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Adventure

Arthur O. Friel
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Leonard H. Nason
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Arthur D. Howden Smith
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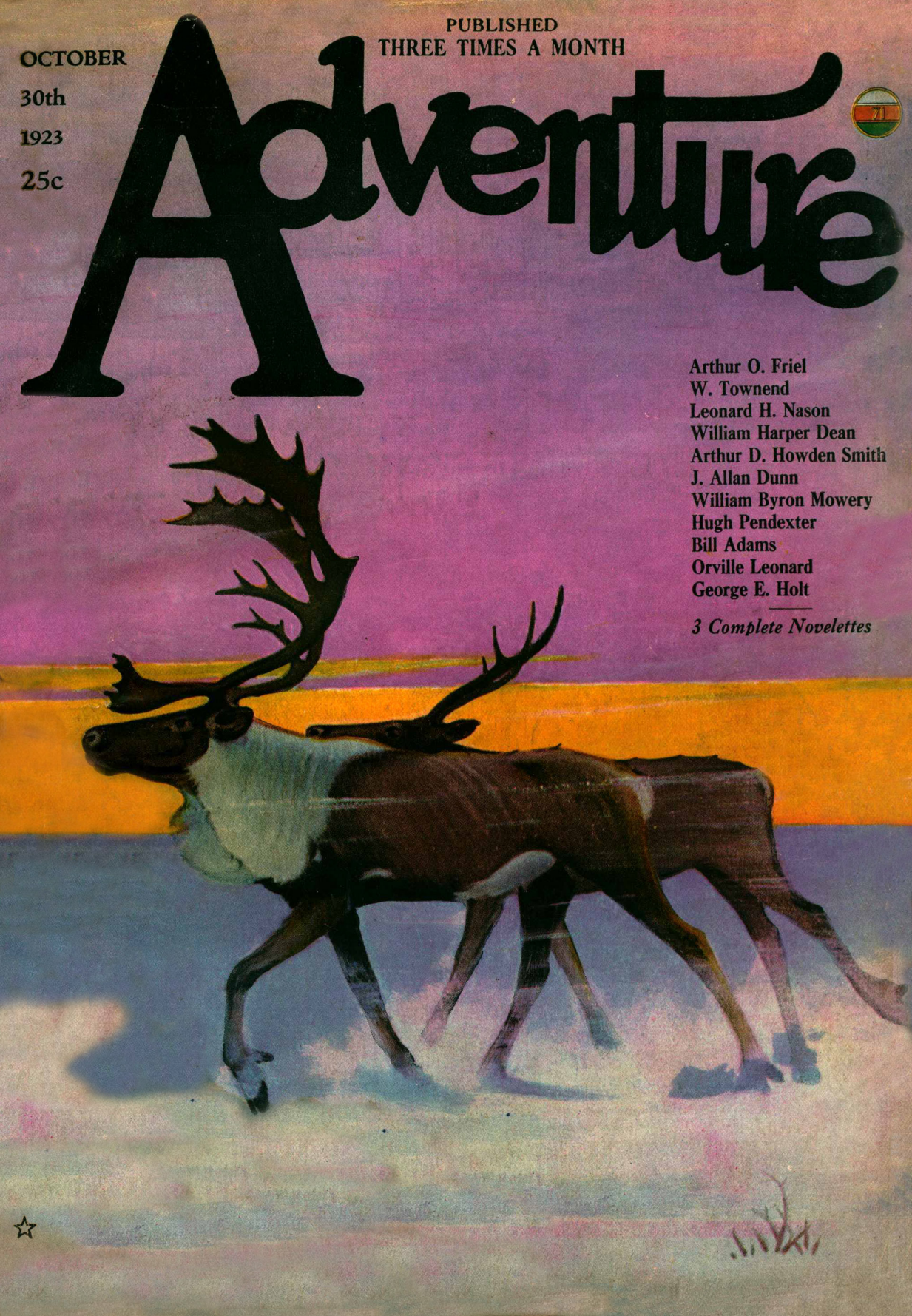
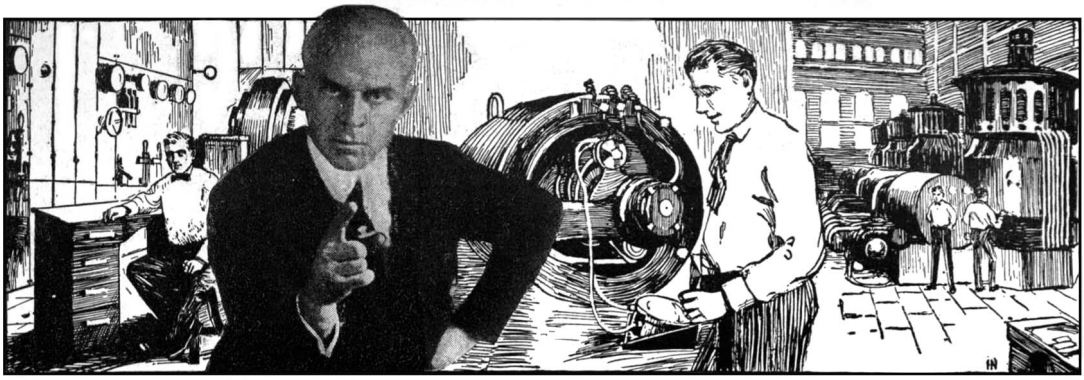
3 Complete Novelettes





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Contents for October 30th, 1923, Issue

The Thirty Gang *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . **Arthur O. Friel** 3
Venezuela—"*Black White*" mystifies the balata trader.

Trade Jargon *Indian Dialects* . . . . . **Clarence Hutchinson** 45

The Seventh Man . . . . . **William Byron Mowery** 46
Labrador—murder!

Slants on Life *"Bill Adams Says——"* . . . . . **Bill Adams** 51

Zukoff Fits a Key . . . . . **William Harper Dean** 52
New York—told in the jury room.

"John Bull" on Bears *Old West* . . . . . **Faunce Rochester** 58

The Tramp *A Three-Part Story Part I* . . . . . **W. Townend** 59
Sea—a cargo of intrigue.

The Judgment o' God . . . . . **Orville Leonard** 87
The West—the sheriff cleans up.

Pilgrim's Progress *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . **Leonard H. Nason** 94
France—war is just one thing after another.

Nemesis . . . . . **J. Allan Dunn** 110
South Seas—the fugitive and the hunter.

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(Continued on next page)

(*Continued from preceding page*)

The Economics of Headhunting *Solomon Islands Customs* — **J. D. Newsom** — 118

Old Misery *A Five-Part Story Conclusion* — **Hugh Pendexter** — 119
California—the test of a mountain man.

Checkmate *An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali* — **George E. Holt** — 145
Morocco—"the fowler fills his nets to overflowing."

Swain's Sons *A Complete Novelette* — **Arthur D. Howden Smith** — 151
The Orkneys—a fight, a burning and an escape.

Little-Known History *A Frontier Figure* — **C. B. Watson** — 175

The Camp-Fire A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers — 176

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader — 184

Ask Adventure — 185

Radio — 187

Mining and Prospecting — 187

Old Songs That Men Have Sung — 187

Weapons, Past and Present — 187

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing — 187

Tropical Forestry — 187

Aviation — 187

Lost Trails — 191

The Trail Ahead — 192

Headings — **Arthur Schwieder**

Cover Design — **Colcord Heurlin**

Three Novelettes, Complete

THE coming of sleek-haired *Frank Campion* to Pasiooks meant disagreeable developments to "*Peace River*" *Parker*. *Cross L. Peace's* boss, warned his homely cowpuncher that *Campion* was not to be trusted; but *Peace* didn't take it seriously. When things began to happen, *Peace* wished he had heeded that warning. "BLIND TRAILS," a complete novelette of the West, by W. C. Tuttle, in the next issue.

WHEN *Ben Hamza* raced *Fader el Aziz* for a wager of fifty douros to overtake a renegade negro in the heart of the Sahara Desert it meant nothing more to them than the upholding of their indomitable Arab pride. How it led them into a plot by French military officials to set up a sultanate is told in "WEST OF CHAD," a complete novelette, by George Surdez, in the next issue.

FOR forty years the box had remained sealed; for forty years the *Attridges* had looked with contempt upon the *Ducettes*. Then *Louis*, old *Eugene Ducette's* grandson, unlocked the box and brought to light a story of murder and piracy on the high seas. "THE INTARSIA BOX," by Henry S. Whitehead, an off-the-trail novelette complete in the next issue.

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

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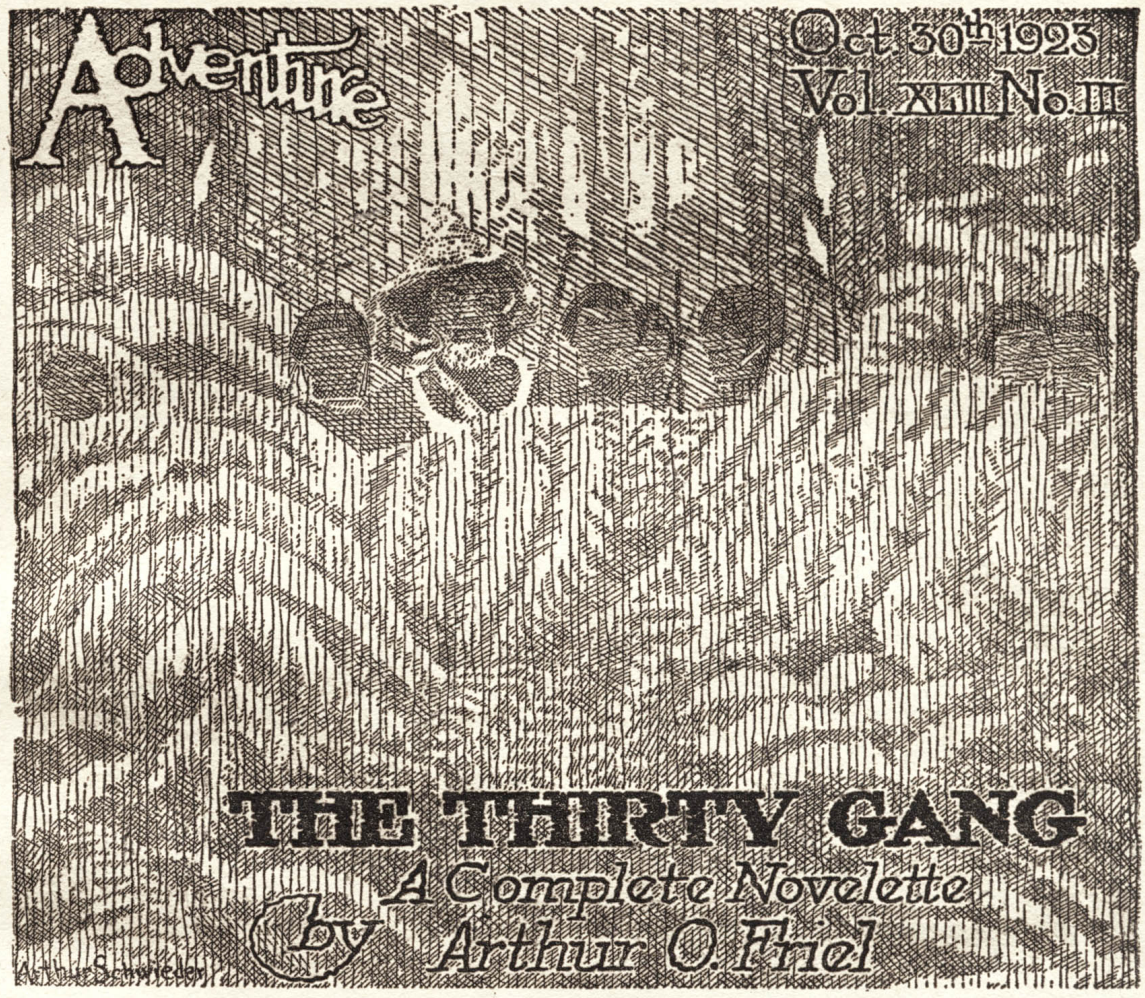


Author of "Cat o' Mountain," "Black White," etc.

THAT is quite true, *señor*. Every man must be his own judge as to the kind of gun he should use.

There are fashions in guns, and in the way of carrying them, too, and no doubt those styles are different in different places. But any one who follows any fashion that does not suit his own needs is unwise, even if it be only a question of shoes or hat. And in the matter of a gun—if he lets fashion force him into carrying a gun unfit for his own build and his own wants he is a fool.

So, *señor*, since you and your partner find your .30 repeaters best for you, take them with you on your gold-hunt up the Rio Caroní. As I have told you, this Venezuela of ours is a .44 country; but if you brought plenty of ammunition from your North America you need not care for that.

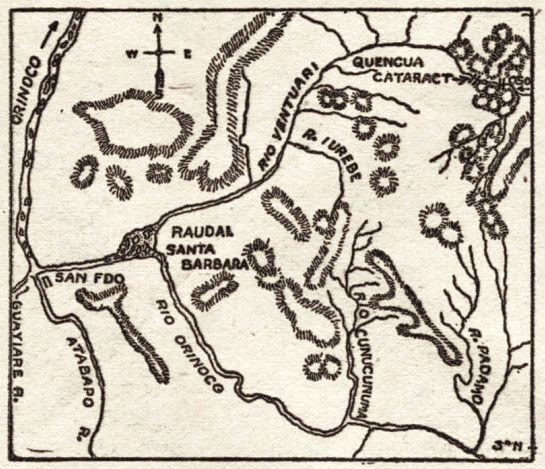
Como? How is that? You have two thousand rounds for the rifles alone? *Valgame Dios!* I have known revolutionists to capture half the towns on this Orinoco with less. You will not use a quarter of them, unless you stay in the Caroní bush much longer than you now expect; and you will find that so many cartridges are most infernally heavy to carry. Still, it is better to have too many than too few.

Besides, if you decide later to lighten your load you can do so at a good profit. You have only to tell the Indians up there that you have cartridges of .30 caliber to trade, and very soon you will be visited by brown men bringing little bags of gold. They will buy every cartridge you are willing to sell—and your rifles also, if you are careless enough to part with them.

Oh, no, *señor*, those *Indios* themselves will not use the cartridges. They are

"*The Thirty Gang*," *copyright*, 1923, *by Arthur O. Friel.*

bow-and-arrow men, having no guns except a few long muzzle-loading small bores. But they will buy your thirties because they know they can trade them in turn to the *Cuadrilla Treinta*, as we call it—*La Cuadrilla de Treinta*—"The Thirty Gang." Have I not told you of that mysterious band, which from time to time crosses the whole length of the unknown Guayana highlands in order to buy cartridges of .30 caliber?



They are Indians all; Indians of the Maquiritare nation, and descendants of the old fighting Caribs who held this land when the first white men came; Indians who live in the jungled mountains from which spring the rivers Caura and Ventuari, and in which only two white men ever walk. One of those white men is I, Loco León, the only blond Spaniard in all the back bush of Venezuela, and, therefore, much whiter than any other white to be found there. The other is Black White—El Blanco Negro—the North American whose skin and whose mind both were turned black years ago by a Maquiritare maiden, and who consequently is white only in name.

It is for him, for Black White, that those *Indios* cross the cruel Parima mountains and buy cartridges. By some secret trade-route of their own they go all the way to the river Cuyuni, in Guayana Inglesa (British Guiana), where men hunt diamonds and gold; and from those gold-hunters, who have ways of getting cartridges in spite of the laws, they buy those bullets—always of caliber .30.

That is why the Cuyuni men call them the "Thirty Gang." And because the Thirty Gang pays high and always has plenty of gold, though no man has ever learned where they find it, some of those Cuyuni men have smuggled in rifles as well as cartridges for sale to the brown men. And Black White, the renegade who brought into the Maquiritare land the first high-power rifle ever seen there, now has about him a little force so well-armed and so wily that I do not believe the whole federal army of Venezuela could ever capture him if it tried.

I learned of those guns in a rather odd way, and since that time I have puzzled more than once over what then came about; or, rather, over the thing that Black White then did. To any one not acquainted with White, as I am, it might not seem so strange. But I know him to be a madman: a man ruined, heart and soul, by the terrible secret drink of the Caribs which was given him by the Maquiritare girl whom he had made his plaything and whom he then intended to abandon; a man who was heartless enough before that time, and who since then has been bitter against man, woman, and God. And to think that such a man——

But let me begin at the beginning. This *ron anciado* has a way of making the tongue wag off sidewise, unless one takes enough to keep it well oiled. Tobalito! Here, *muchacho!* Another bottle of the same, and charge it to my account. And bring fresh glasses for three!

I

NOW, as I have told you, *señores*, before this, I am a rover of the balata rubber country where the Maquiritares live. In the dry time, when no balata can be gathered, I ramble in those wild mountains both for business and for pleasure: I scout for new rubber trees, I visit the tribe-houses of my Maquiritare friends, and I enjoy the freedom and the sudden adventures of the untamed highlands. In the rainy season my Maquiritares work the balata for me at the places I have chosen, and when the crop is in I bring it down the Orinoco to sell to Blum's commission house here in Ciudad Bolívar. Then I return to the uplands.

I am the only *blanco* in all Venezuela who can follow this life among the Maquiritares, for I am the only one whom they trust. Throughout their land the name of Loco León is known as that of an *amigo* and a *buen hombre*, who always keeps his word and treats them justly.

There are other men, of course, who also work the balata in the up-Orinoco country—but none who work it in the home-land of the Maquiritares. They would do so if they could, but they know the brown men would not let them. Perhaps when this tale of mine is done you will understand why the Indians keep those brutes out of their hills.

It was three years ago when this thing came about. It was also three years from the time when White had been turned into Black White by Juana, daughter of the chief of the Maquiritares of Uauana, at the top of the perilous river Ventuari.

Since that day I never had seen the face of that blackened man, nor did I wish to; for he has sworn that no white man shall look on his face and live to tell of it, and he means what he says. But I had heard his voice at times, and knew he still lived; for sometimes at night he would arrive unexpectedly and, standing back in the darkness where the light of my little camp-fire would not reveal him, he would order me to talk to him in English; and I would talk until, as suddenly as he had come, he went. I knew, too, that the girl Juana always was with him, for I heard her voice also.

But except for these things I knew nothing of him, because the Maquiritares would not talk about him, even to me.

Now, in that year of which I speak, I had finished my season's work, brought my balata down the Orinoco to Bolívar, taken my annual holiday, and gone back up the big river. Thus I had come to San Fernando de Atabapo, the only town in the big Territorio de Amazonas, and the place from which the murder-maniac Tomás Funes and his cut-throat army ruled the whole up-Orinoco country. It was also the place where my rivals in the balata trade lived in the dry season.

They had no love for me, those San Fernando men, nor I for them. They were jealous of me because, thanks to my straight dealings with the Maquiritares, I always got far bigger cargoes of balata than they could gather by brutal methods. My feelings toward them and their town was that of any normal man toward a den of snakes.

But, for several reasons, it was necessary for me to stop at San Fernando. I had to change boats, leaving the *piragua* in which my crew had poled up from the rapids of Maipures and transferring my trade-goods to the long *curial* which I use on the Ventuari. I had to visit Funes and tell him what I had seen and heard down the river; every one traveling up had to do this or risk being executed for disrespect to the tyrant. And I had to walk about, meet my enemies and look them in the eye, and let them see that I was not afraid of them. So I stopped at the town and did all these things.

Funes was in a sour mood that day, but I told him several funny stories about happenings here in Bolívar, and before I left him he was roaring like an *areguato* monkey. Then I strolled about the town, taking a drink here and there, listening to what I might hear, and talking to men who ached to kill me.

There was not the least doubt in my mind as to what those enemies of mine wanted to do. But I did not swagger about with rifle ready as if seeking trouble. Indeed, I had deliberately left my rifle in Funes' house, asking one of his bodyguard to take care of it for me; and my poniard and revolver were at my waist under my loose white coat—though the coat was unbuttoned. Nor did those men who longed to see my blood spattering on the ground speak what was in their black hearts. Things were not done so roughly in Funes' town—unless Funes himself ordered it.

"*Hola, Loco León!*" was the hearty greeting I got from the snake-tongued men. "*Como 'stá uste', amigo?* How are things below? Come and have a drink!"

And their hands would carelessly slip a little nearer to their belts.

"*Gracia'*, Lucio," I would say. "I will have that drink and buy you two in return. All is well down the river. How is it with you?"

And my arm would accidentally brush my coat back a trifle more from my hips.

And while we smiled and spoke so with our lips, their eyes would say—

"Your life hangs by a thread, and at my own time I shall cut it."

And mine would answer—

"It will take a better man than you to do it."

So we would drink and joke—with our mouths; and all would look as peaceful as windless water.

Yet these men who greeted me so cordially had boasted about what they would do to me when next I should come to town.

Those brags had come to my ears, and now I was giving them their chance to "start something," as you North Americans say. And I was not the only one who waited to see how well the boasters made good their threats. While I stood and drank in the Casa del Pueblo, other men came carelessly drifting in or loitered around the doors, looking very innocent but watching and listening to what went on.

They kept on waiting, for nothing happened. I drank with every one of the men who had talked so loudly when I was far away, and they still did nothing but talk; what is more, they were careful how they talked.

Several times one or another of them passed behind my back, but I gave no attention to them; I knew that at that moment Tomás Funes felt good-humored toward me, and that every man in town was aware of it, and so every one of them knew that whoever stabbed me in the back would very soon be beheaded at Funes' order. Of course, if I should be killed in a fight, or by accident, that would be another matter.

Since nobody started a fight and there seemed to be little chance of an "accident" just then, I decided to quit drinking. I had had enough, and the boasters had not even boasted in my hearing, so there was no sense in wasting more time and money there. There was a full cup of *caballo blanco* (white rum) on the bar before me, and after tossing it off I would leave the place. But I never drank that liquor.

The little room was very hot, and the man at my right pushed away from the bar and went to the door. Another man stepped into his place, with his rifle swinging at his left leg. Glancing at him, I saw that he was a hard fellow, named Diego, who belonged to one of my snaky enemies, Otón Argel. And Argel himself had been standing for some time at my other side, and still stood there. So I was between Argel and his man.

Now, this Argel was supposed to be one of Tomás Funes' pets. I say "supposed to be," because no man ever could be sure of himself with Funes. No matter how slavishly he obeyed the tyrant's whims, he might suddenly find himself out of favor and lucky if he escaped with his life; for Funes trusted nobody, and many of the men killed by his order were murdered because he suspected them of plotting against him.

He did not even trust his own mistress—in which, perhaps, he was wise. Still, as I say, this Argel was believed to be in the good graces of Funes—though he had not succeeded in convincing his master that I ought to be executed, as he probably had tried to do.

He had been drinking there with me for some time, but I knew he had taken no more than I. Yet now he began to act drunk. He laughed very loud, slapped the bar with his hands, and threw his shoulders about quite clumsily. And Diego, saying nothing, stood loosely at my right side, his gun-butt on the floor and his eyes on the rum before him. His left hand hung down beside his rifle.

I was no stranger to San Fernando and its ways, and I smelt an "accident." Paying no attention to Diego, I watched the staggering Argel cornerwise and moved my right hand toward my cup of rum. At that instant Argel lurched heavily toward me.

My hand clutched the edge of the bar and I threw myself back with all my strength. In the same second Diego's gun belched flame across my abdomen. Burning powder stung my flesh. Argel gave a hoarse, horrible sound. His thick body thumped on the floor, and he writhed on the spot where my feet had just been.

II

"*DIOS MIO!*" yelled Diego. "The gun has exploded! Loco León is hurt!"

He yelled it even as his master was falling; yelled it too quickly, showing that he had the words ready to shout as soon as his bullet tore through me. With the words he twitched his left hand to drop the black thread, now broken, by which he had pulled the trigger of his cocked gun when his master shoved me.

It was not a very new trick in San Fernando, but up to now it had always worked well. An "accidental" push against a loaded rifle—an "accidental" explosion—made an "accident" that was always loudly bemoaned by the fellow with the gun, but not by the victim. A .44 slug sent upward from under the ribs blows all moans out of a man.

But when Diego saw whom that bullet had caught, the other things he had ready to say stuck in his throat. Argel struggled over on one side before he died, and his wicked eyes glared up at Diego, who stood like a stone.

"—— roast you forever!" gasped Argel. Then he crumpled up and was quiet. Diego, still holding his thread, lifted his face in a dazed way and stared at me.

"A slight mistake, Diego," I said. "It is not Loco León who is hurt. But that is the fault of Argel, not yours. You had better find a *patrón* who is not so clumsy."

I was angry enough to kill him—a powder burn across the belly does not improve a man's temper—but I let him live. He was only a tool, and the real assassin—Argel—had paid in full. Later I laughed long over the joke of it, but just then I was not in a merry mood.

His hand went to his machete, but he did not draw. His rifle was on the floor, where it had dropped in the "accident," and he let it lie. I gave him a hard shove that sent him sprawling, and then started for the door. But before I reached it there was work to do.

Erasmo Argel, brother of the dead man, let out a squall like a maddened cat and jumped for me.

"My brother! León has killed my brother!" he screeched. His dagger was out, and he stabbed for my throat. Other men, too, snarled. I had to fight fast if I was to leave that place alive.

I dodged the knife and shot Erasmo in the stomach. And then, with revolver in one hand and poniard in the other, I shot and stabbed my way straight out of there. I did not pick my men—I had no friends there, and I attacked everybody in my way. The watchers at the door broke and scattered to get away from me. They had nothing in particular against me, and had come only to see what might take place, and now they were well pleased with the show. So, with gun empty but knife ready, I walked away without further trouble.

There was mad swearing back in the rumshop, but the outsiders laughed and called after me:

"Well fought, León! The Coronel will make you a *sargento primero* in the army!"

And I heard one say:

"*Por Dios*, but, this Loco León is well named! When he fights he is a mad lion in truth!"

But, Mad Lion though I might be, I was a lone lion among a big pack of treacherous dogs, and I had no wish to stay there. Those who cheered me now might shoot me down in the next ten minutes; Funes might laugh over the end of the Argel brothers, or he might have me tied to a tree and beheaded. I decided to make a complaint to Funes himself before others could complain of me, and then to get away as quickly as possible. So, reloading as I went, I swiftly crossed the plaza to Funes' headquarters.

It had grown dark now, and I was halted sharply at Funes' door and held there until a lantern was put to my face. The guard had been changed at sundown, and it happened to be under command of Amalio Lopez, who was by far the best man in Funes' whole force: a brave, sensible fellow, who, when Funes finally was captured and executed in 1921 by the army of Cedeño, died fighting to the last for his chief. He was the one man in the place worthy of any respect.

"Ah, it is Loco León," he said. "You can not see the Coronel now, Loco. He orders that nobody disturb him before morning, as he entertains two women. What was the shooting over there?"

"It was my shooting," I answered boldly. "See, my shirt is shot away by that hound of an Otón Argel. He tried the rifle accident on me. Erasmo tried stabbing me. Both are dead, and others also. Now I want to know if this was done by the order of the Coronel. If he wants my life why does he not take it in the usual way?"

"Whenever he wants it he will take it in that way," Amalio answered grimly. "He gave the Argels no instructions. They are dead? I am glad of it. But this may be serious for you, Loco. The chief had use for them."

"He has use for me also," I snapped back. "I pay him a larger balata tax than any other man in this Rio Negro country. What is more, it was only a little while ago that I amused him much, and that is worth more than money. And if those dogs would try killing me without authority, would they not do other things against authority? Might they not even try to murder the chief himself? Who knows?"

"That is so," Amalio slowly agreed.

The one thought always in the mind of Funes and his men was that some one would try to kill him. "Well, you will see him tomorrow. Then he will do as he sees fit. Now, go!"

I intended to go farther than he meant me to, for I suspected that Funes might be ugly-tempered in the morning; but I gave no sign of my intentions. I only said:

"*Bueno.* But give me my rifle, which I left here. I may need it before sunrise."

He grinned a little and ordered that my gun be brought. By this time other men had gathered, but none came too near. When my rifle was in my hands I said to those watching:

"I go walking, and I sleep alone. Let none of you try to follow. Amalio, thank you, and *buen' noche'*."

"*Buen' noche'*," he yawned. And I walked away into the dark, and none followed.

I walked southward, as if heading for the house where I usually slept when in the town. But at the first dark corner I slipped around and loped down toward the river Atabapo, where my loaded *curial* lay.

Whether my crew of mestizos, who usually paddled me as far as my first *sitio* on the Ventuari, was at the canoe now I did not know, though I had ordered that two men sleep there in order to prevent thievery from my supplies. But luck was with me—they all were there, gambling on a box-top and laughing or cursing as the tumbling dice gave them *suertes* or *azares*. My movements since the fight had been so rapid that nobody had yet come down to tell them about it.

"We leave now," I said, jumping among them before they realized that I was arriving. "Out into the river! Move!"

They gaped a second or two. One spoke.

"Leave now? Tonight? In darkness?"

"We leave now!" I growled. "There is trouble. Unless we jump out of here there will be more. *Vamos!*"

They jumped. Sudden trouble was nothing new to them—they were San Fernando men themselves, of the *peon* class—and they knew the value of acting first and thinking afterward. In less than a minute we were aboard and had shoved away, and I had blown out the lantern.

"Straight out," I ordered. "Then downstream."

Their paddles thumped for a couple of minutes on the gunwales before any call came from behind. Then sounded a yell.

"Loco León! You dog, you pig, you ——! Come here and fight!"

Lanterns were swinging down the sloping shore toward the spot where the canoe had lain. Somebody had seen me dodge around that corner, and now the dog-pack was beginning to yelp. I cocked my gun and stood up, intending to teach them manners. But then, realizing that my gun-flash would give them a target, I held my fire. With only the dull thump of the receding paddles to shoot at, they were hardly likely to do me any harm; and I had spilled enough blood there for one night.

Getting no answer, they yelped all the more boldly. Half a dozen rifles blazed at me, but the bullets flew wild. My men, without orders, began silencing their strokes. With hardly a sound, we slid on toward the midstream island, the current carrying us downward all the time. Then from the shore sounded a voice speaking loudly to the other men.

"Save your bullets, save your bullets! Let the fool go. Do you not know that Paco Peldóm waits for him at the *boca del Ventuari?* The gang of Paco will not fail."

A rumble of other voices followed, and the lanterns began to move back toward the streets. Then I answered them in a way that I knew would madden them more than bullets or curses. I laughed; laughed loud and high, as if I found them only amusing and contemptible.

They bawled curses, of course, but I gave none in return. We now were far enough out to avoid the rocky point below the town, and I gave the word to head straight down the river. I was out of San Fernando, and I had no time to think further of what lay behind. I was already figuring on what waited ahead.

As San Fernando lies on a point, with the river Atabapo in front and the Orinoco behind, these enemies of mine might cut across to get me when I passed up the Orinoco. I thought this improbable, however, for it meant half a mile of walking through the night, and they were much more likely to go back to the rum-shop—especially since they knew that Paco Peldóm was waiting for me. It was Paco and his gang, lurking at the mouth of my own river, that gave me some real thinking to do. The drunken

fool who blurted that out had done me an unintended favor.

The plot was bigger than I had supposed. This Paco was no balata merchant, like the brothers Argel and others who hated me for business reasons. He was a killer, and head of a small but deadly band of men outlawed from Venezuela, Colombia, and Brazil; one of Funes' tools, and so inhuman that he was nicknamed *El Carnicero*—the Butcher.

There were many such brutes in the "army" of Funes; for birds of a feather flock together, and Funes, himself a murderous outlaw, drew around him the worst men in three countries. They took orders, of course, from the master cut-throat himself; but they also operated on their own accounts, killing and robbing for loot, for lust, or for pay. During the eight years of terror in the up-Orinoco country, many a hideous crime was committed which Tomás Funes never intended. And if any of his men was worse than this Paco Peldóm, I have not heard of that man.

Now, since I carry little money up the river with me—I leave almost all of it in bank here at Bolívar—Paco could expect no plunder from my boat except my Indian trade-goods, which would hardly tempt him. There had been no trouble between us, so he was not seeking revenge. Funes had shown no desire to kill me yet. The only good reason I could see, then, for this gang to want my life was for pay. And the only people likely to pay them much for their trouble were my business enemies.

So I concluded that those enemies had sent Paco up to the Ventuari to take care of me when I should arrive there, and that the Argel "accident" had come about because Otón was not satisfied to let well enough alone; if I was killed in San Fernando he would not have to pay Paco for my head.

With me dead, perhaps the plan was to seize my balata country in force and compel my Maquiritare friends to work it, or bring in other, weaker Indians, as slaves. With me alive, there was not much chance for those schemers to get anything on the Ventuari except bullets and arrows.

All this I thought over while we slid down the Atabapo and swung around the point into the Orinoco. And then, making a map of the Ventuari and the Orinoco in my mind, I began to laugh.

"Paco," I said to the night, "you and your wolves never fail, no? Well, we shall see."

III

THE delta of the Ventuari, *señores*, is a puzzling place. There, two powerful rivers, the Orinoco and the Ventuari, both born in the eastern mountains, meet each other head-on, like a pair of bulls locking horns. Since neither can push the other back into its own mountains, and both must go somewhere, they stagger off westward together until they meet the Atabapo and the Guaviare, which help the Orinoco to go northward again.

I suppose it is this everlasting fight between the two rivers which has gouged out the land all around their meeting-place and made the great Raudal de Santa Barbara. At any rate, the *raudal* is there, and it is a huge bay full of islands, big and little. And among these islands an experienced riverman can pick quite a number of channels if he will. And I, who had worked rubber for years on the Alto Orinoco before moving to the Ventuari, knew most of the ways through that labyrinth. So, if I had known just where Paco waited to kill me, I could have dodged around his gang with little trouble. That is, I could have done so if he had been among the islands of the delta.

But Paco, too, knew his Orinoco. And, since he was there for the purpose of getting me, he would hardly wait at any place where there was any chance for me to slip past him. He would go far enough up the Ventuari to be clear of the islands, and make camp at some point where he could not fail to see me. He would be a fool to do otherwise.

Yet there was still a way of getting around him. It was a long way and a hard way, and a way open to only one white man in the world—to me, Loco León, rover of the wilds and friend of the Maquiritares. And, rough though that way was, the thought of it was what had made me laugh there on the dark Orinoco; for no road is too hard for the man who would cheat his foes and save his life.

Besides, I had plenty of time and little to do, and I could see a bit of new country by taking this long swing. And so far as my San Fernando friends were concerned, I could disappear completely. Not even

the mestizos who now paddled my canoe would be able to tell of my trail.

So I lay back in the *carroza* and chuckled, and the paddlers thumped on through the darkness with never a word. I knew they had heard that loud voice and what it said, but I did not believe they knew anything more than that; for they had been my crew on the journey to Bolívar and back, and so their recent stop in San Fernando had been no longer than my own; and the plan of having me killed by the Butcher probably was not generally known in the town, since it was made without the knowledge of Funes himself. At the same time, I did not trust them any too much.

When we had gone far enough up the Orinoco to be well beyond the town, I made them work to the north shore and paddle on until the lantern, now burning again, showed us a bare rock. There we tied up.

"You will sleep on the stone," I told them. "And do not come aboard before dawn."

They made no objection. They only asked that I give them the lantern, so that no *tigre* might pounce on them in the night. Since it is customary to burn a lantern in that way when sleeping so, I let them have it. They picked their places and lay down, and I stretched out inside the little cabin. But I did not sleep at once. They were talking low among themselves, and I knew that presently they would speak a little louder, as they always did when discussing something.

Soon I caught the name "el Carnicero." And before long one argued:

"But no, Tito, why should he spare us? He drinks blood like a *murciélago*—a vampire bat. Do you think he will let us go to tell of what he did to *el capitán?* You are simple."

That was what I had listened for. It told me that these men had not been bribed to kill me, and that they worried for fear Paco would murder them as well as me—which was not at all unlikely. So I knew I could sleep peacefully that night.

"Oh, be quiet!" I growled, as if disturbed by their voices. "The Butcher is a fool, and I will make a monkey of him. He will not even see you."

"*Como, capitán?*" somebody asked eagerly. "How?"

"I will show you. Now be still."

They hushed, and I went to sleep.

At dawn we were up, and at sunrise we were away. And all that day, and all the next, we crawled on up the river undisturbed. Two or three dugouts and one *piragua* passed us, but all were going downstream. From San Fernando came no boat.

My men had traveled with me before, and they knew I had the habit of getting the better of any one who attacked me. They also knew I would pay them well for their work, and that it was best for them not to desert me.

Still, the thought of the Butcher worked on their minds, as was only natural. So did the fact that I, who had not the reputation of running away from anybody, had left the town in such a hurry. And on the second day, as we neared the big *raudal*, one of them made bold to ask me why Paco wanted me.

I told them I did not know, unless he was hired for the job. I also told them just what had come about at San Fernando, and they laughed about it for half an hour afterward, for none of them liked the Argels. And then, deciding that it was time to hearten them and to tell them what they must know in a few hours, I added:

"Paco waits for us in the Ventuari. Let us wish him a pleasant time there. He thinks himself very clever, but there are many things he does not know. One of them is that on this trip I do not go up the Ventuari, but up the Orinoco."

They stared.

"*Como?* You are quitting your Ventuari grounds?" one asked.

"The grounds on the lower Ventuari are worked out, and the upper river is so dangerous that it would be very hard to bring out the crop next year," I answered. This was true. "So I shall look at another river."

"But the other rivers where balata grows are the grounds of other men," the man said.

"That is their affair and mine, not yours," I reminded him. "We go up the Orinoco, and Paco waits up the Ventuari and swears."

They laughed again, much relieved. If I wanted to steal some other man's ground, that was nothing to them; indeed, it would be another joke for them to tell when they returned to San Fernando.

They wondered, of course, what river I had in mind, but I did not tell them. Their job was to do my paddling, not my planning. And now, with three jokes to think about—Otón killed in his own trap, Paco fooled, and somebody's balata grounds jumped by

Loco León—they paddled right merrily.

In the next few days we worked through Santa Barbara, seeing nothing of the Butcher's gang; swung southward, and then eastward, up the Orinoco; and passed river after river flowing in from the mountains at the north. At each of these rivers my men looked at me, and the steersman called forward:

"*Aquí, capitán?* Here?"

"No," I answered.

And we kept on.

After I had said this at half a dozen river-mouths, it became a sort of joke with them, and even at little *caños* where they knew I would not turn they asked—

"*Aquí?*"

They did not care how far we went, for the longer we traveled the more pesos they earned. And when, about forty leagues from the great *raudal*, I suddenly answered, "*Si*," to their question, they seemed astonished.

We had reached the mouth of the Cunucunuma: a wild, rough river dashing straight south from high mountains, and very hard to travel because it is full of *raudales*. In the country up this river grows the balata, and some of this balata had been worked during the previous wet season by Pascual Rivero of San Fernando.

But the balata of Rivero did not interest me. What had brought me there was the fact that on the Cunucunuma lived a tribe of Maquiritares.

YEARS before, while I was on the river Padamo, near the head of the Orinoco, some of those Maquiritares of the Cunucunuma had worked for me. So, though I never had been up their stream, I was known to those Indians. And, though the Maquiritares change their homes at times, moving from river to river for reasons known only to themselves, the Cunucunuma men had been in their old place during the season just past, and some of them had worked for Rivero. So they probably were there now; and I had use for them.

When I told my crew to enter the Cunucunuma they were a little slow in obeying, and their faces showed that they were thinking about something. But they made no objection, and I would not ask them what was on their minds. They probably would tell me when they had thought about it long enough.

Up into the northern river we turned, and after a little hard paddling against its stiff current we halted to cut poles; for the water was only a yard or two deep, so that poling would be easier than swinging the paddle.

While the men chopped their poles and trimmed the bark from them I heard low-toned talking, and I looked up the dark, clear water, wondering what bothered them now. Nobody would be on that stream at that time of year except the Maquiritares, I thought, and my men surely must know that all Maquiritares were my friends. When they came back, though, I learned something.

"*Capitán*," said the steersman, "do you know that Ramón Rodriguez is on this river?"

I stared, then scowled. Ramón Rodriguez was the foreman of Rivero. He kept the balata work moving in its season and had much more to do with the workmen than Rivero himself; and he was somewhat more aggressive than his chief.

Rivero was sly; he was as bad as Rodriguez, or worse, but he was the sort of man who gets what he wants by lying, cheating, and letting others stand in his place if any danger has to be faced.

Rodriguez had more courage, though none too much; he could bluster and drive men who seemed unlikely to turn on him, but if he had to meet an enemy he would rather shoot him from behind than fight him face to face. He and his chief had gotten along with the Maquiritares of this river because the Indians were paid something, though very little, in trade goods by Rivero, and because they cared nothing for Ramón's loud talk so long as he did nothing worse than talk.

But a loud mouth deceives some people into thinking a man far more bold and reckless than he is; and these mestizos of mine were a little troubled about carrying me up to seize Rivero's grounds when they knew Rodriguez was likely to see them do it. To tell all San Fernando about it afterward would be one thing, but to face Rodriguez on the Cunucunuma was another.

I snorted at the idea of any one fearing that man, but I was none too well pleased to find him or any other outsider here; for I had amused myself so much with the thought of fooling every one that I hated to see my joke spoiled.

"How is that?" I demanded. "This is not the rubber season."

"He is here," was the answer. "We heard he had a woman here, and he came up a week before us."

"A woman! On the Cunucunuma? What sort of woman?"

"A young one. A light Indian. He told about her when he was drunk at San Fernando. He has come back to her."

"A Maquiritare?"

"*Si.*"

"If that is so," I laughed. "I will take her away from him. *Vamos!*"

So we went on. And as we went, I chuckled and scowled by turns. Rodriguez was a drunken liar and the San Fernando rum-drinkers believed him, I would tell myself.

But then again, I was not so sure. If Rodriguez really was up there and making bold with some Maquiritare woman, trouble was likely to be in the air; and when it came it would break like one of those up-Orinoco thunderstorms, sudden and dangerous. I had not lived so long among the Maquiritares without knowing how they felt about their women.

Two days up the river I suddenly became sure that Rodriguez was on the Cunucunuma. It was nearly noon, and we had passed through a bad *raudal* and were poling quietly along smooth water, when we smelt smoke. Then, rounding a big rock, we came on several men just beyond, clustered around a small cooking-fire on the sandy shore. One of them jumped up with a startled curse. He was Rodriguez.

And among the cotton-shirted figures which remained squatting and staring at us was one without a shirt. It was a woman.

IV

RODRIGUEZ stood there a moment with his rifle half-raised, his thumb on its hammer, and his eyes on us. He was by no means handsome at any time, and now, scowling and glowering, he looked an ugly brute indeed. His men, who were mestizos like my own, kept wooden faces.

"Who in —— are these men?" he growled. I was still sitting in the *carróza*, and he could not see me well.

"The crew of Loco León," one of his paddlers told him. I crept out and stood up, and as Rodriguez looked at me his face grew uglier than before.

"*Buenas tardes*, Ramón," I greeted him. "Do you travel up or down?"

"What is that to you?" he snarled. "What in the name of *el diablo* are you doing up here, León?"

"I am riding in a *curial*, as you can see for yourself," I coolly replied. "And I am stopping to eat *almuerzo* with you."

With that my canoe grounded, and, holding my rifle forward, I stepped overboard and ashore, looking him in the eye all the time.

He opened his jaws as if to say something, but thought better of it. With a sour grumble he stepped back a little, glancing down at the woman. After swiftly surveying his men and noting that they showed no sign of backing their disagreeable master, I too looked at her.

She was looking straight back at me with much interest. As I have said, I am the only blond Venezolano on the whole upper Orinoco, and when I travel on the big river I always let the hair grow on my face—it helps to keep off the mosquitoes; and by this time my yellow beard was quite long and very odd-looking in that land of black hair. My blue eyes, too, always are noticed by strangers who are used to seeing only brown or black ones.

So, being accustomed to stares from people who had not seen me before, I gave no attention to her steady regard. What interested me was the fact that she was there with Rodriguez.

She was young, just past her girlhood—perhaps fifteen years old; the Indian girls in our country become women early, and the change is swift. She was plump, strongly built, firm-breasted, and very light of skin; light even for the forest-dwelling Maquiritares, who are much more fair than the Guahibos and other Indians of the sun-burned plains. Except for the fact that her face had the flatness so often found among Indians, she was attractive to the eye of almost any Venezolano.

"Did you come here to eat or to look at my woman?" Rodriguez demanded roughly.

"To eat. But since the woman is here, I look at her. And since I know something about Maquiritares, Ramón, I ask you how you got her. The Maquiritares do not let their girls go out to live with Venezolanos."

"No?" he sneered. "You see that this one goes out with me, do you not? Your Maquiritares have nothing to say about it—or you either. What Ramón Rodriguez wants, he takes."

He was putting more force behind every word, working into his usual loud boldness. I decided to show him and all the listeners where he stood in the opinion of Loco León.

"You need not yell at me," I told him. "I am not deaf. And do not forget that while any dog can growl and show his teeth, it is one thing to bark and another to anger a *león*. The wise cur is the one who knows enough to make little noise when the *león* is near enough to use his claws."

Ramón had to fight then and there or give ground. He did not fight; did not even make a move to show he thought of fighting. After a very quiet minute, while all the others held their breath, he laughed loudly, as if at a good joke.

"You are becoming wise, I see," I went on. "But not so wise, either. You seem to have barked yourself into the belief that you are a *guapo*. And because the Maquiritares are quiet, good-humored fellows you think they are Macos. You are mistaken, both in yourself and in them." *

I glanced down again at the girl, and back at him.

"If you took this girl away as you say, you will find that her people will say something about it if you ever come here again," I added. "But you never took her so. You would not dare. So she must be going with you of her own will, though I cannot understand why. She certainly cannot have fallen in love with your mud-turtle face."

At this my mestizos cackled, and even the men of Rodriguez snickered. Ramón seemed to bloat with rage. I had told him the exact truth about himself, and it stung as the truth sometimes does. And to be ridiculed so before men who would tell it all over San Fernando was more than he could stand.

"I would not dare?" he yelled. "I, Ramón Rodriguez, would fear those *Indios? Caramba!* I fear nobody—neither Maquiritare nor Loco León! I took this woman today from her people—threw her into my *curial* and made her come! And I stop here to eat—I take my time—I do not run from her whole tribe! Let them come on if they dare! Bah! They know better than to follow Ramón Rodriguez!"

He was shouting again, as usual, to prove how brave he was—as if bravery were a matter of mouth. But his way of saying it made me think perhaps he was telling the truth about his way of gaining the girl. I took my eyes off him long enough to glance at the faces of his men; and one of them nodded to me. The others looked around them a little uneasily. It was true. Rodriguez had stolen the girl.

"Then you are a bigger fool than I thought," I told him. "I had already decided that I would not eat at your fire, but now I do not even want to talk longer to you."

With that I stepped away from him—though I did not turn my back to him—and ordered my men to make our own fire at a little distance from that of the Rodriguez crowd.

I was not yet through with talking to him, for I intended to say a good deal more about that girl-stealing before he should go on down the river. But just then he offended me as would something rotten. I felt like breathing cleaner air. Why I should feel so I do not know, for I am used to rough things, and woman-stealing was nothing new in the Rio Negro country. Perhaps it was because I liked Maquiritares and disliked Rodriguez.

Looking over at them from my own fire, I saw that the girl could not keep her eyes off me. Rodriguez saw it too, and growled at her; then, when she still watched me, he gave her a shove that threw her on her back. She rolled over and rose to her feet in one quick move, and for an instant she stood looking dumbly at him. Cursing, he lunged at her again. With another swift movement she dodged him. And then she dashed around him and came running straight to me.

"Ha!" said I to myself. "This makes it much more simple."

The girl had puzzled me a little. Until now she had given no sign of dislike for Rodriguez; and it is always possible that when a woman is carried off by a man she is not very unwilling, and in that case another man is likely to make a fool of himself by interfering. But now she was fleeing

* *Guapo*—in Venezuela, a bold "bad-man." The Macos are notorious cowards.

from him to me for protection—and I was very glad to give it to her.

In no time at all she was beside me; and, looking me in the eye and pointing back at him, she shook her head. I gave her a nod and pushed her behind me. Then I waited for Rodriguez to act.

He stared, his mouth twisting in muttered oaths. Then, his face black, he came walking swiftly toward us, cocking his gun as he strode over the sand. Whether he would have had the courage to attack me at the end I never shall know. He never reached me.

A sudden rush sounded in the dense bush beyond the sand. No life had made itself known in that green tangle since I landed; but now it appeared with the suddenness of a squall. Out on the sand bounded human tigers, coming with the speed of the storm-wind.

Rodriguez halted in mid-stride, his feet wide apart. For a second he seemed paralyzed. Then, with a hoarse cry of fear, he swung his gun and fired without aim. And that was the end of him.

The brown men were on him. Machetes gleamed in the sun-light. There was a *chop—chop—chop* of blades, a crunching sound of bones split and severed, a horrible bubbling gasp. Then Rodriguez disappeared. I could see only a little ring of Maquiritares, a blur of red steel rapidly swinging up and down.

Chop—chop—chop—chop! Then silence. The bush-knives were still. Some one grunted. It was the first human sound the Indians had made since they burst from the trees.

They looked swiftly around; at the mestizos of Rodriguez, who still were paralyzed, and at us. Then, their eyes blazing, their skins smeared with great gouts of red, their machetes dripping, they walked steadily toward us.

Ramón Rodriguez was gone. Where he had last stood was a crimson mess which was not a man, nor even parts of a man; a hash of cloth and hair and meat that was only a hideous blob on the clean sand.

Watching those grim-faced killers advance on us, I cocked my rifle and braced myself.

"*Alto ahí!*" I commanded. "Halt where you are!"

They came straight on. But one spoke in Spanish.

"We know you, Loco León. You are a friend."

At once I lowered the gun. Since they recognized me, I was in no danger. A few steps more, and they stopped beside me. After looking a minute at the young woman, who had come from behind me, they turned their eyes again to me.

"Why are you here?" asked one.

"I come to visit the Maquiritares," I answered. "How do you know me? None of my Padamo friends are among you."

"We heard you talk with Ramón. We heard your name. We have heard of Loco León."

"I see. You now go back to your *paragua?*"

"It is so."

"I go with you."

"It is good."

The paddlers of Rodriguez were sneaking now to their canoe. The Maquiritares turned and watched them, but made no move toward them. I called to them.

"You need not run. These men would have killed you before now if they intended to do so. Wait, and you shall have companions."

To my own crew I said:

"You had best leave me here. Go back to San Fernando with those men. I will pay you now."

They were only too glad to leave me, after what they had just seen; for they knew that though Loco León might be welcome among those killers, they themselves had no such welcome. And I too knew that I should be better off without them. It had been my intention to send them back as soon as my *curial* should reach the Maquiritare settlement, as my further movements were to be made with the knowledge of the Indians alone. Now it was best for all that I get rid of them here.

So I paid them, and they crowded into the Rodriguez canoe. At once the double crew pushed out and shot down-stream, turning their heads for one last look at the awful thing that had been Ramón. Then they were gone.

"Once more I am among my friends," I said. "It is good."

And the Maquiritares, their hard eyes on the fragments of the man who had outraged their tribe, echoed—

"It is good."

V

IN SENDING away my mestizos I had, of course, relied on the Indians to carry me onward to their settlement. For any other *blanco* than Loco León, this would have been a very poor time indeed to hope for aid from the Cunucunuma men; and, in spite of my well-known friendship toward all the Maquiritare nation, not even I should have been sure of a welcome just then if I had not known that those men had seen and heard what took place before they broke from the bush.

As it was, they had convincing proof that I was no friend of Rodriguez and that I had stood ready to defend the girl from him. And now, without waiting for me to ask them, they manned my *curial* as coolly as if they had come there for that purpose.

We got away at once; for I had lost my appetite—perhaps because three black *zamuros* had already dropped from the sky to attend to what remained of Ramón—and the Indians, having completed the little job for which they had come there, saw no sense in lingering. There were about a dozen of them, and half entered my canoe, while the rest, with the girl, disappeared into the bush. First, though, every man bathed himself and his machete, scrubbing off the blood of Rodriguez as if it were pollution.

A few rods up-stream we found, among rocks on the eastern shore, the two canoes in which the avengers had followed the woman-stealer until they smelt his smoke. We did not pause; the others would bring the boats on. With paddle and pole, my new men forced the *curial* northward far faster than my mestizos would have moved it; for they knew every current and every channel among the *raudales*, and they were determined to reach their tribe-house before night.

In all that afternoon I said no word. To try to give them orders about the work would have been foolish, and they spoke of nothing else. At first they were moody and silent, but after a while the river-work drove all other thoughts from their minds, and they became such good-humored fellows as Maquiritares usually are.

Whenever one of them slipped and fell into the water, as happened more than once in a *raudal*, the rest laughed at him like a crowd of boys. And when the following canoes appeared at times behind us there was calling back and forth between crews. To any man not well acquainted with their ways it would have seemed impossible that those merry young men could show such ferocity as they had vented on Rodriguez.

Sunset brought us to the *paragua* of Yaracuma, *capitán* of the Maquiritares of the Cunucunuma. As we drew up at the bank, another canoe came driving down-stream and swung in to tie beside ours. In it were several Indians, all of whom looked curiously at me but seemed undisturbed by the coming of a new white.

One of them, older than the rest, had a quiet air of authority which told me he was the chief; and the bodies of several *baquidos* (wild hogs) in the canoe showed that he had been on a hunt. I began to understand now something which had puzzled me—why Yaracuma had not led his men when they chased Rodriguez. He had been away when the crime of Ramón took place.

This proved true. My paddlers at once told him of what had come about, and for a minute he glared like an angry *tigre*. But then, learning that the girl was safe and Ramón cut to pieces, he gave a grunt of satisfaction. When he was told who I was he grunted again, and studied me sharply. Then the other two canoes from down-stream arrived; he asked the girl a few questions, which she answered quietly; and in the first darkness of night we all climbed the slope to the tribe-house.

There I was led into the big central room where the men always gather. And there Yaracuma called a couple of names. Two young fellows came forward, grinning at me, and I recognized them as men who once had gathered my balata on the Padamo.

"*Como 'stá uste*', Loco León?" they greeted me. "How are you?"

"*Bien*," I answered. "*Y ustedes?*"

"*Bien.*"

They kept on grinning, but said no more. I looked at Yaracuma, and we both smiled, for we understood each other. Although he had been told who I was, he wanted to see with his own eyes that I was recognized as Loco León by men who knew Loco León. There was no longer any chance of doubt.

Soon we ate, and then we talked. As the killing of Rodriguez was the most important subject, we talked first of that; and now I learned more about how Ramón had captured his woman. In their tale to the chief

his men had spoken their own dialect, which is so queer that I never have learned more than a few words of it. But Yaracuma spoke fair Spanish, and he told me what he knew of the matter.

Ramón had not taken her from her people in the bold way he wanted me to believe. He had stayed at the tribe-house several days, saying he came to make sure that the Maquiritares would be ready to work again for Rivero in the next wet season.

There was nothing strange about that, except that it was very early for him to make such a trip. He had tried several times to talk to the young woman, but she had avoided him; and he had laughed loudly, as if it were only a joke; so, though the men kept an eye on him and hoped he would go soon, none was disturbed about it.

This morning she and several other girls had gone, as usual, to the plantation, half a mile away, in order to dig *yuca* roots for the making of cassava. Ramón had suddenly decided to return to the Orinoco, and he had gone down-stream in his canoe. But while the girls were busy at their work and the one who had taken his fancy was a little away from the others, he suddenly jumped out from the trees, grabbed her, stopped her mouth, and dragged her away.

The other girls did not see this done, and it was some time before they succeeded in puzzling out what had taken place. Then they returned to the *paragua*, where they found that most of the men were out hunting and fishing. Before the pursuit could start, Ramón had time to travel a long way. But the pursuers went fast after they did start, and Ramón's own foolishness in stopping ended whatever chance he might have had.

I smoked awhile after hearing this, and I saw something which, I knew, must be also in the mind of Yaracuma. The two crews—mine and that of Rodriguez—would travel fast down the river to San Fernando, and there they would tell of what the Indians had done. And Rivero and all his friends would be enraged—not at Rodriguez, but at the Maquiritares.

To most men of the wild Territorio de Amazonas an Indian is a dog, to be beaten or shot or outraged at will; he has no rights and no protection, and he is a creature made only for the use and abuse of the "white man." And for him to defend himself and avenge his wrongs is a crime calling for death—and not always a quick death. So now, with the town full of men who delighted in murder, it would be odd if an armed gang did not soon appear on the Cunucunuma to teach the "Indian dogs" a lesson.

It was quite likely, indeed, that those killers would start even before the crews should reach San Fernando; for if the mestizos should meet Paco, the Butcher—which was not at all improbable—they would tell him all they knew, and Paco probably would come up the Orinoco at once. It would be just such work as he and his gang would like: a chance to kill me for pay, to butcher the Indian men for sport, and to enslave the maidens for pleasure.

Yaracuma did not yet know about Paco, and I decided not to tell about him for awhile. It might not be necessary to speak of him at all. I was quite sure I knew what thought was in the chief's mind, and I was willing to let that thought grow without forcing it too much.

"Do you come to work the balata here?" he asked after a time.

"No. This is not so good a place as my own river. I come to visit the Cunucunuma men and then go on to my Ventuari."

"It is a long journey."

"Not so long for Loco León, the rover. I do not go back by the Orinoco, if my friends here will help me overland."

He looked thoughtfully at me.

"How do you go?" he asked.

"I have heard that there is a pass through the mountains from the Cunucunuma to the Iurebe," I explained. "Down the Iurebe to the Ventuari is not far. So I reach the Ventuari well above the *boca* and go on to my *sitio* near the fall of Quencua. And I have seen new country."

"It is so," he said, and thought awhile longer. It was well known that in the dry time I was a rambler of the wilds, always seeking something new; so it did not seem very odd to him that I proposed this overland journey.

"But the way is hard," he added, "and you have much weight to carry."

"*Si.* I have just come from down the great river, and I bring many things. There are good presents among them for all my Maquiritare friends who help me across."

He was silent for several minutes. I decided to help him think.

"How long have the people of Yaracuma lived on the Cunucunuma?" I asked.

"Many moons."

"Ever since I was on the Padamo?"

"Yes."

"Is it not a long time for Maquiritares to live in one place?"

"A long time."

"Is not this a good time to move to some other river?"

He agreed so quickly that I knew my guess as to his thoughts had been right.

"It is so. We have lived too long on the Cunucunuma. It is no longer a good place for us."

"The Ventuari is a good river," I suggested. "It has much game and fish. There are other Maquiritares on the Ventuari. The people of Yaracuma are too much alone here. And now there will be no more balata work on the Cunucunuma. If the men of Yaracuma would like to bleed the balata another year and have new knives and machetes, beads and cloth, matches and fish-hooks and other things, they can get them all on the Ventuari. I, Loco León, can give all those things."

The men squatting around or sitting in hammocks gave a murmur. They knew as well as Yaracuma and I that they must move, or live in dread and die in hopeless battle; for, fight as they might with arrow and blow-gun and spear, they could not win against the bullets of the merciless men who almost certainly would come.

And here was Loco León, friend of all Maquiritares, arriving at their time of need to point out the way to a safer land and treat them well after they entered it. It was great luck for the people of Yaracuma. They did not know it was greater luck for Loco León.

Yaracuma considered it awhile, however, in his deliberate Indian way, and I knew better than to expect an immediate answer. He was still thinking about it when I curled up in my hammock and went to sleep. Or perhaps he had already decided and was thinking about the travel-plans. At any rate, I heard nothing more from him about it until morning.

Then, as calmly as if the abandonment of home and crops and the passage of his whole tribe over the mountains were things done every day, he said:

"The people of Yaracuma go to the Iurebe."

"It is good," I said, as if it meant nothing to me.

Every woman was put to work at once in making cassava. Every man made the necessary preparations for the journey. And three days later, with everything worth carrying packed in the canoes and everything else destroyed—except the house itself—we pushed away up the Cunucunuma. Behind us the big *paragua* stood empty of all life, never again to be used by the men of Yaracuma. Yet, though the house itself would tell nothing to those who should come later, it held a message for the Butcher.

One of the Indians had killed a big red *areguato* the day before we went. And when it was brought in a foolish idea came to me. So, telling the Maquiritares that we would leave a monkey to plague our enemies, I had them stuff the skin with leaves, sew it up, and fasten one of its hands in a position which, in our country, is a mortal insult from man to man. Then, as we were leaving, we hung that ribald thing in the doorway facing the river. And from its neck I slung a slip of paper on which I had written:

"El Carnicero:
"Hágame V. el favor de irse al diablo.
"Con la más distinguida consideración su afmo.
"LOCO LEON." *

VI

WHEN a Maquiritare tells you, *señores*, that a journey is hard, you may believe that it is hard. Those sons of the jungled mountains and rocky rivers give little thought to a trip that would make a white man consider twice. True, they are not in the habit of carrying heavy burdens, and any well-hardened man can traverse bad ground when he has no weight on his back. But, weight or no weight, you can always be sure that any journey in their country is much more difficult than they say it is.

So, warned both by Yaracuma's hesitation and by my own knowledge of the land to the eastward, near the Padamo, I now looked for no easy trip. I knew that not far to the east were such huge masses as the Cerro Duida, which shoots up into the air for more than a mile, and Maravaca, whose top is at least two miles above the

*"Butcher: Kindly go to the ——. Most sincerely yours, Loco Leon."

Orinoco; and that westward were other great mountain-blocks. What lay ahead I did not know, but I was quite sure it would be rough. And it was.

Through *raudal* after *raudal* we toiled until at last the canoes could go no farther. Then we took to our legs. Every one of us bore a burden, except the children too young to carry anything but themselves. The men were loaded with my belongings and their own; the women and girls with baskets of food or with babies. Progress was slow. But it was steady, and every sunset found us higher among the hills and nearer to the Ventuari.

We passed the unknown Cerro Cuchamacari, and kept on to the north. We struggled through a maze of cliff-blocks and slanted to the northwest, following the line of the high pass between Queneveba and Queneveta. We sweat by day and froze by night, unprotected from the cold of the lofty hills. We ate all our food, and lived on what we could kill—and we killed anything that moved: birds, beasts, snakes, toads.

We paused only to eat, to rest, and to burn our dead—for more than one death came about, especially among the children. Yet there was no murmuring against the hardships of the traverse; for man, woman, and child knew what would have befallen the whole tribe if it had remained on the Cunucunuma after the death of Rodriguez became known.

In those days there was little laughter or light talk; for our bodies grew too tired and out stomachs too empty to let us think of jokes. Nor were there many signs of comradeship among men or of affection between man and woman, unless the action of a father in sharing food with his woman and children could be called so. Every one carried his or her own load, and women killed any small thing to eat just as the men did.

Yet, though I provided for myself and expected no aid from the Maquiritares under such conditions, I began to find that there was one who seemed always to be near me whenever we stopped. That one was the girl whom I had intended to protect from Rodriguez.

With my rifle I was able at times to knock over more meat than I could eat all at once, and so I gave what I could spare to those who happened to be at hand. And, since the girl—who was called Nama—usually was close by, she got food when I had it. Once I laughed at her, and said:

"You are a wise young woman. You know where to get your meals."

She smiled slowly, for she did not understand me: she knew no Spanish. I forgot the matter very soon, and whenever I saw her near me I thought she was merely looking for a few mouthfuls of meat. But then came a day when I shot nothing at all, and the Maquiritares had only half enough for themselves, so that I went hungry. And while I was making new holes in my belt and trying to forget how empty I was, Nama came to me.

"*No tengo nada*," I grumbled, only half-looking at her. "I have nothing. Go."

But she stepped up to me and held something forward. I took it, and she went away at once. It was a little bag of *platani* leaf, tied with bush-cord, and hot—just brought from the edge of a fire. And when I opened it, inside I found five baked tree-toads.

I was so much astonished that I squatted there staring as if I had never seen such things. I must have looked rather foolish, for when I glanced up I found several of the Maquiritare men grinning. The girl was nowhere in sight.

So I ate the little hoppers, and, though they made a scant meal for a hungry man, my stomach stopped complaining. The tired men grinned again at me, and I grinned back, making a joke of it. For Loco León, rover and killer of the biggest game, to be fed on toads by a woman really was a rich joke to the Maquiritares. But when I lay back in my hammock and thought it over it did not seem so funny to me.

It began to look as if the young woman had been lingering near me for another reason than that of getting food. I remembered how steadily she had looked at me when she first saw me, and how she had run to me from Rodriguez without knowing who I was—for it was hardly likely that the name "Loco León" meant anything to her just then.

At that time I had thought she stared because I looked odd, and came to me only to escape from the roughness of Ramón; but now I was not so sure that was all of it.

I do not pretend to know how the mind of a woman works, but I am not blind, and this was a most unusual thing for a Maquiritare maiden to do.

It did not give me any worriment for my safety, either then or later, for the Maquiritare men were not likely to make any objection even to my taking her as my woman, if she and I both felt inclined to have it so. I was no Ramón Rodriguez, nor even a stray *blanco* traveler who soon would leave their land. I was as nearly one of their own nation as any white man could be who did not actually live the Indian life, and I was trusted and respected.

If I wished to do so, *señores*, I have no doubt that I could take not only one, but three or four, of those fair-skinned Indian girls to my *sitio* as my wives, without losing the friendship of the Maquiritares. But if I did that I should lose some of their respect, and more of my own respect, for Loco León. I am no better than other men, but I am a little too proud of my white blood to wish to become a—what do you say?—ah, yes, a "squaw-man."

So the thing bothered me a little, and I decided that Nama must not be allowed to develop any useless ideas about me. And, since I did not wish to hurt her or to make others laugh at her, it seemed that the best way was simply to appear blind: to treat her like any one else, but otherwise to ignore her. And that was what I did.

It happened that the next day I killed a tapir, so that there was much meat to be given out. I cut it up myself, and to Nama, who was near as usual, I gave no more than to the others; nor did I do more than glance at her as she took it. Later, though, when the flesh was cooked, she brought me the tenderest part of her portion. I acted surprized, showed her that I had plenty of meat of my own, and refused her offering.

She looked a little disappointed, but ate it herself without further sign of feeling. And from that time on she offered me nothing. For that matter, I always managed to provide something for myself after that—good, poor, or bad, but always something.

Then we reached the Iurebe. It was a mere thread of water among rocks at that point, but it was the end of our hard life in the highlands. We had only to work down along it in almost open country, killing plenty of game in the woods beside the stream, sleeping warm at night, and joking about the rage of the San Fernando men who might even now be on the Cunucunuma. They never would find our trail, for we had journeyed on the river for days after leaving the tribe-house.

Even if they did find it, they would not dare to follow it. It was too perilous a road.

Yaracuma and his people still did not know that Paco the Butcher was on the Ventuari, and I still did not tell them. It was quite possible that he was no longer there: that he had gone up the Orinoco. And the joy of those hard-worn people on reaching their promised land was such that I had not the heart to spoil it with news of another danger.

After they had rested awhile at a place half-way down the stream, where the water was deep enough to hold many fish and the bush was alive with *baquido* and *paují* and other fine game, they became a merry crowd. The young men sported like boys, the women laughed as they played with the babies, Yaracuma himself talked smilingly of the new home they intended to build in the uplands above Quencua—and the girl, Nama, hung closer than ever to me, saying nothing but looking long with her deep dark eyes.

Then the men began to talk of felling trees and burning out new canoes to carry us all up the Ventuari. But I had been thinking about this and decided against it. Such work meant much smoke, which might be seen far; and, though I believed Paco had gone before now, he might be nearer than I thought.

The mouth of the Iurebe was only two days' journey up from that of the Ventuari, and I remembered that only a little way below it was a rocky point which would be a good place to watch the river in both directions. For all I knew, the Butcher might now be at that very point; and I had not brought these people so far to lead them to slaughter.

So, without giving any reason except that my plan meant less work—which is always a good reason to Indians—I proposed another idea.

"Between here and my *sitio* below the fall of Quencua," I said, "the land is open *sabana*. Across that *sabana* some of the young men can walk easily in a few days, carrying no weights. I can give them a paper showing how the river runs and where the *caños* are and where the sun rises, and by that they can go straight to Quencua. At my *sitio* they will find good canoes lying idle, and to men of mine who always are

there they can give my orders and this ring, which they know."

I showed them this ring, *señores*, which, as you see, has the head of a gold *león* with emerald eyes.

"Then the canoes can come to us here in five days or less," I went on, "and instead of working we shall rest and hunt and grow fat while we wait. Is the plan good, Yaracuma?"

The chief agreed that it was.

"Then let it be done," I said. "But first let us send scouts to the mouth of this stream to look about and make sure that no men of San Fernando are near to harm the people of Yaracuma. It is not likely, but it is always best to be sure."

Yaracuma agreed again, and the next morning several of the men were sent to the Ventuari. After they left, some of the other Indians looked rather soberly at me, but I gave no sign that I expected the scouts to find any one. So they thought no more of it, and in the three days before the absent men returned there was no anxiety about them.

When they did come, though, they brought news. On the Ventuari they had found no sign of any enemy. But on the Iurebe, about one day's march down from our halting-place, they had come upon a camp.

It seemed to have been used by a hunting-party, which had left not long before our men arrived there. Bones of wild hogs and turkeys were there, and the camp was such as might have been made by themselves; it had a Maquiritare look to their eyes. But it puzzled them, because this Iurebe was not in the Maquiritare, but in the Maco, country. Also, there was a hut, and the Maquiritares usually do not make huts for short stays at a place in the dry season.

Something about the hut made the scouts think it had been used by a white man and a woman. And in the bush not far from the camp they had found what was left of a dead *tigre*, and near it a couple of cartridge-shells. These shells they had brought to me.

Both were bottle-necked rifle-shells. And both were of caliber .30.

VII

AS SOON as I studied those brass tubes I thought of Black White. So far as I knew, his was the only rifle of that size in all our Guayana country. The "white-man house" described by the Maquiritares, too, seemed likely to be his. The woman who shared it with him would be Juana, his Indian shadow. But that he should be down here in the Maco country, so far from the Parima highlands of the Caura and the Caroní where he usually wandered, looked queer.

Yet, as I thought about it, it did not appear so puzzling; for El Blanco Negro was restless as a *tigre*, and if he decided to tramp down into this region there was no good reason why he should not. Certainly it was nothing to cause any concern to us. If the shells had been .44, and the camp had not looked to be that of Indians, we might have had cause to look sharply about us.

Whether Yaracuma, who had lived so far from other Maquiritares, knew anything of Black White I was not sure; but I found that he did.

"El Blanco Negro," I said, holding up the shells.

"*Si*," he answered quietly. His face did not change, but I felt that he was relieved. I asked him then if he had ever seen Black White; and he gave me no reply at all. This did not annoy me, for I had long been used to this silence of all Maquiritares concerning the white man who had been changed into an unwilling member of their nation. It was quite clear that the Cunucunuma men knew of him, and that was answer enough.

I though it as well, however, to tell Yaracuma that I too knew that man; that I had been with him when his skin was changed, and that sometimes since then he had visited me. The *capitân* and the others who understood Spanish listened with interest, and later I saw them talking with the rest in their own language, looking now and then at me.

Then we sent away our messengers to Quencua. With a small map which I carefully explained, and with my *león* ring and orders to my Quencua men, eight young fellows set out at sunrise, carrying only their weapons, hammocks, and some roasted quarters of *baquido*. Yaracuma gave them strict commands to let nothing delay them. We watched them swing away northeastward and disappear among the rolling knolls. And then we, too, moved.

Down the Iurebe we traveled, walking in the *sabana* beyond the tree-line of the stream, and taking our time—for the canoes could not reach this water for more than a

week. In this easy journeying along through the open, where I had a chance to look at other things than what was just ahead, I noticed that the girl Nama sometimes walked and talked with a well-built young fellow near her own age; and I was glad of it. She had seen her mistake, I thought—although she still stayed near me at the stopping-places. She would mate with this young man, probably, when the new *paragua* had been built. So I gave no more thought to her.

At the deserted camp reported by our scouts we stopped for a night, finding nothing new. It was just as they had described it, and we saw no sign to show why its makers had come or where they had gone. The next day we left it and journeyed on. When we reached a place which we judged to be half a day from the Ventuari we halted and made a camp where we could wait for canoes to come to us.

In this lazy walk we had used up as much time as it had taken our scouts to travel all the way to the Ventuari and return with their report—three days. The canoes from Quencua could not reach us for several more days. I grew restless, and decided to go on a tramp.

Off to the northeast, perhaps a day's march away across the *sabana*, I had noticed a rugged *cerro* shaped somewhat like a man's fist, standing up boldly against the sky; and near it, I knew, must flow the little Caño Paró, where hunting should be good. So, warning Yaracuma to keep on using only the driest wood for cooking, in order to avoid smoke, I set out with several of the younger Maquiritares who felt as restless as I.

We moved about for four days, finding the hunting no better than on the Iurebe. Indeed, we did not care so much about killing animals as about killing time. So we gave less attention to the *caño* than to the hill near it. And, in rambling around that *cerro*, we found at its base another camp like that on our own stream.

No cartridge-shells were there, and the camp was not so good as the other. Yet the Maquiritares, after looking it all over very carefully, said it had been used by the same people, and that it was at least as old as the first one we had found; probably a little older. Black White and his little party—if they were the camp-makers—seemed to have made these places while heading southwest; and they had not yet come back.

It gave us something to talk about, and that was all. But on the morning of the fifth day something new made us not only talk but act. In the southwestern sky, rising from the point where we had left Yaracuma and the rest of his tribe, rose a tower of black smoke.

The Maquiritares stared and muttered, and I scowled and swore. Had Yaracuma become a fool? Or had the Butcher found them, slaughtered them, burned their camp? Or, perhaps, had the canoes arrived, and was this a signal for us to come in? We did not know. But we started at once for the Iurebe.

I told the fastest man in the little party to push ahead as swiftly as possible, leaving with us everything but his bow and a few arrows, and learn what was taking place. The rest of us held to a steady, rapid walk.

The smoke kept rising hour after hour, too steadily to be that of a destroyed camp. I concluded that Yaracuma either had decided to call us in or had tired of waiting for the Quencua boats and was burning out logs to make dugouts of his own. In either case, I cursed him for an idiot. Yet I had to scold myself as well; for I had given him no good reason to suppose that any enemy was near.

About mid-day the smudge died away. We were traveling faster on this day than when we had left the Iurebe, and already we had put behind us much more than half of the return journey. By this time, perhaps, our runner had reached the *caño*. We kept on without a pause to eat, gnawing at chunks of cooked meat as we walked. And about the middle of the afternoon we approached the camp.

The runner had not come back. But now, as we slowed and spread out in order to come upon the little settlement quietly, several men of Yaracuma's emerged from the edge of the bush and walked toward us as if they had been waiting. They showed no hurry or concern, and when they came near they grinned.

"What is wrong?" I demanded.

"Nothing. All is well," one answered.

"Then why was all the smoke?"

"*El capitán* said to make it."

"But why?"

They only grinned again. I bit my tongue to keep from swearing. I knew that the

more I might rave the more they would grin and the hotter I should grow; and after that long fast walk I was hot enough. I saved my remarks for Yaracuma.

But, though the men who had met us would give me no satisfaction, they told something in their own tongue to the Maquiritares with me. My companions grunted, and all looked up-stream. I looked also, of course, but saw nothing new. And then we entered the trees.

At the camp I found Yaracuma and the rest. All looked a little amused when I demanded why that smoke had been sent up.

"It is nearly time for the boats," Yaracuma answered calmly.

"*Diablo!* Do I not know it?" I snapped. "But they are not yet here, and why in *el infierno* do you blacken the sky?"

"It is time for my men to be here."

"*Porquê?* For what? There is nothing to do. Do you tell all the world you are here because you want these men to squat and look at you?"

"They are men of Yaracuma. Yaracuma wants them here."

I was angry enough to choke him. But it was true that they were his men, not mine. And he seemed to be enjoying my rage. The others, too, looked as if they saw a joke in the matter. So I shut my mouth, turned my back on them all, and went to my usual sleeping-place; hung my hammock there, and took a cooling bath at the edge of the water. Then I lay and rested for an hour, watching them and listening to talk which I could not understand.

They were speaking of something which seemed to concern me, for they looked my way at times. But, whatever it was, it was nothing about which they were worried. And I was quite sure that if they knew of any danger to me they would tell me of it at once.

It seemed, though, that something or some one was missing. The place looked unchanged, so I glanced at the faces of men and women—and then I knew what was lacking. The girl Nama was nowhere in sight, and she had not been near me since my return. I had become so used to seeing her standing about and watching me that now I missed her, just as I should miss a tree or a stone or any other thing which usually stood in a certain place. The young man with whom I had seen her talking at times also was gone.

"Perhaps they have mated already," I thought, "and made a little hut in the bush where they can be away from the rest a few days. *Bueno!* May their first-born be a strong boy!"

And I laughed and forgot them in speculation about where my canoes now were.

Then came the evening meal, and the usual noises of birds and beasts of the bush at the end of the day; and night and a half-moon. Little fires burned here and there to keep off *tigres*, and it was time for all to swing in their hammocks and sleep. But, though many lay down, none slept yet. There was talking, and some of the men squatted by the fires, as if all were expecting something.

I wondered, of course, what this meant. But I would not ask questions. I had a fire of my own, which had been made by some of the Maquiritare boys, and it seemed larger than usual and too bright. I let it burn, though, and lay drowsily looking at it and thinking of various things. One of those things was Black White, marching across this down-river country and heading southwest. Possibly, I thought, he might stop at my *sitio* below Quencua when he came back, and there we should have another of those queer talks in which I never saw him.

And while I was thinking of this, some one moved among the trees behind me. I gave little attention to the movement; it was only some Cunucunuma man, I thought. But the soft footsteps came nearer, then stopped. I turned then, for I always like to know who stands at my back.

There, quite clear in the light of the fire, was Nama.

She stood looking at me, and on her face was a little smile. I started to speak; but I remembered that she knew no Spanish, so I said nothing. Then from behind her sounded the voice of another woman, speaking my own language.

"*Buen' noche', Loco Leôn,*" it said.

"*Quién es?*" I asked, squinting past Nama but seeing nobody.

"*Juana de Uaunana,*" answered the voice.

"Juana!" I echoed. "The woman of Black White! *Buen' noche', Juana! Donde está El Blanco?* Where is White?"

"*Est' aquí,*" she replied. "He is here."

And from a dark place a few feet to the

right broke a harsh voice which I knew well.

"Evening, Loco! Talk English to me. Talk!"

VIII

USUALLY, when the voice of Black White comes out of the night to me in that sudden way, I lie back in my hammock and talk until I feel that he is gone. I know his mind is not quite right, his temper is fierce, and his hands hold a rifle; also, that he comes not to talk but to listen, to hear the language of his own lost land. It is a pitiful thing, too, *señores*, this English-hunger of his, and, gun or no gun, I should be a dog to deny him so small a comfort.

Yet on this night I felt that the talking should not be all on my side, for there were things I wished to know. And, instead of obliging him at once, as usual, I made a bargain with him.

"Good evening, White. I hope you are well," I said. "I will talk gladly, and tell you all I know. But this time you must talk too. I wish to learn a few things."

"Talk, —— you!" was the savage answer. His rifle-hammer clicked.

"Not unless you talk in return," I refused. "That is only fair. If you will not, and if you want to shoot me now and kill your last chance to hear English—then shoot and have it done!"

With that I lit a *cigarrillo* and blew smoke.

He growled something. Then he agreed.

"All right. That goes. Now talk!"

So I began.

I gave him the story of what had come about at San Fernando, and of what I had heard about Paco Peldóm. I went on to speak of my journey to the Cunucununa, and of the end of Ramón Rodriguez, and the movement of the people of Yaracuma from their old *paragua* to the Iurebe. Then, as he still listened, I told of our trip to the *cerro* in the northeast, of finding his camp, and of the smoke which had called us back. When I stopped, he knew the whole tale of my recent travels.

He seemed to give more attention to the things I told him than to the way in which those events were told. When I described the deaths of Argel and Rodriguez he chuckled hoarsely; and when I mentioned the monkey I had left for the Butcher to swear at, he laughed. It was not a pleasant laugh to hear, but it showed he was amused. Never before had I know him to show such interest in what I said. But at length I learned that there was a reason for this.

"That all?" he asked, when I was done.

"That is all I think of now, and I have talked a long time," I said. "Now tell me—was it you who sent up that smoke today? And why?"

"Not me. But I told this man Yaracuma I wanted to see you. He got you that way."

"I see. And you waited until night at some place above here. Some man of Yaracuma came and told you I had arrived. Is it so?"

He grunted an Indian "yes."

"You have been to the mouth of the Ventuari?" I went on.

Again he grunted.

"Did you find any gang there?"

"Not the one you mean. Your 'Butcher' is gone. Saw his camp."

"That is good. Then Yaracuma is not the fool I thought him. But how come you here, so far from the high hills?"

"Had some killing to do. Had to come here to do it."

"*Como?* How is that?"

There was no answer for a minute. Then I heard him growl a few words. Feet moved toward me from some place a little farther back. They stopped, and again came the growl. And still I saw only Nama.

"Takes too many words," Black White grumbled then. "This man will tell you."

Another grunt, and then sounded a new voice; that of a Maquiritare man speaking Spanish.

"Loco, this was the way of this thing:

"There came into our country a bad man from the Orinoco. He came up the Caura. He went toward San Fernando. His name was Bayona."

"Oho!" I muttered. I knew this Bayona; an ugly, overbearing brute who called himself "Coronel," and who worked balata when he could get men—which was only when he could catch them. His name was so bad that it was known not only to the Maquiritares but to other Indian tribes; to the Puinabes and the Banivas, west and south of San Fernando, and even to the Yaviteros and the Barés, still farther away.

During the last wet season he had gathered a rubber crop by making slaves of some Banivas and driving them like beasts, killing half of them before the dry time ended the work. And he had taken

this crop down the river to Caicara and sold it there, knowing that if he dared show his face in Bolívar he would be imprisoned for old crimes. From Caicara to the Caura is not far; and I soon learned why he had gone up the Caura.

"Bayona brought with him other bad men," the Indian went on. "They had guns and many bullets. They came suddenly and caught men and women of our nation. They did not go to big places like Uaunana. They struck small *paraguas* where fighters were few. They shot and killed and made slaves of men. They did vile things to women and girls. They would take the men down the Ventuari and keep them until the rains come. Then they would make them work balata.

"The men who tried to run away were tortured. At the Caño Estuca we found a dead Maquiritare tied to a tree. He had been beaten dead. Many broken sticks were around him. He was a strong man. It would take half a day of beating to kill him so.

"El Blanco was far away when Bayona came. He was at the Caroní. But the word of what Bayona was doing reached to him. We turned west and followed Bayona.

"We visited the *paraguas* of the Ventuari and learned all Bayona had done. We drove our canoes to the falls of Oso. Bayona was days ahead. El Blanco said we must leave the river and march straight through the *sabana* to the Ventuari mouth. We walked this *sabana*. We walked straight. While Bayona delayed to pass *raudales* or to hunt we reached the delta.

"Then Bayona came in a canoe. The slaves walked, driven by men with guns. We were on both sides of the river. When the slaves came we killed the men with the guns. El Blanco killed Bayona.

"We left alive only one man of Bayona. The slaves said that man had not been so bad to them. We put him in the canoe of Bayona and let him go.

"Before he went we fed Bayona to the *caribe* fishes. We told that man to tell other *blancos* not to bother the Maquiritares. If they do they will be made food for fish. He went away very fast.

"We go back to our hills. The Maquiritares who were slaves are free. Bayona and his men are dead. It is good."

The voice was still. For a minute all was very quiet. Then from all about us rose a deep hum of the voices of men who had heard and understood.

"*Es bueno!*" they echoed. "It is good."

And I too, knowing what I knew of Bayona, rejoiced as I heard of his end.

"*Si*, it is good!" I said. "Even if the —— does nothing more to Bayona than to torment him as he tormented his poor victims here, it will take a long time to square the account. And the men of San Fernando now will think twice before they visit the Ventuari again. Yet there may be more trouble because you let that one man go, White. Bayona was a friend of Funes."

A harsh laugh came out of the bush.

"To —— with Funes!" jeered White's voice. "He can come himself if he's got the guts. We take all comers."

"You had better get some guns before you say that," I told him. "He has an army of *guapos*, and many guns brought from Brazil. I do not see how you even managed to kill Bayona and his men, with only your one gun. The arrows of your men are poor weapons against bullet."

Another laugh came; and this time more than one throat made that laugh. The Indians too were chuckling, as if they had a joke on me. But nobody explained what the joke might be. And, as before, I would not ask what amused them.

Feet began to move again; feet in that place where El Blanco Negro and his men had stood. They were going. Only Nama still stood there, looking at me in that patient way of hers. I knew White was leaving me, as he always did, without a farewell; and I gave him no *adios*. With my eyes on the girl but my thoughts on what I had heard, I spoke to her in a careless way, forgetting for the moment that she did not know Spanish.

"Where have you been, Nama?" I asked.

She only smiled, as if she would like to please me by answering if she could. But the receding footsteps of White and his men stopped.

"Got a woman now, have you, Loco?" mocked White's voice, farther out than it had been. "You fool! Oh, you fool! Ha-ha-ha!"

"No!" I snapped back. "I have no woman. This girl is not mine."

"Oh, don't lie!" he sneered. "She's yours all over. She's been talking 'Loco León' all day to my woman Juana. Loco León!

Nothing but Loco León! Ashamed of her, are you, when another white man calls on you?"

"I tell you, *señor*, she is nothing to me," I disputed. "Believe what you like, but I speak truth."

He was still for a minute. Then he said:

"Watch yourself, then, *hombre*. She's after you hard. First thing you know she'll feed you some of that red *yucut' 'sehi* that turns you black. You'll be a nigger-white like me. A dead man, like me! Dead! Dead! Dead like El Blanco Negro! A dead man walking in the night! Ha-ha-ha-ha!"

His laugh now was mad, a terrible sound that sent a chill crawling over me. The leaves began rustling again, and I said no word. Neither did any one else. Except for that slight sound of movement, everything was silent. The rustling died, and still the silence held. Then from somewhere out of the *sabana* sounded again that horrible laugh and a wild yell:

"Two dead men now! El Blanco Negro and Loco León! Black! Black! Ah ha, ha-ha-ha-ha!"

Nama shuddered and crept closer to me. I too shuddered, and made no move.

Black White was gone, but he had left behind him something that bothered me that night and long after. And it was not the thought that further trouble might come from the killing of Coronel Bayona.

I knew quite well—though I am sure White never thought of it—that all the blame for the Bayona matter might fall on me. The man spared by the Indians probably knew only that a band of Maquiritares, led by some man with a rifle, had done this killing on the Ventuari.

To the people of San Fernando, Black White was only a name; many believed him to be only a creature of an Indian tale, not a real man. So I, the only man with a rifle known to live on the Ventuari and likely to lead Maquiritares, might at some time have to pay Funes for Bayona's blood with my own.

But, as I say, it was not this that kept me thinking long after the people of Yaracuma slept, or that made me cautious regarding my drink and food for some time afterward.

For the first time in my life, I was afraid of a woman.

IX

WHETHER Black White and his band of killers went straight out into the *sabana* that night and traveled homeward by moonlight, or whether they returned to some camp farther up the Iurebe, I do not know. From the moment when they left me there in my hammock I neither heard nor saw a sign of them. The next morning, as I walked about in the open and looked to south and east, I could not observe anything to show they had even been there. And I made no journey up the stream, asked no questions of the Maquiritares. Nor did any men of Yaracuma leave their own camp, except for the usual hunting.

As before, I gave no outward attention to Nama. She loitered around near me whenever I was in camp, but I pretended not to see her. Yet I did more thinking about her than ever before; and, as I have said, I was particular about what I drank and ate. I knew White had been made Black White by the girl Juana; I knew Nama had talked about me to Juana; I knew nothing about what Juana might have advised this girl to do. And in my head kept echoing that last cry of the wild man:

"Two dead men now! El Blanco Negro and Loco León! Black! Black!"

Yet Nama did not try to bring me any drink or to cook my meat, and at times I saw her speaking to the same young fellow who had been with her before. All went on as it had been.

Then came the canoes. They reached us about mid-day, manned by the Cunucunuma messengers who had gone overland and by some of my own Maquiritares, who lived all the year at my *sitio* to do my work and care for my plantation. From these men of mine I learned that Bayona had not been seen at my place and that all was well there. They spent the rest of the day in loading my supplies, and the next morning, soon after dawn, we all were afloat.

Though every *curial* I own had been brought down—and I keep a little fleet of dugouts always at hand—they were too few to carry all the tribe. When every boat was packed so that the water rose almost to the gunwale, there were still seven men without a boat. So they had to take the land route to Quencua, just as the messengers had done. And they not only

reached my *sitio* safely, but they were there two days before us. They carried no burdens, of course, while we were heavily loaded and held back by *raudales* and currents.

On that journey of ours, Yaracuma and his people had good proof that I had not lied to them about the richness of my river.

They watched tapirs swimming in the water or standing in their holes in the clay banks; peccaries coming down in file to drink; monkeys of every kind trooping in the trees, wild peacocks and turkeys suddenly appearing and vanishing in the bush, huge ducks floating on the green surface of the stream.

They heard the soft moan of the *paují* day and night, the trumpeting of the *grulla* when the sun was high, the rush and splash of *pabón* and other fish along every sandy *playa* at sundown.

They saw the *assehi* palm and the *aceite palo* trees, which give drink and oil, and the *carraña*, whose pitch makes torches and fires. And they were content.

They talked, too, with my Maquiritares, learning of the up-river *caños* and the *paraguas* of the Indians already there. Yaracuma did not intend either to stay at my place below Quencua or to join any other settlement; he planned to make his new home at the best place he could find, and to lose no time about it. This much I learned from my own men, and I was well satisfied to have it so. It was better for them and for me that they should go their own way after we reached Quencua.

By the time we landed at my *sitio* Yaracuma had learned all my men could tell him; and that was all he could learn from any man, for I kept those Maquiritares partly because they knew the country so well. He said nothing about where he intended to go, though, until after we had reached my place and I had kept my promise to pay well for the carrying of my supplies from the Cunucunuma. Then, when I had given out the machetes and other things his men had earned, he gave me a surprize.

"The men of the Ventuari tell me," he said, "that Loco León will work the balata at the Caño de Oso, above the *parima*—the high falling water."

"It is so," I agreed. "On the *caño* beyond the fall of Oso my friends shall work."

"And above the Caño de Oso is the Caño Uaychamo."

"It is so," I repeated.

"On the Caño Uaychamo shall be the *paragua* of Yaracuma," he announced.

Now this Caño Uaychamo is in the upper *sabana* country, and, though it is well wooded, I had not thought of his making a home there; for the Maquiritares like the thick forests beyond the open lands for their houses, and I had expected him to go there. So I was astonished. But I was well pleased, too, for by this I knew Yaracuma intended to help me bleed my trees in the next wet season.

You must understand, *señores*, that even I, for whom the Maquiritares will do far more than for any other man, am never sure of my workers from one season to another. They are free men and they do as they please; when they wish to work for me they come to me; when they would rather stay at home, or go on one of the long roving trips of which they are fond, or move their whole tribe to some other place, they give no thought to me and my balata. Why should they? Their lives are their own, not mine.

Yet, like any other man whose interests depend on labor, I like to know where that labor is to come from. And I saw that for the next season, at least, I should have willing workers near at hand in the Caño Uaychamo men.

"*Es bueno*," I told him. "I go soon to the Caño de Oso, and much farther up the Ventuari. I shall walk about and see what I may see, as I do in each dry time. Let Yaracuma make his *paragua*, and when the rains fall we shall meet again."

"It shall be so."

And the next morning at sunrise Yaracuma and all his people left me. With one of my own Maquiritares to keep them company and show them the shortest route over the *sabana*, they crossed the river in my canoes and were gone in the trees lining the bank. The last one to fade from sight was Nama, who, after all the rest had disappeared, stood a minute looking over the water at me. I gave no sign that I saw her. As my men shoved away and came paddling my dugouts back to our own creek, the girl turned slowly and followed her people.

"*Vaya con Dios*, Nama," I said softly. "Go with God—and forget that you ever saw me."

And I walked back to my house, feeling as if a load had been lifted from me. Until

then, I had not realized just how heavily Black White's warning had lain on my mind.

Now I turned my attention to preparing for my usual rambling in the highlands. Though I had already decided to gather balata on the Caño de Oso, there were other creeks much farther up where I wished to look about—for it is my custom to work as many grounds in one season as I can, and I am always seeking new, good districts for use in future years.

So, not being in the habit of leaving all my supplies in one house while away, I now had them placed in a number of secret spots known only to me and my trusted men. Then, with two young Maquiritares who usually travel with me in the wilderness, I journeyed up the river to my next *sitio*, just above the cataract of Oso.

All was well there, and I moved on. The mouth of the Uaychamo showed no sign of life as I passed it, but I knew well enough that somewhere back from the Ventuari—perhaps a mile inland, perhaps much farther—the machetes which the Cunucunuma men had earned from me were swinging steadily, clearing ground and chopping poles for the framework of their new *paragua*.

Thinking of that, I recalled their old tribe-house on the Cunucunuma, and the stuffed monkey hung in its doorway, and the insulting note to the Butcher. And as we left the *caño* behind us I chuckled long, picturing Paco frothing with curses and hacking that monkey-skin to ribbons—in a killing rage, and with nothing to kill.

For weeks after that, too, I amused myself with visions of the fury of that baffled murderer. Then I stopped laughing very suddenly.

I had gone about among the nearest *paraguas*, visiting the Maquiritares and telling them all was well on the Ventuari now that Bayona was dead—though they seemed to know all about that affair before I met them—and I had done some scouting for new balata, when the word came that made me a madman.

It reached me in a camp which I had made on the little Rio Tamara, south of the Ventuari, which was full of rocks but possibly also rich in balata. For days I had seen no Maquiritares except my own two men; and, though there are Maquiritares on the Tamara, they are very wild and live far back, so I expected to see none. Then suddenly five Indians were where only two had been.

A surprized grunt from my own men, who were cleaning a couple of *pavas* I had shot, gave me my first warning of their coming. The three stood just at the backs of the squatting pair, and their faces were so hard that for an instant I thought them some of those wild Tamara men, angry at finding us there. But then I saw that one of them was that young fellow who had walked and talked with Nama.

"*Hola!*" I called. "What do you here? Is not all well on the Uaychamo?"

"All is bad on all the Ventuari," one answered shortly.

"*Como?*" I demanded.

"Bad *blancos* are here again."

"*Diablo!*" I swore. "Who? Why?"

"We do not know who. But they are here because Ramón Rodriguez died on the Cunucunuma."

"How do you know that?" I wondered. "Tell me what you know."

They looked hungrily at the two birds in the hands of my men. But those *pavas* were not yet ready for cooking, nor was a fire built. So they talked.

"We had worked making our *paragua*," the speaker told me. "One day we saw smoke in the sky. It rose from Quencua. With us was Pepe, who had come to Uaychamo with us from your *sitio*. He knew you had gone up the Ventuari. There should be no smoke at Quencua.

"Pepe went to see. He did not come back. Then we saw smoke at Oso. We went to see. We saw men with guns. They burned your *casa*."

I bounced out of my hamomck.

"Burned my house at Oso?"

"It is so. They looked very bad. The one who seemed to be *capitán* had great black whiskers. He seemed to have no nose. He had very long arms but short legs.

"We kept out of sight. We went back. We told our people to lie quiet. Our *capitán* told us to go to Quencua. We went over the *sabana*. At Quencua were no men. But there were *zamuros*—vultures.

"We swam across. We found your *sitio* burned. We found Pepe dead. We found the other Maquiritares dead. The *zamuros* had scattered them. But we saw fire marks on trees. We saw dry blood. The Maquiritares had been tied to the trees and burned.

What else was done to them we do not know. But they died slowly.

"We found a stick standing in the ground. On the stick was a stuffed monkey. It was the *areguato* we left on the Cunucunuma. On the monkey was *tabarí*. This is the *tabarí*."

From one ear-lobe he took a little roll of the *tabarí* bark used in our up-Orinoco country for making cigarets. As I took it I felt sick. The man he had described—long arms, short legs, and almost no nose—was El Carnicero. And as I unrolled the bark I felt more sick.

On it was scrawled in the blood of my good Maquiritares—

*Con los obsequios de Ramón Rodriguez y de Paco Peldóm.**

X

FOR a few minutes after reading that message from the Butcher I raved so that even my own men hastily got away from me. I could see those Indians of mine at Quencua writhing in flames, mutilated by the torturing knives of the Paco gang; and I was *loco* in truth.

The burning of my houses was nothing; they were palm structures which could easily be rebuilt. Even if all my concealed supplies had been found and looted, the loss was only that of goods. But that wicked work on my faithful *muchachos* made me burn to destroy the Butcher—and not to do it quickly, as the men of Yaracuma had destroyed Rodriguez, but *poco á poco*—bit by bit.

When I could again talk with sense, I told my men to make ready to travel at once. While they took down my hammock and made the other preparations I asked the newcomers—

"The people of the Uaychamo are safe?"

"We do not know. We left them days ago."

"*Porqué?* Why?"

"To find you and tell you. Then to tell El Blanco Negro."

"Black White? Why tell him? You are not his people."

They made no answer. They calmly picked up the abandoned *pavas* and began preparing to cook and eat them.

"And this is not the affair of Black White," I added. "It is the fight of Loco León, and Loco León pays his own debts. You will say nothing to Black White. You will return with me to your *capitán*."

They looked at me and at one another, their mouths hardening.

"Do you hear me?" I snapped.

"We hear," said one.

"Then go to my *curial*. I will leave you at the Uaychamo when we pass. *Vaya!*"

One muttered something to the others. Carrying the birds, they walked away through the bush toward my canoe. I turned and growled at my men, who still were not ready. In a minute or two we followed the men of Yaracuma. But when we reached the boat they were not there.

"*Aquí!*" I yelled. "Here, you fools!"

"They are gone, *capitán*," one of my *muchachos* told me. "They will not come with us."

"Then let them go to the ——! *Vamos!*"

We shoved off and began struggling down through the rocks of the Tamara.

We traveled fast; so fast that we repeatedly bumped rocks in the *raudales*, which is not good treatment for even the stoutest *curial*. I was in a fever to reach my ravaged *sitios* and attack the whole Paco gang; and, though I knew that the distance from Tamara to Oso could, by hard paddling with the current, be covered in two days, I cursed because those two days were not two minutes. I feared that the Butcher would be gone when I arrived.

The men of Yaracuma had spent days in traveling to the Tamara. Probably Paco was already gone. I would get him, though, if I had to follow him to San Fernando and shoot him in Funes' own headquarters.

But then, as we surged away down the Ventuari itself, with both my Indians paddling fast and myself steering, I began to use my head. Was the Butcher likely to be satisfied with burning my houses and murdering a few Maquiritares? It was hardly probable. That would get him no pay at San Fernando. More than that, he now wanted my head on his own account, to avenge my ridicule of him on the Cunucunuma.

And, now that I thought of it, I saw a purpose in his work at Quencua and Oso. He probably had tried to torture from my Maquiritares some knowledge of where I was. The only thing they could tell him, if they would, was that I had gone up the

*With the respects of Ramón Rodriguez and Paco Peldóm.

river; for I myself never can be sure of what I shall do when I start into those hills—I make few plans, and often change those plans in a moment.

So then, not knowing where to look for me, he might have fired those houses in the hope that I should learn of it through Indians, just as I had done; and that I would do just what I now was doing—rush in rage to the place of his crimes.

The more I thought of it, the more I believed this was so. And if it was so, he now knew that his plan was succeeding: for he knew his message was gone from the stick he had left at Quencua. So he and his cutthroats would be waiting somewhere—perhaps at Oso, perhaps at Quencua, perhaps at both places—to get me when I plunged into their trap.

As for the question of how he had come to my place, that was simple enough. His message and the monkey showed that he had heard of the killing of Rodriguez and of my arrival on the Cunucunuma, and that he had gone there.

I did not believe he had followed us over the mountains. It was more likely that he had canoed back to the Ventuari, heard of the death of Bayona—which by then would be common gossip among all river-men—and supposed it was I, not Black White, who led those avenging Maquiritares. So he had come up the Ventuari and found my *sitios*.

If he still waited for me, though, he might reasonably expect me to come with the same band of Maquiritares who had killed Bayona. Indeed, it seemed almost sure that he would expect this; for he himself always had a gang, he knew I was the friend of Maquiritares, and if he were in my place he would undoubtedly bring as many Indians as he could get. So he probably judged that I would do the same, and he would be alert.

With each of us seeking the blood of the other, the one who would live longest would be he who could trick his enemy.

His strength was in his gang and his guns. Mine was in the fact that I knew my ground much better than he did. Thinking further along the same line, I began to grin. A few minutes ago I had been telling myself that perhaps I should be a fool to go alone against Paco. Now I felt that it was not so foolish an idea. If it was foolish, then I would be a fool to the limit.

I would not even take these last two Maquiritares of mine with me. Worse yet, I would go to fight those gun-men without my rifle.

We traveled that day until darkness halted us, and at daybreak we were up and away. I had told my men I would go first to visit Yaracuma, and asked them whether they knew where he was to be found. One answered that he knew where Pepe had intended to lead the Cunucunuma men, and that he could guide me over the *sabana* to that spot.

So, when we drew near the Caño Uaychamo, I looked for a hiding-place for the *curial;* found a little brook barely wide enough to hold it; slid the canoe in out of sight, tied it, covered it with bushes, and left it. Then we marched northwest, heading across the open land for the place where the new *paragua* might be.

My men thought, of course, that I meant to take the fighters of Yaracuma with me to Quencua, and I did not tell them of their mistake until we had reached the tribe-house. It was not at the exact place where Pepe had thought it ought to be made, but we had little trouble in finding it; for two armed men met us in the bush and led us to the right spot.

All was quiet there, but everyone was on the alert. While half of the men worked without noise at completing the house, the others scouted, watched for enemies, and hunted meat.

As soon as I arrived Yaracuma and every one else who was near gathered around me. I wasted no time in telling why I came. They knew.

"Where are those *diablos* who killed my men?" I asked.

"They are at Oso and Quencua," answered Yaracuma.

"*Bueno!* They wait for Loco León? They shall not wait long. You have many arrows?"

"*Si.*"

"You have *curare* poison?"

"No."

"*Como?* No poison?"

"No. The poison we had is gone. We have not had time to trade for more."

I scowled. I knew well enough, of course, that the Maquiritares do not make that poison, though they use it on their blow-gun darts for killing much of their meat. They trade for it with the Macos or the

Piaroas. But I knew they had had some when they came from the Cunucunuma, and it had not occurred to me that none would be left now.

"That is bad," I grumbled. "I wanted gourds of that swift death for my arrows. I cannot wait until men are sent to the Piaroas for more."

Yaracuma looked puzzled. So did all the others.

"Yaracuma does not understand," said the *capitán*. "Loco León does not use arrows."

"Loco León will use arrows now!" I contradicted. "Listen to what I shall tell you.

"Yaracuma and his people thought I meant them to help me fight those evil men, is it not so? Yaracuma is wrong. This is not the fight of Yaracuma. It has nothing to do with Ramón Rodriguez and the Cunucunuma. It is true that if those men knew Yaracuma was here they would harm his people; but they do not know it, or they would have attacked before now. Those men strike at Loco León alone. Loco León will strike back alone.

"But Loco León is one man, and they are more than one."

"How many are they?"

"They are ten and seven."

"Seventeen? That is more than I thought. But it does not matter. It is all the more reason why I should use arrows. If Loco León, fighting alone, should use his gun, it would make much noise and a bright flash and blue smoke. So they would know where the gun was and would shoot their own guns at it, and soon Loco León would be dead. But the arrow flies with no noise. Now does Yaracuma understand?"

He stared as if he could not believe me. Men looked at one another. One of my own Maquiritares muttered—

"*Es loco!*"

"Are you just learning it, Frasco?" I laughed. "For what have I been called 'Loco' all these years? Crazy I may be, but I do what I say. I want no man with me. You and Gil both shall stay here."

They both scowled at that. But I gave them no more attention. Yaracuma was asking—

"Can Loco León shoot the bow?"

"Give me one and see," I said.

In my life among the Maquiritares I had amused myself more than once with their weapons, and, though I could not handle their long arrows as easily as if born to their use, I knew how to place them. Now a man standing near handed me his stiff bow and a long-headed *tigre* arrow. I picked a stump some distance away and drove the arrow at it. The missile struck at one side, gouged out bark, and stopped in the ground beyond.

"That is not a good shot," I said. "Yet if the stump were a man and the arrowhead carried *curare*, he would quickly die. I came here to ask Yaracuma to give me a good bow and many arrows and plenty of *curare*. I am sorry there is no poison. I want every arrow to kill."

Yaracuma thought. Men talked among themselves. I noticed that some of them looked at a thin, rather old man with bright, narrow eyes. Yaracuma also looked at that man.

"Loco León would kill his enemies with the poison," he said, as if thinking aloud.

"I would kill *those* enemies with poison," I corrected him. "Most men I would fight with lead and steel. But those fiends who tortured my poor *muchachos* with knife and fire, who for years have done every beastly crime known to men—the *curare* is too good for them! It does not hurt enough. If I knew of a worse thing I would use it. I would send those —— into —— with their master's torment already at work."

Faces grew grim, and more than one man nodded agreement. The *capitán* looked again at the narrow-eyed man, and that man looked back at him. Then Yaracuma said:

"If arrows are used those men will think it done by Indians. They will hunt for Indians and——"

"No!" I broke in. "When has Loco León hidden behind his friends? I shall mark every arrow so that those men will know it is Loco León who strikes them down. I want them to know it is Loco León, the man they hunt, who kills them and sneers at them. That is one more reason why I want arrows. They can read those arrows. They could not read bullets."

He smiled a little and walked to the thin man. The two went slowly away together, talking low. The others watched the pair, and a hum of Indian words passed among them. Something was coming, and the Maquiritares had guessed what it was.

Soon Yaracuma came back. The thin man disappeared around the *paragua*.

"Loco León shall have his wish," the *capitân* calmly told me. "Bows and arrows are here. Poison will be made."

"*Curare?*"

"No. We do not make the *curare*. But there is another poison. It is a very old poison of our race. It must be used only for killing enemies. On the day after tomorrow it shall be ready."

"It is as strong as the *curare?*"

"It is much worse. It is so bad that it has not been made among our people for many years. Loco León has said he wants a poison fit for devils. He shall have it."

XI

IN THE long day that followed, little work was done at the *paragua* of Yaracuma. Every one talked. Some of the things that were said I understood, but most of them I did not. Yet I knew that the one thing every one talked about was the mad plan of Loco León.

It was easy to see that some of the men—especially the younger ones—were eager to go with me. The older men, though, who had women and children to think of, were not so reckless. If I had wanted them, no doubt I could have taken with me every fighter in the tribe; for, though the Maquiritares murdered at Quencua were not of the Cunucunuma, they were Maquiritares, and their torturers were hated by every one here.

My own two men, Frasco and Gil, were very sullen, and I could not blame them; they were comrades of the victims. But it now was a matter of personal pride with me to avenge every one of those deaths myself. Also, if I went alone I should have nobody else to think about, and so could direct my movements more easily.

Yaracuma himself, not being a fool, was well satisfied to let me go my way and do my best without aid, since that was what I desired. If I killed all my enemies, well and good; if not, he and his men might fight later on. So he saw to it that the making of the poison went forward—just where and how it was done I do not know, for it was made in some secret spot by the thin man—and he also ordered one of his best bowmen to give me any help needed with the arrows.

With this fellow to watch and correct my manner of holding the weapon, I practised for a time in the morning and improved my shots. The Indians took almost as keen an interest in this work as if I were actually shooting at a man instead of a stump; they were much more serious about it than I was, and every good hit brought a deep grunt from all around me.

When I tired of it, my assistant and half a dozen others went to inspecting the arrows I was to carry, testing the balance of each, examining them for straightness and strength, and throwing aside every one that did not suit their opinions. And I got out the roll of *tabarî* bark which I always carry up-river, and, with my pencil, printed on the thin sheets a message which would leave no doubt in the mind of the Butcher as to who visited him.

While I was doing this, squatting in the shade and keeping my eyes on my work, some one came and stood before me. At first I did not look up, for I was so much accustomed to being watched by the Indians that I hardly noticed it. But after a time a voice said, very softly—

"Loco!"

Then, lifting my eyes, I saw Nama.

She wanted to say something to me, but had not the words. Yet she gave me her meaning. She pointed to me, then toward Quencua, and shook her head. Then, pointing eastward, she said—

"Negro."

And she waved the pointing hand down along the river-line.

It was her way of telling me I must not go alone to Quencua, and that Black White would come down the Ventuari. I smiled and shook my head. Then, by signs, I showed that I was determined to go as I planned, and that Black White would not come; or, if he did, he would be too late. With that I resumed my pencil-work.

She tried to make me pay attention to something more, but I waved her aside. Then some of the men spoke gruffly—probably telling her she was meddling with matters in which a woman should not interfere. Slowly she went away.

Black White would come? I did not believe it. The raid of Bayona in the hills where White lived and the attack of Paco on the *sitio* of Loco León were far different matters. My affairs were nothing to him, especially when I asked no help and even forbade the Indians to tell him. I thought no more of it.

When my little messages were finished

I tied one around each shaft with bush-cord. That ended my day's work. I left to the Indians the packing of the arrows into quivers and the selection of the bow, as well as the preparation of the poison. Only one thing remained for me to do, and that I did when Yaracuma was with me and nobody else happened to be near.

"Yaracuma," I said quietly, "I have told Frasco and Gil that they must stay here. They do not like it. They wish to go and fight. I ask my friend Yaracuma to watch them when I am gone, and to stop them if they try to follow me. When I shoot the arrows I shall not look to see the faces of the men I shoot at. I do not wish to strike down my friends by mistake. Let no man come after me."

"It shall be as Loco León says," he agreed.

So, with nothing more to be done, I did nothing but eat and sleep.

In the morning I found beside me a stout bow, a quiver with several arrows, a corded bundle of other five-foot shafts, and a large, light, round basket such as the Maquiritares use for packing on their backs *yuca* roots and other food. The basket seemed filled with flat cakes of cassava.

"All is ready," Yaracuma told me.

"There is cassava enough for six men," I grumbled. "It is far too much. And I see no poison."

He smiled and lifted the top cakes. Then I saw that they formed a lid, and that under them, in a green nest of leaves, were packed two gourd bottles. The necks of the bottles were short, wide, and tightly closed by wooden plugs.

"The basket holds life and death," he said. "Under the black juice is more cassava. There is a sling to carry a gourd. There is a new bow-cord also. All is here."

It was the best packing I had ever seen done by Indians. Before I could reach my foes I must eat, and so the cassava was placed ready at the top. Also, it would protect the poison from the hot sun during my journey. And the extra bow-cord, which I never should have thought of, might be useful in many ways.

"It is better not to carry the poison in the sling," he told me. "But the sling is there if wanted. You should leave the poison at some place after dipping the arrows. You must not let the poison touch your skin. You must handle the arrows carefully. The black juice is very hungry. It eats."

"It must be bad indeed," I said. I looked around for the thin man, but did not see him. "Where is the man who made the juice?"

"Why?"

"I should like to give him a knife."

"He is sick. He will be sick five days. No man can approach him."

"It is because he made the poison?"

"It is so."

I said no more. But I decided to be careful with that poison.

When I had eaten a good breakfast I swung up the basket, settled its strap across my forehead, and had the quiver and the extra arrows slung behind my shoulders. The basket was quite heavy, for cassava is solid food, and the poison-gourds were none too light. The arrows, though, weighed little, as the long shafts were of hollow cane.

With my thin hammock on the basket and my new bow and one arrow in my hands I left the *paragua* and headed southwest, toward Quencua.

Oso was nearer, but I did not go to Oso for two reasons. One was that I did not wish the brutes of Paco to search for me too close to Uaychamo, and thus, perhaps, discover the people of Yaracuma. The other was that I wanted to repay my enemies on the same ground where they had butchered and burned my Maquiritares. Moreover, the Quencua woods were better for my movements than those of Oso. And I was quite sure that the Oso men would go to Quencua as soon as they knew of what was taking place there.

So, leaving my rifle behind, I walked out into the *sabana* beyond the *caño* and began my journey of vengeance. To travel by the river was impossible, for that water was watched. Paco and his men must be cursing, I knew, because my canoe did not appear. They soon would curse for another reason.

All that day I walked. At night I slept without a fire among some trees beside a small stream. At sunrise I traveled on, and about noon I heard the roar of Quencua. Toward the fall I turned, and in another hour or so I was among the trees through which runs the only path around the fall.

In all the march I had seen no man, either ahead or behind. Now I became more guarded; for if any of the butchers were on their way up or down the river they must pass along that narrow track, a mile long,

which connects the upper and lower ports of the Quencua *raudal*. I did not yet smear my arrow-heads with poison, but I made sure that those in the quiver were loose and easy to draw, and I carried one ready in my hand.

Soon I was in the path itself. The damp ground showed that men had passed within a day, going toward Oso. That was good; for it meant that at the lower end of the path must be waiting one of my canoes, in which those men or others above meant to journey down.

The problem of crossing the river had bothered me a little, for unless I could find a canoe it would mean swimming, and that would spoil my only food—the cassava. Now it would be easy.

I walked fast along the winding path, seeing no life but a few birds and a troop of *marimundo* monkeys. At the end I found the canoe, empty. From among some rocks I got an old paddle which, I remembered, had been thrown there some time ago by one of my men after half its blade split off. It now was partly eaten by ants and woodlice, but it would do. A few minutes later I was swinging around the first bend, heading for my destroyed *sitio*.

Now, the river at this point winds a good deal, and between the white water of the fall and the place where my house had stood were seven turns. I decided to journey past four of these and then to hide the canoe at a certain spot and finish my trip *por tierra*—by land. I kept close to shore, cutting across only to skirt the inside of each turn, and moving slowly as I rounded each curve. The first three bends showed me nothing ahead except empty water. But the fourth——

I bore back so hard that the rotten paddle cracked. A few rods farther down, heading up-stream, was a canoe with three men.

Helped by a shore eddy, I got back unseen. But there was no cover for the canoe at that place; indeed, I was lucky even to meet a spot where I could scramble up the steep clay bank. I managed it, though, and when I reached the top I also had my bow, several arrows, and one gourd of the poison, which I had grabbed as if it were harmless as an empty calabash.

The canoe lay in plain sight, held by a snag.

In the bush at the top I wrenched the cork from the gourd and swiftly dipped four arrow-heads into the sticky black mess within. There was no time to be careful—I jabbed them in one by one, pulled them out, and arose ready to fight. A yard or two away was a small opening in the greenery, and at once I was there.

"*Mira! Un curial!*" cried a surprized voice. "Look! A canoe!"

The other canoe had come around the turn. All its men stared. I recognized every one of them—villains named Blas, Salomón, and Gaspar, more cruel than *El Diablo* himself. Looking at them, I saw my Maquiritares twisting and gasping in agony while the red knives of those men slowly cut off their fingers and gouged out their eyes. And the red of that steel went into my own brain. I saw them in a fiery haze.

I do not just remember my movements for a minute or two. I do remember oaths, yells, gunshots, bullets smashing through the bush around me. Then their canoe was drifting back slowly in the current. Salomón was huddled up, motionless. Blas was trying to pull an arrow from his stomach. Gaspar had yanked another arrow from his right shoulder and was looking at it with eyes full of terror.

"*Veneno!* Poison!" he yelled. "It is black with poison! *O Dios!*"

Blas gave a choking moan and writhed on his seat.

"*Los Indios, los Indios!*" he gasped.

"*Veneno!*" repeated Gaspar, his voice more shrill. "It is fire—it is knives—it is vitriol!"

He threw the arrow down. Its point struck the gunwale and stuck there. Staggering, clutching his shoulder, yet he somehow spied the *tabarí* bark bound to the shaft. He dropped his hands and tore it off.

"*Cien mil diablos!*" he screeched. "It is not *Indios!* It is Loco León! *Mira!* Listen to the note on the arrow:

"*Aquí está su billete para el Infierno.*
Loco León." *

"Loco León?" howled Blas. "Ah, ——! They did not get him! *Oh Cristo!* What pain! This is the very fire of —— in my bowels!"

Gaspar began to twist again. His knees gave way, and he fell into the bottom of the boat. Both of them squirmed and kicked and swore. They cursed me, they cursed Paco, they cursed themselves. They began

* "Here is your ticket to ——. Loco León."

to scream like madmen. And then the canoe faded out of sight around the turn.

XII

WHEN the noise of the dying brutes had become silence—as it soon did—I went back to my poison-gourd and stared down at it.

"Yaracuma spoke truth," I said to myself. "This is a poison fit for fiends."

For a minute I felt like throwing the infernal stuff into the river and continuing my war with unvenomed arrows. But then I saw again my tortured Maquiritares. So, instead of casting the gourd away, I plugged it, wrapped leaves around it, and slid down the bank as carefully as if I carried a bomb. Back in the *curial*, I laid the bundle down like an egg and looked myself over to make sure that none of the black poison had stuck to my clothing. Then I pushed out.

When I rounded the turn for the second time I saw no life. The other canoe still was in sight, drifting down ahead, but it now held only three corpses. Stroking carefully to avoid a complete collapse of the wrecked paddle, I headed for the hiding-place I had had in mind. Soon I was there. With the *curial* drawn into the narrow inlet and bushes bent down as a curtain behind it, I considered my next step.

The drifting death-boat soon would reach my old *sitio*, and the men remaining there undoubtedly would see it, take it in, and learn that Loco León was near. I had not intended to let them know this until I was in my own woods and ready to attack at my own time; but there was no help for it now, and the sooner I finished my journey the better.

By making a long swing through the *sabana*, first to the south and then back to the north, I could reach my woods from the rear with a good chance of avoiding any guards. And, once there, I might be able to do a little more work of vengeance that night.

So I dipped a half-dozen arrows in the poison-pot, shouldered the rest of my equipment, and struck into the hills to the south. When I had passed through the tree-belt along the river and entered the open I had no cover except the little *cerros*, which meant a good deal of turning in order to keep from showing against the sky-line. Yet I made good speed, and not once did I meet men. And as sundown drew near I was at my own little *caño* and stealing northward among its trees. Just at dark I reached one of the little huts in which I had hidden my trade-goods before starting up the river.

Everything there was as I had left it. Whether the other two hiding-houses had been found I did not know, but this one evidently had not. Soon all grew black around me; but I used no light. Later on, I knew, there would be a moon.

While I rested and chewed cassava I kept my ears open to every sound. Nothing stirred, though, except the usual animal life. No voices came to me. If any guards were posted, they probably were at the river or at the big clearing where my house had stood, and where the gang now should be camping. No well-used paths were near this little hut, and it was hardly likely that men would stand all night in what seemed empty bush.

So, when the moon came and made things a little more visible, I started toward the river. The bush was not too thick for quiet travel if one moved slowly, and I took care to travel without noise. With me I carried the six arrows, freshly smeared, which had been in my left hand all the afternoon. They now hung in the quiver slanting across my back.

At length I reached the edge of the clearing. The moon now was well up, and the open space was quite light. I saw at once that my *casa* was gone, and so were two other palm houses where my Indians used to sleep; but one shelter still stood. It was an open-sided shed in which various belongings of mine had been kept. Now it was the sleeping-quarters of the gang. There I could see the vague curves of hammocks and the red spots of glowing cigarets, and hear growling voices. No guard was in sight.

Moving very carefully, I worked along the edge until I was as near the house as I could come without showing myself. It was near enough to hear what was said.

"Paco is a fool, and this proves it," somebody was grumbling. "'Wait,' says Paco, 'and he will come to be killed.' And we wait in this hole and feed the mosquitoes with our blood—*caramba*, I am an itch from hair to toes! And does he come? No! And while Paco sits on his rump at Oso the *Indios* walk in between and kill us. Phew! What a stench was Blas!"

"*Si,*" said another man, "and Salomón too. And all three of them black as the Rio Negro. I would not have touched them or one of those arrows for a hundred pesos."

Several other voices grunted agreement. And thus I learned that the dead men must have been left to float on downward, carrying my arrows with them, and so nobody yet knew that I was near. That was good. But Paco himself, the man I most wanted, was not there, and that was not so good.

"I say again what I said before," rumbled a third voice, "that this thing was not done by Maquiritares. Those *Indios* use only *curare*, and no *curare* would bloat and burst men as that poison did. There must be other *Indios* here. Perhaps a few of those Guaharibo fiends who live east of the Padamo have come here on a raid. They must be few, or they would have taken the rifles from the *curial*."

A fourth broke out with curses upon all Indians.

"Snakes, all!" he swore. "Guaharibos or Maquiritares or whatever they may be, they are snakes. See what they did to Ramón Rodriguez. And those accursed Maquiritares we found here—would one of them talk? Would they tell where to find that dog of a León? Pah! They——"

"We were too gentle with them," somebody interrupted. A chorus of cruel laughter followed. I grew hot and drew an arrow.

"*Mira!* What is that?" some one asked sharply. "Do you not see something move there?"

I stood perfectly still. There was a silence.

"There is something light, but it does not move. Moonlight on the leaves," another said then. "Nothing can come from the river without being seen. Miguel is on the watch. And no *Indios* would dare come so near us in the bush, knowing we are awake."

But another silence followed. Somebody stirred. A man came out, leaning forward and squinting, and stopped.

"It was not there a little while ago," I heard him muttering. "It is— *Diablo!* My gun, Lázaro! Quick!"

He spun on his heels. I let fly the arrow.

A shriek broke from him, and he stumbled, clutching at one leg. Like lightning I drew and shot two more arrows at the hammocks, where cigarets had suddenly dropped and rifle-clicks sounded. Then I threw myself sidewise and down.

I had not touched the ground when bullets were ripping over me. While I plunged forward on hands and knees, gripping my bow in one fist, more bullets crashed through the moving bushes. One stung my chin; another nipped my right thigh. But I got away. Nobody had the courage to rush at the bush and close with me, and the bullets did not quite find me. Perhaps the yells of the men I had hit—there were two, at least—helped me to escape.

"*El veneno!* The poison!" they screamed. "It is the black poison! *O Santo Dios!*"

Alarmed curses sounded from other men as the guns became still. The screams became louder and higher. I did not linger there, but those sounds followed me far into the tangle as I went.

"So," I said, "you who laughed a minute ago over your 'gentleness' to my faithful men now scream over a quicker death than they had. You yell now to God, do you? It is far too late for Him to listen to you."

And I worked onward under the moon toward my hut, feeling no pity for the howling cowards behind.

Yet, when I lay in my hammock and thought about it before falling asleep—which was not long, for I was very tired—I was not so well satisfied with my Indian way of fighting as I had thought I should be. To imagine those brutes dying in torment had been a joy, but to see and hear it was not quite so pleasant. And, though I told myself that this kind of death was no worse than they deserved, I felt more and more that I was not fighting as a white man should fight. The impulse to destroy that deadly mess in the gourds became stronger than it had been on the river.

In another way, too, I was not well pleased with the use of the bow and arrow. The bow was a clumsy thing to handle in the bush, and so was the long arrow. I could not crouch or lie flat and thus cover myself, as when using a rifle. And when I had been crawling for my life just now the bow had caught in vines and the arrows in leaves, hindering my movements.

An Indian would have handled them much more easily, of course; but I was no Indian. And I was learning that shooting at a stump outside a Maquiritare *paragua* and fighting live enemies in the woods were not the same. I wished I had brought my rifle; and I was glad that I still wore my revolver and poniard.

Then I went to sleep and forgot it all.

The next morning, though, while I ate, I looked at the gourds and gave up all thought of abandoning them. Now that I had begun this kind of war I must continue it; for, since my revolver was short of barrel and good only for close work, the arrow was the only weapon with which I could strike from any distance. And unless my figuring was wrong, I ought to be able to wipe out the rest of this Quencua gang today or tonight.

There were seventeen in all, the Indians had said. The Butcher, expecting me to come past Oso, would hardly leave more than half his force at Quencua—eight men. Yesterday I had killed at least half of those eight; in fact, I was almost sure of five deaths. Not more than three men, then, remained here. I would get them in the next few hours.

So, with fresh arrows, I slipped out again into the trees. Moving even more stealthily and slowly than last night, I went again to the clearing. Reaching it, I found nobody there.

I had not expected, of course, to see my enemies in plain sight. Warned by my messages, they would be hidden in the bush, watching and waiting for me to return. But, as I too waited, trying to spy some slight movement or catch some sound to indicate where those men might be, I felt more and more that the place was empty of human life. Birds came, some monkeys passed about, but the man-feeling—if you *señores* understand what I mean by that—was not in the air.

Yet I did not trust my senses. I would not believe the men were gone until I proved it. Moving with extreme care, keeping always covered, I circled the clearing. Then I became sure. Those last men had fled.

When I came out into the open and walked toward the sleeping-house I saw why they had gone. There, on the ground, were three horrible things which had been men. Those arrows which I had shot last night had done their work well. Whether all three had made hits, or whether one had missed and another had wounded two men, I could not know; but three corpses now lay under the hammocks. They were so frightful that I could not go near them. I hastily got back into the bush and left the place.

The last two men had not even dared to drag those bodies to the river and get them away from there. They themselves had gone instead, under the moon. Where? To Oso, no doubt, to tell their chief.

For a while I thought of following them to Oso, walking the *sabana*. Then I decided to wait for the Butcher to come to me. He probably would come with all speed.

So I traveled the bush to another of my hidden shelters, where I could find coffee and make a fire and have a better meal than for some time. Finding it undisturbed, I quickly cooked the coffee and drank until I could hold no more. Then I stretched myself and lay down on the supplies for a *siesta*.

"The luck of Loco León still holds good," I told myself. "Soon my account with El Carnicero will be closed, and then we shall have peace on the Ventuari."

Yet before sunset I was to feel that all luck had deserted me.

XIII

I WAS in ambush on the river-bank when my luck failed.

It was late in the day, and Paco and the rest of his gang might possibly be nearing the place. I did not really expect them so soon, for the river between Quencua and Oso is so bad that it would take hard, fast work for those up-bound men to reach him and bring him back in so short a time. Still, it was possible. So, having nothing else to do, I was watching the river from a little bushy point at the entrance of my *caño*, up which was the landing-place for canoes.

Before me stood a big *mora* tree, which would give me cover from bullets. Around me stood a few bushes, and on two of these, in crotches hip-high from the ground, lay a dozen ready arrows. By trimming branches with my knife I had made those bushes into a rack for the shafts, easier to reach than any back-quiver.

The deadly heads all pointed forward, and when the time should come I could snatch the cane shafts rapidly enough to drive them in a stream at the canoe-men. Meanwhile I leaned against the tree, giving all my attention to the river. The three dead men in the clearing behind me were not likely to do me any harm, and I knew of no other men.

Across the river a couple of *areguatos* were howling at each other, making the

horrible noise those monkeys always make. If it had not been for their roaring I might have turned in time to make a better fight. As it was, I heard nothing near me until several quiet clicks struck my ears. Then I whirled—too late.

Five rifles covered me. Behind them stood men of San Fernando. And farther back, along the path, I saw more men holding guns ready to throw to an aim.

For a few seconds I stood dumb. And the more I stared, the more amazed I grew. These men did not belong to the gang of the Butcher.

"*Caramba!*" I said when my breath came back. "What is this? What are you doing here?"

"We are catching a *león* asleep," one of them mocked. "Come forward—with your hands up."

I stood still, looking at faces. Like Paco, these men were of the army of Funes; and they were no better than the brutes of the Butcher. I suspected—and soon found it true—that they were another pack sent out from San Fernando to get me; but I wanted to know why.

"Does the Coronel order this?" I demanded.

"Come here!" was the snarling answer. "Lift those hands!"

I knew then that this was not the work of Funes. If it had been, they would have said so; for an army party usually made a formal "arrest" in the name of the Coronel—though it often executed its prisoner immediately afterward. Not that I should have meekly surrendered if they had used Funes' name. I asked only because I was amazed and puzzled.

I took a slow step forward as if obeying, and I raised my hands. But I did not raise them far or keep them empty. Letting my bow drop, I snatched my revolver, fired, and fell, all in the same movement.

The rifles roared almost in my face. But the bullets smashed my hat instead of my head. I kept shooting as fast as I could shift my aim from man to man—and that was very fast indeed. At that short range I could not miss. Every man of those five staggered. Two of them fell.

My gun empty, I sprang up and jumped toward the river, intending to dive off, swim down-stream under water, and try to get into the bush. But I had hardly turned and begun to move outward when a terrible blow struck my right leg. With the blow came another gun-shot. I tumbled sprawling on my face.

Before I could drag myself forward, men were on me. I fought, squirmed over, drew my poniard, struck at somebody. My arm was caught and twisted. A rifle-barrel crashed on my head. Everything went black.

When I could see again, a ring of men stood around me. One was squatting beside me and tying up my hurt leg with a strip cut from my trousers. My revolver and poniard were gone.

Much surprised to find myself still alive, and still more astonished to see that some care was being given my wound, I lay still and stared around. I was in the same place where I had fallen, and felt that I had not been long unconscious.

Scanning faces, I now saw that one was that of Jaime Pecoro, a corporal under Funes and a gang leader on his own account. He was as merciless as Paco the Butcher, except that he was not so cruel: a killer, but not a torturer.

"Well, Jaime," I said, "it seems that you are the winner. But since when have you let your men do your work while you skulked behind? You were not here when I fought."

"I was at the clearing beyond," he growled. "We were looking in all directions for you, and these men found you. You ——, you have killed two of them."

"Only two?" I mocked. "My cartridges must be bad. What of the other three?"

Jaime smiled sourly. Several others chuckled in a grim way.

"They are hit, but they are tough," he said. "The fools should have shot first and talked afterward. But you are not so clever as men say, if you let them walk so near to you."

"I was watching for a dear friend of mine—El Carnicero," I retorted. "He may come at any moment. You had best be careful."

"The —— roast him!" Jaime snorted. "He is nothing, that Paco. You are slow, or you would have killed him before now. El Carnicero? Bah! *El Rebuznador!*" *

"I fear that you do not like the gentleman," I said. "It is a pity. But why do you come here and interrupt my plan to receive him?"

He grinned again, but his eyes were cold as those of a snake.

*Rebuznador—a braying jackass.

"Why? Because he is not good enough for his work. He has been given time enough to do a dozen such jobs."

"I see. And now you have been given the work instead, yes? I thought so. Then why do you not finish it now?"

"There is no hurry," he said, with a careless wave of the hand. "You will not run with that leg, and you will not shoot again, with no gun. I will attend to you when I am ready. Until then we shall talk and be comfortable."

I studied him and then laughed, though I did not feel at all merry. He meant just what he said. When he was ready he would chop off my head with no more feeling than if he were cutting a bush. But while I lived I intended to seem as cool as he was.

"That is quite agreeable," I said. "I wish you had kept away until I had seen Paco—I have a personal account to settle with him. But that can not be helped now. I am sorry also that I can not receive you in my *casa*, but you must blame Paco for that. He burned it while I was away."

He nodded shortly.

"Where are your *Indios?*" he demanded.

"I have no *Indios*," I denied.

"That is a lie! Every one knows you have the Maquiritares in your hand. You and they killed Coronel Bayona. We met on the river a canoe with three bodies—phew!—and arrows. We find more bodies and more arrows here. Where are those *Indios?*"

I held my tongue a minute. He did not know those arrows had been shot by Loco León. It would do me no good to tell him so, or to let him know of those other arrows so near us. I might yet find some chance to save myself.

"They are not here—" I was about to say, when every man jumped. From the entrance of the *caño*, just beyond the *mora* tree, sounded the bump of a paddle against the side of a canoe.

"*Hola!*" Jaime called sharply. "Who comes?"

"Paco Peldóm!" growled an answering voice. "Who are you?"

Jaime grinned once more. His teeth looked like the bared fangs of a *tigre*.

"Paco Peldóm?" he sneered. "You are too slow and too late, Paco. Your game is trapped by Jaime Pecoro. Travel onward."

A savage curse sounded from the water. The ring of men around me swung back and became a line, facing the *caño* and holding their guns half-raised. I turned over on an elbow and looked, but saw only the bush between me and the edge of the bank.

"What game do you mean?" yelled the Butcher. "How come you here, you——"

"The game you were not good enough to catch!" Pecoro taunted him. "You have been away for weeks and done nothing. Now Jaime Pecoro comes here and catches your *león* in less than an hour after going ashore. Go on down the river to San Fernando, Peldóm, and ask the Coronel for a place as grave-digger. You are growing too old for this work."

The men standing behind me laughed jeeringly. The Butcher roared a string of foul names which only made Jaime grin wider than ever.

"You lie!" Paco raved. "You catch León? You? You could not catch a sick monkey! And I am old, am I? You——son of a ——! Get off this river before I show you how old I am! You will come here to steal my meat, will you? You crawling snake——"

I looked at Jaime. His eyes were glittering, but he still grinned that cold grin. He was enjoying Paco's rage too much to shoot. I sat up.

"Give me a gun, Jaime—a revolver—anything," I asked. "Let me settle my score with that filthy brute. After that——"

"*Si*, after that you will shoot me also, León," he jeered. "You are not to be trusted with a gun. Lie down again before I kick you down!"

But I did not lie down. I started to crawl toward my arrows, which nobody had noticed. I was determined to kill the Butcher before I should die in my turn.

Somebody fell on me and forced me flat on the ground. Then came another roar from the *caño*.

"*Diablo!* It is the truth? You have León there? Then, *por Dios*, you shall give him to me! He is mine, and I will have him!"

Water splashed and paddles bumped. Jaime's rifle clicked. But he was not yet through with talking.

"*Si*, he is here, but he belongs to a better man than you," he called. "Go back to San Fernando with your tail between your legs, if you know what is best for you—or you will never return there at all."

A snarl was the only answer. A scrambling sound on the bank—then the ugly

face of Paco arose beside the *mora* tree. Gripping his rifle, glowering like a mad dog, he came lunging savagely toward me. The man holding me jumped up. More gun-clicks sounded behind me. In one more second there would have been shooting.

But in that one second something else happened. Paco gave a sudden grunt, grabbed at his stomach, halted as if struck, looked down. For the space of three breaths he stood like a block of wood. Then he jumped back as if from a snake.

His rifle dropped. His face lifted, and it was gray-white. His mouth worked; his tongue made a horrid sound without words. And down the front of his dirty shirt and breeches showed a row of black spots surrounded by red.

He had run straight upon the points of my waiting arrows.

XIV

JAIME and his men must have thought I had suddenly gone mad. I let out a wild screech of laughter.

"Welcome, Paco!" I yelled. "Welcome to the place where you burned helpless Maquiritares! Welcome to the pleasures of——! I received your message written in the blood of those poor tortured ones, and my answer is marked on your belly in red and black. I trust that you will enjoy our meeting as much as I."

His face twisted, and he stooped toward his gun. But he did not pick it up. His hands went to his stomach, and he stood humped over.

"Ah-h-h!" he groaned. "*Ah, Cristo! El veneno!*"

A grunt ran among the men of Jaime. I struggled up to my feet, and nobody touched me. Standing on my one good leg, I laughed again. However I might have felt about the use of that poison before, I now could keenly enjoy the misery of this inhuman beast.

"It was most amusing, was it not, to watch my *muchachos* twist and writhe under the torment?" I went on. "But the rest of us were not here to see it, Paco. Will you not show us how they danced and sang for you? If you cannot think of anything to sing, there is a little sentence on each of those shafts which is most appropriate. Take one of them off, *Carnicero mio*, and read it, and then sing to us while you can. That will not be long, unfortunately."

He staggered, tried to straighten up, but did not touch the arrows. His men, no doubt, had told him what that message on the *tabarí* bark was. He groaned again and looked at me with eyes full of hate.

"Ah! Oh! *Demonio!*" he gasped. "León —you *diablo del infierno*—you are—— Ah! *Dios!*"

He doubled over again.

"What is this, León?" demanded Jaime. "Is it a snake there in the bush that has struck him? What is this talk?"

I gave him no answer. In another minute he was more puzzled than before.

Behind the Butcher arose other heads—those of his men, climbing the bank. They stopped, watched their master with faces growing harder, and pointed to the arrows, which they now could see. An ugly growl sounded in their throats. Then, as Paco began reeling about and groaning more loudly, they surrounded him.

There was a struggle. Paco fell and thrashed about. The men, dodging him as if he were a serpent, hurried toward us, lifting their hands high as they came. One held the Butcher's gun as well as his own. Another carried Paco's belt, with revolver, poniard and machete. They had taken all his weapons and were leaving him to die like a poisoned dog.

"Peace!" one said, shortly. "We join you, Pecoro. He dies, and he will be mad before he goes. It was so with the others. So we take his arms. You had best throw him into the river before he bursts and becomes foul."

"What is it?" Jaime demanded again.

"Poison of the *Indios*," the Butcher's man replied. "A most horrible poison found by this fiend of a León. You had best kill him too, and quickly."

"*Diablo!* So that is it?"

Jaime gave me a hard look. But before he could think more about it Paco became violent.

Yelling and foaming, he fought up upon his legs. Before any of us guessed what he would do, he had grabbed several of the long arrows into a bundle and swung the points toward us. He drew back his arm——

I dropped flat, and just in time. With a screech, Paco heaved his fistful of death at us, throwing the shafts all at once as if they

were a spear. Then he fell, laughing horribly. The arrows separated in the air. A frightful yell of fear broke out behind me.

Turning, I found three men wounded by the black points. Two more arrows had dropped and stuck in the dirt. An instant later, gunshots roared.

The three doomed men were shot in their tracks by their companions. It was a merciful death for them. More bullets tore into Paco, rolling and kicking in the bushes. Some one shot at me too, and why he missed I do not know, unless his gun was knocked down in the confusion. As it was, the bullet spattered dirt into my face and eyes. For a few seconds I could not see.

When I had wiped the dirt away I saw men dragging the three bodies to the river. Paco was being lifted by four men, who held his hands and feet and yanked him to the bank. He was still twitching and making a low moaning noise. The four gave him a swing forward, back, forward—and let go. He went sprawling out into the air like a great toad.

A heavy splash sounded, followed by three more, as the other arrow-struck men were dropped. And then the cannibal *caribe* fish had a meal which, no doubt, killed them also.

I heard a grim chuckle overhead, and looked up at Jaime. He was unhurt, and cool as ever. I did not laugh with him, for my leg was hurting badly now, and I felt sick. But I did grin a little when he told the joke.

"*Adios*, Paco!" he said. "You had to blunder even in dying. You bumped into your own death without seeing it. And when you tried to kill me you only destroyed three of your own men. Not a man of mine was touched by an arrow. Ha, ha!"

Then he moved like a flash. His rifle covered somebody behind me.

"*Alto!*" he snapped. "What do you do with that?"

Turning my head, I saw one of Paco's brutes holding an arrow. Its point was directed at my back.

"I will give this accursed León his own dose," the man snarled. "I want to see him squirm as my cousin did last night."

"No, you will not," Jaime told him. "Throw that thing into the river! I take this man's head to San Fernando. I will have no poison in it. Throw that arrow!"

Muttering something, the man stepped to the bank and cast the deadly shaft outward.

"And remember that Jaime Pecoro commands here, you dog!" Jaime went on. "What I want done will be done, and nothing else. If you make one more move without my orders it will be your last. Do you understand me?"

He understood. So did the others left from the Butcher's gang. Not one of them even spoke in my hearing after that.

Jaime lowered his rifle and looked again at me.

"So you are the band of *Indios*," he said. "Are there more of those arrows?"

"That is for you to learn," I retorted. "Since you promise me only death, I need not tell you anything."

"As you like," he said, with a shrug. "I will not promise you life, since I came here to take your head. Men, look there in the bush for more arrows. If any are there, burn them."

Moving very carefully, men searched and found all the arrows left. Soon they, and my bow as well, were feeding a little fire.

"Now go and bring up the canoes," he ordered. "Move fast, for it will soon be dark. Heberto and Carlos, remain here to help me watch this mad *león*. I am afraid of him."

He grinned again. But his joke was half-truth, for he stepped out of my reach and kept his eyes on me while the rest were gone; and the two who stayed with him also watched me steadily. Jaime squatted, made a *cigarro*, and smoked it, never losing sight of me for an instant.

"Since you will not talk," he said, "it was a waste of time to bind up your leg. I did not want you to bleed to death too soon. Why not talk awhile? You will live no longer by being sulky."

"When do you expect to kill me?" I asked, feeling a natural curiosity on that subject.

"Before I sleep. You are too dangerous to be kept alive over night. We shall smoke your head a little, so that it will not spoil before we reach San Fernando. I will save you until after I eat, because a beheaded man bleeds much, and it might spoil my appetite. After that—whenever I feel sleepy I will put you to sleep also."

"You are as cold as a fish!" I said. "But do not forget that you are likely to get into serious trouble with the Coronel for killing

me without his order. I am worth something to him, with my balata tax."

"That does not worry me. You are worth a very good price—it has doubled since you killed Bayona and his men—and as soon as I collect my money I shall quit Funes. He is a madman and not to be trusted, and I work always for the good of Jaime Pecoro."

"I see. You are a man of business."

He nodded.

"Since that is so," I went on, "possibly I can overbid your employers. My head is worth more to me than to any one else. I have money——"

"Where? Here?"

"Not much here, but plenty in Bolívar——"

"Ha!" he sneered. "I do no business on credit. Let you go to Bolívar for your money? I am not such a fool! At San Fernando I shall get solid silver money for you. But I talk too much. What was that you said to Paco about torturing Maquiritares? And what was it about burning your house? I am curious."

"I will tell you that," I said, "if you will first tell me how you got behind me and caught me."

"It was very simple," he explained. "I brought from San Fernando one of your men who knows this place. Instead of coming by boat to your *caño*, we tied up at one farther down and walked overland. Then we came through the woods and looked around the clearing, and I sent men in different directions to hunt for signs. And here you stood against that tree, sound asleep. It was too easy."

He laughed again, and I cursed those howling monkeys which had spoiled my hearing; cursed that San Fernando mestizo who had led this gang here, too, though it was no more than could be expected—such a man would do anything for a few pesos. But I kept my curses inside my own head; I would not give him the fun of hearing me swear, as Paco had done.

Then I told him of the Butcher's treatment of my *muchachos* and his destruction of my place, as I had promised to do. But I said nothing of the people of Yaracuma or of how I had obtained my poison, nor did I deny that I had killed Bayona. There was no use in either. I held the talk to Paco and what I knew of him. And while I talked I was trying to see some way of escape—and finding none.

The canoes came, and after they reached the landing-place up the *caño* the men rejoined Jaime at the point. The sun now was down, and it would quickly be dark. Jaime arose and ordered me carried to the landing-place.

"Hold his arms tight, and when you let him go give him no chance to snatch a weapon from you," he commanded. "León, you had best try no tricks, or you will eat no *cena* tonight."

I was seized, firmly held, and borne along the path to the landing. There dry wood was quickly gathered and several good fires made. By the time darkness had come the whole place was well lit up, and more wood was piled at hand. I felt a little chilly when I noticed that some green stuff also was brought and laid near one fire. It was meant for smoking my head.

There was no chance for me. Men were all about, and I was kept in the brightest light. I looked longingly at the steep bushy bank just across the *caño*, now a black mass. If only I could reach it—but I could not.

So I made the best of it, determined that when the time came I would take it with my eyes open—and that I would make whatever poor fight I could. Hands and teeth could not do much damage, but I would leave a few marks behind me. And in the meantime I would eat and drink and keep my nerves steady. A man is never dead until he is a corpse.

Jaime and I ate facing each other, with men and fires in a ring around. He had some tapir-meat, plantains, and coffee, besides the usual farina; and after eating cassava alone for days I found those things good, especially the meat and the fried plantains. Both of us ate heavily, as if nothing further were to take place. And when the meal was done we both smoked *cigarros*.

"You are a better executioner than El Carnicero, Jaime," I said, with a laugh that I tried to make real. "Instead of eating and smoking with me he would have begun at my toes in cutting off my head."

"*Si*," he nodded. "That was his way. And where is he now? Such work is not business. To me it is not pleasure either. A clean, sure job with quick pay—that is the way of Jaime Pecoro."

"There are worse ways," I agreed.

And we smoked on.

It became very still. The men around us smoked and watched. None of them spoke. Jaime asked no more questions. My own tongue became dry. Something cold began to creep around my heart. Time seemed to drag, and yet to go all too fast.

I wanted to talk, but I could think of nothing to say. Never before had I been in such a position. Death is nothing, I told myself. But that slow silence, that unfeeling "business man" deliberately taking his time, that green pile ready to smoke my head in a few minutes more—those things gnawed at me.

Jaime's *cigarro* was smoked down to a butt before he moved. The quietness had become a cold horror. There seemed to be no animal noises in the night, and even the breathing of the men seemed to have stopped. Then Jaime dropped his burned-out roll of tobacco. His face stretched in a long yawn. Calmly he arose.

"I am sleepy," he said.

And he drew his machete.

"If you will bend over, León, and rest on your hands, it will be easier," he suggested. "A clean cut. I do not like ragged work."

I looked about me. No chance, no hope, was within reach. Jaime was raising the machete.

"Give me time to set my knees," I said.

I began to move my bad leg around. I drooped forward a little, but not enough for his swing. If I could brace my knees under me I meant to spring at him, to try to seize machete—revolver—anything—and fight till death. While I moved I kept my shoulders hunched, shortening my neck, giving no chance for the "clean cut" he wanted. I did not look up at him. I feared he would read my eye.

And then——

A harsh voice yelled. It was in the bush across the *caño*. Instantly flame spat from that bush.

Gunshots cracked my ears. Jaime staggered. Other men leaped and screamed. I jumped forward. Jaime fell over me. He stayed down.

The streaks of flame shot out again—again—again. The keen reports made a ragged rip that did not stop. The men of Jaime Pecoro jumped and yelled and fired and fell. The *caño* seemed bursting with noise.

I threw myself at Jaime, who lay still, a hole in his head. I wrenched out his revolver and emptied it at his men. And then there were no men. There was nothing but the blazing fires—sprawling bodies—another harsh yell—and sudden silence.

"*Quién es?*" I shouted, staring at that black bush.

A wild laugh screamed back at me. That same harsh voice tore across the water.

"Ha! ha! ha!" it yelled. "Dead men walking in the night! Dead men walking in the night! Poor murdered Indians with bows and arrows! Ah-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!"

XV

I LOOKED around, seeking any living man of Jaime or of Paco who might still be dangerous. I saw none. There were two or three who moved a little, but it was plain that they would not move long. Then I suddenly felt very old and tired; and I sank down beside dead Jaime, caring little for what might happen next.

The bushes across the *caño* rustled loudly. Bold splashes and sounds of swimming followed. Beside the canoes arose wet Indians. They came up the sloping shore, carrying *tigre* spears, and walked swiftly around among the bodies. Into every man's heart they slipped their spearheads, making sure that none should escape by pretending death. Then they gathered before me.

"*Como 'stâ ustê*, Loco?" asked one.

He was Frasco, one of my own Maquiritares. And another of them, I now saw, was Gil.

"I am not very well," I grumbled. "How come you here? I told you to stay with Yaracuma."

"El Blanco Negro told us to come," answered Gil. "Yaracuma too is here. We shall bring the fighters."

With no more words, they turned back to the *caño*. Across it they shoved the canoes. There was much bush-rustling, crossing and recrossing of boats, landing of men. Then the place was full of Maquiritares—and of Maquiritares alone. Black White, their leader, did not cross. He remained in the masking bush, seeing all, and himself unseen.

Among those Indians were at least a score with guns: long repeating rifles with box magazines, which looked very powerful. Across the chests of those men hung stout

shoulder-belts of woven fibre, studded with cartridges held in loops.

Each man wore two of those *bandoleras;* and each had also a hip-belt from which hung one of those straight narrow-bladed machetes called *casanareno*—a knife like a sword, made for stabbing as well as for slashing. The men themselves looked more hard and stern than Maquiritares usually do, and every one of them had the build of a fierce fighter.

These men walked about among the bodies as the ones with spears had done, but not for the same purpose. They took from every dead man his weapons, which they laid on the ground: rifles, revolvers, machetes, knives, cartridges, each kind in its own little pile, each pile close to the others.

Then they drew together and stood there, leaning on their own guns. One of them gave brief orders to the Uaychamo Indians. These picked up the bodies and, with torches taken from the fires, walked out along the path to the river. Soon they came back empty-handed.

In less than fifteen minutes from the time when Jaime stood up and drew his machete, he and all his gang had disappeared forever from the eyes of men. So had the treacherous mestizo who had led them there. So had the last of the Butcher's killers. They never would reach the Orinoco—the *caribes* would see to that. And only we men of the Ventuari knew what had become of them.

I looked up at Yaracuma, who stood quietly near me, armed with a stout bow and a full quiver of arrows. I glanced around at his men, carrying the weapons of their race, who now were soberly watching me. I let my eyes drift again over the gun-fighting force which I never had seen before, but which I was to know thereafter as the Thirty Gang of El Blanco Negro. I looked long at the silent bush beyond the water, where Black White himself was watching me. And in my heart I thanked God for such friends as these.

Then I gave thanks also to the man across the *caño.*

"*Gracias, Blanco,*" I called. "Perhaps some day I can repay this. You came at a good time. But why?"

"What?" answered the rough voice. "No thanks to me! Go thank your woman! Has she fed you the *yucut' 'sehi* yet? Ha-ha-ha!"

"My woman? You mean Nama?"

"Who else?" he jeered. "Have you other women too? That's bad business, Loco! I played that game before I died. I fooled with 'em all—and they got me in the end. Black! Black! Black as the soot of ——! Yah! God!"

"But what do you mean?" I persisted. "What had Nama to do with this?"

"She sent her brother to me, you fool! You saw him at the Tamara. She and my woman Juana got thick as thieves that day on the Iurebe. Juana told me how things were between you. When I was alive I'd do anything to accommodate the ladies—except marry 'em—ya-ha-ha! Now that I'm dead I still listen to 'em. So when my woman and yours both wanted you helped and there was more killing in sight to make it interesting——

"Well, here we are. I'm tired of talking. Shut up!"

I did shut up. I sat there marveling. So that young fellow with whom Nama had walked was her brother? And I owed my life to two women? And the wild man over there had done this because of them? It all seemed impossible. But I was feeling more and more tired and sick. I stopped thinking, and lay back on the ground, and let myself slip off into nowhere.

I stayed in that Land of Nowhere for some time. I do not remember anything more that night, or in several days and nights after that. Then I was lying in a hammock, and over me was a new leaf-roof, and in other hammocks near me lay Yaracuma and the thin Indian who had made the terrible black poison.

It was late in the day, and cloudy and cool. The chief and his medicine man were dozing, and I looked around to see where I was. The house was one of those quickly-made Maquiritare shelters of pole and platani, and two others stood near. The trees beyond were those of my own clearing.

The thin man opened one eye and looked at me. Then he opened both and arose. He studied me very sharply and grunted something to Yaracuma, who had joined him. Both looked well satisfied.

"You are better," said Yaracuma. "It is good."

"Fever?" I asked.

"It is so. The fever was bad. The leg was bad. But you soon will walk."

"Tell me what has been done," I requested.

"We have cleaned this place. We piled wood and burned that house of death and what was in it. We made these new houses. This man has made drinks for you. He has killed your fever. He is making your leg whole.

"El Blanco Negro is gone. He went when the next sun came. My men stayed one day. Some are here now. I sent the others home. There is much work for them. The women and children must be protected."

I nodded, and let my mind go back to the last night I remembered. Then I asked—

"The brother of Nama went to Black White?"

"It is so."

"Why?"

"To tell of the bad *blancos*."

"I know that. But did Nama ask that it be done?"

"She asked it. And I ordered it."

"Oh. It was by the command of Yaracuma?"

"I ordered it," he repeated. "I did it because you ought to know what was done here. El Blanco Negro too should know."

"Then it was your work and not hers?"

"She asked it. But it was done because it was sense."

"I see." But I did not quite see, either. I wondered that she had dared to tell the chief what he ought to do. Then a possible reason came to me.

"Is she of your blood?" I asked.

"She is the child of my sister."

"I see," I said again. That was a different matter.

There was a little silence. Yaracuma watched me, and after a time his eyes smiled.

"Nama soon will mate," he told me.

"Is it so?" Perhaps I looked relieved, for the *capitán* now smiled with mouth as well as eyes.

"It is so," he replied. "For a time she dreamed she might mate with Loco León. The young sometimes dream foolishly. But the dream has passed."

I said nothing. Soon he went on.

"Before Loco León came to us Nama looked kindly on one of my young men. Then came Ramón Rodriguez like a spirit of evil, and Loco León like a spirit of good. In her dark hour her heart turned to Loco León. The young man of her tribe was forgotten.

"In those days she had good counsel and bad. Her brother spoke to her the truth that it is bad for Maquiritare and *blanco* to mate; that it is worse for Maquiritare woman to think of a *blanco* who does not think of her; that Loco León wants no woman, and she must think no more of him. But on the Iurebe the woman Juana of Uaunana spoke other words. She told Nama that Loco León could be made black like El Blanco Negro; that then he would not go out among other men for shame; that no other woman would want him. So he should be hers alone.

"Nama thought upon these things. But in the end she saw that Loco León did not want her. She saw that even if made black he would not want her; he would hate her with a bitter hate. She does not want Loco León ever to hate her. So the good counsel of her brother became strong in her mind. Her eyes were opened again, and she saw once more the young man she had forgotten, and she found him good. So there will be no more dreaming, and all is as it should be."

"*Sí*," I agreed. "She has judged wisely and rightly. I shall be ever a friend to Nama, and to all the people of Yaracuma. But my heart does not turn to her, and where the heart does not turn the body should not be given—or taken."

"It is so," Yaracuma said solemnly. And we said no more.

In a little while I slept again.

Before many days I was again on my legs, and then Yaracuma and his medicine-man and the others of his tribe returned to their Caño Uaychamo, leaving me with Frasco and Gil. And one of the first things I did was to visit that hut where my two gourds of poison lay, and to have a deep hole dug and the gourds dropped into the bottom. Then Frasco and Gil filled the hole with stones, crushing the gourds to nothing.

I was through with fighting like a savage. If my own pride in being a white man had not been strong enough to make me abandon such weapons, the fact that Black White's men used guns would have shamed me. For when Indians fight like white men, a white who uses poisoned arrows is far lower than Indians—he is no better than a snake.

Now that I had seen those gun-men of Black White, I tried to learn, by questioning my own Maquiritares and others, how

they armed themselves. But, as always when asked about El Blanco Negro, they were dumb. It was not until later, when I met in the wild hills a little band of Macusi Indians from Guayana Inglesa and talked with them, that I was told of that mysterious trade in bullets and gold at the Cuyuni which caused the name "The Thirty Gang."

But I can tell you, *señores*, that that small force would be a terrible machine to fight against in its own hills; and any expedition that ever tries to force its way to the lair of Black White had best make its peace with God before it starts.

So now I know what the Thirty Gang is. But there is another thing which I do not know, and probably never shall learn. What was it, in the mind of that half-mad Black White, that drove him down the Ventuari again to help me fight my foes?

It was not because Yaracuma asked it. The wishes of an Indian *capitán* are nothing to him. I do not believe it was friendship to me; for I am the man who led him to his doom, though it was through no fault of mine that he met it. Neither can I feel that it was because I had fought for him in the past; he was always ungrateful.

Can it be that he told me truth on that last night in his mocking talk, and that he really acted for the sake of the girl who wanted me? Is it possible that memory tortures him now with the tears and heartaches and despair of girls whose trust he betrayed in other days, and that now he would atone for his wrongs by aiding an Indian maid to win happiness in love? Or was it only the blood-call of a fierce animal, driving him to a killing, that brought him down to my *caño?*

I do not know. It might be either, or both, or neither one. Such a mind as his is in the hands of God—or of the devil. It is one more of those puzzles which the great hills of the Land of Falling Waters hold, and for which there is no answer.

TRADE JARGON

by Clarence Hutchinson

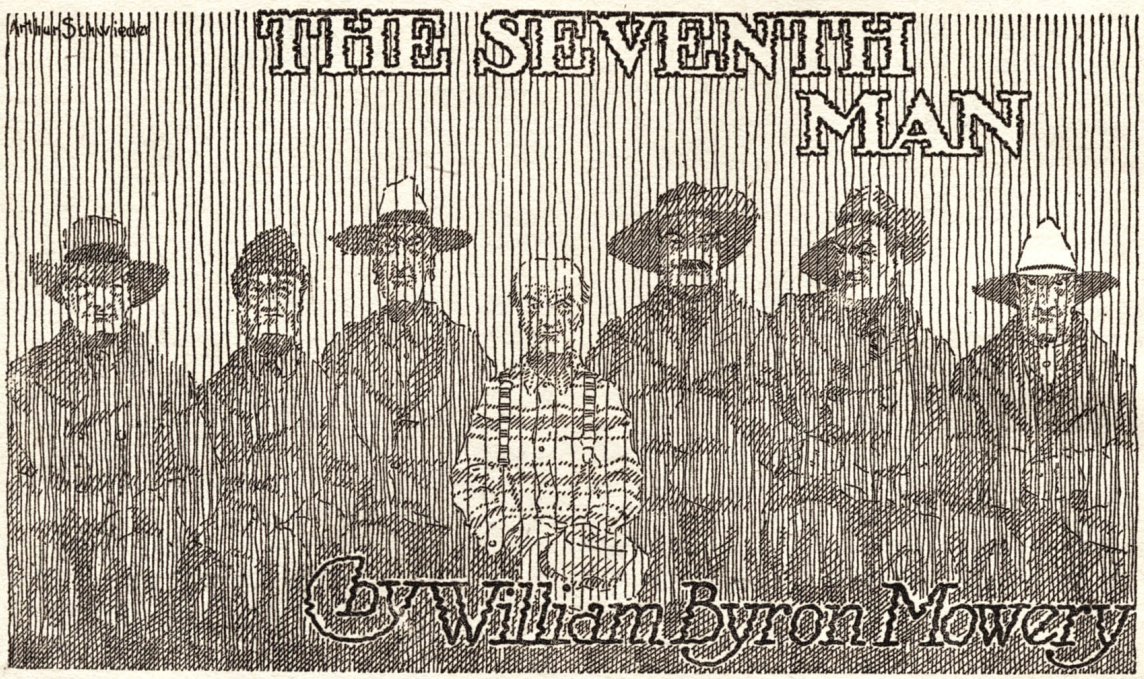
IT IS erroneous to think of the North American Indians as being a nomadic people. Each division held certain territory quite definitely marked by natural boundaries, and there were no haphazard wanderings outside this area unless the adventurers were looking for a tribal war. There are many American citizens who think of Indians as being all alike in language and customs. This is as great a fallacy as to imagine a continent parceled off among English, French, Russians, Germans, Swedes, and so on, and to expect the different peoples to speak with a common tongue.

However, despite the dissimilarity of languages, the continent was threaded with trade routes. Shells from the Pacific coast would be traded from tribe to tribe far east of the Mississippi River. Eastern merchandise found its way to the Far West. As two tribes might live side by side and even intermarry without either acquiring any proficiency in the language of the other, and inasmuch as the well-defined trade routes passed through the lands of many different divisions, the trade language or jargon naturally developed.

The Mobilian trade language, a corrupted Choctaw jargon and also known as the "Chickasaw trade language," was in use from the Florida and Louisiana tribes up the Mississippi valley as far as the mouth of the Ohio. The Comanche language was much employed by neighboring tribes for trade purposes, as the Comanches were great travelers and introduced their speech to many tribes.

In the Columbia River region and along the coast from California to Alaska the common trade medium of speech is called the "Chinook jargon." The whites first met with it in the fur-trade days in 1810, and added to its various Indian elements words from the European languages.

The universal trade language in trans-Mississippi tribes has been a silent one, the sign language. Once on a time this speech by gesticulation existed east of the Mississippi. The Kiowas, Crows and Cheyennes were best versed in this language of gestures. Less expert were tribes living east and west of the Central Plains area, such as the Omaha, Kansas and Osage and other Missouri tribes and the Utes and Shoshoni in the mountains.



Author of "Matched Silvers" and "A Cain of the Uplands."

NEWS of the murder of "Nascaupee" Neilson at his trapper's shack back in the Lake Nedluk country had set Fort Chimo in a ferment. What time the white-coats would be on the pans in the Ungava Bay or the cod would come in, or what men the "swilers" had picked up on their way down north to seal-ice, were topics forgotten.

Not that a death, or a violent death, was a rare thing on the Ungava coast or in the savage uplands. But Nascaupee Neilson was an old-timer, the chantey fiddler at the Fort during the Spring and Fall gatherings, the most jovial and likable mixture of French and Scotch on the Koksoak.

Only the most meager details had leaked out. Neilson had been stabbed to death a week before, presumably for his furs. He had shot a black fox late in January; the fox was gone. Two arrests had been made. Thad Macoun and Larry Scott were in the butter-tub for safe-keeping.

The assistant-factor, Bent Avery, had kept his own counsel about the murder. He had made a trip up the Koksoak to Neilson's cabin, investigated, and returned that morning.

In the open bastion of the Fort, under the warm Spring sun, fishermen who should have been working on their twines and sealers who should have been swatching white-coats out on the Bay ice, were gathered to hear what Bent Avery had to report. On the wicket of the store-room a notice had been posted that the assistant-factor would report at two o'clock. He was then in the butter-tub, questioning Macoun and Scott.

There was a sprinkling of Montaignais and Micmacs in the gathering, and an *umiak* load of Innuits had come in for trading; but the heavy majority of the sixty men in the bastion were livyere fishermen and trappers, who had known Nascaupee Neilson for years, and were there on grim business which they too kept strictly to themselves.

Promptly at two o'clock the heavy side door of the bastion opened, and Bent Avery stepped into the court-yard. He was a medium-tall man, slender, with high, bald forehead, tight lips, and steady gray eyes. Fort gossip had him a "bookish man" during his odd hours. The livyeres to whom he nodded doffed their dickey-hoods respectfully. Under his arm he carried a Mannlicher-Schoenauer repeating-rifle, and around his waist was a full cartridge-belt.

He laid the rifle on a heavy, block table near the door, leaned on his knuckles, and spoke to the men in a low even voice—free from the burr of the Labrador:

"I've been up to Neilson's cabin. I investigated the murder there. Also, I've questioned Macoun and Scott. I'm ready to report to you men.

"First, understand I am bossing this affair from beginning to end. I know what some of you have been saying and wanting to do. All your spruce-limb parties couldn't find out for sure who killed Nascaupee Neilson. I've taken the affair into *my* hands and I'll enforce order—and protect the murderer—with this, if necessary."

He tapped the magazine of his rifle.

There was a growl of surliness in the crowd. Avery noticed it; the lines about his mouth tightened, but he went on evenly:

"There were but two ways of finding out the murderer. The first was to find positive proof or evidence pointing straight at one man. The other was to eliminate all the men who *might* have committed the crime, and have just the murderer left. There was no positive clue in Neilson's cabin or about the place. Not one positive clue! So I had to suspect all the men whose cabins were within reach of Nascaupee Neilson's. Not counting Macoun and Scott, there were five trappers who could have done the stabbing. I'll ask these men to step forward.

"Match Guernsey."

A tall, raw-boned livyere elbowed his way out of the crowd. He made a sorry attempt at grinning, when he sat down on the end of the bench. His cheeks flushed beneath their bronze, and he breathed heavily.

"Rob McRae."

A second livyere, younger and dressed jauntily, stepped forward and sat beside Guernsey.

"Carcajou Sul Walters."

There was a movement in the center of the crowd. A small, frail-looking man of fifty appeared, crossed the open space with quick, rabbit-like steps, and sat beside McRae.

"Pierre Chouart."

A half-breed wood-loper on the fringe of the crowd started at the sound of his name, said something in angry French, and stepped nervously forward.

"And Burt Calloway."

A man of forty, heavy-built, stocky, with a livid knife-scar sprawled across his face, grunted and stumped up to the bench.

When Calloway was seated, Avery moistened his lips:

"I said there was not one positive clue in the cabin of Nascaupee Neilson. There was a clue, of a sort. It was left behind to cover up the crime, to throw the blame upon an innocent person. That is the sole clue I had to work with."

At a signal from the assistant-factor, a Fort guard opened the bastion door and led Scott and Macoun out. Still handcuffed, they sat down on the bench. There was an angry stir in the group of livyeres—a seething restlessness. Word had got out that Macoun was guilty beyond a doubt, and that Scott was implicated by his own confession.

"If I had thought," said Avery, noting the temper of the crowd, "that discovery of the murderer would make law-breakers and murderers out of sixty more men, I would not have turned a hand to find who killed Nascaupee Neilson."

"*Youse* know who he is!" a livyere at the back shouted. "Tell us, and *we* won't waste any time."

"Put that man out!" Avery commanded. No one stirred. "Put him out," Bent Avery repeated, "or this meeting stops right here!"

Three men escorted the hot-headed livyere to the gate and ejected him.

"The single clue in the shack was a small *kiliutok*."

The assistant-factor held up a thin, keen skinning knife.

"It belongs to Larry Scott. He is to tell us what he knows about the murder."

SCOTT got up from the bench and spoke to the crowd:

"I passed Nascaupee's shack on my fur path two mornin's without seein' any smoke. T' third mornin' I went in. He wuz layin' dead on t' floor, with a *kiliutok* beside 'im. That *kiliutok* I knowed better'n my own. I couldn't believe t' man who owned that knife 'ud kill Nascaupee, but there it wuz, with blood all over. Mine wuzn't different from three dozen others—just an ordinary store skinnin'-knife. I left it there an' took t' other *kiliutok* away, an' then reported."

Bent Avery nodded confirmation as Scott sat down. The man's words carried conviction even with the suspicious crowd. There was a hush of expectancy as Avery

held up a second, much larger, and highly carved knife.

"This is the weapon Scott found beside Neilson and which he took away with him. He turned it over to me. This knife—" he paused an impressive second—"belongs to Thad Macoun."

He turned to the liveyere on the near end of the bench.

"Do you admit this *kiliutok* is yours?"

Macoun nodded, too scared to speak. He was ashen-pale, and his hands trembled.

"Then I think we may exonerate Larry Scott from blame," Avery concluded. "To keep a friend from being charged with murder, he endangered himself."

At a sign from the assistant-factor, the Fort guard unlocked Scott's handcuffs. The trapper joined the group. One or two shook hands with him.

"Thad Macoun, stand up and tell what you know about the murder of Nascaupee Neilson."

"I know nothink!" Macoun burst out. "I wuz on my way back up t' river t' time it happened. I wuzn't nowhere within fifty miles of t' lake."

Avery nodded again.

"The trade books show that Macoun was at the Fort on the afternoon of the fifteenth. I distinctly remember Macoun's trading. Neilson was killed that night or sometime on the sixteenth. It is a hundred and sixty-seven miles up to Neilson's cabin by the river route, and he couldn't have gone through the deer bush with snow piled over the top of it. In other words he was two days fast *komatik* travel away. Macoun, as he says, *couldn't* have been within fifty miles of the shack at the time Neilson met death."

Macoun gulped as the Fort guard unlocked his handcuffs. He started up to shake hands with the assistant factor; but Avery motioned to him to join the crowd of livyeres. Not two or three, but half the group shook hands with him.

Avery waited till the livyeres were quiet again, and went on:

"Of the seven men who trapped close enough to Lake Nedluk, five are left. One of the men on this bench killed Nascoupee and left Macoun's knife behind to throw the blame upon Macoun. The murderer did not leave a single positive clue. He did his work neatly. If he had not left this knife behind, there would have been no tracing him. Macoun, how did this *kiliutok* get out of your hands?"

"A bunch of us from t' upper Koksoak came down to t' Fort on dogs t' last week in Febr'ary," Macoun answered. "We all started back t' twenty-eighth at midnight. I had t' *kiliutok* in t' storeroom at ten o'clock. When I wanted to cut a tangled trace as we buckled t' dogs in, t' knife wuz gone."

"That means the knife was taken, either accidentally or purposely, by some one here at that time. It must have been taken with an eye to the murder. The *kiliutok* was a peculiar one. Everybody knows it is Macoun's. Besides, the word had got out about Neilson's thousand dollar fox. The murderer took the knife that night, meaning it should cover up his crime later. There are no trade records of that visit to the Fort. Is any one ready to swear Macoun told the truth?"

A livyere held up his right hand.

"T' records'll show I turned in some marten on t' twenty-eighth an' took out some goods t'fust of March. I remember seein' Macoun, Pierre Chouart, Calloway, Sul Walters, Scott, an' Rob McRae here at t' time."

"You did not mention Match Guernsey," Avery prompted.

The tall, raw-boned liveyere on the end of the bench rose up.

"I come down with t' party, but I went out to t' coast to Big Island to see Dad Meadows 'bout workin' on his smack this cod season. I wuz with 'im t' twenty-eighth an' t' fust."

"Match Guernsey left t' evenin' of t' fust," Meadows, an old fisherman in the crowd, verified. "We worked on t' twines that whole day."

Avery nodded.

"Then Match Guernsey could not have taken the knife. He was seventy-five miles away."

Guernsey got up awkwardly and joined the other livyeres. He was still trembling from the ordeal of sitting on the bench. Young McRae tried to appear nonchalant, as he saw his turn was next. He rose up at a sign from Avery.

"Rob McRae was here the night the *kiliutok* was stolen, and he lives within twenty miles of Neilson's cabin, on that same lake," Avery continued. "I want to point out one thing: McRae is Macoun's

trap-line partner. He could hardly have had the knife in his hands for two weeks without Macoun seeing it. Besides, McRae was Macoun's best friend. When some of you this morning were starting to break into the butter-tub after Macoun, it was McRae who said he would shoot the first man that climbed the wall. If McRae had killed Neilson, he would have covered up by some other way than laying the blame upon Macoun."

"Friends don't go in this deal!" a livyere shouted. "That don't clear McRae."

"True enough," Avery agreed. "I wasn't through. Notice this. The man who killed Neilson plainly didn't know Macoun was at the post at the time of the murder, or he wouldn't have left Macoun's knife behind in the cabin. But McRae knew where Macoun was. If Rob McRae *had* a secret grudge against Macoun, there wouldn't have been any point to his leaving the knife in the cabin, when he knew Macoun could prove his innocence. And if McRae was still friends with Macoun, would he have put the knife by Neilson's side? Either way you take it, it lets McRae out. Besides, I believe McRae has a word to say for himself."

The young livyere wetted his lips.

"I wuzn't in t' party that come down t' Koksoak t' last week in Febr'ary. T' fust of Febr'ary I come down with 'Sul' Walters for flour an' carcajou p'ison. 'Jay-Bird' Willett had got his lungs nipped, so I took his place an' carried t' mail across to Hebron and back. I got in t' fust of March, just a couple hours after t' bunch had started back up t'river. Nobody saw me with t'other men. I went back up t' river with Match Guernsey, after he come back from Big Island."

"Besides all the other evidence tending to clear McRae," Avery summed up, "there is this last point to prove that he had no chance to steal the *kiliutok*. McRae is eliminated."

The young livyere jumped off the bench with alacrity and joined Macoun at the edge of the group. The three men on the bench moved apart. Carcajou Sul Walter's teeth chattered as Avery motioned to him to stand up. He was a little fellow, bald, thin, and wizened.

"It isn't thinkable that Carcajou would try to stab a man as big and strong as Nascaupee," Avery began. "Nascaupee was stabbed in the breast, face to face with the murderer. Carcajou would have tried some other way. In Neilson's cabin I found a sack of flour, half-used. Neilson bought no flour since November, so he had to borrow it. That sack was in a serial lot. I traced it to Sul Walters; he bought it the time he came down with Rob McRae. He loaned Neilson that sack. If he had wanted to kill Nascaupee, he would have put strychnine in the flour.

"Every last one of you seven have carcajou poison at your shacks, and every last one of you had a chance to put it in Neilson's flour. So Carcajou would have been taking no chances. Stabbing a bear of a man like Neilson would have been the last thing he would have tried. Besides—" Avery smiled for the first and last time—"we know Carcajou."

There was a murmur of approval when the little man padded across and was swallowed up in the crowd. Match Guernsey summed up opinion when he said—

"Nascaupee 'ud have said 'Boo-hoo' an' blowed real hard, an' blowed t' runt into t' lake."

The two men left on the bench were in a nervous rigor. The half-breed woodloper, Pierre Chouart, had thrown back his dickey-hood and was running his twisted fingers through his long, black hair. His lips moved; he talked to himself under his breath, after the habit of the man who lives alone in the deer bush.

The stocky livyere, Burt Calloway, sat at the far end of the bench. His face was ashen; the knife scar had become a red weal across his face. His eyes were upon the hushed crowd.

The livyeres had followed Avery's logic and evidence with gasps of surprize. They had hung upon his word, and approved each acquittal. But Avery knew the supreme test of his power over them was come.

HE PICKED up the Mannlicher-Schoenauer from the block, and threw it into the hollow of his arm. Coolly he ran his thumb and forefinger around his cartridge-belt.

Before eliminating the last man and leaving the murderer alone on the bench he eased the terrific strain with a few words:

"I want to point out," he rehearsed,

"how every last acquittal has centered about this *kiliutok;* how all lines of evidence run to it. It is possible to cover up a crime *too well.* The murderer, I repeat, left the *kiliutok* behind to throw the blame upon another man, Thad Macoun. That was his only slip. Because of that *kiliutok,* I have been able to eliminate to your satisfaction five of the seven men."

"*Laissez,*" Pierre Chouart groaned. "*Allons,* Bent Avery."

"I'm coming to it," the assistant-factor replied.

He held up the murder-*kiliutok* again.

"Pierre Chouart, give me your skinning-knife. You have it in your belt-sheath."

The wood-loper unbuckled the sheath and tossed it to Avery. The assistant-factor took the knife out of the sheath, put the two *kiliutoks* behind him, shuffled them, and laid them on the table.

"Larry Scott, you found Macoun's knife in the cabin and had it with you almost a week. You ought to know it. Come here and pick it out."

Scott stepped forward, picked up the knives, and studied them for a full minute. He shook his head.

"I can't. *They's identical.*"

Pierre Chouart swore luridly and crossed himself. Avery held up his hand for silence among the livyeres.

"Those two knives are identical. The blades are exactly alike, the handles are of walrus ivory, carved in Micmac fashion; there is not a single mark of difference that I can discover. Both are the handiwork of Pierre Chouart. Perhaps others of you are wearing different knives that Chouart carved. Macoun bought his knife from Chouart. How many others like these did you carve, Pierre Chouart?"

"But those two," the wood-loper spoke up. "They each took a month of evenings, Bent Avery."

"Thad Macoun, can *you* tell which *kiliutok* is yours?"

Macoun stepped forward, examined the knives with wrinkled brow, and held one up.

"This is mine. It's worn a bit at t' p'int."

Avery waited till Macoun was back with the other livyeres. He shifted his rifle, toying with the magazine.

"Those two knives are so alike that the owners can scarcely tell them apart, and the rest of us would say they are identical. Pierre Chouart made both of them, and could have made another. Furthermore, he wore his *kiliutok* to the Fort, in his belt-sheath, in plain view of us all. If he had stabbed Neilson with Macoun's *kiliutok*——"

Bent Avery never finished his sentence. Calloway, who had been sitting as if turned to stone, screamed, leaped to his feet, jumped upon the bench, and sprang for the top of the bastion wall. The crowd, as one man, bellowed, and surged forward.

Quick as Calloway was, Pierre Chouart was quicker. He had risen to his feet, following Bent Avery's every word and action, hypnotized. Calloway's action broke the spell. Lynx-like, the wood-loper leaped at the stocky trapper, caught him in mid-air as Calloway's hands were outstretched for the top of the wall; and they fell heavily to the ground, clawing and struggling like panthers.

Bent Avery vaulted lightly upon the table and threw his rifle to his shoulder. His voice was scarcely louder than it had been always.

"Right there stop!" he snapped. "—— you, Thad Macoun, I'll drop you the first one. Stop. Stay back! '

At the click of the Mannlicher-Schoenauer, Macoun stopped. He was in the lead. The others stopped; but Avery saw they were going to rush him and the two struggling men.

"Match Guernsey!" he cried. "You jump in and help Chouart. The rest of you—back. —— you!"

The gesture and the words were magic. The livyeres stopped as one of their own number jumped in and helped truss up Calloway.

"Get on back out of reach," Avery ordered again.

Nerveless and terrified, Calloway had broken when the slow moving finger had written his name on the wall. To Avery's ears came the babble of Calloway, cursing and snarling his confession. Bent Avery knew better than to let the livyeres hear.

When Chouart and Guernsey had disappeared through the bastion wall door, Bent Avery dropped his rifle butt upon his foot.

"I want to thank you for being so orderly and collected while I showed you who killed Nascaupee Neilson," he said dryly.

There was a trace of irony in his cool, even voice.

"Bill Adams Says—"

by Bill Adams

"BILL ADAMS says" doesn't look a bit good to me, old-timer. It looks as though the silly blighter thought a bit too much of his nonsensical self altogether.

I am one of the gang—one of the woolly sheep whose fleeces are sooty rather than snow-white. I haven't any desire at all to orate, to teach, to philosophize—all my desire is to be a human man with a man's red human heart and that love for his fellows, whoever they may be, that may yet, at some far far day, perhaps go far to the unravelment of the tangle in which we dwell. Life at the best is a hard matter to face, and an affair that calls for much of courage.

Courage alone won't win us through. One has got to have a large share of humility, and of inner consciousness that it is not one self that counts at all but that it is the whole race. I can not see that there is any great worth in those things of which men speak so cherishingly—fame and fortune, honor and such renowns as come to one from one's fellows. The fact is, I suppose, that there's a something greater calling than just this present battle of today—today being but a road through a forest and leading to a cliff top whence our vision shall be brighter.

"Bill Adams says"—what? Says, if you will, that he is very conscious that he is a small grain of dust wind-borne along the throbbing gale that echoes with the strife of mortal toward immortality.

No, please don't say that I say anything. I've nothing to say. I have a smile, not always easy to show though, and a hand for any brother who wants it to boost him along a step or so. Too many men have made of religion a lie; thus the word religion is come to be a hated word amongst those hard sons of earth who know earth's hard ways of open manliness, and, knowing them, scorn the easy religions of the folk who chant from the safety of the church steps. True religion is deep, I think, in the soul of each one of us. I haven't often met a man devoid of reverence. I've seen old drunken sailors, old rough port profligates, stand awed at the bright sight of the dawn upon a rosy tinted iceberg in the grim Antarctic—as though in the presence of utter beauty they bowed in the presence of ultimate Grandeur, sensing the quiet echo of the voice of our unknown Creator.

Bill Adams says nothing, old man, but, as God dwells in a place of merciful beauty, he thinks a deal, and would that he might think more clearly.

Life's a queer deal. I've seen some very terrible things indeed.

I've seen the dregs of it, and the heights also—bright heights.

How shall I say words, as though wisely, amongst my brothers? Wisdom is, all too often, a cloud of dust on a freak wind and passes without meaning or refreshment to any one along life's roadways.

A friendship, mingled with a humility, with the yearning for a courageous heart—heaven grant them to me, to us all!

But don't say "Bill Adams says"—for he is less than no one at all.

Two days ago I drove to Berkeley, now but eighty-eight miles or so from my home. I picked up an aged hobo on my way. He sat beside me, with his old boots upon his tawny blanket-bundle, his ancient pipe puffing smoke and his queer old puckered eyes looking straight ahead of us.

"You're a perfec' gentleman, sir," said he, to every remark I made, and added, "You're right, sir—you're right for sure!"

I took him right on to the end of my journey, and at the very gate of the great university opened the door and said—

"Well, old-timer, here's a fine place for the likes of you—a place as fine and fit as any other."

He got out, all frayed and battered. He slung his tawny blanket-roll over his old shoulders, and waved a friendly hand to me, the ancient pipe tight clutched in his crooked fingers.

"You're right, sir—you're right for sure," said he, and added, "You're a perfec' gentleman, sir."

I laughed and called to him—

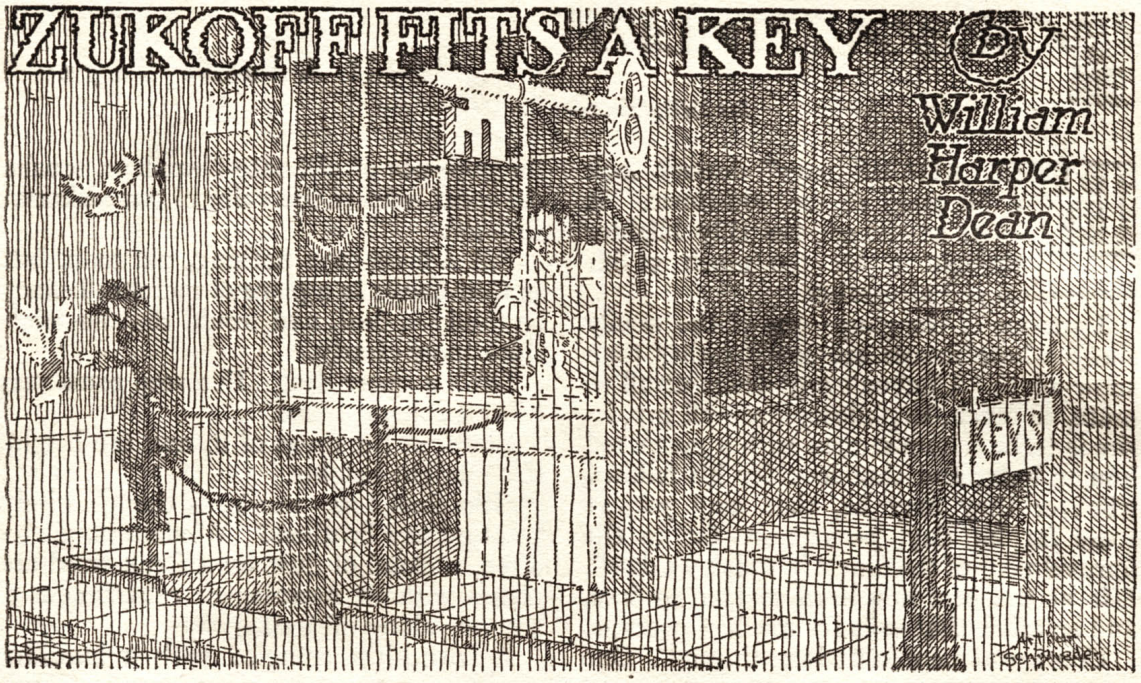
"Good luck to you, old-timer."

What does it matter what Bill Adams says? It's what folks *do* that counts to the Hanger of the stars and the Tuner of the sea-winds.

Is it not?

ZUKOFF FITS A KEY

By William Harper Dean



Author of "Breed of the Brush"

WHENEVER I think of that jury room, reeking of pipes and cigarets, with the big oil lamp, suspended from the ceiling, burning a sickly yellow hole in that fog of smoke, and red-eyed, heavy-lidded men breathing shrilly as they stared drunkenly at the one man who had held them in this hole since three o'clock yesterday afternoon, I find myself shaking my head as if that physical effort would throw out the picture. It's a nightmare.

It was stifling hot—choking, stupefying. The chairs were hard—too hard to sleep in, too hard to rest in; they were made to force verdicts. Yet Zukoff held out and kept us here. We had played cards, sung, swapped yarns. But that was before midnight. Now every man was suffering, one dared not speak to another. For two hours eleven men had sat staring red-eyed, contemptuously, with murder in their hearts for the little man who would not yield. It was maddening.

He sat on my right side at that bare, whittled and cigaret-charred table, stubbornly immobile of countenance, his elbow on the table and his broad, bulging forehead supported on the heel of his begrimed hand. His little blue eyes were full of a melancholy calmness as they looked through the gold-rimmed spectacles at some undecipherable initials carved on the table directly under his nose. His hair was thick and black and curly, yet he stooped like an old man. I found myself idly wondering if all locksmiths stooped and if there were anything peculiar to the trade which made for a maddening obstinacy to characterize its clan. For any child could have heard that testimony and known the man was as guilty as Cain. Yet Zukoff held out.

"Look here," I said to him. "You are a sensible man."

He turned those little blue eyes on me.

"Yes, I am very sensible. That is why I am going to sit right in this chair until the judge lets us go home and calls in another jury to hang the feller."

"But you don't know this judge," I pleaded. "He'll just keep us locked up forever until we *do!*"

"Then maybe I will spend the rest of my life sitting in this chair." He paused and sighed. "They are always mixing me up in such a business," he said bitterly. "Let me vote it to hang that feller and before I could get back to my shop my throat would be cut or maybe my wife was bombed."

"This isn't Russia," I said angrily. "Such things don't happen over here." And inwardly I cursed the man who had drawn this creature for jury service.

He looked at me accusingly.

"My friend, I tell you to ask my wife. She will tell you strange things happen by this country. You should ask me if worse things come off than in Russia."

"Oh, ——!" snarled the heavy-jowled foreman, who had overheard.

He dropped his head on his arms that were folded on the table and began to snore. The others were not listening. What with the foulness of that air, the fearful strain of that deadlock, they were too stupid to do more than doze fitfully between vindictive glares at the little bent obstructionist at my side.

Nicholas Zukoff lighted a pungent cigaret and once more turned to me. Now there was a deep wistfulness in his eyes.

"My friend," he said in guarded voice, "I will tell you something."

One by one the jurors had succumbed. The locksmith and I were the only ones awake. He looked around the room to reassure himself of that fact, and then he began to speak with a low earnestness, now and then pausing to receive my encouraging nods. One year ago on this very night it had happened. This is as I remember it.

"NO, I wouldn't take them a-tall!" Nicholas Zukoff rubbed his nose with the back of his metal-smudged hand, then turned to the flashily dressed young gentleman who dangled before his gaze a panel of dummy book-backs.

"Fifty cents down and fifty cents a week!" sniffed the locksmith. "And why should I pay you the price of two key jobs down for cash and hand you the price of two more every week for the rest of my life? I don't want books. I am too busy at my business."

The salesman gave a finicky touch to his yellow-and-blue tie.

"You hadn't ought to turn me down like this, Mr. Zukoff. It ain't every day my house puts out such a gilt-edge proposition. You couldn't buy these fifteen vol-yumes for twicet the price if you was to purchase them singly, one at a time, y'understand. Besides, Mr. Zukoff——"

"Poosh!" exploded the locksmith. "And why should I work to pay you these fifty cents for a lot of stuff what a feller makes up out of his head, Mr. Feinberg? Rather I would read the newspaper to know what is going on."

"Ain't you American?"

The locksmith took off his spectacles the better to squint at his persecutor.

"You ask me am I American? What do I look like, anyway?"

"Well, Mr. Zukoff, I thought maybe you might be Russ, y'understand."

"And what of it! Next door lives Wong Fu by his laundry, next to him is Popparlado's shoe shop what comes from Greece. And on the other side is Bissano's delicatessen what took part in the war in the Alps. And Epstein's pressing palace—suppose it I do come from Kief, Mr. Feinberg, which is exactly the condition, ain't I American?"

"No harm, Mr. Zukoff," the agent hurried to say. "I was just about to tell you, Mr. Zukoff, that like as you are American, these books is all about America and you ought to read them. You say you read the paper to find what is coming off. These 'Adventures By Life's Highway' is coming off every minute, only the papers ain't smart enough to know it.

"Now f'rinstence, Mr. Zukoff, here's two fellers what was young men together. When it comes time for them to leave home and paddle their own rowboat—because, y'understand, their fathers is sick and tired of supporting them all their life—they make it a promus between them to meet right on that corner across the street exactly ten years from date."

Mr. Feinberg paused. Mr. Zukoff squinted at the corner mentioned.

"So when that night comes," continued the pest, "one of 'em was a cop living in this very town. The other feller was a bum. But the cop went to that corner as per agreement and soon's he seen his friend he knew his friend was wanted by the police. And the bum didn't recognize the cop, y'understand."

"Poosh!" exclaimed the exasperated locksmith. "What a lot of words you make it!"

"So what does that cop do?" dramatically asked Mr. Feinberg. "Mr. Zukoff, what does he do?"

"I should worry my head about what he would do!"

"Hurt his good friend's feelings by pinching him like that?" cried Mr. Feinberg. "No! He walks away and pulls the patrol-box—that's what he does! And his friend never knew who done for him! Now the papers didn't have *that*, Mr. Zukoff. This

lib'ry is packed full of such beautiful adventures!"

The locksmith began to file industriously on the key.

"Stands by this corner—this very corner where that bum was pinched—a man," he said. "If you was to come in here, Mr. Feinberg, and say to me, 'Mr. Zukoff, what time is it?' and I was to look out and see that feller standing there, I'd wait a minute. Then if he threw some crums to the birds what comes every day by that corner, I'd say, 'Mr. Feinberg, it's exactly two-twenty sharp.' And you could betcher it ain't a second before or later, either!"

The salesman nodded.

"Yes, but as I was saying, Mr. Zukoff—"

"Hold on! Now if this feller what wrote it about your cop and bum was to see that feller throwing crums to birds every day at two-twenty sharp—like I watched him every day for six months—what would this writer feller do? He would write a whole book about this great adventure!

"But if your writer feller was to come here and ask *me*, 'Mr. Zukoff, what do *you* think about a feller standing there at two-twenty sharp every day and feeding birds?' I'd say he is just a nut. Which he is what he is and what I ain't. Otherwise, Mr. Feinberg, I might pay you that fifty cents down and let you take my name for a sucker!"

"But these adventures, Mr. Zu——!"

"Poosh! And suppose it when I found my wife sitting on my shop door over in Bleecker Street—before I moved it over here—she wasn't my wife then—crying like a peasant girl from the Volga country, which is the exact condition, because she was just landed and was lost from her relations, suppose this writer feller had seen that. I guess he'd write *two* books about *that*. Which is because he ain't practical. But for me, here was a good wife sitting right on my shop door, and so I took her. And I ain't never stopped work to hunt for her relations what she lost when she landed, Mr. Feinberg, because I don't need any more relations. That's because I'm practical, Mr. Feinberg, and wouldn't waste any more time on that adventure business."

The agent folded his dummy, walked out and slammed the door. Then Mr. Zukoff bent over his work and filed furiously.

"There's a loafer for you!" he addressed his wife, without turning 'round.

She was dimly visible in the rear of the shop, an eyeshade hiding the upper half of her face as she worked at a key in the light of a gas jet. "A Russ, too!" he added, in a tone of humiliation. His wife's only reply was a vigorous filing.

("Just to show you," said Nicholas Zukoff, when he had reached this point, "that a man never knows when he is sitting on a volcano.")

After a while a sunbeam touched his vise. Whereupon Mr. Zukoff looked up from his work.

"I betcher," he muttered, "it's almost two-twenty." He peered across the street at a man standing on the corner. "That's him!"

Mr. Zukoff watched the fellow closely, expectantly. Zukoff scowled; the man was crossing the street.

"He ain't thrown a crum!" gasped the locksmith. "He's coming to this shop!"

He heard his wife's filing cease abruptly and the tool clatter on the floor. "Some supper burns," she called, rushing through the rear of the shop.

The man had entered.

"Are you Nicholas Zukoff?" he asked.

The locksmith was too amazed to answer. Such a deep, reverberating voice to come from the interior of such a miserable little man. The fellow was tall, lean—so lean that Zukoff believed he was half-starved. The cheek bones seemed about to break through the chalk-white skin. The blue eyes were sunken, restless, penetrating; the nose as sharp as an eagle's beak. In the long, unkempt black hair some gray was showing.

"Yes," finally said Mr. Zukoff, "I am."

"You open locks when keys are lost?"

"Maybe," was the cautious answer. "When did you lost it?"

"I don't know. But I want you to open it tonight."

"If I got to go by night," said Zukoff, "it is two dollars."

"Good," said the sepulchral voice. "I'll come for you at nine o'clock."

"And besides," hastened the locksmith, "I don't open no locks a-tall what ain't got the right."

"Don't worry about that."

Zukoff nodded.

"Nobody can throw dirt in *my* eyes, Mr.——"

("And even then I was a blind man!" hissed the locksmith.)

"Nussbaum is my name."

"Nobody can throw dirt in *my* eyes, Mr. Nussbaum. And by the way, Mr. Nussbaum, you didn't throw any crums to them birds today, did you, Mr. Nussbaum?"

The look that the stranger gave Zukoff made the locksmith shrink back and pale.

"No harm, Mr. Nussbaum! Only, Mr. Nussbaum, when a man what works by this shop sees a feller throw crums to them birds every day at two-twenty sharp, Mr. Nussbaum, he had ought to get used to it. Which is the exact condition, Mr. Nussbaum."

"Every man has a right to throw crums to birds," was the sullen reply. He went to the door, then turned. "Remember, nine o'clock."

The locksmith stared after him.

THAT night as Zukoff sat down to supper with his wife, between mouthfuls he analyzed the events of the day.

"And just like I said to that adventure feller this morning," he expanded, "them writer fellers would make him throwing crums to them birds for a great reason, Irma. On the other hand, just like this nut says to me, Irma, this is a free country and every man has got it the right to throw anything he wants, unless it is bumbs or bricks."

Throughout this monolog his wife had stared at him fascinated. As yet she had not tasted food. When he ceased speaking she picked nervously with her fork at a boiled potato. She was much younger than Zukoff. Her figure was good, her eyes a deep blue. She would have been prettier but for her bobbed hair.

"All the same," she finally said with an accent which her husband had nearly lost, "I wish you didn't promise to go. Two dollars is two dollars, but what would be two dollars if you was stabbed?"

"Always it is the same!" cried Zukoff. "I betcher all your relations is dead long ago, scared to death by things that never come off. Always it is the same by you—watching every man what comes in this shop to bring me business like he was paying calls to cutthroats!"

"Terrible things happen by this country!" Irma answered in awed whisper.

"Afraid to go even to Bissano's delicatessen unless you are grabbing my arm——"

"All the time womens is stole!"

"Always working in the back of the shop by the gas while I work in the front where the light comes free."

"The sun it hurts my eyes."

"It is always the same by the Volga people! And your hair," he wailed. "It was the pride of my life when I married you. Then you cut it off! If you ain't miserable yourself you try to make me miserable. Look at you right now—pale like I was a ghost talking to you out of my grave! I am a practical man. I don't have imaginations and I hope I never get none!"

There the meal ended. His wife had not tasted food.

Promptly at nine, cadaverous Nussbaum entered the shop as Zukoff sat reading the evening paper under the flickering gaslight. Irma had bolted herself in behind their bed-room door.

"Well," said Zukoff, "you come on time, don't you, Mr. Nussbaum?"

"If you are ready," was the nervous answer, "let us go."

Zukoff put on his hat and picked up the heavy satchel bulging with keys and files. He followed Nussbaum through the shop to the curb. There stood a taxicab, its engine running. Before Mr. Zukoff could question, Nussbaum gave him a shove into the cab, slammed the door and they were off bouncing and banging over the cobbles. For half an hour they traveled. Zukoff was lost. Then the taxi stopped and Nussbaum dragged the locksmith to the street.

"Come along!" he whispered, seizing Zukoff's arm.

He conducted the now thoroughly frightened man through a hedge, across a tremendous lawn, around to the rear of a tremendous house. Nussbaum knocked guardedly on a door. Immediately it opened and in the doorway Zukoff beheld the silhouette of a powerful man of flowing black beard.

"You come on time, Nussbaum. Whom do you bring?"

Nussbaum shoved the locksmith inside.

"A friend to help; Zukoff, this is Mr. Leo Pinsk, the caretaker."

Zukoff stared about him at the magnificence of the furnishings.

Without a word, Pinsk led the way into utter darkness. The locksmith clutched Nussbaum's sleeve as they passed through

great spaces where footfalls were silenced by the lush, deep pile of the rugs which covered the floors. They mounted a great stairs, then Zukoff felt himself in a new room, delicately scented with a rare perfume. A click and lights flooded the scene. Zukoff gasped in wonder.

The room was tremendous. Priceless rugs covered the floor, the walls were ivory-paneled to the height of his shoulders, then tapestried to the ceiling. The furnishings were in ivory and gold; the ivory-and-gold canopied bed struck him speechless with awe.

"Now," said the giant Pinsk, crossing to a wall-panel, "here is the lock."

But Nicholas Zukoff stood still.

"I ain't going to open it," he cried. "Today I told you, Nussbaum, I wouldn't open no locks that——"

"We have every right," said Nussbaum.

"How do I know it? How do I know who you are—or this feller Pinsk? He speaks a fine Russ, and that is all I do know!"

"I am the caretaker," said Pinsk, smiling. "This is the home of the Countess Saminoff. She is away with the count for the Summer. The countess has some letters behind this panel which our friend Nussbaum has every right to examine."

"Then," exclaimed Zukoff, "you got to wait till this countess comes back from her vacation and sends for me!"

"You will save yourself much trouble," said the big Russian.

Zukoff gulped and turned sickly pale. He was looking down the muzzle of a tremendous automatic leveled in Pinsk's hand.

"Please open this lock."

The locksmith looked appealingly to Nussbaum. The latter nodded.

"He means what he says, Zukoff."

Limply Zukoff knelt beside his satchel, with shaking hands drew out a great chain of keys.

"Right here!" Pinsk indicated with the blue muzzle. "Here's the lock."

Zukoff saw the tiny hole. He tried a key; it would not fit. He tried another; it fitted but would not turn. He tried a dozen, while the chain of keys jingled musically in his shaking hands. When the lock turned with a refined little click, he stepped back, aghast at what he had done.

Pinsk swung open the panel, reached in and drew out a packet of letters bound with lavender ribbon. Nussbaum, breathing shrilly, reached out for them. The caretaker held them behind his back and shook his head.

"One moment," he said quietly.

He retreated several paces, laid the automatic on the dressing-table and whipped a letter from the packet. He opened it, glanced hurriedly at its contents.

"I am afraid there has been a mistake," he said apologetically, raising his eyes from the letter to Nussbaum's livid features. "The handwriting does resemble your own, as I told you, Nussbaum. But these letters are from one Anton Harowitz. So we have had all our trouble for nothing."

Nussbaum's eyes seemed to sink deeper in his head. He had turned white again.

"They are mine," he said in a voice like a hollow groan.

"I tell you," frowned Pinsk, "they are from one Harowitz!"

"My name *is* Harowitz."

"What do you say?" exclaimed Pinsk. "Harowitz? Then why have you called yourself Nussbaum?"

The cadaverous man's lips were blue. Great veins swelled in his forehead.

"Pinsk!" It was as if he spoke into an empty barrel. "It had to be. In America I am Nussbaum. In Russia, Harowitz. To the countess I am Harowitz. Now will you give me the letters?"

"What child's tale is this?" growled the mastiff Pinsk; "without beginning or end! I do not deal with liars."

"I am no liar!" wildly cried the man. "Those letters will prove that the countess tricked me—that she is my Sonia——"

"It is I who have been tricked," said Pinsk accusingly. "Did you apply for work in this house that you might spy on her?"

"I wanted to see her!" Nussbaum was wringing his hands. "That is all! I had heard this count had married in America—heard how beautiful she was!—like my Sonia!" Perspiration was gathering on his forehead.

Pinsk put the letters into his coat pocket.

"That will be enough," he said angrily. "As one countryman for another I offered to let you see these letters. But this has gone too far. I do not deal with blackmailers."

"Pinsk," moaned Nussbaum, beating his breast with his fists, "I am no blackmailer! I swear to you I met this peasant girl in Moscow!"

"And you think *she* could marry a count?"

"A king!" cried the man. "She is beautiful enough! I saw her only once—ah, the glory of her being! I desired her more than life! And, fool that I was, I told her my real name—Harowitz. Then I was ordered here to sow the seeds of liberty."

He was speaking in Russian. Zukoff stood rooted to the Persian rug, his eyes starting from his head. A practical, unimaginative locksmith who found himself plunged into the very vortex of terrible mystery.

"I came here," Nussbaum was saying passionately. "The desire for her was consuming me—I must have her! I wrote to her. We exchanged many letters—those!" He pointed a bony finger at Pinsk. "I begged her to come here and marry me. I sent her the money. A friend forged her passport. She wrote she would come!"

The cadaverous man paused, brushed the perspiration from his eyes.

"She was coming to me—and how could I meet her? They were hunting me here as Harowitz. She would call out that name when she saw me at the gate. And that would be the end!

"Then I wrote to her, warning her never to breathe that name. I would not meet her ship. But every day for two months after she sailed I would stand on a certain corner at a certain time and cast crums to the birds. In that way she could find me and it would be safe."

Mr. Zukoff's knees buckled. He went down on them, white as death. Neither man glanced at him.

"And so I waited for my Sonia. Every day I have waited on that corner—for six months! Hoping to feel her touch on my arm, hear her voice——"

He ground his teeth savagely, swallowed audibly.

"She never came—this dog of a count stole her. I knew it all when you told me about those letters. I want them to prove it. And when I have done that," he concluded in so calm a tone that Zukoff's teeth began to chatter. "I shall cut out both their hearts."

Pinsk's hand swept the automatic from the dressing-table. Now it was Nussbaum who glared into its muzzle.

"Harowitz," said the big Russian, "there is a gentleman under the bed who will make an excellent translation of your confession into English."

With a hollow cry the man wheeled. From under that gorgeous canopied bed a coatless, collarless man was crawling.

"A reg'lar A-number-One confession," he wheezed, getting up and mopping his face with a handkerchief. "Wasn't made under no compulsion, neither, was it, Mr. Zukoff?"

The locksmith could utter no sound. The room seemed to tilt terrifyingly before the eyes of the miserable man who stared agape at the red, perspiring countenance of the loquacious Mr. Feinberg. That book agent!

It was a madman's bellow that sounded in the trapped man's throat. Straight at Pinsk he came lunging with a hand clutching a slender blade. Mr. Zukoff closed his eyes while icy streamlets coursed down his back. He was conscious of a terrible scuffling sound. When he opened his eyes again, Nussbaum lay on his back, his wrists bound together in the cold clutch of handcuffs. And Feinberg was completing the mopping of his face.

"Speaking of them adventures along life's highway," he was addressing the locksmith, "Mr. Zukoff, I assure you this ain't nothin' to what you'll find in them vol-yumes."

The big Russian stood looking down at the captive. It was an impersonal look he gave the man, as if he was thinking of other things. Suddenly he shifted his eyes to Zukoff and smiled.

"It may interest you to know," he said, "that Mr. Feinberg planned this. It was his idea to have me get this man to apply in writing for a position here. That gave me an excuse to talk about letters. We had suspected he was Harowitz and we had wind of the disappearance of some girl who was to have married him. Harowitz walked straight into the trap. And also," he added, "you have done nothing wrong tonight. That was my own wife's cabinet you opened. I am the Count Saminoff, whenever I can assisting this government to rid itself of such creatures as Harowitz. And Mr. Feinberg is—well, it is getting late."

He drew a bank-note from his pocket and thrust it into the locksmith's hand.

Zukoff rose weakly to his feet, staggered into the hallway which suddenly blazed with light.

IT WAS very late indeed when Nicholas Zukoff found his shop and wabbled through it to the bedroom. When Irma unbolted the door and saw his face she gave a little cry, then stood trembling in her nightdress.

"What did he do?" she finally managed to articulate.

Mr. Zukoff collapsed in a chair. Irma found her strength, rushed for the kümmel. Zukoff drained the glass. A little color crept back into his cheeks. Then words negotiated the passage of his throat. He told the tragic tale.

When it was concluded, he looked up from the floor to his wife, standing there before him.

"And he will be locked behind a prison?" she gasped, while her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. "Locked up—forever?"

"Exported!" Zukoff shouted it. "Back to Moscow!"

Wildly she was clapping her hands. Her eyes had become sparkling sapphires.

"My Nicholas!" she cried.

"Irma!" shouted Zukoff, sitting bolt upright. "What is happening!"

She was down on her knees, clasping him in smothering embrace.

"Curse all the days I have worked in the shadows of the shop!" she was sobbing hysterically. "Now I shall work in the front by your side! And you shall see my hair grow long again! Always afraid he would find me and kill me for marrying you when I could not find him that day——"

"Irma!"

"Bless the day I got lost on Bleecker Street! Harowitz will never find me now! A countess!" she laughed wildly. "Him to think your Sonia could win a count!"

IT WAS day when Zukoff concluded, wiping the perspiration from his forehead. The jurors still slept like drunkards, the lamp above still burned in that foul air. But the chill of dawn had crept into the room. And Zukoff shivered.

"And so," he whispered, "I shall sit in this chair until I die before I say to hang that man. Who is he? I do not know. A man of a thousand friends who will strike me down in the dark—maybe my own brother. Maybe yours! Who knows anything? I who did not know my own wife, I who laughed at a book-agent only to find him again in a red nightmare! I laugh at nothing, doubt nothing. I shall sit in this chair until I die!"

"JOHN BULL" ON BEARS

by Faunce Rochester

ONE of the guides for the Red River expedition of 1852, called "John Bull," was a famous bear-hunter and regaled the officers with many stories. One of the officers in his journal says that the guide's statements were repeated to him by several Indians, in whose veracity he had much confidence. He adds, "I have no doubt they are strictly true."

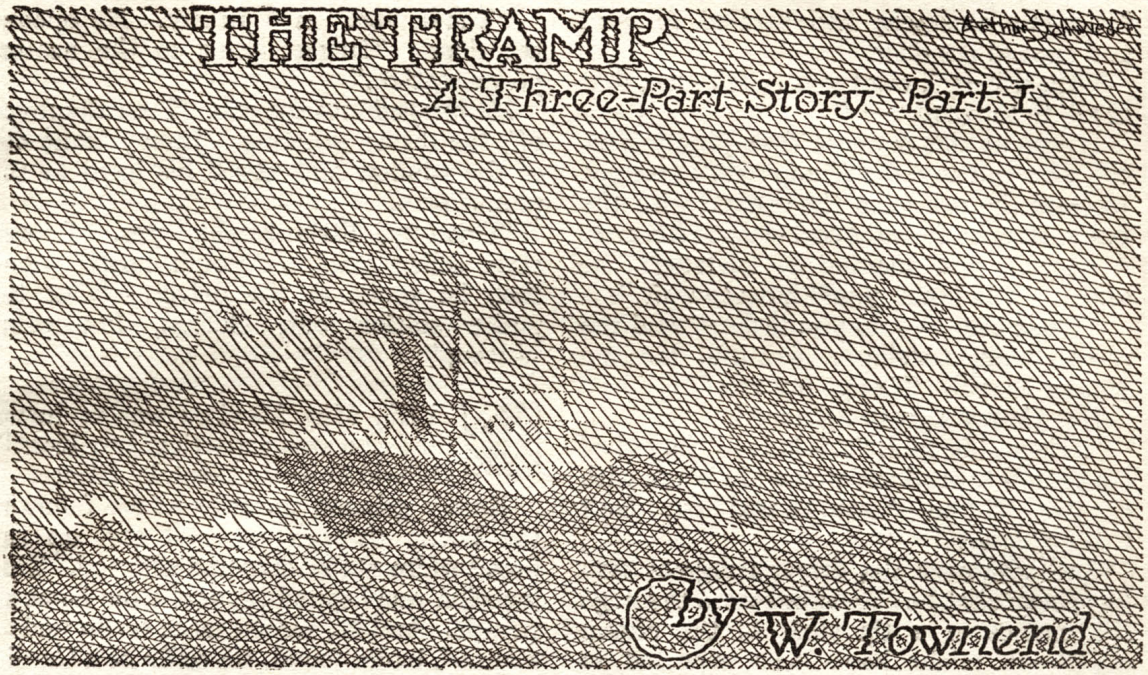
The guide said the black bear had greater sagacity than almost any other quadruped. Before making a bed the bear always goes several hundred yards with the wind, the officers were told, "at a distance from his track." Any enemy approaching along his track must come with the wind and be detected by the animal's keen nose.

When a black bear hides in a cave in earth or rocks and a hunter tries to smoke him out the bear will not rush forth to be shot, but, masked from view by the smoke, will come as far as the smoldering fire, put it out with his forepaws and then return to his hiding-place.

John, it must be admitted, rather weakened his case when he described the behavior of the bear on being pursued by a hunter into a cave.

The hunter in addition to his rifle of course carried a torch. Instead of being a very dangerous adventure for the hunter, John insisted the bear, on beholding the light, would sit upright and hold his paws over his face and eyes and remain motionless so long as the torch burned. Without risk the hunter approached close and slaughtered the foolish fellow.

Why a hunter should bother to "smoke" out the bear when he can so conveniently crawl into the hole and kill him without risk John is not recorded as saying.



Author of "The Trimmer," "Angel," etc.

I

THOUGH Jimmy Kerrill, the second mate of the *Medea*, had a tolerably high opinion of his own merits and, as a direct result of his experiences of tramp steamers, their owners and crews and water-front populations in general, a deep and abiding contempt for humanity in the mass, nevertheless a sense of humor, clean ideals, the ability to hit quick and often and to keep on hitting, and a sturdy independence of character, had won for him the respect and liking of his shipmates.

He was Irish, with all an Irishman's virtues and a few of his failings. He was lacking in tact. He spoke his mind freely. He made enemies as easily as he made friends. He hated hypocrisy and bullying and shams and graft and fat, puffy unwholesome men who had more money than they honestly deserved or could decently spend.

He was sorry for girls who imagined themselves in love with sailors or trusted them too far; he was sorry for the wives of most of the men he knew; he was sorry, above all, for widows with babies and the fear of poverty and the work-house gnawing at their hearts.

And so nothing was more natural than that Jimmy Kerrill, being Irish, should have picked a quarrel with the plump, well dressed man with the sleepy eyes and the soft mouth and the little fair mustache whom he saw one wet afternoon coming out of an office building in Cardiff, the day before the *Medea* was to sail.

There was an air of smug satisfaction and conceit in the plump man's manner and way of walking that aroused Jimmy's disgust. He followed him down the crowded street, wondering what the plump man had done that had given him such an exaggerated idea of his own importance. For no man on earth could strut as this plump man strutted without feeling in his heart what a remarkably fine fellow he really was.

A little woman in black, carrying in her arms a baby who whimpered and having another child, a small girl, clinging to her skirt, stood at the curb, glancing from left to right as if frightened. Jimmy halted, undecided whether he should go to her and ask if he might help her across the street. Then, before he could make up his mind, the little woman in black shifted her baby into the crook of her right arm and with her left waved to a cab.

The driver nodded and, a gap in the traffic giving him his opportunity, turned and guided his cab to where the woman was waiting.

Before he had reached her, however, before he could stop, the plump man with the

little fair mustache had bustled forward and opened the door.

"Ah, driver, I want you to take me, first of all, to the bank——"

It was at this moment that Jimmy Kerrill, who had seen the plump man's attempt to steal the cab from the woman with the baby, stepped forward and clasped his arm.

"Aren't you making a mistake?" he asked. "Old horse, you'll have to wait."

"What the —— do you mean?" said the plump man, turning a wrathful face on Jimmy Kerrill. "Let go my arm!"

But Jimmy's grasp tightened.

"Friend," he said, "this lady—" he jerked his thumb toward the woman in black with the two children—"saw the taxi first. Isn't that so, driver?"

And whatever the driver's regrets may have been that he should be forced to forego the chance of a tip such as the plump gentleman might have been expected to give, for the sake of driving a shabby little woman with a couple of kids to some outlying suburb, nevertheless the driver acknowledged that the brown-faced, yellow-haired young man with the grim look in his blue eyes was correct. The lady had seen him fust! He was goin' to drive 'er or no one!

"See!" said Jimmy. "I was right, old horse, wasn't I?"

He released the plump man's arm and helped the little woman into the taxi and lifted the little girl in after her.

"There! And where do you want to go to?"

As soon as the taxi moved slowly off Jimmy turned to the plump man who was scowling at him, with his heavy lidded eyes half-shut and his little fair mustache bristling.

"Next time," said Jimmy, "you try and bilk a little woman out of a cab, take care that the man who sees you isn't worse tempered than I am. Or else, maybe, mister, you'll be hit in one of the soft parts of your body, and you'll die quick, because, mister, you're flabby and you've probably got valvular disease of the heart or bone spavin or something just as fatal! Get me! And if you look at me like that, I'll slap you!"

The plump man, his face a dull red, beckoned to another cab.

Just as before the cab drew up at the curb.

"Thank you," said Jimmy. He opened the door. "Driver, drive to the nearest police station."

He jumped into the cab. The cab moved off, the driver grinning. Jimmy leant out of the window and kissed his hand to the plump man.

"Good-by, little bright eyes. Loosen your collar quick or you'll bust!" And then he spoke to the driver. "Cut the police station out, George, I'm going visiting."

YES, Miss Mavison was at home, and she was expecting Mr. Kerrill. Would he come this way, please!

Jimmy grinned uneasily as he followed the butler through the hall and up the broad white stairs carpeted with red. This mansion was beyond all doubt the home of wealth. And he, second mate on an undermanned, badly found, tin coffin of a Cardiff tramp, was an invited guest. And tomorrow, tomorrow he would be at sea.

The butler, whose expression was that of a man to whom life has no secrets, paused and threw open the door with a gesture.

"Mr. Kerrill!" he said in a deep voice.

Jimmy found himself in a lofty drawing-room walking across a polished hardwood floor toward the girl. He had met her once, only, yet even had he been fated never to meet her again, he could never have forgotten her. She was a tall girl with fair hair a shade darker than his own, and blue eyes that looked at one steadily without flinching, and a complexion tanned from an outdoor life, and a smile that would have set any man, much more nervous than Jimmy Kerrill, at his ease directly he saw her.

And although she wore a cream shirt with a soft collar and black silk tie, and a skirt of some fawn tweed, and tan silk stockings and tan shoes, nevertheless she gave Jimmy the impression at a glance, an impression that persisted throughout his visit, that never, not even in the moving pictures, never before in all his life, had he seen any girl so splendidly and perfectly dressed as Miss Mavison.

What was more, Jimmy decided after less than five minutes' conversation, there was something about this tall girl with the fair hair—he reminded himself, too, that after all she was only a girl—there was something about her that told him that she

was the kind of girl who would never go back on a pal, or reveal a secret, or break a promise, or tell a lie, or expect a man to make love to her, or pay her compliments, or rubbish like that.

She motioned Jimmy to sit by her side on the big couch near one of the tall windows; tea would be ready in one minute; she asked him had he had much difficulty in reaching the house; and it was this that made Jimmy tell her, with a certain amount of humor, the story of a plump man who had tried to steal the taxi from the woman with the two children.

When he had finished the girl looked at him with a little furrow between her straight eyebrows and said—

"Mr. Kerrill, you're like one of those knights we used to read of in the story books, going around the country, rescuing damsels in distress and killing dragons and giants, aren't you?"

"Lord, no!" said the second mate of the *Medea*, much abashed.

The girl laughed.

"You came in the nick of time to save me, anyway. The shopkeeper said I was trying to cheat him. That was the awful part of it, of course!"

"Wish I'd known," said Jimmy.

"What would you have done?"

"Oh, I dunno!" said Jimmy. "Made him apologize; talked to him! That's all!"

The door opened.

"Mr. Romer," said the stout butler.

A thick-set young man with a round red face and a beaming smile, dressed in tweeds, bustled into the room.

"By Jove! Eileen, old girl—how are you!"

Then he saw Jimmy standing by the girl's side and he stopped.

"Hullo!" he said in a lame way. "Hullo!"

He came forward rather more slowly, looking as if all his good nature had departed.

"Archie," said the girl, holding out her hand, "I thought you'd be here half an hour ago!"

She spoke as if she were pleading with him and Jimmy wondered what exactly was the relationship between them.

"Couldn't get away from the office," he said.

The girl turned to Jimmy.

"Mr. Kerrill, I want to introduce Mr. Romer. Archie, this is a great friend of mine, Mr. Kerrill, who saved me from another disaster yesterday."

Mr. Romer, the big, red-faced man, bowed.

Jimmy disliked him at sight.

"Hah! So Mr. Kerrill saved you from disaster, Eileen, did he? Lucky Mr. Kerrill! And the disaster, what was it?"

"I'd lost my precious purse and was having rather a bad time with a very rude shopkeeper when Mr. Kerrill arrived!"

Mr. Romer, not a very amiable young man, apparently, frowned.

"Ah! And Mr. Kerrill, I presume, called to enquire how you were after your ordeal, eh! Whether you were up and about and taking a little nourishment, and so on!"

The girl's cheeks were flushed.

"Not exactly, Archie. It was I who asked Mr. Kerrill to come and see me." Then she laughed rather nervously. "Hadn't we better all sit down."

She dropped on to the couch and once more she motioned Jimmy to sit by her side.

Mr. Romer seated himself in a straight-backed chair, scowled at the round brass tea-tray with the spirit lamp burning under the kettle and turned to Jimmy.

"I don't—ah!—think I've had the pleasure of meeting you before, Mr. Kerrill, have I?"

"No," said Jimmy guardedly.

"Live in Cardiff?"

"Not exactly," said Jimmy. "You see, I'm abroad most of the time. I'm a sailor."

"Ah!" Mr. Romer's expression became alert. "Navy?"

"Merchant Service. Second mate!" And then he added, almost defiantly, "Tramp steamer."

Mr. Romer shot a quick side glance at the girl. "Ah, indeed! And so Miss Mavison invited you here, did she?" Jimmy noticed that he smiled with his lips only and not with his eyes. "You're fortunate!" he said dryly.

"I am," said Jimmy. And not even on board the *Medea* had he met a ruder and more objectionable man than this Mr. Romer. "Most fortunate!"

"Archie!" said the girl. "What makes you say things like that? They're not clever, you know!"

"I never supposed they were," said Mr. Romer, chuckling. "Mr. Kerrill is fortunate, that's all I mean."

But Jimmy knew better. He knew that

Mr. Romer was sneering at him because he was only a miserable sailor, a second mate of a tramp steamer, and, on that account, fortunate to be permitted to set foot in a respectable house, fortunate to be allowed to know a girl like Eileen Mavison, fortunate to be able to meet Mr. Romer on equal terms.

Apparently the girl knew better, too. For a few moments she said nothing but sat and looked at Mr. Romer from under her long lashes, as if she were studying him carefully and trying to decide something of much importance. And at last she opened her eyes wide and leant forward.

"Archie," she said, "perhaps Mr. Kerrill is more fortunate than you are!"

To Jimmy's amazement, Romer jumped to his feet, his red face almost purple.

"It seems to me, Eileen, the sooner I go the better. Thank you for a most entertaining visit. I am not—ah—likely to accept one of your kind invitations again, in a hurry."

"No," said Eileen Mavison, filling the tea-pot with boiling water from the kettle. "No, Archie, and perhaps you're not likely to have the opportunity."

The big young man bowed with exaggerated politeness first to the girl and then to Jimmy.

"Thank you again, Eileen, you anticipate my wishes, as usual. Perhaps, then, I am to consider our engagement at an end! Mr. Kerrill, some day I should like to have the pleasure of meeting you somewhere else!"

Jimmy was also on his feet.

"I wonder whether you would or not, Mr. Romer," he said. "I'm not so sure." He felt, all of a sudden, furiously angry.

MR. ROMER walked slowly out of the room. The girl turned to Jimmy with flaming cheeks.

"Mr. Kerrill, I apologize."

"It's not you who ought to apologize, Miss Mavison," said Jimmy, "but me! Hadn't I better go after him and tell him I'm going and you want him back?"

"No," said the girl. "I wouldn't dream of it. He was abominably rude to you. For no reason. I've warned him before. Often. He thinks he can do what he likes. He can't. He didn't mean that about our engagement being at an end, of course. He couldn't have."

"Then—why, I'm very glad," said Jimmy.

"But," said the girl, "though he didn't mean it, perhaps I do!" She paused and sat, staring at Jimmy, with her teeth pressed into her lower lips and her forehead puckered. "Though why or how I should ever have let him imagine we were engaged I can't understand!"

It seemed to Jimmy that she was merely speaking her thoughts aloud. He grew more and more uncomfortable.

All at once she flashed a smile at him.

"Mr. Kerrill," she said, "do sit down again. Please!"

"And—you don't think I'm to blame, Miss Mavison, for Mr. Romer's going!"

"Certainly not." She gave him a cup of tea. "And now you must tell me about the sea. I never knew that you were a sailor, of course. I like sailors always."

"I don't," said Jimmy.

The girl looked puzzled.

"I don't understand."

"No," said Jimmy, "perhaps you don't, Miss Mavison. You don't know 'em! I do. I'm one of 'em."

"I always thought the sea did so much for a man!"

Jimmy shook his head.

"Physically, perhaps," he said; "morally, no; mentally, no! Whatever bad there is in a man the sea will find it."

"What did you mean by 'mentally?' " the girl asked.

"Only this," said Jimmy, "that the sea's a wretched career for a man of any—well, intelligence! I don't know whether you'd consider I had intelligence or not, Miss Mavison, but what prospects have I got? With luck, by the time I'm forty or forty-five, I'll be in command of some miserable little tramp steamer, liable to be thrown on the beach at a moment's notice, or without, if I don't do as I'm told, with the owners and the Board of Trade and the men's Unions and a half a dozen other gangs out to down me! There's no chance for a man to do anything big at sea; intelligence doesn't count; nor does industry, nor honesty, either!"

The girl watched him closely. The young man was original, at least, and his talk amused her and touched her, for she guessed that deep down, hidden away somewhere, there was a lot of good in him, although where or in what respect it was difficult to judge on so short an acquaintance.

"Perhaps I'm ignorant," she said, after a time. "Am I?" She raised her eyebrows and smiled when the young man gave a perplexed little nod of assent. "Yes, I'm ignorant; I know little about the sea—very little."

"You don't want to know any more," said Jimmy, "either about the sea or ships or ship-owners; especially ship-owners."

"But surely," said the girl, "the sea teaches you something. How to control other men, for instance. You make yourself liked and respected; you enforce discipline; you—why, I should have thought that going to sea would be the one career above all others where a man would by his own ability and force of character come to the front!"

Jimmy chuckled. What a perfect peach of a girl!

"Miss Mavison, do you read much fiction?"

"A good deal, Mr. Kerrill."

"Ah!" he grinned. "Just so!"

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Ever seen the crew of a tramp steamer? They couldn't be written about, anyway! I tell you, Miss Mavison, we don't talk too much about discipline and making ourselves respected and liked on board a tramp! We're lucky if we can get from one port to another safely. And there are more ways of getting into trouble at sea in half a day than there are on dry land in a year!"

"You don't like being a sailor, then?"

"I loathe it."

"Why be one?"

"What else is there to be? My father was a soldier—we're Irish, of course, and broke naturally. He was a captain in the South Irish Fusiliers and he died of wounds in South Africa when I was about four. My mother died a couple of months afterward. An uncle—a doctor in London—who didn't want to be bothered with me, took charge of me. I don't blame *him*, in the least, though he made life pretty tolerably unhappy. He sent me to sea as an apprentice as soon as he could; that was the cheapest way of finding me work. I hated the sea, but I stuck to it—had to—and now—well, I'm second mate on one of those tramps I was speaking about."

The young man looked so unhappy and boyish, and there was such an earnest, mournful, bitter look in his brown face and his eyes seemed so sad, that the girl had a sudden impulse to lean forward and pat his hand and tell him he wasn't to worry because she would think out some plan to make him happier and to give him hope. But, then, that was out of the question, she knew. Impossible! And, after all, this strange young man had rather too good an opinion of himself as it was.

If she showed herself too full of sympathy he might imagine that—well, he might imagine a lot of things. Nevertheless, she would take him in charge at once; she would help him, somehow; she would teach him some very important truths about his own failings; she would make him realize that other people had their point of view as well as himself.

In the distance a telephone bell was ringing.

"You'll do better than you think, Mr. Kerrill. I'm sure you will."

"It's the fault of the ship-owners that the sea isn't a better life——"

The girl interrupted him.

"But, Mr. Kerrill, you're wrong there, I know. Not all ship-owners are inconsiderate and mean, I assure you."

The butler opened the door.

"Miss Mavison, some one wishes to speak to you on the telephone."

The girl stood up.

"Mr. Kerrill, will you excuse me just one minute!"

She hurried out of the room.

Through the open door there came the sound of voices.

"Eileen!" A man, and not the butler, certainly, spoke to her from the stairs.

"Yes, father, what is it?"

"What have you been doing to poor Archie? I met him just now and he seemed rather unhappy. My dear girl, I don't want to criticize you or interfere, but hadn't you better exercise discretion sometimes? You know——"

"Some one wants to speak to me on the phone," she said. "Trot into the drawing-room and talk to Mr. Kerrill, there's a dear!"

Jimmy who was standing gazing out of the window turned as a plump, pale-faced man with a little fair mustache entered the room.

For a moment they stared at each other without speaking. And then the plump man's pale face turned red and his sleepy eyes were no longer sleepy but hard and

fierce and his soft mouth twisted into a grin.

"Oh, ho!" he said. "So it's you, is it?"

He closed the door and came slowly toward Jimmy, who shifted his weight from one foot to the other and chuckled nervously.

"Well," he said, "this is what you call unexpected, eh!"

That the plump man who had tried to steal the taxi from the woman with the two children should be the father of Eileen Mavison struck him as being, not comic, but the most tragic thing that had ever happened.

"Unexpected!" said the plump man. "Yes. Now, before I have you thrown out for your —— insolence, who are you? And what are you?"

"My name's Kerrill. I'm second mate on a ship called the *Medea!*"

"You're what!" said the plump man shrilly. "Second mate on the *Medea!* And you have the impertinence to come *here!*" The plump man spluttered with indignation. "Oh! so that's it, is it? You come here! Do you know who I am?"

"Mr. Mavison, I suppose. Miss Mavison's father."

"My name is not Mavison. I am Miss Mavison's step-father. My name is Grinton. Now, do you know who I am?"

That Jimmy had never heard of him seemed to make the plump man more indignant than ever.

"You're a fool!" he said. "I know everything about you, Kerrill, that I care to know. You're one of those young men who think it a proof of intelligence to be insolent. I've had reports on you before now."

A lie, but it served. Jimmy gazed at him in growing astonishment.

"I don't understand," he said.

"No, but you soon will. I never, in all my life, heard anything like it! That you should actually dare come here, to my home, passes my comprehension. I'd as soon tolerate a deck-hand or a fireman as a second mate!" He laughed a weak, sniggering kind of laugh. "I'd think little enough of you, Kerrill, if you were the *Medea's* captain, which you never will be! But a second mate! And an inefficient second mate, too! Good God!" He snapped his fingers in Jimmy's face. "Clear out! Sharp!"

"Maybe you'd better tell me who you are!" said Jimmy slowly. "It might help! I don't have to prove I'm as good as the next man, but, I'll say this, it's no insult to your step-daughter for me to know her!"

The plump man came close to Jimmy and scowled at him.

"Have you signed on for the next voyage?"

"I have."

"Then it's too late to get rid of you now. But it's your last voyage on the *Medea.* And, Mr. Kerrill, if I have anything to do with it, I'll get you blacklisted in every port in the United Kingdom. I'll make things so hot for you that no ship-owner will let you set foot on his decks. I own the *Medea.* Now, get out before I have you thrown out!"

The second mate of the *Medea* walked slowly down the broad red carpeted stairs. In the distance he could hear the voice of the plump, pale faced man's step-daughter, Eileen Mavison, talking over the telephone.

II

AFTER waiting for a quarter of an hour Captain Dorrock was at last permitted to enter the inner office. Mr. Grinton kept him standing for a further two minutes while he pretended to be unaware of his presence.

Then he turned in his swivel chair and pointed with his pen at another chair some distance away from his roll-topped desk, thereby making Captain Dorrock feel inferior and ill-at-ease and nervous, which was precisely the state of mind that Mr. Grinton desired to create.

"Won't be long, Dorrock—busy!" he said.

Captain Dorrock—"Black John" Dorrock—stared grimly at the wall opposite, with its pale gray paper and the pictures of steamers, and wondered fiercely why Grinton should always arouse in him feelings of hate and contempt. No other man in the world had ever treated him with such offhand, deliberate rudeness, without paying the price in full. Yet, Grinton, —— him! soft and flabby and sleek, did as he pleased.

And why not? If Grinton chose to exert his power, what could a poor devil of a shipmaster do but crawl when he was ordered, crawl and cringe and lick the polished patent-leather shoes of the man who paid him his miserable wages and owned him, body and soul.

"Well, Dorrock," said Mr. Grinton,

leaning back and crossing his short legs: "well, and what can I have the pleasure of doing for you this fine morning?"

He pulled open a drawer and drew out a box of cigars.

"Smoke, Dorrock?"

"Thank you, sir," said Dorrock. He stood up and took one of the cigars and then, still on his feet, he began to speak. "Mr. Grinton, sir, I've come to ask you a favor. I didn't want to; I hate doin' it; but I have to."

Mr. Grinton watched him between half-closed lids and nursed his knee.

"I have to," said Dorrock miserably. "Mr. Grinton, sir, my wife's ill. The doctors don't think none too well of her chances. I want to know, sir, if you could see your way to advancin' me a little money——"

His brown, clean-shaven face reddened, and his gray eyes under the black bushy eyebrows wavered, and he broke off in the middle of his sentence.

Mr. Grinton dropped his feet to the ground and leaned forward, one elbow on his desk, and frowned at the square-shouldered man standing in front of him.

So old Dorrock was after money, borrowing. So much the worse for old Dorrock!

"I'm afraid," said Mr. Grinton, almost purring; "I am very much afraid, Captain Dorrock, that what you are asking is impossible!"

"I'm not askin' for a loan, sir. No, indeed. All I want, sir, is a little on account." Dorrock wiped his lips with the back of his hairy hand and continued: "You see, sir, it's this way. The doctors say my wife can't go on livin' in this country an' hope to get better. It's out of the question, they tell me. Well, sir, what am I to do? They say, send her to Algiers, or Switzerland, or Madeira! It's the everlastin' rain an' wet an' cold that's playin' her up! An', between you an' me, sir, unless I can get hold of a little cash, sir, I can't manage it. An', sir, Maggie, that's Mrs. Dorrock, an' a better wife no man ever had, sir, Mrs. Dorrock, sir, will have to stop on in Cardiff."

He waited, then, hoping against hope, although hope had well-nigh vanished, that even now a miracle might come to pass and he would get the money.

"Captain Dorrock," said Mr. Grinton slowly, "you know my rule." He paused. Other men, he reflected, might be embarrassed but not Paul Grinton. Plain speaking was the best in the long run. "You know my rule," he went on, "don't you? Why come here, then, and ask what can never be granted? Once I began lending money, and it would be lending, where would I end? I'd have every —— captain and mate in my employ, dodging up here, asking could I let 'em have five pounds, ten, twenty, and what not? Captain Dorrock, I shall have to refuse you. I'm a kind-hearted man and I'm sorry to hear of your trouble, but I can't let you have the money."

Black John Dorrock swallowed the lump in his throat, nodded and prepared to depart.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "I'm sorry, too. I'm afraid I've taken up quite a lot of your time. Good mornin', sir."

Mr. Grinton fingered his little mustache.

"Don't run away yet, Dorrock! As a matter of fact, I'm glad you came in. There are one or two things I'd like to talk to you about." He gazed absently out of the window by his side. "When's the *Medea* likely to sail? Tomorrow, isn't it!"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah!" Mr. Grinton lit his cigar. "Dorrock, bring your chair up and sit down. It's about the *Medea* that I want to talk to you."

Dorrock, wondering what was coming, carried his chair nearer the roll-topped desk and seated himself.

"Well, sir," he said presently.

Mr. Grinton who had been smoking with every appearance of keen enjoyment looked at him.

"Oh, yes, Dorrock, sorry!" He threw over a box of matches. "You'd better light up. I always find smoking a great help when one is er—discussing business—serious business—eh! And, Dorrock, this *is* serious—most serious!"

Again he paused. Dorrock stirred restlessly in his chair. He knew the symptoms. He knew beyond a doubt that before he left that office and went walking down the sunny street toward the docks Grinton would have told him something that he would willingly not have heard. But as it was——

"Yes, sir," he said. "You were sayin'!"

"Dorrock," said the ship-owner, leaning forward, and lowering his voice, "Dorrock, I'm going to trust you. I'm going to talk to you now, man to man. If I tell you that things are not entirely satisfactory in the shipping business I'm telling you nothing you haven't already learnt for yourself. Shipping's finished, for the time being. The bottom's dropped out of the market. Freights are down to nothing. Cargoes—Lord! what chance has a tramp firm like mine got of picking up cargoes at a profit? I tell you, Dorrock, we're going through as bad a period of depression as I ever remember. Look there!" He waved his hand in the direction of the window, south and west. "How many hundred thousand tons of shipping are laid up around the Bristol Channel ports, eh? What chance have I got of keeping the *Medea* and the *Druid* and the *Boadicea* and the others in commission, eh? Dorrock, do you realize I stand to lose by sending the *Medea* across the West'ard this trip? It's a fact."

Captain Dorrock, his face a mask, folded his arms. One might have thought, not knowing Grinton, that the man was a philanthropist. That he was in the shipping business for the sake of his crews, or his country, or his health, anything, save that he had in the past ten years made a fortune by cutting wages and running his ships on the cheap.

"No, Dorrock, I tell you candidly, if it hadn't been for the men I have working for me, I'd have cut my losses and put my ships on the scrap. But I couldn't. I've kept on, hoping the tide would turn, and, apparently, the tide has no intention of turning. Dorrock, listen to me!" Again he leant forward, again he lowered his voice, again he half-closed his little, sleepy eyes. "Dorrock, I'm up against it, at last: everything: freights, cargoes, wages. I'm at my wits' ends for cash."

Dorrock's throat had all at once gone dry and rasping.

"Yes, sir," he said slowly. "Yes, sir."

"You asked me for money," said the ship-owner. "Dorrock, I am disposed to give it to you: more than you would have asked for: more than you would have dreamt of getting! But—" he smiled—"but, at a price, Dorrock; at a price! I lend no man money on his own terms: I am prepared to give on my own."

SO THIS was it, then: Grinton, whose wealth was proven by his appearance, his clothes, his motors; his horses, his yacht, and his home; Grinton, who sucked the life-blood from the poor wretches who manned his ships; Grinton was planning, on the pretense of poverty, new methods of making money!

"Well, sir," said Dorrock. "What do you suggest?"

Mr. Grinton purred.

"I think, Dorrock," he said, "we can come to an arrangement whereby we may both profit. But—" here he tilted his chair back once more and put the tips of his fingers together—"are you prepared to wait for that profit, say, till the end of the voyage?"

"If I have to, I have to," said Dorrock. "But what do you want me to do, sir?"

Mr. Grinton got up out of his chair and went to the door and turned the key in the lock.

"Dorrock," he said, when he was once more seated, "I need scarcely say that I am paying you as great a compliment as it is possible for one man to pay another. I am er—trusting you."

"Not for the first time, sir."

"No, Dorrock, it is not the first time that I have told you things that I should prefer not to have mentioned in a court of law, or the press, for instance. Nor, Dorrock, will this be the first time that I have induced you to help me in ways that I need not er—specify!"

"You mean, sir," said Dorrock bluntly, "that you're going to get me to do what you want because you know so much about me I can't refuse! Is that it?"

Mr. Grinton chuckled.

"I shouldn't have put things as plainly as that myself, Dorrock, but that's more or less it! I want you to do something for me, and I intend paying you well. Are you on?"

"You haven't said yet what it is you want me to do?"

"I want you to make some money. That's all. I want money and you want money: by the plan I am er—going to suggest we can both er—achieve our desired ends. Then we'll both of us be satisfied, eh!"

Long-winded and pompous and scared. Quickly, accurately, Black John Dorrock summed up his master.

"You're a long time coming to the point, sir!" he said.

"The *Medea* is getting on in years, isn't she?"

"She is, sir. She's old."

"She's due for her next survey after this coming voyage!"

"She is, sir."

"Will she pass?" said the owner.

"She'll need a lot in the way of repairs an' refit," said Dorrock. "I think, sir, I told you last week that——"

Mr. Grinton cut him short.

"I know all about that, Dorrock; you and the chief engineer just about scared me out of the business. According to you, the *Medea* needs a new hull, new engines and new boilers! And Lord knows what else!"

"There's the rudder, too, sir," said Dorrock. "I was having a look at it the other day. It's all right, of course, sir, but the surveyor will kick when he sees that post!"

"It strikes me, Dorrock, the surveyor is going to kick at a lot of things: a lot more things than I'm inclined to consider. In fact, Dorrock, speaking frankly, I can't afford it. No owner who wasn't a born fool would. If I want the *Medea* reclassed a hundred *A* one at Lloyd's it 'll cost me more than the ship's worth. No, it's off the map, Dorrock—off the map!"

"What's it mean, then, the scrap heap?"

But he knew, he knew from Grinton's voice and his smile and the droop of his eyelid, and his methods in the past, that never would the *Medea* go to the scrap while there was money to be made out of her.

"The *Medea* is insured for a considerable sum, Dorrock, as you know. A greater sum, owing to the fall in the value of ships, than she is er—worth! I believe, without consulting my books, I believe I am right in saying that the total amounts to something around ninety-five thousand pounds!"

Dorrock sucked in his breath sharply.

"Ninety-five thousand—Lord!"

"Or a hundred and five thousand: I forget the precise figures at the moment: but would I get even the ninety-five thousand, if the ship were to be sold?"

"No, sir: you'd get, maybe, ten thousand: maybe nine thousand five hundred!"

"Or maybe nothing. Exactly! Dorrock, you understand the position, I know. I want money. How am I to get it?"

Dorrock knew that Mr. Grinton was watching him closely, waiting for the suggestion to come from him, the solution of the problem that would prove that he had grasped the significance of Mr. Grinton's figures.

"The *Medea's* worth more sunk than afloat," said Dorrock. "That's easy."

"So she is," said the *Medea's* owner. "So she is."

Black John Dorrock wiped the sweat from his face with a red handkerchief.

"And you want money!" he said slowly.

"And you, too, Dorrock: you want it just as badly, don't you? How are we to get it? Eh?"

"Look here!" said Dorrock. "What's the sense o' playin' the fool, you an' me! You want me to scuttle the *Medea!* Why not say so an' have done with it?"

A look of what might have been pain crossed Mr. Grinton's plump face.

"My dear Captain Dorrock! Scuttle the *Medea!* Could you?"

"I could," said Dorrock, "an' you know it! But suppose I don't! Suppose I said you'd asked me to——"

"Ah!" said Mr. Grinton. "Then—then, Dorrock, things would happen! I think you'd be very sorry—I'm sure of it!"

"You're threatenin' me, Mr. Grinton!"

"Not at all, Dorrock. You have er—suggested a method by which you can earn some money!"

His rather full lips curled in a sneer.

Dorrock leant forward and brought his fist down with a crash on the desk in front of him.

"It's a —— hold up! that's what it is: just as much as if you'd got a gun in your hand. You get me in here an' you hint at things an' you wait till I tell you back what you've got in your mind an' then you pretend it's me suggested it! I do the dirty work, an' you sit there at your ease——"

Mr. Grinton rose to his feet and unlocked the door.

"All right!" he said. "You'd better go. You've dug your own grave."

Dug his own grave—he had, of course—and Maggie's, as well! Dorrock saw himself, in a flash, for what he was—Grinton's slave.

"Mr. Grinton." Dorrock was standing, also. "Mr. Grinton, sir, I'm sorry. But I'm worried about my wife. I take it back, everything."

"Ah!" said Mr. Grinton. "Ah! that's better, Dorrock. Much better." He locked the door again and came back to the swivel chair. "Sit down, Dorrock, an' we'll talk it over. You'll do as you er—suggest, then, eh?"

"Yes," said Black John Dorrock slowly, "yes, Mr. Grinton, I'll do it. But couldn't you see your way, sir, to letting me have something in advance?"

He could, if he would, of course. A few pounds was all that they would need.

"Dorrock, listen to me!" Mr. Grinton's usually pale face was pink. "I've told you before that I can't. I mean it. I'm sorry, but I never permit my personal feelings to interfere with business. And if you're laboring under the impression that men are scarce and that I'd have a difficulty in getting any one else to take command of the *Medea*, let me tell you that out of work shipmasters are as common as coal dust! All I have to do is to open the window here and whistle and they'd come at a trot, with their tongues out. No, Dorrock, I think, for your own sake, that you would be well-advised to help me in the er—scheme you suggested!"

Dorrock squirmed and then uttered a harsh laugh.

"I'll do what you want me to," he said slowly. "I'll sink the *Medea*, whenever you like, and wherever you like! And the price?"

"Ah!" said the owner. "The price, eh!"

And then they began to bargain.

III

"AN' SO it's settled!"

"Yes, Mac, it's settled!"

Black John Dorrock nodded and lit his pipe and watched the lean, humorous face of MacGish, the chief engineer of the *Medea*, seated on the other side of the little table in the parlor.

"Aye!" MacGish pondered. "Aye, John, he has ye. The auld fox has ye. Ye'll do as he ses. An' I'll help ye, fur your sake, an' ma ain sake, an' the sake o' the prrofits accruin'."

He grinned.

"But maist especially fur the sake o' the prrofits an' what I can buy wi' them! Man, if I hadna a perpetual thirst on me, what a wunnerfu' contentit an' happy man I wud be, wi' a hoose in Aberdeen, an' a garrden, an' an auld dog fur company, an' the kirk on the Sabbath, an'—losh! ne'er a thocht of a bilge pump or a thrust or a crank-shaft to weary me an' keep me awake nichts worryin'."

Black John chuckled at the picture.

"You'd be dead in six months without your engines, Mac, an' you know it!"

"Aye, I wud that." MacGish sighed and drank what remained of the beer in his glass. "Aye, I'd be deid in sax months!"

For a time neither of the two men spoke. The little room, with its red wall-paper and red-shaded gaslight and the drawn curtains and the pictures and models of ships and the shells and curios gathered together from the seven seas, was warm and snug; a kettle sang on the fire that burnt with yellow flames in the open grate; on the mantelpiece between the little Chinese image and a Burmese Buddha a clock ticked out soothingly the passage of time; a gray parrot in a cage near the bookcase crooned softly to itself; the rain pattered against the window.

Presently MacGish sighed.

"Ye, ha'e a fine wee hame, John. Ye're lucky. But I dare say if what we're plannin' the nicht gangs aff wi' oot accident, or mebbe I shud say if the accident passes wi'oot ony unforeseen circumstance, then maist like the wife wull be wantin' to move!"

"Yes," said Dorrock, "she'll move. Yes, Mac, she'll move."

He wondered which it would be: Algiers, Madeira, Switzerland, Italy—Italy, now, was cheaper, perhaps, than any: one could live cheaply in Italy—near Naples, for instance, or over on the Adriatic side—certainly not Naples itself——

But MacGish was speaking to him.

"What's that you say, Mac?"

"Did he gi'e ye ony idee whaur he wud like the accident to occur?"

"Homeward bound. Why! Lord knows! He's deep, old Grinton. Deep as the Atlantic, an' just as vicious, an' hard to cross. Mac, do you know what?" He leant forward across the table. "Mac, I'd like to have his soft neck between my two hands this minute: I'd like to squeeze until he screamed for pity, an' go on squeezin' until he couldn't scream no more, an' then I'd laugh at him, laugh, Mac, until all of a sudden he'd go limp all over, an' I'd know I'd done one good deed in the world before

my time came to swing at the end of a rope!"

"John, ye've an imagination that does ye credit!"

"But I won't, Mac. I won't. I'll bow an' scrape an' duck my head when we meet an' smile on him, like an old sheep dog, an jump when he ses so, an' do what he wants, without argument, an' why, Mac? Why, eh? Because I'm scared of the beach! I'm scared bone deep of bein' thrown on the scrap heap an' starvin'! That's the sea, Mac! Here, ye're not drinkin'."

He jumped up from his chair and took another bottle of beer from the sideboard.

Some one knocked at the front door and he swore under his breath.

"If that's a message from the ship, sayin' I'm wanted, I'll—. 'Pon my word, Mac! I'll brain 'em!"

He put the bottle down on the table.

"I'll go an' see who it is!"

The sound of footsteps in the passage outside stopped him. He waited, frowning, straining his ears to try to hear what the voices were saying.

Mrs. Dorrock, a pretty little woman, her face white save for the pink flush in her thin cheeks, her dark eyes filled with anxiety, entered the room and closed the door gently after her.

"Jack," she whispered, "it's Mr. Lappett, the mate."

"The devil!" said Dorrock. "Maggie, what's he want? Did he tell you?"

"He says it's business, but I don't believe it." She caught hold of her husband's arm. "Jack, go slow! I don't trust him. He's trying to knife you. Don't talk, whatever you do!"

She broke into a spasm of coughing that silenced her.

Dorrock patted her shoulder.

"Maggie, old girl, you're not to have fancies!"

He strode across the room to the door. "Come on in, Lappett. Glad to see you."

As Mrs. Dorrock went out, the mate entered.

"'Ullo, Captain Dorrock!" He grinned. "'Ullo, convivial meeting, eh! Chief, I didn't expect to find you 'ere. 'Ow goes it?"

And although he smiled and showed his pleasure at meeting two such friends of his, as the captain and the chief engineer, his heartiness grated. There was in his manner and his flat, loud voice a curious lack of sincerity that made it an effort to smile back at him and answer in the way he intended he should be answered.

"Take yer coat off, Lappett, an' sit ye down," said Black John. "What brings you here, this far off your track, eh?"

And was there a shade of uneasiness in Lappett's little pale eyes or was there not? Did his grin relax a trifle over his protruding teeth, yellow from tobacco, and did the lines between the small hooked nose and the tight mouth take on the shape of a sneer, or was it merely the flickering of the gas on the thin sallow face?

The flickering gas, perhaps.

The mate broke into a deep and jovial laugh.

"Matter o' fact, captain, I came out to see you on purpose." He groped in the pocket of his topcoat and brought out a bottle wrapped in pink paper. "Been makin' a bit o' money last two days; horses been runnin' true to form. 'Ere's something to chase away—what's it they say?—dull care an' gloom."

"Makin' a bit o' money, eh!" said Black John, stripping the paper from the bottle. "Think o' that now! These hard times. Brandy, eh! Well, Lappett, that's good of you. Draw that chair up to the fire. You're in need of a drop yourself, I bet. Cold out, ain't it?"

And all the time he was bustling about the little front room, chatting and getting fresh glasses out of the sideboard and putting fresh coal on the fire and drawing the cork of the brandy bottle, Black John Dorrock was wondering what reason the mate would give to explain his coming.

"All right on board, eh?" he asked.

"Right as rain," said the mate. "Thought I'd have a run ashore for an hour or so to stretch my legs. The second's on board. Said he'd had the ——uva day—three full-sized riots since four o'clock. 'E wouldn't say where or what. Just laughed when I asked him. I dunno; think 'e's got himself mixed up with some girl!"

"If he has," said Black John, "he's been keepin' it almighty dark. Always set him down as a sort o' woman-hater."

"Ah!" said the mate. "He's deep. Deep as they make 'em. Those quiet ones are. You go along, never suspectin', an' all at once you see it's got into the papers!"

He winked at the chief.

"Not that young Kerrill's quiet," said Black John. "Most of the time he's a —— sight too noisy for my likin'. Too much side an' bounce. Ever hear him talk! You'd think he'd condescend like to honor us with his —— presence instead o' feelin' —— lucky he's got a job!"

"Young Kerrill, he kind o' works on yer nerves," said Lappett. "Parson's son, they say, an' chock full o' piety an' the ten commandments. Won't do this an' 'e won't do that: talk to a girl! No, not that kind of a girl! An' so on. In public, any'ow. What he does when nobody's lookin', that's 'is secret. Asked him once last voyage why he went to sea at all, an' he had the cheek to say the crossin' sweepers' union an' the garbage gatherers' association was full up!"

The chief chuckled.

"Ha'e ye seen him ficht? He's got the kick of a mule in each fist!"

"Huh!" Black John grunted. "What he's sufferin' from is swelled head. He's got it bad. Mebbe we'll do somethin' to ease it. Water, Mac?"

"Man, wud ye ruin guid liquor? Not a drap!"

The three men sat in front of the fire and sipped their drinks and talked of the sea, of ships they had known, of men they had had as shipmates, of ship-owners and their ways.

And then the mate leant forward and knocked the dottle from his pipe into the fire.

"They tell me Grinton's took to throwin' his money around a bit!"

"Not on us," said Black John. He held out his hands to the blaze. "He ain't hard up exactly, I bet."

"Not him! It 'ud take a lot of spendin' to get through what he's put away, safe an' sound for a rainy day! But I heard it said he's thinkin' o' gettin' married again."

"Wha tell't ye that?" asked the Chief.

"Lady friend of mine," said the mate with a wink. "The old fox didn't, you may bank on that! I wondered what he'd 'ave said if I'd asked him if it was true!"

"Seen him lately?" asked Dorrock, trying not to show that he was interested at last.

"This afternoon," said the mate. "He came aboard an' 'ad quite a yarn with me."

"Oh!" said Black John. "Was that after I'd gone?"

"Yes. He asked where you was. I said you'd been called ashore on business."

Black John nodded.

Presently the mate went on.

"The superintendent was with him; old Traskett, lookin' like he hadn't had a square meal in his life. What d'you think?" Lappett's grin was triumphant. "They asked me, both of 'em, Grinton first, though, whether I'd like a ship of my own. How's that, eh? Grinton said I'd been givin' great satisfaction an' he was very pleased with me."

Black John Dorrock was startled. He glanced at MacGish over the mate's head as he rubbed his knees.

"I wunner noo," said MacGish, "is he thinkin' o' buildin' or buyin' anither auld tramp to add to his fleet, eh?"

"Or," said Black John with a little laugh, "or 'as it that some one's goin' to get fired out? Me, for instance! Did he give you a line on that, Lappett, eh?"

"I wouldn't take no one else's job, Captain Dorrock. That's not my way of doing things, an' you know it."

"A feller can't pick nor choose these days. If they offer you a job, my job, any one's, you grab it, an' don't argue!"

But grab it, of course he'd grab it! Lappett, of all men, talking big, about not taking another man's job! ——!

Black John frowned at the fire.

"No," said Lappett, "that's not my way. I believe in us captains an' mates hangin' together. We got to stand firm against ship-owners. Else, where would we be? No, captain, you may depend on me, Fortescue Lappett! I'm proud to serve under you. Yes, sir, proud! Though I went to sea five years before you did, I ain't the man to let a thing like that stand in the way. No, sir! That don't weigh with me at all!"

Dorrock finished his drink and nodded two or three times gravely, as if considering and approving what the mate had said. But he knew what the mate meant; he was ugly; either he hid a threat under a pretense of friendliness, or else the drink he had taken was making him say more than he had intended.

"A-weel!" said the chief engineer, "we live an' learn."

"We do," said Lappett with a chuckle. "That's a fact, chief. 'Ere, you're not drinkin'." He jumped to his feet and

filled the three glasses. "Lor', an' 'ere we are, the three of us—all poor, 'ard-workin', honest seafarers—poor's the right word, captain, ain't it? But I take it, you an' me, the three of us, we ain't above turnin' an honest penny if the chance come our way, eh! We got to 'elp ourselves! That's my motter! An' if we don't—if we don't, gents—then the more fools, us! No one else won't. Our wages don't carry us far, do they! Wages, ——! That old fish in the office, now, he knows a thing or two, don't he? He's out to feather 'is own nest, eh, not ours! Ain't that so?"

The little pale eyes glanced from the captain to the chief engineer and back again as though trying to read their thoughts.

"An' if he's out for money, what's wrong with us bein' out for money, too?"

"Jus' so," said Dorrock. "Jus' so."

HE WISHED now that he had kept his mind clear, but the —— brandy was getting him. What was the meaning at the back of the mate's words? The owner was out to make money, so why shouldn't they make money as well? Had he suspected, the little yellow-faced toad? Or was he guessing?

Why had he come to the house to-night? Had he heard whispers already? Did he suspect? Was it another hold-up? Another edging in for a share of the proceeds—or what?

Better say nothing and wait!

The mate continued in a voice that was little more than a low whisper.

"Now, listen! I'm tired o' workin' for old Grinton: for starvation wages! See! Dog tired! An' I'm out for a pound or two on the side. That's me. *Savvy!* Anything that comes up I'm ready to jump at; an', unless I'm way off the map, gents, I'm inclined to believe you two, both of you, are thinkin' the same."

"What the —— are ye bletherin' aboot?" said the chief testily. "What's got ye? Why dinna ye speak oot instead o' hintin' at things no yin can foller!"

"I will, then," said the mate. "I will, mister. Yesterday a feller I know—'Limehouse Larry,' they call him—came to me with a proposition that looks pretty good."

"Limehoose Larry!" said MacGish. "Man, thon crimp's no' to be trustit!"

"Limehouse is all right," said the mate. "I know him well. He asked me if I wanted to make some money! I did. Right! 'E knew 'ow I could make it. We're goin' to 'Alifax, Nova Scotia, to pick up a cargo for 'ome. Ain't that it?"

"Who told you?" said Black John.

"Ah, ha!" said the mate. "There ain't much that this child don't know; no, sir!"

And again there was the flicker of the eyelid and the leer that made Dorrock wonder uneasily how much the mate knew and how much he had guessed.

"I've known men knew too much, mister, for the good of their health," he said.

"No offense, captain—no offense. But this proposition now—there's an old partner of Limehouse Larry's that's got himself in bad all the way round. I didn't ask how: an' that's neither 'ere nor there. But he's layin' up at his brother's 'ouse in 'Alifax, with his right arm and his thigh broke an' Lord knows how much else of him! He can't move, even if he wants to, an' he's got hidden away stuff worth thousands of pounds, brought across from the Continent, an' all useless because 'e ain't able to dispose of it! What's worse, from 'is point of view, the police are after 'im. They've been warned. See! Even when he gets well, he'll have to be slippy an' get away to a place where 'e ain't known! An' what's he to do with the stuff, eh? Ah! that's what's troublin' him!"

The mate paused and looked knowing.

Black John growled.

"Get on with it, Mr. Lappett!" he said. "Get on!"

"Now, soon as we get to 'Alifax, then, we go an' see this feller an' have a talk with him. You understand, eh! Limehouse Larry don't see the use o' lettin' stuff like that lay idle. There's a big demand for it. He can use as much as 'e can lay his 'ands on. Well, then, we'll take the stuff off this bloke with the broken thigh an' fetch it aboard in a suit-case, fair an' square, without a word bein' said to us."

"Oh!" Black John nodded. "Then it's smugglin', eh!"

Lappett closed his eyes and smiled.

"Ah! you're right. Smugglin', it is!"

"Seems a roundabout kind of job to go smugglin' goods from Europe to Halifax an' back to Cardiff! What's the sense of it?"

"Ah, but listen! That stuff was meant

for New York or Boston! The feller we're talkin' of could have run it across the line from New Brunswick into State o' Maine. See! But 'ow can he? New York's impossible. An' now 'ere's Limehouse clamorin' for the stuff across this side. We'll manage it for him. I've told him so. Lord, if we ain't clever enough to hide it aboard the *Medea* where not even the foxiest customs man could smell it out, my name ain't Lappett! See! Lord! why how many times have each of us 'ere brought stuff 'ome an' run it through the dock gates without bein' spotted, eh?" He broke into a high pitched laugh. "It's easy!"

Black John's eyes narrowed under the bushy black brows.

"Very nice!" he said. "Very! An' I dare say, mister, we'd make big profits—if Limehouse Larry didn't put it across us! But tell us, what's this stuff they want us to take charge of?"

"Snow," said the mate.

"S n o w!" repeated Dorrock. "You mean——"

"Coke! What else. Lord, there's money there, Captain! Lord! Why, we couldn't lose if we tried!"

"I wouldn't touch it," said Black John slowly, "not with a barge-pole. No, mister. What's more, you won't touch it either, mister, not on my ship. I draw the line somewhere."

"Why, blast yer!" said the mate. "Do you mean to pretend you've turned pious all of a sudden, or what? Do you mean to say you ain't willin' to break a law or two an' earn a bit o' money by cheatin' the customs? ——, I don't believe it! ——! How long have you an' me been shipmates, eh?"

"Mr. Lappett, are you trying to insinuate that my husband would do anything dishonest?"

The three men started. Mrs. Dorrock stood at the door of the room, her face white, her dark eyes fierce and angry, her lips set in a hard line.

"Maggie," said the husband. "Now, Maggie—you shouldn't be here!"

"I want to know if Mr. Lappett thinks you'd act like a crook!"

"Well, I wouldn't. I told him so. Hadn't you better go?"

The little woman continued to stare at the mate.

"Mr. Lappett, do you mean to say—do you mean to hint that my husband's dishonest? He's not dishonest. He's never done anything mean in his life."

Lappett burst into a shriek of laughter.

"Ho, ho, ho! Lord! Mrs. Dorrock—'elp! Some one 'old me! Mrs. Dorrock—never done nothin' mean in his life!" He rose to his feet and stood, resting his back against the mantelpiece. "Ho, ho, ho! Why, ——, Mrs. Dorrock!"

His laughter died away. His thin face with the yellow skin that always looked too tight for the skull underneath was livid with passion. He showed his great fangs in a snarl.

"I've never met a shipmaster yet as wasn't ready to pick up a piece of money an' no questions asked! See! Your husband's the same as any. I know things that, mebbe, would surprise yer!"

Black John Dorrock realized, rather muzzily, that the mate was saying things that were hurting Maggie. Things that, though possibly true, he should never have said.

All at once he lost his temper.

"Get out o' here, —— you, Lappett—get out at once! Or mebbe I'll show you."

He reached out his hand and grabbed Lappett by the collar and shook him.

"You miserable little dock rat, shut up! What the —— do you mean by your lies, eh?"

"Ow!" The mate yelped. "Ow! you're hurtin' me—you're chokin' me! Stop it for the love of Gord!"

Mrs. Dorrock laid her hand on her husband's arm.

"Jack, please!"

Dorrock released his grip on the mate's neck.

"Another time, mister, I'll kill you!"

The mate glared at him and then he rubbed his throat and mumbled something about people who couldn't take a joke without flaring into a temper and he was sorry if he'd said anything that Captain Dorrock had misunderstood.

"If you didn't mean it," said Dorrock, "what did you say it for?"

"For fun—that's all—no harm intended! Why, Captain, surely you don't think—Mrs. Dorrock, you don't think I'd say anything against your husband! Why, there ain't a more honest man livin'! No one could be more honest! An' when he grabbed me just now, I was so taken aback

I could 'ardly tell 'im to stop or 'e'd hurt me! Captain, you're as strong as a horse!"

"Aye," said Dorrock, with a grin. "Aye, I'm strong all right."

"Mair strang than ye ha'e ony idee," said the chief. "Ye'd be surprized."

"Well," said Lappett, "I think I'll be goin' back to the ship. It's gettin' late."

"Yes," said Mrs. Dorrock, "yes, it's late, isn't it? It was good of you to come."

When the mate had gone and Dorrock had returned to the little parlor after shutting the front door she stood for a while by the table without speaking.

"Well," said Dorrock, "well, Maggie, what is it?"

"Now, do you understand?"

"Understand what!" said Dorrock uncomfortably.

"Understand what that mate of yours is! Don't you see through him? Jack, he's trying to ruin you! You an' Mac here, you make me tired—the pair of you! You've been drinking too much, of course! He brought you this, didn't he?"

She held in her hand the empty brandy bottle.

"That on top of the beer! Oh, Johnny, Johnny, why haven't you learnt wisdom?"

Black John put his hands on his wife's shoulders.

"Maggie," he said, "you're an angel. Lappett's tough, but he's well meanin'."

She smiled into his face.

"I can't be angry with you, Jack, on your last night. But steer clear of Lappett. He's bad."

Dorrock kissed the pale lips.

"Maggie, dear lass, you're too good for me."

And Lappett, hurrying through mean and narrow streets toward the docks, wondered how he could get even with his captain. Black John Dorrock had nearly choked him. Black John Dorrock should pay for that, with interest. He whistled softly to himself, deep in thought. Dorrock and MacGish were planning something, he was positive. Something crooked. They would be clever if they kept their secret.

IV

"SANDY" RACKEN, the second engineer of the *Medea*, clad in a greasy boiler suit, his face shining with sweat and oil, an old uniform cap perched on the back of his head, came out of the alleyway that led to the engine-room and stood on the bridge deck, looking around in search of some one not too busy for conversation.

The second mate approached from the poop.

Sandy grinned.

"Hullo, Jimmy! What have you been doin', eh?"

"Seein' the steerin'-gear's all clear. What's the matter, Sandy? Slept it off?"

"Slept what off?" said Sandy indignantly.

"Lord!" said Jimmy. "The habits and morals of you engineers! Well, well! Haven't I warned you, Sandy, time and again! Where does it hurt most?"

Again Sandy grinned.

They stood side by side, leaning against the bulwarks.

"Jimmy, look yonder!"

Jimmy's gaze followed the direction of the second engineer's thumb.

"Golly!" he said.

On the lower bridge Black John Dorrock was talking to the amiable Mr. Grinton, whose head he had threatened to punch the previous day.

"You see 'em!" said Racken. "The crookedest pair of thieves between here an' Frisco, an' that's goin' some. Look at old Grinton's side view! Jimmy, he takes more care of *his* belly than he does of ours, don't he?"

"Sandy, your coarseness pains me. Mr. Grinton is one of my oldest friends."

"Huh!" The second engineer grunted. "Tell me another. You said only t'other day you'd never seen the old shark."

"My lad!" said Jimmy, "since then Uncle Grinton and I have become bosom pals! Whenever he sees me now he says, 'Jim, what about a tenner to put in your pocket to spend?' Or: 'My dear old James, come on up to the house and stay a month!' That kind of thing."

"Why don't you shout it a bit louder?" said the second engineer. "You'd look —— funny if he or Black John heard you, wouldn't you?"

And then Sandy Racken's sallow cheeks went red under the grease and he clutched at Jimmy's arm.

"Holy sufferin' snakes! Look, Jimmy! Am I dreamin' or what?"

Jimmy turned toward the quayside and the huge coal tip towering above the *Medea*.

"What's up?" he asked.

Then he saw Eileen Mavison in a blue suit and a small blue hat step from the gangway on to the rusty iron deck-plates. She hesitated a moment and stood, glancing about her, with a little puzzled expression in her face, as if not quite certain what her next move would be.

A sudden panic took possession of Jimmy Kerrill.

"Sandy," he whispered, "I'm off!"

"What on earth for?" said the second engineer. "Jimmy, that's Miss Mavison, old Grinton's step-daughter. My Lord! Jimmy, ain't that girl a peach!"

There followed what was for the second engineer of the *Medea* one of the most stirring episodes of a stirring life. For Eileen Mavison, the owner's step-daughter, had caught sight of Jimmy and was coming toward him, smiling and holding out her gloved hand.

"Mr. Kerrill!" she said.

Never before had Jimmy felt so miserable. Eileen Mavison had learnt that he, the man who had insulted her step-father, was the second mate of one of her step-father's ships.

The second engineer vanished into the fiddley.

Jimmy and the girl shook hands.

"Mr. Kerrill," she said, "yesterday you bolted before I had time to explain things. I must apologize."

Her blue eyes were, so Jimmy decided rather gloomily, the color of corn flowers; her hair was like golden wheat in the sunshine.

"I understand that you and father discovered that you had met before."

Jimmy could only stare at her in a kind of stupor.

"You needn't have been so shy, Mr. Kerrill, simply because you found that my step-father was your owner. But you ran away and I wasn't able to pay off my debt. That's why I'm here this morning."

She paused and the color came into her cheeks, and she went on again rather more quickly.

"Father's a bit hasty, but you mustn't mind that, Mr. Kerrill. His bark's worse than his bite, always."

Jimmy found his voice.

"I'm afraid I didn't make a very good impression, going off like that, but—I was rather taken aback, Miss Mavison—and I didn't know you'd care for me to stay any longer, you being the owner's daughter——"

"Rubbish!" said the girl. "Isn't that a little hard on me? What have I done to deserve so poor an opinion! And my step-father, also! Any friend of mine is a friend of his! Only, of course, Mr. Kerrill, father's in business and a man may seem to be hard in his business dealings, when he's really kind-hearted. And not even in business would my step-father stoop to do things that other business men seem to do as a matter of course!"

The girl's cheeks were still flushed but into her blue eyes there had come a curious gleam of amusement that made Jimmy wonder what she was going to say next.

"You do understand, don't you?" she said. "And now, there's something else!"

She smiled at him, with her head slightly tilted to one side.

"Do you remember me?" she said. "It's rather trying for me to have to ask *you* that, but do you?"

"Remember you!" said Jimmy uncertainly. "But—why, of course, Miss Mavison; I'd scarcely be likely to forget you—not since yesterday and the day before."

"But you have forgotten me! And I'd forgotten you, Mr. Kerrill, until you told me you were the son of a soldier and that gave me a clue. I knew you were Irish, of course."

Jimmy felt that he was out of his depth once more.

"You mean to say, Miss Mavison, that you knew me before yesterday!"

"I do. I did know you. And you knew me. Very intimately. In fact, Mr. Kerrill, I wonder you can look me in the face and not blush to think how you've neglected me—after all your promises!" The blue eyes twinkled and she laughed. "I was rather a forward young person in those days—but do you remember those Summers, years ago, in Donegal?"

"But—good Lord!" said Jimmy. "You're not Eileen—little Eileen—Eileen Mavison!"

"Yes," said the girl, "and you're Jimmy Kerrill; grown up! But you've not changed in the very least!"

"You have!" said Jimmy pointedly.

The girl laughed again and looked quickly toward the bridge where her step-father was still talking to Black John.

"Do you remember the last time we met,

when we said good-by to each other on the cliff near the tall pines."

"I do," said Jimmy. "I told you all the wonderful things I was going to do; and what a wonderful man I would be—and now!" His face clouded. "And now, here I am, second mate on a tramp steamer!"

He pulled himself up in time. After all, Eileen Mavison's step-father owned the *Medea* and, apparently, Eileen considered her step-father perfect, and so—

And the girl, watching his gloomy face, pitied him, and yet a strange little irritation stirred within her. Jimmy Kerrill, though older than herself, was, she considered, young and foolish.

"Mr. Kerrill," she said, "I should hate you to feel that because you're only a second mate on a tramp steamer there's nothing in life left for you. Maybe you think you've ability enough to be something better. You have. I'm sure of it. But how do you know you won't have just as big an opportunity to make good at sea as on shore? If the chance comes, you'll make the most of it, I know. You'll do more, you'll make the chance, and you'll come out on top!"

Jimmy, wondering if in her heart she was laughing at him, muttered that it was very kind of her to say so.

"No," said Eileen, "it's not very kind. It's what I know to be true. I believe in you. I want you to believe in yourself!" She glanced over her shoulder and turned once more to Jimmy. "Mr. Kerrill, you'll write to me, won't you, and let me know how you're getting on—will you! I'd like to hear from you very much!"

"Eileen, what are you doing here?"

A querulous voice interrupted her.

"Hullo, father!"

Mr. Grinton stood by the girl's side, scowling.

"Eileen, I don't like you coming down to the docks." From his manner Jimmy Kerrill might have had no existence. "Mr. Jones," he said, beckoning to a young man in glasses, "will you see Miss Mavison home, please."

"He needn't take the trouble," said the girl. "Unless he'd like me to give him a lift. I've got the car waiting." She held out her hand to Jimmy. "Good-bye, Mr. Kerrill. Now, mind what I say! You've got to make good——"

And with this, breaking off abruptly, she departed, walking with long boyish strides toward the gangway, leaving Jimmy staring after her with a confused idea in his mind that she believed in him and had been trying to help him, and that since she had once more forgotten to pay him the money she owed there was a hope that they might meet again.

Mr. Grinton had turned and was walking in the direction of the lower bridge.

The mate met him.

"Good mornin', sir." He saluted with deference.

"Hah! Lappett, h'are you?" The owner nodded curtly and passed without stopping.

The mate came to where Jimmy was still standing, gazing after the girl as she walked quickly along the side of the basin, followed by the little clerk who was trying to catch up with her.

"Hullo, Jim, boy, what's the matter, eh?" The mate eyed him keenly. "Lookin' pretty sour, eh? What's up?"

"Nothin'," said Jimmy, leaving his problems to take care of themselves. "Nothin', Mr. Lappett. Why?"

"What've you been doin' to the owner, eh? Met him just now an' he wouldn't 'ardly speak to me. You an' 'im been chewin' the rag about anything, eh? Or what?"

The mate chuckled and thrust his thumb into Jimmy's ribs.

"Saw you talkin' to that little filly o' his! Know a thing or two, you do! But don't you look too 'igh, me lad, or you'll come a cropper! I was trottin' up hard as I could to say how-do an' cut you out when the boss interfered an' she took to her 'eels! Eileen's the goods all right, ain't she! Leave her to me, Jimmy—leave her to me!"

And the mate, who had a high opinion of his own personal charms and, in his own words, a way with the women, shook his large head and closed one eye and laughed.

Jimmy gave a shrug of his shoulders and turned away. That he should have to be shipmates with a man like Lappett was bad enough, but that he should listen to his talk about Eileen, or any other straight girl, was impossible. Lappett had a habit when in form of allowing his imagination to descend to depths deeper than mid-Atlantic. And so Jimmy slouched off toward the poop again, only to be held up by the long arm of the second engineer.

"Jimmy," said Sandy Racken in a hoarse whisper, "if I wasn't a friend of yours I'd

drop you over the side with your skull cracked! Do you know, Jimmy, I've been schemin' for the last two years how I can get to know that girl! Do you think I'd stay on an old broken-down coffin ship like this if it hadn't been that she was old bladder-belly's daughter! Tell me the truth, Jimmy, how long've you known her?"

"Since yesterday—no, the day before!"

The second engineer grunted.

"And she comes on board to say good-by to you! How do you do it, eh? What's the secret?"

Jimmy laughed. "Cheer up, Sandy! We're only friends, and I've had a ——uva row with her father. He's going to fire me after this voyage."

There came a fierce roar from the engine-room gratings.

"Misterr Racken, are ye gaun the v'yage wi' the ship or no'? If ye are, mebbe ye'll gi'e me the honor o' yer prresence doon in the engine-room! What the ——'s keepin' ye?"

"Hark to him!"

The second engineer grinned and made off.

IN THE captain's sitting-room on the lower bridge Mr. Grinton had, without showing the slightest sign of either annoyance or anger, completed his final instructions for the voyage.

"That's about all, Dorrock. You know what you've got to do. I know that my trust in you will not be er-misplaced!"

Dorrock nodded and said nothing.

"And now, about the second mate!"

"Eh?" said Dorrock. "Mr. Kerrill!"

"Yes, he's no good."

Black John, who had seen the second mate talking to Grinton's daughter, considered.

"I've no fault to find with him, sir," he said, "not as seconds go! Young, of course, an' a bit apt to talk for the sake of talkin', but he knows his job, sir."

"Pah!" Mr. Grinton thumped on the table. "So do a thousand others! Listen to me, Dorrock, I don't trust him. Get rid of him!"

"But that's impossible, sir. He's signed on."

"Yes, yes, I know that. But as soon as you can. I don't want him aboard any of my ships. I'll tell Captain Traskett. I don't like him. Watch him! Keep your eyes skinned! —— it, man! Surely you can find some way of tripping him?"

"You're not suggestin', sir," said Black John slowly, "that I should frame somethin' up, are you?"

He was getting angry.

Grinton held up his hand.

"Now, captain, that's enough. Don't get excited. I've got reasons. That Irishman, Kerrill, or Ferrill, or whatever his —— name is, is dangerous. He's inclined to be too inquisitive. If you get a chance to leave him behind in Halifax, do so! I don't say get him into trouble, Dorrock, of course!"

He shook his head, as if this were the very last thing in the world he desired.

"But the sooner you manage to get some one else in his place the better. It'll be worth your while. A nod's as good as a wink, eh! To a blind horse or a ship-master!"

He forced himself to laugh with a pretence of heartiness.

"Have a cigar, Dorrock. Let me see!"

He glanced at his watch.

"Well, I've got to be going. Pilot's about due aboard, eh?"

Dorrock opened the door.

The noise of the main exhaust blowing off steam was like an echo, or a symbol, of his own impatience to be clear of Cardiff.

"Pilot's here now, sir, talkin' to the mate."

"Hah, good feller, that mate! I'll see what I can do for him!"

Dorrock nodded.

"And the second mate, Dorrock! Watch him—or else we'll be sorry, perhaps, both of us. You wouldn't like that little plan of ours to fall through, would you?"

Dorrock wondered whether it had been worth his while to deliver himself into Grinton's power; and then he remembered Maggie and her cough and the fogs and rain of Cardiff, and he sighed, and his brief thought of rebellion faded, and he was once more the same subservient, affable, obedient slave as he had been ever since Grinton had found him, as he had found most of his captains, half-starved and ready to take anything that was offered.

"No," he said, "I certainly wouldn't like it to fall through, sir."

"And, remember, Dorrock; help me on with my coat, there's a good feller; remember, as soon as I hear that you've managed

things, o.k., then—or as soon, Dorrock—" Black John noticed the hesitation and the quick shuffling—"as soon as the underwriters come through with the goods, then, I'll do as I said; pay you the money. You'll be beyond reach of want for—ah, for some time, at least, eh!"

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir."

And one punch, Dorrock hugged the thought of that one punch to himself; one punch in that little round stomach, one punch and how much would all his wealth, his houses and horses and motor cars, be worth to him? Nothing—less than nothing! The man was no good. Flabby. Soft. Black John smiled and followed the owner down the ladder and on to the bridge-deck and said good-by at the gangway.

"Pleasant voyage, captain, and a safe return!"

"Thank you, sir, thank you!"

The owner walked down the gang-plank with the air of a man deserving of the highest respect of his fellow citizens.

Dorrock spat to relieve his pent-up feelings. Then he turned and nodded to the pilot.

"All ready, cap'n," said the pilot, stamping his feet on the deck. "Br'rh; it's cold."

"All ready, mister," said Dorrock, "an' glad of it. The sooner we're away out o' here the better." He raised his voice. "Mr. Lappett. Stand by to cast off!"

The mate, who had been talking to the chief engineer by the door of the fiddley, hurried toward him.

"Four of the deck-'ands ain't aboard yet, sir!"

"Blast 'em! Where the —— are they, then?"

MacGish approached, rubbing his hands on a piece of waste.

"Whaur wud they be but quenchin' their thirrsts? I'm yin fireman short noo, an' a trimmer, that's a', but fur maist o' the morn' I've had the donkeyman an' the third engineer in the stokehold gettin' steam up an' tellin' their Creator a' aboot the richts an' the wrangs o' the case!"

"Well, cap'n," said the pilot, "there's no use in worryin'!"

"Who's worryin'?" Dorrock snapped. "I'm not. We'll pick the gang up at the lock, o' course, or some o' them! But I'm in no ruddy hurry to take this packet across the West'ard light ship an' short-handed." He growled at the mate. "Mister, step lively! There's the bos'n an' carpenter aboard, anyhow. Have you told off a man for the wheel? Do it, then!" He spoke to the pilot once more. "Come on, mister, let's get out o' here before we get barnacles growin' all over our toe-nails!"

Black John climbed to the upper bridge and pulled the handle of the telegraph to Stand By. The bell clanged far beneath in the engine-room. The engine-room answered.

He raised his hand and tugged angrily at the cord above his head, and the raucous screech of the whistle in the damp air sent out a warning to the men on the quayside, and to the missing hands gathered in a melancholy little group at the lock, and to the prosperous and virtuous owner walking pompously toward the dock gates, and to the owner's daughter watching from the shelter of the coal tips, that the S.S. *Medea* was about to set off on her long voyage westward.

Rain was falling softly as the big tramp moved slowly ahead with the dockmaster bellowing orders through a megaphone and the shore-men in oilskins hauling the heavy bow and stern hawsers from bollard to bollard.

A thin, derisive yell went up from the men at the lock head.

"Here she is, b'ys! 'Op aboard or ye'll miss the treat o' yer life. Be a sailor an' see the world!"

"Yah! look at her! The ugly, flat-nosed hooker!"

The *Medea* stopped in the lock as the gates were opened; a ladder was placed against the bulwarks of the after well-deck and the hands came scrambling aboard.

"Suffering snakes!" said the second mate from the poop. "Drunk as blazes, the lot of 'em!"

There was one man far too drunk even to stand on his feet; a big, broad-shouldered man with fiery red hair and no hat. Two other men, sober enough to know what they were doing, held him by his arms and dragged him toward the ladder.

"Get that man aboard!" roared the second mate. "Do you hear?"

"Make haste, chum!" said a little, pale-faced man with scared eyes. "Make haste, or they'll leave you!"

The red-haired man did not speak. Unresisting, body and legs limp and helpless,

he let himself be hauled up the ladder. He and the two men who had him in charge, the one pulling, the other pushing, fell over the bulwark rail on to the deck.

"Get up!" said the little deck-hand. "Here, what's up? Are you bad?"

The red-haired man groaned.

"Get for'ard, you lubbers!" said the second mate. "Sharp!"

The red-haired man rolled over into the scuppers where he lay, unmolested, while the *Medea* edged her way out through the lock gates toward the open water.

ON THE bridge the pilot was preparing to drop over the side into his steam-cutter.

"Will you sign my note, cap'n! Thank you! Ah, light ship across the West'ard, eh! Shouldn't care for it, myself, cap'n!"

"No," growled Black John, "dare say you wouldn't. Don't care for it, myself, neither!"

The pilot had a grievance.

"Cardiff Roads pilotage! Would yer believe it, eh? Why don't you cap'ns do somethin' about it, eh?"

"Do what!" said Black John. "What can we do? Nothin'! Pay for a Barry Roads pilot out of our own pockets, that's all! No, mister, we can't do nothin'!"

"Always tell what kind of owners you got, cap'n, just from that. It's a mean firm what only pays for Cardiff Roads pilotage, a mean firm."

He looked at Black John for confirmation of this view, but Black John gazed ahead and said nothing.

"Well, cap'n," the pilot went on, "here's the Outer Wrack Buoy all right, so I'll say good-by an' wish yer a pleasant voyage an' leave yer!"

ON THE after well-deck the red-headed man still lay in the scuppers, huddled up, covered with coal-dust.

"Here, what's this!"

The boatswain turned him over with his foot.

"You lemme be!" said the red-headed man. "See! Or you'll be sorry. ——! I've a head on me!"

The boatswain, a big, gloomy Ulsterman, whose temper had suffered from a difference of opinion with the mate, yanked the red-haired man to his feet.

"Get for'ard!" he said.

The red-haired man blinked and gazed around him, as if trying to account for his presence aboard ship.

"Why!" he said thickly. "Why, ——! What's wrong? Where am I, eh?" He staggered to the bulwarks. "Why—why, we're movin'!"

There was a laugh.

"What'd you think we were doin'? You're aboard the *Medea*, bound for Halifax. Get on for'ard!"

The red-haired man cursed. Then he stumbled toward the bridge and climbed the ladder, the boatswain staring after him with the look of one not quite sure if he can believe the evidence of his eyes.

The red-haired man was half-way up the ladder that led to the flying bridge when Black John saw him.

"What the —— do you want?" he growled.

"I want you!" said the red-haired man. "You with the brass buttons! Put me ashore!"

Black John glared at him in speechless amazement.

"Stop the —— ship, d'yer hear?" shouted the red-haired man. "I never signed on at all. Put me ashore!"

Black John Dorrock uttered a yell of rage.

"What's that you say! You come here, givin' orders, an' flingin' yer weight about, will you!"

He ran a few steps down the ladder and then, holding on to the rails and using his foot as a lever, he caught the red-haired man a blow in the chest with the sole of his boot and sent him sprawling in a heap on the lower bridge.

"You come up here again, by James! an' I'll clap you in irons! Bosun, what the —— do you mean by lettin' that tough come bargin' up here!"

The second mate chuckled. The same old game. The sea. The sea that never changed. That never had and never would. The voyage not an hour old, the course just set, and trouble already. And what else had he come to sea for but trouble? Trouble always, from port to port! But what a gang! Lord! What a gang for a decent man to live with!

He paced to and fro on the bridge, glancing keen-eyed into the drizzle.

Presently his spirits lifted and he began to whistle a tune.

Black John looked out of the chart-room, abaft the wheel-house.

"Mister!"

"Sir," said the second mate.

"Stop that —— noise!"

V

THERE was no moon, and the clouds hid the stars. From the deck of the *Medea* nothing could be seen but the occasional lightening of the blackness as the crest of a wave went scudding past the rail. No sound broke the stillness of mid-Atlantic but the fret of the wind in the funnel stays and the splash of water and the clang of a furnace-door or a slice or shovel falling on the floor of the stoke-hole and the slow, steady throb of the engines—*phoom-tah, phoom-tah, phoom-tah*—that had never changed since leaving the Bristol Channel.

Black John Dorrock came out of his room on the lower bridge, buttoning his heavy coat, and climbed the ladder to the flying bridge. He stood for a moment by the telegraph, peering into the night. Then he glanced quickly left and right and saw the mate, whose watch it was, huddled up on the starboard wing of the bridge.

"Mister," he said.

The mate did not answer.

The wind was freshening. The *Medea* shivered and a wave swept over the forecastle head.

Black John moved slowly to where the mate was leaning over the rail.

"Mister," he said a little more sharply.

Still there was no answer. Black John flared into a quick anger. He strode forward quickly and brought his hand down hard on the mate's shoulder.

"Mr. Lappett, wake up!"

The mate turned swiftly.

"Yes, sir."

"What the —— do you mean by it?"

"Mean by what?" said the mate.

"Don't pretend! You were sound asleep, an' you know it!"

"I beg yer pardon, sir, I wasn't asleep."

"You were asleep, mister. Think I'm inaginin' things?"

"Dunno about that, sir, but I wasn't asleep."

"Listen to me, Mr. Lappett," said Dorrock. "You were asleep. I called to you three times before you heard me. What's the good of tryin' to stuff me into believin' you're deaf or half-witted. If ever a man was asleep on his watch it was you! An' what's more, if you stand there, arguin', I'll log you! Drop it! I've had enough of your sodjerin', mister! The sooner you mend yer ways the better for all of us!"

He turned and walked away to the chart-room, leaving the thin-lipped mate glaring after him in the blackness and swearing by all that he held sacred, such gods as he acknowledged, that he would get even with him if it took him a year or ten years. Because Black John Dorrock, a miserable, brandy-drinking twister, happened to be in command — as low-minded and foul-mouthed as the toughest deck-hand that ever staggered blind drunk out of the dens of Tiger Bay—he thought he could make life miserable by lies and threats for men better than himself.

—— him! To —— with a man like that! He would go on in the same old way, Black John would, eaten up with his own conceit, and then one day he would go too far, and—*click*—the mate's teeth met with a snap—he would get him.

A little before eight bells the second mate arrived on the bridge.

The mate spoke to him in a low voice.

"What d'you think? Black John comes sneakin' up on me, without makin' a sound, an' because I'm leanin' over the rail an' don't 'ear him he threatens to log me for bein' asleep! By ——, if it hadn't been here, on the —— bridge, I'd have half killed 'im! The mis'rable liar! One o' these days, Jimmy, I'll make that crooked old shark sorry he ever left home!"

"Eight bells, sir," said the man at the wheel.

The mate growled and moved across to the bell hanging in front of the wheel house.

The eight deep-toned notes rang out sharply.

Clong-clong, clong-clong, clong-clong, clong-clong!

The smaller bell on the forecastle head answered.

Clang-clang, clang-clang, clang-clang, clang-clang!

And the sing-song voice of the lookout came faintly.

"All lights burnin' bright, sir, an' all's well!"

The man at the wheel was relieved by

one of the other watch. He came out of the wheel and approached the mate.

"West by north, a quarter north!" he said.

"West by north, a quarter north!" repeated the mate. He spoke to Jimmy. "Well, if I got to be up 'ere in four hours' time, I'd better get some shut-eye. Lord! Wish sometimes I was dead. Might as well be, as serve under a —— like yon! But he'll get his one o' these days, Jim lad." He chuckled. "Well, I'm off. West by north, a quarter north!"

"West by north, a quarter north it is," said Jimmy.

The mate clattered down the ladder, and he went into the wheel-house, glanced at the binnacle and then began his four hours' watch.

He paced leisurely to and fro, from one side of the bridge to the other, balancing himself against the uneasy tilt and dip of the vessel, high up out of the water, the wind fresh and cold on his face, his hands deep in the pockets of his coat.

He thought of what Lappett had told him and he grinned. Dorrock's version of the story would be worth hearing.

Jimmy knew that Black John had taken a dislike to him; again and again it seemed as if he went out of his way to find fault—for no reason, so far as it was possible to discover. On the other hand, the mate was a bad egg. A hypocrite. Filthy-minded, sly and vicious. The kind of man who boasted about his own good qualities and gossiped about the failings of his shipmates behind their backs. Of the two, Black John with all his faults, his language and his coarseness and his fierce bursts of drinking when ashore, was the better man.

Besides Jimmy comforted himself with the reflection—there never had been a ship yet, sail or steam, oil-tank, liner or tramp, but that you would find, if you dug down, sufficiently deep, hatred and jealousy and spite somewhere.

The captain's burly figure loomed up in the darkness. He did not speak to Jimmy, nor did Jimmy speak to him.

The man at the wheel coughed.

"One bell, sir."

Jimmy banged the clapper against the rim of the brass bell.

Clong!

There was no answer from the head.

"Mr. Kerrill," said Black John gruffly.

"Sir."

"Run for'ard an' kick that —— lookout till he won't sleep again for a week. See! Go yerself! I dunno what in —— they think this ship is! Make haste!"

"Very good, sir."

Jimmy slid down the ladders on to the bridge-deck and ran forward.

On the forecastle head he saw a man lying, motionless, wedged between a ventilator and the steam windlass. He stooped and shook him by the shoulder.

"Wake up!"

The man groaned.

Jimmy dropped on his knees and groped in his pocket for a box of matches. By the flickering light of a match held in his cupped hands he saw that the lookout was the little man whom he had seen helping the red-headed man on board the ship the day they sailed. There was blood on his face.

He opened his eyes, and then the flame died down, and they were in darkness once more.

"What the ——'s the matter with you, Garle?" said Jimmy. "What happened?"

"I wasn't doing any harm, sir. No, sir. But there's things been said, sir."

Jimmy cut him short.

"But how did you get like this?"

"Dunno, sir. I'm not sure, sir. I was standing here, sir, and I heard some one come up the ladder behind me and then I felt something hit me—I didn't remember anything more, sir, not till you came."

He struggled to his feet.

"——! I feel queer."

"Hang on a bit! I'll go and see what's to be done."

Jimmy went aft to the bridge.

"Well," said Black John.

Jimmy explained.

Black John flared back at him.

"Look here, Mr. Kerrill, what d'you take me for? Seems to me I've got a pack o' lunatics to dry nurse, not officers to help me! Do you mean to tell me you believed that yarn about some one hittin' him—stuff an' nonsense!"

"There's blood all over his face, sir," said Jimmy.

If the old fool wouldn't believe him, he wouldn't. He might go and stick his head in a furnace before he'd argue.

"Go for'ard again an' find the man who hit him, then!"

Orders were orders, but what the blazes

did Black John think he was! One of the deck-hands—or what? —— his eyes!

Perhaps there was something to be said for the mate, after all.

"Look here, you, Garle," said Jimmy, when he reached the forecastle head once more. "Are you all right?"

"Yes, sir," said the little deck-hand. "Yes, sir."

"H'm! And you can stand your trick at the wheel, eh? Who was it hit you? Any idea?"

"No, sir."

There was a note of alarm in the little man's voice.

"Any one got it in for you?"

"No, sir. I've got no enemies on board, sir. Not so far's I know, sir."

"You're lying, o' course. Well, serves you right if you won't tell me."

"No, sir. I don't lie. Whatever my faults may be, sir—whatever the sins I've got on my soul, sir—I'm no liar. Maybe if it hadn't been for the drink, sir, I'd have been a preacher by now, sir, preaching the Gospel, but——"

WITHOUT waiting for the little man to finish a long drawn-out explanation which was, on the face of it, mere driveling lunacy, Jimmy Kerrill went down the ladder into the well-deck and very cautiously peered into the seaman's forecastle, dimly lit by a paraffin lamp and smelling of damp clothes, and sweat and heavy body odors and tobacco, and warmed by a small bogie that smoked from the pipe and made the close and stifling atmosphere almost unbreathable.

Jimmy entered the narrow iron pen and approached the bunks, one over another, where the hands who had come off watch were sleeping.

"Here you!" said Jimmy. "Wake up!"

The man nearest him opened his eyes and grounted.

"Any of you men know who hit that man Garle?"

No one answered. And then a slow, sneering voice said:

"Who's that kickin' up that —— noise in here. Get out! Whoever you are."

Certain now that he was bound to have trouble Jimmy made his way to the bunk at the far end of the forecastle from which the voice had come.

"Who's sleeping here? Who are you, eh?"

The man in the bunk had his head covered with a coat. He did not move. His breathing was slow and regular. Jimmy knew that he was shamming to be asleep. He shook him by the arm.

"Who the —— are you?" he demanded. "You're not asleep. Answer me!"

"An' who the —— are you?"

Before Jimmy could dodge, the man in the bunk had flung his coat over his head and hurled himself over the side of the bunk on top of him, hitting with both fists.

"I'll teach you!"

Jimmy, pinned to the wreckage of the table that collapsed under the combined weights of himself and his opponent, did his best to ward off the storm of blows that came raining down on him. The coat hamperred him, but he worked himself free and hit back at the face above him, hidden in the shadow of the lamp, and feeling no pain from the battering he received.

All at once the man he was fighting gripped him tight around his body under his arms. Jimmy felt that his ribs would break under the strain; he could not breathe; his senses were leaving him. In another moment he would be done, finished— Oh, God! The pressure on his body increased; his chest was cracking. But his arms were still free.

Making one last supreme effort he crashed his right fist into the deck-hand's face. The deck-hand grunted, as if with surprize, and loosened his grip sufficiently for Jimmy to draw his breath. Jimmy hit him again, with his left, under the chin. The man seemed shaken, at last, and gave way. Jimmy found that he was free.

"What the —— do you mean by it?" he asked. It was difficult to keep his voice steady.

Suddenly the man jumped.

A hard drive in the jaw sent Jimmy smashing against the iron bulkhead. The pain in his head made him feel sick and dizzy. If the deck-hand attacked him now he was beaten, he knew.

But the deck-hand stood panting for breath, his hands by his sides, his lips drawn back from his teeth.

"Had enough?"

And then Jimmy recognized the red-haired man, Hannigan, who persisted that Hannigan was not his name, that he had not been to sea for fifteen years, and that he had been drugged and taken aboard the

Medea, when in no condition to realize what was happening; a bad-tempered, surly beast who had given nothing but trouble ever since they had left Cardiff.

"Hannigan, what the —— have you been playing at? What d'you mean by it? Don't you know who I am?"

Hannigan gave a start of surprize, or what was intended as such.

"My ——!" he said. "Why, it's the second mate! I'm sure I beg yer pardon, sir. I thought it was one o' the firemen havin' a joke, sir!"

A lie, Jimmy knew, from the mocking gleam in the man's close-set eyes and his grin. But what was the use of arguing with a man who still had the use of his two fists and could hit as hard as Hannigan could?

"Talk sense!" he said.

"Well, sir, why didn't you say who you was at once? An', anyway, now you are here, sir, is there anything yer do want, or what?"

The man's insolence made Jimmy itch to swing at him once more, but his aching head was a warning not to be disregarded.

"I want to know who was the man who hit Garle?"

"No one here, sir," said Hannigan. "We didn't know the poor little feller was hit!"

He climbed once more into his bunk.

Jimmy, feeling that he had been made to look foolish, but through no fault of his own, went out of the forecastle and walked slowly aft to the bridge.

"Well," said Black John, "you've been long enough about it, mister! Did yer find the man?"

"No, sir," said Jimmy.

"You didn't find him! You mean to say you just stood there chewin' the rag, askin' questions an' swallowin' all they said to you!" He laughed under his breath. "My ——, mister, what made you think you were cut out to be a sailor, eh? Why didn't you stay ashore to take up preachin' or pushin' a pen for a livin' or sellin' silk stockin's or somethin' quiet an' peaceable. On your own showin' one of the hands knocked that lookout man out an' yet you don't do nothin' to find who did it? Seems to me, mister, the sooner you change yer vocation an' get a job teachin' a girls' school to dance the better for all of us!"

The second mate stared into the darkness. The pain in his head where his skull had crashed against the bulkhead throbbed to the slow *phoom-tah, phoom-tah, phoom-tah* of the engines. He felt too tired to talk. His teeth had cut into his tongue and his lip was bleeding. His ribs were sore. Nevertheless he grinned, in spite of his bruises, as he listened to Black John's bitter description of his failings.

"Mister," the captain concluded, "you want a nurse. That's the truth o' the matter. You want a nurse. How in —— they think I'm goin' to run a ship with the dubs they give me for officers Lord knows! I don't. Might as well throw discipline to the winds. I suppose before you left the forecastle you kissed the hands good-night an' tucked 'em up, eh?"

Without waiting for a reply Black John stumped down the ladder to his own room.

At eight bells the mate was back on the bridge.

"Where's the stinker?" he asked.

"Who? The old man?" said Jimmy.

"Who else? What's he been doin'? Anything out o' the ordinary!"

"Don't think so," said Jimmy. "Told me he didn't think much o' me! Said I ought to be home, lookin' after a nursery—or something! —— old bottle-washer! For no reason, either. He 's captain, of course, and he can say what he likes! I've got to listen. Well, what's the odds? I dare say Black John has his troubles, same as the rest of us!"

The mate came so close to him that Jimmy could feel his hot breath on his cheek.

"Mister," he whispered, "he'll go too far. He's got me to reckon with. Blast him! He's said things no man's ever said before! You get me! I mean what I say, mister. I'll get him all right. That blood-sucker can't treat me like a lump o' muck! I'll break even with him if I have to do it with my own —— hands!"

"Will you?" said Jimmy.

"I will," said the mate. "I'm a man of my word. You wait! I'll break him."

Jimmy wondered.

VI

FORTY-EIGHT hours had passed since the *Medea* had entered the thick, white blanket of fog that shrouded the stars by night and the sun by day.

The morning was very cold and still. Save for the slow progress of the vessel, the wash and the wake, not a ripple stirred the calm surface of the sea; the long blasts of the whistle every two minutes and the steady beat of the engines seemed to make the silence of the enveloping fog more noticeable and deadening.

Mr. Lappett made his way slowly to the forecastle head where he stood by the side of the lookout man and peered into the impenetrable whiteness, stamping his feet and hissing through his clenched teeth.

"Cold, isn't it?" he said at last.

The lookout man, muffled in oilskins and a woolen muffler, grunted an unintelligible reply.

Mr. Lappett, surprized, turned and saw Hannigan's hard face with the broken nose and the bushy red eyebrows and the fierce eyes.

"Huh! It's you, Hannigan, is it? Hear anythin'?"

"No. Nothin'."

The mate considered whether he should ask Hannigan whether he was accustomed to speak to officers with so little respect or not. And then he noticed what he had noticed several times before in the past week, the purple swelling under Hannigan's right eye.

"Oh, Hannigan!" he said in a matter-of-fact tone, "I've been meanin' to ask you for some days. Who marked you? Been scrappin', my man, or what?"

Hannigan scowled.

"Scrappin'!" he said. He spoke deliberately, as if making up his mind whether he should answer or not. "Scrappin': well, in a way, yes, an' in a way, no! There ain't no one aboard this packet, mister, what knows what scrappin' is!"

He gave a grim laugh, and it was not the chill damp of the fog that made Mr. Lappett shiver as he listened.

"Oh!" he said. "That so? Reckon yerself a bit of a bruiser, eh?"

"I do," said the man. "I'm past my prime now, but there was a time, mister, when there was few pros would have cared to stand up agin' me in the ring without gloves on. Not even old Bob Fitzsimmons, himself! An' even now, mister, I'm a tough nut to crack!"

"Well, no need to give us a song an' dance about it!" said the mate. "Who landed you in the eye, eh?"

The red-haired man stirred restlessly.

"No one. Accident." He growled. "Won't happen again."

"No!" said Mr. Lappett. "Dare say not. Next time you'll croak him before he can cut loose, eh?"

For a moment Mr. Lappett thought that he had gone too far. The red-haired man glared at him from under the brim of his sou'wester. Then he shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"You're right, mister. Next time the man what done this—" he touched his eyelid—"the man what done this will be sorry he ain't home with his mammy!"

The mate whistled softly.

"Well, my man, mebbe you're all right. Seems to me you think a ——uva lot o' yourself, whatever you are!"

"Reason to, mister. 'Cause why! I'm on board ship where I oughtn't to be. I'm no ruddy deck-hand, same as I've said pretty nigh every day since I found myself crawlin' round this here blasted deck! None o' you'd believe me, o' course. Can't say I blame yer, but I won't forget. I'm bidin' my time. When I gets my chance, I take it. They call me Hannigan. They can call me what they —— well likes. It don't matter to me. There's some aboard this packet, mister, that ought to know me, but don't want to. One, anyway."

"Who's that?" asked the mate.

"That's tellin'," said the deck-hand. "Mebbe you'll know before you've finished. He will, whoever else don't! An' what's more, he'll be sorry he didn't see the last o' me years ago, same as he hoped!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Lappett. "Most interestin'! Most! Seems to me, my man, you're a customer worth dodgin'. What do you do when you're home. Not a cabinet minister by any chance, are you?"

"Me!" said the man, frowning. "No, mister. I got more sense than them stiffs. Me, I went into partnership with a friend o' mine year or so back, sailors' boardin'-house, etcetry. When I get back I'll pull the roof off the house to find out how I come to be steered aboard this packet with a skinful o' dope. I got my suspicions. If they're correct—some one'll be hurt bad, an' it won't be me!"

He laughed shortly and spat his chew of tobacco into the fog.

"Sailors' boardin'-house, eh!" said Mr. Lappett, considering. "That's good. I

know one man who makes a pretty good thing from that pertickler line o' philanthropy—with the extras, o' course—Limehouse Larry. Know him?"

"Limehouse Larry!" said the red-headed seaman slowly, and there was in his voice a note of what might have been termed respect. "Are you a friend of Limehouse Larry's, mister?"

"So, so!" said Mr. Lappett. "He ain't the kind of man I'd care to 'ave shoutin' after me on James Street corner, but I did him a service once, helped him out of a scrape, an' I'm tellin' no lie when I say there's nothin' Larry wouldn't do in return if I asked him. I've been in one or two little business deals with Larry neither of us 'ave ever regretted!"

"If you're a friend of Limehouse Larry's mister," said the red-headed seaman, "you ought to be able to find your way round without askin' no policeman the way. He's got a lot o' power in Cardiff, Limehouse has."

Mr. Lappett nodded.

"Any one I recommended to Limehouse as bein' on the square 'e'd use." He paused. "Only—I'd 'ave to be sure of my man."

"Lookin' for proof, like," said Hannigan, "eh, mister?"

"Yes," said Mr. Lappett. "I'm not askin' questions, I don't have to, but—whatever you are now, whatever you may have been doin' lately—you were a sailor once! In that blow we 'ad last week there was no one but you in the whole crew who could keep the old hooker on her course."

Hannigan looked at the mate with contempt in his eyes.

"Yes," he said. "I was a sailor. Once. If you want to know more about me, mister, go an' ask Black John Dorrock back on the bridge there! He'll tell yer. That's to say, if he ain't chose to forget things he don't want to remember. Ask him!"

The mate was startled.

"Mean to say you sailed with the captain?"

"Mean to say nothin'!" said the red-haired man.

"You'll be pretty hard up for money by the time you reach 'ome!" said Mr. Lappett presently.

"There's more ways o' earnin' money, mister, than by drawin' another man's pay as an A.B. aboard this packet!"

"You're not pertickler, I suppose!"

The deck-hand and the mate glanced at each other quickly and then each turned and stared ahead into the fog as before.

"No," said Hannigan, "I ain't particular. Anything in your mind, mister?"

"No. But mebbe you're the man I'm lookin' for. I've got a scheme—sometimes things crop up—mebbe I'll need you. I pay well."

He walked back to the bridge.

HE HAD debts to settle. Life was full of perplexities. The longest way round was often the quickest way through in the end. Hannigan's talk had puzzled him. The man was a mystery. One thing was clear—he knew Dorrock. He had sailed with him in days gone by. And, judging not so much from his words as from his looks and his manner, he had reason to hate him.

Decidedly Hannigan was a man worth keeping in view.

The mate reached the bridge.

Black John spoke to him without turning his head.

"Well, what do you make of it now, mister, eh?"

"Thick as ever. Seen nothin'. 'Eard nothin'."

Black John Dorrock grunted and continued to gaze into the fog. Presently he spoke again, without moving his eyes.

"Don't like it, mister. Eight days dead reck'nin', no sun, no stars, no ruddy horizon, forty-eight hours thick fog! No catch, is it, mister, eh?"

The mate sniffed and smiled. Black John had been drinking brandy again. He would, of course. Black John was scared.

"No, mister, I don't like it."

"There's nothin' to worry about, sir," said Mr. Lappett.

"No!" said Black John with heavy sarcasm. "I'm glad to hear it. I am, honest! Mister, you're a wonder! A —— wonder!" He screwed up his eyes and sucked in his breath between his teeth. "We ain't lost, if that's what you mean!"

The mate looked at him and said nothing.

"No," Black John went on, "an' as long as we got wireless workin' an' nothin' goes wrong, we know where we are. When we're gettin' near land, anyhow. Cape Race an' Chebucto Head gave us our bearin's in the mornin' watch. That's all right

so far as it goes! We'll reach Halifax tonight, but——"

"Well!" said Lappett presently. "You said 'but,' sir."

"Yes, an' I meant it. Wireless ain't goin' to pick us up an' steer us clear of all harm, past rocks an' shoals an' steamers straight into Halifax Harbor, is it, mister?"

"No, sir, but all the same, sir, just because there's a bit of a fog, it don't seem to me there's no reason to worry!"

Black John turned at last and looked at the mate's yellow, tight-skinned face and thin lips, and then he smiled.

"Suppose you'll say next we'd be quite safe, mister, to cut right ahead, full speed, an' to —— with the fog!"

Lappett wriggled uneasily.

"In a manner o' speakin', yes, sir. I always 'old with what they used to say, unofficial, sir, in the old Blue Star, the faster you go through fog, the faster you reach clear weather an' sun. This dodgin' aroun', dead slow, half-speed, stoppin', listenin', whistlin', ain't good for no one, us nor the other feller—that's my opinion!"

"Wonderful!" said Black John. "Wonderful!"

"Halifax ain't near enough yet, sir," said Lappett, "for us to begin panickin'!"

"Who the ——'s panickin'?" said Black John.

"No one, sir. No one."

"Mister," said Black John, after a long silence, "I'd look funny, wouldn't I, if I rang the telegraph Full Ahead an' let blind into this —— fog, eh! You've never had command of a ship of your own, have you, eh? An', let me tell you, mister, if you ran things the way you'd like me to run 'em, you wouldn't have command of her long! Mister, suppose anything happens to the *Medea*, who's responsible? Not you! You bet not. Whose ticket would go? Not yours, mister."

Mr. Lappett shrugged his shoulders. A sudden swirl of anger swept over him. He hated Black John a little more than he had ever hated him before.

"Well, sir," he said, "you know your own business best, o' course!"

"Should —— well think I do," said Black John with a short laugh. "It's easy enough to be mate an' not worry. We'll make Halifax tonight, all bein' well an' with a couple o' days or so coal left in the bunkers—that's somethin' to think of, ain't it! Suppose that gale had lasted! You didn't worry, mister, did you, when the wind was drivin' us way off our course? Why should you? You ain't responsible. I am. But I tell you, Lappett, I never take the *Medea* across the West'ard light ship without bein' mighty thankful soon as I make port! What's more, I'm no coward!"

And he glared at Lappett as if he dared him to contradict.

"No, sir," said Lappett. "Why, no, sir; o' course not!"

One bell sounded.

Through the fog there came the faint moan of a steamer's whistle, like a cow in distress.

"Hullo—what's that?"

Hannigan hailed the bridge.

"Steamer on the port bow, sir!"

The *Medea's* whistle blared out a warning.

The little group on the bridge, the master, the mate and the big Irish boatswain, waited, straining their ears, leaning forward.

Presently out of the thick, sound deadening blanket of white fog, the other steamer's whistle hooted once more.

"Big feller!" said Black John.

He pulled the whistle-cord.

Again there came the reply out of the fog.

"Br'rh!" Black John growled. "He's comin' up too fast!"

Jimmy Kerrill ran up the bridge-ladder. Eight bells sounded. Another deck-hand arrived to relieve the man at the wheel.

The eight strokes of the other steamer's bell carried across the water to the *Medea's* bridge.

"That ain't port, sir," said the boatswain suddenly. "That's starboard."

Black John rang the telegraph to Stop, and the engine room answered. The slow beat of the engines died away; the *Medea* rose and fell on the slow, heavy swell of the North Atlantic. Black John pulled the whistle-cord twice in succession, two long drawn screeches, the warning to navigate with caution.

In the cold stillness the noise of the other steamer approaching came clear and distinct.

"I'll give 'em the letter R!" said Black John. He made the signal by whistle—short, long, short. *"Way is off my ship, you may feel your way past me."*

And then the mate muttered:

"Why, my ——! There's two o' them—port an' starboard—listen!"

It was Jimmy Kerrill, leaning over the port wing of the bridge, who saw the liner first.

"Look!" he said sharply. "See that!"

The fog lifted for an instant and there came a faint, misty glimpse of a huge black hull and many port-holes, red boot topping, the white wash of the stem, white deck-houses, a lofty bridge, a red-and-black-and-white funnel, churning past. And then the fog swirled down again once more and the gap was choked and the liner vanished.

"And," said Jimmy Kerrill, "that's what they call going slow; why, their slow's faster than our full speed ahead!"

Black John Dorrock chuckled and glanced at Mr. Lappett who said nothing.

"There's that other feller still," said the boatswain. "You can hear him!"

"Believe he's stopped," said the second.

Black John rang the telegraph to SLOW AHEAD.

"Messin' about like this!" he growled.

The *Medea* moved forward once more, the whistle screeching at two-minute intervals.

"Seems like he's right ahead of us," said Jimmy. "Hear that?"

"Can't hear because of our own —— whistle!" said Black John. "Don't talk!"

And then there was a wild yell of warning from the forecastle head, as out of the fog there loomed the dim shape of another steamer's stumpy masts and funnel, immediately ahead of the *Medea*, and so close that it seemed to the men on the bridge impossible that a collision could be averted.

Recognition of danger and action were simultaneous. Black John shouted at the man at the wheel, "Hard a port!" and then waited, leaning heavily against a wooden awning upright, head thrust forward, teeth clenched, shoulders hunched, like the shoulders of a fighter receiving punishment, nerves taut, glaring at the oncoming steamer fiercely, eyes puckered, as if by sheer force of will and energy and eyesight he could save his ship.

Slowly, so slowly, that time and space seemed to have lost all meaning, the bows of the two steamers turned aside sufficiently far to permit their hulls free passage through the churned up water.

"By ——! We've done it!" said Black John. "By ——!"

He choked a lump that rose to his throat. His ship was safe.

As the port wings of the two bridges came abreast he stared at the men on the other ship and grinned uneasily as a man will grin when he has cheated death.

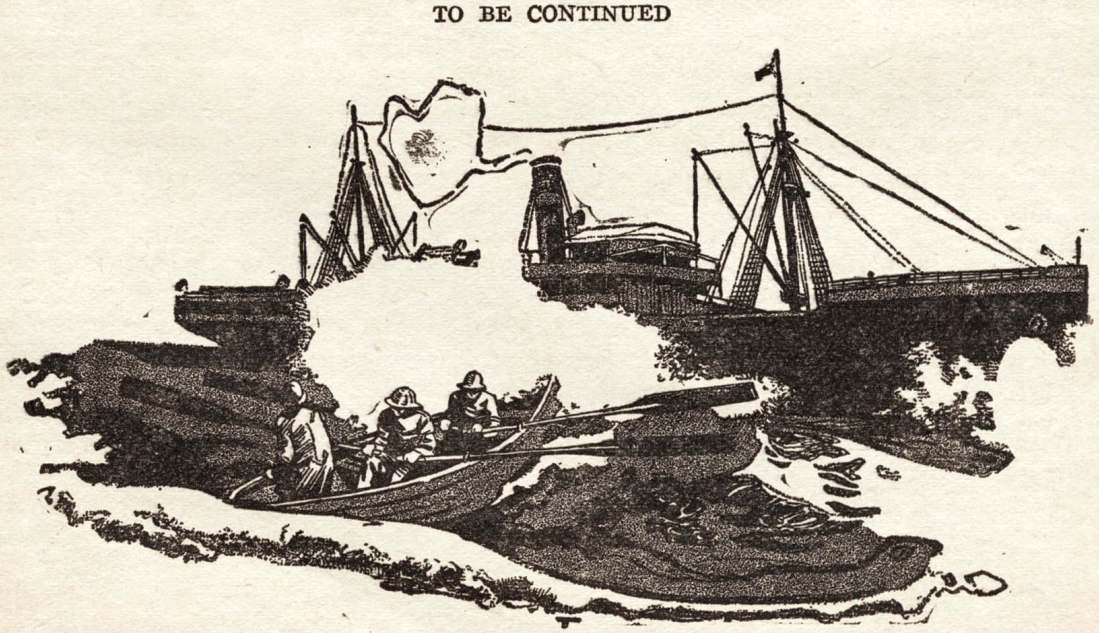
"Near thing, that!" said the mate, casting a quick look at Black John's hard face. "Near as I want, sir!"

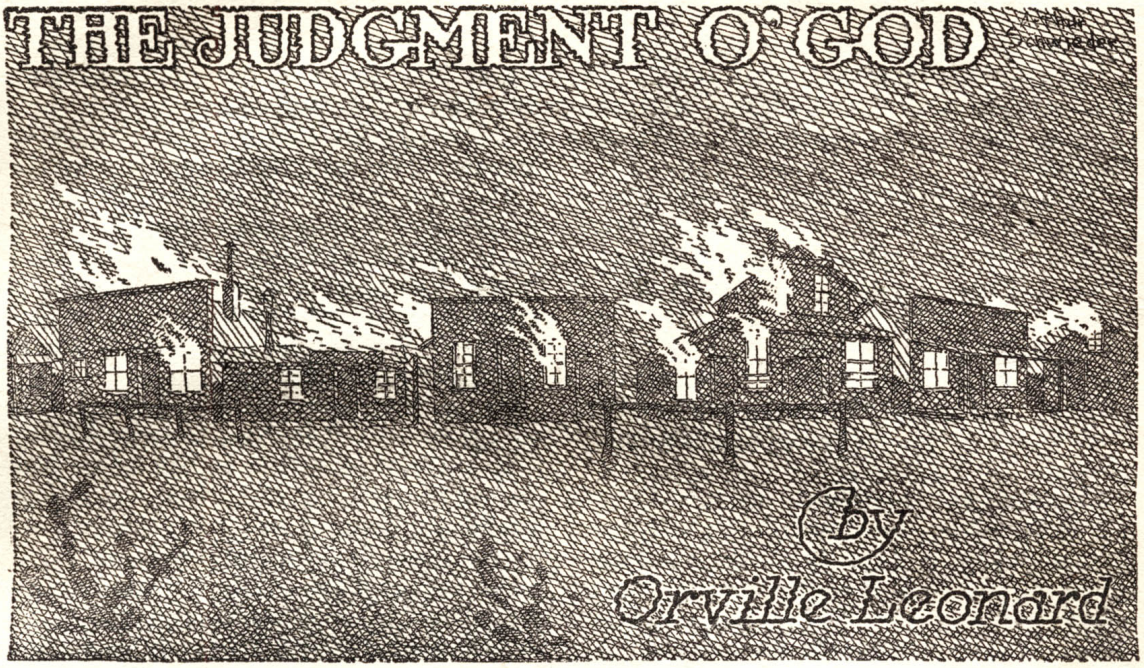
"Just as well I wasn't foolish enough to listen to your —— advice, mister," said Black John. "Satisfied?"

"One bell, sir," said the man at the wheel.

Black John stumped off to the chart-room.

TO BE CONTINUED





Author of "Malapai Ranch."

PIÑON lay under the very shadow of the Sierras' lofty gray wall, and was watered by swift mountain streams bordered by cottonwoods and filled with big salmon trout. These swiftly foaming waters never went dry, as the placer streams did, for they were fed perennially by melting snow from the high Sierras; so Piñon was beautifully grassed, and dotted with fruit and alfalfa ranches, with here and there a bunch of cattle. The little town looked, from the other mountains that hemmed the desert on the east, like a ribbon of green velvet edging the flat yellow blanket of desert.

In the Summer, the ranchers drove their herds up on to the Sierra benches, where the juicy grasses were thick and high. And in September, the yellow road threading that band of vivid green on the desert's edge was kept in a ferment of dust for days, churned up by the hoofs of thousands of cattle herded back on the ranches for the Winter: for in September the Sierra peaks began trying on their winter snow-caps, and those richly-grassed mountain benches would presently be deep in snow.

Then was Piñon filled with brown sinewy cow-punchers straddling along the board-walk which edged the one irregular street, with the stiff-legged gait of men who sat a saddle for most of their waking hours. But as stiff leather chaps, high-heeled boots and heavy Mexican spurs do not make walking easy, the *pasear* down Piñon's main street was merely taken because it was the road to the "Cowboys' Rest," "The Rancher's Retreat," and half a dozen more—through the swing-doors of which came the sound, day and night, of the clicking of poker chips, of voices raised in song or argument.

In Piñon, the ranchers reared large families; and there were many Mexicans who knew that the range riders held their lives but little more valuable than those of the Indians, so they kept to themselves and lived very quietly. Hence, with the Mexicans offering no excuse for reprisal; with women and children acting as a check on their actions at home, the tiny mining town of Drybones on the opposite edge of the desert valley allured with promise of wild, unchecked hilarity.

But the long continued quiet of Piñon was broken the day that Steve Ransom pulled his sweating horse to a standstill in front of The Rancher's Retreat, left the over-ridden bronco with heaving sides and hanging head, clanked into the saloon and announced:

"Jack Logan's wife has just been knocked down an' robbed by that thievin' skunk Manuel Estrada, up the road near Jack's ranch—an'—an'—there's reasons why it might go special hard with her jest now."

"Get Estrada, Steve?" demanded Tod Clemmons.

"Logan did—trailed him through the chaparral back o' his shack an' shot him careful, where he'd suffer like ——, an' die slow."

"Where's John now?" persisted Clemmons.

"Gone loco—huntin' greasers—swears he'll kill 'em all. Headin' this way now."

It was the spark needed to touch off the powder; for the round-up was over, quiet games of pool and poker had already begun to pall, the inbred animosity to greasers awaited but a good excuse for violent action—and Mrs. Jack Logan was greatly liked.

Chairs were pushed back, pool and card games forgotten, even whisky glasses were left undrained, and hardly a word was spoken as the roomful of vigorous, hard-bitten young fellows arose, felt the butts of their revolvers and made for the door.

Tod Clemmons added a working slogan for their seething anger—

"Boys," he said emphatically, "the greasers must go!"

"You betcha!" agreed Steve Ransom, "we'll clean this town, by ——!"

Quickly the broncos, sleeping in the sun, were jerked to life, and a dozen lean, wiry men, with six-guns drawn, galloped up the street. The five Mexicans in "Tony's," the one, isolated Mexican saloon in town, had no chance for life as a volley from the mad punchers, fired as fast as six-guns could be fanned, poured through the open doorway into the dark adobe room. But one Mexican fired back, and before his body was riddled, he dropped Steve Ransom with a shot through the stomach; which added fuel to an already hot fire.

After wiping out Tony's place, the enraged riders turned to the Mexican settlement. The cooler heads among them rode from door to door of the small, wooden shacks where the dark-eyed Southern families dwelt, telling them curtly:

"Vamoose by ten o'clock tonight. Git! And don't ever come back!"

Then was there hurried bundling together of bedding and cooking utensils, and burros laden to the point of eclipse staggered slowly out of town into the desert, driven by fearful, despairing Mexicans wailing and mourning for their dead, and for ruined homes; crying of "*Madre di dios*," and calling to all the saints.

But on the edge of dark, the more vengeful townsmen hurried the exodus by shooting at the barricaded doorways of the ones who had not already left.

At sun-up next morning, Jack Logan, who had raged through the country all night like a madman, spied three heavily laden figures toiling up a steep trail into the Sierras, three miles from town. With an oath, he forced his tired horse to gallop up the trail where broncos were only expected to walk, overtook the fugitives, shot them all, and left them where they fell.

In a day, some rather listless, bored young cow-punchers had been transformed into killers, yet they would have hotly denied the name of "bad men," since they considered their cause just. Their spirits were keyed up to a fierce excitement, and their trigger-fingers still itched, but now the greasers were gone, and Piñon was dead—deader than it had ever been before, with the reaction that comes after hot tragedy.

"Boys," said Tod Clemmons, "it's me fer Drybones—this town's safe now—also, it's like a bottle after the last drink."

"You betcha!" "Same here!" "Us fer Drybones!" came the chorus, and the little troop of punchers swung their shuffling broncos down onto the level desert floor, and headed for Drybones, which showed a huddle of brown patches against the yellow sand thirty miles away.

BIG TIM CLANCY was sheriff, and Tim didn't believe in guns, either for himself or another, when natural means could effect his object. Big Tim was seldom in his office at El Nojas, for he was giving Drybones much of his attention: he was in that town when the troop of men from Piñon arrived, and though no news had yet leaked in of the Mexican evacuation Tim had chanced to meet a Mexican struggling through the sand a few miles from Drybones. The Mexican was half dead from grief, and wholly exhausted by his long-borne household gear, but Tim's humane treatment brought forth the story in a wild gush of emotion—so Tim followed the visitors from Piñon with a keen eye, and mentally checked them off.

They were lined up in "The Miners' Delight," every man with a heavy gun on his hip, when Clancy brushed through the swing doors and stood just inside, his great

bulk nearly blotting out the blazing desert light behind him.

"Mornin', boys. I see you're wearin' your artillery."

"Yes," spoke up Tod Clemmons, "an' what about it? An' who might you be, stranger?"

"I'm the new sheriff. Drybones is my particular pet spot in this here county. For the sake o' law an' order, all gents is required to cache their shootin' irons with the bartenders, or at the hotel, fifteen minutes after they hits this town; an' they don't git 'em back till fifteen minutes before they leave town. Now, you boys been here half an hour by my watch an', as you don't know the rulin', I'll excuse you—but I'll ask you to lay them guns on the bar. Tom there will treasure 'em careful till you're ready to vamoose—savvy?"

Jake Sleshinger, young and hot-headed, and tall as the sheriff, flashed back—

"We don't give up our guns fer nobody—to —— with your rulin'!"

But Jake—until yesterday innocent of man killing, and still full of the unholy joy of releasing a spurt of flame and seeing his man drop—made the mistake of watching Clancy's gun hand. When the sheriff's hard, knotty, left fist shot out and drove against Jake's chin, he fell like a stone and lay still.

Then, before any of the angry ones could draw, Clancy ripped out his heavy revolver and slammed it on the bar, while his hot blue eye ranged the line of fierce faces, the tallest on a level with his own. His soft tone was belied by his determined mouth and the glitter in his eye:

"I don't like to collect guns that way, but I will if I have ter," he said, with a fleeting grin. "Put them guns on the bar, gentlemen, or I'll be after taking you all on, one at a time."

Tod Clemmons, whose lead was generally followed, unbuckled his belt with a laugh and threw belt and gun on the bar:

"We ain't afraid of you none, sheriff, but you're sure a white man, and I reckon we'll respect your rulin'. Poor cuss—" looking down at the long still figure on the floor—"I don't hanker to ride home to Piñon feelin' like he will when he wakes up."

"Now that's O.K.," said the sheriff. "You look like a fairly decent bunch—but I got just this much more to say." His face hardened, "I'm sheriff of another county than your'n, but if I knowed the skunk that plugged Tony Loreno's little kid, I'd give him the time o' his life,"

His quick glance shifted from face to face but he saw only surprize on the tanned faces about him.

"Loreno's kid! Nobody shot him," declared Tod.

"Oh, didn't they!" sneered Clancy. "When you git a whole brood o' kids behind a thin door, an' plug it with lead, one o' the slugs is liable to meet something inside."

Picking up his gun from the bar, he shoved it back in its holster, spat contemptuously and added:

"I met Tony out in the desert, 'most dead with mourning' fer little Tony. One o' your bunch drawed a pattern on his front door with a gun, an' one of them bullets got his kid. He seen it through a crack in the cabin, but he wouldn't give me the feller's name. An' if I know Mexes, the feller that plugged little Tony better watch out. You fellers want to remember, while you're in this town, that a Greaser's a human," and swinging about, he was gone.

"Now that," said Tod Clemmons, with conviction, "is what I call a game sport. All the same, he takes the joy out o' Drybones fer me, fer what's the use o' celebratin' without fireworks! I'm goin' ter hit the trail fer home. How about it, boys?"

"Naw—we ain't goin' yet," drawled Pete Huggins, "we come to make a day an' night of it, an' we stays—also, Jake ain't fit to travel yet. You go along home, Tod, if you want to, an' we'll bring Jake along when it gets cooler."

But Drybones had lost its charm for the men from Piñon. The surrender of their guns, in a town that had always represented to them unbridled liberty, made them feel like boys deprived of their marbles, and they wanted to go home—just as would those smaller boys. They lounged along the street from bar to bar; they played poker and solo; they drank much—but their beloved six-guns were not handy. Why, it was almost as bad as being afoot!

Along about six o'clock, when Jake Sleshinger sat up on the billiard table where he had been laid, and began to swear, Pete Huggins asked him—

"Feel better, Jake?"

Jake smiled feebly.

"I have felt better, but I'm able to fork a bronc, if I ride slow."

"D'you shoot up Loreno's shack, Jake?"

"Uh-huh—why?"

"Oh, nothin'—only the sheriff says somebody plugged Loreno's kid behind a locked door."

"Suppose," said Bill Simpson, breaking an uncomfortable silence, "we pulls our freight for Piñon, an' see how Jake makes it?"

To this there was a chorus of assent.

Broncos were saddled hastily, and eleven rather subdued cow-punchers rode out of Drybones into the desert; but when they had topped a sandy ridge that ran down the desert like a frozen wave, they sat up straight in their saddles.

"My ——! That looks like Piñon afire!" gasped Pete Huggins, for backed by the dark Sierra wall, an intermittent line of jets of yellow flame spread along the edge of the sand far ahead of them.

"Old-timer, can you make it?" they inquired anxiously of Jake.

"I c'n make it slow, boys," he replied. "You get goin' pronto, an' I'll mosey along at my own gait. I'm gittin' my saddle legs again." With nothing more than "*Adios!*" they spurred away, following a faint trail where the sand was harder; and the badly jolted Jake was left to ride alone under the fast-gathering desert stars, with only his thoughts and his bursting head for company.

And his thoughts were worse than the pains in his head and body, for when the group of punchers had halted yesterday before Tony Loreno's door, and sent a volley of bullets into it—shoulder-high—Jake it was who had lingered when the others rode on, reloaded his gun and sent a zig-zag pattern of lead through the thin panels, from lintel to sill—then he had ridden on alone.

Jake Sleshinger had always hated Tony Loreno, and at last his hatred had been licensed to express itself. But some one had killed little Tony Loreno, a black, curly-headed laughing little lad of six—and Jake knew who had done it.

The desert may bring peace and solace, or it may bring fierce agony of loneliness —but to Jake it was a horrible black void where he was riding alone with thoughts he could not ride away from. Potting a Greaser in the open, when he had been warned to quit, was one thing—but little Tony Loreno! He cursed; he shouted aloud to drown his thoughts; he spurred and quirted his tiring bronco—anything to bring fierce action and change the current of his thoughts—but little Tony Loreno rode with him.

The sudden spurt of galloping brought on excruciating pains in his head; hammers were pounding there, and shots were popping—shots like the explosions of six-guns, and one, louder than the others, made him reel in his saddle. He grasped the saddle-horn, but his feeble fingers slid away, and his body struck the deep sand with a soft thud, while his bronco galloped on.

WHEN Tim Clancy left "The Miners' Delight," he was bound on an errand to the Cerro Verde mine, which lay far up in the hills. His errand had to do with the attachment of certain movable property there, for debt, the owner having defaulted on her obligations.

The trip through dark cañons and over rugged trails would consume much of the day, and Tim felt uneasy at leaving Drybones with the Piñon men in town. But his face cleared when he saw Lewis McKendrick galloping up the trail from the south, for McKendrick, though a wild, harum-scarum boy, was clean and straight and quick as light with his gun—also, he was cool and fearless: the sort who laughed when a fight was on—and fought the harder for his laughter.

At Tim's raised hand, McKendrick drew up sharply.

"Hold up your right hand, Kid," said Clancy, repeating the formula which made Lewis McKendrick a deputy sheriff—and handing him his star.

"Why the honors, Tim?" laughed McKendrick, fastening his deputy's badge on the flannel shirt beneath his flapping vest.

"Kid," said Tim soberly, "I got to leave town, mebbeso for all day, an' there's a bunch from Piñon in the 'Delight' there that I don't like to leave alone. They ain't really bad boys, but —— broke loose in Piñon, an' they're lit up with some o' the fire, I reckon. Anyway, you keep cool an' watch out—I'll be back as quick as I can, but it'll be evening, at the closest. *Adios!*" and Tim was off.

On the edge of dark, the sheriff's lean, long-stepping range horse came dropping

down through the foothills overlooking Drybones. Beneath a clear green sky, a flaming rose edged the lofty peaks, but the mighty Sierra wall was purple dark, and the desert was dusky gray. And where the deepest shadow lay—where the desert met the mighty wall—a line of flickering light flared up in tiny yellow points.

"Looks like Piñon's afire," said Tim aloud, and hastened his horse's gait.

He found McKendrick smoking a cigaret on the hotel porch, his chair tilted back at a comfortable angle.

"How was everything, Kid?" he asked.

"Nothing doing, Tim. You must 'a' drawn them *hombres'* teeth when you extracted their artillery. Tom told me all about it. That Piñon bunch pulled out half an hour ago, an' Drybones sleeps peaceful."

"Thanks, deputy," grinned the big man. "Say, Kid, there's fires in Piñon—you can't see 'em from here, but they showed up when I was comin' through the foothills." The sheriff looked down musingly while he rolled a cigaret—

" 'Tain't exactly my business, for Piñon's in another county, but Lorton, the sheriff, is fifty miles away at Gold City.

"Kid," he said suddenly, throwing up his head, "I'm goin' to Piñon. I might save some poor devil of a Greaser—for them boys are full of —— today. Coming along?"

"Tim," grinned McKendrick, "besides being willin' to travel a long ways with you, I ain't never side-stepped excitement yet. You betcha I'm comin'."

"Then I'll be gettin' me another horse, for mine's not fresh enough for sixty miles more. How's your bronc?"

"I only done twenty miles this morning, an' the son of a gun's been eatin' his head off since you left town."

McKendrick, mounted on Mesquite, the wisest and speediest cow-pony in the county, took the road to Piñon with the sheriff, just as lights twinkled out in the row of one story, false-fronted saloons that lined one side of Drybones' only street.

The night fell velvet dark as the two broncos padded steadily through deep sand, their riders talking little after Tim had told Lewis what he had heard from Tony Loreno that morning.

"Those fools in Piñon are like a lot of others," growled the sheriff. "Jest 'cause a *hombre's* got a dark skin an' Spanish blood—an' mebbeso some Indian—they figure he ain't human; but they'll learn different some day. Them Greasers are good folks if they're treated square—an' there ain't no kinder folks, or quicker to do a feller a favor, if you take 'em right. 'Course they snarl when you kick 'em like they was dogs, but so would I, or you."

Then silence, save for the creaking of saddle leather and the soft swishing of sand under the ponies' hoofs.

"Must be gittin' well over the county line," spoke Tim at last. "Them lights is growin' nearer, but they seem to 'a' died down some. We'll be in Piñon in an hour."

A few rods farther on, Lewis felt rather than saw Mesquite's lifted crest and pointed ears as he sidled against Tim's mount to avoid a shadowy something in the road. Then both horses snorted and halted, quivering.

McKendrick, swinging down, peered for a moment at a dark huddle directly in the sandy track.

"Tim, it's a man."

Striking a match, he held its flare to a lean young face.

"It's Jake Sleshinger," he continued, "one o' the Piñon boys, with a hole in his head."

But Tim did not heed, for he was watching a slight figure that had suddenly appeared out of the darkness.

"Who's there?" he demanded, quickly, his hand on his gun.

"It is Tony, Señor Shereef, I see you face by the match, and I weesh to geeve myself to you. You see those fire? I light them all, *all*. I no light the Señor Logan's house, the Señora she seeck—but I light hees barns an' hees hay—an' I hear those bad *hombres* coming home say Jake behind—too weak to ride fast. I know their voices—I know them long time—so I wait for thees *hombre*, an' I keel heem, for he—keel my little Tony."

The softly liquid voice rose to a passionate tone as he went on:

"My little Tony who hurt nobody, but always laugh. An' thees *hombre* here, I see him through a crack in the wall of my *casa*. He sit in his saddle after all the others go, an' he shoot the top of the door, then he shoot sideways, an' then he shoot at the bottom of the door, an' that last bullet—low down—he hit my little Tony.

Then thees Jake he curse an' ride away. There ees no Mexicans left in Piñon. I was the only one. You hang me, I savvy, but I not care what come to me. I lost my little Tony an' no ain't got home any more."

"——!" swore the sheriff under his breath. "Tony," he said gently, "I ain't sheriff o' this county, and I ain't your judge. You vamoose pronto—and," he added, "Mr. McKendrick and I haven't seen you tonight—savvy?"

"Yes, *señor*, I savvy. *Gracias*."

But there was indifference, not hope, in his tones. And he was gone, melting into the shadowy sand-dunes and sage.

"Well, Kid," said the sheriff, shaking up his horse, "there's nothing for it but to keep on and report finding this body, but o' course we don't know who done it. Reckon them Piñon *hombres* is gettin' what's comin' to 'em!"

They spurred their fearful broncos through the searing heat, making for a house on the slope back of the town, where bright lights shone from the windows; and on the way they met no one, and heard no sound—Piñon was a smoking and deserted ruin.

Leaving McKendrick in the road with the horses, Clancy rapped on the door of the large ranch house, from which they had seen the light.

"Who is it?" asked a woman's voice nervously, through the locked door.

"It's Sheriff Clancy, from Drybones."

Bolts creaked then, and the door swung slowly open.

"Where's John Logan?" he demanded.

"I don't know—an' I don't care!" the overwrought woman answered tartly. "When Piñon started to burn, he cussed an' ramped 'round the house awful; an' when his own ranch buildin's began to blaze, something snapped, I reckon, for John Logan's got a hair-trigger brain an' temper. He went plumb loco then, tearin' 'round the house like mad. He busted into his wife's room, an' when he sees her Mexican nurse bendin' over the bed, he shot her. The body fell across Mary Logan, an' he let it lie there, while he stood watchin' fer a minute, a crazy look in his eyes, then he jest ran out without sayin' a word, stuffin' his pockets with cartridges, an' galloped off, leaving his barns blazin'. An' that was jest the last straw for Mary Logan. She's lyin' dead upstairs this minute."

Clancy's deep rough voice softened, for he knew and liked Mary Logan:

"That's sure bad news, ma'am. Can you tell me where the rest o' the boys have gone?"

"They went skyhootin' out into the desert, John Logan with 'em—headin' south. Aimin' to do more murder, I reckon, when they found Piñon blazin'. There's Mexican women an' kids drove into the desert—an' some of 'em killed—an' I can't think how them fellers can ever sleep sound again. John Logan's done the worst—but—" and the solicitude of a worried mother was in her strained tones—"my boy Jake was on the rampage with the rest."

The big sheriff looked up quickly at that. He had watched mental and physical suffering in many forms, but he felt abashed before the grief and pain he saw in the depths of her dark-circled, tired eyes; and at the tragedy in her voice.

"I—I—reckon I must be goin', ma'am, an' thank you."

Clancy retreated hastily; but as he swung into the saddle, a sudden thought made him call back to the figure still in the doorway—

"I'll send back some o' the boys if I meet 'em."

THEN Clancy, with Lewis McKendrick, rode on into the night, and as he rode he growled—

"She said her boy 'Jake' was with that bunch, an' I betcha anything in all the world that her last name is Sleshinger."

They rode slowly now. Down the slope, across the flat alfalfa land, and beyond that down still further into the desert—and then, without warning, a shadowy form on horseback loomed ahead, a harsh voice cried:

"Greasers! —— Greasers! The world is full o' Greasers!" and a heavy gun roared.

An exclamation sounded from McKendrick, and Clancy felt rather than saw his friend's tall form bend forward over the saddle-horn.

Then all his fighting blood awoke, and he fired at the gun-flash in the darkness. Again he fired, again and again, raking the space ahead at the height of a mounted man—and some of his shots went home, for he heard a heavy body crash into a clump of sage, while a bronco galloped off into the night.

"Lad, are ye hurted bad?" asked Clancy tenderly, as his burly arms lifted McKendrick from the saddle and laid him down on the sand: but no voice answered.

Clancy struck a match, and found where a heavy bullet had ploughed along Lewis MeKendrick's scalp. He bound the bleeding head tenderly, then with other matches, he went hunting further.

"It's as I thought," he muttered. "It's murderin' Jack Logan—plumb loco—an' he won't shoot no more Greasers."

Bending close to the sand as he was, soft footsteps close by came to his keen ears, and the rustling of the sage as some one brushed against it. His tall figure snapped up, and his heavy gun was in his hand.

"Who's there?" he called.

"It is the shereef from Drybones."

"Yep!"

"We two Mexicanos, *señor*, who be hunted by Logan until you ride across hees trail, an' you save us; we hear Logan's body fall.

"Señor Shereef," and there was an unconscious dignity in the soft Mexican voice—a dignity tinged with the calmness of despair, "we have hear that you are square *hombre*, even to a Mexicano. Our *casas* in Piñon are burn, an' we not go back even if the white men build 'em new cabin for us. We go with you, mebbeso, an' make homes in Drybones?"

Clancy struck a match and held it up. In the still night air it flared high.

"Come into the light, *hombres*—I'd have a look at ye."

"Yes," he said, after glancing keenly at the swarthy faces which sprang out of the darkness in the match flare, "I'll take ye with me—an' get behind me pronto!" he ordered curtly, for the shots had drawn questing cow-punchers in their direction, and pounding hoofs thudded in the heavy sand, converging upon the little group—for Clancy's last high-held match had located them completely.

"What you doin' here, sheriff?" called Tod Clemmons, pushing through the sage, "an' what was them shots?"

"The first o' them shots," said Clancy coolly, "was fired at us in the darkness without warnin', an' it creased McKendrick, who's lyin' insensible at me feet. The *rest* o' them shots you heard was fired by me, an' John Logan's lyin' over there in the sand, an' he won't never move again till somebody moves him."

"Didn't I see somebody as I rid up?" asked Clemmons suspiciously.

"Ye did, an' they're two Mexicans behind me back, an' they're goin' with me to Drybones. Me back is fair broad, feller, an' me gun is out, an' they'll get there if I do."

Clemmons forced a laugh.

"I don't blame you, sheriff. There's been killin' a-plenty. But we're lookin' fer the —— that burned Piñon. How do we know them *hombres* you're shieldin' didn't start the blaze?"

"Because I happen to know they didn't, an' I give ye my word."

"That goes with me," said Tod.

"Well, if it goes with ye, hop off that cayuse an' help me with the Kid here," said Clancy.

They found McKendrick conscious, and lifted him to his horse.

"What's that gun doin' in yer hand," asked Clancy. "You didn't have time to draw afore Logan plugged ye."

Lewis grinned in the darkness.

"I woke up in time to hear yer friendly conversation with Clemmons, an' I wasn't able ter talk, but I managed to pull her, an' was waitin' to——"

The sound of many riders threading through the brush came to their ears.

"It's all right, boys," called Tod. "It's Clancy with two Mexicans, an' he has my word to take 'em with him."

"Which one o' you fellers is Jake?" boomed Clancy's heavy voice on the desert night air. Silence.

"The only Jake in town, sheriff, is Jake Sleshinger, an' he ain't in from Drybones yet," volunteered Tod.

"Well, then, one o' you *hombres* go to Logan's house an' tell Ma Sleshinger that her boy ain't never comin' home, exceptin' to be buried. We passed him out in the desert, with a bullet in his head, an' these Mexicans here didn't do *that*, neither."

"Seems like you know a lot about it, Clancy," called out Huggins from the darkness.

They couldn't see the blue fire in Clancy's hot Irish eye, but they sensed it in the tones of his voice, which held, withal, a cold and cutting edge:

"I know *this*—the judgment o' God has wiped out Piñon an' them as had the deepest hand in this business. An' now I'm

pullin' my freight. The Mexicans are goin' ahead o' me—an' they're goin' *heeled.*"

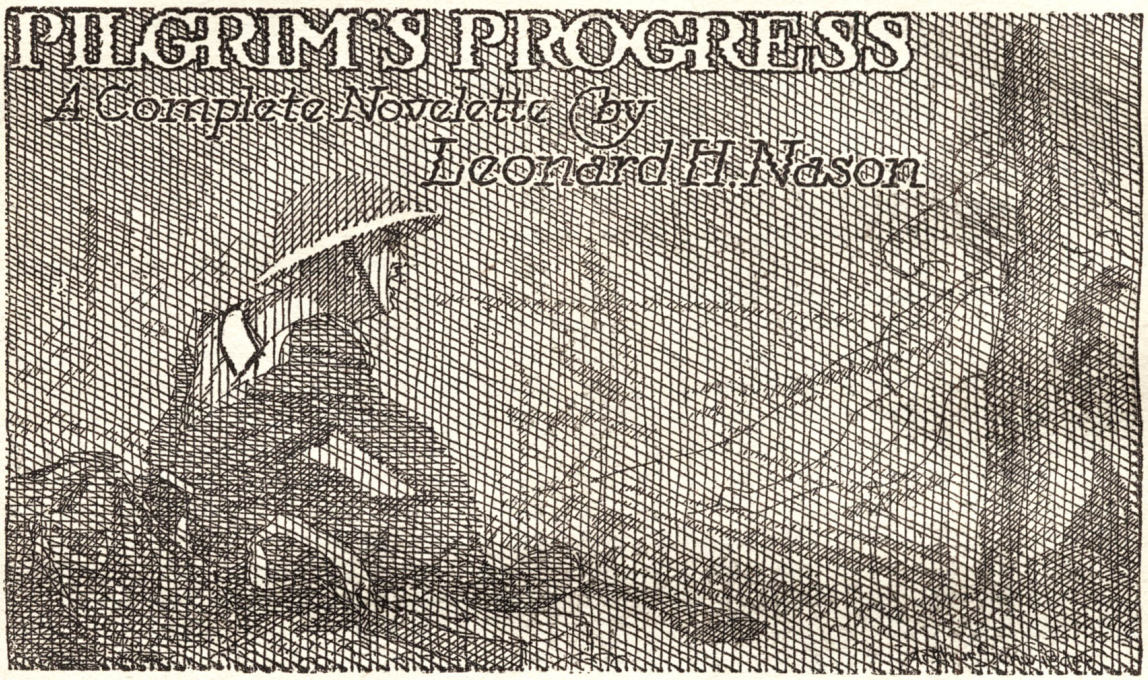
His voice changed to a softer tone, edged with grim humor, as he added:

"You byes ain't got homes any more. You're welcome to hole up in Drybones, but if you come, you leaves every gun with the barkeeper at the "Last Chance" on the edge o' town. *Adios!*"

And telling the Mexicans—

"Get goin', *hombres,*" he rode off, holding Lewis McKendrick in his saddle.

The group of wild-spirited punchers—sobered now—watched his big figure silently until it melted into the darkness of the desert.



Author of "A Happy Birthday," "Breeches," etc.

"WHAT time is it now?"

"Four-thirty; half an hour more."

"How come we couldn't sleep that extra half-hour? How come they drag us up in here in the mud all night, and then we gotta sit in the rain all this time? Why couldn't we sleep back in them woods?"

"How come yuh askin' me? I dunno; I ain't no officer."

The two soldiers hunched silently into the collars of their slickers. The rain fell in sheets, and the water in the ditch in which they were sitting was half-way to their knees. They had started at dusk, from some little town they had never seen, before the trucks had unloaded them there, and had marched all night through numbers of other towns. Nobody ever knew the names of those places. They were just towns, and the outfit always marched at night.

Finally, when the road began to get rough and full of pits and holes, they turned off into some woods. They emerged from these woods on to yet another road and halted in the ditch. No need to tell them this was the end of the hike. Those rockets going up and the faint rattle at intervals told them they were close to the front line. This was a company of infantry, the ditch was the jumping-off place, five A. M. the zero hour, and these men knew that it would be the last hour for many of them.

"Where's all this barrage we been hearin' so much about?" said one of the men.

Perhaps it would be well to introduce these two. The one with his steel helmet on over his overseas cap is Costello, and the man beside him is named Ira Hall, both privates of infantry, A. E. F.

"Well," said Hall, "if you listen hard,

you can hear somethin' whistlin' by overhead, but it don't seem to bother them Huns a whole lot. They keep shootin' lights up just the same."

There was silence after this while the waiting troops bowed their heads to the driving rain. Then suddenly a tremendous crashing and banging under their very noses. Whistles began to blow.

"Heads up, men; heads up;" then, "Let's go!"

And they scrambled out of the ditch. Costello and Hall moved along side by side, their hearts hammering. On all sides they could hear men sloshing through the mud. It was fairly light, but the rain on the eye-pieces of their gas-masks made seeing difficult. Their own barrage proceeded them—thick, acrid stuff like dirty wool.

The men began to breathe more easily they were still alive, and the German trenches must be pretty near by now. Maybe the Jerries were all dead. Then men began to appear, coming toward them through the smoke. Hall gripped his rifle, and then he saw that the oncoming figures all had their hands raised, with the palms open.

The smoke grew thicker, and the prisoners appeared in greater numbers. There was no one with them, and no one paid them any attention, except perhaps to motion them to the rear.

Costello stumbled. There was a lot of wire underfoot that had been uprooted by the bombardment. There was more of it standing. The men floundered through the strands, climbed over some of it, tore their clothes and mangled their hands. A sudden clamor of voices, and the rattle of breech-locks.

"Here they are, fellows!"

"Steady now, steady."

"Hold 'em, hold 'em!"

A confused medley of voices, shouts, curses. With the whir of a flushing partridge a machine gun began firing into their very faces. Men began to drop everywhere. Somebody gave Hall a tremendous blow in the back.

"Who done that?" he cried angrily, turning around.

The force of that knock upset his balance, and he sank on his right arm. He dropped his rifle.

"Lie down, guy," said some one; "the stretcher-bearers will pick you up."

"Lie down ——!" said Hall, but he could not get upon his feet again.

His shoulder hurt him cruelly. And then he felt a warm, sticky wetness trickling about him. There seemed to be a lot of it. His exploring hand came back covered with blood.

"Thank God," said he, "I been hit."

The wound was between his shoulder-blades, so that he was unable to inspect it and judge of its severity. He unslung his pack, and regarded it earnestly. There was a tiny hole through the pocket in which he carried his mess-kit, and the bacon-can and box of hardtack in the haversack, between his mess-kit and his shoulder, were punched with a jagged keyhole tear.

Again he reached a questing hand over his shoulder. He felt tenderly of his back. His hand was not so wet as before, the blood was flowing less freely.

"Hot dog!" said Hall. "This will never do. They'll think I'm camouflagin'."

Two men came slowly picking their way through the wire. One of them bore a strange piece of apparatus on his shoulder.

"Hey!" yelled the wounded man. "First aid!"

The two turned in his direction.

"Where yuh hit, buddy?" said one, dropping to his knees and unrolling a bandage.

"In the back," said Hall.

Silently the other ripped up the bloody blouse and shirt and swabbed the wound with iodin. Then he rolled up his bandage again and wrote out a tag.

"Your mess-kit saved some guys the trouble of buryin' you," said the medical-corps man. "How come you got hit in the back?"

"How should I know? I didn't see it comin'."

"You a non-com?"

"No."

"Crap-shooter?"

"Well, some; but I ain't made any money at it for some time."

"Strange things happen in this man's Army. Maybe you stopped one that was meant for the looey or the top kick."

The two stretcher-bearers prepared to move on.

"Hey," said Hall, "don't I get a ride on that stretcher?"

"Ride ——! That stretcher's for wounded men! You can walk all right."

"How far is it?"

"Couple o' miles. There's a dressin'-station at Rambucourt, and maybe they'll let yuh ride on a truck from there."

"Couple o' miles! Nix. I been hikin' since eight o'clock last night. I ain't goin' to walk another step."

"Suit yourself; it ain't nothin' in our young life," and the two moved off into the fog.

"Can yuh compree that!" muttered Hall bitterly.

He lifted himself to his feet and started off, reeling a little, back through the wire to the dressing-station.

BEHOLD now our friend Hall, seated on a wooden bench, clad comfortably, if not neatly, in a pair of coarse gray trousers, a loose coat of the same material, and a pajama shirt. With him are two more with similar clothing. All about them is a pleasant green park, white-graveled walks, a fountain that plays merrily, enticing vistas leading away to shady depths, and opposite the bench is a long spacious colonnade, the entrance to a casino wherein is a wonderful spring that cures every ailment known to man or beast. Such a place was Vittel, where aforetime French society went to forget its cares, and where at the time of this tale the wrecks of the actions at Cantigny, Château-Thierry, the Vesle and the lawn-party at St. Mihiel were being nursed back to usefulness again.

"This," said Hall, stretching himself luxuriously, "must be old man Riley's home town."

He lighted a cigaret. These were issued regularly, and as each soldier received far more than he could smoke and since the French yearned for American tobacco, cigarets were a medium of exchange with both the military and the civilian population of the hospital center.

"They're never goin' to get me away from here without chains," said one of the other men on the bench, who wore on the lapel of his hospital clothing the globe and anchor that is the symbol of Uncle Sammy's Marine Corps.

"That's right," said Hall, "there's about three or four million men in the American Army, and they all ought to get a chance to go up to the front. I was crazy to get up till I got there, and then about ten seconds would do me for the rest of my life."

"It wouldn't be so bad," said the marine, "if you went up to the jump-off and had a day or so to ketch up with your sleep. But —— this marchin' all night long and then goin' into a scrap without any breakfast. A guy knows that just as long as he's on his feet he ain't goin' to get any sleep, nor no chow."

"I sure was in luck," said Hall. "I got bumped about five minutes after we hopped off."

"Huh!" said the leatherneck. "I was in three days an' didn't have nothin' to eat but some bread I swiped out of a dead Jerry's knapsack. Then I was forty-eight hours before they got me after I was hit. Stretcher-bearers couldn't get in. Man, it was hot in there. Why, the night before I got hit——"

He rambled on, the way the marines always did, and his tale had much of admiration in it for the soldiers of the sea.

Hall smoked peacefully. He belonged to the first American division to land in France, the first to take a hostile gun, the first to do anything more than learn to throw hand-grenades and kill bundles of branches. His regiment was the only one in the whole American Army that had not been broken up to form new outfits. It was Old Army to the core. Marines ruffled him not.

"What outfit you out of?" he asked the third man on the bench.

"I'm a truck-driver," said this one with a slight smile.

He was old and small of build, and looked a lot like the little man in the cartoons that represents the common people.

"Huccum you got hit?"

"I didn't get hit; I driv a truck clean from Epinal to Chateauroux without gettin' off the seat. Then I got off to stretch my legs and some sanguinary illegitimate on a motorcycle come along an' run over me."

"Waddya do before yuh come in the Army?"

This from the marine; he saw a chance to astonish this non-combatant.

"I reckon I was cuttin' my teeth," said the little man with a slight smile. "Son, I been in this man's Army since about the time Cap'n Jack had his fight at the lava beds. That was 'fore your pappy an' mammy was born. I started in beatin' a drum."

"Tell him somethin' about the marines," suggested Hall.

The marine favored him with a look and announced he was going for a walk.

"Those birds got an idea they're the whole A. E. F.," said Hall to the old-timer.

"Naw," said the truck-driver; " 'tain't so. The old-timers in the leathernecks is all right. I soldiered with 'em in the Islands an' in China, an' 'most everywheres else. Rookies is always shootin' off their mouths thataway, specially if they ain't been in garrison for some time. Let 'em keep a squad-room clean for three or four months and wait till the other men have et before they gets their chance, and they soon tames down. You ever soldiered before?"

"No," said Hall; "I used to drive a grocery wagon in Philly. I had a row with the boss one Saturday night about workin' so late, so I went an' enlisted."

"You hit bad?"

"No, I ain't. I got a crack in the back o' the neck, but it went through my mess-kit and bacon-can and just knocked the flesh off. I only been here a week. This is my first day out o' bed."

"Well, you'll be goin' back pretty soon, won't you?"

"I will like ——! I'm tellin' you I ain't *never* goin' back. I got outta that place alive, an' I don't never crowd my luck. No, sir! Every time I think o' those shells burstin' and them machine guns rippin' I get complete total paralysis of the heart, you bet. When that doctor examines me, I'm goin' to have so many different things the matter with me that it'll take him all day to write 'em down."

The old man grinned again.

"I'd like fine for to get up myself, I aim to see how they do their killin' now'days."

The two sat in silence after that, then Hall rose and departed for his particular hospital. His stomach told him that it approached time for mess. He went on down one of the paths, watched some men bowling on an open-air alley for a while, surprized a French *chasseur alpin* kissing a girl and then cut across the ball field to the Hotel Continental, where he lodged. One of the hospital orderlies hailed him in the hall.

"Classification exam tomorrow, soldier," said he. "Your name is on the list."

"What's all this?" asked Ira.

"All the men in this ward that are out of bed have to be examined to see what class they belong in. Class A goes back to their outfit. Class B gets a job guarding prisoners. I don't know what happens to Class C, but Class D goes home."

"I'll be Class D," said Hall emphatically.

The following day the doctor took his place at a table in the hall. Those whose fate hung upon his decision lined up along the wall and went before him one by one. Those waiting could hear all that was said, and could get some ideas for their own tales of wo from listening to those of others. The doctor had a sergeant of the medical corps for his assistant, a package of cigarets for the relieving of his nerves, and a rubber hammer with which he beat one on the knees, and occasionally on the head, in a playful manner, calling attention to the hollow sound. A huge, lumbering man with a cane approached the table.

"Well," said the medico, "what's the matter with you?"

"My leg hurts, sir, every time I step on it."

"How long have you been here?"

"Three months, sir."

"Anything else the matter with you?"

"Oh, yes, sir; my ears hurt me all the time."

"Sort of burn, do they, and pains run through them?"

"Yes, sir; yes, sir; that's just the way they feel."

The doctor turned to his assistant with a bored air.

"Duty," said he. "Next man."

"Doctor," said the next, "I'm in bad shape."

He told why for some ten minutes. The doctor inhaled his cigaret.

"Mark him 'Duty,' " ordered he.

"What's your complaint?"

"I've got trouble with my feet."

"Most of you birds have, especially when it comes time to go up on the lines again. What's the matter with them?"

"They itch all the time."

"Well, I've heard of itching palm, but never of itching feet. Let's have a look at them."

The feet were inspected; the inspectee stood on his toes, jumped up and down on one foot and then the other, and worked himself into quite a froth. He looked hopefully at the doctor.

"Duty," said the doc.

"But look, doctor, I can't walk. I——"

"Duty, I said; and duty you get! You're

no sicker than I am! Haven't I listened to you gold-bricks tell your tale of wo for eight months? Up to the front with you, and make way for some wounded man."

About half a dozen more were disposed of, and then came Ira's turn. In this man's heart was a dull heaviness. He had heard better liars than he would ever be, recount injuries and ailments that would make a patent-medicine advertisement blush. What hope had he? With the brightness of the sun through clouds an idea came.

"Well?" said the judge of life and death. "What's the matter with you?"

"Nothin'," said Hall.

The doctor and his assistant gasped.

"Nothing? Let's see his card."

They consulted the card together, the card that is put on a man in the field hospital and stays with him until he dies or leaves the base hospital for the replacement camp. On it is the whole history of his case. There was nothing there save the routine history of a gunshot wound.

"It says here you were shot."

"Oh, that's all right," said Ira; "that wasn't anything. Just a scratch."

He smiled benignly upon the medico.

"Well, what do you want to do now?"

"I want to go back to the front."

"By ——!" yelled the doctor. "This man is insane! Take him over to Twenty-three for observation. The States for him."

And the wild hugs that Hall gave himself and his merry chuckles on the way to the Psychopathic Hospital only confirmed the impression that he was raving mad.

A WIDE plain, flat as a table-top, stretching into the darkness on either side. Acres and acres of twinkling lights and the coughing of innumerable steam engines. Whistles and the clanging of bells. A little group of soldiers clustering together for protection and mutual reassurance in front of a large hut. This was the regulating station and intermediate storage depot at Is-sur-Tille, and the soldiers were some who had arrived that evening from various hospitals, and were waiting for a guide to lead them out through the maze of railroad tracks to their quarters.

Among them, his bones filled with weariness and his heart with disgust, but with his stomach full of nothing, was one Ira Hall. He and three more had traveled all day from Vittel, riding gloriously in a third-class carriage, and they had had nothing to eat since breakfast.

"Come on, gang," called the guide, emerging suddenly from the hut.

He led the way down the road, and then struck off across the plain. The men followed, a mournful-looking company, the little gingham bag that was their only baggage hanging from each shoulder.

God bless the women that made those little bags! About six inches square they were, and in them were all the earthly possessions of their owners. When a man was first admitted to the hospital he was given one of these bags, known as Red Cross bags because of the tiny red cross sewed on the side. In each was a little bag of candy, a pack of cards perhaps, sometimes a mirror. Gradually by fair means or otherwise would be added a toothbrush and a razor.

The main thing though was that the soldier had something he could call his own, somewhere to put what few treasures he had and this little piece of gingham was all that he could call his own from the time he reached the hospital until he went to the replacement camp to be fitted out to go back to the front again.

Suddenly a shaft of light shot across the dark path. A door from one of the nearby buildings had been opened. The men stopped aghast. The building was brightly lighted, and was full of women.

"How come! How come!" said they in amaze. They perceived that this barracks was surrounded by a high fence of barbed wire. A voice came to them from the darkness.

"Move your feet, guys; move your feet. Yuh ain't allowed to hang around here."

Speculation was rife as the soldiers moved on.

"What are them women doin' in the middle of a Yank storage depot?"

"They're women was caught fightin' dressed up like men, I bet."

"I betcha they're spies. I read a book about women spies. The German Army is full of 'em."

Finally the guide turned in a superior manner.

"Them are French refugees," he said. "They work in the buildings and in the rest camp. That fence around there is to

keep you guys away. They got marines guardin' it, too."

"That wouldn't be a bad job," said Ira reflectively.

The guard laughed.

"Wait till you see some of 'em. They'd scare the cooties off an Algerian."

Hall and his companions stumbled on. In the very heart of a gridiron of railroad tracks, in the midst of the crash and bang of shunting cars, were seven or eight huts, and into one of these they were led. Dirt floor, and a line of double-deck wooden bunks on each side. There on the first bunk was Costello, who will be remembered as the man who sat beside Hall while they waited for the signal to jump off. The two fell on each other's necks.

"Where yuh been?" asked Hall.

"The tube on my mask got shot away," said Costello, "and I got full o' gas. I got in this morning from Dijon."

"How did yuh like hospital?"

"Well, it was all right the first two or three days while I was still in bed, but after they got me up I had to do settin'-up exercises and run around the block and play O'Grady. By the time I did arms sideward swing and palms open an' shut from eight in the morning till four in the afternoon with an hour off for dinner, I was wishin' I'd got a bullet through me. They let on it was to get the gas outta our lungs."

"Yeh, I know, I know. They had me in the nut ward for a while, but the main guy couldn't find nothin' wrong with me, so they give me the raz. They had me doin' cook's police for a week or so."

"Any o' you birds just come in want anything to eat, better go over to the mess-shack an' get it."

Thus a man who shoved his face in the barracks door.

"See yuh later," said Hall, and hurried forth.

The mess-shack was a building similar to the hut used as a barracks. It had two tables down the center, and two stoves at the far end, on which the cooking was done. A third table placed crosswise was used as a counter, and the pans containing food were placed on it. A female in a black dress was serving. There was goldfish—by which name salmon was known to the American soldiery—rice, sirup, coffee and bread.

The maiden in charge—whom we shall call the waitress—might have been fair had she possessed any front teeth. She was troubled also with a cold in her head, which necessitated frequent blowing of the nose, this being done in the good old-fashioned way—that is to say, with the fingers. The operation completed, the waitress would hurriedly begin to hand out the bread again, as if apologizing for having kept some soldier waiting.

No one made any comment. Either the men were too tired, or else nothing could dull the edge of their appetites. Very probably it was the latter.

Here are the different steps in the progress of a soldier from the time he leaves the hospital until he returns to his organization. The wounded man, coming to the base hospital in a suit of pajamas from the field hospital or evacuation hospital, was clothed in a uniform that covered his nakedness and that was all that could be said for it, inasmuch as it had been taken from some wounded man in the first place, sterilized and put back into service again. To this was due the scarecrow appearance of casuals. By the way, a man was known as a casual during his travels, thus showing one and all that he belonged to no organization, had no friends and could be done dirt by with impunity.

From the base hospital the casuals went to a regulating-station—Is-sur-Tille, or Saint Dizier or some other place—and there were sorted out into the different branches of the service to which they belonged. From the regulating-stations they went to those great reservoirs, the replacement camps, each to his own. There they were given new clothes and fully equipped again and started back to their organizations.

If a man was clever enough, he could see to it that he never left the replacement camp, and some there were that took this method of keeping a whole skin. These last were not many, and the reason therefor shall presently appear.

In the morning Hall and Costelo strolled out to view the sights. There were miles and miles of red wooden buildings in which were stored all the necessary tools for the carrying on of war. There were acres of railroad tracks, and real American-style freight-cars with American crews from the Railway Engineers running around their roofs, to the great horror of the French.

"Hey, look, Hall. Those are Jerries!"

True enough, several hundred of them

breaking rocks for the new road, guarded by a few bored-looking Yanks. Most of the prisoners still wore their gray uniforms, but some wore the American blouse or breeches dyed a bright green, and all the laborers had P.W. in white letters painted on them somewhere.

"This is the nearest I ever was to so many of them," said Costello. "Looka that gray-headed guy, Ira. I'll bet he's old enough to be your grandfather."

"There's some young ones there, too. That kid with the yellow band on his cap ain't over fifteen, or I'm a liar "

The Germans worked on stolidly, pounding the rocks with little hammers, and breaking them up into the proper sizes for road-building. They paid no heed to the soldiers that stopped and regarded them from time to time. They did not talk among themselves, possibly from fear of divulging some secret to the listeners. It must indeed have been a cheerless prospect to live behind a barbed-wire stockade and break rocks for two or three years.

"I wonder if they wish they was back with their regiments again?" said Costello.

"Do you wish you was back with yours?"

"I do like ——! But I ain't breakin' rocks all day, nor bein' penned up every night."

"I dunno," said Ira, "but what I'd rather been taken prisoner. Then you'd be sure the war was over. Here it's just one thing after another. I thought I was all set to stay in Vittel, but they looked in my ears and shined lights in my eyes and allowed I was all right. Then they kicked me the —— outta there."

Let us not judge Hall too harshly. Who does not know the exhausted, irritable feeling a man has after a night of broken rest, when he has lain safely on his own bed? Let him who would judge our soldier go without sleep not one night, but two and three or more. Let him take no food during that time. Then let him see with how much joy he welcomes the putting of his life in peril.

Such a test is not really fair to the soldier. He who simply goes without food or sleep for a few days escapes the additional strain of the sight of his friends, not cleanly dead, but shattered and torn, like a fly killed with a newspaper. He will escape the sudden barrage, the steam-roller that rolls and rolls and beats everything to earth; he will escape the mad buzzing, the shrieking of the Strombos, the wild hammering of machine guns and the brain-rocking crash of bombs and all the terror and confusion of the air raid. He will not know the silent raiders of the night that creep into a trench and slit throats of sleeping men, leaving their bodies to be discovered in the chill of the dawn when the garrison turns out for "stand to" and their courage is at its lowest. One that has safely come forth from this is not to be blamed in that he yearns not to return.

ON THE morning of the third day Hall, Costello and three other men with a corporal named McGubbin, were handed an order to proceed to the infantry replacement camp at Saint Agnain, near Paris. It was inevitable that this camp should be known to the army as Saint Agony. Their train would not go until evening, so that they had all day to make preparations. These consisted of borrowing some matches and drawing rations for the trip—some canned tomatoes, canned hash and canned beans. One could always tell a route that carried many troops by the amount of tin cans along the track. These men had no packs, so the chow was put in a wooden box, and the travelers set off for the station a good two hours before the scheduled departure of the train.

The six of them waited patiently under the dim lights of the *gare*. The train was always late, the police informed them. McGubbin and Costello kept charge of the box of chow.

"What kind of a train is it?" asked Hall.

"The American special they call it," said the M.P. "It just carries troops, and the crew are all Americans. It makes good time, they say. You guys are lucky you don't have to ride on a frog train."

"I'll say," replied Ira fervently. "I rode down on one from Vittel, an' believe me, I had a fine ride. We went almost four miles an hour on the straightaway stretches."

The crowd grew larger.

"Are these guys all goin' away?"

"Sure. Some of 'em are from the rest camp, some of 'em are convoy men, goin' back to the base ports. Maybe there's some students goin' to Saumur or Gondrecourt. Lookit now, I'm tellin' you kinda

friendly-like that when that train comes in you just get on, an' don't go lookin' for a good seat nor don't wait for any one else. It's goin' to be kinda crowded."

The M.P. nodded sagely to give emphasis to his remarks.

There was a long whistle, the dazzle of a headlight, and the train rolled in, a long line of sleepers, or *wagons-lits*. Hall essayed to board one.

"Nix," said the M.P. "Those are for officers; yours are back farther."

Ira hurried to the rear of the train, he and Costello carrying the box, while the corporal ran ahead to find an empty compartment. Sounds of strife arose. What looked like a young riot was in progress. It appeared that those on the train refused to open the doors, asserting that there was no room for any more therein. Those without denied this and tore at the handles and beat at those at the windows with their fists.

There was the sound of splintering wood. Here and there a door was wrenched open, and men shot out like seeds from a squeezed orange. Others were torn bodily from within the cars.

One poor man held on to the door-jamb and howled lustily, the while another tried to drag him forth by the slack of his clothing. The waist-belt of his breeches gave way, and the situation became embarrassing.

The man hanging to the car raised his voice and howled for assistance. His friends held on to him with vigor. Those on the platform, seeing his plight, hastened to add their assistance to drag him forth.

A ripping sound, and he was free. The remnants of his clothing were waved an instant in the air and then lost sight of. He must have had a fine time when he arrived at where he was going.

"Trooper!" said a voice in his ear.

A door opened almost in front of Hall, and without hesitation he climbed into the compartment. He had lost both Costello and the chow-box early in the fracas.

"Shut that —— door," cried a dozen voices, and two men promptly tried to close it.

Too late. Fifty pairs of hands had seized it, and twenty-five men did their best to squeeze through the narrow opening. Blood was drawn here from noses, and knuckles were skinned on teeth.

The police arrived in swarms, their clubs swinging freely. Men were hurled into compartments with the force of shells. Others were pushed in by main strength. Somehow, somewhere, that crowd was wedged into the train, and the cars began to move. The windows were thronged with men exchanging compliments with the military police.

Hall wriggled a bit, and looked to see if there was any place to sit down. He tried to move a little to one side to get relief from the intolerable pressure, but he was unable to change his position by so much as an inch.

A French third-class carriage is divided into compartments, running across from side to side, with a door at either side. There are two seats that face each other, with room for four people on each seat. Over these seats is a baggage-rack.

There was a dim light from a small bulb in the ceiling, and all that Hall could see were overseas caps, tossing and wagging with the motion of the train.

"Well," thought he, "that means all night and all the next day standin' up in the car. An' people at home kick if they ride in a street-car and stand up for a couple of blocks!"

The train stopped again after a time, and M.P.'s appeared and announced that more passengers must be got aboard. There were not as many as at Is-sur-Tille, and the delay was not so great. The train started again with a few more clubbed heads and several new passengers.

At the next stop there was no getting another man on that train. Club as they might, and even draw their guns, the police could not wedge another man into those compartments.

A very haughty sergeant tried to make a personal inspection of a car. He was helped in by welcoming hands—how they made room for him was a mystery—and shortly bleats of protest rent the air.

The sergeant was hurled forth, minus gun, club and most of his clothing. His flying body struck some would-be rescuers and bore them to earth. As the train moved on a man who wore about his brow the poor sergeant's brassard leaned from a window.

"Who won the war?" cried he, and blew a kiss to the enraged M.P.'s.

At one station two men appeared bearing between them one far gone in liquor. They

had a worried look about them, as of men who had been saddled with some hopeless task. Opposite Hall's compartment they let their burden fall to the ground and declared loudly that there was no room on the train. An officer appeared, bearing a lantern.

"Get me a bucket of water!" cried he.

It was brought.

"Now pick up that man by the heels."

Here he whispered into the ears of his helpers.

"Now! One!"

—the men started to swing the helpless drunkard.

"Two!"

The swings grew wider.

"Three!"

The man with the bucket sloughed the water in on the men in the compartment, who promptly ducked, leaving the window free, and at once the bibulous one was hurled in upon their heads. Howls of rage arose. The men in the compartment were packed so close that they could not give way and let the new passenger fall to the floor, and he was no burden to be borne on the heads and shoulders all night.

"Put him in the baggage rack!"

"Yeh, put him in the rack! Up with him now!"

The drunken soldier was seized and lifted into the rack by willing hands. Hall jammed his legs in with vigor. One of those hobnailed shoes had made unpleasant contact with Ira's nose.

After that Hall had a little time to meditate on his position. He was due to spend all night and the next day on his feet. He had no food, and there was none in sight. He had no orders since McGubbin, being a corporal, had retained their only copy.

Now this was serious. A man who had no authority for his travel would be seized by the first A.P.M. that discovered it, and put to work lugging rails or unloading cars or at some other congenial form of labor.

The man in the baggage rack showed signs of becoming violently ill. He was hurriedly seized and dragged from his refuge, then passed from hand to hand or rather head to head until he reached the window. Hall, who was near the door, had a bright thought, which he proceeded to put into execution. He was very solicitous of the comfort of the unfortunate one, holding his head, undoing his blouse and so forth.

"Dump that bird out the window," said some one.

The train was slowing down for another station, and the suggestion was carried out.

"A drunk never gets hurt," said one of the men.

In the light of an arc light shining into the compartment Hall eagerly read the folded paper he had removed from the inebriated one's left-hand upper pocket. Sure enough, it was a travel order, properly stamped, ordering the bearer, one Pvt. Duffin, 55th Regiment of Artillery, to report to the commanding officer, F.A.R.R., Le Corneau, Gironde.

Stiff, red-eyed and dirty-faced, the men crawled out of the train at Tours. They stood in line at the assistant provost marshal's desk and had their orders stamped, and then were told to go outside and fall in, and they would be taken to chow.

"How far is it?" asked Ira.

"Up to the Caserne Lafayette, about four miles," said a sergeant of police.

"Four miles! I can't walk four miles. I been standin' up in that train all today an' the night before."

"You don't need to go if you don't want to," said the sergeant kindly. "You can wait here in the station."

"Where do I go from here?"

"Let's see your orders."

He perused the slip rapidly.

"Huh! F.A.R.R. That's near Bordeaux. Two o'clock you get a train for Bordeaux. Leaves from Saint Pierre des Corps."

"Two o'clock! What the ——! Have I got to lose another night's sleep? That's a —— of a system!"

"Lookit, trooper, a guy named John J. Pershing is runnin' the A.E.F.; I ain't. You can get outta here at two G.M. or stay all night in the mill; I don't care. I'm only tellin' you."

Hall went out and took his place in the waiting line. Shortly they were marched to the other end of the city and fed.

After supper Hall went to the main gate of the *căserne* and inquired of the sergeant of the guard what he should do.

"Git a gate pass in that office there, an' go out an' look the town over. You might as well be outside as stickin' around here."

"What's F.A.R.R. mean?" asked Ira.

"Search me," said the sergeant. "Foul Air an' Rotten Rations for a guess."

He spoke truer than he knew.

The gate pass was secured, and Ira went forth into the dusk. He set off in the general direction of the depot, and after diving down one dark street and up another and making many side excursions down mysterious alleys he arrived in what seemed to be the center of things.

Lights streamed from café doors, and one could catch glimpses of white tables, sparkling glassware, brightly clothed women and glittering officers of all armies. Russians there were, French, British, Polish, Belgian and, of course, American. The sidewalks were thronged with them.

Hall became acutely conscious of the fact that his blouse was old and several sizes too small, that his breeches had been made for some one larger than he, and that the patches on the knees thereof were of a different color from the rest of the garment. He knew that his puttees were mere strips of rag, and that his hair needed cutting. Here was no place for any buck private.

He crossed the street and went by in the shadow of the trees. He felt no bitterness that others should carouse and soak themselves in wine while he and his fellows suffered the tortures of hell. Perhaps those officers were on leave from the front and were enjoying life while they might. If Hall had had some decent clothes and a month's pay in his pocket, he would have been in the very center of the very brightest of all those bright places, a girl on each knee and one around his neck. Alas, he was bound to the only mast that would keep him from the sirens of France. He had not been paid for four months.

ON THE shores of the Bay of Biscay, south of Bordeaux, is a desolate tract of sandy country with dense forests of pine toward the coast. This section is known as the Landes, and has been the subject of many a gloomy tale. No one lives there but a few shepherds and gatherers of pitch. A tiny railroad runs from La Teste de Boucque to Caseaux, and this is the only means of transportation.

One of the stations is called Le Corneau, and here the French established a training-camp for the Senegalese or negro battalions, where there would be no friction with white inhabitants, and where there would be no chance for desertion. When the Senegalese had all been trained and taken up to the front and killed off, the camp lay empty until it was turned over to the Americans, who established a replacement camp for the field and railroad artillery there.

This camp was in a state of filth and dilapidation that defies description. The Americans whitewashed the portable huts that served as barracks, sprinkled a little chlorid of lime around and declared themselves ready. It was a terrible place; but when two millions of men must be tucked away somewhere in a tiny country, one-half of which is in the hands of the enemy and the other crowded with the armies of the entire world, it stands to reason that the last comers are going to have to take what is left. People who go late to a show should not object to poor seats.

To this cheery place came Hall, a day's journey from Bordeaux. He climbed wearily from the little rattling train that had brought him from La Teste, and surveyed the camp.

"So this is the F. A. R. R. I'll get mine when they find out I'm a doughboy."

He turned in his orders at the headquarters, not forgetting that his name was no longer Hall but Duffin, and was turned over to the supply company for rations, that being the organization that received all casuals. Two blankets he drew, a shelter half, a pack, a mess-kit, a bacon and condiment can—who ever carried bacon or condiments in them?—a pistol-belt, a pole and some tent-pegs. These last he conveniently dropped between the supply room and the barracks.

Four thirty P.M. Chow in an hour. The men in the barracks were playing cards, smoking, reading and lying, just as any other crowd of idle males would.

"What outfit you out of?" asked the man on the opposite bunk.

"Sixteenth Infantry," said Hall.

"Infantry! Waddya doin' in this camp?"

Hall explained.

"I can get by, I guess, unless they set me to workin' round one o' those seventy-fives."

"Well," said the other man, "I'll tell yuh. I been here a week. Name's Knox. I'm outta the Seventh Field. They're

heavies, you know, but anything that's artillery comes to this camp just the same. There's two old seventy-fives here to train two thousand men with, so you won't get blisters takin' a breech-block apart.

"An' then another thing. You said that Duffin guy was from the Fifty-fifth. That's a railroad outfit. You can claim you don't savvy nothin' but fourteen-inch. But what'll you do when they send you up to the front again? They'll know when yuh get to the Fifty-fifth that you ain't Duffin."

"Listen, Knox, I ain't never goin' up to no front again. I know when I'm well off. I been draggin' myself all over France these last two or three days with nothin' to eat, and standin' up in trains all night, and fightin' with the police, an' I crave a little rest. An' right here is where I get said rest. Right here. When I'm rested enough to go back to the front again, the war's goin' to be over."

"You an' me both," said Knox fervently. "But somehow this place don't fit in with the dreams I've had o' the place I was goin' to rest in. Gee, it's time for first call. I better go wash."

He snaked a tin basin from under the bunk and departed.

"How do they eat here?" asked Hall of the man in the bunk above him.

"Well," said the other, "it isn't so bad, when you can get any of it. You know there are about six hundred men in the supply company, and more come in every day. They have a great system. The gang from each barracks lines up in front of its building, and then they march over in turn to the mess-shack. Anyway that's the theory."

"Waddya mean, theory?"

"You wait, buddy, and you'll see for yourself."

Knox rushed in just as retreat blew and tossed his towel on a nail, and the two hustled out. Hall gasped. Men were pouring from barracks like water from an overturned jug. He hadn't thought that there were so many in the whole camp.

"Where do all these birds keep themselves, Knox?"

"Huh! Each one has got a place of his own. They lie doggo during the day, but every one comes to retreat because then they read off the names of the men that are to go away."

A man with the chevrons of a first sergeant began to blow on his whistle and continued to do so until he was quite black in the face. Then by way of change he shrieked, "Attention!" several times at the top of his lungs, and then fell to on the whistle again.

The six hundred conversed affably with each other. They were lined up three ranks deep, and their front covered more than a hundred yards. At the far end of the line some twenty-five or thirty reclined at ease on the ground. The company began to shuffle its feet, and at once a thick, heavy cloud of dust rose from the sand, blackened with ashes of four years' fires. The top kick still called like a lost soul in that black cloud.

At once it came upon the six hundred that he was reading a list of names. Silence fell with a suddenness that hurt.

The first sergeant read rapidly, paying no attention to the shouted "Heres," nor to the silence that followed the calling of some of the names. Conversation gradually started again, and men began coolly to leave the ranks and go into the huts.

"That ain't no list," they said. "He's callin' the roll."

"How do they know?" asked Hall.

"If he reads off the names fast like that, and non-coms and bucks all together, he's just calling the roll; but if he reads 'em slowly with a bunch of sergeants and corporals first, it's an order, and those men are going away. You can easily tell the difference after you've heard a few."

"Ain't the band goin' to play 'The Star-Spangled Banner'?"

"I don't know; I never heard it. Retreat doesn't mean anything here. How are you going to get any order with a bunch of Indians like that?"

"My ——" said Hall. "What kind of a madhouse have I got into? Yuh'd think they was a bunch of Bolsheviks!"

Mess was immediately after retreat, and the men equipped themselves with their mess-kits and fell in again. This time there were not so many. In fact, there were surprizingly few in front of one hut, which, by the way, was the one scheduled to march to the mess-shack last.

Some of the jaw-bone n.-c.o.'s took their places between the huts, and gave the commands for marching. There was some jeering at this, and subdued laughter, as

of men having a private joke up their sleeve. The jaw-bones, lacking experience, got one of the squads turned upon itself, so that no one knew where he was supposed to go and had no knowledge of what his neighbor did, save that he was walking up the back of his neck; and what with the rage at being ordered about by a John, and the knowledge that the other squads were getting ahead of them in the chow line, and a general disgust at all the world in general and Le Corneau in particular, these poor convalescents were well-nigh beside themselves with rage.

"To —— with right face an' left face; I'm goin', " said one, and he went.

The squad started to the chow line by the most direct line.

"Hey! Git outta there; we come ahead of you guys!"

"Get back into ranks!"

"Squad halt!"

This last brought a ringing cheer. The next squad quickened their step and then broke into a slow trot. A roar went up from five hundred throats; and all and severally, the men of the supply company broke their formation and made for the cook-shack at a dead run.

Here their shouts took on a different tone. Some hundred men were standing in line there, and these prepared to defend their position to the death. The battle became general.

Hall stood aloof for a moment and then made his decision. It mattered not to him who stood first in line, nor how many men would be ahead of him. At a table in front of the shack stood two grinning cooks' police, ready to serve out the bacon and bread. They were enjoying the spectacle of the fight much as keepers would a row among their charges in a zoo.

Hall scooped up a mess-kit full of bacon, seized a handful of bread and then fled. But he had been seen. The six hundred straightway stopped their struggle for places in the line and bore down upon the food. Two men seized the boiler full of bread and started off; a third leaped into it with both feet, tearing it from their hands; and then the three were buried under an avalanche of grabbing hands and stamping feet. The table crashed to earth in ruin.

A lieutenant and the first sergeant rushed from the orderly room, blowing their whistles. The top went straightway to the cans of hot water, bubbling over a fire-pit dug in the ground in preparation for the washing of many mess-kits, and cast buckets of this boiling water all about upon the struggling men. Many of them retired to the mess shack and continued the battle there, to the accompaniment of crashing pans and the bulging of the buildings' walls.

The officer smote the first man he came to upon the jaw, wafting him against the coffee urn, which promptly overset and well-nigh drowned the bold top. This last fled shrieking, with his shirt and breeches full of hot coffee.

The turmoil of battle carried to the guard-house.

"Turn out, gang," called the O.D.; "there's another mess-shack fight at the supply company."

The guard trotted across the parade, but when they reached the scene there was no one in sight. And the fragments of that supper would not feed a healthy Airedale.

Some time later the lieutenant went down the line of huts and thus delivered himself—

"Those men who did not take part in the riot and who got no supper may fall in and be marched to the second company's mess-shack."

He repeated this at each hut. Verily he was a trusting young man, and one not mindful of the evil of the world. When he reached the last barrack he turned around. There were some six hundred men lined up behind him.

A COLD dawn with a freezing mist, the high, thin wail of first call, then in a little time the faint strains of the band over by the guard-house playing "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight." Now this is a Marine song, so the chances were that the leader was some old leatherneck.

Whistles began to shriek. In an outfit where there are many new non-commissioned officers there is always a great clamor of whistles just before assembly. Hall was not used to them; they made him nervous. In his company they were rarely used, and then only by the officers. The first sergeant had no use for one, being blessed with a voice that would shake a bird from the limb of a tree.

"Huccum all this tootin'?" said Ira, as he struggled into his blouse.

"Don't mean nothin'," said the man in the next bunk. "No formation—only for the replacements; leastways they're the only ones that go."

"Waddye get up for?"

"No breakfast if yuh stay in bed. Better beat it an' get in line, or you'll lose another meal."

This time there was no pretense of forming to be marched over. Every one went at his best speed and got as near the head of the line as he could. The head was a doubly desirable place, since those who were fed first could dash around to the end of the line and be in time for a second mess-kit full before the chow was all gone. This was possible for only a few.

It was bitter cold. Ira secured two slices of bacon, some fried potatoes, a little Karo, a slice of bread and tin cup full of coffee, and then retired to the side of the fire that was burning under the water-cans in preparation for the washing of the mess-kits. It was beautifully warm there, and he put his breakfast on the sand and crouched over it in happy anticipation. A huge foot went by and scattered a film of black dust over the contents of the meat-can.

"You poor tripe!" said Hall. "Keep those big mud-scows of yours out of my mess-kit!"

"Fry your ear," said the culprit. "Go an' eat somewhere else if you don't like it."

Ira arose and looked the other between the eyes, but he kept his mess-kit in his hand while he did it. The man with the big feet went on without further parley, and Hall returned to his breakfast. The hot coffee and the warm food felt good in the poor man's inside, and did fair to raise his body temperature to normal. The sun was not yet up, and the mist clung thickly.

Suddenly from the fog came a sharp voice—

"Get your —— —— feet out of my mess-kit!"

"Get your —— —— mess-kit out from under my feet then."

"I'll show you, you ——!"

The sound of running feet. Then the first voice again boastingly:

"He'd better run. I'd broke every bone in his body. Kickin' sand all over my bacon!"

A pause: then the same voice complainingly with just a hint of apprehension—

"Where'd my bacon go?"

The sound of snickering, like the rattling of paper. A gruff, heavy, taunting voice—

"Never mind the bacon; eat your breakfast."

"I kinda thought that was the game," said Hall to himself. "Pick a fight with a guy, and then some one else swipes his chow. Huh!"

When first call for drill blew, Ira looked about him for Knox, but he was nowhere to be seen, nor were any of the other men in evidence. The infantryman was in doubt whether to attend drill or not, but there was no one to advise him, and the habit of discipline was strong upon him. He guessed he'd better go. He wondered how the six hundred would behave at drill.

Poor Hall! When he took his place in ranks he gazed about him with wondering eyes. There were not enough men there to make more than three healthy squads. They were armed with rifles, which cheered him somewhat as he had feared that there would be maneuvers with a field-gun, a piece of apparatus that he knew nothing about.

"Where's all the gang?" he asked the man next to him.

"They don't ever stand drill," was the reply. "Only us poor guys that belong to the replacement draft have to. They give us the manual of arms and squads right and left, and then the loot asks us questions about the parts of the field-gun, and who takes off the breech cover at the command, 'Prepare for action.' A —— of a lot of good that will do us when we get up to the front."

"I'll say," said Hall.

The men were fallen in and marched toward the drill-ground; but when they had gone but a few paces a complication arose. A major with a bull-like voice halted them.

"What organization is this?" he asked the lieutenant.

"Supply company, sir."

"Supply company? Supply squad! You had six hundred and thirty-five men on the morning report. Don't deny it. I saw it myself. There aren't more than thirty here. Where are the others? Speak up now. Where are they?"

"They must be on detail somewhere, sir. I leave that to the first sergeant. These are all the men available for drill."

The poor lieutenant began to perspire slightly.

"Detail ——!" roared the major. "They're all in these barracks; I know they are. Go into that one and dig them out—at once now; turn 'em out for drill. What's the Army coming to!"

The lieutenant walked toward the nearest hut. Perhaps in order to make clear what follows, it would be well to give a description of the buildings of which Le Corneau was composed. These huts were invented by the same man that invented the tin hat, and were put up in sections. There was a door at both ends. At about the height of a man's chest from the floor the wall flared outward, making a storage space some three feet deep. The hut had the appearance of a common wall tent, save that it was made of wood, and the space where the guy ropes would be was covered over, making the flare described above. It was the custom to hang slickers, overcoats, packs and all the odds and ends of equipment from the wall, just above the flare, so that they hung down and curtained off the space in back of them. Let us now proceed.

When the officer was several paces from the door, there came a sound of scrambling. Then men poured from the farther door in a stream. The major's wattles grew crimson, and he bellowed melodiously.

The watching men shook with delight. The longer this kept on, the less time would be left for drill.

The lieutenant entered the door, all unaware that the bird had flown. The hut was empty. He returned to the major, happy in that his story had been vindicated.

"Sir," said he, "there was no one in the barrack."

Who is he that hath said profanity springs from a lack of vocabulary? Not so. The squad listened while the major went from the burning, blazing heat of the sun's innermost depths to the stark cold of interstellar space, from the high heights of heaven to the blackest, foulest pit of irretrievable perdition. He spoke feelingly of the lieutenant's ancestors, his immediate family and descendants. He gave his views of the Army, the war, G. H. Q. and the commissioned personnel of the field artillery replacement reserve. Pinwheels flashed, rockets soared and burst and diamonds glittered in his speech.

The listening soldiers treasured every word. Happy, laughing faces were at the windows of all the huts.

"Now," said the major, "come with me, and I will show you how to turn out these everlastingly condemned gold-bricks."

He selected two of the huskiest of the jaw-bone non-coms and had them take position at the farther doors of the barracks. Then the two officers moved toward the door of the nearest building. The faces disappeared from the windows. The non-coms at the farther door were seen to take the position of charge bayonet, and confused sounds were heard.

The officers entered. Silence. They reappeared at the other door. The major's words could be heard distinctly, even at a distance of a mile or so.

"In the name of all that is blue and green and red, what did you let those men out for?"

The two jaw-bones executed rifle salute as prescribed.

"Sir, no one came out."

The major went back into the building. The signs of recent occupancy were numerous. There were the hands of a game of black-jack lying face down on one of the bunks, smoldering cigarets on the floor, a pipe with a thread of smoke rising from the bowl. A complete outfit of clothing for one man lay across a bunk.

"Some one," said the major, "will be badly sunburned before he gets back."

The two officers repeated their inspection at the next hut with the same result. They went to every barracks in the line, and then came sadly back to the waiting squad.

"Well, well, lieutenant!" said the senior officer. "Don't bother me with your troubles. I have too much to do to be chasing soldiers all the morning. I can't help it if you can't get your men out to drill. There now, take what few you have and run along with them. They are all you can handle, I dare say."

And he departed on his way. The lieutenant sadly marched the squad to the drill-ground for the forty minutes that remained of the drill period. The men felt sorry for him.

"Saturday, thank ——," said Knox after mess, "and no drill to duck this afternoon."

"Where was all that gang when the major went in the barracks this morning?" asked Hall.

"In the dugouts."

"Dugouts?"

"Sure, back o' the slickers and stuff on the wall. The looey'll get wise to it some day though, and then we'll have to hunt a new place."

"It appears to me," said Ira, "that this camp is a bum place to rest."

"It's better than duckin' shells anyway," replied Knox.

"Turn out to draw Bull Durham," called a voice outside the next barracks.

Hall made a wild dash for the door, and then stopped. Clearly something was wrong here. Some of the men reconnoitered the adjoining hut through the windows. Others went into seclusion behind the slickers without delay. No one seemed anxious to receive any tobacco.

"What's comin' off here?" muttered Hall.

"Don't never turn out for any call like that," said a soldier, "unless you see somebody right there with a cartoon of Bull."

Hall looked out the window. Sure enough there was one of the jaw-bones with a big pasteboard box under his arm.

"Come on out, guys," was the universal cry. "It's a sure-enough tobacco issue."

The barracks was rapidly emptied. Knox and one or two more remained.

"You stay in here," said Knox, seizing Hall by the coat. "I smell somethin' wrong. Now don't be a —— fool. Stick around. They don't give nothin' away in this place without a string to it, especially on Saturday afternoon."

"Aw, what's eatin' yuh?" cried Ira. "Ain't the guy out there issuin' it out?"

"Come here," said a man at the window. "Can you imagine this!"

There was a line of eager soldiers in front of the next hut, a man with a big box full of Bull Durham and a lieutenant who gave a sharp command as Hall reached the window. The waiting line snapped to attention.

"Left face!" said the looey. "Forward, hart!"

The men marched off out of sight. The man with the tobacco turned and went the other way, with never so much as a glance at the disappearing men.

"I thought it was some gag like that," said one of the watchers at the window. "They'll go down to the tracks and unload cars all the afternoon, and all the Bull they'll get will be what that officer throws while they're workin'."

A WEEK passed. How simple a thing it is to write thus! In that week Hall went through tortures that he never knew existed. Each day the selfsame fight for food. He stole from other mess-kits and had his own stolen. He fought for his place in the line, only to find when the fight was over that the chow was all gone.

The hiding-place behind the slickers was discovered, and Hall found a new one in the pine woods across the railroad tracks. He was dragged forth from this one by the police and spent a hot day on the rock-pile, regretting it.

He had forgotten to answer to the name of Duffin at roll-call, and hence found that he was being carried as absent without leave. This meant that he would never be sent away because his name would never be put on an order. The only thing to do would be to announce that he had returned and stand trial for being away the better part of a week. Indeed he was upon the horns of a dilemma, and had both of them skewered clear through him.

"I had a new dodge today," said Knox one evening as they were discussing their wos. "I had a box I carried around with me all day. I didn't go out an' hide. I just stuck around the camp. Every time an officer or an M. P. came near, I'd pick up the box and walk off with it, like I was carryin' it somewhere. Then just about half an hour before recall some wise bird halts me an' asks where I'm goin' with the box.

" 'I'm goin' to the supply company with it,' says I.

" 'How come there's nothin' in it?' says he.

" 'Firewood,' says I.

" 'Well, you be —— sure you get it to the supply company right *priesa*,' says he. 'I see you carryin' it four times already, an' it's the same box 'cause I remember the tomato label on it.' "

"How's the chances on goin' over the hill?" said Ira casually.

"Nothin' doin'. D'yuh know what keepin' yuh here? There's the regular camp guard—just guys like us, you know. Then there's the provosts sergeants' gang from

the F. A. R. R. all mounted, an' one behind every bush——"

"I'll say!" agreed Ira.

"Then on the road is the regular police, the Sixth Cavalry, mounted an' dismounted all the way between here an' Bordeaux, an' each town has its own special police. A frog gendarme ain't above pickin' you up either."

"I know a good chance to get out," said a man on an upper bunk. "They're goin' down to the Spanish border tomorrow to get horses, an' a detail is goin' along. They're goin' to take their lunch an' everything."

"How do you know?" demanded Hall.

"I heard the top kick talkin' about it."

"Let's go," said Hall.

"Nix," answered Knox. "It's a stall."

"I'm goin' to look into it anyway. I crave to get out of this hole, even for a day."

The next morning it appeared that the rumor was true. The cook's police were busy making up sandwiches, and the supply sergeant had a huge pile of halter shanks in front of his door. Excitement was high. Even the worst drill-dodgers in the company besought the top to be allowed to go—all save Knox, who remained aloof.

"I don't trust 'em," said he.

After breakfast two halter shanks were issued to every one that applied. It would have been obvious to a disinterested party that if those men were really going somewhere in trucks it would require a considerable train to transport them. It would also be noticed that nothing had been announced officially regarding their destination. The first sergeant had started the rumor and had allowed it to take its course, knowing that it would run like a prairie fire. The men were fallen in and marched away.

A FRENCH freight-car has at one end a little house, set just below the level of the roof and reached by a flight of steps. This is for the use of the brakeman. The last car of a train leaving Le Corneau with troops for the front had such a house. Up its steps might be seen creeping a soldier. It was Hall. He slid into the house cautiously. It was occupied by a man who was trying to hide behind the door.

"Knox!"

"Hall! What the —— are you doin' here? I thought you was goin' to Spain?"

"Aw, those scurvy bar sinisters!" said Hall. "They marched us down to the other end of the camp an' give us each two horses. Then they told us to take 'em across the railroad track and graze 'em all day. Can yuh imagine stayin' out there holdin' them two goats all day an' eatin' a cold lunch of bread an' goldfish in sight of your own kitchen? Not me! The whole outfit bit on that one. After all the stalls we had put up on us, we oughta known better."

"Then what?"

"I held 'em till they —— near pulled my arm off, one goin' one way an' one the other, an' then I tied 'em to a tree. When I was beatin' it across the track this train was goin' out.

" 'Where yuh goin'?' I says.

" 'First Division,' says the guys in the cars, so I got on."

He paused a moment, his eyes on the receding camp.

"I'm goin' back to the front. I need a rest."

"You an' me both," said Knox.

NEMESIS

By Allan Dunn

Author of "The Treasure," "Smoke Island," etc.

IT WAS close to nightfall when the canoe crossed the last lagoon and entered a swift river, mangrove-banked with the current making curious sucking noises among the stilted roots—like chuckling mud monsters. The naked natives paddled hard, sweat beading on their dark skins while their eyes rolled strangely beneath their frizzly hair, fantastically bleached with lime to the semblance of yellow and orange dust mops.

Presently the mangroves gave way to the bush, tall trees festooned by lianas, wattled with jungle undergrowth. The lowering sun bloodied the drips from the paddle blades, painted crimson the ragged crests of the mountains, looming dark, savage, distant. The far-off throb of drums came down the whispering wind that went rustling mysteriously through the gloomy forest.

Benson lolled in the stern, languid, affecting nonchalance, as ever—posing—imagining himself the leader of a band of dusky slaves, not quite easy in the rôle but unable entirely to lose his theatrical tendencies, his love for playing a leading part on his immediate stage.

His eyes were haunted, like those of Harris in the bows, like those of all the men they were furtively going to join, men whose loud laughter was never extended to their glance, men who were anxious rather than gay, for all their swaggering masquerades.

Benson knew the hunt was up, implacable, persistent. In the calamitous hurry of discovery and departure he had not been able to bring much money, less than ten thousand dollars of all those gathered from his dupes, barely two per cent. of all his loot. Flight, with the knowledge of sure pursuit, had proved expensive and his funds were low. True, he had spent, had thrown away, most of that half a million dollars but there had been another coup pending. If he had only had a little more time——

His white linen was limp and grimy from the heat and discomfort of the trip from Suva. A good deal of the bravado was out of Benson and the look of the sullen jungle in the sunset glare was not promising. Mosquitoes buzzed and bit viciously. Invisible sand-flies were worse.

Harris, the cheap crook, the absconding trader's agent who had told him of the Brotherhood, was hunched up in the bows, foul of mind and body, half-drunk, swigging at his flask of rum, singing snatches of ribald song.

Strange company for Benson after the glitter of cafés, the music, the white, smooth shoulders of women, the food, the dance,

the wine, the life for which he had bartered his honor—his essential liberty. He cursed the woman who had given him away. His mood of make-believe vanished. The paddler facing him started at the sudden ferocity of the white man's face.

"Round the next bend, matey," sang out Harris. "Then we 'oof it. Git there just right. No use showin' up afore dark."

Fair she was, to outward seemin'
An' she swore that she'd be true.
'T'was my gold that caused 'er beamin'
For 'er nyme was Siren Sue.

"Sirens up to the Brother'ood, matey. Good pals. There's one called Kumi they s'y is a fair knockout. Good grub an' plenty of good booze. All your 'eart desires so long as you got the price. Suit you, matey?"

"Sounds good," forced Benson, affecting distasteful fellowship.

"Betcha life."

The bow-paddler suddenly jabbered in Fijian and Harris answered him in the dialect. The canoe swung inshore against the swirling current. The drums boomed out louder. The barbaric, compelling rhythm seemed to Benson to come simultaneously from everywhere—the bush, the sky, the ground and the dark welling water. The ominous, sinister measure dominated his feverish pulse. The boohing of conch-shells, like demon hooting, came down the river gorge. He was sure he saw a dark figure materialize for a moment against the bush and then vanish like so much vapor.

His vivid imagination pictured stark savages careering about monstrous idols while shaven-headed women shuffled in silent files, their pendulous breasts swinging time, peeled wands surmounted by grinning skulls in their right hands, flaring torches in their left. He wiped the perspiration from his forehead as the canoe bumped gently, nosing into the matted bush.

"——, what a hole!"

Harris leaned forward.

"Cheerio! Ere we are, matey, chuck out your luggage."

They were at the entrance of a dim and narrow bush-path, its floor trodden hard by myriads of horny soles, walled by the impenetrable jungle. It was here that Benson had seen the figure appear and vanish. The paddlers had been paid beforehand. Without a word they swiftly turned the canoe, the paddles making circles of troubled water that caught the red of the overhead sky. With a swiftly increasing stroke they went racing downstream as if glad to leave the spot.

Harris swung up a grimy duck bag to his shoulder. Benson, reduced to one piece of baggage in this latest flight, hesitated to take up his grip.

"I'll swear I saw a man watching us just now before we landed," he said. "A native. Listen to those cursed drums, will you?"

"Sure. Give me the creeps when I first 'eard 'em. Lor', I couldn't sleep without 'em nowadays! Wait till you've 'ad a beach-station, matey. Course you see a man. A lookout. 'E's on 'is w'y to s'y we're comin'. You don't ketch 'Rumbo' Williams nappin', matey. 'Ow 'ud we be safe if 'e didn't set watch? Come on."

The bush hemmed them with barely elbow room. Buttressed banyans, breadfruit, towering tutui, scarlet geranium-trees, feathery-bamboo, wild-citron, inextricably meshed with vines, dense shrubbery at their feet, writhing creepers across the trail. There was no sound of birds, only the hum of innumerable insects, jeweled beetles, metallic butterflies that flickered in the twilight. The foliage seemed black under the fading after-glow of sulfur-colored clouds floating on a sea of jade-green that swiftly dimmed to olive, then to purple, suddenly set with glowing stars—like eyes.

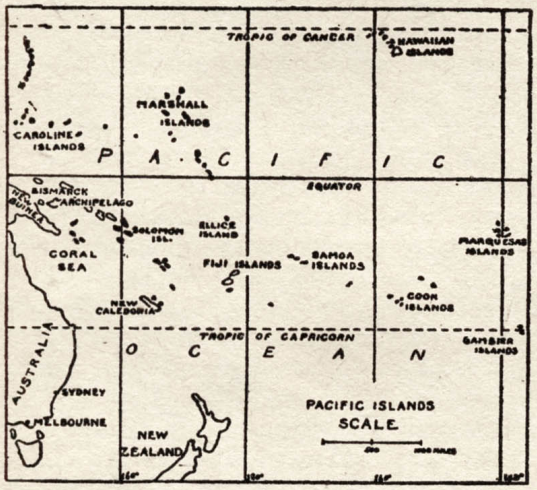
Out of the bush came the oppressive odors of decaying fruit and too fragrant flowers—a decadent perfume suggesting death.

THE Brotherhood had various names bestowed upon it by the various types of men that sought its sanctuary. It was a Clearing House for Criminals, a Fourth Dimension for Fugitives. They entered its immunity—at a price, fixed by Rumbo Williams, bawdy prior of this mysterious monastery—and disappeared. Sometimes an emissary of the law, a kilted half-caste of the native police, arrived in desultory search, found nothing and departed bribe in hand.

Swindlers and rogues and fools in their degrees. Fraudulent bankers, corrupt agents, venal trustees, pearl poachers,

ex-convicts—some of them desperate fugitives from dread Noumea—runaway ship's apprentices, pallid men, men tanned by wind and sun and sea, men white, yellow, brown and black, of all ranks; all runaways, coming from all parts of the world for asylum, for a chance to hide and be forwarded by Rumbo's underground system to still remoter places. These the Brethren.

The low-roofed house was hardly visible as they broke out of the trail and crossed a tract of breast-high ferns whose crushed fronds gave out a faint smell of almonds. Again a flitting form preceded them, materializing and vanishing like a fantom. No lights showed.



The sounds they had heard while they were in the fern ceased suddenly—the whine of a violin, the blare of an accordion, buffeting of feet on a dance floor and men's coarse voices grating in careless chorus. Only the distant drums persisted.

Harris tapped a signal. This was not his first visit, he boasted, and he knew the ropes. A slide opened finally and the *sesame* was passed. There was the chink of coin, a door set wide and Harris passed in. Benson found himself confronted by a man half a foot taller than himself, his long bearded face in the shadow, his eyes dark though Benson felt their keen appraisal.

"It's twenty quid a week, pay in advance," said a deep voice that was not without an echo of quality, of educated intonation.

"Twenty?" protested Benson. "Harris said——"

"Harris is a horse of another color, my friend. I know a gent when I see one and I know brains. I don't know what your lay was, brother, and I don't care, but I'll warrant it paid well. You're not a piker, a picaroon, like most of our pals in here. And you pay accordingly—take it or leave it."

Benson gave him notes he had got in Sydney. The noise had started again. His host escorted him through the main room of the shanty where men sat elbowed at a long, low table, some playing cards, some drinking moodily, all turning hunted eyes towards the door. Tallow candles swung on wires suspended above the bar and guttered on the table. There were Chinese in the crowd, Malays, mixed breeds, white men drumming with nervous fingers to the music while their thoughts were far from the cards spread out in 'Canfield' before them. A few rough customers danced together. Two—more lucky—dragged about half-white girls who screamed with laughter as they repelled crude familiarities.

"All sorts and conditions of men," said Rumbo. "Good fellows but—careless—let us say careless. Knit in common interest, in common safety. A sort of socialism, effective despite apparent limitations of caste, because each depends upon the other. You can well understand that.

"It pays to be liberal. I should stand a round occasionally, if I were you. Get their goodwill. You can never tell when you may need it.

"Here are the sleeping quarters. Communism again. But I insist upon cleanliness and only white men sleep in this room. You can take either of these end bunks. Quite pleasant with the window open above. Mosquito nettings, you see. Fresh matting."

He had talked specifically to Benson. Harris, as a former guest, needed no enlightenment. Rumbo Williams lowered his voice.

"I do not ask your confidence or your name," he said. "Though you will require the latter. Call it Smith. Glad to have you stay here as long as you like. If you have decided where you are going I will arrange the exit, if not, I might suggest. The Marquesas now? If it were not for the profits—I'm being frank with you—I'd go there myself. May yet. Golden

women with golden hearts who worship a white man like a god and hide you in the hills. Loving and not over jealous. You can have a dozen of 'em if you want. Lotus Land. I can tell you are a woman's man, sir. All red-blooded men are. I'm one myself. My failing."

Benson wondered from what pinnacle of respectability this keeper of an illicit sanctuary had fallen when he became 'careless.' Closer inspection showed Williams to have good features coarsened by self-license, eyes that were a strange combination of being both bleary and keen, a prominent nose that advertised his title of Rumbo, a physique marred by corpulence—but powerful. With it all an assumption of fellow villainy that jarred on Benson who was not over sensitive.

"I can get you in without registry, Mr. Smith. The French authorities will never know you've landed. Once tucked away, you're safe forever. Unless things blow over. They do sometimes unless you happen to get in wrong with the Federal Government—we're both Americans. Uncle Samuel has an inconveniently long memory."

Benson dissembled easily enough. He was not going to give himself away to this trafficker in 'carelessness.'

"Quarters are fine," he said. "I'll talk things over with you later. Expect I'll stay here for a few weeks.

"Rumbo's eyes glowed with cupidity. Benson knew that his was a slick villainy, that his veneer of friendliness would slide like a dirt road surface after rain if friction occurred. It would cost money to get away but it was worth it. The Marquesas and its golden women! That was an apt phrase. A man might do worse than live in Lotus Land and thumb his nose at the Federal hounds.

He had been a fool to cross swords with Uncle Sam, to plan with an alien enemy and conspire to prevent the shipment of ammunition to the Allies. True, he had not been an actual traitor to his own. He had double-crossed the very men who had paid him so liberally. It was lucky the Allies had taken over the South Seas. It would not do to fall into the hands of those with whom he had bargained.

There had been other matters too; trust funds, gold mines and oil wells, unfortunate investments for those who had sought his advice. All stirred up when the woman had betrayed him. Still—in the Marquesas a little money went a long way.

"Let's buy that round of drinks," he said.

There was a woman—a girl—posturing at one end of the big room, gracefully voluptuous, round of limb and firm of breast, chanting as she moved in a native *hula* to the plucking of a banjo. White wild-ginger flowers were wreathed in her hair and about her body above the swinging skirt of grass and bark-paper. Not all the men regarded her. One looked at her with eyes that showed hatred of her sex.

"It's Kumi," said Harris. "Ain't she a charmer? A bit of all right, she is. 'Ave 'er up for a drink when she gets through."

The whole room responded eagerly to Benson's 'shout.' Clouted natives acted as waiters to those who did not crowd to the bar. The pungent liquor warmed Benson's body, mounted to his brain, loosened his emotions. He shook off his moodiness. Here was an audience and he was first and last an actor, a player to the gallery, desirous of applause.

With the same air—with something of the same hypocrisy—with which he used to lay a twenty-dollar bill upon the collection plate at church in his home town in Massachusetts—where his wife and child now lived as best they could—he flourished his money, bought them liquor, told them stories and sat smiling at their loud guffaws.

They cheered him and sang him passing fame as a jolly good fellow. The room grew thick with smoke, the air carried fumes of strong brews. Kumi came to his side and stayed there while Harris glowered. Benson was master of the revel. He began to boast a little, to hint more than his reason warned him—against his glib tongue—was wise. He absorbed their admiration, swollen with conceit like a dry sponge soaking water.

His eyes brightened and he complacently stroked the mustache and trim beard he had grown since he had read the newspaper in the club at Sydney that warned him to move on. He slid an arm about the giggling Kumi and Harris, red-eyed, drunken, malevolent, struck fiercely at him.

Benson was not a coward and he was as

physcially fit as the other. Harris fought foul with foot and knee, with fingers that clawed for his opponent's eyes and Benson fought him off half-blinded, a pain in his groin like a hot blade.

When his vision cleared Harris was struggling futilely in the grip of Rumbo who propelled him towards the door. A two-quid guest against a twenty-quid one! There was no question of the issue.

The men had formed a ring about them, musicians, waiters and barman, their eyes eager for a fight, already showing disappointment as Rumbo took charge.

"Out you go!" cried Rumbo. "I don't stand for that sort of thing, my bucko! Got drunk on his liquor and then turned on him for nothing. I'm running this shanty, women and all."

Harris, bloodied where Benson's fist had split his mouth, his whole face crimson with rage and mortification, struggled hard in the clutch of Rumbo, holding him aloft, calling for the offender's dunnage, prepared to cast him into outer darkness and insecurity. Benson interfered. His brain cleared at the crisis. He could not afford to be enemies with any of his fellow refugees, let alone Harris, who knew more than the rest.

"Hold on," he said. "That was my fault. I didn't know she was his girl. If my drinks started the fuss let another round end it."

Rumbo regarded Benson with eyes that held a glint of approval, of recognition of the other's sapience.

"If that's the way you feel about it," he said, "I'll call it off as a favor to you. But I don't stand for having my rules broken."

He shook Harris a little before he put him down, as a bull-terrier might shake a rat. Harris stood glowering.

"My fault, Harris," repeated Benson. "I didn't mean to butt in. We'll have another drink round and forget it."

It was plain that Harris' ungracious growl of acceptance was more expedient than spontaneous but he shook hands with his assailant though he did not look him in the eyes. He turned to the girl who had stood by with her big eyes glowing, her breasts heaving in the feminine excitement and satisfaction of being the core of a quarrel.

She made a scornful *moue* at him.

"What name you so rough a fella?" she demanded as she eluded his uncertain grasp. "I no like that kind."

Benson, carrying his liquor better than most of them, knew he had not properly placated Harris and he made it a point to send the latter to his bunk in a condition which he hoped would produce forgetfulness of the details of the quarrel, though he did not doubt that Kumi would remind Harris of it if the agent again approached her for favors. Now she showed herself attracted by Benson but self-preservation was prime with him over his inclinations. Pretty and voluptuous as she was, he did not intend to enter an intrigue that might lead to dangerous reprisal from Harris.

All that could wait until he met the golden women of the Marquesas. In Lotus Land.

Benson didn't sleep much but lay in a reverie in which he saw himself a petty potentate, petted and pampered by black-eyed, black-haired beauties, secure from pursuit. A man might do worse.

There were none of those cursed drums in the Marquesas! They were pacific islands in the true sense; lands of wild, romantic beauty, of waving palms, of streams and waterfalls, of flowers and universal verdure, life, the love of life and the life of love.

He knew something of Rumbo Williams' methods of speeding his departing guests, gleaned from Harris. An outrigger canoe to Nuka Hiva, a cabin aboard a discreet trader, a vanishing in the night. Costly—in Benson's case—but efficient.

Of the victims of his various peculations Benson, then, as ever, thought not at all. He had a faculty of dismissing them as inferiors unable to cope with his smartness, victims of their own credulity, to be forgotten as the birds limed and netted by a fowler. Man, woman, child, widow, orphan, friend, he eliminated them.

One thing remained with him against his efforts. The look in his wife's eyes when she realised that he was not merely rogue but traitor. In vain he called her to himself a canting hypocrite. He had hidden things from her because he had wanted to maintain her respect, if not her love, and the loss of it rankled. Far more than the fact that she sat in ashes amid the ruin of her respectability and that of their child.

Benson was a very thorough-going blackguard.

When he woke up it was well after dawn. The drums had ceased. A radiant shaft of sunshine came through the window above his bunk. He watched the little motes dancing in the shining beam. The *golden* beam.

It might be well to stay with Rumbo long enough for ingratiation—at twenty quid a week—then—emerald islands, sapphire seas, crags of gray-jade, silver streams and *golden* women—*golden* life—the old world laughed at.

THERE are at least two types of detectives, even those in government employ. The solver of mysteries, attracted to the profession by a flair for the unraveling of riddles. The man-hunter, the bloodhound of the law.

The last is brave, persistent, patient. The other need not have the first of these qualities.

Jim Griffin of the Federal Service was the bloodhound of the law. He had brains, bravery, pertinacity, a faculty for recognition, for penetration of disguise, an excellent memory and an absolute conviction that he was serving the ends of justice, the good of the community, doing his duty as a citizen when he took the trail.

From that moment he was a sworn foe to the fugitive, implacable, not to be shaken off. Taken off the official leash, given full liberty, Griffin had never failed to get his man. Some of them dead, but all of them accounted for.

During the World War the criminal who fled was of less importance than the still active agent of the enemy. Griffin was recalled from pursuit of Benson just as the trail began to grow warm. He returned from Sydney on the same steamer that had landed him and the years went by with the case of Benson docketed—filed, but not forgotten. It was a cold scent when Griffin took it up again while part of the world, at least, settled slowly, very slowly, down towards normal.

Griffin was human. Professionally, a man like Benson was to him as a fox to a hound. That part of it was automatic. Personally, he held a warm man's hatred towards the human vermin who deliberately won the confidence of the ill-advised or the unadvised and robbed them by methods that left the victims helpless. This man had made beggars out of some women so that he could enjoy the loot with others. He robbed the fatherless and the widow without compunction and swaggered in many rôles. At his home he was a virtuous citizen, in New York he smiled to be pointed out as a *roué*. On top of it all he had played traitor. His part in the war had been one of chicanery. A carpet-bagger was a gentleman beside him and Griffin took up the chase with a grim satisfaction that matched his determination.

But there were two sides to Griffin, just as there are two sides to velvet. Stern and implacable, though without rancor, wherever business was concerned, Griffin had a soft as well as a seamy side to his nature. He was born with an eye for color and an ear for music. The arts did not claim him yet he was at heart a poet. He was such a good judge of poetry that he abandoned his own attempts but he never traveled without one or more pocket-editions. To him the sea was beautiful and for him others more gifted expressed his feelings to his supreme content. He did not read his verse in public but went on deck primed with it and returned to it in his own cabin with renewed delight.

None suspected him of such a trend. None ever guessed his profession, for that matter. He had no wife, no home beyond bed and sitting-room in Washington where a discreet landlady enjoyed him as her only lodger and where he repaid her good offices by making her garden a glorious, perfumed riot—peonies predominating. He was a stocky, middle-sized, middle-aged man, inconspicuous yet affable. He was the sort of man to whom many people confided their troubles—principally domestic—and to whom he gave excellent advice, out of his knowledge of human nature.

He was generally thought to be something in insurance or else a traveling auditor but, on the *Miowera*, going out to Sydney, he let it be understood that he was a botanical chemist, being assured that he would find Benson somewhere in the South Seas. Benson had not had money enough in hand to seek indefinite sojourn in some country where the extradition courtesies are not exchanged and, knowing his man's tendencies, knowing that he had formerly headed for Sydney, through San Francisco, two thresholds of the Southern Pacific,

Griffin felt sure that he would find him somewhere between Capricorn and Cancer. His own rôle of botanist would give him excuse for rambling.

Griffin believed in finding his man first and securing local official warrant afterwards. Experience had taught him that this was the best way. Local justice might be blinded by a bank-note bandage, peculiarly opaque. Local gossip ran fast and far ahead where the law was invoked. A policeman off his beat in the South Seas is notoriously looking for a criminal and his company is equally suspicious.

Griffin went to Sydney only to tranship to Suva. He had learned that his man had gone to the Fijian capital on his previous trailing, when recalled. It was his habit to keep in touch with the fugitives with whom he was officially concerned. Many a man, heartsick and homesick, venturing at last back to God's country of Home, had been met on the borders by this medium sort of a man whose gray eyes were remorseless and whose methods of taking in charge were tremendously if unostentatiously efficient.

There was some luck in his meeting Harris, not an unusual amount, since Suva, like Port Said, Honolulu, Singapore and Shanghai, is a cross-roads and since Harris invariably made it his intermittent headquarters. He picked Harris with certainty as a rascal, finding him in one of the waterfront places he wandered into. And he managed to hint to Harris that he was in some trouble with his firm—that he had sold them out over a valuable discovery and, therefore, was inclined to lay low. Inside of forty-eight hours he had turned Harris inside out like an old glove, had heard of the Brotherhood and the lamented demise of Rumbo Williams.

" 'E got too bloody fresh with a woman from the 'ills," said Harris. "Now 'is 'ead 's 'angin' up in a club'ouse somewheres, dried. I 'elped bury what they left of 'im. Caught 'im spoonin' with the woman, they did. Probably sneaked up on 'im through the bush and got 'im with a 'ead 'ook. That's a loop of cane on the end of a stick with a spike they jab through the top of your spine when they jerk back. 'E was a nasty mess when we found 'im. The ants 'ad got at 'im. Reckon they cooked the woman. She was gone."

Over the fiery rum, with Griffin absorbing his tots until Harris declared with enthusiasm that he must possess a hollow leg, Harris reminisced of Rumbo. Griffin recognised it as a likely lead and elbowed him along the mental trail until Benson appeared like a picture thrown on a screen, clearly focussed by Harris' ancient grudge.

"I'd 'ave copped that girl if it 'adn't been for 'im, the blighter! It's too bad the Brotherhood's busted up, matey. No one else 'ad Rumbo's pull. But I can put you up to a 'ideout."

Griffin deftly led him back to Benson and the next day he took opportune ship for Tahiti, thence from Papeete to Hiva-Oa in the Marquesas in a trading schooner. The trail was warm again.

For seven hundred and fifty miles of sailing Griffin gave his poesy full rein, watching the birds and the fish, the argosies of trade clouds, the purple seas by day and the phosphorescent breakers at night, a milky path of trembling radiance. The winds, the stars, intrigued him and he read in his pocket-edition of Keats' magic casements, waiting to see the islands rise out of the sea, lonely, unvisited, without cable or wireless, ideal losing-places, but sure of his man.

The land smiled. Mount Temetiu, swathed in sulfur mists, waited the strengthening of the sun. The high crags were already tipped with amber, below them dense foliage ran, crisp as lettuce, down to the fronded palms on the bluffs where cascades fell waving into the sea. Blow-holes spouted at the foot of the cliffs and the spray surged like smoke.

Here was Hiva-Oa, the Bloody Isle, peaceful now and supremely beautiful. Griffin and his dunnage were landed on the beach at Atuona where the deep ravine back of the tiny settlement lay in violet shadow shot with gleams of green, like an opal. He registered at Government House in his assumed character and three days later started on his wanderings in the interior escorted by a native body-servant, bearer and interpreter, a trinity of usefulness with skin of bronze loin-clad in a scarlet-and-yellow *pareu*, the speed of Mercury, the body of Apollo and the guileless nature of a laughing faun. Regarding Griffin as a foolish white man who paid well to be shown plants which, to Talofu, were common as dandelions to a New England chore-boy.

A beau and a dandy was Talofu, boasting of his conquests, a bearer of gossip and a gatherer of news.

TALOFU led the way along the heights, bordering cliffs that looked into fairy ravines. Everywhere flowers were blooming, on the trees or hung like butterflies on the orchid sprays. Palms and breadfruit, bananas, guavas, candle-trees. Bright colored birds. Fragrance. High up, fantastic crags where the verdure ended, cloud-wreathed fastnesses to which they worked a toilsome but fascinating way, trailing at the last through a dense forest that led to a barren ridge, a spine of volcanic-rock finned above two valleys, leading to a sheer precipice split by a deep fissure down which thundered a waterfall.

Griffin's face was set. Talofu's was as grave but tinged with uneasiness.

"You go along back of that *vaitapu* (Forbidden Water)" he said. "I think better you not go. Maybe that man is dead. Me, I stop along this place."

Griffin saw that the gay Marquesan's skin was gray, that the man was quivering like a dog that scents a mysterious danger.

"No good along that place, I tell you," he persisted but would give no reason for his evident fear that Griffin set down to some ancient superstition. He admitted that the white man he had babbled about lived there—and not alone. Further, in speech or on trail, Griffin could not cajole or bribe him.

The intuition, born largely of rule of thumb, bolstered by a hundred hard-earned lessons of experience, told Griffin that his man was there.

Benson had chosen well. There was a *tapu* of some sort on the place. A gorge masked by the waterfall, barricaded by native credulity and reticence. Yet, swore Talofu, a place of wonders, once beloved of the gods.

Griffin left Talofu begging him not to venture, retreating into the forest before he was well out on the ridge.

There was a cave back of the fall, pierced by an arch that led to a narrow glen. Beautiful it was, but somber, visited briefly by the sun each day. The air was dank, the foliage wet with mists that hung about the crests of the high walls, waiting for evening to descend. There was a silence about the place that affected Griffin unpleasantly, keen on the scent as he was.

Here, he fancied, some tremendous battle might have been fought in the old days or the spot was one of heathen rites, the home of passed sorcerers, a secret place where cannibalism made its last stand.

There was a faint trail through the tangle and he followed its slippery windings. Ahead he heard a low pounding sound. He passed crumbling platforms of dry-laid stone, sites of perished buildings, houses or temples. The hollow noise became plainer and suddenly he paused on the edge of a clearing and gazed, unseen, at an old hag, shrunken to sexlessness, her skin like shagbark, white hair over her eyes, mumbling as she struck feebly but steadily at a strip of bark-cloth on a hollow log.

Deaf, toothless and half-blind, she did not look up as Griffin detoured about her, dodging from bush to tree. She seemed the eery witch of the place, humanity shriveled out of her.

The trail took up on the other side of the clearing where straggly taro grew in a swamp. Clutching at wet boughs that made a tunnel of the path, Griffin bored through it. His automatic was loose in a side-pocket. Benson was not the type to be taken back on a silken leash. His was the courage of bravado coupled to the desperation of a cornered rat. So Griffin estimated it.

He came out into a banana grove, the banners flaccid, yellowish rather than green, with sickly white shoots. Innumerable insects buzzed and stung.

In the middle of the plantation—if it was that—a tumbling, rotten thatch was supported on uneven poles, the miserable hut occupying half of a tottering platform, the rest open, a hammock slung between posts. Litter was all about. The mouldy air was charged with offensive smells of ordure and garbage.

There was scant light and, at first, Griffin, peering through a cloud of mosquitoes, did not recognise the squatting bundle for a man. Then he distinguished the figure, cross-legged, clad in filthy pants, once white perhaps, and the remnant of a singlet. The man moved and his naked flesh gleamed strangely white. His feet were bare. His face was bloated as if with stings of insects, puffed and swollen out of recognition, tufted as it was with

an unkempt beard and mustaches that looked mangy.

But it was Benson. Griffin knew, as he gazed in a maze of swift repulsion, that it was Benson. Benson the debonnair, the boulevardier of Broadway!

His gun came out of his pocket as he advanced, his jaw set, his gray eyes metallic. The man stood up, swaying, his arms hanging loosely, like stuffed appendages.

Something opened in his face, a hideous caricature of a mouth, as his face caricatured a badly-stuffed lion's head with its protuberant forehead and eyes that flickered in deep sockets. A harsh sound—it might have been a laugh, issued from the gap between mustache and beard.

"I want you, Benson," said Griffin. "No foolishness. Put up your hands."

Benson cackled. He spoke hoarsely, slobberingly.

"Come at last, have you? Never mind my hands. You see——"

The old crone came hurrying through the flaccid bananas carrying a wooden bowl. She halted, looking stupidly at Griffin.

"What do you want me for? Griffin, isn't it? Come to take me back, Griffin? Not this time."

He cackled again as Griffin, his gun ready for some move, a curious nausea possessing him as he scrutinized his man, moved closer.

"Money's all gone, Grif. I didn't have much. Last of it bribed the old dame to feed me till I die—or she does. You wouldn't think she was a golden woman once, would you? There were others—but they've gone. And you can't take me back, Griffin."

"Why not?" Griffin heard himself speak as a stranger. Horror was crawling on him.

The animal face crimsoned suddenly as Benson extended his arms. They were shapeless and scaly. They ended in hands that were fingerless save for one thumb, not scarred but smooth as a snake's skin and silver white.

"I can't feed myself, Griffin. There's no one else in the world but this hag who'd stuff my mouth. Do *you* know of any port that lets in a leper?"

THE ECONOMICS OF HEAD-HUNTING

by J. D. Newsom

SMUG self-satisfaction usually characterizes the attitude of the white man in his dealings with so-called backward peoples. He takes neither the time nor the trouble to understand the races with which he comes in contact until it is too late.

Take, for instance, head-hunting in the Solomons. It was a widespread practise and it came to interfere with the planter in need of labor and the missionary in search of converts. So the administrator was called in. He put an end to head-hunting in short order in the islands where there were white residents.

Head-hunting was the focus around which centered all the social and religious institutions of the people. Heads were needed as propitiatory offerings to the tribal ghosts on such occasions as building a new house or making a new canoe. And not only were heads needed for religious purposes, but they stood in the closest relation to pursuits of an economic nature.

The actual head-hunting expedition only lasted a few weeks, and the actual fighting often only a few hours, but this was the culmination of a process lasting over years. It was the rule that new canoes should be made for an expedition to obtain heads, and the manufacture of these meant work of an interesting nature lasting for many months, probably for years.

The process of canoe-building was accompanied by rites and feasts which not only excited the liveliest interest but also acted as stimuli to various activities of horticulture and pig-breeding. As the date fixed for the expedition approached even more rites and feasts were held.

In putting down head-hunting the alien rulers were destroying an institution which had its roots in the religion of the people and spread its branches throughout nearly every aspect of their culture. At one stroke these islanders lost their religion and their incentive to work and produce. They are dying of sheer boredom for what has been offered them in exchange is too totally different to make the slightest appeal to their collective imagination.

Author of "Red Autumn," "Long Rifles," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

"GOD help me!" groaned Joseph Gilbert to Maria the monte dealer as he saw her sweep in his last dollar. "It was not my money I lost. I am a thief!"

The young Vermonter had lost fourteen hundred dollars belonging to friends in Coloma, a mining camp in southern California.

To Maria his was simply another ludicrous case. She was accustomed to seeing men losing other people's money in gambling halls. In these flamboyant days of 1853, when the wild hilarity of the '49 gold rush had not yet checked itself, San Francisco saw many things that a more conventional time would have been shocked over.

The girl's laugh died out. Joaquin Murieta, Mexican bandit, and five masked men had entered the gambling-hall. On their heels came "Old Misery," the Man from the Mountains—Old Misery, who was the most expert knife-thrower in California.

In a twinkling Murieta had shot the lights out. In the darkness men grappled with each other helplessly. Gilbert, shaken and trembling, endeavored to escape; groping blindly, his hand found a window curtain, and he drew it back. Before he could stir, the bandits leaped through the window, each carrying a bag of gold.

In a moment Gilbert had also cleared the window sill. As he landed on the ground his hand encountered a bag, dropped by the bandits. Concealing it under his coat, he fled.

Inside, the lights on again, Old Misery faced the girl Maria.

"You ain't bad at heart, Maria," he said. "Just a trifle wild. Your grandpap won't lambast you again."

When he left he took her with him. Old Misery was accustomed to taking care of other people's troubles; this girl was going to be taken back home again.

The next morning Joseph Gilbert took the bull by the horns. In his pocket was a ticket to Sacramento. From there he would take the stage coach to Coloma. Afterward he would have to let fate take its course. In the bag he found three hundred dollars, which for the present, he felt entitled to use.

THE landing at Sacramento left Gilbert confused. Therefore it happened that he took the wrong stage coach, and as a consequence found himself bound for Nevada City. And opposite him sat Old Misery and the girl, Maria. He resigned himself to the situation; he was not anxious to reach Coloma.

In Nevada City Gilbert met Mr. Peters, the gambler exquisite. Talk concerning the raid of Joaquin Murieta and his fellows on the gambling-hall in San Francisco ran feverishly. It was being said that Murieta had been aided in his escape by a greenhorn Yankee. In desperation Gilbert confessed the whole affair to Peters.

According to Peters, there was only one thing for Gilbert to do: lay low until the thing had blown over. And after Peters had persuaded Old Misery, it was decided that Gilbert should seek refuge with the Mountain Man in his home in the foot-hills. Old Misery had finally been prevailed upon to accept the commission after his tame bear, Ben Williams, fawned upon the young man.

Just as Old Misery and Gilbert were riding out of Nevada City bound for the foot-hills, Manuel Vesquio, half-Chinese, half-Mexican, rode up behind them.

Hurriedly the breed told them that excitement had broken out in the city and a posse was being formed. Why, he said he could only imagine.

"They're after me!" gasped Gilbert.

BUT they reached Old Misery's cabin safely.

The next morning Gilbert's panic was resumed when he beheld a crowd of men coming up the slope. But they were not concerned with him. Phelps of Grass Valley, at their head, intimated strongly to Old Misery that he suspected him of having built his cabin in a gold mine.

Old Misery grinned broadly.

"What give you boys the notion I'd struck pay dirt up here? You know I never fuss with gold till some one else has dug and cleaned it."

After a discouraged search the invaders departed, Old Misery's mocking laugh ringing in their ears. As Gilbert and Old Misery were returning to the cabin a masked man thrust a pistol into Misery's face.

"He robbed you!" gasped Gilbert, as the horseman galloped away.

"No. Just took a peek at my medicine," was the Mountain Man's reply.

He exhibited a small bag in which he carried, about his neck, a monte card. Scrawled across the face were two words:

Joaquin-Amigo

Old Misery explained how he had once rescued Joaquin Murieta from drowning and the bandit had presented him with the card.

"I'll spoil his hide the next chance I git," Misery commented humorously.

To Gilbert's surprize he discovered that the girl Maria and her half-blind grandfather, Dom Miguel, were living in a cabin in Old Misery's clearing. Two lone prospectors also dwelt not far away. During the next few days Misery was gone on mysterious jaunts. Left alone Gilbert received hints from Maria confirming his impression that something strange was stirring in the clearing.

There also came word that Joaquin Murieta and his marauders were raiding again. Old Misery home at night, weary and lame from his curious pilgrimages, brought this news. It also amused him to know that his Nevada City neighbors suspected him of having discovered a goldledge. Gilbert had the impression that Misery, in spite of his queer Indian superstitions, was not quite so child-like as he appeared.

One day Misery left his little colony and went down into the valley. In time he entered Coloma. In a barroom he found a crowd of men having fun at the expense of "Pretty Soon" Jim Pipps. Misery, who had known Pipps in the old days—days when he was first trying to scrape together enough money to go back home in the East, defended him.

That evening Stacy, the storekeeper was found murdered. The bartender endeavored to lay suspicion upon Pretty Soon Jim Pipps.

"Let's take a peek behind the bar," Misery suggested suspiciously.

A blood-smeared bottle was found. The bartender leaped through the window, the crowd after him. Misery departed alone. He was anxious to find Pipps and discover how he had become associated with the crime.

That night as Misery slept alongside of a cabin just outside of Coloma, he was suddenly awakened by the noise of horsemen approaching. In the dim light he saw they were Murieta's men. From their talk he knew they were after gold, buried at this spot by one of their former comrades. As they were lifting the last bag of gold from the hole they had dug, a mysterious figure loomed in the doorway of the cabin. The bandits fled, dropping one bag.

It was Pretty Soon Jim Pipps. He had been sleeping off a carouse.

Old Misery decided he would see Pipps safely on his way home. The contents of the bag would defray his expenses. They walked to the edge of the slope, where Misery said they would part for awhile, to meet later. Misery was becoming disturbed over the fact that his gold possessions were becoming known to the public at large.

WHEN Old Misery thought it safe again he overtook Pretty Soon Jim. As they were preparing to have supper at Tom Tobin's old cabin in Illinoistown, a horseman rode up, who said his name was York. Misery, suspicious, directed Pretty Soon to leave the cabin that night. Shortly after Pipps' departure York entered the cabin, and after a fight in the dark, Misery killed him. The dead man was one of Joaquin Murieta's band.

Convinced that Murieta would be looking for the gold slugs which Pipps had found the night before, Misery went to Nevada City and had the slugs changed for gold dust by Peters, the gambler, who informed him that the man who had helped Murieta escape from the *El Dorado* was still being sought.

Pipps made his appearance, jubilant over the fact that he spent his money for a gold mine. By clever salting, Misery convinced Phelps that what he had sold as a worthless mine was really a fortune, and Phelps was only too glad to buy back at a big price. When he discovered he had had a dose of his own medicine, Phelps vowed vengeance against Old Misery.

At Grass Valley Gilbert met Lola Montez the actress, and she used him as a means to making Phelps jealous. Phelps told him he was going to marry the woman and warned him off. Maria, who was becoming increasingly fond of Gilbert was also enraged.

Old Misery and Tobin left Grass Valley and were trailed by Phelps' men, bent on discovering the location of the Mountain Man's gold mine. Roger, an actor in Lola Montez's company, was also with the trailers. He dropped a note for Old Misery.

At the Hotel de Paris Peters read the note to Old Misery. It warned him that Gilbert was being attacked.

By leaving Tobin at the Hotel de Paris Misery convinced his pursuers that he was also on hand; and he slipped out of town unnoticed. On his way home he encountered Ching-a-Ling who told him he had proposed to Maria and that the girl knifed him. Misery threatened violence if the breed molested the girl further.

Gilbert, who was also on his way back to Grass Hollow with provisions, met Maria and she added another warning to the ominous cloud that was gathering.

When Old Misery joined Gilbert and Maria at Grass Hollow he announced that he was going to take Gilbert away and avoid the man-hunters. The next morning when they looked for Maria she was gone.

"Only four people knew that you were in the *El Dorado* that night," Misery announced. "Maria told Phelps—she was mad at you about that Montez critter."

As they were leaving Grass Hollow, "Three-Finger" Jack, one of Murieta's lieutenants rode up and announced—

"Ching-a-Ling was saying that Maria is in cahoots with Murieta. Very soon he shall lose his head."

When "Three-Finger" Jack was gone Misery told Gilbert that if Murieta failed to kill Ching-a-Ling he would do so himself. Also, that he was convinced Maria had been taken away by Murieta to resume her former wild life.

Misery declared he would get Maria back, at any cost.

AS THE little band was leaving it was discovered that Old Miguel had disappeared. Misery, fearing impending disaster, said they would have to proceed without Maria's grandfather.

Before they had gone far Weymouth Mass and Sailor Ben appeared. Misery agreed to give them a share in his gold mine if they should see Maria, or Ana Benites, as she was now known, safe into Mexico. They agreed. Just as the two parties were about to split Maria confessed:

"I have been holding something back, *Señor Comandante.* My grandfather has gone to slay Ching-a-Ling for revealing my real identity."

Dubious about blind Miguel's ability to defend himself, Old Misery announced he would go down to Nevada City and find him. He left the little band, and said he would join them farther on.

At Nevada City Old Misery found great excitement. Twenty horses had been stolen from Adams' *rancho* and two men killed by horse thieves. The mob, convinced that Gilbert and Maria were mixed up in the affair, were organizing a posse to capture them. After some difficulty Misery learned that Ching-a-Ling was a prisoner, under guard in his own cabin. Misery decided to find Ching-a-Ling and kill him before Miguel appeared.

In a moment of excitement when Ching-a-Ling's guards were distracted Misery entered the cabin. He found Miguel and Ching-a-Ling dead; the latter's head was completely severed from his body. Maria's grandfather, after being fatally wounded, had finally revenged his granddaughter.

When he had joined his party waiting for him in the hills, Misery gave Gilbert his choice of going with Weymouth Mass, Sailor Ben, and Maria into Mexico, or continuing with him.

"I can't leave the United States," Gilbert declared. "If I must lose myself, give up my name, and be thought a thief, at least I'll stay in this country."

"Spoken like a mountain man!" cried Old Misery. "And all —— can't drive you out of the Rockies!"

So the two factions divided. Old Misery looked back and saw his cabins afire in the distance. The pursuers were pressing them rapidly.

THEY walked rapidly and eventually discovered a lone cabin in the woods. Old Misery guessed it was a storekeeper's cabin. While they stood there wondering how they could secure supplies a band of men rode up and made them prisoners.

"Snake" Martin, the leader, admitted he was a lieutenant of Joaquin Murieta's, and that, assisted by the other men present, he was responsible for the slaying of the two men and the theft of the horses from Adams' *rancho.* Accordingly Misery pretended he was also one of Murieta's valued men and to prove his ability picked a fight with a giant named Evrick. To the awe of every one Misery won the fight.

Martin said, while Misery and Gilbert were his prisoners, he would nevertheless permit them to wander, unmolested, around the immediate vicinity of the camp. It was on one of these walks that Misery and Gilbert heard two of Martin's band plotting to overthrow him and secure his money.

As time passed and they heard more concerning the cruelty of Martin, Misery was convinced they would have to make a bold attempt at an escape. As a prelude to this he pretended drunkenness, and innocently picked up a bow and arrow in the corner.

"Drop that!" Martin commanded, pointing a pistol at him.

"The old fool is drunk, chief," said one of his men.

At this moment there was a stir from Gilbert.

"Here comes a man riding hard!" he yelled from the window.

MARTIN, followed by all in the cabin, hurriedly passed outside. The newcomer was riding at a smart gallop, but not pressing his mount. Somes was the first to recognize him and called out—

"Reelfoot Williams!"

Martin advanced toward the outlaw and waved his hand in greeting. Obviously he held Williams in some esteem. The bandit leaped from his horse and shook hands with Martin and nodded genially to the men. The latter admired him for being a lone worker and one who could take desperate chances.

When Williams' gaze lighted on Old Misery he looked the surprize he was feeling, and exclaimed:

"You here, old man? Well, I'm not trying to hold you up again. "

And he laughed at his recollections.

"You know this man, Reelfoot?" eagerly asked Martin.

"Know him? Not long since I held him up on the ridge above Nevada City. He had a rare bag of nuggets. And what do you think? I didn't take it."

And he laughed more heartily.

"No, no. They were not for Reelfoot Williams. Met Rattlesnake Dick right after to work in harness for a big pot. Told him about it. And he said the same. He wouldn't 'a' touched them if he'd stood in my boots. Remember, old man, what I said? 'Not any for me, thank you.' Good joke on me, Martin. There I had dogged him from town, where he'd been giving nuggets to Chinamen, and then I held him up and opened his bag of gold—and didn't take it!"

"Just what are you driving at, Reelfoot?" cried Martin, sensing a mystery and therefore feeling uneasy.

"The first thing I saw in the bag was a monte card, with '*amigo*' written on it, and signed by Murieta. Joaquin's card, you know. Telling all us bold boys this man was not to be bothered. I never worked with the greaser; he does too much unnecessary killing, but I won't go out of my way to make him mad. Oh, no. The minute I saw that card I knew I didn't want any of that game. No, sir! Same old cuss who threw a lariat around Murieta and pulled him out the American when he was about to drown. But how comes it he is on this side the ridge? Quit Murieta to take on with your boys?"

"I was just about to kill him," softly explained Martin. "He talks too much. Makes my head ache by always telling what a —— of a fellow he is. I intended to wait and find out the truth about him, but his talk was driving me crazy just as you rode in. Came here yesterday with a young man. Done nothing since except brag how he can lick any man in any kind of a fight——"

"I can do it. It ain't bragging," broke in Old Misery.

"There! You hear him?" wailed Martin, the veins over his temples congesting again.

It struck Reelfoot Williams as being very humorous, and he laughed loudly and clapped a hand on Martin's shoulder and drew him to one side. They talked for some minutes. When they returned to the doorway Martin's anger had vanished. He briefly announced:

"Williams speaks in his favor. Also says it's true about the young man helping Murieta escape at the bay."

"And that he must have helped Ana Benites, one of Joaquin's band, to escape a posse," reminded Williams. "And that Jaoquin's Nevada City spy, Vesequio, who betrayed the girl, was found with his head cut off."

"What did I tell you folks?" proudly asked Old Misery. "Now be you ready to believe I've a right to wear eagle feathers?"

"We're believing you're entitled to horses, a mule, and your weapons, and a clear road," quietly replied Martin. "But if it hadn't been for that crazy bear dance you'd be dead."

Gilbert advanced to stand beside his friend, his face shining with joy at the prospects of an immediate departure from the terrible place. He groaned inwardly as Old Misery persisted—

"But I was hankering to join this outfit."

Hope returned to the young man's heart when Martin shook his head firmly and declared:

"Impossible. You need too much room. There's not enough room for you and me in the same outfit. Your talk makes me think red. I'd have to shoot you to stop your tongue."

"If I wasn't playing a lone hand I'd take you on in a second, old man," said Williams. "But I couldn't take both of you even if I wanted a partner. Three's an awkward number. In a running fight always one has to go it alone. Might blab to save his neck. Then again, California isn't what it used to be. It's getting well organized. Gang work is playing out. Another season will see the electric telegraph hooking up the northern and southern camps and towns. It's got so a man to make a decent living must work fast and sly and ride alone."

"Then what about Murieta?" anxiously asked Old Misery.

"Think you were wise to cross the ridge," promptly replied Williams. "They're bound to get him. Think they'll get him this season. His band is too big. Rewards offered for him dead or alive are growing too fast. Too many posses after him."

Old Misery gravely asked Martin:

"When can we start? We're ready any time. S'long as you don't want us the quicker we're 'bout our business the better."

Gilbert drew his first free breath since coming to the cabin.

"I'll send a man to the grazing grounds for mounts and a mule. Your weapons are in the cabin. You can get away tomorrow morning. In the mean time you're your own men, of course. Go where you will, do what you will, but stop that cursed boasting. I wouldn't stand it even from Murieta himself."

"You've got some dust and a blanket roll of mine. Take pay for the horses and mule out of it," said Misery.

Martin grinned sardonically and retorted—

"Sorry, but there's just about enough dust to square the shot."

"Let it go at that," calmly agreed Old Misery, although his averted gaze was dangerous. "Reckon I know where to pick up plenty more. We'll catch up and ride in the morning."

Williams left his horse to graze in front of the cabin while he entered and ate. He was in a mood of reckless jollity and impressed the men as having much respect for Old Misery. Martin did not relish this, but contented himself with ordering a man to bring two mounts and a pack-mule from the southern grazing grounds. He stressed the importance of haste in bringing up the animals.

"We're making for the Humboldt road. Riding our way?" asked the mountain man of Williams.

"Starting back tonight by way of the Walker River country. They were hot on my trail, and I had to cross and lose myself. If I can hit the head of the south fork of the American I can make Frisco. Safest place for me just now. I'll have to light out for good pretty soon. May try Salt Lake City. Join the church, you know. You'd better be pulling out as soon as you can or some one will be coming over the ridge to find you."

"Looked like the game was played out when I quit," said Old Misery.

And with that he rejoined Gilbert, who was nervously waiting outside the house, and he pleased the young man by suggesting—

"Let's take a walk and find out what that young hellion of a *Dart Again* has been doing."

With the exception of Bommer and Somes, and José, who was waiting on Evrick, the gang was inside the long house hungrily listening to the talk of Martin and Williams. Old Misery led the way toward the woods, fringing the south side of the valley. José, the Mexican, cut across his course, and the mountain man saw a knife slip from the red sash. He picked it up and called out in Spanish for the man to turn back and get what he had lost.

José turned back and thanked him in broken English. Old Misery answered in Spanish, telling him he was welcome.

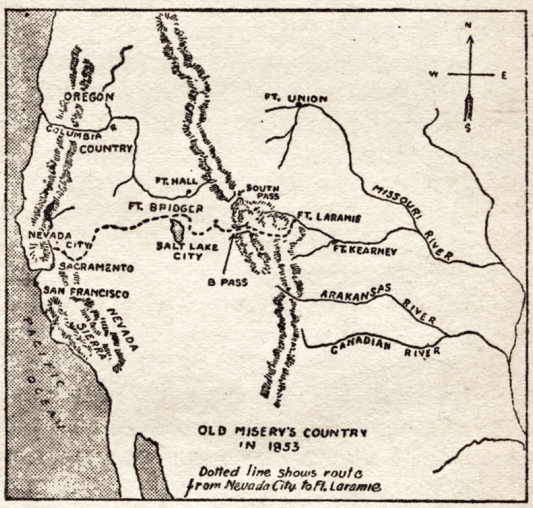
Then José, in his own tongue, hurriedly said:

"I dropped the knife so I could speak with *señor*. I am a friend to any one who helps one of our women. You helped Señorita Ana Benites. You saved the great Joaquin's life. My life would be lost if the *comandante* knew that I know what I know. Lost again if he knew I was telling you. He took your bag of gold into the woods on the north side while you and the men were sleeping. I was up, waiting on the sick man. He came back without the gold."

Old Misery nodded and resumed his way.

"What was the fellow jabbering about?" asked Gilbert.

"Said our gold is hid on the opposite side of this valley. I'm hankering to take it along with me. That bag must be worth more'n a thousand dollars."



"Let's forget the gold and get away from here," begged Gilbert. "I'm more afraid of these men, especially that Martin, than I'd ever be of Indians. He gives me the shivers."

"We'll clear out soon's we can. But this gang isn't of much account, 'cept in talk. Blood-hungry all right, but they can be tamed," calmly assured Old Misery. "My medicine has pulled us through this far. I've made them think we're their kind, and I've made Martin hanker to have us go. He made one bad mistake. He oughter been white 'nough to hand back my bag of nuggets. His mind's narrer. He may lose his pelt by trying to keep that bag."

They entered the woods and followed along the edge for half the length of the valley before Old Misery found a spot that suited him. Then he lighted his pipe and Gilbert picked up the adventurous trail of *D'Artagnan*. But the young man turned

only a few pages before the mountain man was interrupting him by saying:

"Reckon I'll scout south toward the hoss-herd. Hosses are nearer than Martin let on. You wait here for me. If any one comes along it's all right to tell where I went. We're free men now."

"I'll believe that when we've left this place and those men. It'll be dark soon."

"If the hosses ain't close by I'll go until I strike the trail from the house. If I ain't showed up when it gits along the edge of dark you can go back to the cabin. If they ask 'bout me say I struck off to the south to have a look at the hosses."

Gilbert disliked being left alone but was ashamed to say as much. He watched his friend disappear in the growth to the south and then returned to his book. Old Misery, however, walked but a short distance before changing his course to travel west. Moving with the long, even stride of his kind, he soon turned the end of the valley and was traveling along the north side to the east.

When about opposite Gilbert's position he worked deeper into the growth and did not pause until on the west side of the small opening containing the graves. Then he crawled under the low-hanging branches of a scrub evergreen, and sucked his cold pipe, and waited with the patience of a red man.

The shadows crept deeper into the opening. Squirrels played in and about the covert, never suspecting the motionless figure possessed life. At last Old Misery put up his pipe, shifted to a sitting posture and muttered:

"Some risky if I'm seen prowling round out there; but *Tunkan* is with me. Nothing like a rock-medicine if you're keen to search under ground. Martin will be talking and drinking with Williams. T'others keep clear of this place along of the ghosts."

He came to his feet, yet hesitated. Neither did he relish trespassing on the burial ground. Because of his strong horror of earth burials he firmly believed victims of interment always felt resentful and hovered about their graves. Then Snake Martin walked rapidly from the south end of the opening, entering at the point where Gilbert and Misery had lounged under a tree and the former had pointed out the graves.

Old Misery smiled grimly and patted the bag holding his rock-medicine. Surely *Tunkan* had directed him wisely, and his luck was greater than he had had reason to expect. He had believed he must make the search for the hidden bag of gold in person, and now another had come who would save him that trouble. Martin was in a hurry and was carrying what appeared to be a ramrod. He kept his head swinging suspiciously from side to side as he approached the graves.

He halted at the first mound and turned and stared about. Remaining stationary, he rested both hands on top of the iron rod. After holding this posture for some moments he wheeled and walked beyond the graves for some distance, then swung to the east side of the opening and disappeared into the timber.

"Clever cuss!" muttered Old Misery. "Only needs a few seconds with that ramrod to make sure his stealings is where he left 'em."

And without prosecuting his search farther he withdrew and ran rapidly to the west. Rounding the end of the valley, he struck deep into the growth and did not shift his course until about due south of Gilbert's position. When he broke through the last cover he beheld Gilbert standing, book in hand.

"I'm mighty glad you came back!" exclaimed Gilbert.

"Who's been along since I quit you?"

"Not a soul. But it was tedious waiting."

"Won't have to wait any more. No one knows we ain't been together all the time, and we'll let it go that way. We've been killing time and you've been reading to me 'bout *Dart Again*. Now we'll go back and eat a bite."

"What good did your wandering do you? See the horses?" asked Gilbert.

"No; never saw a hoss, but they ain't far off. Feet git to itching if I stay too long in one place. Medicine told me to walk round a bit."

ON ARRIVING at the house they found Reelfoot Williams had taken his departure. Old Misery's first act was to enter the house and pick up Solid Comfort and examine him carefully. Snake Martin watched him, but made no objection. Then the mountain man selected his revolver and long knife from a shelf and found Gilbert's rifle.

"You seem to be in a hurry," spoke up

Martin in his thin voice. "Going to start on foot?"

"Nary a start on foot when we've paid for hosses and a mule," replied Old Misery. "Paid a good price, too. Nigh on to two thousand dollars in that bag you took from me."

"Two hundred is nearer right," snarled Martin. "You're lucky to have your heads on your shoulders.

"Well, we ain't thanking you for our heads."

"Your blankets are in the corner. That makes all your property, I believe."

"You're forgitting the younker's pocket-knife," reminded Misery.

"He's lost that. I warn you to talk about something else," said Martin softly.

"I don't want it! Let him have it!" nervously whispered Gilbert, tugging the mountain man's fringed sleeve.

"Just as you say, younker, but it's foolish to heave away property like that. I could trade that knife for a prime war-pony with any plains tribe. You'll never git anything ahead for a rainy day if you make presents so free-hearted. An', Martin, I never took kindly to being 'warned.' Let's understand you've warned us for the last time, and the next time you'll begin to show your mettle. Now what time can we start from this place? Early morning?"

Martin was in a most venomous mood and perhaps regretted allowing the two to have their weapons.

"The man will bring the horses and mule to the south edge of the clearing very soon. I'll send a man to tell him to fetch them here. The quicker you two light out after he comes the better it'll suit me and the safer it'll be for you."

Old Misery grinned widely and reminded:

" 'Nother of them warnings. But it's simply 'mazing how our minds have the same thoughts. You want us to go, and we want to go. First, the hosses couldn't be fetched till midnight! Now they'll come up almost any time."

Martin, fighting to hold his temper under control, went outside. Bommer, who had been lounging in the doorway, entered to take a drink and murmured to Old Misery:

"Better quit pestering him. He's blood-mad."

"Thanky kindly. Some of you fellers oughter kill the skunk."

"How much dust was in the bag he took?" rapidly whispered Bommer.

"Rising two thousand dollers. Clean nuggets; not dust."

Bommer lowered the jug and hastily made for the door. Old Misery threw himself on a bunk and told Gilbert:

"If you wa'n't along I'd stay here and watch things bust up. Snake Martin's going to lose all his rattles if he ain't mighty careful."

"I wouldn't stay here a minute longer than absolutely necessary for a million dollars!" muttered Gilbert.

"I wouldn't neither. Man with a million dollars needs a stronger medicine than I ever could scare up. I don't know just how much a million dollars is, but I know it's a million troubles; and that's a heap. Think I'll snooze a bit till they cook supper. We'll soon be on our way. This is just something that's happened, that's all. You'll laugh when you tell 'bout it a year from now."

Gilbert did not feel that he could ever laugh again. He sat beside the bunk and in the rapidly failing light attempted to distract his mind by reading the story-book. But there was not enough wizardry even in Dumas to keep the sinister figure of Snake Martin from his thoughts. It was the insatiable cruelty of the man, his bloody ruthlessness, that appalled Gilbert. Physically he was contemptible. Exemplifying evil he was monstrous. Fortunately for Gilbert's peace of mind Martin remained outside.

Once the young man heard him cursing Evrick in a shrill, wailing voice, and his blood grew cold from fear that murder was being done. Bommer and Somes came and sat in the doorway, and exchanged words without glancing at each other. Others of the gang sprawled out on the grass and smoked, and recounted various gruesome bits of history. That they should feel proud and boastful of their crimes amazed Gilbert.

At last a man entered and raked the coals in the fireplace together and commenced cooking the evening meal. Bommer and Somes left the doorway. Martin entered briskly and stopped before the bunk and stared at Old Misery. Gilbert held his breath and waited. Martin's hand dropped to the handle of a revolver in the waistband of his trousers, then came away empty. Without a word he turned and began pacing up and down the long room. Gilbert knew the outlaw leader was in a black mood

and surreptitiously shook his friend by the shoulder.

Old Misery rolled on his side and murmured:

"Hand-gun under the blanket. Had him covered all the time. He was never closer to —— then when he felt for his gun."

The fire had succeeded in heating up a kettle of cooked meat and the cook carried it outside together with an apology for bread. Martin continued walking up and down the room. Old Misery yawned and slipped from the bunk and tucked Solid Comfort under his arm and startled both Martin and the young man by sounding his war-whoop.

Then he explained:

"Grub! I smell grub. B'iled meat. Always hoot when meat's ready."

He hurried outside, and Gilbert kept at his heels. Bommer and Somes drew back as if making room for them. The others, now ranged in a circle around the kettle, affected not to be aware of their presence; but they could not resist stealing frequent glances at the man who Reelfoot Williams had said was Joaquin Murieta's friend, as well as the slayer of the spy who had betrayed one of Murieta's band.

Martin came from the house and helped himself to a dish of the meat and sat down outside the circle. Jason took a position near his chief, his grinning teeth tearing wolfishly at the food.

Old Misery broke the silence by tossing a slab of bread aside and condemning it:

"That's —— poor chawing. Oughter had my young pard here make you some bread."

"You won't have to put up with our bread long," gently Martin reminded him. "It's the best we have. We're sorry you don't like it."

"Beggars shouldn't go to finding fault," huskily remarked Jason between his closed teeth.

"Any one says we're beggars is a liar," complacently retorted Misery; and Gilbert quailed. "We've paid Frisco prices for all the grub we eat. And that bread's —— poor. Them as like it that way are lucky."

Silence followed this reiterated reminder concerning the bag of gold. Bommer nudged Somes with his elbow. The circle of men stiffened; then came the scuffling of heels drawn back as if the men were making ready to leap up and dodge bullets. But Martin, staring at Old Misery, said nothing. José came up to the kettle and dished out two helpings and turned to take them back to the helpless Evrick. Because of the gathering darkness he did not see Martin's outstretched leg and tripped over it. The leader exploded in a high-pitched yell and kicked the man savagely. José muttered apologies and limped away.

The men hastily finished eating and drew farther back from the kettle, each sensing a sinister tension. Old Misery continued eating, watching Martin. He felt Bommer press his arm in warning as the outlaw rose to withdraw. The mountain man continued eating, using his left hand only, his right resting on Solid Comfort, which was cradled in his lap, the muzzle toward Jason and Martin.

Martin suddenly rose and entered the house. Old Misery shifted his position to where Bommer was standing. The latter began filling his pipe and from the corner of his mouth warned—

"Look out!"

Old Misery amazed him by making for the house and entering. Gilbert and the men waited for the explosion, but nothing happened.

Gilbert heard Bommer tell Somes—

"Storm passed round us." The young man decided this remark meant that some expected climax had failed to materialize.

Inside the cabin Martin was saying to Old Misery—and taking care to keep his voice subdued:

"You two had better ride for it as soon as your horses come. It's for you to choose, but I really think it's better you go as soon as possible."

"Meaning you can't keep the —— inside you chained up much longer," said the mountain man bluntly. "I 'gree with you. We'll light out when the hosses come. But if I was here alone I'd be keen to stick along."

"Others have felt the same way. They're still staying here and will stay here after we're through with this camp."

"Planted out in that little opening," mused Old Misery. "It's a handy place for a burying. I come nigh laffing when you said some of the Donner party was buried there."

"There's plenty of room for more graves," quietly added Martin. "You can ride very soon. I'll tell the cook to pack up some supplies."

He left the house, and Old Misery followed as far as the doorway and sat down. Martin spoke to the cook who hurried into the house and began making up a pack of supplies. Gilbert stole up to the door and sat on the threshold beside his protector.

Old Misery told him:

"My medicine says there's going to be a most 'tarnal fuss. For the first time since coming here we hold the best cards. We've got our weepins back. And if anything's going to bust loose I want it to come now while we've got the house empty and the gang in front of us."

Yet he surrendered this advantage once he saw Snake Martin start for the south side of the valley. He told Gilbert:

"I'm going out on a little scout. If any one asks for me say you don't know. Won't be much of a lie at that."

And he chuckled softly and surprized the Vermonter by stepping back into the room.

The cook staggered out with an armful of supplies, and Old Misery slipped through the rear window. The dusk was thickening, and all the band were in front of the house. Bending double, the mountain man made for the north side of the valley and found it dark night inside the timber. His unerring sense of location permitted him to penetrate the growth in a straight line to the opening; and, passing around to the west, he took up his position in the spot from which he had spied on Martin two hours before.

His ears rather than his eyes told him when the outlaw leader entered the opening. There came the sound of steel grating on stones and the softer sound of dirt being thrown aside. Old Misery wormed his way into the opening and was quite close to Martin as the latter finished his labors and with a grunt of satisfaction started for the timber. The mountain man rose and walked after him, his form bent far forward although there was no sky-line to betray his presence.

He trailed Martin to a point due north of the cabin, then waited until the man began working his way farther east. He knew why Martin had halted before making a détour around the eastern end of the valley, and he was not surprized when he advanced to the foot of a big pine and with his foot located a mound of needles.

Rapidly exploring the contents of several bags, his lips parted in a snarl as his fingers came in contact with rings and pins and odd pieces of jewlry. The other bags contained gold in dust and nuggets, the booty doubtless obtained from homeward-bound parties of gold-hunters, or else stolen in some of the camps or towns over the ridge. What he had unearthed he carried for a short distance after the man ahead and cached it at the edge of the opening.

Then he tore a limb from a sapling and tossed it on the ground. Bending low, he raced at top speed for the end of the log house. Halting beneath the window, he listened. The long room was dark and seemed to be deserted. From the front came the idle talk of the men. With a lithe movement he slipped through the window and astounded Gilbert by suddenly sitting down beside him in the doorway.

"What—how—" began Gilbert.

"How many been in here since I was gone?" snapped the mountain man.

"No one but the cook. He came in and picked up some bundles and hurried right out. No one has spoken to me. But you——"

"Keep shet! My rock-medicine is working so hard for us that I can hear it," whispered Old Misery.

From the group on the grass outside, marked only by glowing pipe-bowls, a man challenged—

"Who's that?"

"Martin, you fool," whined the leader, who was returning from the south side of the valley. "Where's that big-talker?"

"Right here, old hoss-fly," called out the mountain man.

"That's a poor way to talk to me, old man," admonished Martin, walking toward the door.

"More warnings. Just l'arn me what's the right way and mebbe I'll be keen to try it."

Ignoring him, Martin ordered—

"Some of you make a light inside."

Old Misery and Gilbert rose to their feet and made room for Jason to enter and throw some light stuff on the bed of coals. As the dancing flames lighted the room Martin entered and glared evilly at the Vermonter and the mountain man. He abruptly announced:

"The animals will be here pretty soon. The minute they come I want you to pack the mule and clear out."

"That's all we're waiting for, mister," said Old Misery.

"Hosses coming now, chief," bawled one of the men. "I can hear 'em."

"There's only one hoss," corrected Bommer.

With haste that denoted concern Martin rushed from the house to meet the newcomer.

Old Misery touched Gilbert's arm and shifted his rifle to his left hand so his right would be free. All could hear it now; the rapid *thud-thud* of a galloping horse.

"Riding like —— for such a dark night," commented Somes.

"Make a blaze out there," whined Martin.

Some one ran into the house and brought out blazing brands, and others tossed on light fuel that soon dispelled much of the darkness. Then the group waited in silence for the horsemen to emerge from the black wall and enter the light. On came the horse and up to the fire before the rider could be recognized.

The man threw himself from the saddle and cried:

"It's me—Rockmore! Had to ride for my life till I topped the ridge!"

Old Misery whispered to Gilbert:

"Keep awake and behind me. It's the cuss that got away from the men in Nevada City."

Martin advanced a few steps toward the newcomer and querulously demanded,

"Why ain't you with the rest of the boys? Where's the stock?"

"Had to ride for my life, chief. Caught in Nevada City and only got loose by luck and grit. Jumped the first hoss I saw. Stock was to go through one of the southern passes. Oughter been here before this. The boys had a good start when I rode for Nevada City to see what was up. Got nabbed on s'picion."

"Here comes the other boys now," some one announced.

But Martin again was disappointed, as there was only one man riding into the firelight. He was leading a horse and mule. Martin loudly announced:

"Let that old loud-talker and his friend mount and ride for it. Some of you throw the grub on to the mule."

Instead of jumping at the offer Old Misery held back, clutching Gilbert by the arm. Two of the men were expertly fastening the provisions on the mule. The horses, stolen from some California *rancho,* were good ones. Misery held back until the packers had finished. Rockmore was the man he had questioned in Nevada City and whose escape had given him a chance to enter the little Chinese store and discover how old Miguel had satisfied his vengeance.

"Bold face. He never see you," cautioned Old Misery to his companion.

And, pulling his ragged hat low over his eyes, he left the doorway and swaggered toward the horses.

"Climb into the saddle and get out," ordered Martin.

Bommer advanced a torch so the men could make sure the mule-pack was correctly adjusted, and, as the additional light revealed the mountain man, Rockmore gave an incredulous cry and demanded:

"Wait a minute! By ——! I'm *not* mistook! That man's the friend of Peters, the gambler, in Nevada City. Peters sent the posses out after our boys. That man is the one who got me caught along of the Adams *rancho* killings! You won't let him live, chief?"

With a howl of rage Martin pulled a revolver and screamed:

"Riddle both if they make a move! Here's something to be looked into!"

"There's an empty hole out in the burying-ground that your men will like to look into," Old Misery quickly broke in. "That hole once held the loot you hid there afore Bernie, the Frenchman, died of poison. Until you dug that stuff up and hid it again this evening you was the only man alive who knew where it was. You men understand this: Your leader planned to ride away with the gold, to ride alone and to ride tonight. I saw him dig it up and bury it in a new place."

Martin threw down his heavy gun, and a streak of fire and a loud explosion interrupted the rest of the disclosure; and only the intervention of José's arm saved the mountain man from catching the lead.

The group of men were now in an uproar.

Martin was screaming—

"Who did that?"

Bommer was shouting:

"Old man talks straight. The little —— is robbing us, boys!"

Gilbert endeavored to drag Old Misery to the horses, but with his wild war-whoop the mountain man rushed toward Martin. The latter, entangled in a struggling group

of men, broke loose, leaped forward, knife in hand, to meet Misery. Gilbert suddenly found himself endeavoring to dodge a fierce attack on the part of the grinning Jason. He warded off several knife blows with the barrel of his rifle and tried to use it as a club, but did not think to shoot. José slipped in and dexterously stabbed Jason through the heart.

Old Misery and Martin were engaged in a knife fight, the former stamping his heels and sounding the war-cries of various tribes he had lived with. Martin's wailing voice kept up a stream of horrible threats as they circled about, each endeavoring to get the fire at his back and the light on his antagonist.

Bommer rushed to aid the mountain man but was set upon by Rockmore and the man called Ike.

"—— you! You will have it!" he shouted.

And the double detonation of his heavy gun cleared his path. Only now his purpose was interrupted by the desertion of his friend.

"This way, Somes!" he cried, making after his swift-footed mate. "Curse you! Come back here!"

But Somes, with the primal instinct to destroy the thing he hated, only thought of reaching the wounded Evrick and slaying him. No amount of buried treasure could come between him and that satisfaction. The figure on the blanket, possessed of a hand-gun in some way, shot Somes off his feet. Bommer took one shot, and Evrick writhed and lay still.

With lightning rapidity Martin was forcing the knife play, Old Misery giving ground and falling back toward the horses. The mountain man taunted:

"Watched you bury the stuff. Dug it up. You can't ever find it."

Their blades slithered, and with a scream of triumph Martin took advantage of what he believed to be an opening, only to meet death on the haft of the veteran's knife.

Gilbert found himself seized by the collar and began fighting desperately. Old Misery snarled:

"Come along! Ain't you had 'nough?"

Bommer ceased exchanging shots with the man who had brought up the horses and mule, and who now was crouching at the end of the cabin, and ran up as Misery and Gilbert swung into the saddle.

"Stop, or I'll kill!" he yelled.

Old Misery's moccasin caught him under the chin and toppled him over. Then the mountain man was galloping for the growth, a hand on Gilbert's bridle, and when he halted their flight they had passed through the timber and were several miles from the cabin.

Slipping to the ground, he remarked:

"That was a fuss worth while. Too dark for a man to do his best. Snake Martin's one of the niftiest knife-fighters I ever fit with. Now we can sleep in peace. In the morning I'll scout back and git grub and certain things I cached."

CHAPTER XII

AS PROCLAIMED BY *TUNKAN*

THEY traveled many days; also they loitered and camped and hunted. There were forced marches over dreary deserts and barren mud-plains. On the eastern slopes of the Humboldt they tarried, and Gilbert's interest in life faintly revived at sight of numerous springs cascading down the rocks.

The tumbling ribbons of silver reminded him of Nature's prodigal waste of water among the New England mountains in early Summer. They made many side excursions to nameless places, and they halted and did nothing for days in pleasant spots. At first Gilbert had been watchful for Indians, but in time became indifferent to them as a menace.

From the first day out of the outlaws' valley Old Misery had commenced his tutelage, only his companion did not realize it. Liberally supplied with ammunition, the mountain man contrived for his pupil to shoot much of the meat they ate, and initiated him into the various ruses of the hunter. To educate a greenhorn somewhere near to a mountain man's standards is a hard task. Only a great liking for the Vermonter held Misery to the work.

Old Misery might have been somewhat discouraged had he known how hungry his friend was for civilization, and how eagerly he looked ahead to visiting Salt Lake City. Very possibly the mountain man came to suspect this yearning for wooden houses and food on tables. For although they followed the immigrant road around the north end of Great Salt Lake and down the eastern side almost to the Mormon metropolis

Misery shifted their course on a cloudy day and traveled east through Ogden Hole. He had hoped to deceive his friend until the city of the Saints was out of reach, and yet he was disappointed.

The fact was Gilbert did not possess the instinct of location. Without the sun to guide him he could not orient himself. On all other points of woods, mountain and plain craft Misery was confident the young man would grow to high standards of excellence. On the most vital of all points he showed but little progress.

Often the mountain man encouraged himself by secretly vowing:

"He'll come to it. I'll make him. Slow myself at first."

He knew the last was false. There had never been a time he could remember when, placed anywhere, he could not instinctively name the points of the compass. Having always possessed this instinct it was hard to be patient with one who lacked it. But he liked Gilbert. Few of his own generation were alive. He had long since passed the time when a man collects new friends. It had been an amazingly pleasing experience to have the boy "take care" of him in Grass Valley. In all his Winter counts that incident would remain most prominent.

Tom Tobin would have taken care of him in a fight against hopeless odds, and cheerfully have died in front of him. But Tom would do it as Misery would do it, with a mouthful of harmless oaths and a manner brusk almost to brutality. Tobin showed his liking by damning. So did Old Misery. The boy had come to the bunk when he believed Misery was asleep and had rested a hand on his forehead. Old Misery almost felt ashamed as he recalled and thrilled over such intimate solicitude.

One night while studying his medicine the notion struck him that had he had a son it would be this Gilbert. He nourished the fancy, a bit ashamed, as if it were a weakness, yet encouraging the idea. A mountain man wasted no time in placing a hand on a "pard's" head unless it was placed there violently. The idea wasn't permissible except one conceive of a son doing it. Then it became all right. It logically followed that Gilbert should have been his son (young enough to be his grandson), and the old man created a little make-believe world in his mind wherein he had raised a boy to look after him.

Up and around the Red Chimney Fork of the Weber they traveled, and only as time passed did the Vermonter come to suspect they were not making for the city by the great lake. He expressed his regret.

The mountain man told him:

"I'd like mortal well to obleege you, but there's reasons why I'd better not go visiting the Elders for a while. Once some of their Destroying Angels jumped me, thinking I was another man. Afore the mistake was found out I'd counted five coups. We're well east of Salt Lake now."

"Then I'm mighty glad we didn't go there," warmly declared Gilbert, his disappointment vanishing. "Don't know what I'd do if anything happened to you."

"Keep shet and don't talk *heyoka*," growled Old Misery, feeling more highly pleased than possible for him to express.

For the sake of convenience, reenforced by a feeling of affection, Gilbert began to address Misery as "Dad." The old mountain man fairly squirmed with delight, but was unusually brusk for several days.

Gilbert was strongly stirred when they came to the head of Sulphur Creek and was told by his companion:

"We're at the rim of the basin. Bimeby we'll strike east-flowing rivers."

"I'd like to see one of those rivers," muttered Gilbert, his eyes homesick.

Old Misery studied him furtively. Then he tried to change his line of thought by profanely declaring:

"—— my moccasins! But you'll make a mountain man yet. You're a good shot. A mighty good shot. Young eyes. You're better at squaw work then I be. You ride well. Just two things for you to l'arn; fighting Injuns and knowing where you be when the sun don't shine. Just a bit more spirit; just a bit more liking for it, and them two things will come.

"Just wait till we strike Jim Bridger's trading-post on the Black Fork of the Green. He'll put a love for mountains and Injun-fighting into your blood! 'Nother forty miles will fetch us there. No one can listen to Bridger and not turn mountain man on the spot."

Gilbert smiled rather grimly and reminded him:

"Nothing else for me to do, is there, Dad? I can't go home, you know. And I can't wander around alone. I'd go in a circle.

It's mighty kind of you to bother with me. I feel as if I were holding you back."

"—— and ——!" roared Old Misery, fairly bristling with delight. "Any one would think I was tending the whisky-trade in one of the old rendezvous! Holding me back? From what? I don't have to be on time for nothing— But you'll like Bridger. You'll like his place. You'll prob'ly see Shoshoni, Utahs and Uintahs Injuns there."

One more camp and they came to the fort. It was built of pickets, with sleeping-quarters and offices in the center, the entrance being through a strong gate. On the north side was a large and enclosed yard where the stock was corralled for protection against the Indians and wild animals.

To Old Misery's great disappointment Bridger was away on the Fort Hall road and would not be back for several weeks. Gilbert learned that the fort occupied the neutral ground between the Shoshoni and Crows on the north, the Dakotas on the east, the Cheyennes on the southeast and the Utahs on the south. Here, also, the immigrant road from the East divided, one fork leading to Oregon by the way of Fort Hall on the Snake, the other extending for a hundred and twenty-five miles to Salt Lake City.

"We'll rest for a day or so," Old Misery told Gilbert.

The latter was satisfied. It was an excellent place for a camp. The Vermonter was contrasting the sandy wastes with the thick grass, the absence of all timber with the graceful groves of cottonwoods, willows and hawthorns. A mile and a half above the fort the fork divided into four streams, clear and sweet, and reunited two miles below.

This combination of water and beautiful islands, with the Bear River Mountains for a background, was most pleasing. Gilbert found but one flaw—the several camps of Indians around the fort. It made him feel uneasy to observe how carelessly Old Misery entered the skin lodges to talk with former enemies and friends. Sometimes the mountain man spoke the red man's language, and sometimes he depended upon the sign-language.

"I don't like it, Dad," remonstrated Gilbert. "They'll be doing you mischief."

"Like —— they will!" roared Old Misery, immensely pleased but anxious to conceal the fact. "When they can show me new tricks you'll be older'n me."

They tarried three days, and Gilbert was willing to remain longer, but the mountain man suddenly decided he must be traveling. He had no set purpose that Gilbert could learn beyond his explanation that his feet "itched." It was late in the afternoon that Old Misery insisted they break camp. Gilbert would have preferred an early-morning start.

They went down the fork five miles and camped in a meadow on the right bank where there was good grass. A train for Salt Lake City was passing, carrying stores to merchants. The mountain man exchanged two nuggets for a liberal supply of coffee and sugar, articles which they had long been out of and which were very scarce at the fort.

On the next day they made twenty miles, following the immigrant road to the mouth of the Muddy. When dust clouds told them immigrant trains were coming Old Misery complained and said he felt "too crowded."

As they advanced Gilbert collected white, yellow and smoky quartz fragments which were sprinkled over the ground. The mountain man watched him closely and consulted his rock-medicine; then became gloomy of mien.

Gilbert noted his depression and asked the cause.

"I was hoping *Tunkan* had a medicine for you," explained Misery. "It made me think that when I see you going after the colored stones. I'm 'fraid it ain't so. But don't you fuss; there's lots of medicines. And yours may be mighty strong without being a *Tunkan* one."

Thus far the mountain man had been unable to discover whether the rocks, the Thunder Birds, the water or the sun, favored his young companion; and being in doubt meant a troubled frame of mind. Because Gilbert's sense of location seemed to be lacking Old Misery dismissed the sun. His own researches had seemed to eliminate the Stone God. Inasmuch as he was thinking in the terms of the Dakota god-seeking he was forced to believe Gilbert was under the protection of Takuskansan, or the Moving Deity; or of the Unktelii, the Water God.

"He may be so —— *wakan* I don't know nothing 'bout it," mumbled the mountain man. And yet there abided the recollection of Gilbert's inability to place himself when the route was changed.

Anxious to leave the white man's road, Old Misery was ready to start before sunrise. They followed the road two miles, long enough to raise Pilot Butte. The road toward the butte was over an empty, barren plain. The country was desolate, and, to Gilbert, depressing. But Old Misery continued to be in high spirits. They covered twenty-five miles, and, after making an easy ford of a hundred and forty feet, camped on Black Fork.

The vegetation consisted of dwarf sage and greasewood and black currant bushes, with much bunch-grass and occasional thickets of willows. Gilbert simulated a gaiety of spirits he was far from feeling, and Old Misery was hilarious in their lonely surroundings.

"Where are we going?" asked Gilbert.

"Nowhere in 'tic'lar. Just looking the ground over," replied Old Misery, his heart aching as he began to realize his youthful companion sensed but little as to their general direction. "We may go as far as Fort Laramie. Mebbe not. Bimeby we'll swing back over the Oregon road and turn off north into the Beaver Head country. I'm kinda cur'ous to see if things has changed since I was up there last."

WHEN they awoke next morning it was to find the sky overcast and to feel a chill wind. To add to their discomfort some thirty horsemen charged down on the camp as they were preparing breakfast.

Gilbert yelled, "Indians!" seized his rifle, rolled into a shallow depression and drew a bead on the foremost rider. Old Misery threw his blankets over the young man's head and warned—

"Don't shoot!"

Gilbert got rid of the blanket and beheld the Indians spreading to encircle them. Old Misery was walking toward the horsemen, one hand raised. The riders on the ends of the half-circle galloped in, closed the gap and the mountain man was surrounded. Gilbert remembered all he had heard about Indian torture and decided to die fighting. Then the group opened, and his friend was returning, accompanied by the red band. The mountain man shouted:

"Don't feel skittish. They're good folks."

As he drew nearer he explained:

"Shoshoni. Friends of mine. Carrying a pipe against some Utahs. Thought our smoke was made by their enemies."

But Gilbert did feel "skittish." The Shoshoni looked very savage in their paint. Some were armed with old rifles, some had sword-blades fastened to long poles for lances. Every man carried a bow and a quiver of war-arrows; and around the neck of each hung a small round shield.

Old Misery made them a feast of coffee and sugar, luxuries they were inordinately fond of. In return they presented to the white men a buffalo-tongue and two marrow-bones. After making sure they could have no more coffee and sugar the warriors rode south in search of the Utahs. By the time the marrow-bones were roasted and eaten a drizzling rain set in. Gilbert would have preferred erecting a shelter and waiting for clear skies, but to the mountain man all weather was welcome.

They traveled to Green River, striking it a mile above Bitter Creek, and descended a thirty-foot bank to splash eight hundred feet to the opposite bank. The gray sky, the pelting rain and the sullen river impressed Gilbert as being dreary and dangerous. However, at no spot of the crossing did the water more than touch their stirrups.

The mile-wide bottom was dotted with willows and heavily grassed. Old Misery hurried through this area. The rain ceased, a thick fog taking its place. Gilbert was soaked. Buffalo-berry bushes, fifteen feet in height, stretched out branches through the mist to scratch his face. He tried walking and stepped in holes. At last he urged his companion to halt.

"Just a trifle more travel," cheerily replied the mountain man. "Three Injuns been follering us ever since we broke camp. Some of my Shoshoni friends. They hanker to git our guns and horses. Good people and all right, but they can't help stealing hosses 'n' guns any more'n white can help driving Chinamen 'n' greasers from a rich placer-claim, or Sailor Ben can help drinking whisky."

He took the lead as they entered the Bitter Creek Valley and warned Gilbert to cease talking. After a few miles he was forced to call a halt as their course was cut by numerous deep gullies. They were not disturbed that night, and the morning was cloudless. There were no signs of Indians. Gilbert believed he had never gazed on a more desolate scene, except in the Great

Basin, than he beheld under the first light. The wash from the sandstone cliffs was so continuous as to prohibit vegetation. Not even a blade of grass was to be seen.

"Ain't this a bully place!" enthusiastically cried Old Misery. "Lawd! But I'm glad to be back here once more."

"Mighty lonesome, Dad," sighed Gilbert.

But Misery warmly defended the valley, saying it had little snow in Winter and in the old days had been a favorite rendezvous for trappers. As they cooked and ate the buffalo-tongue the mountain man reveled in reminiscences, speaking of times before the invention of silk hats spoiled the beaver-trade. He reviewed the old-time mountain men from Ashley down, and concluded his talk by proudly declaring:

"And you're to be one of the same tribe. And a mighty good one."

"If I'm not it won't be because I didn't have a good teacher," agreed Gilbert.

Two more camps found them following up the east, or left, fork of Bitter Creek. Antelope were not numerous. Old Misery shot a buck and Gilbert easily bagged a half-dozen fat quail. They came upon the track of a big bear, and the mountain man's eyes lighted with love of the chase. Then he surprized his companion by foregoing the pleasure.

"No chance to overtake him?" asked Gilbert as they left the trail.

"He's close by. Git him all right," muttered Misery. "But the notion hit me that mebbe he's a friend of Bill Williams. Hope they don't forgit that Bill likes his chaw of terbacker."

Gilbert's physical improvement delighted Misery. During the seventy miles up this one valley he seemed to have doubled in strength and in ability to make a camp, read signs, and to find and shoot game. His face was deeply tanned, and, no longer daily living in fear of mob violence, his eyes were keenly objective. There remained but one defect in him, and Misery repeatedly told himself this would be speedily overcome: Without the sun or stars to guide him he had no sense of direction.

They left the valley and rode six miles to a small branch of the Muddy. Gilbert was disgusted to find the water strong of alkali. The animals drank it with reluctance. Grass had been scarce, and the horses and mule had suffered. It was Misery's plan to camp and recruit the strength of their animals, but they barely had reached the creek before buffalo were sighted and the mountain man gave chase. After an hour he returned in disgust, his worn-out horse being unable to carry him alongside the shaggy creatures.

That night Gilbert received the scare of his life when an old bull stumbled upon the camp and stampeded the horses and mule. Aroused from a dreamless sleep by the visitor's blundering about, Gilbert heard his companion shouting, heard the crack of his rifle and took it for granted the Indians had them.

After the bull had departed they built a fire and looked for damage. None of their weapons had been injured, and the property loss was insignificant aside from the disappearance of the horses. Old Misery was much disturbed but presented a cheery face to his young friend as they sat by the blaze and reviewed the mishap.

"I'll fetch 'em back in no time once light comes," optimistically declared the mountain man. He started his search before sunrise and before Gilbert was awake found the three strays grazing within two miles of the camp.

Traveling less than four miles after breakfast, they passed between high cliffs of red and green clay and came out on a vast prairie, which, Misery informed his companion, stretched from the Snake to the Platte. Then followed days of aimless wandering. At night Misery would ask his friend to make a map of where they had been, but only when the sky was clear and their course had followed a general direction was the result any more than guess-work.

As a rule the young man retained only fragments of recollection of narrow gulches, beaver-dams, silhouettes of interminable mountain ranges, sage, salt-grass, ridges covered with flat black gravel, ridges bedecked with yellow and white quartz, large bear tracks, petrification of shells mysteriously scattered over high places, and grotesque sandstone buttes. But all this data was scrambled together in his mind, and the trivial, if curious, was more keenly retained in memory than some prominent landmark.

"You ain't yet come to the p'int where you're able to carry a picter in your mind of where you've been," mused the mountain man one night.

"Nowhere near that point. It's all like a jumble of dreams. I'm hopeless."

"Not by a —— sight!" energetically denied Misery. "You're doing fine. Don't 'spect you to pick up in a season what I've been gitting together for fifty years. Now them last big shells you see. What did the butte east of that ridge make you think of?"

Gilbert's face was blank.

"I remember the shells well. I remember there were three overlapping each other like a big fan. But I don't remember any butte."

"Course you wouldn't," heartily cried Misery. "Buttes everywhere, every day. Shells is more scurce."

Yet when he went to look after the horses his face was very grave. He was keenly disappointed. But his liking for the young man was too genuine to permit him to abandon the task.

With a shrug of his shoulders he grimly told himself:

"But I'll do it. I could make a mountain man out of Bill Williams. I'll make one out of the younker, or bust. He's gitting along fine 'cept he never knows where he's going or where he's been. Even a bear knows that much. But what of it? Ain't I going to keep at his side? Ain't I got eyes 'nough for two?"

He returned to the camp to find Gilbert about to set out to shoot game. He restrained him by explaining:

"We're now on the war-grounds of a half a dozen hostile tribes. So we won't fire any guns today. It's only 'bout two miles from here that Henry Frappe, Jim Bridger's old partner, was wiped out. Five hundred Dakotas, Cheyennes and 'Rapahoes charged his camp, drove off his cattle, killed a white man, two women and a Injun; then scattered and chased his hunters and bagged several of 'em.

"Jim was building his station on Green River and sent word for Frappe to quit this country. But Frappe didn't move quick 'nough and was jumped by another big band. He was killed with eight of his people, but forty Injuns was wiped out."

"Are the Indians as quick to attack now as they were then?" inquired Gilbert, endeavoring to conceal his anxiety.

"More so. Back in Forty-one the first immigrant train went up the Platte to Oregon. Till then only some of us trappers had crossed the northern plains. But from Forty-one on the Injuns began to understand there was lots of white folks in the world, and their eyes bunged out when they see the whites streaming across their hunting grounds. Wood was cut down and wasted. River bottoms grazed bare by the stock. Buf'ler shot and left to rot on the ground, or scared out the country. Why, in Thirty-five the Oglala hunted at the forks of the Platte. In Forty-five they had to travel to the Laramie Plains to hunt. Now they have to go farther where the Shoshoni is ready to carry a fight to 'em."

"Then why do we come here? Just to get killed?" demanded Gilbert.

"Oh, we'll git through with our ha'r on, if we keep our eyes open. One of my Shoshoni friends back along that was trying to steal our hosses told me that the Pawnees just had a big fight with the Cheyennes, Kiowys 'n' Comanches, and killed some of their men. Now them three tribes is trying to git the Sioux to help 'em carry a pipe against the Pawnees. So you see it makes it mighty nice for us as we can slip through the pass and take a peep at Fort Laramie while them four tribes are busy smoking war-terbacker.

"You can't be a mountain man till you're a plains man. That's why I'm fetching you out here. It's your eddication. You're going to like it, too. No one to boss you round. No posse to come after you. You can just look up to the old mountains every day and tell every one to go to ——!"

Gilbert was not entirely reassured. On the next day they rode through a beautiful pass, and the mountain man reined in and announced they were standing on the height of land that separates the waters of the Atlantic from those of the Pacific. Gilbert's first feeling was of joy. Then he remembered the red danger. Next he was recalling his sentence to exile, and a great misery filled his heart. Before him extended the gently undulating country sloping to the east, with the Medicine Bow Mountains in the background. Old Misery pointed to the range and said the Platte flowed along its base.

"Now don't it make you feel sorter proud to know you've stood where the big rivers git their start?" anxiously asked Old Misery.

"At first. But I can't help remembering that I can never follow them east," sadly replied Gilbert.

"—— and——! A mountain man don't

want to foller 'em east. Fort Laramie is far 'nough east for us to foller any river," impatiently cried the mountain man. Then more gently: "I'm bound to do it, younker. I'm going to make a prime mountain man out of you. You're going to travel with me and see I ain't buried under ground when I'm wiped out. You feel a little out of sorts now, but you'll git over it. Just think of coming all this way from Californy! Don't it make you feel like you'd done something, counted a big coup, and oughter be named to wear the crow in your belt? Don't it make you feel like you owned the world?"

"It's fine to think about," agreed Gilbert, essaying to present a better face. "But of course I couldn't have made three camps if it hadn't been for you."

"What of it? Everybody has to be l'arned. I had to be. Now here we be, two mountain men. Every sky-line is free to us. Let folks stew in towns back East and on the coast. Let 'em rob 'n' cheat 'n' die. We don't have any more truck with such doings then a eagle does. We're free to come and go. No one can tell us where and when to go. We take what we want. We live in a country the Almighty made. Made for us to live in and not for men to shovel into cricks and cover with wooden lodges. We don't need money."

There was something in this speech that impressed Gilbert as portraying a magnificent freedom. If only a man could forget his kin, could forget ambition as measured by the town, forget the dark-haired Walker girl back home! Then that man would be without a care or a responsibility. Anyway, sentence had been passed on him.

"I'll make a hard try for it," he stoutly declared. "The East is closed to me. I'm a fool to make myself miserable when it can't be helped."

"*Wakan* talk! *Wakantanka! Hi yo!* A man comes to take a new name! All he now sees belongs to him!"

And in his joy at the young man's decision Old Misery slipped from his horse and executed a little dance of triumph.

Remounting, he sedately announced:

"Now we'll range down to Fort Laramie and take a squint at the immigrant trains making for South Pass, swapping their Eastern prisons of wood for Western prisons of wood. Mebbe we'll guide a train through Injun country far as Fort Hall. Sometimes I feel I oughter do that for the women 'n' children. Mebbe we'll turn back to the Park Mountains and see where the Colorado rises. Or we can cut up into the Flat Head country and help the Nez Percés carry a pipe over the mountains against the Blackfeet. I owe the Blackfeet a few digs. Lawd! Wish I could live a million years and not have anything changed. Then I'd have time to hunt every crick 'n' buf'ler waller, every peak 'n' cañon."

After this talk, and largely because he was convinced of the futility of fighting against the inexorable, Gilbert did his best to pick up the ways of his companion. While they were camping in a wonderful bottom on the left bank of the north fork of the Platte he announced his desire to shoot buffalo from the saddle. Heretofore he had shot them only by stalking. He felt uplifted by the gigantic cottonwoods, towering sixty feet above their camp. He was determined to complete his education as rapidly as possible.

Old Misery secretly applauded his ambition but had misgivings. Gilbert's horse was not trained to run buffalo; nor had the young man any experience in shooting while at full gallop. But the mountain man would not discourage him. He simply advised:

"Take my hand-gun and leave your rifle. If your hoss will carry you close the hand-gun will do the business and won't need only one hand. Bimeby you can try shooting the rifle when going at a dead run."

Taking the heavy revolver, he rode out to a small herd of buffalo. He drew very close before the huge animals displayed any alarm. They started off at a ponderous gallop, moving slowly at first, and he had no difficulty in maneuvering his mount alongside a cow. He held the revolver, cocked, and brought it down to fire just as his horse stumbled and all but fell. His gun-hand instinctively moved in and the weapon discharged under the unintentional pressure of the trigger finger; and the horse, minus the tip of an ear, reared violently and threw him to the ground.

With the breath dashed from his lungs he remained on his back until Old Misery flogged his horse forward and in a flying leap gained his side.

"Hurt bad, younker? Bullet hit you? Good ——! To think I let you try it!"

"All right!" gasped Gilbert. "Lost my breath. I'm all right. And what a fool!"

"You done fine!" cried the mountain man. "Never see a man make a better start. But what'n —— made that hoss prance so! Never showed such life afore!"

Gilbert crawled to his feet. Old Misery remounted and caught the runaway. Now assured his companion was not injured, he struggled mightily to keep a sober face as he brought the horse back and rubbed some bear-grease on the poor brute's mutilated ear.

"Did I do that?" cried Gilbert.

"If you did it's some the neatest, closest shooting I ever see," declared the mountain man.

Now they began to find old Indian stockades where war-parties had camped. They left the Platte to travel around an isolated mountain on the north of Medicine Bow Butte. Old Misery pointed to the narrow opening between the two and explained that while Frémont had passed through the gorge in 1842 they would save time by avoiding it, so rough was the traveling.

He had scarcely finished this bit of information before he was standing in his stirrups and shading his eyes as he stared at the rough defile. Gilbert's gaze, quickened by experience, discovered it—a dot. It was emerging from the pass, and was followed by another and another, until a score had strung into view. A short distance on their right was a clean, open grove of pine, marking the course of a branch of Rattlesnake Creek.

"Are they Indians?" whispered Gilbert.

"Yep. Fetching us a fight," quietly replied the mountain man. "Mebbe they'll think the risk is too much for what little they can git."

He shifted his gaze to the pines.

"We'll ride in there and stand 'em off."

"You've said we should keep in the open," reminded Gilbert.

"That's what we'd do now if I wa'n't seeing an old Injun fort in there. It's close to water. Take your time. No hurry."

But Gilbert's horse was the first to enter the pines.

Instead of one fort they found three, and the burned remains of a dozen more. All were built in the form of the ordinary skin lodge and, being constructed of logs stood on end, were bullet-proof. Old Misery dismounted and pulled back enough logs to permit Gilbert to lead the horses and mule inside. The mountain man closed the opening except for a hole large enough for him to crawl through. This he blocked with their saddles and the pack from the mule.

The horses were told to lie down and had been taught to obey promptly. It was necessary to throw the mule, however. The animals were next tied, to prevent their getting to their feet and plunging madly about when frightened, or if wounded.

The interior of the lodge measured some eighteen feet in diameter and received its light through various loop-holes five feet from the ground, and through an opening at the apex.

"Couldn't ask for a better spot!" endorsed the mountain man as he pushed a log aside at the back and picked up a canvas bucket and the camp-kettle.

"Must you go out?" asked Gilbert.

"Crick's close by. Nothing like a drink of water when you're choking on powder smoke."

He crawled outside and slipped down the bank to the stream and returned with bucket and kettle filled to the brim.

Gilbert was immensely relieved when he saw the kettle slowly advancing through the opening.

"I was afraid they'd come while you were gone," he whispered.

"Lots of time. It'll be quite a lot of minutes afore they come up. I'm going out again. Be right back."

This time he went to the next, or middle lodge. He found it contained the remains of a warrior resting on a low platform of logs. The man had been dead for years. The usual burial miscellany of property was piled about the bier. For weapons there was a Hudson's Bay Company's trade-musket, an excellent bow and a quiver of arrows, a long lance with a point of obsidian and a trade knife in a fringed sheath. Among the utensils were two large copper kettles.

Old Misery placed these and the bow and quiver outside the lodge and ran to examine the third "fort." The logs of this showed arrow and bullet marks, and the lower side was burned through. Weather and flames had so weakened it that the mountain man sent it crashing to the ground.

Then Gilbert was racing toward him, rifle in one hand and a camp-ax in the other, his eyes round and wild. On beholding his friend erect the young man explained—

"Thought they'd got you!"

"And come out to git caught," mildly rebuked Old Misery, but secretly pleased.

"Well, Dad, I wouldn't last long if left alone," reminded Gilbert. "Let's get back. Whose kettles?"

"Ours. Take the bow 'n' arrers inside. We'll git some more water."

And for the second time he descended the bank to the stream.

When he returned with the extra supply of water he remarked:

"We're fixed mighty fine here. Plenty of grub, and close to water, and plenty of lead 'n' powder. And I'm glad that end lodge is down. They'd be sure to take cover there."

"Better for us if the nearest one was down," said Gilbert.

"That's a burial lodge. They'll keep out of that even if they ain't Sioux. Dead man in there was a Sioux. He'd carried the pipe more'n once as his war-bonnet tells us."

"How do you know he was a Sioux?"

"Wrapped in a green blanket. That's their funeral color. Never saw a live Sioux wearing one. Cheyennes 'n' Rapahoes don't seem to have any 'tic'lar color. Tom Tobin would like this."

While talking he was passing from loop-hole to loop-hole and peering out. There sounded a smart tap close to one aperture, and Misery announced:

"They're here. Just shot a arrer into the logs."

Gilbert was immensely excited but to his surprize did not feel afraid.

"I see nothing."

"Keep down! Use the holes close to the ground. Timber's full of reds. They saw us make for cover, and they rode into the growth above here."

ALL doubt as to the Indians' presence was removed as a crash of guns and chorus of hideous yelling spoiled the quiet of the grove.

The mountain man was quick to encourage:

"Don't mind their howling. Hooting never hurt any one. Reckon I'll hoot back."

And, lifting his head, he sounded the war-whoop of the Pillager Band of Chippewas, the ancient enemy of the Dakota tribes. The yelling was renewed by the besiegers. Old Misery grinned and explained:

"Knew that would make 'em mad. Lawd! But they do hate a Chippewa."

When the timber became quiet again Misery said—

"Reckon I'll give 'em some more."

And he shouted defiance in the Oglala Dakota tongue, and repeated it in the Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Crow and Pawnee. The last two raised the unseen warriors to a pitch of frenzy.

Chuckling gleefully, the mountain man hoarsely whispered:

"They don't know what to think. They see only the two of us. But they don't know but what some of their own color is in here."

That he had not deceived the besiegers was now evidenced by a deep voice from behind the burial lodge demanding—

"Who speaks to the Oglala Tetons with the tongues of many tribes, but always in the voice of a white man?"

Old Misery glanced out on four sides of the lodge to make sure no braves were creeping close under cover of the dialog, and then answered:

"A man who forgets he was born white. A man who has a rock-medicine sent him by *Tunkan*. He is a very brave man and has counted many coups."

"Come out where we can talk with you and smoke."

"Stand out where I can see you."

"Makhpia-sha sends his voice. It is enough. Come out here, white man."

"The white man is an old man. He hunted at the Forks of the Platte where Red Cloud was born, long before Red Cloud was born. Life is a pair of old moccasins to him. He has lived too long. He has seen too many white men come out here and spoil the hunting and trapping. Bring him a good fight, Makhpia-sha, so he can die happy and take some Oglala Tetons to hunt with him to the Land of Many Lodges," was Misery's answer.

And as he finished his defiance he again made a round of the loop-holes. The Oglala leader, crouching behind the burial lodge, began:

"There is another white man with you. Is he tired of life because his people have spoiled the hunting-ground of the Dakota?"

Old Misery suddenly thrust his revolver through a loop-hole and fired, breaking the arm of an Indian who was about to tree himself close to the logs. The wounded brave remained behind the tree, giving no sign of being hurt. Leaping across the lodge, the

mountain man sounded his war-cry and taunted:

"Red Cloud talked to keep the old man from using his eyes. Red Cloud forgot the medicine sent by *Tunkan* keeps watch for the old man."

And, shifting his position, he fired two shots at random from the front of the lodge.

Gilbert, who had been keeping watch on the side where the wounded warrior was hiding, despairingly confessed:

"I'm useless. I can see nothing. Every time you look you see them."

"Seen just one man," chuckled Old Misery. "But they've surrounded us, and they think I've seen 'em when I shoot. Fire a couple of shots from the back side to keep 'em from sneaking up from the crick."

He returned to the loop-hole, facing the burial lodge, ready to resume his conversation with Makhpia-sha, or Red Cloud. This Oglala man was well advanced on a career that was to make him the most powerful and astute chief of the Oglala Tetons. He came from the Snake family, one of the most influential of the tribe. His advancement was more remarkable because he had no claim to the chieftainship, that office among the Oglalas being hereditary in the family of Tasunkakokipapi—'They Fear Even His Horse'—or, as the plainsmen called him, 'Young Man Afraid of His Horses.'

Red Cloud was taking his time to consider Misery's repeated boast of possessing a strong rock-medicine. Gilbert fired his rifle just as the famous leader began to talk, but as if not hearing it Red Cloud called out:

"The white man lies. He has no medicine from *Tunkan*. The Stone Spirit does not give medicine to white men."

"The rock-medicine is in my medicine-bag. Makhpia-sha is a brave man. Let him come to me alone and look at it."

"It is a lie. If the white men come out they will not be hurt. If they do not come out my men will set fire to the logs and roast them. If taken alive they shall be skinned alive."

Gilbert fired a second shot; then shifted his position and wasted another.

Old Misery laughed derisively, and reminded Red Cloud:

"When this fort burns, Makhpia-sha, then the burial lodge you are hiding behind burns. That is very bad medicine for the Oglala Tetons. If *Tunkan*, whose rocks are painted red, is not helping me why does Red Cloud wait? Why does he not bring us a fight? How many warriors must he have behind him before he dares to charge two white men? Are there no Strong-Hearts, or Crow-Owners, or old men of the White Horse Band, with him?"

The shrill notes of a turkey-bone whistle split the silence of the timber. Instantly there was a deafening chorus of ferocious cries, the crash of guns and the thudding of arrows. The mule gave a convulsive twitch and Gilbert was hoarsely whispering:

"Mule's dead, Dad. Shot through the head."

"Keep low and load for me!" snapped the mountain man.

And at the risk of being hit by a chance bullet through some loop-hole he ranged around the circle, pausing a second before each opening to peer out, then quickly firing. And as he worked he repeatedly sounded his war-cry and added many insults in the Teton dialect. For ten minutes this yelling and shooting continued, and when the whistle sounded and brought silence the only casualty, so far as the defenders knew, was the dead pack-animal.

The mountain man yelled to Red Cloud by name but received no reply. The silence in the grove was more trying to Gilbert's taut nerves than had been the mad howling. Old Misery, too, was accepting it as an evil omen and began spying through the loop-holes in an anxious endeavor to discover what the enemy was up to.

Luck, or *Tunkan*, ruled that he should be kneeling by the choked front entrance and peering through a tiny aperture when a twig dropped within his range of vision from a pine ten feet from the lodge. Working rapidly with his knife between two logs at arm's length above his head, and taking great care his blade should not penetrate to the outside, he whispered for Gilbert to drop on his hand and knees before him. Stepping on the young man's bowed figure, he elevated himself sufficiently to use this new peep-hole.

Twenty feet above his head a naked warrior was working his way out on a limb. He carried a big coil of rope, and obviously his purpose was to lasso the projecting ends of the logs at the apex of the lodge. Did he accomplish this his hidden companions could quickly pull the timbers loose and expose the white men to capture or quick death.

Old Misery pulled his revolver and warned:

"Steady. I'm going to shoot."

The Indian was feeding the coil to the ground, and as it tautened the mountain man knew the invisible foe was ready to pull the logs apart once the noose was in place. Now that his companions had hands on the rope the man in the tree began gathering up sufficient slack for the cast, and while doing this he dropped the noose over his head.

As he was in the act of lifting his arm to remove the noose the heavy bullet caught him in the arm-pit; and before the Oglala men knew what had happened, and while they were holding tightly to the rope, the man fell and was brought up with a jerk that broke his neck, his moccasins within six inches of the ground. But he was dead before he left the limb as the upward course of the bullet plowed through his throat. So unexpected was the dénouement of this ruse that those holding the rope kept the dead man suspended for nearly a minute, his naked form whirling rapidly, a horribly grotesque teetotum.

Back to the loop-hole facing the burial lodge leaped the mountain man and loudly derided:

"How many Winters since the Oglala Tetons hung their dead up by the neck? Has Makhpia-sha a new medicine that tells him to do it?"

Then he was crouching behind the saddles and pack at the entrance. The dead man was on the ground. The whistle sounded, and there came a hail of lead and a flight of arrows, and under cover of this assault a brave reached from behind the tree, seized the dead man's foot and commenced dragging him away. He desisted and retired with a shattered wrist.

Old Misery again hurled defiances and mountain abuse.

Gilbert screamed—

"Look out!"

Misery wheeled just as the young man kicked a gun barrel thrust through a loop-hole on the creek side of the lodge. The gun discharged, the bullet harmlessly plowing into the logs above the prostrate horses. As the man yanked the gun back Gilbert fired his rifle through the opening. He was too excited to hear the sound of a heavy body falling. But Old Misery heard it, and he leaped across the enclosure, pushed the young man aside and was in time to see the dead brave being dragged to cover.

"—— and ——! You counted a coup!" roared the mountain man. "You'll wear a war-bonnet yet! Make you a prime mountain man? Why, already you're almost a second Jim Bridger! Mebbe sometime you'll be almost as good a man as I be. Quick work! Good work! Some new medicine is working for you! *He! Hi! Hi! Hi!*"

And he proceeded to arouse the savages outside to a maniacal pitch of fury by singing a war-song of the Mississippi Band of the Chippewa.

" 'I make him bite the dust, the Teton Sioux, when I see him,' " he repeated in English for Gilbert's benefit.

He howled this arrogantly over and over, but as he sang he did not neglect the loop-holes and kept moving around the enclosure.

Although at first stunned by his unexpected victory, Gilbert suddenly discovered his heart was filled with strength and courage. Knowing no Indian songs, he burst into a violent denunciation in English, his fresh, strong voice carrying far. Old Misery was overjoyed by this metamorphosis in the young man. The flushed face, the sparkling eyes, the confident volume of the ringing voice erased all doubt in the mountain man's mind; the Vermonter had found himself. Under some mountain name his fame would travel far. When Gilbert paused to renew his breath Misery was impelled to shuffle around in a Chippewa war-dance, punctuating his grotesquery with an exclamatory:

"How! How!"

The shrill whistle sounded again. The mountain man believed the last climax was upon them and jumped to a loop-hole. All remained quiet outside. He examined the timber from all sides. At last he proudly informed Gilbert:

"They're drawing back to powwow. Younker, you'll be a Crow-Owner for this day's work. Keep on and you'll figger in one of their Winter counts."

"I never supposed I would ever kill a man," muttered Gilbert, a slight reaction setting in.

Old Misery feared weakness and harshly corrected him:

"You say it wrong. You killed a wild animal that was trying to hoop your ha'r after skinning you alive. And it's a mighty big coup to make Makhpia-sha draw back and go into council."

"But there are so many of them! They can easily rush us and tear these logs apart."

Old Misery grinned and agreed. "Easiest thing in the world. But they ain't done it. They've had two men killed and a couple wounded. That's bad for 'em. It's bad for Red Cloud, their leader. They planned to git us without losing a man. Now Red Cloud is madder'n an old buf'ler bull that's been driven out of the herd. But he's a Injun. He won't let his 'mad' git the best of his red mind. They'll talk it over and think up some new tricks. Mebbe they'll lose some more men, but they won't plan to. They won't rush us in daylight. Red Cloud knows he mustn't lose another man. Now let's drink some water."

"If they don't get us today they will tonight."

"They ain't going to git us alive any time," cheerfully assured Old Misery. "If they come in the dark it'll be along toward sun up. We may git a chance to sneak away afore then. May have to leave the hosses. You start moving round and peeking out. Don't stop more'n a second at any hole. I must talk with my medicine."

Gilbert began spying on the outside world and saw nothing but two squirrels scampering madly down one tree to cross and ascend another. Old Misery seated himself with his back to the logs, opened his buckskin bag and stared earnestly at the rock. Then he held it to his ear.

"The man's gone you shot out of the tree," whispered Gilbert.

"The sly cusses," absent-mindedly murmured Misery.

"What does your medicine tell you?"

In his desperation the young Vermonter was eager to try to believe a curious piece of rock possessed magic powers.

Old Misery listened intently; then frowned slightly.

"Don't git it just clear, but that's 'cause my head is slow. As I make it out we're to bust away from this trap. That must mean we oughter make a try after sundown. I'll make two packs from the muleload. What we can't carry we'll leave to pay for the dead men."

SUSPECTING some new ruse, the two watched with ears and eyes, but there was no sign of life in the timber. After twenty minutes of tense waiting there came a sharp yelping, more like the cry of a dog than a human. At first it was faint and far off but rapidly increased in clearness and volume. From the edge of the timber the assembled Indians began shouting back. The red sentinels left posted around the lodge caught the contagion and from their hiding-places added high-pitched, explosive cries to the general tumult.

"What does it mean?" whispered Gilbert.

"Some one on hossback comes with a talk for Red Cloud. Knew 'bout where to find him. Shows he's one of the band," explained Old Misery.

The newcomer had now reached the circle of Indians gathered in a war-council, and the howling ceased.

"He's giving his talk," muttered Old Misery.

An outburst of wild howls told the white men the talk was finished. The whistle-signal pierced the grove.

The mountain man cried:

"Something big's busted loose. They'll be leaving soon. They won't make more'n one rush at us. Keep your head."

The sentinels began firing on the lodge. Inside half a minute the entire red force was discharging bullets and arrows at the logs. The whistle again commanded, and the firing ceased. Old Misery watched closely from a loop-hole beside the blocked entrance. He had a glimpse of a sentinel retreating through the trees and toward the open country on the west of the timber. He saved his bullet and told Gilbert:

"Untie the hosses and git 'em up. Something big's happened. Mebbe it's war-talk about the Pawnees. They're all leaving."

"It's some trick," muttered Gilbert, not daring to indulge in such an extravagant hope.

He got the horses up and was ashamed to find his limbs trembling violently.

From the edge of the timber rose the voice of the red men, singing a war-song. It gradually receded, and the mountain man knew they had taken to horse and were riding away. Gilbert insisted it was a trick to induce them to break cover.

Old Misery shook his head and reminded Gilbert:

"A man rode up, yelping like he had a big talk. They may 'a' left a few braves to take a shot at us when we show our noses, but my medicine says we won't have no more trouble from Red Cloud. Something

the medicine tries to tell me I can't make out. We'll wait a bit."

Half an hour passed and brought no new alarms. The horses shared the mule-pack between them. Gilbert was for throwing away a heavy buckskin bag, tied in the middle, that Misery had said contained lead. The mountain man insisted they might need it.

"Time enough to heave it away when we're jumped and have to ride bareback for it. We'll have to leave the saddles, of course."

He was not quite ready to depart, however, and directed Gilbert to remain inside with his rifle ready.

"I'm going to take a two-minute scout," he explained.

And before his young friend could remonstrate he had yanked a saddle from the opening and had squirmed out of the lodge. Inside the two minutes he was back, walking boldly and calling for Gilbert to remove two logs and drive out the horses.

"They've gone north toward the immigrant road. Have a sixty-mile ride ahead of 'em. Must 'a' had word from some of their scouts that a big train is coming. Red Cloud's got to wipe out some whites to make up for his two men killed. The skunks packed the dead men 'way with 'em. So we ain't no ha'r to show for our fight. I was going to show you how to sculp."

"But I don't want to learn!" cried Gilbert.

Misery was disappointed.

"As a mountain man you've got to know how," he insisted.

Then more cheerfully:

"Mebbe we'll git a chance to bag one of 'em afore we reach Fort Laramie. Trick's easy 'n' simple."

"I pray we meet no more Indians," said Gilbert with a shiver.

The mountain man would have resented this had he not remembered the vague message his medicine had endeavored to tell. His gaze grew somber with fear as he looked at his companion.

"Mebbe it's best that way," he muttered.

THEY crossed the creek and covered twenty miles before making camp in the dark. Gilbert gladly would have attempted to walk another twenty, but Misery assured him they could not outwalk danger, but might walk into it. Their course had taken them up a dry branch of the Rattlesnake that headed in a low gap. From the gap they had followed down a hollow to a small tributary of the Medicine Bow River that headed near the northern end of the Medicine Bow Butte.

Starting before sunrise, they took a southeasterly course with the country much more pleasing than what they had left behind on the west side of the Medicine Bow Mountains. The valleys were wide and richly grassed, and were hemmed in by low, rounded hills. Antelope in graceful flight passed back and forth near them. The grass-covered hills swarmed with buffalo. They camped early in the midst of some willows. Cottonwoods and aspen were close by, and the tiny stream was lined with rosebushes.

The day's travel had been short. Gilbert was for covering many miles, but the mountain man appeared to be preoccupied. It was fear of what his medicine had tried to tell him. He tried to keep it from his thoughts but was remembering it each time he glanced at his companion.

Two hours before sunrise they ate emergency rations of dried meat and ascended a high bluff. In the northeast and beyond the Laramie Plains, rose Laramie's Peak, dark and mysterious against the early morning sky. Gilbert was confused as to direction until the red glow of the hidden sun had burned a hole in the eastern skyline. The traveling was easy as they were passing through an open, rolling country. Old Misery explained that the great abundance of game was due to the remoteness of the immigrant road. The buffalo were quite tame, the old bulls refusing to move. The antelope were more curious than timid.

Misery refused to eat antelope so long as he could have buffalo. He shot a fat cow and butchered it "mountain style," taking only the "bass" and tongue. The former was the hump projecting from the back of the neck, and about the size of a man's head. It was removed with the skin attached. Misery assured his companion that once the bass was boiled it would prove to be very tender and rich and most nutritious. They crossed the east fork of Frappe's Creek and camped early in the mile-wide bottom. Old Misery informed Gilbert:

"Named after Frappe when the 'Rickaras stole sixty of his horses at the mouth of the crick."

This information made Gilbert nervous until his companion explained Frappe was robbed years before.

"Now we're clear of the Rattlesnake country we won't hurry," added Misery. "Might run into another band of Injuns. I'd struck north to the immigrant road if Red Cloud hadn't gone that way. We'll have to dodge some hunting parties most likely. But I'm proud of you, younker. You're going to be a big mountain man."

Had it not been for fear of roving Indians Gilbert would have enjoyed the next few days. They moved cautiously and each day traveled eight or ten miles before sunrise. One day when it rained they put in twelve hours of almost continuous walking. At each camp Old Misery would produce his medicine-rock and consult it, and each time vainly endeavored to understand what it was trying to tell him.

So far as he could understand he learned nothing to dismiss his secret fear. He told none of his thoughts to Gilbert, however. On leaving Frappe's Creek they had entered the Laramie Plains and traveled a score of miles across a beautiful rolling country to camp on the west fork of the Laramie River.

Old Misery was doubly cautious, saying: "Probably some Injun villages down the river. But that don't mean all the reds we meet will hanker for our ha'r; not even if they're Oglalas."

Gilbert found no consolation in this talk. Yet they met with no trouble and rounded the Black Hills Range, but directed their course outside of Cheyenne Pass—a valley rather than a gorge, and so called as it contained a Cheyenne village. They had often seen red hunters at a distance but thus far had escaped discovery. It was after they left the Chugwater and were striking direct for Fort Laramie that they ran into a small band of Cheyennes. All Indians looked alike to Gilbert, but Old Misery assured him there was no danger; and he called by name the leader of the hunters, a man of some sixty years.

The leader was pleased to meet with an old acquaintance and shook hands with both white men and told his followers they were "good men." The young men, however, eyed the two horses and their packs hungrily. Old Misery informed them that several war-bands of strange Indians were south and west of the Black Hills. The Cheyennes at once became nervous and anxiously asked what tribes were sending out war-bands. The mountain man repeated they were strange Indians, but he was sure one band was composed of Pawnees. The Cheyennes mounted at once and galloped to the Chugwater and their village at its head.

On the next day, and before Gilbert was prepared to receive the heartening information, Old Misery was announcing:

"Afore night we'll be camping just above Laramie. You act s'prized."

"I've been mixed up as to the direction we've traveled and as to the distance we've covered," said Gilbert.

Misery felt misgivings, but ousted the thought and explained:

"Used to be called Fort John. Used to be used by 'Merican Trading Company to protect its trade. You still 'low you'll be a mountain man?"

And he anxiously waited to hear the answer.

"Why, Dad, what else is there for me to do?" morosely replied Gilbert. "I'll do my best. I'm afraid I never can get to know where I'm at. But I'll do my best."

THE land around Fort Laramie impressed Gilbert as being very sterile. The absence of dews and the dry atmosphere turned the occasional patches of grass brown, as if they had been burned over. Much of the surrounding country was carpeted with gravel. The fort itself, built of adobe brick and occupying a natural shelf of clay and rock, was a most welcome sight to the Easterner. This largely because the Stars and Stripes were fluttering from the top of a bastion.

Old Misery led the way a short distance above the fort to a spot on Laramie Fork and announced they would camp there to be clear of the sun and the dust from passing wagon-trains. He was very quiet as he cooked the mid-day meal; and while he smoked his pipe he turned aside, peered into the medicine-bag and frowned as if not understanding. About mid-afternoon clouds of dust advertised the coming of a big wagon-train.

Observing how wistfully his friend was watching the sun-riddled dust, Misery remarked:

"It's coming from the Oregon country. Mighty soon we'll be going up where it

started from. Big trees. Big mountains. Big lakes. Air cool and make you sleep better'n a gallon o' Missouri whisky. Lawdy! But if I could be young and be seeing that country for the first time again! Waugh!

"And how you're going to take to it! No pindling timber like what you see down here. No burned-out grass. No dry crick beds. But good water 'n' grass 'n' fire-wood everywhere. And game! You'll go plumb *heyoka* when you see the game and catch the fish."

He spoke with boisterous anticipation, but his shrewd old eyes were ever watching the wo-begone face across the tiny fire.

"That'll be smash-up good fun, huh?"

"I'll be glad to be with you, Dad. You've been mighty good to me. But I almost wish we hadn't come here. I mustn't go near the fort. Some word may have reached here about me. And to see that train pulling out for the East would make me feel awfully cheap and homesick— Well, well. It's settled and I'm a fool to be complaining. I'm mighty lucky to have some one to look out for me."

"I'll make a mountain man out of you yet," growled Old Misery. "*Hi! He! He! He!* There. I feel a heap better. Go to the fort? You're a mountain man. You can go anywhere you——please. Come along. Folks round here don't know nor care nothin' 'bout any stranger. Soldiers have all they can do to look out for Injuns and git the hay down eight miles from up the river. We'll look at that train. Keep looking at 'em till you laff at the notion of ever wanting to foller one to the East. Mebbe some old cusses I know is with that train, hired to come along to help stand off the Injuns. We'll catch up with a west-bound train and take life easy."

They reached the fort ahead of the long train, and when it came in it attracted the attention of soldiers, officers, guides and groups of Indians lounging about the place. In the tops and sides of several wagons war-arrows were flopping. There were fresh scars from bullets and arrow heads on the wagon bodies, and several horses were wounded.

Ahead of the foremost wagon, mounted on a raw-boned horse of wicked eye, rode a man with a face of leather and with gray hair that came down on his shoulders. He gave Old Misery one look and then slipped from his crude wooden saddle, yelling like a Comanche, and playfully tried to knock the mountain man's ragged hat off with a sweep of a rifle barrel.

Misery grinned in keen delight and in ducking the blow scooped up a handful of gravel and tossed it into the weathered face.

"—— your old hide, Misery! If it ain't you! Wait till I git rid of this dirt from my eyes and I'll climb you. Big beaver! But I'm glad to see you. Who's the young buckskin I see just before you put my eyes out?"

"Partner of mine, Ned. Killed his Injun up on the Rattlesnake when they had us cornered. I wouldn't be here if it wa'n't for his gun. He's going to be the rip-snortingest mountain man you ever see. He's going up Oregon way with me. We hoofed it alone from Frisco way here. Fighting every inch of the way. Left a trail of dead Injuns fifteen feet wide. Wiped out thirty outlaws this side the Sierra. Had so many dry sculps we used 'em for wood for cooking our kettle when wood wa'n't handy."

"You old liar! You fight Injuns? You'd never come east if the Digger Injuns hadn't took sticks and driv' you away. Younker's all right. He'll make a good mountain man, but he's tying up with a mighty weak partner. Heard you was in Californy from Tom Tobin. He's at Fort Hall. Dropped a word that he had a grudge to settle with you."

"Tom Tobin at Fort Hall!" exclaimed Old Misery, his eyes lighting. "The little lying runt!"

"Yep. Spent a night at our camp. Said you bit him down in Californy."

"The —— little runt! If I ever bit him he wouldn't have any head on his shoulders. My teeth slipped just as I was going to give my war-hoot. But I promised him a scrimmage next time we met. You go back with us and watch the fun. I'm a wolf from my shoulders up, and a grizzly b'ar, Sierra kind, from my shoulders down."

Ned shook his head sadly.

"I've got to go through with this outfit as far as Fort Kearney. I'm home-sick already. Remember the time I saved your ha'r for you at the Three Tetons? You save that fuss till I git back."

"Saved my ha'r, you ongrateful liar! And me packing you out the Injun country on my back! Couldn't even bring a big train

down here without letting Injuns shoot arrers through it."

"Red Cloud's band jumped us. Got two of our men. We bagged three of 'em that I see knocked dead."

"And me and this younker stood off his whole outfit and killed seven and wounded a dozen."

And he turned to Gilbert to have him vouch for the figures. But the Vermonter had heard little if any of their talk. He was staring at the train. Misery broke in on his reverie by saying:

"This is the train that pulled us out of that mess, younker. Red Cloud quit us to tackle it. If you've got 'nough of the fort we'll start up the trail today and make a dozen miles afore camping. I'll git fresh hosses and a pack-mule and plenty of grub and powder."

Gilbert bowed his head on his hands. Fortunately Old Misery's mountain friend had turned back to the wagons and did not witness this weakness.

"My——! What's hitting you?" gasped Old Misery.

"I'm no good, Dad. Don't mind me just now. I'll be all right in a minute. I won't break down again— It's that train— It's going East— It got me before I could guard against it. But I'll toughen up. I won't act the fool again."

Old Misery dropped beside him and began pulling up the few blades of grass showing through the gravelly sand.

"You'd go back home, give up being a mountain man and go back, if it wa'n't for that bit of trouble?" he huskily mumbled.

"Oh, but I would! I wish I could go and take you with me."

"Not by a —— sight! Anything but that, Young Buckskin. That's the new name they'd give you if you'd come with me— Then, bimeby, Old Buckskin— All plain now— Back in the fort on the Rattlesnake my medicine bothered me. Told me things I didn't dast tell you— All the way down here it was telling the same thing. I didn't git the *sabe* of it. Sounded *heyoka* 'less I figgered it one way. Kept saying in the lodge that we'd git clear, but that I'd lose you. That's been bearing down on my old neck ever since we struck out for this place.

"That's why I made long travels 'n' short travels, and started long afore sunup and walked after dark, and come in here by a roundabout way. I believed my rock-medicine meant you was to be rubbed out. And all the time it was saying you'd be rubbed out of my life, but not the way I'd figgered."

"I don't understand you," numbly remonstrated Gilbert. "I am here. We'll start for Oregon after this train gets under way. I probably won't feel this way when we see the next one."

"*Tunkan* is right. His medicine never lies," sorrowfully continued Old Misery. "You've got guts; but they ain't mountain guts. You've lived too long in the East, where they believe in double-time. If I could 'a' caught you younger— Well, that's all ended."

"You're wishing to go back alone? I don't blame you," muttered Gilbert, trying to conceal the shock the mountain man's speech had given him.

"Ned's wagon-train will take you back East. Dragoons will go with it to Kearney."

"You know I can never go back East. But that's no reason why I should be a drag on you. Maybe I can get work here at the fort. They need men for cutting hay and firewood. Or I can get a job teaming."

Old Misery pulled out the bag containing his medicine-rock and from the bottom of it extracted a worn and soiled piece of paper and explained:

"Here's a writing. Saved it to give to you if you didn't pan out as a mountain man. I got it from a long cuss outside of Coloma. Men called him Elnathan Plumb. I give him 'nough gold to make up for what that young streak of scarlet got away from you. I told him you started for Coloma from Frisco with the money and was held up and robbed by Reelfoot Williams and was wounded a bit. I 'splained how I ran across Williams and made him fork over 'nough dust to square the money. So everything's all hunky back East. Now you git on your feet and foller me."

With the precious paper clutched in his hand and his mouth agape the dazed Vermonter followed Misery to their camping place. From under the blankets the old man produced the bag tied in the middle. He dropped it at Gilbert's feet, saying:

"That's the lead you wanted to heave away. —— of a tussle to fetch it way from Snake Martin's camp. He had it buried, and I got it. It's yours. Twenty

thousand odd in dust 'n' nuggets. Buy a trading-store or a ranch, and marry that home-squaw."

"You knew all the time I might weaken——"

"Rub it in. I'm o'nary 'n' low-down. Lived with the Crows too long, mebbe. But there was a chance you'd pan out a prime mountain man and like it. But I didn't go to play you dirt, younker."

"Good ——! Paid up my stealings! Planned to give me a fortune. Dad, if I leave you I'm always going to feel mighty bad. If I stay——"

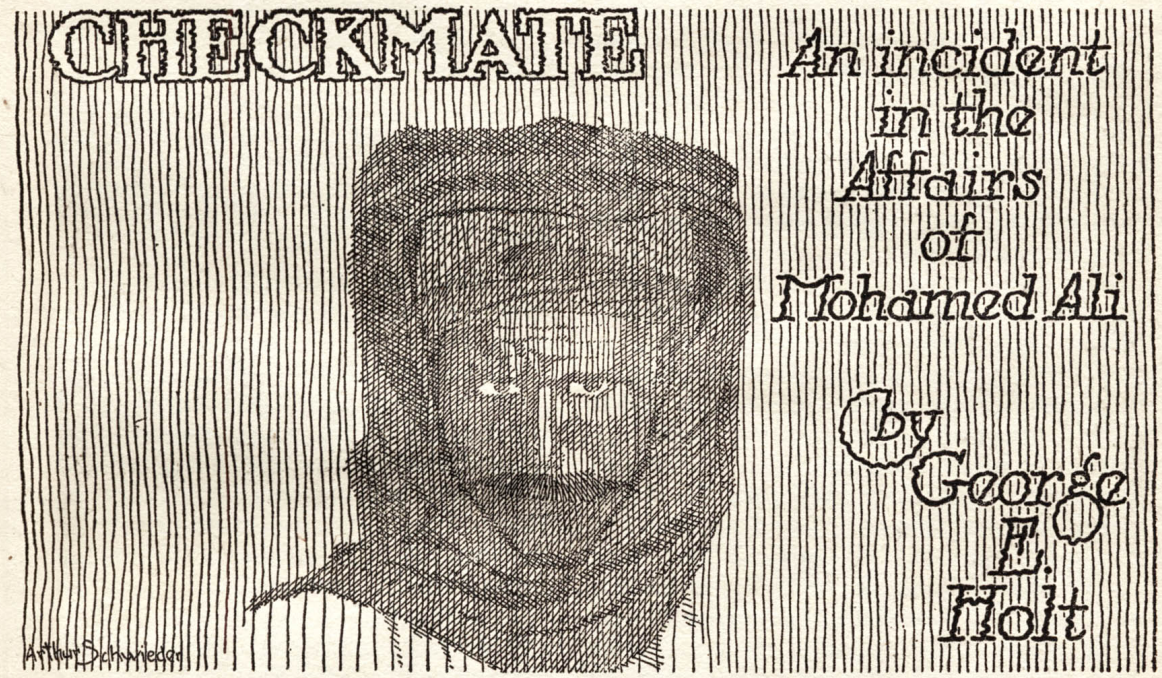
He paused, and his gaze swung back toward the fort, and his thoughts leaped to far-off Vermont and the dark-haired Walker girl. For several minutes he remained motionless and silent, his eyes beholding the green-forested, amiable hills of home, the placid propriety of the village streets and a dark-haired girl standing by an ancient gate—waiting. And when he finally turned back to announce his decision he found he was alone.

THE dust clouds followed the long wagon-train traveling under armed escort down the north fork of the Platte, the "Big Medicine Road" of the white men.

From a ridge Old Misery stood beside his horse and stared after it.

"Lawd! But I hated to let him go! Lawd! But I hated to send him home— Took care of me— Felt of my old head to see if I was sick— Lawd! But I feel sorter lonesome— Wonder if the mountains ever feel lonesome. Well, that's ended. That rock-medicine is —— strong— And there's that Tobin runt waiting for me— Said I bit him!"

THE END



Author of "Pro Patria," "Crops, Cradles and Consequences," etc.

"THUS your trip has been a vain one, I fear, Mohamed."

"Such things must be as Allah wills," replied Mohamed Ali quietly. "At least I have again seen a friend."

Mohamed Ali sat cross-legged upon a great cushion in a house in Tangier, and beside him squatted his good friend Hadj Drees. A low, octagonal, gaily-painted table stood before them. Upon it were little cups and a green pottery teapot into which Hadj Drees had just put boiling water, a handful of green tea, a ragged chunk of sugar and three sprigs of fresh mint.

At the risk of his head Mohamed Ali had left the safety of the Riffian Hills and

had made cautious way alone and by night, to the little iron-studded doorway of Hadj Drees' house in Tangier. Behind this door his friend had lain in the slumber of the just. From these slumbers, at the first gray hint of dawn, he had been roused by the resonant knock of the big iron ring upon the door, to open the portal, to stare sleepily for a moment at the smiling brown face, then to drag Mohamed Ali hurriedly inside and to bolt the door securely.

Now, Mohamed Ali had not traveled away from his hills for pleasure, but upon business of importance. When he had been *Basha* of Tangier, and the news had come from his ancient friend and patron, the Vizier Baghdadi, that his enemies were about to descend upon him, Mohamed Ali's departure from his office and residence and the city of Tangier alike had necessarily been hurried. As also had been that of his staff, including his first secretary, or scribe, in whose hands he had placed for safe-keeping, a package of valuable official documents. Many months had passed, but not until the preceding day had he received word that the scribe might be found in Tangier. Wherefore, being a man of prompt action, Mohamed Ali had immediately resolved upon seeking him, rather than risk divulging the location of his own haven.

But it was now past mid-day, and Mohamed Ali had learned that his mission had failed. His scribe was in jail in Tangier, and was so confined that communication with him, for the present at least, was out of the question. The reigning *basha* appeared to know that the scribe was worth guarding. Wherefore Mohamed Ali drank many little cupfuls of tea and awaited the coming of another night to cloak his return to the hills. There, he would give his full attention to the matter of securing the release of his scribe. The affair would take both thought and time, and Mohamed Ali felt a certain reticence in exposing his friend, Hadj Drees, more than was necessary to the danger caused by the presence of an outlaw in his house.

But even as Mohamed Ali reflected upon this matter, the iron ring on the door of Hadj Drees' house again voiced its summons. Staying a servant with up-lifted hand, Hadj Drees himself went to open the door: it seemed policy under the circumstances. He found a very small and very brown and very dirty urchin, whose single garment was a ragged gray *djellaba*, who repeated the name of Hadj Drees, presented him with a many-folded paper, and ran swiftly away, paying no attention to the callings of the master of the house. Hadj Drees closed and re-locked the door and returned to his seat upon the cushions beside Mohamed Ali. There he examined the paper, grunted expressively and handed it to the outlaw. Mohamed Ali's name was plainly inscribed upon the outside. In Hadj Drees' clear old eyes as he watched his friend, there was combined a flicker of amusement with a tinge of concern.

Mohamed Ali read his name twice aloud. The first time it came as an expression of astonishment; the second time it contained another note—neither of fear nor anger nor disgust, but a little of all three emotions. Then with strong brown fingers he unfolded the paper and his eyes raced through the few lines of Arabic script. The sanded ink was scarcely dry.

"Humph!" said Mohamed Ali then. "Humph! Again *djinnoon!* I read:

"In the name of Allah the Merciful, from the Master of the *Djinnoon* to Mohamed Ali, Vizier-to-be, greetings: If Mohamed Ali would learn of a certain French affair with which his name is to be unfavorably connected he will do well to be at the shrine of Mulai Yacoub at sunset."

"Thus it says, friend Drees, and no more. And yet that little would seem to be enough!"

"Who—and how——"

"And why, also," Mohamed Ali interrupted him. "You know this man who calls himself the Master of the *Djinnoon?*"

"I have heard tales, that is all," replied Hadj Drees. "Like all magicians he has the veneration, I believe, of the unthinking Moors—and entertains, for a consideration, the foreigners."

"Nevertheless," said Mohamed Ali, "I am inclined to think that he is more than he appears to be. The fact that he knew I was here would seem to confirm that belief. Besides which—you remember Hadj Hosein?"

"He who was found dead one morning with no mark upon him, in the street of the mosque? *Aiwa*, I remember."

"I came to Tangier at that time disguised as a beggar, to secure by whatever means offered, a certain letter which was in the hands of Hadj Hosein. It was at night. A

voice whispered my name from the shadows in the street. I found the source of the whisper, and to make matters clear, went with the whisperer to his house. There I fought against the little lightnings that play in the eyes of this black magician who calls himself Master of the *Djinnoon*, and witnessed strange matters.

"Hadj Hosein was one time known as Hadj Larbi ben-Susa and lived in Marraksh. There he wronged the sister of this man who now claims kingship over spirits good and evil. My purpose—my desire to secure this letter from Hadj Hosein—was known to the black. Also other matters which need not be mentioned. To his house came Hadj Hosein, and the black claimed that his spirits had brought him. However that may be, he came, and became as a witless one beneath the eyes of the Master of the *Djinnoon*, gave him the letter I sought, and at command, went forth into the night—to find shrieking death in the deep shadow where the black had told him he would find it."

"*Ai, ai, ai,*" Hadj Drees' eyes stared into those of Mohamed Ali.

"As Allah is my witness." So answered the outlaw to the look of amazement and question. "Wherefore——"

"Wherefore at least this message must not be ignored."

"Besides which," went on Mohamed Ali, "while I do not admit his claims with respect to the *djinnoon*, I think that he may be a person of considerably more importance than a black magician. He deals with matters, as you observe, which are scarcely within the province of a master of tricks. Wherefore—as I have no desire for these scurvy Frenchmen to misuse the name of Mohamed Ali, in which I have some pride—I shall see what occurs at the shrine of Mulai Yacoub at sunset.

"But there is also another side to this matter. I do not think—I do not think that it is entirely out of consideration for Mohamed Ali that the Master of the *Djinnoon* thus sends me warning. On the contrary, I suspect that it is an offer to let me play a part in some game of his own. If that game be against the foreigner, the part may be worth the playing. However, my scribe lies in the Tangier *casbah* and I desire his release. Let us, therefore—Have you pen and paper?—let us send an acknowledgement of this message to the black magician—to be delivered when I am on my way to the shrine of Mulai Yacoub."

"You do not fear a trap, Mohamed Ali?" asked Hadj Drees. "You do not fear what you may find at the shrine at sunset?"

He offered paper and ink and bamboo pen as he spoke.

"Humph!" said Mohamed Ali, preparing to write. "Humph! I always fear a trap—or at least I consider the possibility of a trap having been set. Thus I write:

"From Mohamed Ali to the Master of the *Djinnoon:* Those who play with the name of Mohamed Ali do so at their own risk. My former scribe, Mamun el-Merwani, is a prisoner in the *casbah* of Tangier. He could be of service to me were he at liberty. And he who secured his liberty would have the gratitude of Mohamed Ali."

He sanded the ink, folded the paper and addressed it to the Master of the *Djinnoon.*

"It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the possible and the probable," he said, and his friend nodded slow understanding.

THE shrine of Mulai Yacoub is a small white cube topped by an eight-sided dome, and it stands in a little olive grove at the end of a path which runs away from the Tetwan road at a point perhaps eight miles from Tangier. Although so near the city, it is beyond the Wad-el-Halk, the tidal river which cuts into the crescent of the bay about at its middle, beyond the line of gray-brown stony hills which here march down to the water's edge—beyond the watchful eye of that Western twentieth century Baghdad, Tangier.

It is one of a thousand little shrines of holy men scattered about the country, and like most of them, is visited infrequently save by people living in the immediate vicinity—country wives who wish sons, country girls who wish husbands, country men who wish favors from Allah for crops or cattle. And the ancient custodian of this shrine, a bent gray-bearded man, was the cousin of Mohamed Ali's father.

An hour before sunset a hooded figure in a brown *djellaba* shuffled along the path to the shrine. The hood of his *djellaba* was drawn low over his face, and his neck and chin were buried in a voluminous bandage, obviously a turban-cloth. The traveler knocked thrice upon the door of

the shrine and entered without waiting for a reply to his summons. The old custodian rose from a pallet of straw in surprize—a surprize which, when the visitor threw back his hood, changed to curiosity, and a little fear.

Mohammed Ali explained his desires in fifty swift words, and with a shrug and a mutter of understanding, the ancient returned to his couch. Mohamed Ali, knowing that he must wait for darkness, made himself comfortable, watching the little square of sunlight from the solitary, tiny window, climbing up the eastern wall of the shrine.

At last it came to rest, paused and began to fade. The interior of the little shrine waxed gray. The custodian slept with the easy sleep of the aged. Mohamed Ali rose and took position at the little window. The shadows deepened quickly and spread like blots of ink from the hillsides to the valley.

Soon his vigil was rewarded. His keen ears heard the patter of a horse's hoofs upon the road. Some one was approaching from the direction of Tetwan. A horseman rode past the shrine and perhaps a hundred paces further. There Mohamed Ali heard the noises which announce a rider's dismounting. Scarcely had this occurred when it was repeated by one who came from the west, from the direction of Tangier. And shortly after the last comer had passed the shrine, Mohamed Ali followed cautiously in the darkness. And in the darkness, behind a gnarled olive tree, not ten feet from the riders, he heard most interesting affairs discussed.

Half an hour later one of the riders was pounding the road back to Tangier, and the other was going with equal speed towards Tetwan. Mohamed Ali sought his horse where he had hidden it and set out for his haven in the mountains. There he summoned twenty of his followers and addressed them at length.

Now there is no more peaceful village in Anghera than a certain little settlement which calls itself El-Menar. It sits on a quiet hill-top across the bay from Tangier, and its people are children. It was therefore a matter which should have caused surprize, when, on the following day there began to arrive within its walls of cactus and prickly-pear, brown men who carried beneath their brown *djellabas* high-powered rifles of which the blue finish had not yet become worn. By ones and twos they came, greeted the head-man of the village, and were promptly led by him into a certain house wherein sat Mohamed Ali. By one and two they came and disappeared into the house. Sunset saw a score arrived.

But aside from a little extra activity in the cooking-quarters of the women, where many big bowls of *kesk'soo* were being prepared, there was nothing to indicate that anything unusual was in progress. And even after the *kesk'soo* bowls had been scraped clean by brown fingers, and Mohamed Ali had personally posted his men where he desired them to be, there was no mark upon the village save that of the tranquillity of night.

Wherefore Kaid Mahalli, head-man of a settlement of ill-repute which lay some ten miles to the east, leading a score of his ruffians quietly up the path to the village of El-Menar, smiled contentedly to himself at the mental vision of what that village would look like very shortly. The head-man had a good imagination—a fact that was not to be a source of unqualified pleasure to him a little later. Had he been more acute, he might have noted the absence of the inevitable village dogs which should have given warning of his approach. He reached the top of the hill and gathered his men about him in the little open space inside the cactus walls—gathered them for a pounce upon the tranquil village which he had been paid to destroy. A few yellow lights marked doors or windows of contented thatch-roofed houses—fuel awaiting the torch—and the stars gave light enough to make black shadows all about.

"Ready then," said Kaid Mahalli, and started forward.

Three steps he took. Then, from the shadows emerged a circle of men. Twenty rifles covered Kaid Mahalli and his followers. And into the belt of the kaid himself, the muzzle of a pistol was being pushed by a big man whose face was not visible, but whose chuckles were audible enough. Beginning with the head-man, the night visitors passed the big man one by one, leaving their rifles at his feet, and were received by a reception-committee waiting just beyond. And as the last one dropped his gun, the first one was already bound and gagged and lying in one of the

little thatch-roofed houses where a yellow light burned.

This matter having been attended to, Mohamed Ali gathered his men together and led them down the path to the foot of the hill, where behind great boulders they squatted like shadows. Suddenly from the village there came the noise of shots and shouts, and then red and yellow flames flared up. Mohamed Ali, squatting behind a rock, pistol in hand, chuckled again. It is always pleasing for a maker of plays to see the products of his imagination become realized upon the stage.

"That," observed Mohamed Ali to himself, "should bring them speedily."

And on the tail of his words came a sound from the west—the sound of military brogans marching over a rocky road, and the sharper note of a horse's hoofs. The sound grew louder and more variegated—the creak of leather, the click of metal against metal, the subdued coughing of men. Then, into the defile guarded by Mohamed Ali and his twenty rifles, rode a French-Algerian police officer, followed by a dozen native police. A hand reached up suddenly and dragged the officer from his horse into the arms of Mohamed Ali, and in unpleasant contact with the muzzle of Mohamed Ali's pistol. At the same moment the officer's men each looking into the small end of a rifle, realized that working for the French had its disadvantages. They were quick to understand, to drop their guns and to permit their pistols to be taken from their holsters without opposition. And shortly thereafter they also, bound and gagged, lay helpless in a little thatch-roofed hut in the village above. Mohamed Ali, the fowler, had filled his nets to overflowing.

BUT in order that the affair might have its proper fruition—in order to teach that Mohamed Ali's name should not be connected with the political outrages of the French—Mohamed Ali still had work to do. And the first of his steps was to send swiftly to Tangier one of his own men clothed in the distinctive yellow trousers, red coat and crimson fez of the native French police. Alarbi, his name was, and to the French Minister in Tangier Alarbi carried the simple message that all was as had been planned.

Now this message, which was very satisfactory to the French Minister, did not mean that in a little thatch-roofed cottage in El-Menar twenty ruffians headed by Kaid Mahalli lay bound and gagged, nor that a French-Algerian police officer with his twelve men lay in the same condition in a similar hut—because that had not been the plan at all. No; to His Excellency, *Monsieur le Ministre*, the message brought by Alarbi meant this: Kaid Mahalli and his followers, for a proper consideration, had attacked the village of El-Menar, set the torch to its thatched roofs, killed a few of its inhabitants, and driven off its stock—thus proving to the entire diplomatic world that so long as Mohamed Ali was at liberty, such things would happen; and also evidencing to this same world the sultan's inability to preserve order in the country. It would be made the basis of very striking publicity.

Furthermore, the message meant to His Excellency that a certain French-Algerian Lieutenant of Police, with his men, had fortunately been in the vicinity, heard the shots, witnessed the conflagration, and had speedily gone to the succor of the outraged village and had driven away Mohamed Ali and his gang of outlaws. This, in turn, would be the best of evidence as to the efficiency of the French police; it would emphasize the necessity—and this was the guts of the matter—for the establishment of a strong police or military barracks in Anghera, for under a certain provision of the Act of Algeciras the French had the duty of maintaining order in Morocco.

These are the important things which the simple message of Alarbi meant to His Excellency, the French Minister. Wherefore, his first official act on the following day, was to call upon the old and wise *naib*, the Sultan's representative in Tangier, Sid Mohamed Torres, a blue-veined, waxen-faced, white-bearded old aristocrat whose blue eyes for twenty years had watched foreign intrigue for possession of his native land.

"Wherefore," concluded the French Minister, after having stated the facts as he believed them to be, "Wherefore, Sid Mohamed, it is manifestly obvious that a French military barracks be established in Anghera immediately."

There was no twinkle, no hint of greater wisdom, no suspicion of guile in the watery,

ocean-blue eyes of the Sultan's representative. He held up a gentle hand, white and indigo-veined, and in that motion was gathered the essence of the slow-moving East.

"First, Your Excellency," he said, "I think it would be wise for us to observe the situation in person. We must have order; yes, you are quite right. We must have order. It will not do at all to permit such things to take place. Wherefore—I am an old man, but the road is not long. Let us ride to El-Menar and see with our own eyes that which has taken place."

There was no reason for the French Minister to oppose this. On the contrary, he welcomed the suggestion: It gave him an opportunity to demonstrate to the *naib* just what terrible things would continue to happen unless the hand of France was called upon for aid.

Thus the mid-day sun saw the venerable Sid Mohamed Torres and His Excellency, the French Minister, attended only by two riders, reining in their animals on the hill-top where lay the settlement of El-Menar. The Sultan's representative looked with calm blue eyes at a tranquil village. No blackened ruins, no scene of desolation and death lay before them—only a peaceful thatch-roofed village with children playing about the doorways, chickens scratching industriously for what they might encounter, a cow taking its lazy way along a path, and a group of men smoking lazily around an old village patriarch whose gnarled fingers wove palmetto leaves into rope.

Now the blue eyes of Sid Mohamed Torres sought the face of the French Minister and found it frowning, set and a little green. Without comment the old man urged his white mule onward and rode slowly through the village, followed by the French envoy. The smoking men rose quickly to greet the *naib*—to kiss his flowing white *k'sa*, and to stand about bashfully after they had done so.

"All is tranquil here."

It was a statement rather than a question, from the *naib*.

"As always, Sidi; as always." Three or four voices hastened to reply. "Nothing ever takes place here, Sidi—except a birth or a death."

"A calf was born yesterday, O Sidi."

It was the cracked voice of the old rope-maker, whose ancient fingers still twisted at his palmetto leaves. His statement was greeted with a roar of laughter from the other men.

"There has been no—no trouble?" asked the *naib*.

"No, Sidi. Trouble? What sort of trouble?"

"Mustapha Shawi's wife—" It was the voice of the old rope-maker again—"Mustapha Shawi's wife yesterday beat him with a stick."

His ancient cackle found no response: Mustapha Shawi was one of those who stood about the *naib*.

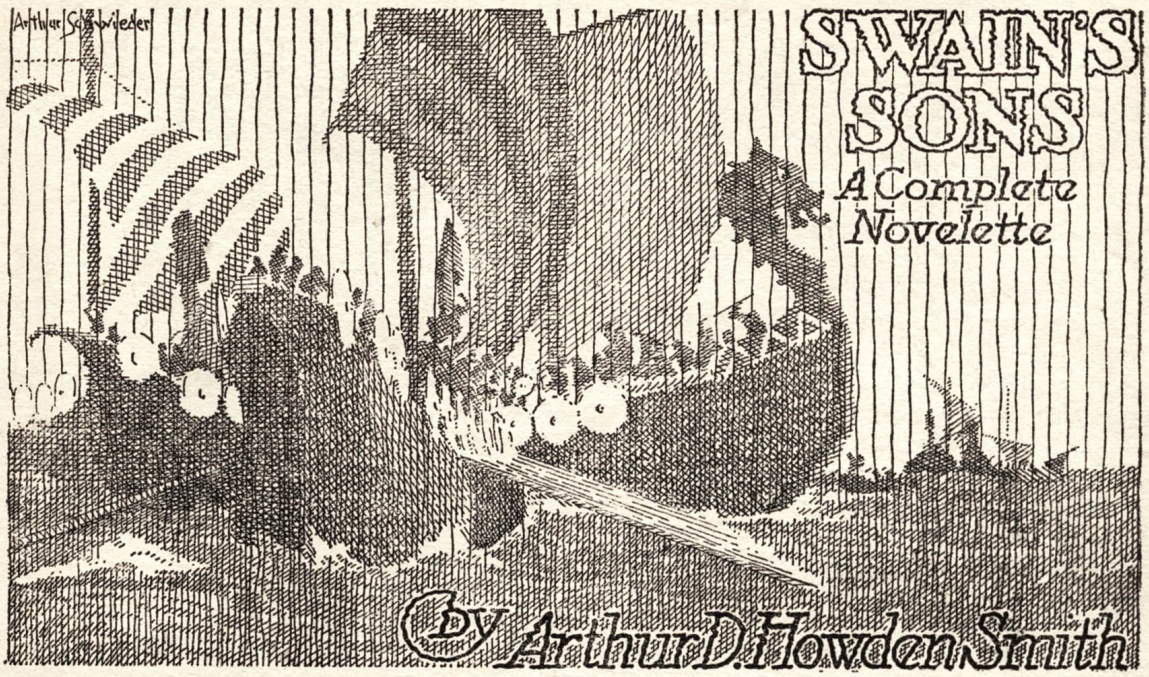
"Let us go." The French Minister's voice had lost its diplomatic tone; it was almost a growl. "I have been—misinformed."

"So it would seem, Your Excellency; so it would seem."

The *naib's* voice was gentle, inexpressive. He turned his mule slowly and followed the French Minister. But after his mount had taken half a dozen steps he turned and looked back. Winking is unknown in Morocco—but they know how to express the same idea by means of a smile.

THE French Minister was never fully satisfied concerning this matter. His agents could never again find Kaid Mahalli, probably for the very good reason that what was left of the worthy Kaid was protected from dogs and jackals by a little cairn of stones among the Anghera Hills. Those who accompanied the kaid no longer lived in his village, and the village folk said that they had gone as one man to a very distant settlement in the south. That, it is true, had been their instructions from Mohamed Ali.

And finally, the French-Algerian police officer with his handful of men, were found wandering among the hills fifty miles away. They wore no clothes when they were found, and, as they were fetched to Tangier in almost the same condition, they talked very little about their experiences. That little entirely concerned their having been set upon in the mountains by a great gang of outlaws, who robbed them, stripped them, and turned them loose to shift as best they might. They did not even mention the name of Mohamed Ali, or the village of El-Menar.



Author of "Swain's Burning," "Swain's Vengeance," etc.

DOWN on the strand the mallets of the shipmen beat a steady tune, and Swain Olaf's son tarried by the skalli door to watch the little black dots swarming about the bare sides of *Deathbringer* and his brother Gunni's dragon *Seabroth*. Already the winter sheds had been removed and the riggers were at work on the tall masts, while other men calked the bottom planks and spread paint where it was necessary.

To Swain, watching, came his mother, Asleif, a stately figure, such a woman as must have mothered warriors, but in her eyes the brooding shadow product of month-long vigils and the bearing of stark sorrows with dry eyes. There was that in her face this morning, too, which in another might have passed for fear—a dullness of foreboding.

"Why must you go viking-faring this year, Swain?" she asked. "We have more goods and lands than we have use for. In all the Orkneys only the Jarl is richer than we."

Swain laughed.

"Ask me why the whaups fly northward, mother. The viking-fever kindles in our blood. There is not a man on Gairsey does not hunger for oar rattle and the grip of a thirsty sword. No, no, the Spring planting is done; the fields lie fallow. What should we do if we bided idly at home?"

She gave him a curious glance.

"Take a maid to wife, perhaps."

Swain laughed again.

"A wife? What should I do with a wife? Women are—I'll say no more, for you are woman. But saving you I know none I'd give bower-room to."

"Nonetheless you should wed, Swain," persisted his mother. "Here are you and Gunni both growing out of your youth, always wildly aventuring, and if harm befalls you both our stock is ended."

"Humph!" grunted Swain, his eyes on the shapely longships below the skalli hill. "Let Gunni do it."

"No," returned Asleif. "Well you know Gunni will follow your lead, and none other. Also, it is for you, the elder, to provide an heir for our lands. It is not fitting that a family such as ours should end in a single ill-fought struggle."

Swain shook his head, frowning.

"You forget I still have a vengeance to achieve," he said.

"Say, rather, I remember that vengeance," Asleif retorted swiftly. "It is true that of the slayers of your father and your brother Valthiof you have slain Frakork, the witch, but Frakork's grandson, Olvir Rosta, escaped you, and who knows

but he may surprize you in your sleep or when you lie in some friendly haven?"

"That is the reason why I want no wife to hamper my thoughts," rejoined Swain. "When I have found Olvir I will talk to you of this again."

"But if Olvir finds you first?"

"He will not," Swain promised her grimly.

"Or Gunni?"

"You are not yourself, mother," he answered. "Forget this black thought that haunts you. If Frakork lived I might think she had lain a spell upon you. Be at your ease. Olvir has fled so far from my wrath that I have not heard trace of him since he was in Iceland. That is why I am off this morning to seek Jarl Rognvald and ask him what aid he will lend me in this cruise."

Asleif sighed.

"You were never one to take another's counsel, Swain," she said. "But there is little I have ever asked of you, nor have I hung upon your shield-arm in time of danger."

Swain turned to her with a great light blazing in his fierce blue eyes. Tall as she was, he was a head taller, and his mighty shoulders and stalwart limbs had made him famous for strength through all the countries of the North, so that kings spoke of his exploits at the ale-drinking and the common men called a sudden death "a Swain's bane."

"If I might find a woman like you, I would take her today; but well I know your like is not to be found in any land. Yet this I will say, for love of you: When the time comes I will wed, love or no love, so that your fears may be satisfied."

With this he left her, and went down to the shore, and boarded a small sailing-boat, in which he crossed the narrow waters of the Efjasund to the mainland of Hrossey. Hrossey he crossed by way of Rennadale and Steinsness to Jarl Rognvald's steading at Orphir. He walked into the skalli at candle-lighting, and the Jarl hailed him from the high table in the hall. Jarl Rognvald had much love for Swain, although in times past he had felt the weight of his wrath.

"You are come in a good hour, Swain," he greeted him, with twinkling eyes. "I have been expecting you ever since the southland traders began to sail in. It is in my mind that you are late astir this year."

"I never sail seaward in any year, Lord Jarl, until the Spring planting is done," returned Swain. "Viking plunder is not food."

"Therein you show good sense," approved the Jarl. "I wish that you were as well-advised in other ways."

"For what do you find fault with me, Lord Jarl?" inquired Swain.

"For your failure to take account of the future.

"You are past your green youth, yet you have never gotten sons to protect your lands after you are gone. That is foolish, Swain. You are the richest man without title in the North; but if you and your brother Gunni die your property will be divided among the most powerful bidders for it."

"I have no traffic with women," answered Swain sourly.

"They have their uses," observed the Jarl.

"Women," growled Swain, "are like oar-foam. They are a spatter of words in your face."

Jarl Rognvald laughed hugely.

"The truth of that I will not deny," he admitted; "yet they appear to be necessary in this world. However, it is for you to order your own life. What can I do for you?"

"As you have guessed without difficulty, Lord Jarl," answered Swain, "I am ready to go viking-faring. Are you of a mind to lend me your aid in this cruise, as of yore?"

Before the Jarl could reply his young cousin Jarl Harald, who shared his rule with him, burst into the hall, dragging a man after him.

"Ho, Swain, so you are here!" cried Harald. "That is well, for here is one who has come far to seek you, and he brings great news."

This Jarl Harald was a youth in the beginning of manhood, dark and of middle height. He had a considerable admiration for Swain, to whom, indeed, he owed his estate in the Islands, for Swain had brought him to Orphir as a child and secured for him from Jarl Rognvald a half of the jarldom, because, as Swain said, "one Jarl rules with might; two Jarls rule with justice."

The man with Jarl Harald was a bandy-legged fellow, very swarthy in the face,

and he had a cast in one eye; but his clothing and armor proclaimed him a chief. He bowed low to Jarl Rognvald, and addressed himself to Swain, although it was difficult always to be sure which way he was looking, on account of his cast eye.

"I see that my luck has changed," he said, "for I have found Swain Olaf's son easier than I expected to."

"All men do not count themselves lucky to meet Swain Olaf's son," returned Swain, frowning. "Who are you?"

And the stranger answered freely enough—

"My name is Holdbodi, and I hold lands in Liodhus[1] from the King of the Sudreyar."[2]

Swain's face cleared.

"That is better. I have heard men speak of you, Holdbodi. What is it you wish of me?"

"Men have said that you were concerned with one Olvir Rosta, grandson of Frakork, the witch," replied Holdbodi.

"I am. I am concerned to hew his head from his neck."

"Then it may be I can be of some assistance to you."

Swain leaped up from the high table and brought the full scowling menace of his bearded face to bear upon the oblique eyes of the Sudreyarman.

"You waste time chattering," he rasped. "Say your say, and have done."

Holdbodi nodded, and a close watcher might have fancied there was a crafty light in his slewed right eye.

"I will, I will," he promised. "There are always formalities to be observed in approaching famous men. The plain truth of the matter is that Olvir Rosta has burned my steading——"

"Is Olvir in these parts?" shouted Swain.

"Why, I have just said——"

"You have said too much—or not enough!"

Swain vaulted the table-top, and landed catlike beside the stranger.

"Speak quickly! Or——"

"He *was* in Liodhus," protested Holdbodi. "Where he is now I cannot say, except that his galleys pointed south."

"Give the stranger an opportunity to find his words, Swain," advised Jarl Rognvald. "Let him tell his tale in his own fashion."

[1] Lewis. [2] Hebrides.

"I thank you, Lord Jarl," remarked the Sudreyarman. "All men say you are fair-spoken——"

"So am not I," interrupted Swain sourly. "Your tongue runs all around the skalli. If you would share my friendship, you will speak with judgment."

Holdbodi bowed to him even lower than he had to the Jarl.

"Indeed, if you will not assist me, Swain, I am in despair of securing my just vengeance——"

Again Swain's face cleared.

"So you seek vengeance upon Olvir, Holdbodi? That is well. But be sure to remember that no hand but mine is to give him his death-blow."

"I have no desire to match blades personally with Olvir," observed Holdbodi drily.

"Then we shall agree excellently," said Swain. "Tell us your story. I am surprized by what you say, for I hunted all the northern seas last Autumn for a trace of Olvir, without uncovering a single clue."

"That is not strange," answered the Sudreyarman. "From what his men let drop in Liodhus he has spent recent years in Iceland and Greenland acquiring wealth with which to outfit two longships and secure crews for them. He sailed south from Iceland with the clearing of the floes, and Liodhus was the first land he struck. I escaped from him with difficulty, borrowed a longship from my brother and came east to ask your assistance, for I am not strong enough alone to go against him. That is my story, Swain."

"You'll take me, Swain!" struck in young Jarl Harald. "You have promised me these past two Winters. You must take me, Swain! Where should I find a better opportunity to become a warrior than upon such an expedition?"

"It is an unusually good opportunity to lose your head," responded Swain. "Olvir is a skilled warrior, and— You say he has two longships with him, Holdbodi?"

"He had when he came to Liodhus," answered the Sudreyarman; "but men said he was for heading southward to Man and the west coast of Bretland,[1] and there is not knowing how many masterless men and rovers he may win there to his standard."

[1] Britain.

"Holdbodi says truly," counseled Jarl Rognvald. "Depend upon it, Swain, Olvir will wax strong this Spring. Let others take toll of him first. Then do you come at him after his strength begins to wane."

Swain glowered.

"I was never a man to ask shame for my portion," he growled. "Let Olvir have a chance to say that he was in these waters, and I did not give him battle! Rather would I be impaled alive upon the point of his spear. I sail so soon as my ships are *boun.*"[1]

"And I go with you, Swain!" clamored young Jarl Harald. "You will not be sorry for it. I can strike as rare a blow as old Gutorm who captains Rognvald's housecarls."

There was a general burst of laughter.

"It is for you to ask Jarl Rognvald, Harald," Swain pointed out.

"No, no," answered Rognvald. "I will not have the responsibility cast upon me, Swain. If the boy was killed, my enemies—and every man has enemies, as you know—would say that I had sent him off to be rid of him."

"That is true," admitted Swain. "And I will take it upon myself, Lord Jarl, to advise you to permit young Jarl Harald to sail with me, in order that he may become a warrior the Orkneyfolk will be proud of."

"In that case he shall go," replied Jarl Rognvald; "and as it is my desire that you shall be able to make a proud showing and overcome Olvir even though he gains allies, I will lend you two longships with full crews on the usual understanding that a fair proportion of your booty is to be awarded to me and to my men."

Swain hammered his fist upon the table.

"Ho, Lord Jarl, that is generous!"

And he swung around upon Holdbodi.

"There is a Jarl for you," he continued. "If there were many such, fellows like Olvir would soon be ravens' food."

Jarl Rognvald clapped his hands for the servingmen.

"It is a pleasure to assist you, Swain," he said; "and now we will eat and drink ale together."

"No," returned Swain hastily. "Let Holdbodi stay if he chooses, but I must be off to Gairsey to hasten my ship-men in *bouning* our dragons. We shall be at Orphir three days hence, Lord Jarl, and with your permission will sail the day following."

Jarl Rognvald smiled at Holdbodi.

"There was never a man for hurrying like Swain," he observed. "When he has a notion in his head there is no room for anything else. Well, well, we will get along without him as well as we can."

"And I will give orders to have the sheds removed from your longships, Rognvald," offered young Jarl Harald. "We must not be behind Swain here at Orphir."

Whereat they all laughed anew, and Swain and Harald strode out of the skalli into the darkness of the early night. There was a raw wind blowing out of the North, and young Harald shuddered.

"That is a cold wind," he muttered.

"It is an ill wind," answered Swain. "I smell death in it."

II

THE wind out of the North was still tearing the wave-crests of the Pentland Firth when Swain's fleet sailed from Orphir. He had five longships and all of four hundred men, his own great dragon *Deathbringer*, pulling thirty oars a side; Gunni's dragon *Seabroth*, of twenty oars; Jarl Rognvald's two longships, each of twenty oars; and Holdbodi's dingy craft, which pulled eighteen oars and carried a crew of sixty or seventy hairy, skin-clad flat-faced Sudreyarmen, who talked with a whistling intonation in high, excited voices and were better stone-slingers and knife-fighters than swordsmen. Chancey folk they were called in the North. Jarl Rognvald drew Swain aside upon Orphir strand, the while Bishop William was blessing the longships and the crews were embarking.

"I say nothing against this Holdbodi, Swain," remarked the Jarl. "He seems a fair cup-fellow and friendly in his views. But all folk are agreed that the Sudreyarmen are treacherous. Be on your guard."

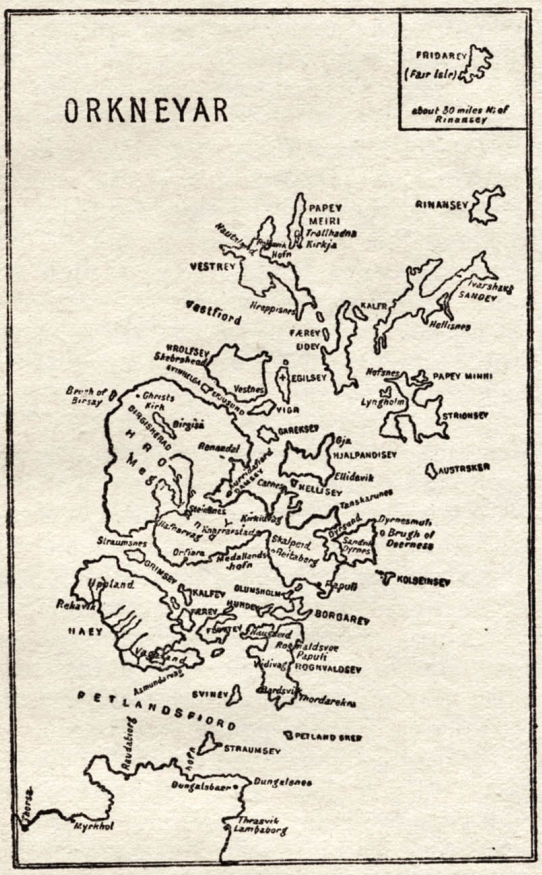
Swain laughed in his golden-red beard.

"What harm could he wreak if he sought to?" he demanded. "No, Lord Jarl, the man who is outnumbered five to one is he you may rely upon to the death—because he dies if he seeks to betray."

"That is all very well," returned the Jarl. "Take my counsel or leave it, but sooner or later you will find it worth while."

[1] Equipped, ready loaded.

So they sailed in the teeth of the gale, with the foam spurting through the oar-holes and the waves breaking over the laboring dragons' heads; but after they had rounded the point of Scotland at Hvart,[1] they entered the waters of Scotland's Firth,[2] with the wind behind them, and



the seas moderated somewhat. They came to Liodhus with fair weather, and bespoke the islands there for news of Olvir. People answered them with grief-stricken faces.

"It is little trouble you will be having in following *him*," they said. "His path is ruddy with blood and soiled by fire wherever he has been."

Swain held on to the south, touching at Nord Ivist[3] for further news. From here the trail of Olvir's slayings and burnings led them east across the Firth to Skidh,[4] and then southward again to Tyrvist[5] and Il[6]. But however hard the crews rowed, however steadily the wind blew, they could not catch up with Olvir.

[1] Cape Wrath. [2] North Minch. [3] North Uist. [4] Sky. [5] Tyree. [6] Islay. [7] Ulster.

From Il he had crossed the tossing waters of the open ocean to Uladstir[7], where Swain's company found a charred village on the shores of Ulfresksfiord. And all the way south on the Irish coast villages were smoking ruins, but not until they had penetrated the waters of Irlands Haf[1] did they come close enough to Olvir to feel that they were at last a menace to him.

This was on the day they sighted the cliffs of Man. A small sailboat danced out to meet them, and from it a single bluff, leather-faced man in rusty mail climbed to *Deathbringer's* deck.

"I am called Erik Skallagrim's son," he announced shortly, unawed by the armed men around him. "By any chance, is Swain Olaf's son among you?"

Swain bent a scowling glance upon him.

"I am Swain. What is that to you?"

"Much," rejoined the other laconically. "I am come on behalf of the Lady Ingrid, who is Queen in Man since her husband's death. Olvir Rosta slew him in battle two weeks since, and fled to Bretland with his following after word reached him that you had been seen in Ulfresksfiord and were sailing south."

"Where is Olvir gone?" demanded Swain.

"To Bretland, I said, Swain."

"Yes, but——"

"Now, be reasonable," pleaded the leather-faced little man. "It is a great country, Bretland. But if you will beach your longships and lodge with us a while at Stikleborg, the Lady Ingrid will send out scouts to endeavor to learn where Olvir has gone. He will not go far because he has joined forces with Hrodbjart,[2] who is a Bretlander who lives outside the law on his own account, and they plan to ravage all this part of the world between them and bring it under their sway."

"Humph," said Swain. "What sort of woman is this Lady Ingrid? Has she means?"

"She has Man, which is a very rich island," answered Erik.

"Is she old?"

Erik grinned.

"She is commonly said to be beautiful, but since all men do not agree as to beauty I prefer to leave you to judge for yourself."

Swain spat overside.

"Bah! I detest all women, but most of

[1] Irish Sea. [2] Robert.

all these soft-handed, long-haired, crooning creatures!"

"She is no fresh bower-maiden," rejoined Erik, slyly amused. "Come and see her. She bids you ashore, by me, and wishes to have you and your people for her guests so long as you will tarry."

"We will tarry as long as suits us," rasped Swain; "but not to see her. I came here to find Olvir Rosta. When I get news of whither he is gone, I shall be off after him."

"No one will seek to stop you," said Erik. "Let viking hew viking, the Manfolk say."

"Why should you speak for them?"

"I am Ingrid's steward."

"Can you fight as well as wag your tongue, Erik?"

"I was Iceland born."

Swain smiled at the little man, taken, despite himself, by Erik's bantering swagger.

"We will make trial of you," he said. "You shall be in the front of the raven-feeders when our bows crash through Olvir's oar-banks. Meantime my people are bench-weary, and we will go ashore and bid this Lady Ingrid show what she will do to aid us in slaying her husband's slayer."

"She will marry you," said Erik assuredly.

Swain stared at him.

"Marry me? Who do you think you are talking to, manling? Marry me? I am Swain Olaf's son. The woman— You are bewitched! As for her—let her cast but a glance, and I'll flog her from her own hall with my sword blade."

Swain's housecarls roared with approving laughter

The little Icelander pursed his lips.

"If it isn't you, it will be somebody else," he said. "She has rich lands."

He lingered on the last words, but Swain did not hear him, having turned impatiently to shout his orders to the longship next astern.

III

THERE was a sheltered cove on the shore under Stikleborg, and Swain ordered his captains to let the longships ride here the while they went up to the skalli of the lady of the islands—who, after the manner in those parts, was queen in Man—and made trial of her hospitality. But because he was cautious and trusted no strangers he left one-half the ships' companies on board.

"It is true we have this Icelander Erik for hostage," he growled as he stood in the midst of his vikings on the wet beach, "and if we come near Ingrid we can hold her, too. But I am of no mind to present the Manfolk with a viking fleet for the taking."

"You are a forehanded man," commented Erik, who was standing by, in his dry way; "but you concern yourself to no purpose."

"Touching this Lady Ingrid," spoke up Holdbodi, moistening his lips with a large tongue; "if she be in the mood for marriage, it might be wise for us to humor her. Here are broad lands to be warded and much wealth to be secured."

"We are not a bridal party," reproved Swain harshly. "We are the executors of vengeance."

"Oh, yes, vengeance comes first," Holdbodi agreed. "Nevertheless, if a marriage was to aid the vengeance——"

"We will take what we need," Swain cut him short.

"So will we," Gunni affirmed after him.

"Yes, yes," muttered the other chiefs.

"Enough of talking," said Swain. "Loose your swords, and we will climb to the skalli. Erik, you guide us, and my spear splits your neck if there is sign of treachery."

"It is you who waste words," snapped Erik. "Do I look like one who would invite a spear in my back?"

So they climbed the foreshore to the upland, and came to Stikleborg, which had been the strong place of Ingrid's husband and in which she now dwelt. It was a steading richer even than Jarl Rognvald's at Orphir. Farms and dairies surrounded the borg, itself, which was a palisaded wall atop of a bank of earth, with a wide, dry ditch, and inside this protection the skalli and its necessary outbuildings. Many of the Manfolk lined the way, and watched with awed faces the two hundred strapping fellows who followed Swain in their mail. The darkness had settled as they reached the borg entrance, and torchbearers came out to meet them, the flames flickering on steel caps and big raven-shields and long, yellow mustaches.

Swain strode along with his chin in air, his fierce eyes boring at the half-seen figures in his path. In front of him

walked Erik. At his back walked Gunni, Holdbodi and young Jarl Harald, quivering with interest in his first venture, and Thorar Asgrim's son and Leif Anakol's son, the captains of Jarl Rognvald's two longships.

They tramped over a bridge of planks across the ditch, and passed the earthen walls into a wide open space, aglow with fires, where oxen were roasting slowly and huge kegs of ale stood open for the horn. Directly in their path stood a single figure, a woman, at sight of whom Swain's lips curled and his clutch tightened upon the haft of the spear that was close to Erik's back. She took a single step forward, as the column approached, a step sufficient to bring her into the full glare of one of the fires; and Swain owned, against his will, that she was handsome.

A tall, strapping wench, Irish by her gray eyes and the long black hair that had a glint of blue in it in the uncertain light. Her features were marred by a kind of wilful arrogance; her full lips parted in a constant pout. Around her she had wrapped a long, black cloak, which she held fast over her breast.

"Are these the brave strangers who will avenge my murdered husband, Erik?" she demanded in resonant tones.

"This is Swain Olaf's son, of whom you have heard, lady," replied Erik.

The woman advanced another step and flung out both her arms in a theatrical gesture of appeal.

"I am a widow—alone and wronged, Swain!" she cried. "Will you help me? Whatever payment you ask, shall be yours."

Swain came to a halt, and glowered at her.

"Why should I help you?" he countered.

"I am rich. I can pay you."

"If I want your property, I can take it," returned Swain.

She looked somewhat puzzled. This was not the answer which evidently she had expected. Erik seemed suddenly to be concerned with the straps of his harness.

"It would ill become a noble chief like you to take advantage of my friendship," she replied at last.

Swain snapped his thumb and finger.

"That for your friendship! You want something of me."

"Only what you ought to be glad to offer," she flashed, white teeth gleaming for an instant between pouting red lips.

"I am not one to fight other peoples' battles," rejoined Swain. "If your interest matches my interest I may talk to you. Otherwise, we have no meeting-place."

Holdbodi, behind him, thrust mouth to his ear.

"Hold in, Swain," he whispered. "Here are rich pickings. Don't lose them for us."

Swain growled deep in his throat in a way he had—and Holdbodi quickly melted back into the group of chiefs. But Ingrid in the firelight had observed his move, and she tried again.

"It pleases you to be rough in your answer to me, Swain," she said, holding herself proudly erect. "Perhaps you do not know that a week ago I caused it to be proclaimed that whoever brought me the head of Olvir Rosta, who slew my husband and lord, Andrew Morkar's son, him I would wed, be he chief or common man, Irlander, Bretlander, Scotsman or of the folk of the Sudreyar or the Hebrides."

"I did not know it," admitted Swain. "But it does not interest me."

"Ah, then you are not concerned to slay Olvir Rosta, who, men say——"

"No, I am not concerned with you, Lady, unless you can aid me with men and ships to go after Olvir."

"I can do much," she cried.

"Do you prove it to us, then. For myself, I will give the man who slays Olvir lands and gear to make him rich for life—but it is easy for me to promise that because it will be I who slay Olvir."

She came still closer to him, an artificial grimace of rage masking her lovely face.

"I will prove my words," she hissed. "Whatever you choose—take it! Take all! My men, my gear, my ships! Take me—use me for oar-grease. Do with me what you will. Only promise to slay me that foul——"

Swain pushed her roughly aside.

"This is no place for woman's chatter," he rasped. "We are warriors hungry from the sea. Be off, and see to the servingmen that they do not try our patience. Be off, I say!"

Erik granted him a reluctant glance of admiration as she scuttled away into the shadows.

"Ho, you are no boaster, Swain. But mark me, marriage she will have, so you may as well single out him of your company you like least or best, eh?"

"A man might do worse than wed with

such a fair woman," pressed Holdbodi. "Here are broad lands and——"

"You have said that before," snarled Swain. "I will not have it! Do you see? I will not have it. Tomorrow we sail hence after Olvir. Then battle. After battle— Let the ravens croak their answer!"

"The ravens will answer," agreed Gunni.

"Women," remarked young Jarl Harald, "have no place in men's thoughts on the eve of battle."

There was a gruff bellow of laughter. Even Swain joined.

"A stout borg, this," he remarked critically, casting his eye around the circuit of the enclosure. "With this to fall back upon, it will be strange if we do not come to an accounting with Olvir."

ON THE next day Ingrid would have had Swain and the other chiefs to talk with her in the skalli, but when she appeared in the steading Swain sent her word by Erik that there was man's work to be done and that she could best aid them by keeping out of the way. She flung back to her bower in a black storm-cloud of anger, biting her lips until the blood ran. Yet it was not long before Swain came to her. He strode in unannounced, and stared at her with hard dislike where she huddled sullenly on a furstrewn couch.

"Any vengeance you secure you will pay for," he announced.

She peered at him almost hopefully.

"I said I would pay," she began.

"Why could you not *do?*"

"Do? I am only a woman, Swain. What——"

"You are also a queen. Could you not have mustered and armed your people? Could you not have provided fresh arrows? Could you not have had the old mail mended? Could you not have swords for your housecarls with an edge to cut cheese loaves? Could you——"

"I need a man to do that for me," she interrupted with what she meant for an alluring look.

Swain simply glowered.

"You won't get one from me," he barked. "This island was ripe for the first comer to pluck. If I had not happened along Olvir would have gathered it in—and you, with it. Yes, you would have lost your widowhood by now."

"I am not fond of it," she said, desperately frank. "Andrew was old, and——"

"I am not interested in you," said Swain brutally. "What concerns me is that I get away from here as swiftly as possible. And I find that your people are untrained to war, that your arms-chests are empty and your longships are broken or decayed. Well, I shall take what I can use. Afterward I shall return and collect payment from you for the trouble you have put me to. Be sure to have a payment ready for me to select from or I will take twice what otherwise would satisfy me."

And he turned upon his heel.

"But are you going away now?" she cried.

He did not answer her. But from the walls of the borg she saw the fleet stand to the southeast an hour later, Swain's five longships supplemented by two others which Erik had produced and which considerable effort had made water-tight. The sun was already far down in the westward sky, and the massing shadows in the east soon blotted out the lean hulls of the longships, with their huge, square, bellying sails and myriad crawling oars.

Toward morning they came to a headland of the Bretland coast called Jarlsness, and waited in the purple dusk, bows drawn close together in a star-shaped formation, so that the ship-captains could exchange counsel; and presently there winged out to them a small sailing vessel, one of several which Erik had dispatched in advance of their coming to scout the neighborhood. Erik, himself, was on this boat, and he scrambled aboard *Deathbringer* to give Swain his report.

"They are here, Swain," he said curtly, "as I thought they would be. There was a wealthy abbey up the river a ways, besides a town and a dozen villages and two small lords' castles, and all these Olvir has plundered. We had the word from certain poor folk we found on the beaches. His men are glutted with slaying and plunder."

"What is 'here'?" demanded Swain. "Where do they lie?"

"Beyond that headland—a score of them."

"A score?"

"Big craft and little, dragons and ten-oared barges and a few fishing-boats."

"How many dragons has he?"

"Two of his own and Hrodbjart's two, but he has twice the men you have."

"Mongrels," answered Swain. "What have we to fear from such as they? We will run them down at their rowing-benches."

He considered.

"How long shall we take to round the headland?"

"With this wind? An hour, perhaps more."

Swain raised his great voice in a hail that carried through the fleet.

"Olvir Rosta is close by. We go to him. *Deathbringer* leads the way. Ravens throng the sky."

A shout rose from the crowded longships, the deep, booming voices of the Orkneymen mingling with the shriller tones of Holdbodi's people and the Manfolk.

"Lead on, Swain! We follow."

"But will Olvir stand to it?" clamored young Jarl Harald excitedly. "Will he stand to it when he sees us, Swain?"

Swain laughed shortly.

"He will stand to it, for we will carry it to him wherever he stands. Erik, get you aboard one of your dragons. I look to you to keep the Manfolk in line. Every sword counts."

"If all slay as many as I none will escape us," returned the Icelander coolly. "But by your leave, Swain, I use the ax. It has advantages for one of my stature."

"Slay all you can," said Swain. "But on your head, spare Olvir Rosta for me."

"Oh, I'll pass him by!" said Erik. "He is one I will gladly pass by. I saw him slice Andrew's head off as though it—Yes, yes, Swain, I am going."

And the little man scrambled over the bulwarks of *Deathbringer*, leaping from ship to ship until he gained his own vessel's decks. Then they hoisted the sails, and the seven longships straightened out in one another's wakes, churning the foam as they advanced.

All went well until the dawn broke, when the wind freshened and shifted, blowing head on against them, with the result that they were compelled to lower their sails and continue by rowing alone, a hard and toilsome undertaking under such conditions. Swain, by the steersmen of *Deathbringer*, watched their slow progress with mounting fury. It meant that instead of coming upon Olvir on the heels of the twilight, while his men were heavy-headed and unready, they would round the headland in the middle of the morning to find the hostile vessels awake and in shape to prepare to meet them. Half of their advantage was gone, but Swain never thought of abandoning the attempt. He intended to come to hand-grips with Olvir if they must row all through that day and into the next night; and as a matter of fact the sun was almost overhead when they finally rounded Jarlsness and in the bight formed by the estuary of a considerable river glimpsed the riding hulls of their enemies.

The hooked end of the promontory moderated the wind's force upon this side of it, and it was possible for the seven longships to straggle into line abreast in response to Swain's orders shouted through a ludr-horn. He placed *Deathbringer* at the right end of the line, the outer flank, because he looked for the enemy to attempt to break free in that direction. Next him were Jarl Rognvald's dragons, then Erik and the two Man ships, then Holdbodi and the Sudreyarfolk, and lastly, on the far left, Gunni in *Seabroth*. They all drew in their oars, so that the rowers might rest their tired arms and shoulders for the fray, and with the wind squarely over their sterns, slanted down upon Olvir's fleet which was bustling with sudden activity.

Swain stood on the poop of *Deathbringer*, with young Jarl Harald beside him, and a half-score of giant housecarls. The waist was crammed with the idle oarsmen, who had donned mail shirts and caps. The forecastle was dense with spearmen and archers. Overhead the sun shone brightly, and the wind thrummed like a skald picking at harpstrings in the cordage and the huge, straining hollow of the sail.

Gradually, as they drew nearer, Olvir's fleet formed into a sort of hasty order. The four dragons, two of twenty-four and two of twenty oars, became its nucleus. On either side of them clustered a pack of barges and fishing-boats, small in size, but overflowing with men; and they surged forward, using their oars perforce, as the wind was against them. The dragons forged rapidly to the front, propelled by their scores of oars, and the small craft tailed out behind in a kind of wedge, with its point—the four dragons—aimed at the center of Swain's line.

Swain perceived this at once, and he

endeavored as well as he could to constrict his front, so as to reduce the intervals between his ships; but in that wind and on a rocky coast the agile longships required an unusual amount of handling-room, and he dared not tighten the line as he would otherwise have done.

"They will strike Erik or Thorar," exclaimed Jarl Harald.

"Then Erik or Thorar will die," grunted Swain; "but in the turmoil we shall ring them and those who do not swim ashore to be slain by the folk they have despoiled will die upon our blades."

"Which is Olvir's ship?"

"How should I know, boy? I have never seen it before."

"Shall I try an arrow upon their leader? It is down wind."

"No, no. Hold your arrows until you can see the face of him you shoot at. Steady, helmsman! What are they doing?"

Without warning, the opposing fleet had shifted direction, and were striking obliquely across the front of Swain's line, aiming at Gunni's flank.

"They can never pass between Gunni and the rocks," cried Jarl Harald. "There is not——"

Swain interrupted with a bull roar of rage.

"Larboard, helmsmen! Larboard, all!"

And running to the rail he shouted to Leif, his next in line to larboard:

"Pass the word to bear off to larboard! They will crush Gunni and Holdbodi."

Leif shouted the order to Thorar, and so it traversed the line of seven ships; but the shift came too late to avert Olvir's stroke. Wind and oars on either side combined to bring on the impact between the left flank of Swain's formation and the spearhead of Olvir's attack before Swain's center and right could come into action.

Olvir's four dragons charged bluntly into Holdbodi's and Gunni's, and their tail of small fry overwhelmed momentarily Erik's two ships. There was a grinding of planking; the shrieking of boarders caught and pinched between lurching hulls; the snap of masts as rigging was cut asunder; the thrashing of falling sails.

Holdbodi saw the menace of his position and backed away, dropping his sail and turning his attention to the small craft that had attacked Erik's ships; but Gunni met the odds of four to one without yielding a foot of sea-room. It was his mast that fell as the boarders slashed the overburdened rigging. It was his crew who leaped on the rowing-benches and met the assaults that poured over both quarters and one bow. It was he, who lifted an immense ballast stone from beneath the gangway planking, poised it an instant upon his shoulder and then flung it overside to smash through the bottom of Hrodbjart's dragon and send the Bretlander careering to the bottom.

But Gunni alone might not stay that wolf-rush of numbers four times his own. Hrodbjart's men, those who could, scrambled from their sinking vessel, reckless of what fate they met so long as it was not drowning, and bravely faced the spears and swords of Gunni's waist-men. On his starboard side Olvir boarded, hewing a passage through the ranks of the Orkney oarsmen. Olvir's other dragon launched a flood of Icelanders, led by raging berserks, fey men who had no fear of dying if they might die slaying others, who swarmed over Gunni's forecastle. In five minutes of close fighting these three streams of invaders penned Gunni and a surviving handful of men into the constricted space of the poop.

Swain, raging with helpless anger, saw his brother's end, as he rounded against the wind, furled his sail and with outthrust oars led Rognvald's two longships into the heart of the fight that centered about Holdbodi and the two Man longships. Two barges he crushed under his dragon-bow, and his archers took fearful toll of the crowded open decks of every small vessel they passed, but despite his urging his men could not reach *Seabroth* in time to save Gunni. The second of Hrodbjart's dragons was in his path, and while he refused to stop and take it, bellowing an order to Leif behind him to lay it aboard, he was obliged to shove it out of his way and exchange spears and arrows with its crew as he drove by.

In that very moment, heedless of the hostile arrows that clinked on shield and mail, he saw his brother alone upon *Seabroth's* poop, reeling from a dozen bleeding wounds. He saw, too, the squat, powerful, black-bearded figure that crouched toward Gunni, with lifted spear. He saw Gunni's feeble effort to lift a riven shield, to raise the heavy sword. Then the spear flashed.

Gunni fell. A hoarse shout of satisfaction rang down the wind. Olvir sprang away his men pelting after him along the streaming decks of *Seabroth*. They regained their own dragons and cast off. Oars darted through the oar-holes, foam spurted under the drive of shoulders still hampered with mail, and open water showed between them and their victim, an empty, lifeless, man-gutted hulk that tossed upon the waves.

Swain leaped into the waist of *Death-bringer* and strode up the gangway, such a look on his face that no man could meet it.

"Row!" he bellowed. "Row, as you have never rowed before! The man who hesitates I will impale alive. Put your backs into it. Do you call this effort? Row, I say! Shall I beat you with my sword? Row!"

They were all freeborn men, but none answered, nor did a single oar slip in its work; but try as they might they could not gain upon Olvir's lighter dragons, which in such a sea were easier to drive. Then, as they came to the end of the headland, the wind veered again and blew from the northeast, and Olvir's sails were raised to catch it.

"Up sail!" growled Swain. "If they can outgrow us, perhaps we can outsail them."

It was not to be. Hard-driven, one of Olvir's ships, tore its over-strained sail to shreds and fell off into the trough of the waves, its men, exhausted by their toils, dipping feebly with their oars. Swain contented himself with pouring arrows into it at short range, and steered on as soon as he was sure that Olvir was not on board, confident that Thorar and Leif who followed him would take care of the enemy without difficulty.

All that day he pursued Olvir southwesterly across Irlands Haf. When the Irland coast towered green ahead the outlaw bore to the south, and held the course until darkness obscured the sea. Swain set double watches on the forecastle and himself climbed to the masthead, where he might gain the widest sweep of the night, and scarce a man of the crew slept until morning dawned, and they found themselves beyond sight of land—alone. Seagulls swooped and dived, but not another sign of life was within view. Olvir had vanished.

But Swain refused to be discouraged. He steered northwest and poked into several harbors of the southern coast of Irland where Olvir might have sought shelter, but the Irish all denied having had sight of the raider, although many knew his name from his exploits of old. Baffled, but still undismayed, Swain turned to the open sea gain and sailed to Syllingar,[1] where he sought speech with the monks who dwelt in this bare, wind-swept place. All they could tell was that some days since, about the time he had first lost trace of his prey, they had sighted a single longship, with tattered sail and salt-crusted bulwarks which had beat past the islands, headed toward the south.

"Yes, that would be he," he said bitterly.

"Who, my son?" asked the gray prior.

"One who shall yet feel the bite of my sword," rumbled Swain.

The prior raised a crucifix in protestation.

"No, no, my son. Man of blood that you are, accept the unfortunate's escape as a divine intervention to save you from taking his life."

Swain reached for his sword.

"If I thought that— But no matter! My time will come."

And he stalked back to his vessel heaving below the monastery landing. His men heard the tidings in silence, except young Jarl Harald.

"Then we continue our voyage," remarked the boy in matter-of-fact tones. "If Olvir went south he can go only as far as the edge of the world. Sooner or later we must come up to him."

A growl of laughter came from Swain's bearded lips.

"You are a mastiff," he said. "That was well-spoken, but if you were older you would know that it is a long way to the world's edge, with many ways to turn and twist and double before the edge is reached. No, Harald, Olvir has escaped us this venture, and our course is to go back and bide until he comes again."

"But will he come again?" asked Harald doubtfully.

"He will, because his evil spirit drives him. Also, I shall have something which he desires."

"What?"

"That is to be seen. In the meantime, we will return and discover what our

[1] The Scyllies.

friends have achieved in our absence. Out oars!"

And as the dragon bucked under the pull of the stout ash-sweeps, he muttered so low that none might hear him:

"And there are words I must have with Holdbodi. The swine! Yes, Jarl Rognvald was right. Beware of the Sudrey-armen. If they are not treacherous, they think only of themselves."

V

SWAIN was met on the beach at Stikleborg by Thorar and Leif. Erik was with them, and all the surviving Orkneymen, a considerable number.

"It is to be seen that you had ill luck, Swain," said Erik.

"I have been out of favor with the gods in recent days," returned Swain. "But ill luck some day must become good luck."

Thorar cleared his throat uncomfortably.

"You know Gunni——"

"I saw what happened," Swain cut him short.

"We gave him haugh burial on the point of Jarlsness," said Leif. "There are four hundred to keep him company, and the mound is to be seen from afar."

"I would not have had it otherwise," said Swain.

Then there was a pause which lasted as long as it takes a man to tighten his helm-strap.

"Touching Olvir Rosta," hinted Erik.

"He escaped me," answered Swain shortly. "He is gone south of the Syllingar."

"Ah," said Erik. "But what was in my mind is that I am tired of serving the lady here and the new lord she picked—or who has picked her; I know not which it is. And I have taken thought that I would throw in my fortunes with you, Swain, if you cared for a man who was willing to accept luck as it comes and could persuade a few others to follow him."

He grinned.

"You were not close by in the fight off Jarlsness, but perhaps others will tell you that I was not the one to give ground to Olvir."

Swain's blue eyes, steel-cold with a bright, piercing light, peered down into the little, bandy-legged Icelander's.

"I will take you for my man, Erik," he answered; "but my service is not so easy as Ingrid's."

"Or Holdbodi's, perhaps," answered Erik, with his quirky grin.

Swain frowned.

"I have somewhat to say to Holdbodi," he observed. "If he had held his place in the line at Jarlsness——"

"He would not sit in Ingrid's bower now," finished Erik.

Thorar and Leif, big, slow of speech, exchanged looks of misgiving, which Swain did not miss.

"What is this veiled talk?" he demanded.

Thorar and Leif cleared their throats, gulped, shifted their feet. It was Erik who answered.

"Why, you and Holdbodi are not agreed concerning the merits of his deeds off Jarlsness. He talks largely of having stayed the rush of Olvir's people, and is taking the Lady Ingrid for his share in the spoil."

Swain frowned.

"Have you permitted this?" he asked Thorar and Leif. "I was not here, but surely you two——"

They found their tongues.

"He said that you had no use for her," protested Thorar.

"And we were loath to pick a quarrel with him," said Leif.

"It was my advice to abide your return," added Erik. "No harm has been done yet, and the issue lies in your hands, Swain."

"He can have her, and welcome," said Swain. "But her lands are a different matter."

And then he remembered his brother Gunni dead. He remembered the smoking skalli which had been the pyre of his father and his elder brother, Valthiof. He remembered his mother's words at Gairsey, and the half-bantering advice of Jarl Rognvald. A sudden resolution formed in his mind.

"Lands and woman go together," he went on. "No, he can not have her, either."

Erik darted a quick glance at him, and chuckled.

"Ho, Swain, did I not say——"

"You have said much," Swain rebuked him. "I like you, little man, but curb your tongue. What I propose to do I do for reasons which suit my own ends. Come, we will go up to the borg."

They followed him, and Erik's face was

now as puzzled as Thorar's and Leif's. After them tramped the Orkneymen, shields clinking on the backs of their mail-shirts. The Manfolk along the road watched them pass with anxious looks.

In the gateway of the borg beyond the plank bridge stood a knot of Sudreyarmen, perhaps a score or more. Their ranks knit closer as the boards creaked under the feet of Swain's following.

"Do you come in peace?" hailed one of them.

Swain answered not a word until he was within arm's reach of the fellow. Then he caught him by the arm and tossed him four spears' lengths away.

"Out of my path!" he growled. "Put up those knives—or Orkney swords will drink your blood."

They melted before him, and several started to run toward the skalli; but Swain heaved back a spear as if to cast it after them, and one who marked his gesture called to the others and they skulked aside.

"Thorar!" rasped Swain. "Take fifty men and keep the gate."

"And what of Holdbodi's people, Swain?"

"Send them forth, peaceably or by force. Leif, do you take a hundred men and scour the borg. No fighting if they do not ask for it, remember!"

A second knot of Holdbodi's people hovered by the skalli door, but they had observed the incident at the gate, and they offered Swain no active opposition. He brushed past them carelessly, Erik and fifty of his own men behind him, and entered the great hall, where Ingrid and Holdbodi sat side by side at the high table. Servants cowered behind the arras on the walls or darted into half-concealed doorways, fearful of the aburpt invasion of armed men. Holdbodi, too, looked uncomfortable. He had half-risen in his place, and his hand was on his sword-hilt. Ingrid, next to him, stared at Swain with a kind of preening triumph. It was as if she regarded this episode as a tribute to her, an indication of her importance in the affairs of these men. She spoke first.

"So you are back, Swain! That is well. You are in time to give my lord his due for the triumph his valor won upon our behalf."

Swain's laughter rumbled to the roof-rafters.

"We shall have discussion of that valor," he answered. "What say you, Holdbodi?"

"I say that your jest is not becoming to a friend and loyal ally," blustered the Sudreyarman. "Why do you bring in this rabble to the hall? It has an ill look."

"It has," agreed Swain. "And so had the borg when I entered it a moment since. There was a stink of uncured Sudreyar fur. But we have mended that."

Holdbodi sank into his chair and nervously twitched at his beard.

"You speak as though I was your enemy, Swain," he remonstrated. "What harm have I done to you?"

"None," returned Swain promptly. "Unless it was by playing the coward's part to leave my brother to die under the teeth of a wolf-pack."

Holdbodi started up.

"This passes jest," he shouted. "Ten of my men died in that fight, and my ship was covered with blood! And you accuse me of being a coward. If our forces were even——"

"Oh, that need not concern you," said Swain. "I will send all forth from the hall, if it pleases you."

Ingrid was crouched over the table throughout their talk, a fever-flush of interest staining her cheeks, her eyes alight with the hunger for men's attention which was the keystone to her character.

"Yes, send them forth," she begged eagerly. "It is not fitting for two chiefs to quarrel before the common men. Send them forth, Swain, and I will be judge between you."

Before Swain's look she huddled down in her seat.

"Be still," he said. "There is one chief here, one chief in Man. And I am judge."

"You may be chief of our expedition, Swain," fumed Holdbodi, "but you have no right to order me as if I was your man. And as for calling me coward——"

"You are no coward when it is to your advantage to fight," said Swain; "but you were not man enough to hold your place in line and aid Gunni to meet Olvir's rush. If you had, perhaps you would have died, but Olvir would not have escaped."

"I could not do everything," muttered Holdbodi sulkily. "My one ship held back all Olvir's tail; a hundred of his men met their death at the hands of my people."

"You did not play a man's part," answered Swain. "And so I tell you plainly. Also, I take it in bad part that while I was away in pursuit of Olvir you should seek to seize the wealth of the island for yourself."

"It is true that the lady has promised to marry me," admitted Holdbodi, a thought shame-facedly; "but I had no intent to secure an unfair division of what booty there is."

"Were you planning to carry her back to Liodhus?" asked Swain sarcastically.

"No, for——"

"For her lands are here."

"Why not?" returned Holdbodi. "Somebody must hold them for her."

"But that need not be you. It will not be you."

This time Holdbodi jumped up, crimson with wrath.

"You shall not give her to one of your men! She has promised——"

"She will promise anything. But she will marry me."

The Sudreyarman's cast eye rolled wildly. Ingrid, herself, emitted a little screech, part surprize, part pleasure, and forgot Swain's recent snub. Erik grinned quietly to himself, and Swain's Orkneymen rattled spear-shafts and sword-hilts upon their shields in applause.

"But you would not have anything to——"

"Forget what is past, Holdbodi. I say now that I shall marry her."

"She is promised to me," wailed Holdbodi.

Swain smiled grimly, his tight-lipped, savage grimace which never inspired a taste for mirth in an opponent.

"That is easily mended. If she bleats—as I do not think she will—we'll drown her cries with the shield-rattling. But married she shall be before the sun sets tonight."

Ingrid leaped lithely from her seat and stretched out her arms toward Swain.

"This is the mating a woman craves, Swain!" she cried. "To be seized by a strong man, whether she wills it or not. To be torn from one man by a stronger! Ah, my viking, Ingrid of Man will be worthy of you!"

Swain did not speak a single word to her, but the blue flame of his eyes from under leveled, bushy brows drove her cowering behind the untidy furniture of the table.

Holdbodi chose the moment for his last defiance. The Sudreyarman was so overcome by his rage that the words spat from his lips with the hissing intonation of an angry cat.

"This is a rich reward for faithful friendship and loyal service!" he snarled. "It will make a brave tale, Swain. Men will speak enviously of you, as of one who takes all and gives nothing, who delights in appropriating for himself that which his friend desires! You may succeed now. You may take Ingrid—and much joy may you have of her, the ——! The last man who has her ear is the one she will follow. You may send me forth no richer for the fighting I have done in your behalf. But the time will come when you will regret it. I shall not forget."

Swain heard him out.

"If what you say was true, Holdbodi," he answered then, "you would have just cause for resentment. Answer me this: Am I the chief of our expedition?"

Holdbodi reluctantly admitted he was.

"Of five longships, I led four?"

"Yes, but——"

"And you have said you lost ten men off Jarlsness, where my dead were numbered by the score!"

The Sudreyarman made a final attempt to regain his swagger.

"If it had not been for me——"

"You did no more than save your skin. Bah! Jarl Rognvald warned me against trusting the Sudreyarfolk, but I would not heed him. Yet I am not one to let any man, however unworthy, leave me with empty hands, and seeing that there were five longships with which we started I will give you one-fifth of such movable booty as we can take from Man without injuring the island, together with the same share of what was captured in Olvir's ships. Take that, and go."

"But the lands in Man! We all helped——"

"My offer will not hold open very long, Holdbodi."

"My own lands were wrecked by Olvir," persisted Holdbodi. "I am of a mind to settle here, and begin anew."

Swain shook his head.

"Here you would make trouble," he said. "You will take what I offer, and go."

"I shall come again," hissed the Sudreyarman as he stumped to the door.

VI

ERIK returned to the hall after escorting the priest to the door. "Where is the bride?" he asked, grinning.

Swain, sitting at the high table with young Jarl Harald, Thorar and Leif, roused himself from the thoughts in which he had been immersed.

"I could not stand her chatter," he answered. "She is gone to her bower. Did Holdbodi make sail?"

"Yes, he steered out for Irland at the setting of the sun."

There was an interval of silence during which the others peered secretly at Swain. Suddenly he raised his head.

"Jarl Harald, it is for you, with Thorar and Leif, to return to Orphir and carry news to Jarl Rognvald of the issue of our expedition."

They all spoke up in quick denial.

"No, no, we stay with you, Swain," exclaimed Harald. "What, leave you here amongst strangers, with a wife——"

He broke off, but Swain accepted the implication without comment.

"No harm can come to me," he reassured them. "I have Erik here, who will be forecastleman for me when I go viking and aid me in governing the Manfolk; and I have plenty of my own stout carls left who will stay on with me. I can not keep Jarl Rognvald's henchmen to help me carve out a new fortune here. He may have need of them at home."

"That may be true of Thorar and Leif and their men," clamored Jarl Harald; "but there is no reason why I should not remain with you, Swain. Jarl Rognvald gives me no share in governing the islands, and here I can learn far more with you."

Swain smiled, for he had much love for the boy.

"No, no," he said. "I can not take on myself the responsibility of guarding your head as well as my own. Man will be no place for young jarls to learn war-making and statecraft while I am here. You go home with Thorar and Leif."

"But what is your purpose, Swain?" inquired Thorar heavily. "It is known to all of us that you already hold ample lands in the Orkneys. This estate may be as rich as a jarldom——"

"Seeing that it takes rank as a kingdom, and he who rules it is called king," commented Erik in his dry way.

"That may be, that may be," Leif took up the argument. "Still, Swain can be safer as a common boendr in Gairsey than as king in Man. And in Gairsey he would not have to own a shrew of a wife."

"My reasons are sufficiently good," said Swain. "Now that Gunni is dead, I am the last of my family, and seeing the extent of my feud with Olvir, it is possible that doom may overtake me suddenly. Therefore I must have sons to follow me, to exact vengeance for me, if necessary, and to hold my lands."

"But you can have sons in Gairsey as well as in Man," objected Jarl Harald.

"Yes, and if I go to Gairsey now I shall have to abandon Man. It is a rich land, and with peace for its folk and protection against marauders it will become richer. Also, it is a good base for raids to Irland and Bretland and the southern Frankish lands; and here, too, I can watch all who go up and down the waters of Irland's Haf, and so I can more readily come by news of Olvir Rosta even than at home in the Orkneys. Until Erik and I have put the farmers back to work and taught marauders to keep away I shall stay here. After that I can spend part of my time in the Orkneys."

"And so we are to leave you by yourself!" mourned young Jarl Harald.

Swain patted the boy's shoulder.

"You will come again. Jarl Rognvald will send you south in the Spring with longships to join my viking cruises. I will employ the Winters to mark down opportunities for plunder."

Erik drained his ale-horn.

"He is a wise man, Swain," he remarked. "But it is unfortunate he is not wise enough to be able to secure another wife than Ingrid."

Swain's jaw set squarely.

"Do not concern yourself about her," he growled. "I will tame her with the butt of my spear."

"Yes, yes, that is all very well," grumbled Erik. "You can beat her, but how are you going to curb the evil vanity that is inside her? Remember the trolls who strove to capture the sunshine; they are laboring yet."

This Erik, himself, was a very wise man, in after years accounted one of the wisest

who ever came into the Orkneys; with a great store of runes and skalds' sayings and no small skill at verse-making. He was a strong friend to Swain, as shall be told hereafter.

VII

JARL HARALD, with Thorar and Leif, sailed north at the end of the Summer. To Thorar Swain gave this message for Asleif:

"Olvir Rosta has taken Gunni's life. This I could not help, and you may be sure that I shall not be slow to carry our vengance to Olvir when I discover where he is. Also, I have taken a wife, in order that I may have sons to inherit our lands and preserve the feud if I perish. For a while I dwell in Man, but the Orkneys will see me again. In the meantime, I commend you to the care of Odin and the blessed St. Magnus."

To Jarl Rognvald he likewise sent a message by Jarl Harald:

"If I do not sit with you at the high table in the long nights this Winter do not forget me, Lord Jarl, for I shall live to be with you again. I am taking the counsel you gave me concerning the getting of sons. If the booty I send you with your people seems sufficient reward for their efforts, let me have Thorar and Leif next Summer, for there are rich spoils to be secured in these seas."

It is to be told in this connection that Jarl Rognvald was much pleased with the spoil Swain sent to him, and Thorar and Leif, not to speak of young Jarl Harald, and all their men spread the tidings of Swain's new dignity and estate all through the islands, so that during the Winter people talked of very little else, and it became a saying—

"Common man is King of Man."

Jarl Rognvald never tired of questioning the members of the expedition about Swain's exploits, and he delighted especially to hear from Jarl Harald of Ingrid.

"That is a filly I would walk wide of," he would say. "But it is like Swain to do things differently from other men. Nevertheless, I think he will be wise to watch her closely."

Asleif said nothing when Swain's message was given to her, except to inquire of Thorar what kind of woman Ingrid was, and the best Thorar could do was to mumble that she was fair to look at, but had a strange temper.

"Swain will curb her," answered Asleif proudly.

Then she sent messengers through the islands hiring men to aid her housecarls to harvest the crops, since they were short-handed in Gairsey and on Swain's lands in Caithness also, by reason of the absence of all those who had sailed with Swain in the Spring. Men were quick to aid her because all desired to stand well in Swain's estimation.

During the Winter and the following Spring Swain and Erik were very busy. They established look-out stations on the coasts of Man to make it easier to discover the approach of raiding-parties, and Swain removed his residence from Stikleborg to a steading in the center of the island whence he could shift his men readily in any direction. He encouraged the farmers to plant full crops and gave assistance to such as had suffered damage to their property. In this way he became very popular, and the Manfolk gave him true allegiance.

He kept Ingrid under guard of men he could place confidence in, the oldest and most savage of his housecarls, for he was anxious that no harm should befall her; and he had his reward in the Summer of the next year when she gave birth to twin boys, Olaf and Andres. He was so pleased at this that he held an ale-drinking for his men at which the guests sat for two days and three nights, and it was said there were not five sober men on the island, aside from himself who drank nothing but water.

"My luck has turned," he said to Erik. "Here are two swordsmen at a stroke."

"Why stop at two?" replied Erik, who saw how his mind worked.

Swain shook his head.

"I have sufficient lands for two sons, but if I had more they would be fighting amongst themselves."

"A woman must raise children or trouble," warned Erik.

"I will take care that she is harmless," rejoined Swain.

In truth, Ingrid was so occupied with her twins that she was less trouble than she had ever been, and Swain went viking cruising in late Summer with Jarl Rognvald's men, who had come south in three dragons, young Jarl Harald commanding his own. They gained much loot in Irland and along

the Bretland coasts, but nowhere did they hear anything of Olvir Rosta, who had disappeared completely from those parts.

Swain asked his friends from the Orkneys if they had heard of Holdbodi when they traversed the Sudreyar, and they told him that his former ally had never returned to his ravaged lands. Swain set small store by this information, but Erik gave it much thought.

"Holdbodi left us with booty sufficient to restore his property," said the Icelander. "If he did not do so it was because he had plans to use it otherwise."

"He is a marauder who has no use for lands," returned Swain.

"No, no, Swain, all men crave land. What do the skalds say?

> "Summer for the sea,
> Winter for the land,
> Work for the foot,
> Work for the hand."

"At any rate, he does not bother us, so we need not concern ourselves," said Swain. "I am not afraid of a Sudreyar fox."

"When the fox joined the wolf the farmyard was emptied," said Erik.

In the Autumn of the year Jarl Harald, who was now grown much in stature and wisdom and sweetness of character, sailed North with the Orkneyfolk; and Swain and Erik turned their attention to harvesting abundant crops. Swain looked forward to a peaceful Winter, sitting about the hearthfire with his chiefs, talking over old times and raids and fights and listening to Erik's recitation of sagas and wise sayings. He was a very restless, domineering man, fond of his will in all things, and he liked the sensation of being ruler of his own dominions, for friendly as he was at home in the Orkneys with Jarl Rognvald there had been times when it irked him to admit the suzerainty of another. Here in Man his word was law; people did what he bade them without question or suffered the consequences. Only Erik ever questioned him, and the Icelander's ripe wit was ample excuse for independence. But Ingrid would not have it that he should dwell in peace and happiness apart from her, and when he resisted her first attempts to sally from her bower and join him at the high table or by the hearth she turned on him like a treed wildcat.

"All that you enjoy here you had of me. Will you treat me like the cattle in the stable?"

"If it suits me to," replied Swain simply.

She tossed back her black hair.

"It is to be seen that you are a man of great nobility!" she cried. "Have I not given myself to you, and all that I own? Is it so you reward a woman who put aside others that there might be room for you?"

"You did not give yourself; I took you," answered Swain. "As for others, Andrew was slain and Holdbodi I sent away. Be quiet, woman."

"Never while I have breath! I am the mother of your sons——"

"And for that reason I permit you to bide with me. But do not strain my patience or I will get rid of you."

She gaped at him, almost believing that he meant what he said, so impassive was his manner.

"Ah, it is little you care for me or for them," she screamed. "Sad will be their lot with such a brute for father! And I am fittingly rewarded for the love and service I have given you, I who could have wed with——"

"You were for wedding the first man who came hither with strength to take you," said Swain. "Now be silent!"

"Silent? Never while I have strength to tell you how I hate you, you hairy beast of the North! There is cold, green ice-water in your veins and your eyes make me think of the marshlights the evil spirits send abroad to tempt us from the down paths. You are a great troll that some wizard has put a spell upon, and——"

At that Swain could bear no more of her, and he took his spear from where it leaned against the wall and beat her soundly with the shaft until she was quite black-and-blue and had tearfully promised that she would do whatever he commanded and not otherwise. More than once in the succeeding months he was obliged to threaten her, but he never had occasion to beat her a second time.

The Winter passed without incident, and there was an unusually early Spring. Jarl Harald came from the Orkneys with four longships, and proposed that this year they should extend their viking cruise to the coasts of Valland[1] and Spainland, and as Swain felt an itch for adventure after

[1] France.

the dull months that had passed, he consented, thinking, too, that in far-off waters they might come upon a trace of Olvir Rosta.

This tale tells no more of Swain's cruise with young Jarl Harald, except that they had with them seven dragons and acquired much honor and considerable store of plunder, especially from a certain rich city of the heathen in Spainland. They parted company off the Syllingar on their home voyage, Jarl Harald returning to the Orkneys by the east coast of Bretland and Scotland and Swain continuing direct to Man where he had left Erik in charge of his interests, for lack of a substantial chief among the Manfolk.

Erik climbed aboard *Deathbringer* so soon as Swain beached his dragons on Stikleborg strand.

"I perceive that you have had good fortune, Swain," he said, noting the chests of cloth and jewels and valuable weapons and armor which the crew were preparing to shift ashore.

"It was a profitable voyage," answered Swain. "Has all gone well here?"

"Yes and no," replied Erik. "We have had a visit from Holdbodi."

"You beat him off?" exclaimed Swain.

"No, he came in peace, openly. He asked for you, saying that he was establishing himself on Lund,[1] and desired you to know that he was there and that he hoped to effect friendly terms with you."

"Humph," said Swain. "In any case, he can do us no harm."

"You are very foolish to say so," replied Erik energetically. "Holdbodi is not one to forget a grudge."

"If he could not harm you while I was absent with so many men, he can do no harm with me here," insisted Swain. "Had he more than one ship?"

"Two. If he comes again——"

"We shall be ready for him. After the harvest is in I will sail over to Lund with sufficient men and make certain of his friendship."

"Yes, that will be best," agreed Erik.

VIII

BECAUSE of the early Spring there was an unusually bountiful harvest that Autumn, and Swain and his men were hard put to it to gather in the crops before the northerly rains began. Swain did all things thoroughly, and he was as careful in the matter of harvesting the produce of his lands as he was in the conduct of his dragon at sea. He distributed the single men among his housecarls to those farms which were most in need of assistance, and as soon as one farmer's crops were stored that farmer and his men were sent to help another farmer. In this way the work went on apace.

He, himself, with his family and Erik, dwelt in the steading at Scaurfell near the center of the island, to which he had removed at first in order to keep his main force in a position whence it could be dispatched rapidly to any spot on the coasts which was attacked by marauders. He was given to saying that a borg was good enough for fighting purposes, but it was no place to live in by ordinary. And another reason for his preference for Scaurfell over Stikleborg was that it enabled him to supervise the several districts of the island to better advantage.

Scaurfell was just such a steading as those he had left behind him in the Orkneys. There was a skalli, with a chapel and the customary barns and outhouses; and farther up the slope of the fell was a small village. Swain, of course, lived in the skalli. He and Erik slept together in a chamber on the right of the entrance. Across the hall was Ingrid's bower and the room in which the two children slept. A handful of servants had quarters off the kitchen and others were lodged in the outhouses; but there were very few housecarls about, because, as has been said, Swain had scattered them through the farms to help in getting in the crops.

Ingrid was quieter and less sullen than her wont after Swain's return home; and she did not, as she had the year before, oppose objections to moving from Stikleborg. Erik commented upon this several nights after their arrival at the steading, but Swain laughed at him.

"The Irish cat has learned her lesson," he said. "We have no trouble with her any longer."

Erik wagged his head solemnly.

"What did I say before?" he returned. "A woman raises children or trouble."

"She has children to raise," answered Swain.

"Oh, for those two she no longer has any

[1] Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel.

care. She leaves them all day to the bower maidens, and has since they were weaned."

Swain frowned.

"I am glad you mentioned this," he said. "I should have realized that she was not a proper person to rear them. In the Spring I will send them North to my mother, Asleif."

Erik agreed that this would be a wise policy, and they turned their discussion to the question of shedding over the dragons at Stikleborg, arguing as to whether they should leave all in the water until Swain had been to Lund or drag up at once such as he would not use. They decided to leave them in the water, as the harvest would be reaped by the end of the week, and in another week Swain could compass his voyage to Lund. Then Erik had a last horn of ale, and they went to bed.

Toward morning Swain was aroused by a confused clamor outside the house. His couch was beneath a small window high in the wall and parallel to the skalli's entrance door, and he climbed upon a stool to peer out. There was a fog, so that the dark was dripping with pearly gray moisture, and it was impossible to see more than a spear's length off; but Swain had sharp ears, and he heard the shuffling of many feet, the muttering of voices, and the occasional clink of a sword-blade on shield or mail-coat. He did not stay to hear more, for he knew that visitors who approached by stealth at that hour could be up to no good.

He leaped softly from his perch, and crossed to Erik's couch, covering the Icelander's mouth with one hand he whispered in his ear—

"Enemies at the door!"

Erik sat bolt upright, and seized helm, sword and shield in three consecutive movements from the stool beside him.

"Who?" he whispered back.

"I cannot see; but there are many."

"We can hold the skalli until help comes from the outlying steadings," suggested Erik.

"No," denied Swain. "They would fire us—and we must think of Ingrid and the sons. Come!"

They slipped into the shadowy mystery of the hall, which was barely illumined by the embers on the hearth, and crossed it to Ingrid's door. Inside the bower Swain felt his way to the couch. and fumbled with his hand to cover her lips, lest she should scream. She was not there!

Faintly, he heard the creak of an opening door, the shuffling of feet on trodden dirt, the *sh-shrring* of trampled rushes. Erik stole up beside him.

"They are in, Swain."

"Yes, and the Irish cat leading them," muttered Swain grimly.

Erik made a quick pass over the couch.

"At any rate, she is not here," he agreed. "Well, do we die here, Swain, or elsewhere?"

"Nowhere, little man," whispered Swain. "We will take the sons, and flee."

There was a door between Ingrid's bower and the chamber in which the children lay. On a stool in one corner a night lamp of whale-oil burned. One of the bower maidens started up with fearful face, clutching her furs around her, at sight of the two armed men who stole through the shadows.

"Up, girl!" commanded Swain. "There are enemies in the skalli. Take the babes."

She reached for robe and shoon, but Swain shook his head.

"There is no time. Haste!"

He caught her arm, and pulled her to the outer wall of the room, where, high under the eaves, was another such window as that through which he had spied upon the enemies who had thought to surprize him as he slept. The girl—Ragna by name—he bundled up in his arms, kicked a stool before him to stand upon and thrust her through the opening.

"Hold to my hands," he bade her. "Now drop."

He turned, and Erik behind him, held up the squirming piles that were his sons.

"Good warriors, these," growled the Icelander. "They take bad luck without yelping."

Swain passed them out the window to the maid without reply. Then hauled himself through, dropped to the ground and turned to assist Erik down. As the Icelander dropped beside him there came a shout from the hall.

"Torches, here! Our birds have flown!"

"Holdbodi's voice," exclaimed Erik.

Swain stood, listening.

A second voice, deeper, more resonant, bitter with hatred, called:

"Watch the rear! Make a ring, carls! Torches to smoke them out!"

"Ha," mumbled Swain. "That is Olvir Rosta."

A woman's voice wailed before Erik might answer him.

"The devil is his friend! After him, Holdbodi, or he will escape—and if he gets free your life is not worth a rusty dagger, or mine, either."

"It seems that Ingrid has had a hand in this matter, also," commented Erik.

Swain cursed in his beard.

"I will attend to all of them," he snarled. "Her fears were not without cause. But now we must run from here as fast as we can."

He and Erik took the two children from Ragna's arms, and with her ran in and out between the scattered outbuildings of the steading, taking advantage of the shadows, until they came to a ravine which protected them from observation. Here they halted a moment, watching the glare of flames behind them; and Swain sent Ragna to raise a number of his housecarls who had been lodged in an outlying barn. Erik likewise ventured back a short distance to call up a group of farmers and servingmen who had been roused by the uproar and were wandering about in bewilderment. One of these men had a ludr-horn, and at Erik's suggestion he sounded it with all the strength of his lungs.

Presently, Ragna returned with the housecarls from the barn, and men began to drift down from the village nearby. From the surrounding hills and valleys came the blasts of other horns, as the folk of the different steadings were awakened, and passed on the alarm. And Swain knew that very shortly he should have a large force at his disposal. So he bade Ragna take the children, and hide them in a little wood, and with the men who had joined him he climbed up from the ravine and took his stand upon a hillside within view of the flames of Scaurfell steading.

"See how foolish it is to plot any deed with a woman," he said, as the invaders caught sight of his party and commenced to stream toward them. "She told them that they could surprize me, and they believed that they could, and therefore they did not even stop to cast a ring around the skalli, as they would have had they acted alone. I have had my fill of women, Erik. They are stones about men's necks."

"Some men must have sons," rejoined Erik.

"And having them need no longer be burdened," answered Swain savagely. "When this is over I will give Ingrid fitting punishment."

"Give her to Holdbodi," suggested Erik. "Punish both of them."

"I will place her where she can no longer make trouble for men," said Swain.

"Humph," said Erik. "We have not yet caught her."

"We will," replied Swain with confidence. "I shall meet the onset with these men here. In the meantime, do you leave us and gather together our friends as they come up. Then, instead of falling upon Holdbodi and Olvir in scattered parties, they can strike all together; and in that way we shall shatter our enemies."

Erik said this was a wise plan, although he was reluctant to abandon Swain to confront such odds as he must meet at first; but he finally agreed to it, and ran off just as Olvir and Holdbodi came to the foot of the hillside. Their men were considerably winded, and they rested for a while before they commenced to climb the hill in order to come at Swain's company, who had formed a shield-ring upon the very summit of the hill, thus having the advantage of being able to strike down at their enemies, who must always be a little distance below them.

When Olvir, who was a warrior of much prowess and craft, perceived Swain's plan, he arrayed his men in a solid column, and ordered Holdbodi to do likewise with his Sudreyarmen. There were upwards of three hundred of the invaders, and Swain with all the accessions that had come to him had no more than a fourth as many. But Swain had as much craft as Olvir, and as soon as he saw where the two attacking columns must strike, he concentrated his people at those points, leaving only a thin screen of men to guard the rest of the hilltop.

Olvir and Holdbodi tramped leisurely up the hill. By now the darkness had lifted, but the fog persisted, and everything showed gray and indistinct. Olvir's men, Icelanders and outlaws of all the North countries, loomed gigantic in the mist. Holdbodi's folk showed like distorted, hairy gnomes. Their eyebrows, their moustaches, their garments, even their weapons dripped with moisture.

At the break of the hill the attackers halted, and Olvir stepped from their ranks,

his squat figure, with immensely long arms, distorted out of all proportion by the tricky light.

"Stand forth, Swain," he called. "I have waited for long this hour."

Swain stepped from the shield-wall.

"It is to be seen that you finally became tired of running away, Olvir," he answered. "You have gained little honor in recent years."

"Yet it was you who ran today," retorted Olvir. "The others of your family did not flee when I slew them. There were your father and Valthiof; they came out of the skalli at Dungelsbae to die upon our steel. And Gunni stood to the last on *Seabroth's* poop. Only you fled from me, you whose sole vengeance has been to burn Frakork, my mother, an old woman."

"And a foul witch," replied Swain with heat. "It ill becomes you to talk of running, you who feared to meet me alone in *Deathbringer*, ship to ship, after the fight off Jarlsness. There never was a time, Olvir, when you would fight any man with equal numbers. You must always come by stealth in the dark."

There was a *hiss-ss-s* in the fog, and a spear clanged into Swain's shield.

"Who cast that?" cried he.

"Yes, who cast it?" demanded Olvir. "Did I not say Swain was to be saved for me?"

"I threw it," answered Holdbodi's voice after a slight interval. "There is too much delay. Slay Swain, and be done with it."

Swain laughed in derision.

"It is not in you to slay me, Holdbodi," he mocked. "Nor any other."

"Men will say differently tomorrow," returned Holdbodi. "And tomorrow I shall sit in your place, with Ingrid beside me."

Swain snatched up the spear from the ground at his feet.

"What is that you say?" he shouted.

Holdbodi grew bolder and swaggered out of the fog until he stood revealed against the dim ranks of his followers.

"I say that Ingrid, who arranged our coming here, so that she might be rid of you, Swain, will sit with me in your place tonight," he boasted. "And we will laugh often as we speak together——"

Swain flung the spear at him with such violence that it drove through his thigh, below the bottom of his mail shirt, and pierced the soft ground of the hillside to a depth of two palms, pinning Holdbodi on his side. His shriek of pain was eerie in the moist grayness.

"I think you will pass your evening in another wise," remarked Swain. "And now, what have you to say, Olvir?"

"This," returned Olvir, casting his spear.

Olvir Rosta was the most powerful spear-thrower in the North. Also, Swain had not had time to don his mail-shirt before fleeing from the skalli, and he knew that while he might be able to fend Holdbodi's spear with his shield, Olvir's would strike through shield and all but the stoutest armor. So he cast himself to one side upon the ground, and Olvir's spear flew over him, slaying one of the farmers in the shield-wall behind him.

Swain sprang nimbly to his feet.

"Try again, Olvir," he cried. "That was mis-cast."

"The ax is surer," returned Olvir, taking that weapon from his belt. "Fall on, all."

A great shout answered him, and his men poured up the hill at his back in a dense mass. Holdbodi's men, too, came on at the word, but they had lost heart when their leader fell, and they did not strike the shield-wall with the same impact as the Icelanders, who, as many skalds have sung, are the stoutest of warriors, being, for the most part, men of good blood and inured to all manner of hardships.

The men Swain had told off to meet the Sudreyarfolk held them with little difficulty at the verge of the hill, but when Olvir's column hit the shield-wall it bent in, notwithstanding the best efforts of Swain, himself, who met Olvir blade to blade. There was a great clattering of weapons and a mighty stamping and shouting, and the heavy air became impregnated with the sour smell of sweating bodies and the hot, acrid stench of blood. Gaps opened in the shield-wall, and at Swain's shouted summons men flew from other points to stop them. The line receded, step by step, stopped, swayed forward for an instant, then gave ground again, as the irresistible weight of superior numbers began to tell.

With a shout, the tail of Olvir's column flowed round the scantily-guarded flank of Swain's wall and smote it in the rear—and it flew to pieces. What had been an

ordered battle, men fighting shield to shield in regular formation, became a scattered affair of individual and group combats. Swain, himself, gathered a dozen men who were nearest to him, and strove to carry the fight to the enemy, hewing through their ranks in an effort to come up with Olvir, who was raging across the hilltop, scattering death with his huge ax.

But his vengeance was not to be achieved. A great wail came suddenly from where the Sudreyarfolk pounded the remnants of Swain's other detachment, and the jubilant shouting of many men in the fog.

"Run! Run! The Islandmen are upon us!"

"At them, Swain's folk!"

"Hold, Swain!" That was Erik's voice. "We are coming!"

Olvir Rosta stayed his advance, head cocked on one side to listen. Then his bull voice boomed over the confusion.

"Olvir's men to the strand! To the ships, all my folk!"

"Bide, Olvir," shouted Swain hoarsely. "Stand to it."

Olvir laughed as he ran over the edge of the hill.

"This is your day, after all, Swain. Another time."

"Be a man, you cur! Wait! You shall fight me, man to man, the winner to go free!"

But no answer came from the mist, and Swain stumbling in pursuit, almost fell upon the spears of his own people rushing along the side of the hill after the wreck of Holdbodi's men. They recognized him in time, and with him to lead them, took up the pursuit of the enemy. Past the steading, a charred ruin, outhouses still smoldering; past a little group of women clustered around one who wrung her hands and moaned; past stray corpses and discarded weapons on to a road which led to a disused cove on the southeastern coast. Men reinforced the pursuit at every cross-road, dropped from every cliff, appeared from scaur and gulley. But Olvir was wary and warwise. At each defensible place he left a small guard of berserk fighters, who died to the last man to give their comrades time to escape.

By mid-morning the mist was gone, and a watery sun shone down upon the running fight; but it was of scant use to Swain, and served principally to enable him to watch the embarkation of his enemies upon three dragons which were pushed off from the beach before his men were even within arrowshot. Helpless himself, because his longships were miles away at Stikleborg, he stood at the water's edge in sullen resentment, and raised his sword in a last gesture of defiance. Far across the leaden waters, a figure leaped upon the stern gunwale of the rearmost ship, and likewise heaved an ax aloft. No words could have carried across that broadening gap, but both men read the meaning without effort, implied threat and promise in one.

IX

WHEN Swain returned to Scaurfell he was met by Erik and a multitude of the Manfolk.

"We have Holdbodi and Ingrid secured in a barn here," said Erik. "What is it your pleasure to do with them?"

"Fetch out Holdbodi," replied Swain briefly.

The Sudreyarman was carried from the barn and placed on the ground in the full glare of the fire by which Swain sat. He was unable to walk or stand erect because of the wound in his thigh, but he groveled on his face in front of Swain and pleaded for mercy.

"Mercy?" replied Swain. "I will show you as much mercy as I would a fox I found raiding the poultry."

"But I will tell you everything," protested Holdbodi. "I will tell you where Olvir is fled to."

"Tell," commanded Swain.

And Holdbodi fearfully whined out the story of how Olvir Rosta had come to him secretly at Liodhus in the past Winter, and suggested that they operate together to slay Swain and seize his possessions in Man; and how in the Spring they had both met with their men at Lund, and fortified themselves there, and as soon as they had determined that Swain was gone on his usual viking cruise, he, Holdbodi, had been sent to spy out the land.

"It was she who plotted last night's deed," he clamored. "It was not I, Swain. She planned it all. She told me where we should land, how we should approach the house. She promised to let us in without rousing you. She——"

"When did she promise this?" broke in Swain. "When you saw Erik at Stikleborg?"

"No, she made a sign to me during that visit to come again, and I came in the night afterward, and——"

"When? How?"

"Two nights after. We pretended to sail away, but we did not go far, and the second night we returned, and I landed quietly and climbed the walls of the borg and rapped upon her window."

Swain's face was blacker than ever.

"None knew of this?"

"I told Olvir afterward. He—he——"

"What said he?"

"No, you——"

Swain glowered down at him.

"Tell!"

"He said I should have her, and a fair half of the island."

"And she?"

"She was—was—willing. Oh, don't slay me, Swain! I'll be thrall to you; I'll serve you as none——"

"Take the snake away and make an end of it," ordered Swain curtly.

Holdbodi's shrieks were smothered in the darkness.

"And what of Ingrid?" inquired Erik curiously.

Swain roused himself.

"Yes, bring her forth, and muster three ships' crews. We march to Stikleborg at once."

When Erik led out his prisoner, sullen-faced and vicious, she flared at him:

"Go on! Make an end of me. You can tell Swain I did not fear him."

Erik surveyed her quizzically.

"Swain is gone on before, lady. It may be he will acquaint you with your doom later."

"Doom?" she spat. "What doom? At the worst, he can slay me."

"It is in my mind that you are very ignorant concerning your husband," replied the Icelander.

And no more would he say to her, however she badgered him.

They came to Stikleborg, and weary as they all were with marching and fighting, Swain bade run out *Deathbringer* and two other longships, loaded them full of men, with necessary provender, and headed southeast for Lund with a favoring wind. The rest of that night and the next day most of the crews slept, lying upon rowing-benches and in gangways; but thereafterward they were refreshed and they continued toward their destination without any untoward incident.

Ingrid was confined in the poop-cabin of *Deathbringer*. She saw none save Erick, who carried her food and water. Twice she called through the door to Swain, but the second time he came to her with such a look upon his face that she cowered, screaming, in the farthest corner of the cabin.

Lund they drew blank. There were signs that Olvir had stopped there after his flight from Man, for the stores inside the borg which he and Holdbodi had built were sorely depleted; but no human being remained to tell which way he had gone. And Swain, without a word, ordered his ships run out and continued southward.

Three days later, despite contrary winds, they came at nightfall to the Syllingar and ran into the harbor of the island wherein was situated the monastery at which Swain had stopped once before. He summoned Erik, with a dozen men to attend him, had Ingrid brought from the poop, and landed.

"What is this place?" she babbled, peering about her at the wild mingling of sea and sky and the insignificant dots of land between.

Nobody answered her.

"Will you murder me here, Swain?" she cried. "Was it too much kindness to slay me at home or to drown me in the sea? Must you carry me to this wretched haunt of devils and——"

Swain looked at her, and she became still, sobbing to herself in a frenzy of fear.

At the monastery gate Swain spoke with the gray-bearded old monk who had told him of having witnessed the passage of Olvir's dragon, escaping from the fray off Jarlsness.

"I have a woman here," said Swain simply. "I desire you to keep her for me."

The monk tossed up his hands in horror.

"Impossible! It is against our vows even to look at a woman."

"I might burn your monastery," considered Swain aloud.

The monk grasped his sleeve.

"No, no! You need only sail on to the next island—that little one where the light twinkles, in the east. There is a house of

holy women where your charge could be well cared for."

"Could she get out?" demanded Swain.

"Get out! Why, she would not want to——"

"She might. I must be certain that she stays where I place her."

"That you must arrange with the abbess," replied the monk. "Doubtless a suitable gift——"

"Or a sincere threat," remarked Swain. "I grasp your meaning. And let me caution you to use your influence with the abbess to cause her to obey the commands I lay upon her, for if, for any cause, this woman escapes, I shall hold your establishment as well as hers to blame; and I will not leave one stone standing upon another."

Late that night the abbess of the nunnery on the adjoining island, the most remote establishment of religion in all the world, was called to her gate by a party of helmed vikings, whose heavy tread and clashing weapons sent a shiver of dread from end to end of her house. To her Swain explained his needs.

"This woman is my wife. She is a bad woman. She is a source of trouble for men. She is vain and wicked and selfish, and she thinks only of herself. I wish you to take her among you and keep her for the rest of her days. She is never to pass your walls again."

He paused and took from one of his men a heavy leathern bag, which he emptied before the abbess' eyes. A torrent of jewels and precious things cascaded from it.

"This will pay for your trouble," he added.

His terrible, cold blue eyes bored into the old woman's pale face.

"I am Swain Olaf's son," he said. "You will have heard of me. No man stands before me and lives. Do what I say, and I will see that your establishment is unharmed by the viking folk. Let this woman get away from you, and I will wreck your house, and sell you and your people into slavery in Serkland."[1]

The abbess bowed.

"It shall be done," she promised. "You need have no fear."

Erik led forward Ingrid to the abbess' side.

"I wish you joy of her, lady," remarked the Icelander. "She is a rough-mouthed filly."

[1] North Africa.

The abbess gave her a chill look.

"We have ways to handle such," she said.

Ingrid burst into a passion of wailing.

"Swain, Swain, Swain! Will you bury me alive in my youth? Will you give me to a living death?"

"Yes," replied Swain, "for you would have buried me in very death, and your sons with me. You fool! Do you think Olvir Rosta would have let children of mine live?"

And he turned on his heel and departed, heedless of the screams that followed him. No man ever saw the Lady Ingrid again. She goes out of this story as she went out of Swain's life and out of the world of living folk. A veil shut her off from her kind.

X

SWAIN sold his lands in Man, together with all the rights pertaining to them, to a Bretland Jarl, and with such of the Manfolk as cared to share his lot and his own housecarls and his two sons he went north in that Autumn to the Orkneys.

"I am no man to dwell an outlander," he said to Jarl Rognvald who welcomed him gladly. "And I would rather be a plain boendr in the Orkneys than King in Man, for a man savors the true zest of life only among his own kind."

"Your words prove to me that you have gained in wisdom, Swain," replied the Jarl merrily. "And if you care to take an Orkney wife, I am sure that Bishop William will see that the necessary——"

"One marriage is enough," interrupted Swain. "Having lived through it, I am not of a mind to tempt the gods again. I have enough to do in raising my sons and caring for my property, aside from the fact that I have yet to slay Olvir Rosta."

"That is a bad business," said Jarl Rognvald soberly. "If you and Olvir do not slay each other shortly, one or the other of you, you are like to be the death of every one in the North."

"What I can, I do," returned Swain, shrugging his shoulders.

Nevertheless, what Jarl Rognvald said was true, as all men agreed in future years. This feud was a sorry burden to folk who had not been born when it began.

From Orphir Swain journeyed to Gairsey

where his mother greeted him with much pride. To her alone he bent his head.

"I have fared ill, mother," he said. "I have let Olvir slay Gunni, and twice more escape me; but I have brought you two sons to succeed us, and we are richer for my venturings."

Asleif kissed his forehead.

"Gunni died sword in hand, a ring of slain around him," she answered, her lined face very serene. "No man could ask more, nor could a mother desire a better death for her son. We will endeavor to bring up these younglings to be worthy to take his place. As for Olvir's escape, well I know it did not happen for want of your efforts."

For the next few years Swain remained at home, improving his lands and purchasing additional property in Caithness and Hrossey. All men who came to him he received into his employ. At Gairsey he maintained eighty housecarls at his own expense, and he reared upon his estate here a drinking-hall larger than any other in the North, where the mead bowl and the ale-barrel stood free and open from Winter's beginning to Winter's end. He had much honor, sitting always between Jarl Rognvald and Jarl Harald when they dispensed justice, and his sons grew into sturdy lads.

Those were the pleasantest years of his life. Olvir Rosta, men reported, had gone to Mikligard[1] where he took service in the Vaering Guards of the Greek emperor and soon won high rank, so that for a space peace reigned in the Orkneys and young men who desired adventure had to fare overseas with Jarl Harald, who was viking bound every Spring.

[1] Constantinople.

LITTLE KNOWN HISTORY

by C. B. Watson

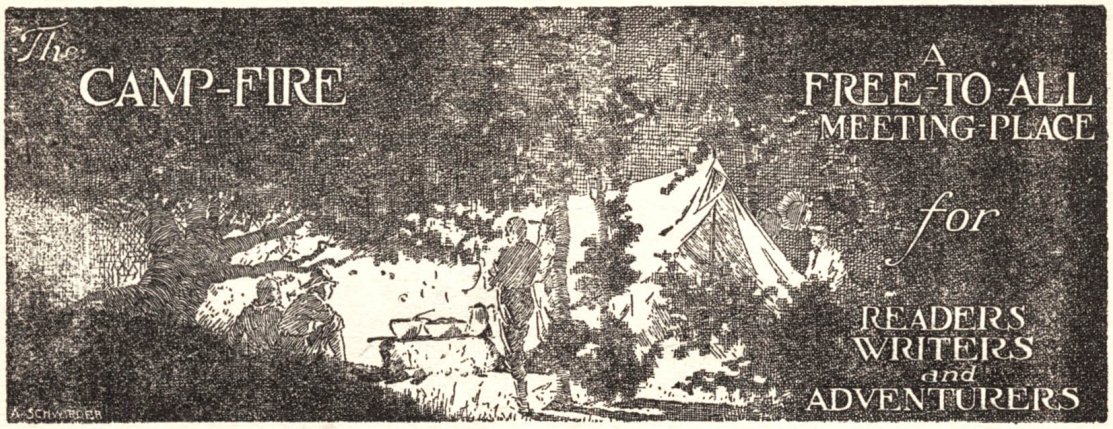
DURING the War of 1812 Manuel Lisa, the first of the great fur-traders, was made sub-agent by the Government and allowed five hundred dollars a year salary for his efforts in restraining the Upper Missouri Indians from joining with those of the Upper Mississippi in warring against the United States. That Lisa did not profit financially by this meager stipend is evidenced by the fact it did not pay for the tobacco he gave away each year among the uneasy tribes.

One of the great problems confronting our Government was to get messengers through to the Upper Mississippi with a peace-pipe and talk for the malcontents. The Sacs and Fox Indians were so hostile it was impossible for the messenger to pass through their country, and it was necessary to start the messenger up the Missouri to some point above the Omahas, thence across to St. Peter's River in Minnesota.

Governor Clark's first messenger offering peace was the One-Eyed Sioux, one of the very few Upper Mississippi Sioux who was friendly to the Americans. The One-Eyed Sioux offered his services to Governor Clark of Missouri when he learned that Joe Renville and Little Crow were to lead a big band of warriors against the Americans. Receiving his commission and a peace talk, he went with Lisa up the Missouri to the river Jacques (James River, S. Dakota) and crossed to Prairie du Chien, where he was seized and imprisoned and threatened with death. He refused to tell his errand. Finally liberated, he visited various Sioux tribes and delivered his message.

The peace commissioners were still hard at work, trying to send more messengers through. Few men cared to volunteer for the dangerous task. Joseph La Barge, father of Captain Joseph La Barge, whose biography is a history of the white man on the Missouri, did try, but could not penetrate the Sac and Fox country. But a Lieutenant Kennedy did make the trip, via the Missouri and Prairie du Chien, the route followed by the One-Eyed Sioux.

Lisa held the Missouri tribes in hand, but spent no time with peace-pipes. He organized a strong war-party and hurled them against Great Britain's allies, the Iowas. When peace was declared Lisa had several thousand Indians about to take a path against the Mississippi tribes.



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.

ARTHUR O. FRIEL comes across with several things in connection with his novelette in this issue:

There are a few sizable chunks of truth in "The Thirty Gang." For instance:

A COUPLE of years ago Ramón Rodriguez (his real name), a foreman for a San Fernando balata man, attacked an Indian girl on the Cunucunuma. Except for the fact that he did not attempt to carry her to the Orinoco, but left her in the bush, what followed was exactly as I have related. The avengers made no attack on Ramón's crew; they got the guilty man and got him very thoroughly; and then they turned back into the jungle and let the crew go out to tell the tale. They knew perfectly what that meant, too. So when they returned to their tribe-house they calmly gathered their effects and vanished into the mysterious mountains to the north. They have never come back.

The raid of *Coronel Bayona* in the Maquiritare country, *via* the Caura and the Ventuari, with its accompanying brutality, also is fact. He did not carry men down the river as slaves, however; it was an expedition of wanton murder and fiendishness against unsuspecting "Indian dogs." Unfortunately there was no *Black White* to take his trail, and he traveled fast enough to evade retribution from the unorganized Maquiritares. During one of his halts he had a Maquiritare prisoner tied to a tree and beaten to death merely for his amusement. He himself was one of Tomás Funes' boot-licking brutes (hence the self-conferred title of "Coronel") and, when his boss was killed, he fled to Brazil. I hope somebody has shot him before now, but, as I am not sure of it, I am changing his name.

Another San Fernando gang who later started up the Ventuari, however, had to turn tail before they came within many miles of the Maquiritare hills. In spite of their guns, they got thoroughly licked by a bunch of Yavaranos, and most of them became food for the *caribes* instead of returning to San Fernando.

Working balata by terrorizing and enslaving Indians is very old stuff in the up-Orinoco country. It's still done—oh Lord, yes. The Indians fight back when they can, and some tribes have proved themselves distinctly dangerous to meddle with.

IN A way, I'm sorry that I have to portray the men of San Fernando de Atabapo in such an unfavorable light. As previously stated, I got along very well with those who were in the town when I was there, and some of them were darned good scouts. At the same time, the place is what it is, and in Funes' time it was what it was, and there's no getting away from facts. If I tried to depict that burg as anything else than a murderers' roost (at any rate between 1913 and 1921, which is the time of this story) I'd be a liar and a fool. *Paco Peldóm* and *Jaime Pecoro* and their gangs were types only too well known in the "Rio Negro" country.

The "rifle accident" which *Diego* tries on *Loco León* is old stuff in San Fernando. In fact, if there's any form of plain or fancy assassination unknown to that town it's one that's been forgotten since prehistoric days.

There was one real man in Funes' "army"—the Amalio Lopez mentioned in this tale. That was his real name, and he is an unsung hero. He fought to the last for Funes, and when he fell mortally wounded he refused to have his wounds stanched, preferring to die in the service of his doomed Coronel. It was a noble sacrifice for a most ignoble master.

AS FOR the poison used by *Loco León*—well, let an old-time adventurer tell it—Sir Walter Raleigh, who in 1595 journeyed a little way up the Orinoco and had a tough time of it. In his report on what he learned there he stated:

"There was nothing whereof I was more curious than to find out the true remedies of these poisoned arrows. For besides the mortality of the wound they make, the party shot endureth the most insufferable torment in the world, and abideth a most ugly and lamentable death, sometimes dying stark mad, sometimes their bowels breaking out of their bellies; which are presently discoloured as black as pitch, and so unsavory as no man can endure to cure or to attend them. And it is more strange to know that in all this time there was never Spaniard, either by gift or torment, that could attain to the true knowledge of the cure, although they have martyred and put to invented torture I know not how many of them."

Sir Walter ascribes the use of this infernal stuff to another tribe of Indians than the Maquiritares, but that does not mean that the Maquiritares and other nations were ignorant of it. For that matter, the Maquiritares themselves were unknown to Sir Walter, who stayed on the Orinoco, went only as far as the Rio Caroní (about sixty miles below the present Ciudad Bolívar)and saw only those Indians who came to meet him. The only poison with which I personally came into contact down there (except that in the systems of sundry snakes which came a-visiting) was the *curare* commonly used by the blowgun sharpshooters—and I took good care that none of that got under my hide. But I have little doubt that those usually good-natured sons of the highlands could, if they wished, produce a war-venom as bad as that used by *Loco León*.

SPEAKING of poisons, here's something which the anti-tobacco crusaders probably would include under that head, but which I and my crew inhaled without permanent impairment of health: black Brazilian tobacco rolled in rectangles of *Adventure* magazine paper. On the Ventuari I ran out of cigarets and eke of rice papers and *tabari*, and the only thing smokable left was that Brazilian tobacco (obtained at San Fernando, and very scarce and precious there) wrapped in scraps of *Adventure*. The combination was so strong it nearly knocked us cock-eyed. But we not only survived—we got so used to it that when we came out to a point where we could again buy regular Venezuelan *cigarrillos* (which are pretty stiff smokes) we grumbled because they had no punch!

I do not recommend this combination, except to desperate men. Anybody desiring to try it out, however, can get about the same effect by smoking full-strength perique rolled in a piece of this page. Before lighting, sit down in a sand-pile. Then you won't get bruised when you fall over.—A. O. F.

THE following letter contained also some good suggestions for organizing the efforts of Camp-Fire against these anti-weapon laws, but *Field and Stream*, 25 West 45th Street, New York City, with their organized campaign, are the ones to whom all of us should turn for this purpose.

Berryville, Virginia.

Some time ago, when temporarily editing the local newspaper, and after reading what you had to say *in re.* the "Anti-Weapon" law, I wrote an editorial setting forth the situation and bringing to the attention of the readers of the paper, largely composed of isolated small farmers, what such a law would mean to them and their womenfolks.

COMMENT on the editorial was, without a dissenting voice, that such a law would expose the women of the South to untold danger; would be resisted by force, if necessary, and would lead to a great increase in lynchings and other measures of vengeance, possibly against innocent persons, owing to the feelings engendered by the rapidly increasing outrages which would undoubtedly occur.

Many commentors stated that, in their opinion, no sane legislative body would consider an act which would be so fatal to the safety of the large body of isolated country women throughout the South and Southwest. The mere idea of such a law being even considered was beyond their understanding.

SOMETHING from William Byron Mowery concerning his story in this issue. The word "livyere" worried us and we wrote asking him for its exact meaning. As you'll see or already know, the meaning is so very plain and obvious that we missed it altogether.

Austin, Texas.

Perhaps you know that the Quebecquois in the days of Radisson began to call themselves "habitants" to distinguish themselves from the roving bush-lopers and from the fishermen who went back to France in Winter. The term is still universally used. The Labradorite translated the word into

"livyeres" (live here) to distinguish themselves from the Newfoundland cod fishermen who visit the coast for a few months in Summer, and from the wandering fur-hunters. So "livyere" means a familied man who lives on the coast the year around, or a trapper or hunter who is settled about a fort or trading station.

I anticipate somebody rising and yelling that "kiliutok" or "pilintok" means an Innuit instrument more like a meat-chopper than a knife. "Kiliutok" has been taken over from the Innuit and means almost any kind of knife, from the *oo-la-ra* (a woman's dainty garment cutter) to the *wulu* (big skin-scraper), though it is usually applied to a bone or ivory-handled skinning instrument with a slightly bowed back, thick blade and keen point—in other words, an abbreviated but vicious simitar—W. Byron Mowery.

THE following is much, much too deep for me, though I like its plea for independent thinking. Anyhow, it bears on our previous discussion concerning the Ark of the Covenant and, having once burst into the realm of metaphysics and the psychic, Camp-Fire might take this one more excursion. Any of you who may be particularly interested are asked to write to Mr. Thornton in our care instead of to Camp-Fire in general.

Aurora, Illinois.

Referring to the letter signed Anna Brockway Gray, M. D., in Camp-Fire regarding some of the theories worked out in some of Talbot Mundy's stories which I have read with keen interest I want to call the writer's attention to the works of Baron Karl von Rickenbach, an Austrian; Dr. Karl von Prel, a German; and Colonel De Rochas, a Spaniard, on the subject of *odic* or *odylic emanations*, some of the laws deducible regarding same, together with many interesting and curious experiments; and also to the works of Boirac, Joire and Broquet along similar lines.

TRUE, all these theories and researches were carelessly rejected after scant consideration because they failed to lie comfortably in the bed of the sophomoric science of a generation ago. More recent scientific progress, however, has demonstrated that many things prematurely rejected contained sound scientific truth. The X-ray demonstrated the existence of recordable light vibrations far beyond the range of our human senses. Radium and the breaking down of the atom demonstrated that alchemy and the transmutation of metals, which a generation ago were considered as supremely ridiculous, are not merely possibilities but probabilities to be reckoned with in the immediate future, laying the whole science of chemistry open for wide revision. Diacyanin slides proved the existence of *aura* beyond the scoffing of the incredulous. Old time alchemy premised as axiomatic the existence of four terrestrial "elements," fire, water, earth and air, and one celestial "element," *the ether*, and science, hard pressed to escape its own inevitable conclusions resulting from the non-continuity of physical or ponderable matter, has always accepted *the ether* as a continuous imponderable fluid substance filling all space not otherwise occupied, particularly the intermolecular and interatomic space the existence of which was inescapable in view of the laws of non-continuity, density and penetrability. It is this realm of *the ether* that we are at last beginning to invade.

It is now generally conceded that every living individual is surrounded by an envelope of radiant animal magnetism or *biogen*, the existence of which, although composed of ordinarily invisible intangible imponderable essences, is none the less perfectly susceptible of proof. This is apparently what Dr. Gray refers to as *atmosphere* although it is more usually called *aura* and was first observed and treated of in modern times about the middle of the last century by the writers above mentioned as *biod*. The knowledge of it is, however, far older than the middle of the last century, for the theory of animism runs back, like alchemy, to the lost sciences of the ancients, *atmosphere*, *aura*, *od* or *odyl*, and *the ether* being closely related to the Akasha of the Sankhya, the Alkahest of Paracelsus, the Generative Fire of Heraclitus, the Telsma of Hermes, the Living Fire of Zoroaster, and the Astral Light of the Kabala.

LET us therefore approach the subject with an open mind as befits our day and age, realizing, although we still lack much that must be rediscovered before we can understandingly piece together the garbled fragments which have come down to us of ancient learning, that the so-called occult sciences of the Middle Ages were but the distorted remains of half forgotten, misunderstood truths which had been lost through disuse and misuse, the real verities of which we are from day to day little by little stumblingly reclaiming and re-establishing in the course of the triumphant onward sweep of our own advanced scientific progress.

Certainly peculiarly sensitive persons in every generation have been psychically clairvoyant to the point of seeing *od* or *aura* more or less distinctly, but in the main they have been ridiculed and openly discredited by those less fortunate in their endowments, with the natural result that undoubtedly many who have had such powers have kept the fact scrupulously to themselves, both failing to develop their powers and frequently losing them through disuse rather than suffer ignominiously at the hands of skeptical materialism. However, with the advent of diacyanin slides it became possible for practically every one to see it more or less clearly and prove its existence for themselves. Unfortunately considerable eye-strain results from the protracted use of this artificial stimulus. Moreover, the ability to see by its use varies considerably with different individuals, so we must still remain largely dependent upon those gifted individuals having natural abilities along these lines for the data relative to these phenomena and, as such persons are comparatively rare and usually without sufficient scientific training to make reliable observations and classify the data arising out of them, the obstacles to intelligent research are still colossal. If you will read "The Country of the Blind," you will better grasp the manifold difficulties of the situation. Indeed, not until we begin to pick out and specially educate those endowed with these special powers, the same as we do our musicians and artists, etc., can we reasonably expect to make much real progress along these lines.

WITH all this in mind we will now proceed to consider what has been authoritatively laid down regarding *od* or *aura* both in conjunction with and apart from the entity or entities generating it.

First, it is cumulative; that is, it can be accumulated or stored up in suitable media just as static electricity can be accumulated or stored up in a leyden jar, or the emanations from radium can be absorbed or stored up in water, etc., and when so charged with *od* the media is said to be *odylized*.

Second, this *od* is surcharged with the mental attitude of the individual or individuals furnishing it at the time of *odylization* and its power and activity will vary directly with the concentration and intensity of their mentality or mentalities at such time.

Third, such a charge of *od* can be either added to or discharged in whole or in part from time to time, the same as a charge of electricity in a leyden jar.

Fourth, such a charge of *od*, like a charge of static electricity, tends to gradually dissipate itself as time passes, the length of time any medium is capable of retaining its effective *odylization* depending upon the nature of the medium and the strength of the charge of *od* originally or subsequently accumulated.

THE next phase to consider is that individuals affect one another, some consciously but most unconsciously, by their *od*, *aura* or *atmosphere* without spoken or written word, look or action. This is because *od* is a product of the subconscious and not of the conscious mind and consequently does not depend for its interaction upon the sensory nervous system. The ancients keenly appreciated this and believed that it radiated from the solar plexus, which they therefore termed the sun or the light of the body. Groups of individuals all concentrating on a group idea or purpose naturally develop a much greater *odic* force, frequently, in fact, sweeping all except exceptionally isolated or insulated individuals along with them like waters in a flood; witness a panicky day on 'change; a religious revival, or the coalescent mind of a mob.

Everything we wear or use, particularly those things we wear in contact with our bodies, becomes more or less *odylized* or impregnated with our personality or atmosphere and we leave a constant trail of it behind us wherever we go just like scent. Places and things frequently become *odylized* in varying degrees and where strong emotions have repeatedly released similar *odic* charges over considerable periods, this atmosphere is distinctly noticeable. It is easy to be brave in a pirates' cave, reckless in a gambling den, or reverent in a cathedral, in fact it is difficult to be otherwise.

MANY of the peculiar religious customs and beliefs, especially those dating back to the primitive churches and worships, are based on the lost knowledge of *odic* forces and charges. This was the real reason behind the Ark of the Covenant, the Breastplate of the High Priest, the Roman Eagles, and the Russian Icons; the faith in the efficacy of amulets, charms, fetishes, and sacred relics; and the use of the Chrism and Holy Water together with the Stations of the Cross, which in the early Church were merely twelve specially selected points around the Church marked by a cross cut in the stone upon which the Chrism was splashed in dedicating the edifice; because the ancients knew the advantages of using visible fulcrums upon which to concentrate the mentality of the masses. The whole worship of idols and and reverence for sacred images; voudouism and envoutement in effigy; and the old-time belief in the efficiency of blessings and cursings are likewise remnants of the same lost knowledge, for all these things to-day among civilized peoples are in themselves but empty forms save as our own personal belief may lend them artificial force unto ourselves only.

ALL this brings us directly to the question raised regarding the Ark of the Covenant and other possible similar phenomena such as Tutankhamen's Tomb, etc. During the time it was in regular use and for an indeterminate period thereafter it is not only possible but probable that due to the heavy *odic* charge in and upon it the Ark of the Covenant could and did kill the profane who opened it and brought disaster to whoever laid unlawful hands upon it regardless of their knowledge or beliefs concerning it, just as radium would burn and, if the quantity was sufficient, kill any one not handling it properly today. The Priesthood, including the Levites, knew of course just how to protect themselves and were consequently not harmed, just as those of our scientists using radium or the X-ray have learned how to safeguard themselves and their patients.

Therefore, if the Ark of the Covenant with all its original charge of *odic* force still intact could be placed before one of us today and we, even in complete ignorance of what it was, violated it, I firmly believe we would pay the penalty. But we must remember that this force, like a charge of static electricity, tends constantly to dissipate itself and consequently must at intervals be renewed. Now it is improbable that this has been done with the lost Ark of the Covenant, so that if it is still in existence it has probably long ago lost almost all the powers it at one time undoubtedly possessed. However, if a sufficient remnant of them did still exist in it, due to some secret of its construction, it would now harm Jew or Gentile alike because the secret knowledge of controlling these forces is as much lost to the Hebrew priesthood of today as it is to us.

FOR the same reason it appears improbable that Lord Carnarvon died as a result of the effects of a malific charge of *odic* force accumulated in or on something in or about Tutankhamen's tomb or vested in an elemental artificially created for that purpose although, sealed from contact as it has been, such a thing might not be impossible. Remember radium salts once isolated and refined will continue to give off their emanations almost indefinitely and you will more readily grasp the point, because we are entirely without reliable data regarding the lasting possibilities of *odic* charges generated by mass or group monoideism.

Egypt in the height of her power possessed almost superhuman knowledge but misused it, as Atlantis had done aforetime, and consequently like Atlantis slowly but surely destroyed herself. Moses, who led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, was skilled in all the secret lore of the Egyptians and appears to have introduced considerable of it, made over, into the Hebrew forms of worship and life. Unfortunately at the time Moses acquired this knowledge the Egyptians were already misusing or abusing

their powers, because whenever these powers are turned to selfish or destructive uses they eventually and inevitably react upon those so misusing them.

Consider the whole series of miracles wrought upon the Egyptians by Moses, each more destructive than its predecessor, and you will gain some faint appreciation of how terribly malific these forces can be when turned to destructive uses. Observe also that, while the Egyptian priests were able in part to duplicate the doings of Moses, their works were always markedly inferior and you will perceive that they had been losing, while Moses had been gaining, power, and since so great a difference could develop within the brief span of a human life, there seems scarce room to longer doubt the old legend of the destruction of lost Atlantis as the culminating episode of the selfish internecine struggle among their priesthood misusing their almost superhuman powers. Lastly note that both Moses and the Egyptians began their wonder works with the serpent, clearly proving the familiarity of both with the Black Magic of the Rites of Menroe. Then consider all the various miracles of Christ wherein the same power was invariably used in a constructive manner and you will appreciate the wonderful possibilities of these powers for good, and do not forget that Christ persistently refused even in the last extremity to loose his powers destructively against His persecutors.

APPARENTLY the ancient lore was never taught in the clear cold step-by-step fashion of our sciences of today, which are forever patiently struggling to lay bare the exact cause behind each effect. The vast majority who learned these things did so as the average person learns to use a radio set, with little definite comprehension of how or why it really works. They came to know that certain combinations produced certain results and did not in the main concern themselves how or why. Further, their practises usually contained a large surplusage of non-essentials which grew steadily by accretion until truth became smothered under a meaningless mass of empty form. Further, as those using these arts came to care only for the results they could produce by them to advance their own selfish ends, they guarded them more and more jealously and actively resented, even to the point of destroying, any and all attempts to deviate from their rule of thumb practises.

WILLINGNESS to serve in any capacity, no matter how humble, and sacrifice anything, even themselves, for the advancement of truth and knowledge was not in them, just as it is not in the average humanity of today. Those who can cheerfully and wholesomely endure to see others supplant them in undertakings to which they have given their all and rejoice in the advancement of the cause are few and far between and this unfortunate human weakness of selfishness is materially holding back human progress in many lines today just as it has always done throughout the centuries. That we have not been making greater psychic progress is due not so much to lack of ability as to the fact that the field has not appeared to offer the rich promises of financial gain, which represent selfish power today, that many other lines have. There have been, however, recently a number of epoch-making books written along psychic lines which I believe are destined to accomplish a great work in quickening the perceptions and concentrating the attention of all who read them upon the almost undreamed of possibilities lying dormant within us.

A last word in closing: for some who will read this the hidden pathway to the glorious South undoubtedly stands open. Ponder well before you set your untried feet upon it. The ancient landmarks are almost lost amid the sands of the ages. The dangers are imminent and terrible upon every side. Only he that endureth to the end shall be saved. A single mis-step may bring instant destruction. There are worse things than physical death. There is no promise of reward at the end, save as work well done brings ever the capacity and the responsibility to do a yet greater work well. He that goes does so for the great love of all humanity that is in him without hope of fee or reward. If, after weighing all this, you still desire above anything and everything else to enter upon this greatest of adventures, if you have no earthly ties or responsibilities to hinder you, if you are sure of yourself, of the steadfastness of your purpose, of your unflinching courage to meet and conquer the lions along the way, then commit yourself into the hands of your God and in faith and purity arise and make your progress.—HENRY V. THORNTON.

SOMETHING from Hermann B. Deutsch of our writers' brigade concerning one of the characters in his stories, a personal letter but one I think he'll not mind my sharing with you:

New Orleans, La.

Bob Sellers—the original of the *Bob Keller* stories—was killed a month or so ago by a negro he was just placing under arrest. Bob had just come back from the Conservation Commissioner's office where, in the presence of duly accredited witnesses he had released three beautiful cock Kentucky Cardinals which had been taken by a Cajan trapper, when he noticed three negroes hiding something in bundles of moss. They were trying to get away with poached muskrat skins. Bob promptly informed them they were under arrest. Two of the blacks submitted peacefully enough. The third plunged back into his cabin and came back out shooting. The first shot took Bob through the stomach. Bob's young son was with him, so Bob drew his gun, tried to raise it, couldn't, and then turned to Bob, Jr., and said: "He's got me, son; now you go get him." The son shot it out with the negro, wounded him, but not fatally, and the black escaped into the swamp.

They brought Bob in to the big red hospital on Prytania Street. He was operated on at once, and successfully; but his strength—which is underestimated rather than exaggerated in the *Bob Keller* stories—was his undoing. He came out of the ether delirious. Seven of us could not hold him down when he got it into his poor fevered head that he had to go out into the swamps to get that negro.

We clamped to his arms and legs, but he twisted and squirmed so that he ruptured his riddled body (he had been wounded four times, in all) and died. The longest day or night I live, I'll not forget his dying reproach to me: "You aren't playing a man's part, Hermann, holding me down like this, when I got to get that black —— that shot me."

Well, we organized a posse at once, and I spent

the next week in the swamps, waist-deep in water for the most part, with four bloodhounds and a pet German shotgun of mine. We got the negro on the sixth day, but it was a Cajan ranchman, Jean Grenier, who shot him in the back, instead of one of Bob's friends having shot him from in front. I was about two minutes and thirty seconds too late to do the shooting. However, if there is a consciousness after death, Bob'll know that his friends tried.

I AM sending you herewith the photographic evidence of a recent and very wonderful fishing trip to Manila Village. One strip shows my own classic features with those of Frank O. King, the Chicago illustrator. The aged, aged man is Miguel Mosquera, better known now as McGill Mosquito, who trains a pair of beautiful hounds, Napoleon and Lourenço by name, to hunt turtles for him. When the hounds strike a terrapin-trail they follow it, baying in a manner that would shame Caruso. Having found Mr. or Mrs. Terrapin as the case may be, the hounds will leap at it, causing the startled turtle to pull in its neck, to say nothing of feet and tail. Then the nearest hound will reach down and turn the turtle on its back, and bay, like a coon-dog who has treed his quarry, for Miguel. Jules Fisher buys all the old Manilaman—who is eighty years of age—can catch, for they're a great delicacy; and one on which we feasted royally during our visit.

The little scene shows the principal part of Manila Village—the store and the warehouse, between which, not shown in the picture, is the little screened bungalow on whose gallery you sit to watch a butter-gold moon climb out of Barataria bay and cleave a gold and silver path across the black waters of the gulf. Ah, well—

The long strip shows the shrimp dance—a part of Manila village platform where shrimp—principally for export to Japan—are sun-dried and then threshed by being danced out to grind the glassy, brittle hulls to powder, leaving only the rubbery dried shrimp to be packed in barrels. My own elongated figure is in the foreground. Jules Fisher is behind me and Frank King ahead of me.

INCIDENTALLY, I am sure there is a plot concealed somewhere in this: Two years ago I drove a flivver to San Francisco and back, being snowed in one day at Navajo, right between the Painted Desert and the Petrified Forest. Out of the storm there came to us one Bob Thomas, a radium prospector, and after he had thawed himself out I absorbed large earfuls of his life among the Zuñi Indians while we smoked and were warm and frowsty, and the swollen Rio Puerco growled at the foot of the clay bank whereon our cabin was perched. He told me of the ancestor-worship of the Zuñis, who deify turtles and frogs as their forebears, and lamented the fact that he couldn't get a real big god to worship.

I mentioned this to Jules Fisher while we swapped yarns in the moonlight on his screened gallery last week, and he promptly had Miguel Mosquera summoned and ordered him to produce three of the enormous white turtles which grow in those waters—regular sea-wolves, too; beside whom a shark is a mild, shrinking and merciful, kindly beast. Miguel has come through in noble fashion. I am trying to get in touch with Bob Thomas to notify him to let us know where he wants his little old gods shipped.—HERMANN B. DEUTSCH.

YOU'LL notice that beginning with this issue we've added a new feature to "The Trail Ahead," giving you a general line on what authors and stories are coming along in the near future. "Trail Ahead" has been covering the next issue and the new feature covers three more, giving you a slant each issue on what the next four issues of our magazine will bring you. I think you'll o.k. this "Still Farther Ahead" idea.

IN CONNECTION with his story in this issue a few words from Orville Leonard:

New Canaan, Connecticut.

"The Judgment o' God" is a bloody tale, but the country was a bloody country in the 80's. The little sun-warped saloon still stands, where seven Mexicans were shot and killed, just before the rest of the Mexican population of the town were driven out into the desert. A Mexican packer, a mighty genial and likable chap, told me the story: his big brown eyes were calm, and his voice was matter-of-fact while he told me that his little nine-year-old sister was shot and killed by a bullet fired through the barricaded door of their little 'dobe house.

The town had no such excuse as I have given Logan for running amuck. They were simply fired by blood-lust, mob-frenzy and, above all, by that destructive and foolish thing, racial hatred. And—it seems to me—particularly foolish where Mexicans are concerned; for no people are quicker to respond to kindness or reciprocate a favor.

I knew *Tim Clancy's* deputy. In a day when guns were used "promiscuous," Tim's habit was to enforce order with his fists. He rarely drew his gun. He met his death many years after, at the head of a posse while raiding a moonshine still.—ORVILLE LEONARD.

IT SEEMS strange. For years before our last war I was one of those who tried to stir Americans into preparing against war. They wouldn't stir. They said there wouldn't be any war; war was a thing of the barbarous past; we'd had the last one we'd ever have.

But war came. A war worse than the world had ever known.

Now, through these same columns, I am again one of those who try to stir Americans into preparing against war. This time, with the world in ferment, they can't say war is a thing of the past. They don't even argue. They're sick of the war idea and won't even talk about it. If they think of it at all, they dismiss the danger with "Well, if we do have one, we've proved we can get ready and lick the other fellow easily enough."

IN ONE way our success in the World War was a calamity for this country. It increased the size of our swelled head. Made us more cock-sure and careless than ever about our prowess in arms.

We forget the facts.

We had a year to get ready in. *And we needed every minute of that year!* When we finally declared war it was, so far as any immediate importance on land was concerned, only an empty declaration, a gesture meaning nothing. We had nothing to fight with. We had no men to do the fighting. Don't you remember that *year* of fevered preparation? And when we did get an army to the scene of action they were still unfit to fight until our experienced allies had given them further training.

That war was fought 3,000 miles from our boundaries. We could sit safe at home for a year and prepare for it.

We wouldn't have been safe even 3,000 miles away if another nation's fleet hadn't helped protect our coasts and coast cities from the far ranging enemy.

We feel proud of the size and speed of our preparation. Of our *year's* preparation. We forget that even a whole year's time was so inadequate that our preparation was too hasty and inefficient. And that our boys sent over there paid the cost of that haste and inefficiency. Many of them with their lives.

THE next war may not be 3,000 miles away. There will be no safe year for preparing. And we're *not* prepared now.

We have veterans now, to be sure. But modern warfare since 1914-18 changes and advances more in a month than it used to do in a year. And those veterans are not equipped.

Our next war will burst against our own coast. There will be scant warning, if any. As in the Russo-Japanese war, the attack may be made before the declaration of war.

Who will attack us?

Well, however little we may like to think so, nearly everybody hates us. Also we are rich and fat for plundering. The other nations are poor. Almost any of the larger ones, probably several together, may take a try at us.

Germany still nurses the "blood and iron" idea. And is not so weak as might appear from the manipulations of her capitalists. Or her very poverty might drive her to it—to recoup. An Anglo-German alliance is not so wildly improbable. Or Germany may go Bolshevist and unite with Russia to scourge the world.

France? Only reluctantly and belatedly did France sign the five-power naval limitation treaty. And refused to limit her submarines. Or limit anything for more than ten years. The next war will be one of chemicals and will be largely decided in the air. Germany has retained chemical supremacy, and France has attained air supremacy—a very heavy supremacy. She is preparing primarily against Germany, secondarily against England. The main point is that she is as ready for war as in Napoleon's day.

England? The Government speaks as a friend; the English people are more unfriendly to us now than in 1776 or 1812. There are points of friction. How many more of them will there be and how many will be too many? England, as always, will follow whatever policy will get England most. In today's tangled world politics, all played on very thin ice, who can say what will happen?

Russia? Bolshevist Russia? She has a standing army, trained and equipped, of more than a million men. Don't make the mistake of underestimating either the training or the equipment. And Russia, in spirit and intention, is already at war with all the world that is not Bolshevist.

Japan? Like us, rich after the war, but, not like us, prepared. Her population, crowded for space even before, has increased one-third in the last twenty years. She *must* have more room. The Japs do not thrive in extreme cold or extreme heat. China is her prey, but China is already densely populated. Where else is room for her expansion? Japs on our Pacific coast, in the Philippines, in Hawaii, reaching for foothold in Mexico and South America. And everywhere it is *we* who stand in her way.

THE Anglo-Jap alliance is no more. No formal existence. But Japan for years has policed India for England, while England in return backs Japan in China.

England would never fight her "Anglo-Saxon cousins?" Well, she did so twice. But not now? I hope not. Maybe she doesn't want to, but you can rest assured she will so play her cards that, if she feels

she has to attack us, she will be in good shape to do so.

Have you noticed that Canada is moving for an arrangement under which the British Empire can not draw her into a war without her formal consent? Looks like a move for peace. But perhaps England, not Canada, was responsible for that move. Certainly such an arrangement would be ideal for England's purposes in case she and Japan declared war on us.

SUCH a war would be a naval and air war. They could seize our outlying possessions and harry our coasts and bomb our cities with comparative ease and big results, while invasion of our mainland by armies would be a more difficult and less profitable attempt. England's fleet, along with Japan's, would be the major weapon.

Now consider. With Canada joining in the war against us, she would add practically nothing to that fleet, and, because of our far greater numbers and resources, our armies—ugly and distasteful as the thought is—could retaliate by invasion, thereby possibly taking from the British Empire one of its most valuable parts.

A very simple way for England to avoid that awkward happening is to arrange in advance so that Canada can not be "forced" into war by the Empire. If England and Japan declared war on us, the Canadian Government would refuse to take part. It would be backed in this by the Canadian people, for they and we have lived in peace for more than a hundred years, war between us is as repugnant to them as it is to us, and also, they, like the Australians and New Zealanders, have no warm spot in their hearts for the Yellow Peril.

So there you are. By this simple little move the British Empire loses nothing from its offensive power and protects itself absolutely against invasion of one of its most valuable parts, for Canada would be a neutral and sacred from any molestation. The English and Jap fleets would be undiminished and could have things pretty much their own way with Alaska and our island possessions. The Panama Canal would undoubtedly be blown up inside of twenty-four hours after war was declared and our navy would have to split in two, each half of it against a powerful navy, or unite in one ocean, if it could—leaving the other ocean and our other coast free to the enemy.

Why else would Canada bargain for freedom from the Empire's wars? Would she have kept out of the World War if she'd had freedom to refuse? Only a fool can think so, after her utter loyalty and devotion. Has she suddenly become less loyal and devoted? There seems no evidence of such a change. Then why this proposed arrangement to give her the opportunity to keep out of a war if she wishes? Or if the Empire wishes.

I'VE dwelt on this possibility of an Anglo-Jap offensive against us chiefly because the case shows how the improbable may after all be entirely possible. Certainly the example does not trace back to any anti-English feeling on my part. Some of you have accused me of being pro-English, some of being anti-English. I'm neither. Just pro-American. I have only one point to make:

We may very well have to face another war. Against what nation or nations I do not know. But there is small chance that we shall again have a year for preparation, and equally small chance that the war will again be 3,000 miles away from our coast. We are not prepared for such a war. We ought to be.

We are not a nation that seeks war. I do not think even our politicians have or will have any desire for aggressive war. And even our politicians, who foist so many disliked things upon us, would not dare try to foist an aggressive war upon us. For there is none of the "blood and iron" doctrine in the American people. We do not like war, being peaceable folk, and our attitude, traditional and actual, is to let the other fellow alone if he will let us alone.

But all the other fellows are carrying guns. Are we safe without a good gun of our own?

WORLD peace? How are we going to get it unless we lead the way by disarming? Go down into some gangster district and see how far you get toward general disarmament by going without a gun yourself. The world is pretty close to being a gangster district at present. There are only two ways to make a gangster district peaceable. One is to police it with adequate force. The other is to reform the gangsters. The reforming has to be done *before* it is safe for you to disarm yourself in the district.—A. S. H.

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2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
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18. Africa Part 1 Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria
ROBERT SIMPSON, care *Adventure*. Labor, trade, expenses, outfitting, living conditions, tribal customs, transportation.

19. ✠ Africa Part 2 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, Ile de Lerne, par Vannes, Morbihan, Brittany, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport. (*Postage* 12 *cents.*)

20. Africa Part 3 Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal and Zululand
CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, care Adventurers' Club of Chicago, 40 South Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Climate, shooting and fishing, imports and exports; health resorts, minerals, direct shipping routes from U. S., living conditions, travel, opportunities for employment. Free booklets on: Orange-growing, apple-growing, sugar-growing, maize-growing; viticulture; sheep and fruit ranching.

21. ✠ Africa Part 4 Portuguese East
R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc. (*Postage* 3 *cents.*)

22. Africa Part 5 Morocco
GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*. Travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

23. Africa Part 6 Tripoli
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, Morgan City, La. Including the Sahara Tuaregs and caravan routes. Traveling, exploring, customs, caravan trade.

24. Africa Part 7 Egypt, Tunis, Algeria
(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, ancient and modern; monuments, languages, races, customs, commerce.

25. Africa Part 8 Sudan
W. T. MOFFAT, 38 Bessborough St., Westminster, London, S. W. 1., England. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history. (*Postage* 5 *cents.*)

26. Turkey and Asia Minor
(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, geography, races, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

27. Bulgaria, Roumania
(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

28. Albania
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, care *Adventure*. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

29. Jugo-Slavia and Greece
LIEUT. WILLIAM JENNA, Plattsburg Barracks, New York. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

30. Scandinavia
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, care *Adventure*. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

31. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
FRED F. FLEISCHER, 464 Park Ave., West New York, N. J. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

32. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

33. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 424, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

34. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 424, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information.

35. Central America
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, languages, game, conditions, minerals, trading.

36. Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Border States of old Mexico—Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs, topography, climate, inhabitants, hunting, history, industries.

37. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, So. Pac. Extra Gang 21, S. P. Depot, San Francisco, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan; Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

38. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land and Northern Quebec
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Also Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern Ungava and Keewatin. Sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber, customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit. (*Postage* 3 *cents.*)

39. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping, aviation. (*Postage* 3 *cents.*)

40. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario
GEORGE L. CATTON, 94 Metcalfe St., Woodstock, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. *Postage* 3 *cents.*)

41. Canada Part 4 Hunters Island and English River District
T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. Fishing, camping, hunting, trapping, canoeing, climate, topography, travel.

42. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
ED. L. CARSON, Monroe, Wash. Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

43. ✠ Canada Part 6 Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin
REECE H. HAGUE, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel. (*Postage* 3 *cents.*)

44. ✠ Canada Part 7 New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Codrington, Ont., Canada. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper industry, water-power. (*Postage* 3 *cents.*)

45. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1436 Hawthorne Terrace, Berkeley, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, backpacking, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

46. Baffinland and Greenland
VICTOR SHAW, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

47. Western U. S. Part 1 Calif., Ore., Wash., Nev., Utah and Ariz.
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

48. Western U. S. Part 2 New Mexico
H. F. ROBINSON, 200-202 Korber Block, Albuquerque, N. M. Agriculture, automobile routes, Indians, Indian dances, including the snake dance, oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping; history, early and modern.

49. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.
FRANK MIDDLETON, 705 So. 1st St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

50. Western U. S. Part 4 Mont. and the Northern Rocky Mountains.
CHESTER C. DAVIS, Helena, Mont. Agriculture, mining, northwestern oil-fields, hunting, fishing, camping, automobile tours, guides, early history.

51. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country
OTTO M. JONES, Warden, Bureau of Fish and Game, Boise, Idaho. Camping, shooting, fishing equipment, information on expeditions, outdoor photography, history and inhabitants.

✠ (*Enclose addressed envelop with three cents in stamps—in Mr. Beadle's case twelve cents—NOT attached*)

52. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. WHITEAKER, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

53. Middle Western U. S. Part 1 The Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON (lately Capt. A. E. F.), care *Adventure*. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially, early history of Missouri Valley.

54. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), Editor *National Sportsman*, 275 Newbury St., Boston, Mass. Also the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big-timber sections.

55. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), Editor *National Sportsman*, 275 Newbury St., Boston, Mass. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

56. Middle Western U. S. Part 4 Mississippi River
GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton P. O., Ingram, Pa. Routes, connections, itineraries; all phases of river steamer and power-boat travel; history and idiosyncrasies of the river and its tributaries. Questions regarding methods of working one's way should be addressed to Mr. Spears. (*See next section.*)

57. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Automobile, motor-cycle, bicycle and pedestrian touring; shanty-boating, river-tripping; outfit suggestions, including those for the transcontinental trails; game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs.

58. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
HOWARD A. SHANNON, 631 East Fifth Street, Chattanooga, Tenn. Motor-boat equipment and management. Oystering, crabbing, eeling, black bass, pike, sea-trout, croakers; general fishing in tidal waters. Trapping and trucking on Chesapeake Bay. Water fowl and upland game in Maryland and Virginia. Early history of Delaware, Virginia and Maryland.

59. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville
HOWARD A. SHANNON, 631 East Fifth Street, Chattanooga, Tenn. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

60. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 424, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Alleghanies, Blue Ridge, Smokies, Cumberland Plateau, Highland Rim. Topography, climate, timber, hunting and fishing, automobiling, national forests, general information.

61. Eastern U. S. Part 5 Tenn., Ala. Miss., N. and S. C., Fla. and Ga.
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Box 432, Orlando, Fla. Except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

62. Eastern U. S. Part 6 Maine
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main St., Bangor, Me. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

A.—Radio

DONALD MCNICOL, 66 Broad St., Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

VICTOR SHAW, Shaw Mines Corp., Silverton, Colo. Territory anywhere on the continent of North America. Questions on mines, mining law, mining, mining methods or practise; where and how to prospect, how to outfit; how to make the mine after it is located; how to work it and how to sell it; general geology necessary for miner or prospector, including the precious and base metals and economic minerals such as pitchblende or uranium, gypsum, mica, cryolite, etc. Questions regarding investment or the merits of any particular company are excluded.

C.—Old Songs That Men Have Sung

A department for collecting hitherto unpublished specimens and for answering questions concerning all songs of the out-of-doors that have had sufficient virility to outlast their immediate day; chanteys, "forebitters," ballads —songs of outdoor men—sailors, lumberjacks, soldiers, cowboys, pioneers, rivermen, canal-men, men of the Great Lakes, voyageurs, railroad men, miners, hoboes, plantation hands, etc.—R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

D.—Weapons, Past and Present

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, ammunition and edged weapons. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district.)

1.—All Shotguns, including foreign and American makes; wing shooting. JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), Editor *National Sportsman*, 275 Newbury Street, Boston, Mass.

2.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers, including foreign and American makes. DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Lock Box 75, Salem, Ore.

3.—Edged Weapons, and Firearms Prior to 1860. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. LEWIS APPLETON BARKER, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), Editor *National Sportsman*, 275 Newbury St., Boston, Mass. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Tropical Forestry

WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 424, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

G.—Aviation

MAJOR W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR., General Airways System, Inc., Duryea Bldg., Connecticut Ave. at L. St., Washington, D. C. Airplanes; airships; aeronautical motors; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; aeronautical laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. No questions answered regarding aeronautical stock-promotion companies.

H.—STANDING INFORMATION

For **Camp-Fire Stations** write J. Cox, care *Adventure*.

For general information on **U. S.** and **its possessions,** write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash, D. C., for catalog of all Government publications. For **U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries,** the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

For the **Philippines, Porto Rico,** and customs receiverships in **Santa Domingo** and **Haiti,** the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For **Alaska,** the **Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce,** Central Bldg., Seattle, **Wash.**

For **Hawaii,** Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For **Cuba,** Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union for general information on **Latin-American matters** or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For **R. C. M. P.,** Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For **Canal Zone,** the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

National **Rifle** Association of America, Brig. Gen. Fred H. Phillips, Jr., Sec'y, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Wash., D. C.

United States **Revolver** Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

National parks, how to get there and what to do when there. Address National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

Uganda-Kongo Region

HOME of the gorilla:

Question:—"I am interested in Africa, especially that section around Uganda and the Kongo. I am most interested in the uncivilized parts. It would please me very much to learn more of it, and so I decided to write.

1. How many types of animals are there within these two sections?

2. Does the savage gorilla still inhabit the Kongo?

3. Are the savage tribes completely subdued by the whites?

4. What are the most destructive diseases of this region?

5. Is the country densely populated with tropical forest?

6. Do monkeys and apes inhabit this section?

7. I intend to go to Africa some day. Could you suggest a possible way?"—KENNETH LANCASTER, Waterville, Me.

Answer, by Mr. Beadle:—In answer to your queries:

1. Scores. Couldn't possibly pretend to state exact number.

2. Yes.

3. Yes, though there still remain small areas where they're apt to get fresh.

4. Sleeping sickness, dysentery, blackwater, malaria.

5. Some parts, yes; others a wilderness.

6. Yes.

7. Sorry can't suggest a way, as for one thing you don't state your position or qualifications. Just want enough to get there and I guess you'll do it!

The full statement of the sections in this department, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Down the Grand Cañon by Boat

ALSO a few words with regard to placering the San Juan:

Question:—"Would you kindly give me any information you can as to how far a party could go down the Colorado River by boat from Grand Junction? Is there any game for hunting or trapping, and what is it? Is there any chance for prospecting, especially placer mining?

Could a boat return up the river?"—M. D. BRIGGS, Smuggler, San Miguel Co., Colo.

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—Parties have been clear through the Grand Cañon in boats. One outfit made it on a raft along in the nineties; another went through in a boat more recently. I would not advise any one to try it unless expert "white-water" men. Personally I should prefer a canoe or a bateau such as is used by river-men in the Maine and Canadian timber drives.

By the word *expert*, I do not mean the ability to handle a boat or canoe on lakes or smooth rivers, even in rough weather. You must know how swift water acts under all conditions, how it sets against a cliff-base; against a curve or straight wall; how to take advantage of the back-set eddy behind a rock in mid-stream; how far up-stream is the submerged rock whose ripple "breaks" with a spray, etc., etc.; you must know how to use a setting-pole, to work up a steep pitch, or to let yourself down when the channel is too crooked or too full of rocks to "shoot" successfully.

I am an "old-timer" with paddle and setting-pole, but I should make an event of it should I consider going below the Dandy Crossing. You can make it to the Dandy Crossing with very little trouble if you are familiar with water. By the time you get there you will be in a position to judge pretty well whether you care to proceed.

You will find game 'most all the way, especially in Utah, from the junction of Green River on to where the San Juan comes in. Blacktail deer in season, bear (mostly cinnamon), bobcat and mountain lion, some wild turkey, ruffed grouse low down and blue grouse in the hills, also badger, rabbits and coyotes, as well as the more common fur animals.

This game, you understand, needs hunting. I've hunted all over the Southwest and never found it easy to get—not nearly so easy as in Maine and Canada.

I am not familiar with placer conditions above where the Green River comes in, but if you go up the San Juan River you will find enough to keep you going, from the Colorado nearly up to Bluff City. These are high "bench" placer, and you have to pack your water to the ground or carry the dirt to the river. However, you can make day's wages by hand methods. If some one can invent a scheme to wash that dirt in quantity it could be made to pay big.

There are fairly high cliffs at the points where the best of this placer ground is, and you will need a fifty-foot coil of half-inch rope. That rope will come in handy several times, I predict, before you reach the San Juan.

However, you will have a whale of a good time if you go, and you'll find enough game and fish for the pot. It would be a tough proposition either to row or paddle back up-stream.

You can get down to the lower San Juan quite easily by pack-horse from where you are. Take the Rio Grande Southern to Dolores and outfit there. One pack-animal will do, if there are two of you. Strike for Disappointment Creek *via* Cortez and leave the Lone Cone to the northerly, hitting southwest-by-west, perhaps through Norwood, and from there to Bluff City. It is fine hunting and fishing all the way, and a dandy ride.

Whichever way you go, be sure and don't cross the Utah line into Arizona when east of the Grand River, for then you will be inside the Navajo Reservation, and Uncle Sam doesn't stand for hunting or prospecting on the ground set aside for his wards. It seems too bad, too, for there's a lot of excellent prospects, gold (both quartz and placer) as well as turquoise down in that section.

Good luck to you, whatever you do. Now that we've got in touch, write again if you want more data that I'm able to give.

"Estates" for $500 Apiece

THAT'S what they've been selling at in Austria—some of them, and with the accent on the "been:"

Question:—"When I get out of Cuba, which I hope to do before long, I want to go to live somewhere where a little American money will go a long way, and I get interested when you talk of buying an 'estate' for $500. In England, where I was born, the owner of an "estate" expects the property to give him a living from rents of tenants, sale of timber or other products of the land.

Would you mind telling me if the estates now selling so cheap in Austria, Germany, etc., can give a living to their owners, or are they estates that give no income, or have their incomes been all eaten up by taxes?

How much does it cost now approximately in American money per month for a family to live in Austria—I mean a family of the ordinary office-worker class that would live in the States on an income of say $150 a month?

Do not publish my name or address."

Answer, by Mr. Fleischer:—While it is quite true that about $500 American currency will buy an estate in Austria, these estates are not on par with the English estates you mention in your letter.

There have been sold during 1920 and up to last year a number of holdings formerly belonging to members of the Austrian nobility, and the prices reported to me by my informant ranged from $400 to $8,000. From my own experience I know that such "estates," located in the valley of the Danube, in Salzburg and Styria, consisted of the "castle"—more or less modern, more often rather ancient—buildings, some timberland and what we term here the farm. There are of course the usual out-houses and stables.

There were a few cattle, farm horses, pigs and fowls, several parcels of land planted with rye, barley and oats, few of wheat. In the Danube Valley were parcels of land where grapes and hops were grown. I hardly think that even in pre-war days a single one of these possessions supported the owner. These were men of means, judged according to the standard of these days. They had a manager on their property, lived there a few weeks in the Summer or if they also owned a game preserve spent the Fall there hunting.

Since writing the information which appeared in an earlier number of *Adventure* I have been told that there are hardly any "bargains" left. People from countries with sound exchange have bought up all there were to be had. However, there are some attractive pieces of land, large farms, to be had in or near the larger villages and small towns.

In such a place a family depending on the income you mention can live in comfort and save money. There may not be the conveniences which we take as a matter of course over here; but life is pleasant nevertheless.

The only towns I could suggest would be Linz in Upper Austria and Graz in Styria. Vienna is expensive, due to the fact that so many foreigners stop there and prices are in accordance. The palmy days when a dollar went far in Vienna seem to be over.

Before you do anything I would suggest that you get in touch with either the American or British Consul in Vienna and get first-hand information from them. They are on the spot and report actual economic conditions to their respective Governments. I also receive reports, but by the time they reach me conditions may have changed considerably. Things move very fast over there, although you may have noticed, that for about a year the Austrian crown has maintained a fairly steady level.

I hope that I am giving you the information you request, but should you have a more definite subject in view, write me again.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose* full *return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Muskrat-Farming

ALMOST the only fur-bearer holding its own on the census-sheets today:

Question:—"1. Would it be a good location for a muskrat farm in the vicinity of the city of Parry Sound?

2. What kinds of game and fur are found in the northern part of the district of Parry Sound?

3. Are there any muskrat farms anywhere around Georgian Bay? Where?

4. Where in Ontario could a person catch an original stock such as dark or black rats?

5. What time do rats mate and have their young along Georgian Bay? How many litters?

6. There seems to be quite a little land open for settlement in Parry Sound. Is it a good farming district?"—RAY WM. BAKER, San Francisco, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Catton:—1. I know of no good location that is available for a muskrat farm in the vicinity of Parry Sound. There may be a good location there, and I not know of it; I haven't covered all the ground in that vicinity. But when I take into consideration the requirements of such a farm I am inclined to think you could do better elsewhere—farther away from such a large body of water as Georgian Bay. You see, a large body of water like Georgian Bay is too much of a temptation to the rats; and once they get into big water they are usually GONE!

A rat farm needs, to be successful, a fairly large marsh a good distance from large bodies of water or big streams. The district of Muskoka, inland and miles from the larger bodies of water, would be O. K. if you locate on a big marsh or swamp.

2. Game and fur in the northern part of the district of Parry Sound: Deer, moose, a few bears, wolves, foxes, beavers, otters; a few raccoons, muskrats, skunks, rabbits, partridge, ducks, etc. Also a few fisher and marten have been taken there.

3. Can't say whether there are any rat farms around Georgian Bay, but it is quite likely there are some inland from the big water. Write the Department of Game and Fisheries, Parliament Building, Toronto, Ontario, for this information and for all information needed on fur-farming in Ontario.

4. An original stock for a rat farm may be captured anywhere where the rats live; and that is most anywhere in Ontario north of Toronto. The North American "musquash" (its right name) ranges from the Rio Grande River to the Arctic Circle, and despite the advance of civilization holds its own pretty well—as does the red fox. In fact the musquash has been killed in the heart of the Toronto streets—a city of a half-million people. Then too some of the sporting magazines such as *Rod and Gun in Canada*, published here in Woodstock, sometimes carry ads of fur stocks for sale.

But you are mistaken in thinking that there is a black species of this animal. There isn't. There is only one species of this rodent in America; the dark (or black) being only darker phases of the brown. There is in Russia a "muskrat" (Desman Myogale) that is black above and white underneath; but it is small and of little value as a fur-bearer.

5. Rats from my observation mate all through the Summer. I have never made a study of them

nor read much of their habits; but from sundry and haphazard observations I would judge that they mate and bear a litter of young at least twice in the Summer season. I have caught rats in October in Muskoka that were heavy with young, and once dug a family out of a creek-bank in May that consisted of a female and three kittens. And I have seen lots of half-grown rats in July and August. Your data from the Department of Game and Fisheries should include this information.

6. For muskrat-farming on the land that is open for settlement in Parry Sound my answer to question one will apply. But if you mean by farming, raising crops of grain or vegetables, the answer is no. The season is too short. Spring frosts are too late and Fall frosts too early.

Come again if you think there is anything else you want to know that I can tell you.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Things Japanese

HERE is a bunch of information sources that it would be hard to locate by independent effort:

Question:—"Please send me the following information concerning Japan:

1. A list of the names and addresses of all Japanese live-stock and poultry breeding-associations. I mean all national associations.

2. A list of the names of all Japanese political parties.

3. A list of the names and addresses of all national Japanese learned societies.

4. Is there being published a dictionary of the Japanese language, similar in plan and scope to the Oxford English Dictionary published at Oxford University? If so, please give date of beginning and name and address of publishers.

5. Is there a cook-book or books published in Japan similar to the Boston Cooking-School book and the White House Cook-Book? If so please give name and address of publishers.

6. Is there a Japanese Encyclopedia that holds the same place in the Japanese-speaking world, that Encyclopedia Britannica holds in the English-speaking world? If so please give name and address of publishers.

7. Is there a national parents' association of Japan similar to the Parents' Association of Pleasant Hill, Ohio? If so please give name and address.

8. What persons or concern should I apply to, to obtain the official publications of the Japanese Government?

9. Please give me the name and address of some reliable magazine agency, mailing-directory and information bureau of Japan, the last two similar to the Big Mail Co., and the National Bureau of Education and Advice of Chicago.—R. E. CURRY, Dallas, Tex.

Answer, by Mrs. Knudson:—I may not be able to answer all your questions, but here's a go at them, and as far as they go I believe they are correct.

1. Both live-stock and poultry breeding to any accountable extent are in a state of infancy in Japan. The Government is doing all it can through the Department of Agriculture and Commerce to encourage increase of both according to approved scientific methods, and maintains a number of experiment depots. There are private live-stock gilds, and district cattle-shows are held; but I know of no national associations as yet.

2. The political parties in Japan, or more properly the political *factions*, are the Seiyu-kai or Constitutional Party; the Kensei-kai or Liberal Party; the Kokuminto, the old Progressive Party.

3. The Imperial Academy of Japan, Tokyo, Japan. There is also a National Research Council under the Department of Education, Tokyo, Japan.

4. Do not know.

5. I know of none at present.

6. Nothing quite parallel to Britannica that I know of, though Japan is advancing so rapidly along all lines that her educational helps may have taken very recent turns that I know nothing of. My information on the above is up to about September, 1922.

The authorities generally consulted by English students of Japan are: "Japan and China," by Capt. F. Brinkley. A twelve-volume work—the first eight devoted to Japan. This has, I think, been recently revised or reprinted in collaboration with Baron Kikuchi into a one-volume work.

"Things Japanese," by Basil Hall Chamberlain, is encyclopedic in arrangement. A Japanese work of reference is Taguchi's Encyclopedia, "A Dictionary of Japanese Society." Any one or all of these might be procured through Orientalia, 32 West 58th Street, New York City. Chamberlain's publisher is John Murray, London.

7. Do not know of one.

8. To the Ministers at the head of the different Government Departments: Interior, Foreign Affairs, Finance, War, Navy, Justice, Education, Agriculture and Commerce, Communications, Railways, and President of the Board of Census. All at Tokyo, Japan.

9. Japan Tourist Bureau, Tokyo Station, Tokyo, Japan—an information bureau. Kelly & Walsh, Ltd., Yokohama, Japan—a magazine agency and mailing-directory.

On Lake Okeechobee

A WINTER camping, hunting and fishing expedition to look forward to, if you haven't already been there:

Question:—"A party of four of us intend to go to Lake Okeechobee from here by launch, for the purpose of camping there and fishing and hunting.

1. What kind of game is in that vicinity?

2. What kind of firearms would you advise us taking?

3. What are the hunting and fishing laws there?

4. What does the hunting and fishing license cost?

5. What kind of fishing-tackle should we take? (Size of lines, hooks, etc.)

6. What is the best time to go there?

7. What is the best way to tan a skin?

8. What is the best method of hunting alligators?

We are taking an eighteen-foot canoe along, and two of us may leave the party for small trips of two and three days.

9. What camping-equipment would you advise us carrying in the canoe on these trips?"—CHARLES GEIGER, Jacksonville, Fla.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—1. In south Florida you should find deer, some bear and panther, turkey, fox squirrel and gray squirrel, duck, flicker, quail, etc.

2. For hunting the bigger game mentioned above I like any good high-power rifle—Winchester or Remington automatic preferably perhaps—.30-30 caliber, with soft-nose bullets, and I especially recommend sights of the Lyman variety. For hunting the smaller game I prefer a 12-gage repeating shotgun with either 28-inch or 30-inch barrel, the latter-named length a modified choke and the former a full choke.

3. Hunting and fishing laws are subject to changes each year, I believe. Get in touch with the Florida State Game and Fish Warden or Commission in Tallahassee. Find out also about the cost of licenses, and state whether you are a resident or a non-resident of the State.

4. Answer above.

5. Tackle for fishing in Okeechobee? Any good rod and reel. Black silk lines of about 24-lbs. test. Either O'Shaughnessy or Sproat hooks, running from a size that will take a nickel in the curvature on down to minnow-hooks for catching bait (minnows). The best sport in my opinion, however, is in casting with wooden minnows, using Heddon's Zaragosa, South Bend Bassoreno, and the Surprise minnow (the Surprise is a dandy). Take different colors if you cast, but stick to the lighter colors—white or yellow or a mixture of white and yellow, with some red about the head.

6. The best time to go to the Okeechobee section is in December.

7. Tanning hides is not in my line.

8. The best method of hunting alligators: Go at night with a bright light, "shine" their eyes and shoot them, mark the spot and go back next day to grapple for them with a big hook on a long pole.

9. Camping-equipment? Tent, folding Army-type beds, mosquito-nets, cooking-utensils, water-containers, emergency medicines and especially for possible (but hardly probable) snakebite (get a doctor's advice here) small ax, rope, flashlight with extra batteries, etc. Let your good judgment guide you, and travel as light as possible. Don't forget water-proof container for matches. Don't forget iodin for insect bites, or oil of citronella to keep insects off. You can take from this list whatever equipment you will need on the side trips.

Have a distinctly understood signal shot in case any of you become lost. You may possibly need a guide; and if you do, take one.

As for "any other information"—use your wits, and you'll come out all right, I think.

The canoe you mention is a nice size, but don't take any chance with it in a high wind on Okeechobee.

The Canadian Lumberjack's Activities

BY ANY other name he works as hard:

Question:—"Will you please tell me some of the duties of a lumberjack and the pay, and whether he is supposed to work as helper first? Name and describe the different positions."—STANLEY BEGANSKY, Munhall, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Moore:—"Lumberjack," which is the American term for what we know over here as shantyman, covers a vast number of occupations allied to the lumber industry. A road-cutter is a man who cuts roads; a loader is a man who helps load the logs on to the sloops; a log-cutter fells the trees, either by ax or saw or with both, afterward trimming off the branches and cutting the trees into lengths or logs; a skidder puts the logs on skids by the aid of horses and leaves them there until the roads are cut in, when the logs are taken out to the dump; the men on the dump unload the logs as they arrive and roll them up so that they can be let into the water for the Spring when they are taken out on what they call the drive; then there are the teamsters, in some big camps the stable-bosses, etc., etc.

Now then as to wages—say twenty dollars per month and board for the chore-boy up to about forty-five dollars and board for good men.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

HANKINS, O. D. Last heard from he was in Santa Fe, New Mexico, about six months ago. Any information will be appreciated.—Address R. D. WILSON, Hotel Clifton, Redondo Beach, Calif.

SHEPARD, HAROLD NORTH. Last heard of in New York City in 1920. Served in the Navy. Any information as to his present whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address J. CANNAN, 66 W. 9th St., N. Y. C.

A LIST of unclaimed manuscripts will be published in the January 10th and July 10th issues of Adventure, and a list of unclaimed mail for the past month will be published in the last issue of each month.

SMITH, W. L. Sorry you have received no mail. Have written every day—some returned "opened by W. L. S." All yours and Earl's received. Wire and wait for answer.—Love from both mothers.

A COMPLETE list of unclaimed mail will be published in December 30th and June 30th issues of Adventure.

MAUCK, JOSEPH B. and two sons HILLARY and JOSEPH age ten years and six years respectively. Last heard from in Ocala, Fla. Supposed to be playing fairs in the south with a pig slide. Any information will be appreciated by his wife.—Address MRS. LUELLA MAUCK, 5919 Bryson St., California, Ohio.

DE VERE, RAYMOND D. Enlisted in U. S. Marine Corps at New Orleans in 1915 or 1916 and later stationed at Haiti or other island in West Indies. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address E. H. DEMPSEY, 6249 Norwood Park Ave., Chicago, Il.

ESTES, L. B. Last heard of in Pasteur Ins., Chicago, Ill. in 1906 or 1907. Taking treatment for the bite of a dog. Any information will be appreciated.—Address C. L. ESTES, Box 712, Douglas, Arizona.

JACKSON, JACK H. Painter by trade. Please come home at once. Your wife is very ill. Any information will be appreciated.—Address LEONA JACKSON, Gen. Delivery, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

CHRISTIAN, OLIVE. Resident of Chicago, Ill. Last heard from was with the "Pennant Winners of 1918." Any information will be appreciated by her cousin.—Address JOSEPH G. MITA, 71 W. Main St., Meriden, Conn.

MANNING, WILARD. Last heard of in 1916. Any information will be appreciated by his friend.—Address WILLIAM B. NOLAN, 1400 Harlem Ave., Baltimore, Md.

MAY, C. B. Write me at once. The worry is unnecessary and your home needs you. Any misfortune will be overlooked.—Address MARTHA.

HART, ALLAN J. Last known address "Superior." Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address GIBSON D. HART, 10969 127th St., Edmonton, Can.

The following have been inquired for in either the Sept. 20th or Oct. 10th issues of Adventure. They can get the names and addresses of the inquirer from this magazine.

BAILEY, ROBERT W.; Brown, Mary; Corp. Norman L. Simpson; Davis, Andrew Lester; Duckworth, John; Gardner, Charles H.; Gildewell, R. R.; Gillam, Catholine; Grant, Carl L.; Griffith, Arthur, Frederick or William; Gwilliam, John Lodge; Hidinger, Leonard L.; Johnson, Dercy and William; Johnston, Robert Gordon; Kirsch, Michael; Langshaw, Robert Henry; Lantis, Wesley; Maloney, Roger O. Mills; Mitchell, Bob; Murrays, James; Navarro, Nedra; Price, James; Prichard, "Zark" or Walter; Rahilly, Richard H.; Reed, Tiffin; Riley, Charley; Roberts, George L.; Sciarra, Ben F.; Spencer, Raymond; Steel, William; Streeter, Ray; Thompson, Charles; Ubil, George Durbro; Wikstrom, Ralph, Ronald; Ludwig; MISCELLANEOUS—Jack Passfield, Charlie Farnham, Sam Pyle; Lester; "Monte" or Hassayampa.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

NOVEMBER 10TH ISSUE

Besides the **two complete novelettes** mentioned on the second page of this issue the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE SCAR An Off-the-Trail Story* — *Eugene Cunningham*
The man who thought of vengeance.

A TOUCH OF FEVER — *John Scarry*
The menace of the tropics.

ACCORDING TO THE EVIDENCE — *Clements Ripley*
He was guilty—or innocent.

ON THE WATER-FRONT — *Gordon Young*
There were crimps in that saloon, but the unexpected happened.

EVENS UP — *Bruce Johns*
A dog caused the old friends to quarrel.

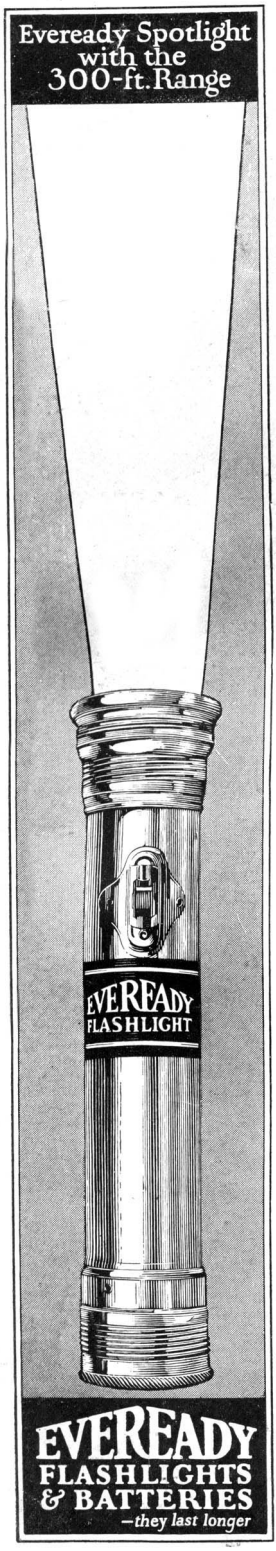
THE TRAMP A Three-Part Story Part II — *W. Townend*
The first mate starts something.

**See note at foot of first contents page.*

Still Farther Ahead

IN THE three issues following the next there will be *long stories* by Gordon Young, Leonard H. Nason (two), Talbot Mundy, T. S. Stribling, H. Bedford-Jones, Charles Victor Fischer, J. D. Newsom, Frank Robertson, Ralph R. Guthrie and Gerald B. Breitigam, with short stories by Robert Simpson, John Webb, Frederick Moore, William Byron Mowery, George E. Holt, H. C. Bailey, Thomas McMorrow and many others. These stories take us to the West, Philippines, Seven Seas, New Caledonia, Canada, Arabia, the French front, Siberia, the South Seas, the West again.

Watch for "The Retreat of the Hundred Thousand," the first full account in English of the Czecho-Slovak fighting march across Asia, one of the most dramatic performances in history.



"DAD'S GIFT . . . NOW I HAVE AN EVEREADY, I DON'T SEE HOW I COULD DO WITHOUT ONE . . ."

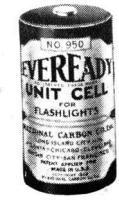
The most useful light and the light of the most uses is the EVEREADY FLASHLIGHT. Instant light when you need it—any time, any place—right on the spot you want it. A convenience and a protection.

School and college life abounds in uses for the Eveready Flashlight. A great convenience in the room; a real companion and protection crossing the campus after dark.

There could be no more valuable and pleasing present to a boy or girl starting away to school or college. Why not add a new and handy article to the student's outfit this fall by including an Eveready Flashlight?

It is literally the light of a thousand uses; one use may prove worth a thousand times the small cost. Complete with batteries 65c to $4.50.

There are 60,000 Eveready Dealers trained to deliver Eveready Service with the sale of Eveready Flashlights and Unit Cell Batteries; at electrical, hardware, drug, sporting goods and general stores, garages and auto accessory shops.



Eveready Unit Cell Batteries fit and improve all makes of flashlights; they give a brighter light; they last longer.

JUSTICE!

Are Any Man's Hands Clean Enough to Administer Justice?

Andrew Denborough returns, a millionaire, to the town that wronged him and turned him out years ago—to the mother who believed him guilty of a crime he didn't commit and who has never sought a reconciliation. Denborough wants justice, revenge! And when he has the town completely in his power will he follow through? What is the reason for his mother's strange unforgiving attitude? Read this absorbing story, "The Double Code," by I. A. R. Wylie, the well-known author. It appears in

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Everybody's Magazine for **October**