AUGUST
10th
1924
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PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

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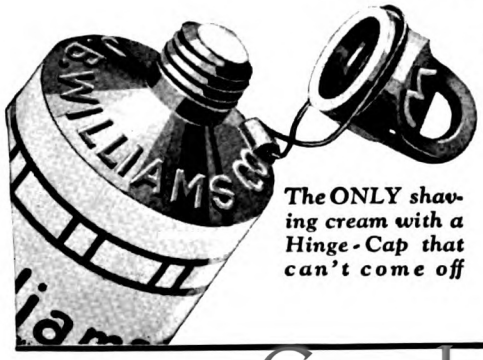

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Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Adventure

August 10 1924
Vol XLVIII No 1

THE SHRIMP

A Complete Novelette

by FRANK C ROBERTSON

Author of "Desert Fame," "The Long Striker," etc.

A SMALL figure sat on top of a board gate with his spurs hooked through a crack and with a disconsolate hump in his back. From a distance that small figure might have been taken for a fifteen-year-old boy despite the huge cowboy hat with the gleaming silver buckle on the hat-band; but close inspection showed a seamed and leathery face. The little man was actually twenty-five years old, but his experience was far beyond his years. In his eyes was the wisdom of a man of forty.

For an hour "Cigaret" Johnny had sat on that gate gazing pensively at a rollicking bunch of thoroughbred horses in a pasture. Three or four were race-horses who kept aristocratically apart from the rest. One of these, a tall sorrel with a flax mane and tail, occasionally came up to the gate and nibbled playfully at the little man's knees. But for once Cigaret Johnny did not respond to his pet's playfulness.

"G'wan away now, Oregon; I'm thinkin'," he urged.

Cigaret Johnny was home-sick. Three months before he had been a more or less happy horse-rustler, working in the guise of an ordinary cow-puncher. If the life was dangerous it had the virtue of being thrilling. Then along came Kate Bromley with this self-same bunch of horses which he now contemplated and made him her slave for life. Incidentally, in trying to protect these same horses he had fought a battle with his former pals and killed three of them, barely escaping with his own life.

On top of that he had learned that Kate Bromley was an operative for the Western Range Detective Bureau, and that she knew all about him. Johnny's part in that affair, however, had wiped the slate clean against him. Kate's hobby was horses; and, needing a man to help her who was light enough to be a good jockey, she had hired Cigaret Johnny on the spot. The little rustler had accepted eagerly; but the young widow did not dream that his real reason was because he had fallen utterly, and as he believed hopelessly, in love with her.

They had taken the bunch of thoroughbreds back to Mrs. Bromley's little ranch near Pocatello, and for some time Cigaret Johnny was superlatively happy caring for the horses and being near the woman he loved. Oregon Lad, the big, flax-maned

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sorrel, a long-distance runner with a disposition that had never before been curbed, was his special pet, and into the horse's mildly twitching ear Johnny confided his secrets.

Then Kate had gone away for two weeks, and existence had suddenly begun to pall upon Johnny. He began to miss the long distances, the wild rides and the close, exciting calls to disaster of the old days. It culminated in his present fit of depression. He bitterly wished to ——.

"Cigaret! Cigaret!" exclaimed a shrill voice.

"What yuh want?" Johnny demanded without turning his head.

"Boss come. She wants see you," breathlessly exclaimed a fourteen-year-old Mexican boy, slightly taller than Cigaret Johnny.

A surprizing change came over the little ex-rustler. He unhooked his heels and deftly dropped to the ground. He flipped away a half-smoked cigaret and started eagerly for the house. If Kate was back there was some chance for a little action.

Enrico, the Mexican boy, stood grinning until Johnny was out of sight; then he gleefully picked up the half-consumed cigaret and, puffing great mouthfuls of smoke, stalked away like a lord of creation.

But Johnny's confidence vanished abruptly as it always did when in the presence of his lady boss. He removed his big hat and stood grinning awkwardly at the silver buckle. Kate Bromley was a girl who never stood on ceremony, and never claimed privileges on account of her sex. She shook hands heartily with the little man and put him at his ease.

"How have things been coming, Johnny?" she asked.

"Purty good," he replied. "All them cayuses keep fat an' sassy. R'arin' fer action, every darn one of 'em."

"They don't get work enough," Kate smiled. "How have you been standing it, Johnny?" she pursued.

"T' tell the truth, Mrs. Bromley, I wisht them cussed rodeos would start so's we could git some action," Johnny confessed.

"It will be a couple of months yet," Kate said, and she noted quickly that Johnny's face fell.

The girl knew that life on her tame little ranch was likely to pall on a fellow like Johnny. She knew much more of his history than he imagined, and she hated to lose him.

"But we've got another job on our hands that promises some little excitement," she added.

Instantly Johnny's seamed face lighted up with interest.

"You haven't forgotten that we are working for a range detective outfit?" she added.

"Yuh mean another job like the one yuh had fer Ted T. Thompson?" Johnny queried.

"Exactly," Kate smiled. "Listen. It seems to be a most mystifying case. Ranchers all along the Big and Little Blacksnake Rivers have been losing stock for three years now, and they can't find a clue. Not a thing. It's got so bad that a rancher by the name of Grey has applied to our outfit for help in cleaning out the gang—and the job has been turned over to me."

"Gee!" was Johnny's contribution.

"I've decided to have you go up there at once and introduce yourself as a detective," Kate said. "I have a letter of introduction from the superintendent for you to take."

"Yuh mean I'm t' tell 'em I'm a detective? Why, if I told people that the rustlers'd find it out, an' I couldn't do a thing," Johnny objected.

"You don't have to," Kate smiled. "All you have to do is get the rustlers to watching you. I'll do the detecting."

"Oh, you mean t' go, too," Johnny said.

For a moment he was pleased; then he thought of the danger to the girl.

"Can't I handle this alone?" he asked. "Yuh know I—I was a—a rustler myself once, an' I know the game."

"I know rustlers, too, Johnny," Kate laughed. "Anyway it's my job, and furthermore I've got my plans all made. It's only a little over a hundred miles from here, and you can make it easily in a couple of days on Oregon Lad. Report to Mr. Grey with the letter I'll give you, and he'll put you to work as an ordinary hand. I'll coach you what to do until I get up there with the horses."

"Gee, yuh mean t' say you're goin' t' take chances on havin' that bunch o' beauts rustled again!" Cigaret Johnny exclaimed in horror.

"Certainly. It's our one best bet. No bunch of rustlers has ever been able to resist them; and even if the horses should be

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got away from us they are known to every man working for the detective bureau, and there is usually some of our people around wherever rustled stock is sold," Kate stated.

Cigaret Johnny was not in the least convinced of the wisdom of such a course, but Kate Bromley's word was his law. And after all it was not the danger to the horses that he worried about, but the welfare of the girl. It was entirely too dangerous, he felt, for a girl like Kate to buck against a hardened bunch of outlaws.

Anyway, he congratulated himself, she now had a man to look out for her. That the man in question was a runt who weighed only a hundred and fifteen pounds did not trouble him.

II

JUST after sunset on the fourth day after Cigaret Johnny's talk with Kate Bromley the little man rode up to Ad Grey's Lazy G ranch on Chicken Creek, six miles above the junction of the Big and Little Blacksnake Rivers, and asked for the boss.

It was rather a large outfit for the times, employing about a dozen punchers as a rule, and as it happened they were all hanging around the corrals when Johnny rode up. The funny appearance of the wizened little ex-rustler almost raised a laugh, but the fine horse he rode quickly diverted the men's attention. Johnny had to ask his question twice before any one condescended to answer him.

"The boss? Yuh mean Bill or Ad?" a puncher asked dully.

"I mean Grey; whether his name's Bill, or what the —— it is," Johnny snorted crisply.

"Well, he's upt' the house right now, an' so's Bill Steele, the foreman," replied the puncher, a huge fellow whose name happened to be Phil Norton.

Johnny climbed down and stalked haughtily away toward the ranch-house the puncher had indicated. Oregon Lad followed at his heels like a dog until barred back by a swinging yard gate. Then he stood and neighed softly as Johnny left him.

Instantly there was a buzz of conversation among the punchers.

"Now what in —— is a little shrimp like that doin' with a horse o' that kind?" Shorty Blair voiced the general query.

"That horse looks t' me like a race-horse, an' the shrimp might be a jockey," Phil Norton observed. "Say, wouldn't it be rich if he was t' stay here long enough t' git a few races? I bet we could clean up big on that Snail Creek outfit with their bum roan scad that they think can run."

"All wrong," declared Anse Clover, a sour-faced puncher who was staring fifty in the face; thirty years of which had been spent in the unsuccessful pursuit of a foreman's job, leaving his mind lop-sided and his soul corroded. "That horse is fast all right—anybody could see that—but that feller ain't no jock. Didn't ya notice how he set his saddle? Straight up like a reg'lar rider, an' not humped over like a bloomin' toad. Now find out what kind o' punchers ride horses like that sorrel speed demon—he's no cow-hoss—an' you'll have the answer t' that bird's business."

The implication was plain. It did not require Phil Norton's half-smothered exclamation, "Rustler!" to tell what the men thought. Rustling had become a sore subject with them, and instantly there was a bristling antagonism toward Johnny.

"I'll bet anything he's a spy fer that gang o' rustlers," Anse Clover declared.

"We'll sure in —— make it hot fer him if he is," promised another man.

"Tell yuh what, fellers," said big Phil Norton, the official ranch cut-up, "if he stays here tonight le's turn the tables on him an' swipe that flax-maned sorrel. I bet there's nobody kin holler quite as loud as a rustler when he gits set afoot."

"Yuh mean t' turn rustler yerself?" demanded Shorty Blair.

"Of course not. Only want t' hear that little shrimp holler, an' mebbe queer his game a little. Yuh know that homestead o' Bill Steele's over the ridge? He's not stayin' there nights now, an' the fence is hoss-high an' bull-strong. We could leave the sorrel there, an' Shrimp can't find him fer a week likely."

Norton planned as he talked.

"It might show them rustlers we ain't t' be fooled with," he concluded.

Thus by a little progressive guessing the men of the Lazy G had catalogued Johnny as a horse-thief, and were prepared to deal with him accordingly.

Meanwhile in blissful ignorance of what was going on behind his back Cigaret Johnny had advanced boldly to the two men who sat in the shade of the ranch-house with their chairs tilted back against

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the wall. He identified them at once. The tall, supple old man with the chew of tobacco bulging his cheek would be the owner. The younger man with loud, expensive cowboy attire and a cheap diamond ring on his finger and a tailor-made cigaret in his hand was certainly the foreman.

"Howdy, gents," Cigaret Johnny introduced himself. "Nice afternoon. A little sultry, but a man hadn't ort t' kick."

Ad Grey spat reflectively.

"Well, no, stranger; a man ortn't."

Johnny imagined he detected a slight stress on the word "man" and instantly he was on the defensive. He was unduly sensitive on the matter of his size. He looked about him for a seat, but, finding none, proceeded to state his business.

"Yore name Grey?" he asked.

"Sure is," replied the rancher. "Want t' see me?"

"Yeah. Reckon I'm lookin' fer a job."

"An' I reckon we ain't needin' no men," the foreman put in with a touch of contempt. "Still," he grinned, "we might be able t' use a water-boy."

"I'm a cow-hand," Johnny returned heatedly, "an' a good one, an' don't yuh forgit it."

The foreman's retort was an unintelligible cluck of his tongue that was a distinct insult. Like a flash Johnny dived for the rungs of the man's back-tilted chair, and the next moment the foreman's head struck the wall with a thump, and his back the dirt. Cigaret Johnny stood over him with the uplifted chair.

"Yuh wanta talk language t' me, an' not cluck like yuh was a —— chicken," he raged.

Ad Grey chuckled, but the smile abruptly left his face and he sprang erect as he saw Bill Steele's hand steal swiftly toward his hip.

"Stop that, Bill," the cattleman commanded. "Put down that chair," he ordered Johnny.

Johnny dropped the chair and stepped back, but his eyes were watchfully on the foreman's hands. His own gun hung handily, and he knew how to use it. Steele, however, got to his feet and dusted the dirt from his pink silk shirt without looking directly at Johnny; but his looks were murderous.

"Just what is yore business here?" Grey asked Johnny pointedly.

Seeing that Steele was not dangerous for the time being, Johnny reached in his chaps pocket and fished out a letter which he handed to Grey.

The cattleman studied it gravely, and when he had finished he rubbed his chin reflectively and read it again. Then he passed the letter to his foreman with a grim comment—

"Wouldn't that jar yuh?"

"Looky here," Johnny remonstrated. "Yuh ain't supposed t' be showin' that letter. How the —— am I goin' t' be a detective if everybody knows who I am?"

"It won't go no farther than right here," Grey said, "unless yuh broadcast it yerself."

And he winked slyly.

Bill Steele glanced over the letter stating that the bearer was the recognized operative of the Western Range Detective Bureau sent to clean up the Blacksnake gang of rustlers. A sort of wonder seemed to claim him, and then he burst into laughter that was as wormwood to Johnny's tortured dignity.

"Oh, lord!" the foreman gasped. "Think of it—a detectiff—a great, big, keen-eyed sleuth!"

"That'll do, Bill," Grey said sharply. "I happen to know that this company knows their business, an' if they've sent this man he's good enough for me. You tell the boys that we've hired another puncher an' let it go at that."

"Now listen here, Ad. Let me git this straight. Does the little feller take orders from me, or me from him?" Steele demanded.

Grey consulted the letter of introduction.

"I reckon you'll give him orders like yuh do the rest o' the hands, but he can use his own judgment about carryin' 'em out. An' if he asks yuh for any help——"

"He won't," Johnny cut in.

"I reckon if he needs any help he can come t' me an' I'll give the orders," Grey amended. "Now you take him out to the bunk-house an' introduce him to the boys as a new man an' show him where t' put his horse. In the mornin' yuh can give him a string o' saddle-horses."

"All right," Steele said grudgingly; "but I don't see how I'm goin' t' make the boys swaller that yarn since we've been threatenin' t' fire half of 'em because there was no work."

Cigaret Johnny trailed the foreman to the bunk-house, and because he was sore as a

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bruised heel at Steele he was rather surly to the boys when Steele gave him a none too cordial introduction. The punchers on their part, having accepted Anse Clover's analysis of his character, gave him little more than insolent nods.

"Yuh can turn yore horse in that pasture with the rest o' the cavy," Steele directed.

"I reckon not," Johnny refused. "That horse is used to barn-keep, an' he's goin' t' git it or I don't work."

"All right then. Find a vacant stall an' put him in it. But you'll have t' pay extra fer his feed, an' don't expect any of us t' baby him when you're away," Steele said.

"I ain't askin' no favors from you," Johnny ground out fiercely as he led his horse away.

Behind him the punchers exchanged significant glances.

Cigaret Johnny was fuming inwardly as he tended his horse. It certainly was not the kind of reception he had figured on. He had believed in his simplicity that representing a detective agency carried with it a certain amount of dignity, and he had expected at least to be treated with respect. Grey was not so bad; but that Bill Steele—

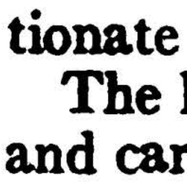
Suddenly Johnny dropped his pitchfork and scratched his head thoughtfully. He knew nothing about the business of detecting, but he did know that of rustling—from the inside. Kate had told him that the letters from Grey indicated that on some one of the ranches that were losing stock was a member of the gang who possessed inside information as to the movements of the stock and of the riders. Bill Steele, for whom he had formed such an antipathy, was an exact type of various rustlers he had known. Then, assuming that Steele was that inside man—lord, what a pudding for the thieves!

He began to project farther than that in the realm of speculation. Suppose now there were others on this ranch? Certainly they were the most stand-offish bunch he had ever met He decided it was a possibility that would stand following up. Gee! What a triumph it would be if he could only say to Kate when she arrived—

"Here are your rustlers, Mrs. Bromley; take 'em in!"

Reeking with suspicion, he went back to the bunk-house; and after supper he sat apart from the rest and studied them furtively—thereby adding to their conviction that he was a member of the mysterious gang of rustlers.

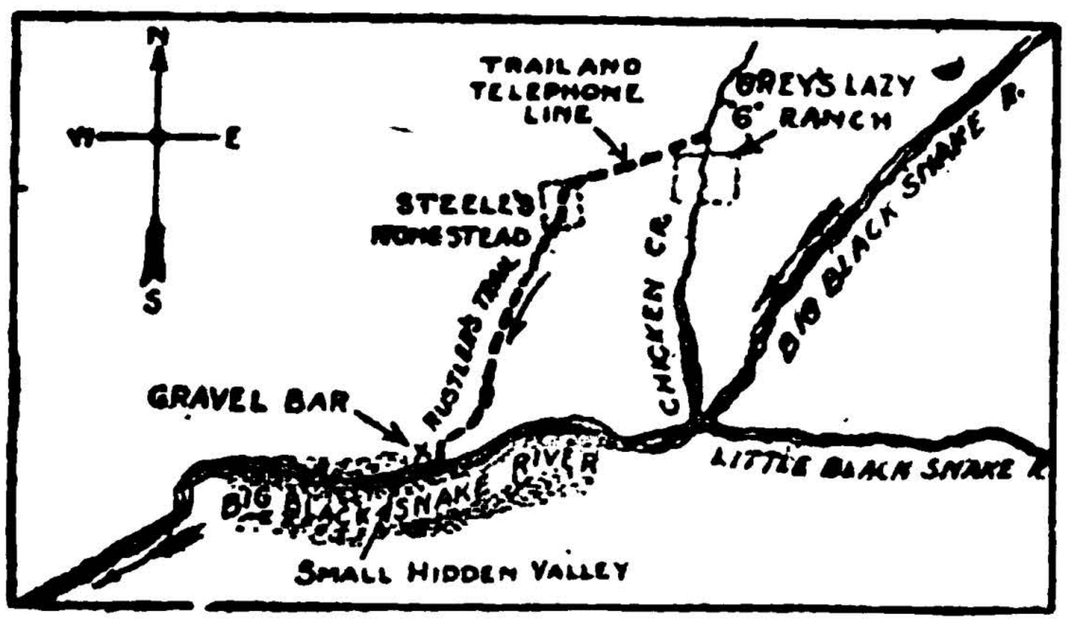
III



IT WAS a slack season at the Lazy G, and the punchers slept late. But with Cigaret Johnny it was different. Having that peculiar, restless energy which small men so often have, he was up at dawn. Naturally his first action was to pay a visit to Oregon Lad.

In his three months of association with the horse he had won Oregon Lad's affection, and the horse always greeted him with a friendly nicker. Especially was this the case when they were both strangers in a strange land. The sorrel missed the other members of the band and said so many times a day in unmistakable horse language, but it caused him to be even more affectionate to Johnny.

The little puncher found a forkful of hay and carried it to the closed window in front



of Oregon Lad's manger. But when he threw open the window there was no expected whinny of welcome.

Johnny stuck his head through the opened window into the semi-dark stall.

"What's the matter, Lad?" he asked anxiously.

As his eyes became accustomed to the gloom he took in the completely empty stall. He leaped through the window like a rat into a hole. His saddle and bridle hung on the peg where he had placed them, but he quickly saw that Oregon Lad had been gone for hours.

He reeled back against the feed-box and stood thinking. He was one wretched little man. Certainly some one had made a joke of him on the very brink of his career as a detective. That was bad enough, but the thing that hurt worse was that he had lost

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one of Kate Bromley's horses. He fairly worshiped the sorrel himself, which he knew was the real reason Kate had let him take him; and now the horse was gone.

He took a brace on himself and went to the stable door. A dim hope that Oregon Lad might have got loose himself and wandered into the corral was dispelled. The bars were up, and this was the only way the horse could have been taken out. He walked over to the bars and examined the ground. Just once he found a track made by Oregon Lad, but around the corral the dust was ankle deep, and away from it the ground was gravelly—something he had noted the day before as a characteristic of the whole country.

"Bill Steele ain't lost no time gittin' revenge for me upsettin' him," he murmured angrily.

He had learned the evening before that Steele occupied a one-room shack at a little distance from the bunk-house, and it did not occur to him to doubt that Steele was responsible for the theft of the horse. He might have had help from some of the men in the bunk-house, for Johnny realized that men might have come and gone that night without his knowing it, because, being tired, he had slept very soundly; but he was sure that Bill Steele had been the instigator if not the perpetrator of the theft.

He thought of rushing to Steele's shack and hurling his charge into the foreman's teeth, but second thought convinced him that this would be disastrous as well as useless. Until the people at the ranch woke up he decided to scout around on the almost hopeless quest for tracks, and at the same time keep an eye on Bill Steele's shack.

He found no tracks, and when Bill Steele came from his shack the man looked as if he had slept well. Some of the punchers came tumbling out of the bunk-house sleepy-eyed but jovial. To Cigaret Johnny it seemed there was something incriminating about this sudden joviality.

He had intended to make known his loss at once, but a cautious impulse caused him to pretend that he had not yet visited the stable. He even joined in the bantering talk like one on intimate terms, yet he thought he detected sardonic grins on the faces of several.

One man in particular he sized up carefully—big Phil Norton. As Phil started for the barn Johnny swung in beside him.

"Boy, that sorrel o' yours is sure some beaut," Phil said. "The boys was wonderin' if he couldn't run. If he can there's an outfit on Snail Creek that's got a scad they're everlastin' proud of. Mebbe we could all pick up a bunch o' jack."

"Yeah, Oregon kin cover quite a little country when he gits in a hurry," Johnny admitted.

"Le's go over an' take a look at him," Phil suggested. "I didn't git t' examine him like I'd like to las' night."

"No?" Cigaret Johnny queried so sardonically that Phil started like a man who has suddenly and unexpectedly had a firecracker discharged under him.

"I mean before yuh stabled him," Phil blundered, at once realizing that one bad break is the father of another.

"Yeah, we'll look at him," Johnny acquiesced sarcastically.

Phil was having an unhappy time. He had anticipated having a joyful moment watching the supposed rustler discover his loss. Being something of a clown, he had intended to do some tall acting-out of his own surprize at finding the stall empty. But without quite understanding how it all came about he realized that this mite of a man with the wizened face and the ferret-like eyes was wise to him. If he tried to act surprized he felt it would be a dead give-away. Why in the ——, he wondered, had he suggested going to that stall in the first place?

Johnny opened the stable door and stepped in.

"Whoa, Oregon!" he shouted. "Feller wants t' size yuh up."

He stood politely aside, and Phil Norton, dripping cold sweat, walked in to make his stage play.

"Wh—why, he ain't here!" Phil faltered.

"Did yuh really notice that?" Johnny asked coldly.

"Why—when did you miss him?" Phil blundered.

"'Bout an hour ago," Johnny replied. "When did yuh?"

"Why, I—I—didn't know he was gone," Phil blurted unconvincingly.

This cussed little rustler was acting altogether too cool about this thing. Phil made for the open door and raised his voice in a really concerned manner—

"Boys, this man's horse has done gone!"

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The other men crowded around, expecting to get some secret enjoyment from Johnny's dismay; but the look of vicious determination upon his leathery face spoiled much of the mirth.

Then Bill Steele came pushing through the crowd.

"What's this about a horse being gone?" he demanded curtly.

"Somebody's rustled Shrimp's horse," a man informed him.

Steele looked into the stable and then walked over to the corral bars.

"You make these tracks?" he asked Johnny.

"I did," Johnny replied. "I been lookin' fer tracks fer an hour."

"Didn't anybody hear anything last night?" Steele demanded.

Each man affirmed that he had heard nothing.

The foreman turned to Johnny.

"I'm sorry this happened," he said. "I suggest that we call up every ranch in the county that has a phone an' have 'em keep their eye peeled. After breakfast I'll stake yuh to a string o' saddle-horses an' yuh can put in yore time lookin' for yore horse, an' still be on the pay-roll. I'll do what I can."

Johnny was decidedly puzzled. Phil Norton's manner had been almost an open confession of guilt, but Steele's manner was perfectly straightforward. Yet he distrusted Bill Steele. He wondered if he could be mistaken; if he had merely taken an unwarranted dislike to the foreman on account of their run-in on first acquaintance His thoughts shifted to Phil Norton. Johnny was not a detective in anything but name, but he was a quick thinker.

"I'm much obliged, Steele," he said with as much cordiality as he could muster. "I'd like to look fer my horse, but as I don't know the range would yuh mind lettin' the big feller ride with me fer a day or two?"

"Sure not," Steele agreed. "Phil, you ride with him."

Norton's expression reflected clearly his discomfort. Cigaret Johnny noticed that before and after breakfast Norton was the center of various shifting circles whose purpose obviously was the giving of advice.

"That whole bunch is crooked," Johnny murmured to himself, "but I don't see how Grey, unless he is stone blind, could 'a' failed t' read 'em."

He went with Steele to the house to telephone to the neighboring ranches and listened keenly for a false note while the man talked. There was none. As Steele finished telephoning Ad Grey came in.

The rancher listened gravely to the story of Johnny's loss, and expressed himself as concurring in all that Steele had said and done. But when Johnny and Steele turned to leave he requested Johnny to stay.

"Want me t' stop, Ad?" Steele asked a bit eagerly.

"No. It ain't important or I would," Grey said. "You go on an' git the boys started t' work."

It seemed to Johnny that the foreman went reluctantly, but go he did; and Ad Grey stood at the open window until he saw his foreman's broad back at the corral gate. Then he turned to Johnny.

"Mr. Tompkins," the rancher said with a twinkle in his eye, "losin' that hoss ain't goin' t' enhance yore reputation as a detective none, is it?"

"Not losin' him ain't, but they's liable t' be a lot o' talk about the way I git him back," Johnny retorted.

"That's the talk," Grey said admiringly. "Still, as yuh ain't a sho'-'nough detective I ain't anticipatin' no amazin'——"

"Who said I wasn't no detective?" Johnny demanded.

"Well, yuh see I had two letters before I got the one yuh brought—one from the detective bureau an' one from your lady boss, who, it seems, is the real thing in range detectin'."

"Then I'll say you've got the kerrect dope," Cigaret Johnny admitted. "They ain't nothin' goin' on on a range that Kate Bromley can't find out; an' she's no snoop neither."

"Her orders is that it's to just kinda leak out what your business is; an' that's why I ain't t' be so —— secret in my talks with you that the boys can't help but notice it, an' it'll quickly spread."

"Ain't Steele liable t' spread it?" Johnny asked.

"Not him. Not unless I prompt him to. That's one feller the world could take lessons from when it comes t' bein' close-mouthed," Grey informed him.

"Yuh sure he's all right?" Johnny queried.

"Bill? Why, dead certain. He's been with me five years, an' I never had a better man."

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"Just wanted to know," Johnny apologized.

"The low-down on the matter is this," Grey went on soberly. "Somebody that's ridin' steady knows everything that goes on on the range; knows where the cattle are an' the men ain't. *Sabe?* They haze a bunch o' stock away—we know they head' em towards the breaks along the Big Blacksnake, but that's as far as we've ever been able t' trace 'em."

"I've noticed this is a hard place t' find tracks," Johnny said.

"Sure is. But the mystifyin' part o' the thing is this: Several times we've missed our stuff right quick. Now there's a full twenty-five miles on this side o' the Blacksnake where the bluff is straight up an' a hundred feet high. No chance whatever fer anybody t' cross the river. See?

"Now, when we've missed our stuff quick we've allus telephoned down-river right straight fer men t' watch at that end o' the line. Likewise we foller up from this end, an' we've had the best trackers in the business lookin' fer tracks where the stock might 'a' been pulled away from the river—an' we've never found a trace."

The tall old rancher spat disgustedly as he finished his explanation. Quite as much as losing the value of the stock, evidently, was the injury to his pride in being so easily and consistently outwitted.

Cigaret Johnny had listened intently.

"Yuh say there ain't *no* trail down t' the river?" he asked.

"No trail whatever—'cept one less'n ten miles from here, an' only three miles below where the bluff begins. An' that only goes down to a gravel bar that's shut in by rocks an' rapids all around. There's three prospectors got a claim o' some sort down there, washin' gold dust outa the gravel or somethin' like that," Grey said with the vagueness of a stockman when discussing an occupation he instinctively despised.

"Have they got a way t' git across the river?" the little man insisted.

Grey smiled benevolently.

"Sure they got a way. They got a little skiff that they row over in. But all they got on the other side is another bar with no way out except by comin' back across the river. No; there ain't nothin' outa the way there; but I can understand yore suspicions—I had 'em myself once. I went down there an' pried around their diggin's from end t' end. They treated me fine an' even rowed me across the river in their skiff. Nothin' wrong whatever."

"Well, it seems t' have me beat," Cigaret Johnny admitted. "I reckon it'll take Mrs. Bromley t' figger this out."

"It seems kinda funny they'd send a woman on a job o' this kind," Grey said. "Still, I reckon they know their business. Can the old lady ride, or does she do her detectin' by brains alone?"

Cigaret Johnny nearly collapsed at the reference to Kate Bromley as an old woman. But he recovered instantly and grinned in anticipation of the shock Ad Grey was going to get when he got an eyeful of Kate.

"She rides some," he said.

IV

CIGARET JOHNNY found himself with an ordinarily good horse to flop his saddle on to, and big Phil Norton, already mounted, waiting for him with an air of uncontrollable trepidity. Johnny saddled carefully and without a word. He knew cow-punchers from the ground up, and it would be funny if they failed to try some dodge on the stranger within their gates. He was quite sure that this apparently meek bay horse would prove to be a veritable volcano of action when he landed in the saddle, and he acted accordingly.

When the horse was saddled the stirrups that fitted Johnny's short legs were so high up on the tall horse's sides that Phil Norton forgot his nervousness for the moment.

"Shall I git yuh a bench t' stand on, or shall I give yuh a leg up?" he asked.

Johnny gave him a look that was fraught with disfavor, reached up and collected his reins and a handful of mane with one hand in the approved manner, twisted the stirrup forward with the other hand and fairly bounced into the air. His left toe stuck into the stirrup, and the next instant he was planted in the saddle.

He had not been mistaken. The dull-eyed bay left the ground with a sound between a bawl and a groan. When he came down his legs were as unbending as steel pillars, and he emitted a bawl that sounded to Johnny like—

"I wantcha!"

"Want an' be ——," Johnny growled. "I'm here t' stay."

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And he was. The little man's legs and arms were flying wildly, but it was not because he was unbalanced. He was administering punishment.

In due time the bay gave it up with a final disgusted bawl. Johnny reined him around and faced the collected crowd of punchers. There was admiration in their looks—and a little fear. Certainly had that grim, challenging look been on the face of a bigger man they would have been really alarmed; yet the desperation that is supposed to clothe a desperado clung to Johnny like a garment, and made up somewhat for what he lacked in pounds and inches.

"Got any more funny tricks yuh want t' try?" he demanded savagely.

His eyes were like pin-points as they focused on Anse Clover.

"That horse'll be all right now. He just happened t' take a pitchin' spell," vouchsafed the disgruntled puncher hurriedly.

"I sometimes take spells myself," Johnny stated.

He reined the now docile broncho toward the outer gate, and Phil Norton rode beside him timorously. The little man's dynamic energy was rapidly gaining him respect if not love and affection. And, having been an outlaw, Johnny had learned to take chances as a matter of course that these by-the-month punchers would never dream of taking.

"Which way do we ride?" he asked Phil.

"Why, I'd say right down t' the river an' the main road," Phil said eagerly.

To him had been given the task of seeing that the supposed rustler did not find his horse—at least too easily.

Johnny permitted the big puncher to lead the way until they were out of sight of the ranch. Then he reined up suddenly.

"I reckon I don't like the looks o' this road," he said. "Le's drop over the top o' that ridge."

It was not a suggestion nor a request—it was a direct command. Norton had no stomach to disobey.

They rode almost straight up a bare-backed ridge and angled down the other side into a grove of aspens. Cigaret Johnny looked all around carefully. There was no one in the draw where they were, and there was not much danger that there would be. He stopped his horse and uttered a sharp word. When Phil Norton turned around he found himself staring into the muzzle of a .44.

"Where's my horse?" Cigaret Johnny hissed.

The big puncher's jaw dropped, and his eyes popped. Half-falteringly he started to raise his hands as if he had been so bidden.

"Never mind yore hands," Johnny rasped. "I ain't afraid o' anything yuh can do with 'em down. But yuh want t' start talkin'."

"Why—I—" began Phil.

"Cut out the preliminaries an' tell where the horse is."

"My lord, man, can't yuh——"

"I sure in —— will perforate yuh if yuh don't come t' the point," Johnny snarled.

He thrust one hand into his inside coat pocket and brought out his letter of introduction from the detective bureau and flared it open in Phil's face.

"See that?" he demanded. "I'm a detective. I've been sent up here t' clear out the rustlers. Did yuh think I was asleep las' night?"

As a matter of fact he had been asleep—and soundly. But Norton's actions had firmly convinced him that the man knew what had become of Oregon Lad, and he meant to have it out of him. His very honor was at stake, and he was reckless enough to do anything to get the horse back.

Phil Norton collapsed. This, coming on top of the fear which the diminutive man had already inspired in him, was too much.

"It was just a joke—hones', mister, it was. I meant all the time t' tell yuh where he's at," he whined.

"Then tell it," Johnny ordered crisply.

"He's over in Bill Steele's pasture two miles north o' the ranch," Phil blurted. "Now listen, mister; let me explain."

"Explain nothin', yuh big piece o' cheese. Yuh can do yore explainin' t' the judge," Johnny said in a lordly manner.

Inwardly he was having hard work trying not to laugh nor pat himself on the back. This was rich; it was great. Before he was through with this big boob he intended to have the whole story of the rustlers and have them all rounded up before Kate Bromley arrived.

Bowing to the inevitable, Phil led the way across a rather rough country till they came to a flat meadow pasture in a short, flaring cañon. Johnny noticed at once that the place was rather isolated and that it was

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fenced with four new barb wires and cedar posts a rod apart with two dancers between, affording a remarkably fine hiding-place for stock. He judged that there was a hundred and sixty acres under the fence.

A small creek, lined on both sides by thick, stubby willows, meandered through the center of the meadow. Toward the upper end of the meadow, close beside the creek on a gentle swell, was a well-built two-room cabin.

From the side where they approached a narrow lane ran from the cabin to the outside of the pasture. At the end of the lane, quite close to the cabin, was a round corral, high and strong and built of strong, smooth, pine poles.

There was a pair of bars on each side of the corral. The strategy of the thing was apparent. A bunch of horses could be hazed into the lane and the corral yawned open to receive them, or they could be passed through into the field.

"Where's the gate on the other side?" Johnny asked.

"Right at the bottom o' the medder on the other side the creek," Phil informed him.

Another thing Johnny's observant eyes noted was a telephone wire stretching over the hills toward the Lazy G ranch. Upon questioning Phil he learned that Steele had only recently had it installed.

Johnny gave an ear-piercing whistle which he had taught Oregon Lad to recognize. In a moment he heard the high-pitched whinny of the horse in reply, and presently he saw Oregon Lad come trotting toward him.

"Now listen, mister, yuh got this all wrong," Phil again began plaintively.

"What business you got t' talk?" Johnny cut him off fiercely. "Ain't I got the goods on yuh?"

"Yes; but——"

"The only talkin' it's worth while fer you t' do is t' come clean with the whole story," Johnny declared indifferently.

"Dang it, that's what I been tryin' t' do," Phil complained. "It was all a joke, an'——'

"Talk facts," Johnny hissed.

"We took the —— horse because we figgered you was a horse-rustler sent t' spy on us, an' we meant t' hold yuh here till we could git a line on yuh," Phil got out desperately.

"What?" Johnny yelled shrilly.

"Hones' t' ——!"

"All right," Johnny said more mildly. "You just stick t' that story if yuh want t' eat at the State's free boardin'-house fer a good long stretch."

"But it's the truth. The whole outfit up there was into it. Anse Clover figgered it out, an' it looked mighty reasonable t' the rest of us. We never dreamed yuh was a detective."

"Yuh didn't, huh?" Johnny sneered. "An' yet I'd showed Bill Steele that paper within ten minutes after I hit the ranch."

"But Bill, he didn't know nothin' about it," Phil denied. "Him bein' so —— strict about other people's property, we didn't dast let him in on it."

"An' yet I find my horse in his pasture," Johnny sneered wisely.

"Well, I've done told the truth, an' that's all I can do," Phil lamented. "But I'll tell yuh this, little feller; yuh don't want to' make no cracks t' Bill Steele that he's a thief. He's bad medicine, Bill is."

Johnny pretended to be busy with Oregon Lad. Secretly he was up against it. He didn't believe that Norton was telling the truth, but he didn't know how to get it out of him. Guilty or innocent, the fellow would stick to his story. His hopes of getting a full confession right off the bat had gone glimmering. Anyway, he congratulated himself, he had at least found out who some of the rustlers were.

"I ain't goin' t' arrest yuh—now," he said deliberately. "I want the whole gang. I'm lettin' yuh off for the time bein', but I'm warnin' yuh—if I ever hear that it's known that I'm a detective I'll sure in —— cinch yuh."

"I ain't no rustler, an' I'm as anxious t' stop the rustlin' as anybody," Phil argued. "If yuh was wise yuh'd let me help yuh. There's no rustlers on the Lazy G."

"An' if you're wise you'll keep yore trap closed," Johnny said with finality

They rode home moodily; each man occupied with his thoughts. Johnny tried to make things balance. He had found out how the rustlers operated beyond a possibility of a doubt. That was an achievement. But against that was the fact that the rustlers were now on their guard.

Still, that was what his job was supposed to accomplish. He was to get the rustlers to watching him while Kate did the real

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brain-work. He was quite sure that Steele and Norton would see to it that all the rustlers knew what he was supposed to be. It was all right—except that he had set his heart on getting the gang himself and keeping Kate out of danger. He consoled himself with the thought that there were still several days before Kate's arrival.

They returned to the ranch, but only Johnny stopped. Phil was only too glad to get away from the fierce little man, though he knew he was going to have some tall explaining to do to the other men. And he did. It happened that the first man Phil met was Anse Clover. To his surprize Clover was not at all impressed.

"It's a forgery," Clover said. "All rustlers carry papers claimin' t' be officers."

"But he said Bill knows he's a detective," Phil contended.

They argued the case pro and con, and in the end laid the matter before Bill Steele for judgment.

"Yeah, I saw the paper," Steele admitted, "an' I'm inclined t' hold with Anse that the Shrimp is a crook."

"I don't believe it," Phil insisted.

But he found himself in a small minority.

Meantime Ad Grey was greeting Cigaret Johnny with some surprize.

"I'll say yuh work fast," he declared. "If yuh keep up that speed the old lady won't find nothin' much t' do. Where'd yuh find the horse?"

Johnny decided to fall back on what he considered to be Phil Norton's fallacious story. But it served the purpose.

"I reckon yore boys here was just playin' a practical joke. Phil told me where Oregon was right kindly."

Grey laughed.

"Yuh can't make cow-punchers act serious," he said. "Just the same I aim t' raise —— with 'em."

V

IT WAS nearly a week later when a remarkably pretty young woman dashed up to Lazy G ranch, riding a spirited little thoroughbred black mare. She swung off her horse and walked toward the house with the peculiar, lithe grace of which only the truly outdoor girl is capable.

As it happened Ad Grey and his foreman were in conference on the shady porch of the house when the girl approached. Bill Steele broke off a report abruptly to ejaculate:

"Wow! Who's the million-dollar beauty?"

"Dinged if I know," the rancher said, hurriedly collecting the cud of tobacco in his mouth and surreptitiously dropping it into his hand, by which route it was furtively tossed off the porch.

Both men stood; the rancher awkwardly, the foreman gracefully and confidently. Bill Steele was dead sure of himself around the women, and this girl coming up the walk far outclassed any girl that had come within his notice for many, many moons.

"Howdy, ma'am; have a chair," Ad invited awkwardly.

The girl smiled radiantly.

"Are you Mr. Grey of the Lazy G ranch?" she asked in a clear voice that was loud enough to express perfect self-command without being in the least coarse.

"I have the honor," Grey said ceremoniously. "Pe'mit me t' present my foreman, Mr. Steele."

"I am Mrs. Bromley," the girl said. "I'm delighted to know you both."

She shook hands with them in man-to-man fashion.

"The pleasure is all mine, Mrs. Bromley," Bill Steele said; but there was a shade of disappointment or annoyance in his voice.

He was at once jealous of the unknown Mr. Bromley.

But Ad Grey's face was a perfect blank at hearing that name. He had been told to expect a Mrs. Bromley, but he had certainly not been told to expect any vision of loveliness such as this. He wondered whether there could be a mistake. She had told him she would introduce herself by presenting a letter from the Western Range Detective Bureau, yet she had not yet produced it.

"Won't yuh come into the house, miss?" Grey said awkwardly, quite forgetting the Mrs. "I'll—I'll have the Chink prepare some refreshments, an' we can talk business meantime."

"I think it's pleasant out here; and really I just had lunch down on the river a short time ago at my camp," she refused politely.

She accepted the chair which Bill Steele offered her, and the foreman lounged languidly on the rail of the porch, where he knew his dudish clothes would be on exhibition and his graceful form in a good pose.

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"I was advised to come to you, Mr. Grey, by mutual friends," Mrs. Bromley began. "I need the advice of an experienced rancher very badly and I was told you were the best man to come to. But perhaps I'd better show you my letter of introduction."

Ad Grey silently reached for the letter and read it with a poker face. It was true. It was the girl's credentials from the detective agency, and he had been warned in advance against letting any one whatever know her real business. It was in his mind to send Bill Steele away, but the girl was speaking.

"You see, Mr. Grey, my business here is no secret."

Grey gave a surprized start.

"My husband died some time ago—" it was Steele's turn to show surprize—and satisfaction—"and practically everything I have is a little band of thoroughbred horses to which I have become greatly attached. But I have found it very expensive to keep them. You see, my husband was a professional rider and roper, and made a good bit of money doing exhibition stuff at the various rodeos and round-ups, and we had a few fairly good race-horses. But it isn't so easy for me.

"Still, I don't want to give up my horses, so I decided that the best way for me to do was to get into some new country like this where there is still Government land and file on a homestead. That way I hope to keep my horses and make a little money, too."

"I see," Grey drawled.

Steele licked his lips.

"I am throwing myself on your kindness," Kate continued. "If you know of any land that is open to entry I'll file on it on your recommendation."

"Well, now," Grey said hesitantly, "most o' the good land has been took up long ago, an' I don't know as——"

"I do," Bill Steele interrupted eagerly. "I know just the place."

"Oh, thank you," Kate breathed. "I'm so glad it's all settled!"

Ad Grey was as timid around women as a bachelor of sixty is likely to be, but in matters of business his head was hard.

"Now looka here, lady," he objected. "Ain't yuh jumpin' too quick? I don't know the piece o' land Bill's got in mind, an' although I'd back his judgment as fur as anybody I still wouldn't figger I had a piece o' land till I'd seen it myself."

"But I'm so ignorant of land values," Kate demurred.

"Even you'll have t' say the land is worth havin', Ad, because you've already done said so," Steele smiled. "It was on yore recommendation I filed on it."

"You filed on it? Yuh don't mean t' say——"

"Just that. I've been thinkin' for a long time that it was all a mistake. I'll either have t' give up my job with you, or give up the homestead. I'd rather give up the homestead," Steele said.

Grey's eyes bored into his foreman. He knew Steele was lying—knew that the idea had not entered his head until that moment. But the rancher was a believer in the philosophy that a fool and his folly had best be let alone.

"But I don't understand," Kate said in her slow, rich voice, and she gave Steele a look from the battery of her eyes that made him stiffen his shoulders and straighten his neckerchief complacently.

"It's this way, Mrs. Bromley," the foreman explained. "I have a homestead just two miles from here that I ain't never proved up on. I ain't lived up t' the law neither, for I ain't plowed a furrow, an' I'm supposed t' have sixteen acres plowed up right now. As I say, I'm tired of it, an' I'll let yuh have it for five hundred dollars an' the value o' the improvements."

"An' the improvements is worth more'n another five hundred," Grey put in.

"But I'd take that figger," Steele said.

"But I can't raise that much money—now," Kate worried.

"I'll give yuh time," Steele offered at once. "Yuh could give security, I reckon. Yuh said that bunch o' horses——"

"They're worth five thousand dollars, perhaps more," Kate said in a worried tone. "But, you see, I——"

"Then don't worry about it," Steele laughed. "Le's you an' me ride over an' look the place over."

"Why, certainly; I'll be glad to go with you," Kate smiled. "You'll excuse us; won't you, Mr. Grey?"

The rancher had been looking perplexed and half-angry. But suddenly he began to laugh, cackling and slapping his legs with his hands.

"Go on, go on," he gasped. "I reckon it wasn't me yuh wanted t' ask for advice anyway."

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Yet after they had gone he turned sober again. He had seen through Steele's little game—or thought he did. The foreman had become suddenly enamored of the new girl and was willing to lose his homestead on the chance of getting it back with the girl also.

The girl, on her part, had fallen for Steele and forgotten all about the fact that Grey was the man she was to consult. Otherwise she would at least have requested the rancher to go with them. That was all right. It made him laugh, for he had a streak of romance in him that few suspected, and this sudden development appealed to it.

But what sobered him most was the recollection that the girl's business was to ferret out the gang of rustlers who had been making life miserable for the stockmen, and here she was falling in love right off the bat. He had had his doubts about a woman detective, but he had had confidence in her employers, and he had certainly expected a woman of mature years. It seemed to him that she should at least have asked for a private conference with himself before going away with Bill Steele. Of course he had every confidence in Bill, but that wasn't the thing.

"I'll bet that when they git back here Bill will know more about her detective work than I ever will," he grumbled.

Kate had even left her credentials in his hands with the grossest carelessness, it seemed to him. Supposing some one should find the letter? Slowly and methodically he tore it to pieces.

"She ain't a-goin' t' git a chance t' say it was me spilled the beans," he declared.

Happening to glance up, he saw Cigaret Johnny ride into the corral. He grinned.

"Anyway," he commented, "the Shrimp has sure in —— done his part. Them that don't think he's a detective thinks he's a rustler, an' people are sure watchin' him."

Grey strolled out to the corrals.

"Say, Shrimp—" it was the cognomen the punchers had fastened on Cigaret Johnny—"the lady detective pulled in a spell ago."

"She did?" Cigaret Johnny yelped eagerly. "Say, where is she?"

"Right away she had t' go ridin' with Bill Steele. Sort o' fell fer him right off the reel. Didn't give me a chance t' tell her nothin'."

"Yuh mean t' say she went ridin' with that big slob?" Johnny demanded indignantly. "Well," he added more quietly, "if she did it's just t' git the goods on him as a rustler."

"Look here," Grey said sharply, "have yuh been sendin' in reports that Bill was a rustler just because yuh happened t' find that sorrel over in his pasture?"

"Naw. I ain't reported nothin'—wasn't asked to. But when I do talk t' Kate I'm surer than —— goin' t' tell her he's the bird t' watch."

"If I didn't know yuh was only the same as a wooden decoy in this business I'd git mad," Grey said coldly. "I trust Bill Steele."

"An' I don't," Cigaret Johnny replied undismayed.

VI

THE evening shadows were lengthening rapidly when Kate and the Lazy G foreman returned to the ranch. Cigaret Johnny was in the stall with Oregon Lad, keeping his eyes glued to a crack. He had had his orders to appear as a perfect stranger to the girl, and he meant to obey them; but just the same his leathery little face softened at sight of Kate, and there came into his eyes the devoted look of an attached collie.

All at once his ears were deafened by a shrill, piercing whinny, and he beheld Oregon Lad dancing madly in his stall, striving with impatient nose to thrust open the manger door. Almost immediately there came a whinny in reply from Bonnie, the little black mare Kate was riding. Looking out of the crack again, Johnny saw the little mare dancing eagerly and pulling at the bit in her eagerness to reach Oregon Lad.

"Lord, talk about yore giveaways!" Johnny murmured.

He caught the look of strained anxiety on Kate's face, though she was talking desperately fast to Steele to keep him from noticing the strange actions of her mare. Johnny saw that Steele was utterly absorbed in the girl and had not yet noticed anything amiss, yet strangely enough it only added to Johnny's hatred of him.

They were now so close that Johnny could almost hear what they were saying, and he knew that something had to be done. He might clamp a muzzle on Oregon Lad; but that would only serve to make the black mare worse, for she would certainly contrive to make everybody notice her anguish.

Not knowing what else to do, he seized a

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pitchfork and bolted through the window, stalking toward the hay-stack. As he was coming back with a forkful of hay Kate and the foreman were not three rods away, and the black mare was becoming frantic. Even Steele now noticed it.

"Bonnie is hungry," Kate explained. "She's the silliest thing; every time she hears a horse nicker she nearly has a fit—if she thinks the other horse has some hay."

"We'll feed her," Steele said promptly.

He stopped, leaped from the saddle and gallantly helped Kate dismount. His eyes fell on Cigaret Johnny, and he realized that here was a chance to show his authority—something he never neglected.

"Here, Shrimp," he called, "take these horses in an' feed 'em."

"All right," Johnny said sullenly.

"An' give 'em plenty of oats—especially the black mare," Steele added pompously.

"She'll git just what the rest git," Johnny returned ungraciously.

But he accepted the reins and led the two horses away. His chest swelled with pride as Kate gave him a furtive smile of approval. As quickly as he could he got Bonnie into the stable with Oregon Lad.

As soon as the two thoroughbreds could nuzzle each other their whinnying fell to a soft murmuring, and presently they began to eat in great content. The problem was temporarily solved, but Johnny wondered what would happen when one of them was taken away.

Meanwhile Kate and the foreman had gone on to the house. This time the girl made no objections to Grey's invitation to come in.

"Well, we've fixed up our deal," Bill Steele announced with a glint of triumph in his eye.

"That so?" Grey queried without enthusiasm.

"Mr. Steele has been so nice and kind!" Kate cooed softly. "He's letting me live on the place for three months. If I like it then I'm to pay him a thousand dollars for his relinquishment, and if I don't decide to keep it I'm to pay him a ridiculously small amount of rent; but it's all strictly business."

"Exactly," concurred Steele.

"Well, it listens all right," Grey said with a fatherly smile. "In three months I reckon you'll be able t' fix things up plumb harmonious."

Kate blushed, and Steele looked complacent.

"It's just what I need," Kate said hurriedly. "The cabin is all ready to move into; the fence around the place is good, and there is plenty of pasture for my horses. Best of all is the telephone so that I can talk to you gentlemen any time I need advice."

She gave the grizzled rancher a ravishing smile that completely disarmed him.

"She may not be much of a detective, but she's one —— fine girl," he thought.

"An' I'll be stickin' around if anything's needed," Bill Steele assured her.

But Grey had begun to worry about something else.

"Where is them horses o' yours, an' where are yuh goin' t' stay tonight?" he asked.

"I'm camped down on the mouth of this stream you call Chicken Creek," the girl said. "You see, I have a Mexican woman and her son with me. We'll move into our new home tomorrow."

"That's all right; but I ain't a goin' t' have yuh campin' out around here where there's a good house t' stay in, plenty o' grub an' a good cook," Grey said hospitably.

"Oh, but—" Kate demurred.

"Nothin' to it."

Grey waved a commanding hand.

"Bill, yuh take a couple o' men an' go right down an' move her outfit up here," he ordered.

"Sure thing," Steele agreed readily.

"Well, if you insist," Kate surrendered. "Just tell Maria that I said they were to come up here."

"I'll bring 'em," Steele promised.

When Kate and the grizzled cattleman were alone Grey regarded her quizzically.

"Well," he said at length, "I've laid a small bet with myself that you've already told Bill Steele you was a detective."

"Then you lose," Kate smiled back. "Do you think Mr. Steele would be so anxious to let me have his homestead if he knew I was only going to use it a few days? It's too bad to mislead him like I have."

"Yuh mean t' say that yuh've been just deliberately—what is it they call it?—vampin' Bill Steele?" Grey demanded.

"Well, in this business I frequently have to employ every weapon at my command," Kate admitted smilingly.

"All right; yuh go ahead. Any time anybody, man or woman, can git ahead o' Bill

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Steele I want t' see the color o' their hair. An'," he added as if speaking absent-mindedly, "I'd like t' see Bill git a good woman."

"About that letter I left with you," Kate said, suddenly changing the subject, "have you shown it to anybody, or left it lying around where any one could pick it up?"

"I tore it up right away," Grey informed her.

The girl smiled.

"Then I guess we can depend upon each other. That was only a little test. I always like to know in advance whether the man I work with is liable to be careless or not. Now will you tell me what Cigaret Johnny has been doing?"

"Oh, is that what yuh call the Shrimp—Tompkins?"

And he told her what he knew of the things that had happened to Johnny.

"He's doing better than I expected," she affirmed. "Now about this rustling?"

He told her practically the same thing he had told Cigaret Johnny, and she listened thoughtfully.

"It sounds baffling," she said when he had finished; "but I think rustlers are always bound to show their hand someway, and the best system, I find, is to encourage them in every way possible. That is why I have brought my bunch of horses. No gang of rustlers has been able to resist them, and I don't believe any rustler can get away with them."

"Mebbe not," Grey said, unconvinced.

"Remember that our men know all the principal horse markets, and they all know my horses, so there is small chance for the rustlers to get away with them if they should happen to get by us, which I don't propose to permit."

"Figgerin' that way yore system may be all right," Grey allowed.

"Can you depend upon your own men?" Kate asked.

"Absolutely."

"Including—your foreman?"

"Say! Who's been spreadin' stories against Bill?" Grey demanded heatedly. "Every time we've lost stock Bill has been the first man on the trail."

"No offense," Kate smiled disarmingly. "I only wanted to make sure. No, listen. Could you contrive to sleep close to the telephone so that when I give your ring—two longs and a short, Mr. Steele tells me—you'll be sure to hear me?"

"Why, sure," Grey said, puzzled.

"And could you arrange for your men to keep up night horses so that they can ride without needless delay?"

"Yes, but——"

"I suppose they all have guns?"

"They can rustle some, but——"

"I intend for the rustlers to get the idea that I am next to helpless. Sooner or later they'll come for my horses, and all the chances are they'll come in the night. The horses will be corralled at night, and I'll undertake to keep the thieves there long enough for you and your men to get there providing you hear the telephone," Kate explained.

"It would be a good scheme," Grey said slowly, "only I don't see how yuh are goin' t' know when they come, an' how yuh are goin' t' hold 'em long enough fer me to rout out my boys an' git over there, though I'm a-tellin' yuh we'll sure come a-hellin'."

"Well, if I can't I'll lose my horses," Kate said with a smile full of confidence.

VII

THE next morning, for the first time since his arrival at the Lazy G, Cigaret Johnny found himself overlooked. Kate Bromley and her band of fine horses held the interest of every eye. Johnny seized the first opportunity to throw his saddle on Oregon Lad and ride away while all the punchers were admiring Kate's horses.

The sorrel protested noisily against leaving his fellows now that he had been reunited with them, and for the first time in his life Johnny struck the horse. It hurt him to do so, but it had the desired effect of making the horse so angry that he forgot to nicker.

Johnny had passed close to Kate several times and had given no sign of recognition; but apparently his dumb devotion was felt by the girl, for once she gave him a look that was charged with annoyance, and it hurt the little man like a blow from a quirt.

That day he rode down toward the bluff above the Big Blacksnake River. His investigations at first were more or less cursory, for he was feeling bitter. He knew that Bill Steele was hanging around Kate, helping her move and making himself agreeable. Therefore, to Johnny's innate dislike of the man was now added jealousy.

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Kate Bromley had been the only woman to fill any place in the little rider's life, and when he had met her, under rather dramatic circumstances, he had given her all the devotion of which he was capable—an amount not to be measured by the size of his body. None better than he knew his limitations, and the idea that Kate might care for him as he did for her never occurred to him. He was content to serve and worship, asking nothing. But that his idol might marry, and marry a man whom he instinctively hated and distrusted, was a contingency that had not before occurred to him, and the thought of it corroded his very soul.

But for all that he resented the situation there was no way for him to help matters. He must keep on with the farce of being a detective whom every one ridiculed, pretend to be a stranger to the woman he worshiped and let another man play the gallant courier around her.

As he reached the bluff of perpendicular rock above the river the peculiar manner of the disappearance of the stolen stock flashed into his memory. One glance at the bluff showed him the utter impossibility of getting down to the river. There was not only one high bluff, but a series of them; those closest to the river not high, yet steep enough, and jagged enough to prohibit any one getting over them.

It was easy to see that stock could not be successfully tracked over the flinty, gravelly top of the breaks. He rode along down-river for about three miles till he came to the road that led down to the river in the one place where it was accessible. It was little more than a trail through a crooked crevice that twisted around and around till it reached the bottom, and it was so steep that a man riding down there bareback would have had difficulty to keep from shooting over his horse's head.

Yet there were wagon-tracks visible now and again, and all along the way were short, stalky bits of hay and dry, powdery leaves that Johnny knew could come only from baled alfalfa hay. The inevitable conclusion was that the miners down below had horses and no pasture so were compelled to haul in hay.

He rode on down to a gravel bar along the river, comprising, he judged, some four or five acres. He took in the miners' cabin standing open and unconcealed on the very brink of the river. It had been placed there apparently for the double reason that it was handy to water and afforded an easy, natural sewage system.

Back against the bluff was a horse-shed containing five horses, three good-looking saddle-horses and a work-team. There was a wagon also, and a few bales of hay.

As he reached the sand-bar two men were just preparing to launch a small skiff across the river. At sight of him, however, they waited until he rode up.

"Howdy, men," he greeted affably.

They nodded or grunted a greeting. Their attitude, it seemed to Johnny, was more watchful than friendly; yet they appeared anxious not to give offense.

"Got a good thing here, looks like," Johnny ventured.

"Well, it ain't so bad," replied one man, a burly giant with a black beard.

He turned toward his companion, and it impressed Johnny that a knowing leer passed between them.

"Any more diggin's like this below here?" Johnny asked.

"Never heard of any; did you, Bennett?" asked the other man, who sported a light, sandy-colored beard that likewise concealed most of his face.

"Never did, Randall. Yuh might ask McGuire, stranger. He was the man who discovered this diggin's."

Another burly man with a flaring, rusty-looking beard was now approaching from the cabin.

"McGuire," said Bennett, "this party wants t' know if there's any more claims like this down-river."

"Not a thing," McGuire said jealously. "No pickin's here for yuh, stranger. We got it all."

"Oh, I ain't a prospector," Johnny disclaimed at once. "I'm a rider for the Lazy G. I was just curious, that's all."

"Oh, that's it," McGuire said with visible relief. "Yuh see, we have t' be s'picious, because every now an' then some feller tries t' horn in here on us."

"Not me," Johnny assured earnestly. "But would yuh mind lettin' me see how yuh git the gold outa here? I never did see no minin'."

Two of the miners looked at McGuire. Obviously he was the leader.

"T' tell yuh the truth now, boy," that worthy said, "we ain't doin' no minin' right

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now. We're just fixin' up t' work on a new project."

"I see," Johnny said, his eyes roving about restlessly.

The place was exactly as described to him by Ad Grey. The bar on this side of the river was plainly closed in by high ledges that touched the water above and below the bar. On the other side it was the same, though the pocket over there appeared even smaller.

Yet instead of being only one bar there appeared to be two, as the river divided and made a small channel through the middle of the bar, leaving a small island that was densely covered by birch and alder growth. He noticed also two strong steel cables stretching across the river.

"What's them cables for?" he demanded bluntly.

"Them?" asked McGuire with a grin. "Why, yuh see we use them t' send tools an' things back an' forth across the river in a big bucket jigger. Lots handier than makin' a trip with the skiff every time."

"I see," Johnny drawled. "I'd like right well t' see it work."

"Say," said the black-bearded giant suddenly, "we heard there was a detective feller up at the Lazy G ranch who answers yore description. Do you happen t' be him?"

Cigaret Johnny flushed. This detective business was getting to be a sore spot. It was an insult to his ability that even a bunch of lowly prospectors should know what he was, even though it was his business to act so clumsily that every one should guess it.

"Well, mebbe I am," he snapped. "Yuh goin' t' git funny about it an' try t' keep me from lookin' around?"

"Not in the least," McGuire said conciliatingly. "We've always been ready t' show anybody at all around except prospectors."

"Since they say this is the only place where the river can be crossed for twenty-five miles it's a place t' be looked into, an' I'm goin' t' do it," Johnny said determinedly.

"All right; go ahead an' look," said Bennett sullenly.

"Row me across," Cigaret Johnny commanded.

"Sure thing," McGuire said pleasantly, and with a dark look at Bennett. "An' I'll tell yuh this, seein' as yo're an officer; it's somethin' we wouldn't tell anybody else, an' we want you t' keep it quiet. What we use them cables for is t' hold a sort of a platform we've got hid in the brush on the other side.

"Yuh see, we've only touched the fringe o' the gold, so t' speak, on the bars. The real stuff is in the river-bottom, an' when we git our platform finished—it ain't done yet—we'll run it along on them cables t' where we can dredge the river-bottom. By movin' the cables once in a while we can clean it all. *Sabe?*"

Johnny nodded wisely. Actually his ignorance of mining in all its branches was monumental, but he was now convinced of the miner's truthfulness by their seeming candor. It grew to a certainty when they rowed him across and showed him all around the edge of the bluff on the other side. It was even more nearly unscalable on that side than on the other. The only way out was back across the river.

He saw the vague outlines of their "platform" through the birches, and the men offered to show it to him, but with such reluctance that he respected their wish not to have their business secret disclosed and did not go near it. Anyway he had found out what he wanted—that there was no place to conceal stolen stock there, and no way to get them out if they were there except back up the one trail.

They rowed him back across the river, and he thanked them for their courtesy.

"Glad t' have the privilege o' showin' yuh around," McGuire said. "Only thing is, we'd take it kindly if yuh didn't say nothin' t' nobody 'bout our dredgin' operations."

"Not a word," Johnny promised readily.

He produced his sack of Bull Durham; they all rolled a smoke from it and parted the best of friends.

"Well," Johnny murmured as he reached the top of the bluff and paused to look back, "I've at least made sure there ain't nothin' wrong down there. But still," he continued more doubtfully, "if I ever saw three hard-lookin' customers they're right down there under that bluff. If yuh could judge by looks they'd as soon stuck me into the river as not. But they didn't do it, an' they was obligin' besides. Mebbe if they had them rats' nests offa their faces they'd look almost human."

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VIII

WHEN Cigaret Johnny returned to the Lazy G that night he was met by Ad Grey.

"Mrs. Bromley wants t' see yuh, Shrimp," Grey said condescendingly. "I'm goin' t' send Bill an' the boys up on the head o' Chicken Creek on a hard ride tomorrer so's yuh can drift over there any time after nine o'clock with no danger o' anybody seein' yuh there."

"All right," Johnny grunted none too cordially.

The faint amusement which Grey manifested when in his presence was getting irritating. The attitude of the punchers was even more exasperating to his raw nerves, though there was one conspicuous exception—Phil Norton. That big puncher had gained a very real respect for Johnny and predicted darkly to the rest that "some o' these days he's a-goin' t' surprize yuh."

Bill Steele was quietly contemptuous, though for the most part he chose to show it by completely ignoring Johnny's existence. The man most open in his antagonism was Anse Clover. That thick-headed, disgruntled puncher who had ridden the range till it had lost all romance for him, leaving only the most sordid kind of ambition, was keen to make a reputation for himself; and, believing that Johnny was a rustler, he spied upon him continually and otherwise made himself obnoxious.

In one respect in particular was this irritating to Cigaret Johnny—it kept him from watching Bill Steele the way he wanted to. The foreman usually retired early to his shack. Johnny wanted to keep that cabin under some sort of surveillance, but on account of Clover this became utterly impossible. Believing as Johnny did that many of the Lazy G men were rustlers, it seemed a plain case of collusion.

That evening the men received orders from Ad Grey to keep night horses up and to have their six-shooters where they could get at them handily. Naturally it occasioned much comment. By this time practically all of the men knew that Johnny pretended to be a detective. Most of them believed he was a rustler, and some of them believed Ad Grey himself was fooled. But Bill Steele contrived to drop a word or so that led them to think Grey was playing a deep, dark game that might be at Johnny's expense.

Johnny, being altogether in the dark as to the reason for this order, was inclined to attribute it to Bill Steele's machinations. At any rate he quickly found that the punchers seized on it as an excuse to have some fun with him.

"I reckon this is yore doin's, Shrimp. Have yuh got a hot clue?" Shorty Blair demanded.

"Why me?" Johnny demanded belligerently.

"Well, I dunno; but it's been whispered about through the murmurin' pines that you're just about the formidablest man-catcher that ever happened."

"When I start somethin' I won't need the help o' you birds," Johnny retorted.

"Now, Shrimp, yuh know yourself that although you're equal to at least half a dozen o' such fellers as Phil Norton in a fair fight even you can't whip fifteen or twenty bold, bad rustlers," Shorty gibed.

With a great effort Johnny kept a grip on his temper. He knew that he must be careful; must make no mistakes lest they react against Kate. And he must be careful not to let these men know that he suspected them.

"The trouble is," he retorted, "that if there is an alarm an' we're all called out, you birds'll all be goin' in the opposite direction from the way the rustlers go—an' you'll be goin' fast."

"But you'll be goin' the way the rustlers are, I'll bet my socks," Anse Clover growled heavily.

Johnny flushed angrily. Though he had once been a rustler he was now heartily ashamed of it and was perhaps unduly sensitive about being called one even though the accusation came from one whom he firmly believed to be a rustler himself. But again he managed to control himself, and threw himself on his bunk with a disdainful grunt.

In the morning he heard Ad Grey give orders that would take the whole force to the upper end of the range for the entire day as the rancher had promised, and Grey furthermore contrived to have Johnny left behind in a casual way that would not excite suspicion. Grey himself announced that he had business in Henryville, twenty miles away.

Promptly at nine o'clock Johnny swung

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on to Oregon Lad and headed for Bill Steele's homestead, though first he made a circuit in the other direction in case any one should ask the Chinese cook in which direction he had gone. But in a remarkably short time he was in sight of Kate's abode. The bunch of thoroughbreds were grazing in the pasture, and at sight of them Oregon Lad set up a furore that ceased only when he was able to touch noses with some of his friends across the fence.

Cigaret Johnny found Kate and Enrico building a wire gate in the lane and stretching various other small wires.

"Hello, Johnny," Kate greeted cordially. "I'm glad to see you."

The devoted, wistful look had crept back into the little man's eyes.

"How yuh comin' along?" he queried.

"Fine. By night we'll have everything all fixed to receive the rustlers," she smiled.

"Would yuh mind tellin' me what yuh aim t' do?" Johnny inquired meekly.

"Not in the least," Kate said. "But first I want to congratulate you. You've done fine getting them to think that you are either a horse-thief or a detective. It's better than I hoped. No danger now that they will suspect me at all."

"It ain't been no —— of a lot o' fun bein' laughed at, but I think I've learned somethin' worth while," Johnny said.

"Yes?" Kate questioned absently.

She was more intent upon fastening a refractory wire. Johnny straightened out the wire.

"I'm dead sure Bill Steele is the leader o' the rustlers, an' a lot more o' Ad Grey's men are in cahoots with him," he said doggedly.

"Oh, surely not," Kate protested. "It can't be possible."

"But it is," he insisted, and told her of the theft of Oregon Lad.

"I heard of that," Kate laughed, "and of course it was only a joke. I'm afraid it was a mistake for you to bring Oregon Lad here in the first place. If you hadn't been a better actor than I suspected you could be, we would have been shown up the other night. If Oregon Lad or Bonnie don't give us away we can consider ourselves lucky."

"I'm glad I rode Oregon—his speed is liable t' come in handy fer us yet," Johnny said.

It was the nearest he had ever come to disagreeing with his employer. He recognized that he could not convince her that his suspicions of Grey's men were well founded, so he let the matter drop and renewed his request for information as to her plans.

"Of course we are hoping that the rustlers will come to us," Kate explained with a smile. "It's always easier than where you have to go out after them. But I'm sure the bait will prove irresistible, and our first job is to get ready to receive them. Now it's almost a certainty they'll come in the night, and when I get through with this lane I'm sure they'll come up the meadow from the lower gate. It will be handier for them anyway. The grass in the meadow will keep the horses' feet from making a noise both coming and going."

"That's just what I was thinkin'," Johnny blurted.

Kate smiled again, a bit condescendingly.

"The first trouble they're going to have is to find the corral bars wired up so tight it will take them at least a quarter of an hour to get them open. Then when they finally get the horses back to the outside gate they are going to find it locked with a chain and padlock."

"But how's that?" Johnny wondered. "Yuh said they'd come in all right."

"I'll explain that presently," the girl went on. "They'll surely lose some time because they'll know they are trapped. But they won't want to give up the horses at that stage of the game. They'll try to break down the gate first, but it's strongly made and will take some time. They might try to cut the wires if one of them happens to have a pair of wire nippers, but they'll have more trouble for themselves when they come to drive the horses through the gap. They know what barb wire is, and they'll be afraid to go through so close to the gate. At the very best the rustlers can do it will be half an hour from the time they come through the gate until they can get out—and by that time there will be plenty of men there to receive them."

"I'm plumb lost," Cigaret Johnny confessed.

"Well, listen. You know Enrico is a bright boy, and like so many Indians he has the faculty of sleeping with one eye open. He is going to sleep right close to the gate where he will be sure to hear any one coming through.

"We've run a very small but strong copper wire through half-driven staples right

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close to the ground from the gate to a bell that will hang at the head of my bed. If Enrico hears the men he will pull the bell and wake me up. If he shouldn't wake up by any chance the wire is so arranged on the gate that it will give the alarm. Enrico will jerk the bell once for an alarm and then a separate time for each man who comes through.

"There is a telephone by my bed, and I'll call up Mr. Grey instantly and let him know how many rustlers are here. He has promised to have his men at the lower gate in twenty minutes from the time I give the alarm."

She finished her explanation a little triumphantly and a little expectantly. But Cigaret Johnny was strangely silent.

"Don't you think it's a good scheme? Mr. Grey does," she said a bit resentfully.

"Suppose I should happen to be right about Grey's men bein' rustlers?" he demanded.

"But—but that is ridiculous. And what matter? If it should be true Mr. Grey will miss the guilty men, and it will only be a matter of rounding them up," she reminded him.

"Well, mebbe," Johnny said.

His anxiety for her welfare conquered some of his reserve.

"Look here, Kate," he went on earnestly, "you're takin' a long chance stayin' here alone with just them two Mexicans—a woman an' a kid. You'll be in a —— of a lot o' danger if them rustlers come like yuh figger. They're goin' t' be mighty desperate when they find out they've been trapped."

"I can take care of myself, Johnny, thanks," Kate smiled. "If it comes right down to it I'm not afraid to shoot it out with them. I can handle a rifle or a revolver as good as any man."

"Yuh ain't told nobody yore plans?" he asked. "Yuh ain't let anything drop t' Bill Steele fer instance, have yuh?"

"Not a word to Mr. Steele," she assured him. "He may be all right—I think he is—but it's against my policy to let any more people into my plans than I absolutely have to. No one knows about this but you and Mr. Grey. Grey's men know they may have to fight rustlers any night, but they don't associate me with that."

"Well, when that alarm comes yuh can count on me an' Oregon Lad gettin' here first," Johnny promised.

"You mustn't," she said urgently. "That might spoil everything. You stick with the bunch."

"Nothin' doin'," he rebelled.

"It's my orders," Kate said coldly.

"Well, then— Oh, —— it all, I'm one —— of a detective!" he growled.

"You're fine, Johnny," the girl praised; "but most of your work is done. We mustn't be seen speaking together, so don't come again unless I send for you. And you positively must not let Oregon Lad get close to these horses again. All you have to do from now on is to ride around and look wise," she finished with a smile.

"Which is one —— of a job," Cigaret Johnny raged silently as he rode away.

He rode mechanically toward the mouth of Chicken Creek, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and so he did not see a man on a bay horse who turned and loped rapidly toward the head of Chicken Creek. This man was Anse Clover, who had set himself the task of keeping Johnny's movements under observation. From a thicket of aspens Clover had watched Johnny ride in and talk to Kate.

"I'm bettin' my socks," murmured Clover, "that that gal's bunch o' thoroughbreds is as good as stole right now. That measly little shrimp has just been lookin' things over."

IX

TWO monotonous weeks passed. Weeks monotonous to Cigaret Johnny at least, and filled with worry. They were not so slow for his employer for several reasons. Kate was more patient than the little ex-rustler, and she had full confidence in her ultimate success where he had only doubt.

Then too she was almost overwhelmed by a wave of popularity, while Johnny was being stung constantly by insults and jeers. Neither Chicken Creek, nor the Blacksnakes for that matter, had ever before seen a girl of such poise and polish, and withal with such a magnetic and charming personality. Single young men hung around her cabin from noon until she sent them home in the evenings.

Most prominent and dominant among them was Bill Steele. The foreman of the Lazy G had fallen for the girl and fallen hard. He made no bones about it but rushed matters masterfully.

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"It's this way with me, Kate," he told her one afternoon—he had dropped the Mrs. Bromley at their third meeting—"when I want a thing I go out and get it. I'm only just past thirty now, but I ain't done so bad—not so bad. For one thing I'm foreman of the biggest cattle outfit in this country an' draggin' down a hundred an' a quarter a month.

"Lots o' fellers have tried t' git my job, an' I look t' see 'em keep on tryin'. Old Anse Clover, for instance, is fairly green with jealousy. I could fire him in a minute if I wanted to, but I keep him around for the fun o' seein' him try t' prejudice Ad against me. Yuh see, he was workin' for Ad years before I come into the country, an' it hurts his pride t' have me jump over him."

"I remember him," Kate said noncommittally.

"I've not been just content t' drag down my salary either," Steele bragged on. "An' neither have I just salted it down like some o' the tight-wads I know. I've invested, an' I've made my investments pay. It won't be long until I'll be ownin' one of these big ranches myself."

"The work you've done here shows that you are in the habit of doing your work well," Kate flattered him, and the foreman swelled perceptibly.

"This place was a mere side line with me," Steele said. "Still, I ain't sayin' I don't like the place, an' that it wouldn't come in handy for me later on in a business way."

"Then perhaps you don't want to relinquish after all," Kate suggested.

"I'm not renegin'," Steele said hastily, "but I was just leadin' up to something. Why can't you an' me strike a bargain on this place?"

"Why I thought we had," Kate said open-eyed.

"I don't mean that way. You know what I mean. Go into partnership on everything," he suggested with a smirk.

"You mean—get married?" Kate cried in amazement.

"Just that. Yo're alone. Yuh need somebody t' take care o' yuh, an' I'm the man that can do it. Why, Kate, I knew you was meant for me the first time I ever saw you," he said ardently.

"Then you knew more than I did," Kate said dryly.

"Yuh mean yuh don't like me?"

"I didn't say that," Kate denied, "but I certainly am not contemplating matrimony—not at this time."

"What's the matter with me?" Steele demanded.

"Why, nothing—that I know of," she said calmly. "Only I hadn't thought of marrying anybody. You see," she went on gently, "I've always managed to take care of myself pretty well, even while I was married, and I've sort of got the habit of it. I don't want to be dependent on any man. Some day, after I'm financially independent, I may think of marriage again; but now——"

"Yuh dead sure you're goin' t' make a go of it by yoreself?" Steele asked meaningly.

"Why not?" she countered. "I have a little money, and more than all I have my horses. Why, the three-year-old colts I sell every year alone bring me in a tidy income."

"Maybe so. But horses is uncertain property at the best," he argued. "They might git a contagious disease an' all die; rustlers might git 'em; the price drop on yuh, or various other things."

"The price of the kind of horses I raise don't drop very much, and the other things, O Prophet of Disaster, can't happen if a person is reasonably careful, and that I mean to be."

"Well," Steele said gruffly, "I see I can't argue with yuh, but just the same yo're liable t' come a cropper any time, an' when yuh do just remember that I'll be stickin' around—an' I intend t' marry yuh, don't forgit that."

Kate laughed with genuine amusement. She rather liked Steele because he was of the go-getter type that she admired, though he certainly failed to rouse any spark of romance in her. He was entirely too selfish, too self-centered, for that.

"We'll let that matter rest until the fearful crisis you speak of comes to pass," she said.

She failed to see the cold gleam of resolution in his chilly eyes.

Steele was not discouraged by her lack of response, for he came to see her almost every day and asserted himself in such a way that he frightened his rivals and quickly had the field largely to himself.

Kate was not idle these days. Though she pinned her faith to the trap she had set

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for the rustlers, she rode when she could without attracting notice, on the alert for telltale signs. She had been range-raised, could ride, rope and shoot like a man, and furthermore and most important, she had the gift of observation and brains enough to correlate apparently disassociated facts. It was this faculty which accounted for the success that had made her the most valued operative of the Western Range Detective Bureau.

This time, however, she failed to find anything that could possibly be construed as a clue. Cattle and horses disappeared at frequent intervals from the range as mysteriously as if they had left the earth. It seemed almost uncanny. More than one cattleman, she learned, had vowed to sell his property for just what he could get unless the rustling was stopped.

It was this which had led her to give a little more serious consideration to Cigaret Johnny's theory that the crew of the Lazy G were the rustlers. After thinking things over she decided that Johnny was wrong in blaming it on that particular outfit; that was to be accounted for by his animosity toward them on account of the treatment he had received. Ad Grey had told her of the run-in between Johnny and Bill Steele, and she learned that the little man's life was far from pleasant.

His general idea, however, she thought was probably correct. The brains of the rustling gang must certainly be some influential, or at least well-informed, cattleman who perhaps had a double object in view. Getting the value of the stolen stock perhaps did not mean so much to him as creating a reign of terror that would enable him to buy coveted ranches for a mere song.

As far as her trap was concerned she felt sure she had overlooked no detail. Enrico was animatedly on the job at night, and she had the utmost confidence in Ad Grey. She was sure the old cattleman would have his men on the job long before the rustlers could get away.

For a number of nights the girl scarcely slept, expecting every moment to hear the jangling of the alarm bell; but as time went on without anything happening she began to sleep more soundly. Her worst problem was to get rid of her suitors early enough to give the rustlers a clear field.

Then one moderately dark night the expected alarm came. The little bell at the head of her bed jangled wildly. She was on her feet in an instant, waiting breathlessly. The ringing stopped; then it jingled once sharply, and three times more in rapid succession.

It was enough. She knew that four men were about to enter the lower gate. With swift, deft fingers she gave Ad Grey's telephone ring, two long and a short. She waited eagerly for the reply with the receiver to her ear. None came. Impatiently she rang again. Still no reply.

For minute after minute she rang, finally trying to get other parties, but with the same result. Finally she was forced to acknowledge the awful truth that there had been an important slip-up in her plans. The rustlers had made themselves safe by cutting the telephone wire.

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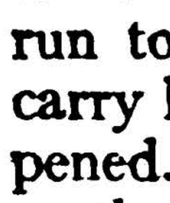

KATE dressed rapidly, at the same time calling out to Enrico's mother, who slept in the adjoining room. By the time Kate was all dressed excepting her coat and hat the Mexican woman stumbled sleepily in.

Kate had been thinking fast. If only she had left one of the horses out of the corral! But she had not dared to do that lest it's nickering betray her plans. There was no time now to get one out of the corral before the rustlers arrived, for she had fastened the corral bars to stay.

"The wire has been cut, Maria," she said quietly. "You slip out and run along the fence until you meet Enrico. Have him run to the Lazy G as fast as his legs can carry him and tell Mr. Grey what has happened. I'm going to find out who those rustlers are if I have to follow them to—Well, you go on."

The Mexican woman stumbled out, and Kate belted on her revolver, a businesslike .38 Colt on a .44 frame. Then she slid into her coat and slipped noiselessly out of the door on the side away from the corral. But before she went she dropped a powerful pocket flashlight into her coat pocket.

With one hand gripping her revolver, the other the searchlight, she waited in the shadows of her cabin. It was not long until she saw four indistinct shapes moving toward her corral. Gradually they took form as men on horseback. She felt a pang

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of regret over the failure of her plan. Before this Ad Guey's men should have been on their way, and now Enrico was not even started.

There was scarcely a sound. The faint stirring of the grass caused by the horses' feet would not carry against the soft breeze that rustled the bushes and reeds. None of the men was betraying himself by talking. She saw them reach the corral; saw her pets stir uneasily. She saw one of the men dismount and begin fumbling with the bars.

For two minutes perhaps she waited tensely, and then she grinned a little as she heard a smothered oath. Another pair of minutes passed, and there was more subdued whispering that plainly indicated profanity. It had taken Kate and Enrico a good many minutes each evening, and a good many more each morning, to twist and untwist the coils of barb wire which made of the bars to the corral a veritable Chinese puzzle—and they had daylight to work in.

The girl could resist temptation no longer. She threw herself on her hands and knees and crawled rapidly toward the corral, yet cautiously making her approach from the side opposite the bars. Soon she was close enough to hear the rustlers' voices. She was thankful that Bill Steele had built the corral solidly, leaving not even a crack between the poles. Thus she was able to stand on the opposite side of it from the men without danger of being seen.

"For ——'s sake," raved one of the men on the horses, "ain't yuh ever goin' t' git them bars down?"

"Nobody but a woman could think o' such a —— way t' fasten a pair o' bars," complained the man on the ground. "I ain't got the top bar loose yit, an' there's five more."

"Aw, let me git down there," scoffed one of the others.

He threw himself from the saddle, and for a few minutes there was no sound save the labored breathing of the men. Then a third man got down to help untangle the wires that held the bars in place.

Suddenly the silence was ripped open by a sharp, cracking oath, followed instantly by three whispered fierce admonitions from the other men.

"Cut muh blame thumb half off on a —— barb," complained the man who had sworn.

"Well, yuh needn't wake up the people in the house if yuh did!" fiercely exclaimed the man who had remained on his horse.

Kate stiffened involuntarily. There was something vaguely familiar about that voice. She was sure that had not the man been trying to subdue it she would have recognized it.

The three men on the ground continued their work, and finally one of them wrenched a bar loose with so much noise that they all remained tense for a long minute as if expecting the noise to wake the house. There being no sound to indicate that the noise had been heard, they resumed work.

"Look here, fellers, we can't waste time here all night. Ain't anybody got a pair o' pliers?" demanded the man on the horse.

Again it seemed to Kate that she ought to know that voice, but even his words were hard to catch. She got far enough away from the corral to get a glance at him, but it was too dark to recognize his form. All she could see was a shapeless bulk on a horse. His arm was in motion, however, and she judged he was swinging a rope.

"I ain't got no pliers, but I'm gittin' mad enough to chaw the —— things in two," hoarsely declared the man who had hurt his thumb.

But even barb wires must in the end yield to the hand of man. Kate presently heard two more bars fall in quick succession, and realized that in a little while more the horses could be taken out. She knew, also, that Enrico would not be much more than started on his way to the Lazy G. She had not discovered the identity of any of the men, and she had no horse to follow them.

When the men got back to the lower gate and found it chained and locked they might become frightened and kick the wires loose from the posts until there was slack enough for two men to hold them to the ground while the other two led their saddle-horses through. Or they might take time to smash down the gate and take the stolen horses with them. It all depended upon the amount of nerve they possessed. But in any event Kate knew that she would not get to see them, and it meant the failure of her elaborately planned trap to catch them. Something desperate had to be done, and she decided to do it.

Edging around the corral, she reached a point where she could see all the men

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plainly. She dared not go farther without risk of losing the advantage of taking the rustlers by surprize. It would all be easy, she felt, except for the man on the horse. He was some distance from the others, and it was going to be difficult to cover them all; yet it had to be risked. Stepping swiftly out from the corral, she ordered crisply—

"Hands up!"

At the same moment she snapped her flashlight on and let its glare play upon the three men by the bars. It disclosed three heavily bearded, amazed-looking men.

"Get 'em up, I say," she repeated.

The gun was steady in her hand, and the men heard an ominous click that they recognized only too well. Their hands shot into the air.

Kate swung the flashlight upon the man on the horse for just a second before snapping it off, but she gave a gasp of astonishment as she recognized the horseman. The same moment she heard the swish of a rope as the man made a dexterous, underhanded throw. She turned her gun swiftly and fired, but just as she pulled the trigger she felt her arm beaten down as something heavy and painful struck it.

The bullet struck the ground directly under the horse the man was riding. There was an oath from the man as his horse jumped, but he jerked the rope viciously, and Kate's arms were pinioned to her sides as she was jerked from her feet. At almost the same moment the bearded ruffians were shaking and mauling her.

"Here, stop that," commanded the man on the horse. "Git her gun, but let her alone."

Two of the bearded men jerked her to her feet while the other one took her gun. The flashlight rolled neglected to the ground. The man on the horse got down and approached her with a grim smile upon his face.

"So Johnny Tompkins was right after all, Mr. Steele, and you are nothing but a horse-thief," Kate said scornfully.

Steele made no denial.

"D'ye know yuh might 'a' killed me when yuh fired that shot?" he demanded.

"I meant to," Kate retorted calmly. "I gave you a chance to get your hands up, and when you didn't I had to shoot."

"Well, yuh lost the trick," he said, "but I want t' say that you're some girl t' try t' stick up four men."

She knew that she must kill all the time she could. A minute now might mean life or death. That these men were desperate characters she had no doubt.

"So you are the mysterious 'inside' man that the ranchers have been talking about," she mused aloud. "No wonder you expected to own a ranch of your own soon by frightening your neighbors into giving their property away. Really I was fooled. When you came around talking marriage I had no idea you were only trying to find the easiest way to steal my horses."

"I wasn't," he denied quickly. "I meant every word of it when I said I wanted t' marry yuh, an' that I meant t' marry yuh anyway whether or no. If yuh hadn't turned me down by bein' so —— independent this wouldn't have happened."

"But you said you meant to keep on trying," she temporized.

"That's just what I'm doin'. That's why I aimed t' take yore horses. I figgered that when yuh found yoreself broke yuh wouldn't be so high-minded with me."

"So that's it—and you are not really a rustler at all. This is just a way you have of courting me."

She laughed in a way that made Steele flush, and the three other men snicker.

"No; I'm not a rustler," Steele said.

"And you won't take my horses after all?"

"Not if you'll marry me."

"Isn't that rather humorous, paying for me with my own horses?"

"Come on," growled one of the bearded men. "Let's be movin'. The gal knows what we are, an' we can't take any chances on her squealin'. This ain't courtship—it's business."

"Any particular horse you'd like to ride?" Steele asked her.

"You mean to take me with you?" Kate demanded.

"Absolutely. As these men say, we can't take chances."

He turned to the other men.

"Two of you go in an' tie up them Mexicans, an' the other one ketch a horse for this girl. I don't mean t' quit this game now till it's finished."

"I'll call my horse," Kate said.

She whistled, and the little black mare came to the bars. In a few minutes Bonnie was saddled, and Kate was lifted to the saddle. The men were taking no chances, and her wrists were tied together and then

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tied to the fork of the saddle. By that time the other men were back from the cabin.

"The Mexicans have gone," they declared.

"Then, by ——, we'd better ride," Bill Steele averred in something approximating alarm. "Did you send them for help?" he demanded of Kate.

"You'll know the answer to that in a short time," she replied stoutly.

Steele rode close beside the girl and kept a firm grip on the black mare's hackamore, and the other rustlers drove the thoroughbreds. All the way to the lower gate Kate listened eagerly for the pounding of hoofs on the hard trail to the Lazy G, but there was no sound.

They reached the gate, and one of the men rode ahead to open it. As she had expected, he cursed loudly and came dashing back with the startling news that the gate had been chained and locked since their entry.

"We're trapped," he finished.

For a minute Kate was permitted to enjoy the men's obvious panic. They seemed to expect an instant attack, but as none developed they began to consider their problem.

Suddenly Bill Steele laughed harshly.

"I believe I've just tumbled to the straight of this thing," he said to Kate. "I think I know now why Ad Grey give orders for the boys to keep up night horses an' to keep their guns oiled. Anse Clover told me he seen the Shrimp talkin' t' you once, an' I reckon you're with the Shrimp; ain't you, my dear?"

"Well, if I am you can see that you can't get away with anything," Kate said with a confidence that was largely assumed.

"The Shrimp!"

Steele laughed loudly and contemptuously.

"I'll bet he is in bed a-poundin' his ear right now. I'll say it was a good hunch I played when I cut that wire before leavin' the ranch."

Kate said nothing. She hoped they had forgotten Enrico, but that hope was quickly dispelled by one of the other men.

"What's become o' them Mexicans?" he demanded.

Kate managed a laugh.

"Who do you suppose locked the chain on that gate?" she inquired.

She must persuade them that they were safe and get them to waste as much time as possible.

Somewhat to her surprize the men accepted that version without question, but it did not aid greatly.

"Two of yuh slap yore ropes on a board on that gate an' pull her to pieces. Them boards'll break, an' it won't take long," Bill Steele directed.

It was done quicker than the girl thought was possible. There was a prolonged creaking and cracking as the two saddle-horses settled into the pull; then a board gave way with a crash. Bit by bit the remaining boards were broken, and the band of thoroughbreds were driven through.

Kate listened with aching ears for sound of rescuers, but only utmost silence reigned behind them.

XI

CIGARET JOHNNY'S belief that Bill Steele was crooked had never lessened. He still suspected some of the other Lazy G men, but he firmly believed Steele to be the leader, and the man whom he must watch.

There was little danger that any of the men in the bunk-house could or would try to leave in the night while he was present, but Steele was different. And since Steele was going to Kate Bromley's so often Johnny's worries doubled—also his resolution to keep an eye on the man—especially after night.

The shack which Steele occupied was perhaps a hundred yards from the bunk-house, but the windows in the bunk-house fronted the other way. Johnny had obtained a bunk on the side next to Steele's cabin, and very early he had maneuvered to get into the bunk-house alone, and there with some little difficulty he succeeded in removing a small piece of chinking from between two of the logs. It made a small crack six inches long and half an inch wide just where Johnny could keep an eye to it while stretched full length on his bed—and no one else in the bunk-house suspected it.

He had quickly learned something of Steele's habits. Almost invariably the man saddled a fresh horse and rode away from the ranch directly after supper. From the ranch gossip Johnny knew all too well where the foreman spent his evenings. That, however, was something he could not avoid.

But he did know that Kate invariably

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sent her evening visitors away promptly at nine o'clock. And Steele had been getting back to his shack before ten each night. Johnny always knew the precise instant the man entered his shack because there was a gap of an inch beneath the window blind, and when he lighted his lamp there was a shaft of light visible. Johnny always stayed awake until that light was extinguished, and for many minutes thereafter till he knew that the foreman had gone to bed.

This particular night Steele did not return at his accustomed hour, and Johnny grew anxious. The minutes passed, and whatever of drowsiness there had been in Johnny was swiftly dissipated by his growing alarm. Why didn't Steele come home? was the question that ran through his mind continuously.

As the hours passed away Johnny grew more and more anxious. Steele might be off on some rustling job, he reflected; but the little man's chief fear was that the fellow might be annoying Kate Bromley.

Finally he could stand it no longer. Moving as softly as he could, he raised himself in his bed and gazed around. Not a man moved. So far as he could see each one was sound in his slumbers.

He carefully picked up his boots and tiptoed outside. He slid into his boots, and after a moment of indecision moved stealthily toward Steele's shack. He wanted, if possible, to make sure that he had not been mistaken about the man not coming home. He felt that he had made blunders enough, and was not desirous of going on a wild-goose chase after a man who was sleeping soundly in his bed.

He listened at the window and heard no sound. He tried the door and found it locked. Suddenly he thought how foolish he was to make his investigations that way. If Steele was in his cabin his horse would be in the stable.

The horse which Steele had ridden away after supper was in its accustomed stall. Johnny was more than ever puzzled. He ran his hand over the animal's back and found it dry. It had been in the stable a long time.

"Now that beats ——," Johnny pondered. "He never made no light or I'd 'a' seen it, an' he wouldn't 'a' went into his shack without makin' a light. I wonder ——"

He looked toward the ranch house. It had long been dark. Steele certainly was not in conference with Ad Grey. Neither had they gone away together; for there hung Grey's big, old-fashioned Texas saddle behind the long-legged bay the cattleman rode. Something—he called it a hunch—caused Johnny to look for Steele's saddle among the mess of rigs hanging on pegs behind the horses. The saddles overlapped so thickly that one particular saddle was not likely to be missed except by the owner of it. Yet Johnny discovered that Steele's saddle was gone.

"Now what does that mean?" he demanded. "He rides away on a fresh horse, comes back after dark an' rides away on another one after leavin' the first one so it'll look like he's in his cabin. Somethin's rotten."

Johnny's mind was quickly made up. No matter if he had been ordered to stay away from Kate's place, he intended to go there and make sure that everything was all right with Kate. Oregon Lad was in another stable with only a partition of logs separating them, but it was necessary to go outside and enter it by another door.

It was characteristic of Johnny to move fast when he did move, and as he rushed outside he had a fleeting impression that the door back of Oregon Lad was quivering as if it had been hastily shut. With two leaps he reached the stable door and thrust it open. It was dark inside, but he made out the indistinct form of a man in the manger, a man who evidently had failed in an attempt to get through the manger window before Johnny got through the door. Whoever he was, Johnny knew the fellow had no business in the stable with Oregon Lad.

"Come out of there," Johnny yelled.

For answer the fellow dropped into the manger out of sight. Johnny had no mind to stand still and be shot; neither did it occur to him to retreat and leave the enemy in possession of the field. He took a chance shot at the manger and was rewarded by hearing a howl of pain.

Like a bouncing rubber ball Johnny sprang over to the manger, and a man rose to meet him. The fellow's gun came up slowly and a little awkwardly—Johnny could see the cold glint of it. The little ex-rustler knew he could beat the fellow to the shot, but he was not in a killing mood; neither was he desirous of raising an

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alarm. He feared that his one shot might already have roused some one in the bunk-house, though the probabilities were that the thick walls and roof of the stable had muffled the sound.

Like a flash he struck viciously with his gun at the fellow's gun hand. It was a move totally unexpected by the other, who let his gun fall to the floor. He gave a moan of pain, and Johnny knew he had struck hard enough to break a bone or two in the man's hand.

"Stick 'em up," Johnny rasped, and this time he enforced his command by sticking the muzzle of his gun into the man's stomach.

One hand shot up, but the other stayed down.

"I can't raise that hand—yuh broke it," groaned the man.

"Anse Clover!" Johnny ejaculated. "I hoped it was Bill Steele."

"I wisht t' —— Steele would come in now," Clover ground out.

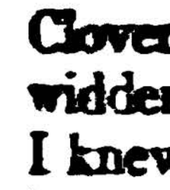
"Look here," Johnny demanded, "what was yuh doin' in here with my horse?"

"I was watchin' yuh, yuh —— rustler," Clover snarled. "I saw yuh lookin' that widder gal's horses over the other day, an' I knew yuh was a rustler from the first. I been watchin' yuh, because I knew the rest o' the bunch was blind. I saw yuh step out tonight, an' I follered yuh."

"Yuh did, eh?" Johnny gritted savagely.

"I did. Yuh got the drop on me, but in a way I got yuh just the same. If yuh go on about yore crookedness tonight I'll tell 'em what happened, an' they'll git yuh, an' if yuh don't I'll tell 'em what yuh tried t' do anyway," Clover said defiantly.

"It's —— lucky fer you I ain't a real rustler," Johnny said. "If I wasn't pressed fer time I'd show yuh some o' the virtue in repentance—but as it is I'm goin' t' just tie yuh up fer the present. Back up against that pillar."



THERE was no choice for Clover but to obey. It took but a moment for Johnny to lash the man firmly to the log pillar in the middle of the stable, and he completed the job by gagging his victim. He knew the man was suffering excruciating agony from his injured hand as well as from the bullet that had scotched his hip, but he had no time for anything but silent sympathy, which Clover did not in the least appreciate.

Shortly afterward Johnny led Oregon Lad outside and out of the corral. He sprang lightly into the saddle and let the tall sorrel have his head.

Without hesitation Oregon Lad took the trail toward Kate's cabin. The intelligent animal knew where his mates were, and, finding that he was not to be curbed, he broke into a long, easy run.

Johnny humped over in the saddle and let the horse go. He was no less eager than Oregon Lad, and he gloried in the horse's speed; and he knew also that the sorrel had the endurance to back it up over a long, long trail. Half of the distance was covered, it seemed, almost before they were well started.

Suddenly the sorrel left the trail in a sidewise jump that would have unseated many good riders, but not Cigaret Johnny, who could never be taken by surprize while on the back of a horse. Then Johnny saw a small, sobbing figure on foot in the trail ahead that had suddenly come around a bush and alarmed the horse. Instantly he brought Oregon Lad to a halt.

"What is it?" he questioned sharply. "Where's Kate?"

"It's rustlers," Enrico panted sobbingly. "They come. Four men. I give the alarm like I am tol'. But they cut the telephone an' Miss Kate she no can call. She send me fas' to Mr. Grey's an' git help while she foller —— rustlers to ——."

"Well, yuh go on an' wake Grey up, an' I'll go on," Johnny said.

There was a peculiar void in the regions of his throat and stomach. Kate was in great danger, perhaps of her life. Her plans had gone awry, and she was at the mercy of the rustlers. But as he started he thought to ask Enrico one more question.

"Seen anything of Bill Steele around here this afternoon?"

"Tonight he not been there," Enrico panted as he jogged on up the trail.

Cigaret Johnny hugged Oregon Lad's ribs with his heels, and this time he urged the sorrel to faster speed. The race-horse responded in a way that fairly took his rider's breath away; he fairly split the wind, and the little man's breast filled with a determination so great that it amounted to a savage joy. Whatever happened to him, he vowed, he was going to save the woman he loved.

The cabin lay dark and ominous; the corral empty. Johnny flung himself from

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his horse and looked around. One glance at the scattered bars told him they had been torn down violently. The rustlers had certainly taken the horses.

What had become of Kate? He yelled her name at the top of his voice, but there came no reply. He listened for the horses, but there was no sound. Everything had gone; disappeared as if swallowed up by the earth.

Suddenly he heard the crackling of bushes close at hand, and soon the bowed figure of a woman broke from the brush and came shambling toward him. He knew it was not Kate, and as it got closer he identified the Mexican woman. She was whimpering as she hurried.

"Is't you?" she gasped chokingly.

"Yes. Where is Kate?" he shot out.

"I hide, but I see some things," the woman jerked out. "Miss Kate she flash the light—she pull the gun—shoot. Then something happen. She fall down, an' the rustlers they rush all around her. They turn loose the horse, an' pretty soon they lif' Miss Kate on the Bonnie mare an' they all go 'way."

"God!" Johnny breathed. "How long ago was this?"

"Oh, long time. I send Enrico long time ago for help, but somet'ing must have happen', for he no come back," Maria whimpered.

Johnny did not stop to consider that the time must have been actually much shorter than it appeared to the Mexican woman as she crouched among the bushes in abject fright.

"Enrico's all right," he said. "I meet him, an' he'll soon be back with help. When they come you tell 'em I've gone on toward the Big Blacksnake. They say nobody can ever track them rustlers after they hit the breaks, but I'm goin' to or bust. If I find where they've turned off I'll—I'll try t' let 'em know which way to go, some way."

He suddenly stumbled over something round that rolled under his foot. Picking it up, he recognized Kate's flashlight. Snapping it on, he was gratified to see that it was uninjured. And it gave him an idea.

"Have you got a lantern here?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the Mexican woman.

"Fetch it."

The woman hurriedly brought the lantern, and he swung it on his arm.

"If I find out which way the rustlers went I'll light the lantern an' leave it settin' at the turnin'-off place," he said. "I'll leave my handkerchief on one side of it to tell 'em which way to go."

He swung into the saddle, the lantern on one arm and the flashlight in his pocket. That, he decided, might prove useful. His reins were tightly held, and Oregon Lad reared high in air, pawing the air madly with his front feet. Johnny loosened the reins, and the sorrel made a terrific lunge. Then with an eager whinny he broke into top speed.

"Why, Oregon; why, yuh danged ole sucker!" Cigaret Johnny gasped with a gasp that was nearly a sob. "I believe yuh know which way they went—I believe yuh do!"

They tore down through the meadow and through the demolished gate without a halt. Now beyond a doubt Johnny knew that the sorrel was surely on the trail of his band. No man could have followed them, but the horse knew. Whether it was by smell, an intensely acute sense of hearing, or by sheer instinct did not matter. He was on their trail.

XII

FOR three miles Oregon Lad had raced along the breaks of the Big Blacksnake. Then they reached the single trail that led down to the gravel bar where the three miners lived. Abruptly Cigaret Johnny stopped his horse.

"I wonder now," he thought. "But—but—he can't be wrong. He knows dang well the other horses have gone that way."

While the sorrel raged wildly in his anxiety to take the river trail Johnny got off and while hanging on to the horse with one arm managed to light the lantern and place it squarely in the forks of the trail. Then he dropped his handkerchief about six feet away from the lantern, and plainly in the river trail so there could be no mistake.

He swung back on Oregon Lad, but held the fretful sorrel in while he pondered the situation. Eager as he was to rescue Kate, he had not forgotten all sense of caution. Now discretion whispered that he had better go back and meet Ad Grey's men—or wait for them. There was no way for the rustlers to get out of the trap they were in except back through that narrow road down

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the bluff. Why, then, court death by going down alone?

On the other hand he felt reasonably sure that Ad Grey would be along presently, and that the veteran cattleman would read the signs correctly; but in the meantime anything might happen to Kate. If he waited for Grey to arrive it would only be adding one more man to Grey's strength, and it would not be a question of numbers anyway, while if he went down now he might be able to do the girl he adored a tremendous service.

"Come on, Oregon," he said; "we're goin' down there. If Grey finds any corpse at all when he gits down there, there'll be anyway two."

It was a desperate, risky undertaking. For all he knew the rustlers might have posted a man to watch the narrow trail. It would have been safer to leave Oregon Lad behind and slip down on foot; but someway Johnny realized that the horse was as eager as himself, and he had not the heart to leave him behind. Furthermore Johnny always felt more confident on the back of a horse than on foot. Then too Oregon Lad was content to keep quiet as long as he was moving in the right direction, but he would certainly make a tremendous fuss if he was left behind.

Somewhat to Johnny's surprize they reached the foot of the bluff without being challenged. The roar of the rapids and the *lap-lap* of the water against the rocks was startlingly loud in the silence of the night, and it was this, he felt, which was responsible for the fact that he had not been heard.

He strained his eyes through the darkness as he held Oregon Lad to a walk, and finally he made out the dim outline of something large and bulky almost across the river, and as he stared at it it passed silently out of sight in the channel behind the little island on the other side. At that instant Oregon Lad sent out a shrill, ringing whinny of protest.

Cigaret Johnny comprehended instantly. That dredging "platform" the "miners" had boasted about was nothing less than a ferry-boat, and the band of thoroughbreds had just been ferried across.

There, then, was the key to the whole riddle—almost. All the stock that had disappeared had been quietly taken across the river and concealed on the brushy island or the gravelly bar behind it and under the bluff until the danger was over, and then possibly the stock was ferried back across the river and driven away in perfect safety.

While these thoughts were sweeping through the little man's mind he was busy. He had leaped from the saddle, unhooked the cinch and dragged the saddle from the sorrel's back. Then he slipped the bridle and permitted Oregon Lad to trot away along the river-bank. There was no hope of keeping the horse quiet, but there was a good chance that the rustlers might, upon seeing a loose horse, conclude that he was one they had overlooked that had followed of his own accord. At least it was pretty certain to bring some of them back across the river, and that was all Johnny asked.

He thrust the saddle and bridle behind a boulder and, keeping well within the shadow of the bluff, ran swiftly toward the cabin after he had got directly behind it. He reached the door unmolested and found that it gave open readily.

With his gun ready for instant action the little man peered inside. He dared not risk discovery by using the flashlight, but the absolute silence inside the cabin showed him it was empty.

He went down on his hands and knees and crawled up the river until he was just below the place where the skiff had been anchored on the occasion of his previous visit. It was not long until he saw the skiff coming across the river toward him. He waited with bated breath until it touched the shore scarcely ten yards above him.

He saw there were two men in the skiff as they dragged it up on the sand and snubbed it to a boulder. By their voices he identified them as Bennett and Randall.

"I sure in —— heard a horse nicker," Randall said, "an' I can't understand it."

"There it is now," Bennett said in a low tone as Oregon Lad vented an ear-splitting whinny.

Then the horse came trotting almost up to them.

"No saddle nor nothin'. It must 'a' been one that slipped outa the bunch an' follered us," Randall said.

"It wasn't," black-bearded Bennett contended. "I counted them horses when we took 'em outa the corral, an' again when they went on the ferry, an' this horse don't belong."

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"But he's just a loose horse, an' he follered us here. Le's ketch him anyway," Randall suggested.

It would not do. Johnny now knew that these men were not miners but horsemen. The moment they laid their hands on Oregon Lad they would remember him, and the sweat on his back would testify that a saddle had just been jerked off him. Johnny suddenly leaped to his full, but not imposing, height.

"Up with your hands," he ordered shrilly.

Randall was facing Johnny, and his hands went up automatically. But Bennett was standing sidewise to him, and the black-bearded rustler wheeled sharply, his gun seeming fairly to leap from the holster. Johnny swung his gun from Randall to Bennett and pulled the trigger. The same instant he went to his knees as something struck him in the head with terrific force.

For just an instant there seemed to be a black page before his eyes that shut out everything. He fought against it, fought to retain consciousness and his grasp of the situation. Like a man in a dream he saw Bennett reel, saw Randall go for his gun. Without just knowing what he did he raised his gun and fired at Randall. The man pitched forward on his face, and Johnny's wandering thoughts came back enough to know that he had killed the man.

Bennett had dropped his gun and was whirling furiously on the gravel and rubbing his dangling arm. Johnny had aimed at the biceps of the fellow's gun arm, and his shot had gone true. Johnny's senses came back to him with a rush, and though his head was fairly splitting with pain and shock he staggered to his feet.

"Stop that dancin'," he raged at Bennett, and fear of another bullet quieted the man instantly.

Then Johnny removed his big hat and felt gingerly of his head. But though it ached horribly he felt no blood. He fumbled over his hat and found no hole in it. He wondered what had hit him.

And then he absently felt of the big, silver buckle he wore as an ornament on his hat band. It was badly dented, and he comprehended the truth. Bennett's bullet would have scored a clean miss of his head by half an inch if it had not been for the buckle. He had been almost killed by a bullet which had not brought a drop of blood nor left a scratch.

SOMEBODY on the other side of the river was now shouting loudly, but the noise of the water made the words indistinguishable.

"Listen, Bennett," Johnny said crisply, "you got t' row me across that river."

"With one arm?" the man demanded.

"I wish I'd busted yore head 'stead o' yore arm, an' then yuh'd still 'a' been some use," Johnny observed. "Anyway you git into the boat ahead o' me, an' I'll do the rowin'. But don't yuh forgit that I can drop them oars an' git my gun quick enough t' perforate you if you don't carry out my orders to a fare-ye-well."

The man started to step into the skiff, but Johnny stopped him.

"Wait," he said. "I want yuh t' yell. Loud now, an' at the top o' yore voice—but don't yuh dare t' say nothin'."

Bennett glared fiercely at the little man, and Johnny violently prodded him in the pit of the stomach with his .44.

"Yell, —— yuh," he grated.

And Bennett yelled. It was more of a shriek because of the pent-up fear in the heart of the rustler, but it satisfied Johnny on all points.

The man on the other side of the river yelled; his tone was querulous, but they could not make out his words.

"Yell again," Johnny rasped, and again Bennett's weird voice rose above the water.

There followed an interval of silence.

"If that don't make yore pals bring that ferry back across t' see what's the matter I reckon we'll have t' row across an' git it after all," Johnny said calmly.

He had grasped the skiff and was ready to push off when he saw the ferry nose out of the bushes.

"—— the luck!" wailed Johnny. "If I was any size it 'ud be easy. But how in —— am I goin' t' fool 'em into thinkin' I'm Randall, an' him weighin' two hundred pounds? But don't you go t' thinkin' I'm any dwarf," he warned Randall immediately. "Yuh speak yore piece accordin' t' directions."

By keeping the hulking Bennett between himself and the approaching ferry Johnny was able to remain concealed. And when they reached the spot where the ferry would land he stood squarely behind the rustler—with his gun prodding him in the back.

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The ferry touched land, and one man sprang to the bank. It was McGuire.

"What the ——'s the matter over here?" the fellow demanded.

"We let one o' them horses git away, an' we was yellin' fer the ferry t' come take him across," Bennett said, obediently following Johnny's orders.

"The —— yuh was! Why didn't one o' you row back an' git it? Where's Randall?"

"Right behind me," Bennett said docilely.

It was Johnny's moment, but one full of peril. He leaped as far as he could from Bennett and jerked his gun down on McGuire as he sprang.

"Not a move," he said cuttingly.

Like Bennett, McGuire was a man of nerve. His first impulse was to go for his gun. But he also knew when he was beaten. His hand came away from his gun-belt faster than it had gone there.

"I give up," he said hastily, and just in time to stay Johnny's quivering finger.

Bennett had dropped into a crouching position, watching for his chance to take Johnny off guard, but at this development he straightened up with a discouraged air.

Three of the four rustlers were accounted for, but Johnny figured that until he had found Kate his work had not really started.

"Where's yore other man, an' where's Kate Bromley?" he demanded.

"Suppose yuh find out?" McGuire sneered. "I don't reckon even you could shoot a feller fer just keepin' his mouth shut. But if questions are in order what in —— are you after here?"

"Don't chatter then," Johnny snapped. "I'm after Kate Bromley an' the horses you fellers stole."

"I'll eat all the horses except our own that yuh find here," McGuire said confidently.

"Don't talk crazy," Johnny snapped. "We're goin' t' take a boat-ride now, an' you're goin' t' do the rowin', an' I'm a-goin' t' be the captain, an' don't yuh forget it."

Before the men took their places in the skiff he went over them carefully for any weapons that he might have overlooked. Then, seating himself behind them, he made McGuire bend to the oars.

The little man needed more eyes than two to watch the men in the boat and at the same time keep a watch for the fourth member of the gang, but he did the best he could. The skiff touched ground, and he ordered his unwilling crew ashore. There was no sign of the fourth man, nor of Kate Bromley.

There was a small rope in the skiff which was used to snub the boat, and Johnny had made up his mind to put it to a different use before leaving the other shore. He had cut it loose from the skiff while they were crossing the stream, and as soon as they had landed he tossed the rope on the ground and gave the boat a sudden, violent shove that carried it into the main current of the stream, and in a moment it was being whirled down-river.

"Anyway I reckon there ain't nobody goin' back over after that ferry for a while," he muttered to himself.

He had deliberately cut himself off from a retreat. A good horse might swim the river, but it would be dangerous at best, and suicidal at night. But the ferry would remain where it would be a dead give-away on the miners to whoever found it.

He made his two captives lie face down on the ground, while he tied their ankles together. Then he made McGuire place his hands behind him and tied those.

It was a problem what to do with Bennett's one good arm, for Johnny had not the heart to hurt the injured one further. Finally he solved the problem by tying the man's good arm to McGuire's wrists. And he made sure that they would be helpless until some one turned them loose. Then he set out to find Kate and the fourth rustler, of whose identity he was now practically certain.

He circled the bluff carefully, but failed to see or hear sign of man or beast. Somewhat mystified, he began to look for a way to cross the small channel to the brushy island where the ferry had been concealed. He soon found a foot-bridge, and he investigated the island minutely, boldly using Kate's flashlight for the purpose. He saw the cunning arrangement whereby the ferry first touched the main bank and then was swung out of sight in the dense, overhanging bushes above a small bayou. And when he finally reached the river he had to confess failure. There was not a thing in sight to indicate that Kate or her horses had ever been on that side of the river.

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XIII

IN SHEER desperation Johnny recrossed the foot-bridge and circled the foot of the bluff again, hoping to find some way to scale its overhanging crown; but there was no way for a man to climb up, let alone a horse. He yelled Kate's name at the top of his voice, and was abashed at the ensuing silence.

There were places where the brush grew close to the bluff so thickly that he had to go out around the patches. He was more than ordinarily careful in searching these, but he had no results.

"I know they come this way," he murmured. "I just know Oregon Lad wouldn't lie t' me."

Suddenly he stiffened. He had caught the sound of something moving on the other side of a patch of brush he had just walked around. Whatever it was could not be more than fifty feet away from him. Johnny waited, listening breathlessly, and suddenly he heard a man's voice raised in a shout.

"McGuire! McGuire!" was the call.

"Bill Steele, or I'm a liar," Johnny thought jubilantly.

And then he heard a scarcely distinguishable voice raised in answer from the bank of the river. That, he knew, was McGuire, though the man's voice was not natural, owing to the fact that he lay on his face and was in no position to speak distinctly.

Johnny regretted that he had not taken the time to gag the two rustlers. If Bill Steele should get to them first Johnny knew that his chances of whipping the three of them were indeed slim. He was on the point of trying to head Steele off when the foreman's next words halted him.

"Come on over here, one o' you, an' don't be all night," Steele had shouted.

And then Johnny heard something that sounded like the creaking of a gate. In a moment he had cautiously circled the patch of brush with his gun ready to meet Bill Steele, but the foreman was nowhere in sight. There was not a sign of the man, though Johnny could still hear McGuire and Bennett's incoherent shouts. Though fearing an ambush, Johnny stepped boldly out and turned his flashlight on the face of the bluff near where Steele must have been, and studied its face with all the concentration of which he was capable.

Almost in front of him was a jog in the wall of rock. It was a mere indentation perhaps ten feet wide and not more than a rod long. He had noticed it before, but had not gone to the very back of it because it was covered with what seemed an impenetrable tangle of brush and vines.

But now under more careful observation those vines and bushes did not look just right. They were just a shade more dead-looking than other bushes and vines.

And as he parted them with his hand and peered through them by the aid of the flashlight he suddenly saw something that brought an ejaculation. One of the vines was nailed to the solid rock with a steel staple. Viciously Johnny struck the face of the rock with his bare hand and found, as he now expected—wood.

Feverishly he jerked the vines and bushes aside, and presently under a mass of them he found what he was looking for—a latch. A moment more, and a huge door creaked open, a door that had been painted the color of the rock, and then further disguised by cleverly placed brush and vines.

The flashlight revealed a tunnel perhaps ten feet wide and eight high. Through this Johnny proceeded for a distance of fifty feet, and then he found himself outside. He snapped off the light and stood looking things over as best he could by the grayish light of approaching dawn.

A miniature valley a hundred yards wide and longer than he could at the moment make out, stretched before him. Ledges of sheer rock seemed to surround it on every side, and the river was not in sight.

Some distance down the little valley he saw moving objects that he knew to be horses. Things were beginning to clear up. He remembered now that from the other side of the river it appeared that the ledges on the side where he now was extended from the very edge of the river back a half-mile or so to the top of the breaks in a seemingly unbroken jumble of bluffs.

This open space lay between two high ledges of rock, but from the other side of the river, or from the top of the breaks on this side, it would be absolutely and literally overlooked. In some way the rustlers had found the place and tapped it by their cleverly concealed tunnel. By using the hidden ferry to get across the river it was no wonder they could make the stole

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stock disappear until all search for them was given up.

But it was not stock nor a rustlers' nest that he was looking for right now. It was Kate Bromley. Just to his right he saw something that bulked rather large and square, and he moved stealthily toward it. He brought up against a corral fence, and discovered that what he had seen was a rick of baled hay containing several tons.

"They sure must bring a lot o' stock here one time an' another," he speculated silently.

He reached the hay and, peering cautiously around it, discovered a cabin a few rods beyond. He covered the distance speedily and crouched just outside the door. He could plainly hear voices.

"Yuh've got no other choice," he heard Bill Steele say with a voice that was strained with anxiety. "My pals all want t' throw yuh in the river anyway, an' I'm tellin' yuh that after you've passed through them rapids below here there ain't nobody goin' t' recognize yore body. But if yuh listen t' reason you'll come out all right. But yuh got t' marry me, an' then you go with me to a place where yuh can't talk if yuh want to, an' you've got t' swear t' keep quiet.

"I've gone too far now t' back out. I went back after dark an' left the horse I rode away after supper so I could turn loose the horse I rode tonight an' pack my saddle in on my back like I've always done, an' they couldn't suspect nothin' because there was my horse there with a full belly an' showin' no signs o' bein' rode. But now I reckon that Mexican kid has roused 'em up an' they've found my horse there, but me an' my saddle gone. They'll have the goods on me unless you come through. If yuh don't make me safe it's into the river fer you."

The man's voice changed to a snarl as he finished.

"I've got my share of nerve, I think—enough that I can face the river if I have to—but I haven't got nerve enough to marry a thing like you," came Kate's quiet, undaunted voice.

THE little man on the outside of the cabin squared his shoulders resolutely. With such an example of nerve as that to spur him on, he thought warmly, nothing on earth could stop him. He knocked on the door and stood back with his revolver ready for instant use. He hoped that Steele would think it was one of the miners, and evidently the man did, for he unlocked the door and, opening it a mere crack, demanded—

"What is it?"

"Bennett's hurt," Johnny uttered, imitating the husky tones of McGuire as best he could.

"What?" Steele demanded suspiciously, opening the door a fraction wider and peering out.

"Stick 'em up!" Johnny snarled.

Steele jerked back, and Johnny fired. Even as he pulled the trigger Johnny knew that his shot had not gone true. The man's face was all he had to shoot at, and Steele had jerked it back like a chicken. But, better than a clean miss, the bullet had struck the top of Steele's nose, just below the eyes. The shock and pain of it caused Steele to do just the reverse of what he had intended, and instead of shutting the door he threw it wide open.

Fearing that the door might yet be closed upon him, Johnny holstered his gun and dived for the man's legs as he had done once before. It was a trick which the handicap of his size had taught him to perfect. The ruse was successful. He jerked Steele's legs out from under him and dragged him outside.

But Steele was far from being conquered, and pain made him murderously angry. He jerked up his legs and kicked out with all his strength, sending Johnny careening like the popper from a whip.

Instantly Steele drew his gun and fired, but the blood that spattered in his eyes at every movement spoiled his aim. The bullet whistled harmlessly over Cigaret Johnny's head. Johnny dived for the ankles again, and once more Steele was upset.

Johnny released his hold and jerked out his gun again. At the same time he swarmed over his fallen, cumbersome foe.

"Drop that gun, or I'll blow yore teeth right down yore cussed throat," he hissed, and he pressed the cold muzzle of his gun against the prostrate man's lips.

Steele permitted the half-raised gun to clatter to the ground.

Very cautiously Johnny got out of reach of the fellow's arms, yet keeping him covered every instant.

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"Call me a shrimp, will yuh?" he demanded indignantly.

Steele's only reply was a groan.

"Git up now, an' stroll over t' one o' them posts," Johnny ordered, and his captive meekly obeyed.

Wires from the opened bales of hay lay strewn about everywhere, and in quick time Steele was wired firmly to a corral post. Not until this job was satisfactorily completed did Johnny return to the cabin, and then he did so with a strange timidity.

He found his employer tied to a chair inside the cabin. There was a faint red spot in each cheek as Johnny entered, but when she saw him a rich color overspread her entire face. Johnny blushed also.

"Johnny," she faltered, "how did you get here?"

"I—I'm afraid I had t' kill one of 'em an' nick a coupla more; but they're all as harmless now as suckin' doves," he explained as he cut the girl's bonds with his jack-knife.

Kate's limbs were numb, and she moved stiffly as she led the way out of the cabin. Cigaret Johnny followed humbly behind, content to let her assert leadership. She whistled, and her band of thoroughbreds, led by Bonnie, came trotting up.

"How did you do it, Johnny?" Kate asked softly.

"It was all Oregon Lad," he replied. "Somehow he knew the bunch had come this way, an' he follered 'em. It was a good thing yuh let me ride him."

"I see," she said.

Johnny said nothing. He felt that her pride was hurt, and he wanted to tell her that she had succeeded wonderfully; the mystery was all cleared and the rustlers were caught—but he lacked the language.

They went back through the tunnel and closed the door on their horses. They found Bennett and McGuire still firmly tied where Johnny had left them, and when they learned that Steele had been conquered their nerve gave way utterly.

"I'm afraid I raised ——," Johnny confessed. "I cut the skiff adrift so's nobody could bring the ferry back from the other side, an' we're swamped here till somebody comes."

"They're coming now," Kate said eagerly. "Look!"

A dozen men were coming down the trail to the gravel bar on the other. Daybreak had come swiftly, and they were able to recognize Ad Grey and Phil Norton in the lead. The Lazy G men first saw Oregon Lad, then Kate and Johnny on the other side, and lastly the body of Randall.

But it was the ferry that created the greatest amazement. After some difficulty they managed to get it started, and presently it touched the other shore.

"What the —— happened, Mrs. Bromley?" Grey demanded anxiously.

"I'll show you," she said.

She showed them Bennett and McGuire; then she led the way to the concealed tunnel, and on the other side of that she showed them the hidden valley, the horses and Bill Steele.

"This is where all your stock has disappeared so mysteriously, and Bill Steele was the chief of the gang," she said.

"I'd never believe it if the proof wasn't right before my eyes," Grey said earnestly. "Mrs. Bromley, you're a wonder, and no mistake."

"But what a blunder I made when I didn't take into consideration the fact that the telephone might be cut! It almost ended in disaster," she said gravely.

"It wasn't your fault," Grey said quickly. "Things would have went fine an' we'd 'a' been hot on yore trail long before this if it hadn't been fer Shrimp here. Yuh see, he kept spyin' around till he convinced Anse Clover that he was a rustler, an' then he fell afoul o' Anse tonight an' for a wonder got the best of him.

"When yore Mexican kid arrived we found Anse tied up in the barn, Shrimp gone an' Bill Steele gone, though his horse was still in the barn. It was such a mixed-up affair, an' we done so much arguin', an' I couldn't help but believe that Bill was somewhere after the rustlers or else they'd hurt him, that we lost some more time.

"Then when yore Mexican woman told us Shrimp was follerin' the rustlers down the breaks here an' was goin' t' leave a signal it bothered us some more. O' course we knew he couldn't do nothin' by himself, because yuh told us he was only a dummy, so we just took a cut-off an' hit the river 'way below here. We didn't find no signs, so we come back up here an' found that lantern he'd left, so we decided t' come down an' investigate. Yuh see, we lost so much time arguin' about the Shrimp, us not bein' able t' convince Phil Norton but what Shrimp was the one t' foller."

Grey was sweating profusely as he

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finished his lengthy explanation of the lateness of his arrival.

"Mr. Grey," Kate said steadily, "I believe you are a good cattleman. But it's a mystery to me why the rustlers haven't stolen all your stock. Like most cattlemen you are ruled solely by your prejudice. You are prone to judge men and things entirely by surface indications. And I was just as blind. You called Cigaret Johnny a shrimp, and I called him a dummy."

Her voice broke.

"Instead of being either of those things he's a regular giant. It was he who discovered this place, and he captured the whole gang single-handed."

"Aw, now——"

Johnny blushed and stammered.

"I knew it. I knew all the time the little cuss had it in him," big Phil Norton crowed.

And before the astonished little ex-rustler could move the big puncher seized him and swung him aloft triumphantly. They cheered him until Norton let him down.

"I apologize," Ad Grey said sincerely, thrusting out his hand. "An' I'll make these yokels o' mine go down on their knees if yuh want 'em to."

"Aw, yuh got this all wrong," Johnny insisted. "Kate done all the brain-work, an' I just blundered through."

Suddenly Kate's hands were on his shoulders.

"To think," she said softly, "that I told you all you had to do was ride around and look wise! But after this I'm going to appreciate you."

The little man seemed to shrink still smaller under the battery of friendly eyes, but in his heart was an unuttered song of joy.

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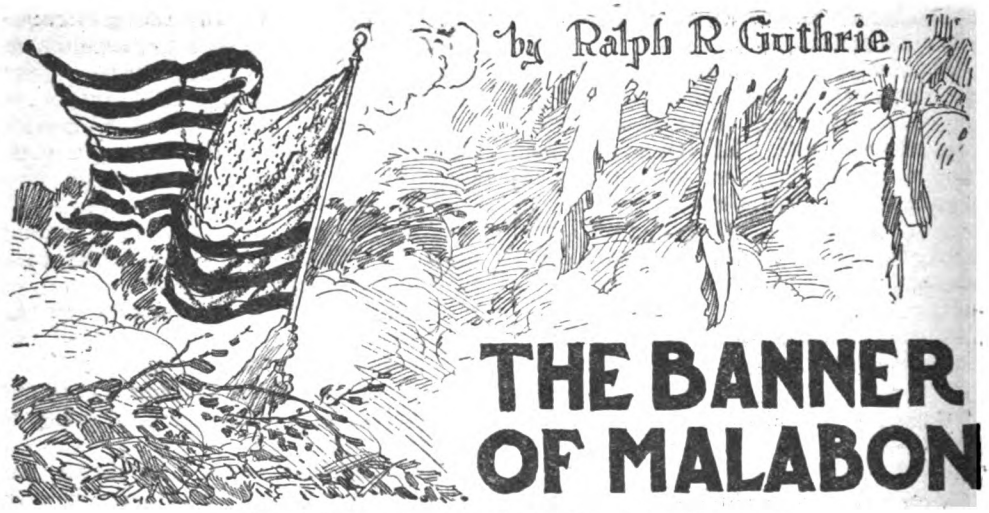

by Ralph R Guthrie

THE BANNER OF MALABON

Author of "Nugent Amok," and "Send Millikin to Misamis."

THE first time that I heard the name of "Kidney Stew" Smith was in action in front of the Pasaga barrio, Northern Mindanao. Inside of a week I had learned the whole story, and I believe it to be worth telling—even in the simple language of a soldier.

Things were moving pretty lively in those days. A sultan and two *dattos* had raised the ire of their new Uncle-in-law Samuel, whose ways always will be inscrutable in this Mohammedan and reactionary country. There was organized what we called the third punitive expedition. I was in command of "L" company, —nth regiment, infantry.

We were lying belly-flat in the cogan-grass, half-way up a gentle slope, waiting for orders to advance, wishing futilely to get into the combat which was raging like a thousand wildcats among the banyans and bamboo thickets in the valley below.

Rack! Rack! Rack! Pop! Pop! went the rifles of "G" and "H" companies at our left. Elements of other companies and other regiments were likewise engaged, extending over a nine-mile front. They were making history at the rate of a page a minute, but we were doing nothing because we were reserves. Suddenly I saw, with startling distinctness in spite of the tropical evening haze, a bit of vari-colored bunting fluttering over a retreating band of Moros cutting for cover in the distance. I called the attention of my First Sergeant to the phenomenon.

"Look, Morgan!" I called excitedly. "It's a flag made up of red and white stripes. That's something new for this part of the world, isn't it?"

The old-timer crawled to my side, and together we gazed intently off over the green barrage of jungle growth to where the colors were last seen.

"Its confounded odd," observed Morgan, at last, "but I've heard of that very thing happening before. Let's watch and maybe it will show up where we can get a clear slant at it. I'd like to see how those goo-goos, operating under it, get away with a maneuver."

"I saw them and they seemed to be unusually well disciplined for Moros," I informed him. "They took intervals like seasoned skirmishers once they were clear of the trees."

"They did, huh? Well, let us keep our eyes open a little longer. I'm not sure that it might not be Kidney Stew Smith, the battling cook from Minnesota."

"A battling cook in Moroland? What's the answer?" I scoffed.

"The answer probably will be found in Malabon," he concluded cryptically.

For a few minutes we lay there, beside our rifles, speculating. Then I heard a match struck at my left elbow, and smelled the sweet and soothing odor of tobacco.

"I guess they're gone," said he then. "The whole band will be on the run soon and we can chalk up another local success."

"What about Malabon?" I demanded, recalling his peculiar remark about the flag.

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"Oh, well. Up in Malabon they have there a banner which is very similar to the old flag. At least so I am told. I have never seen it, myself."

"It probably has green on it somewhere," I observed. "All Mohammedan people profess a reverence for green because it stands for the Prophet and the faith of Islam."

"I know; but this one don't. Red and white stripes with white stars in a blue field. Very much like our flag. It's made of *piña* silk and fringed with yellow thread. But the people up there swear by it. They say it never has been defeated, and that it can't be."

"What kind of folks are they?" I inquired for Morgan knew most of the lore of Mindanao by heart.

"Very gentle and child-like, when they are *amigo*," he told me. "But rip-roaring —— from the pit when on the war-path. The funny thing is that their young men all know how to fight civilized fashion; echelons, feint attacks while the reserves try to cut off your rear, harassing fire for moral effect. —— nearly everything we know. Old Man Gowdy, of "C" company, who is the B. G's main guide and principal adviser in this campaign, was up against 'em in the second punitive expedition and says it's not generally known but that the Malaboners whipped the socks off the regular troops and that he saw their flag on two separate occasions."

"Yes? That's strange," I observed. "I know Gowdy. He's usually truthful, at that."

"He says the whole system of modern warfare was taught 'em by a renegade doughboy who deserted and went over to 'em in 1899. That old guy Gowdy knows the story from the beginning."

"What does he say?"

"He says the doughboy's name is, or was, Kidney Stew Smith. Nut, Gowdy says. Was a cook before he enlisted but spent all his spare moments reading up on history and tactics until he began to slip a cog now and then thinkin' he was Mr. Bonaparte. There was no question but that he became insane. Was a bit off even when he signed up."

"IT APPEARS, however," he continued, "that he was the very personification of militant patriotism and throughout his ravings one could see in it a loyal and utter subservientness of self to flag and country.

" 'There's more than one way of whipping these people,' he would shout in some of his tantrums. 'They are human beings, aren't they? Well, tell them what we've got. Make them see eye to eye with the greatest nation the Lord ever constructed with His own hands. Carry the flag to 'em and teach 'em the virtues of good citizenship under our Constitution. Then if they want to fight, crush 'em quickly and proceed to forget and forgive the offense. My idea is, however, that we've never properly stated our case and we've never even demonstrated that we can fight better than any one else.'

"On three successive occasions he went to the regimental commander and begged to be sent alone into the enemy country to preach the gospel of our beneficent rule, but they wouldn't hear to it. He was laughed at for a visionary, and the men took it up and made life miserable for him.

" 'How come that the Great Napoleon takes so much interest in the little old United States?' one rookie asked him once.

" 'Because he has seen the light,' this *hombre* replied with dignity, and strutted away to his kitchen to sulk.

"He always defended seriously his assertion that some of Napoleon's genius had descended to him, and you only made him roaring mad, Gowdy says, when you tried to kid him out of the notion.

"Nevertheless he was a good cook and his stews, kidney and otherwise, were the talk of the outfit.

"Smith had been chef in a cheap restaurant in Milwaukee before he joined. Somebody told on him, so he was rated 'cook' forever after. All his pleas and ranting about being a walking warehouse well-stocked with military information wouldn't go with the C. O.

"The colonel who had him in the officers' mess at Fort William McKinley said Smith was the only man in the army who really knew how to make a kidney stew. That's how he came by the name of Kidney Stew Smith. It used to make him boil.

"About the time Luzon was pretty well cleaned up, the colonel went back to the States, so Smith transferred to Zamboanga, where the first Moro trouble was taking place. I guess he thought he could break in somewhere, but his service record went with him. He wound up in the kitchen.

"After this disappointment, the boy, he was only twenty-one at the time, began to

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act more queerly than ever. He used to get up in the middle of the night, and call his field-marshals by name, making inflammatory speeches about 'patriotism versus inefficiency' and that kind of bunk. Kept asking Marshal Ney why it was that the American Army couldn't recognize military genius when it was right under its nose crying for a chance.

"The upshot was that the medicos got busy and put him under observation.

"But one night, Gowdy says, he went 'over the hills' with all his books and treatises on war and in thirty days he was branded in orders as a deserter."

"Sounds good, so far," I agreed. "But how does Gowdy hook this crazy soldier up with Malabon?"

"I'm coming to that, if the captain will give me time," replied Morgan. "Old Man Gowdy says he knew Smith well in those days and that he believes, while he was crazy all right, he was a first-class genius. It amounts to the same thing. Just a kid, he says, tremendously well read on army topics, with a great bulging forehead and gloomy black eyes that stared, but seemed to see nothing. We'll have to take Gowdy's word for him being a genius. I never met anybody else who knew him. Besides, no one ever heard of him after he disappeared."

Morgan lapsed into silence, as if he had come to the end of the story, leaving my curiosity all keyed up for a dénouement.

"Is that all!" I cried, in disgust. "A yarn as thrilling and mysterious as that ought to have a happy ending somewhere. What else does Gowdy say?"

"Gowdy don't know any more," was the disappointing reply. "However he is agitating a scheme, he says, which sounds to me to be about as crazy as anything Kidney Stew Smith ever thought up. Says if the B. G. will trust him with the national flag he will go up to Malabon and receive the surrender of its army by himself."

"He'll be fired upon before he's out of the woods," I prophesied. "The Old Man won't trust Gowdy or anybody else out in front of the lines with the colors.

"Look here!" I exclaimed. "It's several hundreds of miles to Zamboanga from where we're lying. How in the —— could that nutty soldier make it through a hostile country?"

"Probably couldn't be done," agreed Morgan. "However, we will be inside of Malabon within the week. I see our left is beginning to stir itself for an advance. Ye-ah! Here comes the colonel's orderly now. We're off!"

FOR three days we edged our precarious way through a broken, hostile country after the fleeing Moros. There wasn't a great deal of hard fighting—only bushwhacking affairs and mopping up of villages where women joined the men in making demonstrations that knocked out a dozen or so good men, and left the trail behind us smoking with the ruins of war.

By the end of the third day we had chalked up as many as thirty-two minor combats, averaging thirteen casualties per. How many Moros were killed I haven't any idea, but they certainly could be numbered by hundreds rather than by scores. There were bullet holes and *bolo* slashes in the clothing of a great many of us who weren't actually wounded, and our colors even bore the marks of slugs from their small-bore hand-carried cannons. This proves that they had a way of getting at us.

We habitually kept that sacred bit of bunting well back out of easy reach. There was a tradition in the Philippines that the natives, at one time, almost captured a flag, so we didn't take any risks.

I was the "new officer of the day," going on at regular informal guard-mount and reporting at the commandant's tent for instructions. The general happened right then to be in conference with the colonel. Also, in the conference, I noticed a tall raw-boned infantry sergeant whom I knew to be Old Man Gowdy, the B. G's principal guide. They all stopped talking when we entered, but the colonel motioned for me to stay after the "old officer of the day" had saluted and withdrawn.

"Captain," said he, "we are discussing a mighty ticklish subject this evening. I doubt whether anything like it has ever come up before in the history of the army. Sergeant Gowdy wants to take the national colors into the enemy lines—alone! What do you think about it?"

"Absolutely foolhardy," I returned emphatically. "If you will allow me a stronger expression, I might say that it will make us the laughing-stock of the world."

The general winced a bit at that. It appeared that he was an advocate of this wild

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venture. I had always known him to be a man who favored taking the bull by the horns and had heard he followed hunches like a professional gambler, but he always cleaned up his campaigns with less loss of life than any of the others I had fought under. Nonetheless, I was surprized.

"I don't think it will contribute much to the gaiety of nations," he cut in dryly. "If we lose our flag, of course we will take it back or know the reason why in twenty-four hours. But there is as much of the flag in the life of the meanest soldier in our army as you see fluttering from that staff. I count it a greater disgrace to needlessly sacrifice a single man, than to do what I intend to do tomorrow morning, colonels and captains of my command, notwithstanding. Gowdy knows what he's up against and Gowdy will be charged with the results. You can settle the details between you."

Thereupon he arose, buckled on his six-shooter and strode out in obvious disgust.

"That settles it," ruled the colonel. "What and whom do you want, Gowdy?"

"If the colonel pleases, I will take the flag and the color guard," replied the sergeant.

"I am in charge of that flag while I'm on duty and it sha'n't leave my sight," I exploded hotly.

"Just what I was going to suggest," Gowdy agreed humbly. "Will the captain accompany it, with the permission of the commanding general—if I get it?"

"The captain can go, if he wants to," put in the colonel. "I am the commander of the guard tonight. How about it?"

"I'll go," I said. "Another officer can cover my duties here. Am I to understand there is to be no further attack until I return?'

"The general has halted the advance until noon—unless we hear from you in the meantime. He enjoins you to keep in mind that the honor of the army rests temporarily in your hands. You will start at daybreak. Further instructions will be prepared, in writing, to give your proper clearance. Good-night—and good luck!"

THAT was that. We hurried away to our respective bunks to catch a few hours of well-earned slumber, too exhausted from the ceaseless grind of the past week of campaigning to care much what the morrow might bring forth. It seemed to me that hardly had I crept between my blankets after the final inspection of outposts, when a sentry shook me roughly by the sleeve and told me it was time to make one more round and be off on the road to Malabon.

The dawn was beginning to break when I arrived at the commandant's tent to meet my party. The other members of our party already were there waiting for me—a color sergeant, two corporals and Gowdy. They had breakfasted early at the cook-wagon. With a pint or two of black coffee in our stomachs and sleep blinked from our eyes, we were all, so far as I could determine from appearances, eager for the adventure which the fortunes of war had thrown in our path.

"What do you expect will happen, Gowdy?" I inquired as we waited for enough light to get under way. "Are we going to be able to turn this trick?"

"It can be done with safety, I think, sir," was the prompt reply.

"The Moros won't try to take it away from us for a souvenir?"

"Not at all, sir. I anticipate no trouble of any kind. There's a little misunderstanding up there as to who the flag belongs to, but I can speak the language and can explain to Datto Umba, sir."

"What is the nature of this misunderstanding?"

"Why, they love the old flag as much as you and I, sir. It has been taught to 'em. How and why, we've got to find out. I've got my suspicions but nothing to verify 'em just yet. Ever hear of Kidney Stew Smith?"

"Yes."

"That's him. So I think, at least. He's a genius but he's crazy. He will keep down trouble all right, if he's still alive."

If——

Notes of the first call began to rise and fall on the dewy morning air. It was time to be going.

An armed camp does not awaken gently, like a schoolgirl on vacation. It springs to its feet nervously, every tendon and muscle taut. Two thousand pair of hands reach, as one, for two thousand pair of breeches. The notes of reveille still are echoing back from the surrounding hills, the sentry's feet are still plowing through the dewy grass beyond the picket line where excitable mounts are tossing heads and stamping feet in impatient expectation of breakfast.

Cooks have been at their task for an hour or more. The atmosphere is heavy with the aroma of strong coffee, oatmeal and bacon.

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Here and there among the squat rows of "pup" tents, top sergeants are hustling about, yelling "All out! Shake a leg." In a few minutes—very few—some outfits are in line, the members thereof finishing the adjustment of belt and shirt and legging.

"Attention! Right dress! Front!"

Then the roll call barked into the matutinal clamor.

"Jones! Schlenvenski! Bogs! Smith, Henry, and Smith, Fred! Wilkerson! Horne!"

Back from the ranks rolls the grand chorus of roars, barks and yelps of response.

"Yo-eh! Yeah! Ho! Hi! Hey! Here!"

"Fall out!"

It was just at this busy period of the morning-routine that the regimental flag of the —nth Infantry, a glorious symbol of prodigious beauty, was carried tenderly out of the colonel's tent, uncased and shaken out into the breeze, and so the picture of that particular reveille will remain in my memory as long as life lasts.

Only a moment was spent in parleying with the outposts, a short, swift interchange of conventionalities, a salute to me, "present arms" to the colors, and we were out in the open and fair prey to the vagaries of chance and savage passions.

We threw out our chests a bit and extended our step. The sooner the hazardous embassy was over, the better we would feel.

But nothing happened for some time.

There were no Moros in the cane-brake along the river edge at our left, or at any rate they did not show up. The ominous hill, coated with green tropical vegetation, from the top of which an effective rifle-fire could be delivered, passed slowly to the rear. Then we ascended a gradual grassy slope, tripping occasionally over viny growths matted close to the spongy soil, came to the top of it, passed over and up another.

A single glance back—nervously—verified the suspicion that we were still almost within hailing distance of our camp with a mile or two to go. The sun nevertheless was beginning to throw up its red arms as if in a mighty yawn before springing full-clothed, in radiance, from its bed.

"There's some of 'em!" Old Man Gowdy exclaimed, gripping my arm.

"Where?"

"Over there!"

I saw a dozen white shirts, apparently unsupported by human agency, fluttering up a distant timbered hillside. The dark skin of the natives made the flying legs and stooped bodies quite invisible. They were directing their flight, if such it was, obliquely to our left, crossing the trail about five hundred yards ahead.

"What are they?" I demanded.

"Messengers," was the prompt reply. "Some sub-chief has spotted us and is gettin' the tidings to his boss. We'll see the *barrio* from the rise yonder."

"Why didn't they have Cossack posts out, if they were such A1 tacticians?" I asked then, voicing a question which had been on my mind for several minutes.

"We've passed through twelve of 'em," came back the startling rejoinder. "They're perplexed by the small party. Their first line of defense is right along this crest, but I'm keeping clear of their entrenchments, which are concealed by grass mats. It might bring about an embarrassing situation."

I glanced surreptitiously to right and left, but there was nothing to verify the old soldier's statement until finally from somewhere near there came to my ears something which sounded like a smothered cough. Instantly a prickling sensation broke out all over my body. We were in the very heart of the enemy works.

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Delicate yellow fingers of light were beginning to caress the dark blue mountains which serrated a sodden background twenty miles in advance. Then we came to the top of a sort of hog's back, and looked down upon a sprawling native village three-quarters of a mile away in the center of a thousand farms.

"There it is," laconically stated my guide.

We began to descend.

Half the remaining distance had been cut away when the sun burst in all its glory upon the thatched roofs and smoking chimney holes of Malabon. It looked at that moment to be a city in arms. Troops in parade formation were drawn up in a grassy square at the south end of the village, where a white-painted pole projected its graceful height into the dawn.

"Better call a halt here," cautioned Gowdy. "I think something is about to come off."

We stopped uncertainly and somewhat out of breath.

The maneuver, whatever it was, had come to a dead rest in a beautiful hollow square around the pole. While we gazed upon the scene with rapt attention, our eyes were smitten by a wicked flash from a one-pounder within the square. Following by a few seconds, came the detonation. On the heels of the flash hundreds of rifle barrels reflected back the early morning light in a simultaneous "present." Softly to our straining ears came the note of the bugle and then——

"The Star Spangled Banner!"

There is only one thing to do when a soldier hears those blessed notes. He does it gladly with a song in his heart, a rush of blood to his head, an almost foolish impulse to burst into tears.

"Attention!"

The color guards stood like bronze heroic figures, beside their silken charge. Gowdy and I turned on our heels and faced Malabon, with hands at salute.

"'Tis the Star Spangled Banner; Oh long may it wave;
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!"

The words took form in our minds, imperfectly perhaps, for few soldiers and still fewer civilians ever absorb more than the spirit of that grand anthem. But there was not a dry eyelash among us. The thing was unexpected, appalling. It gripped our hearts and squeezed them as if in a vise.

We continued our advance, but cautiously, with holster flaps loose and revolver butts ready to hand. That was my own forethought. Gowdy complied in a perfunctory manner, as if to say:

"I agree with you perfectly, captain. There is a regulation way of doing every little thing, even when it is unnecessary. Then you have clearance, in case of a mishap."

I THINK we had all come to expect that the Moros we were approaching would be better uniformed than they were. We found them dressed in cotton shirts, *sarongs* or tunics. The only thing one had in common with another was the condition of both clothing and small arms. They were obviously well kept and clean. But there were not two pieces of equipment precisely alike, as in our army. Springfields, Krags, Lee-Enfields, Mausers and Winchesters were well grouped, tactically, at the flanks of each organization, though the warriors in the center had only *bolos*, krises and javelins. Nevertheless I concluded that with such an organization, a competent leader might put up a nasty fight.

No notice at first was taken of our approach. Finally an elderly chief or *datto*, whom we had observed in deep conversation with a group of lesser functionaries, turned on his heel, and, followed at the proper distance by an orderly, advanced to meet us. I knew my place and saluted first. He came back instantly and in kind. Then we shook hands.

"I am Captain Brownlee of the —nth Infantry," I declared, using his own language. "This is Sergeant Gowdy. We are here to interview you on terms of capitulation."

The old man looked at us in astonishment.

"There is some mistake," he declared. "How can I believe that you represent an enemy when you come most irregularly under my own banner?

"That—" he exclaimed, pointing at the national colors, "is the banner of Malabon. How came you by it?"

I nodded to Gowdy the message that he was to begin here to discharge his duties as envoy extraordinary of the expedition.

"It is the flag of my own country—the United States of America," he retorted with dignity. "You are answerable to it if you go to war against United States troops."

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"I understand that the United States is engaged in a war of extermination against the people of my faith," responded the *datto* dryly. "Part of my army is now awaiting an attack in force. Tales of crucifixions and desecrations of our womanhood come to me constantly."

"They are not true, your excellency."

"But it is so reported from many parts of the island," he insisted. "My soldiers were once attacked even here where this banner, which you claim is also yours, flies over my capitol.

"How comes it," he demanded with a sneer, "that in no fight in which my troops have been engaged against yours, have you fought under that flag? What I have seen are many different pennant-shaped banners with numerals and letters written on them."

"They are guidons. See! There is a man posted at the right of your own organization who has a streamer on his spear. It is the same with us, only our pennants are larger. Also each designates a different outfit. As for the 'national' we keep it out of conflict when fighting a bushwhacking war like this, to forestall the possibility of its capture."

"Its capture!" exclaimed the old chief with a ring of genuine scorn in his voice. "Do you mean to tell me that the men of your nation are so weak-hearted as to admit of such a thing? Why, there can be no capture. The flag, itself, brings victory. It is a sacred emblem and if you carry arms under it, you should accept the faith of Malabon that it can not be beaten."

We were abashed at such words coming from the mouth of the old heathen. It put us at an embarrassing loss for words. Nevertheless it was apparent that I must say something.

"Tell me," I urged earnestly, hoping to get him off the unpleasant subject of our natural prudence in respect to the emblem, "how comes it that you, who make claim to complete independence, should have adopted the ensign of the United States. For we have had that same flag for upward of a hundred years. It also is true that it never has been defeated. In the end it always has won."

"Is there to be an attack on my warriors?"

"Not unless we do not return safely by high noon," I replied.

"Then there is, perhaps, little reason why I should not tell you the story," he declared, "for it concerns chiefly one of your own people. If it develops after I have spoken that there is some misunderstanding, and that we who fight under the same sanctified emblem are really in accord, then we will discuss what shall be done about it in a more formal manner either with you or your commanding officer."

He turned as he spoke and led the way to a nearby *bahai*. The several women, children, dogs and chickens in it were unceremoniously turned out of doors by the *datto's* orderly and we entered, Gowdy and I, to one of the most peculiar conferences in the history of the insurrection.

After we had taken seats upon the floor mat, he drew a small clay pipe, such as Arabs use, and began to smoke in silence. At last he summoned his orderly by clapping his hands and spoke a few guttural words of Moro, pertaining to the disposition of his troops, as I afterward learned. Then he addressed us as follows:

"I DO not know what actually is the reason for this expedition which your people have sent against mine," he began. "I only know that you claim to have taken the island by force or by treaty from Spain. My people never accepted the rule of that country. We are a fighting people and would not be subjected. So it has been that we have been free for many generations.

"Not yet a week ago certain of my force which had gone to assist neighboring tribes repel one of your attacks, reported that they had learned you were flying the flag of Malabon. I sent word immediately to withdraw, supposing naturally that you had acknowledged the justice of my rule and that you would at last send an embassy to explain everything. Do you represent such an embassy?"

"I can show you the way to an honorable and righteous peace," I asserted humbly. "Perhaps also we can, between us, clear up the misunderstanding that apparently exists. I await anxiously a statement of fact."

"Very well, then. I shall proceed. Do you then listen attentively, for I shall be brief.

"Six years ago there came to this village a ragged and unkempt soldier from one of your armies, who told us neither his history nor his name. He was dying of starvation and exposure, when one morning he dragged his emaciated body into my *barrio* and began to cry piteously for food and hot

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drink. He appeared to be a man who had completely lost his mind.

"We are a hospitable people in Malabon and so we tried to make this stranger, potential enemy though he was, as comfortable as might be. In a week's time he was nearly normal, except for his mind and soul. The former was a wreck because of what he had undergone. The latter was great—great! No man I have ever seen possessed such a spirit.

"It was heartrending to see this man. He was possessed of the overpowering egotism of the mighty warrior and yet strongly inclined to cut his own throat. He was swayed alternately by two impulses: One to create, from out of our nondescript cohorts, an invincible fighting machine; the other to destroy himself and thus release from his insufficient body a soul fit for an emperor. He said this soul belonged to some one else who had died a prisoner far away from his own country and that it formerly belonged to a mighty conqueror.

"As this suicidal mania grew upon him and when we realized his power for good among us, we forged chains upon all his limbs and tied them to a stake where he could see our warriors and command them. The bonds were so arranged that he could even sit inside a little hut we built for him, and instruct the troops without exposing himself to the sun. Thus handicapped he did marvelously well. I, myself, listened to him with all my ears, for he was a genius in the art of organization and war.

"One day the tribes which lie to the south of Malabon united themselves and tried to do me out of my kingdom. They got their warriors together with great secrecy, and they were as numerous as the blades of grass in one of our valleys. Without warning they surged upon us from all sides.

"When news of the strength of my enemies was borne to me in my *barrio*, I was in despair. Never had I known such odds to be successfully met by any people. In my mind's eye I could see the torrential onrush of the invaders, the short desperate defense at close quarters, the final pillaging and murder of my people.

"We Mohammedans have great respect for the mind that is deranged. There is a Moro saying that through such Allah loves to converse in parables with true believers.

"I went at once to this madman and explained the situation fully. His answer was to throw himself into a fury of imprecation.

" 'Unloose my bonds,' he shouted, 'and I will show you victory. In my brain I have defeated ten times that number. Unloose my bonds!'

"I took council with myself and ordered that the iron bands be stricken from his wrists and ankles. For a time his insanity seemed to decrease and he never once offered to do himself violence. It appeared that the great moment of his life had come, and now he wanted only to live and strike our foes.

"One of the first things he did was to send for our best needlewomen and direct the making of the banner yonder. He was in a terrific hurry, but very particular as to how it was done. Each star and band of red or white, he explained, had its own meaning in the eyes of our Creator. The ensemble meant liberty and love and understanding. Beneath its folds there could be no cowardice nor running away. It would be unnecessary to bind the loins or starve the body in fasting. It took only the flag, he said, to make men want to fight and die like heroes.

"He did not say there ever had been such a banner before. In fact he led us to believe there was only the one in all the universe. I know not what he meant by this if the same flag has been flown by the United States of America for over a century.

" 'Is it the flag for which you conquered many lands when you lived before?' I asked him once. He replied:

" 'No. That was the flag of a despot. This is the consummation of an ideal. It Is the flag of humanity.'

"Finally," continued the *datto*, "the enemy after long marches crept upon us in the dead of night, and we had our chance to prove its efficacy as a talisman of victory.

"In some manner this strange soul had devined the precise time of the attack—about two hours before dawn. Every warrior was at an assigned post the night before. Such cannons as we had were mounted at all sorts of places and well concealed by grass mats, so as to form a crescent with the strong points at the tips.

"The first conflict was in the center, and our warriors gradually were driven back, one line against the other, until we had to meet them hand to hand in the last shallow trench. There were hundreds of warriors doing nothing within the village, but he

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would not let us use those. He said they were reserves. He would not let the cannons open up on the enemy also. Still the battle went on furiously along the center.

"At daylight a messenger came to me and said the madman had a message. I followed him to a hilltop which commanded an excellent view of the battlefield. He was attended by several couriers, but was crouched into a squat in the sand, tracing mystic figures with a little stick. It seemed to me at that time that the battle was lost.

" 'I will strike their flanks at sunup,' this strange madman told me. '*Datto*, do you please send my reserves far around their right to intercept their flight and follow them into their own villages.'

"I saw that he had something further to say, so, after dispatching a courier with the proper instructions, I waited silently while he examined a keen-bladed kris which I had presented him on the eve of combat. He kept turning it over and over in his hands as if it fascinated him.

" 'Your excellency,' he said at last. 'You are in close straits. Let me ask you two favors, both for your own good. They are conditional on victory.'

" 'They are granted,' I replied. 'Even before I know them.'

" 'Keep well in mind the principles I have taught you. And this above all! Never allow anybody to take up arms against that flag. It is a holy symbol and it will bring you nothing but good.'

" 'It shall be even as you say,' I promised, and if I have not kept my word it is because I did not know."

The *datto* paused to relight his pipe.

"And what happened to the stranger?" I asked him then.

"Ah, that was a sadness to all of us," sighed Datto Umba with deep feeling, adding piously:

"What is written is written. Blessed be Allah who understandeth all things and whose ways are inscrutable even to the mightest of this earth. The stranger did not allow himself to survive the battle so marvelously won by his astuteness and valor.

"Some time after, it appeared certain that the enemy had been routed and would bother us no more, a *teniente*, named Pisano found this man, raving mad, standing alone on top of his hill from whence he had driven every one of his staff. He held one hand—so! Plunged deep within the breast of his tunic.

" 'My General—' began Pisano.

" 'Call me sire!' thundered the maniac. 'How goes the battle? Did that vagabond Langa Ali charge as usual at the head of the guard?'

"We had no organization known as 'the guard' but the *teniente* replied humbly, hoping to flatter him—

" 'We have won, sire!'

"Then this demented stranger did a remarkable thing. He walked slowly forward and tweaked the *teniente* by the ear.

"All of this was told me faithfully by Pisano himself, but I too went to the hilltop and verified that it was even as he had said. The *Americano* was frothing at the mouth and for a time I feared almost to approach him on account of the kris which he still held in his hand.

" 'You are a varlet and a weakling,' he told me. 'Nevertheless I shall confer upon your benighted head this day a great honor. You shall send back to purgatory the soul of a mighty conqueror which you have had the temerity to enthrall in your chains. Advance, my infant, and do your duty.'

"Thereupon he handed over to me the weapon and with it, duly reverent and prayerful to Allah, I removed his head, using a single blow at the nape of the neck. It was done as painlessly as one can do such things.

"SINCE then," concluded Datto Umba, "we have held faithfully to the tenets of his strange religion, keeping in mind always that it is for the glory of Allah and the extension of his dominion on earth. And now that I learn you are worshippers of the same flag and that we have much else in common, I shall straightway announce the tidings to my people. Tell your commander he may enter in peace and that I am proud and happy to welcome the province of the United States under the banner of Malabon."

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THE DESPERADO

by E. St. Mars

Author of "Blood Brothers," "Antonio," etc.

IT ALL came about by the rich Englishman betting the rich American one hundred pounds that his head gamekeeper would trap or shoot within a week any animal, classed as vermin, and smaller than a wolf, that the American could bring up against him. Thereafter the rich American sent swiftly by cable for a beast which he called a "quickhatch," and whose name the trappers of the Rocky Mountains use when they want to call any one by a worse name than devil.

He came, that beast, in seven days, more or less restrained in a cage, and even the keeper owned that he was not a lapdog. If he had eaten the cage, bars and all, no one would have felt surprized, I think. In fact, he was all that the trappers of the Rocky Mountains thought of him, and a good deal more that can not be set down here for fear of scorching the paper.

The man who brought him over looked at the keeper, and at his own bandaged right hand. After that he looked at the quickhatch beast, and back at the keeper again. Then he put his handkerchief over his mouth and walked away.

The quickhatch was certainly not a bear, for he was smaller; nor could one have called him a badger, for he was larger; and yet he resembled both beasts somewhat. He might be described as a sort of stumpy bear-badger with a brown-black mat of a coat that seemed to be everlastingly in the throes of moulting, and a tail like a very old and rather large bottle-brush. That was if you looked at his body. If you looked at his face, you said "Ough!" very softly, for fear the caged fiend should hear you—and reached for your gun on the wall, or slid your hand to your hip-pocket, according to your nationality.

The name quickhatch is vernacular for wolverine, a beast of the weasel persuasion, which does not account for the fact that he was as much like a weasel as he was like anything else—and that was not at all.

They took him to the rich Englishman's large preserves, and gave him back to the wild from which he had been so rudely snatched. The last they saw of him was a squat, ragged beast, shambling at a gait that was hybrid between a walk and a gallop, over a blue-black hillock into the bloodshot eye of the departing sun. He just walked into the sunset and went out, and that, so far as the public is concerned was the last time he was on view—it was not the last time he was heard of, however, for the fame of his deeds was written neither in water nor in sand. Nothing, in fact, was seen of him again. From that day to this—nothing.

What follows was told to me by sundry wild folk—notably the missel-thrush, the wren, the bank-vole, and the owl—and is made public for the first time. It finishes the tale that the papers began.

McTAVISH, the keeper, opened the ball next evening with a long line of those inventions of fiends disguised by the name of "gins." In the pinky silence of the pine-wood he moved, planting spring

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horror after spring horror for the honor of his name, and with the hand of a master. A stoop, a minute of jugglery, and lo—there was no gin at all, only the bait. Grass, earth, twigs, and leaves hid all the rest, and the hiding was the work of an artist.

And all the time the pink grew into red, and the red faded back to rose, and the face of day became gray like the face of a dying man. The shadows came out and crept about, and the silence grew heavier and heavier, till it became as the silence of a well, and was terrifying.

Then McTavish, bending over a gin, looked up. There was no reason—at least, no reason that he could have given—why he should look up. Nothing had moved, and no one, save a bank-vole, crooning to himself in a minor key, had said anything.

His eyes flashed to a blotch—again he cannot tell you why—which his brain and the voice of reason said was the shadow of a pine-bough; but it melted away before his eyes, and when he went to the spot there was nothing at all.

Later, that was just before he left the wood, a blackbird, set up a sudden, insane screaming in a holly-bush forty yards away. Blackbirds do this kind of thing frequently, and without reason in nine cases out of ten. Since, however, a thrush joined in—and the thrush is rarely at fault—this seemed to be a question of the tenth case.

McTavish cocked his gun—he had loaded with No. 13 shot—and the snick of the hammers sounded hollowly in the vaulted gloom.

A woodcock, close to the blackbird, got up suddenly, apparently out of the ground, and flapped away, owl-fashion, without reason given, and a rabbit, that till then had crouched still hoping for the best, shot away almost under the man's feet. It bolted into the holly-bush, but it did not stay there long, that rabbit. It came out again much quicker than it went in, and shot into the arms of the gathering gloom—also without reason given.

McTavish investigated that holly-bush of mystery. It produced, first a thrush, then a blackbird—both much agitated—and finally a half-silly squirrel that looked as if it had seen a ghost. And one of the traps not two hundred yards away, and not ten minutes set, went off with a metallic clash that splintered the silence as if it were glass.

Something was wrong somewhere. He found the trap with great speed. It was sprung, but it lacked two essential parts; the bait and the beast. Nor was there any sign of either—only the deathly silence of the darkening woods, and the smell of the pine-needles.

Then McTavish went home. He had had enough for one night. And the wolverine followed him even to his door.

By the time the moon was up—there is a pitch-black interval just before moonrise—the wolverine had the geography of McTavish's cottage and environs by heart.

Being a wolverine, he never needed to look twice; his memory was the memory of an elephant—or a fiend. He tested to an inch the length of each dog's chain—McTavish came out with a whip and beat them for barking at nothing. He found the weak place in the fowlhouse—a sheet-anchor to windward for use in a time of famine. He wrenched open the ferret-hutch, and slew half the ferrets because they reminded him forcibly of gins—a ferret is, after all, nothing but an animated gin, when one comes to think of it. Then he ambled, at his indescribable double-shuffle, back to the woods.

Now, this beast alone of all beasts is born into the world with a full and uncanny knowledge of trappers and their ways.

No animal on four legs has any conceivable right to understand the workings of every trap known to man, and it is altogether an insult that such an animal should be able to "throw" any trap in the dark, and without injury to itself. Yet that is precisely what the wolverine proceeded to do, and to dine sumptuously off the bait provided for his death, not his digestion, all along the line of gins so carefully sown by McTavish. What is one to say of such a beast?

Came later a sulky, half-awake moon, which revealed things just enough to make one realize the darkness.

The wolverine, shambling down an aisle of the pine-wood, halted so abruptly that one might have thought he was tied on a string, and had come suddenly to the end of it. There were things in that wood, and they ran about, without saying anything to each other at all. The wolverine became scarce in a brier-patch on the edge of a clearing. He would investigate these strange things.

It was no pleasure of the hedgehog, who owned that brier-patch, that the wolverine

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should choose to lie down on his spikey back. Nor was it any pleasure of the wolverine that, in removing not slowly from the seat of pain, he should so nearly land on a rabbit-gin, that only some miraculous juggling contortions of his steel-hard body in mid-air saved him. He altered the direction of his spring after he had sprung, and that, with a wild creature, can have only one effect.

It lands him back on the spot whence he started. The hedgehog, as we know, was on that spot. And what followed followed quickly.

The hedgehog was removed two yards in exactly two seconds. It was about the biggest thing in blows—fierce, under-driven, scooping blows—that he had ever run up against. He did not, being rolled up after the fashion of his kind, see the suggestively-clawed paw of the wolverine that drove him. If he had he would have thanked his stars that he wore a livery of a thousand needles that prevented him from being ripped into patchwork.

The gin followed him, describing a neat half-circle in the air, trailing its peg on a chain behind it. Then a face, such as wicked men dream of in their nightmares, glared out of the briers for a second, and was withdrawn swiftly, and after that came the deep, blanketing stillness of the night.

A shadowy something slid by overhead, snoring as only an owl can. Furtive shapes passed and repassed, which might have been gnomes—they had pink, elfin-like ears, and they sat up like old men and caressed white whiskers with pink hands—if they had not crossed the moonlight and become rats.

After that came one seeking alleviation from a great pain of body, or mind, or both, and he sat up in the center of the clearing and moaned. He was a rat, and he suffered from an indigestion from which few recover in the wild—the indigestion of lead; the result of getting in the way of a man and a gun.

Even the hedgehog, peeping out of a chink in himself, so to speak, could not tell exactly what things happened.

The moon slid behind a cloud and went out without warning—as the moon does. Came a period of inky blackness, a pattering rush, as of tiny feet into the clearing; a single, sudden, piercing scream; a scuffle; a sob; another pattering back to cover, and —silence.

When the moon came back, there was no rat in the middle of the clearing, nor any sign of one, and all the other rats had removed themselves into nowhere; though it must surely have been their feet that made the pattering sound. As the hedgehog says—he crawled quickly away, shuddering with terror—it is only the rats who eat their own kind.

At length came a surreptitious rustling, by which token the wolverine knew that the unknown things for which he had so long waited were on hand.

BY THIS time the wolverine had grown a very rank hunger, and his limbs were cramped because he had moved no more than a log during that wait. A blotch *became*—one can use no other word to express its sudden appearance—on the shadow-fringe along the edge of the clearing. Another blotch followed, and instantly, as if at a word of command, a silent company uprose all round—uprose out of the ground, and were still.

The wolverine flattened the while a form, long-eared, fat-cheeked, sleek, and well-seeming, hopped into the moonlight. He had seen such folk before. In the land of his birth they called them snow-shoe rabbits, which these were not, for these were just rabbits, and knew nothing of snow-shoes.

After the first followed others to the number of perhaps fifty. Then began a game. It had no meaning, that game. It consisted of chasing and being chased by everybody, and it was called the "Game of the Joy of Living."

Hungrily the wolverine watched it, till his eyes ached and blinked with the strain of following dozens of rabbits, whirling, jumping, tearing, and bucking every way at once, so to speak. He knew not that he was watching what few human beings have seen, the moonlight dance of the rabbits, in their ballroom in the hall of a thousand columns.

Nor was he aware that he beheld revealed the secret cause of those round spaces which one finds here and there in the woods—spaces where the grass has been trodden flat, and whose surface is the surface of a billiard-table. The children call these trampled circles "fairy-rings," but the rats and those who are of the wild brotherhood know better, and exchange a wink with the rabbits.

What the wolverine did know—his quick,

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unutterably cruel eyes took in everything—was that every few yards round the circle, and just within the shadow of the trees, sat a silent, motionless form—the form of a sentinel rabbit.

Save when one sat up on his haunches these sentinels never moved, but their big, staring eyes were alert to focus the slinking form out of the shadows; their long, restless ears were ever on the flap to catch the tread of the padded, stealthy paw; their cleft noses "working" without pause to unravel the slow-drifting scents of the night.

When the masterless wind, which till then seemed to have been stagnant—there are always smaller currents of air traveling about even when there is no wind, which only a wet-nosed animal can detect—awoke without reason, the wolverine lifted his lip in a voiceless snarl. He was on the wrong side, to windward; and he knew it. Moreover, his brier-patch could not be vacated, he could not shift his ambush without crossing the line of the sentries' triple battery of wireless telegraphy receivers; and he knew that also.

So he sat tight where he was, fretting in hot anger, the while the boughs on the tops of the pines awoke and spoke one to another, and a single leaf, hung out like a sign on the end of a twig, flip-flapped and spun in the growing breeze irritatingly.

Thump, thump, thump—thump, thump!

The nearest sentinel to the wolverine had shot up on end, poised rigid for a second, dropped again to all-fours, and was thumping the alarm-signal with his hind legs against the ground.

Then it was as if the Witch of the Night had cast a spell over that gay company, and they "froze." Became still. Ceased to move. Turned as it were to stone, with a concerted suddenness that was startling.

Each rabbit remained stiff and inert, just in the position in which the alarm signal had found it; some caught in mid-scamper, some rolling over, some stretched flat, some sitting bolt upright—and every head, every bayonet-like pair of ears, was turned in one direction—the direction of the crouching wolverine.

Then, in a flash, they were gone. A rush, a wave of white tails, like the bursting of a grounding billow, and the whole company swept to the other end of the clearing. Quick was the wolverine's bound. Lightning-like the stroke of his armed paw. But he bounded upon nothing, and his paw met only air.

What followed is worth noting. A red thing, long, lean, and quick, got up in front of the flying mob, got up and sprang. There was a flash of glistening fangs in the moonlight, a squeal—it was strangely child-like in its appeal—and back beat the rabbits, as a breaker flings back from a cliff. This time the wolverine did not miss. The rabbits went, but one stayed, under his paw; and the drumming of their stampeded throng died on the air and was lost.

Then, in the comparative silence that followed, broken only by the swelling, sighing murmur among the tops of the pines, these two hunters of the wild stood, and glared across the green-lit space at each other.

Bloodshot, searching eye met bloodshot eye, sniff echoed sniff, and glint of unsheathed fang met glint of fang. For a space neither spoke. Then the wolverine, with a quick, coughing growl, dived suddenly forward.

Those who watched—I have this part of the tale from the little, red bank-voles—thought that the fox—it was a fox, that red thing—misjudged the speed, or the courage, or both of his enemy. Any way, it seemed that he realized his danger only when the wolverine was a spring and a half—about four yards—away. He made to fight, changed his mind, pivoted to bolt away, and rolled over in a heap with the wolverine atop of him.

It all happened so quickly that none of the wild-folk seem to know what followed directly after that. There was certainly a flurry, and not a little bad language. Fur and leaves and grass and flying pine-needles got mixed up in a whirligig. This lasted for exactly thirty seconds, and ended quite suddenly in a crumpled heap of a thing which had been the fox, and the wolverine, sitting on the ground thoughtfully, scratching his neck.

After that he took a survey of his hunting-ground. It was all so new, and trimmed, and shaven, and shorn that he was rather at a loss what to make of it. He sniffed for foes first—after food, and with many before it, the wild-folk always think about their foes first. There is health in the thought.

Neither puma, lynx, bob-cat, nor bear seemed to live here. Not that he was given to fearing either very much, but he never took chances.

Once, however, he prospected a new foe.

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That was just before dawn, when the moon, which had been sinking and threatening to go out for a long time, suddenly ducked behind a piled cloud-bank.

The wolverine stopped in the sudden dark to adjust his eyes to the altered light, and, in the pause, he heard above the rising wind-talk of the trees the swift passage of a big beast. He glided to a "ride" just in time to see a large, lithe, long-legged, raking form shoot across the open, catch his wind, and come round with a snarl.

A voice somewhere in the smother of shadows whispered:

"'Ere, Jim! Come 'ere. What's that black thing under them trees? See 'is eyes? Not a keeper's dawg that——"

The rest was lost in a rush and a whirl, as the lithe form flung itself upon the wolverine like a bolt. It was a lurcher dog, and the same, if he have bulldog blood in his veins, and greyhound, like this one, is many times of a deadly handful.

I think that lurcher was surprized. I know his owner, the poacher who had just spoken, was. When the other lurcher dog came up to help, there wasn't anything much left worth helping.

There was certainly a thing which looked as if it had been arguing with a lightning flash. There was also another thing, squat, massive, and ungainly, sitting a few yards away, scratching itself; and the thing looked round with eyes like live coals, and showed a white, scintillating, double row of teeth—or daggers, I forget which.

Because of these things, the other dog saw no reason to interfere; no reason at all. He would go to his master's heels, or worse still, his toes, but he was not taking any wolverine either in small or large doses that night. You see, that dog wanted to live. He was no coward, but he wasn't designed to fight devils straight from the Pit.

Exactly what McTavish thought when he examined his traps next day he did not say. He was a dogged man, and a silent. Also he was a Scot—and they are a hard breed. By the time the sixth night had fallen he had mixed what he called a salad for the benefit of the wolverine, and there was much mustard in it. Then he climbed into a tree, and took whisky to keep the rain out.

How it rained! The wolverine started out of his lair just at dusk—his lair was under a most aged holly-bush, by the way—into the darkening landscape. Everything glistened; steely, cold, desolate, and wind-whipped. Even the sky was wet, and gray, and sullen, and one could scarce tell where or when the sun set. A bad night for all the wild hunters, for when the wind does all the talking, and even trained, hungry ears can not hear above the shouting branches, wild-folk, if they go abroad at all, are wary beyond capture.

The wolverine watched McTavish go to his post. He even followed him there, and stood for a while, an image of black shadow behind a river oak, to make sure he was safe for the night.

Then he went to the home of the rabbit-folk, but they hate wet, like cats, and the only living thing he found among the dripping "buries" was a weasel that stood within a hole and called him names.

HE PROSPECTED the keeper's cottage after that. There were dogs loose before he got there, three of them. One of them came out to ask questions when he reached the poultry-house. They found that dog quite dead next day but his death-howl awoke the others, and the wolverine removed himself in a hurry.

It happened that on the edge of the pine-wood he found a tunnel, bored through the briers by the rabbits for their better passage, and in it a fox and a keen, warm, sweet smell of meat. New meat, fresh meat is desirable; but when it is hung on a bough in the middle of a rabbit-tunnel, one is at liberty to ask questions. Moreover, if a fox—even he, the wiliest of all English wild-folk—be disposed to answer those questions, there is no more to do but lie down, out of the hammering rain, under a bush and wait.

Anon the fox got up and shook himself. In any other but the dripping, pall-like darkness of such a night he could not have failed to see the wolverine hugging the ground not five yards away. As it was, he saw nothing but blue-black shadow and deeper shadow; heard nothing but the clamoring of the upper boughs, and the wailing "koo-lee, koo-lee!" of some migrant curlew ploughing the sullen sky.

Then he stepped into the run—and the wolverine jumped fully one yard.

That fox stepped, as has been said, and—well, he stepped into eternity. A gin of enormous proportions, armed with evil,

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grinning teeth, uprose and seized him, and the quickness of it was the quickness of a snake. Ten minutes later the wolverine went away, licking his lips. The fox had answered the question.

Not a hundred yards farther on he came upon the trail of a dead rabbit, and—this was ascertained by leaving the trail and cutting in upon it farther on—it led nowhere.

Now, it is not customary in the wild for a dead rabbit to leave a trail, you understand. Nor is it in the accepted order of things for a trail to lead nowhere; unless it be the trail of a bird, and they, of course, may end it by taking wing.

There was a certain levity about this proceeding, the wolverine considered, not in accordance with Nature, who is not given to practical jokes and rarely breaks a rule or a precedent. He could not conceive that any beast that could walk along on four legs was able to stop and go off in a kind of smoke-puff, as this one appeared to have done; though, of course, anything might be expected of a dead rabbit that could leave a real, well-authenticated trail.

For these reasons he followed the tainted line inch by careful inch, treading nowhere that his nose and whiskers—especially his whiskers—had not pronounced safe before him.

Then, quite suddenly, he suspended his step between rise and fall. The rabbit lay on its stomach, just ahead, and there was a smell of man. Also the earth was new, though cunningly covered with grass to conceal the fact. Such trickery might do for mere foxes, or even for badgers, and others have, in a weak moment, let it pass, but a wolverine——

He touched the ground in front of him, tentatively, and—oh, horrors!—it turned clean over, sliding the rabbit down into a black nothing, and returning upon itself with a horrid, metallic clang.

There are occasions in life when it is advisable to act first, and think after. He shifted exactly six yards in no more time than it takes to wink; that was the acting. Then he sat down to scratch, a little habit of his—even a wolverine may have idiosyncrasies, you know—and that was the thinking part that came after.

It was merely a box-trap, this horror, a box-trap of large size, which is no more and no less than a hollow metal case with a revolving lid. The box is sunk in the ground. The wild animal treads on the lid. Result, trapped wild animal. Such is it in theory, but in practise—we have just seen it in practise.

Did he go away, that wild animal of ours? No, indeed! He was a wolverine of the United States of America, or, according to some people, a lost soul on four legs; which is much the same thing. He dug out that box-trap—a stoat came and watched him do it, for stoats are the most inquisitive of all the wild hunters. He tipped it on end. He dined off the dead rabbit, and the same was the bait. Then he went away. What McTavish said when he appeared next morning is not on record, but, knowing McTavish, I fancy it was quite beyond the power of pen to repeat.

From the scene of the box-trap—that was McTavish's mustard in the salad, I think—the wolverine loafed to the keeper's cottage again. He had work to do. A wolverine always has work to do, strange work. No less, in fact, than the paying off of an everlasting revenge upon man. It is, apparently, what he comes into the world for. He imbibes it with his mother's milk. She teaches it to him upon his first hunting trip.

But why?

Ask Nature, she knows. Ask the eternal pine-woods of the Rockies, they may know. Ask the mountain stream, the up-flung peaks, the timber-wolf, the bob-cat, or even the great mountain-lion himself. Ask the wild-folk, they may know; but I doubt it, for, though they have told me many things, the story of the wolverine's blood-feud is not among them.

To the keeper's cottage the wolverine loafed in that hour before dawn, the dread, dead hour, when life itself is all but dead, and if there be no moon the darkness and the chill fight for mastery. He found the tool-house; a place where traps, spades, wire, nets, and such things live.

McTavish was a tidy man. Even his tool-house—the place where men are generally most untidy—was in order. At least, it was before the advent of the wolverine—not after. It was a chaos, a catastrophe, a deliberately planned and amazing insult.

Put a live eel into a basket with two or three fishing lines, some bait, hooks, reels, and other items. Then leave him for half an hour, and, if you look into the basket at the end of that time, you will dimly be

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able to realize the state of that hut when the wolverine had done with it.

Next evening the wolverine was abroad early. He was hungry. He always was hungry, by the way. The rain had gone. A fiery sun burnt low down in a red-hot sky, and the earth—how good it smelt—steamed blue-gray steam after a hot day. At such times an indescribable stillness falls upon Nature, a quietness which is all the more noticeable because of the many sounds which try to shatter it and fail.

As the wolverine passed down the edge of a wood, the blackbirds were in high alarm at nothing, as blackbirds so often are, and the last kestrel of the day hung against the red caldron of the sun—right in the very center—a picture for an artist to dream of.

Turning at right angles, he loafed up a double hedge, noting by the way a fine, new, break-back trap of McTavish's importation. Here a robin sat all alone, singing into the sunset; from which, I think, he took the paint for his unmatched breast. Then across the field known as the "Rough Pasture," where a lone, red bull loafed among the gorse.

Here he found two gins unset to attact him, and the third set. These McTavish found scattered and defiled next day. Here, also, he encountered something that made him check like a boar at gaze. It was no more than the mark of a cleft hoof in a soft place.

There were marks of other hoofs, cleft also, for the great, lone bull had trampled here as well, but this was as the footprint of a fairy by comparison. He who left them was a deer, and not a large one either.

Down went the wolverine's head, and he altered and increased his pace, but not his gait—that he never altered—his own patent slouch. The missel-thrush saw what followed—he was flying home to roost, and the missel-thrush dearly loves a row.

In the angle of an enormous hedge the deer was feeding when the wolverine arrived. He was a fallow stag, a fine beast in his way. He was dappled, and velvet-coated, slender-legged, dainty in hoof, large-eyed, and carrying horns that a bigger species of buck might have swaggered abroad with no shame.

He elected to fight because he had to; even *he* could not negotiate that giant hedge. Also the wolverine had him in a corner. There may have been another reason, too. Those who tend them aver that the timid, hunted folk of the wild become more dangerous in captivity than the flesh-eaters.

Be that as it may, the fallow buck charged suddenly, without warning; almost, it would seem, without fear.

WHAT followed will never be quite clear. Perhaps the wolverine stumbled, or caught his feet in a rabbit-snare, or misjudged his low, quick, wrenching rush, perhaps—but who can tell?

The stag passed on, and the wolverine rolled over twice, into a gorse-patch. He did not come out again. He never came out. The missel-thrush saw him there next morning when he went worm-hunting. He was dying then, and the missel-thrush was the last one who beheld him—the missel-thrush and the crows, which latter have the last word in almost all the tragedies of the wild.

So the rich American won his wager, after all, though how he won it—and he may perhaps read this—he never knew.

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IROQUOIS!
IROQUOIS!

A Five-Part Story Part One

by HUGH PENDEXTER

Author of "Rifle Rule," "Old Misery," etc.

CHAPTER I

THE LAST OF THE MACARONIS

ALTHOUGH Sir William Johnson, the most powerful and commanding figure in the valley of the Mohawk, died in the Summer of 1774 his family remained quite supreme in Tryon County affairs. Perhaps the Herkimer family came next in influence even if its members were not always united. Sir John, knighted by George the Third as a compliment to his illustrious father, supported by the Butlers and other influential families, ruled Johnstown, the shire-town of the county, with exacting authority.

He had a small army of tenants and retainers, and after his father's death he was ever scheming to unite the Iroquois in an alliance with Great Britain, while the Whigs were striving at least to hold the Indians neutral. This rivalry between the two factions was carried on in the belief that war was inevitable between the colonies and the mother-country.

It would be expected that one who lived in those stirring times, with the country on the edge of hostilities, would retain very vivid impressions of passing events.

This the more so as it was obvious that did the League of the Iroquois hold fast to the ancient covenant chain, stretching across the sea to England, Tryon County might suffer more from the horrors of a border war than any other section of the colonies.

But hindsight is ever clearer than foresight, and there were reasons why some of us living along the Mohawk in 1774 should not have foreseen the desolation destined to visit the fair valley. Surely there were but few whose prophetic vision could picture twelve thousand farms abandoned, two-thirds of the settlers slain, with four hundred widows and two thousand fatherless children left to hand down the memories of eight terrible years.

As a lad of eighteen, and as intelligent as the average, I could scarcely believe ruin and suffering were to sweep through the valley. For nearly fifty years the country along the Mohawk had been a settled, prosperous land. The Mohawks, Keepers of the Eastern Door and their neighbors, the Oneidas, for many years had lived on friendly terms with the Holland Dutch, the Palatine Germans, the Scotch-Irish, with Englishmen and the Highlanders.

While the other three nations of the league were not so intimately acquainted with the whites because of geographical reasons, yet there was much passing back and forth and general amity between the two races. This fact was enough to impel the belief that peaceful conditions were to continue indefinitely between the red and white men. The Mohawks, most in contact with the whites, adopted many of our ways. Many of them attended white schools and knew their books, and not a few shaved with English made razors.

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UNCLE DAVID WHITTLESEY and his wife, Aunt Rachel, took me, an orphan, to the western part of the Canajoharie district in the Spring of 1764, or eleven years before the colonies dug up a red ax against England. Most of my recollections have to do with my boy's life, with Spring melting into Summer, with Summer fleeing before the war-belts displayed by bold Autumn; with Winter nights given to study and reading.

From early Spring until the leaves began to fall there were the repeated experiences of play and adventuring with the Mohawk and Oneida boys, but largely with the former. Naturally I became a young Indian in woodcraft, in the hunt or in fishing. But there was much of a sameness in that period of my life, and but few events stand out beyond the general run.

A much briefer series of memories have to do with what concerned and worried my uncle. They commence about 1772, the year my aunt died. It was on an evening in late Fall. My uncle had just received a copy of the *Boston Gazette* and after opening it he demanded my attention. I listened unwillingly, for I had my nose in a book—while he read in a loud voice the message written by Samuel Adams of Massachusetts. I was to learn the identity of the writer later, as the article was signed "Valerius Poplicola," and for some time I labored under the impression it was the name of a medicine.

But I never forgot that part of the appeal which read—

"Let associations and combinations be everywhere set up to consult and recover our just rights."

Yet I think it was Uncle David's dramatic style of oratory, rather than the import of the message, that etched those few words on my memory. Other similar recollections follow, only more vague, wherein I see my uncle reading his occasional newspaper, his spectacles riding the tip of his nose, his gaunt, weathered face frowning.

That Samuel Adams should be responsible for those associations, first called Committees of Correspondence and later Committees of Safety, interested me but little at the time. I was too busy making snares, planning to find new fishing, or studying some wrestling trick to try on my Mohawk friends, to worry over the remote possibility of our frontier being soaked in blood. Mr. Adams' persistent efforts to arouse public opinion against Great Britain's encroachment upon our liberties rather bored me, not that my uncle had the habit of reading aloud.

From a boy's viewpoint those early days on the Mohawk should have been idyllic. Surely I found them pleasant enough. But the experiences were so much alike that I find them blurred when subjected to retrospection.

Like a lone tree, revealed by a flare of lightning, stands out a trip to Johnson Hall in the Spring of 1768, when Cherokee deputies met nearly eight hundred Iroquois there. I remember hearing my elders say the Iroquois were discontented and that only Sir William's influence kept them from going home.

The cause were some brutal murders committed on Indians in Pennsylvania. I remember the gallant figure the great Cherokee war-chief, Oconostota, made when he agreed to peace with the Long House, speaking on eleven belts and three strings. The belt he gave Sir William had a calumet and eagle's tail fastened to it.

The Cherokee had been to England. He carried himself well; but while he was quick to bury the hatchet between his people and the Iroquois he neglected to remove it from the heads of the English. Sir William rebuked him, and this omission was corrected. With the French and English always coveting the Cherokee country that nation had allied itself first with one, then with the other. The council and treaty I witnessed in 1768 bound the southern nation to England in the war to come seven years later.

This and other visits to the hall remain distinct pictures, but the incidents of going and returning are forgotten. Doubtless because of my zeal to reach the place visited and my weariness while returning home. Without any particular reason a visit to Herkimer's house east of Fall Hill in our, the Canajoharie, district is also sharply defined in my memory. The house is of brick with a spacious porch and four huge pillars. For the most part, however, those early impressions are sadly run together and are not always arranged chronologically in my mind.

It's quite plain that the round of planting, cultivating, and harvesting must have wearied me else I would not have incurred my uncle's displeasure and a taste of a harness-strap by my first runaway visits to the nearest Indian camp or village.

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My ancestry should have been Dutch or Scotch, for even as a child I had a canny or stubborn way of casting up the account between me and my uncle. I knew I would be soundly thrashed if I left home when the sweet sap began to run, or when the crops were to be tended or stored. What's more I knew my uncle would pursue me and ignominiously take me home. Yet I would consider the price and then doggedly elect to pay it.

That I must have had strong will-power is evidenced by my ability to keep all thoughts of the strap from my mind once I had reached a festival, such as "The Maple Dance," or that in thanksgiving for the first fruits of the year, the strawberry; or the four days of feasting and thanks offerings that celebrated the first green corn.

I remember my impatience during the "confession of sins," and how it seemed as if the Keeper of the Faith would never finish his opening address. The last because of my fear lest my uncle put in appearance and end my holiday; in fact, the Keeper spoke briefly and to the point.

When finished, he handed the string of white wampum to his neighbor. I would count the number present, and would hope that many might find themselves without faults, thereby hastening the period of games and feasting. By the time I had cast off my few clothes and had togged myself out like a Mohawk boy I ceased to remember my uncle was somewhere on his way and that my wild freedom was but a matter of hours.

Curiously enough I can not remember such an epochal event as the first time Uncle David failed to come after me; nor the first time I escaped a whipping. In reviewing my acquaintance with the Mohawks I find no perspective. Sometimes it seems as if I always had known them.

KNOW that I was of man's age and growth and had attended the funeral of Sir William and was hearing much talk of war I was like many of my neighbors in believing we were isolated from it.

An eccentric neighbor, into whose confidence I had wormed myself, fretfully assured me that if war came it would have no local significance. The Scotch-Irish, Palatine Germans and the Dutch were interested only in the viewpoint of the colonies. The Highland Scotch, and the owners of large estates on which they farmed or worked as retainers, were stanchly for the crown. But for years there had been prophets of evil times, much complaining, fiery speeches and rebellious reactions; but no war. If war did materialize most of the Tryon County men would march to the seaboard to uphold colonial rights.

Men gained the public ear and urged drastic action, but no one appeared to be speaking with belts. So many crises had been safely passed that there were few who realized war was on its way to the Canajoharie, the German Flats, the Palatine and the Mohawk districts.

Except of an evening after the post arrived my uncle talked little of the troubled times; as for that he talked but little of anything. Yet he did much writing and was careful in selecting the man to carry his letters to Albany. He was ever eager to receive the *Gazette*, the *Boston Post* or *Newsletter*. Being sated by the articles he read aloud I did not read the papers closely.

I was more interested in planning a visit to Joseph Brant's home at Canajoharie than my uncle's breathless announcement that the port of Boston had been closed and that Tryon County "must do something about it."

But if the heated declarations in the public press failed to impress me as they should have, there was a picture of a snake, cut into pieces, the segments tagged with the initials of the colonies, that must have stirred my imagination. I remember the bold caption "Unite Or Die." Even now it is fresh in my mind and I can draw it and place the initials of the colonies correctly.

There was G over the tail. The next section was unnamed, but the following two were marked S. C. and N. C., respectively. Passing down the half-loop first came V and then an M. And so on, with N. E. written over the head. This appeared in the *Pennsylvania Journal* repeatedly during 1774. I drew the picture for some of the Mohawk boys, and they insisted a snake so badly disjointed could do no harm.

But if history in the making failed to stimulate me—probably because I lacked the analytical ability—my memory is pricked through with clean-cut recollections of little events. I have mentioned an eccentric neighbor with whom I was on very friendly terms. His name, Horace Makepeace Martin, reflected a strain of

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Puritan ancestry which, I fear, never asserted itself at any period of his careless life.

He was commonly believed to be mentally unsound and was known as "Mad" Martin. I was one of the few who spoke of him more sedately. But crazy or sane he was my most interesting acquaintance. He opened doors to new worlds and permitted me to see marvels and to fill my thick head with new thoughts. He had been a sad waster, and my uncle held him in great disesteem. For our family came to New York province from the New Hampshire Grants and was committed to hard work and thoroughly imbued with respect for the shilling.

His company being forbidden me at first, then tolerated with poor grace, I naturally found him a refreshing relief from stolid German, dour Scotchman and sluggish Dutchman. My early visits to his little house were surreptitous adventures and were as strongly condemned by my uncle as had been my runaway trips to the Mohawks.

Nevertheless I accepted Mr. Martin as a very remarkable man, and I never tired of sitting in his quaint company and listening to his reminiscences while I munched his Newtown pippins. His interest was in the past and he spoke as one who has reached the end of the trail. He enjoyed living over patches of his life; and queer enough were the impressions he left on my young and somewhat barbarous mind.

He was younger than my uncle but from the first I carried the notion he was very aged. I think this belief was encouraged by his frequent boast—

"I am the last of the macaronis."

It sounded as ancient as if he had proclaimed himself to be the last of the Cæsars. My long associations with Mohawk boys may have filled me with a love for finery barbarically expressed and aggressively displayed; and beyond all doubt Mr. Martin's tarnished foppery was weird enough. But how warmly did I approve of it and wish my uncle would thus decorate his rugged frame! It was so entirely unlike the sober attire of the settlers.

Aside from his orchard and a small garden he raised but little; nor was he one to hunt game. I now can understand how welcome must have been my offerings of venison and fish, although at the time his acceptance of them made me believe he was doing me a great favor. Many times he must have found himself cruelly pinched for the bare necessities of life, but despite his poverty he never parted with either of the two watches and their dangling seals which he always wore in the pockets of his short waistcoat. This profusion of timepieces was enough to damn him irrevocably in the opinion of my frugal uncle.

I USUALLY entered the Martin place through the orchard at the back of the house. If I arrived in the morning before Mr. Martin was up, or in the afternoon while he was taking a nap, I had to remain outside until he was fully dressed. No one, so far as I could learn, ever saw him except when he was on parade.

He was one of the survivors of that bizarre sartorial mode which came into violent prominence in 1770. It was such an ultra-fashionable cult that it was caricatured and lampooned on both sides of the Atlantic, and its devotees were known as macaronis. The *Oxford Magazine* described it as being "a kind of an animal, neither male nor female. It talks without meaning, it smiles without pleasantry, it eats without appetite, it rides without exercise."

Anstey's *New Bath Guide* was rather severe in hitting off the mode which the macaroni ousted; but the fashionable foibles of the beaux of 1766 were mild and conservative compared with the macaroni's hectic efforts to attract attention.

Horace Walpole fathered the fantastic tribe on Lord Clive. Yet despite all derisive commentaries on its absurd costumes and mannerism the mode crossed the ocean and became as pronounced in New York as in London and Bath. The word was made much of in the colonies. For example, there was "The Macaroni Purse" of a hundred pounds between Mr. Water's "Liberty" and Mr. De Lancey's "Lath," one of the big racecourse events of 1771.

My friend's wardrobe, so far as it went, was thoroughly à la macaroni, although the pressure of tremendous events was squeezing the silly fellows out of their finical foppery. My friend's coat was cut much shorter than any other I had seen and was worn unfastened to display the waistcoat and the two watches. Also it was snug fitting and very pictorial with lace and frogs, and one tassel.

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When by repeated gifts of game and wild-fowl I had won my way into his confidence he confessed it was a great sorrow in his life to have lost the second tassel.

He possessed two pairs of tight breeches which I admired much. One was of striped silk and the other of spotted silk, marvelously gay creations. They were caught at the knee by bunches of faded ribbons. His stockings were of silk and must have cost a pretty penny. One of the shoe buckles held a small diamond, the other being paste.

Mr. Martin invariably received me standing and seldom seated himself in my presence unless it be on the bench under the apple-tree in front of the house. Perhaps he did not care to depend too much on his tight nether garments.

When indoors I was encouraged to take my ease while he held forth from the middle of the floor, strutting, mincing and posing. And when not indoors, whether the day be fair or rainy, or streaked with snow, he usually wore a ridiculously small hat and carried a be-tasseled cane. He combed his hair high above his forehead and wore a large curl above each ear.

In the Summer season he often had a bunch of flowers pinned to his breast. All this suggestion of effeminacy, however, was somewhat relieved by the fine sword hanging at his side. Nor was the face above this quaint ensemble that of a weakling, or an idiot.

The features were thin and the brows craggy. There was a decided predatory hook to his nose and the lean jaw suggested a stubborn will. His eyes were of a frosty blue and could be, I imagined, very unpleasant to meet when his ire was aroused.

Such was Mad Martin, the last of the macaronis, as he sorrowfully, but proudly, styled himself. He was effeminate with his ribbons and gewgaws and posies and curls. He was thoroughly artificial with his standing up for inspection, with his smirking and attitudinizing. But as for that, the ordinary beau of the day was as earnestly devoted to the occupation of dressing as were the belles; and his dressing-table was much such a clutter of scents and essences, cosmetics and powders as would be found in the toilet articles of *miladi*.

But there were times when my friend's wasted face revealed a bleakness of heart that even my young gaze detected, a glimpse of the real man thrusting himself for the moment above his egregious frippery. On the whole, however, I considered Mr. Martin to present a fine picture of elegance.

He took no interest in the problems of the day except to curse any conditions that drove dandyism from the minds of men. His violent condemnation of the Stamp Act was only another way of complaining against anything that checked the erratic foppishness of the macaroni. In truth, we seldom spoke of the unsettled times.

My rôle was that of listener while he moved about the poorly furnished room and ranted in high praise of the profligacy of his fellow beaux. He walked with a mincing step, his arm outstretched from his side and took care in advancing the cane, as if the manipulation of it were some intricate bit of ritual. And while moving forward and back he would regale himself by telling me of his wild life in New York, Philadelphia and Charlestown.

"Blaze me, lad!" he would boast. "But Horry Martin has known the time when he could not find the bottom of his purse."

And he would raise his thin figure to its full height and punctuate his words with gentle taps of the cane.

"And he's known the night when he lost his last ten thousand pounds at the faro-table. Bah! What of that? We of the macaroni presumed to create an effect, to leave an impression on passing life. And if it wasn't for this cursed scolding and braying about the —— taxes, history would have been hard put to do us justice. The only reward we asked was the knowledge that in the records of sartorial victories we would be credited for being —— exacting in our mode.

"Ah, but a man had to be born for it, lad. No Tom, Dick or Harry, simply because he possessed plenty of gold, could hope to win distinction. Poor George Pottler devoted years to planning an entirely new effect in sleeve lace. It was to be his contribution to the Art of Dressing. And by ——! if a half-witted clerk, working for Ennis Graham, the mercer, didn't forestall him by a matter of weeks—just a few weeks! If Graham had not supplied us with true macaroni velvet he'd had no more of our patronage.

"What does the last ten thousand pounds amount to? So much dross. Lad, a man is never remembered because he had ten

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thousand pounds. But I pride myself it'll be a long day before my style of wrapping one's neck and head in a large neckerchief, tied in a bow under the chin, will be forgotten. Nor were my notions of reviving the blonde-lace ruffles of 1764 without merit. Now this threat of a war may cause all our triumphs to be forgotten!"

IN SILENCE, head bowed and thin face drawn and somber, he would pace the room a bit, and then break out again:

"Every man pays. Horry Martin paid—but for value received. He had his day. Many of them. Why shouldn't he pay? He had his own *friseur*, and never were accomplishments in hair-dressing more highly praised and more widely copied. If my man created a hair-vogue for tonight it would be taken up and made as common as blue-powder by tomorrow night in all the better coffee-houses. Many the attempt to bribe the fellow into telling ahead how I would wear my hair.

"All these long fingers of mine were covered with rings. Why, ——! My snuff-boxes and jeweled trinkets alone would make even your strong shoulders ache. And as for pictures and lace and china, lad! Good ——! they would burst this mean apartment! Why my clothing alone would fill it and drive us outdoors to visit.

"Yes, I've paid the price and I've had its worth. The clods who till the ground and trade for peltry know nothing about life. I've seen the time when my wardrobe would buy their raw acres. There was a suit, embroidered with gold. Wore it for the first time on the afternoon I won a thousand pounds at dice from Captain Bitting at the Queen's Head.

"Then the sable-lined velvet pelisse of a strawberry color. It became me vastly the night I stripped Gerry Gorton at *lansquenet*. And now! Why, since Sir William is dead I must drink well-water. Not even a bottle of Taunton ale or Bristol beer to offer a guest! And there was the time when, blindfolded, I could tell by the aroma whether the wine be Portugal or Spain, Prussia or Rhenish, Burgundy or Bordeaux. Just a sniff, mind you—the tick of a watch—and I had named it. They tried to trick me once with a flask of Madeira from Governor Burnet's cellar—and he died in 1729, mind you—but I laid them odds and named it!"

In this vainglorious fashion he would babble on throughout an afternoon, recounting his winnings and losses—apparently as proud of the latter as the former—and describing his wardrobe and wines. His boasting poisoned me none; for it was never in my blood to risk at chance, or spend foolishly on ruffles and wigs, what was hard come-by. The more dangerous topic of women he never introduced.

One day I asked him about his sword-play. He gave me the blade and admonished me not to break it with my awkward strength. Then he armed himself with a slender cane and invited me to thrust him through the chest. I considered it to be murder even to make a pass. But what with his impatient stamping of feet, his grotesque, spraddling posture and the defiance of his high-flung left hand, I finally made a tentative thrust. The blade was easily deflected, and he laughed derisively, and encouraged—

"More audacity, my young peasant!"

That warmed me a bit and quickly did I forget the consequences should I run him through. The ease with which he defended himself amazed me. Then his tactics changed. He took the offensive. *Tap! tap! tap!* came the point of the cane over my heart, until the skin burned like fire.

I was a stubborn, dogged youngster, and gritted my teeth and took my punishment. He must have read suffering in my wry grimace; for with a sudden sweep of the cane he had the sword-point against the ceiling and was sternly commanding—

"Have done!"

I continued struggling to get the blade back into play. More gently he asked—

"Would you slay me, lad?"

Then my senses returned and I was filled with black horror at the evil mood I had worked myself into.

"If you are bruised, strip and we'll bathe you."

"I'm unhurt, Master Martin," I told him. "But you have marvelous ways with a stick."

"You're a good lad. We'll take two sticks and play with them until you've learned some of the tricks," he promised me.

After that there was hardly a visit that we did not spend some of the time in fencing; and he was good enough to say I showed progress.

For these and many similar reasons my

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acquaintance with Mr. Martin remains in the foreground of my memories of those tumultuous years. He told me stories and taught me something of sword-play while the colonies and England erected the war-posts.

My visits to his home broke the monotony of farm life and pleasantly entertained me between hunting and fishing trips, between forest journeys with the Mohawk boys and the learning of their language while listening to the camp-fire talks of their elders.

A larger profit afforded by our friendship came from the books he had brought to the Mohawk and which he permitted me to read. Curiously enough it was this man, deemed to be mentally unsound, who introduced me to the literature of the day. The privilege of taking books home was a priceless boon when came the long Winter nights to besiege us. Many a blustering storm I defied to secure a volume.

Some of the books I read while concealed in the cornfield, or while pretending to tend the cattle while my frosty breath helped to smoke up the cow-shed. This evasion resulted from my uncle's austere views on the printed word. For his pleasure I read aloud "Pilgrim's Progress," La Fontaine's "Fables" and Abercromby's "History of Scotland."

He would sit before the evening fire and smoke his long pipe as long as my eyes and tongue held out. Then with a great show of berating me for keeping my nose in a book he would order me to take my candle and go to bed.

"Robinson Crusoe," however, was his favorite, although he endeavored mightily to conceal his interest. Had it not been for that fascinating story I might never have learned there was much of the boy in his stern make-up. He forbid my reading "Tom Jones," "Pamela" and "Tristam Shandy;" and to make sure I was not contaminated he removed the trio to his room and for several nights burned extra candles. Lying between the rows of corn, or keeping the cows company, I went through the list proscribed and received no harm.

One day I went to Mr. Martin's to return Hannah More's "The Search After Happiness," and Samuel Foote's "The Nabob;" and, of course, to beg other volumes. I was surprized to find the door open and the room filled with dust, and more surprized on entering to behold Mr. Martin awkwardly wielding a brush-broom.

He had discarded coat and waistcoat. His thin face flushed as I plunged in upon him, for he knew my sharp eyes were observing the patched condition of his shirt. He was far better with the sword than with the needle, and colored cloth had been used in the back. I suspected he had sacrificed the unseen portion of the garment in repairing the bosom.

"Have done with your staring. I'm busy to-day," he curtly told me.

It was the first approach to rudeness I ever had witnessed in him.

"Why, then," I quickly told him, "all the more need for me to be busy, too. Since Aunt Rachel died I've become a dabster at sweeping and dusting. Go out under the tree and leave the rest to me."

SHE ACCEPTED my offer because it afforded him an excuse for putting on his waistcoat and coat; but he thanked me none as he passed through the doorway. He was still smarting under my discovery of the patched shirt. When I had tidied up the room—and there were but few articles of furniture to hinder—I joined him under the tree.

Sitting beside him on the bench, I followed his example of staring at the ground. Then I was excitedly crying:

"Why, Master Martin! You've lost the diamond-stone from your shoe-buckle!"

He winced, as if suffering physical pain, and muttered:

"It's nothing. Much better it follows the other."

"But such a brave stone!"

"—— mercy! Have done prattling about a cursed jewel!"

Hurt by his speech, but more hurt because he seemed to be in trouble, I kept silent. I lacked courage to ask for more books, although I desired them keenly. After an awkward pause I rose to go.

Now he would detain me, and in a harsh, brusk voice he commanded:

"Sit down. One would think you must hurry to Albany to give counsel to the governor; or must be preparing to attend the first meeting of this new Committee of Safety that's to meet at Adam Loucks in Stone Arabia."

Believing the shadows of war had touched him at last, I seated myself, and said:

"My uncle has said nothing about the committee meeting at Louck's Inn. I've

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been there. About a mile north of the two hamlets. There are fewer king's men there than anywhere else in the four districts. A good place to meet if they wouldn't be troubled by the Johnsons and their Highlanders. But my uncle told me nothing about it."

I was keenly disappointed that Uncle David had not confided in me. He had been writing and receiving letters throughout the Summer, and had been unusually busy since Sir William's death. Ancient Stone Arabia, grotesquely named and entirely without reason so far as I ever learned, was one of the most peaceful and prosperous parts of the Palatine district. Mention of it always brings up a picture of the two churches, the happy hamlet, and the old churchyard on the glebe land.

"When does the committee meet?" I inquired.

"I know naught, nor care naught," he mumbled, now resting his elbows on his knees and cupping his thin, pointed chin in his long hands. "This month some time. I do not know, nor care when. Your uncle told me and asked me to be there. I'll not go. It's on the twenty-seventh, I believe. It's nothing to me. When telling me the date your uncle spoke with poor grace. As if apologizing to himself for giving me the word, he explained that I was on his list. —— the war! It'll upset everything."

Poor man. His affairs had been upset long ago. To sooth his wounded pride I reminded him:

"My uncle has his own ways of doing things. At least he told you. That's more'n he told me. He still thinks I'm a child."

He leaned back and began punching his cane into the ground. Then he idly scratched a name. I read it—

"Nancy."

I was wondering what sudden sentiment was working in his mind when he suddenly announced—

"My daughter Nancy is coming home very soon."

Had he sounded the Mohawk war-whoop and had attempted to scalp me I could not have been more astounded. It was the first intimation I had had that he could claim any kith or kin in the whole world; and a child last of all! With open mouth I stared blankly for a few seconds, and then managed to exclaim—

"Married?"

"——! If there isn't intelligence for you!" he fairly roared, and apostrophizing the sky. Then he darted his gaze at me and demanded—

"Am I like a man who would bring illegitimate children into the world?"

Averting my burning face I blundered:

"I didn't know. I never thought."

"A great trouble with the peasant class. They never think," he bitterly complained. "And it's such as they who will meet at Stone Arabia to make over the world!"

We both were silent again. At last my embarrassment would permit me to remain no longer, and I was edging from the bench when he gently said:

"There, there, lad. I don't always mean what my tongue says. You're a good lad and quick enough of wit. Of course you could not know until you were told.

"My wife was of Seneca-French blood. She was educated in Montreal and was the peer of any lady I ever met. She died when the child was born. I left my daughter with Noel Girard, her grandfather, to be educated. That was before I lost my last ten thousand. She was left in Montreal too long, I fear. She saw too much of her mother's people as a child. When her grandfather died Sir William arranged it for her to finish her schooling in Albany.

"By that time I had found the end of my purse, but a diamond buckle and some other trinkets gave her a chance. I had planned to send her to Mr. Hulett's school in New York to learn the newest dances and fencing. Every woman desiring a graceful carriage should take up fencing. But this cursed talk of war knocked my plans into a cocked-hat. Hulett is beholden to me in a small way.

"In 1764 I taught him a few tricks at fence which he passed on to his pupils at a fat profit. Of course every young lady should be proficient in the Dauphine as well as in the Minuet; in the Rigadoon as well as in the Louvre. Of course my daughter already knows the cotillions and the English country dances.

"With her schooling at Albany finished she should have received the polish of Mr. Hulett's teaching. Well, well! Perhaps I can teach her. Doubtless I'm out of the latest mode—living up here like a squash! It was because Sir William was my friend that I came to this —— forsaken valley."

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He brooded a bit and then continued:

"So my daughter comes home as soon as my last diamond buckle has been transmuted into fit wearing apparel. The only child of the last of the macaronis should be well gowned. I have managed so she could make an excellent appearance. Young Walter Butler sold the stone and will advise the child as to making new purchases."

I found myself resenting that young Butler, son of John Butler, the land-speculator and friend of the Johnsons, should thus accommodate Mr. Martin; and it shamed me to think how helpless I would be in advising a maid. Butler was older than I and nad ignored me whenever we chanced to meet at Johnson Hall. Still in a whirl of amazement, and knowing I must say something, I could only repeat:

"Aye. Your daughter comes home."

"—— help us! The lad seems to think it unnatural that an only child should join her father! Parrots from the West Indies can repeat what they hear. Please realize, young sir, it is something of an event in my empty life to have my daughter with me after all the years of separation."

His voice was near to breaking.

As sympathy conquered astonishment my awkwardness lessened, and I heartily cried:

"That'll be vastly fine for you, Master Martin. You won't be lonely any more."

HE BOWED his head and fought to control his emotion before he ventured to speak. Even then his speech came in jerks and his lips trembled. For the first time in my hearing he rebuked himself.

"Not lonely," he muttered. "But what about her? She finds her father in a stranger—wastrel. Fool! Thinking only of self. Poor girl! Poor little girl! And such a home to come to!"

"You shouldn't talk like that, Master Martin," I remonstrated. "You have books. You can have a beautiful garden. Between Cosby's Manor and Tribe's Hill there's no better outlook on the river than you get from this very spot."

Speaking more calmly he insisted:

"She will be lonely. She scarce knows me. You must come over and cheer her up. Youth needs youth, and she is very young. Only fifteen years— You've often heard me say I was satisfied with what I have received from life; that I'm content to have paid poverty and loneliness for what life has given me. All lies—lies! The squanderings of a night would have kept her a lady. Her mother was a good and wise woman, even if she did marry Horry Martin, a macaroni.

"The one year I had with her was worth all the other years. That one year was the one worthwhile year of my life. An affair of the sword sent me to Montreal where I met and married her. It happened that the fellow I ran through decided to live, and my wife died. I went back to taste the dregs. With the exception of that one year all has been madness, from the time I started to play at being a man. Madness—shadows—ghosts. Now be going. I have much to think about. In a few days come and meet my daughter Nancy."

That he should have a daughter was more astonishing than that the colonies should go to war. The closing of Boston's port was a trivial matter beside his disclosure. My mind seethed with jumbled thoughts as I ran home to break the news to my uncle.

His expression was stern and forbidding as he listened to my hurried recital. When I paused for breath he harangued against the wickedness of such a man as Mad Martin being a father. So violent were his denunciations that I fled from the house, my heart hurt, my head in a whirl. He had polished off poor Mr. Martin before I cleared the doorway.

He was charactizing Martin's wife as a "half-Injun baggage" before I could pass out of hearing. I remained aloof until supper-time, hoping he had exhausted his invectives. When I returned and took my place at the table he got the blessing out of the way very quickly and began berating me for running off and leaving my story half-told. And he added surmises concerning the girl which were cruelly brutal.

"Mr. Martin has been good to me. I tried to tell you about his wife and daughter, but you broke in with hard words. She's scarcely more than a child——"

"Daughter!" he jeered.

For the first time in my life I was finding his sharp tongue to be intolerable. Without dreaming I had spunk enough to rebel I hotly warned him:

"The girl isn't to be blamed for anything. Nor was her mother to be blamed. If Mr. Martin married when he shouldn't——"

"Married!" he derided.

"Aye! Married," I sharply repeated.

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"Uncle David, I don't like the way you talk. I can't help it if you think bad things. But I'll not sit here and hear you speak ill of my friend and his daughter."

He dropped his knife and stared at me curiously; then exclaimed—

"Well, I'll be ——"

Which was very strong language for one so orthodox to use. His strong jaw seemed to elongate as he leaned over the table and glared steadily into my hot face. Being desperate, like a cornered rat, I met his gaze.

Gradually he settled back in his chair and gruffly conceded—

"It's no crime for you to take up for your friend."

"You've been ready enough to enjoy Mr. Martin's books."

"Mister Martin? ——'s trash! *Mad* Martin! The whole length of the valley! Books? I had to read them to see if they was fit for you to read. You ought to be lashed for using that tone to me. By godfrey: I suppose you've grown too big and have too much muscle on that gawky frame of yours to be punished for your behavior."

"Lash to your heart's content; but don't abuse my friends."

He stroked his chin thoughtfully, as if taking care how he would frame his next speech.

His voice was quiet, almost subdued, when he said:

"Yes, you've outgrown whippings; for you feel old enough to set your judgment up against mine. That must mean you figure yourself a man."

"If being eighteen, and very strong, counts; then I'm a man," I meekly replied.

"And probably you believe you can best me at man's-grips, Benajah Whittlesey?"

"Aye. I can best you at man's-grips," I glumly said. "I could have nearly bested you the last time you lashed me."

"Well, if that ain't news, then Sam Adams is a sneaking king's man!" he gasped.

And only by a mighty effort did he suppress a violent display of temper.

When next he spoke his tone was ominously polite.

"When there's two minds on a question the matter should be settled," he calmly announced.

If his speech were gentle his haste in gaining his feet was enough to overturn his chair with a crash. The situation had developed to an impossible point before I had realized it. He was standing in the middle of the floor, his arms raised waist-high, his calloused fingers crooked in an invitation. I kept my place at the table, abhorring the thought of meeting him in violence.

He gibed:

"Come, young hotspur. Come! I'm waiting. This must be settled. Have at me, my young cockrel. Bring all your wares; for you'll need them. If your old uncle is harboring a better man than he is, it's time he learned that fact first hand."

"I'll not wrestle with you."

"Then God pity me for living to see the day when the family bred talkers and not doers!" he passionately deplored.

MY CHAIR went to the wall. Walking around the table I kicked his chair to a corner. And the next moment I was grappling with the man who had been a father to me. Thank God there was no anger in my heart against him, although my blood was hot that he should think me a coward.

We swirled about, knocking the heavy table over as if it had been one of those things of gilt and spidery-legs, such as I had seen in an Albany manor-house.

Uncle David was no weakling; nor was there any old age in his muscles. He had pinned more than one square-built Dutchman on the ground in friendly, yet savage bouts. Nor had he ceased to enjoy such affairs.

But I was full grown, with a man's strength, and full of tricks my uncle knew not of, and as supple as the Indian boys with whom I had wrestled many times.

Twice we swayed around the room, my uncle grunting prodigiously as he endeavored to hurl me to the flagged kitchen floor. He could swing me off my feet but that was all.

Then I tripped him, and he fell underneath me; and the *smack* of his head on the hard floor sounded like a pestle hitting the bottom of an empty corn-meal mortar. I leaped up and stretched out a hand to help him to his feet. But he remained silent and motionless.

Sobbing, and overwhelmed by the most terrible dread, I got brandy from the cupboard and bathed his head. Blood trickled from the bushy hair, and I located a bump that seemed to be half as big as my fist.

I cried aloud—

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"You've killed your uncle!"

When it seemed that I must die unless he showed signs of life he made me the happiest mortal in the whole length of the Mohawk Valley by coughing over the brandy I had forced into his mouth. His recovery was quick. Up came his head, and for a few moments he stared at me blankly. As comprehension returned he let me help him to the settle.

I waited for him to speak, mortally disturbed lest he might not forgive me. He gingerly felt of his head; then swept his gaze over the room and noted the overturned table and chairs and the smashed crockery. His first words were—

"Supper's gone to the ——"

"Do you feel all right?" I anxiously asked, proffering the brandy.

He brushed the bottle aside and seized me by the wrist, and cried:

"I'm proud of your guts, Benajah Whittlesey! You're as good a man as your uncle, and that's saying much. And in God's great truth Mad Martin's little girl is a lady!"

CHAPTER II

LITTLE MOCCASIN

I RESENTED the Martin girl. Never having suspected her existence, my deliberate reflections classed her as an obtrusion. Now that another, with the first right, was coming to dispel Mr. Martin's loneliness, I was discovering how much worth while his friendship was to me. The girl's arrival would put an end to his fascinating recitals.

She would be always between us, and the unrestraint of his fanciful discourses would be hedged about by commonplaces. So long as he was known as Mad Martin he was the most unusual and picturesque man I ever had met. Let him cease posing as the last of the macaronis and I might as well spend time talking with Van Broome, who rode in a heavy cart and delivered packages and occasional letters.

After my scene with my uncle I arranged my thoughts in an orderly fashion, doubtless brooded quite a bit over the phenomenon of Mr. Martin's possessing a daughter, and somehow felt I had been cheated.

Unconsciously my uncle added to my pique by assuming that I was impatient to visit the Martin home and become acquainted with the little interloper.

Uncle David would kindly remind me:

"The child is coming to see her father, not you. Let them have time to get acquainted."

And all the while I was striving to find some excuse for remaining away without betraying my jealousy. It was necessary to repair a stone wall near the river-road, and I hurried through the task for fear I might witness her coming by wagon or by bateau. Work on the wall was finished a day sooner than my uncle had expected, and my uncle violated precedent by doing much correspondence before sundown.

"Time is crowding us," he explained. "So much to be done the harvest must wait."

And as his well-muscled hand soon wearied of writing many pages he called on me to make a fair copy of several pages.

This permitted me to discover he was endeavoring to draw up a set of resolves to be offered at the first meeting of the Tryon County Committee of Safety, to be held August twenty-seventh at Loucks' Inn a mile north of the two churches.

Couched in fiery, defiant language and smartened up by several quotations from the Bible, he dwelt upon the enormity of Great Britain imposing taxes without the consent of the taxed.

The Acts of Parliament in laying internal taxes on the colonies were scathingly denounced as a vicious assault on the rights and liberties of British subjects in America. His original draft styled us "Americans," and only after I had reasoned with him and had demanded pointblank if he intended to state an untruth did he surrender and permit me to write in "British subjects in America."

The act for blocking the port of Boston further revealed his genius for invective; and after I had finished the closing warning, that the four districts of Tryon County would rally to the support of "the poor distressed inhabitants of Boston," I threw down the quill and prophesied—

"If anything will make King George fight, it'll be these resolves, Uncle David."

He heard me grimly, yet with a proud glint in his eye, and asked me to read the resolves aloud in my best voice. I complied, and found it mighty fine reading, probably because I felt I had contributed to the authorship.

I will say now the resolves were adopted

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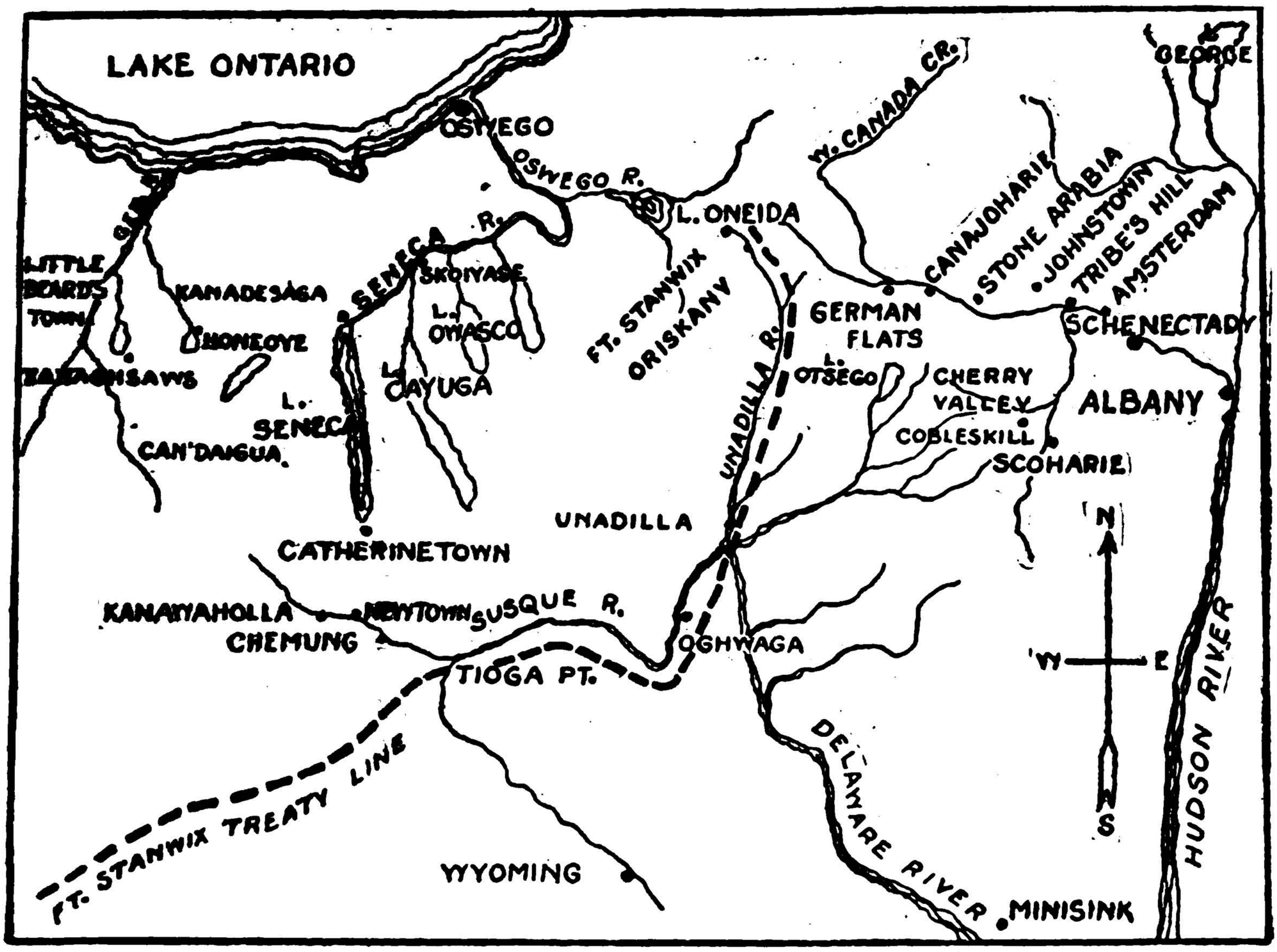

after being stripped of harsh language and the Biblical quotations, and after they had been prefaced by two resolves in which King George was dutifully acknowledged to be our rightful lord and sovereign, to be supported on "the Throne of his Ancestors" by "our Lives and Fortunes."

Could my uncle have foreseen this rhetorical obeisance, how he would have raged that day, when I played the orator in the flagged kitchen.

And could he have had foreknowledge of that second resolve, wherein, "we think and consider it as our greatest Happiness to be governed by the Laws of Great Britain," he would not have attended that first meeting, I fear.

That day and evening were given up to writing lengthy letters in which my uncle explained over and over how the colonies were being wronged, as if the recipients—likewise busy in writing much the same thing—had to be informed!

Several days followed with this sort of work, which wearied me tremendously and made me hanker for my stone walls.

I was not used to being cooped up indoors. My only relaxation came after I had retired to my room under the eaves and could take from the chest my new hunting-suit. I was keeping it for the Harvest Festival of the Iroquois, when they returned thanks to "Our Supporters," especially to "The Three Sisters": Corn, beans and squash.

Throughout the Long House the different nations would celebrate the storing of the crops with four days of speeches, feasting, games and dancing. Their passion for the latter form of amusement would, on this occasion, require the entire night. Aside from my pride I owed it to my Mohawk friends to be attired in my best.

Night after night I put on my new suit and admired it greatly. The shirt of dressed deerskin was soft and pliable. A Mohawk mother, who felt indebted to me for pulling her four-year-old son out of the river in the Spring rise, had fringed the broad collar and wide sleeves and had decorated the front of the garment with beads.

The breeches were of wool and long enough to tuck into my moccasins, and the gray-squirrel hat had been provided by my old single-shot.

Since Sir William's death had greatly saddened the Six Nations, especially the Mohawks, much of the harvest merry-making would be lacking. The thought

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came to me one evening, while dressed at my best, that I owed it to Mr. Martin to shine according to my sartorial lights when going to pay my respects to his daughter.

She would be beribboned, betucked and befrilled in the latest Albany mode and probably would disdain my border smartness. This anticipation gave me a pleasureable feeling, however. Resenting her intrusion I preferred to accent the difference between homespun folks and the gallantry of dress her father and Walter Butler could so well display.

The very oppositeness of that which she was used to seeing would at least hold her attention. I knew this hostility toward a helpless child was unworthy of me, and it must not be supposed I took her coming too seriously. But I did hate to lose my old friend.

One morning I descended to breakfast and had all thoughts of fine apparel driven from my mind by a marvelous gift from my uncle. It was leaning against my chair: A new rifle, and unlike any I had seen.

Uncle David, seated at the head of the table, eyed me sternly and complained:

"What with working like a squaw and dishing up the victuals I didn't ought to be kept waiting by any big, lazy lummox."

With that he bowed his head to say grace and I slid into my chair and held the rifle tightly against my knee and closed my eyes that I might not be tempted into unseemly thoughts. The welcome "Amen" brought my head up with a jerk and sent my glittering gaze to the gun.

"Mine?" I gasped. "Double-barreled!"

My uncle smiled a bit and said:

"S'pose I bought it for old Van Broome? I sent to Easton, Pennsylvania, last Spring to have James Golcher make it. He made one for a man named Tim Murphy down in the Schoharie Kill country. I heard about it and the fine shooting it done. Thought you ought to have one, seeing you're wasting so much time sneaking away to go hunting.

"I reasoned that with a better gun you'd get through your hunting quicker and be back to work where you belong. And it cost a pretty penny! Came last night in old Broome's cart while you was milking."

I had never seen such a beautiful weapon, and my eyes must have been several times larger than the half-ounce ball for which it was bored.

The barrels revolved, one being over the other, with one hammer and two pans and frizzens. The barrels were thirty-six inches long, somewhat shorter than my single-shot. This was to save weight.

As I handled it I decided it weighed between ten and twelve pounds. My breakfast grew cold before I could bear to put it aside, and then I must admire the new leather bullet-pouch, and in doing so made a discovery. The bullets, running about thirty-two to the pound, were "pickets" or pointed.

Observing my surprize, my uncle explained:

"That's the lead Golcher sent with it; so I s'pose they're proper. He sent a line of writing, saying the gun carries three hundred yards and is accurate. It must be the pointed bullets give that range. Some molds came with it; they're on the fire-board. Now take the rifle and open the patch-box."

I shook my head. I had noticed the absence of any patch-box; the only possible criticism I could make. He came around the table and pressed his thumb on a spot in the filigree work, and behold!

What proved to be the cover of the patch-box flew open. There was nothing to suggest this cunningly concealed cavity. The metal was bedded in and had no screws.

My uncle proudly said:

"Some contraption. Paid extra to have that built in."

"It's wonderful! No one would ever guess. You shouldn't have paid extra. A common patch-box would have served."

"For greased-patches—yes." And he smiled grimly. "But say a time comes when you want to carry a bit of writing and don't want it found on you." And he returned to his chair and continued to smile.

"Then it would be a fine way of keeping the writing hidden," I agreed.

But for the life of me I could not imagine a contingency where I would be called on to use any such secrecy.

I FELL to gobbling my breakfast and my uncle casually observed—

"That Martin girl has come."

I nodded, and turned to gaze at the gun.

"I'll go out to the north field and try one of those pointed bullets at three hundred yards," I said.

"If it's a good tool the sooner you prove it the better," he agreed. "But Mad Martin's girl has come home. I s'pose you must

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go over sometime, seeing you've been so neighborly with him."

"I'll try the rifle and go there later. I'm not interested in Mr. Martin's child. And I haven't thanked you yet for this beauty."

And putting aside the rifle I caught him by the neck and hugged him till his tongue stuck out. When I released him he coughed for a bit, and faintly gasped:

"Don't thank me again, Benajah. I'd rather wrestle."

But Uncle David's heart was very warm, and despite his brusk way I knew he was tremendously pleased that I was pleased. I picked up the rifle, pouch and powder-horn and started for the back door. I was most eager to try the gun, and yet, of a sudden, I felt guilty.

I had been very neighborly with Mr. Martin, and he had loaned me books and had been kind to me.

My uncle settled the matter by calling after me—

"When a man likes another well enough to lick his old uncle to prove friendship then he ought to be the first to give him fair greeting when something's come up to brighten his life."

This sounded rather intricate but I knew what he meant. I hesitated and looked back.

He shook his head roughly and added:

"Where's your manners. He's your friend. You picked him out. You'll be about the only one to drop in and say howdy. He might like to have his girl think he has some friends. The rifle can wait. You won't hurt its feelings by letting it wait."

I glanced down at my rough farm rig. He caught my thought and gravely agreed:

"It would be respectful to look your best. Not that clothes will cover up much of your awkwardness. Might's well try to dress up an ox."

Grinning sheepishly, I ran up to my room and arrayed myself in my forest finery. It was something of an ordeal to come down and meet his critical gaze, and my face burned like an Indian Summer sun.

To my relief he pushed the spectacles high on his forehead and beamed on me most amiably and declared:

"I take it back. That sort of clothes becomes you a heap."

Taking my rifle I walked slowly across the fields, itching to pause and try my marksmanship. I was so lost in admiration of the piece that I do not remember passing through the woods.

I woke up to find myself standing on the north edge of the Martin orchard, leaning on my rifle and staring like a half-wit at the slight figure of a girl. She was munching away at a very large pippin and was returning my gaze unconcernedly. She was fairer of complexion than the average frontier girl and yet she was wearing the costume of an Iroquois maiden. Her small face was a perfect oval and in her cheeks was the stain of red fruit-juice.

Copper sunbeams were entangled in her hair, just as Gaoh, the wind-god, is eternally enmeshed in riotous breezes. She should have been eating strawberries, so red were her lips. She slowly advanced, eyeing me gravely now, but still enjoying the apple. And she was exquisitely attired.

The Iroquois girls I had seen long since had exchanged garments of skin for those of cotton or broadcloth. But the slight figure before me wore doeskin, as soft as any wool. The skirt, reaching nearly to the tiniest of moccasins, was richly embroidered with beads.

The needlework was the equal of any I had seen in any of the Iroquois villages; and that is saying much. The pantalettes, instead of being the usual red broadcloth, were also of doeskin, and porcupine-quill work around the bottoms and up the sides were pleasingly decorative.

The overdress, loosely caught at the waist and falling half-way down the skirt, was handsomely embroidered and was fastened in front with brooches of silver. The amazing little woman also wore silver earrings and a string of silver beads.

Thus we faced each other for much less time than I have taken in trying to describe her appearance. She tossed the apple away and lifted her brows inquiringly, and a dimple came and went in one fair cheek as if she were slightly amused at something.

Then she wiped her fingers on a piece of lace that only a white woman of fashion would call a handkerchief; and I remembered my manners and explained:

"I am Benajah Whittlesey from the next farm. I come to pay my respects to Nancy Martin, the daughter of my friend, Horace Martin. Of course you are Nancy Martin."

Again the elusive play of dimples; then with a stolid expression that eliminated the

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liveliness from her countenance she told me in the Seneca dialect—

"Little Mocccasin of the Wolf clan of the Nundawaono does not know the white woman."

The Six Nations of the Iroquois, although speaking different dialects, readily understand each other. The Cayuga and Seneca dialets are very similar, as are the Oneida and Mohawk; and I had mastered the latter through much play with the Mohawk boys. In that tongue I replied—

"So Newataquaah does not know the white girl I name."

The dark eyes were lustrous with amusement and the dimples, heritage of the white blood, became more pronounced for a few moments. Then the small face was as blank as if she had slipped on a mask. I felt she was not paying proper respect to my years, and I bruskly told her—

"You understand and speak English as well as I do."

With her voice running up and down, from octave to octave, sweetly musical even when remaining on a higher key than a white woman's voice attains, she told me in English—

"You are dressed gay enough, Mr. Whittlesey, to take part in the Great Feather Dance."

And she made a prim little courtesy.

"I've seen it danced many times. And so you are Horace Martin's daughter."

Newataquaah does not know her," she replied in Seneca. "She does not like white women."

"And I'll not talk Injun when I can talk English," I declared. "We'll go and find Mr. Martin. Perhaps he knows something about his daughter."

I started for the house, but instead of walking at my side she ran swiftly ahead.

When I turned the corner she was beside my friend on the bench under the apple tree. As I approached to give him greeting she stood, and, with another quaint courtesy that smacked of precise schooling, was gravely saying—

"Father, this is the young man who seemed to have lost his way, and who was asking where you lived."

"——, Nancy! You'll have me fair bedeviled!" he querulously complained. "This is young Master Whittlesey. I've told you about him. He is a good neighbor; a good friend. What game has she been up to with you, lad?"

I grinned sheepishly, for Miss Nancy was the most bewildering specimen of her sex I had seen; as pretty and soft as a butterfly and as elusive as a sunbeam.

"I spoke in a homely fashion, Master Martin. Your daughter did not understand me."

Lowering her eyes like a Quaker maiden she primly told us:

"Each woman is several women. Hypocrisy is a sin. One should not pretend. When one feels one's self changing into a different woman she should become that woman. Otherwise there is deceit."

"Woman?" muttered Mr. Martin, staring at her helplessly then shifting his troubled gaze to me.

With a sad shake of his head and speaking confidentially, as if she were not present, he told me:

"I've been trying to catch her in her real self ever since she came. And blaze me, lad, if I know yet whether she's French, English or Seneca! At first she jabbered French, which was well enough. Then she was an Albany school miss, proud of her learning. This morning she starts in an Iroquois."

The last was almost in a whisper.

Her eyes, very large and mournful, turned in appeal to me. She was only a child and I defended her to the extent of saying—

"She's a very lovely daughter, whatever she plays at being."

"She needs to play at something to keep alive in this forsaken spot," he murmured.

She lashed out in Seneca and my face flushed. Mr. Martin anxiously asked—

"What's she saying now?"

"She says the Indian women do not talk with the men. She says men should not speak to them. Then I told her in Mohawk— 'Young Seneca girls know better than to speak thus to their elders.' "

I think she was about to explode, but her father slapped his palm on his knee and cried:

"For —— sake, Nancy, run into the house and get into civilized clothes. No one ever knew your mother wasn't all white except as she told them."

She glared at me, sidled prettily to her father and kissed his thin cheek, made a deep courtesy and obediently walked to the house.

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I was sorry to have her leave us. There was something almost exhilarating in the airs she assumed. I was amused and deeply interested. Also impatient for her to return as Nancy Martin, recently arrived from an Albany school.

Mr. Martin plaintively remarked—

"Two diamond buckles and a hatful of trinkets I spent in having her polished off, and she don't seem to be one thing or t'other."

"You must be very happy, Master Martin, to have her with you?"

"Oh, yes; of course," he absent-mindedly replied. "Still it's very confusing. My head aches. It's like trying to become acquainted with several people at once. Worse than that: With several people at once who keep changing personalities. In the old days, after too much wine, I've dreamed of people slipping out of one identity into another."

WE TALKED some time of other things, each waiting in suspense to behold the next Nancy. Finally Mr. Martin expressed surprize that she did not come out. I had no notion how long it should take a young girl to shift her clothes, but it seemed we had talked a long time. So preoccupied was Mr. Martin that he did not observe my new suit and the unusual rifle.

"French one day, English next and Injun t'other," he would mutter.

"—— take Walter Butler for buying her that rig! I can't understand. Her mother was a most proper lady."

"High spirits. She takes them from you."

This pleased him, but he protested—

"—— snatch me if I ever played Proteus!"

With that he rose and walked with strutting steps to the house and called to her through the open door.

I heard a high-pitched reply, but being some distance behind him I did not catch the words. Stabbing his cane impatiently into the turf he explained as I came up—

"Says she is a white woman and has a headache and must rest!"

Then rather proudly:

"The minx has caught all their tricks! Her mother never had a headache."

He called to her again, suggesting the air would make her head feel better. I had to interpret her answer as she had reverted to the Seneca again.

I translated:

"Little Moccasin is tired and will sleep. She should not talk to young men. She will wake up a white woman."

"Woman! Always prating about being a woman, and she's just entered her fifteenth year!"

Irritated because he felt helpless he said:

"I'm poor company. I feel as if a large number of people were housed with me. But I'm sure she doesn't mean to feel uncivil. Try us again, lad."

THIS was a dismissal and I was glad to go. My new rifle was calling me. In the north field I tried out the gun at three hundred yards and had no idea where the bullets struck. At a moderate range it was a sweet shooting weapon and I loved it dearly. My uncle was not at the house, so I changed my clothes and hastened to find him.

He was repairing a corn-crib, and as I fell to work he remarked—

"Didn't make much of a visit."

"I spent part of the time trying the rifle. It's a fine one."

"How did you find the Martin girl?"

"I don't know," I truthfully replied. "She's the oddest stick I ever saw. If you only meet her once in a while you might be taken with her peculiar ways. But if you lived in the same house with her you'd come to think she's a disagreeable little brat."

"So?" he gravely murmured. "Poor lass! Must take after her witless father, I fear. And there's no reason why we should wrestle over my saying that, Benajah, my lad."

Uncle David had something besides Mr. Martin's eccentric child to think about as I discovered after working with him for a spell. He was not moody but much preoccupied. He frowned over some problem even as he was humming a hymn.

As we walked back to the house to eat a late dinner he told me:

"Some of the men are going to get together at the German Flats in a few days. I'm minded to go."

"Then it must be a man's business and I should go."

"It's a man's business. If we can find some one to look after the stock I'd want you along. Otherwise you'll have to stay here. But stock or no stock, I want you with me at the meeting of the Committee at Adam Loucks. The business at the Flats

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is to talk over a few things before the committe meeting."

"What particular things? More resolves? We've worried through lots of bother and what's troubling us now will be smoothed out in some fashion."

His face was melancholy, and for some time he stared through the window and saw that which was invisible to me. Then he softly replied:

"You've been busy with your work and play, Benajah. You've heard me read from the papers without giving much heed. But when a young fellow can put David Whittlesey on his back it's time he was prepared to stand by old David and help put the enemy on his back. Benajah, as sure as the sun will rise over Tryon County to-morrow just so sure there's going to be a cruel and bloody war."

His few words impressed me more than had all the fiery newspaper articles. Yet I could not believe his dire prophecy.

"To fight over taxes!" I exclaimed. "Uncle, it can't be true. Why, we have grumbled over taxes ever since I can remember."

"There's going to be a fierce and bloody war, Benajah."

He repeated it in a monotone, but with a finality that chilled me for the moment.

"Neighbor will be against neighbor. Families will be divided. There will be many sad years before peace comes back to our valley. We've reached the end of the times I've always known. You will live in a new time."

"That will be a better time, then; and you will enjoy it."

"That would be asking too much. I'll die happy if I know it's coming."

His quiet way of saying these things affected me more than any violent ranting could. I insisted—

"If there must be a war I'll go and fight and you shall stay here and look after the farm."

"You can stay at home and find all the fighting you want," he sadly assured me. "The war will sweep this valley with a bloody broom."

This was going too far. Our county was out of the path of any possible clash at arms.

"Fighting on the Mohawk?" I cried. "Why, Uncle! You know that if England ever sends redcoats across the water to collect her taxes they'll never get away from the coast. All she will try to do is to hold the ports till we give in."

"—— will turn to ice before we do that!" he snarled. Then more calmly—and his words were more blighting because softly voiced: "Injuns will burn this valley. Injuns, and king-loving whites we call neighbors."

"I can't believe that!" And I thumped my big fist on the table. "You've been thinking these things so long you've fooled yourself. Neighbor turn against neighbor? You can't believe that! We talk and rant, but that's the worst to happen in Tryon County. Mohawk boys turn against me? Boys I've played with ever since I was knee-high to a grasshopper?"

I half-expected he would resent my disbelief. To my surprize—for he was one to fly off at angle when opposed in argument—he smiled a little, and I could swear there was pity in his deep-set eyes. His voice was low and gentle as he said:

"You've been mighty busy growing up, and in trying to become a man. That's as it should be. There was no profit in having your young head fussed up unless things took a sharp turn."

"And now?"

"Now we've reached the turn. We can't go back. Sir William would have had a bad time in choosing between colonies and Crown; but Sir John will always be for England. Many of the biggest men on the Mohawk will side with the king. Their tenants will go with them. Of us who are for the colonies, first and last, the Scotch-Irish will suffer the most as they've taken up the outlying lands."

I was not worrying on the account of the Scotch-Irish. That they had scattered along the utmost fringe of the border and were at Cherry Valley, Unadilla and other remote sections, was true enough; but what profit to England to wage war beneath the continuous forest crown of hemlock, pine, maple and oak?

What victory was to be gained by burning isolated cabins, where the man-made clearing was so small that the morning sun could not warm a cabin doorway until near the noon hour, while twilight came early in the afternoon? But I did not have the heart to contradict him further.

I endeavored to turn his thoughts by remarking:

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"I've seen more than one of the Scotch-Irish scanning Horace or Virgil while trying to plow straight. It must seem queer to go through a university and then to come over here and grub a farm out of the wilderness."

"Being Calvinists it would be more queer had they done any different. I can remember when they couldn't find ships enough to bring them here from Ulster. Sir William died too soon. The Indians are uneasy. They don't understand why we should quarrel. Sir William, had he lived and so desired, might have held them neutral. Yet all he had and enjoyed came from the Crown.

"Donald McDonald, the Johnstown Highlander, is traveling around and talking loud. Sheriff Alexander White is sending a man named Newberry up and down the river to threaten the settlers. But our Committee of Safety will stop their tongues. I'll walk alone and think a bit. You mind the house. An express may come with word for me."

HERETOFORE I had viewed my uncle's activity in receiving and sending secret messages as a peculiar sort of pastime for occupying his mind when not at work in the fields. But his great earnestness in this last talk set me to thinking. His prophecy of war was very ominous. I was loath to contemplate the "new times" he so often dwelt upon.

The old times, with all their vexatious problems, were good enough to me. I sprawled on the grass outside the front door and fondled the new rifle and tried to visualize war tramping up from Albany. Even in this somber mood I could think of war only as "tramping" to the accompaniment of ruffling drums.

That the Iroquois would ever make war against the colonies was unthinkable.

Joseph Brant, while never raised as a sachem, was the most influential of the Mohawk chiefs. He had been educated in our white schools. I considered him to be too wise to play the partisan when he could easily remain aloof. Without Thayendanegea, to give him his red name, the Mohawks would not lift an ax.

I had seen him many times, and more than once had been in his comfortable little home at Canajoharie when missionaries were enjoying his hospitality. He was a great chief, and it was from this class, rather than from the sachems, that the leaders of the league came.

I would not admit for a moment that the Johnsons and Butlers, and their land-owning neighbors could ever change the political beliefs of the Palatine, Canajoharie and the German Flats districts. Of all the settlers I knew the great majority were of my uncle's mind. For the life of me I could find no cause to worry over the outlying Scotch-Irish. In my way of thinking they were even more removed from war than was Tryon County.

"I give you good evening, *m'sieur*," broke in a bland voice.

It was the Frenchman, who traded for ginseng and who lived much among the Onondagas and Oneidas.

"A pleasant evening to you, Peter Bolduc. Do you come from up or down?"

"From Albany, *m'sieur*. I was stopped and questioned by Sheriff White. One would think I was a runaway slave."

"The valley grows tired of Sheriff White. Albany was quiet when you left it?"

"But no, *m'sieur*. There was big excitement. Your uncle should know."

"He is away. Wait for him. Or tell me, and I will tell him."

"I must hurry on to Oneida Lake. Tell him a call is sent out for a Continental Congress to meet in Philadelphia on September fourth."

"You have talked it into wampum, Peter Bolduc. My uncle shall receive your belts."

"Then let him find this also in the belts, *m'sieur*," he earnestly continued and adopting my language of the Iroquois. "Let him find that Colonel Guy Johnson, Indian agent for the Crown, says he will use violence to prevent the people from gathering and supporting the Congress. He is now in the Palatine district, telling the people they shall not send representatives."

"It is recorded in the belts, Peter Bolduc. My uncle shall find it there. But Guy Johnson overrates his importance if he thinks he can tell Tryon County men where they shall, and shall not, travel. But it will blow over."

"Blow over? ——! But young *m'sieur* does not read all that is in my belts! He is not yet a Keeper of the Wampum. Peter Bolduc, the ginseng trader, has traveled by canoe and horse to spread the word ahead of the Albany express, who may be stopped and put into jail by that miserable one, Sheriff White. Young *m'sieur's* uncle will be quick to see a black belt among those

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I leave. The black wampum says war already has been declared in this valley."

And with a low bow he hurried back to the road. I heard his horse galloping westward to pass the word along the upper reaches of the river, the German Flats and the Royal Grant.

The dusk was hiding the lowlands when my uncle returned and found me there. I gave him Bolduc's message. He stood silent for a few moments; then softly murmured:

"So it's come! They would have war before either England or the colonies have declared it."

With that he entered the house and lighted a candle and opened the big Bible on the table.

When I stole supperless to bed he was still reading the Book, his spectacles riding the tip of his nose.

Next morning I expected him to refer to Bolduc's news, but he seemed anxious only to complete an end of a pasture wall. I accommodated myself to his mood, and we worked steadily until noon. After a hasty dinner we hurried back to the task as if an enemy were approaching and our lives depended on our finishing defensive works.

But after an early supper he abruptly said:

"Go over to Martin's. Tell what the Frenchman said. Maybe he knows already; but he's on my list and should be told."

"I'll go; but he'll scarcely be interested."

"He's one of the men I'm to keep informed. If he's not interested that's on his conscience, not on mine. After the Committee of Safety organizes he'll show an interest one way or the other. No one will remain perched on a fence in Tryon County."

I was tired and would have preferred remaining at home. I was scarcely presentable in my working-clothes, and I was too weary to change. On the way over I planned to stop at the door and deliver my message without entering.

As I came to the house I heard her lilting voice, running up and down the scale and dwelling on the high keys as clear and natural as a bird's song; and for a wonder she was talking in English, babbling about some schoolgirl friends.

I paused before the open window and saw them standing by the table, about to eat their supper. They were beyond the table and the light from four candles, held in silver candlesticks of the Corinthian column pattern that came in with George the Third, blinded me for a moment. I wondered at the candlesticks as I had not suspected Mr. Martin possessed any such. Uncle David had two, long cherished by Aunt Rachel; but we never used them.

They moved nearer the window and into excellent light, the girl facing me, and I marveled at her changed appearance. Her abundance of copper-colored hair was piled so high on her small head as to make it look top-heavy for the slender neck.

It suggested the *têtes* of the day, but was wholesomely lacking in curls and cushions and pads and puffs, all of which fashionable ladies used. I had seen such enormous structures at Johnson Hall, when the gentry gathered to welcome guests from Albany or New York; when the surmounting towers contained enough foreign material to stuff a hassock and were bedecked with enough lace and feathers and jewels to buy a Tryon County farm.

Needless to say, it was impossible for a woman to build her own *tête* and that a hair-dresser was an absolute necessity.

Miss Nancy was reflecting this disgusting mode, but as there was nothing of the artificial not even pomatum nor powder, the effect was quaint and pleasing. She was a grand dame in miniature. The square-cut and tightly fitting bodice, with much lace at the neck and sleeves, gave a curious touch of maturity to her schoolgirl figure.

As she shifted her position I observed the richly flowered brocade hoop and glimpsed the paste buckles on her little slippers. The high heels caused her to walk with mincing steps and her father—wearing a white silk waistcoat, gaily embroidered, I had never seen before—seemed to be in the highest of spirits.

He was continually bowing, and fluttering his hands, and making much of his manners in addressing her. He was wearing his spotted silk breeches, but he had new ribbons at the knee.

I advanced to the door and he quickly recognized my rap and called for me to enter even as he strutted forward to give me greeting. Miss Nancy's *hauteur* was amusingly pronounced as I stood in the doorway and briefly stated my business.

Mr. Martin waved his hand airily as I finished, and dismissed the subject by saying:

"The Frenchman was here, Master

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Benajah. ——, if I didn't take him for an Indian at first. We are about to dine. You must join us, lad."

Miss Nancy already was putting on an extra plate, but the small face had lost its haughtiness. I was puzzled to behold the rich color sweeping through her cheeks, and her manner of half-averting her head. At first I took it for more of her play-acting, but when she tilted her chin and resumed her grand manner and made a deep courtesy she could not masquerade her eyes. It was obvious she was sorely embarrassed.

A side-glance at the table told me the cause. A large bowl of succotash was the principal dish, and she was ashamed that I should have seen their sorry fare. Not that succotash is a mean food, for it is the Iroquois' first choice, and I was fond of it. But that large bowl, bastioned by the four silver candlesticks, proclaimed poverty.

"My compliments, Miss Nancy, on your beautiful appearance. But I have just eaten and must be going."

"Nay, you must not run away," she insisted. "At least sit down and bear us company."

"Blaze me, lad; but our scant fare won't keep us long at the table. And, Nance, Master Benajah has given me too much venison, and too many catches of trout, not to know my larder is a lean one. Draw up a chair to the light, lad, if you won't come to the table. I can't talk with you seated behind me, or while you wander about like a bear."

I anticipated him in seating her and then sat at one side. I was almost willing to give my new rifle to be out of the house and sparing her embarrassment. But I could think of no way of making a natural exit, so I remained.

"You will say grace, my daughter," directed Mr. Martin.

She lifted her head and exclaimed in a high key, after the Iroquois fashion of offering thanks at their festivals. I was still gaping stupidly when she darted a frowning glance at me. Then I remembered myself and joined in on a lower note.

Mr. Martin glared wrathfully at the two of us, and bitterly upbraided:

"It is my wish, Nancy, that grace be said in a Christian way at my table. And you would do better, Master Benajah, if you did not encourage her in such outlandish practices."

I warmly retorted—

"It suffices the way she said it."

And I was glad of anything that might clear the atmosphere of foolish notions. For if one have only succotash to eat it is still a noble dish.

"She has followed the custom of the Iroquois, as I did, in joining her," I added. "In this particular their sincerity could be copied with great profit by the white people."

"I am convinced, Benajah, my daughter is able to defend herself;" rebuked Mr. Martin as he stirred his cup.

Next he was making up a wry face and was exclaiming:

"God help us, Nancy! What's this? Surely not tea."

"Spiced tea, from wild spice-plants," she softly told him, and not looking at me. "I thought you might like it. My mother must have drunk it often. I could have made it of sassafras roots."

"Cursed poverty!" he bitterly cried. "I remember now. We're out of tea."

"So are we," I spoke up.

"It would not be right to drink English tea," she added; but the hot face told me she was shamed by his confession.

NOT until afterward did I find time to marvel over my forgetfulness of self and my rough appearance. Where I should have been the one to feel awkward and out of place it was Miss Nancy who was confused. I managed to keep up a conversation of a sort with Mr. Martin until they had finished their simple meal; then I rose to go.

"Master Benajah, kindly walk in front of the house with my daughter," Mr. Martin requested. "I must be alone to think. The world seems to be coming to an end."

I turned to her, certain she, too, would prefer to be alone. She gave me a charming smile, revealing both dimples, and said:

"You shall walk with me and hear me talk. I miss not having Betty and 'Lispeth to talk to."

Thus I found my evening prolonged, and more to my liking, as we stepped out into the warm moonlight and she rested a hand on my arm and took the path to the river. And she talked unceasingly the length of the path and after she had perched herself on the rough bench, with her voluminous skirts compelling me to be seated

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on the ground. I watched the moon-ripples in the water while she prattled.

At last she emptied her bag of Albany talk, and irrelevantly demanded—

"How will my people side in this quarrel between the colonies and the king?"

"You're speaking as Miss Nancy Martin, white woman?"

"I am of the Nundawaono, The Great Hill People."

"The Senecas keep the Western Door. The two hereditary war-chiefships are supplied by them, by the Wolf and Turtle clans."

"I am of the Wolf clan," she broke in to remind me, and speaking in English for a wonder.

"The Senecas are called the 'First Fire,' " I gravely continued. "If the white people dig up red hatchets the Iroquois will do as the sachems decide at the grand council at Onondaga. There can be no war for the Senecas unless the Six Nations unanimously vote for war."

"Five nations," she corrected. "The Tuscaroras have no vote at the great council. Yes, they spoke as one in making war against the Eries. They spoke as one in voting war against the French. But who knows how it will go now?"

I had been talking to her as one who pretends to take a child seriously. Her question troubled me. I had scoffed at my uncle's notions about the Long House lifting a bloody hatchet against the colonies, but this young girl had the ancient Iroquois blood in her veins. That she should have a doubt as to what her mother's people might do made me feel very uncomfortable.

"Surely they'll abide by their ancient laws," I insisted. "Else why have a hereditary Keeper of the Wampum at Onondaga?"

"The Fourth Fire—Oneidas—will never fight against the colonies," she mused.

"Then all will remain neutral," I declared; and I was happy in believing it.

"I said the same to Walter Butler, when he brought me my pretty Iroquois clothes. He laughed at me, and said the colonies were welcome to one Fire if the king had the others."

"Much that prig knows about it!" I jeered.

"Be careful, sir. You are speaking of my friend," she warned.

"It's best that I take you back to the house before I offend you. I liked Sir William very much. But I do not like Sir John, nor old Butler, nor young Butler. I'll not pretend to feel civil toward any of them."

"Stay, stay," she coaxed, and bent her small head close to mine and rested a hand on my shoulder as I made to get to my feet. "Surely there's much we can talk about without exchanging bad belts. Of course you know my father is desperately poor."

"He is not a hunter, a trader nor a farmer. He has been a good friend to me."

She was silent for a minute and I supposed she was thinking of her father's poverty when she confided—

"I heard a witch cry last night."

Now none of the Iroquois I had met will ever talk about witches and demons and other evil spirits during the Summer months.

From the first of the Spring fishing until the leaves fall their talk is about war and hunting. Only during the long, cold Winter months do they tell their blood-curdling fables about the flying-heads and stone giants and various animal monsters.

The girl's violation of this ancient custom led me to believe she was not so thoroughly Indian as she would have me think.

"You believe in witches?" I asked, once more relegating her to the plane of a small child.

"I heard one cry last night," she whispered, and edged closer to me as I leaned against the end of the bench. "But Heno drove her away."

"I heard Grandfather's voice in the night," I solemnly said; and my use of the Thunderer's affectionate red title seemed to please her.

"When he spoke she turned into a dog and ran away."

"But the night was overcast. You could not see the dog."

"I heard her barking like a dog," she insisted.

The talk wandered to evil spirits, and she edged along the bench and rested against my shoulder. I could feel her shiver as she spoke of the demons who meet in bands at some nightly rendezvous and initiate a human novice who has paid the fee by taking the life of his best friend.

It was shameful that the poor child should believe all such fearsome stuff. I questioned her, and without realizing my purpose, she told me how an old Seneca woman, devoted

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to Mrs. Martin, had cared for her while she lived with her grandfather. So I knew how her small head came to be filled with gruesome stories of the supernatural.

I did not make the mistake of deriding her grotesque beliefs, thereby checking her confidence. And as we walked up the path she was very friendly and frank, and clung to my arm and asked me—

"Can't you come and talk to me tomorrow afternoon?"

Farm work and my uncle's political correspondence would leave but little time for visiting on the morrow, but there was something wondrously pleasing about little Nancy Martin. In the moonlight, after her frank confessions, she appealed to me as a lonely child. I promised to come.

But when we reached the door and her father called out for me to enter and stay a while she hurriedly whispered:

"I dressed to please him. I must get to bed and rest. I feel strangled all over. So don't come in."

"I'll come tomorrow."

"Please do not come tomorrow."

Both vexed and amused at her inconstancy I reminded her—

"But you asked me."

"That is nothing. I held no white wampum as I said it."

"Very good, Miss Nancy. But you shouldn't give invitations unless you mean them."

"You may come. You'll find me a simple housemaid, and I shall say 'Lor, sir,' to everything you say."

"I learned my red manners from the Mohawks, who are named first when the Five Nations answer the roll-call at the Great Council fire. The Senecas are named third. I have work that'll keep me busy tomorrow."

"If you wait for another invitation we'll see each other only by accident," she warned.

"You're a white girl in spite of your Seneca blood, and I'll treat you as such. I came tonight on an errand for my uncle."

"Why not let your uncle do his own errands?" she innocently asked.

And with that the amazing young creature was dancing through the doorway and making a deep courtesy to her father.

I was unfortunate in being the only child, and had it not been for the companionship of Indian boys my life in the valley would have been very lonely.

I realized it much as I went about my work next day, and even essayed to make believe I had a little sister to care for and indulge. And the little sister took the form and displayed the tantalizing vagaries of Nancy Martin. It was impossible to keep the child from one's thoughts after watching her varying moods.

One might as well try to ignore the first Spring breeze, the song of a bird, the glory of a flower-garden. So she was in my thoughts as I worked beside my stern-faced uncle. She was in the corn and behind the trees; in doeskin dress, in flounces and ribbons, as variable as the wind and as mysterious as the first snow.

I reached the house ahead of my uncle late that afternoon and found a string of white wampum on the doorsill.

CHAPTER III

A RED HATCHET

UNCLE DAVID came to breakfast dressed in his Sunday suit, fresh shaved and with his hair neatly brushed and tied. But I asked no questions. After we had eaten he said:

"You'll bide here and mind the place. I'm going to Anthony's Nose and have a talk with Jelles Fonda. If Guy Johnson thinks he can keep Tryon County men from going to the Congress he should be faced down. The Fondas will be with us to a man."

How important the allegiance of one family to a cause might be is more easily appreciated when one remembers that of the Fondas alone we could find fifty men on my uncle's lists who would fight as one for the colonies. Large families were the rule in those days. We had twelve Seebers on the list and seventy-five by the name of Vedder, sometimes spelled "Veeder." Thus a dozen families might furnish two hundred or more fighting men.

It was a trip I would have enjoyed making, for there was sure to be good company at the Nose, as the ridge broken by the river was called. Tryon County boys and men were ever keen to compete in footraces and our border style of rough and tumble wrestling, jumping and shooting, and throwing the tomahawk.

But, having flopped my uncle on his back, I would not for worlds have questioned his authority. However, I did venture to say:

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"If Guy Johnson has his Highlanders with him there should be enough men to send him about his business."

"No fighting," was the sharp retort. "There'll be too much time for that later on. Hot-bloods are not wanted till the great trouble comes. Better take the bush-sith* and clean up along the road. Then you won't miss any word that may be brought for me."

So I was left to keep house with the solemn clock and fat cat for company, and with the string of white wampum in my blouse. After I had attended to the barn chores I commenced ridding the roadside of the bush-growth. The seriousness of the times was beginning to worry me, but this was largely because it hurt me to behold my uncle so downcast and sober.

I tried to think about the child Nancy only to find my mind persisted in picturing my uncle meeting the Johnsons and their Highlanders and being abused by them. So each bush became a Highlander, and I worked myself into a fine sweat as I slashed away with the curved eight-inch blade. I must have routed several hundred Highlanders in this fashion when two horsemen came along and stopped opposite me.

One was William Johnson, Sir William's son by Mollie Brant. He was somewhat under the influence of drink. The other was a white man, a stranger to me. His features were heavy and were relieved from stupidity only by the malignant liveliness of his small eyes.

William stared at me stolidly and told his companion:

"He is one of them. Old 'Fox' Whittlesy's nephew. I'll cut his head off some time."

I did not take William seriously; and I little dreamed as I listened to his drunken threat that he was riding down a death trail which would end the world for him at Oriskany. I knew William of old, having met him many times in the settlements and at the hall. He was lazy and shiftless and improved none by his white schooling. He was ever a braggart when in drink, and I gave him no heed now.

The white man spoke, bawling loudly as if I were standing at a distance, and asked—

"You live here?"

"I live here."

He rode his horse closer and stared down at me savagely. He carried a stout stick and I was glad I had the scythe in my hand.

Keeping his voice raised, as if calling cattle from the back end of a pasture, he informed me:

"I'm talking for Sheriff White. Understand that to start with. Keep that —— sith away from my horse's neck! I'm talking for the law. I'm talking for Colonel Guy Johnson."

"If Colonel Johnson had your voice he could make himself heard without leaving Guy Park," I peevishly told him.

William chuckled; then sleepily promised—

"Some day we'll cut his head off."

Remembering my uncle's last words about hot-bloods I controlled my temper.

Alexander White was the first sheriff of Tryon County; and if he bore hard on those who refused to think with the Johnsons and Butlers, nevertheless he represented the law. If the stranger were his deputy there could be no profit in brawling with him. I civilly reminded him—

"If you have any business with me, I'm waiting to hear it."

"There's too —— much rebel blood up this way," he replied. "It's my business to call on such as you and your uncle and give a last warning."

"To give us warning," I prompted as he paused.

"Where's your uncle?"

"Away for the day. Maybe several days."

"Sneaking around to some —— meeting to make a Boston talk."

"I'll repeat your warning to him. What is it?"

Much puffed up by the importance of his message he loudly informed me:

"The grand jury of this county will make it go mighty hard for any one caught nesting with rebels. Our magistrates will see they take their medicine."

"Bimeby bring lots of Mohawks. Cut their heads off," mumbled William.

"I'll tell my uncle all you've said. You haven't given your name."

"Newberry's my name. I'm talking for Sheriff White, for the law and for Colonel Johnson."

I turned to my bush-cutting. The two rode on at a walk, William rolling half-asleep in the saddle. Newberry reined in to shout back—

"You tell your uncle it'll go —— hard with any one that tries any slick Boston tricks in this county."

*Scythe.

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After a cold dinner I suddenly decided to visit Mr. Martin and learn if the Voice of the Law had sounded on his premises.

He was walking beneath his apple-trees, his hands clasped behind his back. It was so seldom I saw him without his macaroni cane, and so unusual to behold him taking a natural step, I halted for a few seconds and stared. Yet when he discovered me he immediately resumed his mincing gait.

"Has a white man named Newberry been here? And was Sir William's half-breed son with him?" I asked.

"I have seen nothing of the half-breed. A lout, calling himself Newberry, was here a bit ago. A most offensive creature! Talked about the law and the like. What have I to do with king's men, or rebels? I'm kept busy trying to get acquainted with my daughter."

"Newberry called at our place and left a warning. I wondered if he'd been here."

"Come and gone. My ears still ring with his —— loud voice."

"Miss Nancy in the house?"

"She's up in the maple orchard." And he sighed as he said it. "Blaze me, lad, but I wish she'd select one plane and stick to it! She got up this morning the sweetest little white girl a man ever saw. I enjoyed her company greatly. She was my little daughter come home to make me feel less lonely. She went for a walk, dressed in civilized gear.

"Alas! She must have seen something that called to her red blood; for she came back on the run and shifted into the Seneca clothes before I knew what she was about. Then she went to the shed and found some paint. She snatched the hatchet from the wood-pile, and made off like one possessed to the maples.

"I've no idea what tantrum she's in now. Be a good lad and go and fetch her home. If she takes the notion she'll girdle the trees in playing they are wild animals."

This fear amused me much but I kept my face straight and said:

"I'll look her up, but she may send me flying. She has very high spirits, Master Martin. She's very young. Her play won't hurt her any."

As I finished there came a faint cry from the maple orchard.

"God help her! She's hurt! She's cut herself with the —— hatchet!" he weakly exclaimed, one hand going to his heart.

"She's not hurt. It's only a part of her play," I told him.

For the cry was not that of pain, or fear, and I had heard it often in the Mohawk villages.

It was a long, drawn-out cry, sounded in a high key, then dropping to a lower pitch only to explode in a scream. It was the war-cry of the Iroquois. Often had I heard it when the war-dance was danced at the ceremonies of raising up a sachem, or for the entertainment of visitors. It was a part of the war-dance, the first taught to the young. It was sounded by the leader of the dance before each song and was answered by all the dancers.

So I entered into her play and sadly startled Mr. Martin by lifting my voice and bellowing the response. Then I started for the maples.

WHEN I came in sight of her I halted. I feared she had carried her play too far and had lost her senses—at least, her white senses. She was dancing around the dead trunk of a broken tree; but she was not dancing as Iroquois women should with a gentle movement sidewise and coming up from heel to toe on each foot in turn. Nor, of course, had she any business to be taking part in the war-dance.

Nevertheless, there she was, thudding about on her heels like a young fury, going through the grotesque and violent postures in pantomime of a warrior fighting. She lacked only a drum and the staccato clamor of rattles hung at her knees, to be ready for a red path.

The sincerity of her play-acting worried me. Nay; it could not in truth be called play-acting. No woman of the stage could simulate such a bellicose frame of mind. There was no suggestion of dimples now; no excited play of laughter in the scowling face.

I walked closer and observed she had daubed red paint on the tall stump and had painted red the hatchet she was bandishing so wildly. As I watched she sounded the war-whoop and drove the blade into the decayed wood. From the handle of the hatchet hung a red feather and a piece of black cloth. The latter was to represent the black wampum always used in this dramatic ceremony.

"Good lord, Miss Nancy! What are you doing?" I called out.

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She ceased dancing. The small face turned in my direction was marvelous angry in expression.

"You heard my cry and answered it. So you knew you would find Little Moccasin of the Wolf Clan here. And you call me by a white name!" This in Seneca.

Although out of patience with her I adapted myself to her mood and replied:

"Newataquaah dances Wasasehono, which women do not dance. She has stuck the red ax into the *gaondote*—war-post—and hangs up the red feather and the black wampum. The dance is finished. Now it is time for her to change into a white girl."

"She will walk through the villages and sound the war-whoop until she raises a band to follow her," she passionately replied.

"Does she go to stick her ax into the heads of the Cherokees, or the Hurons? Old Van Broone's little grandson will take his wooden gun and follow her."

"There is a path," she fairly hissed. "Where it leads Newataquaah will tell those who follow her."

"Change into a nice white girl," I coaxed.

"You have talked as Mohawk. Will you follow a Seneca?" she demanded.

It was unwholesome that a girl three-fourths white should respond so violently to the thin red strain. It was unnatural that one so young and dainty should demoralize herself by such fierce play.

And I suddenly experienced the fear that these mental excursions into the red life would leave her stranded and unable to get back to the white life. I feared this distortion of mind already had become permanent; that the false had become real. In English I harshly commanded:

"You stop this foolishness. Your poor father is frightened by your nonsense. He sent me to bring you home."

She wrenched the hatchet from the stump and wheeled about. I heroically threw open my shirt, but at the same time produced the string of white wampum, and asked:

"How long since the bearer of your belts finds the road unsafe? Young lady, you drop that hatchet. What you need is a good, thorough switching."

For a moment I believed she would disregard the white wampum and hurl the hatchet at me, and I watched her eyes closely so I might dodge. She dropped the hatchet and taunted:

"You are quick to turn white when you find there is danger. Here! I now put the gakaah on you."

And she pretended to strip off her absurdly small skirt and to pin it around me.

"I now place this corn-pounder in your hand."

And there followed a second bit of the ridiculous pantomime.

As I stared blankly at my empty hands she drew back and folded her arms and scornfully said:

"Never forget you are a woman. Never forget you are like the Delawares after the Iroquois put petticoats on them. Your place is at the fire, boiling the kettles. I will take the path alone."

She picked up the hatchet and would have made for an oak-grove beyond the maples had I not caught her and tucked her under my arm, her kicking heels clear of the ground.

"You'll take the path back to your father, Miss Spitfire," I growled. "I was sent to fetch you home. It's for him to stop such foolery. I'll advise him to duck you in the river."

Kicking and squirming like a wildcat she gasped in English:

"Put me down! Put me down! You are as bad as he was!"

I placed her on her feet and felt mighty cheap as I saw the big tears chasing each other down her cheeks in a most un-Iroquois fashion.

I placed my hands on her shoulders that she might not run away, and demanded—

"As bad as who?"

"I set a snare for a rabbit and he stepped in it and it tripped him up, and he talked evilly," she whimpered.

"Who is he?"

"When I rebuked him for spoiling my snare, and for speaking so—he—he——"

"Go on!"

"He—he slapped my face!" she moaned.

"Now you tell me his name and the direction he took," I said; and I shook her a trifle to expediate an answer.

"Only a white man could have treated me so! At the house he called himself Newberry," she sobbed.

"Which way did he go?" I gently persisted.

She pointed toward the oaks, beyond which ran the river-road.

The next second I was running my best

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clearing rocks and stumps with more than my usual agility. I was fired by the first genuine rage I ever had experienced. Through the oaks and to the road I raced.

Far ahead was a figure resting under a tree by the side of the road. I prayed it might be Newberry and pressed on. The man became interested in my approach and got on his feet. As I drew close enough to recognize him I slowed to a walk, so I might recover my wind. He suspected my errand was not of peace and eyed me truculently. I advanced even slower.

"You 'pear to have lost your hurry," he bawled out.

My lungs were pumping quite normally as I halted a few feet from him.

"Where is William Johnson, the Indian?" I asked.

"Coming up with the horses somewhere. What business is that of yours?" And he relaxed his stiff pose.

"I wanted to make sure he wasn't in hiding to jump on my back," I answered. "You insulted and assaulted Mr. Martin's young daughter."

"It's none of your business what I do," he replied. "But since you've been to some bother to overtake me I'll say I slapped a brat for setting snares and tripping me up. I speak for Sheriff White and——"

I WAS on him before he could finish; and so irresistible was my attack that we both went over in the road. With a roar of rage he struck me in the face as we struggled side by side between the ruts; and when he drew back his fist for another blow I saw my blood on his knuckles.

Then we were at it, too tightly clinched for pummeling. As we rolled over and over I heard the war-whoop of the Senecas. It sounded faint and far off. I had not breath to waste in giving the ceremonial response.

Newberry was powerfully built and was now contenting himself with tightening his hold around my waist and striving to break my back. Being beneath me he could not get his head under my chin to push as he pulled, and I had no fear for my back. But the steady pressure of his arms was sorely uncomfortable and was affecting my breathing. We rolled out of the road among the rubble, and I was on top when we halted.

His embrace tightened, but his head now rested on a flat rock. I released his throat and seized the long hair on each side of his head and banged his head down on the rock. I thought I had used enough force to fell an ox; but beyond a grunt he gave no sign of weakening. Again I managed to lift his head a few inches and to smash it down. This time he wriggled convulsively.

The war-cry of the Long House sounded nearer. Up came his shaggy head and down on the rock for the third time. Now he groaned and loosened his hold and attempted to tear my hands from his hair. He drove his fist into my face and scratched me villainously.

He even opened his big mouth and endeavored to bite my arm. But I stuck to my work, and the next time his head hit the rock he became quiet.

I crawled to my feet.

Believing he was unconscious I turned my back and pumped for wind while I watched Miss Nancy. She was skimming along the road without appearing to touch the rough ruts. It was not until she screamed and pointed that I realized that Newberry's head was tougher than one could believe.

I wheeled, pivoting on one foot, and let drive blindly with my fist and with every ounce of beef and muscle and hate behind the blow. I caught him under the chin and stopped his onrush and knocked him off his feet.

He was unconscious in earnest when the girl came up, her eyes dilated and her small mouth open.

I was covered with dirt and blood and looked worse than Newberry did; but he was whipped.

"Is he dead?" she faintly whispered.

"I hope so," I panted.

"No! It's much better he is not dead," she cried. "He's Guy Johnson's man. He's Sheriff White's man."

But could she have foreseen the next four years, and have known the part the brute was to play, she would have pronounced him the devil's own child, and would have urged me then and there to stamp out his vile life.

Touching my arm timidly she softly said—

"Benajah, of course you know I took the skirt off from you, and the corn-pounder from your hand when you went to find him?"

"Lucky you took off the skirt; else I might have tripped and fallen," I mumbled.

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And I thrust a finger into my mouth and brought out a tooth.

"You've been sadly hurt," she sighed.

"He's coming to his senses. Step back! This isn't finished yet. —— him! He's spoiled a thoroughly sound tooth!"

But I was mistaken. It was finished. Newberry wanted no more fighting. Nor was he physically able to renew the combat. He got on his feet, his mouth half-open. His jaw was broken. Groaning heavily he feebly waved his hand for me to leave him alone. Then he staggered up the road, presumably to meet his half-breed companion and the horses.

Then nothing would do but I must sit down on the river-bank while she soaked her tiny handkerchief and bathed my aching, lacerated and swollen face.

"You are a very brave man," she murmured as she washed off the dirt and blood. "Your name shall be taken away and a new name shall be given you. You shall be raised up as chief."

I managed to mumble:

"You're a very nice little girl, Nancy Martin. But I wish you would stay white most of the time."

"I was red in the maple orchard. I'm a white girl now."

"Why didn't you stay at the house and wait till you could tell me about it?" I complained, my voice sounding oddly through my swollen lips. "What would you have done if I hadn't found you in the orchard?"

"I don't know. I think I should have followed him."

"Thank God you didn't! Now that you've taken the petticoats off from me let's go home."

"I shall make a confession of sins before the Keeper of the Faith for calling you a woman," she penitently told me.

"Please stay white!" I begged, fearing lest she improvise on the spot the Iroquois ceremony of public confession. "Let's go home."

"I'll help you walk," she gravely insisted as I stood up.

And with her arm partly around my waist to support me we walked slowly down the road and into the oaks and to the maple orchard.

She caught me grinning down at her—for I was remembering how I had held her kicking and protesting under my arm—and she withdrew her arm. But I twisted my grin into a grimace of pain, and groaned and lurched and rested a hand on a tree to steady myself; and she renewed her assistance. She insisted that I show my wounds to her father; but my appearance was too disreputable.

As I was leaving her she abruptly said:

"I dreamed a dream last night. Tell me what it was."

"A white girl has no business with dream guessing. That goes with the New Year's celebration, when they sacrifice the White Dog."

She colored highly and without a word ran to the house. All the way home I wondered what new whim possessed her; and why she should indulge in this peculiar custom of the Iroquois.

For the red dreamer does not divulge the dream—as did Pharaoh in seeking Joseph's aid—but simply states he has had a dream and then asks his friends to guess and interpret it. A blind bit of silliness I always held it, but an Iroquois would never agree with me.

As a people they devoutly believe supernatural messages are sent to mortals during the hours of sleep. And I was sorry to find the superstition cropping out in the macaroni's daughter; but if her dream be wholesome I hoped it might all come true.

CHAPTER IV

BRANT GIVES ROAD BELTS

PLAY was being driven from our world. We seemed to be tumbling through chaos. Life was filling up with discords. Careless ease in forest camp and monotonous comfort on the farm were being shelved. The changes came about gradually at first; then almost overwhelmed us in a tumultuous flood.

General Gage shifted the seat of government from Salem to Boston and began fortifying Boston Neck. Our Tryon County Committee of Safety met at the appointed time at Loucks' Inn and adopted eight resolutions.

I felt immeasurably older after being enrolled as a member of the committee. I fear I was jealous of Christopher Yates, only six years my senior, when he was selected to head the standing committee on correspondence.

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Mr. Yates doubtless was the best educated man on this committee, but it was hard for me to forgive him his youth. Associated with him were Isaac Paris, destined to die miserably at Oriskany in reprisal for William Johnson's death; John Frey, whose family had been in the valley for nearly a hundred years; and Andrew Finck, whose grandfather was a patentee of the Stone Arabia tract, and whose family for three generations had been influential in the affairs of the valley.

Shortly after the first meeting was adjourned Lord Dunmore's brief war against the Shawnees and their allies was finished. The first Continental Congress was in session. Militia companies were forming. The kettle was boiling over in Massachusetts, and news from that colony was being received several times a week. General Gage advised his government to raise an army of twenty thousand men to prevent open rebellion.

There was considerable speculation as to the part the Iroquois would play did war come. But the Long House was concerned only in having righted certain wrongs resulting from the Fort Stanwix treaty of 1768. By the terms of that treaty the lands around the Indian villages east of the line running from Stanwix south to Pennsylvania were to remain the property of the red men. These rights had been encroached upon. The Mohawks were chiefly concerned by repeated trespasses.

In the fall of 1774 we had no fear of the Six Nations turning against us. They were bewildered by the threatened revolt of the colonies. Why the Tree of Peace should be uprooted they could not understand. But the Long House was agitated and disturbed from the Eastern to the Western Doors by belts received from the Shawnees after the Point Pleasant battle. It was talked into the belts by the Shawnees that the Virginians were about to invade Iroquois lands.

But the Indians were alarmed, not hostile. They would not lay down a red path through our beautiful valley until after Joseph Brant had visited England, where he was to be fêted like a prince of the blood, and after the battle of Oriskany had aroused a terrible ferocity.

Unable to read the future I feared no evil from my old red friends. Our excitement of mind was provided by minor matters.

There was the arrogance of Sheriff White. There was the activity of Guy Johnson in attempting to prevent public gatherings for the purpose of selecting representatives to the Philadelphia congress. There were stirring accounts of tar and feathers, and other acts of violence in Massachusetts.

The close of that memorable year is impressed on my memory by something personal, and, in retrospection, very trivial. I was called upon to answer for my assault on Newberry.

UNCLE and I returned from a trip to Stone Arabia and dismissed the Dutchman who had tended the stock. Immediately on our return my uncle requested me call on Mr. Martin and again urge him to become a member of the committee.

"Just ding it into his crazy mind that no one can sit on a fence these days without being a target for both sides," Uncle David called after me.

I found my old friend in a peppery state of mind because he could get no tea, and because Miss Nancy flatly refused to brew any in event he did obtain it so long as it was held to be tabu by the colonies.

It was a poor time for my business, and my suggestion he join the committee was scarcely heeded. He brushed it aside with a wave of his hand and entered upon a bitter harangue against the sad condition of the times.

"Nothing but Indian tea!" he bitterly complained. "Sassafras and wild spices and all such stuff! To the —— with it! Blaze me! But I've drank enough water to float all His Majesty's ships of war. Talk not to me of your Committees of Safety. A country that doesn't dare to drink tea doesn't deserve to be saved! Saved from what? Saved from tea?

"In —— mercy what are they running around in circles for? Why are they holding meetings and signing petitions, and ranting and heating their blood? Here am I, the last of the macaronis, I am fatigued and wish a dish of tea. Does your committee come to my aid? I go without tea. I am restless and would solace myself with a pipe of Oronoko. My daughter brings me tobacco leaves grown in this valley, mixed with sumac!"

I welcomed the return of Miss Nancy from the fields. She greeted me quietly

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and glanced often at her father as he paced the floor and slapped his hands together nervously. She appeared to be worried about him. Suddenly he directed her:

"Mind the house, Nancy. Entertain Benajah. He's a good lad if he does talk nonsense about his silly committee. My head aches. I wish to walk alone."

After he had left us and she had watched him disappear down the river-path she turned to me and eagerly asked—

"What did your committee do?"

I told her briefly, for beyond adopting the resolutions and naming a standing committee to correspond with similar bodies in Albany and New York, we had done nothing. She heard me with a downcast expression on her small face.

When I had finished she took some tobacco leaves from the box on the shelf and tossed them on the coals in the fireplace. And I knew she was making a petition to Hawenneyu, "The Ruler," god of the red man alone, and never approached except through the medium of burning tobacco.

As the last of the smoke died away she sighed and said:

"We shall see much trouble. And my poor father worries only about his English tea!"

"Are you a sorceress? Did the smoke tell you we shall have trouble?" I asked. Then reproachfully— "I thought you were to be a white girl."

"I am white," she quietly replied, still staring at the coals. "But what difference does it make whether I say the Lord's Prayer in English, French or in the Seneca tongue?"

"None at all. The Lord would hear *you*, Miss Nancy, if you whistled it."

She rebuked me with a frown; then said:

"My father was provoked this morning because I said the prayer in Seneca. Still he married a Seneca woman."

"Seneca-French," I mildly corrected. "You must always remember you are a white girl. Three-fourths outweighs one-fourth."

"I don't know," was the doubtful response. "There are many things about the white people we can't be very proud of. The Mohawks were to hold the land around their villages. They're losing it."

"That will be corrected."

"I dreamed of a black cloud that reached from the sky-line to the center of the sky. Can you tell me what that means?"

"Nothing. You happened to dream it. What was that other dream you wanted me to guess?"

She faced toward the fire and shook her head, and said:

"You asked me to forget about it. I've forgotten. But there is a black storm coming down this valley."

"It's been threatening to storm for years. One quarrel after another. It'll blow over. The Long House doesn't even understand what the colonies and England are bickering about."

"The Nations will give the *Yo-hah* at the proper place."

"Which means much or nothing," I said. "They'll not fight against the colonies. At least, the Mohawks and the Oneidas won't. The others won't split the League to please the Johnsons."

Swinging her gaze about she confessed:

"My friend, I am worried. I am a white girl. I feel I am white. But sometimes I feel other things. At night when the wind is weeping I hear them singing for the Dance for the Dead. I can see there are many dancers, many women who have lost their men."

"Imagination! I, too, have seen the women dance *Okwa* in the Spring and in the Fall. When you were very young that old Seneca woman mixed up some queer red thoughts in your white mind. As you grow older you'll learn how to throw them out."

"The Dance for the Dead is very sad. I think I'll go and look for my father. I'm sorry I've troubled him any. I think I'll go alone."

I was sorry for her; as I would be sorry for any child who meets worries. I was close enough to boyhood to remember my own tragedies, incidents that grown-ups would ignore. As we went outdoors and I turned to enter the orchard I told her—

"Your father isn't lonely any more, now you're here."

WHEN half-way across the last field on the way home I was aroused from my abstraction by the sight of three men on horseback approaching me. Beside them, afoot, walked my uncle. I quickened my pace, anxious to learn what errand brought mounted men into our hay-field.

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I slowed my steps on recognizing the riders to be Sheriff White, the man Newberry and Donald McDonald of Johnstown.

When we met, the horsemen reined in and my uncle ranged himself by my side, the deep-set eyes burning with anger. The hand that rested on my shoulder trembled and shook.

Sheriff White turned to Newberry and asked:

"Is this the man you named in your complaint and affidavit?"

Newberry's jaw was still sore, for he grimaced with pain as he gently caressed it. In a low voice he replied:

"He's the man. Benajah Whittlesey."

White leaned forward and told me—

"Then, Benajah Whittesey, you will come with me to Johnstown, to be tried before a magistrate for assaulting a loyal subject of His Most Gracious Majesty."

McDonald ranged his horse ahead of the sheriff's as if to cut off an attempt at flight.

My uncle's hand gripped my shoulder uncomfortably hard as he whispered:

"No violence, Benajah. They wish to have you resist." Then aloud: "You'll not be long in jail. They do this to make trouble for you, but the writ is regularly executed and we obey the law."

McDonald—and I'll not attempt to reproduce the burr in his voice—boisterously broke in—

"Let him try to make trouble and we'll make an example Tryon County law-breakers will long remember."

"Quietly. Softly," whispered my uncle.

I was outraged to the bottom of my soul. I probably would have made a fool of myself and have afforded rare entertainment to the three wretches had it not been for my uncle's restraining hand and advice. As it was I feared more for him than for myself. Never before had I known his hand to shake and tremble.

"I broke the jaw of a brute who struck a little girl of this neighborhood. I've no wish to defy the law. I'll ride with you," I told White.

"That man Newberry was scandalous and damaging in his conduct, Sheriff White. And you'd do better to serve a writ on him than on my nephew," passionately declared my uncle.

Now it was turn for my hand to rest on his shoulder, and for me to quiet him.

"I'll be back in no time," I told him. "Sir John won't hold me."

"No complaint has been entered against Mister Newberry," said the sheriff, and darting an ugly glance at the scoundrel. "I know nothing of any child being abused."

I believed him. Newberry had said nothing of slapping Miss Nancy's face.

"He means the daughter of Mad Martin. She's half-Injun and pestered me with some —— rabbit snares," muttered Newberry.

McDonald turned on him and growled. "You be careful. Sir John thinks much of the Injuns. So long as she doesn't complain, there's no proof she's been wronged."

White was quick to take his cue. Neither Sir John, nor Guy Johnson, would approve of any act that tended to alienate the Iroquois. If not so anxious to take a member of the Committee of Safety into custody the sheriff might have inquired more deeply in Newberry's story and have refused to act. But he had committed himself. He told me—

"Benajah Whittesey, you grievously assaulted a representative of the law."

"That's a lie," I promptly told him. "No man can officially represent you on any such errand as that skunk was doing. You'll never tell Sir John he acted for you when he struck the little Martin girl, whose mother was a Seneca half-blood. Look out for your hide, if the Mohawks of the Wolf clan, her clan, learn Newberry was acting for you."

McDonald whispered to him. The sheriff hastily declared:

"I know nothing about that. The Mohawks are my friends. I'm taking you before a magistrate because a citizen of this county has made complaint and sworn out a writ against you."

"That's a lie," I repeated. "Newberry belongs down Scoharie Kill way. He's not of this county. But we waste time. I'll get a horse at the barn and ride with you."

They wheeled and rode ahead of us, no longer guarding against an attempt to escape. McDonald and the sheriff talked much in an undertone. Newberry sullenly rode behind them. Only my uncle's fear that I might come to harm held him in bound as I led my horse from the barn and mounted. Only my fear that he might be seized with a mortal spell did he fail to keep his anger in check, permitted me to go along tamely.

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I was young and rash enough to have made a dash for the Royal Grant, or the hiding places at the Little Falls. Aunt Rachel had told me many stories of the Green Mountain Boys, of their dash and daring in the New Hampshire Grants, and any game of forest hide-and-seek was bound to appeal to my young blood.

But there was my uncle. He was set on riding with me, and only my earnest urging that he remain at home for a few days and see if I did not return kept him from bringing out another horse. With a handclasp and a nod I left him, a lonely, pathetic figure, leaning against the wall and watching me ride away in my first experience with the hostility of the loyalists.

TO BE CONTINUED

HOMESICK

by Sherman Ripley

FOR thirty year a seaman—now I'm done!
I've earned a rest; fought ocean night and day,
Loved it in sweat and glory; breathed the spray,
And rode the pathway of the setting sun
Till tropic constellations, one by one,
Blazed out across the gleaming Milky Way;
While overside, in phosphorescence, lay
Our spars' reflection, like a skeleton.

And now I'm homesick; mossy garden walls,
My little whitewashed cottage, and the calls
Of mating birds, the foamy beds of phlox,
My fireside, the rows of shining crocks,
The joy of children—these things comfort me,
But still—but still—I'm homesick for the sea!

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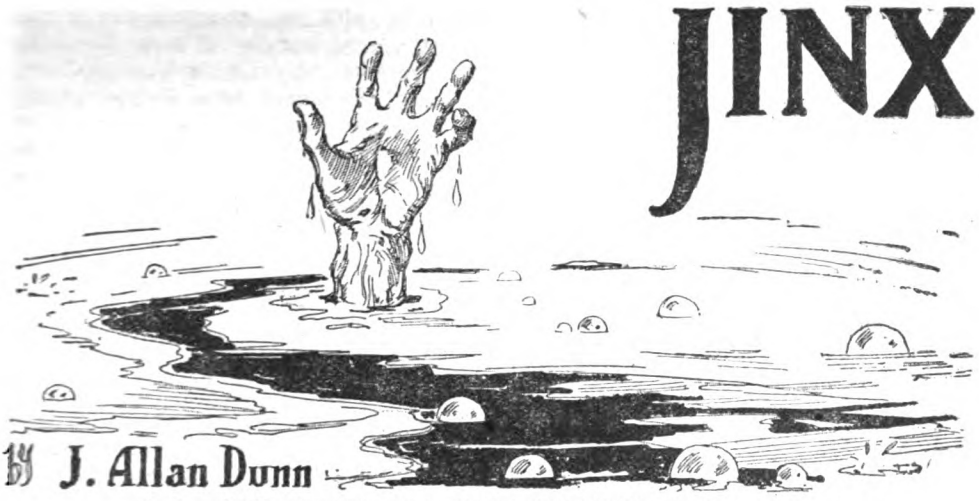

By J. Allan Dunn

Author of "The Man Who Spoke With the Wind," "Rivals of the Reef," etc.

POWDERED, plastered with floury alkali, man and horse came out of the dry arroyo. There was wind on the arid flat, that was almost desert, a sepulchral place strewn with the scattered bones of cattle, sparsely set with sage, prickly pear and scraggly mesquite. It was not a steady wind, it was neither connected nor continuous but born in scattered gusts that were often miniature whirlwinds, gathering up the fine soil in dancing heaps and then, dispersing them, driving the tiny grains furiously before it to leave them rippled as if an ebb tide had just retreated. The pinnate leaves of the mesquite drooped, folding under their burden, the stiff foliage of the sage was white with dust, the flat leaves of the prickly pear held their share of it. Streamers of dust blew from the tops of the dunes, that ever slowly shifted under the fretful winds.

A blast, hot as if it had come from the open door of an oven, sucked down the draw as *El Lagarto* curbed in savagely and his pony stood with heaving flanks, hanging head and flaring nostrils that strove to refill its distressed lungs. They had come at top speed for three miles through the arroyo with the horse pounding fetlock deep.

Invisible grains hissed in the wind that was thick with it, drawn from the arroyo's rim. It blew directly into his face and the head of his mount; striking viciously at their eyes, already red with the grit, running with the anguish of it. It forced its way into their nostrils, their ears; it drove between their teeth so that they chewed grit. It gathered like blizzard snow in every crease of his clothes, his saddle-blanket, on the leather of the saddle, lodged in the stirrups, sifted into his high-heeled boots and down the collar of his shirt. It powdered his eyebrows and lashes, the hair above his ears and the hollows of his eye-orbits.

He cursed thickly as he turned in the saddle and looked backward. There was no sign of pursuit, no reappearance of the dust cloud that he had seen through the window of the ranch-house and which had sent him leaping to his horse and racing off, screened by the cottonwoods that grew by the tank, down into the arroyo, riding recklessly, unsparing of the horse that was his safety.

He had seen them but they had not seen him. That was the way it seemed but he could not be sure. They might be back there at the ranch. Sooner or later they, or others summoned by them, would be after him, relentlessly bent upon his capture. *Rangers!*

They must have been bound for the ranch, early as it was. He fancied that it was an automobile, probably a flivver, throwing more dust than he would, so that, in the brief dash that he was in the open, before he reached the cover of the trees, they might not have perceived him at all.

But they must have been bound for the

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ranch. There was no other place to go. The road—such as it was—ended there. There were no trails beyond, nothing but semi-desert all the way to the Seco Hills through which he must work his way, down to the Rio Grande, across it and into Mexico.

The Seco Hills—they stood up now as if they had been clipped out of slate-colored cardboard and set on edge, with only two dimensions—hardly constituted a range. They were practically separate crests, sometimes twinned, a buried ridge of lava overwhelmed by the sand that had filled all this ancient sea, set close together with passes between them that all led north and south to the river.

He had little time to waste. The hills looked about five miles away but he knew that they were fifteen and that meant three hours. No water till he reached the river. He ought to have watered the pony at the tank, filled his canteen, but things had not turned out as he planned.

The pinto, its patterned body hardly to be told now from a gray, showed vicious rowel marks where blood had come and dried, lines where the quirt had cut through the alkaline film. Sweat marks had broken out in patches. *El Lagarto's* face mask had cracked with them and with the play of his cursing.

His oaths against the sand stopped suddenly. A glint of sudden panic came into his pale blue eyes with their pupils contracted against the glare.

He had forgotten his bandana. Left it at the ranch-house, lying on the floor where it had fallen when the woman had torn it from his face where it had hidden his broken nose and hard lips.

He dared not go back for it and there were twenty people who could swear to it. The pattern was common enough—dark blue silk with white polka-dots, but Carmen Padilla had worked his monogram in the corner, the raised figure of a lizard in white silk, deftly done. It had not shown as he wore it, for a mask, but now— Carmen, whom he had thrown over because he was tired of her, would be one of the first to identify it. She had sworn to be even with him, the jealous cat of——!

It wouldn't matter so long as he got across the river. But he ought to have cut the telephone wire from the ranch to Tres Pinos. Rangers riding out from there at a traverse would not have much farther to go to the hills than he did and they would guess his destination. If they sighted him they might even follow him across the border. They had been known to when they were hard-set after a quarry.

There was Juan Guiterrez. They had shot Juan with their carbines across the river and sworn afterward that he had been hit on the American side and forded the river with a bullet in his brain! Juan had killed a man over a card game. And *El Lagarto*——?

When they found what he had left behind him at the ranch——!

HE spurred his half-breathed mount and they started off over the desolate flat, forced to detour by the clumps of mesquite and cactus, going in a cloud of their own making while the wind devils danced all about them and the brazen sun hammered at the plain out of a sky that was like an inverted bowl of blue glaze. Swifts darted here and there, disturbed from their basking, a sidewinder glided out from the skull of a steer. The pinto's lope faltered to a trot, to a walk.

A mirage appeared to his left as he strove to discover any signs of Rangers coming out from Tres Pinos. It showed a pool of water, with mirrored trees and sleek cattle drinking. The bases of the Seco Hills seemed lifted, tilting, careering drunkenly. Heat haze shimmered above the dunes like the steam from a kettle against the light.

Behind him—nothing. Then what were they doing back at the ranch? Why didn't they come after him? Perhaps they were afraid.

There was blood on his hands, blotted by the dust, dried darkly. On his wrists, spattered on his cuffs. Hard to wash out now. He wouldn't have time at the river.

The nearest pass, the one directly ahead, between Cabeza and Alta Peaks, was the best, unless he took the next, two miles to the west. That led to the crossing at Ruiz' place, half rancheria, half tavern, resort of smugglers where stolen steers were disposed of, drugs and Chinamen contrabanded. Ruiz would take care of him—for a price—and there was his daughter Maria. He had flirted with Maria once and she had made eyes at him.

But Ruiz would take every dollar he had. For—after all—he had not got hold of the money. Seven thousand dollars, paid to Jim

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Hadley for his three-year-olds, paid in cash.

Hadley swore he had banked it. Swore it with a gun jammed into his ribs and *El Lagarto's* cold eyes boring into Hadley's gray ones.

"Shoot — and swing for it you fool," Hadley had said—and laughed.

The laugh had been his death warrant. There was nothing spiritual about *El Lagarto*, at any time but, with the laugh and the steadfast resistance that shone in the ranchman's eyes, the brute had leaped out and he had shot him. The fire from the muzzle of his Colt had singed the flannel of Hadley's shirt as he pulled trigger—thrice—wantonly.

"I've buttoned your shirt fo' you," he muttered as Hadley dropped like a length of chain to the floor.

He had not meant to kill the woman. But she had flung herself at him and the beast in him slipped leash at the sight of Hadley writhing in his own blood. Even then he had not meant to kill.

She had seen what he meant in his eyes and she had fought furiously for more than life. Her clawing hands had torn the neckerchief away and he saw recognition flash in her desperate look. There was nothing else for it. And, after all, he had left the bandana. Thrown into a fool's panic at sight of the dust cloud seen through the window with its curtain torn away in the fight with the woman, the flower-pots and cans with their dirt and leaves and blossoms scattered over the spotless floor. She had been as strong as a man.

Hadley had lied to him about the money. But he had not been able to find it in his swift search. He had not thought then of the blood on his fingers. Only of the money. It was still his one real regret. But he had printed his name on the woodwork as surely as if he had left it scrawled on a sheet of paper. He remembered now a smear on the cupboard he had found full of dishes neatly put away. He had flung the bowls on the floor when he discovered them empty of the bills. The sugar had gritted under his feet as he left.

It had been all for nothing.

A SHAPE showed in the sky ahead, a speck that was too large for a bird, that moved too swiftly. A plane of the Border Patrol. Well, they were not looking for him. He did not think they carried radio sets. Of course the news would be broadcast from Tres Pinos. The country would be told the news, known from east to west, read, before nightfall, of how *El Lagarto*, son of an American convict father and a Mexican dance-hall woman, was a murderer—a double murderer, hunted—but not caught.

They were not going to catch him.

The plane passed on, flying east. Beside its effortless flight the pace of his pony seemed ridiculous. But he knew it was doing its best. If only the sun had been setting instead of rising when he rode out from Tres Pinos. He had walked in upon them just after the breakfast things had been cleared away. He was not hungry but, what with the floating, flying dust and the sun sucking out his moisture, thirst was beginning to tease him. Soon it would be a torture. But he could hold out until he reached the river.

Once thought of, it was hard to get the thought of running water out of his mind. He saw it swirling in shining reaches, green in deep pools, rippling on toward sparkling cascades, and cursed intermittently, but persistently at his horse, at the desert, the heat and—most of all—at his luck.

El Lagarto was the kind that never blames himself. Luck and luck alone was at fault though he had provided against its breaks—or thought he had.

He had actually seen the money handed over to Hadley by the cattle-dealer, yellow-backed bills, most of them in hundreds with a few of larger denomination. He had taken a drink with Hadley on the deal and had bought in his turn. Altogether four or five rounds had been bought, with *El Lagarto* watching the clock, until Hadley suddenly said that the bank was closed and the thin lips of the watcher had twitched in the shadow of a grin. There had been one bad moment when the hotel-keeper suggested putting the money in his safe, but it passed when Hadley said he could handle it all right.

It was barely possible that he had given the money to Howard, the banker, after all, before he left town. Howard might accommodate an out-of-town rancher that way. But he had not found any receipt in his swift search. Hadley had lied. It was just the "breaks" going against him. His jinx was working.

He looked at the ever present symbol of

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the jinx, rolling up his sleeves where dusty grit and sweat were irritating him. On the swelling muscle of the forearm, underneath, where the tan was not so heavy and the skin smooth from hair, there showed the birthmark that looked a good deal like a stumpy lizard, a birthmark curiously pigmented and shaped.

To *El Lagarto*, and to most of those to whom he showed it, it was indubitably a mystic picture of a Gila monster. With this suggestion in mind it needed very little imagination to see the likeness.

There was the tale about his mother, that she had been nearly bitten by this sole species of poisonous lizards, shortly before his birth. Such an experience was ordinary enough. Gila monsters were fairly common and his mother had gone barefoot. The coincidence of the birthmark was never so thought of. It was proof positive of his mother's deep-seated fright that had "marked" the boy. No one ever contradicted that in the circle of his acquaintance.

Then there had been *la bruja*, the witch, Luisa Otero, *el sortilego*, the fortune-teller, the sorceress. Her predictions always came true. More than that he had rendered Luisa a service—unwittingly, it was true, but she regarded it as a favor. In return she had told his fortune.

"You are bold," she said. "You are fortunate with women, yet through a woman you will die."

"With my boots on?" he asked her swaggeringly, talking her own language, for he spoke Mexican as well as American, though he preferred the latter, to emphasize his toughness.

"*Si*," she answered.

"When?"

"That is yet hidden. But there are three things of which you must beware, *lagarto*, *mujer*, *arena*. And of these three most of all *el lagarto*."

Lagarto, *mujer*, *arena*. Lizard, woman, sand.

"I have a lizard on my arm," he told her.

"I know it." And she described it and its position, adding the tale of his mother's fright.

Well, a woman had got him in trouble before now. One might bring about his death with his boots on but not necessarily the wife of the rancher though, through her, his life was forfeit to the law. The American law. Not across the border. A woman, particularly a *gringo* woman, did not count for so much. The revolution was not long over, there were still memories.

He had seen no Gila monsters for many days—weeks. As for sand—there was always sand. Some day he might go down in a swift duel over a woman. That was how he fancied his end. A jealous lover, or the woman herself, might take him off guard, as Carmen had tried to do.

Es lo mismo!—was all in the game. *El Lagarto* shrugged and the sand inside his shirt grated. His neckerchief would have kept that all out—most of it, anyway.

The sun struck at the bottom of his neck as he rode slightly humped. It was high now and the strength of it was as if it rayed through a burning glass. There was shade in the hills ahead and he longed for it.

The pinto was beginning to play out—with reason. It had covered a good many miles that day, without much rest, and with the abusive treatment that *El Lagarto* always accorded to horses, holding them cheap and plentiful. Now this one acquired potential values. He was still an hour's ride from the pass—he had made up his mind to try the nearest as his thirst became insistent—and he was in no mood for walking, besides the waste of precious time. He had a hunch that there was none too much to spare. He would win through but by a small margin. He rather liked the zest of a close call, when he was sure of his way out. Something to brag about later—to Maria and the loungers at Ruiz' place, where he must ultimately arrive, whichever pass he took to the river. Ruiz would give him some employ in his shady schemes. He might ultimately become his son-in-law. Ruiz was rich. Maria not so bad.

There had been other plans in his mind if things had worked out as he planned them. El Paso, or Mexicali, or Tia Juana; with seven thousand dollars in his pocket and the girl for whom he had jilted Carmen sent for—unless he found another better to his taste and saved the expense. Girls were like horses, plenty of them. And they liked to be treated roughly. Now—he moodily readjusted matters and looked with a frown at the jinx imprinted on his arm.

After he was clear, once his identity had been established by the bandana, the birthmark would always be a danger if he returned to the States. He had shown it to too many. Worse than red finger-prints

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left on the paint of the kitchen. The birthmark was always there, ineradicable, and there would be plenty looking for the man with a lizard on his arm. *El Lagarto*. —— the old bag. Was that what she meant?

There would be a reward, of course. And those cursed Rangers.

He looked back but he could see little. Gradually the sand had been sloping up on either side of him, following perhaps the contour of the hidden lateral ridges beneath the surface. The change had been hardly noticeable but now he rode in a swale, his gaze limited to the end of the shallow valley that he had entered. The sand rolled smoothly, save when wind flaws broomed patches of it into space or over the sloping pitches. All plant growth had disappeared, even prickly pear. There was no shadow anywhere except the one cast by himself and the laboring pinto, foreshortened as noon came swiftly on and the brazen sun mounted the glazed, blue bowl of sky.

The wind was beginning to blow more persistently. He fancied that it might develop into a genuine norther, though now it had no specific direction, seeming to be locally created. It made little difference. An hour and a half, two hours at the most, would see him through the pass, over the Rio Grande, beyond pursuit. Ruiz would look out for him.

A hint of doubt came into his mind. How about the reward? If it was big enough Ruiz might sell him out, might even deliver him across the river to save extradition delays.

Well, he would find a way to handle Ruiz. He knew a thing or two about that clever contrabandist and he could pretend to know more. He had not been called *El Lagarto* for nothing. The word had a double meaning. *Lagarto* was a sly and artful person, as well as lizard. And he was all of that. His actual name was Smith—John Smith, called Juan by his mother. Smith was probably an alibi of his father's at that. *El Lagarto* was a much better sounding title than Juan Smith. It gave him personality. Set him apart. He would have to change it now, he supposed.

He rode on slowly through the shadeless place with the long dome of Cabeza and the higher peak of Alta looming closer. He saw that by insensibly following the swale—for which he blamed the pinto for choosing the simpler trail—he was a little out of the direct course. He would have to cross the eastern slope. He marked a lateral draw deep enough so that he would not have to silhouette himself topping the ridge.

THERE were hoof-prints going into the pass. Three horsemen had gone that way. With the wind blowing through the place, up from the river, he could not determine how lately they had been made. Not very long or they would have been entirely obliterated. He calculated that his own trail would be entirely erased by the shifting grains before sunset. But one set of these hoofs was plainly older than the rest.

El Lagarto stiffened, like the startled lizard for which he was named. His eyes narrowed to slits in which the segments of pale blue orbs shifted back and forth, restlessly, while his dry lips compressed until they cracked and a drop of blood oozed out.

There was only one way to read *that* riddle, he decided. The Rangers had been warned by telephone. Their fresher horses had beaten his. They had guessed that he would go to the river and they had made straight for the nearest pass, not bothering to turn off and look into the swale. They probably did not suspect its existence, the slope was so gradual on the side they traveled. They had found sign. In all likelihood they had cut it some way back and had followed it believing it that of *El Lagarto*. While all the time it belonged to some prospector.

"Huh!"

El Lagarto straightened up from his examination, relieved. The jinx was behaving itself. That was what he always called the birthmark—his jinx. There was no word to express it in Mexican. By calling attention to it, by jeering at it, he affected to think that he disbelieved in it and acquired a certain awed respect from the crowd who believed that he was foolish to make fun of anything that Luisa Otero took seriously.

The Rangers, overtaking the prospector, or whoever it was, would wait for a little while to rest their horses, perhaps to water them, before they turned back. But they would know that *El Lagarto* would never ride into a trap so plainly marked.

It was seemingly decided that he should go through the next gap direct to Ruiz

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crossing, after all. Another half-hour added to the time before he could touch water.

He did not curse the Rangers aloud. His tongue was beginning to swell and the lining of his mouth to get leathery. But silently he extended to them his whole vocabulary of oaths.

Before he remounted he looked to the north. The shimmering heat waves interfered somewhat but he saw some wisps of dust that he did not like the look of. They were too constant, too regular for wind spurts. They were far spread out and came on in steady advance.

It was a posse. The sheriff's posse from Tres Pinos, following up the Rangers, delayed because of swearing in deputies, though that there were many volunteers in that little cavalcade he did not doubt.

He sneered and again a drop of blood oozed out of his lower lip. He touched its saltiness with the hardening tip of his tongue. Well, he would beat them all. They would follow the Rangers' trail, they would meet and there would be talk, consultation, time wasted for them, saved for him.

Down into the swale and up its western slope, along the base of Cabeza, unseen. Into the next pass. Here rock rimmed out through the sand, half-submerged, forming a rough stairway up which he must climb. He set the failing pinto at it. A blast, hot, vicious, charged with grit, came out of the comparatively narrow cañon. It lashed him as with myriad tiny whips and he bent his head to let his hat protect him from its fury while he spurred the pony. The pinto began to jump, cat-fashion, to surmount the last of the rimrock. A ledge of it, weathered and worn by sand, pitted and brittle, broke off and the horse, blinded, maddened by the rowels in its torn flanks, tired by the long and thirsty trail, stumbled, strove to regain its footing, smashed another honeycombed section and fell, rolling down to the bottom of the declivity.

Fatigue could not rob *El Lagarto* of his horsemanship. He was out of the saddle and safe as the pinto rolled sideways. Sullenly he climbed down to where it lay, forelegs outstretched, head swaying, body on its side.

A hind leg was broken, the bone protruded.

El Lagarto looked at the horse with the face of a balked demon. If they caught sight of him now, by any chance, they could catch him before he reached the river. He had a swift vision of himself dodging among the crags like a coyote chased by a pack of wolfhounds. He had seen that once. He remembered what happened to the coyote.

He turned his back and left the pinto to die. Then he turned back, debating the choice between the risk of a shot and the chance of the tormented brute neighing for help or in terror at the buzzards that would surely arrive. He could not help the buzzards. They might guide to his trail sooner or later but not in time.

He saw the broken fragments of rock. They would not do. His knife!

He slit the pinto's throat and saw it paw the earth before it collapsed, the fine sand eagerly drinking the red blood. There was no mercy in the deed. He kicked the quivering carcass. He would arrive at Ruiz without horse or saddle.

He climbed up the pitch, no easy job afoot. As his head topped it, there came another blast, surcharged with the invisible grains. He slipped to all fours, eyes tight closed against the chafing, eroding grit.

The gust ceased and he opened them, wrists deep in loose sand, angled against the rise.

A scant few inches ahead of his knuckles, creeping sluggishly along with feet that seemed to move with the deliberation of all the ages, there crawled slowly a stubby, venomous-looking lizard, its pinkish-orange skin and black markings, from blunt snout to the end of its thick tail, tubercular, leprous. It was almost two feet long and it looked like a miniature dragon, uncarthed from some sleep started in antediluvian times. It opened its mouth and hissed at the intruder, emitting a putrid stench. It was a Gila monster.

The jinx.

El Lagarto knew nothing of the creature's actual powers. Nothing of the poison glands in the lower jaw instead of the upper, or their functioning. He fully believed that the fearless, horrible thing could spit its deadly venom. Back of this was all the supersitition of the half-breed, all the badly suppressed fear of Luisa Otero's predictions. A little farther and he would have set his hand on the thing, would have been bitten.

As it was he slipped down to the next ledge and lay there against the slant, shaking, his nerve shattered.

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The jinx! *El Lagarto* of which *la bruja* had particularly warned him.

What did the warning mean? Not to attempt that pass. That was positive. He must accept the sign. There was danger at the other end. Perhaps the Rangers would come back this way.

After all he had been lucky, so far. If he regarded what *la bruja* had told him he would be all right. They said that she had told Gutierrez not to cross water but he had done so and the Rangers had blown his head apart. Luisa had said nothing to him about water. Only about sand, and women and lizards.

Here was the lizard, on the sand. The woman lay behind—at the ranch. He would heed the signs.

He came fearfully out of the cañon, looking for tell tale dust. He saw none. The posse was well east. There was no vegetation on this slope of the *Secos*, the Dry Hills, though there was on the other, where they fell to the Rio Grande. But there was cover enough for a man like *El Lagarto;* ribs of rock, half-covered spurs of lava, little arroyos and dunes about which he dodged and darted, lizard-like, though not much like the sluggish jinx that was pictured on his arm.

He came to the next gap between the peaks. A seamed cliff rose forty feet to the narrow gulch between them. There were vertical cracks in the rock up which he might squirm, clinging and wriggling.

He was forced to rest before he tackled the climb. His mouth seemed to be filled with warm ashes in which his tongue ceased to function. His head was splitting and he was a little dizzy besides faint from lassitude; much of his vitality sweated out of him, scant of breath, a sharp pain in his side. He had to set these aside and he did so, clambering as if in a nightmare, flat against the wall, with the sun hammering at him to beat him off; swinging with his fingers clamped in sharp-edged crevices, rock breaking off from his attempts at foothold until, at last, he dragged himself over the lip of the cliff and lay there panting with raw and bleeding fingers, palms and knees rasped raw.

He got up before he was able. From his elevation he saw dust rising to the east. It was the posse out of the first pass, starting to search for him elsewhere.

He broke into a staggering run. It seemed that he had made a lucky choice, unless the gulch ended in an *impasse.* If it did, the game was over—lost. At present, the going was smooth enough, the best of the three gaps now that the cliff was won. There was sand clogging his feet but presently that gave way to rock that had been swept bare. The wind no longer carried sand and it brought to his acute senses the smell and moisture of water.

He ran till his pounding heart pumped blood so hard that he could taste it inside his parched mouth. Every moment he waited to hear a shout that proclaimed they had picked up his trail. They would have to come after him afoot down this gulch. And his own foot-sign from the swale was pretty well hidden. The Rangers might find it, not the posse.

The gulch curved. For a moment it seemed as if it ended in a box cañon but it opened up again. A blue V widened, deepened. There were the boughs of a piñon, cat's-claw, mesquite! Sand under him again but sloping down—down toward the rolling Rio Grande and, on the other side, dreary enough to the casual eyes but not to those of *El Lagarto*—Mexico!

He paused for a moment, a wretched object, powdered from foot-sole to hat-crown, his black eyes looking through the mask of his face as if through the orbits of a skull; surveying the river for a crossing.

THE Rio Grande was low with droughts. There was a run of water in one channel that was looped up with pools of varying sizes and depths. *El Lagarto* could not swim but he did not believe he would have to. There was a stretch of sand immediately below him, and below the chaparral that covered the foot of the hills. It led to a *laguna* of slowly moving water, save where the current drove. From the height he could see the bottom, see the butt of a snagged tree that lay almost horizontal. It would not come much above his waist, he reckoned. If the sand was firm. There were quicksands in places. He glanced up and down the stream, swiftly, for a better ford and saw none.

A shadow skimmed the ground at his feet and involuntarily he looked up, knowing what it was; the first buzzard, on its way to gorge on the dead pinto, swift for the prize of the winner of the ghastly race—the dead brute's eyes.

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There would be more. Idly, listening for sounds behind him, his black eyes shifting here and there for Rangers who might be waiting for him to emerge and cross the river, for other buzzards; he saw the growing speck of the soaring patrol plane, returning from the end of its aerial beat.

He had to chance the river, without delay, whether the Rangers were ambushed or not to do the same with him that they did with Juan Guiterrez. Still, that chance was slight. They might see him but they were probably at least a mile away. The plane would spot him, unless he dived into the chaparral, like a rabbit while a hawk passes. He had no time to spare. He started swiftly down the slope, striding fast and long, ending in a run that he checked on the edge of the sand that formed the regular bed of the river.

It was firm. Ahead of him the water gleamed and beckoned and *El Lagarto* sped to it like a wounded puma to the pool. He dropped on all fours as he entered it and stayed there, swilling the precious stuff, letting it flow in and out of his swollen mouth, ducking his burning head into it. The dust—some of it—came off his face and hands. The dried blood began to dissolve and loosen, some of it his own, some the pinto's, some——

He was going to forget all about that as soon as he got across. He got to his feet again and saw the jinx, clear of grit, on his forearm.

"Blamed you too quick," he said with a quick grin. "Looks like we'd won out. To —— with the Rangers! An' with that, too," he added, glancing at the rapidly approaching plane, flying at three thousand feet.

He splashed on through, ready to duck but exultant, the water up to his hips, the bottom hard beneath him. Then it unexpectedly deepened with a strong but hardly noticeable eddy through which he fought, emerging, waist deep, crotch deep, knee deep, clear.

"To —— with the jinx!" he said aloud.

The plane had come swooping down on a sharp slant to straighten out just above him. He interested the observer but he was just one lone man, driving no cattle, operating no passage of contraband——

Something spatted in the sand just ahead of *El Lagarto*. From the cliffs behind there came the bark of a high-powered carbine, reechoed two or three times. The whine of the bullet had passed him like the hum of an angry bee. It was a sighting shot, from long range, but he did not know that. There was no show of smoke—only a second shot that was not quite so close but near enough to stampede him, to bring crowding thoughts of Guiterrez. They had waited for him to get out of the water. They thought they had him.

But they hadn't. He sprang into the air in a running leap at the second shot and landed set to run for his life. Forty feet of sand to cross, and cover waiting for him.

It was like falling into a great bowl of porridge, thick and viscid. The shock of the jump sent him into the quicksand to his knees, flung him on his face with hands outspread, scrabbling, mowing as his wrists sunk and the treacherous stuff struck his face. By a convulsive miracle he jerked upright again but now he was trapped, mired to mid-thigh. All about him the surface wimpled and bubbled like boiling meal. It formed into blisters that melted rather than broke. The whole expanse shuddered as if it laughed at its victim.

It had him. It held him. It sucked him down. *El Lagarto*, The Lizard, would dart no more!

"Dios! Madré de Dios! Sangre de Cristo! Jesu!"

Not oaths now, but a babble and patter of long forgotten prayers, with despairing eyes that turned upward, showing only the whites. With hands that clasped and twisted and wrung.

Down! Deeper! To his buttocks, his belt!

"Oh, my God!" American now. His voice a frenzied shriek.

They had stopped firing but he did not notice it. Two Rangers were riding as fast as they could over the rough terrain from the mouth of the second pass. But they would be too late. The quicksand was working, quivering all over. He sank to his lower ribs, to his armpits and he flung his arms out flat in a last hope that he might stay himself a little longer.

There were no swift, crowding thoughts of life gone and wasted, no panorama of misdeeds and tardy repentance. He was dumb with the horror of it. He could think only of the minute when the wet sand would crawl into his mouth, his nostrils!

Arena, mujer y lagarto.

First there had been the woman, then the crawling horror, now the sand.

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Deeper! Was that a buzzard? Buzzards had no use for *him*.

The plane coming back, hazardously low, looking for a landing.

A rope! But he could not hold it. It would sear and tear the flesh from his hands, his arms from their sockets.

"Almighty God!"

About his neck, like clammy hands. Help!

One arm and hand outstretched, the other pinned. *Down!* An oozy eddy. Nothing but a forearm and a clutching hand. The sucking sand rose to a spot on the skin, a birthmark, like a stubby lizard. Covered it. Blisters that formed and broke, melting. The quivering ceased. Only the placid sand with the shadow of the aeroplane upon it as the machine settled to its landing on the American bank, where two Rangers rode down to meet it and a posse of men began to emerge on foot from the gulch that *El Lagarto* had traversed.

"I TOLD him," said Luisa Otero, *la bruja* of Tres Pinos, sipping *tequilla* through her toothless gums. "I told him to beware of *El Lagarto*. *Bueno.* He did not heed my warning. For who was *El Lagarto* but himself?"

Plants on LIFE

by Bill Adams

Useless Gold

I WAS talking to some one or other not long ago and we fell to talking of money. He said what a fine thing it was to have lots of money, and I said—

"Why?"

"Why," says he, "think of the good you can do with it! Man alive, it's your duty to get rich if you have the chance, just for the sake of the good you can do with your riches."

Says I:

"It's a lie, old son—a whistling dusky-faced lie that's got you deceived. It's not money that ever does any good in this old world—*it's the heart that throbs behind it.*"

"Why," says he, "man, you're crazy. You can do no end of good with money——"

"You can do no end more good with a bit of a pearl named 'love'," says I, "and all the mines of gold in the earth will not help you if you don't dig up that small little gem."

"A gift," says I, looking him square in the eye, "a gift'll do no good if you don't love the party you give it to."

"Why," says he, "Bill, you're mad as forty rabid rabbits—s'posin' you were to become a well-known writer. Make a heap of coin. Why man, if you were rich and famous you'd be no end of a big light, and do a heap of good."

"Sure," says I, "I've seen big storms beat the fruit-trees down, but little breezes scatter pollen rightly—it's the tap of the carpenter's hammer that holds the house joists together—'tain't the gilt on the weather-vane, son."

He shook his head. I laughed at him.

I'd hate for any writing of mine ever to do what they call "succeed" if it left naught but the echo of a gone-by wind with it. I'd not want success at the price of forgetfulness of the poor chaps who haven't any gift for writing. I'd hate to be well-to-do, sitting at my desk here tapping off a lot of stories, and have the boys in the jungles saying: "What's come o' Bill? He ain't about no more."

Maybe that's why I sometimes seem brusk; because I often forget that we are all of us after all but boys in the jungles—rich and poor alike.

I'd love to have a book published; but not an empty taradiddle book all about nothing: just fit to amuse folks seated at evening firesides. I'd like a book with a slight, small, yet present, quiet whisper of the worthwhile songs of life in it. Something to encourage my fellow man or woman to step out brave again, trouble pushed aside once more—something to make the poor man say:

"Ol' Bill 'e don't care who 'e eats wi', do 'e? Rich nor poor 'e looks at all folks alike—I wonders if mebbe 'e is right now?"

Something to make the rich man fling his window open, staring up the road beside his house, and seeing a broken man go by, cry out—

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"Come on in out of the rain and the cold—there's carpet and chair for both of us, and the fire glows red and warm."

Something to make even just a few human beings pause an instant to think; to think, forgetting all the babble and bauble of prattlers who prate so idle-mouthed of merciful and just gods. Something to make folks do *their own* thinking; remembering their own brothers; seeing on their own fellow beings' faces the bright likeness of God—seeing, if you will, their own reflections—seeing that it is within themselves that the solemn power of God is placed; within them and their passing brothers.

The peace, the security, of nations will never be till comes the day when humanity has learned its lesson—the lesson that says in bold-faced type that all mankind were meant for brothers; that it is within man that divinity exists, awake or sleeping, as man himself may choose to have it. Politicians, diplomats, may thunder and seduce; tapestries may quiver to the uproar of bugles; empires and republics rise and sway, and toppling fall again, their pride an ash-heap.

Truth must go on, though trampled in man's war-made mire. The nations may fight, letting one another's heart-blood flow away—Truth knows no boundary.

Why is America? Why this, our country within which all nations are supposed to be offered equality, equal peace? Why may not all the earth become America? and all men neighbors?

If on the little street on which I dwell there lives the old illiterate immigrant from the Norse lands, the soft-spoken, dark-faced fellow from a hill in Sicily, the man from Cracow, and from Dantzig, the family who come from an English lane-side, the wizened little party, the laundry man, from Bordeaux—if we dwell in peace and harmony here on one small street in one small city of America—why then not all men take heed and learn the open lesson? Why must it take a border-line, a breadth of ocean, to offer to mankind a land of freedom?

All men were meant for freedom.

Freedom is justice. Justice is truth. Truth is the lesson for the tribes to learn; forgetting their altars of slaughter; joining their many hands and shamefully bowing; recognizing at last that Man is Man and God is God, divinity shared alike by Man and God; each one but the other in a varying guise.

When will come this freedom that we thirst for so? We who pay the price of a harlot freedom bought upon the barren field of war? When prelate lays his robes aside and priest kneels low in shame! When warring creed and straggling doctrine cease their mockeries within the man-made temples of Truth who never needed temple yet! When the house of God flings its small door in men's hearts open; when man's spirit cries:

"Enough! Enough of bigotry and sham, of pride and self-appointed sanctity! Enough of mockery! May God and my brother forgive me!"

Then publican and Pharisee, fisherman and soldier, yielding no whit of their birthright of bravery, none of their birthright of courage, none of the beauty of their earthly lovings, may murmur at last—

"Brother, I have found you, my neighbor and my God!"

Till that day comes we who would but endeavor to amuse the passing multitudes are naught but circus clowns. For we must whisper, a little wafted whisper, of the Truth. We must tap with the carpenter's hammer, for solid foundations; lest the gilded vane upon our house-top topples, lest our whole house shakes, and a black lie crushes us.

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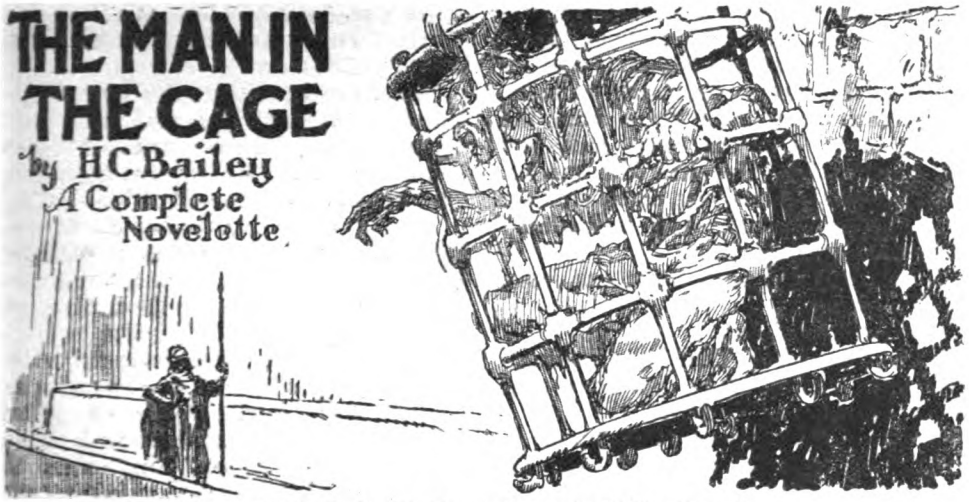
THE MAN IN THE CAGE

by H C Bailey

A Complete Novelette



Author of "The Wolf of the Mountain," "The Child's Honor," etc.

SIR SILVAIN and his squire Thibaut were coming down from the Alps into Italy. The snows shone far behind, but they were still among the rocks. Their path wound by masses of gray limestone which towered in broken cliffs to peaks like spears. But below and near, the Italian plain smiled at them through sunshine. Out of the dark-green of vineyards and orchards a city rose glitteringly white.

"See, brother, we come to a good land," Silvain said.

But Thibaut glowered.

"I have seen it this long while. I do not believe in it," he said. "Who goes with you comes nowhere. We ride to dream-land, my lord."

His horse, which he was leading, slipped and slid round a turn of the steep track and crushed him against the cliff, and the rest of his breath came out in a groan. He dragged himself out and felt for his bones.

"Pity me, that is the worst death ever I died," he gasped, and looked about him. "I knew it," he said with somber satisfaction. "This is hell. Here is the devil. Look how he mocks us."

High above a sardonic face, bearded and horned, looked out from the cliff. A stambecco, a mountain-goat, sprang from ledge to ledge and was gone.

"A blithe beast is your devil," Silvain laughed.

"No honest beast he," Thibaut shuddered and crossed himself. "He flies without wings. Holy mother, this is no land for simple flesh and blood."

He dragged his horse on in a hurry, but was not far gone before a cry came from him:

"God defend us! Here is the goat turned man! Look, lord, look."

There were people on the track below them and one, an old man on a mule, peering up at the crags showed to the sunlight a face something like the goat's, long, gray, bearded and malign. The others were afoot and climbing higher than he among the rocks.

"Why, brother, they are a hunting-party. See their bows," Silvain said.

"See; fiends hunt fiends in hell. What sport!" Thibaut groaned.

While he spoke one of the party was fitting a bolt to his crossbow. He shot high across a ravine. Silvain and Thibaut hurried on and saw a goat fallen on a ledge of rock. Its kid nuzzled into it and bleated. From the hunters came a halloo of triumph. The man who had shot took another bolt and was aiming at the kid, but a woman cried out and caught his hand. There was some argument among them.

"Old goat-face is merry," Thibaut said. "Look how he grins."

Round the cliff-side below the dead goat came the sharp muzzle of a wolf. The beast sniffed and growled and gave tongue and sprang up the rocks to the carcass, leading a roaring pack. The kid fled, but could only reach a shelf of rock above its

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dead mother and there stood helpless, bleating feebly. The wolves flung themselves upon the carcass and tore it asunder and dragged it away. Some angry shouts, some arrows went after them from the hunting party, but they were soon lost among the rocks. The little kid was left waiting till its mother was eaten and the noise of the meal mingled with its bleating.

The old man laughed.

"Shoot the babe now, Felix, and have done," he said.

But Silvain cried out:

"Hold your bolts. That babe is mine."

He flung himself from his horse and climbed down into the ravine.

The hunting-party turned and stared.

"Who is this father of goats?" the old man said.

The woman cried out to Silvain to stop, for he was going to his death. The man who had shot bade his servants go and stay the fellow from meddling with my lord's sport.

"Let be, let be," the old man said. "This is better sport than yours, Felix."

And he called to Thibaut:

"Hither, my master. What paladin is this you bring us?"

"Sir Silvain de St. Lo, a knight of France."

"And who made him the patron saint of the goats?"

"My lord is the patron saint of all the weak."

"Then has he a busy life and merry," the old man sniggered. "But short, I fear."

"I do not fear." Thibaut thrust out his chest. "I know my lord."

"If you know what he will do next, you are a sage," the old man laughed.

Silvain was already far down the cliff-side. He had no armor upon him but his breastplate; he was quick and lithe and his reach long, but, though the limestone offered him many ledges and crevices, it fell sheer or overhung often and he had dangerous work.

"Our saint is no cragsman," the old man sneered.

"My lord, send the foresters to his help," the woman cried.

The old man laughed.

"Who will climb with him to feed the wolves?"

He turned to his company.

They were not eager.

"It is madness, so please you," one muttered. "There is nothing worth a man there."

"We have no saints here but the one, Yolande," the old man said, and turned again to look as Silvain let himself drop the last dozen feet. "Well, there he is down. Now he goes up to glory."

IT WAS at first easier climbing on the other side, for in its lower part the rock was much broken, and Silvain went up fast till he was level with their eyes. Then came sheer cliff and he was spread upon it, arms and legs wide, and so stayed long, feeling with one hand for a hold. He found it at last and worked sidelong out of sight. They heard the wolves give tongue. They saw him again, wriggling up a gully in the rock and the wolves above him, growling and snapping at the air.

"Shoot, Felix, shoot for the love of God," the woman cried.

"They will spring at his throat as he rises," one of the foresters said, and their bows were drawn.

But Felix said coolly, "Be wary, he is among them already. Hold your bolts."

A wolf leaped for Silvain's head, missed as he swung aside and a gray body fell, hurtling from rock to rock. Silvain swung a leg up, sprang to his feet and the pack were upon him. They could get no hold on his breastplate and his dagger let blood from one and another, and his feet were busy. Two more of them went over the cliff and he shook himself free of the rest and they backed away, snarling, and slunk off.

Then he had to work out on the sheer rock again, and so at last drew himself up to the ledge where the kid cowered. He gripped the little creature as it shrank from him, and sat on the ledge and put it across his shoulders tying its legs together in front of him with his girdle. Some while he waited there to get his breath again and choose his easiest way.

"This knight should be a shepherd," the old man sniggered. "That is his trade."

"Sir, he is like Christ the Shepherd in the painting in the chapel," the woman said.

"The Good Shepherd giveth his life for his sheep," the old man sneered. "Let him show us that too, Yolande."

But Silvain took his time, and came

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carefully and safely down into the ravine and up again on the other side.

"Welcome, sir." The old man bowed gravely. "We need such as you in my sad land. I have not had so merry a day this long while. Nay, nay—" Silvain was lifting the kid from his neck—"wear the honor you have won. Only be worthy of it."

But the younger man, Felix, struck in.

"My father mocks us all, sir. But by my faith, this was a wild noble venture. You hold your life cheap."

Silvain looked at him; he was dark and sleek, very much the Italian, a pretty fellow enough.

"Who holds life dear pays too dear for life." Silvain smiled.

"Sir, it is a brave man's faith," Felix smiled back.

"Every man has his own sport, Felix," the old man sneered. "You kill the mother, he saves the child." He yawned. "Come, we shall do no more to-day. He has scared all the game on the hills. Leave him to suckle his kid."

He turned his mule and rode away.

"My father grows old," Felix said gently. "Do not think us churls in Saluzzo. I pray you, ride with us and let us do you honor. Such a knight as you comes not often on our hills."

"My ——, that is true," the woman cried, but as Silvain looked at her she laughed. "And how will you rear your child, Sir Silvain?" She pointed to the kid.

She was a tall, slight creature, dark and proud of brow. She met him with bold hard eyes.

"Is there no mother's heart in Saluzzo, lady?" Silvain said tragically.

"A hit, Yolande, a hit!" Felix laughed.

"Not in the castle, I vow," she said, flushing.

But she held out her hand to the kid where it stood forlorn, bleating a little, and the creature sucked at her fingers. She picked it up and set it on her mule and mounted and rode away.

THAT night Silvain lay in a loose gown of silk on a bed of cedar in a marble room, and a silver lamp which burnt an aromatic oil gave him light. But all the castle of Saluzzo was marble and the luxury of the room seemed to him homely by comparison with the splendors of the banquet which he had eaten and the hall where he had eaten it. The Marquis of Saluzzo kept rich state.

Thibaut came into the room with a slow and pompous gait. Messire Thibaut stood over him and smiled very sweetly and said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here," and held on by the crimson hangings of the bed.

"They are happy folk and merry, brother," Silvain said.

Thibaut hiccoughed austerely.

"How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven," he said and shook his head. "But did you eat the ortolans, my lord? And that sweet white wine?" He caressed his stomach. "A sirup of paradise. My soul is mellow tonight. Surely they live like the holy angels. The gold on the tables and the fine lady with gold on her white bosom and the pearls in her hair! But she was sad and solemn, too. And the old man, sitting like the cold dead in his robe of fur. —— give them joy! But, oh my lord, did you eat the sweetmeat of mulberries?" He licked his lips.

"I have eaten and you have drunk. Give you good night, brother."

Silvain turned on his side.

"And St. Mary grant that we wake still ourselves. For I think there is magic here," Thibaut said, and crossed himself and put out a leg in a lofty step. "Peace, peace. What did I come for? Oh, the young lord asks may he speak with you, my lord."

"Tell him I wait for him," Silvain said.

Felix came in a long red gown with a lamp in his hand.

"We make poor cheer for our guests in Saluzzo," he said.

"By my faith, I have never fared so richly in all my life."

Felix laughed.

"And never found so gloomy a welcome."

"Sir, I have had all honor from you."

"Be honest with me, Silvain, for I am come to be honest with you. I think you are a man I may trust, and God knows I have never found one yet."

"Then you live unhappy, my lord."

"There is no happiness here. You have seen my father. He is a hard man and a masterful, and has trusted none all his days."

"God be merciful to him," Silvain said.

"Amen, amen. But he has no mercy in him."

"Sir, I am not your father's judge, nor

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yours. But what you have against him is not for me to hear, who am his guest."

"He has done me no wrong, and if he had I should not tell of it," said Felix proudly. "Yet I am come to ask help of you, for I think the good God sent you to us."

Silvain smiled.

"Or to the kid perhaps," he said gently. "But what is your need, my lord? I ride to win honor and if you have a good venture for me I will thank you for it."

"Thus it is, sir. I am not my father's heir, for my brother Humbert is the elder. Him I love better than all the world and my father loved him once. There was no one who did not love Humbert—and that has brought him down. My father found that the people made much of Humbert and he could not endure it, for he thought himself all in all at Saluzzo. And so fear came into his heart. He taught himself to believe that Humbert was seeking to win the people and cast him out and reign in his stead. So he seized my brother and carried him off a prisoner to Pinerolo, and the people are told that Humbert was taken, plotting his father's death. It is not true, sir, it is not true. But there my Humbert lies in a cage this many a day."

"In a cage?" Silvain frowned.

"In an iron cage like a beast. You have such things in France, I think, for men that plot against their lords."

"King Louis brought them from Italy. But I have not heard in my country of a father who had a cage for his son."

"God forgive him, he is hard," Felix sighed. "Judge if we are a happy house in Saluzzo."

"You plead your brother's cause well, sir. Your father should hear you."

Felix flung out his hands.

"My ——, do you think I come first to a stranger? He has heard me a dozen times. Yolande has been on her knees to him. All is nothing. Only my father begins to hate us, too. Sir, you have heard him mock at us."

"What is that lady?" Silvain lifted his head.

"She is our cousin. She loves him well, poor child." Felix smiled sadly. "He is dear as a brother to her."

"You are in a hard case, my lord," Silvain said gently. "But if I were my lord Humbert's brother, I should ride out to set him free."

The dark face flushed.

"God knows you have the right to taunt me," he said sadly. "I come to you with my shame. Oh, sir, I would risk life and all to serve him. But I can do nothing. My father holds me under his eye. If I went out from the town alone, I should be brought back in guard before I was gone a league." He shrugged his shoulders. "So it is I ask you to go on a venture that should be mine."

"I see no shame in you, my lord," Silvain said. "I am glad that I came to Saluzzo."

Felix caught his hand.

"Surely God sent you. Oh, my friend, when I was a child I dreamed that I would be like you, a knight, riding through the world to seek brave ventures. And here I skulk, my father's sleek slave. You go upon danger for me and mine; but, by my faith, you are the lucky man. Do you know, when I saw you venture yourself so blithe and bold upon the mountain I hated you for envy of you. And then I knew that you were the man to dare what I could not dare." He laughed sadly. "I envy you the more, Silvain. For the love of God, set my brother free and deliver us all."

"By God's honor, I will do my endeavor," Silvain said gravely.

And they sat long and talked of the castle in which the prisoner lay and the man who had him in guard.

SILVAIN would have been in the saddle early, but Saluzzo had given too much wine to Messire Thibaut and when he was sought, there was no sense in him. Silvain's impatience made the old lord peevish.

"You are in a hurry to be away from us, sir. You have my sympathy. Well, Yolande, if we can not please the master at least we have pleased the man. It is something." He shrugged.

"Oh, sir, you have here a noble palace," Silvain said gently. "But I fear its enchantment."

"Aye, it turns men into swine," the old man scowled. "Well said, boy."

"I said not that, my lord. But I ride to win honor."

"And what is the brave venture that calls you now?"

"Wish me fair fortune, my lord."

"God send you another maiden-goat to deliver, brave knight," the old man sniggered.

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"God send you happiness, my lord," Silvain said gravely, "and deliverance from all evil."

It was past noon before Messire Thibaut, washed into sad sobriety, climbed on his horse and rode out behind his master. When he saw that Silvain was taking the road by which they had come, "Woe is my name," he said in a hollow voice. "Do we go up into the mountains again, lord?"

"We do not," Silvain smiled.

Thibaut stared at him. Thibaut stared again at the mountains in front.

"My head, my head!" he mumbled. "Am I sober or are you drunk, lord? I pray you why do we go this way?"

"So that they should not know which way we go."

Thibaut held his brow.

"And where do we go, my lord?" he said in a small meek voice.

"We go to Pinerolo. We ride on a noble venture, brother."

Thibaut groaned.

"Who is Pinerolo? Man or maid?"

"It is a castle in the plain. It is held by one Vincent, a vassal of this old lord of Saluzzo. The old man has chosen to hate his elder son and has sent him prisoner to Pinerolo, and there Vincent keeps the man in a cage. So the old man must not see us turn to Pinerolo, brother. For we ride to set his son free."

"Holy Mother!" Thibaut gasped. "Is that all? Have no fear, lord. If the old lord saw us at the gate of Pinerolo he would not guess what you have in your head. A castle to take and a cage to break and a man to bring out alive. And we be two! Tell me a thing. Was it I who drank of that white wine last night or you? By my head it was I. Then you have no excuse."

Silvain laughed.

"It is a joyous venture, brother."

"As the puppy said when he ran at the mule. Give you joy of it! If ever you come to this man in his cage, it will be in chains to lie by him."

"Not alive, brother," Silvain said.

"Here is no good fortune, but death." Thibaut reined up.

Silvain stopped too.

"Your life is yours," he said. "Go your ways, wise man." He held out his hand. "You have served me well."

"Alas, my lord, never better than now," Thibaut groaned. "But you will not be served. Ride on, ride on. I am not wise enough to leave you. God guide us, we go into the dark."

"I see a star, brother," Silvain said.

Then warily they turned away from the mountains and rode fast, but none followed them or hindered them till, as the shadows lengthened, they saw the towers of Pinerolo set on a crag above the vineyards and mulberry-trees. They came to a fork in the road and there a man sat his horse, watching them. He was a squat, sturdy fellow, wearing a light helmet and breastplate. He grinned through his beard and shook his head at them.

"God save you friend," Silvain said.

"Peace be with you, child. Go your way."

The man put his horse across the road to Pinerolo.

"Why so I do," Silvain smiled.

The man shook his head and pointed to the other road.

"Sir, you lack courtesy," Silvain said gently. "Give me room."

The man grasped at his bridle and pulled his horse's head round. Silvain's sword gleamed. He struck with the flat, but the blow crashed from the man's helmet to the shoulder and brought him to the ground in a heap.

Silvain stood in the stirrups and looked all round. It seemed the man was alone. He sprang down and spread out the huddled body. It bore no wound. The man gasped and raised himself on one hand, and groaned and stared at Silvain.

"The ——! You have a heavy hand and quick," he said thickly. "The iron is in my head."

He felt at his dented helmet. Silvain dragged it off and he cried out at the pain and fell back.

"I am spent. My head swims."

"Who is your lord, friend?" Silvain said.

Dull eyes stared at him.

"Vincent of Pinerolo. I am his man."

Messire Thibaut made a grimace to the sky.

"This is well begun, as the devil said when he fell from heaven."

But Silvain set the man on his feet.

"Mount and ride, friend. We will bring you home."

The man reeled against him.

"My head goes round and round," he groaned. "I can not lift my arm. My shoulder is gone, I think."

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So Silvain lifted him and gave him to Thibaut and, thus nursing him and leading his horse, they came to the castle of Pinerolo.

It rose from a lonely mass of rock in many towers gray in the twilight. As they began to climb the steep track to the gate, a warder challenged them and bade them stand.

"I have an errand to your lord," Silvain shouted and had some while to wait for the answer.

"One man come up and speak."

Silvain rode on alone.

"Cautious folk are you," he laughed. "I am a knight of France, Silvain de St. Lo. I bring you a man of yours who has fallen by the way."

Again he had to wait. Then he heard the groan of a rising portcullis and the gate was opened. He waited for Thibaut and the damaged man, and they rode in together under the arch of the gate-tower to a wide courtyard. The gate was closed. The portcullis crashed down behind them. Messire Thibaut looked back at its iron bars and shivered.

"Now are we in," said he.

A man came forward who stroked his gray beard and smiled.

"My poor house bids you welcome, Sir Silvain." He looked Silvain over. "I have heard of you. I am Vincent of Pinerolo." He made a low bow.

"Sir, you are gracious," Silvain said. "I ask your good will for this poor man of yours."

"That is Lippo, is it?" Vincent peered at the body huddled on Thibaut's saddle. "What ails you, child?"

The injured Lippo stirred and struggled to the ground. "He—he cut me down, captain," he said, and tottered and fell.

"The more fool you," the graybeard growled. "You are something quick, Sir Silvain."

"Why, sir, the poor man mistook me. For he ordered me off the road and then laid hands on my horse. And so this happened. He will do better another time. Do not punish him."

Vincent bent his bushy brows.

"By my faith, I will believe all they tell of you. You are a mad fellow. Come in, come in." He took Silvain's arm and marched him into the hall.

IT WAS a bare soldierly place with a rack of arms along the stone walls, sword and ax and mace, and a company of men-at-arms sat down below the salt. Large lumps of boiled beef smoked on the table; there were bowls of a mess of rice and beans, and hams and cheeses.

"Hard fare, sir. We are plain fighting-men in Pinerolo. But you are welcome." He poured wine for Silvain. "Though by my faith you come to do me an ill turn."

"What is that, sir?"

"Why this fellow, Lippo. He was my right hand. Come, you thought him an insolent churl. But the man had his orders. We guard all the roads for we want no strangers in Pinerolo. Oh, I know you, sir. You are a knight of honor. But how should he know? And it is a command from my lord the Marquis of Saluzzo that we keep strict watch."

"Sir, I hope that I shall not offend your lord."

"You—no, you are a knight of France. I think you do not come to strike for the lordship of Saluzzo," Vincent laughed. "But there are those in the land that do. And I have one of them here in a cage on the wall."

"Poor soul!" Silvain shrugged.

"He is damned," said Vincent placidly. "It is my lord's own son who sought to take his father's place before the old man was dead. But my lord caught him and caged him here to think of his sin. And still my lord fears him, for the lad has many stout friends. So we watch well who comes to Pinerolo."

"And so you do. I will bear witness," said Silvain.

"But you have done me no good this day. For look, my men are few enough and you have broken the best of them. Lippo will be good for nothing this long while. And he was the only man could take my place an hour. By my faith, you owe me something, Sir Silvain."

"How shall I pay?"

"Why, are you in haste? Stay here in Pinerolo till Lippo is sound again and keep his watch."

"I can give you a day and another at least," Silvain said. "But faith, sir, you trust me far. What do you know of me?"

"I have heard of you," Vincent smiled in his beard. "I have many friends in France. I served with the old king."

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And they talked of the wars of King Louis and his craft.

So when Silvain came to bed in the little room where Thibaut lay on the ground, he was smiling. Messire Thibaut opened one eye and groaned.

"Are you well, lord?" he said. "For I am not. This is too easy."

But Silvain slept soon and sound.

In the morning he was early afoot and out on the ramparts and he found what he sought. By the gate-house tower halfway between the ground and the battlements, where no window nor embrasure was near, an iron cage was fixed to the wall. It was so small that a man could neither stand nor lie at length, and within a man sat crouching. The bars had no screen to hide him whatever he did, and sun and wind and rain must beat upon him, and his brown flesh showed through his rags.

Silvain walked to and fro, and as he walked he sang the psalm, *De profundis clamavi:*

"Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord. Lord hear my voice."

The man in the cage stirred and looked up. Silvain saw a gaunt face in a tangle of matted hair and beard, and wild, wild eyes full of hate. The man cried out like an angry child and shook his fist. Silvain continued to sing:

"In his sword is my trust. My soul fleeth unto the Lord: before the morning watch, I say, before the morning watch."

He paused, smiling, and looked again at the raging man in the cage and wandered into the gate-house tower.

When he came out again the man in the cage was still looking up. Silvain began to sing the psalm *Benedictus Dominus:*

"Blessed be the Lord my strength: Who teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight."

The gray head of the lord of Pinerolo came up the stair.

"Why, lad, have you turned priest in the night?" he laughed. "It is long since we heard matins in Pinerolo."

"I like to sing in the sunshine," Silvain said. "And a psalm quickens the heart."

"You are a strange fellow." Vincent pulled his beard and his keen eyes darkened. "Psalms! Look at my lord in the cage there. He thinks the world has gone mad."

For the man was contorted, trying to stand and twisting his head to stare at them.

"Well he may," Silvain said. "His life is torture. I pray you, why will his father keep him there for all to see his shame? There must be dungeons in Pinerolo."

"So there are, I warrant you," Vincent laughed. "But the cage is safer. A man in a dungeon may talk with his jailer and no other hear them. There on the wall none speaks to him but all the castle hears. A man in a dungeon may play a trick and none see. There on the wall he does nothing but all the castle sees. Oh, he is safe there, are not you, my lord?" He leaned over the ramparts and laughed. "Sit you down; here is your breakfast."

A servant came with a loaf and a flask of wine, and lowered them down on a cord. The man in the cage stretched out a lean arm and snatched, and began to eat greedily.

"Sometimes we dangle them out of reach. That is good sport," said Vincent. "But he grows sullen."

Silvain turned away.

"Every man has his hour. This is not his," he said. "But you have no need of me here. You hold him safe and sure."

"You think so?" Vincent laughed. "Mother of God, I take no risks. Well, come to breakfast. I am hungry as my rat in the trap there."

WHILE they ate he expounded to Silvain his orders of the day. Every morning men were sent out to watch the roads about Pinerolo. It was the duty of the damaged Lippo to go the rounds and see that they were all at their posts and then take one himself, for men were scarce. The wretched Lippo lay in his bed, he was still mazed, his collar-bone was broken and his shoulder big and black. Would Silvain ride out in his stead?

"Do not blame me if you lose me," said Silvain.

Vincent looked puzzled.

"Why, sir, I do not know your country."

Vincent brought him a map of the land in the lordship of Pinerolo and gave him a lesson in geography.

So Silvain and Thibaut went out from the castle again. Messire Thibaut's dark face was much wrinkled and he wore one eyebrow up and the other down.

"I pray you," said he, "if you wanted to be in why do you go out?"

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"To please graybeard, brother," Silvain laughed.

"And pleased he is, for he has you out of his castle all day long."

"And he has shown me all that he has inside-and out. And he will welcome me back at night. A kind man is he."

"Kind he is," Thibaut groaned, "and too kind. I do not like him. He hath an eye, that graybeard, a cold, pale eye. He knows much."

"Me he does not know," Silvain said. "Have no fear, brother. I see far."

"So do not I. Nothing I see far or near. We got into the dark. Oh, my lord, you are a noble knight and great in arms, but nothing you know of men."

They went the rounds faithfully, found all Vincent's men at their posts and rode on to take the place of the damaged Lippo. But the only travelers they saw were country-folk about their business in field and vineyard, and with them after his manner Silvain made friends, so that while Thibaut mounted guard for Lippo, he was welcome in a farmhouse. When he came out he had with him a rope of hide such as bound the loads on the bullock carts. This he wound about him under his breastplate and came again to Thibaut.

At sunset they rode back to the castle and found Vincent on the watch for them.

"By my faith, sir, you live in a peaceful land. I saw no need of your guards," Silvain said.

"Who knows? The rogue there has bold friends." Vincent yawned. "But this is dull work for you, sir. I would I could show you better sport. I owe you something."

"I have had a good day," Silvain smiled.

"Come to supper and make a good night, lad," Vincent laughed.

And he brought out a rare white wine and was merry.

That night when the castle was still Silvain rose and stole out of his room with the rope of hide. Into the hall he crept and took from the arms on the wall a mace. Then he climbed to the ramparts and after him came Thibaut, shivering but stealthy. Silvain made a round of the walls and found no men on watch. A light glimmered faint from the warder's room above the gate, but no sound stirred in all the castle.

The sky was clear and a young moon gave faint light. Silvain stood above the cage and unbuckled his sword and hung the mace from his girdle. He loosed the hide rope and one end he looped over the battlements and made fast. He took the rope in hand and lowered himself till he stood upon the cage.

The man was cowering in a corner and Silvain heard him tremble.

"A friend, my lord, a friend," he whispered. "Be still and of a good courage." He lay down upon the cage and felt for the lock.

But the man was muttering as if he talked to himself. "It is a cheat. It is a cheat," and his teeth chattered and he groaned.

Silvain found the lock and he sat on the edge of the cage and took from his girdle the mace. He swung it high over his head and brought it down with all his might between his legs upon the lock. The crash was loud, but in that one blow the lock was broken away from the bolt. Silvain thrust the mace between the bars and forced the door open.

"Come, my lord, come. Now are you free."

But the man still cowered in his corner. "No, no, it is a trick. You mock me," he groaned and held on to the bars.

Silvain reached down into the cage and dragged him away to the open door and knotted the hide rope under his shoulders, and pushed him out to swing at the end of it.

Above them Thibaut leaned over and whispered hoarsely—

"Quick, quick."

"Hold fast, brother," Silvain said, and gripped the swinging rope and went up.

Then Thibaut and he laid their weight upon it and hauled the man on to the ramparts.

But there was shouting and a scurry of feet up the stair, and here and there lights gleamed.

"Away to the gate-tower, brother," Silvain said, and lifted the rescued man to his feet. "Follow him, my lord. Run for your life."

Thibaut caught the man's hand and dragged him on with the rope trailing behind him.

Silvain buckled on his sword. Lanterns came out from the stairway to the ramparts, and among the lanterns he saw the gray beard of Vincent, and Vincent was laughing.

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"On them now, lads," he called. "Kill, kill. Here is our rat out. Good thanks, Master Silvain. You are my friend."

The men-at-arms ran upon Silvain, but they were confused by their own lantern-light, and out of the dark he beat down the first that came and sprang back.

"Where is your master?" he laughed. "Ho, my lord Vincent, a wise man are you and careful. You lead from behind. Kill, my lord, kill."

They charged after him, along the narrow ramparts, jostling one another. He beat a man down to crash on the stones of the courtyard below and broke away.

"Where is your master? Behind, behind! A brave man he."

And the men-at-arms wavered and halted, looking behind them. Then Silvain sprang in upon them and struck down one and another, and cried:

"Go back, bring me your master. You serve a coward."

So he made them waver and won time to gain the gate-tower, and there he stumbled on Thibaut.

"What now, lord?" Thibaut panted. "Here is no escape. The warder has his guard there below. We can not break through. And if we did the portcullis is down."

Vincent was raging after them.

"Here is your coward, Master Silvain," he roared. "Stand fast, light of heel."

"Down the stair, brother. Into that upper room there," Silvain said, and thrust Thibaut and the rescued man in front of him through the narrow door.

THEY were in darkness which smelled musty and oily. Then their eyes found the faint moonlight come through two embrasures and show them a long, narrow room built for the pulleys over which ran the ropes of the portcullis.

Silvain shut the door and drove his dagger under to hold it as a wedge and Thibaut did the like with his.

"Another nail to the coffin," said he.

And now Vincent was beating upon the door and the noise of his laughter came between the blows.

"Good thanks, Master Silvain," he said. "You have done your work."

"Do not thank me, my lord. Thank yourself who have served me well," Silvain said. "Never so easy a venture I hoped."

"Oh fool," Vincent laughed. "I have played with you since first you came."

'And merry sport it has been," Silvain laughed.

"Now, my lord," he picked up Humbert, the rescued man, who still had the rope about his shoulders, and set him on the sill of the embrasure and tied the other end of the rope to a beam.

"Merry sport and a merry end, lad," Vincent cried. "Oh, sir Silvain, bold are you and wise. My lord Humbert, know your friend. Do him honor! He is a noble knight. He was sent to tempt you to escape that I could kill you clean and end all. A good deliverance, my lord! Do him honor before you go."

"It is a trap, a trap, I knew it," Humbert cried, and he fell upon Silvain and struck at him with empty hands. "You are my brother's man."

While so he fought the door was breaking from its hinges. Silvain mastered the man and thrust him upon the sill of the embrasure and over and out. He hung by the rope screaming and Silvain lowered him fast. "Down after him, brother." He caught at Thibaut. "Then cut him loose and drop yourself and away."

He plucked out his sword and struck at the pulleys of the portcullis and smashed them. The door burst open. He sprang aside, he saw the lantern light, saw men-at-arms on the narrow, winding stair, saw Vincent's gray head.

"In on them now, lads," Vincent cried, but while he turned to send his men on before him, Silvain leaped forward crying—

"A good deliverance!"

Silvain's blade found him above his breastplate where the head joins the neck and as the press of his men bore him on, he fell under their stumbling feet.

Silvain was out of the embrasure. The rope burnt his hand as he slid down, and he was near the end of it before they cut it and he fell.

Thibaut helped him to his feet.

"Where is our man, brother?" Silvain panted.

Out of the dark a faint voice said:

"Here am I, sir. What would you have of me?"

"Forward, forward. On down the hill, my lord."

"And the faster the better, as the tortoise said to the snail. For they will be

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out upon us in a moment," quoth Thibaut.

But Silvain laughed.

"I think not, brother. For they will not raise their portcullis this night. I broke the gear before I came."

Humbert turned and looked back.

"It is Vincent who lies behind the bars," he said in a low voice. "Vincent has his cage now."

"None will deliver him, my lord. For his cage is death. But forward, forward. We must be far away at dawn."

It was hard going that night. Humbert was feeble of body from his long imprisonment and lack of food, and he seemed to have no will to drive him on. They took him between them and bore much of his weight and still went slowly. But at last they came to a farmhouse and roused the good man from his bed, and Thibaut told a tale of horses fallen on the mountains and bid for three mules to go, as he said, to Pinerolo. The farmer charged him the worth of the beasts for the hire.

"So are we all happy," said Messire Thibaut. "For he thinks he has cheated me and I know I have cheated him."

And they mounted those mules and made for the mountains and were at dawn among the upland pastures. There they found the herds of the valley at their Summer station and the huts where the cows were milked and cheese made, and on barley bread and cheese and milk they fed, standing by their mules. Then they mounted again and rode on into the mountains till Humbert could keep the saddle no longer, and they slept like dead men.

Humbert waked with a cry and clutched at Silvain who sat beside him, eating bread and cheese.

"God give you peace, my lord," Silvain said gently.

"I was dreaming, then," Humbert muttered. "I dreamed that I was dying there in the cage. I have prayed for that." He looked at Silvain and there was fear in his eyes. "Yet I feared it. I had no will to die. But it would have been easy, I think."

He fidgetted and looked away and plucked grass.

"What is there for me now?" he muttered. "Now all is hard."

"You are an empty man," said Thibaut and broke bread for him.

"Have you no will to live, my lord?" Silvain said.

"Why did you save me? What do you hope of me? I am broken and spent."

"It is in my mind that you have done me a wrong," said Silvain.

"You said that I came to cheat you and brought you into a trap. That was not gracious of you; that was not noble, my lord."

Humbert looked at him bewildered and afraid.

"I thought you came to deliver me to death, to tempt me to escape that Vincent might kill me."

"I can not excuse you," said Silvain coldly. "You shall account to me for this, my lord."

"In the name of God, why did you come?" Humbert cried.

"You ask that, who lay in a cage last night and now breathe free. Your heart is cold, my lord."

"Free? I am free to be hunted till I die. Yes, by my faith, my heart is cold."

"Who should hunt you?"

Humbert stared at him.

"My brother is master in Saluzzo. He will not let me live."

"Your brother sent me to deliver you."

"I knew it," Humbert cried. "You are my brother's man."

"By the faith of ——, no man is master of me," said Silvain. "Come, my lord, open your mind. What have you against your brother? But for him you would still lie in your cage."

"But for him I had never been in it. It was he taught my father to hate me. My father is a hard man, and he and I were well enough till Felix grew up. My father used to mock at him for his womanish ways, and Felix was full of spite against him and would come to me for comfort. I stood by him as I could, my Lady Yolande and I. He won upon her and she turned to him. My God, she has been for him many a day now.

"Then Felix came to me and told of a plot he had to seize my father and make me lord of Saluzzo, and he swore that he had all the town ready to strike for me. But I would not. And then he wept and made me swear I would not betray him, for he meant to serve me. Sir, it was he who betrayed me. On a day soon after Yolande ran to me in a frenzy and said that my father was raging against me and calling me traitor, and she begged me to fly for

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my life. So I took horse and rode away."

"That was not nobly done," said Silvain.

Humbert groaned.

"The woman worked upon me. I trusted her. Mock .me, you have the right. I rode out of Saluzzo and after me came a troop of my father's men and caught me. They told me that Felix had warned my father I was plotting to raise the town against him. I cried out that it was all a lie and wrought with them that they should bring me to my father and let me speak. But they would not; they had their orders. They carried me off to Pinerolo and there in a while came Vincent and put me in his cage. Then I had no more hope. For Vincent was Felix's man."

"Yet this Felix sent me to set you free," Silvain said.

"My ——, do you not know him yet? He coveted my death. Vincent dared not kill me while my father lived, and always there was the chance my father might set me free. But if I broke out and tried to escape Vincent could make an end of me and no blame. Why, you heard him last night. He thanked you that you gave him the chance to kill me."

"It is so. But the man was vile and bitter. This is a dark story, my lord. You have had ill fortune. God give you grace. You live yet."

"For how long?"

"Tomorrow is another day, as the knight said when he ran away," quoth Thibaut.

"There is no man you trust in Saluzzo, my lord?"

"No man—nor woman neither."

"God deliver you, you are still in your cage," Silvain said. "Fare you well."

"What, you leave me now? I am naked and alone."

"My lord, I ride to win honor and I have no honor yet of this venture. I go to Saluzzo. Follow after with my brother Thibaut, and wait for news of me where the road comes down from the mountains."

He mounted his mule and made off.

IT WAS drawing toward evening when he rode into Saluzzo. He left his mule in the town and came to the castle afoot, like a wandering soldier, seeking one who would hire him, and humbly he asked for my lord Felix saying that he had news for him. One of the lounging servants at the gate—they were many and pampered at Saluzzo—deigned at last to stroll off with the message. He came back in a hurry, red about the ears and at a round pace Silvain was marched through the castle. On the way he had to stand aside to make way for the Lady Yolande, passing from the chapel to her lodging. She looked at him gravely, but if in the humble dusty soldier at the lackey's heels she knew the knight-errant of the mountains, she gave no sign.

Felix was leaning from a window above. When Yolande had gone in he beckoned impatiently. Silvain climbed the stair at his leisure, but the servant hurried on to say breathless:

"He is here, my lord. He is coming."

"Get you gone to the ——," Felix cried, and the man slunk down again as Silvain came to the doorway. There he halted and lifted his hand in salute. Felix pulled him in and shut the door.

"What brings you back?" he said in a low voice.

"Why, my lord, did you think I should not come back? By my faith, it was a hard venture and dark."

"Where is my brother?"

Silvain smiled.

"God knows, my lord. It is only I who come back to Saluzzo."

"My ——, you have failed! Speak out, man. Did you lose heart? Did you flinch from it? Have you done nothing?"

"I have done your will, my lord," Silvain said and he smiled.

"You set him free?"

Felix grew pale and licked his lips and stared at the smiling face.

"It is not true!" he cried.

"I said I had done your will. Judge you if I told the truth. I came to Pinerolo and in the night I broke open the cage where your brother lay and brought him out. But then Vincent rushed upon us with all his men, crying, 'Kill, kill,' and I hardly escaped them, letting myself down the wall. So I come back from that venture alone." He laughed. "It is in my mind that you owe me something, my lord Felix."

"Vincent killed him?" Felix drew back. "He is dead?"

"And was not that your will, my lord?" Silvain smiled. "Who told Vincent that I was coming to Pinerolo?"

"Oh, villain," Felix cried. "You have

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murdered my brother." He leaned from the window and shouted, "Guard! Guard!" and drew his dagger and turned to face Silvain.

But Silvain was gone. Down the stairs he went and the shouts of Felix pursued him. As he came to the courtyard he heard the clank of arms, and turned and darted into the lodging of the Lady Yolande.

She stood listening to the shouts when Silvain broke in upon her. He shut the door and locked it and stood facing her.

"It is you then," she said very still and calm.

"My life is in your hand this night," Silvain said.

"Why do you come to me?"

"I seek one in Saluzzo to trust."

"Trust none in Saluzzo."

"Whose woman are you, lady?"

"I am my own. What is it to you, Sir Silvain?"

"I am not here for myself. I am not thinking of myself."

She laughed.

"That I believe, sir."

Feet sounded on the stair. Silvain drew his sword but she frowned at him, and laid her finger on her lips and signed him to a curtain in the wall. He found himself in her bedroom and she closed the door upon him. The outer door was tried and there was knocking.

"Yolande!" Felix cried. "Yolande, are you there?"

"Why, yes. What a din!" she said and turned the key. "What ails you, cousin?"

Felix broke in, stumbling upon her and glared round the empty room.

"How long have you been here?"

"An hour. Two hours. How should I know? What does it matter?"

"And your door locked all the while?"

She stared at him.

"And my door locked, cousin. That was because I chose to be alone. I still choose it."

"No one has been in here?"

"Do you wish to be impudent, Felix? For you are."

"I am not. There is a vagrant soldier, playing the rogue in the castle and I feared for you. I thought he came up your stair."

"I thank you for your fears, cousin. There is no soldier here unless you are one. I suppose your man is out and away by now."

Felix turned and ran out calling to his men. Yolande locked the door again and went into her bedroom.

"I lie well, do I not, Sir Silvain?" she said. "One learns that in Saluzzo."

Silvain flushed.

"I am shamed that I made you lie. But indeed it was not for my own sake."

"How do you know that?" she laughed.

"Lady, I am not here to please myself," Silvain stammered.

"I thank you. Nor to please me either it seems. In fact, why are you here? For certainly you have not pleased Felix. My friend, he will have your life yet, if he finds you."

Silvain recovered himself. Silvain smiled.

"He will do his endeavor, by God's grace."

"What have you done to him that he is so bold against you?"

"I have found him out and he knows it. Do you know what manner of man he is?"

"He has wooed me, sir," she said and flushed.

"That is another thing I can not forgive him," said Silvain. "There are enough."

"It was he taught his father to hate my lord Humbert."

"If a man went to the old lord and told him that Humbert was loyal and true and Felix a knave, what would come of it, lady?"

"That man would hang," she said and laughed bitterly. "Oh, sir, you do not know us in Saluzzo. My lord marquis believes no good of any man alive. It is by that Felix has won upon him, teaching him to hate and fear."

"Here is one who had kept her heart clean." Silvain knelt and kissed her hand. "Have courage, lady. Humbert is free."

He felt her hand shake and grow cold. She turned away.

"Do not play with me," she said. "Where is he then, this night?"

"He has escaped and is away in the mountains."

"Is that what you told Felix?"

Silvain smiled.

"No, lady. For I told him Humbert was dead."

"And why that?" She was bewildered.

"Patience, lady. It is Felix's move. I see far."

"My God, you have told him what he longed to hear."

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"That I know well."

"Now he will count himself lord in Saluzzo."

"And what of his father? The old lord lives yet."

"He does what Felix wills."

"Yet he did not kill Humbert. I wonder if Felix has told him that Humbert is dead."

"My God, I must know that!" she cried and started to the door.

But Silvain caught her hand. "Tell him nothing that I have told. You have heard nothing."

"Do not fear. I can play a part."

She hurried away and locked the door on him.

SILVAIN stood by the window and looked out. Night was falling and lights shone from the houses in the town. Many people were out in the streets and there came to him a murmur of noise. When it grew darker he leaned from the window and measured his distance from the ground.

The key turned in the lock. Yolande swept in.

"The old lord has shut himself in his oratory," she said. "He will let no one come to him. All the castle has heard that Humbert is dead. They chatter in the courtyard like rooks. Tell me that he is safe. Swear it!"

"By my honor, he is alive and safe in the mountains," Silvain said gravely and then he smiled. "So Master Felix has told his tale."

"Felix is out in the town. They say he swears to hunt down the murderers."

"Then it is time for me to go."

"You can not pass. The courtyard is full of men."

Silvain laughed and climbed out of the window and scrambled down the wall. He made his way to a humble tavern on the outskirts of the town, and filled himself with bread and wine. The woman told him that it was a black day for Saluzzo because the good lord Humbert had been killed in his prison.

"God rest his soul," said Silvain. "You loved this lord well, mother?"

"He was kindly. All the town loved him."

And Silvain thought:

"That Felix said in the beginning. He did not always lie, the wise Felix."

He went out into the main streets and mingled with the crowd. They had the story clear. The old lord, who always hated Humbert because he loved the people, had sent men to Pinerolo to murder him in his prison. And this the old lord hoped to keep secret for he feared the people. But the knave who brought him news of the murder boasted of it to the good lord Felix. So all was known. And Felix was in the cathedral praying for his brother's soul and had sworn to avenge him. And every man in Saluzzo would follow him, for they loved Humbert, a gracious lord, a kindly lord and gentle.

Silvain slid out of the crowd.

"Yes, Felix is wise," he said to himself, and he smiled as he strode away to the mountains.

In the morning when Messire Thibaut and Humbert came riding warily and slowly down the mountain-track they saw far-off a man whose hair shone in the sunlight. He made quick gestures to them and shouted—

"Forward, forward!"

Humbert drove his mule on.

"What is it? What news, Silvain? Are they hunting me?"

"No man hunts you, my lord. No man knows that you are near. Ride on fast to Saluzzo. This is your hour."

"To Saluzzo!" Humbert stopped. "But Felix—is he not there? And my father?"

"Felix is there yet. Ride on and match yourself against him."

"Are you mad? My father would have me caged again."

"It is Felix who rules in Saluzzo."

"Felix!" Humbert flushed. "My father is dead?"

"Not yet. But Felix is master today. For they have heard that you are killed and your father has gone to prayers and Felix takes all in his hand."

"And you bid me go to Saluzzo? We be three men and he holds castle and town. What would you have me do?"

"Ride into Saluzzo and claim your right."

"Then I go to my death."

"Better die for your right than yield it and slink away."

"I am no coward, Silvain!" Humbert muttered and his eyes flinched. "But I have no hope in me."

"It is man against man this day, my lord.

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You or he, which is the better? Choose now."

"——, what can I do against him?" Humbert cried. "There is no man in Saluzzo who will stand for me."

"Do you trust none yet?" said Silvain. "Alas, my lord, you are still in your cage."

Humbert cried out like a man in pain. Then "Forward!" he said hoarsely. "Forward and end it all."

Silvain held his mule's bridle.

"Well chosen, my lord. I have here a horse; and a cloak that I have brought for you——"

"To cover my rags?" Humbert laughed. "No, not I. Forward! This is a beggar's venture and like a beggar I go."

And so, riding a mule, and clothed in squalid rags through which his lean body broke, he led them to Saluzzo, and Silvain mounted his horse and rode behind, singing.

THE townsfolk of Saluzzo were early afoot that day, and in the morning a crowd gathered about the castle. When Felix came out from the cathedral where he had heard mass he talked awhile with the chief men of the town and called for the castle gates to be opened. The crowd surged in slowly and the men-at-arms on guard did not withstand them, but mingled with them in the courtyard.

Felix went on before and found the old lord coming out of his oratory wan and shaking. He caught at his son's arm.

"What is the noise in the courtyard, boy?"

"Come and see, my lord."

Felix led him to the window and he looked out and looked long.

"All the rabble of the town!" he muttered. "What is this, in —— name?"

"Humbert," said Felix. "Oh, sir, the voice of my brother's blood cries from the ground."

The old man swayed against the window.

"You loved him well, did you not?" he muttered.

"God forgive me that I did not love him better. I might have saved him from you, my lord."

"You — you save him!" the old man laughed. "Yes, you were always his friend. And mine, too. It is your nature, Felix." The crowd was growing noisy.

"Holy St. Ambrose, who brought this rabble here?"

"Who could keep them out?" said Felix sadly. "My lord, we have all the town upon us. They have heard that Humbert is killed and they loved him well. They cry for vengeance."

"With all my heart," the old man said. "That knave Vincent shall not die an easy death."

"Alas, my lord, you will not save yourself so. They call you murderer. Hark!"

The murmur of the crowd rose loud:

"Humbert! Humbert! Justice for Humbert."

The old lord looked out of the window and when the people saw his face they howled at him:

"Murderer! Murderer!"

He fell back, he caught at Felix with trembling hands.

"Oh, villain! This is your work, too!"

"I, my lord? I would die to save you. And indeed I will save your life if yet I can. But the people are fierce against you. Something you must yield or they will have your blood this day. For God's sake, sir, make some atonement."

"Humbert! Humbert! The murderer of Humbert!" the crowd rumbled.

"Hark, my lord, there is no holding them," Felix said. "Holy Mother, do not tempt them more. You will find a shameful death. Torn by the mob—a lord of Saluzzo! Let me tell them that you go to the monastery of St. Ambrose to do penance for my brother's murder and I may save you yet."

"To the monastery!" the old man cried. "Oh, it is my soul you will save. You are pious, Felix. Your brother is dead, your father a monk, and honest Felix is lord in Saluzzo. No, ——. Kill me, too."

"Humbert! Humbert! The murderer of Humbert!" the crowd growled.

A shout rang clear through the din.

"Room for the lord Humbert! Room!"

Into the courtyard rode that shaggy, ragged man on his mule and behind him Silvain stood in his stirrups and shouted:

"The lord Humbert is alive and here. Look upon him!"

Felix dashed his father aside and leaned from the window.

"Who is this beggar man that mocks you?" he screamed. "Pull the knave down!"

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From the window of her lodging the Lady Yolande looked out, and she cried: "Humbert! My lord Humbert! Welcome, welcome home."

She held out her arms to him.

Then the crowd pressed about him and those who knew him best fought to come to him and kissed his hands.

"Do you remember me yet, my children?" he laughed. "Yes, yes, it is I and I am a glad man this day."

The old man thrust by Felix to look and called:

"Humbert, Humbert, my son. Come to me."

Felix stood back in the shadow, biting his hands.

Silvain pushed his horse through the crowd and made way, and so they came to the stair and Silvain dismounted and stood aside; and Humbert went up, but after him Silvain followed close.

The old man stumbled to the door to meet him, crying, "My son; my son," and Humbert took him in his arms.

"Forgive me yet," the old man muttered, hiding his face.

As they stood locked together Felix stole up behind with his dagger in his hand. He shouted, "Help! Help! My father has murdered him," and struck.

A sword shot past them and bore him back. Silvain sprang into the room and struck again and beat him down.

"You owed me something, my lord Felix. It is paid," he said.

"Holy saints defend us!" the old man clung to Humbert. "Why—you are the man who fought for the baby goat!"

"That was the beginning of the venture, my lord," Silvain said.

He put up his sword and crossed himself and looked down at Felix.

"God in his mercy be gracious to you," he said, "for you were slain in your youth."

Yolande came running up the stair, calling, "Humbert! Humbert!" and cast her arms about him and drew him to her bosom.

"And that is the end of the venture," said Silvain. "Now are you out of your cage."

He strode past them and his feet sounded on the stair.

It was a moment before they knew he was gone and when they called to him he had mounted and was pushing his horse through the crowd. Yolande saw him ride out through the shadows of the gateway into the sunshine.

"What, has he left us now?" the old man said. "By my faith, he is a mad fellow, this saint of the goats. I would have made him rich."

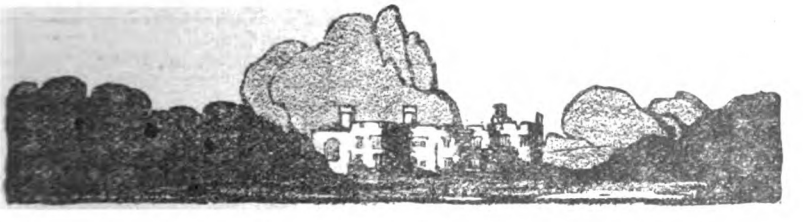
"What should I give him?" Humbert said. "He has given me my soul."

Yolande smiled through her tears.

"He gives, he does not take. He has the sunshine."

AND Silvain sang as he rode—

"Blessed be the Lord, my strength, who teacheth my hands to war and my fingers to fight."



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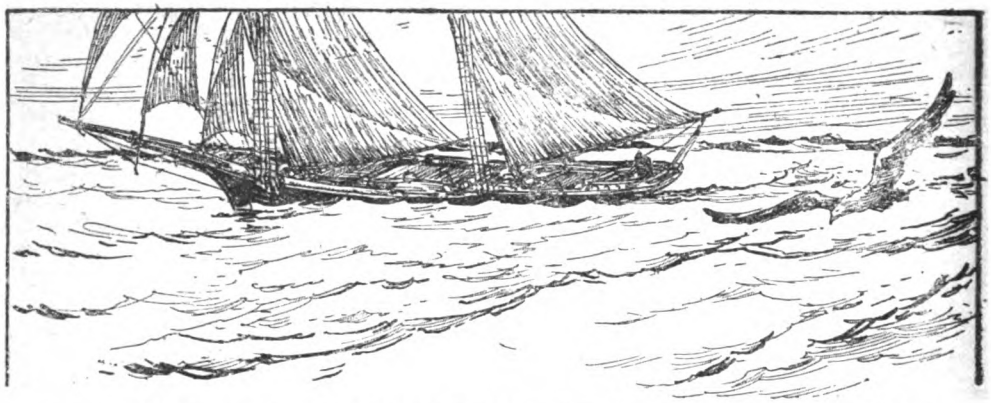

PEARL-HUNGER

CONCLUSION

by Gordon Young

Author of "Everhard and the Russian Count," "Ointment Pots," etc.

The first part of the story briefly told in story form.

CAPTAIN BENNINGS, owner of the pearling schooner the *Gloria*, died as hard as he had lived. He had been cheated by Fate, bowled over by a poisoned arrow just as he was about to put the *Gloria* about and make for the harbor of a Christian port.

His wife had left him years before, her pretty empty head turned by the flatteries of a rich youngster. She had taken one of her children—the golden-haired Margaret—with her, leaving him to bring up the other girl. And for that daughter Bennings had lived and worked, making his name to be feared in the South Seas, reaping a rich harvest of pearls.

He kept good men about him—they were all intensely loyal; especially Heddon, a big powerful man who feared no one—not even "Black" McGree.

It was to Heddon that Bennings entrusted his girl—the schooner was named for her.

"Take her to Lianfo, Will," he said just before he died. "Let the consul take care of her. You'll promise, Will?"

And Heddon had promised.

So to Lianfo they sailed after giving Bennings a sailor's funeral. The *Gloria* carried a native crew of twelve. Heddon, now, was captain; Raeburn, nothing much and old Wateman, the other white man on the vessel, was an odd piece of flotsam who was always sober at sea and always drunk on shore.

Lianfo was a copra port, south of the Samoans. It was settled by rich planters who drank and gambled while their women gossiped and danced.

There was a seamy district to Lianfo; a collection of gin shanties where beachcombers, half-castes and Chinamen—broken down, vicious fellows—clustered like chilled flies.

Most notorious of the gin shanties was the *Gallows*—the rotted hulk of a wrecked bark—run by Duclos, a mean vindictive Frenchman.

After coming to anchor at Lianfo, Wateman and Heddon went ashore, although it was past midnight, Heddon wishing to be on hand to make a call on the consul first thing in the morning. He also planned to see Oxenham, a distant cousin of his. Heddon had always regarded Oxenham as "a fine fellow, but rather a bore; a man to be admired, but hardly liked."

Old Tom Wateman went ashore but for one thing—whisky!

And so, presently, the two found themselves in the *Gallows*.

They arrived just in time to hear the beachcombers plan to marry "Shanghai Ann"—a slovenly woman of the beach—to a young planter who was drunkenly announcing his intention to marry, "The wors' woman on Lianfo."

IT WAS their plan to take the man and the woman out to one of the ships and have them married by the ship's captain.

But Heddon interfered.

"You fellows can't take a drunken man and marry him to that," he said.

"Who in —— are you?" demanded one of the men, Buxton by name.

"You heard all I have to say," Heddon answered.

And then Duclos took a hand in the game. He pulled out a knife, double-edged, and held it ready to throw.

"You'll meddle now?" he asked Heddon with insolent softness.

A hurtling stool came through the air and knocked Duclos over. Right after the stool came Wateman; he pounced on Duclos and snatched away the knife.

Then the fight was on—Heddon and Wateman against the crowd.

"Come on!" old Tom bawled. Then somebody clouted him on the back of the head with a bottle and he went down and, for a time, was motionless.

Lights went out. When they were restored again the bartender yelled triumphantly:

"Duclos has carried them off to be married. He wants us to save this fellow until morning."

"That's a —— of a trick," grumbled Buxton. "Mate—" he turned to Heddon—"you was right

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anyhow. It was a blasted trick to do to any man."

"Who was that feller?" asked Wateman. "Him the row started over?"

"Him? He was going to marry Peg Cardan, but she threw him over for ol' Jeffries. And so this chap Ox'ham took it hard and——"

Buxton went off, swaying.

"Ox'ham," muttered ol' Tom. "Ain't that him?"

"Yes," said Heddon broodingly. "Peg Cardan is old Benning's first-born. The last thing he said to me was, 'If daughter of mine ever plays with a man, I'll——'

"And if she brought Oxenham to this, by ——, I'll—I don't know what'll I do."

Heddon and Wateman then left the *Gallows* and went to the house of the consul, finding Mr. Sanborn dead and Roland, son of one of the wealthy planters, acting in his stead. To him Heddon reported the affair of Oxenham and Shanghai Ann. As nothing could be done until the return of the wedding party, Sanborn and Heddon went to the club where the news was broadcast. All seemed to think it a great joke and, later, went down to the beach with rice and pans that they might properly welcome the couple on their arrival.

Heddon and Wateman were on hand, too, and taking possession of a gig drove off with Oxenham and the woman to Oxenham's plantation.

There Heddon endeavored to send the woman away.

"I'll shoot myself if you make me leave him," she screamed, snatching a revolver from a near-by holster. "I'll make him a good wife! I won't go back to the beach!"

"Tell her to do it," Heddon said coolly. "I'm going out on the veranda until her little scene's over. Shoot yourself if you want, too."

He went out and again the woman threatened herself.

"Don't," Oxenham pleaded. "You'll be taken care of. Give me the gun—it has a hair-trigger—it——"

He took a step forward. She lurched backward to keep out of his reach and was half-falling when the gun went off.

Oxenham was held for trial, accused of the murder of the woman, but was released the next day on the evidence of Wateman.

"You'd better come with me," Heddon advised Oxenham.

"I wish I could, but——"

Heddon turned impatiently away and with Wateman left the plantation, taking the winding path which led to the beach.

On the way they met a woman on horseback. She tried to ride Heddon down but he pulled her off her horse.

"So, Peg Cardan," he cried, "you think you can trample any man underfoot! I'm going to take you with me—to the ship."

He lifted her up in his arms.

"Let me go," she pleaded. "What can I do?"

"Nothing," said Heddon, stepping off the trail and making a sliding drop down through a mass of ferns.

That same day Black McGree boarded the *Gloria*. He was accompanied by two of his men. After threatening to carry off the girl, he bound and gagged her and Raeburn then, taking with him a picture of Gloria's mother, set with pearls, he departed.

Gloria and Raeburn endeavored to free themselves but were unsuccessful. While they were still struggling Heddon and Wateman returned, bringing Peggy Cardan with them.

Gloria and Raeburn both pleaded with Heddon, begging him to let the girl go free, but he refused.

"I'm going to take her to Kulicos," he said. "They buy women at auction there."

He gave orders to slip the cable and amid the bustle of getting the crew over the side with a towing hawser there came a hail off the water astern the *Gloria*. It was Oxenham. He came aboard and demanded that Heddon put Peggy Cardan ashore.

Again Heddon refused—refused, too, to allow Oxenham to leave the ship.

Then the crew deserted, fearing that they would share the punishment which would surely come to Will Heddon for abducting a girl. Chang, the Chinese cook, later joined the deserters and the *Gloria* was left unmanned so that Heddon was obliged to call upon Oxenham and the two girls to assist him in sailing the ship.

The days passed quickly, and every day the others expostulated with Heddon, endeavoring to change his mind. Between the two girls there was a sort of armed truce; Oxenham transferred his affections from Peggy to Gloria; Wateman and Raeburn were both ensnared by Peggy's beauty. But Heddon seemed to be apart from them all, sneering at them—specially at Peggy.

And then a heavy sea came aboard and carried Peggy over the side.

Heddon let go the wheel, kicked off his shoes and leaped after her.

Hours passed. It was black on the water. Thin clouds lay before the stars. The sea tossed and smote the *Gloria* with reverberant thumps.

A voice came up from the water like a weary echo—

"Get a line over—quick!"

"He's got her! He's got her!" Raeburn yelled excitedly.

"Of course," said old Wateman. "He never let's go o' nothin'. Hold that lantern down."

They hauled Heddon and Peggy aboard.

"Raeburn—" there was a weary echo of mockery in Heddon's voice—"you said *man* overboard."

They put Peggy to bed and cared for her but an hour went by before she showed signs of life.

Presently she moved her head, coughed weakly, opened her eyes and stared.

"Cold—cold!" she said to Heddon, not knowing what she said.

A FEW days later they were hailed by the *Loftus Mark*, Black McGree's boat. McGree challenged Heddon to a finish fight, the winner to take Margaret and the pearls. Heddon was forced to accept the challenge and on the gently swaying deck of the *Loftus Mark* the two men fought savagely.

Heddon, realizing that he would not stand a chance at in-fighting, boxed McGree, concentrating his attack on McGree's eyes. It was with his left that Heddon struck, but he struck four times to McGree's once.

An opening came. Heddon had saved his right for it and put his two hundred pounds behind an overhand, right-arm drive. It caught McGree's right eye—and buckled the knuckle-bones in Heddon's fist.

From then on a one-handed man fought with one

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half-blind. It was like butchery—Heddon could hit McGree when and where he liked.

"You're blind, McGree!" Heddon cried. "Let's stop this thing!"

"I'm on my feet," McGree bellowed and blundered furiously after Heddon.

His foot struck a stool. He pitched headlong. His head crashed to the deck and he did not move.

Heddon jumped to the deck of the *Gloria*.

"Cast off!" he shouted.

The order was obeyed. For a time the ships still bumped together, then their sterns drifted off, the bows touched—and parted.

All that day and night Heddon was in a black mood. His face was bruised, blackened, raw; his mouth was swollen, his hands were useless. McGree was the better man. Heddon knew it and the knowledge hurt.

"What are you going to do with Margaret?" Oxenham asked timidly.

"Give her away to Stockton, the old storekeeper at Kulicos," he said brutally.

As Oxenham left the cabin Margaret came in. Heddon, contemptuous of all women, laughed at her flatteries and her attempt to justify her jilting of Oxenham. Then, coming to a sudden decision, Heddon made old Wateman break open the cabinet where Bennings had kept his horde of pearls.

"They're all false," he said and ground the largest to dust beneath his heel. "Pretty but worthless," he concluded, looking hard at Margaret.

"I've worn too many imitations not to know real pearls," she said.

"I could kill you," Heddon replied savagely.

Coming to Kulicos, Heddon went ashore, alone, seeking Stockton.

He found the old man dead, and the store in charge of Jenkins and some degenerate beachcombers. They were planning to make themselves owners of Stockton's wealth, denying that the dead man had a wife and daughters in Sydney.

Heddon turned them out, shut the door of the store and snapped the heavy lock.

And then a voice squeaked:

"That's him, Lieutenant Masters! That's him! He stole my bride!"

It was Jeffries. With him was a naval officer and a detachment of sailors. They formed a ring about Heddon.

"William Heddon," Lieutenant Masters said fiercely, "you are under arrest for the abduction of Margaret Cardan.

"KEEP your hands off me!" said Heddon angrily, turning on a sailor that had laid hold of his arm.

"Where is she? Where is my bride?" old Jeffries shouted.

"Where is Miss Cardan?" demanded Lieutenant "Buddy" Masters, gazing severely from mild blue eyes.

"On the schooner, out there. But here, lieutenant—" he extended the store-room key—"I want to turn this over to you. Stockton's killed himself. He has a family down in Sydney. These beach rats—" he pointed into the crowd, singling out Jenkins—"will clean out everything if they are not watched. You take charge. Auction off the stuff. Send the money to Sydney. Stockton's up there with a hole in his heart. I just found him."

Lieutenant Masters drew back suspiciously from the key. He did not want it, and appeared to think there was some trick in it.

Voices all about took up the babble that Stockton was dead.

"He ain't got no fam'ly!" Jenkins called loudly to no one in particular.

Heddon pressed the key upon Masters, who received it gingerly, not wanting it, not quite understanding why it was given to him.

"You've no right, you ain't!" Jenkins shouted impudently at Masters. "He was a Britisher—you're a Yankee. You've no right. I'm Stockton's store-keeper—I'll look after things. Ask anybody. I'm his store-keeper. Give me the key an'——"

Lieutenant Masters readily tossed the key, and Jenkins caught it; then in triumph said, "Blah-ah-ah!" at Heddon.

The mere absence of a key would not have kept Jenkins out of the store; but having it was like permission to do as he pleased, and with Heddon under arrest his insolence had nothing to fear.

Heddon, taller than any man there, easily overlooked the heads of those about him. Two dark Malayan women stood together, their black hair as straight and glossy as if lacquered, and watched him. Two men were with them; one, a bulky fellow with a drooping mustache, and a small, dark fellow—Duclos! Duclos and Sanderson. They stood well apart from the crowd, not hiding, but keeping to themselves.

"How," asked Heddon, pointedly, "did everybody know I was coming here—to the Kulicos?"

"The Chinese cook you threw overboard—he overheard you. We've been watching here for days," said Lieutenant Masters, a little proudly, as if in a way it was partly his own strategy that had caught Heddon.

Jeffries stamped about and waggled his thin arms, glaring at Heddon—

"If ye've hurt her, I'll—I'll——"

Some one yelled—

"That's right, grandpa, give him ——!"

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Laughter went up. Even the sailors chuckled. Jeffries looked about him in angered confusion.

"Will Heddon," said Lieutenant Masters with a business-like air. "We're going on your ship now. It's a pretty bad mess you've got yourself in—you and Oxenham. Miss Cardan—" he frowned severely—"is an old friend of mine, and I am personally greatly concerned over her welfare. You couldn't have done a more dastardly thing. Life imprisonment will be too light a sentence for you!"

"Am I being tried now?" Heddon demanded.

"You'll be tried soon enough!"

"That you will!" stammered old Jeffries. "I'll see you hung if I have anything to say——"

Some ruffianly voice sang out:

"Grandpa wants his bride. Will Heddon, what have you done with grandpa's bride?"

"He's the handsome lad, is Will Heddon!"

"Face looks like the little bride had landed on it! Some scrapper, that little bride. Want to look out for her, grandpa!"

"Grandpa, get some more teeth. You'll look younger!"

Heddon, with the sailors watchfully by him, was taken to the beach. A straggling crowd followed; and the crowd got fun out of seeing old Jeffries squirm and wriggle when he was called "grandpa." Men who did not like Heddon nevertheless now taunted Jeffries, and threw slyly edged remarks toward Lieutenant Buddy Masters, who had formerly been at Peggy Cardan's feet.

All the gossip of Lianfo was known on the Kulicos. Duclos and Sanderson, with the crew of the *Emmeline*, had for almost a week been drinking and gambling ashore. But Duclos, slender, sleek as a black wasp, and Sanderson, heavy and squat of build, now kept beside the two Malayan women on the outer edge of the crowd; and Duclos, with a steady glitter in his black eyes, watched Heddon.

From the beach the crowd could see figures on the *Gloria*, and some, mistaking Gloria for Margaret, impudently waved and called to her.

Lieutenant Masters raised his binoculars and stared; then, accusingly to Heddon—

"I don't see her!"

"Well, neither do I!" Heddon snapped.

"But you said she was there!"

"You expect her to be hanging over the rail, waiting for you, and *that?*" Heddon asked, making a back-handed gesture toward Jeffries, who, too, gaped at the schooner.

"You'll be singing another song before this day is over," Lieutenant Masters warned.

Some rude wit lifted his voice—

> "Oh, Will Heddon, where did you hide
> Poor ol' grandpa's little bride?"

Other remarks, more coarse and brutal, were flung at Jeffries, who tried to pretend not to hear them.

Lieutenant Masters made use of a large boat lying on the sand. As he came alongside the *Gloria* he called—

"Put over your sea-ladder!"

"If ye can't come aboard like a sailor, stay where ye are!" said old Tom, looking down with defiant blinking of his red eyes.

"Is Peggy Cardan on board?" Jeffries asked anxiously, talking with mouth half-open.

"No, she ain't. We've got a Miss Bennings 'r two, but——"

"Throw over that sea-ladder!" ordered Lieutenant Masters, who was rather chubby and not particularly agile at scrambling.

"I'll do that!" Tom shouted angrily, and unshipping the sea-ladder threw it over, clear over, so that it fell into the water. "There ye be!"

"You'll pay for your insolence!" said Lieutenant Masters. "Up men, climb up! Up with you, Heddon."

They climbed to the deck. The sailors stood about as if half-expecting trouble. Oxenham, all a-quiver, came up to Heddon and began asking questions; but Heddon told him to shut up.

The sailors looked at Gloria, who coolly returned their stares. They eyed Tom Wateman with suspicion, and gave young Raeburn hard glances.

"You are Oxenham?" said Lieutenant Masters accusingly.

"Yes. Why, of course. Yes."

"Unh," remarked Lieutenant Masters, with an air of deep pondering. "Where is Miss Cardan?"

"Yes, where is Miss Cardan? You stole her! You'll pay for this. You—you——"

Old Jeffries, having been hauled onto the deck, was puffing from the exertion. He went on:

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"You done it jest to get even with me! You an' him stole her——"

Margaret appeared. Quite leisurely she came out of the companionway, looking fresh and pleasant, a little surprized, but not at all excited. Through the telescope she had readily seen what was going on ashore, and she had gone below to keep out of sight until, like an actress for whom the play has been written, there should be a properly dramatic moment for her appearance.

The sailors, who had thought Gloria good-looking, stared with frank astonishment at her. She did not seem at all forlorn, or like a maiden in distress. She had helped herself to what clothing Gloria had, with yellow hair in fluffed curls about her head, she wore a blue blouse with velvet sash and short skirt. Her eyes glowed. Her face was very white, but she had an amazing ease of manner.

"Well, well, well, if it isn't Buddy himself! Oh, and a lieutenant now! Congratulations, Buddy. And Mr. Jeffries, how are you?"

He was standing by hungrily. She held out her hand to him without looking to see what he did with it.

"This is quite a surprize to see you, Buddy."

Lieutenant Masters was taken aback, discomfited, irritated, by the nearly playful indifference with which she received him and his rescue party. He had rather thought she might fall on his shoulder and praise him.

"You have been well-treated? This big brute hasn't mistreated you?" demanded Masters.

"Well-treated? Why, whatever do you mean? Well-treated? Why, this is my father's ship. This, allow me to introduce you to my sister. Lieutenant Masters, my sister, Miss Bennings—and Captain Heddon, lieutenant. We have had a wonderful voyage. Simply marvelous!"

Jeffries let his mouth fall till it hung as if his jaws were broken, and he was speechless. His hands jerked and fiddled aimlessly with themselves. Lieutenant Masters looked very much as if he had swallowed something large and disagreeable. His face got red and apoplectic. He stammered—

"But weren't—weren't you kidnaped?"

"I? Kidnaped? Whatever do you mean, Buddy?"

"The crew—your crew said——"

"Those deserters!" She was indignant. "They ran off from the ship. I don't know what kind of story they must have told. What did they say, Buddy?"

"And the cook," said Lieutenant Masters. "That Chinese cook—he heard you scream, and this man struck you——"

"I scream? Now Buddy, do you think I would *ever* scream? And you believe a Chinaman, and runaway natives? I did leave Lianfo a little hurriedly, but I simply had to leave—I couldn't have stood it another day—and I learned that this was my father's ship. My sister was on board. You understand, don't you, Buddy? And you, too, don't you, Mr. Jeffries?"

With that question she gave him his dismissal. Her voice was kindly, her manner even a little solicitous; but her meaning unmistakable.

"You mean you want to be on this ship?" said Lieutenant Masters, a little dazed.

"Why, of course! Why else would I be here? You know Mr. Oxenham, don't you? No? I thought you did. Mr. Oxenham, Lieutenant Masters. Mr. Oxenham and my sister are to be married soon——"

Oxenham blushed and looked down at his feet. Gloria looked with calm level eyes, straight at Heddon, but he was not watching her. In sullen fascination he stared at Margaret, wonderingly.

Lieutenant Masters, baffled, feeling cheated and a little confused, gave Heddon the barest of apologies, asking—

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Tell you what?" said Heddon.

"Er—there's something—er—funny—cook—sailors—*good-by!*"

He withdrew his sailors into the boat, Jeffries with them. Jeffries sat hunched over, with a sort of glazed-eyed indifference, as if something he had expected and dreaded had happened.

As the boat went off, empty-handed, cheers went up from those who had come out in canoes and boats to watch, and the cheers were echoed from those on shore. Amid the cheers were taunting words—

"Grandpa—bride——"

One of the canoes drew alongside the *Gloria*, and Tom Wateman, without ado or good-by, tumbled into it. The siren call of the shore had reached him. He meant to have a drink, just one, and that would be all.

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HEDDON, in the grim embarrassment of a man who feels himself hopelessly entrapped into gratitude, looked down at Margaret. He was half-angered, but like the captive he was he had to acknowledge his debt. He was puzzled, sullen; unhumbly he growled—

"If I'd been in your place I never would have lied for a man who had done what I did to you."

"For you?" said Margaret, drawing herself up, regarding him through a blue flame in her eyes. "Why should I care one way or another what happens to *you?* I did not want to be taken on board the *Dolphin* and have to be with such a pest as Buddy Masters. I was not thinking of *you* at all!"

And with every appearance of meaning what she said, she turned from him and walked coolly away.

He glared after her, tantalized, furious. That was the woman of it, the tormenting, elusive, maddening part of woman. He did not quite understand, but sensed vaguely that she had taken her revenge as a woman loves to take revenge—with a sort of spiteful generosity she had repaid him for keeping her from drowning, for keeping McGree's hands off her. He stood and watched her go—small, alert, with an impudently happy swing to her slender body. She did not look around. He knew that she was vibrant with triumph.

"—— her!" said Heddon bitterly, and even as the words formed in his mind he knew that in saying so he lied to himself.

And what was there to her? A glint of hair. A luster of skin. A certain gracé of shapeliness in her body. Nothing more. A skeleton was entombed in that fair flesh. The glinting hair was attached to a skull that would be bald and grin like any death's head. Worms would eat her flesh and think no better of it for the beauty.

Angrily he brooded, defaming her; and he would not admit to himself that in punishing her for making fools of men he had himself become one of the fools.

While Raeburn was calling a boat alongside, Heddon spoke alone to Gloria:

"You will be happy, Gloria. I am glad to learn it. Oxenham is a fine fellow. He'll take you home—to Washington. It is beautiful there."

She looked up at him with level gray eyes and answered calmly:

"It is not so. I will not marry him."

"But Margaret said——"

She met his eyes without a flicker of trembling, saying:

"When she saw the sailors had you on shore, she said to me, 'They have caught Will! There is only one way to help him. You and Fred must pretend to be engaged. Let me say that you are to be married. It's the only thing we can say. We two girls here on the ship with men—even then it will appear bad— But I'll tell them that, and you'll see, I will make it all right.' And," Gloria concluded, "she did. But I do not mean to marry him."

Heddon looked at her, mystified—

"I don't see what that had to do with it?"

"I do," said Gloria, calmly. "She thinks that maybe now I will marry Mr. Oxenham. She knows that I love you. She does not want me to love you."

"Oh, the ——! Nonsense, Gloria."

Heddon turned away impatiently. The boat was at the schooner's side. He jumped into it.

XVII

IT WAS late in the afternoon. The heat of the day was hardly less than it had been, but the sun had turned into a red ball just above the water's edge. It was a queer sunset, cloudless, yet strange, somehow ominous. The scraggly palms stretched their scrawny shadows over the sand as if they were bodiless specters trying to sneak off, perhaps escape from Kulico, as if they sensed the coming of danger.

With the passing of the day and the spreading of the news, almost everybody from the ships in the lagoon, and from the shacks and shanties, began to stir out. Much of the crowd gathered at Stockton's store. There were plenty of drinking and gambling places about, any one of which was usually more popular than Stockton's; but his having killed himself, and Heddon's having tried to get charge of the store, had aroused a babbling interest.

Jenkins was hospitable and talkative. He told his story so many times, adding a little each time, that shortly before sundown he was swearing that he and Stockton had been partners all the while; and as he gave away cups of rum to whoever wanted a drink, there were many who said they believed him.

A party of men entered, and, stamping the sand from their feet, placed against the

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wall two new shovels which but a little while before they had taken from the storeroom.

"Well, that's done," said one of the men, puffing in relief.

"Bein' blind don't bother a dead man. Give us a drink, Jenk."

"I always liked ol' Stockton. Who'd ha' thought he'd go that way. Who goes next, I wonder! Hurry up with that drink, Jenks."

"Tight old rascal, he were. Give me a drink, Jenks. Jenks here ain't like him, Jenks has got a good heart. Fill 'er full, Jenks."

The matter of burial was attended to with unceremonious promptness on the Kulicos, as in other hot places; and Stockton, without even a blanket over him, was carried out behind the house, near the cook-shed, and put down into a deep hole, then covered over with sand.

As men tossed the sand on their shovels, other men stood about passing from hand to hand the photographs that had been on the table; and the men made comments on the plumpness, the fairness, the charms, the comparative good looks and possible blemishes of Stockton's wife and daughters.

THERE was now a shouldering push through the crowd, a flurry of voices in half-whispers, saying—

"He's come!" "He's here!" and Heddon's hand fell on Jenkins' shoulder, jerking him around, slamming him up against "Yankee" Saunders.

"How many times do you have to be told something!" Heddon said.

"Here, what you think you're doin'!" cried Yankee Saunders.

Right beside the door Duclos stood on a keg to see over men's heads. By him was the bulky Sanderson, dull, mask-like, uninterested.

"What do you think you're doing?" some one else shouted at Heddon.

"Taking charge of Stockton's affairs," said Heddon. "And we'll have an auction, here and now—of everything!"

"You can't get away with that!" cried Yankee Saunders.

"We'll see about that!" Jenkins snarled, pressing back into the crowd.

"You bet we'll see about it?" some one cried.

"Get him, fellers!" Jenkins cried, himself pushing hard to get far enough back to be out of the way.

The crowd hung tense and motionless. No one moved.

Then a sharp shrill voice screamed:

"Kill heem! Kill heem! A thousan' dollars to the man that kills heem!"

Heddon stepped back, clearing space for himself with sweep of arm, and edged near to where the shovels stood against the wall. As he reached behind him to grasp a shovel he looked up and saw Duclos waving a pipe-stem of an arm, and crying—

"Kill heem!"

Then a voice boomed in the doorway. Duclos whirled about, but too late. He was caught, lifted, and pitched bodily into, on to, the crowd, striking on heads that ducked as he thrashed arms and legs in falling. A bull-like voice roared in laughter and the huge form of Salvador McGree rose on the keg where Duclos had stood.

"Ah-ho!" said McGree with an amused serenity as he gazed over the crowd. "That is one fellow that talks of how Black McGree is afraid of him. And you—you want something, too, my friend?"

As he spoke he looked down and put a hand on top of Sanderson's head, impudently rolling it about.

"No, eh? Then make yourself absent. I smell skunks when I see you!"

McGree's face about the eyes showed still the marks of bluish-black, but both eyes were wide open. His head was bound with a silver scarf. He wore a shirt of scarlet silk, and a broad, black sash about his waist. His looped earrings tapped his cheeks as he moved his head, looking about over the crowd.

His brigantine, the *Loftus Mark*, was out in the bay within a stone's throw of the *Emmeline*, which, like the *Dolphin*, had not cared to enter the lagoon. McGree had come in not two hours before.

"There is the thing that says to many people I am afraid of him!" cried McGree, pointing down at Duclos, who had got to his feet and stood half-sulkily with furtive up-turned eyes, as if judging his chances to draw and throw his knife. "A little rat and a big skunk. Where is my skunk?"

He looked about for Sanderson, but Sanderson had gone.

"You better wait till my back is turned in the dark," said McGree, full-voiced, laughing, contemptuous. "Dott, put your

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foot under that rat's tail. Run it out——"

The grinning negro squirmed through the crowd and came to Duclos, but with a drawn gun in his hand—otherwise the savage little Frenchman might have cut him into ribbons.

"Git out!" said Dott. "You git!"

Duclos's fuzzy, greasy face was ashen with rage and shame; his small, wasp-like body trembled; but he went—strange dark foreign oaths and curses flying from his lips.

Men jeered him, not for any ill-will toward him, but because of their eagerness to please the riotous McGree. Jenkins "blah-ed" the loudest of any. Yankee Saunders shouted up familiarly to McGree:

"You're all right! That's the best joke I ever saw, McGree! That's the best joke I ever——"

"You make too much noise," said McGree impatiently. Then, loudly, frowning but somehow as if not very angry: "Oh-ho, there, you Will Heddon! I've got you now. You won't run away this time, I tell you that! You hear me?"

"Yes," said Heddon grimly. "I hear you."

"All right then. Shut up, you Jenkins. Shut up you ever'body! There is too much talk in here. *Shut up!*" he bellowed, and his voice fairly rattled against the corrugated-iron roofing; and silence followed. "That's better," said Salvador McGree, complacently. "What about this Stockton? I just come ashore, but already I have heard much. You want an auction for Stockton's family. Is it so?"

"He didn't have no fam'ly," Jenkins cried. "I was his partner. I know."

"He did too," a voice answered. "I seen their pictures—four women!"

"How'd you know it was them?" Jenkins challenged.

"How'd you know it weren't?" demanded the voice. "There was a woman an' three girls—pretty uns!"

"I was his partner!" Jenkins shouted.

A dozen voices, some hotly, some jeering, told him that he was a liar.

"Where are the pictures?" McGree demanded, interested. He gazed inquiringly from face to face. "Let me see the pictures. I'll tell whether we have an auction when I see the pictures of these women. Who's got the pictures?"

A shifting, shuffling movement ran through the crowd. Somebody lighted a lantern for it was beginning to grow dark.

"You had 'em, Frank, what did you do with 'em?"

"I seen George lookin' at 'em."

"I brung 'em back here. Put 'em over there on a shelf."

"Here they are—here's three of 'em."

"Let me have them," said McGree, reaching out a great arm.

The three pictures had been handed up to McGree, and he was looking at them, one after another, frowning studiously. He said nothing but appeared indifferent.

"There's still another. George has got another!"

Then George sheepishly drew the fourth picture from his pocket and tried to pretend that he hadn't known it was there. Men guyed him.

"He was keepin' it!"

"It's the pretty one!"

McGree reached out, and George handed up the picture.

McGree's eyes fell on the young, sweet face. He cried instantly:

"Throw Jenkins out — trying to rob orphans and a widow! We'll have an auction!"

He gazed again in a moment's pleasure at the sweet innocence of the smiling child-woman who looked up as if with recognition in her fair eyes.

"Here goes!" shouted McGree, holding the face up for all to see. "How much for this picture—picture of a beautiful girl? How much? George McComus bids twenty dollars——"

"I never!" cried the thrifty McComus.

"I said you bid twenty dollars!" Black McGree thundered, glaring at him. "Yankee Saunders, twenty-five——"

Saunders started a gesture of protest, but stopped it, and grinned foolishly.

McGree was in a merry mood. He ran up the bids on the photograph arbitrarily, finally knocking it down to the canny McComus for fifty-five dollars — cash. And McComus, grumbling, dug down into his leather pouch and paid.

McGree tossed him the photograph, but he let it fall.

"Here, George," said a man picking it from the floor.

McComus seized and tore it across, threw the pieces to the floor and tramped on them; then, stamping in anger, bolted from the store.

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"Ah-ho," said McGree, "now we'll get down to real business. Will Heddon, I put you to work. Yours is the hard part. It is for you to see that these men pay. And nobody goes out that door till this auction is over. Let 'em come in, Dott. You and Bill White let 'em come in—but not out. Put the other boys to watch the door, too."

Auctions were common on the Kulicos. Anybody who had something he didn't want, sold it at auction. But there had never before been such an auction as this. If the bidding was slack, or under value, McGree simply raised the bids. If a man protested that he did not want the article, McGree would say—

"Ah, you sell it to somebody that does and make some honest money!"

Men protested that they did not have the money, but he was obdurate.

"Get it!" he would say, glowering suddenly. And, as he had a half-dozen sailors with him who were armed, the protests were not very strong. Every one knew that he was now in a merry mood, enjoying himself, but that he might instantly be otherwise.

"Any man that doesn't pay Will Heddon, will have to pay me!" he announced, bull-throated.

Dott and Bill White brought the bidders, willing and unwilling, to the counter where Heddon sat, and they saw to it that the money was paid down. Heddon gave hardly any attention to the amounts or who paid them.

"How do we know Stockton's wife is goin' to get it?" some one asked, but quite timidly for such a bold question.

Black McGree, with a big mug of rum in one hand, an enormous black cigar in the other, paused in his auctioning and looked down on the questioner.

"You don't!" he thundered at the fellow. "But would *you* steal from a poor little orphan? How's that? No, eh? So? Ah, do you think Salvador McGree is a worse man than you are? Ah, so! Then you think the money is safe in my hands, eh? Good! What is your name? Hemple, eh? Sack of sugar next. Hemple here he bids twenty dollars——"

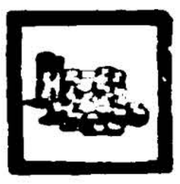
Sugar was worth about four.

And so it went. Mr. Hemple bought two sacks of sugar at twenty dollars the sack, and asked no more impertinent questions.

People swarmed to the auction, crowded in and could not get out. The store-room was packed. Heddon sat at the counter with a heap of gold and silver before him, and from time to time raked it into an empty gunny sack. The crowd milled about under a drifting cloud of tobacco smoke that nearly obscured the lanterns; and looming through the smoke, high above everybody, McGree stood on his keg and directed the auction with imperious good-humor. And the crowd more than half-enjoyed itself, liking, as crowds so often do, to be over-ridden, bullied, by one of unquestionable dominance.

"—a box of cigars now. Bad cigars—Stockton's cigars were always bad. What am I bid? Thompson there, he bids ten dollars. You, I don't know your name, but you bid twenty. They are bad cigars. Thompson he wants them. He bids twenty-five. This fellow, he says Thompson can't have them. He bids thirty. Going—going—going—ah-ho, just one little minute! Salvador McGree bids fifty dollars! Sold! Sold to Salvador McGree!"

Thereupon he fished up a leather purse from inside his wide sash and tossed gold coins at Heddon; then McGree opened the box of cigars, started it through the crowd, and went on with the auction.



IT WAS near midnight when McGree grew tired of his auction and stopped it as peremptorily as he had begun it.

"Everybody must now get out. Take what you have bought and go. Dott, ask them to go quickly. Use politeness when you shoot that fellow who won't go! Bill White?"

"Here, cap'n."

"Hurry them to go. We have taken all you fellows' money. Now it is out you go!"

McGree waved his hand in a gesture of shooing, grinned broadly and cared not at all that more than half of the people there believed that he would keep the money. For that matter, most of them believed it a clever trick, a good joke, worthy of Salvador McGree.

The last of the crowd was being cleared from the store. Purchases had to be carried out, then and there; and there was much confusion and swearing. Many were trying to carry off whatever had been unsold. Nobody objected unless it was some one who also had it in mind to steal the same

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thing; then quarreling followed, and the negro Dott and Bill White, with another sailor or two, would hustle the fellows through the door.

McGree drained a pint cup of rum, and coming to where Heddon sat, indifferently hefted the gunny sack.

"The Lord, he loves cheerful givers. He thinks a lot of Kulico tonight, he does. Will Heddon, how much money?"

"I don't know. It's all there. I lost count."

"Who would waste time counting money that doesn't belong to him?" demanded McGree; then with a flourish he drew a second purse from his sash, and emptied a shower of gold coins on the counter. "I need some prayers of widows and orphans for my soul. Strange how we start to do one thing and there is something else. I had no mind of an auction. I meant to break your —— neck, Will Heddon, right before everybody! You did not keep the bargain we made. You run away. We have that to settle yet. Now there is this —— money? What shall we do with it, eh? Before morning the sack it would be empty as a punctured bubble if not watched. Never were such thieves as on the Kulicos. You take this to Sydney, to the woman there. One of them is most beautiful. You could teach her love and keep the money. You try to keep everything anyhow, you do!"

McGree widened his eyes in a ferocious glare.

Heddon took a cigaret from a package that lay scattered before him, lighted it, tossed the match at a crack and asked:

"What are you trying to get at? What do you mean?"

As suddenly as he had frowned, McGree laughed. He parted his flowing mustache, taking a puff from the cigar, answering coolly:

"We will talk of that together on your ship tonight. It was there I was going when I stopped here and saw that rat Duclos. He is no Frenchman, that Duclos. I know him. No Frenchman could swear as fast as he does. He is a Spaniard! Some day I will take his neck between my thumb and finger, so—and crack it! But tonight it is your neck, Will Heddon."

"What ——'s trick are you up to now?"

"Ah, so you are afraid of that —— scoundrel, Salvador McGree, eh? It is so?"

"I? Of you? No. I don't think the man's alive that could down you with his fists—but the world's full of clubs. No, McGree, I am not afraid of you."

McGree smote the counter with his ponderous fist:

"Any man but you say that I would know he lied. No man but you has ever put his fist in Black McGree's face. That is something to make you proud, Will Heddon. But you are not one little bit afraid, eh? You would better be. You owe me yet for that anchor, and for two bad eyes! ——! I could not tell night from noon! You owe me for much. Tonight that rat Duclos, he would have bit you. You owe me for that. I kept you for myself. And this auction—you have a sack of dollars, and who is to say you took it to Sydney, or to Sydney you did not take it? I? I do not care one ——. I had fun. And the good God, he knows we gave to the orphans and widows. If the orphans and widows do not get it, that is the good God's lookout, eh? But maybe you will go to Sydney and teach love to the Stockton girl, eh? Why do you not say something, Will Heddon?"

"I am wondering what you are up to."

"It is this. You give me the girl on your ship or give me the pearls. It is not the pearls I want, but it is not right that you should have so much. With pearls one may buy many women. I go aboard with you tonight to take one or the other. Is it the woman, Will Heddon?"

"No!"

"The pearls then. That is something for a broken heart—and two blacked eyes."

McGree spoke a little wearily but amused—

"You will give me the pearls?"

"No!"

"——! So? Not the woman? Not the pearls? Then what?" McGree asked with the tolerance of a man who expects anyhow to take what he wants. "What is it you will give me, eh?"

Heddon stared at him from narrowed eyes and did not answer.

"You grow sulky, my friend? You are not the one good sport, eh? There is much that you owe Salvador McGree. Come. We will go to your ship and have more talk, then do something!"

There was nothing that Heddon could do. The store had been cleared, and Dott, arms

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folded across his bared breast, waited and grinned. The other sailors, with cups of rum in hand, watched, listened, took sips and smiled at their captain's play and at the grim mystification with which Heddon regarded him.

"See here, McGree. Sometimes I think you are a *man*, and other times you act a —— scoundrel. Now what are you up to? You've got too much sense to try to take that girl with a gunboat here—or the pearls either."

"You think so, eh?"

"I know it!"

"You think she would not say that she went on my ship because she liked Salvador McGree, as she did for you, Will Heddon?"

"She didn't say that! Anyhow, you don't dare try that sort of thing now."

"Some things you don't know, my friend," said McGree with the almost musical smoothness that his deep voice could have when he wished. "The *Dolphin* she went off before sunset. Back to Lianfo. See? I have more sense than you think. So?"

"You don't mean to try to take that girl!"

"No? That is how you got her. Yet she tells that she came with you because she wished. Maybe too she would learn to love that —— scoundrel Salvador McGree if we went into a cabin and locked the door, you and me, Will Heddon? Who would come out, eh? And in South America I would make her a great lady. When I want something I take it, Will Heddon; but I give you the choice. You are a man I like. You give me Bennings's pearls—or the pearl-woman. What is it you say, Will Heddon?"

"You go to——"

"So?" asked McGree agreeably, enjoying Heddon's torment. "You have no gratitude, Will Heddon. I give you a choice and you talk like that to me. Come. We will go to your ship."

Heddon looked from the negro to Bill White, from White to the other sailors, sipping rum between puffs on cigars, then at Salvador McGree, huge, half-amused, complacently patient.

"Come. We don't get anywhere, Will Heddon, while you set here looking like a sick fish."

"Listen, McGree. It may mean nothing to you to keep your word or to stand up to a bargain, but I thought we had settled this matter once, at sea."

"You did, so? Was it your fist that knocked Salvador McGree down? No! If you want that we should fight again, here, now—good! I meant that was to be done tonight, but on your ship. That rat Duclos and your —— auction made me forget it."

Heddon looked down at his broken hand, still useless to fight with. But he knew that with two good hands he could not beat this giant.

"Are we to fight or be still good friends?" McGree asked.

"As you say!"

"—— your soul, I like you, Will Heddon. In South America I will make you my majordomo. But now where there is a woman and pearls, a man you like is nothing. Is it not so? Most sure. That is Life. Life is as it is. I don't knock my head against Life. I take what I can and give up what the other fellow is strong enough to steal from me. There is not much that I lose, Will Heddon!"

McGree laughed. He was not wholly joking, if joking at all, but was in a good-natured mood, tolerant, philosophical, triumphant.

"It shall be as fortune says, Will Heddon."

McGree took from the counter one of the gold coins and placed it in his palm.

"Heads is the woman. Tails is the pearls. That is agreed, an' now——"

"I agree to nothing of the sort!"

"It is not necessary that you agree. I have agreed. And it is to be as I say, unless you want to come out here on the floor and we will finish our fight. So, Will Heddon?"

"Suit yourself, Black McGree!"

"Then if it comes heads, you keep the woman——"

He threw the coin into the air. It struck the roof, came down, hit with clattering bounces, spun about and lay still.

McGree bent forward, then pointed—

"There is what luck has said for you."

Heddon reached for another cigaret, lighted it, shook out the match, looked from McGree to his sailors, and back to McGree.

"You do not want to know?" asked McGree. "You do not look to see?"

Heddon made a sweep of his hand that included the negro, Bill White, the other sailors.

"I have lost—before you tossed a coin."

"Come, then. Now we will go," said McGree softly.

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Then with sway of shoulders and heavy stamp of feet, he strode to the door, flung it open:

"Dott, you and Bill White come with me. You other fellows stay here. Too many thieves about. You watch this store, and tomorrow we will help ourselves to supplies." He grinned. "Will Heddon will want some supplies too, maybe. Bring your sack of money now, Will Heddon. You will find another beautiful girl in Sydney. Spend the money on her."

The sack was hardly heavy, not much more than the bottom was covered, for it was a big sack. Heddon slung it across his shoulder.

McGree stood by the door, waiting for him to pass, and Heddon stopped before him, seemed about to say something, to make one more appeal; then he glanced back toward the sailors who stood with lazy ease, smiling. McGree grinned tolerantly and shook his head:

"No use, Will Heddon, we are too many. And your old crawfish, Tom Wateman, he is over there drunk. On your ship there is only the boy and Oxenham."

McGree made a gesture contemptuous of anything to be expected of them.

THE wind was up, but the sky was not cloudy; yet to Heddon there was something in the very air like the coming of storm—a certain fierceness in the wind, as of whirling harbingers that rush ahead to announce the tempest. Filmy clouds were streaked out, like whipped pennants. The sky was full of stars, gleaming with shivering brilliancy.

From the scattered shacks rose loud voices, shouts, singing, the strumming of guitars; now and then the shrill merriment of a woman. The sand was like a blanket of snow. Palms, with frayed crowns, rose against the night like tall specters, full of evil, and swayed tossingly, restless as if uneasy.

Dott and White walked together, on before. McGree, thumbs in sash, strode at the side of Heddon, and now hummed a bit of a song, now made careless comment on the fancies that came to mind.

"Life, it is all one gamble. The tricky man, he wins—if he is strong enough. But the good God, he does not like the man who is honest because he is a coward. The good God, he does not give luck to cowards. See for yourself, Will Heddon. You dare to steal the woman that you want—then the good God makes her love you. But I will have the pearls, and there are many *señoritas* in South America."

Heddon did not answer, but swung the sack a little higher on his shoulder, trying its weight.

Near the water's edge McGree and Heddon waited while the two sailors went in search of a boat—anybody's boat. McGree, with face upturned, slowly looked back and forth across the sky.

"Wind is coming," he said soberly. "Rain is behind it. I smell rain. A sailor, he needs a nose." Then, with just a bit of uneasiness, staring all about: "Maybe I should have come into the lagoon. But there was not much wind to bring me in. ——, there is plenty now!"

On the far reefs the surf was thundering like an army against a battlement. Its spray foamed up in the night, showering clear over into the lagoon. The sea, too, under the rising wind seemed to be gathering itself for another tremendous assault in the unending, and never to be ended, warfare against the rock-ribbed land.

Heddon glanced this way and that. The sailors were out of sight. No one was near. McGree was unarmed and off guard, almost friendly off guard. But one shout and the sailors would come back, running. They were armed. It was useless to try now. Heddon scowled out across the water where he could see the glitter of the *Gloria's* cabin lights.

Dott found a boat, a ship's boat, and he and White turned it about, stern on, so that McGree could get in easily without wetting his feet. Heddon waded into the water and sat in the bow, the sack still on his shoulder.

White and Dott shoved off, climbed in, sat to their oars, facing McGree.

Even in the sheltered lagoon the water was now deeply ruffled. Storm was in the air.

Lights showed in the stern of the *Gloria* but the three or four other crafts that lay near appeared dead. The owners and crews were ashore, and standing lights were usually forgotten.

Dott and White grunted affably as they pulled together, each man at one oar, leaning far back to the stroke, swaying unhurriedly. All the stars of heaven were out, glimmering through the thin streaks of

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cloud. The negro pulled with a cheery "Un-ah!" low, nearly musical, almost like a chanty, to which White puffed a propulsive, "Huh!" McGree filled the stern, and appeared to be meditatively watching the fire-fly glow at the stern of the *Gloria*.

Heddon now felt that one time was as good as any other that would come. He brought the sack a little higher on his shoulder, then lurched forward. The sack swung over his shoulder and struck the head of the negro as he heaved backwards, pulling at the oar; and Dott fell backward, limp as a steak. Instantly, just as he had planned, Heddon's hand flashed out and seized on the gun stuck into the waistband of the unconscious man. He swung the gun up, with:

"Stay down, McGree! Don't move, White!"

Then with the muzzle close to White's head, Heddon took his gun from him and tossed it into the water.

"Ah, Salvador McGree, life is as luck makes it! I shall be pleased to have you on the *Gloria* and keep you there till I am ready to sail out!"

McGree cursed him, and most brutally cursed Dott and White, particularly Dott, who had let himself be knocked unconscious.

"Push him out of the way," said Heddon to White, "and take both oars."

White pushed the body of the negro into the bottom of the boat, took both oars and began a creaking pull toward the *Gloria*.

"Will Heddon," said McGree furiously, "this world it is not big enough for the two of us!"

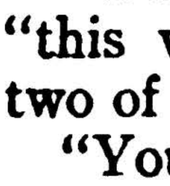
"You can jump overboard."

"No! I will have my turn again, and then——"

"This is hardly the time to make threats, McGree."

"I make threats as I please!" he said defiantly. "You bring me bad luck, always. Wherever you are, something it goes wrong for me. Never again will it happen. —— that Dott, and you, Bill White—you would be better in a shark's belly than on a ship!"

Then McGree became silent, glaring ragefully.



AS THEY drew near the *Gloria*, Heddon hailed the deck. He thought that he saw a shadow move, but there was no answer. Wateman, he knew, was on shore and, of course, drunk. Even McGree had known that. But Raeburn and Oxenham should have been about, unless down in the cabin where the lights were burning; even then they ought to have heard. Heddon, if he had known the *Dolphin* had left the Reefs, would not have stayed away from the schooner himself.

He hailed again—

"Raeburn!"

No answer.

"Come up under the main chains, bow on," said Heddon to White.

After some fiddling effort in which he pretended to be trying harder than he was, White put the bow of the boat under the chains. Heddon, standing on a thwart, made fast the boat's painter to a shroud.

"Now get back there, and don't move. Either of you!"

It was no easy matter to scramble up with one hand half as good as it should be; but Heddon stuck the revolver into his waistband and took hold, bracing his feet against the side of the ship, and wriggled up, at the same time, as best he could, keeping watch on McGree. McGree would undoubtedly have tried something, but White was in his way; and too, he knew from experience that any sudden move on his part would likely upset a boat because of his great size.

Heddon got to his knees on the chains, and looking down, said—

"All right, now, you ——"

From over the rail a glancing blow grazed his head. He straightened up. Other blows came at him. Above the clatter, grunts and oaths rose the shrill scream:

"Kill heem! Kill heem!"

Almost point-blank a gun went off at Heddon's head, and missed; and he blazed away blindly with the revolver. There were frightened oaths, Duclos's shrill cursing, shots, but the attack fell back. Those on the deck had not expected him to be armed.

Heddon peered across the rail, watching for any flicker of movement. The rigging made dim tracery of shadow, and objects took on a deceptive vagueness. Then he felt himself nearly crowded off his narrow foothold. Salvador McGree stood beside him. Heddon braced himself to take a blow as he brought the gun, muzzle on, against McGree, and his finger trembled to the pressure of the trigger before he saw McGree was not even looking at him.

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"That —— Duclos! He has come to steal what we want!"

Then with an explosive bellow, McGree roared—

"Ho, you rat, Duclos—this is the end of you!"

A kind of quick, excited, frightened jabber came from the shadowed places about the deck. They had not expected McGree, in the dimness had not recognized him in the approaching boat.

"How many are they, cap'n?" asked White nervously from the boat.

He had already cast off the painter, ready to make off as soon as McGree stepped down into it. White's was not the sort of courage that, when outnumbered, would take him into a fight.

"Not so many that we should care one ——, eh, Will Heddon!"

"No!" said Heddon, and together they scrambled inboard.

From behind the mizzen a revolver blazed at them, and from over the skylight, too. Heddon shot in the direction of the flashes, and McGree charged. His was a bull-like rush. He bellowed his challenge. Shots went at him. Missiles fell about him, on him. The deck was bare of hiding-places. He struck one man down, and went at another. Forms with hurtling rush made for the companionway.

"That's Jeffries!" Heddon cried as over the skylight's glow he caught the profiled glimpse of chin-whiskers, open mouth, slumped shoulders, all hunched forward in awkward flight toward the companion.

There was the shock of bodies. McGree had closed with another man, bulky and squat. With bare hands McGree jerked him back, flung him to the deck, then jumped on him, shouting—

"You skunk, Sanderson!"

That jump would have killed many a man, but Sanderson grunted heavily, then rolled over, staggered upright, with hand out:

"No—no—McGree! Wait—blast you—I'll tell you——"

"Bah!" McGree roared.

His fist struck, and Sanderson went staggering back like a drunken man backing down an incline.

Sanderson put his hands to his face. He made no sound. He did not try to strike back. McGree struck him again. Sanderson reeled to one side, giving way, falling as if crumbling.

McGree swore in furious amazement.

"You won't fight! Bah—the skunk is insulted to be called you!" He glared all about. No one was in sight. "What is the matter with you. Bah!"

In a daze, Sanderson was getting to his feet. McGree struck him contemptuously with an open hand.

"Wait, —— you, McGree!" Sanderson said heavily, putting out a hand as if begging. "Let me tell you——"

"Tell me nothing!" McGree cried, drawing back a fist to drive it into Sanderson's face.

"Duclos — Jeffries — I'm against 'em," Sanderson grunted in a kind of dazed, heavy anger. Then he puffed, getting his breath, and put both hands to his side. "They meant to double-cross me. When your boat was coming—just now—I overheard them. 'That pig-headed Sanderson, he will get nothing,' Duclos said that. They found the pearls. Duclos was mad because I did nothing there in the store tonight—when you threw him into the crowd. I won't fight you. I hope you kill him!"

"So?" said McGree, surprized, doubtful, half-suspecting a trick, again looking all about the deck. "I will kill him all right."

Sanderson had his hands heavily against his side:

"You have broken my ribs, —— you!"

"Will Heddon! Will Heddon!" McGree called. "If they have killed that fellow——"

"Since when have you been friends with him?" Sanderson said dully. He stood bent over, breathing in short gasps.

"We are no friends!" said McGree, glaring. "But I like him better than fellows that are my friends. Will Heddon!"

There was no answer.

Sanderson, with a grunt very like a repressed groan, sat down on the hatch, bent over, straightened up, then clumsily got up. No position gave him ease. Again the grunt. Then:

"They will kill you. You'd better go ashore and get some men. I want you to kill Duclos."

"How many came with you?"

"Five of us. Two sailors. Mine."

McGree walked to the side, calling for White; but White had rowed off. McGree cursed him.

"There's our boat—other side—Wateman is in it. Dead I guess. You can go ashore in that."

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"No," McGree looked all about again. "When you heard what Duclos said why didn't you call your sailors and kill him yourself? Him and that old robber crab Jeffries? Eh? . Steal everything yourself, then. You are a fool. Your head has nothing in except what somebody puts there. You are a fool all these years. Duclos—it is not the first time that rat has played you tricks. You wrecked your ship, the four-master—did it to ruin her owner. Ho, I know about that! Duclos, he made you believe her owner had your wife. He lied. He used you all the time. Now you do nothing. Bah! You call to your sailors now—tell them not to fight. Shout to them."

Sanderson looked up with steady blankness, in a glimmering way half-understanding what McGree had said. It was known all through the islands that Sanderson had ruined himself, his career, by letting the big insured ship he commanded go on the rocks; and afterwards he had taken his black fortune with dull and silent resignation.

"Shout them on deck, your sailors!" McGree commanded.

"I don't know where they have gone."

"Idiot! Pig of a fool! I'll break more than your ribs! Call—go to the companion——"

He seized Sanderson, half-dragging him. They came to the skylight. McGree stopped, peered down, saw nothing. He knocked on it with his fist. In a moment Duclos's savage little face peered up. He, being in the light, could see nothing; and ducked back as McGree roared:

"Ha, rat! You are in the corner now!"

McGree again grasped Sanderson, pulling him to the companion:

"Shout to your sailors. Call them out!"

Sanderson grunted and gasped; then, like a weary man speaking out of a dream—

"How—my wife—about her—how do you know?"

McGree was without mercy. Jeeringly he answered—

"It was me she loved!"

"You lie!"

"Sure I lie. But I know just the same. She was a good woman. She would not love me. That's how I know Duclos lied to you. But it served you right for being the fool then—like now!"

"But tell me——"

"No more talk! I'll break your head off! Call your sailors—" He had Sanderson at the companion entrance—"or down you go, head first."

In a dazed mechanical tone, Sanderson called:

"Hardy? Jim Hardy? Clay? Hardy? Clay?"

Pause. Then, muffled dimly from below:

"Sanderson? That you, Sanderson?"

"Tell them to come out," said McGree.

Like a man with no ideas but those thrust upon him, Sanderson repeated:

"Come out. Come on deck. It's all right!"

From somewhere in the dimness below Heddon growled—

"Like —— it is!"

"Ho, Heddon! Will Heddon!" McGree shouted.

"Now what are you after?" Heddon answered doubtfully from the darkness.

"Down you go," McGree ordered, pushing Sanderson over the coaming, on the ladder, shoving to make him step down.

"Back there! Stay back!" Heddon warned. "I've got one bullet left, and the —— gets somebody. Stay back!"

Sanderson, afraid of Heddon's menace, tried to hold himself on the ladder; but McGree, excitedly furious, shouted,

"Down you go!" and lunged.

Sanderson's hold was broken. His feet were shaken loose, and he bumped and rolled, falling. At the foot of the ladder he grunted two or three times, then sighed deeply, and with slowly spoken words cursed:

"You dago —— Blast you! You've killed me—unh—unh!"

McGree, descending step by step heavily, answered with bull-throated harshness:

"What do I care how many like you I kill! Heddon, Will Heddon?"

"Look out, McGree. Some of those fellows are in the pantry there, with a gun. Duclos is in the cabin. I'm watching both sides!"

McGree laughed savagely, and came on down the ladder. Hardly noticing Sanderson, McGree stepped over him.

"So we have the rats in a corner, Will Heddon? They will try to kill men like us another time, eh? Where is your —— pantry?"

Heddon, under the ladder, held the gun in readiness and watched both sides, fore and aft, at the same time. He said:

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"There's a lantern—just back of you. Light that. But look out!"

McGree struck a match. It flared for a moment between his upraised fingers, lighting his dark face, gleaming on the earrings, and in his large dark eyes, now hotly bright; then the match went out. McGree swore. Inexcitably he struck another match, raised the chimney, touched the wick, carefully set the chimney back in place, and looked about him.

"In there, is it?" he pointed at the pantry door.

"Yes," said Heddon, "but——"

McGree strode to the door, pounded on it with his fist—

"In there, you fellows!"

"What is it!" a voice inquired doubtfully.

"You want your throats cut, you stay in there! Come out!"

"What's to be done to us? How many are out there?"

"Salvador McGree and all his crew of rascals. You come out—or we come in!"

"No!"

"I've got an ax," McGree said convincingly. "All my crew. You come out now, all right. I come in after you——"

"You won't hurt us?"

"If you come out, no. If you don't—you won't have heads on your shoulders!"

"Honest, now?" a voice asked doubtfully.

"Sure, honest. If you come."

The pantry door opened an inch or two. An eye peered out, timidly, and saw McGree standing alone, no ax, no men. The door closed quickly. McGree's shoulder hit it, and against the frantic push of those inside, he burst through. A shot was fired, another—then a man lurched out, thrown bodily. Heddon jumped forward.

Then the door in the passageway behind him opened furtively. Within the cabin a woman screamed warningly—

"Will!"

Jeffries' face peered out. Duclos was by him, and cried:

"Queek! Shoot heem!"

Heddon swung his arm backward and fired. The door closed with a slam, and there was the scratching rattle of locks being thrust home.

McGree, moving backward, came out of the pantry. He held a man by the neck and pulled him head-first.

"So," he cried, jerking the fellow and letting him fall. "So, you think maybe you won't come!"

He kicked the fallen man, then drew back his foot to kick again.

"No—for God's sake, no!" Heddon shouted.

McGree stopped, straightened up, looked with amazement toward Heddon; then angrily tore open the shirt of scarlet silk, pointing to his breast as he glared at Heddon:

"Don't? Don't! When twice he shot me — here — you see? Here and here! Bah——"

Again McGree kicked the man. Then, facing toward the lantern, he looked down at his bared, dark, hairy breast, poking near the two red spots with a forefinger. His great body seemed brutally insensible to pain, and he appeared almost naively curious of those red dots. He coughed suddenly, then spat. Blood trickled on his lips. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and, holding his hand up near the lantern, looked curiously at the red smear that had come away on his knuckles.

"That is nothing for me!" he said proudly.

Then with a downward glance at Sanderson—

"What do you grin at?"

Sanderson was against a bulkhead, half-sitting, half-lying. He said nothing. His eyes looked up with a fixed, hot, nearly defiant stare.

"Where," Heddon asked hurriedly of him, "is Raeburn? Oxenham? The girls—where are they?"

Sanderson shifted his eyes a little, moved them from McGree to Heddon. His dull face remained expressionless. He understood. He could speak. But he would not answer. That was his impotent revenge—silence. He lay like a chunk of dead flesh with living eyes.

"Where is an ax?" McGree asked loudly.

He had torn off his shirt, as if that somehow had something to do with the hot, smothering sensation that he was beginning to feel.

Heddon hurried up the ladder and took an ax from its rack under the skylight; then he paused to peer through the skylight.

He could see Duclos acting as if insane, with Jeffries standing open-mouthed, stupefied, staring about the deck. Duclos,

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knife in hand, was jumping up and down stamping, darting about as if crushing insects that swarmed over the deck. Heddon peered in fascinated puzzlement, then a chill ran through his bones.

Duclos, cornered, knowing that he had lost, in a frenzy of spitefulness was destroying the pearls he had found so that no one else might have them.

With a blow of the ax Heddon crashed in the skylight and shouted—

"Stop that, you ——"

Duclos, with face upturned in fright, flashed to one side of the room, then laughed. His laughter was shrill with madness. Jeffries stumbled backward, half-raising his gun and got out of sight.

"Oh, Will—Will, come!"

That was Margaret. Heddon bent over, searchingly, but could not see her. Then he bounded down the ladder.

Heddon one-handedly drove the ax at the door. As he swung it back for a second blow, McGree snatched it from him.

"There is no time—give it to me!"

Within the room there was a shrill confusion of voices, screams, shots, the sound of struggling.

With blow on blow on blow, McGree cut into the wood. His great half-naked body swayed to the swing of the ax. His breathing was hoarse. Sometimes he coughed even as he swung. With a force that splintered the wood as much by the blow as by the edge, he unhinged the door until it trembled on its bolted locks. Then with a rush he threw himself against it. The door swayed with a rickety tremble, but held. Together he and Heddon drove themselves at it, and with splintering creaks the door gave way, toppling inward. With a stumbling rush they staggered into the cabin.

Oxenham and Raeburn, bound and gagged, lay out on the deck where they had writhed and floundered in the desperate effort to free themselves. Gloria stood as if dazed in fright with hands outspread against the bulkhead behind her, and blood streamed from her fingers, cut by the knife she had grasped as Duclos slashed.

Margaret leaned against the table, in the last effort of exhaustion. She had been slashed. Her waist lay open. Her breast was cut. Her arms were cut.

Duclos, knowing that this was the end of him, had tried to destroy everything that McGree and Heddon would prize. He had crushed the pearls, and, as madly, at the last moment tried to kill the woman, Margaret.

McGREE, after a lurching stagger, unbalanced by crashing through the door, straightened up, seeming to fill the cabin, towering, broad as a giant. His great dark face lighted with a kind of fierce humor. With one hand he swung back the ax and jeeringly shouted—

"Rat, you now——"

From half-way across the room Duclos, small, wasp-like, lithely sinister, raised on his toes and with an overhand sweep, sent his double-edged knife. It went like an arrow, and like an arrow at the target sank to the hilt in McGree's breast. But McGree hardly paused. With a long stride he reached Duclos. The ax gleamed in a circling blur of movement, struck at neck and shoulder, and Duclos fell to the deck, headless.

Heddon's hand swept out and seized Jeffries, shaking him, choking him, pushing him toward a bulkhead to beat his head against it.

"No—oh, no!" Margaret begged, half-falling on the table as she spoke. "He tried to save us—shot at him—no—don't!"

Heddon shoved him aside, contemptuously, though at the last moment Jeffries, with a sort of doddering frantic marksmanship, had tried to kill Duclos.

McGREE, unsteadily as if drunken, but holding the ax as if about to chop again, looked down on the small thing that had been Duclos, and said mockingly:

"Rat, you bite no more! And so little a thing as you to kill that —— scoundrel, Salvador McGree! Ho, you will boast of it in ——, eh?"

Drunkenly he looked at the knife's hilt on his breast. He touched it, then dropped the ax and grasping the hilt, jerked the knife out and flung it disgustedly to the deck.

Dazed, he stared about him; coughed, half-doubled over, coughing again and again. He straightened up, puzzled. He rubbed, fumbling, at his eyes.

"I can't see—I am——"

He staggered, hand out, groping against the table.

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"Ho, so this is death! Will Heddon? For a woman—pearls—this is death. But to live without them, that is not worth living. In South Amer——"

He peered about, brushing at his eyes.

"I did not mean to take her, Will Heddon —I swear—I swear—I——"

Heddon placed a chair behind his sagging body and helped him into it. McGree did not seem to notice. He fumbled confusedly with his face.

"I can't see!" he said a little angrily. His head swayed. "So this is death—Ho, Señor Death! ——"

In his throat there was a vague sound like laughter being strangled.

He fell forward on the table and lay for a moment breathing heavily; then the breathing stopped. And so he died.

XVIII

THOSE on the *Gloria* were hardly aware of the storm though it lasted for hours and was very severe; even at her anchor in the sheltered lagoon the schooner bucked and plunged, dragging her anchor into shallow water and beating her bottom on the sand. They got old Tom out of the boat in which Duclos and Sanderson had made fast to the *Gloria* when they boarded her. His head was swollen and cut from blows, and he was still confusedly drunk.

He had been in a shanty bar, talking with loud incoherence of pearls, a busted looking-glass, of Will Heddon tramping on a pearl, of how them pearls was hid so nobody could ever find 'em, saying that a sea-beast would always catch the prutty little mermaid but that ol' Tom Wateman would never help 'im do it. No!

Two of Sanderson's sailors had taken him in tow, feeling that Duclos and Sanderson and Jeffries would be interested; and they had found Duclos after McGree had driven him from Stockton's store.

Forcibly they took him into the boat, told him to be quiet; but as the boat drew near the *Gloria*, Tom had begun wildly to yell for those on board to look out. The men had beat him over the head to make him silent, then quickly came on board.

Now when he was got on deck, old Tom, with a look of suffering in his eyes, stumbled about wherever Heddon went, begging Heddon to throw him overboard.

"I ain't no use, Will!— I want 'o be throwed o'erboard like I desarve— Never —I swear never 'nother drop—blasted lookin'-glass done it—seven years bad luck yit comin' to us, Will— Oh, do somethin' to me like I desarve——"

Raeburn at last got him into a bunk where he continued to mutter and struggle in his dreams.

MARGARET had fainted, partly from loss of blood. Gloria had not fainted, and in silence, as if she had lost speech, looked at everything that went on for a long time, and would not be led away. Her hands were so badly cut that she could not use them.

When Heddon had lifted Margaret from the deck, he thought her dead. She was covered with blood. He took her into the room that had been her father's and placed her on the bed. With Raeburn helping him, he tore bandages and put them to her cuts. She lay unconscious.

Raeburn explained as Heddon worked over her, tying her cuts, baffled in trying to stop their bleeding:

"—heard Tom yelling like mad. We thought you were bringing him. That he had the jim-jams. All of us ran on deck. Then they were over and at us. No chance, Will. They had guns out. 'I won't let 'em hurt ye, Peggy. I love ye!' Old Jeffries said that. He tried to hold her. It was funny, Will—but I was so scared I couldn't laugh. Duclos was grinning and polite. He made me think he was going to cut my nose off—that knife—right up against my face, wagging it back and forth. Telling me to stand still. That he'd drive it into me if I didn't. Then we were taken down in the cabin.

"'Pearls,' he said. 'Where are the pearls?' He had that knife right up against Oxey. Margaret here said quickly—

"'I'll show you!' She did. He played with them—counted them a dozen times—the other fellows tied us up. They meant to wait for you. Duclos wanted you. Awful ——, that fellow! Told Margaret he was going to drink her health in a cup of your blood. That Jeffries just stood there and grinned. They didn't tie the girls.

"When somebody said you were coming they threw stuff out of the stern lockers then made Margaret and Gloria get down into the lockers. I thought they would

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smother. We heard you hail the deck. Couldn't answer. Couldn't get loose. It was awful there just before you broke in—tried to kill Margaret, and Gloria, she hit him. Caught at his knife. It was Margaret he wanted to kill. Old Jeffries shot—couldn't hit anything. Too scared. It was awful——"

Heddon had done all that he could for her. She was still unconscious. Her cheeks were without color. The yellow hair was tangled and the curls crusted with spots of dried blood. The face was thinned with loss of blood. She looked like a weary girl that slept. The gift of beauty had been thrust upon her as deformity might have been thrust upon another; and she, no less than those who came within its spell, was helpless to evade its destiny. Heddon remembered his bitterness, his cruelty. He felt physically weak. The tenderness in his repressed nature spread through him, and was warm like shame, flushed his dark hard face, made his hands unsteady.

"Always a fool!" he said to himself, of himself, thinking of how he had tried to hate her.

HEDDON found old Jeffries in the cabin, holding on the table, staring stupidly, gaping about, now at the great motionless body of McGree, now at the small beheaded thing on the deck.

"Get to —— out of here!" said Heddon.

"I tried to kill 'im!" Jeffries answered in an injured whine.

"Not till you saw we were breaking in—thought it would get you off! Well, it did, though you missed him—probably on purpose. Get out!"

Talking through his drooping mouth, Jeffries said:

"That ain't so! I done it for her—I—I jest couldn't give her up—I——"

Then he stopped short, and sidling, half-backward, went out, afraid that Heddon was about to strike him. He went on deck, into the whirl of rain, slunk about, and finally crept down into the forecastle, huddling in the dark, alone, miserable.

SANDERSON'S two sailors, slouching humbly, were in the cabin. They were morbidly curious, looking a little guilty and shamed, and battered.

Some spots on the deck were strewn with the powder and particles of crushed pearls, and in places blood and pearl-dust mingled, and had been marked with footprints.

The sailors had been staring about furtively, looking for any pearls that might have escaped unbroken. They lowered their eyes when Heddon turned and watched them.

The *Gloria* at anchor was riding nearly as roughly as if at sea. The lagoon was storm-swept. Heddon had nothing to fear from these fellows. All the fight was out of them. They never had much anyhow. He would have told them to be off the ship, but the boat, tied alongside, had filled and sank under the bucking of the *Gloria* as she wrestled with her anchor. He gave them a long, hard look, said nothing and went into the passage-way.

Sanderson lay propped against a bulkhead. His dull face was still expressionless, but looked as if a bucket of water had been thrown into it. He could hardly breathe. The rolling of the ship jarred him.

Heddon frowned, then doubtfully—

"What's the matter with you?"

"I don't know—my leg an' ribs—when that blasted dago threw me down the ladder—my hip seems—unh—broken. I'm glad he got it! I'm glad both of them got it! Unh."

"You don't expect me to be sorry for what's happened to you, either, do you?"

"I don't want no pity!"

"You haven't got any that I know of."

Heddon watched him. His face was bruised. He was rolled and jarred. He looked like a big, chunky dummy. He grunted, coughed, swore, with a kind of grumbling futility. Sweat ran off his face, and when he gulped at air he seemed to be stabbed.

"Oh ——," said Heddon, "this can't go on—though you deserve worse."

He took hold of Sanderson, pulled at him.

"Get up. I'll help you."

"My hip—I can't stand—ow!"

Heddon went back to the doorway, called:

"Raeburn! And here, you fellows bear a hand. Sanderson's slewing about like a chest adrift."

"He can go to the ——!" said one of the sailors.

"He lied to us—said it was all right to come out!" said the other.

Heddon's face clouded—

"Out here and bear a hand, both of you!"

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They looked, one at the other, then with surly stumbling crossed the cabin, squeezing past Heddon in the doorway. Raeburn came too, from somewhere.

The four of them, tugging and shuffling, got Sanderson into a bunk, but he would not lie down.

"I got to set up—can't get my breath—layin' down—ow—unh!"

"Get some whisky, Raeburn. Out of the chest. Here's the key."

When Raeburn brought the whisky, Heddon handed the bottle to Sanderson, saying:

"Try this. It may help."

The two sailors, a little stealthily, had edged back into the cabin, hopeful of picking up unbroken pearls.

Sanderson spilled much of the liquor, but got the bottle to his mouth and drank deeply. His drinking ended with coughing. He dropped the bottle and pressed his hands against his sides. The bottle broke on the deck.

"You *are* smashed up," said Heddon.

"Aw what of it!—I quit carin' what happened to me—long ago. Unh—oh—that hurts!" He gasped loudly, then gnawed on his mustache and held his hands against his side. "That blasted dago—I tried to tell him—feels like all my bones are broke."

"Well, it serves you right," said Heddon, without anger. "Coming on board, attacking women. Would serve you right anyhow for what you did to Oxenham, there in Lianfo. And men say you used to be a decent fellow, good sailor. And you married a boy like that to a dirty beach whore!"

"Ow—wait—unh!—I'll tell you."

But he looked at Heddon as if nearly minded not to tell him. Then:

"He was too drunk to know, that Oxey—we stood 'em up together—I jabbered a lot of stuff. Told her it was Latin. She didn't know. That was the joke. Duclos's idea. He said they'd think they were married. Make as much of a mess. Then some day he'd tell 'em. He was a bad un, Duclos. I'm glad he killed McGree. I'm glad McGree killed him. Unh! You got another drink some'ers—I'm— Ow, it makes no difference what happens to me——"

THE next morning Heddon sat on the skylight of the *Gloria* and with uninterested steadiness looked at nothing; yet there was much to see. A terrific wind had beat the Kulicos. Windwhipped tide had leaped the reef barriers, making a tidal overflow into the lagoon. Some of the vessels were on the beach, two on beam's end, one half-submerged. The *Gloria* had dragged her anchor, but the anchor held.

The afternoon before, the captain of the *Dolphin* had seen his barometer fall with amazing suddenness. He got up steam, anxiously awaiting the return of Lieutenant Masters and the sailors; then when they came he at once put out to sea to be clear of the rocks, and those who had seen him leave thought that he was heading for Lianfo. Other shippers there had been too excited ashore to pay much attention to barometers, if they had them. Most of those who came in and out of the Kulicos depended on their eyes and nose, and the wary sailor-sense, for weather signs.

The storm had been such as frequently strikes the flat island of the tropics. On shore not a building was standing. Every one had been blown over, flattened out as if by the smash of a great hand. Palms lay overturned, and those that had stood to their roots were thrashed about until their crowns were thin and ragged as if the wind had carried knives.

The Kulicos had been hit once or twice before in the same way. But men came to them, as before; built their shanties of wreckage and sheet-iron, got in women, put out in the search for pearls, came in and merrily cursed, danced, drank and gambled—and so they would again.

The storm had been of shorter duration than most; but it had done its work, and having done it, passed. The sun came up on a nearly cloudless morning; but the sea boiled with foam, and the great waves, piled up by the wind in the night, still ran like moving hills, yeasty and ragged.

Heddon had left young Raeburn, in a kind of fretful exhaustion, sleeping in a chair. Oxenham, pale as sickness could have made him, dozed up-right on a stool.

Twice when he had looked in at her, Heddon found Gloria motionless, wide-eyed, still frightened by what she had learned of men and their evilness. He had finally brought Margaret to consciousness with wet cloths, but she would hardly open her eyes before closing them again as if very weary. He could not tell whether she dozed or fainted.

Now he sat alone on the deck and with

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brooding futility regretted many things. He had meant that one women of the kind whose beauty makes men mad should be taught bitterness, should know that there were men who scorned her kind, her beauty, her body, the very magic that is Woman. Like a fool he had played with fire, the ancient fire that burns in the bones of men—a fire that only age could turn to ashes, and even in the ashen age of old Jeffries it still smoldered.

OXENHAM came on deck. He was worn out, and pale. He looked all about in a sort of sad astonishment, incredulous, nearly dazed.

"Terrible! Terrible!" he exclaimed quietly.

He had completely lost the boyish look that had begun to go on the night when he had blundered into the Gallows. He was aged now, as men always seem to age in the tropics, suddenly growing gross with bulging fat, or becoming wearily anemic.

He sat down beside Heddon and after a time cautiously said—

"Will?"

"What is it?"

"Will, I've been thinking——"

He stopped, nervously, expecting to be interrupted, jeered. But Heddon did not say anything; did not seem to be listening.

"Will," he began again, "I've been thinking—my plantation and all. I don't want to stay down here any longer after all—you know—that's happened. I feel better to know there wasn't any marriage, but it's bad enough. I'm tired of these South Seas. There's my plantation—you run it. We'll go shares. You fix the shares to suit yourself. I've got a good thing there. You listening, Will?"

"Yes."

"What do you say, Will?"

Oxenham put an arm on Heddon's shoulder, a little timidly at first, but it was not shaken off. He repeated—

"What do you say, Will?"

"I don't know. You're a mighty decent fellow, after all I've done to you."

"You always were the best friend I had, Will!"

"You're a generous liar," said Heddon dully.

"You ought to settle down, Will. Take hold of something. I'm through with the South Seas. And I'm being selfish. If I sold out—you know how it is when you try to sell out. Make more money going shares with you. Think of the future, Will——"

"The future be ——. I'm thinking of —are you going to marry that girl?" Heddon looked up as he asked it.

Oxenham shook his head.

"Well, why not?"

"I asked Gloria, yesterday, last evening. She said, 'No.' "

"Hang women anyhow," Heddon growled, dejectedly mystified. "I don't know what's to become of her, now. All the pearls gone. This ship half a wreck—look at that rigging. Couldn't have been worse if we'd been at sea. She dragged her anchor to shallow water and pounded herself on the sand. I'll bet she's half-full of water. And I promised Bennings I'd look after that girl. I've been a blasted fool."

"You couldn't help it, Will."

"Oh the —— I couldn't! I always do the worst possible thing—like that time I slapped Lord Kelso. In the diplomatic service—ambassador's attaché. In all civilized countries the person of a diplomat is inviolable—smaller man than I, too. But of course, I would do the worst thing possible. I ought to have been locked up for life—in a madhouse."

"He was glad enough to hush the matter, Will. That woman—many people now think she was merely his agent, and when she found she couldn't get information out of you—out of your father's department, she wanted to get you into trouble. She thought you would insult Kelso, then get thrown out of the service. She never, of course, thought you would hit him!"

"I got thrown out, all right."

"You did," said Oxenham, feeling almost a chill as he recalled the hysterical agitation that Heddon had caused social and official Washington.

Heddon leaned forward, elbows to knees, looked at the deck and ran his fingers through his hair:

"But worse than that was there on Lianfo. Like a savage—that girl— Why, I slapped her when she cried out. Like a slap anyhow. Then she got me out of it. I don't understand women!"

"I do!" said Oxenham with conviction.

Heddon looked up at him in surprized inquiry.

"Yes. I understand. She loves you, Will."

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"Oh, go to the ——. Nonsense. You're a dunce. She hates me—she has every reason to hate me."

"She has done everything to show you that she doesn't. Why, Will, she *loves* you! She told Gloria that she loved you. Gloria told me."

"Loves me?"

"You. Gloria knew it a long time ago. Raeburn knows it. Old Tom knows it. I could see it, even before she told me yesterday that she was glad you carried her away from Lianfo. That's one reason, Will, I'm suggesting the plantation. I'm through with it, anyhow. I thought you—you can take her there. Odd, isn't it? I expected her to live there with me. But, really, I don't feel bad. It was her taking up with old Jeffries that upset me so awfully. You —you are—well—I'd do anything for you. But I don't think I'll ever marry. Women are—I don't understand them."

"No man does," said Heddon thoughtfully. Then: "But that plantation—you sell it. I don't think I could do that. Yet —I don't know."

"Don't be stubborn, Will."

"I'm—I'm not civilized. McGree, poor ——, he was a gentleman to what I am. Wanted a woman fit to be a 'lady' when he was president of some banana republic. He probably would have been. Queer, I thought he hated me, too. I don't understand Life."

HEDDON tried noiselessly to open the door into the stateroom in case Margaret might be asleep; but she was not sleeping.

She did not move. Only her eyes turned toward him, and her gaze hovered watchfully on his face.

He closed the door gently behind him, and came to the side of her bed. Motionlessly she watched. His voice, when he did speak, was vaguely husky. His words fell in fragments of sentences:

"I want to tell you. Try to explain. Can make no difference. It's all I can do. But all my life whatever was worst to do, I did it. As with you. It wasn't you—" he was trying to explain without being truthful; without bringing up Oxenham's mess, her father's torment and rage, without hurting her— "It was because of other women, too. I thought they were all alike. All beautiful women. I wanted to make you miserable because—oh—well—because I always do the worst thing."

Margaret's motionless gaze searched into the dark depth of his eyes. She asked softly—

"Was she *very* beautiful, that woman who made you think all women were—were like me?"

"Yes. That's why—that's mostly why I did it. Because you are beautiful. I tried to hate you."

A very faint smile lay like a vague glow of sunshine on her pale face. She said:

"I know you did. I tried to do that to you, too—and couldn't. Life is like that. I would rather be here—like this—weak and hurt—than still at Lianfo. I did mean to marry that awful old man. You were right. I was *selling* myself. You treated me justly."

"No."

"Yes. I am glad!"

Her pale cheeks colored a little. She said no more, but there was a glow in her tired eyes.

"Everything," Heddon told her, "has gone to smash. The ship's nearly as bad as wrecked. Pounded on the sand—dragged the anchor into shallow water. You here—hurt this way. Not a thing can be done."

She raised her arm weakly, putting out a hand toward him, to touch him reassuringly. He took the small hand, holding it.

"You hurt. The pearls, gone. Some of them were to be yours. Your father wished it."

Margaret laughed weakly, happily. Her eyes flashed—

"They were French pearls, mostly——"

"No, they weren't!"

"But they were! They were pearls from that little picture frame McGree threw back on our deck. I had taken them out, oh days ago, to look at them, to compare them with the others. When that fearful little Duclos demanded pearls, I showed him those. I hid most of the others—not all—but most."

"You did that!"

"Yes." She laughed as one who is pleased though very tired.

"You—you—I don't know what to say!"

"Ah, you don't?"

"No," he said, knowing that she meant something half-playful.

"Shall I tell you what to say?"

"Yes."

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She closed her eyes and whispered the immemorial command of Woman—

"Tell me that you love me!"

XIX

THE *Dolphin* put back to the Kulicos to see what the storm had done, and found men and some women standing about in idle dejection, looking at the wreckage.

The crew, with the ship's doctor and most of the officers, came ashore. Heddon met them and told what had happened.

The doctor came to the *Gloria*. He was a little bulldog of a man, with a talkative, calloused manner under which he had a great deal of sympathy for those who needed it.

"Sanderson," he said, "is badly smashed. Ribs caved in. Hip broken. We'll take him to Lianfo. He's a wreck. We're taking all you fellows, I guess. Be a long time before this schooner goes to sea again. That one girl's not hurt much, except her hands. Lord, she must have courage—grab a knife with bare hands! The other, she's badly hurt, you know it? Guess you do. Darned good job you did of tying her up. You'd have made a good surgeon. Got the long fingers and steady nerves. And what a slaughter house you made of this ship, you fellows! Lord! Never saw so much blood. We'll move Miss Cardan—I've sent word to have a stateroom fixed up for her. Turn Masters out of his berth. He can sleep on the deck. Do him good. Ha! Ha! She lost a lot of blood, that girl. Had it to lose. Not like old Jeffries—old mummy. Why didn't somebody prod him with a knife? He wouldn't have bled. We'll move her last thing this evening when it's cool. Cook her, this sun. She's weak now. You are coming too?"

"Yes," said Heddon. "I have a plantation there—one I'm taking over."

Heddon had what he felt was one piece of luck. It gave him satisfaction, seemed a good omen. On shore in company with some of the *Dolphin* sailors he ran into the negro Dott and Bill White. It took very few words with the bit of a threat in them to make Dott and White lead the way to where they had cached the sack of money from Stockton's auction. Heddon turned it over, then and there, to Lieutenant Masters, telling him who it was for and why.

THE *Dolphin* sailors took the bodies of Salvador McGree and Duclos ashore to bury them. They dug one big hole and placed both bodies in it. The night before, during the storm, their two ships, almost side by side, had struck the rocks.

Late in the afternoon a boat from the *Dolphin* rowed into the lagoon to take off Gloria and her sister.

Twice during the afternoon Heddon had quietly opened the stateroom door and peered in. Each time Margaret had been sleeping, the faintest trace of a smile, as if she dreamed happily, on her pale face, shadowed by the tangled mist of yellow hair. Each time he had stood gazing at her, proud of her, worshipful, thrilled by her beauty, until, afraid that his presence might awaken her, he had gone away. The doctor had said she needed sleep, would sleep, that it was good for her.

Heddon now stood on deck watching the *Dolphin's* boat. The little doctor sat in the stern sheets, hat in one hand and scrubbed his clipped head with a handkerchief in the other. It was very hot, though nearly sundown. It was ebb tide.

Heddon felt rather than heard some one beside him. It was Gloria.

"Our troubles will soon be pretty well over, Gloria," he said.

Calmly she looked up at him, her face nearly expressionless except for the enigmatic steadiness in her eyes.

"I've talked it over with Oxenham. You'll be all right. He has an aunt. Fine old lady—but don't ever mention my name. She doesn't like me. I disgraced the family once. She will do anything for him. He'll take you to her. She will like you. You'll like Washington."

Gloria did not answer. She seemed hardly to hear what he said. He had the odd impression that she had suddenly grown older, somehow maturing under his very eyes.

"What's the matter, Gloria?"

"You have not told me the truth, Will," she said quietly.

"The truth? I certainly have. What do you mean?"

"You said you did not love my sister."

Gloria was not angry, she did not appear hurt. She was quiet, and had the baffling mysterious poise of one who knows her mind and heart and will not be confused.

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He felt almost embarrassed. It was absurd, this mere child's attitude and jealousy, though it was strangely unlike jealousy.

"See here, Gloria—this is preposterous. I didn't when I told you—didn't think so——"

"But you did. I felt it then. I knew it. You did not tell me the truth, Will."

"But, child——"

"I am a woman!"

"I know, but very young. You are going to Washington. You will meet people that you will like. Different world, something you've never dreamed of. People will like you. Forget all about these South Seas."

"I am a woman!" she repeated in quiet pride. "I will never forget that I love you. When I give my love, Will, I give it for all time. Nothing can make me change. I will go away from you because you want me to go. But I would go wherever you went, and whether you were poor or sick, I would stay. My mother is not my mother for she went away from the man she had said she loved. My sister is not my sister for she has loved many men. As long as I live, I will never say, 'I love you,' to any other man."

"Gloria, this is——"

He began hastily, and stopped. However much of a woman, to him she was only a child. He hardly knew whether what she had said was admirable or stupid, but there was dignity in her calm earnestness. He said nothing.

The boat was near. The doctor called up:

"Hi there, Heddon! Everybody ready? All right——"

He came on board, moving with a sort of brusque vivacity as if there was a sort of bounce and rebound in his muscles.

"Help this girl into the boat, Heddon. I'll go get the other one ready. All fixed for her on the ship."

Heddon carefully helped Gloria down into the upraised arms of sailors in the boat, then handed down the small bundles of things that she treasured and wanted to take off with her. Then he went below.

The door was open. The doctor stood by Margaret, a hand on her wrist. She had not moved.

"Why," said Heddon in a low tone, "she is still asleep!"

"She is dead." The doctor replaced her arm. "Too much blood—she bled to death while asleep. Had lost too much already. What a beautiful girl, too."

THE day was done. The shadows of coming night spread themselves flatly over sea and sand. On the outer reefs the surf pounded with a sound of mighty sobbing.

Heddon stood on the deck of the stranded *Gloria*, and in the short-lived twilight watched the boat being rowed across the lagoon toward the *Dolphin* that lay outside. Old Tom, with staring red-rimmed eyes, stood by him, muttering inaudibly. Young Raeburn, on the other side of Heddon, held the railing and watched in heavy-hearted silence.

Oxenham and Gloria were in the boat—and Margaret, still sleeping with the glow of a smile on her tired face, and the mist of curling golden hair shadowed her forehead.

"We'll bury her at sea," the doctor had said. "These blasted Reefs no place to lay away a girl like that."

Oxenham had tried in every way he knew to have Heddon come.

"Do anything—get you to come, Will. It's not right, your staying here. Sooner or later a fellow goes to smash in these Islands. I've learned that much."

"No. Some ship or other will be in here in a few days. We'll go pearling again. We are pearlers—that's all. Pearls."

"Don't throw your self away, Will. Come on with me. Why, it'll be all right even to go home, now. People have forgotten. Don't make the biggest mistake you've ever made. Come with me. Won't you?"

Heddon shook his head and said nothing. Thoughts whirled too rapidly through his mind to crowd them into words. Besides, Oxenham would not understand. Heddon himself hardly understood.

The bitterness of it all! Almost every man and woman somehow suffered greatly. Gloria, futilely faithful to a glimmering ideal, putting her love where it was not wanted. Stockton, tortured and faithful, rewarded for it with blindness by the Puller-of-Wires behind the Scene. The wretched beach-woman of Lianfo. Sanderson. Oxenham, absurd Sir Galahad, somehow cheated by the very virtues that made him admirable. Salvador McGree, brutal and sentimental, thwarted in his dream of making some woman a great lady. Margaret—

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himself—Bennings—Bennings, dying in a hut amid a thunderstorm—

"If daughter of mine ever plays with man, I will—"

And Margaret had died as if a malignant ghostly hand had opened her veins as she dreamed of happiness.

But now as he stood and watched the boat withdrawing, his thoughts were vividly of Gloria. After all she was a woman, steadfast, poised, inflexible; of a type that is the Mother-Woman of the Race, strong with the woman-spirit that has made men do noble things—the woman that has held to her ideals and held men to her ideals, strengthened the race with her children, infused her blood into the generations that fight on and up through the dark destiny that envelops mankind. There was loyalty, courage in her, the serenity of faith and any sacrifice.

Margaret was dead, and he felt as if his very heart was in the keeping of her motionless, cold fingers; but now he saw that both of them, Margaret and himself, had with a sort of embittered groping missed Life, missed its best values, the steadfastness of faith, of high courage, the nobility of sacrifice. Both of them had lived fretfully, in cynical bitterness. Recklessness had been his only courage; his only challenge to Life had been a certain fearlessness of Death.

He had given way to bitterness, like Bennings, like the slothful Sanderson; even the weakling Oxenham, always puzzling over right and wrong, was the better fighter; the riotous McGree had kept the steadfast ideal of the one woman, and had died with laughter in his throat; and Stockton had not perished miserably, but nobly. He had forced Life to give him at least a part of what he wanted—no man could have all that he wanted; and his had been the triumphant gallantry that makes the Man, the ennobling passion of sacrifice and courage with which the race has fought its way up, Man and Woman together, up from the dark jungles where an ape-like humanity was born. Stockton had not lost his fight; he had won it, won it year after year, until his children were grown, ready for their part in the world; and one daughter had already become the mother of a man-child, handing on down his own strain of gallant unconquerable blood.

There was a deepening sense of wretchedness in Heddon that he, wastrel and rash fool, had thrown himself away, judging Woman by the worthless women. It was he, not Life, not Woman, not the malignant Puller-of-Wires behind the scenes, that had been futile, blundering, unjust. He, a turbulent and embittered wastrel, deserved no more of Life than Life had given him—not so much as had been given him, for there remained Gloria's serene, unjealous, unchanging love of him, a love of passionless purity that called to something deeper than mere woman-love, to the real bottommost manhood of him. A new and resolute courage stirred within him as if it had been long dead and come to life.

"I will fight it out—up—up," he muttered.

Then the vague light of day went out, as if under a great breath the setting sun had been suddenly extinguished, and it was night.

THE END

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MOROCCAN "INDIANS"

by George E. Holt

IS THERE any ethnological connection between the brown-skinned Berbers of Morocco—the original inhabitants of that country, who still maintain their ancient independence and tribal customs among the Atlas mountains and foothills—and the American Indian, or the Mexican aborigines? In more than one case ethnologists have suspected connections between two widely separated peoples because of similarity of customs, of arts and crafts, of beliefs. In view of which it is interesting to note a series of remarkable resemblances between the Berbers and the true Americans; even though these be coincidental, they afford food for thought.

In the interior of Morocco, where pottery-making, in many localities, is still very primitive, I have gathered bowls, dishes, saucers, pots, beakers, but so decorated either in black or colors with crude designs, crudely executed, as would cause them to pass anywhere as of American Indian make.

More striking, because more complicated and finished, are the Berber baskets, which are not only made in the same forms but woven in designs some of which can not be distinguished from the Indian. One basket of this sort which I brought back I was able, by accident, to match perfectly, as to size, shape, design and colors, with a basket of Indian make, Moki.

Still more striking, because still more complicated, is the bead-work, of which I once submitted several pounds' weight—necklaces, belts, etc.—to a man who was an authority on certain American Indian products, with the result that, without hesitation he assured me that the work was Indian, and even named the tribes who had been responsible for the "lightning streak," the "snake back," the diamond design, etc. But the fact is that I had brought the beads from Anghera.

The leather-work of the Riffian Berbers has every touch of that of our own Red Men. Their *shakarahs*—bags hung about the neck, taking the place of pockets—are decorated with leather fringe, braided leather, and leather embroidered with silk and beads.

And from the primitive looms of the Berber of the southern Atlas I have bought carpets which would pass, and did pass, in this country for Navajos.

Is there anything more than a coincidence that, although scalping the enemy has never been practised among the Berbers, so far as I know—they prefer the entire head as trophy—they have a custom of tying to their gun-stocks a tuft of cut-leather cords, much resembling a scalp-lock?

Herodotus is authority for the statement that the ancient Scythians scalped their enemies and carried the scalp-locks on their saddles, and it is also believed by some authorities that the Jews of old scalped their enemies. Scalp-locks are pictured on Egyptian monuments as one of the characteristics of the Japhetic Libyans, who shaved the head except for the same tuft of hair, which is still retained, when they shave their heads, by many of the Moroccan Berbers.

And, as a final astonishing bit of evidence, I have been informed that many years ago an American professor, who understood various Indian languages, visited Morocco and made the discovery that he could understand the Shilha tongue—the unwritten language used by the Shluhs, or Berbers of the southern Atlas, and which is *supposed* to be a degenerate offspring of ancient Greek.

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WHERE the trail widened the fatigued pony stumbled into a frost-touched clearing and stopped dead, his head lowered between wide-spread forelegs and his breath escaping from distended nostrils in white puffs of steam. His rider, who had dozed in a terrified half-stupor for the past hour, looked up as the animal stopped, and he shuddered as he slid from the saddle and stood, scarce daring to move, beside the drooping animal who had brought him to safety.

Safety?

"Dopey" Baggs looked about him as he leaned against the tired pony, and his stomach turned to water at the scene of ghostly desolation upon which the moon looked down. To the east, as far as eye could see, the rounded tops of the Sierra Central were black against the star-frosted sky, with the huge bulk of Loma Tina, Santo Domingo's tallest mountain, dominating her lesser sisters. The little clearing to which he had adventured was barren of grass, and Baggs thanked God in his heart that it was so—that no fearsome tarantula could advance across that open stretch of clay without being seen.

But the loneliness was overpowering; the dead silence on the mountain-pass almost worse than the mysterious menacing noises of the lowland jungles. Then Baggs saw a pin-point of light far across the valley, and he knew that in some little thatched mountain hut humans dwelt, and he was strangely comforted.

The knowledge that among those lonely hills were others of his kind heartened the man to the extent that he was enabled to lead his dispirited pony to the side of the trail, loop the reins about a small, dead *baitoa*, and remove the saddle and blanket from the animal's sweat-drenched body. It never entered his mind that the implacable cold of the mountain-pass might prove fatal to the over-heated and exhausted animal and, even if it had, Baggs was cold and he craved the protection that the sweaty coverlet would give him. He wrapped the warm, odorous blanket about him, secured it firmly with a large safety-pin and, striving to forget the picture of "Red" Ryder's body as it had crumpled before the impact of a lead-nosed bullet—a picture that was indelibly engraved upon his consciousness—he curled himself up and lapsed into the insensibility of exhaustion.

DOPEY BAGGS had been the butt of every jokester in the camp. Among the irrigation engineers who toiled in the sweltering lowlands of the Azua plain, Baggs was a joke that was perennially entertaining, and hardly a day passed that the little Englishman was not forced to bear the brunt of some crude practical joke.

His horror of all the creeping insectivorous and reptilian life of the tropics was a never-failing source of joy to his companions in the camp, and one that could always be relied upon to afford their jaded spirits vast entertainment. Dopey was always finding dead scorpions in his boots,

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centipedes in his bed and, on one occasion, when a dead tarantula had fallen from his hat as he raised it to his head, he had gone berserk from fear, and his laughing mates had scattered in all directions until Dopey's shattered nerves had become somewhat composed and he had put away the knife he had grasped in his unreasoning rage and terror.

To Baggs the daily early morning ride to the survey-line was a hideous nightmare. Beside the trail, in hundreds, lay the torpid, curled-up bodies of tarantulas, awaiting the life-giving rays of the tropical sun; and along the side of a clayey cañon down which the trail led, the harmless, but fearsome-looking Dominican iguanas lay sprawled before their caves, scarce moving, save to hiss with what Red Ryder had described as "a breath from a graveyard" at the humans who disturbed their basking comfort.

To his companions Baggs' timidity was construed as just plain lack of guts, and in that turbulent country, where at any moment a marauding band of *insurrectos* might descend upon the camp and make its inhabitants the target for a score of rifles and revolvers, courage was a prime essential. Instead of accustoming the miserable Englishman to the horrors which beset him, their treatment of the man was slowly driving him to desperation, and at his hysterical threat to shoot the man who again attempted to play another practical joke upon him, he had been unmolested for several days preceding the tragedy which had forced him to flee the camp.

Baggs carried a revolver on his hip after making his threat, and on the night of the shooting he had returned from a hard day's work at the nearest triangulation-tower and had left his belt and revolver upon a bench outside the men's living-quarters, while he went to the bank of the river upon which the camp was pitched and cleaned the sweat and grime of the day from his person.

When he entered the palm-thatched building where the other members of the survey-party were impatiently awaiting the welcome notice that supper was on the table, Red Ryder suddenly stepped in front of him with an enormous dead tarantula suspended from a string, which he thrust in front of Baggs' terrified face. With a whimper of terror the Englishman turned and ran and, whooping joyously, Ryder followed him.

Dopey's revolver lay upon the bench where he had placed it before performing his ablutions. Crazed with terror, he pulled the gun from its holster and, pointing it at the shouting Ryder, he pulled the trigger once—twice—and Ryder sank suddenly to his knees, and from thence toppled slowly forward upon the hard-beaten ground.

For a moment Baggs stared stupidly at the sprawled form of his tormentor. Then it dawned upon him that he had killed a man and a sudden panic overswept him as he turned in hopeless desperation, dropped his revolver and made for his horse, which had not as yet been unsaddled by the negro servant whose duty it was to perform this task. He sprang to the saddle and, before he could be intercepted, he had disappeared in the dense thicket which bordered the trail leading to the mountains.

DOPEY twitched restlessly upon his hard couch and he shivered from the cold. He drew his legs up to his body and snuggled his head farther into the frost-rimmed blanket. The horse snorted violently as the cold bit into his vitals, and the man awoke suddenly at the sound, every nerve in his body tense and quivering.

The night was silent save for a distant moaning which struck cold fear into the heart of the wretched man.

"*Sa-a-anta Maria-a Ma-adre de Dio-o-o-os*——"

Across the empty expanse of valley came the low, sepulchral wailing of voices, sounding weird and unearthly to the ears of the listening Englishman and, as the low cadences broke the silence of the night, Baggs' heart contracted with horror, and the significance of that distant, lonely light on the opposite side of the valley came to him. In that little hut some one had died and the voices he heard were those of the mourners bewailing their dead.

The lugubrious *rosario* rose and fell in eerie waves of mournful sound. A frost-bird, whose cry is supposed to augur death to those who hear its eldritch "*Frio! Frio! Frio!*" shattered the night with its call, and Baggs groveled in affright as Red Ryder's dead face appeared to be pressed close to his.

"Gawd! Gawd!" screamed the man in an agony of terror and remorse. "I didn't

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mean to kill him! I didn't mean it—it was that —— awful spider as made me do it!"

He turned on his side and opened his eyes—and then he screamed again in unearthly accents of horror. Beside his head, staring malignantly at him with eyes that glistened in the moonlight, squatted an enormous tarantula!

His body stiffened—instinctively his arms rose to protect his face—the blanket, burst from its fastening, enveloped his head, and then, as a sharp, piercing pain paralyzed his right hand, he lapsed into insensibility, knowing that the spider had sunk its deadly fangs into his wrist and that Nemesis had overtaken him.

UP THE Constanza Trail, under the burning sun of morning, two horsemen made their way. The heat was terrific and both men perspired profusely as they lay indolently back in their saddles.

"That —— Englishman will throw a fit when he sees you, Red," commented one of the men as he flicked the sweat from his brow with practised fingers. "You were a fool to give him such a fright."

Red Ryder shrugged his shoulders.

"It was your idea to substitute blanks in his revolver, Schultze," he replied. "If you hadn't suggested that I wouldn't have frightened the poor nut the way I did. Good Lord, I knew the man was scared of spiders, but if I'd known he felt as bad about it as he does, I would have let up on him!"

For several minutes the men rode in silence and then, as the path widened, each of them uttered an exclamation of satisfaction. There, beside the trail, stood a pony and, lying on the ground, not far from the animal, his head and shoulders covered with a blanket, the figure of a man.

"Well, what do you know about that!" exclaimed Schultze. "The boob's still sleeping!"

Quietly dismounting the two men walked over to where the silent form of Dopey Baggs lay upon the baking ground. Ryder bent curiously over him.

"He's awful still, Schultze!" he whispered nervously. "Do you suppose anything's happened to him?"

"Naw," replied Schultze scornfully. "He's only tired and worn out from the ride he's had. My ——, Red," he exclaimed, as his eyes fell upon an object that squatted close to the Englishman's head. "Would you look at the size of that —— tarantula!"

He kicked the loathsome arachnid with his heavily booted foot, and he laughed relievedly as the spider crumbled into dust at the impact.

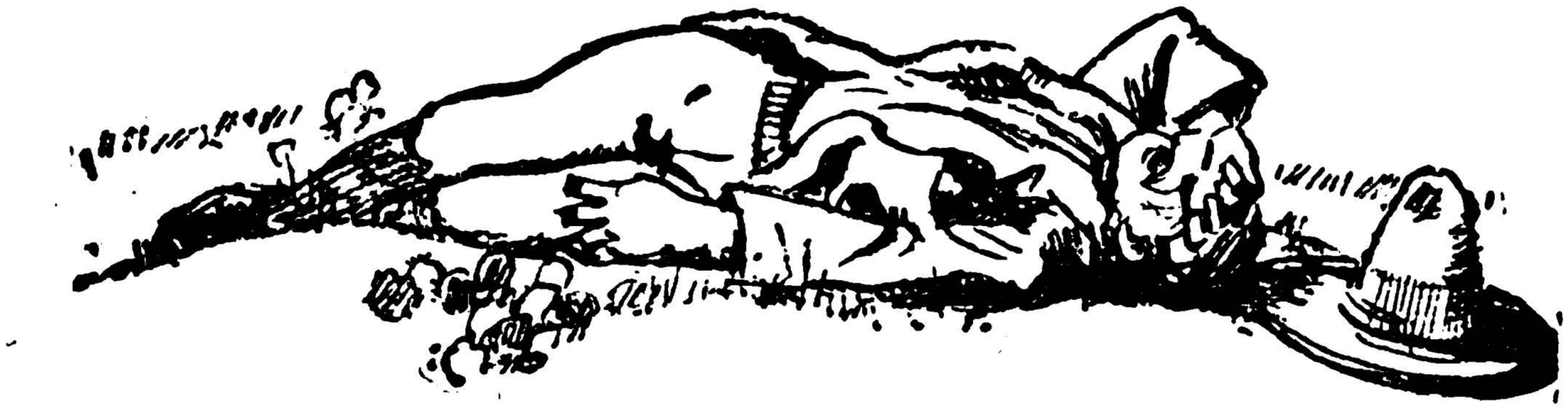
"The thing has been dead for days!" he laughed, "and the ants have left nothing but his shell. But—but——"

He stopped and stared with gradually widening eyes at Baggs' hand.

"Say, Red," he whispered, as he stooped down and pulled the sharp point of an open safety-pin from the man's cold wrist. "It's funny that Dopey didn't wake when that pin pricked him."

He pulled the blanket back from the man's quiet face.

"Good Lord, Red," he gasped. "He—he's dead!"



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COME HOME TO ROOST

Author of "The Papa Man," "The Trail at Landry," etc.

JOE JETA was clever in a cheap, contemptible way. In the city he would probably have become a small malefactor. The country offered a broader field.

As a type he was not uncommon. Loafer, gambler, dabbler in petty rascalities, his like might have been found in any of the back rooms of St. Pierre. He was a slim little man, lazy and soft, with the kind of stringy mustache that goes with a pair of rat eyes.

That was Jeta, a rat—a gutter rat, dreaming of cheese while he fed upon the refuse of the town.

And like a rat Jeta hated those other scavengers, the buzzards. All his life he had done so. As a boy he had never allowed one of the big black birds to rest peacefully on limb or fence-rail. Always he had thrown the clod or brickbat which, in Southwestern Louisiana, replaces the rock of more favored lands.

Growing older, and attaining the dignity of a gun, Jeta ceased this open warfare. But only through stern necessity. It was the law that, unless one owned sheep and had the excuse of protecting his lambs, the slaying of a buzzard was punished by means of a twenty-five dollar fine.

So Jeta stayed his hand. But always he watched the buzzards with grim anticipation, biding his time.

All in all Jeta had little to recommend him. He was no good. Thus there was no slight amazement when, after a brief courtship, he married Lise Hébért.

In a way Lise was no great match herself. She was not young, and she also had no looks to speak of. True, there was her hair that was unique in all that country. It was wonderful hair, thick and ruddy, with the soft sheen of silk. In the light its golden red was like the last, sullen glory of a sunset. But the face below it was plain.

Yet, to offset her lack of beauty, Lise had other advantages. An orphan, with no near kin, she had inherited a farm some ten miles from St. Pierre. Also there was a patch of cypress timber in one of the swamps along the bayou. This patch, however, was of doubtful value. And the farm lay a long way from town.

Once married, Jeta solved this latter problem by means of a mortgage. Then, following some urge of perverted respectability he started in to make a place for himself at St. Pierre. His aim was not lofty. He merely wished to be known as a good fellow, to join the several fraternal orders, to mingle on terms of equality with his fellow citizens. But the town knew Joe Jeta, and black-balled or snubbed him accordingly.

In the end, however, he was successful. With some score of others he joined The Knights of the Mystic Chain—an order established between two suns by a traveling organizer. It was a kindly order. Its requirement were of the simplest.

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One had only to produce the necessary fee.

Yet Jeta was enchanted. Receiving his badge, he had it engraved with his name. Afterward he wore it everywhere with the proud consciousness of a newly decorated soldier. It was a short length of gilded links, not unlike the insignia of the Odd Fellows.

When the money gave out this badge was all that Jeta had to show for the mortgage, his promise to his wife, of a business career. However, he was not discouraged. With him it had always been easy come easy go. For a time he pursued his former activities only to find that what will do for one will not do for two. Then, quite naturally, he proposed a second mortgage, the sale of the place.

But here he reckoned without his wife. Lise, the descendant of peasants, had their inborn love of the land, their fear of waste and extravagance. In addition she now knew her husband. St. Pierre had been right. He *was* no good. Very well then, she must make the best of a bad bargain. And this could be better accomplished on the farm than in the more expensive atmosphere of St. Pierre.

Jeta did what he could in the way of argument and persuasion. He would also have tried force, but he was a slight man, and Lise had not been given her red head for nothing.

When finally cornered a rat will bite. Given the opportunity, he will run. Jeta ran.

II

OUT at the farm on the Fausse Pointe Road Jeta sulked, and whined, and scratched intermittently among the fields in a futile attempt at planting. It was a lonely spot. Backed up against the low ground at the head of Little Bayou, it combined richness with desolation. Save for "Stick-Foot" George, the one-legged darky whose cabin was at the bayou head, there was no neighbor within three miles.

When he had stood it as long as he could, Jeta deserted Lise, and slipped back to town. But he did not stay long. Lazy always, the ease of the farm had unfitted him for even his former fitful endeavor. In less than two weeks he was home again, contrite, abject, inwardly cursing his fate.

Yet a faint gleam of light now fell athwart the darkness of his days. About the farm the buzzards wheeled unceasingly. As he watched them, Jeta realized that his time of reckoning was at hand.

Sheep were scarce in the parish, but Jeta found some; going all the way to Petit Anse before he unearthed them. Then, having the artistic touch in certain matters, he bought a .22 rifle. Why blow a huge, stupid creature like a buzzard to tatters with bird shot? Rather drill him neatly through his scaly head for the pleasure of seeing him kick a while.

From the first it was most amusing. When outdoors, Jeta was seldom without his rifle. And woe betide the buzzard that foolishly lighted within range.

Occasionally, through the medium of a fortunately placed piece of carrion, he enjoyed a veritable feast of slaughter. At these times he fired until the last bird had died or had reluctantly departed, picking them off by the dozen.

It was useless, cruel, but Jeta was within his rights. Also, save for Stick-Foot George, there was no neighbor to complain.

Stick-Foot did not like it. This wanton slaying of buzzards aroused in him a feeling in which righteous indignation mingled with superstitious dread. But then Stick-Foot knew buzzards. Living as he did, alone in the woods, he had found ample opportunity to study them.

Thus he had observed that these dingy scavengers were strangely human in their ways. For example he had seen their preaching where a single buzzard, perched solemnly upon a limb, uttered uncouth sounds for the benefit of his assembled brethren. There were their balls when these quaint creatures, gathered together upon an open space, hopped and shuffled in a weird imitation of dancing. And, stranger still, was their habit of picking up bright and curious objects with which to amuse their young.

Yes, Stick-Foot was wary of buzzards. They were birds which one would do well to leave strictly alone. To trouble them invariably brought bad luck—bad luck that reached, perhaps, beyond the offending one.

Yet at first Stick-Foot said nothing. Jeta was white, and he was also the owner of many things of which Stick-Foot was incessantly in need.

But that bad luck! Stick-Foot dreamed of it at night, soothing his fears with such strange decoctions as prohibition and the

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closing of the grog-shops still allowed him. In the end, hearing the scattered reports of a particularly impressive slaughter, he pegged over one day for a word of warning.

He found Jeta shooting at ease from a log with his victims kicking and choking before him. It was not a pleasant sight. Stick-Foot made haste to unburden himself.

"Boss," he questioned, "how come you do like that? It's sho' bad luck—bad, bad luck, I'm tellin' you."

Jeta pumped in a fresh cartridge. He did it carefully, as his little rifle was hot and dirty.

"Yes," he agreed, "it is bad luck—for the buzzards."

Stick-Foot waited a moment. He had uttered his rebuke. More would not do for white folks. He could only end on a note of pleading.

"Don't pester them ol' black chickens, boss," he begged. "Some day they come home to roost." And he chuckled, half at his odd conceit, half to blunt any possible edge from his words.

Jeta replied by shooting again with easy, fatal accuracy.

"Let them come," said he. "I will attend to the future."

Stick-Foot pegged on, his duty done. And, as he went, be besought such gods as he knew. The thing was unholy.

Left to himself, Jeta's thoughts became bitter. Yes, he would attend to the future. But what future was there to attend to? He would just keep on as he was, loafing, sulking, shuffling the days aside. That was unless something turned up.

But what could turn up? Lise was implacable. Long ago he had abandoned any faintest hope in this direction. Indeed he now thought of his wife quite calmly, considering her with a cold malignancy that had none of the elements of honest hate. Of course if ever he had his chance at her—But that was for this future that did not exist.

No, nothing would turn up, at least nothing of importance. Such trifles as he might accomplish himself were not worth the effort. Had he not tried it before?

So thought Jeta with the easy fatality of his kind. Then, in less than a day, the impossible occurred.

III

JETA made his discovery next morning in a remote corner of the place. It was a marshy spot next the bayou swamp, soft and treacherous. Before he had avoided it.

The smell was what first aroused his curiosity—a faint odor, rank yet pungent, that was like a stain upon the soft Spring freshness of the air.

Drawing nearer, Jeta sniffed; at first abstractedly, next with quickened interest. Where had he encountered that smell before?

Then, all at once, he had it in a sudden burst of revelation. The next moment he was racing for the nearest tree. He was excited yet cautious, as he wrenched a stick from its lower branches. It would not do to hope too much. He had heard of such things before. One was often fooled by rotten vegetation.

Hurrying back, Jeta chose a spot where the black, gummy earth was thickly pock-marked with little pools of water. Here he thrust in his stick, twisting it about until the ooze was scattered in all directions.

It seemed an age before the sediment settled. But when it had finally done so, he had his reward. For where the little pools had been was now one big pool, and on its top swam a dull, iridescent scum that was shot with all the colors of the rainbow.

Snatching a handful of the mud, Jeta held it beneath his nose. And this time, as he sniffed, his look was exultant, since there was no mistaking the smell. It was of oil, crude oil, such as fired the boilers of all that country.

If anything Jeta was cautious. Therefore he did not rush homeward shouting his discovery aloud. Instead, having washed his hands and dried them upon a grass clump, he went back to the tree again. Here he stretched himself out in the grateful shade, to twist brown paper cigarets, and consider his find.

At first Jeta's thoughts ran riot. Here was money, big money, as real as though each small puddle was a pile of gold pieces. Here was prominence undreamed of, the regard of St. Pierre, perhaps of New Orleans itself.

Reaching down, Jeta fingered his little gilt badge which he still wore unceasingly. Soon it would be one of many. They would ask

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for him now. He would glitter with decorations. And the fun he would have, the things he would buy! For a space he was lost in an orgy of spending.

Then, like a rosy dawn that is overcast, Jeta's bright thoughts became clouded by doubt. After all, was he as lucky as at first appeared? What if he had found oil? It was not likely to profit him.

The land was not his. He owned not a single arpent. And there was his wife with her ceaseless talk of the mortgage, the necessity of preparing for their old age.

Lise was miserly. Though a fortune came in she would never throw it about. You could count upon her to put away the final cent of it.

Though he lay in the shadc, Jeta's brow was peppered with moisture. He writhed as from the thrust of some physical torment. Mercilessly he flogged his crooked brain.

Tricks would not do. His wife knew him only too well. And even should he contrive a fictitious sale of the marsh land, where would he find the necessary third party? Trust him to not trust another.

Of course he could keep silent and wait. Lise had no kin. Should she die first, the farm would be his. But no, there was nothing in that. Lise would not die first. She was too strong and well. She would be wholly impervious to illness. And anything else——

Jeta pulled himself together guiltily, and glanced up to where, far above a buzzard hung motionless against the blue of the sky. With an oath he closed his eyes again, yet in that instant a thought had been born, remote, sinister, poised, like the buzzard, amid the upper reaches of his consciousness.

When a little later he returned to the house, he did not slouch along. Rather he moved with nervous anticipation. And once inside, he spoke immediately to his wife.

For one of Jeta's craft, this precipitancy was akin to madness. Yet, somehow, he could not help it. It was as if that far-off speck in his consciousness demanded the verdict of an immediate answer.

"See, Lise," he began. "I have a plan to make money."

Lise looked up curiously from beneath her crown of wonderful hair. It had been some time since her husband had spoken this way.

"So," she observed. "I have heard of these plans before."

"But this is different," persisted Jeta. "It is money, big money." He waited a moment and added jerkily. "We can go back to town, Lise. There will be more good times, eh?"

His wife did not reply at once. It seemed hardly worth while. In the end she repeated her usual formula with a listlessness that gave it a touch of utter finality.

"If money comes in, we will pay what we owe," said she. "And afterward we will keep on here. Once I played the fool, Joe. It will not happen again."

"*Bien*," said Jeta, and his tone was one of relief. Also he went outside without slamming the door or exhibiting any of his usual signs of exasperation.

Throughout the afternoon he was calm and thoughtful, moving about the place with an aimlessness born of abstraction. And as he went it was as if that distant speck in his thoughts swooped ever lower to clutch his attention.

Again Jeta scourged his lagging thoughts, planning, testing, rejecting. Carefully, patiently he wrought at his fabric of evil, and always there was some weak spot through which the hand of the law could thrust in to seize him.

Only at dusk was he roused from his task by Stick-Foot George, his one-legged neighbor. Stick-Foot, cringing yet hopeful, had arrived upon one of his endless pilgrimages of borrowing.

"Got a hatchet, boss?" he wheedled. "Catfish comin' in good. I 'lows to cut us some poles." And he awaited, expectantly, the result of his "us."

Swearing fervently, Jeta was about to send him upon his way. Then, breaking off in the midst of an oath, he became suddenly calm again.

"A moment," said he. "I will see."

As he searched for the hatchet, Jeta's brain worked swiftly. By the time he had found it his plan was fully born. It was a clever plan, both simple and safe. It had come to him complete, like some perfect gift of Evil. As he watched Stick-Foot peg away, hatchet in hand, he had worked it all out to its final detail.

"*Bien*," said Jeta again, and as he spoke there was the curl of a lip above slim, yellowed teeth, the glint of an eye that was shinily red.

At last he was cornered—this gutter rat. And by a handful of mud. Now he would bite.

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IV

IN ALL that followed Jeta acted with the curious detachment that marked his attitude toward his wife. Now that he had his chance at her he was neither bitter nor vindictive. Save for the thought of gain he had little feeling of any sort in the matter. It was as if, following that demand of his inner consciousness, he drove coldly yet ruthlessly toward a given end.

That night, at supper, he made his first move.

"Tomorrow I will go to town," he announced.

"For that big money?" mocked Lise.

Jeta nodded with a gravity that he hoped was impressive.

"It is the cypress," he explained. "I tell you that there is money there. It has only to be arranged."

His wife made a gesture of hopelessness.

"It is as I thought," said she. "You will only waste your time. It is no good—that cypress. Always my father said so."

"Things have changed since your father's day," observed Jeta. "We shall see."

Next morning he set out early in the ancient jumper which, in an age of cheap motors, was like some curiosity upon the road. As he rattled along, Jeta consoled himself with thoughts of the future. Soon he would have a car, a real one—something that folk would rush out to see when he went flying past.

Arriving in town, he made the round of the cypress mills. At each he spoke to the manager. His wife owned some timber in the swamps below town. They would, perhaps, be interested? No, he did not know the exact acreage or the condition of the trees. But he could go and see.

And when the managers, exasperated by such stupidity, sent him about his business, he departed saying that he would go and see.

Back on the street again, he went in the stores for a small stock of supplies. Also he bought a hand ax with which to blaze a trail through the cypress.

His hatchet was gone, he explained to the storekeeper. Or at least that one-legged neighbor of his had borrowed it. It was the same thing.

Seldom voluble, Jeta proceeded carefully with his talking. Yet at each place he visited he succeeded in leaving a full account of his forthcoming expedition. He would leave that afternoon, going into camp. Yes, he would make a thorough job of his inspection. It would take, at the least, a couple of days.

Finally, before starting back again, he drove to the edge of the town, and stopped at the shop of Nick Briganti. It was a tiny place, crowded and dirty with the usual Italian stock in trade. But Jeta was not in quest of fruit, or oysters, or cheap candy. His purchase came from the rear of the shop, muffled in a sheaf of old newspapers.

Jeta was not fastidious, yet he handled the package with a certain repugnance. Briganti's back room had been dark, and foul, and crawling with roaches.

One more visit Jeta made before reaching home. Three miles from his place he turned in at the gate of Frank Patin. To Patin, his nearest white neighbor, he spoke of his coming journey. He would be gone two days. And his wife would be alone. Should Patin pass his way, would he look in to see if anything was needed?

Patin promised readily. He had planned to drive to Fausse Pointe next morning. Be sure he would stop by for a word with Madame Jeta.

At home Jeta began immediately with his preparations. It was all right, he informed his wife. He had promised the man at the mill that he would waste no time in examining the timber. Trust him for a satisfactory report. The rest would follow naturally.

And, true to his craft, he added with a savageness that he was far from feeling:

"Do not worry about me. As usual I expect nothing. Only stop your whining about the mortgage, and I will be satisfied."

Having placed his supplies in his blankets, Jeta added a wad of spare clothing. Next came the hand ax, matches, a coffee-pot and frying-pan. When all was ready he set off along the foot-path that had been worn between his home and the cabin of Stick-Foot George. Just beyond the cabin, at the head of Little Bayou, Stick-Foot had built a rude landing. Here Jeta kept a *pirogue* that he used for fishing.

Stick-Foot was not about when Jeta passed the cabin. But hardly had he set down his bundle on the bayou bank, than

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the one-legged darky appeared. Had he looked closely, Stick-Foot might have wondered at the white man's swift look of satisfaction. But there was the borrowed hatchet to consider, the promise of fishing-poles. Stick-Foot sought to temporize.

"Goin' fishin', boss? I 'lowed to git them canes this mornin', but my foot——"

"That's is all right," broke in Jeta. "Me, I am off for the swamp. Should you lose that hatchet——"

"She's in the house," Stick-Foot assured him hastily. "Won't stir out 'cep' for them canes."

"So," grunted Jeta. "Then see that you keep it there."

Lugging his bundle from the bayou bank, he undid it on the landing. Inside, in the very middle, was his purchase from Briganti, still sheathed in its covering of newspaper. This package Jeta loaded first, wedging it in beneath the brief overhang that sheltered the bow of his *pirogue*. Thus placed the package took on a shape that was round and tapering—presumably that of a bottle.

The rest of his gear Jeta stowed quickly, dividing it between bow and stern. From the bayou bank Stick-Foot looked on abstractedly. In his eyes there was a light of longing, of sad speculation.

The *pirogue* loaded, Jeta rose erect, to stand for a moment as if thinking. Then, with a growl of impatience, he turned back toward the cabin.

"No salt," he muttered, as if to himself. And he added, speaking directly to the speculative Stick-Foot, "You will touch nothing while I am gone."

Starting back along the foot-path, Jeta walked briskly until he was well in among the trees. Here he slowed down to his usual slouching gait, pausing finally before a dense clump of blackberries that grew at one side of the path. Moving in behind this clump, he discovered a tiny glade. An instant later he was stretched out on the grass twisting his inevitable cigaret.

As he smoked, Jeta considered the blackberry-clump. Here, on its inner side, its barbed surface was marred by a break that was like a miniature cavern. Stick-Foot's berry-patch. Jeta nodded appreciatively.

When a little later he departed, he, too, was speculative. Apparently forgetful of his lack of salt, he returned whence he had come.

V

AS BEFORE, Jeta found the cabin deserted. Nor this time did Stick-Foot appear. Yet all seemed as it should be. The *pirogue* swung at the landing. Supplies and blankets were undisturbed. Beneath the little overhang of the bow the package showed plainly in the fading light, its soiled wrapping still molded to a comforting roundness.

But Jeta was not satisfied. Leaning over, he prodded this roundness with an inquiring forefinger. And at once it vanished with a promptness that proclaimed it an empty shell.

Most men, snatching forth this pitiful counterfeit, would have hastened to find and confront the thief. Jeta did nothing of the sort. Unmooring his *pirogue*, he got into it, and paddled away.

Two miles below Stick-Foot's landing Little Bayou emptied into the Teche. Paddling slowly, Jeta reached the junction at the end of the brief twilight. Hardly was he cut upon the larger stream than he caught the sound of a rowboat toiling townward along the opposite bank. At once he hailed it.

"That is you, Edmond?"

"No! And who are you?"

"Pardon, it is a mistake. I am Joe Jeta."

Paddling noisily, Jeta passed on toward the swamps. Then, having turned a bend, he checked his *pirogue*, and paused at attention. No threatening sound broke the silence of the bayou. Beneath the gray of a cloud-swept sky its dull emptiness was like that of a tarnished mirror. At once Jeta paddled in to the near bank, going under cover behind a tangle of willows.

It was hard to wait without even the solace of tobacco. But the flash of a match, the scent of the smoke might attract some night wanderer upon the bayou. Two hours, three hours dragged by to the deep, bell-like booming of the frogs. Then, easing up through the shadows, Jeta worked stealthily back to the mouth of Little Bayou.

Once free of the Teche, he paddled swiftly. There was no need for caution upon this creek-like tributary. Who better than he should know its desolation.

At the landing Jeta slipped ashore with the quick furtiveness of some water creature. Just beyond the cabin loomed dark and

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ilent. Moving up to it, he called out—

"Hola! you in there!"

Next he beat upon the flimsy door. Fully assured now, he pushed inside.

"Hola!" called Jeta again before striking a match. With its first brisk flare he saw that his precautions had been useless.

As if scorning his pallet, Stick-Foot lay asprawl upon the littered dirt floor of the cabin. Nearby, within reach of his hand, stood a quart beer bottle, half-full of some colorless liquid.

When Jeta snapped his match away, it was with a gesture of impatience. Briganti brewed well. He might have saved himself a good two-thirds of his waiting.

Having unearthed a battered tin lamp, Jeta worked quickly. From Stick-Foot's foot came the heavy brogan. The peg-leg followed after. And through it all the rifled one lay without sound or movement. Yes, that was strong stuff of Briganti's—too strong, perhaps for even the thieving Stick-Foot. Jeta wondered. But he did not make sure. There was time for that later.

Cajan-like, Jeta had always been proud of his feet. Now he found their smallness a liability. The brogan, iron-stiff, must be-lashed like a vise about his ankle. When he walked it flopped miserably, threatening each moment to trip him.

Even worse was the peg-leg, since its use was wholly unknown. The vagaries of the peg seemed as endless as they were malevolent. The cramped pressure of the bended knee became swiftly a torture. Yet Jeta persevered, blundering about the cabin until he had achieved a dependable equilibrium.

In one small respect fortune favored him. Stick-Foot had kept faith. The hatchet was in the cabin. Having discovered it, Jeta blew out the lamp, and stumped off along the foot-path toward his home.

His progress, if slow, was methodical. Few soft spots in the path were denied his attention. When he had reached his fence-line and silenced the dogs, he chose a route to the house that left many marks of his passing. Nor did the porch, newly scoured and sprinkled with brick dust, fare any better. Cased in fresh mud, the single brogan tracked it unmercifully.

At the door Jeta halted a moment.

"Who is there?" came a call, half-sleepy, half-fearful.

"Open up," ordered Jeta. "It is Joe—your husband."

His voice, thick and hoarse, was like that of a stranger. At first it had failed him entirely.

Inside a light flashed to life. Then footsteps came thudding forward.

With a hand on the door frame, Jeta steadied himself. This part was not easy. Clutching his hatchet, he waited trembling.

VI

BY MIDNIGHT Jeta was back on the Teche again, a white-faced, round-eyed Jeta, shaken with horror and fear. The house was something to shudder away from. The return to the cabin was almost as bad. This time there had been no doubt as to the potency of Briganti's brew. And the dead Stick-Foot had been far easier to ravish than to readorn.

Fleeing as if from the fiends of torment, Jeta sped down toward the swamp. Thanks to the hour there were no craft about. He could use the full current in mid-stream.

Half a mile above Lise's tract he turned in among the trees. The Teche was in flood. Save for the dense, rusty growth, the swamp was like some continuation of the bayou.

Paddling now with infinite caution, Jeta made his way into the very heart of the cypress. Here, in the thick, stagnant darkness, he made a strange toilet, changing his outer garments. Such clothes as he had removed he thrust in a rotten tree-trunk, jamming them deep with his paddle, covering them over with moss and refuse.

As he worked back to the Teche he was calmer. Somehow it was as if, in the black depths of the swamp, he had also discarded the worst of his fears. Reaching his goal, he made camp upon the first bit of high land. Once beneath his blankets, he slept through sheer nervous exhaustion.

Next morning Jeta paddled lazily. He was no woodsman. A blaze here, a blaze there was all that would be expected of him. In the afternoon, having eaten a bite, he dawdled back to the bayou.

As he waited, floating upon the brown, shadowed water, Jeta pictured the events up-stream. First would come Patin, stopping by for his word with Madame Jeta. Having knocked and called without effect, he would look inside. One glance would be enough. It had been well done, that effect

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of hasty rifling. Half-open drawers, scattered clothing, the chest with its lock in steel splinters, all would tell their story. And then there were the prints of brogan and peg-leg, the hatchet.

Patin would wait for no more. From the nearest telephone he would call the sheriff.

The rest would follow inevitably. If anything, Sheriff Arton was thorough. A search inside, then the trail outdoors—the scraped, wavering trail leading down to the blackberry-clump. There would be a wait here, a dreadful wait. Jeta passed over it quickly.

Then finally would come the cabin, the discovery of Stick-Foot, the blankness of thwarted justice.

Jeta saw it all, as fully as if he were actually present. And, seeing it, his assurance redoubled. Stick-Foot's death was the crowning fortune. There would be no search, no trial or lynching to contend with. The affair was finished and paid for. Even its memory would not endure.

Yes, he had planned well. And now he was safe. His alibi was perfect. Even should they suspect him they could prove nothing. Let them search the house, the place, the very cypress tract. They would have only their trouble for their pains.

Jeta could have shouted his relief aloud. Gone were the terrors of the night before. He was eager, triumphant.

When at last there came the chug of a launch, the call of his name, he answered confidently. He went forward like one who goes to receive some well-earned reward.

VII

JETA was right. It all happened as he had anticipated. His return in the launch was a triumph of misunderstanding.

At the house it was the same. Sheriff Arton, big and kindly, had only words of regret or condolence. He had done what he could, which was little. The crime was quite plain. The criminal was dead. Nothing remained. It was over.

From the crowd that had gathered came the same opinion. There was not the slightest suspicion.

And afterward, as Jeta had foreseen, the affair was quickly forgotten. Stick-Foot's death proved an anti-climax. Soon the countryside turned to other matters.

As he looked back on it all, Jeta's pride was touched with contempt. How clever he was. What fools they had been—especially the sheriff. He was rated a good officer, slow but competent. Yet he had been as blind as the rest.

But for all this Jeta was cautious. He was not one to underestimate the dangers of success. A little more care, a little more patience, just the right amount of grief and thwarted vengeance. Then riches, prominence, all the good things for which he had planned.

Thus he waited, carefully. It was Summer before he felt wholly secure.

One morning, following a late breakfast, he set out for the final move in his game. In one hand he carried a long-handled spade, in the other an empty tin can. To all appearances he was after bait for a day of fishing.

As indeed he was; for would not the contents of the can bring out the oil people from town to inspect his find? Big fish, these oil people. Trust him to land the most promising of them.

As he went down through the fields, Jeta was jubilant. He had won. He was free. No more farm with its silence, its loneliness, its occasional surcease of slaughter.

Half-idly he thought of the buzzards. Of late he had neglected them. Now, reassured, they were about again. Coming home to roost, eh? Very well, they were welcome. He had attended to the future.

Reaching the marsh land, Jeta went at once to the spot of his former activities. With the coming of Summer the character of the muck had changed. Flayed by the sun, it had cracked and hardened. Its rich, black surface had become a scattering of thin, brittle scales.

Loosening a handful of these scales, Jeta held them beneath his nose. Yes, they still smelled of oil, though faintly. That was this cursed dry weather.

He considered a moment. Perhaps lower down? But no. Why trouble himself? Already it was hot. What he had was all right. Let the oil people do the digging.

He began to fill up his can.

"That is you?" called a voice, and he looked up quickly. A huge, linen-clad figure was approaching from the direction of the road.

Recognizing Sheriff Arton, Jeta was startled. Then he recovered himself. It

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was the mortgage, of course. He had ignored it purposely. Let them threaten foreclosure. Soon he could laugh at them.

That this was the case seemed evident upon the sheriff's arrival. He began with talk of the land.

"That is right," he approved. "This place needs a levee. It is bad, that seep from the bayou. The ground is rotten with oil."

Into Jeta's quick brain leaped suspicion.

"Oil?" he exclaimed. "From the bayou?"

"From the Teche," the sheriff explained. "Always those tanks at the rice-pumps are leaking. The high water brought it in through your stream. Last Spring, when I looked about——"

He broke off to stare at the other. Why the man seemed suddenly stricken. In his look was despair, disappointment?

Sheriff Arton could be quick enough on occasion. He glanced at the spade, the tin can with its jumble of earth flakes. All at once he swore in sudden enlightenment.

"——" said he. "You thought you had oil. So that was it, eh—the motive?"

It had a bad sound, that word "motive." It snatched Jeta back to a startled alertness. What was coming now? Was it not enough that he had lost his oil?

"Pardon," he began. "I do not understand——"

The sheriff thrust in bruskly.

"Come," said he. "You do not think that I came here to talk of levees. You were clever, my friend, but you made your mistakes. A white man can not commit a black man's crime."

Jeta tightened from head to heel. It was here, the thing from which he had thought himself secure. Now, as never before, his wits must serve him.

"You mean?" he parried.

"Little things," answered the sheriff. "The knot in that brogan—a white man tied it. And those tracks all over. They were too many, they spoke of a purpose. Also they were smeared, as from an unsteady footing. True, there was the liquor, but that only brought up another matter. A black man with a bottle will drink before his crime. It is his way. And the liquor was poisoned."

He paused, and added:

"You see? I was not quite the fool that you thought me."

Fear seized Jeta, throttling his reason. Yet he fought back to sanity. This talk of the sheriff's was empty. He was merely trying to trap him. After all he could prove nothing.

"So," he sneered. "You were clever also, *m'sieu*. Yet you did not arrest me."

"No," said the sheriff, "I could not. Little things will not do for a jury. You had planned well, both here and in town. The facts were all in your favor. Once tried, you would have gone free. So I waited, seeking more proof. And now——"

Thrusting a hand into the side pocket of his coat, Sheriff Arton produced a crumpled envelop. From this he shook out some object upon the palm of his hand, holding it forward that the other might see.

It was a small object, a badge—the brief length of links emblematic of The Knights of the Mystic Chain. Once it had been smooth and shining. Now it was scratched and dull. And, twisted about the tarnished links, was a tangled bristle of golden red hairs.

"Well?" demanded the sheriff. "Is it enough? On the back is your name. The hair is your wife's. There is no other like it. That was another mistake—to hide the body. A black man, perhaps, would have let it lie. At least he would have worn no pin to catch in the hair, to tear loose in the dragging."

Jeta's soul seemed to shrivel within him. That badge! He had thought it lost with his clothes in the heart of the cypress. And here it was, with the proof of his guilt, in the hand of the law itself. Vainly he clutched at his cunning. When at last he managed to speak, his very words were a confession.

"You—you—found it by the path?" he faltered. "In—in the blackberries?"

Sheriff Arton's attitude changed. The play was over. He had justified himself. Replacing the badge, he reached back into another pocket.

"Jeta," said he, "I am told that you are a buzzard-killer as well as a wife-killer. It is a bad combination. They are curious—buzzards. Like myself, they pick up little things. And afterward they take them home to their nests. That was where your badge was found, not two hours ago, in the woods at the edge of town."

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SCALPING

by Alanson Skinner

IT WILL probably surprize many readers of *Adventure* to learn that the custom of scalping was not found universally among the Indians of North America. It was not found on the northwest coast, nor in New England or along the Atlantic coast to a great extent, and recent studies by the German savant Friederici go to show that in the earliest times it was confined to the limited area in Eastern North America occupied by the peoples of the Iroquoian and Muskhogean stocks; that is, the Five Nations, the Huron-Wyandot, the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole tribes. The spread westward of the custom was largely due to encouragement due to scalp bounties offered by the Colonial and even later governments.

While scalping may not have been known to the New England tribes, there is strong evidence that the Narragansetts and perhaps others were at one time head-hunters.

Roger Williams, writing of this tribe in 1643 says:

"*Timequassin:* To cut off or behead—which they are most skilful to doe in fight: For whenever they wound, and their arrow sticks in the body of their enemie, they (if they be valorous, and possibly may) follow their arrow, and falling upon the person wounded and tearing his head a little aside by his Locke, they in the twinckling of an eye fetch off his head though but with a sorry knife."

Scalping was occasionally performed as an act of torture, but was commonly merely the taking of the whole or a portion of the hair and skin of an enemy's head as trophy to show that the possessor had slain a foeman. It was only necessary to take the little portion on the crown where the hair radiates, the "cowlick." This part was demanded, because there is only one such place on any given head, and therefore cheating was eliminated. The Central tribes, from whom I have personally obtained many scalps, generally took a piece no larger than a dime, or on rare occasions, a half-dollar. I have seen some unusual examples, however, where more was taken.

In the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, of New York, there is a scalp of unusual size. The taker of this trophy slit his victim's skin down the center of the face, and from forehead to chin, and skinned the whole head, which he stretched on a hoop, and which still retains the eyes, nose, mouth, and the ears, with the earbobs attached, although moths have eaten away all the hair. The Iowa Indians, a people of Siouan stock, tell me that they sometimes took and prepared scalps like this. There is supposed to be a scalp with the ears attached among the Prairie Potawatomi. The Osages also took large scalps, but I have never heard of their taking any as big as these.

Scalping was by no means fatal of itself, and several persons, both white and Indian, are known to have survived its effects and felt no very ill results.

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WHERE NO MAN HEARS

A Complete Novelette

by Georges Surdez

Author of "When the Sun Sat Down," "The Bridge," etc.

"NIELLES—"

Lieutenant Nielles looked up. Captain Biot, a stocky, red-faced officer, stood in the doorway, yawning sleepily.

"Captain?" Nielles questioned, the inquiry properly toned down by that respect due three stripes, from two.

"I wish you'd stay here and attend to the —natives," Biot explained. "I know it isn't your turn, but the ants kept me awake last night, and I need sleep."

"That's all right, captain," Nielles assured him. "I'll attend to it."

The questioning of the natives was presumed to be Biot's task, as he was in full charge and shouldered the responsibility. But he was a kindly man, thoughtful of his subordinates, and Nielles was willing to go beyond the lines of strict duty to do him a favor. He smiled at the eagerness with which Biot had grasped at an excuse. Truly the afternoon sessions were trying. The negroes smelled and shouted, whined their woes and had to be pacified one by one. But Nielles found a certain amount of picturesque charm in the long procession of half-naked blacks. He was new to the Sudan—and to the post.

The headquarters of the Third Company of Senegalese *tirailleurs* on the Nieri Ko had been established in a former palaver hut, a rambling, loose-jointed structure, which had, in the happy days before the coming of the French, been used by the natives as a meeting house. The sides of the building had been reinforced by thick walls of mud, erected outside the trunk flanks, pierced by loopholes. Twenty feet clear of these walls rose a stockade made of thick logs pointed at the end, and linked by strong vines. The *mirador*, a crudely designed watch-tower, surmounted the whole.

At the foot of the gentle slope, bared of brushes, flowed the Nieri Ko, narrow and blue, creeping down through the thicket to swell the Gambia on its course to the ocean.

"I'll send Alfa to you," Biot went on. "He knows the procedure and can do all the talking."

Then he went out. His footsteps died away in the direction of his hut.

Nielles lighted a cigaret and waited for Alfa, the post interpreter, who did not long delay.

"Here I am, lieutenant. Did I keep you waiting?"

"No," Nielles reassured him shortly.

Alfa-Sega was a Songhai from the Niger bank. He was an intelligent young man, speaking with great fluency French, Arabic, the pure tongue as well as the dialects peculiar to the Sudan, Bambara, Ouolof, Mandigo, and twelve or thirteen minor languages. He affected white men's clothing, even to the sun-helmet, willingly discoursed upon the barbarism of his own race, scoffed openly at the most sacred

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precepts of the Koran. In a word, Alfa was a Frenchman in everything save color. He was of a milk and coffee hue.

He brought a packing-case which he placed beside Nielles' folding-stool, rolled a cigaret between agile long fingers, and dusted the tobacco particles with care from his creased white duck trousers.

"The sentries are waiting to bring the first man in," he suggested.

"All right," Nielles replied laconically.

Alfa shouted, and two *tirailleurs* brought in the first native. He was old, white-wooled, and evidently abashed before the white man. He spoke for some seconds in jerky syllables, then waited.

Alfa explained:

"He says that the riders of Kouro Moussa have raided his village, and taken the women and children as captives back to Dianna."

Nielles made a note on a pad of paper.

"Next one——"

The next negro narrated the same tale, with variation as to location and number taken captive. Others came in, with similar stories. And Nielles noted down what they said. As he wrote he realized Biot's utter helplessness to give aid.

Eastward stood the town of Dianna, surrounded by a formidable *tata*—mud fortification—in which El Hadj Mahmadou Lamine sheltered his seven thousand cutthroats. Mahmadou was a self-made man, African style. Born of low parents, his father a trader near Kayes, he had been fired by the example of Samory, who had carved himself a kingdom.

A pilgrimage to Mecca to gain prestige and spiritual worth, a silver tongue, a deep knowledge of his own race and of other races, had made him, immediately upon his return from the Holy City, an idol of the Saracolets, a people long deprived of a capable leader of their own blood.

The Saracolets are the direct descendants of the Berbers, who joined the Arabs in in their warfare in Spain. Considerably mixed with negro blood, with a strong inheritance of fighting instinct, they joyfully greeted the returned Mahmadou, and with him conquered various territories, the first step toward a new empire.

Mahmadou, while under the eyes of the French Government, had promised, were he allowed to go free, to use his prestige to further their advance. But temptation had been too powerful. He bid fair to overshadow old Samory in the massacres he led. His chief aid was a giant negro, Kourou Moussa, who held command over his cavalry.

In Kayes a French column was forming to come down to the Nieri Ko, pick up the Third Company and crush the chieftain. This Nielles endeavored to explain after the several interviews were over.

Alfa, cool and supercilious, translated to the negroes. They shook their heads and grunted, dissatisfied. One of the number, apparently the spokesman chosen by the others, made a long speech.

"What does he say?" Nielles asked.

"He says that Mahmadou has promised his men *baraka*—divine protection—against the French. He says that those men who are loyal and friendly to the Frenchmen are pillaged and taken captive. What is he to think?" Alfa paused, then added his own comment—"All nonsense, of course."

"How did these men, who are here to complain, come to be safe?" Nielles demanded.

Alfa resumed the conversation, then translated.

"They ran into the bush when the attacks came. Truly, they do not love powder."

"Tell them the following: As they, through wisdom, kept out of the way during the attacks, being too weak to do anything, so must we do until the column comes."

He paused, and saw with satisfaction that his reasoning had registered.

"Tell them," he went on, "that as a man must gather strength before an effort, so must the French gather many soldiers, cannon, and Spahis, before crushing Mahmadou. But when we move forward, within a short time, the bandit's head will be off his shoulders, and their villages at peace."

The natives spoke excitedly.

"They believe you," said Alfa.

"Send them out, now."

The negroes left. Alfa took his packing-case into a corner of the room, and was silent.

The sun, swinging to the west, had found the door, and drew a rectilinear patch of light on the beaten earth floor. Presently, in this glowing oblong, a shape was outlined, demeasured.

Nielles looked up. Another native was in the doorway, a man he had never seen before. Beside him stood a corporal of *tirailleurs* evidently doubtful as to the advisability of allowing the stranger to enter.

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"Let him in," said Nielles.

He was naked, save for a sort of skirt hanging from his slim hips.

"Alfa, ask him what he wants."

The man spoke, not in the quavering voice of a complainant, but self-assuredly with great poise. For the first time Nielles noticed the cause of the sentry's hesitation: the fellow was armed with a long knife in an ornate leather sheath passed through the twisted rag that served as a belt. A peculiar amulet strung on a worn leather string about his neck marked him as a follower of Mahmadou.

Alfa, speaking swiftly, showed signs of intense excitement. When he turned to Nielles, his liquid black eyes were wide, his fine nostrils quivering. He smiled.

"This man says he knows where Mahmadou Lamine will be, unguarded during the night," he said.

"How much does he want?" asked Nielles, somewhat nauseated by the thought of this warrior offering to sell his chief, a transaction not overcommon among natives.

"He wants nothing, save to see Mahmadou's head," Alfa replied. "He has a grievance."

"Revenge," murmured Nielles. "That's better." Then, aloud—"Why?"

Followed a swift colloquy between Alfa and the other.

"He had been promised a reward, and Kourou Moussa's brother obtained it instead. He says he does not want to serve a man who breaks his word to a true believer."

"Question of pull, even among these fellows," Nielles decided. "A shabby way of treating the Prophet, but all iron must go into the blade." He turned to Alfa. "Tell him that we'll use his information, perhaps, but in the meantime we'll keep him here. If it's a trap we'll worse than kill him."

Alfa translated, without the delicate shading of words, and with appropriate gestures, accompanied by a click of the tongue which was full of menace.

The man seemed indifferent, and in the same calm voice replied—

"You may do with me as you wish."

Nielles called the sentry.

"Call captain!"

Biot arrived, rubbing his eyes, a tunic hastily drawn over his fat torso.

"What's up?" he asked.

The lieutenant told him, briefly, of the negro's news. Through Alfa Biot asked for more precise information. As he listened, his excitement grew. He grasped Nielles by the arm, drew him out of hearing of the others, and spoke swiftly:

"Old man, if he's right, we can pluck Mahmadou like a pond lily, within ten miles of this place. After that, with the leader gone, I'll guarantee to bash in that Dianna *tata* in two hours."

"And if it's a trap?"

"Not likely. If that were the case the information would not have been brought by one of his own warriors. Their uses are stereotyped, all alike. If it were a trap, some trader would have brought the news carefully allowed to leak through."

"Will you risk the company on this fellow's information?"

"No. In any case, the company would have no chance. A hundred men would be reported at once. One of us with ten or twelve men could hop over the stockade in the middle of the night and catch the bird."

Nielles, perceiving the possibility of the feat, glowed with eagerness.

"You can't go, captain, I know that. That means——"

He pictured himself, earning promotion and fame through the midnight raid, bringing back the Saracolet's Prophet and ending the campaign. Truly a magnificent feat for a newcomer. He did not doubt but what he would be chosen. He had been the one to receive the news, he had foregone his turn of rest to question the natives in his captain's place——

But Biot coughed apologetically.

"Listen, Nielles," he said. "You're new. You have plenty of time before you. Jacquemin, who is only a sub-lieutenant, has been here years, never had a real chance. This means a decoration and promotion. I'll have to ask you give place to him."

Nielles found the power to smile. There was truth in what Biot said. Little Jacquemin was a splendid man, and it was doubtless true that he had never had a fair chance. But to step aside, was none the less bitter.

"I understand, captain," he assured Biot. And then tactfully added: "Anyway, upon thinking it over, I'd have declined. I don't know enough about this country yet to lead an expedition of the sort."

Biot, relieved, sought his hand.

"Let me tell you, that willingness to help others will bring you luck," he said. "The

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next chance will be yours, on my head." Turning to the *tirailleur* in the doorway he ordered briefly: "Take this man to the guard-house, and place a sentry over him, corporal. Here, I'll take his knife."

The stranger allowed himself to be disarmed without a protest, and followed the corporal to the guard-house.

CAPTAIN BIOT pressed the crown of his watch. Eleven tiny *clangs* resounded, the minute pounding of the gold hammer on the miniature gong. Biot was proud of the timepiece, which had marked according to him, the beginning of many important engagements.

The three officers regarded each other.

Eleven o'clock. The night was dark, propitious for a stroke such as they contemplated. Nielles, in the excitement of the occasion, had forgotten his disappointment.

Jacquemin, a short, wiry man, was seated across the table from Nielles. The lieutenant contemplated the fine sweep of brow, the nervous energy in the glance. Had Fate been kind, Jacquemin might have risen high. He was scarcely thirty. There was still ample opportunity for him. If El Hadj Mahmadou were on the indicated spot when Jacquemin arrived all the evil demons of the Moslem catalog would not keep the Frenchman from laying unrespectful hands upon the man, whose capture meant an enemy of France removed from active participation in Sudanese affairs and was also the key to a successful career.

Of course, the commander in chief, back in Kayes, would get official credit for subduing the Saracolets. But in army circles, Jacquemin would be known, and watched—favorably. His period of vegetating through the years in hopeless expectation of promotion, would be ended.

"Are you ready, Jacquemin?" Biot asked.

"Yes," Jacquemin said sharply.

"Have you picked out the men you'll take?"

"I have. And I've placed them on guard under some pretext or other so that I would find them awake. They have not yet been told that they are to leave the blockhouse tonight."

"Good."

Biot and Jacquemin, experts in such matters, had well planned the expedition. It is a recorded fact that undertakings of the sort, discussed with the natives before setting out, never accomplish much. There is bound to exist a loose-tongued member who will talk, if not to other men, to his wives, who in turn, with true feminine discretion, will spread the news throughout the neighborhood. The follower of Mahmadou, brought in for further cross-examination after dinner, had been told that the information he had brought, would not be used. Alfa, trusted though he was by Biot, had also been kept in ignorance.

Biot now picked up a lantern.

"Come," he said.

He led the way outside. He made a preliminary round of all sentries, warning them that a small party would soon leave the enclosure, and that after the departure no other person was to be allowed to move out until daylight. Then the captain went to the lean-to, near the main gate, where the men placed on guard by Jacquemin were seated about tiny smouldering fires. The eight negroes rose, and carried arms.

"You are all going with Lieutenant Jacquemin, here," said Biot. "The bayonet is to be carried, not suspended from the belt as usual, but passed through it like a knife. Take no packs, no blankets. Understood?

"Yes, captain."

"No need to tell you to bear yourselves like men. I know you. If you succeed, you'll one and all be rewarded. Understood?"

"Yes, captain."

"Now get ready."

The *tirailleurs* packed their belongings together. Three of the number doffed their coats, wearing only the baggy trousers and belts with the cartridge-boxes.

Biot indicated the cartridge-case of the nearest man.

"How many packages have you?"

"One."

"Take three more. A hundred shots are better than twenty-five."

The packages were distributed.

Then Biot carried the lantern back to his room, to give the impression to possible watchers outside the stockade that the procedure had been a simple inspection. He returned almost immediately.

"Can't see ten feet away," he noticed with satisfaction. "I hope one of your men knows the trails."

"That's attended to," Jacquemin assured him.

The party marched silently to the rear of

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the stockade. One by one the *tirailleurs* climbed over and dropped softly on the other side. Jacquemin shook hands with Biot and Nielles and listened to final instructions.

"Good luck, Jacquemin!"

"Thanks."

Nielles joined his hands to assist Jacquemin to reach the top of the barrier.

"I have to thank you for a bit of luck," the sub-lieutenant whispered.

And then he disappeared.

Biot stood, silent.

"They're gone," he said, at last. "There's nothing more we can do."

"Save hope," agreed Nielles.

THERE is unlimited lung power in a gigantic Senegalese boasting a forty-five inch chest. When directed into the brass tube of a bugle, it would snap dying men to attention.

Nielles, at the first note of reveille, rolled off his cot and hurriedly dressed.

Captain Biot greeted him cordially. They breakfasted together, and talked of of Jacquemin. The place where Mahmadou was to spend the night was within a five hour walk, under the best conditions. At night, on bad trails, the five hours might stretch into seven. Unless they had been misled as to the number in the escort, the eight *tirailleurs* should find no trouble in dispersing the enemy. Experience has often proved that well-trained men, led by a white officer, can easily cope with five times their number. And not more than fifteen riders were reported with the Saracolet leader.

Nielles, in accordance with invariable routine, went out with half the company, on a cleared space behind the blockhouse, and commanded the drill.

Being a large man physically, he had a predilection for bayonet work. He was satisfied with the progress made by his husky pupils. Gifted with native strength and cunning they unconsciously applied the principles of balance and weight, and the instruction was limited to casual advice. Nielles found them better material than narrow-chested factory workers, or muscle-bound peasants. But the *tirailleurs* could never claim to be expert riflemen. At fifty or even a hundred yards they obtained fair results. But the adjusting of sights for greater distances was above their comprehension. Those who became marksmen were the exception.

On his return to the mess-room for lunch he noticed that Biot appeared ill at ease.

"Any news?" he asked.

Biot shook his head.

Several times during the meal the captain got up and moved about restlessly.

Good intentions count for nothing in a military report. If harm came to Jacquemin, Biot would find himself in a bad predicament with the commander at Kayes, who was a disciplinarian and did not approve of a departure from orders. And his personal affection for Jacquemin had been evident. Perhaps the thought that he had sent his friend to his death instead of to success had come to him. Indeed, what had seemed plausible the night before began to assume a different aspect in broad daylight.

The serving-boy brought in the coffee, and Biot sat down for the fifth time, and sipped at the scalding liquid.

"I'm worried," he began.

Nielles volunteered the conventional suppositions, trending toward the belief that all was probably well, that the return trip encumbered by prisoners would take a longer time.

"If Mahmadou had been caught, Jacquemin would have sent one of his men back to me, asking for a stronger escort to meet him half-way. ——! Why did I let him go?"

"It was a chance in a hundred, captain."

"Why didn't the thought come to us, idiots that we are—why didn't we wonder why Mahmadou was comparatively alone, and spending the night in a bush village? We never thought of that, did we? I don't blame you. But I should know the bird! He's not the one to risk his precious hide like that. And we can't set out blindly to look for Jacquemin. They might raid the post in our absence."

"I could take a few men," offered Nielles.

"And get cut off, yourself!" Biot exclaimed ironically. "I wish I knew one way or the other. He's been gone thirteen hours."

As if in answer to his wish, the boy entered and spoke:

"*Tirailleur* here. Want to speak to captain."

Both officers gained their feet and made for the door, almost colliding with the *tirailleur*, who presented arms, according to regulation, and offered a slip of paper to Biot. The captain read the message, and

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without a word handed it to Nielles. On a leaf torn from a note-book—Jacquemin's note-book—across the soiled surface interlined with blue threads, a few words were scrawled in pencil, apparently written in the dark.

Trap—surrounded by two or three hundred men. JACQUEMIN.

Not a word to ask for help. Jacquemin was reporting a fact, as was his duty. He had taken a chance, and he expected salvation only in case it was coincidental with the good of the service. Nielles folded the note and stuffed it in his breast pocket. Biot, hands behind his back, paced up and down, muttering.

"Can't let him go like that—white man, after all—orders—" Then, almost brutally, he shouted at Nielles: "Call the men, I tell you! We're going."

Neilles stepped out into the open, called the bugler. Soon the *tirailleurs* tumbled from their shacks, struggling with their packs, and fell into line.

Then Biot led the way to the guard-house. Their informer of the day before rose to his feet when the door swung open. He appeared to realize what had happened, and grinned with satisfaction. Alfa, emerging from the throng of troopers, translated the captain's questions.

"Yes, it was a trap. And I am here," the prisoner replied.

A corporal and four men surrounded him, and walked outside the stockade. The tall half-naked form did not quiver. A few shots sputtered out. That was all.

"The pig is dead," Alfa remarked.

No wonder the task of conquering such foes was difficult, thought Nielles!

He had expected to be left behind, and was agreeably surprized.

"Fifty men would not be enough," Biot explained. "I'll take every one, save a squad, which will remain here with Sergeant Duplan."

Quartermaster Sergeant Duplan was the only white non-com. in the post, and not extremely trustworthy. His health was poor, he was a habitual drunkard, and managed to find intoxication in almost any fluid. The climate and the country had gripped him. He had lost his energy.

Today he was unshaven, dirty, his feet in slippers, clad in baggy, yellowish garments. He shuffled forward, made a gesture that might have passed for a salute. He was smoking a pipe, which, out of respect for his commander, he took from between his gums, and held carefully in the plam of his hand.

"Duplan, I'll leave you here with ten men. Close the gate and keep good watch."

"Yes, captain, I know what to do. By ——, a man like me, who's done three campaigns ought to know——"

"Yes, yes," Biot assented. "Jacquemin is in trouble."

"In trouble?" Duplan laughed silently. "Bah, those new recruits are all alike." He turned and addressed the troopers who were to stay with him, and ordered them to their stations. "Don't fret, captain, I'll keep my eyes open."

Biot and Nielles mounted and led the way, down to the Nieri Ko and across. The messenger who had come from Jacquemin was in the lead. He did not hesitate at the fork of the trails, eager to lead the company to his lieutenant's help.

The bush was not thick. There were stretches of high grass, grass that often cut into the feet of the *tirailleurs*, many of whom had neglected to bring their sandals in the hurried departure. But they kept on without a murmur. Their comrades ahead were in danger. And with them was a white man. When a black abandons his white chief the sun will rise in the west.

From the sides, occasionally came a shot. Though armed with good carbines, the Saracolets did not know how to use them and aimed too high or too short.

"Are we getting near?" he asked the guide.

The man turned around. He seemed bewildered.

"Yes, lieutenant, but there is no more firing."

CORPSES.

Two *tirailleurs*, face down, stripped of all clothing save the red *chechias*, which had doubtless been left behind as a symbol of the black man's servitude to the French. Shoulders and torsos were pierced by many wounds. Flies swarmed on the lips of the wide gashes. Upon a brief order from Captain Biot, a squad fell out of the ranks, straightened the limbs of the dead men, and covered them with blankets.

Half the unit kept formation, ready for

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emergency. The others scattered through the bushes, in search of Jacquemin's body. The expedition had made its last stand in a small clearing, covered with bushes, perhaps four feet high. Everywhere were signs of conflict. The Saracolets, according to their custom, had carried their dead away, but blood could be seen close to the trees which had sheltered the riflemen.

A petty encounter, such as occurred practically every week in the Sudan. The newspapers in France would not find space to mention it. Nielles knew vaguely that Jacquemin had relatives in France. But as for the nation, there were other matters to worry about. Some deputy in the Chamber would no doubt attack the Cabinet for spending too much money on colonial affairs. The ultra-red socialists would bellow that the negroes were being civilized at the point of the bayonet. And more men like Jacquemin would go.

He was aware that one of the men had called out, holding his rifle high above his head. Biot had turned his horse in that direction, and was dismounting. Nielles looked for the gesture that is an acknowledgment of respect for the dead. But Biot was merely bending over. Then he straightened up and called out.

"Eh, Nielles——"

The lieutenant urged his horse toward the spot. The animal stepped high to avoid the bodies of dead men, those who had been gathered close to Jacquemin.

The white officer appeared to be lying with his head in a clump of grass. He was naked: The dead are inevitably pillaged by the natives. The hot sun had already swollen the stomach and gasses distended the reddish skin. Jacquemin was not lovely to look upon. There were wounds upon his torso and on his arms, and the green flies were upon them also. Tiny green flies, glinting with a bizarre gold luster. The fingers were crooked, twisted. A ring that Nielles had noticed long ago was gone, in all probability now strung around the neck of some black. Death was not always clean in the open.

Nielles touched the brim of his helmet, then, suddenly overcome, shut off the sight of the dead man with his hand. Then he dismounted and compelled himself to look. He tried to speak, but stammered incoherently. Ordinary death he had seen, even horrible death. One of his best friends, an artilleryman, had been mangled by a gun explosion. But the body had been immediately covered up. There had been no shocking nudity. Jacquemin, dead, was almost obscene.

Biot pointed to the wounds.

"They made sure of him! He was still on his feet when he received that one," he indicated coolly.

Several *tirailleurs* came with blankets. They seized the body by the feet. Then Nielles was aware that the head had not been hidden in the bushes.

Biot chuckled hoarsely.

"That's what they were after! Mahmadou has not been over successful lately, probably needed a white head to enhance his prestige. The sight of it stuck on a post in Dianna will bring him a thousand followers."

"God! Do they always do that?"

"Invariably," Biot declared detachedly. "And if we were wise we'd imitate them."

Biot seemed to be callous, and Jacquemin had been a close friend—almost like a brother.

The *tirailleurs* had closed the blankets, and were tying the bundle with thin ropes, in silence. They lifted it, and went toward the spot where the unoccupied soldiers were busy lighting the individual fires. Tin pots were already hung from sticks, many of the men were smoking peacefully.

Biot remained on the spot, his back to Nielles. Then he turned slowly. And Nielles saw his face.

"Have you a cigaret, Nielles?"

"Yes."

He held a flaming match.

Biot puffed several times.

"Thanks," he said, and led the way toward the fires.

THE manuals recommend the square formation for camps in the forest. Captain Biot, taking into account the long hurried march, ordered trees and bushes cut, and formed about his company a four-foot wall, which, while not absolutely secure against a storming party, would nevertheless form a first obstacle not to be despised.

After nightfall, grouped about the larger fires, privates and non-coms. talked over the day's affair, or played the usual primitive games. There were those who sang

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endless jerky verses, which the others picked up in chorus.

On folding-stools by the central fire, the white men talked. From Jacquemin, the conversation drifted to other men the captain had known—dead, some in the Sudan, others across the Indian Ocean in Tonkin.

"One by one, they all go, Nielles. I went to Tonkin in '84. There were three of us, good friends. Leuriot was killed at Bac-Viay. His head was cut off by the Chinese regulars. The other, Blandon, went out at Lam. We buried his body, but didn't get his head for six weeks. Then we found it at the top of a pole in the market-place of Lang-Tcheou. And even I had forgotten until this brought them to mind. In a few months, six, seven, a year at most, you'll scarcely recall what Jacquemin looked like. The last vision you had of him will fade out. You'll remember him as the cheerful fellow you knew at the post. After all, what does it matter what happens to the body after life is gone? Would Jacquemin be more alive if his head were in that sack?" Biot pointed with his cigaret toward the dark bundle.

Nielles' nerves were shattered. He had been trembling visibly. Biot, having gone through the same experience, understood, and was attempting to brace him up with the feeble consolation of words. His method, not of the best, was not due to lack of understanding, but was rather the result of his life: He did not know how to speak to a man as new as Nielles.

"In this country, Nielles, one must accept the usual," Biot went on. "The able-bodied man seldom dies a natural death. Ask any one of the *tirailleurs*. He'll tell you that the thought of having his head sliced off after he's dead doesn't bother him. His main problem is to keep alive."

Nielles leaped to his feet, white.

"Don't talk—don't talk—" he groaned.

Biot stood by his side, laid a hand on his arm, and persuaded him to sit down again.

"You'll be all right in the morning. And don't bother about what I think, old man," he added, for Nielles had attempted an apology for his behavior. "Want some coffee?"

Nielles reasoned that he had not come to the Sudan expecting to find life as he had known it at home. This, what he had just gone through, was routine. It was idiotic to fear the headless body of Jacquemin, to shiver every time his eyes wandered to the blankets. Yet, the proximity of the corpse made him uncomfortable. Why had they not buried Jacquemin with the *tirailleurs?* Why carry the body back to the blockhouse for burial? If, as Biot said, nothing matters after the life goes out.

"Sentries—watch out——"

The calls of the men on guard came regularly, summoned by the pounding of a stick on a cooking-pan. In this manner the non-com. in charge could make certain that nothing unusual had occurred at any of the outposts.

Two rough beds, elevated on sticks, made from branches, had been arranged for the white men. On these were laid blankets.

Biot yawned, with a simulated desire for rest.

"Time to turn in."

He unfastened his collar, took off his shoes, and laid down, drawing the blankets up to his chest.

"I'll take the first turn of duty," Nielles suggested.

"What are you going to do? Keep awake and brood?" Biot demanded. "You get to bed!"

"I have heard that the *tirailleurs* need watching at night, that they go to sleep—" Nielles protested.

Biot sat up, swung his feet clear of the bed, and laughed.

"The best thing for you to do, Nielles, is to forget most of the things you've heard. There's close to a hundred rifles here, and Kourou Moussa, or Mahmadou, or whoever did this thing this morning, will not want to rub hides with that many men. Furthermore, if you roam about all night, the *tirailleurs* will get worried. If you don't trust them, they won't trust you. Understood?"

"Yes, but——"

"If it will give you peace of mind, you can take a turn around the camp—once! I'll wait for you. And if you find any one asleep on guard, I'll give you a month's pay, and permission to stay up."

Nielles left the radius of light about the fires, and followed the bush wall. He talked with one sentry after another. They appeared wide awake, although calm. Their nervous systems evidently did not respond to shock. Once, between guards, in the darkness, feeling an unseen danger, he felt tempted to proceed revolver in hand. But Biot was right. The commanders should

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not appear nervous or exaggerate the danger.

The captain probably knew what he was doing.

But—again the disturbing mental process—Biot had scoffed at the idea that Mahmadou Lamine might use a warrior as an informer. And the warrior had been a traitor, not to the chief he pretended to hate, but to the men who had blindly accepted his information. Therefore Biot was not always right. However, as the exception often proves the rule, Nielles decided not to worry further.

He returned to Biot.

"Well, skeptic?" the other asked. "What was I telling you! Good night."

Biot again pulled up his blankets, and was still. Nielles imitated him.

The corporal of the guard, three fires down the line, was seated before his pan, and beat at the proper time, silhouetted black against the red glow. The monotonous answers came back, muffled.

"Sentries, watch out——"

Nielles closed his eyes.

A far-off screech, and he propped himself on one elbow, startled. Biot had evidently gone to sleep, for he did not move.

"*Psssst*—corporal—" Nielles called.

The corporal looked up. Nielles beckoned him.

"What was that?"

"What?"

The sound was repeated. Nielles laughed shortly, for he knew even before the negro spoke.

"That be leopard," the *tirailleur* replied with a grin.

The lieutenant dismissed him, and lay down again. Although he had believed it impossible to find sleep, he became drowsy. He tried to force from his mind the vision of Jacquemin's body as they had found it.

He slept.

TARAORE, the Bambara, private in the Third Company of Senegalese, had made a long march. He had eaten heavily, he had been on guard the previous night in the blockhouse. His namesake, the leopard, is a nocturnal animal, it is true. But Taraore was remotely related to the spotted cat.

His turn of duty came toward midnight. When he relieved his predecessor, he was informed briefly of the location of various places within eye-reach in the obscurity. A bush, so many paces to the right. A tree, so many paces to the left. Between, a clear spot with several stones glinting whitely. For the first half-hour Taraore marched up and down, answering the call in his turn, exchanging a grunt with the sentry to his right and the sentry to his left, when they happened to meet at the end of their beat.

The black soldier—Senegalese, Sudanese, Congolese—can be brought to a fighting pitch of demoniacal fury. But his nature is calm, his nervous system sturdy. He has imagination; but not too much. Insured against evil spirits by his amulets, having full trust in the bits of leather with the relics encased within, he lacks that fear of the darkness which marks, to a greater or lesser degree, all white men.

And as Captain Biot has said, night attacks in that particular region of the Sudan were rare. Arab, Tuareg, Indo-Chinese, use the element of surprize in the darkness; the negroid races seldom. While the story of the High Sudan is studded with tales of night combats, the Macina and Gambia River Campaigns offer but few. Taraore believed as did his captain.

Having noticed that the corporal made no round, and that his two nearest comrades no longer loomed into sight, he found a comfortable dry spot, and sat down, his rifle across his knees. Conscientiously, he verified his field of vision: the bush was there, the tree had not walked off, and the stones glinted as polished white stones should glint.

"*Bakh na*," he summed up. "It is well."

He mumbled in Ouolof, having had his eye on a certain chocolate beauty who kept a little store in Kayes, and who spoke no Bambara. In his private affairs, Taraore was more thorough than in his military duty. After all, he reasoned, the service was not the only life. Though it paid fairly well—Taraore received for every day in the week fifty centimes and a ration—should he marry he could sit on the doorstep of his wife's shop, and watch the silver pieces roll in without lifting a hand. Or, thanks to his standing as an ex-soldier, tried and true, he could act as night watchman in some trading-store owned by a white man.

Bang—interrupted the pounding stick of the corporal on the cooking pot.

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"Sentries, watch out!" reassured Taraore.

He could easily purchase his intended spouse from her brothers, on the amount he still possessed from his enlistment bonus—the French Government gives the negro volunteers a bonus on re-enlisting, and Taraore was a second-engagement man. She might be persuaded to take in the wash of several white officers, a task she could easily do in her spare moments.

The private broke off in his revery, looked at the tree, at the bush, and at the stones.

They had not moved.

Had he been standing, and walking the distance assigned, he might have noticed two or three shadows, creeping forward on hands and knees, holding something that glistened, something that was not made of white stone. But he felt too tired. He sought in his pocket for his pipe, walked to the nearest fire, sixty feet away, picked up a coal in his horny palm.

Bang—called out the corporal's pot.

"Sentries, watch out—" he replied dutifully, and went back to his favorite spot where he sat down and smoked.

Decidedly, Taraore did not feel wakeful. His pipe went out, but he lacked the energy to get up and to go to the fire. Squatting, his head falling lower and lower, he dozed off. At first he kept his weapon across his knees. But the weight annoyed him. Mechanically, he laid it by his side, folded his arms over his legs.

Bang!

And by reflex, without awakening, Taraore answered—

"Sentries—watch out——"

A flash of white. Taraore stirred uneasily. The Saracolet crouched, blade in hand. But it was probably a dream that was agitating the *tirailleur*, for he did not lift his head. The newcomer crept nearer. He was within two feet of the Bambara. Then he straightened up. Deliberately, to insure full force, he settled the handle of his dagger in his palms. His arms rose together, fell.

A sign, and other shadows appeared, silent, forming in ranks. A gigantic black, armed with a long blade and bearing a shield on his left arm took the lead, poised himself for a signal.

Private Taraore, of the Third Senegalese, stretched flat on the ground, slept on, a sleep that was disturbed by no dream.

THE report of a Gras carbine resounded, sharp as a whip-crack.

Nielles awoke, tore off his blankets and stood. He had not taken off his boots or his tunic. His helmet was under the rough bed. Mechanically, he bent over to reach it.

"What is it!" Biot asked.

Furious, crackling, continuous fire broke out at the northern end of the enclosure of fallen trees and bushes. The flashes winked out in rapid succession.

The captain, in the darkness, was fumbling for his boots. Shouts and screams, the trampling of bare feet. Around the two white officers, the sleeping *tirailleurs* were awaking. Nielles ran to the nearest fire, picked up a can of benzine used to light fires, and threw it on the coals. A great flame shot upward, revealing the *tirailleurs*, lined at the northern end, crouching, firing at the attackers, whose heads showed over the barricade.

"Get some men away from there and man the opposite side," panted Biot, struggling with his laces. "That's a blind for the real attack!"

In the raw light his face was distorted, teeth showing. From the other end of the camp came several shots. Biot, who was seated on the ground, folded over, his head on his knees, then convulsively rolled over. Nielles, not five yards off, on his way to the northern end, where the first attack was being pushed vigorously, whirled around and ran to his side.

"Hit?"

"Yes — in the side — listen — they're coming——"

Yes, the enemy was within the camp, struggling to pass the scattered *tirailleurs*, who remained in the southern sector of the closed place. Outnumbered, ten to one, the Senegalese and Bambaras were fighting hard. Nielles saw them go down one by one, under the flashing swords. Bewildered, he did not know which way to turn.

"Get up, Biot, and come to the north side!"

Biot, flat on his stomach, struggled to get to his hands and knees. Around him, a shadow enlarged, a shadow that gleamed redly—blood. Nielles bent over as if to pick him up. Then a ghastly thought shook him: With the burden of Biot on his shoulders, could he outstrip the Saracolets to the *tirailleurs*, fifty yards off on the

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northern side? Not a chance. They would both be killed.

"Get away—Nielles—it's my fault—this mess—" Biot was saying. "I order you—if you go, too, the post—is gone—Duplan—ah——"

He went down again. One of the bullets, whistling by, had found its mark, though Neilles, standing, and in full view, had miraculously escaped.

The human mind in a crisis has time for a thousand thoughts in the space of a second. Within Nielles struggled two instincts: The unwritten law of the colonial army, to stick to another white man; and the human impulse to run away from death. If he stayed, death, and decapitation. If he left, dishonor, for even when so ordered by a superior, a white man does not leave a comrade behind.

He discharged his revolver without conscious will, but he exulted when he saw the dusky, white garmented figures crumple, over there where six or seven privates were making a savage stand, rifles empty, bayonets forward, huge leaping shadows whose blades made flashes as they swept into the swirl of attackers.

Had Nielles been older in the colonial service, he would not have hesitated. The instinct of loyalty to the white man would have ruled, an instinct inbred by constant association with men who believe in the code of solidarity. But Nielles was new: He had seen a white corpse in the bush without a head, with a reddish jelly where the neck should have been.

Biot, on his knees now, braced on one hand, indicated the northern end, where lay, perhaps, safety.

"Go—I'm done—what a mess——"

Blood now oozed from between his lips.

Biot had overstepped authority, first in sending Jacquemin out when he had precise orders to mark time until the column arrived, again in leaving the Nieri Ko Post in the hands of a drunken sergeant at the mercy of a bold stroke by Mahmadou. Were he saved now, he must face court martial—so Nielles reasoned. Then, throwing honor and reason to the winds, he turned his back on his companion, turned toward the safeguarding ring of *tirailleurs*.

"Nielles!"

He hesitated. What did Biot want? Was he, too, weakening? Had he recalled the dreadful vision of Jacquemin's fate, a fate which would be his within a few seconds? Yes, for Biot begged, screamed—

"Shoot me, Nielles!"

Nielles lifted the revolver. But he could not, though he knew it was the last decent thing to do. Behind Biot, the last of the *tirailleurs* had gone down. The Saracolets bore down on Biot, surrounded him.

"Nielles!"

Then nothing.

NIELLES turned away from the scattered figures with the reddened knives, and ran toward the line of *tirailleurs*. A bullet struck him in the arm, his left biceps was drenched with something wet and warm.

On the firing-line, matters were better. Two yards apart, the men had taken their position, and were firing methodically, every shot telling. Saracolets were sprawled on the inner side of the barrier, others were hung on the crest, but in no place had they penetrated.

Nielles found M'Pely, a negro sergeant, the oldest non-com. in the company. Cool and stern, he stood, regulating the firing.

"Twenty men to face the rear, M'Pely, the savages are through on the other end!"

M'Pely shouted his orders, and a fraction of the line turned immediately, showing the sergeant's control over his men. The Saracolets by the main fire, where Nielles had abandoned the captain, scattered under the first hail of bullets. M'Pely looked about him, stared at Nielles.

"Captain, where he be?"

Nielles indicated the spot.

"Thou, thou—didst leave him?" M'Pely breathed.

"He was—" Nielles faltered. "He was dead."

M'Pely turned his back upon him, and spoke rapidly. A dozen men stood up, and followed him in a rush toward the fire. Nielles, shamed into action, followed. The Saracolets did not wait for the shock, but turned and fled.

Where Biot had laid, not thirty seconds before, was a pool of blood, and the traces of two heels dragged along the ground. M'Pely was close to the fleeing men now, and a hand-to-hand encounter took place, in which Nielles joined. M'Pely had departed from his calm. The veneer of discipline had been cracked. He paid no heed

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to Nielles' orders that he should not go outside the camp. For a company to abandon its captain was a dishonor that would not be easily lived down, even though a white man had given the example.

M'Pely leaped over the barrier, followed by his men. And Nielles, after a brief hesitation, did likewise. The Saracolets were fleeing on all sides, although a number retreated slowly from tree to tree, sniping as they went, to give the main body time to escape. It was impossible to see at a distance in the dim light. The *tirailleurs* were at a loss.

"Sergeant!" Nielles called.

"Lieutenant——"

"Come back to camp. We'll see what we can do—in the morning."

And M'Pely, downcast, could only agree with his chief. The firing ceased. The Saracolets had gone. And they had taken Biot's body with them.

ROLL-CALL the next morning showed that the company had lost twenty-seven killed, and fifty per cent. of the survivors were wounded. Nielles' hurt was trifling, a flesh wound made by the slug of a trade musket.

The men were sullen, and a vague hostility toward the lieutenant was perceptible. M'Pely had talked. They knew he had left Biot behind. And they were not charitable. As M'Pely had once said: "Black man, he be very good, or he be bad too much. White man he be very good, bad too much, or bad a little." And Nielles was "bad a little," for he had gone with M'Pely after the Saracolets, which showed he was not a coward at heart. But he was not that perfection of bravery and calm that Senegalese have every right to expect of their officers.

Nielles felt this. He roamed about the camp, counting up the enemy dead for his report, and was conscious of many eyes following him, not with favor. One hundred and fifteen bodies, he found, some in the camp, others strung out around the northern end where the false attack had been made.

Taraore's body, with the legs still folded in the sitting position, though the torso was flat on the ground, his wound, delivered from above and cutting through the heart proved that he had been the initial weak link. It had been a cleverly laid trap into which the *tirailleurs* had fallen. But they were not expected to show tactical knowledge, and the belief that they were in part responsible never occurred to them, overshadowed as they were by the lieutenant's exhibition of fear.

The twenty-seven *tirailleurs* were laid beside the eight of Jacquemin's escort, in a long ditch, dug four feet into the ground, then covered over. When all was ready for the return to the fort Nielles looked at the thinned ranks. He tried to console himself with the thought that if Biot had lived, he would have had to account for those thirty-five lives, and for the life of Jacquemin. As for himself, he had no responsibility: Biot had been in full charge.

His own task was beginning. What would he find at the post?

THE march back was performed swiftly, and in silence. But as he forded the river, Nielles started: A portion of the outer stockade was charred, and on the slope were empty cartridges, hoof-prints, signs of a considerable force. He looked for the flag on the mast over the roof of the blockhouse: It was there, small, tri-colored, snapping in the gusts of wind. In spite of this reassurance, he approached cautiously.

"*Qui vive?*" came the question.

"Lieutenant Nielles, you fool!" he called back. "Open the door!"

The gate swung open, not from left to right, but upward, an arrangement that facilitates closing, and makes difficult a forced opening.

Nielles entered, followed by the tired troopers. Crossing from the door of the blockhouse proper, a medium-sized white man in a well-starched tunic approached. The face was vaguely familiar: Clean shaven, save for a tiny mustache.

"I've had a little trouble; lieutenant," he began.

Yes, Duplan, the drunkard; old Duplan, but a shaved, upright Duplan in clean clothes. Placed in command he had reacted to responsibility. Nielles looked closer, saw that the tunic, with cloth loops for horizontal stripes, was one of his own, commandeered by Duplan.

"What happened?" Nielles managed to ask.

"An attack. But I'm familiar with the

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slobs, lieutenant. They tried to set fire to the stockade. When they saw we were ready they drew off. No one killed, or even wounded, on our side, but I'll bet they carried away a good score of stiffs. And Captain Biot, when will he be back? I take it that he stayed behind with the others."

Nielles lowered his head.

"The others are dead. Biot also."

"Killed!"

"All of them."

"——!" remarked Duplan, and then added— "But such is life."

He approached the blanket bundle.

"Captain?"

"No. Jacquemin. Biot's body was carried off."

"Big *tam-tam* in Dianna by now," concluded Duplan.

Nielles went to the office and drew out the official paper. A hard task lay before him. He must accuse a dead man of carelessness, of almost stupidity. If he wrote the whole truth, he would be compelled to give himself an unsavory rôle in the night's affair. For a long time he deliberated, pen in hand, then wrote swiftly:

Report presented by Lieutenant Nielles, André, of the Third Company Senegalese *Tirailleurs*, commanding Nieri Ko Post, to Captain commanding Post of Bani, to be transmitted to the Colonel Commanding in Chief Sudanese Forces, in Kayes.

Followed a detailed account of the warrior's arrival, the translations given by Interpreter Alfa, the apparently trustworthy information, and the initiative shown by Captain Biot in sending Jacquemin to capture Mahmadou. Nielles made a good attempt to elucidate Biot's reasons for moving out. The explanation of the night surprize was difficult. Biot had certainly not done all he could to insure the safety of the camp.

Wishing to be precise in his indications, Nielles summoned Alfa, who had remained behind at the post. The Songhai came in, without the usual smile, wearing a mask of contrition in keeping with the occasion.

Nielles picked up a pencil and drew a circle:

"This blockhouse, understand? And this double line is the Nieri Ko. We crossed here, then walked east, turning to the right, then to the left twice, then to the right again. There's a small clearing, with the dried bed of a brook running not far from the western side. There are three large trees in a clump, as you come out of the trail, so—" Nielles made a crude sketch of the trees.

"Was it there that my captain died?" Alfa asked.

"Yes. Has the place a name?"

"I don't know."

"I want the name for my report."

"I'll ask."

"You may go."

Nielles resumed his work. He could not compel himself to write that he had abandoned a white man. According to his report, Biot had appeared to be dead, at least he had been unconscious and severely wounded. He, Nielles, had acted under orders, the last orders given by the captain, to go to the north end and take command——

That afternoon, with a section of *tirailleurs* to give funeral honors, Jacquemin was buried, in a grave dug not a hundred yards from the post.

Immediately after, Alfa approached.

"I know the name of the place, lieutenant."

"What is it?"

"The natives call it *Kene Dugul*."

And Nielles was able to fill in the blank space he had left, and indicate clearly where Jules Biot, captain, had fallen.

"LIEUTENANT, dinner."

Nielles assented with a nod, followed the boy into the mess room. The servant had not thought it necessary to cover the whole surface of the table with a cloth. Folding the white fabric over he had left half of the wood showing, which resembled, to Nielles, a squat coffin. One by one, the boy offered him dishes, and seemed worried over his unusual lack of appetite. Perhaps he had seen grief-stricken white men before, perhaps instinct guided him. In any case, he added, of his own decision, a quantity of brandy to the coffee, and brought out a box of cigarets that Nielle kept for Sunday nights, last vestige of a former luxurious life.

The servant lighted the match, handed one of the fragrant cylinders to Nielles, then went to a corner of the room, where he squatted, his wide eyes fixed like a dog's on his white master, gleaming expressive eyes, reflecting his own grief, and an immense pity.

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Two days before there had been three men about the table. Yesterday, two. Tonight—one. Dispelling all other thoughts, as artificial lights are dimmed by the noon sun, came remorse. Alone, in a lonely room, with the bare spread of table showing beyond the white cloth, Nielles faced facts.

During the time he had hesitated, struggling with the desire to live, his horror of mutilation, he could have reached down and lifted Biot up in his arms. He might have carried him to safety. But he had quit. The shame of it burned him, burned him so much that he tried to quench his shame with brandy. But the brandy seemed a fuel on which the wick of remorse floated and burned brighter.

Biot had given him orders to retire. According to rules, he was formally justified. Yet, on paper, in accounting to his superiors, had he said that he left Biot *alive, wounded?* No, and what was more, he would not tear up the report and write the truth: He could not. Admit himself a coward? What would be left for him? He recalled occasions, both in France and in the Sudan, when the problem had risen before a man: To save himself for the good of the service, or stick to a wounded man and take a chance. In vain he tried to recall one who had obeyed the order. In Indo-China an officer of the Foreign Legion, wounded in both legs, had been dragged by two men, who refused to leave him, though he was almost empty of blood and sure to die. Not until he shot himself was the question settled. And these men had been acclaimed heroes.

From what had he fled? When he came to the Sudan the sacrifice of his life had been made, for he knew that the majority did not come out alive. He had fled from mutilation. His spirit had snapped before the vision of his own head, the head he saw in the mirror when he shaved, struck off and planted on a stake. Then an anguishing thought took shape. Was it not of more value to Mahmadou's prestige, more harmful to the reputation of France, that a white officer had run away?

Nielles, with all the egotism of man, came to believe that he was the first man who had ever been faced by the remorse and consequences of a deed that had taken but a fraction of a minute. He tried to recall the happenings of the night. He pictured Biot rising, fumbling for his boots. Then he remembered his terror. Between his awakening and his flight scarcely a half-minute had intervened. In that short space he had gathered enough anguish to last him a lifetime.

Biot had been rash but he had been brave. Responsible for the Nieri Ko Post he had nevertheless risked his future as well as his life to go to Jacquemin's help. A white man sticks to a white man. Biot had lived up to his code.

He tried to defend himself against his own accusation: He was young, twenty-four. He had risen far for a man of his age. There were great prospects ahead. Should he have thrown away a possible forty years of usefulness for an idea? Regarded in that light, he found justification.

But what is the world, what is France, but an idea? If men reasoned and calculated before sacrificing, what would become of all ideas? There was a distinct line separating the things a man can do from what he can not do. Which side of the line had he been on? Had he really run to save himself for France, for an idea, or to save his head? He laughed. Was he so good looking that the loss of his head from his body would have been a loss to the world?

He failed to recognize his own laugh, and picked up the kerosene-lamp, walked into his room, stood before the narrow mirror and looked at himself: blue eyes, straight features, brown hair, a very usual type of head. His face seemed lined. Duplan had been rejuvenated by his experience. He himself had been aged. He peered closely into his own eyes. Would not people who saw him for the first time read what was in him, the dry rot that had kept him from meeting the situation? He was new to the Sudan, his nerves had been shattered; he would not, himself, have listened to such an excuse.

He had read somewhere: Africa calls for the finest within men. Africa had called, and found him—running before the Saracolets. Other men, spurred by ambition, had departed from the path of duty and tried to gain for themselves what they were supposed to earn for their country. They had murdered and pillaged. The Sudan had flamed with the burning of villages. But they had possessed courage, nerve.

The face in the mirror stared at him.

"Lieutenant—" the boy had followed

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him into his room, and touched his elbow. "Lieutenant, I take lamp."

Nielles relinquished the lamp, which the servant placed upon the table. Then the lieutenant, hands in his pockets, paced up and down, staring at his boots. On the table lay his revolver, within the holster. The regulation black handle jutted out. Slowly he drew nearer, took the weapon out, held it in his hand. He had refused Biot the final mercy of a shot. A pressure of the trigger was so easily given, so, with the forefinger. He twirled the weapon, which was swiftly taken out of his hand by the boy.

"Give me that!" he said shortly.

The boy shook his head and moved back toward the door. But the lieutenant laughed.

"Afraid I'll shoot myself?"

"Yes, lieutenant."

"White men don't shoot themselves, savvy that?"

"One did."

"What white man shot himself, tell me?"

"When I be small pickin, I be boy for white man, in Medina. One day he catch a letter, read, and all evening he walk and walk. And he laugh. And he go to mirror, he looked himself long time, and he laugh again. Then he look at me, long time, and he say like this—'Woman, no good, boy.' I fear he flog me, so I say—'Woman no good.' And he get up, take revolver and shoot himself."

Queer life, they led, these blacks, thought Nielles; in touch with the miseries and joys of white men, which they could not understand, mysterious reasons not in keeping with the African code. Those who follow the faith of Islam dare not take what belongs only to Allah. And those less civilized can not experience the mental commotions that lead to the irreparable act. If the boy had not spoken, what might he himself have done? And the second act of cowardice would have confirmed the first.

"Go, now," he ordered.

The boy shuffled uneasily.

"Take the gun, if that's what's worrying you."

The servant left.

"A marvelous début!" Nielles breathed. "Frightened by warriors one night, disarmed by the house-boy the next."

He undressed, slipped into bed, and lowered the light. He lay on his back, staring at the poles which crisscrossed above, supporting the roof of dried palm-leaves. Remorse came again, and racked him.

After a time, he sat up and stared into space.

No, Biot's white face had not emerged from the semiobscurity of the room, but from his own memory. Could he live on, enjoying life at the sacrifice of his honor? Honor, a trite, worn word, which had often brought a smile now brutally assumed importance. A life of courage, a short life, ending as had Jacquemin and Biot, in that way could he atone, in that way only could he find peace.

FOR six weeks Nielles awaited the arrival of the column. Then came orders to evacuate the blockhouse, destroy it, and return to Kayes.

In Kayes, Nielles learned that Biot was not the only one who had blundered. The post on the Nieri Ko, ordered built and occupied by an indoor general in Paris, had been in a precarious situation, within easy striking distance of the Prophet's main force. A costly mistake which was quickly hushed. Biot's rash conduct was passed over, the entire report filed. Biot and Jacquemin were awarded, posthumously, the cross of the Legion of Honor, and their names added to the long list of those who had fallen for Greater France.

Nielles' nervous, morose ways were laid to shock, and a kind commanding officer sent him back to the Coast in Saint Louis, for a comparative rest. Nielles cursed the other's amiability, but no protest availed. And the spring campaign against Mahmadou Lamine went on without him.

From his enforced safety, Nielles followed the progress of the column, learned that after a brilliant advance, several engagements, one at Soutouta, another at Saroudian, the French had come before Dianna only to find the place empty. Mahmadou's former capital went up in flames, and the column returned to Kayes. In the meantime, the Prophet had transferred his headquarters to Toubakouta, on the frontier of British Gambia. His new capital was within five minutes' ride of so-called neutral soil. From that soil, Mahmadou had long received ammunition and arms, and had every reason to expect that should he be

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hard pressed by the French, his presence there would not be unwelcome.

Perfect friendship existed between Great Britain and France, in Europe. But African expansion is a game that knows no foul lines. Some degrees farther south, the French, at that identical time, were playing a similar game, partly against Belgium, partly against Great Britain.

Nielles sent in demand after demand for reinstatement to active service. For a man who had decided to face death, fate was serving him poorly. Saint Louis was as safe as the Paris boulevards, many persons considered it to be safer. More months went by. In Kayes, rumor had it, another column was forming. Officers fresh from France were being rushed eastward to take various commands, and Nielles chaffed at the inaction.

Then came other news.

Yellow fever had broken out among the white men in Kayes. The two companies of Naval Infantry, especially dispatched to take part in a last crushing blow against the Prophet, were decimated. There could be no thought of a move against Mahmadou for many months more. The officers who had survived were dragging themselves about, wasted and nerveless. Africa was proving a formidable foe. The casualty list appalled the Legislative Chamber in Paris, deputies were delivering speeches against further conquest, which was not, in their august opinion, worth the loss of life.

To cap this climax, Mahmadou Lamnie, who did not believe in allowing his swords to rust from lack of use, considered his line of retreat sufficiently safe to think of other things. And he came to the conclusion that an expedition against King Malamine of the Ouli region was the next event on the calendar. Malamine had committed a henious crime; he had signed a treaty with France. So that Neteboutou, Malamine's capital, was carried by storm by the Saracolets. For his departure from the strict duty of a Moslem, Malamine paid with his head. The dead King's cousin gathered the remnants of the Ouli army and shut himself up in Macadiacounda, the second town of the region. And sent out a call for help.

France had another ace up her sleeve: An amiable king, Ousman Gassi, lord of the entire Bondou. But Ousman alone could not be expected to cope with the veteran Mahmadou: He needed a white adviser. And the majority of the officers were sick with yellow fever. Then some one remembered Lieutenant Nielles. He was ordered, in the shortest possible time, to go to Bondou. Elated, he packed his boxes, and took the river steamer for Bakel.

Meanwhile Mahmadou was hurrying his attack on Macadiacounda.

The native engineer who fortified the town, probably did not know a half-moon from a bastion, but his work stood the test of Sudanese warfare. Macadiacounda had a first enclosure of mud walls five foot thick, and three other enclosures of heavy logs, called *sanies*. These stockades stood on even ground from the front, but the inner side was skirted by a ten-foot moat, studded with pointed bamboo-poles. To gain the loop-holes, the Ouli riflemen passed over this moat on planks.

Mahmadou, who did not know of this trick, sent his men swarming up the stockades. Fifty, one hundred Saracolets reached the crest, gave one look downward, and hesitated. During that hesitation, they were riddled by the Ouli warriors. They left their dead and wounded hanging along the stockade in the blazing sun. The bodies decomposed quickly, and a terrific stench overwhelmed the town. From all corners of the horizon, came vultures. And no truce was called, each sidefearing treachery.

Mahmadou was stubborn. It took him a long time to realize that a straight frontal attack would avail nothing. When he came to this conclusion, and his pride allowed him to seek out another method, he sent men forward with bags of powder. These were buried at the foot of the log barrier. An explosion, and a gap was made. Swarms of warriors threw into the moat sacks of earth, bushes, planking, and on this passage way, ten abreast, swept forward, only to be brought to a standstill at the second barricade.

At a fearful cost Mahmadou's men carried the second and third *sanies*. And faced the walls. Here the struggle became terrific. The Saracolets appeared to hold no regard for their lives. The Ouli warriors, who were aware that they would receive no mercy, matched them in resolution. Ladders, bending under the weight of the assailants, were thrown back, crushing and mangling the Saracolets and their allies. When a foothold was obtained on the crest

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[illegible] a swirling band would appear from the streets of the town where every low-roofed house was a tiny fort.

Then, under Kourou Moussa, Mahmadou's chief aid, whose giant figure brushed everything before him, a band of Saracolets reached the streets. They slaughtered the defenders in a house-to-house fight, where men fought in a cloud of smoke and dust, grappled in savage conflict, knife against knife. The women of the town joined in the struggle and finished off the wounded Saracolets. And the women also were killed. Warriors ran about with powder-sacks in their hands to blow down doors. The gates smashed. The rush up the narrow stairs began. Blood cascaded down the steps.

After three days Macadiacounda proper was in Mahmadou's hand.

Before his panting, exhausted forces rose the *diomfoutou*, in the northern angle—a fortress within a fortress. There the survivors of the Oulis had taken refuge. The struggle began over again. Mad days and mad nights followed. Urged by the beat of the tom-tom, the attackers reeled against the walls, lifted ladders, scrambled upward. No one slept. The fighting was continuous. The days were dark with smoke, the nights bright with fire.

Kourou Moussa, thrice wounded, appeared to be everywhere at once. On the fortress, the Ouli leader, with the fear of execution upon him, sought to inspire his followers with valor. Mahmadou halted action long enough to offer life to all save the leader. He was sure of victory but appalled at the price. But no one would desert Malamine's kin.

A wind of madness swept over the place.

Wounded men, unable to stand, dragged themselves to the ladders and died there in an effort to continue the fight. Mahmadou Lamine, in spite of his forty-eight years, stripped his gandoura, and figured personally in the assaults. Bushes piled high against the walls were set aflame. Scattered riflemen fired on the defenders who poured water on the fires. The Oulis, with their singed beards, their sweat-drenched, naked bodies, appeared like so many demons from the pit.

The vultures, strutting through the streets eating carrion, did not disturb themselves when live men walked by. No one thought of burying the dead. Sickness broke out, and the sick men carried on. Kourou Moussa, shivering, bloody, his black skin grayed by an unknown disease, would not leave the field. With two thousand men ready, with fifty ladders borne aloft, Kourou Moussa marched forward. Mahmadou had decided to strike a final blow regardless of cost. The ladders were erected and held in place. Warriors went up, gained the top of the walls, brushed aside the exhausted defenders. Kourou Moussa, himself, got as far as the inner room. The Oulis were doomed.

Then it was that Mahmadou received news of an army approaching. The sound of great war tom-toms were heard on the flanks of the valley. Kourou Moussa came back to take command of the riders against this new foe. But he collapsed, and a lesser man took his place.

Lieutenant Nielles rode at the side of Ousman Gassi.

The King of Bondou had proved to be a tobacco-hued giant, fierce-visaged, clad in *gañdoura* and turban. Although over fifty years old, it was evident that he intended to take part in the coming combat. From his wide cloth belt protruded the handles of two daggers and one revolver. Behind him rode twenty-five hundred horsemen, resembling him in color and character, all in white garments, wearing the broad Sudanese straw hat that ends in a red leather spike. Tom-toms, borne by four men, were pounding the charge, the sun glittered on rifle-barrels and blades. The Bondou force was fresh, animated by the presence of a white man.

But when they were confronted by the Saracolets; in rags, black with powder, drenched with blood, this fine array hesitated. The perturbation increased. A retrogressive movement was felt along the line. In another second the force would have broken, daunted by the veterans of Mahmadou.

Nielles, pale and shaken, urged his horse forward along the front of his line, presented his flank to the enemy. Those who were nearest heard him laugh. At his side, shamed into action, appeared Ousman, on his white stallion. Nielles saluted, then turned toward the firing of the opposite line. He increased his pace to a gallop, and he did not draw his sword or revolver as he approached the pick of the Prophet's forces.

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Had Kourou Moussa been there things might have been different. But Kourou Moussa was unconscious within the town, sick with that dread sickness that men call cholera. The Saracolet line dissolved into fleeing groups, which were sabered by the riders in the open. Mahmadou fled, carrying his leader with him, leaving Macadiacounda swept by death and cholera.

Fear in his heart, shaken by emotion, the white lieutenant laughed as some men weep. And with him laughed an army of unstrung Moslems. The siege of Macadiacounda, in which two thousand men found death, ended in a peal of laughter.

WITHIN six days the Sudan rang with the tale of the white leader, great as the greatest, who had led Ousman's warriors over the bellies of Mahmadou's army. From Podor to Timbuktu, the news spread. The white man laughed, and was safe from bullets. He had ridden down on rifles, laughing. He was protected by Heaven. And the men with him laughed also, for did not his protection extend over them?

The commander at Kayes heard, and was surprized. Rumors, not favorable to Nielles, had been going the rounds of the native barracks, yarns told by the privates of the Third Company, Senegalese. The worthy man cursed himself for having hidden that light under a bushel, kept that energy in Saint Louis. He wrote to Nielles, a letter that allowed the receiver to glimpse a captaincy and the cross of the Legion of Honor. M'pely, Sergeant of *tirailleurs*, who had first rumored abroad that Nielles was not as brave as a white man should be, was shamed into silence. While in Mahmadou's capital, a big negro, beginning to move about once more, decided that he and Nielles would some day meet, that no Heavenly force would protect the Frenchman, that Ousman's laughing rider would laugh no longer.

Oblivious alike to praise and hatred, Nielles knew that he was a coward, but that he could act like a brave man. He dispatched a letter to Kayes, demanding half a section of *tirailleurs* to be used as instructors, and a good interpreter.

The half-section arrived under Sergeant Major Duplan, who, inured for many years to the climate, had not contracted the fashionable sickness, yellow fever. And he had brought with him a bland, polite Songhai, Alfa by name.

MACADIACOUNDA, rising from its ashes, throbbed with activity, an activity that held no good for Mahmadou, beaten leader and false Prophet, now hugging close to British Gambia.

Nielles did not feel well. Often during the night he awoke drenched with cold perspiration. It was not cholera, he was certain. The disease declared itself swiftly. In any case the town had been made sanitary, the traces of battle removed. The walls and stockades were repaired; the vultures had left, perhaps they had gone to the south, where Samory, the Malinke was feeding them with his endless conflicts.

Duplan, consulted, advised quinine. The sergeant had taken on new importance as the companion of Nielles in his first post in the Sudan. His pride in the young officer was unlimited. On a certain afternoon, when Duplan was building air castles for him, Nielles changed the conversation abruptly, wishing to drag himself from this false pretense of courage, recall his limitations.

"Did they ever find Biot's body?" he asked.

Duplan, who had been with the column that had burned Dianna, shook his head.

"We found Jacquemin's head, but no sign of Biot. Since he was killed at *Bere bi fanan*, no one seems to know what happened to the body. Probably thrown into some hole in the bush."

"What did you call that place?"

"*Bere bi fanan*," replied Duplan. "The place 'where the night was spent.'"

"Are you sure?" Nielles asked, after a moment.

"Positive."

"Did it have a name before—before that affair?"

"Not that I know of. Probably not. Unless some striking incident has happened at a given place in the forest, the natives usually designate by a description, such as: Three trees, or where the river begins. Understand?"

"Yes." But he continued. "Do you understand their tongues, Duplan?"

Duplan smiled.

"I almost went nigger once. I speak two or three dialects, almost as well as a native."

"What does *kene dugul* mean?"

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Duplan hesitated, repeated the words several times.

"As far as I can make out, it means: No one hears, or no man hears. You may be mispronouncing, of course, and it may have a totally different meaning. Why do you ask, lieutenant?"

"I heard those words spoken, and I wondered. Curiosity, that's all. No one hears, eh?"

"Yes."

"Thank you."

Presently Nielles got up and walked away. No one hears. *Kene dugul*, that was what Alfa had said. Why? Duplan was trustworthy. He had questioned prisoners on the spot when he went forward with the column. Why had Alfa manufactured the name? What was it that no man heard?

Biot's last words—they had not been heard. How did Alfa know? How did he know that Biot had called out? He had been in the blockhouse, miles away from the spot. Not even M'pely had heard Biot's call. Who could have heard except the Saracolets? Could they have heard in the excitement of the moment? Yes, for white men are the center of all eyes.

Alfa, who spoke all tongues, who came into contact with many tribes, had heard of the incident somewhere. And that somewhere must have been close to the blockhouse, for he remembered that Alfa had not gone far from the post that day, the day Jacquemin was buried.

How much, how little, did Alfa know?

What did the Songhai conceal beneath his good-natured mask? Was he capable of risking his life for the sake of a little joke on his white commander? The fellow had a sense of humor, that much Nielles knew. Alfa would appreciate the thought of his lieutenant writing in an official report the very thing he wanted to conceal.

Nielles was walking through a narrow, crowded street, through the space respectfully left free by the populace, who saluted him as he passed. Suddenly the whole scene seemed to spin around, a confusion of red-yellow walls, dusky faces and white garments. He clutched out to keep from falling, and felt that he was being held erect. His eyes cleared.

"Art thou sick, lieutenant?" came a voice.

"No, dizzy."

With a word of thanks to the native, he passed on.

By an effort of will he kept walking, and after a few hundred feet his head cleared. He sat down in front of an open-air shop and sent a boy for his horse. Oulis and Bondqus, passing by, eyed him curiously. The merchant, honored by this visit from the town hero, brought coffee, and offered Nielles a cup.

When his horse came up he gave the boy a copper piece, and mounted; rode aimlessly to the northern gate, crossed the field where the brief battle had taken place. Here it was that he had earned his spurs as a leader.

No man hears.

The words rang through his head. How did Alfa know? Alfa was in the town. The commanding officer who had allowed Duplan to bring him, little realized how grateful Nielles would be to have Alfa in town this afternoon! Had the interpreter been in Kayes, Nielles believed that he would have set out for Kayes, to satisfy his curiosity. What did Alfa know? That Nielles had abandoned Biot? What could prevent the fellow from spreading the news when and where he pleased? And he could not beg him to be silent. Of what use to see Alfa——

What could he say? "I forbid you to reveal that I was a coward" or, "I'll give you so much to keep your mouth shut?"

Ousman Gassi, in gorgeous costume, bristling with weapons, rode toward him. Nielles conversed logically enough.

"I heard you were ill," Ousman offered.

Already! Here, too, a white man was well-watched.

"The sun, I guess, Ousman Gassi," Nielles replied. "Thy Sudanese sun is not good for me."

"Speak no harsh word of my Sudanese sun, lieutenant," Ousman replied in French, with an accent that was a mixture of Arabic and Bambara. "It has blossomed bravery within thee."

"Say, rather, Ousman, that I caught some of thy courage," Nielles said, carrying on the little game of compliments that was in order every time they met.

"One does not become a horse through riding with a donkey," protested Ousman. "But I, the donkey became a horse!" And he went on, with a lengthy imagery of

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language, to the effect that Nielles' example had inspired all.

"What news from Mahmadou?" Nielles put in.

"Not much. He is whipped. But his man, Kourou Moussa, is said to roam close to here with his riders. He has regretted, it is said, that sickness kept him from the lines that day, and wants to meet thee."

"Kourou Moussa is a man," said Nielles. "And a worthy foe."

"And a brave man thus does speak of another," Ousman Gassi continued to compliment.

They rode back to town together, followed at a distance by the dozen or more riders that Ousman kept constantly about him, in case of emergency. Within the town, when their roads forked—Ousman's to the *diomfoutou* where he had established himself, Nielles' to his quarters in the center of the *tirailleurs'* barracks—the lieutenant paused to inquire—

"From here, how can I reach the house of Alfa, the interpreter?"

"The Songhai who thinks himself whiter than white men? I'll give thee three riders to lead thee, not less. For if Oumsan Gassi is escorted by twelve, he can well afford to give his friend three."

"*Au revoir*," said Nielles.

"*Allah insur sidna*," returned Ousman. "May Allah make our lord victorious."

They parted. Nielles followed the three riders forced upon him by Ousman. The populace, seeing him thus in unaccustomed state, lined the streets and cheered, thinking no doubt that his show had some import which they could not understand.

"ALFA, he is in?"

The boy servant saluted, military fashion, and replied—

"No, Lieutenant." Then added— "He has gone to Ousman Gassi's to talk with some new prisoners."

Around Nielles and the three riders people had gathered, filling the street. Nielles could not wait for the interpreter in the open.

"I'll go in," he said. "And my men also."

"Yes, lieutenant."

Nielles dismounted; as did the three horsemen. The servant led the way, first into a sort of hall where the bodyguard halted, then into a room where the servant offered the lieutenant a seat.

Alone, Nielles looked about. Two narrow windows, high on the wall opposite the entrance door, gave light. The room was carpeted with straw mats. In a corner, a rough bunk, in another one of those large ornate wooden coffers which the Arabs call: *sendouk*. On a low table a bottle of ink and a pen, a steel pen.

Was Alfa writing his memoirs, or his own noble opinions of African affairs? Nielles smiled. Then, bored with waiting, he moved about the room. Before the coffer he halted, then bent down and threw back the cover. Nielles was in that stage when natives do not seem altogether human beings. It is the European way in Africa. In this case idle curiosity and the disturbing belief that Alfa might not be that which he pretended to be. In another white man's room, Nielles would not have read a letter uncovered on a table. In Alfa's room he permitted himself to open a piece of furniture evidently intended to be closed.

Within the coffer, bundles of clothing, a revolver of old pattern, a sword.

"Could our good Alfa have been a warrior at any time?" murmured Nielles. "More likely a curio, kept as a reminder of his race. A beautiful weapon, at that."

He looked at the blade carefully. It was inlaid with gold scrolls in Arabic. The revolver was such as had been used thirty or thirty-five years before when the French were still marking time west of Medina.

A box of cigarets, branded as coming from Cairo. But that box had probably traveled to France and to the Sudan again before reaching Alfa. The sword and the fashionable cigarets, all Alfa's character was indicated in these. They were emblematic of what he should have been and what he was. A Songhai who spoke perfect French and wore no sword was not to Nielles' liking, incongruous, out of keeping with the Sudan.

A copy-book, such as are used in school in France—a gray cover on which appeared the lines for the pupil's name, address, grade. He opened the book at random, followed the first lines, then interested, read further. Alfa wrote like a Frenchman, and with a military terseness.

For regular troops, night marches are recommended only if it is wished to hasten the departure of a column two or three hours at the maximum, so as to arrive earlier at a camping-place assigned in advance. Even in this case such marches are not

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advisable, save on moonlit nights. The inconveniences of night travel are numerous: loss of ammunition and personal belongings; fatigue out of all proportion with the results achieved.

Then a little further, Nielles read:

Night attacks in the Sudan are not to be feared. Both mixed races and negroes appear to avoid them. It is the custom of inexperienced commanders, after a daylight combat, to keep a strong guard awake, during the night, in fear of a renewal of action. This merely results in keeping from their sleep exhausted men. Invariably when the natives have struck a heavy blow during the day, they hasten from the point of attack and are not to be feared for several days.

Alfa wrote well. Biot had said very nearly the same things to him at the post. Had Alfa collected and recorded the conversations? That was scarcely possible. Another detail attracted Nielles' attention. The writing was fine and firm, without the finicky touches natives usually placed on the capital letters. He turned to the first page.

In larger writing appeared:

Jules Biot, Captain of Colonial Infantry.

So this was what Biot had been writing, evenings on end, when Nielles heard his pen scratching steadily in the next room! The captain had once mentioned the need of a book to instruct newcomers in the Sudan, spare them the costly lessons of experience. This was the first draft of Biot's book—in Alfa's hands!

From this, Alfa could have known ahead of time just what Biot would, or would not do. If Alfa had informed the enemy: That would explain the night attack, the first of the kind following a bold stroke during the day, on record. Suspicion grew to a certainty. Seeking further, he came upon several papers, folded neatly. Opening them, he was disappointed. They were written in Arabic. But he stuffed them into his pockets, rolled the blank book tightly, and slid it out of sight within his tunic. This done, he closed the coffer, went back to his chair, and lighted a cigaret.

The sound of a horse's hoofs outside, talking before the house, the voice of some one speaking sharply and the undertone of a reply. Alfa was there, probably asking Ousman's riders for an explanation of their presence.

The interpreter entered and saluted. Nielles did not miss the quick glance he gave in the direction of the coffer.

"Sit down," invited Nielles.

The Songhai crossed, sat down on the coffer, brought out a cigaret, asked Nielles' permission with a look, and lighted it.

"At your service, lieutenant," he said, with a slight note of surprize that the white man should have come to his dwelling.

Nielles regarded him intently.

"You know a great many things, Alfa, don't you?"

"Many things about the Sudan, yes, lieutenant. You see I'm a native, and trusted more than a European." Alfa spoke easily, with every appearance of sincerity. His dark eyes met Nielles' without shifting.

"Could you tell me why you gave me a certain name to insert in a report which I sent to Kayes?"

"What name, lieutenant?"

"*Kene dugul*——"

Alfa's eyes winked rapidly. "I asked for information of a Dioula trader, who passed at the post that very afternoon, lieutenant, and he was the one who gave me the name."

"What does it mean?"

"Where no one hears," Alfa replied, in a quiet voice.

"Have you any idea, Alfa, why it is so-called?"

"No, lieutenant."

"I see," Nielles said. Then apparently satisfied, he shifted the conversation. "You are a Songhai?"

"I am."

"You left the Gao region when quite young, I believe. Where did you go?"

"I went to Fez, in Morocco, and studied. After, I came back to the Sudan, stayed a while and went to Dakar, where I learned—" he hesitated modestly—"what I know of French."

"Have you really forgotten the Koran, the faith of your people?"

For the first time the interpreter looked away. He followed the smoke of his cigaret in silence, then spoke, in a low voice.

"Would I be with the French, lieutenant, if I did not love them? And could I love them, were I a true believer? I am a leader among my people, and could command a higher position than is mine here."

"But suppose that you could serve your people here better than with the sword?"

"I do not understand."

"Learning our methods, you know. Samory has sent men as spies everywhere. His armorer was trained in one of the French arsenals on the coast."

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"I would not serve Samory. And in any case, what did Samory gain? Is it not known everywhere among your people that the men he sent to learn the making of cartridges, spent hours engraving by hand on each and every one, the numerals and letters on the back rim, thinking that they were magical formulas needed?" Alfa smiled coldly.

"But you—you are intelligent."

Alfa stood up, not Alfa the interpreter, but Alfa the Sudanese.

"It may please you to play with words, Lieutenant Nielles."

"No, facts."

"You have had news from Kayes."

"No, I looked in your coffer, and found the captain's book. I know why he was attacked."

"And you, too, had you stayed, I would have managed to have sent you out to be killed!" Alfa said savagely. "The Sudan is big, there is no union among the races, but it is coming, the time when they will unite against you. Not the blacks, who since the beginning have been enslaved and killed, but the Berbers, they will form a people!" He paused, then went on swiftly. "I am a Songhai by my father. By my mother, I am a Saracolet. To preserve their independence the Saracolets crossed the desert from Morocco and settled on the Niger. Was it to give up to you? No. I—I, who am a descendant from a long line of chiefs, obey a man of low origin, Mahmadou Lamine, because he has the power to get us out."

"I like you better as you are now, Alfa. I never esteemed you as a half-white man. But even as you speak, you know the French have come to stay. What we take, rightly or wrongly, we hold."

Alfa laughed.

"You may be right. But it will not be your kind who will conquer us. I know that Captain Biot was alive when you left him. And I know this also, that you can not have me shot without a trial, and that I will speak."

Nielles realized that he was alone with Alfa. His revolver was in the holster. No one would question. But he did not hesitate. Stepping to the door that opened into the hall, he called the riders of Ousman.

"I'll send you back to Kayes under guard," he said to Alfa.

It was best that the people should remain in ignorance of Alfa's arrest. Among the inhabitants there were certainly many emissaries from Mahmadou. The lieutenant gave orders that the interpreter should not be allowed to communicate with any one on the outside, and that the young negro servant should also be confined with his master.

Then he set out for Ousman Gassi.

The chief took the slips handed him, and read them in silence.

"Where were these writings found, lieutenant?" he asked.

Nielles briefly told of his visit, a visit inspired by Allah, no doubt, for he was not in the habit of visiting his subordinates. Alfa's excessive caution in hiring a house outside the *tirailleurs'* barracks had been the cause of his undoing.

Ousman Gassi smiled. Between his teeth glowed a cigaret stub.

"I felt that the Songhai dog was false," he said. "But Allah, his name be praised, works in peculiar ways for his true believers: There is much to help me in these slips. For one thing, Kourou Moussa is within striking distance. The place is indicated here."

"With Kourou Moussa gone, Mahmadou would be a hand minus a blade."

"Thou canst be at ease, five hundred riders will find him before morning. Kourou Moussa has sworn to find thee. He is about to find thee riding in the open as is thy custom."

"Kourou Moussa hates me, as one man hates another."

"He is a black, a black among Berbers. His sole claim to leadership is his unrivaled bravery. And now thy name is spoken louder than his. Can he endure this and live on? Being second bravest is not enough. Until he has fought thee and won he loses prestige."

"Where is he now?" Nielles asked.

"Five hours' ride away, to the south, at a small village called the Mango Tree Ford, for there exists a small stream."

Nielles shivered. A peculiar sensation of uneasiness gripped him. Fear? What else could it be? He knew that his face had whitened, that the blood had left his lips. His fingers, too, trembled. He calmed himself with an effort, although a wave of nausea swept over him.

"Five hundred men—" he said.

"Yes," Ousman Gassi returned, smiling. "Be at ease."

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It seemed to Nielles that the king of the Bondou was mocking him. Yes, there was a touch of irony in the smile. Nielles laughed.

"How many men has Kourou Moussa with him?"

"Fifty."

"Thou wouldst therefore send four hundred and fifty men too many, Ousman. Are thy riders as good as his?"

"Yes."

"Fifty men will I take."

"Thou art going to meet him!"

Nielles nodded. Ousman Gassi nodded in his turn, then offered his long fingers, terminating in violet-tinted nails.

"I start tonight," Nielles said.

"So it will be," Ousman agreed.

FROM a round pale moon streamed down silvery light. Giant trees rose on either side, distorted, skeletonized against the sky. Now and then, through the wall of bushes that edged the road, a pool scintillated like a huge mirror, reflecting the moon.

Behind Nielles rode fifty men, each a picked rider, expert in the use of arms. The lieutenant's fear was growing. There were long moments when he did not know where he was, what he was doing, interminable lapses filled with half-delirious visions. The soil seemed to heave like a sea, in rolling waves; the trees swirled and came together, as do telegraph poles seen from a train window. Down his chest, down his back, a cold sweat dripped. His tunic clung to his skin. Within his skull, a trip-hammer banged away, ceaselessly. His wrists pulsed; his tongue was dry and rasping. Nielles was ashamed, and at the same time proud that his will had carried him forward.

Tonight would be the last. Kourou Moussa was a giant in size and strength, brave, with the real heedless courage of the born fighter. He did not need an effort of mind to push himself forward. Nielles thought of the end: Himself going down under Kourou Moussa's sword. Kourou Moussa—Kourou Moussa, the four syllables beat together with his blood. Kourou Moussa, and the Mango Tree Ford, very near now. The pounding hoofs of his horse spoke also: Kourou Moussa—Kourou Moussa——

Across his forehead, a band of iron seemed soldered, pressing until the bones creaked. Up his neck shivers ran, shivers of fear. But his fear was his secret, no one else would ever know. Biot, who had seen him run away, had known, but he was dead. Alfa would talk during his trial in Kayes. But who would believe him, who would doubt the courage of a man who went out to meet a man like Moussa on even terms, at the Mango Tree Ford?

His mind became blank again. Then he realized that he was lying on the ground. There was a pain in his back, across his shoulders. Could he have fallen from his horse?

"We will go on alone, lieutenant," some one offered.

So his subconscious mind had managed that trick to avoid the meeting with Kourou Moussa; his cowardly self, ill-restrained by his will, had taken advantage of an opportunity! He staggered to his feet, grinning.

"No, I'm going on."

He found that his helmet had been replaced on his head. He wished to throw it off again. He did not need a helmet in the moonlight. And he would not need it tomorrow. But the rider insisted, and he agreed to end the argument. He placed his foot in the stirrup but could not gain the saddle unassisted. Strong hands pushed him into place. He grasped the reins, but wavered to right and left and knew that he would fall again.

"Tie me," he said.

A cloth was passed over the pummel of the saddle, tightly. He felt secure. He might sway to and fro, but he could not fall off again.

"All right!" he announced.

And they went on. The trees passed by, swiftly. Other pools glistened in the bush. In his ears, a continuous roar, as of falling water. They could not be near the ocean, he reasoned. He asked, and received no answer. His men regarded him strangely, and were silent. Those Bondou men: Grim and silent, who never knew his kind of fear!

Ousman Gassi, brown old fiend that he was, had penetrated his thoughts, knew that he was afraid of being afraid. That's why he had smiled when the white man trembled at the name of Kourou Moussa. But Ousman was a Moslem gentleman and he had spoken no word.

His tunic, soaked through with perspiration, annoyed him. He tore the buttons

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free, exposed his hot skin to the night wind. And again he shivered.

"Slowly, lieutenant, slowly!" urged the man at his side. "We are coming near."

Suddenly the sky lighted. The African dawn was coming. And in this lighter sky, Nielles saw birds hovering, the birds that herald slaughter. Night attacks, as Biot had said, were rare in the Sudan. They should have reached the ford before dawn. The trail turned around a point of bush. Stenciled against the sky appeared a tall mango-tree, beyond which a slit of golden water appeared. The sun was up now, and the shadows westward in a long somber outline, shaped like an enormous corpse straggling over the reddening sand.

Near the stream, a line of fires. Kourou Moussa was there.

From the camp came the report of a carbine, then shouts. The men were running to their horses, picketed some distance away. Nielles turned toward his men, who were lined up on a single front, blades bare. He also drew a sword, not the curved blade of the natives but the long narrow dress sword of his own race.

Before the Saracolets rose a tall figure on a black horse.

Kourou Moussa, almost naked, his hips covered with a leopard-skin. Kourou Moussa had recognized his enemy. He drew nearer.

Nielles turning, saw that his own men had halted behind him, as had the Saracolets halted behind Moussa. The question was to be left to the leaders. Nielles rushed forward but Kourou Moussa was upon him, wielding his simitar with both hands. Nielles parried, but too late, the blade struck his helmet, the headgear rolled to the ground. Again they passed. The blade rose again. Nielles straightened his arm in a thrust. The straight line is the shortest. Astonished at the facility of the deed, he saw his point enter below Moussa's left breast, travel upward through the thick chest, as a sharp knife passes through cheese.

Moussa's sword fell, in a long sweeping arc of light, and rang on the ground. Still erect, the negro leader rode, the leather sword-knot dangling below the heart. Then Moussa lay back, his toes held by the small stirrups, his back on his mount's rump. Ten or twelve yards, and he slithered off, face down on the sand near the stream. With a shout, Ousman Gassi's men swept forward.

Nielles reeled in his saddle. A returning rider picked up his helmet, thrust it into form with a punch, replaced it on the white man's head.

"They have fled, lieutenant," he said.

"You must set a watch, Biot," Nielles said in French.

He rambled on, jumbling his words. They who saw him decided he was mad, until they felt his hot skin.

On the road to Macadiacounda, Nielles, delirious, sang a long-forgotten ditty familiar in all barrack rooms, concerning the mishaps of a queen—

"C'est la Reine d'Angleterre——"

The riders of Ousman Gassi did not understand the verses. If they had they would not have smiled. The slayer of Kourou Moussa had a right to do as he pleased.

PODOR. White houses, suffocating smells; a streak of reverberated sunlight, the Senegal River.

In the shade of the promenade deck, grouped to the rails, were the convalescents from Kayes. Haggard faces, the color of lemon-peel, twisted features, lusterless eyes, a collection of skinny phantoms, whom Africa had squeezed dry and was sending back home to die, or to store up enough energy to return and resume the task.

Puffing, clanging, a stern-wheeler crept up the river, tugging several barges filled with native troopers, husky grinning blacks. Lining the rails, the newcomers, those to replace the men fallen by the wayside in the relentless advance toward the heart of the continent.

Nielles, weak and shivering, stared at their full faces, health-glowing skins, clear eyes, and sound bodies. Scarcely a year ago, he had come up the stream as eager as any man there. He had sacrificed his life on that long fever nightmare ride to the Mango Tree ford, a sacrifice that had been rejected by Fate. And now he wanted to live, wanted to keep his body, raked and wasted though it was. He felt the hair on his chin, ran his fingers down the deep furrows on either side of his nose. Yes, he looked years older than when he had come. Yellow fever contracted from Duplan, who, although immune himself had brought the

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germs from Kayes, had come nearer killing him than had Kourou Moussa's sword.

Letters had come to him from his superiors, letters read him in the lucid intervals. He had been awarded a decoration. His tremendous energy was extolled; the ride, strapped to the saddle, fighting the fever, had caught the popular imagination. Nielles had become a full-fledged hero.

Something to live for? Yes, something to enjoy. He had forced himself to forget Biot and Jacquemin, and live on for himself alone. After all, the living should not suffer for the dead.

A human scarecrow at his side, a frame of bone from which white garments depended, grinned scornfully.

"Hear them shout!" he said, referring to the new officers calling out greetings as they passed. "They won't yell when they're on the way down, as we are. Salute them, Nielles, for they are the unlucky ones. We are going out to live, they are coming in to die."

"Pessimist," Nielles retorted.

The other laughed.

"From one hundred and seventy-five pounds to one hundred and two, that's what the Sudan has sucked out of me."

"And I'll bet you'll be coming back."

"I am! This land has a lewd fascination. It's a —— of a country but we love it." He suddenly tapped his forehead with his knuckles. "By the way, old man, I have a letter for you."

"A letter?"

"I was defender to Alfa, the traitor, although there wasn't any possibility of saving him. He was shot a few hours before I came down with the yellow. Brave boy, smoked and smiled, and seemed deeply embarrassed because I was shaky—it was my job to escort him to the place of execution."

He fumbled in his pocket, for a piece of paper which was folded twice and sealed with red wax. Discreetly he walked off. Nielles snapped the seals with his thumb, and read:

In the name of Allah, the all-merciful, Alfa-sega-ag-Mahommed, to Lieutenant Nielles. I am soon to be shot—if Allah wills—the court martial having decided, justly, according to your laws. Of matters concerning both yourself and myself, of which I spoke on our last meeting, I have not a word to say to any one. You could have saved my tongue's babbling, could have hastened my death by a word to the Bondou dog, Ousman Gassi, who calls himself Sultan. You did not. For what you did at the time and place that we both know, you no doubt had European reasons that I can not understand. And not understanding, I do not judge. The man who slew Kourou Moussa could never have known fear.

Followed, the consecrated formulas of farewell. Nielles twisted the thick paper and placed it in his pocket. Alfa, descendant of Songhai and Saracolet Kings, received no favor from any man.

"A —— of a country!" mused Nielles. "May Allah receive thee, Alfa."

The stern-wheeler with the barges was proceeding up-stream. His own boat was moving down toward the west, toward Saint Louis, toward the ocean. And the Sudan slipped farther away.

THE sharp warning of a far-off trolley resounded through the night. The newspaper-stands stood like grim, black sentries on the glistening asphalt. Fine, silver drops streamed down past the street lights in tenuous, steady streams. Paris, mournful under the rain, deserted, save for a few isolated pedestrians hurrying for cover.

Nielles walked swiftly. In civilian clothing he had fast resumed the trend of his former life. The Sudan seemed very far away. He wished to forget it altogether until his six months' leave should be ended. The long sea voyage, three weeks' rest and good food, had filled him out. His body was saved.

He thought over his evening: Dinner, dancing. The men had amiably nicknamed him, "Nigger-slayer." The women, attracted by the red ribbon in his buttonhole, had made much of him. "Tell us about your delightful savages!" they invariably asked. Nielles, who had grown to expect the question, was sometimes tempted to tell the raw truth. The official paper of the Republic had mentioned his name, his exploits. He had found himself to be somewhat of a celebrity.

He reached a corner where he was to turn to gain his room on a side street. The feel of the Wintry rain on his face was bracing, and he hesitated, swinging his stick, and contemplating across the street the illuminated windows of the cafe. In a few years, ten or twelve, a cafe would go up near the *diomfoutou* in Macadiacounda.

A lurid poster, lighted by a gas standard just above, attracted his attention. He drew nearer. It was the cover of a Sunday

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supplement. Above the picture, in greasy black print, the title: The End of Mahmadou Lamine.

The artist's composition was a marvel of imagination. A tall, pink-cheeked gentleman, in dress uniform, bearing sword, revolver, field-glasses, drinking-bottle, surmounted by a strange conception of a colonial helmet, was stretching his hand to accept from a fancifully-dressed native, a bag which was presumed to contain Mahmadou's head. The artist had evidently been inspired by a military catalogue and Raffet's illustrations of the Algerian campaign of 1830.

True, the Prophet's head had been brought to the French camp in the Gambia region. But there could have been no grandiloquent gestures, no flag waving in the background, no stage setting of slim legged prancing horses. Just a group of unshaven, tired men accepting a token of victory.

"Queer thing, isn't it?" some one remarked.

Nielles, turning, saw a red face and a wing collar. A well-fed, self-satisfied business man, no doubt.

"It certainly is," Nielles agreed.

The man coughed, and shuffled his feet. Nielles realized that it was getting late, and turned to leave. The stranger had followed him. Vaguely disturbed he turned.

"What do you want?" he asked.

Again the man coughed, or did he stifle a laugh? They had left the illuminated area. Nielles could not distinguish the features. But there was something familiar about the stocky figure in the light brown overcoat.

"*M'sieur*, I am all alone in the city—will you have a drink with me?" he indicated the glittering glass panes of the cafe.

Nielles, puzzled and a bit curious, accepted. Hurrying before him, the man crossed the street, passed through the clustered tables on the deserted terrace, and pushed the door open. He moved forward toward a table, slipped out of his overcoat.

Nielles, seeing him in the light, stifled a cry.

"Biot!"

But Biot was dead, lost somewhere in the bush by the Nieri Ko, thousands of miles away. And here was his likeness, wearing a wing collar! But the cries of the men playing cards at a corner table were real, as was the shuffling of the shirt-sleeved waiter.

"Let's sit down, Nielles," Biot said, offering his hand.

BIOT mixed an absinth judiciously, in silence. And Nielles found his voice.

"How—how are you here?

"Steamer to Bordeaux, then the train. Arrived this morning, found out your address, was on my way to call on you when that picture brought us together."

"Where did you come from?"

"Take it easy, Nielles!" Biot replied. "Always the self-same excitable Nielles, eh? Where did I come from? The Sudan, of course. Take a drink and listen."

Biot called for cigars, then resumed:

"I was taken, half-dead, to Dianna. Mahmadou's reputation was beginning to annoy Samory. As a sort of bribe I was sent to Samory, with the envoys that suggested an alliance. It looked well to show a white captive, you know. Fortunately for me, Samory's son, Diaoule Karamokou, was in France. Samory treated me well, my wounds healed. As you know, he had sent his favorite son to France to gain time. But he was afraid the French would keep him as hostage, and so he held me, in secret, against that eventuality. Nine weeks ago, Diaoule Karamokou returned to the paternal roof, and I was exchanged for one of Samory's captured leaders."

The captain laughed.

"Who was surprized?" he asked mockingly. "The authorities at Kayes. You and I know that I had done enough to be court-martialed, but to cover up their own foolishness, they made a hero of me, when they believed me dead. So, with a bad face, they gave me my decoration, and here I am."

Nielles could not reply.

"By the way, Nielles, I must thank you for your obedience. It's not one man in a hundred who would have had the courage to obey."

"It was hard," Nielles muttered.

A long silence.

Then Nielles gathered his courage. If he did not speak now, he had gained nothing. If he feared to confess the truth to Biot, he would prove that he lacked a greater quality than physical courage, moral courage.

In short, jerky phrases he told Biot—everything.

"And all I did after, was to live that down," he concluded.

"*Kene dugul?*" he said musingly. "That's a good name. No man hears, Nielles."

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Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

NOW I'm told the scientists on the whole now lean to the theory that this hemisphere was populated from Asia. Thought they didn't. Glad they do, since in my ignorant way I'd leaned to that theory myself. Anyhow here's some testimony in support of it:

Otowi, Sandoval County, New Mexico.

Happened to run onto a copy of *Adventure* recently with part of a seminar on Asiatic origin of American Indians going on in Camp-Fire. You may be interested in a few local bits, more or less relevant, perhaps mostly less.

In rambles about the Rio Grande Valley I see a number of Pueblo Indians of all sorts, Keres, Tewan and Tanos, and in all sorts of clothing, and many times the resemblance between an Indian and some Chinese I used to know—most apparent when the Indian is wearing Yankee dress—is so convincing that I have difficulty in persuading myself not to call my Indio by a Chinese name.

The physical characteristics of the Indian in regard to hair in the matter of texture and distribution are decidedly Mongolian, and those Pueblos who sport mustaches—notably the Cochitenos—have the regular Mandarin style every time.

A Mr. Hoo, Chinese capitalist of apparent education and ability, who visited this region during the summer, says he recognized many Chinese words in the local Pueblo dialect, more particularly in the Tano spoken at Taos.

So there you are. If I run into anything else and you are interested, I shall be glad to let you know about it.—F. S. CURTIS, JR.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Gordon Hill Grahame rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine:

My home is in Peterborough, Ontario, where the canoes come from, and which is the loveliest country in the banner province of the Dominion. Being entirely too young to exercise proper discrimination, I elected to be born in Toronto during the early morning hours of March 20, 1889—from which facts the more astute among my fellow Camp-Fire members will deduce that I am slightly over thirty-five years of age and that I am a Canadian.

MY EARLY years were comparatively uneventful. I received a spasmodic and haphazard smattering of education in various Canadian and American schools and, until I was fourteen years

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of age, I lived mostly in and around New York City, moving to Porto Rico with my parents in 1914, where my father had been appointed Commissioner of the Interior by President Roosevelt.

After several years of Porto Rico, where I learned to speak Spanish like a native—of Peterborough, Ontario—I joined an American survey party in Santo Domingo, on the neighboring island of Hayti and from the date of that move, I lived an exceedingly adventurous life for a number of years.

It was in Santo Domingo that I formed a close friendship with one of the whitest and gamest men men I have ever known—Stanley Miller, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He was chief of the survey party to which I was attached. Miller was killed by Dominican revolutionists, in a particularly atrocious manner, several years after I left the island.

SANTO DOMINGO was an unhealthy spot for a white man during the early years of the present century and life was an uncertain possession for the Americans of the survey party. It finally became altogether too hectic for me and I left the island two jumps and a hop ahead of a large, nasty Dominican who had a large, nasty machete clasped earnestly in his eager hand.

In South and Central America I tarried for a while, finally coming back to Canada, homesick for the snows of my native land. I got all the snow and cold I wanted during my first Winter at home, but I was "fed-up" with the tropics and eager to settle down in a white man's country. For three years I was housemaster in a private school in Lakefield, Ontario, and during my residence there I started writing, varying the monotony by occasional canoe and walking trips to different parts of the country. I walked from Lakefield to New York City, paddled up to and around the Georgian Bay, walked to Brantford, Ontario from Lakefield, walked around Lake Ontario, and finally paddled from Lakefield to New York City, arriving there on August 7, 1914.

On my return to Canada—via New York Central—I enlisted in the First Canadian Contingent and was wounded at Festubert in 1915. While serving as a private I won the heavyweight championship of my battalion—by default. The boxer who was to appear against me in the finals had broken a bone in his hand—for which I was duly thankful. That fellow had a mean, voracious look! I received my commission in May, 1915, and, serving throughout the balance of the war, I was demobilized in March, 1919.

IN "THE JOKE" wherewith I made my debut to the readers of *Adventure*, some of you old-timers may find points for criticism. I have no doubt that the so-called "frost-bird" mentioned in the story has some other name, but if it has I never heard it. Whether or no the hundreds of tarantulas which line the Dominican trails in the early hours of "Winter" mornings are really dead or merely torpid, I can not say. I do know that by the middle of the morning they invariably disappear; whether of their own volition or whether they have been devoured by insects or animals, I can not say. As regards the deadliness of the sting of the tarantula I am one with J. Allan Dunn when I state that it is my opinion that the effect of the bite of such a spider depends largely upon the condition of the person bitten—the state of his health—*and* his temperament. Personally I have been stung by tarantulas, scorpions and centipedes and have suffered just such discomfort as would ensue from the sting of a bee or a hornet.

And now, after this brief moment in the full glare of the fire, and having said my little piece, I'll step down and make way for some other *hombre*, I am very anxious to horn in on some of the interesting discussions which take place around the fire and perhaps, at some future date, you'll let me air my views again. Until then—*hasta luego*.—GORDON HILL GRAHAME.

SOMETHING about the "Pillars of Hercules" from George E. Holt whose stories of Morocco we've been reading. Also, the origin of the word "tariff."

San Diego, California.

While the "Pillars of Hercules" is a term which has been used for time immemorial to describe the two peaks that guard the entrance to the Mediterranean, few people know their proper names and little of their history.

They are commonly known as Gibraltar and Apes' Hill, but the native Arabic names are Djibel Tarik and Djibel Musa, that is, Hill of Tarik, and Hill of Musa, or Moses. These names were acquired at the time of a raid into Spain in the year 710 A. D., by some Berbers of Morocco. These were led by two generals, Tarik ibn Zaid en-Nafisi for whom the Spanish peak was named, and Musa ibn Nosair, whose memorial became Djibel Musa, in Morocco. It was of this expedition, of only one hundred horsemen and one hundred foot, that it has been said, "a simple raid became a conquest," for the Visigoths in Andalus were so weak that rulers and subjects fled in panic before the Berbers, leaving Islam to extend its conquest even into France, until checked at Tours by Charles Martel, The Hammer.

Tariffa, the little peninsula situated near Djibel Tarik, and the town by that name, take their title from another Berber of the same period, Tarif, a freed-man of Musa ibn Nosair. From it we get our word "tariff," because from Tariffa a "tax" was laid upon all vessels passing through the straits; that is, contributions were levied by force by people who were little more or less than pirates.

AS TO the case of William Cunningham. You will remember that William Keating of the Committee for Enforcing Public Opinion has been investigating this case for more than a year and maintains that Cunningham, sent to investigate wholesale theft of army supplies, discovered the thieves and was framed by them and sent to Leavenworth. The charges implicate many army officers, some of high rank.

Either the case is a mare's nest or else a very serious and ugly matter. In either case the facts should be brought to light, since in either case innocent people suffer. Mr. Keating is doing his utmost to have the facts ascertained and made public. At

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least theoretically, the case is being investigated at Washington.

If the Keating statements are true—and he begs any one accused to sue him for criminal libel if unjustly accused—there is not only a grievous injustice being done to Cunningham, but the commissioned officer assigned to the investigation with him did not meet his death through accident and there is a goodly number of army officers who belong in prison. If the Keating statements are not true, then it is high time that innocent men be cleared of charges under which no one can afford to remain.

AGAIN, if the Keating charges are true, the accused do not hesitate at any steps to prevent or hinder any investigation into the facts, some very queer things have happened to people connected with investigations, and certain newspapers have performed in an odd manner. Let us hope all this is coincidence or imagination.

But I'll play safe by stating here that I intend to print in "Camp-Fire" the facts in this case when and if they are established. If for any reason the investigation stops or is stopped, without being pushed to a conclusion, I'll print that fact. In the meantime I'll print occasional brief reports. If I fail to do the above, and if there is stated in the magazine no clear and unequivocal reason for my failing to do so, you can take it as one of the queer things Mr. Keating claims happen to those who seek facts in this case and you can write it down as a piece of evidence strongly backing up the Keating charges. No hint of any such thing has as yet appeared upon my horizon. I'm merely making sure.

HERE'S a letter that's lain in our cache some two years. I'm glad it's come to light, for these talks from the real old-timers of the West are particularly welcome at Camp-Fire.

Holbrook, Arizona.

Your issue containing the article by E. E. Brininstool, on "Jim Bridger—Greatest Plainsman," was of intense interest to me because of the fact that in my early youth I had personally known him in the days before Wyoming was organized as a Territory, and as was stated in that Article "Old Jim Bridger" *was* the most noted man in all the Great Northwest.

IT WAS my good fortune to be with a party who crossed the Casper Mountains in 1867, for whom he acted as guide; during those weeks I had an opportunity to see and learn much of that—I thought—wonderful man. As that was some fifty-six years ago, Jim was then an old man, though very alert and active. He was a man of gigantic stature with wonderful endurance, and his old muzzle-loading Hawkins rifle seldom failed to cut the center when he took a shot at Injun, big game, or a spot on a tree, while he could trail anything that walked on the ground.

In those days when I was along the Old Salt Lake Trail between Fort Laramie and South Pass, I met many famous men, old-timers, like Bridger, Billy Cody (Buffalo Bill), Jim Baker, California Joe, Jim Beckwith, Pop Corn and Jack O' Clubs and various others not so famous.

DURING the Summers of '66-'67, there were Mormon immigrants passing through to Salt Lake City with wagon-trains three and four miles in length. Many of their men and women wearing wooden shoes had walked the entire distance from the Missouri River, some of them pushing hand-carts which contained all their worldly goods. There are some who will say they must have had wonderful faith in their religion to undergo and endure such months of grief and hardships. But I take a different view of the matter. They had got into a jack-pot and *had* to play it through—win or lose.

Being at the same time a member of the garrison at Old Fort Casper, I remember how we were kept on the jump up and down the line rescuing corralled immigrant trains from Red Cloud's horde of Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapahoe braves, and burying the dead they had left along the trail of slaughter when they caught any one of those parties at a disadvantage—which was quite often.

TO AN old-timer like myself those tales of earlier days in the West, like "Jim Bridger," "The Covered Wagon" by Emerson Hough, "Adobe Walls" by F. R. Bechdolt bring up incidents of those stirring times when we all had to keep our hand on the gun—and know how to use it, and, speaking of guns reminds me that when I struck Fort Laramie in the Spring of '66—about the time Red Cloud made his famous speech, and then went on the war-path—all those Indians were fighting with bows and arrows. I remember how we took in several miles of the region up the Horseshoe, where they had their teepees strung along the creek—some fifteen thousand of them—and the only gun to be seen among their motley crew was one old flint-lock rifle. But oh man! the way they could shoot those poison arrows close to the spot would start the goose-flesh creeping along the spine of a pretty good man. A year later it seemed that every Injun through the whole northwest had managed to get hold of a gun of some kind with which he managed to get deadly results—like the bull-whacker whom a redskin sneaked up on and shot with an old Springfield musket, loaded with half a bar of lead which struck him in the stomach crosswise, and cut him in two above the hips.

THE hundreds of outlaws who had drifted West at the close of the Civil War made a business of trading guns and whisky to those hostile tribes, with whom they ofttimes raided the wagon-trains as they passed through what was then a wilderness, inhabited only by Indians and a few soldiers together with the millions of buffalo and other wild game with which the country abounded. And

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speaking of the buffalo reminds me how in the spring of '73, while passing up along the Arkansas near Bent's old Fort, there were places where one could travel for a mile or more stepping and jumping from one carcass to another without touching the ground they were so thick where the hunters had shot them down and skinned them for the hides—thousands and thousands of them going to waste.

To those who do not understand the conditions then existing, their slaughter would look like wanton waste—which seemed true at that time—but today as I look back on the changed conditions, I feel that it was a case of the survival of the fittest, that as soon as the buffalo were gone the Indian had lost his meal-ticket and was subdued; therefore he had to come in to eat, for hunger gentles either man or beast. The Old Reliable Sharps Rifle and the buffalo hunter did more to tame the West in a short period of time than all the treaties and military forces since the days of '49, when the Overlanders began to invade the Rocky Mountains and settle the shores of the Western Sea.

Let Hugh Pendexter give us some more of his historical novels of the West, which had each of them descriptions of regions which had been familiar to me long years ago, with characters whom I knew and others I had heard talked of.

Once again I wish to thank those writers who have studied the early history of those men and incidents of early days, from which they have woven tales and stories of more interest to me than any other subject, and I can imagine how all the pioneers of our great and glorious West may feel the tingle in their veins as they read of Men and incidents stirring in those old days when the West was wild.—A. M. MACDUFFEE.

P.S.—57 years in the *Rocky Mountains*. Cody was 20 years old when I first met him—4 years older than myself.—MAC.

SINCE having had a look at South America myself—even since an earlier look at Central America—I've been particularly interested in our relations, business, political and social, with Latin America. I'll not attempt any "impressions," but every talk with an American or European business man who really knew the Latin Americans confirmed what I had been told previously by others—that probably our chief enemies in Latin America are ourselves.

The American business man as a rule still makes several mistakes. First, he works for tomorrow morning's gains while his European competitors work for far bigger gains in years to come. Second, he has no faint conception of the tremendous wealth in natural resources of the other American continent. Third, he considers Latin Americans his inferiors and treats them as such, expecting them to accept North American business methods in place of their own and refusing to make any concessions to either their business methods or their social customs. Result: Outside the mineral field his European competitors have pretty well crowded him off the Latin-American map.

We're going to need Latin America some day, politically as well as economically, just as they are going to need us. Too bad that stupidity is forcing us apart.

Rochester, New York.

Not long ago an article appeared in the *Star and Herald*, published in Panama, relating an incident about a South American firm who had forwarded a large order, written in Spanish to an American concern. According to this article, the American firm returned the letter with the request that the order be translated into English. The Spanish concern then ordered the same goods from England, the American, through his ignorance, losing the order.

Just because some people make ignorant remarks about foreign people is no reason why we should get hot under the collar about it. Many a time I have been cursed in a foreign language, but what I don't know won't hurt me. Somebody is bound to make wise cracks once in a while which will make somebody feel sore, but business is business, and if we failed to deal with a country because some statesman makes a remark about us, we soon would be in a terrible state. What if we do call a Mexican a "greaser" or a Panamanian a "Spig"? Don't they call us by our pet names in their own tongue? Do we get peeved because they call us "gringoes" or "white trash" or whatever pet name they can think of?

IN MR. PERRY'S statement he said he lost a contract through a Congressional slur, but if Mr. Perry will kindly investigate this matter, he will find out that the real reason behind the lost contract was that he could get the material from Germany at cheaper costs than New York. As I said, "Business is Business" and if you can get goods cheaper from your worst enemy, it's a cinch you are not going to pay more to your best friend just to accomodate him.

Regardless of what the individual thinks, it is the majority that counts and so long as we do not bring up diplomatic complications, we will find the Latin Americans, as a whole, our best friends.

Trusting Mr. Perry will see his mistake in thinking he lost the order through an unguarded statement, I beg to remain.—WILLIAM ELLIOTT.

SOMETHING from Hugh Pendexter concerning the historical sources and facts used in his five-part story beginning in this issue:

Norway, Maine.

Much of the intimate data used in "Iroquois! Iroquois!" was suggested by the verbatim reprint of "The Minute Book of the Committee of Safety, of Tryon County, the Old New York Frontier;" Halsey's "The Old New York Frontier;" Lossing's "Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution," vol. I; the "journals" of 27 officers accompanying Gen. Sullivan's expedition against the Iroquois in 1779, pub. by State of N. Y., 1887; Rev. David Craft's "Historical Address" in the foregoing volume;

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"Centennial Celebration of Gen. Sullivan's Campaign," pub. by Waterloo Library & Hist. Society, 1880; "History of the New York Iroquois," by W. M. Beauchamp, pub. by University of State of New York, 1905; Archer Butler Hulbert's, "Historic Highways of America," several volumes out of the 12 published; "Narrative and Critical History of America," ed. by Winsor; Almon's "The Rembrancer," 3 volumes, pub. London, 1779; Wm. L. Stone's "Border Wars of the American Revolution," 2 volumes; John Joseph Henry's "Journal of the Campaign Against Quebec;" Morgan's "League of the Iroquois," etc.

I HAVE attempted to follow history closely. The nomenclature used by the early writers gives various names for the same place. Tribe's Hill on the Mohawk is called several different names, one being "Trike's Hill."

The double-barrel rifle is similar to the one Tim Murphy, the famous scout, used in his forest fighting, and when he shot and killed Gen. Frazier. The hidden "patch-box" was suggested by Sawyer's description of one in a gun of this time and described in his "Our Rifles."

Esther Singleton's "Social New York Under the Georges," (Appleton) will be of interest to those who wish to know how the townspeople lived during and before the Revolution. There were many families in the Mohawk Valley who contributed as many fighters per family to the war as, perhaps, any I have mentioned in my story. I had planned to make a list of such for this camp-fire chat, but gave it up when I realized I could not make a comprehensive list. Fifty years after Newberry's death his bones were exhumed by workmen digging the Erie Canal. (Halsey's "N. Y. Frontier," p. 259.)

THE bones of Boyd and Parker were removed to Mt. Hope Cemetery, Rochester, N. Y., in the fall of 1841. David Craft gives Boyd's age as 22 at the time of his death. He was with Arnold on the Canada expedition as a sergeant. Thomas Bennett and others were captured by Indians at Wyoming in 1780. The leader of the Indians had a fine sword, which he said belonged to Boyd, and added that Boyd was a "very brave man." Craft says the prisoners turned on their captors, killed several, and took the sword back to Wyoming. It would be interesting to know where the sword is now.

In Lieut. John Jenkins' "journal" of the Sullivan expedition it is written that on Sept. 25, thirteen toasts were loyally drunk by Gen. Hand's Brigade, camping around thirteen fires and having thirteen candles burning. The last toast is very good, viz. "May the enemies of America be metamorphosed into packhorses and sent on a western expedition against the Indians."

That all the gruesome tendencies were not confined to Iroquois or their white allies is evidenced by an entry in the journal of Lieut. William Barton, viz: "On Monday the 30th sent out a party for some Indians. Toward morning found them, and skinned two of them from their hips down, for boot-legs: one pair for the major, the other for myself." As common-place as that! And splitting 50-50 with the Major.

At the risk of being a bit confusing I have the trader and Brant say "Tunadilla," the form always used by Brant, while the settlers used the accepted name "Unadilla." The Tory cipher figuring in the story is made from the cipher used by loyalists during the war, and is reproduced in Lossing's history, p. 320.

John Young and McGinnis were sent by Johnson to help Brant at Oghwaga and Unadilla.

Molly Brant's letter is copied from Beauchamp's "Hist. of the Iroquois," p. 361.

It was a custom of the Senecas to "pamper" and make much of a prisoner they intended to torture. I do not mean they invariably did this, but occasionally it was considered to be rather a zestful proceeding. I follow history closely in describing Alden's death.

Chiefs among the Iroquois were elected and the office was not hereditary. The fifty permanent sachemships of the League were, says Morgan, "hereditary under the limited and peculiar laws of descent." A sachem could be deposed on the vote of a tribal council. When a sachem died his successor was named by a tribal council. In this connection Morgan says, "Infancy was no obstacle, it involving only the necessity of setting over the infant a guardian, to discharge the duties of a sachem until he attained a suitable age." I make this reference so that the reader may not think I am drawing on my imagination in next to the last chapter of the story.—PENDEXTER.

THOSE who have been inquiring the meaning of the 71 on our Camp-Fire button will find it explained in "Various Practical Services to Any Reader," which appears in the last issue of every month. C is 3, a is 1, m is 13, etc.

OUT of our cache a 1922 letter from a comrade who first met our magazine in French trenches:

Pioche, Nevada.

The first time I became interested in *Adventure* was in France. We were shoved up to the front-line from reserves and everybody felt pretty downhearted, as our rations were somewhere reaching the moon after the limbers got hit with a nine-point-two, so it was hard to feel good after going without food, water, smokes and rum for forty-eight hours.

AFTER checking up the men destroying works it was nearly dawn, so we "stood to" for nearly two hours and when "stand down" was given we felt more disappointed, for no rations were up yet and the morning was a usual one—rainy. Those who had a chance to go to sleep crawled into their funk-holes and cursed the war in general if they were able to.

When I started to explore my future home two by six, I came across a copy of *Adventure* and struck an idea. I tore all the stories apart and gave one to each section. Believe me, it worked just fine. They had their section commander reading to them out loud—just like a Bible class, only they were more interested. We all forgot our troubles till the stories were read. I kept the longest one, so mine lasted till nearly four o'clock in the afternoon and in those hours I lived back where I was born and raised. (It was a Western story). And ever since I hardly miss a copy.

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I drift a great deal more than is good for me and I've seen the biggest part of the world and now I'm wondering what's my next destination. I would consider almost anything as long as there is some adventure to it.

I'm twenty-six years of age and have made a living since a boy of twelve by punching cows, working in mines, engineering and every other kind of work. Yes, I worked in an office for two days and I thought I was in jail.

So long, boys.—JIM WEST.

THE following is also from George E. Holt whose Moroccan stories we've been reading, and is another example of how a comparatively little thing can change the whole course of history:

San Diego, California.

"The Thousand Nights and a Night" made immortal the name of Haroun al-Rasheed, or Al-Rasheed the Great, Caliph (or Khalif) of Baghdad in the eighth century. But the "Nights" do not tell a tale of the manifestation of his influence in a then little-known country nearly five thousand miles from his own Caliphate. Had he acted more promptly, or, perhaps, had his emissary been swifter, an act of his might have meant the prevention of the foundation of an empire which lasted from 788 to the proclamation of a French Protectorate over Morocco in 1912.

In the year 762 one Idrees, brother of the Imam Mohamed bin Abd Allah, fifth in descent from Mohamed the Prophet—fled from Arabia into Egypt as the consequence of difficulties at home. Thence he proceeded to Tangier, in Morocco, and on into the interior until he reached Volubilis, a Carthaginian city of which the ruins still exist. There he found friends and supporters and very shortly he was proclaimed king, although his supporters were mostly Jewish, Christian or idolatrous Berbers, instead of Mohammedans. The warfare which resulted established an empire—the first in Morocco. But scarcely had this been accomplished when Idrees died suddenly and thoroughly as the result of poison administered by an emissary of Haroun al-Rasheed, who had sent him from Baghdad for the purpose.

TAKE a look at this real life material and don't scoff at a fiction-writer when he embodies in a story something no more strange.

What becomes of guns confiscated under anti-weapon laws? Here's what becomes of some of them.

Archeologists, ethnologists, anthropologists and such, please explain five-foot Indian mortars:

Visalia, California.

The locality I was in would well lend itself to some of your staff. Within a very few miles of where I was located I ran on to the few following "incidents:"

TWO partners in the sheep business—fairly prosperous—one kills other—burns remains—found guilty—given life—pardoned after 25 years—met the gentleman and know his people.

Two Irish brothers staked in the sheep game by a friend of mine—fairly prosperous—stranger drives out their sheep—claims to have purchased—investigated—bodies of brothers found—stranger missing.

Family row—man called to door by unknowns to see about sick horse—takes six-gun and Winchester with him—soon as opens door shot with shot-guns by two men. Met one of shooters and brother of victim traveling together—shooter had served time—made self solid by "busting" mark with .45 Colt that they had missed with .22 rifle.

Fellow who had cleaned about $1500 from U. S. cavalry troop—missing—bones in fire.

The best bet—partners in stock—row—camp located on line of travel across sierras—travelers fed on jerked meat from body of one partner—suspicion—arrest—conviction—execution—fact. Preaching when apprehended.

There were three or four other killings but not well enough known to make note of. The five above were all *known*. Say, it's a beautiful life if you don't weaken.

IN A recent number you wrote of the confiscation of the old lady's gun and the $50 fine and asked where the confiscated guns went. If you make use of this communication please use my name and state that in —— the officers take the guns from the arrested parties and either give them to friends or sell them for best offers.

SOME of the ancient history boys might explain a find of mine. This country is full of Indian mortars where the aborigines ground their flour; have seen thousands of their mortars, could send pictures of 75 or more in space of one small room. This summer found five that must be parents of the whole lot—5 feet across and two to two and half feet in depth. Apparently made by chipping by water on hot rock; completed mortars (or vats) well smoothed, too large to have been operated with pestles and no evidence of track for *arrastas*—geologically no chance to have been water-formed. Old timer suggests skin curing vats, using sequoia cones for acid, don't believe, for never heard of Indians using acid cure for pelts.—MORVE L. WEAVER.

A LETTER from Leonard H. Nason of our writers' brigade. I fear Mr. Nason is too logical to be listened to by some Americans. When they or their sons have to pay the price of national unpreparedness they kick, cuss other people and indict the Government. But they not only didn't have brains enough before the war to demand preparedness so that there would now be infinitely less to kick about, but are not, even now, demanding preparedness against more of the same in the future.

Oh yes, the Government deserves to be indicted. But for unpreparedness before the war rather than for its inevitable blunderings and lacks resulting from that unpreparedness. And these very kickers, most of them, were responsible for that

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unpreparedness. They and the majority of the American people are also responsible for the high price we'll have to pay for our present unpreparedness against the future.

South Hingham, Massachusetts.

People frequently ask me if I ever have had any experience with the Veterans Bureau and once upon a time I was asked to write an article about it. Now I have always held, even when I was in the army, that war is only another name for discomfort and that a people must choose between the yoke of universal military training and the crushing load of armament, or the price of unpreparedness. They that do not raise their boys to be soldiers must expect to put up with inconveniences when the demand for soldiers comes.

NOW then, four million men can not be dragged from sedentary occupations, crowded into drafty barracks, jammed and crammed, sleeping cheek by jowl, taken from Vermont to Texas and back again, forced by ignorant officers and half-witted athletic instructors to undergo the most violent and unusual exercise under the pretext of being hardened, without said sedentary men breaking down in health. The hospital treatment accorded me *in this country* was such as any workhouse or county hospital would blush to give to a pauper.

For the above reasons, the Veterans Bureau is swamped with claims. In accordance with the best American tradition, no adequate preparation had been made for the handling of these claims. So the poor soldier had another stone thrown at him. Let us have peace, and when war is forced upon us our sons can pay the price. No army, no war; no fire department, no fires; no doctors, no disease.

WELL, I have not much to say about the Veterans Bureau. I never asked them for anything and what they have given me they have given willingly. Regularly every six months I spend a day in the local office of the Bureau, while doctors try to see if the three feet of gut I left in France has grown out again. I never say anything to them. They are wearied by the whines of a countless multitude of gold bricks and have no ear for me. The letters telling me my pension has been cut go to Campello, Mass., and my checks go to an address in Chicago, where I haven't lived for four years. Regularly I notify the Bureau that I live in Hingham, and regularly they acknowledge receipt of my letter, and regularly the check goes from Boston to Chicago and back again.

Well now there's no use getting mad. When a million men spring to arms overnight, there's bound to be a little confusion.—LEONARD H. NASON.

THIS came to us in 1922 and only now is drawn from our cache:

Norwood, Manchester, Canada.

Inclosed please find a cutting from the Manchester *Guardian* (England) which I trust you will find of interest to a few old timers of the sea, especially Bill Adams of your writer's brigade.

Sometime ago you published short paragraphs on bygone sailing ships, so I thought I would send it along for Camp-Fire.—R. BURROWS.

A dignified end is rare for horse or ship. The most famous of their kind have immortality in men's talk, but their own last days are a course set through mean tasks to the knacker's yard and the ship-breaker. A retired master mariner, Captain Dowman, has determined that the *Cutty Sark*, the most-talked-of clipper of her day, shall not share that fate. According to the Falmouth correspondent of the *Observer* he has bought her, and proposes to restore her to her old rig and moor her in Falmouth harbor that men may give her the reverence that is her due.

SHE is the last of the great sisterhood who were queens of the sea before the days of steam. Old men who went to sea as boys still tell with awe of occasions when the ships they sailed in tried a turn of speed with her. To have seen her in her prime is introduction enough in dock-side taverns where tradition lingers. Legend, well authenticated, has it that once she sailed over three hundred knots in fourteen hours—a record that it would stir the stokers on the fastest steamship of modern times to better. Certain it is that on voyage after voyage in the eighties she figured as a record-breaker from Australia to England, and the tale is still told of how the honors lay with her in the great race of '72 with the fastest of her rivals, although she lost her rudder off the Cape of Good Hope and was delayed for six days.

SHE was the one astonishing product of a now forgotten firm of Dumbarton builders. Great liners have since come from other yards of that Clyde town, but no second *Cutty Sark*. Already when she was launched in 1869 the doom of the sailing ship was written. In the same year the Suez Canal was opened, and the China tea trade, for which she was designed and in which she first made her name, began to shift its course as it already had its means of carriage. Yet for a quarter of a century she kept a place among her peers of sail—*Guinevere*, *Sir Lancelot*, *Thermopylae*, and the rest—on the long voyage round the Cape to the ends of the ocean.

THEREAFTER she suffered the decline of her kind. The late nineties found her trading leisurely to the Brazils or West Africa. Later still, like an old racehorse put to harness, she suffered the gruelling timber trade of the North Atlantic, under a Portuguese flag and name. But men who care for ships and know about them could still recognize her on the rare voyages when she slipped humbly up the Thames, her noble spread of canvas cut to the prosaic rig of a mere barquentine. If the fragrance of the tea chests no longer clung about her hold, there were points enough, from her raised quarter-deck and low white-painted deck-house to the rake of her jib boom and her ancient figurehead, to mark her age and quality.

A correspondent who described in our columns the "pale apparition" of the old ship as he found it last year wrote that "even in her degradation she carries "the unmistakable air, the poise of the sea bird "come to rest upon the waves. . . . Looking along "her deck in the fading light of a winter afternoon "one can imagine its dilapidation veiled, her slender "spars once more clothed with a great press of canvas "up to the sky-sail poles, until it seems incredible "that so diminutive a hull can spread such broad

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"wings." It is good to know that something of her ancient beauty and dignity will be restored to her as she takes her ease under her own flag again after half a century's service on seas on which she has become a legend.

THIS quotation from an interview with Mayor Kendrick in the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* comes to us from H. H. Birney, Jr., of our writers' brigade:

"Guns are like lots of other things in the world," he remarked, "all right when they're in the right hands.

"I am unalterably opposed to any legislation which would tend to prevent the householder or the sportsman from possessing guns. It really seems to me that familiarity with weapons is one of our national characteristics that should be preserved and encouraged. But at the same time we should make it as difficult as possible for the individual who uses a gun solely as an instrument of crime. They should be kept out of the hands of the criminal element. You can't do that by laws making the mere ownership of a gun a felony. Why, in New York, I guess, I'd go to jail for life! But you can do it by making it mighty unhealthy for any man—any criminal—caught with a gun in his possession. If every one of them got the limit of the law, I don't think there'd be so many deadly weapons carried.

TODAY as I sat writing for Camp-Fire a plea for better citizenship there happened to be a newspaper lying under my pad and presently my eye fell upon this paragraph:

Seven schools for citizenship will be held in Summer sessions at colleges throughout the country as follows: University of Pennsylvania, University of Michigan, University of California, Des Moines College, Drake University, Asheville Normal School and University of Iowa. The second region, in a caucus this afternoon, voted to send six leaders from each State league to the school in Philadelphia. Also a special national committee will be appointed to interest young women in politics.

It proved to be part of an article on the convention of the National League of Women Voters. It was only a minor part of their program for the year, but it cheered me up. For fifteen or sixteen years, even before our magazine was born, I've been urging the systematic teaching of good citizenship as the only possible remedy for our national ills. When I began even my friends considered me a harmless fanatic. Search the papers of those days for any evidence of thought along this line and you will find next to nothing. A wave of muck-raking had passed and we had settled down to self-satisfaction and indifference. Any remedies discussed were for specific evils. Practically no thought for the things underlying all evils and all remedies

BUT civic consciousness has been growing and bitter experience has begun to drive home the lesson that if we want real betterment we must go to the roots of things. Those who advocate the need of systematically teaching good citizenship to our children—and to ourselves—are no longer considered fanatics by the whole population. More and more people are waking to the need More and more we find definite steps being taken in the right direction. We are only a short way along the path, but we are at last on the path.

Are you doing your share for America? Do you want to see the coming generations of Americans as lacking as we are in civic morality? Do you want them, too, not to recognize graft as treason and high crime instead of a semi-humorous and very customary opportunity? Do you want to see public office more and more in the hands of unscrupulous parties and politicians, the people's money going more and more into the pockets of hypocritical crooks? The people being robbed more and more by the few? The people's rights more and more taken from them so that they may more and more be the prey of their masters?

And do you know of any other way of preventing these things? No matter what laws you pass, no matter what temporary remedies you apply, no matter what form of government you may choose or allow to be thrust upon you, there can be no escape from our evils if we are evil who pass, interpret, administer and should obey the laws, who invent, apply and should support the remedies, and who erect and are the government. You can not build any sound house out of rotten bricks. You can not build any sound government out of rotten citizens.—A. S. H.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. **Full list in second** issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. (See footnote at bottom of page.) Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualification and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

1. The Sea Part 1 American Waters
BERIAH BROWN, 1624 Biegelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

2. The Sea Part 2 British Waters
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. The Sea Part 3 Statistics of American Shipping
HARRY E. RIESEBERG, Apt. 347-A, Kew Gardens, Washington, D. C. Historical records, tonnages, names and former names, dimensions, services, power, class, rig, builders, present and past ownerships, signals, etc., of all vessels of the American Merchant Marine and Government vessels in existence over five gross tons in the United States, Panama and the Philippines, and the furnishing of information and records of vessels under American registry as far back as 1760.

4. Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Ports, trade, peoples, travel. (*See next section.*)

5. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups
CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif. Languages, mining, minerals, fishing, sugar, fruit and tobacco production.

6. ★ New Zealand; and the South Sea Islands Part 1 Cook Islands, Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Travel, history, customs; adventure, exploring, sport. (*Postage two cents.*)

7. South Sea Islands Part 2 French Oceania (Tahiti, the Society, Paumoto, Marquesas); Islands of Western Pacific (Solomons, New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga); of Central Pacific (Guam, Ladrone, Pelew, Caroline, Marshall, Gilbert, Ellice); of the Detached (Wallis, Penrhyn, Danger, Easter, Rotuma, Futuna, Pitcairn).
CHARLES BROWN, JR., P. O. Box 308, San Francisco, Calif. Inhabitants, history, travel, sports, equipment, climate, living conditions, commerce, pearling, vanilla and coconut culture.

8. ★ Australia and Tasmania
PHILLIP NORMAN, 842 Military Rd., Mosman, Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. Customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, history. (*Postage ten cents.*)

9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

10. ★ New Guinea
L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, *via* Sydney, Australia. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions. Questions regarding the measures or policy of the Government or proceedings of Government officers not answered. (*Postage ten cents*).

11. Philippine Islands.
BUCK CONNOR, L. B. 4, Quartzsite, Ariz. History, inhabitants, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, commerce.

12. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 1402 Lytton Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

13. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Me. Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelop with ten cents in stamps NOT attached*)

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14. Asia Part 1 Arabia, Persia, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Borneo
CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. Hunting, exploring, traveling, customs.

15. Asia Part 2 Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan
GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York. Hunting, trading, traveling, customs.

16. Asia Part 3 Coast of Northeastern Siberia, and Adjoining Waters
CAPTAIN C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure*. Natives, language, mining, trading, customs, climate. Arctic Ocean: Winds, currents, depths, ice conditions, walrus-hunting.

17. Asia Part 4 North China, Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan
GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., 41 Rue de France, Tientsin, China. Natives, languages, trading, customs, climate and hunting.

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, care Agence Cook et Fils, Nice, France. Geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, adventure and sport.

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, Ont., 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, care *Adventure*. 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, 67 Burlington Road, Fulham, London, S.W. 6, England. Climate, prospects, trading, traveling, customs, history.

26. Turkey
MISS JEANNETTE FRANCES EDWARDS, David Lane, East Hampton, N. Y. Travel, history, geography, politics, races, languages, customs, commerce, outdoor life, general information.

27. Asia Minor
(Editor to be appointed.)

28. Bulgaria, Roumania
(Editor to be appointed.) Travel, history, topography, languages, customs, trade opportunities.

29. Albania
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

30. Jugo-Slavia and Greece
LIEUT. WILLIAM JENNA, Plattsburg Barracks, New York. History, politics, customs, geography, language, travel, outdoor life.

31. Scandinavia
ROBERT S. TOWNSEND, 1447 Irving St., Washington, D. C. History, politics, customs, languages, inhabitants, sports, travel, outdoor life.

32. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
FRED P. FLEISCHER, care *Adventure*. History, politics, customs, languages, trade opportunities, travel, sports, outdoor life.

33. Great Britain
THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., W. C. 2, London, England. General information.

34. South America Part 1 Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

35. South America Part 2 Venezuela, the Guianas and Brazil
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, inhabitants, languages, hunting and fishing.

36. South America Part 3 Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Geography, travel, agriculture, cattle, timber, inhabitants, camping and exploration, general information. Questions regarding employment not answered.

37. 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.

38. 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.

39. Mexico Part 2 Southern; and Lower California
C. R. MAHAFFEY, care of Roadmaster, S. P. Co., San José, Calif. Lower California; Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, inhabitants, business and general conditions.

40. ✠ Canada Part 1 Height of Land, Region of Northern Quebec and Northern Ontario (except Strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. 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.*)

41. ✠ Canada Part 2 Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

42. ✠ Canada Part 3 Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario
A. D. L. ROBINSON, 173 Maple Ave., Pembroke, Ont., Canada. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing. (*Postage 3 cents.*)

43. 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.

44. Canada Part 5 Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta
(Editor to be appointed.) Including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

45. ✠ 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.*)

46. ✠ 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.*)

47. Alaska
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Larkspur, Calif. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

48. Baffinland and Greenland
VICTOR SHAW, Ketchikan, Alaska. Hunting, expeditions, dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).

49. 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.

50. 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.

51. Western U. S. Part 3 Colo. and Wyo.
FRANK MIDDLETON, 500 Frémont St., Laramie, Wyo. Geography, agriculture, stock-raising, mining, hunting, fishing, trapping, camping and outdoor life in general.

52. 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.

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53. Western U. S. Part 5 Idaho and Surrounding Country
R. T. Newman, Box 833, Anaconda, Mont. Camping, shooting, fishing, equipment, information on expeditions, history and inhabitants.

54. Western U. S. Part 6 Tex. and Okla.
J. W. Whitsaker, 1505 W. 10th St., Austin, Tex. Minerals, agriculture, travel, topography, climate, hunting, history, industries.

55. 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.

56. Middle Western U. S. Part 2 Mo. and Ark.
John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. 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.

57. Middle Western U. S. Part 3 Ind., Ill., Mich., Wis., Minn. and Lake Michigan
John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing, clamming, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, early history, legends.

58. 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.*)

59. Eastern U. S. Part 1 Miss., O., Tenn., Michigan and Hudson Valleys, Great Lakes, Adirondacks
Raymond S. Spears, Inglewood, Calif. 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.

60. Eastern U. S. Part 2 Motor-Boat and Canoe Cruising on Delaware and Chesapeake Bays and Tributary Rivers
Howard A. Shannon, care *Adventure*. 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.

61. Eastern U. S. Part 3 Marshes and Swamplands of the Atlantic Coast from Philadelphia to Jacksonville
Howard A. Shannon, care *Adventure*. Okefinokee and Dismal, Okranoke and the Marshes of Glynn; Croatan Indians of the Carolinas. History, traditions, customs, hunting, modes of travel, snakes.

62. Eastern U. S. Part 4 Southern Appalachians
William R. Barbour, Room 423, 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.

63. 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.

64. 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, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J. Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.

B.—Mining and Prospecting

Victor Shaw, Ketchikan, Alaska. 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"), care of *Adventure*.

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 1800. Swords, pikes, knives, battle-axes, etc., and all firearms of the flintlock, matchlock, wheel-lock and snaphaunce varieties. Lewis Appleton Barker, 40 University Road, Brookline, Mass.

E.—Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

John B. Thompson ("Ozark Ripley"), care of *Adventure*. Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting and bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.

F.—Tropical Forestry

William R. Barbour, Room 423, Fisk Bldg., Broadway at 57th St., New York. Tropical forests and forest products; their economic possibilities; distribution, exploration, etc.

G.—Aviation

Lieut.-Col. W. G. Schauffler, Jr., 2940 Newark St., N. W., 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.—Army Matters, United States and Foreign

Fred. F. Fleischer, care *Adventure*. *United States:* Military history, Military policy. National Defense Act of 1920. Regulations and matters in general for organized reserves. Army and uniform regulations, infantry drill regulations, field service regulations. Tables of organization. Citizens' military training camps. *Foreign:* Strength and distribution of foreign armies before the war. Uniforms. Strength of foreign armies up to date. History of armies of countries covered by Mr. Fleischer in general, "Ask Adventure" section. *General:* Tactical questions on the late war. Detailed information on all operations during the late war from the viewpoint of the German high command. Questions regarding enlisted personnel and officers, except such as are published in Officers' Directory, can not be answered.

I.—American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal

Arthur Woodward, 217 W. 125th St., New York. Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.

J.—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 Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union 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.

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Notes from "A. A." Men

FRIEND Tom L. Mills, who watches our "A. A." interests in the top end of the Pacific, writes:

Star Office, Feilding, New Zealand.

Probably by the time these lines reach you advice might have come from Australia of the passing of Frank Morton, who took over the Australian end of the "A.A." section from Albert Goldie. I knew both men. Met them what time—many years apart—they were wandering through New Zealand. Albert I was particularly interested in, for I had first met him when I was doing the critic's job in theatrical and musical work on the *Evening Post*, Wellington. Then he was lost over a number of years, to be heard from again on his marriage with that brilliant New Zealand writer, Dulcie Deamer, who has made a reputation in Australia, England and America.

Frank Morton I met first when he was reporting on my rival paper in Wellington, the *New Zealand Times*. He was a brilliant man with his pen—poet, critic, descriptive writer and short-hand writer. He was an Englishman who had roamed the world, and knew how to journalese his experience. He pulled out of New Zealand some years ago to edit a monthly magazine in Sydney, *The Triad*, where Albert Goldie handed over his "A.A." commission.

There were columns of personal tributes published in the daily papers of Australia and New Zealand when Frank Morton passed over, and he leaves a number of published books of his verse and essays as a memorial to his gifts as a writer.

Tampa, Fla.

I have made arrangements to take another trip to Siberia and according to my present plans I will leave for the Okhotsk district the first of May; but I expect to return in the Fall. In the mean time I would not be able to handle my "A.A." section, and it might help if some short announcement could be made to that effect.

There has been a lot written lately about this district, and it is claimed that there are four thousand square miles of placer ground within easy reach of the coast.

When I return I will be able to tell the men what I saw and learned.—C. L. OLIVER.

The full statement of the sections, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Transportation on the Mississippi

ITS evolution from the primitive canoe to the present-day all-steel steamer:

Question:—"Can you tell me something about the history of transportation on the Mississippi? Its tributaries? Also the present state of transportation in contrast to the early methods?"—M. C. SMITH, Worcester, Mass.

Answer, by Mr. Zerr:—The questions you ask would take volumes to answer. An encyclopedia would give you considerable data as to this stream. Winston's Encyclopedia for instance is the best, one-half page being devoted to this river. Should you be unable to get sufficient data on this subject, let me know at once and I will make a copy for your benefit.

As to transportation: We all know that the first craft used was the canoe; and if you have been a reader of *Adventure* and read Hugh Pendexter's stories, you know that these have been excellent in bringing historical facts to the present-day American. Pendexter deals in large part with the river you mention.

Flat boats were used later by the white settlers. Then came the steamboat, first wood being used as a fuel, later coal. Millions of tons of coal were brought down the Monongahela to the Ohio, then to the Mississippi River in wooden barges. These shipments have stopped, as the fuel is used in the mills near the mines, and now manufactured steel in all forms is being transported in all-steel barges. From the wooden steamboat, which later used coal as fuel, now there is the all-steel steamboat, some of them using oil as fuel.

Not only cotton, which at one time was the chief staple shipped, but live-stock, country produce, poultry, etc.; also grains, automobiles, etc., are being transported by river. The Federal Barge Line on the Mississippi River has made a success in transporting commodities from St. Louis to New Orleans. If you are unable to get enough material in your public library, let me know and I will take the time to write several pages.

Dog-Teams

HABITS of the "huskies:"

Question:—"I would appreciate very much information on the work of dog-teams. Are these dogs hard to handle, or are they easily driven? I am in need of a dog-team this Winter to carry myself and a load of mail, total weight about 225 pounds, over unbroken and drifted roads. How many dogs would I need; and could I ride most of the way? The distance is 28 miles. What is the value of a dog-team?"—CHAS. E. SOLVESON, Osakis, Minn.

Answer, by Mr. Shaw:—Other things being equal, it depends largely upon the driver whether a dog-team is hard to handle or not. Most dogs are intelligent and are quite easily taught to drive; but they have a special instinct regarding character and disposition of the man who drives them. This is true of the "husky," or arctic dogs, and is especially so in the case of such dogs as you will probably have to use. They are generally susceptible to kindness and are quick to resent brutality or neglect.

Arctic sledge-dogs are big-framed and heavy, weighing well up toward 100 pounds. I've known some, used as lead-dogs, that weighed 125 pounds and even more. The dogs you can get will be almost any large, thick-coated animal. Sledge-work such as you wish to do will require at least six dogs. If you use eight the work will be done more quickly and the team will be in better shape at all times. Hitch them tandem—one before another—and when the team has been driven a short time one dog will fight his way to the leadership.

In ordinary snow conditions an eight-dog team should haul the driver, if the sledge-pack is not too

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heavy. It all depends upon the weight of your team. If you overload of course your team will suffer.

You can readily gage the strength of your team after a few trials and can figure on the total weight which they will haul to best advantage. In carrying mail, in rough going, where your trips will be at regular intervals regardless of the weather, I should advise a dog too many, rather than the reverse; and I should keep an extra anyway, in case of illness or accident.

These dogs shouldn't cost you over $25 if you use ordinary discretion in selecting; and if you could pick them up in different places without your object becoming known, you may be able to shade that. Trained dogs of experience are more valuable, naturally. I've known a single specimen to bring $1,000.

Shaggy-coated dogs do not require warm quarters in Winter. Arctic dogs bury themselves in drifted snow. I've owned collies that preferred my open porch during a blizzard to the warm room inside. Watch their feet carefully for snowballs. You'll need to keep an eye on their diet most of all. You'll not be able to get pemmican—the best dog-food—but I advise Spratt's dog-cakes as the next best bet.

In a letter written me from Anthony Fiala, who commanded the Zeigler Polar Expedition, on the subject of dog-food, he said:

> I fed them during the Winter on Spratt's; and in the large circus tent where they were kept there was always an open keg of pure tallow upon which they could feed as they wished. None of my dogs were carried off by distemper or stomach troubles, which afflicted the dogs of Nansen, Peary, Baldwin and other explorers. Mush made from corn-meal is poor food for dogs in any northern country.

If the above does not fully answer, come again. I have the plans of the sledge used by Nansen, which I think best adapted to snow countries where the going is at all broken. If you care to have a copy, I'll gladly send it. It is a sledge very easily made, from material easy to get, and will stand more hard going than any I've seen.

P. S.—Don't misunderstand about hauling weights. A big team on hard, crusted snow or ice will haul more than 50 pounds per dog; in snow where the sun has melted the surface, 50 pounds might be too much strain. On smooth ice a fine team can haul a single passenger 100 miles in a day without much trouble; but if the going is poor and broken with ice blocks, as was the case on many Arctic expeditions, a mile or two in a day might be considered remarkable. I should imagine that you could make your 28 miles all right.

Cleanest Thing on Earth

WHITE granulated sugar; how it is refined:

Question:—"What do you know about raw sugar? Is it obtainable, and is it suited for use in diet?

When I was a boy the merchant bought a brown sugar in hogsheads that was all the juice of the cane. Then loaf sugar was the only white sugar on the market."—E. F. DAVENPORT, San José, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Emerson:—Raw sugar means dirty sugar. Sugar must have been subjected to heat to be in the sugar state, so it isn't really raw; yet as it lacks refinement, it is termed raw.

The refining process, as you no doubt know, consists in taking the very dirty gobs of sugar as shipped in pieces of matting, and dissolving them in boiling water in a vat in the basement of the refinery. From there it is pumped by a submerged pump to the top of the refinery, where it enters a series of sacks of different mesh, each one of which takes out its quota of dirt, the last "strainer" being of white silk. Thence to the vacuum kettles; thence to the centrifugals, where the clear sirup is extracted at the same time that the part that crystallizes remains in the centrifugal. Into this a "doctor" is lowered, and the crystallized sugar is automatically scooped out on to an endless belt, which delivers it to the waiting barrels, which in turn are automatically moved along as the weight of the entering stream of sugar trips the trigger at the right moment. The lining papers are then rapidly folded to place, the head put in and nailed and the barrel sent on an endless belt to the warehouse, ready for distribution.

In my opinion Porto Rico sugar and molasses are about as near clean stuff as you can get hold of today.

White granulated sugar is the cleanest thing on the face of the earth today, as we have proven many times in laboratory experiments; for after it has passed the vacuum kettles and the animal charcoal filters it can not have anything dirty in it unless it is deliberately put in by some one.

Let me know if I have omitted any item in this answer.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Travel in Portuguese East Africa

THE subjoined monograph has been printed in leaflet form on hard paper. The leaflet may be obtained free from the "Ask Adventure" expert responsible for it: namely R. G. Waring, Corunna, Ont., Canada. Don't expect any response unless you enclose addressed envelop and return postage:

WITH no horses or cattle in the country and no railway within five hundred miles, travel overland is accomplished by *machilla*. This is a form of canvas hammock with a canopy over it for protection from the sun, suspended on a stout bamboo pole, and which is carried on the shoulders of four natives, two in front and two behind.

The *machillero* consists of a gang of eight to ten sturdy natives, who are engaged by the month for travel purposes. They are usually attired in red fez caps with black tassels, and sometimes have a tuft of black feathers in place of a tassel. The leader of the gang has a horn, usually the horn of the water-bok.

The start is made in a jog trot, which is kept up all day, accompanied by continuous chants and monosyllabic choruses and horn-blowing, which is increased in volume when one arrives in a village.

On the arrival of any white man at a village it is customary to stop and exchange presents with the chief, and to this end the *machilla* men come to a

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halt opposite his hut. The chief immediately comes out, exchanges greetings through the interpreter and gives perhaps a couple of chickens, a few eggs, some coconuts and oranges or such like. You are expected to return this twofold so far as value is concerned, generally in cotton goods or tobacco. If your arrival is at night you are required to erect your tent next to the hut of the chief; to do otherwise is a direct insult.

A good *machillero* bunch will easily make forty miles a day. The change of one set of four runners to the four fresh "boys" is accomplished on the trot without a stop, and so easily is it done that one is hardly aware of it. When a swamp or ford has to be crossed the boys wade in to their armpits and the hammock is hoisted up by four pairs of arms, high above their heads.

At best it is a tiresome form of travel, the endless chanting of the boys throughout the day making it deadly monotonous.

Throughout Portuguese East Africa, especially in the northern and central sections, are scattered military outposts in charge of corporals. These *cuartels*, as they are called, contain a number of *askaris* or native troops. One may always be assured of a warm welcome on arrival at these outposts; but needless to say the traveler will hear no English spoken, consequently he should be able to speak Portuguese.

The Laridi post in the Melula country I visited on several occasions. As the headquarters of the district it was in the charge of a *commandante* named Ruivo, a genial host and a man ever ready to extend his hospitality and kindness to the traveler. The fort itself was built of sun-baked mud-blocks, in which were quarters for the soldiers and officers. Outside were the regulation sentry boxes, and on a gun-platform peeped an ancient piece of brass cannon of the muzzle-loading variety.

Another post that I visited was that at Kilua on the Melula River, located on the main island of Angoa. This was occupied by only one European, Corporal Santos. Though he spoke no English, he was a keen conversationalist and accordingly I found great difficulty in attempting to keep up my end. My knowledge of the Portuguese language improved after my stay at these outposts.

The country has been under the Portuguese flag for four hundred years; and the fact that even at this date the natives of the two northern districts are not entirely under subjection, is a sure indication that progress and development are at a low ebb; hence the need of these military outposts. African history tells us that the sovereignty of the Portuguese over the inland tribes extends only so far as the guns of the ancient fortress of Mozambique can carry. A relic of early Arab days, like its sister at Mombasa, it still stands as a monument to its builders.—R. G. WARING.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Canoeing Montana's Rivers

FISHING; hunting; magnificient cañons:

Question:—"They say curiosity is the greatest evil of mankind. It must be true—I'm built that way.

What are the possibilities of making a trip from Yellowstone, Mont., to Mondak, Mont., by the following routing?

Starting-point: Madison River at or near Yellowstone going north on the Madison to the junction of the Missouri along the Missouri to Mondak.

Is the routing correct?

What is the length in miles and days of such a trip?

What are the Summers and Winters like, and are the rain and snow falls heavy? General nature of country?

How are the rivers as to swiftness and clearness; that is, rapids, etc.? What time in the year do they freeze?

Would foodstuff have to be carried for any length of time?

Game. What kind, and laws as to hunting, etc.?

What would you suggest as a good light outfit for two and a good canoe? Stamped and self-addressed envelop enclosed. Please do not use my name in case of publication."—H. D. M., France Field, Cristobal, Panama, C. Z.

Answer, by Mr. Davis:—Your routing is correct; but the trip from West Yellowstone on the Madison to the junction of the Missouri and along the Missouri to Mondak is not feasible. The Madison River is a very swift, clear, deep stream whose bottom abounds with jagged boulders.

If you are really an expert canoeist accustomed to dangerous waters the trip on the Madison could be made. If you could not qualify in this respect the trip would be feasible from the junction of the Madison with the Missouri at Three Forks.

From Three Forks to Fort Benton the distance by river is 266.2 miles. This part of the stream is commonly called the Upper Missouri, no navigation ever having successfully been done along Fort Benton.

From Fort Benton to the confluence of the Yellowstone with the Missouri, which is near Mondak, is 525.4 miles. The length of the trip in days would all depend upon the exertion the canoeists cared to make. You could easily average thirty miles a day and make the trip in approximately twenty-five days. Winters in Montana are generally open, with light snows in that portion of the State traversed by the Missouri. The rainy season is May and June. I would advise one to make the trip the latter part of August or in September.

Above Great Falls the Missouri goes through a mountainous country in some magnificent cañons. Below Fort Benton there are bad lands for a considerable district along the river. Some game is to be found. There has been less settlement along the Missouri from a point a few miles below Fort Benton until the river swings north and meets the Great Northern Railroad in eastern Montana. There are still some large stock outfits with ranches along the stream, but comparatively few homesteaders.

The Missouri is a clear stream for the most part. Above Fort Benton between Three Forks and Great Falls there are a number of rapids, the most dangerous being in Mid Cañon a short distance below the Holter Dam of the Montana Power Company.

Three portages would have to be made above Great Falls at Canon Ferry, Hauser Lake and Holter, where the Montana Power Company have thrown huge dams across the river. At Great Falls you would also have to make three or four portages on account of hydro-electric plants that

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have been erected at that city. I think it would be more desirable to go by rail from Great Falls to Fort Benton and thus eliminate the portages at Great Falls. You would have no trouble to obtain the necessary foodstuffs as you went along.

There is good fishing in some of the streams that empty into the Upper Missouri. Occasionally bear, deer and feathered game are to be seen. A non-resident game license would cost you $30 for both small and large game. The season on grouse is September 15th to September 24th; deer and elk, October 15th to November 15th with a closed season in some counties on both deer and elk. The State Game Warden, Helena, Mont., can give you full particulars.

In the way of an outfit you would need only blankets, a tarpaulin or a small light one-poled tent, a few cooking-utensils and ten or fifteen pounds of foodstuffs.

What one man would call a good canoe another would not. I have made trips on the Missouri in a folding canvas canoe that was very satisfactory. I have also made it in a seventy-five pound Old Town canoe. Lewis R. Freeman in 1922 made the trip down the Yellowstone from Livingston, which is a swifter and more dangerous stream, in a light steel skiff that weighed 150 pounds. The sides cleared the water by only two inches. He thinks one that cleared the water by four inches would be better.

Every mile of the Missouri River has been charted and surveyed from its mouth to Three Forks. This was done by the Missouri River Commission in 1892 and 1893. The work is shown on eighty-four sheets drawn to a scale of one inch to a mile. Those sheets relating to the river in Montana are perhaps obtainable from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C.

Your trip would be infinitely more interesting if you were familiar with the historical background of the region. You can get these from among other books: "The Conquest of the Missouri," by Joseph Mills Hanson, published by A. C. McClurg and Co.; the Wheeler Edition, two volumes, published by Putnam, of the Lewis and Clark Expedition; "Oregon and Eldorado," by Thomas Bullfinch; "The Upper Missouri and the Great Falls," by Eugene V. Smalley; "The Missouri River and Its Utmost Source," by Jacob V. Brower.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Fishing in Inverness County, N. S.

LEARN about the paper work you have to do when leaving the U. S. and entering Canada:

Question:—"I am contemplating an automobile trip from here into Inverness County, Nova Scotia, and return about the middle of next July, and I would appreciate it greatly if you could give me information as to the best and most direct route to take going and coming back; also information as to customs regulations on the border and any other information which you may be able to give me regarding the fishing and camping laws of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia."—J. A. McIsaac, Baltimore, Md.

Answer, by Maj. Belford:—I would advise you to write to Dr. Hathorne of this service at Bangor, Me., as to particulars of your route through the States. Your objective from Baltimore will be Calais, Me., on the Canadian border. Your route I fancy *via* New York, Boston, Portland, Me., Bangor to Calais.

Arrived there, go to your customs house and report. You will fill in a form and receive a paper which you will preserve until you reenter the U. S. When you cross see our customs and immigration people, where you fill in similar forms, keeping one until you leave Canada, when you hand in at the last customs house. There is no duty on cars, no fees, very little red tape. In half an hour you are traveling again.

From Calais go to the city of St. John, New Brunswick, where you can get road maps, and then make for Amherst, Nova Scotia, and from there to Pictou. From Pictou to Port Mulgrave; ferry across the Strait of Canso, and you are in Inverness County.

Write the Chief Game Warden, Halifax, N. S., for a copy of the fishing regulations.

You should have a splendid trip and a splendid time. Wish all the luck of the way.

Indians of Oklahoma

ONE-THIRD of the U. S. population of aboriginal blood live in this one State:

Question:—I have a friend in Africa who is very interested in the American Indians and their reservation in Oklahoma. He writes me for information; and, not being very well posted on Indian matters, I am requesting such information as I think he desires.

Location and approximate area of reservations.
Names of tribes encamped there.
Manners and customs of one or two of the tribes.
Approximate population of reservation.
Method of Government supervision.

I have tried to make these questions specific, in order that the answering will not be too lengthy. I shall appreciate any information you may give me on the above questions."—Robert Lentz, Fort Worth, Tex.

Answer, by Mr. Woodward:—Your letter requesting information on the Indians of Oklahoma reached me okeh, and I find in the five questions—provided I answered in full, which to be frank with you I shall not attempt as I would be typing at this time next year were I to do so—enough work to keep two or three secretaries busy. Am very glad you were specific; but man, oh, man! Your specifications would cover the State of Texas—and then some.

In answer to No. 1, "location and approximate area of the reservations." Since 1907 the reservations in Oklahoma have been practically broken up; but as they were before the Territory was thrown open to white settlers and the Dawes Commission made out allotments to the members of the "Five Civilized Tribes" who composed the bulk of the population, the Choctaws occupied the southern corner. Directly above them were the lands of the Creek and Cherokee with a very small corner in the extreme northeast occupied by the Seneca, Wyandot, Quapaw, Modoc, Ottawa, Miami, Peoria, and Shawnee peoples.

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East of the Choctaws on the southern boundary of the territory—being the Red River, which is the boundary line between Texas and Oklahoma—were the lands of the Chickasaws, Kiowa, Comanche and Apache. Directly north of the latter were the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Wichita and Caddo. East of these between their lands and those of the Creek and Cherokee were located bodies of Seminole, Iowa, Sac, Kickapoo, Fox, Potawatomi, and Shawnee, Pawnee, Ponca, Otoe, Tonkawa, Kaw and Chilocco.

The original limits of the Indian Territory consisted of approximately nineteen and a half million acres, or an area occupying about as much space as the New England States, omitting the bulk of Maine. At present the total population—answering question No. 4 on population of reservation—the State of Oklahoma has about one-third of the entire Indian population of the United States, there being a total of 101,506 persons who lay claim to being Indians, although it must be remembered that only 26,774 are full bloods and 40,934 are half or less. These are 1921 census figures from Report of Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

I believe this answers all the questions except No. 3, "manners and customs of one or two of the tribes," and No. 5 "method of Government supervision." Regarding No. 3. To give a history of the manners and customs of one tribe would be a job too large to tackle by letter. Remember, the treatment of one phase of a simple ceremony would require thousands of words of explanation, so I could hardly begin to give the manners and customs of two tribes. I would recommend that you go to the public library and ask for Volumes 1 and 2 of the "Hand-Book of the American Indians North of Mexico," known as Bulletin 30 of the Bureau of American Ethnology. These books will give you brief sketches of the various tribes and also information on anything and everything pertaining to the Indian. They are reliable sources of info.

Since March 3, 1871, no treaties have been made with any Indian tribes, and since that date all Indian affairs have been dealt with through Congressional enactments. The Indian Bureau was created in March, 1824.

The office of Commissioner of Indian Affairs was established in 1832 and was under the charge of the War Department and remained there until the Bureau of Indian Affairs was transferred to the Department of the Interior, which came into existence in 1849. In brief, the Indian Service of the United States begins primarily with Congressional Acts. These are entered on the statute-books of the nation. From them the Secretary of the Interior gets his orders and thus come into being the Regulations of the Indian Service, which are carried out by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, his district supervisors, under whom are non-reservation schools, reservation agencies, agents and superintendent. The numerous duties entailed in regulating the agency office-work, field-work and boarding-schools are again subdivided into numerous departments dealing with every phase of Indian life. Approximately 5,000 men and women are engaged in Indian Service work, of whom one-third are Indians.

Guess this will give you something of an idea of the Indians in Oklahoma and Government supervision. It must be remembered, however, that this letter is a mere outline. For further details I'd say read, "The Red Man in the United States," by G. E. E. Lindquist and also "The American Indian in the United States," by Warren K. Moorehead, A.M.

Hope this helps you in giving your friend in Africa an idea, a slight inkling—very slight, I'll admit—of a few of our North American Indian tribes. *Adios, amigo mio.*

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose FULL return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Automatic Pistols

ALSO a tip on how to carry a derringer ready for a quick draw:

Question:—"The other day I saw a .41 Remington derringer and decided I wanted one. Thought I'd get one with pearl stocks. No, don't think I want pearl stocks on anything but a derringer. Now what I want to know is how to carry one in my right coat sleeve so I could get it out in thirty minutes or less.

What do you think of the .38 Colt automatic? I owned a .38 Colt and didn't like it because it was too small, or at least I thought it was; and then the ——thing would hang too. I read that a Remington automatic wouldn't hang; but they will, because I owned one that would. I like the .44 Colt single action better than any revolver or automatic I ever saw; but it is too big even with a 4¾-inch barrel for me to carry. Would you advise me to buy a .38 Colt automatic? The pocket model, I mean."—PAUL MILLER, Davidson, Tenn.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—I never figured out a way to carry a derringer in the right sleeve, to be used by the right hand, and doubt if it can be done. But you can strap a holster around the left wrist and draw the pistol with the right hand. Have the butt pointing out toward the hand and a retaining-strap or elastic band to hold the pistol in place. I never pack one there, merely tried it out to see whether it could be done. It could.

The .38 Colt automatic pistol is a powerful and accurate weapon; but it's not the favorite the other Colts are, due to the manner in which the handle sets in relation to the line of aim, and the lack of a grip safety. If it were made in the model of the .45 Government, or even the pocket hammerless models, it would be very widely used, I think, and I really consider it the best of the pistol ammunition adapted to automatics.

I have never had my Remington jam with me after two years' constant use and under all sorts of firing conditions. I believe the trouble with the automatic today is largely due to two things; either poor cartridges, due to oil having attacked primer or powder, or else the magazine is in poor shape, lips bent, etc., which all tend to make trouble. Like you, I think the old S. A. Army and Frontier Colt unsurpassed for positive action. I own two of them and like them both; .45's, one 7½-inch barrel, the other 5½-inch, blued with walnut grips.

You can get a .38 automatic Colt from any dealer, although the pistol may have to be ordered from the factory direct for you, at a cost of about thirty-five dollars. I enclose some information in regard to revolvers and pistols.

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Bait and Fly Casting for Bass

HOW to vary your lure according to the weather:

Question:—"I would like full information on fresh-water fishing, principally in Virginia. I love to fish but have never had a chance until this Summer to take a real trip nor to study the finer points which I am sure it takes, covering tackle and equipment, fly and bait-casting bait to use, camping-outfit and trips. Principal fishing of this community is bass, yellow and spotted suckers, perch, etc."—C. RICHARD BOYCE, Winchester, Va.

Answer, by Mr. Thompson:—Doubtless you will want to do both bait and fly-casting for your bass. The bait-casting outfit requires a rod about five feet long with reel-seat above hand-grasp. The fly rod should be nine or nine and one-third feet long with reel-seat below hand. The bait-casting rod is to be equipped with a quadruple multiplying reel, and braided silk line of about fourteen-pound test. You can use almost any kind of bait-casting lures, as bass strike at them avidly; these include the wooden minnows or wabblers and all kinds of spoons and spinners. I am enclosing a little booklet on bait-casting which I know will help you master the art.

In fly-fishing you use an enameled line that balances the rod and then attach a gut leader and your flies. There are numbers of patterns, and the best suggestion in using them is: On bright days dark flies, on cloudy days bright flies. This does not always work out. The smaller flies on hooks from four to ten are very good for perch. In fly-fishing you use either a single-action ordinary or automatic reel.

For sucker-fishing mostly worms are used as bait.

Please write me again about what kind of camping you intend to do, whether going alone or with a party and for how long, and I shall immediately answer. When I am provided with this information I can inform you better. Also whether you are going to take a car or not.

Gorillas

ALSO a few words about another animal, the most dangerous of all those that roam the veld:

Question:—"According to the lists in *Adventure* I believe you are the one I should write to in regard to the savage gorilla.

I would prefer to hear the opinion of hunters rather than official reports as to their temper. Will they attack in defense of dead young?

Would you tell a story or two about them to show cunning or lack of it?

The most dangerous beast or reptile, in your section?"—H. G. REPPETOE, Maumee, O.

Answer, by Capt. Franklin:—About the only time a gorilla will attack is in defense of its young. They are then extremely dangerous. A gorilla is so powerful that he makes short work of a man if he gets hold of him, usually tearing his windpipe out.

Gorillas are very cunning. They throw sentries out during the daytime; these sentries are relieved at regular intervals with clock-like precision, and I have seen huge boulders worn as smooth as a piece of glass and polished as if by varnish from the continual tread of these sentries on the same boulder.

The most dangerous beast in my section is the buffalo. These animals, unlike a lion, which usually slinks away, will attack you as soon as they wind you.

I would advise you to buy F. C. Selous' book on "Big Game Hunting in Africa."

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.

MCDERMOTT, W. Resident of Texas. Formerly of U. S. S. *St. Louis* and U. S. S. *McLeash*, U. S. N. Last heard from he was bound for Denver, Colo. Write to your Pard and Double.—Address THE DUTCHMAN.

MITCHELL, ETTA and Laura. Sisters of T. W. Mitchell of Fargo, N. D. Last heard from in Washington or Oregon in 1916. Any information will be appreciated by their nephew.—Address GORDON MITCHELL, 898 Caldwell Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.

A COMPLETE list of unclaimed mail will be published in December 30th and June 30th issues of Adventure.

MORGAN, WALTER V. Please write your old Pal.—Address HARLEY E. ROGERS, care of S. C. E. Co., Big Creek, Calif.

BATEMAN, LEONARD. Formerly a resident of Baltimore, Md., and also Minneapolis. Last heard of in Minneapolis in 1915. Supposed to have gone West. Important news and funds.—Address C. E. BATEMAN, Minneapolis, Minn.

GREEN, JOHN. Last heard from when he was discharged from Camp Dodge, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Any information will be appreciated.—Address PATRICK CANEY, 713 East Long Ave., New Castle, Pa.

CURTS, FRANK E. Theatrical name Frank Manning. Disappeared from Lusk, Wyoming, about March, 1918, while engaged in business of quarrying. For years prior thereto he had conducted the Frank Manning Shows. Height five feet six inches, light hair, blue eyes, solid build, scar over left eye on the forehead. Any information will be appreciated.—Address R. M. ANDERSON, Beloit, Kansas.

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MITCHELL, DR. GORDON. Son of a sister of Thomas Wesley Mitchell. Age about thirty-five or forty-five years. Has a sister by the name Claudia. Last name unknown. Any information will be appreciated.—Address THOMAS GORDON MITCHELL, 898 Caldwell Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.

TOMB, WILLIAM. Last heard of he was in Denver, Colo., in January, 1922. Have good news for him.—Address EDWARD TRUETER, R. R. 2., Bonner Springs, Kansas.

THOMPSON, MYRON and Lawrence. Ages twenty and nineteen respectively. Last heard from several years ago in Milwaukee, Wis. Any information will be greatly appreciated.—Address F. HAMILTON, Box 1326, East Chi, Indiana.

EADON, LIONEL ALFRED. Age fifty-three. Prospector, born in London, Eng. Blue eyes. Last seen five years ago in Nevada City, Calif. Worked for the Delhi Mining Co., Nevada, Calif., in 1918. Missing for twenty-one years. Any information will be appreciated by his mother and sister.—Address MRS. M. VALENCIA, 317 S. Grant St., Stockton, Calif.

BARR, JOSEPH L. Served in Co. A, 6th U. S. Inf. on Panay, P. I., 1900 to 1902. Any information will be appreciated.—Address F. G. CARR, 723 Gough St., San Francisco, Calif.

BROTHEN, CARL or Charley. Last heard from in Spokane, Wash. Has a homestead in Lovejoy, Montana. Age thirty-three years, height five feet ten inches, weight one hundred and sixty pounds, brown hair and blue eyes. Any information will be appreciated by his mother and brother.—Address LOUIS BROOTEN, Aleza Lake, B. C., Canada.

THE following have been inquired for in either the June 30 or July 20, 1924 issues of Adventure. They can get the name and address of the inquirer from this magazine:

ADAMS, Joe; Bowman, Jesse; Clarence, Roy P.; Coghlan, C. C. Conniston, Art; Connors, Eugene, or Gene (Chuck); Cook, Harvey Lawrence; Dillmore, Jack; Dohl, Frank; Durning, Frank; Fleisch, Florence; Gordon, Frank; Hines, Hugh W.; Hollis, Clarence C.; Holland, James Arthur; Keith, Henry; Kelly, John H.; Little, Thomas; Mann, Herbert, Jr.; Morgan, Newton, A.; Parrish, Harry; Reed, Claud; Tillman, Albert; Van Marter, Frank E.

MISCELLANEOUS—Brother and two sisters of Miss Josephine Thompson; Case family; relatives of Hazel Chreiman; "Snake Eye Scotty"; Troop K, Fifth Cavalry. Members Petry, Kelly, Thompson, G. O. or any others that were in Mexico in 1919; U. S. S. *Chicago* Members of her crew from April 6, 1917 while in "Rio" and Southern American ports; Women members of Camp-Fire please write to me; Z. T. H.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

AUGUST 20TH ISSUE

Besides the **complete novel** and the **complete novelette** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE CAPTIVE — ***George E. Holt***
Diplomacy and kidnaping in Morocco.

A RIMROCK JUDAS — ***Alex. McLaren***
"*Shorty*" knew there was gold beneath the basalt.

X-35, CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES — ***Gerald C. Huntoon***
The submarine commander has a bright idea.

IROQUOIS! IROQUOIS! A Five-Part Story Part II — ***Hugh Pendexter***
The half-breed, *Gentry*, shows his colors.

SIR MELLIVORA — ***Leo Walmsley***
Braver than a lion.

SERVANTS OF THE LAW — ***H. Mortimer Batten***
Nahara could not fathom the white man's code.

DJONGOS — ***John Scarry***
He was an ape—his master was murdered.

Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain long stories by Leonard H. Nason, E. S. Pladwell, Joel Townsley Rogers, F. R. Buckley, Hugh Pendexter, W. C. Tuttle, William Byron Mowery, Frederick Moore, Arthur D. Howden Smith and Georges Surdez; and short stories by J. D. Newsom, H. C. Bailey, Clements Ripley, Leo Walmsley, John Webb, Douglas Oliver, Dale Collins, F. St. Mars, H. C. Wire, J. Allan Dunn and others; stories of Naval aviation, pearlers in the South Seas, York Staters in Indian days, cattle-rustlers on the Western range, viking-farers in Norwegian fiords, gobs in Central American waters, French troopers in Africa, knights-at-arms in the Middle Ages, adventurers the world around.

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Engaged to two girls—he invites them both to dinner! . . .

. . . "Little celebration —lucky dog have two Queens of Sheba," said Martin.

And to himself, "Oh, hell!"

"Swell room!" chirped Leora.

Madeline had looked as though she intended to say the same thing in longer words.

He was ordering, with agony. While he wondered what "Purée St. Germain" could be, and the waiter hideously stood watching behind his shoulder, Madeline fell to. She chanted with horrifying politeness:

"Mr. Arrowsmith tells me you are a nurse, Miss—Tozer."

"Yes, sort of."

"Do you find it interesting?"

"Well—yes—yes, I think it's interesting."

"Do you come from Zenith, Miss—Tozer?"

"No, I come from—just a little town. Well, hardly a town—North Dakota."

"Do you find the contrast to North Dakota interesting?"

"Well, of course it's different."

"Tell me what North Dakota's like. I've always wondered about these Western States."

"I don't think I know just how you mean."

"I mean what is the general effect? The *impression?*"

"Well, it's got lots of wheat and lots of Swedes."

"But I mean—I suppose you're all terribly virile and energetic, compared with us Easterners?"

"I don't— Well, yes, maybe."

"Have you met lots of people in Zenith?"

"Not so *awfully* many."

He sat alone and helpless while she again turned on Leora and ever more brightly inquired whether Leora knew this son of a corporation lawyer and that famous débutante, this hat-shop and that country club.

"Well—" She dismissed Leora and looked patronizingly at Martin. "Are you planning some more work on the what-is-it with rabbits?"

He was grim. He could do it now, if he got it over quickly. "Madeline! Brought you two together because— Don't know whether you cotton to each other or not, but I wish you could, because I've—I'm not making any excuse for myself. I couldn't help it. I'm engaged to both of you, and I want to know——"

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Breads. This includes pop-overs, griddle-cakes, waffles, Scotch scones, sandwiches, johnny-cake and all kinds of yeast and salt breads.

Appetizers. Fruit and fish cocktails and various canapés.

Soups. How to make soup stock; soup accessories, such as croutons, pâte à choux; plain soups, creamed soups, purée and stews.

Meat. You are shown by charts and diagrams all the cuts of beef, pork and mutton. There are recipes for cooking all of them.

Fish. You are told how to buy, skin, clean, fillet a fish, how to dress boiled lobster and how to prepare all kinds of fish dishes, including shad roe, frogs' legs, planked fish, etc.

Stuffings for fish, poultry and game. Bread, sausage, mushroom, celery, oyster and chestnut stuffings.

Sauces for fish, poultry and game. Tartar sauce, hollandaise sauce, horse radish, etc.

Puddings and pudding sauces. All kinds of soufflés, blanc mange, condé, shortcake, dumplings, etc.

Ice-creams and other frozen desserts. Frozen puddings, mousses, parfaits, sherbets, etc.

Pastry. You are told how to prepare plain crumbly pie-crust, hot water pie-crust, flaky pie-crust, puffy paste, etc.

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