Adventure

February 15th

Men *at* Sea

Hunger

By Leonard H. Nason

How the woods made *a* man

Boyhood

By Gordon Young

A Mighty Hunter *of* Annam *and*

The Elephant with the Crooked Tail

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A Tenderfoot's Welcome

On Getting Acquainted

By Raymond S. Spears

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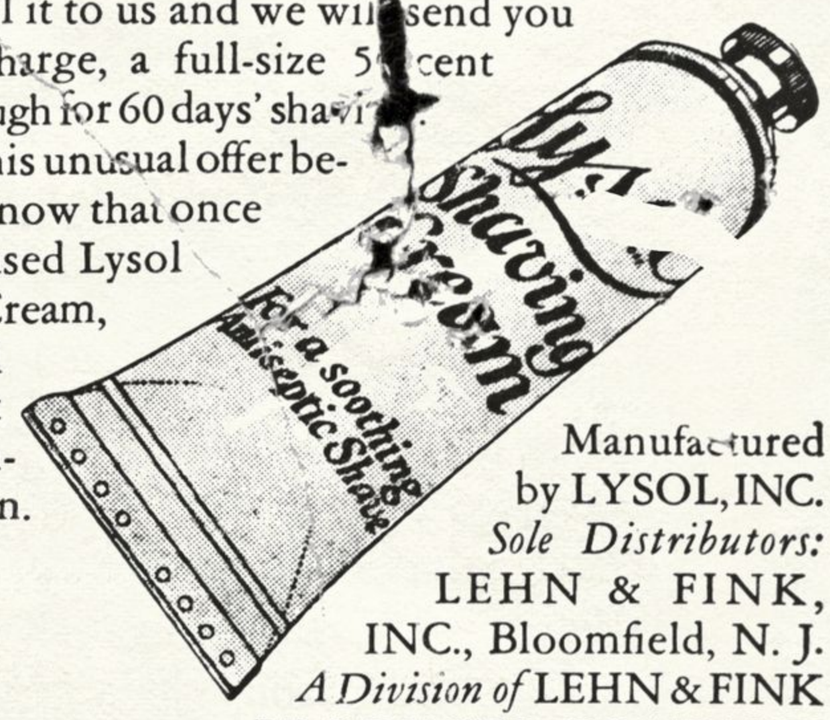

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(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Issue of February 15

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, *Editor*

Contents:

On Getting Acquainted, *A Short Story* . . RAYMOND S. SPEARS 2
West—Without benefit of calling card.

Boyhood, *An Article* . . . . . GORDON YOUNG 14
Forest—A city man's recollection.

The Rider from the Desert, *A Complete Novelette*
Asia Minor—*Khalid* and the sword Gray Maiden. ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH 26

The Mold of Steel, *A Complete Novelette* . . EDMUND M. LITTELL 50
Foundry—Friendship by force of sinew.

Squareheads . . . . . JOHN WEBB 69

The Elephant with the Crooked Tail, *A Complete Novelette*
Indo-China—The augury of the rice cheered the great *pakam*. LYMAN BRYSON 70

A Steady Job, *A Short Story* . . . . . LAWRENCE ROCKWELL 82
Central America—The commandante knows his duty.

The Fighting Years, *A Six-Part Story. Part V.* HUGH PENDEXTER 86
Early Pennsylvania—*Dandy Case* has a story to tell.

Hunger, *A Complete Novelette* . . . . . LEONARD H. NASON 116
Sea—A bookkeeper aboard a hellship.

Painted Ponies, *A Four-Part Story. Conclusion* ALAN LEMAY 159
Overland Trail Country—*Morgan* settles his accounts.

The Camp-Fire, 188

Ask Adventure, 197

Straight Goods, 203

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, 202

Adventure's Travel Association, 202

Books You Can Believe, 207

Lost Trails, 205

Trail Ahead, 208

Decorations by ROCKWELL KENT

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By the man who wrote "The Were-Cougar"

FOREMAN DERLAP of the Broken Bottle Brand and his top-hand "Dragging Wing" Dewstop had a dirty job to do over on the Bench. They carried good rifles, a .30-30 and a .33 box magazine, according to their choices, and the weapons were clean and hanging ready in scabbards. Years before, a wandering Viking had claimed a section on the Bench, built a good stone cabin and undertaken to make a home. In those days homesteading was attended by fatal difficulties. Great cattle ranches had little liking for nesters and the lone invader of seized privileges took little account of the feelings of those who grazed fifty or a hundred thousand acres which they did not own or pay for. So Hansen vanished from the scene and left a fine cabin as his monument.

The stone building, built of flat rocks with a roof shingled with slabs of slate, had remained standing near the brook. Line riders, inspectors, branding-outfits and all the other casual or special workers of the Broken Bottle Brand now used the shack for overnight or over-the-week business. Standing in the heart of the Bench grazing country, it was so well built that many a rider had been glad to take refuge there during blizzard or cloudburst.

Outsiders seldom saw or even heard of this fine shelter. It was a kind of secret of the great range, perhaps only three or four knowing its real history.

Now an intruder in the good pasture had taken possession. He was just a slender, boyish youngster who had drifted in the back way and was settling down by leave of no one. No one saw him coming. He was found present by a surprized estimator and grass-hunter. He had arrived as if between days, a smiling, gray-eyed and good-looking fellow. He would have been welcomed as a rider or as a guest for a week or two. The trouble was he rode over to the Shomekut Land Office and, having looked over the maps and records, actually filed on the old Viking section. He intended to stay.

Foreman Derlap notified Hank Clemmer, who owned the cattle and claimed the range under the old "possession" habit of mind. Clemmer had lifted his nose, which was hooked, twitched his lips and squinted his eyes.

"Nestin' my water, eh?" Clemmer grimaced. "Well, stop 'im!"

Derlap had already served notice, first

On Getting Acquainted by

RAYMOND S. SPEARS

in kindly, discursive phrase. He had told the Queer Dick this was all owned range. The fellow had then investigated in itself was insulting. Worse found that the Broken Bottle owned only sixty-four hundred acres where they grazed sixty-four thousand acres, and neglected to lease than a few sections from the Government. Neighbors knew that Old Hank Clemmer hired good bad men for his riders, and those who intruded had trouble on their hands. In the old days there had been two or three considerable range wars thereabouts. One involved sheep. The others had been a question of invading cattle. And homesteaders had also fared ill, three or four families having been loaded into their wagons and "shipped," as the saying was. And more than one man had vanished in that territory, as had the Viking, Hansen.

The newcomer's name, according to the preliminary papers, was Donald Perry. Over at the county seat post office it was shown by the postmarks and addresses on mail that Perry was from away back East. He was a tenderfoot. He had two weekly newspapers coming in, one from Utica and the other from Cold Brook in New York. Cowboys who had come from the East said the towns mentioned were up State. The postmaster at Cowhide gave all the information he could to accommodate the rather exacting and insistent demands of Derlap. Nobody wanted trouble with the Brand, whose reputation was that everybody riding for it was impatient.

And yet, for some inexplicable reason, Derlap had been reluctant to force the issue with the homesteader. He had talked three times with the boy, endeavoring to gentle him out of the country. Stories of killings by this or that "bad 'un" of the land had led to various questions and much curiosity which Derlap had gratified. Then Derlap and three men had come in, found the nester not at home and cleaned out the place—grub, salt, furniture and all. They had knocked over a corral fence and filled a dugout stable, too. The hint hadn't been taken, but Donald Perry had been noticeably cool and watchful when a week or two later Derlap came that way alone to make sure the fool had abandoned the attempt to squat on the choice Bench pasture.

Now the two men staked out their horses nearly a mile from the cabin. They crossed on foot a divide through the junipers. They jumped two deer on the ridge but did not see them. The deer were badly frightened and ran along the Bench across the open grasslands past the nester's waterhole. The two men came down in the thicks to the edge, where they had at one hundred and fifty yards' range, an excellent view of the intruder's stone house and all the adjacent territory. Here, stretched on the ground, the two poked their rifle muzzles ahead of them and whispered their general directions. Dragging Wing, an old half-breed hunter, was no better shot at the range than the foreman, whose eyes were keen despite some forty-five years' riding and wilderness game killing—not to mention other shootings.

The two were well satisfied. Smoke was bulging in thin blue puffs out of the fireplace chimney. The front door was open. The occupant could not come out for a pail of water, go to the corral for his horse or leave the place in any direction without showing himself a plain mark. At that short open-country range the two could hardly miss deer, antelope or side-hill rooting bear. The fact that a human was their projected victim was not disturbing to their consciences.

Fortune did not favor them. The smoke grew thinner, bluer and finally became but a hardly visible quiver of heat.

"Doggone!" Derlap grumbled. "We got to hang here all day? He's gone out. I thought we'd get it done this mornin'—he's an early bird. An' before this he's always be'n turnin' out two hours after sunup."

"The trouble was," a voice said behind the two bushwhackers, "you scared two deer, who gave me fair warning you were coming!"

The hands of the half-breed drew away from the .30-30 rifle. The hands of Foreman Derlap lifted from his stock and reach.

"Don't look back!" the still-hunter who had come up from behind continued. "I'm not pretty to look at. Stand up, both of you!"

They stood up.

"Now, Derlap, unbuckle and drop the belt."

This done, the voice added—

"Now you, Dewstop!"

"Step around!" the voice continued. "We'll take a walk. Go back to where you left your horses. Keep through the open spaces. Don't try to duck through thick brush. I'm fond of watching you, you know."

The two circled and side by side returned to their tethered animals.

"Take off the saddles and bridles!" the voice ordered.

The two approached the restive, nervous animals. They did as ordered.

"Now throw off the ropes—hit them hard. You first, Derlap!"

"All right!" the captor chuckled as the foreman's animal broke away kicking jubilantly. "Now, Dewstop, lace 'im!"

Both animals romped and leaped away twitching their tails and tossing their heads.

"I suppose the boys saw which animals you rode away on?" the voice continued. "Look at me now if you want to."

The homesteader was sitting on a rock with a little rifle, a carbine. They sat down, too, as he indicated his wish for a powwow.

"How about it—they knew which horses you came on?"

"Why, prob'ly," Derlap grimaced.

"You must have left about midnight or thereabouts to get here at sunup. Or else you were over at the south line-camp and came this way out of the south. When those two deer passed by galloping I heard them and I asked no fairer warning. I thought it was a cougar, but when I circled my glasses showed where you'd staked the horses so I knew that wasn't the kind of a beast I had to deal with. Well, sorry. But you'll have to hit up the mountain there. Start!"

"What!" Derlap gasped. "What you figuring to do?"

"Same as you did to the fellow they called Viking Hansen."

"Wha-what'd we do to him?"

"Found where you walled him under the ledge of rocks, Derlap. I'm going to give him company now."

The two listeners turned gray. Their lips crinkled up, dried. Their mouths opened and closed and their eyes bulged the way a trapped animal's do.

"You—you ain't goin' to kill us!" Derlap gasped. "That's—that's murder!"

"The skull of Hansen showed a bullet hole through the back, behind the left ear. It was a .45-200 grain bullet. That was murder, too. Move!"

The two rose weakly to their feet and stumbled eastward toward the timber up the mountains. They staggered along, their heads turning from side to side. Their walk would be at least a hundred rods, but as they approached the dark timber of the mountain side they grew weaker. Derlap stumbled to his knees, his high-heeled cowboy boots hard to manage in.

"My God, don't kill me!" he cried. "I ain't fittin' to die—not so sudden."

"Hansen begged too, didn't he?"

"Yes, he begged too!"

"Didn't do any good either!"

"No, Perry, it didn't do any good. That was in—in the old days, y'know."

"You've kinda let the old days drag over till now, haven't you?"

"Well, this is pretty far back. And the big fellow, old Hank, he's stubborn thataway."

"He told you to come get me?"

The foreman remained silent.

"Better answer yes or no."

"Why, I'm jes' a hired man, Mr. Perry."

"Not personally to blame?"

"I don't know 'f I be or not. I hadn't ever figured it out."

"Didn't mind doing the dirty work for the boss?"

"If you put it thataway, I expect so."

"I'm pretty bad myself, Derlap. You know I can shoot. I can hunt a bear over bare ground, and there's not much difference between cougar hunting and man hunting. What would you tell Old Hank if I let you go?"

"I'd tell him the truth. I'd tell him he'd have to do his own killing."

"And you, Dewstop?"

"Heh! I takes my time an' quits, tha's what I do, meester."

"I'm a bit disappointed," Perry grumbled, "I wanted to kill a man—to forget the face of a fellow who tried to do me. But to do you I'd ought to have shot you in your backs as you waited to kill me. Now that your quills are plucked out I can't do it. We'll go to my cabin. You can both read and write. I want a statement from you. When you've written it I'll let you go—"

Sweat suffused the faces of the two. They turned with relief to go to the cabin.

But Derlap sat staring at the tablet and bottle of ink when he was in the cabin. Dewstop was writing, however. The penmanship wasn't the most legible nor the spelling the most accurate in the world, but something of the eloquence of the Indian and the anxiety of the white race was in what he said.

Presently Derlap began to write too, with the concise sentences and the picturesque phrase of those who have ridden much alone by day and by night over the lonely spaciousness of low winter pastures and high summer grazing, working cattle.

Dewstop in two pages and Derlap in four pages stated the facts as Perry had heard them, with details. The homesteader read the statements and nodded with satisfaction. When he looked up, however, he saw in the squinting eyes of the foreman a hidden thought.

"I know what you are thinking, Derlap," Perry remarked. "You think I'm a fool. You think I'm going to take these papers over to the County Court where old Hank's friend is sheriff, where his hired lawyer is county judge and where he's the largest stockholder in the county bank. But I'm taking a chance on you two, not on old Hank or the crooked tools he has in the office here. And I

understand that as regards you two there's nothing personal in this matter. I don't even want Dewstop to give up the job he has. Top-hand for the Broken Bottle brand means a first-class man, of course. But he'd have trouble finding another ranch where he could be as useful or earn so much. How about it—can I trust you fellows to shake hands and call it personally square?"

"With me, yes!" the breed nodded, and the two shook.

"You understand I'm in a hole, Perry?"

"Sure, so'm I, too! All I ask you is tell old Hank exactly what happened—that you gave me your word of honor you'd tell him how I heard the deer alarmed and knew it meant raiders, cougar or men. And you'll know how to make him see that it's his job running me out, for it's too big for you, or was this morning."

"It's too big for me, that's right, Perry! Was today, and will be after this. But old Hank's—well, he's my boss. He comes out of the 'Seventies, you know."

"Kind of a hangover."

"Just so, for a fact. If you don't mind—we'll shake."

"Sure!"

"I've three horses in the corral, good ones. Bring in your saddles, and I forgot to pick up the rifles and belts. You might pick them up on your way back to the Broken Bottle outfit."

"Seems like you don't trust anybody by halves, Perry?" the foreman suggested.

"Of course I don't," Perry replied. "I'm a stranger out in this country. But I was a good woodsman in the New York mountains. Outdoor men all over the world are pretty much alike as regards codes. A cheat's a cheat wherever he lives, in city or desert."

Dewstop went out and brought in the saddles and bridles. The foreman and nester talked and smoked together in the shade of the stone cabin and then it occurred to Perry that he hadn't had breakfast. Neither had the two. Accordingly, they prepared a meal. And when Dewstop came he found coffee fragrant on the thin mountain zephyrs.

"Just turn the horses loose when you reach home," Perry suggested.

"All right. By the way, Dewstop and I are going to tell nobody but old Hank what happened. The other boys'll stay away from here till the boss shows up."

"That suits me."

OLD HANK CLEMMER heard over the telephone that he had better come to the Broken Bottle.

"What's the matter?"

"Trouble!"

"A'right."

Good as his word, Foreman Derlap told the owner exactly what had happened till the nester caught the drop from behind.

"He's good, eh?" Old Hank snuffled and snorted. "Doggone, heh!"

He fumed around.

"Let you go, eh—softy, eh? A'right!" Old Hank grimaced. "I'll 'tend to him, heh! I ust-a fix 'em. Seen them guys before, I have."

Two days later old Hank started out alone on an "inspection." He carried in his saddle scabbard an old .50-110-550 Sharps rifle with which he had done much hunting and meanness in the old days. He had dropped antelope, elk, grizzlies, buffalo and deer with the great weapon. He had other firearms but this was his favorite. He carried fifty rounds of ammunition and four days' grub supply. He left the Broken Bottle outfit after noon, saying he wanted some fresh venison. He headed southward but swung easterly as soon as he was out of sight of the ranch buildings.

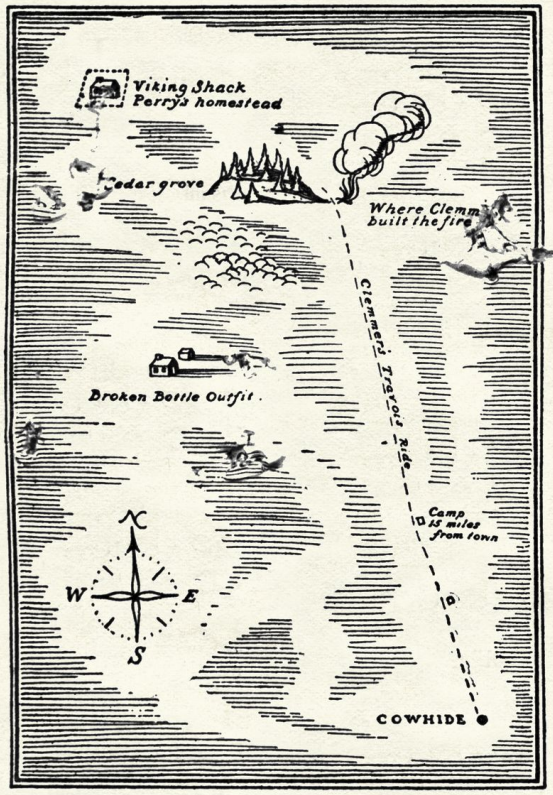
Always he had been a "good man." During the years of grim competition for the range, when Indians still lurked in the outlying country and when the danger of raids by rustlers or killers was constant, he had held his own. He was unwilling to believe he had been passed by. His foreman, a good hired man, wasn't quite up to snuff, though a first-class cow

man of the old school—which was the best the world had ever known.

"Heh!" he snorted. "Told me I'd have to go alone!"

He chuckled. The prestige of the Broken Bottle, after all, depended in the final clinch on the new fellow himself. The boys still had to look to the Old Man when something too much for them came up. A short-pants fellow from down East had shown himself where he wasn't wanted, probably some golf-playing nincompoop of a scoundrel on whom luck had played a good trick, making him think himself a genuine smarty, able to get away with anything.

"I've tuck down a lot of these here smarties!" Old Hank reminded himself, "bad men, polyticians, rustlers, Gov'-ment fellers and the rest."



When night fell he threw down his blanket and staked out his horse. It was fine but a bit chilly. He had lots of gnarly cedar deadwood, so he built himself a good fire. He broiled two young rabbits he had killed and ate them joyfully. It had been a long time since he had ridden line alone. Now he was riding for business. It was fine, settling down here beside this spring which he hadn't visited in years. Smoking, he figured how best he could get rid of the fool who thought an old-timer was going to allow anybody to come in and break up a big pasture by homesteading a first-class waterhole and four hundred acres or so of strong round grass half as much of which would fatten more cattle than any other fodder in all those parts.

Presently, the rancher rolled up in his blanket to sleep. He was going to wake up about two o'clock and get into position for business well before daybreak. But he was unable to sleep at first. An uneasiness affected him. He remembered how he had come out to this same place on other occasions. He had overtaken five men with a bunch of two hundred Bottle Brand steers over in the Narrow Pass. That was one of the times when the story of what happened was not carried away by survivors. And then there had been several brushes with wanderers from the Indian reservation in Custer's day. That was harking back to the exuberance of boyhood and recklessness.

He harked especially back to the time when the Sundog Brand had claimed three or four sections at the north end of the Broken Bottle range. Of course that had been a necessary dispute. It was settled in Cowhide when it happened that Hank Clemmer started out of the Big Bite Hotel bar, crossing the street toward the Cowhide post office just as "Low" Jack Cobale, owner of the Sundog Brand, emerged from the Government building.

The odds were even. It had become a case of shoot on sight. The two first shots had gone wild with the unexpectedness and haste of the occasion. There had been other shots, and then one of Hank's .45 bullets had hit a wagon tire, glanced and struck his enemy in the neck. Twenty-two bullets, it was figured, had flown around the street from the four

revolvers of the combatants, and the joke of it was a slug which had missed by four feet had ricocheted to where it would do the most good. But the shoot-out to the fatal termination had established the reputation of Old Hank as a gunfighter. And the matter of his inaccurate shooting had been remedied in popular tradition when in a cool state of mind he killed two gamblers in the High Horse, right and left, after he caught them in a double-cross, using strippers to throw him three kings and one of the crooks' four jacks.

Thinking over those old days, old Hank presently went into dreams, and these were such as made him grumble and groan, talking to himself. He quivered and jerked like a sleeping dog. He wriggled and twisted, uncovering himself, which let the cold in, arousing him a little. He slept long. When he awakened, opening his eyes, dawn had arrived. With a curse he started to rise, only to find himself in the throes of what he thought was a nightmare. He couldn't move arms or legs.

He twisted his head with a sudden suspicion. Sure enough, he saw over his shoulder a visitor at his camp, a fellow in a golf suit and heavy wind-proof shirt to avoid the chill of a thin high-altitude morning breeze. The visitor was cooking flapjacks and broiling a thick steak. No need to tell the owner of the Broken Bottle Brand what had happened. He was a blamed old fool. He might have known that the homesteader would be restless, riding out to high points and watching for passersby. The fire in the cedar clump had been a lighthouse signal of warning. The rest had been a cinch.

The grim old-timer had been triced gently, but firmly. He was now bundled up in his own blanket. The captor did not even look at his victim, who squirmed and found that his elbows were tied back, that the holster of his revolver was still beside him but empty. In fact, the revolver was lying at the foot of the cedar against which the old Sharps rifle leaned.

The young scoundrel had a good appetite, eating slowly and with relish. He had come prepared for a good meal, taking condensed cream in his coffee and butter on his flapjacks—regular dude-ranch style. At the same time, old Hank grew thirsty and hungry. He was used to his three squares. When he had eaten, Perry reached for the big fifty-caliber rifle, examined it with interest and then rested the barrel over a low cedar branch to aim down the slope into the open pasture some four hundred yards distant at some mark which the rancher could not see. The thunderous boom of the old blackpowder explosion echoed through the wilderness.

"Pretty good!" the shooter remarked almost aloud. "Hit it!"

"Hit what?" Old Hank demanded.

"Your horse," the shooter replied, "I turned him loose. Probably the boys'll think something if you don't show up. They aren't apt to find him down there in the draw. Coyotes'll tear 'im up soon."

"Going to kill me, eh?

"Oh, no! Worse'n that!" the youngster grinned.

"Ugh!" Clemmer snorted.

Death had always been to him the one worst fate in store for any man. He had mercilessly enforced his own rules by threat of dire physical anguish or by killing. He knew the fellow was a fool, though he had out-smarted the rancher and the hired hands. Now he wasn't going to take advantage of his opportunity and be rid of his enemy who living was never to be defeated. Clemmer couldn't be kept a prisoner, though he might vanish as a dead man.

"I lied to you, Clemmer," the man suddenly said. "I was shooting at a rock. Your horse is all right. I couldn't shoot a gentled horse, any more than I could shoot a helpless man. You were such an easy mark that I couldn't even bring myself to kill you though you were here to assassinate me. You're a despicable coward. At the same time you figured from your killings in the old days that you were pretty good. You didn't give

the Viking, Hansen, a chance in the world. It was dirty murder. But when I heard how you were afraid of that poor devil of a nester, killing him without a warning that he could understand, I knew what kind of a fool and bulldozer you are. So I knew I could catch you alive. I'm going to give you a ride. But first I'll feed you, the same as I would a dog. Here!"

With a twitch of a slip-knot Perry freed Clemmer's arms and handed him a plate stacked with broiled steaks and flapjacks. Fed like a dog, contemptuously, the old fellow hesitated. His pride rebuked his appetite. At the same time he longed for the food. A cup of strong black coffee was tempting. His pride succumbed. He ate since he might just as well. Helpless, he endured the insulting scorn of the fellow who had somehow been lucky enough to get the advantage.

"You were chilly when you built the fire last night—getting old and shivery!" Perry taunted him. "There was a time, back in the old days when you trailed cattle rustlers in tracking snow and never built a fire, but ate frozen raw meat so they wouldn't see or smell the flames. That's a day now gone, old-timer. You're a softy. You're pampering that old stomach of yours at the cost of your brains. And goose-pimples show how tender your ornery old hide is, too."

Old Hank growled, clutching the case knife he had for eating.

"Better not get rough, old boy!" the youngster warned, "I got you hobbled, you know. I'm riding you now. You're a rough old sunfisher but I'm some skyscraper myself. I ain't never gentled an outlaw before. I've heard tell of catching wild horses, and busting them. I guess an ornery old rascal like you needs gentling, too, same's a bucker. Physically you're helpless. You're saddled, bridled and toned down. What ails you is an unconquerable spirit, you like to call it. 'Course, you know you're just an old hog, grunting, hoofing into the trough, not satisfied with your own acres which you homesteaded by proxy. You had to grab all the range of the big surveyed, too. Now this is my country. I like it. I've come to stay."

"Well, it ain't big enough for the two of us!" old Hank said.

"All right, then—you'll leave."

"Not alive, I won't!"

"Pretty confident of your pride, stubborn, plumb ridiculous!" Perry laughed, chuckling. "Old-timer, you're out of it. I'm a great believer in moral suasion. You got a spirit that waxed proud on physical victories but your brains never did equal your shooting—and that was mighty inaccurate. You missed Low Jack Cobale by four feet, but the bullet glanced from a wheel rim and killed him. You practised up a lot after that but you never were half as good as your bluff."

Clemmer snarled and cursed till he was breathless. He made promises that were well meant. He took the chance of being killed for his impertinence or because his captor was afraid. Instead Perry laughed.

Then tying the old boy's elbows back and mounting him on his own saddle, the homesteader led him over to lift him on his own staked-out horse. There Perry mounted and headed for home. Some lodgepole pines which he had brought in for fencing were lying on skids. Of two of these long slender sticks Perry made a travois. He stretched a wagon-cover strip of canvas for a bed, and dumped and packed the helpless rancher on the travois thus contrived. And with the old man trailing behind his horse in physical comfort but mental rage, they headed for Cowhide.

Perry took his time. He followed an old cattle-drive trail. He camped fifteen miles from town and, having bundled his captive up securely, seemed to sleep comfortably most of the night but awakened the moment the prisoner made a move of any kind.

In the morning, Perry found the old fellow silent, worried and at loss for words. Instead of rage Clemmer was recalling other times when he had ridden into

Cowhide, his saddle metals rattling and his own back straight, his lean face stern, his eyes glittering in the cold grim pride of one who dominates a situation.

"You—you going to drag me in on a travois?" Clemmer asked.

"'Course I am. You're just an old squaw, you know. Building a fire when you were coming to clean me up. Just a papoose, a kid, an old fool. Riding in a saddle might strain you."

When Perry carried him again to lash him on the travois Clemmer shivered. He struggled against the things which rose to his tongue but, when over his shoulder he saw Cowhide away down in the valley and foresaw what the little town would say to see him thus brought in, he lost the last of his illusions.

"I say, Mr. Perry!" he called, "let's talk!"

Perry dropped back to where he could look down from his saddle seat at the stretched out rancher.

"I've nothing to say; but I haven't gagged you," the nester suggested.

"I don't want to go into Cowhide like this!" Clemmer declared. "It'll do you no good, insulting me thisaway. You know that. I've got lots of friends there."

"I haven't any friends there," the captor said. "Your bank dishonored my checks. When I told them I had a good reputation they told me reputations didn't pay checks. When I tried to get trusted for supplies I needed the stores wouldn't allow it. The sheriff's department, when your hired men told them I'd homesteaded your pasture, began to nag me. They even sent a game warden out here to catch me killing game. And everybody there, because you gave orders that way, treated me dirt mean. They even cut me out on playing pool—had to play alone. You aimed to run me out of the country. I'm not running. I'm going to stay. Get on, boys!"

The nester had been nagged too far. He had been warned once too often. He had grown bitter, bad and relentless. Time had been when the old-timer could have made peace and a friend of the tenderfoot, but this time was gone now. Clemmer had hoped in his heart to trick the intruder with crafty, insincere words. When he knew the fellow wasn't going to be fooled the mask came off again and Clemmer raged, angrily.

And as they came down to the county court, the rancher saw that the homesteader had method in his delays. This was Saturday. The people on all sides had come in to shop — prospectors, ranchers and dwellers of the high ranges, trappers, hunters and even fugitives. When the two horses came in, one dragging a travois, word went along the street that somebody had been hurt. But, whoever was on the travois, a piece of canvas stretched over him prevented revelation of identity. The man on horseback answered no questions, made no comments.

"What's the idea?" Sheriff Tremanse demanded.

"I picked up a curiosity," Perry replied. "Thought I'd put it on exhibition at two-bits a look. I don't know if the community will enjoy a show or not. Same time, I thought I'd try it."

"A show, eh?" the sheriff remarked, doubtfully. "You'll have to see the city marshal about a license."

"I'll go over to that shack there," Perry replied. "That's outside the city limits, you know. 'Course, I'll be reasonable. At the same time I expect to be treated reasonable here. How about it, Derlap? I've a right to be treated reasonable, haven't I?"

Foreman Derlap had come in with three hands and a wagon, after supplies. He sat staring at the covered travois load. He could hear odd, snarling, choking sounds, like those of a man in a nightmare.

"Speak up, Derlap!" Perry demanded. "Do I get a square deal?"

"I expect," the Broken Bottle foreman replied.

The sheriff looked from face to face. Derlap was representative of the old Broken Bottle Brand. No one had spoken in that way to any member of

the outfit, not in many years. The sheriff turned to go away. This nester had somehow gained a whip-hand. The matter was not one for governmental interposition. It was a private affair, at least for the present. And when the town marshal came along Perry said he was putting on a show. The marshal who had talked to the sheriff nodded approval. It was out of the city limits and not a matter of license apparently.

The crowd trailed along behind the two horses. Perry called two nondescripts to help him swing off the travois and drag it into the empty house. With an ax Perry cut off the limber ends of the travois poles and then had his two helpers stand them with their bundle against the rear end of the big living-room.

"All right, boys," Perry told his assistants, "I'll keep the gate, you keep the crowd lined up, going through. Send them out through the cook-room. All ready?"

"Sure!"

With that, Perry slipped the ropes and let fall the sheet of tarpaulin. At sight of the writhing face of the prisoner, the two helpers stood blinking. They recognized Old Hank Clemmer of the Broken Bottle Brand. Even with his jaws distorted by a gag, he was unmistakable. His bulging, gem-blue eyes, his glaring, his twitching skin revealed his rage.

"He came out to kill me," Perry said quietly. "I thought perhaps the crowd would like to see how old Hank takes his medicine when he gets it."

The fright in the faces of the two changed to grins. They chuckled.

"Just pass the word around that it's a good joke," Perry suggested. "The boys'll all understand, you know."

"You bet they will!"

"If he don't act up we'll tickle 'im a bit," Perry said. "You'll work for me?"

"Sure—if it ain't serious, but a joke on the old man!"

Then the first spectators were admitted. They stared, gasping. Perry explained:

"Just a joke, ladies and gentlemen! The old boy tried to put one on me, so I brought him in as a curiosity! This morning we'll leave his gag on. This afternoon, for four bits, we'll show you how he looks and let you listen to what he says, too, taking off his bit. Keep moving, please. And don't tell anybody outside what you've seen. Keep it secret. If you aren't satisfied it's worth two bits, call and get your money back. But all who ask for their money back are excluded from the performance and old Hank's speeches this afternoon."

All had known the bitterness of the Broken Bottle Brand against intruders. None but had been given orders by that haughty outfit, which had to be obeyed whether corner loafer or fellow rancher. Old Hank's word had been law, and a changeable, whimsical law at that. He had insulted everybody, abused those he considered weak or despicable. Now men, women and children filed through the old abandoned house and saw how old Hank took a joke. He exhausted himself in the panic and rage of his helplessness. At noon, the show ceased for an hour, during which meals for four were brought out on a special order from the hotel.

The officials had remained away. They had inquired around to find out what was going on. Finally, as the secret was kept, they had sent a deputy sheriff to learn by observation. He had seen old Hank tried up. A few minutes later the sheriff and city marshal started out with a posse, but they found themselves checked by the crowd.

"Hold on, Sheriff!"a voice warned the posse. "This is a good joke, you know. You know how the boys have been riding Donald Perry. Now it's his turn to do a job of gentling, you know."

The crowd was serious. It loomed between the posse and the show. Not one but had been walked over, imposed upon and bullied by the old rancher who claimed to be undisputed in all that country because of his holdings and desires.

Accordingly, as this was the popular demand, the posse turned back. At that

moment the power of old Hank Clemmer slipped away. He felt, perhaps, the change from fear to laughter. When Perry removed the gag, a wadded up piece of rawhide, not a sound came from the released tongue and jaws. The man's face was sore, his body aching from the struggle in vain against the thongs. His hands trembled as he took a cup of coffee. He choked, as he tried to drink.

His rage was gone. He stood blinking, bound to the thills of the travois from the hips down. The rigor of his anger and bitterness was gone. He had been for thirty hours a captive. He had worn out his strength of body. His pride had clashed with humiliation and defeat, and now he broke completely. He blinked and wiped his eyes with the backs of his hands. He had apparently suffered everything a man could. He was utterly helpless. For the first time in his life a superior strength had overwhelmed him. He had supposed he would die before he would quit. Now he turned his eyes curiously to look at Donald Perry.

Sharp, keen eyes, those range-quickened pupils of the blue-eyed rancher, and before their questioning stare those of the victor in the conflict suddenly drooped. It had been a fight. At the same time there was something in the victory which was not entirely satisfactory. Old Hank had long dominated a great country, perhaps always proud and never kind, but yet a fascinating personality. The nester had come when age and new conditions had grown into the big pasture, changing it.

Impulsively Perry reached and slipped the ropes which still held the prisoner. He steadied the thin old legs as they slipped, bending a bit from weariness and strain. With his arm around his waist, Perry helped Clemmer to a box which served as a chair, at a larger box which would serve as a table. And then he waited on the old man, serving the ample meal which had been brought in for him.

Slowly, for his jaws were sore from the gag, old Hank nibbled and sipped till he had eaten a really hearty meal. He was deliberate and steady, saying not one word as he leaned over his plate, using both hands. He refused third helpings all around, except an extra cup of black coffee to chase two others.

Then as he wiped his face with a napkin, he turned to look over his right shoulder to where the shortened travois thills, the canvas and the thongs leaned against the fireplace mantel. That was the bed he had made for himself, so to speak. He rose stiffly from the box to his feet and shuffled to the most humiliating bunk west of the Mississippi, turning his back to it, ready again to be bound fast, a tamed wild man on exhibition.

The act was so abject, so unexpected, so significant of complete triumph that Perry sat with dropping jaw, staring. Perhaps in all his life old Hank had never acknowledged defeat or even being in the wrong. He was whipped, all through fighting the stalwart who had brought him to terms. He had for once in his life learned to take his medicine.

"Hold on, Mr. Clemmer!" Perry exclaimed, touched by the pathetic spectacle with the magnanimity of a new and stalwart but kindlier generation. "That's all right—"

"But there's the crowd coming!"

"I played you a dirty trick, at that," Perry suddenly acknowledged. "I was— Well, I couldn't help myself, hardly, perhaps—"

"I know how you feel," the rancher sighed. "I felt the same way the first time I killed a man—kind-a sick. You got me. You win."

"I never'd rub it in!" Perry declared. "All I wanted was peace. Anyhow, tell 'em the show's called off—" he turned to the two bystanders— "And bring our horses, saddled."

The crowd stood back when Perry and Clemmer walked to the saddled animals. The old man had to make two tries before he could scramble up into the saddle, but Perry did not insult him by attempting to help. Assistance would have been too

hard a hurt. They trotted back along the roadway into Cowhide where, at the Big Bite Hotel, Clemmer swung down and Perry drove on over to the post office, the two nodding casually at parting in the curt Western way when spectators look on.

Foreman Derlap stood on the porch. The sheriff was sitting in a wide-armed chair behind the plate glass window. Scores were standing scattered around, watchful. From the balcony the old rancher gazed meditatively after the homesteader, his nose twitching and his lips twisting along their thin length. Then he turned to stare at Derlap, clearing his throat, for he had to say something.

"I reckon he's come to stay," the old man began in a kind of snarl but ended in a kind of grin as he added, "danged if he ain't!"

Whereupon some one chuckled, and a ripple of laughter, appreciative of the joke, ran across the Saturday crowd in Cowhide.

An Article as told to GORDON YOUNG

Boyhood

IN THE WOODS

MY GRANDFATHER and father were woodsmen all of their lives, and my boyhood was spent on wooded lakes and rivers, in lumber camps and towns. I fished, trapped and hunted much like a little savage, and from almost the time I could walk I wandered off alone through the woods, at first with a bow and arrows, then with a gun when I was so small I had to prop it on something to take aim. I thought the only way one "learned" was by scowling at a book so as to guess right when the teacher asked questions, so without being at all aware that I was doing more than having fun I learned the kinds of thing that are not to be had from books. Before I was out of my teens I hurried off to a city, hoping to learn something really useful. I have been a city man for the past twenty-five years; I have found city life quite pleasant, even thrilling, for it certainly has more dangers of almost every kind than I found in the woods, among all manner of hunting, fishing, trapping and skinning; but I have also discovered that such a useless thing as half-forgotten woodlore is a treasure of increasing value as the years go by.

My father, in the 'sixties, went to Michigan from the northern part of New York State where during his boyhood it was not at all unusual for wolves to come through the dusk over the snow like black shadows with fiery eyes and howl about the cabin. My grandfather was among the early settlers and had often been treed by wolves. At that time money was scarce and provisions were obtained by an exchange of produce in town. I have many times heard him tell of how he would be on his way to town in the sleigh, with chickens he had killed and dressed to take the place of coins with the storekeeper, when wolves came out of the timber and chased him. While he urged the horses on he would reach down, take up a frozen chicken and, turning, fling it as far back on the road as he could, and lash the horses. The wolves always paused, snapping wildly among themselves, then they would run after the sleigh, and again when they had almost overtaken him my grandfather would fling a chicken. He said that many times he had thrown away the last chicken and by hard driving barely got to town.

Michigan was no longer a frontier State even when my father went there at the close of the Civil War, and I was born almost twenty years later in a shanty near Hart, Oceania County. At that time my father was chopping wood for charcoal kilns. Thousands of acres of the finest maple timber was made into charcoal. The trees were cut into four-foot lengths, then split several times with sledge and wedges; and the pay was eighty cents a cord. My father made what was thought to be top wages by cutting two cords a day. As this district was then becoming a fruit and farming community, my father, when I was about a year old, moved north and although he seldom stayed longer than two or three years in one place, nearly all of my boyhood was spent along the Intermediate Lakes. There are twenty-six of these lakes, each from one to three miles long, all joined by rivers from one-half to two miles long. The lumber companies in Northern Michigan at that time used this string of lakes and rivers for logging.

Before I was given a gun, my father, who made bows, arrows, snowshoes and skis as cunningly as an Indian, gave me a five-foot bow of elm and with it I killed rabbits and squirrels, though at first I had only blunt-headed arrows and would go about with an arrow set and the bow half drawn looking for what next to shoot. One day my older sister while washing dishes scalded herself with the tea kettle, and fell to the floor. Mother ran to her and bent down. I followed with my half-drawn bow and, being excited, I let the arrow slip. It struck mother on the head, knocking her over. Father came. As every one else was crying and I was so frightened I could only stammer, he thought I must be to blame and promptly took the measures necessary to put me to crying too. After that I was careful how I carried a drawn bow, and what was more important the lesson stayed with me in the care of a cocked gun. When I hit my mother was the only time I ever had an accident in shooting, though I was given a gun before I could hold it to my shoulder.

I was about five or six years old when my father one day went deer hunting near the Jordan Swamp. After a long tramp he sat down under a tree to rest and fell asleep. It was autumn. When he awoke he found himself covered with leaves, a mass of leaves. He pushed these away and at once understood that he had been covered by an animal; and, as he readily guessed by what kind of animal, he took a piece of rotted log, buried it deep under the leaves where he had been sleeping, then climbed a near-by tree and waited. After a time a panther with two kittens appeared and sat on a fallen tree about twenty feet from the heap of leaves. The panther seemed to pay no attention at all to her cache. She washed the kittens' faces, stretched, yawned, licked herself, then suddenly, with a scream, leaped in one bound from the fallen trees to the leaves and, snarling as if angered, scratched and clawed in a way that sent the leaves flying. The instant she struck the rotted log she stopped and with an almost silly expression for a moment sat motionless. Then slowly, very slowly, she twisted her head this way and that, looking all about; and when she happened to lift her eyes and saw my father, he shot. This panther was seven feet from nose to tail-tip. She had brought her young to show them how to make a kill.

Shortly before this my uncle had been living in a cabin of log walls and brush roof. One morning as he was just about to step from the door he heard a slight rustle overhead. He took up the rifle that stood by the door, fired, and a panther that had waited there to spring on him toppled off, dead.

When I was still too small to use a rifle we were living under the line of flight that wild geese took when they went south in the spring and returned in the fall. For years this line of flight did not vary a half mile to the right or left, but no geese were ever known to light in that part of the country. When they were flying, as many as fifty flocks of two hundred each would pass during the day.

People all about, in range and out of it, shot at the geese with rifles so that the formations were often broken as the geese rose higher and higher with loud complaining squawks, but so far as was known nobody had ever killed a goose. One fall when the geese were coming north I saw a flock so high up that the birds looked no bigger than quail, and I could hear the neighbors shooting. I ran to mother and coaxed her to shoot. She said:

"There is no use. Nobody ever hit one."

I begged until she took the rifle over the door, pointed it and shot. We saw a bird leave the line and start down with wings spread. I thought that goose would never reach the ground, and when it hit I was right there. Mother had shot it through the head. Neighbors from three and four miles about who had seen the bird start to fall—which shows how high the flock was flying—came at once in buggies and on horseback. During the day there must have been more than thirty people call to see the only wild goose that had ever been brought down in that part of the country; and father walked two miles and back to show it to a sick neighbor who had sent word that she would surely die if she did not get a look at that bird. It weighed fifteen pounds and had a thick layer of yellow fat. Mother roasted the goose and nearly all of the neighbors had at least a bite.

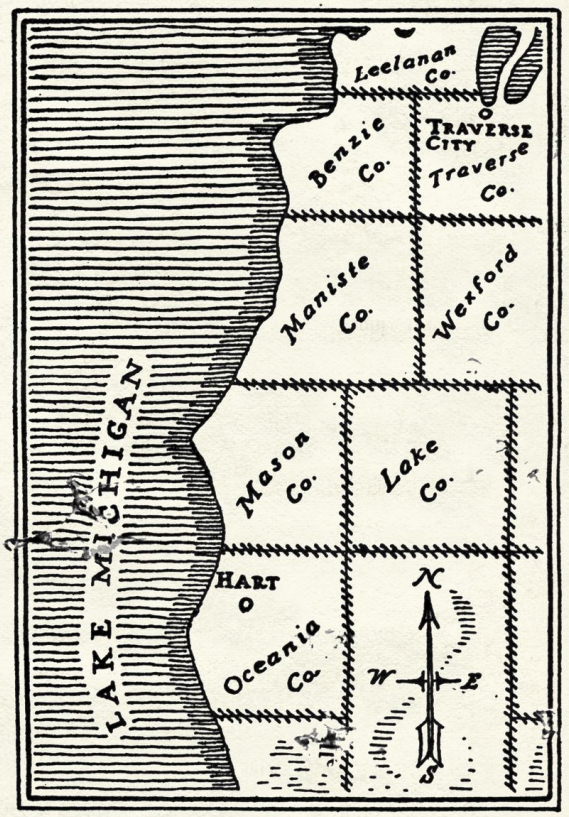
I was too small to hold a shotgun to my shoulder long enough to sight it when I began hunting partridges with my father and uncle, and even they both shot from the hip, never waiting to take sight for, although the woods were full of partridges, these were wise, tricky birds and very fast. They rose with a *whirr* that startled and they twisted in zigzag flight that disconcerted an inexperienced hunter, so that often the birds would be up and away before I had my gun ready, though perhaps my uncle would have dropped two of them. He would tease me, saying:

"What's the matter? Aren't you hunting? Then why don't you shoot?"

That exasperated me so that when partridges rose I would shoot; I might shoot into the ground or wildly into the air, but I tried to fire before he did. Before my boyhood was over I was a better wing shot than my uncle and it was fun to ask him:

"What's the matter? Aren't you hunting?"

I was particularly interested in partridge drummers because, more than merely to shoot them, I wanted to find



out what they were doing and why; and I have spent as long as two weeks in catching sight of a drummer. The drumming can be heard for a mile, but it is almost impossible to place the sound, and the partridge, always a male bird, drums only in the morning or evening. In trying to follow the sound I would walk through the forest this way and that, with much twisting and turning, and come back day after day until I had discovered the drumming log. The same partridge will use the same log repeatedly, and I have

known a partridge to go a mile from its nest to use its favorite log. When I had discovered the log I would have to be near-by in hiding before sun-up the next morning. I might be as silent and motionless as a stick, yet often as I lay watching a drummer he would seem to sense that something was wrong, drop from the log like a stone, sneak away, and nothing more would be seen of him until the next morning.

During the late spring I many times came upon mother partridges and baby chicks, and the hen would invaribly fly straight for my head and even beat my face with her wings. After she had given the babies time to hide and had dodged away herself, I might search as much as I liked but I could never find a chick. I wanted to know where those tiny fledglings got to so mysteriously, so one day when a hen flew into my face I held up my hands but kept my eyes open and succeeded in peeking. After that I could always scratch about and find the chicks, for I discovered that, if there was nothing near for them to run under, they would fasten their claws in leaves and fall over backward, lying perfectly quiet. I have found them on their backs, holding a leaf for a coverlet, when I was sure that they were not more than a week old, and I often gathered a half dozen or more, leaves and all, out of one flock. It was fun to find them, but I always turned them loose. I had been mystified by the apparently magical way that they would vanish; after I discovered their secret I was even more mystified by how they had learned to hide so cleverly when they were scarcely out of their shells. Instinct, I suppose; but to say "instinct" is only another way of saying "I don't know."

I found, or rather my dog found, that "instinct" will make a turtle a bit dangerous even after it is dead. One day going down the river in my canvas canoe after visiting traps, I speared a large turtle and got it into the canoe. He was not happy where I placed him and seemed determined to get into my end of the canoe. I didn't want him there, and held him off with a spear in one hand while I paddled with the other, but his scratching soon caused the canoe to leak so that I had pretty lively work to get ashore with nothing worse than wet feet. I cut off the turtle's head, cut the meat out of the shell and got mother to cook it. Something was wrong somewhere and mother, with full permission, threw the turtle out of the kitchen. Afterward I learned that the flavor of turtle meat is spoiled if it comes in contact with the outside of the shell. That evening I was getting an armful of wood when my dog stuck his nose up against the turtle's head. This fellow was a snapper and, as I had already found out, had a fighting heart. I don't know whether the head instinctively opened its mouth and snapped or, having the mouth open, simply closed on the dog's nose. The dog with loud and frantic sounds bolted and went round the house, and I thought my dog had gone suddenly mad. It was as much as I could do to catch the dog, then almost more than I could do to pry open the turtle's mouth with a screwdriver.

Turtles were common enough, but I have found only one nest. From this I gathered some fifty eggs, took them home, made a little sandbank in a sunny spot and buried the eggs, then I hopefully visited the nest many times a day. One morning I looked and found only empty shells—every egg had hatched and every mite of a turtle had disappeared. That was a big disappointment, for I had set my heart on watching baby turtles grow.

I WAS not much more than ten years old when I began trapping. Muskrats were easily caught and their hides brought fifteen cents. I placed steel traps on a log or in a runway along the river bank, and always under water so that the trapped rat would drown. If a rat can pull a trap clear of the water it will always chew off its leg and escape. Later I caught lots of mink; and these hides, according to quality, were worth from seventy-five

cents to two dollars. I sold skunk hides for about fifty cents each, excepting the "full black" (hides with just a trace of white on the forehead or foot) which brought one dollar and twenty-five cents.

In the winter a colony of skunks would hole up together in a hollow log and were easily smoked out and shot. At such a time the air would be full of more than smoke and, though I never got in a skunk's direct line of fire, my clothes would absorb so much of the odor that, especially after I came near a fire, members of the family would urge me to get out of the house.

I became a rather skilful trapper through the help of an Indian with whom my first meeting was not entirely pleasant. He was a peg-leg Indian preacher with a face wrinkled like a mummified skull, who would trap in the winter and go north in the summer to preach among his people. For two or three winters he camped just across the river from our home. One morning I was visiting my traps in my canoe when I saw him coming after me in his dugout. He was angry and talking fast but not using much English and, though I scarcely understood anything he said, I knew that he was accusing me of having taken muskrats from his traps. Fortunately my luck that morning had not been good, so when he got alongside and saw that there was not a rat in my canoe he knew that I was not the thief.

I often visited his camp to watch him cook. He made bread by mixing flour and water until he had a ball of dough that he buried in the coals. His only other dish was a soup, stew, or ragout that he called *boo-yah*, and the *boo-yah* pot was never emptied, for he added to the mixture every day, throwing in muskrat, mink, or whatever came to hand, including skunk. "Heap good!" he said in urging me to try it; and I, being curious, tried it timidly, but when I told mother she was quite indignant and would scarcely let me come to her table.

I learned many trapping tricks from the old Indian and especially how to dress and cure hides. The mink is a rather crafty little fellow, but the Indian taught me this: Bore a hole with a two-inch augur in a tree or stump near the water, put a few drops of anise oil on chicken feathers, poke them into a hole, and then drive a horseshoe nail slantwise so that about an inch of the nail comes through the hole. A mink can squeeze his head past the nail, but will be hooked when he tries to pull out. This kind of trap was easily made, it worked, and was never carried off by a trap thief.

Always in the late summer I would begin to look for bee-trees. In the woods I would take a bee off a flower and put it into my bee-box, which was about the size of a cigar box, with a glass top in which I had sprinkled sugar. The top was of glass because a bee will not work in the dark. In a few minutes the bee would have gathered an armful of sugar and want to get out, and when the lid was raised the bee always rose straight in the air for ten or fifteen feet, then took what is known as a bee-line for home. I would notice the direction of flight, but let the box stay just where the bee had left it. If the bee-tree was near, the bee would return almost at once; if the bee-tree was some miles off, it would take the bee from twenty minutes to a half hour to return, but always it would bring back helpers, usually four or five. When they had settled down and were working busily with the sugar, I would close the glass lid and walk forward in the direction that I had seen the bee take; then I would let the bees out again and again watch their flight. Soon they would return, always with more helpers, so that as I got nearer and nearer to the tree I had an increasingly large swarm to follow and often had to put more sugar in the box to keep them at work. Bees frequently, in returning, went beyond the box to where they had been let out a time or two before; but nevertheless would find it very soon; that is they seemed able to remember where they had left the box even better than where they had found

it, for I never moved the bee-box except when bees were in it.

I have followed bees fifteen miles, sometimes having to work almost that many days, before discovering their tree. Two or three times I was led into clearings much to my disgust, finding that I had been tracking tame bees, and I would have to go farther back into the woods and begin all over.

Bees, at least in northern Michigan, seemed to prefer a basswood tree for their home. I have thought that possibly there might be something about the wood of this tree that helped the honey's flavor. Whether it was boyish appetite or basswood I don't know, but no other honey has ever had so rich a flavor.

When I found a bee-tree I would get somebody to help me, my father or some boys, then go out at night and cut it down; at night because bees were less likely to sting then, and I needed help because there was always more than one boy, or man, could carry. I have got as much as two wash-boilers full of wild honey out of one tree.

In the winter I snared snow-birds by the hundreds. I liked to catch them for the fun of it and they shouldn't if they cared, though possibly they did, because after feeding them for a few days I would turn them loose. A snow-bird will not live long if caged. I made tiny nooses out of horse-hair, then fastened the end of the horse-hair on a plank, sometimes pegging down a hundred and more of these nooses and sprinkling feed over the plank. When the birds came they got their feet in the nooses, drew the horse-hair tight and so were caught.

After the timber began to be well cut over, the quail appeared in our part of the country and I found the bob-whites a silly kind of bird, so easily caught that they had to be cooked before I could forgive their stupidity. In their path or run I would scatter grain that led to a small trench. Over one end of this trench I placed a small wire frame, built just like a box. The quail followed the grain along the trench and when they got under the wire-box they were trapped, for although they might have walked out the same way they had walked in they never thought of that, but would hop out of the trench, and hop back and forth across the trench, always looking up for a way out.

One winter when my family was living at Traverse City on Lake Michigan I was tantalized by the ducks that would light right at the mouth of the Boardman River which flows through the town. The only unfrozen water was a space about the size of two or three city blocks where the river current pushed out into the lake. This was within the city limits and no shooting was allowed, though the water at times was covered with big fat mallards that quacked in an impudent sort of way just as if they knew that it was against the law to shoot them. I looked at these ducks day after day and meditated; then I got about four hundred feet of line, some big seine corks, a fish-hook and a handful of corn that I soaked until the kernels were soft.

One morning as soon as there was light I started my line out in the river current with corks spaced about fifteen feet apart. Near the first cork I put a corn-baited hook so that it floated about six inches under water. When most of my line was out I saw a duck go near the cork and "strike," then I began to pull and up went a duck, squawking and swirling, taking line and corks into the air. All the other ducks rose too with great flurry of wings, but my duck hit the water again while I pulled hand over hand as if bringing in a fish. That morning I hooked four fat mallards, and during the winter mallard fishing was almost my favorite sport.

Every season of the year had its special fun but there was something like magic in autumn just after the leaves had been touched by frost and were beginning to fall; and there were, even in my boyhood, forests of beech, maple, cherry, hemlock, spruce, elm, birch, that the lumbermen had not yet reached. It seemed finest to go hunting when the ground was

thickly covered with leaves and a light drizzle was falling, for then the air would be filled with strange pleasing odors, smoke of distant cabins would sift through the woods in a blue haze and partridges, on such a day, were sure to rise repeatedly with an explosive *whirr* from almost under one's feet.

When I think of the good things I have had to eat I don't think of café parties or even banquets, but of the chicken-roasts at the sugar-bush in the spring, of fish baked on the banks of frozen lakes, of hot lunches on drizzling days in the fall. Everything in the woods might be soaking wet, but with a little of the "hunter's friend," as the oily bark of the white birch was called, it was easy to have a camp fire; and wood smoke never smells so sweet nor gives such a fine flavor to coffee as on a wet day.

In the autumn we went after nuts. There were hickory nuts, a few black walnuts, but the best were beech nuts. It was well enough for girls to pick about among the leaves for beech nuts, but we boys had another way of gathering them. We would sit quietly and watch the squirrels, and when we had discovered a squirrel's nest we chopped down the tree. I have got as much as a half bushel of hulled beech nuts out of one tree. The nuts were washed, dried, and sealed in fruit jars for use during the winter.

THE winters were long, the first snows coming in October. It usually snowed until there was an average depth of from three to four feet on the level; the temperature varied from zero to forty below. A crust hard enough to hold a man formed, and after a light flurry of snow was a fine time to go hunting for rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, or to track the fox that had been near some clearing to catch a fat hen. In and near the Jordan Swamp, which was a hundred miles long and twenty-five wide, would be found a network of tracks made by panthers, bob-cats, the tassel-eared lynx, and black bears. Deer, not being able to move about easily in the deep snow, would yard-up. By yarding-up I mean that as many as a hundred deer would get together, tramp and pack the deep snow until they had solid footing in a yard as large as a city block where they could run about exercising and also be able to fight off the big cats. The deer would stay in the yard all winter, venturing out only for forage. Many times when hunting in the swamp I have found deer yards. If it was late in the winter the herd was sure to be thin and famished, having eaten all the green feed within a short distance about and not daring to go far because of the panthers. Many and many a time I have packed in armloads of green feed and thrown it into a deer yard, and I don't think it was entirely by my imagination that I saw a thankful look in the eyes of the deer.

I found fishing through ice more fun than warm-weather fishing, and for this I had a fish-house about four feet square, with walls and roof of tar paper. It was light enough to be moved about easily and just big enough for two small boys and a tiny stove. The fish-house was set over a hole in the ice through which I dropped a decoy minnow on a string attached to a short stick. I made the minnows myself, weighted them with lead and gave a curve to the tail so that, at the slightest jiggle of the pole, this type of minnow would scoot in a circle. I never knew a fish to strike at this kind of decoy, but pike, pickerel and muskalonge, as if really curious to see what sort of creature this was that had got into the water, would hover near, almost motionless, watching the decoy. Our fish-house being black, we boys could see clearly into the water to a depth of twenty feet. The spear was generally one of five tines with a pole four feet long, and about twenty pounds of lead was fastened to the shank. The pole was tied to the end of at least a hundred feet of clothes line, so that when a big fish came under the hole there was nothing to do but drop the spear and hang on to the line.

Usually the catch weighed from three to six pounds, but one day another boy

and I set up our fish-house and almost at once speared a fish that weighed thirteen pounds. We were still talking excitedly of this good luck when I looked down and stopped breathing. Right below the hole was a fish; it was so long that I could see neither its head nor its tail. I dropped the spear, and in an instant most of the clothes line went through my hands, and though that fish was carrying a weighted spear it made us overturn our fish-house and had us slipping and sliding about for a half-hour before we hauled it out on the ice. This fish weighed forty pounds, and with the handle of the spear through its gills and the spear resting on our shoulders there was still about a foot of fish tail on the ice.

One winter I lived near Torch Lake. I never heard of any other lake like it and never saw another so beautiful. It is eighteen miles long, from one to three miles wide, and is fed entirely by springs that are nearly ice cold although they seem to be boiling on the lake-bottom. Some of these springs are twenty feet across and the water is so clear that bottom can be seen through sixty feet.

When I played about its banks and over its ice, Torch Lake was teeming with many kinds of game fish, including sturgeon. This winter the lake froze over, flooded and froze again, leaving about eight inches of water between the two sheets of ice. We boys would go along the bank until scattered sand on the submerged sheet of ice showed that a muskrat had left the bank, then we skated about trying to find the rat and when we did there was a merry hullabaloo and chase. Often also we chased mink and even fish that were shut in between the ice. I carried a one-bitted ax and when I overtook a mink, for instance, I struck the ice with the head of the ax. If the blow was at all near, the mink would be stunned, then I had merely to chop a hole through the upper sheet of ice and lift it out.

Ice-boating was great sport, especially when the ice was glassy or was covered with a few inches of water. Water made the ice smooth. One day on Lake Michigan I was going before a high wind and through water about three inches deep. It was great fun to hear the water sizzling and see it fly off in a sheet of spray—then one of the boat's runners dropped into a crack, the boat overturned and I went sliding across the ice—and its three inches of water—for quite a hundred yards before I stopped. I am sure that the boat was going not less than forty miles an hour when I was spilled, and though I wasn't hurt I was twenty miles from home and would not have been more wet had I been swimming. Luckily the boat was not so badly smashed it wouldn't sail, and I headed for home. The temperature was about zero and at first I nearly froze, but after my clothes did freeze and kept the wind out, I really was warm.

On Grand Traverse Bay we boys fished through the ice with three hundred feet of line for lake, or Mackinaw, trout. The line would be let down over a broom-handle frozen across the hole in the ice, and when a fish was hooked the fisherman would start skating and pull the line out straight until the fish flopped up. If the line had been pulled out overhand it would have frozen in a tangle about one's feet.

I had some narrow escapes in one way and another, although for all that I was in the woods and on the water my mishaps were very few. Perhaps the biggest surprize I ever had was given me in a raspberry thicket by a hornet. A hornet comes at you with body doubled so that the stinger is advanced as far as his nose—if a hornet has a nose. I knew all about hornets, or thought I did, and was even polite enough to go out of my way so as not to annoy them. They had seemed to appreciate my courtesy; but one day I was calmly eating raspberries when a hornet hit me on the forehead and knocked me as flat as if I had been struck by a stone. I never have been able to understand how that fellow could strike such a blow and not squash himself, for he came like a bullet and I dropped as if it had been a bullet that struck.

One of the most "thrilling" experiences I ever had was one night on an old logging road when I saw ahead of me what appeared to be two enormous shining eyes. I stopped and wondered; I stopped a long time and wondered much, for I could not imagine what sort of animal this was to have such eyes. I said, "Boo!" because I wanted it to face about and go off, for I reasoned it out that I didn't dare turn and run from a beast like that, and I knew that if I shot I would have to kill it the first time or be in for a lot of trouble—that is, if the brute was anywhere near as big as its eyes indicated. I had been hunting deer and was carrying a rifle, but I was scared. I could feel my hair trying to push off my hat and I had goose pimples big as gooseberries. However, I carefully aimed between the eyes and shot, but nothing happened. For a moment I was more frightened than ever and hastily shot again. Still nothing happened. I knew that I was a good shot, so I said to myself, "Something wrong here," then step by step, with rifle ready, I uneasily approached an old stump, where there happened to be two spots of fox-fire that looked exactly like big eyes. I have found that if it is a real danger you are in for, it is usually on top of you before you have time to be scared.

Another real fright that I had was one day when I was hunting over snow and came upon cat tracks. They were fresh, and I could tell by the faint sprinkling of sand that the cat had been digging; also that it was a big cat, bob-cat I thought. The tracks led to a fallen hollow tree, and I knew the cat was still there. I crept to the hole, stooped down and peered in. There, right within a paw's reach of my face, were two big eyes, and I am sure that my eyes were just about as big as I tumbled over, flat on my back, with hands to my face, because the North American wildcat doesn't usually need more than one chance to spring when cornered. I was very young but should have known better than to peer in through an opening where a cat was holed up. However, I shot the cat, got a stick and worked it out of the hole, only to find that I had killed the largest house-cat I have ever seen. It had no doubt gone wild and had certainly grown fat; its tracks were large enough to be mistaken for a bob-cat's. Then I understood why, having foolishly put my face so near the cat, I had not been clawed. A bob-cat strikes in a flash, and if cornered will fight anything, with a pretty fair chance of winning unless it is up against a bigger bob-cat.

Speaking of cats and kids—my chum and I went one night to a deer lick near the Jordan Swamp. Deer licks were made by boring holes in old logs, filling the holes with salt and plugging them. The salty flavor went all through the wood and for years deer would come to chew on the log. A logging road—corduroy—paved with logs lying side by side, and about as smooth as a washboard—ran past the lick and across the swamp. In those days it was not illegal to "shine" deer; that is, to hunt them with a spotlight.

When deer come into the light their eyes gleam like a cat's and deer are attracted to rather than frightened by light. We got no deer that night but had some fun. The Jordan Swamp was filled with panthers and wildcats, so about midnight when we heard a wagon coming bumpety-bump over the road we could think of nothing better to do than to get behind a log near the side of the road and, as well as we could, imitate a cat-fight. A man with a lantern was on foot leading a cow behind the wagon, and the wagon was loaded with furniture. When we started our cat fight the driver began to swear and lash the horses; the man on foot stopped, looked, hesitated, then with a yell whirled the lantern about his head, threw it toward us, let his cow go and ran after the wagon, all the while shouting for the driver to wait. For a long time we could hear the wagon bumping over the road, and the next morning the road was strewn with stove-pipe, wash-boilers and pans that had bounced out.

And this morning we saw a real cat

fight which made us realize how poor an imitation we had given. We were on a scaffold in a tree still waiting for deer when we heard brush cracking and loud snarling. Two big bob-cats appeared; they would fight for a minute, then run a little way and fight again. When they paused it seemed that they were tearing each other to pieces, for in the midst of snarling and spitting the fur would fly. We shot one of the cats, but the other got off; for all the fellow we killed had been through he was not badly chewed up.

After cats it is natural to think of rats. Any cat, at least any house-cat, that had got in among the rats I have in mind would have had more trouble than he knew what to do with. One winter I worked in the General Store of the Cameron Lumber Company at Central Lake where twenty-seven clerks were employed, and I was the youngest. The store, the basement and all of the company's storehouses were infested with rats; they got into the flour, rice, butter, meat, and the cheese had to be locked up in the safe with the cash. These rats were almost under our feet during the day, and I found it actually unnerving to go into the basement and see so many tiny eyes glistening in the dark. It seemed that nothing could rid the store of these rats and the manager did everything that anybody suggested.

We shot them with .22 rifles; the wire traps were full every morning; we caught rats, put bells about their necks and let them go, but they didn't go far—we could hear bells tinkling all over the place. We singed rats and turned them loose because we were told that this would frighten the other rats; but it didn't. However, the idea of giving the rats a scare stuck in my head, so for several mornings I selected the biggest rat out of the traps, keeping always the biggest and killing the others. It was near the holidays and we were getting in the Christmas supply of ducks and geese. I got a very large rat, a perfect monster among rats, and I had no hope of catching a bigger one. One morning I got him by the scruff of the neck and dipped him bodily into a bucket of glue, then I took the down feathers of ducks and threw them by the handsful all over him from tail to whiskers. He became a queer looking object and appeared about three times as big as before, looking something like a bird that had grown into the shape of a fluffy cat. I turned him loose. During the night about two inches of snow fell, and the next morning the snow about the store was covered with rat tracks, all leading off in the same direction. So far as we could tell not a rat remained, but we later learned that a horde of rats had moved in upon the warehouse of a wholesale produce shipper some blocks off and almost ruined his entire stock.

From the time I could toddle I had pets, and excepting dogs they were always something I had found myself. I began with frogs, toads and snakes; my pockets were usually filled with these, even at school, where I liked to put a toad on my desk and feed him flies rather than rub my nose against a book. I went so far as to discover that I could pick up skunks without getting "hurt." In deciding to try this I reasoned that at worst I would have only a sad odor about me for a time, and I was more or less used to that from smoking out their colonies. A skunk has no fear unless there is a lot of shooting and noise, and even then shows a kind of self-confident leisurely air.

I had often walked up close to skunks, and they would merely face about and wait expectantly. One day I determined to go a step farther. I did; and I held my breath and was ready to hold my nose as I reached down and caught a skunk by the tail and lifted it. Nothing happened. The skunk, in that position, was helpless, but did not appear even offended. After a time I put it down, still a bit gingerly, but still nothing happened. The skunk at first took a defensive attitude, then went on its way without hurrying. After that I picked up skunks whenever I liked, much to the astonishment of my uncle who, fine woodsman that he was,

gave any skunk that he did not mean to kill a wide berth.

One of the most interesting pets I ever had was a crow. Ike was very young when I took him home and he soon became tame, but he was restlessly inquisitive and meddlesome. He would fly off with anything he could carry and hide it, and carried off mother's knives, spoons and forks just about as if he meant to start housekeeping for himself. In the two years that I had this crow he might fly away and be gone for hours during the day, but would return before dark.

Ike liked to sit on my shoulder and go about with me, and one day when I started from the house with a gun Ike flew to my shoulder and sat there. The bird was not at all gun-shy. I had not gone far when I shot a squirrel, and Ike flew straight to the squirrel picked it up and brought it to me, though he had never been trained to bring me things. After that Ike was often my retriever in squirrel hunting. One day the crow flew off and never came back.

Once I was returning home at night along a country road when what seemed in the moonlight a queer sort of broad squatty animal appeared. I chased the thing and it ran; I started on and it followed. I turned again and it ran; I started on and it followed. I got a club, caught up with it and gave it a whack over the head. I didn't know what I had, but I was sure that it was merely stunned, so to keep it safe during the night I put it under a box and weighted the box with a rock. The next morning father came into the house and said:

"Son, did you have something under a box out there in the yard? Well, there's nothing there now but about three bushels of dirt and a hole."

I fitted a wire loop into the hole and waited. I had to wait three days before the fellow came up. It was a badger, the first I had ever seen. After keeping it for a time I sold it for ten dollars.

IN THE woods I shot an old raccoon and caught her baby. I took the baby home and called it Mike, and of all the pets I ever had none was Mike's equal in affection, intelligence and mischievousness; and there is no question about it, Mike had a real sense of humor. He grew up with a terrier pup. They were fed together out of the same pan, and I am sure that Mike would often stop eating before he was full for the fun of sneaking up behind the pup, giving its tail a pull, then running. He would do it repeatedly, slipping up as if on tiptoes, and at times the dog would be so exasperated as to catch Mike and want to fight. Mike was much the stronger, but he would bite only hard enough to teach the dog that it wasn't good form to lose one's temper in play.

Mike simply detested tobacco, and if any one gave him a cigaret he would examine it carefully, then put it on the floor and with the palm of his paw begin rubbing it. He would patiently rub and rub and rub until the cigaret had turned into dust.

It did not take Mike long to discover that I usually had candy in my pockets, and whenever I came home he would make for me, climb all over me, go into every pocket, take everything out and put it back until he found the candy. He followed me about like a dog, and even when we went to town would walk behind me unless dogs appeared, then he scrambled up on my shoulder, sat there and scolded the dogs.

Mike liked to be washed and have his fur brushed and he played in water with the bright caps of bottles, washing them as if washing dishes. He understood and obeyed as well as a dog, and would mind if told to take the caps out of the water and put them away.

A saloon-keeper in town, wanting to amuse the lumberjacks, once borrowed Mike and kept him for some weeks. During that time Mike was into mischief almost every minute of the day and often at night. He discovered that by lying on the partition above the door that divided

the front of the saloon from the bar he could reach men's hats, and when he was in the mood he would lie there watchfully for hours, and during that time grab and throw to the floor the hat of every man that passed.

The saloon-keeper had a small alligator that had been sent him by a friend in Florida and, as Mike did not like this alligator, one night he slipped his collar and killed it. This was surely Mike's night off, and having done what he knew was wrong he evidently thought he might as well make the most of his chance, and he just about wrecked the saloon, scattering everything he could reach, and even got into the refrigerator where food was kept for the bar lunch, all of which he threw about the floor.

The next morning nothing was seen of Mike. He had gone into hiding, and he stayed in hiding for three days. On the third day the saloon-keeper was in the storeroom, and happening to look up he saw Mike's nose sticking out over the edge of the highest box. The saloon-keeper coaxed, but Mike was distrustful, for he knew that he had done wrong, and hungry as he was he hesitated a long time before he scrambled down. But the saloon-keeper forgave him and Mike was soon playing about, even more contented than ever because the alligator was gone.

The time came when I was getting near the end of my boyhood, and I thought that it was wisest to go off to a city and learn to wear city clothes and do the work of a city man. There were any number of people who wanted Mike, but I gave him to a man who raised raccoons because I thought that Mike would be happier among his own people.

Two years later I returned home for a visit and went to the farm to ask about Mike. The farmer showed me a pen fenced with wire where there were about twenty-five coons, and he said: "Your coon's in there, somewhere. If you can pick him out you can do more than I can."

I went to the fence and called—

"Hi, Mike!"

At once a big coon detached himself from the crowd and started toward me. He came squealing and lumbering, and when he reached the fence he didn't pause but came right up and over like a cat. I was standing near and he climbed from the wire to my shoulder, then squealed and licked my face like a dog.

I played with him for a long time, then as I had to leave I put him back in the pen; and with a backward look as I went off I saw the wistful coon face peering through the wire and watching me go. I never saw Mike again; and I have always felt that with this parting the last of my boyhood vanished.

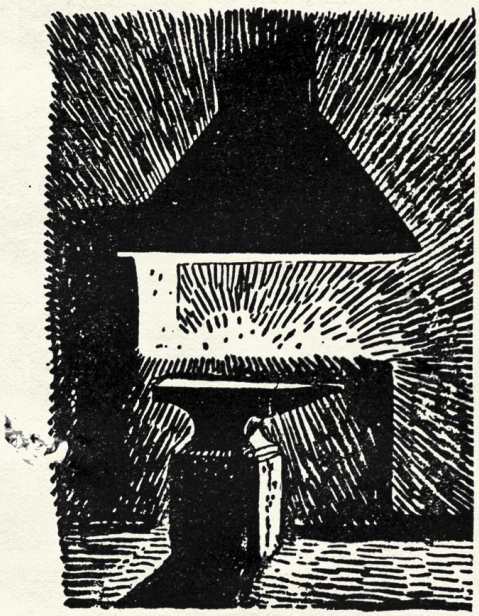
Another story *of* the Sword

GRAY MAIDEN

The Rider

NOTE—Each story in this series is built around a group of characters, but the real hero—or heroine—is the sword, Gray Maiden, which is traced from its forging through the different hands that wielded it down to modern times. Made for the greatest of the Pharaohs, it saw the rise of Greece and the crowning of Alexander's fortunes; it was witness to the majesty and the decay of Rome; it led the way in the first mad rush of Islam; it knew the birth-pangs of the New World and the last agonies of the Old. There are wide gaps in its history; for generations it was hidden in tomb or burial mound or hung in grim quietude upon the walls of armories. Yet often when men turned to war eager hands reached out for it and swung its shining blade in the van of battle. As some medieval owner scratched in the hard, gray steel:

Gray Maide men hail Mee
Deathe doth Notte fail Mee

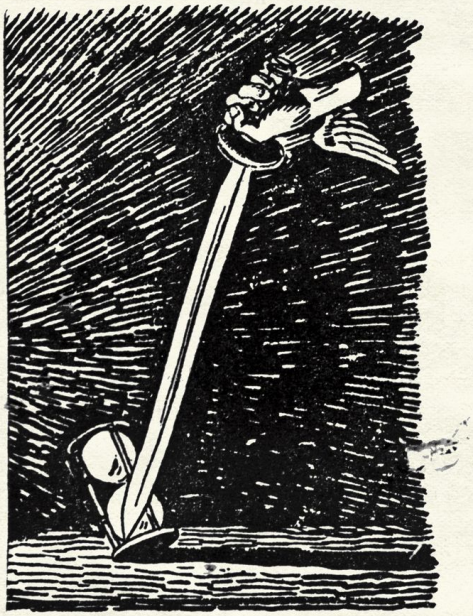


ONE moment the waste of sand and sun-scorched rocks had stretched empty from horizon to horizon; the next the watchman on the gate-tower of Muta was shading his eyes to peer fixedly east and west at two spirals of dust sifting upward under the impulse of the hot wind. They were nearly half a day's journey apart, those two spirals; not likely that there was any connection between them. Still, every sign of life was worthy of suspicion on the desert march and the watchman reached instinctively for his horn.

Below him the gateway arch resounded to the tramp of a column of infantry—drums tapping, cymbals clashing, armor rattling as they marched in from the practise-ground beyond the moat. By the end of the drawbridge stood a little group of officers, mounted and on foot observing several *numeri* of horse, *cataphracti*, going through a series of complicated battle maneuvers. The watchman on the tower glanced down at them. Huge Basilakes, who was called the "Stammerer," the *dux* of the infantry, had stopped to speak to Crispus the deputy-governor of Muta in that year of our Lord, 627. There was young Flavius Eutyches, too, tribune of the Tenth Thracians. The watchman resumed his inspection of the approaching dust-spirals, prepared to bellow the alarm to his superiors. But he shook his head, puzzled.

By ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

from the Desert



The spiral in the east, whence came the fierce raiders of the desert, was too small to be caused by more than a single rider. No harm there. And westward, the declining sun darted a ray of light into the heart of the more considerable dust-cloud and produced an unmistakable glimmer of armor. There could be no armored enemies on the Jerusalem road, the watchman reflected; those riders must be the new governor and his escort. Crispus would wish to know that.

He leaned over the battlements and blew a single short blast on his horn. The group of officers across the moat broke off their conversation, and Eutyches, at a word from Crispus, spurred on to the drawbridge.

"What's your report, watchman?" he called.

"A cloud of dust on the Jerusalem road, Tribune—armored men."

"The new governor!" exclaimed Eutyches, and started to rein around.

"And another rider from the desert!" the watchman cried after him.

The tribune of the Thracians nodded in sign that he had heard and clattered back to Crispus.

"Stavrakios is in sight," he announced, grinning at the deputy-governor. "So passes power, eh? You become *dux* of the cavalry again and I must be content with my Thracians."

Crispus, lean, restless man, tried not to look crestfallen.

"I don't think he can find cause to criticize us," he said.

Basilakes was more outspoken.

"S-S-S-S-Saint Demetrios!" grunted the Stammerer. He was a black-browed Isaurian, gigantic in stature, slow-moving as his own clanking *scutati*. "To think that a l-lousy courtier is t-t-to command soldiers!"

"Oh, Constantine Stavrakios is more than a courtier," exclaimed Crispus. "You know him, Flavius?"

The younger man assented; he was small and compact, a fair Greek.

"Yes, yes! Don't undervalue the governor, Basilakes. I saw him in the ruck at Nineveh. By the Forerunner, that was

a fight! From sunrise until dark, and the Persians as thick as a pest of grasshoppers! After the emperor, no man wrought more for us than Stavrakios. He had a *moira* of Obsequii, three thousand stalwarts. Heraclius led them in the last charge—when he killed Reza Khan. It was just short of sunset and the dust was like smoke over the field. We'd hammered the Persians all day; our tongues were thick with thirst; our arms were tired from slaughtering. We couldn't break them—kill them, yes. I had a century of Macedonians. We were returning from a dash at a clump of spears when we saw the emperor on his white charger, Dorkon, like—like a streak of flame, Stavrakios at his elbow and the Obsequii thundering at their heels."

The group of officers gathered closer; if this were an old story, nonetheless it was unfailing in interest.

"Rezá came out to meet them and the emperor rode straight at him. We could see the swords flickering over their helms; then Reza seemed to slip from his saddle and Heraclius rode on. 'Christ for Rome!' he shouted, and he and Stavrakios and their Obsequii disappeared in the midst of the Persians. We started forward and almost before we knew it the enemy were breaking up. If it hadn't been for the darkness we should have caught them all; but we were worn out, and the night—"

"Ah, that's all v-v-very well," interposed Basilakes, "but what does Stavrakios want out here on the desert march? It doesn't smell nice. He m-mu-must have d-d-done something pretty rotten to g-get ban-banished here."

Crispus spoke up quickly with an obvious attempt at fairness:

"Not necessarily—many good men lose the emperor's favor. I have never been to court, it's true, but Flavius will bear me out."

The tribune of the Thracians assented again, his brows knit in concentration.

"It's not a disgrace to be in disgrace at court—the Bodyless Ones know that! I was thinking, Crispus—there was a story about Stavrakios, a story of a sword he won at Nineveh."

"Many others won swords at Nineveh," scowled Basilakes. "And m-maybe w-we out here w-w-win—"

Eutyches waved his hand impatiently.

"Oh, this wasn't an ordinary sword. There were tales about it. The Perisan who carried it had been knocked from his horse and crushed. Men said—let me think; it was several years ago, and I haven't thought much— Ah, yes, men said that it was a magic sword, that whoever carried it might not be slain by steel."

Basilakes laughed contemptuously, and Crispus remarked—

"What has that to do with the appointment of Stavrakios to command here?"

"That's wh-what I want to kn-know," assented Basilakes.

"Crispus did very well this last year. Y-y-you are a n-new man, Flavius, but w-we have b-been here y-y-years, and I don't see any l-lower military st-st-standards since the old days at Muta when Phocas was governor. H-he was t-t-trtrained by Maurice, and if he drank n-now and then, he was a s-soldier. So is Crispus."

"You are good comrades," Eutyches answered simply.

He regarded them both with a sudden effect of shyness.

"Perhaps," he went on, "Stavrakios feels as I did."

"And how did you feel?" queried Crispus, while Basilakes muttered sullenly:

"No fear! He's not your sort of Roman."

Eutyches hesitated.

"Well," he said slowly, "I came here because it seemed to be the place for a soldier. After we beat the Persians, life was very slow in Constantinople, in the other big garrisons, too. I tried Dorylæum. But that isn't soldiering—it's just play. I wanted the same thrill we used to have—danger, the demand for vigilance. So I came here where I knew a soldier must always be a soldier."

"And you think Stavrakios comes voluntarily, too?" asked Crispus.

"Why not?" returned Eutyches.

"But why?" insisted Basilakes. "H-he isn't you, or anything l-like you. H-he's another one of th-these b-b-back-scratching, b-bath-lounging p-pat-patricians, with a senator and a b-bishop for uncles and f-farms all over the Empire."

"I wonder," remarked Crispus, gathering up his horse's bridle. "He sounds better than I expected. I don't mind being succeeded by a man who— Why didn't you tell us about him before, Eutyches?"

The tribune of the Thracians flushed awkwardly.

"We're the same breed, Stavrakios and I," he said. "Didn't you ever wonder why a man as young as I had gotten my *numerus?* I'm—my family have farms 'all over the Empire,' Basilakes."

"I d-dont care how many farms you have!" blustered the big Isaurian, patting his friend's mailed thigh. "Y-you're our k-kind. Y-you're a soldier. And w-weren't you at Nineveh?"

"So was Stavrakios," Eutyches reminded him.

Crispus' thin, intelligent features lighted with an understanding smile.

"You are a good advocate," he said. "Come, we must inspect the fortress. I want everything in shape for the merarch. Flavius, your Thracians will be the guard. Parade them here. Basilakes, we'll turn out one of your *numeri* in the fore-court. Which do you say—your own Isaurians?"

Basilakes shook his head.

"No, no, my friend. *I'm* n-not the one to start jealousy. G-give it to the Syrians. The Eight are j-junior here. I'll order them out, if y-you—"

"By all means," agreed the deputy-governor.

"Oh, by the way," Eutyches called after Crispus, "the watchman reported a rider from the desert."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

Crispus shrugged carelessly.

"I'll see him when he comes in. There may have been a raid. I'm afraid we haven't much to offer Stavrakios in the way of action, as a matter of fact."

"All St-Stavrakios will want w-will be a h-hot bath," grunted the Isaurian as he put foot to the drawbridge.

II

THE lone rider on the desert track halted warily as the glittering centuries formed in double ranks on either side of the approach to the drawbridge. His eyes, burning, intense, flickered over the scene, taking in the orderly array of mailed cavalry, the knot of officers in gilded mail and chased and befeathered helms, the bristling spears, the eagle-crested standards of pagan Rome topped by the cross of Christ, the military engines on the ramparts, the high towers. Muta rose from the desert floor as solid, as permanent, as endurable as a cliff. Beyond it, the horseman traced the beaten road which traversed the intervening wastes to the Dead Sea and came at last to Jerusalem.

A derisive smile twisted his gaunt face at sight of the cavalcade advancing from the west; white teeth shone behind the thicket of his black beard. He rode on, sitting his roan stallion very erect, his cloak wrapped around his tall form, his features obscured by a loose head-dress which was held in place by a circlet of woven camel's-hair. Without swaggering, he contrived to be as much at ease as if he led a thousand men, ignoring the pomp and parade about him. He would have ridden directly in to the fortress between the ranks of the guard if Crispus had not hailed him in the dialect of the desert tribes—

"Ho, stranger, who are you?"

The lone rider reined in at once and met the deputy-governor with a level glance.

"I am called Khalid," he replied harshly. "I am of the Koreisch."

"Of Mecca?" asked Crispus. And turning to Eutyches, the deputy-governor added, "This is a far-traveled fellow, Flavius. He is from the South by the Arabian Sea."

"I *was* of Mecca," the Arab answered

no less harshly. "I am of Medina. Who are you?"

"I am Crispus," said the deputy-governor. "What do you wish?"

"I bear a message for the Emperor of Rome. Are you the sheikh of this place?"

Crispus pointed his baton of office down the Jerusalem road.

"Until that man comes I rule in Muta."

"Then I wait for him," replied the Arab with decision.

"From whom is your message, Khalid?" put in Eutyches, more to test his hard-learned command of the dialect than to acquire information.

Two eyes blazed into his; high-arched nostrils quivered.

"From the Prophet of Allah."

The words fell with a singsong intonation, indescribably curious.

"And what is Allah?" pressed Eutyches.

Crispus shook his bridle nervously.

"This is no time for gossip," he remonstrated in the Greek which, outside of military exercises, was the normal speech of the garrison. "Stavrakios is almost here. Let the Arab go. He is no longer our concern. And he is crazy, anyway, by what I can make out."

"Your pardon, Crispus," apologized the tribune of the Thracians. "At your service."

The deputy-governor motioned to Khalid, who would have followed them.

"Back! Stand back. Can't you see that the merarch is coming? You must wait. Here!" He beckoned a trooper from the rear rank of the Thracians. "Take care of this fellow. He has a message for the new governor. Fetch him into the castle after us."

There was no indication of humility in the desert rider's obedience. He backed his horse behind the ranks of the guard and sat there quietly watching the ceremony.

The horns of the cavalry echoed brazenly. From inside the gate responded the drums and cymbals of the Syrian infantry. The decurions muttered orders and directions from file to file. Crispus, Eutyches and the other officers drew their swords and faced the oncoming troop in the Jerusalem road.

Stavrakios rode at the head of a decury. Evidently he traveled light, for his baggage was limited to two pack-mules. His armor was coated with dust, his face was streaked with it, but the square sturdiness of his figure, the stern self-reliance of his face, were more impressive than the chased and gilded mail of the officers who received him. He was rather short, but tremendously thick in the barrel, dark in the old Roman way, with a beak of a nose, a black bar of eyebrows meeting above it, a jaw carved in almost straight lines. He had a trick of eying a man so closely as to be disconcerting; his speech was brief and direct.

As he came up with the guard of honor Crispus barked an order, the trumpets sounded again and lances were tossed in salute. Stavrakios' sword flashed out in a gray streak of light. The desert rider started and leaned forward, a hungry glow in his somber eyes, his fingers twitching.

"Allah, what a blade!" he murmured.

The trooper beside him laid a hand on his re[illegible]

"Keep your place, heathen dog!" the *cataphract* ordered in bastard Arabic.

The cloaked rider tautened, then relaxed; but his right hand continued to open and shut, open and shut. It was as if he clutched at a sword-hilt or, perhaps, throttled a man's throat.

Stavrakios hailed Crispus with curt sincerity:

"You are the *dux*, Crispus? Your men do you honor. Ha, I see my young friend Eutyches. A tribune now? And not afraid of heat and sand! Flavius, there are few like you in Constantinople—or elsewhere. Our young nobles are all for easy living. But perhaps we shall show them the Roman spirit is alive again, eh?

"Shall we ride in, Crispus? Humph! You keep your drawbridge chains greased, I see. Is there difficulty in securing grease? We'll remedy that. I have the emperor's leave to call for anything in the magazines at Antioch. That tower is

well-patched. A very defensible gateway. And here are your infantry! Syrians? Well drilled. Basilakes is *dux* of the infantry drungus? Ha, Basilakes, you are a man after my own heart. Always see to your men's boots. That was the emperor's first rule in the Persian campaigns, and so we outmarched and outfought every army that came against us."

Basilakes rumbled a half-hearted acknowledgment.

"M-more fighting th-than d-dressing here, Merarch."

Stavrakios gave him a shrewd look.

"I am glad to hear it, St. George! That is why I am here."

Eutyches winked covertly at Crispus.

"What do you say to him?" the tribune whispered behind his hand.

"I like him," Crispus answered bluntly. "He is a man and a soldier."

"But Basilakes has made up his mind to dislike him!"

"We'll take care of that later."

Outside the fortress the trooper who had the desert rider in charge was urging his man toward the drawbridge.

"Make haste, you scabby dog!" he growled. "By the Virgin, I think you are a beggarly Jew! Get on! Do you want us to be locked out?"

The Arab kneed his horse on to the bridge in a silence that was as much sinister as scornful.

III

STAVRAKIOS glanced approvingly at the row of standards in the rack along the end wall of the *sacellum*. In front of them was an altar dedicated to St. George.

"I like that custom," he said. "If our ancestors were pagans, they were warriors. We Romans have a great heritage."

Basilakes sneered.

"Wh-what is a R-Roman, Merarch?" he asked. "I'm an Is-Isaurian. Crispus is a S-S-Syr-Syrian. Flavius is a Greek. And y-y-you—"

"That is a bad spirit, Basilakes," Stavrakios interrupted coldly. "Rome was, Rome is, more than city. It is an idea, a tradition. To be a Roman one need not have been born beside the Capitol. We—you, Crispus, Flavius Eutyches, all of us, the least of us—are Romans because we carry on the empire Rome founded."

"Well said!" exclaimed Crispus.

"Basilakes must have the belly-ache this evening," said Eutyches, trying to cover the sour mood of the Stammerer.

"I c-c-can eat or d-d-drink any of you un-under the t-t-table," denied Basilakes, stammering the more in his irritation. "And I'm n-n-not a hyp-hyp-hypocrite. I d-d-don't believe in R-R-Ro-Rome. Who does? There is-isn't any R-R-Rome—just a b-b-big heap of ru-ruins with a l-l-lot of p-p-priests and L-Lom-Lombards wrangling tog-g-gether, and a b-bishop who calls himself P-Pope and tries t-t-to tell us Easterns wh-what we should believe. To —— wi-with Rome, I say!"

Crispus and Eutyches murmured uncomfortably, but Stavrakios displayed no resentment. The merarch regarded Basilakes with a calm interest—poised, cool, unprejudiced.

"Your point of view is not new to me," he answered. "There are those in Constantinople, yes, at the court, who hold it. I have heard men declaim against the retention of the Latin drill. But if we abandon our Roman heritage what shall we adopt in its place?"

"B-be ourselves!" retorted the Isaurian. "Are y-you ashamed of b-b-being a p-p-pat-patrician of Constantinople, with m-more Greek blood, very likely, th-than L-Latin?"

"Not at all," replied Stavrakios collectedly. "But permit me to remind you that you sidestep my contention that to be Roman is not necessarily to be Latin. Rome is an idea, a legend, a tradition. It is the empire."

"Once it was," growled the Stammerer. "N-now the em-empire is more Greek th-than R-Roman."

"What will Crispus say to that, who is Syrian?" inquired the merarch with a dry smile.

"It is true that many feel as Basilakes does," admitted Crispus. "We have little in common with Rome or the West, Merarch. These days the West is a brawling ground for barbarians who batter down the monuments of the old empire. Only here in the East are our fathers' works maintained."

"Exactly," cried Stavrakios. "And our fathers were Romans, my friend. The Roman West is, indeed, Roman no more. Only the Eastern Empire persists in treasuring the memories of the past. So, I say, why should we refuse to call ourselves Romans? What other unifying force would hold our different races fused to the one purpose?"

There was an interval of silence. Basilakes, scowling, plainly hesitated to open wider the disagreement with his superior.

"Is not Christianity sufficient?" hazarded Eutyches.

Stavrakios rubbed his smooth-shaven chin, staring reflectively at the statuette of St. George.

"A difficult question, my Flavius," he answered finally. "Religion is a mighty force, yet— Bethink you, the Persians were able to capture Jerusalem and the True Cross—or what men call the True Cross," he added, frankly cynical.

"We won it back," objected Crispus.

"We won it back," repeated the merarch. "Heraclius won it back. And how? With Roman discipline! Flavius, you were at Nineveh. Say, did cohorts of angels fight for us, or did we win with our own right arms?"

"I saw no divine aid," assented Eutyches. "We won by the sword."

The merarch's hand went involuntarily to the hilt of his weapon.

"By the sword," he repeated again. "Yes, if there was unearthly aid that day the Persians shared it with us."

He looked from one to the other of the three officers.

"I would not have the priests hear me say so, my friends, but this Christ of ours is not a warlike god. Christianity is a good religion, finer and better, no doubt, than any our pagan forefathers knew; but it does not spur men to conquest. No, no, for that you must rely upon our ancient Roman traditions, the spirit of the legions."

"What is an idea?" growled the Stammerer. "O-on-only something in y-your head."

For the first time a hint of contempt appeared in Stavrakios' voice as he answered:

"You are very mistaken, Basilakes. An idea is the most powerful weapon in the world. One man with the right idea can overcome an empire—if he believes in himself."

"If y-you believe in Ch-Christ I d-don't see how you c-can be-believe in Rome," said Basilakes stubbornly.

And Crispus thrust in:

"What you have said is true, Merarch, but isn't it also true that the trouble with the empire is that we have outgrown the Roman tradition without finding a new one to take its place?"

"That would be to confess failure," protested Eutyches, "and the empire has not failed. I am a young man, but I can remember when the Persians held all of Egypt and Orientem from Alexandria to Chalcedon over against Constantinople itself. Why, Stavrakios, when the emperor took the field in 621, he had to go by water to reach his own dominions. Men said the empire was dead. And what happened? In six years we had beaten the Persians, ravaged their lands, destroyed their chief cities. And the empire's boundaries are restored."

"Roman discipline did it," Stavrakios replied steadily. "I do not agree with Crispus that we have outgrown our tradition of empire. While the world lasts, Rome will last, not the ruined city that Basilakes is concerned with, but the spirit of organized endeavor which welded scores of different peoples into one whole. If that spirit died, then—ah, but it can not die!"

He turned squarely facing the row of standards, and his long gray sword, a span longer than the regulation *spatha*, flared in the soft lamplight.

"I salute the Eagles!" he exclaimed.

Even Basilakes was impressed, and Crispus inquired as the merarch sheathed his blade—

"Is that the sword you won at Nineveh?"

Stavrakios smiled sternly.

"Eutyches has been talking. Yes, this is the sword of Nineveh—and God knows how many other battles. It is as old as man. But I will speak of it another time. Now, I would have you tell me of the garrison. This is a post of two *drungi?*"

"Yes, Stavrakios," Crispus assented, "it is a small *moira,* small enough for ordinary purposes, but too small for a great emergency."

"How?" questioned the merarch. "What is your strength?"

Crispus indicated the row of standards.

"I am *dux* of the horse," he explained. "Flavius, here, commanded the *drungus* while I was deputy-governor. We have six *numeri,* the Seventh Paphlygonians, the Tenth Thracians—"

"What are Thracians doing here?" interjected Stavrakios.

"They were transferred from Adrianople as punishment for a mutiny in Justinian's time," replied Crispus.

"I see. Go on."

"Then there are the Twelfth Cappadocians, the Fourth Cilicians and two centuries of the Fifth Syrians—the other century* is at Bostra. These five *numeri* are *cataphracti.* Besides them we have the Twentieth Ghassanians, irregulars, for scouting work. But all the *numeri* are under strength. We couldn't put above 2100 men in the field, and that is not allowing for sickness."

"And the infantry?" asked Stavrakios.

"Basilakes is *dux* of the infantry *drungus,*" replied Crispus. "Let him tell you."

The Stammerer lumbered forward.

"My *numeri* are up to moderate strength," he reported sullenly. "I have the Fourteenth Is-Isaurians, and the Eighth, Ninth and Thirteenth Syrians. They average fi-five hundred men, two thousand in all. It is easier to get infantry recruits in this c-c-country; the Syrian *numeri* are always up to s-stre-strength, and whenever my Isaurians fall below I send a message t-to my relatives."

"Your men are in excellent condition," Stavrakios complimented him as warmly as if they had not disagreed. "Humph! And we cover the frontier from the foot of the Dead Sea to Bostra?"

"That is correct, Merarch," said Crispus.

"A long stretch for four thousand men. I could wish we had more cavalry, but we must do the best we can. The emperor has laid a charge upon all his officers to economize. To finance the Persian War, as you doubtless know, we borrowed heavily from the Church, and the Church, my friends—" Stavrakios' tight lips curved satirically—"must always have its debts repaid."

He moved toward the door.

"Is there food in the *principium?*" he inquired.

"Surely," said Crispus.

"Then I could eat. Join me, I pray you, all three."

In the corridor outside, as they walked to the officers' refectory, Eutyches dropped back beside Basilakes.

"He hasn't had that hot bath yet, old Pepperpot," whispered the tribune of the Thracians.

Basilakes scowled with undiminished hostility.

"H-he's no good, little m-man. I never saw a m-man with one of these n-new p-p-pat-patrician double n-names who was any good. N-no, I n-never did. You w-watch."

"I have a double name," chuckled Eutyches. "All the senatorial families have. It's part of the Roman idea."

"I-i-i-idea!" snorted Basilakes. "I'll take his sword in-instead of an i-i-idea."

"But you must have an idea to use a sword," jeered Eutyches.

"All I w-want is my ar-arm and a h-head to cut at," rejoined the Stammerer.

*The century at full strength was 160 men. There were three centuries to a *numerus.*

IV

IN THE refectory Stavrakios shucked off his armor and placed his sword on the table within reach of his hand; it lay among the serving-dishes, in its soiled and rusty scabbard, with an effect of hidden menace. Eutyches found his eyes returning to it again and again. Crispus, answering the merarch's stream of questions, still yielded attention to the subtle mystery which seemed to radiate from the sheathed blade. Basilakes, too, silent for the most past, stole an occasional glance at the plain hilt of electrum, modeled to fit the grip of straining fingers. Once Stavrakios touched it caressingly, absentmindedly, as a man might touch the head of a woman beloved, continuing without interruption his shrewd interrogation of the others.

"What of the desert folk?" he asked finally. "Do they give you much trouble?"

"Nothing serious," replied Crispus. "They raid a caravan now and again, but they are an unstable race jealous of each other, tribe fighting tribe. We use our Ghassanian irregulars against them usually. They are too swift for the *cataphracti*."

Eutyches remembered the desert rider.

"Perhaps the merarch will wish to see the Arab who arrived this evening," he remarked, and added to Stavrakios, "A strange fellow! He said he had a message for the emperor from—what in Constantine's name was it? Oh, yes, from the Prophet of Allah."

"The man is crazy," said Crispus.

Stavrakios nodded.

"Probably. But have him in. Any message for the emperor—" He broke off as Eutyches rose to execute his order; Basilakes, likewise, pushed back his chair, stammering something about inspecting sentries. "I am selfishly disappointed you are so quiet, Crispus. I had hoped to offer a small sacrifice to Mars."

He laughed at his own quip.

"Denounce me not to the priests! They are all-powerful in Constantinople for having supplied the emperor with his war funds. It was that as much as anything brought me here."

His fingers closed again on the hilt of the sword.

"Although I do not know," he went on, "something seemed to draw me, to urge me. The emperor grows old; his belly swells with disease. He is not the man he was. The palace is full of women—women, priests and eunuchs. In Constantinople all the people think of is the latest gossip of the court—who profited most from the African grain fleet, whether Blue or Green will win the next chariot-race in the Hippodrome. So one day I took a map, spread it flat under an inkhorn and my dagger, shut my eyes and dropped the point of my sword upon it haphazard. The point rested in Syria, close to the desert march. 'An omen,' said I. And I made inquiry and discovered there was a governor to be appointed for Muta and besought the post of the emperor."

A shadow on the face of Crispus attracted his attention and he exclaimed contritely:

"By Hercules, I had no thought of cheating you of promotion, man! Hold that not against me." His own face shadowed. "If it had not been me, it must have been some other favorite, perhaps less worthy. The curse of the empire, my Crispus, is favor. It is not sufficient to be worthy. No, no, you must have wealth, family, friends. Not even the emperor, great as he is, can resist intrigue."

"You shame me for my resentment," answered Crispus straightforwardly. "And it is as you say, Stavrakios, we are fortunate to have you to command us instead of some cloak-preening younger son of a senator who hasn't a head for anything above racing. But I am afraid you will be disappointed here. There is little opportunity for action. Since we recovered the fortress from the Persians—"

The leather curtains of the doorway fluttered aside and Eutyches led in the desert rider, Khalid.

"This is the messenger of whom we spoke, Merarch," announced the tribune of the Thracians. "Do you know his speech?"

"Sufficiently," returned Stavrakios.

He rose from his chair and bowed courteously to the Arab, whose glowing eyes scrutinized him with the fervor that had first attracted Eutyches' attention.

"I am the merarch, Constantine Stavrakios," said the governor in halting Arabic. "If you come in peace, you are welcome. If you come in war, you shall not be harmed."

"I come from Muhammad the Prophet with a message bidding the Emperor of Rome to seek salvation in the True Faith," the Arab answered curtly.

He reached into the breast of his camel's-hair cloak and drew out a small roll of parchment.

Stavrakios smiled.

"You are very sure of yourself," he said. "Who is your master, Muhammad, that he should presume to address the emperor, who reigns in Christ all-powerful and undefied?"

Khalid looked down at the merarch almost contemptuously. He was as tall as Basilakes, but where the Isaurian was thick and massive he was lean and rangy, with a suggestion of immense strength in his broad shoulders and loosely strung limbs.

"My master is the Prophet of God," he replied.

"What god?"

"The one God, Allah."

Stavrakios laughed.

"A new god, eh? Of the making of gods there is no end."

He had spoken in Greek. The Arab offered him the scroll.

"Read," admonished Khalid.

And with an involuntary look of respect Stavrakios unrolled the parchment and puzzled out the flowing script.

> Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah, the One God, Indivisible, the Compassionate, the Merciful, to the Emperor of Rome:
>
> Heed ye the warning while yet there is time. Repent of sin while salvation is promised. Accept the True Word. Say, after the manner of the Book:
>
> He is God alone;
> God the eternal!
> He begetteth not, and He is not begotten;
> And there is none like unto him.
>
> Infidels now are they who say, "God is the Messiah, Son of Mary;" for the Messiah said, "O children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord." Whoever shall join other gods with God, God shall forbid him the Garden, and his abode shall be the Fire; and the wicked shall have no helpers.
>
> They surely are Infidels who say, "God is the third of three:" for there is no God but one God; and if they refrain not from what they say, a grievous chastisement shall light on such of them as are Infidels.
>
> The Messiah, Son of Mary, is but an Apostle; other Apostles have flourished before him; and his mother was a just person; they both ate food. And when God shall say, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, hast thou said unto mankind: 'Take me and my mother as two Gods, beside God?' He shall say: "Glory be unto Thee! It is not for me to say that which I know to be not the truth. I spake not to them aught but that which thou didst bid me, 'Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.'
>
> And this which is written here is the Word of God, revealed to Muhammad the Prophet. Therefore take heed, O Emperor and submit, or thy power shall depart from thee, thy people shall be put to the sword and thy lands taken from thee.

Khalid seemed to grow in stature as the liquid phrases tripped from the merarch's tongue. Crispus and Eutyches looked at each other in mingled amusement and indignation. Stavrakios alone displayed no feeling. When he had finished he carefully rolled up the scroll and placed it on the table in front of him beside the sword.

"Who is Muhammad?" he inquired.

"The Proph—"

"Yes, yes, you have told me that. What else is he?"

"He is Lord of Mecca and Medina, master of Arabia," declared Khalid.

"Ah, the chief of a tribe!"

"God's Prophet," corrected the Arab. "Soon he and his seed shall rule the world."

"He would fight us Romans?" Stavrakios pressed gently.

The Arab's contempt was unconcealed.

"If you deny him he will rend you limb from limb. The birds of the air shall pick your bones. The jackals shall howl in the streets of your cities."

Eutyches interposed testily.

"The rascal deserves to be whipped, Merarch. He is insolent."

"I think not," Stavrakios answered in Greek. "He believes in himself—in his master, which is the same thing."

The merarch addressed Khalid again.

"You understand that I must forward this letter to the emperor in Constantinople? Very good! I do not think your master knows the might of Rome or he would think twice before he ventured to insult an emperor who has humbled Persia in the dust."

"Persia, likewise, shall submit to the True Faith," asserted Khalid.

"So?" Stavrakios raised his eyebrows. "You will assail the world?"

"All the world must accept the True Faith," the Arab affirmed proudly. "There is but one God, and Muhammad is His Prophet!"

Crispus could no longer contain his wrath.

"The fellow is Antichrist, Merarch! I agree with Eutyches, he should be whipped—or hung."

"No, no," protested Stavrakios. "He is an envoy."

"Will you send that rot to the emperor?" Eutyches cried hotly.

"Why not?" answered the merarch. "Recollect, my friends. It is addressed to Heraclius, in the first place. And in the second place, we have just concluded a war that drained our resources. The empire requires a breathing space. If I consulted my own desires I should ask nothing better than an opportunity to march across the desert and punish this impudent chief of a tribe we never heard of. But small expeditions cost money as well as large. I shall advise the emperor to make an answer, dignified, but conciliatory. Send this Muhammad some presents and he will be content. Otherwise he may go to raiding caravans and preaching heresy in the Syrian villages."

"Yes, you are right," Crispus agreed reluctantly.

But Eutyches objected:

"This Arab here is the kind to read weakness into such a policy. So will his master."

"Let them," retorted Stavrakios. "Then we can spend the empire's money with clear consciences. For myself, I am moderately interested in a man with the ingenuity to set up a new god. We Christians have been so successful in upsetting religions that it may be a healthy thing for us to have a rival faith to match."

Crispus was visibly shocked.

"A ridiculous mess of words like that rival Christianity?" He jabbed a finger at the scroll by the sword. "Nonsense, Stavrakios! Divine revelation is one thing. Absurd pretense is another. Why, this petty sheikh flouts the Son of God openly! He is mad!"

"It may be," Stavrakios was unperturbed, "but my duty is to keep peace and bear down on expense. So by your leave, *dux*, we will speak the Arab fairly."

He turned to Khalid.

"This letter goes to the emperor by post. I will beg him not to unleash his wrath upon a people who foolishly presume upon their ignorance. He is tender in his strength, and perhaps will agree with me. In any case, return here in two months' time and I will have an answer for you."

The Arab's figure towered in the soft lamplight, tensed as a strung bow-stave.

"I will return," he said haughtily. "See that the emperor's answer be a plea for mercy. Otherwise you shall learn that the Persians are lambs compared with the sons of the desert."

He pointed at the sword on the table.

"You have a good blade, Roman. Show it to me."

Stavrakios hesitated, then decided to ignore the peremptoriness of the man's tone.

"It is a good blade, as you say," he agreed. "I took it from a Persian, but it must have served many men before him. You are a warrior?"

"I lead the Khoreisch in battle."

Stavrakios slowly drew the sword from its sheath. His two officers regarded it as closely as Khalid. A gray blade, with odd flecks and whorls in the steel, forged differently from any weapon they had ever seen. It was very slender and shapely, tapering perfectly from hilt to point.

The Arab's right hand went out to grasp it, but Stavrakios shook his head.

"No, you may not touch it. Admire it, if you please. But a sword is like a wife; it should be for one man's use."

A gleam of appreciation showed in Khalid's eyes.

"You speak the truth, Roman. And the sword is like a woman—like a slim gray maid—but lustful. Yes, like a maid, but no maid. Ah, no! She has drunk deep of many men's blood. A maid, but—"

Crispus and Eutyches, leaning over the merarch's shoulders, peered curiously at the shimmering symmetry of the blade.

"It has marks on it," exclaimed Eutyches.

"Yes, there is a Greek word," cried Crispus, "and a Latin! And those marks—"

"Are Egyptian," declared Eutyches. "St. George, what a sword!"

"It is as old as man," said Stavrakios. "I showed it to an armorer in the Mesé. He knows steel, and he said he had never seen a blade of such balance and temper. It swings as light on the wrist as a centurion's *vitis*."

A feverish glare, covetous, threatening, supplanted the appreciation in Khalid's eyes.

"Will you sell the sword, Roman?" he demanded.

"At no price," Stavrakios replied shorty.

The Arab bowed mockingly.

"Very well," he said. "I will take it from you."

Stavrakios and his officers all stared at him incredulously.

"You will take it from me?" inquired the merarch.

"Yes."

Eutyches chuckled nervously.

"Surely the man's mad," murmured the tribune of the Thracians.

But Stavrakios was aware of a budding sense of hostility.

"You are welcome to try," he said as shortly as he had spoken before. "Have you broken your fast?"

"I do not break the bread of the Nazarenes," the Arab rebuked him. "If you will open your gates for me I will return to my master—who shall be your master."

Stavrakios balanced the sword in his hand, struggling against the sudden, murderous craving that had assailed him. And as suddenly as it had risen the blood-lust succumbed to self-discipline.

"It's not too late to hang him," counseled Crispus.

But Stavrakios brushed him impatiently aside.

"Let him out the postern, Flavius," he instructed Eutyches. And to Khalid, "You deserve imprisonment for your insolence; but we Romans are so strong that we think no more of words from such as you than if they were uttered by children. Go, and learn respect. If you transgress another time I will have you whipped."

Khalid leaned forward across the table, his eyes shifting from the merarch to the gray sword sparkling in the lamplight.

"When we meet again I will kill you," he said and left the room without waiting for his escort.

"By the Forerunner, Merarch, you do ill to let him go!" cried Crispus, as Eutyches hurried after the Arab.

"I liked his courage," answered Stavrakios, returning the gray sword to its sheath as lovingly as he had drawn it. "A firebrand, my Crispus. If there are more of his sort in Arabia we shall yet have a pleasant little border war, eh? A chance to win promotion and train a few young officers. But we must not forget the emperor's injunctions in the meantime. Peace, if it be possible with

honor. And if it be not—why, then, my gray maiden shall not go thirsty."

Crispus frowned at the sheathed blade on the table.

"I believe that sword is a war-breeder," he said.

"Crispus!" Stavrakios remonstrated jestingly. "Such superstition is unbecoming a Christian."

V

DUST billowed across the exercise-ground where the *cataphracti* charged and wheeled and the infantry tramped and trotted, now extended in line, again arrayed in blocks of mailed *scutati* and light-armed missile troops. Eutyches, cantering up to the drawbridge where Stavrakios generally had his post, found only Basilakes scowling upon the busy spectacle.

"What, Stammerer? You aren't working with your flatfooted legionaries?" cried the tribune of the Thracians.

For ——'s sake, don't t-talk to me about legionaries!" growled the *dux*. "That's what *he* is fo-forever prattling about."

Eutyches grinned boyishly.

"You refuse to like the merarch, eh? Well, by the Bodyless Ones, my friend, you can't truthfully say that we have slipped backward in these weeks. He keeps us up to discipline."

"Discip-ipline!" rumbled Basilakes. "We always had discipline. All he does is to th-think up new ways to m-make us work."

"And very good for us, too," amended Eutyches.

"Yes, l-like posting a p-p-picket on the de-desert track during drill," jeered Basilakes. "A l-lot of good th-that does!"

"That's where you are wrong, my Basilakes," rejoined the cavalryman imperturbably. "The order has justified itself. I have to report to the merarch that a considerable body of horsemen is in sight.

Basilake's eyes widened somewhat, but he recovered his pessimism without difficulty.

"A c-caravan," he said doggedly. "And if it wasn't, wh-what h-harm could anybody from the desert do to us?"

"I don't know," confessed Eutyches. "But tell me—where is Stavrakios?"

The *dux* pointed toward his infantry out in the middle of the exercise-ground.

"Th-there, curse him! Move deliberately, he says. Don't be in a hurry. The legions never hurried. S-S-St. George! Whoever thinks of the l-leg-legions now? We're j-just foot-troops to gar-garrison castles and help the c-c-cavalry win battles."

His scorn was so exaggerated that Eutyches was nonplussed.

"At least, Stavrakios doesn't think so," said the tribune of the Thracian.

"N-no. All he th-thinks of is talk. The legions! My men are as good sol-soldiers as he ever s-saw."

"Doubtless, Basilakes," chuckled Eutyches; "but I have no time to stroke the nap of your vanity. I ride to the merarch. Do you come, too—perhaps he will give you back your command."

Basilakes cursed with an efficiency that drew respect from the younger man.

"I'll c-come. He'll r-ruin my men, if he st-stays very long with them. T-talking about not hur-hurrying! All battles are won in a hurry n-nowadays."

"I see what he means, though," Eutytyches answered thoughtfully. "He's no fool, our merarch. All of us who were in Persia noticed how Heraclius used the infantry to good account. Men said it hadn't been done that way in battle since Adrianople, when the Emperor Valens and forty thousand men were killed by the Goths—and that was two hundred and fifty years ago. Personally, as a cavalryman, Basilakes, I don't see why good infantry in solid formation shouldn't be able to stand up to cavalry."

"D-don't you?" sneered the *dux*. "You h-have never f-fought on foot, Flavius. You d-don't know what it is t-to have three or four thou-thousand armored men on armored hor-horses come crashing in-into you. We have our p-part, but we aren't su-supposed to f-fight cavalry in the

open. In a line, m-maybe, where our archers and s-slingers can c-come into play, but—"

Stavrakios had seen the two approaching, and broke off a conversation he was holding with a group of infantry officers.

"You wanted to see me, Flavius?" Then over his shoulder, as he reined around, "Remember, the main thing is to keep your men in hand. Don't be afraid of having your flanks turned. We place too much emphasis on that in our tactics. A well trained force should be able to bend back its flanks without falling into disorder. Gather into a square, dress shields closely and stand quiet while your missile troops volley over the *scutati*. Then if the enemy horse push home their charge you can meet them on your spear-points. The cavalry aren't made who can break good heavy infantry."

Basilakes snorted into his beard. The merarch eyed him keenly.

"You don't believe me, *dux?* Prejudice, my friend! The dead weight of tradition on your imagination. In the old days the legions never feared cavalry. Why should we who are as well armed, if we are as well trained and possess the same confidence in ourselves and our leaders?"

"W-we aren't legionaries," Basilakes answered as disagreeably as he dared. "And the legions did-didn't face horse-archers in ar-armor."

Stavrakios' jaw tightened. He started to speak, then thought better of it.

"Put your men at ease," he said coldly. "Well, Flavius?"

"Riders on the desert track, Merarch." Eutyches saluted. "It may be that messenger—you recall him? We sent his letter on to the emperor."

"Oh, yes." Stavrakios rubbed his smooth-shaven chin, a trick he had when he was thinking. "An answer came for him, and some presents. The emperor said to avoid trouble if possible. Yes, yes! You say he is not alone?"

"It is a large body, by the dust they raise."

"Humph! We had better withdraw the troops inside the walls. There will be less risk of an accident. Tell Crispus, please! I will go on ahead." He called to Basilakes, who had joined the senior officers of the infantry *drungus*, "Take your men into the castle, *dux*—as speedily as you can."

Riding past Basilakes on his way to communicate with Crispus, Eutyches was hailed by the Stammerer:

"He's a f-fine fellow to t-talk about the l-legions! Running behind stone walls when a p-parcel of Arabs show in the d-desert."

Eutyches regarded Basilakes soberly.

"You are talking foolishly," the cavalryman rebuked his friend. "It is not right to say such things of a man of proven courage. If you disagree with Stavrakios on military points, go to him frankly and—"

"Oh, you p-p-pat-patricians are all alike," fumed the *dux*. "It's ea-easy for a horseman to t-talk of f-foot-men meeting cavalry wi-with spears. T-try it!"

The animosity of the gibe made Eutyches vaguely uneasy. He expressed himself so to Crispus as they waited while the trumpeters summoned the *cataphracti* from their maneuvers, but the Syrian declined to take the incident seriously.

"You know Basilakes as well as I, my Flavius. He must always be resentful of something or some one. For two months now, it has been the merarch, and one of these days Stavrakios will send him to Jerusalem or Antioch to cool his heels drilling recruits for a while. But he is not a bad fellow. I'll talk with him later and see if I can't put some sense in his thick skull."

"I know he's a good fellow," answered Eutyches. "That's why I don't like him to be so silly."

"He'll come around," reiterated Crispus. "Leave him to me."

VI

THE Arab, Khalid, stalked into the governor's audience chamber with Eutyches, who perceived that Stavrakios had made some attempt to impress

the desert envoy. The merarch sat in a handsome chair of state, inlaid with ivory, on a low dias. The principal officers of the fortress were ranged behind him, glittering in armor, their shields and helmet-crests gorgeous with the several regimental colors. Stavrakios himself, however, was as simply clad as the Arab. His armor was clean but unembellished. He sat ruggedly erect in his chair, his sword across his knees, leaning his chin on one hand, studying the strange man who had ridden twice to Muta on the fantastic errand of an unknown petty chief.

Eutyches placed Khalid beside the table at the foot of the dais, upon which were spread the emperor's gifts, and stepped closer to the merarch.

"The watchman on the gate-tower reports there are thousands of men behind the sandhills—foot and horse," he said in Greek. "Khalid rode to the gate alone."

A bleak look appeared in Stavrakios' rock-hewn face.

"Man from the desert," he said directly to Khalid, "why do you, who come as an envoy, bring with you an army, as if you came in war?"

He had employed the Arab dialect, and Khalid replied in the same medium, no less directly.

"It is to be seen whether I come in peace or war. What answer sends the Emperor of Rome to my master, the Prophet of Allah?"

"An answer dignified and kind," returned Stavrakios sternly. "The answer of an indulgent parent to a wilful child. He—"

The Arab interrupted as the merarch lifted a roll of parchment from his knee.

"If he has answered in that tone, your emperor is lost," he exclaimed, equally stern, "and so are you. Do you think we, who have the spirit of Allah breathed into our veins, will tolerate the insolence of an infidel Nazarene? Emperor or no, he must accept the True Faith!"

Stavrakios frowned.

"Is it your wish to hear what the emperor says?" he inquired. "If not—"

"I will hear," said Khalid, and his words were a command.

The frown of the merarch became more pronounced, but he unrolled the parchment and translated the courtly Latin into Arabic, stumbling now and then in his choice of words:

> "Heraclius, Christ-loving Emperor of the Romans, to Muhammad, called the Prophet of Allah, in Arabia, beyond the desert march:
>
> "We have read the letter which you sent us by the favor of the merarch Constantine Stavrakios, who governs for us in Muta on the desert march. You speak boldly, but we feel loath to believe that you are sincere in professing doctrines which must destine your soul to the everlasting Hell. Think well, O Muhammad, before you assail those who worship the one God, whose Blessed Son, Jesus, was sacrificed for the sins of the world. Blasphemy is like the ignorant words spoken by a little child. It sounds aloud, echoing in a man's ears. But it means nothing. It recoils upon the utterer.
>
> "We urge that you take counsel with our servant the merarch Stavrakios. He has our permission to send you priests, holy men, who will expound to you the Word of God, as Jesus revealed It upon earth. We urge you, likewise, to beware of vain threats, lest our patience be brought to an end, and we level against you the power of the Empire, which reaches from sea to sea and endures from the beginning of time to the ages of ages. In the meantime, as a sign of our indulgence and desire to show favor, we dispatch with this certain gifts. Yet heed well this admonition: The trouble-seeker receives not gifts, but blows."

Stavrakios rerolled the parchment, fastened the besealed ribbons which bound it and extended it to the Arab.

"The emperor's favor is great," said the merarch. "Will you examine the presents he offers your master?"

Khalid accepted the parchment, but his face was like a thunder-cloud. He brushed aside the suggestion that he examine the presents with a contempt as violent as a blow.

"Baubles!" he snarled. "Why should I look at what I can take? Roman, this letter is not an answer. It is words. It

is nothing. It is as empty as the wind. In Allah's Name, then, take what you deserve—war!"

Stavrakios sprang to his feet, and in his features, too, wrath kindled to fiery heat.

"Ho, wanderer," he cried, "do you think to insult the emperor, who has shown pity for your ignorance? Why, fool, with no more than the men I have here in Muta I can march to the miserable city that houses your lunatic master! And I will, if you do not humble yourself on your knees and give pledge to fetch this Muhummad hither to render allegiance to the emperor!"

But Khalid stared at him with an icy scorn that communicated itself to every man in the chamber.

"You will march no farther than the desert's edge, Roman," answered the Arab. "There I will kill you—and take your sword," he added, as an afterthought, pointing to the long blade, its hilt of electrum dimly gleaming on the merarch's knees.

Basilakes surged out of the front rank of officers on the dais.

"This is t-too much, Merarch!" he shouted. "Let us crucify him on the g-ga-gate-tower for a warning to his rabble."

Other officers echoed the Stammer's plea.

"Crucify him, Merarch!" "The desert thief!" "Give him to the tormentors!" "Let horses tear him apart!"

Crispus said nothing, as did Eutyches; but the *dux* of the horse showed plainly by his expression that he was restrained solely by his sense of respect for his commander. As for the tribune of the Thracians, he was conscious of a renewed feeling of admiration for Khalid. The Arab never moved a muscle, standing erect with arms folded, his eyes haughtily intent on those who clamored for his life.

Stavrakios waved the officers to silence. His anger, now, was transferred from Khalid to them.

"You have forgotten that you are Romans," he said. "Also, it is to be supposed, Christians. This man, whatever his impertinence, is an envoy. He is entitled to go from Muta in safety. It shall be for Flavius Eutyches to see him forth of the gates."

The merarch pointed his forefinger at Khalid.

"I shall wait until the morning," he continued. "Then I shall march forth and harry you until you make amends for this insane defiance. By Hercules, man, the empire has too much work to do, too many tasks for its attention, to waste time with such as you and your master, mouthing of gods born of wine-dreams, I doubt not; but if you compel us to action, we will take up the sword!"

A sudden fury of spiritual rage vibrated through Khalid's tall frame.

"Infidel, you have mocked Allah, made light of the Prophet. For your men there will be choice of the True Faith or the sword. For you—"

He raised his arm in a gesture of denunciation and stalked from the room, as regardless of Eutyches as when he left the first time. Hurrying after him, the tribune of the Thracians was oddly disturbed, tingling under the impact of a will-power he sensed to be utterly unchecked, malignant, overweening, blasting all opposition from its path.

Behind them resounded a great babble of voices in the audience-chamber, where a score of officers besought Stavrakios to lead them to battle. But the Arab ignored it as completely as he did his escort or the stone walls surrounding him. He might have been out in the desert, alone with the faith which made him fearless here in the midst of mighty, of innumerable enemies.

He spoke once to Eutyches as the gate was opened for him.

"I shall be here in the morning. Bid your sheik carry his sword."

A short while afterward the sentries on the walls heard a shout of exultation behind the nearer sandhills, and as evening drew on a myriad campfires pricked the dusk with their flames.

VII

MUTA seethed and hummed. Trampling of hoofs on the cobbles of the stable court; braying of trumpets in the infantry barracks; whining of engines under test on the walls; clanging of weapons in the salute as the standards were carried down from the *sacellum*. Inner court and outer court were a-boil, and in the open gate Stavrakios stood with his officers, issuing final orders for the battle, while from the sandhills on the desert's edge the Arab raiders watched and raised at intervals their shrill, triumphant invocation to Allah.

"One *numerus* of foot to be left in garrison," the merarch was saying. "Which is it to be, Basilakes?"

"Th-thirteenth Syrians," scowled the Stammerer.

"Very good." Stavrakios was briskly confident. "That leaves you three *numeri*. You will march out after the horse and take position in line, with intervals between the *numeri*. Your left flank will be protected by the fortress—you will be near enough for the engines to command the intervening space. Your right is to rest on that dry watercourse which slices the southeast corner of the exercise-ground; a few archers will prevent the enemy from getting across it. You should be able to hold that line very easily until we—"

"You m-mean we are to st-stay back and not get into the f-fight, Merarch?" complained Basilakes.

Stavrakios bent hard eyes upon the Isaurian.

"You are to hold your position, unless I order you up. Your part in the battle is to provide a defense for the horse to rally behind, in case we are unduly pressed. There must be five or six thousand Arabs out there, as many mounted as afoot. They will outnumber us considerably."

"I th-thought you wanted us to f-fight like the legions," sneered Basilakes.

"Yes," Stavrakios answered steadily, "I want you to fight like legionaries—and to obey orders like legionaries. When the right moment comes, I will give the order for you to advance. That will be when the enemy commence to break. Until they have broken it would be madness for us to commit our entire force to the attack. Am I clear?"

Basilakes nodded sourly.

"And if you are attacked in earnest, you are to form square, not hold your line."

"Old tac-tactics and n-new tactics," commented the Isaurian. "It ought t-to be interesting."

"It will be successful, if you obey orders." Stavrakios concealed his impatience. "I expect the Arabs will be shattered by our first real push. After that, your *numeri* shall have their chance. Now, Crispus!" He turned to the *dux* of the cavalry. "Your Ghassanians to the fore as skirmishers. Let them try out the enemy. Main formation according to established tactics. Sound trumpets!"

The hoarse blasts of the *tubæ* reechoed between the walls; a racket of orders from centurions and decurions mounted the *numeri* and shifted them into column of centuries. Then Crispus raised his sword in the signal to march, and the Ghassanians clattered across the drawbridge, their cloaks of orange-and-green fluttering behind them, orange plumes waving from light steel headpieces, their brown faces wreathed with smiles, voices raised in the same shrill note that distinguished the enemy.

"Christ for the Emperor!"

Inner court and outer court of the fortress roared response—

"Christ for the Emperor!"

And on the sandhills there was a restless swaying movement among the brown-cloaked masses of riders and footmen, and an answering shout reached faintly the walls of the fortress:

"*La illah illa Allah! Muhammad resoul Allah!*"

Muta vomited men. The Ghassanians spread out across the ground, providing a screen under shelter of which the

cataphracti maneuvered smartly into the traditional battle order of the Eastern Empire. Eutyches' Thracians and the Paphlygonians were the first line of the center, ranked four deep. In rear of them the Cappadocians took position. On the left and slightly advanced were the Fifth Syrians; the Cilicians constituted the right flank. Stavrakios, with a guard of three decuries, had his post between the first and second lines of the center. Crispus was with him.

And in the meantime Basilakes had arranged his infantry in the order prescribed by the merarch. The *scutati* in the front line, archers and slingers in rear. It was an imposing spectacle. Stavrakios, drawing his long, gray sword, glanced over the field with a distinct glow of satisfaction. The sun shone brightly on the array, every century in place, each *numerus* marked by its distinctive colors, the Eagles lifting above the oblong blocks of spear-points.

"Khalid is not so ready to make good his boasts," remarked the merarch. "Prick him to action, my Crispus. Loose the Ghassanians upon him."

"I'll ride with them, Merarch," Crispus answered eagerly. "They are stout fellows. One stiff charge should tear that rabble to pieces."

Stavrakios nodded assent.

"Very likely. We'll support you."

The trumpets of the irregulars blew the summons for column of centuries, and they wheeled out of line with the same cheerful, lighthearted spirit that had carried them shouting over the drawbridge.

Eutyches, on the flank of his Thracians, waved enviously to Crispus, grumbling to himself that the Ghassanians should have the only real chance of the day.

"Christ for the Emperor!" shouted the centuries.

On the sandhills there was a definite surge forward and the Arabs flooded out to meet the attack, the foot in the center, the horse on each wing. And as they advanced, they yelped with hysterical fervor, brandishing swords and lances:

"*La illah illa Allah! Muhammad resoul Allah!*"

"They will fight, after all," Eutyches called to the merarch.

"Yes, this is better," agreed Stavrakios, pushing his horse alongside the tribune. "We shall be able to cut them up to the barber's taste, eh? Be prepared to charge when— Ha, well struck!"

Crispus had torn into the Arab center like an ax-blade sinking into a tree. The Romans murmured appreciation to one another, expecting to see the Ghassanians rip straight through the mob of footmen emerged on the far side of the Arab array; but nothing like that happened. The Arab wings folded in upon the attack, there was a flurry of steel—and the Ghassanians were swallowed up. A lance-point flickered here and there, a few swords whirled in air. Otherwise the *numerus* was gone, disposed of with a celerity that made the Romans gasp. It was as if a great flame had licked out of

the desert and consumed the irregulars. But Stavrakios was not dismayed.

"We have soldiers to face," he observed. "Flavius, you are *dux* of the horse. Take forward the first line. I will support."

Eutyches saluted mechanically, his wits still staggered by the amazing fury of the onslaught that had devoured three hundred and fifty wild riders in a single bite. Poor Crispus! And he had envied the Syrian a few moments since. Well, the Ghassanians must have taken toll, at least. And the Arabs would learn that it was one thing to meet irregulars and another task to be pounded by *cataphracti*, wave following wave.

His trumpets brayed the signal to trot, and he saw that the Arabs had restored their original formation, infantry in the center, groups of cavalry on the wings. His Thracians and Paphlygonians were in line, instead of column. They would not thrust into the enemy, but hammer at his front, pounding, pounding. After them the second line would sweep into the fight, then the onslaughts of the two flanking *numeri*. A recurrent series of shocks. The troops did not exist that could support such tactics. Success was simply a question of leadership, and Stavrakios was a leader in a thousand.

The trumpets clanged again. A thunder of hoofs acknowledged the summons. Dust billowed overhead. He saw a windrow of bodies on the ground, Ghassanians and their Arab brethren of the desert, hundreds of bodies. His horse's hoofs squelched in human flesh. He saw an Eagle buried under a heap of corpses. He saw a line of fierce brown faces, a rank of spear-points, unwavering. He saw a storm of arrows, heard the shafts whisper by his ear. A green flag waved in front of him and he hacked a path toward it, fending and slashing, guiding his horse with his knees, both hands occupied with sword and shield.

Enemies swarmed around him. He had never encountered foes like these Arabs. The Persians had been brave, but the desert men seemed to welcome death. They hurled themselves upon his point; they sprang up behind the *cataphracti* and pulled the armored troopers down with themselves beneath the frenzied horses. He reached the green standard and slew the gray-bearded warrior who held it; but before he could seize the staff another graybeard had caught it. Eutyches pursued relentlessly, and hewed one of the man's hands off at the wrist. The graybeard clutched the standard tighter with his remaining hand, and when Eutyches slashed that off too, the old warrior hugged the staff between his stumps and a quavering cry, "*La illah il—*" brought assistance which harried the Roman until the standard could be saved.

Eutyches was startled to note that the Arabian horse had not come into action against him. He had been pinned down by the dauntless infantry, any two of whom were willing to die if they could take a Roman with them. And he was secretly relieved when screaming trumpets and thudding hoofs announced the arrival of Stavrakios with the second line. The Arabs swayed visibly under this impact; their center yielded, and as their wings started to fold in about the main body of Roman *cataphracti*, the two flanking detachments Stavrakios had posted, the Fifth Syrians and the Cilicians delivered assaults upon the enemy horse.

The battle became a whirlpool, blind, baffling, temporarily incoherent, despite the leaders' efforts, a vast huddle of horse and foot, revolving about the green standard which was the rallying-point of the Arabs. Then two things happened. Stavrakios, fighting coolly, his gray sword a herald of death, slew the third bearer of the green standard; and simultaneously, Khalid, at the head of a body of Arab cavalry, destroyed the Fifth Syrians on the Roman left and drove a frightful blow into the flank of Eutyches' Thracians, heavily engaged with the Arab infantry.

The confusion was frightful, and Stavrakios, sensing the trouble, shouted to Eutyches for a trumpeter.

"Sound the retreat!" ordered the merarch. "We must retire behind the infantry. Basilakes can give us a breathing-spell."

The tribune of the Thracians craned his neck for a trumpeter, and peering rearward, he saw the Roman infantry advancing in full battle panoply across the ground.

"Too late, Stavrakios!" he said. "Basilakes is marching to join us."

Stavrakios paled.

"The fool," he grated, "the blind, heedless fool! Now, indeed, are we committed, Flavius. We must forget tactics. This is a butchery. The side that can slay the most—"

But a torrent of Arab infantry poured between them, and Eutyches heard no more, put to it to extricate the wreckage of his *numeri* from the persistent onslaughts of Khalid's horse. What saved him was the diversion created by the arrival of Basilakes and the Roman infantry. The Arabian horse ceased the attack upon the *cataphracti*, leaving them entirely to their infantry, and launched a series of charges against Basilakes. At first the Arabs were beaten off by the hail of arrows and stones discharged by the missile troops, and the unflinching advance of the *scutati* continued; but Basilakes had left his flanks exposed the instant he abandoned the position Stavrakios had assigned to him, and he had similarly ignored the merarch's injunction to fight in mass formation. Consequently Khalid worked around into his rear and rode roughshod over his left *numerus*, the Eighth Syrians. The Ninth Syrians and the Isaurians tried to close up and form square when this happened, but they were so hampered by their flying comrades that the best they could do was to face about and retire backward—or advance backward—upon their own horse.

Within an hour of the joining of battle the two armies were locked in a staggering combat that oscillated in response to the varying fortunes of the moment. The Romans were packed into several partially disintegrated groups surrounded by swirling hordes of Arabs, horse and foot. Better armed, better trained, they were now at a disadvantage in face of their opponents' greater agility and numbers.

Stavrakios rode up to Basilakes as the *dux* panted into the diminished circle of *cataphracti*, and the men in the merarch's path shrank away from the ferocity of his face.

"Fool!" exclaimed Stavrakios. "Do you know that you have robbed us of victory, perhaps of every man's life?"

"I th-thought you couldn't dis-disengage," Basilakes answered sulkily. "Y-you were all swallowed up like the—"

"I was on the point of disengaging when you advanced. And if you had to disobey my order and advance, why must you disobey my other order and advance in line? Oh, you fool!"

"I d-didn't bungle this battle," retorted Basilakes. "Y-you mix tactics, and expect—"

"I am tired of your stubbornness," roared the merarch.

His gray sword flashed shoulder-high, humming expectantly—and Basilakes' head toppled from its neck, lopped clean, just under the helmet's chin-strap. Eutyches, forcing a path through the sweating, bewildered press of cavalry and infantry, was in time to see the startled expression mirrored in the Stammerer's eyes.

"A Roman officer must obey orders," cried Stavrakios, as if in justification of his act. "Let this be a lesson to all! We should have nothing to fear from our foes if men did as they were told."

Eutyches found himself expressing solemn dissent.

"He deserved your stroke, Merarch; but—I'm not so sure we can blame Basilakes alone for this. These desert men are no ordinary fighters. St. George! What can you do against men who *want* to die?"

"Yes," Stavrakios admitted mournfully. "They have an idea. And as I told Basilakes, an idea is the most powerful weapon a man can wield. They believe in themselves."

"So do we," protested the tribune, almost frightened by the governor's gloomy mood. "We can fight our way to the fortress."

"Beaten by a mob of desert raiders!" murmured Stavrakios.

An arrow droned out of the air and lodged in a chink of his mail; he plucked it free and seemed to regain a measure of confidence from the circumstance.

"Yes, yes, we can fight our way to the castle," he exclaimed. "That is best. You and I will hold the rear—you and I and Gray Maiden here."

His voice swelled in a bellow of command.

"Close up, men! We'll lure the Arabs under the walls—give the engines some work to do. Close up! Slow does it! Remember, 'Rome's pace, Rome's race'."

VIII

SYRIANS, Isaurians, Paphlygonians, Cappadocians, Cilicians, Thracians, labored frantically to free themselves of the remorseless concentric pressure Khalid was applying. They were regular troops, inured to discipline; but Eutyches could not help hearing the muttered complaints and oaths of disgust:

"Romans! There's too much talk of Romans!"

"What have we to do with Rome?"

"Our officers got us into this."

"Rome's race? It's your race, Michael —and mine!"

"Christ with us, what a muddle!"

"Hurry, there, you bow-legged Greeks. Give some one else a breath of life."

"Well, brothers, we didn't enlist to fight a pack of maniacs."

"No, nor to have our officers killing each other."

"I tell you those old ones with the green flag were sorcerers."

"What? No doubt of it, Simonides saw a demon when the—"

Gradually the merarch organized the retirement. The infantry led, an oblong of *scutati* crammed with missile troops. After them came the cavalry, in two separate columns, *numeri* all jumbled together, men whose horses were killed running to fill the gaps in the infantry's shield-wall. The footmen marched along steadily, while the horse made short, swift dashes to hinder the pursuit. They had caught the Arabs temporarily off-balance when the retreat began; Khalid's original dispositions had been planned to stop the attack of the Romans and pin them down. But he shifted his arrangements with a speed that dazzled the plodding Romans. His infantry pecked at the flanks of the oblong of footmen; and his riders assailed the dwindling columns of *cataphracti*.

Twice and again, Khalid flung himself at Stavrakios, but the merarch was fighting with consummate skill, careful to protect Eutyches' column at need, covering the harassed infantry, declining the openings the enemy offered to lure him away from his supports. The Romans were within reach of the drawbridge when the onslaughts of the Arabs abruptly ceased and Khalid rode alone into the space that separated the two armies.

"Ho, Roman," he called to Stavrákios, "I have beaten you fairly! Will you not stand up to me, as one warrior to another, and suffer me to prove I did not boast idly when I said that I should possess your sword?"

Stavrakios hesitated. His conscience, as a commander, bade him refuse to risk himself in such a personal combat; the day had been sufficiently disastrous. But his soldier's pride yearned for the satisfaction victory in the duel would assure him, and he told himself that it would hearten his men, who sadly needed encouragement. Moreover, he trusted not only in his own ability, but in the uncanny power of his sword. Gray Maiden had drunk deep that day, an elephant's draught. His right arm was red to the elbow; the sword dripped blood as he sat his horse pondering.

The whine of a catapult decided him. Whatever happened, the survivors of his garrison were safe. So he slowly wiped the sword's hilt and his right hand clean

and trotted out from the ranks of the *cataphracti.*

"Stand to it, Arab," he said. "You are a brave foe, but this Maid of mine will not be denied."

Khalid kept his eyes glued on the merarch's.

"Perhaps," he retorted, "but Allah is greater than any sword—even that sword. *She* would never fail a man as eight blades have failed me this day, shivered on Roman armor."

"All swords shiver on Roman armor," answered Stavrakios.

He jumped his horse forward and struck at Khalid's head; but the Arab was watchful and parried the blow. The blades clattered again, rattling and clinking, hammering on armor, ringing clear on each other, whispering hateful messages as they circled and swung. Khalid fought manfully, yet his blows were avoided or fended, while Stavrakios drew blood twice: once, from a slash under the armpit and again from a cut in the arm. Then, so swiftly that no man saw how it happened, the merarch's sword slid off Khalid's blade and chopped down upon his horse's neck. The beast leaped convulsively and fell and Khalid rolled clear.

"Yield," cried Stavrakios.

But Khalid scrambled to his feet and replied with a stroke which the Roman caught on Gray Maiden. A twist of Stavrakios' arm, and the Arab's sword splintered into fragments.

"Now yield or die!" commanded Stavrakios.

A cheer burst from the Romans. A sob of anguish escaped the Arabs.

"No, *you* die, Roman!" gasped Khalid.

He stooped and snatched from the ground a stone as big as his fist and in the one motion hurled it full in the merarch's face. It struck Stavrakios on the temple beneath the helmet brim with a crunching sound like the breaking of a very thick egg-shell. Stavrakios swayed on his saddle, and pitched backward, armor creaking and clanging, the same look of surprize in his staring eyes that Eutyches had seen in the decapitated head of Basilakes; and the sword, Gray Maiden, as if denying responsibility for his end, slipped from his nerveless fingers and flew through the air to tinkle in the coarse gravel at Khalid's feet.

Unhurried, lovingly, the Arab bent and fitted his fingers to the grooves of the hilt. A river of fire ran up his arm, reviving his tired body. He sprang erect.

"*La illah illa Allah,*" he screamed. "There is no god but God! And Muhammad is his Prophet!"

A howl of approval from his followers drowned the sough and whine of the wall-engines, until he flourished the sword in a gesture for silence.

"Ho, you, young Roman!" He pointed the blade at Eutyches, hurrying the *cataphracti* into the fortress. "Tell your emperor that this is the first of many blows the Prophet will deal him. Tell him that Khalid, the Sword of Allah, will smite him with this sword of the Old Ones. And when I come again I will break down your castle, stone by stone—yes, and Jerusalem and Antioch and the other cities shall conform to Allah or be given to fire and the sack."

IX

THE *magister militum per Orientem* had just come from the baths; he felt very pink and comfortable and easy-minded. But a frown that was very nearly a frown of displeasure settled upon his plump features as he looked up from his tablets at the young officer the secretary had ushered in.

"Flavius Eutyches? Oh, yes, tribune of the—humph! Your uncle is the Senator Manlius Junius Eutyches? Yes, yes, of course! You are the senior surviving officer from this regrettable affair at Muta? Yes, yes! Your uncle has written to me. I have—ah—been favored with a communication from the emperor's own hand. Most regrettable. The merarch—what's his name—Stavrakios? Ah, yes, yes! Bishop Cyril's nephew. I served with his father in Africa. An opinionated man—the elder

Stavrakios, that is. But I was about to say, he seems to have been unduly rash, eh? Had trouble with his officers? And it was quite unnecessary to embroil himself with a pack of passing caravan-raiders. And having done so, then, to get himself killed and his garrison nearly exterminated! I don't understand it. Most peculiar, most peculiar! The emperor had sent presents, too, for the desert people. It needs explaining. A bad business. The empire's prestige is endangered."

Eutyches gritted his teeth and blurted into the oily flow of words.

"More than the empire's prestige is endangered. There is a new religion being preached in Arabia. It makes fighting men out of the worst desert scum. I never saw such fighting men! Why, the Persians—"

"Blessed Timothy, don't get excited!" pleaded the *magister militum*. "You know, you are really talking nonsense. New religions are often preached and schisms, I regret to say, raise their heads every year. Yes, yes, very regrettable, too! But who ever heard of a religion making fighting men? Now, now! Religion makes priests."

Eutyches glared at him—the nephew of a senator might, upon occasion, presume so far with a portly *magister militum* who owed his job to a cabal of women in the imperial court.

"And there's a story sweeping the desert now—my spies brought it to me. The Arabs say that this sword Khalid took from poor Stavrakios is a holy sword, and they call Khalid the Sword of Allah—the Sword of God. They say he can't be defeated while he carries that sword, that they will overrun all of Orientem and Egypt and Africa."

The *magister militum* studied his polished finger-nails.

"Let them try, Tribune. Let them try. If they *will* run their heads against our walls we can't be blamed, can we? It will be an excellent opportunity to show your mettle. I—ah—forgot to mention that I have been requested to appoint you governor of Muta—a slight recognition of your efficiency in bringing off the survivors of that preposterous affair."

"But it wasn't preposterous," Eutyches objected desperately. "It was the hardest fought battle I ever saw. If it hadn't been for Basilakes' mistake, we might have won; and it was owing entirely to Stavrakios that we saved any fragments after that. I tell you, the merarch was absolutely justified in—"

"Yes, yes, you are very loyal," the *magister militum* soothed him. "A good quality in a young officer, I always say. But don't lose your head over a trifling border fight. And stick to the tactics. Always stick to the tactics. Men wiser than you and I devised them and they have been tested for hundreds of years. You can't go wrong if you fight by the tactics. Oh yes, and leave the desert people alone. Better keep your men under cover, I should say. We'll have to leave you pretty weak."

"Weak?" Eutyches almost shouted. "Do you mean you won't recruit the garrison up to strength?"

"Why—ah—no. We are paring expenses at all points, and it has been decided to strike off or consolidate all *numeri* considerably below authorized strength. The empire is at peace—"

"It won't be very long," said Eutyches grimly.

The *magister militum* permitted himself a moderate amount of disfavor.

"You are a young man to be so opinionated. Take an older man's advice and curb a bad habit. Enthusiasm for your work is all very well, but when it becomes confirmed humph! Well, we'll say no more about it. Keep your men in hand and don't get into trouble. As I was saying, the empire is at peace. Trade is very brisk here in Antioch. The merchants are much encouraged. No one thought we should recover so quickly from the Persian War; and if you hotheads will manage to keep the border at peace we may reach a point where taxes won't consume a third of our incomes, eh?

That's the great idea! No country can be happy with high taxes."

"No country can be happy in slavery," returned Eutyches. "But I won't keep you. I—I—won't you consider what I've said?"

"Consider it?" repeated the *magister militum*, much relieved that his caller was going. "Why, I'll be glad to. And you consider what I've told you, eh? A fair exchange."

Outside the Prætorium the young tribune stood for a moment contemplating the enormous city, still showing traces of the Persian occupation which had wrought more harm than all the centuries that has passed since Seleucus founded it.

"They won't understand," he told himself unhappily. "They won't see! He talks of ideas! Ideas of money-chasing! Stavrakios was right. Those desert men have an idea that means something—and they believe in themselves. That fat jellyfish in the Prætorium only believes that the world owes him a soft living. He would have kicked me out in short order, if I hadn't a senatorial family behind me. Yes, there's something wrong with the empire. Maybe it's because we don't believe in it—and some of us don't believe in Christianity—and we are jealous of each other.

"By the Forerunner! If the Persians could do *that*," he surveyed a blackened area blocks in extent, "what could Khalid do? Ah, the one mistake Stavrakios made was in fighting him! The Arabs had an idea—and now they have a sword."

He walked disconsolately to the barracks where his escort awaited him, and to the chagrin of the decury ordered them at once into saddle. The least he could do in the the circumstances was to return to his post. There might be a chance to give warning before the desert men launched their great attack. And if his superiors were heedless, there was the more reason for him to keep a lookout for them. He took hope from the reflection. If enough men believed in—in—the empire—Christ—duty—say anything—the disciples of Allah might be repelled. A thought worth clinging to.

ALAS, Flavius Eutyches lived to see the Sword of Allah supreme from Alexandria, in Egypt, to the Taurus Mountains; and in his old age he, who had warded the desert march, defended the Cilician Gates.

"Believe in yourselves," he used to tell his men. "Ah, if we only had an idea, a symbol—if only we all believed in one thing! But believe in yourselves—if you can't believe in anything else!"

The Mold of Steel

EDMUND M. LITTELL'S

New Story

of the great furnaces

IT'S ALL very well for a man to have his little joke; the job of making steel is serious enough at its best, but nudging a fellow with a locomotive—Chuck Walker was mad. He let out a roar of rage even as he jumped to safety from between the dinkey switch-engine and the train of low narrow-gauge flat-cars from which he had just uncoupled it and with death in his eyes set out to even the score.

"Fight with yer hands, yer throttle-chokin' bum!" he bellowed. "Get down out o' that cab an' act like a man!"

But the dinkey was already in motion.

"Adoo, cher-ree," floated out of the cab window. Without a grin; only a hot-eyed look.

"Laugh at me, will ya?"

The engine coasted down the incline from charging floor to ground level, adding the insult of a derisive toot that echoed mockingly down the long shadowed floor.

"Well, ya been askin' for it, ain't ya?" drawled his boss when Chuck had stumbled across the littered floor and flung himself trembling with rage and weariness upon the high-backed wooden bench that was the loafing place for Number Two furnace. "Ya been raggin' that guy ever since ya got him a job. What ya expect?"

No reply from Chuck. His anger demanded action, not words, so for want of something better to do he got up, dog-tired as he was, and thrust hot hands deep into the tank of running water that was the wash tub for the crew. They had just finished making bottom, and even his magnificent body, trained down fine by months of labor about a heat-soaked open-hearth furnace and bare now from broad shoulders to lean waist, showed the effect of such labor on such a day. The shoulders drooped, as if his great veined arms were a burden too heavy for them;

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exhaustion pinched his fighter's nose and drew haggard lines down across the level lines of blazing eyes and grim mouth.

Bottom making—no fun even on a winter day; now an August sun painted a scorching wall along the open outer side of the elevated floor. Trying to equal the heat from the great furnaces inside, where three doors had just been lowered upon the dazzling incandescence that soaked it. This last siege of labor had drained endurance to the last drop. Of all times to ram a fellow with a locomotive! Even the water he sloshed over himself was warm. But it was refreshing; it rinsed off the sweat that had drenched him from sandy hair, where blue glasses now rested to dusty shoes that encased aching feet. And to be rammed maliciously, instead of assaulted openly!

"Yeah, I been askin' for it," he growled toward his outstretched boss. "But I ain't been askin' for a yellow-bellied sluggin' with the front end of a dinkey! I been tellin' him if he had any guts he better try usin' his hands—the tie-hoppin', pan-handlin' tongue-fighter!"

His boss, an eagle-beaked rack of skin and bones that went by the name of "Bony" Carr, lifted despairing eyes toward the blackened roof that was their heaven.

"Women!" he moaned tragically. "Women! That girl'll put this whole blasted mill on the blink if they don't tie a can to her!"

A remark that Chuck chose to ignore. He shook the water from his hands, took a cigaret from his locker and sagged down on the bench beside the twinkling eyes of Bony. For all his amused exaggeration Bony Carr was right. That blondined, gum-chewing queen of change over at the mill restaurant might not be able to put the whole mill on the blink, but her over-manicured fingers had made quick work of one association. They had dipped into one man and brought out the true color of him, done it in two minutes' time when Chuck, with his blunt masculine digits, had dug unavailingly for weeks. Yes, he had been asking for it. Now he had it; why shouldn't he be satisfied? Simply because the bum was yellow instead of white. Disappointing, after seeing the promise of manhood in him; worse than that—disgusting. He spat.

CHUCK WALKER had met the dinkey-driver on Main Street near the court-house some two months before under circumstances anything but conventional. He had introduced himself to Chuck with—

"Say, buddy, got the price o' some chow on you?"

Another bum. Working a soft beat, too. Tapping the pockets of hard-working steel men in a town that was prosperous again after a well-remembered period of hard times. Talking Army language, with the air of one who asks for a casual cigaret. Chuck knew the type; he had buddied with many of them during the vacation he took from steel making for the purpose of fighting a war. But that was over long ago, and he had no use for a man that traded upon those days to get help. Still, he might actually be deserving. So, after the manner of his co-workers in steel, he handed over a two-bit piece and went on, scarcely pausing in his stride and without so much as a glance. Only to encounter, some two hours later while homeward bound from a movie, the same bum in the same spot with the same greeting.

"Say, buddy, got the price o' some chow on you?"

That time Chuck stopped and stared coldly at the impertinent beggar. There were six feet of him, almost as much as there was of Chuck. With a pair of shoulders plenty broad enough to be doing honest work, clad in a suit that would pass as respectable and not in a sleezy uniform.

"Say," he growled, "ain't you got no tags for the guys you bum from? You been into me once tonight. How many times d'ya think I'm goin' to come across?"

"No harm, buddy—" and the beggar grinned—"I was just askin'."

Chuck snorted. This attitude from one of a class that was marked by its slink and its whine was surprizing.

"An' you'll get somepin' you ain't askin' for, too," he retorted. "There's a cop on the corner there lookin' for bums like you. Must be makin' a pretty good livin', I guess, pan-handlin' from guys that work."

"You're all wrong, buddy," the other protested. "I been havin' bocoo tough luck. Two years in an Army hospital, an' now I'm tryin' to get home."

"Yeah, two years tryin' to get home. Must live a long ways off. 'Bout time you was changin' that song an' dance—"

"That'll be all," interrupted a voice of authority. "One o' you's been pan-handlin' an' I'm goin' to run ya in." It was the blue-coated bulk of the corner cop.

"One o' you!" That was good! The beggar was almost as well-dressed as Chuck, and the cop, in the shadow of this spot half-way between two sooty arc lights, wasn't able to tell the one from the other. What was it that made Chuck do as he then did? The memory of those jaunty days, of men like this who asked for cigarets and never lived to repay them? The strange attitude of a vagrant who did not beg but asked? Or the automatic reaction when the Law intrudes? At any rate he spoke up.

"You're wrong, sergeant," he said. "This is an old Army buddy. Been lookin' for me all evening."

"An' who are you?" from the suspicious minion of the law.

"Chuck Walker. Second helpin' out at the mill."

Wise cop. He grunted doubtfully and reached for their hands. Chuck's was hard and calloused from long familiarity with the shovel, that indispensable tool of the steel maker; the other's was almost as soft as a woman's. The hard hand he dropped, the other—his beefy paw slid up and twisted itself firmly in the coat sleeve above it.

"Buddy or not, he's a bum," said he, "I'll be takin' him along."

"Naw, he's just out o' the hospital," protested Chuck, not only adopting the bum's story but going him one better. "He's goin' to room at my house an' work at the mill."

The cop thought that over for a long minute, then released the sleeve.

"On yer way then," he grumbled, "an' don't let me catch ya hangin' around here in the dark again, get me? I don't like yer looks."

They parted, the cop to return to his station and the two oddly assorted men to hike the other way. The bum fell in beside Chuck, got in step with him military fashion, then chuckled.

"Vooley voo promenade avec maw," he chanted as they marched. "Much obliged, Chuck, ole timer. Wouldn't be the first time I did K. P., but how come?"

Chuck grunted. He had been asking himself the same question. And receiving an answer in the very jauntiness of the fellow—

"Search me," said he, and with the words a plan of action offered itself. "You heard me tell that cop you're goin' to work tomorrow, how's 'at? I ain't no sugar-mouthed canteen worker an' I ain't runnin' a poorhouse, either."

"Oh, I guess I can pay my way," airily. "I got some jack."

That was too much.

"Yeah?" sneered Chuck. "Whose?" And had the satisfaction of hearing no flippant answer. Which argued that this vagabond had a certain remnant of the pride that had made him a soldier. Perhaps there was enough left to stiffen him into a man again. Worth trying, anyhow. Nothing lost, at least, and it might mean another good steel man. They swung off down a side street to where the great steel mill reservation edged the soot-ridden town, and Chuck shot another question, carefully maintaining the scornful pitch of his last remark—

"What kinda name you been goin' by?"

" 'Dead-Eye' Dick, they called me in the Army." None of the resentment that might have been expected, only a

cheerful answer to a request for information. "Service record's got Jack Fobes on it."

"Jack Fobes? That's a man's name," said Chuck. "Don't belong to a guy that gyps real men out of a livin'. Gyps, that's good. Fits you fine—Gyp."

"Oh, I work—when I have to." The bum was ignoring the open insult. "But I don't honey up to it like you fellas. Two years layin' around in a hospital kinda got me outa the habit. Hunt me up a nice cushy job, though, an' I'll think it over."

"Cushy job, huh?" Chuck reached out and ran testing fingers over the vagrant's arm. "Yeah, you'll need one, with that. Nothin' but bone an' a lot o' fat on it! Guts enough to bum your chow offa better men than you are an' a backbone as limp as a wipin' rag."

That got to him. He turned and faced Chuck with the first flash of spirit that he had shown.

"Say, buddy, you're talkin' too much with your mouth," said he.

"Buddy?" cried Chuck. "I ain't no buddy o' yours. Not till you act like a man. An' if you don't like the way I talk with my mouth, why don't you try stoppin' it?" and he set himself happily.

Perhaps he had uncovered a real soldier. Perhaps this was a man packing a wallop. If so, Chuck was willing and eager to take it. He waited hopefully for the space of several breaths, and—

"All right, Chuck, if that's the way you feel about it," was all the action he got. And he had the nerve to add, "I don't want to hurt you."

Chuck vented his disgust in a jeer.

"Ya-a-h, no guts! A sweet war vet you turned out to be!"

And that was the beginning of as strange an association as Midwest Steel had ever seen. For Gyp stayed on, in spite of Chuck's jeers. Which argued that he had conceived a sort of liking for the steel-slogging ex-soldier who was as good a man as there was on the open-hearth floor. And Chuck returned the liking, for he pulled strings by way of Jock Campbell, the huge superintendent of the open-hearth, who fully appreciated Chuck's merit and got him a job driving a dinkey switch-engine about the plant.

"Sure, I can run an engine," Gyp had told Chuck the next morning. "I can run anything—steam, gas or 'lectric. That's a job you can do sittin' down."

Chuck, in outlining the merits of his protégé, changed the wording a trifle, adding that he might make a good open-hearth man some day, and Jock arranged it. It would never have done for Chuck to say that Gyp was lazy, which was what he admitted himself—with a grin.

"An' why not?" he went on contentedly. "You guys that work like slaves all your lives, what you got when you cash in? Nothin'. You ain't been no place, you ain't seen nothin'. An' when you check out—" an airy wave of the hands—"a six-foot hole same as I get."

No, he couldn't pass that along. Nor could Chuck find a suitable reply to such treasonable thoughts. He could only growl his disgust, repeat his assertion that Gyp was a bum, and let it go at that, with a determination to make Gyp see the light somehow, if only he stuck around long enough. Chuck informed the rest of the floor that whatever the methods Gyp selected for the work of conversion, they were to be his exclusively; the rest of the men had to keep their hands off.

It was Bony Carr who discovered this before the week was out. The rest of the floor wondered about it and treated Gyp with consideration from then on. Bony Carr knew the circumstances of the meeting, of course. As Chuck's immediate superior and almost constant associate during working hours he heard of it in the fullest detail with side remarks. Nor was there a day when he did not hear Chuck razzing the roving engineer, who in spite of it stopped for a word or two whenever he could. It was natural then that he do the same thing.

Gyp's duties were intimately connected with the charging floor: the supplying of trains of scrap iron, ore and limestone

for the reloading of the ten great furnaces whose eighty-foot fronts walled the inner side of the floor. In spite of the fact that he drove a one-man dinkey along a narrow-gauge track, it was a carefully scheduled run; Jock Campbell saw to that, for that track lay close in front of the furnaces and those caverns of hell were put there for the purpose of getting out tonnage, which meant that they must work every minute. After tapping, the bottom had to be relined with dolomite.

That was hand work with shovels, but after that a train of raw material was supposed to be spotted at once in front of the furnace doors; a long string of knee-high flatcars, each bearing crosswise upon it three oblong charging boxes of thick-walled cast iron filled to the brim with weighed amounts of the stuff of steel. Then, when the huge charging machine had lumbered away on its twenty-foot tracks, the job of emptying the boxes one by one into the furnace completed, the empty string had to be removed.

With ten furnaces that meant a schedule and a close one; so close that thought was given as to which end of a train the engine should take, because sometimes Gyp could run on down the floor after being unhooked from a loaded train and shove an empty one back to the stock-house by way of the ramp at the opposite end of the floor.

So it was that Bony was given an opportunity of sorts. An empty train stood before his furnace that day, waiting—a crime against tonnage production in the work-worn mind of Bony. For only a short time before they had finished making bottom and Bony's nerves were still ragged, getting worse by the minute, until at last the overdue engine climbed up on to the floor. Lazily. It was funny how Gyp could make even an engine appear indolent. Then Bony blew up. He stormed across the littered space between the charging machine tracks where flat-topped piles of dolomite, ferro and spar were flung, thrust his head into the cab window and cut loose.

"What d'ya think this is," he bawled, "a rest cure? You pan-handlin' offspring of a jellyfish, we're makin' steel today!"

Gyp's dark head came grinning around the outside corner of the cab.

"Oo-la-la!" was his reply. "Monsoor is fashay avec mwa? Ter-reeb!"

Bony had heard the same sort of words before, but they had been addressed to Chuck. This was different. He raved—

"Get out o' that cab, you no'count bum, an' I'll—"

"You'll what?" It was Chuck, who had followed Bony across the floor. A Chuck as worn as Bony, but with hollow eyes cold and calm. "What'll you do?"

"I'll pound some sense into this hobo."

"You an' who else?" said Chuck. "What you yammerin' about? Gyp ain't too late. An' what you got to do when the train pulls out?"

That was where Bony had used poor judgment; there was nothing to do. Except sit around for two blessed hours while the charge melted down, their most arduous task that of periodically pulling over the water-valve lever that changed the furnace draughts. Chuck knew it, Bony too. But Bony was not aware, yet, that Gyp belonged to Chuck.

"I'll learn this bum he's got to be on time around here," he snapped. "He ain't goin' to take no naps around my furnace."

"Time enough to start yappin' when he interferes with steel," said Chuck—to his own boss, too. Bony's eruption died down to a stupefied sputter. "Get me right," continued Chuck quietly, "this guy'll take what's comin' to him when he needs it, but nobody's goin' to bully him, see?"

So saying he stepped in between the dinkey and the train and coupled them. It gave Bony a welcome opportunity to retire with dignity to the bench. Then he strode back to the cab.

"Now, you grinnin' ape, wrastle them boxes down where they belong," he growled into the mirth-filled eyes of Gyp. "An' if you want to hang on to this cushy job, get here on time, you spineless piece of a half-man!"

Gyp grinned, as usual.

"Toot sweet, cher-ree," was his reply, and his engine jerked up the slack in the train. "Aw-revore, monsoors," and he was gone.

Chuck stood there, a strapping figure that held boundless strength in graceful leash, and watched the puffing chariot of the grinning idler until it vanished around the curve at ground level. Then he crossed to the bench, picking his way slowly between the sprawling piles that had been leveled down by the axles of the charging machine, and dropped down beside Bony.

"What's on the slate for this heat?" he asked. "Special steel or one o' them merchant heats?"

Bony gave him a quick glance and took his cue.

"High carbon special," said he. "One o' them trick heats Jock's alla time wishin' on us."

Every one knew that Jock Campbell had a definite plan for Chuck stored away beneath his stiff crop of iron-gray hair. Chuck was being groomed for a furnace of his own, so out of the little office that crouched in the corner of the floor opposite Number One furnace came a schedule of special heats with instructions that Chuck be given the running of them. Which accounted for the grin with which Chuck greeted that news.

"Suits me," said he. "The tougher they are the better we like 'em. Cigaret?"

And that was that. Bony Carr could see the hole in any doughnut. And so could the rest of the floor. If Chuck had some personal reason for wanting hands kept off the rambling engineer, he should have his wish. For he had more than once demonstrated the fact that he was as good with his fists as he was with his shovel, which was saying a lot. And so long as their personal requirements were well taken care of, the crews that worked the other nine furnaces were willing to leave him to Chuck. It takes all kinds of men to make steel and there's no accounting for the tastes of some of them. Barring a naturally increased interest in Gyp, therefore, they let him alone.

Except that the interest became a more friendly one. For how could men resist the good-natured grin that followed an outstretched hand from the cab window?

"Name's Fobes, Gyp Fobes. Shake the hand that shook the hand of Harding," he would say.

Asked how come, he would relate his experiences when first Wilson, then Harding would come to visit the hospital where he had stayed so long, shaking hands with all the inmates. From that it was natural that he should drift into other tales, generally of the War.

"Yes, sir, them Heinies was bo-coo fighters," he would say when his schedule permitted a brief stop, and those who could would gather about the little cab where he lounged. "Why, there was one scrap—was it Beloo or Argonne?—anyway, I was allayin' along an' got ahead o' my outfit somehow. Got goin' an' couldn't stop, I guess, an' first thing I know I'm headin' between two pill-boxes an' they was both shootin' at me. Well, sir, I was scared. But I was promenadin' so fast I couldn't stop, an' when I did I was out o' range. Behind 'em, see? But did that stop 'em? No, sir! They piles out at me like taxis on the Champs Ulysses, throwin' 'tato mashers an' shootin'. Tough? Them birds is hard to stop, I'll say! Fast as I'd shoot 'em they'd keep comin' at me, an' I had to kill forty of 'em 'fore the rest comes out an' hollers *kamerad!*"

Ridiculous? Absolutely! Every one knew it. But Gyp always grinned, and they liked it. Most of them had stayed right in front of their furnaces during the War; some of them had been sent back from the camps to carry on at the job few men could handle, and Gyp's tales, truthful or not, were amusing. They supplied conversation for those dreary times when bones were soft with fatigue and flesh dripped away in sweat. Not that he always told of battles; more often his story concerned itself with the softer side of the shield of Mars.

"Ever tell ya 'bout the frog princess?" he would ask, and a gang would crowd up with faces all ready for a grin. "I met one of 'em once. Went A. W. O. L. an' hit Paree. Got me a special uniform an' a Sam Browne belt. Them belts certainly was the candy. Girls could grab on to 'em so easy. But not this one. No, sir. I was amblin' down the booleevard keepin' my eyes to myself an' I sees a queen comin' my way. She gives me a kind-a look—" demonstrating with a sidelong glance and half wink—" like that, an' I gives her a snappy s'loot an' says bon joor.

"Well, sir, she answers me back! An' we goes promenadin' along an' first thing I know she's tellin' me 'bout her palace an' askin' me to come to her swore-ree. Me? I says to her—in French, o' course—why, I'm only a humble officer in the American Army. Only a lootenant. But you couldn'ta kept me away with a division o' Marines. I went. Gosh, she had a palace! Out near the bwa—that's French for woods, y'know. An' didn't we eat, an' drink, an' dance?" He gave an imitation of the Latin gesture of kissing the bunched finger tips. "Oo-la-la! Believe me, boys, them frogs know how to live! An' the princess— She asked me to marry her, but I told her I was too busy fightin' a war—"

Small wonder that those steel-sloggers tacitly agreed to let Chuck do all the rough talking. Never had they had such an opportunity for enjoyment; never had they seen an engineer who was anything but an engineer.

"Some fighter, that guy," was a comment made by Bony Carr after one especially heroic tale of conflict. He had learned that, while Chuck did not condone bullying tactics, it was quite in order to talk about him—in fact Chuck welcomed the chance. "He musta been pretty busy runnin' up an' down the front holdin' back them Germans."

"Yeah," laughed Chuck, "him an' Pershing had a tough time. But he did some real fightin' at that," he added.

He went on to tell how, one night when he was in Gyp's room, a bunch of medals had fallen out of Gyp's pocket as he was undressing. Chuck, still eager to fan the spark that he knew smoldered somewhere inside the man, had asked him where he had bought them. Only to be shown, with a characteristic light remark, the printed citations that accompanied them. He also told Bony of the long white scar that marked Gyp's left thigh from hip to knee.

"Lot o' bone in there that ain't mine," Gyp had explained. "An' they had more durn fun fittin' 'em in. Doc cuttin' an' a artist drawin' pictures. An' they kept changin' 'em on me alla time. But the old second joint's better'n the other one now, doc says."

"—an' that gave me a good chance to pan him right," concluded Chuck.

"Aw, what's the use?" growled Bony, staring across the floor at the three blinking eyes in his furnace doors. "He's only a bum an' you can't change him."

"That's just it, he ain't," said Chuck. "He's a man, if you can only scratch down deep enough; a man with all the sap gone after that hospital loafin'."

He failed to mention Gyp's retort to that panning. That was a personal matter. Gyp had listened to his jeers with a grin that grew stiff, then:

"Aw listen, Chuck. Can that stuff. You an' me's havin' bo-coo fun, old-timer, what's the use o' raggin' me alla time? First thing you know you'll have me parlyvooed to death an' I'll get up an' partee on you."

No, that was strictly between the two of them. So was the conversation of a later date, when July had warmed into August. Chuck had dragged himself home after ione of those days when labor came heavly and rest periods were seldom, and found Gyp dressed for an evening "among 'em," sitting on his bed staring at nothing.

"Guess I'll hit the grit, buddy. Gettin' too hot around here. Goin' North, get me a job on the lakes somewheres. Chaufferin' a dinkey 'round the yard's hot enough, Gawd knows, but when it comes to ridin' it back an' forth in front

o' them chunks o' hell you fellas play with—" He shook his head.

Which drove Chuck, with a strange fear in his heart, to forget completely the exhaustion of a terrible day and deliver himself of as near a plea as he had ever made to any man.

"Play with 'em is right, Gyp. An' we don't have to either. We do it 'cause we like it. It's the best game there is, makin' steel. It—it gets under the skin. An' I was thinkin' you was gettin' bit too. Ain't you havin' a good time loafin' around in your cab? An' how 'bout all your women?"

A shrewd move, mentioning women, for Gyp liked them in his own peculiar way.

"Sure," he had said, "I like 'em—when I want 'em. An' I can always get 'em, too. But what's the use o' tyin' yourself down to one? Not me, buddy, not me!"

Whereupon he would go out and amuse himself and a girl, and roll in long hours after Chuck had dropped exhausted into bed. Gyp, doing his work sitting down, had the energy left to do such things; Chuck, with twelve hours a day before his furnace and double turn twice a month, hadn't.

"Women?" Gyp replied to Chuck's plea with a shrug. "All the good-lookers is on the lakes these days. Layin' around on a beach. No, I'll go up where it's cool an' pick me off some up there."

Then Chuck gave up.

"All right, beat it!" he growled, angry at himself for having displayed any emotion whatsoever. "Get out o' here, you tongue-waggin' tramp! There's always a poor simp like me to wet-nurse your kind, an' there'll always be bums like you for wet-nursin'. Me, I'm done! Go on, get out!" and he slammed into his own room.

Only to hear his door open a few minutes later, followed by a mumbled statement from Gyp.

"Maybe I can stick around a while longer at that," was his concession. "But I warn you," with emphasis, "I ain't goin' to stick around very long. Cold weather an' me don't agree. I follow the sun, buddy, an' me for the South as soon as the weather turns." At which the door closed quickly and he was gone.

Leaving Chuck asprawl on his bed, jubilant and worried at the same time. Too tired to undress and too busy thinking to go to sleep. Those parting words had meant a lot. Gyp had surrendered the least bit and in the same breath had promised not to weaken too much. How to increase that hold? Some desperate effort must be made that would arouse in him the spirit to accomplish and kill the urge to drift. What? But Chuck was too tired. He fell asleep as he lay, so that when Gyp got home late that night he had to wake him up and make him go to bed properly, talking the while of a new "queen" he had met.

"Some dancer! An' she was tellin' me they're goin' to have a girl cashier at the mill rest'rant tomorrow," he concluded with a chuckle of anticipation. "Said she'd give me a knock-down, but I told her I'd interdooce myself. Now there's somepin' they oughta had long ago, a girl in the rest'rant. Makes it nicer for us hardworkin' guys, an'—"

Chuck sank down into sleep without hearing the finish; if, in fact, he was really conscious of any of it. But he remembered it when, the next day, a girl actually did appear behind the cash register of the low-roofed building that nestled beneath a bank in a corner of the yard not used by monstrous buildings or shining rails.

It was a momentous event in the annals of Midwest Steel, this admitting of a woman into the reservation that was the stamping ground of men. It was accomplished at the cost of much argument on the part of the restaurant manager. One girl and three thousand men! But serving food at cost was possible only when you knew the cost; men cashiers with sticky fingers had reduced all cost calculations to absurdities. This time he would have a girl. The best cashier in town, no less, at the good fat salary she demanded. And with a pass through the main office gate, for it would never do to

have her filing through the timekeeper's gate with an army of nondescript males.

Then it was that events took place that led to the use of a locomotive for ramming purposes and the gloomy prediction of Bony Carr. For she was a blond, with flashing eyes of deepest blue shaded by lashes of blackest black. She could hand out a pack of cigarets, toss glances along the U-shaped counter and over the tables outside it, shoot a laughing remark to a socially inclined customer as she handed over his change and fuss with the yellow organdy frills of her dress—all at the same time. Many a meal was slowed up on that first day, and the aroma of heavy foods was more than customarily disturbed by the voices of speculation.

"Name's Florrie," Gyp said to Chuck over his slab of roast beef bounded by mashed potatoes. "My girl told me 'bout her last night. Some queen, what? An' did you see her smile at me?"

Chuck had. She had also smiled at every one else in the room. Moreover, he had noted something else. She had given an extra special smile to a certain flat-chested, white-collared clerk who wore a tie. He came from the stock house and his dark hair was mirror-like and cut exceedingly low in front of his ears. She had smiled at him when he came in, leaned forward to catch some remark he had passed and nodded her head. Gyp had evidently not seen that.

"Sheec, I say," Gyp summed up. " 'Minds me o' the dame I played with in New York last year. Movie star. I was promenadin' down Fifth Avenoo an'—"

What sort of an experience he was about to relate was never disclosed, for Gyp stopped talking. Chuck, looking up from his knife and fork, saw him smiling broadly toward the cash register.

"How's 'at, boy," he exclaimed. "How's 'at for a come-hither look? Will I parly-voo with her? An' will I promenade with her tonight? Oh boy!"

Chuck gave him a pitying look.

"You will not," said he. "If you wasn't so stuck on yourself you'd see she's givin' the eye to that clerk from the stock house; she can't see you for that slick hair."

He was right, for the clerk was standing between where they sat and the flashy queen of change, in the line that was filing past her to pay tribute in coin and words.

"Her? Smilin' at that imitation of a man? You're crazy!" said Gyp.

"Oh well," sighed Chuck, and saw ready to hand a goad he had not yet used, "one imitation man or another, what's the diff?" A remark that had no effect, for Gyp was far too much concerned with the smile that he had taken for his own.

"No sir, she was lookin' at me," he said absent-mindedly. "Just a minute, Florrie old girl, I'll be there. An' I'll take you anywhere you want to go tonight." The last was addressed to Chuck, after which he set to work on his pie.

"I got a dollar that says you won't," challenged Chuck. "An' it'll be cheap if I lose. All this talkin' about women, I'd like to see you in action."

"Watch me," was all Gyp had to say, and he washed down his last bite with a swallow of coffee. Chuck did, eagerly. And the ensuing encounter supplied him with the material he had so earnestly craved the night before.

"Say, Florrie," was Gyp's easy greeting as he handed over his check, "'tain't safe to have you here."

"Come again?" Her brows arched into a question, her pert smile flashed across the hand she extended for the check.

"You'll be startin' a riot around here, Florrie. You're too good lookin'."

"Oh, be yourself," she sighed, and the other hand flickered about her hair. "Where do you get that 'Florrie' stuff? And where's your coin?"

Gyp looked wise and purposely fumbled in his pocket.

"Oh, little birdies fly around," he drawled. "They tell me you do a little flyin' yourself."

"Move along and let the cash customers out," was her retort to that. He did, and that forced Chuck to pay and move on,

but he lingered over the cigar counter to hear what followed.

"How 'bout flyin' around with me tonight?" suggested Gyp. "I got the wings," and he produced a roll from which he ostentatiously peeled a bill.

"Me? I guess not! Takes you too long to get 'em out," said she. *Cling!* from the cash register, the flash of polished nails on quick fingers, and— "Here's your change. Thank-kyou! Next, please!"

And that, with a fleeting smile, was the end of her attention to Gyp whose grin of delight indicated that here was a game worthy of his efforts. Defeated? Not at all.

"Hey, Florrie," he said with a highly aggrieved air, "I want some cigarets. So does my buddy here. Gimme a pack o' the kind I'd walk a mile for. Two miles—if you hand 'em out."

Florrie was extremely busy. An undiminished line of men awaited their turns to settle for lunch, and she had handled nuisances at her movie window many times. It showed in the air with which she tossed him a coolly impersonal aside.

"I'm sorry," said he, "you've lost your turn. You'll have to go back to the end of the line."

Even that failed to subdue Gyp. He walked amiably back to the end of the line, while Chuck stood fast together with several men from the floor who were grinning delightedly—and received his cigarets together with a mischievous wink.

"An' here's the old two-mile walk," was Gyp's greeting when he had once more won to a place before her. "I paid for my lunch, 'member? Now that pack o' cigarets, mercee bocoo, an' how about that promenade tonight? Maude told me about you."

It was complete surrender to a superior force, that disclosing of the source of his knowledge of her, and the toss of the head that Florrie gave was the flaunting of victorious colors.

"What kind of smokes was it you wanted?" she asked very sweetly, and laid them in his hand almost as he named them. With a little meaning pressure that was not lost on Chuck. "Promenade, is it? Thought it was a fly. Well, that's cheaper, 'specially when you go by yourself."

"Oh no, you're going along." Gyp said it with a confidence that was inspired by the pressure from her fingers, and Chuck was sure that she would relent. "What time'll I meet you?"

"My, ain't he the persistent thing!" she gasped to no one in particular. "Sure, seven'll do—seven o'clock next week. *And* thirty-five makes fifty. Thank-kyou! Next, please!"

She took some of the sting out of her repulse by giving him another lingering pressure along with the change, and she spiced it with a teasing glance from the black-shaded eyes, but Gyp had lost, technically speaking. Chuck, as he followed Gyp's retreat to the glaring sun of outdoors, knew that really he had won—any one could tell that from the way she had looked at him—but the brag about a date that night had fallen flat. It was too good a chance to lose. He overtook Gyp, who was walking fast to escape the snickers of the other observers, and held out a dollar bill.

"Can't say I lost it exactly," he said very soberly. "But I've paid a whole lot more for a rottener show. Much obliged." Then he exploded into whoops of glee. "Oh, what a lady-killer!" he chortled. "Knocks 'em dead with one hand an' talks about it with the other! He's a wizz, he's a—"

"That'll be all! Can that!"

Gyp, for the first time in their acquaintance, snarled. A most agreeable sound to Chuck, who had been digging for one a long time, but he failed to show it. He shrank away with exaggerated fright; threw his hands out before him and burst into louder laughter. Gyp's eyes blazed.

"Wipe off that grin or I'll—"

"You'll what?" said Chuck quickly, wiping it off. "You hit—me? Oh, you wouldn't!"

For the second time Gyp stared at him

a long moment, and again his eyes dropped. Gyp slid a hand into his pocket and produced the roll from which he stripped a dollar bill.

"I don't have to," said he with a feeble attempt at his former jaunty manner. "You wiped it off. An' you win. But she was only playin' a game," he added defensively. "She'll be promenadin' with me yet—unless you got it fixed," with a suspicious look.

"Maybe I have," grinned Chuck provocatively. "She gave me my cigarets without makin' me walk for 'em—does that make any diff?"

It did not. Except to cause Gyp, after another silent moment, to shrug his shoulders and walk away without a word, which was something he had never done before.

Of course the whole open-hearth floor knew about it before the afternoon was gone. Too many men had witnessed the affair for it to be any secret. And Gyp had to endure mirthful glances that changed gradually into outright jeers.

"Hey, how's the princess?"

"Promenadin' tonight?"

"Good thing them Heinies didn't wear skirts!"

Chuck heard them too; heard them with anger. But he couldn't go up and down the floor beating silence into every man there. The business of razzing, at first relegated exclusively to himself, was now out of his hands; every man from Number One to Number Ten was at it. Gyp, with the whole floor laughing, could do one of two things.

"Well, where d'ya go from here?" It was Bony Carr's question, put as they were preparing to tap a heat toward the middle of the afternoon.

Chuck was dipping a test spoon into the eighty-foot lake of molten steel, thrusting it quickly down through the restless surface of its slag to where the pure metal bubbled silently, but he had time to look out over his blue glasses and catch a shrewd twinkle in the eyes of his boss. And boss or not, this was a subject that Bony should not discuss. He made no answer, only lifting the spoon out deftly and pouring its contents slowly upon the steel-plate floor, watching it cool. This art of telling the temperature of the bath by the manner in which the thin flow of metal froze was one of the final accomplishments that equipped a man for the job of first helper with a furnace of his own, and Chuck had mastered it.

"'Bout hot enough to tap," he said, dropping the long-handled test spoon to the floor with a clang. "Better change the draughts once more though."

Bony nodded a confirmation that was still colored by the twinkle in his eye, and Chuck continued to ignore it. He crossed the floor with heavy steps, pulled over the water-valve lever that reversed the course of the sighing streamers of flame inside their broad inferno, and dropped down upon the bench. Bony followed, his lips twitching now, and asked the same question—

"Where d'ya go from here?"

"No place," snapped Chuck. "No place. An' nobody's going to kid him off the floor, either, get that? He was almost mad enough to take a paste at me this noon, an' somebody's going to get it sure 'fore this day's out. Just you keep your shirt on—he ain't quit yet."

"What ya talkin' about?" growled Bony with a broad grin now on full display. "I ain't talkin' about nobody but you. I asked ya where you was goin' from here; ya're leavin' next week."

"Huh?"

"Yeah, Jock's givin' ya Number Six furnace; just told me. Ya're goin' to be a first helper, boy, an' more power to ya."

It was a matter of minutes before Chuck could rid his mind of the obsession that had of late made his work almost mechanical. In his anxiety to hold on to a man of promise he had forgotten the ambition that had kept him slogging away. Until Bony asked him what the Sam Hill was eatin' him it was hard to realize that this was what he had been plugging for. Four years! And a furnace of his own—and Gyp coming down the floor toward them.

"Hey, Gyp, I got a furnace!" and he ran across to where the narrow-gauge would pass, waving his hands, laughing.

Gyp went by. His sullen face turned quickly away from Chuck's approaching jubilation, a sharp toot on his whistle warning him to stand aside. Still pouting, was he? Oh well, there were others, men of much longer standing as friends, who were gathering back at the bench for congratulation purposes, Gyp could pout —until tonight.

Tapping, a blazing torrent of molten steel cascading down a clay-lined spout into a huge brick-lined ladle that squatted in its cinder pit below the opposite side of their furnace. Smoke, acrid and biting, and flame and heat that blasted Chuck and Bony as they stood on the platform beside the stream from hell and tossed in the finishing elements that made good steel. Bottom making, terrible, bone-melting labor, with the crews from Numbers One and Three to help them reline with dolomite the cast oval-shaped pan of the furnace bottom, incandescent with the heat that still soaked it. Blue glasses over eyes, bare skin taking the blasts of heat from opened doors and saved only by the rivers of sweat that poured out. Back and forth, round and round. Lift a shovel of the white pebble toss it far across to the opposite bank and fill the tub-sized holes that departed steel has eaten away. Heave with the accuracy of sharpshooters and the indifference to heat of men who fought daily battles with it.

Not much time for thinking about the troubles of a roving engineer save when his shrill whistle—somehow now a defiant, angry sound—ordered them out of its path. Very little inclination, during those welcome interruptions when they stood aside and watched him rumble past, to speculate upon the stiff grin that marked the erstwhile good-natured face. No disposition to repine over the fact that a surly silence had greeted a bearer of good news.

Then a rest. On the wooden bench, with nothing to do for two long hours but change the draughts, except the one little job of unhooking the dinkey from the train of furnace fodder it brought up.

That was Chuck's job, for he was still a second helper, and he got up stiffly to cross the floor, step between the engine and the first car and lift out the coupling pin. No attention paid to Gyp. Too tired, as he had been many times before. Then—crash! The engine lunged forward and whammed into the train and Chuck leaped out to safety, cursing.

That was different. It was yellow, cowardly. And he was gone, with—

"Adoo, cher-ree, laugh at me, will ya?"

Yes, he had been asking for it; asking for a two-fisted demonstration of manhood, not for a yellow-bellied slugging with the front end of a dinkey. He was too tired after that siege of labor to think; had no brains left with which to add to the jibes that were echoing up and down the floor. So worn that he was only resolved that this should be his last sight of that no-'count bum.

But it was not. For Gyp came back to the floor—on foot—the first time he had ever done that, and with a cold anger in his brooding eyes. He halted before the wooden bench on which Chuck had been gathering strength and delivered himself of a speech.

"You been razzin' me ever since I hit this town," he said, and there was no good humor in his voice. "Kiddin' me about bein' a bum, sayin' I wasn't good for nothin'—an' I stood for it. Why? Search me! 'Cause I thought you was a pretty good buddy anyhow, I guess. Well, you ain't, you shovel-slingin' wet-nurse for a bonfire. You're nothin' but a laughin' hyena makin' fun o' me every time I open my mouth. An' I stood for it!

"You stand an' snicker when I try to make that cash-slinger, an' go 'round tellin' everybody in the mill about it, then you come gallopin' across the floor with more o' the same. Now I'm done! I'm beatin' it. Tonight. An' 'fore I go

—stand up on your hind legs an' fight!"

Then it was that Chuck's brain worked. Listening to the tirade, he was swept by amazement, delight and comprehension, and when it was finished he got to his feet slowly.

"Fight?" he retorted with a leer. "You? Why, you gabblin' imitation of a phonograph, you can't do nothin' but talk or slug a guy in the back with a dinkey! Now I'll do some talkin'." He stepped forward until his eyes were less than a foot from Gyp's, practically on the same level, and finished his speech, without staring Gyp down. "Any laughin' that's goin' on down this floor's been because a lot o' men seen you this noon. Me tell 'em? What for? I'm busy! You thought I was laughin' at you 'safternoon when I yelled an' you went sailin' past like a poutin' ten-year-old that's just got a paddlin'? I wasn't; I was tellin' you I got a raise. Startin' first helpin' next week. Why should I worry about you, you yellow bum that uses an engine instead o' fists? Run along, hit the grit, or I'll turn you over my knee and spank you."

"Ya-a-h!" grated Gyp, and swung. It was an awkward haymaker of a blow, but it caught Chuck on the left eye and staggered him. "There's a fist, how d'ya like it?"

Chuck recovered with a laugh.

"Fine," he cried. "Great! Now I'm goin' to spank you."

And he did. Not without somewhat of an effort, for Gyp was a sizable chunk of a man. But what chance had lazy, unused muscles against the magnificent ones of a rested Chuck? How could a work dodger expect to resist the sinews that had been trained into cables of steel by Gargantuan labors amid hellish heats? Chuck wrestled for only a moment before he backed to the bench and sat down, pulling Gyp across his knees. Then, with three mighty slaps of his open palm, he raised a cloud of dust from the seat of Gyp's trousers.

"Now run along," he panted. "Hit the grit, you lousy bum, I'm done with you!" and he pushed Gyp from his knees and dusted his hands disgustedly.

Gyp scrambled to his feet. His face was white, his lips drawn back in a soundless snarl, his hands were clenched.

"Run?" He almost whispered it. "After that? You'll eat that—an' like it!"

"Any time."

Chuck had to raise his voice for that retort, for Gyp had turned on his heel and was striding away. Directly to the little office where Jock Campbell hung his coat, the door of which he yanked open with a swing of stiffened shoulders and slammed it shut again behind him.

"An' that's that," said Chuck to the small audience that had gathered. "If one o' you guys ever says a word about this—"

His smoldering eye finished the remark. They grinned and shifted on their feet, but no remark was made, then or afterward. Not where either Chuck or Gyp could hear it.

For Gyp did not "run along." That developed the next day, after Chuck had gone home and found Gyp's room deserted and spent a night in which sleep was replaced by abysmal thoughts. Wondering whether he had completely broken the spirit of the man; arguing with himself that he hadn't, for those stiffened shoulders meant something; cursing himself none the less for a bully who, secure in the knowledge of superior strength, had humiliated a man publicly. He reported to the floor the next morning in no mood for work, and was greeted by Jock Campbell's kettledrum of a voice before he had begun to change his clothes.

"They tell me ye been maltreatin' a good dinkey man," said he.

"Who?" bristled Chuck with a flame in his one good eye.

"Keep yer shirt on!" Gyp told him. "What about it?"

Chuck told him. Not that Jock needed to be told; that he knew very well. Mighty little went on beneath the fifteen-acre roof of the great building that Jock did not know about. That was what

made Jock Campbell a superintendent second to none. And, towering above Chuck's husky height by a good four inches, Jock watched his most promising steel maker with shrewd gray eyes and listened.

"—an' I guess he's gone," concluded Chuck, not quite able to disguise the regret he felt. " 'Cause when I got home last night his room was empty."

"Not so ye could notice it," chuckled Jock, "he's moved. He's third helpin'."

Third helping? Gyp? The vagabond who bragged about his ability to avoid work? Why, third helping was the dirtiest, rottenest job that Midwest Steel had to offer. Making bottom was a cinch, bossing a furnace positive ease, beside that lowliest of tasks: mixing clay for relining spouts; neating up the piles of steel making materials that were constantly being dumped on the broad floor between the charging-machine track; helping at bottom making; and then, when there was nothing else to do, cleaning out the cinder pit. Jump down into that nest where the great ladle sat and with pick and shovel clean out the mess of smoking, sulphur-stinking slag that always boiled over the ladle brim at the finish of a tap. Gyp? A third helper?

"Told me he was after ye," Jock added, and did not miss the glad light that flashed in Chuck's eye. For that meant that Gyp had been in earnest with that last threat of his.

"Where's he workin'?"

"Number Ten—hey, wait a minute," for without a word Chuck had set out toward the far end of the floor where the brooding roof seemed to meet it. "He ain't ready to fight yet."

"I ain't fightin'," said Chuck impatiently. "I got to talk to him."

"Then hold yer horses. I'm startin' ye in on Number Six today instead o' next week, an' ye'll get out tonnage an' get it out right. An' mind ye, if ye do any fightin' that interferes with steel—get yer time."

"Sure. Much obliged," and Chuck was gone.

Jock lifted his battered hat and scratched blunt fingers through the bristles beneath it. That hair had turned gray with the years of watching men in their reactions to fire and labor and other men, yet he had never seen anything like this. But he knew men, and he knew Chuck, and if this little personal matter should result in the acquisition of another good steel maker—they were not to be found hanging on every lamp-post. He chuckled, a deep-chested reverberation that was a strictly private comment, and went on to attempt the difficult daily task of being in three places at the same time.

Chuck stopped first at the wooden bench opposite the glittering peep-holes in Number Ten's doors. Gyp was not there, but "Bat" Logan, the taciturn strip of rawhide who ran a furnace with his head and not his tongue, was puffing a solitary cigaret.

"Where's Gyp?"

Bat motioned with his cigaret in the direction of the cinder pit.

"Been there long?"

He shook his head.

"Well, he will. An' get this: No razzing—from you or anybody else around here. An' don't bear down on him; not till he gets broke in. I'll be watchin'. I'm first helpin' on Number Six from now on—"

A hand extended in silent congratulation failed to interrupt him. He took it, even as he continued his discourse into the lean face and sharp eyes that were promising him.

"—an' I'll be keepin' an eye down this way. If he asks any questions about steel, unbutton your lip and give him the works."

"Sure," said Bat. It was a spoken promise.

From there Chuck went on, through the hot passageway between Nine and Ten furnaces. There was Gyp, down in the thirty-foot nest that was filled to a level with its three-foot wall, all but a center hole where the ladle had sat, with the shining lava-like slag that was cool

enough to walk on—with soles two inches thick. His gloved hands gripped the handle of a pick with which he was breaking out the slag while a choking black dust mixed with sulphur fumes floated about him. He was working; more than that, laboring. And it meant a number of satisfying things. Chuck dropped down the steep flight of iron stairs and stood at the edge of the pit until Gyp looked up.

"I'm sorry I spanked you," he said.

"Too late," said Gyp, his eyes cold. "You'll get your beatin' just the same."

"Any time," said Chuck again, "an' I won't be layin' down, either, so take your time about gettin' ready. An' if you need any help—"

"From you? More wet-nursin', huh? Pass it along to Florrie. I'll take care o' myself. An' you too, you laughin' hyena."

"That don't make me quite so sorry," shrugged Chuck, "but I'll leave it stand. Good luck," and he turned away to a job that was plenty big enough to occupy his time until Gyp was ready to pay a call upon him.

IT MUST have been terrible, those first few days at the meanest job in steel. Many a full-sized man accustomed to labor had fled before its punishments. Gyp tackled it as a man who for two years had avoided all semblance of physical effort; who for the two years before had been a wounded veteran. It was well-known that he went to the plant hospital that night to have his hands dressed. Even gloves could not prevent blisters when a man has slogged away all day. And when he showed up the next day, bandaged hands and all, the floor knew that if Gyp could stand the ultimate test—double turn, twenty-four hours straight on that back-breaking job—Chuck was in for a rough time sooner or later.

Whether Chuck would be whipped or not was another matter. Other men had tried it and failed; it seemed beyond the wildest dreams that Gyp could ever do it. Every man on the floor, from Jock Campbell himself down to the humblest messenger boy and not a few outside the building as well, waited with eager curiosity. Not to see the process of a vagabond being converted into a man, which was what made Chuck's heart quietly glad, but to see a fight. The result was that every move Gyp made was noted and passed around. He was a public character more to be discussed than the President, more to be speculated about than "One-Round" Luke, the local prodigy of the prize ring who had made his start toward heavyweight fame on that very floor.

Florrie, the spark that set it off? That bright-eyed queen of change was more sparkling than ever. For she heard of it, naturally. Two men about to fight because of her! Gossip, splendid opportunities for little chats with her by men who were eager for them, she took in with an eager ear; for each of the principals she had her most fascinating airs. Safely so, for of course they ate together no more. It would have been difficult even if they had been friends, for the idiosyncrasies of their furnaces made eating times irregular.

"What's the matter with your old buddy," she asked Chuck archly some three days after their first meeting. Chuck had come in after the noon hour rush had dwindled down to a slow trickle and it gave her a chance to talk. "The other day he was crazy for a date with me and this noon I gave him a chance and he acted like he was getting cold feet."

"Yeah? What did he do?"

"Shifted on me," she pouted. "And I offered him Saturday night, too. Said he had to work and changed it to Sunday afternoon. I still got Saturday night open," she added with one of her glances.

If Chuck understood the invitation in the remark he ignored it most impolitely, for instead of leaping at the chance to make her Saturday night a pleasure he frowned.

"Yeah, he'd do that all right," he growled. "Get up outa bed an' prance around when he oughta be sleepin'. If you got any sense you'll change that date."

"And who are you?" she gasped when she had recovered from that. "His guardian or something?"

"No, I ain't. But you will be if you make him get up outa bed an' drag you around."

"Of all the nerve!"

"Get this," said Chuck very earnestly. "Saturday we go on double turn. Know what that means? Twenty-four hours straight, no sleep, nothin' but work. Twen-ty-four hours," with emphasis. "Ever do that? An' he's goin' to bed Sunday mornin'—an' get up to play with you! Want him to kill himself? You break that date!"

"Like fun I will"—with a toss of her taffy-colored hair—"if he wants to promenade with me that's his affair, Mr. Man. Thank heavens there's some people that can treat a lady right!"

"Think it over," said Chuck, and went back to his job.

It didn't occur to him that he had left behind a very strange impression. The idea! One man going to fight another, and worrying about whether or not the other got his sleep! She passed that along to Gyp, of course, and he, when the Sunday night of the beginning of their two weeks of night duty came around, had a few words to say to Chuck. His eyes were blood-shot from lack of sleep, but they burned with the same light that Chuck had seen before.

"When I need a guardian," he said icily, "I'll go to an orphan asylum. Florrie an' me can get along without you hornin' in."

"Yeah?" said Chuck with vast indifference. He had been a fool to talk that way to Florrie, but it hadn't served to cool Gyp's fever. "Better get started then. If you can last the night out."

Gyp had no reply. He went along to his job and lasted the night out. And that was the last time they spoke until the day Gyp selected for the fight.

It was a matter of weeks before they came together. They went through three double turns in that interval, three stretches of twenty-four hours that held the labor of forty-eight. And with each one of them Gyp's resilience increased, the weaknesses arising in his vagabond life diminished. His shoulders broadened and became ridged with muscles, his hands toughened, his stomach, which had shown a tendency toward flabbiness in those earlier days, was flat and showed knots of muscle, his legs grew to be as lithe and springy as saplings. What finer place for training than a steel mill—if a man can stand the gaff? And when it was supplemented by evenings spent in the company of One-Round Luke—sentiments up and down the floor of Midwest Steel began to show cleavages and to be backed by money.

Let's make it a ring affair, some one suggested. This'll be better'n any battle One-Round Luke's put on. But Jock vetoed it. This was a private matter. It should take place right inside the plant. Maybe they could pull it off in that open space back of the building. The mountainous pile of scrap iron that stretched along one side of it would make a first-rate grandstand for the crowd. But maybe they wouldn't take the time to go back there; there was no telling. One thing sure, it must not interfere with tonnage. In that case Jock would take a hand himself, and lose a couple of mighty good men. Chuck already knew that tonnage came first; it might be well to warn Gyp. He was second helping now and had been at it long enough to know a little something about the demands of tonnage production.

Yes, Gyp's concentrated application to a job for the purpose of fitting him for a fight had resulted in unlooked-for promotion. Too darn good a man to be left in the cinder pit, was Bat Logan's expressed opinion, and Jock had promoted him forthwith. Without a word, save a casual mention of it to Chuck, who grinned and said nothing also. He began to take an interest in steel, too. He was no longer the indifferent hireling who worked only for pay. Nor was he the garrulous, grinning entertainer. There was some comment about that, for they all missed it.

The man who had taken his place on the dinkey was only an engineer, part of the machinery of production, and consequently of no interest. Florrie had something to say about that too. He had taken her out a few times, but she was through with open-hearth men; they were always too tired to dance. She should worry if he didn't date her up any more—she knew lots of better men. Those rollers now, they had lots of pep and money. But she'd talk to him whenever he came around, because after all he was fighting because of her, wasn't he? And don't forget to tip her off, either. She would be there to see it if she got fired for it.

A BRIGHT September day with lots of snap in the air. Morning, with the shift just changed, bright-eyed crews taking the places of dull-eyed ones. And Gyp, instead of going to his locker, walked down the floor to Number 6, gathering a crowd of followers as he went. Chuck, who had stripped to the waist in preparation for bottom making—the retiring crew had just tapped a heat—stepped out on the floor to meet him, the blast of light from open furnace doors spotlighting every rippling muscle. He was prepared, but—

"Got to make bottom, Gyp," was his greeting as the other approached. "Have to wait a while."

"Back at ten," growled Gyp, when a quick glance had checked up on the statement, and he turned away toward his furnace.

"Hey, Gyp, can't we call this off?" Chuck's voice held a totally strange note of ingratiation and it stopped Gyp in midstride. "What's the use?"

Gyp took the few steps that were necessary to bring him face to face with Chuck.

"Turnin' yellow, are you?" he jeered. "'Fraid to take a beatin'! Think that over!" and he fetched Chuck an open-handed slap along the jaw that almost floored him. It cracked across the tense silence that had frozen there—and the battle was on.

Bottom making or no bottom making, tonnage or no tonnage, that slap was the ringside gong that made steel of no importance. There, in the flood of light from the three open furnace doors, amid the rabble of stuff that sprawled in heaps about the floor and ringed by a steadily swelling crowd of steel-slogging men, was staged a fight that will never be forgotten as long as there is a fire at Midwest Steel.

Two men of almost equal height, one of them naked to the waist, the other in what was soon ragged strips of a shirt, balanced an account that had been opened by a beggar. Rounds? There were none. Referee? Every man there was one. Time? Jock tried to call it, rushing into the fray with his great voice bellowing:

"Cut it out, ye scuts! Ye're makin' steel today!"

They tossed him aside like a worn-out shovel. Deaf to orders, impervious to any onset save the one between them. Then—

"Call up the hospital!" bawled Jock. "Get a doctor!" and he backed to a place in the crowd.

Toe-to-toe slugging at first, with neither giving ground. Mighty fists, toughened by long gripping of shovel handles; powerful arms, hardened by endless heaving of weighty loads; great chests, developed in the Sahara breath from incandescent furnaces; tireless legs that had carried them when endurance was sapped beyond belief. One man fighting to prove his man's estate, the other for protection. For there was no mercy in the eyes that had brooded so long over slights that rankled, only the lust to hurt, to crush.

Bare fists smacked against bare flesh, driving out grunts as they crashed home, feet scuffled on the gritty floor, but neither of them gave ground. Until Gyp, tossing aside the teachings of One-Round Luke, charged. Then Chuck backed away—and took a wallop that sent him sprawling. Down upon the pile of ferromanganese against which his heels had caught. Rough, jagged stuff it was, its crystals sparkling in the furnace light, and when he bounced to his feet again his back was tinted with red that mingled with his sweat. Then Gyp gave ground.

The crowd was no longer silent. Yells rang among the massive columns and echoed down from the blackened roof, the cry of men gone savage. Cries of the partisanship that had grown during the weeks; sympathetic grunts—the unwitting noises of the man-pack. And the fight went on and on.

The first tides of passion were now subsided. Caution made itself apparent; the blows were less demoniac. They were sparring for a knockout. Great lungs began to wheeze, mouths to gape open. But there was no quarter. Chuck rushed and struck, and Gyp went down. Now both were red behind and before. Gyp came up slowly, but he came up, and there was a vast hush until he did. A hush that was broken by one shrill voice demanding passageway—Florrie.

Florrie, a woman, intruding on this stamping ground of men! Bucking frenziedly against a solid wall of men like a butterfly against a house! Her sex unregarded, for here was a fight—the meeting of two strong men. What use for a woman here? None! Her work had been finished long ago; her name was as nothing.

She won through, but only by using weasel's tactics, and found a place, unnoticed, in the front row. Her frivolous dress was mussed and torn, but her eyes were bright. And her noises as the fight went on were akin to those of the men. For whom did she screech? No one knew, or cared, if anyone heard. They were watching a battle.

How long did it last? No one knew. Long enough to set back a certain attempt at a record for tonnage, for not a furnace received attention until it was over. They were going almost sluggishly now, for such a terrific combat was more than even steel men could stand forever. They went down oftener, came up more slowly. And be it said to the credit of them both not one unfair blow was struck. At last they both went down. Chuck first, with Gyp waving for a second above him, to crash motionless across him. The fight was over.

Then willing hands fought for a chance to help, a confusion of voices babbled until Jock took charge. The water tank, a white-coated man, water, the strong smell of ammonia—and two strong men came back into the world again. They were battered, but they could see after a fashion between lids that were puffed. Their heads wabbled strangely upon husky necks, but they jiggled them around until they were facing each other. Which one of them forced his puffed lips into an imitation grin first? It must have been a tie. Two glasses appeared in the doctor's hands, the amber liquid they contained throwing an aroma into the crowd that caused silent tongues to pass over dry lips. The warriors drank and found their voices.

"I'm licked, Gyp. Good job." Not much of a voice, but every man in the crowd heard it, so breathlessly silent were they.

"So'm I."

"Can't both be licked," with a poor excuse for a grin.

"Sure can."

Another draw. No more speech possible, for the doctor compelled silence by setting to work on their battered faces with cloths and pungent lotions. They both relaxed, after the manner of men who know how to restore drained vitality after a long siege of work, closed their eyes and permitted strong hearts to pump energy through them again. The doctor squatted back on his heels at last and they had strength enough to sit up.

"Now what?" said Chuck. His voice was clearer. "On your way?"

It was as if the two of them were alone; they saw none of the ring of listening faces that surrounded them. This was still a matter of their own.

"Naw," growled Gyp. It was weak, but a growl, from the one who heretofore had done nothing but grin. "I'm makin' steel, you fathead, what ya think?"

A retort that gave Chuck energy enough to scramble to his feet. He gave an imitation of a laugh, held out a hand that shook.

"A-a-h, what you know 'bout steel?" The jeer was poor; it was husky.

Gyp took the hand, pulled himself to his feet. One wreck lifted another, and they faced each other's puffy eyes.

"I can give you a run, you slag-tappin' furnace-nurser," retorted Gyp. "Gimme a job on your furnace an' see, buddy."

It was fortunate then that Jock Campbell took charge, for that last word had defeated Chuck.

"Yer on his furnace right now," he rumbled, and his great voice echoed, "why don't ye try it?"

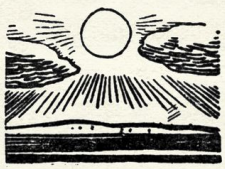
Nothing said about getting their time; nothing of that sort expected from this wise old master of men. Then he turned on the crowd. "Clear out, ye scuts, we're makin' steel today!"

Grins and shuffling of feet, but not in departure, for the mob was clearing the way for two battered men who helped each other to a bench. Their arms were interlocked, their feet stumbled, and the puffed lips were stretched unmercifully into sheepish grins.

"Beat it!" bellowed Jock, with a great display of anger. "Git back to yer furnaces, ye no'count shovel-slingers! Clear this floor! Here's a couple o' steel men wantin' to go to work!"

They scattered reluctantly, their heads still turned on the two men who were sinking down upon a welcome bench, their tongues loosened for a mounting buzz of talk. Who said it? Whose voice rose above the hum with a wail of farewell? It might have been Bat Logan's, but nobody knew, he used his voice so seldom.

"Yeah, steel men," it said. "Got a lot of 'em 'round here, but where's 'at —— good story-teller?"



Squareheads

BY

JOHN WEBB

I LIKE a squarehead crew. I've been with them all—wops, chinks, Japs, Curaçao blacks, San Blas Indians, Liverpool Irish, Chilians, Finns, Bluenoses and Americans, white and black—and I like squareheads. They're loyal. And efficient. And fearless. All-around dependable. When you're sent swinging aloft in a bowline, it's a comfort to know that the man who is to handle your line on deck is a squarehead. You know you won't come down so fast you'll splash all over the deck.

There's nothing brilliant about the scows; quite the contrary. They're slow, stolid, plodding. They don't leap eagerly at their work; they go at it slowly, but with a grim earnestness, and you'd be surprized at the vast amount they can accomplish between turn-to and knock-off. And the thoroughness of it! Real good work; no Irish pendants, no "holidays," no unwhipped rope-ends, no slackly belayed falls, no gear left adrift about the decks. And then, the day's work done, or the long watch at an end:

"Vell, Ay tank Ay go haf goot sleep. Yah!"

If they ever get tired, they never show it; if they're ever dissatisfied, they keep it to themselves, hiding their feelings behind those big square, plank-like faces that never change, come wind or rain or payday. Give a scow an order and you may safely forget it; the thing is as good as done—and done well. Put one at the wheel, give him the course, and if the ship sinks he'll go down with his big hands gripping the spokes and his eyes trying to read the compass-card. That's the kind of men squarehead seamen are. Men who never do a poor job of work or leave one unfinished; men you can depend on. If they do go on an occasional good drunk in port, they do it in their own time and next morning they're on the job same as ever, a little bleary eyed, perhaps, but just as thorough and dependable.

Dependable! There was Ole—pronounced Oola, as near as I can get it. It was winter, and a filthy night. We were rounding a point of land and I sent Ole to keep lookout on the focsle for a certain buoy. We missed the buoy, but other data soon told me we were by it—and I forgot Ole, standing there in the pitchy blackness for'ard.

Now about half the time that fo'c'slehead was buried beneath icy seas; they thundered over, flung spray high in the air and festooned the rigging with ice pendants. The bitter wind pierced through the heaviest clothing. Though high and dry behind the bridge weathercloth I shivered and groaned and counted the minutes to the end of the watch. A little before four in the morning there came a hoarse bellow from the focslehead—

"Light on de sta'b'rd bow, sir!"

It was Ole, reporting a ship before I saw it. Almost four hours he had stood there, wet to the skin and caked with ice. He had been ordered to stay there till recalled—and he did! No one but a squarehead would, or could, have done it. I called him to the bridge. I felt as if I were giving orders to a better man than I, and almost apologized. But his big flat face was as expressionless as ever.

"Vell, sir, Ay tank Ay go haf goot sleep. Yah!"

Fine, stout-hearted men, the squareheads! I like them.

LYMAN BRYSON

The Elephant with the

HEE-WAY, which means "the One with the Crooked Tail," was the best beast in the tribe. The whole village was proud of him. If any man from Ban Dong, where the crooked-tailed one was owned, met strangers on the road through the forest, he always told them a good many things about Hee-way before they hooted him for a liar and drove him out. An elephant could be wise, of course, but not so wise as that!

Ban Dong lies a hundred miles from the coast of Indo-China, behind that line of hot yellow mountains seen from the decks of passing ships by travelers who think the world comes to an end somewhere between Hongkong and Singapore. The only white men who know Ban Dong exists are French inspectors of forests who wander by sometimes and those who came in the old days had to listen to tales about Hee-way. The tactful ones admitted that even in the white man's country there had never been an elephant to compare with him.

Hee-way was tall and well-tusked and his crooked tail, twisted in some jungle fight, was his only flaw—unless perhaps a stickler for points might notice that he had a white spot on one toe-nail of his left hind foot. Otherwise his toe-nails were the smoothest black. He was captured by a Ban Dong man named Tu-op who earned thereby the title of great hunter, although before that time Tu-op had taken only three prizes in seven seasons' hunting. Tu-op rode him and worked him, pushing his great square gray head around with a bare knee, or tickling him in the ears with a handy toe and talking to him all the while in the Moi language which elephants naturally understand.

Hee-way accepted only very gentle treatment. When he paused and cropped up a tuft of grass with his trunk and meditatively knocked it against his foreleg to shake the dirt from the roots, he did not like being hurried. But he soon learned the ways of his master so well that he needed little guiding even in the hunt. He was so peaceful in disposition that Tu-op's ten-year-old son could ride him and drive him around with shrill cursing. Tu-op's wife treated him, except for his inconvenient size, as if he had been the cat. This all made him more wonderful in the eyes of Tu-op, who was an affectionate man and careful of his family. However, Hee-way was the elephant who brought trouble and sorrow into Ban Dong, He knew too much and forgot too little.

In the fifth year of Hee-way's life as the friend and servant of Tu-op, when his fame was well-earned and spread all over the Moi country, a great taking of new elephants was planned by the old chief who was no great hunter himself

Writes about FRENCH INDO-CHINA

Crooked Tail

but had the right, nevertheless, to say when new enterprises should be launched. There was a great festival and a good deal of rice alcohol was sucked up the bamboo pipes that stood in Ban Dong's liquor jars. The auguries for the hunt were promising.

Tu-op, as the greatest *pakam* of them all, had the right to supervise the ceremony by which their luck was prophesied. He held in careful hands a round bowl full of dry rice grains which had a burning candle upright in the middle. In prayerful silence, other hunters took little handfuls of the rice and threw them into the candle flame to see how many would stick in the melting tallow. By the fact that the candle got well covered they knew the hunting would be good and that the scout who had reported a wild herd in the brush beyond the big lake had told the truth.

Before the hunt could start they repeated their vows to Nget-Ngwal, the god of elephants, for the men of Ban Dong had a bargain with that deity of long standing. The old chief wore a sacred tusker's toe-nail hung round his neck in a silk band as token of the vow. To the chief's great-great-great-grandfather Nget-Ngwal had made a promise. The tribe was to have forever all the elephants they wanted, provided they hunted for them of course, and provided they never killed one. They had always kept that bargain to their own profit and impious neighbors who slew wild elephants for ivory were looked upon with horror.

They got ready for the hunt by plastering the forehead of every elephant with chopped raw buffalo flesh and when the drums of the village gave the signal Hee-way led the procession into the deep jungle. Tu-op rode on his sagacious servant's head and he was bravely dressed in a new turban and his best embroidered jacket. Like a lance in the air, his lasso handle with the looped rope in the end waved before him. Behind him, on Hee-way's rump, was his rope holder—his sister's son, Mungye. Tu-op was looking forward to the day when his own son could ride there with him.

Little Mungye had no special costume as the one rag *sampot* around his loins was what he always wore. As rope holder, he had no other way to show that he too was a mighty *pakam* than by riding farther out on the elephant's rear than any other rope holder in the procession, clinging above Hee-way's twisted tail by sheer pertinacity. When Tu-op made a catch, it was Mungye's business to slide off and tie the other end of Tu-op's lasso to a well-anchored tree before the noosed elephant discovered what had happened to him. Then Tu-op would drive Hee-way off to a safe distance and Mungye would scuttle

into the brush while the new elephant tore up that end of Indo-China in criticism of the ways of men.

As long as you are still in the neighborhood of home, when the drums of the old men and the good-luck cries of the women left in the village are still ringing behind you and the dust of the Ban Dong clearings is still in your nostrils, the beginning of a hunt is a very gay affair. Afterward you go into the jungle. It is like a green darkness and it is very hard to tell what things are moving around you just out of sight. You may have been there before, you may have had all your life long the curtain of the brush near you at the edge of the village clearing, but that doesn't make going into it easy. River tribes may live in *sampans* all their lives but they don't get to be crocodiles by being near the water. Even the beasts, even intelligent elephants like Hee-way, always act a little uneasy for the first day or so, bothered perhaps by the scent and echoes of old freedom. Tu-op talked about the jungle to Mungye as they tore their way through in order to laugh at the fears which Tu-op said other men might feel.

It may have been out of consideration for the uneasiness of the other hunters that Tu-op led the hunt near a village by the river. The place looked strangely quiet as the men of Ban Dong came up and paused on the other bank. No men were in sight and two women by the nearest hut were talking idly instead of working as they should have been. There was a sound of a girl singing that came from somewhere near. Tu-op drove Hee-way into the river but before he had wet his hind feet a shrill scream commanded them to stop. A girl ran out of a little shelter of *nipa* leaves on the bank.

"You can see, can't you," she shouted at Tu-op who turned to stare at her, "that our men are gone on a hunt and we want no strangers to disturb us? Why should you come here and spoil our luck?"

Tu-op kept staring at her and little Mungye, who was nearer, stared also from his lookout on Hee-way's rump, but he could see nothing specially interesting about her. The others were coming up slowly behind them. Mungye expected Tu-op to laugh at the idea of any woman's daring to tell a mighty *pakam* to stop. But the leader of the Ban Dong hunt kept on staring and Mungye, anxious to acquire the manners of a hunter, followed his example and stared too, with great ferocity.

When Tu-op spoke his voice was not fierce. He explained that he had not known the men of this village were on a hunt, otherwise he would have been more thoughtful. He said he hoped the auguries were good and that they would come back with many new elephants. He asked the girl if her man also was in the hunt, but she laughed and ran back into her shelter so they knew she was not married but was still in the shadows.

Tu-op gave Hee-way a dig of the knee behind his left ear-flap and made him pull his big tree-like forelegs out of the mud. At the command of this strange young woman the Ban Dong hunt turned away from the friendly village and went back into the lonesomeness of the jungle again.

There were three days more of green darkness and they got farther and farther away from home before they had wind of the wild herd. After that there was no rest, no time to doze in the first dusk and watch the brush for cats' eyes gleaming. It was all unending pursuit. Tu-op kept his mount at a steady rocking pace along the tracks of the quarry and little Mungye, with the rope-end tucked firmly in his *sampot*, held on to Hee-way's hinder elevations wearily.

It was reported by a scout that the herd had a white bull at its head, which was improbable but vastly exciting. White bulls were not much good for working but they could always be sold down the river as curiosities. The wild herd, once aware that it was being followed, ploughed on through the jungle night and day, leaving its scent on the slow air and an evident track of broken vines and trampled undergrowth through the brush. The trees and bushes and hanging flowers

steamed and dripped in the afternoon rains which came down out of abruptly blackening skies. There was always danger, in their speed, that a man would be dragged off by a looped liana and get a hard fall.

In a wide half-circle the herd cut back toward the place where the hunters had first found it. The hunters had no doubt of a final capture. The renewed vows to Nget-Ngwal, god of elephants, and the grains of rice on the ceremonial candle were assurance of success. The bargain with Nget-Ngwal had always been kept on both sides: plenty of elephants for work and hunting, never any to kill.

Thanks to Hee-way's swiftness and good sense Tu-op was the first hunter to come within striking distance and the others were far behind. The pursued troup had turned sharply when going along the bank of the river and plunged across, but one fine young female hesitated. When she saw Hee-way charging out of the brush toward her, with the gayly accoutered Tu-op like a parrakeet on his head, and Mungye, like a determined wart on his rump, she was confused and instead of following the others she ran along the bank. For several miles Hee-way, wise elephant that he was, lumbered after her without urging or guidance from Tu-op. She was a splendid beast, tall in the shoulder although no more than half-grown, light gray in color and vigorous in spirit. Tu-op, being an optimist, was sure the toe-nails on her muddy feet would prove to be of the most distinguished black.

The pursued one kept to the bank instead of plunging into the brush again or turning off into the river as the others had done until Tu-op began to wonder just what Mungye could do with the other end of their rope if they did get near enough to cast the noose at her foot. The trees were not plentiful and there might be none handy when the critical moment arrived.

Then, ahead of them across a sharp bend in the river, Tu-op saw a little shelter hut of *nipa* leaves. The girl was standing before it; beyond her was the deserted village whose men were hunting also. The pursued young elephant went on toward the hut and Tu-op, urging Hee-way into his final speed, yelled to Mungye to look for a tree. He was going to cast his noose. The girl did not move.

The lasso went whistling through the air at the end of the skilfully swung lance and the noose fell perfectly. The young elephant felt herself seized by the hind foot and paused for a fatal instant. In that moment, Mungye had rolled down the cliff-like side of Hee-way and had knotted the holding end of the rope to a solid trunk. Mungye fled into the brush but the girl stood paralyzed.

After the first angry pause the noosed beast went straight on toward the hut. Tu-op, safe on Hee-way's head, and little Mungye both shouted to the girl to run. They yelled at the young elephant too, flinging threats and such insults as will make elephants turn and come at you if kept up long enough.

The rope was too long. The enraged captive rushed at the girl who still stood helpless with terror. Being a female, it did not drop to its knees and swing heavy tusks. It reached forward with its trunk and took the girl around the waist and lifted her from the ground.

Little Mungye was transfixed but Tu-op was down off Hee-way's head and running with his heavy knife in his hand. His bare feet made no sound. His knife, which had never been raised against an elephant before, hissed in the air and the beast was hamstrung. It threw the girl against the hut where she lay silent and crumpled and then plunged against the rope horribly. When it whirled upon him, Tu-op leaped over the taut rope to the other side and cut again, straight into the pit of the stomach where the hide is thin and penetrable. Moving within an inch of the threshing limbs of the beast and spattered all over with blood, he dragged the girl out of the way. She lay with her eyes closed, the copper brown of her skin gone pallid, but she breathed.

The wounded elephant trumpeted in

dismal agony and Hee-way answered from among the trees. Little Mungye was afraid to come near until the wounded one rolled over and wagged her head slowly and died. Hee-way came up swinging his trunk and sniffing in trouble. Tu-op stood for a long time, looking down on the first elephant he had ever struck with a knife, the first elephant to be killed by a man of Ban Dong since the oldest chief could remember. A sultry quiet, full of the smell of death, hung along the river.

At last Tu-op pulled the noose off the twitching foot and looked on while five old women came across from the village in a *sampan* and stooped over the girl. They set up a great cry but Tu-op made a gesture for silence.

"She is not dead," he told them. "Hurt—but not dead. It is my elephant that is dead."

The old women chattered wild questions, but Tu-op turned his back and went up to Hee-way's head by way of Hee-way's cleverly curved trunk and rode away. When little Mungye began to complain bitterly that they had lost their catch and had bad luck ahead of them now, he was told to live a few years longer before he dared to question a *pakam's* conduct. They joined the rest of the Ban Dong men, empty-handed. The rope holder noticed that his *pakam* said nothing to the others about what had happened at the river and he was wise enough to keep silent about it himself.

Seven newly acquired elephants went back with the herd to Ban Dong and all the way Tu-op was morose and ugly-tempered. He was disappointed, the others said, because he had for once in his life, in spite of being Hee-way's driver, failed to bring home a catch. Tu-op did not tell them what happened the first night after the killing of the young female to save the girl.

He was asleep in his little shelter by the camp-fire. It was only a tiny hut of stiff grass into which Tu-op crawled head first but it kept the dampness off his face while his bare feet stuck out toward the blaze. The other hunters were in a circle of similar shelters and the herd milled about in the near-by brush. The jungle was quiet after an hour or two of evening sounds. One captured elephant, tied between two members of the home herd so he could not charge or get away, pushed at his jailers obstinately and trumpeted sometimes in angry blasts which woke Tu-op from sleep. At last the trumpeting stopped and the *pakam* slipped away into dreams of great prowess and fat rice bowls.

He was awakened by something soft and hot brushing across his face. He shuddered—it was like the touch of a hand. He shook his head and rubbed his eyes, but when he remembered where he was he reached up to see whether a frond of grass from his shelter had fallen upon his face. Probably that, he concluded, and closed his eyes again. And again something soft and warm and stealthy went over his face. A cold sweat sprang out along the edge of his turban and he crawled out until his head was free of the shelter. Over him was a huge indistinct shape, black in the darkness and swaying ponderously. Toward him came something hot and breathing and touched him.

"Hee-way!"

He scrambled up and struck the elephant across the end of the trunk that swung toward him. Hee-way made a slow grunting sound and backed off.

Tu-op slept no more that night. No elephant in his knowledge had ever done such a thing before—approach his sleeping master and reach for him stealthily. As he lay there, sweating and uneasy, he could hear the rest of the herd milling restlessly. The obstinate captured one was trumpeting again, calling out in fear and resentment, hoping for rescue. He was calling perhaps to Nget-Ngwal, god of elephants, he who protected his own. Tu-op worked hard at trying to forget that one of Nget-Ngwal's own, in violation of the Ban Dong hunters' vow, was dead back there by the river.

He took counsel with nobody about all this. He let them go on thinking his

moroseness was only disappointment for poor luck in hunting. He tried to fool himself with the hope that Nget-Ngwal was sleeping somewhere, careless of what had happened.

The hunters came into Ban Dong with their string of seven new elephants and set up a triumphant chant at the edge of the clearing. They expected naturally that the old men and the women and children would come out with celebrating tom-toms and honor them as they deserved. The people came and made a partially satisfactory noise but they were full of questions and trouble.

"What has happened?" asked Tu-op's mother, who was a wise and impudent old woman. "Bad luck has been afflicting Ban Dong for many days. Tu-op's woman is sick and Mungye's mother is sick and Tu-op's boy fell out of a tree and there has been nothing but trouble. There must be a reason."

The hunters were taken aback by this tale of calamity. They crowded among their own women to make sure no trouble had come to their own compounds and almost forgot the glory of bringing in seven captures. They could not remember that anything unlucky had happened in the jungle. Tu-op sat on Hee-way's head, unable to speak. His mother pointed her finger at him and demanded again—

"What happened?"

As if in answer to her, Hee-way switched his crooked tail and swung his trunk up into the air and trumpted three times—answering her in the voice of Nget-Ngwal, the god of elephants!

Tu-op was so astonished and alarmed that he rolled to the ground and went straight to the chief.

"I am the one who has offended Nget-Ngwal," he confessed. "Let me be the one to expiate the wrong or the whole tribe of Ban Dong will have to pay."

He told how he had killed a young female elephant to save the life of a strange young woman.

They made way for Tu-op when he stumbled out of the chief's presence, drew back from him as a self-confessed criminal. Tu-op tore off his turban in despair and went to his own hut. Little Mungye stood aside from him also, not sure whether he shared the guilt or not but deciding to wait until judgment was pronounced before he took on more responsibility than he had to.

Tu-op's little son was sitting by the foot of the ladder into his home when his father came up. His cheeks, usually shining with the bright copper color of enthusiastic good health, were a sickly yellow. His hands lay slack at his sides. He rolled his eyes upward at his father but instead of shouting and making glad obeisances in honor of the return of a great *pakam* he only stared and two babyish tears of misery rolled down his cheeks. Tu-op did not speak but climbed up the notched bamboo into his hut.

Inside was a heavy smoke and Tu-op's wife lay on the mat with her face to the wall. The yellow *sampot* that wrapped her was crinkled with neglect and her hair was loose about her head.

Tu-op sat on his heels by her side.

After a long silence she turned and—just as her mother had done—demanded:

"What happened in the hunt? Who brought on the anger of Nget-Ngwal?"

"I did," answered her man.

A second time he had to tell the story of how he had killed a young female elephant to save the life of a strange young woman. A strange young woman! His wife got up on her hands and knees and crawled to the door. This was intolerable. She was too sick to curse him but she had strength to crawl down the ladder out of his house and Tu-op knew she would never come back. He sat on his heels and waited for the chief to call him for judgment. After an hour he heard a faint step in the doorway and saw that his son, pale and shaking, had climbed up to squat beside him. That gave Tu-op the only comfort he had.

When he called for judgment, Tu-op refused to tell his story again. He had made full confession twice; he stood waiting for his sentence.

The old chief sat on a block of teak and stretched out toward the murderer of elephants a palsied arm. He began to recite the ancient bargain with Nget-Ngwal made in the beginning of time. With his left hand he fingered in the silk around his neck where hung the black toe-nail, the sacred token of that bargain. In his shaking voice he chanted the old ritual of the laws, the *bidouway*—

"Elephants for the hunting, elephants for labor and for the household and for journeys, all these has Nget-Ngwal given you.

"Elephants of sagacity, elephants of strength, elephants of gentleness, all friends to the men of Ban Dong.

"The great Nget-Ngwal has given them; he has given his own in plenty and never a one shall suffer by the men of Ban Dong. Never a one shall die.

"He who has killed must expiate. He has broken the word of his fathers. He must pay for the blood of Nget-Ngwal's own elephants. He must pay."

The old chief recited the *bidouway* in a thick, ceremonial voice and the sweat ran on his wrinkled face as he struggled to hold his pose of fearful accusation.

All the people of the village were there, the men in the front rows were jostled out of their places by the women pressing in from the outer rim of the circle. Everyone was there except Tu-op's wife. Little Mungye was inconspicuously listening, trembling lest questions might be asked of him. When the ritual chant was done they were all quiet. The trees in the edge of the clearing rustled in a slow wind and in the midst of the silence came a loud *pop!* followed by a furious chattering. Some inquisitive monkey swinging high above them had dropped his dinner and was scolding about it. A parrakeet screeched and flew across from the roof pole of the chief's house to the forest.

Tu-op lifted his eyes from the ground and wiped his forehead with the back of his hand.

"And does the god of elephants think the life of a beast is more than the life of a woman?" he asked.

"A strange woman it was!" shrieked a thin voice, like a knife scraped on stone, from the outer edge of the crowd.

"Nget-Ngwal looks after his own," answered the chief wearily, for he was very old and he did not know what to do next.

"Then let Nget-Ngwal do his will with me," said Tu-op.

A shudder of pious fear rustled the crowd like a wind in the leaves.

The old chief clung to the silk-wrapped toe-nail on his breast and nodded his head.

"Let it be so," he pronounced, slowly. "The laws of Ban Dong can rest on the will of Nget-Ngwal. Let it be so."

Suddenly Tu-op found himself standing alone in the blinding sunlight, all alone, for the crowd had scattered muttering and the old chief had been carried back to his house. Tu-op waited for Nget-Ngwal to reach out of the jungle for him. The parrakeet flew back again to the roof-tree of the chief's hut and the hungry monkey slid down a liana to the ground to consider a foray into the village. But Nget-Ngwal was asleep and made no sign.

So Tu-op, after waiting in pious despair for the terrible mark of the god's displeasure, saw that he would have to go on living until Nget-Ngwal awoke and took notice of him. He went back to his hut where his fire had gone out and his sick son was lying on the mat gasping for his mother. No mother was there. Tu-op was a man without a wife. He had been fond of that woman, she was sometimes very pleasant and useful. From now on he would have Fear for his wife; but it could not last more than a few days at the worst.

The sleep of Nget-Ngwal was the sleep of a god, very long and careless. Tu-op did not eat for three days but he began to feel hungry and stirred up his fire. He went to his own mother and cornered her in her hut, where she could not run away from him because he was an unclean sinner, and persuaded her to come and take care of the boy. She was wise about medicines and balms for pain.

A MONTH passed, two months, three months, while Tu-op lost the pallor of his fear. At last he began to move about the village and when a friend of his fell off his mount and landed into the river, Tu-op was heard to laugh like a free man.

Time moves on and men and women are what they are and new scandals transpired in Ban Dong. The people of the Moi tribes, naturally, forget very little that is untrue but they can not think of many things at once. So the doom suspended over Tu-op passed out of mind. He even dared to come near his elephant again and found that the one with the twisted tail only looked at him cunningly out of reddish eyes. He commanded Hee-way to give him a stirrup up with his trunk and Hee-way obeyed. From the *pakam's* seat on Hee-way's head Tu-op surveyed the world again and went about his ordinary business.

One day he rode off into the brush. Two days later his small son wandered dismally into the village market and told that his grandmother was wailing. Tu-op was lost; he had trusted himself in the jungle and the vengeance forgotten for months had struck at last. He had ridden off on the one with the twisted tail and he would never come back.

All the old women in the village joined Tu-op's mother in her mourning and there was a good deal of argument about the piety of it. If Tu-op were really paying the penalty for defying Nget-Ngwal it might be a bad thing for the tribe if too much attention was given to his loss. That might seem to Nget-Ngwal like rebellion against his justice.

The old women sat in the thick smoke of Tu-op's hut where a newly severed buffalo head of sacrificial meat hung on the wall and dripped thick blackish blood to a puddle on the floor. His mother stood in a corner and performed a dance for the dead, holding her bent body very still and waving her skinny arms in gestures of supplication to the spirit of her vanished son. She was not deterred by considerations of piety. She was quite as much afraid of Tu-op's ghost as of the possible wrath of a jungle spirit.

When, in the midst of this slow dance to the sound of chanting by her cronies, his mother saw Tu-op's head and shoulders come through the door and toward her through the smoke, she closed her eyes and quickened her prayers to ward him off.

"Be kind, O spirit of our noble son," she wailed. "Accept these gifts of buffalo flesh and chosen grains of rice. Be kind and leave us in peace to do honor to your memory. Leave us—"

"Silence, old woman!" roared the voice of Tu-op's ghost. "I am here and I have brought me a new wife."

He scattered the old women and drove them all out of his door so they tumbled down without getting a chance at the bamboo ladder. He acted not at all like a ghost but like a fierce, obstinate man. He was not in the least concerned when the mourners picked themselves up from the hard ground and stared with scandalized astonishment on the strange young woman who waited timidly to be accepted in Tu-op's house.

He continued to be brutal in silencing his mother and in answering questions afterward which the village elders saw fit to ask him about his bride. They put his irreverence and stubbornness down to his well-known impiety. If it had not been known and remembered that he was a doomed man, living only in a truce with Nget-Ngwal, and likely at any instant to be taken off by a fearful mysterious punishment, the elders would have objected more seriously to his unceremonious introduction of a strange woman into the village.

As a matter of fact, it was not stubbornness that made Tu-op talk as little as possible about his new wife. It was the disturbing memory of what had happened one night in the brush on the way home. He had been wakened by a whisper from the woman who lay beside him.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"I have been asleep," he answered,

"and dreaming of you. I did not speak, did I?"

"You touched my face with your hand and breathed hot on my eyes," she said.

Tu-op's hair crept on the back of his neck. He saw, like a swaying banyan-tree above them, the gray bulk of his elephant. Hee-way was rocking back and forth, lifting first one foreleg, then the other in a ponderous dance and his trunk was waving. The *pakam* leaped with his knife and slashed the beast twice in the trunk cruelly. For a moment Hee-way stood against his master and lifted his right fore leg as if to trample him, but when Tu-op thrust at him again he turned and hobbled into the brush. His trunk was streaming with blood as it did in the hunting festivals when the sacrificial meats were plastered on his forehead. All night the elephant moved restlessly while Tu-op sat on his heels by the girl who cried and could not sleep. In the morning, except for his wounds, Hee-way seemed to be himself again but Tu-op's woman was afraid to ride him. They walked the rest of the way home to Ban Dong while the one with the twisted tail followed behind like a dog in disgrace.

This memory made Tu-op reticent and gloomy when they tried to question him about the wisdom of bringing a strange woman into the village.

"I have had my quarrel with Nget-Ngwai," he said, "and he stalks me in the night time. What I do is not for others to complain of."

Cunningly he concealed the rest of the truth, but he announced that he would not hunt again, nor did he want to travel on an elephant. He would sell Hee-way, the best beast known to anybody, for a small price. There were plenty of men anxious to buy Hee-way and he got his price, which was not small but outrageous. Hee-way was led away to a hut on the other side of the village, as far as possible from Tu-op's house.

Tu-op and his new wife and his small son settled down to life. He had very little to do with other villagers because they were uneasy in his company. However, they were curious about him and watched him sometimes from a distance, hoping no doubt to be present when he was struck by lightning or carried off by a mystic red elephant appearing from the brush. Tu-op's former wife, who lived now with her mother, said a good many unkind things about her successor, but the strange woman was industrious and quiet and no one could find any fault with her. In any case she also would be destroyed when the time came for Nget-Ngwal to wake up and take his revenge.

The man who had purchased Hee-way came once to complain of the elephant's behavior.

"The one with the crooked tail," he said, "is the best beast in the tribe, but he is sick for your house. Twice he has wandered off at night and my son has had to follow him across the village to your place to get him back again."

The man was surprized by Tu-op's rage. The *pakam* shook both arms in the air and tore at his turban.

"Keep that beast at home," he cried. "Chain him up at night! Pound his ears! If once he is allowed his own way he will be dangerous—"

"Yes, Tu-op," answered the purchaser, "but he is a good—"

"He is a worthless rogue unless he is mastered," said Tu-op with great vehemence. "Above all, do not let him come to my house in the night time—ever again."

There was a bad light in his eyes when he said this and the purchaser of Hee-way was frightened. Remembering that Tu-op had reason to understand the elephant's temperament, he decided this advice must be good. When Hee-way wandered away again his new master treated him severely. Hee-way became sullen and difficult to manage.

Sometimes, in spite of the easy way in which life went on, Tu-op wondered whether Nget-Ngwal was really still asleep. One night, almost a year after his new wife came to live in Ban Dong, he had a dream. To an honest Moi, a dream is only another kind of reality. Tu-op thought the

god of elephants called to him. He saw, in his dream, a great red elephant's head push through the door of his house and come toward him, floating in the air with uplifted trunk. He tried to shrink and to scream as even a brave man could be forgiven for doing at such a time but he had no voice. The scarlet visitation had the vindictive eyes of a jungle spirit and those eyes glowed and grew like living coals of fire. The voice that called to Tu-op was a low, terrible trumpeting and its meaning was perfectly understood. It meant death. He felt a hot wind on his face and a soft hot touch on his mouth—

Out of that dream Tu-op burst into consciousness with a muffled yell, and a desperate convulsion of all his limbs. He was lying on his mat, covered with sweat, gasping and weak, and the dawn was at his door. Over in the corner, curled up in childish sleep, was his son. The mat at his side was empty. As Tu-op's mind cleared he realized that this was as it should be, the mat was empty because, like a good wife, she was up and about her business with the first slivers of light through the eastward trees.

The *pakam* shook himself and shuddered. He rejoiced that he had succeeded in waking up in time but he wondered whether he would ever dare sleep again. The careless Nget-Ngwal was taking notice of him at last and it would be natural for the god to come for him like that, in the form of a night monster.

"Some morning," thought Tu-op, "they will find my body on the mat, I shall be dead and probably marked with a sign.

Tu-op did not want to die. There had been a time, in his earlier disgrace, when his son was puny and scared and the boy's mother had deserted him, when the whole tribe looked sidewise at him, that had made death seem a grateful escape. But since the day when he had gone out on Hee-way and brought back the girl from the other village to be his new wife, he had been able to bear his troubles. She was more important to Tu-op than the best elephant in the tribe and there are not many women in the world who could stand a comparison like that. Tu-op had had to beat her once or twice when he first brought her home because he found her mourning to go back to her own village, away from the sneers of the Ban Dong old women. She had taken the beatings in good spirit and recovered from her homesickness. No other woman was so swift and silent and skilful in the house as she was. She was kinder to his son than the boy's mother had ever been and the boy was getting fat and insolent and manly—ready soon to go on his first hunt. She could sing more songs and sing them for more long drowsy hours in the late afternoons than any love-sick girl.

Beyond all these sensible considerations which a self-respecting man like Tu-op could avow without shame there was something more. She touched his heart. She made him tremble with emotion sometimes when he came home and saw her sitting there waiting for him, slim and silent and dutiful. Her skin was smooth brown and she always wore a red flower braided into her shining black hair. She was gentle, probably because she knew she was the cause of his trouble. Her eyes were not gay but her smile was a marvelous thing to see.

Tu-op lay on his back, chilled by the sweat of terror cooling on his bare breast, and thought that life would be a pleasant thing to keep. A narrow shaft of sunlight came in at the angle of the door and made the foot-worn bamboo strips of his floor shine pleasantly. Outside in the village lanes was the early morning quiet.

Tu-op heard a shrill cry of terror and pain. It seemed to come from the river and after it he heard his own name called. For a moment, he thought it must be a dream again but there was the sunlight in the door and his son sleeping in the corner shadow. All around him was the impressive familiarity of his waking world. He sat up. The cry came again and he knew the voice of his own woman.

His knife was at his side by the wall and

he seized that before he scrambled to the door and dropped to the ground. He could not see any one at the bank of the river; that is, not any people, but there was the gray bulk of an elephant with a twisted tail, standing in the mud and intently busy with something under him.

As Tu-op ran upon him, Hee-way lifted his head and fixed his old master with reddish, blazing eyes. Under his forefoot, pressed down into the ooze, was a form in a blue garment, Tu-op recognized the *sampot* of his wife. He was not sure she still moved under the beast's foot.

With the great yell of a hunter, Tu-op sprang at the elephant's head. Hee-way swung at him sidewise and rolled him to the ground, Hee-way's eyes went back to the woman under his foot and he pressed again, not impetuously but with savage intelligent slowness, enjoying the crushing of the soft body into the river ooze.

When Tu-op ran up again Hee-way had to move his feet to reach for him but he would not leave his prey and the *pakam* avoided his trunk. Tu-op drew back, measured his distance and ran behind. He splashed into the water, swinging his knife upon the best elephant that ever lived, and hamstrung him with one blow. There was a terrible trumpet of agony. Hee-way lifted his fore foot from the woman and tried to turn but his hind leg crumpled under him and he went down with a great splash, helpless. His heavy blood mixed with the yellow water and he threshed his head about in the mud. Tu-op waited a moment for his chance and cut once more, in the throat.

Then he took up the woman's limp form and carried her to the bank. He could not tell whether she was alive or dead; her face was bloody and her eyes closed.

Men and women came running out of all the houses of Ban Dong and pressed around Tu-op. They saw his woman and heard the death gasps of Hee-way in the water. Out of the confusion one old woman cried—

"Tu-op has killed again!"

The *pakam* stood straight and stared at those nearest him like a man about to run amok. His knife was swinging slowly in his hand. He grasped it firmly and walked toward the dying Hee-way. The beast's head was sunk in the water and only an occasional shudder moved him. His master leaped to his head and stood there waving his knife. The people on the shore were dumb with horror.

"Where is Nget-Ngwal?" shouted Tu-op. "I served him until he threatened me. I broke the vows. I have no wish to live any longer. Let him take me now. Let him dare to come in the light and not as a bodyless red elephant in my dreams and stifle me with a hot touch. Let him strike now. I have killed twice, I am ready."

There was not a sound on the shore. The people all pushed together and some hid their faces lest they be blinded by a flash of lightning. An old man tried to run away but his knees would not hold him and he fell to the ground. Away off, across the village, the old chief was hurrying up carried by four panting men, trying to see out of his blind old eyes and fumbling at the sacred toe-nail in the silk sling around his neck.

"I am ready," repeated Tu-op.

He looked across the heads of the people and saw his own hut. His son was standing in the doorway, just awakened out of sleep, hesitating and alarmed. A wave of pain went over the hunter that was like the last shudder of the beast beneath him.

"Let him strike!" shouted Tu-op in the voice of a warrior. "I am not afraid. I am not afraid of the god of beasts. Let him strike!"

He waved his knife in an insulting gesture of defiance.

"Where is this god of elephants? Let him come."

Still there was silence. The nearest edge of the brush seemed to be breathing a night mist out over the bright sunlight on the river. The sky was unbroken blue.

Tu-op leaped up and threw his arms above his head.

"Where is this skulking god who hides from a man? I have slain his elephants

twice. I have slain and I have paid the price in the blood of my woman. Let him take me if he can."

Still there was a silence. A puff of wind rippled the water over the inert beast's body under the *pakam's* feet. Suddenly Tu-op turned toward the jungle and threw his knife, across the stream, into the green wall. It disappeared silently as if snatched from the air. Nget-Ngwal did not come.

Tu-op stepped down from his perch and strode to the bank. They parted before him, awed, when he took the muddy form of his wife in his arms and walked away from them to his own house.

His son knelt beside him when he wiped the bruised face of the woman. Together they watched until a short painful sigh shook her and her eyelids fluttered.

Some one called from the foot of their ladder. The hunter paid no attention but his son went to the door. The one outside was little Mungye who had run to tell that a great council was called to decide what should be done to protect the village from further disaster. Tu-op heard his son say to Mungye—

"Go back and tell the old men of Ban Dong that my father and I have defied Nget-Ngwal and we still live."

"But they say," protested little Mungye, "that never again will they be able to capture elephants that are needed."

"Tell the old men," answered Tu-op's son, while the father listened, his eyes still on the face of his woman, "that there will be elephants taken as there were in the old days when my father hunted on the one with the twisted tail. Tell them I will take elephants myself this year."

With great dignity the boy came back into the house and let Mungye carry that message as he would. Tu-op knew his woman would live and he put his hand on his son's shoulder.

That was the end of it. Tu-op has never hunted since but he is still regarded as a great *pakam* because of his mighty heart. He is given first drink through the bamboo tube from the jug of rice wine when the hunt is planned and the signs are being consulted. When the hunt is gone into the brush, with his son very boldly near the front of it and Mungye acting as a trustful lieutenant, Tu-op sits at home under his palm-thatched porch.

His wife, who limps badly and isn't really worth much now because her labors will always be halting, tends his pipe and his fire. Tu-op is out of the hunt before his time but he and his woman seem to be contented. She still sings and has made a song of her own about her regret for bringing trouble to her husband. It ends with a prayer of thankfulness because she was permitted to bear so much of the suffering herself.

There are some old women in the village, however, who say that Tu-op can never be sure what may happen to him; no one can be certain that the breaking of vows to Nget-Ngwal, even by so great a *pakam* as Tu-op, have been expiated with so little pain.

A Newcomer to our pages

LAWRENCE ROCKWELL

in

A Steady Job

"NO," SAID "BALDY," "if you want a steady job, don't be a newspaperman. Rottenest job on earth."

Baldy was consoling young William Harrison Hoffman, the cub, who had just received word that from Tuesday night next he might consider himself a free agent, so far as the *Times-Herald* was concerned. The two others of the force sitting with William Harrison and Baldy in the Bon Ton Café had tacitly turned over to Baldy the job of consolation. That was the way Baldy was.

"Now, just look at me," continued the consoler, having rapidly engulfed another of the Bon Ton's famous sinkers. "Fired from six papers and quit eight more, and now in my sere and yellow—" Baldy was thirty-five—"reduced to working on this sheet—" and he waved his hand contemptuously across the narrow street to the building where the *Times-Herald* presses were roaring. "Only reason I haven't resigned is I couldn't save enough to leave town. But soon it will be warm enough to ride the rods, and then I'll be on my way to God's country."

His face took on the rapt expression of the Texan who, far from the Rio Grande, recalls for a moment the blessed sand and sage-brush of his native State.

The others in the party remained silent, the cub still sulking, the other two watching with carefully hidden curiosity the gradual unfolding of Baldy's technique.

Baldy himself took up the shaving-mug coffee-cup affected by the Bon Ton and took a long draught his eyes fixed on William Harrison. The boy's face showed no change and, lowering the mug, the soliloquist continued:

"Still and all, it might be worse. I've known men to sit so long on a steady job their pants just naturally rusted fast and they were scared to move. And that's worse than being fired once in a while. To tell the truth, I never saw but one steady job I really cottoned to, and that was Manuel's, down in Guamalpa. But there wasn't a chance for me there. Manuel had that bull-tied."

He paused for another swallow. Again there was a silence, but a silence of a different sort. The cub was looking at the older man with real interest, and the other two were arranging themselves in attitudes of comfort, as men do when a real story is in prospect.

"You know I spent some years of my young manhood down in the 'opera bouffe' countries, as our all-wise editorial writers call them, under the burning Tropic of Cancer. I guess you boys have heard me tell some of my experiences there," he looked around apologetically.

"No place for a young man, either. I was lucky to get back to the States. Young man, go West, East, or North—but don't go to the Tropics."

He fixed a stern eye on William Harrison.

"You fellows have heard me mention my friend Jameson, the Britisher with the timber concession? Well, you may remember he had his wife with him. That's a pretty good indication of a man's character down there. If you ever go, take your wife."

He glanced once more at the cub.

"The Jamesons had a house in Guamalpa and a little plantation in the hills a few miles out. That was for the hot weather. Guamalpa is the hottest town on earth.

"Mrs. Jameson would stay in town while her husband was out looking after the timber, and when he came in they would run out to the *finca*. They had a great reputation for hospitality among the white folks, and I had often wanted to visit them there. I had met Mrs. Jameson a few times, and admired her. She had the charm and poise of the well-bred Englishwoman and something besides that made all the boys like and respect her and she did a lot in her quiet way to keep them straight. Down there a fellow has to see a white woman once in a while to remember what they're like.

"Well, one summer I was in Guamalpa on a bit of business such as a consul always has to attend to—you knew I was a vice-consul—and of course I had to go at the hottest time of the year. But I was in luck. I had scarcely left my bags at the hotel the first morning and started out on the street when I ran into Jameson.

"Of course he insisted that I run out and stay with them. Their place was so close that I could run in every morning and do a little business and get back before the heat was at its worst. And he didn't have to ask me twice.

"It was pretty hot even then—this was about ten o'clock—but we stopped at the hotel to have something to keep us cool on the way out. One reason for Jameson's success was his ability to drink like a Latin. Most Englishmen and Americans in the tropics either leave it alone or drink themselves to death. But in this, as in all other matters, so far as I had come to know Jameson, I had found him to have absolute self-control. He had more than the ordinary Englishman's geniality too, so that he was really well-liked down there.

"Well, after cooling off we stopped just long enough for Jameson to mail some letters, and then started for the *finca*. We were both pretty jolly as we rode along, I at having escaped two broiling weeks in the hotel and Jameson at the idea of having me out with them, though perhaps even more at the fact that the letters he had just mailed had put the final touches to an arrangement by which he had straightened out a bad kink in his business.

"It seems, as he told me riding out, that one of the politicians named Rodriguez, a bad egg, had been causing him a lot of trouble in his exporting of mahogany, hoping to pull down a nice bit of graft. But Jameson had refused to come across, and by certain negotiations higher up, had had the muzzle put on Rodriguez.

"I had heard a great deal of this grafter. and I asked Jameson if he wasn't afraid Rodriguez might have him attacked by some of his ruffians, as he had the reputation of using violence whenever it suited his purposes. But Jameson had no fear of this. He had great confidence in his British citizenship as protection against anything of that kind.

"After we had discussed the matter at some length, Jameson changed the subject and began to talk about his wife. He idolized the woman. He realized what a sacrifice she was making in living under conditions here, but he hoped within a few months now to take her back to England. He expected to manage his business from London, with an occasional trip back here to keep his eye on things.

"At length we had climbed the hills and were almost in sight of the *finca*. Jameson spurred on his horse and took the last turn at a gallop. But as we rounded the curve we saw at the first glance that something was wrong. On the veranda

of the pleasant villa, nestling against the opposite hillside a quarter of a mile away, two men were pacing up and down with rifles in their hands. They were natives, evidently servants. Without a word Jameson dug his spurs in the horse's sides and I followed him. As soon as the men saw us they dropped their guns and came running toward us.

" '*Dónde 'sta la señora?*' shouted Jameson, as he came in earshot.

" '*Adentro! Adentro!*' called back the men in the peculiar whining tone of that region.

"Before he could ask further questions the door flew open and a woman ran to the veranda railing and waved her hand. It was Mrs. Jameson.

" 'Thank God!' exclaimed Jameson. Dashing past the men he guided his horse through a narrow gate and up the path to the steps. Springing off, he ran up the steps and caught her in his arms.

"I meantime dismounted at the gate. Unable to make anything of the hysterical explanations of the servants in their dialect, I walked up the path. When I reached the porch I found Jameson, pacing up and down, clenching and unclenching his hands. His face was pale with anger.

"Mrs. Jameson, who was entirely composed and smiling, extended me her hand. 'How do you do?' she said. 'My husband is so busy killing Indians he can't even welcome you. We are very happy to have you with us.'

"Recalled to himself by her words, Jameson turned to me. 'Some scoundrel shot at her,' he said abruptly. 'Shot at her while she was sitting here on the veranda. I know who's behind it. And I'll get the Indian, and some day I'll get the other fellow.' His face grew dark with rage. 'Dirty scoundrel, to shoot at a woman.'

"Turning to his wife, in a gentler voice he said, 'Alice, get ready to ride back to town with us at once!' Then he turned back to me. 'Sorry, old man, not to give you the cool tub and the dinner I promised. But you see how it is. This must be attended to at once.'

"Though I wondered what measures he might take, I protested my willingness to forego the visit.

"He hardly seemed to hear my reply.

" 'I never thought he would dare,' he said. 'Of course it is Rodriguez. But that he would give orders to shoot at a woman! The Indian would hardly have done that without orders. When I get hold of that Indian I'll get the truth out of him,' and his face darkened again.

"I was amazed at his assurance, and asked him how he expected to capture and identify the assailant.

" 'Oh, I'll get him all right. The comandant at Guamalpa is hand in glove with Rodriguez, and he knows that I know it. I'll scare him into delivering the fellow over to me. The trouble will be to get the truth out of the Indian. But I'll get it.'

"Privately I doubted very much his even getting hands on the fellow. If what he said was true, would the comandant put himself and Rodriguez in danger by giving Jameson any least chance of getting at the truth? My knowledge of the country made it seem improbable. I expected suave courtesy and great promises, but no accomplishment. The Indian would doubtless have 'escaped into the interior.' That was so easy!

"But I had reckoned without one factor on which Jameson relied, apparently with right. No sooner had we deposited Mrs. Jameson in their town house than he, ignoring her pleas not to be hasty, galloped off to the comandant, I with him. I had never seen him so apparently outside himself. The comandant, as I had expected, received us with the greatest of politeness, professed the utmost of indignation at the outrage, and promised immediate and effective action.

"But before he was well started with his speech Jameson interrupted him, 'Very well, then, I expect immediate action. If you don't have that Indian by nine o'clock tomorrow morning, I mean

by that, if I don't see him by nine o'clock tomorrow morning, I shall turn the whole affair over to the British consul.'

"The comandant looked at him sharply. There wasn't any doubt he meant it. and there wasn't any doubt from his expression that the comandant for some reason didn't want that to happen. With a low bow he replied, '*Muy bien, señor*, at nine o'clock tomorrow morning you shall see him.' "

Baldy paused long enough to light a cigaret he had extracted from a badly battered case, and to take several luxurious puffs.

"Begins to sound like Dicky Davis, doesn't it? Well, some day I'll tell you one on him. But, as I was saying, I spent that night with the Jamesons. He was restless and irritable as I had never seen him, and she was trying to calm him down. We didn't turn in until late. When I saw him next morning, I doubted whether he had slept at all. And he was restless as a colt until it was time to start.

"The comandant, too, seemed not to have slept. For just as we were on the point of leaving the house a messenger appeared, inviting us in the comandant's name to accompany him to the prison. At the entrance to the *carcel* that gentleman was waiting for us, all smiles and civility. Would we be pleased to enter with him? We should see our man as he had promised.

"I never expect to forget the sight before us as we entered the gate. Looking through the dark passage to the patio which the prison surrounded I saw something which convinced me that despite Jameson's wariness they were to outwit him after all. For there at the other end of the patio, standing blindfolded, before an open grave, was an Indian. Jameson was to see his Indian, but never to question him!

"Across the patio from him stood a squad of ragged soldiers, their rifles leveled. Just as we entered the yard, the officer gave the word, the rifles barked, and the Indian collapsed and rolled into the open grave.

"The comandant turned to Jameson.

" 'So, señor, you have seen your Indian.' He bowed ceremoniously.

"Jameson's face was a study. Of the horror which the scene had inspired in me, he, more used to the tropics, felt nothing. His features showd a mixture of chagrin and of admiration for the cleverness of the trick, which even in his anger he could not overlook.

"He swung on his heel to face the comandant, and in a tone whose evenness equaled that of the other, he said:

" 'Señor comandant, accept both my thanks and my congratulations on your administration of justice—it is admirable at once in its speed and in its effectiveness.'

"And he strode out of the prison."

Baldy laid his hand against the outside of his coffee-cup, found it cool, and with a nod signaled the idle waiter to bring him a fresh one. The listeners stretched, looked at their watches, and at each other. Only the cub still seemed dissatisfied. Abruptly he asked—

"But, Baldy, what has all that to do with a steady job?"

"Why, that's so," said Baldy, looking up. "I almost forgot the point. Well, you see, it was this way. When Jameson turned to go out, and the comandant started after him, I took occasion to saunter across the patio. That Indian had looked strangely familiar to me. And my second shock of the day came when, peering over the edge of the grave, I saw sitting at the bottom just in the act of lighting a huge cigar, Manuel, the porter at the hotel. He told me it was the fourth time that year he had been executed. You see, being shot, when occasion required, to satisfy the demands of justice was his steady job."

Resuming HUGH PENDEXTER'S *The*

MY MISSION as advance scout for Forbes' expedition against Fort Duquesne had not been very well performed. True, I had found out that the spy I sought was the same Ensign Petny who had stolen my sweetheart, but I myself was virtually a prisoner of the Indians under a Frenchman, De la Rue, whom I had told that I was the Colonial fugitive from justice, Dandy Case.

I could have escaped, for my Cherokee friend Giga-tsuhli, or Bloody-Mouth, was free and had gained the good graces of the Indians, but I wanted to save Ann Beverly, her mother, mad Mercy, Mrs. Beverly's sister, and Arlington, a young man from Old England. There were two other prisoners, scoundrels both—Phindry, the half-red witch-doctor who had lured the Beverlys into danger, and Fincer, a sergeant from Forbes' army.

Fincer tried to escape, was recaptured, and would have been tortured had I not tricked the savages into killing him outright. Then Phindry ran away. It was high time for me, too, to escape, for soon De la Rue would find out who I was.

Fortunately Big Man, one of the Frenchman's Indians, was injured, with the result that our journey was delayed.

WHILE preparations for bringing in the wounded man were being made the Cherokee stretched out on the ground and rested. I sat beside him and impressed upon him the imperative need of escaping that night. He glanced toward the top of the ridge, where a strong east wind was pushing ugly clouds into view and said:

"Giga-tsuhli will ask help from the Red Man, the friend of the Thunderers, to send a strong storm. He will ask help from Tsulkalu,* the giant hunter of the Blue Ridge, who owns all the animals, to help us find a hiding-place. We must know where we can hide when we escape. The Good Black Things† will be asked to help us. They know many holes in the mountains. They are angry at the Far Indians for killing two of them without asking their pardon. If we were in the Great Smoky Mountains where they have their town houses they could hide us where no enemy could find us. But Giga-tsuhli will ask them to help us out here."

He rose and entered the timber. I glanced at the sky and was pleased to observe it was rapidly becoming overcast. From his reference to the Good Black

"The Fighting Years," copyright, 1927, by Hugh Pendexter.

*Slanting Eyes. †Bears.

Fighting Years

A Serial *of* AMERICA

Things, coupled to his insistence on a snug hiding place, I knew he must have a cave in mind. And this thought furnished me with my first practical idea. In the Laurel Hill, near where the Youghiogheny cuts through to join the Monongahela, was a cave where the two of us had hidden when closely pursued by French Indians from Fort Duquesne. I would have believed my friend had that particular cave in mind if not for two facts: To reach it would take us deeper into the Indian country; and he was afraid of the cave.

De la Rue squatted before a fire and broke sticks for fuel and waited gloomily for the wounded man to be brought down the slope. His expressed wish that Big Man had been killed was angry vaporing. He knew his bad luck would be blamed for any more deaths in the band. The light lessened rapidly as the dark clouds racing over the ridge overtook the sun and hid it.

Arlington crossed to me and groaned—

"And now more of the —— rain!"

"God give us a heavy one and a long one!" I told him.

He glared at me as if thinking me crazy.

I added:

"We must risk it tonight, or not at all. Have Mrs. Beverly warn Mercy to keep quiet by telling her we are trying to escape. The woman's shrewd enough when not in one of her rages. But also tell her they will be safe as prisoners and will be returned to the Colonies before snow flies if they prefer it that way. It's for them to say if they'll run for it. It'll go hard with us all if we're caught."

"They'll go. This captivity is slowly killing them."

"They must walk. It will be very hard."

"They will crawl if necessary."

"Go back to them. Don't come near me again unless I signal."

Giga-tsuhli was in the darkening woods when we heard the voices of men, brought down to us by the rushing wind. Our two fires were dancing and leaping and the kettle of water was boiling and the kettle of meat was bubbling. The Frenchman had no need to tell his men to run and relieve the carriers. Almost at the first cry they were racing to the ridge and bounding up the slope.

As Giga-Tsuhli emerged from the woods the file of men cleared the slope and

brought Big Man up to a fire on a litter of saplings. As they deposited the litter a drop of rain fell on the injured man's face. De la Rue bustled forward and kneeled to examine Big Man's hurts. He probed and handled the swollen ankles roughly, but far from displaying any sense of pain Big Man lay still as a corpse. The Frenchman rose and said to me:

"Both ankles broken, as far as I can make out. If you know anything about such wounds you examine him."

I did so, and after a brief examination I agreed with the Frenchman. Then the two of us bathed the limbs with hot water and put in place some splints. The Frenchman then told his followers the wounded man must be carried to Duquesne. I suggested that a horse-litter be made and that the remaining strength of the weakened animals be utilized in conveying him. This met with immediate approval.

Broth and meat were given the wounded man and a low shelter was built over him to keep off the rain. No protection was provided for the women until Arlington, imitating the Indians' work, tied the tops of some saplings together and covered the frame with boughs. The drizzling rain, added to the belief that a malign influence was tracking the band, put the savages in bad humor. Their readiness to draw away when De la Rue approached was proof they blamed his weak medicine for their losses and for the accident. The Frenchman was quick to sense this sullen frame of mind. He went to one side, threw a blanket over his head and drearily waited for morning.

I sat apart from both him and the savages, with the stock of my gun in the wide sleeve of my hunting shirt and with my blanket over my shoulders. In turn we helped outselves from the kettle, and I took extra pieces and dropped them inside my shirt. Arlington carried generous helpings to the women in their little wigwam. Not until we all had eaten and the pelting rain was making the fires hiss continually did Bloody-Mouth drop on the ground before me. He was humming:

"*Tlagesitun galisgi sidha.*"*

Then followed the meaningless refrain, "*Hania lil! Lil! Hania lil! Lil!*"

This was the song the Rabbit had sung, when surrounded by Wolves and about to be devoured. He had offered to teach them the song and the accompanying dance, and had managed to dance out of sight.

"Did the Good Black Things tell my brother about a hole in the rocks?" I murmured.

"My white brother has been talking to the Good Black Things."

"There is a big hole in the Laurel Mountains near the Youghiogheny."

He was silent for a minute, then uneasily reminded me:

"They said a hole was good to hide in. But my brother talks of a medicine-place."

"A good medicine-place if we can reach it. They will look for us to go back over the ridge. The storm will hide our trail."

He whispered the shaman's prayer in making a storm medicine, only he petitioned for the storm to increase in violence instead of clearing, and he blew toward the west to indicate the direction the storm should go. Then he quoted from the sacred formula:

"*Yuhahi, youhahi, yuhahi.*"

And again he puffed out his cheeks and blew toward the west. White Canoe raised his voice and cried out—

"What is the talk about?"

"We mix a white and red medicine to help Big Man," I answered in Cherokee. Bloody-Mouth repeated this, and the savages bowed in grave approval.

After a bit Bloody-Mouth whispered:

"Before the camp sleeps the women must crawl into the woods through the back of their shelter. My brother must meet them and lead them away to the cave we slept in. Giga-tsuhli will wait and lead the Englishman to that place. My brother will go fast and not wait for us."

"My brother means we shall try to get away before the men sleep?"

*"On the edge of the hill I dance about."

"No one will guard the camp until they sleep. Then the men will sharpen their ears. It will be hard for the women to crawl into the woods. Now a noise isn't heard."

His reasoning was sound. What with the wind and the rain and the prisoners moving about as they would, no one would heed the breaking of a bough even if the sound were heard. And the women's shelter was in the edge of the timber. I rapidly weighed the advantage of Bloody-Mouth's plan against that of waiting until midnight.

The rain increased in violence. I bowed my head and told Bloody-Mouth:

"Tell the Englishman to come to the fire and take a piece of meat and in going back to stop before me."

Bloody-Mouth rose and went to the timber. He ripped off boughs and carried them to the injured man and added them to his shelter. Turning back to get more, he passed close to Arlington. The Englishman promptly got up and helped in securing more boughs. After he had deposited these beside Big Man he turned back, halted before me and asked whether it would rain all night. Making a pretense of studying the black sky, I quickly told him our plan and urged him to be careful in giving my instructions to the women.

He went back to his blanket and shifted his position to one more sheltered and on the west side of the women's shelter. He huddled against this and I knew he was endeavoring to make my plan clear.

The storm gods must have heeded the Cherokee's prayer, for the clouds opened and the rain would have extinguished the two fires had not the savages been quick to bring big pieces of fallen timber and heap them loosely over the coals. I was watching Arlington. A fitful flare from the nearest fire briefly revealed the Englishman's half painted face peering through the hooded blanket. He bowed his head slightly.

As if driven to deeper cover by the storm I rose and entered the woods. The Cherokee, carrying more dry wood, passed me and grunted—

"Good."

The he began calling on the savages to help carry Big Man back under the trees where he would be better sheltered. Big Man expostulated, insisting a bad medicine followed him and would drop a heavy branch on him or crush him with an uprooted tree.

While the argument was going on I passed to the back of the women's wigwam and all but stumbled over a crouching figure. It was Ann Beverly. I pulled her to her feet and as my arm rested around her I could feel the violent beating of her heart.

The wind made so much noise I did not hear Mrs. Beverly and her sister when they crawled toward me. Then some one was clutching the skirt of my hunting shirt. I caught the groping hand and drew a woman upright. Which it was I could not tell in the ebon blackness until my fingers brushed across the face and identified the parted lips and fixed smile of Mercy. I located Mrs. Beverly and helped her to stand. Then I pushed them into line. Ann came first with her aunt clutching her bedraggled skirts. Mrs. Beverly kept a like hold on her sister's garments.

Then began the fearfully slow withdrawal south, along the foot of the ridge. Ann caught the fringed sleeve of my shirt and detained me. I bowed my head and she demanded—

"Where's Mister Arlington?"

"With the Cherokee," I told her, pressing my hand over her mouth to impose silence.

But she insisted on speaking.

"You're leaving him."

I barely heard the words, yet they sounded like an accusation. Bending low, I told her:

"He's safe. We're not. Cherkoee's looking out for him. Cherokee's a better man than I am. Don't talk."

After some minutes of blundering through the timber I worked my way farther from the ridge and splashed

through the small stream flowing into the creek. I did not fear we would betray our position by any noise. The wind and rain were making a racket through the timber and the men at the camp were busy seeking better shelter.

I changed our course to cross the valley in a southwest direction. Again Ann Beverly demanded an audience by pulling on my sleeve until I allowed her to stand beside me. This time she was suspiciously demanding—

"Why aren't we climbing the mountains?"

"If we did we'd be caught inside of twenty-four hours. With daylight they'll hunt for us east of the ridge. This is best—our only chance."

"Where are you taking us?"

"To a cave in Laurel Ridge, where we'll hide until the savages move on. No more questions."

I do not think either Mrs. Beverly or Mercy realized we were traveling west.

As we advanced farther into the valley the storm beat above us with increasing violence. On we plunged through the night, with the wind pushing at our backs whenever we quit the timber. Only love of life and a greater love of freedom kept the women up to the grueling work, and none but a frontier woman could have made that blind race. I lost all track of time.

We did not halt until we came to a thicket of laurel. We had rested but a few minutes before Mrs. Beverly was saying:

"This won't do. All day to rest if we get clear of the bloody devils. Let's move on."

"Kill 'em! Kill 'em!" cried Mercy, whose venomous hatred of the Indians could not be lessened by any hardship.

Ann Beverly, too, was eager to be traveling. I worked about in the thicket until my feet located a game trail leading toward the ridge. I herded my charges into this, and we advanced. As we mounted the first slope the storm began to diminish. Our path accommodatingly swung to the south and our way grew rougher as we met with low hills.

At last we came to a small opening in the forest and found that the storm had ceased. It was early morning.

"I see a star," murmured the girl, staring to a bright speck over the crest of the Alleghenies.

"The storm was God-sent," I said.

"You talk mighty queer for a spy and a traitor," muttered Mrs. Beverly.

"I'm not a traitor."

"Every spy's a traitor!" she insisted. Exertion or anger had reduced her voice to a whisper.

"No matter what I am, my job now is to get you three women back to the Conococheague."

"Kill Phindry!" screamed Mercy. It was the first time I had ever heard her particularize.

"Yes, Mercy," muttered Mrs. Beverly. "But he's the devil. He can't be killed by mortals."

"Where is he? Where did he go?" whispered the girl.

"To Venango. He's half Injun."

Mrs. Beverly fell against me heavily. As I supported her she murmured:

"I feel queer. Better soon. Age must be telling on me. We must go on."

Despite my insistence it would be better to rest for an hour the three would not listen. So we picked up the trail and walked through the wet laurel until the light of a flawless day found us snugly hidden in the fold of a low hill.

Mrs. Beverly was asleep on my wet blanket almost as soon as we halted. The girl almost as quickly succumbed. I fished out the sorry pieces of meat from my shirt and placed them on a strip of bark before I climbed the hill to study our back track.

Ann Beverly opened her eyes and said—

"It hurts mortally to think we had to leave him with those beasts."

"The Cherokee is a master hand to look out for a body," I consoled. "Go to sleep while I try to perch a turkey. Then we must travel again. The Cherokee knows where to find us. He'll bring Arlington to us."

"I pray he fetches Mister Arlington along."

Then she slept.

CHAPTER IX

DISCOVERIES

MRS. BEVERLY was ill, but she would not halt except for brief spells. And she was strangely sick. She complained none of aches and pains yet seemed to be on the point of collapse. It was difficult to arouse her if she lay down to rest. She knew this, and when we paused for a few minutes she would remain standing and would swing her arms, trying to keep awake. She walked miles without appearing to sense where she was or what had happened.

I did not, however, realize how seriously her mind was affected until she asked for her husband, as if he were alive and absent for a short time. This was the most cruel trouble Ann Beverly had experienced during all our arduous journey. May I never again witness such an expression of mental agony as was reflected in the girl's pale face when her mother quietly asked her—

"Has your father come?"

Oddly enough Mercy acted more rational as her sister's mind grew clouded. Her fixed smile remained but she talked none of killing Indians, and she was direct and helpful in attending her sister. She would pet and caress Mrs. Beverly and talked to her as if she were a small child. Sometimes she would gently scold her, and always endeavored to keep the poor woman up to the work before us.

We climbed the ridge, a vast green elevation covered with various species of laurel. At our point of crossing I figured the ridge to be about seven miles from base to base. From the top we stared back at the darker crest of the Allegheny, and ahead to the white oaks and chestnut groves on Chestnut Ridge. The western descent was gentle and afforded us but few hardships, as the timber of this ridge is not so thick and tall and wild as the grim growths on the heights behind us.

Once across the ridge we turned south and traveled through a forest largely composed of oaks. This was a paradise for squirrels, just as the laurel above was an ideal habitat for bears. And at last we came to the cave.

As I finished piloting the women through the timber that masked the entrance I assured the women:

"It's very big, dry and well-hidden. The Cherokee and I hid here once when running from the Indians."

"Who were you working for then, Mister Case?" murmured Ann.

"We were running from French Indians," I replied. "My masters, then as now, were the Colonies."

She started to make some quick retort, thought better of it and kept silent. Mrs. Beverly halted and stared dully at the dark opening and said—

"It's very black in there."

I had the women keep to one side while I entered to make sure no bears were there. On the right of the entrance I found the dry wood Bloody-Mouth and I had accumulated on our first visit. From this I secured a fagot for a torch, made a light and set the torch to blazing. Evidently the bears preferred snugger and more compact quarters, so we had the place to ourselves.

I called the women in. Some blankets the Cherokee and I had abandoned were on the floor just as we had left them. These I put out in the sun and told the girl to sit with her mother in the entrance while I secured fresh boughs for a bed. Ann disliked our refuge and was frank to say so. I insisted it was a snug retreat, weather-proof and enemy-proof, and reminded that we could not be choosers. I made her feel more at ease by saying much of our time would be spent in the little opening before the entrance.

"It's only a makeshift until we can strike into the Braddock road and work back to the Conococheague," I said encouragingly.

"We may be here for a long time. My mother is very sick. As for the Conny-co-jig, I don't think I ever want to see it again."

I hastened to my task of collecting boughs. As in this region oaks had

largely replaced the pines my work was slow and tedious. Nor was it simply a matter of finding evergreens and stripping them. I had to exercise great care not to leave signs for prowling savages to read. I persevered until I had secured enough for two comfortable beds. Then came the work of moving these to the cave without dropping any twigs or leaving a trail. Out of the first lot I made a couch for Mrs. Beverly inside near the entrance. She was leaning against her daughter, sleeping heavily.

When the two women had put her to bed I brought some bark and diverted the girl from her brooding by requesting her to make a dish that would hold water. With natural deftness she quickly shaped a sheet of bark into a crude dish that would hold a quart, and with a knife for a needle and small vines for thread she made it secure. While she was thus employed I brought more boughs and made a bed for her and Mercy.

As for my own couch, I elected to sleep on a moss-carpeted ledge outside and across the opening.

Having made this start toward housekeeping I next gave my attention to our imperative need of food. One mile from the cave I shot a deer, dressed it and hung the saddle on a high limb. Then I returned to the cave and explained to the women that it would be best that we did our cooking at a distance until sure we were not pursued. Warning them not to be impatient nor alarmed by my absence, I returned to the tree, built a fire and set the meat to boiling. It was dusk before I could carry a portion of it to the cave.

During my absence Ann had made several trips to a rill near by to get water for her mother. This worried me as I knew she must have left a trail.

I visited Mrs. Beverly and placed a hand on her head to see whether she had any fever. I was pleased to find the flesh cool and moist. She roused up under my touch and muttered—

"Rough."

Now Ann appeared to be sinking into an apathy similar to her mother's. I lighted a torch and insisted she explore the front of the cave with me. I led her to a small chamber off what I called the main hall and showed her the rivulet of sweet, cold water flowing in its shallow channel. I explained she must bring water from it rather than from the outside. We did not go farther as she did not relish the experience. When we returned to her mother she took Mercy's place and the latter wanted to take the torch and go alone into the dark depths.

To quiet her I led the way through some of the chambers. She was as pleased as a child with a plaything when she found pieces of beautiful white spar on the rocky floors. She gathered these greedily and had me stuff some inside my hunting shirt. Then she lamented that she could not take more. I swung my torch about and showed her the edge of an abyss into which one might easily walk in the dark. I pictured her fate if she ever penetrated into the back of the cave alone. Staring at me intently as I talked, she waited until I had finished. Then she caressed the walls of blue sandstone, saying, repeatedly—

"Pretty, pretty, pretty."

It was pathetic to observe how much joy a colored bit of rock could bring to her. It hinted at the love of life and love of the beautiful she must have possessed before the black night settled over her mind. She would have continued the exploration for hours had I been willing and had our supply of torches permitted. On our return to the front chamber I endeavored once more to impress on her the great danger of ever wandering into the different passages alone, but her roving glance bespoke heedlessness.

I had expected to be rid of the heft of my responsibilities once I succeeded in rescuing the prisoners. But not so. A sick woman, a demented woman and a heart-broken girl must be guarded, fed and ultimately restored to the settlements. Had Mrs. Beverly been able I should have halted only for a night at the cave and then pushed south and followed the Braddock road back east, leaving

the Cherokee to come after us with Arlington.

Nor did I lack room for worrying about my own poor fortunes. I had told Major Lewis I would penetrate to Duquesne or Venango and bring back reliable information. And I possessed news of importance. Could I get it to him in time? Chabert-Joncaine's belt to the chief Tamaque was a lively menace to Forbes' army unless it was checked by a better belt from the Colonies. For did Tamaque and those under his influence accept the French wampum the old story of an intercepted army would be repeated. To take Duquesne was child's play if even a few hundred border-trained men could stand before its stockade. For the matter of that little "if" one army had been massacred, with the survivors forgetting their years of training and becoming a frenzied rabble.

Mercy proudly displayed the white spar to Ann. The girl smiled mechanically and patted the unfortunate's withered cheek, then turned to me, and announced—

"My mother is going to die."

"Not here. Not now," I vehemently insisted. "She's worn out mentally and physically. But every hour she sleeps is a strength builder. Tomorrow she will be much better."

The morrow sadly disappointed us. It found her alive but in a stupor. It was with difficulty that Ann aroused her to eat some meat. She swallowed a few mouthfuls and fell back and was asleep again.

"After she's caught up with her sleep she'll be hungry enough," I encouraged. But as I went to bring in the rest of the deer meat I believed the woman would never leave the cave alive.

I was continually discovering there are various degrees of torment. My parting with Elizabeth Joy had seemed to be the worst a man could experience. The suffering of Phindry's victims had erased much of my selfish brooding. Fincer's death had racked me horribly. Deliberately to help a man, even a recreant like Fincer, to step out of life is a fearful responsibility. Yet none of these equalled the torment imposed by our condition at the cave. It was a hell without action. Just a waiting and a fearing.

It was a relief to find four wolves leaping frantically to get at the meat hanging from the branch. I charged them, clubbing my gun. As I was returning to the cave a bear ran across the path ahead. I called to him sharply, and, very human, he stopped and reared on his hind legs for a moment. It was natural that Bloody-Mouth should believe that the bear was originally a man.

As I neared the cave I was attacked by a terrible fear. I heard Ann's voice raised in a shrill cry—then silence.

Dropping the meat, I raced forward and felt strangely weak on beholding Arlington standing before the entrance, the girl's hands clasped in his. I had known the Cherokee was to bring him there, but it seemed as if the women and I had been there a very long time instead of a scant twenty-four hours.

Then such a revulsion of feeling! Such an increase in moral strength as I stared into the grave face of the Cherokee and felt his hand gripping mine! Without a spoken word to him I turned and ran to Arlington and congratulated him. Ann's face was rosy with excitement and new hope. Her eyes were miracles of brilliancy as she told me—

"The Cherokee is going to make some medicine of roots and yarbs and it will help mother."

"He knows all about simples," I assured her.

Arlington was squeezing and shaking my hand again, and exclaiming:

"Wonderful! Never was the like in this savage country before! To steal three women from right under their noses! I'd give much to know what that Frenchman said when he found us gone—what he's thinking about his big ransom money." And he laughed almost hysterically.

Mercy came out of the cave and displayed no surprize at seeing the Englishman and the Cherokee. The latter was

uneasy under her fixed gaze and hurried away to find some simples that might help Mrs. Beverly. I insisted that Arlington cease his pacing back and forth and tell us the details of his escape.

There was no dramatic point in his story. During the confusion of moving Big Man back into the timber, and before there was any suspicion of our withdrawal, the Cherokee had simply gripped the prisoner's arm and led him into the black night. They had traveled until daylight, following the west side of the ridge south. But so far as any sense of location was concerned Arlington frankly admitted he might as well have been a blind man. They had sighted none of the enemy in cutting across the valley and crossing the ridge near our cave.

"Never was there a man who kept his head as does that Indian!" he cried. "See there!" And he called my attention to a cooking-kettle close by the mouth of the cave. "He thinks of everything. And that!" Now he was pointing to a bow and a quiver of arrows.

I believe it was sight of the long bow rather than any reference to my friend that started the old hate to blazing in Mercy's stricken mind.

"Kill him!" she fiercely muttered.

Ann took her to task gently, trying to impress upon her what a good friend the Cherokee had been to all of us. Mercy made no answer, but her facial expression remained as enigmatical as ever. I knew my friend would never be off his guard when she was near. I hoped another day would find us traveling, even if Mrs. Beverly had to be carried on a litter.

The Cherokee reappeared at the edge of the little opening and softly called for me to give him the kettle. Receiving it, he retired into the growth and was gone until sundown. When he returned he had a dark thick liquid of rank smell which he had boiled from roots and herbs somewhere in the forest. With a wary glance at Mercy he poured some of the medicine into Ann's bark dish, carried it to the sick woman and directed Mercy to hold her in a sitting position. This kept Mercy's hands employed, and between my efforts and those of Ann we succeeded in making Mrs. Beverly drink much of the stuff.

I followed the Cherokee to the open air and asked—

"When can she walk?"

"One moon."

I was aghast. To remain at the cave for a month was vastly beyond all my calculations.

The Cherokee's mind was occupied with something he always believed to be of the utmost importance. He told me:

"Slanting Eyes and the Red Man have heard Giga-tsuhli. They have helped him. They have sent him and his friends to a bear's house. The Good Black Things are helping us. Let my brother be careful he shoots no Black Thing."

"He will remember. There are so many of them I thought they must have a town house here."

His face lighted up. It pleased him immensely to have me share in his beliefs. He knew he was being helped by supernatural beings. His world was far different from mine. Animals talked and understood the red man's speech. They shared the land in common with the red man. They were a subservient race, yet in times of peril the spirit chief of each species of animal life was capable of helping to the utmost if the endangered be worthy.

Even the trees were embroidered into my friend's imagination. He held the cedar in veneration above all other trees. Its green twigs thrown on a fire would drive away evil spirits. He would not use the wood for fuel—it was too sacred. Scalps stretched on hoops should be hung on a cedar, for originally the color of the wood resulted from blood dripping on to it from the severed head of a wicked wizard. And every Cherokee knew the linn, or basswood, is never struck by lightning and will afford a friendly shelter to hunters in a storm.

The laurel around our retreat also was "medicine," but should not be burned, as that would bring cold weather. I never could get at the reason for this fancy

except that the hissing noise made by the leaves might suggest the sound of wind and snow in winter. And so on through the list of the different growths. For Bloody-Mouth there was life everywhere in nature.

I asked—

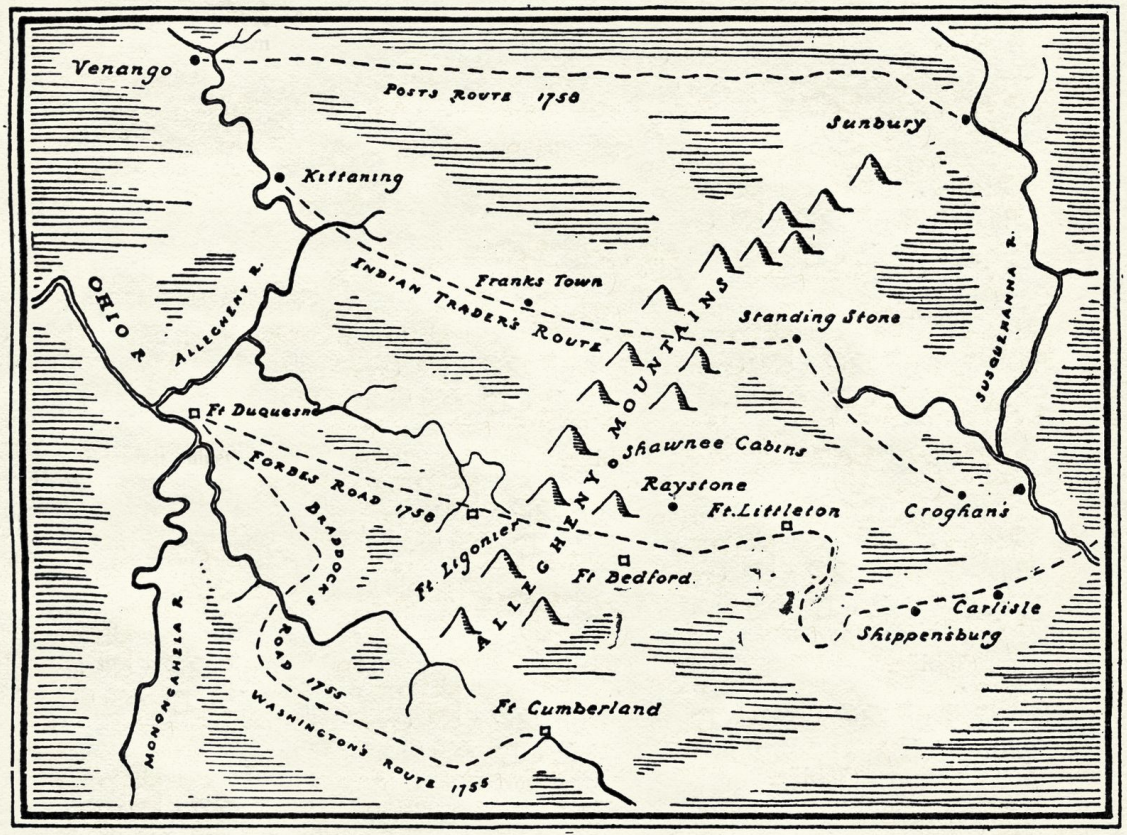
"Can not one bear be killed?"

"If we need meat and he understands, he can be killed. His fathers were once men. His ghost will be happy if it knows it has helped Giga-tsuhli. But we will ask him to give himself to us. We will make a bear trap. If he walks into a spring and shoots himself we did not do it. If we are not near the gun when it is fired we can not be caught by the Frenchman's warriors."

Thus was practicality and superstition wed in the Cherokee's mind. If enemy scouts were near and heard a gun they would seek for a hunter and find none. If the bear walked into a trap, that was a matter that solely concerned the bear. As meat spoiled quickly in the warm June air, and must be procured often unless we could manage to smoke a supply, I was anxious to cure some bear hams.

Leaving Arlington to keep the roses alive in the girl's thin cheeks, Bloody-Mouth and I went some distance from the cave and selected a spot among the oaks. Here we soon fixed my gun in place, with a rawhide cord running from the trigger around the tree trunk and forward to the bait. The latter was a cooked piece of deer meat. We hoped the bear on finding the meat would seize it, rise on his haunches, and catch the bullet for a mortal wound.

After the trap was completed the Cherokee retired to go through his ceremony of warning all bears of their danger. He expressly stated that while we



were in need of meat we did not wish to hurt them. I was skeptical about the bullet's giving a deadly wound, as the chances were so greatly against it. But Bloody-Mouth reasoned that some bear would be willing for the sacrifice and would surely be killed. He did not use "killed" in the white man's sense. If we bagged a victim it simply meant to him another phase of existence.

IT WAS dusk when we returned to the cave. We found Arlington feeding dry sticks to the fire. Bloody-Mouth kicked the blaze into smoking pieces, much to the Englishman's chagrin.

I explained the danger of a fire being seen at night, and of the smoke being smelled at any time.

"We must cook our food at a distance so as not to lead any prowlers here," I added.

"I wasn't planning to cook anything," he told me. "I was lonely. I wanted company. Miss Ann is with her mother. Mercy isn't company even if she would stay out here. I don't believe any savages are within miles of this God-forsaken hole."

"I hope not. But the way to keep alive on the frontier is always to believe there's a savage close by waiting to get your hair," I warned.

Ann came out and stared at the scattered, blinking coals.

"They've spoiled your fire. I'd thought to sit by it now mother's resting a bit easier."

Speaking in English, the Cherokee said:

"A little fire at this place will lead the Englishman to a hotter fire. Next time he will be painted all red."

Arlington winced and drew a long face. He had nothing to say. Ann turned and went back to her mother.

I had dried my blanket in the sun, and now I spread it near the entrance, inviting Arlington to share it. We had no covering. The Cherokee went into the woods to sleep. After a sound night's rest I awoke to find the base of the ridge bathed in mist, but it was speedily routed once the sun got above the heights. Arlington complained of dreaming of war-whoops all night.

"You'll be glad to be back in England," I remarked. "You've seen enough to fill a big book."

He smiled wryly and made no answer.

The Cherokee came and stood apart from us in an attitude of waiting. I joined him, and he announced—

"There is meat in the trap."

"You slept near the place and heard the gun."

"I slept far from it. In a dream I saw the flash and heard the noise," he calmly corrected. I was glad he had not heard Arlington's dream, else he might have believed the red menace was closing in on us.

We built a small fire near the rivulet where Ann had gone for water, and I hung a kettle of water to boil. We led Arlington to the fire and warned him to feed only dry fuel.

Ann visited us briefly. She said her mother had slept most of the night. The Cherokee promptly directed that she be moved out into the sun. With the fire burning briskly, we all returned to the cave, and the Cherokee and I lifted the woman in her blankets while the others dragged her bough bed into the sunlight. She roused and stared at us blankly as if not understanding where she was, or who we were. The girl wept silently at these symptoms of a blank mind.

Bloody-Mouth insisted—

"She will be better."

Mercy crouched beside her sister, her fixed smile following us, especially the Cherokee, until we took to the woods. We advanced toward the trap cautiously. Before reaching it, Bloody-Mouth halted and stared searchingly at the surrounding timber. Then he whispered—

"There is something in the air that makes me feel a wicked shaman has been near here."

I pressed closer to an oak and asked—

"You think there's danger?"

"Something bad came along here in the

night. Now it is gone. The Good Black Things scared it away."

His reasoning was without any foundation of fact that I could discover. The woods were drowsily quiet and threatened to become oppressively warm before night. Squirrels scurried along their overhead trails. A bear vanished into the background.

We advanced slowly, scouting as carefully as if under the walls of Fort Duquesne. I sadly missed my gun. At last we were stealthily peering from behind trees at the trap.

Bloody-Mouth had been correct in declaring there was game in the trap, but it was not a bear, nor any four-footed animal. In front of the gun and sprawled on his face was the naked form of an Indian. For two minutes we stared at him. By his side was a gun. On his back was a bow and filled quiver. In his belt were knife and ax.

Bloody-Mouth motioned for me to scout in a circle until I met him. In completing my half I came upon signs which led me to believe the savage had come from the northwest. I met Bloody-Mouth and told him what I had discovered—half the imprint of one moccasin in the forest mold. He had found nothing.

Then we stole to the silent figure and turned it on its back. The man of middle age and from his scars and paint I knew he was a veteran of many paths. He had circles around his thighs. Long marks on his legs extended from ankles to knees. At each knee he wore a crowskin.

We reconstructed the tragedy and wondered, at least I did, at the coincidence that brought the man up to the muzzle of the gun in the darkness. From his position we assumed he had happened upon the piece of deer meat and had picked it up, thereby discharging the gun. I lost no time in appropriating my weapon and reloading it. Nor would I be parted from it again.

Bloody-Mouth opened the small medicine bag at the man's girdle, taking care not to point the opening at either of us. Among other sacred objects was a water-worn pebble.

"He carried a water medicine," whispered my friend. "He needed a fire medicine to protect him from the gun. Gigatsuhli has seen Ousakis (Sauk) men who painted like this and let their hair grow before taking a red path."

And he nodded to the shock of hair held almost upright like a fuzzy bush by a band of otter skin. He refused to take the man's scalp, nor did I care for it although the English were paying excellent bounties for all such.

"He is not of the Frenchman's band," I said. I felt much relieved that only a chance wanderer had stumbled into the path of my bullet.

"He came from Fort Duquesne. The Far Indians must be gathering there."

If this surmise be true it was important news for General Forbes. If fighting men from Detroit or Mackinack were gathering at the Ohio fork it would mean Chabert-Joncaire was there with red reenforcements.

We removed all signs of the trap and with our knives dug a grave in the forest floor and buried the warrior. We kept the gun and bow and quiver, but Bloody-Mouth was careful to replace all the articles in the medicine bag and inter it with the body. This was done not to convenience the ghost of the dead man but to prevent it from dogging us with bad luck.

We agreed to say nothing about the dead man; and we agreed that if one warrior could steal so close to the cave others might be near.

I was in a sweat to be leaving the dangerous locality, but Bloody-Mouth insisted the woman could not be moved with any safety for many days.

I urged that she be carried on a litter.

He replied:

"Her head is empty. Some day her spirit will return from walking through the air and enter her head. Then she will stand up and be well. If it comes and she is on the Braddock road it will not find her. She will have an empty head

until her spirit turns black and she goes beyond the sunset to live."

This perhaps was his way of saying she would not mentally recover from her shock, even if her physical health improved, unless she were permitted to remain quiet until she had recuperated exhausted nature.

It was imperative that we scout the woods for some distance, and Bloody-Mouth insisted he should be the one to go. He was afraid of Mercy and would not remain in the cave with her. Nor could I blame him. The unfortunate widow might at any time indulge in her homicidal mania, although she was sensible enough in nursing her sister and in helping prepare food. At his suggestion we hid the dead man's weapons in the woods to prevent the need of an explanataion and the spreading of any alarm. The Indian also said he would leave his gun for Arlington and would secure the Ousakis' piece when departing on his scout.

We swung around to the rivulet and found the kettle cooking. We carried the kettle to the cave and overtook Arlington who was preceding us. Hearing us coming, he had innocently waited. If we had been the enemy we would have had him ready for the red paint. On reaching the shelf before the entrance we were greeted by Mercy and Ann. Keeping the kettle between him and Mercy my friend fished out a piece of meat and darted into the woods, eating his breakfast as he went.

"He goes scouting," I explained.

"Without a gun?" cried Arlington.

"He will not need his gun. He will scout, not fight. He does not like to be still. He will be back in a day or two."

"Must we stay here some time?" quickly asked Ann, with a sidelong glance at her mother.

"Until she recovers mentally and physically."

"This is a good place. Pretty rocks," murmured Mercy, scarcely moving her parted lips, but speaking like an Iroquois.

Warning them to be careful and telling Arlington to keep the Cherokee's gun by him, I started forth to secure more meat. The Cherokee's absence simplified my task as I could kill without bothering to placate ghost of deer or bear. I purposed to hunt with the bow and arrow of the Ousakis man, and I hoped to smoke enough meat to last for a week or more.

Slinging my gun over my shoulder, I made to where we had concealed the bow and quiver. Securing these, I ranged to the south for about a mile and came to halt before a narrow ribbon of young shoots and small saplings.

This slot through the old growth extended from the Laurel Hill toward the northwest. I was at the edge of Braddock's road, which for three years the forest had endeavored to win back to primitive conditions. It ran almost to Duquesne where, in a space twelve feet wide, the head of the army had been hurled back on the wagon-train and the Guards were butchered, many dying without seeing an enemy. Behind me the bush-filled tragic way continued as far as Fort Cumberland.

After three years we were to try it again, this time under General Forbes. If the Ohio Indians held back I could not conceive of defeat; and yet, as I stared at the narrow road I felt the shadow of Duquesne heavy upon me. The route was ill-omened. Had I been as superstitious as the Cherokee I could at dusk easily have seen the way filled with the ghosts of the dead.

I entered it after turkeys and halted only when I found myself by the charred remains of a fire. The ground was beaten hard, and marks like wheel ruts were still to be seen. I believed I was standing at the grave of the unfortunate commander. For his grave was in the road, and the routed army had passed over it to hide it from the victorious red horde. Obviously many men must work at clearing out the bush-growth before Forbes' men could follow the path cut for Braddock.

Saddened by the grim reminder of what

it had cost merely to make a gesture at Duquesne, I ceased hunting the turkeys and turned back into the clean timber. I did not rid my mind of forebodings until I chanced upon a deer drinking at a little run. While not an adept with a bow I could handle one passably well. Game was abundant here and unused to being hunted, so I had no trouble in planting my long arrow behind the animal's left fore leg. I skinned and dressed the deer at the edge of the run, rolled the meat in the hide and made for the cave, but concealing the borrowed weapons before reaching it.

New trouble awaited me. Ann, almost distracted, and with big tears streaming down her pale, thin cheeks, informed me that Mercy had stolen into the cave to explore it. Ann had sent Arlington to find her, and he, too, had remained lost in the darkness. Neither the young man nor the mad woman had carried a light.

I gave Ann my knife and requested her to commence fleshing the hide, intending to keep her thoughts off her aunt and the Englishman. Her news was sorry hearing. To penetrate deep into the unexplored recesses of the big cave was as foolhardy as to scout Venango without a gun. Ann spread the hide and set to work while I collected some dry fagots, lighted one and passed through the first chamber.

I soon reached the place where Mercy had picked up the pieces of spar. She was not there. I passed through a narrow passage to a smaller chamber and shouted. My voice returned to me in echoes. I had never been beyond this chamber. Waving my torch into new life I went on and up a gentle slope and rapidly descended into a low-roofed chamber, the extent of which my light failed to reveal.

Again I shouted, and this time a groan startled me. My voice came tumbling back as if many ghosts were calling loudly. I swung my torch to extend the circle of light but could see no one. The groan was repeated. I called again, speaking in a low tone, and heard my words repeated in whispers.

Then came Arlington's voice, saying:

"Here! on a shelf of rock. Be careful."

I turned to my right and advanced, the smoky light guarding me against a fall. I came to where the floor ceased. Lowering my light, I leaned over and beheld the Englishman stretched out on a narrow shelf of rock some ten feet below me. He was facing the wall and both hands were clutching a projection. Had he rolled outward three feet he would have fallen into a black abyss.

I set my torch to blazing, laid it on the edge of the cliff and swung downward and dropped. The moment I released my hold I would have given five years for the forethought to have returned to the mouth of the cave and fashioned a stout cord out of the deerskin. I had completed this regret by the time my moccasin struck the shelf.

I leaned against the wall and asked Arlington whether he was hurt.

"My side is hurt. It pains me greatly," he replied.

"You're not able to stand?"

"Good God, man! Would you stand if you were in jet black darkness, expecting every minute to drop through the bottom of the earth? Have you found that crazy nuisance?"

"Not yet. I'll get you out of this and hunt for her."

The job had to be finished before the torch expired. Keeping the abyss out of my mind, I leaned down and dragged him to his feet, forcing a deep groan from him.

"Ribs smashed," he apologized.

"We must be out of this inside the next half minute even if your neck's smashed," I told him. "Look up, not down."

Before he could develop more fear I shifted my hold to his legs, lifted him up and commanded him to stand on my shoulders and seize the edge of the rock.

Stifling his groans and trembling violently as my shoulders gave and my body swayed under his weight and clumsy efforts, he desperately did as he was bid.

"I can't pull myself over. One arm's almost useless, it pains so," he moaned.

"Over you go!" I shouted, and seizing his ankles, I gave him a hoist and push that shot him half over the edge. He managed to scramble clear and I told him to revive the torch by waving it. The light flared up and his head appeared, staring down at me. I had him light another fagot and drop it down.

Catching it, I examined the face of the wall. Near the top were several small projections which would suffice for a slim hand-hold. I told Arlington to get back out of the way. He wanted to stretch down one hand but I feared I might pull him down. He drew back. Then to my surprize Mercy's grinning face appeared. I angrily ordered her back. She extended a skinny arm and made no reply.

Shifting my position a bit and concentrating my gaze on one particular knob, I dropped my torch and sprang lightly, caught the knob with one hand and threw up the other to seize the edge of the wall. My fingers lapped over the rock but I had no purchase.

Thin bands of iron suddenly anchored my wrist and with a convulsive wriggle I went up over the top. It was Mercy who had given me a hand. Poor Arlington was so ill from fear of the abyss that he almost was nauseated.

I, too, had been sadly scared, once I stopped to think of it. And I was angry at myself. If it had not been for the black depths close to my feet the ascent of the wall should have been easy for me, or for any active boy.

I wrathfully asked Mercy where she had been. She pointed toward the mysterious interior of the cave. How she had found her way there without a serious tumble, and then had returned, without a light, was beyond my comprehension. I could explain Arlington's negligence in searching without a torch by attributing it to stupidity or ignorance.

I gave Mercy a brand to carry and held one in my free hand as I helped Arlington along. Arriving at the entrance, we found Ann Beverly sitting beside the deerskin with both hands clamped to her head. She began whimpering when she saw we were safe.

Mercy took from her pocket some small pieces of rock she had gathered in the darkness and carefully put them aside. Then she went to Mrs. Beverly, gently combed the gray hair with her fingers, and washed her hands and face with water from the bark dish.

Arlington gingerly stretched out on the moss outside the entrance. He thanked me and humbly begged the girl's pardon for causing her any alarm. I opened his coat and shirt and found what I believed to be three broken ribs on the right side. Ann was all sympathy and tenderness, and with border readiness intelligently aided me in strapping strips torn from a blanket around Arlington's body. He declared the tight bandages greatly lessened the pain and again expressed his regret and shame at having added to our troubles. The girl was solicitous for his comfort, and possibly the accident served the good purpose of taking her away from her brooding.

When I took the deer meat and started into the timber to roast it she followed me and said:

"I didn't thank you for going after them. Mister Arlington just said he'd 'a' died if you hadn't got him out of that mess."

"Mercy is the one to be thanked. She helped me out. Both have learned the cave is a trap for any one who goes into it without a light."

"It's filled with evil!" she whispered. "I hate it!"

"It's been all goodness while we kept where we belong," I replied. "It's shelter for your mother." She turned back and I went on.

Dreary, empty days followed. We should have rejoiced that none brought fresh danger, but had it not been for the three women I would have welcomed almost any peril in preference to that dull period of waiting. Worst of all, the Cherokee did not return, and I often pictured him dead on the forest floor.

I smoked meat at night and scouted much by day, my excursions limited to short trips so that I might always be within easy distance of our hiding place. Each morning I made Mercy promise she would not pass beyond the chamber where we procured our water. She never carried a torch in going to this; and sometimes I wondered whether she had a cat's vision and could see in the dark.

One night after she was asleep I took torches, and with the Englishman for a companion penetrated beyond the point of his rescue. He was not keen for the venture but was too proud to say as much. There seemed no end of passages branching off each side of our route, and we began to believe one could traverse much of the Laurel Hill under ground by the various ramifications. There were small chambers and large roomy places. There were holes through which one could crawl and enter upon a continuation of narrow corridors, big and small apartments. And there were dropping-off places with the murmur of running water deep down in the blackness.

Arlington soon lost all sense of direction and requested me to turn back. He was afraid of the crevices, even when only a few feet wide, and he was compelled to make a mighty effort in stepping over or leaping them. We had gone deeper into the cave, I believed, than any other human being.

I boasted of the fact to him, but he had none of the enthusiasm of a discoverer. After I finished, and waved the torch around my head to quicken its murky light, he gave a mirthless laugh which was caught and repeated derisively by the echoes.

"Mr. Case, look yonder," he whispered. "One has been here before us." And he directed my attention to a shelf of rock a few feet above the floor of the chamber. I beheld the cause of his harsh laughter—the mummy of a man.

"Red men don't count," I defended. "I meant we're the first whites to come this far." And I advanced to the shelf.

A white man had preceded us. If one should reach the frozen top of the earth, would he not find the rigid form of an early arrival? The dry air of the cave had preserved the figure. The skin was like tanned leather. The upper part of the body was covered by a leather jerkin and the torso was protected by a piece of iron harness, much like a small shield.

Above the edge of the harness protruded the broken shaft of a long arrow, like those the Indians were eager to use on Forbes' army. It told the whole story. The man had been attacked near the cave and had made a fight. He had been shot through the upper part of the chest, had retreated into the cave and had managed to grope his way to this hidden place to die and escape torture.

Arlington whispered that he must have been one of the early Spanish explorers. I believed he was from one of the first Virginia settlements. His long hair was tow color and in his lifetime his eyes must have been blue.

So, without venturing farther, to wrest honors from the dead, we turned back. We said nothing to the women about the silent tenant of the cave.

After that night Arlington stoutly refused to proceed deeper into the labyrinth than necessity compelled. I managed, however, to find time to acquaint myself with the series of chambers and passages on each side of the front chamber. I permitted Mercy to accompany me on these short explorations. I knew that her nature would not have been satisfied until she had found the ultimate barrier.

My beard now was more than a stubble. It reminded me of the bush-growth in Braddock's road.

Mrs. Beverly ate and slept but would not talk beyond a few words at a time. Her speech was limited to asking for her sister and daughter. Escorted by them, she was induced to walk about the opening in front of the cave, but she showed no interest, no curiosity as to where she was, or how she came to be there. To see her walking about one might think she was normal mentally and physically, but after each such effort she appeared to be

very tired and would sleep heavily for some hours. To all appearances she had forgotten her husband's death, her imprisonment and her escape. As the days passed I believed she was trying to remember, and was almost succeeding. At such times she would remain silent, her brows wrinkled in a troubled frown.

Arlington's ribs knit quickly, as he was a man of great vitality and of splendid physique. The day I removed his bandages he was very sober. I left the cave long enough to perch a turkey, which I shot with an arrow. When I returned Arlington expressed a desire to walk down to the rivulet, and asked me if it would be prudent for Ann to go with him. I had discovered no signs of enemy scouts and told him there would be no danger if he did not go beyond the stream. Ann had obviously consented to accompany him during my absence, for when I had finished she rose and went to her mother and talked with her for a bit, then went down the slope with the Englishman.

Could there ever be a situation so tense that love-making could not be considered? I doubted it as the two disappeared. For me Elizabeth Joy, in Philadelphia, had become an experience in a former life. Our last walk to the Governor's Woods was something most remote.

In truth, I had been thinking too much of Ann Beverly. Each day I discovered the fact and sought to oust her from my thoughts. The Englishman's infatuation for her was very plain. It had impelled him to accompany the Beverlys to Path Valley. His was the fine figure of a man and he carried himself with a town-ease that a forest-runner is slow to acquire.

There was no bitterness in my heart against him. It was fated that he should have the luck in life and that I should take him and his woman back to the Conococheague. I gloomily meditated on my lot while they walked to the rivulet to be alone with happiness.

Since our arrival at the cave none had mentioned my being a spy for the French. Ann Beverly always addressed me as "Mr. Case" when calling me by name. So did Arlington. No matter how much she might think she had cause to condemn me the girl appreciated my efforts to help. Her mother had believed me to be a traitor and a spy even while I was leading her to Laurel Mountain. Under the stress of our danger it had not seemed to matter what they believed.

I had expected to restore them to the Conococheague very quickly and resume my place with the army. Now I found myself wishing the girl had believed me to be an honest man despite my traitorous claims. Yet she had been quick to nurse suspicions. When I had warned her people to leave Path Valley she had criticised me for not losing my scalp in a vain attempt to prevent the Fairden murders. The mother had been fair enough; but it was she, not I, who had softened the girl's prejudice.

Ann and Arlington returned, the girl walking ahead. Arlington said they had seen a bear which he easily could have shot. I did not repeat the border's gruesome belief that since Braddock's dead littered the country west of the Laurel Hill the bears seemed to hold mankind in contempt.

The girl had lost some of her tragic expression and the ivory of her cheeks was tinged with color. She went to sit with her mother and Mercy came and sat by me and patted my arm. For some unknown reason the poor woman had taken a fancy to me.

That day a violent thunder-storm sent us all inside the cave. Arlington and I sat in the entrance and watched the violent contortions of the leafy branches as a strong cold wind sucked down the valley. The outside world turned to twilight, except when Asgaya Gigagei, the Red Man of the Lightning, hurled his hot shafts into the forest crown and bathed the wood in an unearthly light.

"How long before we can start back east?" cried Arlington, the storm drowning the ordinary voice.

I jerked my head toward Mrs. Beverly on her bed of boughs behind us.

"But she can walk," he insisted. "For several days she has walked about. She gains in strength daily."

I tapped my head to remind him of the nature of her trouble. He nodded, but persisted:

"No worse than her sister. We've been in this —— hole for nearly a month."

"Her mind has been stunned by her sufferings," I replied. "It may clear up any day. But I fear the worst if she's called upon to suffer any more before she's cured."

He talked no more but stared gloomily at the frightened forest crown. I could understand his great impatience. There was a time when great happiness awaited me east of the Susquehanna, when I would have risked much to return to town. Yet I found myself criticising his impatience to travel before Mrs. Beverly was restored to normal. As for me, I seriously doubted in my mind whether my superiors would consider my delay in reporting justified even by the plight of the three women. Yet Arlington's selfishness was of a kind that's common to all who are fortunate in their wooing. I kept this in mind and tried not to blame the man too much.

There was no doubt as to an understanding between the Old England man and the girl. Her bravery, her devotion to her people and her clear-headed way of accepting conditions had impressed me mightily from the start, although I was slow to discover that fact. No man could ask for a more loyal mate to stand at his side than Ann Beverly.

I only hoped that changing her plane of life would bring her no regrets. If given a chance she could hold up her head among any woman in the Colonies. That chance she must have, for Arlington was never one to live on the frontier. The girl was cultured but uneducated. She would be very sensitive to new conditions, very quick to believe herself uncouth because of her ignorance of petty social customs. And her nature was such she would suffer torment if she ever believed she did not grace her husband's position.

These thoughts ran through my mind while the storm blustered and assailed the forest. I felt very lonely at seeing happiness for others and none for me. For a man of active habits the cave was torment. Arlington's impatience was that of a lover. Mine was that of a man who was duty bound to return to his post.

I left the shelter and stood bareheaded in the last of the rain. Arlington followed me and interrupted my moody reverie by saying—

"Case, you're neither spy nor traitor."

"Thanks. I've told all of you that several times," I sharply replied.

"So I reminded Miss Ann."

"Small profit in discussing me. Think what you will, all of you. Once I get you clear of this —— place our trails part."

To my surprize he laughed sardonically, and softly exclaimed:

"Part? That's good."

"Anyway, I wish you all much happiness. And I think the storm has left us."

A streak of blue was showing through the oak tops. The storm was sweeping over the bush-grown spot where Braddock had been stealthily buried.

Now, indeed, I felt lonely. I needed the companionship and wisdom of the Cherokee. For nearly four weeks he had been gone and I had given him up for lost. I stared to the west and believed his brave spirit was in the Ever Darkening Land. If he had carried memory with him I knew he would be waiting and watching for me, for he was an outcast.

"I'm going to make you some moccasins," spoke up Ann Beverly at my elbow. "Yours are about gone."

I glanced down at the top of her head and then at my dilapidated footgear. The sunlight was now flooding the little opening and I saw more clearly how disheveled I must have appeared. With the instinct of woman and the cat tribe she had managed to keep clean, even if her linsey-woolsey gown was a sad affair.

Arlington's finery was stained and torn and a beard was well sprouted on his comely face, yet he had a jaunty way of carrying himself that made one forget external appearances. The last time I had looked down at myself in a quiet pool I had been reminded of something to stick up in a new clearing to scare birds away.

I took deerskin thongs, or "whangs," from my bullet pouch and gave them to her along with my moccasin awl, and removed a moccasin for her to use as a pattern. The deerskin she was to use was not thoroughly dressed, but with my feet on the ground it would serve better than none. She methodically set to work cutting the hide with a knife so as to make each moccasin of a single piece. Sitting apart I watched her and wondered what Arlington's fine friends would find in her skill to praise. With great deftness she made the gathering seam along the top and another at the heel. As they were to be makeshifts I told her not to bother with the flaps usually left on each side to reach up the leg, but to cut them off at ankle height.

As I watched her nimble fingers work I cast all selfishness from my heart and instead felt a great pity. She looked very young for one so capable. But how would her frontier virtues serve her once she was taken among the befrilled, bepatched women who had filled the Englishman's life? Her beauty would serve her none among the belles of the town. I feared for her. I almost believed she was walking into a greater misery than she had experienced at the cave.

She was between two and three hours in making the moccasins and when she was done I took my gun and entered the wet woods. To protect the string from rain I had hidden my bow and arrows in a hollow tree, but the storm had managed to wet the cord and I walked on without it.

HALF a mile from the cave I met Bloody-Mouth. At first I could only stare, believing I was seeing his ghost. His face was thin as a hatchet. His copper cheeks were sunken in like those of the mummy in the back of the cave. Across his breast, like a cord worn for a sash, was a blood-red scar. There were scars on his throat, and his arms were welted with them. But the fire in his eyes was unquenchable. Our hands met before we exchanged a word. We sat down on the wet forest mold and remained silent for a minute. Then I said—

"Tell me."

His recital was as compact as a scout's equipment. He had been close to Fort Duquesne. He had gone there to lead a band of French Indians away from our valley. He believed the man killed by our gun-trap had belonged to this band. On finding the trail he had been seen and was instantly pursued. I knew he had purposely shown himself and had left signs to draw them after him. And he had led them back to their headquarters. Close to Duquesne he had been caught between his pursuers and a small band leaving the fort. His medicine must have been most potent to have extricated him from between the two forces.

There had been a running fight and a hand-to-hand struggle just as he was breaking clear of the trap. It must have been a fight that his gods were proud to watch. He had killed. He had been all but killed. His wounds were sufficient to have drained life from a giant. But he had managed to drag himself away to water. He had gone without food for days. Water and rough surgery had stopped the flow of blood and he had crawled back to life.

Unseen except by the enemy, he had made his race and fight. It was magnificent. The friendship which prompted him to bait the savages away from the vicinity of the cave was the friendship a red man can show for those he loves. Greater love hath no man!

When he completed his recital I turned my head that he might not see the tears in my eyes and be ashamed of me for being so weak. I told him:

"Giga-tsuhli has all the good luck. Each day here has been a lame turtle,

barely able to crawl from one darkness to another."

"Let my brother's heart be light. Soon we will leave this place. Soon we will leave the women in a safe place and return to show the Far Indians how to fight," he encouraged.

I went ahead to announce his return and to make sure Mercy did not by stealth accomplish what a horde of Western savages had failed to do. I told her he had killed many Indians—so many that his arms ached. When he came up her glittering eyes took account of his wounds and her smile became a grin. I suspected that she was regretting that none of his hurts had proven fatal, for her hatred of the red man was as inexorable as the hate of fire for water.

A second great surprize, also most welcome, came to us the next day. It was toward sundown and the Cherokee was off in the woods, Mercy was inside the cave gathering bits of the white spar, and the girl and Arlington were down by the rivulet. I was lying on the ground wondering what my superiors would say to me for my absence.

It was then that Mrs. Beverly came out of the cave, her strong face grim and determined. As I leaped to my feet she sharply demanded:

"What's the matter with me, Case? Where am I? What is this place? I remember coming through the night to a hole in the rocks. I'd say it was a mighty bad dream, but here I am and here is the hole."

I urged her to sit down. She waved me back and cried:

"I feel as if I'd been sitting down for ages. We got away from the Injuns. Before that poor Michael was killed. He didn't even have a chance to make a fight."

I rejoiced to hear this. Her reason seemed unimpaired. Her husband's death she recalled and accepted as something that's finished. I briefly sketched our stay at the cave and endeavored to make her believe that we were held there by danger from wandering savages and not because of her illness.

"Nothing to hinder us from moving on now, is there?" she impatiently interrupted.

"The Cherokee came in yesterday from a wide scout and says no French Indians are near. We'll start tomorrow. We're near the Braddock Road. We'll go back that way. We should meet Forbes' bushcutters at work."

"Where's Ann?"

I explained, and added—

"The Cherokee brought the Englishman here the day after we arrived."

"Oh, him? I was forgetting him. A most proper young man. It's a pity you had to go wrong, Case—calling yourself Nolton, and all that! Pretending to be a scout for Forbes and all the time carrying papers to those Frenchmen. It'll never do for you to meet Forbes' road-builders."

I said nothing. Let her believe what she would. Very soon I should step out of their lives. I was weary of life as I had lived it for the last month and preferred misunderstandings to tedious explanations.

More leniently she said:

"Still you done mighty well by us three women in fetching us clear of that mess. Looks like you're sorry for acting up as you did."

"I'm going back and tell Forbes' officers all about it."

"And maybe git your neck into a rope!" she cried. "You keep away from them and go to some good church and repent."

"See here, Mrs. Beverly, the night I took you from the Frenchman I told you I was no traitor."

That she remembered details clearly, with the quickness of the frontier-bred, was shown by her quick retort:

"And I said that very night that every spy is a traitor. But we won't fight over that. I'm beholden to you. Call Ann."

Ann came on the run in answer to my signal. Arlington followed at her heels. On beholding her mother she gave a little scream of delight and flung her arms around her neck. Arlington and I walked into the growth, but only for a short distance.

"She's fit for traveling?" inquired Arlington.

"We start tomorrow by the Braddock Road. I think I'll be going on to look for the Cherokee."

"Wait a bit." Then he sighed rather dismally, much to my surprize. His voice was scarcely audible as he made the astounding statement, "Nolton, you have all the luck."

I stared blankly. He continued—

"You never made a move, and yet that girl is in love with you."

It was remarkable that he and the wretch Phindry should entertain the same crazy notion; as remarkable as their belief was preposterous. I managed to demand:

"What are you talking about? What girl? Have you lost your mind?"

"Words, words!" he mumbled. "What girl is there for me to name except Miss Ann Beverly?"

"You're the second crazy man to say that. Have done."

"Who was the first?" he cautiously asked.

"That —— witch-doctor."

He nodded his head emphatically and murmured:

"I believed from the first that that man had rare talent if he'd been all white instead of half red. If he could have been trained a bit he could have gone far."

Now I was alarmed. This was not Arlington, the Old England man.

"It's fearfully close and hot," I said. "We've all been under a strain. We'll go to the cave where it's cool and get a little sleep. We must be on our way early in the morning."

"——, man! I'm on my way now," he bitterly replied. "I've been on my way ever since a youngster. And a sad, bad way. I say you've had all the luck, Nolton. Canting preachers would say it's because you've lived an upright, righteous life." As he said the last his voice came in the nasal tones of a preacher I once heard. He hotly continued, "But that's all nonsense. Ann knows everything. I told her. She said it wouldn't make any difference if— That —— 'if'! What a trifling word to make so much trouble."

I broke in, saying—

"Honestly, Arlington, I believe either you are crazy or I am."

"Crazy or sane, you stole Fincer's papers after he killed poor Samp. You got the Indian wampum belt. God knows how you managed it! And now you'll get the girl."

A vague suspicion was filling my head, so vague and so ridiculous I could not put it directly into words. I softly asked—

"Is that all I've stolen?"

With a laugh that was wild yet had a bit of genuine amusement behind it, he cried:

"By ——, no, sir! I had to laugh even when a prisoner and about to be painted. Nolton, you climbed to the top shelf when you stole my name."

I gaped, bewildered, yet conscious this was the answer to my absurd suspicion. Lowering his voice he quickly continued:

"Nolton, I shall always hereafter call you by your true name. If Ann had loved me my confession wouldn't have turned her from me. She is tigerish in her loyalty once she chooses. I told her the truth about me and about you. She's heart-broken for ever having believed you to be a spy even after you boasted of it. I'm Dandy Case."

CHAPTER X

BRADDOCK'S CHARGER

WE WERE traveling before sunrise with the Cherokee scouting a mile behind us. Case carried the kettle while I packed along the two guns and some cooked meat. Mrs. Beverly showed no signs of weariness, and after we entered the Braddock road and had passed the place where the army of '55 made its eighth camp on the east side of Great Meadows I drew my first long breath. We made excellent time, considering the condition of the winding road, in passing the ridges; and it was not until we were well down the eastern grade that the

Cherokee overtook us. He had seen no signs of the enemy and expressed the belief no savages were within miles of us.

While we halted to rest Case picked up a rusty bayonet, a reminder of the great rout. The rust stained his fingers and he threw it away. Mercy quickly pounced upon it and thrust it through the folds of her coarse skirt, apparently pleased to possess it. From my side of the road I could have announced a more gruesome discovery, the shattered skeleton of some poor soldier overtaken and butchered.

When we resumed our flight Case kept along the south side of the road and I kept on the north. The women hurried along between us, and Bloody-Mouth again fell back to guard us against a surprize attack. As we were following the road over the shoulder of a low hill he rejoined us and I knew, before he could reach me and press my arm, that he had made some discovery. As he strode along beside me he slightly inclined his head toward the northwest. I glanced back and felt my nerves tingle as I beheld a thin streak of dark smoke.

"Giga-tsuhli has something to tell," I murmured.

"Wolves call each other. They found Giga-tsuhli's trail near Duquesne after he thought he had shaken them off. It was a hard trail to follow, but they are wolves. They have been at the cave and found a wide fresh trail. Very soon the man of the Wolf People will turn back and make the wild wolves fight."

But I would not listen to this offer. If savages were on our track they knew our numbers and that three of the party were women. Some would halt to give the Cherokee battle and to keep him from joining us. The others would swarm along and capture or kill us. By all sentiments of the friendship he might feel for me I urged Giga-tsuhli to keep along in our company. But what influenced him to observe my wishes was the belief that he could not decoy them from our trail.

I said nothing to the others of the menace crowding behind us until Case insisted we halt and make a fire and cook a turkey Bloody-Mouth had shot with an arrow. Then to him alone I revealed our danger, and we continued the flight until I knew the women must rest or collapse. None of the three, however, would admit fatigue. Their passionate desire to get back to the frontier would have kept them to the road until they dropped.

Our first halt of any length was at the head of a stream flowing south into the Monongahela. There Bloody-Mouth built a small fire and broiled the turkey which we ate without salt. During this pause I had my first chance to talk with Case.

In answer to my questions he frankly gave me a recital of lawlessness that was amazing. His offenses had been limited to those against property, and he insisted he had never wronged an individual. He displayed a curious mental—or moral—bias, in sustaining this contention and insisting he had always stolen from Colonies and that no man had been a loser by his lapses.

In part he argued:

"I imitated bills of credit issued by the northern Colonies, it is true. But so long as the paper was not questioned no harm was done. No harm being done, I had committed no crime. All of which proves how dangerous is a little knowledge, or enough to tell a genuine from a bogus piece of paper. Why, my paper was as good as the king's, so long as it was kept in circulation. I defy any one to point out man, woman or child who was ever out of purse because of Dandy Case."

"Except the man or woman who was unfortunate enough to be holding the worthless paper when it was found to be worthless," I reminded him.

"Not unfortunate but foolish," he defended. "That person should have passed it on to another instead of making a great fuss over it. If they preferred the latter it showed they got their satisfaction that way."

"But why did you go to the frontier?

And how did you come to be traveling with Samp?"

He readily explained:

"Last year I was in Philadelphia and disposed of quite a few bills among the Quaker merchants. My visit this spring was not of my choosing. New York grew very warm for me. Poor Samp came there from Boston looking for me. His only clue to my identity was my love of display. I clothed myself more soberly and met him in a drinking place on the waterfront. I saved him from being beaten by a drunken mob. I spent some money entertaining him. As he was hunting for me I knew he was a good man to travel with. I represented myself to be from London. He was leaving for Philadelphia to search for a gaily dressed young man. So I went along with him, expecting to escape notice in the confusion caused by General Forbes' work of organizing an army.

"But as soon as I arrived I began to fear some of my acquaintances of last year would recognize me. Philadelphia merchants have sharp eyes and long memories. I decided to travel to the frontier towns and drop from sight for a while. I wrote a letter of recommendation and signed General Webb's name. Then poor Samp was murdered by Fincer. That made me doubly anxious to leave the town. I had arrived in his company. Although there could be no suspicion directed against me in connection with his death I feared publicity if some one recognized me as Dandy Case. I was glad to leave for the Conococheague to get away from public notice."

He talked at greater length, and as he flung open door after door of confidence there was a perceptible change in the man. He lost his Old England mannerisms. He grew younger. His slight smile was one of appreciation of his own cunning. The fellow actually took pride in his rascalities.

To one of my matter of fact way of living his revelations were very interesting. I was shocked and yet keen to hear more. I was used to Indian subtlety, but he furnished my first experience as father-confessor to a cheat. I was surprized to find he remained likable and much more human as Dandy Case than as Arlington of England.

Despite our plight I found something grimly humorous in his brief recital of how he raised some hard money in Philadelphia the preceding year by announcing he had sold himself to the devil and must go through with his bargain or refund the purchase price. So vivid and dramatic was his whispered description I could understand the sympathy aroused by his horrible plight. I could see the pious praying over him and the ultimate raising of the price of his redemption, which was some ten pounds. In this connection he complained:

"I had to wound my pride. A man levels himself very low who will sell himself for ten pounds. But what could I do? If I asked for more I wouldn't get it. I had to put my pride in my pocket."

Before my eyes he sketched the crowd collected in Second street above Arch, gathered to see whether the ransom would be accepted, or whether the devil would fly away with him. Then the climax, when the graceless scamp stuck his head out of a window and yelled:

"Look out! Here he comes!"

And he touched off some gunpowder on the table behind him and under cover of the noise and the smoke escaped with the hard money while the mob was taking to its heels.

His audacity and frankness had a strange appeal. He was a most likable scoundrel. Queerly enough his confessions did not abate my faith in his loyalty as a friend. And since those fighting years of my youth I have often learned that the man who falls from grace sometimes climbs to greater heights of self-sacrifice than he who smugly follows a beaten path, who takes only his legal due, and gives sparingly if at all to the weak and helpless.

His devotion to Ann Beverly was thoroughly genuine. His needless confession to her of all his misdirected life was ample

proof of his inherent honesty in affairs affecting the happiness of a child or a woman. He touched on his disappointment enough to remark:

"She's the most proper young woman I've met. Of course I told her everything. It wouldn't have counted against me, except to make her feel sorry, if she'd happened to like me. But you have all the luck, Nolton."

"More than enough of that, my friend. First you imagined she cared for you; now you imagine something else. Women in her trouble have no thought except to get back to civilization. You're young. Why don't you reform?"

He grinned dourly and answered:

"Please don't be a canting, whining preacher. She knew I'd have changed over completely if she had liked me. She knew I'd keep my word. But that's all past. I've lived smooth, and I've lived rough. I've cut a gallant figure and had my man to wait on me. And I've been driven from a warm bed in the middle of a cold night when the Law came growling at my door. I've lived on excitement. I need it as a drunkard needs his dram."

"Twenty years from now you'll be praying God to allow you one little spot where you can rest. As for excitement, you can find plenty of that in Forbes' army. And after all, you do owe the Colonies something, even if only for the chance to steal."

He scowled heavily and grumbled:

"Plain talk, my long-haired preacher. That's a low word, is 'steal.' I think 'pilfer' is less harsh and tells the whole story. But 'appropriate' is best. Yet there's reason in your talk. If the French win, Dandy Case will find an easy living harder to obtain. For if France wins, hard money will become scarce. The war will leave the people very poor. They will be doubly poor when they begin preparing for the next war. I get your thought: When France strikes at our Colonies she strikes at my resources. Huh! There's certainly sense in that. Nolton, I may decide to help Forbes yet."

His audacity, or egotism, was supreme. I marveled that he could have held himself so long and deceivingly to the rôle of an Old England man.

I HAD taken great care not to let Ann Beverly suspect that Case had told me anything which would tend to confuse her or annoy her. The three women kept together, the Cherokee remained at a safe distance from Mercy and I busied myself with the details of our flight. Except as we paused to eat I had no talk with the girl. With our poor meal finished we pressed on.

Incited by a hope of finding more weapons, Mercy now kept to the edge of the road and her sister and niece did likewise. It was not long before she came to the skeletons of three men, partly covered by bush growth. Moldy bits of cloth, a few buttons and a broken gun told they were white men. Mercy bounded back into the road and glared about for a red victim, and the Cherokee, reading danger in her wild eyes, slipped into the growth on the north side of the road.

We were traveling faster than Braddock's army ever traveled, even when it was not held up by the slow progress of Sinclair's axmen. Where the army never averaged five miles a day we were covering that distance hourly during the first stage of our flight.

Mrs. Beverly appeared to be in excellent physical condition and trudged smartly along, looking neither to right nor left. Her daughter kept beside her, and since finding the skeletons Mercy had walked behind them in the middle of the road. I endeavored to encourage them by often reminding it would be a but a short time before we would meet bush-cutters and would be safe behind them. And I firmly believed this and listened continuously for the ringing of an ax. For, despite much that has been said and written as to Forbes' choice of a route, our general had originally intended to move his army south from Philadelphia over the Monoccasy road to the Potomac, thence to Fort Cumberland over the several roads used by Braddock in assembling his forces.

From Cumberland our general would find the way opened to Fort Duquesne, once the young growth was cleared out and the road repaired sufficiently to accommodate the wagon-trains. Even while we were running for our lives our general was instructing Colonel Bouquet to cut a road "with all diligence" from Raystown south to Fort Cumberland, as it was too late to move the army to Will's Creek by the way of Fort Frederick.

Our course now for a few miles was almost due east over a high level tableland. Then it swung almost north for a few miles. This last stretch was in bad condition and would require much repairing, in addition to clearing out the bushes, before any army wagons could pass over it. We found no difficulty in crossing the Youghiogheny although the stream was three feet deep and a hundred yards wide. We were now within seventeen miles of the Little Crossing at the upper waters of Castleman's River. Braddock's army had taken five days to cover that distance.

Bloody-Mouth was the last to gain the east bank of the Youghiogheny. With a wary eye on Mercy he reported no signs of pursuit and advised we all withdraw from the road and find shelter and enjoy a rest before attempting to travel farther.

He suggested—

"There is Gist's log house near here, the one he put up the year before Braddock was killed."

"We will find it burned," I discouraged. "Many French Indians have come over this road since Braddock. But we can go to the little opening where it stood and camp. We shall find good water there. Let my brother find red meat to cook. Turkey does not put strength into a man."

To halt and rest was imperative although I knew I could not feel safe until well beyond Castleman's River. And not knowing the delays and general annoyance to which Forbes had been subjected, I was surprized not to meet the road-builders by this time.

I repeated our plans to the women and Case. The latter and Mercy were willing to halt. The Beverlys wished to continue as long as they could place one foot ahead of the other. But such mad haste wins one nothing unless it's possible to race into a blockhouse, and we would find no shelter in our line of flight until we reached Cumberland.

I herded them before me and behind the Cherokee, who led us east of the road and through an open growth for a quarter of a mile. This brought us to an opening, and we all rejoiced at beholding a stout, squat cabin of logs.

Christopher Gist, while employed by the Ohio Land Company, had made frequent trips through the Western wilds and knew the country as did few white men. With his two sons he had been with Braddock on the Monongahela and in the next year had enlisted against the Cherokee nation in Virginia. That this habitation had escaped the torch during the many ferocious raids over the road was a rare bit of luck.

We threw back the door and Bloody-Mouth entered first. He called for us to follow him. There was a small opening for a window on the south side, the door opening on the west. The fading light, coming through doorway and window, was sufficient to reveal signs of tenancy in the past. There were fragments of earthenware. A soldier had been there, perhaps a fugitive from the Monongahela butchery, for we found a pair of torn leggings and some pipe-clay and the barrel of a gun. Bloody-Mouth examined the barrel and hoarsely told me in his own tongue—

"Ghosts come around this place."

He was thinking my thought—that the soldier had made a last stand there and had used his gun for a club. In a corner was a broken bow. Mercy hissed like a snake and we wheeled in alarm. But she had only found a paint-bag left there by some red visitor. Bloody-Mouth insisted the bag had belonged to a savage the soldier had killed with his clubbed musket and that none of the red survivors would carry it away for fear their medicine would turn weak.

Mercy dropped on the earthen floor and forgot us and her surroundings and fell to brooding over the bag. She emptied the contents on the floor and examined a brush made of beaten bark. She curiously touched the vermilion with one finger and shivered as she stared at the ominous red stain.

And prisoners had been there and violently done to death. The Cherokee called my attention to scars on the logs, made by tomahawk blows; also to certain dark stains on the smooth surface of the peeled logs.

We did not call these to the attention of the others.

Now that she had a roof over her head, even if only for one night, Mrs. Beverly took command and became the housewife. She ordered us men to bring boughs for beds and to fill the kettle with water. She told the Cherokee to shoot some game and set Ann to work clearing out the litter. Mercy, usually very helpful at domestic tasks, remained crouching by the open door and staring at the contents of the paint-bag.

I filled the kettle from a spring close to the north wall of the cabin and then built a fire. Case went along with me to fetch boughs. Already Bloody-Mouth, armed with bow and arrow, had slipped into the forest. After enough boughs were procured there was nothing to do but wait for Bloody-Mouth to bring in some meat. And Ann Beverly, for the first time, had an opportunity to talk with me alone. She began by saying:

"Mr. Nolton, that Mr. Case has told me everything. Seems queer to be calling him by that name. Seems good to be calling you Nolton again. Mr. Case did things he shouldn't have. But he's honest with his friends."

"A mighty likely young man," I heartily agreed.

"It was mortal good to hear him telling the truth about you. But why didn't you tell us?"

"In De la Rue's camp my life hinged on his believing me to be a spy. I had to let you believe what you would. When you denounced me it made him more inclined to believe me."

"We should have believed in you from the start," she softly cried. "But after you got us away from him why did you leave us free to think you were a spy but not bad enough to see women suffer?"

"Miss Ann, you questioned my courage when I came to warn you. You believed I had held back when I could have saved the Fairden brothers. It wasn't for me to argue. One believes those things or doesn't. You believed well of Case. You do now. And that is right."

"Meaning I oughter believed well of you all along," she sighed. "Of course I should have. I'm sorry now."

"Be happy. It doesn't matter. We're on our way to the Conococheague. You'll soon be home."

"The Conny-co-jig can't never be home to me after what happened to poor father. We shan't stop there. We'll go to some big town, or even to Philadelphia, and find a way of earning our living."

"Philadelphia is no place for you and your mother. You're frontier women. What sort of work can you or will you do? Go into a big house as servants? Nearly all the servants in Philadelphia are blacks, or redemptioners. You would not stand that."

"We've made no plans," she drearily replied. "We'll wait till we know we're safe. How far is it to Cumberland?".

"It's less than twenty miles to the Little Crossing of the upper Castleman. Less than twenty-five miles from the Crossing to Fort Cumberland. We'll try to do it in two days."

"I'd rather travel all night and have it done with sooner. So would mother."

"Lucky if we make it in two stretches. We must stop for the Cherokee to shoot meat for the kettle. But you'll be in no danger. We'll be meeting the bush-cutters any time. If the axmen had worked this far west I'd be expecting to meet the head of the army. As it is we've left all danger on the other side of Laurel Mountain. The French are losing their Indians. English ships have stopped ships from

France, carrying presents to the Western tribes. The savages will follow neither French nor English after the presents and drink give out. For two years this road was filled with murderous bands. None are coming this way now."

This ended our talk. She entered the cabin and I remained outside to study the sky. A few pale stars were pricking through, and there was every indication of fair weather for the morrow. Then I was startled from my planning by the owl-signal of Bloody-Mouth. I knew he had something to tell me apart from the others. Soon I made out his figure emerging from the woods in the west, and I ran to meet him. He carried a haunch of deer meat and was breathing heavily. I knew it was not the weight of the meat that made his deep chest rise and fall. I said:

"Man of the Wolf People, what did you see? You have been running very hard."

"Giga-tsuhli has eyes like a tree-cat's," he replied. "Where the light was very thin he saw the mark of a moccasin. It was a fresh mark. A man followed us nearly to this place, then turned back."

This unexpected bit of bad news shocked me violently. At the cave I had been strung up to expect the worst. Since crossing the ridge, and especially since crossing the Youghiogheny, I had accustomed myself to believe we all were safe.

Bloody-Mouth continued—

"The man ran very fast to tell his friends and to bring them here."

I glanced back at the glow of the fire, showing through the open door, and tried to come to the right decision. The women had borne up well, but they had been stung by fear to make extraordinary exertions. I did not believe they were capable of traveling along the rough road throughout the night. Whether they pressed on for a longer or shorter distance the sunrise would find them in a state of collapse.

Bloody-Mouth had given the question fair thought; for he decisively said:

"If we run away tonight we will be caught and killed. We must make a fight here, where he have logs around us."

"—— them! All of them!" I passionately muttered.

A terrible fate was dogging these poor women because two kings happened to be at odds.

"The logs of the house are stout. They are better medicine than my brother's words," remarked Bloody-Mouth. Then he advised me practically, "We must soak down the roof. There is one kettle. We must pour water on the dry roof. We have three guns. We will make a brave fight."

"Do you think we can keep them out of the house?"

"*Usgasetiyu.** If we can stop their fire-arrows from burning the logs we can keep them out."

"Then we must lose no more time in wetting the roof," I said.

"We have time. The man went back to find his friends. If his friends were near he would wait for them to come to him. He was far ahead. In the morning Giga-tsuhli will scout for them. If he finds no signs we will start for the fort."

Had I been alone I should have traveled east without any loss of time; but I knew it was beyond the endurance of the women to make any distance, and at the best we would be two days reaching the Potomac. We went to the cabin. Bloody-Mouth halted at the doorway.

Mercy had painted her lips blood red, had drawn lines upward from the corners of her mouth, which gave her frozen smile the appearance of extending almost from ear to ear. And on her neck had made marks that at a short distance looked like cruel wounds. The terrible effect was intensified by the pipe-clay rubbed over her forehead and face until her visage presented the appearance of a horrible red and white mask. I have seen several of the masks worn by the Iroquois men of the False Faces society, but while these are often grotesque beyond all reason I recall none that were so fearful to

*Very dangerous; terrible.

gaze upon as was that poor woman's countenance.

I cut up the meat and put it in the kettle and waited impatiently for it to boil. Until our supper was cooked I could not use the kettle for wetting the roof; and I waited as long as possible before breaking the bad news.

Bloody-Mouth, at the open door, kept his gaze focused on Mercy. Case was in a blue spell and sat with his back to the logs, his head bowed. There was nothing in his demeanor to suggest Arlington, the Old England man. He was only a misguided young man in much trouble.

I left the cabin to examine the spring and consider the possibility of digging a hole under the foundation wall so we might tap it from the inside. But the rock cropped out between it and the wall and discouraged such a plan. This was the great weakness of many of our frontier cabins and forts—too little heed was paid to the water supply. A hand touched my shoulder and I wheeled, knowing it was not Bloody-Mouth.

Miss Ann had followed me. Before I could speak she cautioned me:

"They must not hear. But tell me—what is the trouble?"

"Trouble?" I vaguely repeated, wondering how she could read my mind.

"The Indian told you something bad," she insisted.

"He found signs of an enemy scout in the wood some distance from here. But the signs showed only one man," I explained.

"I knew it was something bad," she whispered.

"If they come up they can't capture us. If they don't come up we'll start early in the morning. The sounder you sleep the more you will rest. It might be death to start off leg-weary."

"I'll try to sleep," she murmured. "I won't tell my mother. But how miserably we have been used. Poor father murdered." And she trembled violently as she fought to compose herself.

"That's the sad fate of many who live on the border. God give us better times!"

"Amen! Give better times to our children. It won't come in our lives." And she slowly walked to the door.

She had said she would not tell her mother of the lurking scout, but I told her when I explained my intention of wetting down the roof. This was after the meat was cooked and we had eaten it without salt from bark plates. She understood that some danger was behind my precaution. For a few moments her mental agony was revealed in her hopeless, staring expression. Then the muscles of her sagging jaw tightened. Her teeth clicked together and the old light of an indomitable will flashed in her eyes. She glanced at Ann, then inquiringly at me.

"She was the first to guess it," I said. "We've been followed to this clearing by one man. In itself it amounts to nothing. The Cherokee will get him if he is here in the morning. But already he has turned back."

"To fetch along a band of the devils," she curtly added. "Well, there's one thing that must be understood. Never again will we be taken alive." And her eyes filled with an awful fear as she gazed at the slender figure of her daughter. "I know how they treat prisoners who have run away," she concluded.

"No prisoners," I agreed. "But we don't have to look at things so gloomily. We're going to get clear. You women sleep and rest and be ready for an early start. We're not in so much danger as we've been during the whole journey to this cabin."

"But if they do come? If they do make our lot hopeless?" she persisted.

"No prisoners," I firmly replied. "They shall never take us alive. And after all, it's only a little difference in time."

She struck me a man's blow on the shoulder and exclaimed:

"You've got guts! Dying ain't hard, when all go together. To be left alive and alone — that's mortal cruel. But wet down the roof. No more gabbing. They must pay a big price if they kill us."

By this time Case was on his feet

and had thrown off his coat. As I took the kettle he followed me outside and remarked:

"In for more bad times. Why can't the Injun take the women on ahead while you and I stay here and hold them back?"

"Your heart is honest," I warmly told him. "But if the women are able to travel all of us could go with them. And once they surround the cabin they're apt to find signs of the women's flight. Still, I'll suggest it."

Leaving him by the spring, I went to the door and repeated the talk to the Cherokee. He shook his head and objected:

"No good. Fear will make them run fast for a little way, then they will drop down and be caught with no shelter."

While I feared as much it was a matter for the women to decide. And I called Mrs. Beverly to the door and briefly suggested Case's plan.

"Lord love him!" she cried. "If he'd go to church in Philadelphia he'd leave off his careless ways. Ann had to tell me some things, as he'd been free in his talk. But it's impossible. I'd git plumb tuckered after the first few miles. I can look at trouble reasonably now. When we first come here I was for keeping on going. But this is a stout cabin. If they don't fire it they'll have a tough job digging us out. We're staying right here."

I repeated her refusal to Case and explained that the savages would not dare to make it a long siege for fear of Forbes' road-menders and their covering party of scouts. Had it been the summer of '56, or even '57, I would have insisted on pushing on. Conditions had changed vastly since the Delawares refused to leave their villages to help the French. I could see no reason why with three guns we could not stand off our pursuers for a day or two, if we could avoid being burned out of our shelter. And I believed that a twenty-four hour siege would be the limit of the savages' patience.

"All right. We'll stick here," muttered Case. "Climb on the roof. I'll pass up the kettle. By ——, we'll make them pay a price! I'm tired of being hounded. It's bad enough to have Colonial officers after you without being chased by the red muck. Up on the roof and I'll do some honest work for once in my life."

I drew myself up on the poles covered with sheets of tinder-dry bark and Case lifted the kettle to the eaves. My feet broke the bark with every step, and the first kettleful thrown on the ridge pole so as to seep down on both sides commenced leaking through. After the second kettle was emptied Mrs. Beverly loudly cried:

"Hold on! No more of that! We'll be wet as drownded rats! We don't need the roof. If it rains it won't be any shelter. Tear it off."

This was a simple bit of common sense. The clear sky was an excellent roof. I directed the Cherokee and Case to carry the fragments of bark and the poles to some distance as I dislodged them. In a very short time the cabin was transformed into a tiny stockade with only the ridge pole left for a covering. When I dropped from the ridge pole into what had been a room the two men were carrying the last of the débris to one side where a fire-arrow, in lodging in it, could not communicate the flames to the walls.

With this done, the women went to bed on the boughs. Case and I slept on our blankets against the closed door. Bloody-Mouth remained outside.

There was a dainty pink ribbon along the forest tops in the east when I opened my eyes. My arising was the signal for the others to awaken and to face whatever evil fate had stored up for us on this particular summer day.

Catching hold of the ridge pole, I drew myself up and scanned the hem of the surrounding woods. There was no sign of an enemy, nor could I see Bloody-Mouth. Dropping to the trodden earth, I reported:

"Everything seems to be very peaceful. It promises to be very warm and close in the woods. We'll eat and be ready to travel the minute the Cherokee reports the way is clear."

We put a portion of the meat aside for Bloody-Mouth and ate our breakfast

standing. Then I caught the ridge pole and swung myself up for another survey before opening the door. This time Giga-tsuhli showed himself. He was on the edge of the western woods and on sighting me he gestured downward with his hand and gave his wailing cry as a signal of immediate danger.

My heart turned into a lump of lead. I dropped to the ground and caught Case by the arm just as he was about to open the door.

"What's the matter, Mr. Nolton?" anxiously inquired Mrs. Beverly.

"We stay."

She remained motionless, her eyes inscrutably fixed on the rapidly reddening sky. Then she was calmly directing—

"Fill the kettle with fresh water and fetch it in."

Case seized the kettle and ran around the corner. When he returned he climbed the north wall and peered over. Descending, he announced—

"If we can make a stout rope we can drop the kettle into the spring and pull it up without spilling very much."

"Well, you've got some brains," exclaimed Mrs. Beverly.

His scheme was as simple as it was feasible. The spring was in a basin of rock within three feet of the wall. It would be a simple matter to draw at least a half a kettle of water at a time providing marksmen on the edge of the woods didn't kill the one attempting it.

But Case was not satisfied. Before I could guess his purpose he had darted from the door and was running to the pile of roof poles. I stepped outside with both guns to cover him. He selected a pole and brought it to the cabin, and eagerly suggested:

"Cut a notch in the end. When the kettle's in the spring push the notched end against the rope to hold it perpendicular. Then we can draw the filled kettle even with the top log without spilling a drop. Then all we'll have to do is to draw the pole back and grab the kettle when it gets within reach. That will save us from showing ourselves too much."

"Where'd you learn all them notions?" demanded Mrs. Beverly.

With a forlorn glance at Ann he replied—

"I always had a curious mind, but I never thought of anything useful before."

Ann and her mother began cutting a blanket into strips and braiding them into a stout cord.

Mercy had not spoken since eating her breakfast. Now she picked up the rusty bayonet and quietly informed us—

"They're coming."

"How do you know that, Aunt Mercy?" whispered Case.

"Benjamin just told me."

Mrs. Beverly lifted a startled face and explained:

"She means her poor dead husband! Poor dear!"

I caught the top log on the south wall and pulled myself up. I dropped back barely before the crown of my head rose above the log, and a ringing volley showered our defense with bullets. Only by a marvel did we escape the lead entering through the small window on the south side. Case would have stuffed the kettle into the opening if we had not stopped him. I gave him my knife and directed him to make small loopholes on each side. While he was thus engaged I used the fireplace faggots in blocking the window.

A complete silence of several minutes followed the volley. Then from deep in the woods sounded the quavering call of Bloody-Mouth. As if it were a signal there commenced a loud and terrible yelling on the four sides of us. I dropped by the first loophole completed and scanned the southern woods. The heaviest fire had come from that side because of the window. Now one gun banged after another until it was evident a red circle inclosed the opening.

TO BE CONTINUED

Hunger

in a different vein

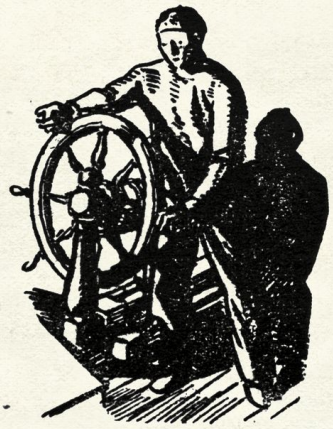
A GRAYNESS in the thick soupy fog heralded the coming of dawn. A great ship that lay at anchor in the stream began to swing round as the ebb tide pushed at her counter. The fog lay heavily upon her decks and the black openings under her topgallant forecastle were the only breaks in the grayness. From these last came rasping snores and uneasy mutterings. The ship's crew lay in there in their bunks, soddenly drunk, just as they had come aboard in the night, totally ignorant of the ship's name, her destination or the fact that they had signed on for a cruise in her. A smell came from the doorways like a blast from a sewer, the smell of stale tobacco smoke, the stench of cheap liquor and all the vile horrid reek of men long unwashed, steeped in the filth of sailors' boarding-houses and waterfront saloons and the rat-holes that cluster about the docks of every waterfront city in the world.

A man came forward along the deck and rested his hand on the rail a moment, while he sniffed at the fog. He was tall and leanly built, but with great depth of chest and breadth of shoulder. His hair was black and curly and he wore a small cap set slightly over one eye in a belligerent fashion. He took one of the belaying-pins from the rail and walked toward the forecastle doors with it. A booming tattoo filled all the ship with its thunder as the man beat upon the bulkhead with the belaying-pin and his voice rose high above the clamor, like a bull's bellowing.

"Eight bells below! D'yuh hear the news? Come outta that, ye limehouse dock-rats, ye So' Boston codfishers! Where d'yuh think you are, on a ferry-boat? Turn to, ye Baltimore oyster-shuckers! I'll have some o' the barnacles off yer backs—yuh won't grow any on this wagon an' yuh won't need copper sheathin' either. Up on the lid of her now, every man that can crack a biscuit! All hands on deck!"

Here followed a perfect hurricane of blows with the belaying-pin and such a stream of profanity and awful blasphemy that the paint was fairly blistered on the bulkhead. Finally a man appeared at the starboard door, blinking a little and weaving on his feet. He stepped over the weather board and stood a moment to get his bearings. The mate's fist smote him full on the mouth and knocked him back into the forecastle. Shortly he emerged again and climbed the ladder to the forecastle-head as rapidly as he might. The next man came with a rush —a short, fat man in a red shirt.

"Wot t' ——'s this 'ere?" he cried, and him the mate knocked handily into the



by LEONARD H. NASON

but with the same punch

scuppers, where he lay sprawling for a minute or two and then got unsteadily to his feet and staggered up the ladder after the first man.

The men straggled out of the forecastle, singly and by twos, but no matter how they came, the first thing they met was a smashing fist. Some tried to slip out one door and up the ladder while the mate was busy at the other, but them he pursued even to the topmost rung and hurled them down on deck again and gave them a couple of extra ones. Finally the last of them picked himself from the deck and hoisted his battered frame up the ladder where the mate followed him. The men were grouped about the capstan muttering and fingering swelling lips and wiping blood from noses. The mate advanced upon them, shifting the belaying-pin from his left to his right hand.

"Is there any man here that doesn't know who the mate of this ship is?" he demanded. Evidently there was none. "Is there any one here that thinks he would be a better mate than I am?" he asked after a short pause. "Fer if there is, let him speak up, and we'll decide now which is to be mate fer the v'yage." They gave silent testimony to their belief in his qualifications.

"Now then," said the mate, "there's a capstan there, by means of which we raise the anchor out of the mud. If you will be so kind as to put the bars in, we'll see what we can do to get our mudhook up."

The men put in the bars and began their slow tramp around the deck, some of them hanging to the bars and barely able to stand upright, pulled along by their harder-headed shipmates.

"Hold hard!" cried the mate suddenly, "we're one shy! —— me for a Salem haddocker, I've missed the tally!"

He dived down the ladder and into the forecastle where he could be heard questing among the bunks like an eager hound. Shortly he gave tongue, and a bundle of clothes hurtled out of the door and fell on the deck with a heavy thump. The mate followed and drew back his foot to smite the bundle, but stopped suddenly, his foot in the middle of its swing.

"Well —— my eyes!" The bundle of clothes was a man, still stupefied from drink or drug, probably the latter, as the effect of liquor would have begun to wear off by now. He lay there, arms outstretched on the deck, clad in a dirty cotton shirt and a pair of old dungaree trousers, but what had shocked the mate was the fact that the man's feet and arms and hands were of startling whiteness, so

that, contrasting with the dirty deck and the gray fog as they did, they seemed to gleam. The mate lifted one of the prostrate man's hands and then dropped it.

"He's dead," he muttered. He felt of the other's heart, which throbbed encouragingly. "Well, my marble statue, you never got them hands sailoring," said the mate finally, "but I've made sailors outta better sojers than you, so don't be downhearted. A hand here!" he roared. The hurrying eager haste with which a man slid down the ladder testified to the effect of the mate's lesson in discipline. "Git a bucket," said the mate, "and sluice this farmer down."

He climbed the ladder again, sent the two most unsailorly looking men to stow chain in the chain-locker and started the remainder to getting the anchor under foot.

The little fat man in the red shirt had responded to the mate's call for a hand and he lowered a bucket over the side and filled it with cold harbor water, icy with the morning chill. It was not until perhaps ten of these had been poured over the prostrate man that he gave a faint moan and turned, after some effort, on his stomach.

"That's right, mate!" said the little man. "Git that bilge aht o 'yer an' yer'll feel better. Pump ship an' she'll ride easier."

A YOUNG man stood by a window and gazed out of it, out across the roofs of many buildings, across forests of chimney tops, to where the harbor glistened in the morning sun. It was spring, and it is a bad thing for a young man to do on a spring morning, to look out where he can see the spars of many ships and sails glimmering and the far-off reaches of the channel that leads to the distant sea. It is especially bad if the young man is a clerk and is trodden down and insulted and ground to the dust fifty times a day by a very fiend of a head bookkeeper.

The young man who gazed was named Joseph Marble. He was a clerk in the establishment of Carruthers and Company, wool merchants. He had no relatives but an elderly aunt, who had brought him up and sent him to Boston, when he was old enough, to make his fortune. He had risen to his present position after four years of hard labor, starting as office boy, and he received of what he earned the sum of twelve dollars a week, which in those days was a good amount.

Joseph looked out across the roofs and his heart yearned to the forests of masts that bristled beyond the housetops. It was warm and sunshiny; little birds fluttered and sang outside the open windows; a gentle breeze fluttered the papers on his desk, bringing a faint tang of salt to his hungry nostrils. A fishing boat was going out, lying over to the fresh breeze, and Joseph watched her with a longing eye. How much better a fisherman's life than a clerk's!

"Well, Mr. Marble, when you're finished with moonin' out the window, perhaps you'll give some attention to those invoices."

The young man jumped. Gone was his dream; the whip of the slave-driver had cracked, and he bent to his desk once more. How he hated the bookkeeper! He ground his teeth at the thought of that bald-headed, eye-glassed, false-toothed fiend, always looking at his great turnip of a watch and wrinkling his brows in vexation at other people's slowness. Of course the bookkeeper never made mistakes, either, nor had he ever when he was just a simple clerk. The fishing boat was almost out of sight now; its sail gleamed like a tiny flame. There were men on that boat going fishing, all day long, out on the flashing sea, with the salt wind in their faces. Joseph had not been fishing since he was a boy. He would like to go again, on a day like this. On a boat. On a little boat with a white sail.

"Mr. Marble!"

"Oh, go to ——!" said Mr. Marble.

Shortly thereafter the young Mr. Marble stood on the sidewalk in front of Carruthers and Company. To say that he had been fired would be to put it mildly. He had been ejected. His head *still*

whirled. How, why, under what mad impulse he had sworn at the bookkeeper, he could not imagine. He was not a swearing man. Moreover, it was his custom to respect authority, even though he might hate the wielder of it. He wondered with some trepidation what his aunt would say when he told her he had lost his position. Also, where would he get another?

Now it was a spring day, and the young man's feet went the easiest way, that is to say, down hill, for he was deep in thought. Moreover, Destiny reached out her hand and led him, after he had reached the foot of the hill, so that before he realized he was in a dirty section of the town among multitudes of fish stores and places with yellow-painted fronts that had oilskins and sea-boots and red undershirts in the windows. There was a great smell of salt and tar and fish about and a great deal of fish scales and mud underfoot.

"Well," exclaimed Joseph, "here I've walked way down to Atlantic Avenue."

A passerby brushed against him and growlingly asked him to get out of the fairway. Joseph looked to see who had accosted him, but the man was walking off, rolling in his walk and letting the smoke from a pipe trail out over his shoulder. He was a sailor; this was entirely obvious from his little wool cap, his red shirt and tarry dungarees. More went by, two and two, some of them roaring songs. And then Destiny, or the devil, whispered in Joseph's ear:

"Here is your chance, go to sea, be done with offices and books and invoices and bookkeepers and be a man of the world! Be a sailor, and roar up and down the streets as carefree as these men."

So Joseph made up his mind and walked off down the waterfront, looking for a ship that suited him.

He went quite a way, for he was a little timid about the matter and all ships looked alike to him. How would he know whether one were good or not? He had almost decided to turn back again when his eye was struck by one that lay alone at a wharf, with no others anywhere near. She was a beautiful ship, even to his unpractised eye. Her figurehead was an Indian chief shading his eyes with his hand and looking out over the end of the dock as if he could see beyond the line of dirty buildings across the street to the distant plains. Her masts were tall and straight and there was a sweep to her that caught the breath. Here was the ship, thought Joseph and, walking along the pier, he found a gangplank presently and went aboard.

There was a tall broad-shouldered man in a peaked cap sitting on the after-hatch, and Joseph went up to him.

"I'd like to go to work on your boat," said he. The man removed his pipe from his mouth and made a little noise, almost a gasp. He looked at Joseph's high white collar, his suit carefully buttoned up to where a tiny triangle of white shirt showed, his black string tie, but most of all at his soft white hands. Joseph looked at him and remarked that he had black curly hair and a kindly blue eye.

"Are you a sailor?" asked the man on the hatch.

"No, sir," said Joseph, "but I'd like to learn."

"Well, I'm ——!" said the man, and Joseph blushed. There was a long pause while the black-haired man puffed at his pipe. Finally he spoke, more to himself than to any one else.

"If I don't do it some one else will," he muttered. "There's worse in this harbor than the *Shenandoah*. Young feller," he said in a louder tone, "we don't sign on men aboard ship. You have to go to the shippin' master. His name is Ethan Blunt, on Commercial Street. You just ask for Blunt's place and any one will show you. Tell him I sent you up to sign on. I'm mate of this ship, and a fine one she is. We'll make a sailor of you yet. You'll get some meat on those bones of yours and learn to use your hands as well as your feet, if you take a cruise on this wagon."

"Thank you, sir," said Joseph, overwhelmed by his good luck "When do you sail?"

"With the morning tide," answered the

mate, and walked to the ladder with young Mr. Marble. The mate stood looking after the young man for a long while. Finally he spat over the side and turned aft. "Well, I'm ——!" he said aloud. "He wants to go to work on this ship. I calc'late he'll get work enough if he gets aboard with a whole neck."

Mr. Ethan Blunt's "Refuge Bar and Eating Saloon," from the outside, was not very pleasing to the eye. Joseph's spirits sank as he surveyed the place, but thinking that the proprietor might have his own reasons for not washing the windows, the young man went in. He had had a vague thought that a shipping office would be something like the office of Carruthers and Company, but it was not. The place was a rather large room, with a bench that ran around the walls, and one or two tables near the stove. There was a bar along one side with two mirrors in back of it, on one of which was painted a hunting scene showing a man shooting at a galloping deer, rabbits running and birds flying, a great number of scattered cauliflower-heads that perhaps represented trees. The other mirror bore a representation of a sea fight between two frigates with enormous sails, one of which bore a very large American flag and the other an equally large British flag. There was a great cloud of smoke and much red paint to represent gun-flashes, but neither ship appeared to have sustained any damage. The Yank customers could believe that their ship was winning and the Britishers could feel the same way, and neither would have any hard feelings against the house.

On the opposite wall were a number of pictures of very thin horses and of ladies who might have been thinner, and several of gentlemen of the boxing profession with American flags around their middles, and very heavy mustaches. Some red-eyed, impolite looking men were sitting on the benches smoking and muttering among themselves. There was a man behind the bar who threw down his newspaper as Joseph entered and bruskly demanded—

"Want to see somebody?"

"I'd like to see Mr. Blunt," said Joseph rather nervously, for he had never been in a saloon before in his life, and the smell of stale beer and staler tobacco, together with the unwholesome appearance of the company present, was anything but reassuring.

"What d'yuh want to see Mr. Blunt for?"

"I want to go to work on the *Shenandoah* and the mate said Mr. Blunt was the shipping master of it."

First there was a deathlike silence in the room, then excited mutterings, and if any there present had not looked in amazement at Joseph when he entered, they did so now. The man behind the bar leaned on it and projected his face almost against Joseph's.

"You what?" he yelled, as if he did not believe his ears.

"I want to go to work on the *Shenandoah*," repeated Joseph.

"You mean you want to ship on her?"

"Yes, sir, I do, and the mate said he'd take me."

There was some loud laughter from the benches at this which the man behind the bar stopped with a look.

"Hey, Blunt," he roared, "here's a man wants to sign on for the *Shenandoah*."

A huge fat man appeared at a door behind the bar, his face suffused with anger.

"What the ——!" he began, and then caught sight of Joseph. A swift look passed between him and the bartender and the expression of his face changed instantly.

"Well, young feller, do you really want to go to sea?"

"Yes, sir," replied the young Mr. Marble, swallowing hard, for he was afraid of these men and he feared there might be some objection to his signing on, inexperienced as he was.

"There's no finer ship sails out of Boston harbor than the *Shenandoah*," said the fat man genially. "Just step back here and we'll put your name down. You're an American, ain't you?"

Then they went into the room behind the bar and Joseph signed on.

II

NOW that he was really going to sea, Joseph decided that he'd go to the bank and get out his modest savings. Mr. Blunt had promised him an outfit, so he wouldn't need to buy anything. Wasn't it fine to be a sailor, and have your clothes given you free, to be able to travel and see the world! Perhaps he'd study navigation—he was good at figures—and rise to be a captain, even to command a ship like the beauty he was going to sea on. Yes, he'd begin to study on his first voyage; there'd be lots of books in the ship's library that would help him and the kind-faced mate would give him a hand. And what fun they'd have, and how surprized the captain would be when one day the young Mr. Marble that he thought was only a common sailor stepped up to him and offered to sail his ship for him! Or perhaps he'd be such a good sailor that the captain would call him down into the cabin, to live there and study.

With these pleasant thoughts Mr. Marble went to the bank, drew out ninety-four dollars, his entire savings, and then decided to go down and have another look at the ship before going back to Mr. Blunt's. It was mid-afternoon when he reached the dock, and his heart thrilled and thrilled when he beheld those towering spars and that white figurehead and the maze of ropes against the sky. That was his ship, and he was really a sailor now and a clerk no more. He wished he'd changed his clothes before he left Blunt's, so that every one would know he was a sailor. Two men dressed in dungarees were standing on the pier, looking up at the *Shenandoah*, and Joseph wandered down near them. They stood smoking silently and regarding the *Shenandoah's* spars.

"She's quite a handsome ship, isn't she?" began Joseph, preparatory to stating that he belonged to her.

The two sailors looked at him and immediately put him down as a landsman, and a foolish one at that, with his derby hat, his high white collar and his check suit with the little short coat. Maybe a Bible shark from the Seamen's Bethel. "Aye," said one of them dully, "she's a handsome ship."

"I'm one of her crew," announced Joseph.

There was a tiny spat. The sailor's jaw had dropped so suddenly that his pipe fell to the wharf and shattered. The two men gazed at Joseph as if he had said he was the President of the United States.

"You're no sailor," said the man whose pipe had broken.

"I know it," answered Joseph, a little ruffled, though, that it was so manifest, "but I'm going to be. I signed on in her this morning." He was learning, was Joseph; he said "signed on" now, instead of "going to work."

"Jump into the dock," said the other man fiercely, "jump down now lad, 'twill be an easier death. Look!" he cried, pointing to where the dirty water lapped at the piling, tumbling bits of bark and sticks and broken boxes about, "tie a cobblestone around your neck and jump in there. Ye'll have more chance for your life than in that gory old canine."

"Can you see what's carved on her figurehead?" asked the first man of the speechless Joseph.

"Carved on her figurehead!" cried the other. "Aye, carved on every bit of her from truck to keel,. from martingale to rudder post! It shrieks from her. Halliard and tack and stay cry it aloud!"

He stopped suddenly, fist in mid-air, the blood slowly leaving his crimson face. The lips of his companion curled back from his teeth in a silent snarl.

Joseph, his head whirling, followed their gaze. The dark-haired man of the morning had come forward and was sitting on the knightheads, looking down at them. He sat there calmly, the smoke from his pipe curling upward in a little blue cloud. The two sailors glared at him and he looked back with unruffled countenance. For what seemed an age the battle of looks went on, when suddenly the smaller of the two sailors, he that had advised Joseph to jump in the dock, gave a kind of shriek, and began to swear and curse at the man

on the ship so horribly that Joseph was well-nigh sickened. The filth and abuse and obscenity of the Seven Seas poured from the little man's mouth until his companion took him by the arm and started to drag him away.

"Come, Matt," he said, "come awa'. Ye'll get no satisfaction that way. Jump in the dock, lad," he said to Joseph, "but don't go to sea in the *Shenandoah.* Her and the *Agony* are the two reddest hells that a living man can know." Then the two sailors stamped up the wharf together.

Poor Joseph! He was frightened almost out of his wits by the sailormen's fearful swearing and the sinister warning they had given him. Something carved on her figurehead! Something shrieked from every part of her! What was it? Joseph went down the wharf a few steps and stood up on a mooring post the better to see the Indian figure that graced the bow of the *Shenandoah.* Yes, there was something carved there, just under the war-bonnet, but Joseph could not make it out. On the Indian's brow, cut deeply into the wood, were some letters, painted over so that they were hardly discernible; Joseph leaned nearer, straining his eyes. Just then the sun peeked from behind a chimney, lighting up the countenance of the figurehead as if a searchlight had been turned on it. Flaring across the Indian's forehead, each letter leaping from the wood as the sun made shadows of the indentations, was the word "HUNGER."

Joseph hurried away, walking as rapidly as he could. He had but one coherent idea, and that was to get back to the shipping office and tell Mr. Blunt that he didn't want to sail in that ship. He still wanted to go to sea, but not in a ship that men swore at, with "hunger" carved on its figurehead. He burst into the Refuge Bar and Eating Saloon with such precipitation that the man behind the bar reached for a bung-starter. When he saw that the cause of the noise was the young man who had wanted to go to work on the *Shenandoah* he tightened his grip on his weapon. Trouble was imminent.

"I want to see Mr. Blunt," panted Joseph, "right off. I've decided not to sail on the *Shenandoah.*"

Mr. Blunt rose from one of the tables where he had been talking to a rock-faced man in a pea-jacket and peaked cap.

"Here he is," said the rock-faced man, "just as we're speaking of him. Nice of him to drop in on us so opportunely."

"You're not going on the *Shanandoah?*" asked Mr. Blunt suavely. "Why, what's the matter? You haven't been believing of any of these waterfront croakers, have you, that will always give a ship a bad name if they can find any one to listen?"

A disinterested observer would have noticed that Mr. Blunt's wattles were suspiciously red and that he kept darting glances here and there at the loungers, as if watching closely to see what effect the conversation was having on them.

"No, Mr. Blunt, I just made up my mind that I'd like another ship."

"One what ain't got such pretty carvin's on her figgerhead?" said one of the men on the bench, at which a general laugh went up. When it died down the rock-faced man spoke and his voice chilled the blood like the flash of a naked blade.

"I'd like to have you take a cruise with me, my joker—you'd keep your ugly face shut on *my* ship or get it broken, one or the other!"

Mr. Blunt hurriedly spoke to Joseph to forestall any further exchange of defiance, for some of the men were growling ominously.

"You better think it over a while. There's lots of time—the ship won't sail for a week yet."

"Why, the mate told me it was going out with the morning tide."

Blunt's face became purple, and the rock-faced man spit out a fearful word between his teeth. The loungers all stood up and one or two started to go out the door, but the rock-faced man struck one a terrible blow, knocking him against the wall. Blunt seized Joseph by the throat and, blaspheming most sickeningly, choked the young man almost into unconsciousness. Joseph remembered the rock-faced man's swinging a chair over

his head and herding the men from the benches to the back of the room while the bartender leaped over the bar wielding his bung-starter. Blunt hurled Joseph into a corner and went to the assistance of the rock-faced man, who was not having it his own way by any means. There was much shouting, breaking of wood and the thudding of blows; men cursed and tramped up and down. Finally all was quiet. Joseph was struggling to his feet when Blunt appeared and bent over him.

"I'm sorry I was rough with yer," said Blunt. "Drink this and you'll feel better."

Before Joseph could even protest, Blunt had poured half a glass of raw whisky down his throat. Joseph gurgled and choked and his stomach writhed. Through the gathering mists a far-away voice said—

"There, you lily fingered —— that'll teach you to come gallyin' my boarders, and the harbor full of ships waitin' for crews!"

Then the dark shut down and young Mr. Marble lost interest in the proceedings.

JOSEPH lay on his back in the starboard waterway, in such agony as he had never known. He was cold and soaking-wet, and his bones cried aloud with bruises where the mate had beaten him in his bunk before heaving him out on deck.

"Where am I?" asked Joseph of a little man in a red shirt who was watching him critically and poising a bucket of water ready to heave over him if it appeared to be necessary.

"Ye're on a ship," replied the little man.

"What ship? Where's she going?"

"This 'ere," said the little man, turning the bucket so that Joseph could read the name on it, "says that this ship is the *Shenandoah.* I would 'azard a guess that she was bound round Cape Stiff."

"I don't want to go to sea on the *Shenandoah!*" moaned Joseph, twisting in another paroxysm of nausea.

"None of us wot I knows on was asked if we wanted to go or not. We was just took. Ships 'as to 'ave crews, and 'ere we are."

A huge, blue-eyed man with a croaking voice descended upon the two.

"Yump, dere! You two go aft an' help stow dat spare hawser! Yoost I tell you, no sojers on dis wagon!"

Joseph wavered to his feet and started to walk after the red-shirted man, stumbling over coils of rope and the barrels and boxes with which the deck was strewn. The confusion was terrible, at least to his landsman's eye. Forward the mate was raging like an avenging angel, crying aloud to the heavens that in all a ship's company there should be at least one man who knew how to reave a catfall and the heel rope of a jib-boom. What with the sailors hauling taut when they should slack away and slacking away when they should haul taut, the mate's voice was growing quite hoarse and his arm weary.

"Never think, ye sojerin', lubberly, lemon-peltin' farmers, that ye'll wear me out, for I'll kill every one of ye before I lay my hand on a stay. Out with her some more! Slack away a little now, you, there—not so much! —— you!" Thump with the belaying-pin on the offender's shoulders. "Out with her! *Out with her!*" And here followed such a blast of curses that of a truth the boom slid out to its place on the wind of it.

"Now then," cried the mate, "smartly with that fish pennant and get the anchor aboard!"

The heavy anchor is hoisted out to the cathead by the catfall. This job of rigging the catfall, as the mate had intimated, is a test of seamanship. A huge hook is lowered from the foremast on the fish pennant and hooked over the fluke of the anchor. Then the anchor is brought inboard and lashed on the forecastle head, the chain is unshackled and stowed, and the hawse pipe plugged up. The hawse plug has two lines on it, one on either end. One is led in through the hawse pipe and the other held on the deck and slacked out as the plug is drawn into the pipe.

The mate's attention was taken somewhere else and he did not notice that the man into whose hand the deck end of the line had been thrust was hauling on it for dear life, despite the muffled bellows that came up from the hawse pipe to "Slack away!" A man came dashing up the ladder, very hot and furious, and demanded the reason for pulling in on the plug line. The man who had hauled in was too drunk to know what he was doing; the line had been thrust into his hand and he had hauled away on it. He was not too drunk, though, to understand what the other sailor was calling him. They fouled hawse immediately, two more tried to separate them and the mate leaped upon the struggling knot of men with both feet, plying his faithful belaying pin on every target he could reach.

They had finished stowing the spare hawser, and Joseph had been gruffly ordered to help with lashing a spare topmast in place. As he knew how to do this a little better than he knew how to fly, he was cursed and kicked across the deck again. Before the blue-eyed man with the hoarse voice could raise his foot for another kick, there was a toot from the tug's whistle, and every one commenced to run forward. Joseph debated whether to follow or not, but the decision was made for him by the hoarse-voiced man, who smote him again and roared:

"Git forrard and take in the hawser! Wadda —— you wait for? Yoost I tell you, I break your neck, you don't yump around better."

Joseph went, totteringly, his head ringing and his stomach rolling like a ball.

The tug was backing toward the ship, to Joseph's amazement, but it was only to slacken the hawser. The men were clustered on the forecastle head and some of them jumped into the rigging and clambered aloft in response to an order from the mate, an order couched in some strange jargon of the sea that Joseph did not understand. Joseph watched the men, though the effort made him dizzy. One of them stood on the yard, pulling and hauling for all he was worth, as if he were ringing a bell. Shortly the sail, a great dirty patched thing, came tumbling down and slatted loosely, with leach and buntlines rattling.

The tug cast loose the hawser and turned in a narrow circle to head back to port again. Joseph noticed a man whose face looked familiar and, scanning his battered features more closely, he remembered him as the man in Blunt's saloon who had asked him whether he wanted a ship without fancy carving on its figurehead. The battered-faced humorist looked anything but in a mood for joking just then. His eyes kept darting from right to left and he kept wetting his lips with his tongue. As the homeward-bound tug came abreast of the ship, this man gave a moaning cry and, running to the rail, leaped overboard.

"Grab him!" cried the mate, "grab him!"

Every one rushed to the side and watched the man in the water strike out for the tug. The mate hurled his belaying pin at the swimmer with all his might but missed by a wide margin. Some one on the tug threw over a line and the swimmer was hauled aboard. He promptly ran aft and, leaping upon the towing bitts, shook his fist at the outward bound ship and probably gave her a Dutch blessing, although his words were not audible.

"Well, he's gone," muttered the mate, "and the Old Man wanted that —— more than any four men we got. Tail out on that hawser, now," he cried turning inboard, "and get it aboard!"

The hawser was hauled in, Joseph lending a hand with the rest, though if it had been pack thread instead of six-inch manila he could not have hauled in a foot of it.

"All hands make sail!" roared the mate.

The crowd of broken heads and bloody noses made for the ratlines and clambered aloft to overhaul the gear. Joseph took one look at the men going up and at the one already on the fore royalyard and then lay down upon the deck to wait for

death in whatever form it saw fit to come.

"What! Up off that deck! Up you go!" The poor boy was jerked to his feet and shaken until his tongue hung out. "Orders is obeyed on this ship, young feller!" This last is somewhat abridged, but it is the gist of what the speaker said. Joseph was hurled bodily into the ratlines, to which he clung, and then looked down to see who had shaken him. There was the selfsame man with the kindly face he had spoken to the day before, the man that had smoked on the knightheads when Joseph had tried to read the carving on the figurehead. His face was no longer kindly and his language was even less so. Joseph was not the first man to find out that the heartiest, kindliest old sea dog ashore may become a smoking devil from the hottest pit of hell the minute he gets to sea.

The young man went up the ratlines, slowly and carefully. Something buzzed by his ear and a voice from the deck urged greater speed. He reached the foreyard finally, hauled bodily into the top by two men.

"Git out on the yard and stop the gear," they said, "if ye don't want to get killed when ye go down." They shoved him ahead of them, showing him how to cling to the jack stay, and feel his way along the foot-ropes. "I can't any more than fall and be killed," he thought, "and if I don't go out I certainly will be."

So he shuffled along and swallowed violently and prayed with a full heart. The leach and buntlines, which are used to pull the sail up to the yard, have to be tied to the jack-stay when the sail is set so that they will stay slack and not chafe a hole in the sail. This is called "stopping." When the sail is taken in, the lines are hauled from the deck and the stops are broken. Joseph did no stopping. He hung to the jack-stay, tried to vomit and wept bitterly. A man next to him, who had a split lip and one eye closed tight and swollen to the size of an egg, cursed him bitterly, but did Joseph's share of the work just the same. Then the men came in off the yard and went down to the deck again.

The business of setting sail went on. The crew stamped up and down, pulling and hauling. Joseph followed blindly, tailing out on the ropes whenever he saw a place to take hold, and pulling with what little strength he could muster. The wind blowing in his face was wafting away the effects of the drug that had stupefied him and he was beginning to feel better. He had noticed several times a pair of broad shoulders, very wide and lumpy, in front of him on the rope, and once or twice had seen the owner's face, evil and sullen, its aspect the worse for a still bleeding gash on the side of the head.

This man was even larger than the mate. He had on a torn, threadbare green coat that had once been black, the back all soiled with the mud of half the gutters in East Boston. There was no singing on this ship, no chanteying when the yards were mastheaded, so the task was a long one, for the men can not pull well together nor with much heart unless a song is raised. The mate had tried to start one some time ago.

"Come on, tune up your pipes, men! Let's have 'Ranzo!' Who's the chanteyman here?"

There being no reply, he had sung the first line himself, but the men at the halliards had maintained a sullen silence.

"You —— clamdiggers," cried the outraged mate, "I'll make you sing!"

He leaped at them tooth and nail, then ducked swiftly just as a belaying-pin hummed past the place his brain had occupied a second previously. The pin banged against the after-house and fell to the deck. The mate folded his arms and regarded them all intently, but he could see no sign of guilt, the hands still pulled on the halliards.

"I'll remember you," said the mate between his teeth. "I'll get you all in my watch. I'll work your old iron up —— my soul if I don't!"

Joseph had seen a dirty hand snatch that pin from the rail. The hand belonged to the broken-headed man in the green

coat, and Joseph wondered whether any one else had seen him throw the pin. Just at that moment the rope gave way suddenly and Joseph fell flat on his back, bumping his head on the deck. There was a smothered laugh. The man in the green coat looked around and grinned evilly, showing his broken yellow teeth.

"Wot price pulley'aul!" he sneered. "Wanter split the block? Yer skinned out 'ands pullin' that rope through 'em like that."

Joseph of course did not know what had happened but the rest of them did. The green-coated man had taken up the slack in his fist, letting it out suddenly as Joseph hauled, with the result that Joseph had bruised his back and seen all the constellations of the firmament.

No peace for the wicked nor for the good, either. Directly the canvas was set the sailors were hounded about by the hoarse-voiced man and set to work lashing spare spars, stowing sails in the sail locker aft, battening down the hatches, lashing the scuttlebutt and harness casks and cleaning away a great riffraff of chips, dirt and bits of rope's-end, the accumulation of a lengthy stay in port. The ship was more than ordinarily dirty, for she was ballasted with coal and the dust of it lay thickly upon her. There was less hammering of the men now and just before sundown the whole crowd stamped aft to the break of the poop for the mates to pick the watches.

The men stood in a clump in the waist by the after hatch. The two mates regarded them earnestly and began to choose, like two boys choosing sides in baseball. The mate had the first choice. He picked the man in the green coat, whose name, it appeared, was Larkin. The second mate took a sturdy red-faced man whose eyes were rather red from liquor, but who seemed to be the most wholesome looking man in the lot. After that there was little choice, the mates picking their watches at random, muttering all the while about "farmers" and "dock-scourin's." Joseph, to his surprize, was chosen by the second mate at the sixth choice. For all he was green and a "farmer," he had a healthy skin and a good pair of shoulders that a little hard work would put muscle on in fine shape. By the time he had been at sea a few months he would be worth two of the drink-rotted gutter rats in the other watch. Thus thought the second mate and called Joseph to his side of the deck.

"What's your name?" asked the second mate.

"Joseph Marble, sir," answered Joseph blushing. They were all looking at him with their red eyes and grinning.

"I'll remember that," said the mate.

Joseph noticed the men casting covert glances upward, looking at something under their lowered eyebrows. He looked in the direction of their glances and gave a slight start. Leaning over the poop rail, wrapped in a green muffler, was the rock-faced man who had been in the shipping office when Joseph had been there the last time. It was he who had resented joking about the *Shenandoah*.

"Where's that weevil I brought aboard myself?" the rock-faced man asked. "You haven't killed him so soon, have you?"

"He jumped overboard when we cast off the tug," said the mate.

"Did they pull him in?" asked the rock-faced man eagerly.

"Yes, sir."

A spasm of rage swept over the rocky face at the poop rail, but the man said no word. He took a turn across the deck and then resumed his place overlooking the hands in the waist.

"That tug will never get my hawser again," said the rock-faced man, "not if I have to take the line and pull her out with the boats, the ——!"

When the last man had been chosen, the rock-faced man straightened up and squared his shoulders.

"Now men," he began, "you've been called aft many a time when the voyage was beginning to hear a skipper read you a sermon. Some phrases as old as the sea: 'Treat me fair and you'll find me fair.' 'This will be a good ship if you make it so,' and others of the like. But

I haven't called you here to tell you that. I've called you here to tell you that you've signed for a man's work at a man's wage and that you're going to earn every penny of it, by ——! I'm a hard man and this is a hard ship. There are owners over me that are harder on me than I will ever be on you; owners that stay snug and warm at home while I take their ships round the Horn for them in the winter gales. Don't forget that I'm on this ship, that when your lives are in danger mine is in danger too. Now then, that's all, except that this ship has a record and I have a reputation to keep, and I'll see that both are kept if I have to break the neck of every barnacled —— on this ship and take her into port alone!"

There was a heavy silence when the last words, which had been roared at the men in a voice of thunder, had died away. Then they began to straggle forward. A bell clanged two sharp quick strokes, close together.

"Two bells in the first dog," said the ruddy-faced sailor who had been picked first in the starboard watch, "the watches picked and out of sight of land. First cruise, young feller?"

"Yes, sir," said Joseph.

"You picked a nice ship. I been in worse, but I don't remember when. She'll make a fast voyage though, and them that's able to live won't be in her very long."

"Aye, mate," said another one of the watch, a man with a face like a coffin, "them that's able to live. D'ye mind the *Alleghany*, the sister ship of this floatin' hell? I made a voyage in her once, and she was so hungry the rats died of starvation. We used to find 'em lyin' all about, just bags o' bones, so weak they couldn't run from under our feet."

"I've heard tell of her," said the ruddy-faced man. "She was a hellship for fair. The mates had to stand their watch with a rifle in the bight of their arm. She come into Sydney once ninety days from New York and they didn't have enough belayin'-pins left aboard to clew down the tops'ls on."

They went into the forecastle, and Joseph took up a sailor's bag, very flat and empty, and a sack full of straw that was pointed out to him as his.

"Put 'em in the starboard focsle," said the ruddy-faced man, "any empty bunk. Name's Martin Grew—what's yours?"

Joseph told him.

"Now listen, what made you pick out this wagon to make your first cruise in?"

Joseph explained that too.

"Hard luck," said Martin. "Well, there ain't no backing out now. You might have jumped overboard like that other fellar did, if you'd thought of it in time. You talk like a down Easter—where you from?"

"Newburyport," said Joseph.

"That so? I'm from Rowley myself. Well, us Yanks ought to stick together. You keep under my lee, and I'll do what I can to make a sailor out of you, just for the honor of the old Bay State."

"Thank you a lot," said Joseph, "I certainly need somebody to show me the ropes. But there must be more as bad off as I am. I heard the mate say he never saw so many farmers in a crew before."

Martin grinned.

"He didn't mean what you did. A farmer is a man who stands no wheel nor lookout. Cause why? He didn't know how. So it's a fightin' word to call a real sailor a farmer. I think you're the only real farmer on the ship, because the rest of 'em look as if they'd seen blue water before. Now then, let's see what you got fer clothes." Joseph tumbled out the contents of the bag. Two suits of a bull's-wool underwear, a second-hand suit of dungarees, an old blanket and a threadbare jacket. A tin plate, a rusty fork and a pannikin clattered on the deck.

"I thought as much," said Martin. "Ye'll have to have oilskins, but the slop chest won't be open till we work off the dead horse, so ye must struggle along without."

"Do you know where we're going?" asked Joe.

"To Frisco, and you've got a fine outfit

to go round the Horn in. Chuck your mattress into that bunk under mine an' we'll have a smoke before supper."

Supper! Food! What a reviving effect the thought had on Joseph. He had had nothing to eat since the afternoon of the day before and his stomach, encouraged by the cool salt air, was clamoring for its due. Supper. Something warm to eat and some hot drink. Things might not be so bad after all.

Joseph gathered the contents of his bag off the deck, replaced them and picked up his donkey's breakfast to toss into the bunk Martin had pointed out. The forecastle was divided down the middle by a wooden bulkhead, painted a light blue. As Joseph bent over his bunk to straighten the mattress, the rays from the setting sun shone in through the door and fell on the bulkhead. There in front of him, cut into the bulkhead in letters a foot high, was the word "HUNGER". Joseph went out hurriedly to where Martin leaned on the bulwarks, smoking. "There's 'hunger' cut over my bunk!" cried the young man wildly.

"Aye," replied Martin, puffing his pipe, "I dare say. Look here," and he moved aside a little, so that Joseph might see the letters "HUNG" cut in the rail, the G only partly finished. "The man that started that is dead," said Martin.

"How do you know?" asked Joseph in an awe-stricken whisper.

"He'd have finished it, wouldn't he, if he'd lived?"

"What does it mean? It's cut in the figurehead too."

"It means that this is a hungry ship, and the poor devils thats sailed in her all these years took it out by cuttin' 'hunger' everywhere. The *Shenandoah* and the *Agony*, hellships they are and for hellships they are known, all up and down the Seven Seas."

"What made you sign in her then?" asked Joseph, "or did they get you aboard the way they did me?"

"No," replied the other man, "I signed in her. The drink was on me and I signed. We were a man short when we left the pier, and the one that jumped into the tug makes it two. A hungry ship and a Cape Horn passage. Shorthanded in the winter gales. Devils aft and drunkards forward. It's a pleasant voyage we have to look forward to."

THEY had supper. The starboard watch went to the galley and had each a mug of tea and a lump of pork given them. This they took into the forecastle and ate, sitting on the deck and on the two or three chests that were in there.

"Is this all we get to eat?" asked Joseph.

"Sure it is—wot d'yuh expect?" said the red-shirted man who had poured the water over Joseph in the morning.

The pork was fat, unbelievably greasy, and was an unhealthy pink color. There was a smell to it that was far from appetizing. Joseph pushed it away. Hungry as he was, he could not force himself to eat it.

"Here, you," said one of the men, "git to the galley and fetch us some bread!" at the same time shoving a small square box toward Joseph with his foot.

"Get it yourself," said Joseph, "I'm not your servant."

The man promptly rose and aimed a savage kick at Joseph, which he followed up by a hearty cuff.

"Yer the peggy o' this watch, ye —— sojerin' farmer! No pierhead jump is goin' to come it over me! Git aft, now, or I'll stave ye in considerable."

At this point Martin Grew arose and taking the aggressive sailor by the throat of his shirt, slammed him against the bunks.

"I'm bully of this watch," said Martin, "and cock o' this focsle, and if there's workin' up or dressin' down to be done, I'll do it."

The other sailor answered immediately by a right hand swing at Martin's jaw and then tried to butt him in the stomach. Martin knocked him down. He scrambled to his feet and rushed again, roaring curses. One of his flailing fists

drew claret from Martin's cheekbone, but Martin knocked him over the weather-board on to the deck with a backhander and following him out, knocked him into the waterway as soon as he got to his feet. There the other man stayed.

"Suit yerself," he growled sullenly. "I never seed a wet-nurse on a deep water ship before. He don't have to get no bread fer me."

Martin turned into the forecastle without answering and picked up the bread barge.

"Get it filled," he said to Joseph, and Joseph went.

Whatever thoughts Joseph had had of making a meal on bread and tea were ruined when he saw what was called bread. The cook shoved a lot of round biscuits, about the size of salad plates and just as hard, through the hole in the bread barge, and Joseph brought it back. He soaked a piece in his tea the way the other men did and managed to get it down. When he had drunk a very little of the mysterious fluid called tea, he went to the rail and poured the rest over the side. Then he peered into the bottom of the mug at the tea leaves. Joseph gave a cry of disgust.

"Fresh meat in yer tea?" asked one of the watch who was scraping his plate over the rail. "Good fer ye. Keeps the blood clean. I got three of 'em in my cup."

Joseph laid his head in his arms and wept. Faint with hunger, lame and sore from the many beatings he had received, disillusioned, heart-broken and homesick —and then to be fed putrid pork and tea with cockroaches in it, was more than he could bear.

Clang-clang! Clang-clang! went the bell. A bellow from the mate, and the starboard watch ran out to take the deck while the port watch had supper. There was no skylarking, no singing in the dog-watches on that ship. The second mate hazed them about the decks, boxing up the rigging, tautening the braces, renewing the lashings on some of the spare gear, and at the last he herded them aloft to put new rovings on the fore and main royals. When Joseph got as far as the fore yard and watched some of the more active hands shinning up the royal rigging, which is the only way of getting on to the royal yard, he fainted dead away and would have fallen to the deck or overboard, if Martin had not seized him. So they dragged him into the top and left him to recover as best he might. He came to sufficiently to lower himself to the deck when the rest of them went down, and the four bells that meant the end of the second dog saved him from further torture for a while.

In all that crowd of broken-headed, bleeding men, none so bruised, body and soul, as Joseph Marble. He tumbled into his bunk with every bone and muscle shrieking and his heart so sick within him that he prayed that he might die in his sleep. "Hunger" stared down at him from the bulkhead. No ill that is not made worse by hunger, no worry that is not increased a hundredfold by an empty stomach. The hot tears ran down Joseph's face and into his ears.

There was a sudden savage roaring.

"Eight bells below, come outta that! Turn out, ye bilge scrapin's, an coil down fer yer betters!"

It was Larkin, the man of the green coat, bellowing through the door and calling the watch below. The starboard watch turned out cursing. The watch below always does. Martin hauled Joseph from his bunk and rushed him protesting out onto the deck.

"Why, it's still dark," said Joseph, "I haven't been asleep a minute!"

"Eight bells, midnight," answered Martin. "Ye been asleep four hours. Four hours on deck and four hours below, watch and watch. When we get farther to the southard, in the Roaring Forties, there won't be no watch below at all. We'll spend the whole twenty-four on deck."

The next four hours the men walked the deck, two and two. The wind was fair; there was not a lashing that could be bettered, not a rope needed to be touched,

so they were left alone and could do as they pleased, save that they must stay on their feet and keep moving.

"Now then, lad," began Martin, "between now and morning I'll try to give ye a bit of seamanship. For all these men are drunken and rough and are treated worse than dogs, they belong to an old and honorable trade. Everything that's done on shipboard is done a certain way, the way it's been done since Noah was in the ark. Now then, the front of the ship is called the fore part, always, and the back the after part. The masts, beginning with the forward one, are the fore, main and mizzen. You think this is one mast," laying his hand on the foremast. "It ain't, it's three. The fore mast is this part, above is the foretopmast and the highest is the foretopgallant mast. That up there is the foreyard, and above it is the foretops'l yards, the fore topgallant yard, the foreroyal yard and the foreskysail yard. The yards on the other masts are called the same way except the mizzen, which is called the crojick yard. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Joseph.

"Don't say 'sir,' unless you speak to an officer. It's not done on shipboard."

"All right," replied Joseph.

He was so numb with sleep that he could hardly feel the decks under him as he walked. He reeled and would have rolled into the waterways but for Martin's steadying arm, and all the while the lesson in sailoring went on. Joseph did not understand a word. He could hear Martin's voice like distant surf, mumbling "stuns'l booms, vangs, maintopmast staysail, clew garnet, spilling lines," and much more of the same order. He lost track of the bells at five bells, and hoped against hope that he had missed a count, but he had not, and when seven bells were struck, he thought he could never live until the next one. At last eight bells clanged.

"Relieve the wheel and lookout!" roared the mate. "Go below, the watch," and Martin had to carry Joseph into his bunk.

In the morning as soon as the watch was called, the mate told Joseph to report to the cook.

"Go int' the cabin," said the cook, "an' take t' Old Man's breakfast leavin's to t' hens. T'en bring me the dishes."

Now that was the steward's duty, but the steward was temporarily unfit, due to his having been knocked unconscious by the Old Man for spilling coffee down his neck. Joseph entered the sacred precincts of the cabin in fear and trembling. There was a passage that led in from the deck, straight aft. Some staterooms belonging to the first and second mates opened off this, and a smaller room with a table and bench where the mates ate. At the end of the passage was the after cabin, magnificently paneled in bird's-eye maple. Across the back of the cabin was a red plush sofa and opposite it a sideboard. There were a number of mysterious doors opening off, probably the Old Man's stateroom and some spare rooms.

There was a table in front of the sofa, with a red-and-white checked tablecloth on it. There was a plate, some white bread and the remnants of a breakfast. The captain's appetite had been poor, for though the food had been messed about, there was quite a lot of it left. Joseph looked up at the skylight and the tell-tale compass, then around at the closed doors, and hurriedly scraped the plates into a slush kid that the cook had given him.

Then he went back down the passage and sat down there near the door on to the deck. He was hungry. The prospect of greasy pork did not appeal to him and he had no idea of giving the hens a lot of good food that was still edible by a human being. When he had eaten the last scrap and licked the plates clean with his tongue, he took them out to the hen coop on the after hatch and made a great show of scraping them into the coop. He salved his conscience by the thought that since he had stolen the hens' breakfast he would give them his. After he had taken the plates to the galley and joined the watch again he felt almost happy.

III

WITH gray skies and a hurrying, tumbling sea, the *Shenandoah* snored away to the southward, sixty-two days from Boston. Joseph and Red Shirt were at the wheel, straining to keep the ship on her course, fighting the seas that pounded at the rudder. It was bitter cold, and off to the west was a white line where the water seemed to splash against the sky.

" 'Ow much longer we got to stay at this ruddy wheel?" grumbled Red Shirt. "I'm fair froze to me 'eart."

"I bet it's hours we been here," answered Joseph. "What makes it so cold?"

"We're gettin' near the 'Orn," answered Red Shirt. "Maybe there's ice about. The Old Man's lookin' for it."

He nodded his head at the binnacle, where a thermometer hung. Ice shows its presence in a number of different ways, one of the principal ones being a sudden drop in temperature. Therefore in latitudes where ice was expected, a thermometer was hung at the binnacle so that the captain could be called immediately, should either the man at the wheel or the mate notice the mercury sliding downward too precipitately.

"We're in for a touch o' weather," went on Red Shirt, "an' it'll get worser the farther south we goes."

The two hung to the wheel in silence, fighting the hammering seas. The rigging began to "tune up" with great gusto.

Boom! went a backstay—*bo-o-o-om!* exactly like a big bull fiddle. There was a whine from another like a violin, and a loud buzzing from the shrouds. Aloft there was a continuous chorus of whistles and shrieks, as if a flock of parrots had perched in the crosstrees. The second mate came aft and stood behind the wheel, occasionally lending a hand to grind her down. He did not dare to call the Old Man yet, for it was not blowing strong enough, and yet if the men at the wheel let her fall off, so that the ocean came into the ship, the crash of it would bring the Old Man topside breathing fire.

The violins in the rigging struck a higher note. The white line to windward had disappeared; a black curtain had been drawn across the horizon. The two men at the wheel forgot the pain in their arms and shoulders in their anxiety at these threats of the sea and sky. The mate dived down the companionway to call the Old Man.

"Meet 'er!" howled Red Shirt, and he and Joseph began to put the wheel up as an enormous sea leaped out of the smother and bore down on them. Too late. The sea poured over the weather rail with a growling roar and thundered back along the decks, hissing and boiling. The watch leaped into the rigging and clambered on to the fife-rails to avoid being washed into the scuppers, but even there they were thoroughly wetted down, for the sea had leaped aboard so suddenly they had not had time to get beyond its reach.

The rock-faced skipper appeared followed by the second mate.

"How's she heading?" he demanded.

"Sou'west by sou'," answered Red Shirt.

The skipper looked to windward and then aloft.

"Forward there!" he roared. "Clew down the main t'gallan's'l!"

"Main t'gallan's'l," came faintly down the wind as some of the watch leaped to the halliards and the rest went aloft.

"Handsomely now, you bean-swillers!" shouted the captain, "roll her up! Have them lay aft to the mizzen tops'l," said the skipper to the second mate. "If you dogfish let her fall off again like that I'll trice you in the rigging."

The Old Man gave the helmsmen a hard look and began to stump up and down the poop, watching the sky to windward and coming over to peer into the binnacle now and again.

The gale increased, and when Joseph went forward at eight bells the *Shenandoah* was being smothered under a steady succession of seas that leaped aboard.

He and Red Shirt clawed their way along the weather rail, where they met Martin Grew.

"Keep your oilskins on," said Martin. "It'll be 'All hands!' any minute." So Joseph sat on the edge of his bunk and shivered.

SIXTY-TWO days Joseph had been on this ship, and had learned many things. He could go aloft now, and overhauling gear on the royal yard had no terrors for him. He could steer after a fashion, too—though the second mate and the Old Man had swabbed the poop with him so often for breaking the *Shenandoah* off her course that he knew every plank aft by the feel of it on his back.

A week back the Old Man had opened the slop chest and had sold Joseph a woolen shirt and a suit of oilskins, for a month's pay. This was about five times what the things were worth, but Joseph was not required to buy if he didn't like the price. A sea thundered on the forecastle head above them and some of it ran in over the top of the door. When Joseph turned to look at the dripping water he could see "HUNGER" out of the clew of his eye.

Night after night that carved word had stared down at him through the dim rays of the slush lamp. He had found it elsewhere, carved on the yards, on the keels of the boats, on the topmasts. He knew what it meant, now. Putrid pork and beef green and slippery with ptomaines, stony beans—three stones to every bean—painted wood for coffee, and tea that was mostly boiled cockroaches. There was a time when he thought he would die, but he still lived. The soul of man clings tightly to its earthly house, even though its owner yearns heartily for its departure.

With a rumbling boom another sea leaped aboard. The men in the forecastle felt the ship stagger and fall away beneath their feet with the weight of it. They made a dash for the door as the cry came faintly from the afterpart of the ship—

"All hands!"

The sea was still aboard, filling all the waist of the ship, so that the men looking aft could only see a level stretch of water with the masts jutting out of it and the poop rising like an island. The lee bulwarks bulged outward like a wet box and then the ship shook herself free. The second mate came forward along the weather side.

"Foretops'l!" he shouted, and leaped on to the ratlines. The starboard watch followed, while the port watch stayed on deck to spill the wind out of the sail with the buntlines. Sleet drove across the decks with the speed of shot, and the sail was frozen until it was like a sheet of steel. It took the two watches an hour to get it on the yard and stowed, both mates and the skipper roaring like mad bulls. None could hear what they said, but their mouths were open and their features working, so the imagination supplied the rest.

Just as Joseph's feet touched the deck on his return from aloft, there was a cry of "Hang on!" A huge grandfather wave, tossing his white beard, appeared over the weather rail, his top level with the foreyard and his crest trembling, ready to break. Joseph leaped for the rigging, but the sea broke half-way up the foremast, and after he held on as hard as he could and as long as he could, with his head still under water, he was torn from his hold and carried aft.

As he floated along he opened his eyes and could see turning and twisting the dark bundles that were the bodies of the other men. The thought came to him that the lee bulwarks were gone and that there was nothing to keep him from going over the side. He brought up against something that nearly cut him in two, but he clung to it and got his head above water, gasping like a strangled fish. The icy water had run down his neck and up his sleeves despite the lashings on his oilskins, his hat was gone and he was three-quarters drowned. He had brought up against the mizzen shrouds—and they had kept him from going over the side.

He had no time to thank his guardian angel, for the mate dashed down the poop ladder and hauled him inboard by the collar.

"On to the poop," howled the mate, " 'less you want to swim!"

Joseph hoisted himself up the ladder and found both watches clustered on the cabin roof, the Old Man by the wheel and the second mate binding a cut wrist with a piece of rag.

"All here?" asked the skipper.

"All here," answered the mate, "all that's still aboard."

Silently they counted noses. Red Shirt and two men of the port watch were gone. There was a long silence, in which even Larkin, the bully of the port watch looked solemnly into the murk to leeward, as if he were looking for some sign of the missing men.

"Three men gone," said the skipper to himself. "Of course they would be good sailors, and the farmers would still be aboard. Get forrard, the watch, and rig lifelines! That gear must be turned up—it'll frazzle itself to —— if it drags around the decks like that."

The men went down into the waist again and, clinging to the weather bulwarks, made their way forward. When a sea appeared, the first man to see it would shout, "Hold on!" Every one would leap for the shrouds, the fife-rails, the after house, anywhere to get out of the rush of the sea and hang on for dear life.

Joseph had a heavy heart. He knew the Old Man had meant him when he made the remark about farmers. Try as he would, he could not satisfy the second mate, nor could he get the other sailors to refer to him by any other name than the "Farmer." "Whose wheel is it?" "The Farmer's." "Who coiled that brace down on that pin?" "The Farmer." "Who the —— knotted this gasket like this?" "The Farmer." The first mate and the Swede boatswain who always prefaced everything he said by "Yoost I tell you" were in the other watch, and had little to do with him, except to kick or cuff him at every opportunity.

The men's clothing, wetted down by the continuous seas, froze like boards, so that the men moved with difficulty. They rigged lifelines along both sides of the deck, stretching them from the masts to the stanchions where the port bulkwarks had been and then forward to the break of the forecastle. They turned up the gear on the backstays, out of reach of the seas, and then went aft to the poop. The forecastle had begun to leak from the pounding of the seas and the water on the floor was inches deep, up to the weather board, which acted as a dam and kept the water in, for the scuppers in the corner had been plugged when the sea first started to kick up, to keep the water from coming in through them.

There was nothing they could do on the poop but stand and beat themselves with their arms and watch the hurrying seas. The skipper stayed aft by the wheel, looking aloft, to windward and into the binnacle, but giving no indication of shortening sail any further. Finally he went below

"Hang on to the main," he told the mate, "and if she carries away, call me."

"Farmer," said the mate, "haul your breeches up the main and put all the rope yarns on that tops'l you can get in."

He sent the man who had sailed in the *Alleghany* up the mizzen to do the same, for he feared that the sail might blow away, and the extra rope yarns would bind it more closely to the yard. Joseph had a wild time on the yard. His hands froze to the iron jack-stay, and the wind howled about his ears and plucked at him, to try to toss him into the foam alongside.

The motion of the ship was exaggerated by the height of the mast, and Joseph would swoop forward and to the side as the ship pitched and rolled. The sleet, flying horizontally before the gale, stabbed his face like needles, and his hands were so numb that he could scarcely knot the rope yarns that he was putting in.

During the night the wind went down a bit and though the ocean still came into

the ship, the men were able to fight their way forward, and after a long debate as to what time it was, and whose watch, the starboard watch went below for three hours' rest. The forecastle had been flooded, and blankets, sea-boots, shirts, hats and all the odds and ends that clutter a place that men inhabit were washing about the floor. Those that had upper bunks—and Joseph understood now why the older seamen had chosen uppers—rolled into them and left those with lowers to fish their wet blankets out of the water and do what they could to dry the place out.

"That ——, herring-gutted, slab-sided, corpse-eatin' dogfish!" said the coffin-faced man. "That ——! To run her into a gale like this! And three men gone already! He'll take her round Cape Stiff with all sail set, you'll see. And watch the albatrosses gather! Did ye notice there was nary a gull followed this wagon all the way down the latitudes? They know her. They know the men aboard don't get food fit for a gull, so what would be thrown over the side they wouldn't eat! But the albatrosses, they'll be around. I know one old feller, got a wart on his nose. He was watch mates with me in the *Agony*, when we went around from Frisco.

"I know some more of 'em, I do. A whole watch, washed from the braces off the Ramirez and over the side. 'T' —— with them,' says the skipper, 'they were no good anyway!' A whole watch, mind you, waving their arms alongside! They'll be around, standin' by to help us clew up and swinging round in the wake, waitin' to pick our eyes out when the sea carries us their way!"

Here a sea-boot descended from a top bunk and drew a hollow sound from the speaker's head.

"Take a turn in your jaw tackle!" said a gruff voice, "an' let some men sleep!" The coffin-faced man muttered to himself a moment, but said no more. He squeezed out the cloth he had been swabbing the deck with and climbed into his bunk, leaving Joseph half dead with horror.

The *Shenandoah* fled away to the southward, leaping from sea to sea. As they neared the Horn the westerly gale increased in fury, piling up great rollers before it that had come snorting clear from the barrier ice at the Pole. The ship was under three lower topsails and whole foresail, and the most the Old Man would do was to put a reef in the foresail when the wind threatened to take the sticks out of her. The weather bulwarks went and then the galley.

For days both watches never left the poop, eating sodden biscuit and sipping a scanty ration of water, for the water casks had gone long since and none could be gotten out from below with such a sea running. On days when the men could get into the forecastle, they turned into their bunks as wet as fish and turned out steaming. Then the first dollop over the side drenched them with icy water again.

On the seventh day of the storm the wind shifted slightly and the mate called the skipper. The Old Man came up the companionway.

"All hands!" he roared, which was rather superfluous, as both watches were clustered on the cabin roof watching the seas making a clean sweep of the waist. The Old Man jumped to the binnacle, noted the direction of the wind and then roared to the mates:

"Shake the reef out of that foresail! Main to 'guns'l and foreroyal! Jump now!"

There was a murmur from the men, and Larkin, the bully of the port watch, turned about.

"Beggin' yer pardon, sir, it's fair death to send us forrard, to say naught of puttin' canvas on 'er in this blow! I fer one don't leave this poop. I'm sick of yer drivin' an' 'ammerin', I am. I'm a British subject—"

Here the mate was upon him with a belaying-pin, and the two of them went down the ladder in a clinch. The second mate never used a pin. He wore "knuckle-dusters," and these together with his thick biceps were all the persuaders he needed. He and the skipper

began to hammer the men off the poop and down the ladder. The mate and Larkin rolled about on the slippery decks, for neither could get a footing, and now one, now the other, would be under water, for the ocean flowed over the waist at every roll, now that both bulwarks were gone.

The mate had lost his belaying-pin and both men were hard at it with their fists, landing great slogging blows that drew grunts from both sender and receiver. Larkin tripped over the coaming of the after hatch and went floundering. The mate leaped on him with his fingers hooked to gouge Larkin's eyes, but the sailor dodged his head just in time and caught the mate's hand between his teeth. This was what the mate had wanted, for though Larkin's teeth met in his hand, the mate closed his hand about Larkin's jaw and held his head under water despite the other man's struggles.

This was more than the other men could stand. Letting go their holds on the weather stanchions and lifelines, they slid down to where the two battled in the water and leaped upon the mate. The second mate hammered the sailors about their heads with his knuckle-dusters and cursed them in a frenzy of rage.

The Swede boatswain was pounding about with an oaken fid, thumping every one indiscriminately.

"Yoost I tell you, belay dis, you —— mutineers! Avast dere, git forrard now!"

Martin Grew picked up a bread barge that had floated out of the forecastle and, shoving his hand in the hole in the end where the bread was put in, smote the boatswain a terrific blow with this improvised boxing-glove. The boatswain withdrew at once and staggered under the break of the poop, where he knelt with his head in his hands.

Crack! A faint enough sound, but every head went up. One of the sailors gave a cry and clutched at his arm. Blood began to drip from his fingers, mixing with the water that was running down his sleeve.

"Get forrard," came a roar from the poop, "or I'll kill every —— on this —— wagon!"

The Old Man stood on the roof of the cabin, a gleaming pistol in his hand. The men got off the mate and stared forward at a shambling run, slipping and splashing across the decks. Larkin got up and clung weakly to the main fife-rail. The sight of him increased the skipper's rage.

"I'll fix that lemon-pelting louse; that big quart of bilge! I'll stave him down to his gudgeons, —— my soul if I don't!" and he leaped off the house in his rage.

The ship gave a lurch while he was in mid-air, his foot slipped in landing and he went down into the water on the deck with a tremendous splash. The crew half-way up the yards missed the scene, and it was not until they had set sails and come sullenly aft to the poop again that the men at the wheel informed them that the mates had carried the Old Man below, and that he seemed to be badly hurt. The second mate was in the weather alleyway watching the sky to windward, and gave no attention to the group on the cabin-roof that clustered about the men who had just been relieved from the wheel.

"Broke 'is laig, th' —— ould swine!" said a Clydebanker of the port watch. "I was aye waitin' tae hut 'im a knock wi' a mairline spike some fine night whin he was stompin' aboot th' hoose. 'E was not sae smert wi' 'is cursin' an 'is pustols in th' mid watch, wi' th' mate forrard an' me puttin' th' wheel a bit doon an' loosin' ma knife. Goad, 'ow I could sink it to 'im!"

The Clydebanker wetted his lips and his eyes burned. The man who had been shot through the arm moaned softly from time to time. Astern a great cloud of birds circled and dipped, sooty abatrosses, mollyhawks and a few Cape pigeons.

"'Tis a crowd of old sailors waitin' for us," said the coffin-faced man. "D'ye see that one with the wart on his beak?" pointing to one that was floating over their heads. "I know him—he was watch mates with me in the *Alleghany*, the old *Agony*, and he went overboard

about here, and the next night the whole port watch went after him. That was a hellship, worser nor this one ever thought o' bein'."

None chided the coffin-faced man for none paid him any attention. They crouched in the lee alleyway, sheltering themselves behind the break of the house as much as they could, watching the whirling birds and the driving seas with reddened eyes. A cry from the men at the wheel brought them leaping to their feet. The second mate was tearing open the door and going down the companion. The men at the wheel pointed off to starboard where in a rift of the haze was a black spot, with seas leaping and hammering at its base, the spray from them rising in great white pillars like puffs of smoke. The foretopsail blew out of the bolt ropes with a tremendous *whang!*

"Let her go!'" cried Martin, "let 'em all go! That's Diego Ramirez over there, and we're round the Horn!" A moment later the mate came on deck, looked under his hand at the distant rocks, took their bearings and then ordered the course changed to the northward. They were round at last.

IV

DINNER time, warmer weather, the Horn six weeks below the horizon. Joseph, Martin and the rest of the starboard watch were sitting on the floor of the forecastle eating dinner. They ate without enjoyment, filling their stomachs with the green beef for the same reason that savages fill their stomachs with clay, because they had nothing else to keep away the pangs of hunger.

"My hands are pretty sore from that sand an' canvasing," remarked Martin, soaking his biscuit in his tea. "I got some good sea cracks off Cape Stiff that ain't healed up yet."

"I'll bet they aren't as bad as my back," declared Joseph. "I was on the bear all the morning watch. That thing is the worst yet."

"Ho, ho!" laughed one of the men, "on the bear, was you? That's a good place for a farmer. Ho, ho! They always lets farmers lead the bear."

"I'm not a farmer any more, you fathom of bilge," cried Joseph. "I can reef, hand and steer as well as any of you." There was a roar of derisive laughter at this.

"You're a Jonah," said another man, a Dutchman. "You bring on a head vind efery time you go by der wheel. Dot's why der mate puts you by der bear."

Bump! A boot crashed against the bulkhead.

"Good shootin', by James!" cried one of the watch and, walking across the forecastle, picked up a dead rat and hurled it out the door and over the rail.

"The rats' been raisin' —— the last coupla days," said Martin. "I never seen so many. They must be gettin' starved out of the hold."

"They were running all around the deck this morning," said Joseph, "and the second mate was throwing belaying-pins at them. I suppose he wanted to get a little practise."

"Dot's right," agreed the Dutchman, "dose knuckle-dusters of his must be wored out by now. He uses dem pretty regular."

"Wonder how the Old Man is today," said the coffin-faced man.

"I guess he's worse. I seen the mates with their heads two blocks when I was doin' my trick at the wheel. They got the companionway closed up now an' shut down the skylight an' rigged a tarpaulin under it so's ye can't see int' the cabin."

"Who was in the after cabin last?" asked Martin.

"Me and der Farmer," said the Dutchman. "A week ago ve cleans der place oudt. Ve shines der voodwork, you know, and paints der alleyvay."

"Maybe the Old Man's got the plague," said the coffin-faced man.

"Plague ——!" said Martin. "He fell off the poop. Didn't we all see him?"

"Then what do the mates want to batten down the cabin like that for?"

"Maybe they want to murder the skipper," hazarded Joseph. The watch guffawed.

"More power to their arms!" said the coffin-faced man. "If they want help, let 'em call on me. They don't need to be bashful about it—let 'em bring him up on the cabin roof an' do it an' we'll all lend a hand."

The watch shoved their empty pannikins aside, and those that had tobacco prepared to fill their pipes, while those that had not tried to look unconscious, all the while hoping some one would offer them a bit of twist. The slop chest had not been opened for over a week and many of the men had run out of their only comfort.

Joseph looked at the bunk where the red-shirted man had slept. It was empty now; even the donkey's breakfast had been auctioned off. Two men short on leaving harbor and three more gone off the Horn meant added labor and misery on a ship that would have been short-handed with her full complement. A hungry ship is always undermanned. The loss of Red Shirt had meant little to Joseph in the excitement of the storm, but the thought of it had grown upon him later when he had more opportunity to meditate. The presence of death was a new experience for Joseph and he felt that next to Martin, Red Shirt had been his best friend on the ship.

The mate roared from the deck, and the watch went out to the afternoon's work of sand and canvasing. The decks and paint-work were being scrubbed preparatory to a general slicking up. Pieces of canvas and sand were used, with slathers of elbow grease. Joseph and an old sailor named Jimmie, a man who had spent all his life at sea and who was fast breaking up, hauled a box full of chain cable and broken stone. To the bottom of the box was fastened a rope mat. The mate kept the deck sprinkled with water and sand, and Joseph and the old man hauled the contrivance, known as the "bear," up and down until the deck was white enough to satisfy the mate.

"The water dries off this deck fast, doesn't it?" said Joseph, as the mate poured the fourth bucket in as many minutes on the planks. "I wish it had done that off the Horn."

Thud! The second mate's fist landed on Joseph's ribs, and the young man rolled into the waterway.

"Never mind how quick the deck dries!" cried the second mate. "You haul on that bear or I'll haul on you. And keep that —— tongue of yours stopped to your teeth! Understand?"

A knockdown no longer meant anything to Joseph—they were too common—but that the mate should fly into such a rage because Joseph mentioned that the deck was dry was beyond his understanding. Perhaps the mate thought that Joseph had insinuated that he, the mate, should be more brisk with the bucket.

THAT night he had another surprize. The pimply-faced steward came forward and threw his blankets into Red Shirt's bunk.

"Mate sent me forrard," said the steward in answer to their inquiries. "Said he and the second mate would take care o' the Old Man, an' we was short-handed so out he tosses me."

"Short-handed!" jeered the coffin-faced man, "they want to get rid of you! A —— of a lot they care how much work we do, but they wanted yuh out of the cabin." He leaned closer and in a hoarse whisper asked, "When did you hear the captain speak last?"

"This morning," said the steward. "I heard him a-damnin' of the mate for stealin' his cigars. Then the mate come out of the Old Man's room and —— near lost a topmast when he saw me. 'Out o' here!' he yells, 'haul your gear forrard. We don't need you no more—outta here.' So here I come. I hope they ain't as many rats here as they is aft."

That night Martin and Joseph stumped the deck together in the mid-watch.

"Do you know," said Joseph, "I feel nervous. I dreamed of home last night. I'm not homesick—I had that beaten out of me long ago—but I've got a feeling that we'll never see port again. What makes those rats come on deck like that? They say the rats know a doomed ship and will run from her."

Martin chuckled.

"Doomed ship ——! Those rats came topside because they're hungry like every one else. And don't let that old frigate bird with the coffin-face galley you. This here is a tight ship, and maybeso the after guard is pretty rough, but they're fine seamen—none better. I wonder you do any dreamin'. I never do."

"It's the first time since I've been aboard that I have, that's why I thought more of it. Usually I just remember getting into my bunk, when I hear some one calling the watch again."

They turned at the after hatch and started forward. When they swung around Martin slipped and fell. As he lifted himself to his feet again, his eyes came on a level with the top of the after hatch and he looked across the hatch into the face of the setting moon. Then he got to his feet slowly.

"Guess I'm getting old," he muttered.

Martin was as silent as the Indian on the figurehead during their next turn, and when he and Joseph came opposite the after hatch again, he stopped and lowered himself on his hands till his head was level with the hatch covering.

There came the rattling thud of a bucket hurled from the cabin roof.

"I see you," bawled the second mate. "—— your barnacled soul, stay on your feet if you want to be able to use 'em. No limejuice sleepin' on deck in my watch!"

Martin apparently did not hear the mate's voice. His face was puzzled, as if he were trying to think of something he had forgotten. He got up and he and Joseph went forward again. Joseph tried to engage him in conversation, but though he asked questions about the ship and various tricks of seamanship that he knew Martin loved to explain, Martin said no word. Joseph went aft to strike the bells at the end of the watch, for he was timekeeper among other things, and when he returned to fall into his bunk, he found Martin waiting for him at the forecastle door, a thing that had never happened before.

"Come here, lad," said Martin, and led the way to the shadow of the foremast. Joseph could see in spite of the darkness that Martin's face was very white. "Now, lad," said Martin, "you and I have been shipmates and watchmates for this v'yage so far, ain't we? You trust me don't you?" Joseph assented. "If you notices anything strange about this ship from now on" continued Martin, speaking with great earnestness, "or if any o' these other sculpin's say anything about seein' anything strange, don't tell a soul but me. Don't let on at all. If ye want to get off this ship alive, mind what I say."

"I won't tell a soul but you, Martin," said Joseph, scared out of his wits. Then they went into the forecastle and mingled their snores with the rest of the crew.

MORNING, especially if it be a bright, warm, sunshiny one, always drives away the fears and horrors of the previous night. Joseph was inclined to laugh at his dreams, and at Martin's whispered plea to say nothing of unusual occurrences. But Martin went about his work with a set face and a whiteness about the lips that he had never had before, even off the Horn.

"Maybe he hurt himself when he fell," thought Joseph, "or maybe he heard something in the hold." Joseph even went aft, and under pretext of examining the bottom of the bear, which was on the hatch, he bent down and put his ear to the deck. There was no sound. Joseph had thought there might be a cargo of slaves in the hold and Martin had heard them moaning.

A man came aft calling loudly for the carpenter.

"Chips!" he cried, "ye lousy sojerin' old

idler, where are ye? Caulkin' off so early in the mornin'? Chips, rouse out o' that!"

He opened the door of the after house where the carpenter shop was, but Chips was not there, nor was he in the living quarters in the after part of the house where he and Sails and the boatswain lived. The boatswain lay in his bunk snoring deeply, and Sails denied any knowledge of the carpenter's whereabouts.

"Maybe he's aft in the cabin," said Joseph and there the seamen went. There was a door into the cabin opening off the deck, but this was locked. The sailor swore in astonishment. He went on the poop to inquire of the man at the wheel whether he had seen Chips go below, but the second mate chased him forward again.

At dinner that day the chief topic of conversation was the captain's condition.

"Why are they keepin' him below this fine weather?" asked the coffin-faced man. "Why? 'Cause he's dead, that's why! Or else he's gone off his nut."

"Aw, leave der Old Man alone," said the Dutchman. "Dose mates, dey choost want him to have quiet. If he vas going to die, v'y not let him? Captains has died at sea before. How should dey bring him on deck mit a broken hip vot he got, hey? A big man like him. I be satisfied if he nefer come topside till ve get by der dock."

"D'yuh mind," spoke up another man, "when I was hollerin' for Chips and I tried to get into the cabin from the deck? D'yuh mind the door was locked? Well, that ain't all; the cracks in the door jamb was stuffed with oakum!"

There was a heavy silence after this. Each man chewed his own thoughts. Then a regular Portuguese parliament ensued in which all the watch joined except Joseph, Martin and the pimply-faced steward. The steward had a hunted, furtive look about him. He caught Martin's eye, and at the look of understanding on the sailor's face the steward whitened perceptibly.

The hubbub died down at last for lack of further explanations of the oakum-stuffed door.

"This is as good a crew of old women as ever I was shipmates with," said Martin finally. "The skipper's sick, and the two mates are tryin' to make him as comfortable as they can by keepin' out noise. Then they gets Chips aft to batten the doors so they can smoke out the rats—and God knows the rats have been thick the last couple o' days—and the dear old ladies forrard gets wrinkles thinkin' about what awful deeds is bein' done aft."

"'Tain't so," said the coffin-faced man, "fer when I was in the *Alleghany*, her they calls the *Agony*, which she is as like this one as the two halves of a coconut, the rats never bothered none like this. They was dyin' around the decks from hunger, but them we killed today was good an' fat, like they'd been gnawin' on dead men's flesh maybe."

The croaker was driven on deck by a shower of mess gear and boots, and then there was silence.

IN THE first dog-watch there was another search for Chips. The port forecastle door was split, and Larkin, the bully of the watch, demanded that it be repaired before bad weather. The carpenter shop was empty and Chips was nowhere to be found.

"He was gone to der cabin dis morning," said the boatswain. "He was making soundings for de Olt Man. Yoost I tell you, nefer mind dot door. We fixes dot door sometime, you bet."

Larkin and the rest of the port watch demurred. They wanted the door fixed immediately; it made the forecastle cold, they couldn't sleep in their watch below, the sun shone in their eyes, and so forth. Discipline had slacked a bit since the accident to the skipper, and this was a good opportunity to air their feelings. The mate appeared on the poop at this juncture and ordered them to the braces, for the wind had shifted several points.

They went, grumbling, but the matter was by no means at an end.

The port watch discussed it heatedly while they were eating supper. It was strange the effect a little thing like a cracked door produced on grown men who had been overlong at sea. Rotten food, curses, kicks and blows they bore without complaint, but a broken door was more than they could stand. They continued to rage throughout the night, and the news of the broken door episode was borne to the starboard watch when Martin relieved the Clydebanker at the wheel.

"It's nut th' door, y'understand, whit makes us a' mad; ut's that lazy sojerin' Chips, whi' his all nicht in, an' us trampin' the deck. Whaur's he bin a' the last twinty-foor hours, eh?" concluded the Clydebanker.

The Dutchman and Joseph were on the poop to heave the log. They had a chip, a logline and a sand-glass.

"What was the Britisher growling about?" asked Joseph, while the Dutchman was getting the sand-glass ready.

"The port watch is all roarin' because they can't find Chips to fix the forecastle door. If the Old Man was on his feet they'd tune their pipes lower. I guess there's worse croakers on this ship than even that old penguin with the coffin-face, in our watch."

Joseph hove the line over and let the first twenty or thirty fathoms run out so that the chip could settle. Then when a piece of rag appeared in the line, he cried, "Turn!" The Dutchman turned the glass, and when the sand had run out cried, "Stop!" The number of knots that had run over the rail gave the speed of the vessel.

"Vell," shouted the Dutchman, "vy you don'dt haul in der line, hey?"

Joseph was looking at the logline in a puzzled manner, but when the Dutchman yelled he pulled a line that was attached to a plug in the chip. The chip, which had been towing upright, fell flat in the water and Joseph hauled it in.

"How much do you think she ought to log?" asked Joseph.

The Dutchman looked aloft at the spread of canvas, for they were running before a strong wind on the starboard quarter.

"Oh I don'dt know," he said, scratching his greasy head, "ten, eleven, twelfe, mebbe."

"She's only loggin' four," said Joseph solemnly.

"You're crazy in der head! Vot you tell me loggin' four knots, and efery sail drawin'!"

He went forward to the port alley, and tossed the end of a downhaul over the side. It dragged slowly astern, very lazily.

"Heaf her again," said the Dutchman, "I nefer see such t'ings!"

They hove the log again, with the same result. Four knots. Just then the two mates came up the companionway and shut the companion doorway quickly behind them.

"What's she loggin'?" asked the first mate.

"Four knots!" replied Joseph. He had expected incredulity, rage, possibly a blow, but neither mate showed any surprize. They simply looked at each other, and then the first mate opened his mouth to speak, but shut it again as a confused noise attracted his attention.

A patter of feet up the poop ladder, the *slap-slap* of them down the alleyway, and both watches, headed by the coffin-faced man and Larkin, rounded the corner of the cabin. They came to an abrupt halt when they saw the mates, and there was a moment or two of confusion.

"What the —— d'ye mean, ye Chelsea clam-diggers, by comin' aft where ye have no business? Git off the poop! Git forrad where ye belong!"

The mate advanced upon them, and they gave way, all save Larkin, who leaped upon the cabin roof.

"Ye needn't try to bully us, —— ye!" he cried. "The ship's sinkin' under us, that's wot! Wot's to be done about it? Ye scuttled 'er, ye did, you an' that —— Chips. That's why 'e's been gone since yesterd'y. We're 'ere to tell you we ain't goin' to die without a fight!"

"Are you crazy?" said the mate. "The ship's sinking under you! You better keep out the sun!"

"It's true," screamed the coffin-faced man and some of the others nodded their heads, "the channel-irons are awash."

All this time the second mate, whom none was paying any attention to, had crept into the starboard alleyway and then climbed to the cabin roof, where he was approaching the crew from behind. He ducked under the spanker boom and leaped upon Larkin, pinning his arms to his sides. The mate whipped out a pistol and pointed it at the men.

"Now," said he, "if you don't want some extra ballast in your holds, git off this poop!"

Wherram! There was the crash of a tremendous explosion, the clatter of falling timbers and the rattle of gear tumbling down from aloft. From forward came a wailing cry, the cook calling in mortal terror:

"Fire! Fire! The ship's afire!"

The men, the mates, Joseph and the Dutchman rushed forward, leaving Martin alone at the wheel, calmly watching the leaches of the mizzen topgallant sail.

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THE deck forward was littered with broken timbers and bits of canvas. The hatch covers had been blown high into the air and had fallen in fragments upon the deck. There was no smoke, no flame, but when the men were forward of the after hatch they could feel the hot blast pouring from the open hatchway and hurrying over the side ahead of the fresh breeze. There was a peculiar strangling smell about that made them all cough, and now and then a little thread of steam.

The mates had only gone as far as the break of the poop, and while the men were still trying to collect their wits, they heard the booming voice of the first mate summoning them aft. They went, and clustered under the break of the poop, while the mate addressed them from the cabin roof.

"Now, men," said he, "we might as well face this thing like sailors. The ship has been afire for days, and we've done all that men could do to keep it down, but it's got the upper hand and there's naught to do but abandon ship. Turn to, now, and get the boats out!"

"Wot's our position?" asked Larkin sullenly.

"Never mind our position, you Limehouse bilge-scourin's! I'm still mate of this ship, and any one that doesn't want to take his chance in a boat, let him speak up and he can die now!"

The second mate stepped from behind the mizzen at this moment with a rifle in the crook of his arm. There was a growling murmur, then the men clambered upon the roof of the house and began to cast off the gripes from the longboat there.

The Dutchman relieved Martin at the wheel and the mate sent him down to the lazaret with Joseph to pass up bread bags. The lazaret was under the cabin floor and was reached by a trap-door. It was terribly hot in there, but Joseph could talk without interruption.

"This is kind of a mess, isn't it?" he asked.

"It is," answered Martin, heaving a bag out on the floor.

"Did you know it before?"

"Aye," said Martin, "I've known it for some days. The steward knew it too. The mates sent him forrard so he wouldn't find out, but he knew. You remember when the rats began to come on deck in the daytime? I should have guessed what was goin on then. 'Twas the gas drove them up. She's got coal ballast, and it must have got wet off the Horn and then caught fire."

"But how did you finally find it out?" demanded Joseph.

"Remember the night I fell when we were opposite the after hatch? When I got up I saw the heat waves dancin' on top of the hatch. I thought the fall had made me dizzy, but the next time around

I got to thinkin' about the rats and some other things I'd noticed, and the cabin bein' shut up so carefully, so when we come opposite the hatch I got down and had a good look. It was heat waves, an' the only thing that would make 'em dance on a hatch in the mid-watch would be fire in the hold."

"Why did they batten down the cabin that way?"

"I suppose," replied Martin, "that the mates knew it long before any one else, because they would smell the gas. They kept the cabin shut up so that none of the crew would find it out. One sniff, and the secret would out, and the crew would want to abandon ship right away. If it had been me, I'd done the same thing. No use settin' a good ship adrift till you have to. They probably tried to get it under, and had Chips go down and bore holes to let the sea into her to put the fire out that way. That's why she sailed so slow, she was waterlogged. Then the water forced all that gas and hot air against the deck and the hatches blew off."

"Why didn't the water put out the fire?"

"Couldn't get through the coal. It would take a long time to seep through and drown the fire and by that time we'd be at the bottom, fer you can't let the sea into a ship like that for very long. If a blow came along we'd go under. That's where all that steam is comin' from—the water on the hot coal."

"It's hot all right," agreed Joseph, mopping his brow. "Haven't we got out enough bread yet?"

"We'll have to have all there is," answered Martin. "We may have a long time at sea. You can't sail an open boat into the wind, so we can't head for South America. Most likely he'll try for the Marquesas."

They finished getting the bags out of the lazaret and then hauled them up the ladder to the taffrail, where they made a heap of them. Then Martin and Joseph and some of the other men cleared away the quarterboats. One of them had been badly stove off the Horn, so that left them two quarterboats and the longboat. They got these over the side and then towed them astern, where the bread bags were handed down from the taffrail and stowed. It was arranged that there should be eight men in each quarterboat and ten in the longboat, and the provisions were put in accordingly. After the mate had given this order, the man from the banks of the Clyde looked at the boats and sucked in his upper lip.

"Whaur wull we pit tha men?" he inquired. "Whin ye ha' a' tha 'tween-thwarts space fu' o' hairdtack, whaur's tha men gaun' t' sit?"

The other men stopped loading and took a look themselves. The mate came aft to see what was making them all hang over the stern. They told him. The boats were half-way to the gunwales now with bread and it would seem that the men would have to perch on top of the load.

"Chop out the air tanks," said the mate, "it's the only thing we can do. Get an ax and break in the tanks and put the bread in them."

The air tanks ran along the sides of the longboat and one of the quarterboats, but the other quarterboat had none.

"We'll have to stow the bread in the tanks anyway," said Martin, "to keep it dry, fer if it stays on the bottom of the boat it will be wetter than a seal before we've gone from the ship's side."

Besides the bread, in each boat they put two casks of water, a compass, a lantern and an ax. The longboat had a mast. This the mate gave orders to step and rig, and to put a halliard in each boat for a towline, so that the longboat could tow the other two. When the boats had been provisioned they were towed out astern, and the men went forward to overhaul their possessions and decide what they would take, for they were allowed to save nothing but what they could put on their backs. The ship's course was put off about five points, and away she went before the freshening breeze, every sail drawing, and the draft from the fore, main and crojick roaring down the open hatches and stirring the smoldering fire

to greater heat. No watch was set, only one man at the wheel and one on lookout, and the rest of them were allowed to have the entire night in, for as the mate remarked—

"It's the last sleep you'll get for many a long night, so make the most of it."

THE next day the wind began to go down and the sea to rise. By four bells in the afternoon watch the ship was almost stationary, rolling in the long Pacific swell. The deck was rapidly growing too hot to walk on, and the mate summoned the men all aft by ringing cry of "Grog-o!" Then he selected the men that were to go in the longboat. Martin Grew he chose first, the Clydebanker and Larkin, but here the second mate intervened, and complained that there would be no seamen left to man the quarterboats, so they fell to wrangling, while the crew stood about thirstily. Finally it was decided that they should pick crews as they had picked watches.

The mate chose Martin, Joseph, Chips, the coffin-faced man and the old man who had pulled on the bear, the pimply-faced steward, "Doc Slush" the cook, and a yellow man of unknown nationality—probably a Lascar—who had been in the port watch. It was noticeable that the mate chose none from his own watch but the yellow man, and he had really no choice in this matter, as the yellow man was the last one left.

The second mate had Larkin, the Clydebanker and the rest of the port watch. The boatswain, who was to command the third boat, had the sailmaker, the Dutchman from the starboard watch and what was left after the two mates were done. All in all the good men were pretty evenly distributed. Then each man stepped up and had a bit of grog and went over the side into his respective boat.

The ship was now so low in the water that the men could step from the deck directly into the boat. The skipper was brought out of the cabin on a mattress and gently lowered into the stern sheets of the longboat. Probably the hands of some of the men itched to tip the mattress and let the skipper in between the boat and the ship, but none dared do it. Perhaps the sight of the Old Man's thin, painstricken face took away a little of their hatred of him.

The sun was going down as it came Joseph's turn to go over the side. He looked about the well-known decks, at the plank bulwarks Chips had put up to replace those carried away off the Horn, at the white paint on the cabin and after house that he had scrubbed so faithfully, at the deck where he had hauled the bear up and down, at the ratlines that no feet would ever go up again and the halliards that would never again feel the pull of hands. The forecastle doors were open, and some one's abandoned jacket lay across the weather board. The sails slatted mournfully against the masts, and the blocks banged and creaked. A hell she might have been, this old *Shenandoah*, but she had been home, and the ocean looked very wide and lonely.

"Come on, come on, we can't wait all night!" called the mate. "Come down into her if you don't want to get left."

Joseph took one last look about the decks and then stepped into the main chains and then into the longboat. Martin was the last man down, and they gave way a little with the oars to get out of the ship's lee. There, without command, the men ceased rowing. The towline was passed to the other two boats, and they all waited while the skipper, raising himself on his elbow, took a farewell look at the *Shenandoah*. As they looked, the mizzen toppled and fell over the side, held to the ship by all its gear.

"The fire ate the mast out at the step," said the mate. "The bottom must be near gone out of her."

The captain lay down on his mattress again.

"We'd better be making time," he said, so the sail was set and the three boats began to move off to the northwest. The mainmast went before the ship was hull down and the smoke began to pour from her, for the fire had reached the cargo.

The swell was dead aft, and after sunset the wind began to freshen again, so that the men in the boats had a hard time getting way enough on them to prevent being pooped by the rising seas. It is a far different thing to see the waves from the deck of a ship, looking down at them, from seeing them from an open boat looking up at them. Each one that came hurrying out of the dark seemed to rise high over the stern and prepare to leap into the boat, but the stern would lift and the sea pass underneath. The other two boats would be on the crest of the seas while the longboat was in the trough, and for a while the men in the longboat feared that they would be run down, but they lengthened the towline, and the going was a little easier.

The mate had the steering oar in the longboat, and the skipper lay in front of him, his face more like a rock than ever with the wasting of his illness. Martin was at the sheet and Joseph and the steward on the next thwart. Then the old man and the cook and the coffin-faced man in the bow, with the rest of them in between.

When it became dark, the longboat hoisted a lantern at the masthead, and the other boats each hoisted one on an oar, so that they could keep each other in sight, for the moon was hidden by the clouds. Rain fell and the wind blew a young gale. The men in the longboat did not have to row of course, but they had to exert every bit of energy they had to keep the boat afloat, for the sea kept coming in over the gunwales.

Due to the rain, the spray and the lapping seas, there was six inches of water in the boat, and despite their utmost efforts they could not get it any lower. There were two bailers: Joseph had one and the cook the other. The rest of the men used pannikins and their hats. The coffin-faced man had a coffee-pot that he had resurrected from somewhere. The glow from the burning ship was visible for a long time, lighting the low-hanging clouds; then, after blazing brightly for a moment, it went out altogether.

Joseph stopped bailing a moment to catch his breath. Despite the cold he was sweating profusely. He looked over the side at the black water, a few inches from his nose, running under the boat in black ridges. Now and again one of these ridges, a little higher than the others, would rustle alongside, and its top would come over the gunwale. Not very high over, but just high enough to let twenty or thirty gallons into the boat. He looked astern where a great black wall towered to the heavens, right over the boat's stern.

Joseph strangled a cry, but the sea, passing under the boat, lifted it high in air, so that Joseph could see the lanterns in the other boats waving and tossing, then vanishing as the boats went into the trough. He looked ahead at the black waters, the hurrying seas, their tops white with foam and lashed into spray by the fury of the wind. A cold terror, a horror of the black night and the blacker sea came upon him and smote him to the heart. Furiously he began to bail, and after that he kept his head down.

There is a limit to human endurance, even if life depends on it. The men reached the point where they could no longer keep the water at bay, and it began to climb, bit by bit, up around the bailing men. At times the towrope would drag heavily on the longboat's stern and almost pull it under water. The mate stood there, heaving his strength on the steering oar, watching the mounting seas and meeting them fairly, and speaking a word to Martin from time to time. The boom of the sail dipped into the seas, and it would not be well to let it get too far outboard.

Suddenly a faint shout came down the wind, then the broken clamor of many voices. The men stopped bailing to listen.

"Never mind listenin'!" cried the mate, "keep bailin'. Get some o' that water out of her! Git—"

There was a rustling as of silk and a gigantic sea appeared directly aft, its top curling into foam and hanging high over the stern of the longboat. The mate heaved on his oar, and a simultaneous

wail came from the men. The crest broke as the stern lifted to the heave of the sea, filling the boat till the thwarts were awash. Something white floated by, oars, caps, a half-filled bucket. They saw an overturned boat with the end of the towline trailing like a long weed. The longboat sagged drunkenly into the seas, and the men cried again:

"The other boat! The other boat! She's swamped!" and they ceased to bail and began to pray, kneeling to their waist in the water in the boat, for they thought their last moment had come.

The mate cursed horribly and, casting loose the becket that held his steering oar, he swung the oar about his head and beat the kneeling men with it.

"To your work!" he shouted. "You may have God to reckon with by dawn, but you've got me to deal with now!"

A heave to keep the boat's stern to the sea; *thud!* on a kneeling man's back, another heave; a long poke at the fat cook, a swirl of the longboats' stern, and the oar cracked again on some one's head, so they fell to. And then the mate, putting the oar back in the becket, gave it to the skipper to hold while he splashed forward and urged the men to greater efforts with his fists, taking the bailer from Joseph and lending a hand himself to lighten the boat. When they mounted the next crest those who faced the stern looked back and saw but one lantern bobbing in the wake. The boatswain's boat was gone.

As if the sea were satisfied with the toll it had taken, the rollers were more kindly and, urged by the mate, the men in the longboat got her emptied of water, all but four or five inches about the footboards, and no more seas broke over them. Their labor was not lightened, however, for the spray flew just as much and the rain fell just as heavily. None of them dared think whether or not their bread had been wetted, for if it had it meant that they would have some salty fare to eat for a while.

The night was ages long. The men, hardened as they were to hard labor, were ready to give up and die from sheer exhaustion. A gray dawn broke over a grayer sea, and then they lowered the sail until the men in the other boat could haul in the towrope and come within hail.

"How ye farin'?" called the first mate.

"Good, how's yourself?" the second mate called back.

The other boat drew alongside, and the two slid up and down the seas together, while the second mate recounted the loss of the third boat.

"We was watchin' the lantern—d'ye see?—fer fear she'd get on top o' one o' them seas an' run us down. They had it on an oar, and sometimes it would roll so that we thought they was tryin' to signal us. We could hear the bosun roarin' at 'em to bail and swearin' in Scowegian at 'em. Then along comes a great big sea and the steerin' oar must have broken, because the next thing we knew she was right over us bottom up. We was too busy bailin' to look out for any of 'em."

"Did ye see any of 'em?" asked the mate.

"Nary one. A lot o' that sea got into our boat, and we thought we were goners sure. I took a look around, but couldn't see a thing. We heard 'em holler when she went, that's all. It was the towrope kept us from goin' under; I couldn't see a —— thing but the men standin' in the water up to their necks. Sea's goin' down a bit now, don't ye think?"

"Aye," said the mate. He extended his hand, the fingers spread, sweeping it slowly round the compass. "Wind's shifted too. Well, a beam sea is better 'n a followin' sea any day. After we get a bit dryer, we might as well split into watches an' some of us get some sleep. Try an' get a sight 'bout noontime and then haul up an' we'll see how we compare."

"Aye, aye," said the second mate, and his boat dropped back to its place again.

"Now then," said the mate, "the men on the starboard side'll be the starboard watch, an' them on the port side the port watch. Martin, here, will have charge of the port watch. Now the duties will be to bail and keep her head to wind, and the

watch below can lie down under the thwarts. First though, let's have that spare sail, and we'll rig a jury gun'le on her. Maybe we can keep some of this water out."

They cut the spare sail to the proper width and lashed it all around the gunwales, making a jury gunwale about six inches high. It caught the wind of course, but they could trim the boat with their weight, and the jury gunwale did make the boat a lot dryer by keeping out the spray. Then Joseph, the old man whose name was Jimmie, the steward and the yellow man lay down on the footboards to sleep.

WHEN they were awakened, they were wet, thoroughly soaked; they were cold and they were hungry. The mate served out two hardtack and a pannikin of water to each man. They drank the water sparingly and gnawed on the hard bread. The mate had some broth or some kind of soup in a jug that he gave to the skipper who lay in the stern covered with blankets and a pilot coat.

So they went on, watch and watch, bailing and bailing and sucking their hardtack until it was soft enough to chew. The weather was fair for the most part, though there were some squalls when all hands were called to bail for their lives. Each day the second mate's boat came alongside and the two mates exchanged news of events and the readings of their sextants. They had no opportunity for confidential talk, for every word had to be shouted across the space between the boats. At first the mate used to consult with the skipper, and the two of them would hold long discussions with their heads together, but gradually this stopped and the skipper would lie covered with his blankets all day long.

The end of the week found the men beginning to ravel at the edges. The dawn of the eighth day was breaking, a smoking dawn that presaged a burning sun. The watch below were beginning to sit up, choking and coughing, for they slept with their heads on the footboards and the water had risen on the floor of the boat.

The old sailor, old Jimmie, climbed to his knees coughing and wiping the water from his seamed old face.

"Ah, them swabs in the other watch," he sputtered, "they ain't fit t'carry guts to the ship's pig! What was you doin' all your watch?" he demanded of Chips, "watchin' the stars? Lookut the water, six inches deep in here. You ain't an idler now—you oughta do some work like a sailorman should."

"They wants to drownd us, they do," said the steward, "so they can have all the food and water."

The port watch indignantly denied that they had sojered and let the water rise in the boat.

"T'ats all the t'anks we get," grumbled the cook, "fer bailin' an' bailin' till we near unshipped our bloomin' spines. Ye're lucky ye all ain't drownded. If you scouse weevils had been on watch we'd be sloppin' around about fifty faddom down, now, huntin' for Davy's locker. T'——wit' ye! Git overside an' walk if ye don't like it. We ain't got no farmers in our watch, anyway." This with a wicked look at Joseph.

This was too much. The cook had fed Joseph food not fit for the meanest pig, and now added insult to injury by calling him a farmer. Joseph arose and smote the cook on the end of his nose.

"Farmer huh?" cried Joseph, "I'm bailing this boat and standing my watch and doing as much work as any man here, and now you call me a farmer." He parried a wild swing from the cook, and returned it in kind, knocking the cook backward over a thwart. "I was standing my wheel and lookout while you caulked off all night on the ship, too, you food-wrecker!" He advanced again, and the cook retreated.

"Hey," he cried, "t'is guy's killin' me."

The men jeered loudly, for they bore the cook no good will, any of them, but the mate interfered.

"Stop that," he ordered, "both of you. No fights in this boat! You'll need all the blood you've got before long."

The mate clambered aft to the steering oar, and Martin whispered in his ear. The mate's face lengthened. The men stopped grumbling and a deep silence fell, while the wavelets slapped loudly at the gunwale. The mate reached overside and scooped up a handful of sea-water, with which he rinsed out his mouth. Then he took a very small piece of tobacco out of his shirt and bit into it, while the other men watched him with watering mouths. They had no tobacco. The mate chewed thoughtfully for a minute or two, and then lifted the blanket and peered at the skipper.

"He's dead all right," he said. He felt of the skipper's hands. "An' stiff, too. He's been dead some time. Give's a hand, Martin."

Martin put his hand under the skipper's shoulders, and the two men, grunting, lifted the captain's body. Martin expected that they were going to lay the body on the bottom of the boat, but the mate gave a sudden heave, and the corpse shot overboard. The blankets flew wide, and the skipper seemed to hang upright in air for as a long time as it takes to draw breath, his gray face regarding the men in the boat, then with deep *kullunge!* he was gone.

"Go below the watch!" said the mate and, taking the steering oar under his arm, he sat down in the stern.

VI

THE day was hot. They were getting into the doldrums and the sun beat down heavily upon them. Each day after the mate had taken his sight he would give every man a piece of hardtack and a pannikin of water, for twenty-four hours' allowance. Joseph had a bright thought, this day, when he had received his allowance. Why not swap his whack of bread for a pannikin of water? His gums were getting sore from chewing the hard biscuit, and this would give them a rest. He looked around at the men, wondering which one he should approach: The coffin-faced man in the bow, his beard matted and straggling, his thin face like a naked skull. Old Jimmie, his eyes red and watery, already wandering a little in his mind. No, neither one of them. Jimmie's whack would be divided among the other men soon enough. Chips was too grouchy, and the yellow man would not understand what he meant. The steward, the greedy, pimply-faced steward, he'd be the one.

"Hey," mumbled Joseph, "wanta swap a piece of tack for your water?"

The steward looked at him with salt-rimmed eyes.

"Wazzat?" he asked.

"I'll give you my bread whack for your water," said Joseph.

The steward extended his hand but Joseph held back. "Give your pannikin to Chips and I'll give him my bread."

The steward did so, after a moment's hesitation, in which his eyes shifted back and forth. Joseph passed over his bread and Chips gave him the pannikin, the contents of which Joseph drank off eagerly, putting his own aside for the demands of the next twenty-four hours.

"Why can't we have more water? What we on short rations for, and us with all this bread around and all that water aft?" cried the coffin-faced man.

"Because we're a —— of a long way from where we're goin'," answered the mate. "We may be weeks gettin' through the doldrums. When the water an' bread is all gone, where ye goin' to get any more? Tell me that!" The water was kept aft in kegs, and the mate slept beside them, when he did sleep, which was seldom. The bread was in the tanks, but none could get at it without being seen and the mate had announced that any man that laid hand on a bag would be put overside to walk. The men knew that he would keep his word, and there had been no attempts to steal rations.

Joseph went to his watch below feeling hungry. His legs were getting sore from sleeping on the hard footboards and he missed the hardtack more than he had expected. He had accustomed himself to put a piece of it in his mouth and suck on it until it was all gone. In this way he

managed to make his whack last him, but today he had none to suck and his stomach promptly noticed the lack. He looked up at the thwart over his head and thought of the bulkhead on the *Shenandoah* with "HUNGER" cut in it. He had a good mind to carve "HUNGER" on that thwart.

The sides and bottom of the boat were hot to the touch, but Joseph fell into an uneasy sleep notwithstanding. Almost at once he dreamed of home. His aunt's house on Thanksgiving Day. They had spread the dinner on a great table in the kitchen. A huge dish with half a dozen combs of honey in it, heaps of white and sweet potatoes, steaming from the oven, a home-cured ham smoked with corn cobs, squash, turnips and a gigantic golden-brown turkey, a very giant of a bird, the odor of him like rarest incense. There were pies on a side table, heaps of them, apple and pumpkin and mince. He could smell them, too, and he bent nearer for a deeper whiff.

The salt water in the bottom of the boat ran up his eager nose as he inhaled, and awakened him to strangling consciousness. He was at sea, in an open boat, and had bartered his day's bread for a pannikin of water that was already gone. No turkey for him, no food at all until tomorrow noon, sixteen hours away. So this was sailoring, and he had gone to sea for this. He remembered the sunny afternoon, so long ago, when he had walked away from the *Shenandoah*, dreaming his happy dreams of studying navigation with books from the ship's library, and of how the captain would be surprized when he, Joseph, would offer to sail his ship for him. Miserable as he was, he grinned at the thought of his going to the rock-faced skipper and offering to sail the *Shenandoah*. The skipper *would* have been surprized.

The next day, some of the others, profiting by Joseph's example of the day before, swapped bread for water, or water for bread. Not Joseph, though —he had had enough of that. He pushed a morsel of hardtack into his mouth and thought it the finest thing he had ever tasted. He could never remember having enjoyed anything so much as that hard bread after his long fast.

They stretched a piece of canvas for an awning that day, across part of the longboat. The heat was terrible. They were in the doldrums now, and a flat calm was upon the sea. They were too weak to row and could do nothing but sit and pray for a tiny gust of wind, a puff, hardly enough to move them the boat's length. The drag of the second mate's boat on the towline held them almost stationary, even when there was a breeze, and many were the black looks and the blacker curses that were cast astern from the longboat.

The doldrums in a ship are bad enough, but in an open boat they come as near the orthodox idea of hell as anything on earth can. Day in, day out, the boats hung in that brazen sea, until the men's brains began to stew in their skulls. Old Jimmie, babbling to himself, shrieked hoarsely and leaped overboard. He floundered awhile, and they reached oars to him, but he was too far away and went down at last for good. Joseph and the yellow man fixed the jury gunwale where Jimmie had torn it when he went over. The thought that was uppermost in Joseph's mind was that there was one less mouth to fill. He knew that this was wrong, that he should feel pity and sorrow for the old men that had dragged the bear with him, but he felt neither. Rather he was a little envious. Jimmie's hungry days were over.

They gave up the two watches. None wanted to sleep and there was no work for the watch on deck to do. The other men were troubled with dreams of food. The instant their eyes closed, food was before them. They sat down to banquets, they were beside bubbling springs, and the sun's heat awakened them to thirst and hunger again.

"My legs are awful sore," confided Joseph to Martin when rations were being issued, "and my gums bleed terribly. Have you got any stuff I could

rub on them? Is there anything I could do for 'em?"

"Are they any worse than mine?" asked Martin, and he opened his mouth widely and showed Joseph his gums, all soft and blackened and swollen so that they nearly covered his teeth.

"Why, what makes that?" asked the horror-stricken Joseph.

"Scurvy," said Martin.

"Scurvy?" echoed Joseph.

"Yes, scurvy. We'll all die of it if we don't get ashore pretty soon. It comes from not having green food. The longer we stay at sea the worse it will get."

"Oh God!" said Joseph, "as if we didn't have enough trouble now!"

The sound of singing came to them across the water. Every head turned.

"What the ——!" muttered the mate. "Some one in the other boat gone balmy!"

They looked, but could see nothing except the men in the second mate's boat clustered aft. The singing went on. The men in the other boat could be seen waving their hands and evidently having a wild time over something. The mate's face grew harder as he watched the actions of the other boat with smoldering eyes. Toward sunset he hailed them, standing up in the boat and shouting across the heaving sea.

"Ahoy that boat! What the —— are you doing?"

A shout of wild laughter answered him. He rummaged a bit in the bottom of the stern locker and drew out a glass that was there, in beckets under the cover. This he focused on the other boat and then cursed deeply. He shut the glass with a snap and put it in its place again.

He did not sleep that night, for Joseph awakened several times and each time the mate sat in the stern sheets, looking astern, his back against the side of the boat.

In the morning when Martin offered to take the steering oar, the mate gruffly refused. It was then that Martin noticed that the towrope was gone and nothing connected the two boats.

THAT noon the cook and the yellow man exchanged tack for water. When, however, the yellow man had eaten the tack he demanded his water back, which the cook had not drunk yet. The cook naturally refused to return it, whereat the yellow man, muttering to himself in his own tongue, slunk forward to the bow of the boat and throughout the rest of the day he sat cursing the cook.

The men in the second mate's boat continued to behave in the strangest manner. They had been too far astern for the men in the other boat to realize what was going on, but in the afternoon Martin, who was at the steering oar, called the mate's attention to the fact that the men in the second mate's boat had put out oars and were trying to row up to the longboat.

All the men in the longboat peered over the canvas gunwale in astonishment. They themselves were too weak to put an oar outboard, and here the men in the other boat were able to row. As the other boat came nearer, the men in it were plainly visible.

"They've only got out two oars," cried Joseph. "Where's the second mate?" The second mate was not visible. Larkin, the former bully, was steering. There were two men at each oar, and the Clydebanker stood in the bow, shrieking oaths and blasphemy.

Larkin began to sing, and the men at the oars roared out the chorus of "Ranzo."

> "Ranzo was a tailor,
> Ranzo, boys, Ranzo,
> Ranzo was no sailor,
> Ranzo, boys, Ranzo."

Larkin flourished a pannikin in his hand, and took a long draught from it.

"Hey, Reuben," he howled, "we're comin' aboard uv yer! 'Eave to, you —— swabs, we wants ter give yer a drink!" He picked up a bottle from the bottom of the boat and waved it at them cheerily. The men at the oars made hard work of it, splashing and rapping each other on the back and falling down into the boat, so that it took them a long time

to get within biscuit toss of the longboat. Then the mate spoke for the first time.

"Where's the second mate," he hailed.

"Gawn to ——," cried the Clydebanker, "whaur we're gaun' to send you, ye swine! We're fair sick o' steerin' aboot the seas wi' no whack, we are."

There were only six men in the boat, of the original eight. It was plain that the second mate had died, or had been murdered—probably the latter. The men had then made free with the supplies and evidently had gotten hold of some liquor, for they were all quite drunk.

Larkin tried to steer his boat nearer the longboat, but the men at the oars were too drunk, or too weak, for they kept swinging their boat's head away. Larkin dropped his steering oar and cuffed one of the rowers about the ears. The other three men at the oars promptly hurled themselves at Larkin and they all fell to the bottom of the boat. A waving leg or a flailing arm shoved above the gunwale showed that the drunken battle was still continuing on the footboards. In the bow the Clydebanker was crying drunk, roaring a sentimental song.

"Oh Jamie, yur the only yin I love!" he bellowed and fell to sobbing at the end of the verse.

In the stern the mate watched them, chin on hand. Once he looked forward at the men in the longboat, their eyes glistening at the thought of all that water and food in the other boat being freely tossed around. His lids narrowed slightly, then he looked back at the other men.

"They'll waste all the water an' food," said the mate finally, "an' I see they've drunk all the grog, so in a day or so they'll be stewin' in their own grease. Then's the time we'll have a yarn with them."

The men in the other boat continued to shriek and hoot throughout the night. None of the men in the longboat could sleep. A huge dark-red sore had come out on Joseph's leg, in the hollow of his knee, and he and Martin were discussing showing it to the mate.

"He couldn't do anything," said Martin, "so don't say anything about it. They'll all be down with it soon enough. I've lost track of the days, but we've been at sea a long time and we must be getting near land."

"Listen to those devils in the other boat. How do you suppose they got hold of the stores?" said Joseph.

"Probably murdered the second mate while he was asleep. He wouldn't have died. He was too strong and young. Larkin and that other feller, they're a hard pair. Both Britishers. They wouldn't think a thing of slittin' a Yankee's throat."

There was a sudden sound of scuffling, and a cry. The boat went far over to port as Martin and Joseph stood up and looked forward. In the darkness they could make out the forms of two struggling men.

"Break away there!" cried the mate, "break away! Cast loose, —— you!" He started to clamber over the thwarts as a dry scream rang out. The mate clattered forward, and there was the thud of a kick. Something gleamed over the side and splashed in the sea.

"Lend a hand here!" he cried. "This yellow gut-eater has killed the cook!"

Martin and Joseph started forward. Chips came clambering in from the bow, a thole-pin in his hand for a club.

"Look out for his knife," said Joseph.

"I kicked it out of his hand and over the side," said the mate. You needn't be afraid of him."

The cook lay back against the mast, his face green in the phosphorescent light from the heaving seas. Two long dark streaks ran down the front of his torn shirt and his breath came with a bubbly noise.

"What's this about?" demanded the mate.

"They was growlin' about swappin' their whack. The yellow man wanted back the water he give for the tack and the cook told him to go to ——," explained Chips. "Then he—" indicating the yellow man—"creeps down after a while and the two on 'em fouls hawse."

The cook could not speak. Blood

bubbled from his lips and he gasped like a fish.

"Out you go!" said the mate suddenly and turning, he seized the yellow man about the waist and threw him into the sea. The yellow man came up some distance off, and began to strike out for the other boat.

"——!" muttered the mate, "I forgot about that!"

The Lascar disappeared in the trough of the sea and they saw him twice again, then a drunken shout told them that he had reached the other boat. The mate bent over the cook examining his wounds. Finally he got to his feet and went aft again. They laid the cook on the footboards and tried to pillow him with their coats, but it was wasted effort. His breathing became quieter and he spoke, very faintly and croakingly.

"A noggin of good old Agawam gin would put me right ag'in," he said huskily.

Martin, who had had his hand on the cook's heart, took it away after a moment or two and washed it over the side. Then he took off his battered hat and covered the dead man's face with it.

They buried the old cook during the night. There was no ceremony, no service. Two men at his feet and two at his shoulders lifted him and dropped him into the water. The coffin-faced man moved aft from the bow and sat on the thwart with Joseph. His face was not shaped like a coffin any more, for his jaws were swollen until he looked as if he had an apple in either cheek. He had moved very painfully and slowly along the thwarts coming aft, for his toes were drawn up and he could not rest his weight on his feet.

"I bet even the old *Alleghany* would look good to you now, wouldn't it?" Joseph asked him.

The other man shook his head.

"She's worse'n this," he mumbled.

"She must be hell indeed," said Joseph, and the erstwhile coffin-faced man nodded violently.

The next day the men in the other boat were quieter, but the men in the longboat could see the yellow man from time to time rise and shake his fist at the mate. The men in the longboat were grouped in the stern, in the shadow of the sail.

"All that singin' and yellin' would make me pretty dry," said Martin.

"It would that," said the mate, "but they have plenty of water yet. You can't get rid of thirty days' store in a day or two, no matter how much you drink it. They've got another mouth to help 'em now, too. It'll run out on 'em though, one o' these days."

For another day the two boats drifted in their same positions. There was not enough wind to take the longboat away from the other, and the men in the quarterboat had lost both their oars on the first day. They probably were too drunk or else did not want to take the trouble to get out more oars. They had plenty, for there had been an oar for each man and two spares put in each of the quarterboats.

In the night, Joseph heard a faint splash and, looking forward, saw a man swimming away from the boat's side.

"Man overboard!" he called as loudly as he could with his sore jaws. The mate stood up and glanced hurriedly around.

"It's the steward," he said, noticing that all the men were in the boat.

"He must have gone crazy," said Joseph, "and jumped overboard."

"Not he," answered the mate. "He's off to plenty of water and no work. If there's any more that want to go," he announced, "let them go now. I don't want to stop them. The more that's outta this boat the higher she'll ride and the more the rest of us will have to eat and drink. Any one goin'?"

None made a sound. They could see the steward drawing nearer and nearer to the other boat, for the water he splashed with his swimming gleamed with phosphorus, but when he finally caught hold of the gunwale there was no drunken shout of triumph such as had hailed the yellow man. Instead the men in the longboat heard angry cries and the steward's

pleading. Then there was a sharp thud, as if some one hit an oar on the side of the boat. Silence.

"Swatted him over the head with an oar," said the mate. "Good enough for him. I guess that's the end of young Tapioca Face." After a long time the mate spoke again, "Those mutineering bilge-suckers must be pretty low, turnin' away the steward like that, and we must be high outta these doldrums."

The men dozed through the night, and just as day was breaking Joseph looked over the canvas gunwale and noticed that the other boat seemed nearer. It had turned bow on, so that he was not certain. There was a white line on the horizon. It would be light in a few minutes, for the day comes with a rush in those latitudes. He kept watching the quarterboat. Yes, it was nearer, there was no mistake. Joseph looked at the mate who slept with his face in his hands; then he craned his neck to see whether Martin was awake. He was not. Well, what odds if the other boat were nearer? The men in it couldn't do any harm. Joseph lay down again.

Suddenly he felt the longboat lie over on its side the very slightest bit. The sail fell over to port, and the end of the sheet rattled across the thwarts. The canvas gunwale was flapping.

"All hands!" cried Joseph, despite the pain of his mouth, "breeze ho!"

The mate leaped to his feet, Martin sat up sleepily, and then the mate began to swear terribly. Joseph got up facing to the starboard side of the boat. Not an oar's length away was the quarterboat, Larkin aft sculling her, the Clydebanker crouched in the bows with a knife in his teeth ready to leap into the longboat and the yellow man and the rest of the quarterboat's crew ready to follow him.

"—— ye, Larkin, ye ha' gallied thim!" cried the Clydebanker. "Ye ——!" he shrieked, waving his knife at them, "I'll gut ye, I'll—" he made as if to try to leap the open water between the two boats.

There was a loud report. The expression of the Clydebanker's face changed, his mouth seemed to form a round O. He looked vacantly at the sea and a tiny stream of blood ran out of his mouth. Then he toppled forward and fell into the sea, as the longboat, driven by the breeze, began to slip through the water and draw away from the other boat. While the mate stood in the stern blowing into the barrel of his revolver, the men in the quarterboat, who had crept up to murder the first mate and the men with him, seeing the longboat heeling over to the breeze, began to call out that their water was all gone and begged not to be left to die. Larkin, however, stayed in the stern and did not join in the outcries. When the longboat was almost out of earshot he called out, and his words came clearly down wind to the longboat.

"I'll meet ye in 'ell, —— ye! Ye'll never get to shore—ye're a boat load o' dead men!"

The rest of his words were lost, though he still continued to call, and shortly the quarterboat was hull down and then the rising seas hid it altogether.

THAT day the coffin-faced man died of scurvy. He had really had the disease on shipboard, and the boat journey had hastened its progress. That left the mate, Martin, Joseph and Chips to handle the boat. Joseph's jaws were swollen and his body beginning to break out everywhere with great sores. Martin was in worse shape, for his blood was poor from years of sailors' diet. Chips did not have it yet, nor did the mate, but they both kept feeling their gums and washing their mouths with salt water.

All four of them were growing weaker rapidly, so that in a very short time they would be unable to stand up in the boat. Even the mate's iron strength was giving way. The weather was a little cooler after they got out of the doldrums and they had favorable winds; otherwise they must have all died. The boat rode higher now and the jury gunwale kept out most of the water, so that although there

was always half a foot or so in the bottom it never got beyond their control.

"Here, lad," said Martin one day, "move quietly over here and give me a hand." Joseph moved to the side of the boat, and looking over, saw a huge tortoise floating on the waves, gliding up and down the seas and apparently asleep. "If we can catch this fellar," said Martin, "we can have some fresh meat."

They motioned to the mate and he peered over the gunwale, then cautiously steered the boat nearer the sleeping tortoise. The four men then leaned over the side and, as the tortoise came within reach, Martin and Chips each seized a leg and tried to turn the tortoise on its back. They were too weak, and the tortoise awoke and kicked vigorously, but Joseph leaned over and seized hold of the edge of the shell, and the mate lending a hand, they flopped the tortoise over with a loud splash. Then the mate proceeded to stick his knife in the hole into which the tortoise had withdrawn its head and so killed it.

"Now how we going to get it aboard?" asked Joseph.

"Heave it in," said the mate.

The four of them tried to lift the tortoise into the boat, the mate shouting and cheering as if they were raising the anchor.

"Heave and she comes! Heave and she must! Heave and a pawl!"

But heave as they would, there was no getting the great shell into the boat, for the instant they lifted it out of the water, its weight increased and the shell tore loose from their hands and fell into the sea again. Finally the mate went aft and got a serving mallet from the stern sheets, with which he beat in the bottom of the shell, so that they could get at the meat.

"Maybe we c'n scoop up some o' that blood," said Chips. "It oughta taste good."

This they tried to do, but the waves lapped over the shell and though they were able to get some of the blood in a pannikin it was mostly sea water, and undrinkable, even by men in their state.

"We can cut out some o' that meat, anyway," said the mate, and proceeded to cut away a great strip with his knife. This he laid on a thwart. He leaned over the side again, but withdrew hurriedly. Joseph looked over curiously and gazed down into a small, pig-like eye. There was a gleam of pink as a great shark turned on his belly and nibbled at the tortoise shell. Joseph looked at him in fascination, but Martin picked up the boat-hook and heaved it at the shark with all his might. The shark slapped his tail, drenching the men in the boat with water, and disappeared.

"Did he take the tortoise?" asked the mate. "Where the —— did it go?"

The shell had disappeared. The shark had turned it over perhaps, perhaps carried it down with him in his teeth; perhaps it had slid under the boat and had gone out of sight over a wave. Anyway it was gone, and they had but one strip of meat out of it. They all cut a piece of it at once, but could not chew it. It was terrible, like rubber, and tasteless. Likewise, it was fearfully salty. Joseph happened to look up as a sea peered over the stern, and there was a dorsal fin sticking up out of it.

"Look at the shark!" he cried.

They all looked, but the fin was gone.

"Never mind the shark," said Martin, "he won't come back. That turtle's blood drew him, that's all. He took a nibble at the shell, found he couldn't eat it and then went somewhere else."

"He did that," said Chips. "Look at him to starboard."

They looked, and sure enough, there he was, his gray hide just visible. His little pig-like eye rolled up at them in a comical manner. He stayed with them throughout the day, and that night they could see him by the phosphorescent gleam when he swirled his tail.

"IS THE convoy still with us?" asked the mate in the morning. They looked but could see no sign of him. "He'll stay around," said the mate.

"He knows there's a boatload of food here, though we ain't but sorry pickin's after all."

Sure enough, the convoy appeared sliding down the crest of a sea, his dorsal fin sticking up like a sail, and he took up a position on the port bow. Here he stayed for the morning, then was gone an hour or two, and hove into sight on the starboard beam during the afternoon watch.

Once or twice a day he would come close alongside and roll his eye up, as if counting the men to be sure none had gone during his absence. During the days that followed, each day he came a little closer to the boat, and at last he stayed very near, even within arm's reach. Martin tried again to harpoon him with the boat-hook, but failed, and the boat-hook shot out of his hands and slid into the sea. The convoy seemed not a bit disturbed.

VII

THE men began to sink into a stupor. The mate forgot to take his daily observation and lost all track of their position. He had never told any of them where they were nor for what land he was heading, and none of them had asked. The four of them took turn and turn about, steering, handling the sheet and bailing, and their utmost endeavors were needed to keep the boat fairly dry. They feared now that they would become unconscious and fall into the water in the bottom and drown. They mumbled to each other and to themselves. They plucked at their long hair and beards. Every now and then one would look over the canvas at the convoy. He was still there. Sometimes ahead, sometimes slightly astern, sometimes abeam. He would roll his eye up at the boat, then sink slowly, slowly, down out of sight, to reappear on the other side. At times they thought they had lost him, but he always came back.

At noon Joseph was handling the sheet, Martin was asleep and Chips was bailing, up forward of the mast, where he could lean his back against the bows of her and work half sitting, half lying down. Suddenly the boat fell off before the wind, and Joseph looking aft, saw that the mate had fallen asleep across the boat. His chest rested on the gunwale, the canvas being torn down, and his arms were trailing in the water. Joseph let go the sheet and went aft to haul the mate inboard. There was a swirl in the water alongside and a scraping noise against the boat, just as if some one had rubbed a sheet of sandpaper along her side. *Bump!* The mate leaped to his feet with an agonized shriek, holding up his two arms, the hands shorn off at the wrists, the blood spurting from them in a scarlet stream. He shrieked again and toppled overboard. Joseph hobbled to the boat's side, but there was nothing there save a great swirl and many bubbles foaming redly up out of the depths and breaking on the surface.

The death of the mate addled what few brains Chips had left. He babbled to himself all day long, sang snatches of songs and talked of his boyhood days and of wild debauches on the China Coast and in India. Two days he lived, and then his foolish, trembling lips grew still. When his jaw hung down upon his chest they knew that he was dead, but they had not the strength to bury him, so they laid him down in the bottom of the boat, and covered him with the mate's jacket.

"Look overside," said Martin, "and see if he's still there."

"Yes," said Joseph, "he is."

"You won't let him get me, will you, lad? You won't let him get me? I'll be the next one to go, but don't toss me over to him, will you?"

"Cheer up," said Joseph, "you won't be the next one—you're the strongest of us all. We must be near land now. Maybe we'll sight a ship. We might sight a ship this very day. You're a long way from dead yet."

Martin shook his head gloomily, and looked over the gunwale.

"He's after me," said Martin. "He's

after me because I tried to harpoon him. I wish the mate had left his pistol behind him."

The next day and the next the two men lay in the bottom of the boat, as far away from the dead man as they could get. Joseph's mind worked actively. The thought that he was very near death did not occur to him. It seemed that he had been sliding up and down these great seas for an unmeasurable time. One minute in a green valley, the next on a hill from whence he could see all about him, far, far to where the waves tumbled and flashed on the horizon, then down into the sheltered valley again. Neither man ate any more; their mouths were too sore. They still had a whole keg of water left.

"While there's water there's hope," said Joseph, but Martin did not seem very cheered.

After the first day or so of fasting they did not feel the pangs of hunger, only a great weakness that grew and grew upon them and a distaste for sleep, because of the horrible dreams they had of an abundance of food. They no longer looked to see whether the convoy was with them. They knew. They could hear the rasp of his hide along the planks of the boat. Then they lost track utterly of the days and nights.

Joseph struggled back to consciousness as a diver comes out of deep water. Something had called to him, had awakened him out of what might have been his last sleep. It was twilight. The longboat was driving before a brisk breeze. Martin lay in the stern, his arm hooked about the steering oar and the sheet clasped in one hand. His eyes were wide open, in the startled stare of one newly awakened. The two men looked at each other. *Boom!* A pause. *Boom!* Another pause. *Boom!* Faint it was, and far off, but a great booming thunder came regularly to their ears.

"What is it?" asked Joseph huskily. "Guns?"

"It's the surf beating on some shore!" said Martin. "We're getting in!" The tears began to run down his face. "I must keep her off, though," he said, "I mustn't get too close in. That surf sounds as if there weren't any harbor there."

They forgot instantly the long weary days in the doldrums. They forgot Chip's body washing about in the water forward. They forgot their hunger. They thought only that they had reached land at last. At last from the crest of a sea they saw the land, high and rocky, stretching away in the sun's eye. Joseph began to shout and chuckle, but due to his sore mouth and swollen jaws the sounds were only chokes and gurgles by the time they reached his lips. Martin sang softly to himself, half humming, half mumbling the words of a homeward-bound chantey:

"The work was hard, the voyage long.
Leave her, Johnny, leave her!
The seas was high the gales was strong—
It's time for us to leave her.

"The food was bad the wages low.
Leave her, Johnny, leave her!
But now once more ashore we'll go—
Leave her, Johnny, leave her."

Then the breeze died. They waited patiently for a little while, and Martin looked over the side anxiously. The boats head began to swing off.

"I wish that breeze would spring up again," muttered Martin, "there's an offshore current here that's pretty strong."

The breeze, as if stirred to life at Martin's, words, began to blow again. Joseph felt the cool of it on his face. He drew deep breaths of it, drawing it deep into his lungs, smelling the earthly smell of it, the smell of the land. Then like a flash of light came the realization. *It was an offshore wind!*

They fought it, they tried to tack, they tried to sail that great boat with her jury gunwales of canvas into the wind, but it was hopeless. The wind and the set of the tide carried them to sea again. When the land was gone from sight, and they could no longer hear the boom of the surf, Martin dropped his head in his hands.

"Cheer up, Martin," said Joseph slowly and painfully, "we lost the convoy, anyway."

Then his senses departed from him.

JOSEPH realized suddenly that he might just as well open his eyes as keep them closed. He did. There was something dark over him, not very far, but still too far for him to see what it was. He closed his eyes again, and when he opened them the second time he decided what was above him. It was the bottom of the boat and that was a thwart over him. He put his hand down, but it fell on something warm and rough. A blanket, sure enough. There had been no blankets in the boat. He had another thought, that he was dreaming again. He knew how to stop that. He turned his head to one side, lowered it and took a deep sniff. That always finished his dreams, for he snuffed up water into his nose from the bottom of the boat. This time it did not work. He smelled only a musty smell of straw, the woolen blankets and a faint odor of tobacco. He looked above his head again.

"This can't last long," said Joseph, "I'll wake up in a minute."

Then his eyes protruded just the slightest bit. On the bottom of the bunk directly over his head, was cut the well-known word, "HUNGER."

Joseph opened and closed his eyes rapidly after that, but each time they opened on the same scene. He turned his head the other way and he could see a forecastle, very white and clean, but he could not see very much of the deck. The forecastle looked familiar, and then it didn't. It was the same size as the old one on the *Shenandoah*, the same partition ran down through the center, the door was in the same place, the little bit of the deck that he could see he could swear was that of the *Shenandoah*, but he had left her burning up, hundreds of miles away. Just then there came a sound of whistling, and a well-built, hearty looking man stepped into the forecastle.

"Ahoy!" he called, when he saw Joseph looking at him, "so you've come to at last! Thought you were going to slip your hawse for a while young man."

The newcomer had on very neat blue clothes, a full shirt and a white lanyard around his neck. He had a bowl of broth in his hand, which he prepared to feed to Joseph.

"Potato soup, lad," said he. "Good for what ails ye."

"For God's sake, tell me!" said Joseph, "am I dreaming or not?"

"Ha, ha," laughed the man, "no lad, you're not dreaming. We picked you out of a boat about a week ago, you and another man and a dead body. You was about ten miles off Hilo, floatin' around by your lonesome."

"What ship is this?" asked Joseph.

"Why," said the hearty man, "this is the *Alleghany*."

"The *Agony!*" shrieked Joseph.

"Why I thinks they do call her that, now that you mention it. Yes—there! —— it all, he's fainted." The man stumped out, in search of restoratives.

Joseph had not fainted. He had closed his eyes, fallen back in the bunk and given other indications of extreme agitation, but he was still conscious.

"So I'm rescued by the *Alleghany!*" he thought. "Out of the frying pan into the fire!"

All the things he had heard of this ship came flocking back into his mind: "When she come into port she didn't have enough belayin'-pins aboard to clew down the tops'ls—" "The mates had to stand their watches with a rifle in the bight of their arms" "She was so hungry the rats died of starvation." Perhaps this was another ship with the same name. No, she was the same ship, for there was "HUNGER" cut into the bunkboard over his head.

Joseph's reason actually tottered. He could not bear to think that after the cold and wet and hunger of the passage round the Horn, after the thirst and heat and the horrors of the open boat, that he had been taken into a ship that from all accounts was worse than the one he had

left. Had not the coffin-faced man who had sailed in her preferred the open boat to her decks, even when he was dying of scurvy? Joseph envied the men who had died, old Jimmie, Chips, even the coffin-faced man. Their troubles were over now, whatever they might have suffered in the boat, and Joseph's were just beginning. In his weakened state, he was very near to death himself right then.

The man in blue entered again and was about to thrust some ammonia under Joseph's nose, when he opened his eyes.

"Feel better, lad? Take a whiff of this here." Joseph did so, and the tears leaped to his eyes. "That'll bring yuh round," said the man. "What caused ye to go off like that?"

"This —— ship," said Joseph. "She's the last one on the seas I want to be rescued by. She's a hungry ship. I know her! She's a floating hell!"

The man grinned widely, and picked up the bowl of soup as he did so.

"Ever see potato soup goin' to a foremast hand on a hungry ship? Ever see clothes like these," pointing to his neat blue shirt and white lanyard. "She may have been a hell once, but she's pretty peaceable now."

Joseph said no word, but his eyes looked volumes of questions. He inhaled some of the soup, then burying his nose in the blankets, made one last attempt to wake himself up. It was a failure.

"No, sir," said the man in blue, "she's all right now. Your Uncle Sammy's boys are bringin' this wagon home. No more lip, now—I'll tell you all about it later. I got to take care of that shipmate o' yours."

He went to a bunk on the lower tier and Joseph, leaning over, saw Martin there, his face very white and drawn but clean-shaven and the swelling of his jaws quite gone. Then Joseph slept again.

A LONG time later Martin and Joseph sat in the lee of the forecastle, sunning themselves and yarning. There was a strange crew aboard that ship. It was uncanny to sit there and look along decks so like those of the *Shenandoah* that they could almost hear the mate bellowing aft and the thump of flying belaying-pins striking the deck.

On the cabin roof there was a very young man wearing a sword, many brass buttons and a glass under his arm. He strutted proudly up and down, now and then gazing aloft. There were a goodly number of blue-jackets about, and three men dressed like soldiers, with much brass and a little plume on their caps. One was on the forecastle head, another at the cabin door and another on the poop. The few men in merchant-seamen's clothes were very sullen and hang-dog looking, and had been adverse to talking to either of the shipwrecked men.

"As I understand it," said Martin, "the *Vandalia*, the ship these blue-jackets are out of, spoke the *Alleghany* off Rapanui somewheres. She had a distress signal flyin' and asked for a navigator. The *Vandalia* sends a boat aboard and the officers asks to see the papers and the like o' that, but the men aboard don't want him to go into the cabin.

"They claimed the skipper and mates was dead of plague, and they'd nailed the cabin up. Well, he smelt something in the wind and went down, and here was the cabin doors all broke in and the furniture broke, and the log not written up or nothin', so he signals back to his ship for more men and holds a little inquiry. They all told the same story about plague, till one fellar breaks down and said the ship was hell, and the men were being starved to death and they went aft to kick for more food. Then a fight started, and when it was over all the after guard was dead. So this Navy man, he sets sail for Frisco with the ship and all the crew that's left to find out the rights of the thing."

"How did you find it out?" asked Joseph. "No one would tell me a thing."

"Oh," said Martin, "I used to be shipmates with some o' these fellars aboard here, and then they used to come

in for a yarn while you was asleep. They didn't tell me direct, but from what they said and what I saw, I pieced it together."

One of the men in soldier clothes came forward and spoke to Martin.

"The skipper wants to see you two men in the cabin," said he.

The two followed him aft and went up the ladder and down the companionway. A young man hardly as old as Joseph was seated at the table under the telltale compass. He wore a frock coat, with a double row of brass buttons down the front, and he and the other gilded youngster on the poop were having the time of their young lives bringing the *Alleghany* home.

"We'll raise the Farallones about daybreak," began the young officer, "and then you two men will have completed your voyage after all. You'll get your pay up to the day you abandoned your ship, we'll see to that, but after that you'll have to whistle for any money. You don't want to be put ashore in Frisco broke, the prey to the first crimp that catches you, do you? No. Thought not. You're both of you too good sailors for that."

Joseph's back stiffened. At least this man could see he was a sailor.

"So," continued the officer, "I thought it over, and I decided I'd see what could be done, so I called you down here to offer you the best outfit of clothes you ever had in your life, a good berth on a wonderful ship and a chance to see the world and keep your self-respect, a chance to go to sea and never have to worry about getting into a hellship again—in other words, I'm offering you a berth as one of Uncle Sam's blue-jackets on the *Vandalia*. We need men like you two in the Service. How does it strike you?"

Martin looked at the floor, at the beams overhead and shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

"Well, sir," he said finally, "I know some o' the men aboard here, and I had it in mind to ask about this very thing for some time back, so if you'll have me, I'll say, I'm your man!"

"Good," said the officer, "and how about you?" turning to Joseph.

"I'm very grateful to you, sir," said Joseph, "for the offer and for your opinion of me, but to tell you the truth, sir, I'm not a sailor."

"Not a sailor!" exclaimed the officer in astonishment. "Why, how did you get in that boat then?"

"I went to sea," said Joseph, "to find out what it was like and I'm going back, now I've found out, and I want no more of it."

"I see," laughed the officer, "you've been through a very trying time, but don't let it frighten you. A disaster like that is very rare. One ship in a thousand—yes, one in two thousand, burns at sea. Hundreds and hundreds of men follow the sea all their lives and are never wrecked. No, if I were a strong, upstanding, two-fisted, broad-shouldered, able seaman like you are, I wouldn't let one bit of bad fortune keep me from the finest calling there is."

"It's very good of you, sir, to speak like that," said Joseph, "but I've seen enough of the sea. I've been beaten and kicked and starved and frozen and burned and drowned fifty times. I've seen men killed by the knife, washed over the side by a sea, shot to death and hauled out of a boat by a shark. I want to die in my bed and not be tossed overside like a kidful of slush."

"But what are you going to do when you get ashore?"

"I think," said Joseph, "that I'll be a farmer."

Painted Ponies

ALAN LEMAY

Brings to a close

HIS SERIAL

of Widening Borders

WHEN "Slide" Morgan reined his tired horse into Roaring River he was broke but for a silver dollar. That night the roulette wheel replenished his fortune to the tune of several thousands, but he incurred the enmity of Lew Cade whose brother Abner ruled the town.

Friends spirited him away that night, and next day he reached the ranch of the Texan, John Chase, who employed him as a rider. Slide hid four thousand dollars under the floor of his bunk that night. Nancy Chase, young and pretty, made Morgan wish to stay, but old John fired him after a week, under suspicion that he was a half-breed. When Slide returned a few nights later, with proof of his white blood, he saw Nancy in the arms of Lew Cade. In the fight which followed Slide mortally wounded the gambler.

Abner Cade took up the task of avenging his brother and Morgan fled to the prairie. A rifle battle ensued in which the fugitive was wounded in the wrist but saved from capture by the intervention of some roving Cheyennes. At first the Indians were suspicious of Slide, but when they realized that he was an outlaw and friendly to their tribe they agreed to take him to camp, where the leader of the Cheyenne scouts finally decided to allow Morgan to accompany them.

Soon all of the Cheyenne people met their scouts on the prairie; the whole tribe was moving north, to a country where fever and famine were unknown, for on the reservation they had left behind them nearly half the tribe had perished. Morgan decided to continue with them on their march until a better chance of escape from pursuit presented itself.

Back in the Happy Chance saloon Abner Cade had called a meeting to try Talky Peters for aiding Morgan in his flight. Cade insulted Peters and, when the latter's gun missed fire, the leader of the Vigilantes shot him down.

Later in the Hickory Lookout cabin John Chase and his daughter, the wounded Talky, Abner Cade and several other whites were defending themselves against an attacking band of Cheyennes;

many of them were wounded and the end of their resistance was near when a voice from out the darkness, using the Indian tongue, ordered the savages to retreat. Morgan, who had left the Indians, had arrived just in time to save the besieged ones from massacre. Back on the prairie Slide found the dead body of his good friend Jake Downey.

Word came to Morgan that Partridge Geer was sick and wanted Slide to come to him. Drunk and miserable in the Happy Chance, Morgan decided to go.

BY A slender, crooked driblet of a stream the sandhills rose in rounded humps, held against the wind by the short buffalo grass. Their crests were bare to the roaring sweep of the incessant wind; but at their feet, where the brown tangled brush huddled by the frozen water, the snow was drifted several feet deep.

Set into one of these hills was a tiny weathered dugout, low-faced, half buried by the crumbling hill and the snow. No smoke came from its broken mud chimney; it seemed a part of the ancient hill.

Slide Morgan dropped off the horse, waded through the moist early snow and struggled with the rough door. It jammed; then cracked, twisted and gave inward. There were no windows, and the rider at first could see nothing in the cold gloom within. Then he made out a bunk in the corner. An emaciated figure was laid out upon it, scarcely seeming to form a perceptible ridge in the blankets under which it lay. Slide stumbled forward.

Pale as frosted buckskin, yet with his face unfamiliarly rounded by the gray beard that had grown upon it, lay Partridge Geer.

At first Morgan thought the old man was dead, but a hurried examination proved that he was not. The cowboy snatched up an ax and whaled into a meager pile of wood that lay in the corner. In a few minutes he had a bright little fire going in the mud-walled cavity that served as a fireplace. He brought oatmeal from the pack of the mule, and water from a hole that he broke in the ice.

A terrible thirst was upon him; within him burned a fire which water would not quench, and his head reeled. But with his one good hand, which he had learned to make serve for two, he worked rapidly, preparing to do what he could for the old man whom he had left Slim's Place to save.

CHAPTER XX

PARTRIDGE GEER

THE door of the dugout stood open, for the fire had outdone itself and had filled the little hole with stifling heat. Through the door the winter sunshine came in a steep slant, it shot through the icicles that hung from the low sod roof, turning them to live silver with burning edges of gold.

Partridge Geer sat in the sunlight, rebandaging Slide Morgan's wrist. The old man was practically himself again, now. There had been a bad ten days after Slide had first come to the little cabin; then a slow, dragging three weeks' recuperation. But for the past two weeks Geer had been moving about a bit. Lately he had managed to hunt a little, piecing out the last of their third mule-load of supplies with a jack-rabbit, three grouse and a yearling steer of the Arrow C brand.

He now finished tying Slide's bandage, and turned to wiping off the scalpel with which he had been probing the wounded wrist. The instrument was efficient looking; it had been a razor, broken off to give it a sharp point, and whetted on stone and leather. With this weapon he had begun tampering with Slide's useless hand several weeks before, as soon as his own hand had begun to regain its steadiness.

"Them cords is sheared in two," Geer had decided. "That's why yore hand flops backward that way an' yuh can't move yore fingers."

"That means it won't ever come right, I s'pose," said Slide.

Geer pondered. "Not by itself it

won't," he adjudged. "But mebbe we can fix it."

Slide was skeptical. "How?"

"I'll bet," said the old man, "that if we got a hold o' the ends o' them cords, an' spliced them together with horse hair, it would work out all right. I never did jest exactly that thing before, but I've sewed some on different men that didn't have no one else to help 'em an' if you say the word I'll take a swing at it."

Geer's eyes twinkled, as if he were quite keen to put his ideas to the test—and Slide was willing that he should. Those men, grounded in self-sufficiency and independence of thought, would always try anything once.

The operations had been painful in the extreme; their immediate result was to hook his wrist sharply inward, where it became stiffer than ever. As the days passed, however, the experiment began to promise success. He could now move some of his fingers slightly, at the cost of great pain. This elated Geer, who confidently declared that in the course of time the full use of his hand would be regained.

They sat staring out across the prairie, blazing white in sun struck snow. A gentle breeze, chill with the breath of ice, moved Slide's dark hair, hair now as long as Geer's.

Below them zigzagged the crooked stream, its ice gleaming blackly where the wind had swept it clean. Beyond, to the southeast, stretched the flats, a vast expanse of dazzling white, framed in low sandhills that gleamed in the sun. Beyond these, beyond the horizon, hung a dark haze, spiting the sunlight; when the men looked in that direction it made the air seem dark against the bright land. In all that limitless brilliance of white not a living thing was seen to move.

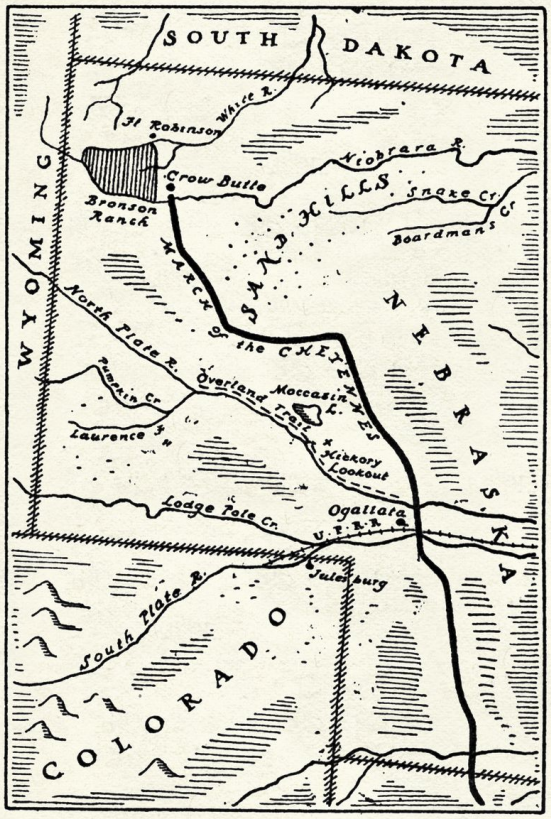
There was a sinister aspect to the white of the prairie, a blank ruthlessness that was intensified by the eye-stunning glare of the sun. It forced in upon the mind the fact that the prairie was living out hidden purposes of its own, in which the desires and needs of men had no part. The vast barren stretches seemed illimitably increased in extent by the snowfall, the deep, muffling snow tired out the horses men rode, hid the grass and made all food rare and hard to get at. The cattle and horses that men had brought here were somewhere out of sight, lost in the majestic reaches of sheer glaring emptiness.

Morgan's face hardened unconsciously as he stared out over the scintillant crust, his eyes reaching two days' journey away without passing a living shape. He had lived in the prairie all his life, it was the only home he knew. Yet now for a moment, as if a smoke veil had parted so that he might see through, he sensed the harshness of the plain, the cruelty of the vast space in which uncontrolled forces moved, oblivious to the lives of men. The dugout in which they sat was less than a speck of dust in that vastness, a speck that tomorrow might be blurred out and lost without affecting the scene in any way.

The men of the prairie seldom thought of that, they lived their lives absorbed in the perpetual difficulties at hand. Yet the moods of the prairie carved their faces with deep leathery lines, twisted their backs, and did for them in the end. The faces of the Indians were molded by the prairie, sharp, hard faces, at once whetted and blunted by privation. The whites who scraped a living out of the prairie came to look like Indians, and the Indians looked like hunted hunters, men who had always fought for their lives.

Slide Morgan turned his head to look at Partridge Geer. Here was the type of man that had learned to beat the prairie at its own game. Geer looked older than Morgan had ever seen him look. His hair was as gray as winter-wrung buffalo grass, the skin of his face as carved and hardened as the bark of a tree. Yet somehow his eyes had remained young. They were quick, pert, as unwearied as a child's. His body might be old and bent by hardships, but whatever was inside Partridge Geer seemed to have missed all that.

Here was the sort of man who could conquer the prairie, given time and others like himself. The whole weight of the prairie's strength, its brooding, crushing force, had missed him. It could sear his face, break his body, lay him out; but the spirit of the man slipped through it all



unscathed, not by indomitable strength, but by sheer immunity to the results of misfortune.

Morgan's eye wandered from the old man out on to the prairie again, and he stirred restlessly. An uneasiness was upon him, a craving for action that had been accumulating during the long days with Partridge Geer. He was still thirsty with an overpowering thirst and he was tired of the food they had had, but his unrest went beyond these things.

He knew that in the tiny dugout, lost in the endless reaches of the snow, there was absolute safety, yet he was aware of a persistent sense of danger. It was as if he were urgently needed some place far away, yet he had no idea from whence the call could come. He felt as if something were waiting ahead of him, some happening to which all his adventures had led since the night when he had struck down the brother of Abner Cade.

It was in no sense a feeling of fear. Fear, together with much of his bitterness, was behind him. The maudlin weakness of his prolonged debauch in Slim's Place had passed off with labor and clean air. A new hard courage, a solidity of character had come into him as the tremors of his hands had passed away.

He had been practising with his new gun and his left hand was becoming quick on the draw and accurate in the throw of the heavy iron. His left-handed skill was nothing to brag about yet, but in ordinary circumstances it might be made to serve.

"Wonder how Abner Cade come out," he said aloud.

"Oh, he's dead by now," Geer hazarded. "Course, he wasn't ab-so-lutely dead when I left, but he was so goldarned close to it that I don't hardly believe he ever could 'a' pulled hisself back. Nope. I reckon you're middlin' safe in jest crossin' him off o' yore slate."

Curiously, Abner Cade seemed to have little to do with Slide's mood of unrest. Some other battle was ahead of him; he could sense the struggle out there somewhere in the distance, almost smell the reek of powder. Yet for the moment he could not make out what the premonition referred to.

"What's eatin' yuh?" Geer demanded suddenly. "Yuh look like yuh was expectin' bad news from home. This Cade business has plumb passed off, I say. Leave lie. Fergit it!"

"I'm doin' purty good," said Slide idly.

"Fair. I've seen a darned sight better. Somepin' chawin' on yuh, though."

"Say!" said Slide, suddenly resentful. "Who the —— are you, anyway?"

"Geer's my name," droned the old man.

"I ain't so sure," Morgan grumbled. His cross-exclamation had stirred up old curiosities in his mind. Well, Geer had

sent for him, and he had wasted better than a month on the old man. He could afford to take liberties.

"I never heard o' nobody o' that name," he said with conviction, "an' I don't believe anybody o' that name ever knew nothin' about me. You do. Yuh might as well say yore name is Jones, or Hackberry Dewdinkle or somethin'."

Geer was silent, apparently willing to let the outburst pass. But Morgan forged ahead.

"I remember back to Moccasin Lake. How come yuh knew I could talk Cheyenne? Why I hardly knew it myself. It was a plumb surprize to me. How'd *you* know?"

"Well— I ought to."

"Why?"

"Because I learned yuh," said Geer.

"You learned me?"

"Yup."

"When?"

"When I was yore paw's pardner," Geer told him. "You was about as big as a real tall boot."

"Well, fer gosh' sake," said Morgan.

"Mebbe you remember a feller named Parr."

It seemed to Morgan that he did remember a name of the sort, dimly. He could half hear his black-bearded father shouting that name, "Parr! Parr! Whar's Parr?"

Here then was the explanation of the note that Geer had left with Jake Downey, of Morgan's own mysterious knowledge of Cheyenne, and of many things. The identity of the clean-shaved man of the shadow wagons stood revealed at last.

There fell a faintly embarrassed silence, neither of them thinking of anything further to say.

"How'd yuh come to do it?" Morgan said presently.

"What?" demanded Geer fiercely.

"Learn me to talk Cheyenne?"

"Oh," said Geer, subsiding with a slight smile. "Why I seen plain enough what the first problem was in this country —it was to smooth things out with the Injuns, afore they smoothed us out plumb even with the ground. Sometimes seems like nobody ever give it any thought but me. Them fools in Washington—"

"Well, all by myself I been tryin' to do what I could. I got on to how to get the confidence of the Injuns in the first place. Simple, too. So simple nearly everybody missed it but me. Treat 'em squar. That's the deep secret they've all missed.

"I kin talk five Injun languages purty good. First I thought I'd teach yuh Sioux. But lots o' folks knows Sioux, hardly anybody Cheyenne. An' lots o' Sioux an' Pawnee understand Cheyenne. So I learned yuh that. I learned another young fella Pawnee. I was tryin' to oil up the sitchation some, that way. An' sometimes it comes right handy."

"Pulled *me* out o' the soup," declared Slide.

"If I told yuh how many Injuns' rows I've saved people from, on my own hook an' at my own expense, why, you'd say I was a lyin' old pelican."

They sat silent, Geer apparently pondering the magnificent extent of the things he had accomplished—at his own expense.

Morgan's face was bleak and hard, but behind his eyes there was a smoldering light. He tore off a ragged thumb-nail with his teeth. Suddenly he thought that he knew what had been troubling him.

"I can't stand it no longer!" he burst out.

"What?"

"What's become o' them pore —— Cheyennes, fightin' their way through every regiment the Government can throw in front of 'em? Where are they?"

"I dunno."

"Them filthy bucks," said Morgan incongruously, his sympathies switching around, "they killed the best friend a man ever had. They killed Jake Downey, Partridge!"

"Which side you on?" Geer inquired.

"I dunno," mumbled Morgan uncertainly. "But there's fightin' somewhere, if it ain't all over. I'm goin' there. I dunno who I'm fightin' with. But I

shore feel like fightin'. I'm goin' there!"

"Prob'ly all over an' done with by now," said Geer. "Where yuh headin'?"

"I'll pick up word some place," said Morgan. "I dunno what's right an' what's wrong, an' mebbe I'm plumb set against both sides. But I got mixed up in it, an' I'm goin' to see it through!"

Geer seemed to consider the inexplicable confusion of Morgan's ideas.

"You best stay here until you figger out which is heads an' which tails," he recommended. "Yuh don't even know which way yo're goin'."

"I'm goin', anyway."

There was a long silence, while Slide stood in the doorway, staring out over the blazing silver-dust of the plain.

"Well," said Geer at last, "so'm I. Cetch up yore horse an' mule! I'll pack up our stuff."

"You comin'?"

"Shore! I can't stay on the shelf any more'n you. Let's git movin', an be shet o' holler talk! We'll hook south to Moccasin Lake first, an' get the news. Then we'll know where we're goin'."

Without further parley Slide caught up his coat and a rope and went out.

"Crazy fool," muttered Geer. "Pore crazy —— fool! He don't know which way he's ridin', or where to step down."

He rose, and with slow efficiency began to gather their scant belongings.

"Somethin' like me," he concluded. "The more a man learns, the less he finds out!"

CHAPTER XXI

NANCY CHASE

IT WAS sundown as the two nondescript figures, one on a raw-boned mule and the other astride an indifferent shaggy horse, plodded through the snow to the edge of Moccasin Lake. No smoke rose from beneath the gaunt-limbed cottonwoods. Contrary to Partridge Geer's expectations, John Chase's Arrow C camp had not been rebuilt. The charred skeleton of the cabin and the tumbled ruins of the low bunk-house lay silent and deserted, clothed in the bleak snow.

A coyote whisked out of sight behind the wreckage like a flitting shadow.

"Well, consarn!" said Partridge Geer.

"Out o' business," said Slide gruffly, to conceal from himself the sinking feeling that undermined him at the sight of the dead ruins.

"That ain't like Roarin' Jack," said Geer. "One o' two things: Either Roarin' Jack has ab-so-lutely changed from what he used to be—or else somethin's all-fired wrong!"

"Who's Roarin' Jack?" Slide wanted to know.

"I guess you didn't know much about Jack Chase," Geer replied.

"Nothin'."

"I knowed him oncet," Geer went on. "He's forgot me, though. Most men forget everything they know, if it ain't drummed at 'em continual. In the good old days Chase wasn't known as 'Old John.' 'Roarin' Jack' was the handle they used fer him—an' he shore earned it. Sech a fire-headed young un yuh never see. He made three fortunes before he was thirty, two in cattle, one at the wheel. Lost 'em the opposite way—two at the wheel, one at cattle.

"Always ready to bet his shirt with any man, an' he'd drink quicker'n he'd bet an' fight quicker'n he'd drink. Old-fashioned 'sooner' type—rush in sooner than he oughter, an' sooner fight than eat. Didja see much when yuh rode into the Hickory Lookout scrap on that gray horse?"

"Darn little," said Slide.

"Well, if you'd looked you'd 'a' seen old Roarin' Jack standin' in the middle, straight up, with a six-gun half as long as yore arm in each hand, layin' lead right an' left regardless. That was like him in the old days. One o' the wild fellers yuh hear tell about, like they don't have no more. Shoot out the lights, shoot out the lookin'-glass, shoot off the heels o' the bouncer's boots. An' if every danged citizen an' his brother started shootin' at him in the dark, that tickled him 'most to pieces.

"That was Roarin' Jack. Crazy feller. 'Cle-e-ear the bar!' he yells, 'I'm goin' to take a drink!' *Bang-bang-bang*, both guns. Absolute nuisance. Shot a marshal, two faro dealers, an' a bartender that had a shotgun, them to my positive knowledge."

Slide remembered the broad, genial old face of John Chase, mild, peaceful, kindly, and was forced to lay heavy discounts on Geer's description.

"But he married some girl he got hold of in Frisco," Geer went on. "I guess that sobered him some. She didn't last it out very long. An' after she died, an' he was left with this Nancy kid, I guess he must 'a' slowed up a whole heap. No little thing like a fight an' a fire would 'a' made him abandon camp like this, not in the old days. Well, old times move along an' pass out. New days, new ways. Or mebbe it's only us fellers that pass on out o' the pitcher— We better prod along to Hickory Lookout."

"Jest a minute," urged Slide. "I got to see about somethin' over here."

He spurred the shaggy pony to the ruins of the bunk-house and dismounted. The runty horse stood where he stopped, stretching his thin neck to sniff suspiciously at the débris.

Slide hastily calculated the position of the bunk in which he had once slept and began burrowing into the snow and the fallen rubbish of the roof. Something was wrong with the lay of the half-burned timbers; the jackstraw havoc was not the sort of tangle that a mere fire would leave, unhelped. As his scuffing boots laid bare the frozen ground Slide realized with a shock that his cache was no more.

The floor slabs had been pried up, and lay tumbled about. Somebody had evidently searched the ruins, and searched them well. There was even a gash-like trench along the base timbers of the wall, where the point of a questing mattock had rooted into the crevices next to the ground. The gold, naturally, was gone.

Beyond a swift flash of anger at the thought of being robbed, Slide did not feel his loss heavily. He cleared his throat harshly and returned to his horse. Geer had sat watching him sardonically throughout his operations. He did not, however, ask for explanations, and Slide offered none.

Probably the whole performance was perfectly obvious to this keen old man, who had seen nearly everything happen before.

IT WAS dark as they reached the point where inconspicuous landmarks told them that Hickory Lookout was not far away. The animals, moving in a steady, persistent jog-trot, followed the snow-covered trail without guidance. They were old, these nondescript mounts; perhaps they had traversed this trail before, or maybe their instincts were enough to tell them where they were supposed to go. Mounts who lack all other virtues commonly gain that one by the time they are too old to put it to much use.

"Only about three mile more," guessed Slide.

"Good thing," grunted Geer. "Lyin' round done up shore has took the tuck out o' me. Come mornin' I'll be so consarned stiff that you can use me fer a fence rail an' pry up things. Reckon I better sleep with my legs spread out bow-legged, so's I'll fit on this mule without havin' to be bent."

"There's a rider yonder," said Slide suddenly.

"I seen him ten minutes ago,"said Geer uncharitably.

The sky was darkly overcast so that there was neither moon nor stars, yet the snow showed with a dull, dim light of its own, as if phosphorus had been rubbed over it by a monstrous hand. Against the rolling reaches of the snow a black form moved, indistinct, sometimes lost in a swale, but moving in a line that presently converged with their own.

"Howdy," called out the rider at last, across the narrowing space that separated them. His voice was thin, husky, even when raised in the hail, yet it was half familiar.

"Howdy, Talky Peters," responded Geer.

Slide started, and then restrained himself from speaking at once.

Peters reined his horse closer, and sought to peer through the dark.

"Hoozit?" he asked at last.

"Partridge Geer," the old man answered.

"Well, heck!" exclaimed Talky. "Shore glad to see yuh a-straddle! I heerd yuh was like to die up here somewheres!"

"I did have a kind o' bad cold," admitted Geer disparagingly.

"I was tryin' to get up an' see yuh," Talky apologized, "an' see could I do anythin', but I only been ridin' a little bit, jest the last few days. Don't seem to go so good, some way."

"No call fer anybody to bother," said Geer. Then, "You know this young feller?"

Talky leaned sidewise to peer through the dark, but made out nothing.

"Can't say as I do, in the dark."

"That's Slide Morgan."

Well, great sufferin' smoke!" cried Talky.

He jammed the spurs into the listless beast he rode, and fairly skittered to Morgan's side.

"Man, man, man!" Talky cheered. "Are yuh all there?"

He slammed a gloved hand upon Slide's shoulder, and shook him gleefully.

"Talky," said Slide almost gruffly, "yuh run into me face to face in Roarin' River, an' yuh took one slow look, an' yuh passed me by."

"Yo're crazier'n ——," replied Talky, dumfounded. "I been lookin' fer some word o' you, an' askin', an' inquirin', ever since we got separated, down there where they called our play. But never hide nor hair of yuh do I get trace of, ' til this mortal minute."

"Talky, yuh mean to set yore horse an' tell me yuh looked right square at me, an' didn't know me?"

"Slide, I don't remember no sech a thing. After that Hickory Lookout fight I was kind o' laid up, an' I never got to Roarin' River—"

"Yuh come in on a buckboard," Slide accused him.

"I did get in once on a buckboard, Slide, an' lived to regret it. But—"

"I set in the back o' Slim's Place."

"Well—" Talky half laughed— "the joint might 'a' been packed with Shoshone squaws with green faces 'long about then, an' I dunno as I would 'a' noticed. What with bein' shook up, an' coughin', an' the floor tryin' to flop up an' slap me in the face—I wasn't feelin' so very noticin', right then, I guess mebbe."

Morgan understood, and suddenly flung an iron arm over Talky's shoulders, almost lifting him from his seat.

"Ow!" said Talky. "Yuh want to bust me?"

"Talky, I shore am plumb ashamed—"

Talky brushed over this.

"There was a feller lookin' fer you in Roarin' River, when I got in there last week fer supplies," he said. "He wanted to know about you. If I'd known I'd 'a' told him where yuh was, an' it would 'a' served yuh right. He said his name was Nugget Sam."

"Gosh, him!" said Slide. "Did he say anythin' about payin' me back a grubstake, or anythin'?"

"Well," Talky chuckled, "he did say he generally got his grubstakes off o' you. He shore seemed to need one. He looked like the place where the cyclone hit. Hat tore, shirt tore, coat tore, shoes tore— He said somethin' about you bein' a regular gold mine of a feller, I think."

"Why the old billy goat! That jest goes to show. Well, I couldn't do nothin' for him now, even if he caught up with me, some way."

"Slide," said Talky in a serious voice, "that makes me think o' somethin'. I want to ask yuh somethin' before we get to camp."

The glowing window of the Hickory Lookout cabin now showed in the distance, a golden pin-point that by contrast gave the dark of the prairie a bluish tinge.

"Spring it," said Slide, anticipating a joke. "I'm laughin' already."

"I hope yuh aint, Slide. I'm goin' to ask yuh to do somethin' fer me. It's a purty big thing, a man hasn't got the right to ask it hardly—but Slide, if ever yuh want anythin' in the world from me it's yores, if you'll jest do this one thing."

"Sure I will," Morgan countered instantly. "Write yer ticket."

"It's purty big, Slide."

He stared at the light in the distance, as if gauging his time. There was plenty of it, even for a man of many words, which Talky was not. It would still be twenty minutes before they reached camp, at the plodding rate they rode.

"I guess you know old John Chase is dead," said Talky solemnly.

"No!"

"Chase dead?" exclaimed Geer. "Old Roarin' Jack!"

"Didn'tcha know?" said Talky. "Well, he is. He died purty quick after that fight. Geer'd left, I guess. He wasn't hit nor nothin'. Jest petered out an' died, after everythin' was all over an' done with."

"Where's Nancy?" Slide asked immediately.

"Nancy's with us, here at Hickory Lookout," said Talky.

Slide suddenly felt a great wave of relief, almost counteracting the shock of the death news.

"What got him?" demanded Geer, persisting, apparently, in horning in.

"Seemed like his lungs filled up or somethin'," Talky told him over his shoulder. "Couldn't seem to get his breath. Sick about three days, then all of a sudden he was dead."

So, thought Slide, here was the end of the old man's slow-built dreams of empire. For a little while at the end of his life Chase had tried gamely to regain the opportunities that his youth had thrown away. Then the sudden grip of winter at an old man's throat, a brief struggle against an ignoble, choking death, and the fight was done, the dream vanished, and the laboring hands forever stilled. In a little while other cowmen would put to use the grasslands that Chase had marked for his own, and the brand of the Arrow C would be gone for all time from the range. If it had not been for a pale-eyed gambler, now in his grave, Morgan would now be there to make the dream live, though the dreamer was gone. But ifs didn't count.

"How's Nancy take it?" Slide asked.

"Standin' up," said Talky. "Well, seems like everybody on the range had some idee of what to do to take keer of Nance, but she wouldn't have none of 'em. She figgers to rebuild the camp at Moccasin Lake, an' run her stock. Seth Russell offered to take her holdin's, an' give her a payin' interest in the Box R fer life, an' she could go east or live where she pleased. An' there was others like that. But she wouldn't take 'em up. She aims to make somethin' out o' what she has, an' not take any charity offers o' them kind, not a-tall."

"Roarin' Jack's daughter," Geer quickly rammed in. "A shore 'nough echo of the old bang!"

"But she fin'ly let us partition her off a place to live in, in our cabin at Hickory Lookout; she let Seth Russell do that much when we showed how we could. Me an' Cork Walters sleeps in a loft we rigged up by raisin' the roof when we put it back on, an' she has a room in one end an' cooks fer us—won't hear different. Seems kind o' funny, but she took a notion to do that way, 'til her own layout is fixed again, an' there wasn't anybody to say her different. We're as keen to look out fer her as anybody is, I guess.

"But she hasn't any money, an' Happy Bent is laid up with his busted leg—he's at Seth Russell's main camp, now. An we don't want any o' the fellers to ride for her for nothin', ' less it's us, because we don't want her indebted to nobody like these plug-uglies round here. They ain't good enough. An' she won't let us ride for her fer nothin', an'—Well, yuh see how it is."

Talky realized that he was rambling;

and the speck of light was growing nearer. He came to the point:

"Slide, you remember the three-four thousand yuh left under the floor o' Chase's bunk-house? Yuh told me where 'twas, in case Abner Cade put yuh underneath. I wanta borry that, Slide. I can't pay it back very fast. But I'll get it paid in the course o' time. Reckon yuh know what I want to do with it, Slide."

There was a long silence.

"I reckon," said Slide at last.

"If ever yuh want to do anythin' fer me in yore life, Slide, do this one thing! It's big, I know, but I'll pay yuh back double, if yuh say the word, or anythin' yuh say. It's the only livin' thing it seems like I can do fer Nance an' I'd give anythin' in the world, if you'll let me do it."

"Talky," said Morgan, "I'd do it in a minute. Only there wouldn't be no payin' back. Not by a —— sight. But I ain't got any more four thousand dollars than a high-lopin' rabbit. I jest looked fer it, an' it's gone."

"I know it," said Talky.

For a moment Slide was dazed.

"Well," he said at last, somewhat abruptly, "if you've went to work an' went ahead with yore plan, whatcha askin' me for?"

"I ain't went ahead with nothin'," said Talky. "Old John Chase didn't leave hardly a penny. When Happy Bent heard that, he couldn't hardly believe it; so he sent Cork Walters to dig around an' see what he could locate. I was done up, right then, I didn't know nothin' about it. Mebbe I would 'a' put it off, waitin' to find you first. But anyway, Cork made the hunt. He must 'a' been good an' thorough: or mebbe you hid it easy. Anyway, he found the money. Not four thousand, but over three.

"Everybody thought Chase must 'a' left it there. So now Nance thinks it's hers."

"Oh," said Slide. "Oh."

"I wouldn't want," Talky drawled, "to tell her different now. Nobody can give her a cent. Here's our one chance to do somethin' for her in the money line. That's the proposition. You let the ready cash go, sayin' nothin'. An' I swear by Gawd I'll pay it back as I can."

"We'll jest ferget I ever had that," said Slide.

"No, I want to—"

"Go to ——," said Morgan.

"Slide, I—"

"I never see so much talk over nothin'," said Slide. "Where'dja get all the loose language at?"

"Gosh," said Talky. For a few minutes he was silent.

"Slide," he said at last, "I'm goin' to run this thing for her an' make it go. Now's the hard part, this year an' next. When I've got the works on its feet, then somebody she wants can come along an' she can take 'em an' they'll have a nice layout together, an' I'll drag out o' the landscape. But right now, when she ain't got hardly nothin' but a brand an' a whistle, I'm shore goin' to do what I can."

"Mebbe she'll want you to stick around permanent," Slide offered.

"I couldn't stand it, Slide," Talky mumbled. "She'll marry some one—"

"You," said Slide. He suppressed a certain bitterness that crept upward toward his voice. "Yo're lucky, Talky. I'd give my neck to do jest what yo're plannin'. I think a sight o' Nancy, mister man."

"You an' me," said Talky gently, "and you write it down, it's jest plain, solid, everlastin' ——!"

The light of the cabin was close now.

"Slide," he suddenly burst out, "stay here! It'll be a tough job fer one man to swing. But we got to swing it, we got to swing it fer Nance. Before we're through she's got to have the neatest little cow business in forty-leven states, all set up purty an' runnin' itself. An' it's got to be made to come up out o' jest plain grass. Yo're the only feller in the world I'd ask help of on this, Slide. The only feller I'd be plumb shore wouldn't be lookin' fer somethin' out of it in the end. Yo're solid, Slide. Yo're—"

A strangling cough broke out in his chest, but when he had mastered it he went on.

"Le's shoot this out with Abner Cade, once an' fer all! We'll blam him because we got to blam him. Then you an' me'll play out this hand."

"Abner Cade? I thought—"

"He ain't dead, Slide. It's gone out that he was dyin' a dozen times. But he hangs on. He's a tough one. They feed him on milk mixed with ice water, to cut down the bleedin' inside. An' now I hear he's up some. An' he'll be out after yuh when he can—he thinks o' nothin' else in this world. But he ain't boss any more, now— Seth Russell's that. When it comes to blammin' him, we'll blam him. Then you stay. I'm goin' to need a man, Slide, an' it's you."

Morgan studied Talky Peters. In the dark the man was nothing more than a voice and a slender black form; yet certain aspects of these things told Morgan much. The voice was that of a strengthless, bullet-weakened body that was still tenuously tough, refusing to go under. Further, the whole air of the man was different from anything that Morgan had known in Talky before. It seemed to embody many contradictory things, among them an odd, wistful bafflement and a grim, scheming force.

"It ain't for me, Slide," Talky said. He had forgotten all about Partridge Geer half a mile back, and did not remember him now. "Its for Nance. The cold cuts into my chest somethin' awful. I'm going to make it through all right. But jest in case— It ain't that though. Oh, you know. She needs an ace in the hole."

"Sure, Talky. I'll take the lookout chair all right."

The cabin was before them; they rode around it and prepared to care for their horses at the shelter within the corral. A new sort of excitement was upon Morgan. The rebuilt cabin of the Hickory Lookout camp had taken on a special significance, such as historic places own. Within, in hailing distance now, was the girl he had hardly known, yet who had entered his thoughts a hundred times since that distant night—

He had killed the man who had been privileged to hold this girl in his arms. How would she look at him now?

Slowly, with cold, fumbling fingers he untied the latigo strap. He had forgotten that side of it somehow. Talky must have—but Talky didn't know about that. Well, he'd see how she acted about him, and if she didn't want him there, Talky would understand. He climbed the fence and threw over a little hay, to take care of the extra horse and the mule.

"Go ahead in," said Talky. "I got to look at a horse's leg, here."

"I—"

"Git in out o' the cold!"

Stiffly, half dreading what he was about to face, yet curiously calm, Slide obeyed.

MORGAN hesitated at the cabin door. It was in his mind to wait for Talky Peters, yet beneath this was the knowledge that he must face this girl alone. If he were to see horror in her eyes, that disaster was his to take, and no one could support him there. A cold perspiration came into the palms of his hands. He lifted his knuckles to knock, then dropped them again, for he knew well enough that the men of the ranch would be accustomed to walking in without formality. Then he changed his mind again, and rapped upon the door.

He heard Nancy Chase's voice call "Come on in." He was surprized at this for she could not see who knocked, but then he heard whistling in the corral, and guessed that she must know Talky was there. He thrust open the door and stepped inside.

Nancy was there at the little stove, putting something into a hot skillet, something that sizzled as it hit. She lifted the skillet to shake it, glanced over her shoulder—

The skillet hit the stove top with a bang. The girl stood for a moment staring at Morgan as at a ghost. Her face was surprized, uncertain. Then—

"It's—it's Ben Morgan, isn't it?"

The question gave Slide a curious twist. The one thing that had never occurred to him was the possibility that the girl had forgotten him. As he recovered from the surprize he felt as a man does in a poker game when he draws his cards closer to his chest.

"Just about," he answered.

For another moment they stood without moving. The brief pause seemed long, long enough for him to notice that the rounded curves of her face were firmer than he remembered, that her hair looked as soft as the mist from sun-struck rain, that some unknown, disturbing force lived in the depths of her green-gray eyes.

Then a second shock of astonishment came to him as he saw her eyes suddenly glisten with tears. In the next moment they were gone, but they left her eyes gentler than before. She smiled, then she extended her hand to him with a direct movement that suggested the men among whom she had always lived. Slide shook it awkwardly with his left.

"We've been waitin' fo' yuh," she said.

"I didn't know that," he replied, "or I shore would 'a' been here before now."

"Yo' hand hurt?"

"Aw, jest stiff, a little."

"You take that pail theah and wash up."

They were in close quarters, there; the cabin had been tiny to begin with, and now a rough partition cut off nearly half of it, west of the door. One step took him to the bucket and wash basin on a bench in the corner. As he glanced over his shoulder at her, he saw that she had swiftly turned a small wooden frame, so that it hung face to the wall.

The incident troubled him, and he wondered what it was that she wished to conceal. A picture? Of whom?

He washed slowly, to take up the time. Alone with this girl, he didn't know what he could say. He was glad when Talky and Partridge came in, stamping the snow from their feet.

Talky instantly noticed the position of the wooden frame.

"Yore lookin'-glass's got turned round," he said, as he corrected it. "Ain't that funny now? I got that for her," he told Slide, "so's she could see what she was missin'."

"He's foolin'," said Nancy. "That's fo' him an' Corky to shave with."

Slide straightened up and stared at the cheap mirror, mystified. Why had she turned it to the wall? Then he glimpsed his own face in the glass, and suddenly knew. With an almost hypnotized fixity of gaze he stepped across to the mirror, leaned his hands against the wall on either side of it, and stared into his own reflected face. There had been no mirror in his saddle-bags, none behind Slim's wretched bar—

Gaunt, livid, its wind-whipped tan underlaid by a pallor that made it ghastly gray, the face of a stranger looked back at him. The cheeks were dug out into hollows that were bordered by grim creases, so that they were as sharp-carved as with a knife. The tight-skinned cheek bones and bony nose stood out angular and harsh. The mouth was thin-lipped and bitterly drawn, made the harder by the ironic, one-sided suggestion of his old smile which remained there.

But most changed of all were his eyes. Only a trace of blood-shot remained; in dark hollows that made them seem deep-set they shone coldly, hard and clear. They suggested perpetual watchfulness, but behind this was a curious hard calm, as if they looked beyond danger to the fatality of hidden events. They were the eyes of a sensitive man who had looked too often upon suffering and death; there were no wrinkles about them, yet they were old—

This strange, almost unrecognizable shadow of himself gave him a fresh perspective of his fortunes of the past half-year. It was curious, looking back on it all now that it was over, to think how he had been driven into the path of a swirling force of hopeless destiny, how he had been swept up by that force and carried with it, and how at last it had almost crushed him between itself and the

stronger elements to which it had been opposed. It had left a heavy record upon his face, now that it was over. But was it over?

He put consideration from him with a snort, as he turned away. But that evening his silence melted off, and he talked easily and humorously for the first time since he had ridden from Hickory Lookout on the gray horse upon the night that Lew Cade died.

THAT night was a momentous one in the career of Slide Morgan There was no flash of guns, no red crush and surge of hand-to-hand fighting, no waiting menace in the quiet outer dark. Yet he always remembered it, for it was at this point that he learned two things.

The first was that he wanted Nancy Chase as he had never wanted anything in his life, and that this had been true ever since he had first known her at Moccasin Lake, before the onslaught of Abner Cade. He watched her now as she moved about the tiny room, her slender, tanned hands quick, efficient, but graceful as the movements of a cimmaron. There was about her an air of such gentleness as he had never known; yet under that, he knew, there was a bravery surpassing that of her father, for all Roaring Jack's two long guns. A deep, torturing emotion stirred within him, and he looked away.

The second thing that Slide learned was that Talky Peters loved Nancy Chase no less than he.

This thing dawned on him suddenly, as a landscape is revealed in the flicker of heat lightning on a black summer night. But, once realized, the fact was so apparent that it hardly needed verification. He noticed how often Talky's eyes wandered to seek the face of Nancy Chase and he saw that the man's cocky air of self-assurance was gone. Instead, his eyes carried a look at once wistful and baffled but weighted with some heavier mood that might have been resignation.

When Slide no longer had any doubt on this score, his ideas declared bitter war upon his desires—he relapsed into a tumult of uncertainty. He realized that he could neither stay in this place nor leave it, and that either move meant disaster. Instinctively he sought some compromise, some indecisive way out of the impossible situation. Talky had voluntarily risked his life over and over in behalf of Slide; any effort to wrest Nancy's affections from him, even considering there was any possibility of success, was inconceivable. Equally unthinkable was the bleakness of his own future if Nancy Chase were to have no place in it. He fell silent, his mind hunting cover.

Thus for a time he lost trace of the conversation that was passing between Talky Peters and Partridge Geer. When his mind came back to it again, after a period of absorption in his own troubles, he found that its tone had changed. Talky still drawled his quiet sentences, with a pause between each two; but Geer's occasional questions had become sharp, and his old eyes had reduced to glinting slits.

"When was this?" Geer demanded.

"'Bout the twenty-third, twenty-fourth of October, somewhere in there. They got 'em all rounded up on the Chadron, an' counted noses, an' found they had a hunnerd an' forty-eight of 'em, not countin' old Dull Knife hisself. Their horses was down pretty low, less than one apiece, so they couldn't get any place, very well. Well, the sojers took the horses an' the guns, an' camped around 'em. That was on Chadron Crick, the way I got it.

"But old Dull Knife had saved out the best o' the guns, some way, and durin' the night they dug rifle pits in the frozen ground. First thing in the mornin' they let wham at the sojers. They didn't have no more chance than a one-legged man at a pants-kickin'. I guess there wasn't no more than thirty bucks in the whole caboodle. But they held 'em off fer two days more, until the troops begin droppin' canister or somethin' into 'em with a field gun."

"Pore fightin' fools," mumbled Geer. "Pore —— fightin' fools!"

"Well, ever since then they been holdin' these hunnerd an' forty-nine Cheyennes up here at Fort Robinson, waitin' to hear what to do with 'em. So it run along—"

"What become o' Little Wolf?" Geer put in.

"Well, Little Wolf an' the rest of 'em snuk through on 'em. Some say he got clean to Canada, an' joined Sittin' Bull, an' some say they got him headed off up in the Big Horns or some place. I dunno.

"Anyway, it run along up 'til a couple days ago, when a feller come through here, headin' south. Middle-age feller, name o' Pat Trent. He was headin' fer the railroad, an' he said he come from Fort Robinson, direct. Where he was before that I dunno.

"But anyway, accordin' to this Pat Trent, word come from Washington jest the day before he left, to the effect that these Cheyennes was to be moved south, right off. Weather disregardless. Back to where they come from, an' no more delay, says Uncle Sam."

Partridge Geer cursed softly under his breath.

"Never learned nothin'," he swore bitterly, "an' never will." It seemed that he was almost ready to break into tears. "What chance we got here to get things sorted out, with a lot o' humany dudes, that ain't never been west o' their dinky little Hudson, runnin' the whole show? I ask yuh? I ask yuh!" His voice trailed off into mumbles. "I told 'em— I told 'em— Fat ignor'nt fools!"

"So by now they're takin' the trail back where they started from," Morgan commented dazedly. The long gruelling rides, the repeated desperate encounters against long odds, yet won because they must be, the tortured children and old people—all the long, brave struggle for life, defeated at the last by the stroke of a pen, a far-away pen that swung armies to crush a handful of helpless people—

"Not by a —— sight!" said Talky Peters. "Not them!"

A thrill shot through Morgan, that the aged chief, in the face of all defeats and all powers, still held to his battling purpose.

"Old Dull Knife made a speech," Talky went on. "Well, Pat Trent couldn't tell what he said, much, though he was right there in the guard-house buildin'. Nobody there could talk Cheyenne but one Sioux scout, an' he couldn't talk American. So they had to have two interpreters, an' I guess it didn't come through very good. But the old scrapper got the sum and substance of it over all right.

"The main idee was that he wouldn't move south—he'd be eternally hanged if he would. He wouldn't go, an' nothin' would move him. The Sioux told him they was sorry he wasn't let to stay with them, but he'd better do like the sojers said. But not him.

"Dull Knife suggested they kill 'em all an' take their corpses south in wagons. He said if they wanted to kill 'em all that was the quickest way, they'd rather die quick than by slow fever, if that's what the whites was set on.

"Well, I always been plumb set against Injuns. They killed pa, an' they like to got me. But dawgone, you got to admit some things, an' one is that this Dull Knife has got more'n a common man's share o' downright guts. I got to admire him. I'd shoot him in a minute if he so much as looked cross-eyed at my horses, but when I'd done it I'd know I'd potted me a real man."

He paused, and his tongue fondled the slender chew of tobacco in his cheek.

"Then what?" Geer urged.

"Then they decided these fool Injuns needed the tuck taken out of 'em. So they cut off their food an' water an' wood. An' nothin' do they get, from now on, until they're ready to go south. Jest as Pat Trent left they was offerin' to take the women and children out o' the guard-house an' feed 'em. But they wouldn't come.

"Well, that's the last I heard. But I guess they'll be movin' south now any

day. There's nothin' like plain, common belly hunger to make a feller change his mind. An' I guess Dull Knife can get jest as hungry as the next. They'll move 'em all right."

"No," says Slide quietly, "they'll never do it. I know those Cheyennes. They'll die there, but they won't move."

"They may die," said Partridge Geer, "but it won't be starvation. There's fightin' goin' on, Ben! Right now there's fightin'! Gawd! The pore fightin' fools!"

"Fightin' with what?" asked Talky skeptically. "They've no guns."

"I dunno with what," said Geer. "An' I dunno that there's no guns. But they'll fight with somethin', I can tell yuh that, if it's only the fresh bones o' their dead. I've seen that very thing, I have."

"What'll it get 'em? There ain't even the faintest shade of a chance—"

"No," said Geer, "there ain't. There never was, an' it's a good thing for us, or we wouldn't be here now. But there's one thing Dull Knife's band knows that a lot o' white men can't never learn. An' that is that there's things worse than dyin', pervidin' yuh die fightin' with all yuh got, an' the best yuh can."

They fell silent for a time.

"What time in the mornin' do we start, Ben?" Geer asked Morgan at last. "It's not more'n eighty mile to Fort Robinson as the crow flies—northwest. But we ain't crows. It's ekal to a hunderd miles by horse or mule, or a hunderd an' fifty in this snow. We got to take it in two heats. Well, let's see. This must be the twelfth o' the month, isn't it?"

"'Leventh," said Talky.

"Of December?" asked Slide. "Well, of all the early winters I ever see—"

"January," Talky chuckled. "Yo're livin' in 1879, young feller. You take the turkey! He's slippin' back on us, Partridge."

"Dawgone!"

"Then they must 'a' stopped the Cheyenne's grub about the fifth, or along in there," Partridge computed.

"Right along in there, some place," Talky agreed.

"We may have missed the finish," Geer mused, his eyes smoldering. "I dunno. We'll go see. Mebbe old Geer can save a lot o' people some bother yet."

"How about horses, Talky," Slide asked absent-mindedly.

Now that the news of the Cheyennes had sunk in, it had somehow mixed itself with Slide's own problem. Immeasurably stirred by the news of Dull Knife's game decision, he yet found that the nearness of Nancy Chase made all other considerations of less importance than they could have been in normal days.

"*Yo're* not goin?" Talky demanded. "Are yuh? You an' me has work to do. Leave this old derringer of a feller ram off on all the wild-goose chases he wants to. What's in it fer you? Looks like it was time you was givin' over all this monkey-business fer a while. You know what yuh told me."

Slide looked at Geer. The old man shrugged.

"It's up to Morgan," he stated. "I ain't askin' him to come as any special favor to me. But if he don't, he shore is a changeable feller, that's all I got to say."

Morgan made no answer: he sat staring absently at the floor, as if he heard nothing that was said.

"I—" he started to say once; then fell silent again.

No one spoke. It was as if they had come to a deadlock, with nothing further to be said until Slide's decision was announced.

Morgan glanced up at Nancy Chase, who sat apart by the stove. He found her looking at him steadily, and instantly dropped his eyes again.

"I'm goin' to ride up there with Geer," he said at last.

"Slide, you ain't—" Talky burst out.

"No," said Slide, "I ain't goin' back on yuh Talky. But—I reckon I ought to see this through."

"What can you do?" Talky demanded. "Yo're no use up there. You can't even throw a gun."

"Don't you believe it," Geer contradicted. "He's been practisin' with his

left hand. 'Course he ain't as good as a ordinary feller with two good hands, not yet. But he's comin'. I reckon he'll do, all right, in a general rumpus."

"Anyway," Talky insisted, "it shore must be over by now. Them Cheyenne's must o' been in that guard-house without supplies for six-seven days now. You think they're eatin' logs in there? Either they've give in, or they're dead. Because the sojers can't give in, they ain't got any say about it."

"They ain't in the guard-house by now," said Geer with conviction.

"What's the reason they ain't?" Talky demanded hotly.

"Because they ain't!" Geer snapped back. "They wouldn't stay in there. They got more gumption than that!"

"Then they've been caught again an' put back," said Talky decisively. "There's cavalry there, an' the Injuns haven't any ponies. Anyway what's *he* goin' to do about it?"

"Ask him," Geer suggested; and again they waited for Slide to break the deadlock.

"It ain't that," said Slide slowly.

"Then what?" Talky demanded instantly. "You old fool," he continued, grumbling, "it's jest like you to go an' get yore head shot off the last minute, after everythin's all over."

In the presence of Geer and Nancy, Talky could not say any more plainly what was in his mind, but he looked at Morgan with such appeal that Slide could not avoid the force of the man's insistence. He knew then with what dread of failure Talky must be looking forward to the struggle for the success of Nancy's ranch and what store he must set upon the assistance of Slide Morgan, the only man in whom he seemed to trust completely.

Morgan longed to see how Nancy was taking all this, but he feared to lift his eyes to hers, lest he waver. He knew that above all things he needed this little time, alone with Geer, that he might straighten things out in his mind.

"It won't take long, Talky," he said at last. "I got to—I got to figure something out. Won't take so terrible long to ride up there an' back."

Presently Talky spoke two words, very soft and low, though all could hear what he said plainly enough.

"Comin' back?"

Slide started, surprized that Talky had seen deeper into his mind than he had expected. Yet he knew that Talky had missed the point.

"Yeah, I'll be back, Talky."

"That's a promise, then," said Talky casually.

"Check."

THEY saddled in the first dusky light of morning, warming the bits with their hands and breath before forcing the cold metal into the ponies' mouths. Their movements were casual, matter-of-fact, they said nothing more to justify their ride northward, which must have had an appearance of peculiar purposelessness to Talky and Nancy Chase.

At the last moment Slide turned to Nancy, but as he met her eyes he lost the words for what he wanted to say. So he mounted silently and, turning his reluctant horse, rose off into the snow plains with Partridge Geer.

CHAPTER XXII

HUNTING DOG'S STAND

THE dim cold of the narrow barracks in which the one hundred and forty-nine Cheyennes were confined became suddenly potent, as if charged by an electric shock. The ceaseless, silent-footed pacing of the gaunt Otter stopped in mid stride. Faces that had shown a gleam of hope went dead, and those that had been passive in resignation became savagely intent. Morning Star, his old limbs trembling, but with eyes wide and hard in the glare of battle, rose swiftly to his feet.

A single war-cry, high and terrible, had sounded in one of the huddled log buildings beyond their own. For an instant

it had rung in the midday silence; then suddenly ceased, as if choked off by gripping hands.

It was their fifth day of privation. The days without fuel, food, or water had passed with agonizing slowness. The Cheyennes were poorly clad—except for their ragged, thin blankets, they might have been dressed for midsummer. Into their bones perpetually crept the slow frost, striving to numb the starved bodies, while hunger and thirst gnawed incessantly at the very sanity of their minds.

Sometimes the mourning prayer-chants of the women had wailed eerily in the narrow confines of the cabin, or again the wild, monotonous death chants of the warriors had sounded for a little while. Between these interims of sound there could be heard perpetually the thin, still whimpering of the children, inconsolable in the suffering that hourly increased. Now and then a young brave, despairing to the point of madness, had flung himself at Morning Star's feet, begging permission to leap forth and die fighting, at once.

Yet at no time had the United States officers been able to draw from that house of doom a suggestion of surrender, a sign of bending to the will that had ordered them back to the place from which they had come. To march in the zero weather would have meant death to many. To arrive safely in the southern land from which they had fled would have meant slow death to many more, perhaps all, as the past had proved. Morning Star had pledged himself never to return there alive. No surrender! Death might come to them at this place, but it would find them unbending.

An offer to take out the woman and children to be fed had been refused.

Behind them lay the endless miles of travel, the battles which they had won against odds, to return to their own land. Here and there their trail was marked by the coyote-stripped bones of their dead. They would not retrace that trail while they lived, though now they were helpless in the cold, remorseless hands of the Great Father, who wanted them all to die.

That morning Captain Wessels had sent for the three chiefs that remained, to confer once more. Of the three, Wild Hog and Crow were permitted to go; nothing could persuade the people to let Morning Star leave them, for it seemed unlikely to them that their beloved old chief would ever return. In this suspicion it was now apparent that they were justified. The single desperate war-cry of Wild Hog had brought them word that the end for them all was close at hand.

For a moment after the war-cry had sounded across the snow, silence continued as their ears strained for some further sound that did not come. Then the war-cry of the Otter answered like an eagle scream. Pandemonium broke forth. The young braves would have burst out of the barracks to fling themselves upon the soldiers in a wild frenzy of hate and despair, but Morning Star himself locked the door.

Then, as the war-cries screamed again and again and the weird wail of the death chants rose and fell, the Cheyennes worked desperately, preparing themselves to fight as best they could. Slabs and planks were wrenched loose by numbed fingers to barricade windows and doors. With their last hope of mercy gone they did not doubt that the malevolent people who encompassed them would soon move to accomplish their end.

Beneath the floor was a cache of a few guns. They had been taken apart just before the Cheyennes were finally disarmed, and the pieces concealed in the clothing of the children and the squaws, and later they had been hidden, reassembled, under the floor. These were brought forth and distributed among the best shots. Riflemen who had knives gave them to others, that none might be without a weapon of a sort. The cold iron of the stove was broken up to make crude weapons for those who had nothing else.

Among the swift smother of the moving people Blanket walked, his face harsh and bleak beneath the great war bonnet

of white eagle feathers which he still wore. A pistol, a few rounds of ammunition, were all he had; not so much as a skinning knife was at his belt for defense when those few rounds should be gone. No trace of his old sardonic smile remained to him, but he spoke quietly to the others, making a suggestion here and there, trying to calm men crazed with hunger, bringing order out of the turmoil as well as he could.

In a dim corner, silent and motionless, sat his sister, Antelope Woman. Close to her body beneath her torn blanket she held Little Frog, trying to keep the cold from the heart of the famished baby for a little while more. For a moment, as his eyes rested upon her, Blanket's face blazed with a savage intensity of wrath, but this was soon past and he went to talk to Morning Star.

"When we break out, we can get a few weapons from the sentries. But we must shoot them from the windows, so that they can not escape, just before we rush from the windows and doors."

Morning Star nodded.

"There is a ranch," Blanket went on, "with horses, only a few miles away. At dusk, if you will give me only one man, I will try to get out of the camp, go to this ranch and kill the men who guard the horses. Then I will start the herd this way, and meet the people as they come."

"It is impossible," said Morning Star. "No man could succeed in such an attempt."

"For a long time," Blanket pointed out, "nothing that we have done has been possible to men. Yet we have done these things. Nothing possible remains to us now. I can try."

But Morning Star shook his head.

"I will do this," he said, "because you are brave and calm. I will give you your choice of place in the fight. Some must fight while others escape. Others must hurry on with the women and children to where the horses are. Not all can get away. You may do either thing, as you choose."

"Then I will fight the troopers here," said Blanket, "and try to hold them back."

Morning Star nodded; then his mind turned away to his plans for the last desperate bid for life of these Cheyennes.

Presently the turmoil subsided. Morning Star called to him certain men, to discuss what they must do. Among these were Hunting Dog, Blanket, Tangle Hair, and Standing Alone. For a long time they talked in low voices, while quiet gradually came back to the narrow room.

At last they separated again, walking here and there to tell the people what they must do when the time came, taking the greatest care that all should know every detail. At last even this movement ceased, and silently in the bitter cold the Cheyennes waited for their time. Up and down, his moccasins noiseless, the Otter paced, paced, paced

NIGHT came on, savagely cold. There was little wind, yet an occasional breath of merciless winter came through the chinks that had been pried open for the rifles, stirring the frost within to beset the ill-clad bronze bodies anew. There was no moon, and the stars were far away and faint. Only the crust of the all-covering snow glistened faintly, as with a mysterious radiance of its own.

By nine o'clock Fort Robinson's huddle of log buildings was silent. Through the still, frost-locked air a clear-voiced bugle sounded taps, slowly, sadly singing the most beautiful call the army knows:

When your last—
Day is past—
From afar, some bright star, o'er your grave—
Watch will keep—
While you sleep—
With the brave—

An hour passed—two hours. A deathlike silence brooded over the Cheyenne prison barracks, over the barracks of the troops; in the officer's quarters a single light burned, but even there the silence was unstirred.

Within the log building of the Cheyennes a quiet figure moved along the walls like a shadow. It paused at each of the

riflemen who were stationed near the narrow window, passing a brief message.

"When Morning Star gives the word, let the first man who can draw bead on a sentry fire."

All knew what must be done the instant that the shot sounded. Braves armed with stove-legs stood by the windows to smash out the frames. The Cheyennes breathed quietly, waiting, not one among them asleep.

A long time passed. Tense, ready, each waited for the expected word. Outside the sentries paced, slowly, sometimes stamping their feet, each man walking alone with his rifle and his thoughts. Their breaths were visible in the gloom, slow-blown mists that rose and lost themselves against the background of the snow.

"Now," came Morning Star's voice at last, low, firm, controlled. "Now!"

In the silence five chosen riflemen rose swiftly, standing to the windows, rifles ready. Another long pause followed, agonizingly tense with waiting as in the gloom all eyes watched the chosen men. There was a swift movement at one of the windows as Little Shield brought up his rifle, dropping his cheek to the stock. Those standing in line with this window saw a slow pacing figure, rifle on shoulder, clearly blocked out against the snow.

Then the voice of Little Shield's rifle crashed in the stillness, and the motionless silence was gone. The slow-pacing figure stumbled and pitched forward into the snow. There was a splintering smash of shattered windows through which figures instantly leaped, their movements violent, swift as animals, as the pent-up fury of the wild broke forth at last.

Outside dark figures were moving, yelling as they ran through the snow.

"Turn out the guard! The guard! Fer God's sake where's the guard!"

A blanket-wrapped figure sprang after one of these like a catamount, struck the man down, seized rifle and belt and retreated. A scattering riflery spoke for a minute as the sentries fired, then a moment of near-quiet as those who remained alive gained the guard house. A thin stream of blue-clad men began to run from the guard house as the guard of the day rushed forth. A bugle blared hysterically, ripping out the call "To arms!"

Quickly, yet apparently without haste, a scattering line of warriors formed near the Cheyenne barracks, between the guard house and the river. They began to fire into the men from the guard house. Blanket, pistol in hand but not firing. walked among these, straight and calm. He fiercely yelled, "Aim well! Aim well! Aim well!" over and over.

Men began to pour out of the trooper's barracks, men without shirts, men without breeches, men clad only in underwear and boots. A swift skirmish line of these formed to the shouting of the noncoms, and the Cheyenne fire was now returned four-fold. A party of half-clad troopers dashed around the buildings to out-flank the thin line of braves, and take them under enfilade. Tangle Hair, chief of the Dog Soldiers, went down, and another, and another. The thin skirmish line of troopers advanced, and the warriors slowly gave ground.

Down the slope toward the river poured the women, children, and powderless warriors of the Cheyennes. Blanket watched the dark rabble of them against the snow until they were lost to sight, and he believed that they had gained the ice.

"Give back!" he yelled. "Don't run! Face the soldiers, but give back!"

Among the troopers all was confusion, yet the discipline and cool leadership of the non-coms was straightening this out. An officer, fully clothed, was striding about on long legs, bringing order wherever he went.

"First platoon to the stables! Get those horses out! You here, stand fast!"

The click of steel on steel rustled in the pauses of the rifle fire. Hoarse commands, stern-voiced, excited, rang among the muddled troopers. Half had no sabers, some had carbines without belts of ammunition, among them was every stage

of semi-preparation for combat which is possible among surprized fighting-men. Then out of the confusion came a disordered line on the trot.

"As skirmishers, follow me! Now, charge! Let 'em have it boys! Club muskets! Club muskets!" Some old-timer of Civil War days was in action.

The thin lines of the troopers and the Cheyennes blended, the Indians giving backward, the soldiers flinging upon them as they sought to retreat. The Cheyenne line broke into groups. Fighting desperately, they strove to disengage and break away. At the river's edge Blanket for a moment reestablished the fragments of his line, and fought the troopers off. In the temporary pause he took them across the river, preparing to fight again on the farther shore.

Behind them they left the snow blotted with the blood of a dozen wounded and dead.

Morning Star was leading his band on the run in the direction of the ranch, where it was their forlorn hope to capture ponies. Down the trampled snow path of their flight Blanket retreated, holding his men together as well as he could, a hard-fighting rear guard. In a little while the half-clad troopers fell away and, in the respite that followed, Blanket's detachment hastened to overtake the main body of their people.

The respite did not last. Fully clad troopers, mounted now, began coming upon them from the fort, first in small squads and harassing parties, then in platoon force. The carbines spoke incessantly, dropping warrior after warrior of the rear guard, killing and wounding women and old men with Morning Star beyond. All along the trail that they made in the snow dark shapes rested, where Cheyennes fell.

Now and again the cavalry charged the weakening rear guard with sabers. Standing Alone went down, one foot broken and an elbow shattered. Gamely he struggled up and with his remaining arm hurled his rifle to a warrior who rushed toward him to take it. Another saber charge was coming. Weaponless, Standing Alone screamed his war cry and turned to face the charging troop; in the next moment he was down under the smashing smother of hoofs, a twisted huddle that the horses tried to overleap.

There was no chance of securing horses now. Many were dead, and hope of escape waned as the trooper's strength increased. Two miles west of the army post rose precipitous bluffs, inaccessible to horsemen. To these Morning Star now led his band, defending themselves as well as they could while they fled.

A long slope led up to the point in these bluffs which Morning Star had chosen for ascent; here Hunting Dog and Blanket drew together their shattered forces for a temporary defense.

From the hard fight at the foot of the bluffs, two men of the shielding party escaped alive, gaining the steep trail after the last of those they defended had gone up. These, by a grim irony, were Hunting Dog and Blanket.

Among the sacrificed rear guard Antelope Woman died, fighting with the men, the riddled body of Little Frog still on her back.

On the plateau above the bluffs those that remained alive found opportunity for unharassed flight.

The light of the stars seemed stronger now; in their pale, thin light the chill snow fields gleamed smoothly, tranquilly. They were in a spirit land of dimly gleaming beauty, a vast world of silver traceries, sprinkled with the dust of countless myriads of jewels. It was a land for the swift spirits of the air to move in, spirits who needed no warmth. But in all the vastness of the prairie's uncanny beauty the inhuman cold had left no place of refuge for the stumbling Cheyennes.

Nor was there hope of food. Across the scintillant crust, eddies of snow powder sometimes fled like wind-whipped ghosts, but there moved there no living thing.

No surrender! On and on they marched, wounded, freezing, weak from hunger— That night they traveled seventeen miles.

MORE than forty miles northwest of Fort Robinson, and hardly farther than that from the edge of their beloved Black Hills toward which the Cheyennes fought their way so long, stand the Hat Creek bluffs. On these bluffs, near the head of War-Bonnet creek, Hunting Dog, with all that was left of Morning Star's band, made his final stand.

They lay in a narrow coulée, shoulder deep. Their number was thirty-one.

Eleven days had passed since the hundred and forty-nine Cheyennes had made their game dash from the prison-barracks of Fort Robinson. A cow or two, a winter-killed elk, had been all their food.

To the best of the knowledge of the thirty-one, they were all that remained alive. The truth was that nearly seventy of their people had been recaptured by the troops, nearly all of them wounded, but alive. Of the rest, most were dead. By a cruel jest of the gods, Morning Star himself, having become separated from his people, remained alive and free.

They in the coulée could not know that their chief lived, nor any of their friends and loved ones. Repeatedly they had slipped away from the pursuing cavalry by dark—sometimes, near the last, creeping like coyotes through the close-drawn night lines. Now all that was done. No less than four troops of cavalry, short-rostered, but numbering nearly three hundred men, now hemmed them in.

Unspeakably weary, wasted from lack of food, many with frozen hands or feet, they still defended the coulée that was their last of earth.

It was warmer, now. Much of the snow had melted away. What remained of it lay in broad flat patches on the frost-blackened prairie, like irregular paper cut-outs upon dark wood. From the thawing sod there rose a moist odor, suggestive of the spring that was far away. From a clear sky the sun shone benevolently, careless of the sufferings of its prairie people, as if they had lived too long and were in truth forgotten by the elements they had loved before they were yet dead.

In the clear light of morning Blanket moved among the people in the coulée, stooping low to avoid the bullets that poured into the shoulders of the banks at each sign of life. Among the thirty-one were several who had not moved since the last light of the day before. A young mother still cradled in her arms the body of her dead child. Those who were unhurt looked at each other wanly, their spirits past fear, past despair. Yet—no surrender! One thing in them was unbroken still—the will never to give up.

They could hear the movements in the camp of the troopers, a few hundred yards away, smell the odors of cooked food and the smoke of fires. Why didn't they come? Stoically the Cheyennes waited for the inevitable end. It came soon.

The voice of a Sioux interpreter called from within easy hailing distance.

"I am lying out here on the slope," it said. "We will not shoot. An officer is with me." They could hear the low murmur of the other voice, prompting the Sioux. "The officer says that if you will come out and give up, no one will be hurt."

There was a long silence in the coulée, while none moved to reply.

"Do you hear? Do you hear?" the Sioux called.

Hunting Dog ran his eyes over the faces of his remaining people and in them he found reflected his own intent.

"If there is a man," said Hunting Dog, in a voice terrible with hate, "who has a cartridge left, let him fire it now!"

Of the thirty-one, Blanket was the only man who any longer possessed a single round.

"We hear!" he cried, and rising to his feet he fired at the emissary three times, emptying his gun of the last ammunition they owned.

After that it seemed that a long time passed. They could hear shouted orders, advancing men.

"We can not fight them off any more," said Hunting Dog. "We must wait until they leap into the coulée. Then let us fight with our knives, with stones, with

whatever is in our hands, and die trying to kill as many as we can."

The Otter ground his teeth in helpless rage, but the others nodded, their gaunt faces grave.

For a quarter of an hour a heavy fire was poured into the coulée from three angles, until none dared lift his cheek from the ground. Then there was a pause.

"Now!" said Hunting Dog. "Now they will come!"

They could hear the slog of many feet advancing over thawing snow and wet sod. Then they heard the swift shouted commands, unintelligible in word, but clear in meaning, and all gripped such poor weapons as they had.

The advancing murmur of feet increased to a muffled thunder of sound. Frantic yells of the officers cut through the crash of a desultory fire at close range. A skirmish line had advanced, and as it came on it had converged in spite of all that its officers could do; until suddenly a solid wall of men stood over them on the brink of the coulée. Now, if their guns could have spoken now, those in the coulée would have carried many a trooper with them to the land of the dead.

They waited for the wave of fighting men to spring upon them.

A terrific smashing roar seemed to split heaven and earth as the carbines blazed, pouring a terrible avalanche of death into the crouched Cheyennes. For a few moments there was bedlam, a rain of sound, then quiet.

As the thick mist of powder smoke rose and drifted, revealing a welter of bullet-torn bodies and slow-creeping trickles of blood, the wall of men was gone from the coulée's rim—the troopers had dropped back to reload. A thick, wailing sound began to rise where here and there a dying brave lifted his voice with his last strength in the chant of death.

"Do any live?" cried Hunting Dog in a ghastly voice.

The Otter, Blanket and a man named Grey Rain answered.

"They will not leap in," cried Blanket. "They will kill us where we wait!"

"We must rush them as they come on again," gasped the Otter. His face twisted, and his voice ended in a choking cough.

For an instant the four looked into each other's eyes as they stood there, stooping above the red shambles at their feet. Among them were three skinning knives; Blanket had his empty pistol alone.

"They are coming," said Hunting Dog. "We must go now."

His voice sounded distant in the wash of sound. Swiftly he turned and leaped out of the coulée, screaming the cry of battle. Blanket and Grey Rain were at his side, but the war cry of the Otter strangled in his throat. All his life this man had lived for battle, but the fighting death he had desired above all things was denied. He fell back helpless and bleeding from the lip of the coulée, and the last of his comrades passed out of his sight.

Screaming their war cries, the three flung themselves against the oncoming wall of the three hundred, and so died.

CHAPTER XXIII

CADE AND MORGAN

IT WAS a Saturday night, following a pay-day, as Slide Morgan sat again in the tiny cabin at Hickory Lookout. It was turning colder outside, but within was a cozy warmth, an atmosphere of friendship, of comfort of stable, homelike things. The keen pleasure, bordering on relief, with which Talky had greeted Morgan, had somewhat worn off, but Talky remained jovial and happy; he fairly radiated contentment and satisfaction with things as they were.

Nancy's face, too, had lighted up at the sight of Slide Morgan. She now moved about briskly getting dinner, her hands making gay, bird-like movements. She hummed a song as she worked.

"Looks like I could help some," Slide hazarded.

"Sho! Men don't know how to cook." Slide's face crinkled in a grin.

"I betcha," Talky chuckled aloud,

"He's cooked hisself more'n a million meals—"

"An' look how thin he is," Nancy retorted. "Men have to be took care of, or my, oh my! Yuh ought to see how they run down!"

"I guess that's so," Slide admitted. "Havin' et off o' men cooks for upward o' twenty years, I believe Nancy's right. Men can't cook. Not any."

"They shore can't cook like Nance," Talky agreed, "that's certain."

Slide had ridden in from Fort Robinson tight-lipped and grim, but the congenial atmosphere was thawing him out. Sometimes his mind reverted against his will to the Fort Robinson disaster, yet for the most part he had come through the terrible days of the outbreak unchanged. Perhaps long adversities, climaxed by the death of Jake Downey, had left him with new qualities of endurance. Or perhaps while at Slim's Place he had plumbed the farthest depths of which he was capable, so that for him there were no new vistas of injustice, horror or despair.

At any rate, his mind had now turned away from the fate of Morning Star's band, as from a subject irrevocably closed. The friends of his Indian life were nearly all of them dead; the power of the band was broken forever. Behind him the doors of the past were closed and he was ready for new things.

These new things were now close about him in the little Hickory Lookout cabin.

"There's nothin' like a big, thick steak o' beef," Talky opined. "I'm glad that's one thing we got plenty of. 'Taters, though is another question. Sweet 'taters especially. If I told yuh how much those sweet 'taters cost, laid down here, you'd call me a darned liar."

"He'd have a right to," Nancy put in.

"Well," Talky admitted, "not these indentical 'taters, but ordinary 'taters, I mean. These here I won in a poker game. But yuh can't always do that. Now take those onions she's fryin' with that steak. Sometimes it looks like yuh can't tell which will bring the most—a prime steer, or a peck o' onions."

Under the influence of appetizing food, genial companionship, and the stimulating presence of Nancy Chase, Slide Morgan spent a contented hour. Then the problems from which he had fled when he rode north to the Niobrara with Partridge Geer began to creep back.

Nowhere in his life had he ever seen anything so beautiful as Nancy Chase appeared to him now. He was glad that it was pay-day, so that Cork Walters was in Roaring River. It was a supreme privilege for him to sit here with just Talky and Nancy Chase, basking in the light of this girl's eyes. For a time this was enough.

Then suddenly the full force of the problem he confronted surged over him, gripping him by the throat. For a moment there was a sinking sickness in the pit of his stomach as he realized that he was beaten again, this time without so much as the privilege of lifting his hand in his own behalf.

But this time he knew that he was equal to the test. Subtly, without realizing it, in his days on the prairie he had become master of himself and, having won to this, was master of all things. He did not realize this now, but he found himself calm and ready and knew what he must do. An iron turned in his heart at the thought of not seeing Nancy Chase again, but even as it twisted, his old easy grin was on his face, and his voice went on unchanged.

"This boardin' house keeper," he related, "was named Owl Nose, an' he was one o' these fellers with a mustache that looks like it was always goin' to make him sneeze the next minute. Well, Snigger O'Grady got the notion that Owl Nose was warmin' over pancakes on us, an' dishin' 'em up from the day before. O'Grady was called Snigger because when he first came there he gave out that he was called 'Trigger' back where he come from, an' the boys played like they misunderstood him.

"So one mornin' Snigger stuck a lot o' toothpicks in the pancakes that was left over on the platter. Next day, come

breakfast, old Pop Smithers bites into a toothpick first thing.

"Pop r'ars right up. He yips, 'I gotta have the *boneless* flapjacks fer *my* breakfast,' an' he grabs Owl Nose by the neck—"

"What did I tell yuh?" Talky chuckled, turning to Nancy. "Any place where Slide Morgan is, is jest bound to be different from any place else yuh ever see!"

Well, it must soon be over. He drank in the sight of Nancy while he could. His memory of her as he saw her now would have to last a long time; clear through to the end, most like. He dreaded to have the evening come to an end; but when they at last had said good night he climbed the ladder to the loft humming a song.

"What tune is that?" Talky asked.

And Morgan sang some of the words, lightly and gaily, though he thought that something was going to let go within him.

"Wall-eyed cayuse, mean as mean can be—
Go kick the foreman, stay away from me!"

He pulled off only his boots and crawled into Cork Walters' bed. Talky undressed, and presently blew the lantern out. For a long time Slide lay awake, listening to Talky Peters' regular breathing. Suddenly Talky spoke out of the dark, surprizing him, for he had believed the other man asleep.

"You ain't goin' back on me, Slide, are yuh?"

"Shore not, Talky, I'd never do that."

Slide knew that he lied. By the time the sun was up again Talky would know it. Peters would think the rest of his life that Morgan had gone back on him, had failed to play up; that made it tough, but there was no help for it. What he was going to do was best for all concerned. They would never understand, but that was a good thing, too—

In the solid darkness an hour before dawn Slide climbed down the ladder, his boots in his hand. At the last he weakened, and left a note for Talky, stuck to the frying-pan with bacon grease. Then he saddled the shaggy, indifferent horse and rode away in the soft muffle of new-fallen snow.

IT WAS only the middle of the morning, and Sunday morning at that, but by good fortune Slim's bar was open. It being the morning after pay-day, Slim could not afford to miss the chance of gathering in any stray gentry of thirst who might be stirring before the opening of the Happy Chance bar.

At Slim's smeared counter Morgan stood and drank sparingly. A single blear-eyed customer had been there when he came in, drowsing at a back table as Slide once had drowsed in the same place; but this man was gone and, except for the morose Slim, Roaring River seemed completely devoid of life.

As Morgan slowly sipped his liquor his eyes watched the façade of the Happy Chance. Somewhere behind it Abner Cade lay. That the man was alive he had learned from Slim. Only the day before, the cattleman had been seen to step out of the Happy Chance, which he still owned, to spend a few moments in the sunshine of the street.

When Cade learned that Morgan was across the street in Slim's bar he would come after him. There was no shadow of doubt about that. He would come if he had to be carried.

Slide looked forward to this eventuality coolly, but with a pleasurable thrill of anticipation. There were advantages, after all, in having no future. It enabled a man who had a fight on his hands to drink before breakfast without qualms, and enjoy the situation properly, without troubling himself as to the result. If something had gone out of Morgan it had taken fear with it. He was more like himself on this quiet Sunday morning, as he waited for Abner Cade, than he had been for many a long moon.

The beautiful part of it was that he had only to wait. Presently some friend of Cade's would notice him and bear the word, and action would begin. There was no doubt that the immunity he had borne while he had lived in Slim's Place

was gone now that Abner Cade was able to take notice of things again.

Probably Cade's aim would not be up to its usual pitch. But then neither was his own; for while he could now use his right hand to lift his drink with, his gun still swung on his left side, and it would be his slow left hand which he would have to use. These things lent elements of interesting variation to what promised to be a pointblank gun fight.

The door of the Happy Chance pushed open, and a figure slid out. The man swaggered casually across the street, apparently merely an early riser, headed for the only open bar. But once he was inside he strode swiftly to Morgan's side. Slide confronted a small man with weak, watery eyes, but a face lined and leathery. A chew of tobacco distended one clean-shaven cheek.

"Yo're Morgan," said the man at once, "ain't cha?"

"Check," said Slide.

"I'm Cork Walters."

"I've heard the name," Slide acknowledged, extending his left hand.

Cork went on in a low mumble, leaning close.

"I slept in the room next to Abner Cade's, an' jest now woke up. They're gangin' up on yuh over there."

"Good," said Slide. "Hardly expected them to get word so early."

"I jest thought yuh ought to know," Cork explained. "Cade's got fellers with him that'll back him up. I wouldn't put it past 'em to shoot two-three at once, if yuh nailed Cade. I dunno how you look at them things. But if it was me, I kind o' believe I'd put this off until I could run into this feller alone. I'd ride."

"I don't hardly believe I will," Slide answered. "Mebbe I can show 'em where they're kickin' it out with the wrong mule."

"Well," Walters apologized, "I jest thought I'd mention it, seein's there's goin' to be five-six against one."

"Thanks anyway," said Morgan.

"There's another slant to this gang business," said Cork Walters suddenly, and with that he hurried out and ran back across the street to the Happy Chance.

Five minutes passed. A scrawny-necked man with snaggly teeth and a dirty tobacco-stained mustache let himself in inconspicuously, puttered along the bar, and finally took up a position at the rear. The man who had sat at the rear table when Morgan first appeared now returned and ordered a drink, standing at the end of the bar nearest the door. Then more came, wandering across in groups of twos and threes, until a dozen men were lounging at the tables, or leaning against the bar.

Slim looked at Morgan curiously, and his fat face seemed to pale a little as he surveyed this record-breaking assemblage. But he hurried up the ordered drinks, making the most of the circumstances before trouble broke—

ACROSS the street, in a square room in the second story of the Happy Chance, a flat-chested youth with a nervous face was fumbling with a gun belt, and chattering in a distracted, pleading voice.

"Fer Gawd's sake, Mister Cade, leave some one do this fer yuh! Leave me do it, leave anybody! It ain't in reason—"

A smoldering cigaret trailed from his lower lip as if glued there; it flicked up and down, forgotten, beating time to the young man's almost hysterical jabbering.

Abner Cade sat motionless on the edge of his bed. His peculiarly light eyes, with their sagging lower lids, stared out from their dark hollows with so little expression that the eyes of the young man dropped whenever they turned to his.

Since last he had been seen outside of Roaring River, Cade had changed almost beyond recognition. His muscular cheeks had wasted and sunk, and even his lips had paled to a ghastly gray. The grim solidity of his body, too, was gone, revealing a great, bent frame, gaunt and stooped under a burdening weight that was not there. He spoke in a husky murmur that somehow still carried a faint suggestion of ballasting rock.

"Put on the belt," he told the young man.

The gun belt was passed very gently about Cade's motionless body; the two parts of the buckle rattled together with the trembling of the youngster's hands.

"Mister Cade, yuh can't make it! You mind what the doc said. A feller with a stummick wound don't dast make a quick move. One quick move, he says, an' ever' thin' inside tears out in one rush. Jest one quick move—"

"Sling on that iron," came the low husky voice.

Very gently the youth eased the heavy six-gun into the holster; only the faintest change showed in Cade's face as the belt dragged against his waist. The youngster almost sobbed.

"We all know yo're game, Mister Cade! Ever'one knows yuh ain't scared! If you'd only jest stay quiet, in a few days—"

"Help—me up."

"Mister Cade, fer the love o' Gawd!"

Cade's fingers gripped the young man's arm and, giving up at last, the other raised the great gaunt figure until the wounded man stood on his feet. Slowly, step by step, they made their way out the door; along the hall, down those narrow, creaking stairs, through the deserted bar of the Happy Chance.

FROM his position at the bar in Slim's Place, Morgan's eyes wandered past the dirty glass in the front window to the door of the Happy Chance. It was swinging open, now.

Calmly, with almost the detachment of a man apart, Slide watched that door open. Through it Abner Cade was coming, slowly, steadily, one arm across the shoulders of the flat-chested young man. In a few moments, now, Slim's place would reek with gun smoke—

The voice of the snaggle-toothed man snarled in the back of the room.

"Box R men keep yore hands above yore belts! I'm in the lookout chair, here, an' I got seven men backin' Cade's play!"

Instantly there came the sound of a smashing blow, and that man's breath whistled through his teeth. There was a shuffle of swift movement, quick, harsh voices, the crash of an overturned chair, then a single voice, speaking in the sudden hush.

"Lookout chair's changed hands! Boys, keep them reptyles against the wall where they belong!"

A swift glance over his shoulder gave Slide a confused impression of shouldering men, the glint of guns, hands raised by men who backed against the walls, and the swift grin of Cork Walters as Slide met his eye. In one astonishing moment of action the Box R men, routed out of their bunks by Cork Walters, had made their play and taken the upper hand.

"Fightin' fools," breathed Morgan, "old fightin' fools!"

The slow beat of his heart quickened to a lifting pound. The situation was changed now. A moment or two before, he had been a man without future, nor friends, nor hope. The implacable destiny that had seemed to dog his trail throughout the year that was past had lain heavily upon him, so that he had stood inertly, spiritlessly, as he waited for this final meeting with Abner Cade.

But about him now were men who wrote their own destinies, never hesitating to pit themselves against stacked decks in a game that seemed lost.

Half-way across the broad street, moving slowly to save his strength, yet coming steadily as an inescapable doom, was Abner Cade. He leaned upon the slight young man as upon a staff. Slide noticed how wasted Cade was, how the look of granite had slipped away from the shoulders of the wounded man. Yet Morgan was not thinking about that. He had suddenly come into the knowledge that there is no final defeat while a man still lives. He knew that when the moment came to draw he would put every ounce of nerve that he possessed into the single movement that would be his bid for life.

The flat-chested youth thrust the door open, then leaped aside to be out of line,

and was seen no more. In the doorway loomed Abner Cade. Morgan seemed to see only the eyes of the man, sagging, curiously light eyes that stared out of their dark hollows steel-hard, unchanged.

Slide stepped out from the bar that was deserted now, since all pressed close to the walls, and with his left hand hanging loose at his side he waited, alone in the middle of the room while no one moved.

Thus they faced each other at last, the man who desired this meeting above all things, and the man who had avoided it for so long; and their eyes met and locked, holding each other for a moment that seemed unnaturally long to the many who watched, waiting for the crash of the guns.

Abner Cade's hand flashed to his gun, a short, two-inch movement only, for the holster hung ready to his hand and Slide, with a mad grip and jerk, snatched out his own gun and fired.

The sound of the single shot roared in the close room, followed instantly by the smashing report of the other gun. Then, while the air still rang with the explosions there was another sound, muddled, ineffectual—the sound a man makes as he slumps inertly to the floor.

Through the pungent powder smoke Slide stared down at the limp figure of Cade unbelievingly, for he was sure that he had missed.

"Yuh got him," said Cork Walters at his elbow.

"No, he shot wild," said some one else; "there's a hole in the windy pane."

Some one was turning Cade over; the limp figure was hidden by stooping men.

"Deader'n ——," said a voice presently; and another, "He sure is."

Then at last, the voice of some one else: "He ain't hit at all! Somethin' must 'a' let go inside—"

But the irony of Cade's inner death was lost upon Morgan, for his mind was numbed by the shock of his release from a struggle that had seemed to be without end. He strode around the body of his enemy to the door and the men there stood aside to let him pass.

CHAPTER XXIV

CONCERNING TALKY PETERS

AS MORGAN rode west out of Roaring River he met Talky Peters face to face on the trail.

"Well, thank Gawd!" swore Talky when they were within speaking distance. "I was afeared you'd took to the tall grass!"

"Talky," said Slide, "yo're too late. The bother's over already, before breakfast even."

"Didja get him?"

"No, I missed him. I slung the widest, craziest shot yuh ever see. But jest as he threw down on me he quillwheeled, and his shot went in the floor. I never was so surprized in all my born days."

"The strain must 'a' popped somethin'," Talky supposed. "I ain't amazed. Shot up like he was, the wonder is that he ain't fell over before. Everybody said they never see such a man."

"Well, it's over, anyway."

"I shore am glad o' that," said Talky, but he did not sound as if he had been worried about that alone. He hesitated, as if he had mislaid what he was about to say, and there passed several moments of uneasy silence.

"Well," said Morgan at last, "guess I'll be ridin' on."

"Where to?" asked Talky dully.

"Oh—over the divide—some place—"

"Slide," said Talky suddenly, "you got to go back there!"

"Back where?"

"Why, back to Hickory Lookout. Nance—"

Morgan opened his mouth to speak, then shut it again. His face reddened, but he held himself in check, and steadied his voice before he spoke.

"If they's one man in the world," he said at last, "that ought to understand why I can't stay where Nancy is, you ought to be him."

"I understand all about that, Slide," Talky said thinly, "an' that there point is the whole sum an' substance o' this thing. I know jest how you look at it,

but I reckon you don't know how the land lays as well as I do, that's all."

Talky's persistent obtuseness angered Morgan unreasonably, so that he flared up.

"I can give you a few pointers yet," he ripped out. "There's things I never told you about this, an' that you ain't got no more idee of than a jackass out in the corral!"

"Ye-es?" drawled Talky. "I reckon not."

"You reckon not, do yuh?" Slide blazed. The tension of his emotions was too much for him, and his reserve snapped. "You reckon not? Well, I'll jest give yuh a thing or two to chaw on, if yuh want to be so —— bullheaded! I never told yuh how come I killed Lew Cade, but I'm tellin' yuh now! It was because I run on to Nancy in Lew Cade's arms!"

He had expected this to be a lash in the face for Peters, and in his present savage mood he did not care. But to his utter loss Talky looked back at him unmoved.

"Yeah," he answered, "she told me about that."

"She told yuh?"

"You understood me correct," said Talky.

Slide hesitated a moment, taken aback; then he rushed on:

"An' you set there on that horse, knowin' that I killed this man—right as he stepped out o' her arms—an' yuh know I'm wild ravin' crazy about this same girl, an yuh know how she must think o' me—" he was leaving Talky Peters out of the question for the moment, but in his anger at the perversity of the man he did not care—"an' yo're tellin' me I should go back there an' live where she is! Well, yuh got a —— sight less understandin' than I give yuh credit for, that's all! There's no point arguin' with yuh. I'm leavin'. If yuh can't understand nothin', you'll jest have to set there in a stupor an' take things as they come!"

His legs pressed the horse's barrel and the animal moved forward; but Talky seized the reins, close to the bit.

"Listen a minute," Talky suggested. He was grinning faintly at the other, ironically and without humor.

"I'm sick o' listenin'."

"You got the case wrong," Talky pursued. "She wasn't playin' Lew like you thought. He grabbed her, that's all."

"He what?"

"He grabbed her. Seemed to me, to hear her tell it, she was kind o' grateful to you fer gettin' her loose."

Slide stared blankly. An old nightmare had been taken out of his life so suddenly that he felt as if the ground had been knocked from under him.

"Talky, you ain't lyin'?"

"Why the —— should I lie about it?"

"Well," he said at last, the anger gone out of him, "that's somethin'."

"Somethin'," Talky mocked him. "Yeah, I reckon that's somethin'."

"It don't change the main point, though— You leave go that bridle!"

"She read that note yuh left fer me," Talky remarked indifferently.

"You showed her that—"

"The one sayin' yuh was wild crazy about her, in case yuh forget what it said," Talky amplified.

"You didn't have no right—" Slide raved.

"When she found out you'd left a note, she 'lowed she had a right to see what it said," Talky told him. "An' after thinkin' on that some I reckoned mebbe she did."

Morgan glared at the slender man, speechless.

"It didn't have no more effect," Talky went on, "than a crate o' dynamite, set off on a dark night on the edge o' the main herd."

"What," Morgan heard himself saying, "what did she say?"

"She didn't say nothin'," Talky answered, and his eyes smoldered for the first time. "She cried."

"She—what?"

"You heard me!" Talky rasped savagely. "She cried! You made her cry, yuh hear? I'm proud o' you, I am!"

"I—" Slide began.

"Yes, I, I, I!" Talky raged. "You've used that word enough! I've come after yuh to send yuh back there, an' back yo're goin' to go! Or else yo're a whole —— sight lower thing than Abner Cade had any idee of. An' one other thing, Mister Man— Right now yo're up against a feller that ain't goin' to keel over, like some, at jest the first sound o' yore gun!"

Slide sat and looked back at Talky Peters, and as he did so he saw their relationship in a new light. It meant nothing that his old friend was reviling him; he saw only that his friend, not himself, was a beaten man, futureless, adrift, whose only remaining purpose was that Nancy Chase should have the thing she desired, regardless of himself. They had ridden a long way together, these two, fighting, dodging, contriving devices, and in all that time it had been Morgan's iron that was in the fire, not Talky Peters'. And now that their ways parted, it was Talky who faced the long prairie trails alone.

It seemed to Slide that he could not now desert this man who had never turned away from him. He knew well enough that there was no room for them both at the Arrow C camp.

"Talky," he said, "I'm not goin' back. It wouldn't be right fer me to go."

"You got to!"

"No, not in a million years."

But in the end he went.

HE WAS clean-shaved and wearing new clothes, and the lathered horse he dismounted before the Hickory Lookout cabin was the best horse that money would buy in the neighborhood of Roaring River. Slowly, with controlled hands, he slacked off the cinch and dropped the loop of the reins upon the hard-trampled snow. He walked to the door and knocked, and heard Nancy's voice call—

"Come!"

He opened the door, then stopped and stood in the opening, his shoulder against the jamb. Nancy Chase stood facing him; she leaned against the table behind her, her hands resting on its edge. For a long time neither moved, nor spoke.

TALKY PETERS, riding southward alone, didn't look just as he did when he first met Morgan, for his wound was not thoroughly healed. But some of his old cocksure nonchalance was in his face again, and it was Morgan's own careless saddle song that he hummed as he rode:

"Easy swing, easy slide,
Easy eat, easy ride,
Let the leather in the saddle take the wear—

Easy come, easy go,
Spend it fast, get it slow,
One place is like another—anywhere—"

The Camp-Fire

A free-to-all Meeting-Place *for* Readers, Writers *and* Adventurers

OUR Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The spirit *of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.*

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

AS STATED in our last issue, there has been splendid response from readers to our request for opinions and suggestions on the "new" *Adventure*. In order to get the benefit of the response as soon as possible, one of the staff assembled the letters as soon as a sufficient number had reached us and made an analysis and summary of their contents. These letters had of course already been read by various members of the staff, but we wanted the total and exact vote in black and white. Your letters are still coming in, even at this writing, and are getting equally careful attention, but these later ones are not covered in the present report.

This report was passed on not only to the publisher but to the Advertising,

Circulation and Promotion Departments and has been carefully studied by them. It is given here exactly as it was given to them except that where we have listed, in two places, the suggestions made we have deliberately changed the order so that it is no longer based on the number of readers making various suggestions. The suggestions were made by you for our own magazine, they give valuable information and guidance and we don't see why we should share this information and guidance with all other magazines.

Even with the letters and summary in our hands it is not always easy to draw the perfectly correct conclusion in every case. The degree of feeling, as well as the number of votes, must be considered. There is one class of readers that never writes to any magazine, even *Adventure.* There are some psychological factors, like habit, to be considered. In a certain few puzzling cases the actual sales of a magazine do not bear out the expressed verdict of its readers. Serials, for example. It seems to me that, out of every five people you ask, four will express themselves as strongly opposed to serials in general. Yet it is a many times demonstrated fact that serials sell a magazine—that people do read them and do want them. For years and years on the question of serials in general *Adventure's* own readers have spoken strongly in the negative, yet during all this time our carefully kept record of readers' opinions shows that our serials have individually scored heavy favorable votes. Hugh Pendexter, who for years past until this year hasn't written anything but serials has always ranked at the very top or close to it.

You've given Gordon Young similar ranking and most of it has been from serials. Mundy, Friel, Tuttle, Lamb and others suffer no falling off in your vote when they give us a serial instead of a novelette. Be honest with yourselves now, you old readers, and tell me, when you look back over all the stories you've read in *Adventure,* don't you find that the serials are very thick among those you've marked down as your favorites?

The answer to it all is that you—and I—object to reading part of a story and then having to wait until the next issue before we can go on with it. It isn't the length we object to, but the breaking up into parts, the delay in finishing the story. But what's the remedy? It's not so easy to find as it may seem.

A serial is essentially a book-length story. No author can afford to ignore the chances of book publication, not only because of direct profit from book sales, but also because of the added prestige and the much improved chances for the sale of motion picture, dramatic and foreign rights. Roughly speaking, book publishers, for very practical reasons, have set 80,000 words as about the *minimum* for book-length. There you are. A large part of fiction output is bound to be stories of 80,000, 100,000 or more than 100,000 words.

Further, an author's best work is likely to be his book-lengths. If he tries to get a collection of short stories into book form, he finds that the publishers have learned from experience that it's too poor a publishing chance—people generally won't buy them. Generally he isn't able to sell anything to book publishers, or even to write book-length at all, until he had served his apprenticeship on shorter stories and thereby increased his skill. I don't mean that a writer of shorts may not be as good as a writer of longs, nor that a short story is in itself in any way inferior to a long one. I'm just talking averages. And, on the average, writers put their more mature work into book-lengths. So in serials we have embodied not only a large part of our fiction supply but also a distinctly quality part of it. No reader, publisher or editor can afford to brush them aside.

Some of you suggest running serials complete in one issue. That in itself is fine. But for every word of the serial you add you will have to take out a word of something else. I can already hear the kicks. The total amount of reading would not be diminished, but people like variety as well as quantity.

For years we've found that 50,000 was about the most we could allow to a complete novelette without destroying the balance of the issue, crowding out other items and generally harvesting displeasure from our readers.

At present we're hearing from the anti-serial readers. But if we were to abolish serials and run 60,000 to 110,000 word stories complete in an issue we'd at once begin catching it from others of you.

So it's not so easy to solve the serial problem.

Nor is it ever easy to please all readers. In fact, it can't be done. It's to our interest to do so, but the best any one can hope for is an approximation. We'll do the best we can, and your suggestions and opinions are a mighty help.

Not covered specifically in the report, but noteworthy, is the fact that the departments received nearly twice as many favorable mentions as did the fiction.

I think nothing in the following needs further explantion except that the meaning of "blurbs" should perhaps be added. Blurbs are the things said about stories on the cover, on the contents page, along with the heading or in "Trail Ahead." In *Adventure's* case we try to make them explanatory, introductory and such as to present the story attractively, but we've made it a set policy not to use them for praising our own wares. Incidentally, if there's anything in the office that every member of the staff hates above all other jobs it is the writing of blurbs. Not because we object to them, but because they look so easy and are so amazingly hard to do satisfactorily.

READERS' REACTIONS TO THE "NEW" *ADVENTURE*

The following is a very general digest of letters concerning the "new" *Adventure*. Letters examined came in both before and after the new magazine appeared, but are so similar in spirit and in the type of comments on the changes that they are all included in this report, which may serve to give a general idea of our readers and their reactions to our magazine. No letters from authors are included. Other letters have arrived or been collected since tabulation was made and letters are still coming in. This is therefore a report on incomplete returns made now to give us an early understanding of our readers' reactions.—J. M. C.

LETTERS received from our readers who have seen the "new" *Adventure* indicate that 75% of the readers approve of the magazine. Most of the remaining 25% of the letters are the result of loyalty to the old magazine and sentiment for it and make no real objection to new appearance. Letters received before the change were mainly in two groups; some readers approved the change because they felt that our appearance was a handicap, and some liked us the way we were but would read us even if we did have a better make-up. All want the same kind of stories as before.

A large proportion of the letters were merely letters of congratulation, but some specific features were mentioned often enough to deserve mention.

Cover

75% like the cover, although 80% of those who wrote in before it appeared expected to dislike it. One man acknowledged his mistake!

Suggestions: (Not in order of number of times suggested.)

Double rule border around cover.
Heavier stock.
Omit blurbs.
Don't feature any story.
List all stories on cover.

Advertisements

More suggestions were made on advertising than on any other subject. Our readers are intensely interested in the development of *Adventure's* advertising policy.

Some people are alarmed lest advertisements dictate policy, but the majority are in favor of more advertisements.

Suggestions. (Not in order of number of times suggested.)

Select strictly for *Adventure* readers.
Guarantee advertised products.
Keep advertisements separate from rest of book.
Classify.
Enlarge Camp-Fire and A. A. Keep main departments where they now are and run extra material between advertisements. (Only 2 letters.)
Run between stories in body of book. (Only 2 letters, one from an advertising man; the other advocates this only because he wants to bind stories separately and interspersed advertisements would facilitate this.)

Note that *almost every mention* asked that advertisements be kept separate. Sometimes this was the only thing mentioned. Even in the four suggestions that advertisements and reading matter be mixed stories were to be kept individually entire, not run with turnovers into the advertising pages.

Distrust of advertisers, both as to the reliability

of their products and as to their dominating the magazine, is strongly apparent. Some of our readers are afraid that advertisers will dictate our policy; more hope that at last they will be able to trust advertisements in a magazine. They feel that we have always been reliable and honest and will continue to be so. Several of them suggested the idea of "Straight Goods" department, which was already being worked up by us.

HERE are excerpts from several letters, showing the general trend of thought on the advertising question. (See also letters under "Straight Goods.")

Before seeing new magazine.

(excerpt) St. Johns, Newfoundland.

I am interested in your editorial about the changes that are shortly about to occur in *Adventure*, and I feel that she'll sell better with more clothes—or better clothes on—notwithstanding the fact that the less you wear these days the more popular you are!! You ask for ideas from readers—I think:

ADVERTISING. I should like to see you get all the big sporting goods, outfitting—such as mining and trapping—and all firms who sell to out-of-doors people; not forgetting that a goodly portion of our readers are interested in the home life as well. There are also a big lot of lady readers—who are like "X" the unknown quantity—and who read the mag. in secret. One could use headings for the various advertisers, *i. e.* sporting goods, one or more pages, as per length of advertisement. There is one thing which I should not like to see changed, and that is—the RIGHT idea you have of keeping the advertising separate from the FICTION. To my mind that is the —— nuisance with your American publications—you start a story—and you are from the first page to the last in finishing it—due to the fact that some advts. of the class of STACOMB are running in on the fiction every half page or so. This is one thing an English publication usually avoids—they have that to their credit—even if their fiction is somewhat slow at times!!

. . . I trust that you will take the MEAT out of this jumble, excusing mistakes, etc. I am a busy man these days—running a "one-man business" is surely no joke—when you are everything from the ground up!!

Assuring you of my deepest interest ALWAYS in anything pertaining to the old magazine, which I hope will be always delightfully different from present-day "slush," Best regards —F. L. M.

Hibbing, Minnesota.

So the old magazine is to have a new buckskin suit! We can look for a lot of improvements, but they will have to be minor ones, as she's a pretty good book now, and you are asking for our opinions. Well, here's mine.

Better paper is of course to be desired so long as it isn't that eye-tiring calendered surface. Larger and more "Camp-Fire" sounds fine. I hope you aren't going to split up the stories and make us turn to page 212 at a critical moment nor make us hunt a trail among the ads. That sort of stuff prejudices me against both text and advertising. I like coffee and I like tobacco, but darned if I want 'em mixed. Since you are going in for ads of outdoor stuff wouldn't it be a good thing to have the things advertised recommended by the magazine or its experts? A new pack outfit, for instance, that had the approval of the A. A. and the Camp-Fire gang couldn't ask for better advertising. And your proposed book department listens good. Are you going to confine your book talks to new ones or are you going to include the old standbys that lots of us haven't met yet? The A. A. folks have often given some good book valuable if unpaid boosts and I don't think the magazine has ever suffered from it. I don't know anything about advertising ethics, but sometimes it seems to me that some periodicals go too darned far in their efforts to keep out all publicity unless it has the approval of the auditor. Sounds mean and penny pinching, and *Adventure's* ideals are too big and fine to start anything like that.

Another thought about advertising occurs to me. I'll bet that there isn't another magazine that is treasured the way *Adventure* is. When you find an earnest "fan" you usually find that he has a lot of old ones that have some especially appealing yarn or back-end stuff he doesn't want to lose. If your new advertisers recognize that they won't be putting in this "Buy now, only thirty days left" stuff, but will offer things whose quality and price will be the same several years hence. I answered an ad once in a two-year-old *Adventure* and had my check returned with the information that the article had advanced 50c and would I please send a new check? I did, like ——. Such folks ought to study the sheepherder's Bible more.

The various "outdoor" magazines are nothing but trade papers, to my notion. Who gives a darn how James Jameson caught his trout or shot his wannigan or whatever it was? Imagine how the average hunting story would sound in "Camp-Fire"! Wouldn't it get the horse-laugh? But a combination of *Adventure* with the advertising that appeals to its readers will be unbeatable. But why you folks waited sixteen years is a mystery to me. Guess *Adventure* has been considered a sort of by-product, when really it deserves its own plant.

Don't change the cover. That word "Adventure" with its peculiar type is your trade-mark and we readers can spot the magazine from quite a distance. And of course there is only praise for the pictures. I've seen more than one shack papered with them, and have stuck up some myself. And the doo-dads —no, I mean dingbats; it always amuses me to see how cleverly they fit in, and it must keep somebody busy pawing over the collection to pick out the right one. I for one would miss them but I imagine they must be a lot of bother to you. So if you throw 'em out, I shall sigh, but consider it all for the best.

With best wishes and highest anticipations.—C. E. R.

(excerpt) Philadelphia, Pa.

I have but one suggestion in the matter of advertising content and arrangement. You are quite right in your opinion of what type of "ad" will be most appealing to the reader of your magazine—that which supplies him with the only information *Adventure* now lacks—where such goods and services as are spoken of in your stories may be obtained. But, as one who has his issues bound, I hope you can arrange to have the "ad" material distinct from the remainder of the paper, so that in binding it can be removed.—J. A. E.

(excerpt) San Francisco.

ADVERTISEMENTS: Select these as carefully as you do your stories and with the same standards of selection. We of the Camp-Fire are a sort of big family and I know you wouldn't want to hand us a bum steer. Just give us the assurance that your advertisers are carefully investigated before being admitted to your columns. We'll buy their stuff if you say it's O. K.—R. S. J.

(excerpt) New York City.

I have only one thing to say, but I feel very strongly on this subject. Please keep advertising in the advertising pages; let the text of the magazine and the advertisements be absolutely separate both physically and in policy.—W. C. W.

After seeing new form.

(excerpt) La Jolla, Calif.

(Suggest) that you put about ten pages of advertisements in the back and front of the book. That these advertisements be limited to those firms who cater to the vital needs of hunters, explorers and wilderness travelers. That only the firms with the reputation of having the best goods of its kind in the world be allowed within the covers. That these advertisements cover the range of equipment, food, clothing, arms, ammunition, boats, canoes and transportation in general. For instance, firms like Abercrombie and Fitch, Anthony Fiala, Vonlongerke and Antoine, Peterboro Canoe Co., L. L. Bean Co., Ed. Von Hoff, W. W. Greener, Winchester, Savage, Colt, Smith and Wesson, L. C. Smith, Parker, Fox, Remington—ship men like Hand, Alden, Herreshoff, Lawley, Mower,—cars like Dodge, Reo, Buick, Studebaker, Lincoln, Packard—and so on. Things that real men want for real wilderness needs, and that they may bank on in a pinch of life or death as being honest to gosh ALL THERE. I will also add dogs and horse department to this.

I am sure that advertisements of this sort will be a boon to many of your following in out of the way places, and will be a boon to the advertisers. For to be advertised in your magazine will be an honor and an obligation.—D. C. R.

Flushing, L. I.

You are always asking for letters from your readers giving their reactions to any changes you make in *Adventure.*

I do like the new paper, and general arrangement of the magazine.

I do not like the new covers as well as the old ones, but you should know what pays, so I am not finding any fault.

I was bitterly disappointed when you changed from a three times a month to a twice a month schedule. However, I know of one reader who returned to the fold due to that change, so I again admit that you were right.

I know, like most people do, that advertising is the real paying end of the business. But I hope that you will never find it necessary to jump your stories all through the book like some other magazines do. I think that no one minds alternate pages or sheets of reading matter and advertising, but it makes me sore to hunt for the page the story is continued on.

I do not expect an answer.—W. B.

Plattsburg, New York.

A country doctor should be an even-tempered individual, but we do get "mad" occasionally and this is one of the times for me and I am going to write you about it whether you are personally responsible or not.

When you told us about what a wonderful new magazine you were planning I said to myself "Now we will have a magazine whose advertising columns will carry the ads of reliable sporting and supply houses, and not a lot of fakes." How many of the ads in the Nov. 8th issue would appeal to you or any man of intelligence? Personally I would not buy one single thing advertised in your columns as long as there are ads for so many things that I know to be fakes. Why believe any of them? It makes me sick. And then you preach about Idealism! Good ——! I. M.

South Orange, New Jersey.

Congratulations on the new *Adventure!* It's fine. Last month I was tempted to write in some suggestions but I didn't get around to doing it. And now I don't need to. You've kept the binding the same, without staples, so that it's easy to hold open with one hand, and you've thrown out a lot of questionable advertisements.

I hope you will be able to hold out for a high grade of advertisements, as reliable as the rest of the magazine; of such a grade that there will be no hesitancy in sending money across country to any of them.

It took me just a moment or two to find out something missing in "*Adventure's* Best Stories—1926." There was no "Camp-Fire." But of course, with the very formal appearance of the stories in book form, there couldn't be a real "Camp-Fire." Anyhow, here's hoping the book draws more readers to Our Magazine.—W. G. H.

MAKE-UP

16 to one in favor of the new make-up in general.
About even in regard to having dingbats in or out.
"Trail Ahead" approved.
Contents page about 50-50—some thought the type on it too loud.

Suggestions: (In order of number of times suggested.)

Same type for running head throughout.

Trim pages.

Substitute fillers for old-style tailpiece; new tailpieces approved.

STORIES

Generally approved. One man objected to all stories in Oct. 23 issue.

Ten specific praise of stories in Oct 23rd issue.

All other letters take it for granted that we are going to use the same kind as before.

Praise mainly for Nason, Mundy, Pendexter, Adams, Tuttle, Lamb, Burtis, Gordon Young, Friel, in order named.

A few slams also at Mundy and Adams.

FILLERS

New type of fillers approved.

SERIALS

Eight to one against serials. One man's only kick on the new magazine, in a letter of congratulation, was that it had two serials.

Many of our readers apparently like to have their stories all at once.

Mobile, Alabama.

Permit me to say a word in regard to the new, or rather the issue of Oct. 23rd. I believe that you will agree the average man does not like serial stories, and also that fully 75% do not read them. However, in spite of this fact you are running two serials, consuming about fifty pages, which is that much "dead wood" to the majority of your readers.

Why can't you run one full-length story in one issue to use, say, from ninety to a hundred pages, and then others from ten to twenty-five pages? This arrangement I am sure would meet with the approval of all readers.

The last issue of the *Adventure* is simply following the "played-out" system of the majority of the weekly and monthly magazines.

WHY?—E. C. B.

Eaton's Ranch, Wolf, Wyo.

I miss the old covers, they were almost always good work and really interesting, and the covers now have no individuality at all; they might be on *Harper's* or *Scribner's*.

I do not like *two* serials, one is enough—too much. I do not want *any* to run more than three copies, they are so hard to remember, but I find I can enjoy a three-part serial.

Anyway I don't care for *these* serials; they are very uninviting. Mr. Young's mystery tales and more especially his Western tales are *very* interesting indeed, but I did not like his former South Sea stories and will not bother to read this. And I am tired of long historical stories, so I pass up the other serial.

The long novelettes are usually very good, and "The Wolf Pack" is exceptionally fine; my mother enjoyed it very much too. I wish we might have a sequel.

I wish Mr. Mundy would forget those old Romans and write some stories in his old vein, of India. "The Tooth of Mohammed" was not a bit interesting, but the others were, some of them, quite absorbing, but the *Tros* stories are awfully heavy, I quit on the second.

Now I have made more criticism than is fair, so I will say I would miss *Adventure* if I stopped it, and have seldom missed a copy since the very first, it and the —— I find the most enjoyable of the fiction magazines. The —— used to be good; of late it has deteriorated.

I always read the "Camp-Fire" and "Replies" and the friendly, familiar tone is very pleasant and agreeable, but I hope you won't feel moved to print *this*.

I always look eagerly for Tuttle, Friel and Burtis in the index, and hope some day Dr. Cochrane's name will be there again.

Sincerely an admirer, though a critic.—(A WOMAN.)

SEX

Five to one are opposed to increasing the woman interest, but most of them think they can trust us not to go too far and not to be sexy and slushy.

PROFANITY

All letters touching this subject were either in favor of the dash instead of cuss-word, or said it didn't matter.

DEPARTMENTS

NEW

Straight Goods—Before magazine appeared, the "Straight Goods" department was suggested, in essence, by half the people who offered advice on advertising. It has not yet been developed enough to get any reader response, although one alarmist objects to it because he is afraid that we are getting graft and will allow advertising to dominate.

Syracuse, New York.

Congratulations and thanks for the good news in the last "Camp-Fire." Incidentally I'm mighty glad to hear *Adventure* is going after advertising of the products we're interested in and as you're incautious enough to ask your readers' reactions to advertising, "here's my sentiments:"

Every now and then I buy some advertised product and mostly I buy in spite of the advertising and not because of it, for instead of facts which help me to form an opinion of said product, I usually find some very general and highly laudatory remarks so absurdly overdrawn as to make me suspect the advertiser to be either a self-deluded fool or a malicious liar. As an example when I read in the ads of six different —— companies controlled by one organization that each of these —— is the best there is, I

feel that undoubtedly five are wrong and probably six, and I'm prejudiced against the outfit in general.

Let's have facts in our advertising: technical data, performance data, structural data and the like, depending on the product—and, above all, prices. It's a mighty strong temptation to elaborate on this—but there's the idea.

Mind, this is no idea for advertising in general but simply for *Adventure's* advertising, as I feel that the readers buy because they like a given product and not simply because most of their acquaintances are buying the same thing. The rule holds good in their reading; why not in their buying?

A suggestion—let's have a department to give us news and opinions of new products. If a manufacturer brings out a new car, gun, boat or what not, let him submit a sample to the expert in that line and then let that expert pass on to us first his technical description of the product and second his personal reaction to it. The idea works with firearms here and with automobiles in England.

It's an attractive idea to me and I believe we would enjoy such articles whether or not we happened to agree with the conclusions the expert drew from his own technical description. I for one would admire to read Donegan Wiggins on a new model automatic pistol.—C. H. L.

Wichita, Kansas.

I am sorry that distance does not permit me to extend my hand along with the hearty congratulations I feel and express following your statement that *Adventure* is to be "dressed up." Could you have seen me when I read your comment, it would have been unnecessary for me to make any statement. My wife asked me, "What's the good news?"

I have, as I have mentioned before, been a consistent reader and booster for *Adventure* since 1913. It is today much better than it ever was and the change should allow "us" to grow by leaps and bounds.

As to the departments, there is very little that I might say. By all means set aside a certain portion of each issue for editorial comments. I can not imagine improvement in the "Ask Adventure" department unless a few more letters might be published. As to "Camp-Fire" I would say let us have more of it, carrying it and the augmented "Ask Adventure" letters in among the advertisements.

I presume that on account of the economy of producing such a magazine you will go into the eight and one-half by eleven size rather than the present size. If such is the case, you will be able then to guarantee every advertisement, regardless of its size, a "Next-to-reading" position. Full-page advertisements would face reading and one and two column advertisements would be so grouped that they would lay alongside of a column of "Camp-Fire" or "A. A." matter.

It might not be practicable—but I feel that it would be an excellent plan if possible—to establish a sort of censorship over the advertisements which we carry by making it necessary for the advertiser to prove to the entire satisfaction of our experts that his commodity is of sufficient merit and his business policy is worthy of the entire confidence of *Adventure* readers. In other words, an item advertised in *Adventure* should be sufficiently recommended by that presentation so that one would buy with confidence.

I have no doubt, and you should have none, that every reader of *Adventure* will give *Adventure* ample credit for every inquiry for orders placed with *Adventure* advertisers. Having been connected with the largest mail-order house in the world and at one time in the newspaper publication business, I know what this means.

This is largely a group of disconnected statements and considerably longer than I had intended it to be, but I have just written these as they occurred to me. In fact I am not sure that I shall not write you again to get some more of this "off my chest."—H. R. L.

Travel Association—

Hasn't been developed enough to arouse much comment.

Two expressions of good-will; no negative votes.

Books You Can Believe—

Approval unanimous, although not many comments made.

Looking About—

More cheers for this than for any other new departmental feature.

DEPARTMENTS

OLD

Camp-Fire—

More Camp-Fire wanted.

Mr. Hoffman's talks generally praised, although several didn't like them.

Special Camp-Fire edition wanted.

Bound Camp-Fire wanted.

Selections from Camp-Fire wanted (for instance Julius Caesar discussions all together.)

People evidently read this department first.

Suggestions—

Column for readers who wish correspondents.

Exchange departments for views, photos and stamps.

Ask Adventure—

More A. A. wanted. Departments on birds, dogs, taxidermy, checkers.

Suggestion—

Longer articles on their subjects by experts requested.

Old Songs—

More wanted. Tunes wanted.

Lost Trails—

Approved as it is.

Class of Readers

By far the larger proportion who wrote to us were men; but several of them said that their wives and children read *Adventure*, too. Almost all of them were old-timers—have read *Adventure* for several years. The letters were tabulated roughly in two groups according to apparent resources, education, standard of living. 70% of the letters came from members of the A group (high ranking). All of them in both groups, whether they were college professors, executives, or wage earners out of a job, consider *Adventure* "our" magazine, and wish for its success *whether or not they approve of the present policy.*

Where Letters Came From

In order of number received from each place:

California

New York City
New Jersey
Ohio

Illinois

New York State

Pennsylvania
Arkansas

Florida
Minnesota
Michigan

Canada

Louisiana
Washington (State)
Connecticut

Arizona
West Virginia
Massachusetts
Oregon
Kansas
Kentucky
Georgia
Wisconsin
Iowa
D. C.
Virginia
Japan (1)

Summary

Our readers are enthusiastic about the magazine. All of them will go on reading it. Although many of them are skeptical about advertising in general, they trust *Adventure*. Most of them are decidedly of the "higher" class. They feel that the magazine belongs to them whether or not it is handsomely gotten out, and are expecting that we will live up to our reputation for honesty, just as they trust that we will run stories as clean and of as high excellence as we always have.

Note—These letters are being held in *Adventure* editorial office and may be examined by any one interested in them.

ONE day last summer a man came to see Gordon Young on business. They were already acquainted and, business over, fell to talking:

Los Angeles.

As we sat by the window watching the birds—my place here is rather a sanctuary—he began to talk of his boyhood. He was born in the northern woods of Michigan, trapped and had every sort of pet imaginable. Just the story of what he did and how. Though there is hardly a flicker of what might be called adventure, in the sense of having run in and out of danger, yet I don't think I ever heard a more interesting story. And I want to do it under the title of "Boyhood," in the first person just as he tells it, and I don't think it will run over 5,000 words; an almost idyllic sort of thing, not at all a boy's story. I am quite sure it can be placed, and I was wondering does it sound at all good to you?

I have had all sorts of people try to offer me their tales, and shy like a nervous horse from such things; this man had no idea that he was giving "copy," and I haven't said a word to him; but how good it was may be judged by the fact that he held my nine-year-old daughter, my wife and myself fascinated for some two hours, and the three of us talked of little else yesterday or today than Mr. ———'s boyhood. As I have said, there is very little "exciting," but it is full of nature lore, and to me seems intensely fascinating. I too in one place and another monkeyed with traps and hunted; but nothing in my memory has in it that warm-hearted magic which this man, in utter simplicity, gives to his story.—Gordon Young.

A second brief letter accompanied the story, or article, when it came to us:

Los Angeles, California.

Here is the story, "Boyhood." All the facts are just as they were told to me by my friend of whom I wrote you.

It seems to me, though I never expect to write another boyhood story, that a series dealing with the various boyhoods in the various parts of the country would make an interesting feature for *Adventure*, for though these would be "fact" stories they would be the sort of fact story that many people would regard favorably.—Gordon Young.

A few of the things told Mr. Young will doubtless be challenged and, if so, Camp-Fire will thresh out these points

and find the right of it. But it seems to me that here is a case in which the picture as a whole is of so much more importance than any question of its details that we can afford to be very lenient in case there is any need of leniency. And what do you think of Mr. Young's suggestion of more boyhood stories from other parts of the world—stories of outdoor boyhoods of course?

THIS letter from fairly well down in our cache goes below the usual surface to some things that are more fundamental. But to "raise the level of our legislatures" we must first raise the level of our citizenship. The only way to do this is by organized effort.

Hockanum, Connecticut.

I am reading with a keen interest all you print about the anti-weapon law controversy and am heartily with you. But why I venture to stick in my oar is this thought: Are not we in danger of attacking a symptom and not the root of the trouble? As I see it, the foundation for much of our legislative blundering is the fact that we are content to have political doughfaces make our laws.

It is an open secret that the Eighteenth Amendment never could have passed had our State and National legislators voted by secret ballot. In other words, our laws are not made by earnest men using their best judgment but by office-boys who are intent on peddling their influence for votes, Soldier vote, Catholic vote, Jew vote, or ministers' vote. Now besides the dishonesty of this I am pretty sure it is stupid as well. The public dearly loves a brave man and if a start could be made by opposing a few of these political vote peddlers by men of personal character I feel confident the doughfaces would discover their game was a losing one.

The government by leagues and associations, whether well intentioned or not, is bad, and though I wish every success to any association striving to repeal these efforts to make men moral and good by law, I would prefer to see a determined effort at raising the level of our legislatures. Less lawmaking and better. We are grinding out thousands of laws a large part of which are useless where not positively harmful.—PEMBERTON CUTLER.

OUR customary biographical sketch to give readers a chance to know more about the men who write our stories:

EDMUND M. LITTELL is one of the fortunate beings who find romance in life as they live it. He says himself that his life has been tame—tame and full of hard work. Raising wheat on a square mile of virgin Canadian prairie—hard work, and hot work, with the prospect of looking at the sky through the branches of a tree as a blessed holiday relief once a week. Business—office work—then steel. And Littell had found his romance.

Here is what he wrote us of it when he sent us his first story that we printed, "The Profaned Shovel," in 1925:

"What has followed men in their penetration of unknown lands? Steel, in the shape of rails and trains, bringing transportation to tie the east and west, the north and the south. What has brought continents close together? Steel, in the shape of floating carriers that defy the elements. What most concerned the nations recently at war? Steel! And what did France do when Germany threatened to cease reparations payments? Seized her most valuable possessions, the Ruhr Valley, where they made—steel! Last, and perhaps seldom thought of in this way, what does every hero and every villain use when he gets into action? Steel, either as a naked blade, a blued bar with a hole drilled in it, or —a shovel!

"Perhaps you can understand why it is that I write about steel, and try to present it in an interesting fashion. This industry supplies the very skeleton of our civilization, yet it is as little thought of as the human framework—until a piece of it gets busted! The observer who sees a fire-marked sky says 'steel mill' without thinking of what it means. He does not see the gigantic work that goes on amid those man-made hells; the thousands of men who labor prosaically in the most spectacular surroundings ever devised by man. These men live and die as others. Their emotions may be dulled by fatigue, or blistered raw by the fires they serve, but they are all of the same stuff as the man who rides the cushioned steel Pullman on the rails they have made."

Even in France during the war Littell worked in steel. As a First Lieutenant in the Air Service he worked in Aircraft Armament, fitting airplanes with machine-guns at Paris and Tours. For five years after the war he worked in steel at Philadelphia, Dayton and New York. Then he resigned and went into the writing game.

Mr. Littell is a preacher's son. He is thirty-seven years old. He is as pleasant to meet as you hope all authors will be. He was married in 1925 on the day before Christmas to Jane Curtis; and they live in Detroit and New York.—J. M. C.

ASK *Adventure*

For *free information* and *services* you can't get elsewhere

Questions and Answers

Accurate Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere

Books you can Believe

Verdicts by Experts on the Authenticity of Current Non-Fiction

Straight Goods

Reports on Tests by Our Experts of Outdoor Equipment and Commodities

Adventure's Travel Association

A Service Organization with Stations and Experts all over the World

Old Songs that Men have Sung

Collecting and Discussing Old Songs still Living among the People

Sea

SAILING down the Atlantic coast in a thirty-three-foot boat. Captain Dingle says that a boat of that size is big enough to sail around the world in.

Request:—"It requires a good deal of sand to take up the time of a man who can grind out the able yarns that you do; but I think a few words of advice from you will be of great help to me, and here goes. I wish to ask your advice about a little trip I have in mind. I will say something of the boat first. She's thirty-three feet over all; about twenty-four feet water-line; ten feet beam; six feet two inch draft. She has five thousand metal on her keel, very little inside ballast for trimming. About fifteen years old; but sound and heavily timbered. Originally built in Maine for fishermen and then converted. No auxiliary power.

I have sailed her one summer around Boston. Darned fast for a cruiser; and I believe able, but

have had no particularly heavy weather to test her.

A pal and I intend to leave Boston next spring, about May 1, to go by leisurely stages southward along the coast. Tentative itinerary: Boston, Plymouth, Provincetown, Cape Cod Canal, Newport, New Bedford, New London, New Haven, Bridgeport, New York; and then still farther, maybe.

My pal knows little of boats, and I will have to watch him pretty close for a few days. I myself: two-three years yachting in very small sailboats: three years before the mast as A. B. in steam; two years deep-sea fishing in Gloucestermen on Gulf of Mexico, Campeche, off Yucatan, etc. Both still young and healthy.

While I am comparatively experienced as seaman, my navigation is another matter. Know rudiments of dead reckoning; familiar with charts; have good sextant and can get meridian altitude for latitude under favorable conditions.

Now for some specific questions:

1. Do you think my boat is seaworthy to take spring and summer trip Boston-New York via Cape Cod Canal?

2. Do you think my sea experience and limited navigation ability sufficient for trip?

3. Boat has only mainsail and jib. Do you think a small leg-o-mutton trisail for a riding sail, set over furled mainsail, would be necessary? Can reef present main down pretty snug.

4. Would you advise making or buying sea anchor?

5. Considering short legs and long stays in each port, are two men big enough crew?

6. On Boston-New York trip is it necessary to run offshore more than ten or twelve miles at any time?

7. Outside of looking at charts, I know nothing of waters Cape Cod Canal to New York. Considering that, together with deep draft (six feet) of boat and no engine, are there any brief, general sailing directions such as imperative DON'TS, you can suggest?

8. If we reach New York by July 1, would it be advisable to run down coast any farther? How far?

9. Is it practical to take such coastwise trip in such a boat by dead reckoning alone, and merely use sextant to impress passing yachtsmen?

10. In extreme case under what conditions do you think craft of this nature would live longest? (a) Hove to under bit of riding sail? (b) Running before it under same? (c) Lying to sea anchor? (d) Taking it under bare poles as sea kicks her around? (e) Or, in water up to twenty fathoms, dropping one hundred and fifty pounds mushroom anchor overboard?

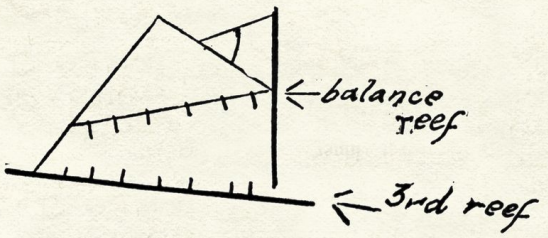
Now, sir, if you will clarify some of these clouds, or if you have any special advice applicable to the case that you might send me, I shall feel very much in your debt. Thanking you beforehand for your trouble and also for many pleasant hours with your deep-water yarns that I have whiled away in more'n one grimy fo'c's'le."—FRED HUNT, Quincy, Mass.

Reply, by Captain Dingle:—It is always a pleasure to answer a letter so specific and clear as yours. At least you know what you want to know. That is something, after getting, as I often do, a diet of queries like this: "How do whales spawn? Will a steel ball dropped into the sea sink to the bottom? Please send me books on all the islands you know about. I am interested in ships. Please send me a picture of the ships you sailed in," *ad infinitum*. These were actually received by me. So your query makes me rear up and give three cheers. I shall reply to your queries in order:

1. Your boat, if sound, is able to take you around the world. A good type. I suppose you know all about the Cape Cod Canal? Have to get a tow through and rather costly. Around thirty dollars for you, I think.

2. Your experience is ample.

3. A better rig than a riding sail (which is just a bit more gear to stow and care for) is to put a balance reef in your mainsail. like this:



4. I have carried a sea anchor for five years and have never used it. However, if you can stow it without much trouble where it is handy without being in the way it may help you at least to feel safer.

5. Two men are plenty. I sail a seventeen-ton schooner in deep water with only one companion.

Coming back to question 3: In case the diagram is not clear, the idea of the balance reef is to get the throat down to the boom, and the gaff almost up and down the mast. You can fit the earring cringle at a suitable distance up the leach, and the reef points run diagonally from there to the throat.

6. You need never be out of sight of land on this trip.

7. On the passage from the Canal to New York there is nothing to bother you. There are plenty of harbors for six feet of draft, and until you get into the East River it is all clear sailing. If you go outside all the way and enter New York from the Ambrose Channel it is all clear with a chart.

8. Reaching New York by July 1st, you could proceed to Florida and back if you wished. If you get back by the end of August there is small chance of meeting anything very troublesome.

9. Such a trip can be made entirely by dead reckoning. If you have a sextant and can use it to get a meridian altitude it would be useful running down the coast, where a knowledge of the latitude may give you confidence in running for port.

10. If you have sea room enough I would say

emphatically get sail off, shut the slide, and let her gambol. I don't think an anchor would be much use without a tremendous scope of roding. If too near a bad shore, you would have to snug her down and trust to her stoutness to claw off under sail. There is little I can tell you. You know boats. Simple care and close attention to the compass and log, the leadline and the leeway ought to carry you through. Luck to you.

South America

A GOOD reason why firearms of certain calibers are not admitted to certain countries with certain unfortunate histories. Gun laws are gun laws.

Request:—"Why is it that no revolvers of larger than .38 caliber are admitted into any South American countries?"—EUGENE E. DE MANDEVILLE, New York City.

Reply, by Mr. Edgar Young:—This old law was put in effect when .41 and .44 caliber carbines—not sure about the former caliber but am of the latter—were the standard guns for revolutionists. Thousands of these guns were used and were owned in Latin America. Many a revolt was won with machetes and these short rifles. The guns were then hidden away for the next fracas. The "ins" could not send all these guns out so they did the next best thing, in their opinion. They made laws forbidding the importation of others larger than .38, which was aimed at the carbines, and also forbid the importation of ammunition that would fit the carbines. It wasn't that they feared so much the importation of single revolvers or rifles, but it was the fear of ammunition getting into the hands of revolutionists. At one time almost all of the Latin republics had such a law and it has been allowed to remain on the statutes up to now when such a law is more or less inoperative in many of them, inasmuch as they have learned to use machine-guns and better weapons than the carbine.

Japan

TEACHING Oriental languages is apparently the one thing that the correspondence schools won't attempt, for which one can hardly blame them.

Request:—"Will you kindly mail me the following information concerning Japan:

1. What is the official name of Japan, in the Japanese language?

2. What is the native nickname of Japan?

3. Is there a nickname for the Japanese flag?

4. What is the national holiday, Flag Day and Constitutional Day (day on which constitution was established) of Japan?

5. What is the national nickname of the Japanese soldiers and sailors?

6. What is the national flower of Japan?

7. What is the name of the national (air) song of Japan? When and where was it composed, and by whom?

8. Who invented the Japanese alphabet, and when?

9. How many words do the Japanese language contain (approximately)?

10. Approximately how many people speak the Japanese language?

11. Is there being published a "general" Japanese language dictionary on the lines of the Oxford English dictionary? What is the name and address of the publisher?

12. Is there a general Japanese encyclopedia, on the principle of the Encyclopedia Britannica? Please give name and address of publisher.

13. Is there a general Japanese history? Please give name and address of publisher.

14. Is there a general Japanese grammar? Give name and address of publisher.

15. Please give brief description of caricature (figure) of the nickname of Japan, as drawn by Japanese cartoonists.

16. Please give me the names and addresses of the principal Japanese (two or three) newspapers and magazines with their circulation.

17. Please give me the name and address of a respectable correspondence school of languages in Japan that teaches Japanese, Chinese, and some of the minor languages of Eastern Asia (Korean, etc).

18. Please name the various political parties of Japan; briefly describe their workings.

19. Do any of the Japanese newspapers, railroads and steamship companies maintain branch offices in the United States?

20. Please give me the address of the American-Japanese Society in Japan.

21. Do there exist in Japan, Franco-Japanese, German-Japanese, Russo-Japanese Societies (and other European nations? Please give list of names).

22. Do the same kind of Societies exist in Europe? (Japan Societies, Japanese-English, Japanese-French, etc.) Please name the cities (capitals) of Europe in which they are located.

23. Please give me the name and address of a newspaper clipping agency in Japan.

24. Please give me the name and address of a newspaper and magazine agency in Japan.

25. Where can I purchase various directories of Japan, such as newspapers, banks, societies of various kinds, commercial, etc.?

26. Whom should I address in Japan to purchase government publications?"—R. E. CURRY, Dallas, Texas.

Reply, by Mr. Small:—If I've not gone into sufficient detail it may be because I'm not certain just which of the questions you are most interested in, and therefore I've given you something on each.

1. The recognized name for Japan in that country is "Nippon."

2. There is no native nickname for Nippon.

3. The Japanese flag is generally called the sun-flag, but it has no nickname as we understand the

word. *Hinomaru-no-hate* means red ball, or the sun.

The war-flag or battle ensign shows a red sun radiating sixteen beams against a white field. The emperor's flag has a gold chrysanthemum on a purple field. There are various other standards.

4. The Japanese constitution was established February 11, 1889, and the 11th of February is a great national holiday. So is October 31st, the "birthday of the Imperial Household." There is no "Flag Day."

5. Soldiers and sailors have no names such as "gob" or "doughboy."

6. The national flower, despite popular belief, is the chrysanthemum, and not the cherry-blossom.

7. The Japanese hymn is the Kimi-ga-yo, written about 1868. I do not know the name of the composer. A translation is:

"A thousand years
Of happy reign be thine!
Rule on, my lord, till what pebbles are
By age unite to mighty rocks
Covered with most venerable moss."

8. There is no such thing as a "Japanese alphabet." If you mean *Romaji*, it has twenty-two letters used in English. Not one Japanese in a million reads it. If you mean Chinese ideographs, there are over forty-seven thousand of them, *Kana*, of which there are four styles, are phonetic, and there are forty-seven of them, easily learned. Books and newspapers are printed in a combination of the last two. Don't know what you mean by "who invented the Japanese language." Kobo-daishi is given the credit for the syllabic writing—a transliteration of Chinese ideographs is really what it is—and did it somewhere in the 9th century. About that time your granddaddy and mine were lucky if they could find a priest to count five beans up to five for them, what? I can give you pages on the history of writing if you want it specially.

9. There are some sixty-eight thousand words in Japanese.

10. About fifty million people speak Japanese or dialects of it.

11. To my way of thinking, the best dictionaries comparable to the "Oxford" are JAPANESE-ENGLISH, published by Sanseido and ENGLISH-JAPANESE, Shiseido, both Tokyo. Orientalia can get them for you. So will any large bookstore. Hepburn's dictionary is a nice pocket-size one. Published in Yokohama.

12. There isn't anything like our BRITANNICA printed in Japan, and if it were it would be in Japanese, naturally. I take it that such a thing wouldn't help. The best I've to offer is "Who's Who in Japan" and "The Peerage of Japan," printed in English, and containing a fund of information. Either may be purchased from the *Japan Gazette*, Yokohama, or ordered from a bookstore.

13. The "History and Geography of Japan," printed in Tokyo, is excellent, and is by E. Papinot. You can get it through Orientalia, in New York City. It comes fairly high. The "Mikado's Empire," Griffis, is also good. This can be bought from Scribners in New York.

14. Despite the early publication date—in the '80s—W. G. Aston's "Grammar of the Spoken Japanese Language," is the real authority. Orientalia have it, and so has the Sather Gate Book Store, Berkeley, Calif.

15. The Japanese haven't any "Uncle Sam." The rulers and nation are not objects for caricature, unless the artist likes jails or six inches of knife wielded by a patriot. The Japanese aren't funny about their government and laws. Here a fellow can thumb his nose at either and get away with it, or kick our Uncle Samuel where his coat tails part, and get away with it, but the Japanese are denied that pleasure in their own land.

16. Do you mean newspapers read by Americans, or the leading *Japanese* newspapers? If the first, *Japan Chronicle*, Kobe, *Japan Advertiser*, Tokyo, or *Japan Gazette*, Yokohama. If the latter, *Asahi*, *Jiji Shimbun*, and *Hochi Shimbun*, all Tokyo, and all with large circulations. Between these is the *Kokumin Shimbun* with an English section. I have no record of their circulations, but the Japanese papers are all over a quarter of a million.

17. I know of no correspondence school teaching Oriental languages. If you are thinking of learning the language, don't, unless you have a mighty good reason for tackling it. I mean really learning it, and not a smattering of the words. It's a job. I know. As for tackling Japanese, Chinese and Korean in a lifetime—here in the States—I'd admire to see it done. I'm not trying to stop nor discourage you; I only want to get across the tremendous job it will prove to be.

18. The political divisions of Japan—Lower House: Kensei-kai, Seiyu-kai and Seijuhondo are the most important; Upper House: Kenkyu-kai and Kosei-kai run the show. You've got to have a knowledge of the entire Japanese government to understand these divisions. They are not like our parties.

19. Nippon Yusen Kaisha maintain offices at 625 Market Street, San Francisco; Railway Exch. Bldg., Chicago; and 120 Broadway, New York. Osaka Chosen Kaisha information may be obtained from NYK or from Southern Pacific or Cook's. Imperial Railways of Japan from Cook's. All Japanese banks have American correspondents in San Francisco and New York. The *Trans-Pacific*—a newspaper, has an office at 1 W. 34th Street, New York City.

20. The address of the America-Japan Society is care of Imperial Hotel, Tokyo.

21. There are no foreigh societies comparable to the above. International organizations have many branches in Japan: League of Nations Association, International Labor Association, et cetera.

22. All of these societies have European offices in all of the capitals, but since you particularly ask for Franco-Japanese Society, et cetera, I am not giving you the addresses of the others.

23. No regular clipping bureau so far as I know—not of Japanese newspapers anyhow. The Trans-Pacific Service Bureau, 18 Yamashita-cho, Tokyo, can answer any question on most any thing, and might possibly supply clippings. The *Trans-Pacific*, by the way (same address) is a great magazine. There is a press bureau called The Argus Clipping Bureau which is supposed to supply clippings from all over the world. They are in New York City.

24. For newspapers or magazines in Japan write Kyo-bun-kwan, 1 Ginza, Kyomachku, Yokyo.

25. The "Japan Directory" is the best you can get. Purchasable from the above or from the *Gazette Press*, Yokohama. Printed every January.

26. The Japanese government have nothing comparable to our printing bureau in Washington, and if they did whatever pamphlets they'd have (or that any department has) would naturally be in Japanese. However, I suggest you write the American Embassy in Tokyo, for information regarding publications of the Imperial Government. If you require them in English, there isn't much use addressing the government. On general information I'd address the America-Japan Society.

Hope I've been able to give you what you want, at least generally.

New Zealand

A SETTLEMENT that is a growing influence for good among the Maori and that would welcome an American negro with mechanical training.

Request:—"What are the restrictions of immigration to New Zealand on the negro race? Has the Ratana organization, at Wanganui, a large following, and what are the principal industries in that section? Would a motor mechanic and scientific agriculturist have a chance of making good in that section? Also, how much money does the Government require for an immigrant to have before he could land?"—G. H. SHERVINGTON, Oakland, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Tom L. Mills:—As an American negro you would not have much difficulty in gaining admission into New Zealand. You must have at least five hundred dollars in your possession, you must have a very clean bill of health, and you must state what your business is. If your objective is to join up with Ratana, then my advice is that you get into direct touch with Ratana himself. His settlement is quite close to Feilding, and I have had his private secretary and some of his executives here in my office. Just now Ratana is planning another trip abroad, but not this year, as he hopes to dedicate and open his new temple at Ratana during this coming Christmastide. His following among the Maoris all over the North Island is growing visibly every month. Ratanaism is an influence for good among our natives. Ratana's executive would welcome you for your knowledge in agriculture and as a motor mechanic. The Maori is naturally an agriculturist, and the modern Maori, especially the thriving Ratana cult, is the keenest of motorists.

Nova Scotia

ONCE in a while reader and expert take turn about and the latter learns something from the former. We are glad to print the correction which appears below:

The statements regarding Nova Scotia, contained in the August 23rd issue of *Adventure*, have been brought to my attention. On Page 190 it is stated that some of the Nova Scotia roads are vile. While this may have been true some years ago, it is not true today.

We have 1,026 miles of trunk roads in Nova Scotia which, from a motoring point of view, are almost perfect. We are informed that they are better than the same class of roads in New Brunswick and Maine, and equal to the roads in Quebec.

Entering Nova Scotia from New Brunswick one has the choice of roads through Parrsboro or Amherst to Truro; from Truro a splendid road to Sydney. The crossing over the Strait of Canso is made by a splendid new ferry called the "Pont de Canseau." Or if the journey is being made to Halifax the road from Truro to Halifax is in perfect condition. From Halifax it is possible to go to Yarmouth through the Annapolis Valley or through Chester along the south shore over roads which are the acme of perfection.

We shall be very pleased if you will correct the statements in your August issue. They were undoubtedly based on incorrect information and may react harmfully to us.—J. F. CAHAN, Assistant Minister of Highways, Nova Scotia.

Reply, by Mr. Bowden:—I hasten to answer to the best of my ability your letter and a number of others, which I have received from your province on the same subject. Apparently my statement is not now true, and I am glad to apologize. . . .

I probably did make it rather strong, but at the time I made it I had in mind a trip I made by auto from Truro to Yarmouth, N. S., in a three-day rain storm in the summer of 1924. At that time I can assure any one who wishes to ask that the term I used was very mild, to say the least.

I am not trying to make any excuses for myself in this matter, but I want to say that the territory which I cover for "Ask Adventure" happens to be Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, and while I would like to be able to go over the entire territory each year find that it is impossible to do so. Therefore I have to rely somewhat on the several Provincial departments for up-to-date information, on highways, homesteading,

and changes in game laws, from year to year.

My efforts in this respect in both P. E. Island and New Brunswick have been very successful. New Brunswick Department of Highways has always given me for the asking the number of roads which would be improved each year, stated where the detours were and the approximate condition of these detours, and other information necessary and useful for tourists. But in Nova Scotia for some reason the different departments seem rather reluctant to give this information out.

On April 6, 1926, and again on May 4, 1926, I wrote your department asking for information on roads in Nova Scotia, and up to the present time have had no reply to either of the letters. Therefore it looks very much as if your own department was responsible, in part at least, for the misstatement made by me to my inquirer, but even this is no excuse for me in giving out wrong information. . . .

All of the above is to be taken as an apology for my statement that the roads of Nova Scotia are "vile."

CAPTAIN DINGLE'S answer to a reader in this issue is given especial interest by the fact that he himself once sailed a twenty-eight-foot sloop from New York to Bermuda single-handed, to the great astonishment of the old salts who said it could it not be done and of the submarines and hurricanes which tried more actively to discourage him. Captain Dingle is an old salt himself, we may say. He went to sea at the age of fourteen, spent twenty-two years there professionally, and has been a master both in square-riggers and in steam, with considerable war service thrown in. We need more A. A. experts of his caliber and shall be glad to discuss the details of the work with any one. Address Joseph Cox, care *Adventure*.

Our Experts—They 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 commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They 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 assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

The full list of experts will appear in the next issue. Besides geographical sections covering practically all of the world they handle the following topics: Salt and Fresh Water Fishing, Small Boating, Canoeing, Yachting, Motor Boating, Motor Camping, Motor Vehicles, All Shotguns, All Rifles, Edged Weapons, Firearms, Archery, First Aid on the Trail, Health Building Outdoors, Hiking, Camp Cooking, Mining and Prospecting, Forestry in the United States, Tropical Forestry, Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada, Aviation, Army Matters, Navy Matters, State Police, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Horses, Dogs, Photography, Linguistics and Ethnology, American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal, Herpetology, Entomology, Ornithology, Taxidermy, Stamps, Coins and Medals, Radio, Track, Tennis, Basketball, Bicycling, Swimming, Skating, Skiing and Snow-shoeing, Hockey, Boxing.

Camp-Fire Buttons—To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Butterick Publishing Company, *not* to any individual.

Forwarding Mail—This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Identification Cards—Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application*. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything.

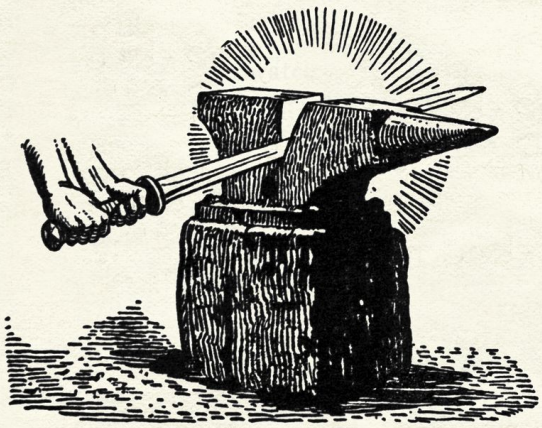
If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Butterick Publishing Company, *not* to any individual.

Old Songs that Men Have Sung.—This department for collecting and discussing songs that still live among the people is printed in alternate issues.

Adventure's Travel Association—Temporarily this department will appear only in alternate issues.

STRAIGHT GOODS

A Report on Tests by Our Experts of Outdoor Equipment and Commodities.



THE advance upon stream and river, ocean and lake is on. In some quarters it's the brisk advance of the man who is packing for Southern waters where bass, tarpon, kingfish, sail fish and many other varieties are ready to follow his lure. In other quarters it's the leisurely advance of the man who looks forward to the sport of spring and summer in Northern streams as he browses among the displays of reels, lines and flies and fondly plans for that fishing trip.

For both men there's interesting news in "Straight Goods." *Adventure* experts are testing articles for fresh-water and salt-water fishing and their reports are coming in early enough to help those who have the chance to fish now in the South and to guide those who are planning equipment ahead of time for trips later in the year. In this issue we are giving the first reports of John B. Thompson and Hapsburg Liebe, who are preparing others for succeeding issues. Neither man needs any introduction to *Adventure* readers or to fishermen.

Thompson may know more about fishing than he does about guns or hunting dogs or more about guns and dogs than he does about fishing but no one has ever found out because he knows his stuff so well that he is a recognized authority in each field. One week you find him addressing a convention in Philadelphia; the following week he may be presiding at an exhibition of casting at a Minneapolis meeting. A dash home to write a few articles for outdoor magazines and get off another book to follow the impressive list that includes "Sport in Field and Forest," "Bass and Bass Fshing," "Quail and the Quail Dog," and he is off to another important convention. And somehow through it all he manages to get away on so many fishing trips and hunts that the rest of us are chronically green with envy. On these trips he submits the equipment on which he reports to the most thorough test possible and his stories of the trials will give many pointers to other sportsmen.

Those of you who have read Hapsburg Liebe's stories in *Adventure* know him as a writer. Those of you who have consulted him through "Ask Adventure" know him as an authority on life and sport in the South. But those who have seen him picking his way over a jetty off Miami or guiding his boat to where the fish bite best think of him as the keenest fishing enthusiast on the Florida coast.

Not a week passes in which Liebe fails to go out several times—and he always gets his fish. One of *Adventure's* editors on a visit to Florida went out with him and two others for the afternoon and after a few hours a storm blew up suddenly. But just then Liebe had a strike. Storm or no storm he was going to land it. In the half dusk with the water lashed into fury by the wind they circled for nearly twenty minutes as the large kingfish shot into the air to be triumphantly pulled in at last. Only then did they hurry back, much to the relief of the others in the boat.

Mr. Liebe gives us here a report on a line made especially for these Southern waters in which he fishes and in another issue tells about a new salt-water reel he

is trying out. Reports on all equipment are made after a test of one or two months and those published here cover their general efficiency. Further reports on wearing qualities will be made after the article has been used for a year or more, although the "Straight Goods" expert can of course give a fairly accurate estimate by going over the construction and giving as severe a test as he possibly can to each product.

REPORTS OF TESTS

WEXFORD SILK CASTING LINE—The Shakespeare Co., Kalamazoo, Michigan. This company has waterproofed this line with a new preparation intended especially for the waters of Florida and the South, as ordinary lines seem to rot more quickly in these brackish waters. I used the line sixteen times in the test, an average of four hours each time, in brackish water and fresh, and it stood up very well. About half of this was in "pop-casting" plugs, which is extremely hard on lines, since they must receive a jerk with each two or three turns of the reel-handle. The line seems smoothly braided, and did not fray too much along the outer fourth of its length. The waterproofing is excellent and officially approved.

(This note is in the way of information for those who are inexperienced in buying silk lines. They may be found good, bad and indifferent in the same brand as silk rots easily, used or unused, and those lines that have been in stock for a long time are likely to go to pieces quickly. Then there is sometimes the possibility of a flaw that has escaped the eye of the maker, and for this reason lines should be carefully examined for flaws before they are placed on the reel.)—HAPSBURG LIEBE.

WEBS WHISKERBUG AND WEBS WHISKERBUG SPINNER—Weber Lifelike Fly Company, Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

The Whiskerbugs are based on the patterns which were first, I think, used years ago on the Mississippi and elsewhere for small-mouth and large-mouth bass, so my familiarity with them antedates the present tryout. The samples I received were exceedingly well manufactured, and their luring qualities were excellent.

No other fly rod should be used than one with hard action, for they will put a bow in a light fly rod, just as with any other type of spinner. You can avoid this to a great extent by stopping them as you bring them to the surface before making the pickup for the backcast, and then you will not feel they have the entire lake or river attached to them. Do not work them too fast with either bait or fly rod and you are sure to get results. When I used the Whiskerbug with a bait-casting rod I attached a one-fourth ounce dipsey sinker, and reeled slowly. They produced many strikes.

The Weber fly-rod spinner was also used effectively in the same manner, and had a remarkable minnow-like action, luring both small and large mouth bass, as well as wall-eyed pike. They are officially approved.—JOHN B. THOMPSON (OZARK RIPLEY).

WEBS AKELEBUGS—Weber Lifelike Fly Company, Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

These are designed purposely for fly-rod angling. They are best used as floaters, and provide an attractive method of angling for bass. They are made entirely of hair and rooster hackle. The way bass hit these lures is only equalled by the way they rise for the regular cork-bodied bass bugs.

The Akelebugs are much easier to cast with short leaders than long ones. Remember to give them a little more time on the backcast than an ordinary small fly. Let them rest a moment on the water, then jump them a little by twitching the rod. If a bass is around he will hit them savagely. This was my experience. I found they could be dried easily and made to float after being wet, if false casts were made somewhat on the order of regular dry fly fishing. I found that one had to strike the very instant one saw or heard the bass rise for them. Bass eject all surface lures quickly if you do not strike in this manner. I found the best time of the day for fishing with the Akelebugs was early in the morning or late in the evening, but bass often took them at midday, especially if there was a slight wind ruffling the surface. Best results were obtained then by casting with the wind and toward the banks, rocks, logs and weed beds where bass usually take refuge. They are officially approved.—JOHN B. THOMPSON (OZARK RIPLEY).

Other products tested and passed by "Straight Goods:"

.22 Winchester Rifle, Model 56.
Winchester Repeating Arms Co., New Haven, Conn.
Crosman Air Rifle.
Crosman Arms Company, 500 St. Paul Street, Rochester, N. Y.
UMC Rustless Cartridges.
Remington Arms Company, New York City.
Stevens Shotgun Pistol, 410 Gauge
Stevens Arms Co., Chicopee Falls, Mass.
Webley Air Pistols.
Webley, Scott, Ltd., Weamon St., Birmingham, England.

Reprints of complete reports on any of the products listed will be sent on request. Don't forget to enclose the two-cent stamp for postage.

If the products described in "Straight Goods" are not carried at your local store the manufacturers will give you further information if you write saying you have been referred to them by *Adventure*.

Lost Trails

We offer this service free of charge to readers who wish to get in touch with old friends from whom the years have separated them. All inquiries of this sort received by us, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with the inquirer's name. We reserve the right, in case the inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any number or other name, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and in general to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. For the benefit of the friend you seek, give your own name when possible. Give also your own full address. We will forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal Star *to give additional publicity 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. Full lists of those unfound are reprinted semiannually. Whenever practicable inquiries will be repeated in newspapers in the town in which the person inquired for was last seen.*

HOHENSINNER, FRANK L. Last heard of in Tacoma, Wash. Please write to your old buddy "Boney" care of Anderson & Fox.—Address ROY F. LA BORNE, care of Anderson & Fox, 316 Montgomery Street, San Francisco, Calif.

MOORE or MORE, CURTIS. Last heard of in Wyoming or Montana. I worked with his father on a Petaluma Hay Press in East Charleston, Vt. Would like to hear from my old friend.—Address SAMUEL CUSHMAN, 145 Johnson Avenue, Los Gatos, Calif.

LAMSON, WILLIS. Practiced law in the State of Michigan about 1880-90. Mother had cousin living in Grimsby, Ontario, Canada. Any information concerning this man or his family will be greatly appreciated.—Address MRS. WILLIAM BOYD (Cousin), 1503 Royal Oak Avenue, Burnaby, B. C., Canada.

DUDLEY, CHARLES W. Please write to me, no matter where you are. I am so worried about you and not hearing.—VA. (Wife), 322 Reid St., Palatka, Florida.

Be sure to let us know when you have found the friend or relative for whom you are inquiring. Address Lost Trails Editor.

JOHNSON, STANLEY C. Left home Baltimore, Md., 1920. Brown eyes, black hair, finger missing right hand. Any information gladly received by his aged mother.—Address MRS. REBECCA L. JOHNSON, 2435 East 6th Street, Tulsa, Okla.

FAY, HARRY. Formerly S. C. 1st class U. S. N. Attended the Commissary School at Goat Island during 1912-13. Communicate with your old shipmate.—Address Spencer Gray, 600 Barrett Place, San Antonio, Texas.

KLOHK, PAPA, MAMA AND SASHA. Please write to me. Am "homesick" to hear from you. Lydia.—Address MRS. LYDIA O'SHEA, 5353 Osage Ave., W. Philadelphia, Pa.

SASS, HENRY. Fourth Engineers, 4th Division, three years across, failed to return home upon his discharge. Last heard from resided in Astoria, Oregon. Mother is left alone with four younger brothers, father died two years ago. Any one knowing his whereabouts.—Address MRS. WILLIAM SASS, Roseland, Nebr.

HARRIS, MARGARET (nee Reedy). Born in England, married to Edwin H. Harris at Ottawa, Ont., Canada, on December 1, 1904. Edwin Harris is a stone cutter by trade.—Address JOHN REEDY, 3009 Scott Street, Victoria, B. C., Canada.

HOLL, GERALD FRANCIS. Engineer, served with A. E. F. throughout the war. Last heard of from Salinas, Calif, in June 1923. Loss of memory or foul play feared. Any information appreciated.—Address R. MCKNIGHT, Box 787, Seattle, Wash.

FANNING, DANIEL. Somewhere in Calif. Please write to Aunt.—Address MRS. PETER FRAME, 203 Washington Avenue, Pontiac, Illinois.

CASS, MICHAEL. Last heard of he was a boxer in Cleburne, Texas, 2 years ago. His mother would like to hear from him.—Address MRS. MARCELLE CASS, 510 Grasmere Avenue, Fairfield, Conn.

Be sure to let us know when you have found the friend or relative for whom you are inquiring. Address Lost Trails Editor.

JONES, JOHN P. Please write me right away. Am anxious to hear from you.—Address HENRY H. HODGES, R R No. 1, Box 147, Edmonds, Wash.

DONNELLY, THOS. F. Son, come home or write to your mother. I have both your children and need your help to bring them up. Let me know where you are.—Address MRS. ED. DONNELLY, 11 Momeyn Avenue, Amsterdam, New York.

TAURE, ALBERT OR DALLAS—(brother-in-law). Last seen in Houston, Texas, 1924. Blond, 5 ft. 4 ins., about 25 years old, weight 125 lbs. Have a good place for you, buddy.—Address STANLEY TRUITT, 6113½ Avalon Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif.

CROSBY, FRED. Last place we met was in Boston 1919. Worked at Plymouth Rubber Co., Canton, Mass.—Address WILLIAM SCULLY (Shorty), care of Greenwich Hospital, Greenwich, Conn.

DOYLE, JOHN. Last place we met was in Boston, 1919. Worked at Plymouth Rubber Co., Canton Mass.—Address WILLIAM SCULLY (Shorty), care of Greenwich Hospital, Greenwich, Conn.

ERNEST, WILLIAM ASHLEY. Late of 2 Romola Road, Herne Hill, London. Last heard of at 194 B Kenilworth Ave., Toronto, Ont., Canada. Would like very much to hear from you with a view to reunion some day.—Address ERIC E. BRIDGEMANN, care of Railway Construction, Moulamein, N. S. W. Australia.

Be sure to let us know when you have found the friend or relative for whom you are inquiring. Address Lost Trails Editor.

A. D. I. Missing since March 1923. Please write to L. M. I. (Sister), care of *Adventure*.

O'HARA, TERENCE. Last seen in St. Louis. Terry please write and send me some money for the children's sake. I can not support them and they will have to suffer. Your wife, Lily.—Address MRS. LILLIAN O'HARA, 4476 West Pine Blvd., St. Louis, Mo.

THE following have been inquired for in either the December 23rd, 1926, or the January 15th, 1927, issue of Adventure. They can get the names and addresses of the inquirer from this magazine.

ANY one with 9th U. S. E., M. T. D., Fort Sam Houston, Texas; Baldwin, Alfred; Bohen, Charles; Bruns, Lillian D.; Butterworth, Robert H.; Casey, Dan R.; Chalk, Joe; Connelly, John; Daddy; Davis, Bryan; David, James; "Ed. Boy" (Ed Norton); Fairbairn, John Goodbourn; Farr, William Goebel; Fester, Glenn; Gayle, Lowell; George Mc (McIsaac); Gordon or Gardner, S. H.; Guttmon, Mrs. Harry (nee Ada Davies); Hall, Alonzo Fischer; Hays, Elijah H.; Joe; Jones, Frank; Kucera, Adolph; LeBlanc, (or White) Pierre (Peter) Joseph or Jean (John); Mongeau, Lawrence; Moore, Henry J.; Old Timers of Abilene & Ft. Hays; Orlander, Sven. "A.B."; Padgett, Jennings A.; Parson, Henry; Pippin, Lee; Polley, James; Riley, John H.; Ring, Albert; Ring, Isabelle R.; Robinson, J. P. (Scotty); Ross, Louis L.; Sanche, Hubert; S. D. C. (S. D. Clarke); Si R.V.J.; Stapler, John R.; Stutts, William Allen; Sullivan, John; Texas Roads; Wright, Leona.

THE FOLLOWING HAVE BEEN INQUIRED FOR IN THE PAST TWO YEARS:

ABBOTT, W. V.; Armer, John; Anderson, Harold Anderson, John Howie; Anderson, Dan; Armstrong,; "Scott" H. (Tiny); Appel, Matt. J.; Augustine, Miss Elizabeth; Bailey, Donald; Baker, Capt. James J.; Baldwin, Charles or Joe Herbert; Baker, Ray A.; Bacon, Leo; Baldridge, Captain; Bailey, Dr. William Curtis M. D.; Bachman, Charles and Emil; Barbour, Mr. & Mrs. Clarence; Bateman, Leonard; Barnett, Jack; Battery D. men 2nd F. A.; Bannon, Charles; Bell, Harry; Beale, Arthur; Bebrant, Henry; Beyersdorfer, Albert G. (Joe Bush); Bettschem, George F.; Best, Christine and Catherine; Berkowitz, Meyer; Bloomenthal, James; Blamksby, Robert; Bonter, Max; Boston, Chas. C.; Bowden, Lawrence Warren; Bowers, Sarah; Bolan, Thomas; Boggs, Jack J.; Bohannan, Delbert; Braden, James Blain; Brendle, John; Bridges, Alfred Renton; Brigham, Franklin Wilson; Brenton Jack W.; Breeden, Ernest G.; Branan, Virgil C. or Cal.; Briston, Robert J.; Brown, George; Brown, John J.; Brown, Lennox Denham; Brownell, Douglas; Brown, Ben or Big Ben; Bruen, or Bruhn; Bunce, William J.; Carkeek, Charles; Campbell, Robert; Carter, Henry B.; Carrier, Roy L.; Calvert, Earle; Challis, Anna; Clute, Henry C, who died about 1880; Charles, H.; Clarke, Corporal; Clark, Tom (Slim); Clark, Joseph Kirby; Christie, William; Christensen, Walter; Chapman, Walter S.; Cohen, Mike; Coe, Noah; Conniston, Art; Conlogue, Bernard C.; Cooper, Mervin P.; Coonstack, Percy James; Cooke, William; Cummins, Norman; Culberson, Albert James; Crawford, R. D.; Daugherty, John; Daley, John F.; Davis, Andrew Lester; Day, Herbert; Davis, William A.; Daniel, Corsley; Daniels, Conley or Conn; Deval, Ralph; Devine, Willard; Dean, Will; Deacon, Hoke; Denney, William B.; Dean, Homer Thompson; Dettmerhing, Earnest; Dreyer, Herbert; Douglas, William; Donnelly, John; Donnelly, Frank P.; Dollar, James Eddie; Donovan, Thomas; Duffield, Henry A.; Dutton, Lousa or Lousa Thomas or Elizabeth Brin; Duffield, Harry; Ellis, Leonard N.; Easley, James Lesley; Edminton, Daniel; Ellis, Leonard N.; Eckley, Thomas F.; Edwards, John (Relatives); Eissengarthen, Guido; Erdtmann, Gustave F.; Erdtmann, Gustav; Erwin, George Richard; Ex-Members of 13th Battalion Canadian R. R. Troops; Farr, Goebel; Farren, Jack; Faldowski, Edward; Flack, Isaac M.; Fitzgerald, Lewis C.; Fitzgerald, William Patrick; Fowler, B. A.; Fox or Foxe, Jimmie (Frisco Jimmie); Franz, Frank Futtage; France, James; Freel or Friel, William or Sydney; Friend of Spook; Furaro, Danton; Garland, John; Gilligan, Sidney Roger; Giffs, Everett; Gibbs, Everett; Gillespie, James, John, Myles; Gideon, James; Gillmore, James H.; Gordon, J. H.; Greene, James William; Greer, Frank A.; Gray, Katherine; Gray, Frank; Grubbs, Earnest C.; G. W. T.; Hackenschmidt, Kid; Hale, Jim; Hale, Edna; Halton, Fred; Hass or Sylvest, George H.; Hale, Edna; Hart, William J.; Hart, James; Hardy, Constance; Hausner, Stanlius; Haynes, Gena Robertson; Herridge, Albert; Henderson, Alpha Lloyd; Holliday, Robert Emmett; Holmes, Perley (Pus); Hoag, H.; Holl, Gerald Francis; "Hodshire" James Victor or Jimmie; Hoffman, Max; Howe, Frank A.; Hopkins, Louis; Hrinco, Joe S.; Hydrick, Edith Adelaide; Huey, Pete; Ingle, Horace; Jackson, James Bangle; Jamison, Hill; Jack, Louis N.; Jeffers, Major Leon; Jensen, Sinar; Johnson, Theodore, William, Oscar and Irene; Jones, William; Justice, Rayborn E.; Keeley, John; Keener, E. Kirby; Kerney, Marshal; Kellogg, Ernest D.; Kellogg, Clement; Knight, Mrs. Anna (Percy) nee Tabel; King, John (Turk); Kilgore, Millard F.; King; Kuehnle, William Ensign; Korte, W. F.; Larrimer, Ned C.; La Chapelle, Ensebe; Lalla, George; Landry, James Edward; Langhaar, Jack; Langshaw, Robert Henry; Lederer, Abe; Lee, Henry; Lewis, Oscar; Leggat, John; Loosley, Earle; Lovett, Charles; Locke, Charles F.; Loan, Mary; Lister, John or family; Locke, Arthur; Lucas, Arthur; Lusk, John; McLoughlin, Peter; McCalmont, Margaret; McCarroll, Chas.; McCarthy, Joseph A.; McLaughlin, Francis; McCaffery (Relatives); MacDonald, Bill; McMahon, Andy; McMorrow, Paddy and Dennis; McTurnal, James; McGee, Clem Le Roy; McMillan, James; Manuel, James; Mallott, Willard E.; Mackenzie, Marie; Macklain, Charles Laurance; Maloney, Francis R. and Francis D. Browning; Mann, G. B.; Marcus, R.; Marcranna, Alfred A.; Meacham, John L.; Moore, George W.; Monnet, Richard J., Moore Ted; Murphy, Timothy; Newton, Lucy Caroline; Nicoll, John L. ;Nolte, Walter; Norsworthy, Tom; O'Connor; John J.; Olsen, Edwin Louis; Olsen, Edward; O'Farrel, W. W.; Old Timers of days of Empire in Philippines on Panay; O'Brien, Claude Francis; Ordway, Charles P.; Otterson, Thomas James; Osberne, Helen; O'Rourke, Pat.; O'Roke, John; Ovenden, Mrs. Dorothy Cornish; Rariera, G. W. Mrs. (nee Jessie Isabel Kelly); Padgett, Jennings A.; Patdo, Alejandro; Patterson, W. L.; Pallaye, Andrew J.; Parker, Lenniel Ernest; Parkhurst, Guy; Parce, Fremont A.; Petterson, John; Perrett or Perett, Ferdinand; Peck, Lewis M.; Pop; Pollard, Harry; Powell, George Francis; Powell, George Carlyle; Peterson (son); Polley, James J.; Prince, Philip J. (Jack); Pugh, William Alonza; Pugh, James W.; Pulliam, W. A.; Pragan, James T.; Pray, W. H.; Reed, Mrs. Jack E.; Rance, Andrew; Renard, Claud and Irven; Reeves, Reginald Floyd; Reed, Mrs. Jack E.; Rhodes, C. D.; Richmond, Earl; Richie, Harold; Richie, Clarence; River, Fred; Rider, Stanley F.; Robinson, James R.; Roberts, Lewis; Roberts, Frank; Roycroft, Lloyd C.; Rosenfield, Max; Will any man that served in Haiti in 1917 to 1920, or in the Rifle Range Detachment, at Quantico, Va., 1921 to '23; Rogers, Arthur; Resenberg, Leo; Ruff, Harold; Ryan, Ernest W.; Russo, Frank; St. John, Gaylord or Lester; Sergeant, Norman; Schabarum, Leo P.; Scully, James Stuart; Schudolska, Esther; Scully, James Stuart and Howard Keith Weeks; Schroeder, Lawrence Charles; Scott, O. O.; Sharp, John R.; Shannon, Carmody or Fennell; Shumbarger, Edward H.; Shakelford, Emliss; Sharpe, Cecil; Sellen, Robert; Seamester (Relatives); Shaw, John (Gock); "Servatius" Frank Servatius; Shatswell, John (any friends); Seeley, James Howey; Seeger, Adolf; Sklepik, Vincent; Skerratt, Fred; Smith, Robert and Samuel Burns; Smith, Dr. W. S.; Smithett or Roderman, William Melvine; Sorensen, W. N.; Stewart, Robert; Steen, Lew (or Stein); Stafford, J.; Stockman, Ed and Hardy; Sprague, W. A.; Stapley, James; Stevenson, Willis B.; Strubbe, Captain G. A.; Spiegal, David; Stoolfire, George; Stoolfire, John; Tallman, George; Tarbell, Elliott; Tanner, Dick; Talbot, George F.; Tabel, Carl George Otto; Taylor, Edward; Thompson, W. T.; Thompson, Myron and Lawrence; Thomas, William, Isabelle, Fred, Arthur and Frank; Thompson, Bert; Thomas, Josid S.; Thompson, Ross; Trostler, Joseph S.; Troop 1, 4th Cav.; Traversy, A. J. (Bert); Tucker, Lorenzo; Van Heldren, T. C.; Vespert, Pvt. Otto; Vincent, Donald; Van Houten, Lynn C.; Walters, Harry A.; Walker, Red; Wahl, Albert; Ward, Richard (Dick); Welch, Andrew; Wesley, R.; Werner, Andy C. A.; Wenger, Herbert; White, George; White, Dan; Wheeler, Edward; Williams, Thomas R.; Williams, Ernest; Wilson, Oliver; Williams E.; Wieritsch, Wm.; Williams, Jonathan Robertson; Wilo, M.; Williams, James; Winsor, W. R. (Shorty); Windross, Raymond H.; Winsor, W. F.; Worthington; Wooddell, Charles; Zwinge, Henry J.

MISCELLANEOUS—R. D. S.; Would like to hear from old comrades who served with Bechuanaland African Charter Co. Police from 1888 to 1894, before and during the Matabele War, please write; Any information as to P. J. Lynch, Robert Auburn and F. J. Temple who were in Mexico and C. A.; Kyd Gyp and Shanghai; Ralph write to your old pard; Would like to hear from those who knew me while serving in Camp Supply Detachment Q. M. C. Camp Merritt, N. J. A.; Annie; "Batesy" or "Dectsy"; Bert; C. F. E.; Ex-Marines of 7th Co.; Kaufman; Mitchell; Munroe; Red Potter, Tommy Watson, Robert Burton or any of the old crowd from the Glen or Palisade Ave.; Stinson; W. C. N.; W., Charles; T. O.; S. O. L.; Happy Davis, Johnny Lisse, Jack "Sheik" Pollock and Harry Blackman; E. S. J.; Arthur; Dewers, Jack, Marty McGee, Arthur Harriss; Men of the 22nd U. S. Infantry Co. G. who served in Alaska and Texas and who were acquainted with Pvt. Charles T. Matthews; Luiz; Shipp family; Bud; Any one knowing the whereabouts of Stewart W. Cairncross or Frank Veidiglione, who were soldiers in the Ordnance Dept. of Raritan Arsenal, Metuchen, New Jersey in 1920; Would like to hear from any member of the old 21st Balloon Co. from the date of 1919 to 1922; A. R. P.; W. W. W.; James Moses, Joe Vreo, Jack Spellman and Mac MacLeod; —"Archie"; "Sparks;" Joe; J. C. L. and the Mrs.; "Shorty."

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SPORT IN FIELD AND FOREST, by "Ozark Ripley." D. Appleton and Company, 15 chapters, 180 pages, $2.00. "Ozark Ripley" is the pen name of one of the most competent outdoor specialists, especially fishing and hunting, in American sporting. Here he tells of small game shooting, mallards, rabbits, woodcock, doves, jacksnipe, geese, 'possums, coons, big squirrels, quail, ruffed grouse, prairie chickens, turkeys—and white-tail deer and black bear. I know personally much of the types of hunting he describes and he brings it all back to me. He suggests a .22 long rifle where I should prefer the more powerful .22 special or automatic rim fire. I have read no outdoor narrative which in so brief a space suggests more ideas or covers so many topics. I have no hesitation in recommending it heartily.—RAYMOND S. SPEARS.

SAILING ACROSS EUROPE, by Negley Farson. The Century Co. Price, $3.50. Though the title and frontispiece are both somewhat misleading—as the trip is made in a small motor-boat—the account of this meandering trip up the Rhine, across to the Danube and down the Danube to the Black Sea, "through the back yards of seven nations," is thoroughly enjoyable. The unusual and picturesque are naturally made to stand out in bold relief, and for their sake one is inclined to forgive the unnecessary and overdone introduction of foreign words, on every occasion. To the one unfamiliar with the languages they are meaningless; to the linguist their value is marred by the fact that so many are misprinted. The book is well illustrated with snapshots taken by the "crew"—the author's wife.—THEODORE VON KELER.

THE SURGEON'S LOG, by J. Johnston Abraham. E. P. Dutton & Co. $5.00. Dr. Abraham is an Englishman who shipped on a scheduled freighter for the Far East. This book is a lively running narrative of most of what he saw and experienced. There is romantic glamour in it, the fresh intelligent viewpoint of a young professional man in unorthodox and adventurous surroundings, and the large liberal sense of humor of men of the sea. It is a pre-war book, but the "unchanging Orient" hasn't altered much where Dr. Abrahams encountered it; and the story is still quite fresh and informative.—WILLIAM ASHLEY ANDERSON.

IN BARBARY, by E. Alexander Powell. The Century Co., New York. $4.00. Look at the maps in your atlas; see the bewildering array of alluring place-names scattered over Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria; trace the routes to the edge of the Sahara and beyond, then open Colonel Powell's book and read about them all. "In Barbary" is not only highly informative and up-to-the-minute but is so written that it will please the fastidious while not trying the patience of the reader who looks for action rather than polished style. It is much more than a very human guide-book, though it is that, too. A curious contradiction is observed between the book and its jacket: the publishers announce three maps, but the author modestly and correctly promises and provides only two. The book has many splendid photographs.—NEVILLE WHYMANT.

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