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EDITOR

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The author of "Ghengis Khan" gives us a colorful novelette of the Don Cossacks and the Golden City of the Sultan

ON THE first night of the moon of Shawwul there was calamity, and fire in the city, and a man afflicted of Allah raged near the golden gate with a sword. Many believers died before the first light. But the cause of all this is not known.

(From the Annals of the Othmanli Turks of Constantinople.)

THE *KOSHEVOI*, the chief of all the Cossacks, rose from his seat against the wall of the hut and faced the old men who still sat moodily on the floor, smoking their pipes.

"You have heard the letter—you have listened to the Jew. Now, sir companions, is anything to be done?"

The *koshevoi* was a tall man with a scar that ran from his eye to his jaw. He was a daring leader in battle, but otherwise slow to think and speak. Across his high shoulders was flung a miniver cloak, stained and dusty, and when he faced the elder men his right hand opened and shut as if clasping a sword hilt.

And the veteran Cossacks stroked down their gray mustaches, frowning in silence because it was not customary to speak at once. Few were they—since few Cossacks of the Siech, the war encampment of the southern steppes, lived to see their hair turn white—in this year of trouble late in the seventeenth century.

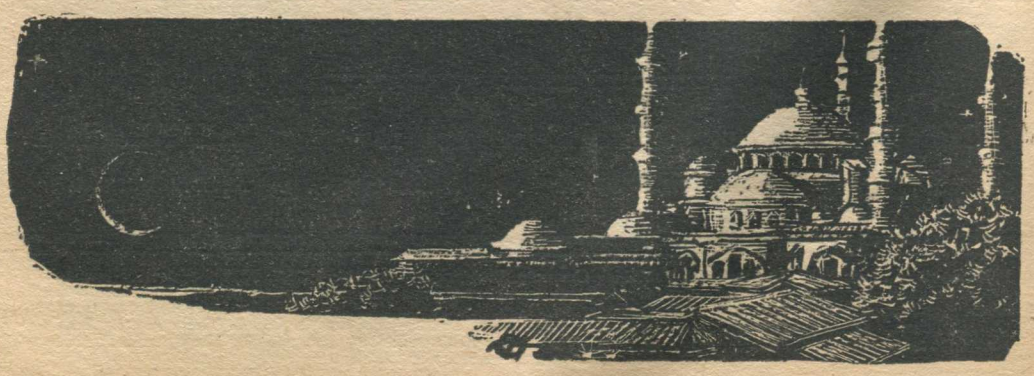
"It is true, sir brothers," said one, lifting his head. "And why is it true? Because the Jew who brought the letter is a son of a dog who can not read Turkish, and his tale is the same as the letter. And he has brought back to us the baton of a Cossack ataman."

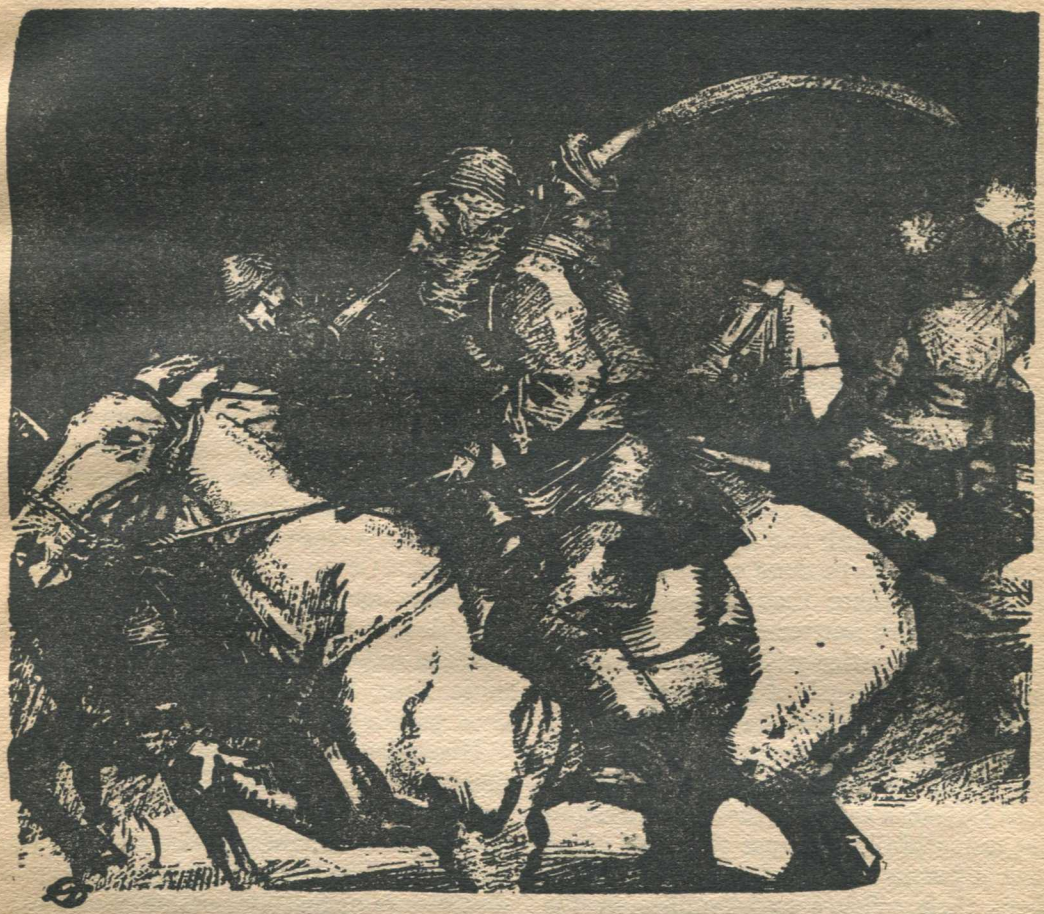
The *koshevoi* took up from the table a short ivory staff with a cross carved upon one end, the baton of a colonel of a Cossack regiment.

"Aye," said the older men, "that was Kirdyaga's."

By their silence the others assented. Kirdyaga, their companion of the Kuban barracks, had been captured by the Turks when he raided too far beyond the frontier. He was in prison within Constantinople, the city of the sultan, and he had been condemned to die upon the first night of the moon of Shawwul by the Moslem calendar. The worst of it was that the Turks announced that they would torture him by setting him on a stake and letting him wriggle out his life.

Unless—so said the letter—ransom should be paid for the life of Kirdyaga before that night. The ransom must be three thousand gold sequins, or an equivalent in precious stones, and must be paid





The MOON *of* SHAWWUL

By HAROLD LAMB

in Constantinople. As a token the Turks had sent with the letter this baton. And they had sent letter and staff by no worthier hand than that of the ferret faced Jew in the tall woolen cap and ragged shuba who stood shivering by the door, palpably afraid to linger and afraid to beg leave to go.

"Kirdyaga has not asked us to aid him," said the *koshevoi* slowly. "He knows that the Turks are faithless as village dogs."

"Impossible not to aid him," muttered another, taking the pipe from his lips. "To die by steel, that is well enough, but it is another matter to be planted on a stake for slaves and women to pluck at."

"True," assented one whose slant eyes had more than once watched such torture. "By God, that is well said."

"We can gather the gold together."

"Aye, the gold," assented the *koshevoi*, "but how can we send it?"

Again silence followed his words. They

could not send the ransom money back by the Jew. Even if Shamoval—he answered to that name—did not make off with it himself, he would be stripped and plundered by Moslem soldiery long before he had covered the two hundred leagues to Constantinople. Nor could the Cossacks entrust the gold to a Turkish officer along the frontier. In that case it would go no farther than the pockets of the officer.

STILL, the money must be sent, or the Turks would mock the Cossacks, saying that they cared more for gold than the Cossack colonel who was to be tortured. So in the *koshevoi's* hut there was silence, until the *koshevoi* himself strode to the open door and looked out.

The only thing that seemed to him possible was to muster the regiments and invade the frontier with fire and sword, to revenge the death of Kirdyaga.

While he pondered he looked up and down the encampment that was called the Siech, or gathering place. Native born Cossacks called it their Mother, and not untruthfully, because they had given their lives to the Siech, leaving behind them their villages and families in the steppes.

Long limbed warriors, sun darkened, clad each after his own fancy, sat smoking by the barrack walls or gathered in circles about musicians or casks of brandy. The barracks were long huts of wattle and dried clay, and in them were piled blankets and saddles, weapons—lances and Persian simitars and long, crooked knives called *kindjhals*, the curved yataghans, embossed Turkish pistols, German muskets—for the Cossacks had few arms that they did not take from their enemies. Kegs of powder and cannon were stored in the arsenal by the log church. Only a few horses were to be seen, for the herds of the Siech were out at pasture under guards.

No wall surrounded the Siech. It was a point of honor with the Cossacks not to fortify their camp. But except for Gipsy fiddlers and the most daring merchants who came to sell brandy and weapons, no one ventured past that invisible line marking the square of the barracks. No woman was ever seen within the Siech.

Any man might enter the Siech, provided he were sound and strong of body. No weaklings could ride with the Cossacks. He was brought to the *koshevoi* who looked at him and questioned him.

"Do you believe in Christ? And in the holy Church? Well, then, cross yourself and enter whatever barrack you want."

But there were other tests, by the brotherhood. An *ouchar*—a newcomer—might be matched against a full grown bear, with only a wooden sword given him for weapon. Often he bore the scars of the bear's claws on his hide as long as he lived. Or he would be set in a boat, to drift down the cataracts of the river that flowed past the Siech, or made to ride the unbroken Tartar mustangs. He must fight, at need, but only with his fists, within the limits of the Siech.

His belongings he could leave by his blankets—his kit and plunder. Gold, if he had any, was given to the keeping of the *kuren* ataman, the captain of the barrack. Theft was almost unheard of and was punished by putting the culprit in the wooden stocks with a club hanging by him, so that the others of the brotherhood could strike him; and when a Cossack of the Siech did not pay his debts he was chained to the muzzle of a cannon until a companion made good what he owed. A murderer was buried under the coffin of his victim.

When the Cossacks moved out to war the *koshevoi's* command was the only law. And disobedience meant death by a pistol ball or saber cut.

But while they were in camp they spent their time in revelry, drinking up the spoils of the last campaign. The brotherhood was never the same. Always death thinned its ranks and new faces appeared around the fires. Hither came the riders of the steppes, tired of herding in villages, eager for war that was life itself to them; and hither came fugitives from the law of the cities, from Moscow or Warsaw or

Vienna. Some of the dark faces showed the slant eyes and high cheek bones of Tartar blood, others the grace of noble birth; many were scarred and seamed by debauch or suffering or cruelty.

Slender Gipsies sat by massive Russians, a French soldier of hazard matched cups with the son of a Persian amir. No one asked what they had been, and even their names were forgotten, because the Cossacks promptly gave them nicknames and they were known by no other. They became free Cossacks of the Siech, self-appointed guardians of the steppes that were the frontier of Christendom in this seventeenth century. And they left behind them only the memory of their deeds, sung by the old minstrels.

AS THE *koshevoi* stood in the door of his hut, by the great drum that was used to gather the brotherhood together he caught the words of an old Gipsy song, in a full deep voice.

"My sword is rusty and the blade is dull.
"It hangs upon the wall where the spiders make their nest."

The whine of a fiddle rose above the commotion of shouting where some of the younger men were dancing, their silver heels striking against the hard clay like an ax upon wood, in the *hopák* and *trepák* of the wild Cossack dance. And over the tumult the same strong voice was heard again.

"And when night falls I hear it whisper—whisper
"Take me in your hand and use me—use me!"

The *koshevoi* listened for a moment, then lifted his head as if he had made a decision. He called out in a voice that was pitched to carry over the tumult of hoofs and guns—

"Charnomar!"

The song ceased and the singer strode through the throng toward him.

"Aye, Father."

"Come."

The leader of the Cossacks turned back into the hut, and the man called Charnomar came after him.

He was not so tall as many of the Cossacks, who towered over six feet; nor was he so heavy. Like the others his head was shaved except for the long scalp lock that hung upon one shoulder, but his heavy buckskin breeches and his wide leather belt with its polished silver buckle were like no others in the Siech. And his sword was a single edged cutlas, almost straight, and heavier than any simitar or yataghan.

Some Cossacks had found him out at sea, adrift on a splintered boom. They had been fishing off the Dnieper mouth and had heard heavy cannon fire in the offing; they had sailed out to see what was happening in the mist and had come upon this man, who knew nothing of their speech at that time. From Tartars along the shore they learned that an English merchant brig had been attacked by three Turkish galleys and had kept up the fighting until it sank. The Cossacks promptly named him Charnomar—Black Sea. When he was able to talk with them in later years, they had asked him where he came from and he said—

"The sea."

He said also that he was not from the Great Sea—the Mediterranean—but from a wide ocean beyond that and a place called the New World. Of this the Cossacks had never heard. The New World was America.

It was said that Charnomar had been a captive of the Turks on the Barbary Coast. At times he spoke of the Christians he had seen tortured there, and he certainly knew the oaths of the galleys. He made himself at home in the Siech, or rather in the raids that were launched across the Black Sea to Azov and Sinope, where the Cossacks stormed the citadels and plundered the mosques.

At such times Charnomar's gray eyes glowed and, though he said little, he seemed utterly content. He knew more about navigating than the Cossack atamans, and they came to rely upon his strange luck which brought him back alive and laughing out of places where he should have died.

They said of him—

"Upon a horse he is a man, but when he rides the sea he is a devil."

ALL THIS passed through the mind of the leader of the Cossacks as he looked at this man who knew more about the sea and the mysteries that lay beyond it than about a horse and the warfare of the steppes. Then he spoke to the old Cossacks.

"This is how it is, sir brothers. The Turks have laid a trap for us; that is what they have done. When did the sultan's dogs ever take ransom for a Cossack of the Siech? They would like to get their hands on the ransom and the man who brings it. That is all. But if we send nothing, then they will mock at Cossack honor. And it is not to be endured that a brother should die alone and unaided upon the stake."

"Summon the Siech to march!" growled one of the veterans. "We will answer with swords!"

But the *koshevoi* shook his head. He would have liked nothing better. Yet he knew that the armies of the sultan were too strong to be met in the field by the few thousand Cossacks of the Siech.

"There is only one road to follow," he said grimly. "To send a Cossack to Constantinople."

"Then the Turks will set up two stakes."

"Perhaps," the *koshevoi* nodded. "Only God knows what will happen. But there is no other way." He looked steadily into Charnomar's gray eyes and explained how Kirdyaga had been taken and what was in the letter. "You know the ways of the Turks," he went on slowly, "and the road over the water. Aye, you stole up on the lighthouse at the straits and blew it up with powder. The Turks put a chain across the Dnieper mouth, and you rode a log down the swift current and broke it. And only God knows why you are still living. But this is another matter. If the Turks seize you, they will put you in the cage, and your sword will not avail you. So, I can not command you to go to Constantinople, but I ask if you will go with the ransom for Kirdyaga."

The elder Cossacks all looked at Charnomar. It was a mission they could not have undertaken, not the *koshevoi* himself, but in the reckless swing of Charnomar's great shoulders, in the poise of his young head and the gleam of clear gray eyes from his dark face, there was no sign of anxiety.

"I'll go," he said. "Only give me jewels, not gold."

JEWELS they gave him, the older Cossacks going from one barrack to another and merely saying that the *koshevoi* wanted whatever was finest in the way of precious stones. The softly gleaming heap that lay upon the table within the hour was no larger than a man's fist, doubled up. In it was a string of matched pearls and several large uncut emeralds, greatly desired by Moslems, and rubies that had been pried out of sword hilts. The value of the lot was double the amount of the ransom.

"For," said the chief of the Cossacks, "it is the way of a Turk when he is offered payment, to ask double the price. And besides you will need gold for the road."

He pondered for a moment and called for glasses and a jug of the strong brandy.

"By God," he said, when Charnomar had taken up his glass with the rest, "it's a hard road—a very devil of a road. The Moslem women over yonder, lad, are dark eyed—vixens. Don't talk to them, or they'll destroy you. Keep a sword by you always, and if you're taken by the Moslems, if they beset you, why strike out and go down with steel in you. That's the best way. And if it happens so, we'll hear of it and remember. Because the Cossacks do not forget."

The old warriors stroked down their mustaches and lifted their glasses. "*Kozatchenky bratiky!*" they said. "To the brotherhood!"

WHEN he reached the corner of his barrack, Charnomar felt a fold of his breeches plucked, and looked down into the thin, eager face of the Jew, Shamoval.

"*Ai*, noble sir," whispered the man in the shuba. "The captain is going to set out on a journey, and in my shop there is everything he will need—soft leather boots and splendid kaftans. Such kaftans never were seen before! And if the colonel wants saddlebags—"

"To the devil with the saddlebags and you too!"

Charnomar frowned at the trader. He still held in his hand the leather wallet containing the jewels and a sack of gold. Although Shamoval's dark eyes never quite looked at the wallet, they circled around and over it as if it were a magnet from which they could not free themselves. Charnomar reflected that Shamoval had been in the *koshevoi's* hut, unheeded by the Cossacks, and had heard the talk. Jews had a way of wandering all over and there was no telling whether Shamoval would not betake himself to the Turkish posts.

"Where is your shop?" he asked, considering.

Shamoval hastened off across the deserted assembly ground to the traders' streets on the outskirts, where blacksmiths pounded at their anvils and rug merchants and dram sellers sat in their stalls. Only a few Cossacks walked idly through the alleys, because, since it was a time of comparative peace, the brotherhood had spent or drunk up most of its gold. These traders were like the moths that swarm around a light; they gleaned fortunes from the Cossacks, or were plundered and driven out, according to the mood of the warriors.

The Jew's shop was no more than a stall hung with blankets under a thatched roof, with some ordinary saddles and gear stacked in it. But Shamoval lifted the curtain on the inner side, calling out harshly as he did so and whispering to Charnomar to enter.

A clay lamp smoked dimly among shadows that vaguely suggested the presence of a Jewess hidden under quilts in the corner, among rags and sacks of cabbages and piles of broken cord—and two wooden chests, one of which Shamoval dragged out under the lamp.

"Look here," observed Charnomar, "you heard what the *koshevoi* said."

"I?" Shamoval glanced over his shoulder anxiously. "How should I understand what the noble lords were saying? Am I a Cossack, to understand such things? I only heard that the noble captain is going on a journey."

He delved into the chest and began to lay out piles of really costly garments. Charnomar sat down on the other chest and struck a light for his short clay pipe. He noticed that the trader was selecting a strange attire—a fur edged kaftan, bright green breeches, a crimson girdle scarf, an embroidered shirt and black velvet vest sewn with seed pearls.

"Here are some of the things the noble captain will need," he explained.

Charnomar pulled at his pipe without answering.

"And riding slippers—" Shamoval hastened off and came back with a pair embroidered with tarnished gold thread. "The man who wore these was a fine, strong hero like you. Only—" he glanced at Charnomar—"that sword won't do at all."

"Why not?"

Shamoval lifted his arms and shoulders. "Doesn't the captain know that such swords were never seen in Constantinople—"

He checked his words suddenly and turned pale, and could not keep from looking fearfully at Charnomar's cutlas.

"So you heard the talk of the Cossacks?" His visitor smiled. "And you've laid out a Circassian swordsman's garments. Why?"

EMBOLDENED because he was not struck down at once, Shamoval became eloquent.

"*Ai*, it is certain that the captain must disguise his noble self. And since he can't talk like the Turks and the Greeks—may dogs litter on their graves!—he ought to go as a man from the Circassian mountains. Then every one will take him for a Moslem, but he won't be suspected

if he talks in a strange dialect. Many times have I been in the sultan's city, and I've only seen a few Circassians. This one was put to death for something or other and I bought his garments from one of the keepers of the cage before they put an end to him. By everything that's holy, I swear they cost me sixty-two ducats, without the sword and all the daggers the noble lord must wear in his girdle. The keepers took the Circassian's weapons, but I have better ones—if the noble lord will only rise up."

Lifting the cover of the chest upon which Charnomar had been sitting, Shamoval drew out a half dozen swords, and the Cossack picked up one at once. It was a long simitar with a worn hilt of silver set with smooth turquoises, and the blade was gray, with an inscription near the hilt. Charnomar swung it tentatively and found that it had nearly the weight and feel of his cutlas.

He picked out two long knives and a worn prayer rug and leather saddle bags, and Shamoval announced that the price of everything would be a hundred and twenty and three gold pieces. And he tried not to look at the wallet in the Cossack's hand.

"No one will ever suspect the noble sir if he is dressed like this."

Charnomar selected a saddle with some care, and bade Shamoval send some one for horses, as he intended to set out at once. It was dark before he had completed purchase of a shaggy Kabarda stallion from a Gipsy trader.

"Now, listen, Shamoval," he said reflectively, "you've charged double what these things are worth—"

"*Ai*—"

"And I'll pay your price, when I come back."

Shamoval raised his hands and clutched at the straggling locks above his ears.

" 'Tis impossible!"

"How, impossible?"

"Why—" the trader gulped and seemed to choke over the words. "Why you will never come back. In the first place no one ever bought a prisoner out of the cage. In the second place, you're like all the other Cossacks. You're certain to get into fighting and be killed, or some woman will trick you. You will never come to the Siech again."

"Then, Shamoval, you will never see your gold."

"*Ai*—but certainly the noble captain will promise! His promise will be sufficient."

"What promise?"

"Surely the captain has comrades. Just let him promise that if he—that if he doesn't pay, one of his brothers will pay."

"Not a silver dirhem!" Charnomar's gray eyes kindled in a smile, and then, before Shamoval could speak again, the eyes changed. "Ay, I'll promise one thing. If you wag your tongue no one will pay."

Shamoval spread out his hands and shook his head so that the tall felt cap flopped from side to side.

"I don't betray secrets," he said seriously, "and as for the Moslems, I spit upon them."

He watched curiously while the Cossack stripped off his old garments and began to clothe himself anew, carefully. Charnomar reflected that the Jew's stall was a good place to change, and since it was dark, no one would notice that a Cossack had gone in, and a Circassian had come out. And it was clear to Shamoval that he knew how the garments should be worn. He wound the shawl girdle above his thighs and let the tasseled ends hang at his hip; he twisted the turban cloth into place and knotted it over one ear.

For a moment he held his old cutlas in his hand, then tossed it aside.

Into his girdle under the vest he thrust the sack of jewels and the purse of gold, and then the long simitar in its leather sheath.

"A pity," muttered Shamoval, "such a splendid weapon to fall to the Moslems."

The Cossack laughed and went out to the shaggy pony that was waiting, hitched to the stall. With a glance at the stars, he mounted and rode off. Once he reined

in, to listen to the familiar roar of voices, mellowed by distance, about the fires where mutton and gruel was being issued to the Cossacks at supper. Then he trotted on into the rushes of the river path.

A FORTNIGHT later a six-oared felucca with its great sail furled drifted around the lighthouse point and made for the quays of Galats through the evening mist. The felucca had come from Kaffa, along the northern coast of the Black Sea, the Greek captain never daring to lose sight of land, and every Moslem on its deck gave praise to Allah in that sunset prayer because he had been delivered from the sea alive.

Charnomar unrolled his strip of carpet with the others and prostrated himself, because not to do so would have brought instant suspicion upon him. But when his companions filed off into the alleys, he rolled his carpet, put it over his shoulder and wandered along the shore looking for a skiff that would take him across the harbor to Stamboul.*

He walked leisurely, because no one but a madman or a thief or Christian ever hurried within the walls of Islam, with the slow swinging stride of the mountaineer. And a pockmarked waterman about to push off in a skiff already filled with sacks took him for a wanderer out of Asia in search of either wonders or quarrels and good humoredly indifferent to which it might be. The boatmen of Stamboul have a nose for silver.

"Eh, *chelabim*," he hailed Charnomar, "I go to the marketplace."

Charnomar went down to investigate. He did not answer at once because his Turkish was made up of the speech of the Barbary galleys and the Kuban Cossacks.

"Thy boat," he muttered, "is heavy, and its smell is of fish."

"But the price—the price is small. Six dirhems. And in a very little while Allah will cause the dark to come."

Charnomar seated himself clumsily—when did a Circassian know anything about boats?—in the bow of the skiff. But he felt that he should have haggled over the price, because the waterman kept glancing over his shoulder, and when they were within pistol shot of the lights of the Stamboul docks he rested his oars and began to question his passenger.

"Eh, *chelabim*, are you looking for a coffee inn, or perhaps a fine *bayadere*—a singing girl?"

"Perhaps."

"Then go around the market up the hill. Under the arch is the Kislar Dar,* where the *janisseries* spend their time. The music there is fine, and the girls come from the Greek islands and Smyrna and all the foreign places. I will show you."

The boatman took up his oars again, palpably eager for a new commission, and Charnomar reflected that it would be well to land with a companion. Already torches were passing along the stone embankment, and the lights gleamed on the shields of armed guards.

WHEN he climbed up the narrow steps, slippery with damp, into the glare of torchlight and the din of many voices, Charnomar's heart beat quickened and a slight shiver twitched his shoulders. The shiver was pure excitement, because he stood upon the stones of Stamboul, the citadel of Islam—Stamboul, mistress of the three seas and the mainland of Europe, the gate of Asia, more beautiful than Rome.

More than once he had seen its marble walls, the dark green of its fruit gardens, the domes and slender minarets that had been built upon ancient Christian palaces. That was when he had been chained to the oar of a Barbary galley. For a Christian to enter Stamboul, except on sufferance, afoot and unarmed, was forbidden; for a Christian to wear a weapon, even a knife, was to gamble with death. A Cossack discovered within the city would be hunted down like a wolf found among sheep.

Even the ambassadors of the great

*The Old City; the Turks never called it Constantinople.

*The Place of the Girls.

kings of France and Holland had their houses across the bay in Pera and came to the city only to petition the sultan or to make gifts, nor could they protect their own followers if the soldiery of Islam desired captives.

So Charnomar breathed deeply, although his dark face was only insolent and expectant, when his guide, eager to curry favor with the open handed swordsman from the hills, cried out loudly:

" 'Way for the lord of the hills! Make way, O ye who believe!"

If the high pitched shout drew the attention of a dozen guards and a hundred loiterers, it also served as introduction, and Charnomar shifted the rug on his shoulder, brushed at his yellow mustache and swaggered onward, taking pains to get out of nobody's way. Instead of striking through the marketplace, where his patron might have been tempted to linger and buy or brawl, the waterman turned aside among uptilted carts and led the Cossack through odorous shadows, past an empty tank, to a flight of wooden steps, narrow and steep and treacherous with mud.

They climbed to where an oil lamp on a courtyard wall revealed the dark mass of an arch overhead. Putting out his hands to steady himself, Charnomar could feel the plaster walls on either side. And as he did so, two tall figures appeared beneath the arch, descending the steps. By their sable lined kaftans, their pearl sewn turbans and the slender gilded staffs they carried Charnomar recognised the two as *janisseries*—soldiers of the sultan's guard, slave bred and trained to weapons. Moreover, they were officers, insolently aware of the fear they inspired.

The waterman shrank back against a wall, trying to salaam and efface himself at the same time. The *janisseries* brushed past him and looked at Charnomar as hunting dogs eye a wolf. Charnomar guessed that he was expected to retreat before them, but he knew that a Circassian would not give up the path without cause.

"Beggar of the hills!" said one officer pleasantly, when he made no move to yield the steps.

The other had a more pointed tongue.

"O son of nameless fathers," he murmured, "surely thou art coming to visit thy sister within the arch, thy sister, the mother of nameless sons."

They waited to see if this would draw fire from the Circassian.

"Thou wilt know thy sister," the first speaker added, amused. "She wears no veil, yonder."

This was adding injury to insult, and Charnomar answered. He had not spent months on a rower's bench of a Barbary galley without learning the sulphurous language of the slave masters. Moreover, under his calm, he was chilled by a cold hatred of all Turks. So he answered with three words and the waterman yelled in fear and scrambled up the steps.

The *janisseries* stared until rage overcame their astonishment and the nearest one swung his staff at Charnomar's head. The staff had an iron knob on one end, a steel point on the other.

The blow was hasty, and the Cossack reached up a long arm, grasping the staff under the knob. He pulled down, and toward him, and the *janissery* was jerked from his footing, scrambled vainly to get his balance on the worn and slippery steps, and ended by plunging past Charnomar fifty feet to the bottom. But the Cossack kept the staff.

With it he parried a savage blow by the *janissery's* companion. The staffs were rather longer than cudgels, but Charnomar could move his big bulk with surprising swiftness. He had the better position, too, on that treacherous incline, because the man above him could not strike down freely and had to guard his feet.

When the *janissery* tried to reach for his sword, Charnomar whacked him solidly in the ribs with the iron knob. The soldier kicked out at the Cossack's head, and his ankle was caught by a hand that wrenched him off balance in a second. Clattering and cursing, he went down into darkness.

At once the two lifted the shrill rallying cry of Islam—

"Ha Muslimin!"

CHARNOMAR ran up the steps beneath the arch. The waterman had vanished. He found himself in a narrow alley full of subdued sound and movement. He smelled musk and charcoal and cooking, saw the faint gleam of iron lanterns carried by some of the figures in the alley.

Aware of an opening on his right hand, he turned sharply and ducked his head under a low arch. In the gloom beyond he stumbled against animals, laden donkeys by the feel of them. He freed himself and ran on, past the glow of a fire where hooded figures sat about a water pipe. Dimly he saw steps in front of him, and kept on.

The steps led to an open roof, he could make out the line of the parapet against the stars. Voices clamored behind him, and he swung himself over the parapet, hanging by his hands until he felt shrubbery brushing against his feet. Then he released his hold, expecting to drop into soft earth.

But the shrubbery proved to be tress, and Charnomar flung out his arms, falling through the swaying branches of cypresses, a dozen feet or more to the ground. He picked himself up, felt to make certain that his sword was in its sheath. He had thrown away the staff in the beginning.

Above him he heard the *slip-slap* of bare feet, and low voices disputing. In the darkness under the cypresses he could not be seen, and evidently the men above did not think he had gone over a twenty foot wall. They went elsewhere and Charnomar groped around until he had found his rug.

With this again on his shoulder he moved out from the wall and found himself under clear starlight in a kind of open alley. Dogs snarled at him tentatively, and he investigated farther, bringing up against blank walls until he noticed the arch of a doorway and found it to be open.

He entered at once, because to hesitate would be to show himself a stranger or afraid. A lantern hung from a bracket above the glimmer of water in a stone bordered tank. Around the tank were masses of tulips and aloes in bloom, and he thought that this must be the garden court of some mosque or tomb—almost certainly a tomb, because it was utterly silent.

He shut the door behind him and went to sit on a bench, not too near the light. Throwing off his rug, he stretched out his legs and sat thinking with one eye on the courtyard door. He was hungry, but the evening was young, and the *janisseries* had been too angered for him to venture out just yet. Presently they would give up the search and he would go and find a coffee shop.

"O THOU man of the hills, what evil hast thou done?"

It was a soft voice, seemingly amused, a woman's voice within a few feet of him. He looked instinctively toward the light, then away. She was sitting a little back from the tank on a strip of carpet under the aloes. After a moment he was certain that no others were with her.

"What is it to thee, O daughter of idleness?" he made response gruffly, for it was audacious in her to speak to him at all.

"Look!"

When he would not do as she said, the woman came and sat on the stone edge of the tank, so near that he could have touched her. Perforce he glanced down. She was a Circassian. He had seen girls like her in the valleys under the Caucasus—girls who wore that same jaunty striped cap with the limp feathers hanging down the mass of her straw yellow hair. Her fringed shawl, which covered shoulders too slender and vigorous for a Turkish woman, was of soft lamb's wool. And her green leather half boots were gilded after the manner of the mountain women.

"Peace be upon thee," he said indifferently.

"And upon thee the peace of God, the one God, O my brother!"

There was a hint of meaning in the last word, and Charnomar frowned down upon her, pulling at the end of his mustache. The last thing he wished was to meet with any one from the Circassian hills, and he chose to look annoyed as a warrior should.

"Thy brother was a magpie!" he scoffed, and rose, stretching his long arms, as if too annoyed to sit there longer.

"Wait!"

The Circassian also had gray eyes, though much darker than his by reason of *kohl* rubbed on the lids. She smelled evasively of aloes and musk, and seemed more than ready to mock him. Because she went unveiled he knew that she must be from the Kislar Dar.

"*Ai-a*, it is two years since I was brought across the sea, and in all that time I have had no speech with one from the hills. What is thy village?"

Charnomar seemed to listen idly.

"Ask the eagles! The eagle is wiser than the magpie."

"Oh, thou art a true *jigit*. * Was it thou who raised the cry and the brawling just now?"

Charnomar smiled.

"Ask the Turks!"

When he smiled, the harshness left his eyes, and the lines about his wide mouth softened. The girl watched him intently and when he would have moved away, she touched his sleeve.

"Wait! Tell me truly what place thou art from."

Silver bracelets set with amethysts slid upon her arm when she moved. She was a *bayadere*, a girl trained to singing and dancing, brought hither for the amusement of the Turks, and the Cossack reflected that she would doubtless be rewarded if she could point out an armed Christian within the city. That she suspected him was perfectly clear.

"From the sea!" he laughed, meeting her eyes frankly.

"It did not teach thee wisdom. For thou wert sitting with legs stretched out like an unbeliever, and thy talk is like—"

She shook her head helplessly. "Thou art no man of the hills."

"What, then?"

For the moment they were alone in the courtyard, and he might have drawn his sword and slain her before she could cry out. The body of a *bayadere* found in a garden tank would have aroused no curiosity in the city. But Charnomar had never killed a woman, and he did not think of doing so now.

"It is strange," she whispered. "That kaftan and vest—"

She turned her head suddenly. Voices approached the garden, and the door was pushed open. Charnomar saw three Moslems enter, leisurely, as if by right.

The one in advance was an old man in white robes and turban, and the two who attended him were obviously disciples. An *imam*, an expounder of the law of Islam, and by the same token, an enemy of all infidels.

Before the *bayadere* could speak, Charnomar stepped forward and salaamed.

"O master of wisdom, tell thy servant if this night is the first of the moon of Shawwul?"

The *imam* answered in measured tones.

"Nay, the second night from this, Shawwul begins."

Something like suspicion touched his thin face, and the two youths stared openly. Charnomar breathed deeply, his ears alert for the first cry of betrayal that might come from the girl. Out of the corner of his eye he saw her rising from the prostration of the dancing girl.

She said nothing at all, and after one glance at her unveiled face, the expounder of the law went on his way toward the tomb. But his disciples looked back over their shoulders, for the Circassian was well worth looking at twice.

"Come," she whispered the moment they were out of sight. "It is not safe for thee here. Nay, walk more slowly, a little before me."

"Whither?" the Cossack asked.

"To my place. Oh, thou art a fool! I prayed, here, outside this tomb, for a man

*A reckless fighter, a daring rider and swordsman, who need not be too clever otherwise.

of my people, a man of the hills. When I saw thee wearing the kaftan and vest I thought that God had sent such a man. But thou art a fool!"

THE CIRCASSIAN lived at the top of a ramshackle wooden building, up flights of dark stairs that were far from quiet. Somewhere a tambourine jingled monotonously, and a woman sang, and the air was full of the reek of hubble-bubbles.

"If thou art afraid," he heard the Circassian whisper, "the way is open to go."

Charnomar did not answer. He had come with her because there were too many lights and too many *janisseries*—who might be looking for a Circassian swordsman—on the prowl for the streets to be safe as yet.

The singing girl drew back a curtain—he could feel the stirring of air as it fell behind her—and after a moment reappeared with a lamp, holding back the curtain for him to enter.

Her room was carpeted and furnished with no more than a charcoal brazier, a tabouret or two with a coffee stand, and a chest. But the settee that ran along the wall was cleanly covered and cushioned, and the air was fresh because the room opened out into a kind of gallery, screened by wooden fretwork. Charnomar kicked off his slippers and went and sat on the divan, and the Circassian laughed softly because this time he sat upon his heels.

"Tell me truly what thou art!" she demanded.

"First," he responded, "tell me why thou did not betray me to the *imam*."

For a moment she looked angry; then it pleased her to mock him again.

"Because thou art a brave—fool."

"Perhaps," he nodded, "because I am a Circassian from the sea—aye, wearing the garments of the dead."

To his astonishment the singing girl shrank back away from him until her shoulders touched the wall. Her eyes widened and seemed to grow swiftly darker as her cheeks became bloodless.

"Why?" she whispered. "In the name of the Compassionate—why?"

"To seek vengeance." Charnomar spoke at a venture, unwilling to mention ransom to this girl of the Kislar Dar.

She swayed and brushed back the yellow mass of hair from her forehead. Her eyes were fastened upon him as if she would read the soul within him, the spirit within the lean dark face and the steel gray eyes. But surely a matter of vengeance could not startle a girl from the hills of the wild clans, who wore thrust in her girdle a curved dagger.

"Indeed, I prayed," she said slowly, "but—how could it happen?"

Charnomar was well content to be silent, until she mastered herself and went to the gallery, presently returning with a small roll of sweetmeat in her hands, fragrant of spice and aloes wood. This was the *ma'jun*, or guest refreshment, and Charnomar took it the more readily because he knew that she meant to offer him food, and the sharing of salt would be a tie between them. Moreover, he was hungry.

"I am Ilga of the Terek people," she said, "and my house is yours."

DEFTLY she prepared food in a brass pot over the brazier, mutton stew seasoned with garlic and rice with saffron. She moved gracefully, and always swiftly, and in silence. She who had mocked and scolded him was now content to treat him as a guest. More than once he found her looking at him with that strange curiosity. Charnomar was listening to the uproar in the street; for the Turkish soldiers, judging by the sounds, were pillaging the houses, under pretext of searching. More than once he heard a woman wailing, and the clinking of anklets as some girl fled past the curtain.

"What can we do?" the Circassian, Ilga, said calmly. "There are guards in the Kislar Dar—aye, they are the first to enter when the door of looting is open."

She placed food on the tabouret beside him and knelt by the divan to eat.

Charnomar was gathering up the last

wad of rice when the curtain was thrust aside and a warrior in mail strode in. He had a shield on one arm and in the fingers of that hand a sack that jingled suggestively when he moved.

"*Ahai*, little pigeon under the roof!"

The Turk, a *spahi* fully armed, blinked in the dull lamplight and made for the gleam of Ilga's tawny head. He must have emptied more than one cup of wine, because he reached for her shoulder and laughed when he clasped only air. Ilga had drawn away from him and slipped to the divan behind the Cossack.

"Little pigeon flies!"

The *spahi* peered about him, holding out his bag, which must have contained many rings and anklets taken from more timid girls. Suddenly he cursed harshly, because he had noticed the Cossack in the depths of the divan.

"Out with thee—dog of the hills!"

Evidently he did not think that Charnomar would dare refuse his bidding. Judging by the shield, the *spahi* was one of the guards of the quarter.

The Cossack got to his feet and confronted the pillager, his hands thrust into his belt.

"Nay," he said, "I will stay and thou wilt go—now."

The *spahi* fumbled for the hilt of his sword, but his fingers struck the sack and he began to mutter. He was not in any mood to take up weapons and presently when the Cossack did not move or speak, he backed to the door and went out, kicking savagely at Charnomar's slippers.

Ilga ran to the balcony and gazed down at the shifting torches and hurrying figures of the alley until she saw the *spahi* make his way into the next house. Then she motioned to Charnomar to sit near her.

"Thou art a strange man," she whispered. "*V'allah*, he, that other, was afraid. I think thy heart is against the Turks."

Charnomar said nothing, but the Circassian seemed to read his silence, because she lifted her head as if making swift decision.

"Surely I prayed; many times. Now I will tell thee who thou art and why—why I prayed."

Drawing her feet beneath her, she rested her chin on her hand.

"Thou art the sword that was sent to me."

Charnomar nearly laughed because it seemed to him that she was playing a game. To feed him, praise him and take money from him. That was what such women did.

"By Allah," he said, "I have no money for thee."

Fleetingly she looked up under the mass of her gleaming hair.

"When did I ask? We have shared the salt, thou and I. And now listen. I prayed for blood vengeance upon Kara Mustafa."

The Cossack had heard that name before. Kara Mustafa was Agha of the *spahis*, commander of the cavalry of the sultan and more than proud of a reputation for cruelty even among a people that made torture a fine art. He took no prisoners and spared no foeman.

"Two years ago," Ilga said quietly, "the sultan's officers went through our villages, claiming a strong young boy from every family to serve in the army. They took my brother, who was a man grown. Ay, they took me—because Kara Mustafa fancied me. We went down to the sea with them. There was a ship . . ."

SHE SAT, musing upon the happenings of two years ago.

"The ship was crowded with our people of the hills—and Armenians and others. It brought us to Stamboul, and when we were climbing up the steps I ran away. I hid that night in the Jews' quarter under some hides. The Jews were kind and gave me food. Another Circassian woman brought me here, to this place."

Again she fell silent, her eyes fastened on the starlight above the flat roofs of the dwellings.

"Every day I asked for my brother, and after awhile they brought me word of him. The Turks had taken him and

stripped off his clothes and thrown him upon the hooks of the wall by the *sarai* gate. I put on a veil and went there with the woman who had sheltered me. It was evening, and they were putting lanterns in the galleries of the minarets. All that day he had hung from two hooks; one had caught in his leg, the other in his stomach. After it was dark I called up to him, and he knew me. But he was nearly mad with pain."

Ilga clasped her hands on the Cossack's knee.

"He cried out that Kara Mustafa tortured him because I had fled, and the Agha had not found me again. *V'allah*! I begged the guards to find Kara Mustafa and make an end of my brother's suffering —the other women going away because of fear. But it was written that my brother should die in that hour. Kara Mustafa is the sword arm of the sultan. And still I, a singing girl, pray that I may see him die, to revenge my brother."

Her eyes blazed suddenly and her hands beat upon Charnomar's knee.

"Now thou hast come in the garments of my people, a swordsman seeking vengeance. If—if I can lead thee to Kara Mustafa wilt thou dare strike him down?"

"The Sipahi Agha?" Charnomar shook his head gravely. "Eh, little maiden, what talk is this? A lord of the Turks is not to be reached so easily."

"But he seeks me—he searches still, they say. And we—"

"Nay, little Ilga. I was sent to do otherwise."

"We have shared the salt."

"And I am bound to aid another."

The light went out of her face, and she went away silently to the divan. She did not make the late night prayer; and Charnomar thought she prayed only when the mood was on her. She drew a linen cloak over her and presently her deep, even breathing told him she was asleep.

Charnomar sat in the darkened gallery, filled with the bittersweet scent of aloes and rose leaves, watching the street and the lights below until he dozed, and the distant call of a muezzin roused him to see the yellow eastern sky reflected in the dark waters of the golden horn. Then, without waking the girl, he went from the room, down to the street.

HE WENT that noon, when the throngs in the streets were greatest and suspicion least, to investigate the lower city where the old *sarai** stood. The sultan now lived in a summer dwelling upon one of the hills; but the armory and the prison and the quarters of the chief officers were still in the old grounds. Two sides of the rambling walls fronted the sea, and one side toward the city was taken up by the barracks of the *spahis*. Charnomar went and squatted among some pilgrims who rested in the shade of poplars by the main gate. Beyond this first wall was a garden—he could see the lines of elms, and through the foliage the blank white wall and domes of a church.

This church had been used in other years by the emperors who had held this last stronghold of Rome. Then the victorious sultans had made of it a small mosque; and when the *sarai* was abandoned as a palace they had hung its walls with their trophies, the weapons of vanquished kings and warriors, the rapiers and matchlocks of Christendom ranged among the jewel encrusted shields, the inlaid pistols and the gold filled simitars of Persia. But chiefest of their trophies was the cage, built by captive metal workers, its bars set into the solid stone flooring of the vault beneath the church.

Here, barred like animals in darkness, were kept the enemies of the sultan, whom he had chief cause to remember. Food was passed in to them through the grating, and the door of the cage was only opened to conduct them out to the blinding iron, or the hooks, or stake. When they died betimes, as often happened, the bodies were thrown over the wall into the sea. And here, Charnomar knew, was Kirdyaga, the Cossack ataman.

By dint of patience and the appearance

*Palace; by Italians and others rendered as *seraglio*.

of good natured stupidity, he passed the guards of the outer gate. When a Nakshab dervish with a gourd and beggar's staff whined to be allowed to see the courtyard within the gate, Charnomar begged a blessing of the holy man, cursing the guards loudly because they mocked the piety of a man from the East.

The dervish, who had come to beg, fastened himself upon Charnomar until he was pacified with copper and went to squat by the roadway where officials came and went.

"*Ya huk—ya hak*!" the dervish whined, the cry that is as common as the barking of dogs beyond Stamboul.

And Charnomar wandered within the elms of the roadway, chewing mastic and gazing open eyed upon the gardeners and the strolling men in silk turbans, and the brown stained wall of a building where great steel hooks projected from the masonry—hooks turned at every angle to catch a falling body.

He was gazing at the hooks, though he was counting the armed Turks in the portico of the prison church near him, when the dervish's wail increased, and hoofs clattered upon the hard clay of the road. He turned in time to see a cavalcade of riders trot past, led by a man in a gold embroidered *khalat* and a small turban the color of steel.

"'WAY!" CRIED one of the attendants. " 'Way for the Agha Sipahi!"

Kara Mustafa—Black Mustafa—had the high, square shoulders and dark face of an Egyptian. He rode, as if from habit, with his hand resting on the balled hilt of his simitar. There was power in the broad figure and both intelligence and cruelty in the blunt head that turned slowly from side to side to scan the crowd. Something in the creases about his throat and the beak of a mouth suggested a lizard.

The beggar rose and advanced into the road, making for Kara Mustafa. With the assurance of a pilgrim and the effrontery of one who has nothing to lose by shame, he grasped at the Agha's stirrup.

Whether the horse shied at the staff of the dervish, or whether the leader of the *spahis* did not choose to be touched by the beggar—the Arab that Kara Mustafa rode flung up its head and swerved. And the instant before it did so, Kara Mustafa drove the point of his iron stirrup into the chest of the dervish.

The Agha reined in the startled horse without shifting his seat in the saddle. Nor did he look back. The dervish staggered and dropped his staff. He fell on his knees, his thin arms wrapped around his body. He coughed and spat blood into the dust of the road.

Some of the *spahis* laughed, but the Turks on guard at the church entrance were silent. They had all seen the dervish fall.

Whereupon Charnomar wandered over to the church portico and seated himself upon the lowest of the marble steps, worn smooth by countless feet of other ages.

"A fine horse," he muttered, after the receding dust of the cavalcade.

It would have seemed strange in a Circassian to take more notice of the dervish than the horse.

"Was the rider the sultan?"

One of the Turks grunted and another yawned and spat.

"Nay, the sword arm of the sultan. Who art thou, to ask?"

The mild looking Circassian pulled at his mustache, his gray eyes jovial.

"A *jigit*, a rider. Aye, from the sea."

He leaned against a pillar and took from his wallet his short clay pipe and steel and flint.

"It was said to me that an unbeliever would be set upon the stake. Here. I do not see him."

"At sunset, the evening after this one."

"Where is the dog who is to be slain?"

The Turk jerked his head backward.

"Within—aye, within the bars."

"Ah. I have not seen the cage. When I return to my people I would say to them that I have seen the cage."

The Turk shook his head.

"It is not permitted. Go and look at

the gaol by the great mosque. Thy people will not know the difference."

Charnomar lighted his pipe and gazed about the garden as if the matter did not concern him overmuch. But he had let the Turk, a hook nosed swordsman from Albania, see a single gold piece when he replaced the flint and steel. In silence he waited, until the Albanian came and sat beside him.

"The prisoner to go to the stake is a Cossack," the guard whispered. "*Bismillah*—he is the chieftain of a regiment."

Charnomar looked inquisitive.

"Is the prisoner thine?"

"Nay, he belongs to the *rikab aghalari*, who is the master of the stirrup, one of the favorites of the sultan."

Charnomar fixed the name in his mind, while the Albanian pondered.

"Eh," he said, "for a price—for a very little price thou canst see the Cossack. Come to this place at the hour of evening prayer on the morrow. Then will the dog of an infidel be led out."

"*V'allah!* For nothing at all, an hour later, I could see him at the stake."

"But here we will bind him, and set him face to tail upon a mule, to lead through the streets. That will be a tale to tell in thy village."

"Perhaps." Charnomar looked disappointed. "And yet it is in my mind to see the cage. I am no beggar. I have gold."

Again the soldier hesitated. Punishment in the *sarai* was swift and sure for one who disobeyed an order. But the Circassian seemed guileless and stubborn —and much might be done with gold.

"An order has been given, to find a man with a mule," the guard whispered. "At sunset, tomorrow, come thou to the gate—that one where the dervish squirms. Come thou at the hour I said—and wait. I will do what may be done. But bring a purse with thee."

Charnomar clapped his hand upon his girdle, nodded, and with a whispered "*Inshallah!*" stowed away his pipe and, after gazing openly at the weapons of the guard, turned his back upon the portico.

BY THE time he had left the gate he had wandered over most of the garden and knew its plan; he had studied the prison church and had noticed one other entrance—a narrow door iron studded and almost certainly kept barred. And he had aroused the greed of one of the guards without drawing suspicion upon himself. He was reasonably sure the Albanian would pass him in to see Kirdyaga, and he meant to bring two horses with him, instead of the mule.

Not until he had decided this did he go in search of the house of the master of the stirrup, to make the attempt to ransom Kirdyaga.

TWENTY-FOUR hours later Charnomar made his way through the ever increasing throngs of the horse market that had once been the forum of Theodosius. There was little buying and selling. The mid-afternoon sun had baked the mud of the streets and the stench vied with the heat, and the flies were a torment. The Cossack wandered among the traders until he found a wizened Tartar sitting on a sheepskin with his back against the soiled marble block of a pedestal that lacked a column. From the Tartar Charnomar bought two shaggy ponies that looked both evil and ill used but had a turn of speed and endurance. He knew the breed.

For both ponies he bought bridles and saddles, and he mounted one, leading the other through the alleys to the khan of the Bokharians, a great hostelry for wayfarers that was half a sleeping court and half a stable. Here he fed and watered his beasts, loosened the girths and left them tied. Three hours of sunlight remained, before the time when he was to go to see the cage.

The khan was near the Place of the Girls and Charnomar made his way back to the scene of his meeting with the *janisseries*. He did not hurry; he even stopped at a weapon seller's stall, and selected a heavy simitar with a fine edge. He placed this, in its leather sheath, in his girdle.

The weapon seller, who had got his price without much haggling, waxed curious.

"Is not one sword enough?"

"Perhaps. But this night will be the first of the moon of Shawwul, and—who knows?—I may have need of the two."

"Verily, the moon of Shawwul begins—aye, and the first of the three holy days."

With the first darkness, when a black thread could no longer be distinguished from a white one, would begin the festival of the Bairam of Ramadan. Already, as Charnomar wandered forth again, merchants were leaving their stalls. Many had put on gleaming robes of crimson and gold; the horses that pressed past him in the dust had caparisonings of white and cloth of silver; through the throngs bobbed the white caps of the dervishes and over the tumult of feet and voices resounded the cry of beggars. The month of fasting was at an end and with the first of the holy days came feasting.

The wisest of the Greeks and Jews were leaving the city, because in the first evening of the great Bairam armed Islam exulted, and a drunken soldier might see fit to try his sword on an unbeliever, and pave his way to Paradise thereby.

But Charnomar, wearing openly his two swords, seemed perfectly happy as he sought out the coffee house where Ilga the Circassian had told him she sang in the afternoon. He went down the steps into the cool gloom where the figures sitting against the wall sipped noisily at their bowls and argued in whispers. A boy dressed as a Mamluk stood at the entrance and sprinkled him with rose water, and Charnomar tossed the boy, who expected copper, a silver coin.

"*Giaba*" he cried at the proprietor, snapping his fingers.

Should not a warrior from the hills, on the eve of a festival, buy coffee for all his companions in merriment? And for himself he had brandy in the coffee.

"Eh," he said to the gloom at large, "where is the music—where is the singer?"

"By and by," explained the Turk who was master of the place, "the fiddles will play, and there will be the shadow puppet show."

"Nay, bring out a singing girl."

"The *bayadere*? She sings only for the *chelabilar*, the lords!"

"Allah! Am I not a personage?"

Charnomar smiled, laying his hands on his two sword hilts, and the Turk waddled off into the curtains. When he returned, Ilga appeared behind him, and the sipping and whispering ceased, because her face, unveiled beneath the tawny hair drew their eyes instantly. And even in the haze of smoke they recognised beauty.

"The Yataghan!" Charnomar cried. "The song of the sword that whispered!"

"He is a little drunk," the Turk admonished her, "but he is a man of thy hills—"

"O son of a bath tender," laughed Charnomar, "I am *very* drunk, and I will give gold to this singer. Go back to thy sitting place!"

Ilga saluted him, sinking gracefully upon her knee, but her eyes under the long lashes were both eager and disturbed.

"Nay," Charnomar insisted, "sit by me, here! Am I not the one to pay? Knowest thou the song? Thus it begins."

Reaching out his long arm he took from her the three stringed lute, and swept his powerful fingers across it. She lifted her head and nodded.

"My sword is rusty and the blade is dull—"

HER FULL, soft voice swelled and sank in the wild and yet sad measure of the Circassian song. And when she had made an end, he called for coffee to be served her, his fingers still wandering over the lute. Fifty pairs of eyes were upon them.

"Are not the gates open?" she said under her breath. "*Ai*, in a little while it will be sundown, and the beginning of the festival. Before then, thou must go!"

"Why?" Charnomar wondered aloud. "Verily, by Allah, this is a splendid city, and soon the cannon will fire, and the minarets be lighted!"

To mark the hour of sunset, he had

heard that guns would thunder from the forts. To mark the eve of the holy day, lanterns would be hung in the galleries of the towers.

To the watchers it appeared beyond doubt that the wide shouldered Circassian had had too much of *raki* and coffee.

"And why hast thou come to this place?" she demanded softly.

"To say farewell to thee," he whispered, and then raised his voice again. "For the sight of thee is pleasing to me. O little pigeon of the loft, I will sing of thy charms. Aye, one by one. First of thy sun gold hair—"

Some of the watchers smiled and resumed their talk. With an exclamation Ilga snatched the lute from him, and picked up the bowl of steaming black juice that had been set before her on a wooden platter.

"O fool!" she cried aloud, and then almost inaudibly, "I know now who thou art. Aye, a Cossack—an unbeliever and friend of the unbelievers. At the time of the late afternoon prayer, yesterday, thou wert at the house of the master of the stirrup, talking with his treasurer. To him thou gavest a great sum in jewels, for the ransom of a Cossack prisoner, saying that thou wert sent by the brotherhood of the Cossacks. Is not the tale true?"

"It is thy tale," Charnomar smiled. "Say on!"

"The servant of the treasurer told it in the Kislar Dar, and it was related to me—that a heedless Circassian hath acted as the emissary of the Cossacks."

"Then," Charnomar mused, "the servants of the master of the stirrup do not know who I am?"

"*Ai-a*, their talk was of the jewels. They think thee a besotted hillman, who served the foes of Islam."

"And thou?"

"*Ohai*, Charnomar, I know well thou art not of my people. Thy speech, thy way of sitting, the mission that brought thee. I think the *janisseries* were hunting thee that first night with cause. Thou art an enemy of Islam and thy life is forfeit, if I choose."

The Cossack took up his bowl of coffee and drank it slowly, with loud sips. His fingers on the hot bowl were steady, and when he set it down, he had made a decision.

"True, little Ilga—thou hast spoken the truth."

He heard the catch of her breath, and was aware that her head turned toward him swiftly, and he was grateful for the obscurity in which they sat.

"Did the master of the stirrup free thy —thy brother in arms?" she asked after a little silence.

"I gave them," he explained, "the missive that was sent to the Cossacks. And the sum of the ransom in jewels. Many men came in to question me, and to ask each for more payment. I gave them the last of the jewels, but did not show any gold. I promised that more gold would be given after the Cossack colonel was freed. So, in the end, the master of the stirrup made out a paper to release the captive."

"And thou, O fool?"

"They told me to go to the courtyard of the cage tomorrow morning and the Cossack would be given to me. That was the order in the paper. I have it here."

"Hast thou read the writing?"

"Nay, how could I? But it has a seal."

"And wilt thou go to the cage with it?"

For a moment the Cossack was silent. Ilga knew his secret, but she had shared bread and salt with him and, beyond that, instinct whispered that she would not betray him. And Charnomar had found that the boldest action was often the safest.

"Aye," he said, "but not tomorrow. I shall go this evening. The men of the master of the stirrup are too fond of gold to keep faith altogether."

"And yet thou knowest not what is written in the paper!"

"No help for it, little Ilga. At least it bears a seal. I have two horses and I shall say that the Cossack colonel is sold to me. A little more gold—" he grinned—

"they may hand him over. If not, we may cut a way out with swords."

She shook her head quietly.

"Can the trapped panther free himself from the cage with his teeth? Do not go."

"Didst thou not go to sit by thy brother who was hanging on the hooks?"

"Aye—"

"I came to Stamboul to free the Cossack colonel from torture. Shall I turn back now, saying to the Cossacks that I became afraid of a paper and a woman's word?"

"Nothing will change thy mind?"

Charnomar made no response, but the singing girl understood his silence. She rose, gathering her dolman about her slender shoulders, shaking back the mass of tawny hair.

"Then come with me. I know an Armenian who can read the paper. Nay —wilt thou go blindly into the trap?"

Again she called to him to follow her, and the men in the place looked up curiously. Charnomar strode after her to the curtains in the rear, and through a passage that opened into an alley deep in shadow where the dogs snarled among piles of refuse. Ilga hastened on, past courtyard walls to a narrow stair that led to a balcony.

THE COSSACK lengthened his stride to keep up with her, but the swift footed girl disappeared within the arch of the balcony a moment before him, and he took his time in making certain that no men loitered in the alley before he followed her, bending his head to pass under the smoke blackened beams.

On a worn carpet an old man in a skullcap sat, with a book resting upon a frame before him. The level sunlight gleamed on his white beard and thin, pallid hands. Ilga's eyes blazed as she held out her hand for the missive, and Charnomar drew the rolled paper from his girdle.

The Armenian glanced at the seal and fingered his beard.

"*Eh, chelabim,*" he muttered, reading over a second time the few lines of writing. "It is like the Turks, this."

"What says it?" demanded Ilga.

"It is an order from Hassan Bey, the master of the stirrup, to the officer of the cage. It says that the officer should seize the bearer and put him to death at once."

"O blind fool!" Ilga whispered.

Charnomar stretched out his hand for the order, and replaced it in his sash.

"I had thought the Turks meant to trick me, by sending the prisoner to the stake this evening," he said grimly, "and giving me no more than his body tomorrow. Now that Hassan Bey has been paid, he wishes to do away also with the man who paid him. I had not thought of that."

"What wilt thou do?" demanded the singing girl anxiously.

"I must take two horses to the gate of the *sarai.*"

"And then? *V'allah!*" She shivered a little, as if the cold wind from the strait had come into the balcony. "Nay, I know. Thou wilt try to aid thy brother with the sword. I am afraid!"

"Why?" Charnomar smiled, because he could not understand her moods. "What harm to thee?"

"At first," she said swiftly, "I would have let thee die, to harm Kara Mustafa. I planned that when I first saw thee. I led thee to my place to persuade thee. But the next day, when I woke and found thee gone, my mind was otherwise."

Suddenly she came close to him, resting her cheek against his shoulder.

"May Allah shield thee—I am afraid. The *sarai* is an evil place, and I—I would like to go with thee from this city. I love thee. May God have pity upon me! Let us take the horses and go back to my people of the hills."

Slowly the Cossack shook his head.

"Nay," he responded, placing his hand on the tawny head. "Do thou stay with this man of learning."

But Ilga sprang away from him, her eyes gleaming with tears.

"Shall I not go to the cage with the man I love—I, who have seen my brother die? I will wait at the gate."

"May Allah shield thee, then," cried

Charnomar impatiently. "Come, if thou wilt."

He strode away and Ilga followed. The man in the skull cap watched them pass from the alley and push into the throngs outside. Down by the sea a cannon boomed.

The Armenian sighed, shook his head, and turned a page of the book on the stand beside him.

THE SUN had gone down in the mist, and one by one the minarets of the *sarai* were outlined in light against the gray twilight, as lanterns were hung in the galleries. The throng that had gathered in front of the main gate of the palace pressed closer, to watch the lights and await the coming of the prisoner who was to be led through the streets to the stake.

By the courtyard wall a mountebank was setting up a puppet show, and cloaked figures had already seated themselves expectantly before the curtain. The jingling of a tambourine chimed in the hum of voices that swelled and sank as Turkish officers appeared and passed through the gate.

Some of the officers stopped at a table under an awning hung with colored lanterns. The table was set with rolls of tobacco, boxes of mastic and ambergris. Behind the table appeared a thin head under a long cloth cap that flapped from side to side. The head hovered anxiously as a bird over its nest, sometimes smiling, sometimes exclaiming, and always bowing profoundly before the Turks. Shamoval, the Jew of Stamboul, had returned to set up shop at the beginning of the festival.

"Great, mighty lords," he cried, "here are ribbons and sweets, and bracelets for the pretty girls—and at such prices!"

While he cried out his small eyes pierced the throng like lances. Shamoval, as well as the others, had come to see the torture of the Cossack colonel. But unlike the others, he had money at stake on the issue. He hoped earnestly that Charnomar had left Stamboul before now.

And so, when he saw two Circassians ride up to the gate on their shaggy horses, he uttered an exclamation of fear and anguish. In spite of the beauty of the girl who rode unveiled among these Moslems, he had eyes only for Charnomar, who dismounted some distance from the gate and led his two horses forward.

Shamoval saw the Circassian girl slip from the saddle and go out of the crowd to the entrance of an alley. Here she stood where she could look through the open gate, and Shamoval muttered to himself, shaking his head, because he distrusted all singing girls.

"*Ai!*" he cried, clutching at the sleeve of an officer who was sniffing at a box of mastic to learn whether there was opium in it. "Look, noble lord!" He lowered his voice. "This mountain *jigit* with the horses—he is—"

Something caught in Shamoval's throat and he could not go on. He would be rewarded if he pointed out a Cossack. But he could not bring himself to say the words. And then perhaps Charnomar had only come here by chance, and would not run any mad risk.

"He is bringing the horse to mount the dog of a Cossack, who will be taken to the stake," grunted the Turk, evidently in good humor.

"Holy Saints!"

Shamoval's mouth dropped open and he trembled. Again he started to speak, and only groaned.

Taking the two horses by the reins, Charnomar advanced to the soldiers at the open gate, spoke to them briefly and passed on, into the palace grounds, where Shamoval could no longer see him.

THE COSSACK knotted the reins of the two ponies and made fast a loop to the low hanging branch of an elm some distance to the side of the road and a stone's throw from the prison church. He took his time about this, because he wanted to make certain where the Turkish soldiers were. Seven at the outer gate, ten or twelve at the portico of the church, an occasional officer with servants riding out of the grounds. Over there, in the

gloom under the high walls of the cavalry barrack, perhaps a score of *spahis* sitting and lying about a fountain.

He was glad that no mounted *spahis* were about. If he could get Kirdyaga into the saddle of a horse . . .

"That's the only way out," he thought.

The master of the stirrup had tricked him, and it was useless now to show the order that had been given him. Only one thing was possible—to try to cut a way out of the city. A guard would be sent, to escort Kirdyaga to the stake. It would be dark by then. And if the guard were *janisseries* on foot, Charnomar could bring his horse close to Kirdyaga, in the streets, let the captive know what he meant to do, and whip up the horses suddenly. After that, he did not know. The gates were locked. But Kirdyaga would be in the saddle of a horse, with a sword in his hand, and he would not go to the stake.

"What is this?" growled a voice. "Thou hast brought horses instead of the mule that was ordered."

The Albanian had left his comrades of the watch and come to meet the Cossack in no gentle mood.

"Nay," Charnomar made answer, "they are my horses. I do not ride mules through the streets."

"May Allah not prosper thee! O dog without wit, didst thou think to ride like a lord among the *spahis* who are to take the Cossack to the stake?"

"What *spahis?*"

"*Mas'allah!* The twenty and the officer who will have charge of the captive. It is past the time of their coming." The broad face of the swordsman glowered under the massive white turban.

Charnomar knew that there would be no chance to cut Kirdyaga free from a score of lancers. That way, also, was closed.

"Where are the sequins that were promised?" demanded the soldier.

Feeling in his wallet the Cossack drew out a single gold piece and gave it to the Albanian who peered at it and spat.

"*One!* May jackals tear thee—"

"No more, until I have seen the cage."

Charnomar's voice was low and unhurried, but the Albanian saw fit not to argue. He stowed away the coin and led the way to the portico.

On the steps the Cossack glanced over his shoulder. The road through the garden was deserted; he heard no hoofs. Twilight had closed in upon the white walls of the *sarai*. The hooks overhead were no longer visible. In the minarets the lanterns glowed, tracing spears of light against the purple sky. One of the soldiers was tuning a flute, and Charnomar hummed under his breath as he waited for the Albanian, who had disappeared into the church.

At any time the *spahis* might come up and after that Kirdyaga was doomed. The only remaining chance was that the Turks might let Charnomar go down to the prisoners with only a single guard, or two. A slight chance. But the thought of it was like wine to the big Cossack and he waited cheerfully for the least bit of luck.

A lantern came swinging between the pillars and was lifted high. A gaunt man, beardless, in a black robe, peered out and asked sullenly—

"Where is the one who would smell of death?"

Charnomar ascended the steps and almost laughed as he did so.

"Here, O thou father of vultures."

The lantern was thrust close to his eyes, then the keeper of the church grunted and turned, signing for him to follow. They passed under a doorless arch, into the cold gloom of the stone nave.

Nothing within looked like a church. The swinging lantern flickered over rows of swords on the walls, the steel blades tarnished and dull. Charnomar saw costly shields heaped in the corners and long Indian matchlocks stacked here and there. The statues and mosaic work had been knocked out by the Turks and the altar, dimly seen under the dome, dismantled.

The air was heavy with tobacco smoke

and an odor less pleasing. The flapping of their slippers on the slabs echoed overhead, swiftly, because the keeper hurried, looking over his shoulder to see that Charnomar did not try to snatch up any of the weapons.

FOUR men seated around a brazier on the raised chancel looked up at Charnomar, stared at his sword hilts and the wallet in his girdle. One had a beard stained red in the Persian fashion.

"What is this?" he asked.

"The mule driver who comes to take the Cossack," responded the keeper. "It is time."

He of the red beard yawned and spat and stretched out a muscular hand for the lantern. The others rolled off their haunches and stood up. One, who looked like an Italian renegade, had a long pistol in his belt, but all carried swords. The keeper saw fit to say nothing more, and Charnomar hoped that the four would not go down together to the vaults.

But the four filed off, opening a door at the side of the chancel. Charnomar heard them descending steps.

"Go, if thou wilt," the keeper muttered. "It is down there—the cage."

Charnomar gained the head of the stairs and kicked off his slippers. There was light enough to see the last of the four passing around a turn in the stairs. The air in the passage was close and foul with stale filth. What good to go down there, with four armed men? Two he could cut down, but not four.

He slipped down the steps and around the turning. One more flight of steps. The Turks tramped off into the shadows of the vault. Charnomar moved after them, his big body swinging soundlessly over the stone flagging. He stopped in the shadow of a heavy pillar.

Holding the lantern high, the man with the red beard was peering through a line of rusty iron bars. In the center of the vault these bars had been set in the flooring and the ceiling, making an enclosure some ten paces long and three broad. And in this space without so much as a quilt or a mattress a score of men were crowded. Outstretched on remnants of sheepskins, or on the stones greasy from the contact of their bodies and darkened with stains, some lay blinking at the lantern. Others squatted against the bars, shielding their eyes from the light. Charnomar noticed one who wore a silk *khalat* and embroidered sash.

By their heavy breathing and restless movements, some must have been ill. The coughing as the guards approached the gate in the bars sounded like the subdued barking of dogs. They were housed worse than dogs—these doomed men of the cage.

Evidently they had shown their teeth in the past, because two of the Turks drew their swords, while a third fumbled with a heavy key in the lock. The gate, a square of smaller bars, rasped open, and the red beard spat through it.

"May God be with ye!" he mocked them. "Send forth the Cossack unbeliever."

The coughing ceased while the listeners hung upon the words.

"He will go to the spit," remarked the man with the pistol, "now that he has been roasted enough."

Charnomar understood the words when the Cossack emerged from the gate. The hair had grown upon his shaven scalp, so the long lock looked like a plume hanging from a tuft. But around the brow the hair had been burned and the skin seared with hot irons.

This torture had taken the sight from one eye, because he turned his gray head from side to side to see his way. He was bare to the belt and through the hair of his chest a great cross had been burned, so that the cracked red flesh showed clear. Only a spark of vitality remained in Kirdyaga's shattered body, but he held his head up and he stood before the Turks not as a slave but as a foeman unarmed.

At sight of him Charnomar strode toward the five men.

"O brothers," he inquired, "is this the unbeliever?"

"And thou, son of a mule—who summoned thee?" demanded the leader of the guards, he of the red beard.

Charnomar's gray eyes surveyed him grimly.

"It was written I should come—to bid thee hasten. Verily there is little life in the accursed unbeliever."

Yellow teeth shone through the red beard.

"Verily and indeed, as thou sayest. Look!" The Turk thrust his foot against Kirdyaga's hip and pointed at deep swollen gashes under the captive's shoulder blades.

"Thus he hung from the hooks."

"Aye, he tasted of hell!" Charnomar nodded understanding and pressed closer to stare at Kirdyaga's wounds. "Ho, he will whine, at the stake, like a ripped cat."

"Nay, he does not cry out."

KIRDYAGA, standing passive as a wearied horse, waited for the talk to cease. And Charnomar knew that the old Cossack was so maimed that he wished for death more than anything else.

"Look how he eyes the swords," he grinned. "Allah, he would like to have one in his hand again! *Hai*—" he drew a simitar and balanced it in both hands out of Kirdyaga's reach—"the old eagle lifts his head." He spat into Kirdyaga's face and the two Turks who had stepped past him to close the gate turned to watch the mocking of the captive. "There is life in him yet. Eh, Kirdyaga!"

"What didst thou call him?" demanded the red beard, who thought he had missed a jest.

"*Kirdyaga*, ataman!"

The good eye of the tormented man turned full upon Charnomar, gleaming strangely.

Charnomar tossed the simitar in the air toward him, and took a single step past him. For that instant the eyes of all the Turks were upon the steel blade, and in the next second Charnomar had set his hands against the shoulders of the two guards standing at the open gate and thrust. He put all the power of his shoulders into the thrust, and the two were taken off balance. They plunged through the gate and fell headlong. Whereupon Charnomar slammed shut the gate and turned the key.

There had not been a sound other than that. The simitar had not fallen to the stones, and the onlookers had not yet bethought them of shouting. A single glance showed Charnomar that the old Cossack had caught the simitar by the hilt as it fell, as a swordsman could be trusted to do by instinct.

The red beard had put down the lantern and drawn his own weapon, his eyes bewildered. He cut hastily at Kirdyaga, but Charnomar parried the cut and knocked up the Turk's blade. The long simitar of the young Cossack slashed the burly leader under the ribs, and blood darkened the man's girdle and breeches.

"*Ha, Muslimin!*" the red beard groaned and fell forward.

Charnomar turned to look for the other Turk and found him cocking his pistol, feeling with hasty fingers at the priming. He fired as the young Cossack leaped toward him, but the ball went wide, tearing through the sleeve of Charnomar's coat.

Then the Turk lifted the pistol to throw it, reaching at the same instant for a curved knife behind his hip. Suddenly he screamed, standing rigid, still clutching the smoking pistol. Charnomar had thrust the point of the simitar under the man's heart and twisted it upward. The soldier's knees bent and his head and arms fell forward.

"A good blow!" Kirdyaga spoke for the first time—a quivering growl, as if the sound of his own voice was strange to him.

"Health to you, Sir Colonel!" Charnomar grinned at him. "The brothers of the Siech sent me to greet you."

"Alone?"

"Aye."

Charnomar had stepped to the cage to see what had happened to the other two guards. And for a moment the Cossacks stared silently.

WHERE the Turks had fallen were two piles of writhing, gasping figures. The Turks were not visible. They had fallen among the captives, and all the inmates of the cage, even one too ill to do more than crawl, had scrambled upon them, gripping and tearing and clutching at their weapons.

A man's leg rose out of the tangle, kicking. A deep groan resounded to the vaulted roof. Some of the captives began to get to their feet. One held a sword, its channels dark with blood. He was the wearer of the silk *khalat*. For the other weapon they were still struggling, until a bearded negro came erect with it and lashed about him, half maddened with the lust of fighting, trampling on the torn body of the soldier who had been alive and careless of harm five minutes before.

"In the name of Allah the Compassionate," cried the first noble, "open the cage!"

They pressed against the bars, peering through the smoke at Charnomar.

"O thou brother of misfortune, open swiftly!"

In the confusion of the struggle it did not occur to them that Charnomar might be anything but a Moslem like themselves. If they thought at all, or cared, they must have reasoned that he had quarreled with the guards. Life is strong even in condemned men, and only one thing was in their minds, to escape from the cage. They were all doomed to torment in various ways.

"O ye dead men!" Charnomar cried back at them. "Will ye come forth to your graves?"

They shouted in unison, half crazed with dread that the Turks would come and bind them. And Charnomar turned the key in the gate. Kirdyaga picked up the lantern and stepped aside.

But the men of the cage did not wait for light. All of them knew that weapons were to be had in the church above them, and they rushed up the stairs, the giant negro in the lead, the sick man staggering behind. In a moment the Cossacks heard a frightened yell, and Charnomar wondered what had happened to the keeper who had lingered by the brazier. Shouts echoed down the stairway faintly, and in the distance sounded the clashing of steel.

"COME," Charnomar said.

But Kirdyaga shook his gray, scarred head. He drew closer to Charnomar and bent to look in his face.

"Nay, for me the road is closed. Eh, you are brave. You may get out. Give me your pipe and some tobacco. I have a sword and Satan will have new servants before they make an end of me."

Charnomar shook his head.

"It is night. I have horses waiting. Once in the saddle, who knows? Come!"

The gaunt colonel's mustache twitched in a grim smile.

"How far could I ride with this?" He pointed to the scar of the cross on his chest. "You are young. Maybe girls are waiting for you somewhere or other."

"If you stay, I stay."

"A thousand devils take you!" Kirdyaga turned toward the stair unsteadily. "Where are the horses?"

He mustered his strength as he climbed the steps, breathing heavily. At the top Charnomar ran out into the chancel to see what was happening at the main entrance.

"Hide of the devil," he whispered, "the *spahis* have come up."

Horses were plunging outside the portico. He heard rather than saw them. Smoking torches swung wildly through the outer garden. The tall negro, the tunic torn from his shoulders, stood in the portico, a sword in one hand, an ax in the other. Many of the captives had been soldiers, and they had had their pick of many weapons. With nothing to hope for except a swift death, they had cut their way through the guards who had come into the church to investigate the pistol shot, and had fallen upon the surprised *spahis* like maddened wolves. Their outcry—*Allah-ilallahu*—mingled with the rallying shout of the soldiers. Charnomar was well content.

He ran back, took the lantern from Kirdyaga and searched along the corridor for the small door he had noticed when he had examined the garden. It was closed and barred, but in another moment he had blown out the lantern and opened the door.

Taking Kirdyaga by the arm, he walked to the elms where the horses were tethered. The *janisseries* at the outer gate of the garden were hurrying toward the church, and *spahis* were running up from their barrack. Turbaned heads appeared under the lights of distant balconies, but no one saw the two Cossacks moving under the trees. The garden was a bedlam of struggling figures and galloping horses.

Charnomar found the two ponies where he had left them, and he helped the old Cossack to mount.

"Keep behind me and keep your mouth shut."

Grunting with satisfaction, Kirdyaga thrust his feet into the stirrups and trotted after Charnomar, who kneed his horse to a gallop as soon as they reached the road.

"*Ahai!*" he shouted, and the throng of merrymakers who had pushed into the open gate gave way hastily.

In Stamboul only Turks might ride and a rider with a drawn sword would not be tolerant of delay. No guards were there, but no guards were needed to open a way.

As Kirdyaga passed through, the crowd yelled with fear and astonishment.

Even Shamoval looked up, who was scurrying about like a long eared rabbit, trying to get his belongings packed and away.

Charnomar looked over the tossing heads, to where Ilga had taken her stand to watch. And he reined in so suddenly that his pony reared.

The puppet showman had kindled oil lamps behind his curtain and the light from these lamps fell upon the Circassian girl. She was straining desperately to free herself from a Moslem who had gripped the tangle of her long hair.

And this man, who sat easily in the saddle of a restless black stallion, whose cloth of gold cloak gleamed in the strong light, over silvered mail, was Kara Mustafa. He had found Ilga and caught her. Another Turkish nobleman was maneuvering his horse behind the girl, trying to grip her arms and lift her to Mustafa's saddle.

Perhaps the leader of the *spahis* had come to take charge of Kirdyaga's execution; perhaps he had come when he heard the fighting. But once he had seen the girl he paid no heed to events within the *sarai*. His broad chin was outthrust, his thick lips grimaced, and his eyes were no more than slits.

Before Charnomar could move he heard a hoarse shout behind him—

"*Khosh aha-ar!*"

Kirdyaga, striking his pony with the flat of his blade, had wheeled into the throng and headed for Kara Mustafa, ten paces distant.

EXCITEMENT had gripped the old Cossack when he mounted to the saddle. Sight of the Turkish commander in his shining dress had stirred the embers of old hatreds. His one eye was fastened upon the grinning face of Kara Mustafa.

Quickly Charnomar wheeled his pony. But Kirdyaga was ahead of him, almost upon the lord of the *spahis*.

Mustafa had seen him at once, had released Ilga and gripped the hilt of his simitar. Clad in mail from throat to knee, a skilled swordsman, he seemed as eager for the meeting as the gaunt Cossack.

" 'Tis a sick dog," he cried to the other Turk. "Nay, I will give him his death."

He started to draw his sword and shouted in sudden fury. Ilga wrapped her arms about his forearm. She was on his sword side and she flung all her weight upon him so that he could not shake her off at once.

He lifted his left hand to strike her, but changed his mind, to jerk at the reins, to wheel his horse away from the Cossack.

But Kirdyaga crashed into him, and the long simitar slashed under his chin.

"*Hai!*" the old Cossack shouted.

All his strength had gone into the blow, enough to drive the curving steel through to the Turk's spine. Kara Mustafa gripped convulsively with his knees and Kirdyaga could not free the blade. At the same instant Mustafa's companion struck Kirdyaga's unguarded head. The steel split the skull and when the Turk wrenched it free, Kirdyaga fell voiceless to the ground.

CHARNOMAR came in with a rush, and the Moslem nobleman turned to meet him agilely. The curved blades clashed and parted and clashed again. The Turk's horse reared. Charnomar closed in—he had need to make an end at once—caught the Moslem's downward cut on the back of his own simitar. Leaning forward before the other could pull away, he drove his hilt into his adversary's throat and when the Turk swayed back in the saddle he pushed the point of his blade deep into the rider's side.

The Turk's horse became frantic and reared, throwing the dying man to the ground. But Charnomar caught the rein and swung the horse to his other side.

"Mount," he called to Ilga.

While the girl was climbing into the saddle, he looked down at Kirdyaga. The old Cossack was dead, a grim smile on his gaunt, scarred face. Beside him the glittering body of Kara Mustafa still moved convulsively, the dark face knotted in agony, the sword still locked deep under the chin.

Charnomar felt in his own girdle for the written order that had been given him by the Turks. He tossed it down beside Kara Mustafa, for the men of the *sarai* to find and wonder at. Ilga uttered an exclamation. He looked up quickly.

The throng by the puppet show had fled at the first flash of the swords; but now the men had stopped to look. The showman, a miniature wooden warrior on each fist, was cursing and praying at the same time; the Jew Shamoval was tearing at his earlocks in an agony of suspense. A *janissery* thrust his way forward, raising his rallying cry.

"*Ha Muslimin!*"

As soon as the Cossack and the Circassian girl turned and whipped their rearing horses into the darkness of the alley, din broke out behind them. Presently Charnomar heard the familiar thudding of racing horses.

"The *spahis*," he said, listening to the shouts of the riders.

"Aye," she nodded, "and the gates are closed."

SHE RODE as if at home in the saddle—what Circassian was not?—her tawny hair streaming behind her, the dolman flapping on her slender shoulders and her arms straining at the reins; for the black horse was not used to women. But there was no fear in her voice and she seemed more than happy.

"Go toward the Kislar Dar," the Cossack urged her. "Knowest thou the way?"

"Aye," she cried, wrestling with the charger until she had turned him aside into what seemed a pit of obscurity.

The alley was too narrow for them to keep together and Charnomar took the rear. Again Ilga turned off, this time into a nearly deserted street, where shadows flitted away from the galloping horses.

Listening, Charnomar thought that the *spahis* had divided at the turnings, not knowing which way the fugitives had gone. Obscurity deepened to darkness, and the walls brushed his knees. Ilga reined in her charger and seemed to be searching for something.

Presently she stopped and he heard her spring down.

"Here are stairs," she whispered. "Be quick. Let the horses go."

Charnomar dismounted and struck his pony with the flat of his blade. The two beasts made off into the darkness. Ilga's choice was wise, because they climbed the steps and passed unheeded

through narrow alleys to the end of the Kislar Dar and the arch that led down to the harbor. Here Charnomar stopped again to listen, and was aware of bands of horsemen moving through the streets about him. In the direction of the *sarai* smoke rose against the stars. But down by the docks all was quiet under a haze of mist.

"The way is clear to thy house," he said at length.

She laughed under her breath. "I held Kara Mustafa's sword arm as he was cut down. And he was a favorite of the sultan. I dare go to no house."

The Cossack bent his head and took her chin in his hand, to look full into her eyes.

"Eh, little Ilga, this afternoon there was fear in thee, without cause. Now they hunt thee, and thou art minded to laugh."

At this she clasped warm fingers about his hard wrist.

"Before sunset I was *not* afraid. I was angry, because thy thoughts were all of the other Cossack. So I told the Armenian to say to thee, in reading the letter that thy brother in arms was dead. But he would not. He read truly from the letter. Verily, the old warrior was brave, and thou art a swordsman . . ." Her eyes closed and she sighed a little, being weary. "It was written, and who may alter what is written? We have come to this place, but the gates are closed."

Charnomar laughed.

"One road is always open."

THE MOON of Shawwul had grown full and passed. The *koshevoi* ataman, the chief of all the Cossacks, was walking outside the lines of the camp, through the shops. There were many shops, and all were thronged with warriors buying vodka or brandy or rare Turkish pistols or costly green and red silk shirts. For the Cossacks had returned from a raid on Azov, and they were drinking up the plunder that had weighted their saddle bags.

The *koshevoi* himself wore over his wide shoulders a kaftan of ermine and red velvet, and he carried his pipe and tobacco in a girdle bag of cloth of gold. He did not walk too steadily, perhaps because he had been so long in the saddle. As he passed an open stall he heard his name called in a strange fashion.

"Lord Colonel! Lord Colonel!"

Checking his stride, he stopped, then took another step to regain his balance, and poised himself with his booted feet wide apart. Before him a thin head in a gray felt cap bobbed up and down. It was Shamoval in his ragged shuba, his dark eyes bright with excitement.

"Doesn't the noble colonel remember me?"

"What's that?" growled the *koshevoi*. "Stand still—don't jerk."

Shamoval ceased bowing and shouted. Fiddles were whining near them, and muskets were barking where the Cossacks were burning powder, and he thought the colonel had grown a little deaf.

"I've been to Constantinople again."

"*Ta nitchogo*," grumbled the leader, "what is it to me if you've been to Satan and pared his hoofs?"

"Will the Colonel only listen? I saw the Cossack captain, Charnomar."

"He isn't a *sotnik*, he's the luckiest son of a dog alive."

Shamoval wagged his head so vigorously that the felt cap flopped around again.

"Only, he's not alive any more."

"How, not alive?" The tall Cossack remembered Charnomar, and that the young warrior had been sent on an almost hopeless mission. "Did he fall into the hands of the Turks? Was he tortured?"

"Tortured?" Shamoval flung up his hands. "May I never live another moment if he didn't torture the Moslems. This is how it was. When I set up my stand at the *sarai* gate, I saw him ride up, with two swords in his girdle, and two horses—and a girl on the other horse—"

"A woman? You lie, you—"

"May God smite me, if I lie! Why should I lie to the lord Colonel? The young Cossack went into the palace

grounds, and after a little while the great lord, the commander of the Turks' cavalry came up—"

"Kara Mustafa?"

"That's how it was. He came with twenty *spahis* but when he saw the girl waiting—what a beauty she was, with hair like gold!—he started to take her on his saddle because she was beautiful."

"To the devil with Kara Mustafa and the girl! What happened?"

"Calamity happened. *Ai*, a battle began in the palace grounds. Such a battle, as if regiments were charging! All over the place the Turks were running. Then Charnomar came out of the gate with an old Cossack."

The *koshevoi* bent his head to listen intently while Shamoval told how Kara Mustafa had been cut down, and Kirdyaga had died, and how Charnomar had killed the Turk who was an officer, and had gone off with his horse.

"Holy saints, what a heedless youth the Cossack was!" The trader lifted his eyes and shoulders at the same time. "The horse was worth fifty sequins of Venetian weight, but the *spahis* found it abandoned in the alleys. Then there was more calamity because the great sultan—may dogs litter on his grave—was very angry, and the master of the stirrup was hung out of a window by the neck, because of a paper he had written, and because the Cossack had been seen talking to his treasurer. The sultan was very angry because of the death of Kara Mustafa. Then the Cossack took a ship."

"How, a ship?" demanded the *koshevoi*, pulling at his mustache with satisfaction.

"A felucca with one sail had just come over from Galats or Scudari to bring some Turks to the festival. The Cossack and the girl hailed the felucca and promised the master gold if he would take them over across the port. They paid the gold, but as soon as the sail was up the Cossack threw the master of the ship into the water. The Turk swam ashore, and said that the soldier was afflicted of God or bewitched by the girl. He heard the girl singing in the mist. Then the Turks sent the oared galleys from Sarai Point to bring him back. And that is why the noble Cossack is no longer living. Because the Turks did not find him in the port or the strait, or anywhere. They did not find the ship or the girl."

Shamoval wagged his head sadly.

"And the lord Cossack was in debt to me, a hundred and twenty-three gold sequins."

For a long time the *koshevoi* reflected. Then his mustache twitched in a smile.

"If Charnomar got to sea, he's safe. The devil himself could not pull that brother of a dog down, at sea. But the girl must have bewitched him, because he has not come back."

He drew the wallet from his pipe case and tossed it to Shamoval who caught it deftly and immediately weighed it in his hand. "He was a good Cossack. I'll pay his debt."

BY MID-WINTER there was a new *koshevoi* in command of the camp. The leader with the scar did not return from an autumn campaign across the border, and with him died the older Cossacks who had been in his hut the day that Charnomar was sent away. And Shamoval no longer had his stall near the Siech, because the Cossacks had been cut up in the campaign, and there were few men in the barracks. Along the trampled snow only an occasional blacksmith's shop or tavern was open.

Still Cossacks drifted in to the Siech—youths from the steppe camps, veteran warriors tired of village life, adventurers who had turned their backs on the cities. More and more gathered at the cooks' fires in the barracks at evening, greeting old companions, or asking for friends who were no longer in the ranks. Some brought their sons, who listened in awe to the tales that were repeated while the *kasha* bowls were emptied and the brandy cask opened.

So the faces of the men in the Kuban barrack were almost all strange when Charnomar came in alone at the supper

hour and flung his saddle bags in a corner near the fire.

The *kuren* ataman stared at him over his pipe, because Charnomar was bareheaded, and his skull, where he had worn the turban was lighter than his weather darkened face. And his green breeches were stained and faded by salt water and the mud. The barrack leader looked at his much worn riding slippers.

"*Cherkess?*" he asked. "Circassian?"

Charnomar shook his head. This ataman was a new man who did not know him. He went over to the rack and took up a bowl, filling it with barley gruel from the pot. Then he borrowed a cup and dipped it into the brandy cask.

"Health to you, sir brothers," he said.

A short and powerful man who had been lying in his blankets, sat up and looked over toward the fire.

"By God, that's Charnomar back again," he shouted, and came over to the group. "That brother of a dog always turns up."

Others who had known Charnomar pushed the strangers aside from the fire and struck his shoulders with their fists.

"Eh, we heard you'd left your bones in the sultan's horse yard."

"Nay, we heard you had found an island out in the sea—an island ruled by a witch who took you down under the water with her."

"Give us the tale," urged the first speaker.

Charnomar looked at them, smiling. He was glad to be back. From Sarai Point at Stamboul he had made the slaves of the felucca head down the length of the Black Sea, and he had wandered with Ilga to her village on the Terek in the Caucasus. But he was a man of few words and he did not know how to tell the story.

"I've been down the sea a bit," he said, and lifted his cup. "To the brotherhood!"

The Cossacks rose and drank and filled their cups for the customary second toast.

"To luck!" one repeated.

Again Charnomar smiled.

"Nay—to the singing girl."

Do you remember "The Flame Test," that exciting tale of the fire fighters in heroic action? Here is one that should please you still more.

FLESH

By

KARL W. DETZER

PADDY MAGUIRE was born on the tailboard, as they say in the fire department. His father, proud old Ham Maguire, served as foreman of a hose company near the South Water Street docks for twenty years before the Great Fire in 1871. Paddy remembered the Great Fire; he was ten years old then. It was during that three day catastrophe he decided he would be a fireman.

Old Ham sat at supper when the church bells rang the alarm that warm October afternoon. He drank his coffee hurriedly and ran south on State Street, pulling a hose reel. Paddy saw him once, early next morning, advancing stubbornly against the flames. Ham was killed the second afternoon. On the third day, General Phil Sheridan, leading his ragged militia, ended the fire with gunpowder. Paddy remembered him, too. General Phil and old Ham were the heroes of the Great Fire.

When Paddy was seventeen, he joined Engine 10. Hand drawn reels, leather hose and gooseneck pumps with the long rocking brakes were disappearing from the department in those days. Horse flesh, steam and hard rubber line were coming

in. Paddy, with the willingness of youth, greeted the new order enthusiastically. Let old men grumble that steam engines were not yet fully tested, that they'd break down when a crisis faced them!

Forty hot, smoky years Paddy served. He watched the slow pendulum of politics sway left and right, saw good marshals and bad marshals, saw efficiency come and efficiency go. But he never played with votes. He was a fireman, he said fiercely, and flame wasn't concerned with ward boundaries and election days.

Pipeman and ladderman he labored—Engine 10, Engine 1, Engine 13, Engine 98, Truck 9. He drove squad wagon and and hose cart and steamer in turn, "buggies" of battalion chiefs, light single horse rigs, heavy teams and majestic three horse hitches. They still tell the story in the department of the time Paddy pushed his wide shouldered grays on a slow gallop from the Loop to the Yards, a stiff five miles, breaking through traffic, and not a speck of foam on their flanks when they got there.

A hard headed horseman was Paddy Maguire. Early in the spring of 1907 he became a lieutenant, second in command of Engine 189. His hair was whitening then, and his beard, which he parted into two sharp prongs.

"There's talk of horseless wagons in the business," his senior pipeman, Jim Casey, told him one summer night. "Automobiles."

"Aye, talk, devil 'em," Paddy answered.

He was standing in front of the alarm board. A gentle wind from the lake found its way through dusty streets and into the wide, open front doors. Paddy had unbuttoned his shirt at the throat to get full advantage of the breeze.

"Gasoline in the fire business? It ain't to be trusted. Takes flesh. Flesh and steam."

He snorted fiercely. Like a blue shirted, gray bearded Canute he scorned the rising mechanical tide. Fight fire with gasoline? Without the throb of steamy pistons to tune your heart? Run without horses? It was a pretty mess those young Johnny-jump-ups were getting into down at the city hall!

In spite of him, gasoline found its way into the department. Paddy Maguire growled and talked on. At least they'd not try to foist such nonsense on him! Steamer 189 was safe for a while yet. And these gasoline rigs often didn't get there. He did not hide his delight at a stalled ladder truck, halted on its way to a fire with the whole crew tampering with the motor. He rang his bell joyfully and galloped past in a triumphant clatter of hooves. He sulked whenever a veteran, some man his own age, retired; whenever young blood came into the department. Mechanics. Fools who talked horse power and didn't know horses. Who spoke of rotary pumps and centrifugals, nozzle tip pressures and gallons per minute. Of cylinders and shafts. Of sixty miles an hour. They intruded into his own company, alert eyed, upstanding youths with capable hands.

"You'd best tend the hocks of that off horse on the wagon," he would say chidingly. Or, "A currycomb ain't a blasted ornament, boys. It's to be used." Then to himself as he stamped away, "Devil 'em."

At last in 1918, with only a score of horsedrawn rigs in the department, he couldn't find a driver to his liking.

"I'll drive engine myself," he told his men finally, "and I'll break the way with her. There ain't one o' you got the feel of a rein in your fingers. A three horse hitch, men, it's got to be handled expert. No, I'll drive, and I'll break with the steamer. The cart can follow."

The old steam engine, its tall brass air chamber still flashing defiance at the crimson march of progress, stood stoutly upon its high rear wheels on the right of the hose wagon in Paddy's quarters. The uplifted snap collars still gaped over the double tongue, brass buckled harness ready to drop on broad dappled backs. At the rear of the quarters the five horses scuffed their stalls, bit at each other playfully, and clanked their slip chains.

Under the alarm stand the kick board stood ready to trip open the stable doors. When an alarm rattled in, the drum of hooves and the snorts of the animals as they charged to their places made music in Paddy's ears.

Other old men, retired firemen and men who loved the past, made a habit of coming to Engine 189 to smoke a reflective pipe and breathe gratefully the pungent odor of saddle soap, leather and sweat, of loose hay and hot metal, to saturate their souls in the rich, ammoniac breath of the barns.

THEN one hot day in 1920 the order arrived, brief, soulless as the very cylinders of the new engines. It told Paddy Maguire to prepare for a thousand gallon motor pumper.

"You will place the new pumper, serial number to be assigned, in operation in your company immediately upon delivery and acceptance by department engineers," it directed. "The machine will arrive tomorrow. Old apparatus will at once be turned in as salvage to department shops. You will appoint a member of your company to serve as driver and operator. The horses, after inspection by city veterinary, will be assigned to city barns, for auction to the highest bidder."

It bore the signature of the chief of department.

Paddy Maguire had prepared for this emergency. Many nights he had lain wakeful in resentful anticipation of it. He was hard headed; he knew it would come. The last two months, aye the last twelve, he had steeled himself against it. He read the cruel words a second time and a third. Then he crumpled the paper in his hand, concealed it in his wide palm as if it were something shameful, and walked to the rear of the quarters.

There he spoke to the five horses, calling each by name. He offered them scrap tobacco, which they accepted greedily. He patted their noses, swore at them affectionately, as was his habit, then with feet that were heavy and rebellious he climbed to his office on the second floor. He wrote painfully for half an hour while his crew waited, ill at ease, below. When he descended the stair he wore his dress uniform.

"Take charge, Jim," he instructed. "I'm going out a bit."

At the city hall he walked through echoing corridors to the calm, orderly office of the chief of department. He was admitted at once. The chief was a younger man than Paddy Maguire.

"I got your message," the lieutenant said.

"And you've come to argue it," his superior predicted. "No, Paddy, it's no good. I'm sorry. Know how you feel. We held off on you to the last."

"I ain't arguin'. I brung you something. Here's my resignation."

"Now, Paddy—"

"Aye, it's final."

"But you're a good man—"

"Aye, you'll have the devil of a time findin' better, if I do say it. But you best start huntin'. I'm out. Me and the beasts, we go together, and you can have your blasted tin pumps. See how long they last, 'side of good horseflesh. As for the rest o' you, askin' your pardon, sir, you can go to hell."

So Paddy Maguire left the city fire department. He was fifty-seven years old, and had served faithfully forty battling years. The pension board met at once, in extraordinary session, and the chief appeared before it personally with his recommendation, which the board accepted. Paddy was retired, without examination, on two thirds pay for the remainder of his life.

He did not go back to quarters that day. Next morning he returned, in spite of himself. He came to clear out his desk. he explained gruffly to the crew. But he waited, wasting time on one pretext or another, till the new apparatus arrived. Sour of face, he watched the new resplendent, crimson pumper back into the house. He stood aside, chewing his tongue, when the stall doors were tripped for the last time and the horses trotted out. He did not speak. Only turned

fiercely and started for his rooming house.

As he crossed the Rush Street bridge, where Great Lakes steamers lay at their berths, he hung a moment, with apparent laziness, watching their trim reflections in the oily current. Stokers were getting up steam in two of them. Bound somewhere or other. Didn't make much difference where, Paddy reflected. He'd always hankered for a good long boat ride.

Listlessly he shuffled down the steps to the lower level. Unaccustomed freedom lay heavily upon him. He inquired of a man in uniform at the gang plank as to rates and ports of call.

"Northern peninsula this trio," the official replied. "All ports along the north shore."

So ex-Lieutenant Maguire bought a stiff straw hat and an umbrella, and with civilian clothes in his handbag and a broken heart in his chest, embarked on his first vacation in forty years. That night he leaned against the rail and watched the city sink beneath its clouds of industrial smoke, saw its lights flash on and sparkle as gaily as if they did not know that Paddy Maguire, son of proud old Ham, had left the fire department.

"They can burn an' fry, for what I care!" he growled. "Devil 'em!"

He was up next morning early. In the engine room companionway he stared down the black iron steps into the brilliant glare of nickel and brass and white paint. The drum of the engine warmed his tired heart. The smell of steam and oil arose to his nostrils; he was grateful for it. No gasoline fol-de-rol here! At noon another vessel crawled up from behind and passed.

"A Deisel," some one explained. "Internal combustion, like a big automobile engine. Great compression. They're taking the place of steam."

Paddy, listening, swore a rich string of oaths across the blue water.

It was suppertime when the ship docked at Glidden on the north shore. The town drowsed in the declining light, a dilapidated, sprawling panorama, unpainted and falling to disrepair. There was something appropriate about sunset here, Paddy thought. Gaunt gray mills with sagging roofs spotted the riverbank. The black scars of fire were everywhere. A dying town, seen in the fading light of a dying day.

"We lie over here three hours," a steward told old Paddy. "Loading tan bark. Give you time to stretch your legs ashore."

Paddy walked up the mouldering pier. Halfbreeds were lazily trundling hand barrows over the ragged planks. A few piles of old gray lumber spotted the shore line. A mill town, this. And no more timber. Paddy felt that he was entering the gates of a dead community as he stepped into the long, lonely street. It reminded him of himself, somehow. It had served its splendid purpose, had known heroic days. It had lived its glamorous moment. Now only fading memories remained.

A lank dog slunk past. A pair of children played noisily farther on. Under foot the flimsy rails of lumber tramways crisscrossed on their way to the shore. The sun was falling behind the high, gaunt roofs of silent mills. Paddy walked the length of the first street. He'd not go far. Just stretch his legs, as the steward said. He had already turned back when a bell rattled behind him.

A hose wagon charged past. Paddy stopped. A good sorrel team there. Light—not more than twenty-four hundred pounds. One man on the seat, a lad on the tailboard. Then the engine; a big fellow, an old Nott. A five hundred gallon tea kettle, bless her! Thirty years, if a day, in service. Her driver was of Paddy's age. His chin was whiskered like Paddy's own. Another man, past middle age, jolted on the hearth, flinging the first scattered coal into the fire door. Paddy stood motionless while the two teams charged down the street in a gay racket of hooves, brass bells and iron tires. The tang of pine kindling assailed his nostrils pleasantly after the engine went by, trail-

ing sparks and light blue smoke. Paddy followed.

THE TOWN had come to life suddenly. Men and boys were running down the steep street. Paddy hurried. He carried his umbrella on his arm. He felt sorry for that fire company. Three men and a boy! How could you put out a fire with three men and a boy? And volunteers at that, very likely.

"Devil 'em!" Paddy growled. "Volunteers is a nuisance!"

He smelled the fire; smelled it before he saw it. It was down beside the wharves, not so far from the loading ship. Flame rolled in sulky clouds out of an old warehouse, black smoke screened it or hung with gilded edges about the windows. The Glidden fire department shouted feebly as it went at its unequal task. The old Nott steamer straddled a manhole in a crumbling wooden bridge and the engineer crammed coal into the fire box.

Paddy stood back and watched. He felt distasteful admiration as the fight started; admiration for the crew—three men and a boy!—distaste for the miserable equipment. It was a disgrace even to volunteers—stiff hose that leaked at every coupling and spouted geysers from a score of holes, bent leather nozzles, warped ladders. Only the engine, that stout old-timer, stirred the cooling blood in his heart.

Its faithful pistons pounded up and down with a wheezy, steamy note, its whole iron frame vibrated in the ecstacy of its labors. Like suppressed laughter the vibration sounded, laughter at the fumbling crew. It had taken them three minutes to lay two lines—lay two lines and stand one ladder insecurely against the front of the two story warehouse. Paddy growled to himself. The boy and one of the men had started to throw water in the front door. The other two were clumsily lifting hose up the ladder.

"That ain't the way!" Paddy complained. He pressed his straw hat tight upon his head. "Best get other side—there's the fire—other side—"

He found himself running, shouting. Vehemently he usurped command. A volunteer blockaded him. Paddy beat him with the umbrella.

"Give me that pipe!" he roared. "Drag that there ladder here. Never mind who I am, give 'er here! Now—up—lean 'er ag'in' the side. Now the pipe! Boost, will you? Up! Now water! Water, devil 'em! Charge the line! Ye blasted apes, charge the line!"

Astonished townsmen saw the passenger from the steamer, the stiff straw hat clinging somehow to his head, on the top rung of the ladder, pelting water into the fire. They saw smoke turn from black to purple under his ferocious attack, from purple to gray. They heard him curse the fire with satisfying gusto, saw him crawl boldly upward. Flame gave way before him. Not once did he rest, till his chin touched the steaming sill.

"Give me more line now, you apes!" he howled. "Line, and a boost. I'm going in."

It was the middle of the evening and the lights of the departed steamer were drifting down the bay when Paddy Maguire, ex-lieutenant, climbed from the warehouse, wet, smoky and triumphant. He still wore a drenched and dirty straw hat. On the ground he gave up his hose.

"Gotta go now," he said, "miss my boat, first thing."

He took off the ruined hat and looking at it once, tossed it indignantly into the lake.

"End o' that."

He stared at the empty wharf.

"Hey!" he demanded. "Where's me boat?"

No one answered. He repeated the question.

"We was telling you—" a man began.

"You left me miss my boat?" Paddy bellowed. "All my duds on it? How'm I to dry off?"

"Dunno," said the man.

Paddy roared. The lights of the steamer looked back at him unconcernedly. He turned angrily on the first individual who approached. It was the mayor, it happened. Paddy heard impatiently all that he had to say. He didn't care for the gratitude of this town. The mayor, an ex-lumberman, was short and stocky and less experienced in oratory than Paddy himself.

"You saved the town," he admitted. "Raised a lot o' hell doin' it, but saved it, But you got no call hollerin' about your boat. Nobody was holding you. There'll be another 'un in three, four days."

"From what I see of it, the blasted town wasn't worth savin'," Paddy answered honestly. "But these firemen o' yours! Why, devil 'em, they was standin' *outside*. Somebody's got to go in, so I took over the job. I was a fireman wanst," he added.

He accepted the mayor's invitation for the night. So far as he could see there was no place else to sleep. Next morning, having nosed about the streets for two hours, he returned with unimproved temper and told the official and his astonished clerk what he thought of Glidden.

"It's nothing but fire traps. Ain't you got a prevention bureau? Nobody ever make inspection? If there was such conditions in my district I'd 'a' got ten days without pay every week in the year and throwed out in the bargain. What kind o' chief'd let dirty rubbish lay around loose like I seen today?"

"Chief's dead," the mayor said. "Been dead ten year. He got blowed up in a boiler explosion. Capt'n's a good man. Can't see as we need a chief."

"No chief?" Paddy objected. "Who's boss?"

"I am," the mayor answered.

Paddy departed, scowling. No chief. The town deserved to burn up. He'd only been a lieutenant himself. The head of this department ranked a captain, and what did he know? Not much. Not half what he should. Old Paddy Maguire, ex-company commander of Steamer 189, had thrown exactly three recruits out of his engine house for knowing more than this captain did. Nor was he a volunteer. It had been a shock when Paddy discovered this was a paid, full time organization. Captain and crew, who knew nothing about fighting fire except to stand outside and pour water, and lots of it, in exchange for this ignorance received good, negotiable money.

IRRESISTIBLY he sought the engine house. Twice this morning he had been there. Its warm rich color of horses and harness was the only pleasant thing in town. The big room was empty empty this time as he opened the door; the only sound was the *scuff-scuff* of horses.

"Hey!" Paddy called, and receiving no response, repeated, "Hey!" He waited a moment before he bellowed.

The four horses looked out at him reproachfully through the bars in the stable doors. A boy, attracted by his howling, stepped in from the street.

"Looking for somebody, mister? Lunch time. They've all gone home."

"All?" Paddy screamed. "Ow, devil 'em! All at once? Nobody on watch? Well, the quicker this town burns the better."

The boy retreated. Paddy grunted, and looked at his watch. The boy was right. It was noon. They'd left the alarm stand useless as a rundown clock. Well, maybe that was the way they did it here in Glidden.

He stared about the room appraisingly. There were a good many things he could teach this crew! His eyes came to rest on the worn snap collars pendant above the engine tongue. A right fancy pair they had been once; gone to ruin now. Their creased leather, the knotting padding, protruding rivets angered him.

He stalked out to the stalls. The pair of grays reared nervously as he approached. Speaking softly—crooning almost—with the tips of his short hard fingers he stroked the soft skin of their noses. They quieted under his gentle

touch. Their pink nostrils trembled and one drew back its lips.

Friendly beasts, he remarked; near enough like his own dapples on 189 to be twins. He guessed their age as seven or eight, their weight around twenty-six hundred. Well fed, but a mite too light. He spoke aloud.

"Twenty-eight hundred's light enough. Ought to be twenty-eight for any tea kettle."

Back of the stalls, in the men's loafing rooms, he sat down at a round table, painted dingy green, and stared dejectedly at the floor. He couldn't see the horses from here; only a long, well brushed tail swished into sight occasionally. Paddy lighted his pipe. He was homesick. Three days away from his own team, and missing 'em worse than he did his own bed! He arose hopefully and offered tobacco to each horse in turn. They refused it, snorting. Paddy growled. Had nobody taught these horses any manners?

He returned heavily to the apparatus room and looked at his own reflection in the round bellied boiler. He was out of the fire business. The cold fact lodged uncomfortably in him. He hadn't felt its full weight before. Out. No more four-eleven alarms. No more smoke to eat. Never again the yank and jerk of a loping team that's minding the bell. Two-thirds pay for life. And idleness. He looked again into the brassy mirror. Not so old. A lot of good fight left in him yet.

The crew was a long time absent. By the dingy green table Paddy smoked three pipes; twice arose from the split chair and tried to feed the dapples tobacco. It seemed unreasonable that they would not eat it. The off horse on the hose wagon, one of the sorrels, sidled to the left once as he approached and went down to his knees cautiously. Paddy observed the slip chain tighten and pull up its head. He growled, significantly; when the first man entered Paddy was ready with complaint.

"Chain on this horse is too short," he said. "Can't lay down comfortable."

It was the captain who had come in, a fat little man named Hicks.

"Ain't supposed to lay down," he answered.

"Ain't supposed?" Paddy retorted. "Free country, ain't it? Horse got a right to lay down if he wants. If you was a horse, think you wouldn't get sick and tired o' standin' around all day? Add two foot to that chain." He spoke with command; immediately went on, "Your dapples there, look at 'em—collar sores on both. Noticed when I come in them snap collars ain't right. No horse born ever had a neck to fit one o' them. Might've been made by a barn carpenter. Rivets sticking clear through. Elegant with brass trimmings, all right, but I never knowed a horse yet as was particular about the outside of a collar."

"We was aimin' to fix 'em," the captain said.

"I'll fix 'em," Paddy declared. "Right now. Won't wait to aim."

He walked forward, passing around the low right hand wheel of the steamer.

"Trip that team," he ordered.

Reluctantly the captain obeyed. With his right foot he kicked the board pivoted vertically under the alarm stand. There was a squeak of tightening wires, a snap of metal latches at the rear of the house. The stable doors flapped open and the two engine horses trotted forward sleepily. Their shod hooves thumped the floor with a hollow drumming sound. Opposite the tongue of the engine they halted, and each backed expertly into place under the suspended harness. Paddy jerked down on the gaping collars and snapped them over the necks of the team.

"Look-ee," he shouted. "Tighter'n a number six shoe. Like to choke 'em to death, let alone wear their skin off. Know how to wear your own collar, mister? Give me a hammer and nail set!" He drove two rivets deeper; with his fists kneaded the padding. "What you call these beasts?"

"Tom and Jerry."

"What's the sorrels?"

"Peter and Paul."

"Knowed a Tom and Jerry once," Paddy said. "Me own three hitch had a Tom. Tom, Dick and Harry."

Again, gently, he stroked their soft noses. Their gray manes hung close to his face. He patted their dappled, well fed sides, once each; then felt his own gray beard thoughtfully.

"We're of a color," he told the pair confidentially. "We matches, me and you. Dappled. The three of us. I guess I'll drive this team."

He left the house without explanation.

"I'll be your blasted chief," he told the mayor. "For nothin'. They ain't a town north o' Evanston can pay me what I'm worth. I'm volunteerin', see? My old man was a volunteer. Ever hear of Ham Maguire?" The mayor shook his head. "You ain't been around much," Paddy decided.

EX-LIEUTENANT MAGUIRE became Glidden fire chief on September first. He was sworn in, with distressing solemnity, at one o'clock in the afternoon. At fifteen minutes past two, the members of his crew, including the captain, were feverishly active with mops, brooms and whitewash brushes. At four the mayor had received a requisition for one thousand feet of new two and a half inch hose, two new smoothbore nozzles, spare parts for the steamer, new harness for the hose cart and leather helmets all round. At five the new chief had placed his recommendation for a new alarm circuit.

Paddy fought three fires that autumn, three stiff battles, not to mention grass fires and a dozen chimneys, one blazing tar kettle, and other minor chores. When snow piled down he watched it gratefully; not only did it give protection to warped, brittle old shingle roofs, but it proved to him conclusively that horses in this country never would be supplanted by motor apparatus. Owners of cars put them away promptly at the first snow squall. Drifts piled waist deep in the streets. The few runs Chief Paddy made were fought through high white barriers.

Each time, returning to quarters, he rubbed down the horses himself and examined the calks on their shoes.

"Good run you made, Tom," he came in the habit of saying. "Good run, Jerry. See how I held your head up? It's confidence you got. I won't leave you fall. Goin' to hold your heads up tight every foot the way. 'Baccy?"

He poured scrap tobacco into his palm. Tom learning to eat it, snuffed and munched seriously. Jerry laid back his ears and jerked away his head.

"I'll teach you 'fore we're through knowin' each other," Paddy predicted. "Ain't no beast o' mine goin' to have less bad habits 'n I got myself."

It was early spring when the next stranger arrived in Glidden. His name was John Baxter Crump and he remained a week, asking questions. Paddy disliked him at once. He was young, for one thing. And the first night at supper—Frenchie Pete's old bar was the only place in Glidden to eat—he talked magnificently of machines. This was a machine age, he told the three men at his table, one of whom was Paddy. Take furniture, for instance; men no longer built tables and chairs by hand.

Paddy left the pork chops uneaten on his plate and, stamping out to the street, kicked up slush with his boots. He knew that kind of talk. It was bad. Wherever he heard it he could expect trouble. The next week, gloomily, he read in the Thursday paper that the Crump Table and Chair Company would build its new plant in Glidden.

Paddy questioned Captain Hicks. He was getting on better with Hicks. The man didn't know horses. He didn't know the feel of reins. He couldn't lay a line without kinking it. But he knew how to listen. Paddy liked good listeners. From Hicks he learned that John Baxter Crump had appeared personally before Glidden's city council and demanded, in return for bringing his plant to Glidden, that they furnish him with suitable and cheap houses for his workmen and adequate

police and fire protection. Paddy retired to the alarm stand to think that news over. Well, horse flesh was adequate. But he had an uncomfortable idea that Crump might not think so.

Before midsummer the walls of the new furniture works were rising. By fall the factory was under roof and the drying sheds steamed and smoked as the first birch was ready to season. Before winter, craftsmen began to arrive with their families, stolid Dutch cabinet makers from Grand Rapids who objected to the town as much as Paddy had. Paddy, grudgingly, had to admit that business picked up during the fall and winter. A new restaurant opened. The mayor put an extra team at work grading the new roadway to the plant. The county supervisors advertised for bids for a new bridge. The council, after months of discussion, in which young Crump participated as heartily as old Paddy, bought five hundred feet of new hose for Paddy's fire department.

In the spring there could be no argument. Glidden was on the boom. Steamships added an extra hour to their stops at the pier while they loaded crated tables. Fresh paint flashed a message of prosperity from the old frame buildings on Front Street. A real estate subdivision was laid out. And on May thirtieth one of the drying kilns at the Crump table factory caught fire.

Crump was perturbed; even nervous about the blaze. He howled more loudly than Paddy Maguire, while Paddy hurled two streams of water and cursed the heat. The fire was stubborn. Paddy led in the first line. His three men followed with the second. The steamer trembled and spit a high column of sparks. The new hose throbbed. Smoke hung ominously over the plant. Paddy drank it in thirstily and after a half hour workout had the blaze subdued.

At the next council meeting Crump appeared. He seemed displeased at the way Paddy had put out his fire. He complained to the officials that they had promised fire protection. The council sent for Paddy. He took his time in getting there. But he opened the door to hear Crump say:

"And I nearly burn up while a horse drawn engine—horse drawn—my Lord, in this age—stumbles out to the plant. We need motor apparatus and high pressure mains. This department is a disgrace. Whoever heard of a volunteer chief? If you want me to put up a second unit at the factory—"

"Did you ever try to run a blasted automobile through a snow drift neck deep, mister?" Paddy flared. "High pressure mains is the berries, so much I admit. But they's damn' little water flows through them when they's froze tighter'n a eskimo's ear. This here's the north country, it ain't Floridy or nothing. You can be modern as to who pulls the whistle, mister, but you can't get rid of them horses!"

The council listened to Paddy. Then they listened to Mr. Crump. and found him more eloquent. After all, one can't ignore threats to take away business. Hadn't Glidden been idle for years? They invited equipment salesmen. For weeks the discussion went on; in its midst a deserted mill burned. Fire, discovered early in the morning, was howling through the roof before the alarm bell struck.

The newspaper said: "Flames were beyond control when discovered," but Crump merely pointed to the ruin and said it spoke for itself. Two of Paddy's company, on a ladder against the north end, fell with the wall. They were dragged out, blistered and beaten.

The men who took their places reminded Paddy unpleasantly of the mechanics who supplanted his old crew on Steamer 189. They belonged in garages by trade. About the quarters they talked incessantly of motors, of miles per gallon. Paddy found work a-plenty for them in the stable.

"A blasted motor ain't got sense, devil 'em, and it ain't got feelin's," he would say. "But you'd heap it with motherly love, to hear you talk, and that

near horse on the cart ain't had a good rubdown in a week!"

Hicks, suddenly becoming talkative, was inclined to side in with the newcomers. Paddy silenced him.

"The less you say the better I like your talk," he affirmed. He became personal. "How'd you look takin' exams for captain? A captain! Wouldn't know you from a ree-cruit!"

He stuffed his pipe with tobacco, which he forgot to light, glowered, and stamped out into the street.

At the council meeting that was to decide on the new apparatus, the omnipotent Crump repeated his demands. Again the council listened with attention. Paddy had argued publicly with Crump the night before in Frenchie Pete's place. He had called him a blasted tablemaker and been dubbed a volunteer fireman in return. The council of Glidden, declaring that John Baxter Crump and no one else had brought back their declining town to the high estate of its timber days, went on record five to two for a new motor pump. The citizens already had voted by a four-fifths majority to issue bonds and put in high pressure water mains.

Paddy clumped up the aisle.

"I quit a better job'n this, wanst, for less excuse," he said combatively. "They ain't room in the same quarters for me and one o' them gasoline rigs. If you think they's anybody else in this town can fight fire better'n me, all right, hire 'em. I'm out. Here's my resignation and be damned to you. Pay some money for somebody else. I won't starve. I got a pension."

He added insultingly:

"Hire some smart fireman like Hicks. Let him crank your blasted tin pumper. Not me! I'll be on hand some snowy day to laugh. Takes flesh to buck snow."

He stamped out of the hall.

"Sorry I'm leavin'," he told Tom and Jerry. "They'll be sellin' you for a milk wagon, mebbe. Kick 'em, I say. Kick 'em right out their corduroys. Half a cent I'd turn fire bug!"

HE RETURNED to his lodgings and got the handbag down from the closet shelf. He packed it that night. But for some reason or other that he couldn't explain, he did not leave Glidden. Boats came and went; he planned each time to take the next one. He was uncomfortable in civilian clothes. Hands in pockets, he moped about town, watching mains for the high pressure system extend, new hydrants thrust out of freshly dug earth, rusty at first and then crimson and resplendent. He saw the new motor pump, a handsome five hundred gallon outfit, back into the doors of the engine house, and the inefficient Hicks rise from his undeserved rank of captain to the dignity of Paddy's badge of chief.

He confided in no one. What was the use? He could predict to himself what would happen. Wait until there were four feet of loose blowing snow some winter night.

One day, walking past the engine house, he discovered with a swift pain in his heart that the old Nott steamer had been trundled into the lean-to at the rear. The four horses, confused and disheartened, were working in the department of streets and alleys. Paddy often saw them, patiently standing by the curb. Always he offered them tobacco, patted their noses and cursed them affectionately.

At the demand of Crump, two additional men were sworn into the fire department, making a crew of six. Paddy read the news in the paper.

"Aye, and they'll need 'em, devil 'em," he growled. "Some nice cold winter night they'll need all the bright lads they can find. Takes a lot o' good old fashioned elbow grease to push that pumper up hill. Think I won't laugh? Ha! They'll hear me if they're a-bed with pillers on their ears."

He fished some that summer, without enthusiasm or much luck. He hunted rabbits all winter, shot one red fox and spent occasional evenings by the stove in the harness room of the livery barn.

What else was there for a decent man to do? His two-prong beard lost its stiff severity. His shoulders sagged. The city officials bought a snow plow in November, and to Paddy's consternation, the streets were kept clear. The new pumper rushed out with midsummer ease in dead of winter. Paddy swallowed fiercely and waited. Time would come!

He was disappointed in December. Weather was cold, but not unpleasant enough to make transportation difficult. There were a dozen thaws instead of one in January. Then, on February twenty-sixth, a great blow out of the north pushed snow before it.

It began at night and pounded the coast for three howling, bitter days. Down in the river the current, that struggled so energetically to reach the lake, gave up the effort and muddy water thickened into ice. High glistening bergs piled tenaciously on the shore of the bay and draped themselves in fantastic shapes across the piers.

The temperature went down—down—zero—ten below—fifteen . . .

Light snow, swept in from the hills, piled in great ridges in the streets. Paddy watched the sorrel team and the grays dragging grading blades on Front Street. The new rotary plow was laid up for repairs, eh? No surprise in that. He noticed Jerry was limping on the right front leg; he crossed the road and examined the hoof.

"That the kind of footwear they give you, is it?" he objected. "Shoe don't fit you no bettern'd it would me."

At the engine house Chief Hicks and his five men labored industriously, shoveling a track left and right from the doors.

"Devil 'em," Paddy snorted. "They've been lucky!"

On the fourth morning at eight o'clock the temperature stood at eighteen below. The wind had fallen, leaving a sharp, quiet cold. It bit deep into Paddy's hard face as he thrust it exploringly out of doors. The town lay in snowpacked panorama before him. Kitchen chimneys spouted small jets of blue vapor. The air was glassy, sounds magnified, distant rustlings took on noisy importance. Voices from far up the street floated clear and sharp. Paddy sniffed suspiciously; then ripped off his ear muffs.

He smelled smoke. And from Front Street, blocks away, shrilled the cry of a siren. The new motor pump was going out. Paddy looked at his watch. It was eighteen minutes past seven. He hurried back into the house and reappeared quickly in an extra sweater. He broke a path along the drifted sidewalk. It was hard going; snow piled over his boots. The siren cried enthusiastically for another moment; then its sound trailed off.

"They're shovelin', devil 'em," Paddy snorted. This was the day of his laugh.

Again the siren squealed. Again stopped. Hit a snow bank, eh? In high spirits the ex-chief turned into the main street. Men were laboring frantically a block away. The great red pumper had burrowed deep into the side of a high drift. Paddy hurried. He saw snow shovels flashing. Citizens were helping. Let 'em if they wanted to. The town could burn. *He'd* not lift a hand.

Over the bundled heads of the crowd, beyond the low skyline of the business section, he noticed for the first time the ugly blue smoke cloud rising. From the Crump table works! He laughed, unsteadily. Hicks, at the wheel of the pumper, heard the sound. He glanced Paddy's way, scowled, and looked aside quickly. The machine jerked forward. It plunged on doggedly, its immense power thrusting aside the breastworks of snow. Hicks grinned over his shoulder. Paddy sobered. He'd laughed too soon, maybe. The pumper made better time now. Down the steep hill and around the corner. Paddy began to run.

In the lowlands at the harbor side a warehouse stuffed with finished product smoked energetically. No blaze showed yet. Workmen in black, huddled groups, wavered in the snow. They scattered out of the way and the spirited pumper

plunged toward one of the high pressure hydrants that poked through the drifts. Its red frost box, filled with straw, was flung off.

Firemen were hooking up the hose, two lines to each valve, each line siamesed, to give four nozzles. Paddy nodded; he'd taught Hicks something; he'd do it that way himself. The black hose of the old department and Paddy's five hundred feet of new white line were yanked through drifts toward the warehouse.

Slow. Mighty slow. Paddy stamped his feet. A good crew could lay ten lines of hose while these johnny-jump-ups were fumbling there. From the six men of the company and their anxious volunteers floated back cries for help and exclamations of distress. Paddy saw the hydrantman jerking frantically at his spanner. No water.

The shrill, unsteady laugh of the ex-chief rang across the lowlands. The high pressure mains were frozen. Crump's own mains!

"Devil 'em, now will you learn?" screamed Paddy Maguire. "You and your kids with their tin toys. Modern, eh? Hey, water!"

Crump panted down the road. Townsmen were milling about. The table maker shouted incoherently at the new chief. Hicks was arguing. Arguing? Hicks? Paddy chuckled. Hicks wouldn't argue, he didn't know how! The ex-chief moved closer.

A second hydrant was tapped; it, too, was frozen. Flame broke through the north end of the warehouse. Timidly at first, in a cloud of black smoke, it tested the cold air, then leaped up exuberantly.

"Get that pumper to the river, down to the river!" Crump was shouting.

"Can't make it!" It was Hicks. "That road—can't get over it—snow—loose gravel. Can't get near—"

Crump recognized Paddy as he charged by. He glared indignantly. Paddy chuckled again; with effort this time. It was his day to laugh, all right. They needed water. Needed it quick. He could tell them a thing or two yet if they asked him . . .

"Let 'em go, devil 'em!" Paddy told himself grimly. "Learn 'em a bit or two. That gang of chauffeurs never et smoke!"

Fire ran along the ridge of the warehouse. Heat, rolling down past the eaves, started the snow to sliding. Paddy, observing the fire critically, gave it ten minutes. Then it would burst through all four sides. The roof must fall. The warehouse stood close to the main building; too close. They'd better get water on the bigger building. Wet it down.

Again he tried to laugh. It was harder than before. He must look pretty standing here on the sidewalk; must look like a blasted cop. Him, a fireman! Sight of Crump, staring up toward town, kindled his spleen once more. He swore, mightily. He'd not help. Heaven be witness, he'd not help!

"That plug's froze, too!" a volunteer charged past him shouting.

"You're losing time!" Crump bellowed.

"Do it yourself then!" Hicks retorted.

Paddy laughed, disagreeably. Hicks was learning, all right; learning to talk back. He'd believe Crump next time, would he?

"Mains is froze," the new chief was crying. "Can't get the pumper to the river, can't drive there. I sent for the old steamer. Maybe horses can pull through."

"Aye, maybe, devil 'em!" Paddy howled.

He plowed back to the corner. For a moment he could see only more men tracking down the steep highway. Then the team. His team! His heart clawed fiercely into his ribs. Here they came! On a slow, rocking horse gallop.

The driver, a young mechanic from the new department, was leaning far forward, feverishly tapping the bell. The horses plunged out of step. The reins lay slack upon their backs.

"Hey, you damned housemaid!" Paddy yelled. The team was still a block away. "Hold 'em, I say. Hold 'em! Lean back! Hold up their head! Hold 'em!

They'll go—on that corner. Ow, and look at the ape!"

He plunged through the drifts toward the steamer. Smoke seeped out of its funnel above the vertical boiler. A fat volunteer in a red cap was stoking the fire on the swaying hearth. Tom and Jerry, heads up, heads down, galloped fiercely. The bell tapped excitedly—too excitedly.

They reached the corner. The huge engine carriage swayed on its high rear wheels and short front ones. Snow flew up in opaque screens at both sides. The driver yanked desperately on the rein for the turn. The horses, heads free, tried to swing.

"Ow, you'll kill 'em!" Paddy yelled.

The off horse went down first. The near followed. The weight of the steamer pressed them forward through the drift. They pawed furiously, became confused, kicked up a vigorous cloud of snow and lay still. Paddy halted, to his knees in a snow drift.

"Blaggards!" he howled. "Blaggards!"

The young driver leaped down wildly from his seat. Forgetting his fire, the stoker jumped from the hearth, and running around the engine, began impotently to pull at the bridle of the off horse. The crowd pushed in, hampering.

Paddy flung out his arms and climbed from the snow bank. A short grumble sounded behind him. Without turning his head, he knew that a wall had puffed out. Cries of the crowd, warning shouts, hoarse commands, oaths, floated up the hill, louder than the rumble of the idling motor of the pumper. Crump charged past. Chief Hicks ran at his heels.

"Put a blanket under 'em!" Hicks was crying. "Give 'em foothold. Blanket—"

"Devil 'em!" Paddy muttered. "What they know about them beasts?"

He discovered his own feet moving. He reached the circle about the fallen team. Men were shouting unreasonably, straining, yanking upward on the horses. Helpless they lay in the snow, immobile except for the rolling of their great bloodshot eyes and the heaving of their flanks. Useless harness draped across their backs.

"Get 'em up," Crump bade.

"Trying," Hicks retorted.

They tugged again. Crump it was who kicked at the horse nearer him. Paddy screamed and jumped forward. His split white beard took on threatening ferocity as he reached for Crump's collar. He seized the fur piece with both hands and lifting his foot, booted the younger man into a snow drift.

"Kick a horse, will you?" he shouted. "I'll show you, devil 'em!"

He bent over the warm, heaving sides of the team. His cold, knotty fingers jerked familiarly this way and that. The tangle of harness somehow righted itself; one buckle open—another tightened. Then Paddy set his foot on the short forward wheel and swung up to the snug seat. He held the reins a second in his bare palms.

"Get down, you crazy fool!"

This was Crump. He arose from the drift, spitting snow.

"One side," Paddy commanded.

He thrust his wrists through the grip loops, twisted the reins one about each forearm. His face had a pinched, fierce look. His lips sucked in. Frosty breath blew about his nostrils. His cap hung over his right eye.

"One side, everybody! Like to get hurt."

He pulled back slowly on the reins.

"Up, Tom," he bade softly. The harshness had melted from his voice. Words rolled out smoothly. "Up, Tom. Tom—Jerry—" There was something crooning in the voice, like a mother's, singing a lullaby. "Up, Tom!—Jerry—we're goin' somewheres—up—"

His right foot was braced on the steel guard of the footboard. His left, searching, came to rest contentedly on the trip of the old single tapper bell. He pressed, and one short note sounded quietly. Then another.

"Up, Tom—up, Jerry—"

It was command now. He was dragging backward on the reins. His shoulders, rounded under his thick sweaters and

coat, strained, pulled—strained backward, a quarter inch—another quarter.

The team scuffed its hooves. Ears shot up, stiff as the two sharp horns of Paddy's beard. The voice was familiar; the touch on the reins was right. Nostrils dilated. Bloodshot eyes rolled. Flanks heaved mountainously.

"Up, Tom—Jerry."

The voice persisted. The bell tapped faster. Snow screened the miracle. There was a riotous tangle of hooves, manes, tails, a quick writhing motion. Then the drift scattered; came the clang of sharp calks on cobblestones.

"Up, Tom—up, Jerry—goin' somewheres."

Paddy, from his high seat, peered down sharply at the harness, a short, expert appraisal. It would do. Get them there. Ruined, but do this trip.

"Out the way, you blasted tripe! Where's that lazy stoker? Get on! Get to work!"

The bell set up a quick, nervous cadence. The horses pawed. Paddy leaned forward.

"Careful, Tom. That's it! Head up, Jerry. That's steppin'. Care—ful—that's the boy—easy—easy—now—"

The old tea kettle rolled triumphantly down the sharp decline toward the river. Its bell rattled a curt, contemptuous greeting to the helpless motor pumper. Paddy drew in cautiously as he reached the bridge. The rear end of his steamer swung to the left, caught, threatened to turn over, and righted itself.

The team left the road, stepping confidently. They had hold of themselves now. Smoke in brown and yellow clouds streaked over their high heads, shutting out the light of the morning sky. It enveloped Paddy in its kindly embrace, Paddy and the steam engine and his team. The river lay ahead, a treacherous surface of weak, snow covered ice. Heat pelted down the wind.

The engine turned, backed, turned again, once more backed.

"Good enough, Tom. Thankee, Jerry.

Paddy relaxed in his seat, eyed the blazing warehouse for five seconds, then leaped down.

As he ran alongside he glanced at the steam gage.

"Pound 'er," he commanded the man on the rear step. "Give 'er hell. Hand on that suction there. Gimme the ax. Here, you—you fool, take this ax, cut hole in ice," He stared closely. "You, is it? You're a good runner. Cut hole, I tell you."

He thrust the ax forward and Crump took it. Paddy yanked open the stiff buckle of the suction pipe strap and jerked up the brass screen from the rear step. With the pipe between his knees he spun the screen into place at its lower end. The other he threaded into the intake valve. Sound of the ax ceased. Small cakes of ice floated in the break on the hard surface of the stream. Crump was crawling up the bank. Paddy thrust the screen down toward him.

"Take this. Stick it in—under, I say. Never mind gettin' wet. That's it! He glanced again hastily at the steam gage. "Line now—two lines—bit o' help here—"

Firemen and townsmen dragged the hose from the frozen high pressure hydrant. Clumsily, with fingers stiff inside their thick knit mittens, they passed the lines into Paddy's bare, outstretched hands. He accepted them without thanks.

"Turn loose that team," he cried suddenly. "Unhitch it!"

He gave the order without a bend of his head. The lines were in place. Slowly the pistons of the pumps began to travel. Like short legs dancing to a quick uncomfortable cadence they kicked up and down. Steam wheezed. Water gurgled. The hose line leaped full of life. Leaky couplings spurted, while over the face of the sky hung the dark cloud of smoke, whipping past on the new gentle wind, like black pennants of destruction.

"Hey, you!" Paddy's voice pitched up again. Command was in it, command usurped by the fierce heat of anger. "Hey, you! Didn't you hear? Exercise them beasts. Blankets on 'em! Walk

'em up and down! Up and down! Cool 'em gradual. Want 'em to die?"

A bookkeeper from the table factory had been standing in front of him. The order fell first upon him; he obeyed instinctively. Disobey this maniac? He gripped the team's reins awkwardly.

"All right, men!" Paddy bellowed.

He charged the fire with the first sputtering nozzle. Flame leaped with triumphant exclamations from the tottering warehouse. It played in spirals about the northern eaves of the main building, stole subtly into windows on the second floor. Paint blistered on the long wooden sign above the ridgepole. Bursting glass fell in slices.

Paddy's arms hugged the brass nozzle. He ran ahead forty paces. Heat assaulted him. He hesitated long enough to look back. Second line was following, all right. His hard stream lifted in a stiff arc and raked the side of the main building. Steam burst in jets from the hot brick. Brown smoke turned gray. The second line came abreast of the first.

"Wet that roof!" Paddy commanded the men who carried it. "Keep 'er wet."

Again he slashed the hot side. There was less steam now. The warehouse roof still held, but fire broke through its four walls. Nothing could save this structure; only if he could cool the near end, make it burn slowly, he might save the main building."

"Lift her up," he bellowed. "Give me a hand here—here—the nozzle—up!"

He turned the force of his stream upon the warehouse. The second line could keep the main building wet. Crouched in the snow, assailed by cold that gnawed his fingers and toes and heat that chewed his face, he aimed. Twice he turned his head. Tom and Jerry, under their blankets, were walking slowly up and down. Cooling off gradually. It was like these blasted mechanics never to think of the horses, let 'em stand stock still after all that workout.

"Up a bit with that nozzle," he bade.

Volunteers sprawled submissively behind him. The north wall of the warehouse had fallen. Then the east wall. The new wind was shifting, pulling around from the lake. There was less heat.

"No layin' back!" Paddy commanded hoarsely. "Up a bit. Goin' to drown it."

Speech caught in his baked mouth. Indistinctly he saw the second line, released from the main building by the veer of wind, pull in beside him. One hour passed, two. The north end of the roof fell.

The south end held.

Fire retreated before the onslaught of water. Paddy eased closer.

It was late afternoon, with a gray hood buckling over the sky when the ex-chief released his nozzle. A heap of black cinders, shaken down through the grates of the old Nott firebox, steamed in the snow. Sparks still shot from the wide mouth of its stack. Its faithful pistons still kicked up and down in their monotonous, dancing cadence. In a barn close by, Tom and Jerry scuffed their hooves contentedly, each belted warmly in a blanket.

"Thankee, Tom. Thankee, Jerry," Paddy said. "Good run you made, Tom. Good run, Jerry." He patted their noses with his left hand; his right was frozen, he had discovered. From his pouch he drew a fistful of scrap tobacco. "Here y' are," he croaked. "Eatin' terbaccy, devil 'em."

The team chewed solemnly. Both had learned.

"Ah—Chief."

It was Crump's voice. The mayor followed him.

"I owe you an apology," the table maker said. Paddy stared at him sharply. The man's face was haggard; he might have been fighting fire himself, the way he looked. "An apology," Crump repeated.

"About a dozen or so," Paddy answered. He kept his hand fondly on Jerry's back. "An' the same amount to the beasts here."

"We were a little—I might say—precipitous in our action regarding the

horses," Crump went on. "I realize that, ah, perhaps."

"They ain't no perhaps to it!"

"But let that be. Here's a proposition. You go back. Take over the job. Those are good boys there, but we need a man with experience."

"That's what you do, mister. Experience and some sense."

"So if you'll take over the job. . . ."

"Me? I quit. Me and the beasts quit. We was just lendin' a hand."

"Good enough," Crump agreed. "You did just that. But we want to be sure you and the beasts will be on the job next time. Keep the horses. Oh, yes, keep the modern equipment, too. But we might need that steam engine again, and I know we need you. I've sent a man up to get the stalls ready. If you'll have one of the boys drive them back—"

"Drive my horses? Nigh kilt them comin' down."

"You mean—"

Paddy stuffed tobacco into his own mouth.

"If the beasts go back, I got to go too," he consented. "Them ree-cruits don't understand good flesh. They think brass and nickel plate and gasoline puts out fire. What they know about horses? Tom and Jerry don't relish a lot o' clumsy mechanics rubbin' 'em down. They like me. Me and them is friends. I got to go back if they do, to keep 'em comfortable in their mind. We're built same way. No gasoline in us. We got the stuff." He turned on the mayor. "Know what saved your good for nothing town?"

"You!"

"Flesh," Paddy corrected viciously. "Not me. Flesh."

RESIGNATION

By HOWARD WILLARD GLEASON

FOR twenty years he hungered to be mate.
At last, his turn—the Second swept to lee,
Bashed to a pulp by one vast Cyclops sea.
He was made Third, by some grim jest of Fate.
The Old Man and the other mates turned cold—
Crude focsle swine! He must be shown his place!
And now among the crew no friendly face
Greeted him man and brother as of old.
So in this purgatory six months passed.
A clumsy upstart, with a quid stained beard
Another mister, to be shunned and feared.
Then one gray morn, 'twixt mizzen-shrouds and mast,
A running bowline 'neath his square chin drawn,
They found him, grinning triumph at the dawn . . .

By WALT COBURN

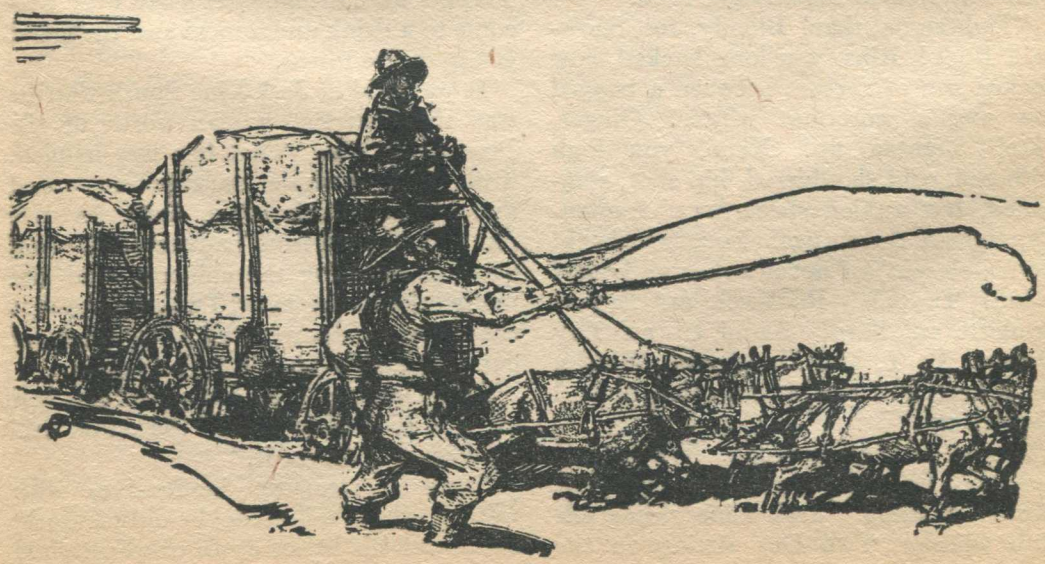
The story of Jerk Line Smith, who drove the eighteen horse freight team through heat and blizzard, and his little pardner Two Dog, the bane of whose life was—

POWDER

"MUD?" said Jerk Line Smith to the barflies in the Bloody Heart Saloon. "Mud? I'll tell a man we was in mud. I'm haulin' grub, powder and licker to the camps at the Little Rockies, five wagons and the caboose, loaded a thousand pounds to the horse, and workin' thirty-two o' the best hosses north o' hell. Bogged to the hubs. It taken us twenty-one days and part o' that night tuh pull the Rocky Point Hill.

"Mud? Mister, them Montana bad lands, comin' up from the Rocky Point crossin' on the Missouri, is eye deep to a tall camel. Ol' Hard Luck Jones laid over at the Point and goes on a big drunk. Turned his hosses loose fergettin' to tie up their tails. Tails gits balled with that gumbo till it weighted down them pore animals. Stretched their hides back. In a week every one o' them hosses was dead. Hide so tight they couldn't close their eyes. The pore things died from lack o' sleep."

"That was in '81," agreed Two Dog Moore, Jerk Line's swamper. "The summer o' the blue snow."



Whereupon fresh drinks were set up. Out on the street stood Jerk Line Smith's freight outfit. The two wagons and canvas topped cart, or caboose. Eighteen horses standing at rest; the off wheeler a bronc. A battered old saddle on the nigh wheeler; brass knobbed hames; chain harness; the lead team decorated with double rowed strings of bells strung on a hoop shaped support fastened to the tops of the hames; check reins and bridles ornate with ivory rings of red, white and blue. The wagons heavily loaded with grub, dynamite and whisky billed to Zortman and Landusky in the Little Rockies.

Presently the tall, yellow bearded freighter and his diminutive swamper would pull out of town, before they got too drunk. And Chinook would pause in its collective business or boredom to watch the long string team under Jerk Line's guidance turn the corner of the town business street and head for the open country. From the rear of the caboose to the ears of the lead team the distance was approximately half a block. Yet, drunk or sober, Jerk Line Smith would accomplish the impossible by rounding that corner with neat and profane perfection. Astride his nigh wheeler, guiding nine span of horses by means of a single line, he would swing around that corner and on to the straight road.

"Tighten up, thar! Blondy, Joe, Snowball, Buck! Ribs, you long backed, cow hocked son of a cross between a bogged cow and a wore out winter! Ginger, Pete! Tighten up! Keno, you high withered, cold shouldered, hip shot, ringboned, box ankled specimen o' humanity, tighten them tugs! You, Greyback! Born a-sleepin' an' never woke up! Louse! Injun! Tadpole! Roosevelt an' Bryan! Roulette an' Faro! Stand Up an' Lay Down! D. T. and Hangover! Whisky an' Chaser! Stumble an' Fall Down! Tighten up!"

Out on to the open road. Winter and summer. Bells chiming, wheels creaking, harness rattling. Jerk Line riding his nigh wheeler, Two Dog sitting on the plank known as the jockey bar, or walking alongside. Two Dog's business was setting and releasing the brakes, helping with the harnessing and hobbling of the teams, wrangling in the morning, cooking, fastening roughlocks on grades, blocking wheels on long climbs, watching the loads, greasing wheels, mending harness, jacking up wheels in the mud, nursing Jerk Line over periods of delirium tremens. In short, swamping.

MOTOR trucks have replaced the snail-like freight outfits. Fences crisscross the old open range. That breed of frontiersman to which belonged Jerk Line Smith and Two Dog Moore is now extinct. Save in the memory of men who loved the old West, their names and deeds are forgotten. Yet the freighter filled his place in the building of an empire. When the West needed him, he served. Through heat and blizzard. Ragged, bearded, his blacksnake hung across his shoulders. Freezing, drinking, laboring, cursing. Broken wheels and empty bottles marking his passing.

Pride of their breed cropped out in their teams. Bells and colored rings. They boasted not of their own deeds, but of what their teams could do. The passing cowboy knew him and liked him. Trapper and sheepherder were ever welcome to a drink and a meal and the latest gossip of the towns.

It was said of Jerk Line Smith that he was the orneriest human north of the Pecos, save one. That one was hanged. Tall, with rawhide muscles, unwashed and unshaven, his rough hewn features red and cracked from bad weather. And each spring, after the chinook wind had melted the winter snow, Two Dog brought the sheep shears from the jockey box and cut Jerk Line's matted yellow hair.

Two Dog had been a sheepherder, and as Jerk Line often said, "the damn' li'l' cuss never got over it."

Small of stature, inoffensive, with watery eyes of mild blue, he did his work, swallowed his liquor as an obedient child

takes medicine, and stoutly vouched for Jerk Line's stories.

"Yep. It happened back in '81, the summer o' the blue snow."

He had attached himself to the freight outfit in much the same manner that a stray dog picks up a master. Jerk Line claimed that Two Dog "must 'a' been with him six months or so afore he sobered up an' found him one day jackin' up a bogged wheel with a case o' powder fer a jack-rest."

But the truth of that statement might be questioned, because Two Dog, above all the dangers that roam the earth, feared powder.

At some spot along the colorless career of little Two Dog Moore, he had been a prospector and hard rock miner. He had lost two fingers and all the toes of his right foot while thawing a stick of frozen dynamite in the oven.

His fear of powder became an obsession. Yet almost every freight load had its quota of dynamite and blasting powder. Jerk Line handled powder with a contemptuous nonchalance that drove the blood from Two Dog's face and sent the little swamper into a sweat chilled fever.

"Gawd. Oh, Gawd!" he groaned in silent agony. "Someday it'll happen! Someday . . ."

And he would hobble back to the Bloody Heart and the bar bottle.

Yet even his terrible fear could not drive him away from the freight outfit. No more than beating can drive off the stray dog from the man he has chosen for master.

Perhaps Two Dog drew wages of some sort. Or it may have been that Jerk Line, in moments of drunken generosity, gave the little fellow money. For the harness maker at Chinook could tell you that almost every trip to town Two Dog would shamble into the shop. Here he would spend an hour fondling the red, white and blue rings, brass buckles and bells. A folded bill would come from the pocket of his disreputable overalls in exchange for rings or buckles or a new bell.

He was never known to buy clothes of any sort. He wore what Jerk Line cast aside as being worn out. With harness thread and the sheep shears, he cut down and patched these abandoned garments until they hung to him somehow. His feet, when wrapped in gunny sacking, would fill the rusty shoes he picked up. Jerk Line fed him. He drank when called up to the bar.

He managed to keep those eighteen horses and the wrangling pony curried and brushed after a fashion. He spent hours trimming their tails. He filled them with grain, and if he put an extra hatful of oats in the nosebag, Jerk Line pretended not to notice.

A good hand around a horse, Two Dog. Even the broncs seemed to savvy that the little old fellow was harmless. Before Jerk Line gave the starting howl that put the long string team in motion, Two Dog went down the line with the blacksnake no man ever saw him use. Mumbling gentle profanity, prodding them with the wooden butt of his blacksnake, talking to those horses as if they were children. And when Jerk Line bawled forth his "Tighten up!" the tugs tightened along the line, lead bars and stretchers, and chains lifted from the ground. Every horse in the string was giving the best that was in him. And deep down in his mule-skinner's heart, Jerk Line gave credit to little Two Dog. Two Dog, who had a way with hosses.

Evenings, when he had the time, the little swamper polished the brass buckles and bells until they glistened.

Their evenings, especially during mild weather, were usually visited by stray cowboys, an occasional trapper, or a sheepherder.

"I seen Jerk Line pullin' in on to Black Coulee this evening'," word would pass along from camp to ranch and from ranch to camp.

Later in the day, after dusk had fallen, a hail would come out of the night.

"Hi, there, Jerk Line, you gone to bed?"

"Dunno who you are," would come the reply from within the lantern lit caboose, "but light and rest your saddle."

If the man was a cowboy, or a trapper, he was welcome to imbibe freely of the liquor. But a sheepherder was limited to one or two "light 'uns".

Not that the freighter was snobbish, for the herder and his dog was ever welcome. But there was a large band of woolies in the herder's care, and despite the fact that Montana makes wanton desertion of a band of sheep punishable by a term in prison, herders had been known to turn loose their sheep. Because most sheepherders were habitual drunkards, and because it took but a few drinks to set them on the trail for town, Jerk Line used caution in the passing of his jug.

Once when a herder, goaded by the taste from Jerk Line's jug, quit his band, the freight outfit laid over and Two Dog herded the sheep until the camp tender discovered the absence of the herder and brought out a man to relieve Two Dog. That week's delay had cost money. Jerk Line had been duly cussed out for his tardiness. And from that time on, the jug was passed with due caution.

JERK LINE'S jug was kinfolks to that fabled pitcher that never became empty. Care of this earthenware container fell to Two Dog. And its replenishing was as much a rite as was the polishing of the bells and care of the stock.

By holding the jug to his ear and gently shaking it, Two Dog could tell a man, almost never failing, the number of man-size drinks left in it. And when its contents was lowered to a certain amount, the swamper would set about refilling it.

Whisky was shipped in huge barrels. To tap this barrel en route from wholesaler to retailer was unlawful. For, allowing for small natural shrinkage, the saloon man paid good cash for the net contents as listed on the bill of lading made out at the shipping point.

Now Jerk Line was a man of honest habit. He paid his bills. His word in money matters was as true and good as signed paper or Christian oath. Yet no whisky barrel ever landed at its final destination without being tapped.

Unlike the trained ear of Two Dog, the saloon man could not gauge the amount of liquor inside the fifty gallon barrel or the hundred gallon barrel. Furthermore, no naked eye could detect any sign of the barrel's having been tampered with. Yet, from that barrel had come a gallon, three, or perhaps five gallons of its original contents.

Barrel tapping, like safe cracking, is an art. Two Dog was the skilled artist.

From the jockey box would come a hammer, a strip of canvas and a cold chisel with its edge filed round and smooth so that it made a dull sort of instrument. Selecting one of the hoops that bound the wooden staves of the barrel, the swamper became a barrel cooper. With hammer and chisel, the canvas as a buffer to prevent marking the hoop, Two Dog would lift the hoop until it was an inch or so above its original place.

A gimlet and length of rubber tubing now came from the jockey box. A tiny hole was bored in a carefully selected spot somewhere along the rim marked by the hoop. The bit of tubing was inserted, its lower end vanishing into the neck of the jug. If necessary, a tiny air hole was made in the top of the barrel. This hole was made somewhere on the lettering of the maker that was customarily burned into the wood by a red hot stencil.

The siphoning was now under way. A slow process, for the air hole was small, as was the tube that led from the barrel to the jug. But Two Dog, from experience, could time the process with fair accuracy.

"Some barrels," he would tell Jerk Line, "gives down their licker faster'n others."

And when the jug was filled, tiny wooden pegs were driven into the gimlet holes and the white dots of the wooden pegs were seared into a blending, charred color by means of a hot iron. The hoop was painstakingly driven back into place. No visible trace remained of the looting. Two Dog would step back, head on one side, surveying the barrel with the pleased eye of an artist who has put the final touches to a masterpiece.

Yet Jerk Line was an honest man. And Two Dog was of guileless bearing, meek as the man of the Scriptures.

"I reckon we earn that much, haulin' the stuff over this damn' road. Anyhow I allers tell 'em."

Jerk Line, with a wink and a grin, would always boast that he had tapped the barrel.

"Show me whar we tapped 'er an' I'll pay fer the whole dang barrel," he'd tell Dutch John or Big Fred or Buster or Jew Jake or old Pike. "Ain't that right, Two Dog?"

"Righter'n hell, Jerk Line," came prompt affirmation.

II

IT WAS powder that severed a five year partnership between the rough hewn Jerk Line and the timid Two Dog. Frozen dynamite.

Those of you who have never cursed and prayed and coaxed and wept your way with a freight outfit can not quite appreciate the heartbreaking grief of the Red Lane in bad weather.

Five miles of red adobe gumbo flat. No road but the rutted strip from the P outfit's horse corrals to the half way house known as the Hog Ranch. Five miles of mud up to a horse's hocks. Mud that sticks in the spokes of the wide tired freight wagon wheels. Wheels seven feet in diameter, sunk to the hubs. Five miles of cold, red, sticky, horse killing hell. Horses floundering. Two Dog hacking away with an ax at the gumbo clogged between the spokes.

"Drop trail."

Caboose and rear wagon unhooked. Wallowing in mud up to their knees, the two freighters labored. Cold. Wet. Hungry. Sweat. Mud. Jerk Line too weary to curse, blood seaming the chapped cracks that filled his hands and red wrists. Two Dog whimpering with futile grief. His beloved horses and rings and buckles and bells caked with mud.

Mud that thawed at midday and froze to cement-like solidity at night. From daybreak till dark. Shivering through the brief night hours. Harness lying in the mud. Hobbles caked with the stuff. Broken fingernails. Freezing, sweating, sobbing, cursing across the Red Lane. Five days making five miles.

Perhaps it was too much liquor, or it might have been that Jerk Line needed more of the stuff that warmed the lining of a man's belly while his hide was plastered with half frozen mud.

The trail wagon was down to the running gear in the gumbo. The teams stood bogged with lowered heads and heaving flanks, sweat smeared, steaming, spent, but waiting to give again the last ounce of strength in their loyal hearts. But no team that ever looked through collar could budge that mired load. Jerk Line, white with fatigue and red eyed from loss of decent rest, was on top of the load, slashing at mud caked ropes with his jacknife. Though it was past noon they had not eaten since four that morning. They had unloaded and reloaded that trail wagon three times since sun-up.

Two Dog, who had been untangling a swing team from a tangle of lead-bars and stretcher chains, was limping painfully back through the mud. His feet were twin balls of gumbo; leaden balls of weight. A cud of tobacco bulged his unshaven cheek. Suddenly he halted. His watery eyes widened. The cud dropped from his gaping mouth. In mud to his knees, he stood there, petrified, breathless with terror.

For the mud crazed Jerk Line was heaving off wooden boxes with insane abandon. Box after box, flung from the high piled wagon out into the congealing, freezing gumbo. One of the boxes broke, spilling forth its contents of dynamite sticks that looked like yellow candles.

Powder! Two Dog, sick with stark terror, let out a hoarse, croaking scream.

"Gawd! Gawd A'mighty, Smith! That's powder!"

"What the hell of it?" bellowed the yellow bearded giant, throwing another box out. "What the hell of it, hey?

Lend a hand up here, damn your sniveling little heart!"

Two Dog stood there, sort of crumpled. In his scarecrow rags, his broken, bleeding, mud caked hands going out in a queer little gesture of supplication.

"O, Gawd, Jerk Line! Don't! Don't, pardner! I'll unload 'er. Every damn' case, Jerk Line! But don't—don't sling that stuff like that! She's powder, Jerk Line! Powder!"

But the yellow haired, mud fouled Jerk Line was like a man gone stark mad. His harsh voice roared forth a string of curses. He threw boxes of the frozen dynamite with a sort of giant petulance that was terrible in its blasphemous contempt for the wrath of God.

"Git!" he bellowed. "Git, you white hearted, sheep herdin' louse! Git, afore I brain you with the next box!"

Two Dog turned slowly, very slowly, like a man mortally sick. Like a stray dog being stoned by his man-god.

Shambling, stumbling, falling sometimes because he was weak and hurt and blind from the tears that coursed down his little old cheeks, Two Dog made his way along the Red Lane.

The weary horses eyed him with some sort of dumb understanding. But he did not look up. He could not look at them. For he was going away. He was quitting the only thing in the world that he had ever loved.

ON DOWN the Red Lane. And even after he had stumbled on for a mile and more, the silvery tinkle of his beloved bells filled his ears. When he reached the Hog Ranch, he crawled up into the hayloft and sobbed himself into the oblivion of exhausted slumber.

While back along the Red Lane, Jerk Line, his sudden burst of fury spent, worked in a brooding silence.

Already he was regretting his fit of anger. And he worked until darkness clogged his progress. Then he unhooked his team and turned them into the Hog Ranch pasture. Too weary and sick at heart to return to the caboose at the far end of the lane, Jerk Line lay down on the load and slept, too utterly tired to know that he was hungry.

He hired a passing traveler from the mines and put him to work in Two Dog's place. His anger had turned to guilt, then into a sort of shamed bitterness toward Two Dog. He lied himself into believing that the little swamper had deserted in an hour of dire need. And when the outfit had been dragged through the lane and Jerk Line laid over at the Hog Ranch to mend broken tugs and rebalance his freight, he got very drunk and sank into a sullen silence.

Two Dog, refreshed by sleep, had quit the barn. Avoiding the little log saloon and dining room that fed the stage passengers, he took to the road before Jerk Line pulled into the ranch.

Two Dog found a sheep camp and stayed with the herder. And two days later he hailed the passing stage and rode with the driver into the Little Rockies. But he did not go into the town of Zortman. He got off a mile this side of town and struck off for a sheep ranch.

A few days later Two Dog was back herding sheep. He wore real clothes. Thick, fleece lined underwear, sox a quarter-inch thick, shoes, overshoes, blanket lined canvas pants, a sheep lined overcoat and heavy cap. His covered wagon held adequate bed and good grub. Two collie dogs for company.

The feed was good, there in the scrub pines of the foothills. There was water. A good shed for the sheep at night. And his band were stout wethers that needed little attention save doctoring them for sore mouth and foot rot. And each morning as they left the shed, Two Dog caught a few sheep and sheared away the overhanging wool that sometimes grows so thick as to make the sheep blind—wool blind.

But Two Dog was not happy. Well clothed, well fed, and an ideal winter camp. A veritable sheepherder's paradise. And Two Dog was a sheepherder, as good a sheepherder as ever cheated the

wolves and blizzards. He tried to tell himself that he was happy, that freighting was a hell of a life. Here he was, warm, with good grub, top wages. This was the life.

But when the sheep bells, reminding him of other bells, tinkled, until the sound of them found their way into his little old heart, he would bury his frost blackened face in the thick fur of the biggest collie and cry like a hurt child.

Sometimes, when the wind was right—for a herder feeds into the wind in winter so that if a storm comes, he drifts with it back to camp—Two Dog's band went up the wind and across the stage road below town. And from some hiding place among the scrub pines, Two Dog's tear dimmed eyes would watch Jerk Line's freight outfit crawl along the road. Wide steel tires creaking across the packed snow. Chains rattling. The silver toned bells sending their siren song across the frozen world to where little two Dog squatted in the pines.

Because he never went to town, because his camp tender was a Swede who spoke no English, and because some queer sort of pride pinched his heart, forbidding him to question men he met, Two Dog did not know how things were going with Jerk Line.

Jerk Line, never sober any more, whose brief stays in town were silent and ugly and sodden. He no longer held the barflies spellbound with fanciful tales of mud and snow and feats of expert hauling.

His horses sensed the change in the man. They no longer gave the best that was in them. Harness and animals alike took on a shabby, prideless appearance. Uncurried, with burrs and witches' knots in their manes and tails, the eighteen horses, from prideful lead-team to the line backed bronc on the off wheel, seemed to miss the unobtrusive care and companionship of little Two Dog. Even the bells, weather tarnished and dull, had lost something of their gallant silvery tone. The caboose was a litter of cast off clothing, dirty dishes and blackened pots and skillets. Man, horses, harness and wagons had a neglected appearance.

Nor was that all. There were complaints from Dutch John and Big Fred. And on one occasion when the outfit had been snowbound a week, and had taken three weeks to pull from the railroad into the twin towns of Zortman and Landusky, the saloon men, becoming wrathful at the light weight of a fifty gallon barrel, checked up. The whisky was siphoned into jugs. The barrel was twenty gallons short. And the gimlet marks were plain to be seen.

Dutch John accused Jerk Line there in the saloon, before a big crowd. Jerk Line knocked the old fellow through the front window and almost into the arms of the deputy sheriff who happened to be passing. Jerk Line was duly jailed, tried and fined. And the final outcome of it all was this: The saloon men got together and bought a small freight outfit of their own. A six horse outfit; a former stage driver for skinner. And when Jerk Line threatened to work over this six horse skinner with a stay chain, that gentleman borrowed Big Fred's sawed-off shotgun and sent word across the street where Jerk Line was doing his drinking.

"Tell that unwashed, louse bound jasper to come on with his stay chain. This town needs a corpse about his size."

The skinner had been a shotgun messenger for Wells Fargo in Indian days and meant just about what he said. Jerk Line ignored the message and carried the bitterness of defeat into a sullen, sulking week of inebriation.

JERK LINE still hauled powder and grub for the two camps under an old contract. He still brought in an occasional barrel of whisky to Landusky, for Jew Jake and old Pike Landusky were too ornery to side in with the Zortman saloon men.

As the goose flies, Landusky is only about five miles or so across the mountain from its sister town of Zortman. But the wagon road, heading the coulees and cañons, is better than twelve miles. And there is the Grouse Gulch grade. A sharp pitch, twisting and narrow. The skinner

of a jerk line team must need know his business to avoid disaster on the Grouse Gulch hill. For if a wagon slipped off there, it dropped for a hundred feet.

"Haulin' powder down Grouse Gulch hill," agreed the muleskinner clan, "is like sittin' on the lid of hell."

But since the departure of Two Dog, Jerk Line displayed a blood-chilling contempt for powder that made even the hardened miners and "powder monkeys" shiver. For powder, as any man who handles it will tell you, is temperamental stuff. Freakish, sort of. And the tawny bearded freighter handled it as if it were flour.

Perhaps, in his present unhealthy state of mind, Jerk Line blamed the stuff for all his troubles. He hated powder as if the stuff were alive and understood. He cursed it as he would curse a man, in terms of the most terrible blasphemy. No swamper ever made a second trip with him.

The men at the powder house called him crazy. And perhaps they were right. No man now stayed at his roadside camps for a meal or a drinking bout; Jerk Line was likely to drive him off in a quick fit of anger. And when men began to shun his company, Jerk Line grew the more sullen and moody. Above the sound of bells and chains and creaking wheels could be heard his big voice as he rode the nigh wheeler or walked alongside, talking to himself. Jerk Line Smith was no longer quite sane.

Men pitied him without knowing why they did so. Landusky and Zortman did not know that the bearded, rough mouthed Jerk Line was grieving for the companionship of Two Dog. They did not know that he sometimes lay awake through the long night, calling in a broken, croaking whisper, for his little partner. That in town or on the road his bloodshot eyes searched with restless stare for a glimpse of Two Dog Moore.

They did not know, because Jerk Line hid his grief, covering it with sulky brooding and fits of sudden anger.

Sometimes Jerk Line saw the band of wethers feeding up the wind among the scrub pines, a dirty gray blotch against the white snow. Once or twice he caught a brief glimpse of the dogs, as those sagacious animals trotted around the lead of the band to turn them back. But even though he stared until his eyes ached, he could catch no glimpse of Two Dog. He did not guess that the little fellow often crouched within a stone's throw of the road where it dropped off the Grouse Gulch hill.

Of the affairs of Jerk Line Smith, Two Dog knew only what his watery blue eyes told him. That was enough to upset the little fellow, so that he lay awake far into the night, smoking and thinking and trying to pray.

Two Dog saw the broken harness, the wheels that needed grease, the tarnished, blackened bells, the uncurried coats of the horses he loved. Jerk Line, his lanky frame bent across the hames of the nigh wheeler. Tossing rocks from the canvas nosebag hung to the saddlehorn. Jerk Line, bent over like an old man, his tawny hair and beard astonishingly gray. Mumbling like a man drunk or gone mad. The trail wagon piled high with powder.

III

A WARNING chinook wind had melted some of the snow, but before its task was completed the wind swung a few points north, and smoke hued clouds shoved up across the skyline, spreading like a pall across the blue sky. Snow, fine and hard as specks of ice, filled the air. The mercury dropped to ten below zero.

The wether band fed into the wind for two hours, then balked. Humped up in the lee of the rocks, the sheep stood there in stupid, stubborn bunches. The dogs barked and snapped at their heels. Two Dog hobbled about, slapping his arms to keep warm. And when he saw the futility of trying to make his sheep graze north, he gave it up and hobbled over toward the head of the Grouse Gulch hill. He had kept close tabs on Jerk Line's trips

and he knew that the freight outfit was about due.

When he reached the grade he stared in scowling silence at the frozen, ice glazed ruts. Dangerous at any time, that road was little more than a devil's slide this morning. Icy, slippery, treacherous.

"Smith'll have to put rough locks on his wheels," he mused. "Them brakes o' his needs new shoes. Wore bad, last trip. Rough locks. Hug the bank clost. Take 'er slow, an' he'll make 'er. If them brakes slip on this hill, he'll . . ."

A shudder swept his little frame. He was thinking of that trail wagon, piled with powder cases.

Out of the gray morning came the distant sound of bells. Clear and sweet, like Christmas bells. To little Two Dog they were voices. Just like the voices of fairies. "A-callin' fer him."

Two Dog scurried to a brush thicket beside the frozen road, ten feet above the road level, on the slope of the hill. He could lean over and spit down on the road.

Then, up over the brow of a low rise, came the freight outfit. Black Jack and Monte, the two black leaders, leaning into their padded collars, their bells chiming. The other teams, plodding behind. The high boxed wagons, lurching and swaying. The dingy tarp covered caboose. Jerk Line, walking alongside the lead wagon to keep warm. In grease caked overalls and torn, faded mackinaw, his blue flannel shirt open at the throat. Beating his chapped, gloveless hands across his barrel chest. His blacksnake hung across his shoulders. Walking with bent over shoulders, as if he carried a heavy pack, his bearded chin sunk on his chest. A little unsteady from too much whisky and too little decent grub. Mumbling into his matted beard.

Plodding along. The wide tires creaking dismally on the frozen snow. Coming on at a dogged, sullen pace, slantwise to the bitter wind. Without a swamper. The trail wagon loaded high with powder.

And when the swing teams were directly under Two Dog's hiding place, the wise leaders slacked to a halt. The other teams halted in unison and stood there. Jerk Line looked up as if waking from a dream; as if he did not quite realize where he was. He passed a reddened, calloused hand across his eyes, then reached into the jockey box.

"Reachin' fer his rough lock chains," nodded Two Dog.

But when the freighter's hand came out of the box, it held a jug. Uncorking the jug with his teeth, he spat out the cork and tipped up the jug. For the space of ten long seconds, Jerk Line let the whisky gurgle down his throat. When the jug came away from his bearded lips, he picked the cork out of the snow and with a sort of fumbling movement replaced the jug. Again his hand passed across his eyes, as if he tried to wipe away a curtain or film that clouded his vision. Then he stumbled with a faltering step back along the wagon.

The brake poles, made of seasoned birch, were equipped with ropes. To set the brakes you pulled the rope taut and tied it to a steel brace up forward. Jerk Line set the two brakes in a haphazard fashion. Instead of a bowline knot, he merely gave the ropes a couple of half hitches and a twist. Two Dog, watching every move, choked back a little groan. And when Jerk Line mounted his wheel horse, the little watcher clapped a mittened hand across his mouth to smother the cry that came to his throat.

"Tighten up, thar!" roared Jerk Line.

Chains rattled taut. Brakes creaked. The wagons lurched forward.

Two Dog shivered in terror, a thin, whispering scream tearing from his tight throat. But Jerk Line did not hear. Two Dog saw the front brake rope give, slacking off under the strain. The second rope jerked loose. The heavy wagons rolled forward toward the brink of the hill. Jerk Line, loaded with powder, was starting down that pitch with no brakes!

Two Dog, pasty white, leaped like an animal, landing in a heap on the first wagon. Half crawling, he scrambled across the load to the brake rope, just as the wagon reached the pitch of the hill.

The rear wagon, still on level ground, held it back. Two Dog reached for the rope as the wagon rolled against the wheel team. The horses, sensing danger, jumped a little, then leaned back against the breeching.

Jerk Line seemed to wake from a stupor. He stiffened in the saddle, cast a swift, furtive look back at the towering load that was not holding. Then he roared a hoarse, screaming shout at the horses. His blacksnake cracked like pistol shots. The long team, frightened at the terror in the man's voice, leaped forward.

In split second movements, Two Dog swung his weight on the brake rope. The brake shoes smoked, screamed, then held the wide tires in a tight grip. Two Dog, with deft, swift hitches, made fast the rope and knotted it. Then he leaped to the ground, was saved by a miracle from death under the wheels of the second wagon, and scrambled up over the end gate of the trail wagon, grasping at the dangling rope.

"Gawd! Gawd! Gawd!"

No prayer of man ever held more pitiful entreaty, more blind faith, more stark terror. And as if in answer to his screaming prayer, his hands found the rope.

The little fellow's weight was puny against the strain of the load that was rolling the huge wheels. He cast a panicky glance about for some object that was solid. Something to throw a hitch around and take up the slack. His eyes fell on a thick iron brace that spanned the sides of the wagon-box. Two Dog threw a hitch about it, then threw his weight against the rope, his feet braced, every muscle straining.

Jerk Line's blacksnake spat and popped. His hoarse screams goaded the terrified horses. They broke into a trot. Faster. Every second courting a pile-up. For if the long, jointed bars that served as a wagon tongue ever slacked and a horse became tangled in the stretchers and lead bars, the whole outfit would pile up in a snarl of mangled flesh. Wagons, horses and men broken and smashed, jerked over the edge and down that hundred feet of boulders. And the trail wagon piled with high explosive powder.

Then, with a horrible squeal the brake blocks of the trail wagon took hold. The momentum of the loads slacked. And as the stridor of the brake shoes smothered to a low moan, Two Dog's voice traveled out of the rattling chains, along the line of fear stricken horses.

"Steady, boys. Easy, babies. Whoa, babies. Whoa, now. Whoa!"

Crooning, calling, talking to them as a mother soothes the fright of her children.

JERK LINE heard it and thought that he had gone clear mad. But he felt the horses slacken to a walk. He knew that some miracle had checked the momentum of the wagons. His hand, shaking as if with palsy, made that queer, brushing motion across his eyes. Then something inside him seemed to break and he swayed in his saddle, tears streaming down into his matted beard, sobs shaking his big frame. But the hands that handled the jerk line were mechanical, sure, skilled even after the man's brain had quit. And so Jerk Line Smith rode down the Grouse Gulch hill. And when the outfit was again on level ground and the horses stood quiet, he still sat in the saddle, sobbing and laughing. Crazy. Crazy from pain and liquor and lack of decent grub. And blind. Snow blind since the day before yesterday.

But out of that babbling delirium and red black of snow blindness Jerk Line recognized Two Dog and clung to him, sobbing like a baby. While Two Dog, laughing through tears of sheer happiness, put his partner to bed in the caboose. Ten minutes after Two Dog had Jerk Line's clothes off and had put him to bed, the freighter dropped into a heavy sleep.

Two Dog unhooked the teams, chuckling and talking to each horse as he unbuckled their harness and fastened on nose bags and hobbles.

"Yep, by gravy, it's ol' Two Dog come back, babies. Gol damn your gosh darned hungry hides. Know me, don't you? I'll tell a wet hen. Quit nibblin' at

a man's duds. Here's grain till hell's no more. A extry hatful. An' I'm tellin' you, ponies, tomorrow is gonna come Sunday. We're declarin' 'er a holiday. Gotta nuss ol' Jerk Line. He's got 'em shore bad this time. Loco as hell. Gotta lay over an' touch up this harness some. Looky at them bells! Gawd A'mighty, what a mess!"

When the camp tender came along, Two Dog turned over his sheep.

"Got a sick man in yonder caboose. I'm quittin'. Yep, goin' back to freightin'."

"What's them cases you're unloadin', Two Dog?" asked the camp tender who had replaced the Swede a few weeks ago.

"Powder," said Two Dog grimly, as he carefully carried a case away from the wagons and placed it gently on top of a pile fifty feet away.

"What's the idee in unloadin' it here?"

"Me'n' Jerk Line has quit haulin' powder. I aim to tell him so when he comes outa it."

But it was none other than Jerk Line himself who grinned weakly out of his delirium, and made the flat statement that he'd never haul another ounce of powder.

"Fu'thermore, Two Dog, I'm tyin' you up so's you can't quit me, never no more. I'm makin' you half owner. Half owner, hear that, you gosh darned li'l' ol' son of a gun?"

TWO WEEKS later the freight outfit was again in Chinook after a load. Dutch John and Big Fred and the others had held a conference. The six horse outfit was taken off the road.

"All that was wrong with Jerk Line, he was just nacherally homesick fer Two Dog. Who'd uh guessed it? Homesick!"

Once more Jerk Line Smith addressed the crowded bar at the Bloody Heart Saloon, while outside the freight team, bells and buckles shining in the sun, waited lazily.

"Mud? I'll tell a stranger! I see's a hat layin' on top o' the mud. Good hat. When I picks 'er up, danged if there ain't a man under it."

" 'Mister,' says I, 'I'll git my shovel an' dig you out.'

" 'You needn't bother,' says he. I'll be out directly. I got a stout hoss under me!"

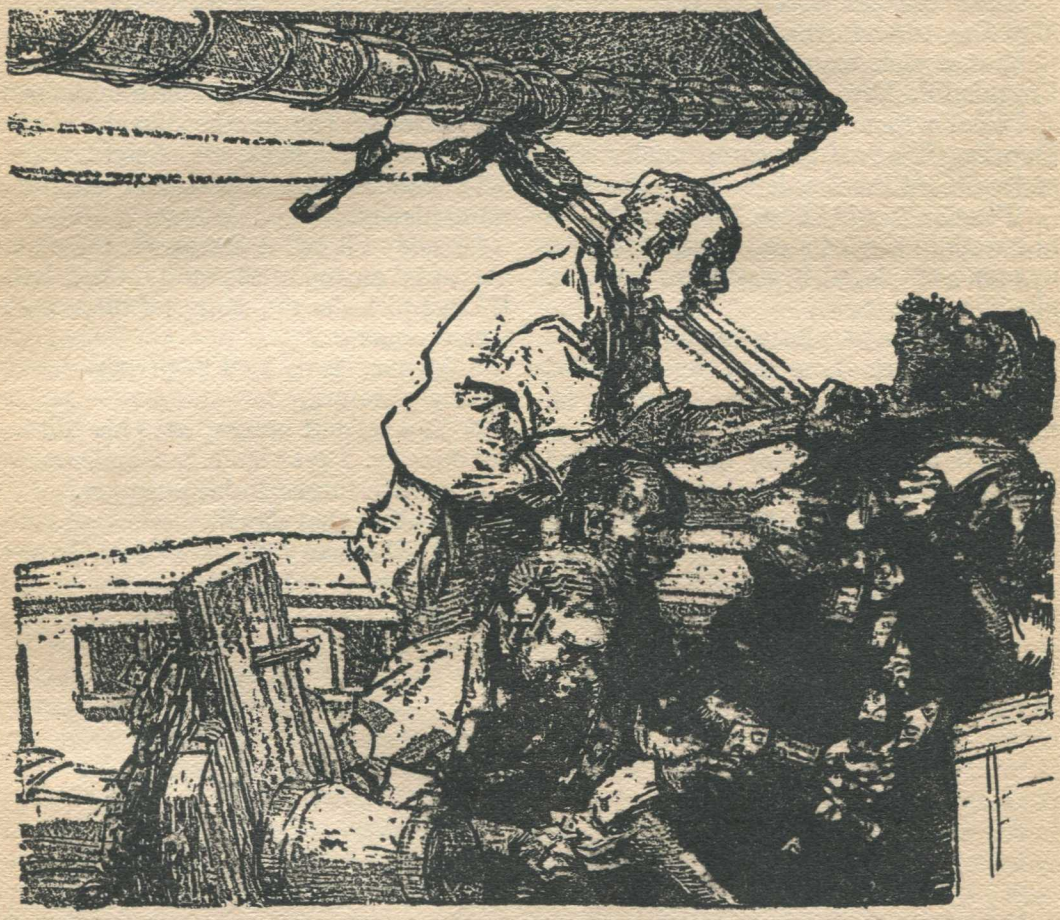
Jerk Line turned to his swamper.

"Recollect that day?"

"I'll tell a man I do, Jerk Line. It was the summer of '81. The summer o' the blue snow."

Going on with

The ROARING HORN



JASON MELLISH, cadaverous old owner of the dingy and ill found windjammer *China Girl*, paid Captain Bohannon a cool twenty thousand dollars to take the hulk of a vessel, laden with railroad iron, to Cape Horn and sink her—for insurance. Bohannon planned to be set ashore at Bahia, and the riffraff crew would perish on the world's worst corner. But Jason Mellish did not know, that morning when the *China Girl* left her Staten Island pier, that shanghaied in the hold was Roderick Tyson, the very nephew for whose profit the murderous voyage was planned.

And as the ship plodded southward, none but Leadspitter, the brutal first mate, knew that Captain Bohannon had found a hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars in the suitcase of dying old Mr. Raineaux, whom they had picked up from a burning yacht, and that Raineaux's

GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND'S

Novel of Perilous Seas

daughter, Isora, knew more of navigation than himself.

As luck would have it upon that ominous voyage, one night the mizzen topsail tie gave way, and with a thunderous crash the litter from aloft fell upon Captain Bohannon. For days he lay in his cabin, unconscious. With this disaster had fallen all chances of the ship's putting in at Bahia Blanca. Leadspitter took charge. He kept Tyson before the mast, made Isora his first mate, drove the crew with fist and oath—and kept his eye upon Bohannon. When Bohannon began to recover his strength, but before he had gained his voice, Leadspitter plotted murder.

He killed the convalescent captain, took possession of Isora's hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars and, searching the cabin for further loot, discovered the twenty thousand dollars that old Mellish had paid Bohannon.

"Two hundred thousand dollars, and all mine!" he cried. "The girl'll get hers—the high dive is what she'll get as soon as I can get along without her. Every nickel, every copper, it's all fair sailin' now."

LEADSPITTER felt thirsty with the fever of emotions so consuming. He swigged more rum, breathed, "*Ah!*" and smeared his bristly chin as some of the liquor dribbled down. Then, leaning back in his chair, swaying with the heave and toss of the laboring ship, he abandoned himself to a glorious rhapsody of delights.

"All my life," his confused thought ran, "I been buckin' wind an' weather. But no more o' them for mine, after this here is over. Wind's damn' poor stuff on a man's stomach when he's hungry. I've had my share. I'm quittin'! No more goin' foreign, in mine. Settle down in the good old U. S. A. I will, an' live high. That's me all over!"

In a wondrous efflorescence of temptations that he ran to meet, the world, the flesh and the devil smiled beckoningly. They furnished, for his delectation, all the old familiar lures for which, since time began, men have done violence of robbery and murder.

Oh, there would be "paradise enow" of women, song and wine! There would be gambling, riotous living, vengeance on many an enemy. Like another Monte Cristo with his cry "The world is mine!" Leadspitter indulged his golden dreams.

Rum! He wanted more rum, and reached for the bottle. But caution whispered, "No!" He realized that already he had drunk enough. Too much, perhaps.

"Time enough for the booze later," he whispered. "That, an' the women!"

He had forgotten, now, all about the woman aboard, save as an enemy, an obstacle to be heaved from his trampling path. His earlier reaction to her, his desire for her, had now figuratively all gone by the board, just as she herself must literally go by the board. Dazzling and golden visions half blinded him—lights, music, strong waters and women, always women. An infinitude of women.

"Everything's comin' my way," he pondered, sunk in a sodden animality. "Everything, if I don't miss stays. I'll soon get the haul of bein' like a bloomin' millionaire, by Judas! God, if we was only at Valparaiso, now, with *her* gone to the bottom!"

Most exigently he desired to be at Valparaiso. Once there, the gates of bliss would open. Even though he should fail to make away with Isora, did he not at all events have twenty thousand dollars? With twenty thousand, what might not be possible?

But Isora, he felt, could not escape death. How easy, after all, it was to kill a human creature! Just one moderate blow had done for Bohannon, done for him in such a manner that no fear of detection could exist. How could a blow on a bandaged head leave any trace? No one had seen him; no one knew. And the captain was dead, and the captain's money lay there on the desk; and in that darkling, tempest tossed little cabin, all things blent and swam before Leadspitter's blood injected eyes, in aureate splendor.

Beatifically adream, he sagged there with the fumes of strong waters fuddling his brain, the dazzle of all that money blending with the entrancement and the lure of what this amazing, golden fortune soon would mean to him. Morseling gluttony, lust, drunkenness with the teeth of anticipation, he sat there and darkly brooded.

BUT AFTER a certain time, during which the *China Girl* plunged on her tempest harried way, some sense of elementary caution arose in Leadspitter. Not thus should he sit dreaming dreams, staring at money loose strewn about the desk. No; wisdom dictated concealment.

He therefore bestirred himself to action. First he gathered up Isora's wealth—some hundred and eighty odd thousand dollars in American and English paper currency, the bonds, the little bag of uncut gems—and replaced them in the japanned metal dispatch box. This he again locked in the safe.

"I know where *you* are, anyhow," he grinned. "You'll be ready waitin' for me there, by Judas, when I'm ready for you!"

Now, how about Bohannon's twenty thousand? His own, rather! The desk drawer? No, that would never do. No longer would he let that treasure lie so unguarded. The ease with which Bohannon had entered the cabin and opened the drawer, confusedly hunting for the money his dazed brain felt was somewhere there—this had taught Leadspitter a lesson. Not the drawer!

Under his mattress then? In the locker; somewhere hidden in the bookrack? No! Old Abey Buzzard, who daily made up the cabin, would be only too likely to discover the hoard. And that might spell disaster.

"I won't chance this here twenty thousand nowheres off o' my own self," he decided. "There's only one best bet, an' that's to keep the cash right on me, till we're safe ashore!"

The pocket of his pea jacket, however, he reckoned would not serve. Too risky, that. He pondered a moment, then opened his shirt and undershirt, replaced the captain's money in the now torn manila envelope, and thrust it in next to his hairy breast. He carefully buttoned his clothes; drew his belt two holes tighter.

"Now, by God, I'd like to see it get away from me!"

The feel of the well padded envelope was comforting. A few weeks more of sensing it there would constitute a luxury of the rarest. Day and night the money should stay with him. No one could possibly know he had it. Discovery was impossible. Safe, protected in every way, Leadspitter felt that this day fate had indeed been kind to him.

But strong rum and stronger emotions were blurring his brain. The murky cabin swam before his eyes. Rest—he needed rest; sleep, if he could get it. He stood up a little unsteadily, pulled off his jacket and hung it on its usual hook, hauled off his boots and tumbled into his berth, where he lay with swimming head and thumping pulses.

Thoughts wove and fled. The charts on the main cabin table—those were good, for him. Those would prove Bohannon had been up and about. Some lurch of the ship, might it not have flung the

captain against a bulkhead, crashed in his already broken skull? By all means it was good business for Leadspitter to have left those charts where Bohannon had been pawing them over. And the imprint on the manila envelope—"Jason Mellish, 26A South Street"—what might that mean? Nothing, nothing—quite natural for Bohannon to have put his money into one of the ship owner's envelopes that he had probably found in the desk. Everything was right; nothing could be better.

"I'm cert'nly carryin' a full spread o' luck," pondered Leadspitter. "Got every stitch o' sail aloft. Goin' to show 'em all a clean pair o' heels!"

A while he listened for sounds of alarm, of discovery that the Old Man was dead. None came. Leadspitter heard only the groaning labor of the racked old *China Girl* as the cruel and churning seas battered her, crashed over her waist, filled her seething decks; he sensed only the loud, continuing tremors of mast and rig and hull, boisterously assaulted.

Above this turmoil suddenly clanged four metallic strokes.

"Four bells o' the forenoon watch," thought he. "Mayes 'll be goin' on at eight bells. I can have a good long plug o' sleep. Easy, it all is—easy as knottin' two rope yarns!"

A Chinese proverb says: "The sparrow chases the fly, but the hawk is after the sparrow." Leadspitter had already become that sparrow; but little enough he even vaguely suspected it.

The cabin faded from before his eyes. Sounds and sights grew dim. Spent with the emotions of his kill, with the immeasurably ignoble lusts that had possessed him, and with the fever of his half drunken treasure dream, Leadspitter drifted into the oblivion of sleep.

In another cabin, meantime, the body of Bohannon lay. There in a berth it rested, inert, motionless save for a slight continuous sagging to and fro with the pitch, the heave of the laboring *China Girl* as she drove through tormented seas toward far and ominous horizons.

CHAPTER XV

HELL CRACKS

FOR TWO black days weather held severe and tempest raged infuriate before it blew itself out, leaving a sea of huge and combing crests that under torn cloud wrack hurled in far immensities toward the Antarctic ice barriers of Weddell Land. Fleeing before that rage, the *China Girl* drove on, always on, under storm canvas. Racked and crippled now with the leak gaining despite all efforts, ever more knocked about and smashed as she became more loggy with three feet jo water in her hold, still she survived. Still she lived—but little more.

The morale of her hit or miss crew was likewise crippled. The courage of many—such as it had ever been—had now suffered a serious abatement. Oilskins were torn to tatters, nails lacerated, bodies chilled, soaked and hungry; for during this storm madness old Chubbock had been able to provide little more than coffee, cold salt beef and hardtack. No few of the men showed ugly bruises, cuts, sprains. A damaged and disheartened ship's company that was, if any ever toiled and cursed.

Much as they had suffered in body, the majority had suffered even worse in mind. For the Old Man's perishing had set a desperate climax to the fears gendered by the death of Isora's father and by all the other misfortunes of superstitious portent that had occurred. Over many now impended a sense of inevitable disaster that gave countenance to those who proclaimed the *China Girl* a ship foredoomed.

Not that any—so far as could yet be told—suspected the truth about Bohannon's taking off; not that any yet called the *China Girl* a murder ship. This source of terror still seemed hidden. Old Abey Buzzard, knocking on Bohannon's door at about two bells of the first dog watch, the fatal day, and getting no reply, had, as he thought, let the captain sleep. But when Bohannon had not answered at six bells of the second dog Abey had ven-

tured to peep in, had learned the truth, had toddled off to tell Leadspitter.

That worthy had enacted his part very well indeed—incredulity, vehement astonishment and all the rest. The news had run with galvanic swiftness through the ship that the Old Man had been found dead in his berth.

"That's right, he must ha' fallen somehow, hit his head," general opinion had confirmed Leadspitter's analysis. "Hadn't ought to ha' been up and around, lookin' at charts and things, nohow, the way he was. Ship pitchin' so, take a better man than him to keep his footin', crippled like he was!"

The logic of it had seemed irrefutable. What more natural than that some savage lurch of the vessel had hurled the invalid and crashed his broken skull against something? Leadspitter's explanation, on such hypothesis, had been eminently within reason.

"I'm safe!" Leadspitter had inwardly rejoiced, as he had entered the event in the log. "Safe as if in God's vest pocket, now!"

Not one word of suspicion had arisen, fore or aft, either before the captain's almost immediate and unlamented burial, or since. Jubal Tabry had voiced practically the unanimous opinion of the forecastle.

"'Twere a proper judgment as come on him, dat's true as de light! First he get de punishment of gettin' knocked on de 'eed, for his wickedness, an' den he get took off entire. 'Twere him de shark was after ahl de time. A gone man, entirely. Stark roarin' an' screechin' ahl his life, an' wid a bad, black sowl on him! He get fairity well paid off, dat's what he done. I 'spects de Old Boy down below is after 'un ravinis, by now. Bohannon's smellin' de phosph'ence awful venimis! My dear man, yes!"

This brand of theology satisfied nearly all. Only one doubt existed as to the manner of the captain's death. That doubt, though still held silent, lurked in the brain of the big, lumbering Dane, Tondern.

"SOMETHIN' damn' funny about all this, somewheres," the Dane had pondered after the hastily sewn up and weighted body had with scant ceremony—a real burial service having been impossible in that gale—been given the inevitable sea toss. Mulling over a pipe in his bunk:

"Somethin' damn' queer!" Tondern had decided. "I'll bet that son of a gun Leadspitter knows more about it 'an he lets on!"

The Dane had been at the wheel when the murder had taken place, and he remembered things. From his place in the wheelhouse, his range of vision had plunged slantwise down through the cabin skylight, so that a narrow segment of the floor had been visible to him. He had seen—or could almost swear he had seen—Bohannon's feet and part of his legs dragging limply along; and, beside them, feet and legs that had resembled Leadspitter's. Then, a few minutes later, he had beheld Leadspitter's feet and legs making way back through the cabin alone.

What could all this mean? What had happened? Tondern did not know. He possessed little if anything whereon to base conclusions. Yet something in the Dane's subconsciousness kept whispering, as with lips that fumbled:

"Somethin' queer in this! Damn' queer, an' that's a fact!"

But Tondern, until now, had murmured no word to any man concerning his suspicions. He had held his peace, stood his watch and worked as usual, smoking his pipe. Yet he had ever continued to brood, with dark and half formed coils of comprehension enmeshing his slow brain.

For two days after Bohannon had been sent down to the cold sea floor, the *China Girl* still fled before wind and wave to the southward and eastward. But on the third day the gale moderated sufficiently so that Leadspitter decided to bring her to the wind.

She was accordingly braced up on the starboard tack, head-reaching and laying her course easily enough. The weather

constantly improving, permitted the old ship to carry more sail.

No Falklands or Port Stanley for Leadspitter, while two planks of the tormented vessel held together! So he stood once more toward the Horn. Both sea and wind steadily diminished as the ship once again made her way southwest.

There came, thus, some respite from the terrors past, some time of preparation for the vastly more menacing terrors still in store—the final struggle with Cape Horn. Life settled back into something of its old normal routine; miserable enough, God wot, but far more bearable than latterly it had been. The moderating weather permitted, at any rate, work that the few veterans only too well knew was indispensable.

As for Bohannon, none gave a fig that he was gone. Hated and feared, he had commanded. Unmourned he had passed; unlamented he had been committed to the deep. All he had left the tormented ship was this—a strengthening of superstitious dread, of the soul chilling thought:

"The Old Man, he's the second to die! Who'll be the next?"

CLEARING weather, though bitter with a penetrant chill that pierced the inner marrows, did something to banish dread. So did the fact that vigorous pumping had begun somewhat to reduce the water in the hold. The sun helped, too. Not that it clearly or warmly shone; no, at best it slanted only a few fading and pale ghosts of watery light that glimmered afar on jagged, murky cloud horizons. For all that, though, it brought certain messages of cheer and turned men's thoughts to better days awaiting, once the dread barrier of old Cape Stiff should lie astern.

Not very distant, Cape Horn now waited. Already the *China Girl* was laying a straight course for the Straits of Lemaire, less than a hundred and fifty miles away. Running free now with the wind one point forward of her starboard beam, she was making good headway toward those Straits beyond which lay the Horn itself.

"Things is lookin' up, some, eh?" Leadspitter that night at supper asked Isora.

He was sitting with her at table, trying to be chatty, now and then elegantly picking his yellow and broken teeth with a steel fork considerably bent, while old Abey waited on them and while Peter Mayes was keeping watch on deck.

"Kind of a coarse wind, yet, but nothin' to bother now. We got nigh all her canvas on her again, an' she's reelin' it off pretty good."

"Yes, yes, very well indeed," assented Isora.

Clear skinned, dark eyed and with her masses of black hair framing the fine oval of her face there under the uncertain light of the brass swinging lamp, she added a touch of sorely needed beauty to the dingy old cabin. "We're getting on finely now."

"We are, that! Pilin' up our westin' pretty good!" He speared a slice of bread with his all handy fork. "Got clear o' the *pampero* belt, anyhow—that's a blessin'. Gettin' pretty far south, by Judas! That there right whale we sighted this mornin', that's a sign. An' them albatrosses, too. If this here weather'll only hold on a few days more, we'll be up with the Horn, sure as guns!"

"I'll certainly be glad to see the Pacific," Isora smiled. "That means Valparaiso before long, and that means I can notify my relations I'm not drowned!"

"Devil of a lot of notifyin' *you'll* do!" thought Leadspitter, his eyes squinting.

A sudden accession of cheerfulness infused itself through his blood, cold as a toad's. His mood, these past few days, had been happy indeed. The security he felt against detection in the matter of the murder, the amazing relief of having Bohannon positively disposed of for good and all, blent with other factors to raise his spirits high. Valparaiso meant the beginning of real life for him, after of course the preliminary satisfaction of jailing Tyson for mutiny. And the Pacific

—that meant the end of Isora. Some dark night the girl would most mysteriously disappear. That event now impending, plus the comforting touch of the money envelope against his skin, all conspired to bring Leadspitter to a state of as near beatitude as he had ever yet attained.

"All my life," thought he, "I could nip every bit o' luck I ever had between my thumb an' finger. But now, by God, I'm havin' luck in fistfuls! Luck is what I'm havin', no mistake!"

Roseate futures beckoned as he eyed the girl. Vague thoughts, half avid and half sensual, drifted through his brain. He felt no pity for Isora, no compassion, in any humane sense; only a sort of dim regret that a young woman of such exquisite comeliness, fresh, molded on such perfect lines—viewed merely as an *objet de luxe*—should thus be wasted and thrown away.

The money he had stolen from Bohannan, the money he meant to steal from Isora, could of course buy other women, no end of women. But a woman—was she not always a woman? Was it not a sheer, downright misfortune to waste one? Especially one of such personable attractions?

To be sure! Yet Isora must go. No two ways about that! Mentally he rehearsed the final scene—a night of black velvet darkness; Isora with him at the counter of the ship surging along through cold, stiff running seas. Then, his hand over her mouth, choking all outcry; a sudden heave and fling; the gleam of a white face, perhaps, as it whirled down, away—then night submerging it; and *finis* . . .

JUST how the man at the wheel was to be kept from possibly seeing the great event transiently worried Leadspitter. It was, thought he, unfortunate that the wheelhouse had large ports on both sides. But none existed at the after end.

"If I could only get her far enough aft, by Judas," Leadspitter reflected with a wry smile, narrowly eying her under the smoky gleam of the lamp, "it'd be safe an' easy. That's what I got to do—get her aft o' the wheelhouse!"

But on what pretext could he entice her there? Could he feign to see a light, or what? This sole point vexed him. Perhaps he might ask her to slack the spanker sheet. That would probably serve his purpose. Never mind! He dismissed the problem. Since everything till now had gone so wonderfully well, one single factor need not worry him. The moment would decided the issue.

And after the girl was gone he could balk suspicion or discovery. He could raise the alarm with effect quite dramatic enough; could heave the ship to, lower a boat, do all possible. Could tell a plausible story—and who was there to doubt, to question? No witness! Not a word could come against him!

Leadspitter's clumsy paw clenched to a fist. His scarred cheek twitched as he tried to look jovial but succeeded only in looking tigerish.

"Things is comin' along fine," he made speech. "Couldn't be better. Nothin' to chafe us none, nothin' at all. The *China Gal*, she's a bit ripe, but after all one o' the stoutest ships as ever drownded herself in spray. We'll be round the Horn now, afore we know it. An' after that, it's all plain sailin'. Fine, fine!"

"I wish I thought so, too," answered Isora, the shadows of her lashes slanting down along her cheek. "As far as weather goes, we've nothing much to complain of. But some other things aren't so good."

"How d'ye mean, now?"

"The leak, for one thing. We're working longer every day to keep her clear, and the men are getting pretty well played out."

"Ah, that's nothin'! We can hold the leak, all right enough!" he grandiosely asserted. "What's a little water? It's healthy for a ship, that's what! I been in ships we pumped nigh the whole Western Ocean through, ships that leaked like a sieve, an' yet we made port. As for the men, it's good for 'em, work is. Men

never died from workin'. As long as they keep workin', you know they're alive, anyhow. We got nothin' to worry about with no leak such as we got, now!"

"I hope you're right, Mr. Furlong. But—" her eyes grew anxious—"I wish the men thought so, too. Judging by what I hear from forward—"

"Oh, blow that!" Indifferently Leadspitter dismissed matters forward. "Let them dogs growl an' be tarred! I most gen'ally carry a gun these days." He patted his hip. "Let them sons o' swabs start somethin', if they want to. I can take care o' them!"

"Perhaps. But there's something else. Rum and good sound judgment, in these latitudes, they don't mix well, and you ought to know it!"

"You're meanin' how?" demanded Leadspitter, knitting angry brows. "As how I'm—"

"Drinking too much, yes!" Her eyes whipped keenly to his face. "A lot too much!"

"Well, by God! When I let a woman tell me—"

"I'm not going to discuss it," she cut him short, her voice discovering a hard quality. "I've told you what I think, and that's enough!"

On which word she got up from the table and went to her own room, leaving Leadspitter to stare at her door with hateful and angry eyes.

"All right, have your say," he muttered at last. "It'll all come out in the wash. An' it'll be a damn' good, big wash you'll take, at that. The whole South Pacific—that's what'll wash you. It'll all be paid for, once we're round the roarin' Horn!"

NOW THAT the weather permitted, work which the storm had interrupted was once more resumed, by way of preparing the *China Girl* for her struggle with the toughest piece of water in the world, the passage round Cape Stiff.

All who could be spared from pumping, while on watch, undertook a variety of tasks that Boatswain Saltash directed with skill and energy. They set up the topmast and topgallant shrouds, bent their stoutest canvas, put washboards on the cabin doors, and extra lashings on spare spars, overhauled the topsail ties and sheets, and rove off new topsail halyard purchases.

Work was hampered by a lack of proper stores. When Jason Mellish had sent his ship forth to die, he had of course not properly fitted her. She was what seamen call "parish rigged," with much of her gear badly worn. The chain topsail ties, for instance, were deeply corroded, and the wire pennants aloft in very doubtful condition, rusted and stranded. Worn gear of the light sails, like clew and buntlines, was liable to carry away in a blow, and little new rope could be rove because of deficient supplies.

The light gear aloft was dubious. Men cursed freely as they were sent aloft to take out broken strands of the running rigging that had carried away or threatened to do so, and to replace them with strands not so much better, picked from the "shakings" in the forepeak. These very repair jobs, likely enough, parted next time the sail was clewed up. Yet still the work went on.

Straps and whips were got ready for preventer braces; double lashings passed on all boat gripes; jumper and rolling tackles prepared for the lower and topsail yards; whips of braces shifted end for end; shrouds and stays set up. The ground tackle was secured by unshackling the cables and stoppering the ends abaft the wildcats and putting canvas coats on them; then the cat and fish were unrove and stowed in the forepeak.

Everything, in short, was being made ready for the battle that soon would be at hand. All men, even the malcontents, felt themselves keyed up to higher tension. Leadspitter too, in his own way, was making preparations by disregarding Isora's counsel and punishing the bottle harder than ever.

The second day after she had spoken her mind to him, he came on deck to keep

the forenoon watch, thick tongued and with unsteady gait.

Eight bells had just been made. Leadspitter, after having commented on wind and weather and remarked that the ship carried a good spread of sail, had just relieved Peter Mayes. Now he stood at the quarter deck rail, ugly of jaw and temper, spoiling for trouble. As the Biblical lion wanders up and down seeking what it may devour, so Leadspitter now was seeking whom he might curse, or strike.

Rum, which inclines the hearts of certain men to mellowness and comradeship, sublimates the poison in the hearts of others only to more deadly oozing venom. Leadspitter was this type of man. Just now, for one thing, his head ached abominably; and various hates were corroding his soul. Now he felt much as Nero did when regretting that all Rome did not have a single neck, so that he might decapitate the entire population with but a single blow.

He snarled at the course, the weather, the sky, and distributed a sailor's blessing on the eight men sweating at the cranks of the big pump just abaft the main fiferail. Among the eight were Tyson, Stackhouse, Alcaniz the Spaniard, Paavola and the gunman.

"Damn' sodjers!" he growled, his voice dripping wormwood. "Keep them there wheels goin' livelier! Put some elbow grease into that work. Good job for you—keep you warm. If I have to come down there an' warm you up some more, you'll wish, by Judas, I hadn't!"

With eyes coldly hateful as a crocodile's, he remained there glowering down at the men a-labor, their faces, for all the bitter morning chill, beaded and runneled with sweat.

The *China Girl*, meantime, kept wallowing along at some eight knots, under full topsails and courses. Gray to ominous horizons, the far reaches of the South Atlantic heaved in hissing and froth streaked combers. Somewhere, off there ahead in the mystery of distances that brooded, the Horn with black and snow streaked cliffs was waiting. An ugly morning, that was, well chimed with Leadspitter's still uglier temper.

For half an hour or so he walked the heaving quarter deck, grumped and out of mood with the entire universe, red headedly itching for a fight yet finding no chance to start one—a most deplorable situation!

Even old Chubbock's singing in the galley set his yellow teeth on edge. The cook, as was his custom, was purring an old sea song to himself:

"Billie Taylor was a blithe young feller,
Very full o' life an' glee,
An' his mind he did diskivver
To a maiden fair an' free.

"Four an' twenty blithe young fellers,
Clad in jackets' blue array,
An' they took poor Billee Taylor
From his true love far away.

"Soon his true love follered arfter,
By the name o' Richard Carr,
An' her white hands she smeared over,
Ahl wid nasty pitch an' tar.

"In de very first engagement
She was dere, wid ahl de rist,
When a cannonball tore her jacket open,
An' diskivvered her lily white brist!"

The song broke off a moment. Coppers clinked. Leadspitter cast a baleful glance at the galley, and consigned old Chubbock to torments unthinkable. Still, the song presently resumed:

"When the cap'n come to hear on't,
Says he, 'What wind has blowed you here?'
Says she, 'I seek my Billee Taylor,
Him you pressed an' took to sea!'

"'If his name is Billee Taylor,
He's bote cruel an' severe.
You rise up early in de marnin',
You'll see 'un wid his lady fair!'

"She riz up early in de marnin',
Early at de break o' day,
An' she see her Billee Taylor,
Walkin' wid a lady gay!

"So she call for sword an' pistol,
Which did come at her command,
An' she shot her Billee Taylor,
Wid his fair one in his hand!

"When de cap'n come to hear on't,
He very much applauded what she done,
An' quickly made her first leftenant
O' de gallant *Thunderbun!*"

"Hell's bells!" growled Leadspitter. "If there was some way to shut his trap!"

Just then the longed-for opportunity arrived, if not to stop the song, at least to start some violence. For Leadspitter's eye, injected by rum and rage, just now caught sight of Boston Irish coming from forward with a tar pot. Boston was headed for the mizzen rigging, with purpose to carry out Boatswain Saltash's orders for repairs on the service of the mizzen topmast backstay.

Now it fell out that as Boston mounted upon the ladder, his foot slipped. Tar splashed the ladder and his hand. Boston let go and tumbled backward. At the bottom he rolled, betarred and suffering. The deck, too, was befouled.

"Avast there, you mick son of a pup!" Leadspitter bellowed in a reef topsail voice. "Burn me, bones an' baggage, if you *ain't* a lubber! You, there, if you ain't got your sea legs yet, I'll put a pair on you!"

In pain, smarting and furious, Boston struggled up. His gimlet eyed gaze bored at Leadspitter.

"Ah, put a double reef in y'r dirty tongue!" he retorted, underbreath. "Go to the divil an' shake y'self!"

The words did not carry, but Leadspitter could see plain as paint that back talk was being growled at him from the Irishman's lips of hate.

ONLY a second Leadspitter paused, as a cobra poises for its strike. Then he fair jumped down the ladder and charged at Boston.

Boston was small, thin, a hundred and thirty pounds at best. Leadspitter's six foot six and more than two hundred pounds filled him with sudden panic. He turned, scuttled to the forecastle, whisked in and banged the door.

Leadspitter, storming at his heels, slammed it open again. The pump gang, meantime, forgot to toil; the big flywheels slowed and stopped with a creak.

"Come out o' that!" ordered Leadspitter, his voice hardly more than a whisper of the rage that kills. "Come out! What d' you say to me, you sculpin?"

"Sure, I—I didn't say nothin'!"

"Told me to go to hell, that's what you did!"

"Faith, and I niver, then!"

"You're a double tongued liar! An' tryin' to make *me* out one? Well, the devil's curse upon you!"

Leadspitter jumped in, seized his victim, hauled him out on deck and with one crashing blow felled him. Boston skirled away, spinning, and brought up in the scuppers opposite the galley door. Groaning, contorted, he quivered there, with a thin trickle of crimson creeping down his unshaven chin.

"Get up, you, an' have another!" croaked Leadspitter, jumping toward him. "Get up, you misbegotten son o' Satan!"

Then, as Boston, unable to rise, still groaned and groveled, Leadspitter's heavy sea boot caught him once, twice on the short ribs, slamming the breath completely out of that starveling body. Stunned, terrified to a palsy, Boston could only gasp and cringe.

"That's enough, there!" shouted a voice from the pump gang; a voice commanding and incisive. "Lay off, now!"

"Who the hell said that?" bellowed Leadspitter, swinging round from his victim.

"I did!" answered Tyson, hands on hips. "And I repeat it—that's enough. Lay off that man!"

"Enough, is it?" Leadspitter started aft. A-swagger he came, fists knotted, and laughed for joy of combat. "So I'm takin' orders from a forem'st hand now, eh? From you, eh? Judas H! That's a good 'un!"

"Good or bad," Tyson retorted, measuring Leadspitter with an eye of appraisal where first to hit, "you'd better lay off. We've got enough on our hands, round the Horn, without your knocking the men about. And if you weren't the

damndest skunk unskinned, you'd know it!"

Leadspitter laughed as he swaggered up to the pump gang. This promised to be good, a scrap worth while. The gang closed up, each instinctively seeking elbow contact with his neighbor. Taxi driver, Rock Scorpion, cross eyed negro and all the rest, they waited on that wet and pitching deck, wind harried.

"Come out o' that bunch!" Leadspitter ordered. "The rest o' what I got in my knuckles is for you, you son of a pup. An' you're goin' to get it right now! Come here!"

TYSON was just surging forward when Stackhouse snatched him by the arm and spun him half round.

"Le' me at him first!" he exclaimed, his eyes small and blue points of hate. "I'll take the edge off him, an' you can finish him—trim him proper! Wait on; let y'r Uncle Dud at him first!"

Paavola thrust them both aside, confronted the dumbfounded Leadspitter.

"You hit one more man," he drawled, "you ketch hell, all hands!"

"What the devil *you* got to say about it?"

"I seen it all, everyt'ing. I testify aginst you, glad."

"Me, too!"

"Same here!" sounded other voices.

"If this here come to court . . . "

All eight of them, possessed by varying degrees of hatred, faced him with a large and growing lust to slaughter him right where he stood.

"We meached long enough to you, you old hellion!" laughed Stackhouse, the first time any aboard had yet heard him laugh. "That was a wicked nail driver you give Boston—knocked him all a gore o' blood. Your turn now! Master hand you are, to fight? Well, you'll get all the fight you want, this time, by Godfrey! You're my hog, mister. I got the scaldin' tub all ready to take your bristles off! You want to try it on?"

Half drunk though Leadspitter was with rum, and wholly drunk with rage, he began to sense the deadly menace of that waiting group. Here, now, was the devil's own to do in prospect! The first blow struck, he realized, would mean a general onslaught. Alone, since Peter Mayes was below in the cabin, he faced them, and hesitated.

Then he remembered his gun, an unbeatable argument. His hand plunged to his hip. The gun covered them.

Some of the watch below began trickling from the forecastle, keen for any excitement. At the galley door old Chubbock's brown and wrinkled face appeared.

"Ain't he de dead gone fooley, dough?" muttered the cook. "If he start shootin', he'll come up 'mongst de missin', sure!"

"Put that popgun away!" directed Tyson. "This is no mutiny—yet. It'll only be one if you start something. You can't go shooting, aboard ship, just because a man protests against your slugging. There's law enough on that!"

"Sea lawyer, eh? I seen that breed afore now, by Judas! Taught 'em more law 'n ever they knew! This kind!"

He leveled the gun at Tyson, who leaped, struck it aside. Leadspitter's convulsive finger pulled trigger. With the bark of the explosion mingled a howl. Broadfoot, the negro, limped moaning away. The breath of pain hissed through his teeth. Then he dropped near the main fiferail, clawing at a perforated leg.

"I'm killed, killed!" he mouthed, writhing. "Lord, oh, Lord—I'm a dead man!"

BEFORE Leadspitter could fire again, a belaying pin, whirling from somewhere forward, slogged against his neck. It spun him half round, felled him. Shouts echoed:

"That'll do *you*!"

"We'll fix up a sailor's grave for *you*—"

The gun, escaping Leadspitter's hand, skittered away. Diving, the gangster snatched it up, held it a second, balanced. But Tyson wrenched it from him.

"No gunplay now!" he cried, and stuffed it into his pocket.

At these alarms of war, men came crowding, swearing.

"Come on, bullies, we got him all ends up now!" howled the Rock Scorpion. "We got him to looard, now—let's send him to pump thunder an' holystone brimstone in hell!"

Leadspitter staggered up, foaming blasphemies, and hurled himself on the nearest man, Paavola. The Finn crumpled under a hurricane of blows.

Infuriated men came on the run, full pelt, their eager feet slapping along the wet deck. All discipline, all fear of Leadspitter had swiftly gone downwind.

"Oh, mercy, oh, my, what an awful fudge!" cried Chubbock.

He retreated into his galley, like a turtle into its shell, and banged the door.

"But I hopes dey sends 'un to de divil, fast as a full sail'll drive un. My glorianna, an awful garagee!"

A chorus of passionate yells made the ship hideous.

"Kill the blighter!"

"Now's the time, b'ys! Finish him!"

"Take the ship!"

"Come on, don't hang in stays, *kill* him!"

"Lay off!" Tyson shouted. "Hold on, boys—no mutiny!"

But already Alcaniz, the Spaniard, was at Leadspitter's back. A knife lunged, ripped Leadspitter's pea jacket, jerked away crimsoned.

With a bubbling gasp, Leadspitter flung himself round and faced the Spaniard with a jaw cracking fist. But three or four were at him now, Stackhouse the busiest of all. They slipped on the heaving deck and reeled down in a fighting tangle.

Arms flailed, legs twined and wreathed, kicking savagely. Cloth tore. With a confused and straining haul, the pea jacket ripped away. Then came shreds and streamers of Leadspitter's undercoat, and, as he battled his way up again, tatters of blood stained shirt.

The fight was formless, unscientific, grotesque as a low farce, but deadly with the passionate hate that lusts to kill.

Others of the crew came running, their boot soles a-clatter like castanets. Eager, these others were, to be in at the death.

From the poop sounded a shout, as Peter Mayes—blurred, dazed with sleep—emerged upon the scene. No one even noticed him. Mayes ducked below again for a pistol. As he vanished he cursed with Celtic fluency.

Boatswain Saltash, running to intervene, got a kick in the pit of the stomach. He staggered to the port bulwarks and fell there, groaning, nursing his middle. Of a sudden his seventy odd years hung heavy on him.

Now Leadspitter was down again, rolling near the main hatch under a swarm of howling enemies.

"Let him up!" Tyson shouted. "He's had enough, and—"

But Leadspitter had not yet had enough; far from it. His strength, always a giant's, was multiplied by rage. He hauled himself up and through the ruck, smashing with bloodied fists. His parched and grinning mouth was all a-trickle with red. Animal grunts issued from his dry throat. In his ears the pulses were hammering, surging with beserk joy. A battle to the death, this was where he shone supreme! Liquor and hate and violence intoxicated him. Truth be, Leadspitter was having the time of his life.

A moment, and he shook his assailants clear. With dangling rags, face inflamed and distorted, he leaped to the rail. Snatching a pin, he crashed it on the Scorpion, who instantly lost all stomach for war and curled up groaning in the scuppers.

But another rush once more mauled Leadspitter down. They grappled him hip and thigh, hooked an elbow round his neck, strangled him till his eyes bulged and his face blackened. Again he rolled on deck under a howling muck of hate. Boots thudded; oaths, yells, laughter like that of fiends made the ship hideous.

Tyson waded in, hurling men right and left, trying to dive for a handhold on Leadspitter so that he might haul him clear.

"Lay off!" he shouted. "That's enough now—enough! Lay off!"

From somewhere underneath the

writhing, battling mass of men who tore, clawed, twisted, bit, a brown manila envelop slid out and away. Feet trampled it, kicked it aside—and of a sudden, spots of green, of yellow appeared.

Yellow and green oblongs of paper scattered themselves at random along the bloodied planks.

"God's sake!" shrilled a startled cry. "*Money!*"

CHAPTER XVI

TYSON TAKES CHARGE

FOR A second, such of the men as were outside the immediate vortex of war, blankly stared. Then Boston Irish, howling:

"Money! Look—my God—*money!*" made a swooping dive.

Panting oaths, the ganster fell a-scrabble on hands and knees. He grabbed, as a starving wolf snatches raw meat.

"A thousand, grand!" he gulped, his blue and dirty hands trembling.

Some of the bills, caught by a blustering slatch of wind, drove slapping, rolling, along the deck. Two whirled fluttering aloft. Bielefeld clawed at one, missed it. Both bills mockingly flickered away over the bulwarks, twirled a moment and dropped into white frothing surges that swept them astern into the fading furrow of the wake.

In the twinkle of an eye all thought of vengeance on Leadspitter vanished. The men's rage and killing lust went slack. A swift madness of greed swept them—all but Tyson, who had recoiled against the bulwarks and now stood staring, amazed. The deck suddenly became an arena of scrambling, battling men, each feverishly intent on treasure.

Released, Leadspitter lay inert with blood trickling stealthily from his knife slash, reddening the deck planks. Struggling men tripped and fell over him. The cross eyed negro, forgetting all about his shot leg, scrabbled along and with a black paw scooped in two banknotes of five hundred dollars each.

"Oh Lordy, Lordy!" he chattered. "Looka—"

But on the instant, Stackhouse snatched them from him, tearing one in two, so that Broadfoot now found himself staring only at a worthless half-bill in his hand.

Around the pump, the main hatch and after capstan, furious men rolled, swearing, fighting. No sooner had one grabbed a bill, than another was at him, tooth and nail. Old Chubbock, running from his galley, set his foot squarely on a thousand dollar note. The gangster slugged at him, to smash him back and away; but Chubbock let drive with a saucepan he held as a sort of impromptu weapon, and sent that worthy humming. Then in his crab pincer claw Chubbock scuttled up the money, made a swift strategic retreat to his own demesne and securely barricaded himself there, richer than ever before in his whole long life.

More and more men came running from the forecastle. Saunier, aloft at repairs in the topmast rigging, took a slide down the backstay, burning his hands in his frantic haste. He succeeded in knocking out the taxi driver and robbing him of fifteen hundred wherewith the taxi driver was trying to abscond to the forecastle head; only to lose this fortune, on the instant, to the now reviving Spaniard who tripped and swiftly plundered him.

Dull, ox witted old Bielefeld came on a pelting run and salvaged three five hundred dollar bills, dazzling wealth for him!

Even the hitherto impeccable boatswain revived enough to join riotously in the looting. He scooped a thousand, half of it instantly jerked away from him by the Cockney, who ran post haste and hid it somewhere in the forecastle, then dashed out, breathless, for more.

The crew, forgetting all about hatred and mutiny, dissolved itself into small, battling, cursing knots. The deck grew covered with little individual fights, presenting a spectacle so far beyond all Peter Mayes' comprehension, that when he hastily emerged on the quarterdeck, gun in hand, he could only gawk and stare.

Men exchanged fisticuffs, kicked, rolled, tumbled, clawed, grappled. The jungle was let loose. A million years rolled away, and the stark rule of fang and claw surged back. Blood flowed and teeth were spat upon the heaving deck. Howls, curses and diabolic laughter echoed, as a pandemoniac madness gripped them. All their lives long, never had they beheld such wealth. And now, now, there it lay for the taking, for the strongest to clutch, the swiftest or the cleverest to keep. Woe to any disabled man, in that amazing juncture! Woe to old Jubal Tabry! He, having secured some two thousand, was essaying to flee therewith, but his gammy foot betrayed him. He slipped, fell sprawling; and on the second, Boston Irish was upon him, most completely shattering all the poor old Newfoundlander's dazzling dream of fortune.

IN VAIN, totally in vain, Tyson bellowed at them:

"Lay off, I tell you! That's not yours! You'll have to give it all back—*lay off!*"

As well might he have shouted to the winds. Abased of all dignity whereto the human estate may be heir, they still fought on, though with diminished numbers. The money now was failing. Much was torn to shreds. The rest had been made way with, by men who ran, dodged, cursed, scuttled away for hiding places; though others, cheated by fate and robbed by the quicker or stronger, still crawled on hands and knees, poked in odd corners, and with gleaming eyes and whistling breath, still sought.

Leadspitter, now a little revived but with all the fire of battle effectively damped out of him, seemed to care nothing for the loss of this treasure stolen from the man he had murdered. Perhaps he did not even see what was going on. Only the will to live now seemed to dominate his blurred senses. He stirred, raised himself a little on his hands, like a wounded dog dragging itself on its forepaws, and hunched toward the quarterdeck. A limp and shattered leg trailed after him.

No one now molested him; no one even thought of him. Peter Mayes came running to help. None said him nay. Money still dominated all their instincts. Money! This dazzling, this amazing treasure that seemed to have fallen from the very sky!

Torn, in absurd rags, blood smeared and broken, Leadspitter tried to mouth a few profanities as with Peter Mayes' help he hauled along.

"Faith! What's been doin', sir?" Mayes panted. "Who'll I shoot, first? Hell's hinges—who?"

"Cabin, damn it, get me to my cabin!"

"I will that, but—what?"

"Curse you! Stow it, an' get me to my berth!"

Mayes, all confusion, obeyed. This was no time for query, or even vengeance. Leadspitter's life, for all he knew, might be hanging in the balances of destiny.

"Bear a hand, here, somebody!" he shouted.

But no one heeded him. Not even Tyson, still standing at the rail, obeyed. Little cared Tyson whether Leadspitter lived or died. His mind, all his senses now, centered only on the amazing spectacle now coming to an end.

Mayes had perforce, single handed, to drag Leadspitter along. The hulking, wounded bucko groveled, sank, groaned, then once more struggled on. He and Mayes reached the door giving from the main deck into the cabin, fumbled through it, vanished.

On deck, the battle had now died down. All the money had been either ruined or retrieved. Trampled, fouled, wet and crumpled, it had been thrust into pockets, hidden in jumpers and dungarees. Like wolves with torn off bits of carcass, the excited men scattered out, now sensing only powerful mutual repulsion. Even the negro, crawling with his useless half a bill in hand, sought some hiding place.

Avid, each man tried to find some corner where he could be alone to see what Fate had dealt him. Under the forecastle head they skulked, in the forecastle and the boatswain's locker, wild faced,

panting, with eyes agleam, and swollen veins in neck and forehead, brutalized to the level of beasts by this amazing windfall. Some, who had got nothing but a torn and worthless scrap, still tried to rob their fellows. But with snarls, oaths, blows, the more fortunate drove them off.

Speechless, Tyson stared and marveled. For all his long experience of the sea and its hard men, never had he known human nature in the raw quite like this. His gorge rose at the greed of this wastrel crew.

From one to another his eyes wandered. All discipline shattered, not one now thought of duty. No one was now on watch. It was a simple, ugly case of every man for himself and devil take the ship. Only Tyson, and Tondern at the wheel—even though the very heavens had fallen in a shower of diamonds the wheelman dared not leave his place lest ship and life itself be lost—only these two now remained aloof from the struggle.

"Good God!" at last gulped Tyson. And again, "Good God!"

His eyes sought the deck, befouled and blood smeared. He saw something there, close in front of him; something torn and trampled; a brown manila envelope.

"What's that now?" he wondered. Advancing, he picked it up. Confused of mind, he squinted at it under the dull, gray light. At first he saw nothing but wet, crumpled paper. Then letters and printed words became visible. He smoothed out the envelope, bent his brows to read—

" 'Jason Mellish, 26-A South Street, New York City.' "

The handwriting under this, bold but a-stagger, was Captain Bohannon's. Just two words: "Private Papers."

Confused, not at all understanding, Tyson stood there and tried to think.

"My uncle's name?" he pondered. "This came from my uncle?" Obscurely some vague gleam of dubious suspicion insinuated itself. "And it was the captain's? But how, then, did Leadspitter come to have it? Thousands of dollars! How?"

AS HE stood there, not yet comprehending, suddenly from the break of the deck sounded a voice on a note of inquiry not without anger:

"What's all this about? What's going on, here?"

Turning, he saw Isora.

"Well, speak up!" she commanded, her rapid and inclusive glance potent to sweep in the outlines of this amazing disorder. "Have you all gone crazy, or what?"

Peter Mayes issued from the cabin door on deck. He had hastily made Leadspitter as comfortable as possible, found him in no dying condition, and had hurried back to take sorely needed command.

"Speak up!" he shouted at Tyson, the only man in sight who seemed at all rational. "What's all this rookus about? Say somethin'!" He advanced toward Tyson, gun in hand. "Out with it!"

"If I knew, I'd tell you!" Tyson retorted. "It's got *me* guessing. All I know is, they jumped Leadspitter for slugging Boston. They'd have killed him, I guess, only they found a lot of money on him—thousands! So they forgot Leadspitter and went after the cash."

"Money, you say?" demanded Mayes, his eye too lighting up with a flick of greed. "Where the devil did—?"

"Search me! But must have been fifteen or twenty thousand. A regular fortune!"

Isora, by this, had come down the ladder and joined them.

"What kind of a fairy story are you concocting now?" she curtly asked.

"My word, I think, is enough!" he retorted. "Here's the envelope the money was in!"

"It wasn't my money, was it?" the girl demanded, shot with a sudden and swift pang of suspicion.

"How do I know? I don't know anything about your money! Didn't even know you had any!"

She bit her lip, angry at her revealment. Peter Mayes, his anger waxing again, exclaimed:

"Gi' me that envelope! Hand her over—let *me* see!"

Tyson thrust it at him.

"Here, and welcome!"

"Faith, an' this is the devil's queer thing, now! Ship all of an uproar, Mr. Furlong hurt bad, an'—how much o' this did you get away with?"

"Mind yourself, Mayes! It's not healthy for any man to call me a thief!"

The girl, her eyes lustrous with excitement, gave Tyson a measuring glance. Wonder lay in her look, profound and unspoken questionings. But all she said was:

"Well, Mr. Mayes, we've got to get all the money back, some way or other. It's Mr. Furlong's. We've got to patch him up, make the men resume duty and carry on."

"There's a mystery in this, somewhere," Tyson declared. "See for yourself? My uncle's imprint on the envelope? All chances are, my uncle gave—"

He checked himself, though, with suspicions unvoiced.

"Private Papers!" read Peter Mayes. "But—this here's Cap'n Bohannon's writin'. Sure, now—"

"How did Mr. Furlong happen to have it then?" the girl asked.

"I've nothing to say," retorted Tyson. "Ask *him!*"

AS THE girl and Peter Mayes still stood a moment undecided, suddenly a harsh voice drifted to them; the gangster's voice, passionately declaiming:

"I *told* youse guys dere was a suitcase full o' kale in de cabin! De skoit, she's got millions! We only picked up de scatterin's of it. If youse had any kind o' guts we could take de ship now an' split a bundle like Rockyfeller's!"

"Come on, lads!" sounded the Cockney's shrill cry. "Let's tyke the blinkin' ship, now or never!"

"Let 'em do their tarnellest! We finished Leadspitter," shouted Stackhouse. "I cal'late we can wallopse the rest part of 'em!"

Tyson's head flung up alertly, as he retrieved the envelope from Mayes' hand.

"Trouble coming!" he warned. "Gunplay—get ready!"

Confused snatches of words, cries, oaths made a jumble of tumult from forward. Yells arose; catcalls, discordant howls.

"A million, by God, an' de skoit!"

"No Horn for ours!"

"Only two of 'em aft, now—that damn' coward of a mick, an' the gal!"

"Fools, if we don't do it now, gorblimey!"

"A million, cold!"

Plucking up hearts of daring, the mutineers passionately incited each other to violence, to murder if need were. Then of a sudden, out of the forecastle issued a ragged little knot of men. Some had knives, others as they came armed themselves with belaying pins. The gangster and the Cockney brandished guns, which they had hastily rooted out from concealment. Under that cold and somber light, on the deck all wetly sodden as it was heaved by hissing buffets of long surges, an ugly and determined group they made.

Only a second they hung hesitant. Then they advanced, at first cautiously ashuffle, but almost instantly breaking into a ragged run. Shouting, cursing, they charged, ten or a dozen of them, with Stackhouse and the gunman in the lead.

Peter Mayes leveled his revolver.

"Stand back, you sons o' dogs!" he bawled, with a swift flame of rage.

Tyson hauled from his pocket the gun Leadspitter had dropped, and covered the gangster. He thrust Isora behind him.

"Get into the cabin!" he commanded.

Not in the least blanching, she only laughed.

"As if I'd take orders from—"

A pinging shot from the Cockney interrupted her. The bullet whined wide, kicked a sliver from the cabin door.

The gun in Mayes' hand began barking. The ganster sprawled and cursed. From where he lay he fired again. Tyson silenced him with a shot.

Now the Cockney's revolver was spitting fire. *Whop! Whop!* the reports

echoed. Mayes grunted. His right arm fell; his gun clattered to the deck. Isora snatched it up and blazed away. The Cockney, spinning out of the mob, lunged over the main hatch coaming.

As Stackhouse scrambled to catch up the Cockney's gun, Tyson's bullet shattered his wrist. Stackhouse gripped it with reddened fingers. Moaning, he sat down on the hatch and began rocking himself to and fro.

"Get along forrard, you!" shouted Tyson, and advanced.

Alcaniz hurled a knife at him, only to drop under the girl's last bullet.

The mob hesitated, broke.

"Come on!" Tyson vociferated. "We got 'em on the run!"

The issue still hung doubtful, poised on the brink of the second. Two or three flung belaying pins, which did no more harm than their maledictions. But they halted. They had shot their bolt, and failed.

Another bullet from Tyson, over their heads, broke them. They turned, gave way. He followed them hard.

"Get along forrard, you!"

Their retreat slumped to a rout. Devil take the slowest! Toward the security of the forecastle they ran, jostling, such as still could run, with Tyson on their heels.

"Pick up their guns!" he ordered the girl.

Pale at sight of the wounded men, she still kept her nerve. This time she obeyed him.

"Take the guns aft!"

The mutineers, devastated now with panic, winged by the fear of sudden death, took cover. Some scuttled to the forecastle; some sheltered themselves under the head behind the windlass or the forward bitts.

ALL RESISTANCE was for the moment shattered. Hardly two minutes from the time rebellion had flamed out it was quenched.

Tyson, with three cartridges still unexpended, strode to the forecastle door and tried to fling it back. The door resisted, gripped by a couple of terrified seamen.

With his revolver butt Tyson hammered the planks. Still the door refused to open.

"Men!" he shouted in at them. "The game's up. I'll give you half an hour to turn that money over to me. There'll be no robbery or mutiny here! Half an hour, mind. Meantime, all hands loyal to the ship, come aft and report for duty. I'll settle with the rest!"

LEAVING them this ultimatum to chew on, Tyson turned aft again. A penetrant glance at the gangster showed him this worthy had paid all debts. Neither money lust nor terror of the electric chair could evermore afflict him. Alcaniz was sitting up, dazed by a crease from Isora's bullet on his round skull. The Cockney had begun to crawl away forward, with crimson bubbling lips that choked out extraordinary anathemas on all and sundry. As for Stackhouse, he was still rocking and groaning, on the main hatch, as he nursed his wrist.

"I'm hurt suthin' dretful," he made plaint. "I got a harker of a wownd, mister! Fingers all dead, like." One of his coughing fits interrupted him. "Oh, what a misery I'm into!"

"Get up and go forward," Tyson ordered him. "I'll have you patched up pretty soon. If you bleed too much, twist a spunyarn round your wrist, with a marlin spike. Serve you damn' well right—you, an American—to get mixed up with such scum! *You* aren't dying, by any means. Get up and clear out o' here! You'll have time enough now to make up your mind whether you'll stick by the ship or not!"

"I'll stick, all right, the morether the better," moaned Stackhouse, unsteadily arising. "What a damn' idjit I was! If ever I weather this, I'll stand to your back till all's blue, s'help my cod!"

Tyson watched him go forward along the swaying wetness of the deck, then returned to where Isora was vainly trying to get Peter Mayes to his feet. The Irish-

man was badly scared. Blood soaked his jacket from a wound in the right shoulder. Mayes was stammering out an amazing litany of prayers and curses.

"Holy Mother, I'm dyin'! Patch me up some way, Tyson. I'm bleedin' like Flannigan's pig! I've known men slip their wind for less 'n this. I have, so! Saints preserve us, an' I'm done, then. Faith, an' I hope them sons o' pups sizzles on the brimstone for this!"

"Get up and into the cabin with you!" commanded Tyson. "You're more scared than hurt. I'll look after the ship."

"Damn the ship! What do I care for the ship, an' me dyin'?" the Irishman retorted. "It's a billet in heaven I'm goin' to get for this day's work! Let 'em have the ship, an' welcome as payday. The curse of God on 'em! It's a horspital I'm after needin', man. Let's bear up for the Falklands. Maybe they can save me, there. Ochone! The murderin' spalpeens! This passage is done, an' so am I. Holy—"

"Clew up!" Tyson interrupted. "You're a fine, hardy man to be mate of a windjammer, you are!" And Tyson hauled him up standing. "Get along to your berth. We'll fix you as quick as we can. Aft with you, now! This is no time for whining. Look alive—shake a leg!"

He forced the mate aft and none too gently propelled him through the cabin door.

"When are you goin' patch me up?" demanded Mayes. "If I ain't seen to right away, it's dyin' I'll be on your hands, an' you'll be partly my murderer. Holy saints above, I'm tellin' you, now! When?"

"As if it mattered!" Tyson exclaimed, and left him chanting his liturgy.

Turning, he found himself confronted by the girl's dark and wind swept gaze. Isora had three revolvers in her pockets, which produced unusual lumps on her otherwise trim figure, but this was a mere unimportant detail. The black hair whipped round her face as she demanded:

"What are you doing all this for?" Her voice was hard-chiseled, her red mouth very straight. "You, the worst of the lot?"

"So I'm the worst of the lot, am I?" he retorted, laughing oddly with the word. "Thank you for the compliment. It's something after all to be eminent even in villainy! But never mind about that, now. I won't argue the point. Things are too complicated for anything but action. I'll only say that when my uncle's money is being flung to the birds and my uncle's ship is in danger—when there's a woman aboard—"

"Don't worry about me!" she interrupted, with a little curl of her upper lip. He noticed it was a trifle short, full; extremely well made. "I can take care of myself, all right. As for this being your uncle's ship, are you still sticking to that absurd story?"

"If the truth is absurd, so be it. No matter, though. The fact remains that somebody's got to handle this ship. Who's to do it? Leadspitter's badly cut up. Mayes is wounded—but scared worse. That leaves you and me, doesn't it?"

She looked at him, all of a wonder.

"You mean—"

"I mean that you and I, just the two of us, have got to take this old windjammer round the Horn!"

CHAPTER XVII

REVELATIONS

SHE STOOD a moment bemused by this announcement, not quite grasping the magnitude of its high adventuring. But suddenly with a smile, a swift dark look, she nodded.

"All right!" she answered. "Round the Horn, it is!"

"Good enough! First thing, I've got to get rid of—"

He gestured at the dead gangster.

"Shall I help you?"

"Oh, no. You'd better go in and have a look at Leadspitter and Mayes. Besides, this deck is a bit risky. Those fellows forward may still have a gun or two.

They might try a few pot shots at us."

At this she laughed; and he noticed how large and healthily even her teeth were.

"I'd be awfully thrilled to be shot at!" she exclaimed. "How about the wounded men forward?"

"I'll see to them—when I get good and ready. A little bleeding will do 'em good. What I want you to do is find out how badly those two in the cabin are hurt. We've got to save every man we can. Short handed, anyhow. Can't afford to lose any more. Get stuff from the medicine chest and patch 'em up, some way, till I can get time to bear a hand. Look alive!"

A moment she hesitated, flushing angrily.

"What are you doing now?" she demanded. "Giving me orders?"

"You bet I am! Right, the very first time!"

"I'm signed on as second mate, mind you. And as for you—you're only a foremast hand!"

"Wrong! Your being second mate, that's correct enough. But as for me, I'm in charge. Now, and from now on, in charge! I may not be officially captain, but I'm really captain under these circumstances. The quicker all hands get that into their heads the better!"

"Including me?"

"Including you!"

She looked at him as never in his life a woman had looked; then without another word she turned on her heel, entered the cabin and disappeared.

Blinking a little as if shaking himself free from some odd sort of spell, he swung away to dispose of the gangster's body. This was but a hand's turn of a job. In a moment the gunman had splashed and vanished. Then Tyson strode back to the poop, mounted the ladder and tramped into the wheelhouse.

Steady as a rock, Tondern, the big, red polled Dane, was holding the *China Girl* to her appointed course. Mutinies were all in the day's work for him. He had already weathered more than one. Tyson looked at the compass, assured himself everything was well, then—

"Tondern!" said he.

"Yes, sir?"

"You know all that's happened."

"Yes, sir."

"You're standing by the ship?"

"Yes, sir. I am that, sir. Till she get to port or hell!"

"That's good enough for me. Steady as you go!"

With which eminently laconic exchange, Tyson returned to the poop rail, ready for the next act in this swift drama.

It was not long coming. Already, from the forecastle, confused sounds of a violently heated argument had begun to echo. Muffled cries, shouts, oaths were audible. Obviously doings of the most lively were there under way.

"Kilkenny cats," smiled Tyson. "Let 'em fight it out among themselves. Only hope, though, there won't be too many killed or disabled. We're short handed enough, now, as it is."

ALL AT once the deckhouse door burst furiously open, and spewed a ruck of men. Men who cursed and were clutched at; men who struck and swore; men with torn jackets and with bruises, cuts, contusions; men who fought their way clear. Three, four, five of them appeared; then after a furiously noisy pause, two more. A chorus of howls and objurgations pursued them. The door slammed shut again.

The seven loyalists trooped aft, some of them sopping blood on sleeves. Tyson saw they were Saltash, Chips Solomon Moon, Saunier the Frenchman, Karlstad, Paavola, Jubal Tabry and Stackhouse. As they passed the galley two events simultaneously took place. The forecastle door crashed open again, and Bielefeld the German was catapulted neck over crop out into the scuppers. Thence he picked himself up and, grinning in sickly guise, hastened to overtake the penitents. Thus, for one event. The other was that out of the galley issued old Humphrey Chubbock, to join the group.

Some shuffling, some swaggering; they came and gathered at the break of the poop, squinting up, every look as placating as the fawnings of a whipped dog.

Saltash took the word.

"Reportin' for duty, sir," said he. Anybody who held the quarter deck was "sir" to Saltash, legally or not. "Me an' doze here, we're standin' by."

"All right!" Tyson returned. "Any of you get any of that money?"

"Yes, sir," Saltash cleared his decks. "I got a five hundred dollar bill, sir." Nervously he pulled at his stringy gray mustachios and shifted his sea booted feet. "Sorry, sir. Kind o' lost me head, sir, an' went stark roarin', when I seen it blowin' round. But—I tried to help Mr. Furlong, sir. I only picked up de money when I seen—"

"Never mind! Give it to me!"

Saltash passed it up to Tyson, who stooped and took it.

"Anybody else?"

"I—I got a t'ousand, sir," old Chubbock faltered, his brown and wrinkled face twitching. "I seen it just airin' alang, an' grabbed aholt of it to kape from wastin' it, in a manner of speakin'. It'd of went overburd, sir, if I hadn't sove it. Supposin' ye could layve me have it, some way, it'd come in wonnerful handy, me bein' a old gaffer like dat."

"Sorry, Chubbock. Can't be done! Everybody's got to give up. The money'll all be put in the safe. I'll investigate ownership, in port, and see that it reaches the proper hands. Come on, let's have the thousand!"

Chubbock sorrowfully fished it out of his shirt, and passed it up with his clawhand.

"Any more?" demanded Tyson.

Stackhouse, Chips Moon, Karlstad and Paavola surrendered bills, some badly torn, totaling fifty-eight hundred. This made seven thousand three hundred already recovered. Saunier, Jubal Tabry and Bielefeld shook heads of positive denial.

"Me, I never got no damn' cent!" Saunier declared. "I have fifteen hundurd, but some crook of a t'ief she's grab it off me 'fore I can hid him!"

"All right, let it go at that, then," smiled Tyson. "Now, get this! We're going round the Horn. I'm going to take this ship round, flying. There are eight A. B.'s loyal, plus cook, carpenter and steward; also—very important—Miss Raineaux. Seven mutineers, three of them wounded. Listen now! First, grub. It'll be better from now on. You'll get some cabin stores. Second, till the mutineers surrender, you'll bunk aft in spare cabins, and in the carpenter shop. You'll mess in the shop. So much for that!"

"Yes, sir," answered Saltash, "but ain't de reg'lar officers goin' to make out so dey'll take charge again? Not," he added, "as how I'm wantin' 'em to, nohow!"

"Can't say. Mr. Furlong is knifed and maybe has his leg broken. Mr. Mayes is shot through the shoulder. They're probably out of it for a while, even if not for good. And—just another thing before I take up promotions—all of you keep out of the focsle. We're short handed now. Mustn't take any chances of anybody getting shot or knifed. Understand?"

They nodded, murmuring approval.

"Carpenter!"

"Yes, sir?"

"We'll make things doubly sure. Get some planks to barricade the focsle door and do a good job of it. A little starvation will bring those men to order!"

"Yes, sir. It will, that! I'll do it right away, sir."

"Just a minute, now. Promotions. I'm taking charge, as I said, because there's nobody else can handle the ship and carry out our sailing orders. That's legal. I'm acting captain."

HANDS on rail, wind in hair, he faced them, his penetrant blue eyes slipping from face to face, analyzing their response, their loyalty.

"Miss Raineaux is acting mate. A competent navigator, and you'll obey her as such. Bosun Saltash!"

"Yes, sir?"

"You're acting second mate. Saunier, you've been a fine deepwater man a good many years. I'll put you in bosun."

"T'anks, sir!" the Frenchman grinned. "I never t'ink, me, I get rated up lak dat. *Nom de Dieu!* I mak' my best, for you an' de lady!"

"Same here, by crimus!" exclaimed Stackhouse. "No more blood on the lid o' this un! We're all right up on our beam water now, sir, to turn to an' make a fetch of roundin' the Horn!"

"Damn' good chinwag ye're givin' us, sir," Chubbock asserted. "If us kapes de course ye're givin' us, can't go far 'stray!"

Nods, oaths of allegiance, words of courage reborn echoed these choice sentiments. Stackhouse added—

"Couldn't ye dress my wownd now, sir?" He held out a wrist, lashed with crude and reddened bandages. "I'm mortal bad. Fix me up as handy as ye can, sir, 'cause I'm slack as dishwater."

"Go into the cabin," Tyson directed, "and I'll soon have you right as rain. Now then, boys, let's all dig in to bring this old girl safe to Valparaiso, spite of hell and high water!"

"We'll do that, sir! We will!"

"Good!"

Tyson, surveying the crowd, saw there were five men from the starboard watch, three from the port, among the loyalists. He ordered Bielefeld into the port watch, for the time being. Then—

"Mr. Saltash, come up here and con the ship. The rest o' you, turn a hose on deck and wash that blood into the scuppers. Then finish pumping. You're going to get a square deal from now out. No more cursing and slugging. Better grub; and if there's no claimant for the money, I'll have it shared up among those that 've stuck by the ship. Get to work now, boys. That's all!"

TREMENDOUSLY inflated by the new dignity of having a handle to his name, and being in charge of a 1400 ton square rigger breasting over the seas under the urge of a spanking wind, Mr. Saltash mounted to the quarter deck. Stackhouse went into the cabin for treatment. Tyson swung aft to the wheelhouse, while his loyalists turned to, their first job being to hose away every mark of the late conflict.

Tyson had another look at the compass, to make sure all was well.

"What's your course?" he queried of Tondern.

"Sou' sou' west, sir," replied that imperturbable squarehead.

"Keep her there for the present."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

A pause. Then in a low tone the steersman began—

"Beggin' your pardon, sir, but as I'm standin' by the ship an' you, there's somethin' ye'd oughta know."

"All right! What is it?"

"Tale bearin's a rotten bad business, sir."

The broad planes of Tondern's face wrinkled with anxious unwillingness. His eye never left the compass card, nor did his competent, tattooed hand relax their grip on the spokes; yet plain to see, his slow mind was being ploughed and harrowed by painful emotion.

"Rotten bad, sir. But when there's been things happen as is worse, things as makes this here ship a floatin' slaughter house—"

"Make it short, Tondern! What's on your chest?"

"Ye mind the day Cap'n Bohannon slipped his cable, sir?"

"Yes. Well?"

"I was to the wheel, sir, the very hour it happen. As ye see y'rself, a man to the wheel can get a bearin' down into the cabin. Ain't that so, sir?"

"And what then?"

"Well, sir, I see some legs, that's what!"

"Legs?"

"The Old Man's legs, an' two more. Cap'n's legs was draggin', deadlike. The other man's was walkin', like he was carryin' the cap'n."

Tyson's heart gave a jerk. He bent closer.

"Who was carrying him? D'you know?"

"I know whose legs they was, anyhow, sir."

"Whose?"

"I know, all right, sir. But—"

"But what?"

Silence, for a moment; a silence that ached for words.

"Now ye see, sir," the red headed Dane sparred, "if I was to tell ye *and* ye told him I told ye, I might be on a lee shore an' no way to claw off. An' I don't want to testify in no court, neither. All I'll do, sir, is give ye the hint. Ye're smart enough to run it down, an'—"

"I won't get you mixed up in anything, Tondern. I promise you that! Who was carrying the captain?"

"Well, sir, it—it was—damn me, sir, if I dare to tell now, when it come to a pinch!"

"Come on, Tondern! Out with it!"

"It was—Mr. Furlong, sir. Leadspitter!"

"Leadspitter? Good God!" A moment's silence, in which vigorously began the banging of Solomon Moon's hammer as the carpenter started barricading the forecastle door. "Keep a stopper on your jaw, Tondern, about this!"

"Yes, sir, I sure will! An' you, sir—"

"Nobody 'll ever know you tipped me off. Stand by the ship, and you'll be A 1. When I'm back in my own command, I'll remember every man that's done his duty here. That's all!"

"Yes, sir!"

Tyson left him, walked to the heaving weather rail and for a while stood staring at the long rollers that surged in towering crests of green, swift breaking to white and flashing leaps of foam.

"Murder, eh?" he was thinking. "On top of everything else, murder and robbery! But, where did Bohannon get all that cash? Never had a red, to bless himself with, from all I've heard of him. Everything went for booze. My uncle Jason gave him thousands? What for?"

He remained awhile, pondering, filled and lighted his pipe and leaned against the rail absorbed in some of the hardest thought of his whole life.

"A rotten old chopping tray of a ship, overloaded with railroad iron. Sent round the Horn. And the skipper given thousands! But would a skipper undertake to wreck and lose a ship, while he was aboard? Something in this I can't fathom! Something damned mysterious. It's up to me to get at the bottom o' this. I will, too, if it takes a leg!"

And for a few minutes he brooded there, while ever the racked *China Girl* lunged toward harsh cliffs and wild sub-Arctic waters grimly waiting her.

AFTER awhile he went below. He found Isora and old Abey Buzzard just cleaning up after their siege of work with the wounded men.

"Well, how are the invalids?" he demanded.

"Mr. Furlong's got a fairly good slash in the ribs, but nothing that 'll kill him," she answered crisply. "Right leg's broken below the knee. We've plastered him up and set the leg."

"Missionary splice, eh?" Tyson smiled dryly. "Let him limp, after this. It'll do him good. Stop his kicking men awhile. How's Mr. Mayes?"

"Resting easily. Wound's dressed."

"That's good. More scared than hurt. And Stackhouse?"

"Bullet went clean through the wrist. No bones broken. He'll be all right in a week or two."

"Can work one handed awhile. Well, lot of fireworks and not many casualties, at that. Abey—" to the steward—"finish mopping up here. And by the way, I'm acting captain, now. Fix up the captain's cabin for me."

"Yes, sir!" The steward bobbed and grinned. "Right away, sir, I will."

"Well," said Tyson, throwing his cap on to the lounge, "we're still carrying on. Fate deals the cards, and we're taking what tricks we can."

The girl's eyes, under those exquisitely arched brows, fixed themselves on him with singular intentness. She sat down in one of the swivel chairs by the table. He found a place beside his cap.

"I'd like a few words with you, sir," she began.

"All right, sir! What about?"

"I think after what we've been through, I ought to have the right, even though I'm only your subordinate—" and what a world of feeling she put into that word—"to offer you a little advice."

"Very well. What advice?"

"About that money. On deck."

"Oh, that! I've already got back more than seven thousand dollars."

"Indeed? You've made a good day's work of it!"

"Not at all. It all goes into the safe. When we make Valparaiso, ownership will be determined, if possible. By the way—" and he glanced sharply at her—"do you know where the keys to the safe are?"

"No, not positively. But when I was patching up Mr. Furlong, some keys fell out of his pocket. I hung them on a nail."

"Those'll be the ones. Just excuse me a minute, please!"

Tyson got up and entered Leadspitter's cabin. He found this old sea dog lying with his face to the bulkhead, in stoical silence. Now that the tide was setting strong against him, Leadspitter had at least the fortitude not to grouse about it. Despite all, Tyson liked him the better for that.

No word passed between them as Tyson took the keys and returned. He asked—

"You've got some money, aboard here?"

"Since I've been foolish enough to admit it to you already, yes."

"Where is it?"

"I don't care to say."

"But you've got to say, and you're going to! We've got to find out, at once, whether the money that's been rioted over on deck is yours, or not. There's a lot depends on that. A most tremendous lot!"

"Anything that affects the management of the ship?"

"Rather! And a good deal more. An enormous deal more!"

"Well, in that case—my money—was—in the safe."

"Thank you!"

Tyson got up. At the door of the captain's cabin he paused and turned.

"In a bundle?"

"In a metal box."

"I want you to witness my opening the safe. I want you to see, for yourself, the condition of your property."

She remained a moment hesitant.

"Come, come!" he ordered sharply. "This is no time for feminine moods. We're on a war footing, here. You rate as a man. Watch me open the safe!"

SHE ENTERED the cabin. He followed, knelt before the safe and presently had it open.

"This yours?" he demanded, touching the metal box.

Silently she nodded. He handed the box to her.

"How did you happen to put it here?"

"I was advised to—"

"By Mr. Bohannon?"

"How did *you* know?"

"I didn't know. I guessed. He probably told you it 'd be safer here, on account of the rough gang forward?"

"On account of you, largely, if you insist on knowing!"

Tyson broke into a big, clean laugh, the first he had uttered in weeks, as he got up from his knees.

"That's a good one! He, Bohannon, told you? Well, well, well! Ye gods and little fishes!"

"What are you laughing at?"

"The eternal gullibility of women."

"Do you know you're rather a brute?" Her eyes gleamed angrily.

"We won't argue that. Count your money, now, and then part of the problem, the mystery, may be solved."

"What mystery?" she demanded.

"Never mind, sir. Count your money, sir!"

She flushed. He saw an artery in her throat pulsing with accelerated tempo. This thing of being ordered about was new to Isora; but helpless, she had to

obey. Tyson's command—she realized moreover, for all her irritation—was eminently sensible and right.

"Very well," she assented, her voice a semi-tone lower; and walking out of his cabin she entered the main one.

There she sat down at the table, her back squarely toward him, every line of her stiff with resentment.

Tyson lighted his pipe, glanced at her with some amusement, and smiled.

"Your name," he pondered, "ought to have been Katherine. But I'm lacking in experience to play Petruchio. Ah, well."

HIS MOOD, however, swiftly changed. Other more weighty problems than the girl's attitude toward him remained to be solved. He leaned back in the captain's chair, stretched out his long legs and brooded with half shut eyes, smoking the while. Blue vapor coiled about his bearded and tanned face, filled the dimly lit cabin. Stress and creak of the old ship, shivering buffets of waves against her hull, mingled with his ponderings. Thus for some moments he remained there, sunk in profound analysis.

The return of Isora brought him back to the surface. He laid down his pipe and stood up.

"Don't get up and don't stop smoking," she directed. "I don't expect it and don't want it. What's more, I've been pickled in tobacco smoke ever since I was a little girl. Father—"

"I see. All right." And he took up his pipe again. "How about your money? All there?"

"Yes. Nothing's been touched."

"Ah! That simplifies matters! Now I'm beginning to see light, maybe. Well, what's your pleasure? Put it back in the safe, or keep it with you?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter in the least. There isn't much. You might as well put it back in the safe."

"All right!"

When it was locked up again—

"Now," said she, "about that word of advice I'd like to offer."

"Oh yes, the advice. Well?"

"Part of that money on deck, it's still missing?"

"Yes. The mutineers have still got some of it."

"Who are the mutineers?"

"Well, there's our friend the taxi driver, the Spaniard, Boston Irish, the Rock Scorpion and Sails Landberry—I'm surprised at *his* holding out! And then, let's see—Sam Broadfoot, Alcaniz and the Cockney, all of them wounded. They're all nailed up in the focsle now," Tyson smiled, "thinking it over."

"Hmmm!"

She turned back into the main cabin and once more sat down at the table. He followed, took a chair opposite her.

"Well?" he demanded.

"There's no use trying to get any of that money back from them."

"Why not?"

"It's impossible to make men like that give it up." She seemed studying her pigeon's blood ring, dimly glowing under the skylight. "They'll destroy it before they'll ever hand it back."

"They'll never get out of that focsle till they buy their way out!" he answered grimly. "Forty-eight hours without rations or water."

"You're going to starve them?"

"Rather! It's my uncle's money, you know."

"Oh, that uncle of yours!" She smiled oddly. "So you're still sticking to that rather preposterous story?"

"It looks to me," he answered smokily, "as if I'd have to give you a few facts."

"Don't bother. I don't care for them."

"But you've got to know," he insisted. "The whole management of this affair depends on your knowing. You and I represent the entire effective brains in charge of this ship and cargo, and all these lives. We can't cooperate without your knowing the situation."

"Well, in that case—"

"All right. That's better! This whole mixup goes back to Atlantic Avenue, Boston, three years ago. Captain

Bohannon was on a tear, fighting drunk, and—"

"Like yourself?"

"Never mind about me! Though as a matter of fact, I found out years ago that seamanship and the flowing bowl make a bad mixture—for me personally, at any rate. But no matter about that. Bohannon assaulted a cop and ran. I helped lay him by the heels. He held that grudge, like iron, and paid me off by shanghaiing me. So much for that. Now for the uncle part."

"Oh, the uncle again?"

"Yes, Jason Mellish, owner of this ship. He's a rare bird, Uncle Jason. I cut him out, long ago. A bit too strong for *me*. Let me tell you how this thing works out, and then you can judge for yourself. Here's this old ship, pretty unseaworthy. The last one he's got. I dare say insured to the main truck. Cargo of railroad iron. Sent round the Horn, parish rigged and with deficient stores. Bohannon in command. A good many thousand dollard paid Bohannon—what for?"

"How do you know Bohannon was paid?"

Tyson produced the torn manila envelope from his pocket and shoved it across the table to her.

"Look a' that!" he bluntly commanded.

The girl's eyes deepened as she pondered on the imprint and the writing.

"The money all came out of that," Tyson added, "and it was in Mr. Furlong's possession! Furlong must have stolen it from Bohannon."

"Hmmmm! It does look kind of queer, doesn't it?"

"Rather! Two and two are five this time!"

"What do you make of it?"

"What do I make of it? Barratry, that's what! The *China Girl* was routed round the Horn for just one purpose—to lose her!"

"But Bohannon wouldn't have juggled with his own life that way!"

"Obviously not. He was probably, yes, certainly, planning to put in somewhere and jump the ship. He got knocked out, though, and—don't you see? Plain as paint."

Her smile was tight and cryptic.

"Who are you?" she half mocked. "Sherlock Holmes?"

"No—just—"

His word was interrupted by a faint cry from above, most stirring hail of any aboard ship after weeks at sea—

"Land ho!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THROUGH THE STRAITS

"HELLO!" Tyson exclaimed. "Landfall! This discussion will have to wait. Going up?"

She nodded. He bundled on his oilskins and made few steps of it to reach the deck. His heart leaped gladly, as only a heart can, long a-weary of interminable wastes of sea.

"Land ho!"

Flaring down the chill wind, Bielefeld's cry mightily stirred them all, announcing new and stern perils close upon them.

"Where away?" shouted Saltash, proud voiced in his new dignity.

"Two p'ints on de vedder bow, sir!"

For the moment abandoning their work, men lined the rail, eagerly peering. Land! Yet was it land, after all, or only the Cape Flyaway of some distant fogbank? Nothing but a faint and cloudlike blur, a loom blent with formless vapors, rose from the far southern horizon, dimly smudged the infinite waters dark heaving and ominous. Eloquent of evil, that vision brooded.

Tyson watched it a long minute. Something tightened round his heart; something blent of exultation, of boding, of hard determined purpose. Land! Here, at all events, was land! Thus far, in despite of everything, the *China Girl* had won.

"That's land, all right," he heard Isora's voice, with warm satisfaction glowing through its levels. She had come up and now in oilskins stood beside him, a pair of binoculars in hand. "We should

be sighting it about now, according to my observations. This ought to be the northeast point of Staten Land, we're standing in with, now."

"Might be Cape Virgins or San Diego."

Tyson gazed at the vague loom that beckoned even as it menaced. Their approach to land, to the harsh tip of South America, was indicated by the appearance of ever increasing numbers of seabirds; fulmars, gray mollyhawks, Cape pigeons.

"I'll soon get the lay of this. Paavola!" he called down to the Finn.

"Ya, sir?"

"Lay aloft and look for land on the lee bow!"

"Ya, sir!"

Paavola went aloft with skill and speed, swarming up the weather main shrouds, over the futtocks and up the topmast rigging. Between the horns of the crosstrees he rapidly made his way, then from the topgallant rigging up the Jacob's ladder to the head of the royal mast, where he straddled the skysailyard and took bearings to windward and leeward.

"Aloft, there!" shouted Tyson. "How does the land bear?"

"Two p'ints on de lee bow, sir," the Finn's voice drifted down. "On de vedder bow, too!"

"All right. Lay down from aloft!"

"Got your position, sir?" the girl asked, as she gazed through her binoculars at the blur to leeward, now just barely perceptible from the deck, through mists like gossamer chiffon. "Got your position, have you?"

"Yes. You were right. Staten Land to leeward; and the land to windward can't be anything but the Tierra del Fuego coast."

"So this is the entrance to the Straits of Lemaire?" she queried, offering him the binoculars.

"That's right. Your navigation's A 1. I only hope our passage through the Straits will be as good."

"Ticklish place, I've heard."

"Right! Strong tidal stream from the Straits of Magellan, off about nor'west of us now, to Staten Land; and a stronger one in the Straits." His voice blent with the hissing seethe of the wake, creamily rushing, the mournful cries of gulls in angular flight, astern. "And then there's the wind to reckon on—or rather, winds you never can reckon on for more than an hour. I've been through here three times."

"Much trouble?"

"Twice we caught it. Winds in these high latitudes chop round in the most unaccountable way; play cat and mouse with a ship as if they enjoyed it. I've seen ships pretty well dusted in these Straits. Maybe you'll get a fog thick as pea soup, and in a couple of hours or so, a tearing wind and high sea. Williwaws and all sorts of variable flaws and gusts."

He swept the horizon carefully, examining a set of haze that like a curtain hung on the horizon's vague edge, then lowered the glasses and handed them back to her.

"If the wind's only a point free, you understand," he went on, "it's bad business to enter the Straits at all, as then you may have Staten for a lee shore. You can't work out, especially as all the currents set toward the Island."

"You're going to try for the Straits, though?"

"Yes, so far as I see, now. We've still got a fair slant of wind. But if it shifts a little more to the south of west—" and he cast an appraising eye aloft—"the Island, as I say, becomes a lee shore for us. We mightn't be able to weather it."

"And in that case, sir?"

"We'll have to run outside, to eastward of Staten Land."

"A lot longer, eh?"

"Yes. That 'd put a few hundred miles more on us. But—we'll see. As I said before, fate's dealing the cards, and we're trying to take what tricks we can!"

The girl put no further question, nor did Tyson speak again. He only remained there at the rail beside her, looking far south toward the redoutable Straits, long and justly dreaded by all mariners. Perilous, harsh, there before him lay the course through which he now must seek to drive the racked and leaking

China Girl, half mutinous, short handed.

"Come and conquer me!" the dangers of the Straits seemed mocking him.

"I will!" his spirit answered. "And what's beyond you, too—the roaring Horn!"

THREE hours later the mutineers surrendered at discretion. A loud and continuous banging on the inside of the forecastle door summoned Mr. Saltash to parley.

"You damn' scuts ready to quit?" he demanded, his tough, squat figure bristling with hostility as he stood there at the door. "All done y'r nonsense, are ye?"

"Yes, sir," issued Noah Landerry's muffled voice. "We're quittin' cold. Ain't holdin' out no longer. Leave us out, an' we'll turn to, like de odders, an' take our medicine, too."

"Is that a say so fer all?"

"All but de Cockney—dat London feller."

"What about him? What's he sayin'?"

"He ain't sayin' nothin'. He's slipped his wind entire."

"Has, eh? Damn' good thing!"

"Yes, sir," meekly agreed Landerry. "He got shot spar g troo de lungs. De nigger, he's awful sick, too. Feverish like, an' says he got to have some settlin' powders, or somethin'."

"*We'll* settle him!" Saltash ferociously menaced. For once in his life tasting the wine of authority, he found it intoxicant. "De nigger be tarred!"

"He's prayin', now, an' dat's a wonnerful bad sign," pleaded the old sailmaker. "His timbers ain't sound. He got to have some medicine."

"He'll ketch brimstun, instid! How 'bout de rest o' ye? Any more dyin'?"

"No, sir, but we're bruck up, bad. Don't want to bide here no langer, an' dat's true as de light. We're mired an' muckered, sir. Down by de 'eed. Dis here racket, it's too wedderish fer us. Too knobbly, altogedder! We can't get a'eed wid it, at ahl."

"Ye warm flaws!" old Saltash vented his spleen. "Thought ye was damn' catty, eh? Goin' to take de ship, was ye? Well, ye're porpuses widout no puff, now lemme tell ye!"

"Yes, sir. An' if ye'll only tell de cap'n—whoever de divil iver de cap'n is, now—"

"All right, I'll do dat fer ye, anyhow. Can't do no less, I reckon."

"An' please, Mr. Saltash, sir. Don't bear too hard on me, sir. You an' me bein' so wonnerful chums afore I went manus!"

"Dem times is past!" Saltash retorted; and leaving the repentant Landerry and the other mutineers on tenterhooks, he went aft to report to Tyson.

"Not a step do they come out of that focsle till they're ready to give up every last dollar of the stolen money!" was Tyson's ultimatum. "If they want to keep the cash, let's see how good eating they find it!"

THESE terms produced nearly six thousand dollars. The mutineers passed the money out of a port, swore it was all they had and were presently released by considerable nail pulling on the part of that knight of the hammer, Solomon Moon.

Tattered, dispirited, bruised and battered, a sad looking lot they were. No fight left in them!

"Let 'em have a mug up, Mr. Saltash," Tyson directed. "Then turn 'em to, and work 'em out, hard. But," he added on a lower tone, "pipe down about the mutiny. That's all over, now. Least said, soonest mended!"

"Yes, sir. An' de corpus o' de London feller?"

"Lose no time throwing it over. I'll see to the nigger's leg."

"Yes, sir. As ye say, sir!"

While Tyson went below to lock up all the recovered cash, a total of thirteen thousand, two hundred dollars, the mutineers were made to heave the Cockney's body overboard. This they did without ceremony, save for black curses on him. Long suffering old ocean received one who by all just criteria had been destined,

from his gutter birth in the East End of London, to finish in some way like this, or maybe on the scaffold or in the electric chair.

The money secured, Tyson took medical supplies, went forward and plastered up Alcaniz's creased scalp. Then he dressed the negro's leg. A clean shot, no bones broken. Panic fear of death, not physical injury, was making the negro a very sick man.

"We'll turn him to in a couple of days," Tyson informed Saltash. "Only two men short, really. Not so bad!"

"Fine, sir, fine!" Saltash replied. "We'll have all shipshape an' Bristol fashion, less 'n no time, you an' me!"

Smiling, but without comment, Tyson returned aft, there to scan the prospect of those harsh, inhospitable coasts, that now insistent problem of the treacherous Straits.

IT BEING now well on to midday, wind ever increasingly raw and nipping cold, clouds leaden and lowering, the *China Girl* was drawing in close toward the grim battlements of Tierra del Fuego. Cape San Diego bore to starboard; the wind swept solitudes of Cape Bartholomew's bold headland on Staten Land dimly was shadowed through mists like tenuous cotton wool, perhaps sixteen or eighteen miles on the port bow.

As the old ship plunged along on a south southwest course, driven at an eight knot clip by a westerly wind that threatened to become half a gale and that filled her courses and topsails, Tyson through the largest binoculars studied the forbidding land.

Slashed clefts of snowy fiords and coombs, now opened by the ship's lunging progress, revealed counterscarps in long reaches like Titans' castles fraying that savage coast, setting metes and bounds to South America's stupendous question mark in stone—the dot of which, as yet invisibly far, was old Cape Horn itself.

"Hard looking land, sir," Tyson heard Isora's voice. She had come up and now standing near him, was looking through binoculars at the terrifying and gigantic desolation toward which the *China Girl* was drawing. "Very bold water, along the landwash, sir! Steep too; water deep, close up to the land, according to the chart."

"Yes, sir, it is that," Tyson agreed with her, lowering his glasses. "I've seen many a bad shore—Newfoundland, the Labrador, Iceland, no end of 'em—but this beats 'em all. Straight up and down out of the water. Not many beaches. If a ship ever struck, there—"

They remained silent awhile, Tyson bearded, tanned, hard as a keg of nails; the girl looking like some black haired Lorelei of Southern seas. Together they watched ocean, reef bound cliffs and sky—a panorama of transcendent majesty and awe. Clouds dun and livid overhung the somber peaks and headlands that swung into view along a skyline unspeakably weird. Across the mountain tops, slanting to the sea in gargantuan reaches, those clouds drifted, shredding out to unnatural red brown streamers. One cloud bank immensely high, touched by some shaft of flickering, spectral sunlight, glowed a sullen scarlet. And ever as, heavily rolling, the ship skirted onward, the jet black turrets soared higher against that menacing sky, higher and more cruel.

"Hard place to claw off of, in a blow," commented Tyson. "Some pretty lively tide rips tumble through these Straits. We've got to keep our eyes peeled for white water, now. Those kelp patches are useful. Indicate reefs, you know."

He pointed at long skeins of weed, afar, sure revealers of hidden rocks. Unmarked by buoys or lights, this dangerous passage whose ledges, overfalls and shallows have crushed the life from ships unnumbered, offered only kelp as signals of half tide shoals.

"Aren't we pretty close in with the cliffs, sir?" the girl asked presently, with the wind wantoning in her hair. "I've seen a good many shores I'd rather have under my lee, than Staten Land!"

"Oh no, we've still got a good enough offing," he reassured her, glad in his heart

that hers could know anxiety. "The land looms up so it seems closer than it really is. That's one peculiarity of the atmosphere in these latitudes. This is my third passage round the Horn. I remember it well."

"Yes, sir, but—"

"Why, we don't even feel the cross lop, yet! And we'll soon get a cant off the land when we fetch by the Cape. It's pretty nearly a-beam now. Hello! Seals, eh?"

"Seals? Where?"

"See 'em?" He pointed.

"That's what they are!" she agreed. "First I've ever seen in this half of the world!"

Off to port jagged claws of rocks were breached by spouting, thundering surges. Just outside this confused turmoil, hundreds of small and bobbing specks showed where a herd of seals were sporting. Farther, in green blue waters of a fiord, others leaped at play, safe from the one supreme enemy of all animal life —man.

ALONG rock shelves, too, other life was visible; huddled lines of white that slowly moved and shifted.

"Penguins," Tyson remarked. "And see that rookery of gulls, will you?"

"Millions of them!"

The binoculars revealed gulls in myriads, wheeling round the clifftops on crooked wing, circling, rising in vast flights that dissolved like smoke, only to reassemble and pitch down once more on those haggard precipices. Life, even in that terrible and elemental wilderness, a wilderness so harsh that it assumed almost a form of beauty, was going its appointed way.

And now from that stark Land of Fire drifted a vague rumor, as of immensely distant explosions shaking the foundations of the world. A deep bellowing shuddered the cold dark air; a dull verberation that mingled with the incessant creaking plaint of the ship, the monotonous grinding thud of the pumps.

"Hear the surf?" asked Isora. "The mills of the gods are grinding there, all right!" She laughed oddly.

"They'll grind no bones of ours," Tyson cheerfully asserted, "or of the *China Girl's*, either. Let 'em grind!"

Dimly audible, the roar of those tremendous and topping breakers rose, fell, surged again like the quivering thundertones of an immense pipe organ's lowest register.

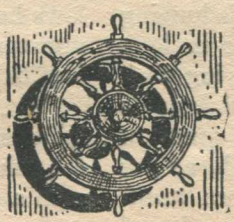
"Sounds like drumfire miles away," Isora murmured.

"You've heard it?"

"Oh, yes. When I was Red Crossing, over there. You?"

"No. Whatever bit I did was at sea. North Sea mines and all that stuff. Good fun, too—'specially dropping ashcans on Fritzy."

"My French blood understands *that!*" she answered, and fell silent, looking with abstraction at sullen sky and storm worn heads of primal crags—abandoned solitudes that man could never dominate. Her dark eyes, a little wistfully brooding, seemed full of questionings she could not voice.



TO BE CONTINUED

GULLET CRACKS

A Story of a Feud of the Lumber Mills

By RALPH W. ANDREWS

IF YOU'RE a sawmill man you'll snort and if you're not you won't know what it means, but Matt Gloor loved band saws. He wasn't like most mill men there. He wasn't always smarting under the whip of the screeching, whining, gutting things—beaten down but still sweating on the job on pay day. The saws didn't tear through his tough liverwurst soul, because they knew him for their friend. Yes, sir, Matt Gloor was different and he loved those saws of his with a passion that flamed continually even though the heat of it was never fanned by love returned.

Matt was a hardwood filer, but he never saw a band saw as some fire-eating thing gashing bitterly into the burly maple. Laugh if you want to, but Matt Gloor—big, red necked, watery eyed Matt—helped drag those fifty foot saws, hot and limp, into the filing room as if they were mischievous terriers worn out after a morning's play, ready to be petted and have their ears scratched by the swage dies. A fellow like that ought to get along, liking his work as much as that. And he'd be a good filer. Matt was. The Ridge Run mill, which for most purposes was Kramer, the general superintendent, wouldn't have acknowledged any man a better filer. Matt didn't get much money, but Matt didn't care for much money. What was money to a man who could imagine the wolfdog howl of a saw-dust-thirsty band saw as the playful bark of some scampering pup? Kramer understood Matt and humored him. But the men . . .

"Matt Gloor? You mean 'Mutt' Gloor—that big slob of a Dutch jackass? Huh, he don't know enough to eat. Say, any guy that has got soft feelin' for a cussed band saw is headed for the bone pile. He's cracked!"

Cracked, eh? Well, if he were, his saws didn't get that way very often—very often. They did once in a while. The throats of his panting little pets got choked up with sawdust sometimes and

came in from play with a few half inch cracks down in their gullets. And how Matt did hate a gullet crack. He could jam his finger or break a swage lever or bang his squash shaped head on the T-bar of the saw rack and go on mumbling contentedly, but let a saw develop some gullet cracks and he didn't sleep until he knew the why of them.

Cracked or not, Matt liked his job and loved his saws. And cracked or not, the men laughed and flung gibes at him, and when he didn't pay any attention to them, they thought he was dead on his feet. But Matt went along, fondling and scratching the backs of his charges, not caring much what they thought. He'd have kept right on that way, too, chewing his leaf scrap and mumbling unintelligible things to himself if those jagged bullet holes in his nice fresh saw hadn't stared him in the face that morning.

THERE were a couple of things that led up to the bullet holes. One concerned a fellow who worked down on the sorting table—a putty colored young Chicago Serb named Zevic whom Matt knew. The other was a boarding house dare that Matt didn't know about. But Zevic. About two nights before Matt had been lumbering along the plank walk toward the boarding house, close on the heels of a knot of other supper smellers. His coat was draped over his shoulders, defying the chill April air. Perhaps he was still thinking about the creatures he had left in his workshop, as his Groningen grandfather used to think about his carved wood toys. Anyhow, the coat slipped off behind him and young Zevic, right behind him, gave it a lusty boot into the dust of the road. The coat was sour smelling and green with age, but Matt objected.

He stopped Zevic with a stiff arm to the chest. Zevic laughed and the others with him laughed.

"Ha, you, Dutchy, where's your coat?"

"Go lay down with it, Mutt, or else whistle it to come back!"

Zevic didn't say a word and he suddenly wished he hadn't kicked the coat. He hadn't been at Ridge Run very long, but he'd seen and heard the banter the men flung at Matt Gloor a lot of times. Always before, the muddle headed filer had taken it like an easy going draft horse. But now there was something wrong. The pinch bar feel of Matt's fist on the chest and the look in his eye meant business. Matt's red flushed face jutted forward.

"You tam fool, Zevic. You Roosian or bohunk or whatever t'hell it iss! You tink you can make fun mit me. You should go back to old country where tey teach you better tings!"

Matt wasn't exactly mad, but he sent Zevic spinning on his none too solid legs. Zevic was husky. It takes a husky to break the spirit of hardwood timbers on the moving chain of the sorting table. But there was a little ditch running alongside the planks of the walk and he slipped backward into it, down to his knees. Matt followed up his advantage, tore up a handful of ragweed and ground it into the protesting mouth of the Slav. He picked up the coat and gave it a swipe across Zevic's face.

"Get oop now, Mr. Zevic, and ton't be so foolish yet. And you shut oop, too!"

This last was addressed to the jeering spectators who dodged the coat as Matt swept it in a circle at them. Mill men like a brawl and while Matt Gloor had this moment raised his stock with them considerably, they had been railing him too long to admit it.

"Ain't Dutchy a tiger when you get his Irish up? Come on, get up, hunky—you with the mouthful of spinach. Why didn't you stand up to him? You could've knocked his head off that red neck!"

Perhaps Zevic could; and then again, perhaps Zevic had other plans. In fact, two mornings later, when Matt Gloor had gotten over the first shock of seeing that fresh twelve inch steel pet of his ruined by the jagged edges of the holes that nothing but bullets could have made, he figured Zevic had started work on those same plans.

When he had punished Zevic that night it had been to him like the spanking of a bad boy, but now a fire was burning. Zevic, only Zevic, had tampered with the thing he loved. Zevic, smarting under the spanking, had side stepped the night watchman and put a row of bullets through the saw that was almost a part of Matt Gloor. So there was nothing to do but annihilate Zevic.

MATT looked like a madman bent on destruction, stumping stiffly down the cleated slope of the planked incline from the sawing floor, arms swinging like a windmill's. The seven o'clock whistle hadn't sounded yet and the mill was quiet, hushed perhaps, in awe of what was about to happen. Two men at the foot of the incline guessed that the filer was going somewhere in a hurry. It was Zevic who knew where.

The young Slav saw him coming. He was up on the working platform of the sorting table, relacing his shoe, ready to take up his canthook when the squared timbers came along on the chain. His eyes were a little squinty from the dead sleep of the night, but he saw Matt's eyes clear enough—big, watery eyes that had suddenly caught fire. He dropped the lacing and scraped to his feet instantly. He might have been an old country goat herder rising up to save his hillside hovel from bandits, hands spread over his hips, head set on his chest, his whole frame waiting tensely. And then Matt was below him, shaking two fists up at him.

"Tam you, Zevic! You shoot a hole in my saw! I play mit you when you kick my coat in t' road. You tink you spoil dot saw. Tam you, I kill you!"

His arms came over the platform as quickly as a jump spark and his fingers caught Zevic's ankle. The Slav broke his pose and tried to leap back out of the steam shovel grip; but it held, and Zevic went off balance, backward on to the chain belt. Men were running up.

"Come on, hunky, now's your chance! Get up and knock that fat Dutchman over the sawdust burner!"

Zevic got up—almost. Matt Gloor was scrambling over the platform edge as handily as a young bull scaling a river bank. Once up, he lurched his whole bulk upon the recovering form. But Zevic was fighting now. He was a bull, too, but a lighter, more agile bull, well matched against this crazy Dutch filer. He managed to swing aside until he could straighten himself and then he hurled his fist into Matt's face. He carried the fight to Matt now, raining pile driver blows at the puffing mouth until Matt dropped his head and groped for the throat that was never there, his fingers coming away with nothing more than shreds of Zevic's yellow wool shirt.

Matt was no fighter. He could never stand up and trade blows. Instinct drove him to the earth and when he succeeded in getting his fingers on Zevic's shoulders, he tried to drag him down. But he never did. That young husky was facing the mill yard when he saw Kramer coming on a run. He knew the fight was almost over and yet his fellow workers kept clamoring for more fight, and he couldn't ease up. His eyes caught the canthook leaning against the post and he swept it into his hand, clubbing the handle of it squarely into Matt's inflamed face as it came toward him again. So instead of bringing Zevic down, Matt went down himself. He took the blow on his chin and stopped short like a startled child. He clapped his hands to his mouth and blood oozed out between his fingers.

"Hey, what the hell's the matter with you two yahoos!"

Kramer was there then, spinning Zevic around. The canthook rattled to the platform.

"The Dutchman, he says I spoil some saws or something. What's he talk about, heh! He kill me he says. But I no know what'sa matter."

"You, Matt? Straighten up. What's the matter?"

"Tat tam fool Zevic!" Matt flourished his bloody paw. "I tell you, Mr. Kramer, tat Zevic shoot ta bullet through ta saw. I know tat Zevic. I teach him not to

kick my coat in ta road and he spoil ta saw yet!"

Kramer finally got it straight, and Zevic swore by all the gods of his saintly forefathers that he didn't know anything about it and never had a gun anyway. But work was work and Kramer hustled the crew to their jobs. He sent the filer into the mill, spitting teeth and blood and Zuyder Zee curses, and he shook Zevic with a warning:

"We'll see what's the matter, you young wildcat! Get to work and I'll see about you later!"

WHEN Kramer beheld the saw he wasn't so sure that Matt was wrong. He'd investigate. Something was wrong somewhere. Somebody had a grudge against Matt Gloor or the mill. He'd see. They put on a fresh saw, threw the maimed one out on the rusty junk pile with a ringing whine and charged a few hundred dollars up to labor troubles.

Matt couldn't charge off anything; the hurt was too deep for that. Not the physical hurt. The canthook had sheared off three teeth and torn his gums and lip, but a bandage stopped the bleeding and Matt wasn't bothered much. The doctor wouldn't let him work, and he dragged himself back to the boarding house and fell into a gloomy, unbroken silence. At suppertime a man sought him and pulled him out on to the porch.

"I'm workin' in the dryin' yard, Dutchy. I heard about the fight and I'm goin' to put you wise to somethin'."

Matt Gloor only gazed at him dully.

"Tat tam fool Zevic—"

"It wasn't Zevic, either. You ain't liable to guess who it was because he did it for another reason. It was Jake Wylie—that's who. We was all up in Torgeson's room last night and dared him to put a bullet through that saw, just to see what you'd do."

The little lumber stacker backed away cautiously, as if expecting more wrath to break forth from Matt's hulking frame. He didn't have any qualms about breaking faith with Wylie, because he had expected his story to draw blood. As it was, big Matt only stared blankly at and through the other's weathered face.

"Tat tam fool Zevic—"

"Oh, t'hell with you, you crazy Heinie!"

A raw wind whipped up over the Ridge the next day to cool Matt to the point that his teeth hurt him. He began to think, and the more he thought the more his teeth hurt. It was Kramer, though, who told him he'd better hop the eleven o'clock local into Merrill and see a dentist. Matt had thought about doing that himself but now that Kramer had suggested it, he said he wouldn't go. And he didn't, right then. He went up to the filing room and trued up the arbor of the bandsaw gummer until every blow on the thing felt as if he were pounding his own jaw. That beat him. A string of flats rolled away from the mill at daybreak, with Matt Gloor in the caboose, rubbing his tongue on three jagged tooth stumps, feeling queerly about something, he couldn't figure out what.

IN ALL probability he thought he would come right back to Ridge Run. That dentist would yank his teeth and let him get back to his precious saw pets. But the Merrill dentist had another idea. The teeth were so sound and firm, in spite of the twenty year erosion of Kentucky Burley, that they would have to be crowned. Matt wasn't so stubborn in things he knew nothing about, so he gave in to the dentist. And after an hour in the chair he began to feel at home. The whir of the electric drill reminded him of a band saw in the cut and soothed him somewhat when he felt the sting of the bit itself. It also reminded him that the only other filer in Wisconsin who suited him, Tom Elmers, the man who had taught him most of what he knew in bandsawry, lived right here in Merrill. He was filing at James & Wood's mill, and Matt wondered how he was getting along.

Tom Elmers was, for a fact, getting

along. Matt found him at the mill, about ready to break at the sound of the whistle, his humor bad.

"Matt, this is the lousiest mill in the world. There ain't a thing right. This cock eyed sawyer couldn't saw hot butter with a jig saw, and the saws 'r' a wreck. They don't wash the grit out o' the logs, and the carriage valves go haywire every other week. And then, of course, I get blamed because the saws don't stand up and they beller like stuck hogs when I yell for new saws. I'm through! Leavin' the fifteenth!"

Matt was all sympathy. He shook his head solemnly and poked around the filing room like an old maid in another's workbasket.

"Tat's right, Tom. Tat sounds like bat business already. Maybe I take ta job."

"You? What's the matter with Ridge Run, you Dutch punk?"

"Tat's all right, tat place, Tom, but ta dentist keep me here for one week, maybe, and I like to see what I can do for tis place here." He was feeling the gullets of the saws on the rack and running a tension gage down the sides of them. "I like to try it, Tom."

"Hop to it, you Rotterdam cheese wrestler. If anybody can put up and keep saws in shape, you can. But why you want to pick on a graveyard like this, I don't know. You mean it? All right. We'll go in and see McInerny and tell him you'll work up some saws for him for a week until he can get somebody else and then I'll check out right tonight. You can stand it a week, maybe."

"Yah, Tom. And, Tom—I guess you quit a long time before? Ta saws are in bad shape, yah?"

"Sure, I told you. I'm sick o' this joint and for a month I ain't been givin' a hoot what happened. Come on, we'll see the boss."

It looked as if Matt Gloor had forgotten all about Ridge Run and Kramer and Zevic. He told McInerny he wanted to go to work right away and he did, never sending back a word to Kramer. McInerny had heard of the "locoed Dutchman down at the Ridge" and his reputation, and he never questioned his ability to lick the saws into shape—the saws on which Elmers had gone dead. What was more he chuckled to himself at the thought of the slick one he and Matt were playing on the Ridge Run outfit. Nothing unethical about it, but Kramer had been known to refuse to loan filers. But there was one thing that worried McInerny a little. Matt hadn't said a word about money. He must be a nut, sure enough.

MEANWHILE, Matt was on the job. He went to work at three o'clock that afternoon and it was twelve that night when he gently laid down his ball pein hammer and picked his way through the drying yard and across a stumpy field to the scattered lights of Merrill. He had rolled and tensioned and swaged and filed, but he had a pair of fresh band saws to show for it, and he was already at the bench next morning when Blaney, the sawyer, swung into the filing room.

"Heard they got a new man. Glad to know you. Say, I'm glad they got rid of that cuss, Elmers. Now maybe we can get the snake out of them saws and cut straight lumber for awhile."

Matt shook his hand. He didn't say a word then, but went right on with his grinding. Blaney went out, wondering what sort of clam they'd got now, but just when the siren shrieked seven o'clock, the clam opened up. He had the millwright with him.

"Ta upper wheel iss out of true and ve haf to set ta guide again. Ta journals and bearings iss worn. Tom vas right. Ta saw iss notting but junk, but ve haf to use it. Blaney, dot's your job. Take ta wheel off."

It was Blaney's job all right, and when he had decided it was no use to argue, he did it. Furthermore, he repacked the shotgun feed valve and did numerous other odd jobs. But Matt wasn't loafing. He and the millwright went over the saw

from bearing to bearing, fixed what they could and left the rest in the lap of the gods that govern head rigs. Along in midafternoon they had it back together again and sawing.

The old battle scarred headsaw sang her hymn without a break until the siren stopped her at six. In ten minutes the sawing floor was as silent as a tomb, with every man gone to his supper. Every man? Not Matt Gloor. He was sitting on the window sill, swigging cold coffee from a milk bottle, thinking about the saw on the gummer. He didn't sit there long, and after awhile the night watchman looked in on him and departed without a greeting. This was a new one on him—a filer working eighteen hours a day. It didn't say anything like that in his book.

Matt kept on. The gullets of the saw ground out, the points swaged and filed, he fingered the cold cutting edges with the tenderness of a man scratching behind the ears of his dog. He stopped now and then to take a fresh chew from the rumpled paper bag, or to inspect some antiquated bit of equipment with which the filer in this mill was supposed to get along. Once the blazing blueness of the big nitrogen lamp in the yard caught his eye and Matt stared dully at it as if for the first time he realized that it was night and pitch black outside of that blue circle.

HE LOOKED at his watch and saw that it was ten-thirty; he turned back to his saw to be stopped short by a man leveling an automatic pistol at him.

Matt's wits moved slowly. Maybe he could have saved himself and other people a lot of trouble by leaping at the fellow as he had at Zevic. But Matt had never seen a gun from the receiving end before, and he didn't know what it was all about. He knew the face—it belonged to the Ridge Run mill—long and lean, the lines set, narrowed eyes hooded by flickering lashes. But Matt remained immobile, in stark wonderment.

"Well?" The stiff lines of the face broke into a hundred little wrinkles. "Here I am, you red faced Dutch dumbbell! You pulled a pretty one on me and I'm here to square it!"

Matt broke his pose, relaxing, lifting his hands limply in front of him.

"Tat's funny ting. You vork at Ridge Run, too?"

"Don't get humorous, Dutch. I ain't got long to stay. The blinkin' watchman's liable to pop in here any minute. And don't try to pull any of that not knowin' me' stuff. I'm Wylie, the guy you got fired, you wooden shoe mutt, when all I did was shoot a hole through a saw that didn't belong to nobody but the mill. Was that nice? I'll knock you cuckoo for it—damn your nosey hide!"

"I fight tat Zevic for tat ting!"

"He didn't do it, you dumbhead! It was me. The boys put up a ten spot to stump me to pull that job on you. And this here is the little girl that did the dirty work, put a bullet clean through that cussed saw. And you knew it was me. That guy Hoff told you and you squealed to Kramer and he yanked me off the job and I smeared Hoff's face all over the landscape before I left. You're next, you half baked Dutchman! You come over here to get away from me, but you don't give Jake Wylie the slip that easy!"

Clear enough, but do you think Matt Gloor got it? He just folded his pink face up in a frown and jiggled a hooked finger at Wylie's leathery face.

"Zevic do tat ting and I fight him for tat. You—tat story you tell—I know notting about tat. Kramer—I tell him notting. Tat's fired you mean? I fix up when I go back tere."

"Fix hell! You fixed enough already. And when I get through with you, you ain't goin' to feel like fixin' anything but yourself. You can stick to that Zevic stuff all you want to, but I know you got Kramer to fire me. You ain't goin' to be able to work here, and you won't have no job when you get back to Ridge Run. Kramer is through with you, Gloor. He knows you used them busted teeth as an excuse to get away from Zevic and me and

he telegraphed to Milwaukee for a new filer this mornin'."

That drew blood. For the first time Matt really came to life. The frown clouded into a black scowl and he glowered over the automatic into Wylie's shifty little face.

"Vot you say! You make fun with me already!"

"I'm tellin' you, you mutt! You're yanked, canned, dished and otherwise fired. You ain' got no more job at Ridge Run than I have and you're goin' to have less than that here when I get through. It's time we was gettin' busy, too. See them saws? Well, old vacuum, you're goin' to play with them awhile—takin' orders from me! If a bullet hole in one saw hurts you, you're goin' to get mangled up bad now! Get a cold chisel and a hammer!"

It was the report of his lost job at Ridge Run that got Matt. The scowl faded like a summer fog, and his eyes looked clear through Wylie. His fingers fumbled at the edge of his gray shirt.

"Hurry up, you yap! Get them tools!"

WYLIE stepped forward to brandish the pistol in front of Matt's face, darting back like a rabbit. His sweeping gaze upon the workbench caught a box of tools and he snatched at it, dragging it toward him. Risking some sudden blow from the filer's limp arms, he found a cold chisel in the heap and thrust it into Matt's chest.

"Here! I ain't foolin' and I'm in a hurry! There's your hammer over there. You're the guy that hates gullet cracks, ain't you? Well, that saw there is one that's goin' to have 'em if you have to make 'em by hand!"

If there had been any fight in Matt before, it had fled him now. He might have been performing some sacred duty, the way he took the chisel and picked up the hammer. That the saws at Ridge Run which he had watched over and worked with so long, that his pets should now change masters drained every ounce of spirit from him. He felt no ill feeling against Kramer, or anybody. He didn't even seem to notice Wylie, so mechanically did he place the annealed edge of the cold chisel in the gullet of the saw and lift his mutton quarter arm.

That blow would have brought four men at Ridge Run. Steel against steel—the sound rang through the dim emptiness of the mill. Wylie's chuckle followed it, like a hawk after spoiled meat. And the meat was spoiling. That shock of the hammer against the bit of steel in his hand brought Matt Gloor to the cold reality of what was happening. He realized now for the first time that he was slaughtering a band saw. And Wylie's chuckle on top of that . . .

Wylie dropped just in time. Matt's arm with the heavy ball pein hammer clutched in his fist, came sweeping with murderous force. But Jake Wylie had dropped like that in pool rooms when Matt Gloor was driving the cows home to Mama Gloor, and the hammer and fist went over his head. Matt didn't press his advantage when he had Wylie down there to hurl the hammer into his face. Nothing strange about it, either. Matt was struck motionless by the sound of that little pistol which he had forgotten, spitting something past his ear to crash through the window behind him. Matt wasn't a fighter and he wasn't used to guns. Jake had hopped to his feet and was bellowing at him:

"You big gutless mutt! You'd better stay there. I'll show you who's runnin' this carnival. What'd you think this here gun was, a pump handle? Pick up that chisel and get to workin' on that saw again. The watchman could hear that shot in the boiler room!"

So there was Matt Gloor stooping to retrieve the cold chisel. A trembling, big hulk, bending like an ox. Dutch Gloor, the fallen champion of the band saw. There he was, gazing stupidly at it, with Jake Wylie watching, catlike, every movement of the blond eyelashes. But he might as well have been a mile away, for big Matt was no more than a witless idiot, his protruding eyes wandering from

one hand to the other, as if querying what it was all about. For Matt came from a land where men obey the stern hand—smarting under it for awhile, but always bending in obeisance to it. Matt could recognize authority. He ran his thumb around the gullet of the vised saw for a moment, finally scraping up the hammer to drive the chisel edge into the quivering saw steel.

"Deeper! Hit it you mutton head!"

So deeper went the wound into the tempered gullet, moving mechanically to the next. Another little gash, another wound in Matt's own flesh. The hammer blows against the steel rang through the silent mill eerily, like the clanking of a prison chain, each one a gouge into Matt's own spirit. And Jake Wylie grinning through it all, wondering why the watchman didn't show up.

MATT could never have said how long he drove away at that lacerated saw. A half hour might have passed when he finally came to the end of the flat strip, loosed the vise and slid the saw around in its grooves, never looking up. An automatic hand lifted the hammer, another steadied the chisel to meet the blow of the flat head. The hand was lifting again.

"Hey, I thought I heard somethin' like a shot awhile ago."

Matt might have been just awakening from a bad dream. Wylie was gone and, instead, the watchman's cautious head was thrust through the aperture of the partly open sliding door.

"What you doin' to that saw?"

Perhaps Matt wondered, too. His eyes rove the length of the saw and his fingers felt the last gash. A startled murderer, touching a lifeless form in unbelief. A deep frown fell over his eyes and then he jerked his head toward the watchman.

"Tat saw, tat's no good already."

The hammer came down on the chisel again, just the same as it had been doing. A second blow and the V went deeper and the hands moved to the next throat, hands no longer mechanical but propelled by the mind that was trying to keep up appearances. The watchman swung away, his flashlight making a path for his heavily falling feet. Matt was listening to those footfalls and when, between blows, he could hear them no more, his whole frame drooped a little and settled down upon the window sill. A clammy hand brushed across his forehead.

He got to his feet presently and drove straight for the door, fumbling, stumbling through the black, hollow mill, down to the chalky blue light of the nitrogen lamp. Beyond the piles of stacked lumber he walked faster, almost running out upon the rutty road into Merrill.

THE LAST person whom Kramer could find who saw Matt Gloor was the night watchman, and he told him how the big fellow was temporarily laying up McInerny's band saw that night. The bullet hole in the filing room window looked bad and made everybody wonder. Of course, nobody knew then that Jake Wylie had anything to do with the thing. Kramer had fired him and forgotten him and then discovered that Jake had skipped town, leaving his wife and kid at the Ridge.

But it wasn't until that letter, postmarked Memphis, came along, that Kramer began to know where and why Matt had gone. Kramer answered it and got Matt to tell the whole story. But that first letter was a masterpiece. Part of it went:

> It is a good job I have here in the box factory in this place. It is a good place and not so cold. Mister kramer there was a man in your mill Jak Wily. I think there is a pay check for me coming. Please I would like you to give it to his widow. He was a married man I did not know.

THE KRU COAST

By

LEWIS J. RENDEL

AN ENDLESS line of dark green bush rises from an endless line of putty colored beach, rimmed by an endless line of white surf, all flat and featureless under a gray pall of rain. The prevailing impression is one of an extraordinary, monotonous savageness. All the four hundred years of European trading up and down this African edge have not been able to leave even a mark. For all that this Liberian beach shows, humanity might not yet have arrived upon the earth; it looks as raw and untouched, as secretly inimical to man, as on the first day it rose like some foul, green scum on the boiling pot of creation.

As the steamer noses in at quarter speed, the sea turns yellowish, with a smell of rotting vegetation in it. There is a stroke of the engine room signal, then the muddy water of the wake boils past as she goes slowly astern. A thick wet heat closes in instantly; the whistle gives three long drawn blasts. It seems absurdly futile to stop just here and bellow at all Africa like a mournful cow.

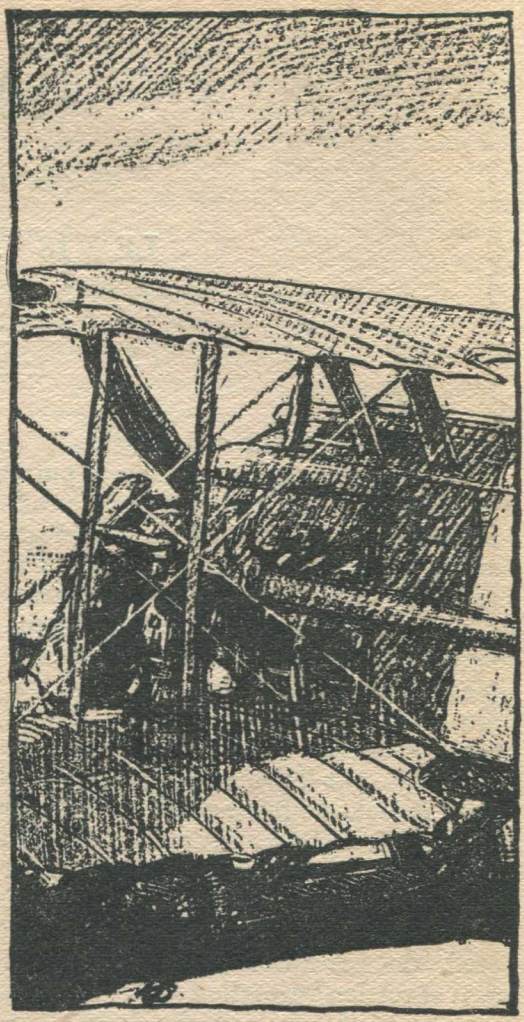
The rain has lifted a little, showing a single conical hill, incredibly lonely, far inland. Also a break in that bush wall, with some seaward crawling mangroves that mark a creek. That opening suddenly swarms with tiny canoes, tossing high on the venomous breakers of the bar. In ten minutes they are at the steamer's side, bobbing on the oily rollers like a flock of black, sharply curved ducks. Each is manned by three or four negroes, all dressed for a four days' ocean voyage in an irreducible minimum of a red cotton handkerchief.

They come swarming up the ropes flung from the decks. Young fellows, bullet headed, compactly built, their skins like chocolate satin over great rolls of muscle, their faces one vast grin of gorgeous ivory.

These are the Kru boys, those West African sawers of wood, on whose shoulders rests the burden of the trade from Sierra Leone to the Congo. By each steamer they go out in droves to work in the trading ports for a year. At Axim, Cape Coast, Kameruns or the Forçados you will see them, nude, swearing and unfailingly good natured, trundling great drums of palm oil, swinging cases of canned goods on to their heads or paddling weary looking white men up strange rivers. Then they will go back to the villages hidden behind that beach line of trees, buy another wife and some more goats and settle down as landed proprietors.

All day they squat about the forward decks, with an endless chattering. At night they lie, almost in heaps, just where they happen to have fallen, sunk in abysmal sleep. One has to pick one's way around or over them. Occasionally there comes a slithering shock as one's slippered foot comes down on a bare leg or stomach. One stumbles, with gymnastics of recovery, but the sleeper merely twitches away without waking. In the hot, wet darkness their bodies exhale a fruity odor, like that of half rotten melons.

The FALLOW FLYER



"WILL he fly again?" the ambulance driver exclaimed with conviction. "Man, what I mean, that there *bon pilot* ain't going to fly no more. He's going to make a die of it. Sure!"

The ambulance driver, having just returned from a long, slow trip to the Main Field hospital, was speaking of the last rider in his hell built, jouncing, bouncing meat wagon. The all ears, listening group took the driver's say-so as authentic. Being a common carrier of human wreckage in its worst form, he was in a position to pass on such subjects. Well, an ambulance driver is pretty much the same as a motor bike nut; that is, he is loud and likes an audience. This one, turned loose, ran off at the mouth and orated like a shavetail inflicting his horrible ninety day knowledge upon his first company.

"When we got to where that plane spun down," the driver continued, "the thing was scattered over about ten kilometers of territory. We never did find two of the wings, and the kid looked like something that had fallen about ten thousand feet through a gang of buzz saws and into a meat grinder. Also, the elevators were missing. Well, the first thing the medical officer said was, 'I hope the propeller isn't busted too bad. I want one for a souvenir; going to mount a clock in the hub'.

"That was sure tough on the medic'. The propeller and motor were halfway through to China; and all that was left of the rest of the plane, you could put in your hat. Gang, I never saw such a hell of a mess! Wreckage strewn from Athol to appetite! And this pilot kid had the carburetor in his belly, where it stuck out of the ground; both legs had drifted through the fixation plate, to the hips; and his arms, folded over his face, were gouged to the bone where they sunk into the cylinder flanges. And if that's flying, what you call the romance of air, then I'll take mine on the rough end of a kidney pounder."

"Did the medical officer say he was bumped, or is that just your guess?" somebody asked.

"The medic was too busy looking for souvenirs. Hall and me put the kid on a

shutter, then the medic' jumped aboard, said, 'The propeller was spoiled but I got the throttle mainettes and the joy stick coupé button; they'll be good souvenirs', and we got under way."

"Well, I'm willing to bet," Bob Girard argued, "that if the medical bunch don't finish the job, Hal Cole will be back among those present before many moons have passed."

"If any of those present ever meet Hal Cole again," the ambulance driver said in parting, "it will be on the other side of the great divide and not here at Field 8, Environs of Indre, Issoudun, France. She was one crash! A washout, right!"

A Novelette of the War Flyers

By

ANDREW A. CAFFREY

LESS than an hour before, many at Field 8 had seen Hal Cole spin into the ground. The thing had happened only a few kilometers south of the hangars. And anxious observers had hoped for the best and feared the worst when they saw his right lower wing buckle and tear loose from the V strut holding it to the upper surface. All the way down the kid had fought for control. From ten thousand, where it had happened, he had gone, first, into a right hand spin. Then, fighting, he pulled the plane out of that. A few seconds later, trying to hold his direction and dive, through the lift of full left rudder, the right side fell again, spun, spun, spun and—*crash!*

"Ten thousand gone home to the folks," an observer mused.

"Crank up that meat wagon!" another had called to the ambulance driver. "Young Cole has made his rendezvous with death. Pick up the medical captain at headquarters and watch out for good souvenirs. What the hell do you think we kill pilots for, exercise? No! Not by a damned sight! Souvenirs for the Medical Corps."

And then, with Hal Cole deposited at Main Field hospital, Field 8 awaited the word to drop the colors to half staff. That very night everybody did the nice thing and told everybody else what a good guy Hal had been. They always did that the minute a fellow went into past tense.

"He sure could fly! What it took to handle a Nieuport, Hal was loaded with! Combat! Man, that kid could kick them

around till it made your head spin! And game! He was, and no damnfoolin'."

Well, Hal Cole was game. And it was that gameness that finally won over the Medical Corps. All the neglect on earth could not accomplish what that crash had failed to do—knock him off and west.

The hospital, of course, was busy. It was busy when they dragged Hal in, too busy to pay much attention to a guy who didn't have a Chinaman's chance. So they had "let him lay".

When, by every rule and regulation of rapid and sure killing, Hal Cole should have been dead, he sat up and began to argue the why and wherefore of his crash. Then, and not until then, did the docs pay much attention to him.

The flight surgeon, who knew something about flying, stopped and listened when a white sheet moved faintly and said:

"She was spinning to the left. All right! Well, I kicked in right rudder and lots of it, and she didn't come out. She should have stopped spinning with opposite control. The book says so. Then, when she started to spin flat I hit her with full motor, and that didn't help one little bit. The book must be wrong."

"Where was your joy stick?" the flight surgeon asked.

"Joy stick?" the sheet repeated.

"Where was my joy stick? Why, I suppose that I had that in neutral."

"Well, that's where you pulled a boner!" the surgeon exclaimed.

"Eh?" the sheet said, with a little more interest. "What do you mean—boner?"

"When she started to spin flat you should have shoved the joy stick ahead, got her into a fast dive, then pulled her out and redressed with power. Now keep quiet. Go to sleep."

So, that was it! Forward stick. Must live; lucky it did not kill him. And the flag never went to half staff, not for Hal.

FOR WEEKS, with nothing visible but a pair of eyes, he stayed flat on his back and hoped that they had fixed the roof above that rain stained spot in the ceiling. In another month or so it would be raining every day and Hal expected to remain right where he was, under that old leak, for some time yet. The nurse said she'd take it up with somebody.

He had more casts, weights and counter weights than would sink a dozen ships, but not enough medical weights to sink his dream ships. For, when the gang was finally allowed to visit him, he spoke of flying again, had it all doped out and knew now how he could have gotten out of that spin had he used his old bean.

"Hal, old devil," Bob Girard said, "forget this flying stuff. You're sitting pretty now. In a few more weeks it's down to Brest for you. Then a nice hospital ship, west. Home. Glory. Sugar, three meals a day and life. You're sitting on top of the world when, by every law of the game, you should be shoving up the well known meadow flowers."

"I've got your old 'sitting on top of the world', Bob!" Hal exploded, "I came over here to fight. Think that you and Kidd and Curry and Maloney and the rest are going up front without me? Boy, you have another wild guess coming! I'm going up there, Bob. Remember that, Bob! I'm going up there if I have to form my own air force."

But Bob Girard and Kidd and Curry and the rest did pull out for the front without him. And, to be easy on him, they didn't even say goodby. But Hal knew that they had gone; for they came no more to see and kid him along.

He was alone now, alone to look at the stained ceiling and listen. Nothing left but the stink of iodoform, and the coming of sounds from the world without.

Often from that sound world without Hal heard other accidents. Oh, yes, you could hear accidents when there was no chance to see them. And, knowing the game, you could even forehear accidents. Hal got so that he'd listen for them.

Most of the training work was done behind rotary motors; not very far behind, however, because the student flyer, in Avro or Nieuport, just about had that old rotary motor in his lap. Well, those

rotary motors in action sounded like a ton of lead shot rolling through a tin chute, rolling not steadily but in fits and spells. So, Hal would lie there and hear a hellish rolling of shot, and that was the plane taking off. Then there would come a steady rolling, and that was the plane leveling off and getting under way. But, and this often happened, the shotlike sound might stop rolling—cut!—start!—cut!—then there'd be a crash. And that was hearing an accident.

"Who got it that time?" he would ask of the first one along.

"Oh, so-and-so. He made a die of it, too—" or—"Those birds were just loaded with luck! They washed out that crate, and neither was hurt. Can you beat some guys' luck?"

"Some guys do have all the luck," Hal would say. "For instance, who ever heard of a major being killed. Ever think of that?"

Then the long nights would come. And he would hear crashes no more. Then it was hard to lie here and plan attack, hard to scheme and dream and wait. Lord, would morning never come!

Weeks passed. How slow they can drag. Months went; and how long months can be! You'd think that life was nothing but the counting of hours and days and weeks and months. You'd wonder whether there could ever be anything beyond the next dawn or sunset.

WHEN Hal Cole pushed off on crutches he was the wonder of the age. Even the medical officer at Field 8 stopped looking for souvenirs long enough to marvel and say:

"It sure beats the devil! Why, even the cylinders were dished in on Cole's motor. The crank shaft had a knot tied in it. And I couldn't find a single foot of the propeller that would make a good picture frame. And here he is walking, and hell-bent for recovery. I'll have to see to his papers and get him headed back to America."

"Send me home?" Hal questioned when the boys at Field 8 told him of the medical officer's design.

Hal was now managing to "bum," almost daily, rides from the Main field to 8; two seater planes, with friendly pilots in charge, furnished the transportation.

"Send me back? That old boy is full of boloney! When I leave Issoudun it will be in the right direction—east for the front."

Without consulting Hal Cole, headquarters fixed his name to an outgoing list of casuals,* outgoing for Brest and home. But headquarters should have figured more closely. When the hour of departure arrived Hal was hard to find. He was so hard to locate that even the brave M.P's were forced to quit the cafés and go to work on the case. Two or three days later, when all danger had passed, they located Hal over in the German prison pen. He was surprisingly happy and well fed.

"Now, listen here," they told Hal, "you are going back on the next shipment, and no monkey business! Get it?"

"I'm better than ever," Hal agreed. "How about putting me back on flying? I'll be throwing these crutches to a staff officer within a week, Colonel."

"I said that you were going home! And I'm not a colonel."

"All I need is a few hours of practise combat, over at 8, under Austin or Osgood, and I'll be all set, sir—Major."

"Home! Did you hear me? You are going back, back, b-a-c-k!"

"Back of headquarters hangar, today, I was looking at that new 220 Spad, sir. You know, I could handle a bus like that like a damn, sir. When do I go back on flying status?"

"Now look here, Cole! We've fooled around with you all that we're going to; this is the end. Within a week, another unit of casuals will be on its way. You hold yourself ready. Any more of this A. W. O. L. stuff and you'll face charges."

When the door closed on the departing Cole, the major in charge of the hospital turned to his also quite old adjutant and said:

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*I use casuals for casualties, because casuals was always used.

"Scott, what wouldn't you give to be his age again? The Service record gives him eighteen years and five months. Think of that, Scott. Fighting a man's size war at eighteen and too game to quit."

"He hasn't thought of beginning to quit," Captain Scott said.

"You think he's going to outsmart us again?"

"Damfino," the captain said.

"Yes, you do, Scott. You know just as well as I that he went out of here a thousand thoughts ahead of me. And do you know what I'm going to do if he pulls anything fast?"

"No," the captain said. "What?"

"Nothing, Scott, nothing."

"That is a fine decision, Major," the captain said. "During the months we've had that boy here I've never seen him lose sight of the Front. And during my career I've never seen his equal in facing suffering. Of course, there'll be no more flying for him. But I'd go to hell before I'd tear down his towering structures of hope."

"Eighteen and man's size," the major was saying. "I'll have to keep fighting him, Scott, but I'll never put the screws on him. Eighteen and a-rarin' to go!"

ABOUT that time Hal bequeathed one of his crutches to the ancient order of lame staff officers. A week later the other was discarded and he moved here and there, in and out of hangars, up and down in training planes, with the aid of two canes. Field 8 saw a great deal of him. Higher officers habitually said "No!" the minute he approached. And the war went into the fall season, the fall of '18.

Big news came back from the Front; big doings were there. New flyers went up to the Front; much dying was there. Hal Cole threw away his canes and got sore.

Hal went to the C. O. of all Issoudun. The C. O. treated Hal like a stretcher case; he refused to give Hal much of the valuable official time and insinuated that Hal still belonged to the hospital. The C. O. acted as if he would have slightly less than nothing to do with Hal. That was rough on the troops.

From headquarters Hal went directly to the hospital major's office. The major had developed a weakness for seeing Hal at all times; his clerk merely pointed to the door, and Hal would wander in and take a seat.

"Good morning, Major."

"What the devil! You here again?"

"Yet."

"What can I do for you?" the major asked.

"Now, that is a promise, Major. Remember, you are going to do it this time. Give me my discharge from this hospital and mark me up for flying duty. Come on! Let's get together, Major."

"Can't be done!" the major emphasized. "My boy, you could not pass one per cent. of the physical flying examination. Now, be reasonable. On Thursday next there will be another hospital train for Brest, and—"

"Let's send the C. O., a bunch of flying majors and the rest of the cripples on that hospital train, sir. You and I and the rest of the willing guys must stay here and help the M.P's win this war."

"And," the major continued, trying to kill a growing smile, "and this time I want you to read up on timetables and be ready to say goodby to me when the train pulls out."

Hal had been gazing intently over the major's head through an open door and into the flight examination room beyond. In that room was the whirling chair and newly installed Ruggles orientator, two devices employed in the physical testing of all flyers. Hal, in days gone by, had had the whirling chair test; but the orientator was something new.

"Major," he said, "how about strapping me in that new thingamajig and giving me a whirl or two. Bet I won't lose my way for a minute. And it's about time I had another chair test. Bet I'll get my finger between your thumbs the minute the old chair stops whirling. It's about time you

got busy looking me over, as I was about to say, when you began to tell me about sending the C. O. back on the hospital train. It is high time that I quit gold-bricking here at Issoudun and moved up Front where I belong."

"Nothing stirring," the major said, and bent over his work. "Flying is too exacting."

"So exacting that the French allow their T. B. victims to fly."

"The French; not we!" the major reminded him.

"And they have one old guy flying who is past seventy; think of that! How about it?"

"Well," mused the major, "perhaps they had no room for that poor old fellow on the general staff. They might have made room for him, though, among the ten million marshals of France."

HAL STROLLED in and examined the testing equipment, and strolled back to report that it was all ready for him. He waited.

"It is a fine morning outside," the major then said, and turned in his swivel chair to gaze across fields. "What you want to do is get out and move about. You need the air."

"Yes, sir," Hal agreed. "That's what I've been trying to tell everybody for weeks. I need air and lots of it. And I'm glad to have you recommend and prescribe it. Thanks, sir. Good day, sir."

For a long time the major stared at the door through which Hal had passed. Meditatively, after the manner of a man greatly troubled, he passed his long fingers slowly through his shock of gray hair and turned to the captain.

"Scott," he said, "I feel knee high and old, very old. Feel as though I'm slowing up. Did you hear me prescribe anything to that boy?"

"No, sir," Captain Scott answered, "I did not hear you prescribe anything, but, somehow or other, I think that you did."

"Me too," said the major. "Me and you both, Scott. I'll bet dollars to doughnuts that I've said something that I never said at all. I used to think that that boy was about a thousand gifted guesses ahead of me. I was wrong. He's a million ahead. In so far as I feel very funny and foolish today, I'm going to ask a question, Scott, and answer it myself, with another. Are you ready for the question?"

"Shoot, sir."

"Will that boy be on hand to take the hospital train out of here on Thursday next? Answer: Has a fillilloo bird any eddication?"

IN THE major's anteroom, upon quitting the office, Hal had been forced to chest his way through a standing group of eager listeners. The listeners were knotted about a tall flyer who was saying, in part:

"Hell, I was flying a DH with an English outfit for six weeks and never saw a single Hun. I don't know what's doing on our own front. Perhaps there is hell a-popping, as some say, but I'll tell the world, the Limey Front is dead. Flying on the Front," the tall one exclaimed with great derision, "flying be damned! For a kick, give me a motor bike every time!"

Then, if not before, Hal recognized the return front line flyer.

"For a kick, give me a motor bike every time!"

It could be none other than Rube Williamson.

"Hello, Rube," Hal said. "You back? Rube, I don't like to hear you speak so irreverently of the front, the temple of liberty— Don't shake that hand like that, Rube! Hell, man, I'm all loose and just hanging together. I've got all the symptoms and earmarks of a corpse, Rube; and from now out, I'm to be handled like a pet. Tell me more about the promised land, Rube. What about this Front stuff? Sit over here where we can watch the birds."

While Rube awaited his time with the major, they talked. Hal asked about certain towns, towns in American, French and English territory. He asked about

certain airdromes. Certain rivers, too. He wanted to know about this and that, touching upon the art of aerial combat; and Rube told him all, and more. Rube was good!

"Now I have a pull here, Rube," Hal finally said. "Come; I'll get you right into the major's office. This way. And thanks for the information. Goodby, Rube. See you later, perhaps."

Hal, leaving the chief surgeon's office, stood on the top step of the hospital building with no place to go. For a few minutes he watched the hectic activities of a skyful of training planes. Training Avros, giving dual instruction or staggering about solo, with a wild student just missing hangars. "23 Meter" Nieuports doing the same. Flights of faster Nieuports dotted the fifteen thousand level in the higher sky. Spads droned their own peculiar drone. A Morane Saulnier flight —he knew that it was from Field 8— passed off to the south. Here and there, a Sop Camel buzzed and plunged about like a lost bee. DeHaviland flights, flaming coffin outfits, were busy with the final touches on nearly ready front line flyers, and . . . All this; and Hal was to have no part in it . . .

His covetous eyes came to rest upon that 220 Spad. It was still there, pulled off to one side, near headquarters hangar.

This 220 Spad was the only one of its type that had ever visited Issoudun. It was equipped with a machine gun. It had all that one needed on the front. A major, on a visit, had brought it in; and, as an infantryman would examine a new type of rifle, the wondering, admiring eyes of all embryo flyers turned to this ship. It was the sort of equipment that they must some day fly, when that some day would eventually find them on the Front. All but Hal. There was to be no Front for him. No Front. No Spads. No fight. No nothing— Who said so?

HAL, AS he had done time and time again, loafed across to where the 220 Spad was on exhibition. During the several days since the major's arrival, Hal had learned just about all that constant, pestering inquiry could teach.

He knew his machine guns, had got that knowledge on the range and in ground school, so, except for a few new ideas in active handling, he gave none of his time to the Spad's artillery. But he learned much that warned him against the dangers that accompanied the too abrupt climbing of a Spad, that is, on the take-off.

That was very bad joss, they said, very quick way for one to meet his Maker.

Oh, he'd look out and guard against that. You'd think that he was going to fly one. This kid with all the broken bones and bodily kinks.

You could dive a Spad to hell an' gone, they told him. Dive the thing four, five, even six thousand feet, straight down. And at the end of the dive the wings wouldn't be hanging on a cloud while the pilot was hurtling earthward with the fuselage, and at the speed of any falling body. No, a Spad's wings would hang on, stay put; and that was the wonder of the airplane building age.

That, too, was good to know. It was fine to think that you could take a chance on a long dive and that you were not in danger of diving your ship to pieces. Hal was in a position to know how it felt when a ship and all its parts went forty ways from nowhere and let you down. Not so good. It must never happen again.

"They're best at the lower altitudes," somebody told him.

"But the Hun isn't fighting at the lower altitudes," Hal remembered to remind his informant. "A dive seems to be all you've got here, a dive and a little speed, lower down. But, she's a pip!"

AND DAY by day, in every way, he learned more—all that there was to know about this type of plane. He had watched the armorers on that day when they had taken the plane over to the machine gun butts to synchronize the action. He had seen the compass men calibrate the instrument in the 220's cockpit. And on one occasion Sergeant Ungerland, in charge of headquarters

hangar, had allowed Hal to sit in the cockpit and handle the motor while they gave it a test run—on the ground, of course. It is very likely that the major knew less about that particular Spad than did Hal. The hospital gang kidded and called it his ship. Well, who knows? Perhaps it was his ship!

That same forenoon, when Sergeant Harry Ungerland said, "Now listen, Hal! Listen to reason!" he had no way of knowing, could not guess, that the Meuse-Argonne struggle was at its height. And that the war was all but over. Had Sergeant Ungerland known that it is more than likely that he would have leaned less heavily on Hal's urgent request. The two were in deep, hand waving argument in the rear of headquarters hangar, in the rear where none might see or hear.

"Listen, Hal," Ungerland repeated time and again. He emphasized the "listen" with a long finger that rapped and tapped on Hal's chest— "Listen to reason, kid!"

"Well, shoot!"

"I'm just a noncom, see? I don't own this here damned, cock eyed Air Service, see? And being just an enlisted stiff, I can't give ships away. I'd get burnt for it, Hal!"

"But I'm a pilot," Hal protested.

"Makes no damned never minds, Hal! I can't put out a ship for every shavetail that takes it into his head to fly. Why—"

"I'm no shavey, Sergeant."

"Cadet, then; all same. Cadets and shaveys both come under the same heading. Mistakes."

"That's cruel, Sergeant."

"I'm hard!" Ungerland stated. "Don't misuse me, big boy."

"Well, look here, Sergeant. Do you want that nice 220 Spad to fall into the hands of a major and be all busted to hell an' gone? Do you? You remember what happened to the first new Morane Saulnier, don't you? A colonel did that. Washed it out."

"You're the one who must remember that," Ungerland said.

"What's that got to do with my particular begging, my dear Sergeant?" Hal wanted to know. "What have you against me?"

"Nothing, but I can't afford to have this bus crashed, Hal."

"After all, Sergeant, it is only one of many."

"Calm yourself, cadet! This Spad is *the* Spad."

"What do you mean—*the* Spad?"

"Why, boy, she's a special job, that crock. Special and going to be ferried up to Air Service headquarters, behind the Front."

"How special?"

"Well, she's all set for the Front now. Gun magazines are loaded, and she's ready to shove off."

"Oh! she is, is she?" Hal asked, and did not try to hide his joy. "When does the major propose to push off Sergeant?"

"Soon." Ungerland dropped the subject. "No ship a-tall, unless you bring a written order from headquarters. An order that's signed, counter signed, blessed and spit upon by the C. O."

"But I can't get a flying order."

"Damned tootin', you can't, Hal!"

"Well, what's the answer, Harry?"

"Now, it is this way, Hal. At quarter to twelve I go to dinner. What happens while I'm at dinner is none of my business."

"Who's in charge while you're away? Who will shove out and start a plane for me?"

"That's easy. Bill Clark, as a rule, is next in charge. But Bill is on sick leave today. The rest of my gang are just strong backs and weak brains from the casual outfits, and they don't know their armpit from a hole in the ground. I doubt if they can read.

"I'll leave three of them here at noon. You give them some kind of a written notice and name your ship. It's up to you."

"I'll be on hand with a rose in my teeth, Harry. Thanks."

Coming through the rear flap of headquarters hangar, and on his way toward

the mess, at fifteen minutes to twelve, Sergeant Ungerland encountered a begoggled figure. The begoggled one, going toward headquarters hangar, said:

"Good morning, Sergeant. It's a glorious day for a flight, what?"

"How do, Lieutenant," Sergeant Ungerland said, and stepped aside. "Are you flying far, Lieutenant? Or just up for the air?"

"You'd be surprised, Sergeant!"

"Guess I would, Captain. What big goggles you wear, Major!"

" 'Better to avoid being seen'," he said, the begoggled one laughed, "but I must be on my way, Sergeant. Good luck, Sergeant."

"Thanks, General," Ungerland said and went along.

AT THE great open front of the large canvas hangar, the begoggled Hal barked—

"A little service please!"

One of the strong backs and weak brains had been fast asleep on a work bench. He gazed at Hal through a pair of size twelve hobnails, then slowly unraveled and came to the ground.

A second winner of the war looked up from his bed in a fold of the hangar's great draped doors, tossed aside a Y book and contemplated arising. He did so and stood, wall eyed and weaving.

From the cozy cockpit of the 220 Spad, a third, worn out voice asked—

"Got a written order, sir?" Then he went back to sleep.

Hal tossed a much written, official looking paper upon the bench, began to adjust his flying suit and bent over to strap an alarm clock sized altimeter to his leg, where it was to be worn just above the knee. The kid was cool, no fooling!

"Which plane, sir?" one of the sleepers asked, and showed a few signs of slow life.

"My 220 Spad, Sergeant."

"Yes, sir," the one addressed answered, and moved right uptown upon being mistaken for a sergeant. "I'll get it right out."

He turned to put the whip on the other two:

"Come on, you guys! Let's get this crate out on the line. Come on! Get the rag out—"

"Where the hell did you get all the authority?" the one who had been sleeping in the Spad demanded. "Don't call him sergeant, Major. He's twice as low as a second class buck. And that is low!"

Then, fighting among themselves, the three, aided by Hal pushed the Spad to the starting line. Reaching the line, the biggest of the three removed the tailskid dolly while the two smaller men grunted and groaned under the heavy lift of the Spad's weighty tail. After that, and some first class cussing, they put chocks to the plane's wheels, Hal climbed aboard, and they were ready to start the motor.

As the motor sucked, then kicked into action, Hal saw several passers-by, on the road afront headquarters, stop. Then, one by one and two by two, and so on, the passers-by walked afield to see the 220 Spad warm up and get under way. Among the watchers, Hal, through the corner of his eye, found the hospital major and Captain Scott. Watching the climbing thermostat, Hal crowded his motor. The oil was feeding fine. Air pressure to the gas tank, Jake! Then, with throttle wide open, he revved the motor through a thirty-second period at top speed, slowed down again, and waved the mechanics to remove the wheel chocks. They did so; and, at that same second, the commanding officer of all Issoudun strolled upon the field. Hal's heart looped two or three times, he eased power to the plane and waved a fare thee well as he taxied down field in a cloud of dust.

Thirty seconds more and he was in the air. And the past was just that—the past. Hal Cole smiled, looked to his instruments, nursed the Spad's climb and flew northeast. He studied his map board and laughed. He tried a burst from the machine gun, and laughed some more. Then he pushed the climb and the northeast flight till he had passed Orleans at about eight thousand feet. Shortly after that, far ahead, he picked up Paris.

"PARIS!" he laughed. "I'm the only American flyer who has never fought the Battle of Paris. I'm ashamed of myself, but have no time for that battle today."

Then he passed to the east of Paris.

"Issoudun to Paris." Hall figured and checked the time on his watch. "That's about two hundred kilometers—a hundred and a quarter real miles in one hour. One hour of flying gone out of a two hour and a half gas supply. That will never do! I'm going right over into a French sector and mooch a new gas supply. The Frogs will never ask any embarrassing questions of a Yank with cigarets; and I've got smokes to burn."

Clouds bothered him.

Studying his map closely, Hal turned east to Meaux, picked up the Marne, only to quit it at Chalons and cut across to Bar-le-Duc. From Bar-le-Duc he dropped lower in order to see what he could see; and, near Toul, he found what he was seeking. An airdrome.

The French were not asking any questions that November day. Within the half hour, at 2:30, Hal was in the air once more and headed along the lines, northeast. Getting cloudy again.

"Now I'm good for two hours and a half of life," he thought. "Bring on your war!" With that in mind, he crowded the Spad's steady fight for altitude. Eight thousand came easily; and he checked off Verdun on his right. Ten thousand was reached; and that key city was nearly passed. Twelve thousand feet was under him at Montfaucon; and he began to worry because he never found enough clear sky, all at one time, to hold him and a Hun plane, or two.

From fifteen thousand feet and up the climb came more slowly. But he knew that altitude was the thing he needed most. Altitude is the thing by which battle flyers live. Now and then, through thick shifting clouds, he lost his ground entirely. It went out, and stayed out for minutes at a time. But the sun, at his left, was enough; for he could hold his general direction on that. The rest did not matter; yes, the sun was a flyer's only true compass.

"Wonder why all these high class inventors don't do something toward turning out a good compass for us birds?" Hal questioned, a little later, when, for several minutes, he felt that his direction was hopelessly lost. "These liquid compasses would make good goldfish aquariums, and that is all you can say in their favor. Now look at that damned indicator swing! Looks like a merry-go-round, or I'll eat your shirt!"

THE CLOUDS were frightfully thick. They came drifting in around the struts like so much blown snow. Water trickled from the leading edges of all wings, across the surfaces in snaky rivers and blew off in long streamers from the trailing edges. Hal glared at his swinging compass and prayed for the sun.

The compass, bolted to the instrument board of his cockpit, just above his knees, was too close to the motor's electrical influence for anything approaching accuracy. The distance between the 220 Hispano Suiza's dual magnetos and the compass was only a few feet. All the calibration and synchronization on earth could not offset the disturbing flutter and swing that was born in that ignition system.

"Lost," Hal said. "After all, wars are won in the sweat of laboratories. The guy with a good compass will have the world beating a path to his door. And the guy with a sound killer! That's one thing I could use right now. Man, what wouldn't I give to be able to deaden the sound of this old 220 and be able to hear whatever there might be in this sky, besides me? Wonder if I'm alone!

"With all this talk of science, why must they send a poor bird up here to get lost, hear nothing but the bark of his own motor and be alone? This science thing is the royal bunk! And this is the time and place to realize it. Not a compass in the world worth the powder that would blow it back to Hoboken, and to think

that they've been navigating for ages!

"And look at this altimeter reading almost twenty thousand feet! I'll buy you a hat if a 220 Spad will make a true ceiling of twenty thousand! Chances are, I've got about seventeen thousand and not a foot more. Perhaps there's a flock of Fokkers, or something worse, a mile above me. Altimeters! The only reason I'd ever monkey with the thing is because it's snappy equipment and I like to see it strapped to my leg.

"Gosh! that's what most of our equipment is—show stuff! Get up here, where you need it, and the whole works goes haywire.

"Look at that air pressure gauge to the gas tank! One second she shows three pounds; that's O.K.! Then, the next second, she falls to nothing. Wouldn't that knock you stiff!

"And now the motor oil is thinning out! Look at that gage fall! Wonder if those macs back at headquarters hangar forgot to put in oil. The Frogs said that there was enough; but you can't believe a Frog even if you can understand him.

"Well, if the whole works does seem to be on the hummer, I still have all my aches and pains. So, I'll carry on. And maybe the aches and pains are not on the job! Man, this altitude isn't helping the old caved in chest one bit. No, sir! But I must get lots of that altitude medicine. Ah! And there's the sun!"

He forgot all his ship troubles. Pushed ahead. Surely something, he felt sure, would show up within the next two hours. And that was all he asked of life, just one shot at the enemy. It is likely that he never thought for a minute that many flyers had prowled that Front during hours and days without running into a single brush with the enemy. Where there's a war, there must be enemies! Now where were they, for him?

AT TWENTY thousand Hal flew into a clearing. He never dreamed that clouds grew so high. And the answer to his prayer was coming, head on. He recognized the general outline of the Hun Fokker. He'd seen the outline on charts back at 8; and now—so help him, Hanna!—there'd be something doing!

Straight ahead, coming in at miles per hour, the German plane held its direction. At the same level, giving not a foot, nor a thought to turning out, Hal palmed his throttle wide open, pressed his joy stick trigger, to warm his gun, and closed the gap.

"Trying to call me!" Hal thought. "The brute! Trying to call me! Me with both legs in the grave, all aches and pains! The dumb brute! Trying to call me!"

But, at the last minute, when only a few motor barks remained to crash the two planes, the German flyer changed his mind about calling the Yank. In that minute of weakening, the Hun flyer took a long chance that Hal would not do the same thing, and zoomed. For a jiffy, the Hun plane showed its entire bottom side in Hal's sights. Hal saw it; and Hal got it.

"Check one sausage eater!" Hal exulted. "Man, that was sure easy!"

He watched a smoking mass whirl into the clouds, circled once, then turned to other business.

"Now where's my old friend, Sol? Ah, there you are, sun. And right where you belong, on the left. Let's go."

THE NEXT mess of trouble came right along. He did not have to worry or look long for it. He'd lost a few feet of altitude some place—a few hundred, perhaps—and he worked fast to win it back. He was getting that back when four enemy planes jumped him. Four adversaries? Well, that was a crowd. But not too many for an ambitious young fellow who had been nearly cheated out of a war. He took them on, one and all.

The fact that he pulled right up in a loop, then came down among them and went round and round, perhaps saved him. It was a hot dog fight while it lasted; and the Hun pilots, fearing lest they get one another, were forced to hold their fire.

Right away, within the first minute of fight, one enemy plane went into a dive and headed east. Hal got the next one cold. Hot, perhaps would be a better word. It went down in flames.

The other two stayed. And, ganging Hal, they worked around till they were both on his tail. Hal Cole knew the answer to that one; the only answer. He went away from there. For that was where a Spad was good. And his dive took him through the clouds and to safety. The winning glory of a Spad dive was Hal's.

"I'll be darned if I'm not good!" he laughed. "Three in a single flight, and without a press agent along, too. That's always my luck. Here I am fighting for glory, and nothing else but." Then Hal noticed for the first time that the day was ending.

"Let's see; I've been at this more than an hour and a half. Guess I'll go right ahead into Limey territory and call it a day. Tomorrow I'll work a full shift and end this war."

HIS TURN of duty on the American Front had been all that even one of Hal Cole's hungry disposition might desire. Three enemy planes in one flight was a thing that came seldom into any flyer's life. It had been done before, most certainly, yes, but not so frequently as to become a common thing. Three a day was not a bad bag for the best of them.

Hal turned west, flew straight on the sun and lost altitude. The clouds seemed to go all the way down. For minutes at a stretch he wondered whether he was flying on an even keel or upside down, but, at about the three thousand foot level, the ground came through, here and there. Then he began to recall certain things that Rube had told him not to forget, certain directions relating to the English Front. He was looking for a gang of rivers west of Sedan and an airdrome north of Rethel. And he had these marked out on his map.

He located Sedan off to his right. And then the world began to get wringing wet; clouds squatted right down on the hills; and flying visibility went out.

"I'll never find anything now," Hal thought. "The best I can hope for is a fair field near some town and near a highway, if possible."

He dropped down till he was hedge hopping trees and scattered villages like a light blinded bat. Rain steamed from his hot motor exhausts and cut back into his face like so many sharp lashes.

A few kilometers from Signey, after deciding upon what looked like a good field, he made a landing. Then he looked about.

Near Signey Hal found an English motor truck unit that was willing to service a Spad for the novelty of the thing, willing to give him food and shelter through courtesy and more than willing to argue the question of English and Yank ability through force of habit. Always, in such cases, a good time was had by all.

After doping the low test commercial gasoline with ether secured from the medical man with the unit Hal threw a tarpaulin over his stolen steed and hoped that the threatening rain would be reasonable.

But, in November, French rains never threaten. Not so's you'd notice it. French rains rain, and that is all there is to it. In the morning it was still raining; and the Limey outfit had pulled out. Hal was alone, an Air Service of one, and all wet.

"Wouldn't this knock you for a long row of small shacks astride a deep ditch!" Hal lamented. "Here I am, the best in air, and hub deep in the hallowed ground of *la belle France*."

Now and then during that long day the rain stopped; and again and again the rain started anew. Once, just after noon, Hal managed a ride into Signey, secured food, stole a blanket and returned. That night he slept stretched upon the linen of his lower left wing. Not the softest bed on earth, but far better than the wet ground or cramped cockpit. The stars came out. He made wishes over both

shoulders. The stars went back. Hal cussed a bit. Then it rained some more. Small ponds spread across the field. And when morning crawled into the gray world Hal's poor 220 Spad, the glory of yesterday's sky, was an island.

To say that Hal had slept during that long night is merely a figurative use of the word; under such circumstances, and one thin, stolen blanket, there just is no such thing as sleep, nohow, no time, no, sir!

All night long, through the rain and wind, he had bellied down on the wing, shivered under that blanket and listened to the endless rattle of passing, front line bound outfits on the road into Signey. Then, reluctant to do a fellow a small favor, that miserable dawn had slowly dragged itself into the mean, no account world. And Hal, to kill the disappointment that comes with finding oneself hopelessly and helplessly marooned, looked across his small lake toward the highway and laughed.

"Man the boats!" he exclaimed, and came to an elbow lean for a better view. "Wouldn't that cramp your flying style? The only thing that old kid Noah had, that I haven't got, was a dove. Man, I sure wish that I had brought along my best bird. Wow! What a swell time a web footed dove would have out there this fine morning! Bigger and better doves for front line flyers is my slogan.

"But this will never do," he decided right away. "I must unfold these aching parts and get some motion into the old boneyard. Wonder if I have any life left below the Adam's apple! Just one more night like this and the old hospital major would be for sending me home in a wooden kimono, and I hope to sit in your old mess kit if them ain't the hard facts.

"What can I do to get my mind off me? Well, a good trooper looks first to his mount, and I have a good mount. Spad, how the devil are you this fine morning? Supposing I feed you a little motor oil to the exposed parts? Yes, that's not a bad idea. You're wet, kid; and I don't want you to be sore on me when we pull out of this mess. Don't want any spitting and sputtering because you've taken on too much water through your ignition system or by way of the gasoline. Let's see what can be done."

AVOIDING the pond in which the Spad squatted, hub deep, Hal crawled along the wing to the fuselage and took his stand on a wheel. From there he could inspect and work upon his motor. Always, after a period of flying, there is a free oil leakage. With this oil, using his hand and fingers, he daubed and smeared all exposed parts of his motor, worked it into the moving control arms and plastered great gobs of it on the spark plug leads. Then, quite by accident, to avoid slipping to the ground, his hand grabbed the propeller. In steadying his footing, the hand moved the propeller through a quarter turn. Hal's heart knew a bitter pang; a slow asthmatic wheeze came from the exhaust. That was a burnt out valve, and nothing else.

"That's bad," Hal thought. "I must have burned that exhaust valve in the big dive. Well, that's the curse of the Hispano motor—burnt exhaust valves. But they say that the Wrights have developed a tungsten valve that won't burn. That's great; helps me a lot; perhaps they're saving it for the next war. Now, one valve burned is enough to keep a major on the ground for life; but I'm not a major. Wonder if one is all?"

He pulled the propeller through another half turn, and another hiss came to his ears and went straight to his heart.

"That must have been more dive than I thought," he mused. "There are two valves gone. And that means that there's just so much power gone, less speed and not so much altitude. All of which is very bad in my line of business; and I'm still in business. Two exhaust valves out of business would keep all the captains out of the air, but I'm not a captain. Wonder if any more are blowing!"

He pulled the propeller through compression again. Things began to look better and nearly a turn and a half had

been made before the third burnt valve sent out its—

"Here!"

"Three out of eight gone! Pretty soon there won't be power enough left to blow your hat off, and I can see a war being fought at about ten thousand. Well, that puts the majors, captains and lieutenants on the ground. But, thank the Lord, I'm not a loot, not even a shavey! Having gone so far, I want to know the worst. Now, are there any more burned babies?"

He swung the propeller through several turns. There were no more; each time the three blew, and that was all. Which was enough.

"Well, that's that," Hal thought as he gazed into the brightening sky. "I don't know enough about these Spads to know whether or not there's power enough left to pull her off the ground but, as soon as I see a way to get her out of this lake and to solid ground, the world is going to see a try! I'm hungry. And I'm cold. And I'm going into Signey, and right now, to talk the war over with the English. Perhaps, before I'm through, the Limeys and I will have a war of our own. I feel mighty mean. Out of my way, water!"

Hal stepped from the wheel, waded through his lake and reached the highway. A ride into Signey was easy to mooch; in no time he was there and eating. He began to feel better, too. He carried on no private wars in the meantime and returned to his plane at noon. The sun was shining, clouds rolled high and he wanted to go. But the plane was still in its lake. And the chances were that the lake had arrived for the winter season.

SHORTLY after noon, coming down the road, a hard looking English Tommy herded a score or more German prisoners of war. Near the field in which the Spad was taking its beauty bath the Tommy halted his detail for a rest. Sitting on their heels, the prisoners studied the plane and talked. The English soldier, recognizing Hal as a Yankee, strolled afield to beg a fag.

"Well up to your ruddy neck, what?" the Briton remarked. "Got a fag?"

"Two fast and needless questions!" Hal smiled. "The answer to both is yes."

"Could I 'elp you a bit?" the smoke moocher volunteered.

"Hell!" Hal exclaimed as the possibility hit him. "Maybe you can. I never gave it much thought. Now this Spad, motor and all, can't weigh much more than a thousand pounds. Think those Huns could carry it out bodily and move it to the dry stretch of grass near the road?"

"Think they can?" the Englishman piped. "I know they can! They'll 'ither carry it hout, or carry heach hother hout!"

"They'll have to get down and wallow."

"They're best hat that," the guard said, and called to the English speaking German who did the interpreting for the group.

One by one, high stepping and wading afield, they answered the call.

"Get your ruddy 'Uns and 'ave 'em knuckle down hunder this hairship," the guard ordered, "an', mind you, see to it they watch hout not to mess the craft. 'Um to it!"

A half dozen prisoners lined either side of the fuselage. As many as could place hands on the landing gear were forced there to squat in the cold November water and get set to lift. Others bent their backs under each lower wing strut fitting. Then they were ready for action.

"Look at that bird digging his claws through my linen!" Hal barked as a man deliberately damaged the fuselage's covering.

"Where?" the guard asked as he brought his piece to port.

Then the rifle's butt rapped sickeningly on a jaw, a German went into the mud, and the rest were willing workers.

Slowly, splash by splash and foot by foot, the Spad was carried toward the road. On the slight bevel, leading up to where the roadway's grade was above the field, the land was solid; there Hal called

a halt and the plane was dropped to the ground.

"That will be jake," he said. "I can manage the rest; take your army down the long, long road, Sergeant. Thanks."

"Not at all," the Englishman declared. "Got another fag?"

After that Hal undertook a job of which he knew very little, the job of starting that type of motor, single handed. And it is, as a rule, one heart breaking grind.

With a gasoline soaked handkerchief, he primed each of the eight cylinderhead petcocks; he flooded his carburetor, pulled the propeller through to compression and made a run for the booster which was located in the cockpit. The booster was a hand operated, finger skinning electrical generator which shot a spark through the distributer heads and to the inner spark plugs when cranked. Each time he boosted, there'd be a cough and a spit, and that was all. Then he would cuss a bit and repeat the whole darned operation again.

Prime, suck in, run, boost—*hp-t-t-t!* Then he'd repeat once more.

Time after time, the motor would hit a few shots. Hope would come, then die with the motor's quitting. A whole hour was given to this; and a second hour promised little. His fingers were skinned and bleeding; the back of his right hand—the boosting hand—was barked and torn, stiff, numb and cold. His tail was dragging very, very low. And he was seeing red, his head was swimming and every last muscle and bone yelled for a stop. But he would not stop. That plane was going to fly! Already, in the last hour, he had seen other planes flying off to the southeast; among others, he had seen a Hun flight. It spurred him to desperation.

"If I could only stop this Hisso from loading I might have half a chance of getting under way!" he lamented. "Oh, hell! Look at that black vapor pour out of the exhaust manifolds and breather funnel. She's loaded to the gills!"

Loading was a great Hispano fault. After the constant priming and sucking in, the cylinders and crank case would take on a rich, a too rich, charge of gas; then, after that, there was no hope of starting till you opened all petcocks and back cranked the propeller to empty her. All of which was work. Skull cracking, back breaking, hard work!

Two hours of that killing work had almost gone into the past when the booster caught, the motor hit, back fired, hit again, then went off like a million and banged away on all eight. Hal sank to the ground, mopped his brow. He listened, fearing a stop. Then he hoped and listened, heard the blowing valves as the motor throbbed along, revving about five hundred revolutions per minute in warming up. And how those burnt valves hissed, worried, complained and hissed!

"SHE IS sure a sweet sounding motor!" Hal finally laughed. "Strike me pink, if she ain't a pip! Clang-clank-clickety-clang! This makes a Cockney of me. I can sit right in my cockpit and hear the chimes of St. Mary's. Whish! Whish! Clang-clang! Man, she sounds like a flock of tin cans on the east end of a dog headed west! Wrap it up! I'll take it away."

Hal found a few clods of dirt large enough to serve as wheel chocks. With these in place, he climbed into the cockpit and gave the motor a run at top speed. Revving at full throttle, with those three burnt valves blowing, the motor turned two hundred revolutions per minute shy of what she should have had. That was very rotten.

Hal pressed his machine gun trigger. Tracer bullets sprayed through the roadside trees. That was better. He took hope.

"I have a hunch that she isn't going to be a long life—" he began to figure closely—"that is, from here out; but if I can get old consumptive Annie into the air and pray, beg or guess her up to about ten thousand, well, there might be something doing after all. But this field is small and my takeoff is narrow and

cramped. Down in my heart, I really feel that there'll be no flight today. But while there's life there's soap; and while there's soap, hope floats. Here goes nothing, as the banker said, looking into the end of a double barreled shotgun."

So saying, the young man looked right and left, back into the sky behind, and shot full throttle to his motor. For a few seconds the motor howled and the Spad wallowed slowly to the power. Then the ship got under way, the tail came up, Hal ruddered away from the roadside trees and the whole grunting, groaning, clanking, blowing, wheezing works taxied into the wind. Through skill or luck or something, Hal pulled the Spad off the ground. Then he thanked the good god of kindness, swung high over Signey and headed south.

Hal went right out and up for altitude. Ten thousand came far more easily than he had hoped. Eleven and twelve came slowly, and the blowing valves—they blew, blew, blew.

Half an hour later Hal smiled to find his whole attention riveted on a field of high, blowing grain, a few miles below on the east bank of the Aisne, not far north of Grand Pré

"No kiddin'," he thought. "You can take the boy out of the country, but you can never take the country out of the boy. No, sir! Here I am about four thousand wet miles from home—Kansas must be about that far—and my whole attention goes to that field of summer fallow the minute I spot it. And being a borne rube, I wonder why they let it run to weeds and wild grain, wonder why they failed to harvest it. I didn't know that they summer fallowed here in Europe. Chances are, they don't. But it's a cinch that that field missed being harvested this fall. Summer fallow it is—and, by gosh, that is what I am too—summer fallow and nothing more or less.

"Fallow means to cultivate and make land fruitful; also to plow, break up, make idle and keep idle for a season. And that's me all over, Mabel! Didn't they cultivate and make a flyer of me in '17? The answer is—they did. Then didn't they break me up last winter? I'll say as how they did! And haven't they kept me idle ever since? Oh boy, I'm Summer Fallow Hal from way back in Kansas.

"But it is strange that I should spot that field just because it's in fallow." He studied the field a little closer. "Now what are those jaybirds doing behind that fir grove?"

DOWN in the field, behind a fir thicket at its edge, were a few trucks. Getting a little closer, Hal recognized this as the field equipment of a balloon unit. There were a few men near the winch truck; these men, with upturned faces, were watching his approach.

"Yanks, too," Hal decided, "and pretty well camouflaged. What I mean, that bag is hard to find!"

After a long search he had located the captive balloon where it swung at the end of its long cable. Kiting above the yellow field, it was very hard to find.

"That's my class," Hal said to himself. "Balloons are about all that's left for me with this blowing motor. Wonder if I could find a few if I sneaked across the lines. Frank Luke had lots of fun with balloons. And Frank and I drove practise balloons together at Field 8. And how Frank got them! Then they got Frank . . .

"Thirteen thousand feet. And it's all I'm good for; it is my ceiling. And this old Hisso is blowing like Boreas himself. Let me take a good look at a balloon outfit, so's I'll know one when I run on to the brute again. A balloon outfit! That's a hell of a way to win a war, on the end of a string like a kite!"

He flew a wide circle. More than two miles below, antlike in its field, the balloon outfit came very smally to his eyes. Then something else, between him and the swaying balloon, sent a thrill to his heart. It was a German plane, and the plane was going down on the Yank balloon. As near as he could judge, making a fast guess, the Hun was at least

five thousand feet below him. And, though diving fast, the enemy craft was also a like distance from and above the balloon. Hal, too, went into his dive. Straight down.

On the ground the crew had gone into action. Hal saw the drag cable tighten and the diamonds bulge where the net cut into the balloon. She was going down. But, in that same minute, the balloon's crew decided to go faster. Two of them took to parachutes. Hal saw them go over the side, saw the white silk streamers ravel out, whip, bulge, oscillate and float windward.

"Spad," Hal said as he looked straight ahead over his motor, through the whirling prop' and at the far distant ground, "Spad, they say that you can dive for six thousand and hang together. Well, here's your chance, and you'll never get a better one. Let's see you bring that ground up, and *pronto!*" And the Spad dropped.

"Hell hath no scorn like a Spad being abused," he thought. "Twelve thousand. Eleven. Going down, and I don't mean maybe. Ten. Nine— Now what's that Hun going to do? Why the dirty skunk! Of all low sports that is the lowest. Shooting men while they dangle helplessly from parachutes. Spad, do your stuff! Down! Down!"

The Hun pilot, upon seeing the observers take to the 'chutes, had, for the time being, turned his dive from the balloon and swerved off, down wind, to where the white silk umbrellas were drifting slowly earthward. Strafing parachute jumpers was murder!

"Now what's that new noise?" Hal questioned when, at about the eight thousand foot level, a strange rattle came to his ears, a rattle that was heard above the sing and screech of struts and wires. "Oh, Summer Fallow Hal, you champion dumb-bell!" he lamented when his eyes fell upon his motor tachometer which showed a reading of about three thousand revolutions per minute. "Bonehead! Diving straight down with full power! All the bearing metal this Hisso now has left wouldn't fill a gnat's eye tooth."

The strange rattling he had heard was the motor's bearings on their way out through the exhaust manifolds. A long dive, with full power, would burn out the oil and bearings every time. Well, be that as it may, he had no time to cry over spilled babbitt.

HAL NO longer looked at his altimeter after the dive had fallen to a reading of seven thousand feet. He saw that mark reached, and the wings were still on the ship. His motor was still turning and, therefore, the gun should be O. K. He tried a burst, and the tracers went groundward. Then, when the Hun sportsman seemed only a few stone throws ahead, Hal began to ease back on his control stick. Now, if at all, when he'd attempt to pull the plane out of the vertical, the wings would leave. But they did not leave. For a second he glanced out along a trailing edge of an upper surface. It was bowed back like a gull's wing, every landing wire was loose, and struts whipped and shimmied. But they held. Everything held; and he eased out and toward his target. Seconds later, never knowing what hit him, the Hun flyer went out of air for all time, but not because of gun fire.

Bringing his gun to bear upon the nearest parachute, the Hun was just closing in for a sure thing, taking his time, when Hal terminated his dive, redressed and brought his Spad to a level flying position, and came up from the rear. But, redressing and trying to handle his motor again, Hal discovered that many things were amiss. The spark plugs, fouled with oil, were not doing business. The propeller, because of its bearingless crank shaft, fluttered and wobbled, and when he tried a burst from his machine gun, tracers smoked where they ricocheted from the propeller blades. The gun and wobbly propeller were no longer synchronized.

But, worst of all, Hal's eyes were not synchronized and calibrated; not to his present altitude.

A minute before, flying at thirteen thousand feet, Hal's eyes had grown accustomed to a range of more than two miles, because, for several previous minutes, he had been watching minutely what was going on in the yellow field. Ordinarily, coming from great altitudes, a flyer will do so in several, gradual stages. That is, after each few thousand of drop, the pilot will level out and fly the new altitude until his eyes have refocused themselves. Then he will drop to another new low and hesitate again. And so on. But Hal had no time for the conventional. His duties had been urgent, very pressing, urgently pressing on the Hun's tail. And he had arrived much closer than he could guess.

When his gun failed, Hal thought that the game was up; also, Hal thought that he was perhaps fifty yards behind the Hun. But he was not. No, for a few seconds the enemy pilot appeared to have Hal's Spad dragging on a short tow. Very short.

"No gun!" Hal thought. "Well, this situation demands much heavy thought. Perhaps I can yet bluff this bird out. So saying, and so thinking, I'll just pull up over him and see how he acts. Chances are, he'll think more of his own neck than he does of getting that 'chute. I know I would! Many, many times! Well here goes right over his tail!"

When Hal pulled up to ride the other's tail the tail came with him. His eyes were so badly askew that his idea of distance was worse than a French innkeeper's idea of money values, that is, when the Yankee was spending. His propeller chewed through the Hun's rudder, and his stout Spad landing gear carried away the enemy's elevators and stabilizer, and there was a great and glorious shower of assorted shavings. Without a rudder, elevators or stabilizer, a plane has only one direction. Down! And right now. Spinning, too.

Hal knew that the enemy had gone. He knew, too, that his own propeller was pretty well gone. Upon striking, it had shattered. He cut his switch, started down, and shot a glance to the altimeter.

"One thousand feet." He knew a great joy when he learned that. "What would any one do with more than a thousand feet? Why you could teach a major how to land in a thousand feet. Now, where's that summer fallow? I'm going back to the farm, and right now!"

He located the yellow field, back at the river's edge and a few kilometers upwind and behind him.

"Wonder if I can stretch a glide into that fallow?" he questioned. "I'll try anything! Better men than I have tried and died. Stretching glides is the sport of fools, but I remember wearing the pointed hat when I was a kid at school."

And, thinking along these lines, he flew a half turn and headed back toward the Aisne.

STRETCHING a glide, as Hal knew, was—and still is—very bad business. It fills graves. Each plane has a certain, definite gliding angle; and each type of plane has a different amount of ability, when put into a motorless glide. Beyond the prescribed distance it is not wise to force a plane's flat headway. It just can't be done, that's all! You'll "fall off on a wing," spin and crash every time. Down! Straight ahead and down! That's the thing to do if you want to go ahead with the fun of living. Put her into a tree, hang her on the telegraph wires, drape her across a dozen buildings, but never change your direction. Straight ahead, retain gliding speed, and down, down, down!

And each type of plane glides at a different speed; a different angle and a different speed. That is why they train the student flyer on as many types as possible. Otherwise, he might be an ace on one plane and a dirty deuce in handling all others.

"How this baby goes back to Mother Earth," Hal mused as the snug, heavy Spad settled into a fast, steep plunge. "This 220 sure has an Otis gliding angle—straight down and express to the subcellar! Wonder if it wouldn't be better to

slip her down into this field and forget the fallow! But you picked the fallow; and they say, when in Dutch turn into the wind, pick your field, and stick to that field! So, you've made your choice. Don't back down now! The fallow it is, come hell or high water!"

The high water won out, carried the day and gathered in Hal Cole—Summer Fallow Hal Cole.

His stretched glide failed to carry Hal into the yellow field, but his crashing, rolling momentum—and there was a plenty of crashing and rolling and momentum—did the trick. For a minute his head was swimming and he stopped philosophizing. Hal was out—out cold and still. Knocked for a long row of whirling worlds!

WHEN he came to, the ground crew of the balloon outfit had him nicely couched on a section of his lower left wing.

"All wet," Hal remarked when he began to know enough to know that he was all wet. "Signey, good old Signey. The gem of the ocean."

"You're not in Signey, soldier," a voice told him.

"Not in Signey?" he questioned. "All wet, and not in old Signey? Must be in the summer fallow."

"Summer fallow? Where do you think you are, bo? Back in the old États-Unis?" another asked.

"The summer fallow down near the river," Hal murmured. "Did I make that field of fallow?"

"That yaller field ain't no field in fallow, bo. That there is a mess of neck deep, yaller back water, and you made it all jake! We'll say you did! Lucky we were able to yank you out."

"Not fallow?" Hal sat up and looked around. "You boys tell me that that field isn't fallow?"

"Last week," one of the crew explained, "the engineers blew out the banks of the river to make approaches to a pontoon bridge. The water, at the time, was pretty high and had all this low ground flooded. Well the blasting made all the water oily and the yellow mess backed up in here. That's why we were flying our kite over the yellow. It was good camouflage, made the bag hard to see."

"But this Hun saw it," Hal remarked. "I got him, didn't I?"

"Aviator, we'll say you did There's one gone gosling that'll never see his father in the Fatherland."

"And the 'chutes? How about the boys on the 'chutes?"

"One was creased, but both got down jake. And you're a made man if ever there was one."

"If I'm a made man," Hal deprecated, "I'd sure hate to see a wreck. How do you figure I'm a made man?"

"Well, there were two who didn't jump from that balloon."

"What kind of a gang party was that? Four in one basket?"

"Well, you see, this neck of the woods was supposed to be nice and quiet. So, today, General Disability—by the way, aviator, do you like staff officers?"

"Hell, no "

"Very well, then we can talk. Well, the general and his aide came up here to get a medal winning view of the war, to see the thing first hand, as it were. All morning, the observers had seen nary a Hun plane, and the sky was so empty that they could see clear into Berlin where the American Welfare Warworkers were already gathering and hogging the park benches in Thiergarten. Things looked so safe and easy that the general and his aide, after taking a dozen pictures standing near the basket, went aloft. Shortly after that, seeing you come along in a 220, and free lance, we forgot the bag and didn't see the Hun when he arrived from nowhere.

"One of the observers, to point the way, stepped off with his white ally. The aide, being game, followed. But the general, having his chest heavily loaded with self-awarded medals, was afraid to trust the important weight to a parachute. Instead, he picked up the telephone and put in a call for Washington.

"As a result of the general's general disability and a slight touch of buck fever, the other observer would not quit the old boy in his hour of greatest chagrin. And what I mean, the old boy was chagrined. A general hates lonesomeness, and now he says that the aide and observer deserted, quit him under fire and in an hour of great danger. You see, something must be done. Some one must be burnt. A court martial is in order. And if you had failed to do your stuff—"

"Don't knock me," Hal begged. "If I'd known that there was a general in that basket the Hun would have been aided and abetted in his good intention."

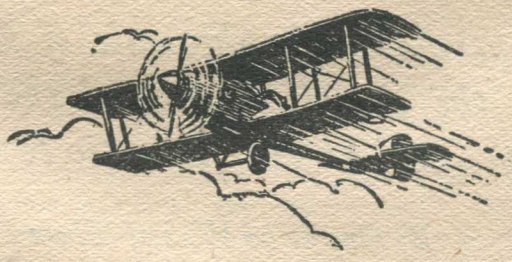
"If you hadn't done your stuff the Hun would have cleaned up the 'chutes, then gone back to polish off the general. And the general knows it. He's gone into town to change clothes, but before he went he left word to have you report. You are made."

"If you were a poor, struggling A. W. O. L., trying to get along in the world, would you want to swap yarns with any general, under any circumstances?" Hal asked.

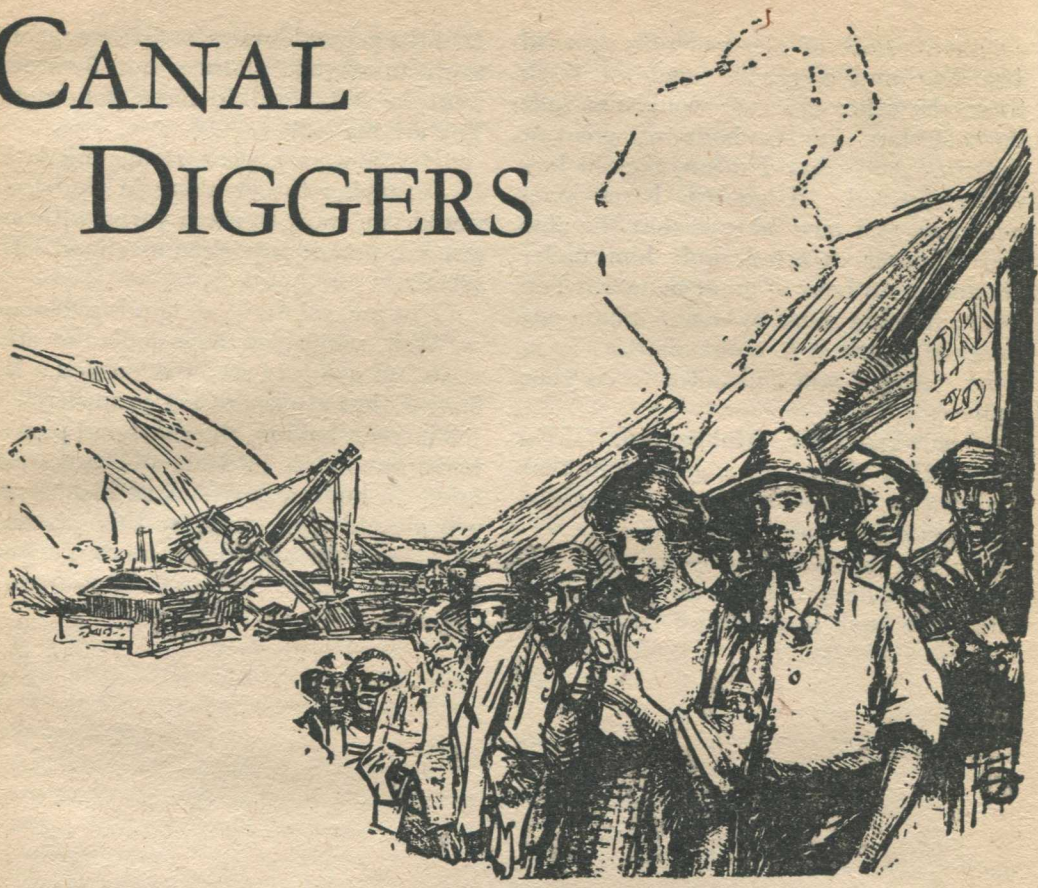
"Not me, soldier!" all hands avouched.

"Well, while you boys look the other way, I'm going to step out on you. But first, is that a piece of my propeller?"

The man holding the shattered piece of wood handed it to Hal. "Thanks," he said. "I know a guy back at Field 8 who will give his eye teeth for this souvenir. So long, now and don't anybody peek till I count one hundred. One—two—three . . ."



CANAL DIGGERS



An exceptionally graphic tale of the red, red days in the Canal Zone, and the iron men who helped to join the Atlantic to the Pacific

By One Who Was of Them

EDGAR YOUNG

RIGHT well I remember those days on the Zone. I was at the hot levers of a locomotive crane for months in that red gash at Gatun. I craned a shovel in the nine mile hell's gorge called Culebra. Where at in the cut? The toe of Cucaracha Slide. Under Gold Hill. At Paraiso. At Las Cascadas.

You remember when the P.R.R. used the old location? You remember the big floods that used to come down the Chargres? Remember the roar of the noonday blasts? *Bowie!* Forty car loads of big pete. *Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow!* Blasting stumps where Gatun dam is going to set.

The sticky heat. The sweat. The grease and grime. The pouring rains. The blazing sun. The thousands of men going and coming. The roar and clatter of the big machines. The vivid green

jungle at the edge of the clearings. The big nights in Colon and Panama. Front Street in Colon. A row of saloons and cheap stores fronting the Caribbean.

Bottle Alley running parallel at the rear. Brothels with red lights over the doors. The Navajo. Jessie Burk's. Sadie Smith's. And others. And, farther down the alley, Nigger Row. Dollar a bottle for beer in the big places and in the smaller ones you could rush the can. Well, that's the way it was. The last train leaves at 1 A.M. Stumble out and get on. The sirens will be blowing at seven and you must be on the job.

It was a hard life. We were a few degrees above the equator. Men are not supposed to exert themselves in the tropics. We worked at a frightful pace. The work had to be done. The job was overdue.

And not all men had the brawn to carry through. Didn't Lanky Moore die one morning at the levers of his Bucyrus on the toe of Cucaracha? He had the con but he wouldn't quit. He was the top of list in the *Zone Record* the month before. Imagine that! Scores of racing shovels and his beating 'em out. He with the con. But he quit *that* morning. I saw him reel back and lean against a stanchion with a stream of crimson pouring from his mouth. No saving him. He'd been going on one lung for months.

Didn't Dick Haley die on the deck of a Brown hoist? He was gripping the throttle and slewing lever and they had to pry his fingers loose.

And men went nuts. They had to build three additions to the nut house at Ancon. It's like this: A white man's skin lets the ultraviolet rays come through. They are like X-rays. They sear his brain and nerves. But you fight it and fight it as you carry on. And they didn't conquer the fever until the last. Chronic malaria is no joke. Black water is worse. Old yellow jack and bubonic are something to deal with. A majority of men were sick as they worked. This is true, records to the contrary notwithstanding. They did not report off. The doctors had to go on the job with thermometers to hunt hospital cases.

BUT SOME men went bad under the strain. Three of our best civil engineers became bandits. They turned off the safe of the Panama Banking Company and got through to Colombia with the swag. They are there yet, for Colombia does not extradite to Panama. A rebel province, so she says.

We had murderers and thieves and cheap crooks. And we had our crop of bums. A sick man could get into the hospitals whether working or not. Or get a steamship ticket to the States. The bums were former workers who had given up. Not enough sand in the old craw. No guts. Down and out. Dirty and hairy. Sleeping in the parks. Begging drinks and grub from the workers when they came to town.

They'd catch your eye and they'd sidle over in the bars.

"Can ye stake me to the price of a drink, buddy? Ain't eat in so long I've lost count. Used to work for Jim Adams at Gatun. How long ago? Oh, quite a spell. Ain't been feeling well. Thanks, old man, I won't forget it."

Or if you stopped on the street there'd be one plucking at your sleeve. It made a man feel bad at times. Sure we staked 'em. Always a spig dollar. That would buy twenty drinks of Balboa rum in the native joints. But we hated to see any of our fellows getting down so low. Beg? I've hit the main drag in Seattle, in Frisco, in Chi, in Denver. Beg and keep going. Then you're hoboing. But month after month and year after year in the same place and you're a bum. There's a difference.

And a white bum in a tropical town is lowest of the low. When they keep on being one. When they don't get themselves together and get up and out of it.

SUCH a bum was Goodyear Brown. That's not his name. Sounds something like it. It will do. There were scores of bums. This was just one of them. I ain't queering any one. I'm

watching my P's and Q's.

He hit me for a piece of change one night in Colon. Seedy? Worse than that. On his feet were rope sandals. His cotton breeches were in tatters below the knees. You could see his naked body through the rents in his shirt. He had on a native straw hat with a peaked top and flopping brim. They sold 'em for a dime in the chink stores. And he hadn't shaved his face or had a haircut for months. Thin blond beard hanging on his face, like the face of an ape.

And him standing in the gutter with his hand poked out, smirking, and blinking at me with his pale blue eyes. Wondering if I'm going to stake him. Me and him both about the same age. About twenty-eight. Me with my starched khaki pants and pongee shirt. My Panama hat. My white shoes and my silk socks. My big necktie with a diamond pin in it. And a wad of money in my hip pocket. I'm making big jack and longevity bonus. And you didn't have to work there long to get longevity. Black as niggers we were on the job, but we dressed up when we came to town.

He started shuffling away. Fred Gartrell was in town that night. Hundreds were moving along the street and the roar of hundreds more came from the saloons. Back in Bottle Alley tinny pianos were banging. Fred Gartrell had stopped and watched me stake Goodyear Brown. I turned and he was standing just back of me, grinning.

"That's Goodyear Brown," he vouchsafed, deep in his throat.

He and I shook hands. We hadn't seen each other since 7 P.M. It was about nine then. We hadn't got to going good yet.

"Yeah, that's Goodyear Brown. It shore is a pity, ain't it?"

"I reckon it is," I told him. "There's a ratt of them fellows around here."

And he saw I didn't know who Goodyear was.

"Why, he was up big when I fust come down here. A civilian in charge of Culebra Cut. He come down as a clerk. Worked up fast."

Fred pursed his mouth and blinked at me.

"He's a graduate from Yale. Some Yale men down here tried to get him on his feet. He was too ornery, so they pulled the pin. He ought to be shot."

Yale College in my mind stood high. I state the reason fearfully. Burt L. Standish. I had read *Frank Merriwell* avidly as a boy. Old Eli! The croaking college yell. *Brekka coax! Coax! Coax!* It was thirty years later when I found it in Aristophanes.

A Yale graduate. Ambitious. Competition was strong but he had climbed rapidly. Culebra Cut was the toughest section of the job. He must have had something to make that swift climb. There were Harvard men there, M.I.T. men, V.M.I., Chicago, West Pointers. There were keen non-college men with horse sense and the will to advance.

I squinted and frowned as I puzzled over it. Fred explained:

"His girl in the States married another man. He took a tumble. They set him back and set him back. Last job he worked was foreman over a gang of blacks. He went up and down in four years. I saw him come down but he went up before I got here."

"Hell, what's one girl in the scheme of things!" I told him. "Love 'em and leave 'em. There's a pretty face in every town. What's the use of lettin' a girl put you on the fritz? Let's go back to the Navajo. That long haired jane is stuck on me."

AND TO the Navajo we went. I bought dollar beer for the long haired jane and she pocketed the check and that was O.K. with me. We went from the Navajo to Jessie Burk's and danced with her girls awhile. We were in Sadie Smith's and in the smaller shacks down the Alley. At five minutes to one we were hustling through a side street toward the depot. We stumbled over Goodyear Brown. Flat on his back on the pavement. Drunk as a boiled owl. Mosquitos swarming in a cloud over him.

Fred caught an arm and a leg and I took hold on the other side.

We carried him to a doorway and propped him up in it. His unwashed body was odorous. We left him lolling there unconscious, head on his shoulder, mouth open, a stupefied animal. We had to hurry to make the train.

John Barleycorn did it, say you. Yes and no. Don't blame old John too much. Old John was always more right than wrong. It depends on what you asked of old boy John. Steam beer in Frisco. Big steins in St. Louis. Bourbon in Kentucky. Corn in the mountains of Virginia. Alky in the hobo camps. Dago red. Third rail. I drank in every State of the U. S. and from coast to coast in Canada. Up there they had square face gin and whisky *blanc*. Big glasses on the bar the size of tumblers to drink Canadian Club and Imperial out of. For a dime. You were always welcome in a bar. It was warm in there. Bartenders were a good breed. I never saw a mean one.

The saloons were clubs for us fellows. When prosperous you met the bunch there. Repression vanished. Foot on the rail, elbow on the bar, you talked big about the things nearest to the heart. You made lifetime friends. The crowds, the lights, the smells, the stories and songs, the free lunch and the friendly bartender you called by his first name. John Barleycorn was a friend to the man wanting a good time. One in a thousand drank because he craved the stuff. Some drank to stupefaction so as not to remember things that hurt.

Booze had got Goodyear Brown, but it wasn't the fault of booze. It was the girl back in the States who turned him down. No doubt he had been trying to make good on account of that girl. Chances are he was.

I SAW him a number of times after that. I'd see him shuffling toward me and I'd have a spig dollar all ready so he wouldn't have to ask. It made me ashamed for him. A college man. A man from Yale. Lower down than a native bum. The white man goes lower than a native when he slips. He goes to the very bottom before he stops. And the very bottom in Colon was extremely low.

Fred Gartrell got killed at Gatun. When the concrete began pouring down into the floor of the locks they transferred the shovels and cranes to Culebra Cut. Cucaracha Slide was coming down faster than they could dig it out. They put us with the others on the toe and we began to hold it. We had eighty-four steam shovels there and at Gold Hill. And a bunch of cranes with clam shells and orangepeels.

At night we boiled into Panama City, which was nearest to us. I didn't get over into Colon for about six months. One of the first men I saw on Front Street was Goodyear Brown. He'd had a shave and he had on an eight dollar Palm Beach suit. Collar and tie. And a sailor straw hat. He looked the other way when he met me and I turned and looked back at him. Same old shuffie. Same droop in the shoulders.

I went into Balderach's and had a drink. I had two of them. I asked the bartender in a low tone whether Goodyear Brown was back working on the job. A shovel runner standing next to me heard the question and laughed brazenly. He passed it along and the line of men at the bar roared good naturedly. A fellow broke out of the line and came over and shoved in beside me.

"You asting about Goodyear Brown working? Well, I reckon he ain't never going to work no more. They's a woman keepin' him. What you know about that, eh? What you drinkin'? Balboa rum. Give us two of 'em, Eddie!"

Eddie shoved out the bottle and glasses.

"Yeah, Goodyear's a fancy man now. Woman a-keepin' him. Ain't that the limit? Aye, God, don't that take the cake? What you know about that, hey?"

"One of these Navajo girls take a liking to him?" I asked.

"Navajo, hell! You reckon one of them girls would've noticed him? Hell,

no! Not them. Too classy for the likes of him. It's one of them crib women. You know them little shacks just this side of Nigger Row. It's one of them janes. You been down there? You know that jane named Flo? Flo Kilbourne? Third crib from this end. Green front. Thin faced girl, wears glasses. That's her, aye, God! That's the one that's keepin' Goodyear. What you know about that, hey? Ain't that traveling?"

"I didn't know them girls made more'n enough to keep theirselves," I told him.

"They don't. Reckon the two of 'em just manage to get by. She chases all over town after him. Manages to keep him halfway sober by watching him. She'll be openin' the back door of this here place by and by, peepin' in. Lookin' for her man. Aye, God, ain't that rich?"

LATER I heard she had found Goodyear writhing in the gutter in front of her crib one morning at dawn. She had got him inside and had hurried across to the Zone hospital for a doctor. He was in the hospital for a month and she came to see him. Brought him flowers and fruit. Staked him to money when he got out. She was far down the social scale, it is true. But she wasn't as far down as he was. She had to descend to associate with him.

The girls further up the line cracked jokes about it. Most of them had lovers on the side, good looking fellows who didn't work and hung about the gambling games. Steering men over. Doing a bit of heeling for the gambling games on the side. Slick haired boys with keen eyes, and sneers on their lips. Ready to go through a man's pockets, if he were drunk enough. Pimps we called them. But the girls took pride in them and there was quite a bit of jealousy and fighting about them. Not over Goodyear though. He didn't fill the bill. He wasn't up to the standard.

I saw him several times after that. Timorous. Shunning the Zone men and shunned by them. They had their code. They weren't drinking and hobnobbing with a P.I. Not that he was a real one. Never heard of him steering a man to her crib. But he fell into that class. He was a kept man. But he was physically cleaner and he didn't go on such awful bats. You understand that Flo Kilbourne had actually raised Goodyear up a peg?

In six months it was an old story. You couldn't even get a laugh about it in the bars. Other things were happening. The canal job had got worse. People were saying all over the world that it couldn't be dug. Ministers preached sermons about it. Said God had joined North and South America together and didn't intend for 'em to be separated. Said the fever and plague were visitations He was sending on to us. We bowed our necks and went at it anew. We'd show 'em!

But even at the hectic speed we were going a thing happened that caused a chuckle all over the Zone. Goodyear Brown and Flo Kilbourne got married! Got a license and were united by the American consul in Colon.

Big Ben was craning a shovel next to mine. He told me about it on the job.

"Hey, what you know about it? Was in Colon last night. Heard Goodyear Brown married that gal that was keepin' him. Florie Kilbourne. Yeah, it's so. I ast a number about it. Aye, God, ain't that rich? Tied up due and proper. That's travelin' ain't it? That's pickin' you a wife, ain't it?"

And I heard it again in the washroom of the quarters that night. I heard rough jokes about it for a month. The Zone workers not only knew the bartenders by their first names but they knew the girls by theirs. They made ribald decisions. They reckoned Florie's business had been bad and she had married Goodyear to keep from taking in washing. That she'd kept Goodyear and now he must keep her. Not heartless men these workers. But rough men. Working under a strain. Thinking up something to make the other fellow laugh. Brawny fellows. Narrow between the eyes. Thick chested. Sturdy.

And a cackle went around when we

heard that Goodyear had actually been seen asking for a job. He started in at Cristobal and he tramped from town to town. There were plenty of jobs. You know how it is when a fellow like that comes along. You look down and away and tell him you sure are sorry but there ain't a thing. That you'll keep him in mind. That you'll let him know. Got too many as it is. May have to lay off a few.

IT WAS a month before he caught on. Jim Adams had been transferred to Pedro Miguel. The first job Goodyear got was tending a switch. Jim Adams had a heart as big as a horse. Jim was a T.T.T. and he'd been all over. He came there on the tramp and made good. He just couldn't turn a man down. He put Goodyear to tending a switch. It wasn't much of a job. A negro could have handled it. It was a silver roll job, but Jim sneaked Goodyear onto the gold roll at beginner's wages. A hundred and twenty-five. Not much money. I was getting three seventy-five myself, and longevity.

It was a small world down there. It was a world forty-seven miles long and about a mile wide. All of us saw one another now and then. Goodyear Brown's wife was waiting outside the paycar when he drew his first pay. She was sort of hidden off to one side with her face turned away. He gave her the money and she put it in a little black handbag. He went back on the job.

She met the paycar every time for months and months. We joked about it among ourselves at first. Finally it got to be an old song. A lot of men had their families down and we heard Goodyear had been moved by the quartermaster three times. There were four family houses. You know how womenfolks are. Bitter. They hardly give another woman a chance after she's been down. But families came and went. The job was the big thing. Men died and quit and went crazy from the heat. 1907 and 1908 passed. I got to be an old-timer myself.

Goodyear Brown was working right along. Jim Adams gave him a better job. I noticed him come in the paycar one day, and happened to notice that his wife wasn't waiting outside.

Goodyear fell off the wagon more than once. I remember the negro in our quarters came into my room one night and snapped the light on. It was 2 A.M. It had been raining all night. Goodyear Brown's wife was peering in the door. She came over when I sat up in bed. She was as wet as a drowned rat and her hair was hanging about her face.

"You know Mr. Brown, don't you? I'm afraid something's happened to him. He ain't been home yet. Do you reckon you could help me find him? I've phoned Panama and Colon. I've been down in New Culebra and over to Paraiso."

It sent shivers over me to see a woman under such a strain. I told her to go home and I'd have Goodyear there in an hour. I got into my slicker and went over and roused up Glassby. He ran Colonel Goethals' railroad motor car. I got him to run me to Balboa Junction over the I.C.C. and we went into Panama the other four miles on the main line.

We found Goodyear Brown in the back room of Jew Sam's, drunk as a boiled owl; and we had to get a hack to get him down to the siding where we'd parked the motor car. It was cracking day when we lugged him home between us.

There were a couple or three other times I knew about personally. And we and Florie getting him home. She'd get him sobered up and on the job next day. I saw them together on the train now and then, or saw one or the other of them in the commissary or post office. People had forgotten. You didn't see the Zone women give her that look. The men didn't nudge one another and crack a joke about him. It's that way when things are moving fast like they were on the Zone.

MAYBE you're thinking I'm going to say that Goodyear went right on up the line and just about pushed the colonel off his perch. Nope. Wish I could. Jim Adams promoted him, but

there was a whole lot of jobs between tending a switch and being foreman again. That's where he left off when he went on the blink.

It took him two years to work up as high as a foreman again. And maybe Jim favored him a bit to do that. Maybe not. He had plenty of savvy. So he was working as foreman right on the end of the job, just one foreman out of scores. Not much of a job. Not quite as good as I had. I know he was working as foreman, for I saw his gang working with the other gangs, helping place the dynamite bombs in Gamboa Dike when they were about to blow it up.

The colonel had picked Jim Adams for that job. It was a big earth dam, eight hundred feet long right across the east end of Culebra Cut. The waters of Gatun Lake were fifty feet deep pressing against it. It had to come up out of there at one time. And Jim had eight or ten gangs locating those blasts. A whole trainload of dynamite. Maybe two trainloads. A gosh awful lot. All wired together to two wires and the two wires running two miles along the top of the cut where the button would be pressed.

The pressing of that button would wind up the job. The water would race down that nine miles of cut when the dike went out. The gates of Pete Miguel Locks would stop it but beyond there the channel was clear on to the Pacific. One little jump down at Mira Flores, and that was all fixed.

Yeah, boy! Gamboa dike came up out of there that morning!

Blooie! And the whole earth shook. Red flags were up and the Zone cops held the crowds two miles back. That big dam of earth turned to smoke and dust as it soared upward. A vertical wall of water was shoved backward and came forward again. Pouring through the cut, all of us watching, Waiting a few moments as it poured along. The walls were solid at Bas Obispo. They were O.K. at Empire. Some said she'd cave where the slides had been pouring down like glaciers for years at Culebra and Gold Hill and Paraiso. We had dug into the hot lava of a volcano at Cucaracha. The foaming flood poured onward. The walls held. We had won!

The sirens atop the power houses were already roaring. Coarse and shuddering. I can hear them now. They had tied the ropes down. Five hundred locomotives began to bellow their varied notes. The steam shovels and cranes, standing in rows on sidings along the top of the cut, chimed in. Men were screaming to one another and pounding one another's backs. Mighty glad. Jubilant. Maybe you don't know how we felt? We had joined the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. We had done the job for Uncle Sam. You blame us for feeling proud?

SO THE job was over at last. We scattered to the ends of the earth. I met Zone men in Brazil and in the Argentine. Met them down around the Straits of Magellan. Knew 'em at sight. Wearin' their brass checks for watch fobs. Glad to see one another. Always glad. Like belonging to the same lodge, only more so. The more time passed the more glad we were to meet up. People kind of forgot about us. But we didn't forget. We remembered.

A bunch of us finally located here in New York. We heard of this one and that one and the other one in New York or over in Jersey or up the State a bit. The colonel? Well, he was head of a big company on Wall Street. Some one got the idea of having a banquet. Just among ourselves. It took us about six months to get the thing arranged.

The colonel was strong for it and he helped out. One of our bunch had got to be president of a railroad out West. Pittsburg and Chicago sent a few. You'd think maybe we could find a couple of thousand around over the country. Or a thousand. Or five hundred. Nope. There ain't so many left as you might think. A hundred and eighty-three. That was the most we could find.

We had that little banquet hall on the second floor of the Waldorf-Astoria. Checked our hats and coats on the ground

floor and walked up. Did we have a time? We had one of the greatest times I ever had in my life. All of us shaking hands, and the colonel going around and shaking hands with all of us and asking us where we had worked. I ain't goin' to tell you how much the old colonel was affected by it. That old boy used to be hard boiled in his time.

And then the big feed. All of us at each table talking to one another and asking questions. Good as it was, the grub gummed up the works for a while. We wanted to hear about the old times on the Zone. I happened to turn over the bill of fare and looked on the back to see who was going to talk. An old old-timer was to tell us about the very start in 1903. Others were listed to remind us of various phases during the job.

Then I got quite a start. "Blowing up the Dike" was the last heading on the list. And opposite that title for a talk was the name Goodyear Brown. Knowin' what I knew, you couldn't blame me for peering all around the tables to locate him. I had shaken hands with the whole bunch and was just beginning to remember a few whom I hadn't recognized. And I picked him out, eating very sedately at a table over against a wall at the rear of the room. Scissor tail and boiled shirt on. Same receding chin. Same thin forehead. A bit gray. But his eyes were keener. His mouth was more set when he got through eating and sat there with it snapped together, looking here and there over the room.

Half of us were in full dress. Others in business clothes. You could suit yourself. We were a right prosperous looking bunch. Wish I could say right here that Goodyear Brown had worked himself up and was at the time a professor in Yale. Maybe he was a chief clerk somewhere down on Wall Street. A hundred a week or something like that. I ain't goin' to say just what. Making good in a middling sort of way.

FROM the old-timer we heard about the early days. From another we heard about the slides. One fellow spoke about Gatun Gash. We roared and cheered. You could have heard us clear out on the street. We wouldn't let 'em finish. We made 'em keep on talking when they tried to sit down. We asked them questions they had to answer.

Finally it worked around to Goodyear and he made his talk. Did right well. He remembered just how the thing had been figured to blow up Gamboa Dike. We sure gave him a good hand. The banquet broke up soon after. It was a quarter after three. Every one was up on his feet, talking, when I slipped out. I live out in the sticks, an hour by subway. No telling when a man would get home if he didn't make a quick start.

I walked down the stairs in high spirits. In the lobby I glimpsed a lady sitting bolt upright in a chair. Some of the lights had been turned off and they had let the heat run down. It was a bit dim and a bit chilly. I knew one of our fellows had brought his wife along and she'd been waiting there all that time. Our banquet was a he-man affair. She had had a long wait. I was thinking about it when I went over and roused up the check boy to get my hat and coat. While he was fumbling for them I glimpsed Goodyear Brown, coming down the stairs. The lady got up to meet him and then I knew who she was. They stood just behind me as I waited at the window. I heard her eager whisper. Couldn't help hearing.

"Did you do all right?"

And his murmured reply with a bit of pride in it—

"Yes, I did better than I expected."

I don't know what effect fifteen years had had on her. I was looking at the carpet when I turned.

A moment later I was in the street, heading toward Broadway where my subway station is.

SIX BOTTLES *of* RUM

and how they instigated the first blow struck for a people's freedom

CAPTAIN Abraham Whipple lolled comfortably in his chair, gazing with idle satisfaction out of the open tavern windows. The warm June air drifted into the bright little parlor of the Roebuck, rich with scents that were perfume to the nostrils of a Rhode Island seaman. From the brown beaded glass in his strong hairy fingers rose a richer perfume. Ever and anon he lifted the strong Havana rum to his commanding nose and sniffed luxuriously.

"'Tis most too good to drink!" he sighed, and sipped meditatively; then, wholly surrendering, he tipped back his untidy white wig, blinked his eyes rapidly once or twice, and the glass descended, empty.

He straightened, as if jolted by the stiff drink. His eyes watered and his wide lips smacked. Smiling approval at his host, he said:

"The flower o' Cuban cane! I hope it paid no duty, Tom?"

Thomas Greene cleared his throat apologetically.

"Here's the jug, Captain. Help yourself. The best in the house is none too good for you. Aye, the duty's paid. Fear God and obey the king; that's the Roebuck's motto."

Whipple's good humored eyes became stern. For a moment his mouth set; then he relaxed and laughed in a gusty, whole hearted manner.

"A fine house, the Roebuck, with a good profit in it," he observed.

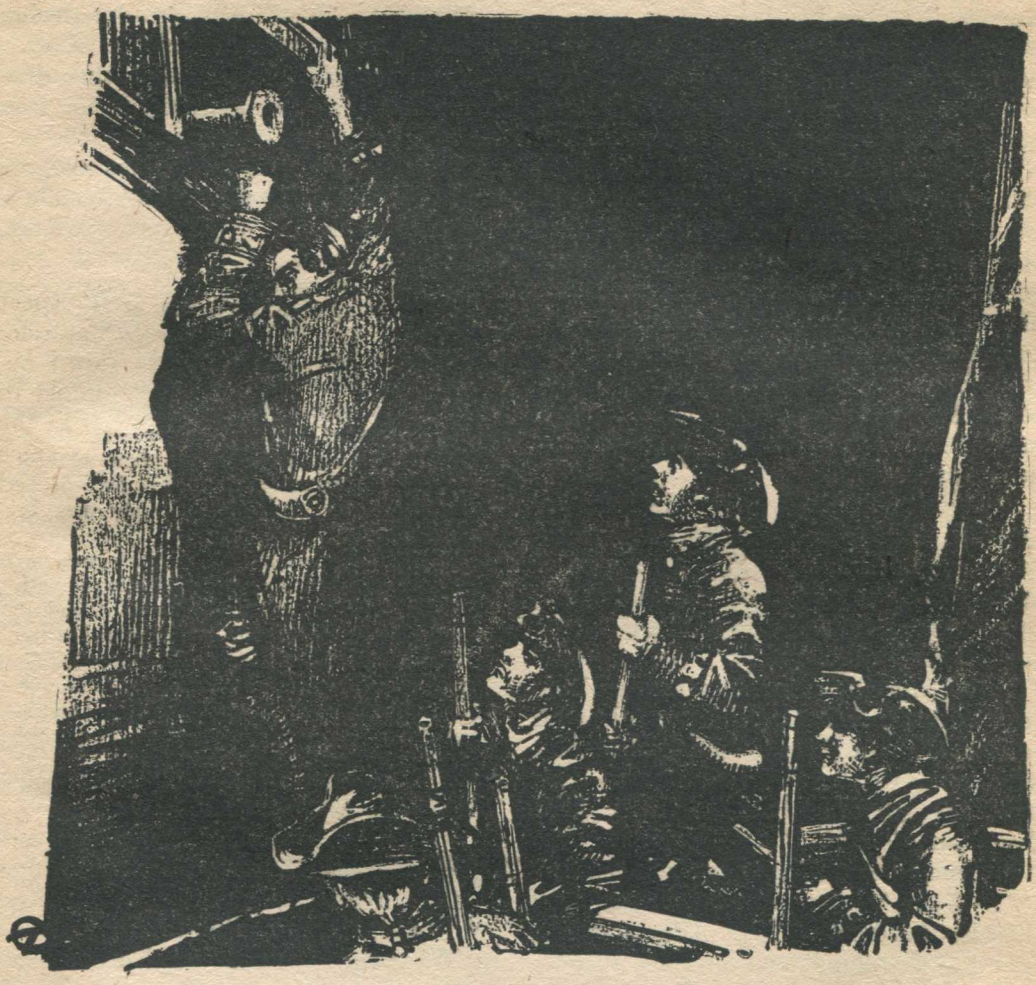
His glance wandered again to the open windows, purposely wide to admit the sweet sea air and the crisp blue prospect of Newport harbor. The inn garden, bright with spring color, ran down between the walls of warehouses almost to the shore, its fragrance mingling with the reek of fish, the tang of salt, the spice of greased hempen rope, and of stored rum aging in the wood. Slender masts, laced with the tracery of spar and cordage, stood out against the soft June sun.

"A fine house!" Captain Whipple repeated. "I blame you not for your prudence, Tom. But—" looking narrowly at the young innkeeper—"at times I wonder how far obedience to the king agrees with a man's duty to this colony."

"MY MAN has better reason for obedience than some folk!" sounded a new voice, full and young, and not without music, though its dominant note was almost too decisive.

The interruption brought Whipple to his feet with a jerk. He wheeled and bowed low to the young woman standing in the taproom door. She was undeniably handsome and stood a bit statuesquely, seeming not unconscious that she was good to the eye. A fitted bodice, finished at the neck with net and Spanish lace, above a flounced skirt of flowered taffeta, set off her wholesome figure. An apron of crisp India lawn lay like a streamer of white mist over the front of the gay skirt, with a charming effect of daintiness. Across her flushed cheek floated a wisp of wavy, coppery hair, belligerently, like the glint in her expressive brown eyes as she fixed them on the captain. Recognizing storm signals, the sailor took in a reef.

A Novelette by ARTHUR GILCHRIST BRODEUR



"Aye, aye, Mistress Greene. With Sam Dunn making the Cuba run, and the king's sea dogs ever a-sniff for smuggled liquor, obedience to the Navigation Laws is wise," he conceded. "And speaking of liquor, I'll have another tot, Tom, if Abigail will oblige."

The young woman, her anger soothed almost as quickly as it had flared, hastened to fill his glass.

"Drink that, Captain, and be glad no king's ship took it from my brother's hold before it could reach your lips. You've been a good friend to Tom and me; but I'll have no man talking treason to my menfolk!" Her tone was still tart, but she smiled down at him kindly. Then, her normal cheerfulness ascending, with a snatch of hummed song she ran to the garden door and stepped down among the roses. Here she paused a moment, gazing out to sea under shaded eyes. The next moment she was fairly flying down the garden path to the shore.

"She can't have sighted the *Loyalty!*" Whipple exclaimed, his gaze toward the open window following her flight. " 'Twould be a marvelous swift voyage."

Tom Greene, too, looked out over the smooth harbor, out toward Goat

Island and the Eastern Passage beyond.

"She's always looking for the schooner," he answered, "long before it's due. She worries for her brother. Aye, there's some craft coming in, but I can't make her out yet."

Whipple watched him as he stood there, and watched with approving eyes. Tom Greene was a fine figure of a lad, tall, thin, wide shouldered. A shrewd merchant for all his scant years and, the older man reflected with satisfaction, a good seaman too; better than most. There were few native born Rhode Islanders in this stormy year of 1772 who could not handle their own craft in all conditions of sea and weather. A good man, Tom Greene. If the lad were only not so prudent . . .

Captain Whipple's brows drew together, then slowly smoothed themselves out. He stirred in his chair, took another swig of the smooth rum and sat up determinedly. His broad hands fumbled in his coat skirts.

"She'll not be coming in again—" he jerked his head toward the door through which Mistress Greene had gone—"till she knows what yonder vessel is. I've something to show ye, Tom. A letter from Sam Adams."

Greene's boyish face clouded.

"I—I don't know that I ought to hear it," he faltered. "Mr. Adams is no friend to the king."

The seaman stared at him in hurt surprise.

"Have I ever got ye in trouble lad?" he protested. "I'm a friend of yours—eh? And Sam Adams is a friend of mine. I only ask ye to hear what he says. It won't hurt ye. Ye can disapprove if ye like. Surely you're patriot enough to feel interest in the welfare of your own colony?"

Tom reddened.

"I'm a patriot; don't doubt that. But I'm no rebel. I obey the king's law. So does my brother-in-law, Sam Dunn. I grant the duties on tea and rum are unfair, but I have faith the king will do us justice once he understands our feelings. His Majesty's ships of war have never interfered with me, and I mean to see that they never have cause to."

Whipple nodded his big head, agreeing. He stole a glance to make sure Mistress Greene was still out of earshot, then drew a snuff stained, tar smeared paper from his pocket.

"It came to hand three days ago, the twenty-ninth of May," he explained, and began to read:

> "Highly Esteemed Sir:
>
> "You are aware of the seizure of Mr. John Hancock's sloop, the *Liberty*, by His Majesty's protective officers. I fear your own colony may have similar outrage to anticipate, now that Admiral Montagu has sent one of his captains to Narraganset Bay. It were well, therefore, that all who love liberty in these colonies should take thought what they may do to avert such wrongs, if indeed they may be averted.
>
> "Tidings reach me that the king purposes to replace all magistrates in the colonies with his own creatures, and to make them dependent for their stipends on the Crown, instead of the Colonial assemblies. This will rouse deepest indignation in patriotic hearts. I charge you look to it that the men of Rhode Island understand what tyrannies they may soon be called upon to suffer. It is now plain to me that nothing short of absolute severance from the British Crown will save our liberties."

WHIPPLE shot a shrewd glance at his host and thrust the letter carefully back into his pocket.

"What think you of that, Tom?"

Thomas Greene stood, open mouthed, appalled.

"It's rank treason, sir!" he gasped.

Whipple chuckled.

"Aye, so 'tis. But 'tis truth as well. Has not the *Gaspee* taught ye that?"

"But—but—" the young man stuttered.

"Would your loyalty and your steadfast obedience to the law help ye, if Lieutenant Duddingston took it into his head to overhaul your own schooner and send your wife's brother to Boston for trial?" he goaded.

"To Boston?"

"Aye, to Boston. Admiral Montagu, commanding the king's ships in Boston

harbor, has given orders that any ship taken with smuggled goods *anywhere in American waters* shall be tried for condemnation, and her master indicted for violating the Navigation Laws, before a Boston court. That means a naval court, with the judge and jury British officers."

Greene thought this over, his eyes troubled.

"That's rank injustice," he reluctantly admitted, "and it would be tyranny indeed to replace our magistrates with Englishmen. But it hasn't happened yet, and we have no right to resist till it does. As for my ship, she never carries smuggled goods. I would not permit it, nor is Sam Dunn the kind of master to consent to it. While we obey the law, we're safe. And we obey the law."

Whipple lifted the jug.

"I'll just have another drop of this rare rum, lad, while it's to be had," he sighed happily. "It's in my mind that the *Gaspee* will put an end to your trade in it before long."

His palate savored the drink, but not too lingeringly. He was pressed on by what he had to say and the possible unexpected return of Abigail.

"Safe, say you?" he resumed. "Just because ye're law abiding? Was the *Seekonk* safe when Duddingston boarded her? And the fleet of market boats, bound for Providence with vegetables—vegetables, mind—that he gobbled up off Warwick Neck? What law had Farmer Brenton's hogs broken, that the *Gaspee* sent a landing party to butcher? D'ye think they carried a cargo of smuggled swill?"

"TOM, TOM! 'Tis the *Loyalty!*" Her pretty brown eyes bright with excitement, Mistress Greene ran into the room and seized her husband by the hands.

"Come!"

He dragged back, his slower nature not falling in readily with her precipitancy.

"Nay, but you must come. And you, Captain Whipple. 'Tis my brother Sam, with Tom's fine vessel!"

Now she had caught them both with her joy and bore them off to the garden. Standing between them among the flowers, she pointed off over the crisping water. Peering out over her head, Tom laughed, then kissed the back of her neck, wholly for the present in her mood. Whipple smiled to himself, well pleased with their young happiness.

"'Tis the *Loyalty*, sure enough," he agreed.

All three watched the clean lined schooner come about for the narrow passage and point her bows for Newport inner harbor.

Greene laughed triumphantly.

"There she is! Safe home, Captain. I see no *Gaspee* after her."

Abraham Whipple fished once more in the deep pocket of his brown velvet coat, and drew out a glass. Dusting snuff off the lens, he carefully fitted it to his eye.

"Ye do not, then?" he barked. "By God, I do!"

Abigail stifled a scream, snatched the glass from her guest's hands and tremblingly raised it to her own eyes. Her husband stared over the water; then, swinging on Whipple, frowned at him in disbelief.

"There's nothing behind her," he muttered.

"There is! There is!" cried Mistress Abigail, her voice choked with fear.

Captain Whipple laughed deep in his throat.

"Fear not, lass. The *Gaspee's* all too far behind to catch him; a bare line, scarce visible without the glass Sam will anchor off Custom House Wharf, declare his cargo and pay duty and bring along the papers to flourish under Duddingston's nose, should he follow him here. The Britisher will not dare argue the matter ashore. We've still courts and colonial judges, and even British naval officers are subject to colonial law as soon as they set foot ashore."

They went, depressed, back into the inn parlor. Sam Dunn would be there, they knew, as soon as possible after

getting the custom stamp on his papers. He was safe now; but the *Gaspee had chased him.*

They talked the matter over in low, anxious voices.

"It's rank bullying!" Tom declared. "No suspicion ever attached to the *Loyalty.*"

"Duddingston suspects every American," Whipple observed complacently.

"Perhaps, Tom," his wife spoke doubtfully, "he didn't know she was your schooner. Lieutenant Duddingston's a stranger in these waters."

"He's making himself devilishly at home," quoth Whipple.

AN HOUR later Captain Samuel Dunn swaggered into the Roebuck with a fine nautical roll, puffing at a six inch Cuban *cigarro.* He was a short, thick set man, with a bluff red face. Instead of a wig, he wore his own hair, clubbed and powdered.

"Home again!" he roared, the habit of the sea still on him.

Straightway his sister's arms were round his neck, while Whipple and Tom Greene stood by, waiting to shake his hand.

"Steady, Abbie girl!" Sam panted. "Ye've a hug like a Brazil sarpent. Aye, Tom—" speaking over his sister's shoulder—"a rare voyage and a full hold."

Reluctantly releasing him, Mistress Greene ran to fetch food, and poured her brother a glass of rum. He drained it and reached for the jug.

"King's ship chased me," he announced, wiping the liquor from his lips with two feet of China red silk. "Never got within cannon shot. Must 'a' thought I carried queer goods."

Whipple cawed:

"She meant to take ye, queer goods or not. She's the *Gaspee,* stationed here since you sailed, and commanded by a young martinet anxious to make a reputation. Look out for her when ye take the *Loyalty* to sea again."

Captain Sam Dunn puffed his cheeks in good natured scorn, the while patting the pocket of his sea coat, which gave forth a crackling sound.

"I've got full acknowledgment from the customs. No ramrod in a red coat can lay a finger on me."

Suddenly Tom Greene sprang to his feet and strode to the door, signing for silence while he listened.

"Some one coming—in a hurry!" he warned.

Feet were indeed clattering over the cobbles of Thames Street. Each instant they beat louder, till they rang at the very door. A young man burst in, red and panting, his neat coat dusty and his dainty curled wig all awry. He stumbled over the threshold and fell sprawling on the floor at Greene's feet. It was the junior clerk from the customs.

"The *Gaspee's* put a crew aboard the *Loyalty!*" he gasped, as he scrambled to his feet. "The port collector told him the duty was paid, but Lieutenant Duddingston bade him mind his own business. The British are marching hither now—a landing party—ten men!"

Tom Greene and Captain Whipple stared at each other, while Mistress Greene excitedly rolled and unrolled the corner of her apron. Sam Dunn alone was undisturbed, his red face redder with anger, but unafraid.

"I've a clear acknowledgment," he insisted, his voice still loud. "I'll make that young whipper-snapper curse the day he was whelped if his rascals have set their dirty feet on my deck."

Abraham Whipple checked him.

"Best take it quietly, Sam. If the British come they'll have guns. Is the sheriff in town, William?"

The customs clerk shook his head.

"He's out fishing, sir."

"The worse for us. Well, while he fishes, I'll cut bait."

The worthy Captain Whipple withdrew himself from the scene, disappearing behind the bar.

From far down the street came the rhythmic tramp of feet. Mistress Greene's cheeks grew white; her husband paled and flushed by turns. The customs

clerk suddenly broke the silence:

"Lord! They mustn't find me here!"

He dashed through the parlor into the garden and scurried to the shelter of the nearest warehouse.

NEARER and nearer came the tramping feet, till the head of a file of men halted in the street outside. An officer bustled importantly into the taproom. Turning, he snapped out an order, and the butts of ten muskets clashed on the pavement. He strode forward, stared at the tavern folk with open scorn and bowed grudgingly.

"I am Lieutenant William Duddingston," he volunteered stiffly, "in command of His Majesty's schooner *Gaspee*. I am come to arrest the person of Captain Samuel Dunn of the schooner *Loyalty*, suspected of carrying smuggled rum and sugar, in contravention of the Navigation Acts and Orders in Council. Is Captain Dunn present?"

The Newport skipper eyed his antagonist angrily, with the deep water sailor's contempt for youth and influential incompetence in uniform. Lieutenant Duddingston was the typical London spark—a mere boy of twenty, most dandified in perfectly tailored uniform and deftly turned wig. His silver buttons were polished to mirror brightness; the very buckles on his pointed shoes twinkled. Yet there was something about him that compelled respect—the healthy ruddiness of the sporting gentleman, and a keen, hard glitter of the eye that bespoke a steadfastness of purpose, and fearlessness.

Sam stepped proudly forward.

"I'm Captain Dunn, and here's my answer to you, sir!"

He flourished a bundle of papers and handed them over with conscious righteousness. Duddingston took them and ran an unwilling eye over them; then, folding them up with strong white hands, he thrust them into his own pocket.

"Prepare to come with me, sir," he ordered. "Your vessel is already in charge of a prize crew. Complaint will be lodged against you in Boston."

Abigail gasped. Tom Greene made a gesture of protest and stepped angrily forward; but Dunn, thoroughly roused, forestalled him.

"I'll thank you to give me back my papers!" he thundered. "You've no right to them. If you read them with half an eye, you'd have seen they're all square. I'm no smuggler."

The lieutenant's lip curled.

"All square!" he sneered. "They account for the sugar and barreled rum in your hold; but how about the six bottles I found in your cabin, with no entry for them on your manifest? Eh? Now will you come along quietly, or shall I have my men drag you?"

Dunn's mouth opened.

"Bottles?" he gasped. "Six bottles? It's a shipmaster's privilege to carry twice that much for the needs of his crew."

"Bosun!" Duddingston shouted, turning on his heel. "Cheever! Take this man in charge."

Two seamen sprang into the room; thick set fellows, in the snug jackets and clubbed pigtails of the service. One carried a cutlas and pistols; the other held a musket on the furious Dunn.

"Out with him!" Duddingston commanded. "I've no time to waste on rebels."

At these words Abraham Whipple thrust his round face above the bar. It was a very red face now, and his eyes were shot with red; but so poor was the light on that side of the room that his head seemed like a great round moon, with features blurred.

"By the Eternal, sir! 'Tis such as you that makes rebels!" he bellowed. "Ye pretend to be a gentleman, don't ye? I'm a gentleman too, and have been a king's officer myself. Ye may be acting in the name of the law, but 'tis lawless work ye're doing. If ye're half a man ye'll measure swords with a man that outranks you twenty years and leave peaceful citizens alone."

Duddingston turned away, not deigning to notice the old man, save for a jibe flung over his shoulder:

"If you've been a naval officer as you claim, you'll know that a British seaman on duty recognizes no private quarrels. Be thankful I have no authority for your arrest, Mr. Whatever's-your-name."

He turned just once and spoke to Tom Greene, with freezing courtesy:

"I believe you are owner of the *Loyalty*. I am informed you are a prosperous and loyal citizen. I am quite ready to believe you ignorant of your captain's lawless conduct, and will not hold you to answer. But I warn you that your schooner will be condemned."

Sam Dunn's temper, too far tried, burst all restraint. He swung one fist at the officer's face. Seaman Cheever, dropping his musket with a crash, caught the upraised arm just as the boatswain thrust a tricky foot behind Dunn's knees.

"No, ye don't!" Cheever jeered, as Sam sprawled on his back.

DUDDINGSTON was now thoroughly angry himself, and the knowledge of the injustice he was committing made him all the more furious at the attempted resistance. He fixed a sardonic glance on the still struggling Dunn, whose naturally red head now glinted fierily through the cloud of powder that his fall had knocked out of it. Emotion had brought the blood to the American's forehead and made an old scar stand out plainly.

"Ha!" the Englishman cried. "Brown eyes, red hair and a scar! We've made a better haul than we knew, Bosun. This Captain Dunn is your old friend Sam Briggs, deserter from his Majesty's brigantine *Dauntless*. We'll give him brig and bilboes till he becomes quiet, and then he'll scrub decks on the *Gaspee* till we can turn him over for punishment."

Abigail Greene hurled herself at Duddingston, all her proud wrath aroused.

"He's no such thing!" she contradicted defiantly. "He's my born brother, born and raised here in Newport, known to every soul in the colony. You daren't touch him! You shan't touch him under my roof!" And she rushed at the officer, pushing him violently toward the door.

Duddingston staggered back, disengaging himself. Again she rushed at him, with another onslaught of strong palms. He kept his feet with difficulty.

"Calm yourself, madam!" he commanded, dodging her next rush successfully.

Cheever and the boatswain interposed themselves and their prisoner between the lady and their officer. Tom Greene took his wife firmly by the arm; but she was not aware of it, as she stood there with tears of baffled rage starting to her eyes. Duddingston daintily pulled and brushed at his disordered coat.

"If you give us any trouble, madam, we'll have to take your husband too," he threatened.

Abigail Greene breathed deeply, wrenched herself free from her husband's grasp, and with a last defiant fling of her head, sank to the floor, sobbing helplessly.

At a signal from Duddingston, the two sailors half carried, half dragged Dunn into the street. The landing party closed in behind, and they all marched stolidly away.

Captain Whipple stood, thunderstruck, behind the bar.

"Impressed!" he muttered. "A free born subject impressed aboard a king's ship, under false charges!"

Then suddenly rage overpowered him. He rushed after the procession.

"You ruddy bellied body snatcher!" he bellowed, shaking a ponderous fist at the lieutenant's slim, straight back. "Keep your dirty feet on your own deck after this, for the first time ye touch land in this colony I'll have a court officer with a writ after ye!"

A thin laugh drifted back to him from the head of the marching file. Not a head had turned, nor so much as a gesture answered his threat. The measured tread of the Britishers beat steadily on.

"And damn your eyes!" Whipple screamed.

He came puffing back into the inn parlor, his face crimson.

But his quarter deck roar had roused

the street. From houses, shops and warehouses the people poured forth, alarmed and curious, to seek the cause of the disturbance. The little knot of idlers who had already witnessed the affair forgot their fear of the king's muskets, now that those muskets were gone, and ran in all directions to spread the alarm.

"Out, Newport men! Guns and staves! The British have taken Sam Dunn!"

WOMEN rushed into the tavern, flinging questions, trying to comfort the weeping Abigail. Men clustered about the door, excitedly questioning the red faced Whipple, cursing, breathing threats. Children hung on the fringes of the growing crowd, half stirred, half afraid, wondering what the tumult meant. A burly butcher, flourishing a dripping cleaver, pressed into the midst of the throng.

"We'll stand no more of this!" he bawled. "Newport ships and Newport folk have been persecuted long enough. Get your guns, lads! We'll save Sam Dunn if we have to kill every dog in the dirty English pack!"

The crowd cheered him roundly, and men began to slip away after their muskets. Abraham Whipple pressed among them, elbowing right and left.

"Drop it, ye fools!" he shouted. "The British are armed. They'll shoot Sam before they'll let him escape. We don't want another Boston massacre in Newport. This is Tom Greene's affair—and mine. Leave it to us!"

At first they howled at him; but at last they listened. A sailor was the first to side with him.

"Give Abe Whipple room!" he urged. "I've shipped with Abe. The man that took three and twenty French ships in the last war can get Sam free without the loss of good Yankee blood. Leave it to Abe!"

There were still some mutterings and angry glances; but the crowd yielded. When the turmoil died down Whipple spoke again:

"Now, lads, home with ye! There's sorrow in this house. Drift off."

They drifted, even the women, for Abigail Greene had made it plain she wanted no more sympathy. Drying her eyes on her apron, she stood erect, motioning them away with a proud gesture. When all had gone Abraham Whipple turned to Tom.

"There ye have it!" he growled. "Ye see now what comes o' heeding the law and honoring the king. George III has no wish to be obeyed. He means to goad us into war and, by God, he'll do it!"

Greene, standing with white face and downcast eyes, made no answer. But his wife was readier tongued.

"We see. Thank you kindly, Captain." There was a cutting edge to her voice. "'Tis precious small I think of the king and his law from this day on. Tom Greene, if you were half the man I thought I married, you'd have broken that Britisher's neck in your two hands and freed my brother. But you feared for your own skin. What have I done that I should be wife to a coward?"

"Tut, lass! What could Tom do, with ten muskets against him, and he unarmed?" Whipple remonstrated.

But Abigail flounced past him to the stairs, with swollen eyes and tilted chin.

"GAD, WHAT a kettle o' fish!" Whipple groaned when she was out of hearing. "What will ye do, Tom?"

Tom Greene flung back his head and faced the old seaman.

"Do? I've said I'm a law abiding man and I mean it; but I'll not endure such tyranny. I'll send a complaint to Governor Wanton, and I'll thank you to sign it as witness. We'll see whether the courts will not force this king's buzzard to give up his prey."

Whipple's lip curled.

"Still trusting the law to protect Americans against the Crown, eh? I'll sign your complaint, and I'll get the leading citizens of Providence to petition that justice be done ye. But the court's writ runs only on land, not on salt water. Duddingston overplayed his hand this

time. And he knows it. He won't land on Rhode Island soil again, except to raid some lonely farm and escape with provisions before the sheriff can be summoned. Colonial law has no hold on a king's officer on the sea; that ye know, Tom. Your complaint will have to be sent to the British admiral at Boston. Yah, ha! Hear him laugh when he reads it and marks Duddingston up a notch. You'll not see either your brother in law or your schooner again. When ye've made up your mind to that, what'll ye do then?"

Greene drew a long breath.

"You can't be right, Captain. Even the British navy, while in American waters, will not mock our courts." Wronged and distressed as he was, his loyalty died hard. "But—if you are right—then—" He ground his teeth in sudden fury. "Then, by the Almighty, I'll find a way to take my rights!"

Whipple looked at him shrewdly.

"Surely ye'd not be a rebel, Tom?" he asked with gentle irony.

Tom met the keen gaze fairly.

"Aye. If to be a rebel is to demand a man's fair rights, I would rebel—and willing to hang for it."

Whipple was solemn, and thrilled to the bones.

"That's all Sam Adams means, boy; and Patrick Henry, too."

He considered a moment, then added thoughtfully:

"I think I can help ye. The hard thing will be to get backing. Ye can't cajole or frighten a British officer into giving ye justice without plenty of support: mayhap moral, mayhap physical. I'm glad to see ye're ready to use either. Your wife's quite mistaken in ye, I observe," he concluded slyly, "but while she thinks as hardly of ye as she does, ye'd best leave her alone, lad. I know Abbie Dunn. I'm going back to Providence now, and ye can't do better than come along. The *Emily*'ll make a quick run of it."

"Go to Providence? Why?"

"There are a few men there who can aid ye, Tom, always provided ye're willing to strike a blow for yourself. I'm to meet them tonight. Ye, see, Tom—I'm a rebel."

A NEW fire burned in Tom Greene's eyes; a fire that pleased Captain Whipple mightily. No anger strikes deeper than that of the habitually good natured man, and the seaman felt it would bear good fruit. The young taverner followed his liberty loving friend through the garden to the quay, topped with the wooden warehouse where lay stored the spices and liquors imported for the Roebuck. Moored alongside lay Whipple's *Emily*, a clean lined pinnace which had been his pride since the French wars, when she had been cutter to his celebrated *Gamecock*, privateer.

As they came abreast her, he turned sharply, caught Greene's smoldering gaze straying to the warehouse and easily read his thoughts. Never again would the *Loyalty* flutter in from the Cuba run, with rich freights to fill those weather stained walls; never again, unless by some miracle British justice should reverse its form, would Sam Dunn set a freeman's foot on his native ground, or give orders to a Yankee crew.

"Aboard with ye!" Whipple urged bruskly, to cover his own emotion. "It's a long run for what daylight we have left."

He spoke truly. Though the pinnace lifted sail like some great winged sea bird, leaving the smooth waters behind her ruffled into a rushing white wake, the sun was down in a flushed sky shot with the purple of impending night when they beat up the Providence River.

On the way they had passed the *Gaspee*, riding arrogantly at anchor in the lee of Hope Island. Under her guns lay the captive *Loyalty*, trans-shipping stores for the run to Boston. The *Gaspee* could not chase them now, and Whipple was relieved; but Tom Greene shook his fist at her and cursed. Whipple spat overside.

"There's an officer's heart in that strutting jackanapes," he declared generously. "Let him get one good beating, Tom, and he'll be a man."

"Pray God I may give it to him!" Tom muttered.

The lights of Providence winked from the east bank as they moved up the river. Whipple conned the *Emily* deftly through the crowded shipping, now and again giving a roar of greeting as he passed the loom of some familiar hull. At last they picked up his buoy off Fenner's Wharf, pulled ashore, and plodded up the wharf to South Main Street. After a short walk Whipple stopped before a plain, square house, with candles gleaming in every window.

"Joe Bucklin's place," he said. "We'll sup here."

They entered. The carved door gave directly on a long, low ceiled room, with two rows of tables spread with fine linen and set with glittering silver. Bucklin's was a place of entertainment of the better sort, catering to the wealthier young bloods. For all the grief and anger in his heart, Tom found himself yearningly hungry after the long sail. He sat silent, however, nursing his grudge, while all the time the enticing odors stealing from the kitchen spoke eloquently to his stomach. Whipple, letting him alone, planned the meal with the unction of hearty middle age. Tom Greene did not rouse from his brooding till Bucklin himself came forward to take their order.

The taverner was a brisk young man, scarce come of age, with a face which blended oddly the fire of the born devil with the astuteness of the man of affairs. His eyes, large and black, danced above chubby, high colored cheeks; large, white teeth shone in an irrepressible grin; but the thin Roman nose and the lines that ran from the nostrils to the corners of thin lips betrayed the close bargaining Yankee.

"Tom Greene, by all that's holy!" he shouted. "How did ye ever lure him from his counting room and bar, Captain? I see ye so seldom, Tom, I'm bound to charge ye double!"

Whipple shot the young man a look that cut his enthusiasm off like a cutlas slash.

"Ye'll charge him nothing tonight, Joe. He's in trouble, and this is a visit of friends to a friend. Give us your best. If ye give it gratis, ungrudging, we'll mayhap give ye a hand in a brisk game. Ask no questions. Ye'll learn soon enough. The boys meet at Brown's tonight?"

Bucklin laughed stridently.

"Aye, and I take it ill of them. Why can't they spend money with a friend, instead of dining solemnly at home, and meeting afterwards at Quaker faced Jack Brown's?"

"Wiser not to be seen too much in public together," Whipple reminded him. "No Rhode Island man would ever betray a friend, but prudent folk take few chances. It's honor enough for a boy like you to be taken into their councils at all."

Bucklin flushed.

"Right, Captain. Roast suckling pig, is it? And a fowl? Good. Strawberries fresh from our own garden. And—rum now, or some old Oporto that never paid duty?"

"Rum, Joe, and hot water. Sober heads tonight."

Tom had seldom eaten at Bucklin's, for he rarely left his own business; but he felt slight curiosity now. There would have been little to interest him in any case. The tavern, ordinarily filled to overflowing, was on this evening almost empty. Only a few youths, the sons of prosperous merchants, sat here and there above their roast and wine. There was an ominous feeling in the air, a sense of something afoot. In that little town where all men knew all others, the most careful precautions could scarce keep Providence men from smelling whatever trouble there might be in the breeze.

WHEN they had almost finished a meal that did full justice to sea appetites, Joe Bucklin bustled up again.

"Give me a little time and I'll go with you," he grinned, and Whipple nodded assent, as the eager youngster was off again.

"Where do we go?" Tom questioned.

"To John Brown's. I'm going to show you what no man in the colony has seen till he could forget prudence enough to be a patriot." There was an almost churchly dignity in Whipple's voice, which left its touch of awe on the younger man.

In fifteen minutes Bucklin rejoined them, a plain cocked hat perched jauntily over his starboard ear, a silver toothpick in his mouth. They walked rapidly along the streets for a time, till the crowd became too great. It seemed as if all the four thousand souls in Providence were abroad, thronging the moonlit streets to enjoy the brisk night air. Again and again people almost stumbled into them, there being no light save for the stars and the glow of candles in house windows. There was much dodging aside, with good humored courtesy. A few sedan chairs threaded the middle of the street; an occasional horseback rider sent the crowds jostling aside; negro slaves retreated into the gutters with a soft voiced, "'Scuse, massa!" In this crowd there were no village rowdies to offer rudeness, for all men here came of the same sober stock, and were friends.

Captain Whipple and his two companions stopped before the old Chad Brown house on the hill, where Chad's descendant John, richest merchant in Rhode Island, lived. Against the light that shone from its windows the dark forms of other visitors were silhouetted, men who dressed soberly and bore themselves with conscious dignity. The wide door opened constantly to admit one and another, or small groups. On the heels of several men in plain broadcloth and broad hats, Abraham Whipple, Tom and Joe climbed the white granite steps.

A negro butler, old and very black, took their hats and canes, bowing like a mechanical toy.

"Massa John in de pahlor, gemmen," he informed each visitor in turn.

Following his gesture, the three passed into a room to the right of the balustraded staircase.

It was a very large room, with the wide, hand hewn floor boards of the Seventeenth Century; but its walls had recently been done over in mahogany. The polished wood glowed richly in the light of a score of candles in silver stands; two great, branched candlebra stood at each end of a huge teakwood table. Around this chairs were clustered, most of them now filled. As each new guest arrived the master of the house greeted him with easy cordiality:

"Good evening, Mr. Fenner. I am glad to see thee, sir— This is very pleasant, Andrew— Ah, Captain Whipple! And Joseph! And Thomas Greene! The pleasure is greater that 'tis rare, Thomas— Seth Brenton, my duty to thy father!"

Quaker though he was, John Brown was no extremist. The lace at his throat and cuffs was as fine as any in the colony, and he wore silver buckles on breeches and shoes. He was a short, well set man of six and thirty, of quiet, graceful gesture, and finely cut features. His forehead, white and domelike, contrasted sharply with his bushy black brows.

TOM GREENE eyed the company with open interest. Whipple's words had led him to expect a gathering of conspirators—fierce, dissatisfied spirits—and in his present rebellious mood he was almost disappointed to find his expectation wrong. These were men like himself, like himself as he usually was; sober, conservative folk, men unapt to plot rebellion against the king. It was borne in upon him that such men, even as he, must labor under some sense of grievous wrong before they could be brought to conspiracy. And in spite of his rage at the wrong done him, Tom felt a strange reassurance at the sight of such men. He grew calmer, felt they must be right in what they would do; only a little later he was ashamed of his new found comfort, wondering whether he was not poor stuff of which to make a rebel, one whose fires died down too readily.

As John Brown seated his guests about the table Tom recognized the most important men in all Providence. There

was John Andrew, judge of the Court of Vice-Admiralty; Daniel Hitchcock, prominent attorney; Arthur Fenner, clerk of the Supreme Court; Stephen Hopkins, the illustrious chief justice, who had been one of the commissioners to act on Benjamin Franklin's plan for colonial union in 1754; and a score of well known merchants and sea captains. These were the very men to whom Rhode Island owed her wealth and prosperity. But for the presence of two ill assorted spirits, the irrepressible Joe Bucklin and young Dr. Mawney—the latter reputed a great classical scholar and hopeless atheist—the respectability of the gathering would have been oppressive.

Bucklin nudged Tom with an impudent elbow.

"Look there!" he whispered. "Old Fuss-and-Feathers himself!"

He indicated a plump and somewhat pompous person seated at Mr. Brown's right. Tom was startled to recognize Deputy Governor Darius Sessions, to whom Governor Wanton delegated the routine of administration in the colony.

John Brown rose and cleared his throat, and the low toned conversation that had buzzed in little groups instantly died away. All eyes turned to the head of the table.

The wealthy Quaker bowed toward Captain Whipple, who arose, bowed back to his host, and again to the deputy governor, he fished clumsily in his pocket, somewhat to the detriment of the careful stateliness of his manner.

"I have a message from Massachusetts," he began, his voice booming majestically through the room as it had boomed through wind and storm on many seas.

"A letter from Samuel Adams, whom you all know—at least by repute."

He smoothed the crumpled sheets in his big bronzed hands and began forthwith to read the same letter which Tom had heard on that unhappy afternoon.

Tom watched the grave faces around him anxiously, sure at first that they, like him, would be both astounded and alarmed at the writer's bold proposal to cast off English rule. But, as he heard the stirring words again, he felt his heart answer them with a thrill, and was astonished at himself. He was a new man since the tyrannical cruelty visited on him after he had first heard those words—the same tyrannical cruelty that Massachusetts men had felt for years. And, like them, he now responded as a wronged man will.

" 'Nothing short of absolute severance from the British Crown will save our liberties'! "

As the fateful lines beat on his awakened patriotism, Tom felt them quicken in his brain and set his pulses tingling. Joe Bucklin caught his hand under the table and squeezed it mightily. Tom's throat tightened. The pressure seemed an assurance of sympathy, though Joe could not yet know what had happened at Newport. His heart pounded so that he feared the company must hear it. He warmed with a sudden strength and pride. So this was how it felt to be a rebel! Well, he would not have it otherwise. Rebel he would. But first, of course—oh, of course—he must try the law; and if that failed . . .

AS WHIPPLE finished and sat down a single voice applauded:

"Hear, hear! There speaks the true American!"

All eyes turned on the speaker, a red faced seaman, Captain Tillinghast. The others seemed not so responsive to revolt as he; at least none spoke a word of praise or blame, not even the deputy governor.

John Brown rose once more.

"I am sure," he said, "that Mr. Adams did not write this as a personal letter. He intended it for the ears of just such representative sons of our colony as are here tonight. And he doubtless expects an answer. When Captain Whipple first broached the matter to me, I resolved to invite you thither, that the voice that should answer Mr. Adams might be the voice of Rhode Island.

"Mr. Adams writes in ignorance of

much that has happened here. He does not know that the sloop seized from Mr. Hancock was converted into an armed corvette, and stationed here to harass our shipping; nor that the *Gaspee* schooner has preyed on us as no king's ship has ever dared prey on Massachusetts. Yet he speaks bolder words than we have dared speak, inspired by the American blood that has flowed on Boston streets. His voice is the voice of Massachusetts. How shall our colony answer her?"

The deputy governor rose to the words:

"Gentlemen," he began, "before you answer that question, I have to report to you the outcome of the complaint lodged on behalf of the people of Rhode Island, against the *Gaspee* for her forcible and illegal detention of peaceful vessels in our waters. The governor reported these offenses, in most respectful correspondence, to Admiral Montagu, commanding his Majesty's fleet in Boston harbor. Governor Wanton has authorized me to read the following extracts from the Admiral's reply:

> "Lieutenant Duddingston has done his duty and behaved like an officer; and it is your duty, as a governor, to give him your assistance, and not endeavor to distress the king's officers for strictly complying with my orders . . . Let your people beware of resistance, for as sure as they attempt it I will hang them as pirates. I shall report your insolent letters to his Majesty's secretaries of state."

Captain Tillinghast could endure no more. Cheeks purpling, he beat both fists on the table.

"By the Eternal, sirs, how much can your stomachs stand?" he fumed. "Are we to be treated like vermin? I say, Sam Adams is right, and the sooner we declare our independence the better!"

Brown's eyes kindled responsively, but he answered a bit impatiently:

"Will thee not moderate thy language, Joseph? I mean thy oaths, not thy sentiments as to rebellion. With them I am in accord. But I see not how Rhode Island alone can rebel against the vast power of England. We must first secure the aid of the other colonies; and that will take years."

Tom Greene scarcely heard these words of moderation. Before he knew what he was doing he was on his feet.

"Mr. Brown—" his voice was husky with embarrassment— "before the governor wrote his letters of complaint to the British admiral, did he seek justice against the *Gaspee* in the courts?"

Brown inclined his head toward Sessions, who answered briskly:

"All legal steps were taken; but Lieutenant Duddingston refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of our courts and declined to appear for trial. Admiral Montagu sustained him. I am of the opinion that no breach of the law, not even open murder, committed by a king's officer can be redressed by a colonial court so long as the king himself treats the colonies with scorn."

"Then—then—" Tom stammered; but his self confidence deserted him in the presence of so many distinguished men.

Seeing him lost for words, Captain Whipple came to his aid.

"Another outrage, and the worst of all, has befallen this day," he said, rising, while Tom slid back into his chair.

Captain Whipple told quite simply, but with all the greater impressiveness, of the seizure of the *Loyalty* and her captain. When he had finished, the assembly broke into cries of:

"Shame! Shame!"

Finding his courage again, Tom was once more on his feet, addressing the court clerk, Arthur Fenner.

"My ship is to be libeled at Boston by a naval court," he said. "My kinsman is a prisoner on a British ship of war. It appears that justice has been denied others similarly oppressed. What recourse have I, if the law will not protect me?"

Before Fenner could reply a gentle voice spoke from across the table; an old, very patient voice:

"Sir, you can hope nothing from the law, for the king has suspended its guarantees to Americans. Nor do I think your ship will be libeled in the courts.

Since Captain Dunn has been impressed, under the false charge of being a deserting British seaman, he will certainly be kept on board the *Gaspee;* and any vessel formerly under his command will be forfeited to the Crown. You have lost without a trial. Believe me, you have our sympathy; and it may prove valuable to you. An unjust ruler forfeits obedience. If a king stoops to force against his subjects, his subjects may rightly use force against him. If you are vigilant, it may be that God will deliver your enemy into your hands. If such happens, and you find opportunity to redress your wrongs, the men of this colony will be prompt to help you—even to the point of what is called rebellion."

It was the venerable Chief Justice Hopkins. At such words from so mild and peaceful a man, those present, one and all, sat for a moment in astounded silence, and then burst into prolonged applause.

THE MEETING was over. Captain Whipple and Tom Greene threaded the early morning streets down to the quay.

"Watch your chance, Tom," counseled the captain. "Use your wits and your knowledge of this coast. Duddingston won't dare set foot on land for weeks, for fear of a sheriff's writ backed by muskets; but he'll grow all the more daring on the sea. When a man has stepped in violence to the waist, he soon wades in to the neck. You may depend on't. He'll make a fool of himself yet, and then your opportunity will come."

With a grip of his friend's hand, Tom Greene stepped aboard the packet boat for Newport. All the next day he sat at home, struggling with his problems. He would have sought counsel of his wife, whose judgment he had good reason to respect when her temper was not aflame, and for whose sympathy he longed. But Mistress Abigail kept her room. Her brother was a captive, and her husband had not lifted a finger to save him. She felt herself a deeply injured woman, and though her real rancor was against the British officer, it was Tom who felt its edge.

Over and over Tom revolved his experience in Providence. He had gone there fully expecting Whipple to lead him into some secret company of headlong malcontents engaged in futile plotting against the Crown. He knew there were such groups, at least in other colonies, and his very loyalty, his slow, peace loving conservatism, predisposed him to think rebellious citizens generally of this raw type.

Wronged as he knew himself to be, he had been quite ready to listen to such men. To listen, yes; but what manner of man was he that he knew he could not conspire against King George? He was too patient, too loyal perhaps. It was legal redress he had wanted; he admitted reluctantly to himself it was legal redress he still wanted.

But the sober, respectable men among whom Whipple had brought him—men he knew and revered, men who had been his father's friends—had convinced him that there was no longer any justice for Americans. The king was determined to crush the colonies, in order that he might the more easily exploit their wealth and industry. And Chief Justice Hopkins, Rhode Island's foremost citizen, had bidden him watch his chance to strike an armed blow for his rights; aye, and promised him the help of his fellow citizens. Such men must be believed. If they advised rebellion, then was not rebellion right?

But how should he, Tom Greene, rebel? How could a simple merchant attack an armed schooner and overpower its crew of veteran seamen? What chance had he, though all the men in Newport and Providence stood together at his back? Whipple had urged him to be watchful. Well, he would be. But how could it help him? What could happen?

He moved through the next few days in a haze of melancholy and mounting rage, scarce able to wait on guests with decent courtesy, or to keep his accounts as a

prudent man of business should. His mind was filled with the *Gaspee* and her impudent commander. He saw them in his very dreams. At length his wife came down, still in high dudgeon and, though she would not speak to him, did give him help about the house. Sympathetic friends came to console him, in all sincerity offering their honest comfort in his grief; but to him they were Job's comforters.

ON THE Sunday, after a pestilent long sermon had eaten his patience to rags, he took to prowling along the waterfront, spyglass in hand, harrassed by an idea; a hopeless idea he feared it was, yet in pursuance of it he set himself to scanning the islands and inlets of the bay. The *Gaspee* was nowhere to be seen; but she sailed his thoughts—a stormy sea, threatening her destruction. Alas! But out of these thoughts a purpose slowly crystalized, possessed him wholly, buoyed him up, cast him down.

At dinner he was visited by the mate of the Boston packet, who gave him news of the *Loyalty*. She had been sailed to Boston by her prize crew, and without the formality of a condemnation was being refitted for the service of the royal customs.

This was the last straw. It turned Tom Greene's last scruple into grim, calm determination. The reckless scheme that he hid in his secret heart seemed surer, backed by his now steady resolution. He was a rebel; and if luck were with him, he now knew how to rebel. An hour later Mistress Abigail found her husband overhauling his father's musket, which had hung unused on its pegs for a dozen years.

"See if there is any powder in the storeroom," he bade her ungraciously.

She glanced once at his face, and the look in his eyes told her all she needed to know. Without a word she obeyed. There was no powder; but she sallied forth and bought a new horn, well filled. As she placed it in his hands she kissed him.

THE CHANCE to strike at Duddingston! He thought he could make the chance, but so often had he rehearsed it in his mind that he was in a fair way to forget he must still trust in large part to luck.

The next morning, Monday, June 8, luck turned his way. Looking ever for the means to his end, he was on Custom House Pier at dawn, staring out to sea. Four hours later his vigil was rewarded. A lean, trim sloop sent her boat ashore with captain and papers, to report cargo, even as Sam Dunn had come. Off to the north, just this side Gould Island, a schooner lay at anchor, watching. Tom trained his glasses on her. The *Gaspee.*

As the sloop's boat drew alongside the wharf, Tom was there to give her skipper a hand.

"Captain Lindsey!" he hailed. "A good voyage?"

Lindsey, a stubby, florid man, nodded jovially.

"Aye, Tom, an excellent passage. What's this I hear of the *Loyalty?* It can't be true?"

"True enough, Jack. You must keep your own eye peeled, or they'll get your *Hannah* too."

Lindsey laughed.

"Not her! She's the regular, chartered packet between Providence and New York. They may interfere with freight, but all the king's officers on the Western Ocean daren't touch the mails and the passenger trade."

"But you carry cargo too."

"Aye. Rum, like every one else. But they'll never stop a packet boat."

Tom told him of the six bottles that had served Duddingston as pretext to seize the *Loyalty*.

"If they stoop to such tricks as that, they'll find excuse to seize any American owned ship," he insisted.

Captain Lindsey frowned. A chill of doubt assailed his confidence; but he shook his head again.

"No, the *Hannah*'s safe."

"Likely so," Tom assented, fearing in his heart that Lindsey was right.

His new born scheme had for its very foundation the chance that he might be aboard the next craft Duddingston attacked; and if the *Hannah* should only prove tempting to Duddingston, it would serve his turn finely. The *Gaspee* could never overhaul this fleet lined packet; but in the chance that she would try lay his present hopes.

Lindsey shook his hand in farewell, eager to be off and get his business done. Not before his papers were approved and stamped, and his cargo inspected, could he land freight or passengers for Newport. Tom, however, detained him a moment more.

"I want to go to Providence," he said tersely. "Give me passage?"

Lindsey agreed cordially.

"Of course. We sail at noon tomorrow."

Tom sailed with him. Over one arm he carried a long musket. Mistress Abigail waved him a tearful goodby from the quay.

THE SLOOP was still in the lee of Goat Island when Tom plucked at Lindsey's sleeve.

"The *Gaspee's* waiting for you, Jack, behind Gould. I saw her yesterday, and again this morning."

"The devil you did! Why didn't you say so before?"

"Time enough now. If you follow the usual course, through the Eastern Passage, she'll head you off and be on you in half an hour. Better veer to port and run down past the Neck, as if you were bound back to New York. Then she'll follow, and will have to make a stern chase of it. Then whip around Conanicut and lay your course for Providence by the Western Passage. That way you'll have a fair chance to leave her behind."

This was as good counsel as any seaman could give. Lindsey recognized its soundness; but, catching a peculiar gleam in the other's eyes, he became suspicious.

"You're not trying to get me in trouble with a king's ship?" he demanded.

"You're likely to be in trouble with one now, without my help. You've known me these ten years, Jack; and you know I bear a sober reputation. I'm only trying to save you from what happened to me. Don't think Duddingston will spare you, passengers or no passengers. He's trying to make a reputation for zealous service with his admiral, and will stick at nothing."

After some thought Lindsey agreed.

"It can't hurt me any to take your advice," he said. "If the *Gaspee* is waiting for me, I'd be a fool to fly in her teeth—Hard aport!"

The *Hannah* swung slowly past the point that guarded Brenton's Cove, heeled to the sidelong thrust of the wind and slipped southwestward along the Neck.

The maneuver served its turn. The sloop had the open Atlantic under her forefoot before Tom, standing by the helsman, saw the *Gaspee*, a mere flutter of white on the northern horizon, edge out from her island ambush to spy whither her prey had gone. The *Hannah* dodged out of sight behind the southwest tip of Conanicut just as the Englishman fired a gun to check her flight. The boom, muffled by distance, came to their ears as a mere faint thud.

"It's us she's after!" Lindsey exclaimed, amazed and convinced. "But with that start she'll never catch us."

Tom was less pleased. He did not want the *Hannah* taken, but he did want her followed—close; and it had never occurred to him that Duddingston would be so easily fooled. The lieutenant should have begun pursuit as soon as the sloop changed her course. Now he was hopelessly outdistanced and would be baffled altogether when the sloop tolled him into the trickier wind currents of the Western Passage. Tom saw his whole carefully laid scheme blown to shreds by the fresh sea breeze. He fell sullen.

But Captain Lindsey was jubilant and very grateful to Tom. In sheer relief he ordered a round of rum for all hands, including Tom; but not for the other passengers. A thrifty skipper does not

treat mere passengers out of ship's stores. It was a merry crew that worked the *Hannah* into the Western Passage and pointed her north again for Providence, with the whole length of Conanicut to hide them from their foe. In the light airs of the narrow strait it was a good two hours before they passed North Point and stood out in more open waters.

THEY had just nosed around the headland when the lookout raised a warning yell. On its very echo came a cannon shot. A little more than a mile to starboard, close to Prudence Island, lay the *Gaspee!*

"A blank charge," Tom muttered. "It'll be solid shot once she draws closer. Lord, how did she get there?"

Lindsey was on him instantly with the same question; and the forejib was fluttering out as fast as straining hands could haul. The mate was busy herding the passengers below deck and locking them there. Lindsey took the tiller himself.

Tom soon saw how the *Gaspee* got there; it was plain enough once the shock of surprise was over. Lieutenant Duddingston might be hot headed and intemperate in his zeal, but he was no fool. As soon as he saw the *Hannah* head south, he guessed she was heading back to New York to escape him, just as Lindsey hoped he would think.

But the Englishman was too shrewd to chase a swift sloop over the open ocean, where he could neither overhaul her nor head her into the shore; so he came about and sailed north himself, along the east shore of Conanicut, while the *Hannah* was in the very act of coasting the west shore. In this way, if she did head for Providence again, he still stood some chance to head her off; and if she did not, he was in excellent position to intercept some other victim from Providence or Bristol. Lindsey was outfoxed; and it cost Tom Greene little grief.

The *Gaspee* pointed northwestward, heeling over, her sails filling. The brisk breeze thrust her forward like a cast lance. It was no stern chase now: the *Hannah* must either let the schooner box her in against the Kingstown shore, or stand out east by north for the safer open water. The former course would mean destruction; the latter must bring her across the *Gaspee's* bows. Captain Lindsey chose the second alternative, trusting to the *Hannah's* splendid sailing powers. The sloop held on her course, outfooting her enemy two to one as she ran before the wind. Her bow and the *Gaspee's* each followed a different arm of the same acute angle; but the Englishman had a longer run to reach the apex. The chief danger lay in the possibility that the British officer, once he knew himself outdistanced, would come about and open fire.

"He has no bow ports, Jack!" Tom shouted, peering through his spyglass. "He'll have to come about for a broadside. If we weather it, he'll lose way."

To the little *Hannah's* crew the schooner loomed like a ship of the line; but for all the spread of her canvas, her weight and her bluff bows told against her. Slowly at first, then faster as the Conanicut shore slipped behind and the breeze swept over more open water, the sloop slipped out of danger, till she crossed the schooner's course, veered, and took the wind on her counter.

In a desperate effort to head her off the *Gaspee* jibed, and found herself left astern. But on her present course she could use her guns, and the range was fair. Jack Lindsey gasped in horror as he saw three ports belch smoke; but at the moment of firing a puff of wind threw the *Gaspee* far over, and her shot splashed harmlessly far beyond the mark. Then, while the schooner's sails flapped and she slowly heeded her helm, the Yankee sloop dashed safely out of range.

Though Duddingston must know the chase was hopeless now, he hung on doggedly. He had overplayed his hand, but the necessity to win was now desperate. If he could catch the packet this side of Providence, the rum she carried legally would be confiscated on just such a false accusation of smuggling as he had brought

against the *Loyalty;* his superiors would accept his statement against the evidence of the customs. The news would ring through England that a licensed passenger packet plying between two colonies had violated the Navigation Laws; George III would have the pretext he wanted for strengthening the British fleet in colonial waters; Parliament would be convinced of the unscrupulous lawlessness of all American merchants.

But, if the *Hannah* escaped, to get a complete discharge of her cargo from the Providence customs, she would lay charges against the *Gaspee* for an act of piracy and prove it with her receipt from the customs. Not only Duddingston, but Admiral Montagu and the king's fleet would be discredited at home. Court martial might follow for the *Gaspee's* officers. The *Gaspee* plunged recklessly on.

WHILE Duddingston knew his plight, Greene and Lindsey did not, having small chance to guess the orders with which the royal fleet had been sent to its colonial station. Lindsey, indeed, forgot to triumph in his momentary success. He raged like a man demented, shaking his fist at his pursuer.

"Fired on me, the dog!" he bellowed. "Fired on me, and me with passengers, and papers all in order! The murdering devil!"

Tom Greene, ever watching for his opportunity, saw it in Lindsey's hot fury.

"He ought to pay for that," he sympathized. "Periling the lives of innocent people! If you're game, Jack, I know a trick that will put him where he belongs."

Lindsey glared at him.

"Game? I'd be game enough if I had guns!"

"No need of guns—for you," Tom insinuated. "If you'll listen to me you can finish the *Gaspee* without striking a blow, just by running from her."

"You're as cracked as Paul's bells!"

Tom laughed quietly.

"Not I. Duddingston never saw these waters till three months ago, Jack. You've sailed them ten years, but know only the regular merchant routes. Now I've handled everything from jolly boat to schooner all over the bay, since I was a child almost. Lead him a chase; let him gain on you a bit, and then—hand the tiller over to me. I'll have the masts out of him."

Lindsey cast a keen glance at the shoreline and shook his head.

"I see what you mean. It's too risky. Remember the passengers. Old John Brown—my owner, you know—would have me in bilboes for it at best, and at worst I'd lose the *Hannah.*"

Tom's excitement mounted. His whole scheme must stand or fall on Lindsey's consent.

"Man, I know deeps and shoals like my own hand!" he insisted. "I've talked with Brown, and I know he'll approve. If I so much as scrape the *Hannah's* paint, I'll pay for craft and cargo twice over."

"H'm. Where would you try the trick?"

"Namquit."

Lindsey considered, with maddening slowness. At last, very reluctantly, he gave his consent.

"Have your way, Tom. There're no rocks there, and it's close in, if we should need help. But what if he gives up the chase?"

"He won't, if we give him a little encouragement. Strike your topsail and handle the helm awkwardly and he'll creep up. All we need mind is to keep out of range."

"It's your plan," Lindsey grumbled, anxious to shift the responsibility. "Handle her yourself. You've agreed to pay for her and make it right with Brown."

"I will. Keep the passengers below."

Tom relieved the helmsman.

HIS HOPES hung on letting the *Gaspee* gain enough to keep her interested, without risking another broadside at effective range. For a man who had sailed his own ships and cruised the bay from boyhood, it was no

hard task. If danger pressed, he could always drive the fleet *Hannah* ahead at her best speed. But he had no fear. The topsail came down; awkwardly Tom spilled the wind out of her sails, headed up again, and with gleaming eyes saw the *Gaspee's* foaming bows creep closer. Without her full spread of canvas, handled with deliberate clumsiness, the sloop slowly surrendered half of her advantage. Borne by the following wind, a cheer from the Englishman's crew rang out over the crisping waves.

"Steady there! Let her run!" barked Lindsey, his cheeks paling as the pursuit crowded his heels. "If you lose my vessel—"

Tom shot a glance at the sun, and jerked his head to port.

"There's Rocky Point. In five minutes give her the top again."

Lindsey gulped with relief. It was twenty minutes' sail at most from Rocky Point to Namquit; and at Namquit, if nothing went wrong . . .

"Up tops'l!" he bellowed. "Trail on there!"

Flapping and straining, the topsail rose again. The *Hannah* began to gain once more, though slowly. Tom still held her off and on, letting her spill wind, leaving a ragged wake. Too swift a flight would wreck his whole plan on the verge of its success. Foot by foot the sloop drew ahead; the *Gaspee* still labored behind. Even now the very orders could be heard from her deck.

Both craft were fairly close inshore; the *Hannah* because Tom wanted her there, and the *Gaspee* for fear of losing the inside track on her prey. Dead ahead lay a peninsula, Warwick Farm, shooting out east by a little north, Namquit Point on its eastern tip.

Tom thrust the helm over. For a moment the *Hannah* hung, shaking, her canvas cracking; then she swerved, heeled and caught the breeze on her starboard beam for a fair eastward run. A little longer the *Gaspee* held on, came about in her turn, and swept in pursuit. They were now coasting the peninsula, heading toward its sheer point. The sun was dropping, the breeze shifting a bit.

"Tide's an hour on the ebb," Tom observed.

Lindsey nodded.

Once more the *Hannah* came about and rounded Namquit Point so close a man could well nigh spit ashore. A little cove lay ahead; but Tom eased her away from it and into the mouth of Providence River.

"The *Gaspee's* draught is twice ours," Tom Greene said significantly. "You'll be moored before dark. Take the helm, Jack."

Hard on their heels came the *Gaspee;* and as she also swerved to round the point, a yell rose from her deck. She seemed to lift perceptibly, to hang and tremble, and stuck fast. Her sails cracked like pistols. Oaths and commands rang from her deck; men ran hither and yon, climbed the rigging.

The despoiled owner of the *Loyalty* looked back at her, laughing.

"Guessed the tide run a bit wrong," he smiled. "Ought to have dismasted her. She's high and dry, though, and won't float again till next high tide; perhaps not then."

"Serve her right for shooting at decent men!" Lindsey answered warmly. "Too bad the blasted bottom's not torn out of her."

"She'll suffer worse than that," Tom promised ominously. "As soon as you tie up tonight, we'll call on John Brown. The *Gaspee's* made her last cruise."

JOHN BROWN raised his wine glass and nodded at his solitary guest.

"Good health, Abraham. Thee looks worried."

"Thinking of Sam Dunn rotting on a British ship, John. I know their ways. Wormy victuals; dirty, killing work; and a taste o' the cat to break a man's spirit. And he a free born Rhode Island sailorman!"

Brown nodded in grave sympathy.

"Yet 'tis Tom I grieve for most," he said. "'T will break his heart that he

cannot help his kinsman. He's a lad of spirit; quiet, but deep."

Whipple smiled, tight lipped.

"I misdoubt he'll stop grieving soon; either that, or make some one else grieve. There's no one more full of fight than your slow, patient man, once he tastes blood."

"But how—" Brown began, then turned at the soft step of his servant.

"Gemmen calling, Massa John."

"Eh? Who?"

"Massa Tom Greene an' Cap'n Lindsey, sah."

Whipple gave a long, low whistle.

"Tom? Gad! Something in the wind, John. Don't keep 'em waiting."

The old negro disappeared at Brown's nod. Tom Greene entered with a triumphant stride, head up and eyes on fire; behind him Jack Lindsey swaggered like a sea going peacock.

Brown gave them a courtly bow; but Tom, without acknowledging or returning the salute, rushed up and seized the merchant by both hands.

"Mr. Brown!" he cried. "Captain Whipple! We've run the *Gaspee* hard aground on Namquit Point!"

"How on earth—" the merchant stammered.

Lindsey found his tongue and poured out the tale.

"It was Tom as did it, sirs," he concluded, "but with my full consent. I hope ye're not angry, Mr. Brown. It was a chance we took, but Tom handled her nicely."

John Brown smiled, the smile of a boy who had tripped an unwary pedestrian and got away with it.

"I congratulate you, gentlemen," he answered. "It was well done. Had you not followed Tom's lead, Captain, I should have been forced to find another master for the *Hannah*."

"Whoop! Hurrah!" roared Captain Whipple, casting dignity to the winds.

One great foot plumped on the table, linen and all; his glass rose high, and a generous half pint of Madeira rolled down his throat.

"Here's to liberty; and confusion to tyrants!" he shouted.

His glass, hurled from his fingers, went crashing to the hearth, and the gallant veteran vaulted the table, clapped Tom's shoulder with a mighty hand and broke into a bearlike dance.

"Now, blast my eyes!" he exulted. "Here's a rare opportunity. What d'ye mean to make of it, lad?"

Triumph had made a new man of Tom. His voice, usually quiet, rang an answering fanfare to Whipple's own enthusiastic roars.

"I'm going to wreck the *Gaspee*, sir. Wreck her so she'll never sail again. And if God is good to me, I hope to lay hands on that fellow Duddingston. If Sam Dunn's still aboard, I'll have him off and free!"

Whipple cavorted about the room. Like imps of glee, dimples flashed in and out of his bronzed cheeks.

"Last week, Mr. Brown," Tom continued, "in your house, I was promised the help of all good men in Providence when my chance should come. Shall I have that help?"

Whipple sat down, rubbing his heavy hands and chortling. John Brown rang for his servant.

"Send for Captain Page and Captain Tillinghast at once!" he ordered. "Bid them here to me as fast as they can come. Then go to Mr. Sabin's tavern and bespeak the use of the kitchen and the southeast room for me tonight. And send the groom for Mr. Bucklin. Ask him to bring the officers of the city's train band—with a drum."

Cocking an eye at his friend, Captain Whipple asked—

"What d'ye want of Sabin's kitchen, John?"

"The stove—to cast bullets."

"Oh, John!" Whipple creened. He slapped his thigh. "For a Quaker, ye're the most ruffling cock that e'er crowed!"

The Quaker beamed mild reproof, and said quietly:

"For myself, I would strike no blow, Abraham. But for America . . ."

THE FOUR men waited, three of them in high excitement, for the answers to the merchant's summons. John Brown was calm, though his cheeks were flushed. It was dark before there was a scuffling of feet on the porch, and three men entered. One was short and stocky, one tall and thin, one pursy, thin lipped and dangerous eyed.

"Ah, Captain Tillinghast! And Ben Page! Captain Hopkins, I did not send for you, but I am very glad to see you. You know these gentlemen, I think."

The lean Hopkins turned a knowing eye on Tom.

"I've been down on the river," he answered. "Had a word with the *Hannah's* mate. It'll be about the *Gaspee*, sir?"

"Aye, the *Gaspee*. You have all heard the news?"

Tillinghast fairly pawed the Turkey carpet with his big feet, like a warhorse scenting the battle from afar.

"We're ready, sir," he declared, "whatever's wanted."

Captain Page rubbed his potbelly in silence, glowering. The look and action seemed ominously ill suited, a fierce soul in a comfortable body. At length he spoke sharply, as if the words had come to a slow boil and then erupted like hot steam—

"Kill the damn' Englishman!" he snapped.

"That's just the point, Ben," the merchant quietly replied. "You are in charge of my warehouses and quay. Take eight longboats, lay in oars and row to Fenner's Wharf, close by Mr. Sabin's. Tillinghast will furnish the rowers from his schooner *Bristol*, which is to clear for Boston tomorrow. He will also break out a hundred oaken staves from her cargo, and have them ready for Ben to place in the boats. You, Hopkins, will proceed to Sabin's tavern and station yourself by the door. Many men will wish to take part in tonight's enterprise; but not all will be sufficiently reliable. We want no loose tongues among us. Pick the men as they come, sending away the more reckless. Captain Whipple, I look to you to command from the moment we leave Fenner's Wharf."

Old Abe's dimples rioted.

The rotund Page arose. The devil in his eyes peered out and retired again beneath drooping lids. He stumped off, followed by the tall Hopkins and the burly Tillinghast. They had hardly gone when Joe Bucklin rushed in, elbowing the black servant aside. The negro, however, knew his place.

"By yo' leave, sah!" he insisted, and Bucklin fell back. "Mr. Sabin's house engaged fo' yo', massa. I presents Mr. Bucklin, sah. De gemmun 'pears to be in a hurry."

Bucklin laughed in little gasps. His cheeks were red with running.

"Beg pardon. No rudeness meant. Eph Bowen, Mawney and Turpin Smith will be at the tavern shortly, sir. Smith will bring the drum. What's in the wind?"

Tom Greene told him and Bucklin nearly fell over with excitement.

"Gad, gentlemen," he said, "this is wonderful. We'll make Boston jealous this night."

Captain Whipple raised his hand. His dignity had returned.

"We'll do more than that, boy. Boston has suffered much, and with the highest gallantry; but thus far she has been on the defensive. It is our high privilege to strike the first blow for American liberty!"

AT HALF past eight, in the hush of an unforgettable night, suddenly broke a martial sound. Citizens of Providence ran to their doors to peer and listen, their blood stirring. Men began to gather in the unlighted streets. Down the night it came, the whirr and roll and *rat-tat-tat* of a drum. A young voice, clear and strong, punctuated the music at intervals with a cry:

"The *Gaspee* is grounded on Namquit Point! Let all who would strike at tyranny bring their guns to Sabin's tavern! In the name of freedom!"

IT WAS very dark—the soft, black dark of a moonless summer night, broken only by the riding lights of anchored ships and the candle gleam from the windows of Sabin's Tavern. Every prick and beam of light threw its glow on the black water, and here and there picked out of the gloom the dark gunwales of waiting longboats, close to Fenner's Wharf.

James Sabin stood in the doorway of his southeast room, his eyes roving uneasily from the low voiced, orderly crowd that filled it to the little group clustered about the stove in the adjoining kitchen. The night was warm; but the stove glowed hot, and about it hung quiet, determined men, coats off, sleeves rolled to the elbows. Now and then one would utter a soft spoken jest, and the rest would laugh; but the laughter was low pitched, and their movements ordered and busy.

In the long southeast room, so fresh from the carpenters' hands that it still smelled of sawn wood, every chair was filled, every foot of standing room taken. The air was charged with repressed excitement. Men stood or sat rigidly, eyes eager. No food was before them, they drank nothing; though every man on entering had pressed into the landlord's hand the price of an evening's entertainment.

James Sabin's pockets bulged with silver; yet he would gladly have been rid of it for the sake of being rid of his guests. Quiet as they were, they talked freely of the business that had brought them, and he feared greatly lest it involve him. In his heart he approved their enterprise, but his head rebelled against it. It was hanging business, this, if a man were caught.

Every few minutes two or three men, with faces red from working about the stove, would step in quietly from the kitchen. Certain of their fellows straightway left the room and took their turn at the fire. One or two spoke, smiling their satisfaction:

"A rare fire, Dick; the lead melts quickly. I've cast more than a score."

"More than you'll need—" gruffly—"and others waiting!"

Sabin felt the chills course along his spine. They were casting bullets in his kitchen, bullets to strike down the king's seamen! It was true that each man, on entering the house, had sworn an oath of secrecy; and Providence men were close mouthed. But if it should get abroad that they had met under his roof . . .

AT THE front door on South Main Street, his hand on the latch, stood Captain Hopkins. A steady stream of fresh arrivals poured up the path. As each approached the door, the lean seaman halted him with a gruff word and held a lantern to his face. To some he whispered, "Enter," and these passed inside, trailing their long guns. Almost as often he shook his head in denial and silenced every protest with a curt gesture, or as curt words.

"Too young for such work, lad; go home to your mother. Nay, Eli; your tongue's too loose. Forget all you've seen and heard this night, or you'll not live out the week. Now, William, I sent you packing an hour ago. We want none who can't pull oar and aim musket. Be off!"

The rejected ones, for the most part, slunk off as he had bade them; a few of the more curious hung back in the shadows, watching. They were still there when a voice spoke sharply in the southeast room, and their ears pricked with excitement at the clatter of chairs shoved back and the tramp of feet in the hall. A low pitched, carrying order from somewhere within came out to them:

"Stand to! Fenner's Wharf! Staves in the boats for them that have no guns. Lively there!"

Hopkins stepped into the night. Behind him Sabin's disgorged a black mass of men. As fast as the crowded hall let them pass they crossed the dusty street and bunched on the other side. They were calmly, sinisterly silent. The slant of guns carried over shoulders or tucked

under arms marked the grim purpose of their silence. At a marching command they moved steadily forward till they reached the wharf. Eight longboats lay alongside, each with a sailor at the helm. Captain Whipple elbowed his way forward and stood at the stringpiece.

"Eighteen to a boat," he instructed them. "Last man cast off. Boats proceed in line to avoid fouling. Bow man keep an eye on the craft ahead and an ear open for orders."

Behind them on the wharf gathered a little cluster of the rejected, miserably watching more fortunate men embark. Small comfort to know that years must pass before any man might dare claim the glory of a share in the desperate enterprise.

Whipple embarked last; the other boats rested on their oars to let him take his place before them. He took over the tiller from Tom Greene, with a muttered word:

"Go for'ard, Tom. You're to be first to board. It's your right."

Carefully Greene groped past his fellows and seated himself on the bow thwart, holding his loaded musket in a hand that trembled.

The commander sent one more order back to his flotilla, his voice low pitched but vibrant:

"Rowlocks are muffled! I'll shoot the son of a dog that splashes! From now on, silence! Give way!"

One after another, noiseless save for the run and ripple of disturbed water at the bows, and the trickle from raised oar looms, the longboats melted into the moonless night.

FAR AHEAD lights winked across the water. Captain Whipple called softly to the boat behind; softly his words were echoed from boat to boat, and returned to satisfy him that he was understood. Slowly, steadily, men in whose hands oars were familiar toys swung their craft to port or starboard, till the flotilla lay no longer in line, but all abreast, with Whipple's longboat on the right, or starboard wing.

"Now!" Whipple spoke, and the oars dipped and surged in unison.

An hour more, in the soft darkness, and the *Gaspee's* bow light lay dead ahead, with the loom of Namquit Point to starboard. According to preconcerted plan, the eight longboats advanced on her very bow, avoiding the gunports in her sides.

The *Gaspee's* lights cast a sheen on the water before and about her. For some distance beyond, the thinning rays turned the darkness a faint, translucent gray. Slowly, silently, with muted oars, the longboats crept toward this patch of faint visibility. Then—

"Who comes?" a husky British voice challenged from the schooner's bows.

No answer; but the steady, almost noiseless oar beat rose and fell.

"Stand off! Who comes?"

Himself invisible in the dark, the challenger now saw, in the farthest reach of the ship's lights, two hundred yards away, the black points of oncoming prows and the wet sheen of oarblades.

A flash of fire, the boom of a musket; the sentry's feet clattered on the *Gaspee's* deck. Whipple, his advance discovered, barked fiercely:

"Pull, boys! Pull! Backs into it!"

A second voice hailed them, curt, authoritative:

"Stand off — at your peril! Who comes?""

Tom Greene stiffened and raised his musket. He could not see the speaker, but he knew the voice for Duddingston's.

"All hands on deck!" Duddingston shouted. "You dogs there, stand, or we fire on you!"

The *Gaspee's* deck thudded with running feet, some stumbling, as if their owners were half asleep. As her crew responded to the alarm, Whipple's longboats shot close in. Whipple himself raised his voice in a bull's bellow:

"I am the sheriff of Kent County, damn you! I have a warrant to apprehend you, damn you! So surrender, damn you!"

The words became recorded history, but the ruse failed. Whipple had hardly

expected it to succeed, but it gained a moment's time for the longboats to close in and relieved his feelings. Angered beyond prudence, Lieutenant Duddingston stepped forward, incautiously, full into the light of his own bow lantern. Tom Greene raised his musket. Before he could press the trigger Duddingston's hand rose, something flashed and roared, and a bullet grazed Tom's cheek. His elbow jerked, and the musket ball went wild. Behind him Joe Bucklin stood on the main thwart, drunk with excitement. Snatching a gun from the nearest man, Bucklin fired. Duddingston dropped to the deck.

"Done it now!" Whipple roared. "In and board!"

WITH a cheer the Providence men drove their boats forward, running under the *Gaspee's* bows. A ragged volley came from her deck; but the longboats were already under the shelter of the schooner's overhang. With a rush and a roar, seizing anchor chains, leaping to haul themselves up by the outjutting guns, clinging to open ports and swarming over the gunwales, the Americans boarded.

A score or so of seamen awaited them, striking out with musket butts, cutlases, fists. A few shots more, and the deck seethed with struggling men. The ship's lanterns cast checkers of light and darkness on the writhing, scuffling mass, glinted on the rise and fall of weapons. At last, still dazed with sleep and the loss of their commander, overborne by six times their own numbers, the British were clubbed into dogged submission, or beaten to the deck. Only here and there, huddled against the rail, a few hung on.

Tom Greene and Whipple stood in the bow, bending over Duddingston's body.

"Is he dead?" Tom spoke through set teeth.

"I think so."

"Dead before I could get at him!"

The Englishman stirred and groaned.

"Nay, he lives, lad. Pick him up."

The two men stooped, lifted their wounded foe and moved away with him toward his cabin. In that act of service Tom felt his frenzy begin to melt. The injured man looked pitifully young, like a hurt child. The pale, smooth, set face, the closed eyes, the welling wound in the groin—why was the fellow such a youngster? While the turmoil of the struggle still thundered on the planks above their heads, they entered Duddingston's cabin. Tom snatched a blanket from a disordered bed and spread it gently over his enemy.

"Fetch Mawney!" Whipple ordered.

Tom ran breathlessly back on deck.

Here the confusion of fight was falling rapidly into a grim order. The crew was down, held helpless, while Providence seamen bound them with tarred cords. Captains Page and Tillinghast looked on, while Hopkins sardonically condoled with a captured midshipman.

Tom went from group to group, searching for Dr. Mawney; but the surgeon was nowhere to be found. It was impossible to call for him, for speaking his name aloud would reveal his identity to the British, and later lead to his capture by the king's officers. Tom was almost in a panic; every moment lost brought Duddingston nearer to death from loss of blood. Also, reason displacing his harsher mood, opened his mind to premonitions of what the lieutenant's death would mean to the colony. It would seriously mar what was otherwise a splendid triumph, the seizure of the piratical *Gaspee* without the cost of a single life. Duddingston's death, moreover, would lend bitter determination to the royal investigation that must follow.

THE SHORT, stocky figure of John Brown was bustling past Tom. The Quaker merchant was a far from peaceful sight. His wig drooped rakishly over one ear; his right cheek was swollen and bloody; in one hand he carried a broken cudgel. Tom caught him by the arm.

"What is it, Thomas?" he whispered.

"Where's Mawney?" Tom demanded softly.

"In the hold, carrying down prisoners. What is it?"

"Duddingston's hurt; maybe dying. He needs a surgeon."

"I'll fetch him."

Brown hurried below and returned after a little with the pale, tall doctor, who listened to Tom's message, while the two ran toward the cabin.

But Tom did not go back into the room. Still a bit sick from the sight of his wounded foe, he walked about the deck, drawing in deep gulps of fresh air. As he turned past the windlass, he saw something stir in the blacker shadows. A man was crouching there. Fearing an attack, Tom raised his fist to be the first to strike. Instead of coming at him, the man sprawled backward, fell and cried feebly:

"Tom! Don't hit me!"

"Sam!"

Instantly Tom's arms were about his brother in law, helping him to his feet.

Sam Dunn clutched at the sustaining arms.

"All right, Tom," he said. "Just a bit weak. They've not fed me much, and they—flogged me."

He gasped the last words and fainted, Tom clutching at him as he slumped. Once more Tom's rage mounted; the old hate for Duddingston revived. What if the dog did die? Unless it were better he lived for a worse punishment.

THE LONGBOATS still hung about the *Gaspee's* sides, their crews aboard. Only a few men remained on deck. Quietly Abraham Whipple gave his final orders to Hopkins and Tillinghast:

"Set the Britishers ashore at Pawtuxet, still bound. They'll be helpless there till morning. Then take your men home."

The captured crew was bundled down into the boats, divided among five of them lest the additional burden sink the boats too deeply. As they pulled away Whipple beckoned to Mawney.

"Will Duddingston live?"

"Yes," the surgeon replied. "No doubt of it. He's conscious now. His hurt is painful, but not dangerous."

"Then we'll take him ashore too. Captain Page, you will take the lieutenant to Rhodes Farm and see him safe in bed."

Two men brought the wounded officer up and lowered him carefully into Page's boat. As they did so he stirred and spoke feebly:

"My papers! My honor—as an—officer—"

"You're a gallant man, sir," Whipple said. If there was a slight grudge in the tribute, at least he spoke it. "Duty first, and you with a hole in you fit to poke a fist into! I'll see to it, boy. You'll get your papers. On my honor."

Duddingston achieved a smile.

"Gallant man—yourself, sir," with something of grudgingness too. "Pity you're a—damned rebel!"

This was more than the old seaman could stand.

"Rebel?" he snorted. "Why, you lobster bellied bumboat pirate, if ye weren't so bloody cocky and stiff necked, ye'd be almost fit to live in Rhode Island. Shove off!"

But two boats remained, their crews waiting the word to give way.

"Tom!" Whipple called.

"Aye, sir?"

"Where's Sam Dunn?"

"Safe aboard your boat. Are you all right, Sam?"

"Right and hearty!" the rescued man called back in a voice not so hearty, but steady. "Tom," it continued, "what about the *Loyalty?* What are ye going to do about that?"

Tom took the suggestion.

"We'll burn the *Gaspee* in reprisal for her!" he proclaimed. "And to make Rhode Island waters safe for decent ships!"

Whipple clapped him authoritatively on the shoulder.

"Ye'll bear in mind, lad, I'm in command," he said, but he spoke indulgently. "Just to have all in proper order—" his dimples didn't show in the dark— "I command ye to fire the schooner. Let's see how fast ye can move!"

Tom ran to the cabin, pulled the bloody sheets from Duddingston's bed and threw them down in a heap. On them he piled light wood from the galley, then hurled the burning lantern into the heap. The glass smashed, the burning oil flared up. Then into the hold, where with more wood and straw from snug packed cases of rum he kindled a second fire. Two boatmen worked with him, smashing chests and soaking the splintered wood with rum. In a few minutes the flames crackled merrily; fire, shot with smoke, spurted out the ports.

"Now then!" Whipple bellowed. "Tumble out before the powder catches!"

All sprang for the boats. The long oars shoved off, fended, dipped and caught. The two boats shot into the darkness, pursued by leaping tongues of light from the burning schooner. Straight up the river they rowed, Providence bound. Before them the night brooded in double darkness, its gloom intensified by the blaze behind. They had gone a scant two miles when the boom of cannon reached their ears. The fire had reached the guns. Once, twice, and again the red hot cannon roared; then, like the crash of close thunder, the magazine exploded. A blinding flash, and the air rained splinters. Again the night closed in, soft and dark and quiet. The tang of powder mingled with the reek of smoke. Faint in the distance the line of Namquit Point stood distinct in the glow from the still burning wreck of the *Gaspee*.

Whipple gazed back at her and cleared his throat.

"There'll be an inquiry into this," he said soberly. "Nothing will come of it, though. No man in Providence will bear witness against us. I was careful to stand behind Duddingston while talking to him. No one on the *Gaspee* had a chance to recognize any of us. There'll be a wonderful ado, for six months maybe; but not an arrest will be made. But we must be prudent. When we land, Tom, I'll take you and Sam straight to Newport in the *Emily*. With you home, and Sam kept under cover for a spell, there'll be no clews for Admiral Montagu to lay hold of."

"You're right, sir," Tom agreed. "You were right about another thing too—you and Sam Adams."

Whipple clasped Tom's hand in the dark. Presently he began to chuckle in his burly fashion.

"It'll give me rare pleasure," he said, "to see Mistress Abigail's face tomorrow, when I tell her: 'Well, ma'am, here's Sam. Tom and I brought him back to ye. And we've just won Rhode Island's first naval victory over Great Britain!'"

We are glad indeed to welcome back to our pages

WILLIAM WEST WINTER

in this stirring novelette of a Western surveying crew and their gallant struggle against terrible odds

The

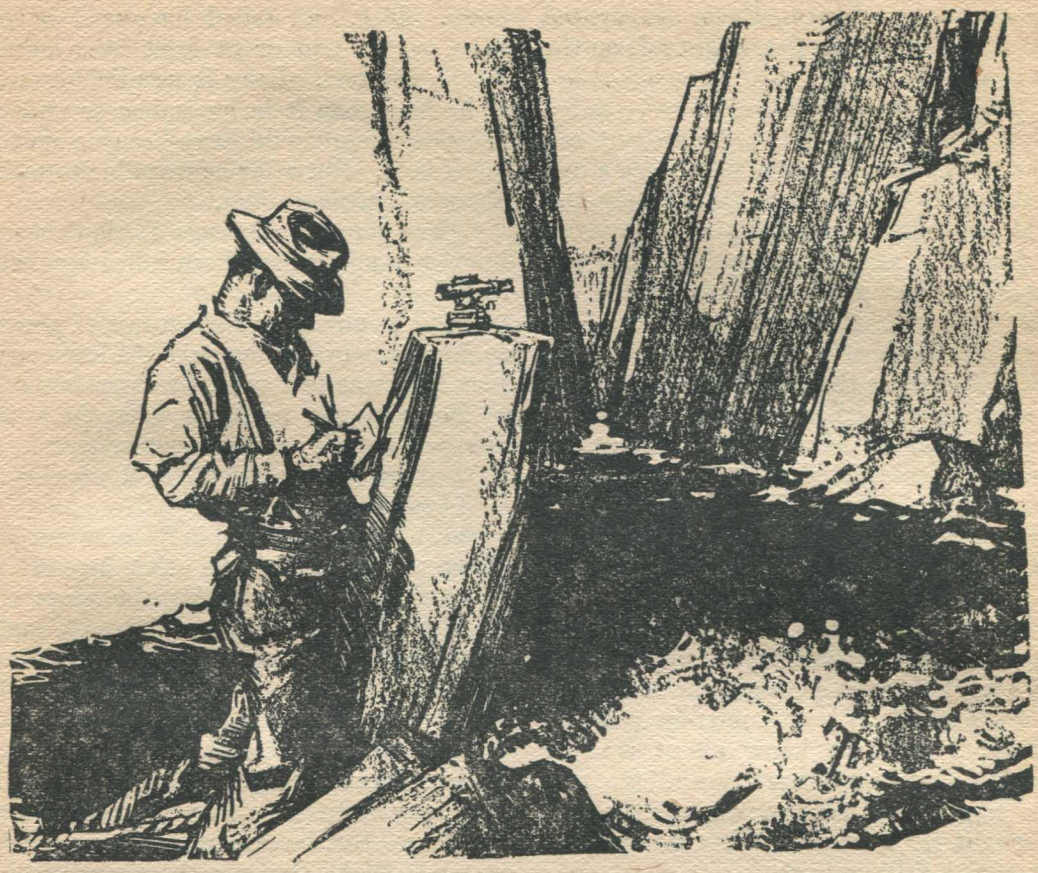
CHAPTER I

THE BATTLE GROUND

AMONG Mackay's Men of Iron, Blake was not much considered, unless it was by Mackay himself. He was not exactly the type indicated for the rugged toils of the Reclamation Service, although doubtless he had desirable qualities as an office man. His talents for draftsmanship, designing and the softer aspects of engineering might be extensive but they meant little to the field men of the Service, who were not so much concerned with working up notes and calculating torsions, stresses and stream volumes as they were in gathering perilously the data for those calculations.

Necessarily Blake had served his apprenticeship as a field man, and was still serving it in the opinion of some. But such men as Manion, who had manipulated the "gun" at dire peril to life and limb in the rugged fastnesses of most of the great mountain ranges of the West, who were themselves hard bitten, iron limbed, rock faced in the presence of danger, deprecated his somewhat softer contours and manners. He was, in the opinion of Manion, a bit too ladylike for the job.

Not that Blake was actually effeminate. He was a well set up fellow of thirty and



GUNLOCK SAGA

he had a record of athletic achievement at the Institute which was not to be sneezed at. But he was one of those fellows who never *look* strong and rugged, and he had manners which were mild and ingratiating rather than abrupt and decisive. Even Manion was inclined to like him, but with the reservation that he was only likeable in his proper place and that place was hardly in the field in command of Iron Men. A bright and pleasant fellow, certainly! But were not his clothes rather too good, his manners too suave and his hands a bit less callous than was required? Manion thought so, and there were others who agreed with him.

What Mackay thought was a mystery to most, although it was the important thought among a lot of lesser cerebrations. Where the Men of Iron were concerned, Mackay was the anvil that shaped and molded them. The Gunlock project was Mackay's idea, and had he been a dozen years younger there would have been no question in whose hands its manipulation would lie.

But Mackay was old now and no longer able to dare extreme adventure. He must turn the direction of the preliminary surveys over to other and more elastic limbs. Manion thought that his own sturdy members and his own broad back were the most fit to bear those burdens, and neither

he nor many others had ever anticipated that Mackay's selection might fall on the insignificant Blake.

That selection, nevertheless, dated back five years. When Sturtevant ran the Green River Cañon, Blake was a cub with him. Manion was also present and did fine work. Blake was not very conspicuous in the exploit and his role was humble. But when Mackay talked the feat over with Sturtevant after that hero had left the hospital to which he had retired following the rescue of himself and party, he learned an interesting thing.

"And what," Mackay had said, at the end of a matter of fact discussion that comprised both technicalities and feats that were truly epic, "in your opinion, was the best bit of work done on the job?"

"Technically?" asked Sturtevant.

"In this business," said Mackay, "good technicians are the least of our troubles. We need them and we get them. I take the brains of my young men for granted. What I want to know about is their souls. You know what I mean."

"Aye!" said Sturtevant, shortly and thought for a while. When he spoke it was with deliberation.

"Taken by and large," he said at last, "I guess young Blake showed the outstanding grit. It wasn't so much, and maybe I overlook more worthy performances. But it struck me at the time as a sturdy bit of work and I haven't changed my opinion since.

"I was telling you how the barge with provisions broke away and how a youngster held it with the rope snubbed on a slippery bit of rock and took two turns of the cable around his waist to enable him to hold on. Well, that was Blake and it wasn't so much the thing he did as the way he did it that struck me. He didn't have the heft to hold, so he used his head and his body and, believe me, he used his soul also with that rope biting fairly into his vitals. Many a man would have done his best and finally failed to hold it, but Blake did his best and lest that should not be enough he deliberately added to his own strength the resistance of his body. If it had failed he would have been cut in two or at least have been fatally crushed. I say it was deliberate. If he had done it in ignorance or under impulse, there would have been no great merit in it. But after he was able to talk about it I spoke to him.

" 'You damn' fool,' says I, 'don't you know you might have been killed by that rope?'

"And he answered right away, 'I guess so, Mr. Sturtevant, but even if I had been that boat was fast until the rope broke.'

"So, you see, he knew what he was doing and acted on that knowledge."

"I think you're right," said Mackay. "I'll keep an eye on that boy."

But he never confided in Manion nor in Blake nor in any of the other men who followed his banner during the years of his field directorate. And Manion and others had done many deeds during those years, all of which were bold deeds, and many of them grand. Blake had accomplished few, himself, and that ancient act, in itself more indicative than important, had long been forgotten by all except Mackay. But he remembered it and he watched Blake through the years of his shaping with a shrewd and observant eye that saw many things that Manion did not see.

Therefore, when he named Blake as head of the field party for the preliminary survey of the Gunlock Cañon, Manion was astounded and Blake hardly less so. Manion was also disgruntled and even jealous. And perhaps that is why Mackay named Blake instead of Manion, if other reasons are required. For Mackay was a man who read souls as well as minds and bodies.

A GOOD many things were in Blake's mind that August day as he stood on the edge of Gunlock and strove to maintain an impassive face in the front of his party. There were numerous things to be done and he had to give attention to them. There were veiled and half concealed questions in the heads of his men, and perhaps there were ques-

tions also in the head of Dickie Blake—questions which verged on and almost passed the edges of doubt.

Manion was sore and disgruntled. Because he was sore and disgruntled Blake had chosen him first of all to be his right hand man on the survey; for Blake reasoned that he had not so much to conquer Gunlock as: first, to prove himself and; second, to prove himself to such as Manion. The running of Gunlock bade fair to be a terrible job, but it was, after all, secondary.

Here they were, as Mackay had left them, far from railhead, at the spot called Fisher's Drift, which had been selected because it was the nearest practicable place where the level of the river could be reached from the surrounding plateau. For Gunlock, as you know, is not like the Green or the Colorado. To begin with, it is nowhere near so large a river. Nor does it roar for hundreds of miles through carven gorges of rock, buried far below the level of the world.

No, Gunlock, though a very sizable river, is of only the third class. For a large part of its course it flows through country mountainous and rugged but not at all impassable. Only, in that part there is little land that is agricultural even if water could be put upon it. It is not until the river almost reaches Fisher's Drift that the scene changes.

Above Fisher's Drift the main range of the mountain chain flattens to a high plateau underlaid with lava and granite. This plain extends on the southwestern side of the river for many miles, without other outstanding feature than its rough consistency to a certain level, and that level a thousand feet or more above the bed of the stream. On the northeastern bank—the stream flows roughly from northwest to southeast—the contour is at first much the same, but some miles down it shows a change. It is as if a tongue were thrown out along the course of the river and another at an angle to it.

That part of the mountain range that extends along the river narrows until, some twenty-five miles below Fisher's Drift, its depth, from the river to where it slopes sharply downward to the Manitou Valley—which here cuts into the high range in a vast V—is less than four miles. But those four miles of volcanic rock are among the most rugged in the country.

The river itself cuts through the range in a steep rock walled cañon. But from Fisher's Drift downward for nearly fifty miles it is a gorge of fearful depths and unscalable walls. Lava and granite rear upward perpendicularly in vertically seamed cliffs down which no man has ever climbed. That stretch of roaring river, buried deep in the bowels of the range, has apparently never known the presence of man; or if it has, no man has traversed it and emerged to tell the tale. There is a story of an escaped convict who essayed the traverse, but of his end nothing is definitely known. The waters thundering through the gloomy gorge have held the secret inviolate.

MACKAY'S idea, like all great ideas, was simple. Here was the Gunlock, with a wealth of water, roaring downward unutilized. Here also, angling toward the river but separated from it by a few paltry miles of rock wall, was the low and fertile Manitou Valley, lacking only water to make it blossom like a paradise. Why not divert the waters of Gunlock into Manitou Valley?

Why not, indeed? Where the Gunlock emerged from its impassable stretch of gorge the level showed a height of water sufficient, with the aid of a dam, to reach the valley. The only thing to prevent was that four miles of rock. And rock can be tunneled and dams can be built. Throw a dam across the lower reaches of the Gunlock gorge to raise the waters and back them up in the cañon; drill a tunnel from the upper levels of the valley to pierce the cañon walls; and then run canals to all the arable land. Most simple!

Yet the simplicity held snares. Who knew what falls broke the driving rush of

the current? Who could say what abutments for a dam existed where the tunnel must emerge, or at what exact level it must pierce the wall? What obstacles that might be insuperable lay in that mysterious stretch of cleft lava and granite?

Before that simple exploit of building the dam and drilling the tunnel could be undertaken, the secrets of the Gunlock gorge must be laid bare to the engineers. There was only one way to learn them and that way called for going through the gorge and finding out what was there. Simple, indeed!

So Blake reflected as he spent his last day at the head of the difficult trail that, at this point, enabled him to convey, though at great effort, his supplies to the bottom of the cañon. Mules and teams from surrounding ranches had done their work. Ropes and tackle had aided them. With toil and travail the outfit was assembled and almost ready; and he, with a last almost perfunctory gesture of farewell, had seen his chief depart over the plateau on his return to railhead. Mackay had finally gone over the inventory and had expressed approval with a grunt. Blake was on his own from this point. He had only to enter the gorge of the Gunlock and pass through it, noting and measuring such things as were to be noted or measured. That was all.

It was all—if he and his men got through. But the chances were about a hundred to one that they would not.

BLAKE descended the trail. He had to do it slowly and it took him an hour to sink that thousand feet down the sheer and splintered rocks over the rude pathway they had "improved" so that the mules and the tackle could lower the supplies to the stream level. When one looked up the river from that perch on the cliff, it was terrific enough. The vista was one of towering black and gray cliff broken by scanty and precarious vegetation, dropping in steep terraces down and ever down to the echoing deeps of the gorge where the white and furious stream leaped and thundered on its course. The walls echoed the sound of waters, swelling the noise to a chorus of enraged threat against all who should dare to ride those broken spates which lashed in whitecapped fury against the rocks of the channel.

But when one turned and looked down, the sight was even more depressing. Above, the cliffs were severe and harsh, but below they were not so much cliffs as walls. No vegetation here; there was not room for it. Black and vertical rock hemmed in the channel until not even a mountain goat could have found promise of foothold on it. A thousand feet and more that wall towered upward and at its foot the stream poured through the crevice in triumphant and arrogant flood, seeming to dare and to daunt at the same time.

The Gunlock was traversable above Fisher's Drift and fifty miles below that point it was comparatively innocuous. But for that fifty intervening miles it was a terror.

Blake went on down, sober and a little pale of face. It was his time of trial and testing, and he knew it. He saw only dimly the reasons back of his choosing. He felt grimly that he must justify that choice at the cost of life itself, if necessary. It was not so vital that he should not fail to get through. If he did fail there would be others who would try it, and try it again. But it was vital that he should prove himself the leader for the task. There was but one alternative and that was to show the white feather before he was irretrievably committed, and withdraw in favor of Manion. Once on that course there would be no returning.

He continued on his slow progression down the cliff, stopping to rest where a terrace offered a secure stop. The rugged trail wound on below him, and on it he heard some one scrambling. In a moment Manion's red and perspiring face appeared, and he climbed to the level beside Blake. Blake, descending, had been at no such effort and his face was slightly sallow under the outdoor tan.

The two men eyed each other, Blake gravely, Manion with a half grin on his broad and craggy face. There was contrast there. Manion was big and sturdily built, gnarled and muscular. Blake was no infant but his lines ran to the smooth and symmetrical rather than the angular. Even in his rough costume he seemed a bit delicate and fragile for such work as this and Manion privately thought him weak. He resented that Blake should have been placed over him. More, he resented that Blake should have chosen him as his lieutenant, though he well knew that Blake had had small choice.

Theoretically free to select his party, he yet had been bound to take Manion. There was rivalry between them and had he ignored the other man it would have been said of him that he feared that rivalry. The Gunlock was a battle ground for them, and on it would be seen which was the better man. As a matter of course he had chosen Manion. To do otherwise would have been a confession of weakness at the start.

But the rivalry depressed him; it caused forebodings and increased the doubts he had of himself. He had not only to conquer Gunlock but to conquer it in the face of a certain jealousy and the critical scrutiny of his subordinate. Manion would be faithful. The code insured that. But Manion would be none the less an Old Man of the Sea. He would be always waiting for his chief to break; waiting for the chance to take over and march on to triumph over Blake's broken soul and body.

And Manion's grin even now proclaimed that he expected to do that very thing before the tale was finished.

CHAPTER II

THE TIME OF TRIAL

THE TWO faced each other on the ledge and the burden was Blake's. For Manion it was but to wait in patient expectation. Both realized this, and Manion was complacent while Blake was a bit drawn and shaken. The latter fought against this feeling, fearing that it might be the beginning of the very break which Manion expected and he himself secretly feared. Up from the depths below them soughed a wind, not a proper wind blowing horizontally but a sucking, insidious, clammy drift of air which seized Blake at the ankles and sent a chill upward through his body. It was as if some evil thing brooding over the waters of the Gunlock hovered about him and congealed his blood by its mortal threat.

It was Manion who spoke, striving to keep his voice matter of fact.

"I came up to meet you," he said unnecessarily. "The outfit's about ready and there's time for you to check it before dark. The boys are ready when you are."

Blake nodded. The boys were ready when he was! But would he ever be ready? Manion seemed to question it and Blake's foreboding echoed that doubt. He set his teeth and stared downward into the gorge, facing the silver spangled waters in all their threat, staring the black cliffs out of countenance, forcing his mind and his soul to take cognizance only of tangibilities. There was water and there were rocks. But rocks and water were material things which could be encountered by material brawn, material nerves, material brains. It was not the time now to ponder over the intangibles. The boys were ready! Well, so was he.

"All right, Manion," he said as quietly as he could. "I'm coming down now. Mackay has gone back with the teams. It's up to us to go down the Gunlock."

"Or go to Glory," added Manion.

He too looked over the ledge to where, far below, the white flecked waters rushed into the iron walled gorge. But he looked with a sort of casual contempt and he spat deliberately out and over the cliff as if to emphasize the scorn which men of iron had for waters and for cliffs.

But as he turned again to face Blake, in his eye glinted that touch of half gloating curiosity and expectancy. He wanted Blake to fail and Blake knew that he

wanted it. But he also knew that Manion would give unstintedly of himself. In the code it was written that the failure must never be ascribable even in slight degree to any other than the one who failed. So Manion would cooperate loyally, though with his tongue forever in his cheek.

Talk went no further. Men like these are not loquacious on a job. Jovial in hours of relaxation, they are taciturn and grim when at work. When the two had negotiated in silence the remainder of the descent and stood at last on the shelf of shale and sand and rocks where the camp had been pitched, they found the rest of the crowd talking, to be sure, but talking idly and only loud enough to make their voices audible above the derisive roar of the water as it galloped past and assaulted in wanton ferocity the unbending walls of the gorge. They were talking about casual things.

"I'll bet you a beef stew dinner at Child's that Joe Wiley makes the crew this year."

This was young Carman voicing his convictions. He was a year out of Tech and untried. But he stood six feet two and was all whipcord and piano wire. His job was lowly, having to do with such things as holding the rod for sights and stretching the tape for distances. From time to time he might drive stakes or chip marks in the rocks with a chisel or the geologist's hammer.

He was chatting with Bannerman, a fellow two years older and from the same Institute, a stocky bull of a man boasting great strength. Bannerman was a few cuts above Carman in experience and rank. He held the other end of the tape, sometimes read levels with an Abney, sometimes sketched with the plane table and spelled Manion on less important work with the "gun". Besides these, Hauser stood there for rougher work with ax and stakes; a lean and weatherbeaten plainsman and woodsman who had also a considerable experience with boats on rougher waters.

They were six altogether, and the last man of them was Sikes, who was boatman and waterman extraordinary and also something of a cook and camp expert.

Sikes was complaining to Hauser. His disgruntlement was due, it seemed, to the fact that some one at Railhead, in a small game for slender stakes, had slipped a "cold deck" on him and had mulcted him of eighteen dollars. He was busily planning a fearful retaliation on the day he returned from this trip.

Hauser was gloomily convinced that it wasn't no use, that Sikes was a damn' fool and always would be one and, on his return would merely be mark for another trimming. Likewise, Bannerman, a bit slow and stubborn in his views, was insisting that one Larry Seaman was a better oar than Carman's favorite, Wiley, and would beat him out for the place on the crew. And he, too, was eager to wager. Yet every one of these men knew in his heart that the chance of ever coming back to collect a bet or to square a score, was by no means certain.

They all fell silent as the chiefs came upon them. The camp equipage was collected there ready for the final inspection, but it seemed that Blake was the thing inspected. Sober and keen and inscrutable, they all eyed him; and only in young Carman's eye was there anything to class as emotion. Carman looked his curiosity, and it seemed he also looked sympathy, and what might have been pity. Blake read all the expressions alike. however. The point was that every man of them eyed him in expectation, waiting and withholding judgment against his time of trial. Would he prove fit to lead them when the crisis came and came again and again? Who knew?

DRIVEN almost to nervousness he turned to his inspection. He himself had seen to the assemblage and had carefully checked over every item of the supplies. But now he went over them again, meticulously, as if concentration on details might still the haunting chill that would creep upon him.

He went over the barge, which was

Sikes' pride though it was largely of Blake's design; a big, flat bottomed thing with a high and slanting bow so that it might ride over obtruding rocks. It was built of cunningly latticed strips of ash and hickory reinforced with aluminum, covered with a fabric tested to the limit for toughness, lightness and resiliency, of which attributes the last was the most important.

He examined the metal air buoys set rather loosely in the fabric so that they would yield on impact and yet sustain the boat in the water, though it should fill to the gunwales. He sprung the paddles and poles in a search for possible but nonexistent flaws. He looked over the compartments which held the instruments and the cylinders of light and airtight metal in which the paper work was concealed and protected from water and battering. Those cylinders were his, too. They were large and light, and would float a considerable weight in water. They had handles which could be grasped by swimmers and so serve as lifebuoys; and they also had cunning flanges on their sides so that a number could be clamped together to form a flat surface like a miniature raft.

Then there were ropes, stout and limber, with strands of fine hemp interwoven with wire. There was piano wire of burnished steel in rolls. It was notched finely at metrical intervals, with markings almost invisible, to serve as tape and chain in lieu of the ordinary measuring devices, impracticable here. There was tackle, all carefully selected or designed, light and strong and handily constructed. There were hand levels and compasses and a very light and portable plane table, all sheathed securely against moisture and battering in cases of rubber fabric strengthened by steel ribs.

Lastly, except for provisions and bedding, was Manion's pet, a "gun" or transit, likewise cunningly bestowed in a case that should protect it. With it went a tripod of selected ash. It was no elaborate theodolite of glistening brass and lacquer, weighing up to fifty pounds. That would never have served. But it had cost even more than a theodolite and yet it was a tiny affair with a telescope barely six inches in length and limbs no more than three and a half inches in diameter. Its leveling screws were hardly bigger than the stem of a watch and the verniers were so fine that they could not be read without a magnifying glass. The little thing weighed less than eight pounds and was built in all ways with jeweler's precision and more. For leveling it was not so much better than an Abney, but for either horizontal or vertical angles it sighted and measured with accuracy.

The rest of the outfit was more or less stereotyped. Provisions selected for lightness and nutritive value and lack of bulk; bedding which could be used as rafts; axes, light but strong; the minimum of cooking utensils made of aluminum. As Blake checked it his foreboding lightened a trifle. It was an outfit which could not be improved upon; of that he was sure.

But what, after all, is an outfit? Of what avail that equipment should not fail if the soul of man did not stand up? The Gunlock, roaring derisively, laughed at steel and rubber and stout hickory. It laughed also at man and the soul of man. Would it laugh even more triumphantly and sneeringly at Blake and his soul before that fifty miles of ordeal and testing had been traversed?

Fifty miles! It could be run, at the rate the current flowed—if Death did not intervene to stop them—in five hours. It was not their task, however merely to run it. If they did it in five days they would be performing a marvelous feat. More likely they would not do it in any conceivable time. When the day of judgment was ushered in, then, perhaps out of Gunlock would rise their wan and battered wraiths to answer for their deeds and their failures and give an account of their passage. Perhaps not until then.

THE EVENING was drawing upon them, early at that depth of shadows. The river splashed and sprayed wantonly past the point of sand and rock on which the boat was drawn.

The fire burned with comforting warmth and yet as if it struggled in the face of depression. The men fell silent, and Sikes set about preparing their meal. They ate it in silence too, broken by Carman's occasional idle chat of things entirely alien to the present and perhaps to the future. It seemed that he was something of a minstrel, this young Carman. After the meal when they had settled about the fire to smoke a final offering, he raised his voice and sang. It was something infinitely silly and light that he sang with a refrain asserting "She's my baby!" But Sikes and Hauser were delighted with it.

And then, gruffly, Blake gave order, and they turned into their inflated bags to sleep if they could. And, before fifteen minutes had passed, from Sikes and Hauser, from Carman and Bannerman, issued gentle snores or snorts that advertised slumber profound and probably dreamless.

For a long time Blake lay and listened for like sounds from Manion. He heard now and then the drawing of breath or the stealthy movement of body that told him Manion was still awake. As for himself, he had stiffened to a tension in which he lay uncomfortably still, listening, ever listening, without any definite thought other than that this too was something of a contest between them. Would Manion remain awake also, his nerves on edge? He half hoped so, but he was doomed to disappointment.

In the course of time came the sound of Manion's deeper breathing that told that he was asleep. Blake sighed restlessly and shut his eyes against the strip of starlight that showed above the lofty rims of the gorge.

The night drew on interminably. He could not sleep. Restlessness seemed to grow upon him. Yet, when he had begun to dread that nervous tension would wreck him for the beginning of the ordeal, oblivion insensibly stole upon him and, after a period of blankness, his eyes opened again to see the sky brighten in the strip far above the abyss.

CHAPTER III

THE READING IN THE TORRENT

BLAKE stood on the sand spit and brooded over the waters. His eye roamed back and forth, searching the torrent as it roared past him, searching the cliffs lining the gorge opposite him, searching the menacing pathway that stretched out below them. For the moment he had forgotten his forebodings in the obsessions of the engineer. He had a task to do and he had now to determine the method by which it could best be done.

It was a dangerous task and technically difficult, but neither fact worried him much. The threat he had to face was not failure of judgment nor failure of courage. He had to face, before all was done, a possible failure of soul; a failure to dominate and lead men who thought themselves better and stouter men than he.

From the slender stretch of rock strewn sand downward on their pathway, this side of the gorge was negotiable on foot for perhaps a hundred yards, and perhaps for more. One could not tell, because at that distance the rock sloped back, leaving a shoulder jutting out to hide view of the walls farther on. On the far side of the cañon the cliffs were as formidable as on the near, looming black and threatening with the water curling and lashing at their feet, broken to white fanged fury by jagged rocks that protruded from the bed.

A bit over half way across and some hundred feet below where he stood a spire of lava, leaning with the current, stuck up some five or six feet. There was, at his feet, driven deep into the sand, a lead plugged iron pipe marked with a carefully cut X. This was his tying-in station, accurately determined by careful survey and leveling by Mackay's own party before leaving him. Up above ran the network of lines and levels which terminated here. On the other side the plateau had been likewise carefully surveyed.

With a pair of fieldglasses he sought out and located the tiny rod that marked on the cliff another terminus of the

survey. He had in his notes its vertical and horizontal angular location with respect to the bench mark at his feet. He lowered his glass and braced his shoulders.

"Manion! Set her up! Carman, can you make it to that shoulder with the wire?"

He indicated the concealing bulge of the cliff a hundred yards down the stream. Carman eyed the dolorous way to it with calculating glance and spat.

"Gimme the loop!" he said casually.

Hauser laid out a coil of the thin piano wire and handed to Carman the twisted wire loop at its end. He stood stolidly ready, holding the reel on which the wire was wound. Carman began his work.

Carefully and yet with daring, the boy crept along the cliff, finding foothold and handhold here and there. After him for some distance, Blake crept as carefully. This was action, and his nerves reacted to it. The water was whirling and leaping below him and the rocks were slippery and harsh, but he did not mind that. He had marked a post where he could pause and wait, a little out of the line of sight and yet within shouting distance of those behind him and the boy ahead.

At the transit, Manion twirled the leveling screws and chewed absently on a quid of chewing gum, but his eyes wandered now and then to the moving figures, noting when Blake stopped and leaned, in a sort of embrasure, against the cliff where he decided to wait. Carman crept on, his way growing more difficult and impeded more and more by the dragging wire which Hauser let unreel slowly and carefully. In Carman's belt were hammer and a pin, and he tucked the handle of the wire in a couple of turns through the strap also, so that he might have both hands free.

But this task was one calling only for courageous and careful effort and he made the shoulder and found a place on its steeply rearing side where he could perch with some security and freedom. His first act on settling himself was to turn and look downward, into that unknown which lay beyond the spur. For a full minute he gazed and Blake waited for his report.

Finally he turned. Manion was swinging the telescope upon him and clamping the limb preparatory to measuring the angle. Hauser stood ready to tighten the wire and read off the distance when called upon. Sikes and Bannister, both phlegmatic, methodically coiled ropes and knotted them to the rings in the boat.

"How does she look?" called Blake.

He wished he could have gone with Carman to see for himself, but that was not his job. There was no room on that spur for the two of them, and he had a more serious job ahead of him. Carman, in his scheme, was to be temporarily marooned where he was, a situation that the boy accepted cheerfully.

"Like the narrow end of hell!" yelled Carman profanely. He lifted both hands and grinned in mock resignation. "Oh, baby! Tell my folks I died game!"

"Any landings?" Again Blake shouted, ignoring the facetiousness.

"For a water snake with a supple tail!" answered Carman. "Better break out the extra coils of cable, boss."

"All right," said Blake briefly.

After all, they had to take their chance whether there were practicable landings or not. It was all chance anyhow and he knew enough of his men to judge that Carman would magnify the difficulties in any case, provided they could be exaggerated at all.

"Tap in a pin and stick a rag on it!"

With his hammer Carman squatted and managed somehow to drive his pin into the rock, where it stood solid and inconspicuous until he tied a bit of red flannel on it. Manion continued to chew imperturbably as he sighted and clamped the upper limb and brought his cross hairs on to the pin. He read the verniers meticulously and Bannister checked him. The figures were entered in the notebook. They were very grave and professional in this, probably the last accurate sight they would be able to take. The others would be more or less slipshod, more or

less makeshift and approximate. Even so, they would serve well enough.

But this measurement, no more important in itself, was, so to speak, an emblem. They made it with loving and grave accuracy, doing it honor in parting finally with precise work.

Also, Hauser and the distant Carman stretched the difficult wire in an effort to draw out the sag, so considerable at that length. This was their base line and, though a makeshift, they took pride in making it as little of a makeshift as possible under the circumstances. As taut as he could get it without pulling Carman from his slippery perch, Hauser read the distance and reported it, reading it again and yet again; and then struck and entered an average of the three readings.

But already Blake was coming back, crawling cautiously on the steep rocks. Carman, with a half comical shrug, tossed the loop of the wire outward and Hauser reeled it in, leaving the boy on his bleak shelf alone.

THE BOAT was ready, the transit packed and stowed away. The load was aboard and then the men stood expectant. Bannerman, the most powerful of the lot, had sat down with a coil of rope, one end of which was tied securely to the stern ring of the boat. A big boulder was at his side, which would serve as a snubbing post. He cynically eyed the onrush of the waters as the men climbed into the boat—Hauser, Sikes, Manion and, finally, Blake. They all had paddles or poles and each held himself tensely poised and ready.

"Don't get your hair wet, laddies!" said Bannister mockingly.

"Ready? Let her go!" yelped Blake through dry lips, and together with Hauser he plunged his pole into the bottom and bent his back in a mighty push.

At the same time, Manion and Sikes tore the water with their paddles at the front. On the downstream side of the boat as it shot out into the current, Blake and Hauser bent and strained with mighty efforts to keep the barge headed and moving outward as the current caught it and endeavored to dash it downward. Paddles up in front lashed the water in aid to them. The boat swung and swerved but it lurched on and away from the bank and outward toward the center of the stream where the spire-like leaning rock beckoned to them derisively. That was their goal. Could they make it?

The Gunlock clutched them and tore at them, knocking them downward, leaping with its weight against their progress. A submerged rock struck the prow and the slanted bottom leaped from the water and hung drunkenly pointed upward before it slid off and let the stern drift downward ahead of the bow. Paddles and poles plunged and swirled as muscles strained in effort. The bow righted itself and went almost too far. But for Sike's consummate craft the boat would have whirled completely around.

But a stretch of clear running water, swift but smooth, appeared, and the frantic paddles dragged the boat across it with comparatively little downward drift as the poles plunged in and out. Then another rock, striking their side with a jarring thud. The boat bounced resiliently off, but again almost swung about. Blake dashed his hand across his face to free his eyes from spray and glanced forward.

"All set! Hauser!" he screamed.

Hauser leaped, dropping his pole on the floor. He swept with miraculous balance between Sikes and Manion and caught up the looped and ready rope. He had been a cowpuncher, and among other things was a neat hand with a lariat. The big loop of the rope shaken out at his side, he crouched with half bent knees, as the paddlers worked frenziedly and Blake howled encouragement.

The spirelike rock slid past dizzily some twenty feet away as he tossed. Spray leaped up about them; the boat seemed to take on runaway speed and darted downward in the sweep of the current. Hauser, swaying uncertainly on his dangerous perch, carefully slid the rope

end under the stanchion and gingerly snubbed her. At the same time, and for the first time, Blake glanced back at the bank. Bannerman was leaning back against the bight of his rope, which he had snubbed about the rock. With a jerk that almost threw Hauser and Blake, who were standing, into the water, the boat swung quartering downstream, held at stern from the shore and at bow from the spire. It heeled under the rush of the current until it almost rolled under. But Hauser slacked off cunningly, and it righted.

"Atta baby!" came Carman's raucously encouraging yell from his perch where he sat marooned.

Blake signaled to Bannerman to slack off until the boat swung below the rock in a line with the current, bow pointed upstream. Then, Manion aiding Hauser, they hauled the prow in hand over hand until it rested against the spire, the stern swaying and waving like the tail of an agitated fish.

Manion looked inquiringly at Blake. Any sight from that leaping and jerking boat would be useless. Yet an attempt to set up on the rock and sight from it would be an act of dread and danger. Footholds were precarious; the rock was slimy, and smooth from ages of erosion. It was slender too and seemed to tremble under the impact of the current.

There was no question however, what was to be done. For that purpose alone had they made this effort. The sights had to be taken and the rock was the place from which they must be taken. There was no question here of measuring distances. Those could be triangulated from their initial measurements if they had the angles.

There was a question, though, which involved Blake's leadership. Manion knew it and so did Blake. The task was hard and dangerous. Who was to do it? Manion stood ready and a challenge seemed to lurk in his questioning eye. It was for the chief to decide, and the temptation was almost imperative to step forward and wave Manion away from the gun. Hauser and Sikes were stolid, but they too seemed to be expectant, inquiring.

Blake fought down the surge of desire to spring for the rock. Cold judgment conquered desire, fought down the dare.

"All right, Manion!" he said incisively and moved forward, but to lend his aid only.

Manion turned without a word, measuring the rock. He held the transit, uncovered, in a sinewy hand, but not the tripod. He handed the gun to Blake, and as Hauser strained to drag the nose of the boat against the perilous rock, he reached forward and clutched at the rope that encircled the pinnacle; it seemed already beginning to fray in places. One foot found a tiny shelf on which to rest. The other came away from the boat and groped upward until it, too, searched out a crevice. The rope helped him, and he dragged himself to the point where, with one arm thrown around the rock, he could reach out with the other for the "gun" which Blake passed to him.

On top of the rock was a fairly level area about a foot square. He rested the gun on it and worked the leveling screws with one hand laboriously. It was a sleight of hand performance under enormous difficulties, no less to take the sights after the transit was in place than to put it in place and hold it there while he took them.

For half an hour he labored pantingly, with the unsecured transit slipping and getting out of level or being touched and displaced by his precariously perched body. Yet in the end he made it, taking the sight and reading the angles after a fashion—not very accurately, for he could not use his glass—not only of the bench mark they had left, on which Bannerman now held a stick, but of Carman's pin; and, finally, of a point below Carman where, as Blake had hoped, Manion's enlarged view of the river now showed a jagged outfall of broken rock and boiling waters at a point on the bank where a section of the cliff had crumbled and dropped its débris into the stream.

Exhausted, Manion finally slid back to the boat and into their arms. He wiped his streaming brow.

"Good work, Manion!" said Blake briefly.

Manion said nothing.

CHAPTER IV

THE FRAYED ROPE

THE CRISIS had not come. Here had been no final test of capacity nor anything resembling it except that simple gesture of letting Manion do the work he was detailed to do. Blake had passed that minor trap successfully, but it proved nothing. Cowardice as well as judgment might have lead him to the right decision, though not even Manion thought for a moment that this was the case. Difficult and dangerous had been the job just completed, but difficulty and danger were matters of course in such work as this. Well planned and executed it had been, but any resourceful engineer might have planned as well and directed as judiciously.

Blake knew it and Manion knew it. Though the older man had yielded a flickering smile of gratification and half grudging approval at Blake's action in refraining from assuming his own task, there was still no compromise in his hostility, veiled as it was.

Blake again stood up in the jerking and swaying boat and anxiously swept the view. The slight curve and embayment of the bank below the spur on which the patient Carman still squatted offered no features of moment beyond the churning and whitened waters swirling and eddying below it. Sheer cliffs edged at the bottom by jagged and broken fragments of rock. The embayment of the cliffs was shallow, barely sufficient to set up foamy whirlpools behind the spur. Whether the water was deep or shallow could not be ascertained. But clearly there was no possible anchorage or landing for them in the boat, no passageway along the shore; there was no shore. The cliff dropped straight down to water's edge.

Farther down, perhaps a quarter mile or a bit more, however, another irregularity of the rock walls offered a point. Here there had been a considerable shoulder at some far distant time, which had gradually broken down and spilled its shattered fragments into the stream. A sloping buttress of granite sprang upward from the water, and at its foot great masses of rock lay in the midst of the boiling, foaming current. On the buttress itself might be foothold, while among those rocks at its foot sand might have been deposited to form some sort of tiny beach. At any rate it was the only practical point at which to aim.

The first problem, however, concerned Carman and Bannister. Both understood what they were to do. The first had merely to sit still and be ready to lend a hand when required. The second had a difficult and important job, but one simple enough if nothing went wrong. Blake gaged distances and the run of the current, striving to note any concealed rocks and placing those which were visible.

He finally exchanged signals with Bannister and received his acknowledgement. Then he gave the order to Hauser. Bannister took a hitch around his snubbing rock with his long cable while Hauser eased off gradually until the bow of the boat dropped down to where the slack of the shore cable was taken up. When the latter was taut he cast off and the boat swung sickeningly, almost capsized and then hung from the shore cable, bow downward.

Instantly the current caught it and swung it toward the shore. Bannister, working fast but coolly, his eye glued to the lurching and careening boat swinging in its arc back toward the cliff, let his rope run out on the rock. The object was to drop the boat in a huge arc downstream and inshore until it could be held by the cable right at the point where Carman awaited it. Then, when it was anchored here, Bannister could cast off his cable, climb along the cliffs as

Carman had done and rejoin the boat.

It was a nice task and one difficult of execution but not beyond their capacity.

It would not have been, that is, had fate not taken a hand. The cable was new, tested, strengthened with a proportion of steel strands. But the current was strong, the loaded boat heavy and the rock on which it was snubbed was unavoidably rough and sandy. No fault attached to any man, nor could any one have prevented the accident. Bannister was doing his task coolly and efficiently and the boat was heeling and rushing in its parabola toward the shore, when the rope, frayed beyond its strength, parted without warning. The boat gave a sickening leap, swung half way about and went rushing on down the Gunlock while still a full fifty yards from the shore.

Carman arose from his squat and stood gaping there as they went past; and then they had passed him, and all possibility was eliminated of making a mooring and taking him and Bannister aboard.

BLAKE acted instantly. He must either do that or waste himself. With a yell to the men, he seized his pole. Hauser did likewise, Manion and Sikes crouched on their paddles. Before the spur had swept past they were working like Titans, poling frantically, paddling like demons. The vicious current pulled and tugged at them, snatched at the poles, entangled the blades. They bent and strained until sinews cracked, driving the boat by main force across the current and inward toward that point of jagged rocks below the curve of the shore.

Danger was there also, but it was danger they must meet if they would not abandon two of their number. Rocks leaped from the white water and seemed to grasp at the boat, but it miraculously dodged them. The shore crept toward them and the outjutting point of rocks, like some dragon's spiked tail, loomed nearer and nearer.

Blake screamed thinly at Hauser, the cowpuncher. An eddy of swirling water appeared just ahead. He poled, Manion and Sikes manipulated their paddles. The boat slowed in the eddy, hesitated. Hauser cast his looped rope and caught a rock with it. Backing water frantically, leaning against the pole in desperation, they managed somehow to ease the shaken and battered boat downward until Hauser could get its prow jammed between two rocks, where it stuck high and secure.

The boat was not wrecked and they had a mooring of a sort. White water boiled around them and locked them in the rocks, but it was shallow water; shallow and futile. There was water in the boat and more came in through leaks but no serious damage was apparent. However the boat was not their immediate concern.

Blake eyed the spit of rocky fragments. Gaps of turbulent water appeared, but the very fact that it was turbulent was encouraging. It had no depth and no strength, no matter how violent it seemed. Nearer the shore the rocks were larger and higher and lay piled together. As he had hoped, there was even a shallow and triangular patch of sand in the angle, sufficient for their purposes. Driftwood also was here in abundance. One more feat and they could call it a day though it was not yet noon.

The feat had to do with Carman and Bannister. Blake stepped from the boat to a rock and then waded through clutching waters to another and higher one. He found a good elevation from which he could see the solemn and dwarfed figures of the two boys standing on their perch beneath the immensity of the towering cliffs. Bannister had climbed down and joined Carman. Between the two parties lay a long, shallow half moon of slightly embayed waters, roaring and swirling among jutting rocks with only the ferocious main current to one side and the pitiless granite of the cliff to the other. More than a quarter mile of furious perils!

Another test of leadership, yet not the crucial one. There was an easy way out—to signal the boys to retreat, reclimb the

trail to safety, reporting the progress so far made, slight as it was. The alternative was one of peril, not to Blake but to his subordinates.

The subtle temptation was there to dodge the responsibility, to let a factious sentiment sway him, to wash his hands of accountability, it might be, for two lives gallantly thrown away. They were young, largely untried. Had it been his task to do what they must do he would have assumed it unhesitantly. But it was only his task to order *them* to imperil themselves. It would be so easy to order them back to safety!

He set his teeth and beat back the thought. He waved wildly until they answered and then began to wigwag. They read and acknowledged and wigwagged back, cheerful, unhesitating.

"All right, Chief! Here goes nothing!"

THERE was a slight hesitation as the two disputed a bit for precedence. Carman, whom they could spot as the smaller figure, gingerly slid to a sitting position, awkwardly held to some projection and swung about until he hung over the water. They could picture him looking down for a place in which to drop, though they could not see what rocks and obstacles threatened him. He let go and splashed into water, was whirled over and outward, found some sort of precarious bottom, half struggled upright and was thrown down again. They saw his arms thrashing as he rolled over.

Then Bannister leaped. He did not hesitate nor drop leisurely, but sprang wildly out, aiming for some area of deeper water. He vanished in a little splash of foam, reappeared and plunged toward Carman. There was a flurry in the water which could not be interpreted, and then the two figures, close together, were swept downward toward the spit on which the others stood awaiting them.

Rocks battered at the swimmers, shallows rolled them over and whirlpools dragged them downward. Sometimes half wading or rolling over jagged bottom, sometimes swimming desperately, the two careened onward while the watchers gazed tensely on this exhibition of the power of the Gunlock.

Bravely they came on, never ceasing the wild fight. On the point of rocks Blake and Manion, Hauser and Sikes crouched, ropes in hand. An eddy whirled the swimmers outward. They found deeper but swifter water and struck out energetically. Blake and Manion together leaped for the outermost of the rocks, reckless of gaps where the stream rushed. The swimmers battled toward them, but weakly now. The faces appearing through the swirl of waters were pale and set, but dauntless.

Blake and Manion took swift turns of rope about themselves, passed the free ends to Sikes and Hauser and leaped together. They thrashed their way out and down, clutching and clawing at their quarry. Reaching the boys, they grappled them with grips of steel, and Hauser and Sikes did the rest. Choked and gasping, they were dragged back to the poor haven of the rock spit and finally, with the half unconscious juniors, they lay wearily on that apology for a shore, where the triangle of damp sand made a tiny beach.

BLAKE recovered first. It was a matter of pride and a matter of leadership. Breath and strength came back to him and he sat up, grimly, concealing his weariness. Manion followed him, but complainingly. And that was a good sign, too, Blake told himself. Manion was loosening up, yielding a little. Otherwise he would have been as grim and silent as Blake himself.

It was, to a very slight degree an acceptance of Blake's leadership, for leaders may not grumble but subordinates may and do. Yet the victory was slight and might be evanescent.

It was, after all, no more a test than what had gone before. Both he and Manion had acted unhesitatingly and bravely. But so would Sikes and Hauser, for that matter, had the task fallen to

them. No; the real gain had been in the fine and unhesitating way in which those two gallant boys had obeyed his orders, relying upon him. Well, he had not failed them.

Carman and Bannister did not get up. They profanely refused to get up, echoing Manion's growls with emphasis of their own. They knew and the others knew that they had earned the privilege. Blake ordered Hauser and Sikes to the boat, lending them a hand. They pried it from its trap, dragged it over rocks, after unloading it painfully, got it high and dry on a place where they could work on it. Manion, cursing gloomily, sorted out the load, separating instruments and cylinders.

Then Sikes built a fire of driftwood and they ate, gorging comfortably and slowly, taking their ease in an unimagined luxury of well being which their bruises and hurts could not infringe upon. Their steaming clothes dried out despite the clammy air and the chill went from their stiffened limbs.

They talked not about far off things, things separate from the work, but about their injuries. They appeared to harbor grievances against fate, and they magnified their damage in a spirit of rivalry that seemed to verge on quarrelsomeness. All but Blake, who listened and said nothing. Nor did they speak much to him and then only casually. He, tacitly, was removed from this phase.

Manion swore.

"There ain't a sinew in me that's not stretched a foot or more," he growled. "That damned rock pulled me so far that I won't spring back for a week. I got pains all over me that you never heard of. I barked six knuckles raw with that damned gun. The crick in my neck makes a toothache feel like soothin' syrup."

"Man, you don't know what luck you got!" said Bannister. "Look at my gloves!" He exhibited them, tattered and frayed, the tough buckskin soggy and shapeless. "You think *they* look sad? Well, there's more rope blisters on my hands than there are holes in those things. And water! Boy, I'm so full of water that I squash when I yawn. You multiply the number of square inches of the area of my body by the number of bruises on it and I bet you you got to calculate it in light years."

"Well, I ain't got no shoulder blades left," complained Hauser. "They was plumb pulled loose and lost back there. I'm goin' in fer a job as the armless wonder in a circus."

"Ah, shut up!" Carman said. "What do you babies know about suffering anyhow? I'm misery incarnate and made manifest. I got everything you got and I ain't even started to count yet."

They luxuriated and relaxed and squabbled. The cañon's dank gloom was around them, but the fire burned cheerfully. The day of peril and Titanic labor was over. The rest was child's play and rest against another tomorrow of giant endeavor.

WORK there still was, to be sure, and the afternoon in which to do it. Sikes and Hauser fell to on the boat, patching and repairing it where fabric was torn and ribs sprung. Manion and Bannister got out the notes and paper from the cylinders and plotted the fragment of the map which they had so far traversed. Blake scrutinized the pathway of the Gunlock, brooding and laying further plans, simple and obvious enough but fraught with appalling dangers to come.

Then, with Carman, limping and grumbling to himself over his aches and pains but never slow in obedience, he set up the tiny transit and took such sights as would aid them in the survey. He had Carman getting levels with the Abney, and later let him try his hand at the plane table, sketching in the salient features of the gorge. For the cub must get his training even when he was performing as few men are ever called upon to perform.

Then, at last, with the chill shadows settling clammily upon them, came the evening, food again and sleep in damp

but warm bags crowded close about the fire upon the tiny beach.

CHAPTER V

BLAKE OFFERS A LESSON

THE MORNING brought little light over the darkness of the preceding night, for when the party aroused themselves from a slumber uniformly deep and almost sodden, dense clouds were scudding above the rift of the gorge, marking a threat of further complications. There was irony here, for at this season in this semi-arid region, rain was not to be expected. Physical gloom was to add to the mental hazard. Rain meant a rising river and a rising river meant multiplied dangers.

In the profound depths of the gorge the light was dim except at midday even when the skies above were bright. Now everywhere was a twilight gloom, dank and chilly. The very fire over which Sikes silently worked seemed discouraged and inadequate. Clothes had dried stiffly on tired bodies. Tatters let in the chill air. Discomfort was real and serious, but as it developed, all grumbling ceased, giving way to silence and a grimly quiet acceptance of the situation.

Again Blake's countenance, which had become confident and high colored during the activity of the previous day, reflected something of anxiety and strain. This was an unlooked for complication, and his men seemed to return to all the old wary reservation of judgment, watching him unobtrusively, as though waiting to weigh his capacity. He had his way to win with them even as at the start, and Manion's sardonic eyes told him that again was the original rivalry active.

He simply could not and must not fail.

Yesterday scrutiny of their situation had promised them a certain respite, in degree at least. The gorge below the rock spit which had given them refuge was not so formidable for some distance as it had been above. The beginning of the traverse had been perilous, and there were certainly more and greater perils to come; but as if, having failed to stop the initial effort, the treacherous river now lured them on to inevitable death by promising easy conquest, for two or three miles, or as far as they could see from where they stood, the river ran wide and rather shallow, swift and broken but not at all unconquerable.

Sikes had run many worse rapids in feebler boats. Furthermore, here and there on either bank were tiny beaches, either sand or masses of rock which offered practicable landings. Under normal conditions they should have covered with comparative ease several times as much ground as they had covered on the day before.

But now had come the clouds and the gloom and, perhaps, would come the rain and a rising, raging river. Visibility, good yesterday, was now diminished to a great degree. A couple of hundred yards marked the limit of vision for even the keenest eye. The opposite walls of the gorge were a mere blur of gloom to them. They could not expect to mark landing places until they were fairly upon them, and there would constantly be a risk of running into the shores when not expecting to.

Why not wait for better weather? Again the temptation to weaken in judgment! Why not, indeed? The rain would answer that. Wait for better weather and allow the storms to break and send the raging waters higher to add to their dangers! Blake hardly gave that temptation the honor of a thought before putting it behind him. He drew a long breath and ordered the start.

They were off on what must be a blind traverse for some distance. Of surveying there could be none or very little at best in the gloom and in running the rapids. The irony of the work was that the easier the pathway, the less data they could secure simply because ease—always merely comparative—meant dashing onward without stop. Barring the taking of casual sights and levels, they could do nothing much. Not that it was particu-

larly necessary. The survey must be only an approximation in the nature of reconnaissance and that was all it was intended to be.

Yet any accurate determinations would be desirable and should be obtained wherever possible. To facilitate this Mackay had seen to it that flags were placed on the rims of the gorge where it was to be hoped they might be sighted upon from below. Many would not be seen, but if a few were spotted and used as stations to which to tie the fragments of the survey, it would be a vast gain.

So now Blake, in spite of weather, decided to get what data he could. The river was wider here and shallower, the current not so wild. While there were rocks and obstructions, it seemed passable to him. Therefore he made the attempt, leaving Manion and Bannister on the shore. It proved a difficult feat, but one which they accomplished without great danger. Poling and paddling, they managed to drive the boat across, hitting an occasional rock but without serious damage. The water, after yesterday's riot of strife, seemed oily and almost sluggish. The gloom lightened somewhat to add to their luck, and visibility increased with the advance of day.

Manion, on the other shore, could follow their progress and sight on the station they might establish across the river. Behind the boat trailed the piano wire tape, unreeling as they progressed. It was hard to handle, drifting and trying to tangle among the rocks, but Carman worked judiciously and skillfully with it.

They finally made the far shore, at some little distance below their starting point, to be sure, but well within sight of Manion with the little transit. And the wire, though sagging and dragging in spite of their best efforts to draw it taut, was still free from bends and tangles that would entirely stultify its readings.

They had moored to a rock they found, and on it they staked a station and measured the distance while Manion took the compass bearings. Then they cast loose the wire, after fastening to it the end of one of the cables. Following instructions, Manion and Bannister then reeled in the wire and after it the cable.

In the course of time they had a stout line running back to their station and when the signal that all was well came to them, they cast adrift again and paddled and poled back. The current carried them downstream in spite of every effort, but that did not make much difference. Assisted by the cable hauled in by Manion and Bannister, they made better time in returning and were able at last to fare back to their starting point, helped by the line in the last part of the journey upstream.

Once there, Manion and Bannister got aboard and stowed the wire and instruments secure from water and damage. The clouds were still thick and a few drops of rain fell. A dreary and clammy wind was soughing in the cañon. In it they cast off and paddled out to the middle of the stream where the water ran more deeply.

Half an hour followed in which the only labor lay in the necessity to ply paddles and poles in fending from the rocks which seemed to rush up river to meet them. They floated downward swiftly, through the constant roaring of the river, intensified in booming echoes from the walls of the gorge.

His men began to exchange badinage which was sometimes scurrilous, a sort of mock animosity with which they veiled their reception of unaccustomed luck. They could do no surveying, but merely scanned the walls for outstanding peculiarities of formation which might be of interest.

THE GORGE bent in a long and gradual curve and began to narrow again. The current grew deeper and swifter and the rapids more difficult. Blake scanned the rear anxiously in lulls of the rain, hoping that more light might come and enable him to land while the rock point was within view and get a back sight on it. But from a distance of a very few hundred yards it was invisible, the

bend soon cut it off from any further sight. Angular measurements from a swiftly moving boat were, of course, of no value. They might have landed once or twice and taken compass bearings, but it did not seem to be worth the effort in view of results to be obtained.

The rush downward carried them perhaps six or seven miles, with slight change in the scene and none of note except the gradual narrowing of the gorge. But as it narrowed, the thunder of the waters changed in timbre and grew ever louder. The pace seemed to increase and, while rocks were less frequent, the men found more and more difficulty in avoiding them.

The struggle waxed until they were all putting forth every effort. The rush of the river, magnified by the echoes, rose to a scream of throat and menace, and the rain began to fall faster and heavier. Visibility grew constantly lower. Blake held on grimly, but at last it became evident to all that to dare further was to be foolhardy.

They managed somehow to land on a shelving bench of solid rock sloping back to the cliff. The boat was securely moored, and driftwood gave them material for a fire. The floor was hard and the rain was chill, but they managed to make themselves comparatively comfortable. But as night came on the rain fell faster, until it was dashing downward in vicious sheets. Thunder rolled and beat into the gorge and sent the echoes crashing, and the lightning streaked like hot wires across the narrow opening of the skies.

The men were soaked and almost stunned by the noise; sleep was out of the question. Past midnight, however, the storm ceased and the last peals of thunder rumbled and grumbled down the gorge and died away at last in sullen threat. Then they dozed as best they could until another day.

THE BEST of men will have sour tempers after such a day and night. When they awoke this result was soon apparent. Sikes and Hauser almost came to blows over the question of whether the former was brilliant or stupid in his manipulation of hands in a poker game of distant memory. Bannister snapped at Carman, and Manion was sullen and silent. Blake himself was nervous and uneasy in mind, and all his old forebodings came back to him again.

For the first time it was to be feared that his men were, for the moment, dwelling not on perils to be surmounted dauntlessly, without a thought for failure, but on those perils grown too great for human fortitude, perils destined to overwhelm them and conquer them. Morale was low. Then the more necessity to revive it in action.

They had light again, for the day was clear. But against the light was set the river. It had risen during the night and was rising now, steadily and stealthily. With each passing hour its level lapped farther up on the sloping bench of rock, and its roar grew more fierce and triumphant. In few places did the white tipped crests now show, for the rocks were generally submerged. Where they still reared from the water, the river flung itself ferociously upon them and sent shattered columns of spray into the air. The echoes boomed deafeningly and monotonously.

Another crisis of fate. Another call for judgment. Failing morale called for action; common sense bade him lie and bide his time. A bad decision was not likely to have the chance of repetition. There would be only one, for the very good reason that they would not live to make another. To let the men lie and sulk was bad; to tackle the river when it was rising to flood would be suicidal. Blake was tempted again and again; and again and again he steeled himself.

A bit of luck aided him when he announced that they would stay where they were until the brief flood subsided. When he scanned all of the gorge that was visible to him, far off on the opposite rim he thought he saw something unusual. He brought his glasses to bear upon it, and then the slightly better telescope of the little transit. It might be only some lone

and sterile tree stalk denuded of foliage except for a tuft at the top, but to Blake and to Manion, called upon for his opinion, it seemed more likely that the tiny spike just visible off there, with the wavering bit of fluff at its top, was a stout staff with a bit of cloth for a flag, set close to the edge of the gorge.

If so, it was one of Mackay's stations. Perhaps sights on it would be a useless gesture. But they offered something to cheer his men, work for them, however trivial it might be. He and Manion took its bearings by compass with elaborate and rather ridiculous care, checking each other and reading the verniers with a glass. They also took the vertical angle, as meticulously, and then gravely went through the pretence of calculating the linear distance on a level line to a point perpendicularly below the staff. Then they got out paper and logarithm tables and gravely calculated the elevation of the staff with respect to themselves.

It was all a sort of serious farce, for though the angular measurements might be valuable if the staff could later be identified so that they could "tie in to" it, assuredly the vertical calculations were wildly guesswork and valueless except for distracting their minds.

But fool around with it as they might, this all took but a fraction of their time; and for Sikes and Hauser, who were not engineers, it did not even furnish distraction. They worked desultorily at repairing the boat in which some defects still remained. Bannister and Carman smoked and talked and yawned and managed somehow to pass the time. The river continued to rise, and as it rose it yelped and bellowed at them in derisive triumph.

Blake held to his decision. For two days the river rose, at first rapidly, then more slowly. On the third day it began to recede again, but by this time trouble had begun to develop. To men strung to high endeavor, inaction is almost unbearable. The discomforts of their camping place were magnified. Defects of fiber showed here and there among them. Hauser disputed at first with Sikes and got the worst of the arguments. Carman had a tendency to play jokes, and his humor soon palled on the others, especially on Bannister. Between those two, however, no irreparable friction occurred. Strangely enough, the outbreak came between Hauser and Bannister.

Worsted by the phlegmatic and stubborn Sikes, Hauser turned on Bannister. There was some latent rivalry there, some underlying antagonism. Both were big men, of great strength. Bannister was, like Hauser, stirred to belligerency by his annoyance with Carman. Hauser began it by sneering at education and then tried to involve Bannister in disputes over what Hauser alleged were the footless errors of scientific men. Bannister retorted by telling Hauser he was an ignorant ass, which was, in a measure, true. But words struck sparks, and before Blake could interfere effectively, those two were on their feet and squaring off for war.

Blake's temper flamed. His self-restraint had been worn thin by the tension also. He leaped between the two men, drove back Bannister, the more reasonable, with bitter words, and then swung to face the lowering Hauser.

"You'll cut this out or get a lesson you won't forget!" he snarled, inadequate in words but with flaming force of emphasis. Hauser, red of eye and sullen with fury, showed his teeth and leered.

"Who from?" he sneered. "From you, you damn' lily fingered fluff?"

Blake struck. There was a sort of grim joy in it. There was all his repressed feeling behind the blow. It was a skillful blow, with the snap of exploding dynamite in it. Hauser caught it on the jaw and shot backward, his legs buckling under him, and he slid toward the water. Blake stooped hurriedly and seized him by the ankles to drag him away from the river, and it was then that he realized, as a dull pain came with the effort, that he had broken his fist on the man's rocky jaw.

But Hauser lay unconscious for nearly five minutes. During that time nobody said a word.

CHAPTER VI

THE DANCE OF DEATH

THERE was no pride of conquest in Blake; only a gnawing rage of impatience and rebellion against the fate that had sent dissension to add to his problems. The pain biting numbly in his aching hand spurred his resentment. He uttered orders now not in the measured and cool tones of yore but with snarling emphasis and shrill vehemence. Bannister took these a bit sullenly but without open resentment. Carman seemed somewhat awed and Sikes was, as always, phlegmatic. Manion adopted a peculiar attitude of lofty indifference, obeying readily enough but as if critically contemptuous. His was the most maddening attitude, yet its irritating quality was so intangible that Blake, reasoning even in his rage, fought back the hot desire to force a clash, and schooled himself to preserve his temper.

After a while Hauser groaned and sat up, a little wabbly and confused. He sat for some moments holding his head and pondering matters. Sikes, chewing placidly on a mouthful of plug tobacco, eyed him askance until Hauser's wandering eye finally met his.

"What was your last remark I heard?" said Sikes, mildly. "Somethin' about a lily handed fluff, wasn't it?"

"Ah, go to hell!" said Hauser, but without animosity. A moment later he said casually, "The damn' cliff fell on me."

Still later he painfully rose, grinned sheepishly and glanced sidewise at Blake.

"S'all right, Boss!" he said. "I got mine and it was plenty."

Blake merely nodded and went on plastering his hand with adhesive tape. The injury was a further handicap, half crippling him. He strove to ignore it stoically, but it worked on his temper almost unbearably. He met the tension by such action as was possible, driving the men to the scanty labor of sorting and repacking the equipment, which served to pass another hour safely. Then he made Bannister and Carman attempt rather useless explorations along the cliffs, as if seeking practical shore paths, of which there were obviously none.

These activities were watched by Manion, in whose eyes they induced a sly light of triumph, and Blake knew that Manion interpreted this fussiness and idle energy as the first symptom of the break. Bannister and Carman ran risks to no purpose, and resented it. When night drew on again the camp was seething with repressed ill feeling. But outward peace reigned still and they slept without another untoward outbreak.

WITH the dawn Blake was up, haggard now and drawn, having slept hardly a wink. He roused the others stridently, that same restless, bitter driving force in his voice and actions. He might break or he might not, but he had at least come to the end of studied patience. He would lead no longer, but he would drive. He hustled Sikes over the breakfast, and when it was eaten he barked at them all in ordering them to the boat.

The river was still high, though receding, but it was no longer possible to consider and weigh the risks against advantages. The expedition was all but on the verge of failure, and even if he rushed it now to certain destruction, that particular failure must be averted.

He thought that he detected some reluctance here and there as they prepared to shove off, as if the let down in morale had spread to such an extent as to induce fear. But none hung back noticeably, and soon they had pushed off and were again whirling downstream in the midst of roaring waters.

Difficulties arose at once. The deeper water swept more smoothly on and the spray columns were easily seen. But the force of the current magnified the effort needed to control the clumsy boat and there lurked always now rocks submerged and invisible and yet near enough to the surface to rip the bottom from the boat. Every now and then they felt the jar of contact and the boat swung around.

Leaks appeared suddenly and had to be ignored except for bailing water out; once made, they could not be stopped. But the air pockets remained intact, and as long as they did the boat would float.

Meantime the navigation again took all their energies and they were unable to do any effective reconnaissance. It was not needed for, as yet, the gorge presented only the usual features of solid, perpendicular rock walls rearing to vast heights, and the river roaring onward without break or marked increase of fall.

Rapids came again, full of jagged rocks through which they bounced and whirled, now either end forward, now lurching and heeling sidewise, with the water foaming over the sides. They bailed ceaselessly and toiled mightily with poles and paddles, but the river flung them here and there with small regard for their striving, and the rocks snatched at them and bit hungrily at the resilient fabric of the boat. The tough ribs creaked under impact after impact, and one or two splintered and gave as the limit of elasticity was passed. The fabric ripped and tore. Mile after mile of the gorge flashed by, pitiless, unchanged. Always the roar of the hurrying waters echoed and re-echoed from the vast sounding boards of granite and basalt, fairly deafening them.

But one gain was steady and vast. As need for effort increased, as the toil called for mounted and magnified, cheer came back to them all and the tension vanished. Hauser bellowed defiance from his station as he sweated and panted over his splintered pole. Bannister yelled over his paddle and Carman, the minstrel, shrieked snatches of song against the booming echoes. Manion lost his calculating look and became tense and terse and efficient. But Blake remained unaffected and so did Sikes. One was silent and wary and alert; the other, tense and dominant, shouting his orders with bite and venom, never hesitating for a second, never suggesting an appeal nor permitting advice. And he held on madly, brutally, until sinews were ready to crack, until muscles could do no more.

Not until the boat was almost flung upon a sand spit which fatigue drugged arms could no longer fend from, did he let up. Then, indeed, he snarled an order to make the boat fast and prepare to camp. His men tumbled ashore, ready to drop. He lashed them alive and to action with a vehement tongue. The boat must be repaired and made ready for the following day.

They had run the cañon, without a pause, for another twenty-five or thirty miles during that wild dash, and even in the daze of fatigue a wondering triumph found place in their minds. Was this the mighty Gunlock which no man had passed since the dawn of time? Why, they had well nigh done it already. Of the fifty miles of its impassable length they had conquered over thirty; nearly thirty-five! But a little over fifteen remained to go, and it began to look as if the feat were to be accomplished and without extraordinary dangers.

The river had exhibited a steady if steep fall, without one single feature that could militate against Mackay's cherished scheme. The younger men were a bit exultant, but Manion was now again craftily watching Blake. Did Blake guess or know? If he did not, then he was no engineer.

But Blake knew as well as Manion. Exact data were lacking, but he could guess approximately the rate of flow of the stream and, consequently, the average fall per mile. It was not enough. They knew the elevation at their point of entry and that at the point where they must emerge. There must necessarily be falls farther down. Yet even so, the distance they had come was encouraging from every standpoint. For, the farther down the falls were, the less they must be in head; and that not only made them less formidable to pass, but rendered them less of an obstacle to Mackay's scheme.

Rock formations were also changing. There was less basalt, with its hard and perpendicular cleavage lines, and more granite, which weathered faster and presented irregularities which should serve them well.

STILL, Blake was urged and pressed to hasten onward. A crisis had been averted, peace once more reigned, but a tension once grown might break loose again at any moment. Hauser was subdued in so far as Blake's ascendancy was concerned, but toward Bannister he harbored a lurking resentment which Bannister returned with contempt added.

Therefore Blake kept them all at work without mercy until the boat was patched in fabric and the shattered ribs spliced and strengthened. And now he took a further precaution. He jettisoned a great part of their supply of paper, and packed the rest bearing their notes and plottings, with a small supply of unused sheets, in one or two of the cylinders. The others, empty and with tops screwed tight, he lashed to the gunwales with cunning knots that could be untied at a pull and yet would hold against any force until slipped. They were life preservers, as he had designed them to be.

Manion's attitude still remained correct and maddening. In that lay Manion's strength. He was strong and patient, crafty and self-restrained. He had only to keep command of himself and wait for Blake to lose self-command. If Manion would only make a misstep, show insubordination, invite the flaming authority of the chief! But Manion would not do it. He bided his time as if secure in the conviction that it must come. In no way did he allow Blake an excuse to bring on conflict. And if Blake brought it on without provocation, then Blake would fail.

The urge to ride Manion, to bully him, to push him to rebellion, was strong. But Blake repressed it, though he yielded to the impulse in a measure and rode them all impartially. So long as he did this he could carry it off. Eventually it might make trouble, but he had to take his chance of that. Nor was the risk great, for it was plain that the expedition must succeed or fail within a day or two at most. For that length of time he could drive and browbeat them.

He did. Into the boat again and once more out upon the raging waters! The waters plucked and tore at the boat; rocks leaped from foaming waves to clutch at them and tear at their frail bark. The patches gave way and other rents appeared. A lattice of ribs above waterline crashed in suddenly as a jagged point of granite stabbed through the boat. An air pocket was pierced and let its precious gas out with a hiss. But they swept on; for one mile, for two, for three and more.

The boat was half full of water, and the shores were now terraced and overhanging, with broken, jagged projections. White water was all around them and paddles and poles were futile things. There were beaches and points to be seen, but as yet no practical shore path.

They managed to win a landing about noon, and patched the shattered boat again as best they could. But the boat was evidently going fast. Would it carry them through or disintegrate before the goal was won? None could even guess, but there was no alternative. They had to go on, and the only way they could go was in the boat.

And into the boat Blake drove them again, though the afternoon was waning. They might have rested on that beach for another night, for every muscle in their bodies begged for the respite. But Blake had a crying need of action and knew that he must make haste if disaster was to be avoided. In action harmony would reign; in rest nerves would give way. Speed, speed, and more speed was now required. He knew that hate was rising against him, but he did not care. He could not and must not fail to hold them in his hand until his task was done or they were dead.

Even Manion cursed at that order, but Blake only glared at him and Manion quickly recovered himself and obeyed it calmly. Carman groaned half facetiously and half in earnest. Bannister snarled and swore unrestrainedly. Sikes frowned and Hauser shook his head. But they started, with the shadows spreading darkly on the dank and clammy river.

MILE after mile they rushed on, at every moment avoiding disaster more by luck than skill, now, for force was failing them and they were growing drunk with fatigue. Like drunken men, however, they acted by instinct; and that, in this case, was for a time, more effective than calculated action. Still, things could not continue this way, nor did they, though the end came suddenly and in an unexpected way.

Blake had been listening tensely for the sound of falling water. He heard nothing but the shattering, crashing echoes of the rushing waters, bounding from cliff to cliff. He began to wonder and to doubt, and then suddenly the explanation came to him, but too late to serve. They heard no booming fall of water because the echoes seized and blended all sounds indistinguishably.

It was growing dark down here, and the chill of the evening was enough to make one shiver. But it was not that which sent the shiver up Blake's spine. He peered ahead in the treacherous light, glanced aside at forbidding shores. He saw no landing place, but ahead there was something. It was a sheet of water that ran like a millrace straight forward for a hundred yards and then seemed to make a line drawn across the gorge, bounded at either end by outthrust spikes of rock over which the water curled and boiled. And now, even through the echoes, came the bursting roar of falling tons of water.

Again he looked at the shore, and saw only unbroken, jagged cliffs falling to the water. He stooped over Sikes, who saw as he did. He had to make his decision; he made it, suddenly calm, almost exultant. His voice was shrill, to carry above the waters, but it no longer snarled and bit.

"Stand by! Steady Sikes—between those two rocks. All hands hold tight! We're going to run the falls!"

Every man tensed himself. They gripped gunwales and the life preserver cylinders and stretched their necks expectantly, holding their breath. Down upon the lip of the fall they rushed. For one breathless instant the prow of the boat hung, shooting straight out over glistening, sheeted waters. Then the stern swung and dropped, headlong, turning oversidewise and looping drunkenly into a foaming, dizzy caldron of seething liquid.

The echoes of the Gunlock howled and stormed in Titanic glee. Whirling scud enveloped them. Thick mists of emulsified water choked them. A twisted and shattered boat whirled round and round with them and they whirled with it in a mad dance of death. Blake caught an arm reaching outward and grabbed it. He had some purchase on solid water and was thrashing madly with the other arm to keep afloat. The boat crashed into him, and he grabbed and hung to it heedless of the pains that rended his broken fist. Some one else had a grip on the other side of it. It bounced around and hit something hard and jolted off it and onward, it seemed, more slowly. Its mad gyrations subsided.

Still dragging at the arm he held, Blake maintained it till he secured a handhold on the broken boat. The head of the man appeared in the foam. It was Manion, half unconscious from a blow in the head. On the other side the boat Sike's grim face reared, pale and set. His jaws were comically clenched on his quid of tobacco. They came to rest against an obstacle, and Blake managed to raise himself to his knees above the foam and the water.

Farther down, on a stretch of broken shore, he saw Bannister, half naked, every muscle of his great form standing out, staggering and dragging a limp form from the river to safety. They too were safe, for they had swung in to the same shore. But of Hauser there was naught to be seen. The Gunlock had its victim.

Blake got to his feet and looked at the boat as Manion crawled ashore and Sikes stumbled to his side. The boat was a wreck, complete, irremediable.

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST STATION

THERE was no force to spend left in any of them. Exhaustion, complete and sodden, possessed them. Manion, dazed from his injury, sprawled uncouthly and seemed to be wondering what had happened to him. Bannister and Carman, the latter almost drowned and the former staggering from weariness, remained where they were, lacking the energy to rejoin the other three but a hundred feet above them. Nor had those three vitality enough to make their way downward to the two.

Yet with Blake and Sikes there remained a last spark of flame which held them up until they had dragged the unrecognizable residue of the boat to the shore. Then Sikes sagged all at once and lay inert upon the ground. Blake strove to summon some resource to do essential things, but he could not. Lassitude and weariness that overbore even the pain of wounds and bruisings, had him in their grip. Fevered blood fought off the chill of the evening; hunger did not exist; there was only an overwhelming need of sleep. The others felt and yielded to it; and soon he too drooped over and stretched himself out upon damp rocks hardly softened by the scanty sand.

They slept the night away and far into the next morning, and then awoke with cravings of hunger. But as they came dazedly, one by one, out of sleep they were shocked in taking stock of each other. Not one but was bruised and battered and injured; not one but was tattered and torn and bloody! Drawn and haggard faces were shrouded in stubbly beards, and matted hair overhung reddened eyes. Yet sleep had restored in them the spirit of which exhaustion had robbed them.

Carman and Bannister made their painful way back to the others and Sikes found a watertight box of matches and set about making a fire. They searched the fragments of the boat in hope and were rewarded. The craft itself was a mere tangle of wreckage, but some of the compartments had held, and in them were food of a sort and some of the instruments.

The cylinder of notes was intact and so were six of those which had been emptied and lashed to the boat. Indeed, these last had served well as buoys, aiding to sustain the wreck and themselves. Plane table and Abneys were gone with most of the other stuff, but in its watertight fabric case the little explorer's transit nestled bright and uninjured, though its light tripod had vanished. A single reel of piano wire tape remained and one stout cable of the several they had carried. Of bedding, none was left.

To Blake, at least, came back the realization of their project and with it awoke all the old sense of responsibility. It might seem that their position was hopeless and that further efforts might well be confined to desperate attempts at escape. But to Blake by this time his object had become an obsession. Escape was incidental, unimportant. He was alive and virile, despite his injuries; and so long as life held within him, he would continue the attempt to conquer the Gunlock.

Fed after a fashion and refreshed, if refreshment of a body aching and cringing with pain were possible, he bent to that object with every faculty he possessed.

He no longer recalled his rivalry with Manion. Indeed, Manion himself had so receded into the distance as to become merely a point on the landscape. So with the others. Jealousies and quarrels and failing morale no longer interested him, nor did those who indulged in or suffered from those things. This matter had been removed from the circuit of human affairs and had become a struggle between two imponderable, impersonal forces.

On the one hand was the Gunlock with the alliance of all material obstacles; on the other stood that intangible thing which was will, vital force, soul—whatever one wished to call it. In Blake that force had become as inhuman, as uncontrollable and as inevitable as those an-

tagonistic forces of Nature herself against which it was at war.

SO HE rose out of himself and took stock of the situation. Little food, no bedding, useless instruments, no vehicle with which to breast the hungry waters! Of human aid, a little; but that little of small avail from now on. His absentminded glance at Manion revealed that erstwhile foe eating painfully and resignedly. Manion met his glance with a grin, half sheepish, wholle ingratiating. He had forgotten the fact that he had saved Manion's life, but Manion had remembered. Manion wanted to yield, to make amends, to be friends. But Blake, while recognizing that conquest as a fact, no longer cared. Manion was only an incident. The Gunlock remained as the only important factor.

Scrutiny of the others revealed a uniform attitude. Resignation, philosophical and stoical, without hint of fear but without semblance of hope. The Gunlock was victor. They might die here in the gorge, and if so they would die bravely. They might, by some great fortune, escape to the upper regions again, but it would be a mere escape. The Gunlock would still remain victor.

Blake turned to the material and scanned the terrain. With some curiosity he scrutinized the vicious fall which had wrecked them. As he did so Sikes followed his glance.

"Chief," said he impassively, "you sure picked the only rat hole on that scarp that we could ha' skinned through. I'll *say* you did!"

And that was true, but did not interest Blake. That one narrow chute of smooth and unbroken rim through which they had shot had actually been unique in the stretch of the fall's border, and the pool beneath was almost the only deep and rock free stretch of the water below the fall. The fall itself was what interested Blake. It was not a great fall—not more than thirty or thirty-five feet from crest to foot. That was all to the good in view of Mackay's cherished scheme. At this point a very high fall might make complications which would be hard to solve. But this picayune head of water would not obstruct it.

Then to the walls of the cañon. Granite, now, and much rougher and more irregular than they had been above. Here were beaches of rock talus, sand and gravel. Here were buttresses of sloping rock running far up to meet the perpendicular walls. Here were crevices and cracks and seams gouged in the ancient rock by the weather of the ages.

It was still a formidable and daunting situation to contemplate; but if escape had held first place in Blake's mind, he could have garnered hope from the scene. He even saw, here and there on the lofty crags, stunted and twisted vegetation, gnarled evergreen trees fighting for life in the unwelcoming rock, and mountain brush striving to cover, scantily, the barren ledges and seams.

With something like indifference and with nothing of his former fury, he gave his orders. They were obeyed readily, if somewhat listlessly. There was no longer question who was leader. In fact, the matter of leadership had shrunk to insignificance for all of them. With Blake it no longer figured, because it made no difference now whether any followed him or obeyed him. To the others it remained merely as a matter of form, for they had accepted the fact that the expedition was at an end.

THEY made no objection when he ordered the wire tape gotten ready and put Bannister and Carman to work with it. Nor did Manion rebel when he was given the transit and directed to set it up for a traverse. The object was not apparent, yet this bravado in continuing a survey which commenced nowhere and would probably end in the same place appealed to them all. They had failed to conquer the Gunlock, but even in failure they would make the gesture of success, however uselessly. It rather cheered them to reflect on the gallant mockery of it. A laugh in the face of Death.

But it was not that to Blake. He made no confidences nor explained his object to any of them. They had become mere instruments of his will, without sentient existence. While the familiar work tended to rouse them all to badinage and normal loquacity and cheerfulness, he remained absent and remote.

They established a station where they were and set up over it. Then, with Carmen ahead setting new points and with Sikes and Bannister measuring the distances, they began that traverse which had no object in any mind but Blake's. A careful traverse it was, in so far as circumstances permitted. Angles and bearings were carefully taken, distances measured and entered with fair accuracy. The transit had to serve as level also, but Blake even made an effort, rough as it was, to get an approximate line of levels.

This was possible because they had henceforth to keep the shore. It made their going exceedingly slow and much more difficult than it need have been; and, God knows, it was difficult enough in any case. They could not be much more than ten miles from the outlet of the gorge, where dangers would cease, but all of them knew that that outlet, for an unknown distance back, was the worst stretch of the passage; it ended in a swift widening of the granite cañon and a spreading of the fierce waters over wide shallows where fishermen came often for splendid sport with the Gunlock trout. But above, the river came through a sheer walled, narrow cleft with the rush and force of an express train magnified a hundred thousand times. And it was that last stretch of impassable gorge toward which they were working.

More than once during that interminable and weary and dangerous traverse, his men gazed wistfully upward at walls seamed and broken almost to the top, seeking some passage that might offer them a chance. Now and then one appeared that might or might not be feasible.

But, with his lips set tight, Blake paid no heed. He would spend long effort and time in finding a passage along the jagged shore. He ordered them again and again into dangers that were heartbreaking. Where there was no pathway of ledge and jutting point, or weather crack in which toes and fingers might take hold, he always found an embayment or shallow through which they could swim, dragging the wire after them. He carried the empty cylinders strapped about him, and they were as heavy as any man's load. Now and then they were of use as lifebuoys in the swimming, and then he distributed them, only to collect them again when the passage was made.

All that day and the next they worked on, with incredible labor and unbearable weariness. Their clothes were now mere shreds, and among the tatters showed bruised and bleeding flesh. Tough shoes had given way under water soaking and abrasion, and the soles flapped independent of the uppers.

They spent that night in discomfort that would have been misery, had they been able to heed it in the throbbing of weariness and stupor.

And for another day still they resumed that terrible flight. The gesture of toil had become a nightmare, and they rebelled, but Blake drove them on with inhuman lack of passion. And they gave in to him.

TWO MILES they made the first day and two and a half the second. They measured nearly every step of it against terrible difficulties and in the notebooks there grew a fairly accurate survey of the Gunlock, at least for this stretch of it. Carman said that he had flagged every station of it with patches of his hide, and the others regarded this as no exaggeration. If they could have understood why it was done it might have been better for all, but Blake did not explain.

Then at last came the inevitable halt. The Gunlock began to change again. Sometime in the vast past there had been a tremendous extrusion, over a limited area, of volcanic rock. Basalt suddenly cut the granite off and reared smooth

and black and shining flanks in sheer walls to heaven. The gorge narrowed sharply and the buttresses and seams and little beaches vanished. Only rearing black and shining cliffs bounded that vast and narrow crack, through which, with a final, exultant roar, the leaping, whitecapped river plunged in triumph.

There was no passage here!

Blake eyed the impasse and then at last turned his eyes to the cliffs. Granite behind, basalt before. Slopes and seams and terraces on the way they had come, sheer walls on that ahead of them. Where they stood was a shelving beach of sand and above the almost kindly cliffs of gray rock were weatherbeaten and rough, their very ruggedness comforting.

They searched back and forward carefully, with the last of the daylight. And at last they found a seam broken by terraces, a sort of winding, crumbling chimney in the cliff, which, to desperate men, might be scalable. And here, at its foot, Blake established the final station of his traverse. Here they slept, preparatory to the last act of their drama. And here, in the morning, they ate a last meal and stood ready for the ultimate attempt.

There was, roughly, five miles of the Gunlock yet to be passed, but no man born of woman, as they thought, could dare the attempt and live. Had they had a boat they would have tried it. Without one, the trial would be sheer madness.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MASTER OF THE GUNLOCK

SO THOUGHT Manion; so thought the others. But Blake did not think about it at all. He had conquered the members of his party; he had overcome Titanic obstacles; he had emerged so far unquestioned master of them all. But he had not conquered himself, nor had he conquered the Gunlock.

In his mind was a lurking shame and behind that shame a determination to expiate it. He was ashamed that his temper and nerve had given way; though he admitted to himself that had they not, at that particular time, disaster might have befallen. And he was coldly angry that the Gunlock appeared to triumph.

If they could win to the surface again that triumph would be only a modified one; for, though they could not pass the gorge, they would have traversed so much of it that the main object of the reconnaissance would have been accomplished. Mackay's project, considered from what data they now had, was feasible. But it still remained to discover whether it might not be more feasible than present indications showed.

From such data as they had, it would be quite possible to build a dam below the falls. The site was propitious, for the narrowing walls of the basaltic formation formed natural buttresses. But the tunnel would necessarily be longer and more costly if it had to be drilled to this point. Could the dam be placed in the lower cañon, spanning those basalt cliffs, a very considerable saving in money and time would be made.

But there was no way in which those last few miles could be achieved, as far as Manion and the rest could see. To none of them did it occur that Blake would try it. They regarded the expedition as at an end, except for getting themselves out of their predicament. To that last end they girded themselves, rousing their wearied bodies to a last and perhaps harder effort than any that had gone before. And Blake, ordering briefly, gave them no hint to the contrary.

"Manion," he said, "you had better take the lead. Carman next, as the lightest, then Bannister as the strongest, and Sikes to follow. Cut yourself staffs from the driftwood. At the top you may locate some one. If not, and you can find any point of observation, try to sight back on the station here. Carry the notes and the gun strapped securely."

Manion understood and nodded. In the climb he was to take the lead and Blake would bring up the rear. That was

a reversal, but he did not question it or think the worse of Blake. He had given over criticizing and doubting Blake. He judged that the chief gave him the lead because he was the older and more experienced man.

So he and the others almost cheerfully took the cable and tied themselves together, after selecting such staffs as would best serve them from the scattered driftwood. Only Blake remained watchful and solicitous of them but apparently heedless for himself.

All of the empty cylinders were lying on the sand together and only that one containing their notes was now strapped to Manion's belt. Bannister carried the transit and the others were empty handed, for there was no food left.

When Sikes had tied himself into the line they all waited expectantly for Blake. But he coiled the remaining length of the rope and slung it on Sike's shoulder, stepping back.

"All right!" said he. "All set to go, Manion!"

"What's the matter with you?" the suborinate replied. "Aren't you going to tie in? You'll never make it alone."

"I don't intend to make it at all," said Blake.

"Don't intend to make it?"

For an instant a blaze of the old contempt and doubt flashed into Manion's eyes. He had a glimpse of Blake funking the final danger, content to let them essay the climb while he remained below. If they made it they would get help and haul him comfortably up. But Manion barely harbored that suspicion and then conviction came to him.

"What's the matter with you?" he cried. "What are you up to, Blake?"

"Nothing," said Blake. "I'm going on down the Gunlock."

"Are you crazy?"

"No," said Blake. "It is what I started out to do and I am going to do it. Get on to your climb, Manion."

Manion started to untie his rope and dropped it. "I'm damned if I will!" said he. "If you're going down the river I'll go with you."

"You'll obey orders," said Blake patiently. He was quite calm now and Manion's loyalty even made him comfortably warm. "I'm the only one to go. Two would do no good. And those notes must be gotten safely to Mackay if it is possible to do it. You must lead the climb."

"But, man!" cried Manion. "How will you go down the river? How?"

"Swim it," said Blake briefly.

They all looked at him soberly, searching his sanity. But he was sane. Glances swept to the dreadful chute of thunderous water and the brutal black cliffs of the gorge. Sikes spat.

"Gawd Almighty!" he said. "I hope you make it."

MANION said nothing. For a moment he frowned at Blake; for another moment he cast aloft a questing eye upon the cliffs which must be climbed. Blake was right, and that was the pity of it. If the cliffs were to be climbed, he must lead. Neither Bannister, nor Carman nor Sikes was experienced enough in mountaineering to pick the path. He alone could do it. And he was sure that he could not swim the Gunlock. Could Blake? God only knew, but Manion began to believe that if any man could do it, Blake was that man. He shrugged and held out his hand. Blake took it.

"So long!" said he without emotion. "Climb the cliff, old man!"

"We'll climb it or bust!" said Manion. "So long! And the best of luck."

The others came silently past him, shaking his hand. Their farewells were studied, casual, almost gruff. Blake stood smiling slightly and shook the hands one by one with his left. His right was strapped and bound stiffly with tape, for a knuckle was shattered.

"Come on!" said Manion bruskly.

He picked his spot and began the laborious and perilous climb. Skillfully and coolly he negotiated the first difficulties,

coaching his followers as they fell in below him.

The lower slopes were not so bad and they made comparatively rapid progress. Blake stood below with folded arms, watching them as they crawled slowly, like flies up the granite walls. Seams gave them handhold and foothold and small ledges broke the interminable climbing now and then. A hundred feet; two hundred feet were successfully won and the figures of the men became to the watcher small and dwarfted and black against the gray of the rock. For a time he lost sight of them on a larger overhang, and when they again appeared he was cheered by the fact that they had gained with comparatively little effort another hundred feet.

Higher and higher they went, ever more slowly with sickening pauses for long moments that seemed hours on sheer walls to which they seemed to stick by some supernatural means. They were now like insects strung out on the walls. Now they were lost again as they won to the chimney and buried themselves in it.

Blake strained his eyes to see them. Now and then he saw them, or one or two of them, as they crawled over some abutment and came to view. They climbed steadily on. Manion never made a false move, and those with him followed him gallantly. If there were slips and perils, imminent encounters with death, as there must have been, the watcher could not see them.

He bent himself at last to his own task, though he had plenty of time. Running the Gunlock would not take many hours or else it would take all of his remaining hours of life. He intended to start about noon. To that end he carefully clamped together four of the cylinders by their flanges and with spare rope fastened them under his arms as lifebuoys. Two others, which were all that remained, he also clamped, and made loops of rope as handles. He stripped to the waist, paying no heed to the bruises and contusions of his white body.

TIME went by and he again searched the cliff. Tiny dots that might be men were hovering up there almost on the rim. They did not seem to move, but as he strained to continue to hold them in his vision, one of them crawled with exasperating slowness to the very edge of the rocks and disappeared. One after the other the tiny dots followed, until the cliff was blank and bare of life.

Manion had made the climb and was leading the men out of the prison of the cañon.

Blake sighed and stood up, looking upon the waters. The echoes seemed to have become subdued and expectant as if awaiting him. The river seemed to slow down and pause as if to gather its force against him. He stared a moment at the way of peril and then stepped into the water, wading out until the dragging waves tore at his feet and knees. Straight out he went, seeking deep water as far from the fringing rocks as possible.

Waist deep, he lost footing and was carried away. The cylinders buoyed him up and he managed to avoid the first rocks he encountered. Holding to the free cylinder buoy with one hand, he swam with the other. He struck out strongly for midstream, where the water rushed turbidly but unbroken toward the narrowing gorge.

Then the full force of the current caught him and whirled him under and downward. Despite the buoys, his head rolled beneath the surface and his feet gained over his head. He struggled sturdily, but conserving his strength and, as the water smoothed out, by dint of effort he managed to beat his way to a quartering position, head upward against the current as it swept him on and down. He swam only to keep himself from being dragged downward under, for the pull of the sucking water was tremendous.

The basalt cliffs flashed past him, smooth, and unbroken except at water's edge, where jagged points stuck out and lashed the fringing waters into foam. In the center of the stream the river ran deep and mighty, booming like a thousand

thunders. He dragged the cylinders under his chin to help lift his head above the overtaking waves that threatened always to rush over him and force him under. Now he was swimming only hard enough to keep himself afloat, making no resistance to the current.

For what seemed hours this continued. A ceaseless effort and vigilance was required lest he be dragged and rolled under that mighty onrush of heavy flood. The cliffs stretched on either hand, unbroken, forbidding, derisive. He was like a chip caught in the rush of a torrent. If there were submerged rocks to threaten him with broken bones and mangled flesh he did not know it. At any rate none touched him yet. There was only the diabolical roaring of the echoes beating upon his humming ears until they seemed like the strokes of a hammer on an anvil. They hypnotized him, stunned him with their incessant thunder. He beat the water mechanically, with strokes guided by instinct, and clutched with his wounded hand the buoy that sustained his chin.

Now and then he found himself turned and floating head forward. The waters then flowed over him and forced his head down until he choked and gasped. He had to fight and twist with racking effort to regain the safer position and hold it. The river seemed to toy with him, to lull him at one moment only to exercise some subtle hold like a wrestler's which almost overcame him. He was dull with fatigue, numb with pain which he had long ceased to feel.

The gorge narrowed suddenly again and the waters seemed to rise about him. They were sweeping now, no longer almost smooth and unbroken but crowded and surging in waves that fought and beat and raged around him. He was tossed like a tiny bead upon them. They bellowed and screamed and tore at him, or smashed down upon him with demoniac rage. Now head foremost, now feet downward, he whirled and looped and swirled among them, gasping for breath at every opportunity, fighting blindly and desperately with every last remnant of his might.

His strength was going fast and he had no idea how far he had come. He only knew that the end could not be far away. The gorge must end at last or his life must be beaten out of him. But even in his numb desperation one exultant bit of knowledge cheered him on. He had noted that narrowing, sudden and unlooked for, of the gorge. There was the site for Mackay's dam, made to order.

With a last scream of baffled rage the waters seemed to fall away from him. Lessening force, lessening thunder! Foam was curling where solid masses had beaten him. He beat feebly in the smother to raise his head and look. The walls were falling back like the walls of a funnel and the water was spreading and shoaling. Rocks flashed past. One scraped his thigh and then a smother of foam and mist choked him. He was rolled over and over and smashed against a rock. Another caught him and beat him savagely as if in rage that he had conquered. For though his consciousness was going and his last strength was not equal even to retaining hold of his buoy, he knew he had conquered.

He had passed the Gunlock and was riding the rapids at the mouth of its cañon.

A lone fisherman, wading thigh deep in the smother of the rapids, saw a twisted and shapeless figure bearing down upon him, and stared for a moment as it bounced from a rock. Then he cast away his rod and plunged out into the current, reaching for a bandaged hand and arm that showed wanly in the smother. He caught it and held on and, in another minute or two, Blake was hauled ashore and stretched out in the sunlight that beat benignly upon him.

WHEN Blake came back to painful consciousness he was lying in a bedroom of a ranch house. He was wrapped in bandages and splints, and bound securely against movements that would have injured his shattered body.

In the room, too, were a rough visaged but kindly woman whose hands and voice were soft and caressing, a doctor who chewed tobacco as he examined him, and lastly, the stern faced Mackay, gazing down upon him without emotion.

From the next room, which seemed to be the living room, came the voices of many men.

"Huh!" said the doctor as he saw Blake's eyes open. "You come out of it, have you? You sure have got a constitution to be proud of."

He turned briefly to Mackay.

"He'll do now," he said. "Three fractured ribs, a busted hand and a dislocated shoulder. Bruises too thick to count. Can't find any material internal injuries, though he ought to have plenty. Swam the Gunlock, did he? Well, I'll be damned!"

He began to pack instruments into his bag. Blake stared at Mackay and Mackay looked at Blake.

"There's a perfect site for a dam not more than a mile or so up the last stretch of gorge, Chief," said Blake in a feeble croak. "And not a thing to block your tunnel all along the gorge. It's a sure go"

"Humph!" said Mackay. "Damn' glad to hear it. Well, rest up and get well, Blake. We'll need you again."

"Sure thing, Chief," said Blake.

Mackay turned and went out without another word. Manion and Carman, Bannister and Sikes took his place, standing grinning in the doorway.

"Well," said Manion, "damned if you didn't make it, Chief!"

"I'll say he did," echoed Carman.

Bannister added:

"Rest up and get going again, Chief. We're going to need you. This is going to be a whale of a job."

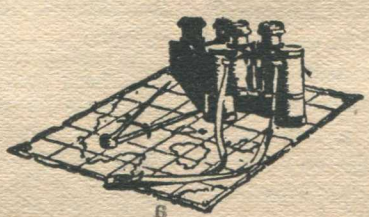
"When you're ready for me again," said Sikes, "I'll be hanging around, Boss."

Blake gazed at them, seeing them through a sort of mist. They, too, were tattered and battered and bruised. They did not seem to be aware of the fact at all. They were good men, all, Blake thought.

"All right, boys; I'll be out soon," he said.

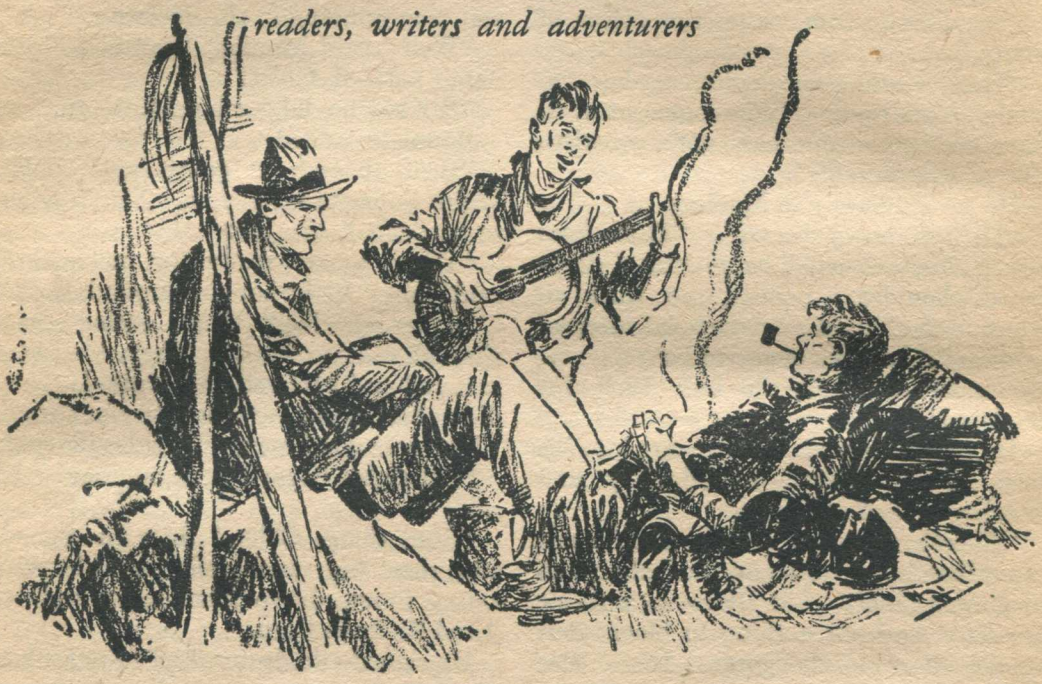
"Sure thing, Chief," they all echoed, and then the ranch mistress, who was acting nurse, drove them away and ordered Blake to sleep.

He sighed and dropped off to unbroken slumber.



The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers



To Tristan Da Cunha

CAPTAIN DINGLE, Captain Masterson and Captain Bleese all have offered the same services as this friendly correspondent. I must confess that the bulk of contributions for our project, thus far received, would not warrant any project this ambitious. We will have a good shipment, as matters now stand—but it will occupy much less than the cargo space of a schooner, or even of a converted lifeboat. I certainly wish to thank Comrade Conaghan for his offer, however.

Dear Sir,

Have just finished reading for the *n*th time the Camp-Fire section of the May 15th number, and especially the letter from Tristan Da Cunha; and the object of this letter is to ask you, is it not practical to deliver that stuff ourselves?

What I mean is this: To get a ship's lifeboat, deck it over and rig it as a ketch or yawl, sail it down there and then continue on to Australia and up through the Islands of San Francisco as an advertising medium and also to bear fraternal greetings to the lodges east and west.

Ralph Stock did it cheap enough, and I believe got a handsome profit out of the trip. Most of the ship yards have a large selection of lifeboats that I imagine could be picked up cheap enough. A thirty-five or forty-foot lifeboat, properly converted and strengthened, would carry a considerable quantity of cargo.

As regards myself, I am at present a sailor, but have been studying and doing a little practical navigation for the past three years, intending to sit for a second mate's license as soon as I have citizen papers.

Owing to the new immigration laws getting me where the chicken got the ax, I have to wait at least two more years. Now if you think my suggestion practical, I will willingly take the vessel, supply my own needs, with the exception of the compass and chronometer which are beyond my pocket, on the trip starting from New York sometime during the summer of 1929.

I have eleven years sea experience in sail and steam under three flags, and can produce recommendations testifying to my sobriety, etc.

If this meets with your approval a letter to Box.

No. 492, 25 South Street, New York City will bring me on-the-double.

Wishing you continued success with *Adventure*, and a longer Camp-Fire, I remain, fraternally,

JOHN CONAGHAN, *S. S. Derbyline*, At Sea.

Overload

A READER who was politely curious concerning an extra-lethal load used by a character in Frank R. Pierce's story, "Courage," seems to have the deadwood on Pierce and the editorial staff of this magazine. Like Pierce I have used—and own—a number of rifles—but it did not occur to me to question the grains of powder and lead used against such gigantic game. The only Kodiak bear I ever saw was a monster female, accompanied by two cubs. She looked to me like a Mallet locomotive—only, able to run without tracks. I didn't feel inclined to bother her . . .

Pierce's letter—

Dear Mr. Lee:

Mr. Rud, editor of *Adventure*, forwarded me your letter of June 9th regarding the story, "Courage."

We who write for *Adventure* appreciate the fact many experts in various lines are numbered among its readers; and for that reason we are very careful to be accurate.

While I have several rifles and shotguns I frankly admit I am not an expert on the fine points of ammunition. Last year I planned to hunt brown bear this Spring. It was one of those plans a man gets into his head; gives him a kick thinking about it, then falls through. Eventually I shall go. It so happened I wanted a heavier outfit than the .30-30 I used in this country. I asked a friend of mine who hunts a lot up there what he used. He told me and I noted what he said, and later used the information

Missouri Meerschaum

Oh some may sing of Danhalls, Sassy-Annies and Ben Mades,
And sundry other snobbish pipes of divers shapes and grades;
But these become mere bric-a-brac to decorate the walls,
To my Missouri meerschaum from the store at Whoosis Falls!

The weather may dodge zero, or it may be hellish hot;
Perhaps Jupe Pluvey's gone on strike—again, perhaps he's *not!*—
But I will smile through any drought, look cheerful through the squalls,
With that Missouri meerschaum from the store of Whoosis Falls!

El Butler said that pigs is pigs—well, maybe that is so;
'Tis well to call a spade a spade (but some folks *don't*, you know!)
But a corncob ain't a corncob—it's a *treasure*, one recalls,
In a cool Missouri meerschaum from the store at Whoosis Falls!

So when my millions vanish, when I've left but one thin dime,
I won't despair or cuss my luck—'twould be a waste of time!
I'll buy a plug of Nigger Twist, and grin, whate'er befalls,
With a sweet Missouri meerschaum from the store at Whoosis Falls!

And when I'm called to answer for my many earthly sins,
And blister on the red hot grate, while old Mephisto grins,
I'll be content if I may smoke—forget my pitchfork galls,
With my old Missouri meerschaum from the store at Whoosis Falls!

But if, by some mischance of Fate, I join the angel choir,
I wont waste time a-strumming tunes on sackbut or on lyre;
I'll saunter down the Golden Streets till Gabey's trumpet calls—
With my Missouri meerschaum from the store at Whoosis Falls!

—H. W. GLEASON.

in my story, "Courage." It is evident he made a mistake; and the next time I see him I expect to make a few coy remarks.

Naturally you wanted to know all about such a husky rifle, and I am glad you brought the matter to my attention; for I do, as other *Adventure* writers do, strive to be accurate. Respectfully—FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE, Seattle, Washington.

Fireman

KARL W. DETZER, whose short story "Flesh" appears in this issue of *Adventure*, has a word to say concerning his fictional background.

Ever since I was two years old and my father held me up to a window to watch a blazing schoolhouse (I remember it clearly) I have been interested in the fight against fire. One night I rode six miles to the stockyards on the running board of Truck 9, in South Water Street, Chicago; I lent a hand on the Burlington fire with Engine 27 (which was one of the 99 pumpers working); I've eaten smoke with Engine 13 (there's a scrappy lot!) and with 98 and 5 and 32, and have bunked out scores of times with Squad 1, the "suicide squad" of the Loop, a reckless rescue crew. And in New York I've rolled with the boys, and in Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Marshalltown, Iowa, and in Indiana, and Kentucky and Michigan.

I'm not a pyromaniac. But I like the smell of battle, the great odds, and the elemental vigor of the fight against fire. Firemen, with their brothers in the coast guard, are our plumed knights of today.

Only last week I held a nozzle in a smoky scrap with a burning oil warehouse at Traverse City, Michigan.

As to the detective story. In 1916 I was one of the brave boys who rushed down to the Rio Grande, to keep Villa from annexing Texas. I patroled the border from Resaca de la Palma to Llano Grande. Then to France, and a captain of infantry, A. E. F. Then in 1919, I commanded one of the sectors of the American Secret Police (D. C. I.) in Europe. A thrilling job. Bad men of all nations, gangsters, grafters, thugs challenged law and order. We broke them, but not until many of our men had died with their boots on. So much of my police fiction has a European background.—KARL W. DETZER.

And the Best of Luck, Comrade!

MR. WILTON speaks up for the first and possibly the last time—to tell us of a colorful life now nearing its final curtain. He asks me to print the following sketch—and I am mighty glad to do it in this, the first possible issue. May the dread malady from which he suffers, stay its deadening cruelty!

MEMORIES

I am going to intrude myself in the circle of the Camp-Fire, not being a writer or an adventurer in the true sense of the word, but just a reader and a drifter; so all I can throw on the Camp-Fire is a burned match, which I shall designate, "Memories."

Had I the vocabulary and the descriptive powers of some writers, I could probably earn a few dollars from my experiences in almost thirty years in show business. I am fifty-eight years old. In my younger days I played the old-time honky-tonks in the West; also the old-time medicine shows, or what we used to call "physic troupes"; from that I played with my wife (married in 1900) to the finest vaudeville theatres in America, from the smallest wagon show, five wagons—and the ten head of stock that pulled these wagons were totally blind, and so weak from hunger they had to be lifted to their feet with seat planks—a couple of months in Carroll County quarantined with yellow jack, 1897, the last big epidemic they had in the U. S. That was in the Yazoo Mississippi Delta, I was with that outfit from the 1st of April until the 21st of December, and received the magnificent salary of $8.05. The last ten miles it rained five days, and it took just those five days to pull into Sidon, Mississippi. I quit, although the year previous, 1896, I had been with the Robinson-Franklin Show, a twenty-eight car show with plenty of "Grifters."

Well from that I graduated, with my wife, to all of the big ones, 4-Paw-Sells, Wallace, Hagenbeck, Ringling, and the Barnum show, also including the Gentry Dog and Pony Show, and two of the best and cleanest carnival companies—at that time Con. T. Kennedy and Herbert A. Kline Shows. Before I was married I played India, Burma, Siam, French Indo-China, and as far up in China as Shanghai. My wife and I have played every hole and corner in the U. S., Canada, Mexico, Central America, and the Northern part of S. America. Also most of the big State fairs in the U. S., and all the big fairs in Canada. So I can say I am a drifter to a certain extent. Now I am, what they call a Shut-In, being crippled with neuritis, with the "end of the trail" not far off.

Now down to brass tacks. When my wife and I were with the Con. T. Kennedy Carnival Company, working under the name, "Up Side Down Zeraldas," we played the Salem, Oregon State Fair. I had charge of the free attractions in front of the grandstand. I also did the announcing for the acts. Opening the Program was a man demonstrating Remington Arms and Ammunition; and the shooting this man did was wing shooting; and he did some of the most wonderful shooting I ever saw. For instance, laying a repeating rifle on the table, he would throw a brick, as far as he could, pick up his rifle, break the brick and then hit another piece, before *it* hit the ground! In all his shooting he had his rifle or shotgun lying on the table; except when he shot at a large size marble with an automatic pistol and he hit it the first time. In shooting at

clay pigeons, he threw them with his right hand, with gun lying on the table; and if my memory serves me right he broke at least five, probably six. I saw this man do these things day after day, so I know it was no fluke.

One day he took me to his tent and showed me a repeating rifle, with a solid ivory stock and forepiece, made from a mastodon tusk. He told me he got it in Alaska. The butt of the stock was pure black, and the forepiece was a dark brown. He said he valued the rifle at $1,000.00; what a trophy for *Adventure's* curio museum! Now here is what I would like to know. *Was that man Donegan Wiggins?* I never had a chance to meet him; if so anyone who wants any information, regarding guns or ammunition, all I can say is he knows what he is talking about. Adios!—DELL WILTON.

Shoulder Patches

THIS SOUNDS like a unique collection. Has any comrade pursued the same hobby, by any chance?

I have enjoyed your Camp-Fire, of the *Adventure*, for a long time and always read it first.

I am trying to make a collection of the cloth shoulder patches as worn by the United States troops during and since the World War. I lack several of them and wonder if any of the other readers can help me?

Any one having one he will part with, please drop me a card giving description and price.

I have quite a few U. S. military badges and buttons and will be glad to help any other collectors of such.

Hoping you may be able to print my request, and hoping that "Long may the Camp-Fire burn" I am —HUBER C. DAMERON, Box 53, R. F. D., No. 2, Hannibal, Missouri.

A Long Vacation

THE FOLLOWING letter, passed along to us by Comrade Sutton of New York City, seems like a whale of an opportunity for any brother afflicted by an itching foot—or fin!

Do you by any chance know of a shipmate of the right sort who might be interested in sharing the building and cruising of a 60-foot auxiliary yacht with one or two happy-go-lucky fellows?

Two of us who lived seven years on the *Ethelsa*, which we recently sold, are now designing a boat for ocean cruising. We expect to spend two or three years on preparations, designing and building, and then perhaps four years making good our first 360 degrees of longitude.

The assistance and companionship of one or two shipmates would be very welcome, if they and we could find ourselves congenial.

If you know anybody to whom such an adventure might appeal will you be so good as to connect us up?—EDWARD BLADE, Belvedere, California.

Rawhide Ropes

COMRADE SPARKS, long connected with rodeos and exhibition contests in our American West, raised a question concerning the possibility of spinning a rawhide rope. The incident occurred in a late story by L. Patrick Greene.

Mr. Greene's reply:

This is an answer to your letter, dated March 2nd, 1928, addressed to *Adventure*.

The editor forwarded it to me with a request that I answer it.

Now about that point you raise *re* "rope spinning" with a rawhide rope. Honestly, I feel like a worm telling an eagle how to fly, for, I frankly admit, my personal knowledge of rope spinning goes very little further than seeing the fellows perform at the rodeo at the Madison Gardens several years ago.

The "little further" amounts to this: A man I knew in the British South African Police hailed from Texas: He used to entertain us at times with rope tricks. And I am quite sure that he used, sometimes, a rawhide rope. Indeed, I vaguely remember that he once commented on the fact.

And (I am doubtlessly exposing myself to a charge of colossal ignorance) I don't see why not. I have seen rawhide ropes (we call them *reims* in South Africa) as smooth and as pliable as silk—though, as a general rule, they are quite the contrary.

The best *reims* are made from giraffe hide and, after being properly stretched and scraped for days and days by natives, with glass, become, as I have said, quite smooth and pliable.

Just the same, in future stories, Drury will not use a *rawhide* rope!

Thank you for your letter, your interesting criticism and the "pat on the back" contained in your last paragraph. Sincerely yours—L. PATRICK GREENE.

Cum Grano Salis

WHEREAS our *Ask Adventure* department is run by genuine experts in their branches—and mis-statements occurring there wring from us our very heart's blood, we cannot pretend to check and corroborate every statement made in letters to Camp-Fire. Many of the most interesting letters published in past times have been found—on close scrutiny by thousands of readers—to

stretch the truth somewhat. When a territory is "unexplored," and a comrade relates his experiences on a trip through it—well, we let him tell it. Perhaps some time another comrade arises with indignation in his voice, and states conflicting facts.

Well, that's all right. That's why we have a Fire.

I may state that several protests like the following, sent to C. R. M., have been returned unclaimed.

It is easy enough for anybody who knows Mexico to believe that emeralds may be found in her unexplored mountains; but, if the gentleman who tells the emerald story in the Camp-Fire department of March 15, is not more exact about the pebbles which proved to be emeralds than he is about the trail to and from Chilpancingo, the emerald story will have to be taken with a little bit of salt.

It is true enough that Chilpancingo is a bit inaccessible direct from Mexico City, but people have been going there by more or less direct routes for many long years. Whether the date assigned to this gentleman's story is 1925, or "twelve years ago" as he says in another place, there were railroads from Mexico City to within striking distance of Chilpancingo; while, if one were willing to go round about a little, it was easy enough to reach the coast at several points from which passage could be gotten to Acapulco, from which Chilpancingo is not a serious journey. I do not now remember how far the railroad between the two cities had got along at just that time, but it would help some.

But the story of the return from Chilpancingo to Mexico City by the way of Nicaragua is highly fantastic. No sane person would even dream of undergoing the toil and difficulties of those many hundreds of miles of travel to make the short distance involved; there are too many alternates at hand. One could go down from Chilpancingo to Acapulco, and within a reasonable time find passage to Salinas Cruz, from which there is railroad connection to Vera Cruz and thence a railroad to Mexico City. Or one could go by roads that are no boulevards but are passable to Oaxaca, from which there is a direct railroad to Mexico City.

I suspect that the young man wrote the letter you published, instead of saying Nicaragua, meaning to say Tehuantepec, and had the former of the two routes I suggest in mind. —WILLIAM P. F. FERGUSON, Keystone Heights, Florida.

It is Excellent—But Is It Dumas?

THE SEPTEMBER fifteenth issue of *Adventure* will start a three-part serial novel which I sincerely believe to be the greatest feature brought out by any American all-fiction magazine during 1928. It is "D'Artagnan," a fragmentary *unpublished* sequel to "The Three Musketeers" by Alexandre Dumas, translated and completed by H. Bedford-Jones!

It is a splendid, swiftly moving, dramatic story of action and intrigue, in which Athos, Porthos, Aramis, D'Artagnan, Richelieu the Red Cardinal, Anne of Austria, King Louis, and that sinister confessor, Father LeClerc, play principal rôles.

Of course one question immediately arises. Mr. H. Bedford-Jones, steeped as he is in the lore of Paris and old France, is much more than a competent translator. All of us who know his stories, grant him that, I have no doubt. But just how well can *any* living man take unto himself the rapture and the zest of Alexandre Dumas, the master?

Adventure invites letters and essays of searching criticism. In order that these may be rewarded adequately, five *double* prizes are offered for the five criticisms judged best.

The first half of the prizes will be of genuine appeal, no doubt. To each of the winners *Adventure* will send a hand-bound copy of the novel in full leather. In each volume will be found one page of the French original manuscript, in the handwriting of Alexandre Dumas! H. Bedford-Jones will autograph each volume.

How about it, you chaps who are proud of your libraries?

To the same five who win the books, Adventure will send five checks, each of $100.00. The letters or essays will be judged on this basis:

1. Is the story *good* Dumas—does it rank with "The Three Musketeers," for instance?

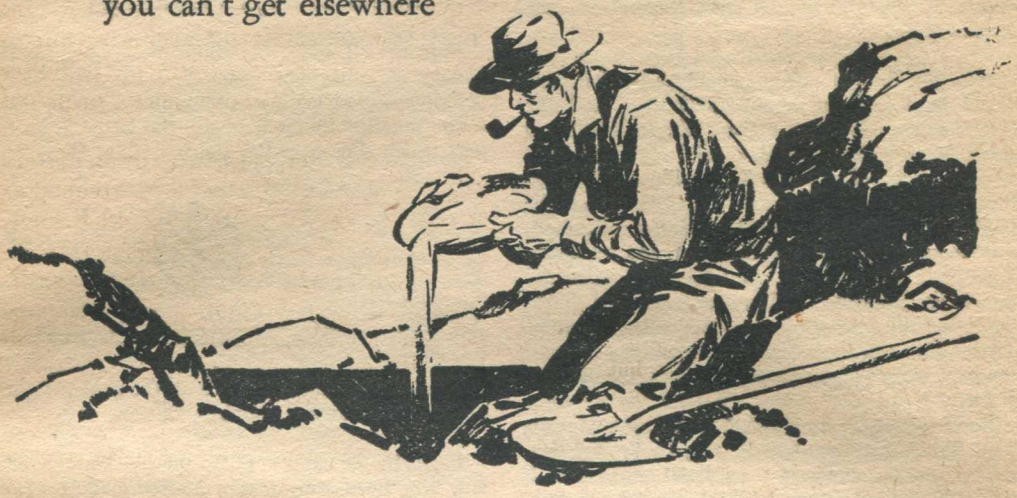
2. How much of the novel is Dumas, and how much was supplied by H. Bedford-Jones?

No one is barred from the contest except the employes of The Butterick Publishing Company, and their families.

—ANTHONY M. RUD.

ASK *Adventure*

For free information and services
you can't get elsewhere



Battle Incident

THE FIRST time in history that troops of the United States fought under British command.

Request:—"Will you kindly give the facts as far as you are able in connection with an incident that took place during the late war, regarding the entry of U. S. troops into the front line, I think either without orders, or against orders. The late Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig made some mention of this during a dinner given to the American Legion in London last year."—F. N. S. JOY, Miller Sta., Gary, Ind.

Reply, by Lieut. Glen R. Townsend:—The incident referred to by Earl Haig in his speech to the American Legion delegation in London last October is believed to have been connected with an attack by British and American troops in the Hamel sector, near Amiens, on July 4, 1918. The remark was to the effect that "an American unit, which I need not specify, joined in a not inconsiderable battle without orders. I understand the incident was the cause of no little anxiety and alarm among all connected with it except the troops concerned." In an interview with newspapermen after the speech the late field marshal said that the unit he referred to was the 132nd Infantry of the 33rd Division.

According to newspaper accounts published at the time of Earl Haig's speech or soon after, the War Department records throw little light on the incident. Participants however recalled the affair as follows: The 33rd Division was ordered to the Hamel sector for training soon after reaching France and units of the division were placed in the line with similar units of the British army, in this case Australian troops, the command of the sector remaining with the British. The Americans, according to orders from GHQ, were to go into action only in an emergency.

Hamel, which gave its name to the sector, is situated on high ground and was then in possession of the Germans. From it they were able to maintain observation over a broad area of the British position. The British command therefore determined to capture Hamel in order to straighten the lines and to deprive the enemy of its use for observation. The plans were laid for an attack on the early morning of July 4. When the news reached American Headquarters it was held that this was not an emergency warranting the use of American troops under British command and orders were issued for the withdrawal of American units in the sector.

Major General George Bell, Jr., who was in command of the 33rd Division, withdrew most of the American units but found that Companies C and E of the 131st Inf., and Companies A and G of the 132nd Inf., which were in the front lines could not be withdrawn without seriously disrupting the plans

for the attack. General Bell died about a year before Earl Haig mentioned the incident so that his own account is not available. But members of his staff assert that he felt that the situation was not as well known at GHQ as at his own headquarters and decided that this was a case where he would be justified in interpreting orders in the spirit rather than in the letter. In any event he disregarded the order so far as the four units mentioned above were concerned and permitted them to go ahead with the attack as the officers and men themselves were anxious to do.

The attack was successful and Hamel was captured. The four American companies participating would have included about 1,000 men, and the official reports show that they lost 15 killed and about 75 wounded. In his official report General Bell said: "The chief of the Fourth British Army on the afternoon of July 3 received orders from the British Commander-in-Chief to withdraw all American troops prior to the attack that was scheduled at 3:10 A. M. on July 4. But the four companies were in the front lines and in such a position that it was impossible to withdraw them without calling off the attack in that sector. Accordingly the four companies participated in the attack on the morning of July 4."

Both the 131st and 132nd Infantry regiments were Illinois National Guard troops. Besides testing the moral courage of the general officer who, if things had gone wrong, might have lost his command, the incident had other interesting aspects. It was the first time in history troops of the United States fought under British command. And the action demonstrated both the willingness and the ability of the American national army to fight and so added greatly to the morale of the British and the other allies.

Secret Service

SOME general information on this most romantic branch of the Government, often called "the invisible eyes and ears of the Nation."

Request:—"What department does the United States Secret Service operate under? What are the requirements for this service? Is this work appointive or under Civil Service?"—TOM JONES, Wilmar, Minn.

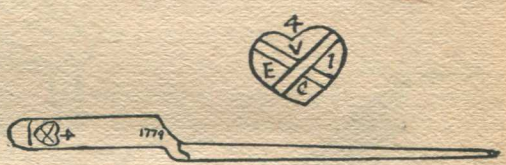
Reply, by Lieut. Glen R. Townsend:—There are two branches of the Secret Service, or rather bureaus of that name in two different departments of the Federal government. One is a bureau of the Treasury Department. Its work is largely the detection and prosecution of counterfeiters but is also employed in work of this nature for other activities of the Treasury Department.

The other Secret Service is a bureau of the Department of Justice. It is more correctly known, I believe, as the Bureau of Investigation. It deals with general matters and offenses under the Federal laws. Operatives in both of the Services are appointed under Civil Service regulations and information about appointment and vacancies may be obtained from the Civil Service Commission, Washington, D. C.

Bayonet

A RELIC of the days when Big Business boasted private armies.

Request:—"I wish you would please give me the history of a bayonet which I own. Here is the description or rather inscriptions on it: On the blade is the number 13—in a square the letter S, on the part which slips over the gun barrel are these:



The letters in the name are all the same height."—CARLYLE MORRIS, Columbus, Ohio.

Reply, by Mr. Robert E. Gardner:—Your bayonet is a very interesting piece. It was made by Henshaw, cutler and gunsmith of Cambridge, for the (Venerable) East India Company. The date 1779 is that of manufacture.

Queen Elizabeth granted the East India Company a charter on December 31, 1599, and the company continued operations until 1858. For the protection of their trading posts the company maintained quite a military and naval force. Your bayonet was made for the line troops and the numerals 13 and 4 are, perhaps, the designation of the company or regiment to which it was issued.

Northland Travel

A JOB for intrepid men and stout hearted dogs—crossing this gale swept ice cap shaped like a gigantic watch crystal, whose bleak surface harbors no game nor offers other recourse from the frightful winds than just digging in.

Request:—"1. What, in your opinion is the longest distance a sledge team might make carrying provisions for the entire trip?

2. What would be the best type of sledge to use on the ice cap in the interior of Greenland?

3. How much, and what kind of food does a dog team eat per day?

4. What is the best type of cooking apparatus for sledge work where no natural fuel is to be found? A suitable list of eats would also be much appreciated.

5. Are soup and meat tablets any use for sledge

work; and would saccharine tablets be as effective as real sugar?

6. Could thermos flasks be used as a saving of time and possibly fuel?

7. Having in mind the way 'Hay boxes' are used for cooking purposes, could the idea be extended to sleeping bags?

8. Where seal oil lamps are used what is the average amount used per day?

9. On an average, how much oil can be extracted from one seal?

10. The name of a handy and reliable tent would also be welcome.

I intend making a trip to the interior of Greenland and if I thought it possible would consider going right across the continent.

Do you think it is feasible for an amateur?"

—WILLIAM A. McLEOD, Manaos, Brazil.

Reply, by Mr. Victor Shaw:—1. The longest sledge trip of which I know, where supplies were all packed on the sledges, was that made by Admiral (then Lieut.) Peary on his trip across northern Greenland at the time (1895) when he discovered and named Independence Bay and established the insularity of Greenland.

All supplies for dogs and two men were carried with them, and of course the route covered was through absolutely barren terrain where there was no game of any sort. They ran short of supplies before reaching the polar coastal plain bordering the polar shores; but Peary banked upon finding musk oxen there and kept going just the same. Luckily, he was correct and the musk oxen were sadly needed, too.

That distance was about 750 miles—a round trip of 1500 miles. You may judge from this that a trip of 500-odd miles is about the limit, for your dogs will themselves eat the excess carried on additional sleds. Peary was of course an expert on concentrated foods, and on packing.

2. Peary's sledges, however, have been adversely criticized as being too heavy. He used the Innuit *kamotee* sledge, which is of very heavy drift woods bound with sealhide and reinforced by walrus ivory on runners. The Nansen type of sledge is excellent. I had working drawings of that sledge for years, but lost them in a fire that destroyed my house up here, in 1925. I believe you may get this data however from Anthony Fiala, whose location now is 25 Warren St., New York City, N. Y. The proper construction is light, second growth hickory for frame, all lashed with rawhide to insure flexibility. Fiala commanded the Zeigler Expedition to Franz Joseph Land in 1901, and can give you the best information on dogs and dog handling, as well as upon sledge construction.

3. Most explorers in barren regions feed dogs pemmican, one pound per head per day. Feeding is usually done at end of day's work. Fiala informed me that he always kept an open keg of suet in the dog's tent and he was never troubled by dog-worms or distemper—two banes of the Arctic.

4. The best type of cooking outfit for such work is undoubtedly the "Primus Stove." It burns kerosene under air pressure, and is light, compact, safe and portable, beside being economical of fuel. It will boil a 5 gallon tin of hard packed snow in 20 minutes.

5. Beef and soup cubes are both good to use—hot and nourishing food on short notice.

As to saccharine, it is a chemical substance derived from coal tar (one of the hundred coal tar products) and contains no real sugar. It will of course sweeten a drink, a cup of coffee takes the least you can pick up on a dry toothpick, but is not advisable either in the Arctic or elsewhere. Physicians tell me that it has a depressing effect on the heart. In addition, explorers stint themselves less on the sugar ration, because the high carbon content makes for body heat. Sugar is an excellent *food*, saccharine is not so in any sense. Medical men advise its use sometime in cases of diabetes. Before prohibition days, the State of Massachusetts prohibited its use by breweries.

CARRY sweet chocolate, pemmican, beef cubes (or the meat soups) lime or lemon tablets, tea, dates, dried meats and fish, evaporated vegetables of various kinds for actual sledge work. Select according to personal taste. But at your main base you can of course have any variety of ordinary food stuffs; except that you select the sorts which contain the most vitamines and heat producing qualities. Avoid much tinned food; they are economical of neither space or price. Take sweets, like molasses and corn or maple syrup. Eggs may be kept when candled fresh and packed in salt, or in water-glass, salt being most economical. Evaporated eggs I've found not so good. Evaporated potatoes however are very satisfactory, and are anti-scorbutic. Your base camp will also have a comfortable assortment of dishes, etc.

Go easy on liquor and tobacco. Beiderbick told me that the men to go first at Cape Sabine (Gen. Greeley's ill-fated expedition) were the habitual users of both—all those who survived had never used either. That was actually the survival of the fittest, for had the *Thetis* been delayed another day all would have been found dead.

6. Thermos bottles would be both handy and advisable for hot beef broth, or hot tea could be taken without lost motion on a day's journey, or save time at some quick camp. Yes, fuel saver, also.

7. I advise you to communicate with Fiala, stating your plans. He outfits explorers' expeditions. You may write for his catalog to the address mentioned above. He puts out a sleeping bag which is one of the best on the market, light weight and sanitary and built correctly from his own personal experience in the field. Don't think you need bother with new wrinkles on sleeping bags. Matter of fact, if you start from the west coast of Greenland, you could get fine fur bags of Innuit manufacture for around 15 to 20 kroners each. They are fur inside, with a hairless waterproof cover of *ookjuk* seal—all sewed with caribou sinew. They are fairly heavy,

but are far too warm to use anywhere but Greenland or like latitude. I tried to use one in the Maine woods, and had to quit in December. The Fiala bag is plenty warm and light and is easily packed in small space.

8. Seal oil light may be used of course, but it is dirty, and very smelly. For your base camp the Coleman lantern is I think as good a light as any. It burns kerosene under pressure and gives a light more powerful than the ordinary electric light. Costs one cent a day to burn. Pocket flashlights would be good on a sledge trip, and piece out with candles. The native seal oil lamp burned with the fat open uses about one pound of seal blubber a week, for average nightly use.

9. Can't recall total oil from a single seal—perhaps around 10 to 15 gallons.

10. I found that a round Odean tent was the best for ice work. This tent has waterproofed floor and walls all sewed in solid to the top. Can be pitched with a single bamboo pole made in sections, and set upon snow, ice or slush and not wet bedding inside. Its shape catches wind perhaps less than any other, and it may be guyed by fastening ropes to bridges cut in ice, or by stones, or patent stakes driven into dirt or hard snow. Made in various weights, from balloon silk to light and heavy canvas.

AS TO the advisability of tackling a Greenland crossing:

It depends upon time of year, your general health, adaptability, and experience on outdoor trails. You know, I suppose, that you sink the landmarks, same as leaving shore by ship. Hence you must know something of navigation; enough at least to be able to take a meridian altitude of star (or sun at extremely low angle) and plot your position doubtless with an artificial horizon. Otherwise, even if you did not get many miles off course, you'd not hit a given objective on the further side. The interior is an ice cap shaped like an immense watch crystal, rising from about 2,000 feet altitude along the coast to 8,000 and 10,000 feet in the central portion. Frightful gales sweep across this smooth surface in the winter and spring and no possible shelter except digging in.

I crossed the Cap from head of Olricks Bay (north Greenland) to Wolstenholm Sound in '99. We used a common sextant, and excavated a hole in hard snow with axes for wind protection. The surface of the Cap in summer is fairly hard, though the sun softens it to make tough pulling for the dogs at times. I'd say your best period would be from July 20 to September 15th. Nansen crossed from Lōwenorn, on the east coast, to Gotthaab on the west coast, in 1888. Can't give details here, but you may find the account of his trip published in book or pamphlet by applying to the Royal Geographical Society.

The advantage of traveling from east to west is that you land on an inhabited shore, and will be able perhaps to take a Danish steamer out that same fall if desired. There is but one native village on the east coast, Angmagssalik, but there are many on the west side from Upernavik to the extreme north, through Godhaven, Holstenborg, Sukkertoppen, Julianehaab, Narssalik, Ivigtut, Arsuk, Kagsimiut, and Frederickshaab just north of Cape Desolation.

I'd say your worst complication might be the care and driving of your dogs. It will be a tough job getting your outfit from tide water up to the Cap above the coast range, but from there on the going is good until you reach similar rough travel on opposite side.

Of course, you must obtain special permit from the Danish Government, for no one (not even a Dane) is permitted in Greenland south of Melville Bay without such permit. This having been secured, you could get passage on one of the annual summer steamer lines no doubt with little trouble. You will need to inquire of them whether any steamer touches at any point on the eastern coast. I doubt if that is so, in which case you'd need a boat of your own at a very tidy sum.

The only other scheme, as I see it, might be to start from some one of the west coast villages, cross to the east coast and then return again to point of starting.

Waterproof

ONE OF our readers sends in this formula for waterproofing boots, to supplement that advanced recently by Dr. Fordyce.

"In the April 1st issue the Dr. C. P. Fordyce formula for shoe dope is very interesting. My grandfather told me that he inherited from his granddad the following:—

1 part beeswax
1 " good tallow
1 " neat's-foot oil

Heat in a pot, stir thoroughly and pour into cans. I know from years of service it is fine."

—TOM W. WYLES, Highland Park, Ill.

Boat

A FORD motor and a second-hand Navy cutter can be combined to make a fine cabin cruiser at really moderate expense.

Request:—"I am planning on putting a Ford motor into a boat and going to New Orleans and then to the Canal and on around to British Columbia. Could you give me any information as to where I can get blue-prints for boat, and what size boat I would need for a Ford motor?"

—PITT VAN HOOSE, California, Pa.

Reply, by Mr. Henry W. Rubinkam:—In answer to your inquiry about plans for a boat which can

be driven by a Ford motor and would be capable of going by water to British Columbia, the best design I know of is the type of the United States Navy cutters or launches. You could probably buy one of these cheaper than you could possibly build it. You would have to build a cabin on it and put in the necessary equipment for such a voyage yourself, because they come in only the bare hull. There have been many of these sold by the Navy varying in price from fifty dollars up.

A Ford motor would drive such a boat about seven or eight miles an hour. They run in size from eighteen to twenty-six feet. I would recommend a twenty-four or twenty-six foot size. many a fine cabin cruiser has been built up out of these hulls.

If you wish to build the boat yourself I would recommend consulting a naval architect of the caliber of P. L. Rhodes whose address is 103 Park Avenue, New York city. He has designed some very good small boats the plans of which could be slightly altered to fit your case and can be purchased for around a hundred dollars. This is a very low price for good plans.

IN SPITE of the very clear directions that appear regularly at the end of this department for guidance of those seeking information, there are still some readers who disregard the rules, thereby causing inconvenience to the expert in charge of a particular section, to the staff here in the main office, or to both. As a case in point, sometimes as many as a third of the letters addressed to Captain Dingle ask for information relative to American shipping, although a glance at his listing in the department indicates plainly enough that he answers no questions on this subject, that this subject is covered by another man. Other *Ask Adventure* men have likewise been inconvenienced by numerous questions entirely out of their field.

Again, some readers continue to disregard the rule that questions are NOT to be addressed to the magazine, but direct to the expert in charge. And finally, the matter of including with the questions a self-addressed envelop and FULL POSTAGE. It is manifestly unfair to force the expert to pay postage charges on the conscientious service he offers gratuitously to the reader.

For the better efficiency of this department, then, please let's follow the rules.

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.

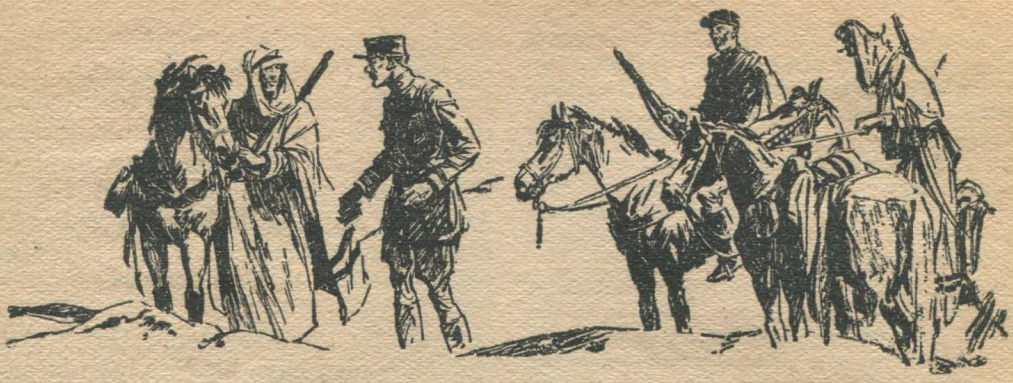
1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.

2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.

3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.

4. **Be Definite**—Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.

The complete list of "Ask Adventure" *experts appears in the first issue of every month.*



THE TRAIL AHEAD

SONS *of the* SWORD

A magnificent novel of the French Foreign Legion and the blazing wastelands of the Occidental Sahara; of officers seeking glory that their names may be acclaimed on the boulevards of Paris, and those who find there in the desert, in constant encounter with the fierce and brilliant cavalcades of the desert tribesmen, the only satiation of their thirst for adventure

By GEORGES SURDEZ

The EXODUS *of* TOBY

Back East he had worked in a gun factory; so he brought with him to the Gold Country two beautiful .44's, to keep him from being homesick. And before long he found they served that purpose admirably—not to speak of one or two others, of vastly greater importance.

By HUGH PENDEXTER

BROOD *of the* EAGLE

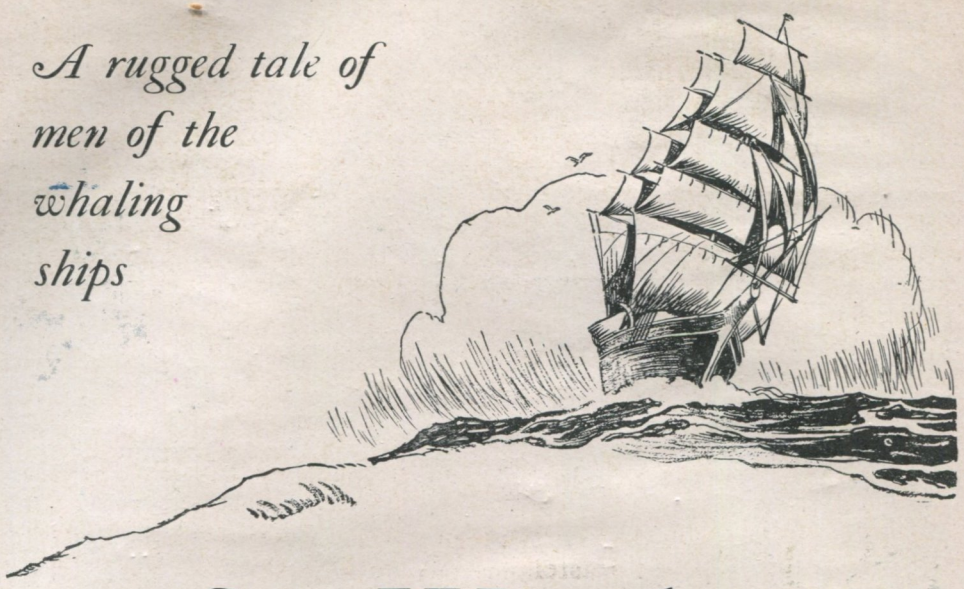
Without doubt one of the finest things Mr. Jackson has ever done — and such prize stories of his as "The Man Who Cursed The Lilies" are classics of their kind—this story of a nerve shattered ex-War bird who found his salvation in the brooding challenge of the giant redwoods.

By CHARLES TENNEY JACKSON

And—*Other Good Stories*

MAN SIZE, a story of the Texas oilfields, by FOSTER-HARRIS; JOYFUL AND TRIUMPHANT, a story of the Montana ranges, by ROBERT CARSE; THE HALLS OF LEARNING, a story of the road builders, by GUTHRIE BROWN; NEPTUNE SPEAKS, a grim little tale of the sea, by FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE; THE JOCULAR PILGRIM, a trick rider with an irresistible funnybone, by BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR; and the last part of THE ROARING HORN, an absorbing novel of perilous seas, by GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND

A rugged tale of men of the whaling ships



Sea Worthy

by CAPTAIN DINGLE

Shanghaied aboard a whaling vessel, a real spouter, a Cape Horner—on her last cruise for sperm, a four year trip. Young Dick Edwards was sullen, scornful of the noble business of whaling, ready for a battle with his fists at any moment.

There's the tang of the salt air, the roar of the stormy seas, the flutter and flip of the windblown sails in this novel of Captain Dingle's. You can begin it in the September EVERYBODY'S. On Sale August 20th at all newsstands.

And you'll find stories by THOMSON BURTIS, RAYMOND S. SPEARS, R. W. ALEXANDER, HENRY LACOSSITT, MILLARD WARD, FREDERICK NIVEN and many others

Everybody's

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