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FOOLS FOR GLORY

HAD the military post at Dar-Tekra been constructed by the Foreign Legion, the officers in charge would have amended the plans for the fortification to fit the actual needs. But as often happens in Morocco, the garrison was doomed to tragedy because some bored employe in a comfortable government office had miscalculated. The small fortress had been erected by a detachment of engineers working from instructions supplied them by the Rabat staff, during a relatively peaceful period in the Middle-Atlas mountains.

There was not a man of the two hundred Legionnaires stationed at Dar-Tekra who was not struck by the manifest shortcoming of the position, twenty-four hours after the Fourth Company occupied the place. A ridge of ground, a few hundred yards to the southeast of the bastions, masked a long section of the road presumably protected by the machine-guns.

As Old Melkheim, the rough-spoken Alsatian lieutenant, who had toted a knapsack at the start of his Legion career, expressed the situation, a man felt as exposed at Dar-Tekra as he would have if found without trousers on the Place de France in Casablanca. And

A novelette

By GEORGES SURDEZ

Alexander Breval, a sub-lieutenant for three brief months, twenty-four years old, approached Captain Carpaux.

Carpaux was middle-aged, a brick-complexioned, graying man who had served as a private with the pre-war Legion and knew the tricks of the trade. He looked at the sturdy, muscular young man who had served more than a fifth of his life in the Corps, from private to officer, and grinned as he read the perturbation in his dark, handsome face. He shrugged, rubbed his big nose with fat knuckles. Amusement was mixed with irritation when he replied.

"You were almost ashamed to speak about it, because it seemed so evident, weren't you?" he grumbled. "Sure, it's obvious that not only does that crest screen off the trail, but also that it dominates this post. I have written one report about it already. But nothing will be done, because it would mean destroying this place and constructing a new one up there. That would cost money, and the big guys of the staff prefer to have us risk our hides a little oftener." The captain sighed, lighted a pipe. "Some fine morning, Breval, we'll leave a few of our carcasses up there on the crest, and some attention will be paid to us."

"And in the meanwhile, *mon capitaine?*"

"In the meanwhile, my young and ardent colleague," Carpaux declared with

some bitterness, "in the meanwhile, we'll do the best we can. That is, occupy that ridge whenever trouble threatens." He dug a thumb into Breval's ribs, "And don't bother telling me that the men I send up there will be hung in the air, isolated, in grave danger, because I know it. Worrying won't help."

"I suppose not, Captain, yet—"

"Breval, you're in the service, and you have to like it as it is."

But Breval did not like it, and nobody liked it. Every time a convoy of supplies was on the road, a section was compelled to leave the safety of the walls to occupy the crest. And that crest was flanked by a ravine in which all the snipers of the Atlas might have lurked unnoticed.

Captain Carpeaux made a second report, a third. But the staff replied that experts had figured out the angles of fire of the emplacement, working from excellent maps of the region, accurate documents drawn from airplane surveys and photographs. It was not possible that the road could be masked for any considerable distance, it was pointed out. In due time, when the already heavy schedule permitted, a special commission would be appointed to investigate on the spot.

When the crest had to be occupied, the sections took turns. Sometimes it was Breval who went up with fifty Legionnaires, sometimes Melkheim, and sometimes the senior-sergeant, Bonifaci, a lanky, leathery Corsican.

Carpaux's company, the Fourth of the Third Battalion, had marched into Dar-Tekra late in the autumn. The winter passed eventlessly. Which does not mean that the usual alarms and incidents did not occur. At irregular intervals, some sniper from the hills prowled on the crest during the night, to shoot at the lights showing inside the post. While these incidents were not without danger, they were welcomed, as the men on guard had an excuse to fire machine-guns, to send up rockets, to disturb their sleeping comrades and break the monotony.

Early in the spring, however, the hostile tribesmen became more active. Long idleness under the snow had made them restless; the keen air tingled in their lungs, swelling their confidence and increasing their abhorrence of the invaders. Life at Dar-Tekra ceased to be quiet. Fatigue parties, detailed to the quarries or gathering wood, were attacked frequently.

ON a splendid morning in May, Carpaux received orders by wire to arrange for the protection of a supply convoy due to pass before Dar-Tekra on its way to the southern chain of outposts and blockhouses. The captain consulted his schedule and announced that it would be Melkheim's turn to hold the crest.

He added that Breval was to sally forth with another section, to serve as a first line of support for Melkheim's men, should retreat to the walls become necessary.

"Watch yourselves today," he said in conclusion. "I feel that the slobs are plotting something. I haven't served twenty years in Africa for nothing. I fairly smell them moving about."

Breval halted his four groups at the position assigned him, midway between the post and the ridge, at the opening of the ravine which yawned like a threatening blunderbuss on the flank of the Alsatian's section. Breval instructed two of his groups to set up their automatic rifles to cover the ravine, keeping the other two as a mobile reserve. Carpaux's last words had impressed him, for his chief was not easily alarmed.

He scanned the countryside carefully, through the glasses. And he noted something unusual at once, a detail which struck him, yet which might have escaped a novice. The usual flocks of sheep and herds of goats were pasturing on the slopes. But the nearer flocks

were without herders, while those more remote, beyond good rifle range, appeared to be tended by too many men.

Sergeant Letzinger, a husky German of twenty-six, who had fought in the trenches of France as a mere boy and had joined the Legion a couple of months after the Armistice, caught the sub-lieutenant's eye and shook his head.

"Something's going on, eh, lieutenant?"

"Looks that way," Breval admitted. He lighted a cigaret, and outlined his plans casually: "If trouble starts, you stick here with your two groups. I'll meet the lieutenant with the others—"

"Understood." Letzinger lifted his hand. "Look at that, they're getting out of sight. Picking up their guns, probably. The convoy must be coming along."

In fact, a signal from the walls of the post confirmed this and urged the outside detachments to precautions. The convoy of pack-mules was coming near. Before long, Breval heard the shouts of the drivers and the cracking of whips on the other side of the crest.

The threat of ambush was in the air.

Minutes dragged by, and Breval was thinking that he had taken alarm too soon. Then the first shot slapped out in the distance and echoed in the hills.

The sub-lieutenant tensed. He surmised, from the direction of the sound, that this shot had been fired as a warning of suspicious activity by one of the vanguard riders with the convoy's escort. His Legionnaires glanced at him questioningly, and he answered with a shrug. It might be the start of an attack—and it might mean nothing.

Other reports crackled.

They were widely spaced at the start, two, three and four at a time. Suddenly, there came the unexpected, coughing sputter of a 1915 automatic rifle, undoubtedly in natives' hands, as that type had long since been discarded by the French. The presence of this quick-firing weapon indicated a determined attack, for Chleuhs do not waste ammunition needlessly.

"Hold on here, Letzinger," Breval called.

He started up the slope toward Melkheim's section. And as he moved forward the ravine spirted fire and dirt was kicked up jerkily thirty yards short of his men. Letzinger's gunners opened fire in retaliation and brought about a rapid cessation of this first fusillade.

Breval broke into a trot.

Silhouetted against the bright sky, standing alone, the lieutenant waved his arm in greeting. Suddenly the air was filled with tumult. Firing had started everywhere, resounding through the hills. The two Saint-Etienne machine-guns on Bastion Two of the post went into action. There was heavy fighting on the other side of the ridge, near the convoy, and Melkheim's men had started to shoot.

Recalling that Melkheim had been instructed to withdraw toward Dar-Tekra at the first sign of trouble, Breval was puzzled to see him holding his position, despite the flanking fire from the ravine. Normally, the convoy should have been out of the danger zone by this time, well within the protected area of the next outpost. Something had gone wrong with general plans.

Melkheim greeted Breval with a grin, pressing his arm in a huge paw.

The lieutenant was sandy-haired, grizzled, appeared ten years older than his thirty-five. The veins showing on his nose and cheeks and the pouches beneath his bloodshot blue eyes showed plainly that he loved the bottle. But he was a sober man on duty. He did not resent the nickname "Old" in the least, aware that his peculiarities of temper, rather than his physique, had earned it.

He directed the new arrivals to combat stations, then explained the situation to Breval.

"The swine have a good system of at-

tack, you know! They slashed the convoy in two places, one some distance north, the other five hundred meters south. So that while the fragment in the lead can get to safety, and the rear can fall back on Dar-Tekra, they've isolated the middle section right below us, trapped it. They took advantage of the fact that this crest screens off the post. As long as we can hold out up here, all will be well. But they have hundreds around ready to fight, and they're probably sneaking through the ravine to drive us away. Once we're forced to retreat, they'll have a good chance at the pack-mules. And what's in the center of the convoy, supposed to be the safest spot? Ammunition, twenty-four cases of cartridges! We can't let them get away with that!"

BREVAL admired Melkheim then. The veteran had definite instructions, could have sought safety at the post without a possibility of being blamed. By staying, he became responsible for the lives of his Legionnaires. But the Alsatian, whatever his faults, did not quibble with his notion of duty and believed in doing things "Legion fashion." And the Legion could not allow cartridges to be captured when seventy-odd of its members were present.

"We may be cut off from the post," Breval hinted timidly.

"Don't fret about that; we'll get back all right!" Melkheim said with confidence.

"But I ordered Letzinger to stick where he is."

"That guy has a pretty good brain," Melkheim stated. "I wouldn't worry about him. Better get down, young fellow. They're doing some nice shooting today. Look!" he passed a finger through a rent in his sleeve.

"What about you?"

Melkheim laughed.

"Me? I'm due to die of delirium tremens, everybody knows that!" Nevertheless, he squatted close to Breval. "Look here, we have to forget orders and fight our little war out here on our own. That is, take a chance, scramble down the slope and into the thick of it."

"That'll do us a lot of good," Breval commented.

It became obvious that he had guessed the enemy's plan. Riflemen were streaming from the ravine in small, galloping groups, which scattered and fanned out into a rapidly spreading, ragged skirmish line. Clusters of them had seeped between the men on the ridge and Letzinger's groups already. Breval saw with satisfaction that the sergeant had initiative, for he was backing off slowly, trying to coax his attackers under the muzzles of the post's machine-guns.

"Didn't I tell you that German had sense?" the old lieutenant chuckled. "Nobody's going to massacre him while he's conscious! A fool would have carried out instructions, stuck there—but he knew right away, when we didn't start back, that we had other plans. We'd better start ourselves, too." He rose and called out: "Attack formation, by groups! Fix—bayonets!"

He swept the khaki groups with a quick glance: "All right, get going!" And he started down the slope toward the convoy, remarking casually to Breval: "One dead already. It's beginning beautifully, isn't it?"

They reached the convoy on the road. The confusion unavoidable in a surprise attack prevailed there. The troopers of the escort were Algerian Tirailleurs, the drivers were Kabyles. But although of the same faith as the mountaineers attacking them, they had no mercy to expect and were fighting desperately.

"Where's your officer?" Melkheim grasped a corporal by the arm.

The man pointed. The officer could no longer worry over his responsibility. He was lying in the dust of the road, his lower jaw shattered, his mangled head resting on reddish mud. He was dead.

"All right," Melkheim grunted. His voice rose to a bellow that could be heard through the uproar: "Steady! Keep steady! Everything's all right! We've come to get you out of this. Steady! Turn your mules around; you're going back! You there, get the cases from that dead mule, stow them on another. Breval, kick some sense into those louts!"

The odor of burnt powder was everywhere, with the reek of sweating animals, the vinegarish scent of spilled wine and a persistent, familiar aroma which came from a sack of coffee ripped open by a missile. The drivers struggled with the mules, the soldiers dodged about and fired. But Melkheim moved his big shoulders through this confusion calmly, confidently. His gestures were extraordinarily quiet and deft as he lent a hand here and there.

"Don't leave ammunition behind. Double the loads when needed. Don't cut that strap, you fool, there's time to unbuckle it—like this!"

In two minutes, he had reorganized the defense. But the enemy seemed to be everywhere. Hillmen were dodging in the tangle of bushes on the slopes, racing across open spaces. It was impossible to estimate how many there were. But they were numerous enough to make considerable trouble for all concerned.

"We've got to get out of here," Melkheim said to Breval. He yelled: "Get the cartridges away." He took time to indicate the crest they had occupied to his sub-lieutenant: "Look at that, they're there already. The swine! Legionnaires," he called to the men who had dropped out of formation to help reload the mules, "follow me!"

One of the convoy's sergeants, a Frenchman, stepped before him.

"Lieutenant, they've blocked the path forty yards from the bend. You better round that curve slowly."

"Thanks for the tip."

Melkheim gestured for his detachment to spread.

And it was fortunate that the Legionnaires did not go ahead in a bunch, for as soon as they passed the bend in the trail, there was a terrifying throbbing, like the explosions of a gigantic motorcycle motor, from a short distance ahead, and the air was alive with whining lead. The old-fashioned automatic rifle heard before had come into action again.

There was no time to confer on methods of attack. Although the first burst had been too high, the next one steadied and cut down a brace of men. The Legionnaires rushed forward, and were close enough to throw grenades in a few strides.

As the hand missiles exploded, the automatic rifle ceased firing. But only for thirty seconds. It reopened from a more secure position, muzzle protruding between two big gray boulders a little distance down-hill from the trail.

"Attend to those swine, Breval!" Melkheim called.

"All right!"

It was not an easy assignment. The man who handled that gun had undoubtedly learned his trade under French instructors. For he caught the gunners of Group Number Three, the best in the company, as they unlimbered their automatic to fight him. In an instant, the corporal who was to fire the weapon collapsed, and his three aides tumbled upon his body.

Seconds meant lives. Breval recklessly ran toward the gun, his dash in reality a panicky flight forward rather than a thought-out, deliberate attack. He dodged to cover twice. A third time, he lay on his back in a sort of natural ditch, reloading his pistol. The sun spilled into his eyes, blinded him. Black shapes hurtled by, and sharp bursts started afresh.

He rose, and three leaps brought him on the gun. The man who was firing

had propped the clumsy barrel on a big stone, and was huddled behind the weapon. Two warriors flanked him, feeding the magazines, the old style half-moon affairs of tin. All three concentrated on the road and probably believed that Breval had been killed.

When he loomed directly over them, the firer writhed to one side, seeking to bring the big muzzle to bear. And the sub-lieutenant smashed his heel into the scowling face. As the others grappled with him, he felt the pistol kick back against his palm. Then he was on the ground, crawling, pulling the trigger when the weapon struck flesh. Then there was nothing, black darkness, until he felt some one shaking him.

"BAD SPOT for a nap, Lieutenant. Better get up."

Legionnaire Rivier helped him to his feet. The private was sweating freely, and the sun gleamed on the beads strung along his unshaven jaws. Breval rose, feeling as if one half of his head were missing. Somehow, he had been smacked in the face by a carbine butt.

"The gun?" he asked as his head cleared.

"We've got it—it's a swell antique," Rivier informed him as he pushed him along gently toward the road.

There, the combat had resumed a more normal aspect. The automatics were in action, checking irresolute rushes as the mules filed by. If Breval expected compliments from Melkheim, he was disappointed. The lieutenant looked at him and laughed.

"You'll have a handsome shiner in the morning, young fellow!" He ran his fingers over the bruise: "No fracture. Lucky escape at that. I wouldn't have given a penny for your hide when you were out there, leaping about."

"I thought I was done for," Breval admitted.

"Bah! You get discouraged easily," Melkheim suggested.

The convoy had gone ahead, into the protected zone. The nearest assailants had vanished. They were brave enough men, but to remain very close to Legion automatics would have been sheer suicide. Melkheim was laughing again, his soft, mirthless laughter.

"Well, we got everything by all right," he said. "But it's been a mess. We dropped eleven men! It's all over, and I'm glad of that!"

There was a metallic hissing, like the lash of a titanic whip. Then a moist, fleshy impact, resembling the sound made by the flat of a cleaver thudding on steak. Breval had recognized the whirring of a ricocheting bullet, and the noise of it striking a human body. He looked about for the victim, then stared questioningly at Melkheim.

"Did you hear—"

He saw the officer's face turning white; the broken veins on the nose showed plainer. It was impossible! And yet—

"Hit?" Breval asked foolishly.

"And how!" the Alsatian replied hoarsely. "Right in the guts!"

"Let's have a look," Breval said, opening a first-aid kit.

"What's the use? I'm croaking!"

"You never know—"

But Breval knew when he had unbuckled the belt and slashed the top of the trousers. Melkheim had fainted.

His abdomen had been torn open, and it was plain from the mess exposed that the bowels were perforated. Melkheim was probably doomed. He must be taken back to the post as soon as possible, and even then, he did not have one chance in a hundred of pulling through.

Breval uttered a brief order.

Two men passed their rifles through the sleeves of a greatcoat, forming an improvised seat into which the wounded officer was lifted carefully. Thus his head rested against the thighs of the

rear bearer, and his legs were hooked over the opposite ends of the rifles.

"Go ahead."

Breval gave orders to break contact and retire slowly. Then he turned active command over to a sergeant—the emergency being over—and walked at the side of his friend.

After a few strides, the pain awoke the Alsatian. He opened his eyes, groaned. Then he realized the situation.

"See here, I'll delay you. Leave me here and get the bunch back to the post."

"You're crazy, Lieutenant."

"Give me a gun!"

Breval understood that Melkheim meant to finish himself.

"No chance," he retorted.

"Give me a gun—I can't stand this all the way in!" the lieutenant cried.

He struggled to rise, fell back limply. The rear bearer, the youth who had reported the first casualty, on the crest, was weeping. He knew that his every movement hurt his chief horribly, and his nerve was breaking.

"Drop me, Breval! It's an order! Drop me!"

Breval wiped his forehead, did not reply. Perhaps, as he was now detachment commander, his strict duty might have been to be concerned with his groups as a whole. But he could not think of leaving Melkheim to die alone. And not a man in the company would have obeyed that order, had he had the courage to utter it.

"Put me down, you swine, put me down!"

For endless minutes, the lieutenant screamed at every stride. Breval had to leave him at times, to direct the rear guard action, for the natives were reluctant to abandon the prospect of loot. Melkheim would swear at him when he returned.

"You're torturing me! It's no use!"

"We're a hundred yards from the post," Breval announced at last. "They're coming out to meet us—with a stretcher for you."

"Letzinger, is Letzinger there?"

"He's there; everything's all right now, Lieutenant."

"All right, all right," Melkheim whispered. "Everything's all right!" He was sinking fast. His struggles had displaced the crude bandages, the blood was seeping through, dripping to the trail, leaving a path of darkening scarlet on the dry dust. He sang out: "All right, all right, everything's all right!"

Then he was silent.

Breval took Melkheim straight to the ambulance, reporting to Captain Carpaux on the way. The captain had telegraphed the central post and a surgeon was flying over.

"Due here any moment now."

The infirmary attendant looked at the gaping wound helplessly. An operation was needed, and he was not qualified to perform it. Melkheim's clothing was cut off his body, he was transferred to a cot. The captain sat by, grasped his hand. He had known Melkheim a long time.

"You're all right, Hanseli," he said over and over again, using an old nickname. "All right. The surgeon will patch you up."

"Sure, he'll patch me up," Melkheim repeated ironically. The sudden calm had brought him some comfort. "Listen, is Breval here?" Breval moved around the cot until he stood before the lieutenant, trying to smile. "Captain, good—good Legionnaire, Breval. Took the gun—took the gun. Got me back, too. Good Legionnaire. Never forget that, eh?" His eyes closed and he spoke with an effort: "You won't forget, Captain?"

"No, I won't forget. Take it easy."

"See that he gets a chance, eh?"

"Sure."

"Breval—don't drink—like me. Thirty-five—all shot anyway. Done for—lieutenant, that's all—thirty-five, too

much drink—not sorry, though. Give me some wine—"

The infirmary attendant shook his head.

"No drinking, abdominal wound, Captain."

"You hear that, Hanseli? You mustn't drink."

"*Bon dieu!* I'm going to die anyway."

"You won't die."

Melkheim smiled faintly, closed his eyes. He seemed unconscious.

Captain Carpaux paced the floor and swore because the surgeon did not arrive. There were seven others to be operated.

"Thirsty—wine—" Melkheim breathed several times.

Members of the company came for news, tiptoed in to look at the lieutenant. Many of them had thought him too stern and not intelligent enough. But he was one of them, and he was dying.

The lieutenant opened his eyes and saw a group of them. Tears rolled slowly down his cheeks.

"My friends," he muttered. Then his glance steadied, as he singled one out: "Letzinger—nice work—"

"Thanks, Lieutenant."

"The company—" the wounded man spoke slowly— "the company—good guys—good Legionnaires—Breval—take my place—the company—" He faltered, then gasped: "It hurts. Wine, give me some wine—"

Several men stretched out their canteens.

Breval looked at Carpaux questioningly.

"Think it would hurt—now?"

"Give it to him," the captain said, suddenly.

But the attendant felt his responsibility.

"The doctor'll be sore," he protested.

"He'll be dead before he gets here."

"Wine—"

"Give it to him," Carpaux repeated.

Breval took one of the canteens offered, poured wine into a tin cup. Then he knelt beside the cot, lifted his comrade's head gently, to give him his last drink.

Then he straightened.

"Too late—" he said.

The Alsatian had passed away during the argument.

Carpaux blew his nose and took Breval aside.

"See here, I'll try to do what he asked, you know. But you're freshly promoted from the ranks. It may be difficult. There's one way—if no one is sent to replace Melkheim for the coming expedition, and you act as full lieutenant, you'll be confirmed in the grade when we get back."

"I'm not asking for that, Captain."

"I know," Carpaux said sullenly," and I'm not blaming you. But the men heard him ask that, and they'll expect me to do it. They're fine chaps, Breval, but unreasonable."

RAOUL JACQUES FORTANE, newly appointed lieutenant to the Fourth Company, March Battalion of the Foreign Legion, reached the small city of Khenifra, where the Mobile Group of the Tadla was concentrating, in a most prosaic fashion, by auto-bus.

He was twenty-six years old, very tall, well over six feet, his torso and chest were superbly developed, his waist slim, his legs wiry. There was a careless, yet ardent expression on his fine features; the light chestnut hair, the black eyes under heavy black brows, contrasted with his fair, soft complexion. He was tanned, but his color was that of the European sportsman rather than the African soldier.

Khenifra was a huddle of red huts beside the Oum-er-Rhab River, had been at one time the stronghold of the famous Berber chieftain, Moha-ou-Hammou. A few shabby houses represented the European section, huddled near the fortified

camp. The tents of the troops gathering for the expedition into the south formed geometrical patterns north of the walls.

"Third Battalion Headquarters?" he asked of a passing Legionnaire, a stocky fellow, evidently a German.

"This way, Lieutenant."

The private had swept Fortane with a rapid glance, noted the grenade badge on his collar-tabs and saluted. He led the way through the camp.

"Has the Fourth Company arrived from Dar-Tekra yet?"

"Came in last night, Lieutenant."

At battalion headquarters the major shook hands and suggested that Fortane should report to his company commander at once. Another Legionnaire piloted the new man through the orderly streets between the tents. Fortane had taken contact with the Legion at Meknes, and knew the types to be expected. But somehow, up in the hills, on active service, the men appeared different, sturdier, with an almost sullen determination in evidence.

Fortane entered Carpaux's tent, shook hands and during the first exchange of banal phrases watched his new chief intently. He was somewhat disappointed. From reports he had believed Carpaux to be a swashbuckling, swearing Legionnaire. He was facing a rather stout, good-natured man of forty-odd, who spoke softly and seemed to be a bit embarrassed.

"You are welcome here, Lieutenant. We shall be camped here for a few days before starting out, and you shall have a chance to get familiar with the routine. The beginning may be a bit difficult, you understand. You are new to the Legion—and our men, the best soldiers in the world, are peculiar—"

"I understand, Captain," Fortane smiled confidently. "I got along quite well in Meknes."

"This may be different. You must be prepared to have patience as well as authority and firmness. At six o'clock roll-call, I shall present you to the company. Meanwhile, I wish you to meet Sub-Lieutenant Breval. You'll like him, I'm sure. You two have much in common. Orderly, ask Sub-Lieutenant Breval to come."

Fortane was a sensitive man. And he felt from the start that his arrival had disturbed something in the company. As a general rule, he made a favorable first impression on his superiors. Yet Carpaux did not like him. Fortane had heard that he had risen from the ranks, and thought that perhaps his reserve came from a dislike of school officers.

Sub-Lieutenant Breval arrived, saluted. Fortane saw a man of about his own age, well-knit and alert, with a self-confident, almost cocky manner. Breval had bruises on his face, and his right hand was bandaged. He offered the left with a brief apology. Again, Fortane felt that first suspicious inspection, that mental weighing of him. Then, as he started in recognition himself, he saw a like emotion welling in his new colleague's eyes. But as Breval said nothing, Fortane decided to remain silent on the subject.

"May I suggest," Captain Carpaux was saying, "that you bunk in with Breval? It is not unusual for officers of the same company to share one tent—and—"

"I shall be delighted, Captain, if Lieutenant Breval will be kind enough to suffer me."

"Naturally," Breval said. Fortane saw him wink rapidly. "If you please, Lieutenant—"

They left the tent together.

"Alex," Fortane murmured, "of all people to find out here! Didn't know whether you wished me to know you or not before the old chap, so I waited. You can't believe how glad I am to see you!"

Breval laughed:

"So am I—and you need not worry

about recognizing me. When I was commissioned, four or five months back, I put my real identity on records."

Fortane had known Breval under another name, his right one, the name of his father. They had attended the same classes at the Lycée Louis le Grand in Paris, while preparing for the examinations to Saint-Cyr, the Military Academy. Breval had been younger, and the more brilliant student, and had passed with a much higher ranking in points. He and Fortane had been close friends.

But where Fortane was wealthy, Breval had been poor. His father, a lawyer in civilian life, had been killed in the World War, at the head of a *chasseurs* battalion, and had left little except beautiful letters of advice to be handed his son on various birthdays. Breval's legal guardian had been an elderly aunt, cranky and old-fashioned, who had sought to bring the boy up like a girl.

Consequently, Breval had been the wildest cadet at the Academy, had leaped over the walls to go to Paris on sprees and had been dismissed in disgrace after two warnings.

"Why didn't you drop me a line?" Fortane wondered. "After you were thrown out, I wrote your aunt to find out where you were. She did not answer. When I called on her, she told me you had vanished, and could probably be located in some jail or other. Crabbiest old hen I ever saw."

"They bred them tough in the Sixties," Breval admitted. "You remember I was eighteen when I was dismissed. I was young for my class. She decided I was no gentleman, and cut off my money. I tried working as a clerk for an attorney. But I couldn't stand being pointed out as the chap who had failed to make good at Saint-Cyr. There was a recruiting station very near that office. Before I knew it, I was in for five years."

"Hard?" Fortane asked.

"Not the easiest life in the world. I was wild, but they tamed me quickly. My military studies helped, once I was adjusted and knew that I was neither the smartest guy in the Legion nor the best fighter in my outfit. I was a Legionnaire nine months, a corporal a year, and a sergeant until a few months ago."

Breval touched his bruised face, showed his bandaged hand:

"Met some of my former comrades, last night, and we had an informal celebration of my promotion. A patrol butted in, and there was a fight." Breval laughed: "They didn't arrest any one, though. But I have a hang-over, and I feel as if my mouth had been painted with fish-flavored tar. Here's our tent."

Orderlies brought Fortane's baggage from the bus stop, and for a few minutes the two were occupied settling sleeping arrangements, alloting space. Finding Breval, an old friend, had made everything appear much more homelike, easier. A bottle of cognac was produced, glasses.

"Here's to you!" Breval toasted. "You know, I can repeat what you said. Of all people, I never hoped to see you in the Legion! If I recall rightly, you're lousy with money!"

"That's where you're wrong." Fortane was annoyed by this reminder of a sore subject. "I have a small income and my pay. And that's all I'm likely to have for a while." He indicated the row of ribbons slashing Breval's khaki tunic: "Let me congratulate you. You have chevrons, decorations! I've followed the careers of our class-mates and I'm sure that although most of us are full-fledged lieutenants, not a single one has seen a tenth of the action you've had. Up from the ranks, too—Legion of Honor, Military Medal, War Cross and so on!" Fortane tapped his own breast, bare of all ribbons: "I envy you, and you can't guess how much."

"Remember I've been in more than five years and that I've been lucky," Breval declared. "You'll have the same stuff in a couple of years. The big ques-

tion is to survive to get them." Breval laughed. "And surviving doesn't imply intelligence or skill. All luck."

Fortane lighted a cigaret.

"What sort of a man is Carpaux?"

"The finest guy you'll ever know," Breval replied immediately.

"Why doesn't he like me?" Fortane stilled protest. "Listen, we know each other too well to kid about the subject. I'm as popular with him as a puppy on a bowling-alley."

He saw that Breval had grown embarrassed in his turn. And he pressed him for explanations. Slowly, he obtained facts.

THERE had been a lieutenant in the company, name Melkheim, who had died of his wounds. He had become a sort of Homeric figure for the Legionnaires. Legends sprang up about him, representing him as a two-fisted, hard-boiled, guzzling, loyal and generous Achilles. Breval, who had served under his orders, first as a sergeant for six months, somewhere along the Euphrates River, then as a colleague for three months at Dar-Tekra, had respected him and admired his courage. But he conceded to Fortane that Melkheim had had flaws.

"When he had had a glass too many at the mess table," the sub-lieutenant said, "he made absurd statements, which he defended against facts stubbornly. No early education to speak of, but he thought he knew history, geography, anything. He was brave, but that's not exceptional here. Frankly, although I've been in for years, I don't quite understand it. Even Carpaux is getting to believe that Melkheim was a demi-god. And that although Carpaux rose from the ranks himself, and has had a fine record."

Fortane shrugged: "And what have I to do with Melkheim?"

"It's annoying for me to say it," Breval protested. "But here's how I figure it out: The men want me to be promoted to replace Melkheim, because he said, as he died, that I should replace him! They forget that commissions are neither hereditary nor elective. If no one had come, I would have had a chance to be given my second stripe at the end of the coming campaign. Your coming spoiled that."

"You're the one that should be sore," Fortane stated.

"At you? I know you couldn't help being sent here. But the men figure out that you're young, inexperienced, and not to be compared with Melkheim. For that matter, any officer would have been resented just now." Breval hesitated. "It's understood that this is between us? I speak as a friend. We'll ride it out together."

"Thanks!"

Fortane was growing angry. He could see that his comrade shared the men's disappointment, and not from the motive one might have expected. Breval did not care that his promotion was delayed, but he fretted because he, Fortane, was green and could not be an immediate credit to the company! He blurted out the next question:

"How long will it take me to get a citation, a decoration?"

Breval stared at him with surprise.

"Well—a year or so."

"As long as that?" Fortane could not hide his annoyance.

"Maybe not, who can tell?" Breval explained: "Any one out here will tell you that decorations don't mean much in reality. Some very brave chaps go unnoticed, and others, myself for instance, get the breaks." He added in a consoling tone: "But look here, old man, Carpaux's an old bruiser who solicits the toughest jobs. He'll take you places where crosses grow, bronze or wooden ones, according to luck."

Fortane hesitated. The next question might be misunderstood, and he was

not as yet ready to explain why he was so concerned. In France, in Morocco, he had asked that same question, and had received various answers. He felt that he must know.

"You mean that—" he paused awkwardly—"well, that the danger is considerable? In the coming campaign for instance?"

Breval looked at him with a puzzled smile.

"There'll be moments."

"I understood that these colonial expeditions were rather quiet, sort of military demonstrations."

"See here," Breval protested hotly, "I know that colonial warfare is not taken too seriously in certain army circles. I grant you it isn't as tough as the trenches of France. But if you expect to be safe all the time, you'll find out some very sad facts."

"Many casualties, then?"

"I was telling you about Lieutenant Melkheim a moment ago, wasn't I?" Breval smiled coldly: "That same day we dropped twelve dead and seven wounded, out of seventy-three men engaged—that was not more than a month ago!"

Fortane reached for the bottle of cognac.

"Cheerful news," he concluded.

THE incidents that happened at the start of Fortane's stay with the Fourth Company could not be blamed on him. A misplaced, exaggerated loyalty to the dead Melkheim and his death-bed wishes stirred the Legionnaires. They considered Fortane an interloper, a personification of the world outside, which had caused the Alsatian's death by misplacing a mountain outpost.

When Fortane was presented at the six o'clock assembly the men eyed him with set faces. The sergeants acknowledged the introductions with impersonal words and hand-shakes.

Any one acquainted with any army on earth can guess what followed. There are a thousand ways in which a group of soldiers can bedevil a superior without great risk to themselves. There are the small, almost negligible incidents at drills, on the march, which wear on the nerves and sum up in a tremendous mental weariness by night.

Fortane received the respectful answers uttered by a private with a half-smile, too fleeting to be justly punished as silent insolence. He found that his automatic rifles, in perfect order and functioning superbly, jammed often when an inspecting officer was present. Senior-Sergeant Bonifaci addressed him as if monologuing before a wall, and Letzinger invariably sneered as he turned away.

Fortane's previous military experience had been as an officer in charge of conscripted men, nineteen to twenty-two years old, younger than himself, impressed by his rank, his wealth, his fine uniforms, men who were eager to please and had never witnessed the horrible equalizing power of bullets. They had been French lads, moreover, whose psychology Fortane knew by instinct and long experience.

He now commanded men whose average age surpassed his own by two years, men who had been hardened by life even before enlisting, who had known cold, heat, hunger, fatigue, exposure, pride and humiliation, men of fifteen or twenty different nationalities. There were veteran Legionnaires among them, military lawyers without peers, who made it their business to pester him constantly, over a worn pair of boots, over a trifling cut. They contrived to make him appear foolish in the long arguments with the military police when a patrol had picked up a few rowdy characters.

"Let them go," Fortane would grumble. "I'll get what I want out of them, whether they like it or not."

He was tempted often, to be very se-

vere. But it was not in his nature. The men hated him, but he could not detest them. He pitied them for ignorant louts, childishly proud of the uniform they wore, although it marked them out as failures elsewhere. For the majority, the Legion is the last refuge.

Fortane sought to earn their respect, even if he did not care for their affection. Physically, he compelled them to admiration, and it amused him hugely to do this. He could shoot very well with rifle, carbine and pistol. He rode as well as any cavalryman. He delighted in proving that he knew his trade thoroughly, took automatic rifles apart, reassembled them, as deftly as the master armorer. He could throw a hand grenade farther than any one in the company. And, quite deliberately, he challenged the pride of the battalion, Sergeant Dekaw, and bested him in a bayonet match.

"Tin soldier," the Legionnaires said, "he won't stand up under fire."

Fortane knew that they were convinced he was a coward. They made no secret of this opinion. It did not enter his plans to prove them wrong by exposing himself rashly. He carried out his duties, seemingly unaware that he moved in an atmosphere of dislike, of hostility.

Nevertheless, from time to time, he would eye one of the most turbulent privates so steadily, with such menace in his glance, that he would obtain obedience without raising his voice.

Gottkind, a young German serving his fourth year, was Breval's orderly. And when no man in the company came forward to offer his services Gottkind was ordered to care for Fortane's clothing. He made so many skillful mistakes, pressing trousers with the creases along the edges, using black polish on white shoes, that the lieutenant could not ignore him.

"I'll fire him and get some one from the civilian lines to serve us," Breval suggested. "Because, after he goes, it may be hard to find another chap in the company. And you can't assign one—they have to volunteer."

"Let me speak to him in private," Fortane replied.

"I don't think it's any use."

"Let me try."

When Gottkind next entered the tent, he found Fortane alone, in his shirt sleeves. He went about his duties a little self-consciously, peering defiance over his shoulder from time to time. Finally, Fortane rose.

"You don't like me, Gottkind, do you? You want to punch my nose?" the lieutenant laughed and grasped the orderly by the shoulder, held him at arm's length. "You see, it might be hard to reach. I'm not your lieutenant, now. I have no stripes. Man to man, what's the sense of what you're doing? You can't tell me, can you? To show you don't like me? I know that. To boast to your comrades of the tricks you play on me? They're getting tired of that. Why are you in the Legion? Because you had to come. So did I, I had to come. You didn't like it at first, neither do I. Could you cut this nonsense out, as a favor to me?"

Gottkind started to perspire. He had a round face, with big red ears, and a very honest glance. Fortane knew that his reasonable tone, his calm arguments, flattered the private. And he knew also that Gottkind could not be sure when his good nature would be shed off. The young German feared a change of mood, a beating. The grip on his shoulder must convince him that Fortane had the strength to lick him.

"Why, I'll tell you, Lieutenant—"

"I told you I wasn't an officer, just now."

"I'll try to do better."

"Promised? Legionnaire's word?"

"Legionnaire's word, Lieutenant."

"All right." Fortane slipped a bill into the private's breast pocket. "I know your sort, old man, you don't sell out.

But you can take this, because you agreed to ease up before you got it. See, you're doing me a favor. Breval thinks a lot of you, and it will make it better for me with him if you seem to—you get what I mean?"

"Sure, Lieutenant."

"Thanks."

Gottkind left, with a pleasant sense of importance. Fortane had known that the gift must follow the promise. Had he offered the money first, Gottkind could have refused and derived a sense of virtue from the refusal. As it was, he had given his Legionnaire's word to behave well, and could not be oblivious of financial advantages. And all Fortane wished to do was to assure himself relative comfort and peace of mind while in quarters, until such time as he left, the Legion having served his purpose.

The Mobile Group started south, nearly five thousand strong, in the direction of Midelt.

Four days after leaving Khenifra, it was in contact with the enemy. The cavalry patrols exchanged shots with the hillmen, then trotted back while the two companies of Legion forming the advance guard doubled forward and deployed.

There was not much excitement, as all knew that the skirmish would not be serious. The natives were too wise to make a determined stand in the plain. They were merely feeling out the strength of the invaders before defending the gap through the hills called Fom-Maklouf. Carpaux's Legionnaires took open order, laughing and joking, and progressed slowly.

Fortane was in charge of the First and Second Sections, while Breval headed the left wing. The automatic riflemen carried their weapons muzzle forward, supported by the shoulder slings, ready to open fire as they marched. The others fixed bayonets.

The mountaineers retired as the soldiers advanced. Then Fortane, who was under fire for the first time and was probably more excited than normal, became aware of bullets which came not from the front, but diagonally from the right. Some of the missiles whistled much too close for his liking, and he realized that a knot of marksmen were making a stand in a clump of bushes four hundred yards away.

"Halt! Automatics!"

The sergeants looked at him oddly, but transmitted the orders, and the right wing of the company halted. Not for long, however. Carpaux's whistle was shrilling to attract attention, and when Fortane turned, the captain gestured for him to go right ahead. At the same moment, sergeants and privates started to laugh around him, and Fortane saw that he had been about to use a trip-hammer to crack a peanut. For three Berbers suddenly scuttled from the bushes and leaped to shelter fifty yards further.

FROM their new point of vantage, they resumed firing. There were only three of them, but Fortane suddenly understood that one lucky shot would be all that was needed to kill him. Even experienced men have that sensation at times. The new lieutenant was aware of the gleaming braid on his *képi,* on his cuffs, that singled him out. It would be the height of stupidity to drop here, during a silly skirmish, with life opening before him.

Carpaux whistled again, and shouted:

"Clean those swine out of there!"

There was only one method, as long as the captain did not wish the advance checked while the automatics set to work—and that was to rush for the spot and frighten the snipers away. But Fortane unexpectedly found himself much more than six foot two in stature, and wider than a wine barrel. He felt sure that he would be dropped if he headed the rush, he had a hunch.

"Sergeant Bonifaci! Right oblique

with a group, and clean those swine out of there!"

Fortane congratulated himself for his solving the problem. Bonifaci would know what to do. The Corsican turned toward the officer, his black mustache lifted in a wry grimace of disdain over his yellow teeth, but he contrived to bite of his first sharp reply, and called back:

"Bien, mon lieutenant—"

He started out at a slow trot, swinging his carbine at the end of one arm, followed by twelve Legionnaires. They used no precautions, such as were taught in "tactics for small detachments" at the school, and completely failed to "consider the accidents of soil carefully." They were fired upon, bullets lifted dirt around their boots, but they reached the bushes without haste, and proceeded to comb them with bayonets, clowning about with savage lunges, although the mountaineers had slipped off before they arrived.

Fortane had led the remaining groups straight ahead. Bonifaci returned, flushed and sullen. And the enemy vanished completely for that day.

After mess that evening, when calm had settled down upon the encampment, Carpaux walked back to quarters with his officers.

"First time under fire, Fortane?"

"Yes, Captain."

"Ah!" the captain grinned and spoke with scarcely-veiled sarcasm. "Baptism of fire? May I congratulate you on not losing your head, as too often happens, and risking too much to make a brilliant first showing." He reflected a moment: "You were very careful."

"Oh," Fortane thought, "you wish to embarrass me?" and he said, aloud: "Lacking field experience, I had to fall back on what we were taught in school, Captain. Section commander should remain with main body and have a group detached to investigate minor obstacles."

"You didn't feel any curiosity to see those chaps nearer?"

"Not the least curiosity, Captain," Fortane confessed suavely.

Carpaux left them. As a rule, Fortane avoided discussion of his troubles in the company. But he was somewhat resentful that the captain, instead of giving him a loyal, perhaps necessary lecture on courage, should assume the same humorous attitude as his men.

"If I had dashed in person toward

those snipers," he told Breval, "and broken the line of advance to do it, they'd have said I was parading courage at small risk, losing my head, showing off. Suppose I had run straight for those bushes and one of the men had been killed? Wouldn't they be saying now that I should have sent Bonifaci?"

"Maybe," Breval admitted. He started to laugh. "They're kidding you a bit, but I don't believe any one really thinks you were afraid."

Fortane scowled.

"Afraid? You're right, Alex, I'm not afraid. But to be frank, I didn't intend to get myself killed out there, on the first day."

"You thought of that?" Breval was evidently startled.

"Sure." Fortane had spoken too much not to explain. "I'm not in your position; this isn't my career. Most of you have nothing to go back to—"

"Captain Carpaux has a wife and three kids—"

"But this is the only job he knows of to keep them fed. You must sense that my natural inclination isn't for this business. Even at school, I made no pretense of aspiring to military fame."

"Then why are you here?" Breval asked with logic.

"Because I have to be," Fortane stated impatiently. "I had to go into the army because of my family. I had to beg for this assignment, to pull wires, to climb over the heads of better men." The lieutenant drew breath. "It may seem comical to you, Alex, but I came here to recuperate my fortune. That's all. That's why I see no purpose in playing the hero. I don't want to die."

"Not so loud," Breval urged. He looked about the camp street, seemed glad that no one had been near enough to overhear. He led the way into the tent, where they settled on trunks, smoking cigarettes, until the sub-lieutenant resumed: "Better pull yourself together, Raoul. You're unstrung. I know the feeling, it passes after a while."

Fortane shrugged.

"I'm very calm. I came here for a purpose, and aside from it, I don't give a damn. I don't care what Carpaux thinks of me, what those guys think of me. But you've been so decent to me, right along, when you had every right to resent my arrival, that I feel I owe you the truth."

Breval thought this over several seconds.

"If that's the way you feel, you'd better quit now. What you saw today was nothing to what's coming. It was not even a skirmish."

"I understand that," Fortane snapped. "That's precisely what made me hesitate to risk myself foolishly. Driving that parcel of hogs from cover wasn't anything for which I would be awarded a decoration, was it?"

"No," Breval said with a laugh.

"But there was an element of risk?"

"When guns are fired, there always is."

"And there you are, Alex—a real risk without possible reward." Fortane gestured angrily. "I decided not to fall for this glory stuff, when I was very young. I don't want to be killed like a hare crossing a plowed field. I repeat that it would be stupid."

"Why are you in the army?" Breval challenged.

"Have to be in it. Just as I have to be in the Legion now."

"And you don't like it?"

"I should say not!" Fortane smiled grimly. "I'm a reasonably civilized man with the opportunity to live beautifully."

"I understand you less and less—"

"Because you have an inborn taste for this existence, because this sort of thing is a ladder to what you want in life, a means to an end. Were I poor, healthy and courageous as you are, I would think as you do. Then I'd say 'take a chance'. However, life holds too

much for me to jeopardize it constantly. You know my family?"

"I've read history," Breval admitted.

"Then let's start at the beginning:"

"You know that even as a boy I resented the rules laid down for my behavior because of my birth, Fortane related, and you must have noticed that since I have attained majority, I have elected not to use my title. Being Fortane is bad enough, but being Count de Croizet, Lord of Beausur, would have been too much.

"All the men of my race are presumed to be soldiers. For five hundred years, we've left corpses on battlefields. That's all very beautiful, of course. But I simply happen to have seen through the bunk. Being soldiers by taste and birth, all my people were also great spenders, gamblers. Between wars, they loved fine horses and beautiful girls. In the order named, too!

"My grandfather, who commanded a cavalry brigade under General Bourbaki when he was killed, had been so occupied by the wars of the Second Empire that he had left four hundred thousand francs to my father. At thirty, father had spent all of that, and was in debt for half as much. He had nothing left save his good looks and his titles. The nobility in general had passed through a crisis, and titled young ladies available had meager dowries.

"Consequently, father married an excellent woman, my mother, who belonged to the higher bourgeoisie. Her people had been bankers for centuries, one of her ancestors had connections with Colbert, Louis XIV's financial genius. My father believed he was doing that bunch a favor, but they did not trust him. My uncles made arrangements to limit my father's spending of his wife's dowry legally. And they bickered with my father constantly over his expenditures, until mother died. Naturally, he inherited all her money.

"Unfortunately for him, he had no time to spend much of it, for the war broke out, and he went to the front, where he got himself gloriously killed. He willed everything to me.

"Under certain conditions, however. I would not inherit the capital without check or control, unless I obtained a commission in the army and was willing to remain in service a minimum of five years. As I had entered the Academy at nineteen, that stipulation would be covered by my twenty-fifth birthday.

"I studied for the Academy, passed the examinations, behaved myself. Why? Because I wished to wear epaulettes? You know better—I had to be commissioned to get my dough. When I was graduated, an officer, I knew that I would get a lot of cash within a few years and did not economize.

"Forty thousand francs go quickly, if you have horses and motor cars, and like to spend leaves in Paris. I borrowed in advance against my inheritance. I used to run into Paris almost every night in my car. Naturally, I got into a few jams. One with a charming little dancer, Mimi Latour, who once announced our engagement and caused some mild scandal.

"On my twenty-fifth birthday, about a year ago, I called on my uncles in Paris, at the Bank. There are three of them, and you should see them, fat and important. You could have stuffed mattresses for a squad with their white beards. The attorney was with them.

"They started on me very gently. They suggested that I sign an agreement to let them keep the money in the bank's interests, and that they would increase my income sixty thousand francs, and even give me an occasional dividend. I turned that down. Then they showed their hand: The money was very important to them, its removal would dis-

turb their business, and in any case, I could do nothing save squander it foolishly.

"When I protested and demanded what was coming to me they showed me a clause in the will, of which I forget the exact legal wording, but which meant exactly this: If I did anything dishonorable before inheriting, my annuities would be stopped completely, and I would not be entitled to recover anything until such time as I had straightened out, shown proper repentance for the past and promised good intentions in the future.

"I started to laugh, and asked them what I had done that was not honorable. They showed me a sheaf of papers—my promissory notes to various usurers, clippings from various newspapers and magazines dealing with my liaison with Mademoiselle Latour, reports of my losing heavily at roulette.

"I protested that my father could not have considered such things dishonorable, for he had gone through the same experiences himself.

"The attorney then came into action. He said that the clause might legally be interpreted as covering the sins I had committed. Unpaid debts, gambling scrapes, public scandals with questionable women, would not be called honorable by the courts, he assured me. I could see that they had me.

"I asked them how I was supposed to redeem myself.

"It was plain that they wanted to tell me that it couldn't be done. But they did not quite dare. The attorney helped them out, having come prepared with a list of decisions arrived at by honor councils in various families. His suggestion was that I should seek active service, leaving behind Paris and temptation, and honor my uniform by facing the enemy's fire. When I had obtained a couple of decorations, Legion of Honor and War Cross, for instance, the past might be forgiven. As long as they were driving a bargain, I insisted that the terms be one citation for bravery, and the agreement was drawn according to that.

"SO," Fortane concluded, "it was the cross or no dough. I was sure that I could not win it in France. So I shopped around for a colonial assignment, where I'd get a chance to distinguish myself. A friend at the War Ministry suggested that the Legion, which fights constantly, would be the ideal place. With all the friends my father had in high places, that was rather easy. So here I am. As soon as I get what I want, watch me beat it!"

Breval shrugged.

"You've made a poor start. Listen, suppose you get transferred to the staff? They cite you easier, there. In the Legion, decorations must be earned—"

"They foresaw that," Fortane snapped. "They said that the award must come for a feat performed while in service actively with a combat unit, under fire! They explained that was the way my father had won his cross!" Fortane's natural humor won out, and he laughed as he saw Breval's perturbed expression. "Say, couldn't you suggest to your pals that the surest method of getting rid of me would be to have me decorated?"

For a moment, Fortane thought that Breval was about to get angry. But he controlled his voice when he spoke.

"Carpaux takes no joking on military subjects. You see, Raoul, with most of us, this is a pretty serious business, the only occupation left. We are here to live—and to die—as decently as we can manage."

Fortane clapped his hands softly.

"Beautiful! You orate like a rural mayor, Alex! But how does a guy go about getting a citation?"

This time Breval laughed.

"You are willing to risk yourself if

there's a sure citation at the end of the stunt?"

"Most assuredly," Fortane nodded, grinning. "We Fortanes pay!"

"All right! Carpaux always goes after the dangerous missions for his company. And he has a reputation for carrying them out, so he gets them often. He usually gathers the section chiefs, when the whole outfit's not needed, and asks for volunteers. When he next does that, I'll hang back a second. Bonifaci respects officers and always takes a quick glance at me before speaking. So you talk quickly, and unless Carpaux is willing to show his distrust of you publicly, and he's too kind a man to offend you like that, he'll have to give you the job. Then it will be up to you to ask the company for volunteers. I'll give you the wink as to which of the volunteer sergeants you should take along, according to what you're supposed to do. If it's a day job, take Bonifaci; Letzinger's nerves are fine at night. If you don't get killed on a special mission, you get cited."

Fortane rubbed his head thoughtfully. He loved to gamble, and this would be his greatest coup—his life against his fortune, on a single chance! Something to talk about, much later, when he had achieved what he sought. Nevertheless, a growing dread was in him, fluttering like a weak flame. He was startled to find in himself a physical reluctance.

"Think I'd make out all right?" he asked.

"Well, one never is sure—"

"I meant," Fortane spoke slowly, "could I carry out a mission successfully? A failure from which I returned would be almost as bad as death. Carpaux'd never give me another chance."

Breval lighted a cigaret, his eyes holding Fortane's glance.

"Don't worry. With the right sergeant behind you, there'll be no failure. You'll have to carry it through."

"You said that in a sinister tone," Fortane said, reaching for the bottle of cognac. "However, here's hoping!"

FOR nine days following the skirmish, the hill men retreated before the French column. They were biding their time to make a stand when the expedition was far from its base and on their chosen soil. But while there was little danger, there were many hardships.

Sketchy trails, washed out by rainstorms, had to be repaired before the artillery could progress. The Legionnaires turned laborers. Fortane knew his trade and was tireless. He could have spared himself hand labor, but he believed in preaching by example, and was not reluctant to show his endurance and strength. At this game, he blistered his palms and broke his finger-nails, but he was rewarded to some extent by the grudging admiration he could discern on the Legionnaires' part for his muscular power.

He was beginning, moreover, to have a hearty dislike for them all. He no longer hoped to overcome their prejudices. He admitted to himself that he had shunned danger, and there were moments when he was a bit ashamed of his nervousness during the skirmish. But he felt that had it not been for the general hostility caused by belated loyalty to Melkheim, his one slip would have gone unnoticed or been dismissed as the slight blunder of a novice.

As matters stood, they made it all too plain that they considered him the living shame of their company, and rated him an absolute coward.

On one occasion, he had given Letzinger instructions on a road job. Not an hour later, Captain Carpaux called him and reprimanded him, in a grouchy voice, for the manner in which the work was done. The German sergeant had disregarded Fortane's orders and worked as he pleased. The lieutenant knew better than to complain to a superior that his

subordinates did not obey. A good officer obtains obedience. It was better to be believed careless than weak.

"Letzinger," he told the sergeant at the first opportunity, "you got me a bawling-out from the captain. Why didn't you do as I told you?"

"Lieutenant, I am your inferior in rank," Letzinger retorted, "If I did wrong, punish me. But I'm a man, and I don't want to be nagged as if I were a kid."

Fortane's hands clenched. He remembered in time that an officer who strikes a man publicly loses his commission in the majority of cases. For a moment, he was tempted to suggest a meeting man to man, rank and respect forgotten. Then he figured that he was taller, heavier and younger than Letzinger, and that he would merely earn the reputation of being brutal.

So he grinned convulsively, swallowed hard and turned away. It was plain that he could not act right in his soldiers' eyes. To Fortane's bewilderment, officers in the battalion sensed that he did not get along well with his men, and discreetly avoided intimacy with him.

Breval, who was a fine chap, remained friendly. But he was more or less compelled to be on good terms with a colleague in the company. When he was on duty, Fortane had to seek companionship elsewhere, and was often with staff officers, which caused gossip.

"Trying to bootlick his way into a soft job," the men said.

They did not stop to consider that with his connections in France he could have obtained a staff position easily. And they could not know that it would be worthless to him, as a citation obtained for staff work and not for bravery under fire would not count in his case.

The first serious resistance was encountered at Fom-Lalla, a gap in the hills between steep slopes. The passage could not be flanked without shifting the line of march east or west for sixty to seventy miles, which maneuver would consume time and allow the natives to shift their positions to match the move.

The engagement developed into the classic mountain combat fought by trained troops against irregulars. The scouts fell back after taking contact in brief skirmishes, and the line was formed. The sixty-five-millimeter mountain cannon took position, and pounded away for an hour.

THEN the bugles sounded, and the infantry deployed and moved to the attack confidently. While the scarlet-capped Senegalese Tirailleurs crept up the western side, the Legion was detailed to carry the eastern slope by storm.

By this time, Fortane was so disgusted with hard work that he would have gone into action with pleasure. But Carpaux, who knew that his company formed the spearhead of the onslaught and would be watched constantly from the rear, seemed to dread an incident in the field, due to his lieutenant's unpopularity. He assigned him to command the ammunition base, a caravan of mules concealed in a hollow of soil nearly a kilometer from the van.

As the attacking sections passed near, the Legionnaires hooted and cursed. They pretended to believe that Fortane had sought the less dangerous task.

The first part of the advance progressed as scheduled.

Then the attack grew into a fierce, drawn-out, bitter struggle—dirty, hot, treacherous fighting—bayonets and grenades against carbines, clubs and knives The Berbers were like men possessed, screaming, fighting fiends. Many women and young boys participated in the show. They halted the Legion short time after time.

Cresting the eastern slope was an old native structure, once the stronghold of a hill bandit. Among the ruined walls, the mountain people had dug trenches

and rifle-pits. They wielded several old-fashioned automatic rifles.

Around this rude fortification the resistance centered. Twice, the Legion sections appeared to have gained a foothold. Twice, they were pushed back by overwhelming forces. And the attack was suspended while the artillery resumed the bombardment. But the small shells knocked down lengths of crumbling walls without doing great harm to the defenders.

When the guns ceased firing and the infantry attack was resumed, the old automatics rattled and coughed from the smoking ruins. A section of the First Company of the Legion was decimated at short range, and brought away its wounded only after hard fighting.

The colonel commanding the Mobile Group had enough troops to carry that position in a headlong rush. But he dreaded a long list of casualties, which makes for poor publicity for an ambitious colonial chieftain. So he recalled the Legion, and the entire expedition camped for the night at the foot of the hills. The Legionnaires were raging, for they believed that they had been halted just as they were about to succeed.

"Where were you all afternoon?" an unidentified Legionnaire yelled from the ranks as the returning soldiers passed Fortane.

At twilight, Captain Carpaux summoned his section chiefs, Fortane, Breval and Bonifaci. He was haggard, unshaved, irritable.

"This company was given a job today that it did not carry out," he opened. "Our outfit and the First Company were engaged directly against that fort. The council of war has decided not to wait for heavier artillery, but to send a raiding party of twenty men to wipe it out during the night. The natives will not expect this, as the news has been allowed to leak out that we would wait for bigger guns. Twenty resolute men, using grenades, pistols and knives, to deliver a quick, hard blow. Risky, of course, if they're discovered too soon. The major contrived to keep the job for the battalion, although a free group from a Moroccan outfit volunteered. So the captain of the First and I drew lots. I won. I cannot designate any one. I was instructed to ask for volunteers."

Fortane saw Bonifaci glance quickly at Breval. To the Corsican, a daring undertaking was something to be coveted, and he hesitated to deprive the popular sub-lieutenant of a chance. Breval, as he had promised, did not speak at once. Fortane took the hint, stepped forward smartly.

"Present, Captain!"

"Ah—yes, yes!" Carpaux appeared uneasy, annoyed. "Good spirit, Fortane. But you're pretty green and—"

Fortane checked his first flaming resentment at this distrust.

"I'm green, Captain, but I won't ripen doing nothing." His voice was light, humorous. "I have to start somewhere. Moreover, as you know, I am more rested than others—having been safe at the rear all day."

"Right. I'll designate the men to go with you."

"Captain, you said we'd ask for volunteers," Fortane protested hastily. He was unwilling to lose this chance to earn the gratitude and attachment of some of his men by picking them out for a good job.

Carpaux smiled without conviction. Perhaps he foresaw what would occur.

"As you wish, Fortane. Bonifaci, assemble the company. Fortane, you understand of course that you are not to reveal the purpose of the raid. It might leak out. Words have wings around here. And secrecy is your sole chance."

"Very well, Captain."

Within a few minutes, the company was formed by sections. Upon a nod from Carpaux, Fortane stepped forward. He was calm, confident. He knew that the opportunity to distinguish himself

was the one bribe one might offer a Legionnaire.

"Twenty Legionnaires to come with me on a special mission. Sergeants will note the first to answer. Call for volunteers!"

Fortane knew the fabulous reputation of the Legion for courage. He had read and heard a hundred stories of the fanatic devotion of Legionnaires to the Corps. And he expected a surge forward.

But the ranks did not stir, the lieutenant faced a wall of uninterested, blank faces. There had been no need of a consultation. The Legionnaires had waited for an occasion to show the new officer that they despised him. Fortane felt as if the ground had yielded under his boots, a sort of nausea swept him. As in a nightmare, he saw Breval's face grow white, saw Carpaux starting forward.

Fortane had asked twenty volunteers from a whole company of the Legion, and there had been no reply! It was the bitterest humiliation a man could experience. Careless though he was, bending them to his own purpose, the lieutenant understood that a man might well shoot himself after that.

His dismay did not last long. For a flitting moment, he felt the blood in his head, and his throat contracted convulsively. Then he motioned for Carpaux to remain where he was, forced himself to smile. To his own amazement, his voice did not even quiver when he resumed.

"I note that no one wishes to steal a march on his comrades. But as I am too new to the company to know every one individually, I am afraid my selection would not be fair to all. I am aware that you are all courageous and willing, and that you feel that picking men out at random I would obtain a fine group. However, some of you have merited this chance more than others. Sergeant Letzinger!"

Letzinger stepped forward.

"Lieutenant?"

"You shall be my sergeant. I leave it to you to select another sergeant and twenty Legionnaires. You shall see to it that they are equipped and armed properly for our purpose. You will be informed later when and where to report to me with the organized raiding party. Understood?"

Letzinger stood six feet ahead of the ranks, completely isolated. He dared not turn to look for support. The three officers watched him expectantly.

The German paled, then turned red. This was the moment for a bold speech, one of those retorts that echo for years in Legion garrisons. But Letzinger, who would have walked against a machine-gun without flinching, could not quite find the moral courage to refuse the assignment.

For a moment, he stood with his mouth agape, hesitating. Fortane, his palms perspiring as he clenched his fingers tightly at his side, dreaded a refusal which would precipitate greater scandal. But the lieutenant had used the right words. He had not asked Letzinger if he was willing to follow, he had ordered him to serve as second. And Letzinger had been a soldier more than half his life. His heels met, his glance steadied, and he saluted.

"As you order, Lieutenant."

"Thank you, Sergeant."

"Company dismissed," Carpaux called.

Then he walked away with his two officers, giving Fortane minute instructions.

"The major will call you in for a consultation," he went on. "Routine business. Fortane, you are too intelligent not to have noticed that there is a certain feeling against you. I like the way you handled yourself tonight. But remember that no matter how sore the men are, they won't permit a Legion job to fail. If you come through this all right, you'll have taken a long step in the right direction."

"I'm certain they'll do for the best, Captain," Fortane agreed.

BREVAL suggested that Fortane change into simpler garments for the raid, and the two found some amusement in selecting appropriate clothing from the lieutenant's trunks. Together, they created what was undoubtedly the most stylish rig ever worn on an official occasion in the Atlas: whipcord riding breeches, laced at the calves, tennis shoes, a white wool shirt, and a green and red pull-over sweater. A snug, small black béret topped the outfit. The big lieutenant grinned.

"I hadn't foreseen how odd those things would look out here," he said.

"You'll make a hit," Breval laughed.

Fortane lighted a cigaret.

"By the way, I went into this blindly. What are chances of coming back?"

"Very good," Breval replied. "For people who are great night prowlers themselves, the hillmen watch themselves badly. Mostly because many of them have their families very near and go back for the night. You're likely to surprise them, and you'll have support very soon after you attack---companies marching out to draw attention away from you."

"Think I'll get what I expect out of this?"

"Made to order," Breval assured. "Not merely an inside job for the company. The colonel knows about it. The mere fact that you do the job must be reported officially, and if you come back, the least you can get is a citation for the expedition, which means the award of the Colonial Cross."

Fortane waved his arms jubilantly.

"Great! That agreement was drawn so that the citation acts as an automatic release for the dough. And once I get that money, watch! By the way, you are hereby invited to spend your next leave with me. You shall discover that the Legion isn't quite everything in life!"

Gottkind, the orderly, appeared with a musette bag filled with grenades. He had grown to like Fortance since their conference. It is possible that sordid considerations entered into the matter, for the lieutenant was most generous.

"Here's your bag. Take me along, Lieutenant?"

"By Jove," Fortane shouted, genuinely pleased. "A volunteer at last! Apply to Letzinger, with my warmest recommendations!"

"I did, Lieutenant. He turned me down."

"Then there's nothing more to expect, Gottkind. I gave him a free hand."

"Maybe it might be better to take me, Lieutenant—"

Breval broke a rule of long standing, to Fortane's surprise, by asking the orderly for an explanation:

"Why might it be better?"

"Just wanted to go, Lieutenant," Gottkind said blankly.

"There's something more—"

But Gottkind refused to explain and left.

"Perhaps you better take him," Breval said. "There's something planned, and he knows what. As he is my orderly his presence might make the others hesitate to pull any queer trick on you."

"What trick?"

"I can't guess. But Gottkind knows," Breval insisted.

"You don't think they'd murder me, do you?" Fortane looked at his friend with an odd smile.

"Oh, no. But they're up to something."

Fortane thought this over for a moment, then shrugged.

"Gottkind stays," he declared. "I'm curious to know what they can do. It might prove interesting."

The next moment he chided himself for a fool. He was not in the Legion to show courage, to increase his risks delib-

erately. But he did not change his mind.

An orderly came and announced that the major wished to see Lieutenant Fortane. Breval reminded his friend that he should wear something more military, and Fortane slipped into a white tunic and replaced the béret with a *képi*.

The major was very tall, very lean, his bronzed face lengthened by a graying beard. He was a man loved and respected in the Legion, a splendid officer and a perfect gentleman. Although he must have known something of the disturbances in the Fourth Company he gave no sign of it in his manner. Large scale maps of the sector were spread on folding tables, and upon these Major Larbier gave directions.

"Let us repeat once more," he resumed. "You start at two o'clock. It will take you about an hour to pass through their lines, and another to work into a favorable attack position. In case you are attacked yourselves before reaching your objective, fire one red rocket. If you attain your objective, two red rockets. When the position is cleaned of defenders, one green. Before four o'clock, the battalion will be massed and it will advance at the first signal."

Larbier offered the younger man a cigaret.

"Are you related to Colonel Fortane de Croizet, who was with the staff of the Twentieth Corps?"

"His son, Major."

"I knew him well. He was the bravest man I have ever encountered. Consequently you will understand if I seem to probe in your personal affairs. Your motives for coming into the Legion are your own, but permit me to say that for a man as young and as wealthy as you are, with everything to live for, despair is a silly thing. Whatever grief you may suffer, my friend, will pass."

"Yes, Major," Fortane agreed. He reddened, wondering if Breval had spoken to any one of his confidences. The next words of the major made him ashamed of this suspicion.

"Remember that you shall be entrusted with a score of men who although they desire to do their duty, love life. As an officer, you must think of them, and not seek the grim solution to your problems that I suspect you wish—"

Fortane checked a smile of amusement with an effort. Larbier believed that he, Fortane, had come to the Legion to commit suicide decently! Probably, he had heard rumors of certain old scandals, vague gossip.

Then a thought struck him and to his astonishment he experienced sharp mental anguish. Larbier had disregarded all talk of cowardice on his part as foolish because he had known Fortane de Croizet and could not imagine that his son could feel fear. The lieutenant recalled his father's high, slender silhouette, his fine, sensitive face. The colonel had been known as a gambler, notorious for his many affairs, but he had been madly brave and had sought a glorious end.

"Major, I shall be as careful as possible."

"Thanks. You had better get some rest."

Fortane returned to the tent he shared with Breval. His friend took one glance at him, then filled a tumbler of cognac.

"You've the shakes, old man," he said. "Don't worry, everybody gets them. It's the waiting that's hard. Once you're on the way, you'll be fine."

"I'm all right," Fortane protested. But he accepted the glass.

"You look as if you had seen a ghost!"

"Perhaps I have," Fortane said.

He stripped off the white tunic, stretched on his cot. The cognac warmed him.

"I'm too nervous to sleep, Breval. But I'll relax a bit. Not starting until two."

He closed his eyes. And he thought that he would carry out this mission with the general interest uppermost. He

would do the task for the Legion as much as for himself.

THE light of a lantern awoke him. Breval and Gottkind were standing near by.

"Two o'clock, Lieutenant," the orderly announced.

"For a man too nervous to sleep, you did pretty well," Breval put in jokingly. "You won't need to see a specialist for a while!"

"All right, all right," Fortane grumbled grouchily. He drank a cup of burning hot coffee, cut with brandy, drenched his head and neck in a pail of cold water. Then he combed his hair carefully before a small mirror fastened to the tent pole.

He removed the magazine from the heavy German automatic pistol he owned, ejected the cartridge from the barrel chamber, clicked the trigger several times. Then he reloaded the weapon carefully. He was reasonably sure, after that, that the gun would not fail him in an emergency.

Breval lighted a cigaret for him, gave him a short drink of cognac. Fortane grinned.

"The last drink, the last cigaret. Execution morning—death at dawn, eh?"

"Don't be morbid," Breval chided.

"You'll find letters to mail, top compartment of my trunk, in case the worst happens. But I have a good hunch, you know, the way one feels at roulette before the ball stops clicking and one already knows the right number is going to show. I've been rather an ass, Alex, but I'm not as calloused as I thought."

Letzinger lifted the tent flap, showed his sullen, tanned face.

"Waiting, Lieutenant."

"Right with you, Sergeant."

"I'll walk as far as camp limits with you," Breval offered.

"No. Let's cut short the pathetic moment of separation." Fortane's voice grew a bit hoarse with emotion. "So long, Alex."

He left the tent hastily, following Letzinger through the darkness. There were the usual sounds outside. The regular calls of the sentries on guard in the shallow trench circling the encampment, the occasional, rhythmic tramping of a patrol.

"All ready, Lieutenant," Letzinger said.

The raiding group was drawn up for inspection. Fortane walked before the men, asked a few questions: "Cartridges? Grenades?" And they snapped back the correct answers. Captain Carpaux was there, his legs naked under his great-coat. He sucked at his unlit pipe furiously, grumbled vague recommendations.

"Understood, thank you, Captain."

"All right. Not wishing you luck—that's a hoodoo. If you're spotted too soon, don't keep on through false shame. Return."

"Right, Captain. Let's go, Sergeant."

LETZINGER took the lead without hesitation.

When Breval had suggested to Fortane that the German was the fellow to select as a second for a night venture, he had proved that he knew the qualities of his subordinates. No braver man than Bonifaci existed, but the Corsican had too much dash and imagination. It could be sensed that Letzinger's nerves were steady, that his mind did not dwell on needless exaggeration of perils, that he possessed supreme faith in himself.

Fortane was next in the line of March, followed by the other sergeant, a lanky, taciturn, mature man named Maritz, who was on the records as a Balkanese, without other qualifications, and was believed to have been a cavalry officer. And Maritz seemed to possess the same uncanny sense of direction as Letzinger, touched Fortane lightly, right or left, to guide him on the invisible ground.

From the start, the lieutenant experienced a series of keen, uneasy sensa-

tions, that soon merged into a throbbing, choking emotion, an emotion that resembled physical fear less than spiritual terror. The need for silence taxed him. He could scarcely hear the footfalls of those nearest him, an indistinct shuffling. He was one of twenty-three men within as many yards, yet when he looked back, he could not discern anything beyond the darker blob made by Maritz's head.

And these Legionnaires admittedly were not the equals of the hillmen for night raids. Which brought up the possibility that the bushy plain might be swarming with unseen enemies, with foes that Fortane would not see until they were upon him.

He slipped, recovered, but a small stone dislodged by his foot rolled down the slope, fetched against another with a smart click that crashed in his brain like a gunshot. This startled him so that he stopped short, until Maritz's fingers tapped his back warningly.

From Letzinger came an almost inaudible sound, a faint hiss, which held more irony than anger. Fortane understood that his share was not brilliant, that he was being taken along by these men as a clumsy tourist. He contributed very little and hampered them considerably.

A darting orange streak lashed the night, a detonation slapped out. some distance ahead and to the right. Fortane almost cried out in disappointment, thinking that the party had been detected. But Maritz touched his shoulder, steadying him, and Letzinger bent close to whisper a single word:

"Prowler."

Fifteen minutes went by. Then Letzinger stopped once more. The men came close. Fortane could sense that they had relaxed somewhat, that they knew something which had escaped him. The sergeant spoke, his voice low, but without exaggerated caution. The prevailing calm was surprising to the officer.

"We're through their first line, so we can go on the trails. Maritz, you look ahead, eh?"

Maritz left the line and vanished. In a few seconds, he was back, whispered to Letzinger, and the German clucked his tongue as a signal to go on.

Fortane's perturbation had dwindled. There was a definite thrill to this business, he decided. All was as before, except that it was Legionnaire Rivier who urged him right or left, instead of Maritz. The lieutenant was overjoyed that he had achieved something of his men's quiet confidence.

Then, having lost touch with Rivier for a moment, Fortane leaned back, his outstretched fingers groping for the hand he knew must be held out from behind. And he struck not only flesh and bone of a tightly clenched fist, but the cold, unmistakable surface of steel. The Legionnaire had drawn the broad-bladed trench dagger issued to the members of the party at the last moment.

Fortane had passed his through his belt with a smile of amusement, less than an hour before, inclined to think of it as a melodramatic, brigand-like tool. He drew it now, and held it ready, finding comfort in the feel of the wooden handle against his palm. This was not a fancy weapon, but a useful instrument. If Rivier thought it right to hold it in his hand, he must be right.

A problem arose. The supporting strap of the bag of grenades pressed down hard, sawed at his collar bone, chaffed his neck. Fortane realized too late that Gottkind had adjusted the bag on his own person, not thinking that the lieutenant was taller, larger, heavier. Fortane had forgotten that important detail, more important just now than the careful reloading of the pistol, which he had believed such a professional precaution.

He dared not ask for time out to adjust the straps, so, loosening the small metal buckle, let the bag slide down, un-

til it hung near his thigh. At every step, there was a slight jar against his leg. Grenades were sensitive things, and if a single safety loop worked loose, the explosion would not only mangle him but cause the expedition to fail.

At last, the bag was against his hip, where it belonged. Then he struck his ankle against a sharp stone, and limped on. He had been so tense, so intent, that he was tiring. He sweated and gasped.

"I'm in command of a raiding party," Fortane grumbled bitterly. "In command of a raiding party!"

He was in command, with another man leading, with a private jabbing his spine to steer him. He was as ridiculous out here as an umbrella would have been. Why had he allowed Letzinger to take charge so completely?

Why? Because he could not have done the job properly. He realized, with a surge of shame, that he would have taken the trail at the start, for to him maps meant chiefly the network of paths. These chaps had been right; he was not fitted to lead them. Excelling at bayonet drill, throwing hand grenades in practice, did not make a soldier.

This single experience would be invaluable. The next time, he would have his straps adjusted, tape his ankles, know all the minor tricks grown so commonplace to others. If he came out alive, he would find some way of obtaining understanding from the men. He would show a willingness to learn.

Hours seemed to pass before Letzinger pressed his arm warningly. The night was as black as before, but Fortane's eyes already had improved for night travel, it appeared. For he distinguished a darker, jagged mass a few feet away and looking up, saw a ridged outline against the paler sky. He grunted with relief. This was the spot agreed upon in advance for the detachment to rest and take breath before the actual attack, the lee of two enormous boulders.

THE small fort which had checked the French advance during the day was not more than a hundred and fifty to two hundred yards away. It would be a matter of seconds for the raiders to dart to within grenade distance, and every chance existed to gain a foothold. Driving the natives out would not be the most dangerous task of the night. The natives might be determined enough to make counter-attacks.

Fortane rather hoped they would. He felt that he could recover some prestige. He would be striving for a citation, but he was glad that they would not know this. Much of his aloof scorn of the Legionnaires was gone, and he was fired with a sincere desire to prove to them that he was not wholly useless.

He stretched on the ground, and knew that the others were resting also. Letzinger was at his left, Legionnaire Rivier on his right. The soil felt cool, the short, coarse grass was damp. There was a strong stench floating in the air, which recalled forcibly that corpses had been left about the place.

A shadow suddenly loomed very near. It was Maritz, who slid on the other side of Letzinger. The lieutenant listened to the conversation carried on in whispers.

"Got very close, Litz. Most of them are sleeping like hogs. Only a couple are awake. I could have walked right in and no one would have noticed me."

"About getting in?"

"No trouble. The shells knocked hell out of those old walls. The automatics are at the angles facing north."

"Fine. Wonder why they didn't stick a man on watch here."

"They had one," Maritz explained: "I found him on the way up."

"Good," Letzinger complimented. "I think we better act now."

"It's risky," the lieutenant heard Maritz say. "You never can tell what it will lead to. My idea's to leave it alone."

"Not a chance," Letzinger went on.

"All right. Count me in, then."

Fortane was puzzled by these words. Could there have been any question of withdrawing after having attained this spot? Risky? It had been evident from the start that their undertaking was dangerous. And he was growing angry because the two disregarded him, their official chief, so utterly.

Letzinger swung his body closer to him, until Fortane could feel his breath on his face.

"Give me that bag of grenades."

The officer hesitated, then he remembered his resolution to take these men's advice. Everything they had done so far had had a motive, a motive which he understood later. He noticed that Letzinger did not use his title, but attributed that to excitement. He should have known better. The German was too methodical to forget anything, even under stress.

He slipped off the strap, shoved the heavy sack toward the sergeant. He was dimly aware that Rivier was very close on the other side. Letzinger was groping for the bag, his fingers touched the lieutenant's wrists, closed tightly around them.

Again came that peculiar clucking of the tongue.

Hard knees struck his back, a strong hand caught his forehead, something sticky, thick and moist, pressed against his mouth. He sought to rise, but another man must have dropped on his legs.

There was something nightmarish, altogether unreal in this surprise attack. Fortane, half-choked, believed that he was about to be killed. In desperation, his feet dug into the ground hard, his powerful body arched despite the weight of two men.

The others did not speak. They panted as they struggled with him. Now, a dozen hands were clutching at his arms, at his legs. His arms were pulled down behind his back, leather thongs bit into the flesh. The stuff on his face, probably muddy earth, worked into his mouth, into his nostrils.

A mad effort twisted his body to one side, he almost rolled free.

Then a hard object thudded against his head. Spinning flames flared before his eyes. As he fought to keep consciousness for endless hours which were in reality fractions of seconds, his aching muscles strained against the leather straps binding his limbs. Other blows were struck.

Fortane felt himself sliding down a steep incline, with maddening velocity, became the center of an enormous wheel that crackled with fire and spun its black rim closer and closer. The fire whirled more rapidly, the darkness approached, and all was black.

FORTANE came back to himself slowly.

All he knew at first was that there was a darting pain in his skull. Bells tolled and crashed in his ears. It was no longer dark, a weird, scarlet light struck his eyes.

The bells swinging in his head changed to loud reports. And smaller gongs crackled, metallic, pulsating. There were hoarse shouts.

His head cleared suddenly.

He knew who he was, where he was, what had happened. The red light, which he had believed caused by pain, had given place to darkness. It had been the glare of the signal rockets announcing the attack. The heavier explosions were the bursting of grenades as the Legionnaires attacked, the crackling was pistol and rifle fire.

He tried to rise, and remembered that he was tied. They had overpowered him, left him here to die! Perhaps they believed they had killed him.

He knew that he must free himself, escape somehow.

He would be butchered without a chance if the fleeing natives located

him. Perhaps, the Legionnaires expected this.

Fortane worked frantically to loosen his hands. He could hear running men crashing through bushes near by. The detonations were not as numerous. Any moment now, one of the fugitives might stumble over him. And he knew the Chleuhs well enough to feel that he would not be spared.

His hands were free, raw and sore. He sat up, struck his head against stone. Investigating, he understood that he had been rolled beneath the overhang of the boulder, out of sight. He squirmed into the open, freed his ankles. He stood up, stiff and aching in every joint, but free. His pistol holster was empty, his knife was gone. He picked up a heavy stone.

A brilliant streak slashed the dark sky, blossomed against the night in a surge of green light. This was the signal that the fort had been cleared of defenders. The raid had been successful, successful without him!

He forced himself to calm. And decided that rushing off aimlessly would be foolish. It would be best to hide near by until the troops arrived. But he selected another hiding place. The Legionnaires might return, find him alive, and would be unwilling to have him talk about the incident. Yet, had they wished him slain, they would not have shoved him out of sight. He did not understand.

He heard Letzinger's voice shouting orders. The firing had resumed. The darkness was streaked with the flashes of the guns. But most of the shooting was down the opposite slope, for few bullets could be heard.

Dawn was breaking, and he was still uncertain, when voices sounded very near. Two Legionnaires were strolling toward the boulders, speaking in normal voices. They used German. Fortane identified Rivier by his accent.

"I can't see him."

"He's right over there, I tell you."

"No, he isn't. Look yourself!"

There was a pause. Rivier was investigating.

"He's gone! Holy Sacrament! If the slobs killed him, what a howling mess this will be!"

"Here are the straps. They're not cut. Anyway, he got loose himself. But something's bound to happen to him."

"Better go back and tell Letzinger."

"Yes," Rivier sighed: "I'm sorry for the poor boob, you know. He was stuck on himself, but sort of harmless."

Fortane strove to understand what the men had intended to do. They had not meant to kill him. Then why had they done this? Somehow, Rivier's words, suffused with almost friendly scorn, infuriated him more than physical pain.

He dropped the stone and emerged from cover.

Striding quickly toward Rivier, who gasped as he recognized the officer, he swung hard to the jaw. The Legionnaire was knocked sprawling. Fortane attacked the other, battered him down with a flurry of punches. Then he felt better.

He hoisted Rivier to his feet by the collar of his shirt.

"You're going to talk, and talk straight."

"Sure, Lieutenant."

"What's all this about?"

"Sergeant Litzinger will tell you," said Rivier defiantly. "No use blaming him more than the rest, though. We were all in it. The twenty-two who came with you, and the whole company. Whoever was picked to come was ready to do the same."

"Give me my pistol!"

"Here it is." Rivier shoved the weapon into Fortane's hand. "We left the magazines in your pocket."

"Is the ground between here and the fort safe?"

"We came to get you, didn't we?" Rivier spoke with sarcasm.

"Right. You two follow me."

"Lieutenant!" The other Legionnaire, a rather young chap, protested timidly.

"What is it?"

"Keep that gun in its holster, please. Don't start shooting or there'll be murder."

"I'll be killed, eh?"

"Maybe. See, we figured you might be sore, and we didn't intend for you to have the gun at first. Maritz said—"

"You've told enough," Rivier interrupted. "Shut up and let's get going."

As he entered the ruins of the old building in which the natives had held back the Legion during the preceding day's attack, Fortane noted that the Legionnaires had the upper hand. The surprise raid had demoralized the mountaineers. A few of them clung to the opposite slope, but the expected arrival of the main body would drive them off.

Several men wore bloody bandages; two were seriously wounded. In one of the abandoned rifle pits were the bodies of the defenders, thrown in by the Legionnaires as they cleaned out the yard.

Despite the shooting from the wall facing south, every one was calm. Letzinger was superintending the digging of a shallow trench, while Maritz, squatted on his heels, was trying to repair one of the old automatics captured. Fortane expected his appearance to cause some confusion, and he was disappointed.

A few of the men turned to grin, Maritz swept him with a casual glance. Letzinger nodded cheerfully.

"Hello, there!"

"Sergeant, what's the meaning of this?" Fortane was conscious of all that his question held of the ridiculous.

"Just that we didn't want you."

"Call me 'Lieutenant', when you have time!"

"Take it easy," Letzinger advised. He turned away and addressed the men working near by:

"Throw the heavy stones on the outside."

"You know you're liable for a court-martial?" Fortane insisted.

"Sure," the German shrugged. "You'll cut a handsome figure, too. Putting twenty of us in the dock. Very pretty. Know what you should do? Shut up and resign. You see, we decided long ago that we didn't want you in the Legion. You told Gottkind that you didn't want to be in it. As long as we all agreed, what was the use of keeping on? Just the same, it would have been a shame, after following a fine man like Melkheim, to follow a guy like you on a job like this. What are you kicking about? We kept you safe, didn't we?"

"You think I'll resign?"

"Yes. If you start a mess, I'll explain that you were endangering the success of the raid. There's an article in regulations to cover the case. I'd probably lose my chevrons and get a prison sentence, but your reputation would be made. Now, will you go and sit down somewhere, keep out of our way?"

Fortane thought this over for a few seconds. It was true that he had nothing to gain by a scandal. The men would be punished, but his resignation would be asked nevertheless.

"I'll agree to shut up and resign."

"Fine. Now, get out of the way. I want this place in order when the captain gets here."

"You forget that I'm in command," Fortane said softly.

"Why pretend? You're through."

Fortane started to laugh, a sincere, happy laugh. Letzinger was startled. It had occurred to the lieutenant that things had worked out as he wished. He would be credited with the feat, and he had not run the gravest risks! But he must be in charge to have the credit.

"What's so funny?" Letzinger challenged.

"Nothing you'd understand. But listen, you mustard pot, I'm in charge from now on, in charge when the captain comes. Also, when you speak to me, you'll say, 'Lieutenant'—"

"No!"

"Will we do anything about this?" Fortane nodded as if in answer to his own question. "We surely will. I presume that you gave me this assortment of bumps?"

"I socked you, yes. And you'll get more in a moment—"

Fortane was amazed, for he had believed that Letzinger admitted him as a physical superior. On the contrary, the sergeant was belligerent and eager for a fight! These Legionnaires were astonishing fellows, with blind, unreasoning confidence in themselves.

"When my hands are free?" he asked.

"Think I'm afraid of you, baby?" Letzinger unbuckled his belt, tossed it aside.

He spat on his palms, rubbed them together in approved fashion. He was so sure of himself that Fortane had a moment's fear that he would prove an extraordinary fighter. But the German, although solid, powerful and undoubtedly an experienced bruiser, was manifestly slow of foot and brain.

HE leaped at the officer, swinging both fists, as he did when he faced a private, and a private intimidated by the invisible chevrons of a discarded coat. Fortane stepped aside, and smiled.

As Letzinger hurled by, Fortane slapped the back of his head and dropped him face down. From then on, it was less a fight than a demonstration of training over brute force. The German seemed to strike his face against Fortane's knuckles with deliberate intent. Very soon, he tried to kick, but the officer was darting away in time.

The lieutenant had been amused, mild at the start. But before long, the lust of combat swept him. There was an elemental release in this business, and the thought of the miserable moments he had spent, tied in the lee of the boulders, enraged him in retrospect. The few blows that reached him stung, and spurred him on. In a short time, he was gasping oaths similar to those uttered by Letzinger. It was no longer a neat encounter, but a nasty brawl.

Letzinger's nose spread over his face. His ears bled and puffed up. For a moment, he fought on with one eye completely closed, peering out of the other, brushing the blood with the back of his hand. Fortane started to knock him down, once, twice, three times.

"You'll kill him," protested a private, stepping between the two. The officer slapped him aside.

"Get up! Get up!"

He hauled the dazed sergeant erect, brushed his hands aside, battered his head. Letzinger slid to the ground, helpless. Fortane turned on the others.

"Well, talk up!"

They parted before him as he strode toward Maritz, who rose as he approached. The Balkanese half-smiled, waited until his chief was six paces away, and drew his automatic.

"If you lay a finger on me, Lieutenant, I'll blow your brains out."

Fortane was furious, and lashed to recklessness. The menace did not frighten him, but something about Maritz's expression puzzled him. The sergeant was considering him with something close to affection in his eyes. Moreover, he had not been insolent, was using the proper form of address.

"You can slate me for a court-martial if you please, Lieutenant. But it would be better to pull yourself together, just now. This would not make a nice picture for Captain Carpaux to behold."

Fortane nodded, and Maritz ordered the men to resume their various chores. Two Legionnaires had dragged Letzinger aside and were reviving him. The sergeant brought Fortane a basin of battered enamel-ware found on the spot, and a skin distended with water.

"Personally," Maritz resumed in a quiet voice, "I suggested killing you. But they insisted on their boyish pranks. This whole business was not serious."

The mounted scouts passed by a few minutes later. They reported the Legion on their heels. Fortane ordered the able men of the detachment to assemble before the fort. Letzinger, still somewhat unsteady, went to his proper place at the extreme right of the line. Fortane stood four paces ahead, béret tilted rakishly over one eye, careless, and matter-of-fact as usual.

He turned his head slightly as Carpaux approached, snapped an order: "Present—arms!" which caused some uneasiness, as not all the Legionnaires knew how to salute with pistols instead of rifles. So that the show was somewhat marred.

Fortane saluted before shaking Carpaux's hand.

"Objective attained on schedule, Captain," he reported briskly. "Two gravely wounded, four hit lightly, a half-dozen suffering from contusions and bruises."

Carpaux hesitated. Certain details could not escape him, Letzinger's swollen face for instance, and he knew that Chleuhs do not fight with their fists. His eyes sought Fortane's hands, he noted their condition with a flicker of the lids.

"Congratulations, Lieutenant. Much trouble?"

"Why, none to speak of, Captain." Fortane spoke glibly. "We passed through the lines without being challenged, guided by Sergeant Letzinger. We paused for breath by the boulders over there." The lieutenant lifted his hand, suave as a professional guide. "Then the Legionnaires galloped across the open space and started to toss in grenades. A complete surprise."

"You found those automatic rifles?"

"Oh, yes, Captain. But they're really not in good condition. One wonders that they could be operated at all."

"Nothing else to report, Lieutenant?" the captain's voice was sharp.

"Nothing, Captain."

"All right. Your uniforms and equipment will be brought up soon. I'm satisfied with you. The company is to remain here until the whole column is through the pass. By the way—" Carpaux seemed to seek for words—"the written report of this need not be rushed. Take your time."

"Understood, Captain."

Breval attended to his duties, placed the guns of his groups, assigned sentries. He joined Fortane at the first opportunity.

"What happened? A row? How—"

Fortane hesitated, uncertain whether he should tell the entire story to his friend. Then he decided to follow Carpaux's tacit example. The captain had made it plain that making public certain episodes of the night deserved long and careful consideration.

"See here, Alex, you have told me that some things are never discussed in the Legion. This is one of them. Something happened, of course, but I won't be the first to mention it."

"Did you fix up Letzinger in that style?"

"Ask him."

"What was the trouble?"

"Trouble?" Fortane smiled, shrugged. "That's nonsense. These chaps did me a great favor, one I would never have dared ask of them. We argued, in a friendly fashion, about how long it should continue. We reached a perfect understanding."

WHEN the Mobile Group had camped for the night, the following day, a brief and impressive ceremony took place. The captain adjutant read the orders of the day. After a terse account of the night raid accomplished by the members of the Fourth Legion Company, the bugles, fifes and drums played 'colors'. The officer took a deep breath and started on the routine list in a resounding voice.

"Cited to the order of the Mobile Group. Fortane, Raoul-Jacques de Croizet, Lieutenant in the Fourth Company, Foreign Legion March Battalion: Young and ardent officer, volunteered for a most dangerous mission, during which he perfectly coordinated the operations of his raiding party and achieved its purpose without loss of life, vanquished the natural obstacles afforded by the soil as well as a stubborn enemy. Showed splendid qualities of calm courage, intelligence and energy. The present citation carries the award of the Colonial Cross with Silver Star. Proposed for the Cross of the Legion of Honor."

Fierce elation swept over Fortane. He had won what he sought, not in a year, but in a month! That he had won it without great glory to any one who knew the real facts did not matter. For he had not joined the Legion to prove his worth to himself or any one else, but to obtain the release of his money into his hands. As the bugles blared the closing salute, he turned his head slightly, caught Breval's eye and winked.

Then he was aware of an extraordinary event—a faint yet distinct murmur had fused from the ranks of the company behind him. For a moment, cold sweat dripped down his spine, as he thought the men would make a hostile demonstration on parade. But the rumor subsided as Letzinger's citation was read off, giving the sergeant the Military Medal.

As they marched back to the tents, Fortane saw Carpaux take Breval aside, whisper to him. The sub-lieutenant then dropped back casually, until he was alongside.

"The captain just told me that if any-

thing started when the bunch breaks ranks, you should go to your quarters immediately. There's something wrong, and there's no use advertising it to the whole expedition."

"All right."

Fortane obeyed, and when the Legionnaires started to mill about, excited and noisy, instead of dispersing to their various tasks, when he saw the sergeants did not seek to hurry them, he walked away.

"You can't get away with that!" Some one shouted after him.

"You played us for suckers—"

Some of them were starting after him. Breval stepped before them, and held them back. Fortane did not even peer over his shoulder, lighted a cigaret, and strolled to the center of the camp, where he called on the colonel's aide to ask for permission to use the military radio to communicate with Casablanca.

When the message was on the way, he felt better. The agreement had been for a citation. Even if the court-martial annulled the citation later, it would be too late. The transfer of accounts would have been made. A fat retaining fee promised the attorney would make this doubly sure.

Fifteen minutes later, when he entered the tent, he found Breval waiting for him, white-faced and nervous.

"What in hell did you do?" he challenged abruptly. "There was a near riot. Never saw anything like it. From what I gather, the men accuse you of stealing that citation. I don't understand it, but they insist you took no active part in the attack, that you weren't even there."

"And what are they going to do?" Fortane asked lightly.

"They asked to speak with Carpaux. They say they're all willing to go to jail, but that they'll get you where you belong."

"Charming fellows," the lieutenant remarked.

"This is no joke!" Breval protested.

"I can see it isn't," Fortane sat down, crossed one leg over the other leisurely. "As a matter of fact, you're on the verge of hysteria. I assure you that I wasn't to blame for any of the whole damn silly business."

"So it's true? You didn't share in the attack?"

"I was willing to. They prevented me."

"Then you're in for trouble. They're talking with the captain this minute."

"Then I might as well tell you what did happen." Fortane outlined the incidents of the night briefly. "You see that they're worse off than I am. Tying me up, striking me, an officer, was mutiny, rebellion, whatever you choose to call it, before the enemy. I thought I was kind to drop it."

"You'll probably have to resign."

"I'm ready to." Fortane laughed in self-derision. "But do you know that for a while, that night, I felt close to them, and asked nothing better than to win their liking? They soon made me realize my mistake. They don't want me."

Breval stared into space.

"It's not your fault. It's because of Melkheim. The men made a fetish of him. That happens, and you don't know just why. He died, and started all this."

"All what?" Fortane asked defiantly. Then he could hold on no longer. He buried his face in his hands, and cried convulsively. "It wasn't my fault, not all my fault! God, Alex, I'm glad it's finished. Hating me, all of them hating me all the time!"

Breval mumbled awkward words of comfort, tried to console him. Fortane recovered control rapidly.

"Forget it," he said. "I'm glad this didn't happen before any of them. To hell with them. I'm no sucker for glory." His buoyant nature reasserted itself. "What do you say we go to the Greek's for some celebrating? I have a citation to wet down, and if signs mean anything,

I'd better hurry celebrating it while it sticks."

"Can't hurt," Breval granted.

But they met Bonifaci outside, who informed them that the major expected both of them to report at his quarters as soon as possible. The two exchanged glances. Fortane tried to smile.

WHEN they entered the big *marabout*-tent, there were ten or twelve officers gathered already, seated on camp stools before folding tables. Fortane understood that he was to face a sort of informal court martial, pending a genuine trial.

Carpaux was seated some distance from the others, annoyed and flushed. At a sign from the major, Breval crossed the tent to be near him. The two evidently were considered witnesses rather than judges. Fortane's captain had undoubtedly found the problem too serious for him to solve without assistance.

The big lieutenant, so downcast a few moments before, now felt held up by a bizarre, calm defiance. He came to attention before the major, a faint, ironical smile on his lips.

"Lieutenant Fortane," the major cleared his throat and consulted the others with a glance, seemingly more embarrassed than the man on trial. "You understand the reason for this meeting—"

"Perfectly, Major."

"Grave charges have been made against you."

"Charges, Major?" Fortane's chin lifted.

"Yes. Chiefly that you claimed a reward to which you were not entitled."

"I deny the charge, Major. Who made it?"

"Well, no one has, officially. But your men, that is to say the Legionnaires who accompanied you—that is who were with you, the members of the raiding party, have related a strange story." The major resumed briefly: "What have you to say?"

"That the facts as narrated are correct, Major. But I deny the charge."

"On what do you base that denial, please?"

"I claimed nothing. The Colonel commanding the Mobile Group saw fit to cite me. He will assure you that I did not claim a citation, by word or writing." Fortane waited with an intolerable air of hypocritical respect for the major to acknowledge this obvious statement with a nod. "So I deny claiming a reward to which I was not entitled."

"Eh—you admit that you did not show particular courage."

"Nothing of the sort, Major. I volunteered for the raid, started out, and was ready to do my duty to the finish. You cannot reproach me for rashness, carelessness, because I did not presume that I should guard myself against Legionnaires." Fortane gestured widely. "As a matter of fact, Major, I do not know what charges can be brought against me."

"You are playing with words, Lieutenant."

"I respectfully protest that, Major. Mention a single charge which I cannot refute."

The battalion commander looked about him helplessly. Renaudin, captain of the Second Company, a youngish, hard-bitten chap, scribbled on a slip of paper which he slid toward his chief. The major scanned it, looked up with renewed assurance.

"Lieutenant, you concealed important facts from your superiors."

Fortane smiled confidently.

"The matter might be regarded as confidential, Major, and not to be mentioned in a verbal report during an action," he explained. "As for the written report, Captain Carpaux told me that it could wait, on two occasions. Once on the morning following the raid, again when he asked me to list the men

who had distinguished themselves, for citations. I did not put down my own name, as can be ascertained. My company commander will no doubt attest all this—"

"Correct," Carpaux barked.

"In view of the gravity of the situation, you might have insisted."

Fortane thought of a way out. He had asked to see the major with the intention of asking his immediate transfer.

"I did insist, Major. You will recall that I asked for an interview with you at your earliest convenience."

"Yes, I recall that my secretary so told me. Was it your intention to reveal this affair?"

"I intended to speak in direct connection with the events of the raid, Major," Fortane said, with literal truthfulness.

"We must presume that," the major consented. "Why, gentlemen, I do not see what charges remain against Lieutenant Fortane. We may not approve of his behavior, but there is nothing definite—"

Captain Renaudin stood up bruskly. His jaws quivered, he was very pale. He bore a genuine adoration for the Legion and all connected with it.

"Major, may I observe that such things are technicalities? Why bother with them? What is evident is that Lieutenant Fortane has not been able to assert his authority, to gain the respect of his Legionnaires. You may call what they did mutiny. I see in it the desperate protest of soldiers against following one whom they could not trust. What is important is to persuade Lieutenant Fortane to leave the Corps quietly, to seek his luck elsewhere. I demand his resignation."

Fortane had been ready to offer to leave without further fuss. The sooner he left, now that he had his citation, the better it would be for him. In three days, he could be in Casablanca. Within a week, he could be in Paris, where few were concerned about the Legion, its traditions and code. But if he was ready to be obliging, something in him resisted being thrown out.

"Captain Carpaux will attest," he started, "that before I came to his company he was led to believe that there would be trouble with any lieutenant who reported for duty in replacement of a gentleman named Melkheim, who died on the field of honor somewhere in the Middle-Atlas, not many weeks ago."

"Captain Carpaux?" The major asked.

"That is true, yes."

"It is your belief, Captain, that there was prejudice against a newcomer, in advance?"

"I must admit that, Major." Carpaux waved a big hand. "You know Legionnaires!"

"This is a Chinese puzzle," the major blurted out with irritation. "I understand less and less."

"The matter is perfectly simple," Captain Renaudin stated firmly. "The lieutenant received a citation for something he did not do. He can go to the colonel and tell him so, ask for the mention to be struck off the records, annulled."

"I would be asked for explanations, Captain," Fortane pointed out with mock patience. "I would have to relate that I was overpowered, struck, injured, insulted, by my subordinates. Can I ask you, Captain Renaudin, what punishment is foreseen for such crimes perpetrated on active service?"

"Death," Renaudin admitted.

"In all justice, I do not believe that they deserve death, nor even severe punishment," Fortane went on. "It is one of those exceptional incidents where the ends of discipline are better served by allowing the guilty to escape punishment. I have been given to understand that such episodes are not unknown in the Legion, and can be handled deftly." The lieutenant was enjoying this bait-

ing of the group which had gathered to crush him. "It would be Spartan, of course, to decorate all twenty of them, then shoot four or five of the leaders, ship the rest to prison camps for a number of years. But the scandal would do no one much good."

"You make a clever lawyer," Captain Renaudin grumbled, "though you have shortcomings as a soldier."

Renaudin's hostile attitude had singled him out. Fortane grasped the occasion by the hair. He would leave, but he would not depart beaten.

"You doubt my courage, Captain?" he pressed.

"Well," Renaudin said with derisive friendliness, "let us put it that I'm not at all convinced of it, eh?"

"You depart from your position as a judge, and exceed your rights as a superior," Fortane warned him.

"I'm speaking my opinion as a man," Renaudin declared.

"Drop the subject," urged the major.

"Drop it?" Fortane raised his voice. He was at the end of his patience, happy to find a single target for his accumulated resentment. "Until further developments, I'm an officer. I demand an apology or other satisfaction. Captain Renaudin may discover that when I'm not attacked from behind and tied up by four or five men, I'm somewhat more active."

"A duel?" Renaudin shrugged. "I don't need that to prove myself, fortunately. I refuse an apology."

"Gentlemen—" the major intervened.

"In that case, Captain," Fortane said quietly, "I shall slap your face before your company before leaving." He laughed nervously. "We shall see how indifferent and aloof you can remain, when you are the one humiliated. Do you people really believe that you hold a monopoly on honor and courage? I deny it."

"I'm at your disposal," Renaudin grumbled.

But his colleagues took him aside, argued heatedly. Undoubtedly, they convinced him that he had spoken rashly. For he returned to face Fortane and extended his hand.

"I apologize, Lieutenant. Please believe that my retraction is sincere and prompted neither by policy nor fear of scandal."

Fortane pressed the outstretched fingers.

"I am the last to doubt your courage, Captain, and regret my own faults."

Probably to indicate that Fortane was no longer accused, the major gestured for him to take a chair. He outlined the situation.

"By making this public, we start a nasty scandal, a controversy which will echo throughout the Legion, the army. Lieutenant Fortane, I gather, makes no charges against the Legionnaires. They shall be allowed to get off with a private warning. Is that agreed?"

The officers nodded in turn as the major's glance reached them.

"And you do not exact an apology from Sergeant Letzinger, Lieutenant Fortane?"

"What good would it do? I would not humiliate any one, Major."

"Nevertheless, you cannot go on serving in your present assignment, Lieutenant. We must dispose of you in some manner."

"I see. I'm still the man with a citation he did not earn," Fortane admitted. "You ask for my resignation from the service?"

"Not immediately, Lieutenant. That would cause speculation, gossip, all that we are seeking to avoid."

"Then what, Major?"

"I shall announce that you are recalled to Meknes, to attend special instruction in mortar and small gun practice. The next convoy leaving for the North is starting in three days. Meanwhile, you are relieved from duty."

WHEN the members of the raiding party returned to their quarters, to report that they had been released with a warning, the Legionnaires believed they had won out. The officers did not reveal what had been decided at the meeting, but every one soon learned that Fortane was no longer on duty in the company, that he was making preparations to leave. It was plain that he had been dismissed from the Legion. They pitied him.

Even Gottkind, who knew Fortane best, shared the illusion that they had left him nothing to live for. He unloaded the lieutenant's pistol, concealed the cartridges. Breval caught him at this pious task, asked his motive and dismissed him. Fortune, when told, was intensely amused.

"They think I've hit bottom, don't they?" he said. "Mind if I share your tent until I leave, Alex?"

"Don't be a fool; of course not."

"Glad you're not afraid of contagion," Fortane remarked. "You don't think I'd shoot myself, then?"

"No." Breval shrugged. "You have what you wished."

"Many thanks, old man!" He filled a wallet. "Coming with me to celebrate my citation? That was in order, you recall."

"All right," said Breval, "I'll have a bottle with you."

The Levantine who ran the officer's *cantine*, an enclosure of canvas stretched on poles, rubbed his hands when Fortane ordered champagne. He sold his rotten stuff at night club prices. As there was no ice, the custom was to make the wine palatable by adding cognac freely. Breval drank sparingly and left.

Fortane seemed exuberant, treated every one in sight, officers of native cavalry, infantrymen, engineers, even a brace of lieutenants from the supply corps. By the time lights out was sounded he had run up a considerable bill and was not too steady on his feet. The trader, seeing him somewhat drunk, doubled it, thereby making a serious mistake in elementary psychology.

A poor man becomes generous with drink. When sober, Fortane seldom looked at a bill, paid for the bottom figure, for money had never meant much to him. It may be that alcohol brought to life the banker's strain in his blood, for when he was tipsy he dreaded to be mistaken for a sucker. On this occasion, he grew furious. He caught the Levantine by the shirt-collar and started to beat him.

A patrol entered the tent, lured by the shouting. The sergeant in charge had scruples against touching a superior, particularly when that superior was engaged in a public service. So the howls and thumps continued until the officer of the day came to investigate. He suggested that Fortane retire to his quarters, with a request to remain there until further notice. After a long and eloquent argument which delighted the spectators, the lieutenant obeyed.

This incident made Fortane the champion of soldiers' rights. Not a Legionnaire but had had trouble with greedy traders while in the field, and the calm, masterly hiding given one of them by the officer thrilled them all. Even Melkheim, who had often protested a bill, had never taken the law into his own hands after being commissioned.

The belief spread that Fortane had got drunk to drown his grief at leaving the Legion. His refusal to pay led to the discovery that he had as much money as a man could dream of, that he had been defending a principle and not a miserable handful of bills.

Furthermore when the major had given the raiding party his private going over, he had told them that Lieutenant Fortane had refused to make charges against them, and that but for that they would have faced a court martial. So the

officer had been lenient after they had sought to make trouble for him, when he had nothing to gain by keeping quiet.

The men, whose resentment had vanished with the success of their revenge, now judged that Fortane had sacrificed himself to avoid the Legion a scandal. The reversal, as was to be expected, was complete.

When Fortane emerged from his tent the following morning, to report at headquarters for a scolding and a settlement of the bill at the trader's, he was greeted with mute admiration which he did not discern. Legionnaires snapped to attention, granted him salutes worthy of a colonel.

Carpaux, who missed nothing that went on in his outfit, and was well disposed toward the lieutenant because of his resolute, calm attitude before the gathering officers, noticed this change in attitude at once.

"Breval," he addressed the sub-lieutenant, "I think he'd do all right if he stayed. You could drop him a hint. Or had I better speak to him myself? I'm sure the major would reinstate him at my request."

Breval shook his head.

"It's no use, Captain. I might as well tell you," and freed by Fortane's approaching departure and his removal from the Legion, the young man related why the lieutenant had entered the Corps. "So you see, he no longer needs us."

"Too bad, too bad," Carpaux mused. "He is too good a man to waste his life playing."

FORTANE had hoped to leave immediately.

But he was informed that a serious engagement was expected before the end of that week. The departure of the convoy for Khenifra would be delayed until it was over, so that the wounded could be taken back. For a moment, the lieutenant considered asking to be allowed to board one of the military ambulance planes, but a last vestige of pride prevented it. He did not wish to appear a fugitive.

A column in the field forms a compact world in itself. As it was most unusual for an officer to leave an expedition while in progress, news of his departure aroused much curiosity.

Officers of other units did not know quite what had been wrong, and were consequently cautious. Although they did not shun Fortane, the big lieutenant realized very soon that they avoided speaking of the current operations before him. He mistook tact for silent blame.

On the march, instead of keeping with the company, he rode on the baggage carts. At night, he wandered aimlessly about the camp when Breval was on duty. Once, he overheard a black sergeant of Senegalese announcing to comrades as he passed:

"There's the white chief whom the Legionnaires kicked out."

Fortane started, whirled and strode toward the man who had spoken. The black face glistened with sweat as if varnished, the big mouth gaped. The lieutenant shrugged, turned away without speaking. The man had been right, and whether Fortane liked the wording or not, he was the man whom the Legion had kicked out!

Whenever he thought of that, he laughed nervously.

He had achieved what he had started out to do. He should have felt elated, happy. But now that he was safely out of the Legion, could go back to France and lead the existence he aspired to, something was lacking and he had an aching sense of emptiness and failure.

Captain Renaudin's words, which had lashed him into defiance, still rankled. There had been an apology, but that did not satisfy Fortane. He was certain that Renaudin honestly believed him a coward. There was small comfort in thinking that he was a coward because of

deliberate choice. Perhaps that was somewhat worse than to be the victim of physical terror.

New doubt seeped into his mind.

Were the Legionnaires right? Was there something definitely wrong with him, a soft, rotten streak in his character? If he had tried to do the job well, could he have succeeded?

For three days, Fortane drank more than was good for him. He felt lonely. A barrier seemed to have been erected between Breval and himself, although they lived in the same quarters. The sub-lieutenant was courteous enough, but Fortane would catch his glance often, speculative, preoccupied, as though Breval had something to say which he did not dare phrase.

Fortane thought he knew what that might be, a candid expression of what Breval felt. The young fellow had come from comfortable surroundings in France, enlisted as a private and fought his way to a commission. Little wonder that he must feel superior to Fortane—he was superior!

ON THE morning of the fourth day after the officers' council, Fortane awoke at dawn. Breval was dressing carefully. He buckled on the garrison belt, adjusted his holster, placed additional magazines for his automatic pistol in the breast-pockets of his tunic. His face was drawn and pale, little muscles played on his cheeks as he spoke.

"Well, Raoul, looks as if you'd be off for Meknes tonight," he said. "It should be all over before noon, and the wounded will probably be evacuated early in the afternoon."

"What will be over?"

"The attack—"

"You're attacking today?"

"Sure. We cross the river this morning." Breval stared at his friend with surprise. "Where have you been? Everybody in camp knows that."

"Everybody but me," Fortane tried to laugh casually. "I'm a tourist now. I'm not supposed to be interested."

"If I don't see you again before you leave," Breval extended his hand. "Good-bye and good luck."

"You'll spend your first leave with me in Paris?"

"All right." Breval hesitated. "If I'm all right. I've a bad hunch for today. Things are planned too well, and something always goes wrong when the big guys pretend to know not only when a fight will start but when it will end. In case I'm—well, the captain spoke to me—maybe there's something I should say—"

Fortane winced.

"I know what it is. Save it."

"As you wish."

"Ready, Lieutenant?" Gottkind called from the outside.

"Right with you. So long, Raoul."

After Breval had left, Fortane drank a long swallow of cognac, settled back on his cot. They were attacking. What of it? What had it to do with him?

But he could imagine the battalion marching off, in a long triple file, striding toward the thin, silvery streak made across the plain by the Oum-er-Rhab River. From the camp rose rumors, the trampling of troops, the oaths of the mule drivers, the braying of their animals. A platoon of light cavalry trotted through the camp street, there were a few resounding calls in French, guttural replies in Arabic.

Long after, he heard the piercing notes of the bugles signaling for open order. Scattered shots started, then the batteries of mountain cannon opened fire. The shrill yelps of the Senegalese as they launched their attack clashed through the fusillade.

"*Eely-ly-ly—*"

Fortane rolled out of the blankets, dressed. He lighted a cigaret, strolled through the almost deserted camp. He bought hot coffee from the cook of a

Moroccan section, as the officers' mess was empty.

Seeking for a vantage point from which to watch the engagement, he found the staff grouped on a rise of ground. The colonel was seated on a folding stool. There was a pad on his knee, on which he scrawled from time to time, snapping instructions over his shoulder. He was brisk, confident.

The infantry already had crossed the stream.

The batteries were shifting positions in swirls of reddish dust. Fortane joined the group without attracting attention, and followed the attack with field-glasses. It could not be seen as a whole, because the ground beyond the stream, although it appeared flat to the eye, dipped and rose in a series of low hills tufted with bushes. Save for the flickering of carbines and rifles, nothing could be seen of the enemy.

Fortane identified the turbans of the Moroccan Regulars, the scarlet *chechias* of the blacks. Then with an unexpected thrill of intense excitement, he located the Legion!

There were two companies engaged. Even at that distance, they could be distinguished from other formations. Their advance had a particular, machine-like, remorseless drive. They had the right of the line and were forging ahead of the others. He recognized Carpaux, because the captain had a sensitive throat and always wore a thick, multi-colored scarf wound about his neck during the morning hours.

The men with him must be the Legionnaires of the Fourth Company, Fortane's own outfit. After seeking a while, he located Breval, at that moment kneeling behind a skirmish line. And it seemed to the lieutenant that the automatics of that company crashed out with greater authority than all others. Something new stirred in him—corps spirit. Those men were admirable soldiers, and beholding them in action, their faults were forgiven.

The other company must be the Second, under Renaudin. Even numbers usually worked together, in the battalion.

"Seven-thirty," a voice said near by. "The Legion will reach its objectives on schedule. Look at them go!"

The groups were silhouetted briefly on the crest of a hill and vanished from sight. Information now would depend on runners. When they were gone, Fortane scanned the rest of the field. In the exact center, advancing steadily over open ground, were two companies of North African Tirailleurs. They must have lost heavily during the crossing of the river, for numerous bodies could be picked out on the bank.

Fortane turned to an officer at his side, a lean, bearded captain of Spahis, who wore a staff arm-band.

"Who are those chaps in the center?"

"Tunisian Infantry." The cavalryman shrugged. "They're having a bad time of it. See if they don't crack up before long. The slobs are picking off the officers."

Fortane tried to see by what sign the other knew all this. But to him, the Tunisians appeared to be making progress, slowly but steadily. And it was unthinkable that troops organized and led by Frenchmen should be broken by native forces.

Nevertheless, that is what happened within a few minutes.

At first, it was merely a sagging of the skirmish line on the left, where the sections lost touch of each other. Then the front seemed to dislocate, like a string

of dominoes scattered by the hand. There was not panicky flight, no stampede for the rear, the groups started to retire slowly, but it was a check. The unseen enemies were fighting superbly, for the little knots of soldiers became smaller and smaller.

There was some agitation around the colonel.

A young officer mounted and galloped away. Before long, the troops held in reserve were going down to the river at the double. There were the First and Third Companies of the Legion and four companies of blacks. After crossing the river rapidly, the Legion was hurled to the threatened spot on the left, while the negroes attacked straight ahead. They collected the broken elements of the Tunisians as they advanced.

"Here comes the real stunt," the Spahi muttered.

For the first time, the enemy showed himself in the open. The mountaineers seemed to rise among the troopers as if by magic. They had laid in wait in the bushes. They were too close to the soldiers to be shelled. There was a brief pause of the French line; bayonets glittered in the sun. Then the hillmen were through on the right, rolling down the invaders' lines like a curtain along a rod, reaching the river in a single, headlong lunge. While a number of them formed a defense line, many more slipped toward the right.

Even Fortane, inexperienced as he was, could see what was taking place. The enemy had split the French, and were closing in on the Legion companies from the rear. Somewhere in the shallow valleys, the Fourth and Second were surrounded.

The cavalryman uttered a neighing, mirthless chuckle.

"They managed to coax our reserves to the left, and before we can untangle them and shift right, they'll dish out the Legion in fine style! There must be more than a thousand in that gang that walked by just a while back!"

The colonel was on his feet now, pacing restlessly.

As Breval had feared, he had taken too much for granted. And it must have been hitter for a gentleman trained in the Ecole Supérieure Guerre to be outwitted by primitive foes. The mountaineers' plan was obvious: They would lose the battle as a whole, but they would compensate that by wiping out a large number of their enemies' finest troops.

"What companies are those?" the cavalryman murmured, consulting a typewritten paper.

"Second and Fourth, Carpaux and Renaudin," Fortane announced.

"Right!" The officer turned and glanced at Fortane curiously, his eyes resting on the grenade badge of the Legion embroidered on the collar-tabs. He seemed to be puzzled, about to ask a question, then remembered who Fortane was. He repeated casually: "Right!"

It was impossible to know what was happening. The automatics were working at irregular intervals in the direction of the Legion. Within a few minutes, a Legionnaire arrived, mounted on a horse. He had come through the enemy's lines from the isolated companies and had obtained a horse at the first cavalry post. Fortane recognized him as a private in Letzinger's group, a sullen, quarrelsome chap. He had been hit, for his open tunic showed blood stains.

Fortane could not hear his report, but the news passed from men to men.

"Attacked from all sides—completely surrounded—hundreds of them—Captain Carpaux's wounded—no, doesn't know much about the Second Company—saw Renaudin—Breval's commanding the Fourth—they're dropping like flies—"

"It's a massacre," some one said.

The cavalryman again looked at Fortane. Again, his eyes rested on the Legion badge. He looked away, sought

to disguise his wonder. But the big lieutenant understood that it was odd for him, a lieutenant in the Fourth, to be safe and idle when the outfit was in danger.

For a moment longer, he struggled against an insane impulse. Then he walked toward the horse on which the messenger had come. The Spahi followed him, laid a restraining hand on his arm.

"What do you intend to do, Lieutenant?"

"They're short of officers out there. I'm going."

"You're mad. You'll never get through."

Fortane indicated the Legionnaire.

"He got through, didn't he?"

He leaped into the saddle, gathered the reins. Voices shouted after him as he galloped away. But he did not turn. In a short time, he was near the river, at the first cavalry post. The sergeant in charge, a sunburnt young Frenchman, caught the horse by the bridle.

"Can't cross here, Lieutenant. The swine hold the opposite side."

"I'll try—"

"Not on that horse, Lieutenant," the sergeant insisted.

It was all right with him for a man to risk his life, but he was responsible for the animal, five thousand francs of Government property, and he did not intend to get into trouble. Fortane dismounted.

WITHOUT hesitation, he slipped down the embankment, waded in the river. The stream, a rushing mountain torrent, was ice cold. Although there were fords upstream, where the troops had crossed, the middle proved too deep to keep erect. Fortane had to swim. He lost his *képi*, was carried down by the current a couple of hundred yards. This probably saved him.

The physical struggle had kept him from thinking, but when he climbed on the opposite shore, and sprawled under convenient bushes, he was frightened. He gasped for breath, his teeth chattered with cold.

The undertaking now appeared under its real proportions. It was a rash, stupid display of needless ardor. Fortane felt that he could not possibly get through alive. The Legionnaire who had brought news had succeeded because he had been selected from a number of veterans as the best man for the task. The lieutenant was a novice, and would prove as conspicuous as an elephant.

He considered turning about. But he would be met by the cavalry sergeant, who would grin with amusement, and his return to the camp would cover him with ridicule.

He rose to his hands and knees, peered about cautiously. Natives were shouting not far away. They kept hidden as he was, because of the French outposts on the opposite side waiting with ready carbines. The company, naturally, was somewhere in the direction of the heavy firing, less than a mile distant. He must make up his mind, start one way or another.

The sun was growing warmer as the morning passed. His tunic was drying, stiffening after the drenching. The well-tailored garment, made snug over hips and shoulders to show off his athletic figure, hampered his movements. Fortane cursed himself for having sought style instead of comfort and wear. He stripped off the garment, threw it aside. Then he yanked the moist shirt from his trousers, because the linen, wet and pleated, chaffed his abdomen painfully.

He was ready to start, with his automatic as sole weapon. Nine cartridges between him and—whatever would happen.

He crept forward some yards on all fours, rose and glanced around. Then he rose and raced across an open space, plunging beneath a bush at the end of

his rush. His feeling of uselessness and futility increased.

After a brief pause, he started forward again. He progressed thus for a considerable distance. Then he saw natives crouching as he was, dodging about as he was. They were tall chaps, most of them mature men, bearded and wiry. Some of them were almost completely nude, but the majority wore the mountain *jellabas*. The detonations came from the southwest, and seemed much nearer. Occasionally, leafage would rustle, twigs snap, or the air vibrated in a metallic screech.

"Bullets," Fortane decided. "What's the use of worrying about them? They're not aimed at me. When one of those chaps happens to look at me, I'll be done for."

It was mathematically certain that he would not go much farther without being discovered. But when his worry over this possibility reached its peak, he knew it would be as dangerous to turn back as to go ahead.

He stumbled upon the first corpse. The hillman was very young, probably not much more than a boy. He had crept under a bush to die, with a bullet in his throat. Fortane seized his rifle, an old gun with a lever action, probably a Martini. A skin pouch fastened to the body's waist by a leather thong yielded two dozen big cartridges, tipped by lead slugs as big as a finger-joint. The lieutenant slipped them in one pocket of his trousers, placing the pistol in the other.

He continued on his way, hiding and running. And his amazement grew. He could see natives everywhere now, some of them so near that he could almost distinguish the color of their eyes. He must have been seen by now. How long would his luck hold out?

Some minutes after capturing the rifle, he broke out of a clump of bushes, found an unexpected drop into a narrow gully, stumbled and fell headlong. When he rose, he saw three snipers, not twenty-five yards away. One was squatted at the bottom of the shallow depression, nursing a bleeding leg, the others were prone near the top, rifles pushed forward.

All three looked toward him as he crashed down. But as he gained his footing, ready for a desperate fight, all three looked away casually, and the two at the top fired their guns, in the opposite direction! Without pausing to analyze their motive, Fortane scrambled up and away. The wounded man shouted after him, a warning from the tone.

Ten seconds later, as he huddled at the flank of a boulder, panting and relieved, he brushed the sweat from his face with his grimy hand. This suddenly gave him the explanation of his rare luck. Chance had served him far better than skill or experience might have!

His first good fortune had been to lose his *képi* as he swam the river. The rigid outline of the crown and cap would have attracted immediate notice. Then he had discarded his uncomfortable tunic, rolled up his sleeves to free his movements. The shirt, khaki in color, was very long, as French shirts are likely to be, and reached almost to his knees. This dark hued, floating garment would resemble a *jellaba* unless closely examined!

The dirt transferred from his hands to his face and neck, as he wiped perspiration away, had smeared the skin. The muddy clots adhering to his chin might be mistaken for a beard. The natives did not expect an isolated enemy wandering through their positions, and seeing him gallop by, without a sign of uniform, save for his leggings, they had naturally mistaken him for one of their own seeking a new shelter.

He had been on the way for a long time when he heard the sound of the automatics very near. At the same moment, he recognized Sergeant Boniface's

Corsican voice bellowing orders. He dropped to the ground, as a number of natives galloped by. And when he saw the *képis* of the Legionnaires above the bushes, he hailed them in French.

"This way, Legionnaires!"

The soldiers swerved in his direction, and covered him as he rose. He identified himself briefly. Bonifaci recovered from his surprise first.

"What are your orders, Lieutenant?"

"Keep on with what you're doing," Fortane said.

Bonifaci and his groups were clearing out the nearest attackers, making a path for the rest of the company to a crest. Fortane dropped back and walked with the crew of the first automatic, noted that it was short one man. He relieved the remaining feeder of half his magazines, and carried them. When the gun went into action again, he knelt behind the firer and passed the ammunition. Even then, he was afraid that one of his comrades would protest his presence in the group, deny his right to help.

"Where did you come from?" some one asked.

"The camp," Fortane announced.

"Walked through them? Well—"

THEIR glances, in which admiration mixed with lingering disbelief, warmed him like strong drink. He could see that they, who had fought in Morocco many years, understood just what dangers he had run, what he had accomplished.

"Want to try her, Lieutenant?" the firer asked, after a while.

"Sure—"

"All right. Hold her down all the time."

The Legionnaire surrendered the automatic. Fortane was elated. He knew what a rare concession this was from an automatic boss.

He moved about with the rest, obeying Bonifaci. During brief respites, he learned that Carpaux was not very seriously wounded. A bullet had ripped the skin above his left eye and he was blinded temporarily. The company had had a very hard time for an hour or so, when they had found themselves circled. But everything was going well now.

During a lull, Fortane held a hand on his shoulder. He rose to face Breval.

"At your orders, Lieutenant," he was greeted.

"I'm doing all right here, Alex," Fortane replied.

"As you wish," Breval agreed. He lowered his voice somewhat. "Say, you've been exposed to the Legion too long. You've contracted a very bad case!"

Fortane shrugged, at a loss for a reply. He remembered that he had claimed that he was no sucker for glory, yet what else could he harvest on this spot? Just when he had changed, he could not have said. But he knew he was in the right place, doing a good job. That was what mattered.

The combat lasted, with alternatives of intense action and absolute calm, until mid-afternoon. Then the other companies of the Legion Battallion bayonetted the tribesmen out of the zone near the river. Cavalry squadrons trotted by, spread wide some distance ahead and darted about, sabering stragglers.

Breval sought Fortane, gave him a cigaret.

"What's the idea of coming here?" he asked.

"Your runner got to camp and said the Fourth was being massacred. I was with a bunch of officers, and they seemed to wonder what I was doing at the rear when you were in trouble. I got to wondering myself and got here somehow."

"Ah?" Breval paused thoughtfully. Again, Fortane saw that speculative expression in his eyes. Then the sub-lieutenant reminded him: "If you want to leave with the convoy, you better get back to camp. It will start as soon as the transportable wounded have got a first dressing—"

Fortane hesitated, felt himself grow red.

"Listen," he said, "I know it sounds silly, but I don't like to leave like this." He was aware that his concern would seem humorous to his friend, in whom he had confided his practical views on life. "It's not just the Legion," he explained lamely, "but you never know when it might crop out later that I had been kicked out. It would sound worse than it is. Do you think they'd let me stay?"

Before Breval could answer, Sergeant Letzinger came up, joined his heels and saluted. The lieutenant was justified in experiencing a thrill of satisfaction. Even the legendary Melkheim would have been flattered by the respect and devotion in the eyes staring from the face of the sergeant, the face that still bore bruises made by Fortane's knuckles.

"Lieutenant—" Letzinger faltered, moistened his lips.

"What is it?" Fortane prompted.

He sought to be casual, but his fingers groped nervously for his belt buckle, for the buttons of the missing tunic, for anything that would prevent their twitching from being noted.

"You came without your canteen, Lieutenant. We—I—the men, I mean—well, we thought that maybe you'd be thirsty. So—here's some coffee, if you care—" The sergeant added an apology: "It's cold, but there's cognac in it."

Fortane took the canteen, tilted it to his mouth and drank. The brandy must have been very strong, for his eyes were wet and his voice hoarse when he spoke.

"Thanks, Letzinger."

"Oh, that's nothing, Lieutenant."

Letzinger corked the canteen carefully, saluted once more, pivoted and left. Fortane looked after him.

"Eh, Raoul!"

Breval was touching his arm, recalling his presence.

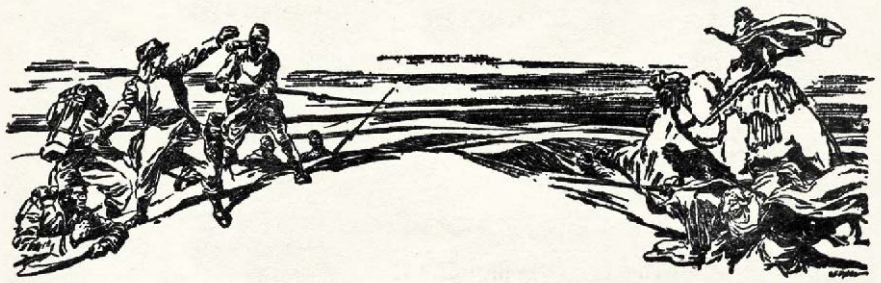
"What's that?" Fortane asked.

"You were asking me something, Raoul—"

Fortane remembered his question. But it was needless, as he had received the verdict through Letzinger. And he saw that Breval was amused rather than curious.

"I? Oh—" Fortane hesitated, then laughed, an easy, boyish laugh. "I forget just what it was, old man. It doesn't matter, anyway."

THE END



JACLAND MARMUR

SAILOR OF FORTUNE

IN AN obscure and crooked alley not far from Coenties Slip, where once the spar yards roared with activity fashioning flawless topmasts and royal yards for the wool clippers bound round Cape Horn, Ben Harrisy has his place. The alley, gloomy even in the brightest day, is black as a cave at night. A slush lamp hangs over Ben's door, and that is all. The place has no proper name; and either you know it or you don't. It is not a place for men who want four stripes in a hurry, and the dignity and security of the ferry-boat liners: it is a place for the sailors of fortune.

Outside, there is the brutal drum of the elevated, and the deep, voracious muffled roar of the city, like the noise of a gigantic machine grinding out dollars, grinding out bright, new dollars. But inside Ben Harrisy's place, once you have closed the scarred door behind you and descended the five worn stairs, that monstrous machine rocking the earth is swallowed up in the sea. It exists no more.

Here the smoke of strong twist tobacco spins thinly above grizzled heads. Here and there a light bulb glimmers like a planet about to set in a hazy sky. The talk drones endlessly, of deep water and strange corners of earth where the wind is sharp and the seas like hammer-blows. Once and again there is the slap of the river, almost underfoot. The steamers blare in the murk outside, and the snore of the shipping out there is like a call, an insistent call, not to be denied. And a head lifts, listening intently for the proper signal.

From behind the till, old Ben will call out to him, as a man rises and passes, the amount of his debt to date, without once changing the set of his stare or the

motion of his jaw on his cud. He has an uncanny memory for such things, old Ben, and he rarely gets done in. Men who owe him for drink and food spread the breadth of the earth, and may be met wherever salt water touches solid land.

Strange things happen in Harrisy's place, and a crew may be shipped there for any venture.

John Hawley thought he had stopped too long. They don't stay over long at Ben's. The suck of the sea is too strong. You can hear the thresh of rain on the river—the deep-sea rain driving in from yonder beyond Ambrose Light. But you would not think it to look at him, sitting there lifting a battered pewter mug to his stolid face that the sea called irresistibly. He seemed more a young countryman than a sailor, or perhaps a New England rock farmer. Massachusetts winter water was in his eye. Slow in his movements, but with the heavy certainty of power—deceiving. Ran a little to raw bone, except for his face and the quiet, gray eyes. Opposite him, his friend, little Ned Sparkdale, put a match to his gurgling pipe-bowl, grunting. He'd got struck with the pox a good many years ago, and it left curious marks on Ned's cheeks in two odd round patches. When the light caught him a certain way it gave him the appearance of blushing continually, especially when his small blue eyes were twinkling.

"Dull, Ned," John Hawley ventured. "Got to move on."

"Ay, Jawn, dull."

"The Min River was better."

Sparkdale's eyes lit. The peak of his cap cast shadow on one flushing cheek spot. "Hanker for Fuhkien myself, Jawn. Them yellow devils was top-hole." He sighed prodigiously. "Long way to China land, Jawn."

"Ay, Ned, long way. Wonder what happened to the old *Palermo* after they auctioned us out of the ship up Canada way?"

"Three weeks gone now. Never see her again."

"Ah, well."

"Person'd never think there was that much blood mixed up in tea and spice. Hey, Jawn?"

"And in other things."

"Ay. I expect."

They mused on, silent, each in his separate mind, as did the score of others in Harrisy's place near old Coenties Slip. The spice of life, that's what they sought, each in the manner that suited his nature. It left them in tatters more often than not, men of outland trails. The hard, gruff voices droned on. In the river, a ship blared. Heads lifted a little, listening. You could never tell. It might be the signal a man waited for. The muffled roar died away. A snatch of conversation came clear in the momentary stillness.

". . . wanted a sailing master for a Red Sea dhow, he did. Blarsted blackbirder! That's him now by the till. Niggers from Port Sudan across to Jiddah. Black gals, too. Fancy prices for 'em from the Ayrabs even today, providin' they're young 'uns. Not me, Joe! I draws the line at slavin' . . ."

"Don't blame you a bit. He's plumb ruinous, the Deacon is . . ."

NED SPARKDALE grinned; then the sparkle went out of his eyes.

"Jawn!"

"Ay?"

"Look what's talkin' to Harrisy." He jerked his head toward the counter. "Captain Bludlon — Deacon Bill — an' some other fancy."

Hawley turned his head. Bill Harrisy hadn't stirred. Still with elbows on counter, he rolled his cud complacently and let an occasional word slip out. Two men stood before him, the one tall and thin, with a waxed mustache above a line of blue lips and a cane under his arm; and the other short, fleshy, and

bald—Captain Bludlon. Harrisy's eyes moved. It was the closest he ever got to a nod of the head. The pair moved away.

"Lord love us, he's comin' here."

"Good enough. No harm. Been dull lately."

Bludlon edged his paunch between the up-tipped chairs until he reached the table where Hawley and Sparkdale sat. Here he dropped without ceremony to a seat, puffing a little, and smiling expansively.

"Sit down, Mr. Zhareg," he invited his companion in a slow and unctuous bass. "Mr. Hawley and Mr. Sparkdale might be interested in my ship."

Ned's lips twitched. "When you get your ticket reinstated, Bludlon?"

"My dear fellow!" the fat man protested in a hurt tone, showing the palms of his pudgy hands. His bald head glowed, and his red jowls expanded and collapsed. You almost expected him to start leading the choir in a hymn to the Lord. "My dear fellow!" he said again.

"What's it this time, Deacon?" Ned persisted. "Sacked Chinks from Mexico, or opium from over across? We ain't interested. We're resting."

Bludlon's mouth cracked open and closed. He looked at the blue-lipped man called Zhareg, who betrayed no sign that he even heard. There was ruthless purpose in his fixed black eyes, a man to drive and bludgeon his way to his end. Bludlon smiled enticingly.

"It's a good proposition," he whispered.

"Deacon, you're poison."

"Might's well listen, Ned," John Hawley drawled.

Deacon Bill Bludlon turned his smile on him. Now there was a fellow! He looked slow-witted, dull, but he had shoulders on him. Probably keep a ruffian crew in control, if it came to that. Bludlon liked them that way. Stolid clods turned sailor. You could manage 'em. Didn't think of too many questions to ask. His smile grew more expansive. Mr. Zhareg shifted his cane restlessly. He didn't fancy this foul place. He wanted to be free of it and back to that high-breasted girl with the flashing derisive eyes. But business is business, and she was an expensive bit of baggage.

"Well, m'son, what we want is a mate and second for a voyage I'm starting on," Captain Bludlon wheezed. "That's you, John, and Ned. And it's double pay and first-class passage to anywhere you choose if we leave the ship at Iquique."

"The cargo?" Hawley murmured.

"All stowed and hatches secure. So you see it's no worry for you and plenty of pay."

"But the cargo?" John persisted in an idle murmur.

Captain Bludlon coughed. "Machine parts. Very expensive. Worth close on a million cold."

"Nix, Deacon," Sparkdale put in angrily. "It's off. First place, your ticket's rotten, and you got no leave to sail master. Second—"

"M'son," Bludlon urged blandly, speaking really to John Hawley's half-closed eyes, "m'son, the vessel flies the Bolivian flag."

"Seems like all the pots you scuttle fly some outland flag."

"Of course," the Deacon agreed.

"What's her name?" John drawled.

"*Palermo.*"

Hawley's eyes snapped wide. "*Palermo?*" he repeated, a little startled. "Why she—"

"Yes, *Palermo.* Been on the China coast. Pilot house all sheeted in armor plate. Needed it out there, you know." Captain Bludlon seemed about to pray. "Handy. Mr. Zhareg just bought her up in Canada. A bargain. Brought her here, and we're shipping a crew. *Palermo,* yes. Good name, that. Good little ship, too."

John Hawley looked hard at him. Fishy looking gent, he thought. Fishy

business, too. That Zhareg bird looked like he could see a man skinned alive without doing more than pluck at the tip of his mustache to see if it were properly curled. So they'd got hold of the old *Palermo?* Lord! The times he and Ned had seen her in funny little holes of China land. You couldn't stay put for long after that, after once the gay goddess of all the outland trails had lifted the curtain for you and let you see purple mist over foreign earth and a sea like hard-hammered silver spouting white along barren reefs in the light of strange, gold dawn. After that, when she nodded, it was your signal: you stood up and followed.

"Well, Ned," he said, a little mournfully, "I guess we better join up and see what lies down yonder under the blue horizon."

Captain Bill Bludlon beamed. Mr. Zhareg, still silent and icy, fished out some papers and passed them across to the Deacon.

"He's poison," Sparkdale growled. "I tell you he's poison!"

"All the more reason, Ned. Can't let the *Palermo* go it alone."

Bludlon shoved articles across the board. "Sign here, gentlemen," he wheezed.

Hawley fixed his name, grinning a little. Sparkdale, still growling, scrawled savagely underneath. Captain Bludlon spread out the palms of his hands. He seemed about to utter blessed words, but instead passed each an official looking paper, and stood up. Mr. Zhareg did likewise, very brisk now. He spoke for the first time, and as he did his blue lips parted in an instantaneous smile.

"You will be well paid," he said: and his face froze hard as chipped granite again.

Sparkdale looked up from the paper. There was scroll work all over it, and the press of a heavy seal. But in all that foreign writing, he could recognize nothing but his own name.

"What in blazes is this?"

"Bolivian ship, m'son. Like I told you," the Deacon explained blandly. "Government appointment is necessary. Got to do things right and proper. No other way. 'The way of the transgressor is hard, saith the Lord.' " He turned his paunch toward Hawley. "Well, Mr. Mate, we sail tomorrow dawn, if the drunks are all mustered. I'll expect you both aboard by then."

"Where you got her?"

"Take the Digby launch, gentlemen. Just call 'em your ship's name. *Palermo.* They'll know. She is anchored in dynamite row— Well, Mr. Zhareg, we must move along."

He turned away at once, sidling heavily between the tables for the door, Mr. Zhareg behind him with an air of holding his nose. John Hawley smiled a little. He didn't know just why. Funny things men did, funny things. Little Ned snorted loudly.

"Cargo worth a cool million. Machine parts, bah! And her in dynamite row! Looks like to me, John Hawley, we've bit into somethin' queer an' nasty."

THE *Palermo* sailed at dawn. As John Hawley came on the forecastle head in the cold, hard light to break the anchor clear, his four men clustered by the windlass, still a little drink-bleared. As steam hissed, and the links started clattering in, his eye caught something unusual up in the *Palermo's* eyes. A long-snouted thing crouching there like a sleeping beast beneath a canvas shroud. Newly installed. Riveted hard to the deck plates. A loose bolt still lay against the bitts where a workman had dropped it. He said nothing, but there was no mistaking what it was.

Leaning far over the bows, he watched how the cable grew. The ship's head swung. The anchor showed black in the early light. He waved to the bridge and the *Palermo,* trembling to her engine

thrust, made way. Hawley climbed down and went along to the bridge. Sparkdale stood by the telegraph. Captain Bludlon watched with bleary eyes as the skyline slipped along. A barge-load of freight cars cut diagonally across the river, the tug hooting. The wind chopped in, sharp and cold. There would be mist in the narrows.

"What do we do with that three-inch gun up for'ard, Captain Bludlon?"

"Polish it, m'son!" the Deacon blared. "Polish it all the way from here to Iquique!"

Little Ned Sparkdale looked up toward Hawley and pursed his lips. John grinned back at him, a little ruefully.

Strange trails lead out from Harrisy's place near old Coenties Slip! And the *Palermo* throbbed along, lifting a little now. The Atlantic rollers caught her, spouting along her hull. The wind was out of east, hard and brittle with autumn. The seas ran long, green-hollowed and foaming. Her rigging started to twang. The Jersey coast slipped by, swinging, glittering white in the early sun. Deacon Bill Bludlon started to laugh.

There was a dangerous quality to it. It was neither mirthful nor hearty. It froze abruptly as he moved against the bridge wing, waiting. He seemed expecting something. Hawley and Sparkdale became aware at the same time of the lean, gray hull on the sea, nosing a waterfall from its bows as it bore rapidly down upon the *Palermo*. A Coast Guard cutter, making knots, heaving daintily from side to side, slashed through the water. It bore abeam swiftly, keeping easy pace with the vessel, until the two bridges poured along as if on a single hull. The Deacon shot a swift look aft to the taffrail jack of the *Palermo*. That foreign flag still flew there, left by his orders, tight in the wind. He waited. Hawley and Sparkdale tensed. Trouble already. They heard the cutter hail, distinctly.

"Ahoy, *Palermo!*"

"Ahoy!" Bludlon roared back. "Whyn't you break out colors and dip?"

"Dip—?" the deep bass sailor voice had a twinge of anger. "Heave to for search! My nose smells contraband on—"

"Do tell! Don't they learn you manners, m'son? What I got on board is none of your damned business!"

"Heave to or I—"

"Go catch shrimp, navy boy!" Bludlon roared down in a high fettle. "This is the Bolivian gunboat, *Palermo*, leaving after a good-will tour. You want to cause international complications, m'son? In case you don't know, I'll explain that the ships of foreign navies ain't subject to search! I oughta make you fire a twenty-one gun salute. By Jasper, that's what I oughta make you do!"

Sparkdale whistled softly. John Hawley's eyes narrowed. Evidently a hasty conference was going on in the cutter's pilot house. No doubt her commander decided to wireless for verification and instructions. The *Palermo* could be caught up with easily enough, if necessary. He growled something the two men on the *Palermo's* bridge could not make out. Then the fleet, gray thing swung away and dropped astern, caught in a snare of technicalities no simple and straightforward sailor could dare cut. Captain Bill Bludlon sent a peal of rough-throated laughter after it, and turned for the ladderway.

"Right and proper and everything legal's the only way to do things, m'son," he told the chief mate solemnly. " 'The way of the transgressor is hard, saith the Lord.' Trust a man like Mr. Zhareg. He's the fellow for that!"

"You might tell us about it, now we're here," John Hawley murmured.

"You don't have to know! That's why we waste double pay on you two! Understand that?" The Deacon's sanctimonious face jelled, and his little eyes

glittered in two beady points of dangerous fire. But instantly his jaws relaxed and his lip curled lazily. "You're in the navy now, m'son!"

"The—navy—?"

"Ay! Bolivian navy. Never hear tell on it? This is it. All of it." His smile expanded. He seemed about to break into loud hosannas, as if he had just converted dozens of heathens to the way of righteousness. But instead he merely shook with heavy mirth. "Mr. Zhareg's a business man. Smart. Influence in the right place is what counts, m'son. The *Palermo's* a full-fledged gunboat, officially commissioned and all. Papers tight in my cabin safe. Couldn't want no better. They can't touch us. And those papers you two got in Harrisy's place are your naval commissions. Me, I'm a full commander. Not bad, hey? No one but a fellow like Mr. Zhareg would 'a thought of that! Best we could do for you two is lieutenancies. I'm right sorry, m'son, we didn't have the sideboys pipe you aboard this morning. By Jasper, you rate it. And we'd oughta have uniforms, too, with lots of gold! Come down, m'son, and join me in a drink. Make the best of things, say I. Come down, Lieutenant Hawley."

And he went waddling down the ladder, his paunch jiggling with his walk and with his laughter. Hawley remained motionless for some moments under the spell of that sinister mirth. The wind whimpered, and the sea sang as the *Palermo* drove to the south. Ned Sparkdale spat overside.

"Pretty game, Jawn."

"Seems like."

"Simple as pie, if Bludlon's in it. I know his tricks. Ship foreign registry. Bought her cheap. Cargo heavily insured. Faked manifests, I wouldn't doubt, so he's careful no one looks inside the cases underdecks. Probably nothing but old junk. Then he piles her up some place, total loss, and everything's rosy. You and me and the poor devils for'ard get drowned, maybe. We got to watch that blister, Jawn. We got to watch him like a hawk."

Hawley, still staring fixedly off to leeward, shook his head slowly.

"Don't reckon you're right. Not this time."

"Not much! What else?"

"He'll relieve you for mess. When he does, we'll have a look in the 'tween deck. See what's in them cases marked machine parts, Ned."

"Old trash. I'll bet on't! What you expect? Doilies for the Bolivian Indians shipped in through Iquique?"

"I'd admire to know."

THAT noon, with the *Palermo* rolling heavily in a hard beam sea, they did find out.

In the gray gloom underdecks, the stuffy air was full of the groans and creakings of a ship in motion, and the muffled beat of the seas outside. Hawley drew back the tarpaulin in a likely corner, holding an electric flash. Sparkdale worked quickly with hammer and claw. John flung the beam of light inside. There was a moment of silence. Then Ned let loose an oath and sat down heavily.

Hawley released his finger on the button, and the light went out.

"Damn!"

"Pretty, what?" John Hawley breathed tightly.

"Lord, Jawn! We're runnin' guns! Machine-guns, rifles, enough shells and powder to— A million dollars' worth!"

"A million dollars' worth of hell! I don't reckon Bludlon would care to pile her up with this under her hatches."

"That bloomin' Coast-Guarder had it right, then."

"And so did Bludlon and his precious pal, Mr. Zhareg! Contraband or not, they can't be touched. They've got the *Palermo* commissioned as a naval vessel. She's not subject to search and seizure. They can't touch her. If that ain't rich!

Every time some poor devil of an ignorant Indian gets his face blown off or his brains spattered down in the Chaco —the cash register rings for the Deacon and his smart friend, Mr. Zhareg!"

Little Ned Sparkdale spat again.

"Damn!" he said once more.

"Board it up again, Ned."

"Let's clear out o' this in Colon, Jawn. It ain't decent. I'd sooner rustle niggers."

"What good'll that do? May as well see it through. Hurry along. I've got a watch to stand."

And the *Palermo*, naval ship, three-inch blind gun on her forecastle head, and commission papers in her safe, went rolling innocently southward with her cargo of concentrated death and horror for the profit of Deacon Bludlon and Mr. Zhareg. Cleared the windward passage, and stood in for the canal. She was shoveled through with dispatch, ahead of two intercoastal liners, because of the influential hand of the invisible Mr. Zhareg who had a very large commission at stake.

Once clear of the Gulf of Panama, Captain Bill Bludlon's mind was at comfort. He expanded visibly. His bulbous nose became more than ever enflamed, for he drank steadily. He felt good. This, he reflected, was duck soup, the easiest and safest thing that had yet come his way. Why hadn't he known about it before? Mr. Zhareg was the fellah to do business with! He must be making a nifty fat commission on the deal. A million dollars' worth . . . ! And nothing to worry about. He knew how to make a delivery, that thin-lipped fox, Mr. Zhareg. Embargo, Coast-Guard cutters—pah! Wasn't it rich though, being able to thumb your nose at 'em? Bolivian naval commander William Deacon Bludlon! He roared his laughter at the very thought of it and poured himself another drink in his cabin. Rich, that's what it was, fat and rich!

And the *Palermo* slid southward through the heaving cobalt swells of the South Pacific. It was hot and peaceful, flying fish weather, with the trade clouds bulging huge above the seaward horizon. The South American coast rolled leisurely along on the port beam, the lofty barrenness of the west coast, hazy, majestic, imponderable. Until, twenty-four hours before Iquique, with the Deacon in a high fettle of fulfillment and liquor, John Hawley made out a dark smudge on the shimmering sea, just lifting above the heat-ridden horizon.

He observed it merely as a matter of habit in the way of a bridge watch, and little Ned, beside him, nodded in dour silence, glad only that the business would soon be over for them. Coming toward them, it lifted rapidly, innocent enough, the black, swinging hull of a vessel somewhat larger than a good-sized tugboat. It was not until Hawley and Ned, both at once, noted unmistakably that the small craft was altering her course to bear upon the *Palermo*, that it took on some significance.

"That bird lookin' for a tow, Jawn?"

Hawley grunted and put binoculars to his eyes. The glitter of the sea flung white-hot and blinding light at him. He drew the focus down, squinting; and grunted again.

"What does the Chilean flag look like, Ned?"

"Blessed if I know, Jawn. They're all alike to me. Why?"

"Because that ain't it."

"Well, she's—"

A DISTINCT belch of white cloud from the stranger's bows silenced the little fellow with the pocked checks. In the heart of that white puff was a spear of crimson flame. The next moment a short, hoarse report echoed loudly like a cough of thunder. Far to windward something invisible dropped into the sea, sending upward a jetting plume of water.

"Crackey! She's shootin' at us!"

"Shot across the bows, Ned."

"Wants us to heave to?"

"Seems like."

"Jawn, somethin' stirrin'! What's it mean?"

"Ask the Deacon. He knows all the answers."

The dark shapeless thing became a hull now, two small masts, and a funnel spouting smoke. She spoke again. White puff with a heart of solid red. Louder this time. A deep bark. You could see her leap down with the recoil. Not built for that kind of business, that was plain. It brought Deacon Bludlon charging up the bridge ladder. He caught hold of the rail and stood there, swaying, red-faced.

"What in blazes—!" he roared thickly.

"Stranger there." Hawley swung his arm shortly. "Firing across our bows. Wants us to come to, I expect. What next, Commander Bludlon?"

The Deacon shot him a bleary look of anger and brought glasses to his puffy eyes. He swung there a little. Then his flabby jowls went a pasty white. His hands trembled so that he was forced to lower the binoculars.

"G'Lord!" he said in an explosive whisper. "That flag, she—" And then the one word: "Paraguayan!"

Hawley started at what that implied. Ned Sparkdale stiffened, then recovered at once.

"And there's a war," he murmured carelessly. "Hadn't you heard, Deacon? Maybe we'd better change our registry right quick."

"But it ain't supposed to happen! I tell you it—!"

He broke off. His whole fleshy frame was shaking convulsively. Blind, naked fear was in him. He had one horrible thought of what would happen if the next shell exploded inside the *Palermo's* hull. The armed, strange little ship came wallowing closer, purposeful, dangerous, unaccountable.

"You got a three-inch gun in the bows!" Hawley reminded him harshly.

"Who'll work it? There's no shells for it, you idiot! It's a blind. We've got to surrender. Get a white flag, some one. Get—"

"I'll work it. You've got enough hell cased down below decks to send that little pot to glory in ten minutes if it's trouble they want!"

"No, no!" Bludlon fairly screamed. "I'm not a fighting man. It ain't supposed to happen, I tell you. It ain't—"

"No, you're not a fighting man. God knows that's right enough. You turn rat in three seconds. What you want is something all neat and safe, and let the other fellows get blown to bits if they want. You filthy scum—! Come along, Ned. It's a dirty enough business, but white flags hurt my eyes. We're here to get the *Palermo* to Iquique, so to Iquique she goes. If it's fight that little tub wants, let's give her some. C'mon, Ned!"

"Right, Jawn."

Bludlon, glasses again to his eyes in trembling hands, had heard very little of what had been said. Hawley and Sparkdale turned quickly for the ladderway.

"*'Vast all!*"

Bludlon's shriek brought them up short. It was a happy roar, merry and gay, full of certainty and authority again. The two spun around to stare at that rejuvenated quality in the Deacon's hoarse heartiness.

"'Vast all!" he cried again. "It's Mr. Zhareg aboard there! If he says heave to, heave to it is! He's smart, that man. Stand with him, m'son, and we'll all come clear."

His hand swooped for the telegraph. The bells jangled. Hawley and Sparkdale stood frozen in momentary astonishment. Meanwhile the *Palermo* lost her way, rolling down with a large hissing to the long, undulating sea. The tug-like craft hove close and started curtsying to the larger ship with ungainly dips

of her bows, lipping up water. A boat put off from her and started across. The sun went west, flinging angular bars of red light upon the sea through the smoky clouds of the southeast trade. Bludlon swung down to the main deck, crying as he went—

"Ladder, there! Put the ladder over."

Hawley looked at his friend. "Fishy," he said. "Gun, Ned?"

"Right handy. Colt's .32."

"You talk to the bosun and those six men for'ard?"

"Long since. Don't like it no better'n we. Whatever you say, Jawn."

"Let's get along."

AT THE main rail, the small boat swung in against the *Palermo's* side. A shabby looking sailor, Chilean fisherman by the dress of him, caught a rung of the Jacob's ladder, steadying it. Four uniformed men, brassbound and bandoliered, came up one after the other, and ranged themselves on deck in grinning silence. You could see at once the swelling pride they felt in all the glory of those unfamiliar uniforms. And sure enough, Mr. Zhareg himself came stiffly after them over the iron bulwark, blue-lipped and gimlet-eyed as ever. His cane was missing, and a drop of spray glittered on the tip of his waxed moustache. He waved the small boat away; then turned, sighing with bored weariness. Deacon Bill Bludlon exploded.

"Lord bless me, Mr. Zhareg, you gave me a scare! Thought you were in New York. Why didn't you wireless you meant to come aboard?"

"And let half the world know?" Mr. Zhareg smiled his bloodless smile. "Some business turned up, so I flew down—and here I am."

"But that—that tub shows Paraguayan colors. Dangerous, Mr. Zhareg. S'help me, if I hadn't seen you through my glasses standin' on her deck just in time, I'd sent a couple o' three-inchers through her guts!"

Mr. Zhareg showed his teeth. "I doubt it," he breathed; he knew the Deacon very well. "As for the Paraguayan colors," he went on with dry, lifeless humor, "I assure you it's quite in order. Until I got your coded arrival message, she was just an unemployed trawler. But a few hundred pesos to her master, and a paper I had made ready—and presto! she is for today the flagship of the Paraguayan Western Fleet!" He swung his white hand in a short arc. "Let me introduce you to Acting Admiral Buenovento, in command."

The epauleted leader of the boarding party executed an amazing bow. Deacon Bill Bludlon stared. His mouth gaped; his jaw hung slack. He never would get accustomed to Mr. Zhareg's fantastic way of doing his business. John Hawley's eyes narrowed. The thing was utterly grotesque. It didn't make sense. He waited. Beside him, little Ned Sparkdale showed deep furrows between his eyes. The *Palermo's* crew, backed bewildered against the forecastle bulwark, growled to each other and waited for some signal from the chief mate. They could make nothing of this, and heartily wished themselves safely back in the dives of South Street.

"Got me beat, Mr. Zhareg," the Deacon admitted at last. He shrugged. "It's your show. I'll get her along to Iquique."

"You're not going to Iquique!" Bludlon turned to stare at him. "You're sailing through the Magellan Strait as fast as you can go, and up to the Plata. "This,"—he gestured again to the four uniformed men—"this is your prize crew. You have been captured by the Paraguayan Western Fleet, and you will surrender to Acting Admiral Buenovento!"

The thin-faced Mr. Zhareg was enjoying his cleverness immensely, and thinking how he had turned an already large commission into a much greater profit. John Hawley's eyes went across the

heaving water to the trawler. Her boat was being taken aboard. The Paraguayan flag came down. Her job done, she was making ready to get under way again. Light dawned on him. The thing was beginning to clarify itself. His face, so much like that of a New England stone farmer's, hardened. His fists went tight.

"I think," he said icily, "I think you mean, Mr. Zhareg, that you sold out to the highest bidder."

Mr. Zhareg turned with cold deliberation. "Precisely!" he snapped. "I am not in this business for my health. I will set your mind at rest." His bloodless lip curled in a disdainful smile. "This shipment of munitions was destined for Bolivia. After you had cleared the canal, negotiations came to me, offering a very tidy extra sum to divert the shipment. Since you are such a very bright young man, you may know that this was impossible to do—except by capture. So you are captured! There's a war, you know. The ship is a prize. You are prisoners of war. You are now bound for the Plata. That's all there is to it!"

There was a moment of silence, tense and still. John Hawley's face paled a little. He thought, how calmly, how cold-bloodedly that man played pawns with horror and death—for a commission. Almost as though he were selling Christmas toys for children. Something turned inside him. He wanted to retch.

Then Deacon Bludlon laughed. Loudly and with a full, appreciative heart, he laughed.

"Rich!" he roared. "Bless my soul, if that ain't fat and rich. Smart, Mr. Zhareg, smart's the word, says I!"

Ned Sparkdale spat on the deck. "To hell with him!" he said.

"Mr. Zhareg, you had better recall that trawler, and take yourself and your comic-opera admirals to blazes off this ship!"

Mr. Zhareg looked up. Something in the still, brittle quality of John Hawley's voice arrested him. He wanted no trouble.

"You're a young fool," he soothed. "There's an extra bonus in it for all of you, besides your double pay. And," he added with sparkling eyes, "there are beautiful women along the East Coast. With all that money—"

"God! you're filthy. You must have good dreams, you two! It's good to know how wars are fought. You haven't even the decency to play it straight with either one side or the other. One Indian's ripped-out guts is as good to you as another's. You'd sell your mother's soul for an extra fifty cent commission. Get—"

"You impudent young—!"

"Clear off! The *Palermo* goes to Iquique! Clear off before I set my whole crew at your throat!"

Bludlon sprang back before the white heat of Hawley's rage. The gold-uniformed men darted bewildered looks from one to another at this unexpected turn of events. The *Palermo's* men, growling, edged closer. Mr. Zhareg alone did not stir. His face was like stone.

"You will do nothing of the sort!" he spat out. "That is mutiny. And I remind you that you are both commissioned Bolivian naval officers, beyond the protection of American consuls. Naval mutiny is high treason, in Bolivia as elsewhere. I will use every ounce of my influence to guarantee you a very pleasant hanging!" He turned away icily. He was sure of himself. His plans seldom hitched. "Commander Bludlon! Give these two officers of yours the order to surrender to Admiral Buenovento, according to your command as naval master of this gunboat!"

"What'd I tell you, m'son?" Bludlon had found his courage and his heartiness again. "You can't go against a man like Mr. Zhareg here. Everything right and legal, tight, no loopholes. That's his way. 'The way of the transgressor is

hard, saith the Lord.'" He grinned vapidly. "Better behave."

John Hawley nodded slowly. Behind him, Ned Sparkdale groaned. The men of the *Palermo's* crew backed off, growling. It was checkmate. Mr. Zhareg smiled approval.

"That's better," he said. "Very good, Bludlon. You will now consider yourself a prisoner of war under the command of the prize officer of this ship. Under his order proceed at once as directed. Enter it in your log at once." He smiled and sighed. It was all so wearisome. "It will be profitable."

HE LED the way aft toward the bridge deck. There was a loud buzzing of merry talk, and the Deacon's hearty laughter. John Hawley looked off across the darkening sea. The trawler, pouring smoke, was steaming into the sunset light. Sparkdale growled at him.

"Let him bluff you, Jawn. S'help me, you did. He wouldn't dare!"

"You forget there's enough hell underdecks here to blow him and all the admirals of his cock-eyed western fleet to blazes!"

Ned Sparkdale stiffened. "You mean—?"

"Talk to these men. Tell them when they see smoke coming from the ventilator of Number Two hatch they're to rush for the boatdeck and make a grand play at swinging out a boat. Understand? Explain it, but explain it quick! I'll—"

"Smoke?" Ned gasped. "Where's it coming from?"

"From you! Get into the 'tweendeck. Light a smudge in the ventilator. See to it smokes plenty. It's a fuse we've set. Understand? This business of Mr. Zhareg's don't sit good on my stomach. Too much like double-crossing dead and dying men."

"Mutiny, Jawn!"

"Mutiny, my ear! Get along! Join me soon's you can."

Sparkdale let out a suppressed whoop, spun around, and started talking excitedly to the bosun. The ship was throbbing again now. The dusky gloom gave way to pallid light. The moon came riding over the eastern cloud bank, huge and round and red. Nothing remained of the trawler but a long plume of broken smoke, winding from under the horizon. John Hawley reached for the ladder leading out of the well deck.

Just under the bridge, Deacon Bill Bludlon was passing a bottle of Pedro Domecq around. He felt he could afford it now. He was gay and friendly. Mr. Zhareg stood to one side, disdaining such boorish amusement. Other things were more to his taste, and Mr. Zhareg was a patient man. But the new-made "admirals" puffed visibly with splendor and importance and thought the captain an excellent fellow. John Hawley, silent at the rail, watched with one eye on the rose of the ventilator beneath him.

"Have one!" the Deacon urged. "Hard feelin' don't pay, m'son."

Hawley shook his head. He saw Sparkdale dart like a shadow up the bridge ladder and a moment later heard the telegraph ring. The *Palermo's* engines stopped. Bludlon cocked his head. Sparkdale came down, striding eagerly. Fingers of smoke were beginning to reach from the ventilator rose.

"All set, Ned?"

"Right, Jawn!"

The little fellow stopped at Number Two boat. He slashed the tarpaulin loose and kicked out the chocks. On the other side of the deck half a dozen men were crying about the other lifeboat. Mr. Zhareg smiled wryly in the moonlight.

"Thinking of leaving us?" he asked sardonically. "Perhaps it is just as well."

"I think," Hawley murmured. "I think we will all leave."

He pointed carelessly downward. Dea-

con Bludlon stared. The bottle, poised in his hand, crashed violently to the iron deck.

"Fire!" he cried hoarsely. "They've set fire to---"

"Nothing so crude as that," Hawley interrupted slowly. "Mr. Sparkdale has set a fuse to your most profitable case of gunpowder." His voice went hard. "You have ten minutes at the most to get clear of this ship before she blows herself sky-high!"

For perhaps ten seconds of time there was absolute stillness. The wind came puffy. Nothing but the sea, hissing along the *Palermo's* hull, and the suck of water as she rolled down and up. The four fresh-born naval officers of the "prize crew" stood rooted while desperate fear grew like a weed in their eyes. This, too, was not supposed to have happened. Then one of them spun round and flung himself bodily toward the swinging lifeboat. Another uttered a guttural sound in his chest. Panic seized them by the throat. All in an instant they swung away, leaping and clawing at the gunwale of the boat between its falls. Mr. Zhareg stepped up. Hate flamed in him.

"You lie!" his voice cracked thin. "You're bluffing! You wouldn't dare!"

"You're wasting time."

"I'll double your pay!"

"You're wasting your time."

Mr. Zhareg was certain of himself. It was bluff. He knew it. Bluff directed at those four stupid fishermen in gold-decked uniforms. There was only one way to deal with this. With so much at stake, Mr. Zhareg wasn't the man to hesitate. His eyes were tight little points of steel. His hand went back to his hip. John Hawley gave a little contented sigh. It was what he had been waiting for. All slowness of movement fell away from him. His left fist arced so quickly it could not be seen. The right crossed over. Something glittering blue and metallic clattered to the deck. Mr. Zhareg's thin face went suddenly dull and empty as he sagged down. John Hawley's knuckles tingled with the pleasure of it. He was just in time to hear Sparkdale grunt swiftly.

"Deacon, I been waiting a month for just this minute!"

He heard the smack of a fist, like a mallet striking flabby flesh. Bludlon, close by the empty chocks, went down with a wheezing groan. The four "admirals" in the boat were working frantically, one head and then another flying back on a shoulder to eye that terrible plume of smoke pouring from the ventilator. They looked pitiful now in those gold-epauleted uniforms all awry. Ned heaved the Deacon aboard. Mr. Zhareg tumbled after him, a dry sound of returning consciousness in his throat. Hawley kicked the lifeboat free. The davits swung. John seized the forward fall and took a turn around the bitt. Across the deck, the men of the *Palermo's* forecastle let off their play with the other boat and rushed across to lend a hand.

"Let run, Ned."

"Right, Jawn!"

The boat swung down. They could hear the blocks tripped free, and oars scraping hurriedly against the *Palermo's* plates. A moment, and the snarl of Mr. Zhareg's voice knifed upward.

"If it's the last thing on earth I do, I'll see you two swing like crows for mutiny and treason!"

"Wrong this once, Mr. Zhareg!" Hawley hurled down at him. "You forget we are both commissioned Bolivian naval lieutenants. And Captain Bludlon surrendered his command to your fancy prize crew! It's in the log. There's a war, you know. We only did our duty in recapturing our gunboat from the enemy's Admiral Buenovento! All proper and legal, you know. That's the way to do things. Am I right, Deacon Bludlon? 'The way of the transgressor is hard, saith the Lord.' . . . There's plenty of

moonlight. Even the Deacon can handle that boat in this sea. Just hold her steady. I'll wireless the admiral's trawler fleet you've changed your mind and to come back and pick you up. When you get to Iquique, better look up the American consulate. I'm turning the *Palermo* and her cargo over to him. Sweet dreams!"

A curse answered him, the bark of an automatic, and the whine of lead singing past his ear. You couldn't blame Mr. Zhareg for feeling badly. All that profit gone! Hawley turned away for the bridge to set the *Palermo* full ahead again. The bosun grinned broadly at his retreating back, legs braced wide. The smallboat became rapidly nothing more than a black and shapeless speck, heaving on moonbright water.

Sparkdale, after seeing to the smudge in the hold ventilator, leaned idly against the bridge rail beside his friend. The little fellow's head barely cleared the low-fluttered canvas dodger, and the spots on his cheeks glowed. They were silent for long moments. The stars arced through a remote and velvety heaven. The South Pacific heaved in long hummocks of cobalt, sighing the ponderous sigh of deep water.

"Nasty business."

"Ay, Jawn, nasty."

"Glad to be clear of it. Glad to get back to Harrisy's place again. Maybe pick up a venture there to stir a man's blood. Things happen, somehow, in Harrisy's."

The *Palermo* steamed for Iquique. Sparkdale considered his friend in silence for a time, studying things out in his mind.

"Ay," he said slowly at length. "Ay, Jawn, been dull lately."

BLOWPIPES TRUE AS RIFLES

BLOWPIPES used by South American Indians are ten feet long and are used effectively in hunting jungle animals for food and skins—and in killing enemies! The making of these weapons demands patience and precision and ranks as an art. Sections split from the husk of the Chonta palm are cleaned and glued together with pitch. The tube is bound with fiber and covered with heavy pitch. The hollow leg bone of a tapir furnishes the mouthpiece. When thoroughly dried, the gun is strung on a coarse cord stretched taut between trees. By moving it back and forth on the cord the bore is made straight and smooth as a rifle barrel.

Ammunition is made by the women—deadly darts of bamboo ten inches long with a tuft of kapok at the end so that it can be given driving force. Darts used in warfare are poisoned.—FOSTER DRAKE.

THE WOODS RUNNER

By HUGH PENDEXTER

Conclusion

SYNOPSIS

I AM Enoch Watson. My father and my father's father were both sailors and I should have been born with salt water in my blood, but even as a boy I loathed the sea. I wanted to be one of those men who pushed so boldly westward into the great wilderness beyond the Atlantic seaboard. But in the year 1740 I yielded to my family's wishes and shipped on my uncle's boat the *Northern Queen*. Then Fate played its trick. The ship was wrecked off the Virginia coast, and I miraculously saved, found myself working in an inn in Norfolk. There I met a servant named Joe Cantil. Together we planned to venture back into the Blue Ridge country. His red hair and trading ability made it possible for him to get along with the Indians. One night three pirates had a terrific fight at the inn and fled. Under cover of the excitement Joe murdered his master and fled likewise. Shortly after I helped a beautiful girl called the Bird Woman escape from jail—she was charged with being a witch—and I too had to flee. I met up with two men called Pinau and Michi who took me to a settlement called Borden's Grant where the settlers offered me a cabin and land if I would act as scout or woods runner for them. I gladly accepted, and immediately set forth to learn what I could about the French and Indians who menaced the settlement from the north. To my amazement I came across in the woods the three pirates from the Inn, now apparently good friends. After I took leave of them I saw them talking to a man from Borden's Grant who I was sure was a spy and traitor. My

suspicions were proven sound when the man started to stalk me. We began a desperate game of hide and seek with death as the loser's portion. Finally I won. On his body I found a notched stick giving a tally of the settlers on Borden's Grant. As I examined this I was surprised and taken prisoner by an elderly scout with a Scotch accent. It was my Uncle Berachah, long supposed to have drowned at sea. Mistreated by the British, he had joined with the French and now was compelled to take me to their camp up the Ohio. There he told Capt. Desartre I wished to join also. It was the only way to save me and keep his faith with the French. As the Shawnees in camp danced about the fire that night, a scout brought word that a band of Cherokees was coming to join them and that with them were three pirates. Uncle Berachah explained that the pirates sought him, since he knew where treasure was buried. I knew I must escape. Joe Cantil, who was with the Indians in camp, helped me. When the dreaded Lynx Man—a medicine-man dressed as a lynx—came into my tent to kill me I killed him instead and Joe dragged his body to the river. The French would read the signs and think the corpse trailed in the dirt was mine. I slipped off into the forest and encountered another scout from the Grant named Posby. His laziness and greediness caused him to lag behind and the Indians got him. At last I came to a cabin owned by Pinau. From inside the cabin I saw an old Indian named Powhatan John down on his knees doing something to the trail. Then he faded into the forest and a short time after another Indian appeared, a magnificent red man. This Indian was at once joined by two others. One of these apparently ran a splinter into his foot and sat down to examine it. Almost immediately his leg began to swell. Powhatan John had strewn the trail with sharp pointed bits of wood covered with deadly poison. As the Indian began to show signs of greatest agony one of his companions clove him through the brain with his tomahawk to end his suffering. With this example of the red man's relentlessness to speed me on I got back to Borden's Grant quickly and told the settlers to expect an attack soon from the French and Indians. To my great rage the warning was greeted with skepticism, some even suggesting I was in league with the enemy. This idea grew stronger when a small boy was kidnaped by the Indians and I, with the aid of a stallion only I could handle, got him back again. Then Joe Cantil brought me a message on a piece of birch bark. It was signed "Loch Lomond" and I knew it was from my uncle. Hastily scratching out those two words I showed the message to the settlers. It read:

DEATH COMES FROM THE WEST.

"WHAT'S it mean?" hoarsely demanded Carver.

"It has the appearance of a warning," I answered, and all the while I was surreptitiously scraping my thumb nail over the name of the Scottish lake.

"I couldn't make it out," he mumbled. "Since poor Sewell was murdered my head ain't right. Used to like to read. Printing now all runs together, like the letters was alive."

"If this is genuine warning it means that some friend believes we will be attacked on the west side of the Grant."

"That would be near the cow-pen."

"Aye. And twenty men concealed in the cow-pen will be worth fifty out in the open here, or in the bush."

"Mebbe it's a dirty red trick to fool us," he grumbled. "No such luck they will come to grips with us."

"I'm afraid it's a true warning."

"Who could 'a' sent it, or fetched it?"

"Cantil, or the Bird Woman." But I doubted if the Bird Woman knew her letters. Carver was satisfied; as he could not know it was from my uncle. With

the two words erased even the most suspicious, such as Pinau, could not know with any certainty the person who had printed the warning. And yet, I felt uneasy as I took Carver with me and sought Borden to hand him the sinister message.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SOME VOLUNTEERS

I FOUND Borden in a conference with Michi and Pinau. It was the latter who impressed me as having the greater influence with our proprietor. I could easily understand why this should be the fact. Michi was mooning about the antiquities of America, while Pinau was incisive and thoroughly alive to the questions of the moment. He stated his theories as if they were so many facts, and Borden gave him great credit for being long-headed. He was endorsed by Governor Shirley, of Massachusetts, one of the most outstanding Colonial executives in America.

Then there was that additional endorsement of the rugged Irishman, William Johnson, who was on his way to reach a high place in the regard of England and all the Colonies, and who was destined to achieve greater influence over the red men of America than any other white man, or men.

Michi was talking pedantically about ancient inscriptions on rocks. To hear him run on, a body would never surmise the settlement was about to come to death grips with the savages. Borden endured his rambling talk with ill-concealed impatience. My intrusion was actually welcomed, if for no other reason than it called a halt for the time being to the archeologist's maunderings.

"What is it, Watson?" sharply demanded Borden.

I explained the warning which Carver had brought to me. Borden snatched it impatiently, read it aloud, and then demanded:

"Who the devil wrote and posted this?"

I took it back, glad he had not noticed that two words, apparently, had been scuffed off where one might expect to find a signature. I replied:

"How should I know? Possibly Joe Cantil."

"I don't believe he can read, let alone, write," sharply spoke up Pinau. And he took the scrap of paper and studied it keenly.

"Seems like something had been rubbed out," he mumbled.

"It isn't what may have been rubbed out which interests me," said Borden. "It's what we can read. Could that crazy Carver have posted this?"

"I never can believe it," I replied. "He has but one mind, one thought. Not to influence the settlers to leave this grant, but to stick here and kill Indians. So long as we remain here, we are bait for his trap. That is what he wishes. To kill and kill!"

"If I could discover the key to their racial descent," heavily said Michi, "I could then take up the work of convincing these red men that their course is ruinous to them, and is bound to fail in preventing the expansion of this settlement."

"I wish I knew what has been erased," mumbled Pinau. "The indentations show there were, at the least, two more words."

"Enough is there," said Michi, "to constitute a warning. The man who left this notice says that the attack will be on the west side of the Grant."

"It says nothing of the kind," broke in Pinau. "It simply says that the danger will come from the west. We know that already. It gives no indication as to when and where the first blow will be struck. It tells us nothing new. 'Death comes from the west.' Of course it does, when it comes to this colony. It's ever the Shawnees from the Kentucky coun-

try, or the tribes on the Ohio."

"If you have finished with me," I told Borden, "I'll be going back to do a bit of scouting."

"I prefer that you remain in the settlement," said Borden, and his voice contained a note of suspicion.

"If you feel that way," I hotly retorted, "you can send the sheriff along with me."

As if afraid he had spoken too plainly, he quickly sought to mollify any impression I might have received and was saying:

"If an attack is about to be made I prefer to have our fighting men inside, rather than outside, the circle."

"Even if it be more dangerous for you to remain on the Grant," added Pinau.

"So?" I cried. "As to danger, I will walk with you to the west, or south, and we will see who wearies of the faring first."

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled skeptically, and replied:

"I have no red-headed friend, nor white woman who has turned red, to do me a good turn. I'll stay here."

"I can't fancy a man who says half things," I began.

Borden cut me short by gruffly saying:

"That will do, Watson. You have done us good service, whether you purposed it or not. Stay on the Grant."

"And if I prefer the risk of the woods and the savages?" I queried.

He stared at me somberly and quietly warned:

"Then I shall tell all our men to consider you in the pay of the French and to treat you accordingly."

"Damnation!" I exploded. "Just what do you mean? I do not like half words. I want to know where I stand in this community."

"To some, you are an object of suspicion," he frankly replied. "I sincerely hope it will fade away. There remains the mystery of how you were received in the French camp, and how you came to escape. On the other hand you have done some fine things. The rescue of the boy, and the like."

"All right," I surrendered. "Had I gotten myself killed I would have been a hero. I lived through it all, and brought back to you some valuable information. Therefore I am a suspect. Yet I advise you to give good heed to this warning. An attack will soon be made. Twenty men, in the protection of the cow-pen, can fall on the enemies' right flank and demoralize them."

"That is true, according to all that we know of the ancient methods of waging war," spoke up Michi. "Smash a flank and rout it, and the head of the attacking force is up in the air and can easily be driven back, or annihilated."

"It's a good talk he makes," gravely admitted Pinau.

How far and to what length this interview would have gone was not destined to be known. At that particular moment, the sound of many voices brought us to a sharp *qui vive* and running from the cabin. I was the first to learn the cause of the disturbance. Three men were entering the clearing. Men who wore huge flapping boots which reached to their knees.

"What queer-looking creatures!" exclaimed Pinau. I fancied I detected much concern in his voice.

"I know them!" I cried. "The three red seamen, who were at the *Walter Raleigh* in Norfolk. They were friendly with the scout you sent out, Borden. The scout who proved to be in the pay of the French. The man I fought with and killed."

"Well, well. So, so," he mumbled.

Moon Face was ahead, his broad, round visage beaming with amiability. His long hat plume was broken and dangled grotesquely down over his left ear. Behind him, in single file, like Indians, walked Joals and Black Tug. The lat-

ter's blue-black beard was unkempt and ragged.

"Here sure be news," murmured Pinau. "One of those three men must have left the warning. Get them away from the people, so we may examine them."

There was an uneasy fluttering in my breast as I feared that the pirates, among other things, would tell about my uncle, Captain Desartre's right-hand man. But my bearing, I pride myself, was as curious and eager as that of any other settler as we hastened to meet them. The ill-omened trio walked with a swagger and grinned savagely at the men and women who were gathering around them. In peace times they would have received short welcome and a long invitation to go back the way they had come.

"Heave short!" mumbled Moon Face, gesturing for an open path. "We come to talk to your betters." Then they were sighting me, and Black Tug joyously called out:

"Enoch, my lad! It does my old eyes good to see your colors!"

"Ha! Our younker what I loved as I would my own child," croaked Moon Face.

"I give you greetings, Black Tug. You did me good service when you signaled me to leave your camp in the forest. You two other men planned my death at the hands of the French spy. He caught up with me. I killed him."

With never a blink, nor the least bit of hesitation, Moon Face continued his advance and hoarsely proclaimed:

"I feared that scut was a dirty spy. But as to setting him on your trail, my boy, I'd as quick sent him after my own child. If he be dead, then I am vastly pleased. He said he was a scout from this settlement."

Borden threw up his hands and gestured for the people to keep back. He loudly announced:

"I will talk with these men alone. The rest of you be about your tasks. Carver, take to the woods and see if you can find any fresh signs of the savages. You women return to your cabins and take your children with you."

The settlers, unwilling, fell back, for every newcomer was a potential source of important news. Borden seated himself on the ground and motioned for the red seamen to do likewise. Michi, Pinau and I also sat. Borden, addressing Moon Face, demanded a full account of why he had left the enemy camp to come to the settlement.

"THAT'S a easy course to follow," croaked Moon Face. "No one seemed to want our company. We've tried sailing in consort. We've tried drifting. We wandered through tall woods and come to a party of Frenchmen and red savages. We heaved to and dropped our hooks. They fetched us food aboard. But when we logged from the talk of a red-faced man that the French was bearing down to strike this settlement, we up-anchor and hauled off."

"Never mind that," cut in Borden. "How many white men in that French camp?"

"Three-score and more," was the prompt reply.

"And as to savages?"

"They come and go. 'Tis hard to make that reckoning. There be close to a hundred savages with them when we set sail."

"Who commands the French?"

"A Cap'n Desartre. Too uppity and grumpy for us lads."

"No Englishman with Desartre?"

Moon Face opened his mouth, then gave a jerk like a fish feeling the hook, and answered:

"There be men under Desartre who can speak English."

"But still be of French blood," croaked Black Tug.

"How can you know that?" demanded Pinau, his eyes narrowing.

"I talked with 'em in French."

"So? You speak French?" murmured Pinau. Wherewith he loosed a volley in that language. Black Tug grinned dourly and answered him with equal ease and rapidity. "Beard me with Spanish," he invited. "Come over the side with Portuguese. Then take a fling at me in Dutch, my hearty."

"He speaks almost more tongues than I do!" exclaimed Michi.

Pinau frowned and told Borden:

"These scum usually know two or more tongues." Then he returned to his examination and asked:

"This man here—" and he pointed to me—"You saw him in the French camp?"

"We knew a young prisoner was there, spoke up Black Tug. "But we was told by a soldier that a savage killed him, weighted him with rocks and sank him in the river."

"Was there no white man there who was friendly with him?" insisted Pinau.

"Belay! Belay!" rumbled Moon Face. "You heard Tug say we heard about a white prisoner, but didn't see him. How could we know if any of the Frenchies was friendly with him? If they was, why would they keep him a prisoner?"

He had purposely misstated and jumbled the facts and I drew a deep breath of relief.

"You saw a red-headed man there, Joe Cantil?" I called out.

"Aye, aye. The red head. Hair like the light of a battle lantern. The red men think highly of him, or fear him much," croaked Joals. "He was at the tavern in Norfolk when we dropped anchor there."

"Was the Bird Woman with the French when you left?" asked Michi.

"She were," rumbled Moon Face. "An' such heartsome singing of birds when she took the notion. Only once did I ever hear the like . . . Madagascar, when our fleet o' friendly rovers were ashore to divide honest profits. A colored wench, and shaped like a Spanish dance-girl."

Polly Mulholin pushed forward and demanded:

"Why did you leave the French camp?"

It was the most sensible question that had been asked. Moon Face rose to his feet and swept off his ragged, bedraggled hat, and replied:

"Lady sweet, our hearts turned sour when we found our new convoy planned to fight our own people, the English."

"You were followed when you left?" spoke up Borden.

"If so the craft was hull down all the way. We spoke none such," said Tug.

"Queer they could leave and not be followed," mused Pinau.

"If there was a chase the enemy didn't come down on us close enough to taste our metal," growled Moon Face.

"They never could have escaped that camp unless they were sent to come here and spy on us," Pinau told Borden.

"Ha! Say ye so!" growled Tug. "Then little ye know about the Red Brethren. We dropped our hooks where we will. We make sail when we will. Naught comes in range of our stern-chaser an tries the trick twice."

Borden was puzzled as to what should be done with the uninvited guests. The belief they would prove to be sound fighting men must have urged him to retain them. And yet, the fear they had come to spy upon us to the great advantage of the French naturally suggested suppressive measures. Pinau, too, was puzzled.

Borden spoke slowly when he said: "No settlement is prepared to shelter and feed three grown men unless it be believed they will be of some assistance. As hunters you would be worthless. What have you to offer in pay for shelter here?"

"If we ain't wanted we can dip our colors and bear away to the coast," said Moon Face.

"That path is closed by the savages. You would be killed before you were a mile from this clearing."

"Aye? Aye? Then we can light our battle lanterns an' go down as all brave

sailormen should, with our colors at the peak, and be damned to the guns what sink us," hoarsely replied Moon Face.

This fighting talk had a pleasant savor, and a settler called out:

"We'd be master fools to turn away stout fighting men."

Other settlers echoed this sentiment. In a quandary like ours there were few men who would refuse help from the devil himself, if such help needs be, if they would weather the storm immediately ahead. The pirates had all the earmarks of being savage fighters. The great majority of the men and women believed it was no time to question too shrewdly into the history of any would-be helpers against the French.

"You may stay and draw rations," decided Borden. "If you prove to be false friends you will never rejoin the French."

"The French! Bah!" Moon Face spat in disgust. "You people should sink the French without us. We'll bide till you have better faring, then it's back to deep water and a strong following-wind through the tops."

The interview and cross-examination was over. Borden rose, and the people began to disperse. Black Tug called out, saying:

"You must have a hand here who knows his work. We see bloody heads, hanging from trees. He must be a rare one to keep such a reckoning."

"The savages killed his friend," I explained. And I pointed to the dour-faced Carver, who sat at one side, brooding and scarcely heeding our talk. Moon Face's piggish eyes widened with admiration, and he croaked:

"He'd make a rare 'un for me. Gunner's mate, nothing less."

"It may all be a game," Pinau murmured to Borden. "Better throw out a line of scouts."

Borden sensed the wisdom of this precaution, and slowly bowed his head. Lifting a hand, to attract and hold the pirates' attention, he asked:

"Have you anything to offer which will make us believe you will serve this settlement faithfully?"

"A sailorman's word should be enough," grumbled Black Tug. "Here we be, at the mainmast, ready to sign on till the way to the sea is open. But here's a token we've been overlooking."

He fished from a wide, flapping boot a rag of paper, and handed it to Borden, explaining:

"A list of the Frenchman's crew, even down to the cabin-boys."

Borden muttered a curse under his breath that such information should have been overlooked, snatched the paper and examined it carefully. Then he handed it to Michi and remarked, "Jibes in with the report Watson fetched back." Michi nodded and stared owlishly at the paper. Pinau, reading it over his shoulder, mumbled: "Perhaps it's too much like that report. I would prefer to see some small discrepancies."

Borden's mood seemed to change. He impressed me as being nervous and hesitant. The three scarecrows were bloody ruffians without a doubt. Yet, did they fight their bigness they would be excellent allies so long as the fighting lasted. He glanced at me, his eyes brooding over his vague suspicions. As if talking to himself he mused:

"Yet, do they fight their bigness they will be excellent allies—as long as the fighting lasts."

"Fight fire with fire. Fight the devils with other devils," said Michi.

BORDEN seemed to shake off his suspicions. He squared his shoulders and told the newcomers:

"You will have a cabin on the west side. You will have rations. You can not leave this settlement without being cut off by prowling savages. Remain here and fight your bigness and you shall be repaid. If you wish to try for the coast, there's the eastern trace. But

you'll not live to reach the crest of the Ridge. If you stay here you will obey my orders, as do all these men."

Moon Face nodded his big head and replied:

"We must stay. It's the only port open to us just now. If attacked, we fight. When we fight there is no quarter asked, or given. Give us food and a jug of rum, and we'll hold the cabin on the west side, or north side, or wherever you station us. No colored people, red, brown or black can sink a white man."

Borden liked this brand of confidence. He nodded approvingly, and then called out the mother of the little boy, and told her to move permanently to Polly Mulholin's cabin in the middle of the Grant. Then he was directing me to escort the red seamen to the widow's cabin. He also told me to furnish them with suitable rations of rum and to assure them they would eat three times a day.

Thus, once more I walked with the pirates, two of whom had set a bloody spy on my track. Beside me was Black Tug and I was remembering he had warned me flee the pirates' camp in the forest at the outset of my involuntary journey to the Big Kanawha. He appeared to be genuinely glad to talk with me; and under my breath I asked him as to his relations with the two behind us.

"A truce," he murmured. "An' scarcely that, Enoch, my lad. A parley, I'd log it. They need us just now. Just now we need them."

"Why did you leave the French to come here?"

"The Scotchman," he murmured. "He whispered in our ears the red savages would turn on us if we didn't fight for the frog-eaters when they come to board this settlement."

"And what else did the Scotchman tell you?"

Tug cast a sly glance around to make sure he would not be overheard, and murmured:

"He said there was treasure to be had for the finding. Enoch, my lad, is the Scot your father?"

I shook my head emphatically, and inwardly shivered lest Moon Face held a similar suspicion and might talk with Borden to my hurt. Then I was remembering I had the right key for locking up that particular danger. In a low voice I told him:

"I believe I now know where the treasure is buried."

His eyes seemed to protrude as he glared at me. His voice quavered as he murmured:

"Enoch, my lad, I've loved you like you was my son!"

"Then see that you three fight your bigness. After this trouble is finished I'll give certain sailing directions. A short cruise."

"Gawd ha' marcy on ye if Moon Face hears such talk. Have no truck with him. He shall fight for the people here. So shall Joals."

"I shall say nothing to them. If this grant is attacked I shall die fighting, taking my secret with me. If we stand off the French and the red men, I talk."

"Enoch, son of my old age, or just as dear, say no more. The Frenchman will find the netting up when they come over the side. The battle lanterns will soon be lit."

"And when you three get back to blue water—"

He interrupted me with a slight gesture, grimaced, and murmured: "Two may go, one may go; but never the three of us."

I shall always believe the villain, in a roundabout way, wished me well, and was remembering how I had tripped Moon Face off his feet. Once already he had proven it, when he signaled for me to retire from the forest camp.

The widow emerged from her cabin to stare at the red seamen and wonder at their bedraggled finery and flapping boots and belts of weapons.

Black Tug produced something from

his baggy shorts and held it in his hands long enough for me to see the row of tomahawks and the sinister warning, "When the moon is full. The signature was "Loch Lomond," which was identification enough. This vital information might have caused me serious trouble, had Tug given it to me in the presence of Borden, or Pinau. Obviously the pirate had been instructed to hand me the warning with the utmost secrecy, less I be embarrassed in explaining why I should receive a secret warning.

Instinctively I glanced at the sky, although I must wait until night before I could behold the pale lady of the evening. The fulling of the moon was three nights away. I felt my skin turn to goose-flesh, although for some time I had believed the attack was inevitable. Yet this certainty of the fact gave me a queer turn. Did I tell Borden how I had received the warning I might be under suspicion for all time. In event of disaster I would be held to a bloody accountability. The only way to profit by the warning was for Tug to give it to Borden, by word of mouth.

He would need to pretend he had overheard the officers talking and planning the attack. Then obtruded the realization I had been talking with the pirate for some minutes, and Borden easily might wonder why the pirate had not imparted important information to me. On second thought I knew there was another man on whose discretion I could completely trust. Carver! He was an eccentric and could be blamed for nothing. He could present no proof to substantiate the warning, yet Borden would carry it in his mind and be prepared.

Forthwith I set forth to find Carver and was fortunate in meeting him as he emerged from the woods. He was gloomy of mien because there were no fresh Indian signs. I swore him to secrecy, and his attitude was that of a deaf man. Finally I secured his attention and told him what to report, but not to mention my name. He asked no questions. His features seemed to relax. He nodded his head and mumbled:

"Full of the moon. I soon shall be with him. It is well."

"You will remember and say nothing about my telling you this!"

He frowned slightly, as if my request was interrupting an important train of thought. Then he was easing my mind by saying:

"I found it in the woods. He was my best friend and only friend. Could I live a hundred years I could not get enough heads. I thought my mind could have a little peace after I'd fetched in about so many. But something inside my head keeps crying, 'More! More!' And me but one poor human! But there shall be more. Full of the moon. A night of rare harvesting."

Once the pirates had received their rations of rum the clearing was made hideous by their wicked old sea-songs. The settlers were highly scandalized. Then came a second commotion, although this at first was confined largely to Borden. Carver reported he had traveled far to the west, and from a high tree had counted twenty cooking-fires. Estimating five men to a kettle the number of enemies should at the least be a hundred. This did not include the red allies, already prowling around the Grant.

Now that the indefinite, therefore the remote, had become immediate it was interesting to behold the settlers' reactions. Those who had talked loud and had lusted to come to death-grips, were inclined to silence, and drawn of face. Those who had betrayed worriment, suddenly lost all nervousness and carried themselves as if impatient for the question of the settlement's continued existence to be put to the test. I went out after the midday meal to scout in a wide half circle, and was not much surprised to find the woods empty of the red enemy. Obviously the various scoutbands had fallen back to join the main

body. On returning to the Grant by the cow-pen I came upon Tug, who was examining the pen as a place of defense. During our talk he informed me the major reason for him and his companions leaving the French camp. "It was along o' Moon Face's bloody ways, Enoch, my lad. He opened a grave of a ancient man. The Injuns was both skeered and mad. We had to hoist all sails and make a lively passage. The black-hearted fool not only took some of the gegaws but wore some of 'em hanging from his belt. 'Twas then the Scotchman give me what I fetched here, and a fat gold piece for my father, Enoch, my son."

"I hope your friends will fight," I sighed.

"Never friends of mine, Enoch, my lad. I'd been dead long 'fore this, with a cruel, crooked knife in my craw if they didn't need my fightin' way to see them through. Yes. They'll fight. Moon Face is the savagest fighter I ever seen, and I've seen many a heartsome lad go over the side against French, Spanish and English. But never one so heartsome as Moon Face. Once this bit of a fuss is over there'll be no sailin' on convoy ag'in. Moon Face surely will try to do me in if we ever struck a soft spot in life. But, Enoch, my lad, when I find myself in such a sittawation I will be the everlasting sickness of Moon Face, damn him! I *won't* have him sailin' after me over the seven seas. I won't keep thinking he's hunting me, a short cruise behind me. I want to know he's far behind, me . . . *dead*.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Desartre Strikes

SOME commotion was created the next day after the pirates' arrival by the coming of the big Guinea. His eyes rolled like those of one bereft of his senses. I first saw him early in the morning, surrounded by a ring of the settlers. The men stood back some distance from him, and the black's bearing was sufficient to hold them aloof. He mumbled and mouthed queer sounds and did not appear to know where he was. His shins were barked, as if, in blind flight, he had tripped and fallen many times.

But what attracted one's first attention was the long, three-tined fish-spear which he was convulsively gripping. It was his only weapon. When I came up he caused the settlers to fall back, precipitately, by running to meet me, his mad eyes glinting because of some recollection. Then he was kneeling and clawing at my legs, and talking in a jargon none could understand. I recognized the poor devil as being the same slave who had bolted from the *Walter Raleigh* on Dee's racing mare.

I spoke to him and clapped a hand on his shoulder, and called out to the people that he was an escaped slave, and doubtless had had hard faring in the forest. I had a bucket of water fetched, and he drank until it did seem as if no human capacity for liquids could hold more. Then I called for food, but the black ate scantily, although at the first he made a ferocious business of worrying the meat. I explained his identity to the folks of the settlements and advised them to leave him be until he had collected his few scattered wits.

Gesturing for the settlers to fall back, I essayed to question him, but what between his patois and the shadow of the great fear under which he seemed to be suffering, I could learn nothing of much intelligence. He did cease his trembling however, and when I walked about he kept close to my heels. When I next turned to speak to him I discovered that he had added an ax to his equipment. He followed me when I went to inspect the cow-pen. The pen was simply a circular space in the big growth, quite clear of timber, but dotted with bushes. With the exception of a narrow opening,

the entrance was barred by felled trees, leaving but a narrow opening through which the cows might pass. Borden had further barred the entrance with felled trees until it became a defense, where a dozen men might stand off several times their number. Did the enemy attack from the west side, as was most logical, they could be subjected to an enfilading fire, which was bound to work rare mischief. And this with the least exposure of, or danger to, the defending force.

One man in such cover could stand off the assault of half a dozen reds. It was excellent strategy to throw a force into this defense. If the savages attempted to assault the settlement on either of the other three sides, they would have scant cover and were bound to be severely punished.

I talked to the black, although I could not speak his jargon, and succeeded, as I believed, in making him understand he would be safe from the savages did he but fight his bigness. Then I saw to it that he was fed, and this time he ate like a wild animal. That he was restored to something akin to normal was suggested by his wild cry:

"Killa massa red man!"

The law-officer found the two of us at the pen. He was armed with a four-foot cudgel, which would require both his hands to wield. I suggested that he take a gun and ax, but he would have nothing of them. Returning to the clearing I conferred with Borden and stressed the importance of having a small force to lay an ambush at the pen. He was skeptical and would allow me only the three red seamen, Carver and the Guinea. He insisted:

"The savages are bound to attempt breaking through and firing the cabins. Under cover of the smoke they will spread and kill, kill!"

The law-officer, who had been following me close, abandoned my company when I loitered in the cow-pen. He took to following Polly Mulhfolin, until it came to be that did she turn quickly she would bump into him. His preference for that stalwart woman aroused her sympathy, and she talked in undertones to him as if she were a mother comforting a child.

Some of his wildness seemed to leave him. In his natural environment he was a brave man. His coming over the ridge alone in the line of duty, and his attempt to take me back to Charles City Shire bespoke a very courageous man. But that was in the line of his duty. And even a man, be he ever so brave, will have his moments of indecision and weakness when placed in a new environment. New surroundings are bound to bring moments of indecision and weakness.

Carver passed me on the day before the full of the moon, and his expression was dour. He was bound for the forest, as was his wont. When I remonstrated with him, he complained:

"Small chances of getting heads when such a pother is made about a red attack. We should all go forth and meet them."

Pinau, Michi and Borden were almost continuously in consultation. It became known that Pinau was advising an immediate withdrawal. He argued that all the red scout-bands had fallen back on the main body and that the trace to the east was clear. He insisted we could hurry the women and the children up the trace and over the crest of the Ridge, with only a rear-guard action at the worst. Michi agreed that this was possible, but added that did we do that, then the country west of the Ridge would be closed to settlements for a dozen years. Borden sensibly remarked:

"It isn't entirely a question of this Grant being held. The women and children come first."

"My only thought is to prevent bloodshed," said Pinau. "The land will be left here. No Indians can take it away. Another planting season, and the set-

tlers may be able to return without a tithe of the danger they are running today."

The Muholin woman swung a woodsman's ax and hoarsely proclaimed:

"We'll hang on to what we have! Let the red divvils attack. They'll do that some time. Might as well have it over with now and give them a good fight. If we don't fight now, we'll be fighting the next ten years. I'm staying, if I have to stay alone."

The three red seamen were interested listeners to this informal council of war. Moon Face called out:

"We've got our battle lantern lit. Let's have a fight!"

"Aye! Aye!" hoarsely endorsed Black Tug. Then he was chanting his pirate ditty:

"Then each man to his gun,
For the work must be done,
With the cutlass, sword and pistol:
Ho! Ho! Ho!"

Moon Face caught up the crude song, and stentorily shouted:

"And when we no longer can strike a blow,
Then fire the magazine, and up we go!
It's better to swim in the sea below
Than to hang in the air and feed the crow,
Said Jolly Ned Teach, of Bristol:
Ho! Ho! Ho!"

"A very fine spirit," called out Michi. "Some of us are bound to be killed. Every border is more or less of a graveyard. Some of us must be killed. It's been so on every border. Some must die before homes may be made. I have no woman or child here. As Herr Pinau has said: We may get clear of a fight by packing the women and children on ahead, with the men as a rear guard. We might hold the savages back until the Ridge is crossed. But now it's too late, my friends. Carver has told me that the Indians have us practically surrounded."

"Fight! Fight! Fight!" cried the Mulholin woman.

"We have fine cabins, cleared land and crops to be harvested," shrilly spoke up another matron. This was the mother of the little boy I had recovered from the savages. "We women will stick here!"

Pinau shrugged his shoulders, and declared:

"Nothing more needs be said. It must be a fight, I fancy. But I fear that there is much worse ahead of us."

Borden strode back and forth, his eyes sweeping the western skyline. After several minutes of pacing he came to a halt, and announced:

"We'll fight. It must come to that. It might as well be now as a month or a year from now. We'll hold what we have. If any women want to try for the ridge they shall go with a just percentage of fighting men."

Michi turned to the sheriff, and it was the first and last time I ever suspected the savant as possessing any sense of humor. I may have been mistaken. Possibly he was entirely serious, when he asked:

"What says the law-officer from Charles City?"

"Oh, don't ask me!" mumbled the law-officer. "The Ridge looks to be very far away. I think I prefer dying here, where I will have company."

Polly Mulholin laughed loud and hoarsely, like a man. She cried out, "Company, is it? If red nagers will be good company, we will have much of such."

THUS ended the council of war, and the men pretended to return to their work although but little was done. Powder horns were filled. More bullets were run. The women were concentrated on the east side of the settlement, where the

forest had been cut away, and where the enemy would have the least cover. Roofs were well wet down and buckets of water were assembled as a final precaution against fire.

No routine work was done. Men abandoned their tasks and gathered in small groups to discuss the chances of surviving the attack. Each believed that some of their mates were due for an early burial. Yet each individual was an egotist and refused to picture himself in the clammy arms of Death. Those more familiar with border fighting, feared the French soldiers more than they did the red savages.

If, by any miracle, the soldiers could be routed, the savages would not carry on the attack alone. Scouts were thrown out that afternoon and the people retired early to their cabins. During the night I was aroused by men shouting near the cow-pen. By the chorus of profanity I knew it emanated from the pirates' cabin. When I went forth I found almost all the settlers aroused and fearfully asking what the outcries meant.

"It can't be a surprise attack," said Pinau grumly.

Then a man came into the light of the hastily lighted brush heaps. It was Carver and he was fair spent from running. He could only mumble his report. Borden repeated it in a loud voice, saying:

"Carver has just come in. He says the savages are much nearer than he had thought. He says they will strike us before sunrise! Let every man stand on guard for the rest of the night. Watson, you take command of the force in the cow-pen. The three pirates will go along with you. Pick out half a dozen more men and go there at once!"

I was busily making my choice, when the law-officer explosively demanded, "Take me, mister. I'm fair crazy with this waiting. Let us get to the fighting, and have it over with before we all turned cowards!"

I called out to the red seamen, Carver, and three other men, and cautioned them to have plenty of powder, bullets and flints. As I started toward the cow-pen, something went *plump* between my shoulders and I wheeled about and beheld the little boy I had brought back from a red camp. He was fitting another blunt arrow to his tiny bow, and his small face was screwed up into what I took to be the spirit of exultation.

Leading my motley crew I made for the west side of the clearing. As I reached the timber I was startled by the loud thudding of hoofs and for a moment I imagined that the savages were doing the impossible and attacking on horseback. But it was my friend, the black stallion. I endeavored to turn him back, but he would have none of it. Black Tug, ever a master-thief, had obtained a new jug of rum, and the two other pirates trailed him like questing hounds. I gave them but little heed. Carver's unexpected report had thrown me into some confusion. According to my warning from my uncle there was to be no attack until the next night. If Carver be correct in his surmise this assault would not begin at daybreak.

We blundered into the cow-pen and I sought to explain to my strange company its peculiarities. Did the attack swing by us we were to make a flank assault, with a fair chance of throwing the red force up into the air. My three questionable companions were impatient to be at the bloody work. The big Guinea had but little sense. He understood nothing of what I had said. But he was ripe for running wild with his big spear and ax. I wondered dully how he would use the two weapons to any advantage.

The woods finally quieted down, but at early dawn we were awake and waiting. Carver visited me for a few moments. He insisted the enemy were close by and in full force. He was composed. Had he been any other man I would have said he was happy. He refused to re-

main with us. He said Sewell had been talking to him all night, demanding more heads, and that he must be about his gruesome business! The law-officer came to the pen before sunrise, doubtless wishing to be near me, his prisoner. It revealed his hope that the two of us would survive the battle. There was something relentless about the man.

The sun came up red and warm. We had been needlessly alert throughout the night. The pirates were for taking what was left of the rum and retiring to their cabin. I called a halt on any such, and we bided in our hiding-place. Carver went into the forest, and my little force repaired to the cabin for food. While we were eating we learned that the majority of the settlers had grown to doubt the red peril. While one man was insisting that the savages had left our neighborhood for good, Carver came staggering in, panting for breath and scarcely able to speak above a hoarse whisper. He managed to exclaim:

"Injuns and French within half a mile of this clearing. I've nigh busted my heart and lungs in keeping ahead of their scouts."

No one had time to listen to more. Frightened matrons were herding their children into cabins. Borden was barking orders for men to take their positions and for the cabin roofs to be wet down. I hastened to the cow-pen, fearing lest an advanced red scout-band had taken it over. The law-officer accompanied me. The three pirates looked upon him as bad luck and bound to bring destruction upon them. They would have driven him from the pen had I not interfered.

After the first shock of the tragic news our reactions were more wholesome. We could at least thank God it was to be a daylight and not a night attack. But why had the enemy changed his plans? I knew my uncle had sent the correct information in the first instance. We settled ourselves, helped by the knowledge that the tireless Carver was returning to the woods. Yet the first alarm was given by the black stallion's racing furiously from the timber, a red seam ripped across his flank.

Moon Face stared vacantly after the black brute, and then sought to renew some argument with Tug by hoarsely declaring:

"John Gow was a better man than Red Hand."

"Gow had to have a following breeze—"

Tug got no further, as the first of the red raiders were streaming through the growth, shrieking and leaping high, and brandishing their axes. We opened fire on their flanks and quickly stifled their hideous howling, and the Frenchmen found the head of their attack was up in the air. We could hear the guns of the settlers exploding, punctuated by their hoarse cries of defiance. Our flank attack was so severe the French leader sent nearly two-score of his red followers to quell us. I distinguished Desartre's voice, rising above the din, exhorting:

"Be brave! Be not afraid. The days is ours." He shifted to a red dialect and doubtless repeated his words. Carver crept dangerously clear of our hiding-place and fired, and exulted: "Damn him! His days of blood be done!"

I COULD not believe, at the first, that he had slain Desartre, but the wild howling of the Shawnees convinced me their white father was down. The gunfire from the settlement increased in strength, showing a considerable number of the raiders were entering the clearing. Then came a backwash, punctuated by frantic rejoicing, and I knew the initial attack had failed.

But in giving ground the enemy struck most venomously at our cover. What had been a place for cows now became a bloody arena, with one man in a thicket able to stand off several who were exposed. It was a matter of cold steel, once the guns and pistols were empty,

and the assailants in seeking to search us out were met with unexpected thrusts and swinging axes.

The Big Guinea, undoubtedly crazed by his fears, leaped forth and began to ply his spear with one hand, while the other swung a long ax. He whirled like a teetotum as he struck his assailants, spear and ax doing fearful execution, and his ferocity permitted us to reload our weapons.

We opened fire and shouted as if we were many men, and the wave receded for the moment. I caught fleeting glances of red men retiring from the open ground of the settlement. Then we became the focus of attention again, and we must have been exterminated if not for the black stallion, racing through the horde of red and white men like a meteor.

Crazed by the smoke, noise and his arrow wounds, the brute became as ferocious and as deadly as a tiger. His voice was an ear-splitting scream of rage, as he charged and reared and struck with his front feet and lashed out with his hind feet, while the jaws now and then caught a savage and worried him for a moment as a cat tosses a mouse. His wake was strewn with the broken and bruised and dead.

Carver was beside himself with mad ecstasy as he plunged through the thickets to pluck a man's feet from beneath him and then finished him with knife or ax. Once he hurled a bloody trophy into the midst of a mixed band of Indians and French, just as the strong onslaught threatened to sweep us out of existence.

We did not see many of the soldiers and assumed that they were in the clearing among the cabins. The gunfire from that direction was spirited and well maintained. Once I fancied I heard Polly Mulholin's deep voice shouting encouragement.

Then the reds were surging against the pen once more, striving to root us up and end the annoyance to their right flank. They made the mistake of trying to enter the pen by the narrow, twisting path.

"Take them what git by me, and be damned to you!" roared Moon Face. His left arm dangled helplessly. His right was wielding the largest butcher-knife I ever had seen.

"Each man to his gun!" yowled Joals.

"For the work must be done," roared Black Tug, and he yanked a pistol from his soiled sash and blew off the top of the head of a too venturesome Indian.

I lined two Indians, one behind the other, and brought both down with the one bullet.

"Well done, Enoch, my lad!" roared Tug.

"Keep together!" howled Joals. "Here they come, up over the side!"

But the crashing he heard was made by the stallion, now a terrible agency of death. The brute seemed to have gone mad. He raced through the hiding-place of our red band of assailants, driving them from cover. I discovered at this time that my left arm was dangling, useless; but I could not remember of having received any hurt.

Carver, a raging Nemesis, was carrying the fighting to the red men, and they broke and fell back as if beset by the devil. The last time I saw him in action he had two arrows flapping from shoulder and arm. I heard him cry out:

I'm comin' fast as I can, Sewell!"

The big Guinea's finish was dramatic. He was a colossus in strength, and his brawny arms plied spear and ax as if they were toys. Like a gigantic teetotum he whirled around, the spear and ax rising and falling, bestowing hideous wounds or death. From out of the smoke and the clamor my uncle suddenly confronted me. I knocked aside Black Tug's long pistol, and cried:

"A friend! Leave be!"

Immediately after I had spoken Pinau was on the scene. He yelled explosively on beholding my uncle and hurled a heavy knife, the long blade penetrating my uncle's chest. He screamed *"Hic habet!"* and the same moment was feeling the death bite of my uncle's ax. The Frenchman dropped as if felled by lightning. I dropped beside my uncle in time to hear him gasp:

"Hic habet, eh? Ye ken, Enoch, he also has it."

He gestured for me to bend low, and I was hearing him say: "Desartre smelled a rat. He advanced the time of the attack, Pinau is in the pay of the French. He betrayed this settlement—Loch Lomond."

"Clar Innis," I murmured, my heart aching as I bowed over him.

"Clarior Honos Hinc," he laboriously added. He tugged my sleeve for me to bend low. I was in time to hear him in a dying whisper say, "Berachah Watson fought this day not for France, not for England, but for little Clara's yin. I killed our own savages to keep you from harm. I have slain none of your settlers."

He passed out even as I was hearing the victory cry from the cabins. A hand clutched my arm. It was Black Tug. Moon Face and Joals were dead. My pirate friend murmured.

"Slipping my hawser, Enoch, my lad. But 'twas a goodly fight. Keep the gold for your own profit. These damned black flies will be the death of me. John Gow, you should have been at our bickerin'. Lay her along the starboard bow, you fool."

Not until then did I realize we had no more enemies to fight. I caught the big stallion by his mane and threw myself on his back, and cried:

"If any be living, follow me!"

But I was alone when I rode into the clearing. My cabin roof was blazing, but the French soldiers had been routed except for those strewn on the ground, awaiting burial. I was in time to see Polly Mulholin pursuing a group of the demoralized enemy, with the Charles City sheriff whooping at her heels, armed with a bush-scythe. The little boy with the toy bow and arrows was frantically sending his shafts from the small window of the Mulholin cabin. His mother stood outside the door, armed with an ax.

Borden was kneeling beside a man, done to death—Desartre. The survivors of the attacking force had receded like a wave; only unlike the wave they were gone for good. I believe the Indians would have attempted another assault had not the notes of the raven-mocker rang out on the smoky air. It was the Bird Woman's last service to our settlement. We threw out scouts who followed the enemy for several miles and returned to report that both French and red men were thoroughly demoralized.

Even when the scouts assured us the fighting was finished, the people remained on guard in the settlement. Borden pointed at my ruined cabin and said:

"Our first work is to rebuild this cabin. What happened to Pinau? He vanished."

Michi spoke up, telling him:

"He was employed by the French. Governor Shirley was suspicious of him and asked me to travel along with him and keep an eye on him. But he succeeded in deceiving our young William Johnson."

"You are not an archeologist?" I exclaimed.

He smiled slightly and replied:

"Only when it serves my purpose. No more than Pinau believed himself to be a descendant of Hector of Troy."

The law-officer came up, his eyes still blazing. He wore a bloody bandage around his head. I stared at him as something implacable. He met me, eye to eye for a few moments, and then announced:

"I am sending word by the first man

bound for the coast that I have resigned my office. I'll take up land here and grow corn. But I am mortally afraid."

"Then you are a very brave man," said Borden, as he mopped blood from his hair. "You shall have cabin-rights without paying a shilling. Now we must bury the dead." As he finished speaking a blunt arrow knocked his beaver hat askew. The lad, very grim of face, was notching another arrow when his mother swept him up in her arms.

And in this fashion did peace come to the Grant. Out of all these bloody sacrifices grew up a strong settlement. The penetration of the country west of the ridge was to endure and spread until the name of the lonely Ohio became a household-word and freed from French control.

I looked for the treasure, but found the ground excavated, and somehow I was glad. God would never develop our frontiers. In the forest country an ax and strong arms were worth more than all the gold man ever found.

My uncle was buried near where he fell, fighting according to his political convictions. Nor was there any objection to the board I carved to mark his resting place.

Clar Innis.

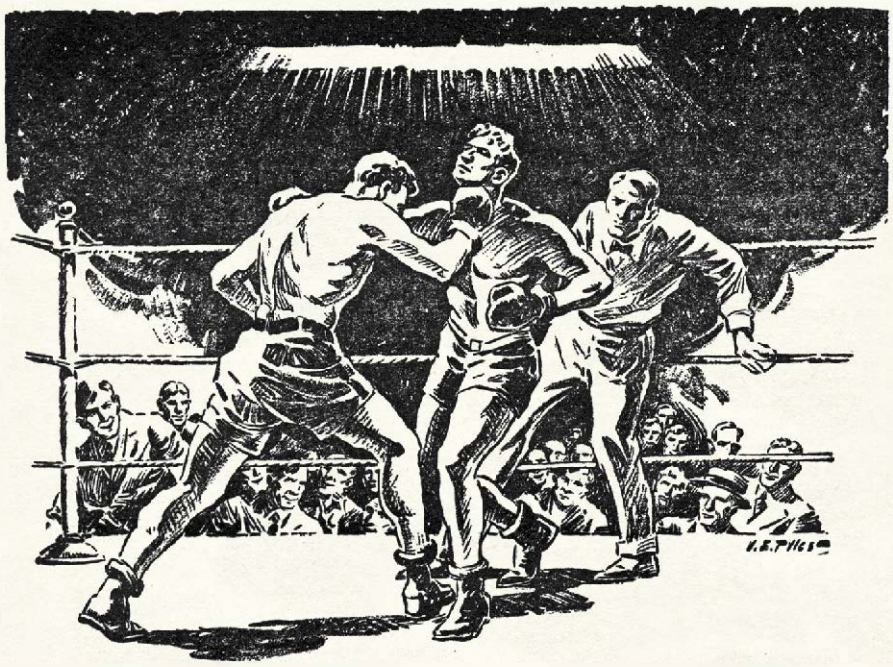
Clarior Honos Hinc.

For he was what the times and manners had fashioned him. And he had been good to me, Little Clara's yin.

THE END

THE BIGGEST BRICK PILE

WHAT might have been the tallest building in the world is now just a big pile of bricks. The pagoda at Mengun in Burma, halfway between Amirapura and Mandalay, was started about 1800 by a king with ideas of his own. It was to become a cluster of elaborate towers topped with a gold-plated spire shaped like a folded umbrella. But King Mentara Gye died in 1819, and twenty years later an earthquake shook a lot of the bricks down. The ruined pagoda is still the largest pile of bricks on record and marks the most ambitious effort since the pyramids.—J. W. HOLDEN.



THE CHAMP

By EDDY ORCUTT

WOMEN, liquor and pals.

If anybody should have worried about that combination, it ought to have been Philly Dugan, because it was the Champ's combination, and the Champ meant everything in the world to Philly. In dollars and cents, he'd meant as much as ninety grand in one year, which works out to six percent on a million and a half. But if you think Philly ever figured the Champ in dollars and cents and six percent interest, you never saw them together. Philly was more like the Champ's dad.

But Philly didn't mind the Champ's women and his liquor and his pals. He'd tell the world he knew the answer.

"A guy has to have pals," Philly would explain, "and his pals have to have liquor. And my boy's women are just to dance with. Where's the harm in that?"

Philly had it all doped out.

"Women won't hurt him—not women in general. What raises hell with a man is one woman in particular."

That is why Sally Godwin worried Philly Dugan so much, even before that day in Grady's gym when Maxie Conn slipped his famous double-X into the deck. Sally Godwin was doing an act at the Arena Club every night. Windy Rosenberg owned the Arena Club, and he also held the contract on Maxie Conn. But even before Philly knew that Windy was going to shoot Maxie at the Champ, he was afraid of Sally.

He was afraid of her just because she was Sally Godwin—not just one of the Champ's girl friends—but a rather proud and lovely person of her own,

with a smile that might be meant for just one man.

Sally hurried into Grady's just before the last round of the Champ's final workout for the Mike Argentina fight.

"I'll shoot the left, this last round," the Champ was telling Philly Dugan. He had done nine rounds of work—three with the big bag, two each with Steamboat Bill Huston and Swede Reisner, and two with Maxie Conn. He was winding up with Maxie, because Maxie was the class of the boys he worked with.

Windy Rosenberg was sitting beside Philly, and Windy jerked his thumb when Sally Godwin came down the other aisle. Windy was heavy and blue-jowled, with mean little eyes embedded in fat, a hog in good clothes. Windy said: "Is it you or Maxie?" The Champ couldn't help looking.

And Philly couldn't help seeing the kind of surprise in the Champ's look, and the way his face lighted up.

"Lay on it, this round," Philly said, but the Champ was already walking away along the ropes. He hadn't expected to see Sally at the gym, that day. She'd told him the night before that she couldn't come. But she came right down to the ring, and motioned him to come over. There were three or four hundred customers in Grady's for the Champ's last workout, but Sally Godwin walked through them and down to the ring, not minding.

Somebody in the crowd laughed. Here was one of the Champ's women handing a mash-note right up into the ring. Sally had a folded paper in her hand, and held it up.

"Who's it for?" the Champ asked.

He leaned over the ring-post, laughing. He looked like what he was—a fighter—with his sweat-shirt and woolen tights wet down from the workout, and the ring-helmet on his head. That face of his had been blunted in the wars, but his grin was direct and reckless. And, at that moment, very happy.

"Is it for him?" The Champ jerked his head toward where Maxie Conn was standing, waiting for the round to begin. Sally was going to have to take Maxie into her act, over at the Arena Club, because Windy Rosenberg wanted to make Maxie a card with the night-life people.

"Read it, read it quick!"

Sally didn't smile at the joke about Maxie.

The Champ reached over, took the note between the big thumb and the clumsy tip of his sixteen-ounce glove. Sally said again: "Read it!"

"Lady, I can't even open the damn thing with these—"

Some ringsider yelled: "I'll read it for you, Jack!"

Philly Dugan banged the bell for the last round.

The Champ shoved the note down into the side of his trunks, where the elastic held it in a pocket. He raised his glove at Sally Godwin, touched the ropes and shoved off into the ring. His face was very suddenly intent, serious.

Maxie Conn walked over swiftly, a grin on his face. When they touched gloves, he said to the Champ: "Leave my girl alone, will you!" He winked across at Sally Godwin.

The Champ's grin was brief. He said—"Watch the left!"

The rake of Sally Godwin's little blue hat made her slenderness seem very wise and sure and self-reliant. Her step in the aisle, going back to find a seat, was easy and proud. But when she looked up at the ring again, there was an anxious trouble in her blue eyes.

"Watch the left!" the Champ said, and went to work with it.

He hooked lightly, saw Maxie's elbow come down to guard his midriff, and shifted his left to the head, where Maxie's glove would block it. He made sure

Maxie was ready. Then he went to work.

The resin-scuffed shoes creaked on the ring canvas, and the fighters' feet pounded a hard, erratic, exciting pattern of noise. The gloves thudded, and the men's breath came in fierce gusts when they stabbed or blocked. The crowd was quiet, watching.

The Champ worked Maxie around the ring, smashing in the old left. One-two! One-two-three! One-two! The Champ liked it.

Maxie Conn weighed two hundred and eighteen pounds—twelve more than the Champ—and he was trained as fine as the Champ was. He had leave to use everything he had to defend himself. That was part of the game. The Champ would not cross him up suddenly with a right—Maxie was wide open for a right when the Champ was working his left hook, but that wouldn't have been according to Hoyle, and the Champ wouldn't have done it. Maxie was in there to point the Champ for his fight. The Champ was in there to ready himself up, not to hurt Maxie Conn. Maxie slugged at him with the big pillows, not wide swings, but short, savage, timed punches—and the Champ crouched, taking them high on the headguard. He stuck to his left.

The Champ shot his left hook with his eyes wide open, deliberately, smoothly. It looked easy in the same way that a billiard stroke looks easy when it's Hoppe cuing the ball. The feel of the punch pleased him. The crowd's gasp, the scatter of applause and the sudden hush—those, too, were a part of the feel of the punch.

The Champ was "right."

He eased off suddenly, broke ground as Maxie rushed, and grabbed him in a clinch. He let Maxie wrestle him around. He said: "All right, it's the blow-off!"

That meant that for perhaps a minute he would fight Maxie, and wanted Maxie to fight him. He wanted to top off the workout with a real rally, meaning business, using everything he had—giving it a last warm-up before he went into the ring with Mike Argentina.

"It's the blow-off!"

For that minute, there was a real fight in that ring at Grady's and a queer silence outside it. The thump, scuffle and screech of the ring shoes, the savage breath and the deadly thudding of the gloves—they were the noise of a fight. Maxie gave way, clinched with his back on the ropes. The Champ fought him out of the clinch, suddenly, furiously. Then the Champ's one backward step was lightning-fast, deceptive, and Maxie moved in. That was what the Champ wanted. He crossed his right to the chin-strap of Maxie's training helmet, and Maxie rocked back to the ropes. The Champ grabbed him.

"That's it, Maxie—that's all," the Champ said.

He had pulled his trick under fire, slipped over the punch that smashed over in a real fight and not pulled would have meant a knockout. He eased up, helping Maxie to clear his head, and the crowd clapped and cheered at the end of the show.

Then the thing happened—and Sally Godwin, out in the fourteenth row, hid her face in her hands.

The Champ felt Maxie go limp. He stepped in close, braced him. Maxie was almost a deadweight on the Champ's arms. "What's the matter, boy?" Maxie straightened a little, held his feet, and the Champ half turned to where Maxie's manager was sitting. He wanted to tell Windy that his boy was hurt.

Maxie jerked cleanly away, swift and sudden as a sprinter's kick.

Maxie clipped the Champ's jaw with everything he had in his right hand. The Champ went to his knees, prayed grotesquely—then slumped in a sprawl to the canvas.

A sneak punch.

A sigh went up suddenly from the gym

crowd, and the Champ got to his hands and knees. He collapsed once, got to his knees again. Very slowly, silly from the punch, he began to get up. He shook his head sharply. He got to his feet.

And then, being a champion, he pulled another trick under fire—a champion's trick. He did the one thing that Maxie Conn and Windy Rosenberg could never have expected.

THE ring has no mercy for the catcher who turns against the man he works for. From John L. Sullivan to Jack Dempsey, the champions have all written a chapter or two in the book of punishment for those who try it. Some of the chapters are none too sweet.

Maxie would have welcomed a savage rush. The Champ was groggy. But the Champ walked over with his hands down, unprotected. He jerked a gloved thumb and said: "You're through, kid. Get out!"

Maxie's teeth were bare in a muscle-grin.

He could have smashed one more right hand at the Champ, and maybe killed him. But the Champ only looked at him with hard eyes.

The Champ said: "Get out!"

When a champion talks like a champion—

Maxie got out.

Windy Rosenberg was talking to the newspapers before the crowd had all drifted out of Grady's gym.

"Maxie's been pulling his punches ever since he trained with the Champ," Windy said. "This afternoon, he just got careless and let go of one. If they'll give us a fight, Maxie Conn is the next champion of the world."

Windy had ribbed his boy into that sneak punch. Windy had figured that if a world champion was going to be worth ninety G's a year, Windy Rosenberg could use those ninety G's in his business.

That was what Sally Godwin, guessing from some talk she'd heard in the Arena Club, had tried to tell the Champ in her note.

On his way to the shower, walking carefully, the Champ looked for Sally, but she had gone. He found the note, though, and kept it. Three days later—noon of the day the Champ was fighting Mike Argentina—Philly Dugan had a little talk with the Champ about that note.

Philly opened up with a fast one. They were up in the hotel room after lunch, the Champ lying down for his rest before the battle. Philly asked his question very casually.

"Listen," he said, "what did you do with that note Miss Godwin handed you the other day at Grady's."

"Oh, I guess I just threw it away," the Champ told him.

"Take another guess, and look in your wallet," Philly said. "It was there when you paid off the cab this noon."

The Champ reddened. "So what?"

"You got to remember, kid, that this girl is working for Windy Rosenberg. And you got to remember that Windy is building Maxie Conn for a crack at the title. You got to remember that Windy would give his right eye to make a sucker out of you." Philly Dugan said it all gently, but straight. "That girl's got everything, kid—but you got to remember who she's working for."

"She's a performer," the Champ said, "and a good one. She could work at Windy's club, and not be working for Windy anywhere else."

Philly nodded. He wanted to be reasonable.

"The other day," he said, "if she'd really been working against Rosenberg, trying to tip you off, why did she let Windy see her pass that note?"

"How could she help it? She'd rather pass a note than let Windy hear her telling me something."

"Why did she wait till then? Why

did she wait till the tag-end of a workout? Why didn't she tell you before the workout began? Why didn't she call you up?"

"She heard something that noon," the Champ said, "in Windy's office. She didn't know what it meant—this ain't her racket. But when she did get it figured, she ducked out of a rehearsal to come down and give me the low-down. She wrote that note in a taxi on the way over. She didn't want to have to tell me in front of somebody else."

Philly said, very quietly: "And you carry the note around in your pocket for three days, like it was a red, red rose." He looked the Champ in the eye. "This is tough to take," he said, "but listen. I can't prove that this was part of Rosenberg's frame-up, and you can't prove that it wasn't, but—"

"Why would Windy use a woman?" the Champ asked.

"Windy is building Maxie Conn, like I say. It'll be softer for Maxie if the guy he fights is a guy all jittered and jinxed by some woman, see? And especially if the woman is one that Windy Rosenberg could do business with."

"Lay off that!" the Champ said. "Philly, listen—"

Philly stopped him. "Sure," he said. "I hadn't ought to make a crack I can't prove. But I know Windy Rosenberg."

The Champ said: "I know Sally Godwin."

"All right. But right now, kid, I'm not talking about Sally Godwin. I'm just talking about a woman, see? About any woman. You can't fall for one, kid. You can't. Once you do, you're wide open. Can't you forget it, kid, and lay off it? Look, don't put yourself where somebody else could make you or break you! That's what you do when you fall for a woman!"

The Champ sat up on the bed. "Listen, Philly, you're crazy as hell," he said. "I've played with all kinds. Why not? I like 'em. But I swear to God, Philly, this is the real one! She's—she's right!"

"Well," Philly said slowly, "then that's that."

He was far from meaning it. He saw another double-cross threatening his boy, and he was not the man to sit back and say: "That's that." He stood up. He knew exactly what he intended to do.

The Champ grinned at him suddenly—the old, reckless, hell-may-care grin. "Jeez, Philly," he said, "don't look so sick. Since when is it a crime for a guy to have a girl?"

"You could have forty girls on the string, kid, and I'd like it," Philly said, "but when you let one of 'em get to you, it's different. One could be poison. One could—"

"This is a swell one." The Champ still laughed.

Philly said: "Yeh, that's what bothers me."

It did bother him, too, when he went downstairs to 'phone. He knew Sally Godwin was a swell one—and he knew that the only way to keep the Champ free of her was to give her the kind of song-and-dance that would most hurt a girl with Sally Godwin's eyes, and Sally Godwin's smile, and Sally Godwin's way of going.

He caught her at the little gym in the Arena Club—she was having a workout, too—and her laugh over the telephone troubled Philly when she told him to come on out.

He did what he'd planned.

Philly Dugan was always ashamed of the lie he told Sally that afternoon, but he kept it a secret for ten months. Not a very good ten months.

THE CHAMP was not right, that night, either—though he gave away twenty-two pounds to Mike Argentina, and hit him with everything in the book for fifteen rounds. It was Mike, not the Champ, that the crowd cheered when it

was over, and the Champ didn't wind up with his usual shuffle and clog when the ref raised his hand. Some of the Champ's zingo was gone. Maybe Maxie Conn's sneak punch had jarred it out of him in the training ring.

Philly was only pretending to be asleep when the Champ got back to the hotel that night.

"Why so early?" he asked.

The Champ switched on the lights, and looked Philly in the eye. The Champ said: "I guess you called the turn."

"How do you mean?" Philly didn't like to see the Champ trying to smile. "I guess it was just a buggy-ride, but it's off now," the Champ said. "Sally wouldn't give me a tumble when I went around tonight. She'd left word she was busy. And," he said, "she left me a note."

"A note?" Philly repeated.

"She left me a note," the Champ said. "I tore it up. You can search my wallet if you want to." And the Champ laughed again.

Three days later, they headed for the Coast, and the Champ played women, liquor and pals in Hollywood for nearly four months while he made his second picture. He and Philly were supposed to cut a hundred thousand dollars from that contract, and the Champ did not spend all his end of it. He only tried.

He boxed twice. He fought Leo McCoy in San Francisco on Washington's Birthday, and he took an open-air shot in Los Angeles, at Wrigley Field, against Pete LaSalle. LaSalle stayed five rounds—a round more than McCoy had—and after each bout the Champ put on his clog in the ring and made the customers like it.

Things were not right, though. It would be foolish to say that the trouble about Sally Godwin threw everything out. Probably things like that don't happen. The Champ went through all the motions of a hell of a good time, though, and it wasn't much fun. It was no fun for Philly, either.

The ballyhoo for a Maxie Conn fight began smoking early in June, while Philly was taking the Champ on a barnstorming swing through the South. Maxie was a killer, the sports writers began to say. He'd had five bouts in less than eight months, and the longest had gone three rounds. The boys were not push-overs, either. The one that lasted three rounds, maybe you remember, was Mike Argentina.

Philly and the Champ hit New York again late in June, and Philly Dugan signed for the Maxie Conn match on the day they arrived.

They booked a toughening-up trip through the Canadian woods, but the Champ put on one big party before they pulled out. The Arena Club was about the only joint the Champ's boys and girls didn't visit, but they passed by it several times, hither-and-yonning.

Sally was up in the lights there.

The neon lights said: "Sally Godwin . . . Beauty and the Brute . . . Maxie Conn."

The Champ spent a lot of currency that night, but his women had a nice time, and his pals had all the liquor they wanted.

Up in the Canadian woods, Philly Dugan intended to confess to the Champ what he'd done about Sally. But it was lonely up there, and Philly didn't want to make it any lonelier.

They took the training camp at Lake Naples late in July, and the Champ squared away for his first heavy drill. The date for the fight was August 18th.

The sports experts began steaming it up:

"The Champion of the World is a frightened fighter, beginning a desperate effort to sweat Hollywood out of his system as he preps for a title defense against the man who once knocked him out in the training ring."

A lot more of the same.

And the angle the papers played was this grudge between the Champ and Maxie Conn. They made it hot.

Eight days before the fight, the Champ gave them a story that was worth playing.

Philly was in a spot. He couldn't confess to the Champ, the way the big boy was acting then, for fear of blowing him up altogether. He had to nurse his guilty secret, getting more ashamed of it every day, and at the same time he had to boss a camp that was beginning to be a madhouse.

The Champ was erratic. One day he'd clown through his training, and the next day he'd all of a sudden level on some big, slow-moving catcher like big black Steamboat Bill Huston, or Lou Badgro. Steamboat was downright terrified of him. On that Friday, eight days before the fight, the Champ had one of his bad days. Johnny Gestler, the welterweight, was working two rounds for speed, winding up the Champ's workout—and the Champ suddenly stepped in and punished the smaller man until Philly Dugan stopped it.

Philly stopped the workout. There was a crowd up from the city that day, and some of the customers booed when the Champ left the ring.

That made a story, of course, but the Champ was working on a bigger one. The Champ walked out on the training camp before supper that night. He went out for a walk, alone. He hired a car in North Merrian, the nearest town, and drove all the way to the city—five hours.

He showed up again at two-thirty Saturday afternoon, half an hour before he was scheduled to put on the gloves.

Philly Dugan had stayed up all night, smoking and reading with a boiler of black coffee. "Get your clothes on, kid," he said, when the Champ showed at the training shack. "Let's have some work today. And when you're through," he said, "I got some stuff to tell you. I want to talk to you."

But Philly got crossed up again.

When the Champ was in a slump, Philly couldn't confess for fear he'd make things worse. And when the Champ was going good, Philly couldn't confess for fear of spoiling it.

The Champ put on a good workout that Saturday afternoon, and Philly Dugan had to keep his mouth shut.

But the Sunday morning papers had the big story, and it was not in the sports section. It was Page One.

"It's a woman!

"Sally Godwin, featured artist at F. F. (Windy) Rosenberg's Arena Club, is the real cause of the pugilistic feud that promises to make this month's title bout the bitterest grudge-fight in championship history.

"Until recently, Miss Godwin played opposite the challenger, Mauling Maxie Conn, in a floor-show sketch. Maxie is now training at Summit, N. J. And the Champion of the World is Miss Godwin's disappointed suitor.

"On the floor of the Arena Club, at 1 o'clock yesterday morning, Miss Godwin publicly and deliberately 'cut' the Champ, refusing his request for a dance.

"That's the last time you'll do that!" the Champ said. He was laughing. Miss Godwin left the club ten minutes later. Attendants volunteered the information that she was in tears. The Champ, 'training' in characteristic fashion, continued on his round of the city's night life with a gay party of friends. He did not return to his training quarters at Lake Naples until early yesterday afternoon.

"Rosenberg, owner of the club and manager of Maxie Conn, announced yesterday that. . . ."

THREE papers carried the story, and the Champ read it when he finished his road work and came in for breakfast. He read it carefully—all three versions—and put away a platter of ham

and eggs and a six-inch stack of toast.

Philly Dugan ate no breakfast at all.

Swede Reisner was at the table, and Johnny Gestler and Monk Timmons. The Champ looked across the table, grinned suddenly at the Monk, and went back to eating his food.

Philly couldn't stand it any longer. He said: "Listen, kid, that part about her going to marry Maxie Conn after the fight—that's a lie! Windy Rosenberg lied about that! He—"

The Champ laughed, laughed so unexpectedly and naturally that Philly Dugan gasped. The Champ said: "That ain't a lie. It's a joke!"

The Champ got up from the table. "I'm going out for a walk, and throw rocks at the trees. Any of you guys think of anything you want to throw rocks at?" He looked like the Champ and acted like the Champ. The Swede was puzzled, but he stood up and said he'd go. Monk Timmons trailed them out of the training shack.

Philly Dugan sat there, staring straight ahead—and dumb little Johnny Gestler saw tears in the boss's eyes.

If the Champ had cried when he read that stuff about Sally Godwin, it would have been pretty bad for Philly. But the Champ had laughed. He had laughed. Philly wanted to get up and go out after the Champ and spill the works to him—wanted to get down on his knees to the boy. Wanted, somehow—

"He should worry about a woman," Johnny Gestler said. "He can have all the women he wants!"

Philly Dugan asked Johnny, very gently, to button his damned face.

Philly kept his own face buttoned for seven more days, while the secret gnawing at him hurt him worse than ever.

And the Champ acted like himself again.

The camp's biggest crowd came out that Sunday afternoon, and the Champ gave them a show. He worked up a lather on Steamboat and Lou Badgro—with Steamboat furnishing plenty of comedy. Steamboat was still terrified. The Champ let Johnny Gestler carry him three rounds as fast as Johnny wanted to go. Winding up with the Swede, the Champ stood 'em on their seats. The old left was not as smooth as it had been, but it was coming.

The Champ got in four days of good work.

And the upshot of Philly Dugan's confession was that he spilled it, finally, in a hotel room on Long Island, fourteen blocks from the big bowl, while the Champ was drowsing on a bed, waiting for the time to shove off.

The further upshot was that, after Philly had got it all off his chest, the Champ lay back and chuckled.

It is part of a champion's technique to pull the unexpected in a pinch, and the Champ was good at that. But this had Philly Dugan lying over the ropes. He was near to crying. He was ashamed, sore at himself, sick in his midriff. He'd spent two hours that afternoon trying to find some trace of Miss Sally Godwin, and there wasn't any. She wasn't playing the Arena Club any more—hadn't been for a week. She'd left the city.

And so Philly had gone in and spilled it all to the Champ.

"You don't understand, kid," Philly insisted, when the Champ laughed. "I lied to Miss Godwin. I crossed you. I pretended that I wanted all the things I thought Windy Rosenberg might be figuring on. I wanted her to fall for you so Maxie would get disorganized. I wanted her to pick him up and throw him down, and fall for you. I propositioned her. I figured if she took me up, she was crooked, and if she threw me out, she anyhow would be sore at you and not let you fool around any more."

"And she threw you out," the Champ chuckled.

Philly's face was miserable. "I'd rather she'd done that than look at me

the way she did. Don't you see, kid, I did a rotten thing."

"Sure," the Champ said, "you double-crossed me so nobody else would get a chance to double-cross me."

Philly was ready to break down again.

"But it ain't all right. I been trying for two hours to get hold of Miss Godwin. I want to tell her—"

"I won't ever see Miss Godwin again," the Champ said, but he said it softly and pleasantly. "And," he added, "I don't ever want to."

Philly thought it over.

"Listen," he said, "things have been kind of rotten with you ever since I slipped this over on you. Rotten with me, too. But last Sunday, when you read that story in the paper, it seemed to get all right again. Why? Will you tell me why?"

"You guessed the answer. I knew then I'd never see Miss Godwin again—and I knew that I didn't want to." But that battered, reckless grin on the Champ's face still bothered Philly.

He said: "I guess I still don't know what the score is."

"Just a flock of double-crosses," the big boy said. "Maxie double-crossed me at Grady's that day. You double-crossed me with Sally. Windy Rosenberg double-crossed Sally with Maxie in her contract. Sally and I—"

The Champ shut up for a minute. Then he said: "Don't fret, Philly. I'm going to hang it on Maxie Conn tonight." Philly did not answer. Then the Champ said: "Maxie's just a catcher—that's all he is." But he grinned at Philly, because he knew it bothered the old man to have him wise-crack about how easy some challenger was.

IT WAS a long time waiting. But somehow, when they got to the bowl, and when they went down to the ring, and when they got up to their corner and Steamboat began breaking the Champ's gloves—somehow, it was the way it used to be.

The Champ was all right.

He kidded the people that yelled at him. He laughed. He wise-cracked at slow old Steamboat and peppery little Monk Timmons. And the big lighted bowl, the mob rumbling in it, the ring lights and the little knot of men in the opposite corner didn't frighten Philly the way he'd thought they would.

Philly Dugan almost believed that the big boy had a chance, after all—no matter how many double-crosses they'd pinned on him.

The referee got through, at last—

Philly went scrambling out of the ring. The gong clanged. The stadium lights dimmed and the ring lamps glared white. Philly went scrambling out, and the mob came up with a roar.

Philly saw the men coming out.

Then it was queer—

That roaring hammered at the ring and crackled into seventy thousand crackling yells, discordant yells, racking, clamorous. And the Champion of the World did a strange thing.

Maxie Conn was out with a rush, relaxed and vicious—coming out swiftly, set to punch. But the Champ shuffled at him easily with both arms extended, ready to touch gloves. And Maxie touched gloves. The Champ went in close, easily, throwing a light left hook.

And Philly Dugan knew that the Champ said: "Watch my left!"

There was a crazy genius in it. The genius of a champion in a pinch, none too well trained, faced by a bigger, stronger man full of berserk hate.

The Champ said: "Watch my left!" Maxie Conn cocked his right arm to block the Champ's hooks—for the tenth part of a tenth of a second, he was the Champ's catcher again. He covered his right side against the Champ's hooks, and for that fraction of time his left sagged ever so slightly.

The Champ did not hook with his left.

He was not prepping, this time.

He crossed his right.

The impact of the punch cracked out in a crazed, unbelieving hush, made by seventy thousand humans packed in an amphitheater under dim lights and sultry stars. The Champ turned away. He walked to a corner, looked back and waited.

Maxie Conn slobbered face down on the canvas, jerking a little when instinct yanked at muscles that would not work.

The mob's yell was an explosion, then —high, terrific, with a hurricane's keening edge in it. Seventy thousand people stood up, screamed at each other, pounded at each other, threw hats.

Philly Dugan did not follow matters clearly.

The Champ knew when the referee swung his last count, pointed at the Champ and got up from beside Maxie Conn's carcass to raise the Champ's hand. He knew when the crowd surged through into the ring, and he knew when Steamboat Bill Huston loomed up in front of him, carrying Philly Dugan like a baby. Steamboat's big mouth was wide open, yelling, but the Champ could not hear him.

They worked their way through a quarter of a mile of mob to get Philly to the dressing rooms. Philly was not out, but he was punch-drunk.

He asked: "What round is it?"

The Champ laughed and cried and hugged hell out of him.

It took an hour and a half and four motorcycle cops to get their car back to town, and it was another half-hour before the Champ and Philly Dugan could get away from the mob in the lobby.

"I suppose you're going someplace tonight," Philly said, when they reached the ninth floor hall.

"No sir," the Champ said, "I'm going every place!"

The Champ rapped on 908, and Philly said: "Wait a minute. This ain't our room."

"It's *our* room," the Champ said, and Philly followed him in.

Sally Godwin was there, and she had the Champ in her arms before a word was said. Then—

"Darling!" Sally said. "Darling! Darling! Oh, you smart, wicked, scheming devil. You did it! You did it!" She was laughing and crying, too, the way the Champ had been. "You did it! You did it!"

And when there was a space, Philly gasped: "But you said you'd never. . . You said you didn't want—"

The Champ laughed and said: "Sally, here's the old footz, himself!" He said to Philly: "I'll never see Miss Godwin again. I don't want to! This isn't Miss Godwin! This is my wife!"

Philly simply stood there looking at them. The warmth flooded in him and something choked at his throat.

Then Philly laughed the first belly-laugh he'd had in ten months.

"You double-crossers!" he said.

"We kicked up a row in the Arena Club," the Champ said, "and the papers went for it. And while they were getting that story, Sally and I were getting married. Nobody knows my right name, hardly—just my ring name. And we got married in a town that there aren't any maps of. We've been married a week."

"So," Philly said, "that's why—"

"In a general way, that's why," the Champ said.

Sally said: "Aren't we a smart family? Maxie Conn double-crosses us. All right, we double-cross him! And you double-cross us, Mr. Dugan—"

"'Philly' is easier," the Champ said.

Philly Dugan looked at them for a long moment. He went slowly to the door, stopped there—looked back at Sally with a blush like a boy's.

"Would it be all right if I kissed the bride?" he asked. "I'd keep my fingers crossed!"

ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

WAY FOR HIS EXCELLENCY!

CAPTAIN RICHARD PARADENE, who was known in Port Royal—behind his back—as Long Diccon the Picaroon, swung around a corner out of the Embarcadero into the comparative shade of Duke of Albemarle Street, left hand on rapier hilt, a smile of gently cynical satisfaction upon his lean and swarthy features. It was dooms hot, not a breath of air stirring, the distant peaks of the Blue Mountains veiled in haze, the waters of the harbor stretching out beyond the Palisadoes to blend with the blue of the Gulf, as level as a floor.

The pursy merchants who passed him with a half-doubtful stare, a hasty greeting—"God save ye, Captain!" "Your servant, sir!"—sweated as heavily in their linen or seersucker breeches and cotton stockings as the half-naked negroes who plodded by with burdens on their glistening ebony backs.

But it was obvious to any one who knew him that Captain Paradene, of the armed ship *Sorry Jest,* was in no wise perturbed by such a trivial affliction as a blistering hot day. He had known hotter, had Captain Paradene—or Long Diccon.

And behind him he could hear, albeit faintly, the raucous songs and boasts and outcries of a few score stout lads of his who were making merry in the taproom of the *Harry Morgan* tavern. In his own way he was quite as merry, more quietly, perhaps, but nonetheless full merrily. Aye, he was content. Had he been another manner of man he would have whistled a ranting tune.

As it was, he jingled in his pocket the golden jos which weighted it down, and thought now and again on the other jos —onzas, doubloons, spade guineas— which Mendoza, the Spanish Jew, was seeing stowed at that moment for safety in casks headed with salt horse.

A mere bagatelle, these. Hadn't he contracted, too, with the wise old man for a venture in a Bristol passage, a share in a sugar plantation, a tenth of a cargo of ripe Orinoko out of Virginia?

For Long Diccon, as it chanced, was but just returned from a by-ordinary successful cruise. There had been the *Portugal* for the Brazils, laden with wine the officers of the garrison and the planters would leap to purchase at Mendoza's word. And rare luck, a spice ship out of Porto Bello, trans-shipping fragrant stuffs from the dim East which would be more than worth their weight in gold when offered in London's markets. And to cap that, a Genoese galleon carrying the rarest fabrics of Italian looms for the dons of La Guayra and Cartagena and the lands of the Viceroyalty beyond the pinnacles of the Sierras.

The richest cruise he had ever known, even considering that he must share the profits, not only with Mendoza, his broker, but the two horny-hearted rascals who had been his abettors in the work. Ah, there'd be sore hearts in Lisbon and Genoa and Rio de Janeiro and Porto Bello and Panama and the Spice Isles when the word came of what had happened!

There was a most unusual smile on Long Diccon's saturnine face. Few ever had seen him smile, and it is no more than true that his smile was not a sign of jovial mirth. He was a man of few friends and fewer intimacies, hard-handed, chary of confidences, Cornish-born, unhappily born, an Ishmael; his sword ready to leap from sheath at a cocked eyebrow and of a dignity as touchy as any Castilian's. A very *caballero* of controversy, who would rather fight than eat, and was a continual source of gossip about the taverns and dinner-tables of Port Royal, that wildest, wickedest town in the seas that skirted the Main.

It was whispered, aye, it was said, that he was no mere picaroon, harrying England's apparent foes, but a pirate, a sea-robber, who would as soon loot a countryman's vessel as another's. But to this the older and more conservative merchants shook their heads, however dubiously.

"When did ye hear of Mendoza offering fruit o' piracy?" they'd demand.

And: "Name me ship and master, sirs, if ye'll ha' me credit Long Diccon wi' profiting from Bristolman or Londoner?"

To which the vaunting youngsters would rejoin: "Aye, and what of the company he keeps? 'Tis common talk he sails wi' Little Gobbo and l'Abbé Rouge—and name me two more desperate villains this side o' Barbary."

Long Diccon knew how they talked of him, and chuckled within, just as he chuckled silently over the feverish debates about him in the dingy wine-shops of Tortuga, the refuge of the more desperate Brethren of the Coast. "The Dove Cote," named with ironic wit, nestling on its rocky bit of land northwest of the easternmost horn of Hispaniola, under the protection of the castle the Sieur Levausseur had built on a pinnacle above the reef-encompassed harbor, was the true home and refuge of the strange race of outlaws who called themselves, according to choice, pirates, buccaneers, picaroons, freebooters, and who lived, after an equally strange and lawless fashion, in strict conformity with whichever designation they adopted.

By and large, you might take it, whoever frequented Tortuga was a thorough outlaw of the sea. He'd loose culverin or bare cutlass against his own brother if his pocket or belly had gone empty. But there were exceptions: men, who, driven from home by any one of those tragedies

which divide families or spurn younger sons, and accordingly ruthless, who yet nourished in their hearts some fragments of an elder gentility, living by the vague remembrance of a code scarce realized, reacting to it instinctively. So powerful is the call of blood, the claim of heredity.

BUT you may consider for a surety that at this moment no such call or claim was dominant in Long Diccon's consciousness. He was fresh returned from a profitable venture; his pocket was overflowing with onzas and spade-guineas—he hadn't bothered with so humble a coin as a piece-of-eight; he was on his way to call upon Solita, the truest, fairest light-o'-love in all Port Royal town. And his curly black head, under its feathered hat, looped up with a golden replica of the mystic quetzal, was wellnigh on a level with the mist banks that swirled around the unseen peaks of the Blue Mountains. He was not, by many years, so old as he looked. And so he found pleasure in downing the stares of the fidgeted merchants, and waving aside the fawning invitations of the officers from the fort garrison and the naval dockyard.

"I thank ye, Mr. Carver. I ha' matters to look to." Or: "I may not tarry, Leftnant Harrowby. Another time, if it please ye."

It might be said, perhaps, that for these brief moments he took and quenched in a draught or two the untapped egotism of his youth, the youth he had never rightly lived. But say it or not, he was by long odds lusty in his pride. And so he strode along, eyes straight ahead, the Toledo blade which had been his sole inheritance raked down behind his thigh. A gallant picture of a man, his red coat laced with gold, his green breeches nicely cut, his boots of the ruddy leather which only Cordova could tan and supple to show a shapely leg, a torrent of lace from Mechelin laundered by a cutthroat who had been branded in the galleys of Marseilles, flooding his broad chest.

For he was calling on Solita, who was known the length of the Main as the Spanish Jade, and yet had no use for Spaniards. She was a dynamic compound of Venetian, Cypriote, Gypsy and Berber. A man could do worse, returning from months at sea, than call upon Solita—after he had made good with his merchantry.

He was within hail of Solita's house when he heard his name shouted peremptorily, and turned to observe a stout personage, clad in puce-colored satin, and just emerged from a sedan-chair, steadied by two bare-calved negroes in black livery, who grinned vacantly at him. But there was nothing vacant about the stout personage, whose purple visage grew purpler, as he thrust tasseled cane into the sandy way and bawled the louder:

"You, sirrah! Ye heard me! Never tell me ye didn't! Damme, I ha' split my lungs to reach your ears. Aye, and I'd see them, sirrah. Are they slit, by chance?"

No less than Sir Diggory Henshewe, the Governor's self. Long Diccon's thin lips twitched slightly in amusement, but his answering stare was icy.

"Your Excellency is pleased to be personal," he remarked.

"Personal!" roared the governor. "Damme, 'tis not for his Majesty's Governor and Captain-general of Jamaica to be personal wi' any goldlaced buccaneer. I asked ye a simple question, sirrah."

"And I'll give ye a simpler answer," returned Long Diccon. "Summon me to the Admiralty Court, and ye'll see for yourself."

Sir Diggory gulped.

"Ha," he said. And again: "Ha!"

Then he leveled his cane.

"Y'are the fellow they call Long Diccon the picaroon?" he challenged.

"Never to my face, your Excellency," Long Diccon answered very gently.

"No matter! Ye go by the name of Paradene in your dealings with Mendoza and others."

"A good Cornish name," affirmed Long Diccon.

"So ye tell me," fussed Sir Diggory. "And y'have just unloaded cargo o' wine and spices and stuffs to Mendoza's warehouse. Oh, I keep a watch on ye, fellow! Will ye tell me ye came by it all through honest trading?"

"I'll even tell your Excellency not a word of it," Long Diccon rejoined pleasantly.

"I'll summons ye!"

"And I'll show the Court my lading bills," promised Long Diccon.

"Ha," grunted the governor. "I would I had ye in my own Court. Ye'd learn the measure of his Majesty's justice. What does a sailor know— But no matter!"

His jowls quivered angrily. It was no secret that his Excellency resented the lenience of the house government toward the Brethren of the Coast, whose raids on Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch ships were of service in hindering alien commerce. Nor was this the sum of his resentment, as he presently showed.

"I ha' heard tell of ye," he fumed, his eyes squinting cunningly. "Y'have the title deeds to Morton's Hundred, and a clear half-interest in Pelter's Honor. Aye, y'ha' thriven and grown rich on our lenience. But what ha' ye done for the Colony? Ha! I challenge ye that! What ha' ye done?"

"Do I owe any debts?" countered Long Diccon. The governor squinted harder, teetering forward on his cane.

"Debts?" he repeated softly. "There are debts and debts, fellow. A rogue who is entitled to enjoy freely such loot as ye ha' taken, he is ready, and he be wise, to recognize an obligation. 'Tis not all who may come and go, taking their ease as they find it. Aye, there are wise lads who take thought to those in authority above 'em, eh? An Admiralty Court—poof! There are others in less direct connection who may spill a word here or there—perchance in London. Not all his Majesty's ships are ordered from Port Royal. Yet if a lawless rogue—one like ye, we'll say—"

Long Diccon laughed aloud, a thing he seldom did, and jingled the gold in his pocket. Behind the governor's portly bulk a sleek dark head had been thrust from a window of Solita's house. It was Solita's head, as any one could tell, and her pointed little tongue was protruded in derision at Sir Diggory.

"Ha!" exploded the Governor. "Ye laugh, fellow!"

"And I owe your Excellency for it," rejoined Long Diccon. He drew an onza from his pocket. " 'Tis less than ye seek, I wot, but a fair wage for the service." And he tossed it into the sand at Sir Diggory's feet, bowed to Solita and swaggered to her door, heedless of the explosion behind him.

WITHIN the cool darkness of the hallway he was encompassed by a whirlwind of muslin; two soft arms ringed his neck; and Solita's voice, like silver church-bells melded with steel, rang joyously in his ears:

"Deekon! 'Ow you 'ave mock' the fat peeg! All 'e want' from you is the slice." She nipped his ear. "Now, you are slit," she proclaimed. "And what you bring for Solita?"

He put a hand in a pocket, and drew out a heap of softly-dazzling globes which caught the scant light and reflected it back. One by one, he dribbled them into her pink palm.

"There's a necklace for ye, poppet," he said, "a duchess might envy. Straight from the pearl isles west o' Panama.

"Oooo, Deekon!" she exclaimed, and cuddled them to her cheek.

Outside Sir Diggory was cursing his chairmen.

"How, varlets! Can ye not see it in front o' your eyes?"

Solita giggled.

"Sir Peeg, 'e'd not miss an onza in the sand! That is 'im all the time. Always 'is slice he want'. And if it does not come he shout and stamp. So 'e goes 'ome to England with the grrrand disgust—this Sir Peeg!"

Long Diccon started.

"Goes home to England? What d'ye mean?"

"You did not know, Deekon? 'E is finish, the Sir Peeg. 'E goes 'ome. And so since before you go away the last time 'e come to the trader, the merchant, every one, and take what 'e can get. So it is 'e say to you, mad, that you 'ave made so much, so much more than 'e, who would be picaroon like you if 'e dare'."

Long Diccon whistled low to himself.

"So that's it," he murmured.

Outside in the street there was another racket of shouting.

"Back, knaves! Would ye trample on good gold?"

That was Sir Diggory. And a second voice, hoarser, more resonant, bellowed in answer:

"What the devil d'ye mean, sir, by stopping my chairmen? Governor or no, there's a limit to what can be compassed. I'd ha' ye know, sir, I'm an officer of his Majesty's—"

And Sir Diggory interrupted:

"A pest on ye, Admiral! The way's broad enough for your fellows to walk wi'out trampling what I seek. Stand aside!"

"For a blue-jowled pinch-penny like ye? Never!"

"Ho, watch!"

"Watch, ho!"

Long Diccon and Solita peered delightedly through the jalousies of the door at the riot in the street.

Sir Diggory stood, with his fat calves planted apart and brandishing his cane, in front of his chairmen, who were scrambling in the sand at his heels. Before him a very large gentleman in a very small chair was leaning out the chair-window and shaking a massive mahogany fist, in the governor's direction—Sir Theobald Antrobus, Port Admiral and the King's Commander-in-chief on the station.

"'Ow they hate each other," murmured Solita. "They are two beeg peeg in the same garden, and they each would 'ave all to eat. The governor, 'e don't like the admiral to 'ave the prize-money, and the admiral, 'e don't like the governor to 'ave more pay and take what 'e can from the merchant and the planter. And both, they don't like to see the picaroon make the most of all."

One of Sir Diggory's chairmen exclaimed:

"Here um be, massa!"

The governor clutched hastily at the proffered coin. Sir Theobald, who was stepping carefully from his chair, snorted contemptuously:

"And ye think ye rate passage in a King's ship!"

"What does he mean?" Diccon whispered to Solita. She giggled behind her hand.

"I forgot you did not know. The governor, 'e ask for a warship to carry him 'ome. And the admiral, 'e have first sent away all the ship' from the dockyard, so when the governor must sail soon—in three-four days—there is no warship left, and 'e must go on the *Somberre Queen*, which is very leetle and very dirrty. And that is one reason why there is a madness between them. All Port Royal know, and the people make much laugh."

The Cornishman's thin lips twisted in a dry grimace.

"I would I had the pair of 'em at a

culverin's mouth," he said. "But hear to them, lass!"

Sir Diggory was climbing back into his chair, bellowing over his shoulder at Sir Theobald, who was climbing as ponderously to the ground.

"Their Lordships at the Admiralty shall know of this, sir! Aye, and the Lords of Trade! I'll tell how the picaroons and worse make mock o' ye. What? Twenty sail at your order, and they come and go as they please, and no honest man safe."

"Y'are a wind-bag, sir," roared Sir Theobald, waddling from the chair. "A pox on ye, sir! And if ye'd but played the honest man, yourself, there'd be never a picaroon this side o' Tortuga."

Another bellow from Sir Diggory, muffled by the padded sides of his chair, and Solita caught at Diccon's arm—"*Ay, di mi,*" she exclaimed. "He is coming here, the fat admiral!"

Long Diccon smiled. "Is it his wont?"

"Never! she denied. "I have a fear. Suffer that I hide you, my Deeccon."

"From that?" protested the Cornishman. "Y'are out o' your wits, sweet. If he troubles me I'll whistle up a few score stout lads from the Embarcadero taverns and slit his wizand for him. What? When there is not a King's ship in port—and I wi' no sense of guilt."

She crowed approval.

"Ah, my Deeccon, I love you for that! So would the great Sir Harry 'ave done."

There was a thump on the door. She looked questioningly at him, waving back the quadroon maid who glided from the shadows of the hall.

"Aye, do you let him in, Solita," Diccon assented, and she stepped forward and flung the door open.

"Why, it ees the Admiral," she cried as if surprised. "Do you come to see the poor, leetle Solita? I am honor', Sir Antrrrobus!"

He blinked at her tenderly, his eyes dazzled by the contrast of the harsh sunlight of the street and the darkness of the hallway behind her.

"Another time, my pretty wanton," he rumbled fatuously. "But the truth is today I am come seeking one I am told is wi' ye, the picaroon they call Long Diccon."

He reached out a pawing fist, then started back as Long Diccon stepped past her, hand on rapier-hilt, looming gauntly above her tiny figure.

"So 'tis rather me ye'd honor, Admiral," quoth the picaroon. "At your service, sir."

A scowl transformed Sir Theobald's plethoric countenance—"I'd honor ye at a rope's end, my man," he growled.

"Ah," returned Long Diccon in his gently deceptive manner. "Y'are at one there with your friend, the governor. I'd ha' credited ye with more wit, alas."

The admiral was speechless for the moment. Finally: "Wit, quotha! 'Tis no concern o' yours, fellow, but I'd ha' ye take heed I am none o' your purse-pinching, frauding gentry will ruin all the Plantations o' the Crown if they be not stayed. I'm an Admiral of the Red, sirrah, and no piratical, thieving sea-rover, no more than that poor lump o' tallow was just by can—"

And as he lapsed incoherently into profanity, Long Diccon most courteously ushered Solita back within the doorway and stepped forth of it, himself.

"Sir, sir," the Cornishman protested plaintively. "Remember the lady, if ye'll not your own dignity and my honor as a gentleman master mariner! This passes bounds. I am a Paradene of Polharrow, and if I sail the sea and war upon the enemies of England, be they proclaimed or unproclaimed, I serve the King's interest no less than yourself."

"Blast me for a—a—" The admiral faltered.

"A gentleman of most intemperate speech?" Long Diccon suggested helpfully.

"I'll blast ye," the admiral corrected himself wrathfully. He stabbed a stubby forefinger at the picaroon. "I ha' but this to say to ye: I know the loot ye fetch into port, and the uses ye put it to. And I know that ye'd as soon lift it from a Bristolman's hatches as any Portugal's." The Cornishman drew himself up with sudden dignity, the underlying mockery fading from his face, his keep-set dark eyes as hard and menacing as a snake's.

"That will be enough, Sir Theobald," he answered. "Ye ha' no proof I ha' ever committed piracy, nor has any other man. Nor has any merchant charged it, save those with whom I will not deal for the sake of my own poor pride."

"Pah," fumed the admiral. "'Tis widely said ye sail wi' such scourges as Little Gobbo, the Maltese, and that son of hell, l'Abbé Rouge. And I warn ye, fellow—"

"If ye were a younger man," Long Diccon interrupted quietly, "ye'd ha' my rapier in your gullet for the 'fellow,' let be your other rascally misstatements."

And as the admiral would have caught him: "No, sirrah, y'are a dishonor to the King's service. I know as well as ye that all ye seek is to shake from my pockets as much as I'll spare ye. And I'll say to ye, as I said to your friend, the governor, that I'll ha' no such truck wi' ye, even as I'll not be affrighted of ye."

He turned to re-enter the house, indifferent to Sir Theobald's parting roar:

"I'll track ye down, and prove ye for the throat-slitting knave ye are! Aye, the day ye put to sea I'll harry after ye wi' a dozen sail, and wherever ye go from here to Barbados and the Main I'll ha' ye covered."

WITHIN doors Solita threw herself into his arms. "My Deeccon!' 'Ow brave you are. Solita is very please' with you. But you must be careful for heem, the admiral peeg. It will not be good if he goes always after you weeth all his ship."

"He'd find nothing I'd not have him see," answered the Cornishman. "But he'd warn off every prize we'd take in chase."

The admiral's departing thunder still lingered on the air, resounding through the street like the dying echoes of a fruitless bombardment. Solita giggled, patting Diccon's lean brown cheek. But he frowned thoughtfully.

"'Tis a threat not to be cast aside," he said. "I must spike his guns, sweet."

"How if I go to the Sir Peeg, and—'ow you say—" She raised alluring eyes.

"He'd not play ye fair," returned the Cornishman. "No, this is man's work. I wonder—" And then he slapped his thigh. "By the faith o' Cornwall, I ha' it! A chancey hazard, mayhap, yet none so hard if all goes well."

He bent, and whispered rapidly in her ear, and a light of mirth gradually overspread her piquant, gamin features. As he finished she danced away from him, silver laughter bubbling from her throat.

"Oh, Deeccon! If you could. But you must! And I'll 'ave masses said for you to the good St. Anthony, and St. Francis, too, and the leettle time you weell be gone Solita will find all there is to find. But go, now—go queeck! It is not moch time."

Long Diccon kissed her at the door, and strode with long, yet seemingly leisured, strides down to the sandy expanse of the Embarcadero, backed by the blue waters of the port, lined by taverns raucous with sailors' joy. For there was always a rush of spending when the *Sorry Jest* put into Port Royal town with crammed holds and lazarette.

At the entrance to the *Harry Morgan*, under the lazily-creaking signboard of the great buccaneer's head, he turned for one gaze at the ship he loved, loved, if the truth be known, far better than he loved Solita. Then he put his head

within the interior, thick with tobacco-smoke, redolent of wine-lees.

"Whitticombe," he called.

There was instant silence as the broad, competent bulk of his Devon boatswain hurried between the tables.

"Will ye raise the crew, my master?" Whitticombe asked anxiously. "'Twill take time, sir. The lads are but new at their fun."

"Only the longboat's men," replied Long Diccon. "And they'll rate extra pay for it. Do ye bide here, and ration them as well as ye may. I'd not have a thickened head in the lot of them this time two days hence."

Whitticombe touched his forelock—"Aye, aye, sir."

It was less than two hours later that the longboat, with lugsail set and Long Diccon at the tiller, rounded the Palisados and steered southeast before the gentle wind off the Gulf, the low line of the mainshore a narrow band of yellow and cream, blending indefinitely into the heat haze which rested over the coastal lands and all but obscured the towering inland ranges.

Toward dusk the land wind commenced to blow down from the mountains, and Diccon caught it cleverly, careful to avoid the belt of calm separating it from the repelled sea wind. His men slept, all but one who sat in the bow as lookout. Sometimes they heard the near moan of a reef, and after the moon rose they could see the white spatter of waves on the frequent sandbanks. The shore was a blur to larboard.

It was midnight by the stars when Diccon glimpsed abeam the dim prong of a point, its skyline ragged with chaparrel in the moonlight. He roused the sleeping crew, ordered them to lower the sail and put them at the oars, steering cautiously for the shore. Presently, they rounded the point, and there before them lay a miniature haven as secure as any freebooter could have wished, its shores one jungle of tropical growth. And in the middle of it two great ships rode at anchor, ablaze with lights, loud with a merriment which trespassed upon debauchery. The clear night carried the sounds of yells, oaths, threats, songs and occasionally the clatter of steel.

Long Diccon muttered to himself, and said aloud to his crew:

"Not so silent, lads. Splash mightily or 'tis like they'll loose a gun at us." The men of the *Sorry Jest* chuckled schoolboywise, and the rattling and slapping of their oars hurried the echoes from shore to shore. Promptly, a hoarse voice hailed from the poop of the nearest ship, using the *Lingua Franca* of the Brethren of the Coast, a jargon of English, Dutch and French and every Mediterannean tongue:

"'Ware shot, there! Who comes?"

"Diccon Paradene," returned the Cornishman.

And the hoarse voice apostrophized the heavens and waters: "Up, ye spawn of Satan, ye sons of iniquity! Our Admiral's self is boarding us."

Savage faces stared down over the battlements, a pair of battle-lanthorns were swung outboard, and voices shouted:

"Aye, 'tis Diccon!"

"'Tis the Admiral's self!"

Long Diccon ran the longboat alongside a rope-ladder and grasped it in one hand. "Lay off your painter's length," he bade his men sternly. "If I set eyes on one o' ye above-decks I'll scurf him to the bone."

Then he went up, hand-over-hand, with an agility older sailors envied, passing between a brace of wide-throated guns, and swarmed the bulwarks. The deck was hung with lanthorns; kegs stood broached on every hand. More than a hundred tarry-breeched, bare-limbed rascals cavorted around, cups and tankards in hand. Under the foremast a bloodstained pair were fencing with cutlasses to a din of: "Gie it tae

him i' the wame, Alasdair!" "Closer, Denis—ye'll spike him!"

At a table under the poop, which was spread with a glitter of gold and silver plate, the worse for wear, sat two men by themselves. One was a grisly, tall fellow, nigh as tall as Long Diccon, with a long, horsey face and a shock of red hair. He had an immense battle-axe on the table by his elbow. The second was a dwarf, with short bandy legs, a barrel of a body and an enormous head and the ugliest face a man might bear. Beside him on the table lay a boarding-pike, and behind him stood a seven-foot negro, whose features had been scarred out of all semblance to humanity in some savage rite. As fiendish a trio as you well might find, and if you asked any one along the Main or in the Islands that one would tell you they were l'Abbé Rouge the Norman, Little Gobbo the Maltese hunchback, and Bini, whose duty it was to carry the hunchback on his shoulders into battle.

THEY hailed Long Diccon, each in his own way—the Norman in his deep priest's tones, Little Gobbo in shrill falsetto, the negro with a tigerish grin.

"So, they ha' cast ye from Port Royal, Diccon," said the priest.

"No, no, our Diccon has a plan," Little Gobbo asserted shrewdly.

"That have I," Long Diccon returned. "Give an ear to it. There's profit for all." He drew up an empty powder-barrel, and sat on it, driving home his points with a dagger-hilt on the table.

"But I see no profit," objected the Norman. "Work, and no more. And we are comfortable here."

"Ye fool," drawled Diccon, "what will it profit ye if I ha' Port Royal closed to me? Where do I gain most of my intelligence? Where do I sell goods for the handsomest price?"

Little Gobbo nodded like an idol on a pedestal, an idol of death—"But we might hold him to ransom—"

"And that would fetch the English after ye so fast there'd be no roving ground left ye in the wide world," pointed out the Cornishman.

L'Abbé Rouge thoughtfully picked his teeth. "He is a wise one, our Diccon," he remarked, "albeit he does not play by our rules."

"Nor ever will," Diccon put in shortly. "Cruise as ye please when I am not by. But when ye cruise wi' me, I am Admiral o' the venture, and the orders come from me. I am a picaroon, God wot, no pirate."

Little Gobbo chuckled shrilly: "What a saint o' paradise," he proclaimed. "Ah, Diccon, there was a good pirate lost in ye. What do ye see in us two miserable sinners, as l'Abbé used to say in his religious days?"

"I see tools to my purpose," the Cornishman retorted. "Y'are men of mettle, for all your evilness. And—" he said this very softly, "I think ye fear me somewhat."

Little Gobbo made a rather evil face; the Norman growled an expletive in French. Long Diccon rose.

"Take it, as I say, or leave it," he said. "For me I ha' enough money and lands to leave the sea." He grinned cynically. "And when I do," he added, "ye two will be the first 'twill be my business to see hung. Ah, my friends, I'll be a prime punisher o' piracy."

"By the Black Mass!" The Norman leaped up, axe in fist. "Ye'd say this on my deck?"

"Anywhere," agreed Long Diccon.

Little Gobbo raised an arm as long as his whole person. "He'll ha' the right of it, M'sieur l'Abbé. He is o' longer sight than we. And perhaps—" he insinuated this like a wicked child craving reward, "ye'll make it worth our while, Diccon?"

"No more than I'll make it mine," Diccon stated. "There's the *Jest*, if ye care for it, that and a measure o' future

safety for your sins. Although—" and now his eyes were stony in the lanthorn light, "if the English had an officer worthy of his rank, and they wished him to, he'd run ye down in a single cruise."

Little Gobbo sighed. "Y'ha' a most quarrelsome way by times, Diccon," he said. "And y' are none so generous wi' old friends and shipmates. But we'll do it, eh, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

"We'll do it," the Norman growled, petulent as a trapped bear.

The longboat sailed into Port Royal harbor under cover of darkness the following night, and while the night was young, Long Diccon had himself set ashore at a quiet spot on the Embarcadero and walked by lesser streets to the rear gate of Solita's garden. The dawn was not yet in the sky when he let himself out the same way and returned to the boat awaiting him. And after that he kept to his cabin in the poop of the *Sorry Jest*, and there was a story spread about the town that he had ridden inland to buy an interest in another plantation, at the which there was much wagging of heads, and Sir Diggory and Sir Theobald cursed their servants at dinner a bit more than was their wont. The tavern-keepers were peevish, too, for there had been a sudden exodus of the *Sorry Jest's* men, and it was by all odds remarkable that home-come picaroons, with pockets lined with doubloons and eights, should be content with so scant a spree.

A bad business, they all agreed, with the *Jest* the one ship with money to spend. Not even a King's ship in the dockyard to be paid off cheap.

"He'll never be for cruising again so soon," they said.

"No, blood me, 'tis this cursed governor and admiral wi' their threats and their groping fingers."

"Rot me, ye speak truth, Sim. And now Long Diccon will be for trading wi' the other Brethren to Tortuga or the Dutch Isles or New York town."

"Aye, and small blame to him, the spender he be!"

So passed two days. The harbor was become almost deserted. The West India fleet had sailed for home long since. The sole Bristolman left was the wretched tub in which Sir Gregory must embark. And aboard her the following morning there was a slovenly bustle denoting sailing orders. Long Diccon, watching her closely, was not surprised when a shore barge rounded to under her lee and a portly figure was hoisted over the rail in a yardarm whip—

"So!" he said. And summoned Whitticombe. "Are ye ready to make sail and clear?" he asked.

"But give me the orders, sir."

"All hands stand by, then; but let there be no sign of it abovedecks."

An hour later the *Somber Queen* was lurching out the harbor, the guns of the fort booming a salute in the governor's honor. She had barely rounded the Palisados and the smoke of the powder still hung over the battery, when Diccon strode to the verge of the poop.

"We'll make sail, bosun."

"Aye, aye, sir." And yards and rigging swarmed with men, for the *Sorry Jest* carried the crew of a king's ship.

Ashore, there was a buzz of comment along the Embarcadero, and in Admiralty House Sir Theobald roared for his spy-glass.

"God send the knave be after his damned excellency," he growled to an aide. "'Twill mean the end o' both."

BUT the watchers on the shore noted that the *Sorry Jest* set a course at an angle to the merchantman's, not an acute angle but one which drew them apart. In an hour the haze had swallowed both.

Long Diccon, pacing the poop behind the two helmsmen who handled the vertical tiller-bar working from larboard to starboard in its slot, hailed his masthead

lookouts: "D'ye see her topsails yet?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" And he gave the con to bear off a trifle toward the Governor's ship. "Neergaard," he called. And his stocky, pockmarked Dutch gunner replied from the mainmast's foot: "Gunner," he continued, "ye'll cast loose and provide the batteries. But no shot. Make as loud a battle as ye can. This will be a jest betwixt ourselves and Little Gobbo and l'Abbé. And another who shall be butt."

The gunner looked puzzled, then grinned uncertainly and saluted. It would never have entered his head to question; Long Diccon obtained a discipline from his crew which baffled all other Brethren on the account.

They drew out of the land-haze, and the waters tumbled away before them south and east. The *Somber Queen* was clearly visible. Visible, also, two great ships bearing down upon her. And it was apparent that she did not like the look of the approachers. She scuttled about on the opposite tack as Little Gobbo fired a shot which skimmed the waves a quarter-mile to windward of her.

The helmsmen looked to Diccon. "A little while yet," he reassured them. Closer the three ships came, and now there was a roar of cannon. Long Diccon knew that two-thirds of the discharges represented powder-wads, but every now and then a shot would pitch dangerously close to the merchantman, lumbering back for Port Royal.

He nodded to himself. "We'll close," he said. And his level voice rang through the crowded waist: "Loose topsails! Veer the mizzen-yard!"

The topsails dropped in a snowy cloud, while above his head the huge lateen sail was hauled around to catch the last ounce of wind-pressure. The *Sorry Jest* responded like a living creature, heeling slightly as the murmur of the water under her forefoot became louder.

She was coming down before the wind, and because of the course Diccon had first set, somewhat astern of this chase. And he had to smile to himself as he saw how his fellow conspirators lagged on their course. They could have run down the *Somber Queen* in a glass, but they hung behind barely within long-range shot of her. He was up with them in less than that time, his guns spouting furiously, and they in all seeming shifted their attention from the merchantman to him, so that the sea was a welter of smoke above which occasionally the breathless people of the *Somber Queen* might glimpse a masthead.

Sir Diggory, himself, was impressed—"What!" he exclaimed. "The fellow closes with 'em. 'Tis madness."

"Ah, your Excellency," rejoined the frightened master, "but they say there's no doubt he's the most desperate fighter along the main. And at the least we may flee safe under the fort guns."

Long Diccon, at the moment, had run between Little Gobbo and the Abbé.

"Enough," he shouted. "'Twas great ploy, and I'll thank ye both."

"Y'are satisfied, I hope," the Norman answered resentfully. "A great waste o' powder!"

"Bide and see," rejoined Long Diccon. "I'll rendezvous a month hence at Tortuga."

Little Gobbo, astride Bini's bulk, hailed maliciously: "There'll be no gold for ye in this, Diccon?"

Long Diccon laughed one of his rare laughs. "Ye fools, can ye not see I am to be great-hearted? No, then, I'll but forgive him the offense he caused me, and watch the admiral's despite I am proven unfriends to ye." And he added to the helmsmen: "We'll 'bout-ship."

He entered Port Royal harbor, under easy sail, a few cable's-lengths astern of the *Somber Queen*, and before he could drop anchor an arm waved to him from the merchantman's low poop, a voice hailed quaveringly as the *Sorry Jest* came abeam:

"Sir, sir, his Excellency would ha' speech wi' ye. Will it please ye to come aboard?"

"Aye, aye," rejoined Long Diccon. "I'll even set him ashore in my longboat. 'Tis a foul shame these seas are become unsafe for honest men."

"Aye, aye, sir," quavered the voice. "And I'll thank ye hearty, sir, for your good favor."

"No matter," returned Diccon.

Sir Diggory was lowered over the side, wheezing and panting, his purple cheeks robbed of some of their color.

Long Diccon, himself, steadied him on his feet, and guided him to a seat in the sternsheets. "I trust your Excellency has taken no hurt?" he inquired solicitously.

"My heart's not what it should be," gasped the governor. "But, but—thanks to ye, Captain Paradene, I ha' had no worse hurt."

Diccon shoved clear of the *Somber Queen*. "Ye should ha' words wi' the admiral," he advised. "The man's below his duty."

" 'Twas an ill deed to let ye go in yon tub, and the seas aswarm wi' piratical knaves."

Sir Diggory straightened in his seat, and a ghost of his old authority vibrated as he responded: "Words, sir! I'll flay the scoundrel to his face! For the Governor and Captain-General of Jamaica to be set upon by sea-rogues within cannon-sound of Port Royal! 'Tis beyond words!"

Long Diccon nodded gravely, and the Governor continued the least bit pompously: "And I'll ha' words for yourself, Captain Paradene. Ye ha' been most vilely used, sir. I shall see to it. I am in your debt, sir."

" 'Tis of no consequence, your Excellency," the picaroon answered generously. "Men of understanding like yourself take no account o' such gossip."

The longboat bumped against the landing-stage, black with people, Admiral Sir Theobald Antrobus foremost of all. Long Diccon arose from his seat—

"Make way, there," he called. "Way for his Excellency, we ha' just delivered from pirate rogues!" He helped the governor up the landing-stage.

Sir Diggory had regained his self-confidence, and at sight of the admiral exploded: "You, sirrah, who call yourself an Admiral o' the Red! Had it not been for this gentleman I'd ha' been taken, and belike murdered, wi'in cannon-sound o' your post. I'll thank ye to call in every cruiser ye have to your orders, and make the port safe, as becomes ye."

The admiral stuttered indefinitely, and Long Diccon said courteously: "My cruise is interrupted by this matter, Admiral, so 'twill in no wise inconvenience me further should ye desire me to carry dispatches for ye, seeing that ye are so incontinently stripped o' ships. If ye'd reach me, I can be found at Mistress Solita's house." He bowed to them both.

And he strode off, his hand on his rapier-hilt, his hat and feather jauntily over one ear.

RIVETS

By ROBERT REID LEE

THE Golden Gate is something like a nostril, a great nostril open to the sky that breathes back and forth between the Pacific Ocean and the smaller ocean of San Francisco Bay, with its ships, factories and summer homes, its tule marshes and navy yard, and all the waters drained from the Sacramento and San Joaquin river valleys.

There are some people who think that the big bridges that are like rivets holding the land together, the Transbay, San Mateo, Martinez, Carquinez and the one I'm working on, the Golden Gate Bridge, will stifle their breathing. They don't like to see the sky circled and cut into bits.

You can't blame them. Sometimes I feel almost the same way, and being foreman of riveting gangs is my job. It seems like the breathing of tides through the Golden Gate is going to sound dry and sick now, like the pillow breathing of somebody who's been bedridden a long time.

But when you spend most of your life putting in rivets you get so you like to see things solid and square and put together like they was going to stay. I guess that's why I like to see all these separate bits of California riveted together by bridges.

And when you feel that way about lands and factories and houses you feel the same way about people. They've got to be riveted together by something, especially in a construction gang. If you're balancing on a girder two hundred or five hundred feet in the air with the white-hot rivets clanking in your bucket, you and the other fellow who's throwing them at you across that hole in the air have got to coordinate just like you were one man.

If a man's two legs got sore at each other when he was lawking along a girder and started to kick each other because one of them said the other wasn't cooperating, the man would go smash against the rocks or the water below, and water is as hard as rock when you hit it the wrong way or from high enough up.

The whole gang's got to work together. If they don't, then a lot of rivets will drop sizzling into the gray water or the job isn't sound and the inspector condemns it.

WHEN poor old Summers was pusher of number two gang—pusher's a kind of straw boss—Danny McGroarty and Joe Piazzoni were the two legs that were kicking at each other. Danny was driver. He held the air-hammer with the chuck splattering against the white-hot snout of the rivet that poked through two plates of steel. Joe was bucker. He held a steel block against the head of the rivet on the other side.

Bucker's the toughest job of all. It's his muscles against the hard, fast beating of the chuck of the air-hammer against the rivet. It's his shoulders against a hundred and eighty pounds or more of air pressure shoving a piston and chuck back and forth.

The gang wears helmets and masks; the helmets to keep their skulls from being dinged in by a stray rivet from above and the masks to prevent poisoning by the gases generated when the white-hot rivets burn the red-lead paint on the steel.

I could see that hard words were being passed between Danny and Joe. I knew that Danny wanted to make a record for speed and Joe always wanted to do a job exactly right. Danny, being driver, was next to the pusher—poor Summers—but even so he shouldn't have ridden Joe the way he was doing.

But I didn't take it serious until one time when I saw Danny holding his air-hammer with the chuck still and waiting to batter in the glowing nose of the next rivet. He took off his mask and yelled at Joe.

"Yah! You're slow, ya sheep-chasing wop! Come on! Wiggle your tail!"

The catcher held the hot rivet in his pincers ready to put it in the hole. Joe's fists clenched like a ball of oak roots. He put his head down as he looked up under the brim of his helmet at Danny. Then he grabbed the pincers from the catcher and flexed his arm back over his shoulder with the rivet aimed at Danny's head. The rivet burned white against the white sun. Danny stiffened and pulled his lips back over his teeth.

I ran overhead.

"Whaddya think this is?"

I cut loose with my language. You can't talk soft to these roughnecks.

Joe thrust the rivet in its hole and held the block against the head. Danny held his air-hammer like he was going to push the chuck right through the steel girders.

There's a lot of rivalry among gangs, and the men in any one gang on construction jobs, and sometimes a lot of hard words passed. But usually these hard-boiled sons are like kids or dogs that fight once and get it over with and things are all right after that. But it wasn't that way with Danny and Joe. I thought back to when they both came on the job and I knew why.

When I made up the gang I made Summers pusher because I'd worked with him on construction jobs before and I knew he could handle men even if he was a quiet sort of fellow. He needed the job, too. It was his first in a year. His wife was about six or seven months along with her fifth child and they'd just come off county relief.

It was a choice between Joe Piazzoni and Danny McGroarty for driver and bucker. Any man that couldn't be pusher wanted to be driver because that was next to top man in the gang. Both of them had run an air-hammer before and wanted to do it again.

"It's a sort of a toss-up between you two fellows," I said to Danny and Joe.

Danny grinned with an Irish wink of his blue eyes.

"Sure."

He scratched his head and the grin got wider.

"I guess it's you that knows which one to choose."

Joe didn't say anything. He wasn't one of your talkative wops. He was big and quiet and slow and as solid and steady as a rock. If you looked at those shoulders you'd pretty near expect any rock that hit them to get smashed. He had his shirt off and the day was sunny enough to see clear out to the Farrallone Islands. His brown hide looked like it had been oiled.

I figured that Danny with his soapy tongue and his brain as keen as a razor blade ought to be next to the pusher. And Joe, who looked like he'd hold on to any tough job when everybody else had quit, looked like the right man for bucking rivets.

"Driver!" I jerked my thumb at Danny.

"Bucker!" I jerked my thumb at Joe.

"Thank you, sir," said Danny. Saying sir to a foreman just like that was almost too much soft soap for me. I pretty near changed my mind on the spot, but he got out of the shack before I had a chance to.

That fool Irishman couldn't miss a chance to crow over the other guy. He slapped Joe on a shoulder-blade.

"You gotta be fast if you're gonna work with me. I had the record when I was drivin' rivets on the Hunter-Dulin Building. I'm goin' after it here. You gotta be fast."

All I could see was their backs. I didn't hear Joe say a word. He humped up his shoulders and walked off with long swings of his arms. Any man with guts would've been sore at having the other man rub it in about being beaten. That was the start of the trouble.

So after the time when Joe pretty near put the rivet through Danny's head instead of the girders I spoke to both of them. I even tried to reason with them. I should have known better. Reason doesn't do any good with most people's feelings. Even if they know better than to act and feel the way they do, they just go ahead and make dumb fools or murdering fools of themselves anyway.

It was nearly time to go back to work after lunch. Danny sat on a girder swinging his legs.

"Say, lay off razzing Joe. He does a good job. You ride him too much. It don't get anywhere."

Danny gave me a thin sort of grin.

"Okay."

He flicked the ash off a cigarette and kicked his foot out as if he was going to knock Alcatraz Light over. At that height and distance his foot just about hid the whole island and prison.

Then I went over and patted Joe on the back.

"Look here. You gotta do things a little more the way McGroarty wants them. You can do it. You got the stuff."

Joe nodded his head solemnly and slowly without looking at me. He spat hard. The shining drops disappeared, drifting down to the rocks where they've been looking for the *Rio de Janeiro* and her gold for nearly thirty years. But with all their divers and equipment they can no more find her thousands of tons of iron hull and machinery under the Golden Gate than I could dive in down hundreds of feet of air and water and find a rivet or a man's body that had slipped from the tower.

I DIDN'T see any more trouble between them for a while. But then there came the christening in blood that the bridge had to have. It's a kind of primitive consecration, this spilling of blood for every tower or bridge or tunnel or trainload of coal or copper or steel. We don't say much about it. We don't dance and pray and make a ceremony out of it.

But the square framework of our life

is christened with blood from the cracking of heads and chests just like a ship is christened with the breaking of a bottle of champagne. I didn't suppose that the Golden Gate Bridge would be built without a sacrifice, but I wasn't going to offer it from my own men if I could help it.

It wasn't a sunshiny day, when the firm patterns of red steel are angular and stiff against the sky, but a foggy day, when the hard corners of metal are blurred and softened and when the cold wet blanket of fog creeps between the clothes and the skin. The whole gang was going to work one morning with their feet and hands slipping along the cold, sweating girders. Summers was the last one in the gang, going along single file.

Suddenly everybody heard a cry. It seemed to come from every direction at once, above and below and from every side, like sounds in a fog always do. It didn't sound afraid or surprised or anything. But when they looked back, Summers wasn't there. The tide was going fast out the Golden Gate and shoving hard against the rocks on both sides to get through.

They never found the body. There was just this that happened: they heard Summers' voice coming from all directions at once and they looked back and he wasn't there.

The job had to go on just the same, so in a hurry I made Danny pusher and Joe driver and changed the rest of the gang around and added a new man. The superintendent—name was Oakes and kind of hot-tempered but a good fellow just the same—approved the changes. Naturally Oakes and all of us foremen got nervous and were twice as particular as ever about safety precautions. I was jumping twice as much as anybody else because the promotions made things worse than ever between Danny and Joe. All I needed to tell me that was the way their shoulders stiffened when they were near each other and the fact that neither of them even razzed the other now. When Danny had to tell Joe something, he just snarled what he said, and Joe snarled back. But there wasn't anything even as open as there had been, just quiet knives shining.

I couldn't change the men's ratings again without authority from the superintendent, and I knew he'd give me hell if he thought I was playing nurse-maid instead of getting those rivets in. So I couldn't tell him what I was worried about. There wasn't any reason I could show him for making a change or for firing one of them. And besides I didn't like to see a good man just sitting on a pile along the Embarcadero and living on yellow coffee and hitching his belt tighter every day. He'd probably fire both Danny and Joe and maybe me into the bargain if he thought I couldn't run things right.

But if I did have to get one of them fired it wouldn't be Danny. He was out to make a record with his gang, and a fast job would help me and the superintendent both. If he hadn't bragged it would have been all right, but he told the other pushers he was out to lick them. And still he didn't make his record. So of course with the other pushers it was:

"Whose record you gonna beat, yours or somebody else's?"

Or somebody would put a hand on Danny's shoulder and say in a sympathetic-sounding voice:

"Whatsa matter, Danny, don't your rivets fit the holes? I'll come down and stretch 'em bigger if you want."

Of course Danny blamed Joe and came to me to get somebody in his place. I didn't want to make a change. Joe wasn't fast, but when he did a job it was done right. When he shut off his air-hammer and the chuck stopped his rivet was in tight and permanent. Sometimes other drivers' rivets had to have the heads burned off and be pushed out

and new ones put in. But Joe was thorough. He never had to put a rivet in twice. And I figured more haste, more waste. So Danny kept on working with Joe and just missed making his record.

BUT finally I saw there had to be a change. There was a short-order joint out on Columbus Avenue where a lot of our men used to go. The air in there was thick with smoke and steam and frying grease and heavy kidding and shop talk. They had a new waitress in there who may have had something to do with the joint's suddenly becoming popular.

She was a surprising thing to find in a place like that. She had coiled yellow hair and rounding arms and steady eyes and a slow way of speaking. She wasn't shabby and shopworn like most of the women these fellows were used to, but as fresh and alive as if she had just been walking, right after a spring rain, through the fields somewhere in Central Europe where she came from.

She was a Slav with a name nobody could pronounce the way she did. Finally they gave up, and just called her May.

Danny and Joe both hollered their orders at her at the same time. She stood still a moment, smiling between them. Then she called to the cook, giving Danny's ham and eggs before Joe's hamburger. Danny got his order first, and Joe's came right after. Danny looked at the girl with his jaw raised and triumphant eyes. Joe ate in sullen silence with his eyes on his plate. The two sat side by side with their heels hooked in their stools gulping muddy coffee from thick, white cups and hating each other.

When Joe was only half-way through eating he slapped his sandwich down on the plate. He upset his cup with a sweep of the hairy back of his hand. The coffee spread over the scarred wood counter in a yellow expanding film. You could see the black wood and shiny steel haft of a knife in Joe's hand.

Danny didn't look as if he had moved at all, but his hand was around the leg of a stool, and the knuckles stood out and got whiter and whiter. All you could hear was the gas under the steaming coffee and the eggs frying. Everybody was as stiff and still as the stool legs.

Just then the cop on the beat stuck his raw-beef face in the door and slapped his feet on the threshold. Everybody went limp like a rubber band when you stop pulling on it.

So I went to the superintendent. It didn't look like much use, because I knew what we were going to say anyway. But I went just the same.

"Mr. Oakes, I'd like to get either Danny McGroarty or Joe Piazzoni changed to another gang."

He grunted impatiently.

"Always thought you said they were pretty good men on the job. If they aren't you'd better fire them. Plenty of better ones in times like this."

I leaned on my hand against a blueprint on the wall and scraped my mind for a good explanation.

"Well, you see it's this way. They don't like each other—in fact, they've got a private feud on, and there might be—well, you know, there might be trouble."

Oakes rattled his blue eyes around like ball-bearings under his prickly eyebrows and yelled. He pretty near blew the time-keeper's papers out of the window.

"Holy jumping Judas! Are we doin' a movie love scene or buildin' a bridge?"

His fists thumped on a drafting board.

"If you can't run your own gangs you'd better quit."

I'd backed clear to the door by that time. I wasn't going to lose my job and let my kids go without shoes just to save a couple of roughneck hides.

"Okay! Yes, sir! I'm sure I can fix it up."

After that Danny still kept rubbing it in on Joe, with his jaw a little lifted and pushed out, and Joe's mouth got

straighter and his eyelids thicker and thicker until you couldn't see much but a very little shine of the pupil of his eye.

Then Danny made his record. I was mighty pleased. He'd been riding his gang and I never saw Joe work so fast.

Danny came up to me grinning and breathing hard. He put his mask in his helmet and let the helmet clank down on the steel.

"Well, I did it. Look at your watch. Count them rivets. I told you I'd do it and I did."

"Yes," I answered, "I expected you would."

I was mighty pleased myself. I felt the same way Danny did.

I said:

"I always told you Joe was a good man. Glad now I left him with you."

Danny hooked his thumbs in his belt.

"Oh, yeah, he's all right if you keep twisting his tail."

I was all set to have Oakes pat me and Danny on the back and even half thinking we might get a letter from the bigshots.

Along came Superintendent Oakes and the inspector. Oakes chuckled and walked on his toes patting himself inside. This would give all the other gangs something to shoot at and he'd make a record for this job. You could see his picture in the papers already, with the mayor congratulating him and sedans zooming through the air over the Golden Gate months ahead of schedule.

The inspector looked over his glasses.

"Hmm," was all he said. He went down to look the job over with mallet and chalk in his hand.

I felt a big wobbly question-mark in my stomach but all I could do was wait.

Tap-tap went the mallet. Over nearly half the rivets the inspector put a cross mark.

Oakes stretched his neck like he wanted to get out of his collar.

"Record!" He came down on his heels and talked through his teeth.

"It'll take this afternoon to get those rivets out and tomorrow morning to get others back in again. Forget the record! I thought you and McGroarty knew your job."

After that all I hoped was that Oakes would be some place where he wouldn't be looking at me.

We spent the afternoon burning off the heads of those condemned rivets with acetylene torches. We were all too sore to say anything. When the day was done I stuck around. I figured I'd better keep any more trouble off the job at least. This time it was Joe who was blowing himself up and talking and Danny who was pulling his mouth tight and humping his shoulders.

Joe looked at Danny with his head thrown back and narrow eyes like somebody who is looking down.

"What I always say is to do a good job. Do things right. Do things once. That's what I always say."

Danny didn't look at Joe, but stared at the bottom of my neck.

"I guess I can be driver and pusher both if I got to—the sheep-chasing wop."

They went their separate ways without any more trouble.

THE next day the red paint on the tower was glassy with fog. The uprights dimmed out of sight above and below. You couldn't see either the ground or the water except when the wind opened a hole in the fog. The first gang at work started the tower vibrating slightly with their air-hammer, and a second took it up, and a third, until the whole framework quivered underfoot and came to life in a rapid ecstasy of shaken steel. You never got over the strangeness of the feeling when this began.

The number two gang was replacing the rivets we took out the day before. Joe shoved his shoulder against his air-hammer and the chuck beat the glowing ends of the rivets into cones. The bucker

held the heads of the rivets in place with his weight against the machine-gun splatter of the chuck of the air-hammer. Joe sat in his bosun's chair fifty feet below the X brace where Danny was bossing the job. Between rivets Danny shouted down to Joe.

"You're slow as hell this morning." Danny cussed out the whole gang. I was on the next X brace below and could see the whole thing by twisting my head back, except when a heavy swirl of fog rolled by.

The number two gang was working pretty good, but it looked like Danny was beginning to ride Joe again. The swell record we'd made yesterday put us behind and we were trying to make up for it.

I heard Danny yell:

"You dirty time-killing—"

I didn't hear any more. Joe had started his air-hammer on a new rivet. When one of those things starts going you can't hear a shout or any other noise on the face of the earth.

Danny slapped his jaws together at the interruption. He waved to Joe to cut off the air-hammer. Joe kept right on working. Danny started climbing down the X brace. From the center he could make the catcher see him and get that air-hammer shut off so he could finish what he was saying.

You could tell by the way he went down that brace fast and stiff legged how mad he was. His foot slipped. His other foot kicked at the air like it was something solid. He started sliding and then rolling down the X to the intersection. He rolled down to the junction and off it but caught the lattice work with his hands.

Even a man that's been dazed and jolted hangs on to anything that's near automatically. I could tell from the way he rolled down that he must have got a hell of a jolt. He just hung there with his legs swinging.

I shouted. I waved my hands and yelled. The gang didn't hear me. It did no more good against the battling of steel on steel than if I whispered.

I stood there a hundred feet below and waited for Danny either to climb up or for his hands to slide off that slick wet steel and for him to go whirling down head under heels and over again and right on by me, getting smaller and smaller as he went down, until the fog closed over him. I wouldn't see him hit because of the fog, or hear the splash because of the air-hammers. He'd just drop by me in the fog and I wouldn't see him again.

Joe looked up to where Danny was. I knew how he would look up sideways under his helmet when he was burning mad and couldn't do anything about it. Joe shut off his air-hammer and held it still. The silence beat on our skulls. Everybody got rigid looking up. Danny slipped a little more. We all waited for him to go. I even had time to wonder how a man like Joe feels when he sees something like that happen to a man he hates and neither he nor anybody else can do anything about it.

Joe just sat there with the air-hammer pointed into the fog. He dropped it and the rubber pipe broke and the air sizzled loud as it escaped. The air-hammer was a spot in the air coming past me and then it was gone.

Danny slipped all the way off. Joe shoved his bosun's chair on its swinging ropes out from the beam with his feet. He grabbed at Danny as he came down. The jerk knocked Joe off his seat. He hung by his knees with his head down and his hands knotted around Danny's ankles. The two swung there jerkily like a pendulum that's come to life and can't make up its mind what to do. The broken air-hose hissed loud and sharp.

It didn't take long for the gang to raise that chair on the pulleys and get Danny and Joe on solid steel. They just lay there and didn't move. A foot of steel beam looks mighty wide and sub-

stantial when you've had three hundred feet of nothing but fog underneath you.

When I got up there Joe was sitting with his legs hanging over the edge. Danny was lying flat on his stomach breathing sharp and quick in the lower part of his ribs. Finally he sat up and looked at Joe. Joe stared back at him. Danny nodded quickly to Joe and Joe nodded back. That was all. There wasn't any thanking or back-slapping or hand-shaking. They just nodded quickly and looked away.

As soon as I could get Joe to one side I said to him,

"Quick work! You sure thought fast."

Joe grunted. "Aw what tha— Sure, I hadda do it."

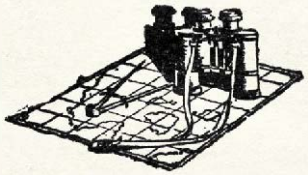
Then Joe made what was a regular speech for him.

"I didn't think nothin'. Not much. I just did it. Somebody hadda."

Joe spat and hunched his shoulders.

"Tha bull-mouthed mick. I hate his guts justa same. But I hadda do it. Somebody hadda."

When I see that kind of rivets in a gang on a construction job or in a bridge or holding an army or a country together then I'm satisfied. I know the job will hold together.



A Freak Ocean Chart

EVERY few years since 1843 there has been published in London a revised version of the Bottle Chart. This is supposed to show the course of every bottle thrown into the ocean and later picked up. The time it took said bottle to make its voyage is carefully noted, ranging from a few days to sixteen years. Distances vary from two miles to five thousand. The Bottle Chart was the idea of Lt. Becher, a British naval officer, and its purpose is to find out which way the currents go. Few of the recorded bottles have contained anything except bits of paper.—DONALD JAMES.

WHITE WATER MEN

BY WILLIAM J. SCHULTZ

SAID Moriarty, the cook, as the logging gang rested in the bunkroom after supper:

"It's green hands that many of you are. I've a mind that as good Kennebec lumbermen you should learn the traditions of the camp. And first, to teach you the respect you should have for him, I shall be telling you of the greatness of your boss, Dan Gordon."

Five years past (continued Moriarty) Dan was the same fine god of a man that you see him today, barring only that he was five years younger and his hair was all as black as swamp coal, and not silver over his temples. And five years ago there was no Mrs. Gordon.

Let me be telling you lumber-lubbers that Mrs. Gordon is a beautiful woman and a good wife, which is rarer in these parts than good whisky, but I can mind the time when she was Toinette Latour, a slip of a girl and flighty as a goldfinch. She's Canajen French, you should be knowing. Some five years past, the Great Eastern Paper Company imported her and about twenty-five other girls from across the border to work in the mill they were putting up at Bemus.

'Twas a risky business to be doing, for an unmarried woman in this part of the country is as dangerous as thawed-out dynamite; but the company built little bungalow houses for them, and coddled them like a mother, and the girls did their work better than any men could have done. Of course, they had wooers aplenty, but they were well off and they knew it; so they flipped their skirts at the boys when they came gallanting around. Toinette was courted by Dan

Gordon, who had just been made a camp boss, and by Pierre Leroi.

Pierre was lumber boss for the Great Eastern people. There were no hard feelings betwixt the Great Eastern Company and ourselves. We cut lumber timber, whilst they were out for paper wood. We were both working along the Kennebago, and once or twice there were disagreements over the water rights when the spring drives went down the river, but mostly the two companies were on good terms. Only there was bad blood between Dan and Pierre.

Pierre was French, as you could be telling by his name, and a good lumberman he was, but deceitful and jealous as a woman, and he had the temper of a wood-pussy. I'm thinking there was Injun blood in him too, for he was short and dark as walnut wood, and he seemed made of steel springs.

'Twas nip and tuck between him and Dan as to which was the best lumberman and bubble-jumper. This was a matter of jealousy between the men, but there was no way you could be testing them out. And so they remained like two bull bears in a full blueberry patch —no excuse for fighting but full wishful to.

When Toinette came to Bemus, they both laid their hearts at her light little feet. At slack of work, they would travel ten or twenty miles to Bemus to be seeing her. So different were they, you would think a girl might be making up her mind betwixt them, and say, "The tall one for me," or "I'll be liking the short one best."

But not Toinette. She was sweet and inviting to the one, and she was just as sweet and inviting to the other. She would coo in that way that women have when Dan was with her, and she would be soft of eye and tongue when it was Pierre. 'Twas a wrong thing to do, for she was setting two good men one against the other. Little did she care, for she was young and Heaven to look upon—and she knew it, which was the greatest pity.

Pierre wanted that he and Dan should fight it out between themselves, and the better man have Toinette, but Dan would have none of it, for he is slow to temper and a quiet-speaking man when he is not touching liquor. There was none could say he was a coward, for all the North Country knew his worth. So there the matter rested.

WELL, the next spring after the girls came to Bemus and when the drives were over, the Great Eastern boys built themselves a casino over by the lake, and they put in a glass-smooth floor and polished it till you could see your face in it. 'Tis said that they would come there to shave in the mornings, using the floor as a mirror. When it was completed, they sent an invitation to the girls at Bemus to attend the grand opening dance.

The company said they could go, and provided a boat to take them to the casino and back. Then, so that they would be doing everything in finest style, the Great Eastern boys told us we should come too—which was no more than right, after all, for the two companies had been a-sharing of sections and water and good will these twenty seasons past.

'Twas an elegant letter they sent us, telling us about the casino and how two hundred people could dance in it without barking their shins. But not a word did they say of the floor, for they were meaning to surprise us, there not being one like it in the whole North Country.

Eh, but it was a preening and a polishing we did to ourselves, that we might look pleasing in the sight of the girls. I used a pair of horse shears to clip the boys' hair—of course we couldn't be finding our sewing scissors just when we wanted them—and made them look more like humans and less like lumbermen.

We shook the chips and shavings and straws out of our jackets, and we sewed the holes in our trousers, and we bear-greased our boots. By the holy toe nails of Saint Colomban, you wouldn't have recognized the boys when they were all tidied up, they were that slick and clean.

The Kennebec Company lent us two motor boats, and we arrived at the casino just after dark. Sure and the Great Eastern boys had fashioned a fine piece of a dance hall. It stood half on land and half over the water on stilts. The bark had been left on the outside logs, but within you could see that they had been shaved and planed till the walls looked like silk. There was a stone fireplace, and some logs were blazing and flickering when we came near, so that the light fell out over the lake and lit up the ripples like a spray of fireflies.

The girls from Bemus had arrived before us; as the boats tied up we could hear the fiddles and the accordion hitting it up, and through the windows we could see the lines of the dancers. Strange, though, there was no tramp from the boots of the men, as there rightly should have been.

We straightened our shirts and our jackets, and with Dan at our head we marched around to the door of the casino. The Great Eastern boys crowded out to meet us, and may I be taken for an Orangeman if they weren't all in their stocking feet. Pierre stood in front, smiling and bowing.

"It's a great dance hall you've put up," said Dan politely to him.

"But yes," answered Pierre. "The boys, they have done fine piece of building."

We started to walk in, but Pierre waved us back.

"The boots," he said, "they must come off. For sake of the floor, you know," he explained.

We stood still in our tracks and looked at one another. There were two holes in my own stockings you could have snaked Paul Bunyan's griddle through, and I knew that the other boys were no better. We'd patched our trousers, because they would be showing, but never a darn had we put in our stockings, by token that they would not be seen when our boots were on. The girls were crowding to the door now to look at us, and we shuffling and scowling like a raft of monkeys.

"You should have told us of that before, Pierre," said Dan. "You can't expect us to be showing the color of our toes with ladies present."

"I am so sorry that I could weep for you," said Pierre, and I'm thinking the little Frenchman really meant it, for it was no plan of the Great Easterners to be shaming us forninst the girls. But now the rascals were grinning like timber wolves. "*Nom de Dieu*," continued Pierre, "your boots, they would make our beautiful floor into toothpicks. With paint on your toes, the holes in the stockings they would not show, perhaps," he added helpfully.

Red Jacks, by me, was grumbling and muttering as he'd sooner be going back than dance in front of the girls without his boots. I was feeling the same way about it myself, and I'm thinking the rest of the boys thought likewise. When Dan turned around to us and asked did we think we should be leaving our clods outside the casino door, we all shouted: "No!"

"Sorry, Pierre," said he cheerfully to the Great Eastern boss, "you should have told us about the floor before we came. Are you going to ask us in?"

"No, not with the boots," shouted Pierre. There was trouble brewing, and it broke when Dan stepped forward towards the door. Pierre jumped for him, and we sailed into the Great Eastern boys. I was just starting to swing my fist at the head of one of them, who was trying to butt me in the stomach, when I heard Dan bellow above the crowd,

"Don't fight, boys. Step on their toes. Step on their toes!"

Faith, and it worked like magic. We just leaned back whenever the Great Eastern boys came at us, and trod on their toes. Oh, but it's a lovely sensation, my lads, to have somebody in a cleated boot step on your bare foot.

The Great Eastern boys cursed fit to curdle the lake, but they were helpless as blind kittens. We joined hands like we were playing ring-around-a-rosie, with all the Great Easterners inside the ring. Whenever any of them tried to break through the circle, we would stamp at their feet, and I'm telling you that they would jump back without further argument.

Then we began to move all together towards the shore of the lake, not to the right side of the casino, where there was a sloping beach, but to the left, where the Company had made a sort of dock, with about five feet of water off it.

The Great Eastern boys saw our intention. They fought like catamounts, but whenever they came near us, we nipped them with our cleats and they'd have to hop back, holding on to the foot we had stepped on. The girls from the Bemus mills had crowded to the windows of the casino, and they were screaming and laughing and cheering us fit to split their little throats.

Soon we had the Great Easterners on the edge of the dock, and then they began to topple off one by one, as those in back pushed against those to the front.

When they were all baptized—floundering around and treading water—we stood on the dock and laughed till we had to be sitting down. Some of the Great Easterners were laughing too, for the joke was a good one, but Pierre Leroi was as black as storm-thunder, and was shaking his fist at us.

"Won't you invite us in, boots and all?" asked Dan between laughs. Eh, but the words that Pierre used then would have made a dried ox-skin creep. Some of the other Great Eastern boys waded up to him and quieted him, and we commenced pulling them out of their bath. Nobody mentioned boots again, and we all tramped into the casino just as we were. What between the water that dripped from the Great Easterners and the ripping up done by the spikes in our boots, it's true that the floor of the casino was completely ruined, but the Great Eastern boys should have told us about not wearing boots before we arrived.

NO sooner was I inside than I laid my eyes on Toinette. Eh, but she was a girl then to lead a man to commit madness. You would look at her once, and then you would look at her again, and her beauty would take you in the throat till there seemed no one in the room but just yourself and Toinette. You may think it the maundering of an old Irishman—me telling you this and she a married woman these years past—but sure, there were two others in the casino that felt as I did and more, and they were Dan and Pierre.

Toinette came forward and took each of them by the hand and said, "You shall be friends now, for my sake," and you knew that the way she said it would make them worse enemies than ever. She's a different woman, now that she's Mrs. Dan Gordon, but in those days there was a devil dancing behind the sparkling eyes of Toinette Latour.

When we were all inside, the fiddler struck up a Boston Fancy, and we started shaking our feet. A good sharp square dance is the best way to dry off after a tumble into a lake; and the Great Eastern boys, jigging to warm themselves, sort of set the pace for us Kennebecers.

Of course, there weren't nearly enough of the mill girls for every man to have one of them for a partner, so we pitched

pennies to see which of the men would be "ladies" for the dance. Every "lady" then tied a neckerchief around his left elbow and took his place opposite to one of the "gentlemen."

Faith, and it was good to hear old Sam Boyd sing out, "Choose yer partners," or "Change partners," or "Naow, you men thar, buck an' wing 'er up—Whoopla! Whoo!"

You'll be finding it a fixed rule hereabouts, you green lads, where there be so few womenfolk can come to our dances, that you must not be dancing with the same girl more than twice during the evening—we do that so that all the boys will have some sort of chance to swing a petticoat, for it's rather like drinking stale beer to be dancing all evening long with bearded lumber-lubbers with hankies tied round their arms.

You may be saying to yourselves, "Now where's the woman that would be willing to dance more than twice with an old fool like that Irishman Moriarty?"—and perhaps you would be right, perhaps you would. But when it came to Dan, sure the shoe was on the other foot. For all that they were so high and mighty, you could see the souls of those French girls go bubbling from their pretty little toes up into their eyes when Dan came near them—him with his great strong arms, and the merry laughing eyes of him, and the stamp of his feet, which shook the floor beneath him like Angus Og, hammering the earth with thunder.

I'm thinking Dan could have had his way with any girl if he would, but his heart and his eyes were then and always have been for Toinette alone. He was full wishful to have danced the night through with her, but after his two dances he turned him away and took another partner.

Sure, and as the evening wore along and we all danced together, there were no hard feelings between the Great Easterners and ourselves for the ducking we had given them and for the gashes that our boots were making in their floor—that is, there was no bad blood in any heart except Pierre's.

But I'm thinking that the hate that was blazing in him was enough for all the rest, and every spark of his hate was for Dan Gordon alone. His little squint eyes were watching our Dan like a mink's, and there was more than one of us felt that the evening would not pass without a fight, the more as there was liquor aplenty, and we all of us had the thirsts of men. I was a "lady" and was kicking up my heels opposite Red Jacks when he suddenly grabbed hold of my shoulder and said, "Moriarty, that's the third dance that skunk of a Pierre is having with Dan's Toinette."

Toinette knew the devilment she was raising all right, all right. There was color in her two cheeks like a winter sunset, and she was gazing across Pierre's shoulder at Dan. There was the hell-light of a pretty woman burning in her eyes then, and they were saying to Dan, plain as words, "You must come and take me from him, my big handsome man."

Dan had seen and was gone white, and the little bunches of muscle at the back of his jaw stood out from his face, his teeth were clenched that tight together. Another moment, I'm thinking, and he would have been across the room and facing Pierre, but Old Sam Boyd had his eyes open and saw trouble coming. Before ever one of us could move, he called the dance off in the middle of a bar.

For the moment every man had been as tight as a fiddle string, but now as we moved about we sort of eased up. I saw Pierre go over to the table where the liquor was, and drink deep and long. By that sign, I knew there was a kettle of trouble boiling, and that Pierre would try to dance the next dance with Toinette.

"Patrick Moriarty," I said to myself,

"you haven't the look of a pin-feathered angel of peace, but it's time for you to be bestirring yourself"—not that I object to a good fight at any time, you understand, but there were women present and 'twas not proper that they should get messed in a free-for-all.

I hoofed over to Toinette afore Pierre was back from the drinking table, and asked could I have her for a partner. She looked at Dan and she looked at Pierre, and then she looked at me and laughed low and gurgling. Eh, I know that I won't take any prizes for my looks, though there was once a woman—but never mind that. Toinette should not have laughed at me in that fashion, though I bear her no ill-will for it now, and she has become the finest of women—God bless her. But her laugh then made me fighting mad, and I said to myself, "If Pierre comes snooping back, 'twill be Patrick Moriarty, Irish and full-fisted, that he will be meeting." Sure, and the moment the fiddle started scratching again, Pierre was back, stepping in front of me and taking Toinette's hand.

I gave the Fenian yell, and was all set for springing at Pierre, who had whirled around, when Dan came between us. With one hand he sent me sprawling, saying over his shoulder as he did so, "Sorry, Moriarty, but this is my fight."

DAN and Pierre went for each other in the same eye-flash. Toinette screamed and jumped on a bench, and all the other girls started screeching at the same time, till the hullabaloo was fit to scare the bristles off a hog.

I saw one of the Great Eastern boys rushing forward, and I made for him. Our lads were tearing across the floor, their arms just aching for a good fight. The lights were knocked over, and someone was throwing beer bottles. The girls had crawled out of the windows, and they hopped up and down outside the casino, squealing like a yard-full of stuck pigs, while we inside were enjoying ourselves in the best free-for-all of the season.

I misremember much of it myself, except that I had someone's ear in my mouth while he was pawing my face so that he could gouge my eyes. Finally, in twos and fours and little bunches and groups, we all tumbled out onto the lawn in front of the casino and finished the fight there. By the teeth of Saint George's dragon, my lads, 'twas a sweet and pretty fight.

Well, the night air outside gave us back our senses, such as they were, and we dropped apart. At last there were only Dan and Pierre left fighting, but they were going it hammer and tongs. They were great men and good fist-mixers, and I'm thinking they would have fought the whole night through, did we not pull them apart. Dan had smashed a finger-bone somehow, while Pierre's face was a sight to be forgetting. The little Frenchman jumped up and down as though he was maniacal, and he was blowing bubbles of blood and froth out of his lips. He was too mad at the moment to be talking decent English, and glory be to God, none of us understood the French names he was calling our Dan.

It took four of the Great Eastern boys to hold back Pierre, and four of us Kennebecers to keep Dan from jumping at the little Frenchman. The girls came trooping out to where we were, and Toninette stepped in between the two bosses.

"Such naughty mens," she said, "that you should make such fights over me." I could have strangled her as she stood, she with her sly little kitten ways, setting two good men at each other's throats. Dan gulped hard and held out his hand to Pierre—his left hand, for 'twas the right that had the broken finger.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Shake!"

Pierre would not take Dan's hand, but

spat on the ground. He looked up with red hate burning in his eyes.

"Mister Gordon is white water man; he is bubble-jumper, heh?" he said to the crowd. "I ask him to race with me through Devil's Sluiceway, and we see who is better man."

You could hear each ripple slap on the shore, it was so quiet after Pierre said that.

"In six weeks then," answered Dan, "when this finger is better."

You green hands do not be knowing yet the terror of the Devil's Sluiceway. It is the throat of hell itself, mocking at God's work in the North Country. Two miles back from the Kennebago River, my boys, Micmac Creek cuts an evil way for itself through Elbow Hill. You can throw a stone across the gorge, for it is narrow, but below the waters of the creek run like a beast possessed over splintered black rocks. No drive ever passes through the sluiceway, for the logs would come out splintered and fit only for toothpicks.

'Tis said that fifty years past, Tim Sawyer ran the sluiceway in a cedar canoe, that his paddle was smashed and his pikepole snapped in his hands, and he was a witless idiot when he finally floated out of the gorge on the keel of his canoe.

Ay, and there was another, Blacksmith Lafarge, who dared the devil of the sluiceway, after he had drunk too deep of mountain whisky, and only a single one of his fingers with his wedding ring on it was washed out of the gorge. Ay, and in my own time, three good white water men, Ted Shaw, and Mark Loury, and Henri Chaffee, dared that black gorge and never came out.

Sure, and it was the talk of the whole North County, was Pierre's challenge to Dan. When the day of the run arrived, 'twas the entire population of the county betook themselves to the sluiceway. Faith, and the edges of the gorge seemed to have sprouted heads, like a tree hollow does toadstools. There were all of our Kennebec lads there, and all the Great Eastern boys, and there were loggers from the other companies, and people from all the villages round. Every man of our camp had bet a season's pay on Dan, and I'm thinking that all the Great Easterners had done the same by Pierre. But more than one of us hedged his bet by a further wager that neither man would escape from the sluiceway alive, for sure those frothing swirling waters below carried death in their evil heart. There was never a man amongst us dared believe that both bosses would come out alive.

Two mighty spruce trunks had been rolled upon the bank of the Micmac, above the entry into the gorge. The loose bark was scraped away, but the surfaces were left rough, to be giving better foothold to the men. I was not there to be seeing the start of the race myself, having positioned myself on the rim of the gorge, but they told me afterwards how Dan stamped along the length of his log, feeling the cleats of his boots sink into the wood and grip on it. Pierre turned his log this way and that, and tested it with his boot. Neither of them would look at the other.

Suddenly, from the crowd that was around the two bosses, Toinette dashed out. She was pale, and her eyes, they were red from weeping. She ran to Dan and threw her lovely arms around him.

"Dan," she cried, "you must not go. It is you I love, Dan. I love you, I love you." Bless me, and she kissed him full on the mouth before all the men that were standing there.

The hearts of the Kennebec boys had been black with hate against Toinette, by reason that she was the root of most of the trouble between the two bosses; but now they knew that she was a true good woman for all her flightiness, and they felt sorry for her. They knew that Dan would face the devil of the sluiceway, even with Toinette's kisses hot on

his lips. Pierre was standing by all this while with his teeth showing, and snarling like a wolf.

"Will Mister Gordon go with me through the sluiceway?" he asked.

"He will not, Pierre Leroi," said Toinette, and she turned on him like a mother-bear with cubs. "He is mine, and he will not go."

"He will," said Dan gruffly, and with a kick he sent his log into the stream and jumped on it. Pierre gave a push with his pikepole, and he was off after Dan. There was one scream from Toinette, and she fell fainting on the bank of the creek.

AT first an eddy kept the two logs close by the shore, and they lazied along in water that was oil-smooth. Both of the bosses were stamping along their logs, feeling their balance and testing their grip. Then Dan poled his log out into the current, and Pierre followed close after him. They were still a distance from the mouth of the sluiceway, but you could see the water suck upon the logs and pull them faster and faster.

Soon the channel narrowed, and there were little side rips of the current from one shore or the other that tossed the heads of the logs this way and that. Still, it was not yet what you would call bad water, and it needed no more than a touch of the pikepoles to put the logs straight again. Then the banks closed like the gates of hell half-shut, and Dan and Pierre were in the sluiceway.

From where I had placed myself on the lip of the gorge, could see the two men as they came hurtling down the creek. Dan's log was about ten feet ahead of Pierre's and somewhat over to the right.

There were rocks all about and before them, and there was no clear channel to choose. Betimes the two of them would separate, so as to be on opposite sides of the sluiceway, and again they would come so close together that one man could have ridden both logs. The logs would snap this way and that, and many were the times when it seemed as if one or the other of the men was off his log and was riding on a bubble of spray. Sure, and those rocks were the devil's own fangs and him hungry and roaring for the two men that were braving his anger.

Once I saw Pierre's log catch on a rock, and may I forever go thirsty if the little Frenchman did not stick his pikepole into the rushing waters, vault onto the rock, ease his log out of its tight place, and then jump back onto it again, all before you could draw a breath. First to one side and then to the other the men would sink their poles, and fend this way and that. Ah, the way they rode their logs made you proud to be a white water man.

The two bosses were right beneath me, when Dan's log drove square at a tree root that was wedged between two rocks. Dan threw all of his weight on the pikepole to turn the head of the log aside, when—before my very eyes—the pole snapped in his hands, and he was left with a stake less than four feet long. He lost his balance, pitched forward, and regained his feet just as the log struck the root. Pierre came sweeping past, and he was grinning like one of the evil spawn of hell.

You could have toppled me off the cliff at that moment, and I would never have struggled, I was that filled with horror. Sure, and I thought that it was the end of our Dan I was seeing not twenty yards below me, and me not able to move a finger to help him. He was not the best white water man of the country round for nothing. At the moment that he regained his balance after the pikepole snapped, he was crouched for a spring. The log struck squarely upon the tree root, and the current began to upend it.

Dan launched himself through the air —or was shot off by the momentum of the log, I can not be saying which—

whirling and twisting himself like a cat. 'Twas well over ten feet he made in that spring. He landed feet foremost, on the rear end of Pierre's log, which was just passing him.

The little Frenchman must have had six senses, or perhaps he saw Dan's jump out of the corner of his eye, for he threw himself at the head of his log just at the second Dan struck the rear. The wood sank somewhat under the surface of the water, and it wobbled like a cork, but, thanks to Pierre's move, it held its balance.

Dan fell forward on one knee, but with the short stake he was still clutching in his right hand he fended the stern of the log to one side and saved it from swerving upon a rock that was ahead. Pierre swung around, and his pikepole cut a huge arc in the air—whether he was striking at Dan with it, or whether he was trying to win his balance I can not be saying, for it all happened before you could close an eye and open it again.

Had Dan been standing upright on the log he would have been knocked off by Pierre's pole. As it was, the pikepole struck him lightly on the shoulder, and the iron point slid down and buried itself in the log at his knee. Pierre's grip on the pole broke, he screamed like a banshee and toppled into the water, and the log started to roll.

The stern of the log, with Dan still clutching it, sank under the water, for the balance was upset. The fore-end rose clear, the entire log hurdled a rock before it, and then, somehow, Dan was on his feet in the center of the log, balancing wildly, and grasping Pierre's pikepole. Then the current and a turn of the creek carried him out of my sight.

Well, the sluiceway spat out Pierre's body and the broken handle of Dan's pikepole. Then we discovered that where the break happened, the pole had been sawn half through. Whether Pierre made the cut himself—which seemed not likely, since all morning there were folks about him—or whether he had bribed someone else to do it, we never found out. But there it was, and sure it was a miracle of the Almighty that had saved Dan and punished Pierre Laroi.

When Dan stepped dripping from his log at the end of the gorge, those on the shore stood back from him in terror. He had gone into the sluiceway a man with tar-black hair. He stepped on shore with the hair all silvered above his ears and temples.

When Toinette came, she threw herself on the ground before him, placed her arms about his legs, and tried to kiss the mud from his boots. He lifted her up, and brushed back her hair—and then he laid his head, tired out, in the curve of her young neck between the head and the shoulder, and she rocked him like a mother.

"Thunderation!" exploded one of Moriarty's audience.

"A man he is," said the Irishman, "and if he has the finest wife in the North Country today, 'tis no more than he deserves."

THE CAMP-FIRE

The meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers.

FROM Georges Surdez, some interesting words about his novelette, "Fools For Glory.

From time to time, I receive a letter through the magazine from a Legionnaire or an ex-Legionnaire who has identified the locale and one or more of the characters in a yarn. The *Anciens de la Lègion* in New York have been kind enough to comment on the accuracy of my stuff through their president. And, after "Come On, Zouaves!" was published, I received a note from a chap serving in a Tonkin blockhouse, in sight of China, opening with: "I know whom you had in mind when you wrote that story, Captain F . . . .!" He was right. I am fairly sure that some of your readers will recognize incidents in "Fools For Glory," and I hope they will understand my reasons for shifting the setting and other alterations of facts. English is not a dead language, and *Adventure* turns up in surprising places.

As usual, I developed a fine case of wanderlust compiling the material for the story. Writing of the Middle Atlas, I could see again the sergeants of the "protection service" dropping into the canteen at dawn, for some hot coffee before starting out. And I came across a personal letter which appeared routine when I got it, and now holds a definite smack of high adventure. It was written to me by a captain of the Foreign Legion Cavalry in the Sahara:

"This letter which I had hoped would be joyous shall bring you a great disappointment, for it must inform you that it is impossible for you to visit me just now. Immediately after the ambush at Atchana (Forty-odd French led riders wiped out by a native band) we received an emergency call, and started at a gallop for the scene of the combat. Alas, we found only corpses, forty corpses, horribly mutilated, throats cut, hands hacked off, bellies ripped open, eyes knocked out. It was terrifying, and my Legionnaires, who are not easily moved, were covered with 'goose-flesh' at the sight. We picked up the trail of the raiders and followed them for three days, at times through narrow gorges, ideal for ambush, by way of Oglat-el-Hamman and the Hammanda. On the third day, a fierce storm broke out, the rain washed out the tracks. My men were out of food, there was no fodder for my horses, so we went back to the Post, stopping only long enough to obtain new supplies, starting off again the same day, for four days of additional search in the region of Beni-Tadjit. I returned last night, tired out, with a spent squadron, but we must start out again tomorrow . . ."

Simple, soldierly language. I had drunk anisette in Colombo-Béchar, not a fortnight before, with one of the men who fell at Atchana—a splendid young chap, six foot two. Not long after, I was up in the desert again, when the same raiding band ambushed a detachment of Legion, killing some fifty-seven out of sixty-three men. I met the survivors, looked over the country. Middle Atlas campaigning? I have notes given me by a sergeant, a Lorrainer, who had served through the World War with the German

Army, in a remote post of the hills. It was Armistice Day, and we celebrated in superb style. I can taste the cognac as I think of it, and remember his efforts to organize an impromptu patrol, to "show what it's like better than anybody can tell you." Those are my sources, and it is small wonder that I can be accurate. I hope that aside from details, I have done a fair job of the conversion of a doubter to the Legion's Creed.

ROBERT REID LEE, who wrote "Rivets," was born a sourdough. He became a son of the Yukon July 9, 1907, at Fort Gibbon, Alaska, a now abandoned army post at the junction of the Yukon and Tanana rivers. Six months later he arrived at Jolo in the Philippine Islands. Afterward he lived in army posts and cities throughout the United States, his father being the late Colonel Joel R. Lee, U. S. Army. He went to school in Indiana, Texas, New Mexico, North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Kentucky and Indiana (again), ending with an A. B. with honors in English from the University of California in 1932. These undergraduate years included waiting on tables, lawn cutting and collecting fares on suburban trains. During the four years between high school and college he worked —chiefly at clerical jobs—for an insurance company, a railroad, a public utility and a packing house. Along with his sheepskin he received a second lieutenant's commission in the Coast Artillery Reserve and shortly after that a commission in the California National Guard, in which he had previously been enlisted and in which he served until 1934. During 1933 and 1934 he studied at the School of Authorship at the Williams Institute at Berkeley. He has published verse, but this is his first published fiction. When *Adventure* took this story, he says, he had $13 board due and no prospects.

ANOTHER author to join our Writers' Brigade, and also to see his first story in print, is William J. Shultz. He is a professor of economics at City College of New York, and has published several books on that subject, but this issue brings out his first fiction. He says:

Is there a Moriarty? Are Dan Gordon, and the boys of Kennebec Camp, and the Camp itself, real?

I can not answer in the present tense. It is fifteen years since I had my last sight of the North Country. Many fates can overtake lumberjacks and lumber camps in fifteen years.

I can wish no happier fortune to a sixteen-year old runaway than to fall into the generous hands of Patrick Moriarty. As his "cookie" I had the peeling of endless barrels of potatoes and the rinsing of ever-renewed mountains of tin plates. And I must not forget the splitting of firewood by what seemed to be the cubic ton. But in compensation I had full access to the priceless wit, wisdom and philosphy of that grandest teller of tales, that Homer of the North Country epics, that archtypal Irish story-man—Patrick Moriarty.

The printed word can never do justice to the man himself or to the tall tales he unfolded—tales told in a little brogue that in itself was pure music to the ear. "'Tis the Irish alone of the races were born with the gift of the golden tongue," he would say, and I, for one, will never question him.

THE "hics" should not have been inserted in Judge Kirby Benedict's death sentence ("The little birds will return from their haven of refuge in the southland where they went to avoid the blizzardly blasts of a cold and cruel winter. They will build their nests and rear their young and their little voices, etc. . . You won't be here to see it, for you are going to be hung by your neck until dead.") That is the opinion of S. Omar Barker of Tecolotenos, New Mexico, who says:

I venture to doubt the authenticity of C. P. Ryan's "flowery death sentence" in the January first issue. At least it shouldn't be credited to Judge Benedict with the inserted "hics," for while Benedict was a regular and heavy drinker, he was reputed to carry his likker with marvelous aplomb, both in court and out. A petition was once gotten up asking the President to remove him from the bench. The President's answer was, in effect: "Judge Ben-

edict knows more law and conducts a better court drunk than ninety per cent of our territorial judges do sober. I won't fire him."

The name "Don Juan Valjan Vigilanti Karranzazas" is obviously a razzberry concoction, only the "Don Juan" possibly being Spanish. "K," for instance, does not exist in Spanish. "Valjan" just couldn't be Spanish, and "Vigilanti" would be "Vigilante" if it were Spanish. Mr. Ryan, or somebody, has just been foolin' with his imagination, I think. Or could there have been another judge as learned and oratorically flowery as Judge Benedict?

DONEGAN Wiggins, *Ask Adventure* rifle and pistol expert, wants the following printed to head off a barrage:

I have a contrite confession to make; you'd heard about it anyhow, and plenty. I've made a baldfaced mistake, and there wasn't the slightest excuse for it, as I knew better all the time, and just now caught it.

In the letter on derringers, to the gentleman in Kentucky, I stated that both Colt and Remingtons have made .45 caliber derringers for cartridges, whereas it should have been ".41" caliber. I caught the mistake in rechecking the letters, and had believed I had remedied it, but I simply forgot. Oh, I'll hear about that, all right. The readers of *Adventure* will sing it to me over the air, I don't doubt a bit. A majority of our readers know their smokesticks, I think.

And dammitall, I knew better; it was just a typing slip that I thought I'd corrected ere I sent it to you, and didn't. I have no record of any cartridge derringer made of greater caliber than the .41 short rimfire. The error was all mine, and I hope you print this. I rate an exposure.

OLD MAN WIGGINS.

AREN'T there some West Coast readers who can give us more information about the mysterious pigeon flights that E. Krauth, of Milford, New Jersey, observed out there and tells us about? What birds are these, and what about the curious ten-year cycle?

I have been sitting in on your tales for these many years all ears, and so far have had nothing to say. Now, however, I wish to rise and speak of something I know from personal experience.

Mr. Edwin Chancelor Payne's tale of the "last flight" of the passenger pigeon is very interesting, but far from the facts.

Stationed at Fort Columbia, Washington in 1906, I was astonished at a flight of thousands of just such pigeons as Mr. Payne describes. Large blue pigeons feeding on elderberries during the late summer. The slaughter was terrific until we established a refuge zone near the fort. Their meat was delicious. They did not have the sense to rise and fly when the hunters approached. Thousands were killed by pot hunters, as they had absolutely no protection.

Another flock returned in 1916, still another in 1926, a ten year cycle it seems. They were seen and hunted on the entire West Coast of Washington and Oregon. Still no protection.

If the ten year cycle holds true, there should be another flight in 1936, and I should certainly be glad if this letter of mine would attract the attention of some one who would investigate the facts as given above and secure protection for these birds.

Now this is off my chest. I wish to voice my appreciation of the remarks of Mr. A. S. Hoffman.

MORE information about Turnagain Arm where the tide arrives in a ten-foot wall, comes to us from Ben L. Campbell, of Portland, Oregon.

In the Ask Adventure section of the issue of February first, Mr. L. C. Pendell of Stockton, California, requests information regarding Turnagain Arm, Alaska, and Mr. T. S. Solomons replies quite fully. There is, however, more to be added, and I hope you gentlemen will not mind if I offer a little information gained by residence there during the summer of 1914 and the winter of 1915-16. The latter was rather severe for that section.

Turnagain Arm is a branch of Cook Inlet, and the distance from the head of the Arm to the sea is something over one hundred miles, by water.

There are several small creeks emptying into the Arm, but no streams of great volume.

At the head is Spencer glacier, and Clear Creek, rising in Bartlett Glacier farther up. Six or seven miles down the Arm, Bear Creek comes in from Bear Glacier, which is near Portage Bay. These creeks are small rivers when the glaciers are melting; but at other times are of medium size.

Thirty degrees below zero was the lowest temperature registered during the winter while I was camped at Kern Creek, on the Arm, and that was not unpleasant except during the infrequent winds. Spring comes to that section about March.

There is a great difference between extreme high and low tides, and I have seen the Arm about one hundred yards wide at low tide, and perhaps two miles wide at high tide.

The incoming tide is choked between Sniper's Point and Bird Point and comes up the Arm in a bore ten feet high, rapidly cover-

ing the mud flats. The outgoing tide forms tide rips in shallow places.

Boats come up the Arm behind the bore, and go out with the receding tide.

During the winter of 1915-16 the Arm froze so there was no movement of the water for several weeks. In the spring the ice broke up into blocks the size of a small house, and in fields of several acres, which were pushed up against bluffs and fell back in fragments.

There are mountain sheep, goats, black bear and a few brown bear near the Arm; but the real game country is below Kenai Lake, forty or fifty miles southwest. Moose in large numbers inhabit the lower Kenai country. The west side of Cook Inlet is known as the Kodiak bear country.

Both the towns of Seward and Anchorage are within a short distance of Turnagain Arm by rail.

Mosquitoes and flies are troublesome during the summer.

NOTED in the early part of Camp-Fire, two writers sell to *Adventure* the first stories they have ever sold. The stories were also the first we had seen from these men. And we've never seen the men.

This throws some light on a situation that will never be clear to many persons. I've never known an editor who had all the good stories he wanted, and the reason is that real story-telling skill is a limited talent. On the other hand, it isn't unusual to find disappointed new writers telling themselves that a new writer hasn't much chance, editors don't read their stories, a writer has to be known, the writers who are known turn out all the stories the editors can use, etc.

It was an interesting experiment to look over the ten issues preceding this one.

In those issues these writers appeared in *Adventure* for the first time:

Edgar Piper—"Down Hell's Gullet."

Eugene Cunningham—"The Red Mare."

William S. Wells—"Man from Horse Heaven."

Capt. William Alford—"Life on a Hell Ship."

Essad Bey—"Ordeal by Ice."

Kenneth B. Collings—"A Cablegram from Cape Haitien."

Tex O'Reilly—"Pecos Bill."

Major George F. Eliot—"Bristol the Blunderer," etc.

Berry Fleming—"The Sea Plunderers."

Alfred Batson—"Stunt Man."

Palmer Hoyt—"World Horses."

William Chamberlain—"Boarders Away!"

H. H. Matteson—"Hogmeat."

Charles M. Brown—"Britches Spree."

Frederick C. Painton—"Justifiable Homicide."

William C. Ford—"Mr. Flipwig, Voter and Taxpayer."

Kenneth Gilbert—"Special Delivery."

Cliffe Manville—"Guns of the Rapid Fire."

To these might be added two men whose work has not appeared in *Adventure* for a long time—S. Omar Barker ("Hard Range") and George Bruce, with his aircraft carrier novelettes.

So much for newcomers. Among the writers whose names are more familiar to you, who have already won your liking, we find in these issues:

Arthur O. Friel, Andrew A. Caffrey, James Stevens, Albert Richard Wetjen, Donald Barr Chidsey, Georges Surdez, Theodore Fredenburgh, James B. Connolly, Fred White, J. D. Newsom, Robert Carse, Gordon Young, Richard Howells Watkins, Hapsburg Liebe, W. C. Tuttle, Hugh Pendexter, Perry Adams, Jacland Marmur, Roy Churchill, Arthur D. Howden Smith, Robert E. Pinkerton, Raymond S. Spears.

Naturally it is to these well-established writers, and to others not mentioned who are returning to *Adventure*, that we look first for interesting stories. But some of the newer ones will in time become favorites of yours and ours. And there isn't real basis for any statement that a new writer hasn't much of a chance.

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

AN owl can be lured by a decoy—but the hawk is a wary bird.

Request:—Some time ago, I read your article on falcons in *Adventure*. Due to your knowledge of predatory birds, it occurs to me that you could give me some information—information I have sought for several years.

Some years ago I was working as Game Protector in this state. I have always had a natural love of wild life, and I took especial interest in the protection of our insectivorous birds, inasmuch as all the other officers seemed to pass them up.

In one district, I found that owls were playing the devil with several coveys of quail, as well as song-birds. Something had to be done, but I was at a loss to know how to go about it. I have always deplored the use of pole traps, and, I do not believe in indiscriminate shooting of predatory birds. I had to devise a method of getting the guilty birds, and no others. It occurred to me that, if I could make an artificial bird, to use in conjunction with a steel trap, I would get only the owls which were preying upon bird-life. Well, I devised such a decoy, and it worked very satisfactorily. Finally, when I caught no more owls, but saw some in the neighborhood, I felt that I had accomplished my little job. After that, I saw no more destructive evidence.

I felt that many others might be confronted with this same problem, so I made up an indestructable decoy, which is released from the trap when sprung. I secured a patent on this device, but I had tried it only on owls.

I wished to try this on hawks, but I felt positive that it would not lure a hawk which was seeking rodents.

I knew a man who was working in the timber, in Bedford County in this state. I had seen plenty of hawks there. I arranged with him that, during the winter, he set a number of traps with my decoys. I sent him a bunch of traps, and a number of the decoys. After several months, I wrote him, asking for results. He advised me that the things were "no good." However, I had occasion to go to Bedford County, and one of his timber-cutters told me that I would find my decoys wrapped up in the barn, and that this fellow had never set one of them. Another told me the same thing.

Next, I sent about a half-dozen to the Brookhave Game Protective Association, the secretary of which advised me that they would be glad to try them. However, I never heard further from them. Upon writing the secretary I learned that the warden whom they had delegated to set the traps had since left their employ, but "as he recalled it, the devices worked quite successfully." Of course this is very indefinite.

Then, I decided to take a trial at it myself, so I spent two weeks in Bedford County. I saw plenty of broad wing hawks, but no goshawks or Coopers. I used a dozen traps, but caught nothing but one set of toe-nails. I then made a canvass of the farmers, and they all told me that this was not the "right season" in that district. They all said that they were losing no poultry at that time. I then called upon the Game Protector, at the State Preserve, and he told me that I had missed it by several months. He advised me that he had seen no evidence of bird-killing hawks and owls during that period of the year.

Inasmuch as you know something of this subject, I would greatly appreciate your advising me if you have ever known of bird-killing hawks decoying to an "artificial" bird, similar to mine, or to a bunch of feathers placed upon a trap-pan. Or, have you ever heard of a hawk decoying to a dead bird? My decoy is about the size of a small adult quail. I use duck feathers in making them up, the feathers of the Rouen duck making a device of the same coloring as a quail. The device greatly resembles a quail or other bird, sitting with its head under its wing. It will fool an owl, but will it lure a sharp-eyed hawk?

Unfortunately, to try the device, I have to make a trip of about a hundred miles. And, it is generally mighty inconvenient to get away in the winter, which seems to be the proper time to make the trial. Of course, on a farm, young poultry is often taken by hawks in spring, but I am no farmer, and I have no acquaintances among them whom I could rely upon to try them. Most farmers regard every hawk as a poultry-thief, it seems. One farmer, who tried the device near his barn, condemned it. Yet, he admitted that he had

not lost one chicken to predatory birds that year, even though he saw several hawks near the barn at several times. What he did not know was that those hawks were seeking mice, and would not have taken a chicken unless driven to it by starvation.

—A. E. KEMMERLING, Wilkinsburg, Pa.

Reply by Mr. Davis Quinn:—Your question is most interesting. Hawks are not likely to decoy to a lure, wild hawks, that is. The hawks used in falconry are trained to come to a lure, but I question whether without the training they would ever respond to even the most "lifelike" of lures. Owls are generally not so fussy, and while I have not heard of them reacting to an inanimate decoy, it is not difficult to believe that your rather ingenious device has met with a measure of success. If the lure were moved perceptibly to the accompaniment of a "squeak" it would probably be even more effective on owls, but I doubt if even such a semi-animated device would have much appeal to hawks. The hawk is an altogether more wary bird than the owl. Incidentally the hawk lure commonly employed in falconry is an oval or egg-shaped mass of cloth or leather with a ounch of feathers projecting from either end. It may interest you to know that in Europe, where wild hawks are captured for falconry training, not lures but live pigeons are used; the pigeon is on a string, is let free from a box to fly, and when the hawk hovers or stoops near enough to be caught in a net the pigeon is retrieved and placed again in its box to be used over another time.

I don't mean this personally, but it is my frank opinion that the pole trap is one of the most cruel and inhumane devices designed to snare live creatures, and I guess you will agree with me on this. It is outlawed in New Jersey. A mechanism that severs a bird's frail leg bones so that the creature hangs head down by the tough tendons of the fracture, to die a slow death, should be outlawed in every state.

IS seaweed diet for a castaway?

Request:—I will greatly appreciate any information you may be able to give me regarding edible seaweeds gathered and utilized as food by the people of England, Ireland and Scotland.

It is my understanding that Dulse is used extensively in the British Isles and there may be other varieties of seaweed used either in a nutritive or remedial manner.

I will surely be grateful for any data you have available in reference to the names of such sea plants and the method of preparing them for consumption. Also whether or no they are commercially available.

—H. G. CHASE, Dorchester, Mass.

Reply by Lieut. H. E. Rieseberg:—I suggest that you write direct to the Curator of Marine Botany, United States National Museum, Washington, D. C., who will answer your query free of charge and with authority.

THERE are only six 1913 old type nickels. So don't go looking for one.

Request:—I am seeking reliable information about the 1913 Liberty Head Nickel. Where are they? How many are there? What is one worth? Why do people mention this coin or supposed coin so often?

I should also like similar information about the dime of 1894 S mint.

—LAYTON HOLLOWAY, Brookline, Mass.

Reply by Mr. Howland Wood:—The 1913 nickel is of the old type with the Liberty head on one side and a Roman V on the other. The one with the Indian head and buffalo has no premium. The reason for the rarity of the 1913 nickel that has been much advertised and talked about is because only six were made and these were made without authorization, simply to try out the die. Early in 1913 the design was changed so that there was no call to make pieces of the old type. I understand that all of these six pieces are in the possession of one man. They are not for sale so that no price can be put upon them. It has been a favorite theme of certain coin dealers desiring to sell premium lists of rare coins to exploit this piece. There is no chance in the wide world of picking up one of these. The same remarks also apply to the 1894 S mint dime. Twenty-four of these were made—several were destroyed and the rest did get into circulation. As far as I know all obtainable specimens have long since been gathered in and are in the hands of various collectors. Several of those that have been found are badly worn and in consequence are worth comparatively little.

EVEN a Marine seems to be fussy about how he looks!

Request:—I would be very thankful if you would send me a history about the U. S. Marine Corps, since it was organized and how, until the present.

I also would like to have information about the uniforms the men and officers wore at different times.

—ALFRED BONETSK, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Reply by Captain F. W. Hopkins:—It is difficult to give the full information you require within a letter, it would require a comprehensive book to do full justice to your query, but I enclose a little folder that does give a general history of the Corps. Collum's "History of the Marine Corps" published in 1880 is a large book and covers the time from

1775 to 1880. Since that date at least two more volumes could be filled. I believe that McClellan's "History" when it is published, will run into about three volumes. 1922 was the first year since 1900 when the Corps did not engage in some campaign, expedition or other action throughout the whole period!

Emblem: Originally the Marines wore a hunting horn with the letter M within the wreath, for an emblem. This gave way to a spread eagle, and then to a rather ornate shield, eagles and scroll design, that was worn through the Mexican war. About the time of the Civil war the globe and anchor design was adopted for service dress, and was placed in the center of the shield for dress. In the 70's the shield design was modified but still was used for dress, with the globe and anchor in the middle, then in the 80's this gave way to spread eagle with the globe and anchor in the middle, and finally the globe and anchor with eagle on the top as we see it today. The idea was undoubtedly inspired by the Royal Marines, who wear a globe (the eastern hemisphere) with a laural wreath around it. We claimed the other half of the globe under the Monroe Doctrine, and took the western hemisphere, added the anchor and eagle for trimming and to symbolize both the U. S. Eagle, and the anchor for the Navy of which we are a part.

Uniforms: In 1775 the uniform was cut similar to common idea of revolutionary soldiers, the coat was either bottle green, or red. Green was regulation but some naval officers preferred red—Paul Jones especially, who started the band. It wears red coats yet. About 1800 the coat was changed to blue, trimmed with yellow frogs and with a sort of stovepipe hat with red plume in front (or on one side). Officers wore a cocked hat. About the time of our second war with England the uniform was standardized and definate regulations began to appear—the coat was a swallow-tail affair of blue, trimmed with red, white trousers, crossed belts, high collar and black leather stock (hence the name "Leatherneck.") Enlisted men wore a shako like West Point Cadets still do. Officers a cocked hat (Italian Gendarme style.) The present officers' sword was regulation then, an Arabian type, as captured from the Sultian of Algiers in 1808 by our Lt. Bannon. In the Mexican war the type of shako had changed a bit to one more sloping up the back, full skirted coats, and after this war the red stripes appeared on NCO pants. The dress uniform during the Civil War was blue frock coat trimmed in red, red worsted epaulets, light blue trousers, red collar and leather stock, and a high-crowned shake with the top smaller than the bottom—the front went straight up but the back sloped, if I make myself clear—like you may think of when you think of Central American or Mexican soldiers on the stage. They had a round ed pompom, or knob, in front on top. The service uniform was like the army then, with the little soft flattish blue cap, that dropped the crown down in front. In 1875 the uniform was modified but substantially as described. Company officers wore a plume of red coque feathers, field officers wore aigrets. Generals wore a cocked hat like a Naval officer's hat, with a plume. Staff officers wore a cocked hat also, and a differently cut blouse. Line officers for service blouse wore a short black coat trimmed with black frogs across the front. In the 80's the shake gave way to the brass spiked helmet. Epaulets on the enlisted men gradually gave way to red shoulder straps. In 1900 the enlisted men's dress uniform was about as now, except the coat was longer, had red collar, straps and cuffs, and they wore the helmet, or a straight sided, rather low cap. Officers still wore the frogged coat. The Khaki service uniform appeared about now. In 1914 the frogged officer's coat gave way to the blue blouse with patch pockets as worn now, and the winter service, forest green uniform was adopted, trimmed and piped in red. We went into the war, and this green uniform with red trimming was so similar to the German field uniforms, and also the demand made the red trimming a drawback, so the red piping was dropped, although chevrons are still mounted on red, on the green service uniform. After the war uniforms were designed a bit more modern again, only slight changes. The style of cap was brought up to date, Sam Browne belts for officers, the roll collar blouse for service uniforms, etc. Sleeve trimming of braid on officers overcoats was abolished. The full dress frock coat of officers was abolished.

Overcoats used to be blue, with red-lined blue capes. They are now forest green, no capes. In summer officers and men wear white caps with dress uniform, and on ships, often white pants.

The 4th Regiment, in Shanghai, in summer, wears khaki blouses, khaki straight trousers, khaki sun helmets. The Marines in Pekin, in winter, wear green or blue uniforms, overcoats, and big fur hats. In the tropics they wear khaki pants, shirts, felt hats and leggings. In the states the service dress is usually winter field, green, with leggings, and caps. Dress is some combination with the blue blouse—either light blue pants, white pants—and blue or white cap. In Tropics at night, and with aviation, they wear a cap like an "overseas cap." The outpost at Heela, TH, at one time, seldom wore much more than a pair of khaki pants and a cartridge belt—I've seen them minus the pants. Those serving with the Army in 1917-1918 gradually got changed over into olive drab by the end of the war—problems of supply again.

Officers have a white dress, cut about the same as the blue dress. No sword belt is worn over this uniform. They also have a mess dress, a short white jacket for wear with a dinner shirt and vest and blue trousers with a red and gold stripe. The evening dress is a short blue jacket lined with red, gold braided

sleeves, collar and shoulder knots, worn with stiff shirt and vest, and full dress trousers. It fastens at the collar and cuts away to the hips, in front, same as white jacket. Officers on duty at the White House have a blue frock coat, double-breasted, gold sleeve braid and collars, big epaulets. The Marine Band wears scarlet frock coats, black collars, cuffs and shoulder straps, piped in white. White siguillettes. The leader has a blue frock coat, gold sleeve braid and collar, gold shoulder knots and siguillettes, gold frogs across the front. The few staff officers in the Corps wear dark blue trousers instead of light blue. Generals wear dark blue trousers, the stripe is black instead of red.

DON'T order an American breakfast in Vienna—you'll starve to death.

Request:—Will you please give me detailed information about the cost of two or three month's visit in Vienna?

What hotels or pensions would you recommend and what are the approximate charges?

—H. WILSON, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Beda von Berchem:—The cost of a two or three months visit in Vienna depends mostly on the demands you make for comfort and whether or not you are willing to forego, for that time at least, your accustomed American food specialities, especially at breakfast time.

What I mean by this is that grapefruit is a luxury in Vienna and during my two years stay in that lovely city about three years ago, I never saw American cereals, not even in the most expensive hotel or restaurant. Toast made of white bread is also a rare article. But the Viennese substitute for our traditional breakfast is not only adequate, but, as far as coffee is concerned, superior. At first, Viennese cooking will seem rich to you, but you will become accustomed to it in no time. It is by far the best European cuisine, French statements to the contrary notwithstanding.

Almost every precinct or district, and there are twenty-two of them, has first class, good middle class and inexpensive hotels, as well as pensions, that is, boarding houses.

The Hotel Imperial, Vienna I, Kaerntner Ring 16 is the best hotel in Vienna. The rates there range from a single bedroom with bath at 32 to 55 Schillings (1 Schilling is 18 cents at the present rate of exchange) in accordance with the location of room, to a single room without bath at 20 to 36 Schillings a day. Hotel Meissl & Schadn, world-renowned for its cuisine, and located Vienna I, Kaerntnerstrasse 16, charges 32 to 36 Schillings, room with bath and 13 to 18 Schillings room without bath. Other hotels, first class, located on or near the Kaerntner Ring in the inner city are Hotel Astoria, Hotel Bristol, Grand Hotel with rates similar to those mentioned above.

The Hotel de France, Vienna I, Schottenring 8 is about the best middle class hotel with rates of 24 to 35 Schillings for a room with bath, and 7 to 18 Schillings for a room without bath. In 1928 I lived for about three weeks at the Parkhotel Schoenbrunn, in Hietzing, which is Vienna XIII, located Hietzinger Hauptstrasse 12 and paid 13.50 Schillings for a good-sized room with bath. The bathtub was big enough to float a rowboat in it. The rates now, as I understand have gone up to 20 Schillings for a room like that.

If you prefer to live at a pension, I would recommend Pension Schwarzenherg, Vienna III, Schwarzenberg Platz 6. The rates for room and board are 20 to 32 Schillings per day and the food is excellent. I know, because I lived there for four months before I moved to a furnished cottage in Doebling, a suburb of Vienna. I paid 200 a month rent, hired a cook for 80 Schillings and including expenses for my table, never spent more than 350 Schillings a month, at that time about $50. If you expect to stay three months in Vienna, this would be the best way to live, especially if an employment agency can get you a cook who has been in the U. S. A. for a time. Domestic help is cheap in Vienna. Cottages can always be rented in any of the surrounding suburbs and you have excellent trolley or suburban (electric) train connections into the inner city.

If you figure 6 Schillings to the dollar at present, including sightseeing and amusement, your three months stay at Vienna should not cost you more than 2,500 Schillings or a little over $400. If you could rent a cottage the cost would come down to $300. My own expenses never exceeded $75 at any month of my stay, but in my case this was due to the fact that I have many friends in Vienna and most things a foreigner would have to pay for happened to be gratis for me. Still, Vienna is, Prague perhaps excepted, the cheapest city in Europe to live in, decently, (I mean, almost up to the American standard.) Of all the capitals of the world, Vienna is perhaps the only one which does not try to mulct the tourist.

Without wishing to be presuming, I would recommend that you register at a quiet middle class Hotel (I mentioned one) and take your breakfast there. Eggs, white rolls with butter, jam or honey and delicious coffee is the continental breakfast. Your lunch and your dinner you can eat almost anywhere and you will find that the food even in the smallest restaurant is excellent and inexpensive. I've eaten a four course dinner for as little as Schilling 1.50.

If you happen to be in Vienna in the early Fall, do not fail to visit Grinzing, and any of the taverns where the new wine is served. They call it "Heuriger." Marie Hendl's place at Grinzing, Himmelstrasse 7 is one of the best. The old lady knows how to make her guests feel at home. And if you should drop in on Hendl Marie, give her my love!

THE fable of Eldorado is still a lure, and still a mystery.

Request:—I've been watching *Adventure* for quite a while, but don't remember so far of an article being published on what I want to know.

Is there really a city of gold in the northern part of Brazilian country? Has any one seen it? I've read some stories of it time and time again, but they all seem to differ quite a bit so the story seems to be just a story to me. Did the explorer Fawcett really know where the city of gold was or did he chance it on the blind?

Possibly you could establish for me some statistics to go by.

—STEPHEN PAPP, Bronx, N. Y.

Reply by Dr. P. U. Shaw:—The "city of gold" in the northern part of Brazil is a fable of Eldorado. We do not know what Fawcett found, if he found anything. Certainly I can give you no statistics to go by. Nor can anyone else, as far as I know.

WHERE can a modern Limey get his lime juice?

Request:—This request for information may be somewhat unusual, but I don't know where else to turn.

I understand lime-juice can be obtained in quart bottles on either coast, but I cannot find anyone who can give me the address of a firm to deal with. If you can tell me of one, it will be greatly appreciated.

—HAROLD DAVIS, Tulsa, Okla.

Reply by Lieut. H. E. Rieseberg:—You are advised that lime juice is bottled by the Snowcrest Manufacturing Company, Boston, Mass.

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure*.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIED, 250 Bronxville Rd., Bronxville, N. Y.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 117 W. Harrison St., Chicago, Ill.

Coins: *and medals*—HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure*.

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

First Aid—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 1208, Orlando, Fla.

Fishing: *salt and fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, (Ozark Ripley), care of *Adventure*.

Football—JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose St., N. Y. C.

Health Building Activities, Hiking—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., Box 1208, Orlando, Fla.

Horses: *care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting; jumping; and polo; horses of old and new West*—MAJOR THOMAS H. DAMERON, 1709 Berkley Ave., Pueblo, Calif.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping—MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., care American Tourist Camp Ass'n., 152 W. 65th St., N. Y. C.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Yosemite, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 995 Pine St., San Francisc , Calif.

Old Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Oriental Magic and Effects—JULIEN PROSKAUER, 148 Lafayette St., New York, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No. 8, Box 60, Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure*.

Skiing and Snowshoeing—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Avenue, Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 184 N. 4th St., Columbus, Ohio.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, School of Education, New York University, Washington Square, New York, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure*.

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachute gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

Ethnology: (*Eskimo*)—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, Box 575, Rio Piedras, Porto Rico.

Fur Farming—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, New York.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—KARL P. SCHMIDT, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill.

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining: *territory anywhere in N th America, Mining law, prospecting outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure*.

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3546 Tryon Ave., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out of the way places, general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Precious and semi-precious stones: *cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 901-902 Shreve Bldg., 210 Post Road, San Francisco, Calif.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Railroad: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure*.

Salvaging Sunken Treasure: *authentic information of salvagable treasure since 1588*—LIEUT. H. E. RIESEBERG, P. O. Box 238, Benjamin Franklin Sta., Washington, D. C.

Taxidermy—SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure*.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—CAPT. GLEN R. TOWNSEND, Ft. Leavenworth, Kan.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 184 Fair Haven Rd., Fair Haven, N. J.

Navy Matters: *United States and Foreign*—LIT. COMDR. VERNON C. BIXBY, U. S. N. (retired), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Fla.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—PATRICK LEE, 157-11 Sanford Ave., Flushing, N. Y.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, 184 Fair Haven Rd., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Marine Corps—CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, R. F. D. 1, Box 614, La Canada, Calif.

World War: *strategy, tactics, leaders, armies, participants, historical and political background*—BEDA VON BERCHEM, care *Adventure*.

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

The Sea, Part 1 *British and American Waters Ships, seamen, statistics, record, oceans, waterways, seas, islands. Atlantic and Indian Oceans, Cape Horn, Magellan Straits, Mediterranean Sea, Islands and Coasts.*—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, P. O. Box 238, Benjamin Franklin Sta., Washington, D. C. ★**2** *Antarctica*—F. LEONARD MARSLAND, care *Adventure*.

The Tropics—SEYMOUR POND, care *Adventure*.

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand; Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies*—V. B. WINDLE, care *Adventure*. **2** *Annam, Loas, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin China, Southern and Eastern China.*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care *Adventure*. **3** *Northern China and Mongolia*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3, Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** *Japan*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntingdon Ave., Scarsdale, N. Y. **5** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. **6** ★*Palestine*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 26th Ave., West, Vancouver, B. C.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 26th Ave., West, Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.*—GORDON MAC CREAGH, Box 197, Centerport, Long Island, N. Y. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara, caravans.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*. **4** *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*. **5** *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Nigeria.*—N. E. NELSON, Firestone Plantations Co., Akron, Ohio. **6** *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, and Rhodesia.*—CAPT. F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Simi, Calif. **7** ★*Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ont., Canada. **8** ★*Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa.*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, 24 Cuba St., Havana, Cuba.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe, Part 1 *Denmark, Germany*—G. I. COLBURN, East Ave., New Canaan, Conn. **2** *The Balkans: Jugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece and Turkey. The Austrian Succession States: Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary*—*History, customs, travel.*—BEDA VON BERCHEM, care *Adventure*.

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*. **2** *Venezuela, The Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 414 W. 121st St., N. Y. C.

★**West Indies**—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America—E. BRUGUIERE, care *Adventure*.

Mexico, Part 1 ★*Northern Border States.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche.*—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Prk., Md. **3** ★*South of line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Sureno Carranza 16, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

★**Newfoundland**—C. T. JAMES, Box 2064, St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland—*Dog-teams, whaling, Eskimos, etc.*—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada, Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island*—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, N. Y. **2** ★*Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada. **3** ★*Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungova and Keewatin.*—S. E. SANGSTER, care *Adventure*. **4** ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Courier Advocate*, Trenton, Ont., Canada. **5** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks.*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 269 Victoria Rd., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. **6** *Hunters Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Dept. of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn. **7** *Lake of Woods Region.*—R. P. LINCOLN, c/o U. FRILUND, 4943 Dupont Ave., So. Minneapolis, Minn. **8** ★*Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. **9** *Northw. Ter. and Arctic, Ellesmere Land and half-explored islands west, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland.*—PATRICK LEE, 157-11 Sanford Ave., Flushing, N. Y. **10** ★*Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie, Northern Keewatin, Hudson Bay Mineral Belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, Yosemite, Calif.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, 405 N. Spalding Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. **2** *Utah and Arizona.*—GORDON GORDON, P. O. Box 2582, Tucson, Ariz. **3** *New Mexico* (*Indians etc.*).—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. **4** *Wyoming and Colorado.*—Homesteading, etc. E. P. WELLS, Sisters, Oregon. **5** *Nevada, Montana, and Northern Rockies.*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **6** *Idaho and environs.*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **7** *Texas, Oklahoma.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S., Part 1 *Dakotas, Neb., Ia., Kan.*—JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. **2** *Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and border waters; touring, fishing.*—R. P. LINCOLN, c/o U. FRILUND, 4943 Dupont Ave., So. Minneapolis, Minn. **3** *Missouri, Arkansas, Missouri River up to Sioux City, Ozarks, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi and Lake Michigan.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure*. **4** *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River.*—GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton, P. O., Ingram, Pa. **5** *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana swamps, St. Francis River, Arkansas Bottom.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. **6** *Great Lakes (all information).*—H. C. GARDNER, care *Adventure*.

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Eastern Maine. All Territory east of Penobscot River.*—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Western Maine. All Territory west of Penobscot River.*—DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 70 Main St., Bangor Me. **3** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 1332, New Haven, Conn. **4** *Adirondacks, New York.* RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. **5** *West Va., Md., District of Columbia.*—ROBERT HOLTON BULL, 1206 Second Ave., Charleston, W. Va. **6** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure*. **7** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains South of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

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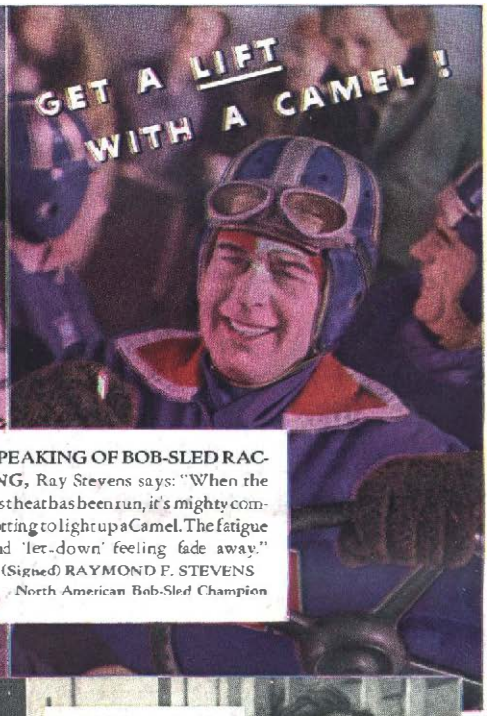

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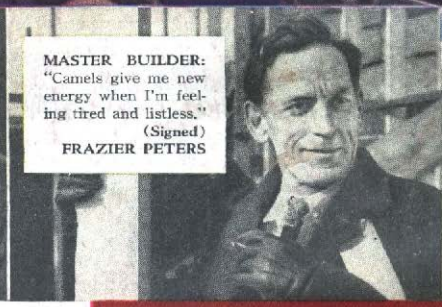

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