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NOVEMBER

Adventure

A POPULAR PUBLICATION

THE LOOT OF THE McKEEKEE
by GORDON YOUNG

SERGEANT SOURPUSS
by PERRY ADAMS

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A BAD CASE OF PIMPLES MADE NAT HATE TO GO PLACES—

–clears the skin

by clearing skin irritants out of the blood

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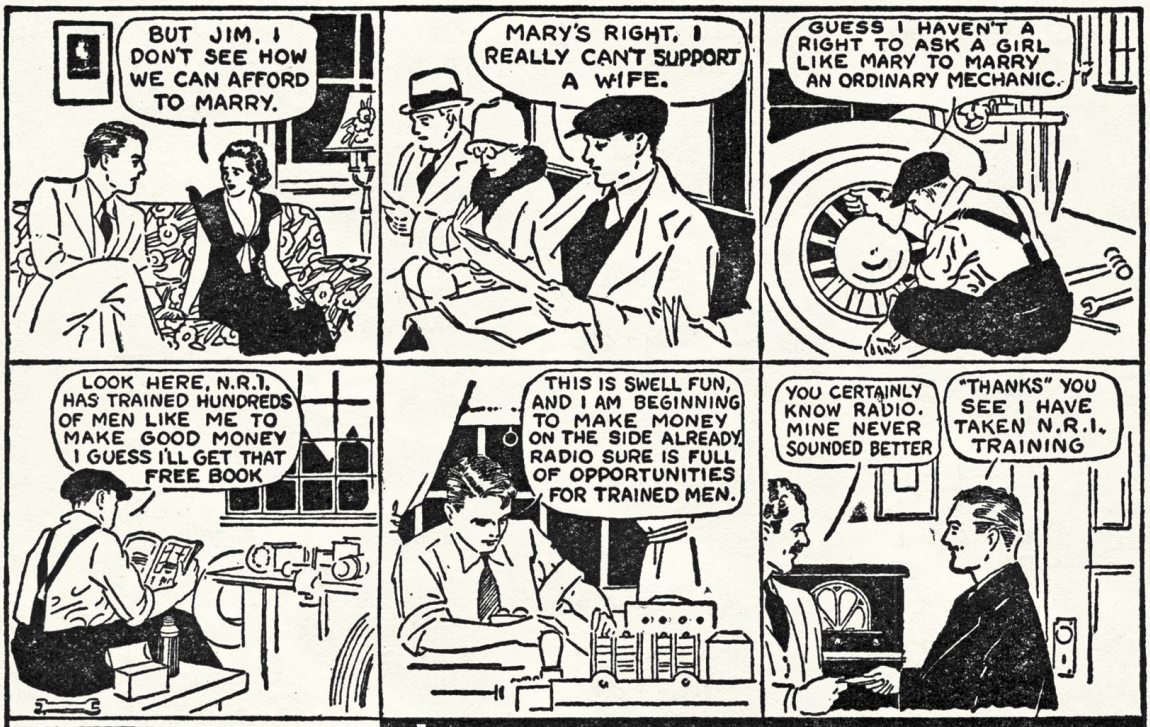

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J. E. SMITH, President National Radio Institute

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National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out the spare time and full time opportunities in Radio and explains your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please Write Plainly.)

NAME.....AGE.....

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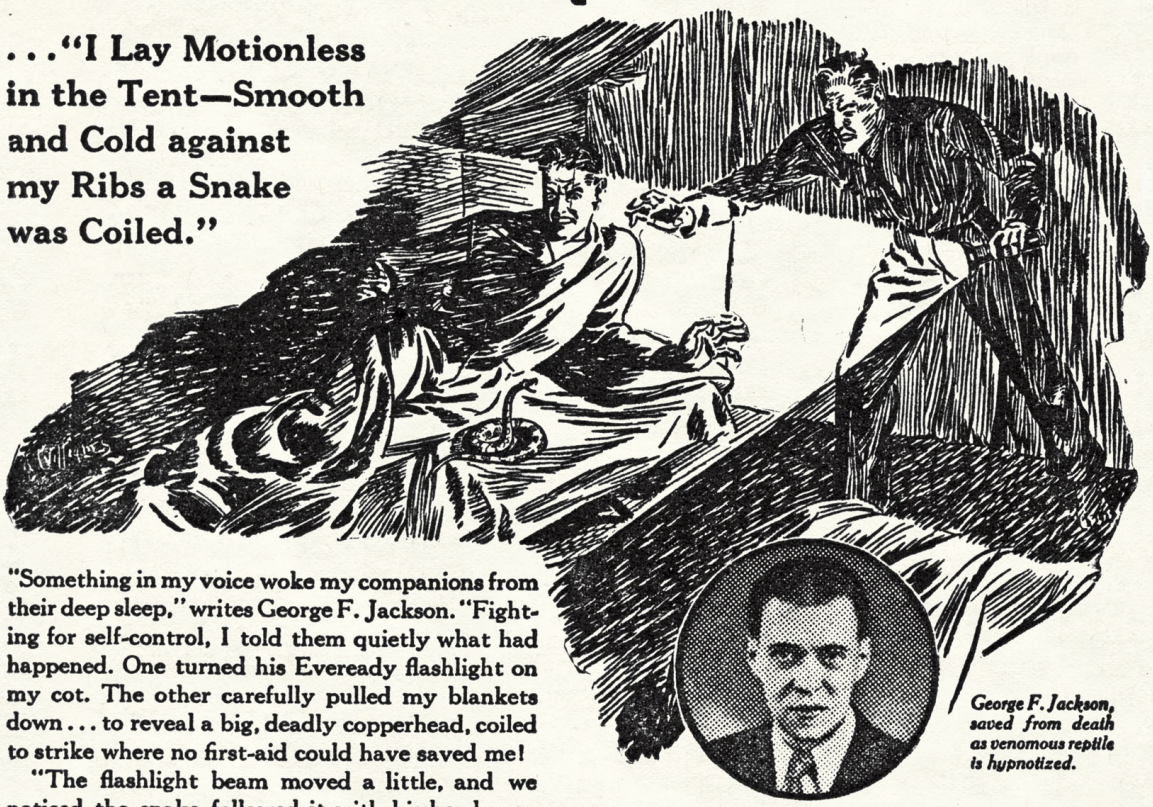
'STARK TERROR WAS SQUEEZING AT MY HEART'

. . . "I Lay Motionless in the Tent—Smooth and Cold against my Ribs a Snake was Coiled."

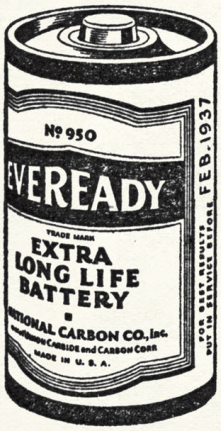


"Something in my voice woke my companions from their deep sleep," writes George F. Jackson. "Fighting for self-control, I told them quietly what had happened. One turned his Eveready flashlight on my cot. The other carefully pulled my blankets down . . . to reveal a big, deadly copperhead, coiled to strike where no first-aid could have saved me!

"The flashlight beam moved a little, and we noticed the snake followed it with his beady unblinking eyes . . . My friend moved the light slowly, farther and farther. The snake continued to turn his hideous head. Gradually he began uncoiling to keep his eyes on the light. Now the snake was facing directly away from me . . . my other companion reached quickly for me, gave a mighty heave and I sailed out of my bunk and against the tent wall. Then I fainted, while they killed the deadly reptile.

"But for the *fresh* Eveready batteries that kept that light strong and steady through this horrible emergency, there could have been no happy ending. Needless to say I never take chances any more on batteries that may have grown old on a dealer's shelf."

George F. Jackson, saved from death as venomous reptile is hypnotized.



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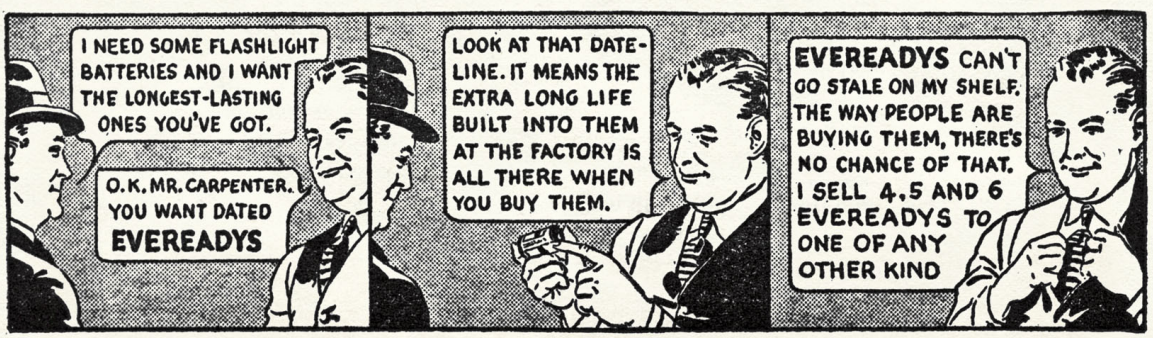


LOOT OF THE McKEEKEE

a Novelette

CHAPTER I

HELL'S MAIN HATCH

A MAN who looked elderly but not feeble leaned into the rain, groped to steady himself in the darkness against the side of a building. He peered and listened, bending in a furtive attitude, saw no one, heard nothing but the drive of the storm, slush and splatter of water. He found the turning and with many looks across his shoulder went through the blackness along a narrow, not sweet-smelling alley and stumbled against a door. He pushed at the door, entered where there was laughter and loud song.

A frowzy woman, cheaply be-jeweled, trundled toward him, partly with an air of welcome, partly not sure. He wasn't a sailor, wasn't a bum; he looked too genteel to be on the law's side; wasn't drunk and so couldn't be a swell on a bust. He had a fox-sharp wrinkled face, gray frizzled whiskers, shaven chin, no mustache, rheumy eyes, good clothes, a

For once in a fight Bill was silent; for once, crazed.

by GORDON YOUNG

smell of respectability and he wasn't at ease.

Mother Sampson said, "Evenin', sir," polite as a duchess, though she did not like him.

He took off his hat, swished it to get rid of the water, wiped his face carefully with a big handkerchief and asked, "Y-you are Mother Sampson?"

"Right as can be, sir." She simpered a little as if acknowledging a compliment. In the early 1880's and before, Mother Sampson was in the way of being a famous lady on the waterfront of Sydney, New South Wales.

"Ma'am, is Captain William Jones here?"

As he asked he again looked about the room. A dozen rough men of the sea drank boisterously; some joined in songs ministers' daughters shouldn't hear. There were only four or five girls, but they tried to make each man feel favored. Laughter was shrill. Lamps in brackets high on the wall glowed dimly over the swirl of tobacco smoke.

"Cap'n 'oo?"

"Captain Jones. William—I mean Bill Jones."

Mother Sampson looked as if she had never in her life heard of Bill Jones. Police—"beaks" she called them—were crafty fellows. This old fellow, being genteel, couldn't be one himself, but perhaps they had sent him. For one reason and another the so-called beaks often troubled her particular friends.

"An' 'oo are you, sir?" Mother Sampson inquired, mild and soft. She had an arm up her sleeve that could fell a boatswain, a tongue that had flung such hard words as to knock out her own teeth. At least some teeth were gone and sailormen, who never exaggerate, said that was the how of it.

"Madam, Mr. Haenal Bainbridge has sent me to look for him, and—"

Mother Sampson raised her eyebrows. "Who's 'e an' wot's 'e a-chargin' the cap'n with?"

"Madam, you have a misconception, because—"

"'Ave I? A nasty ol' mind wot you got, sir!" She drew herself up, looked severe. She, keen judge of men, had decided long before this that she did not like the man; something was wrong with him.

"Mr. Bainbridge wants to give the captain employment, m'am. I," he said with smug loftiness, or what he tried to pass off for clerical aristocracy, "am Mr. Bainbridge's privy secretary."

"Well, look about you, sir, an' if you see the cap'n, why then 'e must be 'ere; but 'pon my 'onor, sir, unbeknownst to me. An' what might your nyme be?"

"Mr. Nomumsen, m'am. And you may be sure the mission is important if on a night like I come to a place like—um—at this hour."

"Set down an' myke yourself easy, sir. I'll ask if anybody knows where your cap'n—wot's 'is nyme?"

"Captain Bill Jones, m'am."

"Jones, is it? 'Arriet? 'Arriet, a mug for the gent'man."

The gent'man said hastily, "I never indulge," but Mother gave him a look and he said, "Only on occasion." He sat down, paid for the mug, frowned at it, waited.

Mother Sampson went among her guests, slapped a back here and there, laughed robustly, presently left the room, returned. She trundled straight to Mr. Nomumsen, beckoned.

"Come right along, sir. I just recalled as 'ow Bill is hupstairs. 'E had a bit of set-to with some gent'men this evenin' an' is restin'."

UPSTAIRS Mr. Nomumsen found Bill Jones with a girl on each knee. The three of them had their heads over a newspaper spread on the table. Two men were drunkenly asleep, one on the floor.

Bill got up, gave Mr. Nomumsen a look. Cap'n Bill was brawny, had hard jaws, lively eyes. A famous fellow and a great seaman, as a man had to be who knocked about the islands by dead reckoning and the smell of the wind. He went trading in among cannibals with a cannibal crew and a worthless old mate; and if need be he fought his way out over the scuttled hulls of other traders that had ventured in, been cut off. Cap'n Bill turned his tarry hand to any seachance; he was a blackbirder for planters he liked and he detested most of them; he traded in copra and oil; fished shell, by choice where the French reserved the waters for Frenchmen and so made a great row over Bill's thievery.

But Cap'n Bill was honest, or nearly so. Money couldn't tempt him, but a pretty girl could. She didn't have to be so very pretty at that. He had been into every kind of work and play; into more trouble than most.

"Captain Jones?"

"Right," said Bill, looking hard at Mr.

Nomumsen, not liking the cast of his face.

"I understand that your ship is—is at liberty?"

"Ready for sea. And any venture. Bibles to niggers or beauties like these to Constantinople!"

"Ow, now, Bill!" said one of the beauties as he pushed her forward, right up close to Mr. Nomumsen.

"Set down," said Bill. "Have a drink."

Mr. Nomumsen's frizzled whiskers seemed to tremble nervously. He appeared not quite to know what to do with the girl, but he didn't want to offend Bill, who had a bad name. The girl helpfully showed Mr. Nomumsen what to do, pulled an arm about her waist, led him to a chair across the table from Bill, pushed him into the chair, got on a knee, put an arm about his neck, playfully fingered the whiskers, kissed his nose, asked, "Do you like me?"

Mr. Nomumsen wanted to keep the girl's fingers out of his whiskers and so held her hand. He cleared his throat, said as impressively as he knew how to Bill:

"The Honorable Haenel Bainbridge has delegated me to invite you to come and consider a proposition he has to offer."

Cap'n Bill frowned. "When all the slack is taken out, you mean Bainbridge wants to see me about a job?"

"Ah—yes."

"What's he want?"

"I believe he would prefer to divulge the circumstances and conditions himself, sir."

"Who is he?"

"Ah, a very fine gentleman."

Bill said, "Huh." He and fine gentlemen seldom got on well. "Where's he live?"

"I—er—at once if you are agreeable will escort you to him and—"

"'*Escort*' be damned," said Cap'n Bill who thought of 'escort' as the man with a woman. "Talk English. Where can I find him?" He didn't like this Nomumsen's look, and so clapped fist to table by way of emphasis.

Mr. Nomumsen gave a start, hastily gave an address on Argyle Road, asked,

"Shall we proceed at once?" Mr. Nomumsen cleared his throat. "Mr. Bainbridge is a very rich man and can put some sailing master in the way of an extremely fine thing. Yes indeed, sir."

Bill cocked his head, interested.

"Have a drink," said Bill. "Stormy night."

"Um—I—not, thanks," said Mr. Nomumsen nervously.

"Have to be well warmed to go out a night like this. Might catch cold. Never had one in my life. Here." He pushed a filled glass across the table, filled another for himself.

Bill sipped his whisky. The girl on his kneed prodded his nose with a thumb. "Just w'y, Bill, don't you think that Perry 'ad a 'and in the *McKeekee* rob'ry, hm?"

Bill smacked the paper. "I've wrecked one pub tonight an' broke some heads over them claimin' old Perry done it. He didn't, damn 'im!" Again he slapped the paper and Mr. Nomumsen gave a nervous start.

The paper told—retold rather—the story of a daring and successful piracy. A world famous exhibition of fine gems was returning to Europe on the steamer *McKeekee*. Less than twenty-four hours out, in the late afternoon, a fast seagoing tug overtook her; and as the tug drew near some seven or eight passengers on the *McKeekee* suddenly disclosed arms. They had planned well, took Captain Macaire and the officers in charge, intimidated the other passengers by shooting down a man who opposed them, forced the purser and custodian of the exhibit to unlock the safe.

"Ol' Black Perry said there was to be no vil'ence, but damn your eyes," roared

the burly ugly leader at the custodian, "we have the jewels or you go to hell!"

They got the jewels, ordered the crew to lower a boat, and the pirates with the jewels were rowed to the tug, which steamed off rapidly northward and into the night. Pursuit was out of the question. The *McKeekee* returned to Sydney. Captain Macaire, having a French name from some remote ancestor, and having once upon a time picked up Black Pierre when he was adrift and famished, was instantly under suspicion.

Later, the tug had been found adrift with the crew murdered.

"THE blighters in the pub," Bill explained, "said 'twas just such a cowardly throat-cuttin' job as Perry—they called 'im a dirty cowardly French pir't! I didn't like the smell of 'em anyhow. Said so. Aye, Perry's a damn pir't. An' he's French. He wears velvet pants an' silk shirts an' jewels in his ears, but he's no coward!" Bill's fist smacked the table. "I'll break his neck if ever I get another chance, but mind you"—again Bill hit the table—"he's no coward, an' that was a coward's work." Bill saw Mr. Nomumsen's point-blank look, said, "Here, why ain't you drinkin'?"

Mr. Nomumsen gave himself a little shake as if coming out of a daze, lifted the whisky, almost took a drink, but didn't, and listened intently as Cap'n Bill, gulping another glassful, went on:

"I know that damn Frenchman. I trust 'im less 'n any man alive. He's stole my goods, damn 'im! He stole my ship onct. Left me settin' like a lonesome crab on a sand spit—but sent a trader in a cutter to take me off. He tried to steal 'er another time an' knifed me 'fore I could knock 'em overboard. Aye, it was a good fight, that night! Then he sent me a case of champagne and a purty girl for a nurse and a letter hopin' I'd soon be up an' about! I'm askin' you, how the hell are you goin' to hate a man like that? He's a gentleman, Perry is. He'll cut your throat, but do it p'lite. 'Sides," said Bill dropping his voice to a growl, "that *McKeekee* was a landsmen's work. Yeller-bellied swabs!"

Bill, wrathful, glared at Mr. Nomumsen, who asked with a certain strained timidity, "But how, sir, can you be sure of that?"

"How? How! A seaman would 've scuttled the tug; sunk 'er!"

Bill glared at him as if expecting argument, and Mr. Nomumsen's eyes moved this way and that uneasily until his look focused on the glass that the girl on his knee was lifting toward his mouth. "'Ere, dearie, tyke a sip. You ac' shivery."

Mr. Nomumsen hesitated. Bill told him, "Down it, man. A night like this!"

"I really—I—" said Mr. Nomumsen, turning his face aside.

The pretty devil on Mr. Nomumsen's knee suddenly had the suspicion that he was one of those horrid persons called teetotalers; and she whispered, "See, 'ere, if you don't 'e 'll 'old your nose an' pour it down! 'E will! That's stryt! 'E's Yankee an' you know wot they are!" Then she grinned and winked at the prettier devil on Bill's knee.

Cap'n Bill had the look and name of a man who had done worse things, and his eyes were fixed on Nomumsen. Mr. Nomumsen reluctantly sipped. The girl coaxed some more, and Mr. Nomumsen drank.

"Keeps you from tykin' cold a night like this," she whispered, cuddling his whiskers.

The first thing anybody knew Mr. Nomumsen was getting himself well fortified against taking cold. He went after the whisky as a cat after cream; also seemed afraid the girl might slip off his knee, held her tightly, lifted his voice

and seemed somehow less of a gentleman.

"Strike me for a Dutchman!" said Bill, who particularly did not like Dutchmen. "Why, the old duffer is makin' a hog of himself. 'Minds me of the time I give a mission boy some bottles of rum to pour in the lemonade."

"Ow Bill, you didn't!" said the brown-haired girl on his knee.

"Aye, there was joyful whoops an' cavortin' all up and down the beach. 'Twas a grand moonlight night. Well, old feller, we'd better be shovin' off." Cap'n Bill stood up.

"Don't go, Bill," said Bill's girl. Her name was Mamie and she was younger than most in Mother Sampson's; more pleased than most because Cap'n Bill didn't use ugly words to girls and would break the head of anybody that laid an angry hand on any woman. He impartially called them all his girls; and to his simple-minded way of thinking, anybody in petticoats was a "lady." He had a fist that could smash a keg.

"Don't you go!" said the girl on Mr. Nomumsen's knee, breathing into his ear.

"Sit down, Captain! Sit down!" said Mr. Nomumsen with all the aplomb of being host. "You are a good man, Captain Jones. I can see that you are a good man. He is a good man, isn't he, my dear?"

The girl on Mr. Nomumsen's knee said, "There was ne'er a better!"

Mr. Nomumsen nodded and looked at Cap'n Bill with a smirking smile. "Smar' man, too. Very." His tongue was thickening, his eye growing hazy. He muddled insistence that Bill must see Mr. Bainbridge. "Ver' 'por'nant, oh ver'."

Mamie pushed. "Set down, Bill."

" 'Ere, dearie, tyke another nip!" She patted Mr. Nomumsen's rumpled hair. He grinned in a pleased, foolish way and drank.

Mr. Nomumsen sank back with head adroop, arms dangling loosely. He was out, cold. The girl sighed, got off his lax knee, looked at Bill, looked at each of the three drunk men. She demanded, " 'Oow in 'ell do you do it, Bill?" There wasn't a flicker of inebriety on Bill's bronzed face.

"Come to think of it," he said judicially, "the old duffer knew his weakness. 'F I had known—ho, well." Bill drew a handful of money, clapped it down on the table. "Here, you girls whack this. But stay out of his pockets; you hear me?"

"Ow, Bill, to think that!"

"Shyme on you, Bill!"

So he gave each a hug and a kiss and a pat on the head. "I'll go see what this Bainbridge billy wants. A good venture 'll be welcome. An' I'll fix it right for the old boy here. So take care of him. The other two, they're sailors. A sailor's at home where he wakes up. But this old fellow—he'll think he fell down hell's main hatch without his hat on!"

THERE was scarcely anybody on the rain-drenched streets. Neither policemen nor cabs could be seen, so Cap'n Bill, who didn't mind the wet, walked. The way was long, Bill tireless. He had on shoes and didn't like that, but liked less being barefooted on cobbles; people looked as if they thought him a heathen or something if he came ashore barefooted.

He found the house dark, but hammered the knocker. Nobody came quickly, so he hammered again. He had been sent for; here he was, and proposed that Mr. Bainbridge should know about it.

A voice called through the heavy door, "Who are you?"

The door was thick, the rain fell with thud and splash, the voice wasn't up to driving through a gale, and Bill anyhow didn't like people too timid to open a door and take a look instead of asking

questions in a timid mouse-squeak of a voice.

"Cap'n Bill Jones of the schooner *Alicia*. If a man named Bainbridge wants to see me, here I am."

It took the man inside a long time to make up his mind; then there was scrape of drawn bolts, and through a dark crack's width a voice, in a kind of hushed breathlessness asked, "Where is Nomumsen?"

"The old gentleman? He was taken sudden. Very sick. Maybe it was the oysters for supper. Bad things, oysters!"

"Sick? Where is he?"

"He stopped with some friends of mine. I come along up. He said it was special."

The voice, now with disgust and apprehension, spoke to some one inside the house. "Drunk again!" The voice swore angrily, perturbed and fretful.

Another voice spoke, some distance off, probably from the stairway; said, "Show the captain up, Wason." That was a smooth voice with a throaty sound that Bill didn't like. Made him think of swells out of their place in a sailors' pub who lifted their noses, put on a look as if smelling something they didn't like, and said, "Oah, so you are Captain Joanes, bah George, eh?"

"Come in," said Wason grudgingly, as if giving a command. "Stand to one side till I fetch a light."

Cap'n Bill stepped in, dripping. His shoes were soggy and squished. He wore a sou-wester and oilskins, but such blasted things never yet kept out more damp than was in a drizzle. He sniffed the darkness, but his nose told him nothing except that it smelt like a house. He didn't like houses; stuffy, stale, hard to breathe in, with furniture scattered about to knock his shins on. There was a coal fire going. Coal made a stink.

Wason, having bolted the door in the dark, went away and came with a lamp in his hand. He held it up to have a look at Cap'n Bill and Bill had a look at him, saw a small, round-shouldered man with an out-thrust neck, a round, dark face, slightly foreign looking, with frightened eyes.

Bill thought, "I've got cockroaches aboard would make as good seamen as him."

"Hang your things here," said Wason, pointing to a hall rack.

Bill shed the dripping oilskins, clapped his hat on the hook, ran fingers through his tangled red hair, straightened his great shoulders.

The little man with the lamp peered with a look very like uneasiness, seemed doubtful about having let this rough looking fellow get into the house.

"This way, Captain." There was scarcely politeness in the voice, and on the stairs as he went ahead, Wason looked back, seemed uneasy, even fearful.

The stairs were carpeted. Bill's shoes made squishy sounds in the stillness.

Upstairs they went into a large, gloomy room with books on the wall. A coal fire glowed in the grate. A tall man stood with his back to the fire, legs spread, one hand behind him, the other nervously jingling the gold seals on his fob. He was six feet tall, with a long narrow face and a thin mouth. He was erect and his clothes were snug as a burial shroud stitched by a proud old sailmaker.

Cap'n Bill had seen these fellows—"toffs" some called them—around the Gardens, strutting in high hats, often with pretty ladies on their arms. Bill got on well with natives, black, saddle colored, near-white, any old color; and he got on pretty well with rich ship owners if the old codgers had been to sea in their youth; but the look of most planters and all swells, and such other people as had no callouses on their knuckles made him bad-tempered. For one thing, he had found their promises

weren't worth a damn. They would wriggle around a contract and snicker up their sleeves at Cap'n Bill's puzzlement over figures. Some wished they hadn't, for when Bill poked a nose, especially a delicate, planter-shaped nose, he spoiled its shape.

"Ah, Captain Jones?" The fellow intoned the name as if doing Captain Jones rather a favor.

"Right," said Bill.

"I am Mr. Haenel Bainbridge." He paused as if expecting Captain Jones to show some admiration. Captain Jones didn't. "Well, sit down, Captain. Wason?"

"Yes, sir."

"Captain, I suppose you left Nomumsen—er—drunk, isn't he? You left him at that place known as Mother Sampson's? Wason—Captain, excuse us a minute."

"I've got cockroaches aboard would make as good seamen as him!"

Bill sat down, was left to himself while the two of them went outside the door and Bainbridge spoke rapidly in a low voice. Bill couldn't overhear but had the impression that they weren't using English.

Bainbridge came back, stood before the grate, gazed at Cap'n Bill a long time; then, "How soon could you put to sea?"

"Twenty minutes after I go aboard!"

"But of course you would have to

stand by for the dawn. No pilot could take out a vessel on a night like this."

"No pilot would. They learn their trade with a chip in a tub."

Mr. Bainbridge lifted his elegant eyebrows cynically. "Don't put on shoulder with me. I am a bit of seaman myself, Captain."

Bill's blue eyes looked pointedly at Mr. Bainbridge's white hand, nervously dangling with fob seals; and Bill said, "I was born at sea. My father was a sailor. He'd put a rag on my eyes, stand me at the wheel. He'd have a rope end. I steered by the wind on my cheek or got larruped."

Mr. Bainbridge started at some sound Bill couldn't hear, drew a breath. He spoke in a lofty, cynical way that rasped Bill's ears. His "My training was not so intensive as that;" somehow tried to imply that it had been better, though. "Have a cigar?" He held out a box with something of the air of giving a banana to a monkey. Bill chose a fat cigar. "Squills here. Get a light from the grate." The way he said it made Bill almost pitch the cigar into the fire.

Bainbridge stood by with a look as if trying his best to make Bill realize that he was being honored. Bill puffed hard on the cigar. Much smoke, no flavor for a palate used to niggerhead.

"Mm. Now, Captain Jones, I am a man of affairs. Large affairs."

Bill cocked his head, looked up. On the whole he thought men of large affairs damn fools. They worked their heads off for money they didn't spend, so what was the good of it? Money was fine and he would sweat and run risks to get it; but he had no more thought of stowing it in a bank or in more property that served as trade goods than of flinging it into the sea.

Bainbridge went on in much the tone of a footman impressing a dustman's little boy. "I have the opportunity to make a large amount of money if I can move quickly and unobserved so that other men of business—rivals, you know—are left at the post."

He paused, waited for Bill to comment. Bill puffed in silence, eyed the slim, narrow-eyed face.

"Secrecy," said Bainbridge, "is the main thing." Bill nodded. Bainbridge cleared his throat delicately, then gave another start, again hearing something Bill hadn't noticed. "Servants are sometimes spies," said Bainbridge, explaining, looking intently to see if Bill accepted the explanation.

Bill made no comment. He was thinking, "You must be a hell of a bad employer, then."

Bainbridge smiled, unbending to pay a compliment. "Of all the captains in port, I have selected you for my—my confidence." Bill took it with bronze expressionlessness. "Oh, a little wild perhaps, as you Yankees say, but dependable, courageous, honest!" He spoke as if reading it off a paper.

BILL moved restively, stretched his legs, drew them in, crossed his feet, uncrossed them, took a deep breath. When people talked about his courage and so forth it made him feel uncomfortable and want to scratch his back. One of his nightmarish remembrances was the time when some passengers he had dragged off a wreck in a storm got him ashore, made speeches, gave him a watch—good one, too, as he found when he pawned it—and the women, some of them, not the prettiest, jumped at his neck, kissed him.

Mr. Bainbridge bent forward slightly. "If my rivals get on to what I am up to—and they watch me like hawks—they will make money out of my plans. But I mean to fool them. I will confide in you. I must get to Trigg Island at once. Unless I can go secretly I might

as well insert a notice in the press. But if you take me, eh?"

Cap'n Bill grinned at him. "Trigg Island is one place I ain't anxious to go. They don't like me there. Don't blame 'em, I don't. Seems like ever'time I set foot ashore somepun happens. Somepun to some planter."

Mr. Bainbridge frowned like a good chessman whose plans were baffled by the bungling luck of an inexpert player.

To Bill it seemed a funny thing that this Bainbridge was part of the time acting half "scairt" to death, and the other part acting like he was a top-lofty somebody doing a favor by noticing a man so much below him.

Now Mr. Bainbridge arched his delicate brows, said in a cool, aggrieved voice, "But I have confided in you!" There was a nearly impalpable hint of menace.

Cap'n Bill's ears weren't sensitive to nuance. He simply didn't like this Bainbridge at all; said, "See here, mister. Trigg Island is a planter's island. Swells, they are. Blue-bloods, so they say. But they ain't! I poked some noses an' they run red, like mine or yours. Why, if they catch me there—I hear they built a new jail, just for me. I tore down the other 'n—from the inside. Purty women, some. I like Miz Dubois. Madame they call her. An' the brown girls. Nice island if you don't have trouble. I allus do. No, I'm not goin' to Trigg Island—not for no mere passage money. No."

Mr. Bainbridge's narrow face studied, relaxed. "Now we come to the point. I am not offering *mere* passage money. I shall pay—how much do you ask for me and—um—there will be just two of us now. Nomumsen is no doubt too ill to go. For myself and my man Wason, how much?"

Cap'n Bill frowned. 'Twas a run of a thousand miles. He would have to swing wide to stop at an island with goods for a trader; then could go on, and from Trigg set off on his trading voyage. Two passengers. Their rooms on board meant nothing. The food not much. They could eat what his half cannibal cook fixed or go hungry. They'd be too seasick to eat, anyhow. Landsmen on board his schooner always were. "Bit of seaman, eh?" Bill thought he would like having this bit of a seaman on his schooner. The smells would take some of the starch out of him. Bill, not nimble at figures, thought ten pounds each would more than repay his trouble. One hundred dollars. He didn't quite dare ask so much, but was thinking he wouldn't trouble himself for less.

Then Bainbridge asked with a cool smirk, "Will a hundred pounds each induce you, Captain Jones?"

Bill caught his breath, coughed, eyed the cigar as if the thing were too strong. "That would be a thousand dollars?" Bill sounded doubtful. He was doubtful of hearing right.

"One thousand dollars," said Mr. Bainbridge, nodding with keen watchfulness.

"In advance, of course," said Bill, innately distrustful of fine gentlemen.

"Oh no, not at all. You have just told me you could up anchor in twenty minutes and go out without a pilot. And what would prevent you from taking my thousand—"

Cap'n Bill's temper flared. He was on his feet, eyes bright, face hard-set. "Then go to hell! I give my word, I keep it. You'll find plenty that don't, and since you're used to doin' business with one of that kind, go look for 'em!"

Mr. Bainbridge hardened icily, stared with narrowed eyes. "Your manners, Captain, are not entirely what they ought to be. I have no such sum in cash by me. Your demand is unreasonable. And since we are indulging our suspicions, let me tell you that I consider it much more likely you will take my secret and sell it to some—"

"I want nothin' to do with it—or you! That's a damn fool price to pay. You ain't a damn fool, so you're up to somepun. An' bad scairt, you are. I don't know what an' don't care. Only I'm not goin' to be caught. A reasonable figger, I might have—but when a man offers ten times what something's worth, I don't trust 'im. He's up to some flumboodlery. To hell with it!" said Cap'n Bill, and flung out a careless hand as if throwing something away.

Mr. Bainbridge's narrow face turned icily pale. "So the drunken Nomunsen talked, eh?" The long slim hand in front dropped away from the watch fob, the other hand was still behind him as if needing the grate's warmth. His thin mouth was set in the rigid line of a knife's-slit scar and he had a glitter in his eyes. Words came in a crisp sneer. "You drunken lubber! You don't know what you're saying, or with whom you are dealing, but you will learn that—"

The hand behind Mr. Bainbridge came to view with a gun in it.

Whether the angered man was as murderous as he looked or merely meant to have his way about something or other, 'twas one and the same to Cap'n Bill, who had fought for his life among savages and more savage whites so many times that he didn't give two thoughts to the matter before he struck the gun aside left-handedly, and he swung the other fist into Bainbridge's face.

The smack of the blow made Bainbridge's head pop back. His eyes opened in a dead, glazed look; then his tall body sagged, gave way at knees and hips, and he sprawled face down on the rug before the grate. His cheek, smashed by tarry knuckles that were as hard and rasping as dried shark's skin, had as ragged a cut to the bone as if splattered by a mallet.

Bill scowled, puzzled, indignant. "Blighter!" He stood in sour wonderment as to what the elegant swab had been up to; gave up the guess with dazed head-shake.

Who or how many were in the house, Bill didn't know and wasn't caring; but he picked up the revolver just to have something in hand in case of need. He gave it scarcely a glance beyond noting that it had a silvery look, much scrollwork, mother-of-pearl handles; but it was too short and light for a proper feel in his big hand.

He went out of the room and down the stairs, carrying the lamp. He did not go quietly, but he kept a lookout and saw no one. He put the lamp on a hall table, got into his hat and oilskins, jerked open the bolts on the door, then turned and threw the revolver as hard as he could up the stairs. He was not a thief; at least of something he didn't want.

He slammed the door behind him, passed out into the wet night.

CHAPTER II

LANDSMEN'S WORK

IT was near to two in the morning when Cap'n Bill got down to the wharf; there wasn't a waterman nearer than some distant pub, and even if there probably drunk. Bill skirmished about and found a boat. It was partly filled with water. He shook out much of the water, took the oars, pulled for his schooner, which he couldn't see, but didn't need to see, or so it seemed, for after a long pull he came alongside a dark hull and hailed the deck.

Fussy old Jody squawked, "'F you want to be lucky, go back ashore, Bill! They's a womin here—an' dammut, she's purty enough so you'll do what she wants you to do!"

Bill climbed from boat thwart to chains and onto the deck. "Stir up the boys. We're goin' to sea."

"A night like this? You're a bigger fool 'n I thought!" Old Jody swung up a lantern, having an anxious look.

He would grouse and growl and curse at Bill; he stole whatever he could get his hands on from Bill—money, trade or bottled goods—much of the time he lied to Bill; but nevertheless he loved Bill; and though he didn't have much more strength than an old dried-up monkey, he carried a knife on his hip and didn't at all mind putting it into the body of any fellow that made trouble for him.

Jody was near to three times Bill's age. He had spent much of his life in jails here and there; he had scarred ankles where leg chains galled. Even yet he wouldn't go ashore in populous Australian ports out of fear of the past. He had been a seaman under Bill's father. Jody hated women, or said he did; and Bill said, " 'F I scared shrieks out of 'em like the sight of you does, I'd hate 'em too!"

Now Bill asked, "Woman, you say? Who is she and why?"

Jody swayed the lantern through the rain. "She's down in the cabin. A settin' there quiet now. But she comes up for air an' goes down again. Some boatmen brought her out near dark. An' why we goin' to sea so sudden? You killed somebody?"

"I bashed a swell. If he makes a row to the police—they believe a swell's lies, whatever they are."

Jody said, "You're as luckless ashore as a Dutchman in hell!"

"He's a damn swab. Kick out the boys. Get the anchor—"

Jody swayed the lantern, pointed into the wet night. "We'll run afoul of shippin'—"

"Your head's screwed on backwards! Do as you're told!"

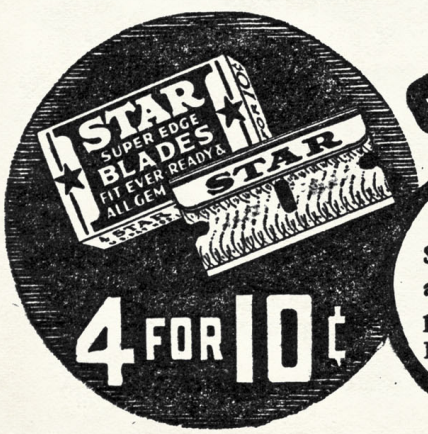
"An' if we're wrecked, dont' say I didn't—"

"I won't. You allus do! On deck, the crew!"

Cap'n Bill in a hurry went clattering in his squishy shoes down the ladder and, in the faint glow of the lantern, came to a stop as a girl stood up at the bare table. She stood nearly under the lantern, just far enough aside for the yellow light to be on her face.

Bill was taken aback. She had a pretty face, but it was pretty in a way that didn't at all have the prettiness he was used to. There was nothing garishly blowzy about her. He didn't mind the garish and blowzy but recognized the difference.

She had just come down from a turn on the deck, had taken off her hat, still wore the gray oilskins. Her hair was dark and her eyes were dark with a staring sadness in them. Her face, now a-trickle with silvery rain drops, had a color that made him think of the faint golden radiance in mother-of-pearl when it first comes from the sea. This was no



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girl of the streets or dance hall; and in silence he pushed back his hat, then took off his hat, held it a moment, flung it aside.

"You are—are Captain William Jones?"

Whatever she had expected of Captain William Jones, she hadn't expected him to be anything like this brawny, red-headed fellow.

"Yes'm. An' what in—I mean, what's a lady like you doin' here?" Bill's voice was rough and the staring look in his blue eyes did not seem friendly, for he was all taken aback. With any girl of the caste he knew best he would have been cheerily at ease; but this aristocratic person made him feel as if his heels were in the air.

She tried to speak but the words wouldn't come. It was as if the set speech she had arranged broke up into fragments under the shock of seeing the sort of man Captain William Jones appeared to be. She was frightened, too, but she had the pride not to give way to fears.

A little hand moved out in pleading toward Bill as the anxious sadness deepened in her dark eyes. "I—my father is Captain Macaire; and they have arrested him because they say—say he must have helped those pirates on the *McKeekee* —oh!"

"Damn fools," Bill growled, and anybody that heard him would have known that he wasn't just saying something to please her. "That's the trouble with landsmen. They'll do anything for money an' think the same of seamen!"

As he spoke he slung off his oilskins, flung them backhandedly, then shed his coat. "Now be quick, Miss. I'm goin' to sea and I'll have to send you ashore right off."

"No no, I must go with you! I wanted to arrange—but if you are going now, then I too will go. That is why—"

Bill, with a shoulder against a bulkhead, was bending to take off a squishy shoe. He clapped the foot down, straightened, stared. "You mean the damned fools are goin' to arrest you, too?"

A nervous little laugh broke on her lips and her eyes brightened.

"No," she said. "Captain—my father said everybody called you Captain Bill —please, you must take me to Black Pierre, because—"

Bill scowled, perplexed. "To old Black Perry? You crazy?"

She came up to him. The gray oilskins rustled and both her soft hands took hold of his big forearm. Words whipped up hurriedly, and her dainty aristocratic face turned to his in desperate pleading.

"You know it is thought that Pierre directed that piracy, so—"

Bill struck the air with an impatient hand. "Perry had nought to do with it! He's a damn pir't, but—"

She shrank a little at the violent way he spoke of Black Pierre, gazed uncertainly.

Bill went on: "—but he's no coward. An' the whole of that was cowardly 'nough to be landsmen's work."

"My father," she said, "once saved him when he was adrift. Now the police are saying that showed friendship. They say Pierre and my father planned the robbery. They suspect my father only because they suspect Pierre. And if it can be proved that Pierre had nothing to do with the piracy, why, don't you see—?"

"Huh, don't worry. The Admiralty Court 'll know better."

"What do you mean?"

"Mean? Ho, I mean that sailors know that a sailor like Perry would have scuttled the tug. He's smart, Perry is."

"But I must find him! And father told me that you, Captain, more nearly than anyone else, could help me get word to him? And he will—I know he will do what he can to help my father!"

Bill said, "Huh" and grinned. "As purty a girl as you would make old Perry jump for the moon if she asked him!"

AVIS MACAIRE drew back, not liking the compliment, but Bill didn't notice. He went on taking off the shoe, pitched it aside, raised the other foot, spoke slowly:

"I'll take you. I'll take you to the only person I know that's likely to know where Perry's to be found. She's a woman and a purty one, over on—" Bill stopped, straightened, had a blank foolish look for an instant, then laughed. She felt frightened at his strange manner.

"Trigg Island!" said Bill. "Ho, well, never been a jail on an island yet could hold me! Madame Dubois is Perry's friend, but she'll lie to us like hell, sayin' she ain't. All women do that for men they like. She'll get word to 'im for you an' you can stop at the hotel. She wouldn't let me know where he is—you know, don't you, I'd kill that damn Frenchman if ever I get another chance?"

Avis Macaire drew away slowly with tight lips trembling. She said, "I really must, *must* do what I can!" and was unaware that she spoke aloud, for she had to say something to convince herself that she oughtn't squeamishly to draw back from companionship with this man if it would help her father.

Then a slightly confused look came over her face, and trembling irresolution, as she saw Cap'n Bill open the buttons on his shirt, bend, whip the shirt over his head, toss it aside and stand half naked before her; but he didn't really look so very naked because his body was as bronzed as his face.

It took wintry weather to keep Bill from going half naked at sea. He liked the sharp, clean beat of spray and rain on his sunburned body, hated the soggy damp of moist clothes.

"'F you want to be lucky, go back ashore!"

Overhead there was the patter of feet, the thumping and hoarse shouts of the hurrying blacks making ready for the sea.

Down the companionway came the jeering squawk of old Jody's parrot-like voice: "Ahoy, Bill? What you startin'? A hire-rum? Here's another lydy come aboard! Aye, when we're adrift on a raft we'll have petticoats to fly! Maybe get rescued!"

Cap'n Bill faced the ladder.

Down out of darkness came an unsteady little wet shape with sopping skirts clinging tightly to her legs; and Mamie, of Mother Sampson's, with a little be-flowered hat all wetly aflop about her head, struggled down the ladder. The rain on her face looked as though it were partly tears; her face was all out of shape with chill, fear, excitement.

Bill met her with a helping hand and she fell against him, clapped both wet arms to his neck, said with stumbling tongue:

"Bill, get aw'y to sea! Mother sent me. That old man with whiskers, he's dead! She said you 'ad to know. They've arrested 'er, Bill! The whiskers come off—ow, Bill! 'E was 'orrid to see!"

"Here now, take a hold on yourself. What they arrested Mother for?"

"For murder!"

"Aw, Mother wouldn't murder a fly, 'less it was a teetoler!"

"Bill, after you left we put 'im in a room—'e looked above the common—to sleep it off. An' when Mother went up to 'ave a look, 'alf the whiskers 'ad been pulled off an' 'e'd been stabbed!"

"That," said Bill, "is a fine pickle."

"She myde me 'elp 'er, Bill, an' we took 'im out in the back alley. 'They'll be blymin' us, she said.' An' s' 'elp me, Bill, if the p'lice didn't stumble about an' find the body right off! Bill, it was terrible! They harrested 'er, but she told me for to get to you. She said to tell you, Bill, that wotever the damn ol' blighter wanted of you, for you to 'ave no part in it. Two of the boys that was drinkin' in the parlor, they brought me, then rowed off to get haboard their own ships an' so be out of it! So I come, an' I'm scairt sick!"

"Aye, course you are, an' wet and cold." He patted her back and she clung to him, for after all she was younger than most of Mother Sampson's girls and wasn't always thinking of money when she kissed a man. "I'll get you a drink."

He fished up keys from his trousers pocket and saw Avis Macaire standing uneasily. The girl's story was shocking and the girl herself was woeful looking and of a caste that the captain's daughter didn't know about except by hearsay.

Bill said to her, cheerily, "You'll have comp'ny on the voyage. This is Mamie. She's one of my girls."

Avis Macaire said, "How do you do," in a stiff, uneasy way, and the sopping Mamie said something about being pleased, which wasn't so, for she could jealously see that this pretty aristocratic girl, cloaked in gray rubbers, was away up above her, and not at all befrumped and spoiled by the weather—Mamie thought what she thought right off, for there was nothing else to think, since the girl was on board Bill's schooner.

"Bill! Bill! I got to get hashore, Bill!"

Bill turned with tin cups in one hand, a half filled bottle of gin in the other. He drew the cork with his teeth. "Not this night." He poured some gin, gave it to Mamie; poured some more, offered it to Miss Macaire, and when she declined he drank it himself.

Bill said, "Now you, Mamie, get into this room here. Get out of your wet clothes. Wrap yourself in a blanket. You take a cold on my schooner and I'll throw you overboard. Can't stand sniffles. Not in a purty girl, and you're that! Come along!"

Mamie struggled a little, not wholeheartedly, and Bill half carried her, set her on a stool, lighted a little tin lantern in a corner bracket. "Get into a blanket. Curl up snug and stay warm. I'll have your things dried out in the galley."

He closed the door, faced the captain's daughter. "Now for you, Miss."

She had taken off her oilskins, was standing up, and gave him a look of re-

proach. It was mild, suffused with more disappointment than blame, and she made her tone colorless so as not to disclose her repugnant feelings. "Miss Mamie is a special friend, Captain Jones?"

"Right," said Bill, as casual and offhand as if claiming his hat. He wouldn't deny his friends, whether they came out of a pub or off the beach. "An' 'restin' Mother Sampson makes me mad! Now we'll have to do some shiftin' about before I can give you proper quarters. So make yourself easy as you can for a time. I've got to get on deck."

A RAIN squall whipped down, struck with the sound of a sea boarding. Water frothed and gushed into the scuppers. Forward Bill could hear the Buka boys at the capstan. He went forward, met Jody coming along near the mainmast, lantern in hand.

"A-peak, Bill."

"Set the jib. I'll take the wheel."

"Look out for that old hooker to lu'ward—"

"Look out be damned to you. You can't see a fathom beyond your button-shaped nose! Night like this, you have to smell your way—now what?"

From the darkness alongside a hoarse voice hailed, "Up there! What ship is this?"

"Careful, Bill! May be the beaks!"

"Not this far from shore in the dark! Somebody wants their bearin's to find their own craft." Over the side Bill shouted, "Schooner *Alicia!*" He called her *Alisha.*

There was a scraping bump alongside, a hurried gust of many voices in furtive subdued tones with some oaths that had a jubilant sound. Bill said, "Jody, you're right!" then leaned afar over the side, smelt trouble, reached for a belaying pin and bawled, "Who are you?"

A man on his way up from boat-thwart to the *Alicia's* main chains called back, "We've got business here with a party that's aboard!"

Old Jody swung up the lantern. The rain struck through the glow and its shimmer fell into the face of a ugly fellow who looked bigger than he was in rubber hat and coat as he came from the chains to the bulwark's rail and flung over a leg. He had a thick face with bushy brows and big white teeth all a-grin. An evilly pleased light was in his dark eyes. Shapes were nimbly climbing up behind him and alongside.

The big fellow whipped out a revolver from under his black rubber coat, thrust it through the lantern light at Jody's head. "We're boarders! That's what we are! Come to go the voyage with you, but you won't be hurt if—"

Bill's belaying pin cracked down the wrist. The revolver dropped into the scupperway. The man yelled. The yell was cut off by the belaying pin taking him in the face. He toppled backwards with left hand clutching the rail. The belaying pin smashed fingers. Blood spurted; the hand vanished, and Bill struck again with long-armed reach as the big man swayed backward, fell. There was the crack of a shattered thwart and clatter of bounced oars as he dropped into the boat.

"Boarders!" Cap'n Bill jeered and threw the belaying pin at a dark shape that had climbed on board and was now scrambling to get overboard. "You couldn't board a scow on a mud bank!" Bill struck with clublike fists.

There was an oathful tumbling back into the boat, into the water, of the men, some eight or ten, who had no heart for boarding when their leader was knocked over. A gun or two was fired by accident or in hopeful rage. One man, slashed from ears to throat by the two-edged knife of old Jody, lay in the scupper. A stiletto was fast by a thong to the dead man's wrist.

The boat was being shoved off in the rainy darkness among confused splash and thump of oars, a babble of angered swearing. A pleading shriek came from some man who had tumbled into the water. The shrieks stopped. He had either been picked up or gone down.

The mop-headed black boys came trouping, cowrie shells whitely shimmering about their throats. They danced, pushed, yelled. And the *Alicia's* half caste cook—his mother was a cannibal—rushed up with cleaver in hand. This squat son of a Scotchman and black Buka maid wasn't much of a cook, but he could be counted on in a fight.

Old Jody hadn't even dropped the lantern. He thought no more of knifing a man than of cracking a boiled crab for his nearly toothless old gums to suck on. He wiped the blade on his oilskin as he stooped to put the lantern near the dead man's face.

"Wot in hell, Bill?"

"Beats me," said Bill, getting to his knees for a better look at the dead man. "Maybe they wanted the ship for a cruise. Ship-stealin' is nothing new."

"Aye, but they said some'at of a passenger on board." Then Jody got his full breath, squawked, "It's them womin! Joners, allus! Why, all the bad luck we ever had they was womin in it!"

"An' you don't have good luck 'less women helps," said Bill, off-hand and casual. He picked up the dead man's hand, looked at, flung it aside. "No sailor," said Bill, and, glancing up, saw a slender form dimly.

He got up, took the lantern with a jerk from Jody's hand, held it up to Avis Macaire's frightened face. "Well, now you are soppin'! On deck's no place for you!"

"Those men—"

"They're gone. Overboard. Aye, they got a look at Jody's face an' jumped! Here, get below. You'll drown on deck!"

She slipped, almost fell under the gust-blow of rain. Bill, keeping hold of the lantern, caught her up like a child, held her wet body tightly, carried her. She was tensely rigid. It was the only way to make seemly protest against this rough familiarity.

He bent low at the companionway, went down the ladder with sure barefooted tread, put her on her feet in the cabin. Water streamed from her dress.

Mamie, huddled in a gray blanket, peered at them. "Wot in 'ell, Bill?"

"They didn't stop to say. Except," he recalled, "that they had business with a passenger. Now which of you—must be you!" He seemed to accuse Avis Macaire.

Her clothes clung to her like wet rags, and she was chilled, began to shiver. "I don't think—why would they care about *me?*"

Bill, on his way to the cupboard, said, "Anybody try to lay hands on one of my girls, I break his neck." The captain's daughter flinched, looked as if about to say something, but set her teeth.

Bill brought his bottle of gin and cups. "Best med'cine I got." He poured. "Now you drink it!" He gave another cup to the blanketed Mamie, whose wet hair was spread lankly about her shoulders. "Then you get in there with Mamie. Get out of them clothes. I'll find another blanket—"

Bill's face took on a vague reflective look; he laughed. "I know what was up! That fellow Bain—something or other thought he was going with me this night. Them men thought so too. If they're en'mies of that swab, I'm sorry I broke their heads. Ho, an' after tellin' him I wouldn't go to Trigg Island for a thousand dollars, I'm goin'! Here, you drink that gin!"

Avis Macaire drank it, coughed and half strangled.

"You two girls can stop in there together. Take care of her, Mamie. Her father's Macaire of the *McKeekee.*

We're goin' to catch Black Perry an' get that reward on his head if he don't get her father clear. In you go!"

He pushed them in, closed the door, shutting up together the fastidious captain's daughter and the little pub girl who would give you a kiss if you bought her a drink.

CHAPTER III

TREACHERY ISLAND

THE *Alicia* did not go to sea in the dark, but lunged out in the wet soggy dawn and blinding rain. Tumbling seas shook the schooner, pitched her about until what wasn't fast skittered like shuffleboard disks. Cap'n Bill warily watched to windward, headed straight out to sea, wanting plenty of leeway if the wind veered.

The *Alicia* was old but sound. She had been an old time blackbirder and 'twas said that any ship in that trade could ever after be smelled a mile to leeward. She had been in the oil trade when natives rotted copra, drained the oil, and the smell withered strong men's noses. She had been, still was a pearler; and odors of decayed oysters are not among the least violent of stinks. All of those smells had permeated her old timbers. There was also, of course, bilge. But Cap'n Bill said the smells were good for the ship; kept the worms out.

Bill was a seaman, saw to it that cordage was new and carried storm sails. Hemp and canvas were things that Cap'n Bill, more honest than most people, was likely to borrow from unwatchful owners when he was in need and short of funds. He would drive when many masters lay hove to; but, ever watchful, he would heave to as quick as anybody if following seas looked like boarders. He knew the *Alicia* as a strong man knows his own strength, liked a high wind, and had found that the schooner could beat through a storm that made square riggers scud under bare poles.

Now he put hold-fasts on two helmsmen, stood with an upside-down pipe in his mouth. He had been without sleep the night before, took none during the day, ate at the galley door, drank coffee under the companion lee when the cook came aft with steaming pail.

Said the cook, "Both missus make much sick sound—oo—oo!"

Bill slowly crunched in strong jaws a biscuit that would have turned a knife's edge. "I been seasick once. In a dingy in a calm. You want to die, but are afraid you'll drown!"

For two days and a night the *Alicia* went under the whip of a wet gale with the lee rail skimming foam. Bobby, the half Scotch cannibal, somehow kept cof-

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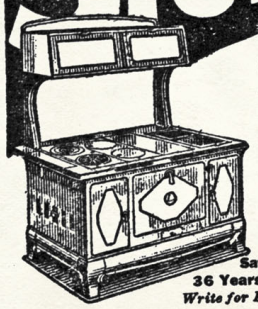

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fee going, night and day; and Bill spiked the blacks' tins with gin. He carried a dozen when six men would have been a full crew. He liked having them; they liked being with him; it made the work light, the forecastle cheery, and in a case of touch-and-go, he had extra weight on his side. As for wages—when he had funds he paid them fair and square, for it never occurred to the simple-minded Bill to cheat children, women, or natives.

With nothing more than cat naps on his feet, he stayed close on deck till the sun came up and the wind stopped howling and began to whistle. Then he shook out the reefs, left Jody on deck, rolled in, slept sixteen hours, and came out of his bunk into the cabin to find two distressed, gaunt-eyed girls clinging with desperate modesty to the scratchy gray blankets and both talking wildly to him about their clothes.

"Clothes?" said Bill.

"They were to be dried out in the galley!" said Avis Macaire, indignant.

"Where's that damn cook?"

The damn cook came. He had his mother's tufted kinky hair, his father's angular face and gray eyes. To show that he was above his birth place, he always wore a shirt, sometimes no trousers—"as," said Jody, "was the way of a Scotchman."

"Here, you! Where's these girls' clothes?"

Bobby gesticulated. "Me do like that, Cap'n. Oh yesum, sir! Hang up um go so—flop-flop!" Arms waved wildly. "Me put um in pan, so." He pantomimed wadding them down tightly in a small container. "Put um in oven—uh? What think, Cap'n? They burn all same hell-fire-full-of-sin-man!"

"Who told you to bake 'em? Jody?"

"Yesum, Cap'n, Jo-dee."

Jody sat on the skylight, looking as innocent as only an experienced scoundrel can. He gazed at Bill with injured amazement; having had his ears blasted, he sulked righteously.

"It's out of your wages they'll get new dresses!" said Bill.

And Jody snapped, "If they don't get more dresses 'n I get wages, they'll look shockin'!"

Bill dug into the trade room, brought up his best colored calico, or so he thought; went into the cabin, offered it humbly.

It was red and yellow, beflowered. Even Mamie, who had a strong taste, regarded it with doubts. Avis Macaire shuddered visibly.

"An' I can't sew!" said Mamie.

"Nor I," said the captain's daughter, sounding almost thankful.

Bill explained that the native girls, for whom it was intended, didn't sew. They just wrapped it about them, poking in ends somehow.

"Very simple," said Bill. "Looks fine, too."

"But if it slips?" asked Mamie.

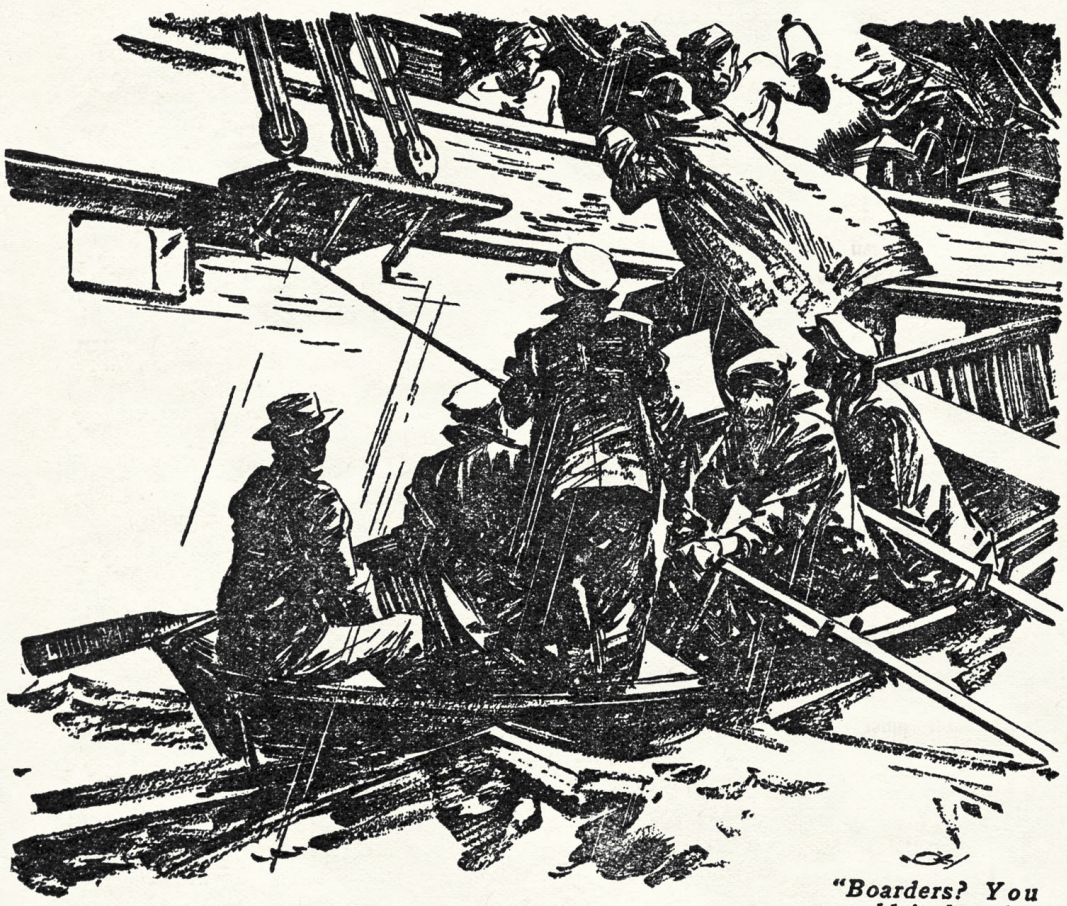
"I never seen one slip," said Bill. "That is, 'less on purpose."

Avis Macaire drew back, looked angry, said nothing.

But the blankets were heavy and itched. The warm weather brought the impregnated smells of the cabin into full fragrance. The girls knew they had to dress for deck or smother; and the rasping blankets were, in the heat, like hair shirts.

"But I won't risk it without pins at least!" Mamie declared. "An' Bill, we are 'ungry! We can't eat white pork nor biscuits 'ard as bolt 'eads! And tea, Bill. You don't know 'ow we miss our tea!"

THE *Alicia* dropped anchor at dawn in the lagoon of a palm-crowned island, and among the canoes that put out was a whaleboat with the trader who was Cap'n Bill's friends. He waved his white hat from afar.



"Boarders? You couldn't board a scow!"

"There," said Bill, pointing, "is a good husband for one of you. Which is more'n I'd say of most traders, 'specially to one of my girls!"

Mamie said, "Ow Bill, 'ow you talk!"

Avis Macaire said firmly, "If you please, I prefer not to be called 'one of your girls'!"

Bill, unruffled, grinned. "All right. Then you can be Jody's."

Jem Clark, the trader, was big, solid, with freshly shaven face, clean ducks. He had straight eyes, was not young. He took a look at both girls and Mamie's heart did tricks. He kept glancing at her in a slightly embarrassed way.

He and Bill had a drink in the hot cabin over an invoice of goods that the boys were breaking out, and Jem said, "These girls, Bill. It's not like you to—"

" 'Tis," said Bill, "just like me. They're nice girls."

He told the story right down to old Jody's malice in having the cook "bake" their clothes.

"I'm taking the captain's daughter to Madame Dubois. She's a friend of Perry's, and—"

"But the other one, Bill? Mamie, you call her. Purty name, Mamie."

"Purty girl, you mean. If we don't fall in with anything better, back she goes to Mother Sampson."

Jem shook his head. "That's no place for a girl." He took a deep breath. "These islands ain't either. An' Bill, I wouldn't be so sure of old Perry. I like him, but may be he *did* have a hand in the *McKeekee*."

Bill slapped the table. "He didn't. Perry don't steal from friends."

"Ho, he's left you high and dry."

"Aye, but we're en'mies! At times him an' me just hate the same people, that's all. An' don't you see, you chucklehead, that even if Perry can't help—'cause the English'll hang 'im if they get a chance—it'll make her and Cap Macaire feel better to have Perry convince 'em that he didn't have anything to do with the *McKeekee*." Bill finished his drink. "That's what I care about."

Jem Clark's stores went ashore in the whaleboat. That afternoon Cap'n Bill and the girls followed, went up the clean white beach to the trader's house and store. Jem Clark's house was clean. His servants were boys. The guests ate much chicken and rice, drank some wine.

That evening Bill and Avis sat in long cane chairs and looked at the moonlight while Jem Clark and Mamie took a walk.

It was a long walk.

Cap'n Bill was to sail at dawn, so Mamie told Jem she would think it over and have Bill tie a shirt or something on a line if she decided to stay, and Jem could come out in the morning and get her.

That night on board the *Alicia* Mamie asked Bill's advice.

He sat on the skylight, pipe in mouth, and she pulled a chair to face him. Avis stood close enough to hear, far enough off not to seem intruding, and looked at Cap'n Bill's face with the moonlight on it.

Bill said, "Be a hard life, girl. Makes sluts out of most white girls as try it. They get lazy with nothin' to do an' only gin to do it with. Jem's a good man. But the best of good men can hate a woman if she stops bein' the sort of woman he wants. If you was my sister, I'd tell you this: No matter how tired you are, ever' mornin' you get up when he does. Make yourself purty. Make yourself smile. Then make his tea for 'im—ever' morning. Then ever' mornin' you play comp'ny was comin' and you wanted the house shipshape, pin-clean. 'Nother thing. When he goes to sea in his cutter, go along. An' swear you love goin'. You'll be seasick at first and maybe afterwards, too; but laugh anyhow! When he has to fight for his life in a storm, lay quiet, an' grin eve'time he looks your way. Maybe you'll drown; but maybe you won't and if you don't you'll have a man as is proud of you. Aye, and if he has to fight for his life with blacks or whites, you pull an oar or load the guns and keep cheery. You do all that, younglin', and when I'm a broke-down old beachcomber, Jem Clark 'll allus slip me a dollar out of remembrance that 'twas me interduced his wife to 'im. You see, I'm selfish and forethoughtful thataway!"

Mamie was crying softly. "Oh, but Bill, I'm a coward an' easy scairt!"

He patted her shoulder. "Who the hell's bein' brave if they ain't scairt? My girls allus win out. I'll run up a flag at sunrise for Jem."

The proud-faced captain's daughter came up quickly, got knees down on the hard deck, put her arms about Mamie, kissed her suddenly.

So the *Alicia* didn't sail at dawn but stayed over for the wedding. The priest came from across the island with the French trader and they drank some wine, sang some songs, ate much chicken, pork, tinned fish; and for a wedding present Bill gave Mamie a case of tinned salmon, a bolt of calico, and a big brass pot out of the galley.

TRIGG Island, lay drowsing under the mid-afternoon heat when the *Alicia,* with no more than a whisper of breath on her sails, came into the half-moon bay where the little waves swished their foamy ruffles on the warm brown wet sand, clicking shells and pebbles.

Cap'n Bill, with an eye to getting out in a hurry if need be, anchored well seaward near the north tip. The anchor splashed, a boat was lowered, and Bill, in his best toggery, new shoes, hat and a shirt that had all its buttons on it, went over the side.

Old Jody grumbled with fist scrubbing his whiskered cheek. "My eye, but you look han'some, you do!"

"An' you'll look less handsome 'n you ever did in your life if you ain't sober when I come back," said Bill.

Jody spat solemnly over the side, brooded with unlighted pipe in his mouth.

Bill was rowed ashore, and out of regard for his new shoes, stepped on the float at the land used for the French steamer's tourists, who were given twelve hours ashore.

Nobody was astir. Except on steamer days, the stores closed during the heat of the day, opened in the evening. Natives piles themselves on verandahs, as carelessly crowded together as puppies basking. Whites took to shadows and long chairs.

Cap'n Bill cut through the grove from the waterfront, made for the hotel.

It was a large hotel. It had been built by a French company as a speculation with other people's money, failed, passed through various hands, came into the possession of Madame Dubois. She had closed up half of the big rambling building. Soon the planters' box-shaped club burned; and whether or not, as some suspected, Madame's husband burned it, she promptly offered quarters at the hotel and so arranged things that somehow or other the planters never got around to rebuilding their club. They could get just as drunk at Madame's. The girls Madame employed were much prettier than their wives would put up with at home. And, of course, the low class public—storekeepers, sailors, overseers and such—were not admitted to the club bar.

Cap'n Bill went into the bar where Madame's husband drowsed over a French comic magazine. That was in the long ago days when bold and naughty artists put lots of clothes on their women under the old-fashioned notion that nudity may be obscene all right, but it isn't enticing. Missionaries still think differently.

The bar was circular, the room large, dim, with most of the small tables and tiny chairs on the verandah.

Felix Dubois was older than Madame, sloppy, shifty-eyed, lazy, and more porter and pub keeper than partner. She, who knew every item of scandal, could not be unaware of his messy muddling with low caste girls. There was a slithering sneakiness about him, like a rat that has been tamed by being crippled. 'Twas said Madame had said that every respectable woman had to have a husband; and Felix served, *n'est pas?*

Before he was through the door, Cap'n Bill asked, "Where's Madame?"

Felix stared blandly, smiled. His teeth were not even or white. "You come back again?" Thereupon at once he put out a second grade whisky in a bottle that bore a first grade label. Sailors never knew the difference.

"Have one?" Bill invited.

Felix shook his uncombed head. "I am not fool. Whisky? No-oo! In this climate? Englishmen are mad."

"Right," said Bill and drank. "I'm 'Merican myself. Any news?"

Felix put an unwashed hand on the old magazine. "The steamer for a week now is overdue. Nothing new at all to read. Nothing to do. It is only when you come," Felix smiled broadly, "that the things happen. Funny things." He shrugged a shoulder. "Madame has for you a bill that long for you to pay. And the new jail, eh? You have heard?"

"Who's goin' to put me in it?"

Again Felix shrugged a shoulder. "Not I. When you hit a man on the nose, even his ears turn black." Felix looked beyond Bill, spoke with wheedling. "Come in, Monsieur Estratrau."

Cap'n Bill, bottle in hand above the glass, looked over his shoulder, glimpsed a thin figure of dark complexion, very dark, with a tiny black mustache and a pith helmet. There was a blur of a scar on the man's cheek. His eyes and Bill's met in an instant's stare, then the door closed; Monsieur Estratrau had disappeared.

Bill frowned at the closed door, looked at the floor, looked at Felix. "Who's he?"

"He come some days ago from Wattles Island to await the steamer that does not come." Felix slapped his oft-read magazine as if the thing was associated in the blame for the steamer's tardiness.

"Huh," said Bill and drank. "Thought I'd seen him before. Maybe not. What's he been doin' at Wattles? I stopped there. Jem Clark never spoke of anybody. No, nor the priest and other traders."

"What does every fool from Europe do on the islands?" asked Felix, grinning. "He looks for land to grow coconuts, while he lies in a hammock with his arm about a pretty girl and grows rich. Pah! He came here in Old Man Thompson's schooner from Wattles."

Cap'n Bill growled, "Uh?"

Felix opened a placating hand, shrugged a shoulder. "But he did. Captain Thompson brought him to the hotel. Then he got drunk and flung money. The captain had got fifty dollars from him for passage."

Cap'n Bill poured another drink, amused himself by seeing how many drops he could let fall into the brimming glass without spilling any; spoke with matter-of-fact disinterest: "Then they are both liars. Thompson was in Sydney when I left—straight for Wattles." Bill looked up, his fist hit the bar. "They're both liars. Who cares?" He lifted the whisky slowly, spilled none. "Islands are full of liars. Where's Madame?"

"Where? At this hour?" Felix shrugged the shoulder, put a hand to his cheek, closed his eyes in pantomime. With a stir of interest and confidential hunch of shoulders, "This Estratrau is afraid of his shadow, and—"

"Most men's shadows have the look of the devil followin'."

Felix nodded wisely. "Everything is not as it ought to be with him. I have wondered."

"What time will Madame wake up?"

Both shoulders rose and fell, then Felix scratched the back of his neck. "So it was Black Pierre who lifted a million in jewels from the *McKeekee*, eh? The one who lays hands on that pirate will have something for the comfort of his old age!"

"Bilge! Perry had no more to do with it than my gran'mother!"

"So, eh?" Felix seemed disappointed.

"So! Perry's no fool. Tell me he had a hand in that boggle? Bilge!" Bill smacked the bar, then took another drink in the manner of being in a hurry to get a bad taste out of his mouth.

IN marched Madame Dubois. Madame dyed her hair black, used rouge, was buxom, neat. She wore coral earrings and necklace, tinted muslin, somehow always looked cool, had jet-hard eyes. There was nothing of the sloven about Madame, neither in dress, hostelry or accounting. She was charmingly good-natured with guests who had deep pockets. Cap'n Bill, being broad-minded about ladies, thought her pretty.

Madame frowned at him from across the bar. "Ha, so! You do not think that scoundrel Pierre did the *McKeekee* thing, eh? He is a bad one, that Pierre. I wish he would hang, quick! People say I, Madame, am his friend just because

he is French. Cannot a Frenchman be a scoundrel, or is New Caledonia a picnic garden, eh? Pah!"

Bill was taken aback, for he knew that in times past Madame had been kind to Pierre, sheltered him, gave him news, was trusted by him; but these were the sort of things Bill couldn't remind her of in front of even a husband like Felix.

Now Madame's jet black eyes glittered. She slapped the bar rapidly. "He is no good, that Pierre! I would like the reward on his head! Oh, how I would like that reward!"

"And I," Felix muttered with bad teeth a-grin. "Once he came here like any man, but now—" Felix shrugged his shoulder, "—one does not see him so much, eh?"

"Already people say to me, 'A-hah, Madame! Your friend Pierre has done something big for himself at last, eh?' My friend, pah! And as for you, my captain!" She poked a finger as straight at Bill as if about to shoot. "On your last visit to my hotel—for the drinks you did not pay, twenty-two francs, which is four dollars and fifty cents, if you please!" Her hand, palm up, waggled in front of Bill's face, awaiting the money.

"That must be about right," Bill admitted, hoping to appease Madame. "I was a little busy and forgot. So I'll—" He reached toward a pocket.

Up flashed Madame's finger again. "And for the sofa that was ruined by the blood—"

"Blood? I didn't do no bleedin'!"

"But Monsieur Wheeler's nose? And on the carpet, Monsieur Horst's?"

"I ain't payin' for what their noses done!"

"The chairs you broke! The mirror that was cracked when you threw the chair and—"

"I didn't throw it. I kept hold. It

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was old Porter hit that mirror—with the back of his head!"

"But you hit Monsieur Porter! And my portières that were torn down and stamped on in the fight? Not to count the loss of patronage for those who refused to come again after so great an insult from you!"

" 'Twas them insulted my friends and me, so—"

"Four hundred francs is not enough, but for that we will settle, if you please!" Again she held her hand palm up.

Cap'n Bill, in simple astonishment, looked as if Madame had turned into an utter stranger.

Felix, with much the air of an actor speaking an aside, gave warning in confidential tone, "I would pay, my friend. It is better so."

Bill felt wronged. "I'll be damned if I do!"

He poured another drink, and as he lifted it he glanced in troubled perplexity toward Madame, saw her close an eye in a tight wink. He took a relieved breath along with the drink, clapped down the glass, admitted for the ears of Felix, "Maybe I really ought to pay somepun."

"So? Then you come with me and we will talk," said Madame encouragingly.

She came briskly from around the bar, swishing her muslin skirts. Keys jingled at the cord at her waist.

Madame walked up the stairs without a word and took Bill into her rooms on the second floor. The suite opened on to a wide porch hung with curtains of split cane, now rolled up. The furniture was overlaid with bright pieces of silk, doilies, remnants of tapestry.

Madame lifted her face to Cap'n Bill with enticing air, "Oh, you have no idea how bad people try to make it appear that Black Pierre is my friend."

"Well, ain't he?"

Madame winked sweetly. "Oh, Captain Bill, but Felix"—this was whispered in aggrieved reproach "—he thinks the price of Judas too high! For ten pieces of silver he would have done as much! Ah, Captain Bill, you, you with your great understanding—"

Madame, though not so young, had a way about her that young ladies haven't learned; and she kissed the astonished Bill smack on the mouth, moved quickly away, laughed, waved him off as he looked ready to play that way some more.

"No, no, no!" she cried. "Not now." Then, "We must be careful. Sit down. Some brandy, eh? You and me? What do you do on this island again?"

"That's just what I want to talk to you about."

Madame briskly brought a bottle of brandy, a water tumbler, and she filled the tumbler, put it on the table by Bill's elbows, fluttered her hand through his mop of red hair. She sat down near him, modestly spread her skirts over ankles in the way that women do when they have pretty ankles. She fingered her keys, listened with black-eyed attentiveness as Bill told of Avis Macaire.

Madame laughed much at the clothes being baked—at least Bill thought that was what she laughed over. "Drink your brandy, Bill. It is my best."

Bill drank. Madame got up, refilled the glass, again swept playful fingers through his hair but teasingly dodged the grab he made for her.

Madame sat down, looked demure and thoughtful, studied Bill with opaque black eyes that sheltered any thoughts she did not want revealed. "I tell you what you do, Bill. You wait here till it is night. Oh, late at night. Then you bring the girl to me. I do not know where that dreadful Pierre is. But a dress for the beautiful girl—she is beautiful?"

"Right," said Bill.

"Is the brandy not good?"

"Fine."

"Then why do you not drink?"

Bill drank. Madame said, "I will drink

with you." She brought a tiny glass for herself, filled Bill's tumbler, lifted her thimble-sized glass to him.

"For our luck!" said Madame; and they drank.

Bill took a deep breath, pulled at his collar, snapped off a couple of buttons, found that better; wished he could kick off his shoes, but that wouldn't be polite in Madame's quarters. For some reason or other, Bill found that he seemed a little sleepy.

"Let us have another drink, Bill? To our luck, eh?"

"Right," said Bill and tried to sound enthusiastic.

Madame filled his tumbler, half filled her own glass. Bill took a swallow, put the glass down, rubbed at his eyes. "Wonder why I'm so—oh, hum!" He yawned with wide reach of arms and Madame stared as if she never before had noticed that great spread of chest, the powerful bull-necked muscles of his shoulders.

"I tell you what, Bill," she coaxed, toying with his hair. "You come over here and lie down. Poor sailor boy! He is so tired. Drink your brandy, Bill."

Bill arose, stood just a little unsteadyily, emptied the glass at a swallow.

Madame watched with much the expression of seeing a magician do something unbelievable. Two tumblers of that brandy would have knocked over any other man she had ever known; and Madame had not been raised in a convent.

Bill turned about slowly, not quite willing to lie down. He blinked through the window, saw that the afternoon was nearly gone. It would soon be nightfall. Madame took his arm, pulled.

"Maybe a little nap would be the thing," Bill admitted. He went to the couch, sat down quickly as if dropping, rubbed his head, asked, "Why am I so sleep—"

Madame pushed gently. "Lie down, Bill."

Bill grumbled, "I'm not drunk. Just a little sleep—sleep—"

He sank over on his side, let an arm fall, seemed feebly struggling to get his feet up on the couch, gave up the struggle, shut his eyes.

SOME time later Bill opened an eye, lay still in a hazy wonder. Something was troubling him. At first he wasn't sure what, then realized that his feet hurt. He did not feel like moving but gradually recalled that he had on those blasted shoes. Blurred remembrance of Madame, brandy, an unexpected kiss, ran through his mind. Wonderful woman, Madame.

Bill felt he had made a discovery of importance in finding out that a woman didn't have to be young to be pretty and nice and endearing.

He took a deep breath, opened both eyes, sat up with a hand vaguely groping toward his shoes.

Bill's hazy blue eyes popped wide in a confused look at the half-crouched stealthy figure of a man who had stepped in on tiptoes from the outside porch.

Brandy-sogged or not, Bill was a fellow of prompt action, and so stood up, not quite steadily but without fuddling weakness. The man seemed turned to stone by the surprise of finding Bill awake.

He was a lean man in clean white duck, bare-headed. He had black eyes, a dark face, long nose, a tiny black mustache, and a patch of a scar on his left cheek. Well inside the door, he stooped stealthily. He had a mean, purposeful look in his small eyes and carried a long knife.

Cap'n Bill frowned.

"Ho, so it's you, is it?" said Bill dully, and he seemed to mean something more than it was the Monsieur Estratrau he had glimpsed in the bar below. Bill brought up at a table, leaned back against it, stared, put a knuckle in one

eye, blinked as if a little unsure whether or not he was seeing right.

Estratrau was somewhat unnerved that Bill had awakened, but it was too late to back out. He had a drawn knife and no explanation, so he eyed Bill, judged that he was drunk.

Cat-quick, Estratrau jumped forward, raised an arm, struck.

Bill was an old hand at any kind of a fight; had made many of his best fights when not quite sober.

Resting against the table, he raised a knee, straightened his leg, lashed out with a foot, struck the crouching Estratrau in the breast, knocked him across the room, flat on his back.

Cap'n Bill jumped after him, fell on the dazed man, wrenched the knife from his lax hand, flung the knife backward over his shoulder. He jerked Estratrau, got him on his feet, then swung a maul of fist into his face, knocked him down again.

"Same old swab!" said Bill, and pounced on him, got hold of a collar, yanked Estratrau up on his feet, shook him roughly.

Estratrau was laxly groggy. His head bobbed like the head of a dead goose, but he was trying hard to come out of it; and Bill helped with rousing shakes, pausing to pluck at the small black mustache; but it was real, did not come off.

"Anyhow," said Bill, "I know you, even with new French name an' that color smeared on your face—let's see if you are the same complexion all over!"

Bill jerked open the coat, ripped buttons off the shirt, tore the undershirt wide, exposed a breast and belly as white as bleached cotton.

"So you knew I'd know you, and wanted to do for me—with a knife? Bainbridge or Ester-something. Just plain blighter!"

Bill's fist had cut the cheek again right where the other fresh scar showed. Blood was trickling on the white duck, looked black on the dead white.

Bill shook him some more, helping to bring him around, and seemed trying to shake out an answer to, "What you been up to? Come on, talk or I'll—"

"You are choking—hard to—to talk. There has been a mistake—I can make it worth your while—you are choking—you played me a hard trick and I—I didn't mean to—to—"

"Can't hardly talk, but can keep lyin'!" said Bill, and drew back the palm of his hand to smack.

Estratrau flinched. He got a little hold on himself, said, "I can make it worth your while, Captain! You are choking and I can't talk—"

Bill wasn't himself very clear headed, and frowned as if trying to weigh his own advantage in the matter. "All right, talk!" He took his hand from the fellow's collar, but fastened it firmly down in the front of the waist band, keeping a good hold. When he shook Estratrau it was much as if hitting rapid short-arm jabs against the belly. He shook him now; and Bill's words shook him, too:

"To hell with you. I turned down what you offered in Sydney to bring you here. I knew there was somepun wrong. For that same reason I'm goin' to take you back to Sydney, passage free! I'm just cur'us thataway!"

"You can't do that!" It was a shriek. "I'm—"

"Can't?" said Bill and shook.

He had got a wonderfully good hold at the waist band and as he churned his fist into Mr. Estratrau's belly, Bill slowly began to realize that his big hand was gripping something more than a waist band. He was gripping a wide money belt that Estratrau wore next to his skin.

"Can't, huh? You *are* goin' back! There was murder done, my friends drawed into it. Mother Sampson for

one. That old man with the false whiskers you sent to me. An' I'll see that you get handed over to them in Sydney as will know what to make of you!"

THE disturbance Cap'n Bill had made in knocking a guest about was heard through the hotel. Madame Dubois appeared, her skirts in a flutter, her hands up in amazement. "Captain Bill, what do you do?"

Estratrau looked like a sawdust doll that had got between a bad bulldog's teeth.

Estratrau began to speak, or rather shriek, with shrill sound of desperate protestation in French; but Bill shook and he gulped, gasped, groaned. He tore at Bill's hands with both his hands and might as well have been picking at a hawser.

"Talk English!" said Bill. "Madame here got me drunk so you'd have a free hand with that knife of yours!"

"I know you—even with a new name!"

"Ho, you, eh?" Bill jolted Mr. Estratrau with a stiff-armed shake just to keep him quiet while he faced the buxom Madame. "I ought've wondered why you was so nice to me!"

Madame's eyes were popping. The elegant guest, Monsieur Estratrau, did not look elegant now. She knew Bill was drunk, or ought to be, and poor

In amazed honesty Madame made furious denial, waved her hands, told Bill he was stupidly drunk, commanded him to release Monsieur Estratrau instantly.

"Why this outrage?" she demanded shrilly.

Bill was bull-headed as well as bull-necked. He had the sensible suspicion

that Madame had played him a typical feminine trick, guessed she had done it to favor this fellow who, so Bill said, was a piece of shark's belly. With backward jerk of head, he told Madame, "Lie all you like! You was up to somepun. There's a knife over there somewheres. He tried to use it, thinkin' you'd got me drunk! I'm for Sydney. This blighter goes along. He tried to shoot me there. His name was Bainbridge there. Knife me here. Name's Extra-something. I'm takin' him right now to my ship, an'—"

That set Madame off wildly. For some odd reason she instantly looked out of the window as if judging how long till sunset. She said, "No!" loudly; then she said, imploringly, "Bill, you are drunk!" Then she said furiously, "I will not let you insult my guest!" She begged, "Sit down and have some sense!"

Bill pushed at her, not gently but with no anger. If a woman—pretty woman that is—had tried to cut off his head and put it on a platter, Cap'n Bill couldn't have hurt her; but he told Madame firmly to get out of the way, that she might know by now that when he said he'd do a thing, do it he would.

Madame ran out of the room and shrieked for Felix; and in French and English called, "Help, help!"

Bill called after her, "Ho, so that's it! You'll scare your Felix so bad he won't come out of hidin' for a week after I'm gone!" Then, "Come on, you!" He yanked Mr. Estratrau across the room to the table.

Bill raised a foot, stamped, smashed a crosspiece supporting the table leg. He bent down, took hold of the leg, jerked, twisted, and had a good teakwood club in his hand. He hefted the club, trying its weight, liking its balance.

All the while Estratrau, with blood a-drip on his cheek, was begging, protesting, struggling frantically. Bill paid no more attention than he would to the wiggles and jerks of a small hooked fish until Estratrau let his body grow limp, knees bend, sank down.

"So that's it?" said Bill. "All right!" He swayed the club. "I'll just do for you an' take the money belt!"

Either the club or the words made Estratrau squawk in dismay and he scrambled up, his eyes filled with as much fright as if Bill had recited all of his crimes. He had a look of madness without menace; he offered Bill money, named preposterous amounts.

"Shut up," said Bill. "I'm takin' you. Maybe there's goin' to be a fight downstairs, but if there is and you make trouble, I'll kill you!" Bill's big knotted face was fixed in a glower. The glower broke, and Bill laughed, laughed as a new thought tickled him. "I know what! 'Twill make you come—or me not care if you don't!"

In less time that Mr. Estratrau could have unbuckled his own trousers, Bill dropped the club, used both hands, jerked out Estratrau's shirt, knocked his protesting hands away, unbuckled the wide money belt with its many filled pouches; whipping up his own shirt, he slipped the belt about his own waist and buckled it. Bill tucked in his shirt, picked up the table leg, patted his own belly, grinned at Estratrau who, for all the stain on his face, looked horribly sick and colorless.

"Come or not!" said Bill, but with the club ready to use it in case he judged wrong and Estratrau would try to get away. He had said he was going to take him to Sydney, and take him he would. Estratrau's long arms fluttered out as if beseeching and he followed Bill.

Madame seemed to be doing some kind of a dance at the top of the stairs and was screaming.

Cap'n Bill came along and Estratrau followed with anguished look and futile little plucking gestures. Madame jumped down the stairs with her skirts hiked high out of the way of her feet.

Planters in their club quarters, languidly sipping whisky and soda, bestirred themselves with querulous, "What's that?" "Beastly row?" for Madame was making herself heard. Natives called to one another and came from around back. Felix shouted. If Bill was on a rampage, Felix wanted somebody else to do the interfering. "Captain Bill!" The planters heard the name indignantly. There was already talk of him, for his schooner lay out in the bay. This man and that had promised to do so and so and such and such to Bill if ever he came again to Trigg Island, and the more cynical of the planters prodded the promisers into remembrance.

PEOPLE came into the hall and Madame came down the stairs. She looked disheveled and cried all sorts of things. The impression she gave, more or less on purpose perhaps, was that Bill had nearly murdered her and had nearly murdered Monsieur Estratrau for interfering.

In the group was white-headed, red-nosed Porter. He was fat, wealthy and pompous, mean to his laborers, insulting even when sober. He waved a fist in the gathering dimness and shouted, "Outrage! Outrage that this rascal dares—" Some of Madame's native girls giggled shrilly and fixed bright eyes on Cap'n Bill.

Mr. Wheeler, the young son of a rich family which had set him up as a planter, was there. He was nose-lofty, a prig, knew Bill was an uncouth bounder. Bill, on the previous visit, had poked him on the handsome nose when Mr. Wheeler tapped one of Bill's friends on the shoulder, said, "Fellow, take yourself off. You are annoying—" Bill hadn't hit him for saying that but for being the sort of lily-handed snip that would say it to an honest seaman whose work in gale and calm gave him the right to sing ashore if he felt like singing. Mr. Wheeler, being a gentleman of proud blood and much honor, now believed the worst possible implication in Madame's perfidious clamor. He raised a dramatic right arm, proclaimed, "Gentleman, the honor of a lady—"

And Horst was there. He had a head that Bill would go out of his way to poke. He was a big man, loud-mouthed, very much given to boasting when in his cups and he was seldom out of them. He hated Cap'n Bill, for once upon a time Bill had taken a whip out of his hand, used it on Horst when he found the planter lashing a black boy. In anything like a mixup, Bill would pass up a half dozen nearer men to get a crack at Horst; and Horst had boasted that the next time—well, he'd even things.

Other men were there and many blacks came jostling and squeezing among their betters. Felix slithered discreetly off to one side and stood with an open door to his back.

Madame had bounced down the stairs and staggered into the arms of young Wheeler, who was the handsomest of the planters. She seemed about to swoon, but didn't.

Excited clatter of voices, with oaths, urgently called upon one another for united action; great blustering shouts from fat-girthed Porter, raucous yaps from Mr. Horst.

Cap'n Bill's shirt was open at the throat, his mop of hair in a tangle. He came slowly down the stairs, looked interested. He liked almost any kind of commotion, was especially pleased to have one when full of good brandy. It did not occur to the simple-minded Bill to be indignant at Madame. This noisy muddle of many angered people in the dim hallway, with night not far off, was just another of the regrettable incidents that inevitably happened when he came, however well-intentioned, to Trigg Island. He serenely had no awareness of

blame. He slid one hand along the smooth banisters; the other used the table leg much as if it were a cane, carried idly.

Bill glanced backward. "Comin', Extra-whoever-you-are?"

Estratrau came as if in dazed weakness he could not help himself. A look of impotent madness shown in his close-set eyes and he followed as if bound by cords.

Old Porter was shouting; young Wheeler was shouting; big Horst was shouting. Natives jabbered and clucked; the girls squealed and grinned nervously. The discreet Felix kept well back, said nothing. He didn't know what Madame had been up to, but he knew Madame.

As Bill came near the bottom of the stairs those nearest pressed back, not liking the grin on his knotted face.

"Quite an honor," said Bill, "all this big reception. First man as touches me, I'll break his head. Try it an' see!"

That brought silence, until proud-blooded young Wheeler cried, "Are we to be intimidated by this ruffian?" A sarcastic voice, well back, cried out that it looked as if they were. Madame seemed still weak and distraught, but she had her black eyes open.

"Here! Here!" somebody yelped. "Look out! Horst has a gun!"

That startled everybody except Bill, who looked with intent peering, trying to spot Horst. It was made the easier because the people all about him surged aside, wanting to stand clear; so in no time at all, there stood Horst pretty much by himself with a big Navy revolver wobbling in his unsteady hand. He looked up at Cap'n Bill, lifted his arm.

The table leg swirled in a long-armed stroke as Bill jumped. The revolver went off aimlessly, high over Bill's head. The gun fell from Horst's broken wrist.

Bill's left fist cracked alongside Horst's ear and Horst lay down, chin first. Bill grumbled something about spoiling a good fight with a thing like a gun and looked about slowly, just in time to see Mr. Estratrau pounce, knees down, for the revolver. Bill stamped on his fingers and Estratrau yelped.

Bill took up the revolver, held it with no menace. There wasn't anybody here he would have shot, however thick the row got. They were just damn fool islanders, didn't understand the sea and its men. Talked too much. Strutted, too, he thought, in a curious way as if trying to make it difficult for other people to imitate 'em, pass for one of 'em. Bill said, "Huh!" His look in the deepening shadows singled out Madame, and he swung the table leg vaguely overhead. "Next you'll be wantin' me to pay for that hole in the ceilin' 'cause Horst missed me!"

Madame, the inexplicable, waved a hand toward the darkness. "You, Bill, go! Get out of my hotel, you devil!" She seemed to be pleading wearily; then spoke generally, 'Let him go! It is best! He will kill somebody, the devil!" Somehow Madame sounded as if she really had a weak liking for devils.

"You comin', Extra?" Bill asked, ready to see that he came anyhow.

Estratrau's blood-dribbled whites gave him a ghostly aspect in the increased gloom. Even his strained face had a gaunt pallor, strangely visible.

"But why?" cried Madame in a startled voice. Madame did not care to lose a paying guest.

"I must go," said Estratrau weakly.

"We're old acquaintances," Bill put in. "Some business started in Sydney ain't finished yet. We're goin' to sea, ain't we, Extra?"

At that Madame made an hysterical sound, not unlike laughter and clapped her hand to her mouth, put down her head.

Cap'n Bill slowly poked the revolver butt-first into a trouser's pocket, put a

hand on Estratrau's arm, took a firm hold but was also helpful. Estratrau looked in need of help, as a blind man does. They went out on the verandah, walked along to the front steps, vanished into the shadows.

CHAPTER IV

ROGUES' RENDEZVOUS

ESTRATRAU, dragging his feet with Bill's hand on his arm, made two or three starts at talking, reconsidered, grew silent. He was like a man who could play but one rôle, that of the superior, top-lofty personage. Bill had cracked that manner as a crab's shell is cracked, left him awkwardly helpless.

Cap'n Bill still carried the table leg as if it were a cane; now and then he swished at a shrub. He, too, was thinking, not of Estratrau, who was merely some kind of a scoundrel, but of Madame, the woman, pretty even if not young, and remembering her hand in his hair, the kiss, the brandy.

"She was up to somepun, though," Bill decided and grinned, gave Estratrau a look. Reviewing the incident, he was pleased to be convinced that a woman like Madame hadn't got him drunk, or nearly so, in collusion with a swab like this.

Their feet crunched the soft sand that lay white and warm between grass and the tide's last mark. Near the water's edge natives were a-stir, making ready for night fishing with torch flares. They ran an outrigger into the water for Bill, who scanned the bay.

There was no moon up yet and gauze-like clouds dimmed the stars. Bill could not see his schooner, but he could see that lights were not burning where his schooner had been anchored. He promised to skin Jody alive, make a purse out of his old hide—"put it to a better use than it's been these seventy years!"

"Come on," he said to Estratrau, who held back at the water's edge as if not wanting to wet his feet.

"Captain," he began in an earnestly respectful voice, "let us talk."

"No. When I talk with fellers like you, I get the worst of it." Bill held up his table leg. "When I use a club, I don't!"

Estratrau's voice had a womanish whine, as if pleading for his life, and Bill's ears crinkled in disgust, liking this tone even less than arrogance. "Captain, I was a wealthy man but unfortunate speculations caused me to have to leave Sydney, so I took what wealth I could get my hands on—let us share! Then I can go my way on the steamer that is overdue, and you, a rich man, can go yours!"

Estratrau peered forward, sniffing, trying in the dimness to see any little flicker of yielding on Bill's bronze face. Cap'n Bill, simple-mindedly, had only one thought in his head:

"You know about the murder of that man with whiskers he borrored. Mother Sampson is my friend, and—"

"That old beach—" Estratrau, weakly infuriated, called her a name, a bad name, not perhaps an untrue name.

Bill coolly said, "Beach so-and-so or not, she's a good friend of me. That's what I care about. That's all I care about. So you're goin' back, an—"

"I am not!" Estratrau screamed. His desperation had already made a hasty plan, hopeless but he was without hope; so he snatched at the big revolver poked down butt-first in Bill's hip pocket. The revolver came free, muzzle-on in Estratrau's hand. Bill struck backhandedly. The revolver dropped, splashed into the water's edge, and Estratrau was flattened out on the sand.

Bill turned to pick the gun out of the water but Estratrau squirmed, got up, cursed, waved his arms, yelled, "I will

not go!" and started to run with lank ungainliness.

Bill let the gun lie, tossed the table leg aside, made two jumps, caught Estratrau, lifted him, waded into the knee-deep water where the outrigger floated, slammed him down, said, "Be quiet or I'll throw you so far out in hell there ain't no bottom!"

A native had picked up the gun, brought it to Bill, who shook off the sand and water, poked it again into his pocket, got into the canoe.

The natives swept at paddles. One said, "He make one hell of blobbery, that fella."

Bill grunted thoughtfully, felt about for his pipe, could not find it, but his fingers began to fumble inquiringly into a pouch of the money belt. With a twinge of disappointment he discovered that whatever was there was not money. He pulled out a pebble-like lump, frowned at it in the dim starlight. The thing lay dark and colorless in his tarry palm.

"Huh," said Bill, wondering if this Estratrau was crazy like the Portuguese he once knew who, being robbed of his fine pearls, went mad, gathered pebbles, secreted them in a belt, made out that they were priceless jewels; and so got himself murdered by a pair who were hanged through drunkenly belly-aching over their bad luck, the Portuguese's deception. This fellow Estratrau was near to crazy, all right.

Bill absently slipped the pebble back into the pouch, felt about, found that the others were much like the one he had inspected; so he grunted, then took off his water-filled shoes. That made him feel a little better. It was pleasant to stick his feet over the side into the cooling water.

As they draw farther out into the bay, Bill saw the white sails of a brig that was staggering in toward the harbor. He stared as every seaman does at a craft to see if he recognized her, gave it up. Distance and the night blurred outlines, but something seemed wrong with the ship, as if she struggled awkwardly under jury rig or poor sailors.

He looked toward his own schooner, guessed that Jody and the blacks had gone ashore among the bar shanties; that, or worse, they had somehow got drunk on board. He cocked his head, listening, but no shouts or sound of jamboree came from the schooner. The only sign of life was a hazy phosphorescent-like glimmer at the skylight.

The canoe was close alongside and there was no hail, not even from Avis Macaire who, in all reason, ought to have been frightened and lonely, watching from the deck.

Bill glowered, knowing it wouldn't be unlike the drunken Jody to corner the girl in the cabin, tell the story of his wicked life, his numerous betrayals and wrongs from women.

He told the natives to be noiseless, keep the canoe from bumping; and he told the wretched Estratrau that he would break his neck and drop him into the water if he made a struggle. He paid the natives and they helped him get Estratrau into the fore-chains, and Bill pulled him on board, jeering. "Bit of seaman, you! Damn little bit!"

Estratrau groaned that he was sick and hurt. Bill said, "Cheer up. They got a rope in Sydney as will cure all that!"

He took Estratrau by the arm, again warned him to move quietly. About the galley Bill found a huddle of black boys, dead drunk. Empty bottles of trade gin lay near. They had broached stores. Bill guessed how it had been. Jody thought one bottle, even if missed, could be apologized for and do good to his thin old blood; now the lot of them were sodden.

Bill kept a hold on Estratrau, went aft, stopped at the skylight, looked be-

low, swore under his breath and pulled Horst's revolver from the hip pocket. He took Estratrau by the back of the neck, hurried him through the companion, ran him down the ladder, gave a fling, and leveled the big revolver at that damn pirate, Black Pierre.

PIERRE, at ease, stood up and smiled.

Avis Macaire cried, "Oh, don't! Don't!" She jumped up with absurd calico garments in a flutter and rushed to Capn' Bill, her dark eyes bright with alarm. She put her hands to Bill's wrist, pushed the revolver aside.

Pierre's smooth musical voice said, "But ah, *Mademoiselle,* Captain Bill would nevare hurt his good frien' Pierre!" The Frenchman bowed, graceful and good-natured.

"Friend the devil," Bill growled, trying to look more angry than he was. He could distrust this Frenchman, at times wish he had killed him; but he couldn't hate him. "Velvet pants and all, hm? And if I was anchored out in mid-ocean with a purty girl aboard, you'd come, you would!"

"Willingly," said Pierre.

Bill said, "Huh," frowned mightily but grinned a little.

Pierre was a handsome fellow with rings in his ears, black curly hair, a white silk shirt somehow spotless, black velvet trousers. He wore his sash and in the sash was a long knife in a silver sheath.

He looked dainty and was fastidious; but he was strong and quick, and there was no shadow of cowardice in his heart. Of course he was a little crazy to go about in such fantastic garb, be so spotless. He was the nearest to an old-time pirate left in the South Seas, though out-and-out rascals were as common as their brothers, the robber crab, and as furtive and nocturnal. Pierre was bold, also tricky, in his thievery, and was a daring, skillful seaman. The French liked him, gave him harborage and shelter from the English who, Pierre explained, were famously untruthful, jealous of colonial enterprise from the French. French officialdom, knowing Pierre was a gentleman, could not think of him as a scoundrel. The English knew better, had a reward on his head. At need, Pierre would plunder any trader or ship, but often give a written promise to pay—like, he said, the honest man he was. Was not the world full of honest men whose debts were greater than their means?

"I come to visit you, an' lo! I fin' the beautiful *mademoiselle,* who you have brought to talk weeth me! Is not that much good fortune for you an' me?"

"You're a liar," said Bill forthright and unangered. "You come to steal my ship an'—here, *you!*" Bill turned on the wretched Estratrau who, having stared in an unnerved sort of way at Pierre, was edging toward the ladder. "Set down!" Bill waggled the gun aimlessly toward the sea chest.

Estratrau sat down, with furtive sidelong uplift of narrow eyes continued to look at Pierre.

"If you," said Bill, making a guess, "think you'll join up with Perry here an' get the best of me, you're crazy as you look!"

"Who is thees, Bill?"

"Don't know. English, he says, one place. Next place, French. So I—"

Pierre rattled French words and Bill said, "Shut up!" To Estratrau, "If you open your mouth in that lingo, I'll kill you." To Pierre, "You damn pir't, you try fancy tricks on me an' you won't live to be hung!"

Avis Macaire heard and shuddered. Bill's voice was unnervingly brutal; towering beside the polite and gracious Pierre, he looked a ruffian. Bill's rough-

ness, even when plainly genial, made her uncomfortable.

Pierre shrugged a shoulder submissively. "Do not min' heem, *Mademoiselle*. His bark is ver' terrible but his bite, it is so gentle!"

"Oh, and he can prove," Avis cried, "that he was at Tahiti when the *McKeekee* was robbed!"

"An' weel!" Pierre was instantly excited. "To do a coward crime like that theeng an' make it so people say, I, Pierre the Black, have done it—Sacred Name! I weel fin' an' cut the throats of—" His dark eyes blazed and he clapped a hand to his knife.

"Aw, shut up. Nobody believes you done it, 'cept maybe a lot of big wigs. You ought to be hung anyhow, so if they make a little mistake—"

"Captain Jones, please!" Avis was pleading and indignant.

"There you are!" Bill flung a hand toward her. "Women allus take his part—if they're purty!" Avis flushed with increase of anger.

Bill looked blank for a moment as he always did when thinking, then laughed. He clapped down the revolver on the table, gave Pierre's chair a push. "Set down, you damn pir't. I just figgered out somepun! Madame certainly done her part all right. Purt-near got me drunk so you could come off and steal my ship. I wondered why she kept watchin' as if she wanted to see if it was dark. Anyhow, it was good brandy and—" Bill stopped. He didn't talk to other people of the kisses women gave to him.

Pierre sat down, smiled. "I tol' Madame, no! I tol' her, 'My frien' Bill may grow what you call woo-zee, but drunk, nevare! I have seen heem—' "

"For once," said Bill, "I'm glad Jody was drunk. And the boys, too. Jody'd rather sail with you than me. You'd have been out to sea by now if there'd ha' been a sober boy aboard!" Bill had his eyes watchfully on Estratrau, asked Avis, "They bother you? Jody and the crew?"

"Oh, no, no. They didn't; really. I was—was uneasy. But no, they stayed in the bows and—"

"That's good," said Bill. To Pierre, "You're smart, but I'm lucky. 'Magine me ever bein' glad my crew was drunk, dead drunk! Oh, well, let's have a drink."

Pierre said, "With pleasure," and lied graciously. He detested the sort of stuff, bad gin, worse whisky, that Bill kept on board.

"What you doin' here on the island?" Bill asked.

"My frien', I have much business in many places. A sheep was to come, but it did not, so—" Pierre shrugged a shoulder.

"So you thought you'd steal mine, but didn't. But next time I see her, Madame charges me with that brandy!" Bill went to the cupboard, called over his shoulder, "How in hell does a woman like Madame put up with a short-tailed rat like that Felix?"

"I do not know. But I can tell you, my frien', it is mos' likely that Madame weel be blessed with widowhood if the toad Felix do not quit the hope to get what the fool Engleesh are weeling to pay!"

BILL clattered down cups, three of them, set down an unopened bottle of whisky, a partly filled bottle of gin. He generously poured whisky, looked at Avis; "No?"

"No, please," she said.

He poured more into the cup, pushed it nearer Pierre. To Arvis, "They'll give five thousand dollars for this feller down at Sydney. It's not enough. Handsome devil like him ought to fetch ten thousand." Bill sipped gin with an eye over the cup on Estratrau. "For ten thousand," Bill went on, "I'd hang 'im myself!" His look good-humoredly accused Pierre, "Allus stealin' my girls!"

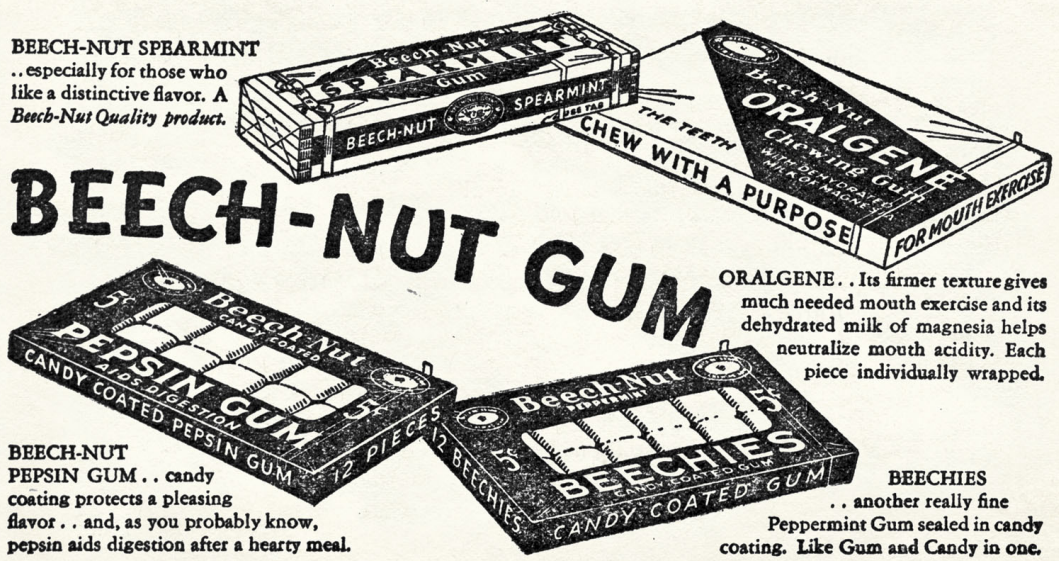
Again Avis Macaire shuddered. Her eyes fell. She lifted them and her look was filled with disfavor. It angered her deeply to be called "his girl". Certainly he looked, talked like a brute. Her glance went pityingly toward Estratrau; partly to change the conversation she asked, "Who is he? And," this with subdued but evident reproach, "why have you hurt him so?"

"Him?" Bill went on sipping gin as if he liked the fiery flavor. "I don't know what of him. Tried to shoot me in Sydney. To knife me today while I was asleep."

"Madame has tol' me that he was ver' mysterious," Pierre murmured, looking intently at Estratrau.

"He's crazy," said Bill, and slowly began to pull at his shirt. As he talked he took off the shirt, pitched it aside, stood half naked, fingered the wide money belt, unbuckling it. "But somepun's wrong. It was this way. There at Mother Sampson's a man comes and said. . . ."

He told the story, all he knew; told,



too, that he guessed the boarders who had got knocked from the bulwarks that night had expected to find this fellow on board. He told, grinning widely, of what had led him to take possession of the money belt today, and dropped the belt to the table. "He's crazy. Full of pebbles—here, damn you, set tight!"

Estratrau had got up as if about to run but collapsed as Bill jumped at him, caught hold of him, lifted him, half threw him back on the chest. "Set tight!"

Avis Macaire cried out. Bill looked around. She was half out of the chair and hovered over the table with her hands out as if not quite daring to touch what lay before them. A look of amazement distorted her pretty face and she was holding her breath.

Pierre, too, was out of his chair. His eyes glittered. He brushed the cup of whisky off the table to make more space in which to empty other pouches of the belt. The cup clattered, rolled. Before Pierre lay a thick scattering of glass-like stones, green and red.

Bill peered, asked doubtfully, "Them things worth anything?"

Pierre's slim, deft fingers moved rapidly. As if not trusting his voice, he whispered in low, vibrant excitement, "My frien', rubies and emerald!"

There was a sudden splatter from the next pouch, a tiny hail-like fall of twinkling brilliants that gleamed, danced, rolled, dropped to the deck with faint clicking. "Diamon'! My frien'. these cannot be other than the jewels of the *McKeekee!*"

Avis with a joyful look in her eyes began to cry; over and over she gasped, "Father!"

Bill swore in a muttering, incredulous sort of way. Then the three of them, as if at a signal, looked at Estratrau, who shrank, huddling back against the bulkhead, his small eyes stretched wide in terror.

Pierre slowly took his fingers from the belt; carefully, by touch alone, for his eyes were on Estratrau, he brushed the jewels together as if to make sure they would not be lost. He stepped softly from the table, put his hand to the knife, said in a low voice, "So? It is you who keel those men an' feex the crime on Pierre the Black!"

Estratrau screamed.

Out came the knife, up went the arm, and Pierre would have struck had not Bill caught the arm, wrenched the knife loose, flung it to the deck behind him.

"No you don't, Perry! Not him! Why, you blasted fool, we've got to take him to Sydney. Think of Captain Macaire and her there!"

No one said anything. In the silence the slap of the ruffled waves was heard like flabby hands patting the *Alicia* in approval.

Bill looked at the gems again, strangely unimpressed. They didn't look like much. He knew about pearls, not emeralds, rubies, diamonds. Looked too much like glass; like the glass of colored broken bottles glittering in white sand.

Pierre spoke thoughtfully. "You are right, my frien'. It weel not do to keel heem—yet!"

Avis' delicate fingers had feverishly opened another pouch, and in the hollow of her hand lay pearls like tiny small eggs in a nest; large pearls flushed with dawn-light.

Bill hunched close, swore in a whisper, cautiously touched her hands with a tarry finger, moving her hand the better to see under the yellow glow of the dangling lantern.

"An'," he muttered, "I had them strapped to my belly!" With a jerk he cocked his head toward the skylight. "Now what the hell? If they're come to an' think they'll get more gin—"

He crossed the cabin, started up the ladder, stopped, backed slowly down.

Legs were crowded on the ladder above him. In front was a desperate looking big fellow. His mouth was open

and some teeth were missing on one side of his upper jaw. He held a revolver at Cap'n Bill's head, kept Bill's arms out of reach by roaring "Back! Back!" adding oaths. He came down the ladder, followed by a press of some six or seven men, all hard looking cases with faces set in sullen fierceness. All were barefooted. One dark-faced small fellow carried a musket, others had knives. The small fellow poked out the musket's muzzle, snarled at Black Pierre, who had picked Horst's revolver from the table. Pierre, no marksman, would have had to shoot close by Bill's head to shoot at the men on the ladder. He laid down the revolver.

The big man of the broken teeth, with jerk of thumb, clicked back the hammer of the revolver in his hand; roared at Cap'n Bill, "Back, on back, or I'll blow your head open!"

Bill showed the bulge of tensed shoulder muscles. He was pridefully bullheaded against giving way, whatever the numbers; but this man had a murderous look and Bill knew him.

The big fellow saw what was on the table, both the gems and the revolver, and his face without softening became pleased. He was cool and restrained his excitement, gave the small man with the musket a shove and a command. The small man took up Horst's revolver from the table, gave it to the leader, who quickly looked to see by the lead noses of the chambered shells that it was loaded.

He put Horst's revolver into his right hand, let out a roar, cocked it and stuck the other into his belt.

"Empty!" he said in a deep, hoarse voice with the sound of telling a great joke. "Used up my cartridges on that damn brig's crew!" Then, "A scow on a mud bank, eh? What'd you think now, my fine jackeroo?" He showed in a wide grin what teeth were left after the crack on the mouth from Bill's belaying pin that rainy night.

At the sight of the jewels men set up a gleeful yelp and scrambled forward, but the big man cursed them, struck with a fist, said he'd shoot, by God!

"Damn your souls, I'll kill you!" shouted the leader and his men seemed to believe him.

Pierre said coolly, "And if you have need, Joe Harbin, I, Pierre the Black, weel help you!"

JOE HARBIN was, among landsmen, a dreaded name, begave him surprise and no liking to hear that name spoken by a stranger and he glared at this dandified figure. "How d'you know my name?"

Pierre shrugged a shoulder. "I put something together with somethng else. A stranger at the hotel talk much to Madame of Joe Harbin an' is—now I theenk I know why he is afraid." Pierre twirled a hand above the jewels.

But Harbin had not listened attentively. He was eying this man who called himself Pierre. "Are you that Perry the Pirate?"

Pierre bowed a modest acknowledgment but kept his eyes lifted.

Harbin, knowing the fame of Pierre, which had been used to cover the *McKeekee* piracy, expected a seven foot giant of a man, ferocious of aspect, with sulphurous light in his eyes.

"You that pirate?" Harbin swore foully, mingled laughter with oaths. "So you it was stole these jewels off the *McKeekee,* eh? Ho!"

Harbin turned to have more of a look at Avis Macaire. She was pretty, delicate, and terribly frightened, though she stood with a kind of dignity.

"Who's this?" His hoarse voice had a greedy sound. Perhaps Harbin judged by the calico that she was the caste that wore calico on traders' boats; perhaps he did not care what her caste.

A commotion started near the ladder. Harbin stepped back and to one side.

An old hand at robbery—at "bailing up" he would have called it—he did not forgetfully face about and he did keep the revolver more or less in line with Cap'n Bill, of whom he was far more afraid than of the dandified Frenchman.

The men had found Estratrau huddled miserably, with head out of sight under his folded arms, behind the ladder, where he had tried to lie like a heap of old clothes. They dragged him out, scratching and striking his face, and by their outcries damned him for having made off with the jewels.

Harbin roared that nothing could have pleased him more than finding this fellow; that is, after finding the jewels and—he looked at Avis Macaire, laughed coarsely. He pleased his men by telling Estratrau some of the punishments he would get. Frying the soles of his feet were among the more moderate.

They all were gleeful.

"A right to be!" said Harbin, brutally a-grin.

Some, when the jewels were carried off, leaving them empty handed in Sydney, had been willing to sit down, get drunk, curse their luck, give up. Not Harbin. The chance looked hopeless; but they had all taken passage, a few as passengers, others as sailors though they weren't seamen, on a brig bound for San Francisco. Then, in order to reach Trigg Island, they had taken command of the brig at sea, not without murder, and forced the mate to act as navigator. The brig's honest sailors had tried to retake the ship. Then Harbin had used up his cartridges; and so with lubberly seamanship they made their way to Trigg Island, not really expecting luck but hoping to learn where next to go in search of the *McKeekee's* jewels.

Harbin made the little dark man that carried the musket, and whom he seemed to favor above the others, gather up and put into the belt's pouches all the stones and pearls. There was a greedy search about the deck for any stones that had splattered into dark corners, and a bearded fellow with a short pipe in his mouth found Pierre's long white handled knife where it had fallen when Bill threw it away.

Their good luck excited them into much talk, much drinking of gin and whisky; and Harbin flourished his cup, drank with his greedy eyes over the brim on Avis Macaire.

The men, busy and meddlesome as monkeys, broke open the cupboard, broke into the sea chest, scattered stuff, prowled about but never far from Harbin, around whose waist the little dark man, called Mig, had strapped the belt.

Cap'n Bill stood and glowered with eyes sullenly bright. He was thinking. The dangling lantern was too firmly swung to be knocked off, bringing darkness in which any head that a hard fist hit would be an enemy's.

Avis Macaire's delicate face was now pale, now flushed as fear and anger came and went. Her firm mouth quivered a little at times, even with lips tightly pressed. She huddled her calico with tight, modest clutch about a bare shoulder and lowered her eyes uneasily before Harbin's greedy stare. Also, she was hurt, as if by betrayal, at Black Pierre's submissive graciousness to this brute; for Pierre, with adroit expression of wonderment, like flattery, got Harbin boastfully to tell the story.

He told it sketchily, with a kick or two at Estratrau when his own words reminded him of Estratrau's rascality, and with much pouring of whisky, for his hoarse voice seemed to need much moistening; but he told enough for Pierre to understand that Estratrau, whatever his name, for he used many, was more than an ordinary rogue. With two companions, Wason and Nomumsen, he had followed the jewels about Europe and to Australia, hoping for a chance to steal them. Then he conceived the idea of piracy. Lacking a sufficient

number of men for so desperate a venture, he had sent his companions into shady places to look for possible recruits. It happened that Harbin, with a shaven face, was on one of his periodic visits to Sydney. "The safest place in the country for me," said Harbin, with knowing nods and fingers at his smooth chin. He was supposed to be bearded.

The plans had been simple enough. When the exhibit of jewels were leaving Australia, Estratrau and Nomumsen, as gentlemen, engaged passage, while Harbin and others went on board as successful miners and they were never seen to speak to Estratrau.

At the same time the man Wason, engaged a sea-going tug, presumably to search for a derelict and salvage.

In the meantime a small schooner, manned by three sailors who had no objection to what they suspected was an enterprise for smuggling Chinamen, was sent to a rendezvous on the coast.

It had been easy to intimidate the surprised officers and passengers of the *McKeekee*, get the jewels. Estratrau's cleverness—he got a smack on the head when Harbin was reminded of it—was disclosed in permitting Harbin and the others to carry off all those jewels to the tug while he, with an aspect as innocent as anybody's, returned with the *McKeekee* when she put back to report the piracy.

It wasn't so much that he trusted them as that he knew Harbin and the others would not venture to make off with the jewels. They were helpless when it came to disposing of such gems.

The men of the tug were murdered, the tug cast adrift, and the schooner brought the pirates back to Sydney. In the dark ashore the three sailors were silenced, for Harbin was not one to endanger his own safety by a little misplaced mercy.

Estratrau then, on the convincing plea that he had fully trusted them and that they ought to do as much with him, got the jewels placed in his hands. He promised to sell off a few of the smaller gems cautiously, and so raise money to get every man among them to Europe, where all would become rich.

HARBIN, convinced but not unsuspicious, had kept spies watching, and they reported that Estratrau had vanished.

He had gone into hiding by renting the furnished house on Argyle Street under the name of Bainbridge; and the plans he had made for getting away having failed him, he had had to arrange other plans. That was why Nomumsen had been sent to find Cap'n Bill. Then, with his weakness for drink, Nomumsen had become worse than helpless.

He could not be left behind to blab, so Wason had been sent to attend to him—with a knife.

Harbin and his men, ranging desperately about the town, had even on such a bad night stirred up the suspicious police; and they were out in force just about the time that the bushrangers got their hands on the unlucky Wason, strangled him into telling of Estratau's engaging the *Alicia*—as Wason thought—for Trigg Island.

Whereupon Harbin and his men floundered about in the rain before locating the *Alicia*; then had been beaten off.

"And I'll pay you in full for that!" said Harbin with the cup before his mouth. "You and your damn ship! Here you, Mig," he said to the small man with the musket, "take this girl and get her out in our boat. We'll have sweet company on our way to South America."

Harbin called to his men to come together and make ready to leave.

Mig took hold of Avis' arm. She drew back. "Oh, you won't come!" He caught the dress, jerked. It was a frail garment, not sewed. Men urged him to pull it off, said things that were unclean, made laughter. Harbin stood amused,

broken teeth grinning in a half-open mouth.

Bill said, "You swabs, let that girl be!"

Harbin leveled the revolver straight at Bill's naked breast. "Shut up!"

Bill looked at the girl, who was holding tight to keep the calico about her, at the grinning Mig, at the half dozen other leering faces. Bill said to Harbin, "Them jewels—that's part of win or lose! My ship the same. But a girl—one of my girls—I'll be damned if all the guns ever made can make me stand and let you—"

Avis screamed. Bill jumped at Harbin's leveled gun.

He knew Harbin could not miss, but a wound is not always death. And Harbin, who had murdered many a man, knew he could kill any man at that range. A hoarse laugh and a curse was on his mouth as the hammer fell with a sharp *clack*—just that, nothing more.

The revolver had fallen into the water on the beach. The water had dampened the primers.

Bill hit him. The fury that for nearly an hour had been boiling up was in the blow, and all the force that Bill could summons to make the blow hurt even if he were hard-hit by a bullet first. It took Harbin on the jaw, knocked his head over, cracked the bone. A flurried look of amazement crossed the bush-ranger's face as he went down with much the sound of a sack of potatoes being thrown to the deck, and he lay as if as lifeless.

With shadow swiftness Pierre jerked his own knife from the belt of the surprised bearded man, standing near, who had picked it off the deck. He whipped the knife's edge across the bearded throat, turned and the silken sleeve fluttered as Pierre, accurate to the inch, raised his arm and drove the blade into the black Mig, just where neck and shoulder met.

Bill, blindly mad, drove head-first at men. For once in a fight he was silent; for once, crazed. The yellow lantern light caught the shadows of squirming arms up-tossed, gave them devilish shadows on the bulkheads.

Bill grabbed a man by the hair, with one surging drive of arm and shoulder-lurch banged the head against a bulkhead, let the dead man drop.

Knives in frantic arms struck at him, slashed. He slashed back, bare-fisted, his arm like a club. The outcry was that of a madhouse in flames; only Bill was silent. He leaped high at the ladder, caught a fleeing man's ankle—Estratrau's—and while men slashed at Bill's back he jerked the man down with bump-bump-bump of head on the steps, swung him bodily against other men.

Bill took his stand near the foot of the ladder; bare-fisted, he would not let men pass that wanted to go. They cut at him as rats bite, cornered and screaming without hope.

Within half a minute from the blow that knocked Harbin senseless, Bill was bleeding from face, breast, back, head; but he was so thoroughly past all caring about anything except to kill that the knife slashes were no more than splashes of warm water. Blood dribbled into his eyes from slashes that had meant to split his skull, and a haziness from lack of blood blurred his eyes. His arms grew heavy. He staggered, turned, peering hard, heard a voice, lurched at a vague shadow-shape of a man, fell unconscious at the feet of Black Pierre, who was trying to make him understand that the fight was over.

THE *Alicia* in the dawn was far out to sea with as sorry a lot of sick black boys as ever staggered dizzily along a deck. Unwillingly they were at work for the devil that drove them—a devil in a red-stained, tattered white silk shirt and a long white knife in his sash. The tough

old Jody drank much black coffee and used righteous oaths, trying his best to be well thought of by Black Pierre.

Harbin, Estratrau, the clever international rogue, and two or three other wounded, perhaps dying men, had been made fast to ringbolts. Others, dead or seeming so, had been given a hasty burial—a swing and a toss over the side, unshrouded.

"Aye, now Perry my lad," said old Jody with a gleam of respect and liking, "an' where are we headin'?"

"To Wattles Island," Pierre told him. He said Jem Clark was an honest man, that the schooner must go on to Sydney with its news and prisoners; added that he, Pierre, had friends on the side of the island. "An' Captain Bill, who is a ver' great man, he has need for the doctors!"

"You mean," asked Jody with mouth agape, "you're not goin' to—to keep the ship an'—"

Pierre swelled out his shoulders, looked scornfully at Jody. "Pierre is no damn thief!"

Jody backed off, mumbling to himself and wondering what the world was coming to.

It was about at this same time that Cap'n Bill opened his eyes blankly, like a man half roused from feverish dreams.

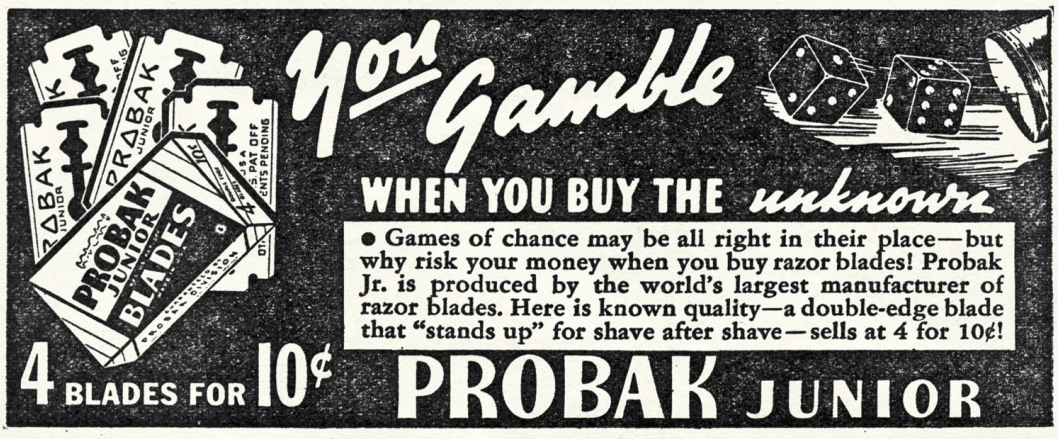
He tried to sit up, to move and could not. He seemed tied and also held down by forceful hands. He knew the schooner was at sea. He knew it just as a bird knows when its wings are spread in flight; and his schooner had no business being at sea with him not on deck.

He was swathed in a bunk. Under his head was something warm and soft. He blinked hard to clear his eyes, because it seemed to him that the prettiest face he had ever seen hovered detached and mistily right before his nose. That could not be, of course, because for one thing this pretty girl did not like him; so Bill squinted, struggled again and was pushed back as if he were a baby. He felt dizzy and weak; heard, "No, Bill!"

The pretty face put a cheek against his cheek. He felt her kiss, not one but many, so he lay back and didn't care whether or not he was out of his head.

Avis Macaire bent over him with her arm under his head and her lips at his ear, and she whispered, "Oh, how I thank God that I am one of your girls, Captain Bill!"

THE END



Hooves, bracing against a tide they could not stop . . .

RUSTLERS' RANGE

by LUKE SHORT

BEGIN STORY HERE

SCATTERED, empty shell cases, a cold camp-fire, the marks of a fatal gun fight—these were all that Mark Flood, trail boss, could find of the great Shifflin herd of three thousand cattle and ten men who were to have met him on the banks of the Ruidoso River.

Flood, in charge, had sent Shifflin ahead with half the herd. At the time, it had seemed like good tactics. Now, confronted by Wheat, one of the ranchers who had accompanied him, Flood saw how foolish it had been. Before a ring of angry, puzzled cowmen, Wheat flatly accused Flood of having deliberately stayed three days behind the main herd so that planned disaster might strike it. Worse, Wheat revealed that Flood was the brother of Gordon Flood, who had been hanged the previous year in the same territory—for having betrayed a herd and its riders to fatal ambush!

Flood left the remnant of the herd, with the intention of tracking down the

mystery and clearing his name. After days of fruitless search he located a town, Clearwater, in a valley leading out of the nearby hills. From what trail signs he could read, this was the nearest settlement to the spot where half of his comrades had been killed. Here, therefore, the answer must be found.

Clearwater, Flood discovered, was an armed camp. The powerful Hand and Petrie spreads were fighting a claw and fang range war for the rights to the rich Bearpaw range.

Flood hired out to Hand and immediately got a taste of the bitterness between the two rivals. While guarding the Hand herd, they fought off an attack by Petrie riders, one of whom was trampled to death in the resulting stampede. Unknown to Hand, Flood rescued Petrie himself and Margot Curtin, his fianceé, and let them escape in the darkness and confusion.

Later, Flood wondered whether the gesture had been wise. For Petrie, blind to anything but hatred, had the body of the dead cowman taken secretly over to his own rangelands, where it was ostensibly discovered, and Hand was arrested, accused of the very crime which Petrie had tried to commit.

But Petrie had not counted on one thing—the fact that Margot would not stand by and see an innocent man framed. Told of the true situation by Flood, Margot went to the marshal's office and revealed that Petrie, her lover, had hoaxed him with false evidence.

It had been a brave and chivalrous thing to do, Flood knew. It had made an implacable foe of the man she had planned to marry. Worse, it tied her through bonds of loyalty and forced trust to Flood himself, a man she believed to be a hired gunman. And it could end in only one way, she realized. One of the two must die!

CHAPTER XI

STAMPEDE

WHEN Coe left Flood and rode south, there was a rage in him that seemed as if it had always been there and would never die. He had felt it once before, and that time he had killed a man; ridden away; and he had never regretted it. But what he was about to do now he knew he would regret. No, he would regret not so much what he was about to do as the way he went about doing it. But there is a time for all things, he reflected. The image of Petrie rose before him, and then the picture of Ben Hand, the man he loved, crowded it out of his mind. He saw Hand in jail, helpless, chained by a lie, and the injustice of it was hot in his blood.

He stopped first at a mean cabin and talked without dismounting, after refusing politely to eat. The man he talked to was in bib overalls, a faded, dirty man who kept kicking a yapping cur away from Coe's horse. It ended with the man coming with him. His second stop was at a similar place, and here he met with refusal from a white-haired man who kept shaking his head all the time Coe talked. But at the third, fourth and fifth places—some better than others—were men who listened and came with him. Some places he picked up two and three men.

And then he swung over to the small ranches and tried them, and men came with him. These men were grim-faced, and they looked on the first recruits with ill-concealed contempt. But they came, so did others, whom he summoned by sending out his first recruits, so that it was still early afternoon when the crowd of them rode up to a small shack deep into the Wagon Hammer range.

"I don't have to go over all this

again," Coe told them. "This is your chance to down him. God knows, he has given enough cause." He paused. "Or has he?"

They nodded or yelled as their several natures prompted them. Coe hated nearly all their faces, their mean, small spirit as reflected in their mob bravery, and he hated himself more. But he had to admit he had chosen well. Every man of them had a real or fancied grievance against Petrie and his Wagon Hammer outfit. Most of them were squatters, whom Petrie moved out at will, as does any big outfit plagued by their whining and borrowing and stealing. Others were small ranchers whom Petrie had antagonized or frozen out or overrun. Coe had put them a blunt proposition. With their help, Petrie would be ruined by morning. Would they risk a neck to see it done? It seemed they would.

He went on: "There won't be more than a half dozen men riding herd, but those men must not be allowed to get free. Understand that?"

They did, it seemed, and with much grinning.

"I don't want you to comb that range for every head, but get most of them—far more than half. It will be easy, because most of the Wagon Hammer stuff has been thrown down in this corner for loose herding. Line out and take it fast, and don't beat the brush. You'll get enough without it, and we can't spare the time. Try to be at Alamoscita Springs by dark."

One man said: "It's a hell of a waste of good beef, it seems like, Coe."

"If you kept what you found, they'd be building a new jail in Clearcreek," Coe said bluntly. It seemed they agreed on that too.

Another man said: "One thing ain't so good about this Coe. What's he goin' to do?"

"I've told you he's got a war on his hands that will keep him busy. If this goes through, he won't have the money to pay fighting men, and without men, he can't do any more to you than I could alone. Besides that, I doubt if he'll win this fight."

When they received fuller instructions, they rode off. Coe counted over forty men. A sober-faced rancher pulled up beside Coe and watched them go.

"That's a hell of a crew to let write their own ticket, Coe," he said grimly. "They'll kill and barbecue every Wagon Hammer rider."

"Can you think of another way?" Coe asked grimly.

"No. I don't even like to think of this."

"Nor do I." He looked over at the man. "Do you want to pull out, Yancey?"

The rancher shook his head. "No. I've waited years to see it done. Why did they come now when you called them?"

"Didn't you ever see a dog fight?" Coe asked softly. "They all pile on the down dog. They think Petrie's down, or will be. And so he will."

FOUR different times that afternoon, Coe heard gunfire. He tried to forget those times in work, in directing his end of this sweep. It was haphazard, but the open, rolling country, stippled with clusters of trees and free of deep ravines or canyons, made it easy. Petrie had thrown his herds down in this far corner of his range, away from where he reckoned the fight would be. Coe had guessed long since that he would, and had known it when he rode over the Wagon Hammer range the week before and saw it almost cleared of cattle.

It was a fool thing for Petrie to do, but his arrogance had made him underestimate Hand's ability. A few quick forays a little way into the Wagon Hammer range was all Petrie gave Hand credit for being able to swing. And if

his herds were out of the way, even those would be fruitless. As for the dozen mean nesters squatting on the fringe of his domain, Petrie had never given them a thought. Mice do not attack a fox. And yet they were, Coe reflected; and they would do it with a vindictiveness that left nothing to be wanted.

As far as sight went, he could see men pushing bunches of a dozen or so cattle into the herd which was pooled now down in the shallow valley before him. There must be four or five hundred there, and over to the south and north, there would be six or eight more herds like it.

Riders kept moving this herd down the valley toward the springs, picking up more cattle on the way which they pushed into the main stream. It was fat beef, neither thirsty nor hungry, and docile, so it moved at a good pace. Coe kept watching the sun, wishing that in some way he could blot it out and have night for a cover. Three hours ago, he had been praying for more daylight, but now he saw he would have enough and to spare.

But it was deep dusk, almost night, when they reached the springs. There was still enough light for him to see the vast herd here on the flats beside the creek. And then, for some unaccountable reason, he knew that Flood would never have done this, nor let it happen.

For Flood was a man Coe liked and knew, although they had spent precious few hours together. This crawling, furtive, rabble-rousing destructive war was a thing Flood would dread, just as Coe dreaded it. To put men and families and outfits against each other by wanton destruction and cunning was a thing Coe hated, for he was wise enough to see that it would have no end. But he reasoned hotly that he had not called the turn, and that Petrie wanted it that way or he would not have done what he did.

But for a minute there, sitting motionless on his horse as the sharp cries of the riders around and below him kept urging cattle into that vast, slowly milling pool, Coe's courage almost failed.

Then it was over, for he saw it was too late to turn back. The hardest job lay ahead. These sullen, excited fools mounted on poor horses and helpless before more than fifty head of cattle would have to put this herd on the move.

It was full dark when they had. Coe organized it like a trail drive, with two riders at point, the lead steers following them. There were plenty of men to ride swing on each side and keep the herd bunched and moving, while the most of them rode drag and prodded on the laggards. They went east, the friendly night about them, as dark and secret as their thoughts.

Coe reckoned he had close to five thousand head of cattle here, better than two-thirds of what Petrie claimed was his entire tally. Riding from group to group, he questioned them. Had they run across Wagon Hammer riders?

Yes, they had. It had been fun to give those greedy sons some of their own medicine. One trio of Wagon Hammer men had put up a fight, but they were smoked out and cut down. Coe learned there had been a line camp up at the head of a timbered valley over to the north and east.

"Did you burn it?" Coe asked, knowing they had.

"Sure. And everything that was in it," one man boasted, and laughed.

"They were dead, though," another man put in quietly.

Coe turned away, sick. By count, he had found there were at least eight Wagon Hammer men accounted for. Only one of them, surprised at the foot of a shallow box canyon, had been spared. He had been tied and thrown into the brush, and his horse hobbled.

As the night progressed, Coe became

easier. Even if a man had got to Petrie with word of this, it would be slow work to follow them. The night was thick and moonless. They had a little better than five miles to go, and even now they had moved off Petrie's range and were crossing one to the east that would be relatively strange to Wagon Hammer riders.

But Coe found that long ago his patience had been exhausted. From an idea, a belief, he had nursed this cursed thing into something bigger than he could comprehend. Envy rode on stronger wings than he had guessed. And now, with five thousand steers strung out over three quarters of a mile in the night, the thought of waiting longer was intolerable. He remembered that he had not smoked since mid-afternoon and he rolled a cigarette and then was afraid to light it, although he knew the sound of the cattle moving would carry farther than the smothered light of his match. He threw the cigarette away and cursed, and rode up ahead, knowing he could do nothing to hurry things, but wanting some release from this tension.

It was slow, slow, timed to the ponderous swing of the earth itself. Coe cut out a mile to the side and listened, and he could hear nothing but the night noises and in the infinitesimal rumbling, which he might have imagined. Then, seized with terror lest something had gone wrong in his absence, he rode madly back to the herd—and found that everything was the same. They had not moved, it seemed, all the time he was gone.

And yet he could see the progress. Riding wide of the herd so as not to startle them, he rode up to the man who was picking the trail.

"How much more?" he asked.

"Soon now," was all the man would say.

"But name it, man!" Coe said harshly.

"I don't know. I do know we're over the hump and on the long slope."

"Don't forget," Coe said. "When it's safe, send a man back and pull out of here. Don't shoot, whatever else you do."

And still nothing, nothing but the quiet incurious movement of the herd, the occasional, short bawling of protest, and the throb of the earth under him and the sound of it in his ears.

He rode past the swing riders and heard them mouthing a bawdy song that yet was gentle and rhythmical and told the cattle they were being herded by friends.

HE WAS close to the men riding when it happened. A shot ripped the night and then from far behind the herd came a half dozen more. Coe rammed in his spurs and rode for the group close to him.

"Fight them off the sides before you run!" he shouted, and cursed with bitter, almost tearful impotence as he swung his horse around and started toward the herd. Racing now, he pulled out his gun and started to shoot and yell, edging closer to the rear of the startled herd. Then, from across the herd, came more shots from the swing riders, and shouts. Someone over there had sensed that a stampede must be bred.

And it was only a matter of seconds before the slow rumbling turned into a pounding, muttering rumble. Coe felt a hot surge of excitement run through him. They were in motion now, stampeded by the racketing gunfire behind him, and, what was more important, they were headed right. If he could make the lead, he could do it, and all the Wagon Hammer men in the country could not stop it.

He rode wildly, quirting his horse, not caring what happened to these men. Slowly but doggedly his horse was overtaking the herd, pushing toward the vanguard, while all to one side of him

the panicky frantic bawling welled up to float above the thunder of the running cattle.

And now, as the width of the herd narrowed down to what he knew was the point of the dozen or so strong lead steers, he swung in toward them. A glance at the stars told him he was traveling east, the direction he must hold.

Then he rowelled his horse until it stretched out in a dead run and he pulled up beside the lead steers, who did not swerve a foot from him in their wild, night-bred panic. He swung out ahead and his horse, goaded by the race and by fear too, took the lead. The nearest steer swung in dead behind him and Coe knew he had done it. The whole herd might spread out on a wide front, but they would hold this direction until they were forced and frightened off it or until they dropped from exhaustion.

Where the Wagon Hammer riders had made their blunder was in coming up from the rear. Now, nothing on earth could stem the mad, headlong rush of the herd.

Coe looked behind now, and could see nothing except the black line of cattle that faded into night behind him. Ahead was smooth gray sweep of grass, and nothing more, except the night and wind in his face.

How long? He did not know, but he swore that he would not leave this course until he did know, and swearing it, he felt sweat bead his forehead and his palms were wet.

But when he heard the first rock under his horse's feet he did know. This was the beginning of the rocky edge of the steep barrier rim. He pulled his horse sharply to the right. Looking ahead now, he could see where the gray line dropped off into the black of utter distance.

And then he looked to the other side, and heard before he saw. The herd had lined out on a wide front. He rose in his stirrups and cursed as he first made out the weaving dark line. His gun came up and he emptied it and still the line came.

So now he could see them and he settled back in his saddle. His horse would not turn into them, but shifted the other way, so that the blind, blundering wave when it struck did not roll over him, but took him with them.

He felt the panic then, but only for a moment, for a short few yards. Then he heard the scrape and crunch of many many hooves bracing against a tide behind them that they could not stop.

He felt every muscle in his horse's back swell to bursting and then he floated forward, all knowledge fled and joining in the scream of his horse and the cattle, as he left the barrier rim for space.

He remembered dropping his gun.

CHAPTER XII

SPLIT-UP

STANDING in front of the hotel after Margot left him, Flood was aware of two things at once; the street was no place for him, and the blood on his face was caked like a mask of mud.

There was a clot of men close to the sheriff's office. Those would be the Wagon Hammer riders after Petrie. Flood crossed to the feed stable, walked down its wide center aisle and out to the horse trough in the corral at the rear. In the cool darkness, he stripped off his shirt and washed. The water bit into his raw knuckles, smarted his face and lips and yet felt soothing. He sloshed it over his chest and back and felt his muscles gather a new strength in protest against its chill.

Finished, he paused in the rear door, where he could look through to the street. A half dozen saddle horses were

in stalls, and he caught the sound of their rhythmical chewing and occasional stomping. He was ravenously hungry; yet he knew if he showed himself on the street now, there would be no place in this town he could finish a meal without trouble. When the Wagon Hammer men had Petrie with them and saw him and listened to Breck's bitter, vindictive tongue, they would hunt the town for him. Mayhew and Honeywell could police them just so long as they did not find him. Flood looked up into the dark haylofts that rose above the stalls on either side of the big centerway. Why not there?

He traveled down the long aisle toward the front, paused, then turned and climbed a stall and swung himself up to the overhang and was in deep hay.

Soon he had found a place against the front of the building where the weathered boards had parted enough to allow him a view of the street. He could see the hotel through one crack, and by moving five cracks down, he could see the sheriff's office too. It was still dark, and now the crowd in front of the shattered store window was gone. Something moved in the door of the sheriff's office and quieted again. That would be the sad marshal, guarding the jail.

Flood settled back into the soft hay and let weariness flow over him in a slowly pulsing wave. It was warm up here against the roof in the hay, and he wanted to sleep, but the knowledge of danger glowing like a coal in his mind would not let him drowse. He had seen lynchings and knew how they were made. A dozen sullen men drinking in a saloon, with their enemy in jail just across the street. Whisky and their own words would give them courage. A word, a look, a gesture would start it off into something only guns could quell.

Sometime soon, Morgan or Emory or Coe would ride in, and their entrance might kindle this flame. Hand had to be moved out of jail, and Flood wondered if he could not walk across the street, put a gun on Honeywell and then take the chance of bluffing it out beside Hand against those men watching from the Palace Saloon. He would do that if he had to.

He knew soon that he would have to smoke if he wanted to keep awake. He packed his pipe carefully, lighted it carefully and put out the match between his fingers. A spark in this hay would touch off an inferno, but now that seemed of secondary importance.

Toward the end of the second hour, he saw eight Wagon Hammer men cross the street to the hotel. Mayhew sauntered after them, a shotgun crooked in his arm. They did not stay long there, but crossed to the feed stable. Flood guessed that the stableman below had been watching this business, for these men stopped at the door and he was there to speak with them. Through the crack, Flood could see Mayhew leaning against a building across the street, and then he forgot him as Breck spoke below.

"You know him. Where is he?"

"I couldn't say. His horse is still here," the stableman replied. One of the men went back to look and confirmed this.

"I saw him come in here," Breck said.

"All right, look," the stableman said. "This place has two doors, remember."

"He likely walked through," one man said.

"We'll look, anyway," Breck said surlily. "Get up there in the loft."

"You take a lantern or light a match up there and you'll get run out of town," the stableman said grimly.

"And who will do it?" Breck asked.

"Not me. The sheriff, the marshal, and every man owning property in this town will do it. You start a fire in that hay and the whole town will go."

"All right," Breck said after a pause. "Get up without a light," he directed one of the riders.

The man swung up on the side opposite Flood. He beat around blindly in the hay, then called down: "I could be standing on him and wouldn't know it."

"Come on down," Breck said disgustedly. They walked down the center aisle and out the back and it was quiet again. But that was only on the surface. Flood heard Mayhew make his solitary way through the stable after them and go out the back. Honeywell still stood in the door of the office. Every twenty minutes, Honeywell would flare a match, and for the next five minutes there would be a glowing pinpoint of red in the door that did not move. Then it would arc out into the street, and the door would be dark again.

Flood watched it with a tension that grew within him. The town darkened a little as it grew later, but nothing else changed. He guessed it was close to midnight when a rider on a blown horse swung into the main street and galloped down it to the Palace. It was only a matter of seconds before Flood heard men running on the board walk. In a moment, all the Wagon Hammer riders boiled past the stable and out of town. Petrie rode at their head.

Flood climbed down and crossed to the sheriff's office, which was lighted now. Honeywell greeted him sadly.

"What has the Bar Stirrup done now?"

"I wouldn't know," Flood said. "You had better get Hand out now."

"You don't figure that was a trick, then?"

"That horse that came in was close to spent when I saw him."

"All right," Honeywell said. "We'll wait for Max."

MAYHEW stepped inside in a moment and opened the rear door. Another one behind it, this of steel, had to be unlocked. Honeywell held the lamp while Mayhew went back into the tiny four cell jail.

Hand squinted against the light as he stepped out into the corridor. Honeywell handed him his gunbelt and said:

"You better clear out of here now. Your horse is over at the feed stable."

Hand said: "I didn't mind this so much, but I will not come here again."

Flood did not talk until they were clear of town, and then he told Hand all that had happened.

"You say this Curtin girl's word is what decided Max?"

"Yes."

Hand did not say anything for a time, and then he said: "I would never have believed it."

He asked about the fight with Petrie and said nothing about it when Flood finished telling him.

"Then you did not warn Emory like I told you," Hand said.

"Coe did."

"And where are they now?"

Flood told him he did not know.

"Then something has happened," Hand said.

Flood said it looked that way, for a Wagon Hammer rider had come into town on a high lonesome and taken Breck and all the other Wagon Hammer hands out with him.

"That means trouble," Hand said. He looked across at Flood in the dark. "I left you in charge, and still you cannot tell me what my men have been doing."

Flood reined up and so did Hand. Flood said: "Hand, I will not run your fight. I tried to tell you that. You gave me two simple orders and then told me to run this as I liked. I did."

"If it is money you are after, I will pay you what I pay Emory and place you over him."

"I have never said I wanted either."

"Then what is it you want?"

"What I have now," Flood said. "But

what I do not want is to direct a man's own war for him. I will not do it."

Hand spurred his horse and Flood fell in beside him again. The night was quiet all about them, and only occasionally could Flood hear the muted hiss as the wind stirred the pines on either side of them. He knew now that it was too late for him to be classified as just another Bar Stirrup rider. Hand had never acted as if he were, and now he had said so. All the blessed anonymity that he had sought in this country was long vanished. He could not help being a figure in this quarrel after today, even if he wanted to, and now he did not. But to shoulder the responsibility, to have to recall the consequences of what was happening and accuse himself of making them, he would not do.

Hand said quietly into the night: "Money will buy a man anything but his own destiny. I thought I could buy you to help me shape mine, Flood. I see I can't."

"You bought and paid for your own there in the Palace yesterday," Flood said. "Yes. A man can."

If Hand could have found any reproof in that, he was welcome to it, Flood thought.

Hand said: "What was there left for me to do besides fight?"

Flood was not going to say that he should have forgotten his pride, for pride is too often bought with blood, and that is why it is so necessary. He was going to tell him that this quarrel was between Petrie and himself, and that somehow it should be made to remain that, yet when Flood thought of saying it, he knew he was suggesting the impossible.

"Every man settles that for himself," Flood said. "But if you are not careful, no man can live in peace in this country when you two are finished."

"You mean I should have forced a shoot-out."

"If it could have been done, yes."

Hand did not speak for a minute, and then he said in a voice strangled with anger: "I am not a coward, Flood."

"No man has said that," Flood answered mildly. "But men are going to fight who do not hate each other. They will die because there was a piece of land in their country that Ben Hand wanted."

Hand said hotly: "Leave off, Flood! I have thought that enough without your saying it to me."

"Then don't try to bribe me to take the blame due you," Flood said.

"Why are you here?" Hand asked bluntly.

Flood did not answer and Hand did not ask again. When they came to a fork in the road which Flood had noticed, he said:

"Coe said to ride to Hartley. He will tell you what Coe is about."

"We'll ride home first," Hand said.

When, a few minutes later, the road tilted down through the trees and opened onto the edge of the valley across from the Bar Stirrup, they both saw the mound of glowing coals where the house had been. It showed plainly and almost pinkly against the night.

Flood heard Hand stir in his saddle.

"Did you know this had happened?" Hand asked quietly.

"Coe guessed it would. So did you, didn't you?"

"Yes."

Hand made no move to ride over to the burned cabin. It was as if he were struggling to put this behind him too. Presently he said in an almost peaceful voice: "I think that is a good sign. It means Emory fought them off at the line camp, so they could not get at the herd. He did this because there was nothing left to do."

He turned his horse up the valley and they had ridden a half mile almost into the sparse timber, when he added: "I think I will take my five men and fight him with them. I think I can. I would

not like to see those men loyal to me get this too." He gestured back toward the burned house.

FLOOD wondered if those hours in jail had made Hand see things which he would not stop to consider before. He believed it had and he was glad. The timber opened onto a large sloping prairie which they crossed going northeast. Picking up the road at its far side, they kept to it another mile until it forked into a cleared space where a cabin stood.

They were expected, for Emory stood in the door with a rifle and a lantern. His companion was a stooped, gaunt man with bitter eyes and gray hair. Hand introduced him as Hartley, and he shook hands with Flood, while Hand asked Emory:

"What happened?"

"They came. Coe sent word up he thought they would, and we scattered our stuff into the high timber," Emory said.

"Was there a fight?"

"No. But when they went to round up the stuff, we kept worrying them with rifles. They gave up."

"Anybody hurt?"

"Morgan. They caught him in a coulee and rode him down. Killed him."

"Ah." Hand said. "And then they rode off?"

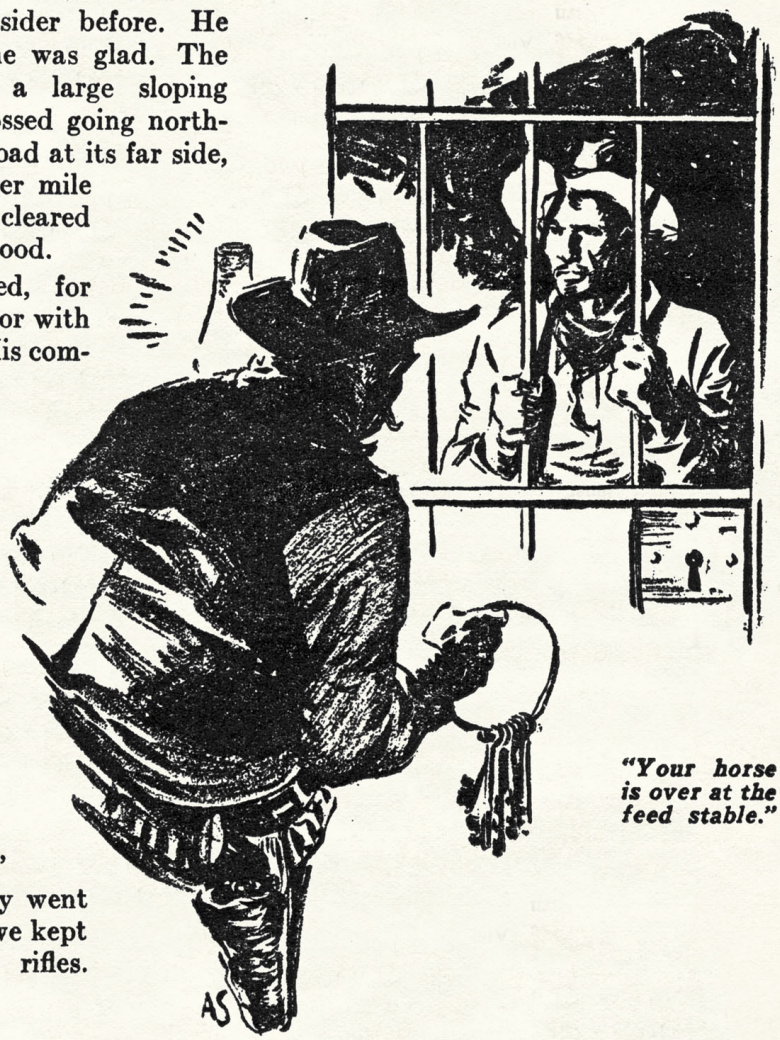
"Yes. The rest of us worked till dark shoving the cattle as high and as far as we could. Most of the stuff is close to timber-line now."

Hartley said: "Get down and come in, Ben."

"Where is Morgan?" was the reply.

"Up there," Emory said quietly. "Nosey is watching."

Hand dismounted, Flood following, and they entered the cabin. Emory said: "I waited until dark and then rode down.



"Your horse is over at the feed stable."

I found the place burned, but this Swanson kid Coe sent up to us told me to wait at Hartley's. I figured Flood was just about enough Bar Stirrup man to be in Clearcreek."

"You didn't," Hartley said grimly. "I did. I had to put a gun on him to keep him here."

The inside of the shack was neater

than if a woman kept it. Hartley took down a skillet and threw in several steaks, while Hand told him and Emory what had gone on in Clearcreek. When he told of Flood's fight, Emory looked over at Flood with appraising eyes. The look Hartley gave him was a different one, one in which there was pity and some contempt. Flood reckoned Hartley an old friend of Hand's who had refused to take sides in this fight or have anything to do with it.

Hand was asking Emory now about Coe, but Emory could tell him no more than he knew.

"I thought he was with you until you rode up here," Emory said.

Flood thought of Coe as he had left him that morning, and then his mind shuttled to those Wagon Hammer riders who had left town in such haste. Somehow, Coe was connected with that, Flood was sure.

The food was ready and Flood and Hand ate, while Emory and Hartley watched. As soon as they were finished, Flood, Hand and Emory turned in, leaving Hartley to sit up for Coe.

Flood did not know what time it was when he was awakened by the scrape of Hartley's chair on the floor. He watched Hartley put out the light and go to the door and open it. In a moment, the older man stepped out into the night, and then returned to get the lantern and went out again.

Flood rose, and so did Hand, who had heard it too. Outside, they found Coe's friend of the bib overalls astride a horse which was nearly foundered. He had asked for Hand, and Hartley waited while Hand walked up beside him.

"Coe said to come to you," the man said.

"Where is he, Swanson?"

"Dead," Swanson said. "Leastways, I think he is." But in spite of the solemnity of the news he was bringing, he chuckled softly, looking at Hand. "Don't never say you ain't got friends in this country, Ben."

"What is it?"

"Close to five thousand head of Wagon Hammer cattle is piled up at the foot of the Barrier Rim," Swanson announced.

Hand said quietly: "What's that you say?"

"It's the truth. Coe come around to me about noon and told me his idea. It never took us long to get a bunch together. We made a quick drive down on the south pasture where most of Petrie's stuff was throwed together. Then we drove them across to the Rim. About a mile from it, them Wagon Hammer riders come down on us, but they come in from behind and started off a stampede. The last we seen of Coe, he was ridin' hell for leather to keep 'em headed right. Taken only a little while for 'em to get to the rim and they piled over it to the last head." He chuckled reminiscently, then swore in slow humor. "If we'd of give that one Wagon Hammer band what the others got instead of tyin' him up, we'd of got away clean. He broke loose and got word to Petrie. It don't matter much, though."

"What did the others get?" Hand asked, his speech beginning to thicken and betray his unbelief.

"I reckon you know that without my sayin'," Swanson answered.

For one fleeting poised moment, Hand looked at Flood, then a harsh savage sound welled up in his throat and he clawed at his gun. Flood leaped at him, his arms pinning his hands to his sides. Hand wrestled in speechless fury.

Flood said between clamped jaws: "Get gone, you fool!" to Swanson.

The man sat his horse for a surprised moment, then opened his mouth to speak, when Hartley stepped up and cut his horse a savage blow across the rump and said: "Get out while you can, damn you!"

Swanson fought his startled horse, wheeled it and vanished out of the circle of lamplight, yelling illiterate curses over his shoulder.

Flood released Hand then, who stood looking off into the night. Then he turned and walked back into the house past Emory, who stepped out of the doorway to let him by.

HARTLEY came in and gently set the lantern on the table, and they all stood in the circle of its light, watching Hand.

Hand raised his head slowly, turning the bleak fury of his gaze on Flood.

"This is why you would not tell me where Coe was."

Flood looked from Hand to Emory, who was watching him with still cold hate in his eyes. Only Hartley was not troubled, but he was watchful.

"You have made the name of Hand a curse in men's mouths," Hand said in slow, flat peroration. "Those seven were not Wagon Hammer riders. They were friends helping Petrie out."

"I knew less about it than you did, Hand," Flood said, a warning edge to his voice. "Be careful of your talk."

"Seven men murdered because you wanted to win this fight your way."

"Even a fool can be just, Hand," Flood said narrowly. His eyes held smouldering pinpoints of anger. "Coe did not tell me or he would never have gone."

"I put you over him."

As Hand's vibrant voice fell and died, all of them heard a horse trot into the clearing outside and then stop.

"Mark Flood!" a voice called—Margot's voice.

Flood stood still a moment, then took a step. Hand raised his arm, barring Flood from the door.

"Go see her," he said to Emory. Flood waited quietly, his eyes as steady as Hand's were hot.

Emory stepped out into the night and returned in a moment.

"She wants him alone."

"She can say what she has to say here," Hand said.

Flood said with ominous gentleness: "Hand, you or no man will tell me what to do."

With slow, solid steps he walked past Hand and out the door, and Hand watched him with murder in his face.

Outside Flood walked over to Margot, and she had already begun to speak as she dismounted. "Mark, you must go! Now! They are after you!"

"Who?"

"Mayhew. Something awful has happened! Petrie rode into town and wakened the sheriff. He swore out a warrant for you on charges of participating in the steal of that Munro herd—the one your brother was hanged for. He swore out a warrant against Hand for the murder of seven men!"

"Are you sure of this?" Flood asked. She was close to him now and some of the excitement in her voice was calmed.

"Yes. Honeywell came over and waked me and told me to warn you."

"Honeywell?" Flood echoed.

"Mark, don't you see they like you? They know you are not guilty. But it is all they can do—Mayhew can do, because something terrible has happened to Petrie. What is it?"

"I have got to tell Hand this," Flood said quietly.

"Of course. Honeywell expected that. But what has happened, Mark?"

"You will know soon," Flood said bitterly. "It will make this range a bloody hell." He could sense her, almost see her, close to him, and he could hear her breathing. "Margot, you should never have done this. Have you got to add this to what you will suffer from Petrie? Couldn't Lee have come with the word?"

"I pay my debts too, Mark," she said softly.

"But I can't leave you," Flood said. "Because Petrie will find out and God alone knows what he will do to you."

"I knew you would say that," Margot said calmly. "Sam Honeywell has moved into the room behind mine, Mark. He said he would when I asked him, and I asked him because I knew you wouldn't leave without my being safe. I will be."

"Yes, Honeywell is a man to trust. But still it was foolish."

"You haven't much time, Mark," Margot said softly; then she said in quiet passion: "Do you think I could let you ride out without showing that I am grateful? This is my way, Mark. Grant me the right to do this much!"

Flood grasped her tightly by the shoulders.

"I have broken into your life enough, Margot," he said quietly. "You saved an innocent man from jail because I asked you to, and not until I fought with Petrie did I know what I had done. You are afraid of him, and I fear him for you—but there is an understanding between you, Margot, an understanding I have no right to question. Yet fearing him, you ride out to me now. If he discovers it, I will have come between you forever."

"What if I want you to, Mark?" Margot asked softly.

SLOWLY, Flood's hands dropped to his side. "You do not know what you are saying."

"Loosh Petrie is nothing to me now, Mark," Margot said steadily. "Last night when he shot at you, and when he cursed me this afternoon, I knew it was finished. I only wanted a way to break it off, a way that would not drag you into it. But should I think of that when you are in danger?"

Flood said: "I am a stranger to you. I would not do that much for a stranger myself."

"I was a stranger to you, Mark, and you did more than this for me. Where is the difference?"

"I will tell you," Flood said, his voice low and urgent. "You are fresh and clean and honest, and sure of yourself and your life. I rode in here to hire my guns, and my dirty job made me ask you to help the man that pays me. You did not even owe it to me to be fair, for what I asked you to do was unfair. And now, because of me, you have become alone and afraid. Is that right?"

"Yes," Margot said quietly. "It is right because I was all wrong, and ready to make a mistake that I could never have wiped away. You did nothing, Mark, except have the courage to show me and tell me that the man I thought I loved did not even respect me." She paused and when Flood said nothing, she went on: "It's true I don't know you. But I do know that you could never do a dishonest thing in your life, could never hurt a weaker person than yourself, that you are clean and wise and strong—"

Flood put a hand over her mouth. He waited a moment and took it away.

Margot smiled in the dark.

"Has no one ever told you that, Mark? Has no woman ever told you that you are lovable and wise and strange?" she said mockingly.

Flood exhaled his breath slowly and gripped Margot's elbows. "I can love you but I will not listen to you mock me."

For a moment, Margot did not speak, then she said brokenly: "Mock you? Oh Mark, are you so blind? I love you so that everything in me cries out for you! Must I shout it and sing it aloud, as I'm doing inside me?"

He folded her to him and kissed her, and the fragrance of her hair and the feel of her parted, warm, yielding lips

"Get gone, you fool!" Flood's jaws were clamped.

was like a drug rioting through him.

"Oh Mark, Mark," Margot whispered. "You are all of me, everything I want. I fought it from the minute I saw you, but I never wanted to. I couldn't! I can't!"

Flood held her out before him, his eyes searching the dark for her face.

"Margot," he said huskily. "I have no right to do this. Not because of Petrie. But—but I am not free. I cannot claim you now."

"But I will go with you, Mark! I will run with you and hide with you and fight with you!"

But before Flood's eyes rose the vision of those eleven men who had trusted him, and who were dead now, and he knew that if he turned from them, there would be no peace in his life from this moment on. A weary bitterness welled up in him and he could not stem it.

"It's not that," he said gently. "You don't know why I am here, Margot, and

I cannot tell you. I will not make you share it. But I cannot come to you until it is done. If it were only running away from a warrant, I would not care. But I cannot run. I must stay here."

"But you must go, Mark, and I will go with you!"

"No. I will go, and go alone, but I will be back when all this is settled. Then we can go together."

"But where will you go?"

Flood thought a moment and in that time he found himself, so that he could talk calmly and without this torture in his voice. "There is a town across the mountains, I have heard. I believe I can get to it through that notch at the head of the Silver Creek range. I will go there."

"Alone," Margot said dully.

"I cannot make you share this," Flood said sternly. "It would not be fair to you. And I can have no peace until it is done. Do you believe that, dear?"

"If you say so."

"And do you believe that I will be back, because I want you and because then I can speak as a man who is neither hunted nor hunting. Can you wait?"

"Yes," Margot said simply.

"Then you must go back to town," Flood said gently. "Sam Honeywell will watch out for you."

Margot kissed him again and clung to him hungrily for a few still seconds, then she broke away from him and turned to her horse.

"Mark, I can wait forever. Good-by."

"Good-by," Flood said softly.

When her horse was lost in the black of the night, Flood stood motionless in the dark, wanting to cry out after her, and knowing that he could not. Then he roused himself. He turned toward the cabin, walking, drawing his gun, so that Emory, who was standing in the door, drew back as Flood walked into the shaft of lantern light and stepped over the sill. He paused there, the gun firm in his hand, thinking how this was the second exit he had made this way.

"They are coming for you, Hand, and for me too. I believe our ways split here," he said.

"Yes," Hand said. "If I had thirty pieces of silver, I would pay you off as you should be paid."

"The charge is murder, Hand. Seven men," Flood said quietly, ignoring Hand's insult. "If you ever let them get you in jail, you are a hanged man."

"Some day, when this fight is bled out, Flood, I will come for you too."

"I can save you that. I will be back," Flood said. He stepped out the door. "Don't come out till you hear me ride off."

CHAPTER XIII

BEYOND THE PASS

FLOOD rode straight for the mountains, and was deep in the Silver Creek range by sun-up. He had wanted to leave this country as he would shed a coat, with no ties and no loyalties behind him. But thinking of Margot now, he knew that he was leaving it for only a while, that as long as there was life in him he would ride back. His mind was full of her, and could hear her warm voice and feel her body against him until the longing for her was an ache within him. He knew he had not been fair to her, that he should not have spoken until this mission was behind him and done with; but it deepened his resolve to go through with this. She had understood him, because she understood a man's silence and a man's honor, and with that he was content.

He reflected too, that in the course of a few days, he had ridden the crest of a bloody and violent wave that was only now receding for him. And from all

those hours, those hired loyalties, he had emerged with her—and with the brief bright memory of Coe. He thought of Ben Hand with the impersonal pity he might have had for a cornered animal. Hand was a man who bred strange loyalties, but he was also a man who could not understand the depth of them. Poor, gallant, unwise, heedless Coe had in one night rocketed a quarrel between two men into a fight that might well rage for years. And Ben Hand, the man who had won that devotion, did not understand it, and could see only the folly and none of the fineness in it.

When Flood reached the very point of the range where it tilted up into the rocks, he paused and looked behind him. A range worth fighting for, hadn't Coe said? And a range now that would be bought with the blood of too many men.

And thinking this, Flood remembered that he had a share in this range too, and that his share had been paid for by Shifflin and those nine men who had vanished here. For Flood believed still that one of the men fighting for this Silver Creek range knew the fate of Shifflin's men. If the next two days proved that there was a way through these mountains to a town on the other slope, then he would be sure of it, and he would know too where the Shifflin herd had gone.

He looked up through the sparse timber to the rocky slope before him. He had little to go on, except Coe's word that a town lay beyond, but perhaps over there was the certainty that would lift this range war beyond a fight for land and give it a meaning for him.

As he threaded his way through these high rocks and boulders, he could see that cattle had been up this far. It might mean that they had strayed from the lower range, but as he rode deeper into the notch and the signs continued, he was certain that these were not the signs of strays.

He probed all he knew of these men below with whom he had lived and fought. Putting away his loyalties and prejudices, he tried to be just to them. When he thought of Petrie, he discounted the fight, and tried to remember that a man who will misname a woman sometimes has a strange sense of honor concerning stealing. But what he could not forget was that Petrie was a liar, and that he had framed Hand with a primitive cunning. He thought too of Petrie's arrogance, his craftiness, his daring, and he concluded that Petrie's name bulked large with guilt. He could conceive of stealing a trail herd, and he had what was needed to carry it off.

Then he thought of Hand, as he looked about him at the hard, gaunted mountain land that towered above and on all sides of him. If this was the trail of the stolen herd, then he was certain that Hand could never have conceived of this way, because it took a kind of daring and imagination that Hand did not possess. If either Petrie or Hand were fighting for Silver Creek for the right of way to this pass, then it was Petrie who wanted it. He wanted it because he was the thief of Shifflin's trail herd—and of the Munro herd too, probably. But Flood knew how useless this guessing was, and that a hunch is a coin unnegotiable in a court of law. Proof was what he must have.

And that settled in his own mind, he forgot it. He was following a faint trail now around the shoulders of mountains that blanketed distance with their vast bulk. Since sunrise he had been climbing and now he was close to white fields of snow. Occasional warped and stunted conifers found a hold between the rock. A hardy grass Flood had never seen before battled with them for the little soil in the desert of rock.

Sharp winds raced along every canyon and swept Flood with the clean cold of the stars. By noon, he was lost in this

profound upland maze of rock and great slashed canyons that twisted and fell and tumbled and angled and doubled back and never escaped from the penning peaks. He had only one thing to guide him, and that was the trail that daily rains had beaten and smoothed and blotted out. But there were signs, such as the rare fields of soft rock that the feet of many cattle had almost pulverized, leaving a clear trail.

Too, when this trail narrowed, there were tufts of hair wedged in the cracks of the irregular wall where cattle had milled and pushed to hurry their turn.

And once, where the trail threaded the edge of a deep canyon, Flood saw far below the carcass of a steer. He dismounted and climbed down to the bottom. It was narrow, and a tiny stream of snow water cut its floor. The steer lay across the stream, a little bloated. On his left hip, which was uppermost, Flood saw where a generous square of hide had been cut out, and all the brands with it.

The very fact that someone had taken the precaution to do this indicated to Flood that a herd had been driven through here in secret. He squatted on his heels, shivering with the cold, his pulse quickened by this new evidence. Then, on the chance that these brand blotters had missed something, he felt the stiff ears of the steer for a hidden earmark. There was none. They had been careful.

"As if they knew that even though nobody would come along at this exact spot and look down here and even come down here, all that was no excuse for taking chances," he thought. He admired their doing it, but he also knew that anyone so careful would have his trail covered up completely.

BY mid-afternoon, he came to a tight flat valley that widened out between sheer cliffs. There was no grass in it, but there was a stream that raced its course against one wall. He made a circle of this flat, and found the remains of a campfire. Here then was where the drive reached the first day. Riders could hold a hungry herd here through the night, each watch warming itself at a fire whose fuel had been carried for a half a day on horseback.

He went on into more canyon country, and when night came down, he picked a sheltered *rincon* off the trail and camped there. He had no food for his pony, and none for himself, and no bedroll, except the slicker. He watered his gray, rubbed him down, then rolled up in his slicker under a shelf of rock to wait the night through. He could travel well enough in the dark, but he did not want to risk losing the trail.

He was surprised the next morning that he had slept, but he remembered he had had no real rest since the bruising, exhausting fight with Petrie. He was stiff and sore and cold and hungry, and at daylight he was on the trail again, a raw wind that smelled of rain and the gray day beating in his face.

It seemed to him as he traveled between these rugged cold peaks that this country was endless, that he had never seen anything but mountains shrouded today in thunderheads. But he could tell that he was traveling a decided downslope, and had been for hours. Soon he saw thin timber, and then timber and brush, and was finally free of the cold mountain walls. At first he could see only a great gap in the cloud-shrouded mountains, but when he was free enough for a view, he saw that this below him was a dark wide valley in a fold of these peaks. It was green below, but it was the cold green of pines and junipers ready to receive rain. The dim trail of the herd took him down the mountainside until it picked up other trails and was lost to him.

But he had seen enough. On the valley

floor, he picked up a rocky, worn and wet road, and was soon making way for the huge ore wagons with their six and eight and ten horse teams that traveled it. His direction was up the valley, although he did not know why. There were a dozen rutted side tracks that turned into the road which flanked a wide and rapid stream now. When he looked up at the forbidding mountains on either side, he could see the tiny pinpoints of mine shacks clinging to their steep sides and veiled in mist.

"I believe our ways split here."

Not one of the crew on these huge ore wagons paid the slightest attention to him, and he took this to mean that cowmen were no strangers to this community.

Where the valley narrowed down, he found the town. It was a settlement of board shacks and tents fronting one street that was deep in mucky mud, and it was, above all, busy. The same heavy ore wagons were churning up the street, their drivers demanding way in fluent curses over the buckboards and other rigs of every description. The mist above was dissolving into a thin rain, but the men and the few women thronging the greasy board sidewalks paid no attention to it.

Flood worked his way down the jammed street to the feed stable, where he gave his tired gray over to a boy for graining. On the walk now and in the crowd composed of prospectors, townspeople, a few cattlemen, promoters, and a motley crowd of hangers on and rustly looking miners and muleskinners, Flood paused under a wooden awning of a store. It was a pleasant din around him, colorful and tawdry and full of life. Cienga, the town was named, so the sign on a criblike assay office informed him from across the street.

Now that he was here, he was at a loss as to what to do. He could not ask the name of men who had beef contracts for these camps and the town, posing as a seller himself and questioning them. If they should want beef, he would be hard put to supply them, and his mission would be detected before he had been here a day. And then he thought of his name, and the difference it had made across the mountains in Clearcreek. If stolen trail herds—perhaps the Munro herd—had ended up here, and he thought it had, then the chances were that the name Flood was not unknown. He would let that name be known then.

The Bonanza was the biggest saloon,

Flood found. It had the loud steady hum of accustomed prosperity, and the free and open camaraderie of a frontier club, which it was. The bar lay to the right along the wall, and was an ornate, heavy affair of thick mahogany. The rest of the big room was shabby alongside it and its magnificent mirror.

FLOOD noted with mild amusement that the glasses had been so stacked on the back bar as to hide three ragged holes toward the bottom of the mirror, holes made by bullets.

All the gambling tables—poker, monte, faro—were doing a brisk business. He made his way to the bar and ordered a whisky from a rotund, jolly-faced bartender.

When it was brought to him, he asked the barkeep: "A man didn't leave word for me here, did he? Flood is the name."

The bartender, as Flood hoped he would, consulted the other three bartenders, who looked toward Flood and shook their heads negatively. Unsatisfied, the bartender called for a swamper, whom he asked to circulate the same question among the percentage girls not busy at the time.

"In a minute, mister," the bartender said obligingly.

Flood waited, the whisky warming him and the smell of tobacco smoke and alcohol and wet wool pleasant in his nose. Around the end of the bar, the room made an elbow, and it was in this big setback where most of the percentage girls were seated at tables with their men.

His elbow on the bar, half turned, Flood was watching, when a voice said behind him: "You are Flood?"

Flood turned to find one of the percentage girls facing him. She was dark of skin with a lovely face hard as agate, and curious, surface-lighted black eyes. Her dress was black, cheap, clinging, full of her curved body.

"Yes," Flood said.

"Buy me a drink and let's take a table."

Flood gave his order and followed her into the other room. They took a table in the corner.

"Won't you miss your man?" the girl asked.

"I don't think he's here," Flood said. When the drinks came, they both left them untouched.

"So they wouldn't bother us," the girl said, indicating the drinks.

She was studying Flood with frank, observing eyes, and finally she said quietly: "You do look like him."

"Gordie?"

"Yes. He must be your brother."

"Was." Flood corrected. "He is dead now."

The girl nodded, no expression in her face. "I know. Did he ever mention Teresa?"

"I hadn't seen him for two years," Flood said. "Maybe he did, but I did not know you and missed the name."

"No. He did not know me that long before he died." She leaned back against the wall, her face gone slack and weary and somehow desperate. "You are not drinking," she said.

"No. May I get you another?"

"You have his same manners," Teresa said quietly, with an undertone of bitterness. She asked without much interest: "Have you been looking for the town all this time?"

"Off and on, yes."

"How did you find it?"

"He traveled a lot. I met someone who said he saw him here."

"Oh," she said, and again there was that look of disappointment. "And now that you have?"

"I don't know," Flood said carelessly. "I would like to find out more about it."

"Ah, then your asking if a man left

word for you was just a way of getting your name around. Is that it?"

"Yes," Flood said, with a quiet smile. "Men aren't so anxious to claim his acquaintance after what happened."

"I don't think you would want to claim theirs if you knew them either."

Flood stilled his hand which was toying with the whisky glass. This was all he wanted, this knowledge that Gordie's friends were known by her.

"They got away with the cattle, didn't they?" he asked carelessly.

She looked sharply at him. "But they left him—deserted him."

"Things happen like that."

She leaned back against the wall, her eyes at once secretive and calculating. "Then you aren't hunting them?"

Flood's stare was frank, almost brutal. "That's water under the bridge. I'm hunting them, maybe, but not for what you think."

"Not to square it for Gordie?"

"No."

There was a long pause, and Teresa said: "For what, then?"

Flood revolved the glass of whisky between his fingers.

"I've got something to sell," he said.

SHE started to rise, but Flood took hold of her arm and drew her down again. "Hear it out, first. I haven't seen Gordie for longer than an hour since we were kids. I don't know what he was. Maybe he deserved to get shot in the back. How do I know?"

"But he loved you!" the girl said passionately.

Flood turned away, so that she could not see the muscles in his throat tighten. Then he laughed, a little scornfully.

"You're breaking my heart," he mocked. He leaned toward her, his face still smiling sardonically. "Do you think I came clear here to fight a saloon floozie's battles for her?"

Before he finished, she had risen and slapped him viciously across the mouth. Men at tables around them turned at the sound as Teresa walked away from the table. Flood glared at them and concentrated on his drink, like a surly puncher nursing an insult.

But inwardly, he was certain he had been all right in his swift change of front to the girl. She had loved Gordie Flood and her bitterness showed on her face. He had given his name at the bar, so many men knew his name was Flood. If talk got around that Gordon Flood's brother and sweetheart were seen talking amicably together it might reach the ears of the men he was after and end with a bullet in his back. As it was, he had talked with the girl just long enough to learn that she knew the names of these men, and then he had provoked her into striking him, so that the whole room might see. If word got around that Gordon Flood's brother and sweetheart had quarreled, then it would not seem that he had come here to revenge the death of his brother.

When the interest in him had died, Flood rose and left the room, walking past the bar and outside. He knew that he must talk to Teresa again, and learn what she knew of these men. Tonight, under cover of darkness and hidden from prying eyes, he would get the rest of her story—and the names he wanted.

Outside, he turned into the nearest café. He had been so eager to make sure this was the town he wanted that he had forgotten he was hungry. He took a chair at the counter and ordered steak, potatoes, eggs, pie and coffee and then sat back, debating how he could best spend the little time until dark, when he could see Teresa again.

He looked up when two men entered. At first sight, they looked to be cattlemen, the older and shorter one a middle-aged man in black trousers, halfboots and Stetson and pearl-handled six-guns.

He had a ruddy, jovial face that crinkled benevolently when he talked or stared or laughed. The other man was younger, swarthy, quieter seeming, and he wore a slicker shiny with rain.

All this Flood noticed in a glance, thinking that these two were probably a prosperous rancher in town with one of his hands. The Chinese owner of the café opened the door from the kitchen, saw the newcomers, grinned absurdly at them and went back to his work.

Flood paid no more attention to them, until he was suddenly aware that a man was sitting on either side of him. It was the jovial man and his friend. And he did not have to guess to know what it meant. They wanted him.

CHAPTER XIV

WANTED!

FOR a moment he debated whether or not to acknowledge openly that he knew why they were there, and then he decided against it. It was daylight, the streets were crowded, and they would hardly dare to take him openly.

The Chinaman brought Flood's meal, and he set about eating it with outward calm. He was not so preoccupied, however, that he missed the nod the older man gave the Chinaman, which was a signal for him to retire again to the kitchen.

Flood had a mouthful of food halfway to his mouth when he paused, looked up at the Chinaman and said quietly: "You stay here, Sam."

The older man chuckled.

Flood said calmly. "These Chinese make poor witnesses, but he'll have to do. What do you want?"

"Looks like this has happened to you before," the old man said.

"Get it over."

"Not till you've eaten, Flood. I'm the town marshal. Brothers is the name. This is my deputy, Colson."

Flood said: "I'm not glad to know you." He wondered if Teresa had warned the marshal that he was a troublemaker looking for trouble.

Again the marshal chuckled. "I didn't reckon you would be. When you're done, we'll go over to my office."

Flood said to the Chinaman: "You stay here, I say."

He ate a leisurely meal, ignoring the silence of the two lawmen and the Chinaman. When he finished, he said: "I'm ready."

The three of them walked down the street a half block and entered a lighted office. It was a large, bare room, with a stairway running up to the second floor and, Flood supposed, to the jail.

Colson was last in, and he locked the street door, although the wide uncurtained window fronting the street showed anyone wanting to look that the room was occupied.

"Sit down," Brothers invited, indicating one of the three straight backed chairs.

Flood sat down and tilted his chair against the wall, shifting his gun up on his lap.

"This is just customary," Brothers said diffidently. "Word got around that a Flood was in town expecting somebody. That right?"

"That's right."

Brothers leaned against the desk and regarded Flood with quiet curiosity. "Who?"

"A man I was going to pick mushrooms with," Flood said insolently. "I met him in Mexico two years ago and we made a date to meet here."

The marshal glared at him. Flood yawned. Colson cleared his throat and leaned against the door.

"I've heard of men jokin' themselves into bad jams," Brothers said calmly.

"And I've seen curiosity get men into worse ones," Flood retorted with mildness.

The marshal was silent for a moment, as if puzzling how to say what he was going to. Then he said: "We never thought much of your brother here."

Flood nodded politely.

"You know how he was killed, don't you?" the marshal continued.

"Rustling," Flood said calmly.

"Yes." The marshal paused, choosing his words. "He had it coming to him. He was a rat. If I thought you were in this town hunting the men responsible for his death, I wouldn't like it very much."

Flood looked up at him with a wide, surprised stare.

"That's queer," he said slowly. "I heard that Gordie was killed by the Munro riders. Hanged."

"He was," Brothers said evenly. "But the story got around that these men he was riding with left him stranded on the backtrail—took his horse, so he'd have to fight and couldn't run."

Flood raised his eyebrows politely. "And these men are here, you say?"

"I didn't say it," Brothers said patiently. "I said I wouldn't like it much if you started hunting them to square things. There's nothing to square."

To Flood, this was broad enough warning to mind his own business, and a warning, too, that these men who had run with Gordie were in this town, and that Brothers and Colson knew them and were protecting them. Which meant, of course, that Brothers and Colson were very probably two of the gang who had taken the Munro herd and the Shifflin herd. Flood did not betray that any of this was of much interest to him.

He said carelessly: "I think you've got me wrong."

"How?" Brothers said.

"Well," Flood said slowly, studying his boot toe, "I remember having a brother by the name of Gordon. I haven't seen him twice since we were grown up. I don't give a damn if he was hanged, shot, knifed, or poisoned, or if he's alive or dead. I've traveled a good bit of country in my time, and in some towns I've had to change my name because my brother had been there before me and they were ready to lynch anyone by the name of Flood."

He looked up at the sheriff. "I suppose you are trying to tell me he had enemies. I don't doubt that. But if I know Gordie, the men he ran with are much more likely to be looking for me than I am to be looking for them. He had a way of making people hate him and the name he bore. As a matter of fact, I'd be obliged if you didn't spread it around that my name is Flood. It might be safer for me."

Plainly, the marshal was puzzled. He looked over at Colson and then back at Flood, and his ruddy, amiable face was wary.

"What are you here for, then?" Brothers asked bluntly.

Flood said blandly: "I just drifted up ahead of a Texas trail herd. I'm supposed to join them over east when they pass. Anything wrong with that?" He watched their faces to see if they showed any interest, but he saw nothing except caution.

"This is way off any trail—way, way off," Brothers said.

"Isn't it, though?" Flood said pleasantly, and he let it go at that.

Presently, Brothers said: "That's interesting. But it don't change the advice I was going to give you."

"I'm listening," Flood said.

"I wouldn't stay here any longer than I could help," Brothers said slowly.

Flood nodded. "I've listened to that kind before. I reckon," the marshal said. Flood rose without haste.

"Is that all?"

COLSON unlocked the door and stood to one side. Flood bid them both good day and sauntered out into the street, and turned toward the Bonanza.

He considered the marshal and his warning. He did not know whether Brothers believed him when he disclaimed Gordie, but he thought he did. Flood was certain that Brothers was one of the trail rustlers, and he hoped Brothers would repeat their conversation to his friends. He hoped this for two reasons: he did not want these men to think he was here to revenge Gordie, and he wanted Brothers to tell them of the trail herd which was coming. If he could leave the impression with Brothers that he was on the lookout for men such as Gordie ran with to help him with the same kind of job that Gordie was killed in doing, then and then alone would he best be able to get into their confidence. And in the meantime, he must see Teresa and find out if she knew these men, and if she would give him their names.

When he entered the Bonanza again, the evening crowd of miners was there, and the place was doing a booming and noisy business. He wondered how he might best get in touch with Teresa, knowing that he didn't dare speak to her, and disliking to write her a note and trust it to a messenger he did not know.

Drifting over to one of the gambling tables, he saw her at a table far across the room in company with two men. She was watching the room too, and he wondered if she were looking for him. On the chance that she might be, he strolled over to the bar and ordered a whisky.

In a moment, he saw her leave her table with a man and come toward the bar. Flood studied his drink.

When she came to the bar next him, he looked up, and she saw him at the same time.

He smiled. "Hello."

She stared at him stonily, then turned to the man on the other side of her. Flood inwardly cursed his foolishness. He should have had a note written which he could have placed in her hand as he left. She was joking now with her man, laughing hoarsely at something the fellow was telling her in a low tone.

Flood, holding his whisky glass loosely in his left hand, suddenly felt his arm bumped. The whisky sloshed over the glass from the impact. He turned to find a wiry little man next him. The man was smiling amiably, apologetically.

"I'm sorry about that, mister." He said to the bartender: "George, another whisky for this gent."

Before Flood could protest or say anything, there was a fresh drink poured in his glass and paid for. The little man raised his glass.

"Here's to steady legs. I could never manage 'em."

Flood drank with him, smiling.

"You're new here too, ain't you?" the little man asked, and there was no offensiveness in the question. Flood told him he was.

"Then you wouldn't be any help," the little man said, with as much glumness as his high spirits could manage.

"Not much," Flood conceded. "What for, though?"

"Well, you looked like a cowman," the man said, looking over Flood's dress. "So am I. I got some money, and I ain't awfully drunk, and I want a poker game. But these miners ain't poker men. They got one table over there, but the limit is clean over my head. I thought maybe another cowman could show me a small limit poker game."

The bartender smiled at the small man.

"There's a couple of back rooms," he said, with a nod of his head toward the rear of the saloon. "Get a few of your friends and see Claborne. He'll likely dig up a house man for you."

"Who's Claborne?" the small man asked.

The bartender looked over the room, then said: "That big gent with the black

coat and gray hair standin' by the table. He owns the place."

The small man nodded and started across the room to the owner. Flood saw them speak to each other, and Claborne nodded. Then Flood saw him go over to a group standing around the poker table watching. He talked to three men who nodded and they all started for a back room. Suddenly, the little man paused, as if remembering something, and came back to the bar. Flood knew he was coming for him. He noticed then that Teresa was gone, and the bartender was about his business again.

And right there, Flood decided this had been planned, rehearsed. Teresa had come to the bar to point him out to the small man, who had put over his act with convincing finesse. The bartender had been handy to make the suggestion, Claborne to give consent, the other three men to assent to the game. It was a skillful way to get him in a back room, but he could not guess for what.

The small man said: "I just happened to remember you might like to sit in. This gent Claborne fixed it up for a back room."

"I've only got twelve dollars," Flood said pleasantly.

"Hell, I've only got fifteen, if that's all that's stoppin' you."

"I'd like to," Flood said.

Flood followed him through the crowded room to the entrance of a small corridor that knifed the back wall under the stairs leading to the second floor. The small man stopped.

"Where'd they go?"

"I didn't notice," Flood said.

The small man went on down the corridor. At the first door he came to, he paused and opened it. Five men around a poker table looked up, and the small man muttered apologies, backing out. At the second door down the corridor he did the same, then swung it open and stood aside for Flood.

Flood entered the room. Five men stood against the back wall, silently observing him. Teresa stood in the middle. A green-felted round table stood under the circle of strong light from an overhead oil lamp. Flood heard the door close behind him.

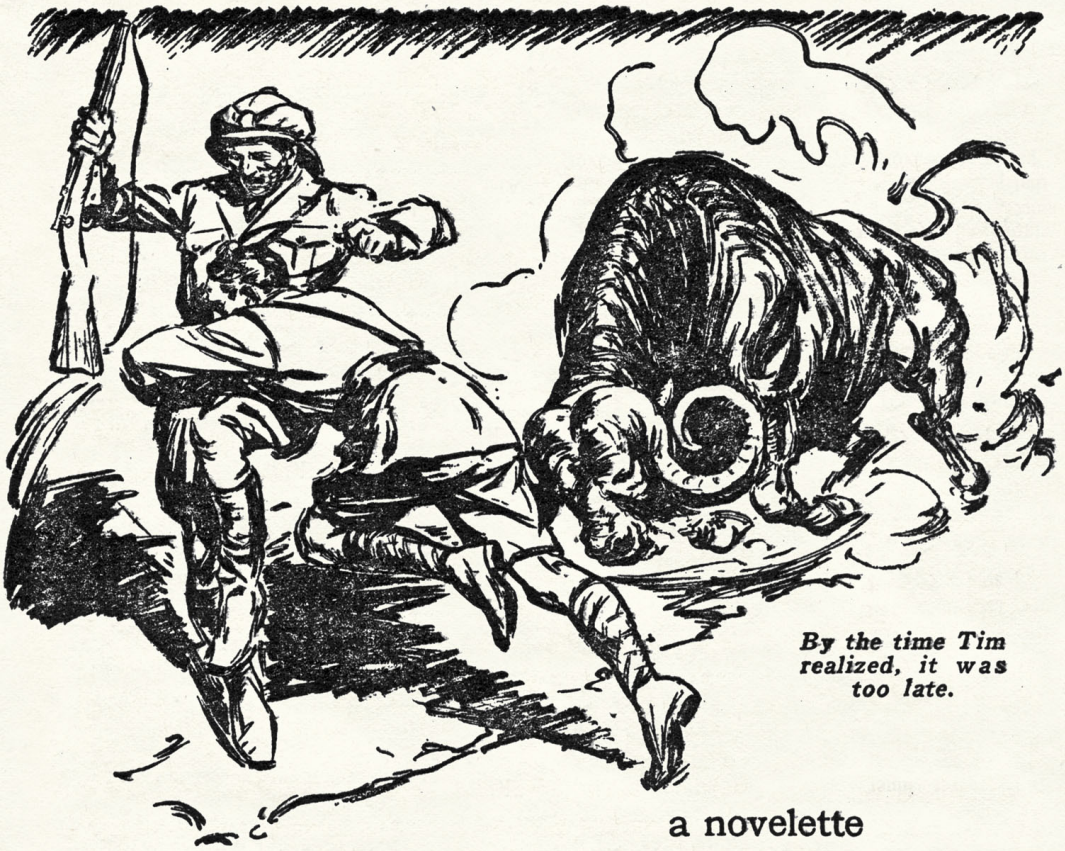
"I wondered when you would get the word," he said calmly, smiling a little at Teresa.

"Is that him?" one man said.

"Yes," Teresa answered.

Flood already had seen a door in the back wall of the room and he supposed it let out into the night. Teresa had come in that way, for small silver drops of rain beaded her hair. Without looking, he knew the small man behind him had a gun out and was leaning against the door. And he knew he had waited too long to tell Teresa the truth.

(To Be Continued)



By the time Tim realized, it was too late.

a novelette

SERGEANT SOURPUSS

by PERRY ADAMS

IT HAD been a mortal hot, bloody summer, Timothy Aloysius Riley was thinking; and now, back in Peshawar, he felt definitely old. When a man reached the stage where he could scarcely shake off his hangovers without a livener or two the next morning, what else could it mean but age? He glared moodily at the soda water bubbles rising in his *chota peg,* and it occurred to him that each little bubble was like the life of a man in the regiment: You started at the bottom, worked your way up just so far and *pouf!* you were gone.

What, he wondered, was to be the end of him? The battalion had overstayed its stretch in India—would normally have been relieved in '15, but for the world war. Well, the war couldn't last forever. There'd come a day when all this familiar Frontier life would be gone.

Familiar? Twenty years of it lay behind him and it seemed the only way of living he knew. Blighty was like some vague dream; for him, it held no reality or substance. Yet presently he would go back there, and soon he'd be just another shabby ex-swaddy, a pensioner in a cold land. There were not even family ties to draw him back.

Across the crowded, smoke-filled mess a young sergeant stood by the piano singing, pretty surprisingly, "Rose in the Bud", in a high, soft tenor.

"Rose in the bud, the June air's warm and tender—"

The ebb and flow of talk about Tim

Riley momentarily blotted out the singer's voice, so that the next lines failed to carry across the big room. With a sigh, Tim turned blue-faded eyes and glanced curiously about the well remembered place. Somehow it all seemed meaner and smaller than it had in the spring. But then, it always did, Tim reflected, when a man returned from a bit of service. Since April, the King's Own Surreys had been out on the electrified apron wire that stretched from Michni to Abazai, a platoon to a blockhouse.

Disease and death, too; both had stalked Tim's platoon, Number Ten, C Company—it had gone out forty-nine strong, but only nineteen marched in. Some were in hospital; those he'd get back. Yet there were plenty he'd never get back. But the mess buzzed with talk of the draft which had arrived in the regiment's absence; soon, Tim knew, there'd be drafties to replace missing faces in the platoon. How many times had he seen that happen? He had lost count.

The singer was reaching the end of his song. The piano accompaniment rippled across the talk, while the high, pleasant tenor rose to the climax:

."Love comes but once—and then, perhaps, too late."

Tim's chair scraped back and he stood up abruptly, a spare, leather-faced, sandy little man, slightly bowlegged, with the trig, scraped smartness of the regular soldier long accustomed to uniform. Fierce, yellow-white eyebrows dominated a plain, wide mouthed Irish face, keying it to an expression of perpetual irascibility.

" 'Tis a hell av a song," he growled, hating all of it, but particularly the lush, Victorian sentimentality of that last line. *Love comes but once*—it was like a rusty bayonet thrust into a old wound.

Laughing, the sergeant beside him caught at his sleeve, tried to pull him back into his chair. "Don't say you're walkin' h'out on us—you, wiv no more'n three, four drinks h'under your belt? Where's your stamina, Tim?"

Further down the table someone said, "Let him go . . ." A crazy, drunken Irishman he was, not like the rest of them, Cockneys all. Let him go. Let him walk it off. What could a bloke do with anyone who let a silly song upset him?

Tim disengaged his arm, he clapped his cap to the right side of his head and made his way to the door, not looking to right or left.

On the verandah he paused. Already the sun had set behind distant Khyber Hills, leaving a washed sky filled with afterglow. Nearer, the many windowed, double-decker barrack bungalows were cold with new shadows as the cloak of a late summer evening spread over the cantonment. The pungent smell of burning cow dung was in Tim's nose as he stood there.

Around the corner of the mess came a duty man with belt and side arms; the ivory swagger-stick he carried marked him C.O.'s orderly-for-the-day. Perceiving Tim, the orderly's face brightened.

"Bit o' luck, I calls it, findin' yer so h'easy, Sergeant. The colonel wants t'see yer in his office."

"Pwhat the devil would he be wantin'?" Tim demanded of the orderly's retreating back. He recalled the last *tête-à-tête* with his commanding officer, some two years before. There had been the matter of Tim's delayed sergeant major's crown.

"You're drinking too much," the colonel said bluntly. "I don't mean this shows in your work. It doesn't"—he had paused significantly—"yet. But you're a damned poor off-parade example for the younger sergeants, boozing in the mess all the time. So the promotion is withheld. Whether I pass it through later is up to you."

If this time it was to be more of the

same, if there was another ticking off coming, why hadn't the C.O. had him marched into orderly room during office hours? Tim stepped out smartly, crossed the parade ground.

"If 'tis more about me crown, to hell wid it," he muttered truculently. He could barely feel the few whisky pegs he had drunk. If he wanted to drink to forget, that was his business, wasn't it? What he did was all right.

Yet he knew it wasn't all right; it was all wrong. By now not only should he be a sergeant major, but close in line for R.S.M. Scowling, he passed through an ivy covered gateway and knocked at the door of a rambling, attractive bungalow.

THE colonel's head boy, a dignified, white turbaned Hindu of the Kahars, presently admitted Tim. Deep in the shadows behind, he heard the colonel's voice. The Kahar vanished and the colonel came forward, a tall, horse-faced man with eyes as blue-faded as Tim's own. He led Tim into his study.

"I've these few minutes before dinner," he said after a brief pause. "I thought of having your company commander bring you to office in the regular way, but Captain Morrow is so recently transferred to us that he's scarcely in a position to understand what I want to talk to you about."

"I haven't stopped drinkin' none, sorr," Tim said hardily.

"Oh, I know that! Well, if the battalion's senior sergeant likes to watch juniors passed over his head—Tim, you're an ass!"

Tim frowned down at the tip of his boot and growled unintelligibly.

"You did a splendid job out on the wire," the colonel went on. "In the absence of a commissioned officer in your blockhouse, you ran that platoon of yours far better, I suspect, than could have most subalterns. You staved off those two big attacks with great credit; the heavy casualties weren't your fault. Yes, and because there was no sergeants' mess to run to, all summer you got along beautifully without liquor. Since we've come in you're right back at your old tricks—drunk every night."

Tim said mildly: "Sure, Colonel, ye know why. Ye've known for twinty years."

"Nonsense! You've used that excuse to justify indulgence."

Tim said nothing and the colonel added, half to himself: "Twenty years—is it that long since Guilford? Why, I was a shavetail not long out of Sandhurst and you were a raw recruit in my platoon. And none of us dreaming we'd spend our best years in India. Big Steve Lanigan—how well I remember him! And Quartermaster Sergeant Foster's daughter, Annie. You and Lanigan weren't the only two who thought her pretty—she was a lovely girl, Tim. But she married Lanigan when he got his lance stripe—that was the whole trouble, wasn't it—and then he was drowned. Wasn't it just after his death that Annie bore his child?"

Tim's answer was muffled. "She did that, sorr—a son—a few weeks before we sailed. She was still livin' in married quarters at the time, d'ye mind?"

"Yes. And I remember, too, thinking that perhaps you and Annie—" the colonel broke off and eyed Tim's averted head.

"I would've maybe had a chance wid her but for the nipper," Tim said slowly, "but she figured havin' him changed everythin'." His voice rose querulously. "Livin' an' dead, Steve Lanigan always stood betchune me an' Annie. First himself, then his boy. I—" Tim shrugged, made a wide, helpless gesture.

"I know," the colonel said. "I watched you. You began to drink. You let it get you, Tim. I don't believe you've ever really tried."

Tim looked up.

"At first I did, sorr," he said earnestly.

"I could see how things was goin' wid me. But the only time I'd forgit was whin I was full o' booze an'—well, I'm afther bein' one av thim strange animals, a wan woman man."

"You're such a good soldier, Tim, that I hate to see you make a damned fool of yourself."

The colonel spoke more briskly. "As you know, the draft from England has had preliminary training here while we've been out. The R.S.M. tells me he's passing the men off the square tomorow. You'll be getting quite a few of them in Number Ten."

"True, sorr. But why did ye ask—"

"I was looking over the men's names. I ran across a Robert Lanigan. That name— I sent for his papers. He's Annie's boy, Tim. I'm planning to put him under your wing. I think it would be a good thing for both of you."

Tim was suddenly on his feet. His face was not pleasant to look upon.

"*Him*—here?" The two words were an incredulous whisper.

"A fine boy, Tim. They pointed him out to me this morning, on draft parade. Enough like his father to be Steve Lanigan himself."

"I don't want no part av him," Tim said harshly.

"Sit down," the colonel ordered. He held Tim's eyes. "I want you to be guided by me in this matter. In spite of what you say, I feel in time you'll take an interest in young Lanigan; and that may change you—considerably. You'd be the best N.C.O. in the regiment if it wasn't for drink. I haven't liked holding you back, but I've had to. As you're going now, it's only a question of a little time before you'll be demoted, and that'll be your finish. I want you to give this an honest trial, Tim."

The two gazed at each other speculatively.

"It will niver work, sorr," Tim said finally. "'Tis unfair to the both av us. Still an' all, ye could av posted him to Number Ten an' divil a word to me need ye have said. I don't want the boy at anny price, but if have him I must, I'd rather 'twas like this, knowin' what's in your mind."

And on that note Tim withdrew, for the colonel showed no disposition to alter his decision. Well, Tim had promised nothing. "I don't want the boy," he'd said; certainly that was plain English. Thoughts in an upset jumble, he regained the main road and headed toward quarters. As he set his foot on the first of the broad steps, a tall figure blocked the way. A draftie—the battered helmet without *pagri* and ill-fitting, off-color uniform advertised the fact.

"I'm waitin' for Sergeant Riley," the draftie announced.

At that Tim regarded him more closely. And suddenly it seemed that by some queer trick of imagination, the man and woman so vividly recalled by his recent conversation oddly merged into the boy before him. For Steve was here—Annie, too.

At the tail end of a choking breath Tim said, "I'm Riley."

The boy smiled. "I'm Bob Lanigan."

"I know," Tim muttered.

"Mother told me to look you up," Bob Lanigan explained. "I'd have done it before, but they've kept us mighty busy."

"Better if she hadn't told ye," Tim heard himself saying. "Better had ye joined another regiment entirely!"

The boy's mouth fell open with surprise. "Why, mother said—I thought—"

After that first look, Tim's gaze never rose above the top button of Bob Lanigan's rumpled tunic.

"Ye've taken the King's shillin'," he said stonily. "Ye're not paid t' think."

The amazed youngster began again: "Mother thought—"

"I know pwhat she thought!" Tim's voice was like a file. "Doubtless she told ye I'd make things cushy for ye; that

I'd let ye ride on me coattails, git ye off guards an' fatigues. That I'd—"

"No, no. She wanted me to tell you—"

"Pwhat do I care? Ye'll get no favors from me. Ye'll soldier wid the rest, d'ye hear? An' now—out av me way!"

Tim brushed past him and continued up the stairs. A devil was in his breast. She'd send this brat of hers to mock him—her brat and Steve's.

Three hours later they carried him back from the sergeants' mess and threw him, fully dressed, on his bed. As usual.

THERE was no relief from the intense heat of earlier summer. September saw the sun coppery red at dawn, blinding at noon and felt even through the breathless nights, for the parched earth never grew cool. Off parade the men of the King's Own lay panting on their beds. It was almost too hot to talk of the fresh tribal disaffection in the Tirah: the Afridis and Orakzais had united, it appeared, and hourly the authorities expected raiding in the Kohat region. Would that involve the Peshawar garrison? Many seemed to think so, including Tim's skipper, Captain Morrow, a round faced, tubby little man recently transferred from the Queen's Regiment.

"I'd hoped that autumn maneuvers would accustom our drafties to mountain warfare," the captain told Tim, "but the way things look, we may be heading for the Tirah before maneuver time. Every subaltern in the company's on leave, the sergeant major, too. Getting the drafties into shape is your job and mine, and I'm leaning heavily on your experience."

Extra parades in that heat? "Divil fly away wid the fat little fool," Tim thought, although the logic of the captain's words was obvious. Tim cursed himself for not having applied for leave along with the others—Murree would be fine and cool right now, with no draft to worry over. Yes, he could easily have escaped the hot, unpleasant job ahead.

" 'Tis a dirty scrounger I'm becomin'," he thought, more than half ashamed of his lack of interest. But that night, drunk as usual, he sneered at himself; his resentment against the draft centered upon young Bob Lanigan. "I'll put him through hell," he muttered. "I'll make him sorry he iver joined up."

On early battalion parade the next morning, Tim struggled to shake off a powerful hangover. From the corner of a jaundiced eye he noticed that young Bob was still clumsy with his rifle. The fact lurked in the back of his mind when after breakfast, on extra training parade, he marched the draft out along the Bara River. Here the country was crisscrossed with ravines and dry river beds. Putting the detail into extended order Tim sweated them up hill and down dale until, black with sweat, the men could scarcely put one foot before the other.

"Ye're soft as putty," Tim rasped at them as he formed them for the march home. "Wait 'til I really go t' work on ye, me fine Aldershot cockies."

In company lines he let them go, but had Bob Lanigan stand fast.

"Ye may have handled that rifle good enough for the R.S.M. t'pass ye from the square," he said, "but ye're a mile below C company standard."

He marched Bob to within a half pace of a bungalow wall and commenced putting him through the manual of arms. The slightest misalignment of the boy's hands resulted in skinned knuckles against the rough stone, and soon Bob's boots were covered with blood. A nearby thermometer registered 118 degrees.

"Maybe ye think it can't be done that close?" Tim taunted. "Maybe ye think 'tis but a trick t'make ye bleed?"

Swaying slightly, curiously white despite his new sunburn, Bob stood patiently, tired eyes on the wall before him.

"Answer me!" Tim barked, when he made no reply.

Tim waited for the long, swift fall.

The dust caked lips moved stiffly. "I—don't —know."

"Thin ye'll carry on 'til ye *do* know!"

But Bob was past caring. Slowly his knees buckled; the Lee-Enfield clattered against the wall and he collapsed, an inert, sweaty heap.

IF IN the days that followed Tim gave the company drafties good cause to hate him, his special persecution of Bob was so marked that it became a subject of bitter, wondering comment. In a hundred ways, Tim was making life unendurable for the boy.

"Wot did yer h'ever do to 'im?" his friend Peters demanded.

"I guess he thinks I'm sort of awkward," Bob said, with no particular resentment. Even to the lanky, red-headed Peters, who had joined the same day as he, Bob had never mentioned the circumstances which linked him so peculiarly to the hard little Irish N.C.O.

"Chaps are beginnin' t'say you must be yeller," Peters said uncomfortably.

Bob shrugged. "You think so, too?"

"Me? Hell, Bob, I don't 'ardly know wot ter fink. 'Course, yer cawn't go abashin' 'im, but this ain't Russia. You'd oughta reported 'im long ago. W'y, you got every draftie in th' company fer witness."

The very next day something happened which puzzled Peters and the others more than ever. Route marching along the Nowshera road, the battalion's first halt was in the vicinity of the government dairy. The men had fallen out for their ten minute rest when upward of a hundred water buffaloes, part of the milk herd, were driven out across the road, in the general direction of Kabul River. Among the last of the great, lumbering beasts were two bulls, one young and smaller, the other fully grown. Suddenly the two faced each other and locked horns. The heavier animal forced his opponent back until with a quick twist of his head he gored the younger bull. Snorting surprise and fear, the latter turned tail and, with the other pelting after him, tore down the road toward the battalion.

Speed of foot is not generally associated with the water buffalo, probably because he is rarely seen moving at a pace faster than a sluggish walk. But, like the rhino, he covers ground at an amazing rate, once started, and is a gentleman to be avoided at all costs.

Most of the men sat in a field to the left of the road and were in no danger. It happened that Tim Riley stood squarely in the middle of the highway, his back to the onrushing buffaloes.

Peters was the first to notice this. He nudged Bob.

"Don't say a word," he whispered, "but old Riley's goin' ter get 'is!"

Instantly Bob sized up the situation. He opened his mouth to shout a warning, then sensed that by the time Tim real-

ized what was wrong, it would be too late.

Bob shot into the road and hurled himself at Tim, catching him in a waist-high tackle. The momentum of the youngster's big body swept them both from under the hoofs of the leading bull in the very nick of time. The two men rolled over and over into the ditch, stopped, looked after the vanishing bulls and finally at each other.

"Sorry if I hurt you, Sergeant," Bob apologized, "but it seemed the only way." They stood up, slapping dust from their uniforms.

"A nice grandstand play, Lanigan," Tim said slowly. "All ye had to do was call out. But no. Ye had to do it fancy, make it look like ye saved me life."

"I thought of yellin'," Bob replied evenly, "but you'd have looked at me first, instead of behind you—"

"An' it would have broken your heart had one av them things got me," Tim cut in.

There was something so utterly mean, so uncalled for in this deliberate twisting of the obvious that something snapped inside Bob. Expecting much of this strange little man because of all his mother had told him, eagerly anticipating the meeting with his father's best friend, Bob had come to India prepared at all costs to win his friendship. But Tim Riley had signally, dismally failed in every essential: this was the last straw.

"Don't kid yourself, Sergeant," Bob said a little unsteadily, "my heart wouldn't have skipped a beat if the buffalo had cut you in two!"

The "fall in" whistle blew. Captain Morrow was not on parade and Tim, acting sergeant major, stalked at the head of the company.

"What come over me?" Tim mused. "Old Steve himself couldn't have done more; why, the lad risked his life for me. I'll take him aside when we git back to lines an' make things right."

But he forgot Bob, and for good reason, for the regiment had no more than regained barracks when news spread that the much rumored Tirah trouble had come to a head. Green banners were aflutter in the hills; already mixed forces of Orakzais and Afridis had crossed the deadline separating the Interzone from British India, to swoop down on several small villages beyond Kohat.

Would the troops in Peshawar be called out? Holding its breath, the entire garrison stood to. In every bungalow of the King's Own, field service kits were stacked ready—a significant array of orderly twenty-two pound parcels wrapped in *dhurries* and rubber ground sheets and tied fast with log lines—all as like as so many bricks in a building.

Sunday night, just before "last post", the "general assembly" was sounded, followed by the quick, nervous "at the double". And when the companies had formed battalion on the big parade ground, the colonel addressed the men briefly in the darkness. Within the hour, he said, operation orders had arrived from brigade. He touched on the seriousness of the coming campaign and pointed out the honor conferred upon the regiment—the King's Own was to serve as advance guard for the flying column.

"We march at five A. M. tomorrow," he concluded simply.

TOWARD dusk of an evening three weeks later, a group of officers studied a map spread upon a hastily erected camp table. Behind them, to the East, the Bara Valley dropped steadily away, bisected by a meandering silver ribbon—the river. Ahead to the west, the rugged spur-locked terrain rose sharply to what appeared in the deepening shadows to be a dead end in the mountains.

Brigadier General Laurie, a squat, square-faced officer with snow white hair, who still wore the black Sam Browne and buttons of the Gurkha

Rifles he had once commanded, shifted the map about under his compass until it was 'set' to the ground about him.

He laid an index finger on the map as the others crowded closer. "This is our position. Here—" he linked the frowning heights ahead with their contours on the map by a quick upward thrust of his head. "Here is the country through which runs the Saran Sar Pass, the entrance into Zakka Khel territory. The pass has always been an Afridi stronghold and, if our experience with Lockhart in '97 is a guide, we are going to be forced to hack our way through every inch of it." The G.O.C. spoke directly to the colonel of the King's Own. "Are your men ready to take over the surrounding heights from the temporary pickets?"

The colonel turned to Captain Morrow. "The all-night pickets are being found by C Company this time, are they not?"

"Yes, sir. All detailed; we're waiting only for machine gun coverage before making the transfer."

"Guns ready, sir," a staff major advised the general.

General Laurie nodded. "Before your men move out, Colonel, it might be well to warn them that some sort of tribal action is likely before dawn, as a preliminary to tomorrow's fight in the pass. There are villages beyond the pass and the Zakkas may resort to almost any expedient to prevent us from forcing our way in."

The picket commanded by Tim Riley was on the most westerly hill of all—in daylight a small section of the pass itself was visible from the summit. It was dark in the valley below when Tim and his men scrambled up the steep slope to take over from the temporary detail, but by then the latter had practically completed the customary *sangar,* made of rocks and scree which lay plentifully to hand. Enough light remained on the summit to enable Tim's party to complete the work before total darkness. As night closed in, the Zakka camp fires twinkled in the valley beyond and seemed in the clear, crisp air, almost as close as those of the British force on the near side.

The view from this *sangar* was indeed a commanding one, but as Tim moved about, studying the ground, one feature made him distinctly uneasy. On the tribal side, just under the summit, a broad, smooth rock shoulder masked the immediate approach. He saw that the Zakkas, who knew every stone of this country, might be able to concentrate beneath the shoulder without being observed by the picket. Once there, they could suddenly swarm over the scant fifty feet intervening and be all over the picket before the fifteen-man force had a real chance of defense.

Dangerous as it was to split up and so weaken his little command, Tim realized the necessity of establishing a listening post outside the *sangar*—on the rock shoulder itself—three shifts of three men each, he decided.

For this picket he had chosen those he rated the best men in his platoon. At the time, the irony of his having selected the draftie, Bob Lanigan, among the first, made Tim vaguely angry, for the choice implied a worth Tim was loath to admit. He shrugged it off and gathered the men about him.

"If the Zakkas come," he told them, "'twill most likely be in the hours just before daylight."

THE moonless night wore on. Faint starlight played odd, deceptive tricks with the shadows, and it was not alone the increasing cold which caused men to shiver in their British warms. In both valleys the fires died down to mere pin points; sometimes a dog barked, or a hyena's odd, mirthless laugh pierced the still air. Slowly the small noises which floated up from the British bivouac

ceased and at last the utter silence held within itself a brooding, ominous quality. Nothing happened.

At frequent intervals the *sangar* signaller noiselessly tapped the key of his electric lamp as he reported to headquarters; and far below, a small bright eye winked answer. Tim had loaned his glasses to the men on the rock shoulder; each time he posted a relief, he took the glasses and made a careful survey of the Zakka position and most especially, of the intervening ground.

"Seems too good to last," he muttered, as he posted Bob's detail for the second time. The coming two hours marked the critical period.

A man of the detail just relieved handed Tim the binoculars. "Not a thing, Sergeant. I been lookin' through them things 'til I'm fair dizzy. If yer looks long h'enough, h'every bloomin' stone seems ter move like it was a tribesman."

Tim stretched himself out beside the new relief and focused the glasses. What the man said was perfectly true. Even prone, it was impossible to prevent a slight oscillation of the lenses; and in the odd, flat starlight, the boulder strewn slope seemed alive with stealthily advancing Afridis.

" 'Tis tricky," Tim admitted, "but there's nobody there—yit. Now you three: If annything's goin' to happen it's got t'be soon, for dawn comes early an' it ain't far off. Don't relax a second!" As he spoke, he stole a curious glance at Bob Lanigan, but Bob's eyes were on the slopes below and his face was devoid of the fear Tim had half hoped to find there. "Whin the light gits strong ye can rejoin us in the *sangar*," were his final whispered instructions. There was no point supporting this post in daylight.

Nodding to the trio just relieved, he led them back to the *sangar*. He was dead tired. Unlike those men off duty within the little stone fortification, Tim had not once closed his eyes. He yawned. Well, it was nearly over now. Probably nothing doing, after all. Another hour and a half, say—he sat down near one of the sentries and before he knew it, his head sank on his chest. . . .

An urgent voice, a hand roughly shaking his shoulder.

"Sergeant!"

Tim, instantly on his feet, saw it was still dark.

Bayonet at the "on guard" position, the sentry was gesturing violently toward the listening post.

"Just now! I 'eard a rattlin' o' stones like. Someone—"

"Aw, the boys down there would av give us warnin' was it annythin'," Tim whispered reassuringly. He'd seen many a good man grow jumpy under these conditions. But—

"*There it is again!*"

Tim heard, as did others, who crowded close.

"Quick—six av yez!" The next second Tim had led them over the *sangar* and they were scurrying toward the shoulder. The worst of it was, Tim thought, you couldn't pick out the prone figures of the men on post until you were almost on top of them. If anything had happened—

They reached the bare rock, scrambled toward its edge. They stopped. Not a sign of the three, not a trace, not even a dropped helmet. They had vanished.

A man clutched Tim's arm. "Listen, Sergeant—"

Far below, a telltale lisping of dislodged shale unmistakably marked the passage of feet—of feet hastening away.

"After thim!" Tim cried. "No," he said in the same breath, " 'tis maybe a trick t'sphlit the picket. Lave the *sangar* we cannot, lads, no matter what happens. We've th' rigiment to think av."

Someone said urgently: "Gawd, we gotta do somefin'—"

" 'Ow abaht loosin' orf a few clips at 'em?" another suggested.

Impossible. "If it'd been a throat-

cuttin' expedition we'd av found th' bodies," Tim said dully. "They've taken 'em alive; we can't be firin' at our own." And yet that might be the kindest way to end them: If taken alive, the three were going to a death worse than death. Inevitably, they would be slowly, fiendishly tortured. Tim recalled other men captured alive; they were never taken

Wounded, the Zakka crawled forward.

save for the one purpose. He stared down into the blackness. Without turning his head he said:

"Someone double back an' tell th' signaller to report this t' headquarters. Put some *juldi* in it!" A man sped away.

So this was what he'd sent Bob to, was it?

"If I'd planned it all me life," he thought with cold horror, "I could av done no worse." Aye, he was even with Annie at last, terribly, overwhelmingly

even. Even with the woman whom he hated because he could not help loving. His whirling thoughts came back to Bob, whom he hated, too. Hated?

Had the boy been his own son, he could not have loved him more.

The impact of that truth was like a physical blow. And now it was too late. And Bob was going to his dreadful end believing him a small-souled tyrant, a bully who hid behind his stripes.

AFTERWARD, Tim had no distinct memory of returning to the *sangar*, of being breathlessly reinforced, of perfunctorily "holding" the quiet *sangar* while the column bloodily stormed the Saran Sar and pressed on into the valley beyond to take and burn the first of the Zakka villages. When it was all over

the big rearguard flag waved Tim down. His men behind him, he stumbled through the pass with the other night pickets and after a fairish march, reported to his own regiment.

Through it all, the course he must pursue, slowly came clear. The desperate idea was based on the premise that Bob Lanigan was still alive. He was lucky enough to find the colonel alone.

The colonel shook his head.

"The idea's fantastic," he said. "I couldn't possibly consider you or anyone leading a rescue party; it would be certain suicide, with not a chance on earth of success." His voice was very kind, despite the pointblank refusal.

"But if they're still alive, sorr?" Tim pleaded. "We just can't let—"

"They *are* alive," the colonel admitted. "But that doesn't alter—"

"What makes ye say so?" Tim asked.

"Why, shortly after we'd taken the village back there, a Zakka came in under a flag of truce. He brought a message from the chief, who said his people would not harm the prisoners, provided the general gave personal assurance that we'd advance no further."

"An' pwhat did the gineral say, sorr?"

"Naturally he could accept no such condition."

Tim sighed heavily. "That manes only wan thing."

"I'm afraid so. The Zakka messenger then said: 'So be it. Tomorrow as you advance you will find the remains of one prisoner. My chief hopes that the sight of that first man may be enough to cause a change of heart'."

"The dirty, stinkin'—"

"All of that and more, Tim, but you know the Frontier. We've got to advance until our punitive objectives have been carried out. If we held our punch this time to save those three, every tribe from the Mohmand country down through Waziristan would resort to the same relatively simple method of escaping just punishment. When the day comes that we are no longer feared in the Interzone, our rule in North India will be over."

True words, as Tim well knew, yet there *had* to be something, some way—

"Let me go it alone, sorr," Tim said suddenly. "Maybe ye're right about a party; but one man—who knows? I might get through. I—"

The colonel's manner changed. "If there were any possible way, don't you suppose we'd try it? Pull yourself together, Sergeant. There's nothing more to be said."

"I got to try," Tim repeated, scarcely aware that he spoke aloud.

The colonel dismissed him; but there was a speculative look in his eyes as he stared after Tim's retreating back. It occurred to the colonel that he had not seen Tim so shaken since Guilford. Left to himself, the Irishman was capable of almost any folly. Decidedly, for the next few nights Tim must be protected against himself.

That evening Captain Morrow sent for the distraught N.C.O.

"You're to sleep in the quarterguard tent until further notice," he told Tim.

Tim could scarcely believe his ears. "I'm—I'm under arrest?" he asked incredulously.

"I'm not prepared to discuss the matter. You'll report to the sergeant of the guard at retreat; you'll be free at reveille."

Tim realized that he had told the colonel too much. He stormed away from his company commander and into the guard tent, still raging. The members of the guard appeared rather mystified, but they had their orders. Had Tim been under close arrest, he could not have been under more constant surveillance. He thought of a hundred schemes to elude the guard; one by one, he discarded all as impractical. At last sheer exhaustion got the better of him. But between uneasy snatches of

sleep, he suffered the tortures of the damned.

THIS first valley of the Zakkas was a long one, and because another big village lay directly ahead, the British anticipated a strong night attack. But the tribesmen made no overt move.

Shortly after dawn, in fact, the British realized that the village had been quietly abandoned. Tim, well to the fore of the advancing column, had reached the near side of the walled town when suddenly he saw a rude cross directly in the line of march.

"Bob—they've crucified him!" he thought despairingly.

Men in the lead were breaking formation in their haste to reach the limp body sagging so horridly on the upright. It was crucifixion right enough, but this ironic display of bitter Moslem contempt for the Christian invaders must have been the least painful part of the prisoner's death. His body was filthily, indescribably mutilated.

The mute, pitiful remains were not those of Bob Lanigan, yet Tim knew with awful certainty that Bob's end would be the same.

Several of the group striving to cut down this gory travesty of what had been a British soldier were violently sick. And all at once Tim was sicker than any.

Presently he was aware of his colonel's field boots. Their eyes met.

"We'll take no prisoners after this," the colonel murmured.

"Two are still alive, sorr. It ain't too late—"

The village was burned with fierce gusto and the column pressed on. Toward the end of the day, as the advance guard neared the mouth of the pass into a further valley, there was some long range sniping from the heights that surrounded it. Mountain battery, machine gun and rifle fire blasted the tribesmen from their positions, and soon the English force was in possession of all the high ground and of the mouth of the pass itself. As yet the Zakka Kehl had made no real effort to defend their homes, and it was becoming increasingly evident that they hoped to lure the British into the almost impassable country ahead.

The night passed as quietly as the preceding one, but for the closely guarded Tim it was a period of inward turmoil the like of which he had never known.

For that night the guard watched him like hawks.

Shortly after daylight, around the first bend of the twisting pass, the advance guard came upon the second tribal victim, this time spread-eagled on a huge rock. The face was unrecognizable, but blond hair told the shaking Tim that again it was not Bob Lanigan.

Presently he had another brief opportunity for a word alone with the colonel.

"Pwhat's the life of an ould man like me worth?" Tim pleaded. "Don't be boxin' me in wid th' quarterguard this night. 'Tis tonight or niver."

The colonel looked at Tim, saw the deep lines etched in that leathery face, and drew its owner further to one side.

"Annie will be alone in the world now, Tim—had you forgotten? We'll be back in England a few months after peace is declared on the Western Front, a peace I feel is not far off. You can't go throwing your life away—don't you see?"

They stared at each other. Slowly Tim shook his head.

"I could niver go near her this way. Now less than iver."

The colonel might have dissembled to press his point, but he was not of that clay. In all his life never would he make a finer gesture than he made now.

"Tim," he said, "of course you're perfectly right. You've acted like a pig, and I know there's only one way you can stand all square with yourself. I can't

sanction what you want to do, obviously, but I can withdraw the order that you sleep in the guard tent, and I will. For the rest—well, I think this is the last time I shall ever see you. Cantankerous old idiot that you are—God bless you!"

THAT day the Zakkas sacrificed two more towns, seemingly ever leading the British toward some predetermined cul-de-sac beyond, where at last they might turn on the hated white men and cut them to pieces.

And so, monotonously, at the end of the day the column was at the head of the usual valley, with the inevitable pass beyond. Tim watched the night pickets being established, went through the motions of eating and soon thereafter wandered off a little way, using the remaining daylight to scan the hills.

In those few moments the short twilight had turned to night; in the sudden darkness he headed for the lines of the Lewis gunners. The sentry there challenged him, but when he had made himself known the man paid no further attention to him. The *yackdans* or mule-cases used for transporting the guns, lay in a heap, their leather corners just touched by the red glow of a campfire. While the sentry was tramping toward the far end of his beat, Tim quickly opened a *yackdan* and abstracted a gun and a shoulder carrier filled with ammunition drums. He was away before the sentry turned around.

Tim was pretty heavily burdened, for his rifle was slung on his back. He had tried to think of some way of disposing of it in camp without focusing attention on himself, but had failed. On Frontier service a man's rifle is like his arm: noteworthy if separated from his person. True, once clear of the lines he could throw it away, but in a country where a rifle was literally worth its weight in gold to the enemy, such a step would never occur to a First Division veteran.

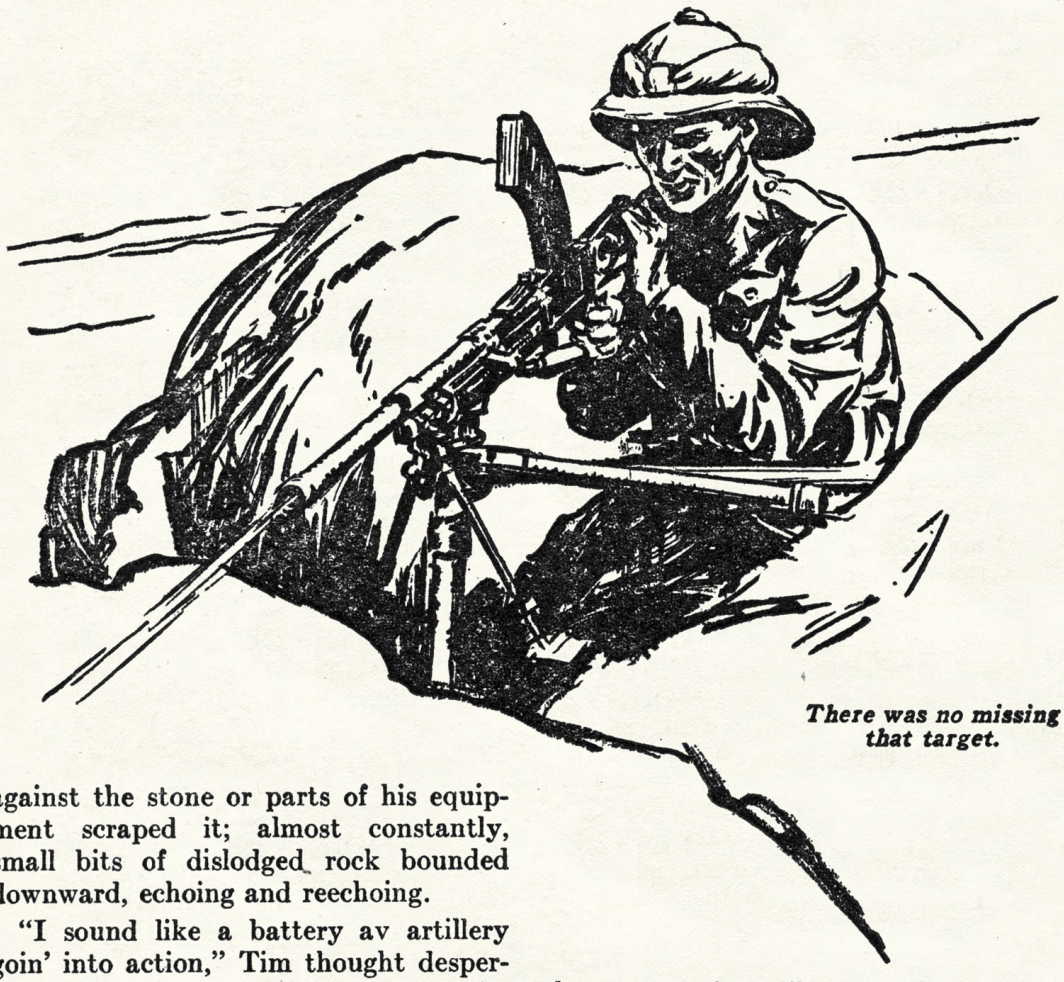
The Lewis gun section was so bivouacked that Tim moved from it straight into open country, without having to pass through part of the camp. At seventy-five yards he stopped; hearing only the usual camp noises, he sat down and unrolled his puttees, to wind them about his boots so that the thick cloth would muffle his footsteps.

Early in that strange night there was a bad moment when, crossing a shale saddle which sloughed between two hilltops, he slipped, and the butt of the Lewis struck a rock with a loud, metallic 'clup.' The pickets on both summits heard him and hailed each other nervously. For a half hour he lay like a dead man while a party descended to investigate. One man came so close that Tim could actually hear him breathing; but he turned away just at the instant when Tim believed discovery inevitable.

At last he rose, pausing after each step, he made his way down the trickily loose scree which extended to the floor of the adjacent valley. This roughly paralleled the one he had quitted and, after he had walked for an hour, he sensed hopefully that it extended far enough to the west to be beyond the pass through which the column would file at dawn; and that if he could discover a way back into the main valley chain, he might find himself very near the rear of the present tribal position.

Against the skyline to the northwest, a V-shaped fold in the hills looked promising. A few hundred yards further on he came upon a dry stream bed which apparently led off toward the fold. He followed the bed out of the valley, but soon the way became steeper and steeper and at last he was confronted on all sides by an almost perpendicular rock face.

As he commenced the difficult ascent, his puttee-swathed feet found scant hold on the crumbling outcrop; burdened as he was, he slipped again and again. Sometimes the Lewis gun clanged



There was no missing that target.

against the stone or parts of his equipment scraped it; almost constantly, small bits of dislodged rock bounded downward, echoing and reechoing.

"I sound like a battery av artillery goin' into action," Tim thought desperately. The ridge above must surely be tenanted by tribal lookouts. As he neared the end of his climb, the stillness over his head seemed unnatural, ominous. He began to have the creepy feeling that hidden eyes amusedly watched his every move. Yet now there was nothing for it but to go on, for in the darkness he could not have retraced that last dizzy hundred feet without a certain fall. He tried to reassure himself with the idea that the Afridis would scarcely be expecting anyone from this side, but soon realized that his infernal racket destroyed every element of surprise.

With a last painful heave he poked his head over the top. Against the stars he had a fleeting glimpse of a turban's outline, then a powerful hand clutched the back of his tunic. All in the same breath the Lewis gun was jerked from him and thrown to safety; like a helpless terrier, Tim was picked off the rock face to dangle at the end of a tribal arm.

But the huge Zakka seemed unable to convince himself that Tim was alone. Momentarily he peered over the cliff edge. In that instant Tim drew his bayonet left handed, grasped the blade with his right and twisting, smashed the handle down on the tribesman's head.

Tim heard the man's thick skull crack like a broken crate.

The pair swayed over the brink. Tim sensed that he had won only to lose. He waited for the swift, long fall. Then, incredibly, a final muscular reflex of the dead Zakka's legs threw them slightly inward. Inches from the precipice, Tim broke the iron grip on his tunic collar—for it held even in death—rolled over and wiped his face on his sleeve.

His slung rifle had not been dislodged from his back, nor the ammunition carrier. He recovered the Lewis gun and sat for a few minutes, listening. He dropped below the skyline on the gently sloping tribal side of the ridge, and moved cautiously on.

DAWN was at hand. The hills had begun to shade from black to gray but the valley was still full of night. Somewhere on the ridge, directly ahead, Tim heard a sudden gruff Pushtu call.

"*Ohé,* Rahim! Let us go down now, else we miss the morning meal."

The yawning answer seemed directly beneath Tim's feet.

"*Wah!* Well spoken, Yusuf. The white dogs cannot surprise us now. Come, or we shall miss the fun with the third soldier. Better than any meal, that!"

The two walked beyond earshot. Night fires, burned low, sprang to life and the valley was a dark carpet dotted with innumerable bright pinpoints. Tim worked down with the shadows, ever creeping toward the Zakka camp.

He was a scant forty yards from the rearmost fires when he halted behind a huge, round rock, removed his rifle, binoculars and drum carrier and settled himself in a prone position with the Lewis trained ahead.

He had not waited long when a sound like a wave lazily receding on a pebbly shore told him that the Zakka main body was on the march. Yet a considerable number lingered, and Tim believed he knew why. Tim's searching glasses brought them to arm's length.

Of Bob Lanigan he could see no sign. Did that mean that his deductions were wrong—that, after all, he had failed? Tim had counted heavily on the fact that the bodies of the other two had been still warm when found by the advance guard, reasoning from this that the Zakka procedure had been to leave a party behind to perform the grisly work at the last possible moment. But he realized now that while this might have been true of the others, there was nothing to prevent the tribesmen from varying this last execution. Bob might have been tortured to death miles farther on, so that every Zakka would have a gloating view as he passed in the morning.

Suddenly Tim knew. A cloaked, green-turbaned *hadji,* who had been squatting by the fire, rose and turned. Tim saw that he held a long, curved knife, its point red hot from the embers. The *hadji* said something and the others scrambled toward a small depression which Tim had overlooked. Before the evilly grinning Afridis quite formed a ring, shutting out his view, Tim had a brief glimpse of a pair of bare white feet.

The *hadji* bent over and picked up one of the feet. Gripping the ankle between his knees, he ran the point of the knife along the sole, from toe to heel. There was no scream of agony, but the *hadji* was whipped violently back and forth as his victim tried vainly to break the hold. The milder torture had begun.

Tim steadied the Lewis on its tripod, drew a careful bead and let go a long burst, traversing the circle. With grotesque suddenness, the picture changed. Half the tribesmen, including the *hadji,* were on the ground, some still, some flopping about like headless chickens.

The rest spread like cigar ash blown from a table. Caught between Tim's sights in various ludicrous attitudes of flight, they were bowled over one by one until he had killed or wounded all but two. Tim snapped on a fresh drum. Coolly, the remaining pair lifted Bob's bound figure and attempted to make off with him.

Tim shifted from Lewis to Lee-Enfield. He did not trust the machine gun for fine-sight shooting. The Lewis might get Bob as well as the others.

Tim's first shot caught the nearer Zakka at the base of his skull. His dirty white turban popped into the air as he slumped down on Bob's legs, bringing the front man to a sudden halt.

At seventy-five yards, there was no missing that target. Yet Tim's next shot was not fatal, for as he picked up his small arsenal and charged forward, he could see the fellow kicking and squirming. Game to the last, the Zakka had drawn his knife and was dragging himself toward Bob when Tim's rifle butt put an end to that dying effort.

Tied as he was, Bob was unable to get up. Tim cut him free with the long knife, and thrust the rifle into his hands.

"Can ye stand on yer feet, lad?"

"Love o' God, Sergeant—how'd you get here?"

"Niver mind now. Can ye—"

Bob tried, but he could not bear to touch his slashed foot to the ground.

"I'll carry ye," Tim began. He looked up the valley, and what he saw told him plainly that he would never carry Bob far. Warned by Tim's firing, the rest of the Zakkas were returning.

"Gimme a shoulder. I can hobble one-footed," Bob urged.

"We might make th' rock where I was," Tim guessed, and they set off on their desperate three-legged race.

"Wh—where's the battalion?" Bob demanded jerkily.

"Back there somewhere," Tim growled.

Half amazed, half accusing, the boy said: "You came alone!"

Tim made no reply. All at once the air was full of whispering lead. A ricochet *thupped* against a rock, whistled off crazily. As the two gained Tim's rock, the cries of their pursuers were close behind: the eerie blood yells of the hills.

"Why didya come alone?" Bob panted, while Tim silently emptied the cartridge clips from his pouches and shoved them toward him.

"Why?" Bob repeated stubbornly.

Tim checked the recoil spring on the Lewis. "Aw, hell. Don't be bodderin' me wid thim questions now." He squeezed his trigger. The gun's chatter drowned talk.

"We mustn't be taken alive," Tim said unexpectedly as he changed to his last drum. "At th' last minute, put the rifle aginst me head; I'll do the same to ye wid the Lewis—count three 'n both fire. 'Tis best." He fired a short burst, took a deep breath. "Done me best for ye, Bob. Ye—ye're a grand lad, a credit to me ould pal Steve and to yer mither—God bless her dear soul."

What caused that sudden blurring in both men's sights? They kept firing, if a little blindly—

And then, behind them, a curious coughing. *Haugh. Haugh-a-haugh. Haugh!* Only one thing on earth made that odd sound: the guns of a mountain battery. They heard the sharp, even roll of Vickers, too, and the heartening bark of many rifles, fired at will—but *behind* them!

The Zakka rush wavered, stopped, turned. Then the tribesmen were in full flight. They wanted no part of an open battle in broad daylight, with little or no cover. Yet before they gained some measure of protection among the jutting spurs about the valley's western gut, it was written that full half their number should fall to British marksmanship. It was further written that the demoralization resulting from this salutary dubbing should shortly cause them to sue for peace, with the usual assurances that henceforth they would respect the property of the British Raj—promises which would be kept for a while, at any rate.

But the shape of things to come was far from the minds of the pair lying side by side behind the big round rock, as they turned their heads to regard each

other incredulously. Such good fortune couldn't be, yet it *was*.

BOB was the first to speak through that din of deliverance. "What you said about mother and dad just now—was that the way you really felt, or were you just havin' a mild case of hysterics?"

Tim shrugged.

"Guess I was just kind of excited," he grunted.

"I didn't exactly ask on my own account," Bob went on. "Whatever's been between us—you've wiped the slate clean forever, Sarge. But there's something else. You—you never let me give you the message mother sent. After what you've just done, I'd like to finish that message."

"As ye like." Somehow Tim's indifference carried no conviction.

"Well—" Bob's eyes dropped. "See, mother's only thirty-seven; people take her for my sister, mostly. She—"

"Did she tell ye to say *that* to me?" Tim growled.

"Hell, no! But I'm sayin' it because—why do you make it so hard for me, you old faker? What she said was this: That you'll be coming home soon, and when you get back she'd like to have a good, long talk with you. You—you can't be more'n forty-five and—well, she thinks an awful lot of you, Sergeant."

Magically, the bitter lines in Tim's leathery face seemed to vanish. Into his faded, hard blue eyes came a sparkle absent for more than twenty years.

"Why in blazes didn't ye tell me that at first?" he barked happily.

Before Bob could answer that outrageous question, a group which had detached itself from the advancing column reached the rock—the colonel, Captain Morrow, others.

Tim scrambled to his feet and gave his commanding officer a resounding rifle salute. Then, a trifle uncertainly, he stood waiting.

The colonel appraised the extent of Bob's injury, spoke kindly to him and turning at last toward Tim, looked him up and down without a smile.

"Gross disobedience, desertion in the face of the enemy—I needn't go on. Nice charges for a Summary Court Martial!"

The colonel took a quick step forward. Tim still stood at the slope, but the C. O. grasped his free right hand.

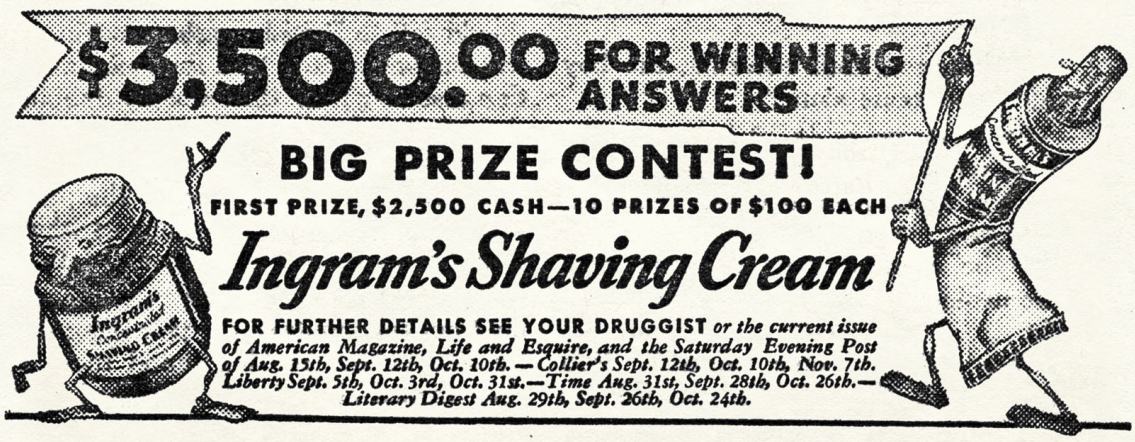
"Congratulations, *Sergeant Major!*"

Tim's mouth fell open. "Hanh!" was the best he could manage.

Still pumping the hand of his most recently promoted warrant officer, the colonel turned to the others.

"Strange, gentlemen, how our best English poets so often prove prophetic. Mr. Kipling, for example, surely must have been anticipating Sergeant Major Riley's magnificent feat when he penned the line—

"'*A little British army goes a damned long way*'."



NEWARK, 400 FEET

"Tell the passengers to buckle their belts," he said harshly.

by T. BENSON HOY

BRUCE PAWLING, the senior pilot on the line, was scheduled out in twenty minutes. His solid figure sprawled heavily in a chair and he stared glumly for a while at the drizzling rain outside the pilots' room. Then he glanced at his watch and frowned.

"I wonder where Jerry is," he said.

"Around," Murphy said succinctly and with a slight twinkle.

"M-m-mh." And Joan was probably still around. Lately she had been so eagerly insistent on driving him to the field. He looked out again and his thoughts drifted, gloomy and detached, through the cold November rain into the past. Formlessly, there appeared in the gray murk the men and planes of old crackups, their wives; then his wife. His head moved slowly with a wondering respect as he thought of her quiet courage through the years he had flown. It was a tough life for a woman, married to a pilot.

Suppose Joan married Jerry Banks? It was a possibility to which he was entirely opposed. She was too young and sensitive for the strain of being a pilot's wife. And Jerry was only a co-pilot with dangerous years ahead of him, which was added cause for his disapproval.

Bruce spoke musingly to Murphy. "Now take a few years ago, we wouldn't fly blind through stuff like this, watching a bunch of needles."

Murphy grinned slowly. He was another veteran and his eyes like Bruce Pawling's, were a clear blue and disarmingly quiet.

"No-o," he said. "But we'd freeze our faces trying to follow a railroad track."

"Sometimes," Bruce admitted. "We learned how to really fly, though. One of the instruments we use now is called

an artificial horizon, and that's what I mean—it's artificial flying.

"Isn't it better than scraping across the tree-tops like we used to do?" Murphy asked.

"Yes, in a way," Bruce said slowly, "but that's not the point." He realized he was arguing somewhat illogically in support of his objection to Joan's increasing interest in Jerry. "We were on our own almost from the start and had to learn how to fly in a hurry or else. Nowadays, there's no way of telling how a co-pilot will stand up in a bad situation. He doesn't know the score half the time, just rides along watching the pilot juggle the needles in bad weather. He doesn't learn anything about the weather and not much about flying. If it's going to be tough he seldom knows it and if things do get out of control it's all over in a hurry, one way or another."

A tall, lean co-pilot had come into the room and heard part of this.

"I learned something once," he said in a soft, confident drawl. "I was with Travers and we were on top of some stuff following the beam when the radio went out. It was high country under the clouds and Travers was afraid to come down until he had to. But when the gas got low he started down. After we had been plowing through the milk awhile, he said, 'Can you see anything?' I opened my window. The milk was turning darker and it was pretty wet outside. I couldn't see anything.

"We went along that way while Travers dropped the ship lower. He asked me a couple of times if I saw the ground. It was getting kinda exciting. Finally I saw a bunch of dead trees. They looked kinda funny. I told Travers. He opened his window and looked. Then he turned to me and said, 'You're dumb as hell.'"

Jerry Banks grinned easily at Bruce Pawling and Murphy before he went on. "Well, Travers reached his arm out the window and pulled in a stalk of corn."

Bruce chuckled and thousands of hours in the air were traced in the deep fanning lines that spread around his eyes. He knew it was a hangar yarn of Jerry's invention. But the story sort of typified an irresponsible attitude towards flying that left Bruce annoyed and a little troubled. He wondered how Jerry, who probably didn't even know what a motor failure was, would react in a real jam.

"We go out soon, Jerry," Bruce said glancing at his watch. "Got your manifests ready?"

Jerry affected a snappy salute.

"All set, sir," he said, grinning. "I've been very busy."

"Very," Murphy affirmed smilingly and looked at Bruce. "I saw him out by your car, talking to your daughter so fast he didn't know it was raining."

Jerry hid a slight flush in a quick smile. He didn't notice that Bruce's lips had pinched together.

"I was convincing Joan," he explained, "that I needed some home-cooked food. So she invited me to dinner tomorrow night if you bring me back on time."

Bruce's face was remote and cool as he regarded Jerry for a second. His eyes seemed to hold some of the far-away stillness of the many horizons on which they had focused. Then he pulled himself out of his chair.

"We'll see," he said noncommittally. "It's time for us to go."

BRUCE gazed somberly through the wet windshield at the cheerless weather while waiting for the plane to be loaded. Thousands of lonely hours in the air had given him a sense of proportion that had come to serve as a philosophy. From the perspective of high altitudes the ground was like a picture of still-life. In the air the monotonous and irritating mole-hills of life on the ground had always flattened out and disappeared, and the perplexing mountains of existence would shrink to indifferent pro-

portions. The air for him had always held a solution or an escape. But his problem now was too earthy, too emotional, too close to himself for his philosophy. In a sense, the air itself had made the problem—and the air, this time, was letting him down.

When the dispatcher came around the wing and waved him clear, Bruce gunned the plane away from the loading walk and rolled it down the runway. While circling the field Bruce checked the blind-flying instruments and then put on his headset.

"Got the beam for me, Jerry?" he asked.

A steady *di-da, di-da* coming through the phones answered him. It was the dot-dash, off-course, signal of the A quadrant.

Bruce changed direction a few degrees to converge with the on-course *da-da, da-da* signal that identified the blind-flying beam. It made a narrow, corridor-like path of sound to follow to Cleveland. Then he lifted the nose in a climb. The ground, dreary and gray and lifeless in its shroud of rain, soon disappeared. The plane bored through a leaden sea rising blindly towards the glittering brightness on top of the clouds.

Jerry watched appreciatively Bruce's smooth mastery of the controls, balancing the plane with scarcely perceptible pressures on the wheel and rudder. Not one needle wavered off the pin for more than a fraction of a second. Jerry smiled to himself. Bruce was always preaching caution in blind-flying—"juggling needles" as he called it—but he could hold them steady with a quicker deftness than any pilot on the line. It would be Bruce's recommendation that would make him a first pilot. He hoped to get on the new division that was being opened soon. Then his mind wandered off and he thought of Joan, remembering a smile, a look, a movement, as men in love do.

At twelve thousand feet the plane pushed out on top. The clouds spread to the horizon like a limitless, snow-covered prairie, crazily furrowed as though a capricious god was farming. In places, creamy billowing clouds towered into the sky, looking like fantastic cauliflowers. The plane seemed to have lost its speed and to be floating across the sky on some invisible current. Miles were no longer distance; distance was absorbed by time and was measured by the hands of the clock. The earth beneath the clouds was revolving on its axis and when the plane dropped down through the clouds, Cleveland would be below.

Bruce was listening to the blind-flying beam in his phones.

"Stay tuned on the weather reports, Jerry," he said. "Give 'em to me when you get 'em."

Every half-hour Jerry had to make position calls to the company stations but the rest of the time he listened for weather reports. The ceiling at Cleveland stayed above a thousand feet with light rain. Further west the overcast was slowly lifting and breaking. All the eastern stations continued to report rain and low ceilings—the storm was a wide and flat low-pressure area that completely covered the east. It was apparently a stagnant low and they sometimes took days to move out over the Atlantic.

Soon after they left Cleveland the clouds cleared away. Bruce let Jerry fly and fell to thinking. Whether he was right or wrong, he at least knew the flying racket and he wanted Joan to have more happiness and contentment than she could find as a pilot's wife. Jerry was probably a good kid, might make a good pilot and might make a good husband for Joan; but a pilot's home life was too broken and uncertain. He wanted Joan to have something better. He shifted restlessly in his seat. The problem of how to be the stern parent baffled him.

That night they had dinner together.

Jerry talked flying with more relish than he showed for his food. But Bruce, his mind still troubled with thoughts of Joan, listened in silence or made only laconic answers to Jerry's eager questions.

Jerry was in the middle of an earnest discourse when Bruce, with apparent irrelevance, broke in: "Have you read many stories about the sea, Jerry?"

"Yes," Jerry said, a little surprised at the question. "Why?"

"Not many stories have been written about the air, yet."

Jerry waited, uncertainly, wondering what Bruce was driving at.

Bruce seemed to be looking far away for something to direct his thoughts. He went on, finally: "The air is harder on a woman than the sea has ever been. When men sail it is for a long time and women can develop patience from day to day, and week to week. A long waiting becomes a quiet one. The air is different. The waiting periods are short and hard and frequent. Relief when a trip is completed gives way to anxiety the next day when another trip starts. They don't have so long to wait, but if you're delayed one hour along the line coming home, every minute of that hour can bring them a different fear."

Uncomfortably, Jerry understood that Bruce was making an indirect appeal for Joan.

"But airline flying is becoming safer and more regular every day," he protested. "We have better planes and engines, better instruments and more accurate weather information than ever before."

"That's all very fine," Bruce replied. "But there are still a lot of hazards in flying. It takes years to learn how to avoid most of them."

"I've been a co-pilot for three years," Jerry said defensively.

Bruce held back a derisive grunt. Riding along with a first pilot who did all the worrying and made all the decisions made flying look easy. It was a lot of fun with no responsibility. And Jerry seemed inclined to regard it as more amusing than serious.

"That's a pretty short time to learn very much," Bruce pointed out. "And a co-pilot doesn't have to make the decision when the situation is tough."

Jerry's head was slumped on his chest. He pushed a bread crumb back and forth and tried to figure out what Bruce meant. It seemed now that Bruce was trying to tell him he wasn't ready to be a first pilot.

"We can learn a lot from books that you old pilots had to get from experience," he said in a muffled voice. Then he looked up at Bruce, his mouth firmed and there was a spark of resentment in his eyes. "That, and flying as co-pilot," he said rebelliously, "is the only way we have to learn."

"There are lots of books about the sea, but storms can knock the biggest boats on the rocks. Don't forget that. It takes a long time to learn aviation, years of flying on your own. And it's fairer on your own. So many things can happen while you are learning." Bruce was beginning to doubt that he could accomplish anything on this particular track. "Let's finish our coffee and go to a movie," he suggested.

ON THE return trip the next day the storm was broken up into scattered clouds as far as Cleveland. But from there on the solid overcast was still hanging over the ground. Bruce had some misgivings about getting through to Newark. At a few stations the ceiling had lowered to five hundred feet. Newark was reporting eight hundred with light, variable, easterly winds. The temperature there was staying around thirty-five degrees with the dew point a few degrees lower. That could mean fog might form at any time. A storm like this one in November could

do a lot of tricks and conditions at Newark seemed to be preparing one.

At Cleveland, Bruce got out of the plane and went into the operations room to study the weather more thoroughly.

A dispatcher tore a strip of tape from the teletype machine.

"King just left Newark," he told Bruce.

"Yeah?" Bruce said without interest. Coming out of Newark was easy. He had to decide what the chances were of getting in.

The chances didn't look so good—that is, it would be a chance. Bruce pulled his lower lip and studied the weather map. Pressure lines waved in vague circles around the irregular oval that defined the storm's center. The oval stretched from Massachusetts to Virginia and spread from the mountains to the sea. The plane was scheduled to arrive in Newark at six o'clock, after sunset, which would bring a drop in temperature and lower ceilings. The winds off the ocean at Newark would be carrying moisture and raising the dew point—all of the elements for a sudden fog. Or a secondary low might form within this one and start throwing snow and sleet every which way. If he didn't make the field the first attempt there'd most likely be hell to pay should the carburetors become choked with ice on the way down through the clouds. But at the least, if he couldn't get into Newark there would be nothing to do but high-tail it back to Cleveland and the passengers would have gone nowhere for a long ride. All this Bruce considered and with a final jerk at his lip decided to cancel. With only the mail and sitting on a chute he'd think nothing of it; but with passengers—it was different.

Jerry came in the room and stood beside Bruce. He was always glad of a chance like this to get pointers in figuring weather. He grinned at the dispatcher, who was muttering over a sheaf of air express forms.

"When do we go?" he asked Bruce.

Just then the dispatcher jumped up and started for the door.

"Watch the teletype, will you, Jerry?" he called. "I gotta check your air express."

"Okay," Jerry said and moved over to the machine.

"I guess we're stoppin here," Bruce said.

The machine tinkled with the Cleveland call. Jerry read the tape as it ticked out, poked a couple of keys to acknowledge the message and slowly tore the tape off.

He turned to look at Bruce.

"Stopping?" he said in a strained voice. "Isn't there a chance of getting through?"

"There's always a chance," Bruce said shortly. He regarded Jerry doubtfully and received a surprising confirmation when Jerry said: "I'd like to get back."

So that was it! He wanted to see Joan tonight.

"Listen!" Bruce snapped. "Get it out of your head that what you'd like has anything to do with flying. You'll make a better pilot when you do. The passengers are your first consideration—your own affairs don't count."

The good-natured humor in Jerry's eyes had given way to a hard bleakness, strange to them.

"Some pilots—" he paused, reluctant to go on—"some pilots would make a try at it."

Bruce flicked Jerry with a glance of startled anger.

"What other pilots would do," he gritted slowly, "or what you want to do makes no difference. I told you the passengers came first. Tell the dispatcher to arrange train accommodations." He jerked out a pack of cigarettes and lit one. The matter was closed.

Jerry shrugged.

"Sorry," he mumbled. "The reason I wanted—" he raised his hand slowly and stopped as his eyes fastened on the strip

of teletype tape with a preoccupied stare. "Guess I was thinking too much of seeing Joan tonight," he said dully and turned towards the door. The passengers came first. Nothing would change Bruce's decision, unless . . .

Bruce frowned heavily at Jerry's back. He sat down, took off his cap and ran his hand through his hair. His opinion of Jerry had changed. Joan was a sensible girl, but if she liked this scatterbrained kid she was making a mistake. She had a mind of her own, though, and it wouldn't be easy to show her that. Maybe her mother would know what to do.

Just then the dispatcher came through the door, followed by three of the plane's passengers. Bruce remembered there were two others, women, probably the wives of two of these men.

"Ahem," a mild-looking man began. "Mr. Pawling. It was explained to us that you were cancelling to avoid the chance that you might have to return us here."

"Yes, and—"

"It might mean only that we would lose several hours time," the man interrupted. His eyes lit with a gleam of long-denied adventure. "We are none of us in an important hurry. We have talked it over and are willing to try to make Newark."

Given the occasion, passengers always seemed capable of a surprising recklessness, sometimes to an extent embarrassing to a pilot. Bruce smiled blankly. "The weather—"

"If you have to come back we will understand why," the mild-looking man persisted eagerly.

"My wife wants to go," one of the other men said. "It's our first trip and we'd like to finish it."

Bruce rose slowly, his face feeling tight and stiff as he forced another smile. To them it would be incomprehensible if he refused to make even a try.

"All right, we'll go," he said quietly. "But we'll most likely return here." The cigarette broke in his fingers.

As the passengers filed out the muscles whitened in his jaw. Jerry was responsible for this. He had disregarded a basic principle of flying passengers by considering his own wishes sufficient reason for making the attempt; and getting them to request the flight be made was a trick and absolutely inexcusable.

He went out to the plane. Jerry was standing at the door, avoiding his gaze. Holding back a hot bursting anger. Bruce passed him without a word.

When Jerry squeezed into his seat Bruce pushed the starter buttons viciously. After the motors caught he turned to Jerry.

"You get the weather reports," he grated. "When you hear a few of them you'll be glad to eat in Cleveland."

JERRY made no reply. He adjusted his radio to the weather frequency and Bruce's to the beam, as the plane climbed to twelve thousand feet. Below, the clouds were scattered and raggy looking, but in a short time they closed together into a solid floor. Bruce's face was set and intense as the ship droned towards Newark. His hands held the control wheel with a grip that made the knuckles show white. Jerry was not unaware of Bruce's reaction to what he had done, but his face was expressionless.

"What's the weather?" Bruce's words were clipped and toneless.

"Ceilings along the coast have stayed around a thousand. Newark is—" Jerry hesitated—"eight hundred." He had leaned over so Bruce could hear better above the roaring motors.

"What else at Newark?" Bruce snapped impatiently.

"Light rain, visibility—" again Jerry hesitated—"one mile, wind northeast five—"

"Write it out!" Bruce cut in. "Write every report you get from Newark."

From then on Jerry handed Bruce slips of paper as the Newark reports came in. Bruce noted, frowningly, that the factors which would cause fog were there. But the ceilings stayed above 400 feet on all reports. Well, perhaps the weather was going to give them a break.

The sun moved down in the sky and a dusty blue arose ahead as darkness crept over the eastern horizon. Above the Alleghenies the clouds tumbled in waving masses roughly indicating the contours of the mountains beneath. Beyond, the clouds smoothed out; but when the plane reached the smoother area Bruce studied the clouds with some concern. They looked too smooth and flat. He let the plane drop down until it was skimming like a speedboat on some strange, gray sea, utterly calm and peaceful. Bruce found no comfort there and pulled up again with a deeper frown. The flatness indicated the likelihood of a temperature inversion — a deep layer of cold air lying on the ground with a warm layer up here. It was just another indication that there should be a ground-fog. For some reason, though, it was holding off and another half-hour would see them landed.

Losing precious altitude, he nosed it down.

The thin dusk of high altitude turned to a dark purple. Then the sky became black and was scattered with stars like pin-holes that let in light from somewhere beyond. A pale, crescent moon stared vacantly into the vast loneliness of space. Jerry shivered involuntarily, but Bruce was heedless now of everything except staying on the narrowing path of the beam. The on-course signal was increasing in volume as the plane approached the sending station at Newark. The beam would fade out suddenly in the inverted cone of silence that reached up from the station. That silent dead-spot, funnelling up through the beam, was the only marker above the clouds to indicate the field below.

Then the beam faded out. They were over Newark. Another weather report was due in three minutes. Bruce flew through the dead-spot and picked the beam up on the other side, following it while waiting for the weather report.

"Tell me the ceiling when you get it," Bruce said. "The barometric pressure, too. Never mind the rest."

Jerry waited with the phones pressed hard against his ears. Then he leaned over.

"Four hundred feet," he said steadily. "Pressure 29.45."

"I would've bet plenty there'd be a fog down there," Bruce muttered. He adjusted the altimeter to the pressure report, swung off the east-west beam and turned to pick up the north-south one that formed a cross above the radio station. Maneuvering a plane around a dead-spot requires sensitive flying and quick figuring. The invisible cross-roads formed by the intersecting beams are marked only by dots and dashes in the earphones. But Bruce, with a delicate

surety of touch, could turn from one beam to another as though they were lighted highways.

The ground was twelve minutes below at a gliding rate of a thousand feet a minute. It would hurt the passengers' ears, but that would be better than a slower decent with the ice conditions in the clouds. If he went down and couldn't get in and had to climb up again there would be barely enough gas to return to Cleveland. But a four hundred foot ceiling was a good margin of safety. It should hold up long enough for him to get under it.

Jerry drew a deep breath as Bruce nosed the plane down into the clouds. Outside his window the darkness seemed to take on an oppressive weight that held the plane motionless in a black, solid stillness. In a moment of panic he started to speak, but gripped the sides of his seat instead. His eyes fastened on the altimeter needle and followed its slow swing. It moved past the four thousand mark, then the three. Bruce would find out soon enough.

At one thousand feet Bruce crossed the dead-spot heading north on the beam that was on a line with the runway. He flattened the glide and after a two minute run on this course leveled off at five hundred feet, pulled the ship around in a sharp turn and unerringly picked up the beam again going south. He adjusted the motors to a ninety-mile speed. The controls were sluggish and the plane made a slow, wallowing response to their action.

"Watch for lights." All Bruce's attention was concentrated on the flight instruments. The on-course signal was clear and steady in his phones. Then it faded out over the dead-spot. "See anything?"

"No," Jerry said tonelessly.

Bruce turned the motors up and held straight for another two minute run before swinging the ship around again. This time, when it cut across the dead-spot, he dipped the nose and dropped to four hundred, three hundred, then to two hundred feet, in a quick zooming pass at the field.

"See anything?" he snapped.

"Nothing," Jerry said heavily.

With a muttered curse he pushed full gun to the motors and pulled the plane up in a steep climb. Suddenly the plane jarred. The right motor had missed. Then the left motor coughed and sputtered. Bruce tensed on the controls. Ice in the carburetors! He eased the nose down and bent close to the instruments. The plane shook and trembled as the motors jerked at their mounts. For short periods they would run smoothly, then one or the other or both would get ragged and lose revolutions. Bruce fanned the control wheel delicately, taking advantage of every burst of full power to lift the plane higher. He had lost his sense of position in respect to the beams and the dead-spot. An attempt for the field, not knowing exactly where it was, would be hopeless now. He cut in the supercharger and that seemed to help. If the motors got no worse the plane could climb out on top of the clouds, where the warm air would melt the ice. But it might only be a breathing spell up there if the motors wasted too much gas in the climb. Cleveland would be out of reach and another try for Newark would be the only way out.

Shaking in every joint, the plane reached twelve thousand feet and was still in the clouds. Its climb stopped there and it rolled and dipped lazily in spite of everything Bruce could do. Desperately, he nosed it down slightly, losing precious altitude, and then pulled up. For a hopeful split-second it porpoised out of the clouds and—sank back. But with another sluggish zoom it stayed on top, dragging across the gray, murky floor for a nerve-wracking minute before lifting off. For the few minutes it took

the motors to clear up, the starlit, lonely solitude was almost comforting.

"Take the controls," Bruce said. He tuned his set, picked up the mouthpiece and called the company station. His face grew incredulous, and then tautened with a dark anger. He twisted full around and his eyes pierced Jerry in heavy silence.

"What the hell's it all about!" he demanded finally.

"I thought—"

"Thought nothing! Newark's had one hundred feet for two hours. We were advised to return to Cleveland. Now Cleveland is closed up tight. They want to know what we're doing over Newark." Bruce turned around and took the controls. "I'd like to know too. Of all the damn—" He choked helplessly. Wrath, up here in the immense expanse of the heavens, seemed puny and ridiculous; it offered no escape from the immediate necessity of making another descent.

"One report gave a rising ceiling. I thought it might go up again later," Jerry explained lamely.

"Shut up!" Bruce snapped and pressed his head-set to his ear. "Newark, zero, zero," he muttered. Then he reached out and adjusted the altimeter to the four point drop in the barometer that was reported. "Tell the passengers to buckle their belts," he said harshly. "Don't scare them to death—grin at them. It's the last thing you'll do on this line." He added, grimly, "On this earth, maybe."

JERRY went back into the cabin and carefully checked each passenger's belt. They seemed unaware that anything might be wrong, but one wanted to know why they hadn't landed when the plane went down. Jerry explained that another plane was landing, and in this weather it was better to have plenty of room.

"We'll get into Newark, won't we?" the mild-looking man asked.

"Sure, in just a few minutes now," Jerry told him, and smiled confidently. His own feelings were a mixture of elation and apprehension. What he had done seemed now a desperate gamble. When he started up the cabin towards the pilot compartment he had to shake off a sudden torment of doubt. So much now depended on Bruce's smooth precision and long familiarity with the Newark field. If anyone could land the plane it was Bruce, he told himself tightly.

As he squeezed into his seat Jerry noted the altimeter read a thousand feet with a compass heading of north. Bruce was sitting momentarily relaxed at the controls, but in the dim light from the instrument panel his face reflected hard, shadowed lines.

Then Bruce swung the plane around and edged back to the beam on the southerly course. Hitting the dead-spot at five hundred feet altitude, he became alert, even tense on the controls as they sped along the beam for one, two, three minutes. Again the plane swung around sharply, and for the last time. Bruce cut the throttles to ninety, then eighty miles an hour. The altimeter needle fell from five hundred to three, before he gave more gun to the motors—just enough to hold the plane in a nose-high stall.

Jerry needed no instruction. He stuck his head out of the window and his eyes strained downward into the darkness.

When the beam faded out it seemed to Bruce that the plane barely crawled across the dead-spot. Just above stalling speed it nosed through the fog, settling slowly. It would be a matter of seconds now. The landing was in the lap of the gods. In spite of all Bruce's skill an uncontrollable factor of luck would decide the result.

Jerry's head jerked in. "The boundary lights!" he shouted.

Bruce snapped the throttles off and they sank for a long, breathless second. Then there came the shock of the wheels on the runway. The plane rolled past

vague, shadowy spots where the boundary lights were smothered in the misty fog, and stopped. Bruce slumped in a comforting numbness of relief untroubled, for a moment, by thought.

Jerry fumbled in a pocket and brought out the teletype message he had received at Cleveland. He handed it to Bruce, who took it with a slow indifference.

Jerry switched on the overhead light. "Read it," he prompted.

Conflicting emotions left Bruce's face a dazed blank as he read:

ADVISE PILOT PAWLING HIS WIFE AT ORANGE HOSPITAL FOR SERIOUS EMERGENCY OPERATION.

Just then the door opened.

"I knew you'd come, Dad," Joan cried, stifling a gasping sob on her father's shoulder.

Her face was moist, and her coat was damp with mist. She had been standing in the rain, following the plane's descent by the motors' roar, unaware of anything except the interminable suspense in the seconds that made up time.

"Hurry," she said. "The doctors are afraid. They call it post-operative depression. I know that mother needs to see you. She is worrying about your flying in this weather." Joan pulled at her father's arm. "Oh, I knew you'd come!"

Bruce pulled out of his seat, but stopped at the door.

"Hurry," Joan urged him. "Jerry, please make him hurry."

"One second," Bruce said. "I wouldn't be here unless—" He paused and looked at Jerry. "It was a crazy thing to do," he said with sober gruffness, "but thanks."

Then he had a little difficulty with his voice, but he went on slowly, "Will you come along, Jerry, and take care of Joan?"

Special Announcement!

Read Page 112 in this issue.

Beginning with the December issue, Adventure will be increased sixteen pages to give more room for stories. The price will continue the same.

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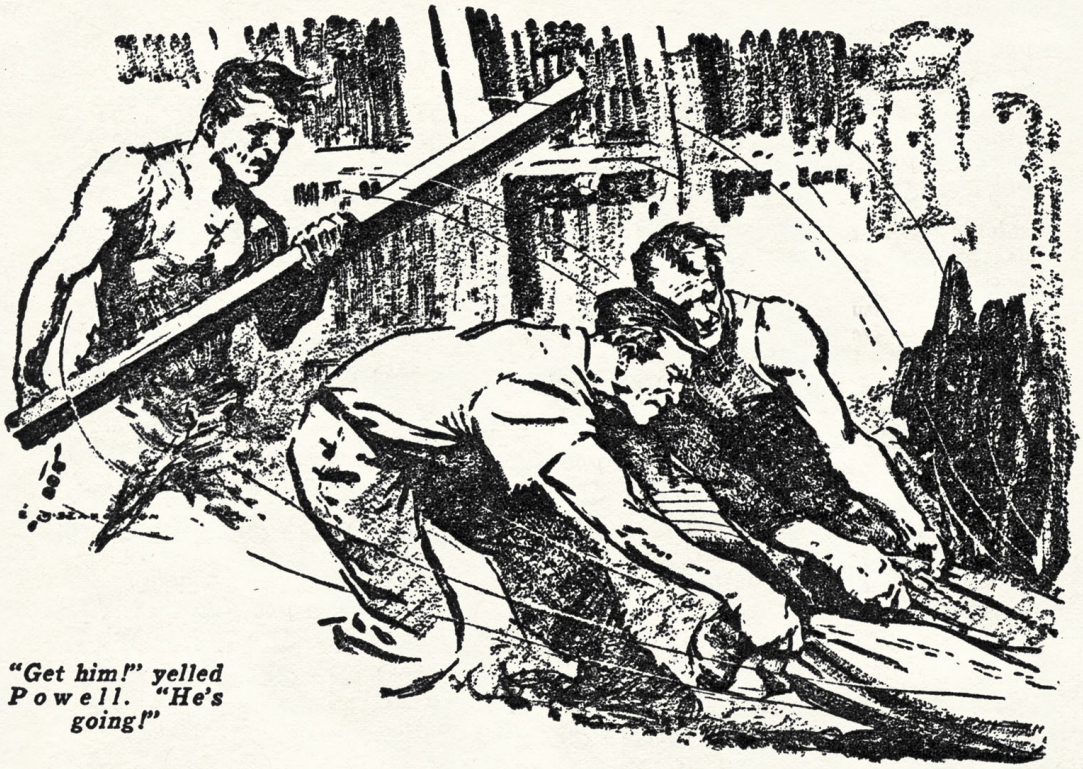


"Get him!" yelled Powell. "He's going!"

JOE MULLIGAN DIES NATURAL

by BORDEN CHASE

"WHAT are you waiting for?" said Corcoran. "'Tis time we were down in the tunnel."

"I was thinking," said Mulligan sadly.

"Thinking?" asked Corcoran. "About what?"

"Them two dollars you owe me. Do you suppose I'd be getting them soon?"

Tige Corcoran let out one of those big loud laughs and slapped the little miner across the shoulders. I grinned a bit, and stepped onto the elevator. Poor Joe Mulligan and his two dollars —it was getting to be the laugh of the whole job, the way Corcoran was stringing him along. Each day at shift time Joe would ask for his money and get nothing but argument instead. Not that Corcoran denied the debt, mind you. It was just his way of having some fun with Joe. Now, he signaled to the hoist man, and when the elevator started down he slapped Joe across the shoulders again and tipped me a wink.

"What would you do with a man like this?" he asked. "Every time I see his homely face he pesters me for money. A miser, that's what he is. Even stopped drinking to save a few pennies."

Somehow I couldn't laugh with Corcoran today. It's all very well to ride a man but there's a limit to everything. And Joe Mulligan hadn't been looking any too good for the past few weeks. His eyes were deep in his head and there was an all-gone look about them that usually means trouble for a sand hog. Maybe he needed a rest. Maybe he needed some good country air and the smell of grass and trees.

The elevator bumped to a stop at the foot of the shaft and I stepped off. Corcoran followed me and we joined the rest of the gang. There were thirty of

us in all, a husky looking bunch, if I do say it. Corcoran was a top notch heading boss and he drew the best men in the trade when he worked a tunnel job. Now he was counting noses, checking up the gang before we went into the air, and I heard him mumbling to himself.

"Where t'hell are you, Joe?" he called.

I thought Joe was right beside me but when Corcoran yelled I turned to look. The miner wasn't with the gang and suddenly I caught sight of him all slumped down on the elevator.

"Hi, Joe!" I said. "What's wrong, man?"

He didn't answer, and when I bent to touch his shoulder I saw that Joe was dead.

IT was a bit of a shock to most of the gang, but I'd been expecting it. I'd warned him against taking the pledge but his old woman had been after him—figuring maybe, it would do him some good. So at length he gave in. And when a sand hog quits drinking at fifty, it's only a question of days before the air gets him and stops his heart.

"Too bad he had to die here at the foot of the shaft," I said. "The company doctor will call it heart failure and Norah Mulligan won't get a cent."

Corcoran rubbed one of his big paws across his chin and nodded his head slowly. He was an old hand on tunnel jobs, and he knew what a thieving bunch those company officials could be when it came to handing out money to a sand hog's widow.

" 'Tis a dumb thing you've done, Joe," said Corcoran. "Now why t'hell didn't you wait till we got inside?"

Of course Joe said not a word, and only a man like Corcoran would have talked like that to a miner who was past hearing. He was a hard one, that heading boss—too hard to understand that perhaps Joe had some feeling in the matter. After all, it was a homey sort of place for a sand hog to die; a place that had been part of his life for a great many years. On three sides the walls of the shaft extended upward sixty feet to the street level. On the fourth, the circular mouth of the tunnel led to a concrete bulkhead in which were the air locks. These were long steel cylinders set lengthwise in the bulkhead and they served as passageways into the pressure chamber.

Water dripped constantly from the arch of the tunnel and the leakage of air set up a noise like a dozen drunks trying to whistle through their teeth. Against this the elevators clattered up and down, taking their loads of river mud to the surface and returning with heavy curved iron plates that were bolted into place to form the tunnel lining.

Yes, it was quite a spot, but I couldn't help but realize Corcoran was right about the money angle. It wasn't the right place to die, not if Norah was to get any company money. However, what's done is done. I turned to the heading boss and asked him if we should send Joe up top and then let one of the gang tell Norah the bad news.

"Close your mouth a while," said Corcoran. "I've got an idea. Let me think on it."

He stood there like a big baboon, scratching his head and blinking down at Joe. Then he grinned.

"Pick him up and set him on a flat car," he said. "Push him into the lock and make him comfortable."

"What the—"

"Pick him up!" he roared. "Am I the boss in this damn tunnel, or am I not?"

Mickey Powers and I grabbed Joe by the arms and hoisted him to his feet. One of the muckers dragged up a car and we got Joe seated on it. Corcoran set a hat on his head and folded his arms, and he said he'd be damned if Mulligan didn't seem to be grinning when we rolled him into the lock.

I could see the men were wondering

if this were some new joke, and I was about to tell Corcoran he might have a bit more respect for Joe, but there was a funny look in his eyes that stopped me.

"All right, men," he said. "In we go—and mind now, not a word to anyone about Joe. There might be a few company men in the heading and there's no need for them to know Joe ain't fit for work. He's going in there like the rest of us—and he's going to die natural."

Oh, he was a smart one, that Corcoran. The gang grinned and exchanged winks but said never a word, for it was plain as day Corcoran wanted to get Joe into the pressure and claim he died there. But when the lock door was swung shut behind us and the air came blasting in, I got to thinking a bit.

"Look here," I said. "It's all very well to take Joe in, but what do we do with him when we get there?"

"Stop looking for trouble," said Corcoran. "If ever there was a finicky man it's you, Tom Hogan. Time enough to fret when we get to the heading."

I shrugged and said nothing. If that was the way Corcoran felt about it, there was no use talking. The pressure was lifting to forty pounds and with it came the heat. The gang crowded around the flat car pinched their noses and blew to equalize the pressure in their head passages. And soon each of us began to sweat. Rapid compression makes heat, and a thermometer in that lock would have registered a hundred and twenty degrees when the inside door swung open.

Before us the length of the tunnel stretched into misty darkness. It dipped away in a gentle slope that extended half way across the river, and from the far end came the clang of tools and the shouts of the gang at work. A small electric locomotive came rumbling up the narrow gauge tracks, swung into a siding and was coupled to the flat car.

"Move over, Joe," said Corcoran, and seated himself next to Mulligan. "You're getting so damn fat you take up all the car."

He gave Joe's belt a hitch and made room for himself. A few more of the gang piled onto the car, Corcoran lifted his arm and away we went toward the heading.

"He don't look good with his mouth gawping open," said Corcoran.

"He looks all right," I said.

But Corcoran wasn't satisfied. He took a pipe from the band of his hat and loaned it to Joe, and I'll admit he did look a bit more natural, squatting there with a corncob hanging out of his jaw. Then the car swung fast on a curve and he lurched against the foreman.

"Watch what you're doing," said Corcoran.

That was just like the man. He'd been riding Joe so long he couldn't stop. Soon we came to the heading. Sure enough, three damn company men were there, a couple of engineers and the general superintendent. So I tucked my arm around Joe and hoisted him to his feet. Powers lent a hand and we marched Joe right past the muck pile.

"What's the matter with that man?" asked the general super.

"Got hit on the head with a shovel," said Corcoran. "Some of the boys were fooling. Nothing serious. We'll douse him with the hose and he'll be fit in a jiffy."

A mucker caught Corcoran's wink and took a backhand swing at one of the miner's helpers. And in no time there was a nice little free-for-all going near the muck pile. The general super cursed and damned, the engineers grinned and turned to watch the fun, and Corcoran and I hoisted Joe up onto the shield.

NOW this shield is a peculiar affair. It's a huge, drum-like cylinder that fits snugly over the forward end of the tunnel. It is divided into upper and lower halves by a platform, and again by uprights that form a set of pockets where the miners work. The tunnel was sixteen feet in diameter, so we had to hoist Joe eight feet into the air to get him on that center platform. And as luck would have it, he dropped Corcoran's pipe and someone stepped on it.

"You clumsy idiot!" yelled the heading boss. "That was a new pipe."

Powers caught Joe by the scruff of the neck and dragged him into the center pocket. Corcoran and I followed and then we squatted there, wondering what in hell we could do next. That general super had spoiled things by asking what was wrong with Joe. Otherwise it would have been a simple matter to tap him on the head with a drill steel and call it an accident. But now we had to think.

"Well!" cried Corcoran. "Don't sit there with your teeth in your mouth. Say something! Suggest what to do!"

"It was your idea," I said. "Me—I don't see why we had to bring him to the heading."

"You wouldn't!" snapped Corcoran. "But he's here—and what do we do now?"

"We could let a car of muck run over him," said Powers. "Soon as these company guys get out of here it would be a cinch."

"No good at all," I said. "Norah Mulligan would have a fit if he was all marked up. Besides, it ain't decent."

"If we were doing some blasting it would be easy," said Powers.

"Much good that does," grunted Corcoran. "We ain't doing any blasting." He went down into the bottom to get the gang started and maybe gather a few suggestions. Finally I picked up a shovel.

It would have to be my luck that Joe was a miner. There are only three of us miners in a heading and we have to keep things going at a fast pace. We start at the top of the shield, just under the hood, and we take out a few faceboards. These are three-quarter inch planks set across the face, or forward wall of the tunnel to support the sand. Behind them is the river bottom and on the near side where we worked the compressed air billowed against them to hold back the river.

First we take out a few boards, dig out thirty inches of mud and sand, then replace the boards against the new face. The process is repeated until the whole wall has been advanced and the muck shoveled through the pockets to the muck pile. Here the muckers load it into the cars that are hurried away to lock and sent up top.

With Joe in this condition I was left short-handed. Micky Powers was handling a side pocket and I was digging away in the center. Of course Joe's helper took up the work in the other side pocket, but he was an undersized runt from Tipperary and not much of a hand with a shovel—not like old Joe. But we did the best we could and sent the sand flying.

"Why not stick a shovel in Joe's hand?" said Powers. "He'd dig from the habit of it."

I didn't think so, but why argue? A tunnel heading is a busy place and there's not much time for gab. The miners race to keep the muckers shoveling and meanwhile a gang of blacks bolt up the iron. And these iron men are a peculiar crowd. Senegalese, most of them, and a fine strapping crew. They swing their seventy-five pound wrenches up and down and chant songs to keep the rhythm of the stroke. But on this shift they were sort of moaning, because they knew we had a dead man in the tunnel and that's supposed to be bad

luck. Imagine Joe bringing bad luck!

Their foreman, the iron boss, kept them going, though. He was a six-footer with a set of muscles on his back that looked like squirming black snakes. He was expected to build a complete ring of iron plates while the miners advanced the heading, and he meant to do it—luck or no luck.

"Most finished wid de iron!" he yelled. "Most finished!"

"Come on, you miners!" roared Corcoran. "You're holding up the shove."

"Hear that, Joe?" I asked. "He says we're holding up the shove. Don't he ever get tired of bellyaching?"

I didn't expect Joe to say anything but it seemed only decent to pass a word or two with him. And as I kept on with my digging I thought he was a lucky Corkonian at that to have missed this shift. It was a tough one. But then, all the shifts are tough when the pressure is high. It's funny stuff, the air. It takes about a pound of it to keep back two vertical feet of water. You can't see it. You can't touch it. But you can feel it tearing at your chest—burning the guts out of you.

The tunnel was well along toward the middle of the river now and the surface was a little over eighty feet above us. First, of course, there were forty feet of mud and sand, and above that the river. And with forty pounds of air keeping that out of our laps we only worked half-hour shifts. Two of these each day was all a man could stand.

It was hot as the cellar of hell in that heading and I didn't have time to take a whack at the water hose, what with doing Joe's work. Not that I minded tossing a little sand for him, but when I looked at him the beggar wasn't even sweating.

"Is it worse than this on your new job?" I asked.

I wanted to know, but I guess I'll have to wait until I work on the New Job myself. Not that I'm anxious to go, but it's part of sand hogging to expect to sign up on that tunnel they're building in hell. Guess they must get about forty or fifty men each year—good men, too.

"Will you get your timbers in!" yelled Corcoran. "We want to shove."

THIS business of timbering up the face before a shove is tricky work, and Mickey Powers came into my pocket to lend a hand. When a ring of iron is bolted tight and the miners have advanced the face, it's time for the shield to move forward. That's what is known as "making a shove." There is a circle of hydraulic jacks around the tunnel side of the shield, and these kick back against the last ring of iron when the pressure is turned on. They have a total pressure of a few thousand tons and they force that old shield right into the river bed. It's as though you took the open end of a drinking glass and pushed it into a wall of sand. The rim cuts through and the sand pours into the glass.

We couldn't have the river bed pouring into the tunnel, so the face was timbered to support the boards while the shove was taking place. But without Joe Mulligan to lend a hand, it was a man's job to set those timbers. Corcoran came into the pocket before we were finished, and I could tell by the satisfied smirk on his face that he had picked up an idea.

"Remember how we lost Polack Eddie?" he asked.

"Will you listen to the man?" I said. "I was working right alongside the Polack when the river got him—and this turkey asks me if I remember."

Mickey Powers put in his two cents' worth. "Sure we remember. A part of the face kicked out and away he went."

Now that sounds easy, but there's more to it than you'd think. With forty

pounds of air forcing against each square inch of that face, you can bet it's no place for mistakes. I'm not much on figures, but if you will take a circle sixteen feet in diameter, divide it into square inches and multiply forty pounds to each inch, you'll know how many tons of pressure were pushing against those face boards. The answer is plenty.

This Polack Eddie was a good miner but he was careless. A few shifts back he had taken out too many face boards. The pressure found a hole—and before the Polack could bless himself the air caught him and jammed him headfirst into the muck. I dropped my shovel and made a grab for him, but he was gone, and I found myself busy fighting a blow. Which means that the air pressure is rushing out and that soon the river will be coming in to take its place. That's when the miners catch hell, because they've got to stand and fight it, while the rest of the gang run for the locks. The miners and their helpers throw everything they can get hold of into that hole and hope like hell something will jam and plug it up. Sometimes it does, but not often. And the next shift you need new miners and helpers.

"I figured we could let Joe make a mistake," said Corcoran. "Those lousy company men are still in the heading. We've got to do something about this mess."

"Why not leave him for the next shift?" asked Powers.

"What?" roared Corcoran. "With Cockney Wilson coming in? Hell, he'd stick Joe in a corner and let him wait another half hour. You know Cockney, he never was strong for Joe."

"I don't like this at all," I said. "And I don't think Joe would, either. He's too good a miner to make mistakes, and—"

"Yeah?" said Corcoran. "He made a mistake fighting with Cockney, otherwise we wouldn't be stuck with this job." He turned to Joe and shook a finger at him. "You see what comes of making bad friends?"

"Ain't that just like a heading boss?" I said. "He's got to blame all his mistakes on a miner. One that he owed money to, at that."

"I was coming to that," said Corcoran. He pulled two dollars from his pocket and tucked it into Joe's shirt. "Look, Joe. I was only kidding, see? You ain't going on the New Job being bad friends with me, are you?"

He was shaking Joe's hand and kind of half waiting for an answer. Just then one of those damn company men stuck his head into the pocket.

"How about the shove, Corcoran?" he yelled. "Going to leave it for the next gang?"

"Not by a damn sight," said Corcoran.

That was natural, because the gangs all race to get the biggest number of shoves. We didn't want to fall behind, but there was this business of Joe. He had to die natural, or Norah never would collect a cent, even with the best lawyers we could get.

"Do a good job," whispered Corcoran. Then he gave Joe's shoulder a pat. "Be seeing you, feller. And here's mud in your eye."

CORCORAN went down to give orders for the shove, and I loosened up one of the face boards. The idea, of course, was to let Joe slide into the mud a bit, then yell that the face had kicked in. Naturally the shield driver would open his controls and ram the shield hell-bent into the river bed, because that's the quick way to stop a blow. Then Mickey and I would heave boards and shovels into the hole, and by the time the shield stopped Joe would be pretty well wedged in the mud.

We knew it would be ticklish work getting him out, and it was a sure bet it

would take at least another shift to do it. That meant Cockney Wilson would be stuck with the job, and I didn't like that so much, him not being a pal of Joe's. But I figured Joe would understand.

"Ready for the shove!" I called.

The shield stirred. It moved, and you could feel the tunnel tremble throughout its entire length as the jacks started shoving. The face boards cracked and split; sand poured in at the top, and air went screaming through the openings. Fog closed in tightly when the pressure dropped, and through it came the shouts of the gang.

Powers jabbed his shovel into the opening I had made. Sand swirled around it and spilled down onto the platform. Then it stopped. The air yelped and whined like a dog with a broken back. It spun in a dancing circle and whipped the fog and sand along with it into the hole. The blow grew larger, wider.

Mickey nodded and I gave Joe a boost. The white wind grabbed him and slammed him into the muck.

Powers was standing with an armful of empty cement sacks. He heaved them in alongside of Joe. I caught up planks and wedged them tightly. Then we both grabbed everything in sight and heaved that, too.

"Get him!" yelled Powers. "He's going!"

Sure enough, the air was pulling him through.

What a nice state of affairs that was! If he didn't jam, there would be hell to pay. Those company officials would swear he wasn't on shift—that he didn't check in, or some other fool thing. We'd have no body to show and the fight might go on for years in the courts. Norah Mulligan could whistle for her money and Joe's kids would be dumped into a home.

"His leg!" yelled Powers. "Get his leg!"

I made a grab for one foot and Powers caught hold of the other. But there was no stopping that pressure. As well try to hold an ocean liner to the dock with your bare hands. Powers was roaring and hollering, and I was cursing Corcoran for an idiot. The shield moved forward, the fog spun around us in twisting layers, and the sand nearly buried us. Suddenly I felt Joe's boot come loose and I pitched over backward. When I got to my feet Joe was gone. The hole was spinning and howling like a soul gone mad, and Powers was staring at it with eyes that were big and round.

In front of the hole was Corcoran—fighting it, roaring like a wild man. At times he would laugh as he caught up a timber and heaved it into the opening. His shirt was gone, torn away and thrown to the wind. There was blood on his chest where a spike had ripped him, blood on his arms that dripped from a cut in his head. But he was laughing, the fool! He stood there and reached out with his long red arms and snatched at bags and shovels and planks. I stepped beside him and he brushed me away.

"Get out!" he yelled. "Get out before the face lets go!"

I spat at him. That was a hell of a way to talk to a miner! For a moment I thought he'd fight, but he looked from me to Powers and then laughed again.

"Stay then!" he said. "Stay—and we'll all go to hell together!"

We fought that blow for thirty minutes. And it was a bad one. The face of the tunnel was melting away in a swirling funnel of air. Air, mind you, stuff that you couldn't see or grab with your hands. It was rushing into the sand, bubbling and frothing through the river above and leaping fifty feet toward the sky. And when that air was gone the river would pour into the tunnel. No use to run then. It would come like an avalanche with tons of mud and boulders

and chunks of dead ships caught up from the river bed.

We had to stop that blow—stop that air blasting out. Corcoran was in the middle, the danger spot. Powers and I passed him everything that came to our hands and he fed it just as fast to the whirlpool.

"A timber!" he yelled. "One timber—you raw faced sons! One big timber and I'll plug it."

I ran through the pocket and found one resting against the back of the shield. It was a big one. So big I'd not been able to lift it if I hadn't heard the rumble of the sand. And when the sand rumbles the river isn't far behind.

"In with it!" cried Corcoran.

He caught it up in his great hands and jammed it square across the hole. Powers criss-crossed it with short planks and I stuffed the holes with bags. The air hit against it and howled through the openings. Bags whipped away and we scrambled about on our bellies looking for more. It was like building a paper house in a hurricane, but we couldn't quit. More bags, more planks—we were naked as at birth when the show was over. But we stopped it. We licked that damn blow, and then we squatted there without strength to lift a hand.

THE company men came in when the noise was over, and the general super seemed a bit surprised.

"Where's Mulligan?" he asked.

I took a deep breath and said a quick thanks to the saints. Sure enough, the super had asked about Mulligan on the way in. He'd seen him and admitted it.

"On the New Job," I told him. "He got sick of working for the likes of Corcoran."

The company men left the heading and I turned to find Corcoran staring at the patched-up face. I think the big turkey was grinning.

" 'Tis a devil of a way to get buried, Joe," he said. "But Norah's sure of her money now. There's no telling but what them doctors might have got wise if we tried it any other way."

"You mean you expected this would happen?" I asked. "You took a chance on losing the heading—and me along with it?"

"And me, too?" said Powers.

"You were his friends, weren't you?" laughed Corcoran. "Me, I was just his boss who owed him two dollars."

I looked at Powers and winked. That Corcoran was a hard man and he liked his little joke—but we both knew he'd never have walked out of that tunnel without his miners.

DONEGAL SAILOR

by L. L. FOREMAN

The man with the boat-hook raised it to strike, and then I understood.

TO help build a ship, to labor and sweat over her, to see her taking shape—that's the work of a man. To watch her grow from a skeleton keel to a grand young lady, tall and full-bodied and beautiful—that's a joy to a man. To see her, finished at last, gliding majestically down the slip, as eager for the good salt water as any healthy girl, yet calm and haughty with it all—that puts pride into the heart of a man.

But to watch other men trooping aboard her, lugging their duffle bags, scraping their careless feet on her virgin decks; men who will take her out to sea while you lean on your hammer and gaze after her as she steams grandly down the Lough—Holy Saints, that's like seeing the girl of your heart go to other men. It tears at your stomach, and you feel like pitching your hammer into the sea and going off to get drunker than you ever were.

Which was what I did, the day they signed on a crew for the *Sweet Norah*. Sweet she was to me, as only a ship can be sweet to those who helped build her. As only a ship can be to a man with the salt in his blood. Other ships I had loved, aye, many's the one. The shipyards of Belfast built them in the old true way, with care and jealous pride of workmanship. But to me the *Sweet*

Norah was the grand queen of them all.

Not over large. Built for the China trade, she was, and a better ship never left Ireland. And we send out ships, not pots, from Ireland.

She was signing on a crew, a crew of men who had never bucked a rivet of her. But they had their tickets. They were seamen. I was a shipyard man. I knew ships, but only the building of them.

So I flung down my hammer and went off to the Anchor Bar on the Quay, and the ganger said nothing, but understood. He, too, had helped build the *Sweet Norah.*

Late that evening and long after dark, I was still in the Anchor Bar. Sailors and shipyard men packed the place. Liverpool men, Cockneys, lean-faced Americans, Lascars and all kinds, their talk drowned out by the loud and happy arguing of the Irish, just as the blue fumes of tobacco smoke were strong with the reek of good Irish twist, honest and unflavored. I drank alone.

"I hear they're signin' a crew for the *Sweet Norah,*" piped a voice at my elbow, and I looked down and saw little John Shane, who was old and talked a great deal about nothing.

"I've been hearin' it since the morn," I said, and added, "What'll you have?" for the sake of peace and quiet.

"What would I be havin'?" grinned John Shane, and ordered a double whisky. "They say that's her new skipper, over there."

I looked where he pointed, and saw a lean-faced man sitting alone at a table. He was medium size, with sharp blue eyes and a quick manner about him.

"A Yankee!" I said, and felt a boiling within me. "Begor, the Yankees gobble up the best of everything, the best men and the best ships! I wonder would yon little man know a chock from a wedge?"

John Shane cocked an eye up at me, and rolled it then at the Yankee skipper.

"Why don't ye ask him?" he queried softly.

So I did. I pushed through the crowd to the table, and leaned over it.

"My name," I said, "is Gart Gilbride. I wrought on the *Sweet Norah,* which I hear tell you're takin' command. The Gilbrides built ships an' sailed them out o' Lough Swilly, up in Donegal, before Columbus was a wee one. Tell me, Captain, do you know a chock from a wedge?"

He looked up at me, and when he saw my face he stopped smiling.

"I," he said, very quietly, "am Captain Peter Dornin. Yes, I'm taking command of the *Sweet Norah.* And I know a chock from a wedge. I also know a drunken Donegal dock-walloper from a sailor."

"You're a neat little man, Captain Dornin," said I, just as quiet, and I knew from the hush in the bar that the crowd had caught on. "'Twould be a shame to spoil your looks."

"Yes," said the captain. "It would be a shame."

"Ah, well," said I. "Shame take me!" And with that I swung at him.

What happened then I do not rightly know. The captain seemed to vanish queerly, and I almost fell across the table. When next I saw him, standing beside me, I felt all the agony of hell in my stomach at the same time. They said afterward that he hit me amidships with only his fist, but I still think he butted me with his head. Then something flashed up and I thought my jaw was broken. I was sure of it when another blow jolted me off my feet, though I hadn't much time to think about it before the back of my head hit the floor.

There was a lot of noise going on around me when I came back to my senses. The whole world seemed to be talking and laughing at the same time. I got up, wet with the water someone had thrown over me, and glared around

at the laughing crowd. Me it was they were laughing at. Me—Gart Gilbride, who could handle any three men when sober, and well they knew it.

"Where is he?" I asked, and they laughed the more.

"Have no fear, Gilbride," cried someone. "He's gone an' away. He's a man, that one. Keep away from the likes of such!"

"Three times he hit him wid his fist," said someone else. "So fast he couldn't see 'em! An' Big Gilbride went to sleep like a child! Moider, moider, I never seen the like!"

I STUMBLED out through the door and left, the crowd still laughing behind me. Not drunk was I now, but cold sober. There was just one thing in the world I wanted. That was Captain Peter Dornin. I wanted to grasp him in my two hands and break him, and the devil take his pretty fists.

I hurried along down the dark Quay to the darker backs of the waterfront warehouses. The *Sweet Norah* was having her bunkers filled at Wharf 14, as well I knew. Many's the time since she went down the slips had I wandered along to look at her, all trim and bright with her fresh paint and shining brass, putting her shabby old sisters to shame.

The bold Captain Dornin would be aboard the *Sweet Norah*, likely enough. And Gart Gilbride it was who would be calling on him, with a pressing invitation to settle a little bit of unfinished business.

At Wharf 14 I stopped in the shadow of the wharf shed, and looked at the black outline of the *Sweet Norah*. Ah, she was a ship, that one! Even in the darkness you could see the fine clean lines of her, sharp against the moon-silvered water of the Lough.

It was quiet and deserted down here. With that, and the sight of the *Sweet Norah*, much of my temper died, and I stood there, full of a strange loneliness. Then someone moved quietly down the gangplank and stood on the edge of the wharf, back turned to me.

I could tell by the cut of him that it was Captain Peter Dornin. Taking a prideful look at his ship, thought I, like a baron standing off and taking a look at the castle he has conquered. Preening himself. And well he might. He'd never had a better command, and never would. But I'd had more to do with the *Sweet Norah* than he would ever have. I had helped to build her. Aye, I had helped to build her so that the likes of him could strut on her bridge.

I walked forward, soft on the balls of my feet. He didn't hear me. As I got closer I saw that his head was lowered and his body bent over, as though he was staring down over the edge of the wharf into the dock. Then suddenly he let out a shout that made me jump.

"Hey! What're you men doing down there?"

No answer came but the echo. Then the splash of oars sounded. The captain seemed to grow shorter. He vanished over the wharf's edge, and I heard the louder splash of him as he struck water. He had jumped into the dock, the fool, with all his clothes on, boots and all.

I ran to the edge and looked down. The first thing I saw was a tiny spark. It came from an open-head box that floated in the water close to the ship's side. The water broke near it, as the head of the captain bobbed up. He began swimming for the floating box, raising a great splashing as he fought to keep afloat in all his clothes.

He was within a few strokes of it when a small dory darted out from close under the wharf, heading for the captain and the box. Five men were in it, two crowded in the stern, two rowing, and another crouched over the bow with a boat-hook in his hands.

Only when the spark in the box spluttered a little, and the man in the bow raised his boat-hook to strike, did I understand what was going on. Sabotage, begor! The dirty devils were trying to blow a hole in the *Sweet Norah!*

AS big a fool as the captain, I jumped with all my clothes on. But I didn't jump for the water. I jumped for the dory, with a wide leap. It was all of twenty feet down, and I weigh close to two hundred pounds. I landed on top of the two men in the stern, feet first, which broke my fall and the shoulder of one of them. I heard it crack under my right foot. My left landed on the other's head, which was even better.

The bow of the dory went up in the air as the stern went down. The fellow with the boat-hook went up with it. He and his boat-hook were flying over my head as I went backwards into the water. It must have come as a great surprise, for he let out an awful screech. Then I was under the water, with the men and the dory on top of me.

For a minute or two I didn't have time to see if the captain had reached the box. I hoped he had got to it and tipped it over, else we were all due to be blown out of the water. From the way those devils fought, their minds were on that box, too.

But they were poor creatures, and full of fear. When I came to the surface, with more water in me than was decent, only one man was clinging to the capsized dory. I got a grip on his neck and was shoving him under when I noticed it was Captain Peter Dornin.

"You'll pardon me, Captain," said I, between spitting and gasping for air. "But without your fine cap I didn't know you. Where's the box?"

"Under the water," said he, coughing and spluttering like all that. "It was dynamite, I reckon. The dirty, low-down, sniveling— Where'd they go?"

"With the box," said I, hauling him up to get a better hold of the dory's bottom. "Who were they, Captain?"

"Some wharf-rats I shipped out of Liverpool a year ago," he grunted, still spitting water. "They raised trouble on the return trip from Singapore. Tried to start a mutiny. I clapped 'em in irons, and got them sent up for six months when we made port. I've seen 'em hanging around the wharf here, and I had my eye on 'em. Scum! Didn't have the nerve to tackle me, so they tried to blow a hole in my ship."

Somebody yelled down from the wharf. It was a dock copper. "Hey, what the hell's gates—"

"Get a rope and haul us out!" snapped the captain. "We fell in." To me he said under his breath, "Keep your mouth shut about this. I don't want to be held in port to answer a lot of questions if this gets out. I'm sailing tomorrow."

The copper vanished to get a rope.

"She's a fine ship," said I. "I helped to build her."

"She's all that," said the captain, and the tone of his voice made me look at him. He meant it.

"I used to be a shipyard man," he went on. "The O'Dornins built ships and sailed them out of Lough Swilly, up in Donegal, before the Gilbrides came out of their caves in the hills. My grandfather dropped the 'O' when he emigrated to America."

"More shame to him," said I. "Have you a full crew, Captain?"

"Not yet," he answered, feeling his neck where I'd pinched him. "Know any good men I can pick up?"

"I know one," said I. "But he's a shipyard man, and knows little of anything else."

"Can't the big swab learn?" snapped he.

"Aye, Captain O'Dornin," said I. "The big swab can learn."

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

TWO new men join our Writers' Brigade in this issue, one with a story of the sea, the other of the air. Both of them are well qualified by their experiences to know what they are talking about, as the following short accounts they give of themselves will show.

This is from L. L. Foreman:

I have long looked at *Adventure* with a wistful eye.

Personal data: Born in London, England, 1901. Went to Ireland nine years later, and stayed there. Lied about my age during the War, enlisted in the now defunct Royal Irish Rifles. Wounded, gassed, taken prisoner, spent ten months in a German prison camp. Youngest gefangen there, as I was sixteen years of age and beardless.

After the fuss was over, and democracy assured, returned to Ireland, which was just then tuning up with an affair of her own. I was working in the Belfast Shipyards when things boiled over, and I somehow got mixed up with the enthusiastic participants. What with one thing and another, the day came when travel seemed to be indicated. I traveled.

Finally reached New York, with a passport and everything, in 1922. Since then I haven't stayed put in any one place for very long. Country is too darned interesting. I've seen most of it, and parts of Mexico and Canada, but this is a big continent and there's still a lot left to see.

I broke into print about a year and a half ago, and since then have sustained life by that pleasant method. Previous to that, I bowed to the whims of circumstance by being one thing after another—blacksmith, printing-ink maker, auto-factory worker, bartender, copper miner, house painter, hobo, harvest hand, ranch hand, dishwasher, poultry farmer, and other odds and ends, most of them odd, all came to an end.

"Donegal Sailor" is practically biographical. Gart Gilbride was a pal of mine. We worked together in the Harlan & Wolff shipyards, in Belfast, Ireland. Gart—not his real name—always hated to see a ship which he had helped to build ploughing down the Belfast Lough to the Irish Sea. Used to give him an empty feeling, he said. So he would promptly proceed to fill the lonesome cavity with suitable ballast. Then he'd look around, with the devil in his eye, for somebody to accommodate him. Just about that time I'd seek other company. He was a big, raw-boned Donegal wallah, and could hit like a pile-driver.

One night he picked the wrong marble out of the bag, a chunky little man, quiet and dangerous, who met him more than halfway. Gilbride never knew what hit him. It was as big a shock to the rest of us as it was to him.

Next day I came across them—Gilbride and his David. They were drinking together like brothers. The little hard'un was the skipper of Gilbride's latest lost ship-love. Just coincidence. The skipper liked Gilbride's style. Signed him on.

I sometimes wonder if they're still sailing together, and how much salt water Gilbride has put behind him.

AND T. Benson Hoy tells us:

I remember reading a newspaper account a few years ago in which I was described as a "veteran pilot". I remember being a little amused by the description—I was a downy-cheeked youth of 28—and then a little astonished at the realization that I probably was a veteran. And I can remember many years of reading stories with a hopeless envy of the writers who could draw yarns from their roaming experiences. (I yearned to roam and never thought of writing.) And here I am, a writer.

It's all a bit confusing.

Learning to fly in the Navy, twelve years ago, I filled my logbook for the next three years with haphazard barnstorming and a year in a pursuit squadron on the carriers Langley and Saratoga. Then I began flying mail and passengers on schedule with various lines in this country, and went to South America and flew the Andes during 1930. Returning, I carried passengers "Every Hour on the Hour" for the old Ludington Line, and wound up with Eastern Air Lines.

In the story "Newark, 400 Feet" I've taken a slight liberty with the operation of the radio beam. As I describe it, it is the way many pilots would like to see it work but is not the present method. And the larger operators use the system of ground flight-control in deciding bad-weather cancellations but ground control is comparatively recent and I doubt if all the lines have adopted it yet. I mention this to avoid a letter-to-the-editor dogfight with other "veterans".

INTERESTING letters have been received from these comrades, and I wish to thank them.

Walter Quinn, Montgomery, W. Va.; W. E. Aughinbaugh, M. D., New York City; Dr. A. L. Boyce, New York City; Alfred W. Miller, New York City; J. D. Kenealy (address omitted); John R. P. Wilson, Tayabas, Philippine Islands; Thomas P. Jordan, Scranton, Pa.; Thomas J. Johnstone, New York City; V. V. Sessions, Baton Rouge, La.; Clifford E. Gillette, Belmond, Iowa; W. H. Ulsh, Kane, Pa.

DEAD air pockets in the Mammoth Cave, Kentucky—they don't exist, writes Arno B. Cammerer, Director of National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

I have before me the *Ask Adventure* section for July, 1936, in which is published an inquiry from Mr. W. C. Woodall, of New York, and the reply thereto, written by Mr. Victor Shaw of your staff.

The query concerning air conditions in caves and the reply by Mr. Shaw are informing and authentic except for his reference to Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, a portion of which has recently been added to the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Mr. Shaw states that "Some rooms in the Mammoth Cave have a waist-high layer" (of carbon dioxide) "so that a man could walk all right, while a dog would die of suffocation quickly."

Never having heard of any such condition in Mammoth Cave, which has been visited by the public for more than a century, and is probably the most widely publicized subterranean area in the world, I detailed one of the geologists of this Service to investigate the matter. I also requested the general manager of the Mammoth Cave Operating Committee to supply me with any information which he might have upon such an alleged condition.

Not one single indication of the existence of carbon dioxide in Mammoth Cave has been found, nor is there any record of discomfort to human beings or deaths of animals in the annals of this famous cavern. On the contrary, evidences refuting the possibility of dead air in any portion of the area are numerous. Most conclusive is the fact that Mammoth Cave is inhabited by many types of life which do not stand as high as the waist of a man, such as rats, mice, insect life, etc.

Some of the guides at Mammoth Cave have served there for thirty years, and replied, when questioned, that they had never known of an instance of discomfort or death to animal life within the cave, such as is known to occur at the Dog Grotto near Naples.

That danger to small children is as remote as to dogs is proved by the travel report from Mammoth Cave for last July 8. On that date a family from Mokena, Ill., consisting of an eight year old, a ten year old, and a 16-months infant, accompanied by their parents, made the all-day de luxe trip. They all enjoyed the trip very much,

and the baby showed no ill effects from the experience.

FROM Lieutenant Commander Vernon C. Bixby, expert on navy matters:

Would it be asking too much to request a short notice addressed to Mr. Clark, Montreal, Canada. "Please forward your address. My letter to you has been returned." As an explanation I would say that Mr. Clark very kindly sent me a clipping from the *London Illustrated News* dated 1850—and an old copy of *Scribners* containing Farragut's own account of the capture of New Orleans. I wish to acknowledge the gift but am unable to do so.

I WAS fishing for hardheads on the Chesapeake a while ago, and my companion caught an eel. The eel got us into argument. I told him I had read somewhere that eels, or at any rate, freshwater eels, bred in the ocean north of Bermuda. European eels as well as North American ones—the adult eels go to sea from their ponds and rivers and travel perhaps thousands of miles to that breeding ground. Moreover, I had read, I assured him, that the tiny thread-like infants of the North American eels made the long trek to this continent, and the progeny of the European ones invariably headed for Europe. And they never made mistakes.

I can't recall where I read this but I believed, and still believe, that I was stating a scientific fact. My friend looked at his eel and at me. His face indicated that he had thought all along I was an honest man but he'd been making a horrible mistake. Then he began to talk. Even if such a thing were true (not that he'd admit it, by a long shot) how could anybody have proved it? Did somebody follow the eels to Bermuda, and how could you follow an eel swimming under the ocean? Did somebody wait around for the young to arrive, and how could he tell which young eels belonged to which parents, when maybe this all took place more than a hundred feet deep? And when it came to tracing the tiny eels back to Europe or North America—well, would I try to explain these things?

I didn't know any of the answers. Those eels must have been marked in some way, but it isn't clear how conclusions were reached. Someone at this Camp-Fire will know all the details of this subject, and I ask him to tell us. If true, it will be interesting to all of us. And I am going fishing with that fellow again, and something should be done about his ignorance or my gullibility.

H. B.

An important notice appears on the next page

26th Anniversary, and More Pages!

WE GO on sale with this issue in November, 1936, and that is *Adventure's* twenty-sixth anniversary.

Last year at this time we got out a whacking big special issue, which *Time* and *News-Week* and many newspapers wrote up in a very generous way.

Our twenty-six years have seen many great yarns and much kindness from readers. But also, to be honest about it, the last ten of those years saw too many changes in size and price. The records show one dismaying period of many months when our magazine sold for a dime and contained only ninety-six pages—a thin and pitiful appearance it made then, like a man shrunken inside his coat. Many comrades threw up their hands and left the Camp-Fire circle, and no one can blame them. Another band waited on in some kind of faith, but unhappy, and looking over their shoulders at the night creeping closer.

No more staggering blow could have been dealt to a magazine known for its size and quality, and the wonder is that it survived.

It did survive, but its pulse was pretty jumpy, and the doctors were alarmed. That was a few years ago—the patient has put on some weight since.

The Audit Bureau of Circulation's figures, compiled every six months, show the last half of 1935 ahead of the first half. The first half of 1936 is ahead of both—the increase being approximately twenty percent.

This is something we have hoped for, because we want to see our magazine bigger—more Camp-Fire, more *Ask Adventure,* another story or two. I have used all the arguments I could think of, and even some whose logic I can't follow myself, to try to prove in advance that the extra expense will be rewarded by a continuing and greater increase of readers.

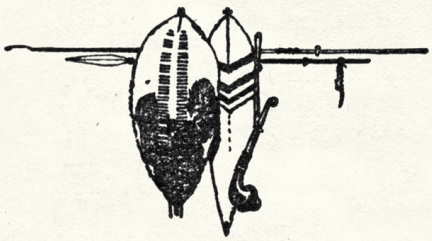
An editor is not supposed to be much of a business man, and likely is not, but I have a blind faith in this idea. Of course, if it doesn't work, then one man whom I know very well will be hiding behind a bush. I'll give you a report on that in about six months.

Beginning with our next issue, *Adventure* will contain sixteen more pages at the same price.

I hope the conclusion of this twenty-sixth year is satisfying to all of us.

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE



Information you can't get elsewhere

HE was in a spot—so he made a new record.

Request:—Have you any authentic information on a Alex Wickham's record dive? It was from some incredible height.

—E. Gaillet, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. L. De B. Handley:—There is absolutely no question concerning the authenticity of Alex Wickham's two hundred two-foot dive. It was witnessed by thousands and the height is vouched for by Dudley Helmrich, present secretary of the Australian A. S.U.

Wickham, son of a Rubiana, Solomon Islands, planter, then and now a resident of Sydney, was the man credited with introducing the crawl stroke in Australia. He undertook to execute a 100-foot dive at a benefit carnival for disabled soldiers of the World War, being held at Deep Rock, Melbourne, Victoria, on March 25, 1918.

When Wickham arrived at Deep Rock, however, he discovered the take-off to be much higher than claimed, actually two hundred two feet by measurement. But not wishing to disappoint the large crowd, he decided to risk the dangerous leap.

He performed a beautiful header, entering as clean as a whistle, but the terrific impact tore the suit off him and knocked him out. He was unconscious when he rose to the surface and had to be rescued by boatmen.

In recognition of the great exploit, Wickham received an award of about $500 from John Wren, millionnaire Melbourne merchant.

THE spade work for an anthropologist isn't digging in soil—but in science.

Request:—I am writing to you in the hope that you may be able to give me some advice on research work in Massachusetts along anthropological lines.

I intend to excavate on the sites of former Indian villages and encampments in this state. Do you think that would be worth my while? I'd like to uncover implements, weapons, and utensils of the tribes which inhabited this section.

I am of the opinion that if one were to choose the sites for excavation carefully, and dig thoroughly, one would discover many interesting remains.

Any information or advice which you may be able to give me will be greatly appreciated. —Wade M. Fleischer, Rutland Heights, Mass.

Reply by Mr. Arthur Woodward:—Regarding such digging I can only say that unless you understand what you are doing, don't do it. I am in sympathy with your desire to learn more about the vanished tribesmen of your part of the country but your query concerning the worthwhile part of it indicates more or less a lack of knowledge of what you are seeking. If by "worthwhile" you mean to find specimens that would prove of monetary value, I have nothing to say. On the other hand if you mean the knowledge to be derived from such studies, I might say, yes. There are always possibilities for an ambitious student.

However, you should first study your area thoroughly before attempting to excavate. Untrained excavators ruin sites for actual study. Private collectors who collect for the joy of personal possession serve no purpose but to exploit dead men and tear pages from the book of past history . . pages that once removed can never be replaced. Our local museums are filled with curios, arrowheads

and Indian skulls, shell beads and stone axes. They will forever remain curios because the collectors were seeking fine specimens. They dug carefully and sifted every inch of the soil—but they forgot to read the story of the earth as they dug. They didn't make notes or take photographs. They didn't recognize the various types of specimens or distinguish between cultures. Now their relics collect dust and the curses of students who feel cheated out of a chance to learn something.

If you must collect, study first, and then, when you collect, you will realize why archeologists stand aloof from the commercial or private collector.

Write to Dr. Carl Guthe, c/o Museums Bldg. Ann Arbor, Mich. and obtain his advice. He is a member of the National Research Council and will explain to you the difference between collecting and being an archeologist. A new society of American archeologists has been formed within the past year or two. No man who deals in archeological material privately or for commercial gain can become a member. The question is, do you wish to shape your course so that in the future you may be eligible to this society or do you just wish to dig?

I've spoken frankly but without personal rancor. If I were you, I would make a point of studying everything pertaining to the subject, then take some college courses, particularly in anthropology. Then, you will be equipped to conduct excavations.

GIVING the deer a sporting chance.

Request:—Will you please advise me on the following subject: hunting white tailed deer in Pennsylvania.

I recently went on my first deer trip, and while unsuccessful, had so much pleasure from it, I expect to go again.

Any information useful to a gunner would be welcome: driving or still hunts, best hours for gunning, habits of deer in this mountainous section, etc.

—Chris Meister, Jr., Roslyn, Pa.

Reply by Mr. Ernest W. Shaw:—Hunting white tailed deer in Pennsylvania varies little, if any, from hunting that species in any other place. The habits of the white tail are universally the same. I say this because I have found it so wherever I have hunted them over a wide space of country from northern Maine to Alaska.

I suggest that you try and obtain a copy of Van Dyke's "Still Hunter". Own a copy if you can, but otherwise get it through a library. It is the most authentic, the best written, and the most interesting treatise on still hunting the white tail that I have ever read. *And that method of deer hunting is the only sportsmanlike way to hunt.* There are areas where the brush is so thick and heavy as to make driving about the only way deer can be obtained, but one cannot call it sport. To be successful this way one must have a knowledge of the deer runs so that the gunners can be stationed on all the runs surrounding the area to be driven. This applies to all localities. Deer will normally use the same runs to leave an area. It then resolves itself into who will be the lucky man to be stationed on the run used by the deer that particular time, since there are usually several routes used by the game. This is the method used in Massachusetts and in the Adirondacks of northern New York State.

I have never hunted in your State, but am told that driving is the common method used there also. To get deer with this method only the ability to shoot quickly and accurately is necessary if some one man in the crowd knows the runs so that he can place the others on station. It frequently happens that one or more of the drivers gets a shot before one of the men on station. Sometimes the drivers travel along barking like dogs and making plenty of noise (which is probably safer for the drivers since it enables the station men to know when to expect the drivers and where they are). In other places the drivers only scout along with or without noise. Driving deer with dogs is against the law in most States. I can see little difference in driving deer with dogs or men. Neither is true sport.

To successfully still hunt, one must not only know the country well, but must know and understand the habits and reaction of a deer under any and all circumstances, and also have the ability to slip along through the brush and timber without noise. One spends as much time looking over the country immediately ahead, as in advancing. Needless to say, one must always hunt against the wind, which often makes it necessary to change one's direction. Experience teaches from the tracks and the action of the deer, what the deer is doing and about what can be expected of him or her. One can learn to know whether it is a buck or a doe which the hunter has been following, for they may act differently under the same circumstances.

In approaching any given small scope of country one must be able to tell at a glance what kind of cover the deer will naturally seek, whether the tracks tell one that the deer is to continue feeding or is hunting a place

to bed down. The latter is usually near the top of a brushy or timbered knoll off to one side of the track previously made, and where the wind will bring the scent of the hunter to the deer, as the man follows along the track. It is this ability to sense what the deer will do (sense in time) and avail himself of topography and cover, to approach either the feeding ground or the bedding spot ahead, and often out of his immediate view, that makes for a successful still hunter. It is mighty hard to impart this knowledge which in many cases amounts to almost a sixth sense, through writing, but the nearest approach to it that I have found is in Van Dyke's "Still Hunter".

Hunting mule deer or black tail is entirely different from white tail. The former will often, on discovery of a hunter on his trail, get up and quit the country, leaving the hunter miles and miles behind, whereas the white tailed deer can seldom be forced out of the small scope of country which he has adopted as his stamping ground. They like to play hide and seek with a hunter, and have often been known to give a man plenty of fun trailing them on a area of one hundred acres. This is particularly true in western, wooded river bottoms which are surrounded by cultivated bench lands. I have in mind several such areas along the Yellowstone River in Montana, where I have had lots of sport while never being out of hearing of the passing trains and the noise of ranch life, the feeding of stock, etc., almost within hailing distance. This does not apply so much to the wooded and brush slopes of the eastern hills, yet it is to an extent true there also.

It is seldom much use to hunt in a storm, since deer are then hunched up under the shelter of some heavy limbed spruce or similar tree, or the thick brush on the sheltered side of a ridge near the crest, and are always on the watch for both the sound and scent of the approach of danger. It is nine chances in ten that the deer will spot you first and leave.

The time of the moon has a distinct bearing. During the full of the moon, when it is brilliant most of the night, deer often feed, and consequently are bedded down resting and watching their back track during the following forenoon, getting up and feeding near this spot around noon, and changing their bed slightly at that time, but not starting out to really feed again until mid-afternoon. During the dark of the moon early morning and late evening are the best times to find them traveling and feeding. However, if one is well acquainted with the country and the habits of the deer in that area, he may often successfully hunt them at any time. It's so much a matter of experience and locale that it is hard to make a flat statement without some qualification. I have seldom read a book on hunting or an article from which I did not pick up something new. Perhaps that applies more after one has had some experience than before, yet by reading and remembering, one should have a sufficient background to enable him to go out and get him a deer if the ground-cover conditions are not too unfavorable.

THE R. C. M. P. is in for a cross-examination.

Request:—Any information about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police will be interesting to me. Please tell me first about their uniforms. Are the coats red? Are the cuffs and collar made of leather? Of what material are the boots made? Does the hat have a leather band around it? Does the braided rope that fastens to the revolver butt-plate swivel, fasten to the hat noose or does it go around the neck?

Do they have a special caliber rifle?

About how many men are in the Royal Canadian Mounted at present? What are the enlistment requirements?

In the winter they travel by dog team. How many dogs do they hitch to a sledge?

How many Canadian outposts are there in one province?

About how many airplanes are in operation in the Canadian Air Force at present?

Is the Royal N. W. Mounted in charge of all law enforcement?

—John Eschman, Warren, Ohio

Reply by Mr. H. Patrick Lee:—You've fired quite a barrage at me—but here goes.

The dress uniform of the R. C. M. P. consists of the scarlet serge tunic with blue facings and gilt badges, dark blue, almost black, riding breeches with two-inch yellow stripe down the leg, and brown strathcona-type riding boots. In winter a fur cap is worn, the stetson with a brown leather band at other times. Gauntlets are brown leather. Peajacket is dark blue, lined with red. Riding slickers are green. Fur coats in winter are of a fur which resembles buffalo, with brown leather facings. Black stockings and moccasins are sometimes worn in very cold weather instead of boots. Naturally spurs are not worn with moccasins, even when mounted.

There is also a field service tunic of khaki cloth piped with blue. This has a roll collar and is worn with a khaki shirt and collar and dark blue knitted tie. A visored cap with a

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POPULAR MECHANICS

yellow band goes with this outfit, but men usually prefer the stetson or fur cap. Brown drill uniforms are worn for fatigues, with a red woolen toque.

The regulation arms are British army pattern .303 Lee-Engefield rifle and .45 Colt's revolver. Winchesters and Savage rifles are sometimes issued to men in the north, for hunting purposes.

Uniforms, arms and all equipment are furnished free to the men of the force. I do not think it can be purchased by outsiders. The revolver lanyard is white cord and fastens round the neck.

Applicant for enlistment must be unmarried British subjects. The minimum height is five feet eight inches and the age limits 20-32. Pay for constables starts at $1.50 per day and rises to $1.75 and $2.

Enlistment is for three years with an option of reengaging for further periods of one or three years.

Headquarters of the force are at Ottawa, Ont. After enlistment recruits are sent to the depot at Regina, Sask., for several months' training before being assigned to duty. There are no examinations other than physical prior to enlistment, but a good education is demanded. Application must be made in person at headquarters, or at the headquarters of one of the fifteen divisions. At present the force numbers about twenty-five hundred officers and men, and I understand there is a waiting list of fully qualified applicants.

The Mounted has four hundred and nineteen detachments of which the largest number, ninety-four each, are in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Mounted enforces the Criminal Code in all of Canada except Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, and Federal statutes throughout the Dominion. The area covered by one post varies greatly, being several hundred square miles in isolated districts of the Far North.

Dogs and breeds vary with locality and equipment. Eight dogs per sled is a common number.

The men of the force are paid monthly where possible. The pay of men in isolated stations is credited to them or deposited in a bank which they designate. Pensions are awarded after twenty years' service.

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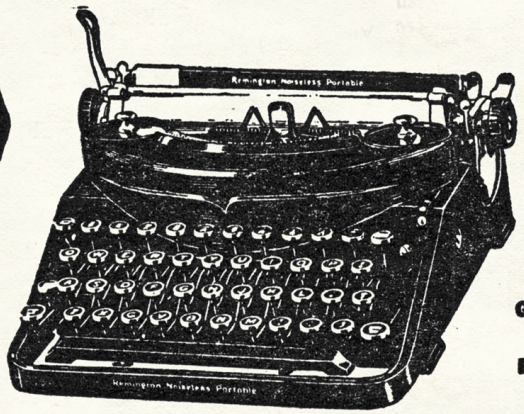

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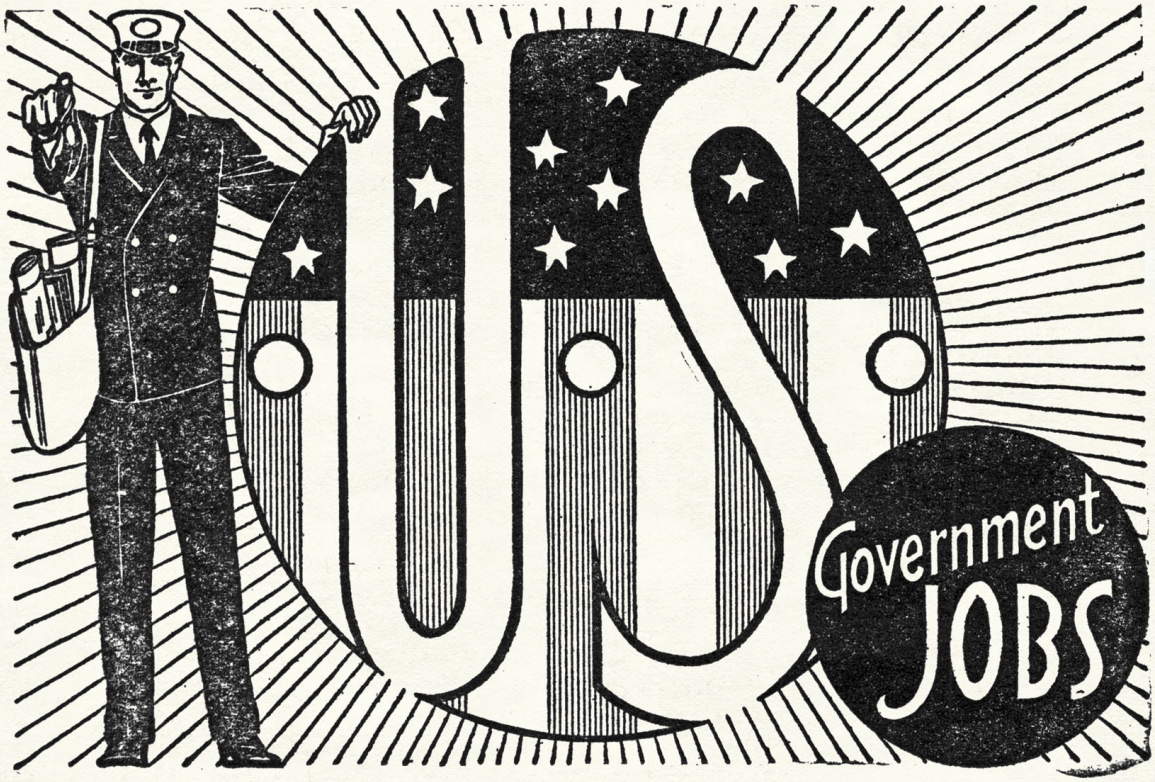
I'll appreciate any information you can give me on roads or trails, or on anything else you think I should know.

—Arthur Patrick, San Diego, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Edgar Young:—By riding to Nogales, Arizona, you can possibly ride your motorcycle to Hermosillo, to Carbo, to Guaymas, to Culiacan, to Santiago, to Tepic, to San Marcos, to Guadalajara, thence to Mexico City. This is old stagecoach road and you cross the larger rivers in ferries. Maybe you could get some native to ferry you in a canoe. You could also ride from El Paso by going further east to make the start. From Mexico City you could get to Cordoba, inland from Vera Cruz. The road is just a path from there on to San Geronimo and if I were doing it I would bounce myself along the ties of the Vera Cruz al Ismo Railroad at night. There are not many trains. From San Geronimo there is a passable road to Rincon Antonio and on to Gamboa, inland from Salina Cruz, and there is a sort of road on to the Guatemala border but you would save time by getting permission from the official railroad at Gamboa and riding the track, I think. The track ended at a place called Marischal and then started in Guatemala on the other side, but it has been linked up since my time. I walked every foot of the way from the river to a place called Cavallo Blanco. It is an ox-cart road running through hilly country dotted with coffee *fincas.* There is a passable road all the way to Guatemala City if you go that way but you could head across to Salvador and figure on trying to get to the big lake (Gran Lago) and ferrying yourself on a boat to Cartago, or better yet by lake sailboats to the upper end of the San Juan River and down it to the end of the San Carlos and up this by launch to the end of a road running to San Jose, C. R. By superhuman effort you might get your cycle across to David, Panama, and there is a little horse trail, "Chiriqui trail", to Empire on the Canal Zone, which might be negotiated but it seems almost impossible without some natives to help. You cannot get any further south from the Zone, not even on foot, for there are two hundred miles of unexplored stuff between there and the Colombian border and no connecting road after you get there. You would have to ship all the way to Callao and take the cycle by train to Oroyo, Peru, and possibly continue down the highlands on old llama roads and mule trails through highland Peru, Bolivia, down the slopes into Argentine which is level for hundreds of miles.

You can get gas all the way to David, Panama, in the cities and towns.



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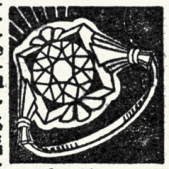

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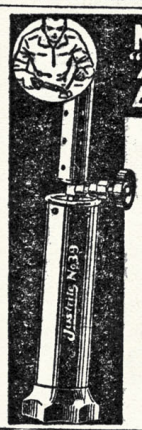

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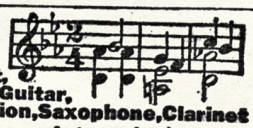

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THERE'S still room for some pretty wild expeditioning in these United States.

Request:—I have for some time thought of trying to follow the Colorado river from its source to the Gulf of California. I am speaking of the river which heads in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado rather than the Green River branch. In your opinion would it be possible for a person to make such a journey alone? Would two people be enough to make the trip?

I have in mind traveling as far as possible with a horse or burro. How far down the Colorado could I go with an animal? As far as Moab, Utah? From what accounts of canyon voyages I have read it seems that boat is the only possible means of transportation through many of the canyons. Would it be possible to go on foot—could one carry sufficient supplies that way?

I should like to make a side trip to Rainbow Bridge, near the Utah-Arizona line. Is it possible to reach the bridge from the river? How would I know when I got near the bridge? I realize I am asking questions that may be very difficult for you to answer, but I will greatly appreciate any information you can give me on this subject.

Is there any place between Moab and Lees Ferry where I could get in touch with civilization to get supplies? If possible will you suggest equipment I would need for such a journey? Are high-top shoes essential as protection from snakes? I have hiked and camped extensively in the East, but have spent only part of one summer in the West so I am not acquainted with conditions there. Do you happen to know if I could secure permission to shoot game for food. I don't suppose anyone would ever know it if I did.

—R. W. Mallory, Oberlin, Ohio

Reply by Mr. Gordon Gordon:—I am afraid you have me stumped with some of your questions about your proposed trip down the Colorado. Although quite a number of parties have "gone down the Colorado", I don't know of any that have ever traced the river from the very source to the very mouth. Perhaps there have been a few.

As you say, boat is the only means of actually traveling down the canyon. In any number of places, the walls are simply precipices. This has been caused by the river "eating" through the earth over eons of time. There isn't even a foot path. So a burro from almost the start would be out of the question unless you wanted to trace the rim on one side or wanted to travel part way

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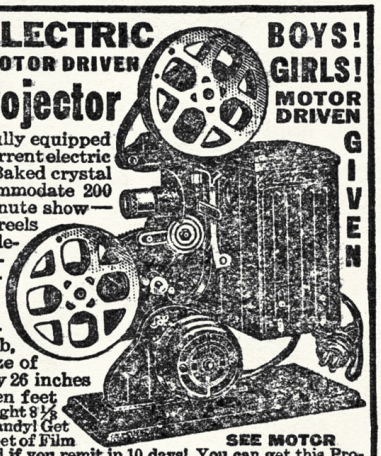

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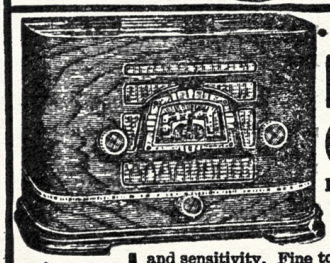

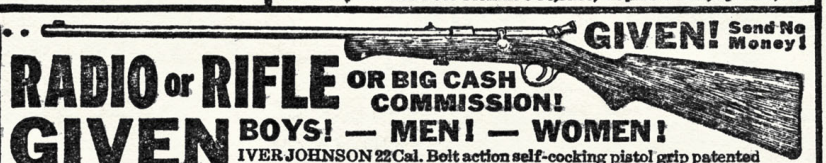

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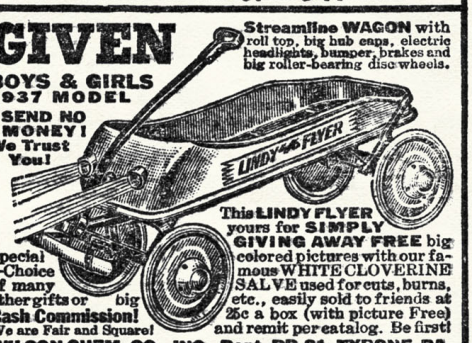

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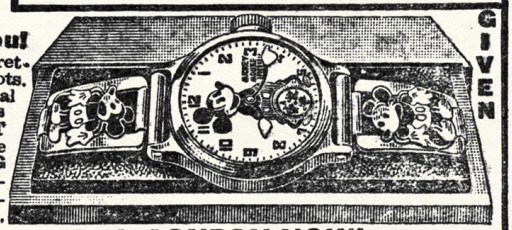

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29x5.00-19	2.25	1.05
30x5.00-20	2.40	1.05
5.25-17	2.45	1.15
28x5.25-18	2.45	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.45	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.50	1.15
31x5.25-21	2.80	1.15
5.50-17	2.75	1.15
28x5.50-18	2.75	1.15
29x5.50-19	2.75	1.15
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by burro in the canyon and part way on the rim, and this would take the patience of a Job since you would often have to double back for miles and miles to find a way of reaching the top when your progress down stream was blocked. And what is true of traveling with a burro also would be true on foot.

As to equipment, you should have boots and either regular rough hiking clothes, or the blue Levis which are worn so much in this country and which can be bought at any cow town's general store for almost nothing. You would need to carry quite a store of foodstuffs because this is a wild, desolate country and there would be times when you would spend days and weeks without seeing anyone. You should also have a handy medical kit in case you contracted an infection or were bitten by a snake.

If you go by boat, you would need any number of aids, and as for these, you had better find out from veteran Colorado "rapid shooters". You might write Frank B. Dodge of Lee's Ferry, Arizona, or E. C. Larue of Pasadena, California. Both of these men have gone down the Colorado any number of times.

I know it wouldn't be safe to go alone. You will need someone to help you with a boat—in fact, you should have several men and at least one of these should know the Colorado and its treacheries. Even if you should travel by burro on the rim, you will run the danger of becoming lost, and thirsty unless you have traveled through such country or are accompanied by someone who knows the country—knows where to stock for provisions, can estimate the number of days the party will be gone, and can find water holes or Indian camps if necessary.

In September the federal soil conservation service made a survey of the Colorado river, employing men to map the region from Lee's Ferry to Boulder Dam. I don't know whether the map is ready yet but you might write the service in Washington. Such a map would prove invaluable.

And here's the best of luck to you if you do decide to make this epic trip.

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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 of *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, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

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, Chapel Hill, N. C.

Fur Farming—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, New York.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining: *territory anywhere in North America. Mining law, prospecting outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic*—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3508 Kings College Pl., 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, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Sunken Treasure: *salvaging and diving*—COMDR. EDWARD ELLSBERG, U. S. N. R., care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—SETH BULLOCK, care of *Adventure.*

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—CAPT. GLEN R. TOWNSEND, 5511 Cabanne Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St, Fair Haven, N. J.

Navy Matters: *United States and Foreign*—LT. COMDR VERNON C. BIXBY, U. S. N. (retired), P. O. Box 588, Orlando, Fla.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—PATRICK LEE, 11 Franklin Pl., Great Neck, Long Is., N. Y.

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U. S. Marine Corps—CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, C. C. C. Co. No. 510, Mammoth Cave, Ky.

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GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

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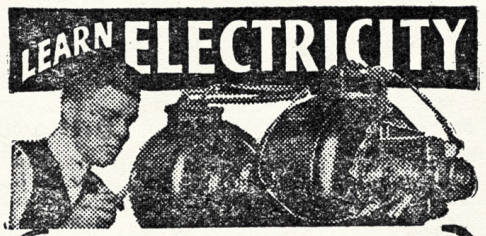

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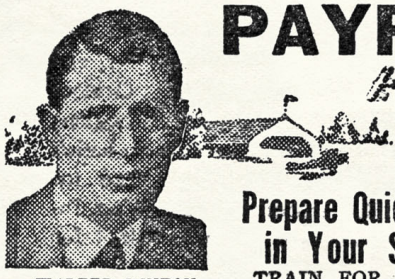

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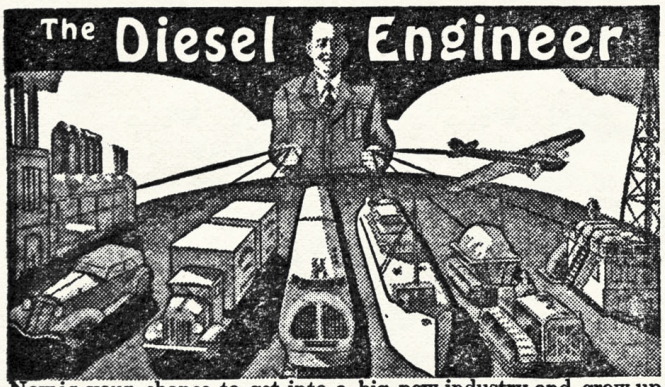

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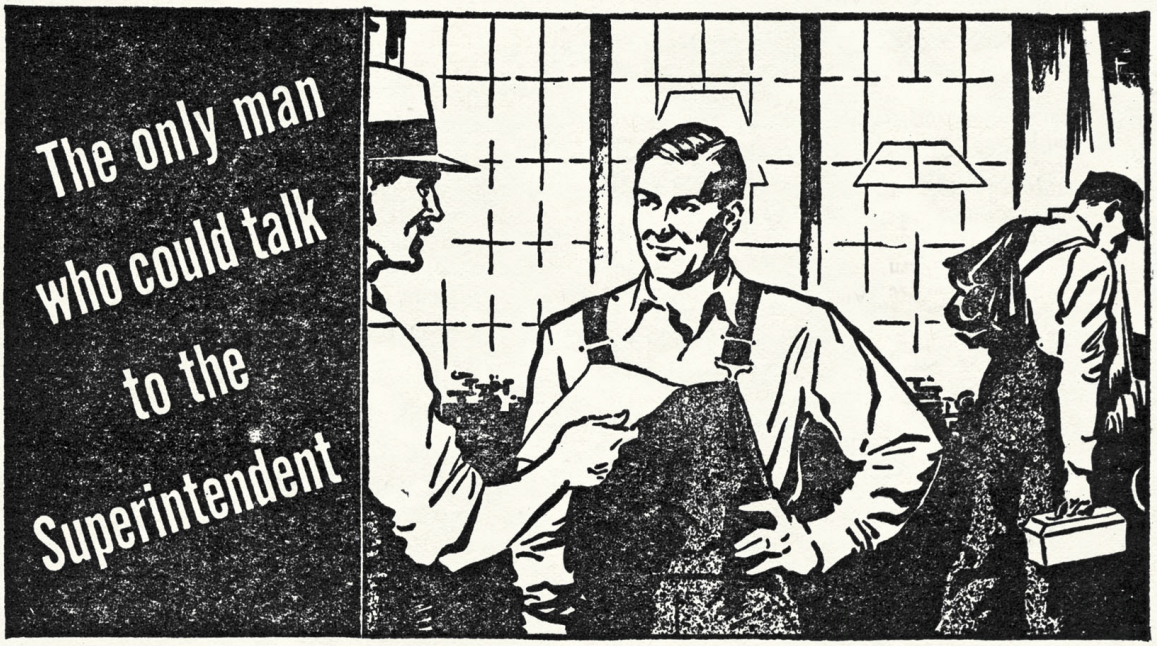

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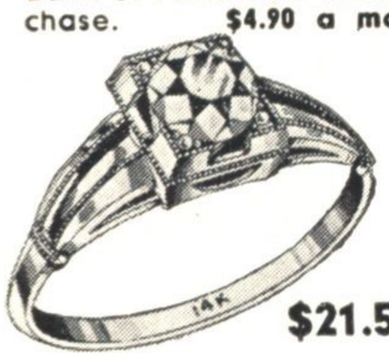

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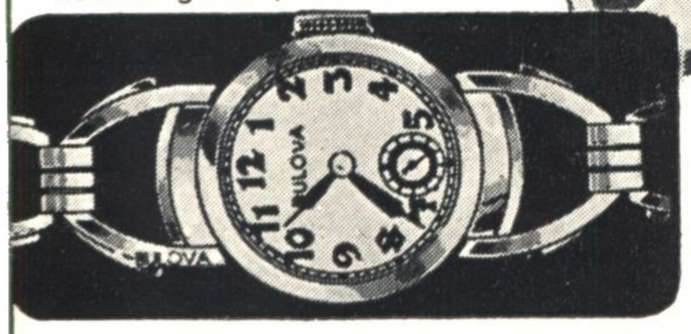

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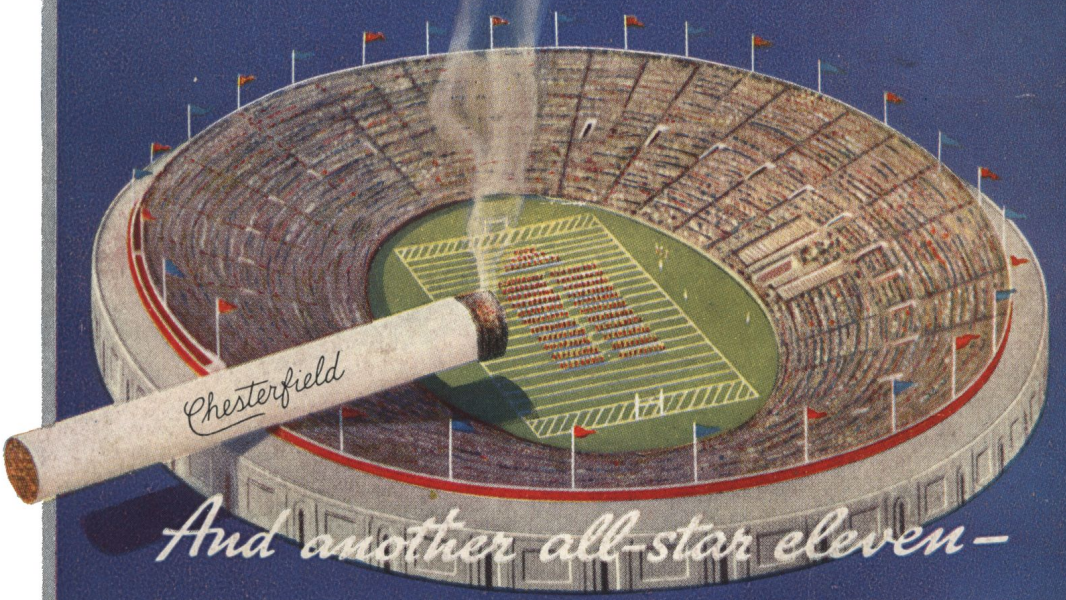

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