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Adventure

APRIL

WHAT I WANT, I TAKE!

A STORY OF THE FOREIGN LEGION IN INDO-CHINA BY

GEORGES SURDEZ

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Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to Lost Trails will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Earnestly wish to locate a buddy who was my constant companion for four years of service in the United States Army: Leslie D. Smith. He left the Philippine Islands in July, 1940, was to return to his home in Wisconsin. Last heard from at Fort McDowell, California, August, 1940. Notify Dale C. Schwartz, Box 476, Jamestown, N. Dak.

Wanted information of the following: 1st Sgt. Gerald R. Driscoll, 34th Inf., whom I last saw in Maryland, 1921; Norman W. Smith, 18th Inf., whom I last saw at Ft. Wadsworth, N. Y. 1922; and Sgt. Henry M. Phillips, 34th Inf., whom I last saw in Camp Eustis, Va., 1922. Their old supply sergeant would like to hear of or from them. Leo Neace, Ava, Ill.

Would like very much to get in touch with my mother and father, whereabouts unknown. I have received the following information from Sparta State School:

My name was Frankie Carpenter, born March 12, 1906, in Kansas City, Mo. My mother's name was Annie Woodmase at that time. I was adopted by a Silas Brown, whereabouts unknown. A Mrs. Hill, who was then Alice Carpenter, took care of me for Mr. Brown, and when I was about five years old, she adopted me, in Kansas City, Mo.

They tell me my mother married a Gould Bailey, and at last reports, which was some time ago, lived in Chicastra or Chickasha, Okla. If anyone knows them, I would like to contact them. Francis Henry De Voe, Box 21-636, Represa, Cal.

Information wanted about: former nurse, Anna Kincaid, attached to Greenhut's Veterans Hospital, New York, April, May, 1919, last known address Washington, D. C., originally from Beloit, Wis.; former 1st Lt. H. S. Davidowitz, Acting Chaplain, 312th Infantry, 78 Division, Camp Dix and A.E.F., last known address given in Atlantic City.

All members of Company "D," 312th Infantry, now residing in all 48 States of the Union, and Territories, interested in forming Last Man Group, reply to Robert L. Allan, 565 West 169 Street, New York, N. Y.

Would appreciate any information concerning address of my buddy, Harold Biggerstaff, who was in McKinley Park, Alaska with me during the summer of 1938. When last heard from, he lived in Vancouver, Wash. Pvt. Gerald Kessler, 34th School Sqdn., Scott Field, Ill.

Some few years ago ADVENTURE published an account of our unit, The 97th Battalion, American Legion, of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (Later the B. E. F.) which was formed in the fall of 1915 at Toronto, Canada, of Americans who had enlisted in the Canadian army prior to the U. S. entering the World War, and was known as the American Legion (long before the present American Legion was founded in Paris in 1919.)

We have organized an association of former members of that long forgotten battalion and are trying to get in touch with those chaps who served with it. Would request that they get in touch with our Adjutant: Thos. McLaughlin, 2111 McKinley St., Berkeley, Cal.

My brother, Arthur Coleman, was adopted out of an orphans' home in Rochester about 1895 by a family who lived across the street. I do not know the name of the home or the name of the people, but do know the orphanage stood on the southeast corner of the street, and the family's house stood on the southwest corner, in a large yard with three stone lions in the front yard.

My mother worked for someone up the street several doors to the north, but I do not know their name. My maternal grandfather's name was Harvey Johnson, but as I was quite young when my parents died, I do not know their names. My brother was born about 1888 in either Hunts Corners, N. Y. or Groveland, N. Y. Any information whatsoever about him will be appreciated by George F. Coleman, 862 Marshall Drive, Erie, Pa.

Have lost track of my brother and sister. Brother, George Schutter, last heard from at North Franklin, Conn., about 1919. Sister, Mary McGrath, née Schutter, last heard from in 1918, lived in Norwich, Conn. If anyone

(Continued on page 6)

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City ..... State..... 2FR3

(Continued from page 4)

has heard of, or knows either, please write to Fred Schutter, 328 East 38 St., N. Y. C.

My twin brother, Donald J. Smith, 24 yrs. old, disappeared in August 1940. He is 5 ft. 11 in. tall, weighs 135 lbs., light brown hair, very crooked teeth, neither drinks nor smokes, disappeared wearing dark suit, white shirt, tie, black shoes, no hat or topcoat, no rings, wears glasses constantly—has since he was seven. Makes friends with everyone, is a jack-of-all-trades—carpenter, tractor and auto mechanic, male nursing, typing, etc. Please get in touch with Pvt. David E. Smith, Co. E, 19th Engineers, Fort Ord, Calif.

Would like to hear from the descendants or acquaintances of the family, of Hugh and Elizabeth Davis who lived in Clayton, Crawford Co., Wisc. in 1860. All or part of the family was known to have lived in Red Wing, and later, Stillwater, Minn. (between 1870 and 1884). One daughter, Ida Davis, married a man named Hunt; her second husband's name was Baker. She had three children: Minnie Hunt, and Joe and Laura Baker. Communicate with Mrs. H. M. Clark, 236 River Lane, Rockford, Ill.

Would like to hear from any descendants of Dr. Christian Seahousen Friis or Fries. Native of Denmark. Died about twenty years ago. He was my uncle. He lived in Texas somewhere near El Paso. Write T. M. Meyers, c/o ADVENTURE.

Would like to contact some of my old shipmates in regard to getting a claim through for a pension. I served on the U.S. destroyer *Burrows* #29, all through the World War, was based at Queenstown, Ireland and Brest, France. I was ship's cook, 1st class. I am at present in the Veterans' Hospital, Bronx, N. Y., and do not know how long I will be here. My mail address: Charles A. Miller, 847—4 Ave., Allegheny County, Verona, Pa.

Oscar Staiber, gym instructor, last seen in Oakland, early part of 1935. Please write Geier, 1065 Aileen, Oakland, Calif., or, F. P. Soen, 144 Congress St., Jersey City, N. J.

Frank J. Molan, formerly of Minneapolis and Cass Lake, Minnesota, a Locomotive Fireman by occupation or probably working as an engineer on some Northwest railroad. He would be about 52 years of age now—height about five feet 11 inches and weight about 170 pounds. Last heard of as having enlisted in the Canadian Forces in 1916. Any information as to his whereabouts will be more than appreciated by his two sisters and two brothers. Write F. S. Kavanaugh, Box 5176, Memphis, Tenn.

Want definite information of R. E. or Ralph Emerson O'Quinn who left his home on September 15, 1939, to enter college at Atlanta, Ga. Failed to do so, and his parents have never heard from him. He is 29 years old, 6 feet tall, medium brown hair, medium complexion. Weight, 180 to 185. Has small mustache. May be employed in machine shop, or some mechanical work. Had 3 years naval R.O.T.C. training. Any word of him—or if he sees this—please write home to allay the anxiety of distressed parents. Dr. A. E. O'Quinn, 1109 South Park Ave., Tifton, Ga.

Any information leading to the whereabouts of Lawrence Tanner, age 34, height, 5 feet, 10 inches, brown hair and eyes, scars on feet and scars on hands from skinning beeves—fastest meat cutter in the world—would be appreciated by C. G. Hancock, 139 N.E. 15 Street, Oklahoma City, Okla.

I want to re-contact members of Co. A—106th Engineers, who were in Camp Harris and Wheeler, at Macon, Georgia, June 12th to Sept. 25th, 1917. D. F. Arthur, Ward 4, V.A.F., Lake City, Fla.

J. M. (Joseph Marchand) Hall was a football star and engineering student at South Dakota State College in 1907-08. Owned a machine shop in Fort Morgan, Colorado, in 1909 and was a construction superintendent for a contractor in 1910. He was my friend, partner, and hero during these years and I will reward the reader who gives me his present address.—W. H. McCullough, 916 Larson Building, Yakima, Washington.

Arthur Garfield Coake, last seen in Rochester, N. Y., 1915. Any word of him, dead or alive, contact at once his son, Arthur Frederick Coake, 213 East 4 Street, Erie, Pa. (Dad, if you are living, please come home to me. I need you.)

St. Sgt. A. Praisnar, H & S Troop, 8th Engineer Squadron, Ft. McIntosh, Texas, desires information as to the whereabouts of Verne G. Moldt, Ex-Cpl. Co. B. 3rd Engineers, Schofield Barracks, Oahu, T. H. He left Schofield in June, 1936.

Wanted information concerning one Raphael Belluri who was last seen in Baltimore, Md., in 1920. He may be going under the assumed name of Ralph Norman. Write to Private Norman L. Belluri, Elgin Field, Valparaiso, Florida.

Albert D. Rounds, lost since about 1914, was born in Sioux Falls, So. Dakota, on Sept. 23, about 1893. Last heard from by his youngest brother, Don, in 1914, from Deca-

(Continued on page 123)

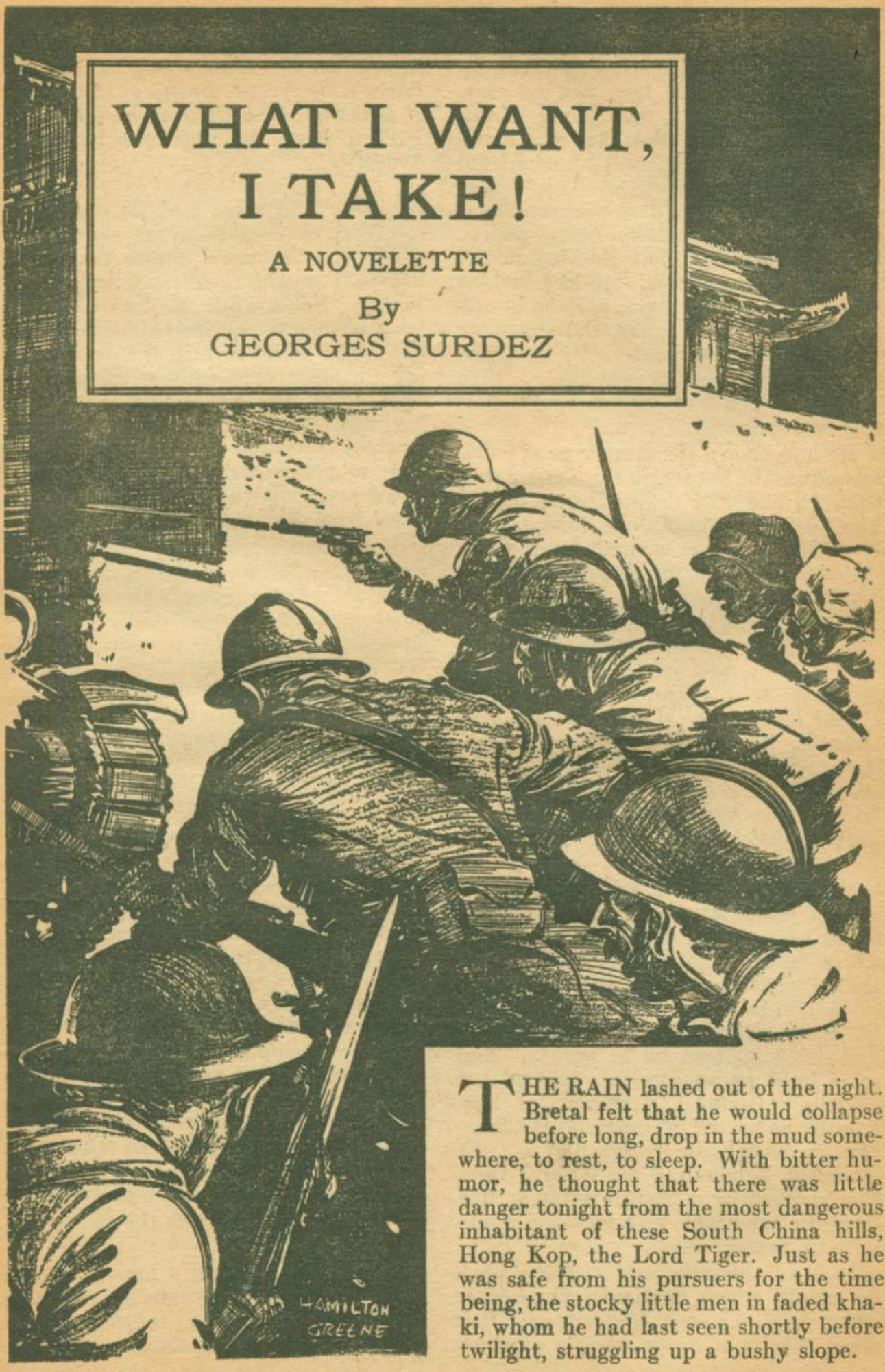
An armored car rolled out, machine gun firing, and a flood of attackers literally drowned it.

WHAT I WANT, I TAKE!

A NOVELETTE

By

GEORGES SURDEZ



THE RAIN lashed out of the night. Bretal felt that he would collapse before long, drop in the mud somewhere, to rest, to sleep. With bitter humor, he thought that there was little danger tonight from the most dangerous inhabitant of these South China hills, Hong Kop, the Lord Tiger. Just as he was safe from his pursuers for the time being, the stocky little men in faded khaki, whom he had last seen shortly before twilight, struggling up a bushy slope.

He must keep on, keep going—keep going where? He was lost, had no map. His ultimate goal was Hong Kong, British possession. But that was many hundred miles away, and he could not reach it before morning, plodding up the twisting trails in the darkness, rain hammering in his face like metal pellets, bleeding, lacerated feet sloshing in the remnants of his boots. He had had no warm food for four days, no food of any kind for thirty-six hours, nothing more bracing than brook water. He had tried chewing berries and leaves at first, then a fit of nausea had warned him that it was dangerous.

He had known the same type of country across the border, in the Tonkin, but then he had had devoted men behind him, arms, ammunition, food, maps. Now, he was alone, a small fragment of a shattered army, an ex-officer of what had been France.

He staggered on aimlessly for a while. Then the wet breeches cut into the back of his knees, the water dripping down his back, to his armpits, to his loins, chilled him and he shuddered. He used the stick he had broken off for a cane, beat under bushes, to scare away lurking snakes, then crawled under the leafage. At first, the rest was enjoyable, but, as his physical aches lessened, moral suffering resumed.

His mind had been tormented for almost a year. At first, because the outbreak of war had found him in Indo-China, in a spot of safety, when others, men of his class in military school among them, had faced the Germans. Naturally, every active officer in Indo-China had asked for transfer to France. And some must perforce remain to hold the colonies. Bretal had chafed for long months, as second in command of Chem-Hoa, a blockhouse perched high on a mountain dominating the Chinese frontier, reached by a narrow pathway dug from the solid rock with pick and dynamite by Legionnaires.

In May, the radio had started a sinister chant, which continued for weeks: *They have invaded Holland and Belgium, they're at Sedan, they're at Brussels, at Ostend, at Soissons, at Rheims, at Arras, at Amiens, at Abbeville, at Le Havre, at Le Mans—they've reached Paris!—they're at Brest, at Besançon, at Orleans, at Le Creusot, at Lyons.*

Then came the knockout blow, the Armistice!

HIS mind had no sooner recovered from the shock than war leaped across the world, sought the French isolated in Tonkin. For a while, Bretal had hoped for a chance to sacrifice himself—in action. The white men in the army were eager to fight, even without hope of support from France, a few thousands against millions. Legionnaires, Colonials, marines, prepared to fight and to die. But it appeared that Frenchmen no longer were allowed to die, for the word came from Vichy: Surrender!

It was not a matter of choice, it was an order. Bretal recalled with shame that some of his colleagues in the army had greeted this order with relief. "It's the sensible thing to do, to side with De Gaulle means civil war." The spirit of defeat rested dankly upon Frenchmen. They were beaten, beaten not merely in the field, as had happened before, but beaten mentally.

Not all of them, however. Captain Thallier, in charge of the blockhouse, had announced the Japanese demands to his officers. "Well, as was to be expected, the jackals have reached the corpse. But we'll show them we're still a bit alive, eh? There are too many of them to hope to win. But we fellows out here are lucky—we won't have to surrender our arms. They'll find it hard to get artillery to bear on this place, and they have to come up that narrow road. Even with tanks, they'll have to come up one by one, and our seventy-five can knock them into the precipice as fast as they come. Unless they decide to take us by famine, we'll kill two or three thousand of them before we blow ourselves up."

"They'll bomb us from the air," someone suggested.

"This post is small, a hard target to hit. We have machine guns to keep them high. From all I hear, they're not the world's best bombers. An open city, yes. But this is Chem-Hoa, not Canton!"

The captain had announced his deci-

sion to the one hundred and sixty Legionnaires of the garrison, many of them Germans. They had approved of it. Not that they were eager to fight for France, but they were Legionnaires, and Legionnaires fight. That they would die in the end did not matter. Men seldom enlist in the Legion with the hope of attaining three score and ten.

Then had come the order to evacuate the place without fighting. The line of military posts constructed along the China border by Gallieni, soon after the conquest, was to have the same fate as the Maginot Line. Captain Thallier's message to Hanoi, that he had decided to fight without orders, brought an immediate answer that he would be held responsible for Japanese reprisals taken on French civilians in the cities.

The captain was disgusted.

"This isn't war any more," he said. "It's the Chicago gangsters' method applied on an international scale. If you don't pay, if you resist, we kill women and children." And he ordered the tricolor flag burned, and the company's emblem, the *fanion*, which bore two decorations. He swore during the ceremony, and said: "The white flag has lost its meaning—when one wishes to surrender, one shows the blue, white and red!"

After that, he had summoned Bretal and the sub-lieutenant, a young chap named Lassieur. "All right, we have to obey. We are officers. But, as an individual, I reserve the right to fight. The British are still in it. I've never liked them much, but they're lads with guts. I'm heading for Hong Kong."

Bretal and Lassieur had decided to accompany their chief. A number of the Legionnaires had deserted already, with arms and baggage, to join men across the border who still fought. The world had gone mad, and men had to leave the service of France if they wished to continue the struggle against odds!

All three officers knew the trails over the border, as all had taken long hunting trips. They reached Longchow City with ease. But Europeans were conspicuous in a place swarming with thousands of Orientals, among whom were many Japanese agents. A friendly Scandinavian supplied them with funds, with false passports. But the usual means of leaving the city was impossible to them. The Japanese watched the boats on the Si-Kiang River carefully.

After a few days, their hosts got them in touch with an "underground railway" system, used by the Chinese nationalists. There was a chance of traveling by night and resting by day, going from one spot to another according to a careful schedule. Rumor had it that the Japanese patrols were not nearly as active during the dark hours as they were supposed to be. Even a Japanese soldier does not like his throat slit from ear to ear. Unfortunately, all three fugitives had a military bearing, and even native clothing could not have concealed their identity. They went garbed in European civilian clothing.

FOR some days, all went well, except for physical discomforts, and the problem of food. Lassieur suffered most, for he did not like rice. But all three were somewhat suspicious of the weird stews offered them, for even in a world catastrophe acquired dislikes are strong, and they objected to snakes, toads and rats, whether fresh, smoked, stewed or fried. Fortunately, they found the purchase of good cigarettes possible everywhere.

But when they emerged from a hut, late one afternoon, they were confronted by a detachment of Japanese infantrymen. Bretal probably never would learn whether they had been betrayed, or if the meeting was a coincidence. The sergeant-in-charge spoke good English and some French. In happier days, he explained, he had worked in a commercial firm in Shanghai. He had confiscated their passports, their pistols, their money.

"You prisoners. You make no trouble, everything is fine."

He was polite, but very firm. They were marched back toward the nearest village, evidently a Japanese center. As always when he saw Japanese troops, Bretal had the impression that they were disguised, disguised as Europeans. The short, sturdy bodies did not look well in the western uniforms, breeches and roll puttees emphasized the tendency of the lower limbs to arch. But they were

tough, muscular, alert men, most of those in the detachment apparently between twenty-eight and thirty-two or -three, reservists. The discipline was good, and they appeared like a parcel of toy-dolls actuated by some sort of clockwork.

However, none of them appeared ferocious, brutal or cruel. Just stocky little guys in khaki, with wooden faces and beady eyes. The prisoners and their guards reached the village, tramping through ankle-deep mud left by the night's rain. The procession attracted attention. A crowd of coolies, women, and children formed rapidly, which was dispersed with butt blows when it impeded progress. The impersonal, mechanical use of force by those automatons was frightening. There was no anger in their faces, merely the same calm, impassive stare, yet they lunged out without hesitation, cracking down on a head, on a shoulder.

What was even more bizarre was the fact that the Chinese spectators seemed as calm, as impassive. They parted unhurriedly, appeared to feel more curiosity toward the newcomers than fear of their new masters. A man knocked down would rise, shake his head, and resume walking and staring as if nothing unusual had happened.

At a brief order, the little column entered a gateway, crossed a vast, muddy yard surrounded by low-roofed houses. Three armored cars were parked to one side, small machines, giving the usual impression of all things Japanese, odd grace, flimsiness, like toys. The sergeant went into a house, returned soon.

"Captain Sir is away. Come back soon. This afternoon."

The three were placed in a single room, provided with four cots. Everything was relatively clean, and boxes in a corner seemed to show that this was the quarters of some officer. A short conversation with the sergeant proved useful, for the food that was brought them was palatable enough, and Lassieur even obtained a fairly decent omelette, made with fresh eggs.

"Well," he said as he finished his meal, "I guess our trip is over, Captain. They've got us."

"I don't think so, young fellow. There has been no declaration of war between Japan and France that I know of. We'll either be allowed to proceed, if we give our word not to fight the Japanese anywhere, or we'll be returned to our army authorities at Hanoi for trial on desertion charges." He laughed. "For, if I remember rightly, not one of us thought of sending in an official resignation. What do you think of their troops, Bretal?"

"Short, of course, but solid enough."

"Nevertheless, how do you think they would compare with European troops in the field?"

"Depends on leadership, Captain."

"Good answer. I'm going to have a nap."

It was mid-afternoon when the sergeant awoke them.

"Captain is back. Will see you now. Come."

In the yard, eight men, helmeted and with bayonets flashing on their rifles, fell in with the Frenchmen. The sergeant entered a room, stepped aside, and they were pushed forward, before a long table behind which sat an officer. Another officer, younger, stood behind him respectfully.

BRETAL looked over the officer carefully. Much depended on the attitude of this man. He saw a rather flat face, as still as if carved from a block of cedar, ornamented with a little black brush of a mustache, surmounted by another and thicker black brush of hair. The eyes, set in the dark skin, had an odd, glittering yet lifeless appearance, as if they were made of porcelain. A man of good height, for a Japanese, with well-shaped, muscular hands.

He spoke in his own tongue, and the younger man translated.

"The captain asks your names."

Thallier answered for all three, naming himself, and introducing his subordinates with a gesture each time.

"The captain asks what you are doing here."

"It's easy to understand," Thallier retorted. "The French Army was in Indo-China to protect it against invasion. The invasion has taken place, so there was

no further purpose to our remaining."

"The captain says you are deserters."

"One leaves a surrendered army, one cannot desert from it. An army ceases to exist with surrender."

The two globes set in the dark face fastened on Captain Thallier. The voice barked harshly.

"The captain says you were going to join the rebels to fight against Japan."

"The captain," Thallier replied, "is mistaken. What we wish to do is fight Germany. It serves no purpose to fight Japan here—if Germany is defeated, Japan is not our enemy."

The Japanese captain listened to the translation. Then he arranged some papers on the table before him, rose and circled the end of the table. He spoke again, and the interpreter translated.

"The captain says you have insulted our army."

"It was not my wish to do so. I meant—"

But the Oriental had stopped before Thallier. The Legion captain was not a tall man, five feet six or seven, yet he loomed above his captor. Suddenly, the Japanese captain moved, his hand flashed out, and two slaps cracked out. The Frenchman paled. Bretal saw the prints of the hard fingers on his cheeks.

"Why, you little—"

And the Legion officer's massive fist caught the Japanese full in the face, knocked him down. But even as he fell, the little man in khaki was pulling at the heavy automatic hung at his belt. Young Lassieur sprang forward, and Bretal followed him without thinking. There was a clatter of booted feet on the flagstones, strong hands gripped them.

A shot followed, and the smell of burnt powder.

Thallier laid the flat of his hand on his belly, sank to his knees. Then he collapsed on his side, only to roll over and prop himself in a sitting position. "I've got mine—take it easy, lads! No use inviting the same, eh?" He looked up at the Japanese captain standing over him and smiled. "You are a very brave fellow, you know!"

The younger officer, calm as before, translated the remark. The captain barked an order, one of his men lunged out and stabbed the Frenchman through the chest with his bayonet. His aim was excellent, for the Legionnaire dropped back and lay still. Lassieur and Bretal struggled to go to his side. The young sub-lieutenant was half-weeping, almost in hysterics.

"Assassins, swine, murderers—"

Again there was the monotonous voice of the interpreter, the brief order. Again, a soldier stepped forward, braced his feet and jabbed. The blow caught Lassieur in the pit of the stomach, gashed him open to the breastbone. Blood cascaded to the floor. Bretal cried out in horror, and received a gun butt on the side of his head

for it. Dazed, helpless, he was jostled back, held against the wall. He saw another blow come, could not dodge.

WHEN his head cleared, he was back in the room where he had been placed first with his two comrades. He did not remember quite what had happened after he had started to struggle. Within a short time, the interpreter entered, closed the door carefully. He spoke in excellent French. "I am sorry to inform you your friends have died. And that I personally regret the tragedy that has happened."

"You have lived in France?" Bretal asked.

"Yes, several years."

"Then I suppose you appreciate what I cannot expect your less educated countrymen to understand—the ignoble savagery of your superior officer. Are prisoners beaten, killed—in France?"

"I don't know," the interpreter said calmly. He sat on one of the cots, lighted a cigarette, after offering one to Bretal, who refused. "I've never been a prisoner in France." He smiled, a smile as cheerful as creases in an oak plank. "However, I have lived in French Indo-China also, as a native. Have you ever seen a Frenchman slap or kick a 'boy'? Have you ever seen native passengers go through the immigration and customs inspection at Saigon? Have you never seen one of your burly Corsican agents use a club rather than waste words on 'the stinking monkeys?' "

"Captain Thallier is—was, a gentleman, an officer—"

"And that counts heavily, does it not, in a country that professes equality of all classes." The Japanese again smiled. "Suppose we consider what would have happened across the border if three dark-skinned strangers had been brought into a military post for questioning—if it had been proved that they held forged passports, that they carried pistols. Suppose that during the questioning, one of them had made what sounded like a slurring remark about France—and that an officer had slapped him. Suppose the chap had retaliated with a punch—what would have happened?"

Bretal hesitated to reply. He was forced to admit mentally that very much the same scene would have followed. And he could not claim that no French officer would have slapped a native prisoner. He had seen native prisoners slapped several times. And this scarcely seemed the time to invite comparison of races, traditions and prestige. He was a white man, a Frenchman—but how little that counted at this minute.

"*Tout depend donc de qui tient le mauvais bout,*" the interpreter stated. "All depends upon who happens to hold the bad end! Unfortunately all around, my captain was as convinced of our superiority as your captain was of yours." The wooden smile appeared again. "We have our colonial-minded officers also, you see."

"If you've come to tell me that, you might as well get out," Bretal said.

"Just a minute, just a minute," the other protested. "Listen. As you said, I know France. And I like Frenchmen, in France. I am supposed to be here to question you as to your real identities. I have that information, in the papers seized on you. What I wish to do is something friendly. In doing so, I am placing my life in your hands. I would be executed—worse, my family would be shamed, if you told. You are to be taken to Lungchow, for trial—resisting arrest, assaulting a Japanese officer, Japanese soldiers. You will be sentenced, and the sentence will be executed, publicly. You understand why."

YES, Bretal understood. How alike were all conquerors, really. A sinister example of what happened to rebels was considered healthy in a new land. The execution of a white man, an officer, in public, on a Chinese city place, would enhance Japanese prestige. And the French could not protest. First because they could do nothing to back their protest efficiently, second, because he, Bretal, was a deserter from the army. How often had he stood by when "examples" were being made. And he wondered whether the trials had been any more just than his was likely to be.

"I understand, yes."

"Have a cigarette?" the Japanese said. And this time, Bretal accepted. "My reason for helping you is precisely that which you would have in my place. I have lived in France, and I understand you. And there are many among us who would approve of what I am doing—approve first, to kill me after. You are innocent of wrong intent. I would like you to escape. The chance is slim.

"You will start at dawn, with a detachment of infantry. It is considered better than a motor car, because more public. Still the policy of 'example.' The Chinese populace can see you, under our guard. It will affect their psychology deeply. The journey will take three days.

"Tomorrow night, you will stop in a certain place. There you will be kept, doubtless, in a room adjoining the officers' quarters. You will feign to have a stomach disturbance. Several times, you will ask the sentry to escort you to the spot. The sentry will remain just outside the bamboo screen. The place is in an angle of the walls. You will lift a plank, pull aside a large tin container. There is a hole behind, to facilitate the placing and removal of that container. There is an alley about eight feet wide, a wall eight feet tall. For an athletic chap such as you, two seconds. There is a muddy track outside, two, three hundred meters wide—a field. On the other side is a little forest. It will be dark—and although your start on the sentry will be only a minute or two, it will be fifteen minutes before a patrol can be sent out. It will not follow you very far, because there have been a number of night attacks in that region. You can be in the hills by dawn. Don't thank me. You may break your neck falling down a precipice, a tiger may get you. If you fall in with some bandit gang that detests all foreigners, you may wish you had gone to Lungchow. I'm giving you nothing but a short chance."

"Between that and certain death." Bretal smiled. "The difference remains enormous. But why do you do this, old man?"

"For this." The Japanese produced a piece of khaki cloth bearing a metal grenade, a collar tab kept by Bretal from his uniform, in a foolish moment of sentimentality. "I served with a captain of the Legion, when I was assigned to duty across the border. I was Han, the houseboy. I was with him eighteen months. When my government recalled me to Japan, I could not of course reveal that I was not the Tonkin-born half-breed he believed me. So I told him of imaginary family troubles. And he forced on me what I knew was a whole month of his pay, to help me. I knew I would never dare write to him from Japan—and asked him how I could repay. He laughed and said: 'The first time you see a Legionnaire in a mess, help him out, Han. That'll be easy, as when you see a Legionnaire, he's in a mess.' You're the first Legionnaire I have a chance to help."

"Your name?"

"Meaningless to you. After this blows over, if it ever does, write to Koko the Jap, care of the *Café de la Rotonde*, Paris. They'll forward it." The interpreter laughed outright, and the sincere laugh changed his personality. "I still owe the bartender fifteen francs!"

CHAPTER II

NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

THE escape had been carried out precisely as planned.

When the sentry had discovered that his charge had vanished, there had been much activity within the Japanese Military Station, motor cars had raced along the road, headlights had swung to and fro, probing the darkness. But attempts to follow him on foot had not been pushed very far. Probably, he would have remained untraced if he had not made a mistake, early in the morning. Thinking that the sun-hat he wore revealed him at a distance as a foreigner, a white man, he had hopped into a hut's backyard to steal a piece of cloth which would make a good turban. Even at that altitude the sun was dangerous over a long period and, bereft of a helmet, a turban seemed the best protection.

Then he had looked about for food, to steal, as he lacked cash. A stocky, pantalooned Chinese woman had discovered him and altered all his notions concern-

ing natives of her sex, for she valiantly attacked him with a club, screeching as she swung, bringing out a swarm of men, women, children, fat dogs—and, before very long, the ever-present Japanese soldiers, three of them, who came down the trail as if the clock-work actuating their arched legs had been recently oiled.

They fired, but without stopping, and did not follow him beyond the village fence. China was conquered, but her conquerors were hemmed within narrow lanes. But the trio evidently reported him, by signals of some sort, perhaps radio, for it was three hours later that Bretal spotted his pursuers for the first time. But they were miles away in actual distance, revealed by the flash of sun on steel, and even farther if one followed the winding trails ascending the flanks of the rugged hills.

Several times, Bretal encountered Chinese on the paths, some bearing burdens, others evidently out for a stroll. They identified him as a white man, greeted him with a sketchy military salute and a grin. These mountain folk appeared more cheerful than others.

In pantomime, Bretal asked one of them for food. It was granted at once. Animal or vegetable? Bretal would never be sure—it was sticky, heavy, and smelled. His throat tightened, and he ended by throwing the lump away untasted.

The first storm broke out early in the afternoon. The lashing of the rain was unbelievably violent, the cascading waters turned the steep trails into skids, level stretches into bogs. Soon after nightfall, during a lull of the elements, he heard the distant, deep, coughing bark of a prowling tiger.

The sound had been impressive enough when he had squatted on a platform in a tree, heavy rifle in hand, waiting near the decoy. But to hear it when shelterless, hungry, without weapons, was much more poignant. It brought the hair erect upon his head, kindled little ripples of fear in his flesh. He was learning a good deal about Asia during this hike. For instance, that he had been wrong to laugh when coolies had huddled together at the mere bark of the Lord of the Bush.

When complete darkness reigned, he felt his plight to be hopeless. He spoke the local dialect very badly. And while there were guerilla forces of the Nationalist Chinese Army in the region—he had heard fusillades from the outpost often as their bands clashed with Japanese patrols—how would he find them in this immense country?

His chief hope was a missionary. American, British, French, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, it did not matter. Not one would turn away a destitute white man, or perhaps just a destitute man. But it was with missionaries in the Kwangsi Province of Southern China as with policemen in a large city. One saw them everywhere normally, and in an emergency, not one showed up!

A missionary would supply him with food he could eat, with some money, mostly with precious information as to how to get out of the region undiscovered. A number of men had walked from the Tonkin border to Hong Kong, to his knowledge, many of them, in fact, deserters from the Foreign Legion. Some had taken a few months, others years, and probably many had never managed to finish. In Hong Kong, he would make himself known, and probably be granted transportation to England, where a regiment of Legion was located, escaped from the Flanders debacle.

Yet how many years would it be before he was on French soil again, before he saw his family? They were in occupied France. Their last letter, dated May 7th 1940, had informed him that the war would last much longer, not to grieve, that he would see action in 1941, when his stretch of colonial duty was over!

SOON after nightfall, fatigue had gripped him. He had slept but two hours of the last thirty-six. There were insects, flies and spines to torment him, his hands were swelling. He had sought for a tree in which he could climb for a nap. But when he plunged into the bushes, the darkness whispered about him, "things" slithered close to his feet. An old, instinctive dread of snakes overwhelmed him, forced him to retreat. He pictured himself bitten by a cobra, dying in the

mud under the beating rain, in horrible pain. The mere thought frightened him more than the actual sight of a naked bayonet would have.

The reports that most of the local snakes were lazy, fat, harmless things, which provided food for natives, were hard to believe. Bretal dreaded to meet the truculent exception!

With the poisons of fatigue weakening his tendons, seeping into his brain, he grew light-headed, feverish, experienced a sensation of unreality, kept repeating to himself: "I am Henri Bretal, lost in a jungle, in China—" And it did not make sense. With each downpour, his clothing grew tighter at elbows, shoulders and knees. His tie choked him, and he found it so wet that it could not be unfastened. He tore it off. The pockets of his jacket had no protecting flaps, filled with water, grew amazingly heavy in a short time, leaked icy fluid on his hips and thighs.

He passed through the successive stages of weariness. At first, his body wanted to keep on, toward a more comfortable place which his brain informed him could not be found. Then his body craved rest, immediate and complete rest, and his mind had to keep it going.

"I must find some shelter, anything, a shack, a hut—"

He could not see six inches before his nose. Fortunately, as the ascending trails were dug deeply by running water, his feet could keep on them.

At last, he beat the soil to drive away snakes, and crept under a bush. He had no food, no cigarettes, no matches, not even a pocket-knife—and so far as prowling bush life was concerned, he was as helpless as a worm. He contrived to brace his back against a solid root, hugged his knees with his arms, bowed his head, and slept a while. The sudden halt of a shower awoke him. Some paces away, the trail gurgled like a mountain brook.

He could not sleep again, although he ached for sleep. He tried to stand, but the brief rest had allowed his joints to stiffen, and he grunted. What was the use of walking on? For all he knew, he might stride right into a Japanese outpost. No—they had no posts established in the inland hills as yet.

A low whistle not far away startled him. His body tensed, and his heart pounded like a steam-pump. The sound was made by a human being, of that he was sure. Three notes—oddly familiar notes—something he had heard many, many times, yet he could not recall where.

There was a pause, and from farther away came another whistle, five notes. And these identified the first, merged with them—the first notes of the bugle prelude to the Second Legion's march! He laughed—this was the beginning of delirium. He was much worse than he had imagined!

And the dream carried on. Not far away, someone seemed to be speaking, in a normal voice, casually, speaking in French, with a German accent, speaking in Legion-style. "No more sign of him than there's hair on my palm. Of all the lousy jobs—" and another voice replied, in drawling Parisian: "Go ahead and weep, we need water!" "I'm for going back—" grumbled the first voice. "Go ahead and go back," the other retorted. "You know how much the boss will like that. He said to find one European, one, and bring him in. So far as I'm concerned, I'm bringing a European, if it takes a year, and if I have to go to Shanghai for him. Eh, Chen! Where are you?"

"Right here," a third voice spoke up. The Parisian asked: "Listen here—you sure you took the right trail?" And the third voice, speaking fluent French with a Chinese intonation retorted: "There's no other trail this way. And he can't cut through the bush, not a white man!" The guttural voice resumed: "Think he fell in a precipice, Chen?" Upon which, cool and crisp, came the surprising answer: "What the hell do you think I am? A fortune teller?"

"You're supposed to be a guide, to know the bush—"

"I tell you I heard him splashing around before! I can't hear when it rains hard, any more than anybody else. He was around a little while back, so we better keep looking." The singing Chinese tones went on. "After midnight, we'll work back downhill. Wouldn't do to have him lose his way, turn back to

the Japanese. I don't want to lose a fortnight's pay!"

"Like looking for a needle in a haystack," the Parisian declared. "We're not even sure there is somebody. The informers from the village may have been lying to get a little cash. All right, all right, Chen! You heard him. But how you can tell one splash from another beats me." He chuckled and added: "Plop! By the mere splash of water, I can tell that a white man, twenty-nine and unmarried, five feet nine inches tall, with a wart on his left cheek, is walking on a trail exactly nine hundred and fifty-eight meters, seven centimeters away. I'm good, I'm a Chinese guide!"

"Look here," Chen retorted. "You can tell it's a European—"

"Sherlock Holmes, Sherlock Holmes," muttered the German.

"I'm not," Chen said, his education evidently not extending to detective fiction. "My mother was as good as yours, Sausage-Mug!"

BRETAL was recovering—this was real. What these men, were, who was the "boss," he could not imagine. But they did not intend to harm him, for they feared that the Japanese would recapture him. The thought that he had friends nearby braced him immensely. His own voice suddenly cut through the drip-dripping of water from leaf to leaf.

"Has any of you gentlemen a cigarette?"

There was complete silence on the trail. The others had been startled into motionless, speechless stupor.

"And perhaps something to eat?"

"Eh?" came the cautious whisper.

"Something to eat."

"That's him, must be him," Chen whispered.

"Sure, come out here," the German voice agreed. But complete faith was not as yet established, for Bretal heard the click of a pistol's safety-catch clearly. "Who are you?"

"Lieutenant Bretal, Fifth Regiment Foreign Infantry, the man you're looking for, I believe."

He stood on the trail, and hands located him in the darkness.

"Mister, you're soaked through," the German announced. "Better take my coat. Sure, you'll still be wet underneath, but it may save you a chill. Me?" The man laughed. "I'm used to it. Sixth year in these hills. Here's some chow—"

Bretal drank from the canteen pressed into his hands. It was wine, and rather better wine than that issued to troops across the border. A slab of roasted pork on a thick piece of bread was handed him, and he asked questions as he chewed.

"Who's the boss? What are you fellows? How—"

"Sorry, mister, but we have orders not to talk, general orders, maybe not meant in your case. Think you can cover eight or nine kilometers more tonight? If not, we can hide you in a shack not far from here and a chair and bearers can come in the morning—"

"I think I'll be all right now. But it was tough—"

"You're telling me?" The German laughed. "I was eleven days in the bush after I deserted. Eleven! Say, Chen, you better tip off the others that we found the bird—"

"You mean there are others looking for me?"

"Thirty in all. All over the hills."

Chen had uttered a prolonged, peculiar call, which was answered from a distance, then echoed from hill to hill. Bretal felt a cigarette placed in his hand, then the glowing end of a trench-wick was presented. He could not smoke long, for after they had covered a few yards, the downpour suddenly resumed. Nevertheless, his despair had vanished. He was no longer alone.

CHAPTER III

THE LORD TIGER

STRETCHED on the big table, Bretal felt the fatigue ooze out of his muscles under the strong, skilled fingers of the masseurs. Both were large men, one white, the other Asiatic. They were using some sort of thick, yellowish lotion, dipped from a bucket on the floor. The place was lighted by a luminous globe

protruding from the ceiling—electricity!

There was running water also, both hot and cold, spurting from spigots of a peculiar shape. There were two other tables such as the one he was on, a number of shower-stalls. He no longer felt the power to wonder and think, accepted all that befell him placidly. From the time when Chen had led the way into a sort of tunnel—a tunnel it must have been as the rain did not fall there and footsteps echoed—he had had proof of a modern, systematic organization. Once or twice, he had walked across what he presumed to be clearings in the jungle, he had entered several dimly lighted buildings, passed through them and out again.

He would have preferred to drop off to sleep immediately, but when they had turned him over to the masseurs, his rescuers had told him that their chief wanted to speak to him. The masseurs did not speak French fluently, conversed between themselves in English. From his tattooings, Bretal imagined that the white man was an American sailor. The Oriental was harder to place. He was very big for a Chinese, his features were almost aquiline.

A big hand slapped his back, he was propped to a sitting position. The white man went to a corner of the room, glasses clicked, and he came back with a tumbler filled with steaming liquid.

"Against fever—quinine," the man said. "Drink quick." Meanwhile, the other had brushed his hair, and now offered him a sort of thick kimono, into which Bretal slipped. His aching feet felt the ease of felt shoes. Most of his weariness had vanished, he experienced utter well-being. The drink had braced him, evidently. A short, dapper man appeared, beckoned to him. Following him, Bretal passed through several doors, in long passageways, until they reached a door in a brick wall, before which stood a sentry, European, carrying a bayoneted rifle. The sentry turned slightly, rapped on the door with his knuckles three times.

The door opened, Bretal entered. As he did, he thought he heard a woman laugh, looked around. He was in a very large room, obviously a former pagoda,

for the whole rear was occupied by a sculptured altar, bearing five assorted gods, all fat, thoughtfully smiling, and twinkling with all their ancient gilt. There were great rugs on the flagstones, an enormous couch to one side, several arm-chairs of odd designs. Pagoda flags and screens ornamented the walls. Here also, there was electric light, but the bulbs were shaded in silk.

"Good evening—"

Bretal half-turned, and saw a man seated in an arm-chair in what might be termed an all-European corner. There was a big buffet, several comfortable chairs, a table loaded with bottles.

"I suppose I have you to thank—" Bretal started.

"Naturally. You are Lieutenant Bretal, I hear. Therefore, you were with Captain Thallier at Chem-Hoa. Old acquaintance of mine. How is he?"

"Dead."

"Ah—he was the captain involved? Sad end for a brave chap. Sit down—help yourself to a drink if you care to. Only not too much—might not mix well with the infusion given you. I presume introductions are in order."

"I admit that I am curious to—"

"I answer to the modest title of Hong Kop, the Lord Tiger," the other informed him. "In keeping with the locale, you understand. You may call me captain. As you probably will have guessed already, I am a former Frenchman, and a former officer. Not particularly popular, I admit, with former superiors. However, what can I do for you?"

"I should like to reach Hong Kong."

"That's easily arranged. What for?"

"To join the French Army in England."

"Thought so. Well, in your place, I suppose I would wish that." He shoved a large tray bearing cigarettes and cigars. "But why don't you help yourself?"

THE Lord Tiger then rose and stretched himself. He was not a very tall man, but gave an impression of extraordinary strength. And, so strong is the suggestion of a name that Bretal thought he resembled a tiger. The head was perfectly round, massive, with strong jaws, the closely-cropped hair tawny rather than blond, and the pupils of his eyes actually seemed yellow. The age was difficult to decide—somewhere over forty, somewhere under sixty. He wore khaki breeches, shiny cavalry boots—and a multicolored kimono.

"I know you must be tired," he said, "and I shall not keep you long. But could you give me the details of what happened to you and your comrades? My informers have told me the outcome, but, as you may discover, it is hard to get a coherent story from them."

Bretal complied.

"Then the interpreter—" he said.

"Lieutenant - Interpreter Koyuma," the Tiger stated. "Very clever chap. Was on secret service in the Tonkin for a couple of years."

"Precisely, he told me himself later—" Bretal admitted.

"I naturally know most of the Japanese officers in the region—at least by name. Your friend, the captain, is Matzumi." He waited until Bretal finished his relation of the tragedy, then nodded. "Yes, I see how it happened. There would be nothing to kick about—Thallier did make a remark that might appear to reflect on Japanese policy—if I didn't know that Matzumi was ready to seek the least excuse—"

"The man is a coward, a sadist—" Bretal said.

The Tiger leaned back in his chair, smiled and shook his head.

"Not at all. Captain Matzumi is a brave and efficient officer. In some ways, he is very kind. But he is of the type that we used to call in France 'Negro-killer.' A plain army man, without complicated reasoning, you know, who never had foreign contacts. Made his whole career, until recently, in Korea and the Manchurian border. He detests Europeans, Chinese, normally and naturally, as a well-trained terrier detests rats. Go and tell a terrier that there are good rats and bad rats, and see what he thinks!"

"But the cold-blooded way in which he—"

"Cold-blooded? What does that mean out here?" The Tiger laughed, showing his teeth. And the short, whitish mustache lifted slightly. "Or anywhere,

for that matter?" He leaned forward. "You mustn't make any mistake, I was as fond as you were of Thallier. We were friends, served together, came out of the *bahut* in the same class—"

The *bahut*, army slang for St. Cyr Military Academy. This placed the Tiger as a professional officer—and gave his age, within a few months: forty-four, like Thallier.

"But, young fellow, don't judge Matzumi! To dispose of a potential enemy is wisdom anywhere. If France had done that, she would not be the laughing-stock of half the world and the object of pity from the other half! Kill first, kill fast. The rest is tripe."

"The laws of international courtesy, the laws of war—"

"War has no laws, save victory." The Tiger shrugged. "And international courtesy is a code that works one way, imposed by the strong on the weak." He reached forward and tapped Bretal's knee with a hard finger. "Which doesn't mean that I, personally, cannot hold a bit of a grudge against the worthy captain. Vengeance should have been inserted as one of the 'Rights of Man and Citizen,' because few things grant a man sweeter pleasure."

The Tiger rose again, bruskly. "Your quarters are over there—through that door. We'll talk longer in the morning."

"I believe I have seen you somewhere, Captain," Bretal said.

"When did you come out to Indo-China?"

"Almost two years ago."

"I've been here, in these hills, nine years."

"Yet, your face is familiar. I've seen it somewhere."

"Naturally. Photographs exist. I'm Captain Chanod."

"Chanod—who—"

"Precisely. Chanod who"— the Tiger laughed—"who told them to go to hell with their civilian regulations applied to soldiers on active service. Who told them that when you place a gun in a man's hands it is cruelty, sadism, to forbid him to use it in self-defense. Who stood in open court at Hanoi and told the judges what he thought—who predicted then what has since happened, the collapse of France through the spinelessness of her leaders. Did I tell them, or didn't I, that the Asiatics would be spitting in their eye inside ten years? I was short one whole year!"

"In fact," Bretal smiled, "Captain Thallier often told me about that—"

"Yes. All right. I'll see you tomorrow."

HE ADDRESSED a native servant who had entered silently, ordered him to take the "gentleman" to his quarters. Bretal found himself alone in a comfortable room, provided with a wide couch, a small table loaded with cigarettes, brandy, a thermos bottle, two magazines. But he was in no mood for reading, stripped off the kimono and settled under the covers. Somewhere in the distance, he heard a bronze gong peal four times. And immediately after, the rhythmic steps, the familiar clatter of weapons. The sentries were being changed. Probably two o'clock, as naval time seemed to prevail here. He reached out and turned off the light.

And he laughed. A few hours before, when he was crouched under bushes, he had not expected to see an electric-switch for a long time! The mystery of his surroundings was clearing up through that one name: Chanod.

Rumor had reported the man as dead, as living in South America, as an obscure private of the Legion in Syria, as a general in Russia, in Northern China. No one had been sure, no one that Bretal knew. What had been sure, however, was that he had been sentenced, by default, to military degradation and six years' imprisonment in a fortress. For insubordination, insults to superiors, complicity in the escape of prisoners, and sundry other misdeeds.

In the Legion, where he had served thirteen years, he had become a myth, a legend, a hero. One of Bretal's first experiences in the corps had been to hear a drunken private, whom he was berating, answer proudly: "Who d'you think you're scaring, with that half-grown mustache? Me, with seventeen years' service, medals—a guy who served in Chanod's company!"

Thallier, when questioned about the "renegade" who had been his close friend, had said: "A hot-head, maybe a bit cracked—but a man with guts and the smartest fighting officer I've ever known."

Chanod's story was simple. In 1929, serious troubles had started in Indo-China, increasing in importance through 1931. Some of the natives had rebelled openly and, everywhere, shots had been fired at the French troops of occupation. There were a number of trials of army men, Legionnaires and others, for cruel reprisals. In most cases, military emergencies had been admitted, the accused men released with a mere blame for "too much zeal." However, each acquittal led to bitter attacks by the leftist press in France.

One of Chanod's sections—he had just arrived from Morocco with a relief battalion—had been quartered in a native town in Tonkin. Several men, corporals and privates, disappeared. Their bodies were found, beheaded, bearing evidence of torture, flung on dump-heaps by the killers. The civilian authorities pretended to be investigating, promised discovery of the culprits. Then a very popular young sergeant was decoyed by a girl into an isolated spot. His headless torso was recovered, forty-eight hours later, artistically carved.

His men went berserk, as might have been expected. The sergeant had named the girl to a friend before leaving, and she was located. Through her, a dozen males were spotted, taken in charge. The civilian police came to claim them all, to book them for investigation.

"Sorry," one of the Legionnaires said, "but they must have caught cold, or something. They're all dead." And he led the gendarmes to a dung-heap, on which the bodies were piled. The Legionnaires had acted quickly, avenged their tortured comrades, knowing full well that they could not produce *legal* proof of their guilt. But it was absurd to think a mistake had been made, all agreed.

Nevertheless, the men of the section were tried, thirty-odd of them. The tribunal was influenced by the clamor of the press. Political meaning was ascribed to reprisals taken for a murder.

BY SOME bizarre reasoning, although not one of the Legionnaires would answer questions, the jury established degrees of guilt among them. Fifteen were acquitted, fifteen were sentenced to military prison in Indo-China, and two, both corporals, to fifteen years of penal servitude in Guiana.

When one of the lawyers brought up the point that a sergeant had been lured to torture and death, one of the judges retorted: "A man might expect trouble when interested in native women."

That might have been sound reasoning for a white-bearded gentleman, but did not sound logical to professional, young soldiers. After sentence had been passed, Captain Chanod had asked for permission to speak.

"The word that has been on every mind in this trial has not been spoken," he said. "I shall dare to speak it: Communism. The press claims that the men, the girl, were killed because of their political opinions. Well, I was in the Tonkin years ago, when natives ambushed and killed our soldiers. They, the natives, then were called 'reformists.' Even earlier, they were called 'dissidents.' Shortly after the conquest, they were called 'pirates,' and during the conquest 'guerillas.' But their method was the same.

"My men are not politicians, they're Legionnaires, soldiers. They are willing to die to serve the Legion, France. But they will not stand by and see their comrades butchered, whatever the name assumed by the butchers. They know that an unpunished death of one of them means the death of many others very soon. It is not for them to say whether they should be here or not. The government sends them here—for all they know, the Communists may be in the right, may have the right to drive the French out. Such considerations do not enter their minds.

"Everywhere, here, in Morocco, where I have led men out into danger with strict orders not to shoot—that was under the rule of Steig—I have found the civilian authorities being humane at the price of soldiers' blood. Humane conduct must be a luxury, gentlemen—a

luxury we cannot afford. Let political considerations, fear of the press at home, guide you here, and I predict that inside ten years, the Asiatic will spit in your eye!"

"Order, order — Captain Chanod you're—"

"Your stinking politics, your hypocrisies and your lies are heading us for disaster! Be strong and keep, be weak and relinquish. But do not undertake to be weak and to keep—it can't be done! We shall end with the Uhlans in Paris."

The presiding judge had then ordered Captain Chanod expelled from the room. But the officer, shaking off the policemen, had turned at the door and reviled the civilians in strong soldierly language.

"Money-grabbing maggots!" had been his final farewell.

In his case also, the timidity of the civil authorities worked. Instead of being placed under arrest at once he was allowed some freedom. With the result that two days later the two men sentenced to Guiana vanished from prison. And in less than a week all fifteen of those placed in local prisons had escaped. And for each and every one, the guards who had watched them presented release orders, signed, boldly: *Chanod, Captain of Legion.*

The eighteen men were reported once, in Northern Tonkin—when Chanod appeared at their head at an isolated blockhouse, obtained guns, supplies and ammunition. Since then, no one in the Tonkin admitted having received news of any of them.

Bretal now knew where they had gone.

CHAPTER IV

SOLDIERS FOR SALE

A NATIVE servant awoke Bretal the next morning, with the information that the master expected him for breakfast, in thirty minutes. In a private bath adjoining the room assigned him, the young officer found shaving tackle laid out in readiness. When he emerged, shaved, refreshed, he found clean linen and a new khaki suit, properly sized. He selected a necktie from an assortment offered by the boy and asked: "Where do we eat?"

"Watch-room, master."

They left the building through a small door, descended worn stone steps. Bretal looked about curiously. There were a number of houses nearby, of the bungalow type, scattered under very tall trees. Here and there, long strips of painted canvas stretched to cover an open space, obviously camouflage against air observation. He saw a few men, a number of women, many babies, and was struck by the fact that they formed a bizarre mosaic of races. Strangers evidently were not rare, for he attracted no attention beyond a smile or a grin from a small child.

This odd village seemed to be located in a saucer-like depression in the top of a hill, a hill that tapered off into several jagged rock needles, like the prongs of a molar tooth. The vegetation was thick, as elsewhere in the hills, but appeared to have been trimmed, arranged. Aisles paved in green tile divided it into sectors. By one of those paths, Bretal was led to the entrance of a tunnel into the ground. The sides were bricked in, the arch was metal—it was electrically lighted. Strong doors, reinforced with heavy steel bars, could be seen at intervals. There was a faint, vibrating drone of machinery in motion.

The servant opened a door, left.

Chanod came forward to greet his guest. He wore shorts, a khaki shirt, rolled puttees, and, perhaps because Bretal knew his age now, appeared younger than the night before. The lieutenant offered his hand.

"I don't quite know how to thank you, Captain."

"I'm glad you decided to shake hands, Bretal—" Chanod smiled. "As you understand, I could not be the first to make the gesture."

"Why not?"

"Criminal and felon, you know. An outcast. Well, what do you think of our studio?"

"Tremendous!"

Bretal was sincere. The room was all of sixty feet long, fifteen in width, flooded with sunshine. It evidently followed the outer flank of the hill, for long

oblongs of glass allowed the eyes to plunge into space, down upon the crests of the rolling hills, some stark and nude, others heavily tufted with green, to the yellow of the plain, the glittering coils of a distant stream, and another range of hills hung in purplish outline against the cloud-speckled sky. Before one of them was a tripod bearing an instrument which the lieutenant identified at once as an artillery range-finder. There were large-scaled maps on the wall opposite, several large tables bearing folders and books, pencils, ink, pens and rulers.

The Tiger stepped toward the wall, moved a metal handle. There was a clicking of metal, complete darkness, another click, and the light flooded in again.

"Windows are set back so as not to catch the sun. But we have to work here at night, sometimes, when light up here would attract attention from the valley. There's a ventilation system." He indicated a lock. "At five every afternoon, a man goes through every apartment facing the outside and locks the controls for the night. So that no one will release the shutters by mistake. No one but that chap has the keys, not even myself. So he's responsible. Some time, from another room, I'll show you the Tonkin border. On a clear day, with the telescope, you can discern some French blockhouses."

Bretel remembered with a pang that those were no longer French. But he said nothing. He had adjusted the controls of the range-finder, and the valley seemed to leap up toward him. "Powerful instrument, Captain—"

"Finest lenses made."

"Where did you find it out here?"

"German military mission brought it out, to one of the Southern Chinese Armies. Got much of their stuff in exchange for some favors."

"Breakfast ready, master."

IT WAS a simple meal, excellently prepared, eggs and bacon, rolls and marmalade, coffee, fruits.

"May I ask how many men you have, Captain?"

"Stationed with me permanently? Perhaps six hundred. But I have minor allies, subordinates, throughout this region, each one with fifty to two hundred men available. I probably could muster close to four thousand chaps."

"How many Europeans?"

Chanod reflected a while, then laughed lightly.

"Odd—I thought I knew everything about my outfit, but I don't know that. You see, my statistics divide my men into their specialties, such as grenadiers, automatic-riflemen, machine-gunners, dynamite handlers—or again into land raiders and river raiders. But not into races. Here, a man is a man for what he shows. There are Europeans serving as privates, with a private's share, and probably a third of my officers are of native Asiatic races. I'm sorry you can't meet an extratordinary chap, a Korean. Walked and spoke like a girl and had the guts of Achilles! One of my very best lieutenants. Painted colorful birds on porcelain plates for amusement. I'll show you some of his work—"

"What became of him?"

"Night raid on a Japanese oil depot—killed covering the retreat of his chaps." Chanod indicated the electric fixtures. "We have water power, but in an emergency, we need the Sulzer-motor. The cheapest place to get fuel, of course, is from the Japanese."

"For whom do you fight, Captain?"

"For myself. I'm an independent worker, a free-lance."

"You're not fighting the Japanese?"

"I take stuff from them when I need it. I thought, for a time, of working with them. But while their yens may be enough to hire Manchurian bandits, this bandit doesn't work at their price. Also, whether their ally or not now, I would be put out of action by their army ultimately, if it managed to gain control."

"But how did you contrive to organize this place, Captain?"

"I didn't. It's been a pirate center for centuries. I modernized it, that's all." The Tiger lighted a cigarette, released the smoke in a long jet. "I realize it seems enormous, incredible—but it grew into what it is naturally. When one decomposes the fantastic, it so often becomes logical!

"You see, even before my unfortunate

quarrel with the civil authorities, there were a number of deserters from the Foreign Legion in these hills. They had been scattered around, waiting for a chance to reach the coast and a steamer to whatever dump they hailed from. But we were eighteen in my bunch, all armed, a very large group compared to others. And possibly because there was an officer, myself, the smaller groups were attracted and absorbed.

"Three days after crossing the frontier, I had forty-odd men. The regional Chinese governor, the *Tong-Doc*, sent soldiers to capture us. Now, my idea was to leave this country, reach a port, with the vague notion of going to join the Russians in Manchuria. I knew that a trained officer would find work—and one of the Frenchmen won over by the Bolshevists at Odessa, a childhood acquaintance, was said to have a high rank.

"Well, you have seen the Chinese regulars, and they were much inferior in those days to those you saw. What my forty Legionnaires did to those few hundred badly armed, unorganized, unpaid Chinese, was horrible. We killed forty or fifty, and I stopped the massacre when they started to run. Victorious, I started to make plans for a march across China. The governor I had licked gave me the right idea, to organize a band after the pattern of the ancient *Grandes Compagnies*.

"His soldiers having failed to beat us, he sent an emmisary to see me, and offered me a large sum to do a job of soldiering for him before I left. You see, he was appointed by the Peiping Government, and they were after him to do something about the piracy on the river, the opium smuggling, and so on—something to tell the League of Nations.

"What made it awkward was that he was in business relation with the pirates and the smugglers, collected an unofficial tax from them. If he sent his own soldiers after them, they'd get sore, and would stop paying. But, as he deftly suggested, if I were to take my men, seemingly on my own initiative, down the Si-Kiang River, somewhere short of Taipingfu, and get into an argument with a certain pirate gang, who could blame him? He stipulated that I must not wipe them out—they laid golden eggs—and that, aside from those killed in combat, I should cut no more than seven heads.

"I did the job for him—we needed money, and he was paying well. I delivered the heads of the fallen, there were enough without using my margin of seven. He made out a report for his administration, photos were taken as proof that he was cleaning out the pirates. And he paid me. A Chinese official will work rackets, accept bribes, ask for them, but that doesn't affect his personal integrity. He did try to get rid of me not long after, by hiring assassins to murder me. But that is the game, and I bore him no grudge. It was a compliment in a way, I was becoming so strong I worried him."

CHANOD crushed out his cigarette, and smiled. "Not only deserters from the Legion joined me, but many of the very pirates we had beaten. I had four

hundred men inside of three months. You know how adaptable your typical Legionnaire is, each one became a very good instructor, training the Chinese in Legion-style. And our recruits were excellent material. Tough, leathery fellows, enduring as mules, courageous as terriers. You didn't have to teach them how to fight so much as how to win.

"They loved drill and military instruction. At the end of one year, I had almost a battalion of tireless, fanatical Legionnaires, white and yellow. The civil war was going on, and my outfit was hired by both sides, first working for Peiping, then for Canton, then for Peiping again. I had decided my policy by then, and hired only for a definite task, a raid, the taking of a village, the occupation of a town. Piecework, as it were. Improved the morale. You see, instead of being paid in small sums at regular intervals, no matter what they did, my chaps would be paid off in lumps after a particular stunt, could see the results of the risks they had run, the wounds they had suffered, in good, hard silver dollars.

"The main trouble was that my increasing wealth and power caused resentment. When there was a truce between the warring factions, one or the other would try to wipe out my band. Once or twice, they even joined forces for a day or so against me! My chaps fought well on those occasions, but grumbled because that was fighting for nothing, bad business—fighting just to protect yourself is a sucker's game. Moreover, each time we were attacked, we had to move, and that meant, very often, that my fellows would be separated from their women, their kids, sometimes never to locate them again. The Chinese accepted that: it was China. But the Europeans kicked.

"I saw the necessity of finding a safe harbor somewhere, to return to between jobs. One of my men suggested this place. The guy who held it was very old—he'd fought against Francis Garnier in the eighties—and I reached an agreement with him easily, by promising him a percentage on what we won. I am considered trustworthy for a white man, and he took my word.

"I moved my gang in here. It was then simply a hidden pirate stronghold, such as you probably have seen in the Tonkin. The observation holes existed, and the galleries leading to them. But they were mere burrows, unpaved, unroofed. Among my Legionnaires, I had chaps who had been electricians, engineers, masons, carpenters, miners—a complete technical staff. When we were not fighting, the men had to be kept busy. Year after year, the place improved. It isn't finished yet. I need anti-aircraft cannon, two of them.

"The fixtures, furniture, tubs, and so forth? That was easy. Civilization was seeping into the Kwangsi region, steamers coming up-river had whole cargoes of fittings for European-style hotels and residences. It was simply a question of having one of our agents on the coast scan the manifests of the steamers, to tip us off when there was junk aboard we could use. Ordinarily, I did not even raid the boats myself, just made an arrangement with some river pirate outfit down the stream.

"I'd swap them guns and ammunition for the stuff. We have a large stock of those, of all kinds. Mausers from the Cantonese Army, Belgian rifles, Russian-type Lebels. I even sold Schneider mortars to a Chinese general, after having taken them from him to start with.

"We have radio installation here. Curious how we got the stuff. I wanted it very much, knowing how valuable it was, to save time. But nothing of the particular type my experts told me was needed could be found out here. So one of my Legionnaires borrowed the letterhead of an important British firm in Lungchow, itemized the stuff carefully, ordered it from America. Naturally, while there was an argument between the radio firm and the Britishers as to whether they had ordered or not, the material was stored in a customs warehouse in Nanking. We had it taken from there by local pirates specializing in such thefts. Everything reached us in perfect order."

"You are rich, Captain. You could have paid for it."

"Several thousand dollars' worth?" The Tiger laughed. "My dear fellow, it's

the principle of the thing. In China, a bandit leader pays for nothing, as, among us, a true gentleman always owes his tailor money. You are shocked by a small commercial irregularity, when you accepted tales of pillage and looting without blinking, because they were achieved guns in hand! You should be the last to complain about the manner in which we got our radios, because it was by radio that I heard of the killing of French officers, of your escape on the next night. So that when mountaineers reported a battered white man on the trails, I sent for you."

"Yet you didn't know it was Thallier who had been killed."

"Yes, yes. We have some difficulty with proper names. I'll explain. Your names were known only to the Japanese, and our informer is a Chinese. Complicate the mispronunciation of a French name by a Japanese with the mispronunciation of his version by a Chinese, and see the result." Chanod ceased speaking, then resumed in a different tone: "Thallier was killed, that's true. And France is no more."

THIS brought Bretal back to his own problem, his anguish. "You will help me reach Hong Kong, Captain?"

"In due time, in due time." Chanod turned to a servant who had entered. "What is it?"

"Captain Soun, master."

"Let him in."

An officer came in, wearing khaki and marks of rank similar to the French. He was a half-breed, rather tall, slight, with intelligent, steady brown eyes. He acknowledged the introduction to Bretal with a salute.

"Gaverton and the woman have just been brought in, General." As Chanod did not pay special attention to the title, Bretal decided that it was the usual mode of address here. "I wish to know what is to be done with them."

"Carry out general regulations, Captain."

"The woman's husband is pleading to be allowed to take her back, General. There are the children—he insisted I speak with you about it."

"Fine him a tenth of his next share for it, Captain. Unjustified request. There are a number of women available. Let him find one that suits him. She can take care of the children." The Tiger held up his hand. "Case closed. Good day, Captain."

When Soun was gone, Chanod addressed Bretal.

"That's the hardest job, to keep rigid rules. Now, I don't hold my men as prisoners. But they must warn me before leaving my service, and leave the region. I then turn over to them the money they have accumulated in various ways. Some of my 'graduates' are in business in the Far East, others are in Europe. But I must know when a man is leaving, must have him checked upon all the way to the coast.

"Gaverton came to me as a deserter from the Legion. I offered him help to reach a port, he preferred to stay with me. But he became infatuated with this woman, and instead of arranging matters with her husband—personal vengeance is forbidden, there's a council to decide those things—he ran away with her. I knew what he intended to do—sell me out. Some of my friends located him in Wangchow—heading for the Japanese headquarters there. He thought he was beyond reach. He has been brought back with the woman. Both will be publicly executed inside an hour.

"I don't use a firing-squad. I have an old-fashioned headsman, a giant dressed in red, using an axe. That showmanship is necessary. You must understand that they are criminals, who have endangered the lives of hundreds to indulge their passion."

"The woman's Chinese?"

"Not altogether. Eurasian from Macao. Quite pretty." There was a long silence, the Tiger uttered a sigh. "Ah—can't be helped. Come over here a minute—" He led the way to one of the work-tables, unrolled a plan. "That's the Japanese post where you were taken with your colleagues. Do you see anything wrong?"

"Yes," Bretal said, after a brief study. "They have a small cannon on the roof of the garage—over here. Thirty-seven millimeter or so."

Sure-footed mountaineers were in the lead—perilously juggling boxes of shells, along ledges not a foot wide.

Chanod made the correction, sketched red arrows with a thick pencil. "Newly installed. Nice location, it does cover some angles overlooked before. I'll have to figure on that. With a trench mortar here, we—" He outlined his intention rapidly, clearly. "And then we'll attend to Captain Matzumi."

CHAPTER V

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE

WHEN the Tiger had reached a decision, he wasted no time. The goal of the expedition, the Japanese post in which Thallier and his subordinate had been murdered, was situated outside the village of Pho-Laow, forty miles as the crow flies, closer to seventy-five by trails and roads.

Chanod explained that they would not use the roads, for an occasional motorized patrol of Japanese circulated at night. He had guides born and reared in the region, chaps who had been hunters and pirates for years. They knew the short-cuts.

The ordinary trails Bretal had found steep enough, but the short-cuts were beyond imagination, cascaded down the hills, led along ledges not a foot wide, with a rock wall on one side and two to four hundred feet of space on the other. They had to be negotiated in the darkness, at times in a beating rain, by men carrying automatics, rifles, cartridges, grenades. The crew of the trench-mortar handled their cumbersome burden and its ammunition as smoothly as a team of acrobats.

Sure-footed mountaineers were in the lead, often stretched safety lines of tough hide to serve as guides for those following. Juggling boxes of shells with feet braced on muddy soil, over sheer drops, with wet hands, made a frightening sport.

Few words were uttered. The men appeared to communicate perfectly with grunts, low whistles, tongue-cluckings. There were times when Bretal, hugging a rocky cliff, would hold his breath and listen, finding it hard to believe that there were several hundred people scattered on trails on the face of the mountain.

These chaps were trained, knew how to muffle their equipment, for there was no clatter of metal on metal.

When a convenient place was reached, there would be a pause of five to ten minutes, for the men to relax, rest. Their calm, their patience, their skill were astonishing. The night was very black, and only rarely did the lieutenant see, through the foliage, the fires of villages. The guides were avoiding all thickly populated centers.

Chanod consulted his watch.

"Midnight. We've covered twelve miles on the map, which means twice that in reality, with the ups and downs. Do you think the Alpine *Chasseurs* could have done much better?"

"No." As they were progressing down an easy incline at this time, they could converse. "What amazes me is their silence. There must have been dangerous moments, tight squeaks. But there wasn't a call or a yelp."

"They'll whisper even a call for help," Chanod said. "Possibly because they know that a yell will doom them as well as a fall. A man who causes the discovery of a raiding detachment is through—and we have only one way of granting a dishonorable discharge. To be fair, I don't believe that's the main thought.

"My fellows serve for cash, that's true, but they have a fine *esprit de corps*. In camp, in garrison life, they have their disagreements, their feuds. I have had thirty grudge fights in one day, after a long period of inaction. But once the cards are dealt in a serious game, it's one

for all, all for one. I've known men to drop to their death—*without screaming!*"

Bretal was ready to believe him. He had seen the men.

He had accompanied the Tiger on the final inspection of the troops from the hidden camp scheduled to take part in the raid. There were five hundred of them, divided into ten sections and two special groups. Anyone judging by externals would have been somewhat disappointed, for the warriors did not resemble one another like lead soldiers in a box. To a man such as Bretal, accustomed to look at a formation and see every detail of dress precisely duplicated by each individual, the variety of footgear, uniforms and helmets was shocking at the start. Khaki predominated, but khaki of various hues, ranging from olive to almost yellow. There were blue tunics, green coats. The headgear formed a collection of discards from all armies, the round helmet of the British and American, the oval helmet of France, the bucket of the German Infantry, and odd numbers, Japanese, Italian and even Swiss.

The rifles were of different types for the whole, but identical within a section, because of the ammunition. Mausers, Lebels chiefly. The automatic-rifles were of the modified Madsen model, such as the Legion had used until the 1924 gun had been issued.

"My raiding group," Chanod announced, pointing out a detachment somewhat ahead of the line. "I think it's rather good, and would compare well with some in the Legion."

IN THE ordinary infantry sections, the Orientals dominated by seven or eight to one. Bretal felt a thrill of foolish pride to note that the proportion of Europeans was much higher in the selected group—at least twenty out of the fifty. There was a squad of rifle-grenadiers, who bore a special emblem on their shoulder. Four men carried a weapon made familiar by gangster films, the Thompson sub-machine gun, which fired a heavier bullet than the ordinary automatic.

"And here is a group in the experimental stage," the Tiger declared. "My anti-tankers. I'll have to find them a small cannon to play with."

There were over forty of them, and the Chinese predominated. Bretal was informed that they carried special grenades that spread liquid fire when they exploded against a tank, dynamite charges that could be laid on a road and fired from a distance, lengths of thick cloth saturated with inflammable liquid, several long crowbars. Chanod explained that their chief superiority rested in their training. They knew the limited vision from an armored car or a tank, the dead angles along which they could progress openly, had learned how to coordinate rushes by alternating groups to disperse the enemy's fire.

"They only had one chance to show what they can do, but the system worked well. Men who have hunted a lot take to it naturally. I started to study that problem years ago, when the Italians rolled over Abyssinia, before we had any tanks here."

Bretal noticed that some of the men wore a decoration unknown to him, a star of silver hanging from a yellow and green ribbon.

"That's the Silver Star," the former Legion officer explained. "Created it to reward special valor. Mainly to flatter man's vanity, which holds as strong here as elsewhere. Men love to be distinguished from the mass." He smiled. "And what they like even better than glory, the man who wins it gets a quarter share added to his pay. Each time he is cited again, he gets another quarter. That tall chap over there, in the raiding group, is only a sergeant, but he gets more than most lieutenants. He's a Swede from the Legion, gets maximum rate for his rank, as he has been here over five years, and he's won the Star seven times. He draws almost ten shares on rank, time and decorations, plus the four shares bonus for raiders."

"Who grants the award? Yourself, Captain?"

"No. Anyone can propose any man, a man can even propose himself. Then the proposition is brought up before the council, composed of men from all rankings. Proof must be given, witnesses are

questioned. If a man proposes himself and is rejected, he loses a quarter of his share. That happens. The Chinese love to gamble and will risk a fourth to gain one."

Although there were several improvised orchestras in camp, there were but two musicians in formation, using little signal trumpets. But to Bretal's complete amazement, the outfit had not only one flag but two flags.

The larger one bore a white and black tiger's head on a yellow field, its staff ended in a sharp spike from which striped tails dangled in an ornamental knot. It was carried by a strapping Chinese, with a superb slash scar across his nose. The other, smaller, was green, embroidered, as were many of the company *fanions* in the Legion, with the Hand of Fatma, the staff terminating in an elongated flaming grenade. It was in the hands of a big Negro, who grinned at Bretal.

"From the *Tirailleurs?*" Bretal asked.

"No, Lieutenant. From the Navy. I'm a *laptot* from Senegal."

After the inspection and the march-by, the men were not allowed to disperse and go back to their homes for last farewells. They were marched into the casemate-like galleries of the hill, there to wait until nightfall for the order to start. Bretal noticed that although all orders were given in French, the European tongue used by the majority was pidgin English.

Chanod, two of his officers, and Bretal then went to the watch-room for another ceremony claimed to be inseparable from a departure for action.

Boys entered one by one, to have a chance to make a personal application for active service. Chanod explained that he had set the age limit at sixteen, but occasionally relented. A lad who had once gone on an expedition was from then on allowed a quarter share.

Most of these lads appeared to be mixed breeds. Bretal wondered whether a queerer assortment could have been located anywhere. There were redheaded young chaps with freckles on an unmistakably Oriental face, others with coarse, straight, jet-black hair, a sallow skin and clear blue eyes. Most of them were really too young, and were rejected.

The young officer felt an increasing admiration for Chanod. The respect of the fighting men was one thing, but the adoration of these youths was even more impressive. How had the outcast contrived to group such contrasting types, to weld them into a solid mass? The Legion although international in its elements, was held together by what may be termed a French cement, the large proportion of officers of French race. It substituted one flag, one patriotism, for another. But Chanod brought into play no patriotic speeches, had no flag but his own. His men wore a decoration he had created with as much serious pride as others wore the Victoria Cross or the Legion of Honor.

Yes, he used a stronger lure than money.

AT ONE o'clock, Bretal learned that the detachment had been joined by another of two hundred men, come from a different hide-away. Chanod informed him then that there were seven other bands, ranging from fifty to two hundred,

marching somewhere in the night, converging toward the point of attack.

"Chaps as good as those of yours?"

"Exactly. Legion trained. All of them have spent a minimum of one year up at the camp. They farm or fish in the villages along the rivers—we need food from somewhere, you know. In fact, a number of their officers are officially *ban-truongs*, village chieftains, mayors. Some of them keep their hand in, between raids with me, by joining the guerilla bands that harass the Japanese communications. There have been few combats in the last three months, but if you had the statistics on Japanese losses, you might be startled."

"Halt. Pause. Ten minutes."

The order was passed along quietly. Chanod again consulted his watch. "Two o'clock. Straight line progress six miles. But the going was better. The next stretch is tough, a steep climb. But many of my men know the road, we followed it two years ago to surprise a supply convoy of carts. The share unit was over forty dollars Mexican. You'll see some climbing, young fellow."

His voice rang with pride. He rejoiced in the exploit that had no patriotic purpose, no prospect of money reward. To him, fighting was evidently the best of sports.

Bretal sat down with him, on the same blanket. The rain had ceased for a space, and the foliage of the tall trees could be dimly discerned against the sky.

"Captain, what is the commercial value of this trip?" he asked suddenly. "You claim to fight for money only. What benefit will your men derive from avenging Captain Thallier?"

"If all goes well, we'll get a lot of weapons and equipment, all of which is valuable. You'll say those could be taken more easily from lorries on the roads. Agreed. You might charge this expedition to the advertising budget. You don't understand?

"The Japanese are hated by the Chinese, but the Chinese think well of their organization. If I can show that my men can handle the invaders, that I have the nerve to attack one of their posts, I am sure to get offers from the sensible generals leading the Nationalists. A successful attack on the Japanese is worth a good deal to some of them, who are getting outside backing for arms.

"There is the question of my own men, also. They are confident enough, but probably entertain some doubt as to their ability to cope with the enemy in actual fighting. There is the question of local prestige. I am known to be French, and the unavenged slaying of Frenchmen will somehow affect my standing. Also, Captain Matzumi has a tremendous reputation around here.

"He is brave and energetic. Many of his colleagues are content, after losing some men in an ambush, to take reprisals on the nearest villagers. Matzumi is aware, because of his Manchurian experience, that that system is not as good in China as elsewhere, that the killings may have been done by roving bands who do not care much what happens to residents. He has tracked some of the bandits to their hiding places, surrounded them, executed them.

"I also wish to test a theory of mine."

"What theory, Captain?"

"That the Japanese is excellent only on the offensive, when the choice of time, terrain, method is left to him. That he is a good workman from blue-prints, but that in the art of war, he does not create nor improvise. He plays from the score, not by ear. I believe the Japanese has been lucky in his choice of enemies. Both the Chinese and the Russian lack initiative in war. The Japanese drove at them, paused for breath, drove again. What would have happened if they had faced aggressive foes who counter-attack during their breathing spells? In the Russo-Japanese War, a young Russian lieutenant took three hundred men and counter-attacked without orders from above—on a hunch. He made hash of a regiment! Everyone knows that the Japanese has beaten every foe that waited for his attack—but no one knows how he would hold up if placed under pressure at a moment not of his choice."

BRETAL thought this over during the march. In fact, he recalled the same theory advanced by many of his colleagues in the French Army. They cited

a number of incidents in support. But then, they were the same men who had theorized on the German Army and discounted its rapid success in the invasion of Poland.

Chanod had been right in his prediction. Bretal saw a good deal of climbing. In some places, rifles had to be gathered in bunches, hoisted with ropes, to leave the men with free hands. But they kept on, uncomplaining, tireless, ant-like in their determination to gain ground. Bretal, attached to the Tiger's staff, benefited from much help—for ropes were stretched for them, rungs improvised, there were ready hands to steady them on all sides. The lieutenant knew that his effort was but one half of that asked of the privates—yet his lungs ached, his legs trembled weakly beneath him.

"Hand to the right—brace for your foot a bit left—" a voice would whisper. "Steady, I've got you—*hop-la!* There you are—hand to the left—" endlessly, for minutes.

When the rain fell, the difficulties increased. Hands were wet and slippery, the edge of a foothold would crumble away suddenly. During a halt on a ledge, Bretal heard someone report to Chanod: "Accident in the sixth section, General."

"Bad?"

"Three men fell. One's dead. Another's not much better. The third has a broken leg."

"We're somewhere near the village of Bac-Vu. Detach a man to ask the people to come out and attend to them. On the usual terms. The messenger is to stay with them until he receives further orders. Carry on."

The descent on the other side of the range of hills was easier. But Bretal, like everyone else, was a block of mud. The slime would dry just enough between showers to acquire a fresh layer. During the pauses, men were occupied scraping off their boots, their equipment. When light came, they were showing signs of exhaustion, but continued without complaining through the fleecy mist, until Chanod reached the spot decided upon in advance for camp.

"We'll rest and clean up during the day," he told Bretal. "Tonight, we have only seven miles to cover, five of them on level soil."

The emplacement was well chosen, on the floor of a deep ravine, thickly wooded. Pots were soon steaming over fires lighted under the overhang of an arroyo. Automatics, rifles, pistols, were taken apart, pieces laid on dry blankets, cleaned with care before re-assembling. Men went to the stream in small groups, to wash. After splashing in the cool water, Bretal dried in the sun, then sought his sleeping-sack.

When he woke up it was afternoon and Chanod was gone. Lieutenant Battan informed him that the general had gone on a reconnoitering trip. Battan was half-Breton, half-Hindu, born in the French settlement at Chandernagor, India. Educated in a mission school, proud of his knowledge, he deplored the fact that, "One could not lead a cultured existence in one's surroundings," and insisted on reciting French classics. He was a snuff-colored hero, but very much of a bore.

Twice during the afternoon, Japanese planes droned overhead. But they were flying too high for observation, and no one paid attention to them, beyond a casual glance upward.

When Chanod returned, before night, his mustache was bristling, his smile most confident.

"Everything's ready. All we need is luck."

CHAPTER VI

MEN WITHOUT MERCY

THE rain lashed out of the night.

The group of officers surrounding Chanod had taken shelter under the overhanging roof of a house at the opening of the village. There had been no sound, no outcry, yet sentries had been disposed of, the first barbed wire fences cut to shreds, the occupants of two small outposts massacred.

"All goes well, General."

When the chief of the raiding group sent in advance had reported success,

Bretal had doubted him. And that although he had been a witness to the speed and efficiency of the trip across two ranges of hills, the final march across the mired plain, the clocklike maneuvers of the units when surrounding the place.

"Good. Get on with the job," the Tiger said.

"It's hardly believable," Bretal said, "that—"

"You didn't remain long in Morocco, did you?" Chanod asked. "A third of the group are veterans of the Sahara and Mid-Atlas. It's a question of nerves and patience." The others leaned forward to listen, approved with grunts and exclamations as the leader explained: "Take note that we waited until the change of sentries. A new man is on duty, and has been awake but a few minutes. He's come out of a warm room into the chill and rain. His ears do not as yet discard automatically all normal noises to concentrate on the abnormal. As soon as the sergeant and his squad have left, he gets comfortable, eases his belt a bit, tightens his muffler, often resting his rifle on the nearest wall while he does so. For that instant, he feels safe enough—the steps of his comrades have hardly died away. He's off guard, hence done for.

"The others have gone back into a warm place. Their first concern is to lay their rifles aside and get comfortable. The door opens so quietly that perhaps no one notices it. And the next moment, the raiders are at their throats. Our chaps move like cats."

Chanod spoke in an ordinary tone, did not lower his voice. Of course, there was no need for it, as the post was several hundred yards away, beyond the screen of splashing rain. Nevertheless, Bretal had to make an effort to speak above a whisper. That was the immense difference between these men and himself. Long habit, old experience, had taught them to relax until tenseness was needed.

"All ready, General." A tall silhouette had materialized from the night, had identified the group. These fellows not only moved like cats, they saw like cats. "We got the wire cut in both places, spliced again, without trouble." This chap spoke with an amusing American accent. "The fellow's on the job and says they suspect nothing inside."

"Good work. If anything interesting comes over the wire, let me know. If I'm not here, look for me near the post." As the man left, Chanod explained: "We've cut their telegraph wire. We have a chap who will answer the calls, reassure the other posts when they inquire what is happening, if they do hear. Oh, he knows his business. They have their deserters and traitors also, and one item we do pay for is treason. We'll control the radio-room before an alarm can be sent. The man on duty will wait for orders from an officer."

There was movement and sound in the street now, the sloshing of boots in the mud. Muffled voices could be heard, for as the raiders occupied the length of the main street, inhabitants awoke and had to be kept quiet. Bretal felt that there was enough noise to arouse the post, until he recalled that the Japanese within believed themselves still under the protection of the outposts.

"We have nearly two thousand men around here," Chanod declared. "There are less than three hundred inside. It will take them twelve hours to bring enough troops to bother us much. Even if the nearby posts dispatch their armored cars before we're ready to leave, we can handle them."

"Raiding group reports everything ready, General."

"All right. Come along, Bretal." Chanod walked down the middle of the street, casually. Bretal heard him whistle an old music-hall song between his teeth.

The man's luck was phenomenal. Just when he needed natural noise to drown out the last sounds of the preparations, the rain increased, drummed fiercely, the wind roared through the street. The men moved without effort at concealment. Bretal trod on broken barbed wire. No light showed from the outer wall of the post, but there was some light inside, revealed by the silvery shimmer of the rain above the yard.

"Watch it, watch it!" Chanod admonished.

Bretal had gripped his arm as his foot sank on something elastic, yet bulky. He

bent down automatically, to identify the obstacle, and his fingers came in contact with hard, smooth flesh, on which the rain streamed—one of the sentries, attended to and laid aside. A couple of men jostled him—from their heavy breathing and gait, they were carrying some burden.

"Careful, take it easy—" Chanod advised them. He added to Bretal: "Matters will never again run as smoothly as tonight. They don't expect any attack, for no strong post has ever been raided in this region."

"All ready, General."

"Very good." Chanod lifted his wrist close to his eyes, to note the time. "Bretal! There will be a lot of confusion in a little while. Keep as close to me as possible. Not all my men know you, and there is no sense in getting hurt by mistake. You don't have to participate unless you feel like it. Well, let's go."

BRETAL vaguely saw his arm rise. There was a dull detonation as Chanod fired the signal-pistol, a flash of red tore streakily into the streaming night.

Then a hundred things happened at once. Bretal was almost knocked down by the concussion of an explosion nearby, where charges had been touched-off against the hinges of the gateway. There was a tremendous concert of other explosions, at least two trench-mortars were in action, firing rapidly. And from all sides came the hammering and crackling of automatics and rifles.

"Forward."

Men raced ahead of Chanod and his staff, started to work on the wreckage of the gate with axes and crowbars, to clear the path. And as silhouettes darted about within, visible in the flickering lights, the men armed with Thompsons opened fire, advancing as they shot, weapons held against the hip, feet braced to counteract the recoils. Chanod calmly strode behind them.

He took but six or seven strides in the yard, turned right and stood against the wall, with Bretal at his side.

The raiders doubled into the yard in an orderly column that broke up into groups, groups that spilled in several directions, according to the carefully rehearsed plan. One gang made for the lighted room straight ahead, known to be the communications-room. Others headed for all doors, windows, for every opening. Bretal saw them knocking doors and shutters to bits, pushing gun muzzles inside. Arms swept back and forward, hurling grenades and incendiary bombs.

Intense blue and white flames spurted up in several spots, and a gigantic drumming started, as the automatics riddled the metal doors of the garage.

In the long shacks on the sides, which probably served as barracks for the troops, the fire spread rapidly. Men appeared at every opening, outlined by the flames behind them. And they were blasted down as fast as they showed themselves. Bretal noticed that many of them were still nude, although they brandished rifles.

Thick, choking smoke coiled at ground level, as if pressed down by the rain. It was hard to breathe normally. Bretal could not recall when the outcry started, but he suddenly was aware that everyone was shouting, in a great clamor. That clamor came from everywhere and nowhere, from the excited raiders, from the frightened villagers outside, from the Japanese. It was a continuous sound against which the crackling of guns made a weird embroidery. Some fluid, gasoline or oil, caught fire near the garage, shot up a white-blue flame that shed a queer light on the scene, tumbled shadows about.

In that light, Bretal looked at Chanod. The general wore no steel helmet, but an ordinary French-style kepi adorned with a silver star, over which he had drawn the cowl of a khaki cape. His eyes glistened, and his teeth showed in a grin under the mustache. He was chuckling, laughing, and there was even more ferocity than triumph in that grin.

"The garage, the garage!" he called. His arm lifted, lengthened by a parabellum pistol. Three hundred feet away, a Japanese tumbled from a roof. Under any conditions, it would have been a good shot. In the turmoil, it was phenomenal. "Here are the others! About time!"

Fresh groups appeared from the rear

of the buildings, those who had scaled the rear wall. They flanked a group of Japanese who had taken shelter in an angle formed by the garage and the defensive wall, and were trying to make a stand.

These soldiers faced the new danger bravely, stood with fixed bayonets. But the wave of raiders rolled into them, dislocated their line, without a second's stop. The defenders trotted back, to gain room in which to aim and fire. But they had no time, hands clutched at their rifles, at their arms, at their legs. They were pulled down, overwhelmed, dispatched with butts and blades.

Three or four of them, who broke clear after being disarmed, ran a few strides, fell to their knees—whether to plead for life, or from weakness and wounds, it was impossible to know. But no quarter was granted. They were hacked to pieces like the others, their heads struck from their shoulders.

One of the armored cars rolled out of the garage, machine gun firing. A few grenades exploded around it, then, without attempt at stalking and maneuvering, a flood of attackers literally drowned it. It rolled a few seconds, a fantastic pile of gesticulating limbs, then came to a complete stop not twenty yards from the gateway, very near the watching officers. The doors were forced open somehow, the occupants, probably already dead, were dragged out, thrown to the ground, lifted again on bayonets like straw sheaves on pitchforks.

THE combat was abating already, splitting into smaller centers. And in the chaos, the superb discipline and organization created by Chanod was proved. Men hastened, carrying boxes of ammunition, to feed the automatics, to supply the grenadiers with new missiles. Men ran up to Chanod, saluted, reported in panting voices, shouting to be heard.

"Some of them got out at the rear, General—we've got them penned up in an alley—"

"Clean them out."

"All clear for Number Four objective, General—"

"Fine. Take your group to Seven."

"All clear at the garage, General." This from the Swede with the citations. "But there's no use trying to take the cannon. Shell struck it, breech-block won't shut." The next moment, he was running across the yard, gathering his men as he passed them.

Chanod gave orders briefly, clearly, calmly. He had sheathed his pistol, lighted a cigar. A procession of half-nude men trotted into sight, unarmed men, laborers, coolies. They set to work at once emptying the storage sheds. Some carried away the stuff in bundles on their heads, others slung on poles carried by two men. These chaps, lacking discipline perhaps, were nevertheless brave in their humble fashion. More than one fell, struck by bullets, and no sooner had their loads touched the ground than another man was there to pick them up.

Bretal also noted that the wounded were picked up and evacuated at once. He pitied them. For those who could not walk would be cared for in hidden places, in village huts, as likely to die from infection as from the wound itself. This was a serious problem for Chanod, who could not jeopardize the safety of his whole band by carrying them all the way to camp, yet would not abandon them completely. With the fusillade still strong in certain sectors, squads were stripping the dead of weapons and ammunition.

There was a sudden cessation of firing. Chanod looked at his watch, smiling. He called out loudly: "Fourteen minutes! I hope they didn't forget—"

There was a string of detonations, several men pitched headlong in the yard. Four or five impacts smacked the wall between Chanod and Bretal. The lieutenant stiffened himself to show no fear, but the Tiger touched his arm. "We'd better move aside a bit. They seem to be aiming at us—"

The shots continued, other men dropped. Chanod whistled, waved his hand, and the men scurried to shelter.

"See what that is—" Chanod ordered.

The answer came soon. According to advance orders given, no bombs had been thrown into the officers' quarters. A number of men had been detailed to prevent their exit, keeping them from

doors and windows with automatic rifle fire. Now, they had given up trying to join their troopers and were firing through improvised loopholes.

"I was hoping they wouldn't forget that I wanted Matzumi alive," Chanod said, with satisfaction. "Get a white flag, go to them, and offer them life with a possibility of exchange with high-caste Chinese prisoners. Point out that their men are done for."

Lieutenant Battan volunteered to carry the flag of truce. He marched into the open, escorted by a man who spoke Japanese. The officers waited for them to get near, but opened fire before they had a chance to speak. The interpreter, whom they may have identified as of their race, was killed, riddled. Battan staggered, dropped the flag and returned, with bullets kicking up spurts of mud about his feet. His left hand dripped blood.

"Raiding group!" Chanod called.

When the chiefs were before him, he gave instructions for the officers to be taken alive, and inside five minutes. The thing was simple, they could be overcome with lachrymal gas grenades, which were available. But three men were dropped trying to get near enough to toss a missile into the building. What had been presumed to be a dead angle had been made dangerous by an improvised loophole at which the Japanese had cunningly placed a cool, accurate marksman.

The Swede tightened his belt, gathered his men. His intention was plain, they would all rush at once, and those who survived would toss the grenades. But Chanod lifted the whistle to his lips and summoned the sergeant.

The sergeant came running over and saluted quickly. He was obviously impatient to begin his simple strategy for cleaning out the cornered Japanese officers. But Chanod spoke unhurriedly.

"Use your head instead of your guts, once in a while. There are two cars, armored cars."

"Sure, General. But they've disabled the motors. And, anyway, it's hard for guys my size to throw grenades from them. And they can pick you off at close range when you stand—"

Chanod eyed him with tolerant pity for his obtuseness.

"Never thought of rolling one of them by hand?"

"No."

A man reached in the car, adjusted the controls, and the vehicle was pushed forward. It could not approach in a straight line, as this exposed some of the men

One man was riddled as he tried to scale the wall.

pushing. It must present the flank at all times. Consequently it progressed in a series of movements resembling those of

a tacking sloop. Save for the line of coolies, which trotted hugging the walls, the yard was empty of all save the dead, and those few men handling the car. The firing from the loopholes kept up, the bullets could be heard striking the steel, ricocheting into space.

At last, the car was against the building. The crew tried to toss the grenades over the top, into a window. When this did not succeed, men sidled into the confined space between the steel chassis and the wall. Yells of joy announced that they had attained their goal. A group battered in the nearest door, dived in. There was some shooting, but before long, four men were dragged out, rubbing their streaming eyes, coughing.

CHANOD crossed the yard toward them, Bretal on his heels. The Tiger scanned the faces, indicated one of the Japanese, looked questioningly at Bretal, who nodded.

"Take him aside—someone get his coat and cap inside—" Chanod said. He waved his hand. "I don't need the others."

They were pushed back against the wall. Bretal saw that they were about to be killed. Killed in cold blood.

"*Par Dieu,* Captain, stop it."

Chanod looked at him coldly, asked simply, "Why?"

"That's Koyuma, the man who—"

"Which one?"

"That one, second from the left—"

"Very well—" and Chanod took the long-barreled automatic from its holster, put a bullet through the interpreter's head!

Horrified, Bretal had leaped forward to knock up the gun, to save his benefactor. He was not speedy enough, the Japanese was down. The lieutenant sprang upon Chanod, who merely put out his left hand, palm forward, and pushed him in the face. At the same moment, a dozen hands were on the young man's arms, he was pulled back, held, none too gently.

"Take his gun away. Keep an eye on him. I'll talk to him later." Chanod led the way into the communications-room. "Anything reported yet?" he asked.

"No, General. They're not sure. They know there's been shooting here, but I put them off. Someone wants to speak to Captain Matzumi. I said the captain was asleep and had left word not to be disturbed."

Someone had handed Matzumi a towel, and he had wiped his face. Nothing but resolution could be read on his face, no fear. Not even anger. Perhaps a little scorn as he swept the faces around him one by one, those of the Europeans, those of the Asiatics. He spoke briefly, and Chanod, who did not understand Japanese, asked for a translation.

"Wants to know why you wait. He's ready."

"Inform the captain—be sure you call him 'Captain'—that he will understand later. If he wishes to report what happened himself, he can speak to the commander of the next post. No detail beyond what happened, or he'll be cut off. He may send a message to his family, if he cares to."

While this was being translated for him, Matzumi kept his eyes on Chanod. It cannot be said that he smiled, but there was a certain friendliness in his expression. And the outcast returned his curiosity with a courteous nod. Then Matzumi spoke, a few words.

"He says that if he cannot give information, speech would be needless. He says he thanks you about his family, but all that should be said has been said." There was another pause while the captain spoke. "He wants to know, if you can decently tell him, whom you are serving. If it is Chiang Kai-shek."

"Inform the captain I'm at present unattached." Chanod addressed Battan, who had reappeared with his arm in a sling: "You may start for the rallying point. You are responsible for this gentleman. Take the necessary measures against suicide."

Most of the men who had crowded into the little room left it. The chap at the radio said: "They're insisting to know—"

Chanod cut him short with a grunt: "Tell them to go to the devil. And leave me—" He also dismissed the men who were watching Bretal. The two faced each other, alone in the place. Outside, the rain splashed, and men swarmed

about in the fire's glow. "You made an ass of yourself, Bretal. I permit it once. Never twice. Understood?"

"You're a murderous brute, not worthy of the name of French—"

"May I remind you that the name is not as glorious today as it may have been? Because there weren't enough like me. What did you wish to do?"

"Save his life as he had saved mine."

"And what would he have done with that life?"

"Well—lived—"

"You prattle like a child. He was a Japanese officer. He was captured. He could not live on with honor. If he did not commit suicide, a court-martial would have sentenced him. It's their system, and perhaps not a bad one. He could not have gone home."

"You could have used him."

"Never. What for? A man who allows personal sympathy to overcome his patriotism, his warrior's sense! Had he not arranged your escape, we might not have come here tonight. He must have realized that when he saw you, and couldn't very well live on with the thought. I might have used him? To have him do the same thing again, and to find myself where Matzumi is? I shot him with my own hand because you needed that lesson. The lives of others pay for military slips."

"If you put it that way—" Bretal said, hesitating.

"Long ago, I told Frenchmen that they had lost their resilience. Their weakness must be contagious, for that poor chap caught it. He paid a good price for having been called Koko by Paris barmen. In war, a man has but one goal, victory for his side. Those who best remember that are the victors."

"What about humanity, civilization—"

"They end with the first shot fired." Chanod relented somewhat. "Within limits, when military necessity coincides with your emotions, well and good. I loved Thallier like a brother. I am glad to avenge him. But you'll note that doesn't keep me from looting this place. I feel no shame. War is my business. You'll come to believe that I did Koyuma the greater service—"

"I think I'm beginning to understand."

Chanod rested his hands on Bretal's shoulders, looked at him a moment. "I think you do understand. We're friends again, eh?"

CHAPTER VII

MATZUMI LOSES HIS HEAD

WHEN Captain Matzumi was marched into the watch-room, Bretal looked for him to show surprise. But the Japanese showed no sign of interest, his face remained motionless. Two men of his escort remained inside, standing by the door with grounded rifles. Battan was but two paces behind him. Chanod, Bretal, and the four other officers behind the long table, rose.

"Good evening, Captain," Chanod said, in French.

"Good evening," Matzumi replied in the same language. And, for the first time, a faint smile appeared on his rigid lips. He was amused at using an alien tongue.

He sat down in the chair pushed forward for him, and his steady black pupils considered the "judges" without expression. Previous experience had proved that he would not converse through a Japanese, so a Chinese who spoke the language had been pressed into service. He spoke a few words.

"The captain says that he has been here three days, that he has been well treated, and why do you wait longer."

"He will understand shortly." Chanod consulted the others with a glance. "We are all agreed?"

They nodded one after another, a Hollander, a German, a Chinese, two Frenchmen.

Chanod then picked up his notes, scanned them, and addressed Matzumi, pausing to permit the interpreter to translate clearly.

"Captain Matzumi, you will be granted a chance to die arms in hand, as becomes a well-born man. This will be done by your engaging in single combat against an opponent of our choice. The weapons shall be those you must be most familiar with, the saber of your ancestors."

Matzumi at last showed some animation. The small, compact body stiffened within the khaki tunic, the head jerked up sharply. His words came like bullets.

"The captain states that he will not honor a renegade Japanese by fighting him, and that against anyone else but a Japanese, the issue will not be doubtful. He is an expert."

Chanod nodded.

"We know that, Captain Matzumi. And we foresaw your objections. Your opponent shall be a Chinese, and measures will be taken to reduce his handicap, although you both shall be on equal terms, and armed with the saber."

"The captain states that he will not engage against a Chinese."

"We foresaw that also, and we know his reasons." Chanod looked at the papers before him thoughtfully. "However, we have an alternative for him. If he persists in his refusal, which is his right, Captain Matzumi will be chained around the waist in the central place of a Chinese village, with a container of water just out of his reach. It is reasonably expected that after some uncertain length of time, thirst will overcome his will. And he shall beg the first urchin to cease his baiting out of pity and shove the water nearer. Add that a man with a motion picture camera will stand-by to photograph the scene."

This threat, which sounded fantastic to Bretal, was not to Matzumi. He eyed Chanod for a few seconds in silence, saw that he was not bluffing. And he gave his answer.

"I have no choice. I know what I would do with my presence of mind, but not what I would do if driven mad by thirst. I have seen men forget their birth for thirst."

"We know that also," Chanod declared. "And we agree with Captain Matzumi who once said that thirst loosened tongues."

"The captain," the interpreter resumed after listening to Matzumi's next speech, "wants to know what he has to gain. For he has seen this place and will not give his word not to reveal its whereabouts if allowed to go free. Therefore, you cannot mean to grant him liberty to return to his people."

"If he wins," Chanod declared quietly, "he can go back to the Japanese and give them the information he wishes. He can even save himself the trip by speaking from the radio here, so as not to delay the honorable death at his own hands which he has decided upon. For we all understand he cannot live."

This time, an expression of disbelief showed on Matzumi's face, a sort of joy. To Bretal, the whole scene was unreal, the words bombastic, pompous. And he was somewhat worried, also, for fear the Japanese would win. Chanod claimed he had a Chinese who could beat him almost certainly. But how far from the Tiger's cold-blooded principles it seemed, to gamble safety and profits on the outcome of a duel!

Some of the same thoughts must have occurred to the Japanese.

"The captain asks if he and his opponent will be treated, armed, exactly alike, without advantage on either side?"

"Naturally."

"The captain says he accepts."

Chanod gave the signal, all stood up. Matzumi expressed a wish to inspect the room, which was granted. The captain examined the maps on the walls, peered through the range-finder, asked a number of questions. Chanod asked him whether he would care to eat, to drink, before the combat, which was due in two hours. Matzumi accepted hot tea. It was a strange gathering, men of contrasting races standing about the fragile table, lifting the small cups, fingering preserved fruits, cakes, absent-mindedly as they conversed on war, with the big Manchurian interpreter standing, blank-faced and impersonal, transmitting words, and Battan taking no part in the conversation, but keeping his eyes constantly alert for Matzumi's movements.

Then the Japanese officer asked permission to retire and rest. After he was gone, Chanod spoke to Soun, his Chinese aide: "I am almost ashamed of myself, you know. He is a very fine, intelligent man. That idea couldn't have flowered in any brain except yours."

"As long as the men are evenly matched, armed, the comparison holds, General. And you demanded something that would be understood by simple minds. This will serve the purpose."

"But I hope that our chap doesn't fail."

Captain Soun smiled faintly. "He never has. He trained for six months before I tested him. Then I pitted him against several opponents—men fighting for life and freedom. He is still alive."

IT WAS a few minutes after two o'clock in the afternoon that Bretal took his seat behind Chanod in the improvised arena. There were over two thousand spectators, men, women, children. The Frenchman noticed that, exceptionally here, the Europeans sat apart, in a special section. He asked Chanod the reason, and the Tiger lifted his hand to indicate a platform erected in a nearby tree. There were two motion-picture cameras and their operators.

"We want only Chinese spectators shown. Important first for psychological reasons, then so as not to reveal the location and purpose of this place." He swept about him with his hand.

He was right, the circular depression in the hills might have been one of hundreds of similar ones to be found in the region. The pagoda roofs were like the roofs of pagodas everywhere. And the noisy Chinese mob could have been recruited in any Kwangsi village.

There was a ring at the bottom of the depression, about forty feet long and wide, the floor was beaten earth, cleared of grass and stones. But instead of ropes, barbed wire hemmed in the square.

"This is used when any of the men have a personal quarrel to settle," Chanod said. "A man who attacks another with a weapon up here is executed. He must ask his officer for an open meeting—and it makes for popular spectacles." He laughed and shook the ash from his cigar. "Had to break up a little racket—duels fought for side-bets. Well, here is our champion—"

He was an ordinary Chinese, short, under five feet six inches, and appeared rather slight in the azure and scarlet robe covering him. Everywhere in Southern China, Bretal had seen men who resembled him like brothers. A man of the people, a coolie. He wore a bluish tur-

ban, like a Muong, but removed it immediately, showing a dark, round, close-cropped skull. He bent over the two sabers, laid on a folding table, said something to the men with him, led by Soun, and they all grinned.

Captain Matzumi showed up with his armed escort, as always. Battan had evidently instructed him, for he wore a robe, and, while his adversary was barefooted, canvas slippers. He too looked at the blades, then he turned slowly, and watched the crowd. His eyes were so fierce that a great cry of anger rose from the Chinese. They had recognized the scorn of the masters.

Chanod whistled, and the clamor subsided somewhat.

"He's very cool," Bretal said.

"Yes. He understands this sort of thing, I believe."

Matzumi had indicated one of the blades, after weighing each one in his hands. One of the men with him picked it up, wrapped it in a green cloth. A movable section of the barbed wire opened, the two parties filed inside.

Just as in a boxing ring, the opponents were led to different corners. Then a Chinese in silken robes appeared, and read very loudly from a scroll of scarlet paper. Bretal could not understand the words, but Chanod handed him a translation of the statement, typewritten in French.

> People of Great China, the monkey-men from across the sea have defeated you, taken your land, burned your homes and enslaved the people. This did not happen because they are wiser or braver than you. They have learned to fight in a way you have long forgotten. You must learn their way to regain your liberty. A Chinese also can learn a special method of fighting. What you are about to witness is not for amusement and laughter but to make you think.

The end of the speech was covered by impatient calls for action. In the brilliant sunlight, the two groups in the ring stirred, and the adversaries suddenly were seen, stripped for combat, garbed only in a loin-cloth. Matzumi was revealed as a species of dwarf Hercules, shoulders and chest very broad and deep in proportion to the waist, with strong muscles playing visibly over his back, down his limbs. By contrast, the taller Chinese seemed smooth, sleek, almost effeminate in silhouette. But Bretal noted at once the sturdiness of his legs, the development of his calves.

Then there seemed to be an argument around the Japanese, a scuffle that lasted only three seconds. However, following it, Matzumi was seen in a semi-crouch, did not straighten. Bretal's eyes swept across the ring, noticed that the Chinese also crouched. There was an excellent reason for this: the left wrist of each man had been handcuffed to the left ankle. They could not straighten up. However, where Matzumi was furious, the Chinese's grin had widened. He had known what to expect.

The seconds had left the ring, closed the gateway carefully.

Captain Soun handed a saber to his man, while Battan offered the other to Matzumi, who had selected it. They were beautiful weapons, with grips covered with shark skin, brass guards, blades thirty inches or more in length, more than an inch broad, slightly curved, the back thick to give weight to the cutting edge, tools as heavy as a cleaver, as sharp as razors, fit to slash off a man's arm at one stroke.

Maztumi refused the weapon, shouted protest. There were those in the crowd who understood him, for his voice was covered with insults and jeers.

BRETAL grew very pale, his damp hands clenched hard. He understood the trick, knew that it was fair, symbolic. The Japanese prided themselves on victories won over the Chinese against great numerical odds. Victories due to their organization for war, due to the fact that they fought under conditions that made training and armament everything, courage and endurance almost useless.

Matzumi was placed in the role of the Chinese, given a weapon to use under unfamiliar conditions, with his body cramped by the handcuffs as the Chinese were cramped by their pacific traditions. It was one man against another, one saber against one saber, one free hand against one free hand. As the Chinese

in the field against the conquering race, he would have to adapt himself to the new factors.

A trumpeter gave the signal, and the Chinese hobbled across the ring swiftly, saber ready. Matzumi looked at him, at the crowd, at his saber lying on the ground. For a moment, he seemed about to refuse combat. Then it was probably plain to him that no one would intervene now, that whether he fought or not, the desired purpose had been achieved. Self-preservation overcame pride, his hand stretched for the weapon.

It was the most tragic spectacle that Bretal had ever seen, and one of the most comical. The queer movements of the pair, as they hobbled and hopped in and out, like game-cocks, were ludicrous. Within thirty seconds, the spectators were laughing despite the excitement, despite hatred.

The swordsmen circled warily, presenting the armed side to the foe. The Chinese, more accustomed to the position, lured the other into striking the first serious blow, leaping back just in time. Matzumi was jerked off his feet by his lunge, rolled clumsily, scrambled up covered with dust, tried to stand and almost fell again.

But he was on guard nevertheless. Having accepted the conflict, he had recovered his impassive calm. His teeth showed, not in a grin or in menace, but from concentration. He warded off the blows, and his brain was working, he was studying this problem. Bretal had realized very soon that the longer the struggle lasted, the better were the Japanese's chances. But thinking as a spectator and thinking when facing flashing steel, are not the same. Yet Matzumi had the same thought almost as fast.

He parried the swings easily, and when he tried to retaliate, he did not lose his footing.

Chanod clucked in appreciation. "Smart man. He already controls some of his normal reflexes."

The two circled and circled, for minutes. Matzumi watched, waited, and when the Chinese tried a trick, he would copy it a few seconds later. He soon discovered the value of a feint at the exposed shin, at the bare toes. Like the

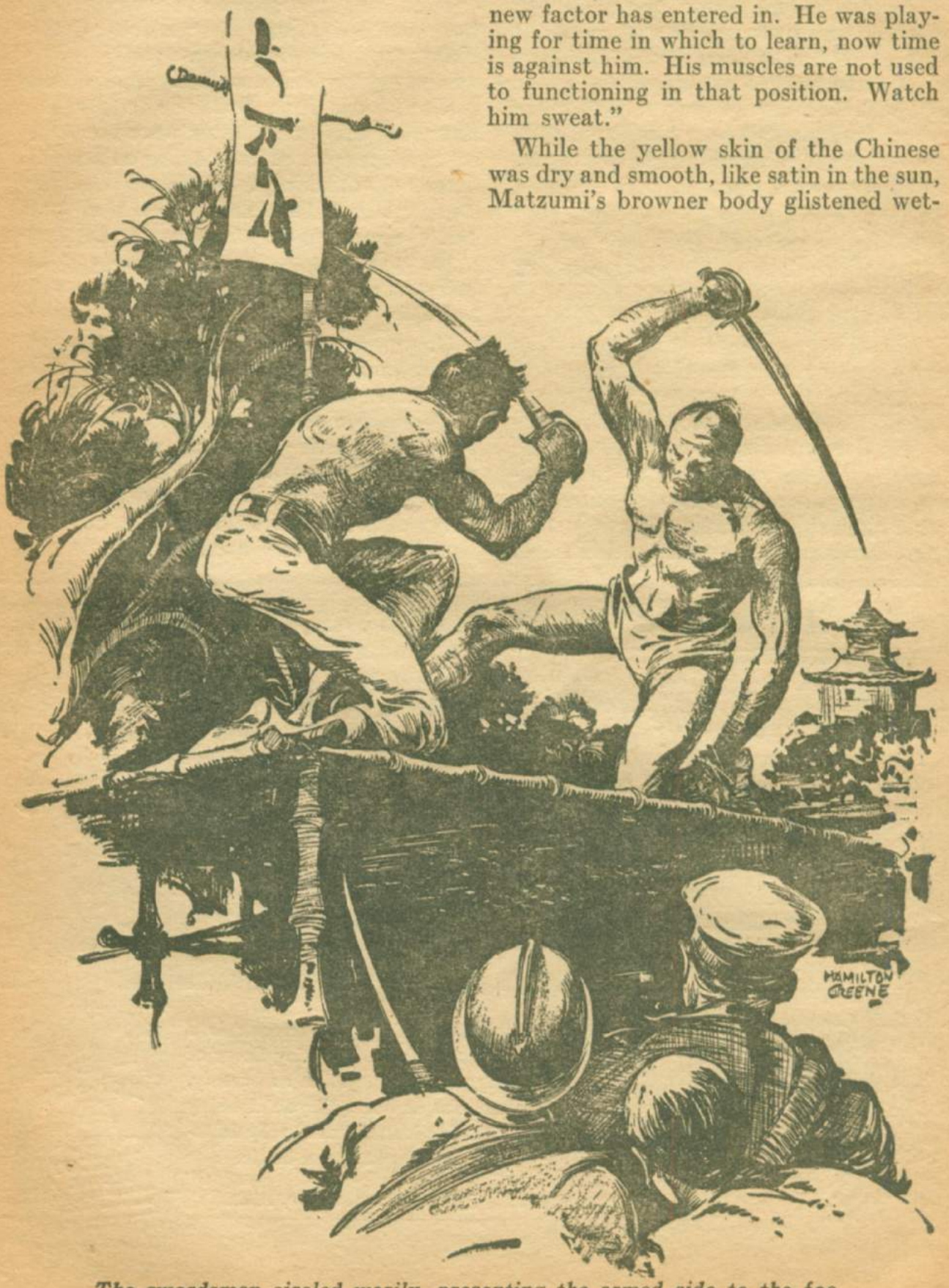
other, he suddenly sank to one knee, sweeping his blade a foot from the ground. He learned to lock his fingers on his leg, to avoid the sharp jerk when he unconsciously jerked his left arm too high.

As the minutes passed, the amusement dwindled, and real interest replaced it. The play was fascinating, and the rallies were greeted with cheers.

"He's learning fast," Bretal said.

"He is," Chanod admitted. "But a new factor has entered in. He was playing for time in which to learn, now time is against him. His muscles are not used to functioning in that position. Watch him sweat."

While the yellow skin of the Chinese was dry and smooth, like satin in the sun, Matzumi's browner body glistened wet-



The swordsmen circled warily, presenting the armed side to the foe.

ly, and there was a rim of perspiration on his chin. He breathed hard and fast, was noticeably slower. The crowd was against him, and when he had to give ground, howled its scorn. Bretal, who had grown to understand something of the intense, rigid pride of the Japanese, knew that the derision affected his thinking. Breaking ground before a man of an inferior race, a Chinese, a coolie!

THE man did not fear death for itself. He had made the sacrifice of his life when he had surrendered. But he much dreaded the manner of his death, an ignoble end in a comic encounter against a man who was not even a soldier, against an ordinary workman, a man who had labored in the fields, on docks.

Bretal felt sympathy for him, fighting a brave fight alone, with thousands howling for his quick finish. At times, he seemed ready to yield, then his eyes flitted briefly upward to the cameras. He suspected their purpose, knew that his conduct would be known, recorded for all to see.

There flamed in him also, as in all born fighting men, the conviction that he would win out, somehow, that he could not be defeated. That should be the last thing to die in a soldier.

The circling continued.

Unexpectedly, as the Chinese squatted and swept his blade at shoulder level, Matzumi ducked down, rolled to the ground, but instead of going away from his foe, as before, lunged toward him. The trick almost succeeded, the Chinese scarcely had time to leap away and avoid an upward slash that would have ripped open his abdomen. Had he recovered in time, he could have won then and there, for Matzumi had some trouble rising. But he had gone back so fast that he sat down himself, and had to writhe out of range.

Several voices shouted approval from the European crowd. It was evident that despite regulations heavy bets were being made. Bretal wondered what the odds were.

"He's got your chap rattled," he told Chanod.

"That was a neat trick," the Tiger admitted. He did not look worried, but he did not smile. Bretal wondered if he would keep his word to the Japanese, if he won. Yet, what else could he do? Even his enormous prestige could not withstand a broken pledge to an enemy.

The Japanese was in attack position once more. He appeared to have regained his confidence, his breathing was easier. A certain remorseless purpose could be read in his attacks, with the right mixture of daring and caution. Bretal now had the impression that he was finding a thrill in the engagement, the satisfaction of a skilled artisan who has solved a problem.

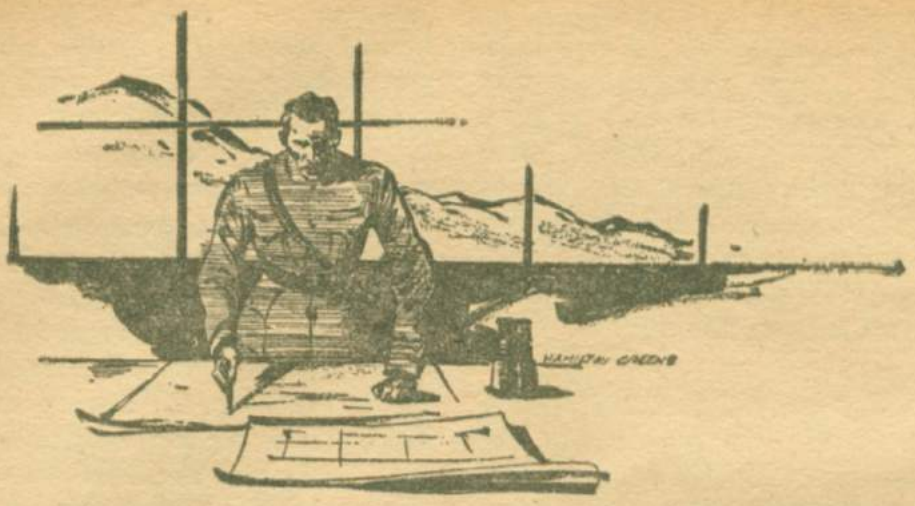
Matzumi had the elements for the game, a tireless arm, judgment of distance. He was growing accustomed to the position, wasted his strength less and less. He faced the steel without flinching, and several times allowed blows to pass less than an inch from his flesh, rather than move back. By some odd psychological phenomenon, he now appeared to dominate the duel, to guide it. Probably because of his dismay and floundering at the start.

He coaxed the Chinese into swings, leaped in, saber extended. On one occasion, Bretal was sure he had touched the mark, waited for blood to show, for the Chinese to collapse. But nothing happened. Nevertheless, the Chinese looked at Soun often, and Bretal realized that he was waiting for a signal. It was then that the true nature of the man's work struck him: the Chinese was not a duelist, he was a toreador—this was a game with a definite course, allowed so many phases.

The signal must have been given, though Bretal missed it.

The Chinese straightened to his full height suddenly, holding the left ankle tight within his left hand. He hopped to the side twice, long hops, hopped in again from the flank. He could move much quicker on one foot, for some seconds, than on both feet when his body was pulled off balance—much faster than Matzumi could think, see, understand, act. That Chinese swordsman was as agile as an acrobat, as graceful as a ballet dancer.

The saber flashed up, seemed to poise



an instant, then fell in a sweep of light. The edge smote across the back of Matzumi's neck, a perfectly executed blow, the result of patient practice. To Bretal's horror, the captain's head flew off, thumped to the ground, rolled. There was a jet of red in the sunlight, the decapitated body faltered, fell. For an instant, the free leg kicked, then, in a prolonged, shocking, jeering clamor, the foot settled to the ground.

And the Chinese planted his saber erect in the still heaving chest.

CHAPTER VIII

HEART OF A FRENCHMAN

CHANOD and Bretal were alone in the spacious room where the Legion officer had first encountered the Tiger. They had returned from a showing of the film taken of the duel that afternoon. Chanod was satisfied with it.

"It's invaluable as propaganda, because it's real. With that and my raid on the post, I can discuss terms with certain gentlemen who have insisted I serve them only as a subordinate." He sipped his whiskey and soda thoughtfully. "If you could electrify the Chinese, give them a united purpose and confidence, the Japanese would be in the sea within a fortnight. The Japanese fight from blue-prints. Create a situation for which they have no blue-print, and they're in trouble. You still wish to get to England?"

"Nothing has happened to change my mind, General." Bretal had adopted the common form of address.

"Here is what I have to offer you: a position with me, on a ten-share official basis. A ten-share bonus from my personal lot, which should amount to something like ten times your pay as a lieutenant in British service. And an unlimited future." Chanod smiled oddly. "I'm on the way to becoming a figure of history. Great things can be done in China. I have twenty-one years before being called an old man. You can be my second."

"Why? There are others here who—"

Chanod chuckled hoarsely. "Why? Because of the qualities I reproach you with, softness, loyalty to friends. I'll have to be in the field very soon, and for months on end. I need someone here I can trust not to get ambitious, not to wish to take my place. A man who won't think of what might be put in my tea. In a word, a young, loyal sucker of a French officer such as you are."

"You mean that the others are—"

"Eager to take my place? Ambitious to lead? They're fighting men, who fight for profit. All those who have brains enough to be of value would dispose of me. That is natural. I would feel the same in their place. In war, you're not worth anything unless you think you are the best there is. In a national army, that is checked, controlled by hierarchy. Luckily, otherwise there would be an epidemic of shooting of aging generals. In a bandit band such as mine, that has free play."

Bretal considered Chanod seriously.

"And you believe I would be different?"

"For four years, perhaps five. Because

you'll feel you have to learn, that you lack this or that. I want to use you and pay you for those years. The years before your mentality changes—and you can shoot a Koyuma as calmly as I did. With you, I'll be reasonably sure of returning here and not being greeted with an uprising. I am never sure with the others. They cannot be trusted. What do you say?"

"I must refuse, General. Some Frenchmen are still fighting—and our enemy are the Germans." Bretal gestured widely. "The people out here? Let France free herself in Europe, and we can brush them off."

The Tiger rose and paced the floor, his steps muffled by the thick rugs.

"Suppose I keep you a prisoner here, Bretal, until you give your word to second me?"

"I shall escape."

"Without money?" asked Chanod. "Without papers?"

"If necessary." Bretal stood angrily. "You saw Matzumi. Didn't that mean anything? He had his country, I have mine."

Chanod laughed. "It's a very profitable set-up we have here, Bretal."

Bretal looked at him bitterly. "That's your affair, General, if you wish to stay here and fatten on the profits of banditry, of mercenary slaughter without purpose or goal—if you can forget France—forget that somewhere men are fighting for freedom—for a chance to live like men, not slaves. I want no part of it!"

Chanod went to a table, opened a drawer, and took out several envelopes, which he handed to Bretal.

"These will help you. The chances of your getting out of Hong Kong are slim. But there is another road, through China, and down the Burma Road to Singapore. You won't have any trouble, I am known enough for my guarantee to cover you.

"Yes, I already knew your answer, because it would have been mine. You'll leave for the plains tonight. Britain will give you your chance to fight. And you'll probably see our side victorious, if you live. *Vichy will be just an episode.* If things turn out badly, come back here. But I hope I never see you again, that you make a career for yourself in a French Army."

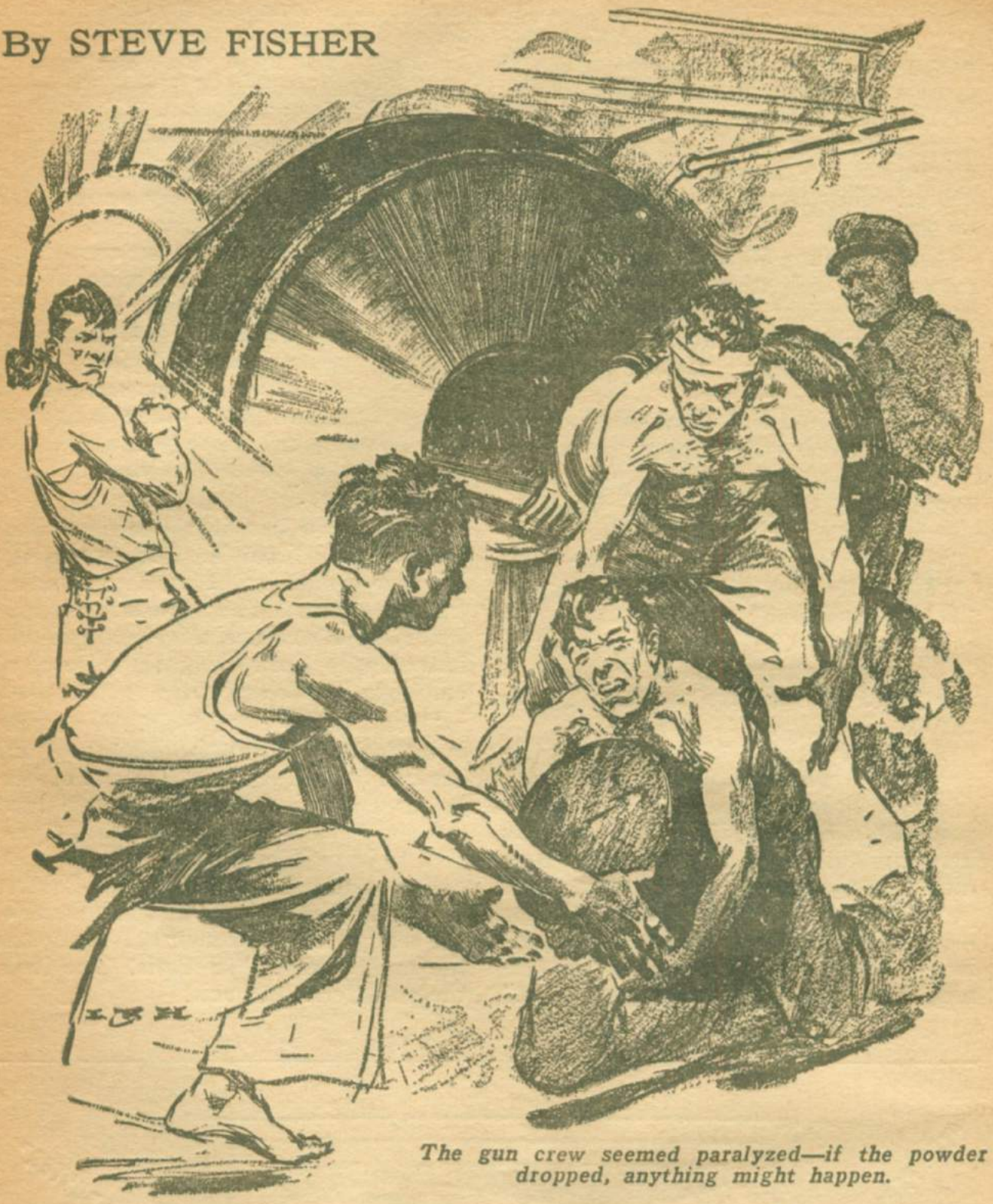
Chanod, the bandit, the internationalist, suddenly lifted his fists to the sky. His face worked, and tears showed on his tanned cheeks. The man whose brain had risen above prejudice and personal hatred, who knew the cash value of all emotions, strode across the room.

"The bunglers, the fools! The Boche is in Paris!" He gripped Bretal's shoulder in his steel claws. "Get out of here before I go with you. Get out. I have given orders concerning you. Good-bye—glad to have helped you—"

Bretal found himself in the bricked passage, under the unconcerned glance of the sentry. And through the door came the muffled cry: "In Paris! The fools, the muddlers! In Paris!"

FIRE ON THE BUZZER!

By STEVE FISHER



The gun crew seemed paralyzed—if the powder dropped, anything might happen.

JERRY woke with the bugle, remembering he had dreamed again of the fire. He sat up in the bunk and shook his head. He was a youngster, only seventeen, with jet black hair that was cut short, dark eyes, and a well-moulded countenance. But the skin of his face was pale, and he was fever hot. He felt a dull ache in the back of his head, and something kept saying: "Today is the day. Today the turrets fire."

A coxswain from the Master-at-Arms crew was coming through the compartment whacking at the bunks with a stick. "Grab a sock, sailor." He watched, bleakly, pulling on his trousers. Doing the normal, mechanical things he did every morning as though this were just

another day. He slipped quietly out of the bunk and went to the gear locker where he got first pick at the pile of boots. Wearing the rubber boots, he clopped back to his bunk and pulled on his jumper. The mess cook had arrived with a pot of black coffee and was pouring it into cups. Jerry took his and sat down on deck, his back up against a stanchion. He sipped at the hot liquid.

But his eyes lifted from the rim of the cup. He saw Dutch, the division boatswain's mate. He had yellow hair, and hard blue eyes. He was already dressed and washed, looking neat, wearing boots, a boatswain's whistle hung from a cord around his neck. Dutch, the deck boss. Jerry's father, his old man. Though you'd never know it. You never would have guessed it now. Jerry watched him, and the intensity of his hatred made his heart pound hard. It was funny, he thought bitterly—it was immensely funny what could happen to hero worship in three short months.

A seaman named Johnny Smith flopped down beside Jerry, drawing up his knees.

"Today's the day they give baby dolls away," he said.

Jerry nodded.

"I figure we'll get underway about nine," Johnny went on.

"What time will we fire?"

"By eleven, anyway. This is your first time, ain't it, Jerry?"

"Yeah."

"Well, it ain't bad down in the lower handling-room."

"I'm not down there," Jerry said evenly. "I'm up in the pits. I'm a powderman."

Dutch had finished his coffee. That was a signal everybody else should be through.

"All right, sailors," he bellowed. "On deck."

JERRY got up and followed the others up the ladder to top side. Seamen were already washing the foc'sle down and Jerry and those who had come up with him grabbed brushes and went forward. Jerry took his brush and began pushing it back and forth. It was a gray, foggy day, but the fog would lift. A buoy tinkled, and he could see men on the decks of other ships scrubbing down. Terminal Island lay off the port side, and San Pedro across from it. The air was crisp and sharp. Jerry glanced at Dutch standing lazily out of the way, his elbows resting back on the life lines.

Dutch, and Jerry's mother, had been separated when Jerry was five. Jerry had been brought up in Utah and he had spent most of his life dreaming of when he would come aboard his old man's ship and be a sailor.

But the day had come and it was not what he had expected. He was a scrawny recruit fresh out of the training station. Dutch hadn't seen him for years and he had possibly expected too much. He didn't try to hide his disappointment, and it seemed to Jerry he must have felt it deeply and bitterly. Sarcastically he had asked: "Why didn't you try the Annapolis training class, Percy? Aren't you afraid a battleship will be too much for you?"

"The name's Jerry. And I came aboard to be a sailor."

"Oh," Dutch had said. "Oh, I see."

Jerry had felt the resentment from the beginning, but like a romantic fool he had tried to change Dutch's opinion. When he was assigned mess cooking for a month, he ran chow back and forth from the galley as if each time he were making a hundred yard sprint. He sanded his tables until they glistened white. He was usually the first messman finished with his dishes. The week Dutch had him on the honey-barge detail (where he ruined two suits of undress blues) he tried to handle the six-hundred-pound rubbish cans as deftly as the larger men did. He filled out, and he developed his muscles, but when he at last reported back to deck for normal duty, Dutch dug up every crummy job he could find and slapped it at him. Captain of the wash-room. Chipping paintwork in the tripod mast.

They finished scrubbing down, and Jerry turned in his brush for a squeegee. It was like a rubber window-cleaning device and it scraped the pools of water off the deck. Afterward, swabs finished the drying job. Jerry sent water splash-

ing into the scuppers, but he wasn't thinking of the work.

Today they went out for Short Range, and he might have been in the lower handling-rooms. Most of the newer men went there first. But Dutch had come into the gun one day and noticed that Jerry was pale and nervous.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing."

"The hell you say."

"Well, it's just that there's something about a gun, but I'll get over it, I—"

The next day Dutch had Jerry transferred from the lower handling-room into the pits. The pits were up where the guns actually fired. It was Dutch's personal triumph. He had been there when Jerry came in for the first dummy rehearsal. It was only a sham practice and blocks of wood were used instead of sacks of powder, but Jerry was trembling and nervous, and Dutch laughed at him.

AT BREAKFAST Jerry sat at a table across from Dutch. The yellow-haired boatswain's mate scraped fried eggs off the mess cook's platter, and ate heartily, drinking a lot of coffee. But Jerry knew that he was watching him, and he tried to eat. He tried to pretend that he was perfectly normal. Dutch was the big man in the second division and there was nothing worse than his ridicule. Jerry was pushing the eggs back and forth on his plate with the fork, but eating nothing.

"What's the matter with the hen's fruit, pal?"

"The eggs are cold," Jerry said.

Dutch laughed. He winked at a man who sat two places down. "The kid's got the jitters."

"I have like hell!"

Dutch had the attention of everyone at the table now. "The poor boy was in a fire when he was six years old, and now it turns out that he's afraid of guns."

"Just the—"

"The fire part of it," Dutch amended. "Somebody told him about the *USS Mississippi* blowing up and killing eighty men in the turret."

It wasn't very funny, and the laughter was mild.

"But nevertheless," Dutch went on, "he's better than the rest of us."

"Why don't you shut up?" Jerry snapped furiously.

"You know what I caught him doing the other day?" Dutch went on.

"What?" somebody asked.

"Taking the examination to get sent to the Annapolis training class."

That, somehow, was extremely funny. It was the emphasis and the ridicule that Dutch put in his voice.

"He's going to be an admiral," Dutch went on.

Jerry lifted his cup of coffee and was about to throw it when Dutch saw him. He reached over and shoved Jerry off the bench. The laughter was hilarious now, and Jerry got to his feet, his cheeks burning red, his eyes hot with hatred. He walked forward, into the first division where he didn't know many of the men. He sat down on a bench, and drew his legs up and put his arms about them. Somehow the things Dutch said cut him to the core. It was as though he had taken Jerry's soul out and aired it at the table for the rest to see, and it wasn't fair.

But today was the day. Dutch had done his worst by putting Jerry in the pits. If he went through that all right, he could laugh in his face. He could stand up with any sailor on the ship. He would too, he thought—but his stomach was hollow, and he was numb all through. He remembered the dream of the fire. It had been coming to him almost every night since the dummy practices. It was a dream that took him back through the years, when he was six years old. He had slept in the attic of a house in San Pedro and lightning had struck. Jerry had awakened to see a pile of old newspapers not three feet from him, leaping with flame. He had seen that, and out the window the rain and the lightning, and then somehow he had run down the stairs. He didn't remember now, but it seemed to him that he had been screaming and crying at the same time.

He didn't know why that dream should have anything to do with Short

Range battle practice, or with fourteen-inch gun turrets. Yet even in the lower handling-room that day Dutch had seen him, there had been something about a gun that affected his nerves. He had heard that there were men on the ship that each time it fired, stuffed cotton in their ears and went down below decks.

He sat there on the bench, staring straight ahead, and he did not know which emotion was stronger, the hatred or the fear—but he realized, somehow, that the two of them went together.

JERRY stood lined up at quarters with his division as the anchor chain came rumbling across the runway. The ship's whistle sounded, and the vessel began slowly to move. The gray bow rose gently, and pointed out toward the breakwater. Behind them, the *USS California,* with targets in tow, joined formation. The other ships in the fleet did not move from anchorage.

Quarters broke up and Jerry went below. The ship seemed different now, as though it were a holiday. There was a tenseness that crackled in the atmosphere, and even the old-timers seemed to feel it. Observers sent aboard from the *California* roamed through the empty compartments wearing hostile looks, and seeming lost. Jerry sat down on his ditty box, and leaned back against a stanchion. He felt the ship listing gently. He tried not to think. He thought that it would be better that way. He did not know how long he sat there, but Dutch stood before him suddenly.

"How's Papa's little boy?"

"Pull in your wooden ears."

"I can get you taken off the gun if you want."

"Don't strain yourself," Jerry said.

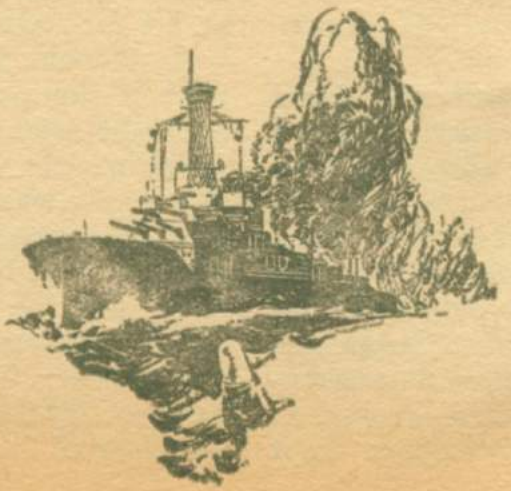
But when Dutch walked on, he wanted to go after him and ask him if he meant it, ask him if he could take him off just this once, until at least he had heard a ship fire and knew what it was like. But that was what Dutch wanted him to do.

It was ten when Officers' Call sounded. The bugle call floated sweetly through the compartments, and men began to move. Then, suddenly, bells started to clang. Shrilly, rapidly. A boatswain's whistle sounded through the horns of the loudspeaker system, and a voice came on, hoarsely.

"*General Quarters. Battle Condition One.*"

Men were on the run everywhere. Portholes were being closed, and bolted. Water-tight doors were swinging into place. Jerry got up, stiffly. His skin was prickly with a hot tingling. He seemed confused for a moment, then he turned in the direction he had to go, and started for the turret. He went down through the lower handling-room and climbed the ladder upward. He passed the upper handling-chamber, and moved on into the pits. Dutch was here and Jerry scarcely looked at him. He went to his place.

The pointers and trainers were arriving. The turret captain came in, and the division lieutenant. Blue-clad observers stood back. The voice tubes began to buzz, and the huge, steel breeches of the guns glistened dully. Footsteps echoed



hollowly on the deck plates. The huge powder conveyor machine, like a treadmill, stood silently for the moment. Jerry lined up with the powdermen and loaders, and he was shivering. He saw the pointers working steadily, eyes pressed to the sights. The fourteen-inch gun barrels were moving stealthily out over the side of the vessel. The life chains on deck had all been taken down.

The voice of the gunnery officer echoed through the tube from the conning tower. The range finder, above decks, was in action. The range was given. Target traveling at five knots, the ship at ten. Visibility was one thousand.

Then the voice tube roared out: *"Coming on the range."*

Jerry felt his heart begin to palpitate. His head throbbed, and he felt the violent throb of his pulse. Dutch was watching. Dutch, who was sweating. Jerry was rigid, waiting, his face bloodless. The tension within the pits seemed to reach breaking point. The division lieutenant stood with his hat pushed back a little. The tube spoke again.

"Are you ready, Number Two?"

"Number Two is ready, sir!"

"Fire on the buzzer!"

Powder conveyors, grinding, grinding. Black silk powder bags. Jerry braced himself. The breeches of the three guns gaped open. The bags were lifted from the conveyors, moved across the deck. Jerry was handling them now. Quickly, efficiently, but with a nervousness that frightened him. This was different from rehearsal. The feel of the bags was different. The breeches slammed shut suddenly. Everyone stood by then—

Buzzzzzzzz

"Mark!"

"Fire!"

The whole compartment shuddered with the roar. The gun-muzzles plunged forward and ton salvos, glistening with paint that would distinguish them on the canvas target, screamed out. They were spiraling across the water. The guns recoiled. Jerry was only half conscious of the things that happened. Everything was speed. Time is as essential, the lieutenant had kept saying, as marksmanship. The conveyors kept working. Orders came bouncing down through the tubes. The breeches gaped open. Powder. Back and forth with it. Breeches closing. The buzzer, crashing out shrilly.

"Mark!"

"Fire!"

THE FLAME licked back against the cradle of the gun barrels, then vanished. The salvos roared away. Jerry was sweating, and moving. The conveyors kept grinding. It seemed to him that the pits were insufferably hot and that he could not go on. Jerry worked as though he were paralyzed. He moved like a robot.

Buzzzzzzzz

"Mark!"

"Fire!"

The turret shuddered. The pointers were turning their wheels. The trainers worked well. The division officer spoke now and again. Suddenly Jerry bumped into the powderman who worked in front of him. He was a seaman named Withers. Withers was wiping sweat from his face, but his hands were covered with the fine black powder from the silken bags. Jerry edged past him, and then Withers was moving again, but he was blinking as though his eyes smarted.

Buzzzzzzzz

"Mark!"

The thunder resounded in Jerry's ears, and he tried to look away from the sheet of flame that flashed and then vanished. He was hurrying with the powder. The ship listed heavily to starboard, and swung back. The salvos were shooting across the water. Withers was pawing at his face again.

A moment later Withers must have rubbed the powder into his eyes. Because he seemed suddenly blinded, and in pain. He slipped, and fell to his knees. He was holding a bag of powder lopsided, pressed in against his stomach, and he was swaying with the list of the ship. For the fraction of a second the entire gun crew seemed paralyzed. If the powder dropped, anything might happen. If the silk bag tore open and the floor of the pit was lined with pow-

der, the flame with the next firing would ignite it. They might—if the word reached Conning quickly enough—cease firing, but it would score off the entire run. There was a frozen, painful second.

Jerry saw he was closest. Dutch moved toward the sprinkler fire control system, and waited. He was standing by. The division lieutenant was ready to yell "Cease firing." The expressions on the faces of the men were awful. Then Jerry went into action. He reached down, with one arm, and deftly scooped up the bag of powder. Someone else grabbed Withers under his armpits and jerked him out of the way. It was quick and neat work, and it was all over in just that second. The routine was restored. Men were breathing again.

The breeches slammed closed. The buzzer sounded. No actual time had been lost. The guns were plunging forward again, the deck plates under Jerry's feet were rattling. The roar was bursting back against his eardrums. But it didn't matter. He was working coolly. For in the bare moment he had paused to do something out of the routine, he had forgotten everything else, and now he knew the secret of the big guns. The secret was simply that during the few seconds that you fired a run of seven salvos you didn't think about *anything*. You worked, and did what you knew you had to do.

He was ready when the breeches opened to take the salvos for the seventh time. The discipline and routine within the gun were flawless. It was like clock-work. Jerry was thrilled that anything so huge and mechanical could attain this perfection—and he was glad, suddenly, that he was part of it. The breeches clicked shut.

Buzzzzzzzz

"Mark!"

"Fire!"

In a few moments the men were crawling out of the pit. Jerry turned toward Dutch. The boatswain's mate was still sweating, his hat was pushed back from his yellow hair. His blue eyes shone curiously.

"Well, I did it," Jerry said.

"So what?"

"Burns you up, doesn't it?"

"It doesn't bother me at all," said Dutch.

"For three months you've tried to run me ragged, now you're just eating your heart out because I can stand up here and laugh at you. Well, I can tell you now that I hate your lousy guts!"

THAT night the division lieutenant called Jerry back to his cabin.

"You took the exams to go to the Annapolis class?"

"Yes, sir."

"You passed. You'll be transferred when we get in tonight. Good luck!"

This, Jerry thought, put the top on it. He still smarted from the laughter at breakfast, and now he could rub it in on Dutch. He could give it back to him. This was going to do his soul good. But when he reached the upper decks something cold came over him. Three months ago he had come aboard a scrawny, underweight kid, cocky and fresh. Since then he had put on weight, he had developed muscle, he had learned to fight. He had been put through the paces and in record time he had become, in all senses of the word, a sailor. Today he had been rounded out, and finished. Dutch must have known all that. He was a first-class boatswain's mate and he knew men. He must have planned it at the beginning from mess cooking on through, and he had put Jerry up in the pits to burn out the last shred of fear there was in him.

Jerry saw it now, because his transfer had been held up until the ship fired. Behind it stood his father: Dutch, the boatswain's mate, who wanted him to become an officer. Jerry moved forward quickly, trembling. He found Dutch in the second division compartment, leaning back on his hands, one foot cocked up on the bench. A few other sailors sat about.

"Say, Dutch—"

"Yeah?"

"I want to tell you that I—"

"Aw, go blow your nose!"

"But I—"

"Look at him," said Dutch, winking at one of the others, "he thinks he's going to be an admiral."

"Make him work! And if you have to, use a pick handle!"

For Valuable Consideration

By LOUIS C. GOLDSMITH

GIMMICK JONES was putting a celluloid observation port in the belly of the six-place Fairmont cabin plane. It cut through the floor in front of the pilot's seat so he could look between his spread legs and see the degrees marked off for drift. It was just another one of Gimmick's fool ideas. He tightened the last screw and limped around to get in and have a look at it.

Floyd Heasley, of the Heasley Air Charter Service, and Sid Milestein, his lawyer and partner in shady dealings, stood inside the hangar office watching the squat, stocky figure of Gimmick. Gimmick Jones had a clean-shaven, ruddy face, lugubrious in expression, though the lips were puckered in his

never-ending, utterly tuneless whistle.

Sid pulled the frayed cigar from his mouth.

"I brought all the papers," he said in a doubtful voice. "But will he go for it, Floyd?"

There was a rasp in Heasley's chuckle. "Him? Why not? It's a giveaway."

Sid nodded. "On a straight deal it'd be a giveaway. But he don't know about Littleby canceling the Forest Service contract." Sid studied his cigar, a mirthless smile twitching his lips. "This'll make about six times you've sold that Fairmont and got it back for nothing."

Heasley's chuckle agreed. "And I aim to sell it another half dozen times. That bus is a gold mine as long's there's suckers in the flyin' game, which'll be a long time. About that contract, Sid? You sure he won't have no comeback on that?"

Milestein shrugged. "It's got ten days to run. You're not selling him a guarantee of renewal. What's the setup there, Floyd?"

Heasley snapped a cigarette against the back of his hand. There was bitterness in the narrow face. "This Frank Littleby . . . he's district forest supervisor—well, you'd think it was his dough, instead of the government's. Well, him and I never did get along—don't seem to trust me. 'Fore Gimmick come I had Jim Dutton flyin' the patrol. Dutton's a good Joe. So we got together an' faked some patrols we never made. Heck, you know how it is."

"Sure. Everybody gyps the government these days. Littleby wouldn't stand for it, eh?"

Heasley frowned. "I don't know. But anyway I ain't got paid yet for 'em. And he told me yesterday they'd use the Spokane plane this summer, canceling this patrol."

Milestein nodded, started opening the flap of his briefcase. "O.K.," he said. "Bring on your sucker."

"FOREST SERVICE calling Mister Arthur Jones on the telephone," Heasley shouted from the hangar office one morning, a week later. He turned back into the room, with a supercilious smile for Miss Clark. He didn't know what he'd do without prim Miss Lydia Clark, who took care of the office work. She was the only girl he'd ever had who could change his rambling, ungrammatical utterances into concise letters that had a magic way of dragging in business.

"In case you don't know it," he smirked, "Mister Arthur Jones is Gimmick."

"I know who Mr. Jones is," she said, in her cool, impersonal voice. She didn't return his smile.

Heasley wondered if she had ever had even one hair of her smooth, auburn bob straggle out of place, if she had ever worn a shirtwaist that wasn't starched and ironed to the last degree. "B-r-r-r," he remarked, turning up his coat collar, "it's sure chilly in here." He strolled out into the adjoining hangar, wondering if she would get the humor of his observation. Probably not. She'd take a lot of warming up, that dame.

Gimmick had been using a wax cleanser on the Fairmont, when Heasley called him. He figured with a little care this linen job would last a couple of more years. He'd always taken pride in the ships he flew, but knowing that this Fairmont was all his gave an extra thrill to the work.

Heasley's raucous shout embarrassed him a little. He saw Pinky Swartz look up from a valve grinding job, smiling over Heasley's sarcasm. "The Forest Service wants yuh, Captain Gimmick," he called, snapping to attention and giving an elaborate, good-natured salute.

Dandy Jim, who flew the oil company ship, added his voice across the tarmac. "Here's hoping it's a ten-hour patrol, Gimmick."

They all knew about Gimmick buying the patrol contract and the Fairmont. Not knowing about the contract, they wondered at the bargain. Heasley had a reputation as a pretty close trader, one who usually got blood along with his pound of flesh. But Jones had their best wishes. He was the sort of good neighbor who would work all night on another man's plane, if it was needed the next day.

Gimmick limped toward the office, wiping his hands off on a clean rag as he

went. This was the first time he'd had any direct business with the service. Before this he'd been just the pilot. He had a lot of ideas how an airplane could be more useful to forestry men—he frowned and made himself stop thinking about that. Ideas were Gimmick's weakness.

Miss Clark glanced up as he entered, nodding toward the desk telephone.

Gimmick's coveralls were dirty, so he wouldn't sit down.

"Hello," he said, into the transmitter.

There was no answer.

"Just hold on," Miss Clark advised. "They'll be back."

Gimmick's hazel eyes met the jade-flecked gray of hers. Miss Clark's eyes, and the dark lashes that fringed them, were her one claim to beauty. Otherwise she had what might be called a 'plain, nice face.' Gimmick's eyes lowered in confusion and he felt hot blood mounting his face.

"Hello," a girl's voice said impatiently. "Forest Service calling."

Gimmick swallowed, cleared his throat.

"This's the forest patrol," he answered, a little shaky.

A man's voice came on: "Mr. Thurston will be out there in a half-hour for a reconnaissance flight over the Statoogan area," he announced coldly.

"That's fine!" Gimmick answered. "I'll be ready. I've got Service maps for all that—"

He stopped. The other line had gone dead with a rude clatter.

GIMMICK hooked the receiver in thoughtful silence, feeling as though his face had been slapped.

Miss Clark was watching him.

"Sit down," she invited, in the detached voice that always made Gimmick think of church bells on a cool Sunday morning.

"I—my clothes're dirty," he said. He was blushing again and was ill at ease, afraid that she'd guess the secret feeling he had for her.

"It's clean dirt," she observed and motioned toward Heasley's chair.

She wasn't looking at him now. Gimmick saw what long, well-kept fingers she had and how swift and capable they were, moving through the sheaf of papers. He dropped his own stubby grease-blackened hands out of sight below the desk.

Still not looking at him: "Have you ever done any aerial photography, Mr. Jones?"

"Why, I—yeah, just after I got out of mail flyin'. Not much of it, though."

She glanced up quickly then. "You flew mail!"

"Uh-huh. Long time ago. One of the first commercial contracts." He saw the question that she wouldn't voice. Why wasn't he still flying the mail?

"I cracked up—invented a gimmick an' it tore loose an' went through the vertical fin and rudder."

"A gimmick?"

"Yeah. I'm always having fool ideas. This wasn't an invention exactly. I just copied it from what the lighthouse service used, triangulating for ocean ship positions."

"Planes use loop antennas now," she said.

He laughed disparagingly. "Not like this thing I had. It was big's a window frame."

"Was that when you broke. . . ?" She stopped, teeth clenched angrily on her lip.

He moved his left leg. It didn't bother him having people mention it.

"I didn't break it," he said. "Pulled some ligaments or something. They can fix it if I ever save up enough for the operation."

A silence followed. "Why'd you ask about that aerial photography, Miss Clark?"

She bent over the papers, making pencil marks. "There are some contracts going to be open for bid," she said. "The Fairmont would make a good photo bus."

He wondered how she knew that.

"I might slip some of that in between patrol trips," he admitted. "But I sort of figured on goin' easy this first year. Y'see," he added, forgetting himself for a moment, "that's always been my trouble. Too many ideas."

"It's no crime to have ideas," she said

in an absent-minded voice. "What would you do if the patrol contract wasn't renewed?"

He was too much startled by the thought to answer that.

"Could you buy a camera—could you raise, say, two thousand dollars?"

He laughed. "Lord, no, Miss Clark! Between you and me I just got enough to run on till the next patrol check comes."

She nodded, frowning. "Maybe you'd better get ready for that patrol," she reminded him. Her voice seemed tired.

He got up hurriedly. He'd thought she was interested, but all the time he had been boring her with his jabber.

Her voice stopped him at the door.

"Do you know Mr. Littleby?" she asked. "Frank Littleby?"

"The district supervisor?" He shook his head. "No, I've never met him. Floyd told me he was a hardboiled little penny-pincher."

"He's honest," she snapped.

Gimmick left, wondering what made her get mad at him so quick.

EVERYBODY seemed mad at him that day. Thurston came out in one of the Forest Service cars. He was a special fire supervisor, Gimmick knew, though he had never flown him before. He was a big man, with a heavy, good-natured looking face. But he wasn't pleasant with Gimmick.

"You ought to know your way around out there," he observed in a dry voice, "after those *three special patrols*."

Jim Dutton must have made those before Gimmick started flying for Heasley. He wondered why Thurston spoke of them in that sarcastic way.

Gimmick had the engine warmed up. Thurston took the back seat that covered the full width of the cabin. He sprawled out on it as though dog-tired. He wasn't in his heather-brown uniform. He wore mackinaw, tin pants and logger's boots.

"Fires bad?" Gimmick asked, waiting at the edge of the take-off runway for a transport to clear.

Thurston merely grunted, as though that was something not concerning the air patrol.

Gimmick was just trying to be friendly. He knew they had a bad fire starting up on Wolf Flats.

Thurston had given him one of the Forest Service section maps, with a cross marked on Salmon Creek just a few miles after it branched from the Pagley River. It was an open field where they had a supply cabin.

The smoke didn't get bad until they intercepted the Pagley and turned eastward on it. It wasn't really bad then but Gimmick put on his amber goggles. That helped to cut through the bluish glare.

The river turned almost due north. Gimmick studied it closely, storing his memory with details of sharp turns, unusually high points of timber and sandbar markings. If the Wolf Flats blaze developed he might have to feel his way up here through the smoke. He didn't have any use for pilots who couldn't fly smoke, so long as they knew the country, and there wasn't any fog mixed in it. He'd never seen it thick enough so he couldn't see a mountain before it got too close.

He picked up the white birdcage of a lookout station, atop a peak a few hundred yards off his right wing. "Eagle Perch," he shouted, pointing.

Thurston glanced up from his map but didn't answer. Gimmick started whistling in his tuneless, absent-minded way. He had a feeling that Thurston despised him for some unknown reason.

He caught the thin thread of Salmon Creek. The Pagley turned almost due east just before the junction of the two streams. That was a good thing to remember.

Gimmick throttled the engine, losing altitude.

Thurston's voice rasped his ears. "None of that damned stalling, to increase patrol hours!"

"I'm easin' down for that landing," Gimmick told him. He tried to answer good-naturedly but Thurston's tone nettled him. No wonder Floyd called this outfit penny-pinchers.

Thurston glanced at his wristwatch.

"Already!" he exclaimed. "Last time it took almost three hours."

Gimmick didn't answer. He figured he

had better than a mile visibility. But if this was a supply field he wanted to get all the landmarks in mind for real thick smoke conditions.

He saw a clear, grass-carpeted area ahead. There were a couple of tents and a log cabin at the northwest corner. That was the spot. They were crossing low over a muskrat swamp. He wouldn't forget that, nor the bleached lengths of two deadfall 'school-ma'rms' just before reaching the field. He dragged the grassy expanse of the field a couple of times, looking for hidden logs that might nose him over.

"Is this a merry-go-round?" Thurston shouted impatiently, after the second turn of the field.

"I'm flyin' this crate, Mr. Thurston," Gimmick told him steadily. "An' I fly it the way I see fit." To add emphasis to this Gimmick kicked her into a side-slip that almost rolled Thurston over onto the floor. It didn't do any good trying to get along with a sour crab like him.

Later, when they were on the ground, he was sorry for doing this. He didn't know how much weight Thurston had in the Service but it must be plenty, judging from the way the men there hopped around to do his bidding.

THERE was a big crew of them. They had a pack train loaded with fire-fighting equipment and material and they were storing this away in the log cabin. There was already a lot of equipment in there—shovels, mattocks, axes, crosscuts and a couple of power saws with their compact little two-cycle gas engines. There was food in great quantities, cases of dynamite, two field radios, power water pumps and backpack chemical extinguishers.

Gimmick was astonished at the quantity and diversity of these supplies. He had a pleasant feeling of being part of a huge, efficient organization. There were only a few of the men in field green uniform of the rangers. The rest had been picked up wherever they could be found—loggers, farmers, anybody who could and would fight the greedy red demon that was building its strength up for a battle in the Wolf Flats forest.

The men in green uniform were a quiet, pleasant sort. But they could be hard-boiled when necessary. Gimmick saw that when an argument started, one man standing on a metal barrel of Kempak, the fire-fighting chemical, and haranguing the others about overtime.

Gimmick recognized his type, the kind who hang around front-street bars, sponging off of working men, soapboxing on the beneficent rule of foreign dictators.

A big Finn logger started for him.

"I get me that tammed communist," he shouted. "I break his dirty neck."

But a green-clad arm reached up and caught the long-haired one's coat collar, jerked him off the barrel, shoved him toward the cook tent.

"An' stay there, too, Commie," the ranger quietly advised. "These boys're liable to take you to pieces."

Gimmick dumped a few tins of gasoline into his ship while Thurston checked supply lists with the field clerk. After this, with nothing else to do, he fell into the carrying line. As he passed the checking table, one of the metal Kempak containers on his shoulder, Thurston glanced up and saw who it was.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he exclaimed. "Don't tell me a patrol pilot would stoop to do anything useful." Then his eyes narrowed. "I get it," he said. "Starting to worry about your contract, eh?"

Without reply Gimmick set the barrel down where he stood. Let somebody else carry it inside the cabin. He was through trying to be friendly with these people. He limped up the field, whistling a melancholy, aimless tune. He felt lonesome, and an unnamable fear was growing in him.

He zigzagged the full length of the grassy field, searching for sharp depressions or obstacles that he might have missed from the air. The south approach, over the swamp and deadfalls, was best. On the north end a five-hundred foot strip of timber would prevent a good approach.

Gimmick studied his Forest Service map. Salmon Creek was the boundary between Wolf Flats National Forest and the Statoogan reserve. Apparently this

five-hundred-foot gooseneck of heavy timber was privately owned. North of it stretched barren shale rock slopes and to the south were swamps and sparse willow growth.

He moved slowly toward the log cabin, planning the way he would use this field. A south approach would be best, even with a light tailwind. With a southwind over ten miles an hour he'd have to sideslip in over the high gooseneck timber.

"All right. All right!" Thurston shouted impatiently, recalling Gimmick from these thoughts. "We've got that reconnaissance flight to make yet."

Gimmick was silent, starting his engine. But he made another attempt at friendliness, calling Thurston's attention to the celluloid observation port. He explained how he planned to use it in getting wind drift.

Thurston was momentarily enthusiastic.

"I get it," he agreed. "That way you can lay a map sketch out north-and-south, making your corrections on the compass." He seemed to remember something. His face hardened. "That's good," he drawled. "Only you fellas snapped out of it too late in the game."

Gimmick didn't know what he was talking about. But he did know that this was the last time he'd try to be friendly with Thurston. A man can stretch his pride just so far.

They made the reconnaissance flight over the Wolf Flats fire, Thurston using one of the large scale maps to sketch its outline, planning his method of attack. There was no wind and the fire wasn't unusually large. But if they didn't get it under control before a wind started there would be plenty of trouble.

The map was finished. Thurston handed it to him, two pages of scribbled note paper clipped to it. Gimmick attached a weight and the long, colored streamers for a dropped message. He circled over the small clearing where they had white panels laid out. He opened the side window, throttled his engine and tossed the message out, kicking rudder on that side to skid his tail clear of it.

Then there was the long flight back to Stanton, the forestry man dozing on the back seat. Several times Gimmick looked back at his unshaven face, etched with the lines of weariness. He supposed that this was just one of the many fires he had to worry about.

Despite himself he made one more attempt at friendliness, after he had landed and taxied in between the two long commercial hangars.

"I'll be standin' by, Mr. Thurston," he said. "Any time you want me, night or day. An' don't worry about me getting you in there, no matter how thick the smoke is."

Thurston gave him a queer look. Then his lips tightened.

"Your contract expires tomorrow," he snapped. "It won't be renewed. Any other trips, if we should need them, will be just special charter."

GIMMICK sat in the cockpit of the Fairmont, watching Thurston's awkward, calked-boot stride toward the Forest Service car. For a long time he couldn't think. His mind seemed frozen. Then anger came to him and he started trembling. It was so bad that he could hardly get out of the ship.

He called the Forest Service office that day and the next morning, trying to get in touch with Littleby, with anybody who could or would explain why his contract wasn't being renewed.

It didn't seem possible that Thurston would cancel it just because he'd thrown him around a little with that sideslip. Time after time he reviewed his own conduct, tried to recall the exact words he had said to the Forest Service man. It didn't seem possible—and yet it was. They told him so, on the telephone and personally, when he made a trip down to the office. The contract was definitely canceled.

That afternoon he approached Dandy Jim. He had been thinking of what Miss Clark had said. Some way she must have known that he might lose the contract. She had tried to warn him, had suggested an out for him with the aerial photographic work.

He took her word for the amount of money he'd need. Gimmick wasn't much of a business man. He had no doubts as to his ability to take the pictures. But

there was the problem of getting just the right sort of camera. Getting it on assignment, was the way they put it, whatever that meant. And along with his bid he must submit pictures made by the camera he would use. And the camera must be certified by the bureau of standards. It frightened him to think of all these obscure details. But something had to be done.

"Two thousand bucks," Dandy Jim repeated. "You want me to loan you two thousand, Gimmick?"

Gimmick nodded, bracing himself for a refusal. He felt like a panhandler. He'd known Dandy a long time, but that was a lot of money to ask for. "I'll give you a note or mortgage or whatever it is, on the Fairmont. There's a thousand I got to pay Heasley by the last of August. But it's worth a whole lot more'n that."

"What d'you figure the ship's worth, Gimmick?"

Jones had been cudgeling his brains over that, but it didn't seem to add up right. "Well," he said, "she cost sixteen thousand, new. She's just passed her NC inspection and I give her engine a top-overhaul. I 'miked' the cylinders an' pistons, Dandy. That engine's got a thousand hours in it yet, the way you or me'd treat it."

Dandy nodded, brushing his forefinger over the black, narrow strip of his mustache. Lights played from the diamond ring on his little finger. It wasn't a great big hunk of rock, like Floyd Heasley wore. But the cold blue flashes from it spoke of real value. That ring was as much a part of Dandy Jim as the cocky swagger that he had, as his fine, sensitive touch on a control stick.

Dandy spoke in a slow, thoughtful voice.

"Something's wrong, Gimmick," he said. "That ship's worth six or seven thousand bucks, with those instruments she's got. That is, to a party who could use it."

Gimmick nodded agreement. "But you see, I only had two thousand saved up. I figured on gettin' my leg fixed. But Floyd wanted to get out of this patrol business. So he—"

Dandy's lips curled in a nasty smile. "Yeah. I see. And Heasley's the only one around these parts who can use a plane like that. *I think I see,*" he repeated. He looked up at Gimmick, eyes narrowed. "You're sure Heasley's a good friend of yours?" he asked. "I'm not around here much but I've heard—"

"Floyd's O. K.," Gimmick interrupted shortly. He'd known Dandy a long time, but he'd never thought him the kind who'd talk dirt about another man not present to defend himself. "What've you got against Floyd?" he asked bluntly.

Dandy's face instantly smoothed of expression.

"Me?" He shrugged. "Nothing, Gimmick. Nothing, only I've heard that Fairmont's been sold a lot of times—but Heasley still owns her."

Gimmick said slowly, "Floyd Heasley's a smart man. People like to run that kind down. I've always trusted men, Dandy, and nobody's ever picked my pocket yet."

Dandy grinned. It wasn't hard to see why people always liked Dandy Jim.

"I wonder, Gimmick," he said, in a soft voice. "I just wonder." He glanced over the blocky, muscular figure of Gimmick Jones. "God help the man you ever *catch* picking your pockets. If you ever catch one," he added.

Gimmick didn't like the way this talk was going. He wanted to leave before he and Dandy Jim really quarreled.

Dandy stopped him. He seemed to have forgotten that talk against Floyd.

"I've only got twelve hundred bucks, Gimmick," he said. He paused, his two hands clasped at his belt. "Twelve hundred," he repeated. He was biting his lips. He corrected himself. "No, come to think of it I can spare you eighteen hundred. Eighteen hundred," he said, with growing cheerfulness, "an' we'll get the other two hundred from Pinky Swartz and the rest of the gang."

His right hand came up again, forefinger brushing his mustache from force of habit. His ring was gone, in its place a circle of white skin contrasted with the tan.

Gimmick started to speak. He knew then where Dandy had suddenly found that extra six hundred dollars. And one time he'd heard Dandy say he'd rather

fly fog weather without a parachute than to leave the ground without that good luck ring.

Gimmick felt like a man who, sleep-walking, awakens to find himself on the point of committing some crime. "Well," he stuttered, trying to whip his mind into thinking, "well, come to remember, Dandy, I won't need that two thousand. That is, I got another guy in mind. Partnership. He'll furnish the camera, I'll furnish the ship."

He left Dandy as soon as he could. He had never realized what good friends he had. He felt sort of queer and his eyes smarted and felt watery. Maybe that smoke flying yesterday was worse than he'd thought. Smoke flying can raise the devil with a man's eyes.

Floyd didn't want to take the ship back, even with Gimmick letting him keep his two thousand. A deal was a deal, after all. Gimmick had signed the papers. Floyd showed him where the thousand dollars was still owing, even if he took the ship back. Of course Gimmick still had his old car and a darned good bunch of tools. Maybe he could peddle those some place.

Gimmick thought maybe he could. He'd messed things up pretty bad. Floyd had made plans that depended on that thousand, and then Gimmick had failed him. He limped out toward his car. From force of habit he glanced at the windsock before crawling under the wheel. It no longer hung limp against the tower pole.

"Pickin' up from the west," he muttered, starting his engine.

. . . . His landlady called him to the hall telephone. It was still dark outside. Thurston's voice crackled from the receiver: "Jones, I want your plane ready—" The tone changed in quality. "Jones, can we charter your plane for an immediate flight up to Wolf Flats?"

Gimmick's mind wasn't cleared yet, he hadn't gotten to sleep for a long time that night. He glanced down at his wristwatch. He couldn't read the dial. But the hall window showed the gray of approaching daylight.

"Can you hear me, Jones?" Thurston's voice carried a pleading note. "Listen, Jones, that Wolf Flats blaze is topping, headed east like a bunch of wild horses. There're farms on the east edge— Are you listening, Jones?"

"I'll be ready in three-quarters of an hour," Gimmick told him, and hung up. That didn't give him much time. But he had the Fairmont outside, engine pretty well warmed up before Thurston got there. And on his way past the administration building he'd stopped in for a look at the weather map.

He wanted to speak to the forestry man about that. But Thurston shut him up before he'd said two words.

"You've got us over the barrel," he snapped. "There's no time to argue. Send your bill in and I'll O. K. it."

Gimmick came as near hating this man as was in his nature. The cheap skate couldn't seem to think about anything but money. He pulled the Fairmont off with a vicious jerk and he was still boiling with anger when they cut over the Pagley River. After that he was too busy for anything but his flying.

The sun was up now, but if anything that made it worse, with the long slant of it refracted by the thick blue curtain of smoke. He couldn't see the Pagley River, even after he'd dropped down to four hundred feet of it. Just the white shoreline, immediately below him. Sometimes even this disappeared momentarily.

He was flying half by instruments and half by outside visual means. It was the toughest sort of flying a man could do. But if he went clear blind he'd have to climb up to seven thousand immediately, to avoid mountain tops. And he'd need eight thousand by the time he reached Eagle Perch.

If he lost sight of the river he'd have to return to the west slope of the Cascades and drop down and pick it up again. Without that for guidance there was no way of finding the supply field on Salmon, nearest point to the blaze. From there Thurston would have to take saddle horse, detouring around by the shale rock break.

Thurston pushed a map in front of his face, bending over him to shout. "Guess you can't make it into the Salmon Creek field. Land up here at Logan and I'll try to get in by car."

Gimmick pushed the map away.

"Sit down!" he commanded. "Sit down and leave me alone."

After that there were several tight, nerve-racking minutes before he again picked up the white shore line of the Pagley. He was talking to himself in a steady, monotonous undertone, cursing the forestry man for that piece of foolishness. They might have hit a mountain slope, they might have missed the sharp eastward turn of the Pagley, indication of where the Salmon came into it.

He caught the small flash of white water where the streams joined. There was no shoreline on the creek. He was down right onto the spiked tree tops now. These slid from under him, leaving a gray-green blank. He jerked the throttle.

Thurston gave a sharp, startled yelp of fear.

They were low, stalling on half throttle. The two bleached deadfalls passed under. He cut the gun, started a slow backward movement on the stick. He felt the tailwheel bump just a split second before the main landing wheels. The black shape of the log cabin swam out to meet them as Gimmick braked to a stop.

"Well, I'll be damned," Thurston exclaimed. "This's the supply field!"

"I told you I could fly smoke," Gimmick snapped.

LATER he watched the big forest supervisor disappear into the gooseneck timber, riding a buckskin cayuse that the camp tender had saddled for him, heading for the shale rock break to detour around the fireline.

Every line of his loosely slouched body bespoke confidence and a knowledge of what he was doing. Nevertheless, Gimmick thought, if he knew anything about weather maps, that wind was going to swing north and then to the northeast. The cold front might bring a little rain, but not enough to quench any forest fire.

He felt the weary nerve reaction of close flying.

"How's for a cupa' java?" he asked the lone camp tender.

The man's name was Pines. He had a farm on the Pagley river bottom, about ten miles south. He was getting thirteen dollars a day for himself and his buckskin horse and he already had the money spent in his own mind. He was going to buy a radio.

That reminded Gimmick of the field radios he'd seen in the supply cabin. After a good breakfast of ham and eggs he borrowed the watchman's key and got one of the sets going. There was a tuning card, but he couldn't get anything, even after rigging a makeshift doublet antenna.

The sun was a faint copper disk in the sky. It seemed to Gimmick that the haze was thickening. Everything, even the solid wall of fir trees to the north, had a ghostly, smoke-wreathed unreality. His eyes were hot with the acrid vapor and he felt groggy from lack of sleep. Pines had an army cot in the smaller tent. Gimmick borrowed the use of this and was asleep the minute he stretched out.

Pines had to slap him to get him awake. It seemed to Gimmick he'd been asleep only a few minutes. The small tent was whipping violently in the wind.

"Wake up, you. Wake up!"

A quick, short drive of rain slashed the canvas.

"They're haulin' the crew out from the east side, mister, bringin' it around here. That radio's been askin' where Mr. Thurston is. Somethin's happened an' the fire's headin' this way."

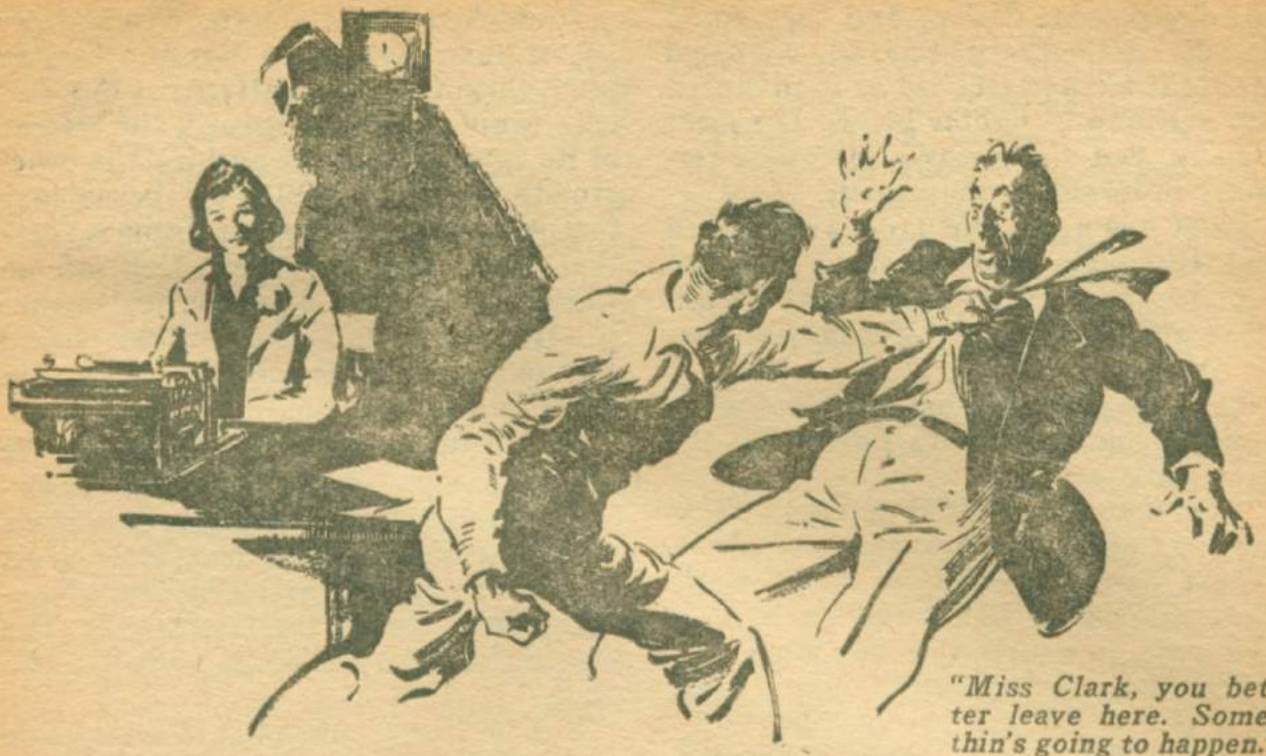
Gimmick rubbed his smoke inflamed eyes.

"Sure it is," he said. "I tried to tell him there was a high pressure movin' in."

He stood at the tent flap. That rain had cleared the air a little, so he could see the gooseneck timber plainly. He was remembering that the west edge of the blaze area wasn't very far over. When the shift came it would start from there, moving westward toward the clearing. Maybe it had already started.

"Anyway," he muttered, "there won't be much wind after the front passes. An' this rain should keep it from topping."

Pines caught that last word. A top-



"Miss Clark, you better leave here. Somethin's going to happen."

ping blaze, with the flames racing through upper growth, is a thing to strike terror in the heart of any woodsman.

"I'm gettin' outta here," he announced. "Right now!"

Gimmick caught him by the shoulder as he tried to pass. "I said it *wouldn't* top! We got something to do here. Somehow we got to stop it."

Pines looked at him, mouth agape. "Are you plumb crazy? Look at the grass out there. It's still dry enough to burn. Look at that gooseneck strip. Mister, it'd take a hundred-man crew to put a break through there in time."

"Take it easy," Gimmick advised him. "There's more ways than one of skinnin' a cat. Anyway, you ain't burnin' up yet."

Momentarily reassured, Pines followed him to the supply cabin. Gimmick stood at the door, staring into the dim interior where all that fire fighting equipment was arranged in neat piles.

"You goin' to backfire?" Pines asked respectfully. Gimmick realized that this man didn't know much about the Service, that he considered the flyer a man with authority.

"Backfire? Use your brains. You can't do that without a break."

"Heck, mister, we ain't got time to cut a break. It'd take a hundred—"

"Pipe down!" Gimmick commanded. He wanted a chance to think. The sight of all that equipment in there stirred his imagination. If he'd ever had any good ideas he'd better have them right now.

"First," he said, "you take this burlap and throw it into the creek. Cut the wire so the bale will get wet all through."

"Throw it into the . . . !"

"You heard me! I gotta get my ship covered against hot cinders."

WHILE Pines was gone on this errand Gimmick had a chance for solid thinking. That burlap would be protection as long as it was wet, but after that—he moved inside, took the lid off of a Kempak barrel. He studied a handful of the dry fire extinguisher chemical. Ideas were crowding into his mind.

They had the Fairmont draped with fireproofed burlap and were scattering a path of Kempak down the field, beginning at the swamp. Gimmick started backfiring from this safety strip, while Pines went ahead, extending the line toward the gooseneck timber.

That was what worried Gimmick. That five-hundred-foot strip of timber. It was the only connection between the Wolf Flats and Statoogan National Forests, but it was like a fuse between

two dry powder flasks. And they could already see the Flats blaze, an occasional flare of it to the eastward as it advanced into a clump of lighter brush. It wasn't topping. But there was a relentless certainty in its slower movement.

Pines was a good man, once convinced that Gimmick knew what he was doing. The way he scattered that chemical reminded Gimmick of a farmer sowing grain.

They were working near together when a ragged figure came in sight from the creek path.

"It's that long-haired spieler," Pines guessed, sighting through the haze. "Them damned Commies won't work. They hide out. I've knowed 'em to start fires even, so's to keep a soft job."

Gimmick nodded thoughtfully. "Look here, Pines. We can use that gent."

"Make him work!" Pines exclaimed. "With a pick handle, maybe."

"O. K.," the flyer said grimly. "If you have to, use a pick handle. If he says a word, if he even looks cross-eyed, just start workin' him over. You an' him finish with this grass while I get busy with the timber."

He said that last with an air of confidence. He had to, to keep Pines believing in him. But he knew that the timber presented their real problem. And there wasn't much time left for solving it.

He took a case of dynamite up to the timber edge. Coming back for caps and fuse and small rope the man in the torn, ragged clothing shouted at him: "Are you the damned fool that's back of this?"

Gimmick saw it wasn't the same man who had tried to start trouble the previous day. That didn't make any difference. "You darned tootin' I'm the man," Gimmick yelled back. "Get to work, you louse, or my friend there's going to start bootin' you."

The man saw Pines already heading toward him. He got busy scattering the Kempak.

Gimmick capped a three-inch fuse and prodded a hole into one of the dynamite sticks. He circled a ten-inch fir with the explosive, tying it on with quarter-inch rope. He lit the fuse and ran a safe distance away.

It worked like a charm. Worked far better than he'd even hoped. The fir pitched up from its shattered stump and fell, leaning to the eastward, the weight of its spread branches pushing the other growth back. It wouldn't take so long to put a twenty foot strip through there that way, and then he'd feel safe in starting to backfire. Anyway, he'd chance it. He'd have to. They would spread Kempak along the cleared strip and fire it on the east side.

He got down now to real business. He capped twenty of the fuse lengths, giving himself two feet for the first shots and shortening the last ones down to six inches. Then he started binding dynamite sticks around the tree trunks. The bigger the tree, the more dynamite he used.

But he had plenty of it. His problem was one of time. The first violent shower had cleared the smoke. But it was settling in again, despite an occasional misting rainfall.

He shouted to Pines: "Send that Commie up here to pack dynamite. You got plenty of time to finish with that grass by yourself."

The man came, willing enough. He had lost his hat, if he'd ever had one. His head was covered with close-cropped gray hair. Considering the type of man he was, the look of character in his lean, tanned face rather surprised Gimmick. But he had no time to consider things like that now. A low, crackling grumble of sound came from the east slope where the red line of flames was now plainly visible.

"Look here," the man said. "I've had enough of this roughhouse stuff. I drove in as close as I could from the Logan camp. I walked the last three miles through that damned underbrush and tore my clothes—"

"You'll get worse than torn clothes," Gimmick shouted, wild with the knowledge of that approaching line of fire. "You move, Commie, or I'll move you."

"You'll hear about this," the man threatened. "I'm—"

Gimmick picked up one of the slender yellow sticks of explosive.

"If you don't move," he said in dead earnest, "I'm goin' to heave this."

GIMMICK didn't have any more trouble with him after that. And Pines, finished with his backfiring of the grass, came over and helped Gimmick belt the trees with explosive. Together they lit fuses on the first bunch. Then the three of them stood back out of danger. This would tell the story. If it worked with this bunch it would work with the remainder. They could save that rich timberland to the west.

The blasts started going off. Gimmick knew, after the third one, that he had failed. That first trial shot he'd made was just luck in throwing the tree in the most effective direction. As blast followed blast he saw that if possible they had made the situation worse. The fire would blaze through that tangled mess in nothing flat.

"I could have told you that," the Commie remarked. "I tried to tell you."

Gimmick didn't have spirit left to answer him.

But Pines was still loyal.

"You shut your mouth," he threatened, "or I'll shut it for you."

Gimmick left them snarling at each other. There was nothing to do now but clear out of the place. The blaze would reach them in another half hour. It was coming down slope, which always slows a fire. And there was very little wind. But it would cross over that gooseneck as sure as fate, and nothing could stop it once it struck the thick stand to the west.

A sharp, sputtering crack, emerging from the dull roar of fire, brought his eyes around. It was the first of a pitch-pocket. It threw a dirty gray fountain of ash and cinders that hung for a moment in the hot upblast of air.

It reminded Gimmick of a bomb. It reminded him of that job he'd had at a county fair, years before. He got fifty dollars that day for dropping a few paper sacks of flour in the oval, inside the race track. They were supposed to be bombs, and they really did look that way, with the flour scattering in white puffs.

Those were the real days of flying, the old barnstorming days. He'd gotten twenty-five more for a stunting exhibition. And he'd picked up another wad flying passengers at ten bucks a head. Those were the days, all right. But they were gone now, receding like the tide, leaving him a useless, stranded hulk without even enough money to get that bum leg of his fixed.

His eyes grew thoughtful as he stood there. He saw again in imagination, the white puffs of flour and the way it drifted, gradually settling to leave an irregular splotch over the brown earth.

Suddenly he started in a limping run toward the supply cabin, shouting like a crazy man for the others to come and help him.

They jerked the removable seats from the Fairmont, replacing them with containers of fire extinguisher powder. The Commie wasn't putting up any arguments now. He was working as hard as any of them. And he seemed to know about dynamite and caps and fuse.

Gimmick was surprised at his eagerness, and at his quick grasp of the plan.

"I'm going up with you," he insisted. "How much altitude can you get and still see the ground?"

"Not more'n five hundred," he told him.

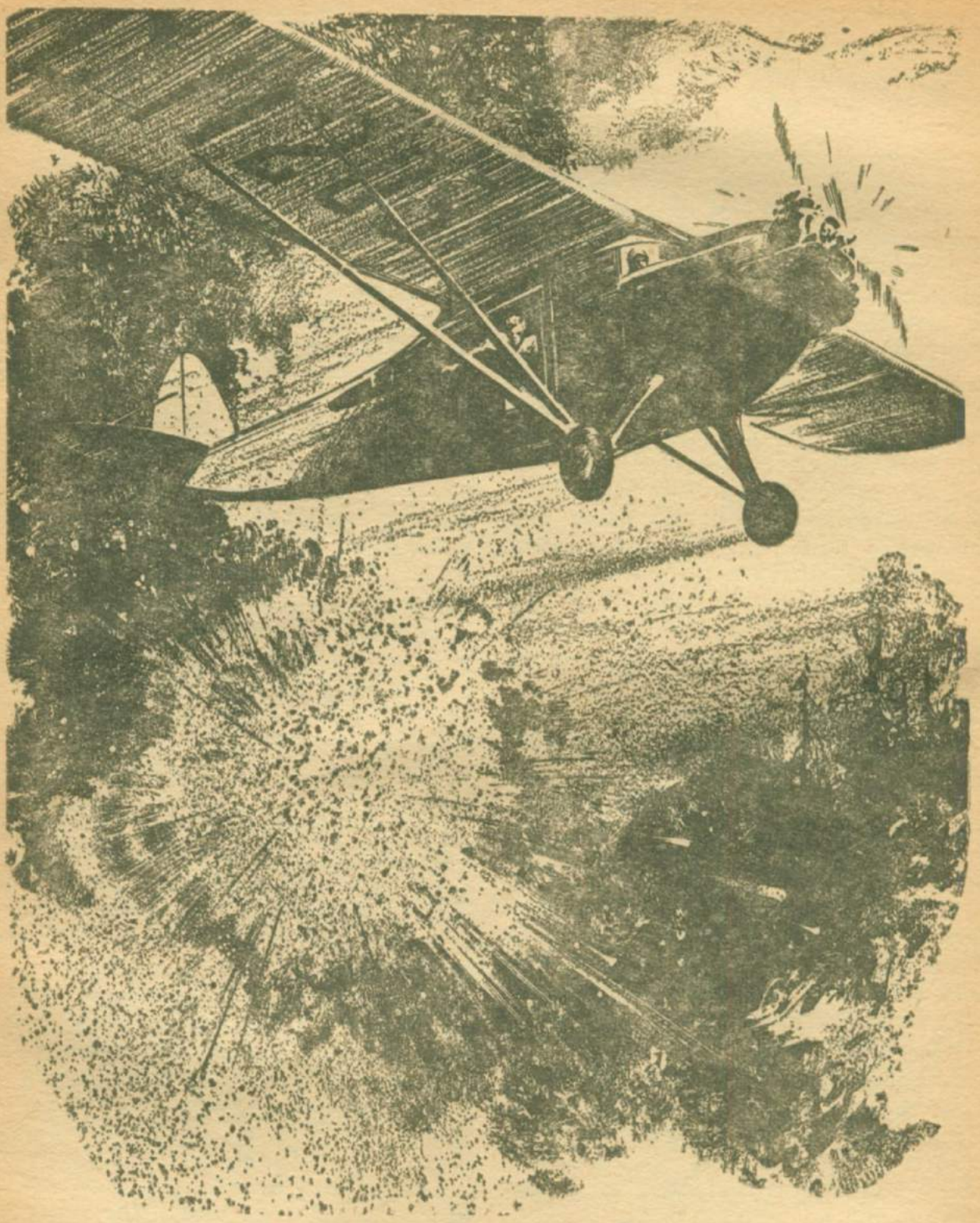
"Then we'll cut the fuses even shorter. Don't worry. I know what I'm doing."

Gimmick hoped he did. They were putting three sticks in each can. It would be their finish if one of them exploded in the ship.

Gimmick took off in a haze of smoke and fine ash. There was one place where a wedge from the main blaze had already tongued out to meet the grass backfire.

He climbed up, clearing the gooseneck timber, straining to catch the reddish-brown color of the shale rock. He climbed straight ahead over this, waiting till it began to fade out under the layer of thickening smoke. He had to use his Turn-Bank then, glad that the Fairmont had such an excellent panel of instruments. Without the directional gyro he never could have made an exact 180 degree turn to come back over the same path.

He felt the ship jarring as the Commie moved about behind him. He couldn't turn his head. There was a change in the cabin pressure as the door was opened.



"Number one!" the Commie shouted. "You'll have to make a trip over for each can."

On the third trip he saw a white cloud, contrasting with the green timber, as it sifted downward. The noise of his engine drowned out any sound made by the dynamite. But there was proof that the cans were being exploded high enough to scatter the chemical before it reached the timber.

"All gone," the man said at length.

Gimmick turned his head then, briefly. The two men grinned at each other. The other's close-cut hair seemed to stand straight up with his excitement.

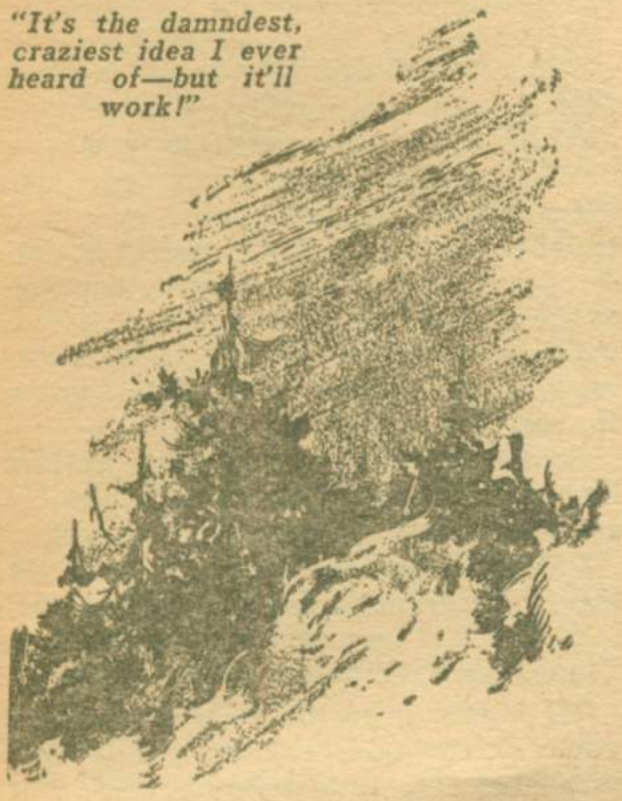
"It's the damndest, craziest idea I ever heard of," he yelled. "But it'll work, with that powder settling on the damp trees and brush."

Gimmick felt a momentary glow of exultation. "Wish Thurston could see it. Or that damned Littleby."

"Who?"

"Littleby," Gimmick shouted. "He's the dirty little penny-pinchin' runt who's boss of this district."

Gimmick heard a peculiar sound back of him. The Commie must have got some of that Kempak dust in his throat.



"It's the damndest, craziest idea I ever heard of—but it'll work!"

But he was too busy now with his flying to turn around. He stalled in over the deadfalls and landed.

The main line of the fire was very close now. Pines had rigged up one of the backpack chemical outfits and was putting out small grass fires started on the west side of the break by drifting sparks.

Gimmick knew what one of those larger live cinders would do to the smooth, doped linen of his plane. He should get out of here immediately. After all, the Fairmont didn't really belong to him. But they had to make another trip to be sure of dusting a strip over the timber wide enough and thick enough to stop the fire. Pines guarded his plane with the chemical rig while they prepared more of their queer bombs.

After that trip the Commie agreed to stay and help Pines take care of any spot fires from drifting cinders. Gimmick was surprised by his quick, cheerful agreement to this. The fire spread was definitely stopped but they'd have a miserable time for a few hours, eating that smoke. Their strange bombings seemed to have made a good citizen out of him. Gimmick had never seen a man in better humor, laughing at everything and sometimes bursting into laughter over nothing at all.

SID MILESTEIN stood in Heasley's office, chewing a fat, unlighted cigar. Floyd Heasley was sprawled in his swivel chair, letting Sid do the talking. On the other side of the desk, Miss Clark, prim and immaculate as usual, was working on an account book. At least Gimmick hoped she was working, wasn't listening to this browbeating that Milestein was giving him.

He had it coming to him, all right. The Fairmont stood in the hangar just as he'd left it that evening. Yesterday he'd felt too tired and listless to clean it up. He hadn't even tried to sell his car or his tools.

Sid Milestein was enjoying himself. Sometimes he had a feeling that Heasley didn't fully appreciate his legal talents. He knew the fear that the average man has of law suits. He made quick steps back and forth in front of Jones, sometimes pausing to threaten him with the cigar.

"Jones," he said, pointing the cigar, "you entered into a legal contract with my client, receiving valuable consideration, a *quid pro quo*."

Miss Clark slammed the account book. "What's a *quid pro quo?*" she asked, a brittle quality in her tone.

The telephone rang. Heasley made a languid, kingly gesture.

"Answer it," he commanded.

Miss Clark took the call. "It's from Mr. Breen's office," she informed Heasley. "They want to know if he is here yet with Mr. Littleby."

Heasley sat up straight. "We can't let them two get together! Breen's got the big say on this air photo contract. What'd he be doing with Frank Littleby?"

"And Mr. Thurston," the girl added. "It seems that all three of them were to meet out here."

Milestein cleared his throat. "As I

was saying, you received a valuable consideration, a *quid pro quo*. We all dealt fairly in this . . . at least my client did . . . a strictly business transaction—"

"I ain't arguin' about that, Mr. Milestein," Gimmick interrupted. "I'll clean the ship up just like she was. An' if there's any damage I'll repair it."

The lawyer smiled thinly. "I'm afraid it isn't as simple as that, Jones. There's the matter of a thousand—"

Miss Clark stood up. "You and your *quid pro quo!*" she said, in a voice no longer cool and detached. "You—you dirty little worm! And you, too," she whirled on Heasley. "I'm resigning—"

"Now, now, Miss Clark," Heasley spoke soothingly. "This's just a business deal."

"That's so, Miss Clark," Gimmick said. "I don't know about this *quid pro quo*, but whatever Floyd thinks is right, I'll do."

"Fine," the shyster approved, diving a hand into his ready briefcase. "*Quid pro quo* means, loosely, 'a valuable consideration.'

"It's Latin," he condescended, arranging two official looking documents for Gimmick's signature. "We'll take care of the sale of your car and tools and other possessions. And in consideration of that"— he pointed to the second document—"you will give Mr. Heasley immediate possession of the Fairmont." Milestein uncapped his fountain pen, held it out invitingly.

Gimmick took the pen.

"Right *here* and *here*," Milestein commanded, indicating the dotted lines.

Gimmick wasn't a very good penman. He'd been through grade school and two years of high school and had read a lot, books on machinery and technical aircraft matter. But his hands were clumsy with a pen. They were like old work gloves, hard-used, the fingers tending to curl as though to grip tools for labor.

"Hurry up!" Milestein urged.

Gimmick had signed his first name. The pen stopped moving. He glanced up.

"What's the big rush?" he asked. "That thousand dollars isn't due for some time yet."

Miss Clark was standing.

"Please, Mr. Jones," she begged, "you mustn't sign those papers! You mustn't!"

There was a mean rasp in Heasley's voice: "Miss Clark, if you don't sit down and shut your mouth, I'll—" He let the warning stand unfinished.

Miss Clark sat down, obeying Heasley from force of habit.

GIMMICK'S hand gripped the pen angrily. That was no way for a man to talk to a lady, especially a lady like Miss Clark. He turned his eyes and caught Floyd Heasley's facial expression, saw the greed and waiting triumph in the narrow face. Heasley's fingers were working nervously on the desk. Gimmick could almost feel them going through his pockets.

So Dandy was right in what he had hinted. Hot anger flooded his brain. He got up, kicking his chair back of him.

"Miss Clark," he said, "you better leave here. Somethin's going to happen."

Miss Clark saw his new expression. There was anticipation in her voice:

"If you're going to do what I think you're going to do," she said primly, "it's just what I've been wanting to—" Her eyes widened with fright. "Arthur! Watch out!"

Floyd Heasley had thrown himself forward out of his chair and struck with the weight of his body back of the blow. It caught Gimmick in the heavy muscles that ridged his spine.

Sydney Milestein was trying to get out of the room. Heasley's blow pitched the flyer head-on into the shyster's middle. Milestein doubled up with a bleat of terror and pain.

Jones caught his balance and turned. There in the doorway, watching with a curious air of detached amusement, was the Commie, the same man who had helped him bomb the fire with chemical. But he was dressed in the heather brown uniform of a high rank Forest Service official.

Thurston was with him. And another man, a stranger.

Heasley was crowding his original advantage, swinging wild blows. Gimmick took them on hunched shoulders and for a time the two men stood chest to chest, slugging.

Twice Gimmick's knotted fist drove into the center of Heasley's smashed, bleeding face. The other was backing up. Gimmick caught a handful of his shirt and jacket and held him conveniently for a final blow to the face.

He shoved him back into his chair and turned on Milestein, swinging hard, open palms to the lawyer's face. He caught him as he tried to escape through the side door to the hangar. Milestein got free of his ruined coat and made a belly dive for protection under the desk.

There was silence except for the asthmatic breathing of Heasley, who cowered in his chair, looking at Gimmick with fearful expectation.

"Well," the Commie remarked in a dry voice, "might I inquire the reason for this little display of temper? Not," he hurriedly added, "that I disapprove. Lord no!"

Miss Clark had been standing out of the way, between the filing cabinet and wall.

"Mr. Littleby," she said, with astonishing composure, "Arthur—that is, Mr. Jones here—was merely showing these two that they were mistaken in considering him a stupid person. Have you met Mr. Jones? He's the sole owner of the patrol plane."

Gimmick had started sidling toward the door. They'd met, all right. And how!

Littleby's voice stopped him. "This is a bit confusing," he said. He came into the room, followed by Thurston and the stranger. Littleby motioned to the latter. "This is Mr. Breen."

"I know," Miss Clark nodded, somehow taking charge of things. "He was going to give Mr. Heasley a photographic contract. I expect you were going to put a stop to that because of those faked patrol trips. But you see, Mr. Jones had nothing to do with those. I can prove to you that he wasn't even here when those were made."

Sid Milestein poked his head out from under the desk. "I'll have the law on—"

Littleby frowned him to silence. "You two had better forget law," he advised coldly. "You might find yourselves facing the rather serious charge of attempting to steal from the federal government."

He turned on Gimmick. "Jones, d'you suppose you could do business with a dirty little penny-pinching runt? I believe that was the way you described me." He looked at Thurston, both of them trying to suppress their mirth.

"I'm sure he could," Miss Clark said promptly. "I'm familiar with the details and it just happens that I am not working now. Mr. Jones has had experience in aerial photography, Mr. Breen. We'll get in touch with—"

"But Miss Clark!" Gimmick wailed. "I can't pay you anything! I'm busted! I'm—"

"That's quite all right," Miss Clark said primly. "I'll work for"— she darted a quick, vindictive glance at the shyster —"I'll work for a *quid pro quo,* Mr. Jones."

AUTHORITY

By R. W. DALY

WHICH IS LESSON NO. 5 IN THE MARTIAL EDUCATION OF LIEUTENANT PETER DICKOE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MARINES

He never knew who struck him, but a marlinspike persuaded him to stop fretting about the mutiny and take a short rest.

PETER thought that Second Lieutenant Carston was exceeding his authority, but due to the absence of the senior officers, Carston was master of the ship, and Peter, as commander of marines, was subject to his will. Therefore, if Carston wished to flog a man, it was Peter's duty to station the marines at the quarterdeck rail above the ship's waist and see that the discipline was enforced.

Looking down into the hollow cube cut in the spardeck of H. M. S. *Fidelité*, Peter faced a gathering of more than five hundred seamen who were patently disapproving of Carston's action, and none more so than the wretched individual triced up to a grating, bare back exposed to the ministrations of a cat o' nine tails.

"Very well, Boatswain," Carston said disdainfully, "proceed to your duty."

The boatswain nodded to his mates, one of whom took a cat out of a green plush sack, and walked to a position beside and behind the seaman who had unfortunately incurred Carston's displeasure by slackness in coiling a rope. The audience stoically observed the mate's measuring of the distance, and heard without visible emotion the first dull report of flesh meeting leather. The lash came reluctantly away from a writhing torso, which looked as though it had been slashed with a rake.

On the seventh blow, the prisoner howled aloud, consigning Carston's soul to Hell, which Carston did not take as a compliment, doubling the punishment. The crew hearing the summary verdict murmured angrily. The man was being beaten for a triviality, and a wholesome resentment was all that Carston could reasonably expect, presupposing that Carston was possessed of reason.

"Mr. Dickoe!" he called, glancing up at Peter.

Peter understood. "Ready, arms!" he ordered his marines. As musket butts swung up from the deck, he wondered if he could really fire into the waist. The volley would undoubtedly cut down thirty men, none of whom had wanted to be in the navy, where a man could be physically broken at the caprice of an officer, who, alone, could alleviate the horrible living conditions necessitated by the cramping of people in a man-of-war. He realized that the primary function of marines was to keep order on a ship and prevent or suppress mutinies, but the ethics of killing his own countrymen who had justifiable complaints seemed slightly shadowy to him, and he prayed that he would never have to choose between authority and humanity.

The crew, cowed by the leveled muskets of the marines, fell silent in all except their eyes, where primitive hatred and savagery longed for Carston's slender, fastidiously stocked throat. The punishment hammered to its brutal end, when the prisoner was cut down from his bonds and turned over to the care of the surgeon, after buckets of salt water had washed away the blood from his welted, liver-colored back.

Carston turned to the sullen crew. There was a smile at the corners of his lips, the smile of an individual who has command of a situation and means to relish the last ounce of enjoyment in it. "Ship's company," he bawled to the boatswain, "dismiss!"

PETER waited until the last sailor had returned to his duty, before disbanding his marines. His job completed, he went below to the wardroom, where he found Carston enjoying a bottle of wine. Peter sat down, ordered some Madeira from the mess attendant so that he could have a few moments private conversation.

"See here, Carston," he said unceremoniously, "ye're going too far."

"My dear fellow," Carston drawled languidly. "I don't know what you mean."

"You know what I mean," Peter said grimly. "That's the sixth flogging you've had since Captain Neely went up to London."

"Mr. Dickoe," Carston said stiffly, "I'd like to remind you that I'm in command of this ship until the captain returns."

"Listen," Peter replied, "if Captain Neely can get along without flogging, I fail to see why an upstart like you should have the presumption to step out of his place to ruin a crew."

"Your language is a bit unwarranted, Mr. Dickoe."

"Any time ye'd care to trade lead, I'm your man, Mr. Carston," Peter retorted.

The second lieutenant colored and took a drink. "You must admit the people have been slack."

"Nonsense," Peter denied flatly. "You just don't know how to handle them."

"Mr. Dickoe!" Carston exclaimed hotly, clapping a hand onto the table.

The mess attendant appeared with Peter's wine and, since officers must never quarrel in front of their inferiors, they held their tongues. After finishing a couple of glasses, Peter went topside, and over to the rail where he could think in peace.

"Can't you go home, sir?" someone asked him.

Astonished, Peter turned to see Sergeant Anderson deferentially standing at his elbow. He was unable to believe that the veteran had spoken to him. In the Royal Navy, a marine enlisted man did not ordinarily approach an officer with such a comradely question. "What did you say?" he demanded.

H. M. S. *Fidelité* rode at anchor in the great harbor of Spithead, one small ship-of-the-line in the company of fifteen gigantic sisters. A soft April wind blew down from Hampshire across the Isle of Wight, and fluttered the flags

and pendants hanging from the spars. Sergeant Anderson was embarrassed. "I was wondering, sir," he said, "if the Lieutenant wouldn't find it convenient to visit his family. I'm sure he hasn't seen them for several years."

Peter clasped his hands behind his back. "Decent of you to concern yourself with my affairs, Anderson," he remarked caustically.

The sarcasm wasn't lost on the old marine, who stood as straight as the bayonet at his side. "Sorry, sir," he said, saluted, wheeled, and went down to the waist of the ship.

Puzzled, Peter stood staring across at the mighty hundred-gun *Queen Charlotte*. Even if he could, this was no time for him to dream of leaving the ship. Major Marlow was in London with the captain and first lieutenant, getting their orders, and only five of the officers had not availed themselves of the opportunity to spend a few weeks ashore, so that the *Fidelité* had to get along with Peter, two lieutenants and two midshipmen, barely enough to officer the watches. Peter hadn't meant to hurt Anderson's feelings, but the marine had touched him on a sensitive sore. He would have enjoyed some days at liberty, yet, with the major gone, he had to remain aboard.

Wondering what the sergeant had been implying, Peter suddenly grasped the import of the incident. "Good lord," he muttered, "not that!" Walking forward to the quarterdeck rail, he thoughtfully studied the seamen at their leisure sports, and the more he watched them at their boisterous boxing, wrestling and cross-sticks, the more he was convinced that his suspicions were correct. From the bottom of his heart, he thanked Anderson.

Mulling the matter thoroughly, he decided to write the port commissioner. His letter completed, he debated with himself the advisability of having Carston endorse it, and preferred instead to post security from his own purse. He sent Sergeant Anderson ashore with the message, instructing him to return immediately. He desired secrecy, in the event he might be wrong. If word reached Carston, and nothing happened, Peter knew he would never hear the end of it. The port commissioner was a friend of his father, and he placed hope upon his name to have his request complied with discreetly.

HE SPENT the afternoon in his cabin, the gunport of which bore directly on the docks of the harbor. Towards evening, he was tremendously relieved to notice a longboat pulling towards the *Fidelité*. He looked around his cabin, which was principally occupied by an eighteen-pounder gun. Grinning in inspiration, he patted its breech, and went up on deck.

Grandly pacing the starboard side, Carston condescended to permit Peter to have two small clothes-chests hauled on board ship and carried below to his quarters. Peter casually followed the seamen down the hatchways, and had the squat trunks stored beneath his hammock.

"Mighty heavy, sir," one of the seamen grunted, mopping his forehead.

"You need exercise," Peter replied, bent down, and easily lifted one of the trunks onto his seachest. Admiring his strength, the seamen were willing to take the coppers he offered them, and politely left him to himself.

Fifteen minutes later, Peter was satisfied, and sat down to recover his breath. Looking around his tiny quarters, he smiled happily. If he was wrong, no one would be the wiser; if he was right, something might be done. Getting up, he carefully hung a brace of pistols on pegs above his hammock, ready to his hand, and went to the wardroom for supper.

The meal was as cordial as it could be with Carston's refusal to speak to him, and Peter had to devote his conversation to Lieutenant Morris, a sandy-haired, muscular Scotsman, who had a fierce love for the sea and an equal contempt for the French. The evening passed in a pleasant discussion of the merits of a republican form of governmen as opposed to the monarchical form, and the gentlemen in Paris fared rather badly.

Before going to bed, Peter visited the marines' quarters which were on the

gundeck directly below the officers' cabins on the second deck. Anderson was asleep and his forty men were in varying degrees of somnolence. Peter visited the petty officer's forecastle and roused the armorer for a few minutes' work, and finally staggered back to a well-earned rest, without disturbing a single one of the seamen who grunted through the night in the spacious accommodations of fourteen inches turning space.

THE next morning was Easter Sunday. There were a few black scuds of clouds in the sunny sky, and Peter was surprised to find that Carston was jovially comradely, coming to him with the information that Admiral Gardner's squadron was going to sail before divine services were held.

"Any idea when and where we're going?" Peter inquired.

Carston shook his head. "None," he said, and paused. Obviously, he wished to continue, but was embarrassed for words. "D'ye really think I've been too harsh?" he finally managed to ask. There was a tremor of worry in his voice.

"I do," Peter said flatly, and nodded towards the seamen on the quarterdeck, who were intently watching the *Royal Sovereign*, Gardner's flagship. The people weren't ordinarily so deeply interested in the sailing of a squadron, and he did not deem the boredom of inactivity in port to be sufficient explanation for their attitude of expectancy. When the signals mounted to the *Royal Sovereign's* halyards, an excited babble animated the watching crew of the *Fidelité*.

Peter sensed that something was wrong, and quietly started on his way to summon Anderson and call out the marines, when he was interrupted by the explosion of the Great Mutiny of Spithead. The crews of every battleship in the harbor spontaneously sprang into the rigging and gave three thunderous cheers, that reverberated menacingly through the harbor.

Peter ran towards the afterhatch and scrambled down the companionway. The small arms rack before the marines' quarters was emptied of firearms. The mutineers had foresightedly done their work. Bursting into the marines' section of the gundeck, he was chagrined to find them absent, hastened out of the room, peered down the length of the ship, and discovered them huddled in the darkness forward. Making his way along the gundeck, he was halted by a group of armed seamen.

"Ye go no further, Mr. Dickoe," one of them said respectfully, yet warningly.

He saw that his marines were pathetically destitute of weapons and was disgusted with Anderson to think that they had been so easily overwhelmed. "Y' know what ye're doing, I presume," he commented calmly.

"We do, sir," a seaman answered earnestly. "Please go up on deck. We don't have a grudge against you, Mr. Dickoe."

"Get out of my way," Peter said, drawing his small sword, and boldly stepped forward. He never knew who struck him, but a marlinspike unobtrusively persuaded him to stop fretting about the mutiny and take a short rest.

He recovered consciousness in his own hammock. Groaning, he raised himself to a sitting position, slinging his legs over the side of the canvas. His head felt as though it had been cleft by an axe. He blearily looked around his room. Every small arm was gone except his dress sword. Painfully, he dropped to his feet. His knees buckled and he slumped against his seachest.

The sound of his fall brought a heavy-shouldered seaman into the cabin, who helped him to sit on the trunk and solicitously asked: "Are ye hurt bad, sir?"

Peter tried to focus on the fellow's honest, concerned face, and grunted: "What the devil's happening?"

"We're going to get our rights, sir," the seaman answered, genuinely relieved that Peter had revived. He was one of the most popular officers on the *Fidelité*, loved as well as a man can be by his fellowmen. "Here, sir," the seaman said, "take this." He held out the sailor's universal remedy for any injury.

Blindly, Peter swallowed the tot of rum. The raw spirits shocked him into clarity. "So, ye're going to get y'r rights."

He said, "Catch!" and flipped a small pistol into the lieutenant's eager hands.

he gasped. "Ye pick a splendid time to make your demands. Your country's at war with France, Spain and Holland, y' know."

"Yes, sir," the seaman said doggedly. "But we want what's comin' to us."

"In the meantime, I suppose I'm a prisoner."

The seaman shook his head. "No, sir," he said emphatically. "You and Lieutenant Morris have the freedom of the ship. We voted it."

Peter laughed. "Demmed generous of the men," he said. "I'm permitted the liberty of the ship!" He thought of the ironic situation that had descended upon England as punishment for her overweening pride in her navy. England, who had put all trust in a tool, which, at the moment of her vital necessity, had blunted in her hand as false metal crumples against steel. He got to his feet; he was going on deck; he'd see what could be done about the *Fidelité*.

The seaman caught him as he collapsed, hoisted him into his hammock, and sent for the surgeon.

FOR nearly a month, Peter rough-and-tumbled with concussion of the brain, and ultimately made a liar out of the surgeon by opening his eyes one sunshiny afternoon. Comprehending what had transpired, he tottered into the wardroom, where his appearance startled Lieutenant Morris into one of his rare oaths.

"I'll be damned for a landsman!" Morris roared. "It's Dickoe!"

Carston was gloomily seated by a decanter. He had apparently sought to obliterate his surroundings by alcohol and been moderately successful. He apparently didn't notice Peter's entrance, even when that battered officer wished him good day.

"Don't mind him," Morris said. "He doesn't feel well."

The midshipmen, with the resiliency of youth, were cursing lustily over a game of loo. Their predicament didn't cause them too much mental discomfort, midshipmen being notoriously indisposed to serious thinking.

"Well," Peter remarked, taking a chair. "Tell me the news."

Morris smoked a pipe. "Ye've missed a fine show," he said. "The people have a congress on board the *Charlotte*, they've sent a petition to Parliament, a ton of gold lace has come down to negotiate with 'em, and it looks like a warm summer."

"How did they ever organize such a wide-spread rebellion?"

"It's your privilege to guess," Morris replied. "I can't. We'll leave that to the historians."

"Anyone hurt?"

Morris jerked his head. "Carston lost his temper the other day and shot one of the delegates. If the lad dies, the people intend to try him for murder. And it looks as though said laddie is going to resign the service."

"My men?"

"The loyal members of your marines are confined to quarters. A half-dozen deserted to the mutineers. Don't blame y'rself, Dickoe—you couldn't have stopped 'em."

Peter smiled. "So the people will try Carston, eh? That should be amusing. Are we invited?"

"Shut up, blast you!" Carston fumed, thereby acknowledging Peter's presence.

"Of course," Peter continued, ignoring the outburst, "we really shouldn't permit such an unorthodox trial to take place."

"Of course not," Morris agreed. "You stop it."

"All right," said Peter. "I will."

Morris grunted. "The odds are precisely five hundred to one."

Peter shook his head. "More like thirteen to one," he replied enigmatically, and left the wardroom.

He found a strong guard before the imprisoned marines. The sailor in command of the group respectfully touched his cap.

"I wish to see my men," Peter said. "Open up."

"I'm sorry, sir," the seaman said. "Orders."

"Tut," Peter grinned. "Look at me," he said, pointing to his bandaged head. "What harm could I do you?"

"Let him in, Jack," another sailor interjected. "He can't do nothin'."

Jack muttered a sullen compliance, unbarred and unlocked the door, and let Peter pass through the bulkhead into the midst of his disconsolate marines. The door slammed shut. The prisoners rose to attention, sheepishly staring into the wall. "Anderson, dear old Anderson," Peter said banteringly. "How have you been?"

"First rate, sir," Anderson replied. "Considering."

"Food and water?"

"Enough, sir."

Peter continued his examination into the condition of his men, perceived that their sole ailment was humiliation, and left them after a few private words with the sergeant. "Thanks, Jack," he said cordially as the seaman secured the bulkhead door again.

"That's all right, sir," Jack said uncomfortably. Not even a month of mutiny could shake off the habit of years. He was accustomed to obeying officers, not granting them favors.

Regaining the wardroom, Peter sat down beside Morris. After five minutes, Morris said, "We'd better leave him out of it, Dickoe," and indicated Carston.

"Right," Peter replied. "You and I."

"Splendid," Morris said. "Let's break up the youngster's game, shall we?"

THE two midshipmen were obliged to square off their loo, until suppertime gave all the officers a more diverting occupation. The meal finished, they returned to the card game until close to ten o'clock, when Peter diffidently went over to his cabin. Morris joined him as soon as he could do so without arousing the suspicions of the sentries posted in front of the wardroom to keep Carston under surveillance.

Shoving Peter's heavy seachest against the door to guard against a surprise, Morris said hurriedly: "Where are they?"

"Guess," Peter replied.

"Damn it!" Morris exclaimed, exasperated into his second malediction of the evening. "Be serious!"

Peter went to his eighteen-pounder roommate, wedged himself past the gun-carriage to the muzzle of the cannon, and plucked out the tompion. A second later, he said, "Catch!" and flipped a small pistol into the naval lieutenant's eager hands.

"Mr. Dickoe," Morris said, "I bow down and adore you. I confess I thought you were a little crazy from the blow on your head. About how many have you there?"

"Fifty," Peter answered, "with powder and ball. I got the ammunition from the armorer. I was sure the people wouldn't notice that. Since the ship's pistols are counted, though, I couldn't ask for them."

"How'd y' get 'em aboard?"

"The port commissioner sent 'em to me in those trunks," Peter explained. "I later filled them as well as I could with clothes and books."

"Let's set about it, then," Morris said anxiously, and strode to the gunport.

When Peter went to sleep that evening, he did so content in the knowledge that forty marines underneath his cabin had successfully taken in the bundles of pistols and ammunition which he had dropped down the tumblehome to them by means of a light card. The situation didn't look as hopeless as it had. The moment the seamen assembled to listen to their delegates, Peter and Morris would get the marines out.

Realizing Peter's haste to get things done, the fates expedited matters by taking away during the night the life of the seaman who had been shot by Car-

ston. Peter was aroused by the grim roll of the death march summoning all hands to the ship's waist. He leaped from his hammock, prepared to go to Morris's cabin, and was spared the effort by that gentleman's appearance.

"We've got our chance," Peter said, when Morris told him the cause of the drumming.

Morris nodded. "Up anchor," he said, and subscribed heartily to Peter's plan of action.

Four seamen morosely stood in front of the marines' quarters, muttering against the lot that had deprived them of the unheard-of joy of witnessing the courtmartial of an officer by his crew. They were dulled by their misfortune, and did not observe anything amiss about the fact that Lieutenants Morris and Dickoe were wearing their cloaks, despite the warmth of a May morning.

"Fine day," Peter said pleasantly to them. They bent their heads in reply, and were miserably disconcerted when each of the officers capably produced a pair of pistols from under his cloak. Disarming them in an instant, Peter worked at the door to get it open, while Morris kept their captives quiet with a promise to drill the first man to open his mouth.

SECOND LIEUTENANT Anthony Carston of H. M. S. *Fidelité* knew that the procedure was deucedly wrong, but did not wish to correct his board of a dozen seamen on the proper method of conducting the trial of an officer. The seamen enthusiastically improvised, and he rightly felt that they would resent suggestions from him. He saw the hostility in every eye that rested on him, and did not like it. He was condemned before he was tried.

It did not help his alcoholic peace of mind to see his two fellow lieutenants calmly appear at the rail of the deserted quarterdeck, but their presence helped him to stiffen his jaw, and meet his enemies coolly.

The evidence was brief and briefly given, with many murmurs of approval or disapproval from the audience, who, gathered in the waist as they had been gathered so often before the mutiny, were for once able to listen to a determination of punishment without fearing that their turn would inexorably be next.

From time to time, Carston's eye rose to a hangman's noose sinisterly dangling from a mizzen yardarm. His courage impressed his prosecutors, while the sailor appointed to his defense was almost eloquent on the propriety of Carston's defending his command against mutiny, until the Board drily reminded the enthusiast that they considered the culprit to be a murderer.

"D'ye think he's afraid?" Morris asked.

Peter didn't. "Let's get this over with," he suggested.

"No," Morris replied. "Let's see what they do."

The verdict was foregone, the sentence was unexpected. Reached after an acrimonious consultation of a minute, the president announced the punishment. "It is the decision of this court that you be given five hundred lashes, sentence to be executed in accordance with the defendant's physical condition."

Carston paled. That would drag out for more than a week, if his frail body could survive that much punishment. To be degraded day after day, to be flogged into a stupor, to be broken in body and spirit, was more than Carston could contemplate. He rose. "I deny the authority of this court," he said with dignity.

The assemblage of seamen laughed until they failed to see the point of their merriment. "Carston," the president then said, "you are hardly the person to discuss usurpation of authority. You were a lieutenant, yet by the Articles of War only a captain may have a man flogged. We, sitting as a civil court, have found you guilty of murder, extenuated solely by the conditions which surrounded the crime. Inasmuch, however, as you are responsible for the mutiny on board the *Fidelité*, we allow extenuation only to commute the punishment from death. We probably would have tried to remain loyal despite our other grievances. You, and you alone goaded us into rebellion." He stopped.

"Boatswain! Seize up the prisoner!"

Peter could not countenance an undermining of discipline by men who would repent their action when the Lords of the Admiralty finally concerted the force to suppress the Spithead revolt. "Mr. President!" he shouted compellingly.

Attention momentarily deserted the struggling Carston and rested upon the pair of lieutenants on the quarterdeck.

"Yes?" the president called inquiringly.

"Your proceeding is irregular," Peter replied.

"Mr. Dickoe," said the president sternly, "please don't interfere. This is our affair."

"But your proceeding is irregular," Peter insisted, throwing back his cloak and lifting his pistols. "You've neglected to have the marines on the quarterdeck. Like this." He waved his hand, and forty men determined to retrieve their forfeited reputation eagerly lifted themselves from the concealment of the deck, and formed their line at the rail.

Peter Dickoe never did discover if he would fire into his own people, for the nonplused seamen dropped their weapons in stupefaction. The mutiny aboard His Majesty's Ship *Fidelité* was over, almost as a signal gun from the *Queen Charlotte* announced that the Channel Fleet had come to an agreement with the Admiralty and was returning to its duty.

The courtmartial that finally dismissed Carston from the service did so because he hadn't exerted enough authority to maintain his command.

THE CLOCK of the COWBOY

By S. OMAR BARKER

The Clock of the Cowboy—the stars overhead
Have wheeled o'er many an untented bed.
No two-dollar ticker, no clock in a tower—
The Big Dipper told every night-guard the hour
When he could go call out the next turn at guard,
And rest him awhile on a bed that was hard.
They tell it with glee how the tenderfoot learned
To tally the time as the Big Dipper turned
Its infinite wheel 'round the fixed Polar Star.
(You know how old cowhands with tenderfeet are!)
A calm night, a clear night, the herd bedded down,
They sent out the tenderfoot, fresh come from town,
To stand the first guard, and they showed him the light
Of a certain bright star in the canopied night.
"You stay with the herd on the first guard," they said,
"Till that twinkler sets, then come in to your bed."
The tenderfoot rode 'round the herd thinking how
He sure was a full-feathered cowpuncher now!
He rode and he rode. Nothing seemed to go wrong,
But his turn at the guard—well, it seemed mighty long.
He rode and he rode, rubbing sleep from his eyes.
He rode and he rode—until dawn pinked the skies.
He rode in to breakfast, plumb mad, you can bet.
"That star you all showed me, it never did set!"
"Well, thank God for that!" said the boss. "If it had,
I reckon the world would have ended, my lad!
But now you have learned what all cowhands must know:
There is only one star in the heavenly show
That a feller can tie to, down here on the groun'—
Our old friend, the North Star, that never goes down!"

It exploded amongst us like a dozen wild-cats—and you bet we jumped for the rigging!

GLOVE-HANDED

By JOHN RUSSELL

WE CALLED him Mother Ferdy. He was our moth-man on the Quidley-Beaks Scientific Expedition, you see. That's the sort of pun the limeys always like to make. His business was collecting moths, and just as scientific as anybody's on board the *Questor*. But he had such a simple, homely face, and such a way of balancing his big, awkward body like some fat house-wife going around her kitchen with gloves on her hands. Because he always did wear gloves. I guess we thought he ought to wear a nice, moth-

erly apron, too. I guess we sometimes almost forgot that Mother Ferdy was a man at all.

I'm sure Miss Kinney did, though she should have known better. She was a way-up scientist herself, like all the rest of the staff—else she never would have been the only woman with the *Questor* Expedition. We were all hand-picked—the whole twenty-some-odd of us, crew and all. Even me.

Well, I won't say I was rightly *hand*-picked. I'm a Deer Island boy myself, from the State of Maine, and I'd come over on a rich man's yacht for racing against the Royal Yacht Squadron at Cowes. I'd got paid off there—or, to tell the truth, I paid myself off after a little argument with our bosun who told me I was no seaman. Me, from Maine, where they grow the best in the world! I took my discharge right there off the end of his ugly nose and walked ashore with my ditty-bag and no wages in my pocket, but thinking no small beer of myself, as the limeys say.

NOW right in the next slip inshore of us there laid a yacht, and a honey. Call her about 400 tons, going 450, maybe—not a racing-rig, but the stanchest little sea-fighting three-masted schooner I'd ever put eyes on. She looked so trig, like one of those models my old Uncle Jim used to build in a bottle. She was setting high, unballasted, and there was a light and an open porthole aft. I just couldn't help it, I stuck my head inside—anybody would. But that was poor judgment on my part, because just then I got the darndest rap across the seat of my pants.

I pulled out quick, you bet, thinking it would be the bosun chasing me up. But it was only a chirky little old man in sea-going jacket and cap, with a cane in his hand. "What're you makin' there, muh lad?" he says, very sharp and limey.

"I was only looking," I said, and I didn't say "sir," either. Anywhere at home I would, of course, to anyone older than me. But you mustn't say "sir" like that to a limey—they don't get you right.

"You're an Ameddican," he says.

"Amurrican," I says, pretty broad.

He asked my rating, and I told him I was just now free on the dock-side. "A seaman?" he says. "Deck-hand, sir," I says, because it was true I hadn't my A.B. And this time I did say "sir," because he spoke like a shipmaster, and that made all the difference, you understand. He gives me a quick look-over, and then he asks me what did I happen to spy when I stuck my head inside his craft, so free.

Well, I'd been two years to high school, in Maine, and I wasn't a-feared to speak up. I told him he seemed to have a darned funny after cabin—more like a work-shop, or a laboratory. He chuckled—anything else? Well, I said I didn't like his rig for rudder lines. They should-a been wire cable with clove hooks instead of a chain reeve—less noise.

So the answer to all this was that I signed up with him next day, by way of the American Consulate over to Southampton to show my papers. Sir Quidley-Beaks—he was the little man who wore the cane because of a game leg—all he said was: "I'll have none but experts on board the *Questor*. If it's only the ship's boy, b'gad!"

And b'gosh he did have them, too. He was making up his famous expedition to the Galapagos Islands, you see. He'd hired six specialists for the cruise, everybody that knew the most in the world about birds and beasts and bugs, and such. That was how he came to bring Miss Kinney along. I guess he didn't want her much, she was too darn good-looking for safety. But she was an F.R.S. and a D.Sc. and the very latest crack on butterflies. And if there was anything Sir Quidley was nuts about, it was butterflies.

Those and snakes. He was nuts about snakes, too. And that was why he brought Mr. Hamelton Count to be his—wait a minute—his herpetologist and his helminthologist, meaning reptiles and worms. Which Mr. Hamelton Count surely was, and slim and handsome and very limey, with a snake-long list of letters after his name, and he could smile like one himself. The other experts, besides me, were a botanist and an ichthyologist and an ornithologist—

there, and I'm glad I got them spelled out right. All except this other fellow I'm telling about—this big, oversized clumsy guy we named Mother Ferdy.

Him, he owned no letter after his name at all, and not much of anything else. He was only what they call a science student. But it seems he had wrote an essay for a prize contest on moths which had knocked all the professors on their ears. And that made him the way-uppest—wait till I check it—the very best heterocerist, meaning moth-man, that Sir Quidley-Beaks could find ready to hire.

SO THERE you have the complete outfit for the start of our cruise on the *Questor*. More than you could say of Mother Ferdy himself, poor chap, when he joined up for duty, the afternoon we sailed from Southampton. It was a day with a cold shoot of rain, the kind you'd get even on the Penobscot in late September and made me almost homesick. And Ferdy, he looked like a skinned polar bear when he came bulging up the plank in a frayed duck suit plastered wet upon him, and an old straw hat.

"Mr. Ferdinand Simms, is it?" says Sir Quidley. "Good gad, man," he says, "is this all the equipment you're bringing along?" What he meant was the little canvas sack the big lubber carried, and for a fact held everything he owned in the world, I reckon. But what he stared at was the pair of hands on the man, covered with a pair of sopping gloves. You bet one thing that Ferdy did own by nature was likely the two biggest paws ever hung onto any two-legged creature. And with those gloves on—darn me if he scarcely seemed like anything rightly human!

Yet he was plenty human, it struck me, the way he grinned from his fat, cheerful, streaming face.

"Oh, thankee, yes. That's quite all right. I've got a change with me, sir!" He took Sir Quidley's puny fist in his own as if it had been swallowed in a muff. And he did say "sir," too. But the way he said it, he was only speaking —by my notion—as anybody naturally should to his boss, his ship-owner.

And following that up: you know something? When he showed on deck again all the "change" he had made, he had shifted his wet cotton gloves for dry ones of yellow leather. If that wasn't the blamedest!

By this time the *Questor* was bowling down The Solent with an easy wind. We had an awning stretched by the small house aft, and there we began serving tea, if you please. Not me, of course, but the staff. And there Ferdy came up to be introduced to the rest of these scientists. Nice, high-class appearing gents, all right—and they all shook hands with Ferdy. All except Mr. Hamelton Count.

There was a snaky little curl to that gentleman's lip as he stood so tall and handsome, looking the big lump over. "Haw. Why hello, hello!" he drawls. "Well, well. It *is* Ferdy Simms, isn't it? I wondered when I heard the name. Why, I remember you—in the la*bora*t'ry at the Royal College," he says.

Ferdy only nodded. "That's right."

"Why, you were my washer-up!"

"Yes, it's true. Quite."

"And now you're a heterocerist—fancy that! Very interesting. Very appropriate, too. Such a safe, such a harmless occupation, you know—dealing with moths. I remember how you used to jump and flinch whenever a mouse escaped in the lab, or somebody broke a bottle under your feet!" His tone of voice wasn't very nice. You could see he was out to ride the lummox, meaning to walk on him, though smiling all the while as if it was only a cheery joke. "Imagine," he says to the others. "Used to be my bottle-boy, and here, by Jove, he's a bally qualified heter-aws-erist!"

Well, Ferdy had gone pretty pink under this sort of treatment. But he managed to get up a grin on that broad, simple-minded mug of his. "Yes," he gave out at last, "I remember. And I remember you used to break a lot of bottles, too, Mr. Count!"

SOMEHOW, in some British way I couldn't exactly get, it must have been a fairish good come-back, for it eased the laugh around onto Mr. Count himself

a bit. And I noticed how Ferdy never offered him his hand, and never "sirred" him, nor any of the others for that matter. That was one thing I noticed. And the next was when he turned to take his tea-cup, and the minute his eyes first lit on Miss Kinney.

Boy! That certainly was a cutter for Ferdy!

I was minded of something I saw one day when I went gamming on board a sword-fishing schooner that ventured once up our way, off Isle au Haut—off the coast of Maine, you know. I climbed into the pulpit, where the harpooner stands, over the bow. And whilst we looked down through the crisping blue water, of a sudden here comes a strong, dim shape drifting by just under us. Before I could wink, the harpoon-man let go like a streak and socked the grains right to it. "Got him where he lives this time, John!" he says, casting loose the marker keg. And I could see that fine, free, powerful thing give off one queer electric shudder, like—well, it struck for its life, sure enough.

If you'll believe me, something like that must have happened to our latest recruit first time he met our lady scientist on the *Questor*. "Miss Kinney, let me present Mr. Simms, late of the South Kensington Museum. Otherwise known as Moth-er Ferdy," says Mr. Count, in that fun-fashion of his which wasn't funning at all.

Her—well, she was kind, and very lovely, and sort of proud, too—which she had a right to be, being on her own amongst all us men-folks. She said some friendly word as she handed Ferdy his tea ration.

"Oh, yes—thankee. How d'you do, ma'am?" he stutters. And blame if he didn't spill cup and all on the deck—*bang*—right in front of her. And then he had to go scrabbling after the pieces, like an old walrus, which made him look foolish. And I seen Mr. Count give him a private boot, which made him squeal, like. And of course Mr. Count was right there with the laugh again—you can bet on that.

Now, you know how it is with anybody getting off on the wrong foot in a new crowd—it's tough. And I'll say it's special tough amongst the limeys. Because whenever they think they've scared up a joke—why, they follow it like a fox-hunt! They done it with me, too, for saying "I guess," and such. Doggone, they like to rid the pants off'n me, always "guessing" at me. And there's plenty good British writers do the same in print, and think they're talking the language, and think it's funny. They can't help it, I guess.

Just so with Ferdy. Once the people on the *Questor* took a notion there was something silly and odd about him, that he was sort of an old woman, and kind of cowardly—which was what Mr. Count meant from the start—why, that was the place they put him and the way they treated him. Me, I couldn't see anything laughable about him. Except maybe this idea of his of always wearing gloves. Certainly, he always did wear them. He must have had a dozen different pairs in his little kit, which must have been mostly nothing else but—all kinds from woolen mitts to cowboy gauntlets, and cotton and thread, and even a pair of silk ones he would put on for meals. But if it made me wonder, myself, why I was always minded to remember my old Uncle Jim.

My old Uncle Jim, home in Maine, he used to go with ear-flaps. It's a fact, summer or winter he used to wear his old fur cap with the ear-flaps down. He said his ears had been so bad frost-bit he had no comfort without them, which naturally made him hard of hearing, he said. Well, come to find out, Uncle Jim hadn't hardly any hearing left at all. So his ear-flaps were just a crafty means of covering up his failings and not telling, you see.

SEEMED to me, it might be something like that about Ferdy. I guess the others thought the same, only they thought it must be something shameful he had to hide. Me, I only felt sorry for him. Because he had fallen so hopelessly in love with Miss Kinney, at sight, and anybody could tell he had no more chance than a rabbit. Mr. Count had certainly settled his hash, thereabouts. And why Mr. Count should have done

so, I couldn't for the life of me understand. It was evident Mr. Count meant to get Miss Kinney for himself, but why he should be so blame anxious to put a poor gink like Ferdy out of the running, and keep him out, was surely a dark and bloody mystery. But he did, and he contrived to make Ferdy's life miserable right along.

Outside of all of which, we made a swell passage of it to the Panama Canal, and right through there, with our handy little auxiliary. That little *Questor,* she sailed keen as a knife, and could point better on close-and-by than anything outside of Maine, by jing. Hardly more than a month till we were down in the Pacific amongst those Galapagos Islands, and began the collecting of those curious natural history specimens which were what we had come for.

And I'll say they were curious. Case you don't know, in the Galapagos is never a sign of human life, but a lot of other kinds you'd never believe unless you should see them—and maybe not even then. As Sir Quidley-Beaks said—it's the throw-away box of this old world, where God dropped all His leavings when He got through with Creation—all the queer experiments, you might say.

On James Island, for instance, we saw one of those giant tortoises big as a smuggler's trunk that used to walk around with Noah, maybe. Mr. Count, he wanted to kill it—but Sir Quidley said no, he'd as soon kill Noah, or even the Piltdown man himself. Oh, we had plenty good scientific talk like that, and I was glad I'd been to school so I could savvy some of it. Like about those monstrous marine lizards that Mr. Charles Darwin found a century ago on Narborough Island. We found them too, and boy, if they ain't something! And I want to tell about the specimen we got. The name is—wait a minute—*Ambly Rhynchus.* That's right, because I wrote it down. And if you ever saw a meaner-looking piece of natural history, it must have been in a nightmare.

Mr. Hamelton Count brought it on board one afternoon whilst the *Questor* laid at anchor and most everybody else was setting peaceful around the afterdeck, writing up their notes, or such. Mr. Count brought his capture from the shore-boat alongside, all wrapped in ropes—and then he quietly let loose of it right underneath the chair of Ferdy Simms. Well, how would you like it yourself? The darn thing was all of three and a half feet long, *actual,* and it was just the image of a Gila monster—if you've ever seen a picture of them. It exploded amongst us like a dozen wildcats, and you bet we all jumped for the rigging, the whole lot of us—me too!

Ferdy's bounce landed him right on top of the scuttle to the companionway, and it was just that minute when Miss Kinney climbed up on deck. She took in the whole situation with one cool glance. Mr. Hamelton Count was laughing fit to kill. He'd already hauled in the beast by a loop on its tail and was holding it in his arms, easy as a tame kitten, except for its strength of wriggling. Miss Kinney stopped to pet it, like—though even she had to wince at the gosh-awful looks of it.

Then she gave Ferdy the go-over. "Didn't you know, Mr. Simms," she says, very proud and scornful of him, "didn't you know that these creatures are perfectly, utterly harmless?"

Poor Ferdy was shame-faced, but good-natured in his usual sappy way. "Y-yes, ma'am," he stutters. "Theoretically, yes. But it's like a lot of things get sprung on a man when he's not prepared for em."

"You mean," says Mr. Count, very sharp, "a man who is only a *theoretical* man. Haw! You didn't have the right gloves on, did you, Ferdy?"

Which goes to show you how this fellow, Mr. Count, could always find some smart way to pin it onto the big geezer and make him ridiculous—and how he continued to do so, right up to the end.

MEANWHILE, you understand, we were carrying on about our explorations from island to island. This being the true yarn of Mother Ferdy, and not a scientific treatise, I'll not try to list all the strange freaks of nature we gathered, for fear you'd think it was all make-believe—and everything else is in

our Expedition Report, anyhow. But the bug-man kept getting bugs most fearsome to behold, and the bird-man got birds like nothing on Nellie's hat, and I mind how the fish-man one day brought a crab on board that walked on stilts down the galley steps and like to scare our Chinee cook to death. And the others were catching a lot of other things, and Miss Kinney was catching butterflies. And boy, could that dame catch 'em!

So far, you had to hand it to her. She sure was aces on her job. Still and all, the time came when Sir Quidley-Beaks must have been sort of downright sorry he had ever hired her. Because just being there, she began to be a bother to every male man on that ship—everybody, that is, except Sir Quidley himself, as being too old, and me, having my own Polly Ann home in Maine to bother about. It was no fault of hers, understand—she couldn't help it. But just what I said before about her—she was too darn pretty for any public peace of mind!

Look. She would come back with the shore-party after a hard day's work in the jungle, and slip into her little swim suit and dive off the bowsprit, and come up like a silver-gilt flying-fish and dare anybody to tag her. And the whole blame bunch would pile after her—the science boys, that is, and any officers off watch. And the rest would stand and gawk, mostly, and Ferdy, too, you bet. He never swum himself. He'd stay with his gloves on, and the look on his big helpless mug was as if the soul of him was sick with longing. And specially whenever Mr. Count tagged her, as he sometimes could.

But what I'm getting at—all this social stuff made bad business for the intents and purposes of Sir Quidley-Beaks. He was a natural-born driver, that little man. Seems he had made his millions in boots-and-shoes, and when he took up science, it was just as serious with him as a factory, where everybody should mind his last and stick to his stitches. And when he saw the eyes and minds of people on his pay-roll drifting off to a lovely young lady, however able, why presently he gave out about it.

And when he did, he did, like the elephant.

"See here, lads and lasses," he says, one evening in the cabin. "We're running this show at a loss. We're behind our schedule," says he, (only he pronounced it 'shed-ule.') "It's getting time to start home, before we smash-up Flora and Fauna," (that's what he called our specimens) "in spring storms on the Atlantic. You, Ferdy," he says, suddenly, "I notice you've hardly begun to mount your moths as yet."

Ferdy turned the color of a tomato.

"I know," Sir Quidley goes on. "You have to do your collecting at night, which keeps you back. But you can take your trays and cases ashore with you, and get on with it. We've plenty of vapors and torches." (He meant gas-lamps and flashlights.) "And that goes for all of you," he added. "From now on, I expect everybody to work double tides!"

I'D BEEN serving near Ferdy, and I heard him give a groan, like. Afterwards when he sat alone in a corner, I couldn't keep from asking him the matter.

"It's come, John," he says, very low-voiced. "It's got up with me at last."

"What's got up with you?"

"My hands!" he says, and he sort of wrung them together, inside their mitts.

"What's wrong of your hands?"

He told me. "It's my weakness, John. All my life, it's been my great weakness—not wishing, not daring, to show these hands of mine. My terrible weakness!"

"Wait a minute," I says. "If it ain't too bad, I got something will cure it."

"A cure, John?"

"Sure. I got a box in my ditty-bag. A salve my old Uncle Jim used to use for his frost-bit ears. Made out of honey and milkweed and bitter sassafras root, like we grow in Maine," I says. "Cures anything!"

He gave a twisted kind of grin, spite of how he felt. "It wouldn't be bitter enough for me, my boy. Can I trust you—will you stick by me, John?"

"You betcha, pal," I says.

"I was beaten when I was a child, you

see. I had a cruel childhood. I was beaten on the hands. Terribly beaten. Always on the hands, John!" He went on in heavy whispers, as if they came dragged out of him. "I was a poor child, very poor. My hands were always big by my growth—too big, like excrescences. They beat my hands until I grew ashamed of them. I learned to hate my hands, John. And later, when I had to earn my living, I learned to cover them up, with rags, with gloves—anything. I couldn't stand to let anybody see the naked flesh of my hands. I could hardly bear to touch anything, except glove-handed. That's all, John. Do you see?"

I saw. By golly, I *did* see! And I guess I never felt sorrier for anybody in my life. I says: "What do you want me to do, Ferdy?"

He says, only: "Just stick along with me. I'll have to start mounting these moths when we make Gorgona Island. You come ashore to tend my lights and tarps, will you? That'll help me to 'get on,' as Sir Quidley wants."

Gorgona. We made it, all right, next day. This was going to be our last important collecting-stop before we turned back for Panama, and I do declare it's the last stop in the universe! Geographically, it's no part of the Galapagos at all. But it's like the worst place on a slumming trip. Once you go poking around that neighborhood you're bound to take it in. Gorgona Island lays off the coast of Ecuador, and they've no use for it, and you can have it—if you want it.

Such a darn *mean* place, is what I mean. All thorn, jungle, and poison swamp was what we had to cut through. Me, I stayed right with Ferdy, the way he had asked me, and helped carry his boxes and cases and such. And whilst the others went thrashing elsewhere on their own affairs, we two set up for our night's work together.

NOW, this was the lay-out: on a little inland hill we made a rough sort of clearing, like a shavy spot on a man's head. Here we set up a white tarp, or mothing-sheet, with poles and ropes to hold it spread high like the tilt to a tent. Next we lighted the lamps behind it—two big "vapors" of 400 candle-power each—to attract the moths flying upwind on that sluggish tropical air. So when darkness shut down we were squatting in a sort of tiny sculp walled around with bush except on this one side, which was bright as the screen of a motion-picture, you see. Soon enough the moths came, whopping and flopping up against the screen like soft, feathery bullets. And from that time on, Mother Ferdy was certainly the busy guy.

First, he had to gather and examine all the arrivals on this early flight which might likely be new or rare. These he would pop into his cyanide bottles to settle 'em. Then, soon as he got a chance he opened up his mounting trays, and his cotton-packed pill boxes where he kept his previous specimens. And then—well, then he took the gloves off his hands and sat down to do the job he was hired to do.

I was setting beside him, couple of feet away and back, and it was only me that looked up when the other people come crawling in about us. Miss Kinney, she hardly made a sound. Mr. Count was next to her, and Sir Quidley next, and some of the others. Now, all these folk were pretty good woods-Indians, you know, by the nature of their business—and if their notion was to creep and spy on Mother Ferdy, why they were doing it pretty good.

But they needn't have bothered. I guess the sky could have fallen on him and he wouldn't have noticed just then. Because Mother Ferdy Simms was being a heterocerist, all by himself—without gloves.

We sat and watched him. And I want to tell you it was something to watch. With those naked fingers of his—naked at last, huge like a giant's, yet soft and white as a baby's, which they had a right to be—he would choose out a specimen moth and handle it. He needed no forceps. He would pick it up and spread it so gently, and fix it with a mounting-pin and set it in its place inside the tray, delicate as a picture-artist putting in some hair-line touch of beauty, if you get how I mean. And they sure were beautiful, those moths. Not smart and

flaring like butterflies, you know, but all dull gold and dusky crimson, and purple, and smoky grays and silvers. And how fast he did it, without losing a fleck of dust from their lovely wings!

As I say, meanwhile all these science people were watching him, and I guess they hardly breathed. Not Miss Kinney, anyway. Her lips were sort of parted, and she stared at Mother Ferdy, and she stared at his handiwork as if she saw a revelation of something not believed—something strange, and wonderful, like a cluster of jewels in a cave. Nobody said a word till I heard Mr. Count give his drawl, hateful—envious, maybe.

"Haw! Well, well—look there. By Jove, the beggar actually *has* a pair of hands—ten fingers, too! And they don't seem—"

Sir Quidley stopped him. "Shut it!" he says.

"Hey? I was merely about to remark, there seems no actual disease, leprosy or such. But how do we know—"

"Shut up, Count!" says the boss, quiet but very stern. And he didn't call him "mister," either. "Quit persecuting the chap, d'you hear? You disgust me. I'm quite aware why you've been doing it—because he knew your record at the College, your secret drinking, and cheating on your lectures—when he had to save you himself, b'gad. You were afraid he might peach on you—so you've tried every trick to discredit him."

Boy, boy—was it a cutter for Mr. Hamelton Count, or wasn't it? You could just feel how our perky little owner had been saving up for this.

Mr. Count could only sputter: "If that big oaf has told you—if he'll face me. He's not man enough!"

"He's told me nothing," snaps Sir Quidley. "I knew all about it from the start myself. I took a chance on hiring you both. And by gad, if he's not the man betwixt you two, he's the gentleman. And a genius!" he adds. "Now dry up and mind your manners, you silly ass."

What—ho! as the limeys say. I always recall with great pleasure that moment when Sir Quidley-Beaks gave the snake-man his come-uppance. And more specially because that happened to be the very moment when the event befell—to speak by the book—the very special incident I've been leading up to. Call it Fate, or what you want, but listen, now . . . .

This was the way of it.

YOU'LL remember—we were all placed, or sitting or gathered like, along the near edge of this jungle clearing of ours, a little tramped-down saucer in the bush. Our lighted-up mothing-screen made it only about as clear, or dim, as twilight. Kind of spooky, too. Of course, we hadn't noticed anything over toward the opposite side—why should we? But all of a sudden, and all at the same time, we were aware—that was Sir Quidley's word—of something yonder. . . . You know, when you just naturally *do* know something? Yes. Well, we all knew that Something was there. *Yonder.*

Me, I was just tightening up one of the guy-ropes to the screen. Ferdy, he was just putting one of his trays aside. We all looked—and I can hardly tell you what we saw. It was Death. . . Right there, come from over the edge of the clearing, and right in front of Miss Kinney, was the Thing, coiled for striking. . .

It was handsome, too. It lay in a perfect black ring, like a hawser with the ends loose. Nor yet not all black, neither—only blackish, with grayish X-marks on it. And a queer fact, too—we knew, without any actual naming beforehand—only on the sight of it—that this was the deadliest living creature, the only snake that goes out to kill a human where it can, deliberate, and whose least bite will kill you on the spot. Everybody has heard of it, and besides, there it was—unlike anything else in the world. Of the two loose ends of its coil, the outside stood like a man's lifted forearm with a bent wrist—and the inside was tapered and erect in a thin, red vibrating spike.

I'm telling you now, of course, with the help of thoughts that came to me afterwards. At the time, I was just simply paralyzed with a great and terrible fear. The kind that strikes into your vitals—exactly like I saw that sword-

fish struck with the harpoon. I couldn't have moved if I had had any sense or wish of motion. Paralyzed, that's all. And so were all the rest. Except Ferdy Simms.

Mind you, we were none more than a few feet apart. The snake was almost in Miss Kinney's lap where she sat, white and frozen-white. Ferdy could have seen no more than the flash of her instant peril, the coiled-up reptile, its spike-tail whirring like a jet of flame, its head with beady eyes, weaving to strike. He had no other warning, and no weapon at all, you understand. But in that instant the big, clumsy man struck —quicker than the snake, the only way he could to save the girl. He threw his whole bulk right acrost her in one lunge, and grabbed the Thing in one hand. . .

That's what I mean: bare-handed. He took it around the neck. And he staggered to his feet, and he wrenched it up with him—and it was as tall as he was from the ground up!

Maybe you never saw a man take hold of a whipping, live-power electric cable, and wrastle it? Neither did I? But I know what it would look like, because I saw it done by Mother Ferdy Simms. Only the cable was a living, powerful, malignant whip of steel—bound to kill!

And Ferdy. With all his sensitive shrinking from the mere touch of anything on his naked skin—you remember? All that? Well, he stood there, and the sweat was pouring off him, but he held that Thing out with his stiff naked arm and his gripped naked hand.

Bare-handed he held it whilst its head and body and fangs were lashing at him. Might have seemed a sort of Whirling Dervish, the way he had to handle it. But, no. He was just making a finish fight for his life, and his love, and his manhood. To strangle it. Bare-handed —after all. No gloves!

WELL—I guess that's about all the story I can tell about the Quidley-Beaks Expedition, and the *Questor*, and Mr. Ferdinand Simms. Except maybe, how I helped to lay him out. That's right. That's what my old Uncle Jim always used to call it, back home in the State of Maine. Whenever a ceremony of any such sort happens on Deer Island, you know, why the neighbors are right there. They'll help to dress you up, or lay you out, if it takes their last doggone button. We did pretty good with our ship-mate.

The Chinee cook, for one. He was a generous soul, of plenty girth, and he chipped in first with a pair of clean duck pants. The mate was a big fellow, too, and he had a new over-all pea-jacket which we set up with bright brass trimmings, quite smart. Then Sir Quidley-Beaks, he took his Royal Yacht Squadron cap and ripped the leather band apart, and spliced it out with a piece of shoe-uppers. So when we had him all ready, by golly—he looked every inch of him just what he was. Fine and trig as the best of gentlemen—and a man.

Me, I was sorry because all I could give him was a box of my Uncle Jim's sassafras salve, cures anything. But I could have died when he put me up to be best man for him at the wedding! I thought Mr. Count ought to be that—seeing how hard he had worked the whole cruise, to qualify.

But the bridegroom picked me his own self—so I stood up with him in my Sunday suit, which I had bought in Augusta, Maine, and I had it in my ditty-bag. And Sir Quidley-Beaks, he gave the bride away. And I want to tell you, they made a handsome couple—Miss Kinney, looking sweet and fine and proud, leaning on the arm of the sort of a man she could tie to for life. You bet!

This happened in old Santa Ana Cathedral, in old Panama City, on our way home. And all I want to tell you is what Ferdy did as they started for the altar-rail. He fished in a pocket and brought out a pair of *white kid gloves!* He did. But he did not put them on.

And one other thing. When they came out on the church steps, afterwards. The word must have gone around town, there was a whole bunch of people who had heard the story. Limeys mostly, and I never knew they could cheer so loud.

We cheered. Not for Mother Simms, but for the name he would be known by—anywhere, any time, always. Not "Ferdy"—but "*Fer-de-lance!*" The name of the Thing he killed. "*Fer-de-lance!*"

FREEZE AND BE DAMNED!

The Brinkleys came on, the doctor a little in advance, with Bolo trailing uneasily at their heels.

WHEN the tragic news of the loss of the Brinkley Expedition reached the outside world, GLENN CONNOLLY, in Seattle, rushed north by plane. Aboard the ill-fated schooner, *Kathleen*, had been Doctor MARCUS BRINKLEY, noted authority on the Arctic, and his daughter, MARSHA—Connolly's fiancée. A faint SOS, sent by the *Kathleen's* skipper, JIM CRAIG, had been picked up and relayed to Nome — *Kathleen crushed in ice and breaking up off Point McPherson—will attempt make land immediately—little chance—no grub—one dog—*

Reaching Nome, Connolly learned that RAVENHILL, enigmatic British flyer-adventurer, had just returned from a daring flight to Point McPherson with the final grim chapter of the *Kathleen's* story. "Riv" had seen the splintered bow of the ship, talked with natives who said they had seen the whole party perish in trying to reach shore.

Connolly, refusing to abandon hope and suspecting foul play by Captain Craig, revealed that Brinkley, ostensibly in search of scientific data, had actually been on the trail of a platinum strike. In the bar of the Malemute Club, that night, Connolly tried to charter Ravenhill's plane for a rescue flight. Ravenhill refused but offered to fly Connolly south next day. Pretending to abandon the idea of a search, Connolly accepted.

After the take-off next morning, Ravenhill nonchalantly admitted conspiring with Craig to cheat Brinkley out of the platinum strike. Connolly, at pistol-point, forced the Englishman to turn the plane north. Riv, admiring Connolly's

By ROBERT ORMOND CASE

unshakable resolve to search for the Brinkleys, agreed to "try it once," and Connolly put away his automatic. They headed into the teeth of the wind.

Hundreds of miles to the north, Brinkley and Marsha, miraculously escaped from the ice pack—utterly exhausted, half-starving—had sought shelter in a rude cave. They had tied a note to Bolo, huge Mackenzie husky, headed him south towards the Endicott Mountains, beyond which lay the nearest settlement. With no food except moss-roots, their whereabouts unknown, they had little hope left.

Meanwhile, Ravenhill and Connolly, flying blind into the intensifying storm, made a forced landing on the ice of the Middle Fork. Ravenhill refused to continue farther. Nearby—in the cabin of a native, Klena George—they spent the night. Next morning, while Riv slept, Connolly set out alone on foot for Barter River, with twelve days' rations—his only weapon a knife of Klena George's. Ravenhill awoke, found Connolly gone, took off dangerously, and locating the tiny figure crawling below, dropped a note urging him to turn back. When Connolly signaled his refusal, Riv, with a dip of his wings, headed south.

That night, wrapped in tarp and blankets, Connolly survived the arctic cold. He awoke to the sound of a wolfish howl. It was Bolo, the husky. Connolly recalled Craig's SOS. "No grub. *One dog.*" He fed the starving Mackenzie, but failed to find the note under his collar. When he resumed his arduous journey, the husky fell in behind.

After three days of battling the full fury of the elements, Connolly had traversed the Pass and reached the tundra. On the fourth day, he had a moment's exultation. Far ahead, he heard the cannonading of the ice pack. He was within sight of his goal. Then, his strength gone, he collapsed in the snow. There the Brinkleys found him and took him to their rude shelter.

The grim meeting was not without its reward. Marsha and the doctor were

overjoyed to see him, although he had brought little more than two days' food supply—and his moral support. Dr. Brinkley told Connolly of staking a claim to the platinum strike before the wreck of the *Kathleen*. And Connolly described the conspiracy between Ravenhill and Craig.

The following day, the three set out, heading toward Barter River, eighty miles to the east—the Brinkleys weak from starvation, Connolly from the rigors of his trek north. Their supplies were pitifully inadequate. They moved wearily along the tundra, continued on to the beach. In a crevasse farther on, the doctor and Connolly—unknown to Marsha—came upon traces of a recent campfire. Dr. Brinkley suspected it might be the abandoned camp of the two breeds, Hempel and Sloane—and even, possibly, Craig—none of whom were known positively to have perished. This was an added peril. Survival was the only law here and, to desperate men, Connolly's meager provisions might be worth life itself.

The little party moved on through the cathedral hush of the "still cold." Marsha's condition had become the key factor in their long haul toward Barter River—and life. Growing steadily weaker, she clung to Connolly's arm. It was plain she could never make it on foot to Barter River.

The terrain was rougher to the eastward. Rounded swells in the tundra became ridges that pointed south toward the mountains. Headlands thrusting into the barrier reared slowly. Presently the mean level of the tundra was higher than the barrier itself, so that the immense sweep of the pack northward was fully in view.

PART III

SHORTLY after noon the doctor halted on the crest of a ridge. He explained their position. They were high above the beach. Travel was impossible down there. It was merely a series of debris-choked pockets with rough headlands between. Yet, if they stopped to eat, they must descend to the beach to build a fire. The mere descent and ascent would waste their dwindling strength. The question was—should they push on, without eating, and make early, permanent camp?

It was hard for Marsha. She clung to Connolly, and he put an arm about her to hold her up.

"Tell me the worst," she said. "How far?"

"To camp?"

"Yes. To where we begin to eat moss-roots again. Where Glenn goes on alone."

The doctor and Connolly looked at each other.

"I know," she said. "I can figure too, damn it. I've been figuring. It's the only way."

"Three hours more, perhaps," said the doctor.

Connolly could feel her body slump. "Just let me rest a little, then. Put down my pack for me to sit on, Glenn. Bless your heart, you've been carrying it for miles. . . Now unroll yours and wrap me in your blankets."

He did so and she sat swathed from head to toe, bowed forward against her knees. The doctor and Connolly stamped about, flailing their arms. The cold had a different quality than when the wind blew. There was no constant impact. But the moment motion ceased it crept in like liquid ice.

"No smoke ahead," the doctor told Connolly out of Marsha's hearing. "No fire. It looks like they've outrun us. Well, perhaps it's best."

The dog's uneasiness would have been funny if the moment itself had been less grim. It seemed to know that a halt at this temperature, without a fire, was entirely out of order, contrary to the laws of the trail. It ranged between them and Marsha, ears erect, whining in a throaty undertone.

"You're right, Bolo," the doctor soothed. "Easy, boy. It won't be long."

The light was at its best when they again got under way. It had the texture of winter twilight, with a few pale stars twinkling along the northern zenith. To the south the mountains were edged with silver. Visibility was unchanged. At a distance all was cloud-like and vague.

Night was full-grown but lighted by

the stars when they came to the end of the largest bay they had yet encountered. It was in the shape of a crescent whose farther horn was lost in a seeming infinity. This, according to the doctor, was Half-Moon Bay.

"Brinkley nomenclature," he explained. "The Geological Survey didn't name it."

A single sheer-walled cape thrust out from its center. That the water offshore was shallow was shown by the fact that the barrier had not swung inland to follow the contour of the bay, but stretched like an unbroken bowstring from tip to tip of the crescent. The ice inside had the look of a calm lagoon.

Marsha, too, recognized the spot. "Boy—what a lunch we ate that day! Hot soup. Beefsteak. We built our fire just this side of the cape."

"We'll build it there again," said the doctor. "That's our camp."

"But it's miles and miles."

"Less than three. Let's get down to the ice. It will be easier going."

It was a steep fifty feet down. The doctor led the way, following steps lately cut in the ice-sheathed bank. Connolly noticed this, but not Marsha. She was, finally, on the verge of collapse.

All were weak-kneed and trembling when they reached the floor of the bay. It was good to be on solid ice again. It had the feel of rough-surfaced concrete.

"This is better," said the doctor. "How goes it, Marsha?"

"O.K. The fighting breed—" but her laugh was almost a sob.

The doctor, too, was almost done for. They angled away from shore, arms locked together like weary revelers, homeward bound. Connolly was in the middle, partly supporting the doctor, almost wholly supporting Marsha.

"You're like a horse," she told him. "A pack horse. What holds you up?"

"Cussedness, mostly."

"And youth," said the doctor. "And courage. We may need it all."

Hours later, so it seemed, the outthrust cape loomed close at hand. They passed the mouth of a shallow canyon at their right. It was low-walled and broad, with a narrow strip of ice meandering down its center. Only the darker hue of the ice made the groove different from scores of others that pierced the plateau.

The doctor pointed apathetically. "I've called it Platinum Creek. Discovery claim corners less than one hundred yards in."

They shuffled on, during a momentary silence. Then Marsha said: "You heard him, Glenn. He's telling us where the strike is. You know—that platinum."

"Oh, yes," said Connolly. "Yes."

"Well? Aren't we millionaires or something?"

"Maybe," said Connolly. "Sure. . . Where's this campsite, Doctor?"

"In the corner. There's spring water there. Plenty of wood. Plenty of moss."

"Good," said Connolly, holding them up. "Swell. Sounds like a nice spot. Maybe we could sell lots to tourists. Come on, we'll make it."

CHAPTER XI

FIRE ON ICE

AS CAMPSITES went on the shores of the Arctic, this was near perfect — better, even, than the one they had quitted that morning. In the angle formed by headland and beach was a small, U-shaped crevasse floored with sand. Fuel and good water were practically within arm's length. With the tarp overhead and sleeping-bags stretched between fire and wall, living temperatures could be maintained against any storm or extreme of cold.

Connolly shed his load and the doctor did likewise. Marsha leaned against the wall, knees braced and head bowed. For an instant Connolly stood, undecided. Which was the more imperative: to build a fire at once, or find out for certain how closely they had trailed those ahead?

The doctor named the play. His thoughts had plainly been following the same groove.

"Gather some moss, Glenn. We'll fix Marsha's bed and get her into it. . . You're too tired to eat for the moment, child. Rest first. There's lots of time."

She did not object. The doctor unrolled her sleeping-bag. Connolly took the axe and uncovered moss in the nearby cleft from which the frozen spring emerged. He spread it on the floor and made all ready while the doctor helped Marsha out of her frost-encrusted parka and mukluks.

She was soon settled, with the extra blanket tucked in. They left her there, swathed and motionless, and Connolly led the way along the base of the wall toward the point where the headland broke off abruptly into the ice of the bay. They were as quiet as possible, yet the crunching of frost crystals underfoot rang out far too loudly.

The dog was ahead. He stood at the corner, facing eastward, his muzzle sampling the motionless air. Though the animal's untroubled pose told them that nothing of flesh and blood was close, they moved cautiously out into the open.

It came as an odd shock of surprise to Connolly, prepared though he had been for hours and miles past. . . Far up the beach, as though a star had fallen from the sky and was blazing there, a lone fire twinkled. It was just inside the far horn of the crescent, perhaps two miles away. It might have been recently kindled; it might have been burning for more than an hour past, hidden from view by the headland.

As he looked at that fire, and all that it might mean in relation to their own survival, a mounting excitement pushed his weariness into the background. A battle against unkind nature was one thing, to deal with living men was another. Those yonder in that camp were not so far away. They might have food. Certainly they had rifles.

"H-m-m. Can we make something out of this, Doctor? Maybe?"

The doctor was also deeply moved, but in a different way. "Wait. Make no plans. Not until we know who is there. Let's go over to the claim. Marsha's resting. It isn't far."

"To the claim? Why?"

"Sh-h-h. It won't take long. Perhaps we'll find the answer to some of the questions that have been bothering both of us."

Connolly did not protest. They left the point and struck out across the ice, heading toward the mouth of the creek.

It was less than two hundred yards across the angle formed by headland and bank. They entered the broad, shallow canyon. Black ice was underfoot. There was nothing else to indicate—if this was an indication—that they were in the presence of what the doctor believed to be the continent's greatest single deposit of platinum-bearing gravel.

For the first time that day, Connolly saw signs of travel underfoot—a faint, fresh trail of broken frost crystals, following the line where ice and snow joined. This trail presently rose up on the flat and was lost there. The doctor led on, bearing toward the dim bank.

Other trails moved in again, converging upon a square, sturdy stake, driven down through snow and moss into the frozen gravel. Its top was cleft. The cleft held in its grip a folded square of waterproof material to which only frost crystals clung.

The doctor removed this packet and unfolded it, his mittened fingers clumsy. His shoulder, pressed against Connolly's was trembling.

"Get a match ready. We'll read it." In the utter silence a ghostly echo whispered from the opposite bank, *"We'll read it. . ."*

Connolly drew off a mitten and got two matches from an inner pocket. He placed them between his teeth and thrust his unprotected hand into the other sleeve while waiting.

"We're a long way from courts of law," said the doctor. "Too far. But remember the circumstances. . . . I discovered and staked this claim twenty-one days ago, on the seventeenth of January. This notice should so attest, in my handwriting."

He opened the packet. Connolly struck a match and they bent over it, heads together.

It was not the doctor's handwriting, but a bold, equally scholarly scrawl. It gave the usual description of a discovery claim—placer, cornering on this stake, extending southward along the channel of an unnamed creek, here called Platinum Creek, located approximately

seventy miles due west of Barter River. . .

It was not the description that told the story; it was the signature: *James N. Craig. Master of the Kathleen. Of Nome.*

It was dated January 17th.

THE flame of the match dwindled and died in the motionless air. The following darkness thinned again into the starlit gloom. Connolly watched the doctor, drawing on his mittens.

"Well? D'you still think the *Kathleen* was wrecked by accident?"

He hadn't intended to be brusque. His own speculations had centered on Craig. He had thought of him often, each time Marsha had stumbled. Here was final proof, and the palms of his hands itched.

The doctor placed a hand on the stake and leaned heavily upon it.

"He's up there now, between us and Barter River. That steals our last crust. . . . God forgive me—what have I done to you children?"

When his knees buckled, Connolly grasped at him with clumsy haste. His tattered feet slipped. The doctor's bulk dragged both to the snow. Each came up to his knees, but no further. They faced each other, while the stillness poured in and congealed about them.

"I'm all right." The doctor's low tones murmured from bank to bank. "It's just that I've been keyed up all day, waiting for this moment. I—I still wasn't prepared to meet it."

"Look," said Connolly. "What do you mean—it steals our last crust? They'll go on tomorrow. I'll follow."

"No. That's what got me just now. . . . If Jim Craig planned this far, he's too shrewd to leave much to chance. They've undoubtedly got a grub cache up there, planted long before the storm."

"You mean—where they're camped now?"

"Yes. Otherwise they'd have camped here tonight. It's an open beach up yonder. . . If they've got food, they'll be in no hurry. They'll wait three or four days to rest up, regain their strength. But we can't wait."

Connolly considered this, eyeing him fixedly. Somehow, he was unmoved by the dilemma that had so demoralized the doctor—that they couldn't go on, and couldn't wait. His thoughts refused to go beyond a single possibility—probability—here suggested. "So. . . A grub cache, eh?"

"Help me up," said the doctor, in a feeble voice.

When they were on their feet, he made no move to go. He stood, fumbling inside his parka. "Better go back to Marsha. Start getting supper. We'll discuss what's to be done after we've eaten. I'll be along, as soon as I've done a little chore."

Connolly was dubious about leaving him. "What chore?"

The doctor already had his notebook out, and an indelible pencil. "I'll post my notices again." He indicated the location stake. "Such as it is. For whatever it's worth."

"Good!" Connolly approved the spirit as much as the purpose. The doctor was not entirely beaten down. "O.K. But don't wait too long."

He started off, but halted at a distance.

"Listen. I'd better tell Marsha the whole thing?"

The doctor hesitated, then nodded. "I suppose so. She's entitled to a vote. With her eyes open."

MARSHA was not asleep. When she heard Connolly enter she roused up and raised the flap of her sleeping bag a little. Her eyes glistened in the shadowed slit.

"You're like a badger," he told her. "Backed into your hole. How goes it?"

"Awful. Too tired to eat. Too hungry to sleep. How's that for being between the devil and the deep sea?"

"You'll eat," he promised. "Then you can sleep for a week. Meanwhile, listen to the low-down on your old friend, Craig."

While he built the fire he told her the story of Craig's plot. She was unhappy because of her previous faith in Craig. It was the first time she had known what had happened between the captain and

the doctor while the *Kathleen's* decks had been crumpling underfoot.

"Poor Dad! No wonder he took me out on the pack. It wasn't a matter of choice. He was like the dog that climbed the tree: he had to."

But it all seemed far away, in her viewpoint—examples of greed, weakness and human passions that belonged to the past. . . The true importance of it came with Connolly's second revelation—that Craig and the two breeds had not only survived but were ahead of them on the beach.

He was unaware, at first, of how heavy the blow had been. She lay motionless in the shadow, watching him mutely as he moved about. She roused up, just as he was about to apply a match to the dry moss and nested shavings.

"Don't light it, Glenn! Please!"

"Why not?"

"They'll see it. They'll see the reflection on the cliff."

"Nonsense," he soothed, pointing upward. "It's forty feet high. They're two miles away."

"A small fire, then. Just enough to cook with. And we'll put it out as soon as we've eaten. . . I'm afraid for you, too, Glenn. They're maniacs. They must be. Oh—what shall we do? What can we do?"

"Do?" he echoed. "Just let them march along. I'll trail them in to Barter River."

He humored her by building a small fire. He made a blaze hot enough for the flapjacks and beans, and to leave a bed of coals for the coffee. . . His own speculations circled again and again about that other fire, blazing so boldly up yonder—so insolently, almost. Thought of the days ahead brought again the cold and mounting fury that had touched him during that black night in Nome. Why should the Brinkleys face starvation and death while three such renegades lived fat and secure?

They were three, armed with rifles. They would be unsuspecting, unaware that they were not alone on the long, desolate beach that extended westward from Barter River. They would soon be asleep, gorged and comfortable. A determined man, one prepared to stop at nothing though armed only with a club and a native hunting knife, stealing upon them unawares. . .

The doctor came shuffling up from the ice of the bay. He seated himself wearily, pushed back the hood of his parka and took off his mittens. He looked down at Marsha, who was propped on an elbow now, and at Connolly, kneeling beside the fire. His shadow and Connolly's wavered like giants against the walls of the niche.

"He told you about the claim, Marsha? And Jim Craig?"

She nodded and patted his hand briefly. "Yes."

"Sit still, both of you," Connolly directed. "I'll dish it up. Where's Bolo?"

"He was up on the bank a moment ago," said Marsha. "Don't call him. He'll drive us crazy, teasing for food. I hate to eat this, Glenn. It seems like I'm eating your chances tomorrow."

"Forget it," he told her. "You've got to start off with a good meal. I'll make it O. K. . . Then we'll all turn in. If there's anything to debate, we'll do it in the morning."

This last was for the doctor's benefit. Brinkley nodded, showing that he understood. His face was more sunken than before, the lines etched deep.

Marsha insisted that the fire be put out the moment the coffee was boiling. The doctor agreed. Connolly did not object. The sooner these two were asleep the sooner he could get under way. *A pleasure to meet you, Captain,* he thought grimly. *Mutual friends have mentioned you often.* . . He first heated water in the kettle to wash their meager utensils, then dashed the water on the coals, blotting them out. An area of warmth remained, radiating heat. He squatted there, sipping his coffee.

"We won't raise the tarp tonight," the doctor announced. "The sky's clear. But we'll need all the heat we can get. So we'll sleep side by side, with Glenn's blankets and the tarp over us."

Marsha's sense of humor never died. "With who in the middle?" she wanted to know.

"Age has its privileges," said the doctor. "Also its responsibilities. I take the middle."

IT WAS dark in the cleft. The wall loomed overhead. All else was white and frosty and twinkling. The rattling of the aluminum utensils, as Connolly racked them away, raised up echoes from the distant barrier. Having arranged their bed to his liking, with Marsha snug against the moss that softened the rock at her back, the doctor crawled in. The dog drifted in like a shadow, turned himself about twice, then curled in a motionless ball at Marsha's feet.

"I wish I had your optimism," the doctor whispered. "Have you a plan?"

"I've got a plan," said Connolly. "Sleep tight."

Marsha's voice was muffled. "Don't stay out there and freeze, Glenn."

"In a minute. When I finish this cigarette."

He finished it and tossed the stub into the dark circle where the fire had been. He rose up, stretching, flexing his muscles. His weariness seemed remote. He lowered his arms and slid a hand inside his parka, to see that Klena George's knife was still there.

At that instant the Brinkleys were lying motionless, so that even the harsh wrinkling and rasping of the waterproof tarp was stilled. No sound came from the barrier nor the pack beyond. The whole world was chained to a calm. . .

It was not a true silence. Connolly thought it was a faint roaring in his ears and shook his head to dislodge it. The dog's head was up, rigidly alert. The doctor pushed back the tarp and reared on an elbow. Marsha's face was a white blur.

"What is it, Glenn? Do you hear it?"

"Quiet," the doctor whispered.

All held their breath. It was gaining in volume. It seemed to come from the barrier, from the hidden tundra, from the ground underfoot. . . It was coming from the sky.

"Look!" Marsha's whisper was strained and taut. She was pointing above the bank to the south.

Connolly looked, and his teeth clenched. Two incredible pinpoints of light were moving up there, creeping across the sky. They were parallel yet separated lights—one red, one green.

Doctor Brinkley

The drone of a powerful motor swelled among the stars.

"Thank God!" the doctor breathed. "An airplane. They've come for us."

Connolly recognized the sound of that motor. He could have picked it from thousands.

"It's Ravenhill! . . . Good old Riv—did I curse him too soon?"

"Glenn!" Marsha's cry was almost a scream. She was the first to grasp impending tragedy. "He'll never see us. He won't know we're here. . ."

The doctor came out clawing, dragging moss with him. Connolly dropped to his knees and fumbled for matches. It was necessary to reach inside his parka and inside his mackinaw. When the need was greatest, when life and death literally hung on the passing seconds, he was all fingers and thumbs. . . The plane was low, hurtling toward them. He got out the matches, broke the first one, lit the second and thrust it into the moss.

It took hold with its usual frightful slowness. Both he and the doctor fell prone and blew on the strengthening flame. It blazed up, and both piled on more moss—feeding it, watching it soar. It lighted up the niche, shone redly on their taut, upturned faces.

The plane was directly overhead, visible only as a vague fragment of winged beauty drifting down the sky. . . It did not veer from its course but thundered on, as emotionless and undeviating as a force of nature itself. Its lights moved down, disappeared beyond the line of

the cliff. The roar of the motor dwindled in the eastward distance.

"He didn't see us!" Marsha's voice was a kind of sob. "He didn't even look down. Why?"

Connolly knew why. Ravenhill had come from the southwest. He had seen Craig's fire for minutes past, while still far out over the tundra, and had forged toward it as unswervingly as though following a radio beam. Having laid his course toward that lone beacon —the only pinpoint of light in all the barrens—there had been no reason to look down, certainly not directly down.

There was one chance left. It would depend on how quickly Ravenhill would reach his objective and set down on the ice up yonder, how quickly he would take Craig and the two breeds aboard and resume his flight.

"We'll build a fire at the point," Connolly told the doctor, leaping up. "Out in the open. Surely Riv'll look this way —just once—before they take off again . . . I know. It'll bring Craig and his gorillas, too. But it's our only bet."

CHAPTER XII

CRAIG OF THE KATHLEEN

BY STARLIGHT, even at the low altitude at which Ravenhill held the plane, the tundra and pack had a flat, ground-glass sheerness broken by the twin lines of barrier and beach. Only the fire, far up by the eastern tip of the bay's crescent, had a definite quality.

At first, it had been a mere pinpoint of light in the immensity of the night. As he roared over the headland, his attention fixed upon that beacon, the flames became plain. The small circle of light was close to the bank, bringing into bold silhouette three figures on the near edge —three men as motionless as though they were rooted in the snow.

All were in parkas, monkish and bulging. Each had a rifle sloped across his arm. Native hunters, probably, in temporary camp far from their home village. They would be watching his approach in astonishment, and with reason. Who but a madman would be night flying over these arctic wastes? None but Ravenhill.

But there was nothing to be done but set down and find out if that sublime idiot, Connolly, was one of these three. If not, if these savages had not heard of Connolly, or seen trace of him, the chapter was closed. The beach westward was empty. A brief hop east would mean that the stretch between Point McPherson and Barter River had been patrolled. After that—belatedly but finally —he'd go outside.

Ravenhill came in low and cut in his powerful landing light, flooding the surface of the ice. It was smooth and there was no wind. He set down easily and taxied across the ice in zigzags to brake his forward progress. He came to a halt, pointing eastward, directly opposite the campfire and less than one hundred yards offshore.

The men were coming across the ice, the pair in the lead running abreast and a big man lumbering at their heels. Something about their advance seemed sinister.

"What's this?" Ravenhill muttered.

He kept his left hand on the throttle, ready to gun the motor, and with his right turned the manually controlled searchlight so that its beam transfixed the oncoming men, but it did not slacken their pace. The pair in the lead were natives. No—their broad, Mongoloid features were black with beard.

Then he recognized them. "Jove—it's those breeds from the *Kathleen! And Craig himself!* . . . Ravenhill, old fox, what have we here?"

The first two were clawing at the door. He swung around and, in pushing it open, thrust them back. The kind of madness that gripped them was immediately plain.

"Grub! You got grub, mister?"

"Stand back!" Ravenhill ordered. "Back, I say!"

He fumbled in the pocket of his flying suit and brought out three fat chocolate bars. He tossed one to each. The captain, outdistanced in the final sprint, slid heavily against a wing strut and clung there. Ravenhill threw him the last bar. He clutched it and tore off the wrappings with his teeth.

As they wolfed the food, Ravenhill squatted in the doorway, studying them. *Good men die,* he thought. *A good woman dies. These blighters live.*

THE two breeds were little more than bristling animals. The stamp of starvation was on Sloane's pock-marked face and its torture came from Hempel's china blue eyes. They were as unpredictable as wolves at the moment, blind to all but the instinct of survival.

The captain was scarcely more human. His once handsome features were so seared by successive frostbite that the flesh bulged beneath a gray stubble of beard, unwholesome and purple-veined. His parka, like those of his companions, was heavy with grime and frost, matted with the ashes of bitter camps.

He pulled himself together under Ravenhill's gaze.

"My God, boy, we're glad to see you!" He raised his voice above the idling motor. "Any more grub? We've lived for ten days on a blasted seal pup. We ate its hide tonight."

"Sorry," said Ravenhill. "No food at all. Plenty of fuel, though. We can be out of here in a moment." He glanced toward the fire. "Nobody else about?"

"Not a soul."

"What about the Brinkleys?"

"Done for. They took to the pack when we abandoned ship. It was a toss-up. We made it. They didn't."

"You saw no sign of anyone else?"

"Not a whisper. Who'd you expect us to find?"

"A lad named Connolly. He left the Middle Fork four days ago to cross the mountain afoot . . . I had a notion he might have made it."

"Afoot across the mountains?" Craig shook his head. "It's been storming until today. No dice. It couldn't be done. Connolly? Hunk Connolly, of Wiseman?"

"No. Marsha Brinkley's boy friend. A chechako, but tough. In fact—quite tough."

"But not tough enough for that mush." Craig moved closer, with the breeds at his heels. His glance was on the lighted interior of the cabin. "What d'ye say, Riv? Can we get started now?"

"There is too much talk!" Hempel wailed. "We are hungry and cold. And sick."

The more hard-bitten Sloane said briefly, teeth bared: "Let's go, mister."

"Softly," Ravenhill said. "Easy does it. Get your camp gear aboard. Keep your savages under control, Craig."

Craig looked at the breeds. "They're under control, all right. They're good dogs." Then he snapped: "Back to the fire. Roll the bags and fetch them. Fast."

They turned, hesitated and then broke into a shambling run.

"Come aboard," Ravenhill said, holding the door open.

Craig's back was to the chill blast from the propeller, looking west, past the tail of the ship. He stood motionless for an instant, head lowered, the white vapor of his breath abruptly cut off. His face was lit by the glow from the cabin, and Ravenhill saw Craig's look of astonishment. Then it was more than surprise, it became an expression of something black and formidable.

It was a glimpse, no more. When Craig clambered in, his features were impassive.

RAVENHILL slid in behind the wheel, but remained standing while he manipulated throttle and spark. "That blighted motor. Too noisy. Quite." He tilted his head, listening to the staccato explosions, his face half turned toward the tail of the ship.

"That's better. Now we can hear ourselves talk."

He lowered to his place at the controls. Craig was already at his side, the rifle against his thigh. Ravenhill glanced down at the weapon, an eyebrow raised, and brought out cigarettes. Craig took one between swollen fingers. They lighted up and studied each other.

"Relax, man—relax." Ravenhill blew a cloud of smoke upward, his cheerfulness tinged with contempt. "There's no crisis here. Rescue's at hand. Whatever you've been through is in the past. Whatever's on your conscience is immaterial, now that your hide is safe. Right?"

"Listen, Riv," said Craig. He spoke calmly, though he was breathing heavily. "How'd you happen to show up here?"

"Looking for that good fool, Connolly. I left him on the glacier, the other side of the Pass. Afoot and alone, by gad, with a pack on his back. Leaning into the wind. . . ."

"Where did you come from just now?" Craig was not interested in Ravenhill's word picture.

"Down on the Porcupine. I was heading for Fairbanks when I left Connolly. I set down at the Crossing to have a drink with the boys." He shuddered. "Jove, what a binge! No more rum for me—my word on it. It laid me by the heels for four days. It's not a drink for a gentleman."

"You didn't set down on the beach?"

"No. I came over the Pass and then swung east."

"What did you mean just now—whatever's on my conscience?"

"Tut," Ravenhill said. "And again, tut. It's obvious, man. The *Kathleen's* gone. The Brinkleys are gone. Your SOS said you'd wait for rescue at Point McPherson. You weren't there. You never had been, I'm inclined to think. Instead, I find you seventy-five miles up the beach. Heading east."

"A mistake in reckoning," said Craig. "No navigator could have hit it on the nose. When we made it ashore, and I found we were better than fifty miles east of the Point, our only chance—"

"Pardon," Ravenhill interposed. "*I'm* not assailing your alibi. Just remember these three points, old carrion. First, you and I have prowled the same thicket before. Second, no man double-crosses me twice. Third, I'm baying at your heels henceforth. . . . Do we understand each other?"

Craig considered this, and moment by moment his vigilance yielded to relief. He leaned over and pushed the door open for an instant. The breeds were heading toward them with their burdens.

"O. K., Riv." He spoke swiftly. "I tried to double-cross you. You'd have cut my throat just as fast. So that's that. . . . I had a grub cache planted a quarter mile up the beach at the point. The boys quit here. Their feet gave out. So, while they made camp, I went on alone. But the damned storm had moved the ice in and covered my grub cache—tons deep. So here we are."

"H-m-m," Ravenhill ruminated. "Here you are, indeed. Quite. And glad to see me, no doubt? Appreciative and all that?"

"Plenty. I've got the new play figured. Listen—we're pointed east. When the boys get aboard, head for Barter River. McLean there, at the trading post, is an old pal. He'll feed 'em, keep 'em drunk and under cover until we need them again. If at all."

RAVENHILL nodded. "Their trail work being done, you abandon the dogs? Survival of the fittest—that sort of thing?" Craig chose to consider this as humor and laughed.

"Leave that stuff to me. We unload 'em there, sure. Then we eat and you and I take off for Nome."

"Nome? Without a spot of visiting with your old pal, McLean?"

"That can wait." In the man's glance was a hint of smoldering fires. "Bets this big must be coppered first."

"So? You're thinking of the platinum strike, of course?"

"Yes. I know its general location now. I got that much out of Brinkley before he pushed off. I can go directly to it. Nobody else can. But we've got to check in at Nome first. Clear the records on the wreck, the loss of the crew and the Brinkleys, get the coroner's report filed—the whole thing settled. Then, when it's all blown over, and the tears are all shed, we ease back—and cash in." He leaned forward, his hand on the door. "Got the picture? All set?"

Ravenhill considered deliberately, stroking his mustache. "There's a detail or two that could do with a bit of clarifying. I'm sure it's merely an oversight on your part. In the stress of the moment, as it were—"

"Your split?" Craig interrupted, with a facial contortion intended to be jovial. "I didn't overlook it, boy. It's fifty-fifty—all the way. A bird in the hand's enough for me from now on. I learned that lesson on this hellish beach."

"I wonder?" said Ravenhill, politely.

There was no time for further talk, the breeds were clawing at the door. In their eyes was the apprehension of small boys none too sure but that they might yet be left marooned in the dark. They tossed in their grimy bundles and scrambled up.

"Stow it back there," Ravenhill said. "Lash it down. Unfold a couple of chairs."

The breeds took their places, crouching forward, their rifle butts resting on the floor. Ravenhill settled himself at the controls, switched off the inside lights, and advanced the throttle slowly.

The ship moved forward as smoothly as on glass. The searchlight played on the speeding ice. Craig settled back with a sigh of relief.

"Man, have I dreamed of this minute? . . . Gun it, Riv! We're almost to the end of the bay."

Ravenhill disregarded him. The roar of the motor rose to sustained thunder. They were in the air, but close to the point where headland met barrier. The barrier being the lower obstacle, Ravenhill banked to the left—northward, out over the pack—and they climbed toward the stars.

It was a natural maneuver. The next was not. Instead of banking to the right he turned to the left, or west. Thus the headland at the center of the bay was in view. And a big fire blazing there, lighting up the cliff and surrounding ice.

Ravenhill was casual. "It's one of those details that need cleaning up, Craig. You said the beach was empty. I saw the fire there—when I quieted the motor, remember? I knew you'd seen it. But you didn't mention it."

"It blazed up while we were talking. *I* don't know who it is!"

"Which is curiouser and curiouser," said Ravenhill. "So we'll just have a quick look-see . . . Queer, but I've a notion it might be that scatterbrain, Connolly. If so, it won't take but a moment to pick him up."

"Pick him up?" Craig's voice thickened. "What's he to us? Why take any chances? Are you nuts, Riv?"

"Completely mad," said Ravenhill. "That's why I'm so fond of Connolly."

CHAPTER XIII

THE BEST-LAID SCHEMES

MARSHA joined Connolly and the doctor at the fire, bringing her own and the doctor's parka with her. Fully clothed, armored for the moment against the still cold, they stood close together beside the fire, watching the lights of Ravenhill's ship above the pack.

Those lights had headed eastward during frightful seconds. They had dimmed and almost disappeared. Then they had veered over the pack, swung back. Now it was no longer in doubt. The ship was returning, after having seemed to abandon them. It was like seeing the promise of life itself wing toward them.

Then Connolly realized the problem that was also roaring toward them. Rescue might not be a simple gesture with Craig and the two breeds aboard Ravenhill's ship.

"Listen," he said to the doctor swiftly. "You and Marsha duck out of sight. Get into one of those crevasses around the corner until we can see what's up."

"Why should we?" Marsha demanded, in astonishment.

But the doctor had got it. "He's right, Marsha. Craig doesn't dream we're alive. Nor Ravenhill either. Craig put a price on our rescue once before. . . ." His thoughts leaped farther ahead. "Listen, Glenn. Perhaps you should pretend you haven't seen us at all. Use your judgment. In a pinch, take off with them and come back for us later. We can hold out a few days more."

"Dad!" Marsha cried. "Please! Are you talking about the platinum strike? Let them have it—give them anything—"

"Hush, child," said the doctor. He drew away. "The claim's only good now for trading purposes . . . Glenn, I know Jim Craig and I know you. Do as you think best but I suggest the use of kid gloves."

Connolly nodded. "Instead of socking him, it's up to me to say: 'Thank you so much.' I can do it—maybe."

And it might have to be done. Craig had played for heavy stakes from the

first. To gain them he had planned as deliberate a crime as had ever been seen in the north. Those stakes—while the Brinkleys lived—were still on the table, unclaimed.

The ship slid to a halt on the ice some hundred feet distant, its motor idling. In the starlight it was like a great, silvery bird. It was more than a thing of beauty, it was a symbol of freedom, of dominance over space and time. With it, mountains and barrens were no longer barriers. Thirty minutes to Barter River. Three hours to Nome.

Then the cabin door was pushed back, and a bulky figure was outlined there. Connolly knew that this was Craig. He caught a brief glimpse of the cabin's interior—Ravenhill seated idly at the controls, cigarette in hand, the muzzles of two rifles motionless at his back.

"H-m-m," Connolly muttered. "Looks bad. Play 'em close to your belt, gambler."

Craig came on ponderously, the hood of his ragged parka lowered a little, the frosty spume of his breath trailing him like a mist. His features took form, ravaged and rough-hewn, his good eye glinting with reflected firelight. He was as tall as Connolly but far more bulky and heavy-limbed.

"Well, well, my boy!" he said. "Lucky we saw your fire when we took off. You're Connolly? Marsha Brinkley's fiancé? Ravenhill told me about you. I'm Captain Craig."

Connolly nodded, and assumed his role. "What happened to the Brinkleys, Captain?"

Craig, too, was no mean actor. His cheerfulness faded.

"Sorry, boy. That part of it's bad. Only two of the hands and I made it ashore. When we abandoned ship, poor old Mark decided to try the pack. They didn't have a chance, of course."

CONNOLLY turned away and drew closer to the fire. He stood there, head bowed. "I could see that somebody was ahead of me on the beach. Three of you. I couldn't help hoping . . . Well—that's that, I suppose. Have you got room for me? My food's practically gone. Not that that matters very much now."

"Nonsense," said Craig, moving closer. "We must take it as it comes. I've lost a good ship, two seamen and my old friends, the Brinkleys. Poor old Mark—we were in school together. Marsha was a splendid girl." He sighed, his keen glance on Connolly's face. "Riv tells me you crossed the Pass afoot. Tough trip?"

"Plenty."

"Where did you hit the beach?"

"Back about ten miles—close to where you camped last night. When I saw that someone was ahead, I followed along."

"You stayed on the beach all the way?"

Connolly saw what he was driving at. Craig wanted to be sure that no long chance had taken him by the platinum ground.

"Mostly. I stayed on the ice after I hit the bay."

Craig nodded, his glance probing the shadows. "Where's your outfit? How much grub you got left?"

"Damned little. My stuff's back there in the cove. You've got room for me?" he asked again.

"That's the hell of it," said Craig. "We haven't. We're too heavy now. Riv decided it would be best if we flew out by Barter River and sent a dogteam back for you. It shouldn't take more than two days for them to get here."

"Two days?" Connolly protested. "I can't hold out that long. Not after what I've been through. Look—I'll leave my stuff here. The hell with it. That'll cut down weight. . . . Let's go ask Riv."

Craig halted him. "It isn't necessary to ask him. He takes orders from me." He was jovial still, but his glance was cold. "You're a chechako, Connolly, so you don't know the customs of the country. If a man's up against it, that's final. There's no questions asked. But you can get along until the boys get here from Barter River."

Connolly studied him, debating the proper play. There was no logical room for argument. With an outfit and some grub left, two days of waiting involved no mortal hazard. In point of fact, it would involve no final hazard for the Brinkleys, provided rescue was certain within two days.

His course was suddenly plain to Connolly. There was but one thing to be done—leave things as they were. Craig had no suspicion that the Brinkleys were alive. In his viewpoint he, Connolly, was no menace—just a harmless interloper who had stumbled by chance into the picture. Therefore, Craig would have no reason *not* to send a rescue party back from Barter River.

But who knew what Craig might do if he saw his apparently certain winnings stolen from him on the final play?

"O. K." Connolly's shrug was apathetic. He stooped for a piece of driftwood and tossed it on the fire. "I can make it, I guess. You'll be sure to send back for me?"

"Of course. I'll start 'em out tonight."

"I've money," said Connolly. "Tell them I'll pay well."

Short moments before, the thought of the ship leaving without them had been tragic. Now, his decision reached, he was eager to see it under way, fearful that something might arise to hold it back. Each moment that Craig stood here, with the Brinkleys in hiding less than a stone's throw distant, was loaded with dynamite.

A diversion came from the ship itself. Craig had turned away with a nod and a careless, "Well, so long, boy," when the motor coughed once, took hold again. Then the explosions missed entirely and died.

THE ensuing silence was startling. The echoes dwindled and died along the beach. The cabin door opened and Ravenhill thrust out his helmeted head.

"Sorry, Craig." He spoke with his usual cheerfulness. "Ice on the breather valve, from the sound of it. I'll have to step up there and clear it off. Will you explain to your silly savages?"

"Stay here, Connolly," said Craig. His voice changed as he moved forward; it roughened, thickened. The man was close to the ragged edge. "All right, Riv—but no funny business. Sloane! Hempel! Follow him out, you two."

Ravenhill came out at once, followed by the two breeds. All pretense was now stripped from his status. He knew he was under guard. He ducked under a wing strut and came up below the motor. He raised a hand to Connolly.

"Greetings, old chap. Fancy meeting you here! Why don't you come aboard?"

"He's staying here," said Craig, advancing. "We'll send back a dogteam from Barter River. . . . Get that motor started, Riv."

But Ravenhill coolly circled the skid and came toward them. The breeds trailed him, rifles ready, looking to Craig for orders.

"You heard me, Riv." All of Craig's force was in it. "No funny business whatever. We're getting under way."

Though a direct advance into a lion's den would have required less fortitude, Ravenhill came on.

"Nonsense, old chap. I must have a word with Connolly. To present my apologies and all that, you know. It seems I'm always abandoning him."

His self-possession dominated the moment. Craig stood aside and wheeled with him as he came to the fire. The breeds stood shoulder to shoulder at his back.

"Well, Connolly, you blithering idiot." Ravenhill spoke with sardonic affection. "You made it—and made fools out of your betters, eh?"

"I had luck," said Connolly. "I've been places since I saw you last."

"True. You're not a chechako now. Not after crossing the mountains afoot. . . . You're finally convinced that the Brinkleys are gone?"

"Make it fast, Riv," Craig interposed. "Here—I'll speed it up. He found our tracks on the beach and followed us here. I've explained that we're overloaded now and can't take him along with us. It's all right, he says. He's got grub enough to last till we send help from Barter River. That covers it. Do the rest of your yapping when he reaches Nome."

"Grub?" said the breed, Sloane. His voice shook. "Look, Cap'n—"

"Quiet," said Craig, harshly.

"There's a minor detail, old chap." Ravenhill's attention had not swerved from Connolly. "Is this your idea, or Craig's? I mean to say—"

"It's all right," said Connolly. "Just so you personally see to it—"

A gasp of astonishment came from Hempel. He swung his rifle around quickly.

"Look! A wolf!"

Connolly whirled to look behind him. Bolo was slinking through the gloom east of the headland, head and tail lowered.

"Don't shoot!" Connolly spoke sharply. "It's just a dog—just old Bolo. I met him at the Pass and he followed me over."

"I'm damned," said Craig. "It *is* Bolo. He was a mean one, the meanest of the lot. I've a notion to put a bullet in him, just for percentage. . . . You didn't mention him before, Connolly."

"I'd forgotten him," Connolly admitted. "He's O. K. Let him alone. . . . It's all right, Riv. Just so you guarantee to send a dogteam back."

Sloane interposed again: "Listen, Cap'n—"

"Shut up," said Craig.

"I know I'm dumb," the breed insisted, "but I want to ask something. This guy's been alone ever since he met up with the dog?"

"That's right. What of it?"

"Then how would the guy know, unless somebody told him, that the dog's name was Bolo?"

All stood motionless, their breath rising in misty columns. As the silence pressed in Connolly could almost feel hackles rising on his own neck. . . . The error had been so simple—and was so ruinous. Nobody this side of the Endicotts except Craig and the breeds—or the Brinkleys—could have told him Bolo's name.

Ravenhill spoke, faint amusement in his tone.

"*Touché*, old chap! I thought there was something synthetic here. I smelled it. The best-laid schemes—and all that, eh?"

CHAPTER XIV

THE SHIP'S THE THING

FOR a moment Connolly was demoralized. It was the sort of thing impossible to deny or evade. It made the whole business of keeping the Brinkleys under cover a disastrous gesture. Its sole result, in fact, would be to call attention to and exaggerate the suspicion that had prompted it.

There was nothing to be done but wait, poker-faced, for whatever consequences must follow. He had one grim satisfaction. Craig, too, was caught between the horns of an equally ruinous dilemma. On the other hand was the role he had adopted from the first—that his, Craig's, part in the chain of events thus far was above suspicion. He had acted always for the best.

But if he held to the role now, with the Brinkleys back in the picture, all the winnings for which he had gambled so recklessly would elude him. . . . Therein lay the danger of the moment. Craig and his two breeds alone were armed. Much of Craig's shrewdness and caution that enabled him to play a waiting game had been eaten away by the experiences of the past few days.

"Well, Connolly?" He turned himself about like an aroused grizzly, his rifle held close. "So you ran a little whizzer on us, eh? You found the Brinkleys and they're still alive?"

"Yes," said Connolly. There was no use attempting evasion now. "They stayed on the pack until the first storm blew over. When they made it ashore you were ahead of them on the beach."

"Jove!" Ravenhill said. "Again you've made fools of your betters, Connolly. Just a chechako hunch—but you followed through. . . . My compliments, sir."

Craig moved closer. "Where are they? What's the play? Spread your hand, boy."

Connolly decided to call for the showdown immediately, while the Brinkleys were still in the clear. "They laid low because they were suspicious of you, Captain. They still are. So am I. You claimed the *Kathleen* was wrecked by accident, also that the Brinkleys were lost by accident—"

"Softly, gentlemen," Ravenhill interposed. He moved between them as between two bristling mastiffs. "As a diplomat you've all the qualifications of an excellent blacksmith, Connolly. . . . Don't try to bull this through, Craig.

Not in the presence of witnesses. Use the jolly old bean—if any."

Craig turned on him with bitter relish. "Don't get your own fingers burned, Riv. What d'ye mean—witnesses?"

"All of us," said Ravenhill. "Connolly. Your two savages. Myself. Perhaps the Brinkleys. . . . They're hidden nearby, Connolly?"

"They might be." said Connolly. "But they weren't hidden from you, Riv. That was my hunch, anyway. If I'm wrong, state it now. Where do you stand?"

But Ravenhill rejected the bid with a shrug. "On thin ice, old chap. Far too thin. And frankly—with good old Ravenhill's interests always on top—I don't like it. . . . Listen, please. Both of you. Let's have the Brinkleys out. Then let's rally around the fire and have a little spot of lunch. You've enough for one good meal for all of us, Connolly?"

It was a shrewd suggestion, whatever lay behind it. None other, in fact, could have held Craig's attention. He stood, waiting, his breeds pressing in closer.

"Just about enough," said Connolly. "And after we've lunched—what then?"

"Quite simple. With bellies full, we'll be on a friendly basis and in reasonable mood. Everything will return to proper focus, absolutely."

Connolly nodded. "One happy family—except that the grub will be gone. And we're still eighty miles from Barter River."

"My ship's here. Two round trips, if necessary, and we're all safe in Barter River. That is"— Ravenhill glanced over his shoulder—"if I get the nose hangar on immediately and keep the motor warm. So ring the luncheon gong for the Brinkleys, old chap."

"Now wait," said Craig. "You lads—"

But Connolly did not wait. Any postponement of the crisis was gain. "All right, Doctor." He turned toward the cliff. "It's O. K. Come along and bring Marsha."

Ravenhill backed the play. His whisper was impatient. "Don't be an ass, Craig. The ship's the thing. As long as we've got that, everything's under control. . . . So keep up your bluff about your old pals. You're delighted that they have escaped death—and all that."

It was well timed. Ravenhill had expressed the meat of it.

"The ship's the thing."

THE Brinkleys came on, the doctor a little in advance, with the dog trailing uneasily at their heels. The sound of their progress raised up brittle echoes.

Connolly was impressed by the scene and moment. The deadly cold pressing in; the tundra and pack stretching infinitely into the background; this group, marooned and insect-like in the vastness of the arctic night. Each of them, many times during preceding days, had walked in the shadow of death. By all the rules of human conduct there should have been joyous shouts of greeting, the delight of pilgrims met by happy chance on a lonely trail.

Instead, because platinum lay in the frozen muck a quarter mile away, it was a somber meeting. Craig loomed massively, his rifle ready, his face expressionless. The breeds said nothing. The whites of their eyes glistened as they looked from one to the other of the more dominant figures about them. Connolly stood silent, awaiting the fall of the cards. The breed, Hempel, he decided, would be the easiest to surprise and disarm if and when the final jam came. . . .

Ravenhill broke the spell cheerfully. "Well, Marsha. And you, sir." He gave the meeting a Stanley-Livingstone touch. "Doctor Brinkley, I presume?"

Craig's attempt at casualness was more ponderous. "Welcome, folks. I never thought I'd see this minute. . . . You were right, Mark, old boy. The pack was the best bet for you and Marsha."

Marsha came over to Connolly and took her place beside him. The doctor extended his hands to the flames. He said to Craig: "Hello, Jim." He nodded to the breeds and looked up at Ravenhill, his mild eyes twinkling a little. "Nice night."

"A bit nippy," said Ravenhill. "I must insist—a bit nippy."

Marsha was in no mood for triviaiities. She clung to Connolly's arm and looked searchingly at Ravenhill, her eyes dark and luminous, then at Craig.

"We couldn't help but hear what you said, Captain. There's no further need for us to pretend—"

"Wait," said the doctor, mildly. "There's more here than meets the eye, my dear. Food first and business later."

"Correct," said Connolly. "I'll go get the grub and our outfits, Doctor. You and Marsha stay here by the fire. What about the motor, Riv?"

"Forthwith," said Ravenhill.

The group split apart, four and three. Ravenhill headed toward the ship. Craig, motioning to the two breeds, fell in at his heels.

Connolly would have quitted the fire, but Marsha held to his arm. Her outward calm was pretense. She was trembling.

"I'm afraid, Glenn. I'm afraid for all three of us. The captain knows he's in too deep. I could see his face when he found out we were alive. He *wanted* to believe we were dead. . . . Oh, it isn't worth it. Let him have the platinum. Let's agree—"

"Easy, Marsha," the doctor said. "Be calm. We haven't come to trading yet."

"Listen," said Connolly, looking toward the ship.

The quartet had paused in the intermediate gloom between the fire and the ship. As their footfalls ceased, Ravenhill's voice came, brittle and impatient.

"Why the bodyguard? Afraid I'll start the motor and make a run for it?"

"You might," Craig answered. "I'm coppering all bets, boy."

"Sometimes I doubt your sanity, Craig," said Ravenhill. "I flew up to the *Kathleen* in the first storm and to the Pass in the second. Why risk my neck—why am I here now—if it isn't for a finger in the pie? Put your alleged mind to it."

"I'll do that," said Craig. "You can depend on it. Meanwhile, step along."

Ravenhill shrugged and went on.

"Let's go," Connolly whispered. "We'll get our stuff and be ready to eat as fast as we can."

THEY circled the headland towards the shadowed cove. Because of the angle the fire moved out of their line of vision first, then the ship. Connolly walked with his head twisted back, watching the activity at the ship as long as it was in view. Then he faced the cove and quickened their pace.

"It's all right for the minute, anyway. They're not pulling out on us. Riv's getting the nose hangar on."

They rolled up the equipment swiftly. Marsha and the doctor had been utterly exhausted two hours before but the interval of rest had given both a reserve of strength.

The ship swung into view as they started back, the canvas nose hangar illuminated. Ravenhill was inside. They could see his head and shoulders in silhouette. Tools clinked and a blowtorch roared in a low undertone. The two breeds were on guard nearby. Craig was not in sight.

Then they saw the fire. Craig was standing there, on the east side, obviously awaiting their approach. He had chosen his position so that he commanded a view of both ship and cove. His rifle sloped from his left arm. His mittens were off, his fingers extended to the heat.

"Now it's coming," said Connolly.

"Be careful," the doctor warned.

Craig minced no words when they came up. He said, glancing toward the ship: "I can talk turkey to you three? All for one and one for all, eh?"

"That's right," said the doctor.

"Very well. . . . You came by the platinum strike on the way here?"

"Yes."

Craig nodded, pushing back the hood of his parka a little, so that he could see their faces. He winced as the inner fabric rasped against raw flesh at jaw and temple.

"You saw my claim notices, then," he said, between his teeth. "You probably tore them down, just like I tore yours down. It doesn't matter. Title to the claim is in dispute. It's a question of who discovered it and who records it first."

"You've got your story ready?" said Connolly.

"It's ready," said Craig. "It'll stand up if it comes to the courts—which it won't. My whole story will stand up. It's shock-proof—up to now. . . . Think that over."

"Go on," said Connolly.

"And don't crowd me, boy." A dark vein throbbed on Craig's forehead. "There's too many jokers wild in this deck. . . . Here's a part of the story. I've known for fifteen years that platinum was somewhere along this beach. For fifteen years I've traded with these natives, bucking the ice, freezing and starving, eating my soul out waiting for the break. One boy found the dirt—one of my boys, that I'd grubstaked, that I'd depended on to bring me word—"

"Pardon," the doctor said. "This boy was a King Islander. He didn't even belong on this side. Nobody grubstaked him. He was working reindeer."

"Any native on this side was my man," said Craig. "I had an understanding with all the head men. If gold was found—gold or platinum—they were to report direct to me."

"Do you call that a grubstake?" said Marsha.

Connolly pressed her arm warningly. Craig was here to decree, not to defend.

"He should have come to me. He would have, as soon as he'd realized what he'd found. But my old pal, Mark, talked to him first—as usual. . . . He always talks first, and fast, with big winnings in sight. It was just as true thirty-seven years ago. Did you know, Marsha, that before I came north your mother promised—"

"Enough of that, Jim," said the doctor. "There was no promise, no understanding. You know that. She made her choice before you left." They faced each other across the fire, eye to eye. The light from the glowing coals cast shadows across their set features. "She's gone, years since. Don't talk to *me* about lonely years, Jim. . . . What do you want from us?"

"Entirely lonely, Dad?" said Marsha, linking her arm in his.

"No, child," said the doctor. "Just a part of my heart. The part of my life that Jim knew—and envied, God help him. You've filled the rest."

"Talk fast, Craig," said Connolly. He was aware of the danger. The curtain, briefly parted, must be closed quickly. "Ravenhill's putting the tools away and we haven't even got the coffee started."

Craig turned his attention away from Marsha and the doctor with an effort, his face darkening. "We'll figure profit and loss later. . . . It's about Riv. He thinks everything's fixed. As soon as we've eaten, he's flying us all to Barter River. That suits you?"

"Sounds good."

"But remember this. Everything depends on it. Don't discuss the strike with Riv. If he talks about it don't let him know it's nearby, discovered and staked. He thinks that only Mark and I know its general location—a long way from here—and it all depends on who stakes it first. Get it?"

"Of course," said Connolly. "The good old double-cross. And after Riv's out of the picture, what's your cut?"

"We'll come to that after we've eaten," said Craig. "While Riv's warming up the motor."

(To be concluded)

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

ONLY one new recruit to the Writers' Brigade to introduce this month and we're not too sure the author of "Glove-Handed" hasn't been in our ranks before—thirty years before—and is just now getting around to signing up for a second term of enlistment. We flipped through the card-index file when John Russell's story arrived and discovered that John *Edward* Russell had had a short story, "A Proof By Peril," in the October, 1911 issue of *Adventure*. It was a swell story, too—we read it. The time-yellowed file-card indicated that John Edward could be reached in care of the now defunct New York *Herald*, and the biographical data sent over by John (minus-the-Edward) Russell's literary agent says—

> John Russell traveled widely and was special correspondent for the New York *Herald* in Panama and Peru in 1908 and was later a staff writer—fiction, features, verse and interviews—for the New York *Herald* Sunday magazine. He wrote many stories and articles for magazines, notably on South Sea, Oriental, adventure and seafaring themes. Has explored widely in South America, Asia and Oceania; consulting specialist and adapter with six film companies. Author of "The Society Wolf," "The Red Mark," "Where the Pavement Ends," "In Dark Places" and some five hundred published short stories. He is the son of Charles Edward Russell, the publicist.

If he's the same man who did the 1911 yarn for us, all we can say is that he's been off *Adventure's* contents page far too long and we promise you it won't be another three decades before he's with us again. In a brief note appended to "Glove-Handed" he says—

> I saw everything that happened in this story (God save the mark!). And here is a picture of my *Amblys*: some, 4 ft.

A photo, taken by the author, of a herd of *Amblyrhynchus cristatus* basking on a huge rock was enclosed, and we're here to testify that they're the most frightful-looking beasties we ever hope to see outside a dream! In the interest of authenticity we turned the Russell snapshot over to Artist Hazelton, who used it as a model for the giant lizard in the illustration on Page 79.

GEORGES SURDEZ, knocked out through most of January by a bout with *la grippe* but on the mend again now, we are happy to report, took time out from his invalid routine to add these supplementary notes to "What I Want, I Take!" We trust setting them down didn't retard his convalescence. He ought to have a chance at some of that North African sun he basked in so many years to counteract the Brooklyn bad weather in mid-winter.

Very little had been printed in English concerning the 'troubles' in Indo-China some years ago. However I have seen several references to them since I wrote "What I Want, I Take!" Events in Asia appear to have concentrated the public's attention. For instance, THE COMMUNIST, in its January 1941 issue, has an article by Andre Marty in which the incidents and the court-martial are mentioned.

"The Fifth Regiment of the Foreign Legion, hurriedly summoned from Morocco, was dispatched to the district. The atrocities that followed, the massacres in cold blood, surpassed the most shameful episodes in the history of colonial conquest. When, in June 1933, the criminals responsible for them were brought to trial, they were acquitted! Nevertheless, a verdict was uttered, a verdict for history; it was Commandant Lambert, one of the men most responsible for the frightful torture and massacre of this peaceful population, that uttered it. Together with other Legionnaires, he deposed in open court: 'We had verbal orders from Governor Robin. The Resident gave instructions to the Legionnaires: 'Strike down, kill, take as few prisoners as possible!'" Andre Marty's quotation on the court-martial is from *L'Ami du Peuple Indochinois*, which I believe to be a communist newspaper. I could quibble over small details and state that the Fifth Regiment of the Foreign Legion was not hurriedly summoned from Morocco, as it has been stationed in Indo-China since its creation. Reinforcements, more correctly replacements, were sent to it from regiments in Morocco.

Andre Marty is an intelligent man and a brave man. But I rather think that what he writes is 'slanted,' colored, for his party and for its purpose. It would take much space to give the minutes of the court-martial, but the facts were very much those narrated in the story, by Captain Chanod. The acquittal was justified in my opinion, for the men on trial were not those guilty. And what Marty fails to state clearly, or at all, was that the 'crimes' attributed to the Legionnaires had been committed in reprisal for the horrible murder of a young Legion Sergeant, whose corpse had been found, mutilated and beheaded, by the men who went berserk and killed natives perhaps at random.

Whether the presence of the Foreign Legionnaires in Indo-China was justified or not is a matter of opinion—all powerful nations have colonies, possessions, held by armed troops. Whether the troops of occupation are Legionnaires, Marines, Regular Army, Native auxiliaries, the same causes lead to the same effects. And once blood has been shed, it is useless to analyze the guilt of one side or the other. Armed men will pass by legal formalities often, whether they are Legionnaires, American Marines, British Yeomen, Senegalese or Russian Reds. It is wrong to condemn, to sentence men individually for the shortcomings of humanity at large.

Captain Chanod, in my story, predicts that the Japanese will leave Southern China. By a coincidence, the newspapers have reported since that the evacuation has started. Whether they are being forced out by guerilla attacks, as the Chinese state, or whether troops are being withdrawn for an attack on the Dutch Indies, is uncertain. When 'The Tiger' states, in the story, that the Japanese fight from blueprints, he repeats an opinion supplied to me years ago by a fine soldier who had achieved some fame between 1914-1918, and who had served with the Russians in Manchuria in 1904-1905.

He told me that on several occasions, young Russian subalterns had grown weary of playing at war like a game of precision in which the occupation of certain given points led to the winning or loss of points in an imaginary score. Those daring officers had taken the initiative with their small detachments, with extraordinary results. Among other examples, take the Naval Battle of the Yalu, in 1894. The Japanese Fleet was composed of comparatively modern units against a miscellaneous assortment of tubs commanded by a Chinese admiral who had trained in the cavalry. The Japanese Fleet held the advantage of speed, hence the choice of maneuvers, it could fire every ten minutes one hundred and eighty-five shots weighing close to twelve thousand pounds against the Chinese's thirty-three shots for a weight of five thousand pounds. Obviously, the Chinese did not have a Chinaman's chance.

Well, the Chinese got most of their ships back to port safely, because at one stage of the fight they became aggressive and headed for their enormously superior foes. A HISTORY OF SEA POWER, by Stevens and Westcott, Doubleday Doran, gives the explanation: "Admiral Ito has been criticized for thus drawing his line across the enemy's advance, instead of attacking his left flank. *But he was previously committed to the movement*, and executed it rapidly and for the most part at long range. Had

the Chinese pressed forward at best speed, Lissa (a smashing naval victory of the Austrians over the Italians in 1866) might have been repeated."

Just at present, the Fifth Foreign Legion Regiment, ordered to evacuate the line of blockhouses in the North, is fighting the invading Thailand forces in the inner jungle zone. The Legion is meeting old acquaintances there, as Legion units were stationed in Siam for some time forty years ago. Unless the French Vichy Government grows timid again, there is nothing to worry about.

IT IS with great regret that we must announce the resignation of Lieut. Col. R. Ernest Dupuy from the roll of *Ask Adventure* experts. In common with many other officers on active service these days he finds the pressure of duty too great to permit any regular extra-military activity. We shall miss his succinct and informative replies to queries about the care and training of horses, jumping and polo, and the cavalry arm.

BY NOW our file on the "Indian Stream Republic" has swelled to such proportions that a separate folder has had to be assigned to it, and Mr. Sullivan of Somerville, Mass., who started it all, has had forwarded to him from a variety of sources enough material on his little-known facet of American colonial history to compound a score of articles, should he feel so inclined. We felt sure, when we inserted in the February *Camp-Fire* a request for information which might help Mr. Sullivan ferret out the facts, that a modicum of response would be forthcoming, and guessed that whatever we received would be apt to emanate from New Hampshire itself, the home of Indian Stream, or from elsewhere in New England. The flood of references, notations, letters and copies of original material already published far exceeded anything we had hoped for, and, what was most surprising, the bulk of it came, not from the region under consideration at all, but from such far removed spots from New Hampshire as Pueblo, Colo.; Vancouver, B. C.; Newberry, Mich.; Golconda, Nev.; Salt Lake City, Utah; Monterey, Calif., and the deep South. We were beginning to think that it was high time New Englanders began to look to their laurels and brush up on their own local history a bit when Dr. George C. Wilkins of Manchester, N. H., less than a hundred and fifty miles as the crow flies from Indian Stream, saved the day for the home team with the following complete account of what we think is an extremely interesting footnote to Canadian-American border relations.

Accounts of the unique Indian Stream Republic can be found in both Stackpole's History of New Hampshire and the later Hobart Pillsbury's History. The historical facts in these histories were gathered by Grant Showerman, Ph. D. Professor in the University of Wisconsin and were published as the Eleventh Volume of the Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society under the editorship of Otis G. Hammond, M. A., also from the History of Coos County published by W. A. Ferguson and Company 1888, the article on Pittsburgh by David Blanchard p. p. 696-720. I have abstracted a brief history of the Indian Stream Republic from Stackpole's History of New Hampshire which is as follows:

The boundary line between Northern New Hampshire was in dispute from 1783, the Treaty of Paris, to the time of the Ashburton Treaty in 1842. The dispute concerned the determination of the westernmost branch of the Connecticut River. Three streams unite to form the river, the eastern is known as the Connecticut, flowing thru three lakes. The western branch is Hall's Stream and the middle branch is Indian Stream. The region drained by these streams embraces about 160,000 acres and corresponds to the present town of Pittsburgh.

The St. Francis tribe of Indians claimed ownership of all lands in this vicinity in the latter part of the 18th century but in 1796 Chief Philip gave to David Gibbs, Nathaniel Wales and Moody Bedel a deed of all this region, reserving to the Indians the right to hunt and fish therein and an agreement that the chief and his squaw would be furnished food and clothing yearly.

Among the first settlers were Samuel Osborn, David Tyler, James Ladd, Jonathan Kimball, Jessie Tyler, John Haynes, Nathaniel Perkins, Ebenezer Fletcher, James Heath and Nathan Judd. The settlement increased until in 1820 there were about 50 families, including 285 persons, on Indian Stream. Under cultivation were 847 acres.

Proprietors meetings were held and

records kept as early as 1811. The inhabitants were far in the wilderness and were a law unto themselves, but they consistently gave evidence of having the utmost respect for human rights and the decencies of civilization, and all their later laws were founded on common sense, justice and necessity.

There were rival claims to this territory by Canada and New Hampshire and in 1827 the King of the Netherlands as arbitrator recognized the English claim, but the United States did not accept his decision.

At this time the inhabitants of Indian Stream lands were divided into three groups, those who were in favor of being Canadian, those in favor of being United States citizens and a third group in favor of establishing an independent republic. This latter group predominated and on June 11, 1832 a committee consisting of David Mitchell, Luther Parker, Phinehas Willard, Herman Batchelder and Nathan Judd, were appointed to draft a constitution, and on the 9th of July their report was adopted by a vote of 56 to 3. The constitution was a remarkable document and followed the United States and the New Hampshire constitutions. The settlers of Indian Stream had all been educated in republican principles and wanted protection with the largest possible measure of liberty. They sought not to establish a permanent republic, but only a provisional one until it should be determined whether their territory belonged to Great Britain or the United States. Their object, as set forth in the preamble of their constitution, was "to preserve union among ourselves, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for our common security and defense and secure the important blessings of civilized society." They claimed the right "to exercise all the powers of a free, soverign and independent State" until the boundary dispute was settled.

The supreme legislative power of this republic was vested in a council of five and the first five chosen were, Phinehas Willard, Luther Parker, David Mitchell, Nathaniel Perkins and John Haynes. The Assembly was made up of all male inhabitants of Indian Stream who were 21 years of age. They could approve or reject laws and acts presented by the council. They appointed civil officers and assessed taxes for roads, bridges and schools. Peculiarly notable was a constitutional provision that annually the assembly voted yes or no as to whether any change was desirable in the constitution. If a majority voted for an amendment a committee was appointed to draw up the amendment. A two thirds vote in favor of this amendment made it a law. Thus the constitution could be changed yearly.

All between the ages of 21 and 50 were enrolled in the militia and were required to meet one day in the year for training, each militiaman furnishing his own arms and equipment.

In spite of these seeming harmonious arrangements, the small republic had difficulties from transgressors easily crossing boundary lines followed by subsequent difficulties in attempting apprehension of law breakers. Some inhabitants appealed to Lower Canada for protection and others to New Hampshire.

There was much violent talk and occasional moderately sanguinary, small battles. Luther Parker, the most outstanding leader got discouraged and moved to Wisconsin. Captain James Mooney, with fifty militiamen from New Hampshire, was sent to preserve order and in 1836 a commission from New Hampshire consisting of Joseph Low, Ralph Metcalf and John P. Hale visited the settlement and soon convinced the settlers that they belonged to New Hampshire. The inhabitants publicly acknowledged the fact by a series of resolutions, published in two newspapers of Concord, New Hampshire. The troops were removed and the independent republic, after a four year existence, ceased to exist. In 1840 the town of Pittsburgh was incorporated and in 1842 the boundary line was settled as beginning at the head of Hall's Stream. Thus ended a demonstration of the ability of a group of courageous, fair minded men, some of them with education and intellectual development, to plan and carry out in the wilderness their ideas of liberty and justice in government.

Thank you, Doctor Wilkins, for a concise yet comprehensive account of Indian Stream. And thanks also to Ted K. Clark, George Jennings Gale, S. C. Sleeper, Thomas P. Wilson, Carl J. Pebble, Paul A. Dentz, R. L. Reid (who cites the "North American Boundary Papers" published by the British Government in two volumes, Part B of which refers exclusively to the Indian Stream Territory), Dale L. Morgan and others whose information all proved most helpful.

THE following communication from H. E. Pulling, Professor of Botany at Wellesley College, Wellesley, Mass., just

arrived, and having had so much luck clearing up the Indian Stream matter via *Camp-Fire* we are hastening to give all you New Englanders another opportunity to come to the rescue and aid a fellow member of your community. Here's Professor Pulling's letter—

> Talbot Mundy's death is still something I can't get over. There must be many, like myself, who hoped that some day we should hear that Tros had really started to prove that the world was round. That we shall have one more story is good news indeed. That the same evening that I opened the copy of *Adventure* that gave the news of Mundy's death, I came across this note seems to be the kind of coincidence that would have pleased him. This note refers to an article in *Nature* for Aug. 14, 1926 that gives an account of a lecture at the Royal Institution on June 20 entitled Science in Antiquity, by J. Newton Friend. Mr. Friend said that the Druids of Caesar's time had schools that were famous among the Gauls and many students came to them from the continent. That they had devised a clock that differed from all others. It was a small bronze bowl with a hole in the bottom like a flower-pot. This was floated in water in a larger bronze bowl. That note would have been a help when Mundy was defending the Druids, wouldn't it?
>
> This took me back to the *Camp-Fire* of those years and I dug out some of the *Adventures* from the attic and read *Camp-Fire* a while. I don't know whether this is in line with the present policy of *Adventure* but a query like this would have started something then, I feel sure:
>
> Does any one in New England know where there are any of the pines that lumbermen used to call "pumpkin" pine, "bull" pine, "cork" pine? I'd like to find one to photograph and to get identifying parts, but I'd rather find a standing dead one than none. If any one would feel inclined to write to me if he knows of one I should greatly appreciate it and as a token of that appreciation send him a 5x7, 8x10, or 11x14 (whichever he'd prefer) print of the photograph I get—if conditions are such that I can get one. If any one does write, please tell me how I can find the tree (general location and someone to ask when I get there, will do) and—particularly—why he thinks it is this kind of pine—just any big pine won't do, of course. The companion to that query is: do any of the old-timers have any reason for believing that one of these pines is not just an ordinary white pine that grew where it had plenty of water, or just the right mixture of clay and sand, etc.?
>
> Anyway I wish *Adventure* the best of luck and lots of vitamins.

Indeed such a letter isn't out of line with the present policy of *Adventure*. We're mighty glad to pass it along and hope it brings results. And we'll wager that if, as and when they come it won't be to Vancouver or Salt Lake City Professor Pulling will be sending his thanks and pix.

THE American Committee for Defense of British Homes, a committee of American citizens seeking gifts of small arms and ammunition from American civilians to be sent to British civilians for the defense of British homes, and on whose list of sponsors appear many names familiar to *Adventure* readers—Major Anthony Fiala, explorer and outfitter of explorational expeditions; Gifford Pinchot, conservationist and forester; Lowell Thomas, world traveler, adventurer and news commentator, and many more—has asked us to insert the following—

> One great protection for Britain against invasion may be arms for the defense of British homes.
>
> Any American who possesses a rifle, pistol, revolver, shotgun, steel helmet, or binoculars, which he wishes to donate for the defense of British homes, may forward such a gift to the American Committee for Defense of British Homes, 10 Warren Street, New York, N. Y. The Committee will forward these arms to a civilian committee in England.
>
> There is particular need for pistols and revolvers—all types. Rifles and shotguns—using ammunition now procurable. Ammunition—for rifles (not soft nose); preferably ball or buck for shotguns. If possible, send with each firearm from 150 to 550 rounds of ammunition. Arms should be sent by express. Mails can not be used for such shipments.
>
> With invasion of Britain a momentary threat, here is one way in which Americans can help, and help before it is too late. Put a gun in the hands of an unarmed Briton to defend his home.

We are very glad to print this plea and feel sure that many readers of this magazine—sportsmen, gun-fans, World

War veterans and others—will welcome the opportunity to contribute.

VICTOR SHAW, *Ask Adventure* expert on mining and prospecting, knows the Navajo Mountain region of southern Utah too, and was naturally much interested in the material which appeared in the February *Camp-Fire* concerning the still missing (so far as we know) Donald J. Smith, a notice about whom appears in *Lost Trails*. Mr. Shaw offers the following material to supplement what C. C. Anderson, our expert on Arizona and Utah, had to say two months ago, a copy of which went immediately to the brother of the missing man. We sincerely hope it proves helpful in the search.

I have travelled over a large portion of Navajo Indian Reservation, particularly the area from FOUR CORNERS westward to the vicinity of Navajo Mt., as well also as the Carriso Mt. section and westerly from Teeznospas across Walker Creek, the Chinle Wash and the Tyende Wash, through the Keet Seel and Moonlight country. This during a pack-saddle scout to study cliff dwellings, some years back. I did not go right to Navajo Mt., but was close enough to be able to observe it in much detail from several sides. So, I wish to record what I saw:

A single, elongated peak lying practically astride of the Utah-Arizona State Line tho slightly on the Utah side and roughly ten miles due south from the *lower* San Juan River. Its elongation is about due east-west, with crest as I recall some 2000 feet in extent and quite a few small separate peaks of no great height near each end and a long shallow rounded but slightly flattened dome in the middle. At several points both well north and well south from this mountain, this skyline mentioned looks remarkably like a supine human figure, showing a head, neck, torso and long legs terminating in the upraised feet. The arms seem folded across the chest, at the proper place on the figure. I was told by a Mr. Hamilton, who then ran a trading post at Teeznospas, that all Navajos held this figure to be one of their ancient tribal gods, and for that reason considered the mountain sacred and to be avoided. The skyline peaks appeared to be about the same height, with the one indicating the feet perhaps a trifle the highest. This mountain would appear to be a single cone, viewed from either due west, or due east. Average total height probably about 4000-5000 ft. above sea level, or approximately 2500 feet above the surrounding country.

The country surrounding Navajo Mt. is like most of the northern portion of Arizona and consisting of an upper plateau of bare rock except where blown sand has drifted and been heaped up, below which at a variable depth of from 1000-1500 feet or so lie the canyon floors of the streams like Walker, Chinle, Tyende, Pinto and Navajo Washes, worn down by erosion. There is usually a fair amount of water in these streams, and looking into them from the upper plateau affords a really wonderful sight of emerald grass, peach trees blooming profusely in April and May, and the fields of Indian corn which are irrigated by small ditches taken out of the river banks. During winter rainy season and late spring these streams are in spate running full-banked as a rule. Indian pony trails lead angling down to these canyon floors from the rock plateau above. So that since the area around Navajo Mt. in a radius of some 12 to 15 miles *in all directions* is bounded by such streams, it seems to me unlikely that there would be any question of *thirst*, to one lost in this region. Piute Wash is on the east —Navajo Wash on the south and flowing into the Big Colorado on the west and hits it close to the "CROSSING OF THE FATHERS," with a trail running down to it that a horse can negotiate, and *has* done so.

Further: at the base of Navajo Mt. on its southwest side is a shelter shack known as "RAINBOW LODGE." It is the terminus of a dirt road suitable for autos which leads due south about 20 miles to what is known as "Inscription House," an inn on this tourist route called "Rainbow Trail," and which runs on south 22 miles to Tonalea (Red Lake) where there is a filling station. Now, back to Navajo Mt. . . .

From Rainbow Lodge mentioned, which is a stop-over for the curious public who travel to view the famous "Rainbow Bridge," there is a horse trail plainly visible because constantly in use which runs a bit east of north right to the well-known Rainbow Nat'l Monument and Bridge, which is about 6 miles from the Lodge. During the summer tourists travel this road and trail quite often, especially in fall when heat is less. So it seems to me there is but one possible chance of a lost man *staying* lost very long, this being if he happened to travel northeastward between the Big Colorado, and Monu-

ment Valley range to the southeastward. Traveling this direction the box-canyon of lower San Juan River would stop him, unless he chanced to slip and fall over those cliffs, which require ropes to descend. A man I know used to work a placer in there, letting self and outfit down by ropes to the river benches.

Now, moreover, there is a trading post not so very far east of Navajo Mt. which is right in Monument Valley and known as "Goulding's Post." It is almost due east from the mountain about 38 miles airline, and 1½ or 2 miles only from the Utah-Ariz. State Line. It is roughly 60 miles from Four Corners monument. Used to be a trading post right at this 4-Corners Monument, but I haven't heard whether it still is there.

However, mark this: a message, letter, or wire, directed to the Indian Agent, Shiprock, N. M., stating the facts connected with the loss of one Donald J. Smith, giving description etc., time in that region, has I believe the best chance of meeting with success in tracing his trail. Not only are the Indian Police constantly through all the Reservation, but they pick up everything of this nature gleaned from Indians everywhere, via "moccasin telegraph"—which I know from experience travels AHEAD of anyone who travels across or in this particular Reservation. Indians in the Chinle country knew who I was and all about me, before I ever saw them as I mooched along with my pack outfit taking it easy. Sooner or later, word of such a "lost hombre" would trickle in to Shiprock, anyhow, always providing he IS LOST? It is my hunch, that this young chap has gone somewhere just following his nose, maybe on trail of a job, or of those "little ponies," or something perhaps that he had just found, etc. Only real danger there in August would be rattlers in rock-piles, outside of a possible slip and fall on some cliff-edge, both of these rather remote, I think.

LAST month, you'll recall, we had to break off spang in the middle of Howard Bloomfield's account of his cruise south. Lack of space forced us to leave him aground in the mouth of the Alligator River, just having crossed Albemarle Sound. We'll let H. B. get himself off that bar now and continue with the log of the *Kittiwake*.

Couldn't move her under power, didn't dare run up the jib because the wind would have ripped it, and anyhow I might have driven the boat further ashore because I didn't know where the deeper water lay.

I was in the middle of these cogitations when the wind slewed us around and we bumped off into deeper water, with no damage. Then the squall lifted and we were in the channel—it must have been a big lump of dredge mud. This was followed by an afternoon of rain, through which I sat and stood at the tiller, soaking it up. You know how that goes—the cockpit seats are wet, so you turn over a cushion and sit on the dry side. Sitting on it puts a dent in it, and all the rain that hits it runs downhill. You rear out of that pond and stand. I was in a mood anyway, because I had sworn off cigarettes that morning. My wife hunted high and low and there wasn't one aboard.

We went up the Alligator about eighteen miles, it being about a mile wide, and all cypress swamp on the shores and no habitation of any kind, and just before dusk I sounded a few hundred feet away from the markers and dropped anchor, thirty-odd miles from the next settlement. The dog wanted to go ashore. I put her in the dinghy, and set out. If you contemplate rowing around a cypress swamp in the dark, looking for a bit of dry land for a dog, I may say it is a waste of time. I had to give up, finally. Just cut out the whole incident of the dog if you want, as editorial dignity is not my problem.

It surprised me how much wilderness we've got on our eastern seaboard. Commonly a motorboat or two would pass us in the morning, and we'd see no more that day. We had several days without seeing any kind of yacht bound south, and one long day without seeing any boat of any kind in a run of ten hours. The cypress swamps and the great areas of abandoned rice fields have never been settled, and never could be. You can't go ashore in either because you'd go right up to your neck. It's possible to have a breakdown or trouble of some kind, drop your hook, and wait a day and a night for the first boat to come along.

There's plenty of wild life—ducks and herons and buzzards, bald eagles and so on—and on the Pasquotank River below the Dismal Swamp Canal a bear swam across a quarter mile ahead. From what I heard, deer and bear and wildcats and alligators are plentiful in the swamplands, and pretty safe from hunters.

More from H. B. in next month's *Camp-Fire*. We're still envying him, sitting here watching the sleet pour down into East 42 St. Well, at least we don't have to contend with swamp water when we walk the dog!—K. S. W.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

EXPERT to expert!

Request:—It may seem a little strange to get an "Adventure letter" from another Ask Adventure "expert" but I wonder if you could help me out.

I am preparing a book on American travel and vacations to be released this spring by Whittlesey House and it occurred to me that an interesting chapter might be made of "Cowboys and Indians" describing some of the unusual western and southwestern rodeos which take place annually, as well as information on Indians—where to see them, the best times of the year, any special fiestas or tribal ceremonies they have that would be especially worth while visiting for the average tourist throughout the year.

It was with great interest that I read your A. A. reply in the current issue, describing the Indian reservation at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, and I clipped this. I wonder if you could possibly find time to send me any additional information on Indians or other unusual travel suggestions for the Southwest. This information will be of great aid to me and, of course, will be fully credited.

If I can supply you with any further information on the project, please don't hesitate to let me know.

With many advance thanks and kindest personal wishes,

—Robert Spiers Benjamin, c/o *Adventure*

Reply by H. F. Robinson:—I have your letter of November 27th regarding giving you some information about "Cowboys and Indians" for a chapter in a forthcoming book upon which you are engaged.

You certainly have picked out something rather large for a small place, for I have in ms. a book about the Indians here in the Southwest which, without preface, Table of Contents and indices covers some 250 pages or way over 100,000 words, which will give you an idea of the amount of material that might be used!

To list the Indian tribes in New Mexico and Arizona: Navajos, over 50,000 of them. Pueblos—18 separate ones and over twenty-five villages—eight or nine thousand. Apaches, Jicarilla in the north part of the state and Mescaleros further south. Utes and a few Paiutes and Lapans. Arizona has the Navajos, Pimas, Maricopas, Papagos, Havasupai, Hualpi, Chimehueva, Mojaves, Cocopahs, Yumas and a few others. This list is from memory only.

I am not up on the dates of celebrations and dances of many of the tribes in Arizona, but can pretty well tell you of those of New Mexico. I have lived down in the neck of the woods for about 52 years, 29 of which was in the Government Indian Service as Irrigation Engineer, so I have some background in the matter.

Perhaps the best thing to do is to give you a partial list of the various so-called dances (most of which are religious ceremonies) by months, and that will give a start from which you can work, and a basis for further inquiries.

Approximate date	Kind of Ceremony	Place.
JANUARY		
New Year's dances		Many of the Pueblos
6th	Installation of newly elected officers	Most of the Pueblos
6th	Eagle Dance	San Ildefonso
Middle of month	Sword Swallowers	Zuni
23d	Fiesta and Buffalo Dance	San Ildefonso
FEBRUARY		
2d	Children's Dance	San Felipe
15	Turtle Dance	Taos
No set dates	Hunting Dances	Many of the pueblos
MARCH		
Various dates	Opening the Irrigation Ditches	Many of the pueblos
Various dates	Seed ceremonies	San Juan, Taos, San Ildefonso.
Sundays	Woman's Shinny games	Various pueblos
Last Sunday	Blue Bird Dance	San Ildefonso
APRIL		
Variable date	Chongo Races	Isleta
About 15th	Initiation Ceremonies	Zuni
Easter Sunday	Fertility Dance	San Ildefonso
	Corn Dance	Santo Domingo
	Spring celebration Dances	San Felipe Various other pueblos
MAY		
1	Great Corn Dance	
	Feast Day of St. Phillip	San Felipe
3	Ceremonial races	Taos
	Feast Day	(Not Indian, strictly) Santa Cruz and other native Villages.
JUNE		
8	Corn Dance	Taos
13	St. Anthony's Day	Pojoaque Taos
25	Santiago Day. Chicken Pull, etc.	Santo Domingo
JULY		
About the 4th	Apache Dances	Mescalero Apache or at Alamo Gordo.
14	Corn Dance	Cochiti
25	San Antonio Dances	Taos
26	Dance	Santa Ana
28	Dance	Taos
Variable date	Rain Dances	Zuni
Variable date	Katchini Dances	Hopi
AUGUST		
2	Old Pecos Dance	Jemez
4	Green Corn Dance	Santo Domingo (One of the finest dances to be seen).
10	San Lorenzo Day	Nambe and Picuris
12	Santa Clara Dance	Santa Clara Pueblo
15	*Dia de la Virgin*	Zuni and Zia
28	St. Augustine Day	Isleta
Variable dates	Doll dance and Rain dance	Zuni
Variable dates	Snake Dances (usually two or three)	Hopi

SEPTEMBER		
2	Celebration	Acoma
6	Harvest Dance	San Ildefonso
15?	Encampment and dances	Jicarilla Apache at Horse Lake
	Flute Ceremony	Jemez
16-18	Navajo Fair	Window Rock
19	St. Joseph Day	Laguna
29-30	San Geronimo dances	Taos
Variable date	Nan-zrau-tu	Hopi
1st Week OCTOBER	Navajo Fair	Shiprock (Usually includes dances)
4		Nambe
Variable dates After the first frost or "When the Thunder Sleeps"	Hunting Dances	Various Pueblos
	Yei-bi-chi and Fire Dances	Various places on Navajo Res.
NOVEMBER		
1	All Souls Day, Dawn Ceremony	Taos
12	Fiesta of San Diego	Jemez and Teseque
No set date	Wa-wu-chi-ma Ceremony	Hopi
No set date	Shaliko Ceremony	Zuni
DECEMBER		
During Christmas Week	Hunting dances	Various pueblos
Christmas Eve		San Felipe, Laguna, Isleta and Taos
Christmas Day		Jemez, Santo Domingo, Tesque, San Felipe and others.
26-27	Children Dance	Santo Domingo
No set date	Sol-ya-lang-eu	Hopi.

This is not a complete list by any means, and frequently there are extra and special ceremonies thrown in for good measure. Among the non-sedentary Indians, the dates are not, as a usual thing, set at regular times, but occur when the necessity or occasion arises

Now in addition to these strictly Indian celebrations there are other times and places where there are Indian dances, and other ceremonies, many of them by the so-called "natives" who are the Spanish Americans whose forefathers came in 400 years ago with the conquistadores.

Ash Wednesday and Easter bring the rites of *Los Hermanos Penitentes* which may be seen at a number of out of the way settlements. The Papago Indians also put on a great celebration and a play at Easter, near Tucson and Casa Grande.

On Easter Morning we have Sunrise ceremonies in the Aztec Ruins, near Aztec, New Mexico, on the rim of the Grand Canyon and at Albuquerque, and a sunset ceremony at the White Sands.

May 5th is the Mexican Independence day (La Cinco de Mayo) which is celebrated in many places where those of Mexican blood reside.

May 26 is the Feast Day of San Felipe de Neri, and as he is the patron saint of Old Albuquerque, there is quite a celebration.

June 19 Corpus Christi Sunday is given a big celebration in Santa Fe, as is the 26th of the month when there is a church procession which has been held annually there for 400 years.

In August—date changes from year to year but between the 17th and the 25th usually—a three days celebration of the Inter-tribal Indian Ceremonial. Last year there were representatives of over 60 tribes there from as far as Montana and Oklahoma.

September is the Santa Fe Annual Fiesta for three or four days with Indian and native dances etc. and a pageant of the *entrada* of De Vargas. Santa Fe also has a celebration of the saint day of Saint Francis de Assisi.

In October is the State Fair at Albuquerque and the Cotton Fair at Roswell. In December in the village of Tortugas a celebration of Our Lady of Guadelupe.

And last but not least the wonderful

lights and celebration for three weeks at the mining village of Madrid, which would take several pages to describe. People are coming from all over the country to see this, and the TWA planes out at night pass over the village so the passengers may see it.

Now as to the Rodeos.

Personally I am not so much interested in these and cannot give you very much information as to the various ones held in the state; but I will list at least some of the ones held annually. There are others put on for some single occasion or in connection with some special celebration, and I am not in position to give any data regarding these, of course.

JUNE—Clovis has an annual rodeo I believe, in June, but cannot give the dates.

JULY—This is the big month for rodeos. July 2-4 one at Silver City and at Carlsbad. 3-4 One at Aztec. July 4th at Grants, Cimarron, Clayton and Madrid. 29-31 or about these dates, Hobbs.

AUGUST Date unknown. Tucumcati.

SEPTEMBER First week. Magdalena, and a three day celebration at Deming. Fair and Rodeo at Portales. Bean day and Rodeo at Wagon Mound. They cook and serve free the New Mexico Pinto Beans. This last year they served considerably over one thousand people. 29th Fiesta and Rodeo at San Miguel, and the Annual Fiesta of three days at Santa Fe. Rodeo at Tularosa.

OCTOBER State Fair—eight days with horse racing etc. at Albuquerque. Fiesta Day of St. Francis of Assisi in Santa Fe. Columbus Day at Santa Fe.

Not knowing just how you are intending to present this I am at a loss just how to put this—and I would ask that you excuse the crude way I have put this and many typographical errors—for I have compiled this from numerous sources at hand without trying to write it out and then rewriting it in good shape.

New Mexico has many hundreds of miles of paved roads in the state, and it is possible to get around to many, if not most of the places mentioned. I am enclosing a road map of the state which will show the roads, the Indian pueblos and reservations, and it also lists the National Monuments, National Forests, State Parks, State Monuments and other points of interest. Also a list of the larger towns with population and elevation. We have all kinds of climate and

(Continued on page 118)

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Think of it! Here's a surprising yet simple-acting invention that permits Nature to close the opening—that holds the rupture securely but gently, day and night, at work and at play! Thousands of grateful letters express heartfelt thanks for results beyond the expectation of the writers. What is this invention—How does it work? Will it help me? Get the complete, fascinating facts on the Brooks Automatic Air Cushion Appliance—send now for *free* Rupture Book.

Cheap—Sanitary—Comfortable

Rich or poor—ANYONE can afford to buy this remarkable, LOW-PRICED rupture invention! But look out for imitations and counterfeits. The Genuine Brooks Air-Cushion Truss is never sold in stores or by agents. Your Brooks is made up, after your order is received, to fit your particular case. You buy direct at the low "maker-to-user" price. The perfected Brooks is sanitary, lightweight, inconspicuous. Has no hard pads to gouge painfully into the flesh, no stiff, punishing springs, no metal girdle to rust or corrode. It brings heavenly comfort and security—while the Automatic Air Cushion continually works, in its own, unique way, *to help Nature get results!* Learn what this patented invention can mean to you—send coupon quick!

PROOF!

Read These Reports on Reducible Rupture Cases.

(In our files at Marshall, Michigan, we have over 33,000 grateful letters which have come to us entirely unsolicited and without any sort of payment.)

Likes Brooks Best

"I bought one of your Rupture Appliances in 1933, wore it day and night for one year and laid it aside last December. The rupture hasn't bothered me since. I used several others without success until I got a Brooks."—J. B. McCarter, Route 2, Box 104, Oregon City, Ore.

"Runs and Plays"

"My son has not worn the Appliance for over a year. He wore one for ten years and I am very grateful now to think he has laid it aside. He is twelve years old, runs and plays hard like all boys and is never bothered about the rupture."—Mrs. M. George, Route 1, Box 103, Cumberland, Md.

C. E. BROOKS, Inventor

SENT ON TRIAL!

No . . . don't order a Brooks now—FIRST get the complete revealing explanation of this world-famous rupture invention. THEN decide whether you want the comfort—the freedom from fear and worry—the security—the same amazing results thousands of men, women and children have reported. They found our invention the answer to their prayers! Why can't you? And you risk nothing as the complete appliance is SENT ON TRIAL. Surely you owe it to yourself to investigate this no-risk trial. Send for the facts now—today—hurry! All correspondence strictly confidential.

Mail This Coupon NOW!

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.
458-M State St., Marshall, Mich.

Without obligation, please send your FREE Book on Rupture, Proof of Results, and TRIAL OFFER—all in plain envelope.

Name----------

Street----------

City---------- *State*----------

State whether for Man ☐ *Woman* ☐ *or Child* ☐

FREE! Latest Rupture Book Explains All!

Sent You in Plain Envelope **Just Clip and Send Coupon ➡**

Brooks Appliance Co., 458-M State St., Marshall, Mich.

(Continued from page 116)

weather—the latter mostly good! Already we are having snow sports—tho they are just beginning, and skiing on improved runways may be had out from Santa Fe and Albuquerque. According to the elevation we have all of the zones of flora and fauna from the Lower Sonoran to the Alpine. Plenty of hunting and fishing in season. Plenty of deer, some bear, an open season on antelope and a very limited one on elk. Plenty of trout, both lake and stream varieties and fine bass fishing at Elephant Butte.

Well, if this is not just what you wanted, and if you want something else, let me know and I will try and help you out.

BUFFALO for a Grand Duke!

Request:—Some time ago I read a story about Genghis Khan and his Mongolian horde in which the author mentioned that the arrows were feathered with horsehair and that special whistling arrows were used for signalling. I do not remember the name of the author but believe it was Talbot Mundy, who was always accurate in such things.

Can you tell me how such feathering was done and how the whistling arrows were made or where I can get the information?

I have been messing around with archery for several years, made several bows, long, flat and rectangular section and today while trying to make some wild goose feathers stick to the shafts began to wonder if horsehair wouldn't be easier.

Most of my game so far has been edible bull frogs and snapping turtles. I was really surprised to see how a couple of shafts will soften up a big snapper.

One of my patients was telling me yesterday that his grandfather was one of the party when Grand Duke Alexis of Russia was hunting buffalo North West of here some 70 or 80 years ago. One of the stunts the Indians put on for his entertainment was to ride alongside a buffalo and shoot an arrow entirely through the animal so the arrow stopped on the ground. The arrow penetrated high just back of the short ribs and made its exit low on the other side.

—W. R. Caine, D. C., McCook, Neb.

Reply by Earl B. Powell:—I have just received your letter of the 27th ult., which was forwarded to me for reply.

(Continued on page 120)

PRESTO! ANYONE CAN MASTER GLAZE

LEAVES HARD GLASS-LIKE FINISH

SEALS THE PORES OF THE SURFACE

EASY TO APPLY

PROTECTS THE SURFACE

WILL NOT FINGER-MARK

NO OILY FILM AS WITH POLISH

EASY TO KEEP CLEAN

NO SMEAR OR STREAKS AS WITH WAX

LASTS SIX MONTHS TO A YEAR

SAVES YOU MONEY

It's Different! AMAZING NEW GLAZE BEAUTIFIES and PROTECTS

Car Owners Praise MASTER GLAZE

I have used a great many polishes, and waxes, but will say Master Glaze is the winner. Clarence Gray, Calif.

IT LOOKS SWELL

Master Glaze is the best I have ever used and is put on the easiest. I glazed my car last Sunday, and boy!—does it look swell. Lewis Thompson, Ill.

STANDS THE TEST

Master Glaze has been put to the test here directly in front of the Atlantic, where the salt spray with the fine beach sand, including road dirt, form a heavy film on paint. Your Cleaner lifted the film and brought back the original shine. H. M. Chambers, N. J.

LONG LASTING

Used Master Glaze on my car last summer. It stood up all winter in good shape. Now my friends are asking about it, so will sell. A. Stonis, Ill.

SELLS 8 IN HOUR

Master Glazed a car on a demonstration in the parking lot and sold eight sets within one hour. I am delighted with it as a fine product and as a good seller. Edmund M. Blanken, Pa.

VERY MUCH PLEASED

Received shipment of 96 sets and have been very much pleased with the way it sells. It out-demonstrates any and every type of cleaner and polish I have seen. Dave Jones, Mont.

CAR Owners! Meet MASTER GLAZE—the sensationally different luster for new and used cars!

Not a wax—not an oil polish—not a paint—nothing that "smears" over the surface. It's a creamy liquid—quick and easy to apply. A matchbox full is enough to glaze an entire car! Enables every motorist to keep his car finish sparkling—beautiful as a showroom car. Also amazingly restores gleaming luster to dull weather-beaten cars. Gives a hard glass-like surface without smear or streaks! Nothing like it!

Millions of motorists have the problem of keeping their cars looking new. They all want gleaming, shiny, streak-free appearance without hard work and rubbing. Now with this new and different Master Glaze method, anyone can quickly and easily Master Glaze his car, obtaining sparkling brilliance, with a beautiful, smooth, mirror-like surface.

Master Glaze is so durable—so protective to the surface—that even washing with gasoline does not affect its brilliant luster. Lasts six months to a year!

It's Fun To MASTER GLAZE

It's really a pleasure to Master Glaze. You almost feel like a magician when you see the quickness and ease with which you can transform your car into a thing of gleaming beauty. New cars and good paint jobs are entitled to this protection—old cars with dull paint almost instantly look like different cars. No experience is required. Even a child can Master Glaze.

New Car Beauty SAVES YOU MONEY

Master Glaze glorifies the beauty of your car, protects the finish, and saves you money. Less washing, less polishing, less work. You will have a more beautiful car to drive, and a car whose resale value will always be more. You owe it to yourself and to your car to find out about Master Glaze. Send your name for free booklet and free trial offer.

AGENTS - **Write for Big Profit and Free Offer Plan**

Choice territories open. You can make big money taking care of local business and get Master Glaze for your own car free by helping introduce it. Don't delay. Send the free offer coupon today!

MASTER GLAZE CO.
7720-234 W. Harwood Ave., Milwaukee, Wis.

FREE OFFER COUPON

MASTER GLAZE COMPANY,
7720-234 W. Harwood Ave., Milwaukee, Wis.

Gentlemen: Please send your FREE illustrated booklet and tell me how I can get Master Glaze for my own car. This does not obligate me in any way.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY..... STATE.....

(Continued from page 118)

As far as I know—there is nothing on earth which will take the place of feathers on an arrow, and in all my research, historical and otherwise, nothing but feathers will do on any kind of arrows shot by holding them in the hand. Of course on the crossbow, various things have been used, such as horn, fibre, thin wood plates, metal, etc., but they are not held in the hands. Also some flight arrows used in modern archery are vaned with celluloid, etc., but it has nothing to do with good shooting. I don't think that horsehair would be any good if you could use it, and in my honest opinion it would take a day to fasten enough hairs on an arrow to do any good. The hairs were possibly made for ornament, just as Indians used to use down between the front ends of feathers, etc.

The author was probably Harold Lamb. He uses that locale a lot and I think Talbot Mundy never wrote a story about Tartars. I have worked around Harold Lamb on pictures, and he is a nice, quiet, shy sort of chap whom you would never think of as a famous author. Just like I know one of the editors of Field & Stream who is a man who has adventures by the dozen and faced death with a smile, and he is a little chap with a grin, weighing about 130 lbs.—but all MAN. I remember him being asked "When you dropped that Kadiak bear in ten feet of you were you afraid?" He replied I did not have time to get scared, but I did swallow a chew of tobacco I had in my mouth." His name is Harold McCracken.

The Indian you mention as shooting the buffalo for the entertainment of Grand Duke Alexis, shot the buffalo in the favorite spot of the horse Indians, i.e. a raking shot across the kidneys, which puts an animal hors du combat in short order, as it is fatal and painfully sickening before it kills. Gray never wrote an anatomy on buffalo, but the buffalo is enough like a man in that region that an arrow could traverse a lot of meat without hitting a bone. I had two years in medical college, but they did not teach about buffalo. However it is close enough.

Well we have been having so much warm weather here (So. Calif.) that I would like a few days of snow to make me feel like a white man.

Wish I knew where to get some wild goose or turkey feathers, as the wild ones are stronger than the domestic and also the goose feathers stand the damp.

CHILLED shot and dry weather.

Request:—I am writing you in regard to a question that has had me puzzled. I have been told by a good many hunters that chilled shot will damage a shotgun barrel, is there any truth in that statement? I can't see how it can be true as it looks to me that if such a statement is true the gun manufacturers would warn the sportsmen and tell them not to use chilled shot. Will appreciate your opinion. I have a Winchester pump gun, model 97, which I like fine, also like grouse shooting, and like the Winchester Leader shell, 3¼ drams of powder, ounce and 1⅛ of shot, chilled, as I have found this load very effective on both grouse and quail, but if chilled shot damages a gun barrel I sure don't want to use it. What is your opinion?

The grouse and quail have seemed to be very scarce this year in the southern part of this state. Would dry weather have any effect on this condition, as it has been very dry so far this fall?

—H. Q. Cox, 825 Frederick St., Bluefield, W. Va.

Reply by P. H. Glover:—Chilled shot have no harmful effect whatsoever on a shot gun barrel. The advent of smokeless powder resulted in higher breach pressures and greater velocity. This caused a fairly large per cent of the soft shot to be deformed in the cone and choke, and resulted in more shot lagging behind or striking outside of the killing pattern. With the chilled shot you get higher velocities, better pattern and better penetration. Chilled shot are used altogether in trap shooting and the average professional or higher class amateur fires thousands of shells a year.

Dry weather might have a harmful effect sometimes on the grouse and quail crop, but only if the drouth was so severe as to dry up the water supplies and decrease the natural feed, as a rule a cold wet spring does much more harm. This is the case in Maine this year. We had a month of rain during the grouse nesting and hatching season last spring, and as a consequence the crop is decidedly below normal.

KEEPING warm in the Arctic.

Request:—Please give me the low down on the "Yukon Stove." It is a wood burning stove and must be a portable type. It is likely for sale in many places in Alaska but who makes it and

can it be obtained in the states and where? There is really no suitable, well advertised wood burning stove on the market that I know of.

—C. P. Fordyce,
118½ N 8th
St. Joseph, Mo.

Reply by Victor Shaw:—Concerning the old-time Yukon Stove, this mighty good heater is still used quite a bit in Alaska, although modern types have competed to a large extent for the past 15-20 years. There are many Alaska outfitters in Seattle, fully equipped for most everything needed, but I'm very doubtful if many of them still carry any "Yukons." If any of these did, it would be the largest, which is the Seattle Hardware Co., still doing a big business there as they did back in 1898, when I first went to Alaska. Might write them, just addressing them as above, though I recall they're on First Ave.

As for Alaska itself, I doubt if you'd be able to find any of this type of camp stove short of Fairbanks, though possibly Seward.

Might write the Sampson Hardware Co., Fairbanks; also try out the Brown & Hawkins Corp'n, Seward, Alaska. Best place in Ketchikan is the Tongass Trading Co, general outfitters and gen'l merchandise.

Here's a pointer, tho: I've myself up there used and preferred a home-made thing built from an empty oil drum of various sizes. Can be made to use upright, or laying on side. Cut hole at bottom for door, and make door of piece cut out but with hinges. Cut hole in top for 6-inch stove pipe turning *up* sections all around to serve as bottom support for pipe to run up thru roof. Also cut a large hole in top to feed fuel, in this upright type, with a lower small door used for an ash-remover. Have a full-sized heavy sheet-iron cover for top, cooking and/or hot-water boiler. Either type will take 3-4 ft. cordwood sticks and with a fitted damper will burn all night with a terrific heat. Can't use fully in summer. Get these drums in any coast town for 50c to $1.00.

A list of our *Ask Adventure* experts appears on pages 124-5-7-8. Consult these men when you want information you can't get elsewhere.

(Continued from page 6)

tur, Iowa. If Mr. Rounds is living, he will learn something to his material advantage by immediately communicating with Julian C. Hammack, Counsellor at Law, Munsey Bldg., Washington, D. C.

Wanted information of J. C. Johnson, born in Cairo, Ill., July 24, 1902; attended Elmwood School. Father was a steamboat man, Christian or Crispen Johnson. Write H. L. Beasley, mgr., The Hobby Shop, Centralia, Ill.

About eleven years ago I knew Ned Dixie in Belmont, Mass. Anyone having any knowledge of his whereabouts kindly contact Robert G. Lindsay, 133 Fenno St., Revere, Mass.

Clayton Isabel and Red Lewis, write me at once. Bill LaRue, Parrottsville, Tenn.

In 1914, I located a long lost brother through "Lost Trails." Will you run the following for me?—Roscoe I. Smith born in Nickerson, Kansas, March 12, 1889. Sometimes known as Art Smith or Frank Smith. Please write your brother Harry C. Smith, 3820 Flower St., Bell, Calif. My father is very old now and while we did find one brother through your magazine in 1914 and have stayed in touch ever since, the one lost sheep means more to my father than the others.

David Delauie, pronounced De-law-ya—was in Marines at Great Lakes in 1923-24; discharged in Quantico, Va.; worked as bridge riveter; was going to Utica, N. Y. when discharged. Would like to hear from him. L. A. Pratt, 3512 Lake Park Av., Chicago, Ill.

I should like to contact any of the translators who served with me in the Bureau of Naval Intelligence (Cable Censorship) at 20 Broad St., New York City, during the first World War.—G. M. Patison, P. O. Box 128, Hollywood, Cal.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Av., Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY. 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 840 Copeland Ave., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, New York City.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl. Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

(Continued on page 127)

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, financial backing or employment.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)*

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 1325 So. Main St., Princeton, Ill.

Coins: *and Medals*—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing: *salt water, bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure.*

Football—JOHN B. FOSTER, care of *Adventure.*

Globe-trotting and vagabonding—ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure.*

Health Building Activities, Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 70 Colonial sq., Burlington, Vt.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 952 No. Hudson Av., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: foreign and American makes; wing shooting—P. H. GLOVER, Harrington, Maine.

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec, Can.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

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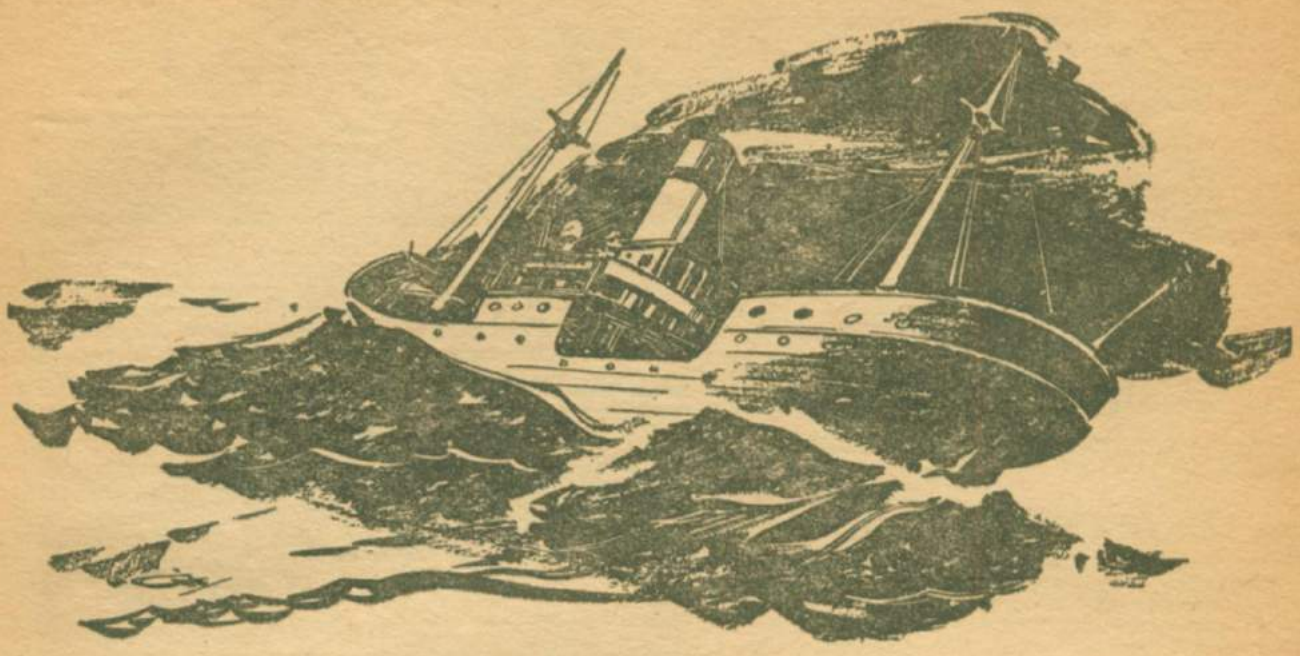
Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

(Continued on page 127)

THE TRAIL AHEAD



"EAST OF THE WILLIWAW"

and West of Punta Arenas; South of the bottom of the world and North of old Cape Stiff! That's the setting of this thrilling new four-part novel by

LESLIE T. WHITE

which begins in the MAY issue. Laid on the mammoth island *estancia, Le Querancia,* whose fertile acres, buffeted by the nonesuch storms that whip the Straits of Magellan into an unnavigable maelstorm, offer haven to Nazi sea-raiders, gulfer bands of escaped convicts from the Argentine penal settlements and colonists who seek only to escape the turmoil of the world outside, it is as timely as tomorrow's newspaper in its action—as eternal as time itself in its characters and plot.

You're going to meet Jeffrey Wynn, young American who found himself heir to *Le Querancia* and the danger that lay there—Maté Cocito, the gaucho who led the gulfer band—Kurt Faber, the flying big game hunter who found himself after bigger game than any he had ever hunted before—Dame Sarah Montagu, eighty and a termagent, whose bark was exactly as bad as her bite, and both were poison—Shirley, whose father was in the grimmest danger-spot any man could be in, and who had to decide whether to save him or a thousand other lives with which she had no tie. *Adventure* readers will be talking about this story long after they finish reading it as well as—

"The Enlistment of Joe Lightning," by Louis C. Goldsmith, a novelette of our army in the Phillippines; "Attention to Orders," and "There's Always a First Time," the final lessons in the martial education of young Lieutenant Peter Dickoe of His Majesty's Marines on the Channel Station to guard England from invasion, by R. W. Daly; "Mosshorn Law," a distinctly different Western by Kenneth Perkins; the last instalment of Robert Ormond Case's "Freeze and Be Damned;" plus the usual departments and features you won't find anywhere but in—

Adventure

(Continued from page 125)

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

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, 1091 Springdale Rd., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure*.

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Av., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *anywhere in No. America. Outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, 11628½ Mayfield Ave., West Los Angeles, Calif.

The Merchant Marine. GORDON MACALLISTER care of *Adventure*.

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3320 Kossuth Ave., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, care of *Adventure*.

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*.

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 156 Joralemon St., Belleville, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—MAJOR GLEN R. TOWNSEND, care of *Adventure*.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 81 Church St., Fair Haven, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC CAVADAS, King Edw. H. S., Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, 81 Church St., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS care of *Adventure*.

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Conner Field, Quartzsite, Ariz.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure*.

★**New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Ingle Nook," 39 Cornelia St., Wiley Park, N. S. W.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Hawaii Equal Rights Comm., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon.*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure*. **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet, Southern, Eastern and Central China.*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure*. **3** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3 Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **5** ★*Palestine.*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.*—CAPT. H. W.

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EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.* —GORDON MACCREAGH, 2231 W. Harbor Drive, St. Petersburg, Florida. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **4** *Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa.*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia.*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durbin, Natal, So. Africa.

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