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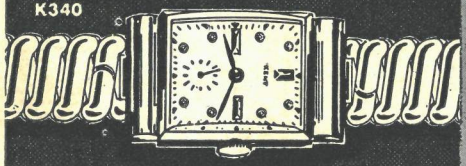

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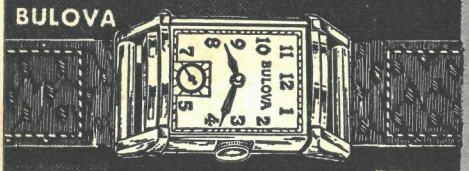

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Vol. 117, No. 3 for July, 1947 Best of New Stories

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Cover painted for Adventure by Peter Stevens
Kenneth S. White, Editor

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

STEVE FRAZEE, whose "Shotguns at Shavano" marks his first appearance on our contents page, writes to introduce himself and his story—

More deer seasons ago than I care to remember accurately I let the bounding buck go right on bounding while I digressed to explore a ghost camp just under timberline in the Colorado Rockies. The postoffice cubby holes still held mail undelivered for twenty years. One deserted cabin had the rock-hard remains of food in pans on a rusting stove. There were still whiskey bottles on the back bar of a saloon—and every damned one was empty! The whole camp was the ghostliest ghoster I ever saw. From the impressions I got there came the setting for "Shotguns" but, like a good many yarns, it was years before I got around to writing it.

My own background?

I was born and ran wild in the mining camps of Colorado, caught my first fish when I was four and for one season wouldn't fish in any other hole than the one that delivered that initial trout. Later I expanded my field and since have tried every stream and lake that necessitates a ten-mile pack trip over terrain that would disgust a helicopter. I also tried four years of college in Colorado and found myself a bit short when it came time to cash in at the end of the bout. So I went back six years later. The duck hunting wasn't quite so good then and I managed to collect four majors, a paternal belch from the trustee who handed out diplomas and a beautiful wife. For another wife like that I'd even go back to college. But she won't let me.

My employment record makes me shudder every time I am forced to fill out one of those sheets that has about one em of space for dates you can't remember anyway and three long lines for: Why did they fire you? One of the best jobs I had as a lad was crumbling dry horse manure into a leaky sawmill boiler that blew up one day while I was gathering a fresh supply of Old Dobbin's Sealing Compound. After that I went to Baltimore and did sheet metal work for a building contractor.

Then I built a few roads in Colorado for a contractor who went broke; edited a trade magazine in Hollywood that went after the sawmill boiler; did a year in vaudeville and *it* expired shortly afterward. Thinking I had a blighted touch, I rushed back to Colorado and operated a gold mine for four years. It prospered, but one day I discovered there was no seat in my pants and no soles on my shoes; so I patched the pants and raked the caked drilling mud out of my beard and charged to a half-hearted embrace with that harlot, Publicity. She palled in time and I went back to get a fresh breath of air from the exhausts of diesel dozers and to watch clean earth being moved. I was deep in the mud of Eastern Kansas. The war, remember? I bounced around as a gunner's mate on a DE in the Pacific. Only I nearly was killed by a case of canned pumpkin that broke loose from topside stores on the torpedo deck. That made me angry, So I came home (after the war) and wrote a novel about all the helpless enlisted characters who almost got killed by canned pumpkin and such. That made the book publishers mad. My wife had our second child

(Continued on page 137)

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Barton stopped three blows with his face before the taste of his own blood cooled his fury.

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF

SHOTGUNS AT SHAVANO

By STEVE FRAZEE

BILL BARTON sat comfortably on blue leather and grinned across the desk at Joe Parks. "You're doing all right for a guy whose sack was on top of torpedoes for three years, Joe."

Parks grinned back. "Life was simpler then, wasn't it?" He rubbed his fingers on the desk top and frowned. "Sometimes I think warheads were easier to handle than this business. I'm not kicking though."

"Yes, you are," Barton said slowly. He studied a large photograph of smug bulls knee-deep in straw. "Something gnawing on you, Joe?" His eyes flicked from the picture to rest steadily on Parks' face.

Parks returned the look quietly. He rose and walked across the room to a large window. He was a trim, slender man, decisive in every movement. His back to Barton, he stared through the open window, running one hand through closely cropped red hair.

Barton sat quietly. A wide grin enlivened the rather sober features of his dark face. "Nervous out of the service, eh?" Barton exaggerated his habitual slow speech into a drawl. "An old hulk at twenty-four. You'll really be ready for Red Lead Row when you're twenty-five—like me. But life is hard; those beautiful gals out there typing—more'n we used to see in years, remember? This is the Parks Building, and that smoke on the hill is your smoke, coming from a mill that's probably lousy with rich Parks ore." Barton sighed.

"Every so often I asked the bus driver who that ranch belonged to and he kept saying 'One of Parks' places' until I got disgusted and fell asleep. But—if a few months of struggle and privation have got you down, you'd better go back to Subic Bay to recuperate."

Parks' smile was fleeting as he turned to look at the broad, grinning figure. "Have you been doing much besides fishing, Bill?"

"No—and that's something I forgot. I notice tailings fouling the river below Parkstown and—"

"I'm having that taken care of. Dad was a little careless about things like that." Parks paused for words. "You figured that wire was something about a job?"

Barton sighed. "Any way I tried to decode it, that sad fact hung out like an LST in a fish bowl."

PARKS walked over and sat on one corner of the desk. He had difficulty trying to speak casually. "The last man who tried this job was found two days ago in the Las Animas River. He'd been blown half in two by shotgun charges. I wired you an hour later."

Barton stared. "Some job!" His brown eyes were sober as he reached in his jacket pocket for pipe and tobacco. "What's the dope, chum?"

Parks sat down behind his desk and ran both hands through his hair. "Dad always dabbled in gold mining—the one thing he never made a dime at. After wartime restrictions on gold mining were lifted, he reopened his favorite dud—the Ajax Mine at Shavano. It's the only one working there. He put Curly Ivers in charge. That was about nine months ago.

"I think Dad was more surprised than anyone when the mine started to produce a little low grade gold ore. But after Dad died the Ajax started to send out some terrific stuff." Parks pulled a drawer, took out a sheet and walked around to Barton. "Take a look at those settlement figures."

While Barton studied the figures, Parks walked back to his chair and sat down, watching the other sharply.

"Whee-yoo!" Barton whistled. He glanced up at Parks, then resumed his scrutiny of the sheet. After a while he laid the sheet on his leg and looked up at Parks with one eyebrow cocked.

"What the hell are you running up there—a mint or a gravel pit?"

"That's what I'd like to find out. Or for you to, I mean."

Parks shook a cigarette from a pack on the desk and lit it from flame that sprang from the mouth of a bronze figure of a bucking horse. He tossed the heavy lighter over to Barton, whose pipe was dead. Barton raised the sheet again and at the same time sucked thoughtfully at the flame. Without raising his eyes he tossed the lighter back to Parks.

"According to this, your ore was not so good at first; then it began to go up. Then several shipments were filthy rich; then some were worthless; then back to rich again. That last load was the McCoy, all right." Barton shook his head and tossed the sheet on the desk. "Doesn't make sense."

"Sure doesn't," Parks said. He hesitated. "No, I—I. . ."

"Say on, professor."

"Well, at first I didn't pay much attention to the variations. In the first place, I never expected the Ajax to pay for the blacksmiths' coal we've hauled up there. The whole district, from what I remember

hearing, never sent out the value of two of those loads since the camp was developed. You know, strictly the oldtime promotion. But later I got to wondering. One of those loads netted almost three thousand dollars; the next one didn't pay milling expenses.

"Still I didn't do much but wonder a little. That district up there is spotty—a tiny pocket here and then nothing. You can't tell just by looking whether a piece of rock up there runs a hundred ounces or just over the dump. But I figured that Ivers should be doing a little better than sending out pure country rock in some of those shipments—because he's no fool."

Parks stubbed his cigarette vigorously.

"So I rode up there one day and saw him," he went on. "He got sore before I finished telling him what I was trying to say. He claimed every damn pound he was shipping was pay dirt. Before we got through talking he implied that I was trying to chisel him after the stuff reached the mill." Parks grinned. "Implied, hell! He said so right out. Then *I* got sore."

"And that ended the discussion."

Parks nodded.

"Chisel him—how? It's your mine."

"Ivers owns a half interest. Dad gave it to him."

"How come?"

"Dad and Ivers' old man came to this country together. Great pals. Sucked marrow from the same bone and all that. Later, Ivers' old man didn't do so well."

"What kind of character is his son?"

Parks shook his head. "I hardly know him. He was a Seabee chief during the war. When he got out Dad hunted him up and turned him loose on the Ajax with a crew of ex-Marines and Seabees that Ivers recruited from his old pals. He's a miner—a good one!"

"Then he ought to be able to tell gold from mountain rat droppings—or whatever it was that registered goose eggs on that paper."

"That Shavano stuff is hard to tell. He has no assayer there."

"O.K. Maybe it does all look alike as two Filipinos in a buffalo wallow—but still he can roast it and pan it out and get a rough idea of what he's sending out."

"I finally thought so too. But Ivers blew so high when I talked to him. . . Well, I guess we both lost our tempers."

"Do you trust him?" Barton asked flatly.

"Yes, I do. Anybody that Dad trusted is good enough for me. But still. . ." Parks lit another smoke and squinted thoughtfully.

"Keep going."

"When I wanted to modernize the mine a little and repair the road, he objected. It's strictly hand work there now and the road up is something out of this age. But Ivers said too much activity would attract a lot of attention before we found out just what we really had there—before we could sort of corner most of those old workings. In a way he's right."

"O.K. Now how about this guy that got knocked off?"

BARTON had scarcely moved since entering the office, but somehow his blocky, relaxed figure gave an impression of alertness and controlled energy.

"That was Dal Jackson," Parks said. "He was an old-time mining engineer who had worked for Dad, on and off, for thirty years or more. I thought he would have more luck talking to Ivers than I had. So I sent him up to look at the Ajax. He just never got there. A Circle M rider found him—"

"How do you know he never got there?"

"Because I very quietly talked to everyone up there, without a hint that anything was wrong—I think. No one, including Ivers, who was still sore at me, had seen Jackson for six months or more. So far no one in Shavano even knows he's dead."

"Toss me that lighter again," Barton said. He lit his pipe; several times he flipped the saddle horn back and forth and watched flame spring from the horse's mouth. He tossed the lighter back.

"How do you know no one up there knows Jackson is dead? No radios, no people coming and going?"

"I kept it off the radio, and no one goes up there but the ore hauler and he's been at the Circle M ever since Jackson's body was found. Of course, if the guy that killed Jackson lives in Shavano. . . But I can't see any of those old coots up there doing it. Besides, Jackson didn't have an enemy in the world. And on top of that, Shavano is more than sixteen miles from where the body was found below the canyon."

"Still you think Jackson's death and the

screwy shipments from the Ajax are part of the same thing?"

"Naturally. The only reason I can figure for Jackson's killing is that he found out something."

"Such as what?"

"Hell, I don't know. What do you think I sent for you for? I don't know beans about mining."

"When did Jackson start for the Ajax?"

"That's another nice question I can't answer. He left here eight days ago. Dal was an independent old cuss, and he told me there was no hurry about looking over a mine that hadn't produced anything in fifty years. He said he was going to do some fishing on the Circle M below the mouth of the canyon before he went to Shavano. He left his car very early one morning at the Circle M and walked over to a little cabin he had by the river. He stayed there for a few days—I don't know exactly—"

"How do you know at all?"

"I was with him at that fishing shack the last time before. He had a place on the wall where he scored the number of fish he'd caught since he built the cabin. When I was there with him last month he had exactly four hundred fish marked up. When I went there after his body was found in the river he had thirty-nine more checked off. So if you can say how long it took him to catch thirty-nine fish you can tell when he started to Shavano—if he did start at all."

PARKS flipped ashes on the floor and looked hard at Barton. "I think he did start."

"Would the river carry his body from Shavano?"

"The sheriff says no. I say yes, but I'm not sure. Incidentally, you and I and the sheriff are the only people who know that Dal was going to Shavano."

"How about the guy who trucks ore from the Ajax—did he see anything of Jackson?"

"Trucks. . ." Parks grinned. "Says he didn't. He came down two days after Dal left his car at the ranch."

"That might have been just when Jackson shoved off. How long had he been dead when they found him?"

"The coroner says between five days and a week, but he didn't guarantee it."

"Maybe the trucker knocked him off."

"No reason at all, Bill. They were old friends."

"Maybe the trucker has been swiping your ore—some way—and Jackson caught him at it."

"I didn't say anyone has been stealing ore. I'm not at all sure that they have. Jackson's death is the thing that bothers me most. The ore hauler isn't switching rock on me because there isn't room on that road from the camp to the Circle M to change your shirt, and it's very unlikely that any shift is being made in the open country between here and the ranch."

Parks stood up. "No, I think the answer is in Shavano." He shook his head. "If it wasn't for Dal getting shot, I still wouldn't be worrying about ore."

Parks walked over to the window and stood looking at the blue, snow-streaked mountains far to the north.

"You'll find Shavano is really isolated," he said.

"I'm going to Shavano?"

Parks turned. "Aren't you?"

"Well, now that you've twisted my arm—yes!" He stretched luxuriously and yawned. "How many people up there?"

"Three old-timers. One of them has been there since the camp was founded. Then the muleskinner that hauls ore from the Ajax to the Circle M stays there between trips."

"Muleskinner! No wonder you grinned when I mentioned trucks. I thought you ran a modern industrial empire. Cattle herded with jet-propelled planes and so forth."

"When you hit Shavano you'll swear you've been thrown for a forty-year loss. There isn't another place like it in the West."

"That's what I've been afraid of," Barton said.

Both men were silent for several moments.

"So you've kept the whole operation pretty quiet," Barton said. "Don't want the district ruined by wild speculation in case you do have a mine up there."

"That's right. Looks like I might develop a tin mine there."

"O.K., let's hear the rest of that gag."

"After some of the shipments began to run so lousy I had complete mineral analyses made of the pulp." Parks looked keen-

ly at Barton. "The load before last showed tin—just a trace, but pure tin it was."

"You didn't say Shavano was in Cornwall. Sorry, Joe, I've had enough overseas duty." Barton grinned.

"Bolivia is closer." Parks grinned back. "No stuff, Bill, there really was a trace of tin."

BARTON blew smoke at the contented bulls. "So far we're not sure that you even got a gold mine, and we both *know* you haven't got a tin mine.'"

"There's an answer to that, but I don't know it; and there's also an answer to who shot Dal Jackson and why. The ore, I think, is at the bottom of everything."

"What's the sheriff think?"

"He thinks pretty straight, but he's flat on the back of his neck with a broken leg right now."

"How about the deputy sheriff?"

"He's flat on his feet with a broken head. He just don't think." Park heavily emphasized the verb.

Barton grunted. "Umm." He dropped his pipe into his pocket, staring through the open window. Except for the busy smoke rising in the warm clear air across the river there was no movement between town and the blue mountains beyond the last green patches of rolling alfalfa fields.

Parks read his mind. "Shavano is way back in there—fifty-six miles from here. Forty to the Circle M, where we transship the ore to trucks."

"How's fishing in this geological paradise of yours?"

"If you can speak Gaelic and make a hit with the old boy who owns the townsite you might do fine. Otherwise, very little."

"He own the whole river?"

"He controls the only piece of it between the Circle M and Shavano that doesn't run straight down."

"I will take my rod and stuff," Barton said dreamily.

"You will also take another rod in your pocket," Parks said. He shook his head and grinned. "Do you realize that you have never moved from that chair since you collapsed into it? Doesn't anything ever excite you?" He paused. "No, I guess not. I remember the time off Mindoro when they were dropping depth charges on us—and you—oh hell! Let's go around the corner and have a drink."

"*That* excites me," Barton said. He rose in one smooth motion.

They stepped into a tiny elevator at the rear of the office. "You were *born* in a mine, Bill. You ought to be able to dope this thing out easy."

"O.K., wise guy. I was born in the Bull Domingo Mine and it was better than being born in the snowslide outside. But that didn't make me a mining genius any more than you being born on these flats made you an antelope. Maybe I can straighten out your ore mess—but remember, I didn't cut my teeth on a shotgun!"

Parks slowed the cage for the ground floor. "Bill, I asked you to help me because—well, after three years together out there—I can trust you above any man I know," Parks said quietly.

They stepped out of the elevator embarrassed and silent, neither looking at the other. Then Barton pointed over his shoulder with his thumb. "Better have that cable fixed, Joe. She's about to go."

Parks stopped in surprise. "How do you know?"

"Talked to a guy once who was born in an elevator!"

They looked at each other and grinned. "You son. . .!" Parks said, and feinted a cut with the edge of his hand. They went out of the building laughing.

CHAPTER II

THE BULL DOMINGO KID

THE SUN was an hour high and the snow-pocketed blue mountains were forty miles closer than the day before, when the dusty dump truck stopped at the Circle M ranch. The gangling lad who had herded it from Parkstown turned to Barton and yawned.

"Hope you got a foul-weather jacket, mate. It gets rugged up there, they say. You must be nuts for sure about fishing. Wait'll you get a load of that road!"

The lad flung the door open, stepped out, stretched and yawned some more. "There's the chariot you take from here—over by that loading ramp. And there's old One Ton Larsen ready to go. I'd help you lug your gear over, but—"

"I know! You're dying for a cup of Joe; you didn't have any chow this morning; you were up all night and boy! was she a honey!"

"She sure was," the driver said, and headed for the cookshack.

"And that was all the information I got out of *him* in forty miles," Barton thought. He swung the door open, stepped to the short running board and hoisted himself over the dump bed to get his sea bag and fishing gear.

"You're One Ton Larsen?" Barton asked of the enormous overalled man bending by the front wheel of an ore wagon to which six horses were hitched. The man straightened and tossed a three-foot hub spanner into the wagon box.

"That kid truck skinner is gonna get that name to stick yet if he ain't careful. Uh-yep! I'm Mart Larsen. And you want to go to Shavano."

"You read my mind."

Larsen laughed a healthy booming sound that rolled easily between huge white teeth. He wiped a thick hand on the bulging front of his overalls and thrust it toward Barton. "Nothing hard about that. The only place I go is Shavano and you look like you want to go someplace."

As he introduced himself and felt the crushing strength in Larsen's big hand Barton grinned widely. Here was no dried-up grump who would spit tobacco juice on the horses' rumps and grunt for sixteen miles in reply to every question.

"Uh-yep! Business is right good today. I got a little surprise for you before we get too far up the road. A young feller like you will be mighty surprised, I bet!"

One man had been sent to go up that road and had received a fatal surprise. The quick sweep of caution that stiffened Barton's insides didn't disturb the even expression on his face.

"You'll see," Larsen said, mistaking Barton's silence for polite interrogation. He reached under the seat and produced a burlap-covered canteen. "Fill this at the spring by the house, will you? I'll put your plunder in and then we'll pull out."

"No water along the road?"

"All straight down—and me too fat to climb."

Three hundred yards from the ranch house the road left soil and became a narrow passage blasted out of rock. At times it dipped steeply where its forgotten builders had turned downhill to avoid heavy ribs of granite thrusting out from the mountain on the right. But it always swerved back to lead upward in pitches that brought the rumps of the horses low as they ground their shoes against the granite bed. One wheel hung atop a jagged rock before descending with a grinding jar that jounced the driver's seat sharply; then another wheel repeated the process, and sometimes two or more did it at the same time.

Barton twisted to look back at the hill they were climbing. No wonder Parks had had to revert to a wagon. Even discounting the grade itself, high center rocks and the rough wheelways would stop any motorized vehicle excepting a tractor.

The wagon wasn't heavily loaded. Under a lashed tarpaulin a few unrecognizable freight items showed. It was then Barton remembered that a letter from Parks to Ivers, explaining Barton's mission, was in his foul-weather jacket in his seabag. "Use it or not," Joe had said. "That's up to you, but I think your best best is to go straight to Ivers and lay your cards on the table."

Barton had decided to use the letter only after a little independent investigation. "Looking at the thing cold, I don't trust Ivers as much as you seem to," he had told Parks.

The wagon came down with a grating shock that brought Barton around to see if they had fallen into an old workings.

"It ain't all like this," Larsen said, swaying easily with the seat. "Up ahead she gets worse!" He roared with delight and gave Barton a playful jolt with a shoulder that was hard and solid.

"This is just the way I like roads."

Larsen bellowed his appreciation. "You're all right, kid! Must be from these mountains some place."

"I grew up in St. Elmo."

LARSEN ducked his head against one arm to scratch his nose. When he looked up surprise dawned across his wide, red face and his little eyes twinkled.

"You ain't old Sam Barton's kid—the one that was born in the Bull Domingo during the big slide in '21?"

"That's me." Barton groaned inside

and braced himself to hear a tale that had grown mighty tiresome.

"I knew your father, kid!" Larsen roared. "When word came of the snowslide I was one of the men. . ."

Barton was weary of being born in the Bull Domingo mine. Larsen's version was a little more garbled than the usual tale, consuming a quarter mile of hellish road and causing the teamster to fight hard near the end in overcoming an increasing water roar on their left. Barton craned sidewise to look at a tumbling, rushing river in the deep gorge below.

"Uh-yep! I shoulda knowed you at the ranch. You got the same curly black hair as Old Bart. The same wide, happy face. Even got your nose pushed a little sideways like Bart. How come that?"

"The nose got that way from poking it in other people's business," Barton said evenly.

He was sensitive about his unusual birthplace because until he reached sixteen and left home he had been introduced and referred to as "the boy who was born in the Bull Domingo"—and he was touchy about his slightly crooked nose because he knew he should have stepped back faster one night in a construction camp when he was eighteen and licking the camp bully.

"By God! That's all right!" Larson bellowed. "You and me will get along fine, Bart!"

When Larsen's outburst had subsided to a guttural chuckle Barton asked, "How often do you make this trip?"

" 'Bout twice a week now. Made it a little better in the spring when I was catching up on ore they got out during the winter. I got through then, but I couldn't haul heavy loads either way."

"If they're shipping ore why don't they fix this road?"

"The Ajax never will ship enough gold to fix a mile of this road."

"No good, huh?"

"I'll bet most of the stuff I been hauling out of there won't run an ounce of gold to an acre. Young Parks is starting out jut like his old man—making a fortune in cattle and throwing part of it into a hole."

Barton winced as an unusually hard bounce jolted the wagon a few inches closer to the gorge. Larsen didn't seem to notice.

"You know Joe Parks?" Larsen asked.

"I'd heard of him—before yesterday, when I went up to his office to see if I could hitch a ride out on one of his trucks. Fellow in Parkstown told me there was some pretty good fishing up at Shavano. But I didn't know Parks owned a gold mine."

"He don't" Larsen bellowed. He shook with laughter and gave Barton a mighty nudge in the shoulder.

Barton clung to his seat and grinned, glad he wasn't on the downhill side of the road. "I'd hate to have this character telling me jokes in a telephone booth," he thought.

The heavy pounding of water receded a little as the road swung to the right along a brush-covered slope. Then it leveled for a short distance. Barton saw that the big teamster was carefully watching ahead for something, studying the sides of the road.

Suddenly he brought the team to a stop with a low, hoarse, "Ho-o-oh, there!" He thrust the lines at Barton, who instinctively grasped them, finding his hands full of moist, warm leather.

Larsen reached between his knees and back in one smooth motion and a sawed-off shotgun flashed in his hands. He threw it to his shoulder and one barrel belched. "Got him!" he yelled and went over the wheel to the ground in a vaulting leap. Then Barton saw the young rabbit kicking in the edge of the bushes on the left.

Larsen retrieved the animal and walked back, showing his big teeth in a large grin. "Generally get one or two right about here." He tossed the rabbit into the wagon box.

Barton stared curiously at the shotgun. "Quite a scattergun you got there."

"Uh-yep! Got it from Bruce Burris in Shavano. He had a whole arsenal of 'em in his gambling joints when the camp was a-booming."

LARSEN broke the gun and squinted through the empty barrel. He mined a fresh shell from a bulging front pocket, slipped it into the breech and snapped the barrels back in line. For a moment the tubes were dead on Barton's chest. Then Larsen stepped on the wheel hub and climbed back to the seat.

"An old friend of mine was killed with one of these a few days back. Found him down by the Circle M bridge," Larsen said grimly. It was the first time Barton had heard Larsen speak quietly.

"I'd like to look at the man who did it—right over the barrels of old Betsy here," the teamster said, and his little eyes glinted dangerously.

"I saw something about it in the papers last night," Barton said. "The story said he had no enemies."

"Uh-yep! None a-tall. Dumbest killing I ever heard of. People generally get blasted for a good reason, but there wasn't no reason for Dal getting shot."

"What was he doing up in this country?"

"Nobody knows. Even Young Parks don't know. He might have been fishing below the Circle M, prowling old prospect holes along the edge of the hills or most anything."

"Maybe he was headed up this way."

"Could be that. Though I come down with a load of ore a day or so after he left his car at the ranch, and I couldn't have missed seeing him."

"Maybe the sheriff will turn up something," Barton said.

Larsen snorted. "He might, but he's laid up with a busted leg. The deputy can barely find his way to a restaurant three, four times a day." Larsen shook his head and cursed. "Well, we better get to hauling freight."

He shoved the shotgun between his knees, bending one shoulder down as he reached back. There were two clicks, and Larsen straightened, looking sidewise at Barton.

"How'd you stow that gun?"

Larsen's roar startled the sweating horses. "I wondered if you'd see that. Give me those lines and have a look."

Screwed to the underside of the seat were two spring clips that secured the weapon neatly. A square wooden box with a spring latch held a box of shells.

"Pretty good, huh?" Larsen said, pleased as a child. "Old Pete Furlan up at Shavano fixed that for me this spring. Before that every time I see a rabbit the damn gun is somewhere where I can't reach it. Now I can catch a rabbit on the pot and knock him kicking before he gets off the pot!" Larsen bellowed with mirth and unloosed another tremendous shoulder nudge.

"Not bad," Barton said.

Larsen certainly could whip the weapon out fast. "He could have shot me with it, or brained me before I knew what was up," Barton thought. "For an undercover character I'm about as quick-witted as that bunny. Oh, well, if he really wants to knock me off he can do it with that shoulder and those gags before we ever reach Shavano."

"Speaking of pots . . ." Larsen plunged into an ancient joke.

Barton made a mental note to grin politely and duck at the crucial point, and began to mull over the problem of what to do when he reached Shavano. It was up there in the ghost camp that the answer to the ore puzzle lay; and maybe the reason for Jackson's murder was there also. Perhaps he should have stopped at the Circle M, prowling over the ground around the dead man's cabin, asking questions of the cow hands. "After all, I'm not supposed to be a detective and that would have tipped my hand off sure." Just what was he supposed to be? The answer popped into his mind without effort: "A guy who was born in a mine, going fishing."

He smiled to himself, and Larsen, seeing the grin, was encouraged to tell another joke about two starving prospectors and their burro.

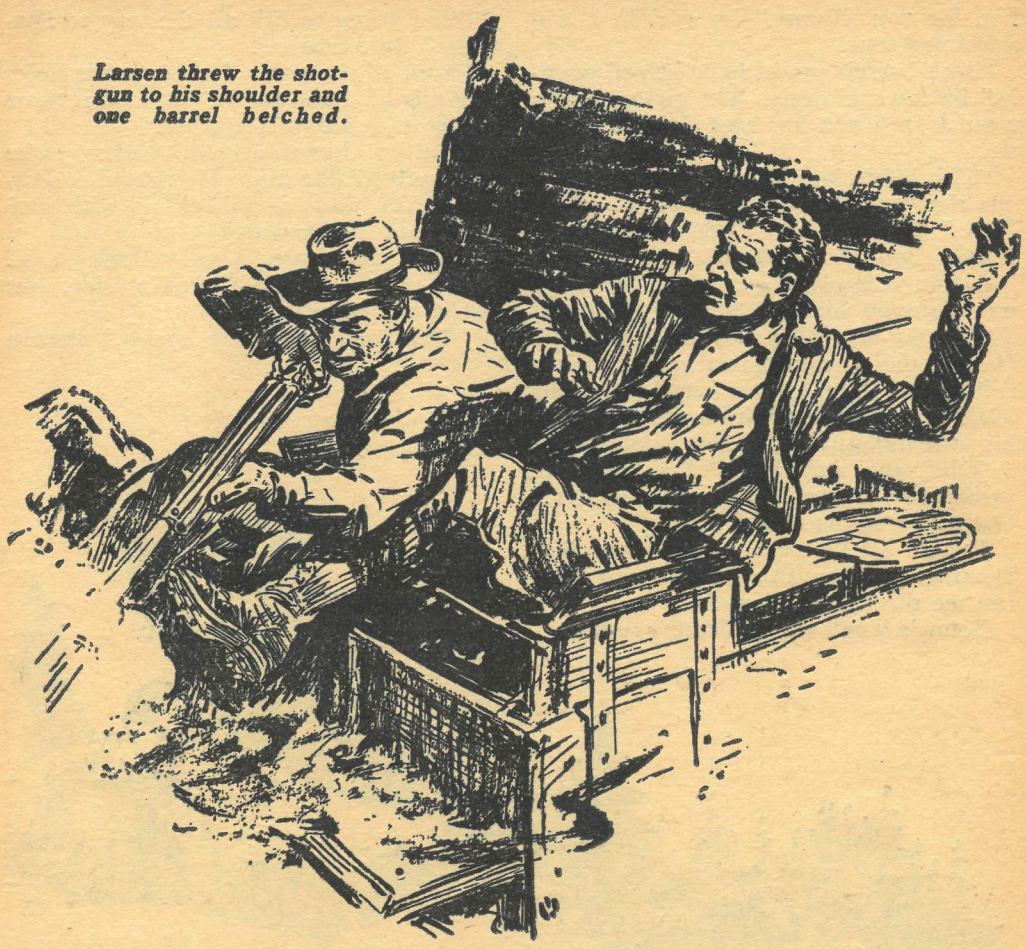
Maybe he wasn't a crack secret agent, but anyone could have an idea. If the Ajax was producing uniformly rich ore there were two obvious reasons why it all wasn't reaching the mill. Either Ivers was holding out, or Larsen was pulling a fast switch on the rock after it left the Ajax.

So far there had been no place where the latter could be done.

Many jokes and innumerable crashing bounces later Larsen announced, "We're almost halfway."

THEY slid down a steep hill and came close to the rock walls of the rushing river. Here the gorge was not so deep. Barton saw occasional dark pools where rocky bowls momentarily trapped the plunging water between series of white cascades.

"Ought to be fish in some of those



Larsen threw the shotgun to his shoulder and one barrel belched.

holes," Barton said, leaning behind Larsen to look down.

"Uh-yep! Reckon there is."

Abruptly the heavy teamster gave Barton an unscheduled shoulder jolt and shouted. "There's the surprise I told you about!"

Fishing with a long line almost straight down into the dark pools was a girl. She didn't look at the wagon. Then Barton saw she was playing a fish in the swirling devil's punch bowl. He went over the wagon wheel and hit the ground running.

Barton watched with approval the way the girl played the fish. When it was no longer fighting hard she started to land it by hoisting it up the side of the rocks. Barton winced inwardly, though he saw there was no other way to land the trout. Halfway up the rainbow threshed furiously, tore the fly from its mouth and dropped back into the swirling water.

Barton gave an anguished grunt and the girl looked at him for the first time.

"If you'd played him five minutes more, he wouldn't have had that last flop in him."

The girl regarded him coolly. "Did your nose get that way from giving unasked for advice—too late?"

Barton opened his mouth and closed it without speaking. Close behind him Larsen whooped with laughter. "You got him good that lick, Bonny!"

She looked up briefly from reeling her line in. "Hello, Mart. You made good time."

Larsen pushed forward to the edge of the bowl and peered down. He had his shotgun under one arm. "I could've shot

him for you, Bonny," he said in a disappointed tone.

"Both barrels would have helped greatly," Barton said dryly. The girl gave him a quick look and her eyes lit with laughter.

"This here's Sam Barton's boy, Bill—the one that was born in the Bull Domingo Mine," Larsen said. "Bart, meet Bonny Burris. Bonny's old Bruce's niece."

Barton's disgust at mention of his birth was plain on his face, and he mumbled slightly in returning the girl's greeting. He saw the corners of her mouth twitch and humor lights rise in her eyes, and he made a vow to beat Larsen to death with his own shotgun at the first opportunity.

"Oh!" the girl said. "I've heard of gazelle boys and wolf boys—but you're the first Bull Domingo boy I ever met!"

Barton grinned. "Genuine Bull Domingo. Born with a granite head and I can see through solid rock."

Bonny's laugh was a pleasing sound.

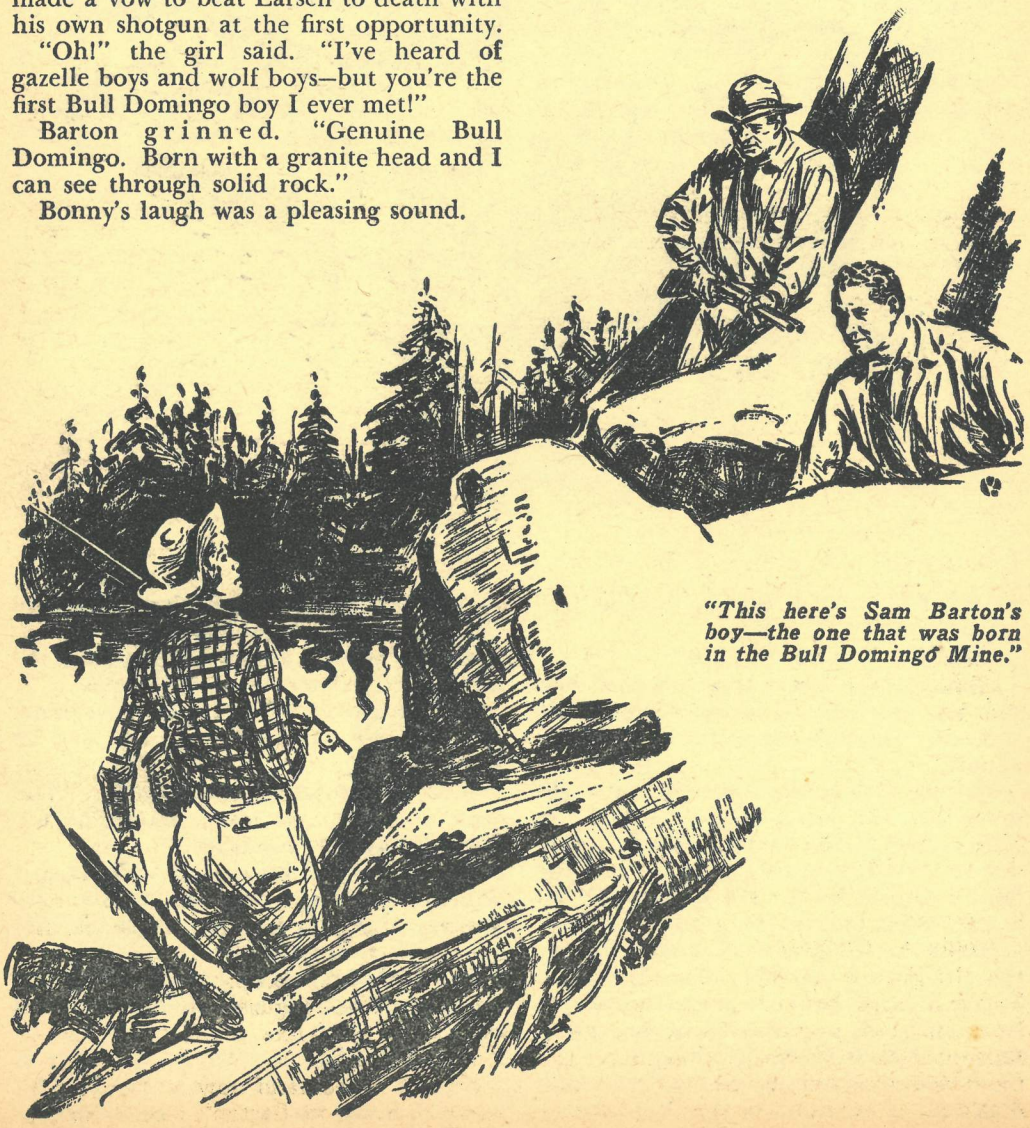
"You going to fish all the way to Shavano?" Barton asked.

"Most of the way. There's a few holes like this here and there. Anyway, it beats riding Mart's bone cruncher."

"Uh-yep! Larsen agreed. "Unless you're well padded like me." He turned to Barton. "You want to fish on up with her? Young'uns like you two—"

"Hold up there, Mart!" Bonny said. "You may be on the chubby side, but you're not cupid."

"The road *is* a mite rough," Barton



"This here's Sam Barton's boy—the one that was born in the Bull Domingo Mine."

said. "I don't believe it's felt caress of pick or shovel since Cutgut Collins drove stage to Shavano."

"Cutgut Collins?" The girl laughed. "I thought Uncle Bruce had told me every harrowing detail of the camp's history, but I never heard of Cutgut."

"Neither did I," Barton said, grinning.

He started away. "I'll stick to the wagon. See you in Shavano. That's where I'm going to fish."

"*Maybe* you'll go fishing there," Bonny said, and walked on up the canyon.

Walking would have been preferable, but there was the letter in his gear. And he'd trust no man—or girl—until he knew a great deal more about Shavano than he did at present.

After the first few bounces Barton was tempted to dig out his letter, tear it up and start walking.

Larsen was regarding him with a huge grin. "What'd I tell you? Some surprise, huh? She goes up every summer to stay a couple of weeks with old Bruce. She's a looker, ain't she?"

"Just a girl," Barton said. "Uh-yep! Just a girl. Maybe twenty-two, brown hair with glints in it like a cock pheasant's breast, gray eyes, nice straight nose and a sort of wide mouth that grins easy. I see she was wearing dungarees and a pair of eight-inch shoes. She handles herself pretty well, too—but she should have played that fish dead tired before she ever tried to hoist him that far."

Larsen gave his big laugh full steam. "Just a girl! Man, how you notice things!"

AMONG the things Barton had noticed was Larsen's skill with a shotgun, and his ease of movement in spite of the gross bulk of him. Larsen had seen that the rabbit he shot was a young one instead of an old one full of warbles before Barton had even seen the animal. It wasn't all fat on the teamster; beneath he was hard as nails. He was anywhere between fifty-five and seventy, but not a character to tangle with readily.

So the girl was going to visit her uncle. Too bad you don't have an uncle in Shavano. Fishing was a very weak excuse. Not even Larsen would swallow that yarn. No, fishing was a stock alibi to cover sins of many colors, but it would fool no one in Shavano. Any stranger would be screened pretty fast by the old-timers who held that place down, unless they were an altogether different breed from their kind. Well, fishing is your story and let them make the worst of it.

"What chance is there for a place to sack out in Shavano, and somewhere to eat?" Barton asked, half regretting his decision not to cast himself on the hospitality of the Ajax.

"Burris can take care of you—if he will. Owns the whole townsite. I eat with him when I'm there, 'cepting breakfast at the mine on the days I load ore."

"Burris is my boy."

"You wouldn't be thinking a little 'bout his niece, would you?" Larsen's roar was the worst, by far, for being out of line with the humor that provoked it, Barton thought.

He grinned and said nothing.

The slide-rock gray rim of the mountain basin ahead had blocked the sun from the canyon when the wagon reached a place where the grade began to lessen and the passage to widen. Barton saw a rust-red splash of a small mine building ahead on the right. A ragged gulch of broken rock cut down the mountain near the mine ahead, coming out at a right angle to the road. As they neared the toe of the mine dump Larsen swung the horses up a branching road to the right. Barton saw the reason. The lower, main road was cluttered with rocks brought down by the gulch during flash floods and appeared to have been impassable for years. Larsen stopped the wagon on top of the dump.

"About a mile more," Larsen said.

"This place worked lately?" Barton asked, looking around.

"Nope. This is the Caledonian. Burris owns it, and she's been dead for forty years. But Burris always keeps it open and in fair shape. I figure he got such a jobbing on this hole he hates to admit it." Larsen scratched the back of his neck, then pointed. "See that ore bin. Biggest in the area and plumb full of worthless rock. Bruce still takes samples from the bin now and then. Figures the stuff 'll improve with age—like fruitcake." Larsen laughed loudly.

He had a free hand now and started to bring it down on Barton's back. Barton

stopped the thick wrist on its way down. "Easy. You might knock a vertebra out through my mouth."

"By God!" Larsen bellowed. "You got a grip like a bear. I'd hate to clinch with you, lazy as you seem!"

"So Burris thinks well of this hole?"

"Uh-yep ! Even had that hack painted not so long ago. Why, hell's fire! When he found out I pulled a load or two out of that bin to fill the gulch crossing ahead he sent a bill to Young Parks. Now when I need a little fill after a real bad rain I'm supposed to take it off the dump—shovel it! Of course, the chute still works, you know." He started to garnish his laughter with a shoulder whack but caught himself midway. "By God! Might get my wrist busted!"

A half hour later they pulled into Shavano.

CHAPTER III

GHOST TOWN

"WHAT the hell!" Barton said, looking up the long, wide street of the ghost town. For a moment he had mistaken the dying rays of the sun on the windows of the old buildings for lights inside the deserted hulks. He had made the mistake before, but this time the momentary error gave him an eerie feeling as if a host of ghostly inhabitants had peered for an instant from those abandoned shells and then run to extinguish their lamps.

The horses began to quicken their walk. Barton missed the grinding of steel tires on rock. He saw that some of the worst holes in the street had been freshly spotted with yellow dump waste. Looking closer at the buildings he saw that they were not falling apart as he'd first thought. One showed a new aluminum sheet roof. Along a wooden sidewalk on the uphill side of the street he saw where boards had been replaced with sound timber.

"How many people live here?"

"Three. One's crazy. Some say Burris is nuts too—for a Scotchman."

They passed a white building from which a long sign projected: *U. S. POST-OFFICE, SHAVANO, COLO.* Barton saw that the lettering had been repainted recently. From a dusty window Uncle Sam jabbed a demanding forefinger and shouted, *I WANT YOU!* in a large poster.

The eerie feeling that Barton had felt on first seeing the camp returned. Fresh painting on a building that showed a poster almost thirty years old. Three people in a ghost town that had repaired walks. The camp must have held three thousand or more at one time.

"Does Burris do the repairs here?"

"Uh-yep! Has it done. Just before the war he had a crew of fifteen, twenty carpenters here most of one summer, just fixing up old buildings. Crazy Tom works— There's Burris now."

Larsen swung the leaders toward a wide two-story building with a long, high front porch.

From the gloomy interior of the building came one of the largest men Barton had ever seen. A huge bald dome topped a brooding, dark face with outsize eyebrow bristles. His mouth was wide and thin and its clamped appearance heightened the stern impression of a heavy, square jaw.

Burris nodded in reply to Larsen's hail, but his Scotch-gray eyes never left Barton's face. Character, all right, in that face, Barton thought, but way short on laughs.

"Here's a young feller that's a-going fishing," Larsen said.

"Is he?" Burris challenged in a voice that fitted the size of him perfectly.

"He's old Sam Barton's boy," Larsen explained.

"Never heard of him," Burris rumbled.

Barton went over the seat, into the wagon box and leaped to the porch.

"Bonny's walking up behind us," Larsen said.

"Bonny! Bonny, ye say!" Burris almost yelped the words. "Whyn't ye speak up before!" His face lost its cavernous look and the thick tufts of his eyebrows seemed to stick straight up in excitement. He brushed past Barton without seeing him and began to shout orders at Larsen.

"Unload! Unload, mon, unload! Give me her bags! Where's my mail?"

"Don't crowd me, Bruce." Larsen was in the wagon box, unlashing the tarp. "You'd think Queen Marie was coming to town," he grumbled, winking at Barton.

"She is a queen!" Burris shouted.

"And I must be the deuce," Barton said to himself. He walked down the plank porch. May as well let the excited Scot cool down before talking to him. A sign across the face of the building read: *THE HIGHLAND TAVERN, 1895*. Both *N's* were backward. Probably never lost one good drinking customer because of that, Barton thought. He stopped at the end of the porch and looked between buildings at the creek. There was some good-looking water there. Between the structures was a worn trail. He followed it till he stood clear of the tavern, noting that the path led toward the river, across a narrow bridge and up a steep slope toward a mine dump. Smoke showed from a large cabin near the dump. Behind the cabin was a long brown building; on the opposite side of the dump the graduated ledges of a mill lay against the mountain. Near the upper end of the basin beaver dams showed their smooth, dark surfaces. Beyond them, on the slope of the mountain, smoke was rising from one of a group of buildings on an enormous yellow dump. That would be the Ajax, according to Parks' directions.

The whole semi-circle of mountains was pocked with old workings, slashed with zig-zag roads. Great wealth had been sunk into those rugged slopes. And very little had come out.

HE TOOK a last look at the stream and saw a trout leap clear. He walked rapidly back to the inn door. Burris and Larsen were standing by a small pile of bags and boxes. Burris held a thick stack of letters and newspapers in one hand.

The big Scot moved around to face Barton.

"Aweel, what have ye to say?"

"I'm looking for a place to stay while I fish here a few days."

"Na, na, there'll be no fishing on my land."

Barton grinned. "Just my luck. For three years I've dreamed of fishing, and now . . . "

"Army?"

"Submarine."

Burris' thick eyebrows lifted a little, but the rest of his stern countenance was unmoved. "I'm verra sorry, but no one fishes my land."

"O.K. I'm still looking for a place to stay."

"I have none."

"What the hell, Bruce!" shouted Larsen, who had remounted the wagon. "What do you mean—no place?"

"There is none," Burris said stubbornly. He picked up two bags and walked into the saloon.

Barton shrugged and grinned at Larsen. Across the street in an old store window he saw a white face peering through the warped glass. Then he was staring at a vacant pane. He had the odd sensation of having seen no face in the first place.

"Get your plunder and come on," Larsen said. "You can have my bunk and I'll sleep on a broken bale of hay. Won't be the first time." His boisterous laugh was out of place in the silent street.

"That won't be necessary, Mart. I think I can accommodate the lad."

Barton turned quickly. Coming along the porch was a small man in faded overalls. His feet made no sound and when he came closer Barton saw that he was wearing tennis shoes.

"Bruce's hospitality is an uncertain quality at best," the little man said. "However, I can make you quite comfortable at no charge, which is more than I can say for Bruce—if he had decided to take you in."

Cleanliness and respectability were stamped on the old man before Barton. His smooth, pink face obviously gave him no razor trouble. Finely chiseled features and thin silver hair gave an air of fragility, but as Barton grasped the extended hand and looked into wide-set blue eyes he was surprised at the strength in the firm grip.

"I am Peter Furlan," the old man said. "And you are Sam Barton's boy." His blue eyes twinkled.

"You knew my father?"

"No." He laughed. "I could hear Mart clear across the stream. I've heard him farther than that."

"You have bought yourself a boarder," Barton said.

"You have no choice. If Bruce turns a man away, there is only the Ajax left, and you have to be a member in good standing to do business with the Ajax." Furlan's voice was pleasantly pitched, rising and falling with expressive precision.

"Well, that fixes you up," Larsen said.

"See you later." He waved a hand and drove up the street.

"Excuse me a moment till I get my mail," Furlan said. He entered the saloon.

Barton saw the wagon stop a few doors up the street. Larsen got out, opened a board gate, and the horses walked through it with no urging.

Burris returned with Furlan. He looked bleakly at the young man, then stooped for a box on the porch. Across the street Barton again saw the face at the window. There was no mistake this time.

"Shall we go?" Furlan said. "Let me take your creel and rod for you." He had several newspapers and letters which he stuffed into a back pocket.

THEY followed the trail from between the building. When they were crossing the bridge Barton saw Bonny emerge from the canyon. He waved and she held up one hand in reply.

"Well! There's Bonny Burris," Furlan said. "You are acquainted with her?"

"Met her on the way up. She must be thrice times seven removed in lineage from our genial tavern keeper."

Furlan chuckled. "No, she's his brother's child. Meeting her will probably prove the only bright spot of your bootless fishing excursion."

Barton wondered if the old man had overemphasized "bootless." Maybe "fishing" too.

Furlan's cabin was low-roofed, solid-looking and showed master craftsmanship on the corner notching. There was no keyhole in the oak door that Furlan swung open before his guest. Books covered more than half of the long wall on the left in the main room. Beyond the shelves in one corner were two leather chairs and a large table that was covered with magazines and journals. In the opposite corner were two sets of double-deck hardwood bunks made up with white woolen blankets. A six-foot fireplace broke the sweep of varnished logs in the wall across from the books. Before it were two more wine-colored leather chairs, with a small table between. Cork tile covered the entire floor, excepting a red concrete spark apron in front of the fireplace. When Furlan flipped a toggle switch by the door lights from two burnished fixtures brought mellow illumination, reflecting warmly from the varnished pine ceiling, glowing from the waxed floor, dancing from ore and rock specimens set in the wide facing of the fireplace.

"You have all the comforts of home here," Barton said.

"This has been my home for thirty-five years," Furlan said simply. "I came to Shavano to wrestle with demons and I have seldom been out of here since, though occasionally I have had welcome visitors from civilization."

Barton showered in a tiled bathroom off the kitchen while Furlan cooked. Except for log walls and a wood range, the kitchen they ate in might have been part of a modern city apartment. Furlan caught Barton's eye as the latter studied a restaurant-size refrigerator.

"The mill has turbine generators—Pelton wheels. With some modern improvements they have served faithfully. Occasionally I have had trouble with the water line off the mountain. I have an aversion to electric ranges, however, though I do have electric heaters in the other room and in my workshop on the hill above."

There was an elfin quality about the old man that reminded Barton of a small, wistful boy—a child who was uncomplaining after being mistreated. To hide his embarrassment he stared through the wide, open windows that faced the town. It was gloomy outside now, natural dusk increased by rain clouds settling around the rim of the basin.

"Winters must be rugged here."

"I never saw the time when one couldn't get out on snowshoes." Furlan smiled. "Really it is unusually mild here for the altitude. The mountains shelter this little hollow beyond belief. It would be an ideal site for a ski resort in winter and a vacation camp in summer. In fact, Bruce has toyed with the idea for years. Frankly, I shouldn't like that . . . I have had peace here for so long."

Barton accepted a second helping of stew. Chow was where you found it, and this was the real McCoy.

"Is that why Burris maintains the town?"

"I really don't know." Furlan chuckled. "Bruce's reactions are difficult to predict.

Since I can remember he has cared for Tom Spencer—he's the one you saw watching you through the window. It must be that Bruce has a deep-hidden sentimentality for the camp as he knew it when there was gold in his beard. Sentimentality is not unusual in the Scotch, you know. Nor do I think backing the trait with money is odd. Perhaps to an outsider it seems so."

"Tom Spencer? You saw him at the window too?"

Furlan smiled and nodded. "Crazy Tom, as some call him. He is not unbalanced greatly, beyond having a grudge against mining engineers because he once lost a mine in New Mexico on the advice of an engineer—a mine that later became an incredible silver producer."

"Burris apparently hasn't lost his money."

"No. Bruce grew enormously wealthy with his tavern and other establishments in the early days. And later he increased that with oil investments."

"Larsen told me he made one sad mistake on the Caledonian."

Furlan laughed quietly. "His only mining venture, and a bitter memory that he insists on keeping alive. You see, Bruce was deceived by a dishonest superintendent and several associates whom this man hired. For almost two years that man and his crew had positions at the mine and kept Bruce pouring out money on the strength of rich ore just ahead and samples that never came from the Caledonian. They even filled his bin with valueless rock toward the end. When Bruce at last discovered the deception he beat the superintendent and half the crew with his bare hands until he fell senseless from sheer anger. Bruce has a defective heart that betrays him in moments of great emotion."

"Still he holds on to the Caledonian."

"Perhaps to punish himself. I really don't know."

Furlan got up to close the windows. It was almost dark outside. "I believe I will have a fire in the other room this evening," he said gravely. "You may want to stay and rest before it, or would you care to join me when I pay my respects to Bonny this evening?"

His words and tone carried the courtesy of a bygone era.

CHAPTER IV

HOLD YOUR FIRE!

RAIN appeared imminent when the two men started for the Highland Tavern an hour later. Warned by the chill in the air, Barton had taken his foul-weather jacket and a long-beaked cap from his seabag. Furlan added nothing to his attire before leaving the cabin.

"Thanks again for taking me in," Barton said as the old man moved along the trail with a sureness that found the other pressed to keep up. "This would have been a bad night to sleep out. The Ajax was my last bid."

"You would have had less luck with Ivers than with Bruce. They are not entirely hospitable at the Ajax. Aside from Ivers I have seldom seen anyone from there in nine months."

"Are they hiding bodies up there?"

"I have never inquired into their privacy."

Light shone dimly through the large front windows of the saloon. Over the high bar that ran the full length of the room a lone electric bulb battled with gloom and failed to lift all the shadows from the faces of Larsen and a short man who stood talking across the mahogany to Burris. Conversation stopped as the three men watched Furlan and Barton cross the oiled floor.

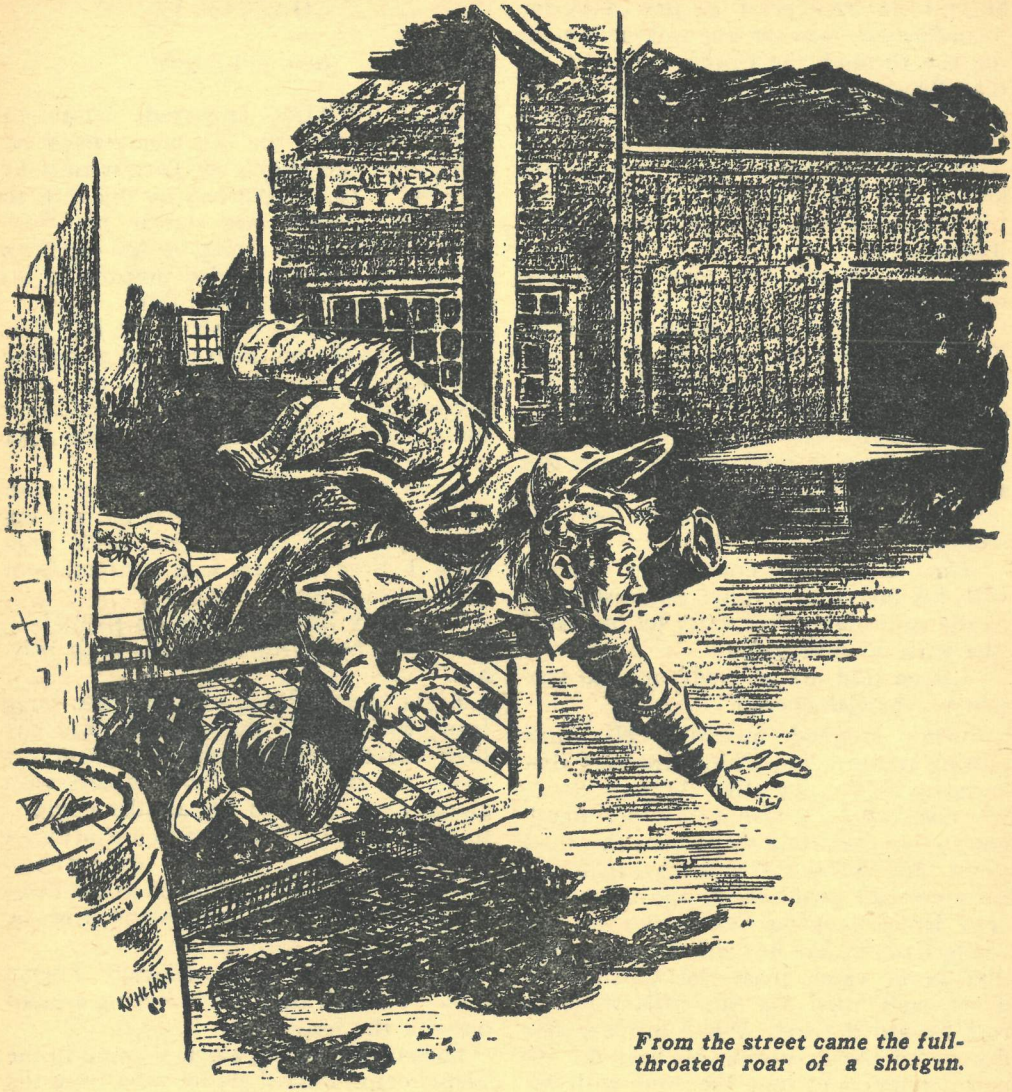
"Good evening, gentlemen," Furlan said. "I take it that you're having a small one—on the house."

Larsen's laugh was a heavy sound in the silent room. Burris' glance went from the short man to Barton without readable expression. The third man studied Barton quietly.

"I will buy you a drink, Mr. Furlan," Barton offered. "You fellows?" He looked at the other two. "Sure, thanks!" Larsen said, draining the glass he held at a gulp. The short man continued to appraise Barton and shook his head curtly. "You, Mr. Burris?" Barton asked. The Scotchman shook his huge head in two firm, deliberate movements.

While Burris filled glasses Furlan asked, "How is Bonny?"

"In bed. She's tired. Walked all the way up."



From the street came the full-throated roar of a shotgun.

"I should have known when I suggested coming over."

Barton studied the back bar. It was loaded with brands of whiskey he had never seen before. Polished cherry wood, grotesquely carved, glowed dully. What the place needed was light, men shouting and laughing at the high bar, jostling and arguing; people tramping in and out of the wide doors. Just four men were almost lost at one end of that big bar, especially four men who seemed so unnaturally quiet.

Through a wide entrance in the wall across from the bar he saw ghostly, shapeless furniture covered with canvas. Pretty good-sized casino that. There should be shouting in there too; the bumble of a hundred voices talking at one time; checks clicking and dealers calling. Instead the whole place was as dead as the few remaining soldiers in the picture above the bar were going to be if the First Marines didn't get to Custer's relief soon. On second thought, it didn't look like even the First Marines could do Custer much good now. He was a goner.

"Bart, I'd like you to meet Curly Ivers."

Larsen's booming voice scattered the calm. "Bart's come up fishing, Curly."

"Howdy," Ivers said, never shifting the direct stare of hard green eyes. He was a compact man, probably ten years older than Barton. Blond, curly hair lay closely knit to his round head. His nose was the small kind that could absorb a lot of punching without being broken. Wiry stubble on his chin and jaw didn't move as he spat the single word through thin lips.

"Howdy," Barton said.

The two men looked at each other until Ivers turned his head to Bruce Burris. "Give me another." He trained back on Barton. "Fishing, huh?"

Silence ran on as everyone watched Barton. He returned their stares individually and solemnly.

"Uh-yep! Fishing!" he said firmly.

"He said fishing, gentlemen," Furlan finally said. "Why cloud your brows with all this hostile suspicion? In the old days a stranger was never subjected to such severe and unbelieving scrutiny."

No one commented. Barton grinned and looked back at the heroic but over-eager Custer. Too bad the long-haired general had no sub-machine gun. It wouldn't save him, but he could sure raise hell for a while.

"Gimme that torpedo juice," Ivers said to Burris.

The Scotchman went through a door behind the bar and returned with a wooden case. Ivers shouldered it in a deft lift and started out. "Wait up, Curly," Larsen said. "I'll walk a piece with you." The big teamster yelled goodnight and hurried out. A few moments later they heard his friendly bellow in the street: "Howdy, Tom! You're up mighty late for a young feller. Ain't you afraid of getting lost?"

"Don't tell me you work Tom on swing shift too," Barton said to Burris. He grinned amiably.

"He prowls sometimes at night," Burris said.

"Congratulations, Barton!" Furlan said, smiling. "You've received a few civil words from Bruce. He's even watched you drink his ancient, hoarded and unlicensed liquor without suspicion. Perhaps before the evening is over he'll give you permission to fish his little preserve."

Burris shook his head. "No fishing."

Barton switched quickly. "Ivers much of a drinker?"

"Very moderate, according to Larsen," Furlan said. "But they have a little bar at the Ajax. According to Mart they have a rather complete recreation room there—even some gambling devices rented from Bruce."

Ivers is going to a lot of trouble to keep his crew isolated, Barton thought.

A SUDDEN swishing of rain sounded on the windows, bringing Furlan around quickly. "A pox on it!" he said. "Whenever I leave my kitchen windows open perverse nature rains and blows water all over my kitchen."

"You closed them before we left," Barton said.

"Did I?" Furlan hesitated. "I don't remember. Perhaps I'd better make sure."

"I'm sure you did, but I'll be glad to go over and check on it."

"No, no. I wouldn't think of troubling you over my carelessness. I'll wait to see if the squall passes."

"I have windows upstairs open," Burris said. "I'll not wait." He came from behind the bar, went through a door at the back of the room and his footsteps receded into silence somewhere at the rear of the building.

"I'm afraid it's serious," Furlan said. "I'll return soon." He started for the front door.

"Wait a minute. Take my jacket." Barton stripped it and walked over to the old man. "Just drape it over my shoulders," Furlan said. "I'll only be a moment."

Barton whipped off his cap and gave it to Furlan and the old man hurried out.

Barton was just resuming his study of Custer when glass fragments scattered across the room. From the street came the full-throated roar of a shotgun. Barton went to the darker side of the room in three leaps. Crouched low against the partition he moved quickly to the front windows. He duck-walked from the corner to the door, holding his head below window level. Still crouched he threw open the door, went through and flung himself on the porch away from the dim light coming through the windows.

Except for the rain that fell softly on his clothes and leaped in his face from the porch there wasn't a sound he could hear in the ghost camp. Then someone groaned in the street. Somewhere toward Larsen's corral a door slammed. Burris shouted hoarsely from the blackness at the end of the saloon.

Barton left the porch and walked slowly through the night toward the groan. He stopped when a voice at his feet said weakly, "A pox on the rain."

His hand found the old man's shoulder. "Hurt?"

"I think not," Furlan said. "I was stunned for a moment or two. I fell from the porch."

Barton hoisted the old man and held him up.

"I'll be quite all right in a moment," Furlan said.

Larsen's heavy roar sounded close by. "What's happening?" From the porch came loud footsteps and Burris shouted. "Wha's oop? Who's shooting?"

"Someone fired a gun just as I slipped on the wet porch," Furlan said. "These infernal rubber soles . . ."

"Let's get him inside! The mon may be bad hurt!" Burris said. "Wait! I'll get a light." The porch vibrated as he moved toward the door.

"Sounded like a shotgun to me," Larsen said. "Let's lift him up on the porch."

They hoisted the light figure to a sitting position on the wet planks. Barton kept one hand on Furlan's arm.

"It was a shotgun, all right," Barton said.

Directly across the street flame stabbed at the ground and a shotgun thundered.

Barton threw himself sidewise to the ground. He heard Larsen say, "Great God! Another . . . " Then a grunt.

Orange lights were still flashing on and off in Barton's eyes when Bonny's voice called, "It's all right. Just me shooting by accident!"

Barton got, up, rubbing mud off his hands. "What a girl!" he muttered.

"Well, Bonny, you're very careless with firearms this evening," Furlan said in an amused tone.

"Hold your fire down there!" another voice called from up the street.

"It's Curly!" Larsen said in a surprised voice.

IVERS, Bonny and Burris arrived almost together. The Scotchman played his light around. It revealed Furlan sitting on the porch, Barton's cap sidewise on his silver hair, an amused smile on his streaming face; it turned Barton's blue shirt jet black, glistened on his wet, curly hair; flicked over to Bonny, standing fully dressed, with a sawed-off shotgun leaning against her leg while she rubbed her right arm with her left hand. It passed briefly over Ivers' stubbled face, made gleaming, tiny pearls of the drops of water held by his short beard. He squinted at the light and used both hands to turn up his jumper collar. The beam shot straight down to show Larsen sitting on the ground, dressed in long gray underwear, a partly buckled black rain coat and large unlaced shoes. He was rubbing the back of a wet, bald head.

"What a night!" the teamster grumbled. "When Bonny shot I jumped on one of my own shoelaces and fell and busted my head against a porch post."

Barton choked down a laugh.

"I hope ye did'na break it. A window is gone already in this night's work," Burris said. He reached down to Furlan. "Let's get in. I'll help ye, Peter."

They sat at a big table in a kitchen at the rear of the saloon. Cedar crackled as Bonny stirred the fire.

"Bonny, what on earth were ye doing, lass—besides sleeping out like a red Indian?" Burris grumbled.

"I was sleeping when I heard the shot—"

"You heard the first shot!" Furlan said in surprise. "I thought you accidentally caused it."

"She don't like the musty smell upstairs," Burris said. "Even when I air the whole building she has to sleep on the hillside like a wild bear—" Burris turned, scowling, and caught the girl smiling at his back. The trace of a smile disturbed his own harsh features for an instant. He cleared his throat loudly and looked hard at Larsen. "Where were ye, Mart?" the Scotchman asked.

"I was asleep when I heard the shot, but you know how it is when you're asleep. It was a little while later I said to myself, 'That really *was* a shot!' Then I threw on some duds and come running."

Furlan cut in smoothly as several started to speak at once. "Let's take it from the start. Now you begin, Mr. Barton, if you please."

"O.K. It had started to rain. Mr. Burris went to close windows upstairs, and Mr. Furlan had started for home to do the same—" It was then Barton saw that Furlan no longer had the jacket. It must be lying out in the street. The others stared at him curiously when he hesitated. "I heard the shot outside. That's it."

"That is correct," Furlan said. "I was running along the porch. I must have misjudged the width and skidded into a fall just as someone—was it you, Bonny?—shot." He smiled at the girl.

"No, Peter. I've never had to go that far to get a man."

"Watch your language, lass!" Burris said.

Bonny smiled at Furlan. "I was sleeping in the trees when the shot woke me. Uncle Bruce always insists that I take 'protection' when I sleep out, so I had one of his old shotguns. I dressed and started back with the gun. First I'd cocked both barrels. When I got close enough to hear who was talking, I started to let the hammers down. I—I guess my thumb slipped off that strong hammer. The other barrel just went boom! all by itself."

"Bonny, ye had that gun with the bad sear. When ye shoot the right barrel first it jars the other one off," Burris said. "I've warned ye aboot that!"

"You were upstairs, Mr. Burris?" Barton said.

The Scotchman gave him an angry look. "I came down the outside stairs when I heard the shot."

"You got back from the mine very fast, Ivers," Barton said.

"You want to make something of it, Bentnose?" Ivers said. His green eyes flared a challenge.

"If you want to!" Barton said, starting to rise.

Furlan put out a restraining hand. "Please! Please, gentlemen. While I didn't approve of Mr. Barton's rather abrupt way of asking the question, it really is no more than we all have been volunteering that he asked."

"I talked with Larsen a while at the barn," Ivers said, his eyes never leaving Barton's face. "Then I shoved off. It started to rain so hard I waited in the doorway of that"—he glanced at Bonny—"a building up the street. I heard someone clumping around on the walk across from me and then they went away. After that I heard the first shot."

"That must have been Tom ye heard. He prowls around harmlessly many's the night," Burris said.

"Harmlessly, you say?" Barton looked at Burris.

"Losh! Tom would'na hurt a flea." Burris pushed himself erect. "But I'll go ask him if he saw anything."

"I'll go along and pick up the jacket I lost out there in the excitement," Barton said, rising so hastily that Furlan gave him a startled look.

"I'll get it," Burris said. He was already out of the room.

"Let Uncle Bruce get it," Bonny said. "But if you want to be helpful you can carry my sleeping bag in. I think that blunderbuss broke my arm. I'll get a light and show you."

BONNY'S sleeping bag was in a stand of young aspens a hundred yards from the street, Barton estimated. Set on four heavy posts was a roof, snugly sheeted and completely protecting the bag.

"I suppose you like the sound of rain on tin?"

"Yes, I do, don't you? Or must you be lulled by the drip of water in a mine?"

They bent to get under the protection of the roof and sat down.

"Wide open but cozy," Barton commented.

"Uncle Bruce had Tom build this for me several years ago when he was convinced that I was serious about not sleeping in that musty building. The rain sounds nice on that tin roof, doesn't it?" Her light played along the underside of the shelter, caught the slanting streaks of rain that flashed past the sides.

"You lured me out here just to listen to sound effects?"

"Hardly." She hesitated. "First, I want to tell you that Uncle Bruce thought you followed me up here to Shavano."

"I got here first."

"He really thought you were someone I knew. In his own words, 'A wurr-thless young luvv-err.' "

"Nice work if—"

"I talked him out of that. It did look odd—our arriving together. But he believes me now."

The old boy, Barton reflected, was pretty hostile before he even knew Bonny was coming. Of course, the Scot could have been merely sizing up a stranger. In a dour sort of way . . .

"He's thawed a little—but he still won't let me fish," Barton said.

"Look, Mr. Barton—"

"Bill is the name."

"Look, Mr. Barton, just what is your business here?" The question was direct and demanding, and Bonny threw the light on his face.

Barton grinned and squinted his eyes. "Fishing."

Out of the night Burris' harsh shout demanded, "Bonny! Bon-nee! Where are ye, gurl?"

"You're bringing trouble, Mr. Barton. My uncle brooded over something ever since I came, and even after he was convinced that you didn't follow me. Then there was that shot tonight. You know as well as I that someone mistook Peter for you—that long-beaked cap as he came through the door . . . You were the one they wanted."

Barton thought so too. But that the shotgun artist had shot to kill, he doubted. Furlan had been lying just below the porch, and the broken window was a full six feet or more behind him. The man who had waited out there in the dark had been awful jittery, a poor shot—or had been shooting to scare, because Furlan had said the shot came just as he fell.

Burris shouted again, angrily this time.

"We'd better get back," Bonny said. "Uncle Bruce has a bad heart when he gets all steamed up."

Barton began to roll the sleeping bag. "O.K., let's get back before he blows a gasket."

As they ducked out into the rain Bonny said, "Don't give my uncle any trouble, fisherman. I happen to like him."

Barton grinned broadly in the dark. "I happen to like my little fat body, too. It was me that was supposed to be shot, remember? Just who's giving who trouble?"

They walked back in silence.

"Ye took plenty of time," Burris grumbled. He was standing in the saloon door. He threw the beam of his flashlight into Barton's face.

"I need one of those for self-defense," Barton said.

Burris took the sleeping bag. "Here's your coat. Everybody's gone home to bed. Tom wasn't home." He took the girl's arm. "Come on, lass. You're wet."

Bonny tossed Barton a goodnight and her light. "You'll need it getting over the river," she said.

Alone on the porch Barton went through his jacket. It was muddy and rumpled as if it had been stepped on. He found his pipe and tobacco, but the letter to Ivers was gone. It wasn't on the porch and neither was it in the street.

"I am a dope, first class," Barton said to himself. He started for Furlan's cabin.

THE OLD man was before the fireplace, in slippers, white pajamas and a black woolly robe. "Have a shower and change your clothes and I'll have a cup of coffee for you," Furlan said. "You

were right. The windows in the kitchen were closed."

A half hour later Barton sat with the old man before burning logs that proved by their even oxidation a skillfully built fireplace.

"You did me a great disservice—unconsciously, I allow—by draping me with your clothes before letting me go forth to be shot at," Furlan chided gently.

"I'm sorry. I didn't—"

"Don't give it a thought. I jest." Furlan smiled. "But it troubles me that one so young should have a past so black that assassins lurk in the dark to assault him."

There was no sarcasm in the old man's voice. He spoke gently, as one who considered the whole evening's events with amused detachment. Perhaps thirty-five years of isolation could effect that, Barton thought. If a man didn't go crazy first.

"My past—"

"No, no. I forbid." Furlan held up one hand. "Don't misunderstand my remarks as a polite wedge to force confidences. A man's past is his own sacred record." The old man chuckled. "The information you drew so cleverly from me earlier this evening I do not consider a violation of confidence. Larsen, no doubt, told you all that about the camp's inhabitants and a good deal more on your journey up here."

"Not a great deal."

"Ah, well, a vagrant fisherman requires very little information, I suppose."

Barton's eyes probed steadily for guile and found none.

"Except where to fish."

"Yes, that is the problem." Furlan smiled at the fire.

Furlan raised his cup and drank as though saluting some vision he saw in the flames. The hand on the cup should have been narrow, blue-veined and delicate, Barton reflected. But it was square, strong, with blunt fingers that were stained and discolored.

"You must be tired," Furlan said, looking quickly at Barton as if he had forgotten the guest's presence momentarily. "Don't feel obliged to visit by the fire with me. Sometimes I sit here half the night, drinking coffee and dreaming. Tonight I shall be here for a while. You see I am expecting a friend."

"I hope he comes unarmed."

"He is always well armed. A most formidable friend."

"If you'll excuse me I *will* hit the sack. If you go outside to meet the friend, don't wear my clothes."

"I shan't."

CHAPTER V

BAIT ON THE HOOK

BARTON lay in an upper bunk, his eyes closed, and tried to fit fragments together. Except for the pop of an ember and the soft sound of rain on the cabin roof the room was quiet. Soon the logical track along which Barton tried to steer his thinking became branched with switches. He saw rainbow trout falling into a devil's punch bowl of black water, the face of a girl crinkling the corners of her eyes as she smiled. A young rabbit kicked beside the road and orange flame lit the night. A white face peered at him through defective glass. It suddenly became Joe Parks' face . . .

He was almost asleep and his drowsy brain was torturing him with the belief that he had a midnight watch in a few minutes when something moving outside, close to the wall, cut hard into his semi-consciousness. He opened his eyes and looked at Furlan, still by the fire.

Something hit the door with a shock that shook the casing. Barton sat up. Furlan crossed the room quickly. Out of the night bounded an immense black police dog that capered around the old man, pawing the air like a horse. It barked just once before spraying the room with the vigor of its shaking.

"Quiet, Sampson!" Furlan said. "You will disturb our guest." He looked toward the beds. "I see he roused you, and small wonder. You see, Sampson is addicted to wandering the mountains for days at a time, and he always returns at odd hours."

The dog trotted unevenly toward the kitchen. It paused near the bunks to lift its muzzle, and Barton saw that the animal had a crippled front paw. Then it went into the kitchen.

"Apparently he never catches anything in his travels," Furlan said. "You observe he goes directly to the ice box after a perfunctory greeting."

"What happened to his foot?" Barton asked.

"He was caught in one of Tom Spencer's old wolf traps two summers ago. I found him almost too late."

"Why don't you tell Tom to take his damn traps up in the summer?"

"I'm afraid Tom woud resent that, and I have never been one to seek trouble. Of course I might tie Sampson up, but better that he have freedom and death on a lonely slope than to die of heartbreak on a leash."

Barton listened to Furlan talk to the dog as he fed him in the kitchen. If Sampson had been around earlier in the evening he might have been helpful in running down the person with the shotgun. Barton did not doubt that the ambush had been meant for him. Bonny thought so, and so did Furlan himself. Excepting Furlan, anyone could have fired the shot. Larsen had a shotgun and was handy with it. Ivers was outside too. Burris could have gone straight out the back door instead of upstairs when he heard Barton offer to go to Furlan's cabin. Bonny had been outside, and with a shotgun. Crazy Tom had been prowling around in the dark. Anyone from the Ajax could have been in the dark street.

He'd have to throw a study on Thomas in the morning as well as on the Ajax. And perhaps it might be a good idea to break out that purloined Navy .45 that Joe Parks had insisted he take.

Now that the letter to Ivers was gone he had quite a problem if Ivers proved uncooperative about seeing the mine. From what he had seen of the Ajax boss Barton figured Ivers *would* be a little hard to get along with.

Maybe Ivers already had Joe Parks' letter. It might have fallen from the jacket pocket when Furlan went off the porch. It could have been taken from the jacket while everyone milled around. Burris had handled the garment. For that matter, Furlan could have taken it before he fell off the porch.

Well, it was gone. And if someone wanted to knock you off before knowing what you were doing in Shavano, that someone had a very guilty conscience. Or something . . .

He was sound asleep when Furlan came in to bed a few minutes later.

"WOULD you like to see my workshop?" Furlan asked after breakfast. "I've converted the superintendent's quarters into a sort of crude laboratory." His voice was eager as a child's asking someone to view a plaything.

An hour later they came out.

"That seemed to me to be complete enough for atomic research," Barton said. He grinned at the obviously pleased old man. "Did you?"

"No, scarcely that. My field was entirely chemical engineering before I came here. I've dabbled a great deal since—minerals, explosives, electricity—even a little botany." The old man smiled shyly. "I worked out an ore grinding process and a few other small developments that made me unnecessarily rich a good many years ago."

Barton stalled for words to cover his surprise.

"I noticed an assay furnace. Do you do a great deal of that?"

"Just in the course of my own work. I now and then run a few samples for Bruce—and very recently several for Ivers." The old man looked up with disarming directness. "Why? Do you expect to find a piece of float in the course of your—ah—angling?"

So Ivers lately had started having assays. In that case he should know what he was shipping.

"I might stumble over a chunk of something," Barton said. He put his hand toward Sampson and the dog moved away quickly. "Does Crazy Tom live in that old store building across from Burris' place?"

Furlan nodded. "He barely might know of a place to fish. Tom moves about a great deal, as you learned last night." The old man chuckled suddenly. "Tom paints, you know."

"Postoffice signs?"

"Oh, no! You'll see."

As Barton walked toward the camp one article he had seen in Furlan's laboratory stuck in his mind. It was the complete working parts of a single-barreled shotgun, secured by bolts and brackets to a heavy block. It had been surrounded with electrical gadgets that Furlan explained as apparatus used in testing certain explosive reactions. Unbolted from the table the gun—or one like it—could be carried easily under a man's clothes.

Barton crossed the narrow bridge. The stream was clearing after last night's shower. Those riffles looked mighty good. Washed, clean air and the warming sun that was sending vapors up from the drying roofs of the ghost camp felt good too . . .

Suppose Furlan himself had fired the shot through the window and then jumped from the porch. He could have flung the gun far down the street and recovered it later when he started for home alone. Rain had been on its way when he and Barton left the cabin that night, but Furlan had added no clothes. Maybe he had been figuring ahead on that jacket buildup. A coat draped on a small man made him look much larger—and the light in and from the bar room had been very poor. There had been no open kitchen window. Maybe Furlan was absent-minded—but that was one of the poorest descriptions Barton could think of to apply to the old scientist.

But why? As a subtle warning to Barton? He shook his head and tried to dismiss the whole theory as fantastic. Still —the idea that a girl like Bonny would shoot from the dark was a little fantastic too. Or was it? Somebody had murdered the calm last night.

Barton stopped near the shattered window. The town was as silent as the crags above it except for the rhythmic coughing of an engine somewhere behind the saloon. Probably Burris' light plant. He jumped from the porch and looked under it. No letter there, nor in the street.

He went across the street to Crazy Tom's house.

Before he could raise his hand for the second series of knocks the door jerked back and he saw a shotgun pointed bluntly at his chest by a thin, stooped man whose face was the color of something you might find under a rotting log.

"What this camp needs is a few water pistols," Barton said. "You're Spencer?"

"T. L. Spencer. Crazy Tom Spencer. Crazy Tom!"

In spite of the sawed-down gun Barton wanted to say, "I'll just call you C. T." Instead he said, "Glad to know you, Mr. Spencer. Now if you can just put that cocked business down for a few minutes—"

"Can't! Both barrels cocked. Never put a cocked gun down!"

Barton grinned at the tall figure, thinking it was fortunate that he didn't have to smile with his stomach because that organ didn't feel equal to the effort. He tried to read the other's eyes. That was difficult too because one of Spencer's eyes wandered around independently while the other misty blue one stared unblinkingly down the rusty rib between those two, large barrels. Just above that steady orb was a depression in the skull that bespoke frightful injury in past years.

"You a dude?" Spencer accused. His good eye stared. "Don't look like a dude, do you?" He paused for a longer survey.

Suddenly he dropped the gun and beckoned with it. "Come in. I watched you yesterday and through the window last night and I guess you ain't a dude."

So he was a peeping as well as a crazy Tom.

"No, I'm not a dude. What kind do you mean?" Barton asked. His stomach relaxed and he stepped into the most disorderly room he'd ever seen.

WATER-STREAKED shoe boxes loaded sagging shelves on one wall. A rusted cook stove blocked Barton's immediate passage; two more sat near the back of the room. Heaped along the walls and in corners were odd pieces of harness, lumber, tin buckets, powder boxes, two wooden barrels from which straw protruded, paint cans and rusty tools. A slot machine with Admiral Dewey's picture on the face was crowned by a saddle. Draped in festive arch over a door at the rear of the room was grimy blue and white bunting. To one side of the doorway six shaving mugs sat neat and dusty on a small, scroll-work shelf.

Everything but the anchor off the *U. S. S. Maine*. That would be in the next room probably.

"Ain't but one kind of dude," Spencer said. He hugged the gun and stared at Barton. "The ones that never dug a hole in their life but tell honest prospectors how to mine." He tapped Barton's chest with the gun. "You ever hear of a mining engineer that found a mine?"

"No," Barton said truthfully and pushed the barrels aside gently.

"You never will! You never will! Nobody did! Why, the dirty, thieving . . ." Spencer launched into an obscene tirade against mining engineers that brought madness to his face and blood streaks to his defective eye. At last he paused exhausted and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "Come in and eat. Never figured you was a dude from yesterday."

Still clinging to the gun he led the way into a combination bedroom and kitchen. Foodstained newspapers covered the table. Partly immersed in a wash basin of soapy water, a basin that showed gray scum at water level, were a plate and cup. Spencer seized the plate and wiped the bottom on the side of his overalls. "Got some good rice with raisins," he said, tapping a kettle on the stove with the weapon.

"No, thanks," Barton said hastily. "I just had breakfast with Peter Furlan."

"Him, huh?" Spencer dropped the plate back into the basin and took the tin cup. He shook it vigorously, splashing soapy water on the hot stove, then wiped the bottom of the utensil on his pants. "You'll want some good coffee then. Pete never could make coffee. Got one of them things that spouts 'stead of boiling. Pete's one of them slick boots—not the mining kind—but you got to watch him!"

"That so?"

"Yeah, that's so!"

Soapy water cracked in the cup he set on the stove, sizzled as it ran off the sides. He poured a stream of black liquid from a blue granitewear pot.

"Set down and drink!"

Barton sat.

"Pete's all right now, you understand—but you got to watch him. Pete was one of them polished-boot big shots once—before him and Sampson J. Parks had their run-in."

"Oh they did?"

"Yes, oh they did! Pete was gonna marry Penelope—that was Sampson's sister—but Sampson queered that. Pete was a bad drinker then—awful bad at times. So Sampson fired him . . . Why ain't you drinking that coffee?"

Barton took a sip. Aside from the soap taste it *was* better than Furlan's brew. He smacked his lips and grinned. "So Sampson fired him?"

"Yeah, Sampson fired him! And he got him fired off'n every job he got, and Pete drank worser all the time. Then he come up here. Now he's all right, but you got to watch him. You got to watch him!"

"Did you hear the shooting last night?"

"I heard it all right. You bet I heard it!"

"Did you happen to see anyone around about then?"

"I see plenty of people around—all the time!"

"Were you close when the shooting started?"

"I said I heard it, didn't I? Don't ask so many damn fool questions—like a dude!"

Spencer's left eye began to roll wildly and the anger of his delivery shot small strings of saliva from his contorted lips.

Barton took another small sip of coffee. "What happened to the girl—Penelope?"

Spencer's face straightened and his right eye softened. "Mighty fine girl she was. Mighty pretty too, I mind. Oh, she married some dude and went east and he run off and left her and I guess maybe she finally died."

"Old Pete must have loved Sampson for that."

"Huh! You think so! What do you

"You got to watch **everybody** *here. I do all the time!"*

think Pete names his dogs after. Named every dog he ever had the same name too! Every one, hear me?"

"I hear you."

"Sampson's dead now. Died last week. Maybe it was a month or so ago—" The old man scratched one ear with the cocked gun. "Maybe last year—but he died."

"Old Parks must have been hard to get along with. Pushing people around and all."

"He pushed plenty. But he never scared Bruce none. He tried to, hear me? He tried to cheat Bruce out of this townsite when the last part went up for taxes five, six years back. He was gonna wreck all these good buildings for the timber. The county commissioners was crooked too. But Bruce won the lawsuit, and then he beat hell out of Sampson. Bruce was two years older too!"

"That was a remarkable disadvantage, considering both of them must have been seventy," Barton said, grinning.

"Yeah, Bruce is pretty tough. No one fools with Bruce. But when he gets heated real good his heart goes back on him. But if they get too mean I can take care of 'em!" Spencer tapped the shotgun and glared. "Ain't you gonna drink all that coffee? I got plenty of it."

"No thanks. I've got to—to go."

Spencer picked up the cup and smelled it. "Same thing every time I make coffee. Always tastes like soap!"

He followed Barton into the other room. "Want to see something good?" he asked craftily.

"Sure."

Spencer went to one of the stoves, flipped a rat-fouled canvas off several framed pictures. "Looky!"

Some of the oils looked as if they had been put on with finger tips. There was Shavano, the long street, the river, the mine-scarred mountains in painstaking, cramped accuracy. Formed of clouds at the head of the range was a nebulous face; a taunting, jeering face that looked down on the camp and sneered. Every detail seemed crude, yet the whole effect was startling. Intense feeling had gone into that face—and some of it had emerged on the canvas. In the lower, right hand corner in large white letters was *T. L. SPENCER.*

"What do you think of it?" the old man asked eagerly, nudging Barton.

"It's a very fine painting. It's got—er—character and—depth."

Spencer swayed back and forth with his shotgun and nodded violently. Then he nudged Barton timidly with the barrels and said, "Would you like to buy it?"

"Well—a painting like that is worth a lot of money, and—"

"Twenty dollars?"

Barton gulped. He'd expected to hear twenty thousand. "I'll take it," he said solemnly. It would look as good as those bulls on Joe Parks' office wall.

He handed Spencer a bill. "Better keep it here for me—where it'll be safe—until I'm ready to go."

He tilted the picture. Beneath it was another. There were five of them on the stove, all the same.

At the door Spencer said, "Come back any time. I knowed you was no dude." He leaned close. "Remember to watch Pete." He leaned even closer, until the gun was pressing against Barton's chest. "You got to watch *everybody* here. I do all the time!"

"Thanks," Barton said. He stepped away. "And you'd better watch that cocked gun, Mr. Spencer."

'Looky!" The old man broke the gun. "No shells, see. No shells!"

CHAPTER VI

SOME LIKE TO FIGHT

BARTON walked up the street. Things were getting complicated. Especially so when he began buying oil daubs. Maybe Crazy Tom wasn't so crazy after all. Still there had been sheer insanity in his face when Barton had pressed him too closely about the night before—and when he was talking about mining engineers. Jackson had been an egineer, and he might have reached Shavano. Now you take that river in the canyon. Would that water carry a body from Shavano to the Circle M?

Across the street he saw Larsen's horses in what had been the yard of a livery stable. The building was only a short distance from the Highland Tavern. Larsen could have shot and run back to his quarters and then reappeared. He wondered what doorway Ivers had been standing in—if he had been in a doorway at all. But Ivers had had no shotgun the night before—at least not in the saloon. So far Larsen and Spencer were the only ones in Shavano who regarded a sawed-down shotgun as standard equipment.

More and more eivdence of fortunes sunk into the hard sides of the mountains became visible as Barton climbed the road toward the Ajax, skirting the slopes of one dump after another. Even without proof of rising smoke from the buildings and fresh waste on the dump, Barton could have identified the Ajax a quarter of a mile ahead. To the trained eye some indefinable characteristic aside from blatant physical evidence shows whether a workings is alive or dead.

At the foot of the yellow waste pile Barton turned from the road to follow a trail that led past the powder magazine. He hesitated when he saw that the magazine door was swinging open, then walked over to secure it. They certainly stored a lot of powder for hand operations. Still, it was a long way to haul supplies, and better to be overloaded than caught short. He took a stick of dynamite from an open box, automatically noted the date before tossing it back.

Three buildings stood on the Ajax dump. One of them, recently built of salvaged lumber, had a neat sign over the door: *THIS AIN'T MANUS.* The other large building was obviously the bunkhouse and messhall. Near the portal sat a small, weather-beaten shack from whence came the sound of a cat-head hammer on steel. At the far side of the wide dump between two and a half and three tons of ore was piled on flat sheets.

Barton crossed the dump and began to gather small pieces of rock from all over the pile. He was aware that the sound of hammering had ceased; aware too that a man had come from the shop and was walking slowly toward him. He started to scoop the handful of samples into his jacket pocket.

"You can leave the ore, mate!" a voice called.

Barton saw a rangy, broad-shouldered man about his own age, stripped to the waist and carrying a sawed-down shotgun. "I said to drop the rock!"

"This camp is shotgun crazy," Barton said. Deliberately he dumped the ore into his pocket. "Anybody up here ever fight with anything besides a scattergun?"

"If that's all that's worrying you, mate . . . !" The blacksmith flung the gun to one side and walked in.

Barton stepped backward, shuffling his feet into the dump and grinning at the angry face. The blacksmith came in briskly and launched a straight righthand drive. Barton twisted his left shoulder in and moved his bent left arm forward and up as he stepped ahead. Nothing but a forceful grunt from the tall tool dresser and a sweat streak across Barton's forearm resulted. The short right-hand punch that Barton countered with was powered from the twist of his hips upward. It numbed the blacksmith's legs and turned his face gray under its coal grime. He sat down on the dump and tried to gasp wind into uncooperative lungs.

"Mike always was a sucker to shoot the works!" a harsh voice said.

Curly Ivers was coming across the dump in quick strides. He kicked the shotgun out of his way without looking down.

"I'll try you, Bentnose!" he said.

He did.

Barton stopped two blows with his arms and three with his face before he could shove the shorter man away. He went after the Ajax boss head-on and collected three more jolts that cut his lips and blurred one eye.

"Come on, Bentnose!"

The taste of his own blood began to cool Barton's fury. When the Ajax boss stepped forward again he went back quickly with one cheek bone blotched from a measured stab. Green eyes glowing with pure joy of combat, Ivers came back. He ducked low and came up fast and Barton shook from two solid thuds in the chest as he used one arm to help Ivers come closer.

Up from Barton's bent left leg as it straightened, along the heavy muscles of his back flowed the force that drove his uppercut against the wiry stubble under Ivers' chin. Most of the electricity went out of the Ajax superintendent but Barton struck once more with his left hand and Ivers sagged backward to slump against the broad-shouldered Mike, who, recovered now, caught his boss and eased him to a sitting position.

BARTON cleared his throat and spat blood. He ran his tongue around the inside of his lips and found plenty of damage. Ivers, he saw with surprise, was far from being out.

"You all right, Chief?" Mike asked.

"In a minute," Ivers muttered. He put one hand under his chin and the other at the base of his brain and gingerly moved his head as if testing for something loose. He looked up at Barton. "I walked right into that one. O.K. Now get to hell out of here."

"No," Barton said. "I want to talk to you. Might even want to look around a little."

"You got a lot of guts!" Ivers rasped. He struggled to his feet, flinging off Mike's helping hand. One of his knees unhinged and he staggered.

"Let me try him again, Chief," Mike said, stepping forward.

"You got even more guts, Mike!" Ivers said.

Barton grinned with swelling lips. "I think you busted four or five ribs."

"I meant to. I hope I did," Ivers said. Without turning his head he spoke to Mike. "Go back to work." To Barton he said, "O.K., we'll talk." He walked toward the building with the sign.

Barton picked up the shotgun, tossed it to the blacksmith and grinned. "I'm glad *you* didn't connect."

Mike stared, turned and walked back to his shop.

A railed-in space at the front of the room held a kitchen table and two chairs. Ivers sat down quickly, kicking the second chair toward Barton. "O.K.," he said.

"You make a big issue over a handful of rock that I could have swiped off Larsen's wagon later."

"Yeah, everybody else in Shavano gets it the easy way. But you had to force Mike's hand. Why?"

"To see how far you guys would go."

"O.K. You found out."

"You make a hell of a beef over a little rock."

"That's up to us. Maybe we *like* to fight."

Barton grinned. "I don't doubt that a damn bit."

He threw a careful study on the room. There was a tiny bar in one corner. Before a big fireplace made of brick from some wrecked boiler were several chairs and an ancient but comfortable-looking leather divan. Magazines were piled neatly on a low table. Nearby sat a large radio. Two poker tables occupied the space under a big window made of ten square, four-paned frames. A roulette wheel, dice layout and pool table completed the furnishings.

"Regular officers' club you got here."

"Yeah."

On a tiny bulletin board a watch list in sprawling print listed six names for master-at-arms duty.

"I want to go through the mine with you," Barton said, his eyes moving quickly from the paper to Ivers.

"Like hell you will!" Ivers rasped. His green eyes hooded with suspicion and he stiffened.

"O.K., just thought it would be something to do—since Burris won't let me fish."

Ivers said nothing and his face didn't relax.

"You weigh your ore before it goes out?"

"Yeah. Crazy Tom fixed up an old scale in a feed store down there." Anger started to grow in Ivers' eyes. "Not that it's any of your damn business!"

"Yeah," Barton said, imitating Ivers' flat tone. "Guess I'll go then." He rose. "By the way, I secured your magazine door on the way up."

Ivers was steady on his feet, his face showing far less effects of the fight than Barton's. "There's about a week left, kid. If you got ideas—forget 'em! You got by two of us fair enough, but if you're figuring what I think you are there'll be seven of us to stop you when you try. Catch?"

"No," Barton said truthfully.

Barton walked toward Shavano slowly. Until the Ajax superintendent had flared up over his request to see the mine he had been flirting with the idea of telling about Parks' letter and laying his cards down. Ivers might be holding out rich ore, hiding it in old drifts, shooting waste down to cover it, gradually cutting down the values he shipped until Parks lost interest in the mine. It was an old, old trick with many variations. Ivers was keeping close control of the crew too. Miners who stayed at their diggings never spilled their guts when they got drunk in town. All Ivers' pals . . .

LARSEN was examining shoes when Barton reached the corral. He shouted a loud greeting and let go of the fetlock he was holding. As Barton came closer the teamster grinned broadly. "I ran into a tree once, myself."

Barton leaned on the corral boards and grinned back. "Grizzly bear, Larsen. Tough fight—but he won." He squinted at the horses. "Been skinning all your life?"

"Man and boy, 'most fifty years. Wouldn't feel right going any place 'less I was looking a horse's rear square in the face!" Larsen laughed and whacked a black mare into a startled jump. The horse looked back over its shoulder, entirely unappreciative of the wit.

"Fishing's been poor. Might go out on your next trip. When do you leave?"

"First thing in the morning. Glad to have you ride down with me."

"Thanks. I'll let you know this afternoon."

Jiggling the ore in his pocket he walked past the saloon. No one in sight there. From a roof he was repairing down the street Crazy Tom waved a hammer and yelled something. Barton waved back.

Bonny was fishing near the bridge. Or was she stalling to intercept him?

"Playing 'em a little longer today, Miss Burris?" he asked with exaggerated politeness.

"Did you sleep well, Mr. Barton? Or did you miss your familiar rock pillow in the mine." She looked at him closely and smiled. "I'd say the mine caved in."

"Gray eyes are the most direct of all kinds, aren't they?" Barton grinned. "I like the way the sun hits that red hair and—"

"It is *not* red, Brother Wolf!"

"Nice though—and the way you fill those boots—"

"Let's hear your howl now."

Barton obliged with such vigor that he raised a challenging roar from Sampson.

Bonny laughed. Barton said he also liked that. "All your own teeth too!" he approved.

Sampson came partway down the hill from Furlan's laboratory, decided he'd been duped, and retired with limping dignity, growling a little.

The girl's face sobered suddenly and she dropped her eyes. Turning, Barton saw Burris watching them from a porch behind the saloon building. The big Scot was motionless, his arms hanging at his sides.

Barton raised his hand and shouted, "Good morning, Mr. Burris."

The Scotchman stood silent and steady.

"Hmm. Look at him there against that backdrop of peaks—like an old bald eagle watching its young. All he needs is kilts, a claymore and a headless body under one big foot—my body."

Bonny smiled absently. "When are you leaving?"

"Leaving! I haven't even fished yet."

"Let's drop that gag, Mr. Barton." She gave him a level look. "You'd save me and my uncle a lot of grief if you left with Mart tomorrow."

"Hey—"

She had turned and was walking down the creek.

Barton took another look at the grim figure behind the saloon and walked on up the trail. Now if you just get bitten by Sampson that will top off the morning.

Furlan was washing clothes in an elec-

tric machine on his back porch. "Ah, the fisherman returns!" He jerked his head for a retake of Barton's battered face.

"Would you run an assay on some rock for me?"

Barton extended his hand with the Ajax samples.

Furlan gave him another sharp look. "Why, yes—sometime this evening." Furlan reached past Barton to shut off the machine. "Pardon my lack of tact—I usually don't pry—but if that came from the Ajax recently I can tell you now approximately what it will run."

"Good?"

"Very good."

Barton blinked without expression.

During lunch Barton announced, "This afternoon I am really going fishing."

"Bonny returned to the saloon sometime ago," Furlan said, smiling. "I saw her from the porch."

Smooth old cuss, Barton thought. He sees plenty.

"I'm going to hit some of those canyon holes."

"Near the Caledonian?"

Barton felt a sudden leap of caution. Furlan was reading his mind. "If there's any good ones there."

"Perhaps you will have another sample then."

Now he really *is* reading my mind, Barton thought.

"By the way, I bought a painting today."

Furlan laughed. "That malignant old fellow watching over Shavano. He represents a hated breed—all the mining engineers whose reports show this district to be unworthy of investment. And that is every expert who ever made a survey here." Furlan smiled. "Now that you've visited Tom you no doubt know all my innermost secrets."

"I discovered you can't make good coffee."

Furlan laughed. He began to gather up the dishes, rejecting Barton's offer to help. "By the way, there's a Parkstown paper on the table by the fireplace. You might be interested in glancing at it before your—ah—angling expedition."

Streamered on the weekly's front page were the headlines of Jackson's death. Barton read the story carefully for the second time.

"How far would the river carry a body?" he called into the kitchen.

"A man shot in the middle . . . I'm sure some of those deep pools between here and the canyon mouth would hold it forever."

Between Shavano and the canyon mouth! The paper said nothing of that. Furlan came to the door, a dish rag in his hand, and looked quietly at Barton.

OUTSIDE the cabin he had to make a detour around Sampson. The dog lay unmoving in the path, watching with dark, alert eyes as Barton passed.

At the head of the canyon he paused in plain view of anyone who might be watching and put his rod together. When he started to get his reel he saw the .45 automatic pistol Parks had given him. He lifted it from the creel. There was no magazine in it, no cartridge in the chamber. The last time he'd seen the gun it was lying unloaded in his sea bag. Still unloaded. He looked toward the cabin.

He completed setting up his gear and walked down the canyon.

New posts had been set beneath the Caledonian ore bin not many years before and the covered, sloping top had been repaired, probably at the same time. He stood a few minutes at the lower chute, looking at the gouge in the dump where Larsen had loaded waste to fill the gulch crossing. He climbed the dump and walked over to the combination dryroom and blacksmith shop. There was a fat lock on the door. He peered through a murky window at tools racked neatly inside; a mine car sat on false rails on the dirt floor. There was a twenty-five pound carbide tin on a bench and above it hung the tank of a bucket-type lamp. Sitting on the forge a mountain rat stared impudently.

He leaned his rod against the shack, unstrapped his creel and walked back to the ore bin.

Here was every detail necessary for a reasonably quick switch of ore. Larsen had to go right past the top of the bin. He could unload, pull down to the lower chute and take on worthless rock. A lifetime of skinning and estimating ore weight would enable him to come very close to the weight shown on the Shavano scales, which probably were not accurate anyway. His wheel tracks at the lower chute could be attributed to his using that branch road to get fill from the dump. Right now, after last night's rain, that gulch crossing could stand repairing.

Suppose Jackson, walking up from the Circle M, had come suddenly on Larsen stealing ore. The way that fat teamster handled a shotgun . . . And it was only a short distance to the river.

Once Ajax ore was in the Caledonian bin who could prove where it came from? If the Ajax shut down, for example. When opportunity came, even if Larsen had to wait for years, he could start pulling the worthless rock from the lower chute, waste it until the ore showed up. There would be some mixing with Caledonian rock, but a three-thousand load of ore would carry a lot of excess waste and still pay off. Parks' sheet showed eight shipments of no value. There could be eight loads worth approximately three thousand bucks each right there in the Caledonian bin.

Barton studied the ground and the chute. There was little evidence that any rock had been unloaded recently. Of course it had rained the night before—and rained almost every afternoon at that time of year in the mountains. He filled his pipe slowly, frowning at the bin. Larsen had said that Burris still took samples from there. In that case the Scotchman must be in on the stealing—if there was stealing. Ivers might be too, because he surely must have suspicioned something wrong after Parks talked to him. How about Furlan? He had known where Barton was going. Maybe the whole camp, including Crazy Tom was cooperating to rob Parks.

Something in his theory of Jackson's death began to irritate the smooth flow of his thoughts. If the old engineer had surprised Larsen at the bin . . . Yes, that could have been the shipment before last . . . But to reach the Caledonian early in the morning when Larsen would be there . . . walking from the Circle M, fifteen miles down the river . . . Why, hell, that would start Jackson on his trip in the middle of the night, and that didn't sound reasonable at all.

Well, find out about the bin first and beat your brains out figuring details later. Squatted with his feet in the chute and his hands on the sides, he let thimself down into the bin. Working over the entire surface in semi-darkness, he filled his pockets with samples and climbed out. From the lower chute he took a few more pieces of rock.

Half an hour later he had hooked a trout in a pool similar to the one where he had first seen Bonny. He lost the fish in the same manner, cursing then grinning. He was glad she hadn't seen that, but he'd tell her, booting the weight of the fish by a pound, of course.

CHAPTER VII

FORTY SECONDS FROM HELL

TWO hours later, with one trout, he started back to Shavano. As he came around a sharp, rocky turn he saw Burris walking a hundred yards ahead. The Scot looked back and kept walking. They were still a hundred yards apart when they reached Shavano and Barton branched off to the left toward Furlan's cabin.

Furlan was sitting in the corner reading. He wore glasses and they gave his face an even more pronounced gentle and child-like appearance.

"I have one fish and some more rock."

"Splendid! I left a red coffee tin on the back porch for the sample. The Ajax ore is there in a blue tin."

On the back porch Barton emptied his pockets of rock. He was grinning as he shifted the Ajax ore into the red can and put the Caledonian rock into the blue one.

Back in the big room Barton took the .45, rummaged in his gear till he found a magazine and then put the loaded weapon under his pillow. Furlan watched with a puzzled look.

He was in the shower room drying when Furlan called, "Larsen was over this afternoon and wanted to know if you were going down with him tomorrow."

"I've been considering it."

"Oh, I'm sorry. I must have overestimated the attraction of my hospitality. I told him you and I were going to Timberline Lake tomorrow."

Barton had one leg in the air and a towel in his hand. He was motionless in that pose for a moment. "Fishing?"

"Genuine Shavano fishing."

"O.K. I'll go by this evening and tell Larsen I'm not going—just to be sure."

"Of course. He eats with Bruce, you know, and Bonny will be there."

Sharp old gee, Barton thought. In spite of a predetermined distrust of everyone in Shavano he knew he'd liked Furlan from the first. But you still didn't have to trust a man, no matter how likable he was.

Barton found the doors of the Highland Tavern locked that evening. He rattled vigorously and soon heard a ponderous tread. Burris' bleak face stared through the glass.

"I'm looking for Larsen."

The big Scotchman motioned up the street with a slow, deliberate movement of his broad thumb and then disappeared. No one, Barton decided, would ever misquote Burris.

He found Larsen reading by a gasoline lantern in a cell that had been an oat bin. Heat from the hot mantle had beaded the teamster's brow with sweat and the light gleamed brightly on his bald head. On the cover of his magazine a fearful blonde clutched her breasts and shrank from a black shadow that was about to clutch her.

"Did it get her?" Barton asked, tapping the blonde in the stomach with his pipe and grinning.

"Naw!" Larsen said in disgust. "Them pictures on the front never have nothing to do with the yarns inside." He lurched out of the den's only chair. "Set down! Set down!"

"No thanks. I have to get back and get some rest. Pete and I are shoving off for some lake early tomorrow."

"Yeah, he told me. I'll be back in a couple of days if you want to go down then." Larsen yawned widely, "Thought all the fish in Timberline got froze out a few years back, but I guess Pete oughta know. He prowls the hills enough looking for that dog of his."

As Barton walked back he caught a glimpse of Crazy Tom ducking between some buildings down the street.

"I'll be in my workshop until quite late tonight," Furlan said when Barton returned. "Do you want me to leave Sampson here? He's quite alert, I assure you."

"I'll be O.K. Besides he looked at me like I was a T-bone this morning."

It was warm and snug in the dark cabin when Barton stripped to his skivvies and climbed to his bunk. He lay there relaxed and thinking. Furlan was either guiding him along or giving him an awful crossing up. There was the forty-five in the creel. Maybe the old man thought he needed protection and maybe Furlan didn't understand modern weapons enough to know it needed a magazine. Maybe . . . He seemed to understand a lot of other things.

Furlan was sure a body wouldn't be pushed from Shavano to the Circle M by the river. Furlan also claimed to know the value of Ajax ore. Of course, if Ivers had some of it assayed Furlan should know. Better string along with the old man—for a while. Barton yawned and stretched, feeling the hard compactness of the gun under his pillow. Good for making a wonderful noise but at fifty yards he couldn't hit the side of an ore bin with it. Ore bin . . . If Furlan ran honest tests he'd know about that bin. Why shouldn't he run honest tests? . . . Kind of a dirty trick to switch those cans. Can't trust everybody . . . anybody . . . Bonny maybe . . . But she wanted him to leave, and her uncle

had been spying on him . . . Timberline Lake . . . There's that face in the sky again . . . beautiful face . . . but those big white letters that spelled Penelope ruined the mouth . . . some fishing . . .

HE WAS half awake. At first he thought it was the night before and Sampson was padding along close to the cabin wall. Then he was wide awake. Those steps were heavier than any dog could make. Now they were gone. Barton drew the pistol from his pillow and eased the slide back. He let it down on the breech, feeling the bolt strip a cartridge and ram it home. With his legs over the side of the bunk he faced the door and waited. And waited. There was no breeze in the still high-country night. No stealthy hand tried the lockless door. There was no sound at all.

Then he heard it. The faint, steady *s-sss.*

He left the gun where his right hand last touched the rail to give him the push that sent him running for the door, bare feet making solid sounds against the cork tiles. He was out in the darkness and around the corner of the cabin. The sack from which the small steady noise hissed was as close to his bed as the cabin would permit. Hot, sticky tar burned his hands and fumes rose in his face as he knelt on the ground and finally got his hands beyond the spitting fuse. He jerked and a stick of dynamite came out of the sack. With his left hand holding the cylinder he again pulled hard on the small, strong line. The soft stick of explosive tore loose and he had the fuse and cap. He doubled the unburned part of the line and thrust the loop between his back teeth, grinding back and forth with savage haste. It took a lot of grinding. When he took the fuse from his mouth and jerked on the two ends it broke and he dropped the burning part. He was breathing hard as he stood with the other section in his hand, feeling the sleek, cold cap on its end. As he stooped for the sack the fuse burned through its severed end and spit flame for a few moments. There was no light then except up the hill in the laboratory.

He walked back to the cabin door with the sack, conscious of the cold ground and the chilly night. He was trembling a little as he looked around the dark basin. Ghostly outlines of buildings showed faintly. The stars were thick and bright above and the black rims of the peaks stood grim against the sky.

"Whew! I'm cold!" he said aloud, as he entered the cabin.

The world changed when the touch of his finger brought light to the room. He set the sack of explosives on the table by the fireplace, on top of the newspaper that told of Jackson's murder. It weighed approximately forty pounds, he estimated. The short fuse in his hands, its tarry covering showing bright wet where he had chewed, was barely eight inches long. Forty seconds to go. The cap had been fixed with a crimper and the fuse had been laced securely through the primer he had torn apart out there by the wall. He'd known that when he first felt it.

He went to his bunk, put on his shoes and shoved the pistol under the pillow. He was building a fire in the kitchen when Furlan came in.

"Well!" Furlan said. "I should have known you might get hungry in the night. I could have anticipated that and left something in the ice box."

"I got cold."

"In this cabin?" Furlan asked in pained surprise.

"I went outside. Look on the table by the fireplace."

When Furlan re-entered the kitchen his pink face wore the look of a child who has been forced into seeing cold, distasteful reality for the first time.

Barton explained.

"I'd have had less timber in me if it had been under the mattress." He grinned suddenly. "Except the splinters I got on my way through the roof."

They walked back to the table together. The wide, dark-faced young man whose arms and legs were dark bronze against his white skivvies; and the old man in faded blue whose stained hands trembled as ungentle emotion disturbed his gentle face. Barton picked up one of the sticks. It bore the same date as the one he'd examined in the Ajax magazine. He said so.

"That means very little," Furlan said. He stared in awe at the sack. "This is truly a serious matter."

Barton smothered a smile. "You just ain't a-woofin', Pop!" he wanted to say.

THE OLD man stared in perplexed fascination at the dynamite. "Oh!" he said suddenly. "Here is something that surprises me. I checked and rechecked . . ."

He handed Barton a small slip of paper on which a vigorous hand had printed: *Ajax—trace, Caledonian—29.35.* Barton's mind registered without comment the fact that Furlan had assumed correctly where the second sample came from. He reversed the results to fit the switched cans. The rock in the Caledonian ore bin really was worthless! Twenty-nine ounces of gold per ton was about right for the Ajax, according to previous settlement figures. If the rich ore on the Ajax dump wasn't going into the Caledonian bin, where was it going, providing it ever left the Ajax and wasn't just a decoy pile? There was no place between the Ajax and Shavano for a switch; and there was no place, excepting the Caledonian, between Shavano and the Circle M. Changed at the Circle M? . . . or by the driver somewhere during the forty miles to Parkstown? . . . If Larsen knew what I'd been thinking I'd apologize to him, Barton thought.

He looked quickly at Furlan, caught the old man studying him with keen appraisal.

"I accidentally kicked over the blue can out there on the porch," Barton said. "And I must have carelessly got the samples back in the wrong cans."

"I see. That clears up my problem then." Furlan seemed to accept the explanation with no reservation.

That doesn't clear things up for Bill Barton. Just what was Furlan's angle? Suppose the old man had concealed the real worth of the Caledonian sample by a false "trace"? Maybe he hadn't run the assays at all. Maybe . . . Barton tried to quit thinking. For a guy with a weak mind and a black eye he was getting in just about over his head.

Furlan's smile seemed to agree.

Where had the old man been when the dynamite was being planted? Up in the laboratory—or by the cabin lighting the fuse? Of course if Furlan had been up—

"Where's Sampson?" Barton asked suddenly. He hadn't meant to speak so sharply.

"Roving the hills, I'm afraid. He was restless when we first went to the workshop, so I released him."

Furlan picked up the short fuse and gestured with it. "Why didn't you hurl it away into the night instead of taking that terrible chance? Even that detonator, you surely know, would have torn off fingers. Close to your face as this was when you were biting it, it would have put out your eyes, blown your jaw loose . . . "

Furlan stopped as if in horror at his own words.

"I was so sore—and so scared—I wanted to show the guy who did it that I could block his play right down to the very cap," Barton said quietly, looking steadily at the old man.

"I am sure you can. And now I will get something to remove that tar and treat those burned hands."

Furlan walked toward the kitchen. "Tomorrow I can show you where to catch a fish in troubled waters, perhaps—a place where you—shall we say, *overlooked* a few casts."

The Ajax Mine, thought Barton.

"It would be best if you again took the item of fishing equipment I put in your creel today."

"With shells this time?"

Furlan turned quickly. "It wasn't loaded?"

Barton shook his head.

"To think that I may have endangered you through my ignorance! I confess it is the first gun of its kind I ever saw."

I wonder, thought Barton.

It was an hour later when both men were in their bunks but not asleep that the quick, light raps came on the door. Bonny's voice called, "Peter! Peter!"

Barton's hand relaxed on the pistol.

"Just a moment, Bonny!" Furlan called.

Barton heard the old man putting on his robe, crossing the floor with light steps. He stepped outside and the indistinct sound of a low conversation came through the door. Furlan came back into the room. "—as soon as I dress." In a few minutes the kitchen door closed quietly behind him.

Barton jumped to the floor. The drop hurt his bruised ribs and he grunted. He put on his shoes and trousers. He was halfway up the hill before the deep growls ahead warned him.

"Sampson! Hello, boy!" he called softly. He took another step and the big dog warned him back again. He moved side-

wise and the animal moved with him, its eyes glowing green.

"O.K., Stinkpot!" Barton said. He took a last look at the lighted laboratory and went back to bed.

WOOD was crackling in the kitchen stove and Furlan was moving utensils when Barton woke the next morning. It was before sunup he judged from the dim light. He stirred slowly under the blankets, feeling stiff and sore as if he had slept tensely. His ribs ached with every movement and his lips were bulky and touchy as he ran his tongue over them. A burned streak on his right hand hurt as he put his legs over the side and rested his hand on the rail.

Furlan greeted him as he paused in the kitchen. "Bonny was here last night."

"I noticed Sampson was too," Barton said, feeling his tight left eye.

"Yes, he came back after a short run." Furlan was laying strips of bacon in a pan. "Bonny had an unusual problem with shotgun shells."

"Did she?" Barton said. For the first time he felt irritated by the old man. In fact he felt a little surly toward the entire world and Shavano in particular.

A hot shower, followed by a temperate one, took some of the bitterness out of him. Breakfast removed the rest. Aside from physical hurts and a sense of complete frustration he felt pretty good as he lit his pipe and watched the sun start its crawl down the rough mountain sides. Larsen's wagon was moving up the Ajax grade. The teamster's voice came faintly when he shouted at the horses. Larsen was an old-time ore hauler all right. He was getting his load early in the morning instead of letting it stand on his wagon all night.

"Fishermen sometimes troll, don't they?" Furlan said suddenly. "You, I believe, were just working on the surface yesterday."

"Yeah, I was on the surface," Barton agreed, thinking of the Ajax Mine.

"I believe we can go a little deeper today."

If Furlan knew how to get inside the Ajax portal the old man really was a wizard.

"Perhaps you will give me an expert's opinion of something in the laboratory, will you?" Furlan asked.

"I'll try."

Sampson followed them up the hill. He moved his tail slightly, with reserve, when Barton reached down to pat him on the head.

"Though this is repugnant to me, I feel that I might be called upon to . . . well . . . perhaps . . . " Furlan was kneeling before a cabinet door, reaching back on the shelves for something he apparently could not find. He frowned and tried another door, forgetting his sentence in the distraction of his search.

Barton idly picked up a small ingot neatly piled with other bars of metal on a small shelf. It appeared to be gold. He took his pocket knife and scratched it. It was gold, he'd swear. He picked up another ingot that looked like pure silver. He bounced it in his hand; it felt as heavy as silver. He cut a tiny soft chip off one corner. The metal gleamed bluish white, almost pure white unless the light was on it.

"Here we are!" Furlan said. He stood up, holding an ancient .45 revolver with no butt grips and the general appearance of having been shelved for fifty years. "I presume the cartridges from your weapon will fit this?"

Barton shook his head, and Furlan seemed relieved. He laid the gun aside and dusted his hands. "I'm sure I wouldn't have been proficient with it anyway."

"What's this?" Barton asked. "Silver?"

Furlan chuckled. "Isn't it natural for one to associate the physical aspects of a familiar object with something unfamiliar. Dal Jackson derived a great deal of innocent pleasure from deceiving semi-learned and over-eager associates with a piece of that metal that I gave him years ago. He always carried that piece as a sort of a talisman to confound the ignorant."

"What is it?"

"Tin."

Tin! Barton's mind jumped back to what Parks had said about a load of ore that showed a trace of pure tin.

"Did you give any of this to anyone else—lately?"

"No." Furlan showed less than polite interest.

"And now we had best take up our vigil to determine when to start our trip,"

Furlan said, moving toward the door. "Sampson, you stay here. Go to your rug and lie down."

The dog obeyed.

CHAPTER VIII

FOOTSTEPS IN THE TUNNEL

SITTING in the kitchen, watching through the wide window, the two men were silent. They could see tiny figures around the wagon on the Ajax dump. Tom walked down the street and climbed a ladder to a roof. The sound of his hammer came plainly. Smoke rose from the back part of the Highland Tavern. The sun finally touched the town, sending bright flashes from the new roof Barton had noticed his first evening in the camp. Flashes like the light on that bar of tin he'd cut.

He refilled his pipe and stirred restlessly. Furlan watched him quietly.

Was it possible, Barton wondered, that Jackson had been killed while he stooped over the ore pile at the Ajax, and that the pocket piece had rolled out? Everyone in Shavano had disclaimed knowledge of Jackson's being there, but it was barely possible that no one had seen him pass through the camp. Suppose he had been killed at the Ajax, how then did his body get in the river? The beaver dams near the Ajax would have held it, had it been put in close to the mine. Larsen could have hauled the body under the ore . . . hauled it almost to the Circle M.

He saw that the wagon was leaving the dump.

If Larsen had hauled the body out that would substantiate the sheriff's belief that the river wouldn't wash a body through the canyon. Furlan's belief too. But if Jackson had been killed at the Ajax it was not likely, knowing Ivers as Barton did, that the mine boss would let Larsen know about it, because that would necessitate cutting the teamster in on the ore stealing. Ivers had six men, and six men were enough to keep quiet and share with. No, if Ivers was hiding rich ore at the mine he was not the kind to take into confidence a loud-talking individual like Larsen, who was away from Ivers' control most of the time.

But there was the tin. Tin traces in the ore that reached the mill . . . And Jackson had carried a tin pocket piece, a metal that was far rarer than gold. Larsen could have shot Jackson, but why should the teamster shoot anyone? Furlan's assay showed the Caledonian bin to be filled with just what everybody said it was.

Barton watched the wagon descend the Ajax grade. He was glad he wasn't riding back on that. He looked at Furlan and saw the old man was a little pale. Maybe he got that way from too much shotgun shell research in the middle of the night. . . . What did Bonny want with shotgun shells and laboratory work?

The wagon reached town, two men riding the seat. Ivers coming down to check the ore load at the scales.

Larsen stopped beside a red building and Ivers leaped down. He was busy near a small platform for several moments. Ivers straightened and turned toward Larsen. As the teamster vaulted over the wheel his hat fell off and Barton saw his gleaming bald head when Larsen stopped to retrieve the article. He walked up to the leaders and adjusted harness, then got back to the seat, shouted something at Ivers and drove off. Ivers started walking back toward the mine and soon the wagon passed from sight in the winding canyon road. Then Barton saw another man coming on the run toward Ivers, who had stopped and was looking down the street. The second man joined the mine boss and the two stood talking for a few moments before starting in the wake of the vanished wagon. Atop his roof Crazy Tom paused in his work to watch them pass. Before they were cut from sight by the rocky turns Barton identified the second man as Mike, the blacksmith.

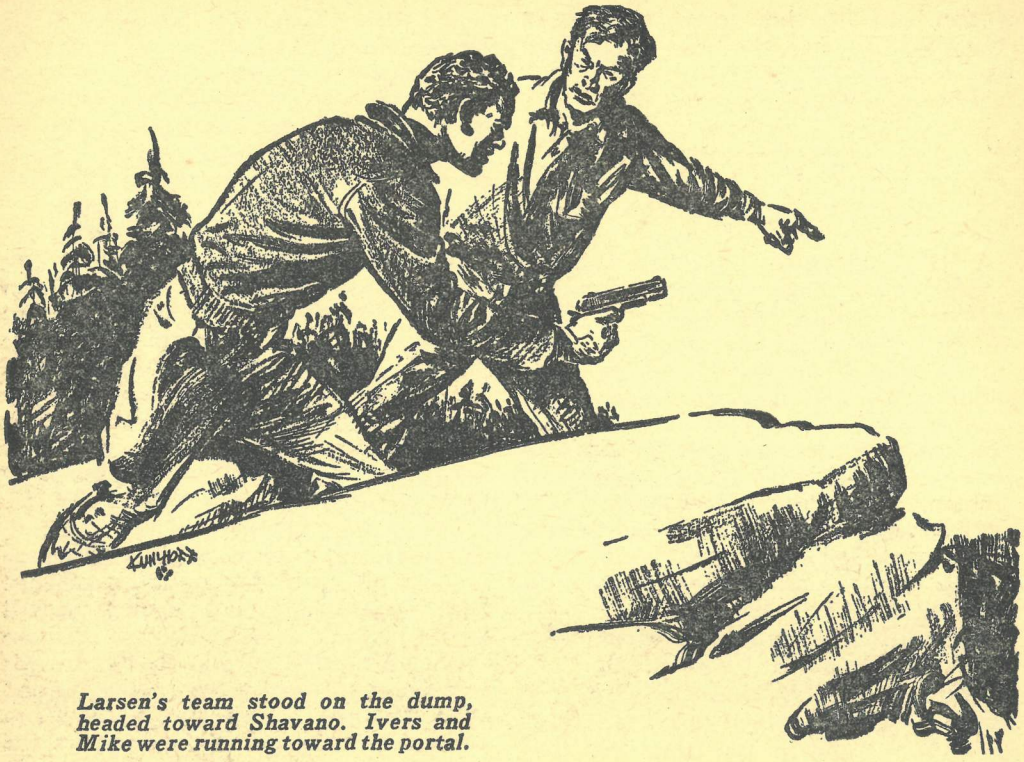
He was carrying a short shotgun.

It was a half hour later that Furlan said, "I believe we can go now. Be sure you have your weapon."

They crossed the bridge and headed, not toward the Ajax, but downstream toward the Caledonian. Barton wouldn't have been more surprised if Furlan had said they were actually going to Timberline Lake.

"Now I am *really* fouled up," Barton said.

"You have done very well," Furlan said. "But you finally reached a point where



Larsen's team stood on the dump, headed toward Shavano. Ivers and Mike were running toward the portal.

you needed help, and after some misgivings, I decided to supply it."

Just before they entered the canyon they heard a wild shout and looked back to see Crazy Tom waving his arms and standing erect on the roof. They walked slowly.

"Not far from here is an old trail that leads along the side of the mountain to the Caledonian," Furlan said.

A little farther along Barton followed the old man up the side of the cut and onto a narrow, unused path. Behind them Tom yelled again. Barton looked back to see him coming in long, loose strides. It seemed like a long time later when Furlan spoke.

"Just over the next rib and across the gulch."

Burris' voice lifted in a roar somewhere ahead.

"Get back, Bonny! Out of my way, lass!"

They walked a few steps. A shotgun spoke and they heard the Scotchman below an oath. Then a second shot sounded. Another, unfamiliar voice shouted something.

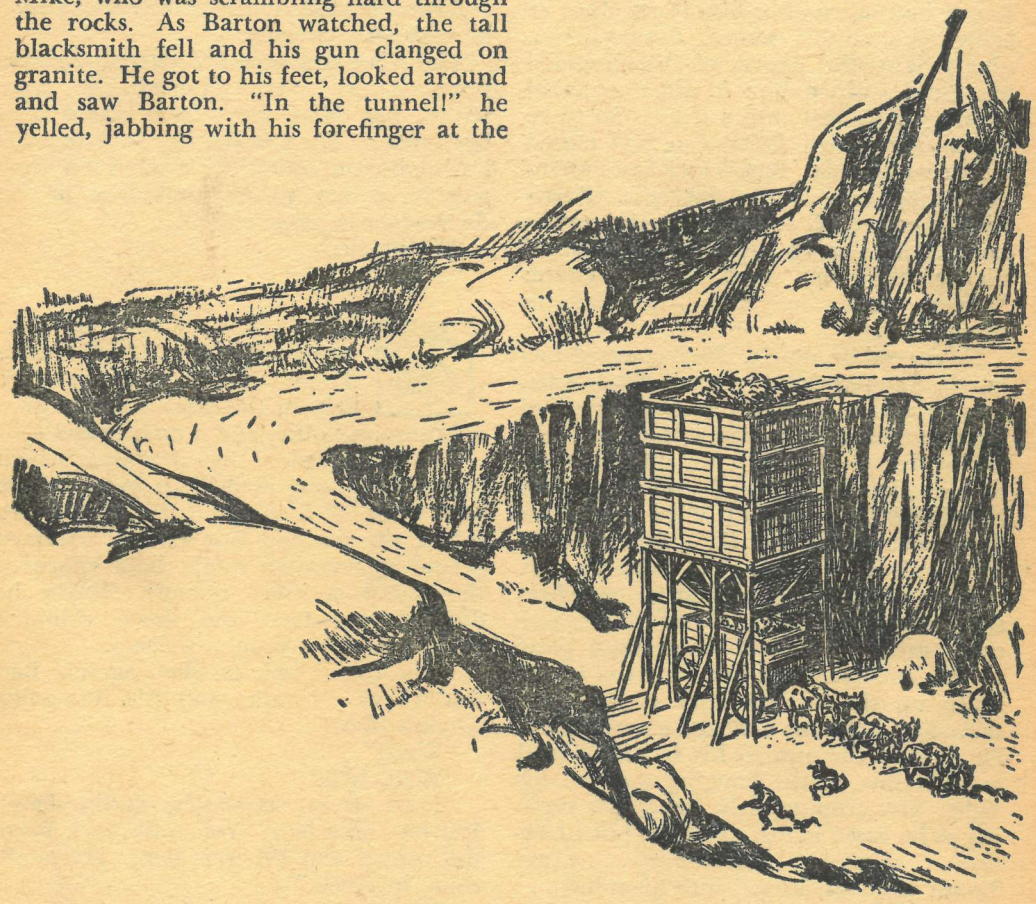
It was a minute or so before Barton, having gone around his guide, came to the top of the rib and saw the Caledonian across the gulch. Larsen's team stood on the dump, headed toward Shavano. Ivers and Mike were running toward the portal. They separated and Mike, carrying his shotgun, started climbing the hill above the tunnel. Ivers looked around, seemed to see Barton, and then plunged into the tunnel.

Close to the river, Barton could see a man lying face down. The first rays of the sun entering the canyon gleamed on a bald head.

Bonny was nowhere in sight.

"Looks like Burris shot Larsen," Barton thought. And Ivers had entered the tunnel after Burris. He ran down the hill. Behind him he heard Furlan gasp something and then Crazy Tom yelled, "You got to watch him!"

BARTON was still running, one hand against his jacket pocket to keep the pistol from bouncing out, when he passed Larsen's outfit, noting with a quick glance that the wagon was loaded. He stopped near the dry room and looked up toward Mike, who was scrambling hard through the rocks. As Barton watched, the tall blacksmith fell and his gun clanged on granite. He got to his feet, looked around and saw Barton. "In the tunnel!" he yelled, jabbing with his forefinger at the



ground beneath his feet. Then he picked up the gun and started climbing fast.

Barton walked into the hole a few sets of timbers. In the damp ground between rotting ties were the tracks of at least two people. Ivers he had seen; the other must be Burris because Larsen lay there by the river. But Bonny . . . she surely hadn't . . .

Furlan and Tom were just reaching the dump level when Barton made his decision. He drew the automatic and walked into the dark bore. He heard Tom shout again before a turn cut off most of the light. With the fingers of his left hand as antennae against the timbers, his head instinctively lowered as a precaution against low caps, he slowly felt his way into the old workings, counting his steps. Never had the velvety cool darkness of a mine seemed so alien; never had an unfamiliar drift seemed so strange. Timber sets stopped and now the bore was shot from rock. He could no longer gauge the wall with his fingers. Instead he guided himself by feeling one rail with the side of his foot. He knew the sound would be carried ahead clearly, but there was no

chance of moving at all in that confined space without sending warning.

Ivers was in there ahead. And Burris . . . and maybe Bonny. Suppose the huge Scotchman had gone half mad before he shot Larsen. Bonny must have tried to stop him when he yelled . . . and maybe Bonny had taken after him in an effort to bring him to his senses. Ninety-seven, ninety-eight—the fingers of his extended left hand warned him in time to avoid walking belly first into a chute. So there was a raise above. Maybe he had passed cross cuts already. Burris and Ivers might be behind him in the darkness. Burris with a sawed-off shotgun. Parks' words came home during the awful thunder of silence while he stood by the chute: "Blown half in two by shotgun charges . . . "

He moved on slowly. He'd counted two hundred steps from the portal. Short ones, but he was a long way into the guts of the mountain. Burris knew the mine, and maybe Ivers— He stopped. Maybe Ivers had shot Larsen . . . But Ivers had no gun. Mike had the gun and Mike was above them somewhere on the other side of thousands of tons of solid rock . . . A slight, steady indraft of cold air gave him the answer to Mike. Ahead somewhere there must be a ventilation raise clear to the surface. Ivers had sent the blacksmith up the hill to block escape from that shaft. Barton started forward again. He shifted the gun to his left hand and moved close to the hanging wall on his right. His groping right hand met nothing as he eased along. Nothing but blackness . . . silence . . . uncertainty . . . Crazy Tom's wild yell leaped into his mind . . . "Got to watch him!" . . . Watch who? Anger compounded of fear and tension grew against his jumping brain. Tom was crazy . . . So are you for coming into a mine after a murderer . . . Outside the sun must be bright and warm by now . . . shining on Larsen's bald head as he lay face downward. Two hundred and fifty-five, fifty-six—

Barton's fingers touched something soft and warm, clutched it as if his hand had been convulsed by high voltage shock. He cocked the automatic.

"Let go! You damn fool!"

It was Ivers' voice, rasping even in its tense whisper.

Barton shifted the gun to his right hand to let the hammer down. With his sleeve he wiped cold sweat off his forehead. Another split second . . .

Ivers' words were a thin hiss. "He's up ahead. He knows you're here. You made enough racket!"

Barton leaned close. "How about you?" he whispered angrily.

The Ajax boss breathed damply against Barton's ear. "He climbed the raise ahead, but Mike must have scared him back down. He was coming back out till he heard you stumbling around on your way in. I was gonna jump him in the dark when he came close."

"He alone?"

"Yeah."

THEY stood silent, waiting. No sound came from ahead. There wasn't even a water drip in the black tunnel. Just darkness and quiet and a man waiting.

Barton organized his thoughts, which had been jumpy as he had been on the slow walk. If Burris had run in full tilt, intent on nothing but escape, his own pounding footsteps might have obscured the sound of Ivers' pursuit. Maybe he didn't know Ivers was there, thinking there was only one man waiting.

Ivers' coarse hair brushed against Barton's cheek. "I can't stand this. I'm going to rush him!"

"Wait!"

"Wait, hell!"

"Look, Ivers. Maybe he thinks there's just one man here. You walk back down the tunnel and I'll wait here. He might come in reach."

"Why—you—you got a lot of guts."

Barton took Ivers' hand and placed it on the barrel of the automatic. "You got more guts. I got this."

"I'd have had a hold of him by now if he hadn't heard you blundering in!"

"Are you going to walk back?" Barton had difficulty keeping his voice down.

Ivers whispered a string of curses. Then he started walking back toward daylight. His footsteps became faint concussions. Barton waited. There was no sound except his own light, fast breathing and the distant poom! poom! of Ivers' feet. He ran his thumb over the knurled hammer, felt the flat, solid weight of the butt, and

waited. His short breaths didn't seem to supply enough air to his lungs. He wanted to start moving . . . moving right back out of the tunnel . . . He could see the disgust and fury that would twist Ivers' thin mouth . . . the contempt in his green eyes . . .

Suddenly cloth rasped on rock somewhere ahead in that awful darkness. Slow footsteps sounded, coming toward him. Metal tinkled lightly on rock and the heavy, measured tread came on and on.

Wait . . . wait . . . hold it . . . you got to time it right . . .

The man stopped.

Barton's mouth was wide open to minimize the sound of breathing past his lips. He could hear the man's breathing, the sound of clothing rustling as the fellow moved his body. Barton knew then that he didn't have it in him to shoot the man down in cold blood when he got close enough . . . Besides he might miss . . .

The footsteps started again. He was close now, awful close. Easy does it. Get your hands on him if you can . . . Then crack him hard with the gun butt . . . He stepped toward the center of the tunnel and struck with the automatic. The blow found no mark and he collided with a heavy body, felt the cold steel of a shotgun as his left arm went across a wide chest. He started to swing the pistol again. A heavy shoulder struck his chest, sent him reeling back against the wall and his head struck rock. White flashes danced before his eyes and his ears were filled with roaring sounds. Dimly he was aware of still clutching the heavy gun. He wanted to drive in, start hitting with both hands, but his legs wouldn't help him. They buckled and he slid down the wall and fell on his side on the tunnel floor.

He heard the man run a few steps ahead, then stop, and twin clicks sounded loud and sharp.

Barton started to raise the pistol. It had never seemed so clumsy before, and the hammer seemed to be working against a very strong spring.

The tunnel became a mass of blinding flame and roaring sound.

"Laying down, huh!"

The flesh on Barton's back seemed to

crawl coldly. That voice was Larsen's . . . and Larsen was lying outside with the sun on his bald head . . .

The .45 bucked in his hand. He heard a grunt, the sound of metal clanging on rails and a heavy bump. There was a bitter taste in his mouth and his ears were ringing as he pulled one knee under him and staggered erect.

Down the tunnel a voice shouted hoarsely and running feet sent air concussions pounding up the bore.

THE MATCH in Ivers' hand made only a small hole in the blackness and it turned the face of the man lying on his back between the rails a ghastly color.

"It *was* Larsen!"

"Who the hell you think it was?" Ivers rasped.

"Burris . . . The sun shining on that bald head . . . And he yelled at Bonny . . . "

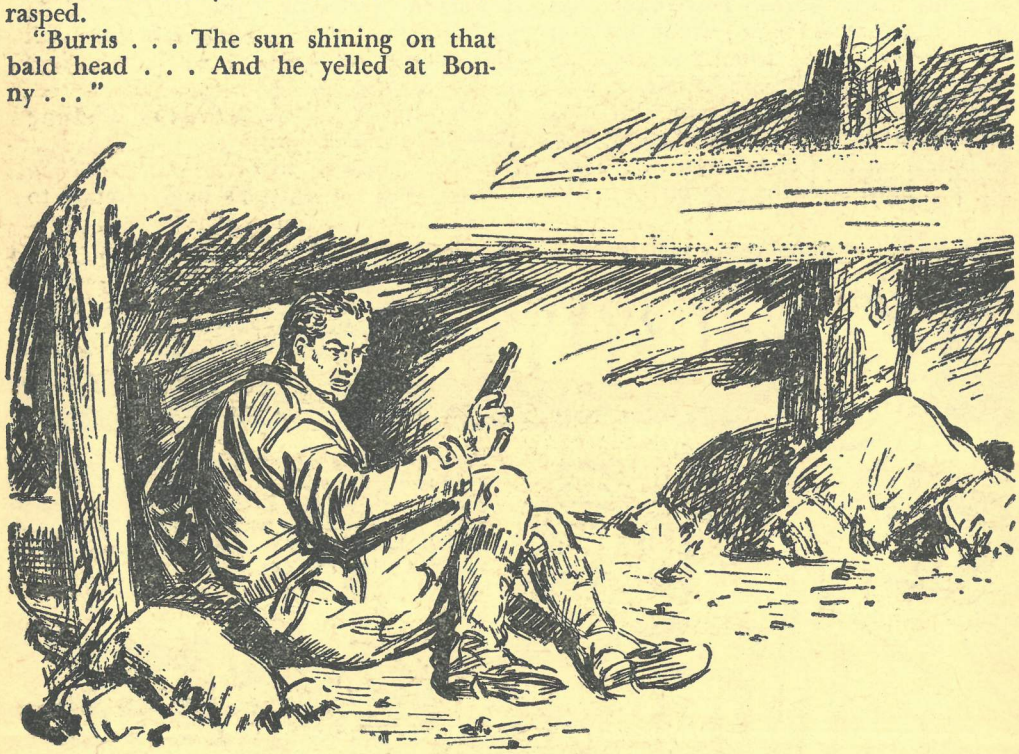
Ivers jerked toward him. "You hit?"

Barton shook his head just before the match went out. "I was flat. He shot over me."

Rumbling toward them came the unmistakable sound of a mine car. Hooked over the bed a carbide lamp sent its bright flame chasing darkness before it. Crazy Tom was pushing the car, singing the same words over and over: "Where the silv'ry Colorado wends its way . . . "

He stopped the car, craned to peer over the bed at Larsen. "You got to watch him. I told you!"

As they lifted Larsen into the steel box Tom grunted, "Figured there'd be a body when we heard the blastin'. Got the key from Bruce. Might've been two bodies.



Barton started to raise the pistol—it had never seemed so clumsy before . . . And then the tunnel became a mass of blinding flame and roaring sound.

One's enough, I guess . . . Where the silv'ry . . . "

"How come you followed us down?" Barton asked.

"I see everyone leavin' town—even the Ajax boys. Awful lonesome working with everybody gone."

"Let's get to hell out of here!" Ivers said.

Furlan and Mike met them at the portal. Barton saw Burris slumped against the side of the dry room, gray-faced and grim, with Bonny kneeling beside him.

Furlan raised questioning eyes to Barton after looking at the inert figure that almost filled the small car. "Is he—did you—"

"I don't know," Barton said. "A forty-five will knock you flat from shock alone."

Larsen was beginning to groan when they laid him gently on the dump. It was Crazy Tom who deftly cut his shirt away to reveal an oozing puncture high on the left side of Larsen's chest.

"He's a goner, sure!" Tom said cheerfully.

Larsen's eyes opened and looked at Tom in horror.

"Let me see, Tom," Bonny said, walking over.

As if by order the two Ajax men, Furlan and Barton moved to the end of the dry room in a close group.

"I'm glad I didn't have to blast him," Mike said. "But I run him back down the raise, all right."

Barton explained his commission from Parks.

"You were on the right track," Furlan said. "Larsen *had* been exchanging ore loads here—but for every shipment of Ajax ore he dumped at the top of the bin he drew two loads from the bottom to dump on top and thus conceal the rich ore. However, you didn't troll deeply enough."

Furlan looked over his shoulder at Larsen, glanced hastily away. "That, too, is why Bruce didn't discover the deception. Bruce suspected something amiss last week when he found small bits of rich ore stuck in the cracks of the chute. I assayed it for him. He became deeply suspicious when Larsen himself told of the news of Jackson's death the day you arrived. Bruce has a very high sense of personal honor and he was afraid he might be accused of being involved in the theft—even Jackson's murder—in view of his enmity toward Parks' interests. Your coming to Shavano speeded Bruce's determination to settle the matter. You see he had no proof, but—"

"How'd *you* know about the stealing?" Ivers asked.

"I saw Larsen actually engaged in shifting ore one day through my glasses when I was hunting Sampson."

"Why the hell—" Ivers began but Barton caught his shoulder and shook his head.

"Why? I have been apart from the petty strife of the world for so long, and I have an inborn distaste for violence and greed. The fact that I bear no love for Sampson Parks nor his memory may have influenced me slightly. But when I heard of Dal Jackson's death . . . "

"The biggest mistake I made was thinking it was Burris who had shot Larsen," Barton said.

"Larsen *tried* to shoot Burris," Furlan said. "But last night Bonny removed the shells from Larsen's gun and his spare box from the wagon, and I replaced the charges with a rather heavy, fine concentrate."

BARTON refrained from mentioning that Larsen also carried shells in his pocket. There had been no fine concentrate in the blast that went over Barton in the tunnel, nor in the loaded shell he had removed from Larsen's gun after they came out of the mine.

"It was something to watch," Mike said, shaking his head. "Me and the chief are hidden in the rocks up the road watching Larsen pull his shifting. He was just getting ready to dump the second load of bum stuff on top when Burris seems to come right up out of the river with the gal behind him. Larsen saw 'em and he comes barreling off the dump with that shotgun. The gal's trying to hold the old gee back, but he pushes her off and walks in like he had an M-1. Me and the Chief starts yelling and running and the shooting begins. The old boy walks a little ways after the second shot and then keels over—"

"His heart is poor," Furlan explained.

"Larsen sees us and I guess he's panicked by the way his shots don't seem to work," Mike went on, "so he heads for the mine on the gallop."

"Ivers, I guess I owe you an apology," Barton said. "After I found out the Caledonian rock—that on top, anyway—was no good, I was sure there was crooked work at the Ajax."

"Yeah. Well, I had my suspicions of you, too. There's a fraction and a full claim right up the hill above the Ajax that ain't had no assessment work done since the moratorium was lifted. There was about a week left to go. The Ajax needs those claims. We're almost out of our end line right now."

"File on 'em and be happy!" Barton said. He grinned at Ivers. "I really believe you broke a rib."

"I still hope so," Ivers said. He tried to grin but his tight mouth wasn't the happy kind.

Bonny joined the group. She said in a low voice, "Larsen's suffering from traumatic shock, but he ought to recover."

"To hell with him!" Ivers said. "He's

got about twenty-five thousand bucks' worth of Ajax ore all fouled up in that damn bin."

"Didn't you suspect him?" Barton asked.

"Sure, I did! I assayed that bin too—just last week when I got to thinking about what Joe Parks told me. I even followed him down here last trip, but he went right on by. I was going to follow every damn load clear to the smelter—after Furlan ran some assays for me and I knew for sure that I was right about what I was shipping. If I'd followed the load before—the day he left at noon—"

"That does it!" Barton said. He explained about Dal Jackson's pocket piece and the traces of tin in the shipment of rock. "If Larsen didn't leave till noon that gave Jackson time to walk up here. Larsen killed him, all right, and hauled the body almost to the mouth of the canyon."

"That might be a little hard to prove," Bonny said.

"Did you tell him he'd get well, Bonny?" Furlan asked.

Bonny shook her head.

Furlan nodded thoughtfully. "I'll talk to him. I'll tell him he's dying . . . "

Furlan returned in a few minutes, pale and shaken. They knew what he had to say, having heard most of Larsen's hoarse whispers. But they listened to Furlan, nevertheless.

"He shot Jackson, right here on the dump. He covered him with rock and hauled him away . . . " Furlan's face showed his inner revulsion. "He shot at me on the porch, thinking it was Barton, but only to scare him. After he stepped on your jacket in the dark and found the letter he—he put the dynamite against the cabin . . . "

They were all silent for several moments.

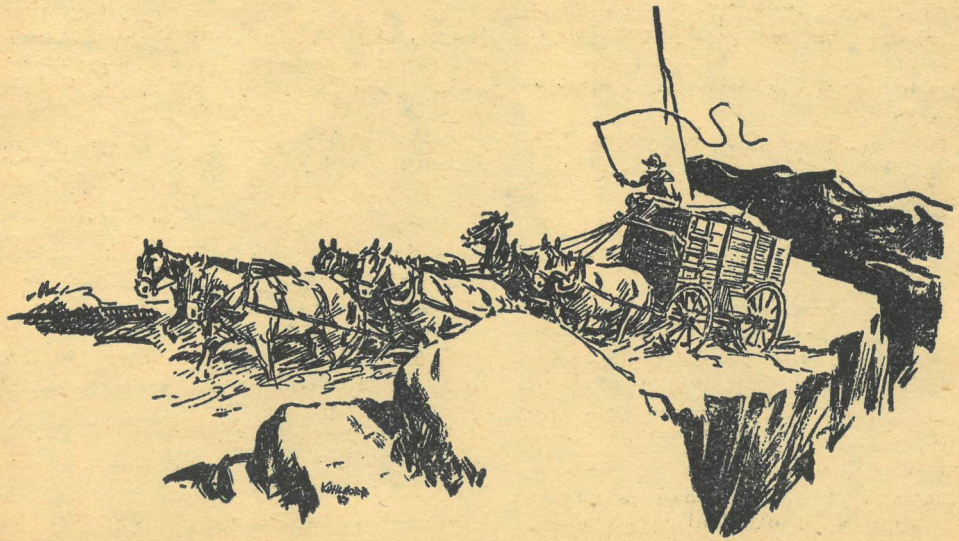
Barton grinned at Bonny. "Traumatic shock, eh? You a nurse?"

She nodded.

Barton grinned again; indicated his eye, touched the back of his head, pointed to his ribs and finally extended his burned hand.

"Ye can go fishing on my land, young mon," Burris said from where he sat against the wall. At once he looked as if he regretted the offer.

"Mike, take one of them horses and start riding . . . " Ivers began to give orders.



ILLUSTRATED BY
EARL EUGENE MAYAN

FUEL

By
FRED LANE

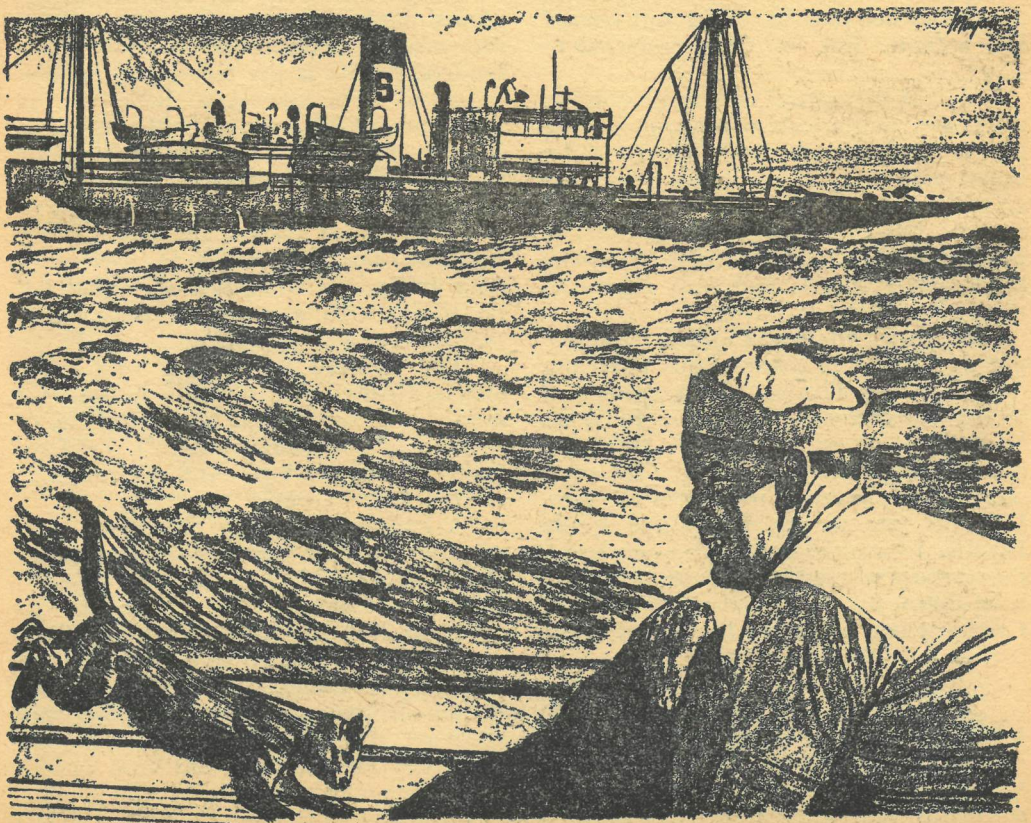
Mr. Giles stumbled, lurched, and with a terrified wail, toppled into the sea.

FEVER

BUNKER, the ship's cat, proudly trotted forward bearing a large rat. The cat mounted the starboard companion to the bridge deck as if seeking an audience.

Captain Judson was standing outside his cabin listening patiently to a large, red-faced man in white ducks and sun-helmet. Nearby, stood a pretty, fair-haired girl in tropic whites. Bunker did not hesitate, he began parading before the group confidently, expecting to be rewarded with a dish of cream or, at least, admiring comments regarding his prowess. But, in this instance, neither was forthcoming. Instead, it was all Bunker could do to dodge a large foot swung at him in a vicious arc. The cat agilely leaped aside and took refuge under a lifeboat and glared at his attacker with smoldering yellow eyes.

"Why, Father!" the girl protested and looked reprovingly at the red-faced man. "He was just trying to show you his catch."



"Cats!" Mr. Gilson Giles snorted. "Another example of waste and inefficiency aboard this vessel."

Captain Judson said placatingly, "He stowed away in Rio and he's got to be quite popular with the crew. Friendly little bloke—"

But Mr. Giles' scowl simply deepened. He turned brusquely to his daughter: "Diane, go to your cabin. And if that Yankee wireless operator should accost you, ignore him." He watched the girl depart and then glowered down at the stocky little skipper. "In my opinion, Captain, now's the time to settle some rather important matters."

Captain Judson puffed leisurely at his pipe. As master of the coal-burner *Williwaw*—River Plate to London—and legally in possession of almost unlimited powers on the high seas, he might have told Mr. Giles to close his hatch, despite the fact that he was senior partner in the firm of Giles & Duckworth, Ltd. But, being of a tactful nature, the skipper led the shipowner into his cabin and offered him a chair. But Mr. Giles preferred to stand.

His thick legs spread wide as he stood in the center of the cabin, his arms sawing like a drunken windmill, Gilson Giles began orating in a bombastic voice that grew hoarser as his ample neck grew redder. His subject was the spendthrift habits of ships' officers with company funds, with special emphasis regarding those aboard the *Williwaw*.

"For three voyages, Captain Judson," the big shipowner roared, "this vessel has docked in the Thames with surplus coal in her bunkers—some of it bought in St. Vincent at outrageous prices!" He shook a thick finger under the captain's snub nose. "Now, as senior partner of the firm, I forbid you to put into Cape Verde Islands. I have checked the fuel on hand, the seasonal winds and currents, and there is no doubt but that we can make Grand Canary where our agent has arranged for coal at a reasonable figure."

CAPTAIN JUDSON was quite accustomed to his owners telling him how to run his ship. But, in the past, the instructions had arrived in the form of wireless messages or cables which are readily torn up and forgotten. An owner aboard was a different matter altogether. The skipper turned to gaze absently through an open port at the serene Atlantic. Some gulls were circling and a group of flying fish broke from the gentle swells to skim gracefully near the green surface. It was a peaceful picture but it did not have a soothing effect upon Mr. Giles, at all.

He went on fiercely, "If you and your chief engineer are too lazy or too incompetent to estimate the bunker fuel required for a passage—" He pounded angrily on the captain's desk. "Or, if you can't manage to buy coal at reasonable prices instead of being robbed by greedy foreigners, then, by Godfrey, I'll find officers who can." He paused, breathless.

Captain Judson eased himself into the desk chair and relit his pipe thoughtfully. "Perhaps you're right, Mister Giles," he said quietly. "But there is such a thing as a margin of safety."

"Margin of safety, my eye!" Giles exploded again. "A complete disregard for the owners' balance sheet and shareholders' profits is the way I should describe it." He swayed a little as the *Williwaw* rolled over a swell. "Besides, it isn't only coal. Exactly what has your so-called margin of safety to do with your extravagant steward serving two kinds of meat for supper every night and eggs for breakfast—not to mention a variety of fruit and pastry fit for a king? That is," he added with a grunt of satisfaction, "until I put a stop to it."

"The steward was acting under my orders, Mister Giles," Captain Judson said mildly. "In the interest of the owners, of course," he amended hastily. "Good food makes a happy ship. And we've made money, haven't we?"

"A happy ship!" The shipowner spat out the words as though they had a bad taste. "Only a soft-headed captain would think a lot of waterfront scum are entitled to live like their superiors." His jowls trembled and his voice took on even stormier overtones. "Yes, you've made money despite your crazy spending and generous ways with other people's money. But—only because there has been careful management in the home office.

The skipper's jaw muscles quivered, but he remained silent.

"From now on," Mr. Giles continued, "this ship will be run from London. I shall expect regular wireless reports on the fuel consumed, the daily menus, and other vital details. And, if you continue to ignore my queries as you have in the past, then it will be necessary that you seek another berth." He turned and strode toward the door. Then, abruptly, he added, "One thing more, Captain. I want you to issue strict orders to that American wireless operator to stay away from my daughter or—" he paused ominously, "I shall be forced to take drastic steps. When Diane marries, it will be in my interest and, most likely, into the peerage. Meantime, I shall not have her picking up absurd, romantic ideas from that upstart Yankee." He went out, slamming the door.

Captain Judson sighed, put his pipe in his pocket and stumped up the companion to the bridge. Mr. Patch, the mate, joined him.

"If we're puttin' into St. Vincent for fuel," Mr. Patch said, his long lean figure drooping over the bridge rail, "we better be shapin' a course, an'—"

"We'll stay on the present course." The skipper quietly surveyed the sea and sky. "Mister Giles says that coal costs too much in St. Vincent."

"Towage and salavage might cost 'im a sight more," Mr. Patch said dryly. His flowing red mustache waggled in unison with his craggy chin as he spoke. "If we 'appen to run into foul weather between 'ere an' the Canaries, an' coal runs short — But mebbe Mister Giles ain't ever 'eard of fuel fever?"

Captain Judson shrugged. He glanced aft along the bridge deck where an elegant cabin had been recently installed near the wireless room. It was of the finest hardwood obtainable in Rio de Janeiro, beautifully sanded and polished until it gleamed like lustrous satin. Studded with shiny brass portholes and bronze door-fittings, it seemed as out of place aboard a sooty old freighter as a monocle on a sea-cook.

Supervising its installation by the ship's carpenter and native labor, Gilson Giles had remarked complacently, "It will serve as reasonably decent quarters for me and my daughter during the passage home. Rather a bit in line with what people in our station are accustomed to." He cleared his throat. "I plan to have it removed in London and installed ashore as my penthouse office. A little idea," he added, "which I picked up in New York."

MR. GILES and Diane had crossed the Atlantic on a fast liner, spent a few weeks in New York, then boarded a South America bound vessel. The combined business and pleasure trip was timed to meet the *Williwaw*—northbound from the Plate—in Rio, where the shipowner consummated what he considered an excellent deal in coffee. He was most eager to take passage home on the freighter in order to observe, first-hand, what he considered the wild extravagance of the elusive Captain Judson who ignored his wireless dispatches and avoided him when in London.

"I s'pose you know," Mr. Patch said, following the skipper's glance toward the structure dubbed "the royal suite" by the crew, "that the men are complainin' about 'is meddlin'. It ain't so much 'is cuttin' down on meat an' pastry, an' 'is snoopin' around what bothers 'em so much—though they don't like it. It's 'is attitude—like 'e was a bloomin' Mogul an' them 'is slaves. Livin' like 'e does in that special cabin, drinkin' choice wine an' the cook workin' overtime makin' fancy dishes for 'im. I can't say as 'ow I blame 'em."

"We'll see the last of him when we get to London." Captain Judson stuffed tobacco into his pipe.

Mr. Patch shook his head gloomily. "The crew don't feel like she'll ever be the 'appy ship she once was. Only thing they like about Mister Giles is that daughter of 'is. She's a beauty, that 'un. Friendly as plum duff an' just as sweet. The crew thinks she's wonderful."

"Especially the new wireless man." The skipper smiled. "They make a handsome couple," he said softly as he stumped to the companion. "I'll be up for the noon sights, Mister Patch."

The skipper went aft for a talk with his chief engineer who, when informed that the *Williwaw* would not put into St. Vincent for fuel, observed acidly, "He's a cheap, pinch-belly slave-driver. It ain't enough he's cut the crew's rations and got 'em muttering about mutiny—but he's got

to deny the ship's belly, too." Mr. Riley took a bottle out of a drawer and put it on the desk. "Help yourself, Cap'n."

Captain Judson downed a generous slug of Irish before he spoke. Then, smacking his lips appreciatively, he said, "We've been a happy ship, Mister Riley."

The engineer nodded agreement. "Even the black gang and deck have got along. She's been a home, all right—until now. And there ain't a man aboard who wouldn't sign on with you again, Captain, if it wasn't for him. Now—I don't know."

"That's just it," the skipper said unhappily. "I don't want my crew broken up. Do your best, Chief, to keep 'em calmed down. Maybe things will work out yet."

That afternoon, the *Williwaw* churned up a leisurely eight knots on a north-northeasterly course, her stack laying down a ribbon of sooty smoke over her wake. Captain Judson paced the narrow strip of deck outside his cabin, his usually unruffled brow furrowed in thought. He looked up as Steve Goodwin, the wireless operator, came forward.

"Weather report, sir." The operator handed over a slip of paper. "From the *Bristol Queen,* two hundred miles northeast."

The skipper took the message: *Barometer* 29.60 *dropping with northeast* 5 *thick haze.* He said, "Thanks, mister," and as the operator started aft, called out, "Just a moment." After all, Mr. Gilson Giles' instructions were specific. "Mister Goodwin, I guess you realize that things aren't quite normal aboard?"

Steve Goodwin nodded. There was a twinkle in his friendly blue eyes but his sun-tanned face was serious. "Yes, sir," he murmured. He had signed aboard in Buenos Aires when the *Williwaw's* regular operator was stricken with fever and hospitalized ashore. The American explained that he had been third radioman on a Pan-Atlantic liner out of New York but had been unable to reach his ship at sailing time because he found himself on a barricaded street during a local demonstration.

"Now, Mister Goodwin," Captain Judson said kindly, "I realize that a young lady's presence does brighten a dull voyage but your attentions to Miss Diane are resented by Mister Giles. The situation is difficult enough as it is without having it complicated by a mild flirtation—" He broke off when he noticed the twinkle had left Steve Goodwin's eyes.

"Sir," the wireless man said, "this is no mild flirtation so far as I am concerned. It is very serious. I have explained to Di—Miss Giles that I've seen enough of the world and I'm going back to Texas to raise cattle. And I think I shall be able to persuade her to go with me."

Captain Judson swallowed. "Well, officially—you have instructions. Stay away from Miss Giles." His left eyelid fluttered, just a bit.

TWO DAYS later, following a speckled, crimson dawn, the northeast trades shifted a few points to the east and feathery clouds began to creep across the sky.

"Glass is droppin'," Mr. Patch announced as the skipper entered the chartroom. "It's 29.60 now. Looks like a blow."

"Could be," Captain Judson said quietly. He checked the ship's position, then went aft for a talk with Mr. Gilson Giles. He found the shipowner lounging in a deck chair outside his cabin, reading the *Nautical Almanac* and sipping a tall, cool drink.

"Looks like we're in for some weather, Mister Giles," the captain said. "I would suggest we put back to St. Vincent for—"

"Are you crazy?" demanded Mr. Giles. "We shall continue on our course. I've just been reading that gales are most infrequent in this area at this season. There is positively no reason why we should not go on to the Canaries."

"I admit gales at this season are infrequent," the skipper conceded. "But it looks like we're going to run into something of a blow, anyway. Of course, your estimate shows that we have enough coal to carry us through in any event, but Mister Riley says—"

"It is quite unnecessary to discuss the matter further," the shipowner said frostily. "By the way, Captain, have someone catch that filthy black cat and have it thrown overboard. Every time I step on deck it seems to be under my feet—as if it were deliberately trying to trip me." He returned to his book in a gesture of curt dismissal.

Just after dusk, rain started slanting down from a starless sky and, a few hours later, wind began to whine ominously out of the east, snapping shreds of spindrift from the crests of the increasing swells. Her beams creaking and the rising wind murmuring in her rigging, the *Williwaw* held her course, plunging obliquely over the running seas.

The mate, in oilskins, reported to the bridge: "Everythin' secure, Cap'n, but it don't look good to me. If this gets any worse, we'll 'ave to 'eave to an' burn coal without goin' nowhere."

A strange smile flickered on Captain Judson's lips. "One thing at a time, Mister Patch."

By four bells, the wind had snarled up to gale force and was driving the sea into surging mountains and valleys. The *Williwaw* staggered sickeningly as a giant sea climbed the starboard rail, smashing into deck gear and shaking the lifeboats in their chocks. The skipper gave the order to heave to, but she yawed badly and threatened to broach.

"Mister Patch!" the captain shouted. "Man the storm oil and prepare to let go the sea anchor aft. We'll bring the wind on the quarter and run before it."

The helm to port, the ship came around slowly, lurching and pitching as the sea took the advantage. But the oil kept the sea from breaking aboard and finally the *Williwaw* was driving before the gale on a westerly course—each hour taking her deeper into the Atlantic and farther away from her destination.

But, if Captain Judson was worried, he did not show it. When Mr. Patch came into the chartroom, the captain asked, "How's Mister Giles weathering the storm? Have you seen him?"

Mr. Patch grinned. "I saw 'im at the rail last night—before the real blow 'it. He looked kinda green."

"He'll be greener tomorrow," predicted the captain. "Better go below and get some sleep, mister. I'll stand by with the third mate."

Mr. Patch hesitated. "Seems to me, sir, we're gettin' farther away from the Canaries ev'ry minute an', with none too much coal—"

"I'll worry about that." Captain Judson bent over the chart. "Good night, Mister Patch."

At dawn, the *Williwaw* was still driving before the gale. It wasn't until mid-morning that the storm began to abate and Captain Judson felt that he could bring his ship about and shape a course for Grand Canary again. This done, he called the engine room to check on the amount of fuel remaining. Then he went around to the wireless room.

Young Goodwin wasn't alone. Diane Giles sat on the spare parts box while the operator was describing the joys of Texas ranch life. Goodwin broke off as the captain stepped in.

"Good morning," the skipper said. "You're a good sailor, Miss Giles. Better than your father, it appears."

She smiled. "Father never was a good sailor."

"Amen," the skipper said to himself. Then: "Sparks, I'd like to know what vessels are in the immediate area."

"The *Bristol Queen,* sir, And the *Wilshire,* northbound from Dakar."

"*Wilshire*—" repeated the captain softly. "Sykes Line. *Bristol Queen's* one of ours." Raising his voice, he said, "Thanks, Sparks. Let me know if you pick up any others."

Captain Judson went forward. He stopped before the ornate cabin occupied by Mr. Giles and surveyed it thoughtfully. Then, returning to his cabin he dispatched a quartermaster for the chief engineer. He had some vital issues to talk over with Mr. Riley.

THE following morning, while the *Williwaw* was churning resolutely toward Grand Canary—more than two days behind schedule—Captain Judson and Chief Engineer Riley knocked peremptorily upon the door of the "royal suite."

It was some few moments before the door opened, revealing the pajama-clad shipowner. He stared at them glumly through swollen eyelids, his haggard, unshaven face twitching. "What is it?" he asked impatiently.

Captain Judson pushed on past him into the cabin and Riley followed.

The shipowner glared from one to the other. "I am desperately ill. I should prefer to be let alone—"

"I'm afraid we'll have to disturb you,

Mister Giles," the skipper said slowly, "unless you wish me to make the decision."

"What decision?" Giles snapped.

"Why, whether to send a wireless call for assistance," the captain said evenly. "Of course, that means salvage—"

Gilson Giles' jaws worked convulsively. "Salvage!" he blurted. "Assistance? Why should we need assistance when we are due in Grand Canary by nightfall?"

"We had to run before the wind, Mister Giles. We can't possibly lift Grand Canary the day after tomorrow— even if we had enough coal—"

"Which we haven't," growled Mr. Riley.

The pallid green tinge left Mr. Giles' face. A pinkish flush started working its way up from the neck. His fists clenched. "You mean to tell me," he shouted, "that you've got this ship in a position where she's out of fuel on the high seas?"

Captain Judson's eyebrows lifted slightly. "Pardon me, Mister Giles, but it was you who insisted that we continue past St. Vincent. The price of coal was too high, you said. Now, the *Wilshire* is in the area and—"

"Sykes Line!" bellowed Giles. "Do you think, for one moment, I'd give those salvage-hungry thieves the satisfaction of towing a ship of mine? Captain, you bungled this!" His voice trembled. "You didn't give me all the facts."

"We can't float around the Atlantic forever," put in the chief engineer acidly. "We'll be out of coal by four bells on the dog watch."

"But there must be something we can do! Something—" The shipowner moaned, his head in his hands.

"Come to think of it," Captain Judson suggested brightly, "there is an alternative. This—this cabin of yours." He looked around at the sleek, shining walls.

"Hard wood, ain't it?" Mr. Riley sounded interested.

"Of course," the shipowner snorted. "The finest—"

"Almost as good as coal," the engineer went on. "We might just squeeze through, at that."

"You mean that you wish to turn my cabin into fuel?" demanded Giles. "Why, that's preposterous, it's unthinkable!"

Captain Judson started toward the door. "Well, it's either that or—"

"Now wait a minute!" the shipowner cried. "The *Bristol Queen* is in this area, southbound. One of my ships. Wireless Captain Hough. Tell him I'm aboard and that I demand he tow us in or else supply us with enough fuel." He looked at the skipper triumphantly. "You see, there's always a way to solve a problem without spending money, Captain Judson. That is, if a man has the brains and initiative."

An hour later, Steve Goodwin brought a wireless message to Captain Judson on the bridge. It was the reply to a request for assistance from the *Bristol Queen*. The skipper read it quickly: *Regret unable assist you. Hove to in storm and have barely sufficient fuel to make port.* It was signed: *Hough, Master.*

The operator said, "The *Wilshire* heard that go through, sir. He said if we need help we can count on him."

"For heavy salvage." Captain Judson smiled. "Thanks, Sparks," he said and went aft.

Within ten minutes, the sound of industrious chopping accompanied by happy voices singing sea chanties resounded from the bridge deck. Mr. Patch, observing from the bridge wing, remarked to the skipper, "Never saw the crew quite so set up, Cap'n. Man, look at 'em tear into that cabin!"

"A labor of love," the skipper said.

With startling speed, the Giles' luxury suite was ripped from its moorings, dismantled, and the wood carried into the depths of the ship where gleeful firemen fought to have the honor of dispatching it to the flames. In fact, they were so enthusiastic that, only a few hours later, the chief was compelled to make another report to the captain.

"Another hour'll see swept bunkers, Cap'n," Mr. Riley announced.

"And nearly two hundred miles to go! Well, let's go see Mister Giles again."

THEY found the shipowner in one of the spare cabins to which he had been moved when the deluxe suite was torn down. Informed of the new development, Giles exploded into an apoplectic fury. It was during this wrathful display of temper in which Giles cursed the inefficiency, stupidity, and inadequacy of the *Williwaw's* officers and crew, that a

quartermaster slipped in and whispered in the captain's ear, "Craft to starboard, sir. Hailin' us."

Captain Judson went on deck followed by the engineer and the irate Mr. Giles. A stubby well-decker was steaming alongside, within hailing distance. It was the Sykes Line's *Wilshire*. From her bridge came a bellowing voice: "Ahoy, the *Williwaw*. You blokes want a tow?"

With his arms flailing frantically at the air, Gilson Giles screamed furiously, "No, we don't want a tow from you robbers. You're a—"

"Want a tow?" came again from the *Wilshire* as Mr. Giles paused for breath.

Howling with rage, the shipowner ran for the rail, shaking his fists. "No—no—we don't want a tow—" An animated bundle of black fur darted between his feet. He stumbled, lurched, and with a terrified wail, toppled into the sea.

"Man overboard!" Captain Judson shouted. The cry was echoed from the bridge and the ship veered to starboard. The engines stopped as the skipper saw Bunker dart to his sanctuary under a lifeboat. The cat crouched there, his long tail swishing back and forth with grim complacency.

Attracted to deck by the shouting, young Goodwin pulled off his coat and called out, "I'll get him." He ran aft and dove over the stern, and started swimming toward the shipowner who was floundering in desperation. The life preservers had been thrown out and the seamen were lowering one of the small boats. From the *Wilshire,* where the crew lined the rail watching the scene, came a bellow of derision: "If that's old Giles, a coolin' off won't hurt him."

Observing from the stern, Mr. Patch said, "Sparks seems to be takin' 'is time."

Captain Judson also noted that the wireless operator was making no great effort to help the struggling shipowner toward a life preserver floating nearby. It was some moments before Goodwin grasped Mr. Giles and swam with him to the life preserver. He held on, holding the shipowner's head above water until the lifeboat pulled alongside.

The skipper approached the dripping, panting owner as he was hauled up over the side. "Mister Giles," he said, "we can accept a tow from the *Wilshire* and pay salvage or—we can burn that special coffee consignment of yours and get to port."

Mr. Giles was capable of one last spark. "But I'll lose money, even at general averages. It's the finest coffee—already sold in Norway at premium prices and—"

Captain Judson cupped his hands: "Ahoy the *Wil—*"

"Burn it! Burn the coffee," sobbed Mr. Giles. "Burn everything—everything. Anything but salvage!" He staggered off to his cabin. "Burn everything. Burn it—"

"Man, oh man," breathed Mr. Patch. "What a beautiful case of fuel fever."

THE wedding took place three days later, at sea. Captain Judson had never married anyone before and he was a little nervous. But he got through it all right and the crew cheered lustily when the ceremony was over. After that, the skipper issued generous portions of grog to all hands.

But Captain Judson was curious about something. He called young Goodwin aside and said, "You and Giles appeared to be having something of a discussion while you were in the water. I've been wondering—"

Steve Goodwin's eyes twinkled. "Wondering whether I took advantage of the situation? Why, Captain—I merely thought it was a good time to ask him for his consent and blessing. That's all."

Captain Judson repressed a grin. "Miss Diane—I mean, Mrs. Goodwin seems mighty fond of Bunker. How'd you like to take him along to Texas?"

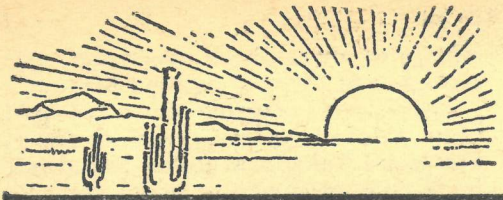
The following voyage, when the *Williwaw* pulled up the Plate to Buenos Aires, a cable was awaiting the skipper. Mr. Patch sighed. "So 'e didn't learn a lesson, did 'e?"

"This isn't from London," Captain Judson said with a chuckle. "It's from a whistle-stop in Texas—from Mr. and Mrs. Steve Goodwin. They thought we'd like to know that Bunker's the proud mother of quintuplets."

"So, Bunker was a lady," Mr. Patch said. "Well, that explains it."

"Explains what?" asked Captain Judson.

"Why, Bunker's revenge. Don't they say 'ell 'ath no fury like a woman scorned?"



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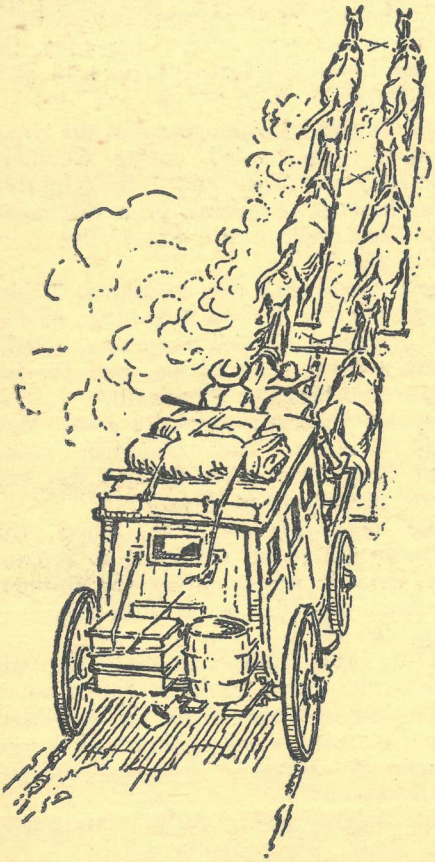

ILLUSTRATED BY HARRY BURNE

LIEUTENANT WARD, 3rd Cavalry, felt a tap of fear in his chest as the distant dust swung slowly toward him. It was hard to tell what was causing it, and harder still to judge its distance. But it was approaching, not receding, and he was in wide-open ground with little chance for covered retreat. It seemed that all of Arizona was nothing but distance blanketed in red dust that never seemed to conceal you but always hid the other man. And now Ward felt trapped, caught

Carbines chewed at the Apaches from both sides —ponies went sprawling and riders spun in the dust.

in space while an unknown danger came through ravines and slipped down gullies with nothing to mark its passage but dust.

The fear tapped again, and Ward raised a hand and halted the troop. "Sergeant Fenstermacher." His eyes flickered across the far bulge of the mountains; they looked cool and crisp and neat, with the landscape in its proper place. Ward was a properly neat young man, and for the surge of a moment he envied Burke, up in the Gilas to the north.

By

GEORGE C. APPELL

Fenstermacher reined in at Ward's left, facing the smudge of dust in the distance. "Yes, sir?"

"What do you make of it?"

The sergeant creaked forward in his saddle, hand to hatbrim, unconsciously leaning six inches closer to something six miles away. His turkey neck lengthened and his face wrenched into a squint. "Hard to tell, sir, without the glasses."

"We won't use glasses in bright sunlight." Ward knew that, because at the Academy they taught you never to use glasses in bright sunlight. Reflection, mister. Makes a target.

FENSTERMACHER hitched in his saddle and wondered, with a spark of irritation, why they sent second lieutenants to the Department these days. One good sergeant, now, and a column of baked-out troopers who'd stood a thousand paylines, and . . . He dropped his tongue from his teeth with a clicking sound and relaxed. "Some of ours, sir. Mister Burke, likely."

"Mister Burke?" Burke wasn't supposed to be down here; he was supposed to be probing the Gila Mountains, where you could ride the roof of the land and look down on things. "Why Mister Burke, Sergeant?"

Fenstermacher tried not to smile and didn't. "Because whoever it is, he's usin' glasses on us. Least, I saw glass wink back at me."

Ward felt better. While he realized that he had a fair chance of dying an unnatural death in the service, he did not plan on dying this week. Young men never plan on dying this week anyway, and Ward was twenty-two. Besides, the general was visiting the post shortly on a survey tour, and it would be nice to tell him what was needed in the Department. Reinforced patrols, for one thing; and more scouts, and faster promotions.

It was high time the general accepted the fact that the Army wasn't fighting in Virginia any more, and that Apaches and Arapahoes knew their country better than any Yankee or Reb knew his. High time, they'd tell you in the mess, and, "We'll put a glass in one hand and a pen in his other. That'll take care of his report."

Ward tilted his head to Fenstermacher. "Post." He could see high heavy dust rolling up from a draw, coming straight and fast. It was thick in the middle, almost black, and that meant wheels. Stage wheels, for example. Ward almost said the words aloud. It had been stage windows glinting that Fenstermacher had seen and described as glasses.

Ward worked wetness into his mouth, raised an arm and called, "For'ard—trot!" The column lurched into motion like toys on a string, jerking ahead by twos, the last starting minutes after the first. They were tired, very tired. And hot. Dust in the desert works into boots and through shirts and feels like a smear of ants. It gets in the nose, the ears, the hatband. It gets in the horse, too, under the saddle and in the hide, and pretty soon you smell like the horse. So they trotted forward, four days on patrol, hatbrims low and eyes half-closed.

The flinty pillar of dust was two miles away when it turned, and Ward saw the stage. It stood out like a painting quickly unveiled, clear now as the filmy camouflage shimmered away on the wind. It was alone behind a ten-mule team, without escort.

Ward decided that it must belong to a damned fool or a renegade. It wasn't on the mail run, certainly, nor was it part of a pack train. It sat low on the axles and the wheels were high. Two men sat on the box, one with a shotgun. Ward reined in and spurred simultaneously and skidded up a fine shuffle of dust. He leveled his eyes on the driver. "Where to, and what's your business?"

"Who the hell wants to know?" The driver nudged the guard, chopped his jaws, puckered parched lips and spat under Ward's horse.

"I'm patrolling this country." He felt helpless, like a man playing bluff when his own bluff hadn't been tried. This was only his fourth patrol. "What are you carrying?" He particularly wanted to know on account of the general. With that worthy loose in the Department, it wouldn't pay to have mysterious men running loose with guns. The tribes were getting too many as it was.

The driver spat again, this time not so close. "Got mining equipment. We was up in the Dakotas lookin' fer gold, an' got lost." He backed his head and laughed and slapped his leg. The guard lowered

the shotgun, grinning. Fenstermacher, waiting at the head of the column, cleared his throat.

Ward flipped out his Colt and held it against his hip. "I'll see you get found. Now then, what're you hauling?"

THE window glass creaked down and a narrow face with a short beard popped out. Hard gray eyes froze on Ward's face. "Who are you?" The short tangle of beard never moved as he spoke.

Ward frowned back without answering. Security was important, out here, and this man looked like a renegade. He wore a rumpled gray suit with wide cross-hatching; a stained hat was balanced on the back of his head. His mouth was tight, his nose laced with veins. "Well? What in hell are you doing?"

"You own this rig?" Ward asked evenly.

The door opened and the man dropped to the ground. He raised his face, leaf-brown and seamy, and his eyes seemed to snap.

"On patrol, sonny?"

"My name's Ward. Five-day patrol, if you like."

"Seems all soldiers do is patrol." His voice had lost its sharpness. He glanced up at the driver and his eyes hardened. He switched his eyes to the guard, and they hardened again. It was like a code, a passage of tested signals, an unspoken warning. He eyed Ward's Colt and pulled a red kerchief from his breast pocket. He blew his nose. "Nice weapon, that. Use it much?"

"I might." Ward thought again of the renegades, the men who incited to murder against their own kind for three hundred percent profit. "What's your business, you? Don't you know this desert's alive with Apach'? You ought to be further east, over near Rock Creek. What're you doing out here alone?"

"Traveling toward Rock Creek." He swung his eyes around the horizon, slowly then dartingly; then slowly again. Ward watched, the Colt still at his hip. After a moment, he dropped it back in its holster. The short man with the beard was pointing. "See there—beyond that serration?"

A thin glimmering hung over the land, a transparency more like thickening of air than a mass of matter from the ground. Ward blinked and tried to focus again, but it was gone.

The man laid a hand on Ward's bridle. "Look, mister, you'd better circle this area for a way out."

Ward's mouth quirked. "What's coming—night?"

"No, Apaches." He jerked his head. "You just saw 'em." He looked tired, and his eyes twitched nervously. "Call me Williams."

Ward looked again for the sign beyond the serrated land, but it was gone. He decided it must have been a panner with a pack train. Or Burke; it could have been Burke, but he'd be too far south, out of the mountains. He lowered his eyes to Williams.

"What's your business? I won't let you go on until I find out. That's why we're on patrol."

Williams slipped his hand from the bridle. "I'm a surveyor." He yawned, tapped the red kerchief, and clambered back into the stage. He lowered the window and took off his hat. "Mind if we stay with you, Lieutenant?" He frowned at the flat terrain. "We might have to back off this place in a hurry."

"Which way? We're heading west on a swing."

Williams stuck a cigar in his mouth and lighted it. He shot his eyes up hard. "That thin stuff in the air—that marks many horsemen, sonny. Apaches. They never do raise much dust."

"You don't know the Army much. We're here to stop 'em."

Williams arched an eyebrow and tilted his face at the cigar. He rolled it in his fingers and pursed thin lips. "Maybe so . . . maybe so." He narrowed his lids and looked up at Ward. "Thing is, Lieutenant, you can't stop a hundred with fifty. Not on flat terrain. I know." He placed the cigar in his mouth and inhaled gently.

"I thought maybe you would. Selling guns, eh?" Ward's right hand rested on the Colt; Fenstermacher shifted away from the column so he could watch the men on the box.

Cigar smoke purpled the inside of the stage and Williams fanned a hand through it. "My friends in the Army tell me the good general knows when to retreat. You have about fifteen minutes to avail yourself of that knowledge."

WARD stiffened in the saddle and clutched the Colt. "Are you telling me my business? Come to think of it, you seem pretty damned sure there're a hundred Apaches coming." He motioned to Fenstermacher, and the sergeant nodded, alert.

Williams examined his cigar tip. "Maybe it's ninety-eight. Anyway, I've been in this corner of hell before, and you're outnumbered. East of here, back where you tracked a little while ago, there are ravines and arroyos. I'd hole up if I were you . . . Retreat's no disgrace if it's the right thing to do." He inhaled, then eased smoke out through veined nostrils. "About twelve minutes, now."

Ward's eyes caught a nearing shimmer in the afternoon sunlight, a something as of a heat wave, yet mobile. It was moving east, following the stage tracks. Williams apparently knew the country better than he, and it was true that fifty dismounted troopers couldn't stand long on board-flat land against a hundred, or near a hundred, circling horsemen. Ward remembered the broken country beyond, the long, narrow draws and treacherous rips that could deceive a man into a trap or lead him away to the open, depending upon which he chose.

"All right, Williams, but if this pans out wrong, you'll be the first casualty." He lifted an arm to the troop; the driver whacked air with his whip and the mules lunged forward. Traces tightened and the stage rolled eastward across the flat land with the column just ahead. Ward looked back once and saw tiny dark horsemen topping the far serrations. He ordered the column from the trot to a gallop, and wondered what Williams knew of the land.

"Fenstermacher . . . You know this country, don't you?"

The sergeant shook his head; he spurred next to Ward, bouncing heavily in the saddle. "Came through once at night, sir, last year."

"Anyone else familiar with it? I'd like to check this civilian's directions."

But Fenstermacher shook his head again. None of them had been in the Department long enough to become acquainted with the sweeping, sandy reaches to the south.

Then the stage guard's shotgun crashed and the whip exploded over the mules. The stage drummed closer to the tail of the column and Ward, turning, saw low-lying riders beyond the tumbling dust. Something snarled past his head. The stage whirled past, in its window a taut, bearded face, and Williams swung an arm and screamed, "Follow us in!" And was gone, careening heavily to the left toward the narrow neck of a ravine. The Apache horsemen were spreading out to circle, when they saw no stand would be made; they flowed back together for a rush, and Ward waved the column after the stage, cursing himself for not forming skirmishers, cursing Williams for raising the dust and inviting attack, cursing Fenstermacher for not knowing the country. He wasn't ready to die. And there was much to tell when the general arrived, much to tell about using scouts and strengthening patrols. A man just off patrol would have that information ready.

PLUNGING into the ravine, Ward's horse skidded low then rose, pawing air. His head cracked the animal's neck and he heaved himself back in the saddle to see Williams on foot, waving his arms. The stage was trundling down the floor of the ravine, its powdery wake rising high in the still day. It was alone, there were no troopers in sight.

Williams grabbed Ward's bridle and hauled his horse to the left, behind the bulge of the entrance. Half the column was there, lined along the rocks, dismounted and prone. The horseholders were further back, trying to rig hobbles in the event of a stampede. Williams seized Ward's arm and twisted him off balance; they fell together and the surveyor stabbed a finger across the neck— "There's the rest of 'em, sonny, dismounted to fight on bellies. The reds'll catch fire from both sides when they come visiting . . ." His breathing was becoming smoother. "Only thing we could do! Can't stand against him with odds." He lifted up on his elbows and called across, "Fire high—get riders, not horses! Don't tag us!" He winked at Ward. "Soldiers always like the biggest targets, like horses. I know—been fired on by soldiers before." He cocked his face to the entrance, listening; then found a fresh cigar and bit down on it. He was

thumbing for a match when the rushing beat of Apache ponies filled the afternoon, filled it like summer thunder. This time they raised dust. They flashed into the ravine after the stage, bunched tight and howling, riders low on straining necks, thick fingers snapping renegade rifles.

Carbines suddenly chewed at the riders from both sides and sent ponies sprawling, hooves kicking high; riders spun in the dust, rose, staggered and dropped, gripping torn flesh. A squat man with an immense chest and horn necklaces hopped up and hurdled a fallen pony, teeth white in his dark skin. He cocked a carbine for a hip shot and Williams blew a hole in his throat; the hip shot whined into the air and the man sat down hard and died.

The leaders were wheeling away from the stage at the other end of the ravine, and Williams shrieked a warning. They rode back fast, rode back low. "They're rushing the gate!" the surveyor bleated. "Don't let 'em out!" Carbines crackled unevenly, and a moment later empty ponies thumped past with flapping reins. They skittered up the mouth of the ravine and were gone.

Seared-faced troopers in smeared, faded blue rose from the rocks and picked their way among the shiny, wet bodies, looking for the living. Twice, Ward jumped to the close smack of a carbine; a trooper spat dryly and re-loaded.

Williams found his match, struck it on wrinkled trousers, and lighted his cigar. He got to his feet and walked out to meet the returning stage. "Water up," he told the driver. "We're makin' tracks."

Ward ordered Stables and a nose-count, then went over to Williams. "You'd better stay with us. There might be others coming."

Williams blew his nose on the red kerchief, flicked it and thrust it back. "That was the biggest band in the woods, sonny, that lyin' in front of you now. Besides, I'm late for Rock Creek, and I'll make it by morning." He took his cigar from his lips and slowly blew ash from the tip. "That's another thing. They'll never attack at night, so I'll be all right."

Ward let out his breath, angry yet relieved, feeling a bit deceived. "You seem to know a lot about it."

"Huh?. . . Oh, I told you before I had friends in the Army, who tell me things." He thrust the cigar back in his mouth. "We'll push along east, I think, and leave you to plant the tribe." Halfway to the stage, he turned and raised a finger. "And don't forget about knowing when to retreat." He winked quickly. "Thanks for your help, sonny."

SOME time later, Ward didn't know how long—two days later, he guessed—he pulled paper from the board desk in his adobe room at Camp Grant and started to write a report. He wrote, *SUBJECT: Patrol Operations.* Then he leaned back in the hard chair and gave thought to the little surveyor and how much credit he should receive. In the light of the smoky lamp he seemed to see again the quick eyes, the wink, the cigar. He glanced across at Mr. Burke, reclining in his bunk. "What would you do?"

Burke looked up from his *Army-Navy Journal.* "Do? About the desert rat?" He snorted. "Forget him. You'll never see him again anyway."

Mr. Burke had been in the Department a long time, and he believed in taking as much credit as the situation would allow.

Ward sighed. "I'm not so sure. The general's supposed to be near Rock Creek now, which means he'll be here shortly. He might read this. He'd want it exact."

Burke looked scornful. "Sherman? Old William Tecumseh? Nonsense, m'boy, nonsense. He's been on his rump so long he doesn't know a ravine from a rabbit." Burke tossed the *Journal* on the earth floor and pulled up his blanket. "He's not out here to read reports anyway. He's here to teach, and I can imagine what that'll be like. School of a Soldier. How To Salute Retreat Ceremonies." He yawned chokingly, tired from a dull patrol in the Gilas. "He doesn't even look like a soldier. Travels around in an old mail coach in civilian clothes with a shotgun on the box. Security, he calls it, though how in hell anyone could miss a general, I don't see." He yawned again and rolled over.

Long minutes later, when the lamp was smoking low, Ward asked, softly, "You think he's here to teach, Burke?"

But Mr. Burke was already asleep.

Ward decided to finish the report in the morning. And he decided, too, not to mention the Department's needs to the general.


My object was to send him to hell still puzzled —but he declined to go.
F. KRAMER

OF BLOOD AND BOOTY

By
F. R. BUCKLEY

TO HIS SERENITY my Lord Duke Pietro IV of Rometia; these by a trusty hand, in haste, from Luigi Caradosso, sometime Captain of the Guard:

Sire;

In the matter of the silver bowl I had the temerity to offer as a christening gift to Your Grace's third-born: if Your Highness states that the arms of the Valdifiori family are engraved on the bottom of this vessel, discipline forbids that I should contradict Your Eminence.

At the same time, discipline forbade that I, at the age of fourscore, should endure accusation by the young sub-lieutenant who brought Your Excellency's letter; which is why I am compelled, at great cost, to send this rebuttal to Your Lordship by another hand. The lieutenant is at this writing in the infirmary of a convent near here, and when he returns to duty should

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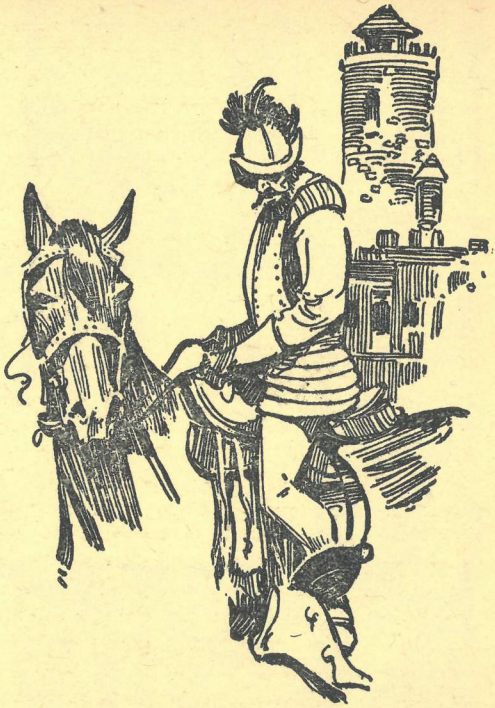
ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER

be told *never* (when opposing a sword to a staff, such as I walk with nowadays) to guard his empty head, but rather to take care the stick be not used to poke his teeth down his gullet.

But to proceed with this matter of the porringer and its Valdifiori crest—I would urgently counsel Your Grace not to place reliance on anything connected with that family. I well recall that in the days of your grandfather (who was not so favorably disposed toward these Valdifiori as Your Eminence would appear to be) we had the devil's own time besieging their main castle, only to find that my lord of Valdifiori and his sons, whom naturally we had wished to capture, had dissimulated themselves in a country villa which turned out to be a worse fortress than the first. When we took that, at great cost (including an arrow through my shoulder) we found that they had escaped by a secret passage and so belied Your Grace's grandfather in Venice as to make that State deny us the land we had fought for.

Of course we burned the villa, and it is possible that in the confusion this silver bowl might have got caught in my stirrup. Since, unlike most captains, I have always been indifferent to loot, it is probable that I flung this gewgaw in some corner and forgot about it; and that, while elated with the news of the birth of Your Excellency's third child (whom God preserve) I may have confused it with a bowl I had intended to have made to celebrate the joyous event. In any case—is it just that Your Serenity should rebuke a faithful servant such as myself, on behalf of a family which engraves its arms on the bottoms of vessels, instead of on the sides where honest men may see them?

Having explained how this mistake may have arisen, I now humbly take the occasion (kissing Your Lordship's hands) to warn Your Eminence against the habit which we country folk call jumping to conclusions. When I conned Your Sublimity's letter—which to some might have seemed to suggest Your Grace almost thought I had stolen the porringer!—I thought perforce of another case of hasty reasoning which, alas, turned out sadly for the reasoner. He was, it is true, a common fellow; but then again he was employed by a noble—one of these same Valdifiori, to be exact—who suffered also.



In the confusion, this silver bowl might have got caught in my stirrup.

And who, in these troubled days, can tell for certain that a similar hastiness might not some day inconvenience Your Grace?

I will preach no more, but let the facts speak. They are few and clear and will not long detain Your Highness from the nursery. Ah, fatherhood! There indeed is a case of jumping to conclusions—I mean of course among commoners. The fathers I have known—

But all that is a long time ago.

SO IS THIS incident of which I propose to tell; it was indeed in the time of Your Grace's father, who, in case Your Excellency has forgotten him, was an admirable kind good man but afflicted in his youth with a belief in the honesty of mankind. He was an advocate of decent forms of procedure—I mean treaties and things; it took several sharp wars to convince him that no noble's signature was worth an onion in the absence of an army to force him to respect it; and to the end of his days, God rest him, he maintained a prejudice against immortalizing incon-

venient persons. The time I have wasted, the men I have lost, taking such persons alive; the bread and water and dungeon space I have seen lavished on them so that they might survive to plague the Duchy again, no one would believe—and even so, most of them would die anyhow, after the first five or six years.

The common people liked His Highness, mainly because of his fatherly attitude about taxes; but it would be vain in me, Sire, to pretend that the guard (which at this epoch more closely resembled any army) shared this feeling. His Lordship deprecated war—which again endeared him to the civilians—but to the soldiery this meant simply a lack of loot and amusement. Ah, in my old age and in these softer times, I do so love to hear captains assure parliaments that, having seen the horrors of battle, they are more opposed to war than any civilian. I have even said it myself—and without laughing. But with Your Highness' permission I will laugh now, because I am retired and all assemblies of burghers may kiss my pension-papers. Ho ho ho!

What with this lack of excitement and the fact that the uncollected taxes kept our pay low—I say "our" meaning the common soldiers, because His Highness was not so unworldly as to underpay the officers—the army would have disintegrated but for me; and His Grace, actually deploring the heritage left him by his father, would have been glad had it done so. As it was, many of our best men deserted, by postern gates and ropes slung out of windows and other devices known to old soldiers; and it cost even me the best of my efforts to keep the rest contented. To those clever enough to believe lies, I pretended that Your Grace's father was a subtle villain, waiting only for the right time to spread rape and pillage over Italy on a scale never before attempted; and the others I persuaded by means which left my knuckles so sore I had to cover them with small bands of steel. To assist me in this work, I must needs promote the best sergeants to sub-lieutenants, making up their pay out of my own—in short, it was a miserable, hard-working, non-rewarding time into the midst of which who should creep but Gostanzo Valdifiori, son of the rogue who'd robbed us in the previous reign.

I say he crept, but actually he entered Your Grace's father's cabinet with a sideways curving movement like a horse blind of one eye—it was typical of his family, like the carving of arms on the bottom of silverware. And the matter of his discourse was just what might have been expected from his manner; he said that God knew he was a poor man and that his conscience had bothered him of late—in short, would His Grace of Rometia consider buying for a nominal sum the land we had fought about and which (as I've said) the Venetian state had wrongly awarded to his father?

At this I stared at Valdifiori's guard-captain—a pleasant, hard-working thick-head named Cozzi; but poor Cozzi seemed beyond interest even in enormities. He stood there behind his master's chair very much as if he had been stuffed; and even when the formal conference was over and we left their lordships to arrange details over their wine, he seemed quite unlike his usual self. I knew at once he must be faced with loss of his command—with being, in plain civilian terms, out of work; but worse off than any civilian in like case. Because, Your Grace, an officer unemployed needs a vast amount of equipment before he can exercise his profession—a reigning noble, an army and an established state; which do not grown on gooseberry bushes. If he tries to earn a living soldier-fashion on his own account, he is considered, and eventually hanged as, a bandit.

"Come, brother," I therefore said to Cozzi, pouring him out a noggin of wine, "if your master sells his patrimony today, sure he'll poison somebody's brother tomorrow and thou'lt be in great demand for saving of his hide. Bloody war and lots of plunder! Drink 'em up, man!"

But he drank very shallow and wiped his beard instead of letting it drip on his chest. Since the weather was hot and we off duty, we were wearing nothing but our hose; but poor Cozzi was so mazed he thought himself still in uniform.

"Ah," says he, "it's very well for thee to talk."

"I've troubles as well as thou," I told him. "Didn't I build this guard into an army with my own hands, and haven't I now a lord itching to reduce it to a corporal's file and send me begging?"

I exaggerated some little, Your Highness, in kindness; but Piero was inconsolable.

"Thou'lt have work enough on thy hands ere long," says he, finishing his pot. "But—I am a married man, Luigi."

Work on my hands?

"So am I. Four times," I told him, again stretching the truth a little, because I have never thought a soldier justified in marrying with bell, book and candle or whatever they use. "But what is this about work on my hands?"

"Never mind," says he, pouring out (I was glad to see) another noggin. "Never mind."

"But it's good news, man!" says I, dissembling a fear I felt in the pit of my stomach. "Work on my hands! Come, share the good news with a friend!"

HE LOOKED at me under his eyebrows.

"Long may thou consider it good news," says he; and drank deep. Nevertheless it was some time (fourteen pots) before I got his secret out of him—he would keep talking about his wife. Not only was he married to her, it appeared, but from time to time he sent her money out of his pay!

"We have a little house in Arcola," says he dismally, "and hens. All to be lost because thy lord would rather pay than fight!"

"Well, as I said, there are other lords to fight beside mine," I told him.

At this he closed one eye and wagged his finger. His beard, I should say, by this time resembled nothing so much as a vintner's sponge.

"Ah—hic—ha!" says he. "But that's not to the point, Luigi. Surely there be nobles to fight—and thy master the first of 'em—"

"Huh?" says I.

"—thy master the first of 'em," says Cozzi, "but—"

"A moment ago wast groaning he'd rather pay than fight," I said. "Thou'rt drunk, Piero."

"—but," says he, disregarding this, "it won't be kind, gentle old Piero Cozzi that comes fighting him, a decent married man with a home of his own and hens—"

"What's this?" says I, sneering at him.

He stared at me for some time, two-minded whether or not to throw his pot in my face; and then he got up, came round the table and after looking carefully about him pressed his wet beard to my ear.

"Giovanni Nero!" he whispered; and departed toward his own chair winking and becking and walking on tip-toe so that he fell on the floor.

"Giovanni Nero?" says I, putting him carefully back in his seat.

"Sssh!!" says he, holding out his pot.

But I would give him no more wine until he had overcome his shyness; because to be plain and in order with Your Grace, the name of Giovanni Nero had some significance in Italy at that time. In fact, and with the sole exception of myself, there was no captain regarded with as much trepidation as this same Giovanni. He was cunning, unscrupulous, rapacious, merciless, treacherous excellent with infantry and cavalry and an extraordinary placer of guns—indeed, save for a very slight inferiority in swordsmanship (and opinion was divided even on that score) he was the nearest possible thing to my equal. His was not a name to be mentioned lightly while I commanded a half-mutinous army.

"Last I heard of that fellow," says I carelessly, "he was commanding in Padua—or was it Siena?"

"But where next wilt thou hear of him?" asked Piero Cozzi drowsily, "thassa question."

O God, it dawned on me all in a flash!

The next place I should hear of him would be Valdifiori. I saw it all. This rogue of a count was selling us this land to hire Giovanni Nero with the proceeds; which done, and his army built up (as I knew cursed well this Nero could do it) he would sweep my collection of moaners and groaners into the dust-heap and take the land back. And probably take the Duchy as well.

I saw the whole thing limned in lightning. The forces of Valdifiori—not yet as large as ours—would be well-paid with *our* money; my men would have that much less. Already I had discipline buckled down to the last hole and felt moreover as though I were holding the strap-end in my teeth. One more pull on the harness—

A sergeant appeared in the doorway and saluted. "Lieutenant says his lordship will be leaving soon, sir," he said.

"How do they seem together?" I asked, motioning him to get a pail of water and throw it over Cozzi. During my reflections (here much condensed for Your Lordship's convenience) he had gone to sleep.

"Very loving, Captain, the lieutenant said. Kissed each other twice on signing the paper."

The paper! That meant the land was indeed sold; and that meant—

"Ah, Dio!" shouted Cozzi as the cold water struck him.

"Scusi, Signor Capitano," says the sergeant, taking the bucket away.

Cozzi stared at me doubtfully.

"Nothing to be learned from *me,* Luigi," he said, peering to find out how much he'd babbled.

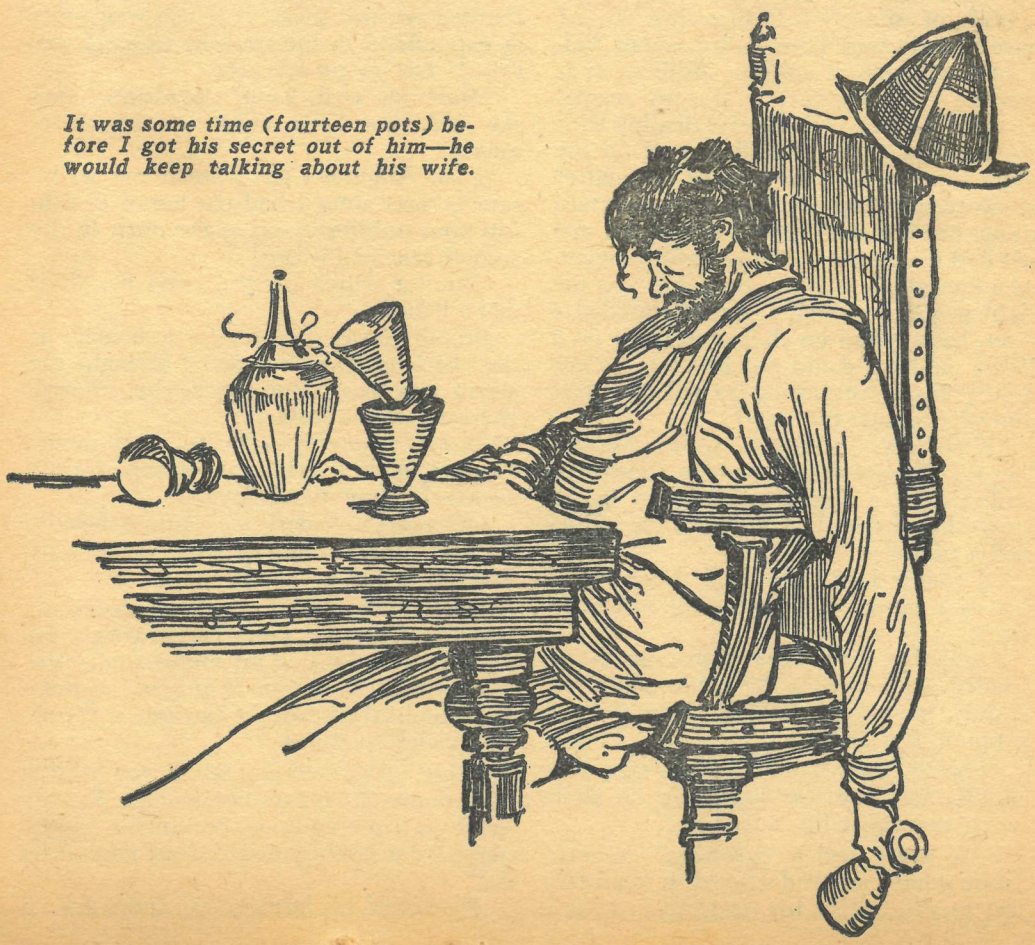
I heaved my shoulders as if to say I knew that, and spat sadly into the fireplace.

We buckled each other's armor.

II

I PASSED a very bad half hour with His Grace thereafter. Dealing with him was the more difficult because it was impossible to treat such a kindly man with respect, and yet, if one went too far, he could flare out worse than Your Grace's grandfather, God forbid. No yells and bawlings like the old lord; but he could say "How, sirrah!"—just that—in a way to curdle the blood in one's feet. I have sometimes tried to develop this tone of voice myself, practicing it while strolling in the fields; but failing to make any cow choke on its cud I abandoned the attempt and fell back again on knuckle-power. It must be something peculiar to nobles, like the French evil.

Well, this evening (after we had seen that Valdifiori halfway home and, I



It was some time (fourteen pots) before I got his secret out of him—he would keep talking about his wife.

hoped, to hell) His Grace seemed to be in a woundy pleasant mood, so I was perhaps less careful than usual in opening my business to him. He was in his armory, changing from his silks into a chamber robe and washing his upper half with Venice water. I suppose the sight of so much bare flesh, so like mine own except for the hair, may have confirmed my delusion that I addressed another human being like myself. Anyhow:

"Well, Luigi?" says he.

"Well, Your Grace," says I, "the time has come."

"Indeed?" says His Lordship. "The time for what?"

"Under favor," says I, "for a stop to foolishness and a dealing with facts as they are."

I noticed that he left his other arm unperfumed and put on his robe with a quick shrug; but thought nothing of it.

"And these facts?" he asked.

Well, of course I told him—just what I have already told Your Grace, about Valdifiori's schemes of empire. Adding, as it was my bounden duty to do, my suggestions for a quick and effective dealing with the menace. The method hinged on my slight superiority over Nero in the matter of swordsmanship—by no means a certain thing, but one with regard to which I myself had few doubts. I had recently invented a knee-drop followed by a thrust at the right groin, in which I placed confidence —yet, having had no chance to try it on a living model, I could not be sure. So evidently I was proposing to risk my life, and what thanks did I get?

"H'm," says His Grace, considering me. "So it's thy opinion—based on something half-said by a discharged captain in his cups—that my lord of Valdifiori is a thief and a perjurer?"

Of course I had not used those words, but they expressed my meaning, so I stood silent.

"And that I, your own lord, am a soft-headed fool, soon to be made a pauper. Should have been landless long since, I suppose, but for thee?"

"Hardly that, Your Grace," says I to mollify him; he was beginning to sweat along the upper lip—a bad sign.

"To avert which calamity," he says, "thou'd have me send thee forth to murder this guard-captain his lordship *may* have engaged—on the ground that he is as big a ruffian as thyself?"

"Sire—" says I, desiring to protest those words "murder" and "ruffian"; but—

"Silence!" says His Grace; so I came to attention and saluted.

He stared at me like a basilisk.

"Have I told thee, and have I told thee again," he demanded, "that there shall be but one Duke hereabouts, and that myself? And that I will manage my state without spies, without murder and without hangings—except in cases where murder shall have been committed?"

THERE was a deplorable look in his eye as he said that. No need to point his finger at me, as he now did, and to say that if I killed this Giovanni Nero he would hang me higher than Hambone was in Holy Writ.

I tried to create a diversion by saying I recalled not this incident in the Scriptures as expounded in the convent where I was raised; but to no purpose.

"Mark me well, Luigi Caradosso," says my lord, "for I am awake to thy movements."

"Your Highness has known me well," says I, "ever since I had the honor of fishing Your Sublimity out of the moat in the second year of his age."

"But for which benefit," says he, "if it *was* a benefit—"

Brooding whether it was a benefit or not, he became silent, and I thought the storm was over. But it was not, though there was less thunder.

"Look, Captain," says he, as if weary. "I have made it criminal for any to wear swords in Rometia. I have—"

"Except the guard, Sir," says I hastily; because in this mood, God knew what ideas he might get next.

"Except the guard, of course, fool!" he shouted at me. "Is every decent word I say to be snatched out of my mouth and stultified by thee, thou bloody animal? Is there nothing in thy head but intrigue and stabbings and stealings—"

"Sire," I said respectfully, "my head is very much like others hereabouts. Excepting only Your Eminence's; which God preserve from having molten lead poured on it."

He waved his hand to say there was no

use in talking to me. Which indeed there was not, when it came to placing faith in this Valdifiori or trying to choke Giovanni Nero with butter.

"You are dismissed," says His Grace, in that quiet voice which chilled the soles of my feet. "And mark you: if I hear any more of getting captains drunk and worming secrets out of them—not that I believe a word of yon—I'll dismiss thee forever. And if thou pickest a quarrel with this Gian Nero or whatever his name is, I'll have thee hanged. I have said it and I mean it and I will have it done."

Possibly he read what was in my mind, because he continued: "If I were thou, Luigi, I would pray right heartily for a long, tranquil life for this rival captain; because should he indeed come to Valdifiori and meet with some accident, I shall require strict proof of thy non-complicity. As thou hast said, I've known thee a long time."

"It hath been the custom to believe a man innocent until he's proven guilty," I submitted.

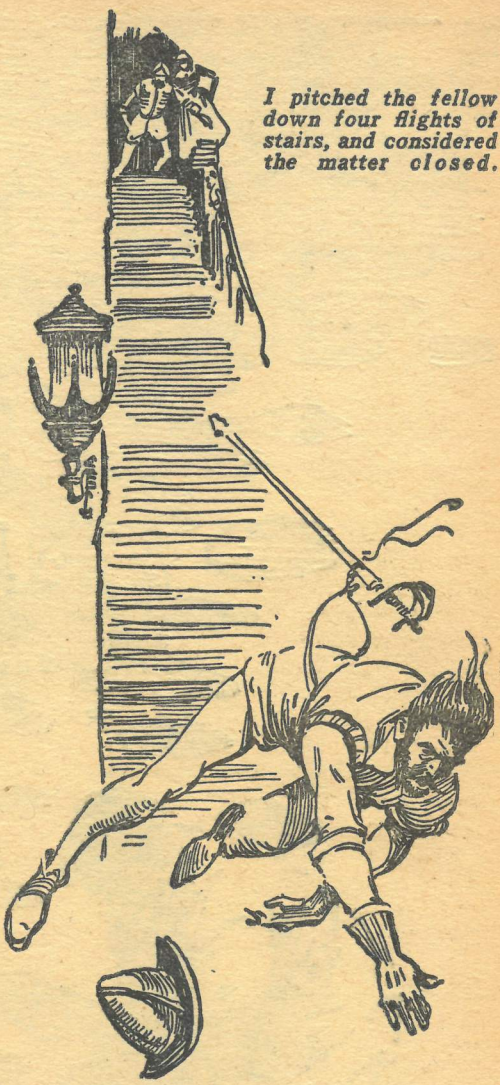
"Then let us believe my lord of Valdifiori innocent until *he* is proven guilty," says His Grace, "lest, arranging the decease of his captain, we ourselves be hanged on suspicion. Or at least one of us. Do I make myself clear?"

Bless the man who invented saluting! The only answer to the unanswerable.

"Dismissed," says His Lordship gently, but still with that basilisk stare.

I felt it on my back all the way down to my own quarters; and when I reached them, what awaited me?

Why, a letter from that bow-legged bastard Gian Montefalcone, by foul means my successor in Captaincy of the Brotherhood of Captains, inviting me to a meeting to be held at Vara that day week "for the purposes of brotherhood and to welcome a new Brother, Captain to His Lordship of Valdifiori; Giovanni Nero."



I pitched the fellow down four flights of stairs, and considered the matter closed.

III

YOUR GRACE will not misunderstand when I say that at this time I had a young feminine friend in Rometia. Having been forced by the exigencies of Your Grace's ancestors' service to forego the joys of a family like poor Cozzi's; and being—despite opinion to the contrary—of a somewhat delicate physique, I had thought it practical to kill two birds with one stone and let this poor girl make a profit on cooking for me once or twice a week. She was named Maria Vittoria—not that it matters—and of most respectable antecedents; her father having been, she thought, a lawyer. So circumspect was she, indeed, and so attentive to her duties in the rooms I'd taken for her in the Via Stretta (atop an old house, since pulled down)—that it was with more astonishment than anger that, coming off guard unexpectedly next evening, I found her entertaining a stranger.

It was well that, so far from regarding this stranger with approval, she seemed terrified by his presence; and well for him that, in obedience to the Duke's edict, he was unarmed. Because thus I could, without loss of dignity, just pitch the fellow down the four flights of stairs, tell Vittoria to be more careful in future and consider the matter closed.

"But, Luigi—I—he—" stammers the poor girl.

"Closed," says I, closing my hand on her shoulder to show what I meant. She screamed a little, but only in play. "Hast cooked the chicken and the other things I sent this afternoon, sweetheart?"

Citizens were putting their heads out of windows by this time; the watch would be on the spot in a minute.

"Y-y-yes, but, Luigi—"

"Good. I feared he might have nibbled *them*. Since he hath not—"

"Luigi—"

"Closed," says I again, seating myself. I have ever discouraged unnecessary conversation from women; a propensity which hath got me several flesh wounds but hath shown a profit on the whole. Vittoria now muttered something about apes in armor and my blood being on my own head—but to her cook-pots, not to me; and so the rest of the evening passed most pleasantly.

I needed a little pleasantry, too, to make up for my worries—the Duchy in danger, the Duke suspicious of me, and this Gian Montefalcone, my supplanter in the Brotherhood, brandishing this upstart Nero at my very beard. Under my captaincy, none had been admitted to the Brotherhood but by election, one vote excluding, and this Gian (captain to a wretched hill-noble) had been a long time getting in. Under his rule, begun while I was recovering from a small duel, any rogue replacing a member—as this Nero had replaced Cozzi—took that member's place; an obscene arrangement, designed to continue himself in power. Since his accession, the meetings had been much less pleasant to me than those held while I was in the chair; and

with this Nero in attendance I anticipated that the next would be more unpleasant still. Not that I for one moment imagined—

Well, that was why and in what frame of mind I next visited Vittoria—the night before the meeting, to be exact; a Friday, when the meals at the castle would be fish and beans; fine for the soul but poor stuff to fight on. Not that I had any idea of fighting—oons, Your Grace, brotherhood of captains should mean other than that!—but with a newcomer present, who could tell? I knew my lord of Valdifiori would be at Nero to kill me first of all; but my only fear—I should say, hope, though what I really mean is certainty—was that Nero would be very chary of the enterprise. I am a poor weak old fool now so I can say it without boasting—at that time I was the finest swordsman in Italy; and boast Nero never so loudly, he must have known it. None but a man eager for Heaven deceives *himself* in such matters; and from what I heard of Nero's past, he was not much inclined thereto. Wherefore I considered aggression on his part unlikely. Still—strength is always useful and Vittoria, like so many women I have known, had a knack of making carp taste like calf.

So the evening passed very pleasantly again; and I was departing, well fed and satisfied, about the time of the second watch, when on the third step of those four long downward pitch-dark stairs down which I had thrown her visitor, catastrophe befell me.

Too late I felt under my foot something that was not the firm step—it turned out to have been a round log of wood; it rolled, I lost my balance, clutched at the air and the next instant was plunging headfirst. Halfway down, rebounding from a wall, I felt a pain in my arm and heard the bone crack; and the next thing I knew I was lying on the cobbles of the street, Vittoria crying over me and a leech she had summoned (very drunk) trying to tear my arm out by the roots.

"*Avanti,* bloodsucker!" says I, and got up. Anyhow, he'd been dragging the wrong arm. Citizens were putting their heads out of windows by this time; the watch would be on the spot in a minute or I'd beat their skulls for negligence—but at the same time, I did not wish to be discovered in precisely that position.

"But, Luigi, thine arm is broken!" wails Vittoria; and by God, Your Grace, it was. Six inches above the wrist and the hand hanging like dead. A nice thing on the eve of a meeting with Giovanni Nero! I have always, in my most desperate moments, had a conviction that the Lord would provide; but at that moment I must confess that my faith was sadly shaken.

"It will mortify, my son," says the leech, "unless—"

At that moment the lanterns of the watch appeared round a corner; and so, having seen that duty was being done, I drove Vittoria and the doctor up the stairs again and in the room I had recently quitted so gaily suffered the agony of having my arm bandaged to a piece of board. At last, the old rogue suspended my arm from my neck by my scarf and asked for two scudi; I told him who I was, advised him to petition the Duke for his money, and went home.

It took two sergeants and ten pots of wine to undress me and get me to bed; and even then I could not sleep. What with the pain in my arm and what with my worries about the morrow and, worse still, the more distant future, all I could do was lie there and think and think and think.

IV

ALAS, what baseness must I now recount!

Accustomed to these latter days when the lion lieth down with the lamb (and peacefully gnaweth his leg off) —Your Grace will need all his faith in my veracity to believe such wickedness possible. Howbeit, a plain tale shall make all clear.

Arm in sling and my face, I doubt not, pale and haggard from my sleepless night, I entered the great hall at Vara to be greeted by my brother captains at first with astonishment and then with incredulity. The astonishment was on the part of all present—that I, notorious for coming out of bloody welters without a scratch, should be crippled by a petty slip on a staircase; and the incredulity first manifested itself in a query from one Batta, sometime a very bad lieutenant of mine and now captain to some squire who lived in a swamp near Caldi.

This lout, after some moments of a fawning and oleaginous leer and being asked by me what this portended, cleared his throat, looked about him for a quick retreat in case of need, and said, "Well, zounds, gentles, meseems 'tis a very timely broken arm. If it *is* broken."

"Timely?" says I. "If it *is* broken? Timely for what?"

Nobody spoke, but after a stare at me all eyes turned to the foot of the table; where, beyond the candles, always sat the last-admitted captain. This would be Giovanni Nero; and, peering past the veil of light, I now saw him; hunched in his chair, elbows on the table, staring at me. Seeing my eyes upon him, he now rose—a great hulk of a fellow, at least two ells and a hand's-breadth tall—and suddenly I recognized him. He was the fellow I had flung down Vittoria's stairs!

"Giovanni Nero," says Gian Montefalcone adding meaningfully, "—of whose coming, Captain, I think thou hadst notice."

"Aha!" says that creeping Batta, and even on the faces of some I had thought my friends, I now saw peculiar smiles. The fact is, Your Eminence, that this Nero's excellences had been so touted theretofore, and his swordsmanship in particular so praised by some who had suffered from mine, that on one or two occasions I had perhaps deprecated this enthusiasm; though that I made vulgar noises or undertook to drive this Nero before me with a broomstick, I utterly deny. Leaving my natural modesty to one side—is it credible I should have spoken so about a man I had never seen? Or if I did let slip some such expression was I not justified in view of the fact that his praisers had never seen him either? Except this Batta, who had served under him once in the Romagna and was now, quite plain to be seen, his jackal.

"I am pleased to see you, Captain," says I—falsely, but after the formula we always used with newcomers.

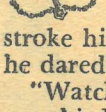
He lounged forward into the full light of the candles. He did not look me in the face, but stared insolently at my right arm in its sling.

"I wonder?" says he; and now he raised his eyes.

And what I saw in them, Your Excellency, was Death.

At the same time (and to my astonishment, so that I looked long to make sure) I saw Doubt. He wanted to kill me, for throwing him down those stairs and for other reasons—the corners of his mouth were a little wet as he thought of it—but sure he had heard of me as loudly as I had heard of him. It is customary to decry prudence among soldiers and to call it cowardice, and indeed this is perfectly just so far as common soldiers are concerned. But evidently it is the duty of an officer to be prudent, if only so that he may make the best use of the courage of the yokels. The question is settled anyhow, by God's wisdom, since an imprudent man will not live to be an officer, let alone a great captain; and whatever his faults this Nero was a great captain—practically, as I have said, on a level with myself.

"May I ask," I inquired politely, "what it may be about my humble self which arouses the curiosity of Your Honor?"



OH, HOW he looked me up and down then, licking that little moisture out of his mouth-corners (while pretending to stroke his beard) and wondering whether he dared go on with his wonder.

"Watch him, Giovanni!" suddenly calls out this Batta. I may, unconsciously, have been wearing a look he remembered. Poor fellow, he had only one ear.

"Why, merely it surprises me," says Nero, "that so eminent a warrior, and with such big feet too, should have been so hurt by a poor harmless staircase, Captain."

"The fact is, Captain," I told him, bowing, "that a harmful hand had put an obstacle on those stairs, which are awkward at the best of times. Others have fallen down them to my knowledge—under circumstances even more humiliating."

Oh, but that pricked him! He may have thought Vittoria's scream had been one of laughter.

"Indeed, Captain?" says he, smiling; but his knuckles were white.

"Indeed, indeed."

"But Your Honor, we are to believe, in falling broke his arm."

"Since I tell you so," I told him coldly, "you *may* believe it."

"Or I may not. Ha ha!"

"Make him swear—" squeaks this Batta;

but before he could finish, Gian Montefalcone was on his feet, speaking almost with dignity.

"Captain Nero," says he, "you are not used to our customs. Outside we must deceive each other in the way of business, but at meetings of the Brotherhood, no captain may lie to another on pain of disgraceful expulsion."

"If he's telling the truth, why should he mind swearing to it?" stutters Batta; and I privately resolved to cut off, at some convenient time, his other ear. For the moment, however, and under the circumstances, conciliation seemed indicated.

I therefore laughed briefly.

"Anything in the interests of peace," I said therefore. "I see not why my cracked arm should be a matter of such moment—"

"But thy word is," says Nero.

"Even so," says I. There was a crucifix on the table, to be used for swearing him

"Now, Caradosso," says he solemnly, "is thine arm broken?"

in. "Wherefore let me lay my sound hand on that cross and I will—"

"Not his left hand!" cries Batta. "A left-handed oath does not bind! Ah, watch him, Giovanni, that old fox!"

Gian Montefalcone came forward and so placed the crucifix that my right hand, protruding from the sling, rested on it.

"Now, Caradosso," says he solemnly, "hast thou told the truth to the Brethren, and is thine arm broken?"

"Sir," I said, "it is."

There was a sacred moment, was it not, Your Grace? And what followed it? Why, Montefalcone was flung to one side and the crucifix fell on the floor and I smelled hell and my face hurt and mine eyes filled with tears—through which I perceived that Giovanni Nero had smacked my cheeks with both hands, twisted my nose, pulled my beard and spat in my face, with the evident intention of insulting me.

So crass indeed was this intention that some of the younger men at the table, not yet quite perverted to captaincy, started up in their seats and cried "Shame!"

"Shame!" says Giovanni Nero, scowling at them under his eyebrows. "Shame for what?"

"Shame to strike a man with his arm broke!"

Nero barked; his manner of laughing.

"This is no game of sport, young sirs," he sneered. "Did I ask him to break his arm? Besides, what's that to the great Caradosso? If he can drive me with a broomstick, can he not fight me left-handed? Or doth he fight by preference with his mouth?"

Now he looked full into my eyes and now again Death (but this time without Doubt beside him) stared at me past Nero's broken nose. He knew, as they all did, that no man right-handed by nature can fight left-handed against his equal and hope to live. He knew that without me there would be no Rometian army to oppose his march into the Duchy—I should be dead then, but while still I lived it irked me to think of Your Grace's family homeless. I was fond of Pietro III, poor innocent, and still fonder of Your Grace's mother, whom God number among his holy saints, Amen! Your Eminence was then only in prospect, but I knew of it and may even have felt a slight yearning toward Yourself.

"WELL?" says Nero through his teeth. A junior captain had by this time appeared with our swords—we always left our weapons in the anteroom, lest Brotherhood be disturbed by fratricide; but of course accidents would happen, and we had our forms of procedure.

Nero took his blade and bent it against the flagstones.

"Sirs," I said, "there is one small preliminary matter."

"Aye—wipe thy face!" cries Batta; but none laughed.

"My Duke," I told them, "being a man of peace, hath promised that should anything befall this Nero at my hands, he will hang me. Now he is no liar and thief like my lord of Valdifiori, but a man of his word; so before we go further, I should like to know whether this court of honor considers me to have sustained insult?"

Batta cackled again, but again none joined him. Montefalcone raised his own hand and looked at the other captains. All raised their hands.

"This Court finds Captain Caradosso obliged to fight," says Montefalcone in the usual formula, "and will so certify his Duke if necessary."

Those words "if necessary" meant, if I lived; but the weight Montefalcone put on them made it clear he thought there was little chance of that.

"Fight?" cries one of the hot-bloods who had called shame on Nero. "He's had enough to make a mouse fight a lion—and left-handed too!"

I smiled at him.

"Then fight I will. But not," says I, "left-handed."

And I took my right arm out of its sling.

They gasped. All of them. This jumping to conclusions is a common fault.

"Perjury!" squeals Batta.

"I trust Your Honor," says I to Nero, taking my sword, throwing it into the air, spitting on my palm and catching it again, "will not think I have belied myself. My arm *is* broken—my left arm."

Meseemed Messer Giovanni seemed a little paler than he had a moment agone; and behold! I looked, and there was Doubt back again in his eyes. Though otherwise he was in excellent fettle, mark you—very full-blooded.

"As to why," I continued lightly, "I should have chosen to wear my right arm in a bandage—well, that may occupy your mind in the duller moments of our little encounter. If any. Shall we begin?"

"Why, you cozening, cheating—" he began, to encourage himself; but he was quite wrong, as I have shown. My arm *was* broken; I had *not* said which arm; and if, greedy for my blood and Your Grace's lands, he had chosen—

It is customary, in such cases, to wait until the furniture has been pushed back and the candles arranged; but Nero was so unsure of himself as to be precipitate—men are sometimes that way with women—and so the younger captains missed a lesson that might have saved some of their lives later. I mean, as to the value of dignity relative to that of life; low, Sire, very low indeed. I exemplified this fact—since it was necessary to let the blood run back into my right hand, so recently slung and clutching the end of a board—by sticking my sword under my left arm (which hurt damnably) and running away from Nero while swinging my right arm like a windmill.

The youngsters, having pushed back their tables, roared with laughter: but Nero did not think it ridiculous at all. Wherein he was right. Because, having taken his point through my leather jerkin (a near thing) and by a twist of the body managed to prevent withdrawal, I snatched my own blade and, had my hand not been still a little numb, would have had his head for a football that instant. As it was, I cut his hair for him so close that the blood ran.

After which pleasantry, it behooved me to be careful; because, as I had perceived from this pasquinade, he was my equal at swordsmanship or very nearly; and I, forced to balance with a left arm that would not obey me and hurt like seven devils, was not quite my usual self. But God evens things for the righteous, and it was apparent that the blood from his haircut must soon trickle down into Nero's eyes. I told him this, at the same time trying to hamstring him with a cut I knew; but both courtesies were ill-received.

We now circled each other, which he should not have permitted, since my hand grew stronger all the time. When, realizing his error, he came in with a rush, I repelled him without difficulty and gave him a small wound in the shoulder—nothing in itself, but if a man has enough of such he'll bleed to death as pretty as you please. He gave me one in the thigh about this time; and, a moment later, another in the left arm. Badly as this hurt, I could not but laugh to realize we were both at the same game—which I then tried to end by running him through the navel. But no. His navel might have been some precious jewel, the way he leaped it out of danger.

And, following it, of course I might be said to have attacked.

THAT "might", Your Grace, is just another example of my modesty, because actually this was the attack which became famous and is indeed spoken about to this day—attributed, as things get to be in the course of years, to other persons; such as Hercules, Alexander the Great and a Greek named Hector.

My object in pressing this offensive—said by some to have lasted fifteen minutes—was of course to take advantage of Nero's surprise; like most fighting men he was somewhat slow-witted. And, having arranged his mind for an easy victory on the left-hand side, he could not instantly become reconciled to a hard struggle on the right. My object was to send him to hell still puzzled; but he declined to go. I took him high, I took him low; I kicked at his belly and waited for him to try the same (they usually do) so that I could slash his knee; I drove for the right side of his neck and by a wrist trick that had cost me hours of practice sent the point under his chin toward the left—it cut him and he bled, but not in spurts as I had hoped. I worked him lovingly over toward a bench which stood some little out from the other furniture and would have made him stumble over it had not Batta yelled a warning—to which Nero replied by spiking my left arm and butting his head in my face. I used my knee on him to some advantage and hammered his face with the basket of my sword—it had cut-steel lozenges on it, because one never knows; and that was the end of the attack proper because we were both dripping like butchers and almost out of breath. I have omitted all the interesting details, because Your

My balances and avoidances were inexact, and this is how I got my jerkin slashed away.

Grace is no swordsman and why should I scatter pearls?

Well, Nero, having been on the defensive, was less winded than I and moreover he had lost less blood; so now, without pausing for a moment, he went over to the attack; and a ghastly time I had of it, Your Grace, you may be sure.

Only now did I realize how much defense, as I practiced it, is an affair of delicate movement, such as I had made in the beginning when I took his sword through my jerkin. Never was I one of your thick-wristed wall-of-steel men; my object hath been to sway gracious aside from the point and use all my strength for the riposte. I have always had a childish pleasure in feeling the hilt bang the ribs—quite unnecessary, since two inches in the soft parts is enough and saves trouble getting the blade out; but go to, we all have our hobbies. Howbeit, I found that with that accursed left arm dangling (I'd had my lieutenant pull the bone straight before I left Rometia, but it had slipped again) — I found my balances and avoidances were inexact; I would move an inch too little or too much and this is how I got my jerkin slashed away and most of the flesh off my ribs on the left side. That was a horrid moment; I thought he had me through that lung, and so did he and stepped back confidently.

But since I did not stagger or get that look of the eyes men have when they are mortal struck, he came in again, thoughtlessly, to finish me off. And it was now that I chanced all, dropped on one knee and gave him that slight new, untried poke in the groin, mentioned to Your Excellency some time back.

He made a couple of points after that, but then the pain came upon him—it is slow starting, but, when it comes, like nothing on earth; and all of a sudden he dropped his sword and bent double, his hands over the wound.

"I'm a spoiled man, you bastard," he said between teeth clenched in agony; and moaned like an unmilked cow.

He had fought well, and I thought it proper to set his mind at rest.

"You are a dead man, Captain," I therefore told him kindly, "but you would have it so. Lie down and die easy."

He believed me, the more so since the blood was now gushing between his fingers; and he let himself down to the flagstones and rolled gently over. I do not know how long it took him to die, because the sight of all the other captains—who would have followed him like dogs had he won—crowding round to gape at his writhing, suddenly filled me with an unnatural fury. Having been some little confused at the time, I do not remember just what happened; but I have been told that I began to curse my brethren and to beat them with the flat of my sword and that thus I drove them out in a huddle to the courtyard. There, being so far from my usual mild self as to be almost demented, I beat them further into getting on their horses and starting with me to bear witness before His Highness the Duke. I remember thinking, as we rode under the full moon, that in my then condition hanging would agree with me very ill, and must be avoided at all costs. Methought the Duke, seeing me as I was, might not wait for the certificate of the court of honor, so I would take him the court, all ten of it.

Some way outside Vara, it seems, they revolted and might have done me a mischief, unarmed though they were, had I not chanced to have half a troop of horse at hand—posted there to make sure of Nero should he kill me. He, it seems, had

posted a half-troop for a similar purpose; which now appeared and added to our troubles. But (though I remember nothing of it) it seems I rode up to them in the moonlight, all dishevelled as I was, and said I had killed their captain and would kill them all single-handed; whereat they made us no more trouble. My lieutenant told me all this later, and said he himself had had qualms when he saw me spouting blood and driving my flock of captains and roaring like the bull of Bashan.

V

THE next thing I myself recall is waking in the Duke's cabinet.

He was there. Must have been called from bed in the middle of the night, but still he had a mild look on his face.

I got to my feet and saluted—and wished I had not, because a piece of my forehead was missing and my nails grated very unpleasantly on the bone.

He considered me for some time, smiling.

"You old devil!" says the Duke.

"Sire," says I, "I have brought with me certain gentlemen who will certify Your Grace—"

"I have seen them and they have told their tale and gone," says he. "What a covey of vultures—and now suddenly, what doves! Moreover Doctor Bertolotti hath put thine arm in a splint and sewn up twenty-seven wounds—at which even thy brethren marvelled—"

"No brothers, Sire," I made bold to interrupt him. "Henceforth I shall regard those rogues as my children and a stern father they shall find in me. Have I Your Grace's leave to fight Gian Montefalcone as soon as I am well?"

He lay back in his chair and laughed for a long time; I do not know at what, since he had before him only a poor soldier trying to do his duty; but noble ideas of humor are sometimes strange. He may have seen that I was respectfully offended, because suddenly he stopped and began chewing the feather of a pen. I was glad to see this—his father's trick when considering something devilish; it boded well for the Duchy.

I am sorry Your Grace hath not inherited the habit.

"Caradosso," says he at last, "I perceive now that perhaps I have been some little too trusting."

Ho! Some little! Stretching forth his neck to Valdifiori and his Nero and threatening to hang me if I tried to protect it! Some little! Ho!

"My lord of Valdifiori hath manifested bad faith," says His Grace. "Those captains babbled . . . Moreover he hath now no captain for his forces. I think we will march into that piece of land tomorrow—thou canst lead from a litter."

"With respect, Sire, I prefer horseback. It impresseth the vulgar."

He laughed again, but shortly, being occupied in his mind.

"Make a beggar of me, would he? And once having that land, meseems we might take advantage of my lord's disadvantage—as he tried to do of thine—and march thence on Peri and Gavenza; whence we can easily strike for his capital."

He spat out some feathers.

"Having taken the city, we will be masters of those two little lordships which were also in the plot—of the hill and the swamp, I mean; we shall have the Valdifiori forces with us, and those captains seem some little afraid of thee, Luigi. So that we should have no trouble in advancing on Castello Nero. Which will assuredly make a pleasant addition to the Duchy."

Pleasant addition! He had his eye on lands as large as the Duchy itself! And the Duke got them, too, as Your Grace knows well.

"And all," he says, squinting at me, "because thou hadst, by chance, a broken arm, Luigi."

"Your Grace is kind to say so."

"Your left arm."

"Yes, Sire."

"But he thought it was your right?" my lord went on.

"Sire, yes. Or he might not have dared—"

"He jumped to a conclusion. *I* jumped to a conclusion—that all men loved peace because I do. Let us beware of jumping to conclusions, Luigi."

He meant, let me not assume that I might now go forth and kill Gian Montefalcone.

And I never did. We understood each the other thenceforth.

The candles were burning low; the last one guttered and he snuffed it out. That left us in the darkness and, thus screened, His Grace came and put his arm about my shoulders. Which hurt, but was a great honor.

"Caradosso," says he, almost in the tones of a man speaking to another man, "I've been a fool and thy blood hath been my sacrifice. A man hath no right to think the world's as he would have it, while he hath folk to protect from the world as it is. Go to bed."

And with his own hand he opened the door and pushed me out into the corridor where a link burned, and by its light I saw there were tears in his eyes. Then he shut the door behind me, and I went to my quarters.

So that is how Your Grace became lord of all those places; and the explanation of the legend that I am a subtle and a dangerous man, given to quarreling and contention. Whereas in fact—

But I forget; my object was to explain my possession of that silver porringer and to warn Your Eminence against jumping to conclusions. Ah, Sire, if it's death to assume a man's right arm is broke because he wears that one in a sling, may it not be stomach-ache, anyway, to think a bowl's stolen just because . . .?

To replace it I now send Your Lordship's son, with my humble duty, a small gold cup for his milk or the like of that. It is engraved with what I believe would have been the crest of my own family had I had one; and I beg that any small similarity to the arms of the Cenci may not again cause unjustified suspicions

Of the honesty of

Your Highness' poor loving humble servant,

L. Caradosso
Captain.

ENDORSEMENT BY THE DUKE

Compared with this honest, gentle good old man what thieves and ruffians are the rest of us! Send him a barrel of wine. Use the Valdifiori bowl to feed my dog.

P.

PASSAGE

TO MARSEILLE

By HENRY NORTON

When the line of native mountaineers inched up the slope to their plane on the fourth day, the ten survivors were all able to stand outside and cheer.

THE ATC waiting room at Stuttgart was as good as any ATC post in the world, the equal of any second-class American bus station. A small wooden counter separated the working personnel from the passengers. A bored sergeant worked at one desk, while a T-4 and a private first class concerned themselves with a personal phone call and a funny book, respectively.

Outside the counter there was a bulletin board with a few thumbtacked announcements grouped around the customary Air Transport Command device, and a modest statement about ATC covering the world. The passengers who waited were fairly brass-heavy—a couple of colonels, the wife and daughter of a major general, and a smattering of lesser rank. The only enlisted man on the flight list was a private who looked like a medical priority case.

The sergeant leaned over and whispered to the Pfc, "She'll never make it across the mountains with all that metal aboard."

ILLUSTRATED BY
MONROE EISENBERG

The private grinned appreciatively without taking his eyes from the comic book. Somewhere down the hall a loudspeaker began talking in tones that were clear and yet somehow curiously distorted.

It was the Rome weather report. The sergeant glanced at the clock. He heard the closing of a distant door, and through a window he saw the plane crew moving out toward the field. Then in front of the barrack-like building a staff car pulled to a discordant stop, and an officer climbed out of the tonneau.

The sergeant stood up and surveyed his little group. Eleven names on the flight list—with the brigadier general who'd just arrived he could make only nine. Neither of the civilian correspondents were on hand. So let 'em miss the plane, the sergeant thought. Lousy no-shows, anyway. Let 'em take the train to Marseille; let 'em walk. Catch him holding an ATC plane for a couple of newsmen.

"Flight Eighteen," he said formally. "Arriving at Marseille twelve-fifteen. This way, please."

They trailed behind him, their order approximating the protocol of Army rank. The baggage had all been stowed beforehand by the civilian ground crew. The passengers straggled in a lonely, proud line toward the gravid and gleaming C-47.

IT WAS cold on the landing field, with a sharp breath wafting north from the night-shrouded rampart of the mountains of Switzerland. The sergeant rattled down his list, beginning with Brigadier General Vinless who had just driven up. The colonels were next, followed by the wife and daughter of the major general, then the two newspapermen, neither of whom were present. One of the captains was French, but he was called in strict order of rank, and the ninth man to enter was the private.

During the loading a small man walked out onto the field. He wore a soft felt hat and a dark gray topcoat, and not much of his face could be seen, since he went directly to the shadow of the plane's wing, and waited there while the passengers went aboard.

At the last moment a jeep pulled out onto the field and an angular man with a briefcase leaped out and ran toward the plane. His path took him under the wing where the small man waited—indeed, the location had been selected with that in mind. As the newcomer came into the shadow, the waiting man took a quick step forward and slugged him on the base of the skull. The small man caught the falling one, eased him down, and then ran toward the door.

The ground crew was busily securing pilot's door and luggage hatch, and preparing to roll away the loading steps as he came quickly forward and went up the steps to the door of the plane.

"Almost missed it," he said pleasantly.

The sergeant had turned back to the warm office as soon as he called the last name. The ground man now had no authority to let anyone enter the transport, but he had heard two civilians fail to respond. This was doubtless one of them. He held the steps in position, and the man in gray went on into the plane.

The door slammed behind him. The pilot took the tower signal, and the already warmed-up engines picked up a throaty bellowing. The C-47 waddled over to the head of the runway, straightened out and then thundered down the strip and climbed away into the darkness.

The small man dropped into a seat by the door as soon as he was in. He took the blanket from its rail and wrapped it around himself from neck to shoes. Then, with the soft gray hat tucked down by his side, there was no way to tell immediately whether he was in uniform or not.

He leaned back and closed his eyes. There was no elation on his face. There was only a deep gravity, a calm and competent recognition of dangers ahead. Getting on the plane hadn't been difficult, though—he regretted the need for slugging the other, but he could take no chances with a possible witness, and he could not travel under his own identity. Getting off at Marseille would be something else. Not impossible, of course—in his work he had learned long ago not to attempt the impossible.

It was now nine o'clock. The plane would not arrive in southern France until shortly after midnight. The distance was not great in airline miles, but certain detours were necessary to avoid the towering peaks that lay like a great fortress across their path. The Bernese Oberland,

with the Jungfrau, the Monk, the Ogre and the Maiden, and beyond them the Pennine Alps with Mont Blanc, Monte Rosa and the Matterhorn—giant fingers of ice and rock that quested three miles into the sky and were nothing for any pilot to flirt with.

Well, three hours were enough for what he had to do, if it could be done at all. Dry and bitter amusement tugged at the corners of his mouth as he recalled his assignment and the manner in which it had been given. Rheem had come to Munich to meet him, and he could gauge the importance of the matter by knowing how much Rheem hated to leave his beloved Vienna.

RHEEM, the dark, gaunt man with ice water in his veins who seemed to carry the air of Vienna with him even when he traveled. His black Homburg hat, the blue, velvet-collared overcoat he wore were as typical of the Ringstrasse and the Prater as the Danube itself.

He brought his chessmen—the battered ivory and ebony set he took with him each day to the coffee house on the Ring, where he spent his waking hours. He set them up on the folding board and invited Bob Orde to make the opening move. All this before he came to the point of his visit.

"We know the channel through which this—material is reaching the seaport," Rheem said softly. "But we do not know all of the personnel involved. You will put yourself on the Stuttgart-Marseille transport. Try to determine who their agent is at this end, and most important, who is their agent on the plane."

"You know the one in Marseille?"

"Reasonably sure," said Rheem.

"How do I book passage?"

Rheem said, "You don't. It would be fatal to our plans to have it known our organization was interested. And it would end your usefulness in this area."

His hand hovered over a knight, as if his only care in the world was the next move in the game. His eyes did not even look upward to meet Bob Orde's eyes. He did not seem to be interested in Orde's reaction.

As in fact, he was not. Orde knew that—anyone who had worked for Rheem knew that he had no more concern for personal reactions than he had for the reactions of the chess pieces he moved on the board before him.

The game was his only passion. There were few clement days when he could not be found in front of the coffee house on the Ring, ready to play with any comer. He ranked high, even in a city where chess is played as commonly as bridge is in America. One of the reasons for his skill as a player was that he did not hesitate to sacrifice his players in order to gain a strategic advantage.

Orde grinned wryly at the thought, seated now in the transport that had climbed to ten thousand feet and was swinging in its wide circle to skirt the mountains and wing down toward the southern coast of France. It was cold now, located as he was near the door, but his place gave him a chance to study his fellow passengers.

The major general's wife, he saw, was as stiffly conscious of rank as any of the army personnel. She chatted with the brigadier, was gracious to the colonels, and managed to ignore all the others quite impersonally. The colonels, in their turn, had a friendly word for the major and a nod for the captains, while the captains, having no one else to outrank, severely ignored the private.

The private didn't seem to mind. He was seated a few places ahead of Bob Orde, across the aisle, and like Orde he was bundled from head to foot in his blanket. His head lay back as if in sleep, and moved gently with the occasional swoop and rise of the plane.

Orde twisted round to look out the window. There should have been village lights below, but there was only vast and unrelieved blackness. Weather, he thought, and pulled the blanket closer. Finding the loose ends of his safety belt, he secured them, and then let his mind go wandering free in recollection while fatigue and strain worked at sealing his eyelids.

HE WAS awakened by silence. It was no more than a thin thread of silence, running through the sounds of the engines and the throb of the wind against the wings and body. But in its very absence it was shocking.

Like walking in a dark room, he thought fleetingly, and reaching for a familiar light

switch only to find that the switch, even the wall itself is gone. There is the same moment of lost and utter panic in which the surrounding dark transmutes itself into a sentient, enveloping foe; the stark bewilderment that ends when a groping hand touches some reassuring object.

He gauged the sounds, and knew at once that one of the plane's motors had stopped. In its absence the spectral howling of the slipstream was loud and ominous.

All save the dimmest of traveling lights had been turned off. Most of the passengers were asleep, or at least quiet and unalarmed in their seats. The private was on his feet, standing by the first aid equipment, and a captain with an Air Force patch on his shoulder was sitting bolt upright with a concerned look on his face. He saw Bob Orde watching him.

"Trouble," he said, "and some night for it!"

Orde rubbed the mist from his window. There was nothing to see but his own face dimly reflected—quick, deep-set eyes, a round-pointed nose that slanted a little to one side, a large mouth just now compressed, making a long, lean jaw look longer.

He cupped his hands around his face, and peered into the blackness. There was nothing, unless—

He said, "Captain, is that snow?"

"Damn right," rasped the AAF man. "We're 'way off course, brother. Stand by to hit a mountain any minute now, or I miss my guess!"

Orde said, "Private, you'd better sit down!"

The private by the first aid cabinet turned a startled face toward him. He opened his mouth, but before words could come he left his feet like a grotesque bird and sailed down the corridor to crash against the door of the pilot's compartment.

Bob Orde's breath left him in the sudden, fierce embrace of the straining safety belt. The remaining engine bellowed on a long, sustained note, like a wounded animal, and then stopped. For an instant the silence was broken only by the dry straining of metal, the faraway obscure tinkle of broken glass. And then a pandemonium of voices rose, topped by a woman's scream.

As the safety belt relaxed, Orde tore it away and leaped for the rear door of the plane, the thought of fire as searing as flame itself. He kicked the reluctant panel open, and looked out on a brief expanse of white over which fine snow sifted in wind-lashed streamers. The plane was almost buried—it was this that had absorbed the shock of their sudden landing.

When there was no longer danger of fire, he closed the door and turned to the other passengers. There was plenty to do. The general's wife had stopped screaming, but she held the unconscious form of her daughter against her breast with one arm. while the other hung limply at her side. The French army captain lay half in the aisle, breathing shallowly, a thin trickle of red threading down from his ear. The private was conscious, slammed against the end of the corridor, but his breath was a thin knife-edge of pain because of his crushed ribs.

These were the seriously hurt. Almost all the others had been bruised and shaken in the sudden landing, but all were up and fumbling around. Orde moved through them quietly, seating and covering all who showed any symptoms of shock or hysteria. He beckoned Kelly, the Air Corps captain, and one of the colonels to help him. Then he did what he could for the wounded.

It was severe concussion for the Frenchman. They moved him as easily as they could to a stretcher. The plane's nose tilted down to an uncomfortable degree, but they managed to lash the man's body at an easier angle. Orde ripped open a first aid kit, set the woman's broken arm and splinted it. He emptied a morphine syrette in the private's arm and composed him as well as he could in the aisle. The child was recovering consciousness now, and seemed in no serious condition.

ORDE went forward. Things are tough all over, he thought grimly. There seemed to have been no warning for the crew in the nose of the plane, no time to prepare for the shock of the crash. The co-pilot was dead, the pilot still unconscious. The radioman had scrambled his features on his instrument panel, and sat numbly blowing his breath through his bleeding mouth, so that a fine crimson spray was covering the front of his jacket.

When all had been done that could be,

and steaming black coffee laced with brandy had been passed around, it was the major general's wife, Mrs. Seever, who thought of the question that had to come.

"You're a correspondent, aren't you, Mr., ah—"

He'd felt it coming for a while, felt it in the respectful, yet curious glances of the military men he'd ordered around so crisply. No use to duck or roll with the punch. He knew what the world would do with the headlines of this story. He had as little chance to get by unnoticed as a five-legged calf at a state fair.

"No, ma'am," he said calmly. "I'm just a civilian, name of Robert Orde. No particular occupation."

"How did you get passage on an ATC plane?"

"Possibly they don't know I'm aboard."

Brigadier General Vinless frowned. "This sounds a bit irregular," he said. "Colonel Masters, you'd better arm yourself and see that this man—"

"Nonsense, Pat," said the woman briskly. "You always were a sucker for red tape and regulations. Let the man go ahead—he's doing a good job."

"This plane is a valuable Army property—"

"This plane isn't worth a Chinese dollar, sir," said Orde. "It's down somewhere in the mountains where it can't even be salvaged for junk. We've got one dead man already, and two more in danger. With any management, the rest of us can live. If we get silly, we won't."

Tom Kelly, the Air Corps captain, came out of the forward end of the plane. "You got that radio working O.K., Bob. I picked up the Marseille field. So they know we're down, and they'll get to work."

"Good boy," Orde said. "Keep sending a while, so they can get a triangulation on our signal."

"Sure," said Kelly. "They want information, anyway." He hesitated. "They got a passenger list from the Stuttgart office. Only nine passengers on it."

Without inflection, Orde said, "That so?"

"They skipped you, somehow."

The French captain stirred and moaned, on his stretcher at the end of the plane. Bob Orde got up and went that way. Over his shoulder he said, "Let's leave it that way for the time being, shall we?"

Vinless said, "I don't like this."

"You might as well learn," said Mrs. Seever, "that in a case of this kind the first casualty is Army rank. Captain, you do what Mr. Orde tells you."

The French captain died at dawn, after a brief interlude of consciousness. Orde stayed with him to the end, murmuring to him in the soft patois of Provence, giving him what small comfort might be in hearing his mother tongue in his ears for the final time.

They were putting his wrapped body with that of the co-pilot in the snow outside when they heard the first sound of the search. A light, cottony fog hid the sky, but the sound of a plane above them came distinctly.

"Radio," Orde snapped. "Tell them a Fieseler Storch plane just passed over us. Have it keep circling till they get our position exactly!"

"Good ear, that," murmured Kelly.

Orde smiled thinly. So much for the protective coloring Rheem had taught him so carefully. "Never let anyone guess how much you know or how much you can do!" That was Rheem's constant warning. Never expose yourself, never draw attention. As soon as you do, your usefulness is ended.

Well, that was no longer important. The moment the plane crashed, Orde's game was up. He might've had a chance up to then. Now all he had a chance to do was to come out of this alive, and bring as many of the others out with him as he could.

Damn Rheem, anyway, Orde thought. *He'll probably blame me because the plane crashed! I'd like to have him up here with me, sitting on this damn mountainside. He wouldn't like it any better than I do!*

THREE times more the plane went over them, and after a while the radio began giving them bad news. They were in the Jura Mountains north of Lake Geneva. It was going to be tough reaching them. Supplies would be dropped as soon as the fog broke, but that might be a day or two, according to local authorities. They were advised to conserve supplies they had, and use the radio only for extreme emergencies, as their signal was even now almost inaudible.

Mrs. Seever took it all calmly. "Don't worry," she said. "Daddy'll have us out of here before you know it." She hugged her daughter affectionately, and the girl smiled at her trustingly.

Orde squinted. There was truth to that. A major general could put a lot of drive into a search when his own wife and daughter were on the fallen plane. There'd be no chance for Orde to escape unnoticed in the excitement, not with the whole world watching.

He said, "I'm sure he will."

The private was coughing badly. Orde left the others and went to the man's sling. He put a hand on the burning forehead, saw with concern the orange tint in what was coughed up. The private's eyes were sunken.

"I feel like hell," he said.

"You'll make it, kid," Orde said. "I won't fool you, it's pneumonia, but there'll be sulfa in those kits, and I think we can pull you through."

"Tht's what it takes, huh? Sulfa, from the kits?"

"That should do it."

"There isn't any."

The private coughed rackingly and turned so that he could look out the high plane window. He shut his eyes then, and began talking.

"There isn't any sulfa because I took it out and threw it away about a half hour before we hit. To make room for something else I wanted to take to Marseille."

The deep chest cough shook him again. He wiped his dry lips and grinned wryly at Bob Orde. "Long's I'm cooked anyway, I might as well tell you. Diamonds. God's own quantity of 'em that the Krauts stole in Amsterdam. I found out they were being smuggled to Marseille by one of the Stuttgart porters, so I cut myself in. With my luck, I would pick this trip!"

No one came near them as they talked—it was as if, since the Frenchman's death, Orde had been given the right of the confessional. He said little, and the boy babbled as his fever burned higher, talking of a sick mother and what the money would have meant for her. At the very last, not much of what he said made sense, save for the bitter clarity of his final remark.

"It's a laugh, ain't it? A quarter million in diamonds, and what I need is two bucks' worth o' sulfa!"

After that, no more bodies went to join the three that slept in the eternal snow of the Jura Range. The skies above the grounded transport were a constant thundering now, and on the occasions when the overcast broke, food and brandy and medical supplies came chuting down toward the target Orde tramped laboriously in the snow. Chemical heat pads and blankets made life bearable for the injured, and when the line of native mountaineers inched up the slope to their plane on the fourth day, the ten survivors were all able to stand outside and cheer for them.

There was a half-mile climb to a level spot where ski planes could land, and in a few trips they were a!' in Geneva. And it was there that the world learned of the thirteenth man on the plane—learned that the dramatic, evil number of the Last Supper had been duplicated in the fatal passage of Flight Eighteen.

People were very polite to Robert Orde, for the others left no doubt that he was the hero of the crash; that without him the chance for survival of the rest would have been measurably lessened. But no one was allowed to talk to him. Two big, courteous MP's took charge, hurried him to a comfortable room with a luxurious bed in which he slept the dream-filled sleep of complete exhaustion. He knew, things being as they were, that the pleasant room was a prison—that armed guards were outside his door constantly. But problems like that could wait on sleep.

MAJOR General Seever received Orde next morning by coming round the desk to shake hands. The general dismissed his aide, and the two men studied one another.

"I owe you a considerable debt of gratitude, personally," Seever said. "My wife leaves no doubt of your courage and efficiency. The surgeon says you did a fine job of setting her arm."

"More luck than management," Orde said.

The general smiled. "I can't subscribe to that," he said. "You seem to be a man of many talents. You did all the first aid, you repaired the radio, you talked to the dying Frenchman in his own unusual dialect. The Swiss mountaineers say that your climbing is equal to their own. And Cap-

tain Kelly swears you'd have repaired the transport and flown it out if you'd been forced to."

Orde grinned and inspected his fingers.

"More qualities than we'd expect to find in one man," said General Seever. "Personally, I can be grateful. As military governor of the district, however, I'm compelled by duty to go a little deeper into the matter."

"Naturally," said Robert Orde.

He handed his credentials to the general, and waited. Seever read, and his lips tightened. "Civilian, attached to the Counter-intelligence Corps," he said. "Do you CIC supermen happen to remember the November directive regarding your work with Army personnel?"

Orde said, "Yes, sir—it's supposed to go through channels. But this was a smuggling case involving civilians."

"Did you get them?"

"The man at Marseille was known," Orde said. "I spotted the Stuttgart man, an ATC porter, by his shoes. Much too good for a poor man. That's how most of these black market operators give themselves away. They can't refrain from using their wealth. But I suppose it's too much to expect them to go barefoot for consistency's sake."

The general cut in brusquely, as Orde expected, but the subsequent tongue-lashing was milder, on the whole, than it might have been. And after he had commented on Orde's method of boarding the plane, and other matters of which he disapproved, Seever was willing to let it go at that. He thanked Orde again, shook hands, and only at parting did he remember to ask, "No military personnel involved, then?"

"No, sir—no military personnel," Orde said, and went away.

Certainly the private had paid for his crime—there was no reason to mention his involvement. Rheem had wanted the diamond traffic stopped, and that was done. Although Rheem would doubtless have a few acid things to say about Orde's usefulness being at an end in this area. What the hell, Orde thought, there are other areas!

Maybe a warm country next time!

GNATS TO 'EM ALL!

By Harold Willard Gleason

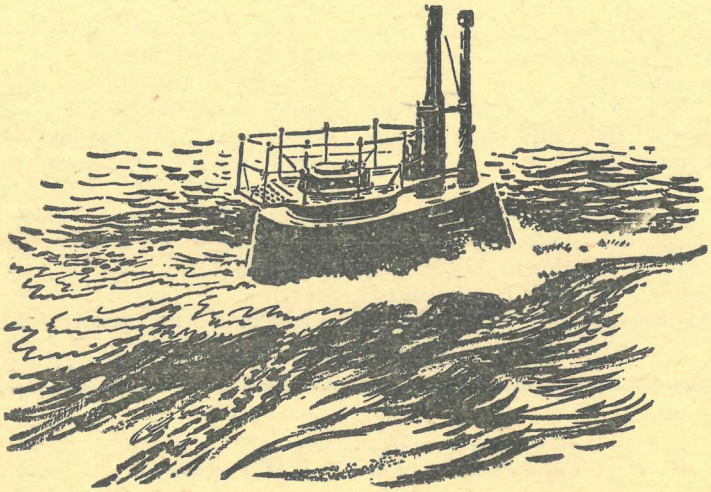
Through alder thatch
Along the stream
Perspiring anglers
Pant and steam,
Wipe citronella
From their eyes,
And grimly mutter,
"*Damn* the flies!"

Anon with flashing fins brisk trout
From rock and riffle
Sally out,
Until, untimely hooked,
They rise
And (doubtless) mutter,
"*Damn* the flies!"

While both contending factions stew—
And, one would venture,
Justly, too—
How myriad flies,
Beyond a doubt,
Must cuss both fishermen *and* trout!

By ARTHUR LARSON

CRASH DIVE



FOR two years prior to our entering World War I and during most of the war period I served as chief electrician in the Submarine Division of the U. S. Navy. I was attached to the *F-1* and prior to entering the war, our home port was San Francisco.

In those days we had frequent engine troubles and we were often in drydock for major repairs. It was just after one of these trips to drydock that we unintentionally broke all records for depth dives. We had started on a practice cruise when Captain Webb suggested we make a dive to see if everything was all right before getting too far away from the Navy Yard. We were nearing the Golden Gate when he signaled for a "crash dive." This maneuver calls for getting under the surface as quickly as possible. Diesel engines are stopped and the ship's drive is shifted to electric motors. Hatches and ventilators are battened down and a predetermined amount of water is taken aboard into large ballast tanks through quick-opening sea valves—Kingstons, we called them. The entire operation requires only a few seconds.

In spite of rather frequent engine trouble we practiced diving a great deal. Our crew coordinated perfectly, for there had been no changes in personnel for several months. This particular dive called for a definite amount of water to be taken

A FACT STORY

aboard through the sea valves and was calculated to give us a negative buoyancy of about five hundred pounds. This means that the ship would now be five hundred pounds heavier than the water it displaced. In this condition we could bring it up or down at will by the use of the diving rudders and the forward thrust of the propellers.

But this time something went wrong. We started down at a rapid rate. Our "full-speed-ahead," with diving rudders tilted to their maximum lift position, failed to check our downward motion. Orders were given to "blow all tanks." The reducing valve on the airline was by-passed, permitting high-pressure air to enter the ballast tanks directly. But we still went down. The sweep hands on the big depth gauges were visible to most of the crew members and needless to say they received more attention than usual. My first opportunity to observe them showed a depth of 150 feet. We were already "out of bounds," for Navy Regulations forbade us to dive deeper than 100 feet, this being considered the maximum depth for safe operation. But we were not going down by choice. As I watched, the depth gauge showed 200 feet, with no noticeable change in the forward motion of the pointer.

Someone wondered, aloud, what the depth of the bay was in this area. "Six hundred feet," was the prompt answer. On another occasion the bottom had saved us when something had gone wrong. But no chance of that here. The water was much too deep. We wondered at what depth the hull would collapse, and what it would be like. Probably like an explosion—instantaneous.

The depth gauge now showed 225 feet and was still climbing steadily. A check of the water gauges and the air manifold showed that high-pressure air was forcing water out of the ballast tanks at a rapid rate. Why were we still going down? The depth gauge now read 250, then 260. Its forward motion seemed to have slowed down. It crept to 270. Moving slower but still going up, 275—280. The pointer had nearly stopped. It crept to 285 and then seemed to stop at 287. Yes, it had stopped but why didn't it start backwards? It just seemed to freeze at 287. A creak in the hull signaled that its plates were beginning to slip and that rivets would soon be sheared. A glance at the overhead showed drops of water being slowly forced in from around rivet heads. More creaks. Well, this was it! Then, "She's coming up." Sure enough! The pointer indicated 283 feet and was moving back slowly, very slowly. It dropped to 275 and seemed to gather speed as it read 270, 260 and then 250. Well, it looked as though we might make it! 225 and coming up fast!

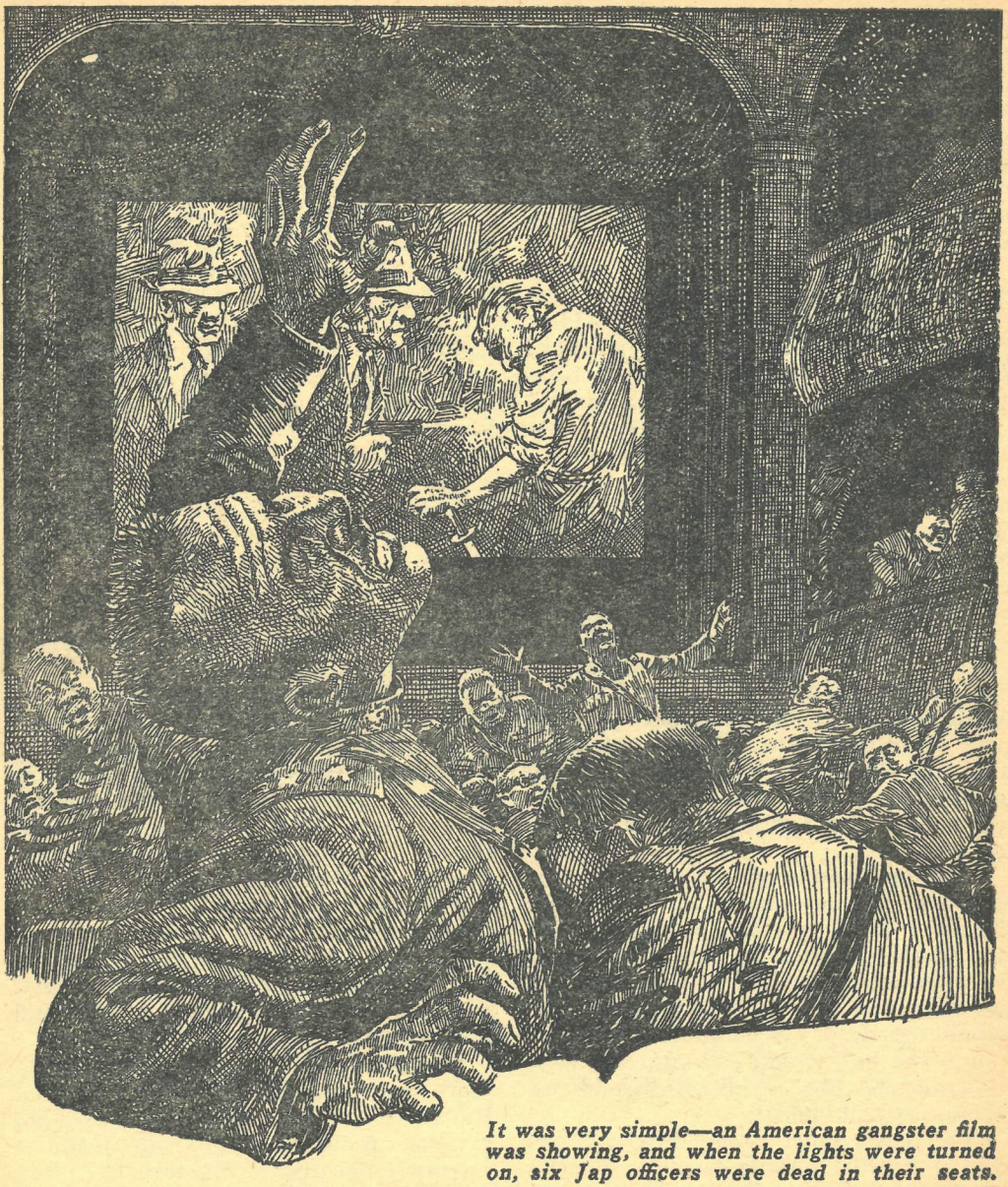
I took a deep breath and realized I hadn't taken one for quite a while. I heard other deep breaths too, and someone said, "Thought for a while there'd be no more liberty parties." The tension was broken. 200 and then 150. Why, 150 was shallow water and we wondered why we had ever thought it deep. 100 and then 50. That was practically on the surface! And very shortly we did break the surface, and many smiles broke through too, as we filed through the main hatch to go on deck. Gee, the air seemed clear and bright today! Swell bunch of fellows too!

Our "post-mortem" revealed that the chief machinist's mate had failed to give the captain the weights of several heavy spare engine parts he had taken aboard at the Navy Yard. The result was that we started our crash dive with several thousand pounds of negative buoyancy instead of the five hundred that the captain had calculated. This was more than our motors could lift, and the result was that we dropped 287 feet below the surface before we could unload enough water to stop our downward motion and start upwards again.

This depth record held for over twenty years and was finally broken by an Italian submarine especially built for extreme pressures. This sub made a successful test dive of 325 feet.

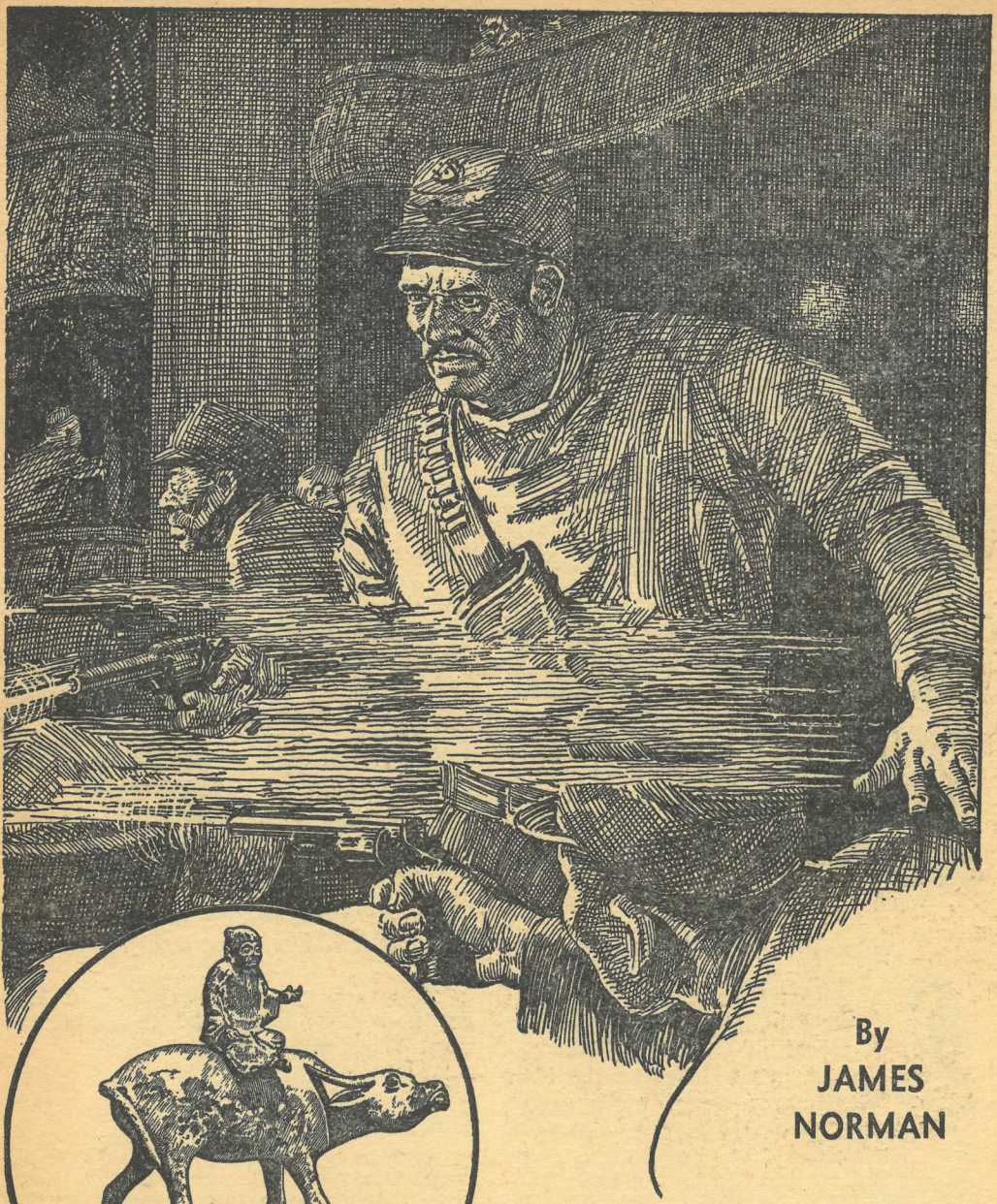
An odd thing about *our* record dive was that everyone aboard was acutely conscious of the strains and stresses our hull endured. We each described in a similar way the stresses we felt in the hull. These seemed to be a combination of the forward driving thrust and the inward stresses of tremendous water pressures.

Anyway we lived to tell the tale and after a trip back to drydock for a hull inspection—where several plates were re-riveted—we proceeded with our "practice cruise."



It was very simple—an American gangster film was showing, and when the lights were turned on, six Jap officers were dead in their seats.

HE WHO RIDES THE TIGER



By
JAMES
NORMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY
L. STERNE STEVENS

THE STORY THUS FAR:

DAVID ARMOUR, a noted Orientalist, wakes to find himself lying, weak and ill, on a *k'ang* in Feng Wang Mission in Northern China—in the care of DR. LARSON, Swedish missionary, and GIMIENDO HERNANDEZ QUINTO, a huge inscrutable Mexican. They tell Armour he was brought to the mission two months before by Chinese partisan troops who had found him wandering aimlessly nearby.

Armour is unable to remember any event since a certain luncheon at the Wagon-Lits Hotel in

Peiping back in 1940. He has lost not only six years of his life but all knowledge of the whereabouts of his wife, ADRIAN—and of the four fabulously precious T'ang Bronzes, which he had hidden before the Japanese conquest. Meanwhile, the war has been fought and won. But where has he spent the intervening years? Armour is haunted by the fear that he may have collaborated with the Nips.

In Shanghai, Adrian, forced to leave China during the war years, has returned to search for David. She has almost given up hope when MR. WU, a Chinese journalist, calls on her at the *News,* where she has taken a job. The old man tells her of a guerrilla leader called CHIAO, who harassed the Japs during the Occupation. Chiao, Wu says, was actually Armour. BYRNES, editor of the *News,* promises to help Adrian track down Wu's story.

At the mission, Quinto tells Armour that Adrian is in Shanghai, and urges him to remain in China to search for the lost Bronzes. He believes they can be used to smooth the bargaining between the Northern Government and the Nationalists. Armour, now strong enough to travel, leaves for Shanghai. While his train is stalled at Chinkiang, he is startled by the face of a Cantonese, spying on him through the window. The man wears a western-style golf cap. The train moves on. At Soochow, MONSIEUR CHEN, a plump, French-speaking Chinese, boards the train to share Armour's compartment. Chen says he is an exporter and offers the American a commission as his agent in New York. He warns Armour that due to the confused political situation, Shanghai may be dangerous for him—and as the train crawls into the Shanghai station, insists that he borrow one of his "secretaries" for protection. Mr. Armour will recognize him, he says, by the fact that he wears a golf cap . . .

PART II

ARMOUR felt as though he were in a strange and unreal world as he approached the desk in the lobby of the New Astor. The former sure-of-itself, gaudy, blatant, yet easy-going ways of Shanghai had vanished. The atmosphere now seemed hollow and drugged, a little frantic, a great deal uncertain. The old faces were still here, and the old ways, but a current of anxiety threaded through the lobby of this hotel which had once been efficiently American, then colorfully French and was now a mixture of Chinese-French.

There seemed to be more blue-gowned, shaven-headed Chinese merchants in the lobby opening their bundles, displaying their wares to attract guests, than ever before. Deeply-hued silks, jades, lacquers and ivories covered the tables. But there was something missing among the people in the lobby. There were no tourists.

"Mr. Armour, I am sorry."

He turned to meet the voice, pleasant and liquid, addressing him in *kuo yu.* The man who had spoken was an elderly, gowned Chinese.

"Yes?"

"You are Mr. Armour?"

David Armour nodded.

"My unworthiness disturbs you," the old man murmured, making a gentle bow and joining his hands within his sleeves. "I am superior journalist, writer of *lun shuo* features. Request honor of interview you."

"Not now, please."

"Important to be interviewed correctly," the old man continued with polite insistence.

Armour turned to go. He was annoyed that the old man should take his time, annoyed and disappointed that Adrian had not met him at the station and because he had been unable to locate her when he had called at the consulate. He was aware that the press would want a story from him and he would have to meet them at least once, but not at this time. He had been too long way from Adrian and was too anxious to see her to let the curiosity of the press come between them at this moment.

As he walked toward the desk the old man hurried after him, touching his elbow lightly.

"You seek one-piece wife?" The Chinese now spoke in English. "Is not in hotel now. Waits you at office on Bund."

Armour stopped and turned to face him. "You sure of that? She wasn't there when I phoned."

"Most sure. Is business to know all facts. One-piece wife was in city, just come back." His eyes twinkled warmly. "Can have interview now?"

Armour smiled gratefully. "Not now. Later." He hurried back through the crowded lobby to the street. As he climbed into the waiting rickshaw at the curb, he saw the man in the golf cap and plus-fours. The latter's flat saucer-face observed him with adhesive and intent patience. *Le type très sportif*—Armour thought wryly as alarm edged his nerves. The watch-dog had followed him from the station to the consulate and now here.

CHAPTER VI

SINGSONG HOUSE

HE FOUND Adrian alone and not, as he had dreaded, in a crowded office. He found her in the cool, silent and empty corridor of the Bund building. It was almost as if she had been forewarned and were waiting. At first, she didn't rush toward him, didn't embrace him, didn't say anything; only, she did not take her tear-filled eyes off of him, and in those eyes he read something of fear, a quick exultation and something of uncertainty.

Armour was smiling. Then he felt awkward and said, "What's the matter, Adrian? Adrian!"

He had longed so much for this meeting. He had built it up in detail within his heart, inch by inch, moment by moment during the last weeks. A few weeks ago he had been a dead man brought back to life. He had patiently reassembled his days, joined them and smoothed them so that they might move toward and fit this single moment. Now he could say nothing but awkward, inappropriate things.

And now, Adrian was at his side. She was not laughing, not smiling. He kissed her and her lips were cold.

"Adrian! What is it, Ade? See, I've come back. I've found you and I've found myself."

She burst into tears and wept like a child within his arms. He tried to soothe her, yet the strangeness of her warmth so close to him, held within his arms, made this moment in the deserted corridor seem unreal.

"Dave," she cried through her tears. "Oh, Dave."

He held her closer and their words were disjointed and strange.

"I found myself on a *k'ang*," he said. "He was an odd chap, a big Mexican, called himself Quinto. There was a Swedish doctor, a missionary."

"It was another world, Dave. They repatriated some of us and I cried because I was afraid I'd never come back."

"From Chinkiang I tried—"

"Oh, Dave, why didn't you let me know you were coming?"

"My telegrams? I wired from Chinkiang and Soochow. To the consulate."

"I didn't get any."

He kissed her again and she tried to hold back her tears. He had not been quite prepared for tears and he did not understand why he had not thought of them. He had built up the image of their strange meeting in another way—at the railway station. He had wanted her to meet him with a smile on her lips, a warm embrace, and life. Her feminine retreat into emotions took him unexpectedly although he realized he had built up his expectations as a man would.

"Dave." She smiled at him through sparkling eyes. "I can't believe I'm alive. When you kissed me, I felt so terrible. You don't understand."

He pressed her arm reassuringly, leading her toward the stairway. "Let's get out of here," he said. "Let's go somewhere where we won't be reminded that this is a first meeting."

As he helped her into the battered Renault taxi which a Chinese driver had disentangled from the mass of vehicles on the Bund, he let his glance search the sidewalk and street for signs of the saucer-faced man. He felt relieved, for the man seemed to have disappeared.

"The Chinese City. Bird Street," he directed the driver in Shanghai *pai hua*.

When the cab rolled from the curb, he suddenly noticed the old man, the scholar-reporter who had stopped him for an interview at the hotel. The old one sat very stiff and ill at ease in a topless jeep parked in the waiting spaces down the middle of the Bund. He seemed deeply preoccupied in studying the austere façades of the Bund buildings and there was a suspicion of amazement upon his broad Tartar features, as though he were startled by what the coastal air could breed on the soil of China.

At the first crossing, Armour glanced through the rear window. The jeep was following and in it the old man had opened a varnished paper parasol to protect himself from the afternoon sun. A Chinese boy, probably still in his teens, drove the jeep. The feelings of constriction and anxiety which Armour had shed momentarily upon meeting Adrian now returned. He was certain that the old man followed for reasons beyond an interview. He wondered if the old man knew Monsieur Chen.

He looked at Adrian and was reassured that she hadn't noticed the jeep. He did not want her to become alarmed, to destroy the feeling in her that this was their time, a day for the two of them to find each other again.

"Where are we going?" she asked him.

"Singsong House, if it's still there," he said.

HE CAUGHT her studying his face as though she were trying to read the past from the new lines and changes time had graven upon his features. "You've grown thin, Dave," she said. "Terribly thin."

"You've changed a little, too." He smiled, his eyes bewildered by her freshness. It had been a long time, so long he had almost forgotten how cool and lovely and sure of herself Adrian could look. She was wearing a bright, lemon-yellow, long-sleeved jacket that seemed to add depth to her face. Her brown hair, full of the glint of Bund sunlight, blew about her cheeks, pressed there by the clear breeze from the Wampoo. Her lips gave him the impression of being both moist and dry at the same time. But he saw something in her eyes that had not been there before, a depth of uneasiness, of doubt and uncertainty.

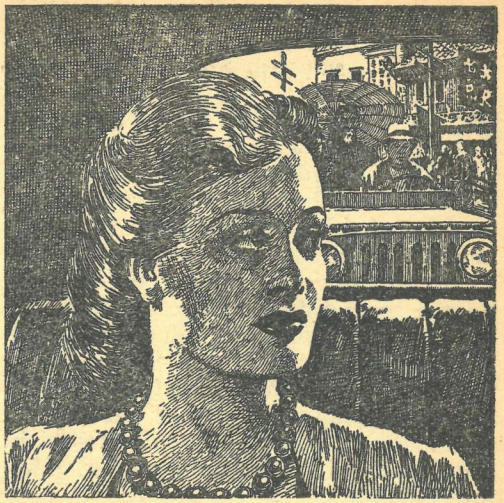
"You still look lovely," he nodded.

"Why did you leave, Dave?" She asked it slowly, staring at him fully. "What happened?"

He squeezed her hand within his. "I'll tell you later, when we've stopped. First, I want to hear about you. What did you do, Ade? What did you think? What happened to you during the last six years?"

The taxi raced toward the Quai de France, then up Rue Colbert in the old French Concession. The driver was of the school of Kiangsu chauffeurs who firmly believed the accelerator should be pushed to the floor permanently and firmly, all driving thereafter consisting of a dexterous use of the horn and a trust that at death the Chinese superior soul ascends to higher regions, there to live as happy lucid matter or *sheng-ming*.

Armour stared at the chauffeur's thin neck and shaven head while Adrian explained what had happened. She spoke as though she were reciting something that had receded from her memory and she had trouble setting it in sequence. Her voice was subdued and careful and he grew conscious of the fact that she was not telling him everything. She said nothing of the hurt she had felt when he vanished in Peiping six years ago. She scarcely mentioned the agony and terror there must have been during the internment by the Japanese.



Glancing through the rear window . . .

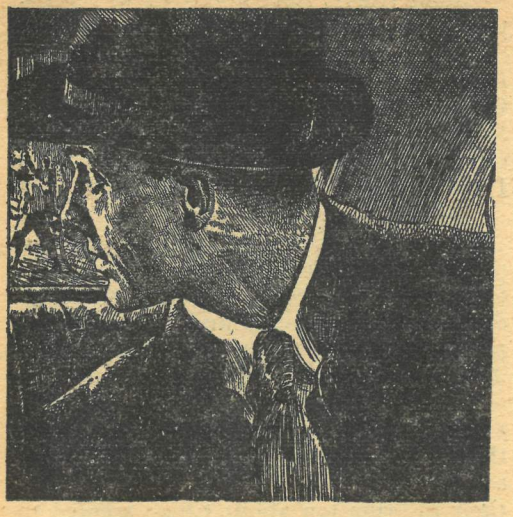
"I knew you weren't dead, Dave," she said, tears filling her eyes again. "And because I knew it, when I came back I antagonized everyone. I wanted them to help me find you. I drove people mad, the newspapers, the consulate, the Chinese officials."

The taxi slowed as it approached the North Gate separating the Chinese City from the foreign concessions. Armour fumbled in his pocket for the temporary identity paper he had received from the consulate. Then he glanced around, oddly lost, searching for the guards and the strung barbed wire which had once divided the concessions from China. He looked at Adrian questioningly. "Where are the guards?"

"The guards?" All at once, she understood. "Oh, no more, Dave. There's no more extraterritoriality now. The city is all Chinese."

He flashed her an embarrassed smile. "I didn't know. No one told me."

A new look came into her eyes. "You



. . . he saw the jeep following them.

were hurt then, Dave. It's true what they told me about you losing your—"

"My memory?"

She nodded.

"There's something to it," he said.

He turned to look back as they drove through the intersection leading into the old City. He caught a glimpse of the jeep and the old man's parasol some distance behind them, then the jeep vanished as their taxi edged into the narrow twisting roadways of the Chinese City. The noisy, blue-toned, teeming life of Shanghai swelled about them, engulfing them with its eddying sounds and odors. They rode down streets lined with tiny, open-front shops; streets ringing with the shrill pitched voices of vendors . . . Bird Street, narrow and crowded, shops devoted to the sale of pets, birds from every province of China and the isles of the Pacific. At the far end of the street the cab stopped before a tea house.

"Remember it?" Armour smiled.

"Singsong House." Adrian's voice was warm. "I remember when you first brought me here; my first day in China with you. Oh, Dave, that was so long ago."

A RUSH of high pitched sounds enveloped them as they entered. Here, at the rattan tables and in the small alcoves Chinese bird fanciers brought their newly purchased birds, and listened to them while indulging in weak, bitter tea. The countless birds raised a cacophony of sound, vying to outdo the monotonous tinkling melody being played by a singsong girl on her four-stringed moon guitar. The *Chao-tai,* a round obsequious man, advanced to meet them, bowing toward Adrian, clasping his hands for David.

"*Ya tso,* private alcove?" he suggested discreetly.

Armour nodded in agreement. At least this had not changed, he thought. The Shanghai businessmen were still conscious of the foreigner's love of privacy in public places. He led them up a stairway to a small room overlooking a courtyard garden planted with lacy Imperial bamboos. Armour surveyed the furnishing with an air of satisfaction. A polished, red lacquer table stood near the windows. It was flanked by two low reed chairs. On a teakwood stand, against one wall, stood a small plum flower tree in a blue-glazed bowl. A scroll of Chinese verse hung on the opposite wall was the only other decoration.

Looking at the menu, he was startled at the inflationary prices. He was beginning to understand why Quinto had forced what then seemed to be a vast sum upon him when he left Feng Yang Mission. It seemed small now. "Spun-silk potatoes, chicken velvet, tea," he said.

When the *Chao-tai* withdrew, shutting the paper panel door and dimming the sharp confusion of birds' voices that came from below, it was as if he had thrown the two of them embarrassingly together. Adrian stood near the miniature tree staring at him, seeming to study him. He felt ill at ease and awkward; the same way he had felt when he had first met her in New York. He remembered how it had been then: the uncanny and unassuageable certainty that she was meant for him, and he for her. Each was meant for the other, because each was so like the other. She had his own inner, hard core of stubbornness, a stubbornness which in the years they lived together had run side by side, but which, if they were ever to come to cross purposes, would bring chaos and bitterness upon them.

"Come, sit down, darling," he said.

She advanced toward him, her eyes still thoughtfully upon him. "You've changed so, Dave," she said again. "I can see it in

you. I don't know exactly what it is, but it wasn't there before."

"What?" he asked, suddenly interested, wondering if the intuition of a woman might, through its devious insight, tell him more than Doctor Larson, Quinto and his own broken memory could tell him.

She kissed him and sat down. "I don't know what it is, Dave," she said quietly. "It's as if I get a glimpse of something in you; not always, just at certain moments. It's a kind of impassivity that wasn't there before, as if you'd learned to withdraw into a mood of complete peace, a way of reflection. I saw it for a second when you sat in the taxi, how you folded your hands together for a moment, quiet and impassive. It made me think of the bronze gods in the temples, sitting there on their gilded lotus leaves, looking inward and fatalistic."

"*Ch'an-ting*—silent sitting, like the monks?" He laughed. "It's nonsense, Ade. I don't feel impassive. Anything but that."

"Just before we came in here, you bowed to the little shrine on the street next door. Why did you do that, Dave?"

"I what—" He looked at her suddenly.

"You kowtowed."

He shook his head doubtfully. He had no recollection of even having noticed the shrine. He tried to find a place for it in his past, but without success. It was another of those rootless, exasperating things revolving on the rim of his memory, finding no place to fit itself—the saucer-faced familiarity of Monsieur Chen's *sportif* watch-dog, the jade tiger and the lotus blossom that had disturbed his dreams, and the porcelain rabbit-amulet in his pocket.

THE restaurant's headman returned, accompanied by a girl waitress who set a plate of fresh sunflower seeds, rice bowls, the chicken-velvet in its yellow custard-like sauce, the silk potatoes and tea, upon the table. The manager appeared pleased that the offering of sunflower seeds was accepted without a look of inquiry. When the man and girl left, Adrian took her tea bowl, cupping its warmth in her hands.

"David, there's something I've got to know."

He looked at her quickly. "What, Ade?"

"Some stories have appeared in the papers here about you," she said. "Stories that you had been a guerrilla fighter called Chiao. We looked it up. There was a Chiao, a foreigner, a partisan fighter in Shantung who disappeared when the war ended—" She looked at him directly. "But I don't believe any of it, David."

"Why?"

It startled him that among all the people in Shanghai, she should be the first to suspect the story. He had expected doubt at the consulate and had been surprised when they seemed to accept the tale. The consular officials had treated him with caution, a kind of sensitive suspicion and a certain casual sympathy, as though they were accustomed to having lost personnel pass through their hands. Yet, their information about Chiao seemed to fit the story he gave them. He knew, of course, that he was not finished with them.

Adrian said, "Why don't I believe it? Because the man who broke the story about you came to see me later. He practically said you had amnesia."

"Who was he?"

"A Mr. Wu."

"Where'd he get the story?"

"He said he had been in the Interior, had seen you."

Armour shook his head. The name made no impression on him. "What did he look like?"

"Very old, quite Mandarin. You know, old-style."

"I can't place him."

"The story isn't true then?"

"No. It's fiction, Ade. A fabric designed so I'd have some sort of past that wouldn't alarm the officials here."

"But what happened, Dave?"

He shrugged helplessly. "Eat," he murmured, pointing to the table. He took some sunflower seeds and chewed them, spreading the flavor with sips of the gingered tea. "Believe me, Ade," he said at last, "I can't really tell you what happened after we were separated in Peiping. The last thing I recall was lunch with you and Fitching at the *Wagon-Lits*. I don't even recall having gone to the temples with him that afternoon. I was told about that—"

Looking at her, then glancing toward the bamboos in the garden below, he recounted the rest. There was something in

him that refused to let him hold it back. He told her how he had been found by peasant soldiers, how he had been delirious and sick, how they had cared for him at the Swedish Mission at Feng Yang. He told her of Quinto's suspicions and demands.

"This Quinto was from the North," he explained. "It was Quinto who made up the Chiao past for me, and seems to have made it stick, God only knows how. Did it so I could stay in China without being charged with having collaborated with the Japanese. He wants the T'ang Bronzes I told you about, and he thinks I can help him."

"You intend to stay here?" Adrian's voice had a note of hurt and distance in it.

"Yes, for a while, at least."

"Oh, Dave, there's no point in it."

HE REACHED across the table and held her hand again. "It's not the T'angs, Ade," he said quietly. "It's the six years. I want them back. I won't rest without them. How do I know what I was doing in China? Perhaps I did collaborate with the Japanese. Without knowing for sure, it's going to be damn difficult to be at rest with myself or face you. Understand, Ade?"

"We should go home."

"I can't."

"You need a doctor to help. A psychiatrist. You can't do it alone, here." Her hand tightened within his, pleadingly.

He shook his head. "It's here. The answer is here."

She withdrew her hand from his. For a long moment she stared at him with that same vague and helpless, half-unconscious fear which all people reserve for those who are mentally ill. Then, as though trying to read his mind, she said, "It's the Bronzes you really want, Dave. You've thought about them so much you're fascinated by them. Can't you see it? Can't you understand what holds you here? You're an archeologist; you just can't bear to think that something like a T'ang Bronze exists and is hidden. You want to dig it up. A doctor can help you at home, but he won't help you find the Bronzes. He'll only help you find yourself."

His attention rested on her slim hands, fingers knotted stubbornly and full of character, revealing the temper and feeling within her. Inwardly, he admitted that the T'ang Bronzes held a certain fascination for him, a kind of cumulative challenge which years of his work forced him to accept subconsciously and automatically. The Bronzes of the T'ang Period, collected by China's most celebrated archeologist and art patron, the Manchu emperor Ch'ien Lung, held a particular appeal for him; they were considered the finest Bronzes in China, yet few men had ever been permitted to see them.

He smiled at Adrian, trying to reassure her. "I'd like to stay to satisfy myself," he said. "It may only take a short time. Try to understand."

She rose from her chair and went to the window, then paced back to the chair and to the window again. "You've got to come home now," she said in a strained, taut tone. "I'm afraid, Dave. Something is liable to happen. China is not like it used to be. There is chaos now. You might be in danger—and Dave, you're not made for that. You're a scholar, a scientist . . . Oh, Dave, you don't know what I've been through. I can't stand China any more. I can't stay here and I don't want you to. I want to go home with you. I want to forget everything, to completely forget these last years and to start over."

"Is that how you feel about it?"

"That's how I feel about it. I can't feel any other way."

Her tone and perhaps the position her body took as she said it sent a new fear crawling through him—the fear of losing her. Her words had not said it flatly, but the inflection of her voice had, making it plain to him that it would be over between them if he held to his own stubborn wish to remain in China pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp strands of his lost years.

He rose and went to her quickly, taking her in his arms. The warmth of her closeness mixed with the strange, tiny rigid hardness of her body, an inner resistance that was there because of her stubbornness which he loved so well, was like a current reaching across his nerves and senses, a long-lasting, tingling electric shock that roused an aching hollow of wanting in him. He kissed her lips and, still holding her, said, "Don't worry, Ade. I'll try to think of it your way."

The kiss she returned was filled with sudden warmth, with trembling insistence and a supplicating savageness. When it had ended and he brushed the webs of emotion from his mind—he wondered why he had lied to her.

CHAPTER VII

OPIUM AND IMPERIALISM

LEAVING Singsong House, they had to walk the length of Bird Street before Armour located another taxi. Just as he helped Adrian into it, he felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned abruptly, his startled eyes framing the thin, gentle figure of the old Chinese who had spoken to him at the New Astor and had followed them in the jeep.

The old man now carried a reed bird cage. In it was a scraggly gray Wutai sparrow which appeared utterly depressed by the world.

"Excuse," the old man said. "I trouble you this instant."

"You—" Armour showed his annoyance.

"Person of importance wish to see you tonight," the Chinese whispered.

"Who? You?"

The old man looked embarrassed; a blush almost colored his bronzed, parchment-like cheeks because he had been mistaken for importance. He whispered again, "Mutual friend at Cathay Bar, nineteenth hour. Most important for your safety."

He bowed and backed away, moving off into the crowd. Armour watched him carefully maneuver his bird cage across the busy stream of traffic. The old man's coming and going was so incongruous, so completely bewildering, it left him with the feeling that their meeting had never occurred, or had merely been a stray thought crossing his mind.

"That's Mr. Wu," he heard Adrian say.

"Wu?" Then he remembered.

"What did he want, Dave?"

He shrugged as he got into the taxi beside her. "Wants to interview me later," he muttered. After he said it, he realized he had lied involuntarily and it troubled him.

"Oh—" Adrian stared at him for an instant. Both the way she accepted his remark and the forced manner in which she had looked at him, made him realize that she, too, was aware that he had lied. She changed the subject, saying, "Are those the only clothes you have, Dave?"

"Excuse," the old man said. "I trouble you this instant."

"Afraid so."

"You look like a minister. They look horrible."

For the remainder of the ride back to the hotel she spoke only of the shops in Shanghai and of the fabulous money-exchange where crisp twenty-dollar American greenbacks were worth more than folded ones and where one ten-dollar bill was worth more than ten singles.

THE New Astor was in the midst of high tea when they arrived. American officers, a few businessmen and foreign officials rubbed shoulders politely with top-class Chinese who, since the war's end and abandonment of extraterritoriality,

had taken up the custom of British afternoon tea with a vengeance, as though making up for the years they had not been invited. The tables in the lobby had filled and there was a busy murmur of voices mingling and clashing in many languages. Armour was impressed by the fact that there were fewer British and American women than before. They had been replaced by the chilled looking Russian women, by talkative French girls and by the accented refugees from Central Europe.

The hotel manager, an olive-skinned Italian wearing pin-striped trousers and a morning coat, hurried toward them. He was a volatile man who had, in his nonprofessional life, been in rapid succession a monarchist, a fascist, a collaborator and now a neo-republican.

"Ah, Miss Armour," he said to Adrian, then glancing curiously at David Armour. "Your husband?"

"Yes, he arrived this noon."

"Ah, enchanting." The manager made a bow that had not made up its mind whether it was Oriental or European. "You have had colorful experiences, Mr. Armour?" Then, without waiting for a response he said to Adrian, "Someone has asked for your husband, a Monsieur Chen. He left no message. And Mr. Byrnes is waiting."

Adrian smiled. "Thank you, Dominic. Will you send a tailor to the room?" She turned to David. "Do you want to meet Mr. Byrnes? He runs the paper."

There was no time for him to make a decision or express his desires. Mr. Byrnes, the stolid, unimaginative editor of the *News,* came toward them.

"This him, Adrian?" Byrnes said, and he was pumping Armour's hand before he had finished speaking. "Nice to know you, Armour. Don't want to bother you youngsters now. Came to say hello. But I want your story, when you have a moment, and before any of the others. Don't mind, do you?"

Armour realized that a smile was expected and he felt his lips draw up in conventional politeness. He knew that he neither liked nor disliked the man. Byrnes was one of those seemingly indestructible fixtures in China—the Old Hands. Before the war they had inhabited the port cities and were as set and unpolished in their ways as a dollar watch. In their moribund society, life was sluggish and ophidian, moving always with a touch of the burlesque in it. They rarely mixed with the "natives" and refused to try to speak Chinese, "because it makes you queer." It was important to be seen only with the right people, to drink only in the right places. They absorbed life in teaspoon doses from the *North China Daily News* and, above all, they scrupulously minded the most important law of their society—don't marry a Eurasian girl.

"Do we stand here or go up?" Adrian asked.

"Go up," Armour said. "Coming, Byrnes?"

As they crossed toward the elevator he suddenly noticed a Chinese who stood near the desk watching them. The man's clothes startled him for an instant. The Chinese was dressed in a tan, wool-knit sweater, a pair of too-tight Japanese cavalry breeches, the bottoms stuffed into plaid golf sox. His shoes were leather, two-toned golf shoes. The idea was idiotic, but it obsessed him that the sport shoes, the sox and sweater were meant to complement the plus-fours and the golf cap worn by the saucer-faced Cantonese who had followed him earlier.

But this man was not the Cantonese. He was taller and thinner. He continued to look their way and yet not really look, for he stared with the unpupiled blankness of a Roman statue.

He took Adrian's arm, and holding it tighter than he needed to, he spoke in a quiet, pressing voice shaded from Byrnes. "Ade—the Chinese near the desk. The one with the golf shoes and the sweater. Find out if the hotel manager knows him. Please."

He read the startled look she gave him and felt the stiffening of her body as he held her arm. She hesitated, lips tightening stubbornly for an instant before they relented. Then she nodded, excusing herself.

"Don't wait," she said. "I'll be up quickly."

THE Number One Boy for Adrian's floor unlocked the door of the suite. The first view of its interior depressed Armour: it was not the staid, overdone Victorian

furnishings which upset him as much as the feeling of Adrian that he got from the rooms. The very atmosphere spoke of her; told of her long search, the heartbreak vigil, that inarticulate loneliness counting out the endless hours in their stillness. He went to the windows and threw back the curtains as though the motion and the flooding in of afternoon light might dispel the invisible traces of loneliness.

"Well, Armour, what about your story?" Byrnes asked.

"Not yet."

"You and your wife going to stay in Shanghai?"

"I don't know. Why?"

Byrnes sat down. "She's been pretty good at the paper," he said. "Like to keep her. We could probably swing you a position in Shanghai."

Armour smiled tightly. Twice in one day he had been offered employment; to get him out of China and to keep him here. He sat upon the edge of a chair facing the editor and asked, "Ever heard of a chap named Chen Li Fu?"

"Chen? It's like Jones. Telephone book is full of them."

"But with a French accent. A Europeanized Chen. A Monsieur Chen."

The phlegmatic expression on Byrnes' face broke with interested surprise. "Him!" he said. "Of course, Chen. Lord, what do you want with him?"

"Met him on the train coming down. Who is he?"

Byrnes coughed, clearing his throat in the manner retired Colonels and Colonials use to presage an old and retold story at their favorite bar. "A by-product of imperialism," he said. "But of the peculiar kind that made Shanghai or Hong Kong or Macao—that's your Chen."

"A commerce man?"

"Everything, and some of it not so nice," Byrnes explained. "Before the war he was associated with old Tu Yu Sen's gang. You've heard of Old Tu. Controlled the opium trade and used the French Concession for headquarters. In the middle Thirties this Chen became a police official in the Concession; naturally the opium-suppression section of the police. He blossomed out in fine silks, expensive limousines, knew all the municipal councilors by their first names."

"What happened during the war?"

"Don't know for certain," Byrnes said. "It was rumored that when the Japs came he quietly tied up with the Puppet 'thought police' in Soochow, then Nanking and later in Peiping. I wouldn't know definitely. About that time the Nips closed in on us. I went back to the States for a spell."

Armour frowned thoughtfully. "He's at liberty now. *Did* he collaborate?"

Byrnes shot him an amazed look and shrugged indifferently. "Don't be naïve," he chuckled. "If he did, who among the Chinese around here would say it in public? He's just keeping up with the Joneses. It's the same old political disease that's always been around. These Chinese would rather make deals than eat. Brings odd people together, really. The Government used Jap soldiers to fight local guerrillas; collaborators with the Japs have now become city officials. I know one who served in Kiangsu as head of the Jap puppet forces fighting the Government troops. When the war ended he just sat and waited. Two months later he received a telegram from the Government, commissioning him a Brig General in the Nationalist Army. Burning a candle successfully at both ends here is an art. But don't let it worry you too much; everything's always upset in China. Always been, always will be."

"He's Chinese. How did he tie up with the French Concession police?" Armour asked.

"Born Chinese; pure-blooded Chinese, nothing Eurasian about him. But he's a French citizen. Educated in Paris, I heard. A Sorbonne man."

"What is he in now?"

Byrnes pursed his lips as though to whistle, but no sound followed. Armour understood its meaning of indefiniteness. He remembered M. Chen's profuse statements on the train. *"I am a marked man, you understand, marked. The assassination is regular . . ."* With the background Byrnes had painted in, he could well understand how a "thought police" agent for the Japanese could become a man marked for assassination.

"You're pretty curious about him, eh?" Byrnes observed with uncertain shrewdness.

The door opened and Adrian came in.

She was followed by a self-effacing Chinese dressed in a plain European serge suit. The man trailed a long strand of string in his hand. Adrian's lips parted as though to say something to David, then seeing Byrnes, she hesitated. Instead, she motioned to the Chinese.

"The tailor, Dave."

WHILE he stood, letting the tailor measure him with deft hands, he had the impression that Adrian was trying to put off being really alone with him. She was surrounding him with people and he found himself feeling almost relieved that she was doing it. He watched the Chinese at work. Like all his ingenious brothers, the man had his own methods: instead of employing a tape with the conventional markings, he measured with the string, knotting it at various points until it finally resembled a much-beaded prayer string. He wrote nothing, yet somehow, he had a mysterious system of remembering the cryptic meaning of each knot. When he had finished he asked only one question, *"K'uo-men he-shih?* Foreign-style button holes?"

"Yes, no frogs," Armour replied, remembering that the Chinese even liked to put "frogs" or elaborate button loops on garments. "How long?"

The Chinese studied the knots on his string. "Two day chop-chop," he replied in pidgin, bowing and backing from the room.

Byrnes got up to go. "Like to have lunch with you tomorrow," he suggested.

Armour agreed tentatively. When the door had shut behind the newsman he turned to Adrian. There was a strained, disquieting silence. It was as if each were suddenly aware that they were alone together in her room, that no one could reach in and disturb them. Adrian first broke the uneasy spell.

"Why did you want me to find out who that man was downstairs?" she asked.

He tried to make his reply casual. "He's either following me, or being my bodyguard," he said. "Another Chinese who is wearing the other half of that golf outfit stuck pretty close to me on the train last night. This morning he became my secretary, *un type très sportif.* Did the manager know this one?"

Armour watched the Chinese tailor at work—like all his ingenious brothers, the man had his own methods.

She was staring at him as if he were crazy. He realized now that his words must have sounded idiotic, totally mad. "It's all right, Ade," he added quickly. "It may sound odd, but I can explain it. Did the manager know him?"

"No. One of the hotel boys did. He didn't know his name, just that he works for someone named Chen, a businessman."

"Chen—"

"Dave, does it mean something?"

He saw that she had become interested, but he got the feeling that she was resisting her interest. It showed in the tightness of her lips and the worry in her eyes. He sat down and waved his arms vaguely as he tried to take people and events out of confusion and set them in their proper order. Idiotic as it seemed, he was certain that there were two men wearing parts of the same golf outfit and that they were associated in watching him. They had probably plundered the sport clothes from some European or American home when the Japanese had interned Shanghai Americans; they had undoubtedly argued

over the division of spoils and, in characteristic Chinese manner, had compromised.

It was also clear that Monsieur Chen was keeping an eye on him.

The realization began to disturb him. It was as if he were fighting the veil of his memory, tearing at clouds that seemed to hide vague and oscillating objects that never appeared fully. When he shut his eyes he could see the pattern and images of Quinto at Feng Yang Mission, and the train, and M. Chen suggesting he must leave China quickly. These seemed to burn upon the inner lid while at the edges there were the shadows of T'ang Bronzes which M. Chen might possibly be interested in, but had shown no knowledge of.

He wondered if he had misread the meaning of Chen's two oddly clothed watchdogs. He might interpret their owlish presence as one of those subtle and curiously Chinese, never completely spoken, forms of warning or threat. Or they might have something to do with that inexplicable, pliable force in China called "face" or "form."

China lived and died by set forms and rituals which even modern ways had failed to erase. If a man failed in business, it was form for him not to show it. If he failed in his plan to ruin another man and was injured himself in attempting it, he must accept fate and apologize to the adversary for the inconvenience he had caused.

Then the adversary apologized, too, so that the first man did not lose too much "face." When brother loaned money to brother, the rich one would say that he had borrowed it from a third party so that the borrowing-brother's "face"—his standing in society—fell no lower than his own. The entire family shared in shame.

Adrian's voice penetrated his thoughts. "Dave, you've got that look again. Like Buddha."

"I'm sorry, Ade." He pulled himself together, smiling.

"It frightens me, Dave."

"Don't let it."

"What were you thinking about?"

He went to her chair and sat on its arm, his fingers touching her hair and forehead gently.

"You," he said.

CHAPTER VIII

THE JADE TIGER

THE light within the unfamiliar room was dimmed and there was just enough for him to make out shapes and images as he turned his head toward the low wooden chair facing him. When his gaze came to the chair he grew rigid with half terror. His agued stare was held there, fascinated and horrified by the monstrous shape of the dark, jade tiger. Now, the beast was scarcely aware of him. Its tail lashed restlessly and its darting paw played with the lotus blossom that floated, spinning gently, disembodied from stem and leaf, floating upon the dusk air. For a fleeting moment he saw the lotus turn into that artful, smiling woman's face, then the blurred spinning once again.

At last, he gained enough control of his body to throw himself from the bed, arms flailing the dark air, voice shouting at the tiger. Abruptly, the dusk turned into blackness.

He found himself sitting upon the edge of a bed, half awake, his body enveloped in a cold clammy sweat. The room was dark and for a minute he was at a loss as to where he was. He shook his head, trying to sweep away the web of the dream that had terrified him. He remembered that he had dreamt not only of the dark jade tiger, but also of Quinto who had been eating some unnamed Chinese food with jade chopsticks as long as bamboo poles.

"Adrian—"

He called her name again. Still no answer. The hotel suite seemed deserted. Rising, he groped his way into the sitting room which was bathed in a soft crimson light, the glow from neon signs on the opposite bank of Soochow Creek. He stared for a second at the strange, enigmatic writing against the sky, then switched the room lights on and searched for a clock. He found a note on the desk, pinned down at one corner by a Chinese book.

Darling—you're napping too beautifully to disturb. I've gone to Marcuson's to book air passage home for us. Be back at seven-thirty or so—Ade.

The pleasant warmth and intimacy of those moments with her just before he had dozed off, came back. He remembered that she had spoken of home, of getting Marcuson, the air-travel agent, to arrange it. Then there had been that intense, possessive nearness.

He looked at the book which had weighed down the note, wondering if she had been studying Chinese. Then the name of the book surprised him—the *Hsi Ch'ing ku Chien* of Emperor Ch'ien Lung. It was the tenth volume of the Manchu emperor's elaborate, forty-two volume catalogue of imperial treasures. He frowned thoughtfully as he set it down.

Wandering about again, he finally found a clock in the bedroom. It said six-thirty. The clock reminded him of Mr. Wu's message that someone of importance was to meet him at the Cathay at seven. He went to the bath where he discovered that Adrian had laid out newly-purchased toilet articles and a shaving kit. He cleaned himself, then taking the Ch'ien Lung book with him, went down to the lobby where he left word at the desk for Adrian to meet him at the Cathay.

The instant he walked out upon the street he realized that he was not cut out for the business of hide-and-seek which had become part of his life. He had been neither careful nor alert. The Cantonese with the saucer-face and golf cap waited in the half shadows beside the doorway.

He had already crossed the street when he realized that it was the better part of caution that Chen's gangster should not know where he was going or whom he met. He hesitated a moment, glancing back. The Cantonese remained on the far side of the street, watching him, making no move to cross. This man and his companion, maintaining their curiously patient, ever-adhesive scrutiny of his movements, made him think of the Dogs of Fu—those frightening lamaistic lions, more canine than feline, which guard in pairs the entrances of Chinese houses and temples.

HE SEARCHED the length of the street for a cab or rickshaw. At this hour of dusk the street was almost deserted. He considered returning to the hotel but put the thought aside as cowardice. Instead, he set off quickly toward the two-spanned, iron Garden Bridge. The Cantonese was following him now.

A truck careened past him, headlights pinning him against the embankment.

Near the bridge, a truck careened past him, headlights pinning him against the riverside embankment with its harsh incandescent glare. A battered Shanghai tram-car came toward the bridge and he leaped aboard it. The tram carried him across the bridge, skirted the Public Garden and the old Masonic Club, then rumbled along the Bund. Once, while standing on the front platform beside the white-jacketed Chinese motorman, he caught a glimpse of the golf cap bobbing back and forth within the crowded interior of the car.

At the Nanking Road corner he left the tram and hurried toward the Road entrance of the plush, conservative Palace Hotel. He halted at the steps and looked back. The Cantonese had reached the sidewalk and had stopped also. Armour waited indecisively. From where he stood he could see the river, dark and somnolent, a ruddy fog creeping across it toward the city. On his left, up Nanking Road the glare of the modern city blazed in the night. Finally, he turned and stepped into the Palace entranceway. He waited a moment, then looked up the street again toward the Bund. The Cantonese had vanished. He smiled to himself, certain that

the watchdog had gone toward the Palace's Bund entrance, probably expecting to intercept him there or in the hotel lobby.

He turned away from the Palace, running across the street to the lofty, black-spired Sassoon House, Shanghai's tallest building. He made for the entrance over which hung a large modernistic sign—*CATHAY HOTEL*. A naive feeling of satisfaction filled him as he went through the Cathay's arcades, a satisfaction the amateur experiences upon successfully completing a clever stratagem.

As he looked for the bar, he was impressed by the fact that the Cathay had scarcely changed since before the war. Its glittering, shop-lined arcade was alive with light and movement. Its shops were stocked with Peking rugs, jewel jades and silks and curios. Its towering twenty stories remained a curious landmark in China, a monumental record of a fabulous dynasty that was almost as old as Commerce itself. It had been built by Sassoon, a bemonocled, Asiatic-featured British financial wizard whose family pedigree was rooted in ancient Mesopotamia, had flowered for a while in Spain's Twelfth Century Toledo, appeared again in Bagdad and finally became an integral part of the British Raj in Bombay, then flourished on opium trade in China. It was a monument to the kind of gods the Old China Hands and the "Old Lady of the Bund"—The *North China Daily News*—kowtowed to.

A white-uniformed Chinese opened the bar door for him. Standing just within the door, he let his eyes swerve from bar to tables, pausing on people here and there, searching for some familiarity. He wondered if Mr. Wu had misled him

He patiently watched newcomers enter the bar: Americans, Portuguese, French, Europeanized Chinese, British and Dutch. The Americans and British seemed tired and fretful; the Europeans all smiled with a faint touch of melancholy, as though they had absorbed or been brushed by a virus of supine depression. He watched a Chinese girl, a girl sheathed in brocaded silk, enter the yellow triangle of light at the doorway. A little Polish refugee who wore a high stiff collar, paused near the door to talk with a Frenchwoman. Their voices were subdued, desperate.

Listening, Armour was able to feel and absorb the moods of these people, but without sympathy. For some, Shanghai and the Cathay left them with an air of disappointment and frustration; for others, it was a world of rootless repose. A fear and a despair ran through them. They had come across the world, many of them refugees, driven here to the edge of oblivion, banished even here to a rootless city on the fringe of a continent that tossed restlessly in its own gigantic awakening.

A voice at a nearby table scaled upward: "It can't continue longer, do you think?" There was pathos in the tone. "What are the foreign troops doing?"

"*Quatsch*," someone replied in German, discounting the first voice. "It means nothing. It is money that counts."

ARMOUR smiled, half amused. The Cathay had become the rumor exchange for the vastness of China and all the Orient. The market value on rumors, particularly those concerning political divisions in the country and commercial opportunities in the inflammable provinces, sold at black market prices. Something large, frightening and portentous stirred under the skin of China. He thought of Adrian's plea to go home. Perhaps it was best, after all, he mused.

"Ah, here you are hiding, eh?"

A warm expressive bulk appeared at his side, an arm went about his shoulder with sudden camaraderie. He jerked away reflexively, then recognized the bronzed solid figure. Quinto.

"You—in Shanghai?" he said.

"*Ayi*, Señor."

He was slightly disturbed, yet pleased to have the Mexican in the city; and he was unable to repress an amused smile on seeing the big man's clothes. Quinto was now wearing a voluminous, sagging Palm Beach suit which had been tinted a delicate uneven pink, as though it had gone through innumerable washings fraternizing with the Soviet flag. His jade chopsticks were thrust in one pocket like a brace of pistols while on one lapel he wore a military medal, the Cambodian Order of the Million Elephants and White Parasol.

"We will sit this way." Quinto guided

him to a small chrome-edged table at the far corner of the bar. As they reached it, the old Chinese, Mr. Wu met them. "This is Señor Wu-shih," Quinto announced. "Wu is my pupil. Since before the war he studies under me."

Mr. Wu bowed and murmured a politeness in *kuo-yu*. A waiter came to the table. "A whiskey or Shanghai sherry, Señor Armour?" Quinto asked. "Only animals practice sobriety."

"A sherry," Armour said.

"I will begin with five or six Shanghai sherries," the Mexican announced.

Mr. Wu studied the liquor card and finally came to a conclusion. "I will take pleasure in six Dragon Tail whiskeys," he said, "and a thimble of weak tea."

When the drinks were brought Quinto covered them, emptying his various pockets of odd crumpled bundles of paper money which he carried like rumpled handkerchiefs—English pound notes, American and Chinese dollars, Japanese *yen*. He assembled them, calculating by color combinations rather than by denominations, and somehow, paid the correct amount.

Armour set his book upon the table and leaned back, scrutinizing the Mexican. He still found it difficult to place the man in any normal frame of reference. Quinto seemed equally at ease in the glossy and feckless Cathay Bar, or strapped down with pistols in the blazing interior of China. He apparently spoke a half dozen Chinese dialects with incredible ease, yet always with a Mexican accent. His body looked hard and solid, his mind sharp, yet he now sat down before an array of foul and violent liquor without flicking an eyelash.

"I thought it was dangerous for you to come to Shanghai?" Armour questioned him.

"You misunderstand," Quinto murmured. "You have heard of the Bubbling Well Cinema affair, yes?"

Armour shook his head. He noted the look of surprise that flashed between the Mexican and Mr. Wu. Both men stared at him disappointedly. Mr. Wu, who had ordered six whiskeys in order to place himself on the same level as Quinto, put down the tea he sipped, a tea that seemed almost too strong and heady for his frail constitution.

He said, "As serene journalist and historian will recount, Bubbling Well Incident was turning point in China war against Japan. Two year before America enters war Mr. Quinto executes famous raid on cinema in Shanghai. Is very simple because cinema shows American gangster film with all-important noises. When lights are turned on, six Japanese Majors are dead in seats. Some Japanese Generals and one Norwegian Admiral also kidnapped. At time Chinese Government already aware war is on in China, but is uncertain who makes war. Cinema event places spotlight on presence of numerous Japanese officers in China making war. For this, the Republic presents Mr. Quinto its highest honor, Order of Blue Sky and White Sun. But, of course, the Norwegian is returned."

Armour had been watching Quinto. The latter sat through the telling of the incident quietly, but with an air of gentle vanity, like an actor waiting for his press-agent to elaborate on his fine points. The Mexican smiled without embarrassment.

"It is very sad that I should have fallen into such an error," he observed. "But this Norwegian wore so many medals and the theater was so dark . . . But you understand why I do not come to Shanghai often? The city is uneasy."

"Plan a raid now?" Armour asked with faint irony.

"Vaya, hombre." Quinto beamed reminiscently. He marshaled his sherry glasses before him, then spoke in a lower tone. "Has your memory found any new doorways?"

"Nothing."

"But you have been approached. That is progress, *sabe?* And you were asked to leave China. That is even more progress."

Armour's lips tightened suddenly. He wondered how Quinto had learned of Monsieur Chen's offer. And he was more interested in hearing Quinto's interpretation of it since there had been no direct threat, only an offer of employment abroad.

"No definite request was made," he said.

The Mexican blinked his brown, imperturbable eyes. "But naturally you were threatened. His two *zopilotes* do not follow you for nothing."

Armour glanced toward the doorway,

wondering why Adrian had not come yet.

"So you know M. Chen," he asked Quinto. "Did you expect him to be on the train?"

"Of Chen, I know much and little. Of the train, I did not expect it, but it is important because Señor Chen does not ride with strangers on a train unless there is meaning in it. And he does not assign his men to watch you for nothing. I think Chen looks for the T'ang Bronzes. Nothing else about you would interest him."

"I never saw him before."

Quinto shrugged his broad, expressive shoulders. *"No me quadra,"* he sighed. "Perhaps he has a place in the six years you have forgotten. You will know him better in time, if you live. You must be careful and your wife must learn to be careful, too. You have a pistol?"

"No."

"It will be arranged."

Armour nodded reflectively and glanced absently at Mr. Wu who scrutinized his six full whiskey glasses with a certain curiosity not unmixed with temptation. Stray conversation from a nearby table drifted toward them; a Chinese officer and an American tractor salesman discussing the fine points of certain "ladies of the willow lanes" who could be found around the huge semi-circular bar at the French Club on Rue Cardinal Mercier. At another table a morose Chinese sat by himself. He was the Provincial Minister of Pacification, a tubby little man who had given up his job as a hopeless task and had taken recklessly to Pear Blossom Wine.

CHAPTER IX

THE FACE IN THE LOTUS

MORE people were entering the bar. Armour looked toward the door, hoping Adrian would be among them. Suddenly his interest quickened, going toward an astonishingly beautiful Eurasian girl who came in with the group. It was, perhaps, the way her hair was made up, or the manner in which she spoke with her eyes to all men in the Cathay that jarred his memory. Her shoulder-length black hair was cut in a loose page-boy bob; her eyes, dark and almond shaped, were shaded by long black lashes that seemed to sweep her cheeks. It was completely incredible, yet hers was the face that had lain within the lotus during his mad, outrageous and delirious dreams.

He conquered his surprise and glanced at Quinto and Mr. Wu. The Mexican had not noticed the Eurasian; he was busy paging through the Emperor Ch'ien Lung book. But Mr. Wu had more than noticed the girl. His aged eyes followed her with frank admiration and there was something of a blush upon his cheeks.

"Ayi hsiao-chieh," the old man murmured the magic Chinese phrase which is seldom pronounced twice in the same manner because the mere mention of it so terribly excites even the youngest and the oldest Chinese. It meant—a woman born to attract, then retire, bestowing favors artfully, rarely and elusively.

"Know her?" he asked.

"The Honorable Lady Chao," Mr. Wu sighed.

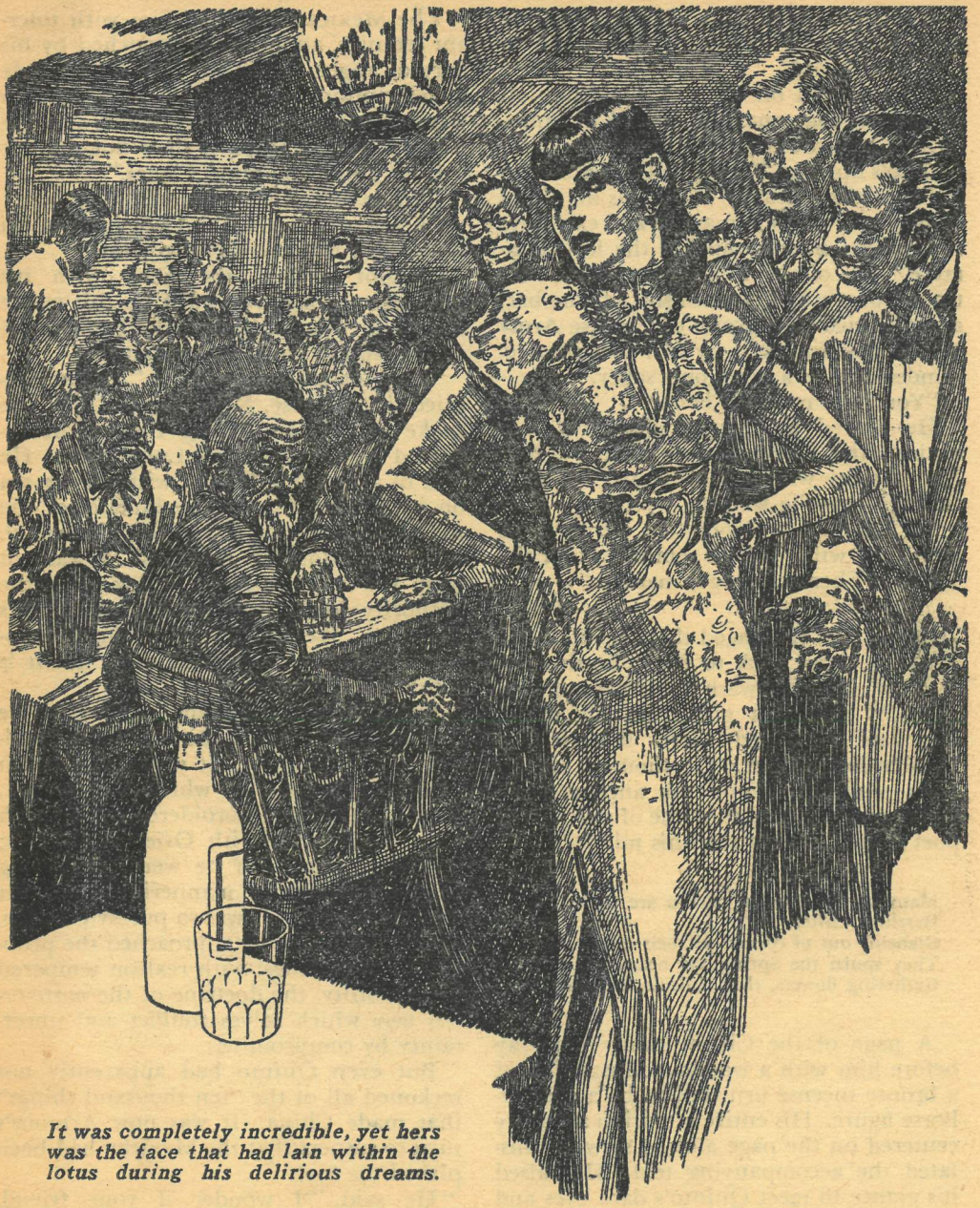
Armour looked at him, puzzled. Then the reference became clear. Mr. Wu was thinking in terms of the Poet Li Po and that legendary beauty of Szechuan, Chao Chun, whose love story lived on, unfaded in the Chinese imagination. Nor was he alone in his thoughts. A dozen men in the bar crowded around the girl, beaming and mooning.

The girl moved among them with confident grace and ease. She was slender and her skin had a faint golden blush. Although she was dressed with Chinese exactness and taste, she was quite modern. Her engraved silk gown, high-heeled shoes and flowing hair gave ample proof. He followed her movements, his eyes and memory taunted by that inarticulate familiarity, the certainty that he knew her and the intolerable inability to remember. She stopped at a table, and while speaking to someone there her glance met his for an instant. He caught the look of surprised recognition in her dark eyes, the momentary expression of interest that vanished as she turned away.

He touched Quinto's arm. "Who is that woman?" he asked.

The Mexican swiveled around his brown thumbprint eyes, settling them upon the Eurasian girl. "Ah, *una chica magnifica.*" He nodded. "But you do not want her. You have one wife."

"Who is she?" His tone grew insistent.



It was completely incredible, yet hers was the face that had lain within the lotus during his delirious dreams.

"Who knows? But why?"

"I've seen her somewhere. Her face is familiar, but I can't remember."

Quinto appeared more interested. He nodded to Mr. Wu, saying, "You will find out who the woman is for Señor Armour, yes?" Then to Armour, in the tones of a father who is warning his son about life: "You are one, Señor, who has spent most of your life digging in the ground and looking at beauty which is over thirty years old. I do not think you know women well. In China there are certain types of women who only have to put on rouge, jewels and to conduct themselves in a certain way and fifty centuries of seduc-

tion acts for them as for all their group—there is no need to flirt to attract and to hold men, *sabe?*"

His eyes still on the girl, his attention filled with that gnawing feeling of familiarity, he couldn't quite agree with Quinto's opinion. In spite of the Eurasian girl's startling beauty, there was an air of demureness about her, a cool and exquisite reserve one never found in the less reputable "girls of the willow lanes." He continued watching her until she left the bar, accompanied by a group of Chinese Army officers and followed by Mr. Wu who reminded him of a tassel on a saber.

"You have read the book?"

He looked at Quinto suddenly, then noticed the Ch'ien Lung book. "That? No. It's my wife's. I thought I'd glance through it while waiting here."

"It belongs to Señor Wu. He left it with your wife. It is to remind you of the T'angs. There are pages marked."

AS HE paged through the book from back to front, he was unable to wash the image of the Eurasian girl from his mind. Her face remained there, tantalizingly familiar yet elusive. He thought of Mr. Wu's tender sigh and the ancient poet, Li Po, and the stanzas of one of that T'ang poet's songs ran through his mind:

> Many of the Maidens of Wu are white,
> Dazzling white;
> Glancing out of corners of their eyes,
> They spurn the Springtime heart,
> Gathering flowers, they ridicule the passerby.

A page of the Ch'ien Lung book lay before him with a woodcut illustration of a bronze incense urn topped by a dragon-horse figure. His entire attention abruptly centered on the page and he slowly translated the accompanying text. He raised his glance to meet Quinto's dark eyes and as he spoke, his tone was edged with a biting anger, a feeling that he had been made a fool of.

"This is almost the same, word for word, as the description of the T'ang Bronzes you gave me when I left Feng Yang Mission. I thought that description was supposed to have been dictated by one of your brother partisans just before he died."

The Mexican regarded him with tolerant serenity, apparently untouched by his flare of anger. "Brother Mei Tung made a description," he replied with an airy wave of his hand. "But this one is more literary, yes? I think it does not matter; it is all about the same T'angs."

"What sort of description?"

"A few words. Mei did not have much time to be literary. He died fast."

Armour tapped the book with his knuckles. "Then you built up this entire search for the Bronzes on the basis of the description in this?" he demanded.

"*Ch'a pu-to*—more or less," Quinto replied in Chinese. "When Mei died he spoke of the four T'ang Bronzes he removed from the Ch'ien Lung grave. He told of an incense burner with a *lung ma* on it, of Lao Tse on the buffalo, of the mirror with dragon and of the wine vessel. His description was not good; it was not bad. We searched in that book. It is the authority on Emperor Ch'ien Lung's treasures. We have found four descriptions. It is not a scientific way, but it is *ch'a pu-to.*"

For a moment Armour wondered if he had been listening to the voice of a Mexican or to a Chinese. It was not so much from the manner in which the strange, huge adventurer embroidered his Spanish accented English with Oriental phrases; it was, rather, as if he were translating Chinese ideas and mannerisms into his curious English. It was so purely Chinese, the way in which he approached the problem of the T'angs; with realism tempered by flexibility, the doctrine of the *more-or-less way* which solves conflict and uncertainty by compromise.

But even Quinto had apparently not reckoned all of the "ten thousand things" that made China. It was now Armour's turn to suspect that the Mexican had been played the fool.

He said, "I wonder if your friend, Brother Mei, hasn't been taken in? Perhaps he read the Ch'ien Lung book too."

"*Por favor?*"

"Most experts say that the Ch'ien Lung catalogue, all forty-two volumes, is pretty inaccurate. Of course, much of the material had been checked and is correct, but many of the pieces and descriptions of pieces attributed to the Ch'ien Lung collection are pure fabrications." He turned

the pages to the textual description of Lao Tse on a water buffalo.

"This one," he went on, "I'm sure of. It probably never existed save in the mind of the writer who made this catalogue for the emperor. It has always been the custom to enlarge someone's collection of treasures in art catalogues with descriptions and illustrations of fictitious pieces. It enhances the collector's 'face' in the eyes of posterity. The Hsuan Palace catalogue is full of such myth-pieces; the *Po ku t'u-lu* and the *Hsi ch'ing* catalogues are all inaccurate, too. The Chinese even ghost-write with the same intent. It's considered unthinkable that a celebrated ancient, a philosopher or ruler, has no book to leave behind him; so some new writer or philosopher authors a book or a system of philosophy and publishes it under the ancient's name. It gives the Old One the 'face' that is due him."

MR. WU'S appearance at the table interrupted the talk. "Female magnolia lady is French now," he announced, evidently highly pleased with the success of his scouting.

"Who is?" Armour cut in.

"Is named Etoile. Employed by lady dressmaker in former French Concession."

Armour frowned as he weighed the name in his mind. It annoyed him that it meant nothing, stirred no memory. "Is that all?" he asked the old man.

"Can find more tomorrow."

"Señor Wu will investigate tomorrow," Quinto added as though he were posting a military order. Then looking at Armour, he asked, "You are staying at the New Astor?"

"My wife is."

Quinto rolled an ounce of liquor in his mouth and puckered his lips, saying, "She is for going to America, eh?"

Armour made no reply. He glanced toward the clock over the bar. It was seven-thirty. Looking toward the doorway with increasing anxiety over Adrian's delay, he heard Quinto saying, "A little while ago your wife went to the shipping office to reserve a plane."

He brought his eyes back to the Mexican's brown face abruptly. There seemed to be very little that the man did not know and keep track of in China.

"I am one who tells you there will be no reservations before a few days, even with *la Señora's* newspaper connections," Quinto went on with disturbing certainty. "You should take advantage of such delays. Perhaps we can visit Nanking tomorrow."

"Nanking?"

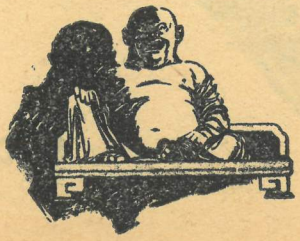
"*Ayi,* and perhaps all the little towns between Nanking and Shanghai. I have traced this treasure of T'ang Bronzes as far as Nanking. The Japanese wished it to come to Shanghai for shipment to Japan, but at Nanking it has disappeared. If you go there with a look of searching in your eyes perhaps it will interest Señor Chen very much. We will then know where he fits, *sabe?*"

Armour stared at the man shrewdly, sensing that Quinto was merely toying with an idea, building a strategy the more-or-less way.

"You think Chen is still looking for Bronzes?"

Quinto picked up one of Mr. Wu's whiskey glasses, raised it and carefully stared through it. "Who knows," he shrugged. "But it will be a very important discovery to the world if Señor Armour finds four T'ang Bronzes which are ghost-written, yes?"

(End of Part II)



"I got it, Harry!" they screamed. "I got it!"

●

By DUANE DECKER

HARRY THE HAWK

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN MEOLA

FIRST time I lay eyes on this Harry The Hawk, I almost ship him right back to the bushes. It's at spring training, down in Glensota, Fla. Harry The Hawk shows up with the big batch of rookies which our farm system has spawned lately—altogether there is thirty rookies out there. But Harry The Hawk catches my eye quick, like a lump of coal in Tiffany's window.

I never see a prospect look so immediately like a truant grocery clerk in my life. He's big, but clumsy and awkward, just a bony gawk with a simple one-track gleam in his eye and a hobby of tripping over his own feet when in motion. I can

hardly believe we got a scout signs up a kid that's practically got A. & P. (Veg. Counter) written all over him.

So, purely off of curiosity, I go over to him. "What's *your* name?" I ask him.

"Harry Diefendorf," he says.

"Maybe you're here linin' up an usherin' job at the home games, is that it?"

"I am a centerfielder, Mr. McClain," he says, with dignity.

"And just where you previously been centerfieldin', if I may presume to inquire?"

"With the Pottstown Pigeons," he replies.

"Is that a ball club or a sanctuary or what?" I inquire.

"It is a ball club, Mr. McClain. In the Cherry Valley League."

"Cherry Valley, eh?" I say. "Ain't Class D to the Sox a kind of a big jump for a growin' boy?"

"I guess maybe it is," he admits. "But I got a hunch I can make it O.K., Mr. McClain."

"Well, well," I tell him. "In that case, just supposin' you go out there and centerfield for me a while. Don't show me nothing too elaborate. Use two hands all you can."

"You bet, Mr. McClain," he exclaims, eagerly. "If there's one thing I love to do, it's shag flies out there in batting practice."

HE BEATS it out to centerfield, tripping over his own feet a couple times on the way, while pounding his right fist into his glove, fiercely. I watch him, still purely off of curiosity. I never see so much misplaced energy cooped up in one kid in my life.

He goes after everything that stays inside the city limits. The first fly ball comes near him, he runs around it in circles while it's coming down, like a chicken with its head cut off and minus all sense of direction. He runs himself dizzy like that and the ball finally drops a yard in front of him. He does the same thing on the next one, although a foot nearer it this time. The third one clips him on the side of the head. Altogether there is one fly ball out of four that are caught by this Harry Diefendorf.

Pretty quick everybody on the bench is watching him. It is the best outfield comedy on view since Babe Herman departs Brooklyn.

"Who is the floorshow out there?" Yank Yordy, our All-Star centerfielder, asks.

"He claims to be one Harry Diefendorf of the Pottstown Pigeons down in the Cherry Valley League," I reply.

"It is a strange thing to go around claiming," Yank says. "On the contrary, it is something to go around denying."

Just then, Harry Diefendorf circles madly under another fly ball. This one finally bounces off his shoulder.

"Look at that Harry The Hawk," Yank cracks, and this Diefendorf is tagged for keeps.

Then, because I can hardly believe we got a scout signed up a boy this hopeless, I tell Harry The Hawk to bat. He *must* be a clouter. There's got to be *something*.

But no. You would think that pitcher was tossing up oranges at The Hawk for all the distance he gets. He falls flat on his face once, going after an outside pitch. I can readily see the guy won't hit near .300 in a league that don't use no outfields against him. I make a mental note to find out who is the talent scout has signed up the worst centerfielder I see since I witness a spirited married men *vs.* single men contest at a clambake some years back.

I find out who the scout is that night—Bugs Boff. I collar Bugs in the hotel lobby and say to him, "Bugs, you must of been lyin' flat on your back with a belly full of bourbon the day you sign up this Harry The Hawk."

"Who?" Bugs says.

"Harry Diefendorf, formerly of the Pottstown Pigeons."

"You'll change your mind on *that*," Bugs says. "Why, that boy is one of the greatest natural prospects I bump into in years. Personally, I think he can make the jump from Class D to the Sox."

"Is this a gag?" I demand. "Diefendorf looks so terrible I suspect at first maybe the Phillies buy him and he shows up here in the confusion. Fly balls bounce off his head, he can't hit his way out of a paper bag—"

"Since when," Bugs cuts in, "do pitchers have to be hitters and fly-hawks in this league?"

"But this Diefendorf don't happen to

be no pitcher," I point out, patiently. "He's a centerfielder."

"You're all mixed up, Mac," Bugs says. "Who says this Diefendorf is a centerfielder?"

"Diefendorf says so," I tell him.

"Well, somebody is nuts around here and it's not I," Bugs says.

"It's not I, neither," I tell him.

And we are both right. We aren't nuts. It's The Hawk that's nuts. But like a loon.

WE FIND him in his room. He's reading a book. I take a look at the cover. The title is *The Fine Art of Outfielding.*

"Listen, Diefendorf," Bugs says, "what's all this about you being a centerfielder?"

"That's what I am, Mr. Boff," The Hawk says, firmly.

"When I sign you up last year from those Pottstown Pigeons, what are you then?" Bugs demands.

"I am a centerfielder then," The Hawk says, very positively.

"Well, if you are a centerfielder with the Pigeons, then how come you win twenty-two games on the mound for them, of which I see you pitch four, three of them shut-outs?"

"Oh *that,*" The Hawk says, in some embarrassment. "I am just filling in then, Mr. Boff, on account of the Pigeons being a little short of real pitchers. But I'm not any pitcher. I'm a centerfielder, Mr. Boff. I *always* been a centerfielder."

"Diefendorf," I tell him, "if you are a centerfielder, then I am utility oboe man with the Philadelphia Symphony."

"Twenty-two pitching wins," Bugs mutters to me, "including eight shut-outs, and this fruitcake still thinks he's a centerfielder."

"You could look it up on the Pigeons' roster, Mr. Boff," The Hawk suggests, eagerly. "You'll find I am a centerfielder, all right. It's right there, in black and white."

"I don't care if it's right there in purple and peony," Bugs screams at him. "You better knock off this nonsense fast, Diefendorf. I sign you to a Sox contract as a pitcher and a pitcher you will be. A centerfielder you will *not* be. *That's* in black and white, too."

The Hawk frowns, sunk in gloom. "If I'd of known you didn't want me for that centerfield slot," he says, "I'd of maybe held out for the Yanks."

"Was you aware," Bugs inquires, heavy on the sarcasm, "that the Yanks already got DiMaggio out there in centerfield at the moment?"

"Yeah," The Hawk says, "but I happen to see these Yanks play an exhibition game once and this DiMaggio don't look like he's got what it takes, not to me. He don't get the jump on a fly ball, for one thing."

He don't crack a smile. He says it in dead earnest. Bugs looks at me, then he shrugs an I-give-up shrug and turns to The Hawk, real confidential: "Didn't you never hear the inside on that DiMaggio set-up?" he inquires. "It seems DiMag is really Joe McCarthy's brother-in-law, which is the only reason McCarthy lets the big Eyetalian in the lineup at all."

The Hawk nods, knowingly. "I figure there's something fishy in the set-up the day I see DiMaggio try to cover center."

"It's the same deal with this Ted Williams up at Boston," Bugs says, with his poker face. "Williams is really Joe Cronin's uncle, otherwise of course, Williams would be back with Peoria long ago."

The Hawk nods, happily. "It don't surprise me. I see that Williams in an exhibition game once, too. He's a sucker for a fast ball down the middle."

"Like a spider is a sucker for a fly," Bugs says. He turns to me in resignation. "It don't look good, I admit, Mac, with a guy that loose in the presscoop. But hold everything until you see him pitch, will you?"

I nod. After all, granted The Hawk is an extreme case, I never yet see a ballplayer that hasn't got a secret fixation he can play the other guy's position better than the other guy plays it. Outfielders think they're pitchers, catchers think they're third-basemen—why, I have a guy one year, he leads the league in home runs and RBI's, but I can't make him quit bunting. He thinks he terrorizes the league with his drag bunts—and he never does beat one out all season. No, you get used to ballplayers after a while. After twenty-five or thirty years, that is.

All except this Harry The Hawk. Even thirty years don't prepare me for *him,* as things turn out.

"So tomorrow," Bugs says to The Hawk, very sternly, "you cease harrowing up that

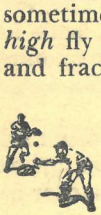
centerfield potato patch and you show Mr. McClain how you pitch."

"Well," The Hawk says, with some bitterness, "as long as you trick me into signing a contract that makes me pitch for the Sox, I guess I got to pitch for them. But it's a very foolish thing to do, Mr. Boff. Here I spend all my life polishing up my centerfielding and I hardly ever practice pitching at all, except just to fill in for the Pigeons. And besides, my heart ain't in pitching. What I like most, I like to catch flies."

"No wonder you like it," I tell him. "Anybody catches as few flies as *you* do is bound to like it. It's the novelty of the thing."

In a pleading voice, The Hawk says, "But, Mr. McClain, will it be all right if sometimes I just hang around centerfield during batting practice and shag a few flies?"

"Absolutely *no,*" I tell him. "Because sometime somebody is going to hit a real *high* fly out there and it will come down and fracture your skull."



WELL, the next day I look over The Hawk out on that mound, and I soon see Bugs knows what he's talking about. The minute The Hawk toes that rubber, all his awkwardness disappears. He acts like a man that's been walking around on roller skates and suddenly takes them off. He's got blinding speed, an unhittable sinker, a very beautiful assortment of curves and a change of pace as puzzling as the weather in Boston. Why, if the kid hasn't spent all his life disguised as a centerfielder, the sportswriters would probably be talking about him already in the same breath with Feller. After two weeks of looking at him, I'm convinced I've got a rookie will win twenty games his first year up.

By the time we head north, he definitely rates the Number Two spot on our staff. He looks like the answer to what we need to jump from a fourth-place team to a pennant contender. There's one big worry I've got with him, though, and that's The Hawk's grim conviction that he's a born centerfielder who's been prostituted into a pitcher by I and Bugs.

Not that he isn't resigned to pitching for us—chiefly on account of it says so in the contract he signed. But because he's got this terrible fixation about being a centerfielder, and can't stop feeling all frustrated about it, he's always picking on Yank Yordy, our All-Star boy in that slot. And gradually there's bad blood developing between them, which don't do this team any good. It's entirely The Hawk's fault, of course.

He criticizes the way Yank covers centerfield out loud and in front of people. It's nuts. I won't go all out and say Yank is the classiest centerfielder since Cobb hung up the glove. I merely claim that among centerfielders in business today, there's only Terry Moore—given a *little* more speed, polish and hustle—that might threaten Yank's job. The only possible place an opposition batter can hope to get a centerfield hit against us is by parking it in the centerfield bleachers, and even then it's no sure thing, what with the way Yank can jump, plus his six feet three inches. Defensively, Yank is the answer to a pitcher's dream. But The Hawk goes around gloomily expressing the conviction that the only reason he can see how Yank stays out there is he must be the club-owner's nephew.

He says to me one day after he pitches an exhibition game in which Yank steals two doubles from the opposition with shoe-string catches and saves one run with a bullet-throw to the plate, "Mr. McClain, I just don't feel too good with that Yordy messing around out in center."

"No?" I crack. "Well, suppose I tell you the Yanks offer me Big DiMag last week, even up for Yank. How would you feel about a deal like that?"

"I would not rush into it, Mr. McClain," he says. "Like I told you before, I notice that DiMaggio don't get the jump on a fly ball that I like to see when they cover center behind me."

"Sometimes I wonder," I tell him, "how you would feel if you had Tris Speaker in his prime out there behind you."

"I never happen to catch this Speaker in a game," he says. "Can he take them over his shoulder, going away?"

"Well, now and then, yes," I tell him, sarcastically.

"Oh—an in-and-outer, eh?" The Hawk says. "Naturally, I can't help but notice all the flaws in that Yordy's play out there, being a centerfielder myself since the age of five."

"Who was you centerfielding for at the age of five?"

"We had a pretty fast kindergarten league out there in Idaho at the time," he says. "Now in the first place, this Yordy don't play the batters right."

"Yank knows every batter in this league like a book," I assure him. "In fact, when a sportswriter writes a book about the league's batters a couple years back, he comes to Yordy for his dope."

The Hawk still shakes his head. "Today Yordy plays that Wallace to pull, every time. I turn and wave him back, but he keeps playing Wallace to pull. Me, if I'm playing that centerfield, I'd play Wallace straightaway."

"But Wallace pulled, four times in a row," I remind him.

"A fluke," he says. "Yordy just happens to be lucky."

I don't argue with him too much, not when it looks like I've got a boy is going to pick up about where Walter Johnson left off. All I try to do, mainly, is soft-pedal his nasty cracks about Yank, so Yank won't get too burned up. Yank is easy-going and he likes us to have good pitchers. But he is burning slowly and I am worried about a blow-off impending. I am not far wrong.

WE OPEN the season in that paradise of road trips, Philly, where we somehow manage to drop the opener despite all Philadelphia's attempts to hand it to us. I start The Hawk in the second game. All he does is let them down with five scattered singles and one run, and we win 3 to 1.

In the dressing room, after the game, I go over to him, figuring maybe the thrill of winning his first major league game will do a lot to break that centerfield complex of his. But no. It hasn't helped a bit. First thing he says to me is, "I should ought to have a shut-out if that Yordy pegs to the plate following that single in the sixth."

"Listen," I practically yell at him, "Yank never has a chance to cut off that run. He uses his head and nails the man at second and pulls you out of what would be a bad hole."

"If I was out there, Mr. McClain, I think I would surprise you plenty by how I play that slot."

I give up and walk off. I only hope that continued success will help him get it through his head he's really a pitcher and not a centerfielder. But it don't.

He starts to burn up the league. He racks one win after another, without a loss, and turns in a one-hit shutout against the Senators. He stays unbeatable until finally he's tied the *all-time* record for straight wins by a first-year rookie. He's the talk of the whole baseball world.

And still he hasn't got it through his head he's not a centerfielder. Every day he's not pitching, he goes out there in center during batting practice and nearly kills himself shagging flies. I let him, as it's the only way to keep him happy. Every so often he casts hints my way about giving him a chance to play centerfield in a game some day.

"Get this through your skull," I tell him. "You're in the big time now, not back in that Cherry Valley League, see? In the majors we fortunately got enough ball players to go around. We don't have pitchers play the outfield on their day off."

"It certainly wouldn't hurt me none," he says. "All I ask is a chance out there and I'll be satisfied. Look what happens to Babe Ruth, after being tagged a pitcher, when they give him a chance in the outfield."

"So now you're comparin' yourself to the Babe, is that it?" I sneer.

"Well," he says, "maybe you never notice it, but I hit a *pretty* long ball now and then."

"Yeah, straight up in the air you hit a long ball," I tell him.

Finally he goes against the Browns for the win that's going to set a new all-time record for rookies—if he makes it. He don't act nervous about it. The trouble is, he don't act like he particularly cares about setting a record or not.

The Brownies squeeze a run in on him in the second, and we don't score. Things stay like that until the fifth. In the fifth, with two men on, somebody tags a long one off The Hawk and it looks labeled for extra bases.

But Yank Yordy is on its tail from the crack of the bat. He finally catches up with it right at the concrete barrier in dead center. Yank crashes into the barrier but holds onto the ball. No runs score,

but we have to help Yank off the field, as the concrete barrier fails to give when he hits it.

I put a utility man out there to replace him and the game goes on.

Then, in the sixth—with no warning—The Hawk suddenly goes to pieces for the first time all year. The Brownies belt him for five straight hits and two walks and are suddenly ahead, 6 to 0. I should pull The Hawk out of there, but I want to give him every chance to break this all-time record. So I go along with him a little longer.

He just gets worse. Two more singles are followed by a homer and now the Browns have us, 10 to 0, with nobody out yet. The ball game is lost. I flag the bull-pen for the relief pitcher that's been warming up.

While waiting for the relief man to make the long walk in, I hear The Hawk shouting at me from the mound, where he's standing around for the relief. He yells and motions he wants words with me. I go out there.

"Now listen, Mr. McClain," he says, very earnestly, "since you lift me, and this ball game is lost, and that Yordy is out of the game, how about *finally* giving me my chance out there in centerfield? Please, Mr. McClain."

I look at him and suddenly I have this certain feeling he threw the game away—for this crack at centerfield. He's schemed this little scheme from the minute he saw Yank go out of the game. Until then he's been pitching O.K., hasn't he? Since then, he can't get a man out. First thing I think of is slapping a heavy fine on him. Then, suddenly, I realize this is maybe a good chance, once and for all, to get this centerfielding bug out of his head. I get a real idea.

"O.K., Diefendorf," I tell him, "you take over center."

With a joyful whoop, he gallops over to tell the umpire his great news the minute the relief man arrives. Then he gallops happily out to centerfield, pounding that right fist into his glove a mile a minute. The boys on the bench and the boys up in the presscoop think I'm nuts, I guess. But I can't help that.

When the team comes in at the end of the inning, I talk confidential to my left-fielder and my rightfielder. We are now behind 13 to 0 and the game is beyond recall. So I tell them every time a fly ball goes near The Hawk, let *him* take it, but holler that *they* got it, to confuse him. The worse time The Hawk has out there, the better chance he'll finally learn his lesson and maybe begin to appreciate Yank Yordy.

LUCK is with me, because in the last three innings there is seven flies that are hit out that way. The Hawk's gunning frantically for every one. But the fielder on his left or right is always buzzing around, screaming, *"I got it, Harry! I got it, Harry!"*

Of those seven fly balls, Harry The Hawk catches exactly one. Two of them hit him on the head, one hits him on the shoulder. They're splashing all around centerfield there like raindrops. By the end of the game, the crowd is laughing itself sick at him and he's a grim, tight-lipped boy.

We lose the game, 18 to 1.

The Hawk comes in the dressing room, after, and he's got nothing to say to anybody. He's really suffering. His centerfielding pride is badly wounded. I tell the team to lay off him, figuring that's the right psychology. I'm pretty sure he's learned his lesson and will shut up about centerfielding from here in.

It looks like I'm right. He don't open that big trap of his the next three days and he quits shagging flies in batting practice drill. But the big test, I know, on whether he's really cured is when he takes his next turn on the mound. That's four days later and Yank Yordy is back in the line-up and we're playing a close one with the Tigers.

He don't raise a beef about Yank once, and I'm smiling. We go into the ninth and we got a 1 to 0 lead, but that's not the half of it—going into that ninth, The Hawk's got a no-hitter racked up. He's just three outs away from it.

He's pitching like a human machine, minding his own business, the way a pitcher should. He starts off that ninth by getting Mayo on a called third strike. Then Barney McCosky steps up and belts a long one to deep right center that looks as though it may fall between the two fielders. But, while I hold my breath,

Yank Yordy catches up with it and puts it away for the save. Two gone now, and just Big Hank Greenberg between The Hawk and his no-hitter.

The Hawk's being too careful with Big Hank and gets in the hole to him, 3 and 1. Then he rifles one down the alley, trying to blow it past him, but Greenberg kisses it. Out and out that ball soars, a speck in the sky. Mentally I am saying goodbye to The Hawk's no-hitter. It looks labeled for a game-tying home run from the minute it meets the bat.

But Yordy hasn't quit. He's turned, running like a frightened deer, straight back. Somehow he gets to the wall of those centerfield bleachers before that tremendous clout comes all the way down. Then, just as it's about to fall into the bleachers, Yank's six-three body becomes a coil on springs. His timing is to the split-second. He comes down out of the air with that ball in his glove and the game is over. Thanks to the greatest catch I see in twenty years of baseball, The Hawk has got his no-hitter.

Five minutes later, the photographers got Yank and The Hawk lined up for a victory pose. One of the sportswriters says to The Hawk, "And just what was your reaction, Harry, when Yank made his remarkable catch?"

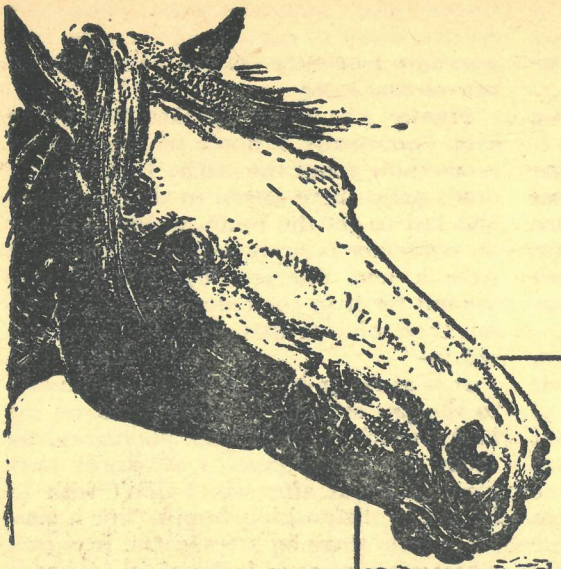
There is a moment of silence. Yank looks at The Hawk, grinning a sheepish, modest grin. Everyone waits breathlessly for the words to come from the man who goes into baseball's Hall of Fame as a result of that catch.

Finally The Hawk speaks: "Well," he says, "personally I don't see nothing so remarkable about the catch. If this Yordy don't stand there asleep in the first place and fail to get the jump on the ball like an outfielder is supposed to do, he could have a tent pitched out there, setting around for it to come down. Had I been out there playing that centerfield slot myself, I—"

It is as far as he gets. One roundhouse to the jaw stretches him out cold on his back, which is how the photographers shoot the victory pose. I see Yordy start his swing, but after all, I don't wish to be put in the position I got to fine a man for merely slugging a teammate in a case where manslaughter is called for. That is why I beat Yank to the punch.

It don't hurt my knuckles or my conscience none to bust a boy that's just pitched me a no-hitter because now I know for certain there's never going to be no hope for Harry The Hawk as a pitcher. He's doomed. A centerfielder he is born and a centerfielder he will die and if you don't believe it, you could look it up on the roster of the Pottstown Pigeons where, like Harry The Hawk always claims, it's right there in black and white.

ILLUSTRATED BY NICK EGGENHOFER



When "tame" Indians felt peeved at their haughty Spanish overlords, they returned to their tribes on horseback, driving along as many loose horses as they could steal.

IRON HORSE FOR IRON MEN

A FACT STORY

By JOHN RICHARD YOUNG

BACK in the 1870's, a lithe, lean rider named King Stanley received word at Fort Custer that a friend of his, Frank Hopkins, was lying seriously, perhaps fatally, shot in Grantrice Pillars, Montana. Between Grantrice and Custer stretched 700 miles of rough frontier country unmarked for long stretches even by trails. But King Stanley saddled up and started out.

Exactly seven days later Stanley loped into Grantrice Pillars on the same horse which he had ridden every step of the distance from Fort Custer. Except for being many pounds lighter, the horse showed no ill effects from the trip. A few days later he was fit to go again.

Ask any army man, "What breed of horse was Stanley mounted on?" and he will almost certainly reply, "A Thorough-

bred, of course." And, equally of course, he will be wrong.

King Stanley rode a mustang stallion that weighed, in good condition, hardly 800 pounds.

That horse, by modern standards, would certainly be called a superhorse; but he was not a super-mustang. Hopkins, Stanley's wounded friend, owned a pair either one of which was as good, probably better. Black Elk, a Sioux, rode another mustang stallion 120 miles in a day; the horse finished perfectly sound. King Stanley's little stallion merely typified the good purebred mustang, one of the three most enduring breeds of horses that ever trod the earth—the other two being the Arabian and the South American Criollo, the latter essentially the same horse as the mustang.

Yet—where is the purebred mustang now? And why did most of the men who now mourn his passing, men who knew him in his glory, do nothing, absolutely nothing, to help him survive? Indeed, many of them deliberately helped to kill him off. "The toughest horse that ever wore a hoof" they called him—and then hunted him for sport, coldly slaughtered him as they slaughtered lobo wolves.

Considering that one of the most desirable qualities in a riding horse is endurance, the quality in which the mustang excelled, this story of the breed's near-extinction sounds incredible. But that, in brief, is exactly the story of the mustang.

Obviously, somewhere there must be a mistake. Smart stockmen simply would not exterminate a breed of horse that had repeatedly proved on the long, grueling drives up from Texas that he had all the qualities a stock horse should have; and proved, too, by actual test that he deserved rank among the world's great cavalry horses. Either the rangemen and the army men were crazy or the mustang's wonderful qualities were merely legendary.

I ONCE asked an old-timer, who had handled thousands of horses from Shetland ponies up to Shires, "Was the mustang really so tough, or just one of those 'giants in them days'?"

The old horseman answered, *"Amigo,* he *had* to be tough just to survive the kind of workouts them Spaniards put him through."

These "workouts," beginning with the long, slow voyage from Spain to the New World, would kill most horses of today. They succeeded in killing about fifty per cent of the Spanish horses destined to found the mustang breed. In large ships, the horses were trussed up in slings that permitted only their hindfeet to touch the floor. Day after day, week after week, often for months, the Spanish horses endured this confinement below deck. On smaller ships, horses were hobbled on deck. During storms at sea they were tied down. Whether in raging hurricanes and typhoons, or when the sun blistered the decks so that the pitch oozed in the seams, the horses had to "take it."

The miracle was that most of them could and did. It was the so-called "horse latitudes" that raised their mortality rate. In these latitudes of sudden but often prolonged calms, when ships drifted with slack canvas, many of the horses had to be pushed overboard so as to conserve drinking water.

Once the survivors reached the West Indies, after months of inactivity, the animals had to swim ashore. Small wonder that even ordinary nags were evaluated at from $500 a head up—and even the ordinary ones were not exactly delicate.

These horses of the conquistadores, according to most authorities, were "Arabs and Barbs." Sometimes the "experts" don't even distinguish between the two. One says flatly that there was no distinction; Spaniards called their Arabian horses—brought into Spain by the Moors via the Barbary Coast—"Barbs" simply because they hated everything Arabic.

But one question all these scholars neglect to answer: After the Spaniards had so successfully mastered Moorish cavalry tactics as to drive the Moors from Spain, what became of all their old-style heavy cavalry horses and breeding stock? Were all these animals slaughtered wholesale just to preserve the purity of the Arabian breed in Spain? If not, was there no crossbreeding whatever, even by accident?

Unless the answers to these two questions are respectively an unqualified Yes and No, there is no reasonable way to explain why the average purebred mustang did not look exactly like an average purebred Arabian. For even the wild mustangs endured no major hardships—except, in

the Northwest, snow blizzards—which the working horse of the Desert had not endured for thousands of years and yet continued, in all lands and climes, to breed true to type.

Certainly there was some Arabian blood in most of the Spanish horses that helped to beget the mustang breed. A very few might even have been bluebloods from the Royal Stud of Spain, for both King Charles V and his son Philip were interested in stocking the Western colonies and to that end stipulated in all contracts granted adventurers bound for the New World that they take horses with them. But one thing is fairly certain: only Arabian aristocrats did not find their way to America.

One proof of this may be found in the horses of Diego Valasquez, a ranchero on Espanola in the sixteenth century. Valasquez, according to Denhardt, became widely known as a breeder of "handsome, well-trained pintos." But you simply do not breed pintos from purebred Arabians. Neither are you likely to produce line-backed buckskins, a typical mustang color pattern so predominant it became practically a type.

Francis Parkman described Indian ponies he saw at Fort Laramie in 1845 as "of every hue, white, black, red, and gray, or mottled and clouded with a strange variety of colors. They all had a wild and startled look, very different from the sober aspect of a well-bred city horse"—and, it might be added, very different from that of an Arabian.

The great majority of the conquistadores' horses were undoubtedly just average good war-nags, "breeding unknown." The popular idea that they were all "Arabs and Barbs" is founded more on wishful thinking than on fact.

IN THE New World the horses multiplied like compound interest. Spaniards did not practice gelding, except, much later, occasionally on horses they selected as personal mounts. Horsebreeding became a major industry. Expeditions setting out to explore were always in need of mounts. One horse was considered to be worth about twenty men in scaring the daylights out of the Indians.

As they pushed North, often with vast trail herds of cattle and sheep as well as horses and mules, the Spaniards founded ranchos and missions. By 1630 there were many horses in New Mexico, colonized by Juan de Oñate. At the same time Kino was colonizing Arizona. Horses taken into Upper California by Portalá and Anza increased so rapidly that thousands had to be slaughtered and driven over cliffs to avoid overstocking.

In 1665 Azcue led an expedition across the Rio Grande into Texas. Eight years later the Janamberes Indians revolted, forced the Spaniards to withdraw and got away with many horses. Encouraged, the Indians then raided Rio Blanco and made off with more. When Alonzo de Leon rode up into Texas in 1687, with 500 horses along, he found the Indians there already mounted.

Always the Spaniards wanted to keep horses from the Indians, but the idea was neither practicable nor possible. On isolated ranchos and missions the few Spaniards could not handle all the livestock alone. Necessity compelled them to teach their Indian helpers how to ride. Hence, when "tame" Indians felt peeved at their haughty overlords they invariably returned to their tribes on horseback, driving along as many loose horses as they could steal.

Often after a raid in which Indians had massacred all Spaniards at a mission or rancho, the livestock not driven off by the raiders wandered and eventually became wild before the nearest Spanish neighbors, often leagues distant, even learned that there had been a raid. Expeditions frequently lost livestock in storms and by buffalo stampedes.

Thus were born the mustang and the longhorn.

Once the Indian had him, the mustang's spread gained momentum. Indians knew nothing and cared less about breeding; they never even thought of gelding. The more horses an Indian owned the richer he was, the more respected by his tribesmen. For the horse changed the Indian's whole way of life.

From a plodding pedestrian the Indian became a rider. Distances dwindled. Pack-ponies replaced dogs. The buffalo fell easy prey, and the sport of the chase consumed as insidiously as that of gambling. The horse became the Indian's chief means of making war and his best mode of escape.

Horse-stealing became a virtue, riding skill a sign of manliness. The horse made the Indian, armed only with bow and arrows, the Spaniard's military superior. The savages stopped Spanish expansion dead at the Great Plains. They even terrorized Spanish settlements for hundreds of miles south and west of the Rio Grande. All this the horse made possible.

What kind of animal was this Indian pony?

He has often been portrayed, in words and pictures, as a hammer-headed, roman-nosed, ewe-necked, cow-hocked, herring-gutted runt, commonly evaluated, if not always worth, $10 at most. But those artists and writers who portray him thus never saw the mustang in his glory. For that is not the kind of horse the mustang *was*. It is the degenerate brute his mongrel descendants became after the mustang blood had been diluted with that of white men's fiddle-footed plow nags—and even then some of the inherent mustang toughness was not entirely bred out.

IN 1774 a colonial traveler wrote of the Chickasaw Indians that they "are very careful of preserving a fine breed of horses which they have long preserved unmixed with any others." A year later James Adair, an Indian trader, published a book in which he praised the riding skill of the Choctaws, indicating that even then the horse was not new among those Indians.

In some sections of the American colonies mustangs were known as "Chickasaw horses." A thriving colonial commerce existed between the colonists and the Chickasaw and Choctaw tribes. The Indians had better access to the Spanish settlements both by trading and stealing.

Lewis and Clark found horses west of the Rockies which they described as like "fine English coursers . . . resembling in fleetness and bottom, as well as in form and color, the best blooded horses of Virginia."

Of Cayuse Indian ponies Farnham wrote in 1840: "These are a fine race of animals; as large as, and of better form than, most of the horses of the States. . . . They are better trained to the saddle than those of civilized countries." This Cayuse horse was the only distinctive strain ever produced by Indian breeding. The Nez Percé Indians' appaloosa horse, in western Idaho and eastern Washington, was merely a color type.

George Catlin, one of our first Western artists, wrote: "The Comanche horses are generally small, all of them being of the wild breed, and a very tough and serviceable animal." He describes them as "very powerful . . . with an exceedingly prominent eye, sharp nose, high nostril, small feet and delicate leg"—quite a different horse from the turtle-headed mongrels later commonly called mustangs.

Some of these mustangs, Catlin reported, soldiers bought from the Indians for "a very inferior blanket and butcher's knife! These horses in our cities at the East, independent of the name, putting them upon their merits alone, would be worth from eighty to one hundred dollars." This, remember, was a century ago when a dollar "went far" and long before the idea became current that the average Indian pony was worth no more than $10. And it is a safe bet that the horses the soldiers bought were culls from the tribal herds. An Indian was never eager to sell a good horse, and he'd sooner sell his favorite wife than his buffalo- or war-horse.

Even during the $10 era, a Texas mustanger said, the wild herds on the Staked Plains in 1872 were "the biggest and best mustangs I ever saw, and the fastest." Mustangs in Kansas in the '50's and '60's could outwit and outrun anything that chased them.

Colonel H. C. Brish, an ex-dragoon and Indian agent, wrote in 1833 that he had "never met with anything of the horse kind that possessed strength, action, and wind equal to the mustang horse . . . or any that could endure on so little and retain their strength. . . . These horses are superior to any others on the face of the earth for cavalry purposes."

Texas Rangers knew this well; intelligent use of the knowledge helped make them famous. Some troops garrisoned in the West learned by bitter experience that grain-fed Eastern-bred cavalry horses could not even get near mustangs. In the 1850's groups of cavalry in Arizona, California and Oregon were mounted on range-bred Spanish ponies raised on old Spanish grants in California. These mustangs proved themselves tops. Yet nine years later General Houston was complaining

bitterly that cavalry could not chase Indians for a day without crippling all its horses—and how could the grain-fed army nags get grain in a land that grew no crops?

Yet, incredible as it may sound, these mustangs, as well as those owned by the Indians, which proved themselves so superior in hardiness and stamina to other breeds, were not by any means the best specimens of their own breed. On the contrary, they were probably some of the worst. For the best mustangs could only very rarely, at least by ordinary methods, be caught. Zebulon Pike, who saw them in their heyday, chased wild mustangs just once, and ever after laughed at the idea of amateurs, no matter how well mounted, ever catching one.

"The horses that were caught," says Catlin, "were by no means very valuable specimens, being rather of an ordinary quality; and I saw to my perfect satisfaction that the finest of these [wild] droves can never be obtained in this way [being run down and roped, the method by which Indians commonly caught wild mustangs], as they take the lead at once when they are pursued, and in a few moments will be seen half a mile ahead of the bulk of the drove. . . . . There is not a doubt but there are many fine and valuable animals amongst these herds, but it is impossible for the Indian or other hunter to take them, unless it be done by 'creasing' them . . . which is often done, but always destroys the spirit and character of the animal."

THIS was the chief reason why the typical Indian pony was always small. Even the cream of the tribal herds, the highly prized buffalo-runner, was almost certain to be a mere cull from among the wild mustangs or a descendant of culls. The mustangs such as Lewis and Clark described were the beauties that almost always got away. As the Staked Plains mustanger noted wistfully, *they* were always the biggest and the fastest.

It was this lack of size in the common mustang which lost him favor with the army. The brass hats knew that the mustang was good, probably the finest cavalry horse in the world. They disliked him because he did not make *them* look good. This attitude of the brass-bound military mind is tragically reflected by M. Horace Hayes, one of the best of the nineteenth century authorities on horses, a horseman of world-wide experience. Hayes specified that an officer's charger, "in peacetime," should stand nearly 16 hands tall, but in war-time, for practical campaigning, can be 14.2 or even smaller, and for utmost all-around utility should never stand more than 15.2.

This was why army men looked down their noses at the lowly mustang. They knew that in reviews and on parade before Judy O'Grady and the Colonel's lady they would not look like real dashing cavalrymen if mounted on a 14-hand chunk of dynamite whose chief virtue was that he could run a dozen parade horses into the ground on one-fourth of the bigger horse's grain ration—or on no grain at all.

Cattlemen were just as guilty of the same foolish vanity. They knew that even ratty little mustangs, as small as 500 pounds, such as they had ridden up out of the south Texas brush country, could carry more than their share of weight—and there were thousands of mustangs bred on the Northern ranges that were nearly twice as big as the Texas mustangs. But still these men had not horse-sense enough to realize the true worth of the horse they had.

As E. C. Cleveland, himself a born Westerner and from a ranching family, points out: "The mustang was, with exceptions, the only horse Texas men knew anything about until they started to take cattle up the trail to Kansas. Then your 'brush-popper' looked at the big 'American horses' and liked them—for their size. Ranchers started crossbreeding to get size and weight, and in doing so forgot that the mustang would die out unless imported studs were used only to *improve* him."

They did more than "forget." Many of them practically went mad for mere size. They crossed their mustangs with Percherons, Clydesdales, Shires. Many of these crosses resulted in the most hideous monstrosities that ever trod grass—freaks with mustang bodies weighted down by gigantic "turtle" heads and hairy Shire legs, or tunlike Clydesdale bodies tottering about on deer-slender mustang legs.

Sometimes, of course, these crossbreedings worked fairly well. But almost al-

ways the increase in bone and muscle was more than offset by a decrease in endurance and "cow-sense" so typical of the true mustang.

Whether the crossbreeding worked or failed, the mania for mere size spelled the beginning of the end of the true mustang. By 1890 the average cow-horse, particularly on the Northern ranges, rarely carried even fifty per cent of mustang blood—and he looked it. Above all, his performance, judged by mustang standards, showed it. It was not without reason that cowboys referred to certain common types of the stock horses they rode by such names as "Oregon lummoxes," "Percheron puddin'-foots," and others. They were.

Even the so-called mustangs that still ran wild were less mustang than a mixture of everything else. They were so full of "American horse" blood that few of them were of any value except in cans. When stockmen set to rounding up and killing off the wild herds, in the 1920's, a wild horse of the old mustang type was rare.

AT THE end, the wild range horse was just a scrubby, degenerate runt. Men begrudged him the scantiest of feed and even water; they needed those for their herds and flocks. They said that he ruined the range, spoiled the waterholes, stole their mares. It made no difference that these same men, when the bottom dropped out of the horse market, had taken so little care of their own stock that they did not even bother to brand, so that the horses naturally reverted to the wild. That was all right, then; there was no money in horses then. But when the brutes succeeded in shifting for themselves, and then market conditions changed, men grabbed their guns at sight of a wild horse. Every hand then was against the wild scrawny runts. There was no range left for them. They had to go the way of the buffalo, the real mustang and the longhorn.

There are still some real mustangs left in isolated back-ranges of Sonora and Chihuahua in Old Mexico, but probably not a single one in the whole United States. The type of horse most nearly resembling the true old-time mustang in this country can be found on Indian reservations in Arizona and New Mexico, but it cannot be found easily.

Frank T. Hopkins, King Stanley's friend, now in his eighties, could vividly tell American stockmen and Thoroughbred-crazy army men of the kind of horse they and their fathers were shortsighted and vain enough to discard. Perhaps it is not too late; South American breeders saved their Criollo. Frank Hopkins won more than 400 long-distance riding competitions, ranging from 50 to 3,000 miles, all over the world. He was never defeated except once on a foul, but that time he crossed the finish-line first too. In all his competitions he rode purebred mustangs.

In 1886, competing against 56 riders, Hopkins rode a seven-year-old, 800-pound, buckskin mustang stallion, Joe, 1,799 miles from Galveston, Texas, to Rutland, Vermont in 31 days. Of all riders—cowboys, ex-cavalrymen, professional horse-trainers—only two others finished. Hopkins finished two full weeks ahead of the second rider. His stallion Joe was a buffalo-horse that Hopkins termed "the only horse I ever saw that could finish a run, then be ready to take on another herd."

Probably his greatest victory Hopkins won in Arabia, against more than 100 of the finest Arabian horses and riders in the East. This was in 1890. This ride, of 3,000 miles, started from Aden, followed along the Gulf of Aden to Syria, then swung inland mostly over limestone country, partly through loose sand. The air was very dry and hot. Water was scarce along the route. The only horse-feed consisted of a plant called *vatch* and barley grain.

Again Hopkins rode a purebred mustang stallion, a 950-pound, cream-and-white spotted horse named Hidalgo. "The greatest endurance horse," he called this stallion, "that ever carried a rider."

Hopkins and Hidalgo won in 68 days, even though they laid over a few days en route to rest. Hidalgo finished 33 hours of actual travel ahead of the horse that came in second. He "finished strong," Hopkins said, "and in good spirit."

The American left the great stallion with friends in Arabia. There in that land of magnificent horses Hidalgo sired many good colts out of Arabian mares. He lived to be 28 years old.

That was the kind of horse at which your grandfather and mine looked down their noses because he was not tall enough to make them look flashy on parade.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

EASY ways on rocky roads.

Query:—Within your knowledge are there any simple, or rather, simply-worded books on "rocks"? To date, everything that I have perused seems too cluttered up with designations of crystal formation, etc. I have "The Book of Minerals" by Alfred Hawkins; "Field Book of Common Rocks and Minerals" by Brewster Loomis; and "Handbook for Prospectors and Operators of Small Mines" by von Bernewitz. But I want something which will in general give me an idea of whether the rock at hand is say diorite, andesite, etc., and without too technical terminology, even though this might not give me the right classification in more complex specimens.

Briefly, I've retired from business, and until I got the prospecting fever, I've never really had much of a hobby. I don't expect to find riches or even much of anything, but there are many metals in this southwestern Oregon, and to date I've found many a rock which, were the vein found, would show real values other than gold. Right now I have filed claim to a cinnabar prospect which apparently runs 8/9 lbs. to the ton of mercury and better yet could be worked so easily that I figure a dollar a ton of countryside using bull dozer, log washer and Wilfley, and retorting. But anyhow, I can dream. Of course, I only work at it when my health permits me the precipitous climb to the prospect, so you can see I'm really not a serious miner from a financial aspect . . . but as a hobby, it really is fun.

The real prospectors here never agree on identifications, nor do they seem interested. The state has no prospector's course as has Washington and some other western states, and even those must be attended, a circumstance which I couldn't comply with. Have you then any helpful suggestions, and bear this in mind, that any too long and arduous mental effort is the one thing I must steer clear of. A picture book is about my speed, I imagine, but I still want to purchase something simple and concise which will allow me to pursue the subject with something more definite than required exercise as a motive.

—H. S. Corbett,
Tiller, Oregon

Reply by Victor Shaw:—I regret my delayed reply to your query, but I've just returned from a prospecting trip in Arizona in an area where mails were *non est*.

With respect to your inquiry re a reliable and simple book on rocks: there are unfortunately plenty of others in your same fix, which is chiefly due to the fact that nobody can make an intelligent study of rocks lacking samples of such at hand to compare with the description. In a classroom specimens are provided, or the instructor takes the class into the field where samples are available.

Further this is a big subject, as it involves high-power microscopes viewing thin slides to determine included minerals, instruments for measuring optical angles by convergent polarized light and others. This is for advanced students, of course, but is necessary if you want to determine *for yourself* the nature of any rock in order to identify it.

You see, there are so many so-called "transition rocks," having minerals included foreign to the usual composition of a given rock, added from nearby different rocks in contact, either when formed, or later due to volcanic activity in that region. Hard to classify these, and it takes an expert with much experience, at that. This is one reason why most books on rocks include a section on crystalography, since this is a science by means of which one can absolutely identify any and all rocks.

However, I sabe your trouble and can help, for what you want is a simple description of the common rocks by which you can recognize 'em in the field when you see them; but since there are igneous rocks, and metamorphic (meaning altered in structure) rocks, and sedimentary rocks, you have to have perhaps two or three such books, to get all the dope.

There's a good one on igneous (eruptive) rocks by Finlay, the professor of geology in N.Y. Univ., which classifies rocks, tell how to determine these igneous rocks such as granite, andesite, trachyte, basalt, rhyolite, etc. by examining hand specimens, tells their composition and effect of weathering (oxidization) and much data added such as the varied rocks related to the common types, description of accessory minerals composing each kind of these igneous rocks, and so on. This book has 228 pages, pocket size and is illustrated. Priced at $2.50 pre-war, and is sold by McGraw-Hill Books, 330 W. 42nd St., N.Y.C. Or, you can doubtless get your local book dealer to send for it, if he doesn't stock it.

With this you should also have a copy of "The Rock Book," by Fenton, a well illustrated comprehensive volume fine for a beginner in the study of rocks. Price is $6.00 and well worth it.

The books you already have bought or consulted will describe the sedimentary (water formed) rocks, also the metamorphic ones which have originated as sedimentaries, but have been altered in structure by enormous heat and pressure exerted later by other volcanic action. An example is *slate*, which was originally a clay rock called argillite, but was changed in structure and appearance by heat and pressure. The same slate, subjected still later to terrific heat and pressure is often thus changed again into the rock we call "phyllite." This will give you an insight into what metamorphism means, and should help you to understand better the books you've been studying.

Write Pacific Mineral Mart, at 687 Redondo Ave., Long Beach, Calif., to put up a set of the principal igneous rocks. They do this to help prospectors and students and sell a set of 48 minerals for $2.00. These are needed to check with the book descriptions. Same can be obtained for the sedimentaries, and metamorphic rocks. If you get these and the books, you'll soon be able to recognize almost all rocks in the field that you run into, and I'll add: without too tough a strain on mentality; i.e. "too long arduous effort."

Best of luck.

CHRISTIVOMER *namaycush.*

Query:—We are about to make a trip to northern Quebec Province and would greatly appreciate any information you can give us on Lake Trout—their habits, proper lures to use, methods for taking, etc.

—Thomas R. Dunn,
R. D., Jermyn, Penna.

Reply by John Alden Knight:—The term "lake trout" is apt to be a little confusing as there are several varieties that are known colloquially as lake trout. The fish that I imagine you have in mind is the togue which has also the acceptable names of Great Lakes trout and Mackinaw trout. To avoid confusion, the generic name of the fish in question is *Christivomer namaycush*. This is of the Charr family and a first cousin to the *Salvelinus fontinalis* or speckled brook trout of the Eastern United States and Canada. The fish has been known to reach surprising weights, there being fish on record that have weighed up to 125 pounds. Today the average weight of the lake trout that most folks catch is around four or five pounds.

These fish spawn on the reefs in the fall of the year as soon as water temperatures are down to their liking, and during the majority of the months of the year they spend their time in deep water. They prefer temperatures in the forties and are reluctant to live in the shallow water where higher temperatures maintain, although they do, on occasion, come into the comparative shallows and feed on the bars and shoals. In the spring of the year, when the ice first "goes out," the water temperatures in the northern lakes are such that they permit the trout to move about more or less at will. It is at that time that you will find excellent fishing in the shallow water and along shore lines. However, as soon as the sun has had a chance to assert itself and warm the surface waters of the lake, these fish retire to deep water and stay there more or less constantly during the remainder of the season until the fall spawning season arrives. In this connection, it might be interesting for you to look up the term "thermocline" so that you can obtain some idea on how lake temperatures arrange themselves during the summer months.

The accepted method for taking lake trout with rod and line is that of deep trolling. The best rod to use for this sort of thing is a fairly rugged "boat rod" with plenty of backbone and the reel seat located above the handle. Length is not particularly important although most of these rods are six or seven feet long. The lines used are either fairly heavy braided silk lines or the braided metal lines which eliminate the need for sinkers. If you prefer to use live bait, a "shiner," a chub or a minnow on a 1/0 hook will do the trick for you. Your guide will show you how to rig this minnow so that it will spin when being trolled. This, of course, necessitates the use of a keel sinker and a couple of swivels. The method, as employed in most of the northern lakes, is to row to the windward shore and then allow the wind to blow you downlake at a slow rate of speed, trolling enough line to permit your bait to troll through at a depth of 60 or 70 feet.

There are many artificial lures that are used successfully for lake trout but the preference seems to be the wobbling or fluttering type of spoons. These spoons are about four or four and a half inches in length and ¾ of

an inch to an inch in width and instead of spinning they move through the water with an erratic wobbling motion. At most stores you can buy these spoons such as put out by the Daredevil or the Johnson people and any clerk in a sporting goods store will know what you want.

In the Finger Lakes section of New York State the lake trout anglers have done a fairly specialized job in spoon design and construction. I would suggest that you write to Mr. John Woodhull, 57½ Orchard Street, Elmira, N. Y., John designs and builds his own spoons in addition to carrying in stock in his shop a wide variety of lake-trout lures.

There are many and varied types of attractors and spoon rigs used for lake trout. The Keuka Lake rig is extremely effective. This consists of a series of eight or ten spoons that are designed to troll about ten feet apart on dropper lines that are snapped on to the trolling line. While this rig is a little awkward to handle, particularly for a beginner, it gives you the advantage of trolling through a considerable depth of water so that you are fairly sure to troll through the level at which the trout happen to be on that particular day.

The lake trout fishermen in Vermont and New Hampshire use a metal line and a fairly heavy wobbling spoon. This rig is paid out so that it will troll at a depth of about 60 or 70 feet. Then the fisherman rows slowly about the lake holding the rod in one of his hands as he manipulates the cars. The motion thus imparted to the rod causes the wobbling spoon to move through the water at an irregular pace, starting and stopping at set intervals. This method accounts for a great many lake trout in the New England states each year.

It must be remembered that lake trout do not have much food available at the low levels in which they live during the summer months. For them to feed it is necessary for them to come to the bars and shoals, usually around 30 or 40 feet of water. Thus, it is wise to keep track of the daily Solunar feeding periods as at these times the deeper levels are fairly empty of fish.

It would be possible to write a fairly comprehensive book on the subject of lake-trout fishing but I believe that the above will cover the main points. Drop a letter to Woodhull and I have no doubt that he will be able to give you some pointers that will be quite valuable.

Good fishing!

JAGER and Brown Bess.

Query:—Can you tell me what was the bore of the short-barreled rifle called the Jager used by the German mercenaries in the British Army during the American Revolution? Did it shoot a cartridge or was the powder and ball put in separately? And did it have a shorter or longer range than the British Brown Bess musket?

—Leon Powell,
Sterling, Ill.

Reply by Douglas Wiggins:—I have never, to my positive knowledge, seen an original Jager of the type brought to America by the Hessian troops during the Revolutionary War. Nor can I find positive proof of any now in collections.

From what I have read, however, I understand they were heavy, clumsy, flintlock arms of about .75 caliber, using a naked ball, without patch, and which had to be first driven into the muzzle of the rifle with a short iron rod and mallet carried by the soldier, and then rammed home by blows of a heavy iron rammer.

The greased patch seems to have been something the Europeon rifleman of that period knew little or nothing of. I understand the Hessian carried his powder loose in the conventional powder horn, with its measuring device, as was standard procedure in those times. While I have read of cartridges being used as far back as the Thirty Years War, in early seventeenth century Germany, I think they were merely a load of powder and a round ball, done up in a paper roll, to get around measuring, or spilling, powder when loading during battle. And I doubt if the Hessian used this method of loading, even, which was advised for the smoothbore muskets then in general use in Armies.

While the Hessian rifle had somewhat longer range than the Brown Bess, it was yet far short in every way from the shooting qualities, range or accuracy, of the rifle which our riflemen used. The smoothbore musket our Line troops used was of course, about the same, as far as ballistics or accuracy was concerned, as the British arms. Nothing to speak of, but the rifles of such corps as Morgan's Riflemen, were deadly arms.

HOW fast is a horse?

Query:—I would like to find out how fast one horse can carry a rider fifty miles. If you know of any specific rides, I would like to know about one or two of the fastest.

—Cordner Nelson
411 Navy Street,
Norman, Oklahoma

Reply by John Richard Young:—Are you at that old Oklahoma pastime, "settling a bet"? Your question is too general to get a specific answer. Everything would depend on the horse and on the rider, as well as conditions during the ride, terrain covered and other factors.

I do not recall any recorded times for exactly 50 miles. The best I can do is give you some recorded times for other distances which might enable you to draw your own conclusions.

A German Halfbred mare—and I do not

refer merely to a half-Thorobred; the German Halfbred is a distinct breed—carrying 200 pounds, ran 34 miles and 6 furlongs in 1 hour and 50 minutes. Of the terrain covered and other conditions affecting this performance I know nothing, but I can safely assure you that she had a good rider, probably a German army officer, for the Halfbred was developed by the German remount service as a cavalry horse and officer's charger. (A grandson of this mare is now in the United States, recently brought over from Germany by the U. S. Army.)

In a test sponsored by the Stadskanal Riding Club of the Netherlands in 1935 a pure-bred Arabian stallion, Akal, carrying 248½ pounds, ran 60 kilometers (slightly less than 40 miles) in 3 hours and 16 minutes, excluding 26 minutes for three halts.

Of 45 horses that started only eight others besides Akal finished. All of them were larger than Akal, who stood 14.3 hands, and none of them carried more than 196 pounds; some were even ridden by children and jockey-sized lightweight riders. Akal, however, not only finished first—the second place winner's time was 3 hours and 35 minutes, plus 45 minutes for halts—but was the only horse to finish with "an absolutely perfect" record for condition. His temperature at the finish was exactly the same as at the start, while other horses that finished ran temperatures of from four degrees up, above normal. The judges—who inspected every horse at every halt—declared the eight finishers, besides Akal, as at best "not quite satisfactory" or worse.

Akal covered the whole distance at a gallop. The year before this test, at the Royal Agriculture Show in England he had won the blue ribbon as the best Arabian stallion in the show.

From this you might conclude that Akal and the German mare were superhorses—and I don't think you'd be far wrong. Just look at what this sort of endurance test can do to ordinary good horses:

In southwestern Idaho in 1945 somebody sponsored a "cow pony race" of 85 miles, the distance covered in two days. Sixty horses started. Only 15 finished. Six horses died, or had to be shot.

Last year in Canada the Western Riding Club of Calgary put on a 30 Mile Stock Saddle race, run May 24, 1946. The winner was a halfbred (half-Thorobred) cowhorse named Skipper, ridden by Floyd Haynes of High River, Alberta, running the distance in 1 hour, 41 minutes, 18.4 seconds. Cavalier, a Thorobred, ridden by Clem Gardner, finished 20 yards behind Skipper. There are the facts for your record book. Here are some facts to ponder:

One horse died less than a mile from the finish line. Another had to be shot on the course. Five other horses had to be shot after the race, and still more were not expected to live. (Whether they survived or died I do not know.)

If your inquiry is not just to settle a bet and you're toying with the idea of entering such a test, my advice is DON'T. It is less cruel to shoot a horse you want to be rid of.

On this question of equine endurance you might find my article, "Iron Horse for Iron Men," on page 122 of this issue of *Adventure*, of interest.

BUTTON-SHELLING and pearling in fresh water rivers.

Query:—Have read quite a few of your stories dealing with shelling. I feel that you are the best qualified to answer my questions.

In your opinion, are the best shelling places the large or small rivers?

Which is the best all-around state for shelling, Kentucky or Tennessee?

I've had button factories tell me that the rivers in Louisiana have mussels that are too hard for button materials and that they have to sell as second grade. Is this true?

Are there button factories in Louisiana?

For medium-sized rivers that are shallow and deep, is the small river launch with outboard motor, hood, sleeping bag the best outfit to take?

How big should the launch be?

Should boats for small-stream shelling be flat-bottomed or round or V-shaped?

Do you think the regular saltwater clam rake could be used as a mussel drag?

There is one more question that I would like to ask, and it may sound foolish. You see, I am Irish and am afraid of snakes. Did you in all your experiences of small boats ever have a snake crawl in the boat at night?

—William M. Ballou,
Box 328, Salem, Indiana

Reply by R. S. Spears:—

1. Shelling was overdone to the beginning of the war—1939-40. The problem was to find shell beds where nobody else worked—in streams of any size.

2. Both Tennessee and Kentucky have been fished a lot. But probably some streams have been overlooked. However, main Tennessee river shells are poor color—pearls and shells not much good.

3. Shells vary in texture, color, thickness, usefulness. If you ask Supt. Public Documents, Washington, D. C. for reports on button shells and pearls, they will help you. Get Fur-Fish-Game, Columbus, Ohio, to send you their book on Pearls and Pearling (60c? I'm not sure of this). It covers what you need to know.

4. Louisiana shells are used—I don't know where. Ask Louisiana Conservations Commission, New Orleans, La., about shelling and uses there.

5. The shellers outfit includes shelter (shantyboat or tents), and a "bannister boat"—a scow 18′ or 20′ long, 4′ or 5′ wide, with railings along both sides, over which to pry the tongs with its grab of shells. The outboard launch, say, is used for towing outfit—shantyboat, skiff, and bannister boat. No two shellers agree on just what is needed. Depends on shell bed whether rake, tongs, crowsfeet, or forks are used to get.

6. The launch is used going to and from

shell beds—camp or shantyboat to the fishing. Perhaps just a skiff with an outboard—or using oars. The shell returns are not large and the power isn't used in fishing. I think a lot of the outdoor outfits are too elaborate—too expensive. Enough is enough!

7. I'd say 5 or 6 horse power outboard. This depends, of course, on the currents and where used. Floating down stream one uses oars or sweeps.

8. In shelling, the bannister boat—just a flatbottomed scow, is used. (Tongs or rake). Rubber boots for wading. Powerboat for crowsfeet drag.

9. It all depends on the shell bottom. A rake, oyster dredge, clam rake or tongs—just whatever serves best on the stream bottom. Where clams are scattered in gravel, perhaps hand-picking is best in shallows, crowsfeet in deeps. It all depends.

In Indiana were some of finest shells ever found. The ditches draining swamps spoiled a million or two beds of shells. Perhaps the ditches are growing shells—now.

As to snakes—I hate them too. In southern streams—lots of them. Summer time! I've spent months without seeing a serpent—then saw a river bank squirming with them! The cure for snake-fear—I don't know!

Snakes do get aboard—but never on my boats. Most snakes are harmless, but there are rattlers and moccasins; but mosquitoes do more harm. Shantyboat should have screen windows and doors. Better than most tents—but should be small enough to truck overland.

MOVING day for a Douglas fir.

Query:—I have a Douglas fir which will have to be moved entirely, or raised in its present position, because terracing will raise the present ground level.

What kind of roots does it have and how deep are they likely to go? The tree was bought when it was between three and four feet high and we've had it five years. It's about seven feet tall now.

Any tips you can give me on how to do the job will be appreciated.

—Grace Brown, M. D.,
Corbin, Ky.

Reply by Arthur H. Carhart:—While I was practising landscape architecture, which happens to be the field of my professional training, we moved many coniferous trees and with a very high rate of success. So there is quite a volume of experience back of my suggestions. At one time we moved three carloads of pines onto the campus of the University of Colorado in one operation, with about 98% success. They were forest grown, "collected" trees. We were able to dig around them, leaving a ball of earth around the roots, and before they were lifted from the hole, a little water was poured around the outside of the earth ball. This froze tight, and we didn't even wrap the earth and roots in burlap.

The trick in moving larger conifers is to not let the air circulate around the roots so the resin is solidified. That means the roots must be "balled" in the earth in which they are growing, with as much earth moved without disturbance as is possible.

You report the Douglas fir which you wish to move is seven feet tall. You can move that without too much difficulty. And while you will cut off some of the root system as you do, you will not lose enough but what the tree will survive.

Dig a trench in a circle around your tree, if you can handle the mass of earth so encompassed, with this trench's inner side nearly even with the spread of the lower branches of the fir. If you cannot handle that amount of earth, dig the trench around a little closer to the trunk, and slightly inside of the circle of the branches. This trench for a tree this size should be two feet deep. As you get beyond the first foot or so down, you can begin to undercut on the block of earth, making the bottom a bit narrower—say if your trench cuts a circle that is five feet in diameter, you can undercut progressively below the 12-15" level, until the diameter of the earth at the bottom is three and a half feet.

If there is any chance of getting sufficiently sharp freezing weather where you are, and you have time to do so, fill the trench with straw or old leaves and wait for the freeze. When this comes along, pour water over the outside of the ball of earth and let it freeze hard. You will have taken the leaves or straw out of the trench to do this. Also, you will either have totally undercut the earth at the bottom of the ball or you can pack leaves into the recess so the total undercutting may come after the upper part of the ball is tightly frozen.

In the event the ball cannot be frozen, which may be because of the weather or the need for earlier transplanting of the tree, wrap burlap or canvas around the earth ball, and use either chains or rope to make a snug "package" of that earthen ball. This would mean a rope around the outside of the upper part, and several ropes around and under, taking a hitch when possible around the rope that encircles the earth ball horizontally.

The whole point is to keep the earth ball, whatever size, from breaking and shattering.

Now you will rock the tree loose from the remaining earth that may be holding it at the bottom of the earth ball, cutting roots cleanly if they still are holding. With the ball free you are ready to move the tree to a new location where a hole large enough to take the earth ball comfortably has already been dug.

You have two ways of getting the tree with its heavy ball of earth out of the hole where it has stood. You can set up a tripod of heavy timbers, lashing the tops together, and hang a block and tackle from there, attaching this to the chain or rope basket around the earth bell, so it will lift on all of the chain or rope as nearly as possible. A chain lift such as used by an auto wrecker will do well. You might use such a truck with a chain lift instead of the block and tackle and tripod if that is possible. You could keep the tree slung on

such an arrangement as you move it to the new location, and there let down the earth snugly into the new hole. But if you do use a tripod, you can put a little platform or stone boat under the earth ball and use a small tractor to haul this to the new location. There reverse the process of the tripod and block and tackle.

If the distance between old location and the new one, is not too far, you can get the earth ball on a stone boat or similar arrangement, lay planks, put rollers under the platform or boat, and skid the tree to the new spot.

Put the tree in the new location, set it upright, fill in loose earth around the ball that has been dropped into the hole, water it thoroughly. Then guy the tree with wires, at least three, of No. 9 size or wire clothesline will do, so the wind will not rock it. Wrap the tree trunk with gunny sacking where the wires go around it, or use old hose threaded on the wire to prevent bark bruising. This is important; some few roots will be growing out even during winter, and if the ball of earth rocks as a unit, it will break them. Then, during all winter and well into the first summer, spray the top with water during dry spells, to compensate for root loss and deficient moisture.

I'm sure if you can approximately follow this routine your tree will live.

TO KEEP *Adventure* safe from silver fish.

Query:—Is there anything that can be done to keep silver fish from destroying old papers?

I have a certain amount of very old papers, such as newspapers, etc., that are of more or less interest from an historical standpoint, too large and too many to put in safe deposit boxes. Also a large file of *Adventure* and *Reader's Digest*. Necessity is forcing me to pack all this material into card-board cartons. The idea occurred to me that perhaps there was something similar to moth crystals that might be placed in the cartons and then sealed with tape so as to be airtight. My present house is very old and we are troubled to some extent with the fish.

—Eldon B. Greenland
Aberdeen, Md.

Reply by S. W. Frost:—Under the conditions you describe you will probably need two types of treatment at one time—one to kill the silver fish that may be present and one to keep them from entering. The latter is the easiest. Moth crystals, as you suggested, would probably not be as good as naphthalene or moth balls. Naphthalene will last for years while most moth crystals are Paradichlorobenzene, known as P.D.B. and even in closed containers lose their effectiveness in a comparatively short time.

To kill silver fish that are present, I suggest a 5% D.D.T. in oil. This can be sprayed on the inside of the containers and upon pieces of cardboard which can be placed at various levels between the magazines or papers. This will give an immediate kill and will have certain residual effects.

The old method, in place of D.D.T., was to smear pieces of cardboard with a paste made of flour and a strong poison such as white arsenic or sodium arsenite. One quarter of an ounce of poison is used to a pound of flour.

This would be painted on the insides of the cartons and on cardboards placed between the layers of magazines or papers.

Of course you must preserve those old copies of *Adventure* and I am glad to be able to help you!

SHOTGUN shells from Italy.

Query:—An acquaintance of mine here in Italy has offered me the opportunity of entering into the business of manufacturing shotgun shells. The shell in question is something entirely new to the hunting world and if the indications as seen from this season's hunting here in Italy mean anything, the results in the States should be tremendous.

The shells are made in all sizes, have the range of all shells of corresponding gauge, can be immersed in water for twenty-four hours without affecting firing ability and can be reloaded ten times (minimum) (maximum reload details not available yet) without imparing casing. The cost of material and equipment for reloading is very low and should meet with the approval of hunters throughout the United States.

From the meager description I have given you, I would greatly appreciate your opinion and in addition can you tell me the proper governmental department to contact for information concerning the importation of this type of article.

(I came across a copy of your magazine in a bombed-out warehouse in this city.)

—W. R. Grant
Villa I Gardini
Antingano, Livorno,
Italy

Reply by Roy Tinney:—Only a very few people possess the desire, the tools, the material or the skill required to reload shotgun shells in this country, therefore, I can not see any market for the shells you are prepared to manufacture. Also I do not believe an Italian factory can turn out shotgun shells of a quality equal to those being produced here.

Any of our commercial shells will withstand a more severe submersion test (in water) than the one you mention.

As to your shells standing up under repeated reloading: your record can be equaled or bettered by any of the shells now being made by Remington, Winchester, Western or Peters; particularly with the light loads commonly used in Italy.

It would be both unkind and unfair to encourage you to enter into a business venture that, my experience clearly indicates, is destined to be a failure.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

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SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure*.

Auto Racing—WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT, c/o *Adventure*.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure*.

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure*.

Boxing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, care of *Adventure*.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Dogs—FREEMAN LLOYD, care of *Adventure*.

Fencing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, care of *Adventure*.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure*.

Fishing: *Fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait casting 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*.

Fly and Bait Casting Tournament—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Health-Building Activities, Hiking — DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure*.

Horses and Horsemanship—JOHN RICHARD YOUNG, 3225 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee 8, Wis.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, care of *Adventure*.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 6520 Romaine St., Hollywood, Calif.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *Foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns, American and Foreign: Wing Shooting and Field Trials—ROY S. TINNEY, Chatham, New Jersey.

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11361 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Swords, Spears, Pole Arms and Armor—MAJOR R. E. GARDNER, care of *Adventure*.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetichism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, care of *Adventure*.

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure*.

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America. Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure*.

Ornithology: *Birds, their habits, and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 5 Minerva Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

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*.

Sunken Treasure: *Treasure ships; deep-sea diving; salvage operations and equipment*—LIEUTENANT HARRY E. RIESEBERG, care of *Adventure*.

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 14 N. Burnett St., East Orange, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

United States Army—COL. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A., Ret., care of *Adventure*.

United States Marine Corps—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C.R., care of *Adventure*.

United States Navy—LIEUT. DURAND KIEFER, U.S.N., Ret., Box 74, Del Mar, Calif.

Merchant Marine—KERMIT W. SALYER, c/o *Adventure*.

Military Aviation—O. B. MYERS, care of *Adventure*.

Federal Investigation Activities—*Secret Service, Immigration, Customs, Border Patrol, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure*.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

The French Foreign Legion—GEORGES SURDEZ, care of *Adventure*.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, 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, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 88 Sidney Rd., Manley, N. S. W., Australia.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya—GORDON MACCREAGH, care of *Adventure*. **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, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDEL, care of *Adventure*. **4** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **5** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

Europe, Part 1 ★*The British Isles*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., London, W.C. 2, England. **2** *Denmark, Germany, Scandinavia*—G. I. COLBRON, care of *Adventure*.

Central America—ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure*.

South America Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure*. **2** ★*Argentina*—ALLISON WILLIAMS BUNKLEY, Calle O'Higgins 2150, Buenos Aires, Argentina. **3** ★*Brazil*—ARTHUR J. BURKS, c/o Alto Tapajos, Rua Gaspar Viana, 18, Belem, Para, Brazil.

West Indies—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, c/o *Adventure*.

Iceland—G. I. COLBRON, care of *Adventure*.

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure*.

Labrador—WILMOT T. DEBELL, care of *Adventure*.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche*—CAPTAIN W. RUSSELL SHEETS, care of *Adventure*. **3** ★ *West Coast beginning with State of Sinaloa. Central and Southern Mexico including Tabasco and Chiapas*—WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Club Americano, Bolivar 31, México, D.F.

Canada Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 89 Laurentide Ave., Quebec, Canada. **3** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario*—HARRY M. MOORE, 579 Isabella, Pembroke, Ont., Canada. **4** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks Camping* — A. D. L. ROBINSON, 103 Wembly Rd., Toronto, Ont., Can. **5** *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. **6** ★*Northern Saskatchewan; Indian life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 6520 Romaine St., Hollywood, Calif.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, care of *Adventure*. **3** *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1236 N. 8th St., Albuquerque, New Mexico. **4** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **5** *Idaho and environs*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **6** *Arizona, Utah*—C. C. ANDERSON, care of *Arizona Stockman*, Arizona Title Bldg., Phoenix, Ariz. **7** *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2093 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S., Part 2 *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River*—GEO. A. ZERR, 31 Cannon St., Pittsburgh, 5, Penna. **3** *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 716, Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif. **5** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C.; S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*. **6** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

(Continued from page 6)

while I was deer hunting and that made *her* angry; the baby girl must have been born angry because she's been yelling ever since.

But *I'm* not mad at anybody now that trout season's here!

We're the only one who's mad! Hard on the heels of Steve Frazee's letter comes one from Art Carhart of our *Ask Adventure* staff (same state) bragging about the Rocky Mountain cutthroats he's been hooking. And we haven't even had a chance to wet a line yet this season! If our Colorado writer-anglers don't stop needling us this way—

ARTHUR LARSON, whose fact story "Crash Dive" appears on page 92, also joins our Writers' Brigade for the first time this month. He says—

I was raised on the Coer d'Alene Indian Reservation in northern Idaho where my Father had been the first to rent land from the Indians and start grain farming. For several years our only neighbors were Indians and they were generally very friendly and gave us no trouble.

The country was overrun with wild horses and as we built no fences the business of keeping these wild herds out of our grain fields developed into a full-time job for my brothers and me. We learned to ride of course at a very early age and most of my young life was spent in the saddle—running horses. I would like to state that my experience with wild horses over a period of several years does not confirm the usual fiction story in regard to the speed and endurance of wild horses. Any of our saddle horses could literally run circles around the fastest wild ones. Our saddle stock was mostly half thorobred and half cayuse. However, their greater speed and endurance was due more to the fact that they were grain fed and hardened by long daily rides, rather than to their superior breeding. In this country where feed and water are plentiful the wild horses were generally soft since they seldom traveled more than four or five miles a day and often perhaps but a mile or two. Compared to our trained and well-cared-for saddle horses these wild horses appeared about as favorable in a race as the average "man in the street" would against a professional track star. However, we never tired of chasing these wild herds and our enthusiasm often led us to run them much further than necessary.

Teen-age Indian boys usually rode with us. They never seemed to have anything in particular to do and as they loved roping and riding there was always keen competition among us. They were also keen on baseball, but it was fancy roping and trick riding that challenged our best efforts and nearly every Sunday our home ranch was the scene of all sorts of contests in horsemanship and roping.

During all my teen-age years I competed—quite successfully—at all state fairs (Washington and Idaho) in trick riding and fancy roping and, with my brothers and Indian pals, we carried most everything in the Wild West Show that was then a part of every state fair. I don't suppose we deserved so much credit for this inasmuch as we no doubt had far more favorable opportunities for practice than most contestants.

There were many coyotes on the prairie in those days and one of our favorite sports was riding them down and roping them. Here again our saddle horses triumphed, for we found it comparatively easy to run down a coyote in open country.

In those days (1900 - 1910) there were no "white" schools on the reservation but we managed to get a few months of schooling a year by riding ten miles a day to a school across the state line—Washington. In my last year of high school—which I took at Spokane, Washington—our English professor urged me to take up writing or journalistic work as a profession, but that did not appeal to me then for my energies craved more direct expression. I wanted to go places and do things. And, I suppose I got my wish for until a few months ago I've been too busy with a number of things to find time for a try at writing.

I left the ranch in 1914—I was nineteen at the time. I had seen an auto race and from then on horses were much too slow. I wanted to be a race driver and also to know all about engines and mechanics in general. Besides, the ranch life was losing its glamor for as I grew older I was more and more often called upon to take a hand in the farm work and that, of course, was not nearly as interesting as running in wild horses and breaking them in for farm work. I worked at mechanical and electrical work for two years and managed to enter a few local (Spokane) auto races during this time and worked off at least some of that urge for speed.

I then enlisted in the U.S. Navy for it appeared that we would soon be entering the European war and I wanted to avoid the rush that would inevitably follow a declaration of war. And, of course, we did enter the war and the four years I spent in the navy were very eventful. I always seemed to be on hand when things were happening. I survived three major disasters and several near disasters.

As Chief Electrician I served as instructor at a West Coast Submarine School during the last few months of the war. I practiced swimming at every opportunity and my last "thrill" in the navy came in 1919 on Regatta Day when I won the long distance swimming event for the Pacific Coast Fleet.

I was paid off in Los Angeles Harbor in January, 1920 and since then, until a year ago, have been steadily employed as electrical engineer in Los Angeles, California. During this time I have engaged full-heartedly in several hobbies—though usually never more than one at a time. My chief interests have been—more or less in order—weight lifting, tumbling and hand balancing, skating, arch-

ery, pistol practice, photography and mineralogy. I have also instructed evening classes in most of these subjects—as well as courses in engineering.

For some years past I have had a desire to go back to the country so, about a year ago or shortly after cessation of hostilities, I resigned my engineering job and bought a small ranch here in Southern California. We're in a very "horsey" section so, of course, I soon found myself again training saddle horses and instructing dudes in roping and rope spinning. However, I've found time at last for a try at writing and since last December have written several articles, all of which have been accepted. I picked on *Adventure* for "Crash Dive" because I've been reading it "on and off" for nearly forty years, and it seemed a natural for that type of story.

Well, I didn't mean to be so long-winded but sort of got wound up and couldn't stop.

No apologies necessary, Mr. Larson. You've certainly been places and done things and it was all interesting. We hope to hear from you again.

AND Duane Decker, whose "Harry the Hawk" appears on page 114, completes the trio of recruits to our Writers' Brigade this issue. He introduces himself succinctly thuswise—

I started free-lance fiction writing in 1935 after a while on a newspaper, in a literary agent's office and before that, at Colgate University. Since '35 my stories have spasmodically been appearing in *Collier's, Liberty, Redbook, American, This Week, Esquire* and a good many others. I'm mighty pleased to add *Adventure* to the list with "Harry the Hawk" which is part of a baseball novel called "Good Field, No Hit" to be published in July. I enlisted in the Marine Corps during the war, came out of boot camp at Parris Island as a private and eventually wound up in Tokyo several years later as a staff sergeant. I became one of the editors of *The Leatherneck-Pacific,* official Marine publication. I went on the invasion of Okinawa, was on Luzon in the Philippines during part of that campaign and went into Japan attached to the famed 4th Marine Regiment as part of the original occupation forces. I also witnessed the formal surrender of the Japanese forces aboard the *Missouri.* As an enlisted Marine correspondent there were not many Pacific islands that I missed during my overseas tour. Since discharge in December of 1945. I have been freelancing again and at present am in Hollywood doing personality stories on screen stars for one of the movie magazines.

F. R. BUCKLEY, still loitering in the pleasant shadows of that Swiss alp, sends us the following amusing commentary to accompany "Of Blood and Booty" on page 66—

Probably no military subject is as interesting to the ordinary soldier as that of matériel captured or "liberated" from the enemy—I have always thought "loot" such a vulgar word. I think pleasantly of the thirsty division which entered a South German town to find the only building unwrecked was a liquor warehouse; I remember the rule that whoever got an enemy photographer also got his camera; and I smile wistfully at thought of the late-coming infantryman who, in roaring, flaming Aachen, was seen staggering along the street with a box of *whetstones.* The present point of my knife was ground on with one of them. What the rifleman did with the rest I'll never know.

There was a tale, too, about a newly-arrived major who asked a combat captain whether loo—picking things up wasn't a capital offense (things were going woof and bang all around at the time) and the captain said sure it was and the major said he was going right out and arrest a couple of guys. They'd only just taken the town. So the captain called after the major: "Say, sir, before you go—are you Catholic or Protestant?" So the major decided not to go after all.

There's been a lot of argument, one time or another, which was the phrase most used in the war "Things are tough all over" or "Ah, blow it out your nose." My own candidate would be "Hi, Joe, what did you get?" My own best souvenir was a midwife's sign from Duren. I think somebody had had a try at the bronze statue of Bismarck (it was turned round on its pedestal till he had his back to the town) but had given him up as too heavy. What a mess that place was! Old Caradosso had some tough going in his day, too, but he certainly never saw or imagined anything like that. Or Cologne. Or Plauen. Or— write in your own favorite. Sometimes one wonders whether we have advanced so far in the last four hundred years, at that.

SINCE the untimely death several months ago of Gordon MacAllister, the Merchant Marine section of our *Ask Adventure* service has been lacking an expert. This month we are glad to announce the vacancy has been filled by an old friend of Mr. MacAllister's, Kermit W. Salyer, whose background and training should make him a valuable addition to our staff.

Introducing himself, Mr. Salyer says—

I graduated at Emory and Henry College, Emory, Viriginia, in 1936 and twelve days after receiving my B. A. degree signed articles on a freighter as ordinary seaman and was on my way to becoming an A. B.

The succeeding four years saw me sujeeing, painting, scaling, splicing and steering for most American steamship outfits, for I changed

companies every trip in order to get a voyage to a different part of the world each time. Rode freighters, passenger ships and tankers.

In 1940, figuring I'd seen enough of the world, I came ashore and tried to settle down with a job selling space for a firm of newspaper representatives. But by mid-summer of 1941 I saw the handwriting on the wall and returned to sea. That voyage was a trip around the world. We were just a jump ahead of the Japs as we sailed, in quick succession, out of Rangoon, Penang, Singapore, Port Swettenham, Medan, Balikpapan. Finally made it back to the States with one of the last cargoes of rubber and tin to come out of the Straits Settlements before the Japs took over.

Upon arrival Stateside, I enrolled at the Officer's Training Station at New London. Four months later started sailing as Third Mate in convoys to Scotland, North Africa, West Africa. Later, as Second Mate, served as navigator to commodores of tanker convoys in the Atlantic. Spent two years in the Pacific as Chief Officer in tankers oiling the Third, Fifth and Seventh Fleets in the Marshalls, Marianas, Gilberts, Admiralties, Philippines and, finally, Japan. During one week in Subic Bay, just before the fall of Japan, fueled 26 fleet units ranging all the way from submarines to cruisers.

During my years at sea I wrote many articles and stories on marine subjects which appeared in various newspapers and magazines.

Came ashore in 1946 and joined the staff of *Mast Magazine*, official organ of the United States Maritime Service. Later was managing editor of that publication. Am currently assistant editor of *Motorship Magazine*.

That's the man who'll try to answer queries you send in to *Ask Adventure* regarding the Merchant Marine. Fire when ready, gentlemen!

ANDREW A. CAFFREY'S authentic stories of the early days of air mail are always provocative of comment from readers who remember those haphazard times when the service was first sprouting wings —comment quite apart from calling attention to such anachronisms as putting the Golden Gate Bridge across San Francisco Bay back in the Twenties! But we made due apology for that artist's boner last month and thought you'd be interested in these additional observations from readers (all of whom spotted the bridge!) on other things in Mr. Caffrey's story, "By the Seat of Their Pants."

For instance—

Dear K.S.W.—

Though normally one of those strong, silent readers who puts aside temptation to write to editors, Andrew Caffrey's airmail story in your March issue lures me out of my hole. And I'm wondering how many other native San Franciscans will show you that they are *Adventure* readers!

First, I enjoyed Mr. Caffrey's yarn very much, but he must have been the guy who landed a plane on a San Francisco street. From his description of the territory, I wouldn't be able to find the old field, either! Or did he "make up" Marina Field?

In the '20's, Crissy Field was the only air field until the late part of the decade, and Crissy was on the Presidio Grounds, *west* of the old Palace of Fine Arts. As at that point the prevailing winds are WNW about 390 days out of the year, the planes all took off in that direction away from the old building (though an Army field, the Navy used it, and the first Air Mail, too). On landing, the pilots often bounced their wheels on the "Palace," especially in fog, though usually they flew in low to the water. The field was between the present west boundaries of the St. Francis Yacht Club and the south entrance to the Bridge. Also, in 1920, Alcatraz was not flood-lighted, (but they did have a five-second beacon) and the Richmond-Contra Costa hills had nary a house upon them, but were bare by day and black by night. These did not change until well in the '30's. . . . At the start of the war, the Army took over the old Fine Arts Palace and fenced it in, as it stands near the east approach to the Bridge, which is on the Presidio Grounds, as a security measure.

Quite aside from these small details which the passage of twenty-five years have changed, I was so engrossed in the general theme and basic factualness of the story that I was truly disappointed to find it was not continued. It is well to remember the humble beginnings of aviation and the men who made the vision a reality.

Very truly yours,
—H. F. Lawrence
2400 Bancroft Way
Berkeley, Calif.

We hastened the above along to Author Caffrey who promptly replied as follows—

Dear Mr. Lawrence:—

Your letter anent this and that in my story titled "By the Seat of Their Pants" has been forwarded to me. First off, we're glad you liked the yarn.

Now you say that I, the writer, must have been the guy who landed a mail plane in San Francisco's street. No, it was Air Mail Pilot Stanley Boggs. That was around the first of the year in 1921. I don't happen to have a good map of San Francisco on hand, and I am long gone from that bay city, but I believe that plane was set down on Larkin Street. The street, I recall, had car tracks, plus the many poles and the trolley line overhead. It was one of those things which couldn't be done, yet Boggs did it, and with damage neither to him nor the ship.

Then again, Sam Purcell landed another plane—with four Sunday passengers in his

front pit—in the Civic Center, on that street which runs along the library's south frontage. That plane wasn't damaged either.

I didn't "make up" Marina Field. It was as I represent it, located as presented: on Marina Blvd., running from the power house near Fort Mason west to the old Fine Arts building. Crissy, of course, was there, too. But Crissy was strictly Army Air Force, and if we unclean folks even shot a forced landing thereon, we were in a hell of a mess.

As for the prevailing winds and the direction of takeoff, we had only one such direction. That direction was directly west, then off the ground and over the Palace of Fine Arts. The high-tension lines at the Fort Mason end of the air-mail field yelled a loud "No!" to any foolish gent who planned otherwise. What's more, the Marina field was too narrow for north-to-south or south-to-north getaways.

The *first* air mail did not use Crissy Field. Crissy didn't love air mail; and air mail had little use for Crissy. We hardly spoke when we flew by.

Whether or not Alcatraz was under flood lights in 1920 I cannot say for sure. Alcatraz, at that time, was, even as today, a Federal pen; but I believe it was more or less a prison for Army and Navy offenders. However, even back there in 1920, and long before that, the Rock was lit up and shining like a diamond during the night. It could be seen, and how! It was a guiding light for ships in the fog, and for anybody who happened to be passing via air in the murk.

As for the Richmond-Contra Costa hills "nary a house" on them, I can't believe that. As a young fellow, back in 1916-17, I used to hike all those trails. Seems to me there used to be many a tavern, here and there, where hikers were wont to hesitate and wet the whistle. Seems to me there were many lodges, camps and other settlements in them thar hills. Seems to me that it is a very old section of the Bay area.

Anyway, Mr. Lawrence, you liked the job as a whole, and we like you. We have another air-mail story coming up in *Adventure*, soon, and we'll expect to have you aboard.

Sincerely,
—Andrew A. Caffrey

And the following, from another "native son"—

Dear K.S.W.—

For the first time in twenty-odd years of reading and enjoying *Adventure* — during which time I've often felt that some *Camp-Fire* critics have carried their technical quibbles to too fine a point—I am moved to call your attention to a glaring anachronism.

Mr Caffrey's fine story, "By the Seat of Their Pants," in the March issue, is laid in the early 1920's. His *Camp-Fire* letter indicates that it is in '20-21.

As a former San Franciscan, I was greatly enjoying this story of the old Marina airfield and scenes with which I was familiar—was recalling visiting that field as a kid, in just about those years—when on Page 28.... (Here comes Artist Hamilton Greene's bridge again!).... And Mr. Caffrey himself is guilty of one minor anachronism:

At the bottom of Page 31, Tramp Higgins refers casually to "The FBI." Now, the Division of Investigation of the Department of Justice was not organized until *1924*—and it was not called the Federal Bureau of Investigation until some time after that. And in any event, it was not until certain Federal laws were passed in *1934* that the FBI came into the limelight—up to that time its criminal investigation activities were greatly restricted. Working as a newspaperman in the early *1930's*, I recall distinctly that the agents were called "Department of Justice men" or "DJ's." The term "G-Men" came into use about 1934. Certainly in the 1920's, no one would have referred familiarly to "The FBI."

These are minor points, in a great story and a great book—but I couldn't let them pass.

Sincerely,
—Edward S. Sullivan
2500 Aurora Terrace
Alhambra, California

Passing the above along to the author Mr. Sullivan draws the following reply—

Dear Mr. Sullivan:—

Your letter has reached me. . . That you should spend your time looking for anachronisms! But let's look 'em over.

First, it was the Golden Gate bridge, and even *Adventure's* editor will admit that you had a perfect right to break your twenty-year silence over that one. It bothered me, and I know now that the illustrator's face is red. (And how!)

Next you mentioned the old Marina field. You remember it. You admit its existence, as stated by the undersigned. I'm glad of that, for another *Camp-Fire* member wrote in (see Reader Lawrence's letter above) saying that the field must be my invention. Not at all. Of course, it's long gone now.

You are right about there being no F.B.I at that time. I'll take that one on the chin, and now *my* face is a bit red. You say they were Dept. of Justice agents, and that's correct. You knew them as "DJ's." I don't recall that designation. On air mail, and as a civilian with Army Air Force, I knew them merely as "Secret Service" dicks; and they, like the poor, were always with us.

So that's how she stands: no bridge; no F.B.I. or "G-men," and many thanks for leaping on us.

Sincerely,
—Andrew A. Caffrey

And the following fine bit of reminiscence—

Dear Caffrey:—

I have been a reader of *Adventure* since its first issue and am glad to see you back writing aviation stories again. Your "By the Seat of

Their Pants" in the March issue is very good except. . . . (Damn that bridge!). . . . Enjoyed the story, as I knew or could recognize most of your characters.

I came out from Chicago on the 2nd of Jan., 1922 and flew the run, San Francisco-Salt Lake, until 1938 when the United States had so many regulations and red tape that you had to kick your way through it every time you got out of a ship, and I quit and haven't been in an airplane since. Also had 2½ years service in the Air Force during the first war and including the two, I rolled up about 15,000 hours. Before coming out here, I was one of the bunch that opened the Minneapolis-Chicago and St. Louis-Chicago runs out of Maywood. Also put in about three months on the Rock Springs-Cheyenne run. Had motor failure and cracked up on my first two flights on the Minneapolis run with the old Hall-Scott twin-motored D.H.'s, once in the middle of Lake Pepin. Had Jennies on the St Louis-Chicago which was a great improvement. And when I got on the Cheyenne-Rock Springs and then later out here with the DH's, they were superduper.

I think you were still in the service when Howard Smith was killed at San Francisco, I believe. He was a very good friend of mine and we roomed together at Maywood before he came out. Also roomed with Clair Bance, Monty Mouton, and Paul Scott. Maybe I can bring you up to date on some of the boys. . . . I saw Ken Imger in Hollywood about a year ago. He has a field in New Jersey. Stan Boggs is in the CAA at Santa Barbara; I see him once in a while at a Q.B. meeting. Ham Lee, Harry Huking, and a few of the other old-timers are still flying out here.

As for myself, I still have a house in Alameda, but spend most of my time here in Lake County in Northern Cal. I went into business before I quit United and have been at it ever since. Have bought a small ranch up here now and think I'll make this my permanent residence before long and live the life of a gentleman (?) farmer, I hope. If you ever get out this way, would be pleased to have you let me know and we will arrange to get together and tell a few tall ones about the early days.

Anyway, here's hoping you give us some more stories in *Adventure* and here's to the Old Gang.

Sincerely,
—Burr Winslow
Clearlake Highlands, Calif.

Incidentally, a copy of "This Winged World," Thomas Collison's fine anthology of aviation fiction, published by Coward, McCann, has just come to our desk. It contains Caffrey's "John A." which was one of the first stories he did set against the early air-mail background, as well as yarns by many other old familiar *Adventure* writers. It's a volume well worth having.

SPEAKING of boners: here's one for the caught-with-our-pants-down department—but literally! In "Escape to Palembang" in our April issue E. Hoffmann Price's "like Lady Godiva riding naked through the streets of London" was promptly and properly pounced on by R. Collier, Remley J. Glass, and half a dozen more alert readers for the egregious error it contained. We'll let Author Price have the floor for mass apology purposes now. He says—

> I plead guilty! Lady Godiva, according to an item in the Britannica (which is about six paces from my desk), did indeed, as you state, ride through the streets of *Coventry*, and not of London. Never occurred to me to look. Look at the Britannica, that is. Peeping Tom deserved to go blind. I might have known better! Riding through any town the size of London, she'd have developed goose-flesh or a bad case of sunburn, at least around the ankles.
>
> Thank you all for your interest, and for your good will in correcting me.
>
> Still and all, I have good company in my ignorance: I salute my fellow-blockhead, the editor of *Adventure*, who should have known better, too!
>
> Sincerely,
> —E. Hoffmann Price

And who are we to plead a leg to stand on? Recalling the numerous barber-shop-chorus sessions in which we've joined in—to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," of course—in warbling the familiar—

> Godiva was a lady who through *Coventry* did ride,
> Showing all the villagers her lovely bare white hide.
> And the most discerning villager—an Engineer, of course—
> Was the only man who noticed that Godiva rode a horse.
> We are, we are, we are, we are, we are the Engineers!
> We can, we can, we can, we can, we can drink forty beers—
> And so on, *ad infinitum.*

—we are glad to share the Price penitence and blush with an embarrassment the Lady herself never suffered. Woe is us!

WE WERE perfectly certain that Clive Grierson Cornish's story, "The Reluctant Dowser," in our February issue would beget a landslide of letters—pro and con, and of the sitting-on-the-fence variety,

too. And for once, it seems, we called our shots. Space just doesn't permit publication of all or even a small portion of the grist that came to the mill (or fuel—pardon us!—that came to the fire) much as we'd like. All we can do is thank all of you who wrote to us and to Mr. Cornish direct—W. S. Grant of Wilmington, N. C., E. F. Baird of Montpelier, Vt., Paul Emile Miller of Plattsburg, N. Y., H. H. Wilkins of Lytton, B. C., Can., C. H. Holmes of San Francisco, Calif., and a myriad more for the extraordinary interest they displayed in the story, and for their lucid and completely convincing explanations (invariably with irrefutable examples from personal history)—depending on which side of the fence they sat—of why water can or cannot be found by dowsing.

And we particularly want to thank Mr. V. H. Paquet of Estacada, Ore. for sending us parcel-post-air-mail (for our own personal experimentation purposes) what is undoubtedly the handsomest divining-rod ever bestowed on a water-witched editor. Oergon hazel nut, it is, and while we haven't had a chance to wield it yet—the spring freshets we've been having lately which have flooded the whole landscape with aqua pura making it unnecessary to *hunt* for water—we plan to do some prospecting the first dry spell.

Until such time about all we can do in the way of handing down a decision is to quote from "Water-Supply Paper #416—The Divining Rod—A History of Water Witching." It was published (so help us!) in 1938 by the Government Printing Office in Washington, D. C. under the joint auspices of the Department of the Interior and the United States Geological Survey. (Six copies came to us in the mail gratis after we published the Cornish story but you too can have it—as many copies as you want—at 15¢ per copy. Just write Washington!) Anyway the bulletin leads off with an introduction by one O. E. Meinzer who says, and we quote, "The use of a forked twig, or so-called divining-rod, in locating minerals, finding hidden treasure, detecting criminals or locating underground water is a curious superstition—" . . . . That's your Government talking, men, and that ought to be sufficient to change the minds of all you gullibles who believe in this water-witching nonsense, this forked-twig tomfoolery!

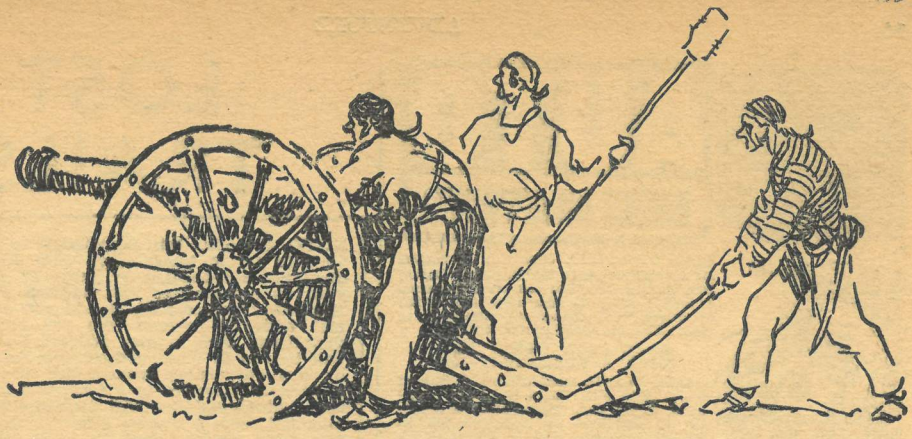
And now let us digress a minute, folks, and tell you a true story about a friend of ours who moved to the Western Shore of Maryland where he found a fine fig tree growing in his yard. Being interested in gardening and something of an amateur horticulturist he wondered what he might do to improve the strain of his figs—the ones he harvested from his tree had been tasty but on the puny side as to size—so he wrote the Department of Agriculture over there across the Chesapeake in Washington, D. C. to see what one of their experts could recommend. Promptly came back the reply informing him that his query didn't make sense for *figs didn't grow in Maryland*—too far north! Our friend went out in his yard and regarded his fig crop and wrote the Government again, suggesting that if their agricultural experts weren't aware of the fine fig possibilities along the Chesapeake—well, after all the Capital wasn't very far so why didn't they send someone over to look into the situation. And back came the answer from Washington suggesting that our friend stop harassing the Government with his nonsense and reiterating pontifically the "fact" that figs just don't grow in Maryland! Well, to make a long story short, our friend gave up in disgust and set about improving the strain of his figs all on his own—and very nice ones he got last season, too, we are happy to report.

So now to get back to dowsing, for of course you see the analogy.

It's all a myth and a superstition—this water witching—says the Department of the Interior and the Geological Survey.

They're just a myth—those figs in Maryland—says the Department of Agriculture.

Us—we're keeping an open mind—and we don't intend hollering at Washington no matter what that forked wand of Oregon hazel nut does, or doesn't do, when we get out to try it—once the spring floods subside!—K.S.W.



THE TRAIL AHEAD

Spaniards, Dutch, French, pirates—no one had ever stood in the way of Bart Spencer's roisterous father, stopped him from sailing his ships from profit to profit. And no one was going to stand in the way of Bart and his three-hundred-ton *Sarah*—not even the girl whose name she bore. Give him a few more years of war and he'd be able to buy all New London and her family, too, the way prices were soaring. With his privateer's commission from Congress and eighteen six-pounders aboard it was perfectly legal for him to claw his way through blockading British cruisers—so why bother to join either the infant Continental Navy or that of Connecticut Colony? Wasn't he doing all right the way things were? . . . But the girl thought otherwise. . . . "I cannot marry a man fattened on blood. Go and get richer," she said with withering contempt. And so he sailed. . . .

"STAND BY YOUR GUNS"

By R. W. DALY

—takes you on an action-packed cruise through Caribbean waters as the young captain from Connecticut wins a fortune in the teeth of enemy gunfire—only to have it turn to dust in his mouth before he learns that every bullion-laden prize he captures is anything but gold. It's Daly at his best in a roaring novelette of our navy in its cradle days with the tang of salt spray and powder smoke in every paragraph.

Plus "Flight from Nome"—a gripping yarn of the transport pilots who ferry passengers and freight across the frozen wastes of our northern-most frontier. . . . Another amusing Charley Hoe Handle story by Jim Kjelgaard. . . . A powerful tale of the dingo-infested back-bush of Australia by Jules Archer, and other stories of Africa, the race track, China today, by Alexander Wallace, Giles A. Lutz and James Norman. . . . As well as the usual unusual quota of fact stories, features and informative departments you can expect to find each month only in—

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 concerning 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 that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

I am trying to find my buddy, Arthur Von Boot, or Bot. We worked together for the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania, in Pittsburgh, during the spring of 1902. He was a lineman and was headed for the southwestern gold fields. He knew me only by my nickname, "Si Perkins." Anyone knowing his present whereabouts, please write to H. H. Epler, 2102 Hollingsworth Street, New Kensington, Penna.

I would appreciate any information about Frank and Fred Reed of New Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The last known of Frank, he was still in Pennsylvania and Fred was somewhere on the West Coast. Anyone knowing of either Frank's or Fred's whereabouts, please write to M. M. Mausser, R.F.D. No. 1, Bernard, Iowa.

I want to contact Stephen Kolowoski from Chicago who was on the Secretary of Navy's yacht and at the Receiving Station in Washington. Also Joe Vieditch who was on the old Reuben James 245 in 1920—and William Jennings Bryan Guest from St. Louis who was on the old battleship, the New Jersey. Would also like to find William Wischertch from the Naval Magazine in Coco Solo and Naval Air Station along with William Henry Hanna Hurst from New Orleans who was on the old Flusser 289 in 1920. Please write L. W. Fraser, CGM, USN, 16th Fleet Staff, Orange, Texas.

I am very anxious to contact my old buddy, former S/Sgt. Harry Rogers. We served with the 491st Bomb. Group H. He may be in Biloxi, Miss., or Mobile, Ala. I have been trying since October, 1945, to find him and any help you may be able to give me will be appreciated. Please write to George Paraspolo, 627 29th St., San Francisco, Calif.

For some time I have been trying to locate my father, George Franklin Watson. He was last known to be in Cleveland, Ohio. If any one has any information whatsoever about him, please write to G. F. Watson, 695 E. Utica St., Buffalo 11, N.Y.

I would like to contact Sgt. Percy Emerick who was stationed at Ford Ord, California, 1940-1942, 3rd Inf., 7th Div. Please write to ex-Sgt. R. L. Hale, 1720 East Johns, Decatur, Illinois.

Will any soldier serving in Company A, 275th Engineers Bn., 75th Division, in Holland during the first part of 1944 who knew Cpl. F/5 Thomas L. Graham or Quentin Rall please write to Mrs. J. E. Graham, Artesia, New Mexico.

I would like to locate Ed La Vergue who was on the *USS Marblehead* at the time of her historic encounter with the Japanese. Please write J. O. Jernigan, 1014 W. Eastland Ave., Nashville, Tenn.

W. G. Carter, General Delivery, Tucson, Arizona wishes to locate Charles F. Head, about 59 years old, born in North Bay, Ontario, Canada. Would also like to find Ellsworth Head, adopted by Willis family at an early age. Charles and Ellsworth had another brother, Tom, and a sister, Leah. Would much appreciate any information concerning these people.

Paul "Duke" Byrnes, 934½ Forsythe St., Toledo, Ohio would like to locate his old buddy, James "Sugar" Solyer with whom he worked in Nevada in '39. We worked together for five years with the Div. of Interior and his hometown was Germantown, Ohio. His last known whereabouts was on the U.S.S. Sands, in New York Harbor in 1940. Anyone knowing his present locality, please write to Paul "Duke" Byrnes.

Any person who was at Lamberts Point Degaussing Station, E.Y.P.S., N.O.B., Norfolk, Virginia during the period from June 1944 to July 1945 for any length of time, please communicate with Edward A. Steacy, (E.M., 3/c 10 Hopson St., Utica, N. Y.

I am trying to find my uncle, August Timm, who lives somewhere in Canada. His last known address was Loon Lake or Loon River, Sask., Canada. We have not heard from him for some time. I wrote him a letter last September and it was returned with the statement that he had moved away years ago. Hs is over sixty years old. I am worried about him, and would be very glad if you can help us locate him. Please write Alexander Fink, 2004 Larry Street, Phila. 42, Pa.

I would like to locate a friend of mine whose names is Joseph T. O'Hare. He was a seaman first class in the Navy. When last heard from in 1945 he was aboard the *USS Schroeder* in the South Pacific. Please write Francis R. De Capot, 65 Amherst Street, Nashua, New Hampshire.

Have any of you ETO men seen Lt. John Donnell Stroud (Johnny, John D. or Donn) formerly pilot in 556th Sqdn., 387th Bomb. Group, 9th Air Force. About 23 years old now, 6' 1", weight 140 lbs. Thin brown hair, brown eyes. He may be blind and badly burned; was shot down 6 miles southwest of Amberg, Germany, on April 9, 1945. Lt. Gerald Swift (Jerry or Swifty) may be with him, anywhere in Europe. Please write to his parents. C. B. Stroud, R. 1, Box 354, Coral Ridge, Ky.

W. H. McCarty, 965 Clinton St., Napa, California wants information of his two brothers, A. W. McCarty, whose nickname is "Buck" and W. F. McCarty, sometimes called "Bill."

I would appreciate any information as to the whereabouts of Joseph R. Connolly, formerly of Westfield, N. J., who has lived in and around Los Angeles since the summer of 1938. He was drafted into the U. S. Army in the early part of World War II. He was in the Air Corps at Hamilton Field, California, and at Hammond Field, California. After being discharged he resided for a time in Los Angeles and later became a civilian employee at a U. S. Naval Construction Unit at Inyokern, California. His father died and I would like to get in touch with him. Please write to J. R. Cummings, 329a Arlington Avenue, Jersey City, N. J.

Would greatly appreciate learning of the whereabouts of Harry (Gus) Stewart, Richard Donato and Sgt. Zimmer all at No. 2 Hospital, Det. Med. Dept., Fort Bragg, N. C. Stewart was from Philadelphia, Donato from New York and Zimmer from somewhere in the Middle West. All served in EENT, in 1942 and 1943. Dr. James O. Baxter, Jr., 1500 Front St., Beaufort, N. C.

Would like to contact Veterans of the French Foreign Legion. If you know of any, please pass this along. Write Elton Horsley, 3804 Mt. Washington, Dallas, Texas.

I would appreciate any information concerning Eddie Jolly, son of Orrin Jolly, last known to have been in Virginia where his father was a foreman for the E. J. Albright Construction Co. Eddie would be about 21 or 22 now. I would also like to hear from Samuel Baily (or Bailey) and Robert Miller, who lived at Arkport, N. Y., both of whom are about 20 years old. Please write to William L. Morris, R. F. D., No. 1 Arkport, New York.

I would like to locate Alvin U. Hodgdon, known also as Tex Ranger. He plays the guitar, has black hair and slightly protruding front teeth. Anyone knowing his whereabouts, please write Lee Kay, Lake Jackson, Texas.

I would like to hear from anyone knowing the address of W. F. (Billie) Benz, who used to ride rodeo in California some years ago. He was last heard of in Willits, California. C. R. Douglas, 628 Del Mar, Pasadena 5, California.

I would like information as to the whereabouts of Donald W. Drilling, age 20 or 21 years, about 5' 7" tall, with light brown hair and brown eyes. He lived in Chicago before going into service. He was a member of the 121st Infantry Regiment, 8th Infantry Division during the war. Anyone having information please write to William E. Toth, 1204 Morrow Street, Pittsburgh 21, Pennsylvania.

Information urgently needed of the whereabouts of Lloyd Garrison (Gary) Patten, whose father is dangerously ill and wishes him to return home. He served in the R.C.A.F. as Pilot Officer from 1943 to 1945, then joined the Merchant Navy in Vancouver. He is believed to have headed East this summer, probably looking for other employment. Please send any information to Mervyn L. Patten, General Delivery, Duncan. British Columbia, Canada.

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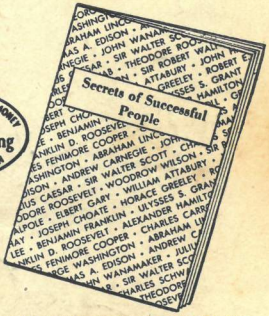

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