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November, 1948 Vol. 120, No. 1

THE NOVELETTE

The Code of Captain Corvain............GEORGES SURDEZ 8

They'd been mustered out of every savage corner of Africa from Senegal to the Soudan—those "mixed colonial" troops of Captain Corvain—to help France stem the Nazi tide. Now that he'd led them into a sure annihilation-trap it was up to him to herd them back to safety. A hell of a "white man's burden" for a guy who was neither adventurer nor hero—just a tired, bewildered and badly frightened man.

SHORT STORIES

Of the River and Uncle Pidcock............JIM KJELGAARD 42

It had taken Uncle ten hard years of fishing (while his wife, Elveeta, did the plowing) to catch the monster catfish of Sheep River. Now, if he gave all his time to the project, he figured it would take at least another decade to hook him again. Nice work if you can get it!

You'll Never Grow Old................COLEMAN MEYER 66

Anything can happen around a half-mile dirt track but Fergy Mason never expected to see the day when he'd have his front wheels running right between a harp and a halo in an all-out race without a nickel at stake—before 20,000 empty seats.

Man Bites Shark (a tall tale)................ NAT McKELVEY 77

A good racing shark is like a good racehorse—a coy, nervous critter—a slippery bundle of energy and speed. . . . Of course before you race him you've got to catch him. . . .

Harilal the Mighty........................ROLAND WILD 78

In the tiny Kashmir village of Bhasti there is no respect for a weakling. But Harilal, the puny one, knew that courage is not measured in inches, like the tusk of an elephant or the chest of a strong man.

The Murderer......................JOHN HETHERINGTON 87

Killer and captor—there they were, prisoned together on that tiny South Sea atoll. What malevolent fate had locked them away from the world—manhunter and quarry—then given to the slayer the treasure which could purchase freedom?

Published monthly by Popular Publications, Inc., at 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, 16, Illinois. Editorial and Executive Offices, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. Henry Steeger, President and Secretary, Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice-President and Treasurer. Entered as second-class matter October 2, 1935, at the Post Office, at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1948, by Popular Publications, Inc. This issue is published simultaneously in the Dominion of Canada. Copyright under International Copyright Convention and Pan American Copyright Conventions. All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction, in whole or in part, in any form. Title registered in U. S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Single copy 25 cents. Annual subscription for U. S. A., its possessions and Canada, $2.50; other countries, 75c additional. Send subscriptions to 205 East 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y. For advertising rates, address Sam J. Perry, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. When submitting manuscripts, enclose stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return, if found unavailable. The publishers will exercise care in the handling of unsolicited manuscripts, but assume no responsibility for their return. Any resemblance between any character appearing in fictional matter, and any person, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and unintentional. Printed in the U. S. A.

BE OUT ON NOVEMBER 10TH ◆ ◆ ◆

The Greatest Beast (an off-the-trail story)....... D. K. FINDLAY 94
The old Tibetan lama knew that only the powerful magic of gold could draw the traveler to the frosty slopes of Chotan Ind, for the towering she-devil mountain fed on Death. But curiosity is greater than fear. . . . Or so I thought until I stood at the edge of the abyss and learned how Elwood Schlinger met his doom.

Wing Shot.................... FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE 104
South lay the swamps where wild rice grew and where awaited sanctuary from eagle and icy storm. But today the gunners were on the prowl and as tired wings dipped lower to their flaming muzzles the northern duck's chances of wintering in the Promised Land grew thinner by the hour.

THE SERIAL

Bargain in Bombers (1st of 3 parts).......... M. V. HEBERDEN 48
Somebody in that little revolution-ridden banana republic was trying to buy U. S. Navy surplus PBY's so the State Department sent Weston down to C.A. to supervise the dicker. He arrived just in time to prevent the abduction of the American consul, and from that point on it was just a question of who wanted to murder whom—and what for!

THE FACT STORY

Water Hazard...................... EDWARD SONNENSCHEIN 100
Twenty-one years after the Great Fire, Chicago again faced disaster. But in this second crisis the Windy City's 1,500,000 inhabitants were saved by one lone deep-sea diver, whereas a regiment of firemen had been unable to cope with the first doom-threat.

DEPARTMENTS

The Camp-Fire.......... Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 112
Ask Adventure............... Information you can't get elsewhere 6
Ask Adventure Experts................ The men who furnish it 122
Lost Trails.............................. Where old paths cross 124
The Trail Ahead................... News of next month's issue 111

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

Do You Know These Two Characters?

If you do, you've recognized them already, of course. . . . If you don't, it's high time you got acquainted!

The one in the left-hand corner's Charley Hoe Handle, the wiliest poacher that ever made a conservation officer's life miserable, and his adventures *outside* the law—and *in* Warden Horse Jenkins' hair—have been generating chuckles and belly-laughs in these pages for the past four or five years.

The bearded swashbuckler ready to emerge for battle from the right-hand corner is Luigi Caradosso, Captain of Duke Pietro's Guard, and as canny a fighting man as ever beleaguered a city or slit an enemy's gullet. With wilts as sharp as the point of his poniard he's red-blooded ADVENTURE personified.

JIM KJELGAARD brings *Charley* back next month and F. R. BUCKLEY returns *Luigi* to the fold. . . . A glorious reunion with two old friends if you've met them before! Or, as we said above, if you've never been introduced—

IT'S HIGH TIME YOU GOT ACQUAINTED!

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

BRITISH salt-dust in our eyes.

Query:—I would like to know something of the leading men who have tried for auto speed records in the past few years.

I understand that a Mr. Cobb of England took a crack at it a few months ago, but I didn't hear about the results.

Could you give me names of some of the other contestants and the results of the tries they made?

—Bert Snyder
Beulah, Colo.

Reply by William Campbell Gault:—The records you refer to were all made on the salt flats, at Bonneville, Utah. The course is about fifteen miles long, and the time for the measured mile is an average time between two trips, one in each direction, thus balancing any wind handicap or help that might exist. The current record is held by John Cobb, a London fur broker, and it was made September 16, 1947. The record is 393.8 miles an hour.

Whether this is the top for all time, only the future will tell. It's possible no track will take the full speed of some future land wagon. Chester Ricker, chief timer and scorer of the A.A.A., states that the speed recorder on Cobb's car shows he was accelerating over the entire measured mile, and

at no time did he gain full speed. The run was not long enough. Cobb had seven miles in which to reach top speed, and seven more for deceleration, on each side of the measured mile.

The other records on the flats are also held by Englishmen, at least the super car records. Here are some, now broken by Cobb's latest peak:

Sir Malcolm Campbell—September 3, '33—301.13 m.p.h.
Capt. G. E. T. Eyston—September 19, '37—311.42 m.p.h.
Capt. G. E. T. Eyston—August 27, '38—345.5 m.p.h.
John Cobb—September 15, '38—350.2 m.p.h.
Capt. Eyston—September 16, '38—377.5 m.p.h.
John Cobb—August 23, '39—368.9 m.p.h.

A lot of the credit for encouraging speed records at the flats must go to Ab Jenkins, race driver, of Salt Lake City. He has established many stock and racing records on the flats.

Before the flats were used, this kind of races, against time, were held on the Daytona Beach run, but this proved too tricky. The sand was rippled and ideal conditions were needed—full moon, high tide and strong wind to get rid of the ripples. There were also treacherous soft spots in the beach. This is where the immortal Frank Lockhart was killed, while his wife watched.

CHANGE for a 50c bill.

Query:—I have about forty pieces of United States fractional paper money in denominations of 5c, 10c, 15c, 25c, and 50c amounts. Would you kindly tell me if they are worth more than their face value?

—George H. Bogardus
345 Crescent St.
Ogdensburg, N. Y.

Reply by William L. Clark:—Paper money, and in particular, fractional currency, must be in crisp, new, clean, uncreased condition to demand any premium value. However, it is still good money though it might be difficult to spend it. It is redeemable through a bank which will accept it subject to collection.

CHEVRONS from a stricken field.

Query:—I came into possession of three chevrons in 1943 on Munda Field, New Georgia, one of the British Solomon Islands. I have reason to believe that they are Japanese Imperial Marine chevrons, although my regimental S-2 and even divisional G-2 could not or would not identify them for me. Background is black, and bars, anchor and wreath are of gold thread. Rosette in the

(Continued on page 116)

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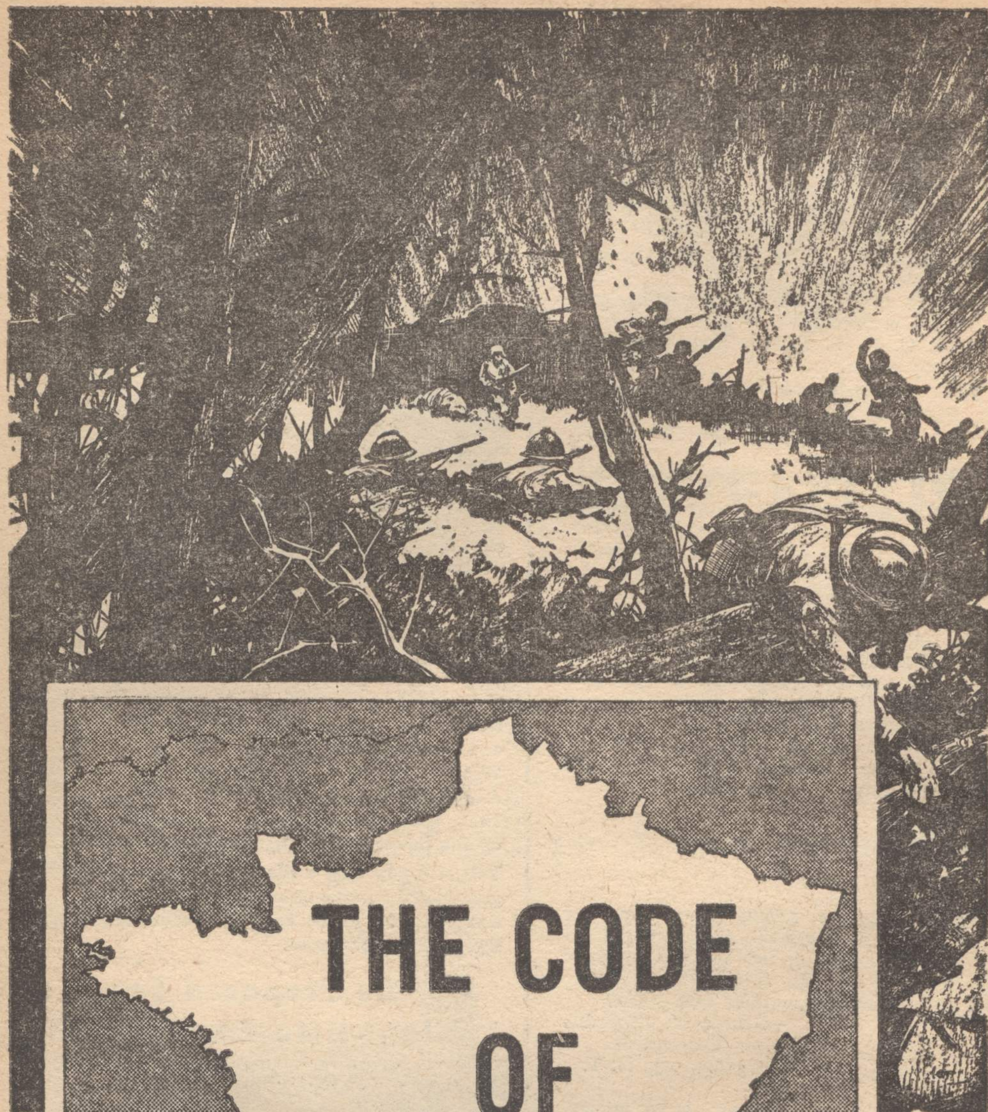

THE CODE OF CAPTAIN CORVAIN

ILLUSTRATED BY HAMILTON GREENE

There were eight infantry attacks that afternoon, five during the night.

By GEORGES SURDEZ

CHARLES-OLIVIER CORVAIN was neither an adventurer nor a hero. On that morning in mid-June 1940, when the survivors of his regiment were ordered to halt and dig in, he felt like a very tired, bewildered and frightened middle-aged man. But he had a job to do, the three strips of gold braid on his khaki sleeves marked him as a captain, hence a chieftain of warriors.

He gave his orders in a calm, clear voice, he consulted the map, he asked the necessary questions, supplied the needed information, assigned emplacements. Outwardly, he was a well-knit, rather tall man, a martial silhouette in the uniform and harness. His face was wide, tanned, with muscular jaws, soldierly under the steel helmet. The young sergeant who served as his second—lieutenant, sub-lieutenant, senior non-coms were gone, with two thousand others in the regiment—listened to him with respect and full confidence.

"Our sector's from that tree over there to the pond, there. The engine com-

pany's on our left, to cover the road. You have your automatic rifles posts well in mind? The location of the battalion P.C.? Here are the indications on the map—"

"Understood, *mon capitaine*. How much time have we got?"

"You're asking me too much." Corvain shrugged and smiled. "A couple of hours, maybe less. So far as I know, there's nothing between us and the Boches, nothing organized."

"If we get out of this one—"

"There'll be another, and another." Corvain lighted his pipe, sucked thoughtfully. "I wouldn't want to give you illusions, my friend." The skin around his blue eyes puckered. "We're poor insurance risks." He stepped forward, lifted his walking stick and called out, "Get a move on; the quicker you dig, the quicker you'll be safe."

He walked up and down behind the line of working men, slowly, steadily. Those who saw him could not guess that the "old man" was dazed, baffled by the nightmare of the past five weeks, the endless wanderings, the endless hours in jostling trucks, the grinding ordeal that had started in Lorraine, gone into the Ardennes, to the Somme River, back almost to the Loire, to shift eastward again and bring them to this stretch of wood and brush slashed by a departmental highway.

The back of his thighs and calves throbbed, his stomach was uneasy, his eyes burned like coals in his skull. The nights without sleep, the days without food, were piling up beyond endurance. If he closed his eyes, if he relaxed, his brain filled with a terrifying tumult, the ripping of rifle fire, the hammering of automatics, the explosions of shells, of bombs, the shrieking of diving planes. He had flashing visions of roads flowing in torrents of panicky civilians, of blasts, of human debris, of the dead, the dying, the wounded and the sick. All through it pierced the squeals of automobile horns, the snarls of klaxons, the panting of motors, the neighing of horses, the shrill cries of small children in agony. And always, always, the shrieking of the diving planes.

"I've got a job to do," he thought, his jaws clenched. He consoled himself: "Can't last much longer, it must stop soon. Maybe it will end today." Then he rebelled, was ashamed of himself. "No, it can't end. Those slobs can't beat us. Maybe it will stop for me soon, this afternoon, in an hour. Impossible? How many officers have we left?"

He considered his men, working heartily, grinning, singing. Those men must be as tired as he was. But no, they could not be. They were strong and they were young.

His men—the poor chaps did not realize that they added to his confusion, to his sensation of unreality, of living in a prolonged, phantasmagorical hallucination. They reminded him of a circus, of a segment of an immense exhibit in a Colonial Exposition. For he, as a reserve captain, had been tossed into an RICMS, a *Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale Mixte Sénégalais.*

THE men Corvain commanded wore French uniforms and were technically French. They were Negroes, Negroes of all types and all tribes, of all shades, ranging from the soot-black Woloffs to the chocolate-cream complexions of certain Soudanese. There were giants and there were small men. Herders from the steppes, farmers from the Cayor, fishermen from the Niger Banks and from the Gulf of Guinea, anything and everything, natives of the mountains and of the plains, of the grassy prairies and the thick forest, ranging from Senegal to the Chad and the Ubangi. Some were adorned with tattoos, others had slashed scars, others showed teeth filed to points. The majority knew nothing but their native dialects and pidgin-French, a small proportion could read, fewer still could write. But they all knew how to march in formation, to drill, to salute, to load and fire guns. The rifle had outstripped the primer.

But in spite of that, or because of it, Corvain thought suddenly, they had proved superb soldiers and homeric warriors. The regiment had been decimated again and again, had melted to a few hundred, but the survivors carried on without amazement, without complaint.

They grew tired, they became hungry, they were frequently in terror—but they did not worry!

They did not worry when they were scared to death. The captain almost laughed—that sounded idiotic, but it was absolutely true. They did not worry in the sense that he, and all Frenchmen, were worrying. They fought, they retreated, they fought, they retreated, they advanced a mile, went back twenty, saw their comrades fall, killed or maimed, but one torture was spared them.

The Negroes operated in a vacuum, many things did not affect them that tormented the whites. Events and places did not hold old associations, had little meaning for them. They must know, of course, that their side was getting the worse of the battle, but for them every road marker, every sign post, the names of towns, of rivers they crossed, was not a landmark of defeat.

In any case, they were a fatalistic lot, they lived and suffered, they fought and died, whether Christianized, Moslem or pagan, without the need of wondering why. Only a very few perceived complicated thoughts about France, the flag, military prestige as depending on victory. It had been their lot to be taken away from their normal existence, dressed, equipped and trained to fight with fine weapons, to fight in a strange land across the seas. So what? Men had always waged war, would always, hence many would be killed. Those things happened—and, realistically, they had no particular fear of any one weapon, felt no special indignation, no matter how death struck.

Corvain considered his soldiers. They were weary, they were scared, but they now worked hard and they would fight hard. But fighting was some time away. So, now, as they wielded their tools, they sang their own monotonous songs. Songs that gave expression to simple thoughts in a catchy rhythm: The road is long, the work is hard, the sun is hot, food is better than work and a woman is better than food—the road is long—the sun is hot!

Phenomenal fellows, really. It might have been predicted that they would be more bewildered and frightened than others under attack of diving planes. The reverse had proved true. The Negroes probably thought that the dive was the usual manner of attack and the noise did not bother them much. One of the early troubles had been to get them to take proper cover, because the whole thing fascinated them as it terrorized them. They fought back, too, with exceptional efficiency, even against this queer foe. And they brought down a number of planes. The fame of Corporal Boke Diarra, Second Company of the 6th RICMS, was spreading through the Colonial Regiments. On May 16, near Sommauthe, this young man of twenty, who was a Mossi born in Moro Naba—which to Captain Corvain meant as much as "something from somewhere"—had brought down two Dornier-17's inside twenty minutes with his automatic rifle —brought them down like plain, ordinary pigeons.

"They have elephants where he came from," Lieutenant Juvert had explained to the captain—Juvert, who was resting in a ditch somewhere in the Ardennes and would never be tired again. "They have elephants, you understand. And when your people have hunted elephants with spears or an old flintlock, you're likely to inherit good reflexes."

Corvain envied other officers, the professionals who knew all about the Negroes, who could speak a few words in several dialects. It was useless for him to ask a man where he came from, the answer meant nothing, most of the time, as the fellow would use the name employed by his tribe and not the French geographical designation. The duplications of names confused him, too—there was Amadou Ma and Mamadou Ba, a flock of Sambas, a swarm of Kones, numerous Boubous, a sprinkling of Koulibalis.

EXPERIENCED officers could connect face and name at once. The reserve captain had never learned. This led to comical dialogues at times.

"Private Kamara!" Corvain would call.

"Present, Captain," a gigantic chap would reply.

"Your corporal has reported you for—"

"No be me, Captain. He got palaver with Corporal Diallo he no be me, he be Kamara, Fakanda—me be Kamara, Lamine—no be Kamara, Fode—Fode Kamara he be First Company, Second Section—"

Corporal Diallo, who had made the report, would put in, "No be Kamara, Fakanda, Captain—slob who tell me 'go lie down' when I give order he be Kamara, Mori. Purveyor my group."

"All right, Corporal. Bring him."

"No can bring he, Captain."

"Why not?"

"He dead."

"He's dead? How long has he been dead?"

"Two, maybe three days, Captain. The time the truck burn."

"Then why did you report him?"

"Orders, Captain. He talk bad to me, I report him."

And that was that. Corporal Diallo had received orders to report all breaches of discipline, no matter how slight. He obeyed and reported. Unintelligent? Many well-educated men were baffled by army red tape and took no chances. Dead or alive, Private Mori Kamara had told his superior "to go lie down." It had been against discipline and was reported.

Diallo himself had died since, cut in two in the darkness by a blast of bullets from a German patrol. He had been replaced by a lean, rangy Bambara, Karamoko Diakite. The captain sought Karamoko with his glance—he was one man he could tell from all others.

When, just before the start of the German drive, Corvain had joined the company, in a Lorraine village, he had noticed that the fellow roamed nearby when he could. After an unusual number of salutes, he had come forward and asked, "You reservist, Captain?"

"Yes, my friend."

"Me too. Five years' service, 1929-1934. Then discharge. Get job, foreman, Bamako. War come, 1939, me mobilized." Karamoko had paused then asked timidly, "You catch little ones?"

"Yes," Corvain had replied. "Three."

"You got pictures?"

A little embarrassed—the captain knew that discipline was less on the social scale in Colonial troops—Corvain had produced photos from his wallet. The long, chocolate-hued face with the triple tribal scars had grown absorbed as Karamoko asked questions as to ages, weight, had complimented Madame Corvain. Then he had produced his photos.

"Seven little ones," he explained modestly. "Me catch two women. Me Mahomet, you know, make salaam, two wives legal, but only old one gets allotment—so I say all seven little ones be hers."

"Nice family," the captain had approved. And they were a healthy, sleek-looking lot. He had had to clear his throat for the next courteous remark, as the plural was unusual: "Very, very pretty wives."

"I no get killed, maybe, go back—catch another." Karamoko looked at Corvain earnestly. "You get killed, nobody can do anything. You get wounded, I watch for you." He had parted his thick lips in a friendly grin. "You, me, reservists."

So, when there had been a chance, Corvain had promoted his friend to the double-chevron. Another man whom the captain could identify was Mamadou Ba, a Woloff from Rufisque, because he was a colossus, half a foot over six feet, and even after the weeks of strain, certainly weighing over two hundred and thirty pounds. Mamadou, known as Doudou, could have been corporal, sergeant, warrant officer—he had been to the Goree School, could read and write French, Arabic and his own language. But Mamadou was a progressive, he proclaimed, and an anti-militarist.

Which hadn't prevented him from getting two citations and the War Cross during the so-called phony war, which hadn't been phony for certain outfits stationed before the Maginot Line—and since the start of the real war, he had distinguished himself constantly.

"What the hell," he had replied to the captain when twitted for fighting so well against his convictions. "I care for my hide, you know, Captain, and when the choice's between me, whom I've known and like all my life, and some

anonymous Boche whom I've never seen, what can I do?"

Now, Corvain looked for him, did not locate him. Then he spotted him, looming over all others, down by the road, where the engine company was finishing anti-tank barrages. Doudou was always more interested in superintending work than in doing much himself. The captain whistled to attract his attention, beckoned him back to his own lot.

"How about using a spade, old chap?"

"I was interpreting for the lieutenant down there, Captain; his baboons don't know French."

"Cut the clowning and get to work."

"Nice family," the captain approved. "Very pretty wives."

CHAPTER II

MEN AND SUPERMEN

IT WAS almost noon when the observation plane appeared, one of the slow, armored type. It swung about overhead for a few minutes, vanished due north. Captain Corvain ate a plateful of boiled rice, washed down with half a liter of red wine. He felt very sleepy.

The pounding of the anti-tank 37 startled him. The engine company was firing at something down the road. The news circulated—armored cars, seven of them. There were trucks behind, loaded with infantry. Corvain called his second: "Pass the word again—no shooting until I give the order. We'll let them come out of that wheat field—" he indicated with one hand—"to within thirty meters of us. We have no ammunition to waste."

"No, Captain. We're almost out of rifle-grenades."

"All right. You take charge of them. Make them count."

"I'll do my best, Captain."

Corvain hauled himself on his tired legs nearer to the line. He squatted beside a hole containing an automatic rifle and crew. He knew that the enemy was growing a bit more careful with his armored vehicles, especially when facing first grade troops, and that they would try to flank the road with infantry. There was a battery of heavy Colonial Artillery—four 155's, some 105 mortars, somewhere in the rear, and the Boche did not like that. Another circus aggregation, that battery, manned by Negroes also, but from Madagascar, Reunion and Martinique.

"Here's our lot—" the young sergeant called out.

The Germans were emerging from the uncut wheat, five, six hundred meters away. The Negroes were well covered, not too easy to spot. The invaders started cautiously, fanned out in groups. Elsewhere, down by the road, on the right in the woods, guns were firing at maximum speed. The Germans came on, in little streams. They had shed coats and most of their equipment, seemed light, efficient, agile. They did not run or trot, walked quickly, bending forward, tense. Corvain could see the backs of his soldiers crouching in the shallow pits. They were motionless, but so alive. One gunner, stretched flat and hugging his automatic, jerked one leg spasmodically, crazy to fire.

The German infantrymen paused, waited, moved on again. They were experienced men, were not deluded by the calm before them when right and left

flanks were blazing. They knew what they were walking into. But they could not stop, could not wait. They came nearer. Under the bucket helmets, Corvain could distinguish faces, even expressions. Good soldiers, brave soldiers, whom super-specialized education had brought to the point of obedient savagery reached with such ease by the Africans.

A crack outfit, all young chaps, all athletes, bones and muscles—bursting with spirit and combativeness. Some were armed with light machine guns, some with rifles and bayonets—all were hung with stick grenades, canteens, masks. Centuries of military experimentation had resulted in these soldiers—the last word, the super-fighters, Hitler's janissaries.

"Fire!"

The black men from Africa, armed with obsolescent weapons, opened fire. The automatics trepidated, the V.B. grenades curved overhead, dropped, exploded. Out there, the young warriors fell, some to cover, some forever. Their light machine guns broke into action, they tossed grenades. But the distance had been calculated, the grenades fell short.

And the bullets flew too high, cracked through the branches, smote into trunks. There was a furious, uneven exchange for two, three minutes, then a whistle signal, and the Germans scrambled back toward the field of wheat. The Negroes screamed and laughed. But they knew, as their white leaders knew, what was to come. They had had five long weeks to learn.

Corvain had sprawled and used a carbine, aiming carefully. He propped himself on his elbows. He felt he had to give orders—but what orders? He stretched flat again—in a couple of minutes, what was happening elsewhere would happen here—the heavy mortar shells would drop. The swine always had mortars, always had whatever was needed. When one multiplied what he actually faced by the number of places where the Boche had to break through, the result was stunning.

Lying there, waiting for the bombardment, Corvain found himself chuckling bitterly. He remembered impoverished Germany, victim of France's unjustified fears of invasion, the pleadings and the weepings, the moratorium, the Hoover Plan. And inside a few years, those victims, those beggars, had popped up with the most formidable array of hell-giving apparatus the world had ever seen. Planes of all kinds, tanks, armored cars, modern cannon, machine guns for all specialties—as many as were needed wherever they were needed.

Not all Frenchmen had been blind. Corvain had heard officers predict, four, five years before, that Germany would pounce on France with up-to-date material in profusion and lick her as badly as in 1870. The commander of the aviation had seen an air demonstration in Germany and had declared his material obsolete. But politicians felt that no man had ever achieved international fame by working for a "limited interest" and that agitating for armament was no way to win a Nobel prize for peace.

"We'll have to clean house, afterward," Reserve Captain Corvain thought, "those who are left alive." Then a cynical thought hurt him: "No, most likely we'll get more talkers. They'll explain everything—they'll say we didn't fight hard enough."

THE earth under him shook with distant detonations, with nearby explosions. The company on his right, across the pond, was catching it. Corvain lifted his head from time to time, peered into the sky under the helmet's brim, looking for planes. But no, the artillery would try first. They had a method for this—they had a method for everything.

"I'm forty-two," he mused. "And how many years have I spent at this nonsense? Three and one is four, four years—"

He had volunteered at eighteen, for the infantry, in the other war, the Great War. And he had made his debut at Verdun—not at the very beginning, but for the counter-attacks, in the fall of 1916. He had been an *aspirant* then, a cadet, and some of his men had been the age he was now. Men old enough to be his father, with years to spare, men who

had known Charleroi, the Marne, the Champagne attacks, the butchery along the Somme. They had obeyed him, but guided his faltering beginnings with kindliness and tact.

After that had come the Chemin des Dames, Picardy, the Second Marne. He had emerged a full lieutenant, with Legion of Honor Cross and War Cross. Four bronze stars on his War Cross—as well as gold stars and palms. The bronze were most respected by active soldiers—regimental citations. He had four of them—he must have done all right.

He had served for a couple of years after the Armistice, then had understood that he was not a soldier, a real soldier—that the Army was for career men, professionals from special schools, in times of peace. He had resigned, but held on to his reserve commission, had gone from time to time for a few weeks' refresher training. On the Fourteenth of July each year, he had put on all his medals and paraded. There were things one had to do, and Corvain had done these things always, without impatience and most of the time without thinking or questioning.

Charles Corvain considered himself a good citizen and an average Frenchman. His father had owned a pharmacy—that was the family business. But Charles' studies had been interrupted by the war and he had wished to earn a living very soon. He had risen to a very good position, office manager of a sizable manufacturing plant in a northern city.

He had married, a girl of his own kind with the plain name of Marie. He had a son of sixteen in Lycee, two girls, one thirteen, named after her mother, the other eleven, named after his mother. He had received no news from them in six weeks—and he hoped that his wife had had the sense to stay put, that she and his children had not been in one of those streams on the roads.

On one occasion, he had been within an hour's automobile ride of his home. But he had been on duty—and the German Army had been in the way.

If he got killed, there would be a pension. But what if the franc should drop after this debacle as it had dropped after victory in 1918? Would *they*, the powers that ruled all things, adjust pensions to prevailing living costs? Probably not for years. His son, after being a future military flyer for years, had recently decided to become a physician. If he, Corvain, was killed, there would not be enough money for that, and barely enough even if he survived and things became normal again.

The captain ordinarily brushed off such thoughts with an effort—they did not help anything and worried him. This time, he did not need to make an effort.

A rising scream overhead ended in a formidable explosion—followed by a series of other explosions. The mortars across the way had been turned on his company. The universe seemed to shatter and to scatter, to contract and burst out again and again. An acrid odor rose, smoke spread slowly, unrolling as it hugged the ground, shredding like impalpable tissue on the bushes and tree branches. *They* seemed to have all the shells in the World available for this spot, as for every other spot he had been at.

Three Negroes were killed by a single explosion. Others sought to huddle, instinctively, but the well-trained noncoms broke them apart with shouts and with blows. Corvain forced himself to get up, to walk from one hole to another, nodding, shouting a few words of encouragement. He learned then that some of the Germans must have lingered, for through the tumult he heard bullets passing close, seeking him.

As he squatted at his old post, a young corporal, a white man, came running, flopped near and panted, "Colonel says you hold on right here. Reinforcements are expected." He crouched tensely then was off, sprinting for the engine company.

"Risking that boy's life for that," Corvain grumbled. "Hold on, hold on—we know damn well we have to hold on—that's what they asked in the first place."

Then silhouettes came out of the wheat field, came forward. The machine guns fired as they came, gusts of bullets swept the line. Negroes settled down deeper in their holes as life left them. Then a contorted black face bent to-

ward Corvain, a high-pitched voice stabbed in his ear: "Captain, Captain—sergeant he dead."

"Get back to your place," Corvain looked around, located Doudou, scrambled to his side. "Doudou, when I'm killed, be sure the major knows it."

"Sure thing, Captain," the Woloff replied cheerily.

THERE were eight infantry attacks that afternoon, five during the night. Part of the wood burned after bombardment by planes. The colonel was killed, in the line, firing an automatic rifle. A major took command. He was in fairly good shape, only one arm in a sling. At a brief, incoherent conference, he announced that the regiment must hold on, that reinforcements were due, and that he had only a few officers and fewer than four hundred men left.

The night was horrible. Tracers crisscrossed above the fields, slithered through foliage. Tanks and trucks flamed up in the distance. The wounded, dragged to the rear, could not be evacuated. Corvain, between attacks, got a little sleep right on the ground. When he awoke, he felt damp and sniffly. For several years now he had been sensitive to draughts, and had felt pain in his articulations.

At ten in the morning, after twenty-four hours on the spot, the regiment was still represented. And the enemy sent a flag of truce with a message: The general commanding the German Division informed the commanding officer of the Senegalese that he was cut off from help, surrounded, and that he must surrender at once. He was given twenty minutes to do this, after which the German troops would resume the attack—*and take no prisoners.*

The wounded major's answer was brief: "Sorry, but we still have ammunition."

At noon, the remnant of the RICMS was pushed back in a hand to hand fight for several hundred yards. The Germans had brought up flame-throwers. They had brought up little cannon—47 guns on special mountings. They had brought up other crack units, Panzer Grenadiers. They even had old-fashioned cavalry prowling in the woods, infiltrating behind the position. The battalions were reduced to scores, there were companies counting less than a section.

The line was no longer a line, it was a dislocated area in which little knots of men held on, firing their last cartridges. At one o'clock, the news nevertheless seemed to leap from mouth to mouth: "They're shooting prisoners."

That had happened before. In fact, certain German Divisions, the 10th Panzer, for instance, had orders not to take Senegalese—that is to say Negro—prisoners. White men, officers, noncoms or enlisted men, who wore the badge of Colonial Regiments were to be executed where taken. It was, in a way, a great compliment to the fighting ability of the colored troops, but a compliment that called for a high price.

A French sergeant, sent as a second for Corvain from the Headquarters Company—which had virtually vanished—told the captain, "Forty or fifty guys of the Fifth Company, way on the left, were nabbed and gave in. They lined them up on the road and bumped off the whole lot with hand guns—a couple of guys managed to get away through the bushes and told us what the bastards were doing—"

"And we *are* cut off?"

"No doubt of it, *mon capitaine.* There's fighting ten kilometers to our rear right now. The swine must have broken through elsewhere and have left us to be mopped up by the supports."

That turned out to be a correct guess.

The Germans were much too efficient to waste shells and bombs on elements scattered through woods and no longer important to the fight as a whole. Groups of grenadiers circulated among the trees, shooting fast with their terrible little hand-guns, much handier under cover than the long-barreled 24 automatic rifle used by French troops. It was no longer a battle, not even a combat, but a series of rapid, spasmodic skirmishes—a brief rattle of shots, the glassy bursts of grenades, then both sides leaving the scene hurriedly unless there was a marked advantage.

Night came again and proved almost quiet in the immediate vicinity—the crash of battle was far south now, where other French units were starting other last stands. Troop-trucks, armored cars, tanks, artillery convoys, chugged by on the invisible road, which had been cleared of obstacles.

When dawn broke, Corvain realized that he was hung in midair. The handful of *Tirailleurs* with him, thirty or less, was isolated, out of contact with any organized force. Within an hour, the Boche would be astir again, searching methodically. To all practical purpose, the regiment could be considered annihilated and the individuals could consider escape.

He called the men together in a small clearing, as yet untouched by the war. The smell of the earth was good, birds were singing.

Corvain explained the situation briefly, announced that they would work their way southward. He and the sergeant bent over the map, trying to pick out landmarks that the Negroes could memorize and identify in case they, the white men, were killed.

"Avoid big bridges over streams—they're guarded by the Boches." Corvain repeated this slowly. "Doudou, make sure that each one understands in his own lingo—wade or swim, but keep away from bridges. Report to the nearest French formation they meet."

"Understood, Captain." Doudou went from man to man.

The sergeant laughed. "Anyway, Captain, they won't be mistaken for fifth columnists."

"The poor chaps, they—"

CORVAIN never finished. Without perceptible transition, he was looking up into the clear sky between the leaves of the tall trees. There was a weight across his middle, and a lot of shooting in all directions. He cursed as he realized that while they were holding their little conference, a party of Germans had surprised them. He propped himself on his elbows, tried to jerk himself free and erect. The weight remained. He saw that it was the sergeant, dead. He moved again to push him aside, something snapped in his brain and he lost consciousness.

Not for very long, for when he opened his eyes again, there were the leaves overhead and the clouds had scarcely moved. The weight had been taken away, the shooting had ceased. His ears felt muffled, stuffed and he had the sensation of grinding sand between his teeth.

He felt pain around his middle, reached down and encountered hands. He looked up and saw a Negro squatted nearby.

"No move, Captain."

"What the devil's going on?"

"Me, *Tirailleur* Kamara, Koffi Kamara. First-aid."

"I'm wounded . . . ?"

"Hit for belly, hit too for back—" Koffi Kamara gave more precise indications.

"All right, I'm done for. You can go."

"Me no go, Captain. Me now purveyor automatic rifle. I be first-aid man before. No move, please." The man was putting on a dressing, seemed to know what he was about. These lads were

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short on theories but long on practice. Corvain hardly felt the pain. He realized that it was because of shock. When it did start—

"Finish quickly and beat it."

Corvain was resigned. He had his service revolver and might be able to use it once or twice before they finished him.

"We no go, *mon capitaine*," another voice spoke. Corvain looked around, saw Corporal Karamoko standing by. "Remember, me tell you I take care you proper? We go take sticks, maybe rifles, we make stretcher. We carry you." He grinned encouragingly. "You no live for die, Captain. No."

"You can't do it."

"We can. We plenty men for carry you. Carry you far."

"It's no use, Corporal. I'll die."

"No die," Koffi Kamara announced. "Me look, see no guts out. We get you doctor, fix you up."

"Corporal—" Corvain snapped.

"Corporal he go get men make stretcher for you, Captain, and get men get all cartridges from dead."

"Call him," and when Karamoko stood before him, Corvain spoke again, sharply. "You leave me here and get the men away as fast as possible. They're not taking prisoners, if they catch you, you'll be shot, do you understand, you'll be shot?"

"I understand good, Captain."

"Then obey orders."

Karamoko Diakite then perpetrated two separate breaches of discipline: He disregarded a direct order and disarmed a superior officer. Shaking his head wonderingly, he stooped, snatched the revolver from the holster, slid it into a pocket of his pants—which did not improve an already sketchy fitting.

"You got fever, Captain," he said apologetically.

Two men arrived with an improvised litter, made of stout poles, picked up who knew where, and coats stripped from corpses. Corvain was lifted from the ground, with precautions, and laid upon it. Without delay, the party started off.

Then the pain, which had been biding its time, lashed out. Corvain groaned and bit his lips. Then he started to shout: "Halt—damn you, you fools, halt —corporal—"

"Captain?" Karamoko stood at present-arms before the litter.

"I order you to put me down and beat it—our lines are at least twenty kilometers from here—it'll take all day—I can't stand it, do you hear?"

"We find doctor soon, he fix you," Karamoko declared. The bearers walked on.

"Put me down, you fools!"

Karamoko did not answer, but Doudou appeared. He had a bleeding cut across one cheek, his left arm was bandaged.

"I permit myself to remark to the captain," he said formally, "that if the captain howls like that, the Boches will hear him and get the lot of us poor slobs."

"Then tell him to leave me—"

"That would be of no use, Captain, no use at all. Corporal Karamoko has tasted authority, has been invested with powers and prerogatives, Captain, and he is a Bambara—as you would know if you had served longer in the Colonials, Captain, a Bambara is stubborn as two mules. Perhaps if the Captain would try smoking—"

"I've lost my pipe."

"I've a lot of cigarettes, Captain." Doudou smiled proudly. "I collect them, when the package is not too messy." Striding beside the litter, rifle slung, helmet pushed back, Doudou produced a crumpled blue package, took out and straightened a cigarette, placed it between Corvain's lips, lighted it. "Better? The pain will dwindle soon, Captain. I won't say it will go altogether, but it will dwindle."

"It better," Corvain shouted.

Then he forced himself to be quiet. There was a white man's dignity involved, as well as an officer's. These chaps were amazingly stoical under pain. Doudou walked near—the Captain noticed that when bearers shifted, as happened with increasing frequency after an hour or so, the Woloff was careful not to take a turn—but he provided cigarettes, conversation and a queer kind of skeptical optimism.

"WE SEEM to have shaken off the Boches," Corvain remarked after a long while.

"Oh sure, that's not hard." Doudou puffed at the cigarette jutting from an angle of his thick lips. "We've got a couple of pretty smart guys along —trackers, you know. One of them is scouting ahead, Dosso Yeo. Hunter in civil life."

"What is he?"

"He's a Bete, Captain."

"What's that?"

"A tribe in the Ivory Coast," Doudou explained. "You know, the companies that cut mahoganies in the forest down there have a lot of laborers. They're supposed to feed them a certain amount of meat. Beef costs a lot of money and spoils. So they have guys who do nothing but hunt, like Dosso Yeo. Shoots anything, porcupine, monkeys, antelopes, even crocodiles and big snakes. Meat's meat to most of those guys like the Korokos.

"Korokos? No, we haven't any in the regiment. They're all right for simple labor, but they don't catch on as soldiers. Even the French give up trying. There's another bunch that's free from military service, you know, the dwarfs, the little fellows."

"The pygmies?"

"Yes, Captain. They're all under the minimum height of one meter fifty-two." Doudou looked envious. "About Dosso Yeo—queer thing, Captain. He's a hunter for a timber concession. He uses an old shotgun, and he is expected to bring one piece of game for every cartridge. His misses are charged against him. So he never missed with that shotgun. But they could never teach him to shoot with a rifle or a automatic. Can't understand windage, or rear-sight or anything. Best shot in the regiment was Alyoun Sissey, and he was a tailor in Senegal!"

"Is he with us?"

"No, Captain. He was killed on May 19, when the planes bombed our trucks."

"How many men have we got? I can't see them all."

"Ten, Captain."

"But there were more than twenty—"

"It was quite a mess after you got hit, Captain. There were twelve Fridolins, or Boches, if you prefer. They had us cold at the start, but Mamadou Toure, first-class private, got a bright idea. After ducking out of sight with two or three guys, he guessed which way the swine would back up and ambushed them—they ran right back into the rest of us. Cigarette?"

"Yes, and a drink, if possible."

"Coming up—water or brandy?"

"Brandy."

Another hour had passed. Corvain's body tormented him. At times, it was like being burned with a red hot iron; at other times, he felt an odd nausea, as if he wanted to throw up his very bones. He was weak, and his will had abdicated. Often he wanted to laugh, to laugh endlessly.

A year ago, he had been in his office at the plant, a comfortable office, American-style desk, filing-cases, pictures of the factory at various stages of development, from 1862 onward. At about this time of day, he would have been back from a hearty lunch at home. He probably had had an argument with his wife about the manners of the girls, who saw too many Hollywood movies. Or about his boy, who wrote his mother for additional money.

He had been planning for a vacation in August, three weeks at the seashore. Only a few hours' drive. A quiet beach, with very few tourists. An old-fashioned hotel, that served excellent meals. He had done more card-playing than swimming.

Had anyone predicted then that in less than a year he would be dying on a stretcher, carried through the woods of an Eastern Department by two tattooed warriors, sought by merciless foes, smoking cigarettes taken from the pockets of dead men, conversing of pygmies, Bete hunters, with a gigantic Woloff who had read Montesquieu, dependent for decisions on a Bambara who had taken a liking to him because he was a reservist and a family man, he, Charles-Olivier Corvain, Captain, would have laughed, laughed.

He was dying, there was no doubt of that. He felt that he was. There was a

sort of hearth of pain in his middle, but his legs, his arms, were growing numb. His forehead felt damp and constricted.

"Doudou—"

"Mon capitaine?"

"I won't last until night. Try to persuade our friend to put me down somewhere in the shade, with my pistol and a canteen—you take my papers and if and when, turn them in to somebody. I can't stand much more."

"We'll have you comfortable in another hour, Captain."

"Nonsense. We're not making three kilometers an hour, and the sergeant told me this morning the French line was a good fifteen to twenty kilometers southeast."

"We're not heading for there, Captain."

"Then where?"

"There are farms around here. We'll hide a while. The folks will get a doctor for you. Peasants are nice people—I always get along fine with them."

"But they may not want to shelter us—that would make them risk reprisals from the Boches."

"They won't care about that. They're French, Captain."

It was a point Corvain did not care to argue with a Senegalese.

CHAPTER III

EACH TO HIS OWN WAR

THE stretcher-bearers dropped their burden suddenly not long after that, to attend to another group of German moppers-up. Captain Corvain was not aware of his identity and importance for some days after that. He had periods of consciousness, but brief and shadowed by extreme pain, moments that flickered by like the lights one sees while speeding through a tunnel.

There was one lucid spell when he

Mamadou Toure guessed which way the swine would back up and ambushed them.

opened his eyes and saw, first, Karamoko, Koffi and Doudou forming an interested and interesting group some few feet away, and two old men with pinkish faces and cotton-wool whiskers bending over him. He knew he was on a bed, a comfortable bed. Over the foot of that bed, behind the three motionless heads of the Negroes, he saw a plastered wall and on that wall a framed picture. He knew that picture, a colored print entitled *The Struggle for Daily Bread.* His grandfather had had one like it, so he naturally believed that he was at his grandfather's home.

"He's coming to," one of the bearded men announced. "Hello, Captain, do you hear me? You're safe, you're all right. Do you hear me?"

"Of course, I hear you," Corvain said grouchily. He had to admit he was not with his grandfather and that made him strain to think. "You're the doctor? How badly did I get it? My papers are—"

"Softly, softly." The beard chuckled, eye-glasses flashed. "Yes, I am a doctor. An old ass of a doctor, but the best you can get just now."

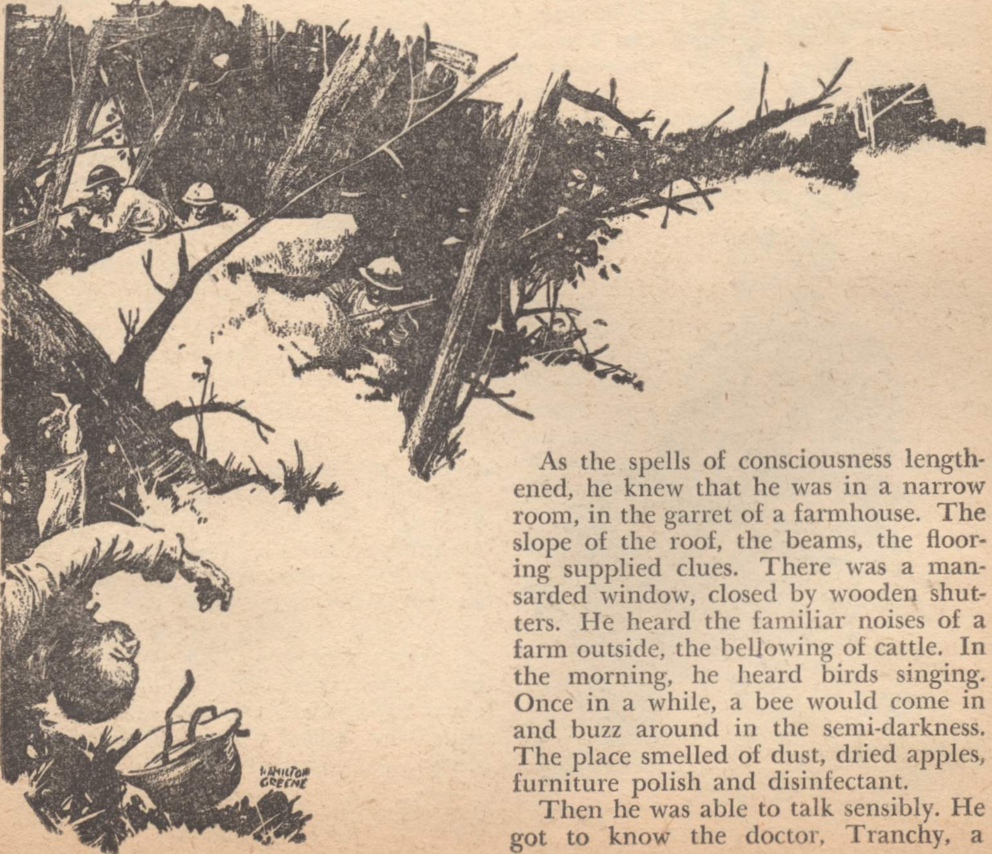
"I was shot."

"Four times. The chap aimed at your middle and it's a miracle you weren't killed. Now, we'll—"

"But where was I hit?"

"Upper right thigh, inside. Through the right hip, missing the bone. On the abdomen, the missile sliding through fatty tissues without perforation. Through the right buttock. Your man here did a very good job of dressing, but now I'll give you a shot to ease you and attend to things properly—"

The old man had moved his hands, somewhere out of sight, the pain had rekindled, streaked like lightning across his brain, exploded, and he had sunk out of existence again. Then he had other lucid moments, not quite coherent. He knew that the old men came in, went out, that the Negroes were looking at him.



As the spells of consciousness lengthened, he knew that he was in a narrow room, in the garret of a farmhouse. The slope of the roof, the beams, the flooring supplied clues. There was a mansarded window, closed by wooden shutters. He heard the familiar noises of a farm outside, the bellowing of cattle. In the morning, he heard birds singing. Once in a while, a bee would come in and buzz around in the semi-darkness. The place smelled of dust, dried apples, furniture polish and disinfectant.

Then he was able to talk sensibly. He got to know the doctor, Tranchy, a

stocky, neat old man with huge, deft hands. The hands were white and soft, distended by veins. Tranchy was shabbily dressed, almost like a peasant, and the white hair around his mouth was stained by the cigars he smoked. Corvain learned that he had been retired for five years when war had forced him into practice again.

"How far is the front now?" Corvain asked after a while.

"The front? Ah, yes. No more front, it's over."

"We—we're beaten?"

"Evidently."

"Ah—" Corvain was dazed. One may expect a blow on the skull, know it cannot miss, see the club come down. But the impact can nevertheless be stunning. He was very weak and he felt the tears rolling down his cheeks. "So what is happening?"

The doctor cracked his knuckles, coughed.

"What do you expect? Our politicians, civil and military, got us into a fine mess this time. And it's become a race as to which of them can kiss the largest number of Boche posteriors in the shortest time. You'll have to know, sometime, and alas, we can't all be lucky and die of a broken heart. I'll bring you newspapers, so you can learn about Petain, Laval and company. I have to go, now—my official rounds to attend to—"

Doctor Tranchy

"Are *they* still around here?"

"Yes, and likely to be here for a long time."

"So if they find me, I'm a prisoner?"

Tranchy sat down again, held his wrist.

"Look here, brace yourself. They're here, their patrols are searching constantly. If they find you, you will be shot."

"Shot? You say the war is over—"

"Might as well tell you—" The doctor relighted his cigar. "There's been a lot of trouble around here. To start with, your outfit and that colonial artillery back of you gave them a lot of trouble. Then your scattered groups fought on, after being warned not to. That sounds funny, but they win and everything they decide must make sense. Then, your isolated groups attacked patrols *after* the Armistice, because they hadn't heard of it. There were raids on parked trucks for ammunition and food. So their Kommandeur gave notice that any French military personnel in the district that did not surrender inside forty-eight hours for decision on exact status, would be executed when captured. He made it a point to stress that this applied particularly to 'the black mercenaries' and their European cadres."

Corvain thought a while. "My men haven't complied?"

"They haven't. Possibly because they knew they would be shot in any case."

"Where are they?"

"Not far, don't worry, they won't be found. We'll wait a while then get you and them out somehow. They're good fellows." The doctor grinned. "But extraordinary fellows. They speak so oddly you are startled to see them do things so efficiently—that Koffi fellow, he'd make a fine surgeon, has an instinct for it, knows anatomy, even if he doesn't know the terms. And a bushy-haired chap fixed the motor of my old car, which has baffled French mechanics."

"There's Doudou—"

"The big one?" The old doctor frowned. "Too loquacious."

WHILE Corvain was recovering, the *Tirailleurs* came in to see him regularly. Three at a time, and always either Karamoko or Doudou was along. And one of the two was around every mealtime, to wait on him. There were women around, but they had to turn the dishes over to the blacks. Their captain depended on them.

"You argue with the doctor, Doudou?" Corvain asked one day.

"No, Captain. But he was taking care of my arm and lecturing me on Negroes being superstitious, and I told him our medicine men compared very well with Ambroise Paré."

The captain left the bed for the first time about a month after the Armistice. He did not turn handsprings, felt very weak, but he made sure that everything functioned normally, walking back and forth in the room. By that time, he had become very friendly with his host, Monsieur Durosier, the other old man with a white beard. The farmer, who was no longer active, had much leisure and came up to the garret every day, very often to spend the evening.

Durosier was sixty-eight and must have been a very large man when in his prime. He still exuded a sort of quiet, soothing strength.

"You'll be well enough to leave us, Captain, pretty soon. You must come back here for a vacation and bring your family," he said when Corvain showed off his walking. "Bah, at your age, one recovers quickly."

"At my age? I'm forty-two."

"At forty-two, I was young. Young enough to be playing soldier around the Souchez sugarmill."

"You were in the war—the other war?"

"Forty-one when mobilized in 1914. Three years in the trenches." Durosier chuckled mirthlessly. "The way things turned out, we might as well have let them in, stayed home. *They're* here. After all our trouble. I have a son and two grandsons in the service in this war —they won't like to see *them* when they come home."

"All three are safe? You're a lucky man."

"I have no news, really," Durosier corrected, "but they'll be back. We never get killed in wars in this family, we always get home. It's well known around these parts. My great-grandfather, who fought at Lutzen and at Waterloo, told me about his father coming back from Rosbach—with two fingers gone, but alive—"

Doudou

"He was at Waterloo?" Corvain wondered.

"He was—and in the last square, according to him."

"And he told you about it, himself?"

"Why not?" Durosier's cheeks pleated in a smile. "I know you think I'm an old liar, everybody does until I explain. My grandfather was born here in 1793—well, not exactly here, but in the old house, where your Negroes are. So he was twenty-two in 1815. He was eighty when

I was born in 1873 and he lived to be ninety-six. So he had sixteen years in which to tell me yarns. He and my grandfather, who'd served in Algeria and in the Crimea, used to argue as to who had had the tougher time.

"Then my father, who'd been in the Prussian War of '70, would kid the two of them. When I got home from the Great War, my grandfather was ninety-four, and he told me he knew more about trenches than I did, because he had been at Sevastopol. When you meet my father—he doesn't get around here too often these days, roads aren't safe—be careful about talking war, or he'll cut you short and tell you what Canrobert's Corps did to the Prussian Guard in the orchards of Sainte-Marie-aux-Chênes. Or I'll tell you about Verdun and the Bois des Caures—"

"I was there myself," Corvain said.

"Ah?" Old man Durosier squinted at the wounded man. "Right—you can have been—well, you know that nothing could be tougher than Verdun."

"It was different, but as tough."

"Where the devil were you at Verdun? They used everything—they bounced 420 shells on us—why, I saw fifty guys lined up for soup and knocked all—"

"The air bombs are worse."

"Listen, they dropped enough around here, I've seen the craters, and there's no comparison."

"The force spreads laterally." Corvain used both hands to illustrate. "You have to be right under them to know what it's like. You get the feeling the bomb's aimed right at you, and they shoot machine guns—"

"They had machine guns at Verdun, if you remember." Durosier checked himself, shrugged. "Same stuff, each one to his war. But, as I was saying, my boys will turn up, in a year, in two or three. We don't get killed in wars. And we live to be ninety-odd. I don't know of any who reached the hundred—"

"You'd consider it ostentatious, eh?" Corvain laughed.

"No, we just can't seem to make it." Durosier protested. "Now, there's a family near the village, third farm from this one, where they always have a centenarian. Just now it's a woman, one hundred and three. She remembers when they planted the Liberty Tree in the village square after the Revolution of '48. This region is healthy, good air, good bread, good wine. Wait until you come back for that vacation and—"

"I've got to get away, first," Corvain reminded him.

"That won't be hard. I'll give you civilian clothes and some papers. I know the mayor, he's a decent fellow and will help. But it's going to be a hard job to get your Negroes out. They'll have to travel nights. The Germans around here hate their guts. Well, your guys have been cutting up some, raiding for food or just having some fun. With them, it isn't a question of getting civilian clothing—see, most of them can't talk good French so they can't say they lived here before the war. And if they didn't live here, they were soldiers. The big fellow—" Durosier interrupted himself—"he's bigger than I ever was, but I was stronger—well, he can talk well enough and could get away with it. But the others—zip—"

He held his hand level before his chest and sliced sharply.

"I'll have to see that they're safe before I go," Corvain said, after a moment's thought.

"It's risky. You'll have to make two or three trips."

"I know," Corvain agreed. "But—well, I'm responsible for them. And they didn't quit on me."

"Right." Durosier nodded. "There are things you must do."

"How far do they have to get to be safe?"

"Not so far. Fifty, sixty kilometers. There's a place near Moulins where they can get across the river. Then it's French and they can report to the cops and be sent to wherever their regiment's got to. We're getting a few away almost every night. Your bunch isn't the only one." He laughed loudly. "I'll make a bet—you go and stick a pitchfork in any hayloft at random, and one chance in twenty, you jab a Senegalese."

"The German patrols are pretty thorough?"

"Yes and no. Hard to tell. They're in a foreign country, and they take it slow-

ly. See, it's no joke to have lived through a war only to be bumped off by a Senegalese in some dark lane in the woods. They're leery. My idea is that they flop on the job often not so much because they wouldn't know where to look but because they're not crazy to find guys with guns, desperate and hungry.

"But it's going to get tougher and tougher, because they're working on the officials and the gendarmes will be called out to help them search.

"Now, gendarmes are either all good or all bad. The good ones will take the Boche patrols for long walks and find nothing. The bad ones will want to show zeal—for some cops, a promotion is worth hanging their mother—and dumb as gendarmes are supposed to be, they've been around a long time, know the woods and farms. For instance, a local gendarme would know where I bunk your fellows, because they know there's a cellar where the old house used to stand."

"You'd be in trouble, then."

"No. I'd be dead. If you're caught harboring, feeding or aiding a fugitive, you get shot, your farm is burned and the nearest village pays a big fine. They had all of us farmers at the village hall not long ago and a German officer, who spoke as good French as you do, told us in so many words. He said he was sorry, but that he hoped we had too much sense to risk our lives, our property, the welfare of our women and children, to protect a lot of savages who would turn out, before long, when their instincts prevailed, to be more dangerous to us than to Germans.

"He then said that anyone turning in fugitives inside twenty-four hours would be considered to have cooperated and be left alone." Durosier lifted his hard old hands. "There are swine in every race, you know. We all left together, but some of the bunch must have managed to send in information. The next day, the German patrols made two raids and collected fourteen Negroes and a white sergeant. Not in farms, in camps.

"The Boches had information and sneaked up on them, jumped before they could get their guns. They put them in an army van and took them to the sub-prefecture. The next morning, they led them out into the yard of the prison, behind the Gendarmerie, and mowed them down with tommy-guns.

"Well, not all people are gutless. The mayor asked for the bodies to bury them. The Boches let him take the white sergeant's corpse and put it where it belonged, in the cemetery, but they wouldn't give up the Negroes. They took them into a ditch outside town, poured oil over them and set the heap on fire. They said animals should be buried like animals. Some people living around there covered up what was left.

"All right. The mayor asked for a report giving the list of names, because the Negroes were French soldiers and their families had to be notified. The commander refused, the mayor insisted —so they had the mayor shot. Of course, he didn't know they'd shoot him, and they laughed when he tried to back down.

"Know what it makes me think of,

Captain?" Durosier asked. "Well, the stories my kids used to leave around, about creatures from other planets who considered human beings as we do bugs, and killed them like insects."

CHAPTER IV

A SIMPLE PLAN

IT WAS some weeks before Corvain was strong enough to go out. But he was not too impatient, he was comfortable enough in his small cell in the garret, supplied with food, drink, cigarettes or tobacco, books and magazines. There was also the fact that something seemed to have happened to his will, that he sank for hours on end into brooding.

After a long time, he visited his men, leaning on a cane. Durosier had checked up and knew it was safe for him to be outside. The Negroes' hiding place seemed frightfully obvious to him, because he had been told of it. Two hundred yards or less from the farmhouse, in a clearing of the woods, were the ruins of the Durosiers' former home, overgrown with grass and shrubs. Such a place is common in Eastern France and known as a *chezal*. There was nothing much left in evidence, as most of the stones and bricks had been used in the construction of the "new" house, in 1833.

The stumps of walls, the tangled vegetation, the manure of stray cattle, all shouted neglect, desertion. Patrols made up of outsiders could have, and had in fact, circulated in the clearing without suspecting the presence of men. But there was the cellar, and as is the case in such old houses, the cellar was very large and quite deep. At the time it had been dug, people in the country had needed such space for storing food and wine.

Few people thought of that now, when one could walk to the highway, hail a bus and roll into the village to shop. The first part of the cellar was dirty, filled with rubble. German patrols had visited it, flashed their lights about. Another part, almost as spacious, had been walled off, could be entered only from a vent camouflaged with earth. The Negroes lived in it, or more correctly hid there when necessary. The local people had already organized a system of signals to warn of the approach of the Occupants, as the Germans were called openly, or "potatobugs," as the peasants termed them.

Corvain found his men very well adjusted to their odd existence. They were clean, their uniforms in good order, weapons furbished as if for inspection in barracks. Karamoko showed him a large cache some distance away, stocked with canned goods, sacks of rice, sugar, coffee, beans, lentils, some sugar in loaves, cases of macaroni and other pastes. There were standard five-kilo buckets of jam, jellies and lard. All of this was neatly stowed and protected from dampness. Most of the stuff had been "retrieved" from German army trucks.

There were German weapons of all sorts, pistols, grenades, rifles, carbines, automatic guns, and a considerable assortment of ammunition. Karamoko outlined all the precautions he had taken, the posting of sentries, the concealing of latrines, the detailing of men to look for mislaid objects that might arouse the suspicious attention of searchers.

Dosso Yeo, the Bete, was a hunter again. But he did not use a gun now, because it was noisy. He hunted with stones and a good club. Helped by Doudou he told his captain that he was very pleased—this French forest was like a park compared to what he had known, and there was nothing dangerous to fear, no leopards, no crocodiles in the streams and ponds and virtually no snakes.

"Y'en a bon trop," he concluded. "It's good too much."

Of course, there were murderous Germans, but one could not expect perfection! Dosso Yeo knew quite well that if the Boches caught him they would shoot him like a dog. But they had not caught him yet and he was not one to fret about the future. Some fine day, somehow, matters would straighten out of themselves—there was no record-

ed instance when matters had failed to do so.

Doudou, much more sophisticated, had found happiness also. Durosier had permitted him to take books from the stock amassed by his children and grandchildren, some of whom had gone to Lycee. Doudou ducked all hard work, and was brushing up on history.

"Did you ever speculate, *mon capitaine,* on what would have happened if Danton had sent Robespierre to the guillotine instead of the other way around?"

"Can't say I ever did, old man."

"Very interesting. And, in the future, will de Gaulle be considered Conde, Moreau or—Joan of Arc?"

Corvain often thought that Doudou knew well when he was being funny. And it was humorous also for him, Corvain, office manager, to be limping along a wood lane, braced on the arm of an ebony giant who discoursed on history. Moreover, he had to admit that he was at a disadvantage—his notions of Senegalese history were limited to the Chevalier de Boufflers and to Faidherbe.

Durosier and the doctor often spoke of General de Gaulle, who had proclaimed from London that France had lost a battle, but not the war. The name was vaguely familiar, lecturers had mentioned it during his periods of training, referred to his theories on armored warfare.

Jonah in the belly of the whale perhaps dreamed of harpoons. Captain Corvain deliberately refrained from hoping too much. He had immediate problems to settle. He wanted to get news of his family, and join it if possible. But he was not fully recovered. And his first duty was to get the ten poor devils who had stuck with him—no, carried him—to some place of safety. When that was done, he would attend to his family affairs. When that was done, he would be free, if his age and condition warranted, to resume combat.

Yet the old man, Durosier and Tranchy, made him feel ashamed. It was an old French saying that there is no time for the brave, and certainly there seemed to be no age. Those two old boys were optimistic against all reason. They spoke of resistance to the Occupants, of preparations for battle.

"When the English come—" they always started. It was odd and a bit pathetic to hear those two tottering patriots refer to the English as the pious speak of the saints. The English were bulldogs, they always won the last battle—and did it matter to them now that one of those last battles had been Waterloo? The English always won in the end, they would manage to bring America into it, and when they landed, the French must be ready to help.

"Petain's senile," they both insisted.

Corvain suffered. He had admired Petain, Petain who had held at Verdun. He had been present, at the head of a company, when President Poincaré, in the presence of Clemenceau, Joffre, Foch, Haig, Pershing, had given Petain his marshal's baton—at Metz, twenty-two years before. A great moment, a scene not to be forgotten—and the same man salaamed to Hitler!

DAYS passed. The Negroes appeared to be thriving in their gopher-like existence. They were growing fat and sleek. Corvain often was amazed by their cheerfulness. Then it occurred to him that he also, for all his inner doubts, smiled and laughed. They probably felt as nervous as he did, wanted to get away. Fall was not far off, winter would follow, and, after all, these chaps were from the tropics, subject to chills and lung ailments. A sojourn in a damp cellar might kill them as surely as bullets.

There was increasing danger from other directions. Civil authorities were beginning to work for the Boches, under pressure. Certain mayors were genuinely eager to clean house, even at the cost of heroic lives. After a lull of a few weeks, the Boches were growing impatient and shooting hostages from lists. A district leader thought nothing of inflicting fines of a million on a small community, as casually as you would say "Pass the butter," and local finances were low.

Gendarmes now were frequently seen piloting German patrols. Constables and field-guards, even more dangerous because of their closer acquaintance with

people and places, were urged to help, tempted with large rewards.

The Boches knew, of course, that there was a sizable group of Negroes lurking in the region—informers reported having seen them. They dispatched a detachment of elite guards to a nearby village, struting, athletic, handsome young soldiers in black uniforms, obsessed with a blind, ferocious devotion to Hitler and his racial creed.

They had their own method. "See here," they would tell a gendarme assigned to guide them. "We're going to bag something today. If we find a black, well and good. If not, we'll walk into an ambush, you understand, and we'll never know who shot you."

After the first gendarme was brought back with a hole in his head, the others became jittery and passed the word: They would have to show some result, discover traces and shelters. It was up to the others to see that they were empty.

A patrol visited the Durosier farm, guided by a gendarme. Corvain retired to his room, which was behind a blank wall in the garret. He heard the trampling of boots, the hoarse voices of the Germans. Later, peering through the shutters, he saw them walk over the ruins, saw them part shrubs with gun butts. They missed the concealed entrance, but only by a few feet.

Durosier was disturbed. "They're getting warm," he said. "There must be a leak."

The doctor did not call that evening, but showed up the next day. "I'll have to be careful—they questioned me last night. I explained about your pains and aches, Durosier. But they think I come here too often. Corvain, you'll have to ask your fellows to keep out of sight most of the time. You can't tell any more who's a spy and who isn't."

"I feel perfectly all right," Corvain declared. "I'll try to make it tonight, with the lot. We can do it in two days."

"You're crazy," Durosier said. "They patrol all the roads all night. I'll see what can be done."

Something could be done, it turned out. Arrangements were made for a cart which would take four men as far as the Allier River, where a clandestine ferryman would take over. Once on the far shore, it was Free France.

At three o'clock one morning, Corvain, Durosier, two of his workmen, Corporal Karamoko and Private Doudou, held a long conference. A carpenter in a town to the north had permission to move to a town on the bank of the Allier River. He had all the passes and papers required. And he was willing to take a chance, to help French soldiers. He would pile his furniture on the cart, seem to mistake his road and come to the farm. There, he would stop for a meal, with his wife, a boy of seven and a baby girl of one.

In the shed, the furniture could be shifted, three men could climb on, and be concealed by the replaced stuff. The carpenter, whose description was not too unlike that of Corvain, would hide in the garret room, so that the captain could go along with his men as he insisted. When the Senegalese had safely passed across the river, Corvain could drive back to the farm with the empty cart.

"Seems childishly simple," Corvain protested.

"It's simple things that succeed," one of the workmen stated. "They don't search carts as often as they do automobiles."

Doudou translated to Karamoko, who did not understand quite everything said in French. The Bambara was reluctant. "We glad go but take guns. We walk night, we hide day, we swim." He smiled at Corvain. "Captain look on paper—read road—explain to me—me catch on good—take guns—"

Corvain addressed Durosier. "Do you know, I'd prefer to try it that way? At least we could sell our hides decently."

"And bring reprisals on my village within a kilometer," Durosier put in, quietly. "There would be hostages shot, a big fine."

"Right. I talked foolishly." Corvain smiled sadly. "Explain to Karamoko, Doudou."

Doudou made matters clear in Bambara.

"We shoot Boche, Boche kill French people?"

"That's right, Karamoko. You shoot

one Boche, Boches shoot five French people."

"That," Karamoko remarked grimly. "That be slob too much. We no go shoot more. Tomorrow, we clean guns, wrap up, bury guns." He gestured with infinite weariness. "Finish, the war!"

"Catches on quick, eh?" Doudou remarked.

"Now," Corvain went on, "we must pick out the three to go first. Give me the list, Doudou, and we'll write the names down, fold the papers, and Monsieur Durosier can pick them out—that's fair."

"I no go first," Karamoko announced. "Me, corporal. All men go, me go."

"And I better stick around too, Captain," Doudou put in. "You'll be along to talk French in case anything goes wrong—and I'd better stay with the others, in case there's any talking to do." He grinned. "Don't worry about me, Captain, I can get away whenever I want to, split the breeze."

"That leaves eight." Corvain admitted their objections.

"No, seven," Karamoko corrected. "Koffi, he first-aid man—he stay so man go sick, he make him well."

"All right, all right." Corvain took the list and wrote down: "One, Konate-Samba, two, Kone-Noumouke, three, Mamadou-Ba, four, Sissoro-Bakary, five, Zame-Nata, six, Toure-Mamadou, seven, Konan-Loka—" He was using the family name first, as at roll-call. "That leaves one over—Yeo-Dosso."

"I'm Ba-Mamadou, Captain, you forgot my real name," Doudou helped out.

"Right. Seven, Yeo-Dosso."

Corvain folded the slips of paper, a hat was located.

"Konan-Loka," Durosier read: "Yeo-Dosso, Sissoro-Bakary—"

"That's the lot," the captain stopped him. "Now, Doudou, make sure they all get what they're supposed to do—the man will come into the yard with the cart, drive it under the shed. Make sure the coast is clear, then unload the furniture, hide the three guys carefully—there'll be rugs or carpets? Fine. Tell them they're to keep quiet. Tell them they may be there a day, two days. They must take food and water—and be careful about using too much water. They might run short.

"I no go first," Karamoko announced. "Me, corporal."

"Tell them they must be most quiet when we stop. That will mean Boches are near, asking for papers. Tell them to be careful too not to do anything unless I knock on the side of the cart and say—" Corvain looked at his soldiers. "What's the best thing?"

"Say *acagni,* Captain. You savvy *acagni?*"

"It means all right, good—I'll say *acagni,* then they'll know nobody can hear or see." Corvain hesitated. "Doudou, maybe we should consult Koffi—you decided for him, you know."

"I didn't, the corporal did, Captain." Doudou shrugged and yielded to his tremendous grin. "But it's all right, you know—Koffi is a first-aid man with delusions of grandeur! Koffi has contracted professional ethics!"

EVERYTHING went off without a hitch. Corvain, although not a remarkable horseman, could handle the two bony nags hitched to the cart. He certainly did not look like an officer in the rough clothes provided for him, with the colorless, battered hat pulled over his brows.

The carpenter's wife sat beside him on the high seat, holding her baby on her lap. The small boy was perfect, called him papa without hesitation. He rode

on top of the heap of furniture and sang shrilly. Corvain did not know if the kid was aware that they had concealed passengers. He was not even sure that the woman knew it. She was a flabby, tired-looking woman of twenty-eight or thirty, and one of the dullest persons the captain had ever met. Her apathy, her unconcern, irked him until he realized that it was an excellent cover. Her blank gaze, her limp mouth, as she considered the soldiers or policemen, were those of a wife utterly bored with her husband.

They rode steadily all day, mile after mile, behind the clip-clopping horses. Somewhere around noon, the woman produced a snack from a basket, sandwiches, two bottles of red wine.

"Sure you have enough?"

"They said some of it was for you."

They were stopped near villages, between villages, by men in blue, in green, in black uniforms. The woman would pull out a wallet, shove papers into an outstretched hand. The soldier, or cop, would glance briefly at the card with the photos, look up casually, grunt, nod or wave a hand. At some crossings, the men on duty wouldn't rise from their benches, merely wave them on. The sun was warm, the wind was cool, the scenery beautiful. It was as little like an adventurous escape as possible.

"Are you nervous?" Corvain asked in mid-afternoon.

"No."

"Have you done much of this?"

"No. This is the first time we move since we got married."

"I mean—helped out in—something like this?"

"No."

"Suppose they arrested us?"

"Why would they?"

"Well, if they took a careful look at the photo, for instance?"

"They don't." The woman fed her baby, which happened frequently. "They're greedy from birth," she commented obscurely.

"Pretty baby," Corvain volunteered after a while. That got a nod. He tried again: "Good-natured little girl, doesn't cry."

"She doesn't know what's ahead."

It was dusk when they reached their destination, a small village. They halted at the inn, a charming little place with grape arbors in a yard behind. From his seat, Corvain could see the gleam of the river. He alighted, helped the woman and baby down, the boy hopped off. Then he led the horses, on foot, to the shed, unhitched them, led them to the stable.

"I'm going to our new house," the woman announced. "I want to clean a bit before the stuff is brought in from the cart."

She asked her way from the owner, a stout, smiling fellow of forty-odd, and the trio was off without another look at the captain. The inn-keeper took Corvain to the bar, poured him a stiff drink of cognac.

"They're there? We'll let them out after dark. It's all arranged for them to go across tonight."

"Think there'll be trouble?"

"Why? The Boches here aren't bad. That's why you were sent here. Costs dough, however."

"I didn't realize—" Corvain started to reach for his pocket.

"No, no, it's taken care of."

Corvain, a little conscience-stricken thinking of the three stored in the shed, made a good dinner. Nobody paid any attention to him. Three Germans in green uniforms, loaded with guns and pouches, sat for a while at a corner table, ate fish and fried potatoes, drank beer, paid and went out. The owner looked at the clock. "Seven-fifteen"—he waited until the sound of motorcycles dwindled down the road—"they won't be back until after nine. There's a permanent post near the bridge, but they leave only two guys on duty at this time. They'll be busy checking somebody when we go through."

"Shall I get my chaps now?"

"My guys are there this minute." The owner offered Corvain another cognac. "You'll be back tomorrow morning for the cart? Good. I'll have the nags attended to, fed, hitched, you can go right off. I'll give you a couple of baskets of fish to deliver on your way. Do you mind?"

"Not a bit."

Not long after, the man beckoned to Corvain to come to the bar. "All right. Walk out of the back door, cross the garden, go down the slope. Your guys will be there, and the passer."

It was quite dark outside. But Corvain had little trouble reaching the bank. He saw a boat, silhouettes. He climbed in, and his men greeted him in low voices. He sat down, the "passer" used a pole, and they started across the river. The Frenchman was smoking a cigarette!

"How goes it?" Corvain asked him.

"So-so. Can't complain."

In an incredibly short time, the boat bumped against the other shore, the four fugitives climbed out. Corvain sighed and grunted. He could not help saying, "That was not hard."

"No. We pick our time. All your risk now is a check-up rounds with an officer. They shoot easy. Now, mister, you go up the slope on your right until you hit the road. There's a car for you."

Corvain led the way and they found the car. It was old and wheezing, but they made good time nevertheless. The driver was as casual and as disinterested in his passengers as the boatman had been. Such crossings had been going on for almost two months, had become routine.

Less than an hour and a half later, Corvain had turned over his three *Tirailleurs* to an army depot. He sat in an office, telling his story to a little captain, very young and very blond. He was moved, his voice was hoarse, because a surprising emotion had gripped him when he had taken leave of his soldiers.

"You're going back, then?" the little captain prompted.

"There are seven more to get out. You understand."

"Perfectly. There are things one must do. Look here, I know it's easy to talk. Yes. However, you'll be supplied with additional papers, of your own, bearing your real name and stating you were demobilized from a line regiment. With a good reason for circulating, like saying you're seeking your family lost in the region during the mess—they can't touch you legally unless they nab you actually with Senegalese.

"Naturally, we've tried to do something about it. In some cases we've succeeded in having the men turned over to us, or considered as prisoners of war. But the German authorities in your region won't listen. They claim they had some men murdered in mid-July, almost a month after the Armistice."

"Well, possibly some of our fellows didn't know about the Armistice. There were raids for food—"

"You should have prevented them, you know."

"I was unconscious or too weak to move. And it's not at all sure that my own lot were involved."

"However, they have a technical point there." The little captain smiled grimly. "And they won the war. I hope things go as well for you the next time, Captain. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"I'll give you my family's address. I'd like to find out—"

"Of course. Under certain conditions, there's a bureau here that will telephone. Can you give me a telephone number?"

"I have no phone." Corvain thought a while. "But a wire? Or—my son is, or should be, in school, and there may be a phone. . . How stupid of me—phone the firm I work for. If my wife is in town, they'll know it." Corvain wrote the number down. "However, can you fix it so that the inquiry will appear to be made by someone else, a friend of ours living in this town, or nearby? I can't recall anyone near, but you can say Corbeil—he used to work with us and moved south."

"Yes, I understand. You fear a leak might—"

"I didn't think of that, you know! No, I just do not want my family too elated over my being safe. Something might yet happen to me."

"I see." The little officer drummed on the table with his small fingers. "You must believe that I feel like a pig not being able to help. And that anyone would quite understand if you did not go back. Your presence isn't really essential."

"I realize that. It's just the way I feel."

CHAPTER V

CONTRABAND CARGO

CORVAIN was back at the Durosier farm the next day at dusk. He had been away thirty-six or seven hours, eight hours of which he had been a free man, safe.

"How did it go?" the old man asked.

"Very smoothly." Corvain shrugged. "I have some papers in my own name, as demobilized from the infantry, and a circulation permit. But if I am searched, duplicate sets of papers with different names will make trouble."

"If you're stopped and searched," Durosier pointed out logically, "you'll be in trouble in any case." He took breath and added, "Things are beginning to stink around here. We must hurry."

"What do you mean?"

"Strangers hanging around. Guys in civilian clothes, with French discharge papers, but smelling of Boche a league away. One of them asked to sleep in the barn, stayed overnight. He was in and out a dozen times. It's too bad, but your chaps can be spotted so easy I had to ask them to stay quiet. We've got to get them away—in a hurry."

"Well, I find that you people know the business," Corvain replied. "So tell me what to do."

"Take three more tomorrow, Captain, the same way. They didn't take away your permit for moving furniture, and you can explain it's a second load. We have enough junky old stuff to pile the cart. You can get through again."

"Easy, I think," Corvain agreed. "I got waved on almost everywhere on the return trip. The couple of times I had to show papers, they asked me hardly any questions."

"Fine. But they might get suspicious about a third load. This is Wednesday. Tomorrow you'll be on the road, back by Friday night. That fits—we have a chance to get the rest away Saturday. It's going to be more risky, because everything can't be done here—the truck is too big, too heavy for our road. You'll have to make it to the highway and work fast between patrols. It should work out all right—the truck has all kinds of authorizations, you understand. Carries big rolls of printing paper for a sheet owned by a friend of the Boches."

"There'll be room for four guys?"

"We'll see there is, and the stuff is awkward and heavy to move—soldiers are lazy about looking for extra work. You'll ride with the chauffeur. With different clothes, a cap instead of that hat and your mustache shaved off, the guards won't recognize you."

Later, Karamoko and Doudou were called in for another conference. Chance designated Privates Kone-Noumouke, Toure-Mamadou and Konate-Samba for the second batch. When all arrangements had been made, the Bambara corporal burst out unexpectedly in a flood of emotional speech, so garbled that neither Corvain nor the other Frenchmen could follow it.

"What's he saying, Doudou?"

"Shut up a minute, Corporal," the big Woloff shouted at the other Negro. "I'll tell him! Captain, he says you must not come back, that this time you stay. He says it will be all right this time, but he had a bad dream about the third time. He says he promised to look after you and he doesn't want you to die."

Corvain laughed, addressed Karamoko directly: "But, my friend, I don't intend to die!"

"Three, bad, three, very bad." Karamoko held up three fingers. "No good, Captain."

"He's been saying that for two days, Captain." Doudou lifted one hand in apology. "Superstitious, you understand? He wants the four that are left to go on foot, by night." The big fellow paused, resumed: "You know, *mon capitane,* that would be better. That way, you wouldn't have to come back. I know you feel it's your duty, but there's such a thing as exaggeration. Monsieur Durosier'll tell you it's getting pretty hot for us around here, a couple of days may make all the difference."

"I think they'll make the raid Sunday, around noon," Durosier declared, "because a lot of our people go to church and our system of signals doesn't work for a couple of hours, not so well."

"You hear, Doudou—Karamoko? And we'll be off on Saturday."

Karamoko heard but he was not satisfied.

"He wants to leave tomorrow night, on foot. He says perhaps something will happen to delay you and that we will be caught if we wait here."

Corvain addressed Durosier: "If I were arrested, delayed, would you know it?"

"Yes. My father is staying in the village, to be nearer to the bus. He likes to go to the movies. He's old, you understand," explained the sixty-eight year old farmer, "and has little else for distraction. He lives with my second daughter, and if anything happens, somebody tips him off and he sends one of the kids here on a bike. We'd know in three or four hours."

"You understand, you two muleheads?" Corvain smiled. "You'd know in three or four hours. Let's leave it this way, if I am not back by eight o'clock Friday evening, you can try it on foot."

"Friday, not good day." Karamoko was sulky.

"Then start after midnight."

"No go tomorrow night, Karamoko finished, Karamoko dead," the corporal insisted. "I be asleep—see me dead."

"He's been having bad dreams, Captain."

"Surely you don't believe in dreams, Doudou?"

"I don't know. You hear funny things about these guys."

"Well, dreams or no dreams, we'll try to do it the intelligent way, in the truck. Unless you hear I'm caught or I fail to show up Friday night."

Karamoko saluted as if in apology and started, "Captain, no—"

"Corporal Diakite, it's an order."

"All right, Captain. Me shut up. Orders."

Karamoko Diakite, Bambara corporal, French soldier, joined the heels of his big shoes, lifted his chin and stood at attention. But he was angry, pouted like a child.

"Come, Karamoko," Corvain said in a softer voice, "don't—"

"I shut up, no talk, Captain. Orders."

"Look here, everything will be all right, old chap! I give you my word to come back and take you out."

"No take me out. Karamoko die, sure thing."

"Not without me, we're reservists together, remember?"

This time the muscular fellow relaxed, grinned happily.

"Reservists, yes, Captain. All right."

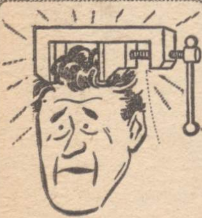
"Now, another thing, you fellows. Clean up that cellar you used, so that nobody can tell it was occupied. We don't want to get Monsieur Durosier into trouble when it's searched."

Karamoko and Doudou saluted impeccably.

"Very well, Captain."

"WELL," said the little captain at the military depot, "your luck—" He interrupted himself and touched wood.

"I'll be glad when it's over," Corvain sighed. "You know, it's like cards, statistics don't mean a thing. Matter of fact, they're getting to know me on the road. I got smiles and waves. Saturday night, I'll bring the last batch." He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smiled. "An important shipment this time, must be close to seven hundred pounds of Senegalese."

"They're still straggling in," the captain said. "But only one or two a day. Some of them have fantastic stories to tell, if you can decode their chatter. You wonder how they manage it." He laughed. "One of them brought in a receipt for his rifle and bayonet, and twenty-two cartridges—he checked it at a police station in the Occupied Zone! But you don't ask me if I have news for you."

Corvain locked his hands together to keep them steady.

"I didn't dare."

"Well, everything is all right with your family, save that they're probably worried about *you*. Your wife and daughters are at home and your son is with friends at the seashore—how old is he?"

"Sixteen."

"He'll probably cross to England. I hear a lot of youngsters are doing that. By the way, the chap who spoke on the telephone accepted my statement that I was an old friend—he told me you were reported as missing."

"Missing?" Corvain breathed.

"Your regiment lists you not only as missing but as 'probably dead.' Three separate reports are in about you, they inform me. *Tirailleurs* who got back said they'd seen you fall. And when a search of prisoners and hospital lists failed to show your name, what were they to think? The report was sent to your wife when she inquired. I did not correct anything at either place, and made no entries to correspond to the papers I made out for you. There are spies about, and it's best to keep quiet until you're back definitely." The little captain shrugged. "I could get into trouble for my part in all this, it's most irregular. But so is getting licked. You don't need to worry about your papers however—there are excellent patriotic forgers."

Captain Corvain re-entered the Occupied Zone under his own name, for the second time. If there had been the slightest hitch, he realized, and the Germans had checked back with his regiment, seen him listed as "missing and probably dead," the last entry could have been rectified!

He got the cart and the team at the inn and started north once more. Gendarmes, both French and German, either waved him on his way or cast a casual eye on his papers as a wandering carpenter. Whether imagination or not, his wounds seemed to be inflamed again, he was uncomfortable. But that was nothing compared to the oppression in his chest—the increasing sense of anguish. On the way south, with his hidden cargo, every mile seemed to pump clean air into his lungs. On the road back, every mile seemed to compress him.

But he was not sorry to be doing what he had to do. He was still moved by the unself-conscious, childish farewells of the men he had taken to safety. Those big, muscular blacks, so courageous in danger, so stoical under physical pain, had shed tears. They had touched his sleeves, his hands, and stammered broken words. They had asked him not to go back, to send word to the others, who, they assured him, were "smart too much" and would make out very well.

Years before, a friend who served in the Senegalese had told him, "When you first start with them, you're disgusted. As recruits, they're balkier than mules, they drive you crazy. You're not an officer, you're a nurse, a teacher, a confidant. They come to you and complain about a toothache, about somebody having stolen ten sous, about a corporal calling them bad names. Then you see that they consider you as important to themselves as they consider themselves to be to you.

"They learn all about you, whether your socks are mended, whether you've had letters from your wife—they learn if your kids are sick. They gradually absorb you. Then you find out sooner or later that they'd die for you without question, without regret, and you're done for—you'll serve with them all your career."

Corvain was beginning to understand what the man had meant. Even Doudou, the progressive, the emancipated Woloff, had that warmth of character, that casual acceptance of a chief as a responsibility. Doudou had acquired a

vocabulary that permitted him to express himself, but his finest qualities he revealed without speaking.

They would go out of his life, all of them. He, Corvain, would be back at his desk, in all probability, within a month. But he would never forget those fellows, never. And it would be enjoyable to think, at times, that in some remote bush village Dosso Yeo, Bakary Sissoro, and any of the others, would mention his name and relate their adventures in common. Just as he would undoubtedly bore his wife, his children and his comrades at the cafe with yarns about his Senegalese.

His son—his son might escape to England. He was very young, but old enough to train. Corvain could not have said whether he wanted his son to go to England or not, but he knew that he wanted him to want to go. And, as he drove the horses, he started to laugh. When all this was over, when all was normal, and his son was home again, perhaps he would have his own war to talk about, and it would be the Durosiers all over again.

HE discerned the tiled roof of the main building through the streets—he was on time, it was Friday night, at dusk. The yard was deserted, which made him uneasy—there must be Boches about or the Negroes would have been there to greet him. One of the farmhands was waiting under the shed.

"I'll take care of them, you go in," he said.

"Anything wrong?"

"Wrong enough."

Corvain found old man Durosier seated at the big table in the vast kitchen.

"Ils sont fichus," the farmer greeted him. "They're done for."

"All four?"

"All four." Durosier cleared his throat, rubbed his eyes. "The poor slobs, the poor generous slobs. So polite and wanting to make no trouble, they said, no trouble!" He pushed a bottle close to Corvain's hand. "Have something. It's good stuff, we make it from our own plums."

"Thanks," Corvain said.

"You didn't notice anything on the way?"

"No. Yes—I passed several detachments of troops between the village and the crossroads. And some gendarmes, both theirs and ours."

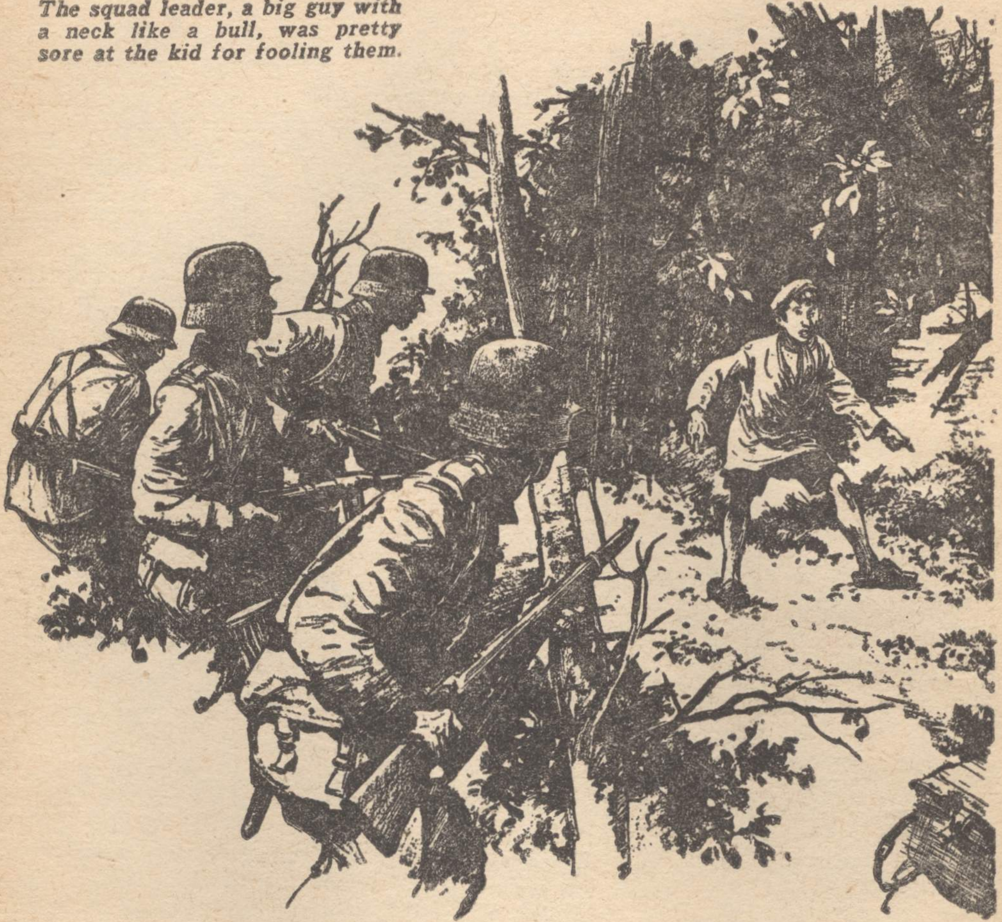
"They were all over the place this afternoon," Durosier explained. "Must have been four, five hundred. They came from town on trucks and stopped in the village to pick up the Black Guards. One of my daughter's kids came right away, but he only beat them by forty-five minutes. They covered every lane, every path, nosed into everything.

"I looked for your Negroes. They seemed to be expecting it, had their stuff packed and ready. The big one, that Doudou, told me they'd make for the departmental road, cross it and strike across country. He said not to worry, that nobody would know where they had come from—that if they got caught, they'd say they'd come from fifty, sixty kilometers in the last couple of days, hiding and stealing food.

"He said to say so long to you, and the others said the same thing. Then they went off. I felt like a dog letting them go, thought I might have bunked them in the garret. It was lucky for me I didn't. They got here at about one-fifteen, coming through the woods slowly, carefully, even shooting into thickets. There were maybe fifty of them right here, with two gendarmes and a kid—I don't know his name but I know he's from around here—a kid about seventeen.

"That kid—he better not be around much longer—must have been laying around, spying. He showed them that window in the roof from the outside, and said he'd seen a light there nights. So a squad of them went upstairs, in that little cell you slept in when you were sick. They took me along, and I was sweating.

"But you know how women are—one of the maids had gone up there, crazy to give a good cleaning, with you away, there were no sheets on the bed, the mattress was rolled up, and she'd strung her private linen to dry—that used to be her room before you came and she had her habits. The squad leader, a big guy



The squad leader, a big guy with a neck like a bull, was pretty sore at the kid for fooling them.

with a neck like a bull, was pretty sore at the kid for fooling them. He slapped him around a bit. I don't think I've ever had a better moment!

"But he goes down with them, they surround the old house. He shows them the vent used for a door. Well, they get out their guns, and the chief yells for them to come out. When there's no answer, he beckons to a guy who heaves four big grenades inside. The things bust, there's flame and then a lot of smoke. They wait a while, then two soldiers slide in. I was laughing then, because if the Negroes had left anything, those grenades would surely have messed things up so nobody could tell!

"The soldiers come back, shake their heads as they're hauled up. The chief kicks the kid in the pants. But he takes me in here and starts shaking me. Old as I am, I could have handled him, but it wasn't the thing to do. So I act scared and snivel. He asks me if there had been Negroes in that cellar. I don't say no, I tell him I don't know. I tell him I've seen Negroes in the neighborhood, ducking out of sight when I came along, that I've had chickens stolen, bread.

"He asked me why I hadn't reported seeing them. I asked him what would have been the use, when I knew the Germans knew there were Negroes around, because the patrols had asked me often enough. He puts his revolver against my head, and tells me to pray. Then

he laughs loudly, shoves his gun back in the holster, and says all right, I'm fined twelve bottles of old wine!

"He invites three other guys and they sit down and start to drink. They get pretty stewed, too, as who wouldn't, drinking like that. They get playful, I have to sit down and take a glass, and they point guns at me. I sort of think they'd have ended by shooting me, if that damn kid hadn't come back and said some Negroes had been taken, on the other side of the road.

"So they're off, without bothering me more."

Corvain had listened without comment. He was thinking that Karamoko's dreamed hunch had been correct—if Karamoko had left on Thursday night, he would have had a chance, he might have been safely over the river by now. Karamoko, Doudou and the others had died because their chief had given them the wrong orders. Many men had died for the mistakes of their chiefs—the thought would not have worried Napoleon. But it concerned and worried Corvain considerably.

But they were dead, and nothing more could be done. They no longer existed save as an eternal remorse for Corvain. But he had acted for the best, had ordered the sensible course. He filled a glass, swallowed quickly.

"I'll leave in the morning," he announced. "I have my own papers and

can move openly. The best thing for me to do is to go over to town and take a train." He laid the carpenter's documents on the table. "Thanks."

"It's all right."

The workers filed in as the lamp was lit. Dinner was served, thick soup, pork, roasted potatoes. Nobody said much, the women sniffled and sighed.

"Think I should go upstairs?" Corvain asked after the men had left the table.

"No," Durosier said. "They've got what they were after. They won't be back for a while."

They chatted idly, Corvain looked over newspapers and old magazines, winced at pictures of military parades showing the finest army in Europe—up to May 10, 1940. He filled his pipe, smoked. Tomorrow, at this time, he would be in the Free Zone—the day after would be Sunday, and he would not be able to do anything—but, on Monday, he would apply for permission to leave for home. He understood such authorization would take three or more days, but that it was usually granted.

It was then that Durosier said a few words that shattered all his plans. Corvain looked up, afraid to believe, afraid to think.

"What did you say, Monsieur Durosier?"

"Me?" Durosier stared at his drawn face, at the grimace of pain. "Me? Oh, just that it seems terrible for the two of us to be sitting here comfortably—but what else can we do?—when those poor devils are spending such a night in prison—knowing they'll be shot in the morning."

"They haven't been shot?"

"No. They took them to town—for questioning, registering—they'll be shot in the morning."

"I thought they shot a Senegalese on the spot."

"When they have guns. These soldiers didn't."

"I saw to it that they didn't," Corvain said, heavily. "So, they are still alive then."

"Not for long." Durosier glanced at the clock. "About eight hours to go. That's tough, waiting."

CORVAIN rose and paced the floor with his hands in pockets, puffing at his pipe. His wounds ached a little. He wobbled a bit, too, and with his shoulders stooped, his thinning hair, he looked what he was, a worried, middle-aged man.

"You can't do anything about it," Durosier declared.

"No, there's nothing to be done, nothing."

"They have two battalions in that town, and a tank company—and there's fifteen hundred to two thousand men scattered in the region around it." Durosier cracked his knuckles. "Do you think you're the only one that dreams crazy dreams? I've had to take it, often enough. They've executed some of my old friends—old guys like myself, who'd never done them any harm."

Corvain tried to sit down, but something uncertain, a sense of urgency, kept gnawing at his brain. He wandered about the room, went out into the darkness of the yard, returned. His nerves jangled so, his thought raced so madly that he half-smiled, and thought of one of Hugo's chapters: A tempest within a skull. He was trying to remember something he did not want to remember.

"Monsieur Durosier?"

"Captain?"

"Do you remember something I told those fellows when I ordered to wait for me here, not to try it on their own?"

"You told them you'd come back for them."

"I not only told them, I gave them my word."

"And you kept it. You're here."

"And they're there."

"That's true. But it isn't your fault."

"That's just it, it is my fault."

"How so?"

"I ordered them to stay. Laughed at their instinct, used my rank to prevent them from acting on their instinct! And I gave them my word I'd come for them. As it is, they who knew will die, and I who was skeptical, stupid, will live."

"Life works out funny, Captain."

"I gave them my word."

"Sit down, have a drink, get drunk. What can you do?"

Corvain sat down and poured a drink.

"I know what I should do, and so do you."

"I guess what you mean, and I think you're crazy."

"What will those fellows think of me? They saved my hide. And I forbade them to save theirs. I am a hell of a white man, a hell of an officer."

Surprisingly, Durosier laughed.

"What's the joke?" Corvain challenged, nervously.

"I was thinking of you, worrying about four Negroes, and of all the politicians who caused this mess and who don't worry about anything save keeping in office and getting their dough regularly."

"They're swine, and I am not—I should be with them."

"What good will it do? They'll be shot, just the same."

"But what will they think of me?"

"Nothing, save that you're lucky. They'll be glad you're all right."

"They will, and that's what drives me crazy."

"Have a drink. Get drunk."

"No."

"You'll have a stroke or something if you don't calm down."

"Calm down, calm down?" Corvain held out his hands, which were steadying. "I'm calm, see. I'm calm, but I am damn scared, because I know what I should do, and it scares me. Look here, Durosier, you're a man, you're a Frenchman, you were a soldier—what would you do in my place?"

"I'd get drunk and try to forget for tonight."

"You give me your word that's your opinion?"

"Look here, Captain, I'm almost sixty-nine, how the devil do I know what I'd do if I was young like you?"

"You won't give your word?"

"I tell you I don't know. Why put it on me?" Durosier was angry. "The way I look at it, you gave them your word you'd come back to get them out. And it's impossible, so what?"

"So I ordered them to stay and they'll die for it."

"Being the man you are, Captain," Old Man Durosier said quietly, "I don't see what else you could do."

"Sure, I see how you're fixed."

"And they'll think their French captain is a lousy liar." Corvain started walking again. Durosier said nothing, the clock ticked away. Then the captain halted. "Know what happened to the uniform I wore when they brought me here?"

"No. One of the women hid it somewhere."

"Can you get it for me?"

"Right now?"

"Yes, wake her up."

Durosier seemed about to protest, then rose and went into the back of the house. There was some knocking, a conference in low voices, doors opening and shutting. The old man returned and tossed the captain's garments on a bench.

"She says she cleaned the stuff as much as she could," he explained, "but you can't wear the breeches, they were cut off you and she's never got around to mending them. The blood's off the tunic, but the holes have not been mended."

"It won't matter," Corvain said, impatiently.

"I'm just telling you what she said to me."

Corvain changed, adjusted the leggings over the workman's trousers after some effort. He picked up the helmet, looked at the lining, dusted the inside with a handkerchief.

"Have you got a lantern and a white towel?" he asked.

Durosier brought him a large electric torch and a white cloth. "Don't hold it yourself, Captain," he advised. "Hang it on a bush and prop the torch to shine on it. Stay out of sight until you get a chance to talk. They shoot mighty quick at night." He picked up a stout stick, put on a worn fur cap.

"Where are you going?" Corvain wondered.

"I'll walk down the path as far as the road—you'd get lost and I know the way blindfolded."

At the door, Corvain hesitated a last time.

"There's nothing else I can do, is there?"

"Being the man you are, Captain," Old Man Durosier said quietly, "I don't see what else you could do."

IT WAS almost day when Captain Corvain alighted before the Gendarmerie Building. The sergeant in charge of the armored car which had given him a lift, a pleasant fellow from Berlin itself, led him along musty-smelling corridors, ushered him into a small office. There was nobody there except a private in shirt-sleeves, a broom under one arm, sprinkling the floor with a small watering can.

There was an exchange of guttural sentences. The orderly left. The sergeant held a match for Corvain's pipe, lighted a cigarette for himself. He and the French officer exchanged banalities about the weather in halting phrases. Then the noncom palmed the butt inside his left hand, snapped to attention and saluted.

A German captain in green uniform had arrived. He returned the salutes, sat down, and he and the sergeant exchanged barks concerning, evidently, the prisoner. Corvain understood but little of the Occupant's language. His school days were far in the past. The German officer was very young, twenty-three or four, pink and white, his torso looked starched, his face looked waxed. As he spoke, his hands went often to his buttons, to the decorations, to the hilt of the blade at his side.

Corvain was conscious that beside this youth, this starchiness, this ornamentation, he must resemble an old tramp. The German told the noncom to go outside. His blue eyes sought Corvain's glance honestly. He spoke in correct French, so accented as to be brittle.

"Sit down, Captain. You may smoke. What is your name and regiment, if you please?"

Corvain laid his papers on the table, settled back.

"I see," the other said after a quick reading. "You belonged to the regiment that fought so long against our troops? I am very sorry, but there will undoubtedly be some complications in your case, special orders of a grave nature. Serious complications—"

"I know all about them, Captain. I'm to be shot."

"That's the strict interpretation. However, as you surrendered voluntarily, there may be investigation, a delay—you might obtain a court-martial." The young fellow flicked his brows briefly. "Rest assured, however, that as a combatant, I respect the French officers who fought against us."

"You are very kind, Captain."

"No. Simply just," the other conceded modestly. "I'll have you put in a secure place until I can report to my superiors."

"When will that be, Captain?"

"Between eight and nine-thirty. The major commanding—"

"When will the four men you hold be executed, Captain?"

"Within a few minutes." The young man indicated the window with a lift of his hard chin. "The detail is already there."

Corvain turned his head and looked into a yard surrounded by high walls pierced with iron-barred windows. There were about twenty men there, helmeted, armed, chatting and smoking. Even as he looked, two of them engaged in a wrestling bout, laughing. They weren't worried.

"That's where it happens, eh?"

"That's where it happens, yes," the officer replied.

"I came here to be with them, Captain."

"You wish to speak to them?" The other seemed puzzled. "The case is not foreseen. Outsiders are barred, but you are a prisoner—and their officer. I suppose it wouldn't do any harm."

"I came to be shot with them," Corvain made clear calmly.

"To be shot with them?"

"Or to take them away to the Free Zone, which I do not think can be managed."

"Do I understand you?"

"Perfectly, Captain. You see, I was their direct superior and I am responsible for their being here."

"Ah?" the German said. Corvain felt immense pleasure at seeing his indifference, his aloofness, crack up. This was something outside his experience. "You mean that you wish to be shot at the same time? That you demand it as a right?"

"Or claim it as a privilege." Corvain gestured with an ease that gave him a strange, unreal pleasure. "A courtesy between enemies."

"I must refer to my superior," the young captain protested.

"We haven't much time," Corvain reminded him. "And I think the best thing is to avoid delays. That will make matters easier for all concerned."

"A moment, please, Captain." The German picked up the phone, spoke to one man, another. There was a knock on the door, a lieutenant opened it, and the captain motioned for him to wait with an impatient wave of his free hand. Then he ended his talk with a respectful crackling of words, hung up. "The major says if you insist, why look for complications? I think he believes I am joking."

"Then it's all right?"

"Absolutely. My responsibility is covered."

(Continued on page 129)

Jack Bailey CROWNS A QUEEN FOR A DAY
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OF THE RIVER AND

Elveeta brought the mule and cart and she and Uncle Pidcock loaded that big catfish on.

UNCLE PIDCOCK

By

JIM KJELGAARD

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE WERT

TEN years ago, when Uncle Pidcock brought his young bride, Elveeta, to his farm beside the Sheep River, he took her to the top of the hill where the maple trees are and showed her his holdings, He showed her all seventeen acres.

"There you are, Elveeta," he said. "It is all yours. The goats are yours, and the chickens are yours, and the hogs are yours. You will find corn and seed potatoes in the cellar. The plow is in the barn, and you can catch the mule in that

little grove of trees you see over yonder."

"My!" breathed Elveeta, taking it all in. "That is real nice of you, Pidcock. It is much more than I ever had before. But I really don't know whether I can work it alone."

"I am going to help you," said Uncle Pidcock, patting her on the shoulder. "I am not the kind of man who lets his wife do all the work, but right now I am going to catch some catfish."

So saying, Uncle Pidcock went down to the shed where he kept his catfish tackle. He unlocked the shed, went in, and unlocked the metal-bound chest where reposed his lines, hooks, and the special sinkers that he had designed. He picked up the can of doughball bait which was the last thing he'd made before going off to marry Elveeta.

The bait was not just ordinary doughballs. The flour was the finest rye and wheat mix to be had in Murphy's store. It was laced with mushrooms, gathered by Uncle Pidcock on the third night of the waning moon and washed in dew. There was corn meal in the bait, and other things. Only Uncle Pidcock knew what they were and how they were mixed; a good doughball bait is not something you just spread around to everybody who likes to catch catfish. Uncle Pidcock gathered up his tackle and bait, and set out for the river.

IT WAS a wide, slow river, with sometimes a small ripple out in the center but mostly no motion you could see. Cattails and reeds waded ten feet out on either side and, as though they were afraid of more depth, stopped there. On the shore side, willows began where the water weeds left off, and sycamores started where the willows left off. The brush was quite thick, but Uncle Pidcock had cut paths through and swamped out some places so he would have plenty of room to whirl and throw his lines.

Uncle Pidcock had been born on the farm which was his father's before it was his and his grandfather's before that. Like his father and grandfather, Uncle Pidcock had been catching catfish ever since he was big enough to stand on the river bank and heave a line. He had learned that—sometimes—you can tell where the catfish are feeding heaviest. The river over that place will be just a trifle murkier than it is other places and, if an ordinary fisherman can't tell the difference, a cat-fisherman can. There are also likely to be uprooted weeds and trash from the river bottom over that place.

Other times you cannot tell where the catfish are feeding, and this was one of those times. Uncle Pidcock knew that he would have to start at his lowest swamped-out hole and work up to his highest. So he walked out a path to a place where the river bends around a big stump and baited and cast his line. For an hour he sat smoking his pipe, and when he pulled in his line he saw that not even a minnow had nibbled at the doughball bait. Uncle Pidcock knew then that the catfish were not biting in that hole so he moved up to the next one.

Then he moved again, and again, and four more times, and when Uncle Pidcock came to his last fishing hole it was already the shank of the afternoon. The last fishing hole was his favorite, and anybody unable to catch a catfish in it might just as well decide that they weren't biting.

It really was a fine hole. Uncle Pidcock could see a mile upstream to some swift water that churned and roared over rocks. Above the rapids there were many miles of muddy, still water. The richest and best of what that sluggish current carried poured over the falls into this hole. A mile and a half below, Uncle Pidcock saw the stump where he had started fishing. Just below him the cattails grew higher and heavier; they took full advantage of all the fine topsoil that poured over the rapids.

Uncle Pidcock put a doughball on his hook, whirled the weighted hook around his head, and threw it far into the river. He tamped his pipe full of the best crimp-cut tobacco he could find in his pouch and settled down to wait. Throughout the year he had cast a lot of catfish lines, but he couldn't remember casting a better one. The baited hook had broken the water just right, and it had gone at least two feet farther than he had ever cast before. Uncle Pidcock

lit his pipe, and it seemed to him that it had an especially fine flavor. He just had to catch a catfish here.

In half an hour his pipe was smoked out, and Uncle Pidcock was beginning to doubt whether he'd catch a catfish even in his hole when his line tugged just a feather's worth.

That's all it was; a tiny little pull that might have been the doughball bait sliding over a stone. Only it wasn't, and Uncle Pidcock knew it wasn't. He had fished too much in the Sheep River and caught too many catfish to mistake a nibble for a baited hook rolling over a stone. After he thought the catfish had taken the bait, Uncle Pidcock set the hook. It was then he knew he'd hooked onto something that, so far, he'd seen only in his dreams.

The line straightened with such force that Uncle Pidcock had to pay out a couple of more feet. He stood up, reefing on the line and managing to gain back the two feet he'd lost. Uncle Pidcock sweated, and heaved, and hauled the line in inch by inch. Ten feet out a little ripple broke the river. Pidcock stared.

He had seen catfish, and still more catfish, and he knew what big ones looked like. Only nothing he'd ever seen had prepared him for this catfish. It was a monstrous thing that seemed to reach halfway across the river, and when it surfaced it looked at Uncle Pidcock with leering, derisive eyes. Then it spat the hook out and the line went slack.

Uncle Pidcock stood a moment, sweating. He reeled in his line, wiped the sweat from his brow, and went up the path to his house. Elveeta was waiting for him.

"Oh, Pidcock!" she said. "I caught the mule and I got quite a bit of plowing done! Are you going to help me tomorrow?"

"Not tomorrow," said Uncle Pidcock. "I have something that must be done."

And he told Elveeta about the big catfish.

UNCLE PIDCOCK really did not like to let Elveeta work the farm all by herself, but he thought it would be only one or two days before he caught the big catfish. Then he would stop catfishing entirely because, after he caught one that size, he would be forever spoiled for catching little ones. All night Uncle Pidcock lay and tossed beside Elveeta, and when morning came they got out of bed together. Elveeta made breakfast, and she saw by the look in Uncle Pidcock's eyes that he certainly was not going to help her that day.

"What are you going to do with the catfish after you catch it, Pidcock?" she asked.

"Why . . . "

Uncle Pidcock scratched his head and wrinkled his brow, because he had not yet decided what he would do with the catfish. He and Elveeta could not eat anything so big though, of course, there were always neighbors who liked catfish. Or he might hang it up by the tail, the way those rich fishermen whose pictures he saw in the papers hung their fish, and have his picture taken for the paper. He might skin and stuff the catfish, so he would always have proof he'd caught it. There were several things he could do, but he hadn't yet made up his mind what he would do.

"I haven't rightly made up my mind," he told Elveeta.

Uncle Pidcock ate the last of his hot cakes, grabbed up his catfish tackle, and hurried down to the hole where he'd hooked the monstrous catfish. First he looked at the lead sinker, and used the blade of his pocket knife to shave just a little bit more off one side. Then he honed a sharper point on his hook, and strung the doughball on with special care. He knew it would take a smart fisherman to catch this fish; it was not as though he was angling for anything ordinary.

Uncle Pidcock whirled the long line around his head, and when he let it go it was another nearly perfect cast. Uncle Pidcock sat down to wait.

He waited all morning, then went to eat the dinner Elveeta had made for him. Afterwards he waited all afternoon, tamping his pipe full of crimp-cut until the big catfish bit. Uncle Pidcock was not unduly discouraged because he did not get so much as one nibble; he thought there wouldn't be too many

small catfish biting in the hole where the big one lived and the big one wouldn't bite. It was nearly dark when Uncle Pidcock gave up the idea of catching the big catfish that day, and went up the path to his house. Elveeta was waiting for him.

"I got some more plowing done, Pidcock," she said. "Did you catch the catfish?"

"Didn't get even a nibble," Uncle Pidcock told her. "But I will. I *must* have that catfish."

"Why of course you must, and you'll just keep fishing until you get it. Have you made up your mind what you'll do with it?"

"No," said Uncle Pidcock.

For two hours after supper Uncle Pidcock sat on the porch trying to make up his mind what he'd do with the catfish after he caught it. Only there are not too many things you can do with a catfish, and nothing that occurred to Uncle Pidcock was satisfactory. At last he went to bed. He was sure he'd find something nice to do with the catfish after he caught it.

The only trouble was that he couldn't catch it. With his tackle and doughball bait he went down to the river again next day, and stayed all day, and the day after that, and the day after that. Elveeta kept right on with the plowing, and after she got the fields plowed she harrowed them, and all Uncle Pidcock brought home were a few small catfish just big enough to make one or two meals for Elveeta and himself.

Then it occurred to him that possibly the mushrooms with which he'd laced his bait were turning bad, so on the third night of the next waning moon he went to gather fresh ones. He had made a pair of picking tongs so he would not have to touch the mushrooms with his hand, and he shredded them with a knife which he had first boiled in hemlock bark so the taint of steel would be removed. When the mushrooms were shredded Uncle Pidcock washed them with dew-wet burdock leaves, and he mixed some new bait which he was sure would work.

It did, but only on small catfish and Uncle Pidcock had no wish to catch them. Every time he got one he moved right away to another hole; he figured the big catfish would not be fooling around where there were too many small ones.

The summer wore on and Elveeta harvested the crops. Then she cut winter wood, and banked the cabin with dirt so it would be warmer. Uncle Pidcock kept right on trying to catch that big catfish, and only when the river froze over would he admit that he was whipped, at least for that year. He would have been glad to help Elveeta then, but everybody knows you can't work a farm or fields in winter.

With nothing else to do, Uncle Pidcock took to going down to the river, chopping holes through the ice, and lying on his belly to peer through them. He saw the big catfish only once, just before the spring breakup, and when he came back to the house his eyes showed bigger than a rent in the seat of somebody's pants.

He knew, though, the catfish was still there and he began his spring campaign as soon as the ice went out.

YOU can be a farmer, or a storekeeper, or a teamster, or even a locomotive engineer, and nobody pays very much attention to you. If you become a catfisherman, or a bank robber, everybody pays some heed to what you're doing. Anyhow, after his third year, people for miles around had become interested in Uncle Pidcock's feud with the big catfish of Sheep River. Of course he was not spending all his time cat-fishing; Elveeta and Uncle Pidcock had both a son and a daughter by that time and there were some mean enough to say Uncle Pidcock should be ashamed of himself for letting Elveeta do all the work while he never did anything much except try to catch the big catfish or chop holes in the ice so he could see if it was still there.

Most people thought it was none of their business how Uncle Pidcock and Elveeta managed their affairs, but everybody wanted to know how the fishing went.

The people who lived farthest away bet on the catfish. They claimed that nobody, even Uncle Pidcock, could catch a

fish that big and smart. Those who lived near, and knew Uncle Pidcock better, took all the bets and laid their money on him. They knew that when he set his mind on doing something, he did it. Everybody who lived nearby remembered the time Uncle Pidcock—that was before he married Elveeta—fished with worms instead of doughball bait. In a dry year when worms were hard to find Uncle Pidcock said he'd find some if he had to dig a hole twenty-five feet deep. He dug it too, though he had to fill it up again so stray stock wouldn't stumble into it.

Also, without any exception, everybody wanted to know what Uncle Pidcock was going to do with the catfish if he caught it.

No matter how you look at it, there are still a limited number of things you can do with a catfish. You can have your picture taken with it, you can stuff it, and you can eat it. Only there was nothing in any of these possibilities that seemed to be worth all the time Uncle Pidcock was devoting to catching the great big catfish.

Of course, Uncle Pidcock himself had given a great deal of thought to what he'd do with the catfish, and some things had occurred to him which naturally would not occur to anyone else. He might make a sort of halter for it, and keep it staked out in the river for a pet. He might put it in a big tank, and take it to carnivals where he would charge people five or ten cents just to see it, or he might take it on a tour of the whole country, while he gave lectures about how he'd caught it.

Meanwhile the catfish just stayed in the river, getting bigger every year but still not growing as fast as Uncle Pidcock's family. In his tenth year of fishing, the catfish—as Uncle Pidcock knew from peering through holes in the ice—was really a monstrous thing. However, in that year Uncle Pidcock and Elveeta had six sons and two daughters, and Elveeta had had to build extra rooms on the house to accommodate all of them. Uncle Pidcock would have been glad to help her, but he was more than ever minded to catch that catfish and you cannot build rooms in winter. Elveeta did not have to do all the work anyhow; the oldest boy helped some now and then.

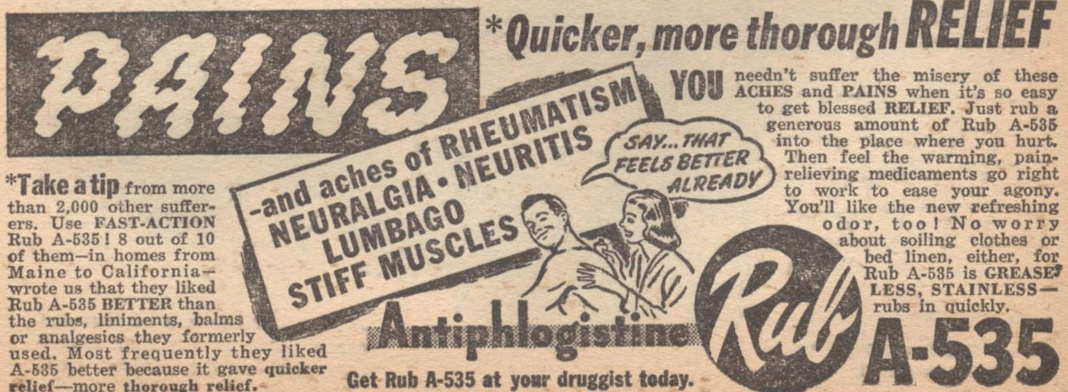
Uncle Pidcock had done almost everything he could to make that catfish bite again, but he was still trying. Of course catfish tackle is catfish tackle, and there isn't much anyone can do to change it. Uncle Pidcock had made a few small changes, but it was the bait that really interested him.

He had tried a thousand different formulae, always coming back to the original because it was most attractive to catfish. The original had seemed so fixed that it couldn't be changed, but finally Uncle Pidcock got a very good idea.

Would it make any difference if he gathered his mushrooms on the fourth night of the waning moon instead of the third?

Uncle Pidcock determined to find out, and the fourth night of the next waning moon he went out with his knife and

(Continued on page 127)



BARGAIN

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A shot cut the end of the sentence. One of the men standing beside the officer fell.

IN BOMBERS

By M. V. HEBERDEN

THERE seemed to be more than the the usual amount of confusion in the very new-looking airport as Paul Weston took his place in the line that led to a desk marked *Migración* and more than the usual number of uniformed and armed men, even for a Central American republic. Finding beside him an airlines official whose face revealed a mixture of anxiety and exasperation, Weston inquired in excellent Spanish what had happened.

"A North American was shot just before your plane arrived," was the answer.

The detective made a suitable and attentive noise and waited more enlightenment.

The official lifted up his hands in despair. "Why did they have to do it here? Why couldn't they wait until he was outside the airport?"

"Perhaps they were in a hurry."

"He was a professor."

Weston's face set a little. He said, quite casually, "Was it Dr. Johns?"

"How did you know?"

Weston ignored the question. "How did it happen?"

"He arrived on the Tagalpa plane. As he came through the gate, the shot came from over there." A vaguely waved arm indicated a gate marked *No Entry,* then the man added plaintively, "The American consul was here to meet him, too."

A fusillade of reports came from outside. A man in an elaborate uniform unholstered a large automatic. The safety snapped off, a shell clicked into the chamber and he held it hopefully. Somewhere a woman screamed and a bunch of passengers rushed in the direction of the washrooms. A thin youth in a torn shirt and dirty trousers dodged in through the baggage exit. Several porters, who could easily have tackled him, collided with each other in their haste to get out of the way. The youth had a gun in his hand.

He vaulted over the counter of the tourist shop, upsetting the display of alligator bags, Mexican and Peruvian silver and butterfly wing jewelry. The tubby man in charge squealed like a stuck pig and came round the counter.

"Silence!" The young man's hoarsely urgent command quieted everyone. His gun swept the crowd. "Drop your guns."

Two breathless soldiers, who had just arrived in the doorway, obeyed with alacrity. Several police allowed weapons to clatter to the paved floor. Again a woman's scream quavered forth. The elaborately uniformed officer near Weston laid his gun carefully on the slab near a pile of passports.

"Hands up! Señor Consul Americano!" The youth's harsh voice continued. "Come here!"

LOOKING on the whole more embarrassed than frightened, Mr. Roberts, the American consul, stepped forward. He was a young, pink-cheeked man and moved self-consciously, like a college boy going up to take his degree.

"You will take me in your car. You will be my hostage." The gun meant business.

An army officer stepped forward, speaking rapidly. " . . . A diplomat—guest of our country—national disgrace—I will be your hostage—"

"I take the consul. Get back."

The army officer tried again. A shot broke his speech. He spun round. The dependable female screamed. Some of the pinkness had drained out of Mr. Roberts' face.

He only said quietly, "That was not necessary."

The airlines official who had been talking to Weston had instinctively moved backwards when the shot was fired. From his position, the murderer could not see the gun near the pile of passports. Weston lowered his left hand a little. The murderer was busy watching the slow and embarrassed advance of the consul. If only he wouldn't keep his gun so accurately trained on Roberts' midriff.

Weston's eyes dropped to the receptacle for cigarette ends: a metal bowl on a tripod stand. He waited until the youth started to come round the corner of the shop counter, then at the moment that his left hand came down on the gun, he reached out his right foot and gave the tripod a hard kick. Metal container and stand went over with a mighty crash. For just a second, the youth's attention and the aim of his gun wavered and in that second, Weston fired.

The youth dropped the automatic and clutched his abdomen: he lurched sideways, gave a grunt and fell. The ash receptacle continued to roll, spilling sand and butts in its elliptoid course. For a second there was a queer silence. Then two soldiers grabbed their rifles and rushed forward, pointing them at the contorted figure clutching its belly on the ground.

Weston handed the gun to its owner. He said, "Thank you," and turned to the immigration officer. "And now, may I have my passport?"

People were all talking at once, swirling round the fallen army officer, about

the writhing prisoner. Roberts came over and pressed through a ring who were asking Weston a dozen questions, slapping his shoulders, trying to shake his hand and otherwise congratulate him.

"I certainly am grateful," began Roberts, "but how the—" He broke off, glancing at the passport that Weston was being handed. "Oh. I understand. But you're too late."

"So I gather," answered the detective and added with a weary brutality, "I didn't kill him on purpose. He can be made to talk."

"The ambassador wants to see you badly," Roberts said in a low voice. "I have the Embassy car here."

The police chief arrived and made a flowery speech while his keen eyes summed up this God-sent stranger who had, so casually and efficiently, got him out of a tough spot. As Weston started to move away with Roberts, he ended, "I had perhaps better give you a guard, señor."

"Please don't," begged Weston, sounding alarmed. "I prefer to take care of myself." As he had just amply demonstrated his ability to do so, there wasn't much the chief could say, but he looked disappointed.

Roberts was saying, "I've taken charge of Dr. Johns' briefcase."

A heavily built, rugged-looking man made his way through the crowd and said, "I hope this time the Embassy really will raise a stink. Of all the lowdown, lousy—" He broke off and said, "A harmless, decent fellow, Johns."

"We'll do whatever the State Department allows us to do," said Roberts.

"Congratulate you on a narrow shave," continued the rugged man. "You probably wouldn't have come back. Nice piece of shooting, mister," he added to Weston. "Pity you didn't kill the so-and-so."

"I didn't intend to," answered Weston bleakly. He looked up, his queerly hooded black eyes momentarily wide open. For a second the two men were face to face, each taking the measure of the other.

The rugged man looked away and said, "Oh, I see," awkwardly.

They finally got to the Embassy car and it started to move. "I could use a drink," sighed Roberts.

Weston grunted agreement and said he'd better stop at the Gran Hotel, leave his bag and make sure he had a room.

When he'd given the order to the chauffeur, Roberts said, "I haven't tried to thank you—"

Weston cut him short with a slight movement and said, "Who was the heavy-set fellow who came and spoke to us as we were leaving?"

"The American? Hugh Dayton. Owns the local airline."

BY THE TIME they had reached the Embassy, the ambassador had been informed as to what had happened at the airport. In spite of an air of solid competence, he looked anything but happy when Weston was shown in. Mr. H. Walter Gensen did not like being an ambassador; he had never wanted to be one. His wife had decided that he should be one, so he was. Mrs. Gensen was, therefore, perfectly happy. She was now a diplomat, or so she thought. Her unfortunate husband was shrewd enough to know that he would never be a diplomat and had sense enough to realize that he was out of his depth, so he clung to a life preserver in the form of the first secretary, James Home, who was one of those career men who are doomed to be thoroughly efficient all their lives without ever being promoted.

Mr. Home, a lean, permanently depressed looking person, was seated in the room with the ambassador when Roberts came in to say Weston had arrived. Mr. Home had indicated the decoded message on the ambassador's desk and pointed out that it was "most irregular" for the State Department to authorize the sending of this "private detective person" who, at the request of Military Intelligence was to be given every facility and cooperation and not interfered with in any way.

"If the man's efficient, and he sounds as if he might be," Hiram Gensen the businessman spoke from the desk of H. Walter Gensen the ambassador, "let's thank God for him and do all we can to help him."

"I think you'll find him efficient, sir," Roberts said grimly.

Accordingly when Weston entered, the ambassador said in a friendly manner, "Take off your coat and sit down," while Home began stiffly, "The instructions we received about you were very irregular, you know."

Weston sighed. He wondered how many times he had heard the same sentence before. He answered, as he had answered many times before, "The job I was sent for is very irregular."

That wasn't helpful and Home frowned his disapproval that this person should be so tactless as to remind them that, for reasons of its own, the State Department might occasionally sanction some irregular proceedings. As if to absolve the State Department from all blame for this particular irregularity, he said, "The matter appears now to be in the hands of Intelligence."

"Exactly," said Weston, "so there does not seem to be any reason why I should waste your time." He moved a little in his chair as if he might be going to get up and take his leave.

"You know that Dr. Johns was going to make his preliminary report to me verbally so that it could be coded to prevent any fear of a leak," the ambassador said briskly. "He was killed before he could make it."

"Did Johns say anything before he died?" Weston asked Roberts.

" 'Get—' and that was all."

"Sounds as if he might have found—" began Weston.

"Certain—ah—radio-active minerals—" cut in Home, giving an apprehensive glance around.

"Quite," said Weston. "I'd like to go over his papers."

"I doubt whether he'd have put anything in writing," objected Home. "The need for secrecy was impressed on him." He paused a moment and added, "His papers are going up by special courier for the experts to read."

"Good. I'll look at them first." The briefcase which Roberts had brought from the airport was lying on the table and Weston reached out his hand to it. Home looked disapproving but he didn't say anything, and as Weston looked up, he surprised a quickly suppressed grin on the face of the ambassador.

"Just what were your instructions, Mr. Weston?" asked Home.

"To stop the revolution," Weston said absent-mindedly. He was opening the briefcase.

"I suppose Colonel Gerard explained to you in Washington that the present government is very friendly," said Home, "and if Johns' report is affirmative, we should experience no difficulty in obtaining a concession in the name of the Mineral Development Corporation."

"Which is another way of saying the U. S. Government. Yes," answered Weston dryly, "Colonel Gerard did explain that. He also mentioned that the revolutionaries, if they really are backed by the Communists and do get into power, equally probably would refuse a concession to a company which is only a thin smoke screen for the government. So, reduced to its simplest formula, the obvious course is to stop the revolution—at any rate for the present," he finished, thinking the average time between revolutions was about six months.

"I don't envy you the job," said the ambassador.

WESTON grunted, then asked, "I'd like to know some more about the death of Dr. Bowditch who came down here first on the same mission as Johns."

"His mule slipped over the edge of a precipice and carried him down a drop of a thousand feet," said Home.

"Odd."

"The trails are very dangerous in the Tagalpa Mountains."

"And mules are singularly sure-footed animals," observed the detective. "Who questioned the men who were with him?"

"The local authorities." Home seemed annoyed at the trend of the conversation.

"You think that wasn't an accident?" asked Gensen.

"Probably not," replied Weston.

"But what do they gain?" demanded Gensen. "They must realize we'll find out sooner or later."

"Suppose their revolution isn't ready. They know that the moment you are sure that the—" Weston looked at Home and

said—"the radio-active minerals are there, you'll go to the government for a concession and probably get it. Therefore they do not want you to be sure until they've got the present government out and themselves in, when they will at once hand the concession to some dummy front for the USSR and politely but firmly tell you you're too late."

"Of course we know that. But why d'you think the revolution isn't ready?" demanded Home. "Everyone else thinks it is."

"It hasn't started yet, has it?" asked Weston mildly, drawing out the papers from the late geologist's briefcase.

It contained a hodgepodge of things including a picture of his wife and daughter, a much thumbed copy of *Alice In Wonderland* and a booklet entitled *All a Tourist Needs in Spanish.* Dozens of scraps of paper had notes scribbled on them: *If stop Guatemala remember blanket. Vitamins in brown bag.* Perhaps the professor was absent-minded. There was a letter, headed Tagalpa and dated the previous day, Sunday. It began, *Dear Kate* and ended with *much love to both, Barry.*

Weston felt like an intruder and put the letter back into its envelope. He picked up the torn half on a form; on the back was written *Miguel Orlando—Interpreter* in another handwriting. He found a sheet with a long list of numbers and notes beside each one. Evidently the numbers referred to his specimens. Weston looked up from his reading. "Where are his specimens? I think you'll find the answer in number nineteen."

"I think they're in the tin boxes I had sent up from the airport," volunteered Roberts.

Home reached over and took the list of notes. "It doesn't say anything about nineteen," he objected.

"That's why. It does say something about all the others—and there's nothing interesting in any of them."

"Maybe you've got something," said Gensen. "We'll send up nineteen with the courier for the experts."

Weston was perusing a map he'd found. Notes corresponding to the numbers of the specimens were marked on it. He found nineteen and studied it for a while. Johns had drawn roughly rectangular lines bounding a considerable area around his figure nineteen. "You'd better get a concession covering this area."

"We'll have to be sure before we can do anything about the concession," said Home.

"I understood the man who is to represent the Mineral Development company is here and waiting."

"He is, but we have to give him word to go ahead and we must wait until—"

"A Soviet company already has it," interrupted Weston irritably.

"The Communist party has been declarded illegal," said Home precisely. He continued, in the manner of a lecturer, "There were four parties here; now there are two. Nacionalistas, which is the government and Trabajadores, the workers' party. The others were the Partido Republicano Socialista, called the PRS, and the Communists. After the last attempt at revolution, eight months ago, the PRS was abolished, its members shot, imprisoned, exiled or just disappeared. The

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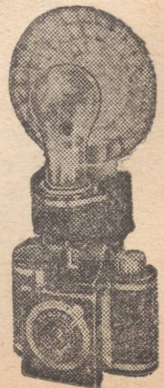

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Communist party was declared illegal at the same time and the Soviet Embassy closed. The Workers have such a shadow of a party that they don't count and the government lets them survive for the sake of appearances. Previously, the PRS wouldn't have anything to do with the Communists but now it is reported that they've merged in exile."

THE DETECTIVE'S mind had gone back to his interview with Colonel Gerard. It had started by the colonel saying, "You know Central America." He always became wary when the Intelligence chief started like that. "Stagg's report," the colonel had continued, "Stagg was the man I had down there. He says the Communist supporters are few in number but very well organized. Too well organized for it to be a local job."

"What happened to Stagg?" Weston had asked.

"He said the police were trailing him so I recalled him. We must not allow anyone to say we are interfering in their domestic politics."

"We never do that," Weston had mocked.

"You, of course, will be quite unofficial."

"As usual."

"Other information, which you can see in the files, makes me think that the Communists want to make a test."

"How?"

"They've had a number of setbacks in Latin America. Relations broken. Parties declared illegal. They've had to move their headquarters for operations around. If they could get one country, particularly a central one, where they could get complete control and keep it—" Gerard had gone on for some time and wound up with, "It must not happen. Quite apart from Johns' report which will be important and liable to precipitate things, it must not happen."

"A bit late in the day to stop it," had been Weston's objection.

"We've reasons to suppose they aren't quite ready. An agent known to have connections with the Communists here and in Mexico, who is just back from a trip to Honduras where he contacted the exiled PRS leaders, has been trying to buy some small navy bombers—amphibians—from War Assets."

"Did he get them?"

"They've been held up. Officially on the basis of export licenses. I've had some inquiries made and everything about the would-be bomber buyer is negative. Pilots and ground crews don't know him. Salesmen and aeronautical experts don't. He's reported to have appeared upset when he found bomb racks had been removed and asked a lot of questions about them. Considering that he was ostensibly buying the planes for conversion to commercial use, it seems odd. He wants to buy six and he has cash money."

"Spending a good deal, aren't they?"

Gerard had nodded. "They mean to make sure they'll succeed." Much later he had said, "I knew that you had connections down there."

"If you knew that, then you should also know that it was some time ago." Weston had been silent for some time and Gerard knew better than to try to hurry him. At last he had said, "Lend me one of those planes."

"Going to fly it down and offer it for sale?" Gerard had queried.

"I'm not automatically welcomed with open arms by revolutionaries," Weston had reminded him a bit irritably. "The plane will furnish an introduction. But not flown into the country. I'd like it to be in Honduras—quite near. Waiting instructions. With a good reliable pilot who'll do what he's told and keep his mouth shut."

Accordingly, the following day, Gerard had introduced to him Captain Jeffries, of Military Intelligence, who was also a pilot. Captain Jeffries, who was a lean, blond Texan raked the detective once with gray eyes that didn't miss much and listened with only very slight evidence of surprise to the colonel's instructions which had ended up with, "And obey his orders regardless of how irregular they may seem to you."

Later Weston had questioned him about the outstanding features of the bombers which he was going to offer for sale and given him his instructions. "Fly the plane to San Lorenzo. Leave it there but make sure that you can get it fueled

and ready with the minimum of delay. Try and answer as few questions about it as possible. You'll have an export license for Colombia. You can imply you've stopped in Honduras to see a girl or any damn thing you like. Take the regular commercial plane from San Lorenzo to the capital, Tagucigalpa. Go to the Palace Hotel and stay there until I telephone you. Don't budge for a letter or a cable or a message. Only when I personally phone. I'll probably tell you to fly the plane somewhere. When you arrive with it, don't talk. You've just been hired to fly the plane down and no questions asked. Understand?"

"Yes, sir. What name will you be using? I should know my employer's name?"

"My own."

"And leave behind anything that could by any chance identify you with the Intelligence," Gerard had warned.

Something that Home was saying to the ambassador brought Weston's attention back to the present. "I heard today that Frederico Calderon was back in the country."

The muscles of the detective's face tautened. He repeated, "Frederico Calderon" in a deliberately level voice.

Home turned and asked, "Know anything about him?"

"A good deal but I thought he was completely out of politics now."

"So did everybody. Although the PRS was his party. There have been persistent rumors recently that he was back and had sent a proclamation to the people to support the men who were fighting for their freedom. And his name means a lot here, even if he is over seventy. The people will follow him. Particularly the Indians."

Weston looked up, his black eyes abstracted. "Yes, the people will follow him," he said. He rose and reached for his coat. "I'd better not stay here too long. You've had more than enough time to thank me for my services at the airport in case anyone is taking an interest in my movements."

"What are you going to do?" asked Home.

Weston turned a faintly surprised expression to him. "Stop the revolution."

"But, good God, how? The local police are stumped—" Gensen left the sentence unfinished.

"Probably the less you know about what I do, the better for your peace of mind," the detective answered bleakly. "You look after your end of it. Get a concession for the territory outlined around nineteen on Johns' map."

"But we can't until we're sure," said Gensen.

"The government hasn't got money to waste on what is nothing more than a crazy guess," added Home severely.

"It's wasted plenty on crazy guesses before," said Weston irritably. "Remember spending our way to prosperity? Good afternoon, gentlemen."

CHAPTER II

A FRIEND FROM MADRID

THE CLERK at the Gran Hotel eyed Weston with considerable respect when he returned, for by now the story of the episode at the airport had circulated in the town with the usual increase in lurid detail. He said, "Señor Dayton asked for you, señor. He is in the bar."

The bar was at one side of a rectangle which surrounded a patio containing a green fountain and a fish pool. There was no water in the pool for in spite of being situated on the shore of a large lake, the town suffered from a chronic water shortage. Some struggling vegetation gave an illusion of coolness but it was only an illusion. Weston quickly picked out Dayton's iron gray hair, rough hewn features and powerful shoulders and made his way to him.

"Been properly thanked by H. Walter?" Dayton grinned cheerfully and pulled out a chair. "I thought you wouldn't be long, so I waited. What'll you have? The whiskey here hasn't killed me yet." He ordered two bourbons and went on, "I stopped by to see if you were doing anything tonight? We're having a bit of a shindig at my place and my wife told me to be sure to bring you. You'll meet a raft of people. I don't know what line you're in—" He paused expectantly and then went on again, "But you'll have

to get to know people if you're going to be around any length of time."

"Very kind of you."

"Everybody's very curious about you," Dayton rumbled on. "We don't usually have such prompt justice around here."

"Police slow?"

"Nothing like that. They're very fast at making arrests but it's usually the wrong people."

"Intentionally or otherwise?"

The keen blue eyes under the heavy gray eyebrows shot Weston a sharp glance. "Some people think they arrest whoever happens to be in sight at the time," he said with a shrug. "I wouldn't know. The politics here are pretty much of a mess. I keep out of them. You can't mix politics with a business like mine."

The detective wondered privately whether there had ever been any public transport concern in any country that hadn't played politics, but he only said, "I wonder why anyone would want to kill Dr. Johns."

Dayton shrugged again. "God knows. Seemed a decent fellow. There's one possibility. He was prospecting round the country back of Tagalpa. There's a sacred mountain to the north there. The Indians don't much like people messing about there." He gave a short laugh. "Funny thing about that damned mountain. You never do see it, even when you fly over it. Always covered in cloud. Three hundred and sixty-five days a year, near as I can make out."

"If Indians objected to Johns' prospecting near their mountain why would they wait till he was back here to kill him?"

"When you've been here as long as I have, you'll realize how unpredictable Indians are. Though, as a matter of fact, they're seldom dangerous."

"Wasn't there some other American professor killed down here recently? Don't they like professors in these parts?"

"You're thinking of Dr. Bowditch. Quite a young fellow. That was an accident. His mule slipped and he went down a thousand foot gorge."

"Where did it happen?"

"Place called Los Encuentros."

"Also north of Tagalpa."

"Yeah." Dayton looked up. "You know the country?"

"I've been here before. A good many years ago." Weston had finished his drink and moved to get up. "What time tonight and where?"

"Any time after nine. I'll write down my address though if you say 'La casa de Señor Dayton' any taxi in town will bring you." Dayton took out a card and printed on it: *Calle 7 de Septiembre—49.*

At the same time Weston had reached a decision. He said, "When do the planes go to Tagalpa? I have to go tomorrow to attend to some business."

"Not tomorrow. Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Leave at 6:30 and return the same day. Unless you want to charter one."

Weston appeared to think. "How much?"

"Three hundred dollars—U. S.—round trip."

"O.K. Can you fix it or should I call your office?"

"I'll look after it. Be ready to leave between eight and nine? I'll tell you the exact hour tonight."

AROUND half past nine, Weston arrived at number 49 Calle 7 de Septiembre and was greeted fervidly by Mrs. Dayton, a woman of about forty with a beaked nose and an intense manner and not at all what he would have expected Dayton to marry. She took Weston firmly by the arm and rushed him round a large room with a patio at one side and a bar at the other, introducing him to something like twenty people with incredible speed. She gabbled a name and added a label to each one. All her labels were either "very intellectual," a "modernist," very "progressive," or a "worker" in something or other.

She was near the end of the round when they came to a dark man with a curiously powerful, worn face. Dark, indifferent eyes looked out from under prominent brows. A scar on the left cheek gave the hard mouth a contemptuous twist. Weston said, "I've met Stefan Radetch before."

"How wonderful," said Mrs. Dayton.

"In Madrid," added Weston as Ra-

detch smiled and held out his hand.

"Oh, you were fighting for the Loyalists too." Mrs. Dayton seemed to think it the only possible reason for anyone's ever having been in Madrid.

Weston said, "No."

She didn't seem to notice it and ran on, "You remember Mr. Weinstein I just introduced you to? You must talk to him. He did a lot for the Loyalists. He has a publishing house here now. Horizontes Grandes. Very progressive." She looked round, saw a small, thin man coming in and said, "Excuse me. Here's Mr. Shenaul. The painter. You must have heard of him. Existentialism in art. Mr. Radetch, do look after your friend." She was gone.

"Our hostess," Radetch said in an English only slightly accented, "is determined to be intellectual if it kills her. Her ambition, I believe, is to gather round her a salon of intellectuals."

Weston looked at the selection in sight. "They look as if they tried very hard." He turned back to Radetch. "I heard one time that you were in China."

"I was. Got sick of it. I'm getting too old to train bunches of imbeciles who, after weeks of teaching, still persist in loading a belt back to front into a machine gun. I haven't the patience any more."

"Are Latins more teachable?" queried Weston idly.

"I don't know. I've given it up. Interested in a coffee *finca* now."

A faint smile crossed Weston's face. "Curious you should have picked this country at the present time."

"If you can show me some country that isn't politically restless," answered Radetch tartly, "perhaps I'll move to it. By the way, what are you doing here?"

After a slight pause, Weston said, "I heard there was a market here for airplanes."

Radetch's dark eyes were suddenly keen and hard. "That wasn't your racket."

"Coffee wasn't yours," retorted Weston.

A big, fat-faced man who said his name was Jacoves and that he was Dayton's operations manager came and told Weston that the plane would be ready at eight-thirty in the morning. He grumbled about the local mechanics. Weston tried to place his accent. He spoke slangy, coloquial English but there was some trace of another tongue in it and it wasn't Spanish. "Have you been here long?" he asked casually.

"Nearly six months. Long enough to know what one's up against." Jacoves offered cigarettes. "You got business in Tagalpa?"

"Yes, but it shouldn't take long."

"The boss didn't say what line you were in."

"Anything profitable."

"With a gun?" Jacoves said it only half seriously. "I was at the airport, you know."

Weston smiled with his lips but it didn't reach his eyes. "Depends whether I need it or not."

"Get hold of Shorty Hollis at the airport if you need a steer about anything in Tagalpa. He's a good egg." Jacoves drifted off.

The evening wore on. Weston learned a variety of things, few of which he thought would be useful. The artist came

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and talked about the ideological meaning of his work. He was, it appeared, going to open an exhibition the following day. Weinstein, owner of Horizontes Grandes came and discoursed on the country's need for political enlightenment and how he was endeavoring to fill it.

Dayton came back. "You being properly looked after? Where's your drink? Never wait to be asked in this house. Stampede up to the bar. That's what I had it put in for." He beckoned a servant and insisted on thrusting another drink into Weston's hand; they were very strong drinks. "You must tell me," Dayton went on, "what I can do to help you. I know how to get things done round here. You've picked a bad time for business. Everyone has nervous jitters."

"Everyone except you?"

"This country averages a revolution every nine months. And the nine months is about up. I've seen I don't know how many of 'em. Abortive ones."

"You think this will be another abortive one?"

"The army's pretty good and it is still supposed to be loyal," Dayton answered carelessly. He looked up suddenly from his drink. "Radetch tells me he knew you in Madrid."

"I met him there."

"I knew a number of fellows who fought for the Loyalists," said Dayton tentatively.

"I knew a number on both sides," answered Weston annoyingly but with perfect truth.

A telephone bell rang somewhere and a minute later a servant beckoned to Dayton, who excused himself and disappeared to the patio.

A female got hold of Weston and said, "Such a dreadful thing, the murder of Dr. Johns. I met him here at the Daytons' before he went up country. *So* intellectual. Nobody would want to kill him."

The detective refrained from observing that someone had not only wanted to, but had done it. He made an affirmative noise and she rattled on. Dayton was coming back; he spoke to Radetch who also disappeared to the patio. Weston realized that the rattling female had stopped rattling and was looking expectantly at him. He said, "I beg your pardon?"

"I said, are you married, Mr. Weston?" she demanded severely.

"No."

"Do you believe in free love?"

"It's certainly economic," murmured Weston. "Excuse me a moment, will you?" He had seen Radetch return from the patio; he seemed to be preparing to leave. The detective made his way to his hostess. "Thanks so much, Mrs. Dayton. Delightful evening," he said.

"Must you go so early? I haven't had a chance to talk to you. Do come any time you like. Don't wait for an invitation."

"What's this? Breaking up the party so early?" expostulated Dayton.

"Airplane trips give me a headache," explained Weston mendaciously. "And I've another tomorrow—though a short one."

"Sinus. Ought to get it fixed. Come on over any time."

OUT ON the street, Weston looked up and down and saw Radetch disappearing at the corner. When the detective reached the corner, Radetch was hurrying sharp right into what, Weston knew, was the secondary business artery of the city. It was not too well lighted and Weston shortened the distance between them, then halted, standing in the shadow of a doorway. His quarry had disappeared into a building on the opposite side.

He moved a little farther up, into the convenient arched entrance of a church. The building that Radetch had entered was *La Noticia*, the independent newspaper.

Men came out and began to put up steel shutters. Weston looked at his watch and back at the building. They couldn't be closing. They must be expecting trouble. What kind of trouble was the point.

Almost before he had formulated the question to himself, he got the answer. Six police trucks rolled up, halted and disgorged twenty men apiece, each man carrying a machine gun. A car had also braked to a halt and an official, flanked by four men, also with machine guns, advanced towards the sidewalk.

As they reached the steps up to the door, a steel shutter fell into place with a clang. The officer began to read rapidly with the aid of a flashlight from a paper he had brought with him. Phrases of the man's high, monotonous voice reached Weston. "... Confiscate the current issue and seal the presses . . . arrest anyone found on the premises. . ."

A voice called back from a small balcony above the door: "This time we'll fight. If you want the edition, come and fight for it."

There was a moment's absolute quiet. Then a voice which Weston recognized as belonging to Radetch, came from inside. "'Put that down, imbecile. Remember your ord—" But it was too late. A shot cut the end of the sentence. One of the men standing beside the officer fell. A dark figure could be seen at the parapet of the balcony, a light machine gun held in its arms, defiantly daring the bullets of the attackers.

Was this an isolated episode, wondered Weston, or was it the beginning of the real thing? On the whole he thought not and wondered if he were giving away to wishful thinking. There had been several episodes like this recently, according to Gerard's reports. And there had been Radetch's warning. Had their orders been not to resist? He remained unobserved in the shelter of the church entrance. Whether it was episode or revolution, it was wasting a surprising number of shells. The street was completely deserted, save for the police, crouched behind their trucks for shelter.

After about fifteen minutes, two dark figures emerged from an alleyway three houses distant from *La Noticia* building and stood for a moment in the shadows, looking up towards the shooting, then walked rapidly towards the main street. At the corner they separated. In the light of the corner lamp, Weston saw that one of them was Radetch. He followed him.

Radetch was walking briskly. He didn't seem at all concerned as to whether he might be followed or not. Perhaps he was going straight to where he lodged. He had crossed the main road now and continued behind the post office, past a market, to the poorer streets at the other side. At the corner of the second cross street he stopped in front of a lighted shop and went in.

From the opposite side of the road, Weston prospected. The place was called the Cafe Antigua and seemed to consist of four tables with marble tops, equipped with spindly looking chairs, a rather confused and messy looking counter in the rear and little else. A single 25-watt bulb, surrounded by a pink cake frill promoted to lampshade, hung forlornly in the middle. There were only two men in the place and neither was Radetch.

Weston crossed and went in. The place was even less attractive at closer range and smelled of an unfortunate mixture of kerosene, rancid fat and garlic. Cockroaches were parading on the counter. The proprietor appeared understandably surprised when the new customer walked in. He wiped the table Weston selected with a dirty cloth, leaving a semi-circle of shiny grease across it.

The detective ordered coffee. It came and was quite good. Gratefully surprised, Weston drank it and lighted a cigarette. A man came in selling lottery tickets. He spoke for a moment with the proprietor, glanced significantly at Weston and was answered with an eloquent shrug of the shoulders. The two men at the table were discussing the price of the coffee crop. The lottery ticket seller left. Weston ordered another cup of coffee. Before he had time to drink it, a door behind the counter opened and Radetch appeared. He saw the detective and hesitated for the fraction of a second, then came forward.

"Are you doing the night life of the capital? If you are, I might suggest that the cafe on the lake is a little better than this."

Weston grinned. "Oddly enough, the coffee here isn't bad. Have some?"

"I've just finished one." Evidently Radetch changed his mind after he'd begun to speak because he added, "But I can always use another."

WESTON beckoned the proprietor who brought the coffee. He put out his cigarette. Radetch brought a packet from his pocket and offered them.

"Somehow," began Radetch, when they had their smokes going, "I don't feel that it was purely your desire to drink coffee that brought you here."

"What other attractions has the place?" Weston looked round at the few fly-specked cans and the cockroaches who seemed to have been joined by more of their clan.

"I was wondering what you found in it," retorted Radetch.

Weston laughed. He might as well try a long shot and see what happened. "Matter of fact, I came here to leave a message for someone."

"Yes? Who?"

"Frederico Calderon."

Before he had finished saying the name, Radetch had leaned forward and gripped his arm. "Shh. For God's sake! Not so loud," he whispered urgently. "You never know who is listening."

Weston glanced towards the men at the other table and obediently lowered his voice. "Police?"

"Haven't a notion. But they easily could be. What do you know about the man you mentioned?"

"He was a friend of mine," said Weston casually, "some years ago."

"Why do you want to leave a message for him?"

"I like to see my old friends. Don't you?"

Radetch made an irritable movement and asked, "What makes you think he's in the country? There's a reward for him and he'd be shot if they ever got their hands on him."

"I know."

"What makes you think he's in the country?" persisted Radetch.

"I've been told it by an extremely reliable source."

"And did the reliable source say that he could be reached through this cafe?"

"Another source," smiled Weston. "You seem curious."

"I've never yet known you to do anything without a reason."

"I hope not. I've occasionally felt on the verge of insanity but I haven't quite got there yet."

"Why do you want to see him?"

"I've explained. He was a friend of mine." Weston's immobile face was even more impassive than usual. "Don't you like to visit your old friends?"

"Not when the police are after them," said Radetch dryly. "I prefer to postpone social activities until some other time."

"I never thought of you as being particularly cautious."

"Nor I you as being particularly sociable. What's your game, Weston?"

"It has nothing to do with the coffee business."

Radetch grinned and for a moment his face lost the worn lines of experience and dissipation and looked almost boyish.

"Ah yes. The coffee business. You must come and see our *finca* some time."

"Thanks. I'd like to."

"I'm afraid you'll find the coffee business rather dull," pursued Radetch, "but we'll do our best to entertain you."

"You find it dull or perhaps you have other interests on the side?"

"We could go on like this all night," said Radetch and grinned again. "What are you up to?"

"At the moment nothing more fiendish than wanting to leave a message for Don Frederico to say that I am here and would like to talk to him."

"And after that?"

"Depends on the talk."

"It all sounds a bit too simple," complained Radetch.

"You've spent so long among secret police and comic-opera revolutions, Radetch, that you can find a plot in a man drinking a cup of coffee."

"If he picks a place like this to drink it in—and if you're the man—yes," retorted Radetch. "You haven't told me yet who said that a message left here would reach Calderon."

"Will it?"

"It was your idea, not mine. How should I know?"

"Incidentally, you haven't told me why you are so deeply interested in what I'm doing here," remarked Weston.

"Like yourself, the welfare of my friends is a matter of great interest to me." Radetch got up. "It's almost like old times having you around to spar with. Let me know which side you're on when you've made up your mind."

"Will you return the compliment?"

"What makes you think I have a side?"

"The previous occasions on which I've run across you, you've shown singularly little evidence of neutrality when there was any kind of a fight going on."

"Perhaps I'm learning wisdom."

"Somehow I doubt it."

Radetch shrugged. "One has to earn a living." He drifted towards the door, then stopped. "Don't follow me. It makes me nervous."

"You overestimate my interest in your welfare," retorted Weston. He waited a few minutes, drank another tiny cup of coffee and then went to the counter. He took a card from his pocket, disturbed several cockroaches while he made room to write and scribbled a few words on it. He handed it to the patron. "I would like that message delivered to Señor Calderon."

The proprietor looked at the card as if it had plague and for a moment the detective thought the man was going to fling it at him. Then he looked from the card to the sizable bill that accompanied it and lastly at Weston's hard face.

"I am a law-abiding man, señor," he said.

"Claro," agreed Weston, "otherwise I would not patronize your cafe."

"I know nothing of the PRS."

"Of course not," Weston agreed again. "But you might learn something. Even law-abiding men sometimes hear things. The matter is urgent."

CHAPTER III

SILVER BULLETS

"THESE TWO gentlemen are from the police," the clerk informed Weston as he came into the hotel.

"If the señor will have the kindness to come with us," said the fatter of the two. They were in plain clothes.

"You have identification?" asked Weston.

They looked a little surprised but the fat one produced an identity card stating that he was Ereberto da Pinto, of the Security Police.

"But I know Señor da Pinto well," protested the clerk.

"But I haven't the pleasure—yet," re-

Radetch leaned forward and gripped his arm. "Shh. Not so loud," he whispered urgently.

torted Weston, "and one has to be careful. Is it not so, señores?"

They had a remarkably comfortable car outside into which they ushered him politely but they were not communicative on the short drive to the large rambling building which housed the ever growing police system.

Weston waited in an anteroom opposite a door marked *Private* for nearly an hour. Señor da Pinto's thinner companion had disappeared the moment they had reached the building and after waiting about five minutes, Señor da Pinto himself went off and did not come back. The man at the desk occasionally eyed Weston with quite friendly curiosity but he did not vouchsafe any comment. After about fifty minutes Weston got up, and curious to find out his status, asked, "Where's the washroom?"

"Down the passage, third door to the left."

"Thanks." The man at the desk made no protest as he left the room. In the passage there were a lot of men hurrying up and down but none paid any attention to him. Considering the hour of the night, or rather morning, there seemed to be a good deal of activity at Police Headquarters. He saw no sign of either da Pinto or his companion. He found the washroom, took his time there and returned to the anteroom in a leisurely manner.

When he re-entered the anteroom, the door marked *Private* was open and a very dapper officer with an ultra-smart uniform and boots that shone stood draped in the opening. He introduced himself as Ramiro Dominico Severo Terceira, confidential assistant to the chief. "We hope that you will be able to give us some information, Señor Weston. Will you please come with me?"

In the wake of the fashionplate, Weston covered miles of passages, finally coming to an open patio, which they crossed. Terceira opened a door at the far side and the unmistakable smell of a hospital came to Weston's nostrils. The dapper young man produced a handkerchief and held it fastidiously to his nostrils; it reeked of some strong perfume. Proceeding in an aura of scent through several more corridors, they finally stopped at a door where they were joined by a doctor and an orderly.

They went into a small room with a barred window. A bed and a table were the only furnishing. On the bed lay something covered with a sheet. From behind his handkerchief, Terceira gave an order to the attendant who pulled the sheet back from the face benath. "What do you know about this?" demanded Terceira dramatically.

Weston considered the thin young face for a moment. His expression didn't change. He said, "This is the man I shot at the airport today."

The fashionplate seemed disappointed at the calm, disinterested manner in which the detective spoke. He said, "Is that all you have to say?"

Weston smiled unpleasantly. "Would you like me to observe that your handling of him must have been peculiarly brutal as he appears to have died from some injury to the lungs and my bullet went into his abdomen?"

Terceira drew in his breath sharply. "Why do you say that?"

"The blood hasn't been wiped from his mouth," replied Weston. With a swift movement he flipped down the sheet. Surgical pads, caked with congealed blood were still on the dead man's chest. "Oh. I see," he said.

The doctor spoke for the first time. "The señor is not a doctor?"

"No, but I've seen a good many corpses and it's my business to know how they died. How did it happen?"

"That is what we hoped you would tell us," said Terceira.

"I? He was in your custody, not mine. Why ask me?"

"You tried to kill him at the airport." Terceira sneezed suddenly and violently and then again.

"I did not try to kill him,' the detective explained when the sneezing was over. "I very carefully avoided killing him."

"What do you mean?"

"Just that. If I had wanted to kill him, I would have done it. I am a very good shot," Weston ended flatly and conclusively.

"Then why did you shoot him?"

"The man was obviously some kind of

criminal and obviously dangerous and he was threatening a crowd which had women and children in it. Furthermore, señor, I am an American and Americans do not like to see their consular officers threatened wtih abduction."

"Then why did you not wish to kill him?"

"Why should I? It's no pleasure to kill." Weston smiled a bit crookedly. "Also, I thought the police might like to question him. Also if, as I suspected, he was the man who had just killed Dr. Johns, I wanted to know the result of his being questioned."

"You thought of a great many things in a very short time, señor."

"The result of experience, señor," Weston told him politely.

"It couldn't be that you wanted to silence him."

"In that case I would have killed him at the airport," explained Weston.

It went on for some time, mostly going in a circle. Finally Terceira said, "You left Dayton's house before midnight and

"What do you know about this?" demanded Terceira dramatically.

you did not reach your hotel until 2:30. Where were you in the meantime?"

"I took a walk and had some coffee in a little place on the other side of town."

They went back to the police building. Terceira wafted him languidly into the anteroom next door to the one where he had been before. "The chief wants to talk to you." Another fit of sneezing rather spoiled his languid exit for he choked himself at the end of it and then started to cough. Weston noticed specks of blood on the perfumed handkerchief and remembered reading that the incidence of tuberculosis among the population of the city was something appalling.

The police chief looked tired. This was not surprising. *Capitán* Sabino Rios had been police chief for nine years and that would have killed a weaker man. As he took the chair Rios indicated, Weston studied him for he had had only a brief glance at him at the airport. The straight, coarse black hair advertised his Indian blood which perhaps accounted for a certain heavy, phlegmatic quality in the face. This was offset by the rapier-sharp black eyes, heritage of his Spanish ancestors. It was the face of a man who would not easily be moved off his course, once he had set it.

"*Teniente* Terceira reports that you have no explanation for the death of this man, Garcia," he began and continued, "The murder suggests that someone was afraid of what he might say."

"Exactly. What do you know about the man?"

For answer the chief pushed a form across the desk. It was not helpful. Garcia had been 23, had had a poor military record when he had done his army service, had served six months in prison for petty theft and had been variously a bootblack, a newspaper vendor and was now selling lottery tickets, when he worked.

"You acted at the airport with remarkable speed," resumed Rios. He evidently expected a comment and when none was forthcoming, finally continued, "Almost as if you had expected trouble." Again he waited and as, for the second time, there was no comment, he asked, "Why?"

"As I tried to explain to *Teniente* Terceira," said Weston, "Americans do not take kindly to seeing their consular officers abducted."

"Your passports say you are a private detective. You have a temporary visa in the character of a tourist. Just what was your purpose in coming to the country?"

"Even private detectives take vacations sometimes."

"I have been told, señor, that you never do anything that will not insure you a very good profit."

"Surely the Señor Jefe understands that?"

"I have also been informed that you are a friend of Calderon's."

"And you think. . .?"

"There have always been men well paid to help foment revolutions."

"So they say. I'd like to know the source of your information about me."

But the chief shook his head. "Our sources are confidential."

"You were told tonight," persisted Weston and when Rios didn't deny it, he asked, "Quite late? After midnight?"

"What difference does it make?"

"Very little," agreed Weston carelessly. "But I'd hazard a guess that your informant is a man well known to have fought for the Communists in a good many parts of the world."

"Information from any source is valuable. You don't deny it?"

"Why should I? But the fact that I know Calderon does not prove that I am plotting to overthrow your government."

"We have a law under which I have authority to deport undesirable aliens."

"The country will look rather odd in the eyes of the world's press if you deport a man whose only offense while he was here was to help you catch a murderer."

"Protecting my country against those who would ruin it is more important than the laughter of a handful of fools." Rios paused a moment. "I would like to understand better why you have come here."

Weston didn't answer immediately. He leaned over the desk and flicked the button that disconnected the dictaphone. Rios made no comment. "Someone told you I seldom did things that didn't show a profit. What would it be worth to you

if I put into your hands the men who are behind this revolution?"

"You'd inform and betray your friends if it were worth your while?" remarked the chief without surprise. "You will find the state is generous to informers if the information proves to be reliable. Who are the men?"

"I haven't the least idea. Let me alone and I'll find out."

The chief stared in utter disbelief. "You expect me to believe that you don't know?"

"I don't know whether I expect you to believe it or not," Weston answered judicially. "It happens to be true."

"And you think you could find out when my men have failed?"

"I think so."

"You have confidence in yourself, señor."

"I have quite a reputation for getting results. But I like to know beforehand that it is worth the effort."

"You will not find the state ungenerous."

"People's ideas of generosity vary considerably sometimes," remarked Weston dryly.

The fencing went on for some time. It was a curtain behind which Rios was thinking and weighing possibilities. Weston knew that. He reflected that, at times, it is useful to have a reputation for being mercenary and not too scrupulous. When he finally left the police station, Rios had, for the time being at any rate, given up the idea of deporting him and had implied that U.S. $10,000 would be forthcoming if Weston could bring about the apprehension of the heads of the movement, their advisers and the source of their finances.

He had also got some information. The chief had admitted that though they knew well the leaders of the political "outs," the men who periodically attempted a coup to overthrow the regime, everything that had come to light about the present movement showed a different hand—and, without doubt, a much more efficient one.

Enroute back to the hotel, Weston mused on the chances of the chief's loyalty. In countries where no politician trusts any other politician and even the highest placed are said to be susceptible to silver bullets, this was hardly a problem to be seriously pondered. The answer given by the toss of a coin was as likely to prove accurate. He felt instinctively that Rios was loyal and he had to take an chance on his hunch. He'd soon know if he were wrong.

Probably a knife in the back would tell him.

(End of Part 1)

"Mike Glasgow was just as tough as the newspapers said he was—and the lead legacy he left behind him was as dangerous as anything he cooked up while the breath of life still bubbled in that hairy chest of his. I'm the guy who put him away—me, Chuck Conrad—but if you're looking for a hero you're talking to the wrong man. I was afraid of Mike every minute I was tagging him but it happens to be my racket. And I collected my regular fee, had the law on my side and came out with a ten-grand bonus—for being lucky! You see, I'm no punk like some of these private eyes—or a crook either. Just a guy trying to do a job and just as scared of getting an—

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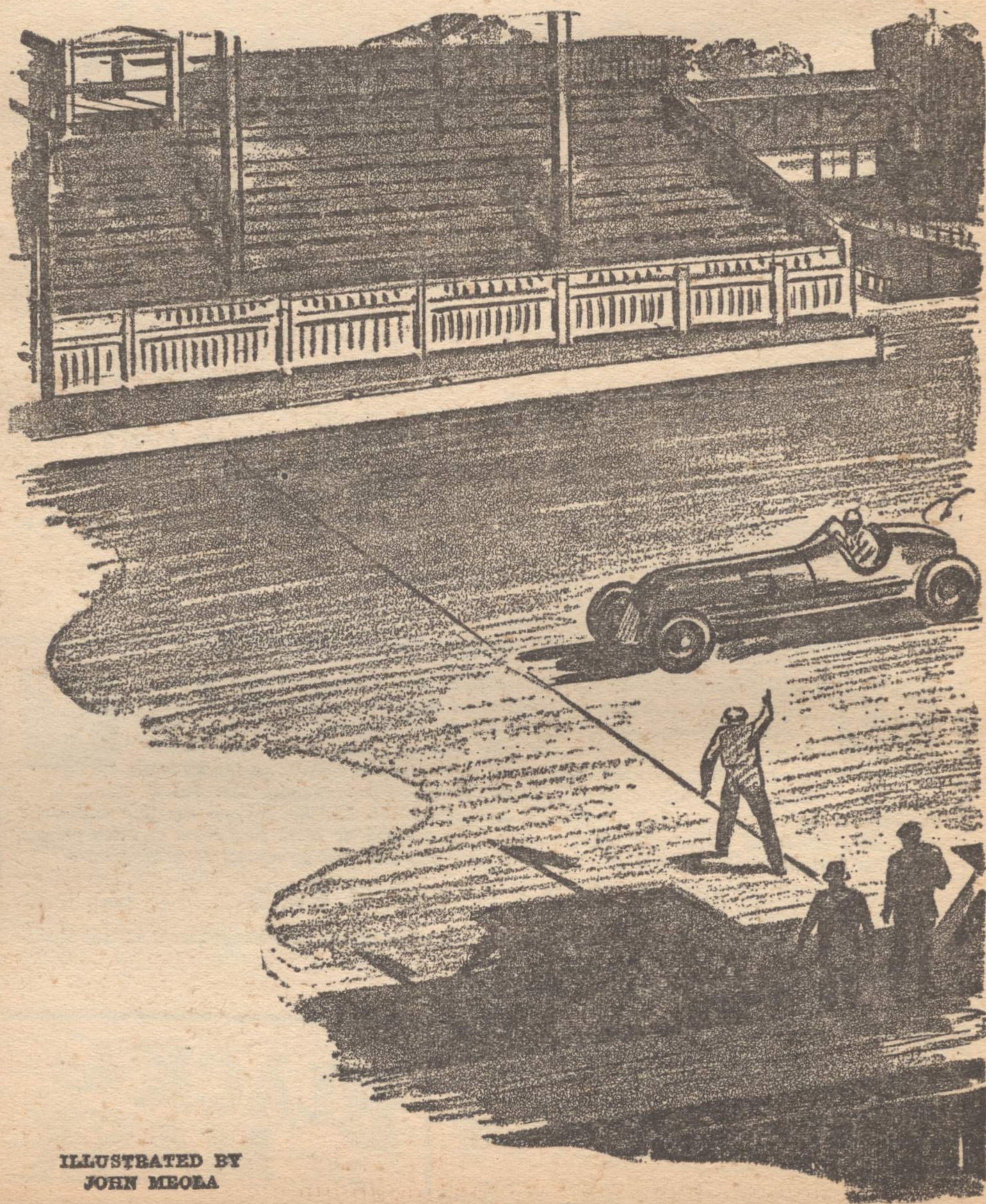


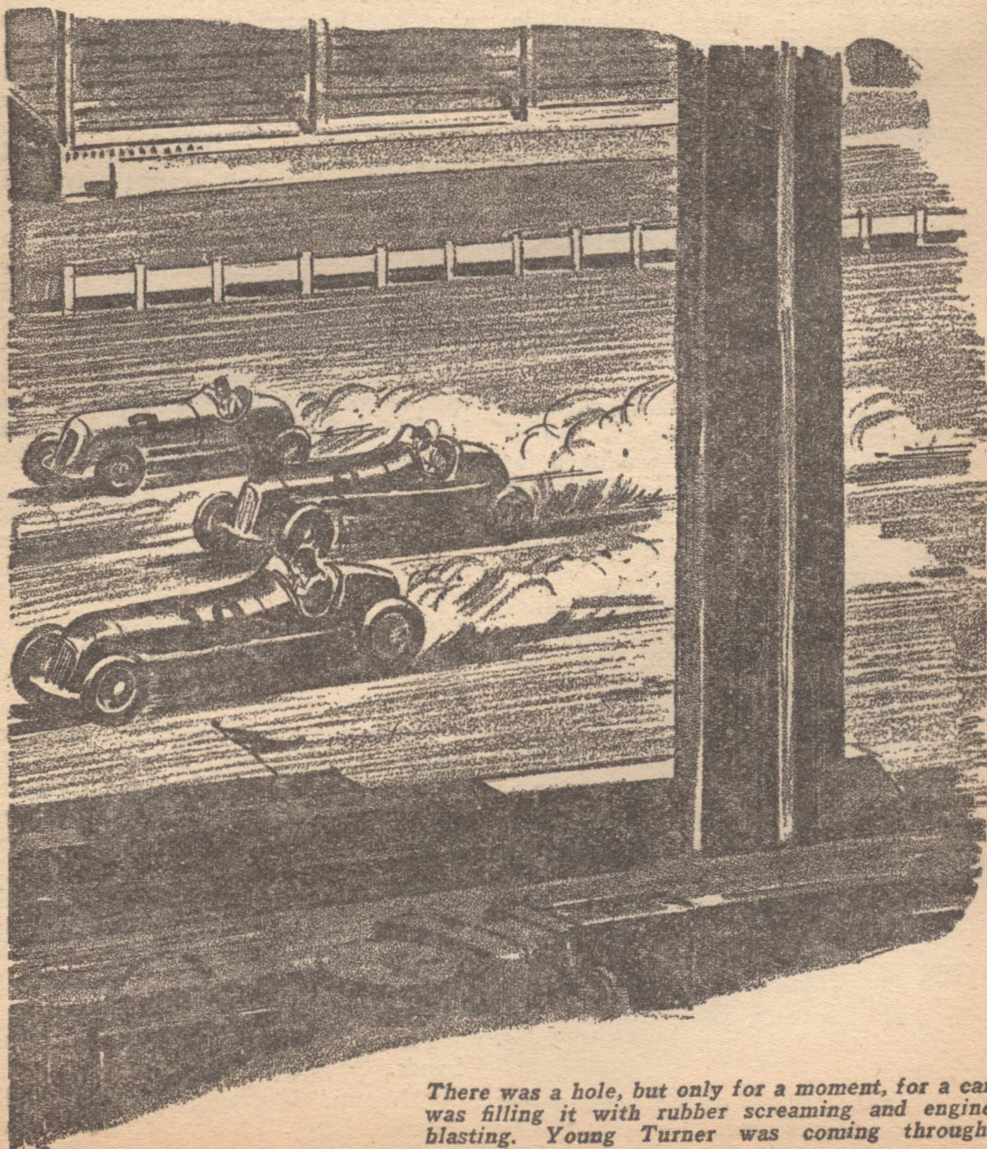
ILLUSTRATED BY
JOHN MECEA

By COLEMAN MEYER

SENTIMENT—it's a fine word and the poets do quite well with it, so I'm told. Only they mix it up with words like "Home" and "Mother" to make it sell. Around the race track we don't see too much of it. Everybody seems too busy getting on with this hard-bitten, cold-eyed business of trying to win top purse money and still stay alive.

Naturally I expected to see it as part of young George Turner's make-up. He was just a kid, a slender, sensitive-featured youngster and the stars were still in his eyes.

But if anybody had ever told me that even a synthetic gleam of it was interred in the case-hardened, gimlet-eyed racing machine that is Tommy Beckett—and if anybody had ever told me that I'd see the day when I'd have my front wheels



There was a hole, but only for a moment, for a car was filling it with rubber screaming and engine blasting. Young Turner was coming through.

running right between a harp and a halo before 20,000 empty seats and without even so much as a buffalo nickel for the doing . . .

Maybe a trace of it properly belonged in Iffy Davis—Iffy wears clothes like Crosby and makes too much of an embarrassed point about being hard-shelled.

He runs a flock of single-seaters, Grade-A dirt track iron, and young Turner was only with us by accident—and intent. The accident was that somebody tossed Art Campbell, fourth driver in our string—the one we called the Prof—a scholarship in poetry or building bridges or something. That left Art's seat in Number Five open. And the intent was in a letter that the youngster presented to Iffy when he introduced himself.

We were at the Clovis half-mile dirt strip when the kid came up and spoke with Iffy. I was too far away to hear the conversation but I could see Iffy's features run the gamut; puzzlement, comprehension, welcome and then his business scowl as he slowly spelled out the words.

He was wearing his business scowl when he came over. "Fergy, this is George Turner," he said waving a fat hand at the tall youngster in the leather jacket. "Ferguson Mason, Turner."

The kid didn't exactly drop a curtsy but he came pretty close to it.

Iffy kept creasing the letter with thick fingers. "Turner's the son of old friends," he continued. "Had some experience down in one of the gas-light circuits. He'd like to latch on to a car . . . Tell you what, son." He turned to the youngster. "You've got a racing ticket?" Young Turner nodded eagerly, went to pawing his pockets. "If you've got your gear, get into it. If not, Fergy here will fix you up with a crash helmet and goggles. Take Number Five. Run it around a little. Not fast. Just get the feel."

I looked at the kid's retreating back as he dashed after a small zippered bag. "What's this?" I demanded. "Kindergarten?"

Iffy rolled a cold-smoked cigar under his Bob Hope nose. "Not exactly," he temporized. "The boy might be O.K."

"Rolly Calder would trade in all his bridgework for the seat in Five," I remarked. "Rolly knows all the answers."

Iffy carefully folded the letter, tucked it in the cigarette pocket of his screaming sport shirt. "Wait until we get a look at the lad."

The kid had been out on the strip for about half an hour when Iffy returned to the pits. "Fergy," he grunted. "Go on out. Ride with him for a while. Don't shove him. Just tell me what you think of him."

I spent a couple of miles getting my water heat up and looking around to see where the boys had been piling the loose stuff. Then I jumped on it and pulled alongside young Turner. He looked over as the chrome grille of my Number Two matched his cockpit. Then he grinned broadly as I waved reassuringly and dropped in his pace.

We got off the grandstand corner in fair fashion. The notes blared from his chrome stack. Number Five bundled her rubber under her, e-e-k-ked a little as the kid heaved on the coal. The corner came racing back at us. I nodded with approval as he breathed it, picked just the right spot to lift the throttle and get fully set for it. Then he stamped his power.

Five ripped her rear skins loose. The sleek tail arched and she rode the corner in a steady, controlled slide. For speed it wasn't anything to write home about. I wasn't looking for speed. I was looking for hands. And the kid had them. Good hands; fine supple fingers that blended his steering wheel and his power.

I tucked my iron inside him, watched for one more corner, nodded to myself the final time. Then, because I've been racing for too many years, I chopped my power and bumped my way into the pits.

"WHYN'T you stay with him," Iffy scowled. "Well, what do you think?"

"Could be," I nodded.

"Any savvy?"

I nodded again. "Smooth savvy. Good hands. Good foot."

"Mmmm." Iffy looked pleased. "O.K. Thanks, Fergy." He went out to wave the kid in.

I said that Iffy runs race cars. He does —like a flock of dump trucks. And makes them pay better. Three of us, Bull Jensen, Tommy Beckett and myself, have been with him for years and were used to pre-race briefings. Young Turner's eyes were out a foot as Iffy called us together in the pits.

"Look, son," he said. "It might be that we can find a place for you—"

"You mean," Turner interrupted incredulously, "I might actually drive for you—"

"The first thing we do here," Iffy broke in cuttingly, "is *listen!*" The youngster almost clicked his heels together as he snapped to attention. I didn't need the silver i.d. bracelet on his wrist to tell me that he had listened to a major speak.

"I said *might,*" Iffy continued fixing the kid with a hard blue eye. "You can run Five today as soon as you get fixed up with a license in this Association. We'll see what happens. First there's a couple of things I want to make clear; ordinarily I don't handle boys without a reputation. Maybe this letter—" he patted the lurid pocket of the sports shirt —"makes a difference.

"Don't forget—I run this outfit and I give orders, once only. I don't like wrinkled automobiles so don't try to be a hero all in one afternoon. Lastly—the other three guys on this team, Bull, Tommy and Fergy, here—" he jerked a thick thumb at me—" are about as good as this business has ever seen. Watch a lot. Listen more. And speak damn seldom! Then maybe, some day, you'll have earned the right to ride with them. That's all." He vaulted the low pit rail and headed over for the timing stand.

Young Turner watched him through distended eyes. "Gosh!" he breathed. "Gosh!"

The kid did a pretty fair job in the time trials and got himself a place for the main event. He didn't fare so well in his heat but I didn't chalk that up to his discredit. He drew a heat pairing with Rolly Calder and Ward Petersen and you have to fly low to beat them anyhow.

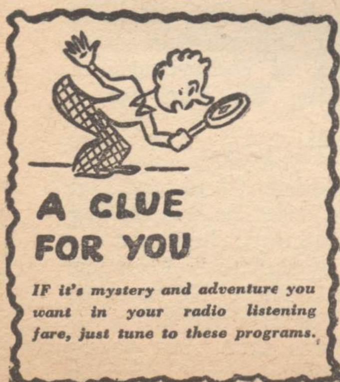
Iffy called me over before the main event. "Let Bull and Tommy take care of the racing business," he grunted around the ragged cigar. "Stick around with the kid and see what he doesn't know."

I "stuck around" and when the checkered flag went down we had eighth and ninth place. I hoisted myself out of Two, walked over to where the kid was. He was still sitting in Five, staring at it like he couldn't believe that he was sitting at the wheel of one of the six best cars on the coast.

"You'll do all right," I said. "It takes time. Don't tail a guy high like you've been doing. That lets him set the pace. Come in under him and start squeezing. If you squeeze hard enough you'll start worrying him. If he worries—" It went on for five minutes.

"Gosh, Mr. Mason! Thanks!" I have heard the word "love" used with less reverence than his awed "Thanks!"

Tommy wandered over to my pit, unbuttoning his chin strap. Tommy is a saddle-leather brown, scarred little devil with ice-water where most people have blood. "The kid," he grinned. "He's a



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little upset to be in the presence of so much glory. Bull said hello to him a while ago and I thought he was gonna kneel!"

We were at the bar that night when Iffy finally caught up with us. Bull's two hundred pounds and ham hands collared him, sat him firmly on a stool. "Come on, Poppa," he rumbled. "Give."

"Nothing to give," Iffy shrugged. "Fergy says the kid has maybe the makings—"

"Makings, hell," Tommy interrupted. "That act out there today cost you money with Five running in ninth place. He'll run in a lot more ninth places before he learns the score. Since when have you taken up G.I. training?"

"Maybe I'd better begin at the beginning," Iffy grinned. "The kid's old man was a racing hackie. A good one. He was killed at Indianapolis over twenty years ago. Could be that you'd remember the name—Terry Turner. A guy spun in front of him. And the guy made it. Turner put it over the wall to keep from smacking the guy. Naturally, he didn't make it.

"Terry was a pretty good friend of mine. So was his wife, Martha. This note—" he patted the screeching sport shirt—"was from Martha. She asked me to give the boy a chance."

Things were a lot different now. The racing gang is pretty clannish. Iffy, with all of his professed scorn of the ordinary human sentimentalities, is no different from the rest.

"So," Iffy continued, "you guys kinda keep an eye on the kid, huh? His old man was about as good as they come. Maybe the boy has something, too."

BY THE time three weeks had gone by the rest of us thought so also. It wasn't that the kid was knocking down the grandstand. This was the Big League and you don't bat .500 your first season.

It was just that he was an engaging youngster who lived, ate and breathed racing. He was so damn polite it was sometimes embarrassing. He still called everybody "Mister" and would snap to attention if you so much as said good morning. As for listening—if you even hinted that it looked like rain he went right out and bought an umbrella.

Tommy was his special hero and Tommy usually looked like young Turner was fastened to him with a leash. But Tommy was flattered, too. Especially when the youngster seemed to know every race meet Tommy had even been in, the winning time, whom he'd beat and why.

He was coming along all right. Iffy's sharp tongue kept him well under wraps, and probably from getting hurt and he was learning fast. A great deal faster than his finishing places would indicate. He was getting a little confidence in himself; once he slugged it out with Rolly Calder for three full laps without getting any the worst of the fight and didn't quit until Iffy's frantic pit board signal threatened him with assassination.

"Who the hell do you think you are—Horn or Bill Holland?" Iffy raged. "You wrinkle up that car and I'll murder you! And you wrinkle up yourself and your Ma will murder me!"

So things were going along just fine until we got to the mile dirt at Hanford. It was Saturday night and the three of us were sitting at the hotel bar when Iffy came charging in with a stricken look on his tanned face. He sat on a stool, ordered a double whiskey and moaned.

"What's the matter?" Bull asked unsympathetically. "Somebody swipe your marbles?"

"The kid!" Iffy bleated. "That damn fool kid!"

"What's the matter?" Tommy demanded in swift anxiety. "He's not hurt?"

"No." Iffy gulped his drink. "I was just talking on the phone with Martha. Martha—his mother," he added in impatience at our lack of comprehension. "She's been looking for him for a month!"

"But," I said. "The letter—"

"Exactly," he nodded. "A phony! You see Martha didn't know he was fooling around with hot iron until she found out about it one day by accident. Then she put her foot down firmly. No more of that. The racing business had killed his Daddy and that was that. But young George lived with the old man's clipping

book and I guess somewhere among those clippings he found my name mentioned. He knew I was running a team on the coast . . . " He spread his fat palms.

"Well," I said finally. "It seems simple enough. Just put the boy on a train."

He shook his head. "It won't work. Besides, Martha's flying out tomorrow."

"Look," I said curiously. "You seem pretty upset. Young Turner is a nice enough kid, but all told, I'd say he's cost you a couple of thousand bucks already in money Five didn't win. Even for the sake of auld lang syne that seems like a lot of biscuits."

Iffy's face flamed red. "I—" Then he halted as though regretting something he hadn't said. "Mebbe," he added cryptically. "But a debt's a debt." And with that enigmatic remark he departed still dry-washing his fat hands.

"Imagine that," Tommy mused. "A kid so dead crazy to be a racing hackie he forges a letter—leaves home . . . "

Tuesday night we are at Oakland for a show the following night under the lights. Iffy "Psst, pssts!" from behind the lobby palm of the St. Charles. "My room," he whispers in a conspiratorial tone.

Somehow I had visions of a long black coat, maybe a shawl. Martha was right out of *Vogue,* like one of those ads where they refer to a young matron. Blonde hair in an up-do, tailored suit, nice eyes and a smile to match. She was easy to know. You could start right out with "Martha."

" . . . And I didn't know where to start looking until I happened to think of Hector," she finished. I grinned broadly as Iffy winced at the use of his given name.

"What are you going to do now?" I asked. "Take him home?"

"I don't know." Her wide eyes were serious. "He's over twenty-one. I can only ask." Then she added rapidly, "You'll understand I'm sure; I'm not opposed to racing—for somebody else. But after his father . . . " She fell silent.

"A guy can get pretty old in this business," Tommy offered surprisingly. "If he's handy. And it's what he wants to do."

"I suppose so," Martha replied doubtfully. "And I suppose it's in his blood. If there was just some way—"

Iffy's fat bulk bounced off the chair. "I got it!" He patted Matha's slim shoulder. "How long can you be around?"

"No particular time," she shrugged daintily. "I have a business that can take care of itself."

"O.K.! Stay out of sight. Go visit somebody in San Francisco. Do anything. But don't look up the kid!" The sweat beads started to form and I knew Iffy was going through the labor pains of a great idea. "Just leave everything to me. We'll have this thing buttoned up in a couple of weeks. Go on now. You can phone the desk and let me know where you'll be staying."

The door had hardly closed behind her trim figure when Iffy said, "You guys, listen—" Then his fat hands put it into motion as well as sound . . .

"It sounds like a pretty lousy trick to me," Tommy finally said doubtfully.

Iffy had the grace to blush. "Maybe it is. But you heard what his mother said. What the hell! If anybody should holler it should be me. This is costing me dough!"

And we left it that way.

WE RAN three times that week under the lights and had a week-end show at Santa Rosa. The following week was four meets. By the time we'd buttoned up the final one the kid couldn't have beat a tow car. And I was feeling like a heel.

Iffy had made it simple enough. "If I dump this kid now he'll just go out somewhere and promote another car. He's gonna be in this racing business or bust. Simply because he thinks he has a chance of being a pretty fair hand. You guys can knock that out of him. And if you knock it out—he'll quit!"

Bull doesn't catch on very quick. "I don't get it," he had rumbled.

"In his scheme of things the Lord comes first," Iffy explained. "You guys are standing in the next three positions. He thinks any thing you say comes right from the Book. If you tell him it's done with mirrors he'll be at Woolworth's in the morning. Catch?"

We caught. But it was a bad couple of weeks. Between three of us giving Turner nothing but confusion—"Go into the corner high . . . Get in on the apron . . . " and Iffy bellowing about potential damage to Five every time he got going fast enough to keep his engine warm, the kid got enough advice to drive a thousand race meets. And all of it was bad.

If it hadn't been for his blind faith and the respectful awe with which he'd listen it wouldn't have been so bad. I dropped some pearls of wisdom in his ear at Santa Rosa. It spun him twice. Tommy rode up with the tow car to get him started. I saw him talking earnestly. Young Turner's helmet nodded agreement. "What did you tell him?" I asked Tommy as his pint-sized frame dropped off the running board of the tow job.

"Just the opposite of whatever you said," Tommy replied shortly. "You know, Fergy—this is a lousy trick. This kid has good hands and a good heart. And right now he's eating that heart out in little chunks. I feel like a guy who has just run over a boy's dog."

The final meet at Hanford did it. So many things were chasing under Turner's crash helmet that he actually wobbled before he made up his mind as to where to try the corner. Rolly Calder was just taking him on the outside when Five got out of hand and the kid narrowly missed turning two racing cars into thirty thousand dollars' worth of junk.

Turner was back in the pits when I saw the steward talking earnestly with Iffy. Then the two of them approached Number Five, Iffy with a strained expression on his face, the steward with that hurts-me-worse-than-you look.

"I'm sorry, Turner," the steward said not unkindly. "Perhaps this circuit's a little fast for you—yet. I'll have to pick up your racing card."

It was a gloomy session back at the hotel. The kid could only gulp when it was his turn to talk. The bottom had fallen right out of his world. Tommy's square, scarred jaw was tight and his hard eyes boded ill for Iffy when we should be alone again.

"Now look, George," Iffy said placatingly. "Maybe it's all for the best. This is a bum business anyhow, even if you're cut out for it. Tell you what—you run along and get some sleep. You'll stay with the team until we get to Oakland anyhow."

The door had hardly closed behind young Turner's back before Tommy exploded. "Of all the lousy tricks!"

"Now, Tommy," Iffy soothed. He spread his fat hands appealingly. "Hell, I don't like it any better than you do. But Martha—"

"Martha!" Tommy snorted. "I've got a couple of things to tell her, too!" He stalked out of the room.

There was a Sunday show due for the cement strip at Oakland. Knowing that Martha was in the Bay Region I wasn't too surprised when Iffy phoned the desk and asked us up to his room.

And I wasn't too surprised at the belligerent air displayed by Tommy when he entered. Martha was saying, "That's simply fine, Hector. You don't know what a relief that is to me."

Iffy winced again at his given name. "O.K.," he mumbled. "It wasn't any fun but I guess the boy is all caught up with the racing business now. Maybe—"

"Maybe, hell!" Tommy interrupted with ungentlemanly directness. "Now that you sharpshooters are all done throwing bouquets and feeling cute I've got a couple of things to say. To you, Mrs. Turner. Privately."

Martha's eyes were wide in astonishment as Tommy took her arm firmly and escorted her to the hall. Iffy's were wider in amazement. "There's no good in this, Fergy," he bleated. "Trouble. Everything is trouble all the time. I get this deal all finished. Now he's gonna get it all stirred up again."

It was nearly an hour before they returned but I felt like leading a cheer as I scanned faces coming through the door. Tommy had a self-satisfied smugness on his leather features. Martha's eyes showed traces of recent tears but her nice chin was firmly set as she said to Iffy, "I'm sorry, Hector. There were some things I didn't know. I wasn't really aware that my son's whole world revolved around this career he seems so set on. Mr. Beckett, Tommy here, explained a lot of things."

"You mean—" Iffy began in a stricken voice.

"I suppose so," Martha smiled wanly. "If he's set on this career I suppose he's set on it. You'll help him, Hector, won't you?"

It was two hours later when I caught Iffy at the hotel bar. He was drinking with the earnestness of unrequited love. He slid a stool over with his foot, a gloomy nod invited me to sit.

"So it ain't enough I got iron that hasn't made a nickel for a month. So that I got a boy who has no more racing ticket than a chorus girl. So now I gotta start all over again." His early-balding head shook sadly. "Get all the iron out for tomorrow, Fergy," he added. "I've got a hunch we'll need it."

SATURDAY isn't too busy a day except for the Class "B" iron. So we had the track nearly to ourselves when we untrailered the cars on the infield. Oakland is a weird strip, vertical wall at one end, a wide flat corner at the other, ⅝'s of a mile that you can roll close to the century and sometimes scares you to death in doing it. Iffy was a sour taskmaster with a hangover. Young Turner was properly contrite.

"We'll skip over the fact of the phony letter," Iffy growled. "Anyhow—your mother is here and she'll have much to say about that. Prime thing right now is to get your ticket back so that you can drive. Maybe that's do-able. And maybe it isn't. Get Five out and run it around all you can. Get plenty of miles on it. The steward should be here this afternoon and you'll have to look plenty good for him. Fergy—you better chase around with him for a while."

The two-man scramble wasn't five laps old before I knew it was no dice. Four weeks of confused instructions and narrow escapes had left a mark that would perhaps never be erased. The kid had the same hands and the same foot on the gun. But the hands were no longer certain and the foot was out of synchronism.

The sixth time around I pulled up on him, waved an arm and pointed a follow-me sign at the hood of Number Two. Turner nodded, tucked in behind. I turned the wick up pretty high.

We rocketed down the steep pitch of the vertical wall, picked up plenty of revs in the dive. I left the burners lit going down the backstretch. The kid nudged right behind, stayed there for a moment. Then, suddenly, I knew he wasn't there. The tachometer had just started reaching for the government figures on the right side of the dial, had just started reaching for 6000, when I felt I was alone.

Rubber squalling, I got through the flat turn, backed it off and waited. He caught me in a moment, nodded a helmeted head as I waved "Come on!" and stood on it.

The front stretch was the same thing—wheel for wheel until the engine started really racketing. Then he slid rearward. And this was the easy corner, the steep one that would hold a handful of horsepower.

Twice more I tried it. Each time found my Number Two into the corner alone. I shook my head, lifted a left arm and

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beckoned for the infield. We braked down, turned into the small midget track that bisects the big oval.

Young Turner stayed in the cockpit, goggles loosely around his neck, yellow gloves plucking uncertainly at the wheel. Iffy came over with Tommy at his heels.

"I—I'm sorry, Mr. Davis," the kid blurted forth miserably. "I just can't do it. Every time the tach gets up there I keep trying to remember what I'm supposed to do and something freezes up inside of me. I just know I'll lose it on the corner."

"All right," Iffy said gruffly. "Go on out," he added swiftly. "Put some miles on it." A push car obliged at his gesture and Five snuffled out onto the speedway. Iffy looked at me questioningly.

"He'll get hurt," I shrugged. "Anyhow the steward will never pass him. He's liable to kill somebody else."

Tommy looked at him with scathing expectancy. Iffy made a gesture of overstuffed helplessness with his fat hands. "Go ahead, Master Mind," Tommy rasped. "You chopped the kid's heart up. Now what's the answer?"

"I dunno," Iffy confessed. "The steward—"

"Is here," Tommy finished for him acidly, jerking a thumb behind Iffy's fat back. Fred Walsh was just striking across the apron. Fred is a sound man, knows his business. Iffy met him halfway, was assisting his earnest voice with plump hands as they approached.

"I'm not mad at your boy, Iffy," Walsh said. "But this is no place for a lad who is uncertain. I won't stand for anyone else getting hurt on his account."

Tommy waited for a moment, then he cut through Iffy's bleating. "All right. What will satisfy you?"

Walsh considered for a moment. "I hadn't thought of it that way. But since you ask, let's say perhaps a half a dozen laps under twenty-four seconds—looking reasonably capable. Then a couple of laps with close traffic . . . I just want to be sure, that's all."

Tommy slapped the back of one hard brown hand into the palm of the other. "Roger!" he crisped. "Do me a personal favor then, Fred. Wait until late this afternoon, and let's run traffic first?"

Walsh looked at him quizzically. Then he nodded.

I spent the next couple of hours in wonderment. I wasn't alone. Tommy barked a few directions: "Pull the kid in. Tell him to stay on the track and hold it at 5000 revs. Remember, 5000 revs on the nose! I'll be back." Then he had vanished.

The long shadows were starting to darken the infield and he still hadn't returned. Five was still winding monotonous mile after monotonous mile. Walsh came over, looked at his watch. "I'm afraid I won't be able to wait much longer."

"Stick around a little longer, Fred," I urged. "Tommy should be back. . . Wait a minute. Here he is now." Tommy's slight figure came running across the infield.

He was breathless by the time he got to the pits. "Get your iron out, Fergy," he panted. "Get Bull, too. Hurry!" Then he ran over to his car, started delving inside.

Bull and I were on the apron, waiting in patient bewilderment. Tommy's car rolled up with us and his arm was flagging the kid down. "Now you listen, son," he said as Five snuffled in. "We're gonna go out for a couple of miles. I want you to take my car. I want you to forget everything that anybody ever told you. We're probably a bunch of heels anyhow. Just get in this can, drive it like it was the first one you ever drove. The three of us are going with you. And we're gonna help you make it look good!"

"But—but—" young Turner was protesting even as he was climbing into Number Three.

"Never mind that," Tommy snapped. "There's no time for talk. The steward won't wait any longer. And one other thing," he added as he waved an arm for a push car. "I carry more gear ratio so don't worry about it if the tach reading is down."

The push car nudged Two onto the speedway. I called out. "Now what, Junior? We make him look good?"

"We," Tommy replied grimly, "just get out there and drive like hell. And pray that it adds up right!"

It was a fine assignment. Four cars, maybe some of the best on the coast. Long shadows. And an empty grandstand. This was strictly for love.

It took a couple of laps to get together. When we did it was Bull on the pole, I'm outside of him. Tommy is nudging Bull's tail and the kid has the grille shoved right up against my rear deck. Bull brought us down the front stretch in a gentleman's start. I saw Walsh at the starting line, eyeing us, Iffy alongside him, still dry-washing his hands and looking sad.

The steep turn was close and easy. And we were all together diving off the wall. Bull doesn't catch on very quick and he was trying to make a parade of it going down the backstretch, foot halfway down and holding the formation tight. Tommy blasted his engine, moved high. I went out to give him some room for his car.

He pulled up alongside Bull, shouted something at him. I didn't get the words. The gesture was enough. Bull's big shoulders shrugged. He didn't know what it was all about but he did know Tommy's gestures. His size eleven shoe stood on it. His engine let go with a startled bleat. And the show was really on now.

The flat corner wasn't half bad. We steamed out of it pretty tight but all together, a nice pocket-handkerchief formation that flowed out onto the homestretch. And Bull's foot stayed flat on the floor.

The front stretch was a rocketing, roaring madhouse. Four engines were shrieking, almost whinnying as they lunged for the steep corner, a slashing run that gulped up the brief stretch in a mad moment of yammering mechanical frenzy and the high, thin wail of rubber. I began to worry about the corner. But I started too late. We were in it all together at last.

Bull cut across my grille, pinned his can on the vertical wall and his ham hands snubbed it with the hubs only fractional inches away from the concrete of the crash wall itself. I dropped in Bull's draft, clung there. Hoped he would make it. Tommy's nose appeared in my vision, one lane down. And, so help me, the kid was shoving Tommy through.

I shudder now when I think of that dive off the wall and the backstretch run. It belonged to a Sunday afternoon with twenty thousand people in the place and maybe a few thousand bucks on the nose. Maybe one of those days when you say, "T'hell with it! Nobody lives forever!" It didn't belong in this vast, empty speedway.

It was a plunging, swooping dive. A thing of insane engines that picked up every bit of the gear ratio on the downhill run. A thing that slammed you out onto the flat of the backstretch like a giant using three-quarters of a ton of race car for slingshot practice.

That's where the formation broke up. Tommy had said "Go!" to Bull. And the squarehead paused not to reason why. He simply stood on it for the whole stretch. I snatched a hasty look. There were still four of us. There wouldn't be four long. Maybe there wouldn't even be four cars. Maybe only sixty thousand dollars' worth of tangled junk and four bodies.

But I've got a 'scutcheon on the wall, too. So I left it on the floor.

BULL beat me in. Grabbed the slot. I had to get off the gun. Either get off or cave him in. Tommy was low on the apron and was starting to slide. There was a hole in the center. There shouldn't have been. Not at that speed. You simply couldn't hold it there and still live.

But there was a hole. But only for a moment. For a car was filling it, filling it with rubber screaming and engine blasting. And young Turner was coming through.

I reeled in the slack. Got the hell out of the way with gingerly hands, snubbed my power as fast as I dared. If he slid out—if it got away from him . . .

But it didn't get away. It didn't do anything but ride the corner like it was on rails. There were fine hands on that front end, fine sensitive hands that were holding a screeching race car only a breath away from a sliding spin. Fine hands that were pulling it up on Bull,

that matched him wheel for wheel until they straightened out for the final home stretch.

Tommy hadn't lost too much. Five is a pretty fair iron and three abreast they raced the front straightaway. I jumped back into the running quick. There was another corner coming up. One more. The steep one. And three is too many automobiles to fit.

The kid was sandwiched in the center. There were only inches between the wheels. Bull took it in in the high slot. The kid never dropped a stitch. He tucked in under Bull, held it there and then I watched three great performers make one of the finest corners I have ever seen.

Tommy gave him all the room there was to give. But it isn't inside room. All he could do was give him what he started with. Bull had nowhere to go. His hubs were brushing the cement of the crash wall now. And the kid had fifty-four inches in which to fit fifty-four inches of screaming race car.

Somehow everybody did his job. And somehow it finally got over. I saw Walsh walk to the starting line, wave an arm. The silence was almost deafening. Somehow I felt slightly surprised at being in good health as we coasted around and hand-braked to a stop.

Everybody sat in his car for a moment. I think Bull was slightly astonished at his present health, too. Tommy eyed the steward from under the brim of his helmet.

"O.K., Fred? The kid can go out against the stopwatch now?"

Walsh grinned broadly. He slapped young Turner on the shoulder. "You'll do all right, son. I'll have your ticket for you in the morning." He turned to Tommy. "I don't think he'll have to run against the watch, Tommy. You see," he added quietly. "the last lap was just a little over twenty-four!" Then he walked away.

The kid vaulted out of the cockpit. Tommy was parked against me. He came between us.

"Gosh," he breathed excitedly. "That was quite a nice ride, Mr. Beckett. I'm pretty sure I'll get the hang of things now. Your motor doesn't turn very fast and it was certainly nice of you fellows to take it easy with me!"

I let out a startled snort. Bull simply buried his face in his hands and groaned.

The long shadows were all one shadow now. The arching spider of the grandstand butted up against the pinking sky. The kid was outside bringing in the station wagon.

"And what the hell happened?" I demanded. "Where were you all afternoon?"

"Working." Tommy shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"Working? At what?"

"Working at clearing the cobwebs out of the kid's head," he replied shortly. "There wasn't anything wrong with him. We just made things wrong. So I dashed into town to pick up an adapter elbow for the tachometer drive. I couldn't get what I wanted to—I had to wait while the guy made me one up."

"Adapter?" I echoed stupidly.

"Adapter," he echoed. "To gear the tach down so it would only show 5000 revs at full throttle. Hell! The kid could handle 5000. He knew that. What he didn't know was that he could handle another thousand on top of that and maybe then some. He'll be all right from here on in."

Bull gave him one disgusted look. "That's fine," he said with fine sarcasm. "You guys play around at being the Lord's shepherd. Me—all I get is stomach ulcers from corners like that last one!" Then he added darkly, "My old man was right—he told me I'd never grow old!" And Bull clumped off in heavy-footed anger.

Our laughter followed him and then I remembered Iffy.

"O.K., Poppa. Now you give. I still don't get it. This deal has cost you dough."

Iffy hates to admit to ordinary human emotions. He grinned sheepishly. "You remember I told you about the kid's old man—that a guy spun in front of him at Indianapolis and the kid's old man took it over the wall to keep from hitting him?"

I nodded.

"Well, you see," Iffy continued. "I was the guy who spun in front!"

MAN BITES SHARK

By

NAT McKELVEY

HAWAII has the best athletes and and the biggest liars in the world. The other night I was chatting via amateur radio with Jim Orrick who operates KH6AQ in the the hamlet of Ewa, near Honolulu. Between sips of okolehao, Jim told me about shark racing.

Preparations for a shark race are only slightly less strenuous than the race itself. Into the turquoise blue waters of Waikiki beach on a warm, tropical afternoon a half dozen brawny swimmers launch themselves in search of sharks.

"A good racing shark," according to Orrick, "is like a good race horse. He's a coy, nervous critter, a slippery bundle of energy and speed. Before you race him, you've got to catch him."

Preceding the shark hunters, a speedboat drags the air-filled carcass of a mule, leaving it afloat a mile or two offshore. When the swimmers reach the bait area, they turn over on their backs, lying in wait. Each swimmer clutches in his hand a stout stick about twenty inches long, barbed on both ends.

Soon the sharks come, lithe and long, their white bellies glistening as they maneuver in the clear waters. The swimmers lie quietly so as not to frighten the quarry. In a matter of minutes, the sharks are nuzzling the feet of the floating men, gathering courage to strike.

"A shark will not strike," Orrick says, "until he has made two or three trial runs. When he does decide to come in, he's got to turn over to bring his saber-like teeth into play. That's the crucial moment for the shark hunters."

When the shark goes over on his back, poised to snap, the swimmer plunges his barbed stick into the animal's mouth. The shark bites, and is hooked. Blue waters churn to foam in the struggle between man and monster. But the swimmers of Waikiki are not ordinary men. With powerful, one-handed strokes they slowly drag the struggling cartilaginous fish ashore.

The sharks are lying in the shallow water, relatively helpless. While a husky Kanaka sits on the head, another throws a western stock saddle over the shark's back, cinching it tightly. Bareback riding is a virtual impossibility on the slippery hurricane deck of these sea demons.

For reins, the riders use squid or small octopus, captured for the purpose the previous day. The nerves of two tentacles are severed, leaving them limp and readily controllable by the riders. Then the squid is placed under the shark's head where it can grip tightly with the suction cups of its many legs.

Now and then, as in equine racing, a slippery, unscrupulous rider will dope his mount and escape detection. While P-80 jets scream over head, carrying the official race cameras, a crooked rider slips a small vial and a razor blade from under the belt of his swimming trunks. Slashing deftly behind the shark's "ear," the rider opens a slit. Into this he pours the contents of his bottle, pure, high-test horse liniment.

The gun cracks. The sharks, free at last, leap into the surf and streak for China. To observers on shore the sharks appear, in a matter of seconds, as bobbing white blobs on the horizon.

In this most fantastic of sports, nobody has discovered a means of dismounting alive. At the race's end, sharks and riders disappear in a flurry of whitecaps, bound, no doubt, for Davy Jones' locker, the Valhalla of all men who go down to the sea on sharks. . . . Wanna take a ride?

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER

HARILAL THE MIGHTY

By

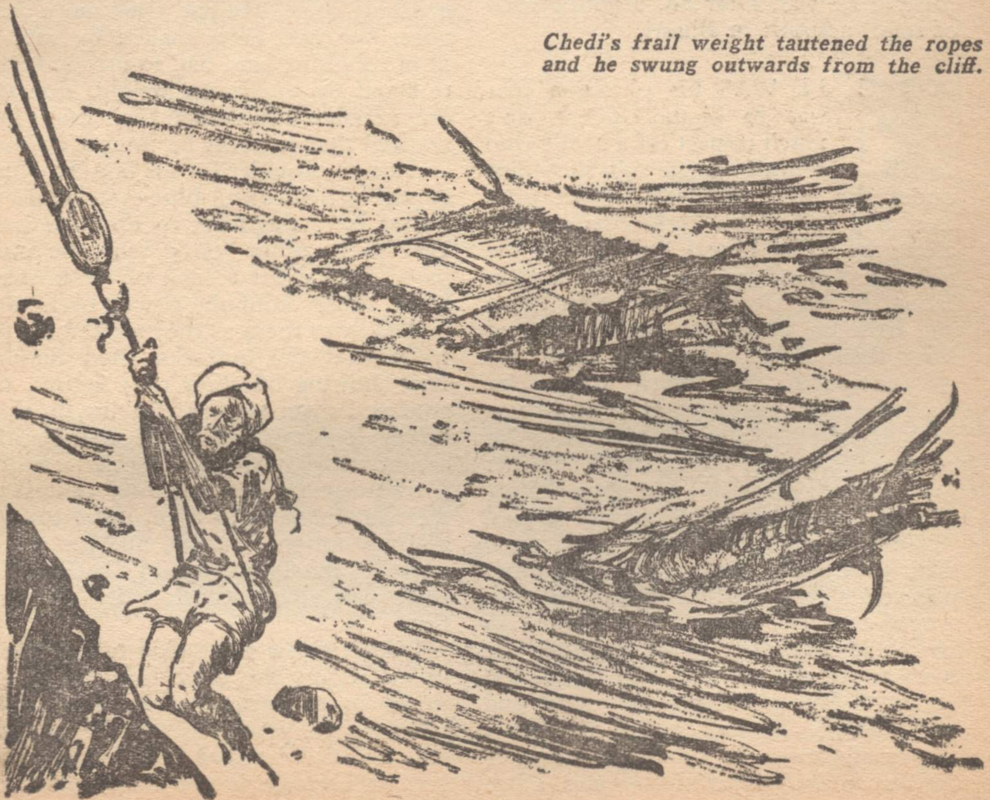
ROLAND WILD

IN MY twenty-odd years of survey work for the Government of India I saw many villages like Bhasti, in Kashmir. I never had occasion to mark it on the maps of the State. It held then, and holds today, under two hundred people. It was far from the road that winds up to Srinagar and is the jumping-off place for the real mountains of the Hindu Kush, and the road had little influence on the villagers. Few of them, indeed, had ever seen it, and fewer still had ever been down its snaky length to Rawalpindi and seen a train. But Bhasti stays in my mind because of Harilal, who today is called Harilal the Mighty.

I was always struck by the friendliness of the village and its people. They liked my visits, for I was able to answer their questions as to what went on in the great world outside. I suppose I rested in the place half a dozen times in the twenty years, but I cannot say that knowledge of the world had increased very much in that time. I was able, however, to give some support to the wise man of the community, ancient Chedi of the placid eyes and great age. And he needed some support.

Chedi had been to the great towns of the plains. More, he had once journeyed to Hardwar, where the Ganges bursts out

Chedi's frail weight tautened the ropes and he swung outwards from the cliff.



of the hills, and had bathed in the sacred pool of Harkipairi during the sacred twenty-four hours of the Kumbh Mela, thereby becoming a great holy man and worthy of respect. He had not only seen a train, but he had seen an airplane. He had also been on the road when His Highness the Maharaja had passed in a sleek low car, the road having been cleared both for automobiles and bullock carts for twelve hours before his journey. Chedi had bowed low at his passing, but he had twisted his head a little and been able to gain a glimpse of the great man—or thought he had—sitting beside the driver.

In the village, there was no more attentive listener than Harilal, and not only when the old man was holding a kind of court outside his tumbledown hut, but on many evenings when Harilal was the only visitor to the northern end of the community where Chedi lived under the menacing shadow of a sheer cliff face. And I knew the young man gained some comfort from the old one, because he was, after all, a young man of small account in Bhasti.

IT WAS his physique that was to blame. There isn't much respect for a coolie who cannot wriggle thin shoulders under the immense dead weight of a tree, and heft it for eight hours a day along the trails. Bhasti, and most of the villages of Kashmir, depended on this labor. It was all very well to cut down the trees far up in the mountains and float them down when the river was mild-tempered, but when they were hauled out of the water at Bhasti, there had to be willing backs, and backs far stronger than they appeared. The other men of the village did not have the appearance of stalwarts, heaven knows. Their legs were thin below their worn dhotis, and the bones stuck out from their shoulders and their arms. But they would contrive to have a tree-trunk so that it rested on two rocks, and then the man appointed for this load would test it for balance, shifting this way and that. When he had found the exact center of gravity, he would get others to tie him to the timber with thongs. Then the man would start out up the hill, staggering at first but gradually getting into a dog-trot that would take him at five miles an hour. The sawmill was twenty miles away. The coolies would make it in a day, with rests at well-known places on the route, where they would be fed a handful of rice and given water to drink.

I have often marveled at the stamina of these men, and become saddened by the terrible despair of poverty that drove them on. When they rested, they would lay the two ends of the log on convenient rocks, and without untying their thongs, could relax in this primitive harness. They drooped, now, from the mighty load that was their master. Seeing them suspended there, I sometimes had the vision of a man on the Cross . . .

But none of this was for Harilal. "Weakling!" they called to him at times. And there was no respect for a weakling in Bhasti or any other Kashmir village. It was his chest that betrayed him—long before the age at which most Kashmiris wilt and die from exposure and back-breaking work. He had tried more than once, but had been shaken by such a fit of coughing, and had so utterly failed to stand up under the weight, that the other coolies had shaken their heads and realized that he must be forever a drone and a non-provider for his family. None of the pale-brown, blue-eyed maidens would have anything to do with him. Like every other young man, he must have yearned for a look of endearment from those kohl-blackened eyes, and looked after them as they walked up the trails after the bullocks, their flaming saris showing off their neat figures, the gold and silver anklets clinking on their brown legs, and their pale complexions accentuated by the silver ornaments in their nostrils. But the high chatter of their laughter was a cruel thing to hear as they noticed Harilal, and he would make his lonely way to old Chedi, where there was always comfort and recognition.

I don't know what they talked about unless it was the basic hostility of the world in general. But I know Chedi admired the youth because he told me so. "Sahib," he had said to me, "the man of courage is not always the man with the thickest chest. That I have

learned. There are many boasters in this village, and most of us have been blessed with average strength to make our living. But that does not make tor courage always in a man. I think, sahib, that Harilal has the courage, though not the sinew."

"He also has intelligence," added the old man, as if this was not necessarily a credit to him.

Even the approval of Chedi could not bring the young man more than the sufferance of the villagers of Bhasti, or the sly glances of a suitable maiden. Yet in all other matters, Chedi was the intellectual leader of the community and its guide through a number of difficult problems. He had only failed to influence them once, he told me, and that was over the important matter of the siting of the village itself. Chedi said it was folly to built the rough wooden huts on the flat meadow so close to the river. He was in favor of building them further up the slopes of the mountain, where there was less danger from the spring floods. "But mankind is lazy at heart," he said sadly. "If they go up the slope, it is necessary for them to build on stilts. It takes double the time, and the young men building for their brides are in a hurry."

"But you yourself, old man, have not built a hut up the slope," I said.

He looked at me with most of the wisdom of the world in his eyes, and also a little pity for a materialist. "But I am an old man," he said as if in complete explanation. "Also, sahib, you will recall that I have been a pilgrim to Hardwar. Also, I am not contemplating the building of a home for a young maiden . . ."

He turned his attention to the river, now a gentle flow that washed lazily the iron walls of the canyon and slipped obediently past the stony shore where the main part of the village lay. Chedi kept himself away from the bustle and activity of the village. His hut backed right against the damp wall of the canyon, and for a moment I had a vision of what the river could do if it swelled suddenly and cut him off from the flat land.

"But they would not listen to me," he said. "They even said that it was easy to give advice when one was too old to engage in the hard labor of building a house on a hill. Yes, honored sir, the world is too full of lazy people . . ."

THE next time I was in Bhasti I was on my way back from a long trek with pack ponies and twenty coolies. I rested in the village a few days, and conceived the idea that I could be of benefit to Bhasti. The logs, as I have said, floated down the river and were trapped near the stony shore. From there, the coolies laboriously toted them a hundred yards to a steep rise of some fifty feet, and it was there that the most arduous work had to be done. It took six coolies all their time to wrestle and heave one log up the slope to where the trail began. I watched for some time while they toiled, and realized that I had in my equipment the device that could

PSORIASIS —is it a SKIN disease?

After years of research, many noted medical scientists have reached an opinion that Psoriasis results from certain internal disorders. A number of physicians have for the last five years been reporting satisfactory treatment of this malady with a new formula called LIPAN—taken *internally*. LIPAN, a combination of glandular substances and vitamins, attacks what is now believed to be the *internal* cause of Psoriasis, and tends to aid in the digestion and assimilation of foods. LIPAN is harmless, non-habit forming, and can be taken with confidence by both young and old. Physician inquiries are invited. Ask your druggist for LIPAN or write us direct for free booklet. Or, order a month's supply of LIPAN—bottle containing 180 tablets—at once, enclosing check or money order for $8.50.

Spirt & Company, Dept. PF-11, Waterbury, Conn.

save them hours of unrewarding work. It was nothing more complicated than a block and tackle, which I took along on long trips in case a pack-pony fell over a crevasse or for any other similar purpose. With the block and tackle and a rough slide, the logs could be flicked up the slope with ease. I would be a benefactor of Bhasti.

My right-hand man had his own coolies make the primitive slipway out of logs in half a day, and it was simple to rig up the block and tackle, using a stout stump of a tree to take the strain at the top of the slope. Then I called the villagers together and gave a demonstration. I made a bad mistake there, for when I wanted to show the ease with which one man could snake a tree-trunk up the skid, I chose Harilal. There was a gust of laughter from the coolies. I had drawn attention to his weakness, and could have choked myself. But Harilal showed that he had the courage that Chedi had talked about. He came forward smiling, as if joining in the laughter at his own expense, and happily jerked the pulley rope until the log reached the top. He was breathing heavily, but he wasn't coughing at all.

"Hey, that is certainly a task for a weakling!" cried a jester in the crowd. "Sahib, you have shown that toting a log is after all work for the women!"

Harilal was still laughing with the rest. Perhaps, after all, it had not been a bad demonstration.

I left the village the next day and went on leave to England for six months, and it was another year before I again passed through Bhasti. The first thing I looked for was the skid and the block and tackle. They weren't there. In fact, at that very moment six coolies were sweating up the incline with a log. I knew what had happened; the rope had broken, or someone had stolen the shells, or the sheaves had rusted through lack of oil. I was pretty angry, for it had been a good and heavy three-sheave outfit, and I had even left instructions as to how they could keep it oiled with buffalo-butter.

The coolies, of course, turned bland faces to me and said they didn't know what had happened to my pathetic little trace of civilization and mechanization in Bhasti. And it was not till I talked to Chedi that I found out the truth.

He smiled tolerantly at my impatience and was very near to telling me that you could not hurry the East. "Sahib," he said, "you must believe me when I say that I tried my best with them. But as well as being lazy in the wrong places, they are stupid. The machinery, sahib, was against the laws of economics in a Kashmir village."

I knew the rest, but he went on. "After a little time," he said, "the coolies began to invent reasons why the machinery would not work. It was getting harder to pull, they said, or it was damaging the logs. But the real reason was that they had time on their hands."

"You put nine of them out of work, out of ten," he said, wagging a bony finger at me. "Sahib, you know better than that. From where is a coolie to get his rice, and rice for his family, if a length of rope and two pieces of metal are doing his work for him? So they came to me, eventually, and suggested that the device of the white man be thrown in the river before they starved to death."

The old man sighed, and looked up the river to where the sun was setting in an angry blaze over the forests. It was getting cold, and I was in no mood to stay in the village that had treated me so shabbily. I noticed that Harilal had crept up, and was listening to the old man.

"So you let them throw away the only labor-saving thing the village has ever seen," I said. "The blocks will be at the bottom of the river, and the rope has been left in the rain to rot!"

"Sahib, that I do not know. All I know is that the villagers overwhelmed me, and would take little notice of an old man who had been to see the great world. All I know is that the machinery was never seen again. The next day the ten coolies were back at work again, and happy."

That night I had half a mind to threaten the village with a bill for the block and tackle. I even sent for Lal Krishna, the acknowledged chief of the coolies, and told him so. Krishna had

been to Srinagar for a spell, and was as clever as they are made, which in Kashmir means as clever as anyone else on earth. He was also the local money-lender, and probably owned the next ten years' earnings of everybody in the community. In Srinagar, he had been a wood-carver, but after spending two years of his life, and ten years of his eyesight, on the intricate carving of a lotus leaf on a dining room table for the maharaja, he had decided to live on the interest of others.

"The table had twenty four similar lotus leaves on it," he had once told me. "And I—I would never need a table of any kind. I am a fine craftsman, but I am also a good businessman. Bhasti belongs to me today."

Krishna either wouldn't talk or didn't know where the block and tackle had gone. "For myself, sahib," he said, "I am a man of progress, as you know. But if these silly cattle want to tear the sinews from their bodies, let them." Then he changed the subject to the other matter that loomed biggest in his mind.

"That Chedi," he said. "Many of us think that he is out of his mind. He had given another warning about the village being dangerously close to the river. Meanwhile, the old man hugs his miserable shanty that is more dangerously situated than any other. In my thinking, sahib, Hardwar has gone to his head."

But I was in no mood to be interested in Bhasti squabbles any more. I left the next day, thoroughly disgruntled at the failure of my attempts to modernize the East.

IT WAS just before early spring, and difficult traveling. We kept to the road for a month, sleeping in the government rest-houses and making surveys and inspections that were convenient. There were bridges to check, and a new diversion for the road to be worked out, and I waited impatiently for the spring rains when I could get out onto bigger work in the mountains.

From a government Public Works man I learnt one night that in the capital they were getting worried again about the Kush Glacier, the vast sheet of ice that builds up in the mountains and needs careful watching every spring. Nobody could ever hope to do anything about Kush Glacier except watch its moods and its perpetual threat. In the *Gazette of India,* before they knew the causes of these things, there appeared brief reports of former years in which, obviously, it had been Kush which had poured death and destruction down the valleys, an unknown and unanticipated horror that had plunged whole villages down on its crest, killing uncounted thousands.

Since those days, the Kashmir government and the British had at least taken steps to keep better informed of the intentions of the monster. I had myself been up on a survey party, and for many years there had been a careful measurement of its menace, and when danger seemed to threaten, a system of warning had been devised. The threat of Kush Glacier was greatest when the spring warmth was most sudden, and when the rains swept across the icefields and lowered the temperature. Then the valleys carved by the centuries could not hold the torrent of melting ice, the glacier seemed to crumble and precipitate itself towards the valleys below, and the great valley where so many thousands led their miserable existence was merely a giant thoroughfare for Nature's most irresistible force.

There was a method of making a rough check of the threatened danger, and there was also the warning system, in itself a happy blend of the practical and the picturesque.

The government looked back into history, and borrowed the idea of beacons. The same method had warned Elizabethan soldiers and sailors of the approach of Spaniards to the English coast. From time immemorial, a flaring beacon against the night sky had been a warning. In Kashmir, it was the only way of spreading the news to inaccessible clusters of huts. The beacons were strategically placed in a string some thirty miles apart, and responsible men were posted to keep a constant watch. No telegraphs could warn them of danger. It was possible that no messenger could get up or down the road skillfully etched into the side of the hills. But each man

could see the neighboring beacon, and light his own to carry on the warning. I had always thought the idea picturesque, but had no wish to see it in action.

I took little notice of the government man's warning as this rumor was heard almost every year, and as soon as the weather permitted, made my way into the higher hills. The rain was warm and persistent, a steady downpour day and night that blanketed the hills and forests with mist, that permeated tents and clothing and made life a misery. It was strangely warm. On two nights running the heavens seemed to gather up the storm battalions and return to the attack with the added vigor of thunder and crashes of lightning. Winter was going out with a Wagnerian finale. The little creeks were in a fury, and the rivers a torrent. Several times I watched while sides of hills disappeared with a thunderous roar into the waters. I began to regret that we had left the shelter of the huts on the road so early, and the bearers and syces for the pack ponies muttered that the Gods must be angry.

Then I saw a beacon alight.

To this day I cannot forget the sensation, or fail to suffer a weakening at the stomach when I see an ordinary bonfire in November. It must have been because through the years I had dwelt on the meaning of these beacons, and unconsciously visualized what would be meant by their ignition. I remember I stood motionless, not knowing what to do, when far on the horizon there gleamed this angry pinpoint of fire. It was no good telling myself that it could be a forest fire, or an accidental fire in this climate. This was the beacon of warning, and it meant that now Kush Glacier had broken its bounds and was tearing a white way through the lovely valleys of Kashmir.

There, with the rain pouring down in the darkness, I stood as if transfixed, powerless and knowing my impotence. The head syce came running and shouting. "The fire!" he said. "The fire, sahib!"

Angrily, I told him to be quiet. But I sensed that he felt as helpless as I did, and as horror-stricken. Not knowing why, I ordered the men to strike camp, and we left that night, riding and walking through a tempest that seemed destined to last till the end of the world. Before we left, the brief flame had burnt itself out on the horizon.

THREE days later, we arrived at the stricken valley. It was a few miles from a village, and with my heart queasy as to what I would see, I ordered the porters to make towards it. But I could make too good a guess already. There wouldn't be any village any more. The valley was stripped, and even now the swirling muddy waters poured down twenty feet above their normal height, and a mile across. The waters bore down giant trees as carelessly as if they were matchsticks. Once or twice I thought I detected the roof of a hut rapidly traveling downstream; but it could have been only a mess of foliage. Once we saw a bloated bullock, four legs ridiculously in the air. There was no more ice on the current, and gradually, before we reached what had once been a village, the rain slackened at last and a pale sun came out to mock the puny efforts of mankind when Nature shows her might.

The survivors of the village were huddled in caves. There were thirty-seven men and women, and three children. They spoke only to ask for food, and I divided out our meager supplies. I asked a man how many there had been in the village. He seemed to think there had been around three hundred. He told me the name, and his estimate agreed with my own knowledge. I noticed that there were no old men, and the men and women were all husky coolies. We lit a fire for them in the cave, promised them what we did not know, that help from the government was on the way, and after distributing more food until our own supplies were perilously low, pushed on towards the capital, keeping to the mountains to be away from the survivors. For we could not help them. The best I could do was to report to the government and see if any relief plan could be devised. But it seemed fairly hopeless. The Kashmiri tills the land closest to his home; there could be no hope of the peasants even grubbing for raw vegetables. Food would have to be sent by

pack-pony, for the road was out at several vital points all the way down to British India.

That spring and summer was a nightmare. Lack of information was the most frustrating feature. We pushed out pack-trains from both ends of the stricken valley, but for weeks heard no news from them. To ship a hundred pounds of food, we had to load the pack trains with four hundred pounds for their own sustenance. There was no knowing whether they would be looted on the way by marauders, and no estimate could be given of the number of thousands of mouths to be fed. The reports that did come in, from half-starved refugees, were all conflicting. And never in this spring or summer did I hear a word of the village of Bhasti.

To be truthful, I had put the village out of my mind in face of the major catastrophe. But then, in late August, the government ordered me to make a personal reconnaissance of the whole valley, giving me messengers for my reports, and fitting out an imposing pack-train for rapid transport. At this moment, information was the vital need before any further steps could be taken. And it was thus, two weeks after leaving the capital on this mission, that I returned to what had been the village of Bhasti.

The river had subsided now to a gentle purring giant who was asleep. The sultry heat of summer pressed down from burnished clouds, and I was pressing on to get through before the monsoon struck. Long before I reached Bhasti, my eyes and ears had become hardened to suffering and the story of death, and I could receive almost without feeling the news of the pathetic percentages which had survived the glacier's onslaught. Now, lack of good water had added to the general distress of men and women who were worse provided for than animals. Dysentery had struck, and there was an incipient outbreak of cholera. I sent back urgently for medical students from the State hospital to be sent throughout the valley with hypodermic needles. But I knew it would be too late. Kashmir, the loveliest land on earth, owes its beauty to the ruggedness of its hills, to the ferocity and the extremes of its climate.

So it was with trepidation that I approached Bhasti, and the first human being I saw was Harilal. But there was something different about him. No longer was he the self-effacing, timorous creature that I had known. His physique was still puny, but it was inconsistent with his new bravado. Something had happened to Harilal. He took me down to the flat land, and I saw the remains of Bhasti. There were no huts left. There was only a trace of the terrace where the few crops had sprouted. From rude shelters, a mere handful of men and women came out to greet me. Of the two-hundred-odd men, women and children who had lived on sufferance from Kush Glacier, only thirty now survived.

The second man I met was Krishna. He lamented his fate, paying more attention, it seemed to me, to his loss of earning power and interest than to his lost relations. Then I saw Chedi.

To see him alive, an old man in a valley that had gathered up the old forever, was a shock that had me stammering for words. I could not help the involuntary surprise that showed in my greeting.

"You, Chedi!" I cried. "But how—"

"Come with me, sahib," he said, and led me up the slope to a tree that had stood just above the torrent. There we sat while he told me of the mightiness of Harilal.

IT SEEMS that nobody in the village had seen the flame in the sky that should have warned them to flee. The torrent had struck Bhasti while tired men and women slept through endless rain, and half the ramshackle huts had been carried away before any effort could be made to save their occupants. Chedi himself, pinioned as he was against the sheer wall of the fifty-foot cliff, had contrived to reach a small platform in the cliff from which there was no retreat. In the little cluster of rearing and breaking huts, there was complete chaos.

"Sahib," said Chedi, "there were scenes there that these old eyes can never forget. It was as if men were animals, thinking only of themselves."

The torrent buffeted a house against

a rock, splintered it with a grip of iron, and patted out the lives of all within. The huts were thrown in the air, tossed by the first onrush of the waters, and spirited downstream while you watched. Men scrambled to the high ground without thought of their possessions. Men struggled for a handhold on flimsy grasses, and miraculously thrust their women and a few children to safety, while they themselves slipped mercilessly away.

"But you, old man," I said. "An old man like you cannot climb a cliff . . ."

"There were also some foolish things done that night, sahib," said Chedi. "But in being foolish, it is also possible to be courageous."

Eveyone in the village had forgotten the old man who had guided them in so many decisions, who had told them so often that, being a pilgrim to the Ganges, he was not afraid to die. There seemed to be nobody who remembered the wise man. Then, from his tiny aerie of safety on the cliff, Chedi had seen through the first light of dawn a slim figure making his way along a ridge. The waters reached for him, crumbled the earth away almost at his feet. Nobody, said Chedi, except the slimmest and most frail of youths could have made the passage. The ridge led to a solid platform fifty feet above the old man, and Chedi could see that it was Harilal. He was wrapped around with rope, and as the minutes passed, Chedi saw that he had the two blocks of the old block and tackle.

"The boy had the instinct of a jackdaw," said Chedi, who liked to tell a story his own way. "So that is where your fine machinery went to, sahib."

Harilal gained the platform and slipped to the ground the heavy blocks and the rope. Chedi hailed him in a quavering voice through the storm. "You should help save the children!" he cried. "I am nothing but an old man!" But the young man only went about his work, hitching the hook of the uppes block to the stout root of a tree, and snaking out the three ropes so that they slid easily through the sheaves. Then he lay down on the platform and paid out the lower block, and Chedi saw that he had slung a loop of rope round the hook, big enough for a man to sit in.

The block swung past his head at last, and the old man grasped it and looked up. "Sit in the loop!" cried Harilal's voice above the scream of the storm. Trembling, Chedi slung the loop round his thin buttocks and clasped the outer shell of the bloik. His frail weight tauntened the ropes and he felt a jerk on the rope and swung outwards from the cliff and upwards.

Then Chedi was on the top platform and in safety. At that moment, he said, he heard the roar of the river mount to a crescendo, and his tiny platform of safety below had gone in a tearing downfall of rock and earth. He lay down then, beside Harilal, and together they blessed the "machinery" that had done its duty.

"So you see the old man still," Chedi said. "No wiser today, sahib, for you will remember, long ago I said that Harilal was the courageous one."

"So he was able to show the village the value of my machinery," I said. "No doubt they will now appreciate it."

The old man smiled.

"Not true," he said. "And it is I who am to blame, sahib. For when we joined the few survivors of the torrent, I saw that Harilal had once again hidden your machinery. It was nowhere to be seen."

The villagers had been shamefaced and astonished to see the old man again. "How now, wise one?" they had said. "But we are glad at the miracle of your survival! It is truly a feat of the Gods that you are safe—no doubt because you are a holy man who has made the big pilgrimage!"

"Not the gods," said Chedi. "I was drawn to safety by Harilal."

They looked then at Harilal, at his puny muscles and his thin body. Then they looked at the sheer face of the cliff-wall above the boiling river. They murmured a little, astonished as they well might be. '

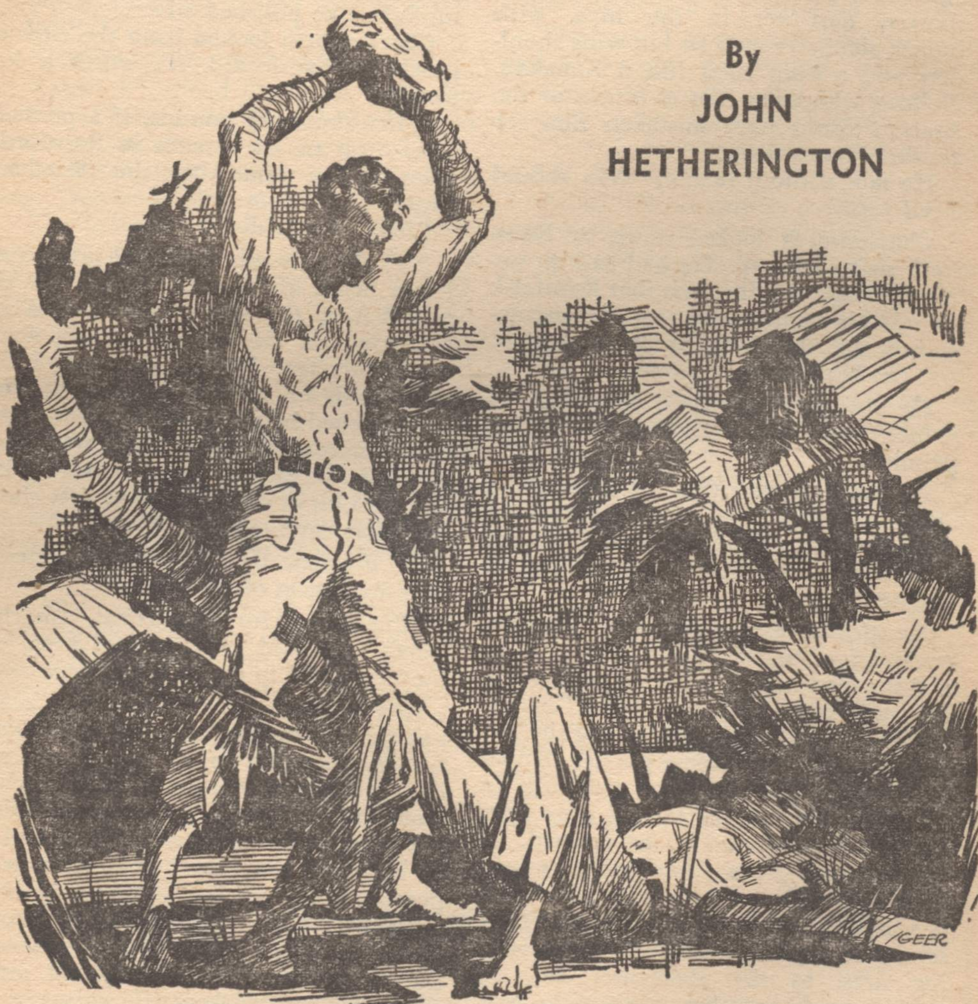
"Ho!" they said. "Harilal aided by the gods! But still—Harilal the Mighty!'

The last thing I did in Kashmir was technically wrong. In the small-scale map of the area I was preparing, I printed in small letters the name *BHASTI*. Logically, it had no right to appear at all. But it was the only tribute I could pay to Harilal the Mighty.

THE MURDERER

By

JOHN HETHERINGTON



He walked right up to the sleeping man and raised the heavy stone in both hands.

CHARLESWORTH came out from under the gray-stemmed pisonia trees and walked down the beach. Ransford was squatting, blackfellow-fashion, over a tangle of seaweed at the edge of the lagoon, and he did not hear the soft crunch of bare feet in the sand until Charlesworth was standing over him, his thumbs hooked in the waistband of his trousers, the muscles of his torso bulging under the sunburned skin like fists.

"What you got there?" Charlesworth asked.

Ransford straightened, his right hand held shut over the object he had picked

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GEER

out of the seaweed. He was two or three years younger than Charlesworth, perhaps thirty-eight, though it was hard to read his age from his brown, tight, unemotional face. He was a lot smaller, shorter, narrower in the hips, with longer, slenderer muscles but wide shoulders and a deep chest like a Kanaka's. Nobody who knew Torres Straits or the Arafura could have mistaken him for anything but a diver.

He said without rancor, "Why should I tell you?"

Charlesworth looked down at Ransford, sizing him up. He had had an uneasy feeling from the start that Ransford, for all his smaller size and the circumstances that had brought them together, was the better man.

He clamped his thick lips hard together and said, "Because you're my prisoner."

He knew at once that his assertion of authority in such words and in such a place sounded ridiculous, but, illogically, he felt fury rising in him when Ransford laughed.

Ransford's eyes slid from Charlesworth's face to the blue unclouded sky and the blue unruffled sea that shut them off from the world of men where Charlesworth represented the majesty of the law and Ransford was a mere pearler wanted for murder. Ransford was thinking, in the brain behind his cynical gray eyes, that he was entitled to be amused. It was improbable that Charlesworth would even be alive if it were not for his prisoner's skill in spearing fish and distilling sea water to make it drinkable and lighting fires, as the aborigines did, by rubbing sticks together. Such tricks were a long way outside the routine of a city detective, and even Charlesworth had realized his inadequacy since they had come ashore on the atoll three days before.

"O.K., Charlesworth," Ransford said. "You can see it. Not because I'm scared of you, though!"

He opened his hand and Charlesworth's eyes traveled to the white object on the palm. He put out a forefinger and touched it, awed.

Never in his life had he seen such beauty, seemingly plucked from nature.

IT WAS a natural cross, formed of seven conjoined pearls, about three inches long. Lying on Ransford's palm it reflected the brilliance of the sunlight like polished silver.

Charlesworth looked from the cross of pearls to Ransford. "It's worth a fortune!"

"Fifty thousand pounds, if a penny!" There was no excitement in Ransford's voice. "You remember the 'Southern Cross', Charlesworth?"

Charlesworth didn't.

"It's the only other natural pearl cross I ever heard of," Ransford said. "A kid picked it up out of a tangle of weed an' driftwood on the northwest coast sixty-some years ago. His old man sold it for ten pounds an' a bottle of rum, but later on it fetched better than thirty thousand from a European buyer. There were nine pearls in the 'Southern Cross', but I'll lay odds this bit of stuff will bring fifty thousand, the way the market is today."

He dropped the cross almost casually into the pocket of his trousers.

"I'm going for a shut-eye, Charlesworth," he said, and walked away up the beach and in under the pisonia trees.

Charlesworth stood on the beach staring out to the horizon. The Coral Sea lay in a flat calm. There was not even enough movement to raise a croon from the lapping of the sea on the reef. He wondered bitterly why it had had to be Ransford that had found the cross of pearls. The luck could as easily have come to him if he, instead of Ransford, had been on the beach when the seaweed drifted ashore. There was, he felt, something ironically, sickeningly unjust in the fact that man who would be tried on an open-and-shut murder charge as soon as they reached Queensland should have picked up a piece of floatsam worth a king's ransom out of the ocean while he, Charlesworth, with a lifetime of freedom ahead of him, missed the opportunity that would have made him rich. It was a damned dirty trick of Fate!

He stayed on the beach until the sudden curtain of sub-tropic night fell, brooding on Ransford's luck, occasionally interrupting his thoughts to scan the ocean for a sail or sharpen his ears for

the drone of a searching aircraft's engine. No sail showed, no engine ruffled the silence, and with darkness he walked up the beach and in among the trees.

Ransford woke at the sound of Charlesworth's approach. He sat up and asked, "Nothing?"

Charlesworth's grunt was negative.

Ransford rubbed his hands across his eyes and looked out through the straight stems of the pisonias on the dark beach. He suddenly jackknifed to his feet, grunting, "Where in hell's the fire?"

Charlesworth said, "The fire?" Then memory returned. It was the duty of whichever of them was on watch to keep the fire on the beach burning, building it up at night so that the glow should be visible to any search vessel that might approach the island in the dark. "I forgot."

"You—fool," Ransford jerked and started for the beach.

The fire was almost dead, but a red spark still pulsed among the ashes, and Ransford dropped on his knees and said, "Wood."

Charlesworth ran to the pile of dead boughs and driftwood they had collected to keep the fire fed and snatched up two handfuls of light, inflammable fragments and carried them back to Ransford. Ransford laid them on top of the ashes, then, with his cheek pressed against the sand, blew, gently at first, then more strongly as the living spark expanded and ignited the dry wood. The fire crackled to new life in a few seconds, and Charlesworth fetched heavier wood from the heap and piled it on the blaze.

They stood beside the fire, two men naked except for ragged salt-stained trousers, with the light of the flames splashing their faces and bodies.

"Well," Ransford said, "you nearly did it that time!"

"Hell," Charlesworth grumbled, "you can always light another fire!"

"I can," Ransford agreed, "but if you let it go out I don't know if I'll bother. It isn't so important to me to get off this place as it is to you."

"You wouldn't do that?"

"I might," Ransford said, enjoying his power. "Remember it next time you let the fire go out!"

The thing Ransford had said started a train of thought in Charlesworth's mind. He looked at Ransford, standing with his hands on his hips staring into the fire.

"Ransford?"

"Yes."

"Ransford, there isn't any point in you getting off this island, is there?"

"I dunno. Not much, I reckon. I'll most likely hang. If not, I'll get twenty years behind the wall, an' that'd be worse."

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Charlesworth came closer to him and lowered his voice, as if he feared what he had to say might be overheard.

"That's the way I see it! Ransford, why not stay here? When they pick us up, I needn't say you're alive. You stay in hiding, and I'll say you were drowned. Nobody'd ever know the difference."

He could see Ransford's face, but it told him nothing.

"It's an idea, Charlesworth!" The smaller man nodded. "It's an idea!"

Charlesworth began to feel almost warm towards him. After all, Ransford was not an ordinary murderer. His crime was not great in the human sense, whatever the law might say about it. He had killed his partner in a brawl over a woman who was not worth the fingernail of either of them. It might as easily have been Ransford's partner who had killed Ransford. There had been no criminal intent, no more than a clash between two men who had let rum and jealousy poison their senses.

Ransford had been stricken when he realized what he had done. His long-time partner, the man who had pumped air down the lifeline to him when he explored the shell-beds of the Arafura Sea and the Coral Sea, his companion in a hundred end-of-cruise celebrations was lying dead by his hand. Ransford had done the thing all but one in a thousand pearling men would have done in the circumstances. He had made for his lugger, lying in the stream off Cairns, and put to sea. A week later he had been reported at Thursday Island. He could hardly have gone to a worse place, because he was known to every pearling-master in Port Kennedy. He must have known that he could not dodge the law there. Maybe he just did not want to go on dodging the law, hunted, forever on the run. At least he made no resistance when the Port Kennedy police gathered him in an a holding charge.

IT WAS to Port Kennedy that Charlesworth had gone to pick Ransford up and bring him back to Queensland for trial. He would normally have had to wait a fortnight there for the regular mail steamer, but a Swedish freighter, heading south from Hong Kong, had happened into port and lifted her hook for Brisbane two days after Charlesworth's arrival. It had seemed a lucky chance, then. Less than twenty-four hours later, Charlesworth had decided it was the unluckiest chance of his life, when the cranky old *Rattvik*, her propeller shaft gone and gripped in a southerly cyclone, ripped out her bottom plates on a Barrier Reef shoal.

Charlesworth did not know what had happened to the rest of the *Rattvik's* complement. He did not much care. He only knew that when he and Ransford, clinging to a life-raft, came ashore two dawns later on their atoll, somewhere on the outer edge of the Barrier Reef, he was on the verge of madness from thirst and red devils danced back and forth in his brain like figures in an opium-eater's nightmare.

"Let's get it straight," Ransford said. "You feel pretty sure we'll be picked up?"

Charlesworth said, "The *Rattvik* was reporting her position by radio before she piled up. They're sure to be searching for survivors."

Ransford raised his head, but Charlesworth could not see his eyes because the sockets were buried in shadow. "Listen, Charlesworth, as a copper you're pledged to take me in, but you're urging me to stay behind. Why?"

Charlesworth said betweeen his teeth, "You know why."

"You want the pearl cross? That's the price, isn't it?"

"It won't be any use to you when you hang or they put you behind the wall." Charlesworth was being deliberately brutal. "You might as well trade."

"Nothing doing," Ransford said, and Charlesworth knew that from the start Ransford had been playing with him, leading him along. He hated Ransford's guts for that. "I'd as soon hang or go to jail as spend the rest of my life here. Anyway, I've always taken my raps when they've come, Charlesworth."

"You're crazy!" Charlesworth said.

"Don't believe it! There's another reason. I've got an old lady, Charlesworth. Lives out of Sydney a way. Haven't seen her in years, but I write to her once in a while. I always reckoned to find a good

pearl and make things easy for her. I never did, until now, but the price of this bit of stuff"he slapped his trousers pocket —"will fix her nicely for good. I'm not trading that to spend the rest of my life on any lousy coral atoll!"

Charlesworth, knowing he was beaten, spat an ugly name at Ransford. Ransford laughed.

"That doesn't hurt me any," he said.

He went up the beach, whistling, and in among the trees, leaving Charlesworth standing and staring into the leaping fire.

It was three more days before the search for survivors of the *Rattvik* reached out as far as the island. Ransford was on watch in the early afternoon when he saw the aircraft. It was far away to the west, and his seaman's eyes detected the glint of its fuselage in the sunlight even before he heard the drone of its motors. He yelled for Charlesworth, and Charlesworth came out from among the trees and ran down the beach, and they stood together on the stand watching the aircraft come nearer.

It flew low above the beach, with a heavy drumming of motors and the slipstream almost fanning the upturned faces of the two men below, then went on far out to the eastward and made a wide turn and headed back towards the atoll.

Ransford said, "He couldn't land. Not enough runway."

"Why in hell didn't they send a flying-boat?" Charlesworth grumbled.

The aircraft skimmed above them, then banked and veered away from the atoll and headed back towards the mainland beyond the horizon.

"Well," Ransford said, "that's that! I reckon there'll be a lugger here to pick us up by tomorrow night."

Charlesworth could not sleep that night. He lay among the dry leaves under the pisonias listening to Ransford's even breathing and thinking of the cross of pearls in Ransford's pocket. The thing had burned itself into his brain like white fire. Desire to possess it and the wealth it would bring, would not let him rest. It was wrong, all wrong, he told himself, that the sea should cast such a prize at the feet of a murderer.

He glanced across at Ransford. It would be easy to do it while Ransford slept. A blow on the head, and he would never wake, never know that his life had ended. Easy! As easy as reaching out a hand! . . Suddenly, Charlesworth realized something. The aircraft pilot had seen two men on the beach. What would the luggermen think if only one man were awaiting them on the island? Charlesworth's quick mind worked at the problem, kneading it like a baker's hands on a lump of dough. The solution came in a flash. . .

He raised himself and stood up, making no sound. Ransford's even breathing did not falter, and Charlesworth walked silently down to the edge of the beach. There was no moon, only starlight, but that afternon he had noted, hardly knowing why he troubled to fix it in his mind, the position at the edge of the trees of a lump of stone about twice the size of his bunched fists. He found it without difficulty and went back into the trees. He walked right up to the sleeping man and raised the heavy stone in both hands. The thud of the impact made Charlesworth's nerves leap in shuddering horror, but Ransford did not cry out. . .

Charlesworth was finished before dawn broke. Ransford's blood had smeared him when he carried the body down to the beach, but he stood waist-deep in the water and splashed his head and shoulders and arms until no traces of blood remained. His brief horror had gone, and he felt exhilarated, triumphant. Ransford's body lay at the bottom of the lagoon, weighted down by the stones Charlesworth had packed into his trousers, ensuring they would stay in place by twisting and knotting the bottoms of the trouser legs, like tourniquets, hard around each ankle.

HE STOOD on the beach watching dawn break and fingering the cross of pearls in his pocket and waiting for the sails of a lugger to rise out of the sea westward of the island.

Charlesworth sat in the tiny cabin of the *Coral Moon* facing old van den Broeck, the skipper, across the table and helped himself to another generous drink from the square-faced bottle of gin. He

was very drunk and very happy—drunk because he and van den Broeck were now deep into the second bottle of gin, happy because the *Coral Moon* was leaving the atoll astern and soon the events of the night before would have no more reality than things dreamed. Only one thing would have reality: The cross of pearls that lay in the pocket of his ragged trousers.

He blinked at the Dutchman's face and decided, through the fumes of gin, that he loved van den Broeck. He did not pause to analyze the emotion. At that moment, it seemed wholly right that he should love van den Broeck, that van den Broeck should from this day be his best friend forever. Hadn't van den Broeck accepted without question his story that Ransford had been taken by a shark when he had recklessly gone to swim in the lagoon that morning? It was a plausible story, plausibly told, but even so Charlesworth had been relieved by van den Broeck's readiness to believe it.

The Dutchman's gross, heavy face, with its curiously codlike blue eyes protruding above cushions of flesh, took on for Charlesworth a quality of nobility and grandeur it had never possessed, and Charlesworth decided that the time had come when he must confide to this best of all friends the story of his great good luck in finding the cross of pearls. Not all the story, of course. Charlesworth, even drunk, loved no man or woman enough to place his life in their hands.

"Cap," he said, slurring his words because the gin had thickened his tongue, "Cap, wanna see something?"

"Sure," said van den Broeck, "V'y nod, eh?" He had a harder head than Charlesworth, and if he was drunk at all, his mind was still pretty clear.

Charlesworth slid his hand out of his pocket and slapped the cross of pearls down on to the green baize cloth covering the table. It lay shimmering in the unsteady light of the oil lamp swinging from a beam overhead.

Van den Broeck put out a hand, picked up the cross, turned it over and over, scrutinized it with expert eyes.

"V'ere you find 'er?"

"She's good, eh, Cap? Worth lotsa money?"

"Ja. Whole lodda money... V'ere you find 'er?"

Charlesworth told van den Broeck the story of the finding of the cross of pearls. He altered only one essential fact, substituting his own name for Ransford's. The expression of van den Broeck's codfish eyes became more intent as he listened, but otherwise his face betrayed nothing. He sat for some time after Charlesworth had finished, fingering the cross of pearls and remembering the old luggermen's adage that where there is one pearl there are more. He glanced up at last to say something, but Charlesworth had gone off into a dead slumber, his head on his arms.

Van den Broeck was a hard man, ruthless, acquisitive, but he was also honest. He had no intention of stealing Charlesworth's cross of pearls or giving any member of his crew a chance to steal it, and he tucked it into a compartment of his wallet and buttoned the wallet up in an inside pocket, then, after turning the oil lamp down to a beady flicker, he left the cabin and went out on deck.

It was a calm, clear, cool night, and the sky was brilliant with stars. Luckily, the wind was light and the *Coral Moon* had not made many miles from the island since she had picked up Charlesworth an hour or so before sunset. One of the Kanakas was drowsing over the wheel, and van den Broeck shouldered him aside, took the wheel and rumbled out a few orders, and presently the *Coral Moon* was headed back for the island.

Van den Broeck called for Christo, the half-Spaniard, half Manila-man who did his diving, and when Christo came, he said, "Chrisdo, I'm pudding back."

Christo grunted.

"I godda hunch, Chrisdo, we are leaving maybe a good pearl bed be'ind," van den Broeck said. He told Christo then about Charlesworth's cross of pearls and reminded him of luggermen's belief.

Christo, never a man to talk much, grunted again, but van den Broeck, who knew him, detected the excitement in him at the prospect of good diving.

Charlesworth did not wake at dawn next day, so he was not on deck when the *Coral Moon* entered the lagoon. He slept on and on, a beautiful dream of pearls

and riches and shining blue waters lapping his brain, his head resting on the table for another two or three hours while Christo, in his armor of rubber and steel and glass, was toiling on the floor of the lagoon. He did not even wake when van den Broeck came into the cabin and stood looking down at him. It took the pressure of the Dutchman's heavy muscular hand to rouse him.

He looked up, his eyes bleared and his head aching as if it had been pounded with a hammer. And this morning he saw nothing in van den Broeck to love, nothing but an ugly and rather gross face turned down on him.

"We're hove-to," Charlesworth said, aware of the absence of movement.

"Ja," said van den Broeck.

"Where are we?"

"I pud back to d'e island."

"Why?"

"I vanded to see vere d'ere any more pearls like yours."

Charlesworth's hand dropped to his pocket. "Where is it?" he exclaimed.

Van den Broeck unbuttoned his inside pocket and brought out the wallet and took the cross of pearls from it and laid it on the table beside Charlesworth's hand. Charlesworth reached out for it, but van den Broeck's hand closed on his wrist and held it.

"Careful!" he said. "D'ere's blood on id!"

Charlesworth swayed to his feet. "What d'you mean?" He intended the words to sound challenging, but they came out querulous, almost shrill.

Van den Broeck did not answer. He clamped his thick hands onto Charlesworth's shoulders and bundled him out of the cabin onto the deck. Charlesworth's eyes took in the two Kanakas huddled together by the after rail and, a little in front of them, Christo, enormous in his dripping diving dress with the helmet lying on the deck at his feet and, behind, the silk sheen of the lagoon and the yellow of the beach and the gray of the pisonia trees. Then his eyes saw the thing that lay huddled on the deck, and his ears heard van den Broeck's voice, "No shark ever did thad to a man's 'ead!"

Charles looked at Ransford's dead face. He could have sworn it was grinning.

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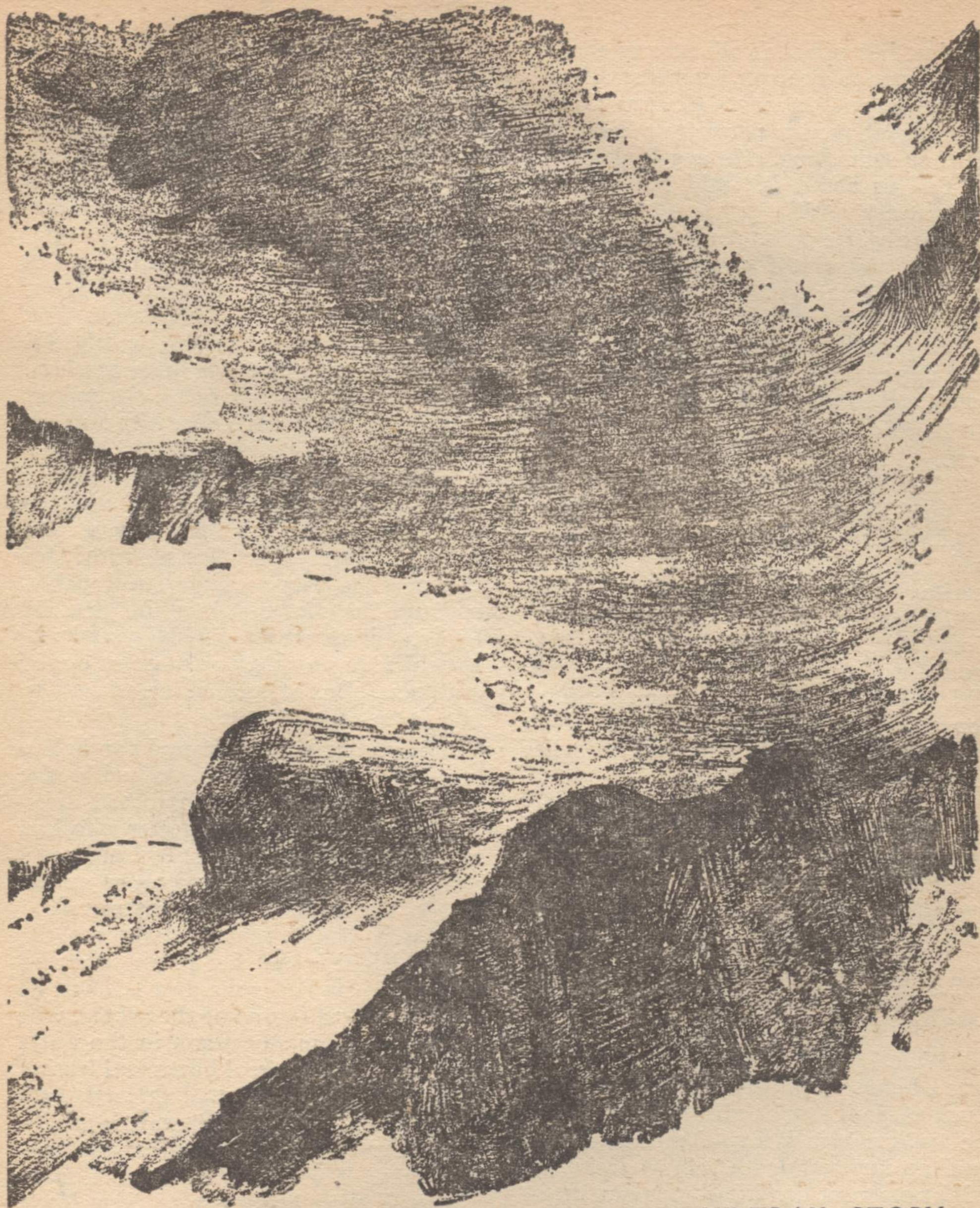
Something was rushing down upon me across the snow, something gray-white and massive.

THE GREATEST

By D. K. FINDLAY



AN OFF-THE-TRAIL STORY

BEAST

ILLUSTRATED BY
L. STERNE STEVENS

THE MEN gathered in Strangeways' room were explorers and travelers and they were talking curiosities. McRimmon, just back from the Solomons, told of seeing a man die by witchcraft in the South Seas. Pearson piped up. "Well, once I came across the case of a man killed by a prehistoric beast."

Everybody laughed. Not from disbe-

lief, but because such adventures should not happen to Pearson, who is small and spectacled and earnest. He was always worrying about his permits or his specimens or something. He is a biologist.

"Tell us about it," said McRimmon. "Was it a native?"

"No, a white man. An American." He thought about it for a minute. "The other one—the one who died of pure fright—he was a native."

Everyone in the room—they were men who appreciated a good story and knew how to tell one—groaned and objected.

"Begin at the beginning," said Strangeways. "First, where were you?"

"Place called Phari Dzong in the Chumbi Valley."

"That's across the northwest frontier," said Strangeways. "In Tibet. Forbidden territory. What were you doing there?"

"I was with the Kami-Chumbi Expedition." Pearson looked a little guilty. "At least, I was supposed to be with the expedition but they carried on like a military convoy, scaring everything in the hills, so I thought I'd just slip over into the next valley."

"That's a biologist for you," said someone who had led an expedition. "When you want him, he's fifty miles away in the next valley."

"Well, it's a lucky thing I did," said Pearson. "We found a rare Himalayan rat. This rat—"

"Confound the rat!" said Strangeways. "What about the dead man?"

"Well, his name was Schlinger and he was a big game hunter. He had really no business in Tibet at all. But you know, he was lucky in a way—I mean, to meet such an unusual death. He was a hunter of beasts and in his last moment he looked up over his gunbarrel at one of the greatest of beasts. One which had died out long ago. He must have been terrified of course—but there may have been a thrill of wonder and satisfaction before his brains were spilled out."

"So far," said Strangeways firmly, "we've got you to a place called Phari. Now go on from there."

"Not exactly Phari. Phari is on the traveled route. . . Where the expedition was. I was farther east, toward the Chomo Lhari."

"The Holy Mountain," said someone. "I've seen it."

"YES," Pearson said, "it's very beautiful. We were working north along one of its valleys when we came to this monastery. Place called M'dinya. I was the first white man to come there since the end of the war and I was given the usual courtesy audience with the head lama. You know how it is, you sit there, and he sits there, obviously thinking of something else, and after an hour or so, the monks draw a sort of curtain before him and the audience is over. This lama was a very old man and very holy. Well. I set up camp and started to work and then I was told I was to have the honor of a second audience. I was somewhat surprised, for you know the holy ones, the genuine mystics, have little interest in white men. By their standards we are like large and violent children and they only see us out of politeness. But it seemed he wished to consult me on a matter.

"Well, after sitting around for half a day, drinking buttered tea with the monks, the old one began to tell me a dim story about a white hunter who had visited the monastery. He did not mention whether it was this century or the last, so I was only mildly interested. I asked what had happened to him and the lama thought it over for a long time and finally said he had gone away. Then he said something to one of the others, who led me to a dim storeroom in the walls. There were a couple of boxes and leather bags covered with dust. I opened them and found the usual traveler's stuff—clothes and personal articles and ammunition. There was a passport made out to Elwood Schlinger of New York, shooting permits for India, including a special license to take two snow leopards, and some pictures, mostly of dead animals. He seemed to have hunted game all over the world. What surprised me were the dates on the passport. The last visa was only three years old. I could guess he had wandered across the frontier, either carelessly or deliberately in search of his snow leopards, but I couldn't imagine why he had left his baggage behind.

"I went back to the lama and more cups of tea. I tried to find out what had

happened to the white hunter. In which direction had he gone? He had gone by the Chotan Ind. I recognized the name—it is a mountain marked on some of the maps. At first I thought the lama meant that he had left the country by way of the Chotan Ind, gradually it dawned on me that he had gone to the Chotan Ind and had not come back. Finally the lama brought out an English word for which he had been searching. Calamity. A calamity had occurred. And with that, he re-folded his hands and relapsed into serenity as if he had cleared the whole thing up. He seemed to think he had told the whole story, while for me, it seemed just the beginning of one. It isn't so much the language difficulty, it's the difference in the way our minds work—or rather, in the things we know. Anyway, the lama had said his say. I felt that he wanted something from me, but I couldn't guess what, so I said thanks for the tea, and went back to work.

"I needed native bearers and I had asked the monks to put in a word with the villagers. A few days later, some of them turned up. One of them was a strange looking creature with a nervous tic. If he had been white, I would have said he was neurotic—he looked like a man who had an experience which he couldn't assimilate and couldn't forget, and it had wrecked his nervous system. As it turned out, he had had a shattering experience. His name was Kiang and he was one of the men who had gone with Schlinger to the Chotan Ind. My Sherpas, whom I had brought into the valley with me, were rather contemptuous of the valley folk, and knew about Kiang. They had also heard all sorts of rumors about Schlinger, who was beginning to be a sort of legend. Bit by bit, from Kiang's wild looks and frightened gestures, from the talk of the valley folk who came to see the camp, and from the lamas, I pieced together the story.

"In the first place, Chotan Ind, the mountain at the top of the pass, is evil. I mean formally and religiously evil. The people may use the track across its knees but the mountain itself is absolutely forbidden, and this has been so since beyond their memory. They believe that the mountain is the abode of malignant spirits which would seize them and carry them off if they came near. Sometimes these beliefs have a factual basis—probably too many travelers disappeared from the slopes of Chotan Ind and it was put out of bounds. The point is that not one of these people for generations had set foot on Chotan Ind.

"But while it was forbidden ground, it was in plain view and everyone knew that something lived in the caves on its shoulder. Herdsmen and porters had caught glimpses of it moving quickly across the mountain, they had seen the marks in the snow, they came to know quite a lot about it. The men of the valley described it for me quite matter-of-factly—and by George! it made me sit up—for this is the remarkable thing: they described accurately an animal which has been extinct for thousands of years—the cave bear, *Ursus Spelæus,* larger and fiercer than the grizzly. His bones are found mingled with the bones of Paleolithic man. There was one difference—the authorities describe the cave bear as brown or reddish. This animal, the locals said, was white or gray. They pointed out an old wool scarf of mine as about the color, and this of course is reasonable for a creature which lived in the snow.

"Well, Schlinger wandered into the valley and heard of the beast. I picture him as a hearty fellow who prided himself on his common sense, the kind who has no patience with local beliefs. He didn't believe in evil spirits which took the shape of bears, or any other shape. I think he would have dismissed the whole thing as mere superstition except for the point which had impressed me, the whiteness of the thing. There is, you know, a glacier bear, bluish or grayish, very rare and seldom seen, and this may have been in Schlinger's mind. Anyway, off he went to hunt it down, whatever it was.

"He told the lamas where he was going. They could not understand why he should wish to climb a mountain known to be evil, but they don't pretend to understand white men. They helped him round up a few people of the valley as bearers and saw him off. The expedition ended in disaster. The natives came flying down the mountain in wild disorder and Schlinger and one Kanoo were never seen again. According to the survivors, they led the white man to the forbidden

place and there they stopped. A storm was gathering, they wanted to come down; Schlinger tried to persuade them to go on but without success. He and Kanoo, his personal servant, went on by themselves. The others waited. They heard a great cry of terror from Kanoo, and the report of Schlinger's rifle, then the sound of a great animal. That is their own description, 'the sound of a great animal'. Rocks and stones showered down on them and they ran for their lives. It is easy to make light of their terror, but it must have been a shocking experience—as witness our friend with the tic—who never recovered from it.

"That was three years ago—and the thing remained just as it was. No one had climbed up to see what had happened. I was the first white man to arrive since then, and the head lama referred the matter to me. . . I wasn't a bit anxious to climb Chotan Ind. I was more interested in the excellent specimens we were finding; but I decided I would have to go for the sake of white solidarity. I didn't think of it as a venture into fear—I just thought of it as a confoundedly difficult climb."

"How high is it?" asked someone.

"The floor of the pass is about 13,000 feet. I guess the peak is about 8,000 feet above that. The day before we set out was clear and calm and I had a good look at the mountain through the glasses. I could understand why it had a bad reputation. Its peak was sheer black rock. Running up to it—at the throat so to speak—was field of black and white diamond shapes, like a Harlequin costume or a checker board squeezed out of shape. Through the glasses I could see that it was a mass of rock crossed by snow gullies. It looked like difficult climbing.

"I took three of my Sherpas, brave men and good mountaineers, and I had three of the valley people, including Kiang, to show us the way. That night we pitched our tents on the flank of Chotan Ind. I don't think I've ever been colder. The wind came down the pass like a river of air, straight off the Himalayan snowfields. Nobody slept. In the morning it was impossible to get water hot enough to make a really hot drink, and off we went with the first light, feeling cold and stiff and empty. We saw the sun rise over a sea of unmapped peaks, but it showed only briefly and the clouds came down around us. It was to be one of those raw miserable days, and a most disagreeable blustery wind got up.

"Now and then we got a glimpse downward and saw M'dinya no bigger than a toy on the valley floor. We had been following an old track and now it lost itself in a defile of broken crags, a most gloomy spot. Kiang, who had become most excited, stopped and pointed. This was obviously where the first party had waited for some of their belongings were still scattered about.

"This was the edge of the forbidden territory and the natives were obviously uneasy when we prepared to leave them. We undid a rope and found a way up the broken wall. We had just reached the top when the three of them came hurrying after us. Fear at being left alone there was too much for them.

"The mountain ran up in a great slope of broken rock. We picked our way round boulders as big as houses. I was leading when I turned around and saw my people standing like stone, staring at a man leaning against the rock behind us. His face was blackened by frost but it was still human and it was fixed in a grimace of pure terror. I had never realized that fear was so infectious. The dead man's look induced in me a painful stab of fright, the sheerest fright I ever felt.

"We went to him. He had been frozen and pretty well preserved by the ice and snow. There was no mark of violence on him. He died, I am quite sure, of fright. He had fallen down somewhere and the loose stones had carried him against the rocks. It was Kanoo, one of the missing men.

"We buried him where he was, making a cairn of stones. But I found myself up against a powerful difficulty: fear. You must remember that the people of the valley had been conditioned from childhood to think of Chotan Ind as a place where they must not go. Now they saw what happened to a man who had gone into the forbidden place and they saw how he had died. They were finished. And my Sherpas were affected, too. They have the same religion as the Tibetans,

you know, but they are mountaineers and it is their pride that they will follow wherever a man will lead. I looked at their sullen, averted faces and I knew it was a bad business. However, I needed them. We left the villagers huddled by the cairn and went on. We had only gone a few yards when Abou, my best climber, fell and cut his knee. I think it was a simple defense mechanism. On any other mountain, it would not have bothered him for ten minutes, now it crippled him. I bound it up and told the other two to take him down.

"I watched them disappear into the mist. The visibility was down to thirty or forty yards. I sat on a rock and waited for my heart to slow down. I was beginning to appreciate Schlinger's difficulties.

"HE WOULD have had the same trouble with his people as I had. They would be as cheerful as crickets until they came to the frontier over which they were forbidden to cross. They might nerve themselves to cross it—but they were different men. I had just seen it happen to my Sherpas. Schlinger, being white, would have no patience with their beliefs. He drove them up as far as he could and went on alone. But he himself must have been affected by their fear—and he himself was going into the teeth of a white man's belief. As I said before, it's a matter of the things you think you know. And Schlinger, if he had any sense at all, knew that Schlinger at 20,000 feet was not the same man as he was at sea level. He must have felt his heart pounding, must have felt his eyes blur and see double from lack of oxygen. He must have known he was in no condition to meet any emergency, even to think clearly. He went on, but not the same Schlinger. I don't think bravery is of much importance. It is simply an attitude, but it is interesting to guess how much we are changed physiologically by nervous tension.

"I had already decided that it was unlikely that there was any big animal on the mountain. There have been cases of bears encountered at great heights—and leopards in Africa—but the larger carnivore are like ourselves. They do not go very far from their food supply and there was nothing on the mountain to feed them, not a hare, nor a rat, nor a lizard nor a marmot.

"I got off my rock and started up again. I came to an upright black rim which I took to the edge of the harlequin field—the black and white effect which was so striking at a distance. I traversed to the left looking for a way up and came to a great gully filled with snow. In spite of my effort and the lapse of time, I had not come far. Not far below me, I could see the burial cairn we made for Kanoo. I also caught an imaginary glimpse into the past. Kanoo was probably standing not far from where we found him, looking up, when he saw whatever it was that frightened him, and Schlinger was probably standing about where I stood. He also would have traversed and come to the edge of the gully.

"I suppose most of you have stood alone on a high mountain. It is not exactly the same as the corner of Broadway and 34th street. The Himalayas have their own impressive atmosphere. It was a desolate and fearful spot. Around me were black rocks glazed with ice; above me the snow of the gulley streamed like smoke. The thing I hated most was the wind. It came in eddies of unbelievable force, with sound effects—voices shrieking at me. I hated it—and to make things more interesting, my eyes were beginning to play tricks."

"How high were you?" asked Strangeways.

"I think about 18,000 feet. I had been too long without enough oxygen. Several times I thought I saw something out of the corner of my eye, something woolly and moving, but when I turned my head it was gone. I knew it was due to the effect of the altitude, but it was disconcerting. I pulled myself together and started up the edge of the gully. It wasn't a good place—the sides were loaded with tons of loose rock and it looked as if a shake would bring the whole thing down. Then I saw the rifle.

"It was lodged on a flat place. It was Schlinger's, all right. There was a plate in the butt with his name."

"What was it?" asked someone.

"A Gibbs five-fifty. The kind of thing

(Continued on page 126)

WATER HAZARD

By
EDWARD SONNENSCHEIN

A FACT STORY

JANUARY 21, 1892—twenty-one years after the disastrous Chicago Fire—that city again faced the threat of a great conflagration. And had it not been for the courage and daring of one man, Chicago might once more have been left at the mercy of devouring flames.

An exceptional period of bitter weather, combined with other peculiar conditions of water and air, created a situation which happily has been repeated only once in the last sixty years. During the night of January 20 the mercury had dropped to five degrees above zero. Two miles out in Lake Michigan sludge ice (ice mixed with sand) had formed beneath the surface. Great quantities of the ice had collected around the intake of the city's only source of water, a huge stone crib with an intake eighty feet below the frozen surface of the lake.

The total water supply for Chicago's million and a half citizens had dwindled to the merest trickle during the night, and by morning virtually no water was being received at the three pumping stations supplied by the crib. Something had to be done and done quickly if the health and safety of the city's inhabitants were not to be endangered.

The city engineering department had come to the conclusion that the only possible way to break up the ice obstructing the entrance of the intake was to lower a diver to the bottom to work the ice

ILLUSTRATED BY MONROE EISENBERG

loose manually. This scheme involved extreme danger to the diver, however, because once the ice had been loosened the powerful suction of the intake would almost certainly pull the diver into the six-foot opening. None of the city employees assigned to such tasks were willing to face this hazard.

It was then that a young independent diver named John Edward Scully stepped forward and suggested what seemed at the time to be a good alternative plan. Scully's idea was to descend below the mouth of the intake and loosen the ice just enough so that it could be easily lifted to the surface by a lowered block and tackle. The advantage to this method would be that the diver could ascend to the surface out of harm's way after securing the block and tackle, but before the ice was raised from the front of the porthole.

Scully's plan met with favor—particularly since he himself volunteered to attempt the ticklish assignment! He knew in his heart that it would be a touch-and-go affair, with the odds very much against his ever coming to the surface alive again if the slightest thing went wrong. But he also remembered as a small boy of six witnessing the horrible aftermath of the great Chicago fire of 1871, and the stark picture of what he had seen then flashed before him and made him determined that it would not happen again if he could do anything to prevent it.

A HOLE was chopped through the ice and, at a little before ten o'clock, Scully donned his diving suit. The headpiece was adjusted securely in place, and the diver was lowered off the ice and into the freezing water. The faces of the group of men who remained on top reflected the tension which all of them felt as they stood by on the ice in front of the crib. Little did they know just how desperately they would be needed a short while hence.

Once on the bottom of the lake Scully lost no time in getting to work. Armed with a long, pointed iron bar he gingerly pried small sections of ice loose from the wall of the crib. After an hour of steady labor he had loosened the ice to a point where he felt it could easily be slid off the porthole and lifted to the surface.

He lowered the iron bar and raised a hand to his lifeline to signal the waiting men above to lower the block and tackle. Just then—without warning—disaster struck! With a tremendous crash the entire mound of ice was sucked into the porthole and the courageous diver swept in with it, as helpless as a matchstick in a hurricane.

The worst fears of the diver and of the men standing by eighty feet above were realized. It looked as though Scully were headed for certain death. To add to his discomfort and helplessness the head attachment of the lifeline, that device which permits a diver to remain upright at all times, snapped under the impact.

Luckily both the airline and the lifeline attachment about the diver's waist held fast. It was a tribute to the quick thinking of the men on the surface that the minute they felt the abrupt, hard tug on the lifeline they realized what must have happened. All except the man tending the air pump hastily pulled with might and main in an attempt to drag Scully out of the current. This served, at least, to prevent the diver from being pulled farther into the intake.

Down below Scully was momentarily feeling a sense of great relief at the knowledge that the lifeline was holding and the airline was still bringing him precious oxygen. That awful instant when he had been swept into the intake his heart had contracted with the sense of sickening dread which even the bravest of men feel in the face of disaster. Now, as he felt the strong, steady pull of the lifeline around his waist he knew that the men on the surface would keep him from going farther into the pipe—provided the rope continued to hold.

In a few moments, however, he realized that the very rope which was saving his life was not an unmixed blessing. The current held his arms pinned down helpless at his sides. As he lay face upward in the intake his feet were higher than his head. This meant that the pull on the lifeline about his waist, coupled with the downward component of the

sweep of the current, bent him backwards with terrific force. Scully admits that there were times during the horrible fifty minutes which followed when he almost wished the lifeline would part.

It was soon evident to the men on the surface that they could not hope to pull the hapless diver out of the intake by merely tugging on the lifeline. Also, assuming that he were still alive and conscious, he would most certainly be unable to lift his arms against the current to pull himself out. In 1892 diving equipment was still relatively primitive, and Scully had no way of communicating the details of his dilemma to the men above. A few minutes later he heard a sound which made him pray God that he could talk with the men at the surface. For, with the best of intentions, they had set about to imperil his life still further!

Faced with the possibility of the lifeline breaking at any moment and his being swept down into the center of the crib, faced with the chance that the rubber airline might snap at any time, faced with overwhelming nausea from the blood congesting in his head due to his inverted position and the unbearable pain of the pull on his back threatening to cause him to lose consciousness—as if all of these things weren't sufficient—Scully's situation was made even more hazardous by the ill-advised use of grappling hooks by the men above.

Their hope was to be able to hook Scully by some part of his diving suit and pull him out of the intake and into safe water. From there it would be an easy matter to lift him to the surface. Scully knew, however, what the men on the surface should have known: the moment the sharp edge of the grappling hook touched his diving suit it would be all over for him. Rather than pull him out of the intake it would most surely rip a gaping hole in the suit and cause him to drown.

WHEN Scully heard the clank of the grappling hooks against the stone side of the crib he knew that if they ever reached him his goose was cooked. A ridiculous situation this—victim and would-be-rescuers working at cross purposes; Scully hoping against hope that the hooks wouldn't be able to reach him, and the men on the ice above trying desperately to do just that.

Ridiculous, yet, but to Scully's tortured mind there was very little humor in the situation. The sound of the hooks scraping against the side of the crib came nearer and nearer. Now they were directly above the entrance to the intake. Scully gritted his teeth and prayed as he had never prayed before that the hooks would not reach him.

He could hear them quite close now. The hooks were at the mouth of the intake and only feet from where he lay. A few anxious moments later he enjoyed a tremendous feeling of relief for the second time that eventful day. The grappling hooks had fallen short of their target—he was too far into the intake.

When you are hovering on the brink of death every small gift of fate assumes the role of a major victory. Had Scully been a few feet nearer safety he would have died by drowning.

If a man can be joyous when he is being torn in two by hundreds of pounds of pressure being exerted unceasingly against his body, and when he is in constant danger of sudden death, Scully rejoiced at that moment. At least now he still had a fighting chance for life.

And then, just as suddenly as it had begun, his fearful adventure was over. Scully felt the suction which was pulling him into the intake slacken and finally cease altogether. He was being pulled by the lifeline at his waist out of the intake and up to the surface. He came up through the ice almost two hours after his descent to the lake bottom—*half of which was spent lying head down in the intake!*

While the men on the ice had been working in their vain attempts to pull Scully to the surface the interior of the crib was a beehive of frantic activity. The only way in which the suction could be stopped was for the three pumping stations serviced by the crib to stop pumping water. They were only authorized to do this in case of extreme emergency at the *express order* of one of the heads of the city engineering department.

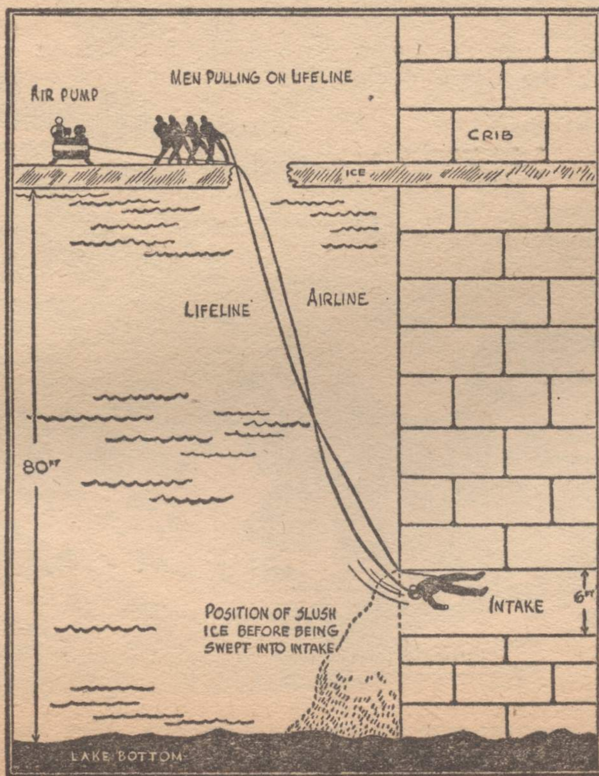
It took all of fifty minutes, every one of which was an eternity to the brave diver at the bottom of the lake, to reach the proper authority by telephone and for him in turn to call each of the three pumping stations. If ever a man had justifiable reason to harbor a lifelong hatred for red tape that man was John Edward Scully!

When they pulled him up through the ice feet first the men at the crib were not sure whether he was dead or alive. They didn't waste any time guessing, but immediately ripped the heavy diving suit off with knives. They found Scully to be very much alive and conscious, although somewhat the worse for wear.

After gulping down half a tumblerful of whiskey which was handed him the diver felt stronger and was able to walk inside the crib unsupported. His waist and back were a mass of bruises bearing evidence of the tremendous forces pulling on the lifeline. A few days later he was back at work, and he continued diving for the next several years.

Today, eighty-two years of age and in splendid physical condition, John Edward Scully can look back at an exceptinally useful and active life. He went on to become one of Chicago's leading construction engineers—and one of the most progressive forces on the Chicago City Council. The same fervent love for his city which prompted him to risk his life for it that freezing day in 1892 was the motivating force behind a career devoted both privately and publicly to promoting civic improvements.

What did he receive in return for his struggle against death at the bottom of the lake? "Forty dollars," says Scully. "No, that's not quite right. Thirty-eight dollars. I had to pay two bucks to the guy who was hired to handle the airline and lifeline." But John Edward Scully also says that you can't measure the reward for such things in dollars or medals or citations. He has the immense pride of knowing that fifty-six years after his amazing feat of heroism the third largest city in the world is still grateful.



WING SHOT

SHE was a "northern duck"—and was wilder than the mallards hatched on Puget Sound lakes and swamps. All day she was one of several thousand ducks and geese floating in "rafts" of several hundred on Skagit Bay. Tomorrow she would continue the flight south to her winter home—an area of lakes and marshes, protected from hunters. Here the wild rice grew. Here was the water fowl's promised land.

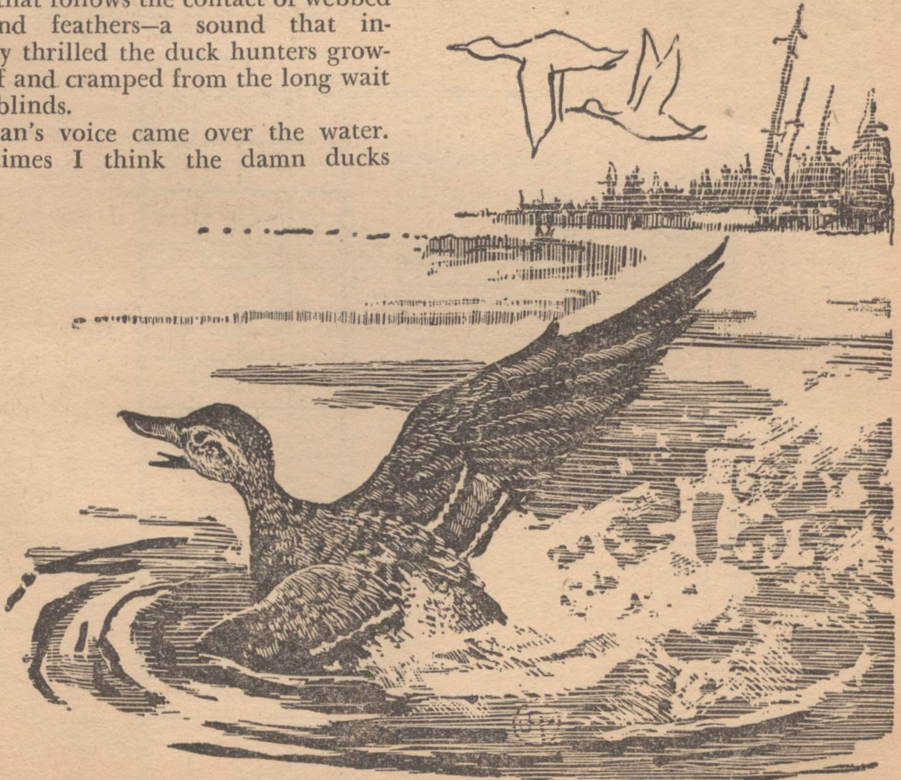
But that was tomorrow.

Today the salt water had been like glass. There were no squalls, no white-caps to keep the ducks moving in an endless search for calm water. Only an occasional motor boat broke up the rafts. Even then their alarm was mild and they soared a few hundred yards at most and settled again with the rippling sound that follows the contact of webbed feet and feathers—a sound that invariably thrilled the duck hunters growing stiff and cramped from the long wait in the blinds.

A man's voice came over the water. "Sometimes I think the damn ducks pack wristwatches. Unless there's a wind they'll hang out there in rafts. Then a minute after it's illegal to shoot they start coming in."

The northern hen was hungry, but she instinctively waited for a general movement before searching for food. Somewhere in the flock were the fourteen ducklings she had hatched and raised to maturity. Unlike chickens, she hadn't scratched out their food, but she had led them to waters where food abounded, and she had guarded them against the manifold perils of the wilderness. Except for the beat of her wings, hissing and raising the feathers on her neck and head, she was weaponless. Many of her kind had died in hopeless combat rather than abandon the ducklings.

Her offspring had long since lost their



Her terror increased with her growing exhaustion. Each time she broke the surface, gasping for air, the eagle was directly over her.

By

FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE

ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL PIERCE

identity as such. Nearby several ducks took off and she followed, climbing until she could see the vast areas of puddles and seaweed left by the receding tide. Beyond that lay green grass, fields of stubble, and countless ponds where water from the heavy rains had gathered.

She saw cattle, humans moving about their affairs, lights coming on in houses, and smoke climbing in the still air. The swamp began rolling under her wings as she headed for a pasture where other ducks were settling. Then off to the left, and somewhat nearer, she saw flocks of ducks.

There was no movement among them. They were lifeless, but cleverly contrived decoys. Hunger had taken the edge from her normal alertness, and she was moving in with set wings when she saw the man in the duck blind. She changed her course and beat the air with her wings as she started climbing.

She saw flame cone around a gun barrel three times, and then her world began revolving about her. The man, the ponds, the pastures, the mountains touched with sunlight on their highest peaks, were above her, then below her. One wing beat the air while the other hung helpless at her left side. She crashed through dead cattails and struck the water with stunning force. A few seconds later the world had stopped its spinning. She tried to take off again, but only flopped around in circles.

She began swimming for a denser mass of swamp grass. She heard the man's voice say, "Find her, boy! Go get her, boy!" She dived and swam. In her panic and terror there was an urgency to remain under, where it was safe, until she drowned. But she came up, moved quietly between the cattails and began running on her webbed feet, her wing dragging. She slipped smoothly into a tiny thicket of swamp grass and waited.

The man's voice, whining now, said, "That's the way it goes. You wait all day for the ducks to come in. You get a shot and the damn ammunition is no good."

"Aw hell, Tim, you strained your gun barrel on that one," his companion said.

"I was right on her. I should've killed her. Only winged her. The ammunition is no good. Damned if I don't write 'em a letter."

"There's always that guy," another hunter a short distance away muttered to his partner. "When they bring 'em down they're crack wing shots. When they miss or wing 'em it's the ammunition. He's going to cuss his dog in another minute. The poor pooch can't find the scent. In the meantime, ducks are leaving this area strictly alone. All because of one guy."

Tim's voice broke in. "Pal, what's the matter with your nose? She fell right here. I marked the spot, now find her."

While the dog searched for the scent, the man went stamping about, kicking thickets and patches of cattails. He stood within inches of the hen, then went on. Darkness settled and the sucking sound of rubber boots in muck gradually died away.

THE tide came in and the hen waddled down to meet it. Ducks were feeding at the water's edge. Here there was an accumulation of sea grasses. When she was no longer hungry, she drifted out with the tide.

All night long she heard the whistle of wings as mallards flew back and forth between the bay and the feeding grounds. Dawn came cold, with the peaks sharp against the eastern sky. The plaintive cry of jacksnipes came over the water. There was a flurry of shooting all over the flats. Ducks fell, then they began rafting up far off shore. She paddled steadily, but the shooting had made them restless, and the rafts broke up and reformed elsewhere. She was always alone.

Again the water was flat all day. She could hear men's voices as they shouted back and forth. Once a speed boat cut through the rafts and headed straight for the geese. A thousand of them lifted into the air with protesting cries, then settled again. There was a flurry of shooting, then night came.

She fed at the water's edge, then found shelter in the swamp. It grew colder and she snuggled into dry, dead cattails for warmth. Ice formed on fresh water pools and remained most of

the day. A raw wind howled down from the north, breaking up the rafts. The air was filled with ducks and geese. The roar of guns was constant throughout the day.

During the night she heard the cries of southbound geese. At daybreak hundreds of flocks of ducks began moving south. The ponds were freezing down to the bottom, each blade of grass was ice-coated. She followed each flock with her eyes. Frequently she would try to fly, but stabbing pain in her left wing subdued the impulse instantly. Within ten days the flocks were reduced to scattered groups of local ducks, and the unromantic fish or squaw ducks that worked close to shore.

The days dragged by, with snow, driving rain or cold periods. She kept close to the beach because the tide always pushed the snow back—always brought food dredged up by the waves. Often it was mixed with slush.

Twice dogs drove her, quacking, into the water, her webbed feet moving until they were a blur, her good wing beating the ground. There she remained, beyond gunshot range, watching the frantic dogs. The bolder of the two swam out until his worried master whistled for his return. The tide was moving fast that day, and it was long after the man and dogs had gone that she waddled onto a sand bar.

Although it was cold, she found the spot to her liking. Long-forgotten storms had cast huge logs onto the bar. And where two formed a V the sun beat down hard. The sand was warm and much of the heat was trapped.

She spent hours there, her wounded wing soaking up the healing properties of heat and light. Conscious of a sense of security, she preened her feathers and maintained her neatness. On many days she paddled through the swamps searching for the food she knew best—wild rice. Birds, like humans, have strong preferences.

It was on one of these excursions that the eagle came. She was a half mile off shore, and she froze, her head turned slightly, one eye on the bird of prey. Suddenly it swooped, plunging with talons ready. She dived and began swimming under water. The eagle followed, tightly circling over the area. The moment she broke water it swooped again. It hadn't the slightest intention of picking her up at this stage of the game. The eagle was following age-old procedure—forcing the mallard to tire herself through repeated divings until she lay exhausted on the surface. Then he could pick her up without wetting a feather.

Her terror increased with her growing exhaustion. Each time she broke the surface, gasping for air, the eagle was directly over her. The nearest cover—a thicket of swamp grass—seemed no nearer. With lungs bursting she surfaced, gasped, and dived again. This time she saw the descending talons and something more—a sooty object flapping toward the eagle. She heard a crow's indignant cawing.

Her period below was tragically brief. She surfaced, gasped and went under. Her heart was pounding with fear and exertion, but she had a quick impression of a sky flecked with sooty specks converging on the eagle.

She surfaced again, and her head was almost too heavy for her neck. Every fiber in the mallard's being cried out for oxygen. This time the eagle was a hundred yards away and cawing crows darted at him from all directions. The eagle could have destroyed any one of them with a slash of his beak, but there was no combatting two dozen. Wherever he looked they were diving, zooming and circling. The din was enough to shatter the nerve of the stoutest eagle. With mighty wing-beats he climbed until his tormentors were far below.

No deep-seated sympathetic impulse motivated the crows. In many respects their records were as black as their feathers—raiding nests, eating eggs and young birds; eating farmers' sprouting corn, and otherwise bringing on the wrath of man and bird alike. The crows simply didn't like eagles and the mallard hen was the beneficiary of this intense hate.

She waddled weakly to the thicket and collapsed. It was hours later that she summoned strength and courage enough to venture into the open. She fed cautiously, racing for cover over alarms.

THE wing healed slowly and there were nerve readjustments that gave her pain when she tried to fly. On nice days she would stand on the sand bars and fan her wings. It was like flying, except that the wings didn't support her weight. The pain was negligible until she attempted to leave the ground.

The sun completed its swing south and turned north. The days lengthened, grew warmer and friendly Chinook winds came from the southwest, melting the snow and bringing rains. The hen saw northbound flights of geese and ducks. She took off and began climbing. There was almost no pain in the wing now, just an odd numbness. Long before she gained their elevation, she tired and planed back to the swamp.

Sitting on a pond, she called loudly at the next flock, inviting them to join her. Only a drake answered. He landed a few yards away and began swimming toward her, quacking hoarsely and trying to sell her a bill of goods.

He was a handsome devil, and his head was the exceptionally beautiful green common to mallard drakes in spring. He had wintered on wild rice and was in top condition. No creature has less family responsibilities than a mallard drake. He takes no part in hatching the eggs, but loafs nearby, gossiping with other males. When she comes off of the nest to feed he paddles about with her, keeping other drakes at their distance. He quacks hoarse warning notes as danger nears and lets it go at that.

His casual marriage vows were made to be broken and no unguarded hen emerging from her nest is safe. In fact he will beat the hell out of her husband if he thinks that he can get away with it.

The hen's drake was the man in her life less than an hour, then a noble fellow went about putting asunder what nature had joined. There was a lot of quacking and neck sparring. The hen watched with a resignation born of experience. She was the prize and had no choice in the matter. The newcomer finally forced the drake's head under water and kept it there by sheer strength.

Suddenly the drake dived. He emerged a few yards distant, gasped and dived again because the newcomer was coming after him. When he again surfaced, the newcomer was flying to the hen's side to fight off a third drake.

Hundreds of ducks came in that night, resting on the pools and feeding. They took off before dawn, and the hen and her new mate followed. Puget Sound was a hundred miles behind them when they cleared a mountain range and looked down on a land heavily timbered and dotted with lakes.

Mule deer grazed in parks below the snowline. Mountain sheep and goats watched the successive flights of waterfowl from crags and wind-swept ridges. Streams swollen from snow water twisted and surged through timber-bordered gorges, leaving an impression of silver threads carelessly tossed on green blankets.

The hen's wing weakened suddenly. She went down so swiftly that her drake failed to follow for several seconds. She saw movement near the first patch of water, and summoned sufficient strength to clear a nearby ridge and go on to another. A half dozen men froze as they saw her coming. Then one said, "You've been practically prayin' for ducks for the past ten days. Looks like your prayer was answered. Here comes a hen, Joe."

"Her drake will be along," Joe predicted with confidence. "I can't figger why she would leave the flock. Must be a very old hen that used to nest here before one of the best duck nesting areas was drained and ruined. Mallards like to come back to their old nest."

"There comes the drake, Joe," a companion whispered.

"Don't move. Maybe they'll stay."

Joe was one of many million men who regretted the diminishing duck population. Long ago, with a little help, he had tried creating nesting grounds in the vicinity of his home. He planted wild rice, built small dams and waited for swamp grass to grow. In a very few years two hundred ducks were nesting there each summer, returning from the southern flight the following spring, their numbers depleted. But gradually their numbers increased.

When sportsmen and the government

began conservation on what amounted to almost a continent-wide scale, Joe was in the thick of it. He knew of an area which had been drained for a large-scale farming project, then abandoned. He talked so much about it that suddenly Joe found himself hard at work creating a duck refuge. It was far from completed when the mallard hen settled on the sheltered ponds.

"She landed just off'n that bunch of wild rice you planted last year, Joe," a companion whispered. "The old man followed."

"Let's be quiet about this," Joe said. "We'll haul out and maybe she'll stay. If we can just get 'em nesting here again, where we can keep down the predators."

They sneaked away like thieves and shifted their operations to a point a mile distant.

THE hen didn't take off the following morning. Her wing, strained from the effort to keep up with the strong ducks that had wintered in the south, failed her. The feed was good, and she rested, calling loudly to passing flocks. But the weather held good and none came down. Not even a casual drake descended to dispute her lord's claims.

At the base of a tree, fifty yards from the water, she built a nest of twigs and reeds, then lined it with feathers. She began laying shortly afterwards, covering the eggs with feathers each time she laid one. They spread over the bottom and curved up the sides until there were fifteen in the nest. After that, she began setting.

Days passed. Her lord paddled in the pond, drifting in the breeze in afternoons, growing fat on the food and basking in the early-morning sunlight. A hawk sailed overhead one morning and almost immediately a shotgun roared. The hawk splashed into the water and a few minutes later Joe waded out, picked up the hawk and threw it onto the bank.

As he was making his way back to the cabin, he passed the tree and stopped. "Hello," he said. His movements were slow. She hissed and the feathers on her head stood on end. He picked her up gently and counted the eggs. Then his fingers moved slowly over her wings. "Hmmmm!" he observed thoughtfully. "Mike, just as I thought, this hen was wounded last fall. That's why she stopped here. Wing played out." He sat down, held the hen in his lap, took out a penknife, made a deep slit in the skin near a joint and removed a lead pellet. "That'll relieve a pressure," he said. He put her down gently and walked slowly away.

She brought off her brood several days later. The last duckling hatched was in the water two minutes after it kicked off the shell. Something alarmed the hen and when she hurried to the water, the still-damp downy little fellow instinctively followed the others. She led them to a sunny spot on a bit of beach where the warmth dried them out.

The drake paddled off shore a few yards, sounding occasional warnings of dangers that weren't visible. In a day or two the brood was feeding in the shallows—drawing water into their bills, squirting it out each side, retaining bits of moss. Within two weeks their bright eyes were spotting unwary bugs and their bills picking them out of the air.

"An early brood," Joe said, watching them with pride. "Maybe she'll repeat again later on. If we could get long seasons throughout the north, and a couple of broods per hen . . ."

"Joe, you've always been an optimist."

"It's paid off," Joe answered.

Weeks later, when he saw the fifteen young ducks paddling alone, he returned to the nest for a visit. She hissed at him, and when he investigated, she was setting on fourteen eggs.

She brought off fourteen ducklings. Joe neglected his work in his efforts to guard the brood against predators. The first brood was testing its wings in short flights, while the second was losing down and growing feathers.

Green heads began appearing in the first brood, and the hens were learning to quack when the second brood began flying. For a while it was easy to tell the broods apart because of the difference in size. October came and with it Indian summer days. "Twenty-nine young

mallards and two old ones," Joe said happily. "Now if eight or ten pair survive the fall shooting, plus hawks, lack of food and disease, then next fall we should see a hundred mallards head south."

"You're always the optimist," Mike observed. Joe brought out his shotgun and slipped several loads into his pocket. "What the hell you going to do, Joe, shoot some of your own ducks?"

"Nope. We've brought 'em through infancy, grade school, high school and college. Now they're going to get a postgraduate course," Joe answered.

He made his way to a commanding spot among the swamp grasses and sat down. It was an hour before the flock took off, circled high and finally returned. As the old ducks set their wings to come in, Joe jumped up and fired the gun twice. Then reloaded. The startled ducks beat the air frantically in their efforts to climb. They went beyond a ridge and settled on a beaver dam. After awhile the old ducks took off and the young ones followed. This time the hen was wary.

Old instincts to danger were sharpened. She circled high, came down, then for no reason climbed frantically. Again she came in. All below was quiet. As the flock again set its wings, Joe jumped up and fired.

This continued for several days. "Mister, you're making it tough for some duck hunter down south," Mike said.

"Hunters down south can stand a little tough shooting until we build up the ducks," Joe answered.

When the ice began forming on the pools a new restlessness filled the flock. For several days thousands of Alaskan and Yukon bred ducks and geese had been moving south. One morning the hen left the pond and began climbing. The others followed. "This is it!" Joe said. "She's full of business today."

They cleared the nearest ridge, a raggedly organized flock of mallards, each gaining altitude. When they appeared again, the hen was the apex of a clear-cut V formation.

Hour after hour she led the way south, her wings as strong as she had known them a year ago. They rested, fed briefly, and went on, the chill of the north driving them relentlessly. The flock was high when it cleared the Canadian-American boundary, but it began settling off the mouth of the Skagit River. The flats were familiar.

The hen saw the fields where she had fed other years and the sand bar where she had warmed herself in the sunlight. A sense of homecoming filled her. Then, suddenly wary, she saw a stirring in a duck blind. She quacked a warning, wheeled and began climbing again. Flame coned over gun barrels, and a young drake dropped into a thicket.

The hen went on, stopping in southern Washington. The next day's flight took her to the game refuge in southern Oregon. The air was filled with moving ducks, the water covered with them.

On she went to the south, losing a young drake here, or a young hen there, for men appeared in the most unexpected places. She settled on familiar waters where the wild rice was thick—the goal she missed the previous year.

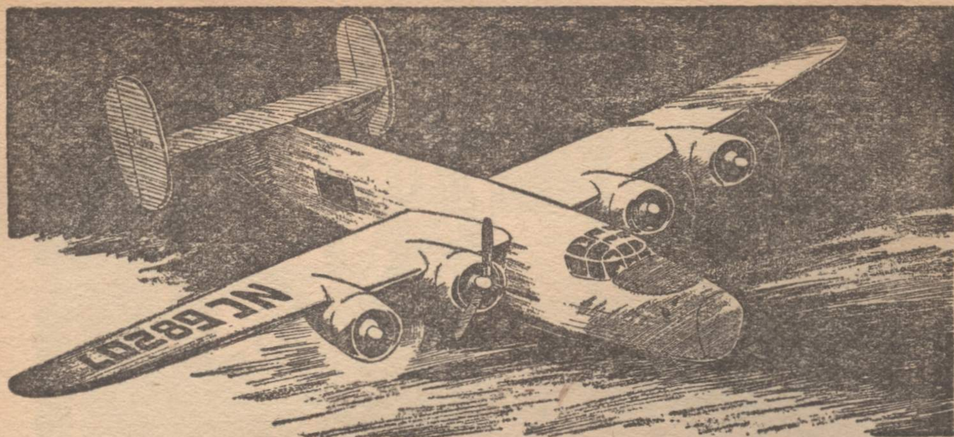
It was months before the old, twice-a-year restlessness filled her—months before the drakes' green heads took on a new brilliance. She headed north with the others. The ice was gone in the ponds when she dropped from a flight and settled. The area was larger for Joe and a gang had worked all winter building dams.

"She's back," Joe said.

"How do you know it's the same hen?" Mike asked. "Or the same husband?"

"She was in Nevada awhile," Joe answered, "and like as not she got a divorce. But I'll bet it's the same hen." Within two weeks nine pairs of mallards were on the lake, then mostly drakes alone were visible the greater part of the time.

Joe pulled on his hip boots one morning and made his way across a swampy area to high ground and a tree. The hen hissed and the feathers stood up on her head as he picked her up. He peered briefly, then placed her gently back onto the nest. His fingers explored one wing and there was a tiny bit of scar tissue where a pellet had once been removed with a pen knife. "Fourteen eggs, Mike," he called. "The Old Lady is back."



THE TRAIL AHEAD

Something had gone wrong for all six of them and now they were sweating out their suspensions from the other airlines working for Joe Halley. . . . Six blacklisted pilots—all of them hating their boss—waiting for the day their slates would be wiped clean and they could fly as free men again. . . . *The Doghouse Gang* was what the other fly-boys called them—*Halley's Remittance Men—The Gentlemen from Hell*. And they were all of that and more—for someone had bought half a dozen padlocks to keep them burning in their own little private Hades—then thrown the keys away! So Joe bought a surplus Flying Bathtub for his hotshot kid brother Jake, who had joined the gang, and what had been a mere Operation Snafu really began to foul up. A great novelette of the commercial flying game and the men who go down bucking it—and the few who stick and fly again.

"SEVEN PADLOCKS TO HELL

By WILLIAM O'SULLIVAN

Robert Carse in "The Bosun's Mite" tells a thrilling tale of the wartime merchant-ship convoys and the furious hates that grow on men in the heat of battle as the bombs rain down. . . . Leslie Bigelow in "Ducats on the Three-Notched Trail" takes you to the top of a firewarden's tower in the West-Florida wilderness to stand guard over a treasure trove of Spanish gold that drew the gutter-sweepings of the underworld like steel-filings to a magnet. . . . "A Piece of Woola-Woola" by Douglas Leach treks you Down Under among the black-fellows of North Queensland to meet the fastest and most temperamental man on two legs that ever broke a trainer's heart—and pocketbook! . . . "Of Lords and Lunatics" by F. R. Buckley and "Charley Hoe Handle and the Weasel's Chance" by Jim Kjelgaard. . . . The second stirring instalment of M. V. Heberden's "Bargain in Bombers". . . . Plus many other fine adventure stories of the world's far places—and an exciting assortment of fact features, articles and informative departments. All in the next—

Adventure

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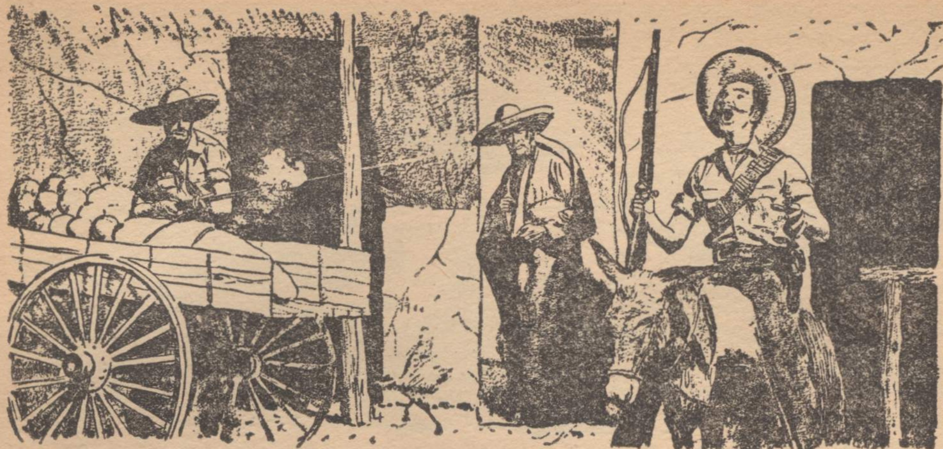

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

M. V. HEBERDEN, whose "Bargain in Bombers" gets off to a flying start on page 48 this month, sends the following to background the story—plus a couple of items culled from *La Prensa* to document it and which we also pass along—

I don't want to be too specific about the locale of "Bargain in Bombers," though I've been in all the C.A. banana republics. Geographically and physically the country described is Nicaragua, whose dictatorship was supported by the U.S. government and who did keep the lid on all attempts at either elections or revolt for a good many years. Owing to that, Nicaragua has not had nearly as many or as lively revolutions in the last five years as its neighbors.

If one has seen a revolution in one Central American country, one has seen them all. If one wants to refer to the one that one personally saw, one has to specify *which* revolution. They have so darn many. I saw the Guatemala one of October, 1944. Luckily for my peace of mind they did not use bombers. But their artillery (seventy-fives, about which I am not enthusiastic) was situated in two forts at opposite sides of the city which were trying to hit each other. Guatemalan mathematics must be weak for most of the shells fell exactly midway, which was too near my hotel for comfort. The worst casualties were caused by seven tanks with revolving machine-gun turrets (lease-lend equipment, I believe) which cruised around mowing down everything that moved on the street. Needless to say, the dead had had no more to do with the revolution than I had. Among the minor inconveniences were broken windows and fallen roofs and no servants in the hotel: they were all too scared to try to come to work and I don't blame them. There were no bread or food deliveries for four or five days and as there was no cook, we lived on bananas, of which, for some reason the hotel had a large supply. The dead lay in the street because snipers on roof tops made the clearing away dangerous. As it gets hot at midday in Guatemala City, this is not hygienic.

Another country, which shall be nameless as I might want to go back there, had two training planes. A revolution was in progress so they decided to bomb an armory held by the rebels. They made some bombs and took off. But nobody had told them that if you wait until you are right over your target and then toss out your bombs, they do not fall on the target. They dropped their bombs as they flew directly over the armory and blew to hell a block of workmen's houses several streets away.

Incidentally, there was a newspaper story less than a year ago about two U. S. bombers, acquired from War Assets, and destined for the bit of bother the Dominican Republic was having. They got as far as Nicaragua, whereupon the Dominican government complained to the Nicaraguan government, which latter said most self-righteously that they would not permit their territory to be used for operations against a friendly neighbor and promptly confiscated the bombers—and kept them, as far as I could gather from the press!

I'm enclosing two clippings from *La Prensa,* the Buenos Aires newspaper, with partial translations. They seem to prove that my plot is not as improbable as it might seem.

Believe it or not, I'd drafted the outline for the yarn before these stories appeared. They also seem to prove that the pattern of Central American revolutions is pretty much the same. They just take advantage of modern improvements.

Here are the two dispatches from *La Prensa*—

SAN JOSÉ de COSTA RICA, March 24—(UP) —The Ministry of War gave out the following communique concerning recent occurrences in the country:

"In the March 1st session, Congress annulled the February Presidential election as fraudulent practices had been used everywhere. Some days later, the naturalized Spaniard, José Figueres, rich landowner and leader of the opposition, started a rebellion with workers and foreign elements on his ranches Santa Elena and La Lucha, situated near the Pan-American highway. The rebels attacked a construction camp of the highway, causing U. S. Ambassador Ralph Mills to send a note to the government demanding protection from the authorities.

"Colonel Rigoberto Pacheco and Commandante Carlos Brenes went in a jeep to inspect the camp: the rebels attacked and wounded the officers and later murdered them in cold blood. The government then sent 35 soldiers of a mobile unit trained by the North Americans who were also attacked by the rebels from the hills which overlook the highway and Lt. Casaola was killed.

"Government reinforcements started an offensive, surrounding the rebels from three sides . . . causing about a hundred casualties and forcing the rebels to retire towards the interior across Figueres property. . . . The trenches into which the rebels have dug themselves required the use of air bombardment to dislodge them and the government requisitioned two civilian planes in the vicinity for the operation and dislodged the rebels with heavy casualties.

"The government took many prisoners and a large quantity of arms and munitions . . . in crates marked SECRETARIA DE DEFENSA, GUATEMALA. . . . Diplomats in Costa Rica were shown the guns and ammunition brought from Guatemala by Guillermo Nunez, T.A.C.A. pilot, who had bragged in front of prisoners captured by the government that he had received them at the Aurora airport in Guatemala and brought them to the San Isidro del General airport for the defense of Figueres.

SAN JOSÉ, March 31—(UP)—A revolutionary airplane flew over the city this morning dropping a bomb which fell on the presidential palace, starting a fire. Some fragments of the explosive fell on buildings in a block nearby. Leaflets were also thrown warning that new air attacks would be launched against the city. A witness said the bomb caused damage in one of the wings of the palace.

The leaflets dropped by the plane, a converted DC 3 transport, said "this attack is our first visit to San José, mecca of Communism". . . They said there would be further air attacks but that they would be directed against military objectives. They also denounced the air attacks which the government makes daily against the rebel zone and charged that the planes machine-gun and bomb the civil population of San Isidro.

AND Georges Surdez appends these interesting comments on the native French-African troops about which his novelette—"The Code of Captain Corvain"—on page 8 is written—

The episode in the story concerning Tirailleur Boke Diara who brought down two Dornier bombers in less than a minute with an automatic rifle fired from the shoulder is true. Boke Diara, who had been in the army but a few months more than a year was twenty years old. He was killed the following night while on patrol in the woods, cut in two by a burst from a tommy gun. And it is true also, strange though it seems, that the Negro troops proved steadier under air attack than many completely French units. Possibly it was because the Negroes did not realize that dive bombing was something new and particularly dreadful, possibly it was lack of sensitiveness, imagination, or more correctly a different direction to imagination. Repeatedly, in the reports and narrations of the retreat, officers remarked that they had trouble keeping their Negroes under cover—they were curious and ran out to see the airplanes, no matter what the evidence of danger.

In any case, the French retreat of 1940 does not appear to have been the aimless debacle it seemed in reading the newspapers —there was much hard fighting, some last-stands worthy of the Greeks and Romans—in some forty days, the French lost one hundred and fifty thousand soldiers killed and, despite the figures given by Nazi propaganda, killed close to one hundred thousand Germans. That the Negro troops (whether in solid units or mixed with white elements) did well is attested best by giving citations such as follow:

Order of the Army No. 404 C.
1st Battalion of the 6th Regiment of Colonial Infantry Mixed Senegalese: This unit always remarkable for its mobility and high sense of duty. On June 13th 1940, under command of Major Cordier, stationed at an important crossing of roads to cover the evacuation of the division sacrificed itself to accomplish its mission.

November 22, 1940, Signed: Huntziger.

That same regiment, the 6th Mixed Senegalese, had left 750 dead in the Ardennes between the 16th and 26th of May, holding against everything the Germans threw at them for those ten days, retreating only on orders when the front on their flanks had caved in. I could cover pages with unit citations.

And here is a sample of an individual citation that will show that there is no exaggeration at all in the story:

> Mama Synyobo, *Tirailleur*, 25th Regiment Senegalese Infantry.
> Excellent Tirailleur, observer for his section, full of courage and spirit, gave the finest example to his section at the combat of Echelles on June 24th 1940.
> Taken prisoner *three* different times, each time succeeded in escaping and resuming fighting. Finally, crossed with full equipment a torrential river under enemy fire, rejoined a French unit, then his own battalion.
> Order 347/C of October 12th 1940.

Did the Germans execute the Senegalese they captured? Not always and not everywhere, but often enough. On the 10th of June 1940, at Lieuvillers, sixty captured Senegalese were mowed down with tommy guns. Did they execute the white chiefs of Senegalese? Troops of the 10th Panzer Division executed Major Rouquet, Captain Riss, Lieutenants Rotelle, Roux, Erminy, Planchon and Brocart of the 24th Senegalese and Captain Speckel of the 16th, twenty-four hours after capture, without trial and without other motive than that they had commanded colored troops. Such examples could be multiplied.

The Senegalese soldiers knew this—they were, many of them, primitive and uneducated, but by no means dumb—and their adventures in escaping capture are fantastic. It must be remembered that to the majority of them, France was utterly strange, that most of them knew little French beyond military commands. But they escaped capture by the hundreds, by the thousands—some of them hid in woods, in farms, for the duration! Many groups of Maquisards in the Resistance counted a few Senegalese of that type. And the Secret Army incorporated many Senegalese who had escaped to the Free Zone before 1942.

I used the term Senegalese because it has become accepted for Negroes from Africa serving France. In the story, I sought to give an idea of the various tribes and types included under that name. There is as much difference, for instance, between an Ouolof from the Cayor and a Bambara from the deep Sudan as there is between an Irishman and a Balkanese. Some races turn out splendid warriors, some races do not produce good fighters. But, as evidenced by the showing of the Negroes in 1940, the French appear to weld them into pretty good outfits.

A tradition of the Negro troops of France, started when the men were professional soldiers only, picked men and few in number, seems to have abided in the colonial service as it expanded.

To wit: Negroes do not leave a white man behind, dead or alive.

The records of the Negro troops for that terrible period of May-June 1940 offer case after case. On one occasion, a sergeant had the bodies of the dead officers loaded on a tractor and sent them to battalion headquarters.

As to the devotion of white officers to their Negro soldiers, it is beyond question. It does not always show itself in the spectacular fashion of the story—but here is an anecdote: Years ago, I was stopping near a military outpost in Africa. The officer in charge was ill—assorted tropical ailments, everything going wrong, malaria, congested liver. The man had his time in and I asked him why he didn't go away on leave. And he told me that he was afraid to, that there was a man who might replace him if he left just then who "didn't understand a thing about our guys and would make them miserable." In other words, he was dying by inches for his chaps' sake.

EDWARD SONNENSCHEIN who gives us the fresh-water deep-sea diving adventure—"Water Hazard" on page 100—tosses the following chips on the fire on stepping into these pages for the first time—

I am a graduate of the University of Michigan. With the exception of three years in the Army my time since college has been spent as a copywriter in the advertising field. Prior to the War I was employed in the advertising department of Zion Industries, Inc. (the stronghold of the late Mr. Voliva, who maintained that the earth was flat).

Since the War I have worked as a copywriter for several large advertising concerns in Chicago.

I started writing while in the Army. I was stationed with six other "dog faces" at an isolated weather station in the Hudson Bay region. While we did do a great deal of hunting and fishing, even that gets monotonous as a steady diet, and I turned to writing to keep myself occupied during the long Arctic evenings.

I am interested in all forms of athletics and am a fair amateur gymnast. That's how I happened to meet Scully. He takes a daily workout at the Y.M.C.A., at the tender age of 82!

Mr. Scully tells me the diving suit which he wore has been given to the Chicago Historical Society, along with a letter from the then Secretary of War regretfully declining Scully's offer to sneak into Havana Harbor at night to determine the cause of the sinking of the Maine.

What a glorious adventure that would have been!

D. K. FINDLAY, who leads us on an off-the-trail hunt for "The Greatest Beast"—on page 94 calls for a brief halt to make his first appearance at the *Camp-Fire* and give us a glimpse into the trials and tribulations of a writer's life—

Any writer who tells you he likes to write is talking either for publication or a psychiatrist. The bitter truth is that there is no affinity between a man and a typewriter. Personally, I belong to the "walk-and-drape" school. I walk around the room and drape myself on the windowsill. I have a desk, of course, but I rarely use it. I cart my portable around, trying out odd corners for inspiration. The best work place I have found to date is a corner of the table in the boys' room, among bits of radio and model-aircraft parts.

I live in a house overlooking the Mississippi River—not Mark Twain's Mississippi—in the town named Carleton Place, Ontario. I am a graduate of the University of Toronto and Osgoode Hall, and originally planned to practice law and do a little writing. What actually happened is that I practice writing and do a little law.

Mountain-climbing is my hobby; I have done a bit of mountaineering on this continent and abroad. And I am always interested in the effect of the mountain on the man who sets out to conquer it. In "The Greatest Beast" I have tried to convey some of the sense of mystery and adventure into the unknown which lures an otherwise sensible man, with his feet on the ground, to climb above the clouds.

WE WERE curious—and, frankly, somewhat skeptical—about the crucifix-shaped pearl or cluster of pearls found by Ransford in John Hetherington's "The Murderer" on page 87 of this issue. But the author promptly replied to our query (by airmail from his home Down Under in Adelaide, Australia) as follows and banished all our doubts as to the authenticity of his yarn—

There was a real-life parallel for the cross-shaped pearl formation described in my short story "The Murderer." The "Southern Cross" was found near Baldwin, West Australia, in 1883, by a boy named Tommy Clarke, who if I remember rightly was fifteen or sixteen at the time. It consisted of nine conjoined pearls, seven forming the shaft and two the arms. It was about one and one-half inches long. The individual pearls were described as "not of great size or beauty" and the value of the piece depended on its unique shape.

Clarke's father traded the Southern Cross for £10 and a bottle of rum. It passed through a series of hands and was eventually sold overseas for £34,000 (at that time about $170,000). Tommy Clarke died about sixteen years ago, never having found another pearl of anything more than minor value.

MAYBE some of you dirt-track auto race fans who have been enjoying Coleman Meyer's yarns in these pages have also heard him bring the sport into your living-rooms via the radio. For in case you didn't know it, Coleman Meyer is *William* Coleman Meyer—the Bill Meyer of the sports broadcasting fraternity. A recent column by Allan Ward in the *Tribune* of Oakland, Calif., carried the following kudos directed at the author of "You'll Never Grow Old" on page 66—

If Charlie Curryer, auto race promoter and the biggest Western name in the sport, makes a deal with the Navy and stages a 500-mile Indianapolis type ramble at Livermore next year, he'll pay a fat fee to Bill Meyer as announcer.

Meyer merely is the BEST in the business. But he must be wooed. Bill has a profitable business and writes fiction on the side. Auto race fiction. He doesn't need money.

Some of the squirts who think they can handle the mike at a big time auto race should sit for a few seasons in worshipful attention at the feet of Bill Meyer.

Bill will blush when he reads this. The other announcers will have red faces, too.

DON WIGGINS reports that he recently presented to the State Library of Oregon his complete files of ADVENTURE from 1913-1940. That makes the fourth State Institution that has acquired such in the past year. We heard, over the past few months, that universities in Texas, California and Oklahoma also have bound files on their shelves now of this magazine.—K.S.W.

(Continued from page 7)
center of one of them is metal, yellow with gold edges and trimming.

I would greatly appreciate any information you can give me to identify them.

—Edward E. Rood
100 W Main St.
Bennington, Vt.

Reply by William L. Clark:—Your chevrons belong to the Japanese Navy and were in use during World War II. The anchor in the wreath was for Petty Officers, 3 bars above, Superior Petty Officer; 2 bars above, Petty Officer 1st Class; 1 bar above, Petty Officer 2nd Class. The anchor alone was for Seamen, 3 bars above, Leading Seaman; 2 bars above, Superior Seaman; 1 bar above, Seaman 1st Class; No bar above, Seaman 2nd Class.

All of these arm patches should have rosettes on them to indicate the branch of the Naval Service in which they serve. There are seven rosettes, as follows: Yellow—Seaman Branch, Light Blue—Aviation, Green—Aviation Maintenance, Purple—Engineering Construction and Repair, Red—Hospital Corps, White—Pay Master, Dark Blue—Music.

ARMS and ammo for an elk hunt.

Query:—I am looking forward to an elk hunt this fall. What type and caliber of rifle would be best suited for this?

How would a .30-30 caliber Model 94 carbine work out?

—Harold Armentrout
Wyoming, Illinois

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—Out here in Oregon, where a lot of elk shooting is done in season, the hunters generally rely upon a rifle having more power than the .30-30.

The majority of the men with whom I have talked, seem to favor the use of such arms as the .30 Army, Winchester or Krag-Jorgenson. The .30 Springfield cartridge in either Army rifles or sporting models for the same cartridge, the .300 Savage cartridge in a rifle adapted to it, or the military arms using the 8 MM. Our game regulations forbid the use on elk of cartridges giving less than 1300 foot-pounds of energy at a hundred-yard range, and all those I have enumerated above will fill the legal requirements.

So, were invasion of the elk territory in my future plans, I'd select some rifle a bit more powerful than the old .30-30, popular though it has been for many years.

IT'S a tough row to hoe before you ride in silks.

Query:—I am in need of a little information and advice. I want to become a jockey. My physical qualifications are good, I think. I am 5' 3" tall, 17 years old, weigh normally 118 pounds (my weight and height have been the same for the last four years) my hands, arms, and shoulders are very strong, and I am athletically inclined. I will graduate from high school this May.

Now for the questions—

1. What apprentice-ship would I have to serve before I could get a license to ride?
2. What are the qualifications of a good jockey?
3. What are my chances of reaching the top?
4. How much could I expect to earn during my first few years as a jockey?
5. What do you consider the best way to get started as a jockey?

You can see from these question that I know from nothing about horse racing. I would appreciate any advice that you could give me along these lines.

—Jerry A. King
2588 17th Ave., North
St. Petersburg, Florida.

Reply by John Richard Young:—I dislike to disappoint you, but it is to save you disappointment, I believe, that I advise you to forget about becoming a jockey. In the first place, you are too heavy. You are also, I believe, too old, in view of the fact that you are (you admit) totally inexperienced. The path to race-riding glory and wealth is tough and rugged. Even though you say your weight has remained the same for the last four years, I believe that you'll grow heavier as you mature. This is, in my opinion, your greatest handicap. Many top-flight jockeys, mature men, weigh only slightly more than 100 pounds. Many racing colts go to the post carrying only 103 pounds—this includes the jockey *and* saddle. Weights of less than 118 pounds are common. Only runners that have proved their superiority—horses like Armed, Assault, etc.—are given handicaps of 130 pounds; and such top performers are not entrusted to inexperienced jockeys. As a rule, they have their pick of the best riders. Therefore, if you were to become a jockey, there would be many horses you'd be too heavy to ride—and how would you gain experience in order ever to merit getting a first-class mount whose handicap would be more than your weight? You'd never get a chance to earn the experience necessary. I think your weight would be an insurmountable handicap.

Now I'll answer your questions in order:

1. Your apprenticeship would be long and tough. First of all, you'd have to find yourself a job in a racing stable and be willing to take what you might get. And remember that any kind of job in a real racing stable, even the lowliest, requires some experience, and is not easy to get. Men who have fortunes sunk in racehorses won't hire just anybody. And make no mistake about it: you'd begin as the lowliest of the lowly,

doing all the dirty chores and for very low wages. If you proved willing and trustworthy, after a while you might be allowed to walk some of the horses, leading them. Eventually, perhaps, you *might* graduate to being an exercise boy, if you proved that you could ride well enough. If you showed real riding ability, then at last you might be accepted as an apprentice jockey; but your weight being what it is, I wouldn't bet a cent on this. You'd still be a long, long way from anywhere near the top, and by this time maybe five or more years would have passed since you'd first gone to work in the stable. In other words, you'd be 22 or older and still be a beginner. More experienced boys of your own age or younger would be far ahead of you, and without your weight handicap.

2. The qualifications of a good jockey: light weight, natural ability, competitive spirit, love of race-riding, determination to be good at it, willingness to learn all you can from others, willingness to risk your neck in every race, and often a callous indifference toward the welfare of horses you ride.

3. For the reasons that I have explained, your chances of reaching the top are, in my opinion, nil. The only possible way you could do it, as I see it, would be to go in for steeplechase riding, a field in which your present weight would not be a handicap. Steeplechase riding, however, is a much narrower field than flat racing, generally is considered to be more dangerous and does not pay off half as well as flat racing. Here too your inexperience would be just as much of a handicap; perhaps even more so.

4. How much you might earn would depend on how many races you won, the sizes of the purses, how often you rode, and your contracts or personal agreements with your employers.

5. The best way to get started as a jockey is to be "discovered" very young by a first-class trainer and enjoy the benefits of his experience and horse savvy added to your natural abilities. I do not imply that this is by any means the commonest way to get started; but I do think it is what you asked about—the best way.

I hate to disillusion you, but if I were you I'd just forget the jockey business. You'd find it as hard as, maybe harder than, becoming a good prizefighter.

ODD-CHORE jobs in the forest and park services.

Query:—I would like some information regarding part-time employment in the Forestry Service for a man of 60 or 65 years of age in good health.

I expect to have an industrial pension in the next two years and as I like the outdoors, hunting and fishing, etc., have been wondering if it were possible to secure part-time employment during the summer in either the Forestry Service or National Parks. I plan to spend my vacation in the "back country" of Colorado and would like to visit with some of the rangers in the parks or forests away from the usual tourist locales.

—E. G. Pearson
P. O. Box 2
Wood River, Ill.

Reply by A. H. Carhart:—There is a variety of seasonal work that offers temporary employment on forest jobs, and there is a variety in the type, toughness and activities in these jobs. Here are some possibilities:

The fire lookouts have to be manned about the middle of June or earlier. This means sitting in a lookout house atop a high peak, with knowledge of how to operate the fire-spotting equipment, and reporting any smoke. It usually is high country, and if altitude bothers one, that is a drawback. There is generally a cabin close by the base of the lookout; a comfortable but temporary summer residence. Good eyesight, reliability, and ability to read maps and interpret what you see, are requirements. These jobs generally are all lined up well ahead of the fire season.

Then there are crews on trails, with back country camps. The actual labor on trails is pick and shovel variety, or clearing logs where blow-downs have occurred. But there are some jobs on each crew that are not so heavy labor, such as camp tender. Such an outfit is always looking for a good cook. And sometimes a "cookee" or cook's helper around camp. Pay not too high unless you are a good cook, but if you are, it's pretty fair. Also, there are some secondary road projects where this sort of opening might occur. That goes too for some projects where drift fences are being built.

In a number of areas, there are part-time jobs keeping camping places cleaned up. Dudes do leave litter around camps, and where there are a number in a ranger district, there is a fairly regular patrol to "police up" the camps.

Somewhat the same sort of seasonal work occurs in the national parks. In the case of the parks, write the superintendent stating your wish to have some such job and your qualifications. In the forest service, it's best to write the supervisor of individual forests. To get this line-up, write U. S. Forest Service, Information Division, Washington, D. C. asking for a list of forests and supervisor headquarters. Then pick forests and write the supers.

As to knocking around with a ranger, a lot of their time is in town headquarters these days, and travel is by truck. There is some back-country travel, of course, but a ranger's job today is mostly that of a business manager—more so than patrol and out-country work. The best way to get at that, is to drop in at the town where you have decided you'd like to headquarter, get acquainted with the ranger, take it a little easy in making the proposition, but state a will-

ingness to go along, help with the camp chores, hustle horses and otherwise be useful. You probably would have to take care of your share of net costs in the event the ranger would cotton to you and be willing to take you along.

There's another opportunity that I might mention beside this. A lot of dude ranches can use a steady sort of man to do various chores around the place. And these ranches usually have good locations near fishing and the like. They have to cram all their season into a few months, and the pace is pretty rapid and steady. But there are slack times, you get acquainted with the country, and you can line up something else. There are a lot of bona fide ranches that are on the lookout for reliable men who can ride a hay rake or drive a team on a stacker. The period of employment isn't long, but there usually is some place waiting when the job on the first is finished.

Altogether, if you're coming out to Colorado, the best approach is to drop into the community you have selected as a first headquarters, and to do some prospecting. If there's a local ranger station, talk to the ranger about such jobs as the trail crew camp helper, and the like.

There are seasonal jobs that probably would fit into the ideas you have as to what you want to do, and the best way to get at them is to work into them right at the place you decide to start.

Write the State Tourist Office, State Capitol, Denver, asking for literature. Write the Information Office, U.S. Forest Service, Denver, asking for descriptive literature on the Arapaho, Routt, White River, Pike and San Isabel national forests. That will help you get started. There are other forests; quite a few, but these will give you enough selection to make a beginning.

BOWS—not fruit—from your Osage orange grove.

Query:—Can you tell me whether or not the wood of the common mulberry—red mulberry, I believe it is called—is at all suitable for making bows?

I have worked with this wood both in lathes and on the cabinet bench and have found it to be both hard and tough, if somewhat coarse-grained. Having observed these qualities I have wondered about the possibilities of this wood as a material for bowmaking. My somewhat limited botanical knowledge leads me to believe that this tree is related, although distantly, to the Osage orange, as good a bow wood as one can find.

What woods native to my locality are good bow material? To be suitable for this, should they be cut from the plank or is the so-called "second-growth" the material that is used?

Some twenty years ago, I played around with archery quite a bit, using a bow which I made from lemonwood. I have a fully equipped woodworking shop and would like to try my hand at turning out a bow such as I made at that time.

Incidentally, what good books on the subject are available and where can they be procured? My interest would be almost exclusively confined to target work.

—Walter V. Miller
Germantown, N. Y.

Reply by Earl B. Powell:—A good piece of mulberry, and especially the wild red kind, will make a very good bow. I have made a number of them.

You are right about the mulberry being related to the Osage orange. As a matter of fact, the huge sweet-smelling useless fruit of the latter is nothing but an overgrown berry.

It may interest you to know that in the tropics is found another member of the mulberry family called FUSTIC which looks exactly like Osage orange (that is the wood looks like it) but is much softer, although I have made bows of it, too. Fustic is a dye wood even as the Osage orange is and either of them makes a lot of color when boiled.

Another wood that is found in your locality is the black locust and it makes a good bow, being something in texture like Osage orange. Among the lesser woods wild crab apple, hornbeam or ironwood, ash, and even hickory may make a fair bow, but the Osage orange, mulberry and black locust make the best ones of any wood to be found in that region.

As to books, you might write to *The American Bowman Review,* a magazine published at Albany, Oregon. They list a number of them. Dr. Robert P. Elmer has just gotten out a new book called "Target Archery" which is very good, even if he did mention ME a number of times in it!

FOOD for the gods!

Query:—I don't know whether the information I need comes under the heading of outdoor cookery or not, but I am hunting for a recipe for a barbecue sauce that can be used commercially. I want something that will be suitable for meat sliced up to be kept warm in a steam table—something home made but not too thick. Can you give me any tips?

—Harold Clapper
120 Broadway,
Newburgh, N.Y.

Reply by Paul M. Fink:—Real barbecue, a far cry from some of the things sold as such, is a meat for the gods. Roasted over an open fire of glowing hardwood coals, it has a most distinctive flavor, added to by the fact that all the while it is cooking it is basted with a barbecue sauce. Some of that sold commercially, judging by a sandwich I ate last week in a neighboring state, must be

simply hamburger, immersed in a sauce of doubtful origin, and certainly is no food for the gods.

Every barbecue cook worthy of the name has a private recipe for sauce, guarded as jealously as the crown jewels. A good friend of mine, whose sandwiches have a reputation all over the South, simply laughs at me when I ask for his formula, and says, "Oh, I keep changing it." Maybe so, but they taste the same to me. Anyway, here are two formulas. You may wish to experiment with them, adding various other ingredients to your own taste.

(1) 1 pint vinegar, 1 can tomato puree, 2 tablespoons red pepper, 1 tablespoon black pepper, 1 tablespoon salt, 2 tablespoons butter. Simmer together until well amalgamated.

(2) 1 quart vinegar, 1 quart tomatoes, 6 green peppers, chopped fine, 6 onions, chopped fine, 1 bottle Worcestershire sauce, 1 tablespoon each red and black pepper, 1 tablespoon salt, one-half pound butter, 3 cloves garlic, 1 tablespoon dry mustard. Simmer together for half an hour or a little longer.

Should your tastes lean toward something a little hotter, add chili powder or Tobasco sauce to suit. If you want it spicier, add cloves and mace, or some of that assortment sold as "pickling spices."

These concoctions are designed for use in basting the meat as it cooks, but there is no reason why they should not be used as a sauce afterward.

Here's a little tip that will help your sandwiches: Keep everything fresh. By that I mean not slice a day's supply of meat in the morning, shred all the lettuce at the same time, etc., but prepare only a short time in advance of use. Fresh sliced meat, with crisp lettuce, has an entirely different flavor from dried-out meat and wilted greens. No matter how fine a sauce you may have, you can't overcome a handicap like that.

With these formulas to experiment, I hope you can develop a blend all your own, one that will be a trade secret worth the keeping.

URANIUM, the Geiger Counter—and "Blacklight."

Query:—What information can you give me about prospecting with ultra-violet light for various metals, precious and semi-precious stones? What firms manufacture ultra-violet light equipment?

Can you tell me anything about prospecting for uranium with a Geiger Counter? Where can one get a counter? Can they be made by anyone? If so where can diagrams and materials be obtained? What publications containing information on this are there?

—G. F. Ramsburg
2333 Deerfield Ct.,
Wayne, Mich.

Reply by Victor Shaw:—The Mineralight instrument using the ultra-violet rays, and also called "Blacklight," is employed by miners and prospectors to detect certain ores and numerous gemstones, also has other applications in agriculture, bacteriology, food products, medicine and so on. It has a very wide use in detecting and identifying minerals by a gem collector but is more limited in the field of commercial ores; in which the chief employment is to identify cassiterite (tin), cinnabar (mercury), zinc ores, some lead ores such as cerrusite, tungsten (scheelite), petroleum, and the pitchblende mineral autunite. Uranium minerals all are fluorescent.

But there is a long list of gems and semi-precious minerals it will identify, and the list can be obtained from Ultra-violet Products Inc: 6158 Santa Monica Blvd. Los Angeles, Calif; or of *The Mineralogist,* 329 S. E. 32nd Ave; Portland 15 Oregon; or Grieger's, mineral dealers at 1633 E. Walnut St, Pasadena 4 Calif. Enclose 25c for the last named. Ultra-violet Products, Inc. make and sell this instrument, so write to them at address given above for literature and price list.

The magazine *The Mineralogist,* H. C. Dake, Editor, publishes a book on fluorescence, *Fluorescent Light & Its Applications,* $3.00, that covers the whole subject including gem and ore identifications, detailed. Also, Dr. Dake's magazine at address given sells his book Handbook of Uranium Minerals, $1.50, which tells where they've been found, and in what kinds of rocks; also describes a Geiger counter, and the use of an ultra-violet lamp and an electroscope for finding these minerals.

The Geiger Counter instruments are sold by Omaha Scientific Supply Corp'n, 3623 Lake St.; Omaha 3, Nebraska. It's a complete unit, the type called "TX-5" used in portable shape for field use in searching for uranium-bearing and other radio-active ores and minerals. Write to this firm for literature and prices, mentioning Dep't M.

These instruments are extremely complicated and since they are based upon scientific principles can only be made by scientists who have an expert knowledge of these principles. However, Dr. Dake's book mentioned above not only describes the "Counter" but also shows photos of the instrument and of the "counter-tube," which is the vital part of this instrument and is called its "brain."

There is a manual included with each instrument sold by the Omaha S. S. Corp. which describes all of it and tells how to use it. The field unit weighs about 5 lbs., and outfit has a back-pack for carrying, as most of the weight named is in the battery that powers it.

JUST north of old Cape Stiff.

Query:—I would like some information on the southern part of South America around

the Strait of Magellan. I'm not sure about that area being part of Chile.

1) Is Magallanes in Chile and are there any settlements south of there?
2) What is the general weather and does it snow in winter?
3) What are the main industries in that area?
4) Do any steamship companies make regular calls there?
5) Is there an American Consul there?
6) What would be the best time of year to make a trip to that part of the world?

—H. E. Keys, Jr.
Box 1, Station 13
Guam, Guam

Reply by Edgar Young:—The area south of the Strait is jointly owned by Argentine and Chile.

1. Magallanes which used to be called Punta Arenas is in Chile, located near the western terminus of the Strait. Just opposite the western end of the Strait is Desolation Island and from what I could see of it as the ship plunged past in a heavy gale the name fits it to a T. Magallanes, however, is quite a city, considering. In my time there it was a free port and good Scotch whisky cost only a shilling a bottle and other things in proportion. I don't know if it's free yet or not, possibly it is. I stayed at the Royal Hotel which doesn't quite live up to the name but is O.K. at that. There are many Scotch and English people there and roundabout engaged in the sheep and cattle business and some work in the local packing houses where mutton is prepared for export. There is a club, several fairly good stores, and all in all it is a very friendly place to a stranger. The climate is on the cool side and it is so damn windy the trees all lean north. The country is bleak and reminded me of Labrador although it doesn't get so cold.

2. Summer is quite nice. The seasons are reversed to ours up here. It seldom gets below ten above zero in winter. It snows now and then, sometimes up to a foot falls.

3. Sheep raising, some cattle, some horses are raised. There used to be a few one-horse placer mines along the Strait and down south. There was a gold-rush there just before the Klondike excitement and these people went north. I am damn fool enough to think there is a mother lode somewhere in the sea not far offshore from the way the dust washes up on the beaches after heavy storms.

4. The "home boats" (PSNC) of the Royal Mail make regular calls and there are local Chilean boats that make it regularly. A catboat is the ticket for making trips along the many inlets and small straits in the southern territory. In my time many Yahgans swarmed the inlets and beaches, stark naked in their bark canoes and primitive camps. They were Christianized by missionaries who dressed them in second hand clothes from England, put to raising turnips instead of living on seal and whale blubber, later given venereal disease by whalers, and eventually exterminated. There are supposed to be a few in a mission down there but I doubt it after seeing the pictures.

5. There is a consular agent in the city who handles American affairs when they don't conflict with his own business.

6. The summer months of December and January.

TO CLIMB a Mexican volcano.

Query:—When I return on leave to the mainland I am planning to make a trip to Mexico and want to climb Mount Popocatepetl while there. What can you tell me about arrangements for guides, best time of year to make the climb, etc?

—Joe L. Kains
Main Gate Company B, MB
USNB Pearl Harbor, T. H.

Reply by Wallace Montgomery:—The "Club de Exploraciones de Mexico" advises that the best time to climb Popocatepetl is from September to March. During this period there are regular excursions in which groups are taken in a truck to the base camp and from there on a guided tour to the top of the volcano. This costs approximately 25.00 Pesos, or the equivalent of $5.00 U. S. You furnish your own equipment and food. They say that it is not advisable to eat very much during the climb. The time involved is approximately six hours from the base camp.

We suggest that you communicate direct with the "Club de Exploraciones de Mexico," Bolivar 12, Mexico, D. F. and secure from them definite information, and if you care to do so they will arrange for a special guide for your trip. They will also be able to advise you relative to what equipment is necessary.

If you decide to come to Mexico you can do so by securing a tourist card from the Mexican Consul in San Francisco. This will cost you approximately $2.10 and is good for six months.

NO AMMO for Jap rifles!

Query:—I recently purchased a Japanese Army issue rifle. After restocking and resighting I have made a very presentable sporting rifle of it, and would like to have the use of it, but cannot find suitable ammunition.

Briefly, what size cartridge should fit? Is it loaded in U. S. and is it safe to use U. S. loaded cartridges in this gun?

The 25-35 cal. cartridge seems to fit all parts of the action, but the bullet itself fits rather loosely up to the cartridge neck. Is this O.K. to shoot?

—C. K. Parker
Eastman, Ga.

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—I fear you have secured an arm that will do you little save eye-service, being a relic only.

No. 6.5 MM Japanese ammunition is available here, nor, I am informed, will it EVER be so. American cartridge makers are so busy trying to get a stock of cartridges adapted to better rifles than the Nip gun, that they are working night and day in the factories. So, you see they will not be apt to produce an odd size like that, for which the demand will be small.

I have talked to men who came home from the South Pacific area, and they stated that the 6.5 MM Nambu Jap rifle was accurate and of long range. But the cartridges are the thing that puts the rifle in the trophy class, solely.

Local riflesmiths have re-chambered the 7.7 caliber Nip rifle to handle the .300 Savage cartridge, and when properly done, they seem to be satisfactory rifles. But the 6.5 MM is a different story, and the 6.5 MM Mannlicher cartridge does not fit the Nambu at all. It's a rimless cartridge, not a rimmed case, like the .25-36, from what I gather by close scrutiny of the loaded clip of this caliber, brought home to me from Iwo Jima by a friend who got into it there.

I regret I cannot hold out any hope to you for future use of the rifle.

NO STUNT to stunt a pine or cedar.

Query:—At various times in reading books on China, I have come across references to the dwarf trees that the Chinese apparently raise—some that do not grow more than eighteen inches high, but are perfectly proportioned. It seems as if quite a variety of small dwarfed trees are raised, as I have seen mentioned the plum, spruce, pine and cherry. Is it true that this can be done? I have asked many questions in various parts of the States, but have not found anyone who definitely knows how to go about this.

Is it necessary to start them from seed or a very small seedling? Will a specially prepared kind of earth be needed.

And last, where can I get the seeds or seedlings—in a place nearby Casper?

—A. R. Witz
P. O. Box 1553
Casper, Wyo.

Reply by A. H. Carhart:—Dwarf trees, well proportioned, and old, are grown in both China and Japan, for gardens that are built to a small scale; or for pot culture. Whether these get to be a hundred or more years old is a question, but it is quite possible.

There is no great mystery as to how this is done. You start with a very small tree—a seedling. The roots are pruned so there are barely enough left to allow the tree to live. Also, the tip ends of the top are pinched back so there will be little, if any terminal growth. This is the process, repeated over and over, along with confining the trees to a pot that will prevent full root growth as much as possible. The whole process is one of just stunting the tree as much as possible. The earth in which the trees are grown also would be as short on soil nutrients as reasonably feasable, so growth would not be stimulated. Water would be restricted.

Of course the trick is to remove all roots and pinch back the top as much as possible, without outright killing the little tree. A fine balance must be maintained between causing death and the severest possible stunting of the tree without killing it. This would be a matter of judgment and a constant watching of the plant. But by balancing the removal of roots with removal of the top proportionately each time, you have some guide to work by.

With patience, most trees can be handled this way. You can probably get seedling trees, such as Scotch or Austrian pine from a nursery in Casper. Or pick up one of the little red cedar seedlings in the rough breaks out from town. You certainly should be able to secure quite a few species to experiment on, at the Great Plains Horticultural Experiment Station the next time you are in Cheyenne. Or write the Horticultural Department, at the state university, Laramie.

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I would like to get in touch with M/Sgt Laurence Allan Cross, R.A. 6944209. He is 5'11", weighs about 140 lbs., has a ruddy complexion, thick, light brown hair, and his middle right finger is deformed on the end. He did have a blond mustache, is very artistic and reads quite a bit. Any information concerning this man will be appreciated and should be sent to D. E. Cross, 2225 Callow Ave., Baltimore, Md.

Please locate my brother, Harley Raymond Buliher, tall, fair complexion, about 35 or 40. Contact Gerald Buliher, 516 E. Dutton St., Kalamazoo, Mich.

I would like to locate Dock Gainy. The last known address was 213 A Princeton St.. Liberty Homes, North Charleston, S. C. He is now believed to be on a farm not far from Charleston. Please write Joseph LeRay, Laudry, P. O. Box 111, Napoleonville, La.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Arthur R. Robbins, 37 years old, recently in the U.S. Army, and who was last heard from December 1947, in Arlington, Virginia, please write Walter J. Kennedy, P.O. Box 869, St. John's, Newfoundland. Robbins' forte is music and at one time he played guitar with Eddie Arnold. Hung out in Washington, D.C.

I wish to gather any information about my old buddy, Walter G. Chandler, nicknamed "Cow-Creek." He was born in Cow Creek, Florida, is about 57 years old, 5'6", black hair and eyes. Served two hitches in the 160th C.A.C., mostly at Fort Stevens, Ore. Last heard of at Camp Pike, Ark., 1918-1919. He once belonged to the Knights of Pythias. Contact M. C. Breckinridge, 113-N. Wilson Way, Stockton, Calif.

I would like to locate Thomas A. Jones, last heard of in Gunnison, Colorado, in 1934. He lived in Gary, Indiana in 1933 and part of '34. He was a body and fender man and worked for Sharps Garage in Indiana and Hartman's Garage in Montrose, Colo. Pleas get in touch with D. G. Johnson, 735 Custer Ave., Billings, Mont.

I would like to locate Phillip C. Steed, last heard from in or around Chicago, Ill. If he or person knowing his address reads this, write Leonard Steed, Talbotton, Ga.

Anyone knowing W. C. Allen, age 23, weight around 240 lbs., ruddy complexion, works mostly as a truck driver, get in touch with E. V. Allen, Box 314, Hull, Liberty Co., Texas.

I would like to hear from anyone knowing the whereabouts of John Emil Gabrielson, born in Minnesota 47 years ago. He was last heard from in Roman, Montana in 1934, but has been reported as being in Stockton, Calif., in 1940. He is slim, has brown hair, blue eyes, and has a thumb missing on the right hand. Any information concerning him will be greately appreciated by his brother, Ervin Gabrielson, 28 Randall St., Cortland, N. Y.

I would appreciate contacting any of the following men: Edward Henry Boudreau who used to work in the U.S. Forestry Office in Portland, Oregon, before the war. When last heard from, he was serving in the 29th Engineers stationed in Portland, Ore., in 1942. Clarence Blanchard was in the Merchant Marine and his last known home address was Seattle, Wash. He was on an oil tanker going overseas in 1943. Paul de Jerld was a soldier in Co. H of the 114th Infantry and last heard of at Fort Lewis, Washington, in 1942. Contact E. G. Sumner, 410 Montana Ave., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

I would like to find my father, Ferdinand Elijah Wood, about 86 years old, of Scottish descent, and 5'6" tall. The last I heard, he was living in the neighborhood of Bellflower, California, or Maywood. Write Joseph Herschel Wood, 2048 Capitol Drive, San Pedro, Calif.

I would appreciate any information which would help me find my five brothers, George, Gople, R. T., Elmore and Elsie Parker, sons of Lewis Monroe Parker. They were last seen in Portland, Oregon, in 1942. R. T. is the only brother known to be married. His wife's first name is Ethel. His small son's name is Darrell and his daughter's is Wanyelle. My mother's maiden name was McAdoo. Anyone having any information concerning them, please notify Pfc. Herschel Monroe Parker, AF18324708, Hqs. and Base Serv. Sqd., Guard Section, 59th Air Depot, Griffiss Air Force Base, Rome, N. Y.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Walter A. Downer, a native of New York City who moved in the '20s to the southwest and last known in 1942 to be in El Paso, Texas, please communicate with Joseph Davis, Prospect St., Watertown, Conn. His son, Kenneth, should be about 25 years old, and his youngest son, David, about 17.

I would like to contact anyone who served on the LST 1033 during the time she was first commissioned until V-J day. H. L. Martin, Box 66, Ashland, W. Va.

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(Continued from page 99)

you use on lions. I remembered the natives had heard Schlinger shoot. I opened the breech, the empty shell was still in it.

"The next moment I found what killed Schlinger for it nearly got me too. Even after being warned by his death—even half-guessing what had happened. There was a movement above me. Something was rushing down upon me across the snow, something gray-white and massive. It was almost on me—instinctively I pointed the rifle and pulled the trigger. The thing passed right over me in a flurry of stinging stuff and went whirling down the mountain. You've seen dust devils in the desert—this was the same thing, a wavering column of snow—but the instant before it drove over me, I would have sworn that it was alive, that it had eyes and teeth. Lucky for me the shell in Schlinger's gun had been fired. Almost certainly he had seen the same thing rushing at him—his mind was crowded with the images of bears—he had visioned it as a huge bear. He threw up his gun and fired. The report of the big game rifle had shaken loose a thousand tons of rock and snow and overwhelmed him, and started the wave of stones which had caught Kanoo. It was the noise of the shifting stones which the natives had taken for the sound of the animal."

"What did you do?"

"There wasn't anything to do. I have no doubt Schlinger is still there, fifty feet under the snow of the gully. But it would be extremely unwise to look for him. I thought of all that enormous black and white mass—loose rock and snow—poised above me, and I took the rifle and I came down very, very carefully. There is no doubt that Chotan Ind is a very dangerous mountain and deserves all the hard things they say about it.

"We went back to M'dinya. I had a talk with the lama. I said it was clear that Schlinger had been carried off by an evil spirit, but I thought it would be better to send a message to the Outside saying he had been killed by an avalanche. The lama seemed to understand perfectly. Perhaps he understood it from the beginning."

THE END

(Continued from page 47)

plucking tongs. Never before were mushrooms gathered so tenderly; there was no suspicion of a bruise or tear on even one of them. Uncle Pidcock shredded them carefully, and mixed some new bait. As soon as daylight came he hurried to the river to see if it would make a difference.

It did. Uncle Pidcock's baited hook had hardly settled to the bottom when a catfish bit. When Uncle Pidcock set the hook he knew he had the big one on, and this time it was hooked hard.

Uncle Pidcock stood up, playing the big catfish in as he had planned a thousand times to play him if ever he caught him. He saw the fish surface, and there was no leer on his face this time. Not only was he hooked so hard he couldn't do anything, but he knew he was hooked. Uncle Pidcock waded into the shallows, grabbed hold of the catfish, and hauled him up the bank.

He shouted, "Elveeta, bring the mule and cart!"

When Elveeta brought the mule and cart, she and Uncle Pidcock loaded that big catfish on. They took it up and dumped it into the trough where the mule drank.

IT WAS a big trough that had been hollowed out of a whole section of big pine. Even so, when the catfish had his nose against one end of it, his tail at the other end had to bend slightly so he would fit in. Uncle Pidcock touched the catfish's back, and the fish did not even move.

Now that the fish was caught he knew darn well he was licked and he couldn't do a thing. Elveeta was smiling up at Uncle Pidcock.

"I'm so proud of you, Pidcock!" she said. "Now that you have the catfish, what in the world are you going to do with it?"

Uncle Pidcock scratched his ear. "I haven't rightly made up my mind," he said.

Now Uncle Pidcock was in a very serious predicament. For ten years he had tried to think of what he would do with the catfish when he caught it, and he hadn't been able to decide. He had

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figured he would think of something after he caught it, but he wasn't able to think of a thing.

Of course they could eat the fish, but why when he could catch a dozen smaller ones that would be better eating? He didn't especially want his picture taken with it, and if he had it stuffed he'd have to build another room just to accommoate the catfish.

It was really much too big for a pet, and Uncle Pidcock didn't think he'd like carnivals or traveling around giving lectures.

All day long, feeling very uncomfortable, Uncle Pidcock sat or stood near the watering trough trying to make up his mind what he'd do with the catfish. He looked about him, as though he should have something he didn't have, and walked three times around the watering trough.

Uncle Pidcock hardly saw the many people who came to view the fish, and those who'd bet on Uncle Pidcock collected their bets.

Everybody who came around asked him, "What are you going to do with it, Pidcock?"

And all Uncle Pidcock could say was, "I haven't rightly made up my mind just yet."

He sat down with his chin in his hands, trying to think of something he hadn't thought of before. But he had thought of everything, and by this time he was very miserable.

Finally, just before dark, Uncle Pidcock leaped up with, "Elveeta, bring the mule and cart!"

Elveeta brought them, and together she and Uncle Pidcock loaded that big catfish back on the cart. Uncle Pidcock led the mule down to the river, backed him around so the cart's tail gate was over the water, and heaved that big catfish off.

Uncle Pidcock was smiling contentedly. Beyond any doubt this was a very smart catfish; it had taken Uncle Pidcock ten years to figure out a way to make him bite a second time.

Considering what the catfish had learned, it should be at least ten more years before he bit again.

THE END

(Continued from page 41)

IN THE corridor outside, the captain informed the lieutenant in charge of the executions that Corvain was to be included. The other, a lanky, dark kid, merely nodded, indicated the Frenchman's helmet, which a private took in charge. Corvain wondered if it was against regulations to wear a steel hat before the firing-squad or if they feared ricochets.

He walked behind the lieutenant, the young captain having retired to his office after a nod and a smile. He probably would watch through the window. Or perhaps he was jaded, completely uninterested.

Corvain was marched through the building, into a vaulted passage, probably headed for the prison proper. He knew that all of this was unreal, that the young captain would show up with a counter-order. It could not happen as casually as this. The major would call back and ask for an investigation of the matter.

Then, not far off, he heard somebody whistling. It was a tune he had known long ago, twenty-odd years ago, perhaps. A nice, lilting, lively tune. And the words suddenly came to his mind:

Il s'appelait Boudou Badabou—
Il jouait de la flute en acajou—
(He was called Boudou Badabou
He played on a mahogany flute)

Then he rounded a corner and emerged into a wider corridor, with dingy yellow walls and a gray cement floor. His four men were there, lined up against a wall. Three stood at attention, with set, stern faces. Doudou leaned one shoulder against the partition and was staring into space, whistling. Then they saw the captain, and their calm vanished.

They started forward—and the lieutenant's voice lashed out, checking the rush of the guards.

Their first expression was of immense joy, of delight, then they understood that he had not come to rescue them, but to die with them. He was alone, bareheaded and unarmed.

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"You see, Karamoko, I came, just as I promised."

"Yes," the corporal agreed, sadly. "Captain, you big———!"

"I suppose so, my poor boy, but I have to be."

"Let's go," the lieutenant said, in French.

Corvain took the head of the line, Karamoko followed, being next in rank, then Doudou, Koffi and Konate. These last three were all very big, muscular men, looming above the gray-green soldiers whose bayonets flanked them. Corvain looked at them over his shoulder, managed to smile.

"Forward—march, *Tirailleurs!*"

There was a double door opening into the lighted yard—the sun had risen above the roofs. There was a blank wall on the right, waiting for them. That door was not twenty-five feet ahead but seemed to keep receding back and back into space.

Doudou had said nothing, merely yielded a sickly grin and a sidelong move of his huge head as if to say, "Sucker!" Whether consciously or not, he had resumed that clear, precise whistling. Corvain thought of his wife, of his family, briefly, and blinked his eyes. Missing, undoubtedly dead. At about this time he could have been leaving the farm to catch a train.

He might have lived on and on, to reach ninety-odd, like a Durosier, and perhaps a hundred—

"Four Negroes," he murmured. "Four Negroes! The things one has to do in this world."

By this time, the major must have called back. There would be a counter-order, he would be held, tried. The orderly, or the captain himself, was probably rushing through the corridors, into the passage.

The door was two steps away, one step—

Doudou had stopped whistling. A foot behind Corvain, Karamoko breathed audibly. That orderly had better hurry—but nothing happened.

Nothing at all.

Captain Corvain, RICMS, led his men into the yard.

THE END

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