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Adventure

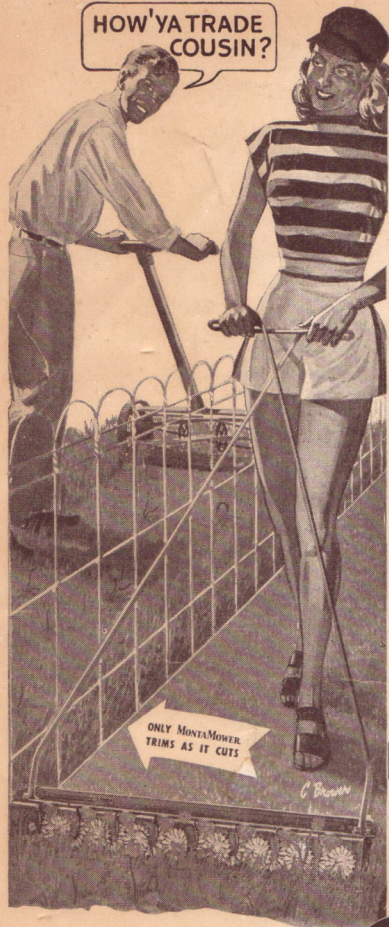
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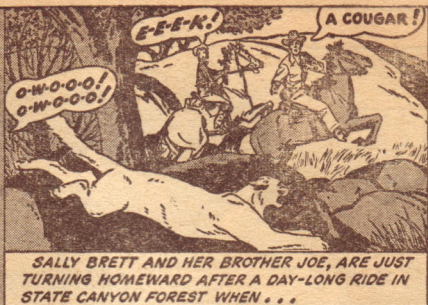
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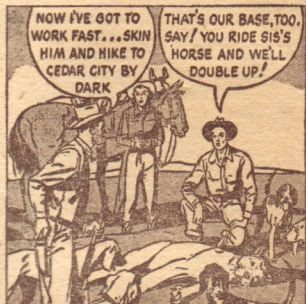
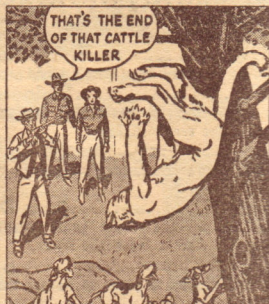
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Adventure

(Registered U. S.
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July, 1949

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Cover painted for Adventure by Rafael DeSoto
Kendall W. Goodwyn, Editor

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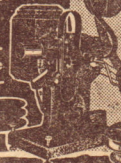
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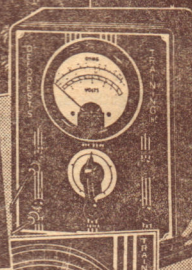
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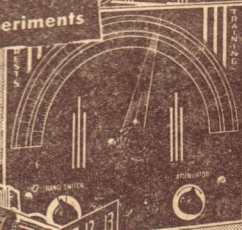
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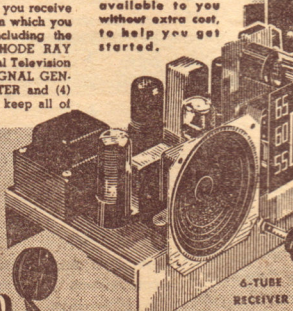
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For A Western: "Stampede" with Rod Cameron, Gale Storm, Don Castle and Johnny Mack Brown (Allied Artists).



A dam on the ranch of Tim and Mike McCall (Don Castle and Rod Cameron) is cutting off the water supply from the grazing land of some new settlers. Connie (Gale Storm), one of the settlers' daughters, tries unsuccessfully to get them to open the dam but only succeeds in infatuating Tim. He is killed protecting the dam from dynamiting. On a second attempt to destroy the dam, the settlers stampede the McCall cattle. Mike McCall loses the cattle but saves the dam after a vicious gun fight. Mike makes everything right in the end with Connie and the settlers. *Some inevitable aspects of a "Western"—cows, cow-pokes, settlers—but a rootin'-tootin' film.*

For Sports: "Champion" with Kirk Douglas, Marilyn Maxwell and Arthur Kennedy (United Artists).



Through crafty managing and put-up fights, Midge Kelly (Kirk Douglas) rises from a down-and-outer to a championship contender.

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For Mystery: "Lust for Gold" with Ida Lupino and Glenn Ford (Columbia).



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• • •

For Adventure: "Scott of the Antarctic" with



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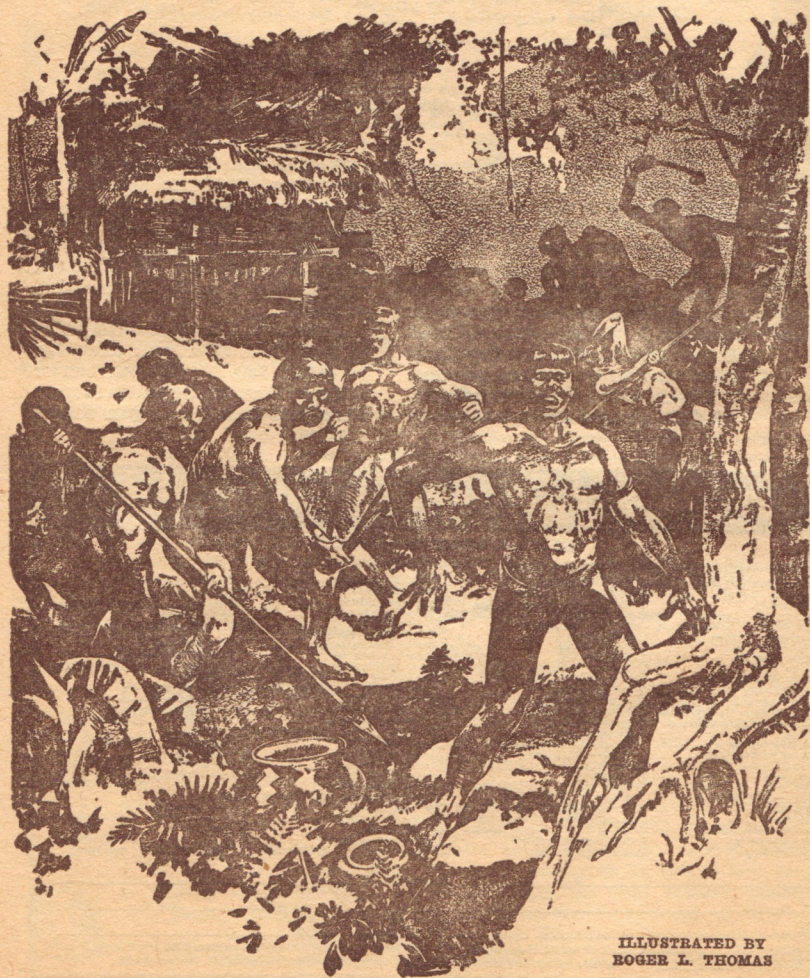
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THE MUNDURUCU MASK



ILLUSTRATED BY
ROGER L. THOMAS

By ARTHUR J. BÜRKS

JAN HARPER'S heavy shoes slogged on through the damp leaves, rotting limbs, over paper-thin palm fronds that might cover holes in the jungle floor deep enough to swallow a man. All four of the men with him, including Antonio Oliveira, the Little Portygee, were bare-foot.

Each morning, beginning the jungle trek, all four of them crossed themselves

—their only protection against snake-bite. "The jungle is big, *senhor*," Little Portygee explained. "There is room for the snake to escape before he is harmed."

Jan Harper's sturdy six feet of man trod almost on the fast heels of Little Portygee. The strongly armed party was heading eastward from the Tapajos River, near the mouth of the Crepory, toward the Xingu. Harper's intention was to cross



Harper ran to Uiuipo, grasped him by the shoulder and spun him around. "You promised not to kill women and children!" he yelled hoarsely.

territory marked unexplored on the map, and report his findings to the American in Belem who paid his salary and expenses in the hope that the land would prove rich in rubber, gold, diamonds or important hardwoods. As far as records went, nobody had ever made the trip. From an airplane the jungles in this part of Central Brazil were a sea of green.

The little party had left the Tapajos five days ago. They were somewhere near the heart of Gaiapo Indian country. Harper's four Brazilian co-workers were being paid twice the going wage to make the trip. They were scared; not because they had encountered war-club-wielding Gaiapos, but because they hadn't.

Harper kept a tight rein on the... now. They might run and not only lose Harper, but themselves as well.

"We should have hire at least one Mundurucu Indian, *senhor*," said Little Portygee. "The Gaiapos fear even one Mundurucu as they would not fear a Brazilian army."

"I tried," said Jan, "but the priests talked them out of it. Besides, the Gaiapos have only bows and arrows and the war club. We have two rifles and three shot-guns."

"The Mundurucus call the Gaiapos *morchuat*," went on Little Portygee, "which means that they hang from tree limbs like bats—and wait for their victims!"

The other three, jungle-wise Brazilians, listened fearfully. This conversation had taken place during the second day in. Thereafter the Brazilians kept watching the tangled mass of trees, studying the high branches and lianas connecting them, instead of watching where they put their feet. They stumbled often, swearing, and the illiterate ones said that Curupira, Jurupari and Congoso, mischievous spirits of the jungles, were laying traps for their feet. By the afternoon of the fifth day even Little Portygee was in a funk.

All that was needed was an accident; the accident occurred. The *surucucu* struck with all the ferocity for which it is famed: the *surucucu* hunts out man. Jan Harper felt the fiery caress of the long curved fangs, looked down at his right leg, where the fangs of the four foot snake were caught in his khaki pants. He refused to

think as he yanked the reptile free with his hand and whipped its head against a tree.

Instantly Little Portygee was on his knees beside Jan Harper. His razor keen bush-knife slashed around the lower limb. From his pocket he took a small bottle of *Especifico*, a preparation in which he had little faith because its claims were so extravagant.

"At least it will do no harm, *senhor*," said Little Portygee. "There should be some *taja de cobra*, but there is little time to hunt."

"I know," said Jan Harper, unable to believe that he could be so cool with death so near. "I have only a few minutes, unless the snake bit something else before it struck me. What happens first?"

Before answering, Little Portygee ordered the other three men to separate, hunt the snakebite plant in which Indians and Brazilians believe, the *taja de cobra*.

"There is painless bleeding," said Little Portygee, "from eyes, nose, ears and mouth. Also it is said, from the palms of the hands, but this I have not seen. Drink all of the *Especifico*. It is too much but it does not matter if it makes you sick."



JAN HARPER sat down, back against a tree, from which *tracua* ants immediately swarmed onto his body. They did not matter. They did not bite and he could endure the feel of their countless feet. He straightened out, turned his hands, looked at their palms.

One of the three men called out, near at hand, that he had found the spotted *taja*. There were many *tajas* in the jungles, but the snakebite *taja* was spotted, like the deadly reptile known as *jararaca*; it was sometimes called *jararaca*, too. With all these indications, how could it be otherwise than efficient for snakebite treatment?

One of the Brazilians came running back, bringing the *taja*.

"*Gracias a Deus!*" said Little Portygee, crossing himself.

Little Portygee rose then, stared down at his employer. Jan Harper looked up at the small man; the first time the small Portuguese had not looked up at Jan Harper. Harper began eating of the *taja*.

It was a kind of lily, he thought, tasting like nothing much, but sounding like crisp celery. Jan had no unusual feeling yet, except that his skin was hot where the fang marks were, and the warmth was spreading. He looked at the still writhing reptile.

"Isn't the living flesh of the reptile that did the biting, supposed to draw out the poison?" said Jan Harper.

"I did not guess that you knew this fact," said Little Portygee. "Sometimes I think it superstition, sometimes it works."

"But you would not bother if I had not suggested it," said Jan Harper quietly. "Am I to suppose that you do not intend to give me every chance to live?"

Little Portygee stepped back.

"We are all in danger," he said. "Even if you live you cannot walk. We cannot continue the trip. We who are well have a chance of getting back to the Tapajos only if we start now!"

"You will leave me food, a rifle, shotgun?" queried Jan Harper. "I've whipped things almost as bad as this."

"I have known many bitten ones," said Little Portygee. "One or two lived, crippled, for others to feed, bathe and dress. Face facts, my friend; there is no hope."

Jan Harper lunged to his feet, striking out. But his arms lacked authority, and warm wetness was dyeing his chin. He had begun to bleed from the mouth. He looked at the palms of his hands. No blood there, but there was a roaring in his ears; he supposed his ears were bleeding. He still munched the *taja de cobra*.

He dropped back, rather than sat, against the tree, considering this hideous thing. Then he looked up. He was alone. He could hear nothing through the strange roaring in his ears, a sound he had once heard when he had all but drowned; he could hear nothing save the louder sounds of the jungles.

A *coata* monkey, which he would not have seen if it had not been black, if it had not moved, peered at him through a high thickness of forest crown. Overhead a pair of scarlet macaws looked down through a hole in the forest and offered raucous comment as they sailed over, dragging their long tails. A green lizard suddenly appeared between his feet, its

throat working like a bellows, its eyes expressing utter lack of fear. The *coata* jumped to another tree, noisily. Far off a wild turkey drummed.

The *surucucu*, in reach of his hand, continued to writhe. He lifted it, tried to tear the flesh, managed to break the skin, applied the hot flesh to the fang marks. It did have a soothing effect, but it didn't stop the motion of the hot wetness on his chin, wetness which dribbled down to the front of his chambray shirt, where he could see what it was.

He crammed more of the *taja de cobra*.

The roaring in his ears increased. Sharp pains raced through his middle. There would be convulsions soon; after that, the end. Away to the west he heard rifles speak, and shotguns. He distinctly heard both rifles and the three shotguns. His men had left him nothing whatever. He managed a laugh. Only one thing would make them all shoot at once: the Indians. Gaiapos had probably been within sight of them since they left the Tapajos, invisible even to jungle Brazilians. Jan pushed off his sweat-soaked helmet. His redhaired head seemed to be afire.

He fell sidewise, with that roaring in his ears; and for a brief period knew nothing at all. Then he opened his eyes, saw a bare foot within reach of his face, smelled an odor never smelled before, though he was sure it was human. Dimly he remembered that the Gaiapos did not swim, build canoes—or bathe! He tried to turn. He was lying on his right side. He wanted to look up. He could see bare shanks. But he blacked out, and the rest was nightmare. In the nightmare he saw gnarled, dirty, Indian faces, atop bodies no more than four feet five inches tall. The odor clogged his nostrils, especially when naked bodies were very close, and hands fumbled around the fang marks of the *surucucu*, pressing, prodding. The nightmare took him away, so that he felt as if he were swimming through the air, sometimes on his belly, sometimes on his back, but always without moving arms, legs, or even his eyes. There was pain, too, which seemed endless, and chattering in an utterly barbarous tongue. There were slaps, kicks, proddings—proddings as with sharp sticks.

But there was motion, and sometimes

the sun was hot on his face. He thought he saw one of the small men wearing his helmet, stumbling along blind because it came down over his eyes. Then he didn't think. For he didn't know how long, he did not think, feel, or remember.

Sometimes his right leg was bigger around than a *sumaumeira*, the mighty flanged cotton tree; sometimes he had no leg at all.

Sometimes there was laughter, the laughter of men, women, and children. Sometimes he was fully dressed, as he last remembered. Sometimes he was as naked as the little men, their women and their children.

When he could realize anything he realized first that he still lived. Then he realized that he was in the hands of the Gaiapos. When the Gaiapos realized that he was conscious, their chief came to where he lay, attracted his attention, pointed at himself and said angrily, "Uiui-po!"

"Jan," said Harper, pointing at himself with a hand almost too heavy to lift, "Jan Harper!"

Uiui-po nodded vehemently. "Janapo!" he said. So Jan Harper was rechristened. So he became Janapo, Gaiapo captive.

CHAPTER II

RAIDING PARTY



A STRANGE year of captivity drew to a close . . .

Excitement grew in Jan Harper. He was not so sure that he hated this sneaking journey. He scarcely believed it. He felt as if it were something out of a dream, as the last incredible year had been. First, there had been no reason he could see, why the Gaiapos kept him alive, treated his *surucucu* poisoning until he felt like himself again. Only a slight limp remained. The limp was valuable. It set him apart from the Gaiapos as much as did the color of his skin.

Thirty of the diminutive, tattooed Indians composed the raiding party. They moved in almost complete silence through the jungles, traveling southeast from the Crepory. Their mission was to raid the Kuruaia for wives and to avenge them-

self against the Kuruaia for generations of abuse.

Never in the life of the oldest Gaiapo had the canoe-less Indians dared even think of attacking the Kuruaia. Word that their ancient enemies were hunting in Gaiapo-land invariably sent the Gaiapo into insane, headlong flight. Jan Harper had known none of this when, almost as soon as he became conscious, Uiui-po turned him over to the women for treatment—and instruction in the Gaiapo tongue. Not an Indian of any age or either sex among them but held Jan Harper in contempt. The women and girls slapped him, prodded him, scratched him when he mispronounced words. For weeks he was too weak to do anything about it. He bided his time, willing himself to be strong. They fed him. They did not bathe him. When he was able to stagger without help to the nearest creek to bathe his body all over, the Gaiapos assembled to watch in horror. He would hear their amazed chattering the rest of his life.

Uiui-po strode along just ahead of Jan Harper. Harper had learned the trick of treading on the heels of a jungle adept, so that trees, spined vines, clinging *tiririca* grass never scratched his hard-as-nails body, clothed only in an *arivanha* (otter) skin about his middle.

Gaiapos went naked, but he could not bring himself to that entirely, though he was no longer self-conscious when he swam in front of the entire tribe. They were too much akin to animals; a man did not care.

"You are sure, Janapo," said Uiui-po, "that we are skilled enough to raid the Kuruaia!"

"You have assured me they are untamed Mundurucu, is it so?" said Jan.

"It is so; but the Mundurucu are devils. We would never attack them. Other woods people have no chance against them."

Of their conversation, this was the gist. Uiui-po spoke in a low voice as if afraid the jungle itself listened. Gaiapo words, some of which were Tupi, meant whole sentences. The dialect was soft, suggesting a false gentleness. Jan Harper knew there was no gentleness in this people. The softness of their speech was merely

another attribute of their jungle stealth.

"You will accomplish your mission," said Jan Harper.

"If we do not, you will be killed!" said Uuiupo.

"Who will be left alive to kill me?" asked Harper, grinning. Uuiupo halted, his face fearful. Harper had to touch his shoulder, turn him, to keep him from running back the way they had come. Had Uuiupo given a hint of his fear to the others, who moved like silent shadows through the forest, right, left, ahead and to the rear, the Gaiapos would have been in full flight.

"We raid only because of your great magic," said Uuiupo.

"And for wives," Harper pointed out. "I promised you nothing with my magic!"

"It it does not work," said Uuiupo, "why should the Gaiapo provide you with food and sleeping place?"

"Why indeed? You can always let me go back to my own people."

This suggestion always brought cackling laughter from old Uuiupo.

"Then you would return with soldiers," he answered.

For just a moment the old chief had forgotten his fear of the Kuruaia. As the raiding party moved on, Jan Harper studied such men as occasionally flitted into view, vanishing the next second. Little men, inexpressibly dirty, with almost no foreheads under their tangled, flea-infested shocks of black hair, they did not even wear gee-strings. On the hunt, or when raiding, they wore a crude belt of tough green vine into which they twisted their arrows. They carried war clubs over their shoulders. These war clubs, of heavy hardwood, were about the same length and shape as a baseball bat, but thinner. They were laboriously carved longitudinally from handgrip to bulbous end, a task which required months of work. When a man killed with his club he left it beside the body of his victim. Janapo had never found out why.

Jan Harper, towering above the Gaiapos, was as brown as Uuiupo himself. Despite the villainous food, usually charred a little over a small open fire, or eaten raw, and the physical abuse he had taken during the first six months, he had never been in better health. He could even travel

barefoot through the jungles as the Indians did, though on this trek he wore the heavy field shoes he was at such pains to save against the day of hoped-for escape.

He chuckled, remembering the day when the women turned him back to the men after literally hammering the Gaiapo tongue—enough for ordinary communication—into him. A day almost a year ago.

"You will teach my men," Uuiupo had said, "the whiteskins' way of fighting."

There it was, the reason why he had been kept alive. He knew that Little Portygee and his four fellow-scoundrels—he would never forgive them for deserting him—had escaped to the Tapajos; they, he knew, would have been killed out of hand.

"No!" he told Uuiupo. "I shall teach you nothing."

Uuiupo said something to one of his warriors. That one, swinging his club, closed on Harper. His intention was clear; Harper was to be beaten into submission. But six months of mute submission to the women had given him back much of his strength. The time had come to make it clear he would take no more harsh treatment without fighting back.

He stepped under the swinging club, lifted a right uppercut to the midriff of the warrior. The warrior went somersaulting backward, while his club flew straight up. Up to that moment Harper had no experience with the *borduna*, the war club, save that back on the Tapajos he had handled a few which Brazilians had found beside the bodies of loved ones. But he grabbed this one as other Gaiapos closed in. Save that the stick was lead-heavy, its resemblance to a parry stick was perfect, and Harper had taught bayonet work, and the parry stick, during the war. He welcomed the chance now afforded him. The Gaiapos used the *borduna* in just one way, with a downward chopping motion.

Harper shot the *borduna* out to the full length of his arm, into the face of the nearest attacker. His aim was sure. The Gaiapo sat down suddenly, blood spurting from his toothless gums. He gagged and spat. Harper hoped he had swallowed his snaglike teeth. He drove the big end of the *borduna* into two bellies in succes-

sion. He remembered movies of Merrie England in which the quarter staff had been used, and tried a few sideswipes which proved quite effective.

The Gaiapos backed away from him. Two ran for bow and arrows and would have killed him then and there if Uiuipo, his seamy, dirty old face alight with satisfaction, had not raised a hand. The women chattered and stared at Harper as if they had never seen him before.

"This magic, Janapo," said Uiuipo, "the Gaiapos must learn!"

"So you can kill more of my people?" snapped Harper.

"Would it help us to do even that?" asked the old chief.

"It won't," said Harper, "for I shall not teach you."

"We use it against the Kuruaia, against more of our own skin-color," said Uiuipo. "This is a promise."



IT HAD not been too difficult to allow himself to become military teacher of the Gaiapos. It gave him something to do, kept him in training, raised his prestige immeasurably among the Gaiapos. They took to boxing, *judo* and wrestling as if they had always known the rudiments. They knew little of make-believe, however, and two warriors were killed the first day of "training." Then Uiuipo had given Harper authority next to his own, to control the redskinned recruits. Within a week, old Uiuipo was talking of a raid against the Kuruaia Indians as if he meant it.

The raiding party was now deep in Kuruaia territory. At any moment there might be action. But the scouts of Uiuipo ranged far and wide, and there were often long silent waits while Kuruaia hunting parties moved out of hearing. Somewhere ahead, to be attacked tonight in accordance with Jan Harper's tactical plans, was a Kuruaia *maloca*, or village.

The Gaiapos did not live in villages. They were usually on the move, spending nights wherever nights caught them, in whatever shelter offered. Sometimes they went so far as to erect crazy lean-tos of palm-fronds, or crawled under hanging rocks, or covered among above-ground roots of great trees. During the dry sea-

son they often curled up in piles, like pigs or sheep; this was the community sleeping habit of the children most of the time, rain or shine. It was a wonder any of them lived through it, but they were surprisingly free of disease.

The Gaiapo, as darkness began to descend, all but lost their nerve. The merest mention of the word "Kuruaia" had served, for many generations, to send them scurrying for cover; they could not grasp the fact that they were now, of their own volition, in the land of their hated enemies. The Kuruaia were headhunters. A Gaiapo who lost his head to his enemies, lost his soul also, which must wander for endless time, trying to find its way home. Harper could understand how they would walk in terror.

Immediately after dark Uiuipo called a halt, but kept his scouts far out on all sides. Hunting or raiding at night was unusual for these people, too. They seldom dared the vengeance of the jungle gods. This, too, was part of the Harper "magic."

Now Uiuipo called his men in for final instructions. No sooner had the stinking shadows—not one Gaiapo had ever followed Harper's example of daily bathing—gathered about Uiuipo, than an eerie sound came out of the black night ahead. It was the moaning wail of a bamboo flute. The Kuruaia, up there somewhere, had posted their lone sentinel. At intervals through the night he would sound the flute, which said: "We are awake, beware!"

"Hear the flute?" asked Uiuipo, his teeth audibly chattering. "It says that the Kuruaia are awake, waiting for us."

"No, said Harper, "it says, 'Here we are, you can find us by following the sound of the flute; come and kill us! It will be easy!'"

"Is this truly the words of the flute?" asked Uiuipo.

"Could be," said Harper. "Now, the gourds of banana oil."

Indians invariably attacked, Harper had heard, read, and believed, with frightful screams, thus disclosing exactly where they were. For weeks, in dry-run attacks against "villages," he had taught them to crawl up and attack in complete silence. They would not use arrows.

"Arrows," he explained, "do not have eyes. Gaiapo arrows in the dark may kill Gaiapo men. No, we use the knife and the *borduna*."

Each warrior had a knife of hardwood, stone, bone, or even of steel; each warrior carried a *borduna*.

The warriors who had patiently and carefully carried the gourds of banana oil through the jungles for the past two days, now lowered them to the ground. They made a game, a silent one, smearing one another thickly with the oil.

"In the dark men cannot tell friend from foe," explained Harper. "But when, in the dark, one feels a body covered with slickness, it is a friend, and one does not strike. But if one finds a dry body, it is an enemy."

Uiuiipo had promised Jan Harper one thing: that old men Kuruaiia, old women and boys, would not be slain. Kuruaiia warriors would have to look out for themselves. After all, they had hunted down Gaiapos for centuries, as contemptuously as they had hunted game birds and animals in Gaiapo territory. The Gaiapos had a victory coming to them. It wasn't difficult, when one regarded both Gaiapos and Kuruaiia as little better than animals, to justify the raid.

The flute sounded again.

"When do Gaiapos usually attack, Uiuiipo?" asked Harper.

"Right after the *ururus* chant welcome to the morning. When they stop it is a signal."

Ururus, called *guaribas* by Brazilians and most Indian tribes, were the red howler monkeys. They invariably saluted the morning before anyone was ready to get up; at about four o'clock.

Harper estimated from what Uiuiipo told him that the attackers should be in position about the *maloca* a good hour before the *ururus* began chanting.

The be-oiled, smelly warriors glided back into the shadows. Now Harper held one end of a stick while Uiuiipo held the other end, and thus led him through the night. At intervals the flute sounded its warning and gave the proper direction, and even Harper was able to advance swiftly and almost in silence.

Harper himself felt some misgivings after the Gaiapo were in position, sur-

rounding the *maloca* of wattled huts which showed eerily against the night; where were the dogs? It wasn't possible that all dogs were out with hunting parties, or that not one dog had scented the invaders.

Yet not a dog barked.

"Maybe," said Harper to Uiuiipo, "they are starving and have eaten their dogs."

"Indians starve before they destroy their house animals," said Uiuiipo. "No, it is not that, Janapo; do you not believe in your own magic?"

No wonder the Gaiapos were unconcerned about the silence of the dogs! They thought it part of the "magic" of their white instructor.

Suddenly, so close as to startle even the accustomed, the *ururus* began howling, growling, or chanting; it depended on how the tremendous sound struck one; to Jan Harper it was a chant.

It would continue for about ten minutes. When it stopped there would be Gaiapo warriors inside or just outside every Kuruaiia hut.

CHAPTER III

TORTURE ULTIMATUM



THE *URURUS* became suddenly and awesomely silent.

The mournful sound of the flute which appeared to have mingled with the voices of the red howlers, broke off short. Jan Harper knew that a Gaiapo had followed instruction to the letter; the sentry had been disposed of.

There was a strange stirring in the *maloca*. Women and children began pouring from the oval huts, crying out. Resin torches appeared. The women and children scurried about like a colony of disturbed ants.

For the first time, and with a shock, Jan Harper saw the Kuruaiia as *real*. Aborigines they might be, but they were people, like himself. "Savages"—"aborigines"—"barbarians" were just words—when you at last looked upon them and saw how little they differed from yourself! They were not animals, but men, women, and children. From the first it was clear that they were higher in the scale than Gaiapos.

"What have I done, to save my own

skin?" Harper asked himself. And what, now that he had loosed the hurricane, could he do about it?

Screams suddenly erupted from the huts, as if so far hands had been held to mouths to keep them back. Figures locked in weird combat toppled out of doors, fell to fight in the street. Hands which held knives rose and fell. Men who thus disposed of their adversaries then went to the help of others who were having trouble. *Bordunas* were used, and dropped beside the dead. The thudding sound as warclubs struck against skulls was sickening. This was war, war as brutal as that among the "civilized" in which Harper had done his share.

If he had it to do over he would defy the Gaiapos, he knew. But if he tried to pull out now he would simply throw the Gaiapos into confusion—and the Kuruaia would rally, wipe them out, together with Harper himself. Thus far, then, he must play out his string. He must play the cards he had dealt himself, take the consequences. But after this . . .

"Gaiapos!" Harper could imagine what that cry meant to the Kuruaia, against whom the Gaiapos had never marched in man's memory. The cry set off the Gaiapos themselves. They forgot the virtue of silence. The single street, while an ancient sickness rose in Harper as he watched a struggle he could not now stop, became a shambles. The Gaiapos went wild. They swung their war clubs at every head, their own friends now indistinguishable in the eerie light of the torches.

When Kuruaia, men somewhat sturdier and taller than the Gaiapos, hurled themselves at their attackers, the Gaiapos screamed with excitement and either used their clubs as Harper had taught them, or fisted their bare hands and swung lefts, rights, uppercuts, jabs and crosses, as if they loved it.

Harper realized that he, playing the role of a renegade white, was responsible for every swung club, every fist that wrought havoc among the Kuruaia. What business was it of his that the Kuruaia had raided the Gaiapos down the centuries? He had no excuse for himself. He had been afraid of what the Gaiapos would do to him if he refused to help.

"I'm not afraid," he told himself grimly, remembering he had proved himself in the war. "I just wanted to be a big toad in a small puddle! Now I'm facing it—as I didn't when I turned the 'savage' Gaiapos into 'civilized' fighters!"

No self-reviling now, though, could halt the Gaiapos. Not only that but if he himself were to live he must stand by the Gaiapos until they were out of Kuruaia territory. For the time being he must sleep in the bed he had made.

The Kuruaia hadn't a chance. The women, to whom it at once became clear that this was a wife-raid, huddled at last in a group in the center of the *maloca*, children clustered in their protecting arms. Gaiapos, momentarily not fighting, strutted past them, jeered at them. The women were stoical about this ancient story; they had always been loot of war. Some of the women were perhaps Gaiapo, or Apiaca, or Cajabi, for the Kuruaia also captured wives from their neighbors.

Uiuiipo and Jan Harper moved into the middle of the fight. Harper had no desire to kill Kuruaia. But Uiuiipo went berserk, now that it was clear the village was delivered into his hands. He shrieked at his warriors. A group of them closed in on him, listened, then hurled themselves at the women. Old women and boys were yanked out of the group. Knives and clubs rose and fell. The shrieks of the victims were hideous to hear. Harper ran to Uiuiipo, grasped him by the shoulder, spun him around. The sickness in his stomach rose into his throat.

"You promised not to kill women and children!" he yelled hoarsely.

Uiuiipo seemed not to hear or even see him. He jumped up and down like a crazy man, mouthing his orders. Harper ran back toward the women, threw Gaiapos away from them, but it was no good. He dashed back to Uiuiipo, trying again to shake sense back into the old man. Uiuiipo jumped and gibbered. Harper struck him beside the face. The old man went down, out cold.

Instantly a strange change went through the village. Every Gaiapo knew that Harper had struck down the chief. They looked at him askance, but did not offer to touch him. They carried out, however, the latest commands of Uiuiipo.

It was all over in half an hour. No male Kuruaia lived in the *maloca*, nor any woman over the age of child-bearing. The street was a mess. The Kuruaia had been wiped out. Uuiupo had lost half a dozen men, killed. Many of his warriors were desperately wounded, but even they did not seem to mind. They were upheld by a strange exhilaration, strange because they could never have known it before.

Gaiapos had attacked and destroyed a Kuruaia village!

Jan Harper's "magic" had worked.

But there still were the dogs, none of which had been seen or heard in the village. Harper stood over Uuiupo when the old chief got to his feet.

"Best get going, back to your own land," he said. "There must be strong hunting parties out. Get your new wives together and let us get started. The fire can be seen for great distances!"

Uuiupo stared at Jan Harper.

"You put hands on me, Janapo," he said.

"You promised not to kill women and children!" said Harper.

"I am Uuiupo!" said the old man. "I shall decide what is to be done to you!"

"Not if the Kuruaia get you!" snapped Harper. "Most of the men in the village were old—or not quite old enough to be men! Don't you understand that, you old fool?"

Uuiupo did not understand. He was drunk with his accomplishments, which had now become his, making him a great chief—whom a mere slave had, nevertheless, struck down with his hand. But he possessed a semblance of common sense. He yelled at his warriors to start the return. Women and girls were grouped in the midst of a dozen guards and driven at a trot into the blackness of the jungles, heading northwest. Scouts went out ahead.

"Let me have the six men I trained as archers," said Harper. "I'll follow as a rear guard."

Uuiupo had no idea what Harper meant; he did understand the six, when Harper called them by name; men whom Harper had taught what little he knew of modern archery. Indians, in his experience, were nowhere at all compared to

trained archers with modern bows and arrows. But he felt he had done well with this half dozen.

The six little men, at Harper's request, formed a weird military rear guard, a semi-circle behind Harper, who marched in the mouth of the semi-circle, the curve of which was to the rear.

"You'd better travel *fast!*" Harper told Uuiupo. "And tell your scouts to let you know if they hear dogs."



ONCE THE madness of the Gaiapos began to wear off; once they realized that they had indeed brought off the impossible, their old fear began to return. Uuiupo had to keep shouting at them to prevent them abandoning everything, including the captive wives, in favor of headlong retreat into their own territory. They were afraid of reprisals before they were out of sight of the column of flame and smoke which showed the location of the *maloca*. The girls among the captives began to whimper. The guards did not hesitate to strike them with their clubs or their bows. There was an almost automatic cruelty among the Gaiapos to which Harper had become accustomed. The marks of it covered most of his own body, scars, gouges, places where laughing women, discouraged by his slowness in mastering Gaiapo speech, had burned him while other women held him. That had happened when he had been very weak. Few had offered him any abuse since he had got back on his feet. His "magic" was too strong.

"Move at top speed until daybreak!" Harper counseled Uuiupo.

"Is Janapo chief of the Gaiapo then?" said the old man.

Everything about the outraged chief spoke clearly to Jan Harper; the old man could not forgive him for slapping his august person. The wormy brain of the chief was planning personal reprisals which, to make them effective, must be witnessed by all who had seen him humbled in Kuruaia-land.

Harper refused to think of what might happen to him. There was little they could do to him, short of death, that they had not already done, and he had lived through it. He doubted that Uuiupo

would execute him, since his training of Gaiapo warriors had proved effective. He held a good hand, but a man in Uiuipo's position could cause him plenty of trouble.

The mad dash continued into the dawn, until the Gaiapos were deep in their own territory.

Then the Kuruaia came swiftly from the rear. The Kuruaia were not war club fighters. They used bows and arrows. A flight of arrows came out of the jungles, struck among the Gaiapos and their captives.

Harper snapped at his bowmen. They turned, just as he had taught them, as if they had done it every day of their lives, and their arrows sped with deadly accuracy to the darting figures in the Gaiapo rear. They did not miss. The Gaiapo vanguard moved out faster, leaving its dead, and Harper's archers cut down several of the Kuruaia. There was no telling how large the group was, for there were no Gaiapo scouts behind the archer rear guard. The Kuruaia must have cut their sign somewhere between here and the ravished *maloca*.

Gaiapo arrows downed three hunting dogs which came too close. Even the Gaiapo must have been astounded when the Kuruaia withdrew. They had every right, based on ages of experience, to expect the Kuruaia to remain on their heels until the last Gaiapo was killed and the captives released.

Harper had another idea. Two arrows had missed him by the breadth of a baby's hand, and he had got a good look at the Indians who fired them. Both had looked at him with their mouths open in disbelief. When the Kuruaia turned back he knew that the word would travel through all the unexplored land: "There is a whiteskinned man with the Gaiapo!"

How far would the tale travel? Would it reach Brazilians? Would it reach the Mundurucus, blood brethren of the Kuruaia, with whom they were supposed to have no contact at all? The Mundurucus, once the most dreaded jungle warriors, now catered to Brazilian masters. If there were any such contact now . . .

"This raid has made one thing clear," Harper decided. "I've got to make a break. Last year there was talk that a Brazilian renegade led Gaiapo murder

parties. If word gets out there will be soldiers . . ."

Little Portygee and his three had escaped the Gaiapos. If two and two were properly added; but no, Little Portygee had been positive that Harper hadn't a chance of survival.

Conscience hurt, no doubt about it. He could tell himself that Kuruaia and Gaiapos were animals, that his hand in the killing of any of them should not trouble him. But here now were captive women, and children who wept just like children anywhere else. The women did not weep, but they comforted and petted the children as any women relatives did. That they regarded capture as routine did not alter the fact of their motherhood, their humanity.

Harper told himself he couldn't help it, but knew he could have held out until he died. He could say he hadn't expected it to work out as it had, when he began training the Gaiapos, but he knew better; Uiuipo had said from the beginning he wished his warriors trained to fight the Kuruaia. The Kuruaia had proved themselves "men" as they died.

Hadn't Uiuipo said, at first, to fight "whiteskins?"

Sleep was a long time coming that night. Harper was fearful, conscience-stricken. Uiuipo hated him, desired revenge. He didn't say so, not any more, but his behavior was eloquent.

Fully dressed now, Harper lay on his pallet of fresh green palm fronds, trying to decide just what to do. He kept hearing the screams of the Kuruaia, the whimpering of the children, the soothing clucks of the captured women. He kept seeing the dead in the street of the *maloca*, the column of fire above the village, and the pursuing Indians, with arrows nocked; kept seeing the two who had got a good look at Jan Harper.

He finally slept, though he did not expect to. Had not Uiuipo posted a dozen sentinels, emphasizing his fear of Kuruaia reprisals, Harper would have tried escape. He never had, so he might get away with it. He doubted his ability to survive alone in the jungles, but he was more nearly conditioned to it than any white man who had ever entered it, he was sure.

He slept, and Uiuipo's warriors jumped him. They did a good job. The surprise was perfect. When they backed away from him he felt as Gulliver must have felt when he awakened to find himself a prisoner of Lilliputians. He was practically wrapped in stout vines.

Uiuipo came to him, between a grin and a yawn.

"Well, what are you going to do to me?" said Harper.

"Nothing, if you promise to show us how to fight the whiteskins!"

"If I don't," said Harper, "I suppose you will kill me?"

"No, I shall not kill you until you have done what I bid you!" said Uiuipo. "But I shall see that you are often at the doorway of death!"

"I don't understand that!"

"There are wounds that do not kill,"

said Uiuipo. "They can be repeated day after day if one is careful not to kill. There is fire. There is water, which you so enjoy. But do you like it hot?"

"I'll never show you what to do against anybody, ever again!" said Harper.

Uiuipo frankly grinned through snagged teeth.

"It will be painful for you, then," said Uiuipo. "My people will be happy to watch. Word is being sent in all directions, bidding other chiefs to come with their warriors."

"To watch me being tortured?" Harper hoped that his voice did not sound as strange to Uiuipo as it did to Harper himself.

"No," said Uiuipo. "To be trained by you when you decide that you will obey!"



A flight of arrows came out of the jungle, struck among the Gaiapos and their captives.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORDEAL



"HOW CAN WE MARCH safely to kill the whiteskins?"

Uiuiupo had repeated the question until it was a kind of litany. Jan Harper shook his head, spat on the ground at his feet. He was still bound, as he had been bound for almost a week, his back to a palm tree, his hands tied behind it. He doubted if any man had ever suffered the indignities visited upon him. It began with slapping, with fists to the mouth, face and groin. Now the very things he had taught the Gaiapos were being used against him. His nose had been broken, and smashed flat, by the hard fists of small men who had known nothing of fists until he taught them.

Uppercuts to the midriff had driven home until he was numb. He did not know how many times he had blacked out. He was beginning to realize what it was to be punchdrunk. Strange fancies came to him when he could no longer feel the proddings, gouging, hair-, nose- and ear-pulling by women and children. In his fancies he could see soldiers of Brazil, advancing warily into the jungles, hunting the murdering Gaiapos. He could see couriers from the Kuruaia, racing into Mundurucu villages to report the Gaiapos led by a white man. He could see Mundurucus repeating the story to priests, by whom the Brazilian authorities were told.

"Why shouldn't I help them against the Brazilians?" he asked himself. "Brazilians ran away and left me. If they hadn't I wouldn't be taking this now!"

Men ground the tops of his bare feet with sharp rocks. Then ants and flies settled on the raw spots. Uiuiupo was always careful not to kill him. He wondered how a man so ignorant could know so much about anatomy and how much a man could stand.

"I could play ball with old Uiuiupo," he told himself another time when he could think of no reason why he should endure this ordeal instead of leading the Gaiapos against Brazilians. "I could turn completely native and make myself military

head not only of the Gaiapos but of all neighboring tribes. We could drive out all the Brazilians in the Upper Tapajos Valley. We could become so strong an army couldn't wipe us out."

His fancy pictured bombers trying to blast the Indians off the face of the earth, finding no targets below because the Indians lived entirely below the surface of the "sea of green."

Sometimes, when his mind seemed oddly detached from his battered body, he saw himself leading the Gaiapos against Brazilian huts, against small villages. He attacked, in fancy, widely scattered areas, when least expected. He taught the Gaiapos how to make rough canoes, overcame their fear of the water, led them even across the Tapajos.

He would return to consciousness glad it was delirium and that he had again withstood the worst his tormentors could deal out. Women fed him only when he became so hungry he lost consciousness. They crammed his mouth, pushing in food with their ever dirty hands. Raw fish, or charred, raw game—wild pig, deer, tapir, the larger rodents. Only the merest outside was ever cooked. Sometimes they mixed herbs with the food; herbs which he strongly suspected of being to blame for some of his hallucinations, his belief that he sometimes left his tree and his bonds, and led the Gaiapo in spite of his best intentions.

But he always came back to the stout vines which all but cut off circulation, to the endless devilment of the women and children. They didn't even allow him to sleep save when he passed out and stayed out. Day and night they kept at him.

"Show us how to kill the whiteskins!" During all his waking hours Uiuiupo kept repeating his demand. Always Jan Harper shook his head. Always Uiuiupo told the torturers to do something else, something that occurred to him or to one of his warriors. Day by day more Gaiapos assembled in the camp, probably the first in ages that the Indians had occupied over a week.

"I will show you nothing," said Harper.

"We may succeed against them as we did against Kuruaia," said Uiuiupo.

"The whiteskins have weapons that

kill further and with a great noise," said Harper. "You have no chance against them."

"Then show us!"

"No!" He was amazed at what the human body could stand. He began to pride himself on his ability to take it. He had stared down at the grimy hands of women who prodded under his skin and under his nails with sharp wooden splinters. He had laughed at them. He had laughed when they dropped a ball of fire ants on his naked body and the countless tiny creatures began at once filling his body with their burning acid. The bites became fiery red; they spread quickly until, even before the women brushed them off him, his whole body was livid. Then his lower lip began to tremble, and fever mounted. He was glad of the fever for it shut out thought and feeling. He had no idea for how long. He thought they must have tortured him for a week, but it could have been a month. He did not know how long he blacked out. Sometimes he remembered nothing between darkness and darkness, between dawn and dusk.

He gained some respite when he was completely out of his head, for then he sang and laughed and his captors stood back from him, awed by his madness. Even the most primitive of men held the madman in awe. Trouble was that when he sang and laughed and tried to dance in his bonds, all were afraid to touch him, so he was never freed. Then, when he was rational, they forgot that he had been mad.

He became obsessed with the idea that soldiers were coming up the Tapajos to start, at the mouth of the Crepori, a punitive expedition against the Gaiapos. He could even count them. He could, when he was on the border of consciousness and delirium, see their faces, their uniforms, and hear their speech. They spoke of him, Jan Harper, with anger. They spoke of previous raids of the Gaiapos, of dead Brazilians, and they blamed Harper. If they got him alive they would treat him worse than the Gaiapos now did.

"Uiuiipo," he called out to the old man, the first time he discovered this strange ability to see, "the soldiers are coming!

They are coming to kill you all, and to return me to my own people!"

"You have seen them?" asked Uiuiipo. "When, then, since you have been a prisoner since the last moon waned."

"But they are coming, Uiuiipo," said Harper. "Send men to look out upon the river and see for yourself."

He would have told them there were forty soldiers, with rifles, pistols and automatic weapons, but the Gaiapos had no idea of numbers. They knew only "many" and "few."

"We do not fear them, Janapo," said the old man, "because you will soon tell us how to guard against them."

"I shall never tell you," said Harper, and meant it.



YET FEAR constantly mounted in him. There were times when he behaved like a madman, knew it, yet seemed unable to do anything about it. There were times when, in spite of his constant refusals, in spite of his determination to do nothing of the kind, he had Uiuiipo align his warriors, of whom there were now more than three hundred, before the palm tree to which he was tied. Then he harangued them, while they listened in awe. He told them of rifles, of pistols, of automatic rifles which killed at far distances. He selected the most skilled of those he had trained for the raid against the Kuruaia, and tried to teach them to teach the others. And all the time he knew he wished to do nothing of the sort—yet went ahead with it. There were times when he argued for and against himself.

"What right have the Brazilians to push into Gaiapo jungles, anyway? It is right they should kill the invaders. It is a good work to train them to drive away the greedy whiteskins."

Then again he would sneer at himself, at his own reasoning.

"Whiteskins! There isn't a whiteskin among them. They are all themselves descended from Indian women and the white men who stole them, even as the Gaiapos stole the Kuruaia women!"

Sometimes a strange ambition stirred through his fever; he thought of himself as the first of a white dynasty, protecting

the Indians against their would-be destroyers. Eventually he would capture some white girl who would be glad to share the jungles with him. No telling what kind of an empire he could carve out for himself. Others had tried it and vanished forever from the sight of men. But he would be different. Had any of them ever been able to endure what he was enduring, and laugh at his tormentors? Was not Gaiapo respect for his courage constantly growing?

When in lucid moments he realized whither such thoughts led he became sick at the stomach; then even the women treated him with contempt.

Uiuiipo had tried to tempt him with the prettiest of the Kuruaiia girls, but Harper had made it clear then, once and for all, that he was of no mind to marry an Indian girl, however pretty. The Kuruaiias *did* have some idea of cleanliness, and the new wives bathed several times a day, as Harper had before being tied to the palm tree; then their new husbands forbade such nonsense and now Harper could tell erstwhile Kuruaiia women from Gaiapos only by their height and the difference in tattoo marks.

Uiuiipo sent a scouting party to the west, to the Tapajos. He did not believe a word that Harper said about the arrival of soldiers—nor did Harper himself save when he was delirious and mental pictures were so real.

Always, building out of subconscious resentment, Harper's rage against Little Portygee and his three companions grew. It was easy for his hatred of them and their desertion to extend to all the Brazilians on the Tapajos. After all, what right had they to push out the Indians? And why had there been no attempt to find him, Jan Harper? He had been lost to civilization for well over a year—perhaps even two years by now, for all he knew.

Days passed. Uiuiipo sent out scattered parties to make sneak raids on individual rubber cutters who dared venture into the jungles of the Tapajos' east bank. Warriors returned to report killing Brazilians.

"Your friends will eventually know that you are one of us, in these attacks on Brazilians!"

Jan Harper knew there was truth in that, if word had got back to civilization that he still lived. Little Portygee was a great gossip. If he suspected that Harper had somehow survived he would spread tales born of his own imagination over all the Tapajos.

The Gaiapos brought back young women and girl children from these sneak raids. They also lost a few warriors. Harper caught few glimpses of these captives, but enough to see that they were all nearly as copper-colored as the Gaiapos. He often wondered what he would do if they returned sometime with a white woman among them.

Uiuiipo had sent seven warriors to the bank of the Tapajos to watch for the soldiers. One day, almost a week later, one man came running into the encampment.

"There are many whiteskins," he cried. "Our brothers are dead. They died with a great noise among the soldiers!"

"Your thoughts have brought the soldiers!" Uiuiipo cried out to Harper. "Now must you protect us against them! Is it not true that if you were not with us they would not come?"

"I will do nothing. Kill me, or let me fall into their hands. They will spare my life. I am no Indian!"

"You have not seen your face for many days, Janapo!" said Uiuiipo. "You are Indian. If they slay us, they slay you, too!"

What did the old murderer mean? He couldn't hold the thought long enough to figure it out. A man didn't become Indian just because he lived among them. A man didn't . . .

"I won't help you!" said Jan Harper.

It was then someone thought of fire, and brush was gathered about him, piled high front back and sides, and a woman approached with a blazing faggot.

"What good am I to you dead, Uiuiipo?" asked Harper.

"You will not die, if you scream that you will help us!"

He watched the brush pressed close, felt it against his naked legs. He watched until the fire began to race through it, all around him. He watched until the smoke shut out vision. He cringed away

from the flames. He saw nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing, when Uiuipo's women dashed in and pulled the brush away, began pouring water from many gourds upon his blistered skin.

When he regained consciousness he was free. His body was smeared with *chiririshep* sap. It felt as if his flesh crawled; as if it were being cleansed by maggots.

Uiuipo seemed very happy. "You promised!" he said. "You promised!"

Harper didn't know. Maybe he had. He was beyond caring. A woman brought him a huge gourd of water. He saw his face in it, understood what Uiuipo had meant about his being an "Indian." Sometime during his longest periods of unconsciousness his face had been tattooed. He wondered what strange sense of humor had caused Uiuipo to cover his entire face from hairline to upper lip with deep, dark green, pricked into his skin to remain until his flesh vanished from his bones and he was long dead! Was that the Gaiapo chief's final, ironical

revenge for his earlier humiliation at the hands of Jan Harper?

Uiuipo had made him, not a Gaiapo, but a Mundurucu! A "black face"!

He thought of himself returning to civilization, bearing that irremovable brand; then he refused to think of it lest he begin laughing, chattering and dancing again.

He drank. He flung the gourd aside, rose to his feet. His entire body was a mass of pain; but pain, he thought, cleansed and healed. Pain had cured him of scruples. Whatever he had been, pain had buried it deep inside him somewhere.

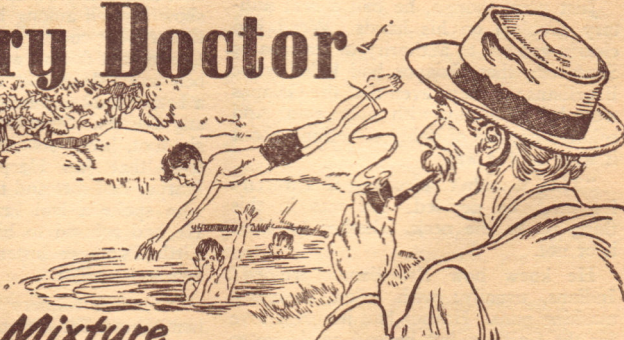
"Where are the soldiers now, Uiuipo?" he asked.

"They camp on the island in the mouth of the Creproy, making preparations!" said Uiuipo.

"Send your fastest runners, your cleverest hunters," said Harper, "to show themselves on the river bank. When the soldiers pursue, your warriors will retreat before them. They will lead the soldiers deeply into the jungles. They

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will not try to kill any of them until I have looked upon the soldiers!"

A plan was growing inside him. There was a way out of this for everybody; for the Gaiapos, for the soldiers, the Brazilians. There was a way out for everybody but Jan Harper, Janapo the "black face."

CHAPTER V

RENEGADE!



JAN HARPER didn't waste much time marveling that he had "seen" the soldiers starting their punitive expedition.

Reason had simply worked during his delirious moments. He had seen the result of reason as pictures. It was as simple as that. If it turned out that he knew all the faces, and there were forty men armed as he had seen them, he didn't know just what he would think! He'd heard of a number of medicinal plants that made their eaters or drinkers see visions and dream dreams, and there might be something to them.

Just now, though, he had a real military problem on his hands. Word had clearly got out to authority in Itaituba or Santarem, that Gaiapos had killed more Brazilians; perhaps even that the Gaiapos were led by a man with white skin. And soldiers capable of doing something about it were on the way.

"They wouldn't be coming if it weren't for me," he decided. He was in this thing up to the neck, whether he liked it or not.

He knew how Brazilians "pacified" Indians, usually; with rifles, shotguns, machine guns. Harper had no great love for the Gaiapos, but he had no desire to see them wiped out, especially if he were in any way to blame for it. Nor did he wish to wipe out the soldiers. They were only doing their duty. They were probably as much afraid of the Indians as Little Portygee and his men had been. They were expecting whispering arrows, poisoned darts, war clubs from behind every bush; he knew just how men felt when, even in numbers, they marched into the unknown. They might be scared away, but they would return.

Uiuiipo sent fast men to the bank of the Tapajos, where, the word came back, they screamed invective at the soldiers. It looked as first as if they had overdone it, that the soldiers would not enter the jungles. But how would they explain when they returned to Santarem or Belém, or wherever they had come from?

The soldiers took their time, which was fortunate. Jan Harper needed time to recover, ever so little, from the long mistreatment he had experienced. Women smeared him with sap, resin, medicinal mixtures that made him smell worse than the Indians. He ate like a pig. He planned as he worked. Old Uiuiipo hung around him, waiting.

Another report came from the mouth of the Crepory, the worst possible news; at the same time it was an explanation of the delay of the expedition. The soldiers, led by a Brazilian colonel, had sent to Vila Nova for a Mundurucu tracker. They had found the one Mundurucu above all others Gaiapos had reason to fear: Huetinben, a *paje*, or medicine man, whose activities had so enraged his own tribe, years before, that he had been sent into exile, would be slain if he dared show himself among his own. Since that time rubber cutters had occasionally hired him to hunt down "wild" Indians. Huetinben was a dead shot with a rifle. He was a better tracker, hunter and warrior than any Gaiapo. Moreover, he was the only six foot, broad-shouldered Indian of any tribe that Jan Harper had ever seen. Harper had met and talked with the man, who spoke a bad brand of Portuguese. He had refused to hire the man, taking Little Portygee instead, because Huetinben was a killer.

Now, the soldiers were using Huetinben against the Gaiapos!

There wasn't a chance in the world of tricking Huetinben! Not, anyway, by using Gaiapos, for the simple reason that not even Uiuiipo would get within a mile of the big Mundurucu.

"We are done," said Uiuiipo, when informed that the soldiers were on the march, straight into Gaiapo territory, led by the big ugly "black face."

"We are never done," said Harper. "Huetinben can bring the soldiers faster than anyone else could."

"Huetinben follows the tracks of those who came to tell me," said Uiuipo.

"I'll have to do something about him myself," decided Harper. But what? The white man didn't live who could sneak up on a jungle expert like Huetinben.

The Gaiapos, properly led, might have kept away from the soldiers for years on end; but not with Huetinben leading them.

"If the Kuruaia would help us!" said Uiuipo.

Harper didn't even answer. There had never been murder accusations against the Kuruaia; they would keep on good terms with the whites. They would not be likely to give much help to Indians who had just wiped out one of their villages, carried off the women and girls.

"It looks as if I had done everything I could to make the situation impossible for the Gaiapos," thought Harper. "Even failing to hire Huetinben. If he had been with me he'd have spotted the *surucucu* before it became dangerous to me. And the Gaiapos would have given us a wide berth. Long before now we would have been in the Valley of the Xingu, out to Belem, perhaps I'd even be back home in the States. I seem to have made mistakes everywhere, and as for the States . . ."

He could just see himself trying to explain his facial tattoos to friends at home!

"I have a plan," he said finally to Uiuipo. "Whether we can carry it out depends on you. I've got to have your most courageous men and they must understand just what I want them to do. When they do, then we'll go to meet the soldiers. I'll call out to them in their own tongue. Then I will go in among them—"

"And show them right where to find us!" said Uiuipo, almost screaming. "This will never be! I will kill you myself first. You have made it clear you will allow nothing to happen to your own people."

"What else, then, Uiuipo?" said Harper. "How do we keep Huetinben from leading the soldiers right into your encampment? You can always run, but sooner or later . . ."

He couldn't explain a military maneu-

ver to old Uiuipo. It was clear to the old man that his captive could not be trusted. But he listened grudgingly as Harper explained, over and over, what those men must do. And *at* times they were not to forget, as they had during the excitement at the Kuruaia *maloca*, and start yelling. They must move in silence deeper than the grave, and remain silent in every move until Harper himself gave them permission to so much as whisper.



WHEN HARPER HAD explained the Gaiapos shook their heads. It wasn't possible.

They did not have the courage. To go into a white man's camp, without even knives in their hands, and get out again without sound! It could not be done.

"I shall be talking to the soldiers," said Harper. "Remember that! I'll even manage to keep Huetinben occupied."

He was most dubious about the Huetinben angle. The Mundurucu could hear sounds beyond the normal human ear; he could hear as a dog could hear, with his whole body. Huetinben himself could perhaps do what Harper was expecting over a score of Gaiapos to do in unison; but no human being could possibly do it without Huetinben hearing.

The Gaiapos said this. Harper knew it. Yet nothing else seemed possible. The Gaiapos were going to be "pacified," thanks to Harper's own attempt to cross to the Xingu from the valley of the Tapajos. He owed something to everyone connected with this situation. He believed in paying his debts.

There was just a chance that word had not reached the Brazilians regarding the white man with the Gaiapos. That chance must be used to good effect.

One thing, silly but of some possible use, was Harper's facial tattoo. It was identical with the tattoo of the big Mundurucu. He would be intrigued about that. Yes, the thing might be possible.

Harper trained his twenty-odd Gaiapos until they were letter perfect—provided their courage did not fail.

"I shall have someone," said Uiuipo, "where an arrow can be loosed into your body, if you turn against us."

"Huetinben will get the man who shoots!" Harper pointed out.

"After he shoots!" said Uiuipo.

Harper had absolutely no reason for loyalty to Uiuipo and his people and Uiuipo must realize that. He could scarcely expect to be loved by a man who had endured almost endless torture at his hands.

"But you will try my plan?" asked Harper.

"I have given you the men," said Uiuipo.

Scouts brought in reports of the progress of the soldiers. They were not traveling fast. They had ample food supplies and were in no hurry. Huetinben ranged all around them as they marched, but he was the only one who seemed in any hurry. Four Gaiapos were wounded by the big Mundurucu, which gave Uiuipo no reason to believe any more completely in Harper's plan. If the fastest Gaiapos could not keep away from the "black face," what chance had a blundering man like Janapo?

Nevertheless Uiuipo himself went along when, on a fateful morning, the Gaiapos set out to put Harper within execution distance of his plans.

"There must be no attempt whatever to kill anybody, even Huetinben!" said Harper. "If you fail this time, there is no way I can help you."

They agreed because there was nothing else to do, except retreat and keep on retreating through the years until, one by one, they were wiped out.

The Gaiapos, led by Uiuipo, with Harper in their midst, hiked through the day, slowly, cautiously, with the name of Huetinben constantly on their lips. They led him to the very edge of discovery, then halted. Harper must go on alone.

He did so, whistling. He had never heard an Indian whistle; maybe they never did. Huetinben would pick that up a mile away through the thick jungles. Harper was not hunting the soldiers; he was simply going forward until scouts picked him up, took him in to the Brazilian commander. There was an excellent chance that he would be shot out of hand. Any Brazilian would shoot first and look afterward. Huetinben would notice immediately that he was no Gaiapo.

Harper walked on. He did not know exactly where he became aware that he was being stalked, that he had met Huetinben, been allowed to pass, and that now Huetinben was behind him.

He hesitated about calling the Mundurucu by name. If he did, would the big man immediately become suspicious, wonder how he knew that he, Huetinben, was with the soldiers? The erstwhile *paje* was stupid, but he might be cunning enough to figure that out for himself, and connect him too intimately with the only people who could have known that Huetinben was guiding the soldiers: the Gaiapos.

Harper continued on until gooseflesh began to horripilate his whole body, when he decided to take the risk.

"Huetinben!" he called softly. "Huetinben, where are you? I know you are near. Take me to the soldiers."

His Portuguese, as he remembered, was just about as good as that of Huetinben; both were unbelievably bad.

Huetinben, naked save for a vine belt in which a razor-sharp bush-knife swung, came out of the forest, grinning. He was close enough to have touched Harper even before Harper spoke.

"Where Gaiapos?" he demanded. "They close. I smell Gaiapos!"

Harper pointed back the way he had come.

"There," he said, "a long way ahead. They send me to talk with the soldiers, ask them to come in peace, to spare lives of Gaiapos."

Huetinben laughed softly.

"No good!" he said. "Kill all Gaiapos. The colonel say so. But come. Why you 'black face,' like Huetinben?"

"Magic, Huetinben," said Harper, "Gaiapo magic!"

He gave that answer to the Mundurucu ex-*paje* on the spur of the moment, then wondered if it were not a statement of the exact truth. It puzzled Huetinben—not that he was difficult to puzzle!—and might lead to his complete discomfiture.

When Harper walked into the encampment half an hour later, night had fallen. The soldiers stared at him with complete lack of friendliness. Colonel Ruymundo Darata, the self-important little officer in command of the expedi-

tion, received him coldly. The colonel used just one word to explain the reception: "Renegade!"

"I am no renegade, sir," said Harper. "I have taken part in no Gaiapo attacks against Brazilians."

"Official reports say otherwise," said Colonel Darata. "Why are you here?"

"To ask for mercy on the Gaiapos, sir," said Harper.

"I am here to pacify the murderers!" said Colonel Darata. "History proves there is just one way to do that—with firearms!"

"Perhaps I can persuade you otherwise, sir."

"You are a prisoner," said Darata. "I may decide to have you shot. But for you I would not be undertaking this foul expedition!"

"Even a condemned prisoner is fed," said Harper, smiling. "I haven't had a decent meal in a year and a half!"

"You will be fed," said Colonel Darata grimly.

"May I talk with Huetinben? He is an old friend."

"He is also our protection against possible surprise. The answer to your request is no."

But Huetinben, hearing his name, came up to Harper, grinning. Darata scowled at him. Huetinben grinned at the colonel. He was well aware of the fact that without him the expedition was just a group of foolish soldiers lost in the jungles.

CHAPTER VI

WHITE MAN'S MAGIC



"HUETINBEN, your place is out in the jungles," said Darata, "making sure this is not a trick; that the Gaiapos are not closing in on us."

"They not come rifleshot close to Huetinben!" boasted the Mundurucu. "They 'fraid. Huetinben hear, feel, smell, see, if they come closer!"

Thus Huetinben outlined Harper's own problem, if he were to bring off a coup that would avert bloodshed. He must do something to nullify the hearing, feeling, smelling, seeing of Huetinben. There was only one way to do that; put him out somehow, and in the presence of soldiers, officers, and Colonel Darata. The latter was trying to make up his mind whether to shoot Harper as it was. Harper could almost see his mind work. It would mean fame for Darata to return and report the death of the renegade and the destruction of many of the Gaiapos; it would be a greater thing to take Harper back as a captive.

Darata would be looking out for the main chance. He would also be averse to losing his command and his life in the jungles. The situation had many ramifications. It was completely explosive. One fact was useful, if he used it at exactly the right time: the supersensitiveness of Huetinben.

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"Why you black face?" asked Huetinben, after Darata had grumbled himself out without stirring the big Indian.

"It is Gaiapo magic," Harper repeated. "The Gaiapos not only wanted a white-skin to lead them, they also thought that by tattooing him with the tribal marks of the Mundurucu, they endowed him with the speed, cunning, vision and jungle wisdom of the Mundurucu hunter-warrior."

This was glib on Harper's part, a wild idea of the spur of the moment. It did serve to increase Huetinben's puzzlement. The big man frowned, his own deep green mask writhing. He put his fingertips to Harper's face, studying the marks.

"It is same," he said. "Juice of *genipapo* fruit. Cooked under dirt. Mixed with resin. Pricked in with spines of *tucuma* palm. Is this so, *senhor*?"

"It is so," said Harper, who did not know whether it was or not, but was of no mind to tell Huetinben how he had been tortured, though surely the Indian could tell from his marks and scars. "The mixture was made as you say."

"Several things they do not do," said Huetinben, while Harper figured out exactly where the point of the big man's chin was. "They punch no warrior holes in the ears . . ."

"This proves I do not make war!" said Harper.

Soldiers were assembling around Huetinben and Harper, vastly curious about the subject of their halting conversation.

"There are no holes in the ears indicating you married man," continued Huetinben.

"I have not married a Gaiapo," said Harper. His heart was hammering with excitement. Could he do what he had in mind, with everybody watching and listening? For all that the Brazilians were innately careless, they still were more than normally on the alert because of the certain nearness of Gaiapos. Their campfire, over which men roasted meat and fish on sticks, outlined them all. The Gaiapos, if they had the courage to come close enough in the dark, could have shot every man. But they would never try it with Huetinben among the soldiers—unless Harper's "magic" proved itself.

The group ate while Huetinben asked

labored questions about the Gaiapos, and Harper watched Huetinben for the first sign that the Gaiapos were closing in. Harper noticed that the four officers carried pistols in their belts, but that rifles and automatic rifles leaned against trees or lay in hammocks.

Out in the dark a limb cracked like a pistol shot. Soldiers looked in that direction. It would have been a perfect spot to lash out at Huetinben, but Huetinben cried out with disdain, "It is a curious tapir! Gaiapos not come so close."

The moment passed. An unconscious Huetinben was of no use if the Gaiapos were too far away to take advantage of the diversion. Moments wore on. Harper began to fear that the Gaiapos had lost their nerve; that spies close enough to see were reporting his apparent friendliness to Uiuipo. No, no Gaiapo spy would be so close.

There was a sudden rigidity in Huetinben. His head started to turn to the left. Harper did not hesitate, did not look around. Both men were standing. Harper had just drunk coffee from the gourd tendered him by Huetinben. Harper struck, a sudden, savage hook to the button, a thorough gamble. Huetinben fell as if he had been hit on the head by a sledgehammer. Soldiers cried out. Officers and men crowded around to look down at Huetinben. Darata pushed the muzzle of his pistol into Harper's back.

"What is it?" he grated. "You struck Huetinben. Why?"

"He insulted me!" said Harper, trusting nobody would ask how, or exactly when. He stared down at Huetinben, wondering how many seconds he would be out, wondering whether he would have to kick him on the temple to keep him out the necessary time. He knew he had made an implacable enemy, for himself and for the Gaiapos. After this, Huetinben would spend his life hunting Harper, and Gaiapos. But even if he could have done so, he had no desire to kill the big Mundurucu. The man lived by his own light.

"If anything goes wrong, Harper," said Darata, "I'm going to send a bullet through your back."

"Wouldn't you rather take the white 'renegade' in alive? Then everyone can

see how you succeeded with your mission!"



HARPER, looking past the gaping soldiers, noticed some odd differences in the camp.

A hammock which no one had touched swayed slightly, though there was no breeze. Huetinben would have seen that; soldiers would have thought nothing even had they noticed. Rifles which had been leaning against trees were no longer there. Two automatic rifles Harper had seen were also gone. Shortly still others vanished, and Harper saw no Gaiapos anywhere.

The thing was working, wild and crazy as it had seemed. The fearful little Gaiapos were coming through! He could just imagine how they would enjoy rushing in and working on these soldiers, and especially on Huetinben, with their *bordunas*. But they were carrying out Harper's tactical plan.

The soldiers, no matter how careless, could not remain long in ignorance. The cry broke even before Harper was ready.

"My automatic rifle; It's gone!"

Attention of all, even of Darata, who still held his pistol against Harper's back, was turned away from the renegade. Eyes stared out in the night, wide and unblinking.

"My rifle is gone! And mine! My automatic rifle, too. My pistol has disappeared. Curupira!"

Even when it must have been clear to them what had happened, the soldiers first blamed Curupira, mischievous god of the jungles, for the strange disappearance of the firearms. Darata jabbed his pistol deeper into Harper's back.

"You did all this, planned it all!"

"Yes," said Harper. "I did not wish to be killed, naturally. Nor did I wish you to mow down Indians who never did you any harm; Indians who only resented invaders."

"You have sentenced yourself to death!" grated Darata.

"I think not," said Harper, hoping that what he said was true. "You now have few weapons. You are surrounded by Gaiapos with arrows nocked. If anything happens to me, half your men will go down with the first flight of arrows. In

fact, it might happen even if you seem to be threatening me!"

Instantly the colonel stepped back. His oaths were deep and heartfelt.

"I don't believe the Gaiapos have nerve enough to stay so close!" he said.

"You can risk it, of course!" said Harper softly. "But remember, you *could* be wrong, for they *did* come close enough to carry off most of your weapons. No, Colonel, I am a hostage who must live if you want to live!"

"Then what is to be done?" demanded Darata.

"Let me go," said Harper instantly. "I'll rejoin the Gaiapos. I'll keep them from molesting you as you return to your boats."

"Such humiliation!" said Darata. "I'll return, with twice as many soldiers and weapons! I'll wipe you off the face of the earth!"

"Perhaps, but remember, if Gaiapos have remained wild and free with only bows, arrows, knives and warclubs, what they may be capable of doing with automatic rifles and pistols!"

"I can still hold you a prisoner," said Darata. "You probably know weapons. They do not. Without you, what can they do with the firearms?"

"Without firearms," Harper pointed out, "and with me as a prisoner whom the Gaiapos do not wish to lose, do you think it likely that you will ever reach your boats?"

"You've overlooked nothing, have you, Harper? You are a dangerous man. I shall see that all Brazil hears about you. A huge price will be placed on your head."

"You will think much and long," said Harper, "before you make a laughing-stock of Colonel Ruymundo Darata!"

Huetinben was just stirring into consciousness when Harper walked away into the night and kept on walking until Gaiapos touched him, led him to a jubilant Uuiupo, to whom Harper said, "March, and march fast, Uuiupo! Huetinben will never forgive you or me! Even now he may be following us!"

Harper did not take time even to secure safeties on the captured weapons. The Gaiapos picked up their wives and children and the retreat eastward became a greater rout than the retreat from the

Uiuiipo, like a child with a toy, lifted the rifle and sent a high-powered bullet through the warrior's stomach.



Kuruaiia. But there was growing jubilation in it.

"You will teach us these weapons," said old Uiuiipo, "and we shall overcome whiteskins wherever we find them!"

Uiuiipo retreated for three days before it became apparent that Huetinben was not in pursuit. It occurred to Harper the very first day that Colonel Darata would not have overlooked Huetinben's obvious value as a scapegoat. His humiliation could be charged against Huetinben's "treachery." Thus the colonel

would have an interesting prisoner from whom he might salvage something of honor. In any case, it was clear that Huetinben, unencumbered, would have overtaken the Gaiapos long ago had he wished.

"Now," said Uiuiipo, "you will begin to teach us the magic of the whiteskins' weapons."

Harper was dressed in the clothes he had worn into the jungles. It had been natural enough for him to wear them in retreat, though he had looked much further ahead than that. He had planned

his next steps as he had planned the business of outwitting the Brazilian soldier group. That Uiuipo would ever let him go he knew better than to hope. He was more valuable than ever to the Gaiapo chief.

"Let all the weapons be brought together here," said Harper.



TRAVEL through the jungles for three days without care hadn't helped the weapons much. There were six automatic rifles, all of them fully loaded and set at semi-automatic. They were weapons with which Harper, as an ex-service man, was very familiar. He had taught many men their use.

Harper had told the Gaiapos nothing about ammunition. There would be more cartridges, he had felt, in the weapons, than he would have any use for.

Harper grouped the Gaiapos behind him, behind the pile of weapons. He examined each weapon in turn. The rifles all had cartridges in the magazines. There were enough cartridges to make any trained force dangerous for a short time. Some Gaiapo had brought away a bandoleer, and Harper sighed with relief to see it among the trophies.

One after the other, while the Gaiapos chattered behind him, Harper ejected cartridges into the dust. This done, he lifted the first automatic, set it at "automatic," turned the muzzle on a young palm tree, set his finger on the trigger. When the cartridges had all fed through the hot barrel the palm tree lay flat upon the ground, and Harper turned to see that every Gaiapo had vanished.

Taking his time, he emptied every other automatic, dropped it to the ground.

Uiuipo came back.

"I can learn this magic," he said. "I am chief of the Gaiapos."

"Yes," said Harper, "you can learn it. But know this: it will do—" he pointed to one of the weapons—"to men and animals exactly as it did to that *paxiuba* palm, if you point it as you point an arrow!"

"Show me," said Uiuipo, gingerly lifting a rifle.

"This does not fire so often," said Harper. "It does not chatter like those I

just shot. Here are the 'arrows'—very small, you see. They go in here, so! When you are ready, you point, and pull *this*!"

To his horror Uiuipo, like a child with a toy, lifted the rifle and pointed it straight at Harper himself. But as he pulled the trigger Harper jumped aside, felt the burn of the bullet, saw a Gaiapo warrior sink to the ground, groaning. Uiuipo had sent a high-powered bullet through the man's stomach.

Next instant Harper had snatched the weapon from the old man. Uiuipo, watching the warrior die, cackled with delight. Harper, since the dying man could have been himself, felt sick. The Gaiapos were awe-stricken, silent. They looked at old Uiuipo as if he were Curupira himself come to be their chieftain.

Harper would wait no longer. With this rifle in his hands, together with such ammunition as he could carry in the bandoleer and his pockets, he felt he could manage. He backed away from Uiuipo.

"You have seen what the weapons do," he said calmly. "These weapons I possess will do it to whoever tries to stop me. Uiuipo, Gaiapos, I am going back to my people."

There was a brief pause.

"They will kill you," said Uiuipo. "You have an Indian face."

"I will take long, and return to my people by another way, from another country . . ."

But there was no use trying to explain that he would go out through Boliva, or some southern nation, to evade capture in Brazil.

"We will follow and slay you with the whiteskins' weapons," said Uiuipo.

"There are no magic arrows left," said Harper. "I shot all away except those I have on my body."

"Then the weapons are useless!" cried Uiuipo.

Uiuipo did not know that the rifles needed oil, care and protection from rain. The captured firearms would indeed be utterly useless in a few more days. There wasn't the slightest chance they would ever be used against Brazilians.

But Darata and other officials would not know this. They would look forward to some not-too-distant day when a force of well-trained, well-armed Gaiapos would

wipe out the Brazilians in the Tapajos. Then, when it did not happen, they would forget. It would be a long time before another punitive expedition came to the jungles.

Uiupo would have to work out his own salvation where the Kuruaia were concerned. After all, they had been doing it for generations. Maybe he could even trade the weapons to the Kuruaia—who knew something of firearms, but did not use them against Brazilians.

Jan Harper, turning at last from the silent Gaiapos who looked after him, vanished into the unexplored jungles. He had, he felt, managed everything about as well as he could in the circumstances. Now his task was to penetrate the unknown, exit from Brazil and tell his story in some other country—then go back to the States and answer questions, all the rest of his life, about the irremovable mask of deep green. He was really in no hurry to do this, he thought. He didn't mind if it took a couple of years.

In fact, it came to him suddenly, he didn't want to do it at all! He had debts to pay—debts to Indians, to Gaiapos and Kuruaia. He turned westward and headed for the Tapajos River . . .



TEN days later he startled Colonel Ruymundo Darata, in Itaituba, out of his normally somewhat added wits.

Darata was forming another expedition to wipe out the Gaiapos and hunt down the "renegade."

Before Darata could draw and shoot, or yell for a guard, Harper grinned at him and said, "I have been thinking—according to Brazilian law, I am not likely to draw more than seven years in the clink. I'm here to take it on, but I've got a proposition."

Darata spluttered. His reaction amazed Harper, but Darata finally got it out.

"The newspapers," he managed, "have

made so much of you. Reporters in the United States want to travel with me when I go after you again. It's amazing. Explorers, American and British, want to organize expeditions to 'rescue' you. My friend, if my own courts put you in jail for even a year, I am an amazed man!"

Harper was a prisoner now, simply because he was surrounded by awed soldiers who forgot the respect due their colonel and crowded in from somewhere to listen.

"I am not surprised," said Harper, "but I am a little ashamed. The fact is that but for me a lot of Kuruaia and Gaiapos would still be alive. So, I am throwing myself upon your mercy—with this suggestion: whatever time I may have to serve, send me back among the Indians to serve. I shall stay among them until I have made peace between the Gaiapos and the Kuruaia. There is something else: not even the priesthood has dared to send a mission to the warring tribes. I can clear the way for them."

Darata was all excitement, apparently forgetting that here was the man who had humiliated him.

"Leave the matter to me!" he said pompously. "Let it be that none other than Colonel Ruymundo Darata has made this arrangement with you."

"You take all the credit, Colonel, with my blessings," said Harper, "and I'll do the work. Go right ahead. I suppose I am under arrest?"

"Paroled in your own custody," said Darata, "and of course watched by my soldiers! But listen, my friend, since you have run away from the Gaiapos, do you believe they will take you back? That you will be able to do all you are planning?"

Jan Harper pointed to his own face.

"I am," he said slowly, "a kind of an Indian myself now. I find I do not mind it very much. In fact it occurs to me that in time I may become very proud of this mask I can never take off!"





WANDERLUST

By P. H. William Bachmann

There will be cold nights I know, my friend,
When even the restless heart beats slow—
When the highway stretches without an end
And home is a prayer that's whispered low.
And yet in the face of the withering foe
I will sing a song to the frozen wood,
"Come blinding sleet or engulfing snow,
I have made my choice and I deem it good."

For even the stubbornest frost must bend
To the warm caress of a bright sun's glow,
And again my adventurous spirit will blend
With birds on the wing and their friends below.
Once more will the springtime's melody flow
In an endless paean of brotherhood—
I'll smile, and the whole wide world shall know
I have made my choice and I deem it good.

And perchance if the sweet green earth offend,
And I long for a stout Northeaster's blow,
In a sturdy ship with a wheel to tend
I'll be off to pay her the debt I owe—
With a heave and a hitch and a roll-and-go!
I'll follow the sea as a rover should,
Just long enough for a chance to show
I have made my choice and I deem it good!

Envoi

Spirit, who sets the flame to grow
Alike in every vagabond's blood,
Let me say forever, in spite of woe,
"I have made my choice and I deem it good."

DECORATION BY L. STERNE STEVENS

By
RODGERS D. HAMILTON



When Nittaluk swerved to the north, Kirk dropped prone, leveled his rifle and squeezed off a shot.

DON'T ALWAYS GET YOUR MAN

ILLUSTRATED BY EARL EUGENE MAYAN



EVER been on the lower Mackenzie during the fall freeze-up? First the river freezes lightly each night. The days shorten, night lingers. Mornings you awaken to fog and flame-bright sundogs around the sun. The ice thickens. As the temperature drops below zero, the smoke from the native tents and trappers' cabins rises straight up in the still, crackling air.

Town is almost deserted. The Eskimos are gone to Banks Land for white foxes. The Indians to the forests for marten. The white trappers have scattered, except for those delinquents caught by the first ice.

Night is the best time then. As darkness falls in the early afternoon men drift to the North Star Inn. Gallons of hot, strong tea are consumed, and the great recreation of

the North—yarn-spinning—begins, to last through supper and on into the night. As you go home the Aurora flashes and flames across the sky, and the bright stars twinkle and glitter as your footsteps crunch across the snow.

There were four of us in the booth this night. Paddy, the little Irishman who has spent his life "hunting for the borders of NWT." Two trappers, who, with a successful ratting season behind, had lingered to spend their money, and me, an errant zoologist winding up an expedition. Moose steaks had come and gone, and we were relaxed and comfortable, enjoying the light, warmth, and companionship.

Paddy was reminiscing about some of his experiences in the Yellowknife country when the door opened to admit a solid, square-built man of about forty, the yellow-striped blue of the Mounties showing below his squirrel-skin parky. Seating himself at the counter, he waved to Paddy, and, after drinking his tea, he stopped by our booth to exchange a few jocular words with that gentleman. As he left the warm room for the dark outside cold, Paddy looked after him admiringly and said to the trappers. "You know him"—more as a statement than a question. I looked quizzically at him and he explained.

"Old-timer in the North, but new here. Corporal Kirk, corporal as of last week. All Mounties aren't sergeants despite the sensational literature." He gulped tea, and his face lengthened musingly, "You know, the Mounties are probably the most written about and least known outfit in the world. Ask the next six men you meet, Outside, what the motto of the Mounties is, and chances are you'll get six variants on 'They always get their man.'" He grinned. "Well, they're not all six feet tall—five feet eight in boots will do—and I've known some skinny ones. The news is getting around these days that they don't wear pink coats on normal duty, and some ain't even handsome. They're an enlisted force, and like your Navy, they get 'em good, bad, and indifferent. The first hitch weeds out the last two, and from then on they're mostly first class. As for their motto, it's '*Maintiens le Droit*'—Maintain the Right. 'Course, they generally get their man in the process, but sometimes, well, listen—"

He stuffed his pipe with Imperial Mixture. "You've seen Corporal Kirk. Do you know Queen's Crown Gulf?"

I had just come back from there, so the question was rhetorical.

"Dead center in the middle of the continent she lies," said Paddy, "Land of the Copper Eskimos, whom the sensational writers call blond. To the east 1500 miles, Hudson's Bay. To the west, us here in Aklavik. South to Yellowknife, nothing. To the North, the Pole."

I grunted. "You should write travelogues. You know as well as I do that there're a couple of men at Cambridge Bay, and over on Bylot Island, and a post at Craig Harbor . . ."

Paddy interrupted. "Yeah, sure, there're maybe ten men in all scattered over the northern islands and to the east, or nine, rather, since you came back. Let me tell my yarn my way—"



"WELL, Kirk was constable in charge of the station on Queen's Crown Gulf, three years ago, temporarily without an assistant. He had his hands full that year with a number of minor difficulties—an adventurous society dame who kept getting into trouble and headlines until he finally shipped her out, some game law violators, and a minor epidemic, not to mention the usual paper work. You know the routine those boys have to keep up—patrol enormous areas, check furs and trapping licenses, dole out family allowances to natives, maintain vital statistics records, and so on—jack-of-all-trades stuff.

However, there wasn't anything Kirk couldn't handle, given time. He'd have been unworried, except that over to the southeast of Crown Gulf, there was a band of half-breeds, mostly of Indian blood, and mostly minor criminals, who had been drifting into that wild area of the Barrens for years. They were a drunken, shiftless lot, who for one reason or another—trap and cache robbing, disorderly behavior of one sort or another—had been run out of every town and settlement from Churchill to Fort Rae. They'd drifted into that isolated area to fish, hunt, drink home-brew and fight.

"They'd created a village of sorts, an

unclean sore-spot on the tundras. Kirk knew very well that he'd have to get over there and investigate the place sometime and straighten it out, or it would become a constant source of trouble to the settlements nearest the hang-out. He had kept tabs to date by an occasional patrol in the area just this side of the nameless village, to let them know they were reachable. With people of the breeds' stripe that wasn't enough forever, though, and he planned a long winter patrol there as soon as possible.

"In the meantime, one man can only do so much, and there was the winter fishing, and a prisoner to supervise, and the endless reports and routine duties. He made a short trip to the nearest Eskimo village, and questioned the people there about the breeds, and left it at that. He knew the mukluk telegraph would carry the news that he was interested in the breeds, and hoped that would hold them in check until he got in another constable to help. He made his routine winter patrols without incident, and waited for spring, the supply boat, and a new man.

"Along about March, one of the Kog-molliks—Huskies, as they call the natives in those parts, got ideas about another man's wife. He dug up a fool kid about sixteen and promised to buy him a rifle from the Bay if the boy would kill the woman's husband. The kid made a bad job of it, only wounded him, and Nittaluk moved in and finished him off with a sealing spear. The woman gave in gracefully, but some of her relatives tipped off the constable, and he brought the man and his kid accomplice in and held them for trial over the spring break-up.

"Break-up came, and with it the supply boat, a replacement, and the trial of the culprits. You know how the Mounties handle cases like that. The natives either pine away and die if sent Outside, or they get the idea that it's all a big picnic—nice, warm climate, comfortable quarters in the jail, free meals, and so on, and come back all primed to kill somebody else. Like others before them, therefore, this pair was locked up every night in the jail cell made of two by fours inside the storeroom of the police post, and in the morning were turned loose to do all the dirty work that needed to be done. It's a great help all around. They learn to behave, their people see them being punished, which has a good effect elsewhere, and the Mounties are left free for more important work.

"Kirk felt pretty good about the whole thing. He had a year's supply of mail off the ship, had talked himself out with the officers and men, and, in addition to the two prisoners to lift some of the work off his shoulders, had a new assistant.

"The new constable looked good on first sight. He bounded ashore full of energy and questions, and pitched right into the routine chores. From his talk, Conant had had a rural upbringing and knew the woods, which helps in the tundra barrens more than you might think. He liked being outdoors, understood cold weather to some extent, and had considerable practical savvy generally. He was always taking his rifle and going off after seal or caribou, or running upriver to Massacre Falls for fish. Kirk was busy with red tape and requisitions just then, and turned all the hunting and fishing over to Conant and the prisoners for awhile."

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Paddy relighted his pipe. "I drifted into town about that time," he resumed. "Had worked over by dog team from Baker Lake, wanting to see that stretch of coast. I'd spent too much time sight-seeing, and lost the snow before I got to Free River. I waited till high summer came along, and then got a ride over with some natives in their boat. Kirk and I knew each other from Yellowknife days, and I hung around the post to give him a hand with one thing or another, for awhile, as a special constable.

"Conant and I went for two or three trips up the Massacre River, and though I had rather liked him at first, I found myself starting to change my mind a bit. He had a slow way of talking, biting off each word as though he would like to chew it up and spit it out. His light hazel eyes had a way of looking at you coldly as though he'd like to have you wriggling on a pin before him. I found him careless too, and too fond of taking unnecessary risks, which he liked to magnify at the time, to anyone with him. A couple of times I thought he was deliberately trying to scare me.



"I REMEMBER one day we went fishing at Massacre Falls. Conant decided when we were through that we should run the rapids below the falls. Ordinarily we'd have dropped down along the quiet water of the east bank, but it was getting dark, and Conant was in a hurry, he said, to get back to the big power boat we had brought up as far as it would go—about two miles below the falls. Well, we had a good stout rowboat, and the rapids aren't really dangerous to any moderately experienced river man. Conant, however, insisted on managing the boat so that we bumped on rocks that any fool could have avoided, kept commenting on our express train speed, though we were moving only moderately fast, and behaved generally in such fashion that Nittalnuk, the prisoner, who sat facing me in the bow, kept staring at me in puzzled fashion with which I could sympathize. It seemed absolutely pointless unless Conant was either much more of a tenderfoot than he seemed, or unless, as I said, he was trying to frighten us.

"There was another thing. Whenever

we went out in the boat he always put an Enfield, a .22, and a shotgun on top of the cabin in front of the wheel, and he liked to try out his marksmanship on *tsik-tsik*—ground-squirrels—small birds, and the like. I have seen him pick up the .303 rifle, chirrup at a ground-squirrel to make him sit up, and then coldly shoot him. There was no sense to it. A .303 doesn't leave enough of a *tsik-tsik* to do anyone any good, just a few rags and tatters. If he had been saving skins for a squirrel-skin parky, or wanted the meat for a tid-bit it'd have been understandable, but this business of strewing the river banks with mangled *tsik-tsik* left me cold. It used up expensive and hard-to-get ammunition too, better saved for caribou. Conant called it 'rifle-practice'.

"He thought well of himself as a rifle shot, and liked to indicate which part of the animal he'd hit. 'Watch me shoot his head off,' he'd say, chewing out those words with his pale eyes coldly gleaming at you, non-blinking. As I look back I can't ever remember him doing it except occasionally—he even missed the squirrels entirely sometimes, but it didn't seem to affect his confidence. 'I'm a pretty good rifle shot,' he'd remark, out of a clear sky. 'Watch me blow the head off that duck.' And up would go the .303. The duck would explode in a mess of feathers and shattered flesh all right, but he hadn't hit its head. Not that he ever bothered to pull over and see. The bird just floated off downstream.

"Well, a little of that sort of puts you off a man in these parts, where game of any sort is food, and maybe emergency food at that, some day. You don't like to see it wasted.

"Around the post things went pretty smoothly, however, with all the help. Kirk was finishing up his routine reports, fish were being dried for the winter's dog-feed, the meat safe was full, and the prisoners had plenty to do to remind them that they were prisoners. In fact, they maybe had too much. Kirk went up to Massacre Falls one trip for fish just to get a little fresh air, and when he came back he dropped into my tent for a smoke and chat. We chewed over a number of things and had a good evening, but just before he left he hesitated a minute, then turned back,

and asked, 'Paddy, you ever see any sign that the prisoners are, well, over-worked?'

"I considered. 'Well, no, not exactly. Conant speaks rather roughly to them sometimes, and I've seen him make one of them line the boat up the rapids all by himself—hard, wet work for one, fairly easy for two, but they are murderers, you know. One thing I do think, and that is he'd do well to quit being careless about those rifles he leaves lying on the cabin roof. I've seen him keep Nittalnuuk at the wheel for hours at a time with the rifles right in front of him, and Conant otherwise unarmed.'

"Kirk nodded, but said, 'I'm not worried about Nittalnuuk that way much. He knows I'd get him sooner or later. He wouldn't make a break without a lot of provocation. Well, let's hope it works out O.K. G'night.'"

Paddy paused and ordered a round more of tea from the Loucheux girl. When it came, he went on—

"Well, things drifted along for awhile more or less quietly. The natives behaved. The white men were all working. No epidemics, no game violations. Just a nice, quiet, peaceful summer. It wasn't until the blow-up finally came that I realized I had been subconsciously waiting for it all along. To this day, I can't make up my mind if it was the result of maliciousness or ignorance.

"You know most people here, whites and natives, wear shoe-pacs in summer, or rubber boots. Conant, however, like many newcomers to the Arctic, had splurged on a fancy pair of seal-skin mukluks, and wore them everywhere. Well, you know when you get a pair of those, you'd better get a native woman too, to take care of them. They are more or less impractical for rough summer use unless you were born to them.

"As most of Conant's work was done aboard the post-boats, the mukluks stayed in fairly good condition for a long time, but eventually got wet and dried out hard. Somewhere or other Conant had read or heard that the Huskies chew their mukluks to soften them in such case, and apparently, as we figured out later, he had made Nittalnuuk do this for him once or twice. I got tipped off to the situation

when I heard a racket in the police post one afternoon while I was cleaning some fish for Kirk. I looked in to find Nittalnuuk huddled in a corner while Conant stood defiantly facing Kirk, who was rating him soundly.

"'I don't care if he refused an order or not,' Kirk was saying. 'Chewing mukluks is woman's work. No man ever does it. It is beneath his dignity and against his pride. Besides, Nittalnuuk just doesn't know how. Don't let me catch you hitting a prisoner again. I'll decide when and if corporal punishment is ever to be used on a man.'

"He growled swift Eskimo at Nittalnuuk, who got up on his feet and stalked expressionlessly past Conant and out the door. Only, his eyes flickered as he passed the new constable, and I wondered.

"'Now that was bad,' Kirk said to me, when Conant had departed after Nittalnuuk. 'Bad for a Mountie to descend to hitting a defenseless prisoner, but worse for me to have to dress down an officer before a native.' He sighed. 'I figured it best to try to restore some of Nittalnuuk's self-respect, though.'

"I nodded. 'He's no man to let himself be hit lightly, nor one to be asked to chew mukluks either. He had a name as a hunter and a strong man among the Kogmolliks before you got him.'

"Kirk squinted thoughtfully. 'You know, Conant seemed to be rather enjoying himself when I came in, or not enjoyment, exactly, but kind of, well, excited—and not just in the angry way, either.'

"'He had a gleam in his eye when he left,' I said. 'I didn't get the impression he regretted anything. I'd keep an eye on him for awhile where Nittalnuuk's concerned.'

"Kirk nodded, and turned back to the post-house.



"CONANT and Nittalnuuk put out in the *Nayokhok*, the police boat that afternoon, to tend the police nets at Massacre Falls. I watched the boat disappear down the Gulf, then headed for the Bay store to talk to the factor, Danning, an old friend of mine and an expert on the Eastern Eskimo. We were comparing dialects of the various areas idly, late that afternoon, preparing to quit and head for din-

ner, when suddenly a tattooed old native woman, Koblella, came running up to the door, and shouted something I didn't catch. We opened up, and she panted out again, 'Nittalnuk he shoot p'lice. He float in boat long time. Maybe dead now, I think. Nittalnuk take him gun, he gone.'

"Danning has been around. He jerked a thumb at me as he went down the steps, and said, 'Get Kirk—I'll start the boat.'

"I lit out for the police shack and roused out Kirk. We grabbed rifles and first-aid kit, ran down to the beach, and piled into Danning's boat. Just off the mouth of Massacre River we spotted the police boat drifting slowly out towards the islands that dot Crown Gulf in these parts. We roared up alongside and Danning cut the motor. Kirk leaped over the rail and bent over Conant, who was lying in a pool of blood. I tied the boats together and joined him.

"'Still alive,' said Kirk briefly, 'Shot through the chest.' He fumbled at Conant's back. 'Bullet's gone clear through.'

"I stripped off Conant's parky while Kirk went into the cabin for the first-aid kit. The small blue hole on the left side of the chest was just wide of the heart. The big ugly hole in the back showed bone splinters, but no air bubbles, so the lung was apparently untouched.

"Kirk is the nearest thing to a doctor in the Gulf area, and he quickly cleaned and bandaged the wounds. We pulled blankets out of the boat bunks, and laid Conant on them, then slipped his sleeping bag up over his feet and body to counteract shock. Kirk started the *Nayokhok's* motor, and, towing Danning's boat, we whirled back to the landing and carried Conant up to his bunk. The Anglican missionary and his wife were waiting. Canon Walls is pretty nearly as good at medicine as Kirk, and, as Mrs. Walls volunteered to nurse Conant, Kirk and I were free to go after Nittalnuk. Kirk put the other prisoner to work gassing up the boat and loading provisions while he questioned Koblella.

"She had been tending nets near Massacre Falls, which is the best fishing area in those parts, and much used by all the village. On her way downriver in her canoe, she heard a shot, and, rounding a bend, was in time to see Nittalnuk climbing the

frozen-mud cliffs that fringe the river here. She said he had a rifle in his hands and another slung over his back. The police boat was drifting downstream, and she caught up with it and climbed aboard briefly. She couldn't start the motor, and had never handled a boat that size in the treacherous shallows at the mouth of the river. Neither was she able to transfer the dead weight of Conant to her canoe. Finally, she left him, and ran downriver and around to the village at her best speed to get help. She thought that Nittalnuk was heading upstream towards the Gloomy Lakes.

"We boarded the *Nayokhok*, briefly checked supplies, and roared off down the gulf for the river-mouth. Kirk threaded his way cautiously across the tricky shallows. They change from day to day, and call for the greatest skill in water-reading to get across without a grounding or two. He opened the throttle wide as we headed upcurrent between the tundra cliffs. It is about twelve miles to Massacre Falls, but it is only possible to run about ten of these in the big boat. The last two miles must be lined up in a smaller craft.

"We did not wish to waste time lining up, nor in portaging canoe, outfits, gas, and so on, above the falls just then—that could be done later if necessary. As we ran upstream, therefore, I made up two light packs, and when Kirk nosed the *Nayokhok* into the bank, we tied her up quickly and left her for Danning and the prisoner. We shouldered our packs, and headed along the rocky bank for the falls and the Barren Grounds beyond.

"On the high hill that lies beside the falls, Kirk threw down his pack, unslung binoculars, and, lying at full stretch, began to examine the country around us.

"'Four hour start, roughly,' he mused, 'Started below the falls, no pack, knows the country. Say twelve to fifteen miles at the outside.' I unslung my glasses also, and looked over the rolling tundra.

"'Plenty of valleys to lie low in out there,' I mused. 'He knows too much to skyline himself, and you know how one of those little dips in the tundra can conceal a whole herd of caribou, even when you're almost on top of them.'

"Kirk assented. 'Yes, he can move right along for quite a way, like that, but I've

hunted out there, and know the general lay of the land. Upstream towards the lakes, he'd head for that timber patch.' He pointed. 'That's the farthest outlier of the forest in this area. From that clump he can work his way through those other scattered patches back to the Lakes where the real woods begin. From there on it would take a regiment to spot him and get him out, if he has any woodcraft, and unfortunately he is one of the few Eskimo who do. He trapped for marten several years back there with a half-breed Indian.' He swung an arm to the east.

"Over there it's all tundra almost to Hudson's Bay, and there's the breed village I told you about. If he went that way we'll spot him soon, for there's one place where it's all as level as it looks from here, about fifteen miles across, and he's got to cross that pretty soon.'

"He turned his head northeast and jerked his chin coastwards. 'Yonder's the way his natural instincts would take him—along the coast. He's an Eskimo, after all, not an Indian. The tundra coasts and the sea are his home and livelihood, and there are Husky villages on King John Gulf where he'd find a welcome. He knows, that way, though, that we'd be sure to get him. I get over there once a year, on patrol. The Cambridge Bay men drop down once in a while, too. And the mukluk telegraph would let us know of his progress.'



"KIRK sat down, elbows on knees, eyes peering through the glasses, and continued. 'If Nittalnuk were an ordinary native, it'd be the coast regardless. If he

were white or Indian, he'd do as you and me, head for the woods—shelter to us from temperate zones. Southeast, there, is no man's land, and no native would be likely to head that way except under pressure. You know they hate the unknown, even more than the rest of us, and believe that where no man is known to live, no man *can* live.'

"I nodded. Stefansson has told the world how one tribe of natives will be completely unaware of the existence of a neighboring tribe, because, although their hunting grounds are adjacent, custom keeps them in one area. If for a variety of reasons they do not hunt an area, they believe that there is no food obtainable there, and no man can live there. It was because of this curious psychological quirk that the breeds had been able to found a village of refuge in the southeast.

"Kirk was still sweeping the upriver area. 'Wish he would head southeast,' he said a bit wistfully. 'I could kill two birds with one stone then. I've got to put the fear of God into those breeds over that way soon, or I'll be a busy laddy for the next few years.'

"His glasses halted in their quartering. 'Caribou over there,' he said. I put my binoculars on the tundra plain, focussed on the brown bodies, indistinct amid the green-brown of the tundra vegetation. 'He's not that way,' I remarked. 'They're grazing quietly.'

"The trees it is, then,' said Kirk. 'That means he must have crossed the river somewhere, or will have to soon.'

"He started off up the river bank, watching the bars for tracks. I worked my way along on the tundra hills above,

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watching the surrounding country for our quarry, to flush him out of possible ambush.

"Kirk is an energetic, vigorous sort, and had somewhat easier and more direct going than I. He was a hundred yards or so ahead when I saw a man with the short waddling gait of the Eskimo run from behind a clump of dwarf willow and over a slight rise. He disappeared into a dip beyond.

"I shouted a warning to Kirk, and a second later, just as he warily dropped to one knee, the solid thump of a .303 came bellowing through the air. Rock chips flew from the gravelly bar on which he knelt.

"Calmly, and without visible haste, Kirk got up and walked to the shelter of the rolling hills that rise abruptly from the river banks. I joined him, and, wordlessly, we unslung our rifles and slid the bolts open, checking for loaded chambers.

"Kirk was grinning. 'Still on our side of the river,' he exulted. 'He'll never get across to the woods now.'

"At that season of the year, the midnight sun drops close to the horizon at night, but it gave sufficient light to prevent any break for the timber across the river without our knowledge, provided we kept careful watch. The advantage, then, was ours, for we could split up into two mobile units, and by simple herding tactics could edge Nittaluk out of almost any position he was likely to take up on the tundra.

"Kirk sat down in a grassy swale to plan our strategy, while I lay full length in the tundra grass and watched the little dip that hid our quarry. The mosquito season was just over, the cool tundra breeze ruffled my hair, and, more or less at ease, now that Nittaluk was spotted, I was enjoying the excitement to the full. After a few minutes Kirk crawled up beside me, and looked over the terrain. He gave a smothered chuckle, then started to laugh slowly to himself.

"'What gives?' I asked.

"'Paddy,' said Kirk, 'If you were anything but a crazy Irishman I'd get rid of you now, or have to change my plans. I've got an idea that's enough to ruin my reputation in some circles, even if it works. But seeing Conant's likely to survive, I'm going to risk it.'

"'And what may it be, Constable?' I asked.

"'Watch and see,' said Kirk. 'I want you to sit here and keep an eye on yonder dip, and when Nittaluk shows, drop a bullet just to the west of him. Don't hit him, and be sure you keep your bullets west. When I wave for you, join me.'

"He slid off to the east through the tundra mosses. I watched him puzzledly as he headed in a great circle around Nittaluk's hideout, until he was on the far side of it from me. He headed for the river then, and back down it to the little side ravine where the Eskimo hid. He waved cheerfully to me, then flattened out and began a cautious stalk to the lip of the cut.

"With the powerful binoculars I could see his muscles bunch as he gathered himself. As he leaped to his feet his mouth rounded into a blood-curdling yell which drifted back to me a moment later, then spread into a grin. He dropped out of sight into the dip. Immediately a volley of shots rang out, and Nittaluk zoomed up into sight and tore off across the tundra towards Hudson's Bay in mighty leaps. I threw aside my glasses, and between laughs at his high jumps and stretches dropped bullets at his heels. Kirk reappeared on the edge of the ravine, reloading and laughing so hard he kept dropping cartridges. I joined him after Nittaluk was lost from sight in a dip of the prairie.

"'What did you do to him, anyway?' I asked.



"STILL chuckling, Kirk kept his eyes on the spot where Nittaluk had disappeared. 'He was clinging to the bank over there when I spotted him,' he said. 'He was peering through the grass at you with no idea that there was anybody behind him nearer than Great Bear Lake. I took a lung-full of air and let out a whoop that blew him straight up in the air. He lit running, which tendency I encouraged with a magazine-full past his ears. He went up yonder slope like a mountain-sheep, and by the time I could crawl up he was only a spot in the distance, and you were cheering him on.'

"'And what now?' I inquired.

"'We will now proceed at a moderate pace in his direction, firing alternately

and regularly at everything that shows in its vicinity,' said Corporal Kirk.

"We went back to our packs, abstracted the ammunition, of which we had a plentiful supply, of course, stuck rations in our pockets, and headed east.

"Every minute or so one of us would stop, aim carefully at some projecting clump of tundra grass or other target in Nittaluk's direction, and fire. We had hardly covered two hundred yards when we saw a little figure, dwarfed by distance, appear on the level tundra plain Kirk had mentioned when we were surveying the area. It ran with the bow-legged gait of the Husky, and, without looking back or pausing, headed east. Once it swerved to the north a bit, and the satisfied grin on Kirk's face changed to a determined squint. He dropped prone, leveled his rifle, and squeezed off a shot. At the third discharge, Nittaluk swerved so abruptly that he fell.

"He scrambled on his hands and knees for a minute, staggered to his feet, snatched up his rifle, and ran on.

"Kirk reloaded. 'That last one must have come pretty close,' he said. He watched the Kogmollik's progress. 'I think we can go back now. We'll get the boat, and grab some sleep, then make a patrol eastwards along the coast to make sure he doesn't have another try at cutting north. I don't think he will after he thinks it over, and I doubt most sincerely if he'll head back this way.' He chuckled to himself. 'Until the day I die, I'll never forget the way he bounced up in the air when I shouted.'

"We hiked back to the *Nayokhok*, and ran down to the village, where Conant lay, conscious and sullen. Danning and the remaining prisoner joined us, and we ran east along the coast. At strategic points we made reconnaissance trips inland. Kirk declared himself satisfied the evening of the second day. From then on we confined ourselves to friendly visits to the Eskimo villages and fishing camps along the coast. Everywhere we passed on the news of Nittaluk's escape and his crime. From King John's Gulf we turned back.

"Kirk and I were lolling on the cabin roof as we returned towards Crown Gulf, Mee-Yuk, the prisoner, steering, and Danning sleeping below, when I finally got

around to asking him just what all his strategic maneuvering was about.

"'I gather,' I said, 'that you want Nittaluk in that breed village over east, but why? You don't need any excuse to go, beyond what they've already provided themselves, and why make a tough assignment tougher by adding one more man to the odds against you? He thinks he's killed one Mountie now, and won't be easy to take.'

"Kirk grinned. 'I'm getting old, I guess, Paddy.' He tilted his peaked cap back on his head. 'To be honest, I've got no desire to be trotting back and forth over yonder every time those breeds act up. In fact, I've got no intention of doing it. There's plenty to do in these parts, and I've lost my new assistant. The way I figure it, Nittaluk is a pretty tough boy, and just now he believes he's killed a Mountie. He'll be on the jump for awhile, but eventually he'll hear Conant's alive. Now, he can live off the country, but that's mighty lonely, especially for a Husky used to plenty of visiting, as they do around here, you know. Also, eventually he'll want ammunition, and, being halfway civilized, he'll crave tea, sugar, and tobacco. The way I see it, he'll be drifting into that breed village sooner or later, and when he does, he's going to have a lot to say about the way they run things.

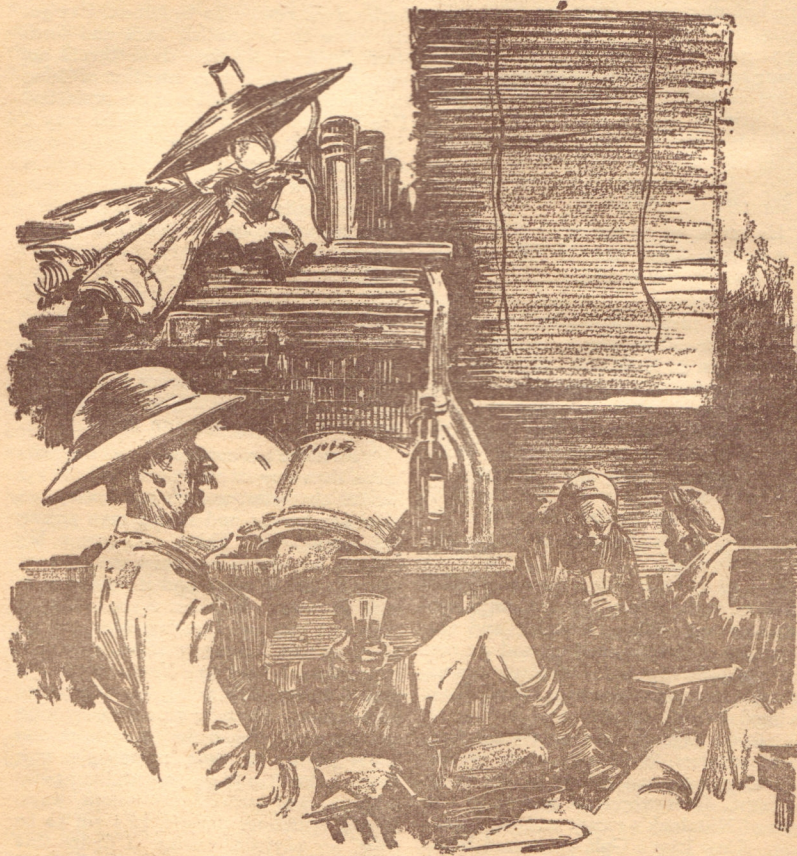
"'First, he's committed a more serious crime than any of them. Second, he's a hardier character, and, as you know, was a mighty hunter and strong man among the Kogmolliks. Third, he's got a big stake in keeping things quiet enough over there so that I won't find it necessary to head that way. He's heard me talking it over with you and Danning often enough to know that I don't want to make that trip unless I have to. Now, unless I'm pretty wrong, he's going to make those boys behave. Once he gets them hunting and trapping, they'll find it simpler and better paying to trade legitimately with Baker Lake than to go on with their petty thievery, and general no-account ways. As for Nittaluk himself, he's got to be good, for obvious reasons. I figure that being separated from his family and friends, unable to return here, unable to go anywhere else where there are police,

(Continued on page 129)

MALAYAN GOLD

WHEN LARSON discovered that the Malays had gold near their village he naturally turned to Coder and Perkins in Singapore. Anybody in the entire length of the Malay Peninsula, or the East Indies, or the many colorful and remote ports of southeastern Asia, or even as far as Cairo or Yoko-

hama, who was involved in some unusual business sooner or later called on Coder and Perkins, for this firm would issue very unusual loans, and it had a knowledge of the Oriental guile that went back generations, and some of the advice it gave or the things it did were downright magical.



Perkins' mustache twitched. "You are a geologist, Mr. Larson. You ought to know whether it is gold or not."

By JOSEPH EMERSON NEWTON



ILLUSTRATED BY
FRANK KRAMER

If you bought perfume from a Chinese in Hong Kong, and wanted to be sure you got perfume and not colored water, you hired Coder and Perkins to supervise the transaction. If you bought uncut precious stones in Ceylon, and wanted the real gems and not imitations, you used the services of Coder and Perkins. If your interests took you deep in the subtle undercurrents of the Orient, and you needed money to deal with Oriental thieves—and Occidental ones too—Coder and Perkins might make you a loan, and tell you exactly how your opponents might steal, those you must watch and those you might trust, and how much you might trust them.

That was why Larson got in a rickshaw and went to see them.

Coder and Perkins were the sons of former Coders and Perkinses who had been in the Far East since the very early days. They had agents and assistants, white and yellow and brown, all through the southeast and the islands, and up the China coast, and in India and Egypt, but their headquarters were in Singapore. They inhabited a dark series of what might be called offices way down on the waterfront, and they were not really like a business firm at all, for they kept no books, wrote no letters, had no clerks, telephones or files. They depended entirely upon the Oriental grapevine for their news, on Coder's knowledge of human nature, and Perkins' acuteness. They had a name and reputation, and they deserved it. For they could, if they were interested and for a fee, reveal depths of Oriental trickery that no other white men could even imagine, and their genius saved you money and grief.



AT first Larson thought he was in the wrong place. For Coder and Perkins were located right in the middle of the Chinese quarter. There the older women wore shapeless jackets and hobbled on tiny distorted feet, and the girls wore trousers or skirts slit up the sides. The young men had broad pale yellow bodies, and the middle-aged men were like monstrous Buddhas. Joss sticks were burning before shrines, and firecrackers added to the din of the Chinese, and mingling with the odor of oil, fish, spices, and soured rinds

of tropical fruits, was the sweet, overpowering scent of opium.

But the location of the office was as nothing to the interior. It was a dark and littered cavern with a ceiling fan squeaking overhead, and in the dim corners were some Malays, and Chinese, sleeping or playing cards, and in the middle of this outlandish place were two desks piled with newspapers, empty whiskey bottles, and dust. At these desks were two men.

One was huge, red, and fat, and he was apparently asleep, with his feet on the desk and a glass of whiskey before him. Larson could not make up his mind whether he looked like an enormous frog, or an owl, or badger.

The other man was small. He had a brown sun helmet on his head, and from under it he regarded Larson with beady eyes. He looked like a mouse under a toadstool, and his whitish mustache twitched, and he appeared very bored. He was holding a glass of whiskey in his hand, and when Larson got to his desk, the glass vanished. Larson didn't know where it could go, but it was gone.

"Is this Coder and Perkins?"

"That's Coder. I'm Perkins. What do you want?"

Larson pushed some papers off a chair in front of Perkins' desk and sat down. Then to his amazement the glass he had seen disappear a moment ago was again in Perkins' hand, and another glass was on the desk for Larson. He could see that it was brown with whiskey and the soda was bubbling up in it.

"Have a drink," Perkins said.

Larson gulped. "Thanks. I don't mind if I do."

Perkins smiled slyly and revealed sharp white teeth. Then he took a cigarette apparently right out of thin air, and a match came from nowhere, and Perkins spoke solemnly as though nothing unusual had happened.

"Smoke?"

Larson was speechless, but he took the cigarette, and Perkins lit it for him.

"Don't mind me," Perkins said. "I'm a magician who likes an audience. It has been beastly dull around here recently—frightfully so, old boy."

"I may have something to interest you."

"What, for instance?"

"I'm a geologist for the Sultan of Dohore."

Anywhere else this would have been impressive. But the Sultan was really an Eastern potentate over some malarial jungle just north of Singapore Island, and his subjects comprised a handful of poverty-stricken Malays. So Larson's job was not very much. The Sultan was obsessed with the thought of oil in his tiny domain, and that was why Larson had his position.

But there were rumblings in Coder's huge frame. He opened his heavy lidded eyes, and they bulged out like those of a frog, and they had the unwinking stare of an owl's, but they were deep brown eyes. After more rumblings down in his throat, Coder spoke.

"That old goat!"

"I beg your pardon."

"My partner," Perkins explained, "has just called the Sultan an old goat, and very aptly too. Go ahead, Mr. Larson."

Coder was subsiding back into his trance. But first he took a drink of whiskey, and his eyes closed, and the sweat stood out on his forehead, and he seemed to pay no attention to what Larson said.

"I'm a geologist and I've been working out of Dohore to the east coast. I've been spending quite a bit of time in a certain Malay village. Back of the village in the jungle are some ruins of ancient temples, and near these temples is a gully from which the Malays get a sort of peat-like mud or substance that they burn at night for mosquito smudges.

"As you know, this is a strange country out here, and especially so for my wife

and me who are fresh from the United States, and this slow-burning stuff from that gully is peculiar geologically—"

Coder's voice was a mild roar. "Does your wife go with you on these trips?"

"By no means, sir. There's too much danger of fever."

"She stays in the city of Dohore?"

"Yes."

"Is your wife pretty, Mr. Larson?"

"I beg your pardon."

Perkins said. "My partner asked if your wife is pretty."

Larson looked at Perkins who was regarding him with those beady eyes of his, and at Coder who was again apparently asleep. "Why, yes, she is very pretty, and I don't mind saying so."

"Young?" bellowed Coder.

"Yes."

Coder almost howled. "Not faded by the tropics?"

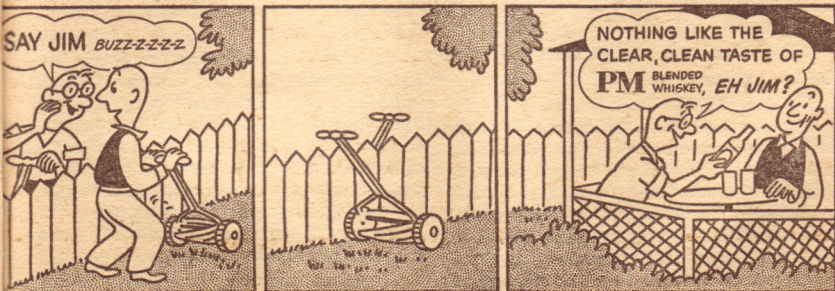
"No. But I can't see the purpose of all these questions!"

Perkins said, "Old boy, if you saw your way clear you would not have come to us. Go ahead with your story."

"Well, gentlemen, the Malays put some of the peat-like stuff in my hut when I stayed over night in the village, and it burned all night, and I must say it kept away the mosquitoes. I was so interested in the stuff that one morning I examined the ashes of the smudge, and I found this."

Larson took a small bag from his pocket, opened it, and poured out some yellow metal on the desk. Perkins squinted at it, and Coder opened one eye and looked at it, and returned to his trance.

Perkins' mustache was twitching. "You're a geologist, Mr. Larson. You



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ought to know whether this is gold or not."

"It's gold all right."

"You found it in the ashes of that silly mud?"

"Yes, and for several mornings. But not every morning."

"You think that gully has gold in it?"

"Not natural gold." Larson toyed with the pieces of metal. "This contains an alloy. My idea is that it is gold from those old temples, the gold of the forgotten people who built them, and the gully and perhaps lots of the country around, and even the ruins themselves contain quite a bit of it. Those ruins are quite extensive if you take the trouble to search them out in the undergrowth, and so there might be enough gold to repay an effort and investment. I was thinking that the Malays might lease the land from the gully on back into the jungle, and with a little equipment we might get results."

"Did you mention this to the Malays?"

"No, I didn't because I haven't got a cent of extra money. That's why I came to you. Coder and Perkins is the only firm that would make a loan for such a wild venture."

"We don't loan money unless we investigate carefully, and are convinced there is no fraud involved."

"I am not trying to deceive you."

"I didn't say you were, old boy. How much money would you need?"

"I should think about five thousand Straits dollars would get a lease on the land and get us started on salvaging the gold."

Coder heaved and puffed. His eyes were open and he was looking straight at Larson. "That land belongs to that old goat of a Sultan."

"Quite so, sir."

"You'd have to lease it from him, not he Malays in the village."

"That's very true."

Perkins took some billiard balls from his pocket and began to juggle them with astonishing skill. Then he got tired of this, and put the balls away, and opened a drawer of his desk, and a white rabbit and a small brown snake came out, and the snake went into a corner, and the rabbit sat on its haunches and blinked at Larson.

Perkins chuckled, his beady eyes were bright as buttons, and his mustache twitched. "It may be a case of a white rabbit and a small brown snake, or maybe you will get your loan. How long will it take to drive up to the village?"

Larson got to his feet. "Just a couple of hours."

Now in spite of jungles in the State of Dohore, the Sultan of the land, hidden temples, and Malays, and gold of ancient peoples, Coder yawned hugely and settled deeper into his chair, and closed his eyes this time in real sleep as Perkins and Larson left on their adventure.



THE Malay village was a collection of wattled huts with thatched roofs and built on stilts. It was a few minutes' walk from the highway where Perkins parked the car, and on an inlet from the sea on the east coast of Malaya just a little north of the city of Dohore and Singapore itself. It nestled in a grove of palms, and fishing boats were anchored at the rickety docks, and women were washing their clothes on the rocks of a little jungle stream that emptied into the ocean—pounding them clean on the rocks and rinsing them in the water. Chickens were dusting themselves under the floors of the huts, and goats were meditating in the shade. The air was rancid with the smell of fish and coconut oil. The men wore peaked velvet caps, and their lips were stained with betel nut, and both the men and the little brown women wore sarongs of many pleasing hues.

"It's all very simple, primitive, and child-like, isn't it?" Perkins was a bit sardonic. "I'm ashamed to think you are cheating these innocent children out of their gold."

Perkins stood with his hands on his hips and surveyed the village. "It all looks the same as before the Japanese were here. But it's not. There aren't enough fishing boats—the Japs took most of them, and I guess they are destroyed now. None of the rubber plantations on the way up are really back in production. It looks as though the Sultan of Dohore's kingdom has fallen on evil times."

Larson led the way to the gully back of the village. The bottom of it was caked

with a peculiar dark vegetable matter, and in the heat of the day this mud was cracked into almost regular blocks.

"Mr. Perkins, this is the tropical peat they burn in their houses at night to keep the insects away. That's what I got the gold from."

Now Larson pointed across the gully at the green wall of the jungle. Perkins shaded his eyes from the glare, and in the green gloom of the jungle he made out walls and crumbled towers, and moss mottled the carved and ancient stones. Where the walls were free of jungle scurf, one could see that they were elaborately carved with warriors, and high-breasted dancing girls, and elephants of war. In the heat waves these figures seemed to move and have a life of their own.

"Shall we examine them, Mr. Perkins?"

"I don't think it is necessary." Perkins leaned over and touched the trunk of a tree. "Know what this is?"

"I can't say that I do."

"It's a gum tree. See the gum oozing out of the cracks? The Malays use it as a substitute for wax, and they've been using the gum off this tree all right. I thought we would have company soon, Larson."

Coming from the village was a party of five Malay men. One of them was old, and he carried a bamboo staff on which he leaned heavily. He greeted Larson as a friend, but all the time he was watching Perkins, and from under his sun helmet Perkins was watching him. The Malay was dark and wrinkled, and Perkins was white and dried up, and they seemed to be measuring each other, to be sizing each other up in an almost professional way.

After the elaborate ritual of welcome was over Perkins began to talk to the old man. He said that Larson was interested in rocks and dirt, for what reason Allah only knew, and that now this white man, this white rabbit, wished to burn some of the mud to see what happened. He asked the old man to put his strong young men to getting peat to please the white man who was no doubt drunk and altogether crazy.

So four of the Malays ran down into the gully, and the old man retreated to the shade of a palm tree and leaned on his

staff, and Perkins stood beside him and regaled him with the juiciest gossip of Singapore, and all the many courteous phrases that Orientals love. They were both as gentle with each other as doves, and yet so cunning that nobody could guess the hidden rivalry between them. Meanwhile the Malays had built small brush fires, and they brought up black blocks of peat from the gully, and laid them on the fires, and Larson stood over them, his eyes bright with greed and excitement.

In soft words the old Malay invited Larson and Perkins to go into the gully and select their own peat to burn, and Perkins smiled and thanked him, but remained in the shade. Larson, however, ran down into the gully, and brought back several chunks of the tropical peat, and put them on the other fires, and now the smoke of the burning peat was curling upward to the blue Malayan sky.

One fire died down a trifle, and the old man hobbled out of the shade, and stirred it with his bamboo staff, and then rejoined Perkins, and regarded him with the calm and penetrating observation of the Oriental. But the moment the old Malay stirred the waning fire with his staff, Perkins became bored with the proceedings. He picked up a blade of grass, and chewed it, and scratched himself, and turned and looked at the village and the inlet of the sea.

Then, while the Malays stared in astonishment, Perkins began to pluck canary birds out of the air, and then release them to fly away into the jungle. He next began to find lizards all over his person; in his helmet, shorts, and shirt, and these multitudes of lizards he gently released, and they scuttled off in the grass. He told Larson that it was time for them to start back to Singapore, and the old Malay leaned the more heavily on his staff, and his eyes were on the ground.

But Larson was feverishly kicking the embers of the dying fires, and stooping and picking up objects that burnt his fingers, and he did this several times. The old Malay just looked at the ground, a dreamy smile on his lips, an air of grudging professional admiration directed at Perkins. So it was time to go, and Perkins grinned, and the old Malay grinned and showed gums without teeth in them.



LARSON and Perkins walked down the path to their car, and once when Perkins turned he saw the group of Malays still watching them; the young men standing about the smoldering fires, and the old man leaning on his staff in the shade. Perkins waved farewell, and the old man raised his staff above his head, and then the jungle swallowed them.

Perkins drove down the blinding whiteness of the highway, and Larson fingered the bits of gold he had taken from the fires. One moment they would be speeding through the damp tunnel of the jungle, and then the forest would cease, and there would be desolate savannahs with forlorn Malay huts on stilts in the tall grass. The hills would rise, and roll, and fall away, and they passed rubber plantations with their rows and rows of white-flecked rubber trees, and the houses of the planters among them. They soared through the little city of Dohore, crossed the waterway, and bore down upon Singapore. Larson was entranced with visions of wealth, for Perkins hadn't said a word the whole trip, and Larson thought the loan was in the bag.

It was sunset when they got back, and to Larson the colorful city was fascinating. He was alert to the white-robed Arab merchants, the Indian women tinkling by with bangles on their arms and legs, the pretty faces and slight figures of the Malay girls. So swift was the sundown that when they arrived in the noise and turmoil of the Chinese quarter, it was already dark, and across the harbor restless native drums were throbbing in the night.

The office of Coder and Perkins was even more weird than it had been in the daylight. The only light was from a candle on Coder's desk, and this threw fantastic shadows all over the place. Over everything hung the close heavy humidity of Singapore. The ceiling fan creaked overhead, and from the mosquito smudges came an almost stupefying sweet smell. Coder had his shirt off, and his fat body glistened with sweat as though he had oil on his body. His frog-like eyes watched them as they came to his desk.

Perkins didn't resort to magic to produce drinks. He simply poured them from a bottle on the desk, diluted them a trifle

with warm soda, and then spoke to Larson.

"I'm sorry, old boy, but we can't loan you anything. If we were like all other firms, we'd leave it at that, and then you might get a bank loan, or something like that, and lose it all in that gully and those temples. But we are really interested in our clients, so I'm telling you that there is no gold in those temples—people have been searching them for fifty years—and the whole thing is a trick worked out by that old Malay."

Perkins poured himself another drink. The light faded from Larson's eyes, and his figure sagged. Coder didn't say anything. His breath wheezed in the silence of the room. In the arcades below, the clamor of Chinese life began to ebb, for the East goes early to bed, and pervading everything was a strange smell of mold and damp hot earth sweating after rain—the scent of equatorial Asia.

Perkins' voice was weary, as though he were running through a school lesson. "The gold was planted in the smudges in your hut. Educated people like you, Larson, are often the easiest to fool.

"Now when the Malays went down in the gully for us to get clods of that peat, one or more clods were doctored. They were hollowed out, the gold put inside, and the holes stopped with tree gum. After the peat burned you found gold in the ashes.

"Then the old Malay asked you to go down and get your own peat. You picked out some that wasn't doctored. But you will remember that the old man stirred one of the fires with his bamboo staff. Bamboo, of course, is hollow, and the end of his staff was full of gold filings, and it was held in by tree gum. When he stirred the fire, the gum melted like wax, the gold fell in the fire, and so there you are. It was as simple as that, old boy."

"Where did they get the gold?" Larson asked desperately.

Insects swarmed around the candle—winged ants and flying cockroaches. Up-side down on the dim ceiling little lizards darted and devoured more insects. The reek of Singapore, pungent, penetrating, enervating, voluptuous, pervaded the office, and across the harbor drums pounded out a savage cadence.

Coder began to rumble and heave, and

when he spoke in a low tone he croaked hoarsely. "It's goat gold. They got it from that old goat, the Sultan of Dohore."

Damp winds from the sea made the candle waver, and huge shadows shifted on the walls. Larson cried. "But why?"

"Because you have a beautiful wife, Mr. Larson," Coder coughed. "I must congratulate you upon having a faithful as well as a lovely young wife."

"You see, Mr. Larson, you do not know the East or the Oriental mind, or the goat-like qualities of that little Sultan of Dohore. He thinks of nothing but pretty women, and all his life he has chased them, and usually had no trouble in getting them. If he had been able to get what he wanted from your wife you would never have found gold in the gully near that Malay village."

"But he didn't get what he wanted. So what is his reaction? He hates you because you have an exquisite and desirable wife, and he can't make any time with her while you are wandering about on these geological expeditions. He also dislikes you because you don't find any oil and bail him out of his poverty."

"The Sultan, of course, is an Oriental, and he likes to do things indirectly. He finds a way that he can punish you, and your wife, and at the same time get money from you. He told that old Malay in the village to plant the gold. You would find it. You would get excited. You would borrow money to lease the temples from the State of Dohore, which means the Sultan of Dohore. You would spend all your money on the lease, and you wouldn't find any gold. You would be broke, and the Sultan would have your money for the

lease. That is pretty smart work, you must admit."

Perkins said, "If you will pay me for the gas to the village, we'll call it square. As a matter of principle we must charge something. But since you will be looking for another job, we'll only bill you for five Straits dollars."

"Yes," growled Coder, "you must go elsewhere. You can't submit even the best of women to constant temptation. It might be in the Sultan's mind that if he broke you, and got you in debt, his little offers to your wife might be more successful. It's a little spider-web of intrigue, Larson, and quite confusing and unreal to you, no doubt. But you should thank us for untangling it."

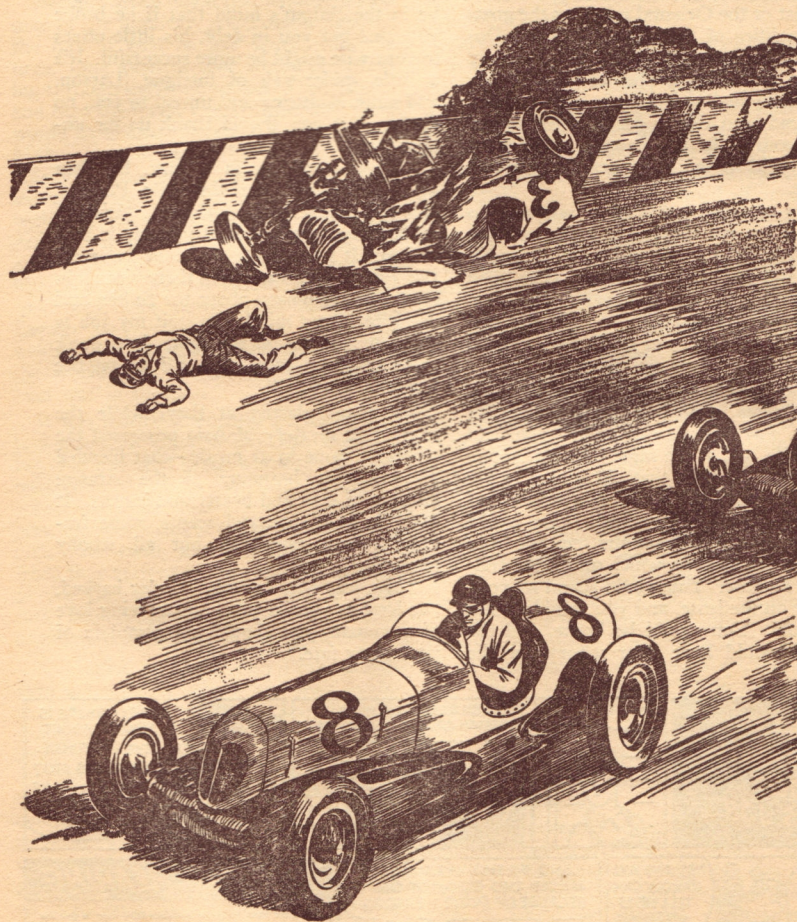
Larson stood up in a fury, his lean figure towering over the little Perkins, and the seated bulk of Coder. "Well, I don't know whether what you say is true or not. It's too fantastic to be believed. But I can't go on working there since you have put this poison about the Sultan and my wife in my mind. To quit my job is going to put me on the spot. Jobs don't grow on palm trees, and I'll be on the beach in a week!"

He stood glaring at them while the magic and mystery of Asia possessed the office. It came in as music—that blended discord, that harmony of the strange tongues of men and beasts and insects. It came in as a thousand scents, some fragrant, some repulsive, but all wholly magical.

"My dear Mr. Larson," Coder barked, "as long as you have the unswerving love of a woman, you should not complain of your petty fate."

<p>HOW THE FOREMAN GOT HIS JOB</p> 	<p>WE'LL BE NEEDING A NEW FOREMAN SOON, TOM—ANY IDEAS?</p> <p>JIM IS A GOOD MAN—IF HE ONLY WEREN'T SO HARD OF HEARING—IT'S SUCH A HANDICAP</p> 	<p>THAT NIGHT</p> <p>MARY—WHERE IS THAT AD ABOUT THE PARAVOX HEARING AID? I HOPE I HAVEN'T PUT IT OFF TOO LONG</p> 
<p>JIM IS A NEW MAN WITH HIS HEARING AID</p> <p>YES, AND YOU HARDLY CAN TELL HE IS WEARING IT</p> 	<p>AND TO THINK—I ALMOST MISSED THIS PROMOTION BECAUSE OF POOR HEARING</p> <p>FOREMAN JAS. SM</p> 	<p>FREE AID TO BETTER HEARING</p> <p>Send for new 16 page booklet—tells how to get the right aid to better hearing. Paravox Research, 2122 E. 4th St., Cleveland 15, Ohio</p> <p>Guaranteed by Good Housekeeping</p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Address _____</p>

DEATH IS A LAP AHEAD



As they flashed by the stands, he saw a crumpled car against the wall, a man lying twisted beside it.

ILLUSTRATED BY MONROE EISENBERG

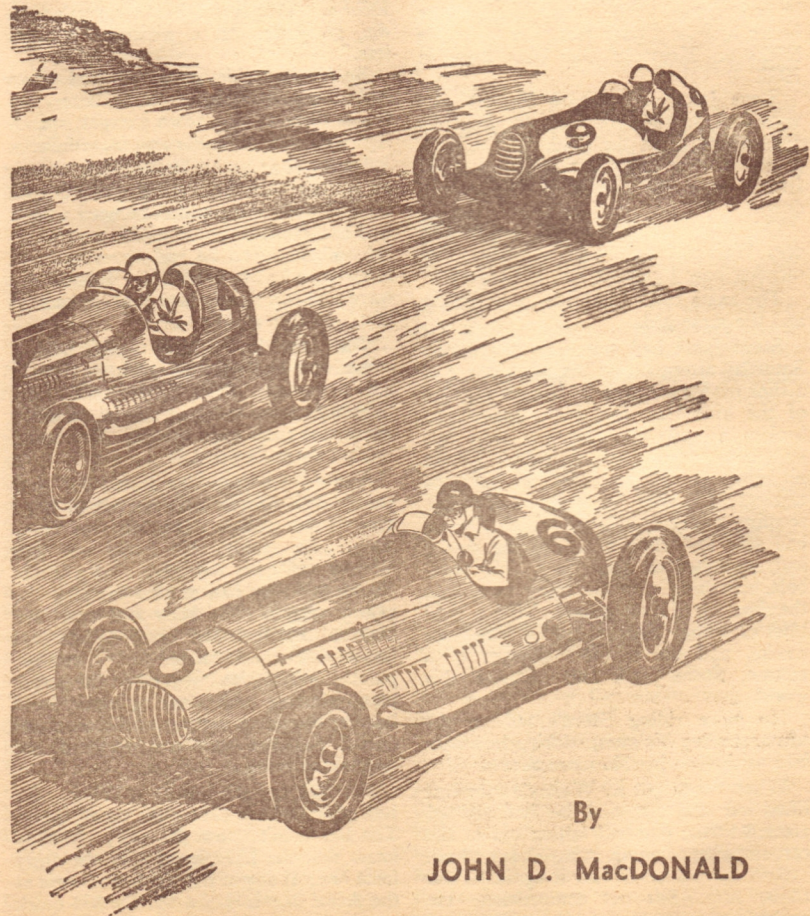
WHITEY EDISON turned in the seat and looked out the rear window of the sedan at the sleek yellow flanks of the racing car which followed with driverless docility. The tarp was roped snugly down over the cockpit, and it rolled on rubber that was useless on the track.

"She follows nice, Whitey," Bob Oliver said. "I can hardly feel her."

The speedometer needle hung at fifty. Whitey turned back and looked at the

road ahead, then at the oddly heavy wrists of young Bob Oliver.

The kid had a sweet touch on a wheel. Whitey Edison let his heavy body sag in the seat and half closed his eyes against the afternoon sun. He felt a dull and constant alarm, mingled with surprise that after so many years he should once again be heading for a track, an iron in tow. His wide red face under the thinning thatch of white hair showed a remaining hint of the recklessness which it had held in youth.



By

JOHN D. MacDONALD

If it hadn't been for the kid's old man . . .

The puzzled young voice broke into his thoughts. "What's eating on you, Whitey?"

"How do you mean, kid?"

"Well, you act like we were heading for a wake instead of for first prize money at the Acme meet."

Whitey knew that it was the time to give Bob Oliver the full story. Not that it was a pretty story. But the kid should know. Whitey Edison. For a few years they had called him Madman Edison, and he had grinned at the name. With a little better luck he'd have placed first on the bricks on Memorial Day back there in 1933.

Steve Jantz and Whitey Edison. Always jockeying for position, carrying tight competition to all the tracks in the land, plants roaring down the stretches, good friends once the checkered flag flashed down.

O.K., boy, so you edged me in this one. Wait until next week at Miami. Remember how I cleaned you in California?

The same tracks and the same drinks and the same girls.

Steve Jantz had gotten it on a sunny Saturday afternoon on the south curve of a slick macadam track in Louisiana. One of the kids they had both lapped had broken an oil line. Steve's deck had started to swing when his rubber hit the oil smear on the macadam. In horrified fascination Whitey had watched it swing, seemingly in slow motion. Steve's Special had sent the white boards flying and it had continued on then, in a slow parabola, smashing with sickening force into the shoulder of rock beyond. With a lurid blast of orange flame, a roil of blue-black smoke, and the thinnest whisper of a scream, Steve Jantz had departed this world.

No more riding Steve's tail on the turns, stealing his girls, sticking him with bills at the hotels. No more Steve.

When Steve got it, Whitey's foot had lifted off the gas and he had drifted around to the pit, half falling out of the car, stopping to vomit in the dust and oil.

And he had never had it again. Time trials, sure. But not competition. He couldn't pass a car. Always it seemed

ready to sway, whip the deck around, smash the life from the driver . . .

He had begun to drink more steadily then. He drank the car away, got a pit monkey job, began to pick up motor lore, acquire cleverness in his blunt fingers. It was a race to see whether the liquor would get him before he became a first class mech. He became a top mech, and lasted about a year. Then, drunk on the job, he had forgotten to tighten down a couple of front end bolts. Len Cassidy, the driver, had spent six months flat on his back as a result. And no one would hire Whitey Edison. "That soak? Brother, you wanna die, go jump out a window. It costs less."

So Whitey Edison had drifted down and down, working a week here, two weeks there in tank town garages, spending every cent on liquor and forgetfulness.

By the time he hit Brooksport, he was on bottom. Alcoholic ward. Stan Oliver, the kid's old man, had once been a soak and had straightened out. He wanted to help others. And he had never told the kid that he had found Whitey Edison in a ward and had slowly brought him back to life.

The first day Whitey could hold a wrench he had gone to work in the old man's garage. Stan Oliver had said, "Whitey, some men can't paint pictures. Some men can't build bridges. You and I—why, we can't drink."

And so the cure had lasted for four years. Bob Oliver had started to hang around the garage. The kid was crazy about auto racing. He found out that Whitey had been a driver. And a mech. In the fall they had started building the yellow wagon. The body had cost four hundred, battered and used. While Bob had hammered and sanded and rubbed and painted, Whitey had worked on the power plant, starting with a racing block, hand lapping the parts, setting in the overhead cams. Together they had designed and welded the frame.

But Bob had the idea that Whitey had just gotten a little old for the racing game. The kid didn't know the story. Whitey knew that the kid should hear the story from him. If any of the old-timers were at the Acme Meet, they'd tell the kid quick enough.

But how do you tell a kid that you lost your nerve? How do you make him understand how it is to look at foul smoke rolling up and see in that smoke the strong brown hands, the quiet gray eyes, the good laugh of the guy you buddied around with for a couple of years?

Whitey tried to be firm with himself, but he found himself grinning at the kid and saying, "If I'm quiet, Bob, it's because I'm worrying about winning."

"With me driving the car? Don't worry one little bit, Whitey."

Whitey saw, in Bob, what he had been years before. Bob had something precious, something he should never lose.

"You'll remember every trick I've taught you, kid?" Whitey said earnestly.

"And I'll add a few of my own, Whitey."

"Well, take it easy, kid. You can kill yourself if you want to, but don't mess up the iron. It's half mine."

Bob laughed in quick delight. But Whitey was remembering the look in Stan Oliver's eyes as he said, "I'm relying on you, Whitey. This stuff is in his blood. I'm hoping he'll get over it. Just try to keep him . . ." Stan Oliver had fumbled for the right words, found none, turned abruptly on his heel and walked back toward the grease racks.

Whitey turned again and looked at the yellow hull, the flaring vents. It was a sweet little iron, hot, steady and stable. Guts to spare. They had learned that out on the quiet road where Whitey had found a curve of the proper width, the proper pitch.

With Bob watching, he had settled his bulk behind the wheel, taken the push from the sedan, roared down to the curve and hit it almost wide open, letting up just a hair on the gas, down to the floor again as he roared out of the curve.

At night they had pored over position diagrams, Whitey saying as he pushed the little oblongs of cardboard around, "O.K., Bob. This is you. You're third. Ten laps to go. You and those two cars are about to lap this car here. He's riding high on the curve. What do you do?"

"Cut low on the curve?"

"Hell no! They'd bounce you off the track. Stay on his tail, right in his slipstream almost all the way around. Say

right to here. Then gun it down to the rail hard and fast with legal clearance and pass him in the stretch. But don't forget to make sure you're clear on the left when you cut down."

"I got it now, Whitey."

And Whitey had drilled him until he knew that the boy's knowledge of strategy was etched into him so deeply that in a box he'd pick the right move every time.

In a way it was like racing again. Bob had, in some odd way, become an extension of himself. An extension not subject to his fears. Bob was lean and compact, with big strong wrists, good hands, 20-12 vision and enough courage for three men. When he looked at Whitey the devotion was so clear in his blue eyes that it made Whitey feel ashamed.

He wondered if he was unable to tell the kid about his past because he couldn't stand the idea of those blue eyes looking at him with amused contempt.



THEY pulled into the Acme track at nine in the morning the day before the race. Two cars, a gray one with red trim and a battered pale blue job were making lazy laps, the drone of the power plants racketing through the sultry morning air.

A mech clung to the side of the pale blue job, his head close to the bonnet listening for the bugs.

An official gave Whitey the pit assignment and he and the kid unhooked the yellow iron, united the tarp, began to go over it with loving hands. From time to time Bob would straighten up, look at the black oval and sigh.

"How does it look, kid?" Whitey asked.

Bob touched his stomach. "It gives me butterflies. Right here."

"That's what it should do, Bob. A guy who is bored by the whole thing can't drive worth a damn."

Whitey felt the same thrill as he looked at the wide expanse of empty stands, the pennants sagging in the morning heat, the dark oval. But as he smelled the familiar reek of hot oil, scorched rubber and blistering paint, he wanted with all his heart to get in the sedan, turn away from the track and never come back. He could not understand the impulse that had made

him do this thing. It was tied up so closely with his utter defeat. It seemed almost as though he had been forced to come back to a track just to know how much he had lost. Self-respect. Honor. Pride.

He squatted in the dust and began an inch by inch inspection of the casing of one of the brand-new tires.

Together they polished, adjusted, checked. They filled the tank with the special mixture. Bob's lips were pale as he pulled on the helmet, slid down behind the wheel. He snapped the goggles over his eyes and tried to smile as Whitey handed him the gloves.

"Bob," Whitey said, "you keep an eye on pressure and r.p.m. and take three slow ones to get the feel. Keep a wide clearance on those two wagons out there. If everything is O.K. on the three slow ones, take three at a good clip and check again. Then take three flat out."

He gave the yellow car a push with the sedan, turned back to the pit, parked close against the rail, got out and leaned against the rail, his fingers tightly clenched.

The hazy sun glinted on the polished metal, and the motor droned. When Bob went by the pit again, he waved.

Whitey noticed that the blue wagon was off the track. He thought nothing of it until a mild cool voice said, "Well, well. My favorite lush! What wave of bar whiskey washed you up here, Edison?"

He turned quickly, his lips stiff. "Carter!" he gasped.

Sig Carter, tall, lean, weathered, looked at Whitey's stained hands and said, "What damn fool is letting you mech for him?"

"It's the son of the man I work for, Carter. He's a good boy. Bob Oliver."

"Never heard of him. He must be green. This is a fat purse down here, Whitey. A lot of big time will be around. Your green boy'll get run into the ground. That is, if you don't get stinko and forget to fasten the tie rod ends."

Whitey felt his face redden. He doubled a big fist and turned slowly toward Sig Carter. Carter looked at the fist in mild surprise, laughed nastily and walked away.

Whitey felt his anger slowly drain away. After all, he had no right to be

angry. Sig Carter was merely expressing what all of them had a right to feel. A sudden alteration in the sound of the motor on the mile-long oval snapped him to attention. Bob was letting it out. He watched carefully. His timing seemed good. The car snugged down against the macadam and whined smoothly around the curves.

As the motor pitch changed again, he took out a stop watch, thumbed it as the yellow iron flashed by. As it came around again he stopped the hand. Thirty-one and two tenths seconds for the lap. Very nice indeed! Thirty seconds flat would be a hundred and twenty miles an hour.

Bob took two slow laps and coasted in. He jumped out, grabbed Whitey's shoulders and swung him around in a grotesque dance.

"We got it, Whitey! We got it!"

Whitey forced himself to scowl. "Hell, boy, it's easy to make time with nobody on the track."

But Bob refused to be dispirited. They checked it over again, added the minutes of running time to the motor log, checked temperatures.

"Notice anything?" Whitey asked.

"A little flutter on deceleration, when it's about halfway unwound. Not serious."

Sig Carter came up again—a stocky wide man with somber deep-set eyes matching Carter's long strides. Whitey forced himself to say, "Hi there, Yobe. Bob, meet Sig Carter and Wally Yobe. This is Bob Oliver, boys."

Bob's eyes widened and he shook hands eagerly. "Gosh, it's nice to meet you guys. I know your national rating. I never thought I'd be on the same track with you two."

Wally Yobe smiled briefly. "Nice iron, kid. Who built it?"

"Why, Whitey and I built it," Bob said proudly.

"You have any parts left over the last time you pasted it together?" Sig asked, glancing meaningly at Whitey.

It was obvious that Bob didn't get the joke, if any. He laughed nervously. "No, it's all there," he said.

"You got a good enough mech, kid?" Yobe asked.

Bob frowned. "Whitey and I can han-

dle her. Whitey does the real tough mech work."

"That's what I meant, kid," Yobe said, no smile on his lips.

Whitey heard himself laugh loudly and unnaturally. "You boys are great kidders. Yes, sir. Great kidders."

Bob joined in the laugh. Both Carter and Yobe smiled briefly and walked away. Yobe turned and called back, "Don't give us a bad time out there tomorrow, kid."

Bob worked silently for a few minutes. Then he straightened up and made a smear of dirt across his sweaty forehead with the back of his hand. His eyes were puzzled. "Those guys acted funny."

"How so?"

"Well, I thought that when you got together with the guys you used to race against, you'd be pounding each other on the back and all that stuff."

Whitey shrugged. "Well, you know how it is. Sometimes you have more in common with some people than you do with other people."

"They kidded you in a funny way, Whitey."

"Did they? I didn't notice," Whitey said.

CHAPTER II

SUCKER PUNCH



THEY had lunch together at a stand near the track. When they got back a few people were drifting into the stands.

They had come to watch the time trials. By then most of the irons had arrived. Whitey counted twenty-five. He guessed off-hand that probably six or seven wouldn't qualify. That still left a very packed track for the race. Three hundred laps. Two and a half hours of bitter, deadly grind, the sort that leads to complete physical and nervous exhaustion.

The sleepy track of the morning hours suddenly began to have a deadlier look, a competitive look. Whitey wondered about death. He looked down the line of cars, wondering which one, twenty-four hours from that moment, would be headed on the grind that would leave it a mass of scrap that might have to be torch-cut to haul away.

The track was bitter hot all through the afternoon. About half the time trials were run and four cars couldn't qualify. Whitey recognized two more drivers from the old days. Veteran drivers. Skip Morgan and Red Lariotti. And neither one of them came near him. He saw Bob looking at him with puzzled concern. He began to wish that the kid had been told about Whitey Edison and about how a man can lose his nerve and his courage and all the things that hold him together.

At dusk they took their bedrolls from the sedan and spread them on the dust close to the yellow wagon. Bob wandered off down the pit line. Whitey knew that he couldn't stop the boy, that he couldn't prevent the boy from going and talking to the others. Whitey snapped his cigarette away and said a silent prayer. If only none of the others, the old-timers, would let the kid know until after the race was over. Then it might not make so much difference. But to have it happen before the race . . .

After a time he dozed off. He woke up with a start, and it took a few moments for him to realize where he was. In a neighboring pit a floodlight had been rigged. A poker game was going on, pebbles weighing the cards against a gusty breeze that had come up to cool the night.

The floodlight cast edged shadows across Bob Oliver's face. He was sitting near Whitey, his hands locked around his knees. Whitey couldn't read his expression.

He yawned and said, "How do the other crates look, Bob?"

"Maybe you want to be sociable, Whitey? Maybe I should go get you a bottle?"

"They went out of their way to tell you, didn't they, kid?"

"Not very far out of their way, Edison. You're kind of a legend, you know. A yellow legend."

"Kid, maybe you're being rough about something you don't know anything about."

"I know all about it, Edison. When they started to tell me, I started to ask questions. They all had the same story. You were a brave guy, weren't you? And then you fizzled out like a wet match." A hint of tears came into the boy's tight

voice. Hell, Whitey, if you'd told me, I could have thought up some excuses for you. But you tried to hide it from me. You filled me full of gunk about what a great driver you were. You were a yellow driver and a drunken mech."

"What I was and what I am are two different things."

"Are they, Whitey? Are they? You haven't got a bottle in your hand right now. How soon will you have one? Tomorrow? Next week?" The boy stood up.

"Don't forget we're partners in the car, kid," Whitey said softly.

"I can't squeeze you out until after the race, Edison. But our partnership ends then and there. Don't kid yourself." He walked away, his shoulders stiff and square silhouetted against the floodlight.

Whitey sat, feeling very old and very alone. He smoked a cigarette, got up with a sigh, went out onto the highway and caught a bus to town. He sat in a back seat, staring woodenly out the window. Several times he licked his lips. Hell, it was easy to move along. Another town, another garage. Maybe a few hours or weeks of forgetfulness in between.

He rode the bus down into a street of bars. He got off and made his pace slow as he walked to the nearest one. He bellied up to the bar, ordered a double rye in a hoarse voice.

The bartender took the bill, gave him a dime change.

Whitey Edison stood for a long time at the bar, looking at the deep tobacco brown of the liquor in the heavy glass. His blunt fingers were white against the edge of the bar. He could hear Bob's voice, "... haven't got a bottle in your hand right now. How soon? Tomorrow?"

Bob's voice was somehow confused with the half-forgotten voice of Steve Jantz, a voice that spoke with a distant eerie hollowness. "You lucked out, Whitey. Pure luck. If you hadn't hit that south turn too high in the sixth lap..."

Other voices: "Edison, I refuse to tolerate drunkenness among the employees of this garage. Draw your time..." "Pal, if you're hungry, go see the Salvation Army..." "Three canned heat? That'll be thirty cents."

With a wide sudden sweep of his hand

he knocked the glass spinning, turned toward the door, ignoring the bartender's angry yell.

Bob wasn't at the pit. He took a walk down the line, staying well in the deeper shadows, listening for the boy's voice. He wasn't on the line. Whitey went back to his bedroll. It was still too warm to slip inside it. He stretched out on top, but he couldn't sleep.



THE luminous dial on his watch said three o'clock when he heard the distant raucous singing. He propped himself up on one elbow. The singing grew louder. Two lights near the front of the stands made a feeble glow across the asphalt.

They stopped near the yellow wagon to put a spirited and out-of-key finale to "The Old Mill Stream."

"Goodnight, you guys!" Bob yelled thickly, the words slurred. They went down the line, ignoring the men who yelled at them to shut up. Bob stumbled against the yellow iron, dropped onto his bedroll.

Whitey went over, squatted beside Bob and touched his shoulder. Bob pulled away. "Lemme alone," he muttered.

"Kid, you got to drive tomorrow! What are you trying to do?"

"I'll drive fine. Any old time Bobby Oliver can't drive why..." The words faded off and the boy began to snore.

Whitey went back to his own bedroll. His cigarette end glowed red against the night. He held it so tightly between his thumb and finger that it was difficult to draw on it. He had recognized the voices of two of the other singers. Yobe and Skip Morgan. He guessed that neither one of them had taken on as big a load as Bob had. He wondered how many of Bob's drinks had been forced on him in such a way that it would have been too hard to refuse. He wondered how much of the drinking was due to the shattering of Bob's belief in his friend, Whitey Edison.

At last he slept.

In the morning Bob was sullen and unapproachable. He said, "Edison, you check over the car."

Whitey looked at him. The boy's color was bad and his hands were shaking.

Whitey shrugged and began to check the car, losing himself in his work. He came to with a start over an hour later to hear the speaker blaring. "Oliver, Robert—driving an Edison Special. Ready for qualifying heat."

He looked at the stands, spattered with the light spots of color of men with their jackets off, the gay cotton dresses of the women and the kids. They had come early. They wanted a good seat from which they could watch death in the hot afternoon.

Bob came running up, his face flushed, his mouth oddly loose. He clapped Whitey on the shoulder. "How we doin', Whitey, old boy? Running like the clock the man talks about? Good old Whitey's got it all tuned up."

Whitey caught the ripe smell of alcohol on the boy's breath. "You been drinking, kid?"

"Best thing in the world to straighten you out. Sig and I split a few. Feel wonderful now. Where's the gloves? Come on, damn you! We got to roll it."

Whitey stood very still, barely breathing. His eyes were narrowed. He looked at the boy's flushed face, and he remembered a few awkward words that Stan Oliver had said before turning on his heel and walking away.

Whitey looked at the oval. He smiled placidly. He held out the gloves in his left hand and said, "Here you go, kid."

Bob reached for the gloves. Whitey brought his big meaty right hand up from the ground. It exploded on the point of Bob's chin. The boy's shoulders smacked against the yellow deck of the car and he bounced off onto the dust, face down.

Breathing hard, Whitey looked down at him. He dragged the boy over to his bed-roll, unbuckled the helmet and pulled it off.

The official came up, his voice high and irritated. "What's the delay here? Didn't you hear the P.A.?"

"Sure, but my partner doesn't feel so good. Whitey Edison driving the Edison Special. Have him change the announcement."

He settled down behind the wheel, his eyes just above the cowl, looking along the gleaming yellow slant of the hood.

The motor caught after he was pushed

forty feet. He pumped it, felt the surge of power that pushed him back against the pads. The oval was empty. For half the first lap it was like driving too fast along a macadam road. Then the objects on either side began to blur. The white fence rushed at him, spun away behind.

He caught the flag out of the tail of his eye, pushed the pedal the rest of the way to the floor. Once again the acceleration pushed him back hard, his neck against the leather cushion. An angry world screamed by him, roaring at him, tilting and slamming by him with an almost physical impact. He took it flat out, pulled back a notch going into the west corner, slammed it back down again to whip the responsive car out of the turn.

The straightaway gave him enough push so that he had to drop it back just a bit further on the east corner. Then the stands were a gray blur on the right. In the distance the flag twinkled, flashed down and he went by.

He lifted the throttle, took the entire lap to slow down under compression, eased it into the pit and cut the motor. He heard the announcement then. "Whitey Edison, driving the Edison Special, qualifies with a one lap speed of one hundred fifteen and six tenths miles per hour."

There was a mild murmur from the stands. It was fair speed. Not good enough to win the best post positions. Good enough to qualify with an adequate margin.

His fingers were stiff from just one lap. He pushed the goggles up, wiggled out of the car, feeling soft and old and too tired.

Bob approached, his face white with anger, a dull red patch on his chin. Sig Carter, sardonically amused, stood behind the kid.

"Just what are you trying to do?" Bob said thickly, his voice dangerously low.

"Yeah," Sig said. "Ain't you getting a little virtuous in your old age, Whitey?"

Whitey knew that he could drop the helmet, gloves, goggles in the dust, turn and walk off the track. It would be far easier than trying to force himself into the main go.

"You can't drink and drive, kid," he said softly.

"Maybe you can't," Bob said. "These

other guys can. So can I. Put up your hands, Edison. Nobody sucker-punches me and gets away with it."

"Give it to him, kid," Sig said softly, his eyes shining.

"Just a minute!" Whitey snapped. The tone of his voice stopped the slowly advancing boy. Whitey pushed by him, walked up to Sig. Sig tensed. "This is private, Carter," Whitey said. "Move along."

"I like it here," Sig said.

Whitey slammed a big hand into Sig's middle, stepped inside the looping right and knocked the lean man down with his own right. Sig gasped in the dust, his eyes momentarily glazed. He shook his head to clear it.

"Now go home," Whitey said.

Sig got up slowly, moved off with painful dignity, with apparent unconcern. Fifteen feet away he turned and said, "Better let the kid drive, Whitey. I might take it in my head out there to send you after Steve."

Whitey swallowed hard on the nausea that filled his throat. He turned, grabbed the front of Bob's shirt in his left hand, slapped the kid backhand and forehand across the mouth in steady rhythm, backing him slowly up against the iron pipe fence at the back of the pit.

He stopped slapping. Bob stood woodenly, a trickle of blood on his chin.

"Sucker!" Whitey hissed. "Chump! No-good green kid! Suckered right out of a chance to build a rating. Look at you! You can't even stand straight! The smart boys sucked you in, laddy. They were afraid of the car. You wouldn't last fifty laps. This is a man's work, kid. It isn't for big-mouth boys. I've got half the car. And I'm driving. Get that straight!"

Bob said uncertainly, "They told me you can't drive."

"Maybe I can't, kid. I don't know. But there's no doubt about you. I'm sure you can't drive."

Bob twisted away and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. His fists were doubled. Whitey stood calmly and stared at him. Bob finally turned away, his shoulders slack, his feet scuffing in the dust. He sat at the edge of the pit, his head cradled on his knees.

For a few moments Whitey had felt

that the clock had turned back, that he was a driver, like he had once been. But the fear was deep inside him. It had merely been waiting. Fear was a quiet gray, viscous pool that lapped slowly at the walls of his heart. Forgotten for a moment, it began to seep up through him again, parching his mouth, tightening his throat, coating the heavy palms of his hands with oily sweat.

He looked down the line, saw Sig Carter standing next to Yobe. They were talking. Yobe was laughing.

A car whined by, flat out, the wind of its passage spiraling up dust-devils at the edge of the pit. It was a virulent orange car. Above the cowl he saw the unhelmeted bristle of Red Lariotti's bullet head. He watched with professional interest, gauging the stability of the orange iron as it hit the west corner. Lariotti was a contradiction of terms, an old driver and an uncautious driver. He shouldn't have lived so long.

Whitey looked at the track and knew he would have to drive the race. The yellow car, which had looked so sleek, so reliable, suddenly had a sullen, deadly look about it. The look of a blued-steel barrel pointed at his head. The gleam of a yellow knife, cool across his throat. He wanted a drink badly. He wanted the courage that a drink would give him. He looked at his watch. Starting time, three hours away.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN BEHIND THE WHEEL



WHITEY ate very lightly, very slowly, forcing relaxation on himself so that the food would not knot his stomach. He bought adhesive, a wide type, and he taped his middle, drawing it tight across the small of his back. He shaved his wrists and taped them too, not so tightly as to cut circulation, but enough to give support.

When he got back to the pit, Bob Oliver was gone. The stands were full and the overflow was beginning to spread along the fence. But not on the curves. No man was fool enough to stand at a curve.

It took a precious half hour to locate a willing kid who knew something about

cars, to hire him, to coach him in the teamwork necessary to gas the iron quickly, yank rubber and replace it. He gave the kid chalk and a blackboard and told him to keep track of laps, of his position, to hold up the board every fifth lap until two hundred and ninety laps had been completed. Then every lap to the end.

Inside he had the cold feeling that he would never live to the two hundred and ninetieth lap. But maybe it didn't make a hell of a lot of difference. If he died on the track maybe Bob Oliver would be cured of the bug, of the racing disease. And that would be almost a fair return for what the kid's father had done for Whitey Edison.

Something had happened to his vision and his hearing. All colors were intensified and all sounds. The startling vividness of everything intensified his desire to live, fighting against the fatalism that had begun to fill him.

The race was scheduled to start at two. At one-thirty the stuttering roar of motors killed all other sounds. Whitey watched the racing cars, picked out Red Lariotti's orange job, the battered blue iron driven by Sig Carter, Wally Yobe's job in battleship gray, Sklp Morgan driving the Ace Special in fire-engine red.

They had their positions. Whitey wedged his bulk behind the wheel, chilled in spite of the heat of the sun. He had checked every inch of the car. There were nineteen entered. Five abreast in three rows, four in the last. He was second from the inside rail in the second row.

He was pushed and for painful moments the motor wouldn't catch. At last it did and he joined the slowly circling cars which were loosely edging into position. At a few minutes after two the formation was reasonably tight, going down the far straightaway, the white pacemaker sedan leading. The sedan upped its speed coming around the east corner and the power plants began to blare. Down the straightaway, the stands on the right. Perfect formation. The sedan gunned over the starting line, darted out of the way. The blue flag flashed down and the formation jumped ahead, gaps beginning to widen.

Still too tightly bunched, they roared down at the west corner. It was very unlike the qualifying heat. The outside world

was a blur, a stream of misty color. The cars around him were solid and real, apparently motionless, his speed being measured only in reference to theirs.

The vibration shook him and the wheel hammered his wrists. The crash helmet tugged at his head and he sank down a fraction of an inch. The tires of nineteen cars made a wet, ripping counterpoint to the crescendo blast of hot exhausts.

They were packed too tightly at the curve. Whitey held his breath, stared straight ahead, utilizing the side vision that enabled him to see the car on either flank. The man on the right moved in too close, and he drifted down toward the left, seeing a gap ahead of him, holding the car in trim through the banked curve, gunning it into the open place as he straightened out, sensing that if he hadn't gunned it, the car on his right would have forced him down into the car on the left.

Ahead they were thinning a little on the straightaway, Lariotti's orange job-almost down to the east corner, lengths in the lead. He guessed that he was in sixth place, possibly fifth. A good place to hold for a few laps while they thinned out.

He had a sudden sense of well-being and realized that it was because the fear had not begun to oppress him. The sense of well-being faded as he remembered that he had not yet been forced to pass a car. He had squirted out of a gap, but purely from the instinct to avoid a tangle.

The car ran sweetly, seeming to flatten on the straightaway, seeming to hug closer to the macadam with every increase in speed.

The east corner flashed by smoothly, the stands on the right in the straightaway streaming by like a gay torn ribbon. A blunt snout crept up on his right, on the outside. He rode high toward the curve, slowing slightly, teasing the man on his right to back away and try an inside shot. The snout dropped back suddenly and, as he rounded the curve he put it to the floor, took it down close to the rail, risking a quick glance and seeing that the man who had made the bid was a good five lengths back.

He thought, If I can fight off all bids, if I can hold it right here, maybe the car will last better than the boys ahead and I can place.

But he knew that he was deluding himself, that he was putting off the decisions that would have to be made.



HE came into the west corner, saw the car spinning ahead of him, gauged its spin, saw that it was carrying up toward the outside rail, sufficiently slowed to be out of danger. He flashed by it, instinctively leaning in on the curve, clearing it by a good dozen feet. But he had slowed. As he came out into the straightaway, a battered blue car edged up, the snout even with him, on the inside.

He held the position, managed to draw away from Sig a foot or so. He went high on the corner, Sig riding below him. Out of the corner he tried to hold position, but Sig had a shorter route, and in the straightaway Sig's nose was in front, his deck even with Whitey.

They roared down at the next corner. Sig moved up a little, forcing him out. He felt his footlift, without conscious volition. He dropped back, drifted down the rail, Sig riding three lengths ahead, his bid successful. In anger, Whitey stamped hard, rode up on Sig, moved into the man's slipstream, taking advantage of the little tug of air behind the battered blue iron, backing off for legal clearance on the curves, edging up again on the flats.

He heard the distant muted whine of the siren, and, as they flashed by the stands, he saw a crumpled car piled against the concrete wall, a man lying curiously twisted and very still about eight feet from the red flames that licked at the blistering paint.

But there was no time to think. The curve was on him. The sight of the flames had made him dizzy and sick. It was with surprise that, the next time around, he saw the big chalked "15" on the board—the "4" below it. Fourth place at the fifteenth lap. Seven and a half minutes of the two and a half hours behind him.

Fourth place. That meant that of the three cars ahead of him, one was Lariotti, one was Sig Carter. Either Morgan or Yobe would have to be behind him. Either one would want to make a bid. Two men out of the race. Thirteen cars behind him.

There was no more sense of well-being. He found himself wishing that something

would happen to the power plant. Something bad. Something that would put him out for keeps. The motor droned with horrible efficiency.

The vibration began to have its usual hypnotic effect—down the straightaway, ease off for the curve, slam into the straightaway again, curve coming up, ease off a little, lean in, slam it down again.

Lap after lap, the blue car riding ahead of him as though the two cars were joined.

On the back stretch they screamed by a slow car with such speed that it loomed up and was gone before Whitey could make the slightest response. He felt the sweat pop out on him. He had barely seen the black smoke boiling from under the bonnet, sensed the motorless quiet of the car.

Had it been three feet closer to them . . . He knew that it was not one of the leaders ahead of him. They could not have slowed down to that extent in such a short space. Thus it had to be one of the ones behind.

Thirty laps—fifty—eighty. Forty minutes gone of the two and a half hours. The vibration and the sickening speed ate into him, inflaming unaccustomed muscles. His hands began to blister through the heavy gloves and his right foot ached with the effort of the precision control.

He felt as though he were being beaten with a vast club.

And as yet he had not made a bid at a car ahead.

Ninety laps. The gray nose of a car came up on the outside. Wally Yobe was making his bid. Yobe was in so close and Sig, ahead, was so close to the rail that Whitey was boxed. He couldn't fight Yobe's bid without over-running Carter. He guessed that Carter had not seen Yobe as yet.

Yobe ran neck and neck with him around the curve, mouth tight, face expressionless, hidden by helmet, goggles and pattern of dust.

On the straight, Yobe moved up. Sig Carter went into the far curve at dangerous speed, opening up a wide gap between the blue and yellow cars. Wally Yobe gave up his bid to take Carter's spot, and eased down into the open space. At the ninety-fifth lap Whitey saw that he was running fifth.

He knew that there was more stuff un-

der the hood of the yellow car than either Yobe or Carter could call on. The difference was the man behind the wheel. He felt shame and yet shame couldn't conquer fear.

He rode along in fifth place, making no attempt to creep up on Wally Yobe, riding in Yobe's slipstream the same way he had ridden in Carter's. The line of three cars, riding nose and tail, edged out and Whitey saw that they were overtaking another car. He knew that the other car had been lapped.

He watched as he crept up on it. He watched in horror. His hands clamped more tightly on the wheel and he fought the impulse of his foot to lift. Carter passed it. Yobe crept up on it, passed it. His nose crept up on it. He held position around the curve. The straightaway was open. Yobe was pulling away. He had lifted off for the curve. Time to blast. Yet he couldn't push down. The lapped car drew ahead. He nosed in behind it, weak and sick.

In the distance Carter and Yobe continued to move away. Another nose came up on the outside. He let it go by. At the hundredth lap he was in sixth place.

CHAPTER IV

SHORTCUT TO SUICIDE



HE was physically ill. His head began to nod heavily. He knew his danger, held tightly to the wheel, caught in the automatic series of motions necessary to get around the banked curves, hold his position. With the lapped car ahead of him he could no longer give the yellow wagon full gun.

It was hard to think of what race it was. He wondered what track he was on. The sun beat down on him and the stench of oil was in his nostrils. He shook his head like a stunned animal. He was confused. He muttered thickly, the wind tearing at his lips, "Must have had a bad night. Where's Steve?"

Sure. Good old Steve. He couldn't remember whether Steve had been with him or not. But it was a cinch that Steve was in the pack someplace, strong hands on the wheel, that mad wonderful glint in his

gray eyes. Steve could handle an iron like nobody else, except maybe Whitey Edison. Steve would be in that deep blue job of his. Shining blue. The blue of the summer sky at dusk, or of deep water.

The corner tore at his arms and as he flattened it out in the straightaway, he looked across the track.

His numb lips spread in a wide grin. No use looking for sly Steve Jantz on the other side of the track. Old Steve would be creeping up behind him, waiting like a big cat, to steal a lap on him.

In the straightaway he thrust his foot down hard, swung out, but not so far as to lose distance. The snout of the car he had been following moved back, back, out of sight behind him. He squinted far ahead, saw the battered blue, the gray. Two cars ahead. Nice guys. He couldn't remember their names. Time to ride up on them.

He fed the yellow car, feeling the constantly rising whine of power, the drum-beat of the tires.

After the run around the bank, the gray wasn't so far ahead. He had it on the floor, inching up, waiting until the last possible moment before the curve, and then letting it up the smallest fraction of an inch, sensing the imminence of the lift of the inside wheels, leaning hard to cut that lift, laughing again as the gray seemed to move back toward him.

After one more wild corner he moved up even, and the name of the driver came to him, Wally Yobe. Sure. But Wally looked funny. As though Wally, that eager kid, had grown old overnight.

Wally moved out a little, forcing him higher than he wanted to go. The hell with that. Wally should know enough to get out of the way. The track always belonged to Whitey Edison and Steve Jantz.

He let Wally force him high, then he lifted off the throttle, letting the compression brake him, cutting to the inside, pouring on the coal again, surging ahead to cut Wally on the inside as they came off the corner. Wally tried to move in a little but he was too late. The yellow nose was out in front and Whitey pushed it down to the floor, held it steady as a rock, letting Wally move in and then decide it was healthier to move back out and give a hot man room.

The blue car was ahead. He took a

quick glance back at the gray, gauging the distance. Then with a mad twist of the wheel he rode out to the right, blocking Yobe, moving out on the blue, creeping up on the blue. He sensed Steve Jantz behind him, bulling his way through the pack in the same manner, always on the thin, brittle edge of control.

Funny how this yellow car seemed faster than anything he had wheeled before. A nice wagon. Sweet and hot.

The driver of the blue gave him a quick, startled look. Why, that was Sig Carter!

Best way to take Sig was always to bluff him on the corners. Ride high and wild. He went onto the outside, and as the oval tipped for the banked turn, Sig was below him. Don't pass on the turn. Hold it right there, steady and true. But blast a fraction of a second before Sig does.

The yellow car jumped, but Sig moved out. What was Sig trying to do? Run him into the stands? Sig should know by now that Whitey Edison can't be bluffed. If Sig wanted to ride him out of the race, Sig was coming too. At the impact he'd go downstairs and roll with it. It had happened before. A few ribs gone, a concussion.

Sig moved over on him. Closer and closer. Whitey held it steady, and out of the corner of his eye he saw Sig's humming rubber moving in, inch by inch. The turn roared down at them. Sig would ease off on the turn. Whitey kept the throttle tight on the floor. He leaned far to the left. He flashed out ahead of Sig, but the inside wheels lifted a few inches. When they touched again it hurtled the car in a crazy dash toward the inside fence beyond the turn. He fought the wheel, feeling his deck slide under him, half hearing the smack as he knocked white wood from the fence, fighting again, the car angling toward the outside fence, his throttle still full on, never letting up, and suddenly he had it under control, arrowing for the turn, Sig Carter well behind him.

He laughed. Let old Steve try that a few times. That's what turned the hair gray. He steadied down and concentrated on hitting the turns at the best possible speed. Maybe he could lap Steve. That would be something to give him a

ride about. Sink the needle in him. Tell him he was loafing out there. As he spun down into each flat stretch he looked far ahead for the glint of sunlight on deep blue, on the familiar tilt of Steve's head. He listened for the distinctive throaty blast of Steve's iron.

He couldn't remember his pit position, and he didn't know where to look for the board. What lap was it? How long was this damn race? Never mind. Keep going until you have to hit the pit or until they flash a flag in your face.

He risked a glance at the whole track. Maybe twelve, thirteen cars. He couldn't pick out Steve.

He looked at his right front rubber, saw the hazy area on the outside rim. A rubber flap. He listened and heard the tiny hum. It probably got ripped loose back there when he'd nearly cracked passing Sig.

Better hit the pit right now. He checked fuel. Good for fifteen more laps anyway. But take care of the works all at once.

But which pit?

He cut it fast on the east corner, took it close to the inside rail, braked, looking for Buzz Gowan, the best mech in the business. But a brown-haired kid was waving him in, jumping around.

He went in. He rubbed a hand over his face. The kid was slapping his back. As he tried to get out from under the wheel, he sensed the heaviness of his own body.

He rubbed a hand across his face.

The boy he had hired and Bob Oliver switched the rubber, and the mixture was being squirted into the fuel tank.

Suddenly he knew that the years had gone by. Steve Jantz was dead. The dark blue car wasn't on the track. Something stung his eyes.

The kid, his eyes glowing, was pushing him. "Roll it, Whitey! Roll it! You're second place. Get going!"

Blindly he got behind the wheel. The kid yelled, as he pulled away, "Fifty-one more laps. Whitey, you're wonderful!"



HIS lips twisted as the car gathered speed. Wonderful! Crazy as a loon. An old man having whiskey dreams behind the wheel of a ton and a quarter of

death. An old man who used dreams instead of guts.

In slower rhythm he settled down to the pace. The gray and the blue were ahead again, but they'd need a pit stop. Beyond them was the bright orange car he'd seen before. That was number one. Lariotti.

No harm to move closer to Sig and Wally. He tucked in behind them. Two laps later Sig moved off and spun back into the ruck as he went into the pit.

The orange car that had been far ahead was gone. Ten more laps. As he came out of a turn, the orange job went by him and by Yobe, skittering along barely on the edge of control.

Lariotti again. He'd made his stop, and pulled back into the lead.

Whitey wasn't interested.

He saw the board—"275"—twenty-five more miles. He had to come out of his dream and wrench the wheel to get out of the way of Yobe as he turned off. The orange car ahead had slowed a bit. Lariotti wasn't taking any chances of mechanical failure. He'd hold his lead, fight off the bids and the race was in his pocket.

Second money for Whitey Edison. They didn't have to know that he made second money because he went crazy out there in the sun, because he lost a few years and he was racing against a man who had been long dead.

He was eight lengths behind Lariotti. Crazy Lariotti.

Play it safe, Whitey. Take your second place. Don't make a bid. He cut Lariotti's lead down to six lengths.

Yet he knew that he wouldn't make a bid. It wasn't in him. The craziness was over. His arms were lumps of lead. White fire burned behind his eyes.

He glanced at the board. Two ninety-four. Six more laps to go. Three minutes more. He risked a look. The nearest car was the blue, way back at the last corner. Third place for Sig Carter.

He rode into the turn, Lariotti four laps ahead.

There was no increase in motor noise as a dark blue car passed him. It went faster than any car can go. Yet it seemed to drift along.

When he saw the familiar wave of the hand, he knew that it was Steve.

Whitey Edison made his bid to pass Lariotti. The redhead was a shade too high. Whitey tucked his nose between the inside rail and Lariotti's deck. It was a tight fit. He saw the movement of Lariotti's head and he fed the gas to it as the orange car tried to run away from him.

Faster and faster and faster. High whine. Roar. Flat smack of wind. Hammering vibration. He felt as though he were being hurled from an enormous sling.

He clung tightly, not letting Lariotti move out ahead. By staying where he was, Lariotti had to take a wider sweep, move a fraction of a mile an hour faster.

But Lariotti kept building up the tempo.

On the west corner Whitey sensed that both cars were going into it too fast. To brake would be quick death.

He saw Lariotti's inside wheels lift. Two inches off the macadam they poised, began to lift further. Lariotti's head disappeared suddenly as he went downstairs. The orange car bounced, hurling fragments in all directions, a sideways roll and an enormous end for end bounce off the top rim of the banked corner.

His face a mask of steel, Whitey held the car on the edge of control, and when he returned to the same corner, he noted, almost absently, the smoke drifting up from the place where Lariotti's car had disappeared.

He made the east corner, the grandstand a flowing bank of misty color on his right. The checkered flag flashed down and he lifted his foot, letting the compression brake him in a last slow circuit before he coasted up in front of the stands.

He had to be helped from the car. And when he was out he could barely stand.

They were gathered around him. Judges, officials, drivers, pit monkeys, people who had come over the fence.

"How's Lariotti?" he asked.

"O.K.," someone said. "Banged up a little and scorched, but O.K."

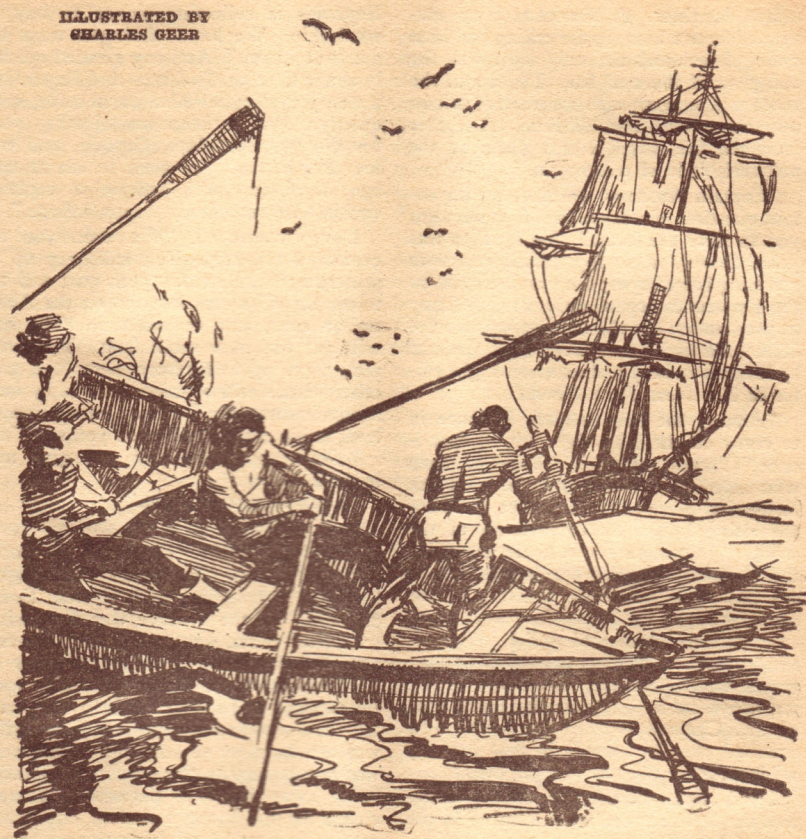
Whitey turned and looked into Bob's face and he knew that everything was all right again between them.

Sig stood near him, hand outstretched. Whitey looked down at the man's lean hand and slowly grasped it.

"Welcome home, boy," Sig said softly.



The great flukes smashed Mr. Smith alongside the head and flicked him overboard like a rag doll.



THE CRUISE OF

THE CATALPA

OF ALL the Fenian Brotherhood's mad and desperate plans to harass the British Empire, the only completely successful enterprise of the Irish revolutionary movement was the freeing of six Fenian military prisoners from the British penal colony in Australia in 1876.

Surprisingly, it began in the United States. Threads of this American master-minded plot stretched from Dublin to New

York to San Francisco to Australia, but the nerve center was in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

It was a cold windy night in New Bedford, late in the fall of 1874. Almost half the men on the narrow sidewalks in front of the outfitting stores and boarding houses were Malays, Africans and Kanakas, the crews of whaling ships in the harbor.

Four bearded men were seated around a pot-bellied stove in the back room of Richardson's Outfitting Store at No. 18 South Water Street. Three were members of the Clan-na-Gael, the American counterpart of the Irish Fenian Society. The other was George Anthony, a square-jawed, square-shouldered man who had been a whaling captain but had left the sea to care for his young wife and their

A
FACT
STORY

By
JOHN WIETING

infant daughter. A hurricane lamp suspended from a beam in the ceiling had been extinguished and the only light was the red glow of the coal fire. The air in the room was pungent with the smell of oakum and rope, nets and oilskins. A flicker from the fire raised a dull gleam on the polished blade of a harpoon.

"Captain Anthony, we have an important question to ask you, but first we want you to have the facts." The speaker was John Devoy, a scrappy Irishman with snapping bright eyes; the man assigned by the Fenians to organize the British Army in preparation for the ill-fated uprising of 1866. He had been forced from Ireland by the hue and cry and was now night editor of *The New York Herald*.

"Among the first soldiers I swore in to carry on the Irish fight for independence," Devoy went on, "were six men who acted as my agents. They left the Army and came to Dublin to be there for the rising." He snorted bitterly at the word. "Informers got in their work and the British suspended the habeas corpus act and made wholesale arrests. In the sweep they got the boys. They were tried, convicted and sentenced to die. After almost a year in English prisons their sentences were mercifully commuted to life imprisonment in the Australian bush. Imagine it. Chained together like beasts to be watched over by guards in that broiling wilderness for the rest of their lives."

Fresh coals were blazing in the stove and the light seemed to be blazing in the eyes of John Devoy.

"The Clan-na-Gael has commissioned Goff, Reynolds and myself to rescue them—and that is what we are going to do." He indicated the two men who had been introduced to Anthony earlier in the evening, and who now sat measuring him with their eyes. John Goff, Recorder of the New York law courts, and James Reynolds, New Haven brass-maker and Fenian "center" of the State of Connecticut. Goff, a round, pink-faced man with bright blue eyes, leaned forward. "You understand, Captain," he said, "the prisoners are unimportant except as a symbol of oppressed Ireland. If they are freed, Irishmen around the world will take new heart."

"Here's the plan," Devoy said. "Mr.

Reynolds is collecting money to buy a whaleship. We know that you want to get back to sea." Anthony glanced quickly at the Clan-na-Gael men and Reynolds, a steady-eyed man with a warm smile, said quietly, "We've been investigating you for the past few days, Captain, and we feel that a man who went to sea at the age of fifteen and became a captain couldn't be completely happy ashore."

Devoy continued, "We want you to command the ship. You will keep up a pretense of whaling, but your part will be to appear off a certain point on the Australian coast at a certain time. The six will put out in a small boat. You will pick them up and return here. All the other details will be taken care of by our agents in Australia." Devoy leaned slowly back in his chair. "What do you say?"

"How much time will you give me to think it over?"

"Until tomorrow night."



ANTHONY paced the floor alone for hours that night struggling with himself. Even if the venture was successful his career at sea would be ruined. Never again would he be permitted to enter a British port. Uppermost in his mind was the thought of his wife and baby. He had left the sea to be near them; still, his wife was the daughter of seafaring people and was accustomed to the men in the family being away for long periods. He was chilled by the thought that in one small whaler he would be defying the mightiest naval power on earth, but the thrill of the adventurous challenge half a world away decided him. The next night when he informed the committee of his decision they were jubilant. They gave Anthony authority to select a ship and then they left New Bedford.

A week later word reached the committee that a suitable vessel had been found. She was the *Catalpa*, a former whaler but now engaged in transporting logs from the West Indies to Boston. She was for sale. The Clan-na-Gael men sent orders to purchase, and she was bought in the name of James Reynolds.

The first set-back came when the shipfitters found the *Catalpa* unseaworthy. Devoy was frantic.

"Everything we touch seems to go bad," he raged to Goff and Reynolds. "We've collected bits of money from the Brotherhood here and in the old country; even the miners in New Zealand chipped in, and now it's all smashed."

"There may be some hope yet," mused Reynolds.

"What hope? We all gave as much as we could. I know that you gave every cent you had in the world."

"There is still my house in New Haven," said Reynolds.

He put a mortgage on his house and every stick of furniture in it. He even pawned his watch. His wife said, "Anything for the cause, James." The money to repair the *Catalpa* was raised, and from then on James Reynolds was known as "Catalpa Jim."

The ship was outfitted in New Bedford as if for a whaling voyage to last about two years. Captain Anthony was given a free hand in the selection of the crew and, to avert suspicion, selected men who could have been used as a model whaling crew of the day. The ship's articles show that over half the men were "christened" by the shipping agents as they were signed on—a custom of the day. Names such as Gingy Malay, Mopsy Roso, Mike Malay and Robert Kanaka sprinkle the articles.

The *Catalpa* was now ready for sea. It was April, 1875. Devoey went to New Bedford from New York to give Anthony his final instructions.

"Cruise the North Atlantic until fall. Put in at Fayal and ship home any oil you may have taken and head at once for Australia. You are expected off Bunbury, on the West Coast, early in the spring. Goodbye and God-speed." The two men shook hands warmly and, with a parting slap on Anthony's shoulder, Devoey went over the side into a waiting small boat.

The *Catalpa* excited no unusual interest as she slipped out into the North Atlantic. In 1875 whaling was a dying trade, but over a hundred whaleships claimed New Bedford as their home port.

A few whales were taken soon after leaving, but then weeks went by with not a sign of a spout. Late one June afternoon came the long awaited cry from the crew's nest, "Thar she blows!"

The boat of Mr. Smith, the first mate, led in the race to the whale. The mate's Kanaka harpooner flashed his blade into the massive body and clambered to the stern to take over the long sweep oar. Mr. Smith went to the bow and hefted the light, razor-sharp killing lance. The crew were pulling like madmen and white water was foaming around the boat. Suddenly the broad, slick back came up with a rush just ahead of the boat, and as the mate drew back to heave the lance, the whale arched forward to sound again. His broad tail broke the surface almost under the bow of the boat and, the great flukes, thrashing to force that giant body down to safety, smashed Mr. Smith alongside the head and flicked him overboard like a rag doll. The manila line was smoking out as hands reached for the dazed mate and dragged him aboard. Blood was pouring from deep gashes about his head and shoulders, but crawling on hands and knees to the bow, he grimly picked up the lance again and when the whale surfaced, shot it home, and then slumped in a dead faint.

Next morning, weak from loss of blood, Mr. Smith, nevertheless, insisted on supervising the "cutting in." Captain Anthony, the only one on board the ship aware of the real purpose of the voyage, felt that here was a man he could depend upon.

The fresh water at Fayal was poor and they headed for Teneriffe. Anthony was becoming increasingly anxious. Beyond Teneriffe there would be no pretense of whaling. The secret would have to be revealed to Mr. Smith so that if he objected he could be given the opportunity of leaving the ship. The mission was too delicate to permit of a balky first mate.

One fine evening, soon after leaving Fayal, the ship was bowling along under full sail and spirits were high. Captain Anthony asked the mate to his cabin and came directly to the point.

"Mr. Smith," he said, "you shipped to go whaling. I want to say to you now that the *Catalpa* has done about all the whaling she will do this fall." He told the amazed and unsuspecting first officer the full story. Questions poured from the mate about the plan and the men behind it. Captain Anthony replied in detail, and

then asked if he would stay with him. Mr. Smith rose and grasped the captain's hand. "I'll stick by you," he said, "if this ship rams hell and burns off her jibboom."

Captain Anthony slept better that night than he had for weeks.

The ship left Teneriffe bound for "River la Platte and other places." The problem of keeping the crew from becoming suspicious was partly solved when, several weeks later, another whaler was spoken. Captain Anthony boarded her to check his faulty chronometer. In mingling with the other men, the *Catalpa's* boat crew, under the Portuguese second mate, learned for the first time that they were not off the coast of Patagonia, bound for the River Plate, but nearer the Cape of Good Hope headed for the Indian Ocean.

"I t'ought we long time getting River Plate," Anthony heard the second officer say to the men. "I t'ink maybe Old Man go New Zealand catch whales. I there once. Nice place." It was all the same to the men. Whales were where you found them.



MEANWHILE the Clan-na-Gael committee had been busy. The man selected by them to engineer the actual prison break was John J. Breslin, working as a railroad freight agent in Boston after his legendary rescue of James Stephens, head "center" of Fenianism, from the notorious Richmond Prison. He was to be assisted by Thomas Desmond, a firebrand from Los Angeles. The two agents left San Francisco in September, 1875. In Fremantle they were to meet John King, a Dublin man, who had collected almost four thousand dollars from the miners of New South Wales and was to ride horseback a thousand miles through the bush to deliver it to Breslin.

The *Catalpa*, nearing the Australian coast, spoke a large English bark. Anthony boarded her for information.

"You'll never believe this," he excitedly told Smith after he returned and they were alone in his cabin. "I asked that skipper if he knew the waters hereabouts. He said he'd been making trips out here all his life. He used to be master of the *Hougoumont*." Anthony paused expect-

antly, and then roared with laughter as realization swept over Smith.

"You mean," the mate said, "that old convict ship?"

"Yes. The ship that brought out the men we are going to take back. I told him I was looking for a good place to refit and asked if he could spare me a chart. I took this from the pile he offered." Anthony indicated a large-scale chart on his table. It was for the exact area toward which they were heading.

On March 28, anchor was dropped in Bunbury harbor and Anthony went ashore expecting to be recognized by one of the conspirators. Nothing happened. He repeated this performance for several days and then one morning, as he stepped ashore, he was met by a boy with a telegram which read: "Have you any further news from New Bedford? When can you come to Fremantle?"—J. Collins.

Anthony replied that he would wait in Bunbury. The next evening a tall, well-dressed man stepped off the mail coach from Fremantle, and approached Anthony who was on the edge of the small crowd around the coach.

"By your clothes, sir, you must be the master of the American whaler in the harbor."

"Yes, I am. Captain George Anthony, New Bedford."

"Collins, sir, John Collins, from the city of Boston. I'm delighted to meet you, Captain." They strolled to the waterfront and made their way to the end of one of the piers. Collins turned to Anthony.

"My name isn't Collins, Captain, it's John Breslin. There are three of us working outside of the prison. I let it be noised about that I was a filthy rich American capitalist looking for ways to invest my millions. I've been entertained royally by the British Governor and, during one of his dinners, I managed to get invited to inspect 'The Establishment'—that's what they call the prison. I spotted James Wilson, one of the six, in a work gang, and got permission to exchange a few words with him. The break will be made when I give the word. They will make their way to the coast at Rockingham, twenty miles south of Fremantle. The surf is rough all along here and I think it best if you met us on the beach with one of your

whaleboats. The *Catalpa* will have to lie well offshore so as not to arouse suspicion."

Anthony was about to ask a question when Breslin answered it. "I want you to come back to Fremantle with me on the mail steamer, *Georgette*, so that you can get a look at the coast."

As the mail boat steamed into Fremantle harbor Anthony again realized the problems faced by the plotters as he caught sight of the impressive stone prison high over the town. His eyes narrowed when he saw, anchored in the harbor, one of Her Britannic Majesty's gunboats, the schooner, *Conflict*.

On the next day he returned to Bunbury to await telegraphic instructions from Breslin. Smith had been replenishing the food supply for the long trip home. On Tuesday a telegram was delivered to Anthony.

"Your friend S has gone home. When do you sail?"—Collins.

Captain Anthony interpreted this to mean that the gunboat had left Fremantle for the south. At once he cleared the *Catalpa* through customs and went to the telegraph office to advise Breslin of his departure. As he was writing the wire a sailor rushed in and told him the ship had been seized by customs officials and that an officer was in charge on board. The fuming captain went to the custom house to find that his offense had been in allowing a barrel of pork to be landed after the vessel had been cleared. Hours of argument followed and finally the ship was released, but it was too late to sail. On Wednesday he wired Breslin that the ship would leave that day. A reply came immediately.

"Your telegram received. Friday being Good Friday, I shall remain in Fremantle and leave for York on Saturday morning."

Anthony appreciated the situation. He knew the prisoners were kept in their cells on Sundays and holidays and his plan would have placed him in Rockingham on Good Friday. He replied that the "wind was ahead and raining" and that he would sail in the morning. But it was not until Saturday that the *Catalpa* got away, due to another delay when four seamen stole a whaleboat and attempted unsuccessfully to jump ship.



BRESLIN'S plan was simple—but bold. The break would be made Monday morning. Desmond, with a team and wagon, would leave town by a side street leading to the Rockingham Road. Breslin, in an amazing demonstration of calculated daring, would drive a rented wagon straight to the prison. Playing the part of an American capitalist, he felt he was beyond suspicion. John King, well-mounted, would hang back until the last minute to determine whether the alarm had been given or not and then gallop with the news.

The *Catalpa* had left Bunbury for Rockingham Saturday afternoon. Captain Anthony paced the deck throughout the night. A delay now would be disastrous because the plan was in operation and word could not reach Breslin in time to stop it. At one o'clock Sunday afternoon, twelve miles off Rockingham, Anthony gave orders for a boat to be lowered and, picking a crew, told them to take food and warm clothing. Then he turned to the mate.

"If I do not come back use your best judgment; go whaling or go home, as you see fit." They shook hands quietly and the captain shoved off for the beach. It was dusk before the first line of breakers was reached and there were some anxious moments in the poor light, but the whaleboat rode the creaming Australian combers safely into calm water. Leaving the men to drag the boat up, Captain Anthony searched the beach. He found what he was looking for within three hundred yards—a long stake driven into the sand by Breslin, who had previously timed the trip from the prison to the beach in his wagon. The stake marked the meeting place.

Anthony instructed his boat crew to rest easy and they wrapped up in sea coats and went to sleep in the warm sandy hollows. In the morning he saw that they were about half a mile from a jetty on which men were piling lumber. Seaward, a black smudge on the horizon marked the *Georgette*, coming in to load the lumber.

At 7:30 Monday morning Breslin drove slowly up the main street of Fremantle and walked his horses past the warden's house. Outwardly cool, every nerve was tingling. Behind the walls, the prisoners were assembling for work details. The six Fenians knew the wagons were to be on

the road, about five minutes' hard run from the prison, at 8:15 and would wait until 9 o'clock.

Breslin was early and, to avoid suspicion, drove down the Rockingham Road until he met Desmond. They stopped in the shade of a tree and divided the clothes and weapons they had brought—three long linen dusters and three broad-brimmed hats in each wagon, together with pistols, rifles and ammunition. Then they drove slowly back toward the prison.

Inside the gray walls the Fenians were shuffling uneasily, casting glances about them, alert to every sign. The huge gates swung open and, in a column of two's, the detail assigned to piling rocks on the jetty in the harbor moved out under the eyes of a beefy guard, his carbine carried loosely in the crook of one arm. Among these men were Wilson and Harrington. They were relying on Cranston, the messenger. Hogan came out of the paint shed with brushes and a paint bucket and, as he had been doing for days now, walked calmly through the gate toward an official's house which he was painting. Just before passing through the gate he glanced toward Cranston, standing near the tool shed in the prison yard. Darragh, the Chaplain's assistant, had arranged for Hasset to help him plant potatoes in the Chaplain's garden that morning. As they crossed the yard together their eyes swung from the guard near the gate, who was watching the jetty detail, to Cranston. He nodded, once. They walked slowly through the gate toward the potato patch. Cranston was trembling with eagerness but he forced himself to move deliberately. He went into the tool shed, picked up a previously selected fancy key to one of the chests and, with it in his pocket, walked boldly toward the gate, as though bearing an important message.

The guard at the gate knew Cranston was a messenger and let him pass without question. He hurried after the jetty detail and when he was within earshot called, "Ho, guard!" Frowning, the guard halted the detail.

"The Governor wants Wilson and Harrington to move some furniture in his house," Cranston said. "He gave me the key and told me to take them over there." Cranston showed the fancy key and the

guard jerked his thumb toward Wilson and Harrington. "All right, you two, get going."

Once out of sight of the harbor detail, the three left the road for the bush. They skirted the prison close enough to whistle to Hogan, pretending to paint, and Darragh and Hasset, bending realistically over potato plants. These three left their work and followed.

Breslin and Desmond, almost within sight of the walls, saw three men running toward them. They were Wilson, Cranston and Harrington. Breslin waved them into the other wagon and whipped up his team toward the prison. Desmond wheeled and headed for the beach. Seconds later the other three came into sight over a rise in the road. As they were climbing into Breslin's wagon they were startled by the sound of galloping hoofbeats. Glancing grimly at each other they crouched in the bottom of the wagon, pistols cocked. But it was King, reporting that when he left there was no outcry. Breslin stood up in the seat and set his team in a hard run after Desmond's.

When Anthony saw the smoke of the *Georgette* he aroused his boat crew. A few minutes later the wagons rattled up, horses white with sweat. As the six escaped prisoners leaped to the ground their linen dusters flew open, revealing cartridge belts with two heavy pistols hanging from each. They snatched rifles and ammunition from the wagons and made a dash for the boat. Calamity almost struck. The boat crew, completely in the dark, drew their knives and brandished oars. It was learned later that they thought the captain was a smuggler and that these men were customs officers come to arrest him. They had determined to fight in defense of the captain. Anthony roared orders in several languages and calm was restored. The prisoners stowed themselves in the bottom of the boat, out of the way, and the seamen shoved off into the surf. As the big whaleboat lifted and pounded through the rolling green combers, the ex-prisoners yelled and cheered the seamen who were pulling oars curved under the strain.

They were little over half a mile from the beach when a squad of eight mounted police galloped up. The break had been discovered. The police were armed with

carbines but, strangely, did not open fire. They watched the boat for a while and then galloped for the jetty.

Breslin had prepared a note, and with a flourish he now slipped it into a bottle, pounded in the cork and flung it into the on-shore current. The note read:

Rockingham, April 17, 1876.

To His Excellency the British Governor of Western Australia:

This is to certify that I have this day released from the clemency of Her Most Gracious Majesty Victoria, Queen of Great Britain, etc., etc., six Irishmen condemned to imprisonment for life by the enlightened and magnanimous government of Great Britain for having been guilty of the atrocious and unpardonable crimes known to the unenlightened portions of mankind as "love of country" and "hatred of tyranny"; for this act of "Irish assurance" my birth and blood being my full and sufficient warrant. Allow me to add that—

I've taken my leave now, I've only to say
A few cells I've emptied (a sell in its
way);
I've the honor and pleasure to bid you
good-day,
From all future acquaintance, excuse me
I pray.

In the service of my country,
John J. Breslin.



THE NEXT twelve hours were a nightmare. Half a gale sprang up and night was falling before they raised the top sails of the *Catalpa*. There was no hope of reaching the ship that day. Anthony knew that with the dark land at their backs the look-out on the *Catalpa* would never be able to pick them up; and with darkness and the storm, Smith would stand out to sea for the night. The mast of the whaleboat was stepped and the small sail hoisted, but it was not long before there was a tearing crack and the mast went by the board.

Rising waves swept over the boat. Irishmen bailed water steadily and the seamen rowed. Miserable hours passed. They could see nothing in the blackness but dark water, and they were wet, cold and silent. At last the sky lightened enough for them to make out the *Catalpa*. She was stopped, headed up in the wind, and as they drew nearer they could make out a smaller boat rising and falling in the waves alongside the ship. Desmond stood up and took a long look.

"My God," he shouted, "it's the guard boat filled with police. Pass out the rifles." Exhaustion vanished. The Fenians were sharply alert and the seamen bent to their oars. The mast head look-out on the *Catalpa* must have sighted them at this moment because the ship suddenly swung off in the wind and bore down on them, leaving the squat little guard boat, with its mutton-legged sail, behind.

"Hoist the ensign!" roared Captain Anthony, as lines were flung and the men in the whaleboat swarmed aboard. Soon the Stars and Stripes were snapping in the breeze.

When the guard boat came up the freed Irishmen rushed jeering to the rail of the *Catalpa*. They knew most of the police in the boat by name, having lived close to them for the past eight years. They called to them gleefully, waving rifles and shouting ribald farewells. The officer in command accepted defeat gracefully. He knew it would be useless to attempt to board by force. He gave Captain Anthony a salute, calling, "Good morning, Captain," and put in for the beach.

Then there were wild scenes of happiness on board the *Catalpa*. The best dinner the ship's galley could afford was prepared for all hands and the ship was headed for the United States. But they were not out of it yet.

The vessel hardly moved its own length the entire night. They were in a dead calm and the sails hung slack. In the morning Smith excitedly called Captain Anthony and told him the *Georgette* was steaming up.

The mail boat was nearly twice the size of the *Catalpa* and in the morning sun her main deck seemed to be a gleaming forest of bayonets. She was carrying almost a regiment of infantry, and through his glasses, Anthony saw an artillery piece mounted on her upper deck. A colonel, brilliant in the scarlet trappings of the Victorian British Army, was commander of troops. Once, as the vessels closed and the attention of the colonel was diverted, Captain O'Grady of the *Georgette*, snatched off his cap and waved a greeting to the men on the *Catalpa*. Then a solid shot was sent across the bow of the motionless whaler.

(Continued on page 128)

TUNNEL HOG



He slipped and fell, and the entire pile caved in on him, blasting him to the mucky floor.

By
**WILBUR S.
PEACOCK**

JOHNNY Nolan came back because he was afraid. Sometimes fear is a greater goad to a man than an honest threat; and so Nolan came back to the tunnels, a yellow streak wide on his broad back, his reputation a thing which turned the sandhogs away from him as though he didn't exist.

He was big, strength like layers of flesh on his tall body. His hair was blue-black, tinged with gray at the temples, which was strange for he was young. His face was hard, the white line of a scar cynically



ILLUSTRATED BY
EARL EUGENE MAYAN

twisting the corner of his mouth. And his eyes were steel blue, cold and wary now, like those of a gun-shot wolf. Once they had laughed, once his smile had been quick and friendly; but now they were slate cold, cautious and unfriendly to all they saw.

He had cared once what others thought. He had fought himself and them, and never could he prove a thing, for beating men with his fists gained nothing, least of all for himself. And so at last he came to despise the world, conscious of his

own defect, and that was the final thing which brought him back to high-air and a world a hundred feet down.

"You'll muck, Nolan," Hennesy said coldly from behind his desk. "You'll sweat your guts out on a shovel." His gaze was contemptuous. "If I had my way, you'd not even do that. You're yellow."

"Yes, sir," Johnny Nolan answered, and his hands were blocky knotted fists at his side.

"All right, get out," Hennesy said.

Johnny Nolan turned and left. Despite himself, his face flamed at the open stares of the office girls. The walls of Hennessy's office were thin, and these girls were tunnel people, too, the silent condemnation in their eyes mirroring the contempt in their minds.

He broke stride, wanting to turn and shout at them, to explain the thing which had happened. There had been no time for thinking; the river was coming in, a blow-devil growing in the face. Turn and run, that had been the thing to do. And if two men died horribly because of that, well, every hog took his life in his hands from the moment he went through a pressure-lock.

But that would have done no good, and so he said nothing, striding full-paced from the office and going down the street. His breath was hot in his throat, and he could hear the *chuff chuff-chuff* of a freight on the siding. He cried to himself, *Get out of here, Nolan. Get the hell out of here and forget it. There are a thousand other towns, where you aren't known!*

And then he felt the dull vibrations of the air-compressors, and he knew the sound like the beat of his own heart. He knew then that he couldn't grab a train out, not now, not at least until he had found out something, not until he had proved forever the cowardice which he knew to be his.

A horn sounded in lonely splendor from the river, and he saw the bright sunshine-dappling of the water. The water was smooth and peaceful; it was hard to believe it could be so ruthless and coldly vicious only a few yards underneath its bed.

He passed the machine shop, the harsh odor of hot oil and metal drifting into the street. A store was next, children's games incongruously placed beside work clothes in the window. Next was a cafe, and then a bar. He swung left, pressing open the door of the bar, crowding into the dimness and footing the brass rail as he had done so many times in the past. He could see the quivering of his strong hands.

"Rye," he said to the barkeep, and when it came he stood there thoughtfully fingering the small glass.



THE ROOM was steamy, and now he could see it was half-filled with men still in their heavy jackets, sweating out the bubbled nitrogen which even decompression didn't remove from their veins. They talked, and their laughter was harsh and sudden. Death was always with men such as these, and so they lived for the day, tempers and humor on feather-triggers.

He drank the whiskey and gestured for a refill. None had noticed him as yet, and his nerves eased a bit in the friendliness of the room. Then two men turned and stared, and he caught the whisper of his name. Others turned, and he could feel the withdrawing, the shrinking, which was second nature to him now. A miner leaned over and talked to the barkeep, and then the barkeep came along the inside of the bar.

"No more rye," he said.

"Then bourbon." Color drained from Johnny Nolan's cheeks.

"No bourbon." The barkeep's hand was below the bar top.

"What's that?" Johnny Nolan asked, and nodded at the bottles racked in gleaming array.

He knew this game; he'd played it before at other tunnels. Sometimes the bottles had been smashed, sometimes men had gone down before his blasting fists, sometimes he had lost. But now, hearing the same words in the same tone, he sensed the futility of fighting.

"Forget it," he said, and tossed down a quarter for the single drink.

He went outside, the warm air chilly after the heat of the bar. Angry muscles slowly unlocked in his shoulders. He watched blankly as a sedan went by. Someone was staring, but the fact meant nothing. He began to walk, and stopped only when the car turned at the corner and returned and a girl called out his name.

"Johnny — Johnny Nolan!" the girl cried, and he was turning as stiffly as a robot, a tiny muscle tic-ing in his jaw.

"Hello, Irene," he said, and wondered at the hoarseness of his tone.

She was exactly as he remembered, dark hair tinged with golden highlights, her eyes startlingly blue against the tan

of her face. She was smiling now, but there was a strain in her, as there was in him, and the smile held no gaiety.

"I thought it was you, Johnny," she said, "but I wasn't sure. The last we heard, you were on the West Coast."

"Yeah!" Johnny Nolan licked dry lips. "I just arrived."

He wondered then how he could have ever given her up. After the blow, after he had run away, her letters had sought him out, letters he had never answered. Somehow, then, it had seemed the right thing to do. He had been marked as yellow, almost as a murderer, and he had thought she might carry his disgrace. Then, later, her letters had ceased, and he had realized she was gone from him forever.

But seeing her now, liking the softness of her face, wondering what lay in her mind, old memories stirred, and despite himself, they came out in his voice.

"I wondered about you," he said. "I thought of you a lot."

She was smiling, but he could see the tears slowly gathering. They embarrassed him, hurt him, as no words could.

"I'm all right," she answered. "Tom and I are to be married this month. Everything's fine."

Johnny Nolan smiled wryly. "Congratulations," he said, turning away. "I'll see you around."

She let him go, and he walked away, shoulders squared unconsciously. This was another part of his life which had risen Phoenix-like, and he could feel the cold trembling of his body. It wasn't that he was still in love with her; it was only that she was another goad to him and his pride, and he knew he could take but little more before he broke and ran.

"Irene and Tom," he whispered, caught by the grim irony. "Irene and Tom."

Tom had been his buddy. They'd dug the same tunnels and fought the same men. They'd shared money and dates and clothes; their laughter had mingled, and their sorrow had been one. It was strange to realize the man was here, that they would be working together again.

Tom wouldn't like that; he hated everything about Johnny Nolan now. Curt had got it in that final blow. The blow had caught him, screaming in triumph, and

then he was gone, sucked through the face, his grave a hidden thing in river mud ninety feet down. Tom blamed Johnny Nolan for his brother's death, blamed him with a blind unreasoning hate.

I didn't kill him; I didn't kill anybody! Johnny Nolan cried to himself then. *My God, why pin it on me. Others ran, they ran like hell. Why make me the goat?*

And he knew why. He had been Big Johnny Nolan, a laughing muscled giant who fought the earth as though the battle were a personal thing. He was the leader, the biggest drinker, the most reckless fighter, the loudest laughter. He was the boss, the big man, and his leadership was unquestioned.

So it was, in the hell of a tunnel blow, that the other men ran, too. He had lost his nerve, lost the tight grip on his courage for one blind period of time, and plunged for the man-lock, clawing and battling to safety. Discipline in the crew had vanished before his own terror. All the hogs had raced for safety, except Curt and a big Senegalese. They had stayed at the face, and they had died alone, slain by a monster they could not whip.

Johnny Nolan clenched big hands, remembering those following days. His nerve was gone, leaving something in him he knew would never die. Somehow, it was more terrible that he should have run, for his strength was his weapon against the world, and with it gone, he was nobody, nothing. He'd gone away, far from hogging, running through his money, not caring where it went; and at last he had done other jobs to live, tasks a high-air man of courage would never do.

He'd tried to come back, forced himself back to the tunnels, but never could go down again. He was afraid, mortally afraid, with a deep grinding terror that would not vanish. He watched other men go down, and then he would turn away, sickness in his heart.

The months had passed, long dusty weeks in which he had come to hate himself. And when at last he could stand his life no longer, he had pulled strings and gained a company order which would let him work once again. He'd break, he knew that, but the breaking would put an end to doubts and hopes which still fought for life in his mind.

And now he was signed for the night tower, one hour under forty pounds of pressure, the tunnel an iron-walled trap which would try to close in and strangle him. He would go down and some men would speak, while others would look through and past him. He'd muck, swinging a loaded shovel, doing a laborer's task, and he'd be afraid. Then when the shift was over, he'd pack his clothes and run again, never to return.

"Damn!" Johnny Nolan swore brutally. "Damn, damn, damn!"

He knew then, a full realization, of how far he had come in the lonely year.



HE changed clothes in the hog house, liking the feel of the heavy boots and rough cloth against his body. Miners talked and laughed about him, but he said nothing, conscious of the shaking of his hands. Compressor vibration touched the building, and the air was tepid with heat and the smell of sweat. A steamer blew its whistle, and idly, he wondered if those on the ship knew that men toiled like moles in a steel warren dozens of yards beneath its keel.

He saw Tom then, big and blond and muscled like a Titan. He was crew chief now, something Nolan had been once, and his movements were sure, his eyes keen as they measured the mettle of the gang. Tunneling was a tough game, fear and uncertainty killed men. Teamwork was necessary if men were to breathe fresh air again after the rubber-tainted hell which pressed at their lungs in the minutes below.

He saw Tom, and when the man came his way, he turned his head, shrinking back against the wall, swallowing hard.

"Hello, killer," Tom said grimly.

Johnny Nolan felt the straining of his throat. A year before, he'd have climbed the man, he'd have beaten the words and the thought back into the other's body. But now, because he was afraid of the tunnel, he was afraid of the man, and he licked dry lips and waited.

"You won't like it, killer," Tom said brutally. "It's glacial now, marbles the size of your thumb. It's tough down there; maybe she'll blow in your face."

Johnny Nolan wiped his mouth, con-

scious that others watched. He wanted to run, and he couldn't move. It seemed incredible that he could have been like this man a year before. No fear, no ugly thoughts racing through his mind.

"Anything to say?" Tom asked; and when Johnny Nolan shook his head, he spat in vast contempt and turned away. "Let's go," he said to the crew, and men streamed from the hog house, going toward the gantry.

Johnny Nolan came last. He avoided glances, gantry steps vibrating under his feet. He went up, turning toward the lift and crowding in with the others. Cables creaked and the lift rocked; then Tom gave the order and the lift began to sink.

The crew crowded together. Cold air from the sump pushed at them. City lights disappeared and pale yellow bulbs gave a feeble brilliance to the sweating walls. Men didn't talk now; they were silent, as was always the way when a new shift went down.

The walls flashed past, and men huddled against the chill. Lift cables whined, suddenly jarring, as the bottom was reached. The crew streamed toward the bulkhead where three orange-nosed cylinders were thrust from a bed of steel and concrete. Two were low, gasketed doors locked by air pressure, one the man-lock for the crews, the second the muck-lock through which river debris came in laden cars. The third cylinder was the emergency lock, high against the ceiling, the last means of escape for trapped men.

Johnny Nolan caught his breath. There was a trembling in his legs. Every man had a limit to which he could go, and he had reached his long before.

"Still yellow, killer!" Tom's mocking voice caught at him and flung his head about.

His face flamed and his mouth went tight with strain. He hated the blond giant then, hated him with a cold-blooded viciousness that was nauseating. He took one driving step forward, fear forgotten for the moment.

"Don't crowd me, Tom," he said thinly. "I'm warning you."

The blond man laughed; he laughed and turned away and went toward the filling man-lock. And behind, still blinded by anger, Johnny Nolan followed.

He found a seat on one of the two benches. Full understanding of what he was doing came to him then. He almost cried out; then the rubber-edged door came to. The lock-tender spun a valve, and air began its keen shriek against which even thoughts turned away.

Heat burgeoned. Perspiration started, slicking muscled bodies. The weight of growing pressure crowded at straining lungs; and men hawked and spat, equalizing pressure. The air cried, and the gauge needle cruised toward its pin. Men could take pressure fast, unlike decompression, but still their bodies tensed against the weight of the heated air.

Then the keening died away, until at last it was gone. The gauge needle stood at forty. The inner door came open in a soughing of wind, and men were climbing out, going toward the working head.

This was the moment which had been an eternity in coming. This was the thing which had shadowed Johnny Nolan's mind. There was the muted crash of sound beyond the lock, and fear was as solid a force out there as the grinding pressure.

Johnny Nolan couldn't move. He had the will and the desire, but his body betrayed him. His swinging gaze saw that the lock-tender and Tom watched, and he tried to force a smile.

"Take the yellow-belly out," Tom said brutally, and went from the lock.

Johnny Nolan came from the bench. He came up, hand reaching out to brace himself. Rusty sweat from the wall lay on his palm like crusted blood. He swallowed and went forward, driving himself, waiting for the moment when he would completely crack.

"You'll never make it, Nolan," the lock-tender said, not unkindly.

He went ahead. Wooden flooring gave beneath his boots, and tenuous wisps of fog thrust at his face. Electric bulbs were weird yellow eyes leering at him and his fear. The lock soughed to behind him.

He turned to run. His fingers clawed at the man-lock's door, and he sobbed deep in his throat like a terrified animal. His mind reeled with the press of raw emotion.

How long he stood there, he did not know. Blood stained his hands, and he was breathing in deep hard gulps of

the hot air. Then at last he could think again, and a measure of sanity slowed the whirlpool of his mind.

He was still alive; nothing had happened. There were no terrified screams, no rushing of haggard men to safety. This was but a tunnel, deep in the bowels of the earth, as safe as any tunnel could be.

He forced a grin, and his face felt like cement looked when it broke from pressure. Perspiration slicked his body, and he rubbed his hands along his pants. He took a tentative step away from the bulkhead, and another, and then another. His mind was in control now, and he felt the first dim ray of hope.

Other men lost their nerve, aviators and soldiers and timber-toppers. It was not so strange a thing to have happen. But those men were only names, there was nothing personal about them and their fears. Their problems did not touch him.

Still, he drew a grain of comfort from the thought. He walked ahead, going slowly but steadily, brushing through the fog which thickened toward the working head. The tunnel stretched like the inside of a gigantic snake, the muck car tracks like narrow silver ribbons disappearing into infinity.



HE came about a bend, and the full-throated clamor of the working head slapped at his nerves. He stopped, held in thrall for the moment.

Iron and steel clanged; air moaned a dull bass roar from the feeder lines. Men worked at slow-motion speed, the iron gang high on the platform running across the tunnel, fitting plates and tightening them with shoulder-wrenching twists of heavy tools. Below, muckers bent and straightened, wielding huge shovels, filling the insatiable maws of the muck cars.

Squarely ahead was the working face. Here was the shield, driven forward at times by the hydraulic jacks spaced about its rear. Girders criss-crossed, segmenting the face, and in the pockets the miners worked, swinging sharp-bladed shovels against the river bottom, then facing the cuts with hay-packed boards tightened with screw jacks.

It was here the tunnel went forward, gnawed away by steel teeth, the shield

inching along, and the iron gang laying the tunnel's scales behind. It was in a tunnel like this that Johnny Nolan had worked before; it was here he had been the king-pin of high-air. And it was in a murder-hole like this that he had broken and run and left two men to die.

He sidled into the heading. Water splashed at his boots, smelly liquid seeping from the countless springs on the floor. Even forty pounds of pressure could not hold it out. A few of the hogs caught sight of him and watched for a second. Then they swung back to their jobs, contempt plain in the set of their shoulders.

A muck car went past, and he stepped aside. Some tunnels had endless chain buckets, but not this one, for new equipment had not arrived. This was men against earth, each seeking to vanquish the other.

Johnny Nolan saw Tom in the face's webbing, and envy touched his mind. The emotion was galling, and when he saw that Tom watched with a mocking grin, he shivered in coiled rage.

Somehow, the man personified everything he hated then. He was big and vital and unafraid, and his right hand pointed unnecessarily at a shovel leaving against a stack of facing boards. He called something which went unheard in the roar of work, but his pocket partner turned and grinned in appreciation.

"All right," Johnny Nolan whispered and bent to catch the shovel.

He mucked. He bent and threw the weight of his back into the shovel. Other muckers worked beside him, but he gave them no heed. He was a miner and yet he mucked. This work was below him and his strength and his knowledge, and knowing it, his pride festered like a naked wound.

Yet he had no choice. In reality, it meant nothing, for after this shift he would be gone. Anyway, he was lucky, for with his reputation, not many companies would have let him go down again. Best to stick it out and to hell with what the others thought.

The first paralysis of fear was gone. He could feel confidence loosening the tension of his body. There was even the first growing sense of shame, for now he could look about the tunnel and it was no differ-

ent from a dozen he had worked. Forty men, a full crew, were casually doing herculean labor beneath a weight of air which would have dropped surface men in their tracks.

He breathed easier, swinging the shovel with greater strength. His mouth twitched in unconscious laughter. He was beginning to understand why pilots went up right after a crash, why riggers climbed their thin ropes just after an escape. Go back or stay away, there were but two choices, for after too long a time no man could return.

His mind eased and the pounding of his heart slowed. He could think objectively now, and the thrill of the tunnel came back to him. Air boomed in a steady rush of sound, and the ring of metal on metal was counterpoint to the bass melody.

Black men and white, Senegalese and Irishmen, Pole and Swede, they all worked together. He watched their precision of movement. No motion was wasted. Each crew worked an hour and rested five; there was no time for anything but work. They yelled when they spoke, for ordinary tones went unheard. They were a team, each supplementing the other, and their mutual trust was a wondrous thing found nowhere else in the world. They were giants in the earth, and Johnny Nolan felt himself apart from them.

He worked, eased now inside, confidence growing. Somehow, he had been tricked; somehow, he was not as yellow as he had thought himself to be.

For the first time, an alien thought intruded. Irene came to his mind, and the rhythm broke in his shovel's stroke. She had loved him once; maybe she still did. Maybe if he proved himself again, she would come back. He didn't blame her for turning to Tom, for with her letters returned, she had no way of knowing how he felt. She could only believe that she and Johnny Nolan were through, that he wanted it that way.

He clung to the thought. After all, she hadn't condemned him too much those many months before. She had tried to help, and he had thrust her words away. He hadn't wanted sympathy; he had wanted only to be left alone.

He paused in his work, wiping sweat

away, thoughts whirling in his mind. His task was simple; prove himself in the tunnel and then cut Tom out.

He glanced at the webbing. The blond giant was there, working with smooth sure movements. His hair was a yellow flame and muscles rippled like snakes beneath his skin. He was a hog, a damned good hog, and this was his world.

The clamor never died. Johnny Nolan could identify the various sounds again, the clink of wrench on bolt, the dull voice of air speaking, the brittle curse of a man with a pinched hand, even the splash of water beneath his feet. This was like the old days, except then he had been at the webbing, a crew chief, the best damned hog of the lot.

He drew a deep breath, conscious of the pressure. He wiped his face, leaving a streak of muck on his forehead. Already he could feel the deadly tiredness stealing into his body. High-air did that; a man had to accustom himself to the work gradually. His layoff had sapped his strength.

A muck car went away and another slid into place. He bent and scooped at the river's muck, lifting it with a full-bodied swing and dropping it into the car. He didn't like the look of the slop, didn't like it at all. It was marbly, not grainy and muddy as it should be. Glacial stuff, pocketed in the earth ages past, it was dangerous.

Then he gave it no more heed, intent on his task. His mind detached itself, went winging back. It had done such a thing before, but now there was a difference, for he was in a tunnel again, not hidden far away like a scared animal. He grinned thinly, liking the new feeling of growing confidence.



HE HEARD the cry at the face, heard it and gave no heed. He bent and lifted a shovelful of muck, swinging it up—and a brutal fear-crazed hand stabbed at his shoulder, thrusting him aside.

"Blow!" somebody screamed. "It's a blow!"

He heard the cry, and this was a year before. He listened to the sudden insane shrieking of air blowing free through the ruptured face, and blind terror fogged his

mind. He dropped the shovel, clinging to the edge of the muck car, gaze locked upon the face.

It blew, crumbling and disintegrating in a gaping sucking mouth that grew bigger by the moment. Air clattered like soured milk from the lowering pressure. Fog grew in strips which coalesced with fantastic speed. Men were crying out, terror spreading like oil on water, like a blaze through tinder-brush.

"Dear God, no!" Johnny Nolan whispered.

There had been no warning, no instant of adjustment. There was but an infinitesimal second in which time was motionless. A miner had become careless, his shovel had cut too deep, and he had tried to face the cut too late. Air had whined, then screamed, and muck had poured in a growing flood past the miners to the floor. A mouth had pouted, then gaped, hungry for breath.

Johnny Nolan was rigid, watching the tunnel, living death over again. Men were shadows in the growing fog; they climbed and they slipped and they ran with clumsy speed toward the safety of the man-lock. They had no thought for each other then; they were like wild animals escaping incredible danger.

Johnny Nolan turned to run. He saw Tom and two others still at the face, fighting with a frantic desperation to stop the blow. Somewhere a siren began to shriek, and he knew that overhead, a hundred feet overhead, a second siren was crying its danger signal to the world.

He spun about, and his foot slipped, sliding in the muck. He went sideways, hands plunging out for purchase. Fingers clawed at the stack of boards, clawed and caught, and he stopped his plunging weight.

He was coming upright when the pile tumbled. It came with ponderous slowness, crowding him; and because he was off-balance, there was nothing he could do. A board slashed at his face, and his cheek went numb with pain. He fell backward, and the entire pile caved in upon him, smothering him, blasting him to the mucky floor.

He felt the pain then, a growing agony, but it meant nothing for a moment. Water was at his back, and he beat at the boards,

hurling them aside, pulling himself free. He swore in a vicious monotone, and he had no thoughts for anything other than himself.

He came free and tried to stand, and a scream ripped at his throat. Blackness crowded his mind. He slumped, sitting on boards which shifted and gave, and his hands told him that his foot was smashed, too broken to carry his weight.

Fear came then, ugly and pulsing. It was part of himself, ingrown, never to leave. He felt the tunnel closing in, vising him, and he sobbed like a child deep in his throat.

He saw the webbing was empty now. The men had realized the futility of the battle and they, too, had fled for safety. Lights were tiny glowworms in the mist, and the shriek of air was higher, keening. The feeder lines bellowed, trying to keep up the pressure, failing.

Muck was sliding by now, cold and grimy, like thick greasy mush. It stretched out, climbing higher. It touched his buttocks and his waist, and its grasp solidified his panic. He threw himself to one side, crawling, almost fainting with the agony of his broken foot.

He'd never make the man-lock, he knew that. But he might crawl to the emergency lock. He might make its high safety. The thought was a whip scourging him, driving him on.

He pulled himself along, one leg-dragging like a clumsy tail. Strain and terror were in him, and the muscles of his back felt like cables knotting and writhing. Air was a whirling gale, and his hands and knees were in muck, deep in muck.

The cry of fear tore at him, and for a moment he thought it was from his gasping throat. It was deep, blind panic making it ragged and ugly. A corner of his mind told him another was trapped, too, and he found a cynical comfort in the thought.

He came to the man, found him huddled against the wall, hands outstretched, knees drawn up and away from the stinking flood. His face was a white mask, eyes like colorless moonstones.

Johnny Nolan rested, licking at his mouth. Agony was a flame running up his leg and hip, and his face was stiff and bruised where the board had slashed. He

stared blankly at the miner for a moment, the terror so thick in him that he could not gain recognition of the other.

Then he caught his breath. This was Tom, this was the crew chief. This was the man who had such contempt for men whose courage failed in a crisis.

"Run, damn you!" Johnny Nolan cried. "See how it feels, you dirty rat!"

The other caught the words, and his head swung from side to side, eyes staring blindly.

The man was blind, blind with the shock of terror. He could see nothing; he was a helpless blind slug in an iron snake's belly.

"For God's sake, help me, somebody!" Tom cried out, and his hands groped for rescue.

"Help yourself!" Johnny Nolan belated his triumph, and went on past, knowing only minutes were left.

He heard Tom's voice, even above the roar of air. He heard it, and Tom was hurt, and this was a year before, another time, another tunnel, but the same blow. He pulled himself another yard, and then he was turning back.

He came to the miner, and the man's hands clung to him. Tom surged at him, face writhing with the agony of his mind, and his eyes were marbles glaring sightlessly at Johnny Nolan.

"Please!" he was crying. "Please, please, please!"

Johnny Nolan beat at the face above him, smashing at it with sliny hands, for Tom was atop him and both would drown in river muck unless one kept his head. He screamed at the torture of his foot, but still he slugged, and finally drove the other away and to one side. He followed him, battering and at last Tom was limp.

He took him pick-a-back, sliding under and edging up and wondering what insanity lay in his mind. He couldn't hear the tunnel now; there was a surf pounding in his ears. And he, like Tom, was blind now, for the tunnel was packed with a black fog the lights could not penetrate.

He began his journey. He crawled like a worm, arching himself, feeling the drag of Tom's weight. His foot was numb now, almost useless. He went ahead, shaking his head against the wall of fog, feeling it creeping lazily into his senses.

He couldn't make the journey, and the thought brought throaty laughter to his mouth. His number had come up a year before, but he'd got a rain-check on it. Now the wheel was full cycle and his number was at the peg. His chance, his only chance, lay in dropping Tom. Then he might get free to fresh air and life.

He gagged, pain lancing from his leg. He braced arms and knees, face almost at the rolling muck, and sobbed for breath and went on. The sandhog on his back came to momentarily, then sagged again, muttered sounds on his lips.

He came to the bulkhead. He never saw it. He came against it with his head, and he had to bend his neck back to keep his nose from the muck. He thought he cried out, but he was never certain. He went instinctively to his left until he came to the iron ladder.

His back arched, and he came up, lifting in a half-crouch, bracing and swinging Tom into a fireman's lift. He boosted his burden up, step by slow step, each movement an agony. He went up, thrusting, and finally Tom was in the emergency lock and he was dragging himself in after the other. His hands fumbled to close the door and dog it shut. Hazily, he fumbled at the air valve. There was the scream of air, solace to his lungs, and then he dropped over Tom, blacking out.



THERE was peace. There was no sound, no screaming of air, no agony of a broken foot. There was only a sense of tiredness, of a weakness such as long illness brings. Then there were voices, soft voices that really were loud, only not to Johnny Nolan.

He opened his eyes, squinting against the light. His mind took hold then, and he recognized the emergency ward of the company hospital. He was on a cot, lying alone in the big room.

"Bravest thing I ever saw," one voice was saying. "My God, imagine carrying another man through that bloody hell and saving his life. He's a bigger man than I thought."

"Yeah," a second voice broke in, "he's O.K."

Johnny Nolan bit his lip. They were talking about him, about what he had done.

They wouldn't shun him now; they'd bang his back and be mighty proud to work with him.

"How about Nolan?" a third voice said.

"Who gives a damn!" the first voice said brutally. "If I'd been Tom, I'd have left him there. He's yellow plumb through."

Johnny Nolan sat upright, hands gripping the sides of the cot. Astonishment lay in his eyes, and he shook his head, not understanding.

"He's got a broken foot," the second voice said. "He couldn't have made it by himself." The voice made a spitting sound. "When Tom comes to, we'll get the whole story. Imagine, just imagine, saving the guy who practically murdered his brother!"

Johnny Nolan wanted to cry out; he wanted to stop those voices, to set them right. He swung his legs from the cot and saw then that his broken foot was splinted and bandaged.

"The girl's taking it pretty hard," the first voice said, "but I heard the Doc say Tom would be all right."

Johnny Nolan stood. This was his chance, his opportunity. He would go out and blow the hell out of those men's words. He'd tell his story and Tom would back it up, and he'd get the glory which was due him.

And then, standing there, one hand braced against the wall, Johnny Nolan suddenly realized that he did not care what those men thought.

For months he had worried about the thoughts of other men. He had learned to hate himself because they despised him. He had been full of doubts and fears, until he was no good to anybody, least of all to himself.

Now it didn't matter. Tom would wake, and maybe he would remember enough to tell an honest story. Even if he didn't, he would remember his fear and maybe be more tolerant of lesser men. One way or the other, it no longer mattered.

Johnny Nolan knew now his capabilities, what he could and what he could not do. He had courage; he had proved that. And if there was fear in him, too, then that was a normal thing.

Johnny Nolan had come, at last, to understand himself.

By CHARLES ELLIOTT.



The canvasback was low on the water, limping toward our decoys—and then I saw an eagle coming in after him.

GENTLEMAN'S DRAKE



I STRETCHED my neck for a quick appraisal of the sky. Daylight was no more than an hour away. The transparent hour before dawn was sparked with a million guttering stars that gave depth and breadth to the dock and boats. Bulky humans were passing guns, decoys and assorted bundles from the pier into the

bows of the bateaus. The wind was directly out of the southwest. It spilled off the Gulf in torrents and flooded upriver between the hallway of trees.

It was quite cold, too. It bit around the edges of my jacket and nipped at my bare fingers. From long experience I sensed one of those perfect days for

ILLUSTRATED BY DANIEL PIERCE

ducks, one of those rare days even for a Florida midwinter.

This was Homosassa, a Florida west coast river, famous for its duck hunting as well as its fishing. It flowed from a huge spring and poured into the Gulf through a network of channels and marsh islands, across flats where every sprig and root was grown to fit the taste of a duck's palate. It was a brine brother of the Cheshowiska, a cousin to the mighty Suwanee. Ducks wintered in countless flights where the great land arc of Florida turned westward. For two days a storm out in the Gulf had driven the flights inshore. Word had come to our club that teal and wigeons and canvasbacks were trading across the marsh in wide, fast V's.

I said "our club." I belonged to it as much as any member who ever signed a sizable check for the annual dues. I had been a guide at the club since I was able to jerk the starter rope of an outboard. I knew every pothole and shell bank for fifty miles along this stretch of coast. I wouldn't have traded jobs with the chairman of General Motors.

Under other circumstances every sprig of fiber on my neck would have been quivering in anticipation of the day. But I was at ebb tide instead, just within a flight feather of throwing my duffel ashore and walking out on a group of men I had known a lifetime.



I SUPPOSE all hunting and fishing clubs are alike in most ways. A group of friends who love a gun or a rod get together and build themselves a camp near some choice spot. The camp may be a slab bark shack or a mansion trimmed in mahogany. It's all the same. Those things that keep it alive and enthusiastic are fellowship, friendship and sportsmanship.

Sometimes those clubs will hit a snag. When they do, it takes a lot of steady sitting in the boat, a lot of understanding, and sometimes a lot of sacrifice to keep from going under. I'd seen it happen to clubs I knew. Now I was sitting helplessly by, watching it happen to mine.

The members of my club were average fellows, scattered over two states. They were business men. Not millionaires by any construction of the term, and not poor-

house material either. Just average, substantial Americans, who by hard work and personality, had attained a fair degree of success, according to those standards by which men measure success.

Two of my members had been rattling at one another for a year. I don't know the cause of their original clash; it was something about a trap shoot. You don't ask questions about things like that. But the tension had grown steadily worse, and finally developed to within a few words of open warfare. They had stopped visiting the club at the same time, and what kind of mixed schedule brought them down on this trip, I'll never know.

John came in late. I was in the big house when he arrived. The other members were having a drink before the log fire. He spoke to all of them and then looked down his nose at Willard. They neither spoke nor offered a hand. Richard, in a clumsy attempt to relieve the tension, put a loaded glass in John's hand. John raised it immediately, looked straight at Willard.

"To a good shoot," he said, "in spite of the human handicaps."

Willard's eyes did not waver. He raised his glass.

"To the eels and coots," he responded, "and their kith and kin."

Hal Adams caught John's arm and went with him to his room.

When they sat down to dinner, I plopped into my usual seat beside the fire. Sometimes I ate with the members, but tonight I had already eaten. John and Willard sat on opposite sides of the table. They seemed to go out of their way to irritate each other. They broke into conversations, blurted side remarks and made things generally uncomfortable for everyone present.

The climax of that dinner came along about the end.

"The shooting," said John, grabbing a pause in the conversation, "will be tame down here after two days last week in the timber on White River. You've got to think fast there, and swing fast, to kill ducks."

"You must be a wonderful shot," Willard suggested, in a low voice.

"I am a good shot," John admitted, looking directly at him.

"How good?" Willard asked, not taking his eyes away.

"Good enough," John replied, without hesitation, "to bet you a thousand dollars a duck, up to the limit. The loser resigns from the club."

Willard stood up and flapped his napkin down beside the plate.

"It's a deal," he said, tersely.

John was on his feet, too.

"Break it up, you drakes," Gene said. I could sense the alarm in his voice. I think he could see the beginning of the end of one of the finest outdoor clubs in America.

Later, in bed, I began to think about that wager. I couldn't even comprehend a thousand bucks. To me it was like having a key to Fort Knox. A thousand in cold cash might not break either one of those fellows, but it would surely hurt them like hell.

And if either of them happened to draw a bad stand . . .

I finally dropped into an exhausted sleep, to dream of shooting at dollar bills that flitted over the gold brick decoys. At four o'clock when the alarm went off I was so groggy that I tried to pull on my hunting breeches over my head.

At breakfast I found that I had been assigned as Willard's guide. Every man in that group had spent a restless night. I understood later that Gene and Richard tried to talk them out of the bet, without success.

It was a dismal crowd that took off from the dock.

Beyond the narrows the boats fanned out over the marsh. I pointed the prow of our boat toward Rat Hole, a wide gap between two marsh islands. Low tide left these flats too dry to float a boat. In spite of the southwestern blowing in off the Gulf, it would be necessary to get out before late afternoon, or spend an uncomfortable night in the marsh.

I found a point of land right for the wind, dropped our stool of decoys twenty yards off the grass clump selected as a blind, and pulled our bateau out of sight into a narrow lagoon, pushing down reeds and grass so as to hide it from sky-borne eyes.

I handed Willard an empty shell case to sit on in the grass clump.



OUR timing was perfect. The copper rim of the sun was showing its arc beyond the palmettos on the next island, had suffused the horizon clouds with bright color. Willard pushed his face through the tangle of reeds for a better look at the sunrise. Two big canvasback drakes hovered with cupped wings over the decoys. They flared on startled pinions, climbing in a beeline away from the stool. Somehow Willard got the gun from his knees, pawed off the safety catch and swung with the pivoting birds.

The firing pin clacked on an empty chamber. He had forgotten to throw in a shell from the magazine.

The drakes, their ruby heads shining in the sunlight, made a wide circle and drifted downward, four hundred yards away. Suddenly they shifted gears and climbed. One and then the other crumpled and dropped out of sight into the marsh grass. A moment later I heard the well spaced shots from a steady trigger finger.

"Who's over there?" Willard asked sharply.

I thought I knew, but stood up to make sure. It was Rick, John's guide. I could tell by the way he walked into the shallows and retrieved the ducks.

Willard, looking at me, knew too. He grew tight around the edges and sat down on the shell case again. Far to the left and to the right, strings of mallards and blacks and cans were winging inland to feed. The sun burned through a patch of pink clouds and came out the other side, too bright to look upon. I heard John shoot again, watched his guide paddle away from the blind to retrieve a bird from the deeper water.

While my eyes were on the point of grass island, a pair of mallards slipped into the decoys. The whistle of flight feathers brought me sharply around. Willard had already seen the birds. They had seen him. They were shooting skyward with rocket speed. He folded one that landed in the marsh grass ten yards away. The other shed a few tail feathers and flew out of sight over the blue waters of the Gulf.

Willard's seat was not warm again when three pintails left the air lanes and

fell into the decoys. He missed the first shot clean, but by some strange circumstance, knocked down two ducks with the second load. One was dead, the other paddled for the marsh beyond and he killed it on the water.

I retrieved the birds and brought the boat back to the bayou.

I never think of the remainder of that day that I don't get the jeebies. Everything that ever jinxed a duck blind and some that haven't, happened to us that day. I first noticed it when the flights began to climb over and around the decoys.

One string after another, coming in from the Gulf, rose on suspicious primaries and went over the range of a Garand. I clomped through the wet reeds to Willard's blind to see what was wrong. Sometimes the flash of bronze from a dead shell will put birds into the ether. When I saw what the trouble really was, my heart sank. Peg, one of the guides, had used glossy finish on a set of decoys when he painted them back earlier in the winter.

That was the set we had. Just at that moment a floating block caught a flash of sun and threw it into the blind. Willard, too, knew what had happened. He looked at me with dismay written all over his face.

"Are all the decoys like that?" he asked quietly.

I shook my head apologetically.

"These are the only ones. We didn't have time to paint them again."

Willard lit his pipe with a trembling hand, and immediately knocked out the tobacco. His eyes burned so strangely that I was a little afraid.

"He'd do that," Willard said fiercely, "to win a bet."

I went back to the boat, restless as a chicken mite. I tried to remember the circumstances leading up to the decoy fraud. Most of the club members knew about those shiny blocks and we had packed them in the tool house, away from the other decoys. Their appearance with the good decoys was something I intended to solve.

At noon I walked to the blind.

"We also got a leaky jug," I said. "I'll have to borrow water for lunch."

Willard nodded dully. There had not been a duck around his blind for two hours, and with only a few clouds lazily down the sky, it looked like bright sunlight and no shooting for the remainder of the day.

John's gun had been popping all morning with the regularity of Leyte.

Willard told me later that I was scarcely beyond the edge of the marsh grass when one of the drifting clouds ducked across the sun. The brief respite brought in a flock of pintails. Two empty spaces in the wing of a big drake showed where he had ventured a little too near some other blind.

The birds were suspicious and high, but he had to take a chance. Three shots brought down two of the birds. One fell on his back in open water. The other, badly wounded, swam laboriously across the river and crawled into the tall marsh grass on the other side.

Willard got set for a flight of canvasbacks which were headed his way, but I did not see them. On my way back from John's blind where I had borrowed drinking water, I rounded the river bend at the precise moment to send them on a wide circle for other feeding grounds.

Neither of us had much desire for food. The tide was going out, and I knew we would have to leave the blind by four o'clock or spend a cold night under the stars.

The flats would be dry by dark.



THE afternoon hours treated us a little more kindly. The sun became entangled with a filmy cloud mass moving in from the west and for at least twenty minutes out of every hour, the light grew dull enough to cut the decoy glare. At ten minutes to four o'clock I splashed through the marsh to Willard's upended shell box.

"John is taking up," I said. "He hasn't shot for an hour, so I know he's got the limit. He's been standing on the edge of his blind, watching us. You've got one more duck to go." I stood there, wondering what he would say.

He opened his mouth to speak. The look in his eyes was asking for only another five minutes, but I caught a flash

beyond him and said under my breath, "Mark!"

A can was low on the water, limping toward our decoys. Then I saw a larger bird coming in fast, and high.

"He's wounded," I said. "There's an eagle after him."

The duck dropped his feet for a landing. Willard was over-anxious. He stood up in the blind and nailed the canvas-back.

The drake turned completely over in the air, wobbled away for twenty yards and dropped to the water. He began to paddle slowly to the opposite marsh.

"The boat! Quick!" Willard yelled excitedly.

I jumped through the reeds toward the bateau. With one eye on the duck, I spun the motor. The drake stopped swimming and dropped his head on the bosom of the river.

"He's dead," Willard yelled. "Take your time."

He spoke too soon. The eagle I had pointed out a minute before, fell out of the heavens, hovered over the dead bird for a moment, and rose again, holding the duck in his talons. I stood with my mouth open, watching a thousand bucks climb the aerial stairway. I was so tight that I jumped when John's gun barked. The eagle swerved suddenly and dropped the duck.

I felt my skin growing hot all over. That did it. John had lacked one of having his limit. That bird would beat us by one duck. I pushed out of the lagoon and paddled around the point to pick up our decoys.

Rick was there, standing in his boat, close to Willard's blind.

"Mr. John sent over your duck," I heard him say.

He threw the bird to Willard and paddled away. Neither of us replied. I couldn't have said a word. I wound up the last decoy weight and stacked the blocks in our boat.

The crowd had gathered when we got in. Willard stared at John and John returned his stare, unsmiling. The atmosphere in the room strained thin. We both knew John had kept the last-duck-and-eagle episode to himself.

"How many?" Gene asked us.

Willard did not reply. He picked up a glass.

"Gentlemen," he said, "take two drinks with me. One to a guy who'll try from now on to be the best sportsman in camp, and the other to a guy who's always been."

They didn't know why, but they knew who, and they drank the two toasts after a unanimous sigh of relief.

Sometimes there's more to a hunt than meat on the table.

BIG SHOTS DIE YOUNG

By RICHARD DEMING



When Private-Eye Manville Moon shot the unarmed gambling czar—only the D. A.'s well-stacked fiancée would believe that the gun-less gambler . . . had shot first.

* * *

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WAGON-TRAIN TO LARAMIE

HERE was a place of silence, where the August heat lay spent in the shade of feeble cottonwoods, and no waterholes drew the soundless tread of antelope. Northward, out of bleached foothills, Wild Cat Ridge clawed the sky; south of the flat, arroyos scored the rolling hummocks and the thing that gleamed in the sun could be light caught on crystal rock surface—or the shaven sweating head of a Pawnee hid behind the next rise.

By
C. HALL THOMPSON



ILLUSTRATED BY EARL EUGENE MAYAN

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On the swell of a hummock, against the yellow moon, the Indian sat his pony like a statue in silhouette.

91

A buffalo's blanched bones lay scattered in the dust. And if a man dug deep enough in the wind-drifted sand piled against the closest foothill, he would find broken wagonstaves and a yoke warped with dryrot; a child's crushed skull and a faded page that said, *Jedediah Gant, His Familie Book—God Bless Us All* . . . Animals sensed the difference of this place; they seldom came and if, by accident, they did, they moved warily downwind, scenting the air at every step. It was not different with white men.



CASS sat the pinto stiffly; his lean hands held the rawhide rein too taut. Gray eyes swung ahead, studying the pale glow of wagon tarp and steamy oxen-flesh that was John Satterlee's train pushing west in the first glare of sunup. Wheel-rims made little noise in packed dust. Men sat their buckboards, clutching longrifles across tense knees. Bonneted women spoke only to hush a forgetful child. At the spearhead of the train, Satterlee glanced at one of the Delaware scouts. The Indian nodded reassurance. The wagons rolled on. Satterlee's eyes did not leave the dark southern hills.

Even the cattle were still, Cass thought. Prodded by Manolo's quirt, they trailed the train and gave no sign of wanting to stray. Manolo smiled and winked a black Mexican eye. Cass winked back; it was meant to be sure and easy. It wasn't.

Concern moved the gray gaze to the sorrel that trotted beside Pap Meeker's chuckwagon. Street was tall in the sorrel's saddle, with a red bony face that looked even younger than a boyish twenty. Dreams of adventure were a taut spring in his body and hungrily his eyes watched the hills. You could see him almost hoping for the thing that these people in homespun prayed would never come. Cass swore softly. The damn fool kid . . .

*"Oh, Shennydore, I long to hear you,
Away you rolling river,
Oh, Shennydore, I cain't git near you . . ."*

Cass's head swung sharply to the chuckwagon buckboard. Pap Meeker shut his mouth hard. The last notes echoed too loudly in dawn stillness. Men took

anxious hold of riflestocks. They waited. But, in the gray arroyos, nothing moved, nothing woke to the sound of a human voice. Finally, Cass stood in the stirrups and waved. Satterlee answered the signal. Willow poles nudged sweaty oxen flanks. Doggedly, the wheels turned. Pap Meeker did not sing again.

Cass frowned. He had wanted no risk for these people with keepsakes and hopes piled in dusty wagons. He had planned on the safe trail to Laramie. But sagging axles and oxen dead in the traces changed your plans.

At the forks of the Platte, men had begun to worry. So far, the trail had been level. But westward, now, lay the steady rise of Jail Rock country and a bluff that sheered eight hundred feet above the shriveled tongue of the river. Spent oxen could never make that climb.

Back in Leavenworth, Satterlee had hired Cass and Manolo to answer these questions. This answer wasn't pretty. It was a long arc that skirted Wild Cat Ridge and struck dead through the heart of Pawnee territory. It was moving in silence with the murmured prayers of women and men whose tight faces waited for death that was an arrow or the ragged edge of a stone tomahawk. It was the only way to get the train to Laramie.

Now, the groan of greaseless wagon-tongues seemed terribly loud and Cass squinted toward the southern hills, telling himself that no ears listened, no Indian eyes watched and waited. A pony sidled near his. Manolo was smiling. "Worry, *hijo poco*. Always you worry too much."

Cass smiled thinly. Manolo uncapped a rawhide canteen, let water cool brown caked lips, then licked them with his tongue.

"We move with the sun. Softly, like the padded paw of del gato. The Pawnee does not even stir in his sleep."

"I don't know . . ."

"He does not know, *hijo poco*, who crawled time and again, unbitten, between the teeth of the Blackfeet . . ."

Cass said, "It was different, then."

In those days, a trapper had been alone; the chances he took he paid for out of his own hide. This was something else. This was children who needed protection and women heavy with new life and the

hope of home beyond the desert. Now, a man had more than himself to think of.

Manolo shrugged. "Still, I say it. There is no call to fret."

Cass was silent. His eyes moved to Street. No call to fret? He had seen too many Streets, too many bright kids fresh from the East, who read of Indians and the boiling blood of a buffalo hunt and came West in new buckskins thinking it was all a schoolboy's game. And the want of adventure still burned in Street's eyes because, until now, he had met only friendly Indians and the road had been a safe one that did not destroy boyish illusions. Until now.

"You are strong, *hijo poco*." Mexican eyes studied the kid's back. "He will cause no trouble. He is young, *si*. So were we all, once, eh? Young, wild, hungry for the first buff; the first squaw with her smell of dried flowers and sweet pine; the first scalp . . ." Manolo laughed. "I remember mine was a big Apache and the blood that came from the head made me sick. But afterward, this child was the proudest of braggers around the dungfire . . . It is always the same. With Street as it was with me . . . and you."

"Yeah," Cass said flatly. "Always the same."

Only it wasn't. He knew it couldn't be. This land beyond the wide Missouri was changed. When trappers first cut trails across the face of it, they had come for furs and nothing more and had not cared if death was near because tomorrow they would be gone and laughing at the danger they had escaped. But these quiet folk with their lives and dreams on wheels were looking for something more important and permanent, for the roots of a home that would stand, in peace, and would not pass away. There was no room left for the risk-takers, the Streets who lived in their own romantic worlds at the risk of other men's lives. Sooner or later, Street would know the change brought by time and a westering people. He would have to learn; the easy way—or the hard.

"Buffer!"

The cry slid down the line from the chuckwagon. Cass saw Street's back tense, his eyes follow Pap Meeker's bony pointed finger.

The buffalo had come from a southern

ravine, topping a near rise, a spike bull, fully six feet at the shoulders, matted blond forequarter hair rippling in the dawn wind. Smooth hornpoints winked at the sun; the massive snout scented the stillness, waiting.

"Jumpin' Jehosopah, ain't he a beaut! Enough steak from hump to brisket to feed a regiment!" Pap Meeker spat yellow shagjuice. "Take a real man to th'ow that'un in his tracks."

Cass caught the sudden fire of the boy's eyes, saw the Winchester slide free of its saddle-holster. "Street!" It was too late. The sorrel wheeled, heading up the south grade. A waggoner said, "The crazy bastard," and a woman stifled a scream. Now, the riflebutt hugged Street's shoulder. The bull's head swung to the man-smell just when the shot blasted morning silence.



THE echo played endlessly in deep coulees. Ahead of Street, the buffalo bucked, quartering downwind from the sorrel to hold the scent and yet be quit of it. Cass swore as Street lifted the gun again. The second shot wasn't fired. The sorrel's fetlock buckled in a prairie dog pit and Street hit ground, stumbling up with the burn of grit in his eyes.

The bull pounded into a near gully, his furious bellow tearing wild across desert quiet. A woman crossed herself. Satterlee and the Delaware scouts had ridden back from the spearhead. Satterlee's voice was controlled. "By the roar of him, he's hit."

Cass only nodded. The bleating scream came again. Pap Meeker screwed up his face. "Enough to wake ever' Pawnee in the territory!"

Satterlee said, "He'll have to be finished. Quick and quiet."

Cass looked at the Delawares. One of them held out a barbed lance. Cass took it. The Indian fitted an arrow to his longbow. Cass reined south. Manolo touched his arm.

"It is not the easiest way to kill a crazed bull, *hijo poco*."

Cass grinned. "It's the quietest."

Nobody said any more. Cass and the Delaware spun away at a quick lope.

The ride was not easy. The land was

pocked with burrows. The ponies weren't fresh. The gully that had swallowed the buff twisted narrow between limestone boulders. The bull's trumpet broke out, suddenly quite near and thrown back by hemming walls. Ahead, a wide land-cup opened and they saw the animal, backed against a deadend of stone and brush.

The buff stood very still. His head weaved. Small eyes watched. Quietly, Cass said, "I'll fade him to the left."

The Delaware drew the bow tighter. The arrow lifted, poised.

Cass gripped the lance hard. The pinto spun to the bit and charged and the bull's black snout followed so that, now, Cass could see the red hole Street's ball had torn in the lower gut. The longbow bent farback; he heard the twang of rawhide. The animal bellowed as the arrow ripped clean through the hump, kicking up a dustcloud beyond; it swerved, head low to gore the Delaware's pony. Right shoulder unguarded, legs off balance, it could not avoid the lance, coming in high and driving neatly down through the vitals. Case was in and out untouched. The bull stood with legs spread, the stained lance-shaft quivering in its side, and purple blood spurted, strangling the final roar. In the end, muscles stiffened and life went out of the crumpled heap on a long, tired sigh.

They rode back to the train. Street was in the saddle again. Men looked at him; the looks were not friendly. Only Manolo sat beside the sorrel, smiling sleepily. Someone asked, "He's dead?" Cass nodded. Satterlee was silent; his pale eyes searched the stony southward roll of land. Somewhere, a girl cried softly and her husband murmured, "All right, Missy, nothing to be feared of, now."

Cass said, "Any sign?"

A morning wind lifted lonely sand-puffs from the crests of drifts. The leaves of a cottonwood muttered. In the shadow of twisted arroyos, nothing moved. Satterlee shook his head.

"If there's Pawnee in them hills, they're playing possum."

A waggoner said: "Maybe there's no Pawnee at all. Maybe they moved south for buffalo."

It was stubborn hope put into words.

You wanted to believe it. You couldn't. Cass's glance held Street's.

"I guess you forgot the order of silence."

The boy's neck went red.

Manolo said, "*Gentilmente, hijo poco*. We are all young once."

A man spat in the dust. "He'll die young if he don't learn quick. And a lot of others with him."

Street twisted angrily in the saddle. "I'm not afraid of Pawnee!"

Somebody laughed. The waggoner said, "Well, well. A brave boy . . . at our expense!"

Street caught the man's shirtfront.

"*Amigo*." It was gentle but decided. "No more buffalo, *si?* No more wild shots."

The young mouth worked, defiant yet grateful for Manolo's easy sympathy. Finally, Street let go of the waggoner. Satterlee nodded to Cass.

"We'll move now." Cass looked at the boy. "Without noise."

Words were hot in his throat. But Street only spun the sorrel and rode off toward the spearhead. Drivers took up lines, but, geeing the teams, their voices were muted and unsure. Glances still searched the southern hills, unbelieving. The wagons rolled.

Quietly, Manolo said, "*Relax, hijo poco*. No harm done."

Cass stared at him. Manolo did not try again. After a time, he dropped back to the cattle herd and aloneness came nearer Cass in the waiting heat of the day and, Maybe they're right, he thought. Maybe the buffalo mating season had drawn the Pawnee farther south and, tonight, in the safe firelight of camp, kids would play again, unafraid, and that pretty little Carson lady dance with her boy-husband to the brassy twang of Pap's banjo. Softly, Cass hummed.

*"Where the ladies knit and sew
And the gents they plow and hoe,
Oh, we'll ramble in the canebrake
And shoot the buffalo . . ."*

Only the melody went flat and without lilt in his mind and in the end, he gave it up.

At high noon they discovered that a cow

was missing from the herd. Manolo rode forward, his face dark and Spanish curses in his throat.

"In the excitement of the buff, *hijo poco*. Then, she must have strayed into the hills."

Satterlee shrugged. "If she's lost, she's lost."

"Not lost, *señor*. Strayed. I could back-track and find her."

There was no real reason to say no. Only uneasiness that said the barren quiet of this land was a lie.

"A fine beast," Manolo urged. "And ready to calf. I was riding guard. I feel responsible."

The sorrel edged closer. "I'll go with him."

Satterlee said, "He's safer alone."

Street swallowed it, but he didn't like the taste in his mouth.

Manolo laughed. "The frown, *hijo poco*. Always you worry! Manolo will return by sundown. Tonight he will drink rum from your cantina, *si?*"

"Sure," Cass said. "Sure."

The words did not help. After them, doubt only closed in more tightly. Waggoners smiled and waved to the Mexican. The smiles were not real. Then, Manolo was out of sight beyond a far rise. The wheels ground on. Nobody looked back. Nobody talked.

Cass told himself the uneasiness would pass. It didn't. Men swore softly at the oxen. Women worked over shirtpatches but their eyes kept shifting to the heat-hazed hillocks. At sunset, there was no sign of Manolo.

The animals slowed; splitwood yokes rubbed raw sores; froth whitened dry snouts. Satterlee wiped gritty sweat from his eyes.

"They'll never make Laramie without rest."

Cass was silent.

"We ain't seen hide nor hair of a Pawnee. Maybe we could strike camp."

Cass stared back along the empty trail. Finally, he nodded.

It was a weary business. Laboriously, wagons formed the circle. Guarded fires flickered. Even the smell of brewing coffee did not ease the tension. Men slapped irritably at dorbugs. A few children played listless games; they never moved

far from the firelight. Cass tried to draw comfort from a pipe but smoke turned bitter on his tongue. Beyond the corral, the backtrail was still empty.

There should be peace here, he thought. Laughter and the wheeze of a hoedown fiddle, *Put your little foot, Put your little foot with mine . . .* No call to fret, *hijo poco . . .* But there was only night and silence and men who waited.



THE moon was fully risen when they saw the first Indian. A woman screamed and Pap Meeker said, "Mary and Joseph!" and, like a panicked antelope, word ran the circle. Teeth clamped hard on pipestems; fists caught up rifles. Men clotted together, swinging toward the south lip of camp and beyond, on the swell of a hummock against the yellow moon, the Indian sat his pony like a statue in silhouette. But, in a wide seawave from southern coulees, shadows moved, and now lines of horsemen stretched far on either side of the motionless rider.

Pap Meeker whistled. "Hundreds of 'em, be God!"

Cass strode toward the mob. Near the chuckwagon, Street checked the charge of his Winchester; his eyes were eager and bright. They turned away quickly. Hell and damnation, Cass thought, don't they ever learn?

"Remember," he said. "No trouble." And did not wait for an answer.

Men crowded around Satterlee. Dully, a waggoner asked, "Pawnee?" Cass nodded, turning to Satterlee.

"Get the women and kids under cover."

The order circulated. The man with the dull voice said, "Maybe they won't attack. Maybe . . ."

"Look!"

The warning wasn't needed. Nobody missed the movement of the moonlit silhouette. Deliberately, the Indian pony advanced, flanked right and left by two riders. Street lifted the rifle. "Easy," Satterlee said. You could hear the brazen beat of unshod hooves now, see the insolent sway of the riders.

Satterlee said, "You sabbe the dialect?"

Cass nodded.

"Tell them the camp is armed. Tell them to stay away."

The tongue was warm and melodious and never meant for words of warning. The Indian ponies did not stop.

Street tensed. "The snotty bastards . . ." "I said easy." Satterlee frowned. "We want peace. Not dead women and kids."

The party reined in. Half-naked bare-footed bucks dismounted, facing the white men. Slowly, the leader came into the firelit circle. He was a chief. His eyes were small and black behind layers of flesh and thick lips smiled without humor. Lazily he walked, fat with the memory of many victories, and the braves who followed were fully armed.

Quietly, Satterlee said, "Tell him we're friends."

Cass told him. The Pawnee kept smiling. His taunting gaze swung to the silent covered wagons. Speech rolled sleepily on his tongue.

"He says we are few," Cass said. "We are females hiding in wagons. They are many as the blades of buffalo grass . . ."

Street swore. The Winchester levelled. "The bastard thinks we're afraid of him!"

Strong fingers pushed the gunbarrel down. Cass kept his tone steady.

"Let him think. If we don't fight, he'll lose interest. He'll think he's won without fighting. It's our only chance."

The Pawnee watched. The white man's words meant nothing. But, the fall of the gun—this he thought he understood. He laughed. Then, behind him, one of the braves spoke and small eyes swerved southeast. A distant russet glow pulsed against the night sky; smokeclouds sifted upward in a rhythmic pattern. The Pawnee was smiling again.

"You understand it?" Satterlee asked.

Cass shook his head. One of the Delaware scouts said, "It warns them to be on guard. A blow has been struck against the white man."

It got quiet then; Cass could hear the raw breathing of the men. Nobody spoke the name but it was there in the stillness and his brain whispered desperately, Not Manolo, please, not Manolo.

The Pawnee stood quite close. His smile widened.

"The white man will remember. He is few. We are many."

Cass's mouth thinned. He wanted to

kill the grinning chief, to tear his skinning knife around the fat skull and feel the wet rip of the scalp lock in his fingers. But he did not move.

Once more, the Indian laughed. The bucks followed him to waiting ponies. Waggoners watched the low lope of horses and shadows that joined others in the hills and moved slowly away against the moon. A sigh went through the camp. Men sat down heavily. Women came close to ask hushed questions. A baby was sobbing and very softly, one waggoner whispered, "The murdering bastards."

Street headed for the sorrel.

"Where you going?"

The boy turned. "They killed Manolo." His face said more; his face said brave empty words like "an eye for an eye." And behind the words lay a picture of himself with a scalp at his belt and men who whispered, "He got the devil that killed Manolo Hernandez."

Cass saw other faces, the numb faces of people who wanted only an end of fear and a homeplace rooted in peace and, turning back to Street, he felt sick. His voice was dull, stubborn.

"We got a wagon train to get to Laramie. We got women and kids . . . Maybe the signal didn't mean Manolo. We don't know."

"But you're going to find out," Satterlee said gently.

For a long time, their eyes held. Finally, Cass nodded.

"We got to find out. Maybe he's alive back there. Maybe only wounded!"

"I know." Satterlee smiled. "We all know."

There was no more to be said.

Street wanted to join the search party. Cass didn't object. The train would be safer without a hairtrigger kid. A Delaware and two waggoners volunteered. There were no goodbyes. Somehow, it wasn't the right thing to say.



OUT of camp, they rode quickly and without talk. For a time, there was nothing but hoofbeats and dust; then, they reached the spot where Manolo had quit the train. A night wind had risen, blurring the Mexican's trace. Cass said, "At a walk." Men tensed over pommels, study-

ing signs of broken sand and bleeding beargrass. Moonglow washed Street's face. One corner of the tight mouth twitched. That bright hunger still lit dark eyes. Cass looked away. "This way . . ." His heels spurred the pinto and, Forget about Street, he thought; forget everything but Manolo. You'll find him. Manolo, dead? Crazy! Manolo was no greenhorn. Pawnee or no Pawnee . . . Only he knew it was a lie and, somewhere ahead, there would be a moment when the time for hoping was past.

He was not wrong. They found the stray first. She lay in a chaparral clump, blood matted in her tan and cream hide, the belly butchered and the filmy inner sac torn open. Dust had been kicked over the ashes of a fire. The meat of an unborn calf made tender eating for a Pawnee fresh from the kill.

Street had gone white. He followed the others, slowly now, on foot through whispering shale and the smell of death. Manolo was not far away. He lay face down with his mouth and eyes open and the arrow crumpled under him as though snapped when he pitched forward. The fall had driven the barb out through his back. His lung was punctured and a great deal of blood had come through the mouth before it drowned him.

One of the wagoners said, "God," and turned away against a rock and was sick. Nobody looked at him. Nobody looked at Street's staring face. Silently, the Delaware drew a spade from his saddlepack. They dug the shallow grave. The wagoner who had been sick made a cross of willow twigs and rawhide. Cass put it at the head of the dark mound. His face was stiff and empty.

"They had their fun. Maybe, now, they'll let us be."

The whole time, Street had sat in the brush darkness, watching. Now, abruptly, he stood and blood flushed back into his cheeks.

"What does that mean?"

Cass only glanced from face to face. A wagoner nodded. Cass turned expressionless eyes on the boy.

"It means we camp here for the night. We rejoin the train at sunup."

"But . . ." Street looked quickly at the grave. "What about this?"

Cass didn't blink. "What about it?"

"Somebody has to pay."

The sick man said, "Who?"

"A Pawnee. A scalp for a scalp . . ."

The other wagoner laughed bitterly. "Still a hero."

"We camp here," Cass said. "We move on at sunup."

The boy spun on him. "Maybe Manolo didn't mean anything to you."

A muscle knotted in Cass's jaw. How did you find the right words for the closeness that grew between two men who had lived together for fifteen years and held between them a thousand memories of old laughter and campfires and pipesmoke?

After a minute, softly, he said, "Manolo was my friend."

"Friend! That makes it worse. The Pawnee can't be far from here. We could make them pay." Street came a step closer. "Maybe you're not just being careful. Maybe . . ."

Rough fingers caught the boy's tunic. A second passed. Cass let go.

"You're wrong. Some things are bigger than one man's feelings. Bigger than the scalp you want to take and brag about. More important than revenge or you or me . . . or Manolo."

"Not just careful," Street insisted. "Afraid."

"Afraid?" The gray eyes were dark with remembered stories of Pawnee torture and white girls who bore halfbreed bastards and too many dreams of a new life in the sweet green peace of Willamette Valley crushed from the brain by a tomahawk. Wearily, Cass nodded.

"Maybe you could call it fear."

Street's smile went crooked. Then, he turned on his heel. He reached the sorrel. Cass said, "You heard the order."

The boy did not mount. His eyes fought with Cass, but in the end, his hands moved to the bedroll strapped behind the saddle. The men relaxed. There was no more talk. The fire they built was small and without warmth. They did not notice. Hard ground seemed soft and sleep was forgetfulness.

Cass stretched out facing the fire and for a long while the voice in his head went on whispering: You have to go back, it's the only way, Manolo would understand . . . Finally, he dozed. Even

then a part of his mind that never slept remembered the sight of Street, squatted beyond the firelight, staring at the fresh grave.



THEY woke him before dawn. Only the raw tone of their words reached him through the lifting weight of sleep.

That was enough. He came to one knee, peering across the dying fire. Street's bedroll was empty. Cass stood up, turning to the waggoner who had been sick.

"How long's he been gone?"

Dry lips worked. "I was sick. He took over my watch. He said he'd wake the Injun when his spell came. I never thought he'd be so crazy."

Cass said, "How long?"

"That was midnight. I went right to sleep. I was sick."

The Delaware looked at Cass. "The signs go south, deeper into the hills."

The other waggoner said, "Maybe he ain't reached the Pawnee. Maybe we can still stop him."

Cass made for the pinto. The others mounted. They never left the clearing. At its edge, sharply, the Delaware lifted a hand. They all heard it. The rustle of trodden brush moved nearer, and then, they saw him.

A purpling bruise scored Street's temple; red stickiness still drained from his bowie knife and the ragged scalp lock that hung at his belt. He stood smiling that hard bright smile.

"I told you they weren't far off. I came up on the lower edge of their camp. The guard never saw me. He squealed like a stuck pig when the blade went in his throat. That was all."

Nobody said anything. Slowly, the sick waggoner dismounted and moved toward Street. His white face twitched. His hands reached for the boy's throat. "I'll kill him!"

The Delaware stepped between them. The furious eyes dimmed.

"My wife's alone back there. If the Pawnee strike . . ."

Gently, Cass said: "There's time. If we can reach the train before they find that body."

The other waggoner said, "We'll have to move fast."

The Delaware helped the sick man into the saddle. Cass looked at Street.

"So you got your scalp. Go back East, now. Write a book about how you were a hero. Only, tell the whole truth. Tell them the price you paid for your stinking scalp."

The boy's lips moved drily. "Price?"

Words were no good. It was too late for words. Cass wheeled the pinto westward and said, "Let's ride."



THERE were no wagons. Beyond the last hillock, there was only dust scarred by wheels and unshod hooves; only chuckfire ashes and the fly-lousy carcass of a calf with a Pawnee arrow through its gut. Here lay a trampled longrifle; off there, in a clot of beargrass, the red-stained tatters of a homespun skirt.

"They struck," the sick man whispered. "They must've struck."

Street's eyes fell away from his.

Ahead, the wheeltracks veered west. The other waggoner swallowed hard. "At least they made a run."

The sick one shook his head. "I don't see no Injun dead."

Cass's squinted gaze followed the deep furrows.

"The Pawnee carry off their dead. There's just a chance."

They spurred tired ponies. Street rode more slowly, alone, to the rear. His eyes had an empty dull look. Hoofprints dogged the wheelruts for miles, then, suddenly, at the mouth of a narrow pass, doubled back. At the far end of the pass, they found the camp.

Nobody cheered. No scouts came out to meet them. The wagons lay scattered, without formation. Somewhere, a wounded ox bellowed. Men sprawled in hot canvas-shadows, arms in slings and thighs matted with sand and dried blood and in one wagon a naked woman wrapped in a blanket cried hysterically. Children with old faces sat close to their mothers and forgot to play. Cass dismounted. A barb had scraped Satterlee's cheek; red streaked the stubble of his jaw. His voice was ragged.

"They came with the sun. We were lucky. We were ready to roll. Other-

wise . . . We made a run and got out of arrow range. They tailed us, but our guns did the trick. Finally, they gave up . . ."

The pale glance switched coldly to Street. "Something happened. Something made them kill-crazy."

Men had moved closer. They waited. The sick waggoner held his wife near, trying to still her sobbing. Cass did not color it. He told the facts. They were bad enough. There was no violence. The people of the train only stared at Street with tired disgust, stared at the scalp that swung from his belt. The boy's mouth trembled. "There are . . . no dead?"

Satterlee eyed him steadily.

"That's not your fault. Nobody could say you didn't try."

Street lifted a hand. Maybe he had more to say. They had stopped listening. Men walked slowly back to their wagons. Cass's tone was quiet, determined. "We'll have to get rolling."

Satterlee nodded. "Soon as we can."

It took a lot of doing. Four wounded oxen had to be shot. Teams had to be shuffled and wagoners with arms or legs in splints had to stick to the buckboards. But, life came back and talk and gradually the hysterical women grew quiet and in the noon sun wagons swung into line. Men swore at animals but the

swearing was something good and of life. The people were ready to go on.

Only Street sat apart, crouched against a shadowed rock, staring at nothing. No one noticed him. Then, they found that young Carson was delirious from the gash in his shoulder; his wife, months gone with child, couldn't handle a team. Street crossed slowly to the Carson outfit. His face was drawn, but a new quiet depth had come into his eyes.

"I can drive a wagon."

The people waited. Cass was silent.

"Am I still with you?"

"As far as Laramie."

"Further than that," Street said. "I'm going all the way. You make mistakes, Cass. You forget the world's a hell of a sight bigger than yourself—or any man. And a price is paid. But, maybe if the price ain't too high, if you learn . . . you get another chance." He said, "Am I with you?"

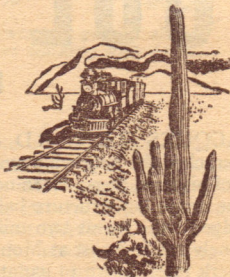
Oxen shifted in the traces, anxious to move. Men sat quite still, watching the new calm that touched the boy's face. Cass's eyes ran down the lean figure and, very slowly, a smile spread his lips. Below the belt, the buckskin was still dark with dried blood. But the Pawnee scalp was gone.

Cass nodded.

"You're with us," he said softly. "Now, you're with us."

Rogue's Justice

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FOOL'S ERRAND

By RUSSELL LAKE

JACQUES RENARD dexterously cracked the long whip over the backs of his tired dogs. Even now he could see the crude log structure half hidden at the edge of the forest two miles ahead—the lonely trading post at Mountain Lake. His dark face, drawn to gauntness by the labor of the long winter's trap line, was alight with anticipation.

Today or tomorrow the other scattered trappers would begin to drift in, bringing their furs and song and long tales of achievement in gathering the mink and

beaver and ermine. For a few days the little outpost would resound with laughter and then one by one they would slip into the forest, accompanied only by the dreaded loneliness which would cling to them through the long months.

His glance fell on the bale of peltries tied on the sled and exultation surged within him. It was a good catch, an excellent catch, even better than last year. The price it would bring would far exceed the cost of his supplies, and that was good. He needed much extra credit this year.



Jacques stopped his dogs and stared at the twisting gorges ahead. Pierre was going through—but it was ten miles of walking with death.

This was no ordinary trip to Mountain Lake, enjoyable as that might be. With growing excitement he considered the things he would have to buy. Yards of pretty cloth he would need, and the softest of moccasins, the finest of parkas. Maybe he would fritter away a part of his precious credit on beads and bracelets and glittering trinkets that would delight a feminine heart.

Even as a child playing on the banks of the Mackenzie, he had loved Babette. He had watched her grow from a flashing

woods sprite into a woman of tantalizing beauty. Nowhere in all the Yukon Territory, they said, was there any other so beautiful as Babette Pitot. Not even in the Northwest Territory, nor in the provinces to the south. Old Georges had gazed upon her last year and afterward declared there was none so beautiful in all Canada, excepting possibly the lovely maidens of Old Quebec.

Often Jacques had sat beside her, adoration in his eyes, while she combed her long hair which shone like the sleek mink

fresh from the water. Her dark skin was smooth and firm and she moved with the quick grace of the wildcat. When he would burst out, babbling of her loveliness, she would smile upon him like a queen accepting her due.

But sometimes he did not understand her. He did not understand her tense excitement the first time she saw Pierre, the new trader. Her pretty head was full of strange thoughts, wistful dreams of the land to the south where great ladies moved in glittering splendor, gowned in silks and satins.

He dreaded these impatient moods when his beloved northland became to her a prison, an ugly prison of privation and moccasins and parkas and deerskin dresses—and loneliness. But all the while he loved her. Changeable as the wind, lovely as the sun on untracked snow, warm as a snug cabin on a winter's evening, exciting as a silver fox in a trap, Babette was his past, his present, and his future.

There had drifted to him as on the wind rumors hinting that Babette was not worthy a good man's love. A firebrand she was, to start a conflagration that would burn a man's soul. There were mutterings that she was like the icy gale which numbs one's brain and brings a pleasant warmth, and then destruction. He would kill a man who would say those things.

Her beauty had tortured him through the long months. He saw her red lips and sultry eyes among the licking flames in his fireplace. He saw her face illumined upon the snow as he plodded his trap line and at night he would awake and stretch out his arms to the lissome figure melting away into nothingness. A man needed a woman in that far wilderness cabin. Jacques needed Babette to share his home and his life, to sit with him before the crackling fire in the evenings, to exult with him in his catch of peltries. He needed her to help him push loneliness out the door.

Always it had been understood that one day she would come to him. Three excellent seasons to prove his worth, a generous credit at the store, a warm cabin deep in the woods—what more could a girl ask? He lifted his head. "She will know," he thought exultantly, "that now is the time!"



JACQUES halted his panting dogs before the log building. No yapping clamor greeted them. A smile of satisfaction clung to his thin lips; the others had not arrived. Pierre flung open the door and shouted greetings, genuine pleasure in his booming voice. He stood there laughing, a huge man with flowing yellow hair in sharp contrast to Jacques' dark leanness.

Together they carried Jacques' bale of peltries and placed it on the long counter. Even as Jacques went out to care for his dogs, a shadow crossed his face. Pierre was his friend. Pierre was a fine fellow but he had acted like a silly fool the first time he saw Babette. He had talked too much and laughed too much, showing off before her. He was from the southland and there clung about him an aura that set him apart from the simple people of the forests. Only last year he had come down the River to assume his duties, bringing with him an irrepressible gaiety and an enthusiasm that seemed too big for the little trading post. A laughing young giant he was, blond as a Norseman, with the bubbling energy of youth.

Although opposite in natures, Jacques and Pierre were drawn together in mutual respect. During the two or three visits Jacques had made, they spent hours in agreeable conversation, greatly pleased, each taking pride in the other's friendship.

Jacques led his dogs to the enclosure and tossed each a frozen fish. Pierre had been dazzled at sight of Babette, obviously at finding such beauty at lonely Mountain Lake. He outdid himself to be agreeable to her and to Henri Pitot. And Babette—her eyes had widened and she dropped her gaze quickly, a flush creeping over her cheeks. Thereafter her glance followed him covertly, a strange and uncertain smile curving her lips. Jacques watched them proudly, glad that his friend Pierre liked Babette. But there came a time when Pierre's eyes grew intense and words trembled in his throat.

Jacques brushed the thought away; he had nothing to fear. Before Pierre should come to like Babette too well, he would take her away to his cabin in the forest and Pierre no longer would follow her about with his heart on his sleeve.

Pierre was waiting for him and they began immediate bartering. There were no demands, no squabbling, no shrewd practices. As they examined carefully one fine pelt after another, each was quick to agree and amiably they compromised. Behind their bargaining was their friendship, and Babette, and the hard code of honor which governed the northland and gripped all in its rigid rules of conduct. It was an old world code, a tradition no one dared disobey. Honor at Mountain Lake was more than a word, more than an idea—it was a way of life, guarded more jealously than a lifetime of furs.

When they were finished and Jacques' credit totaled, they sat down to pipes and eager conversation. It was good to be together again even for so short a time and they relaxed in pleasant comradeship. But each was careful to steer the talk away from the lovely Babette.

The next day Henri Pitot arrived amid the clamor of dogs punctuated by his shrieks as he beat them down. Always there was noise when Henri Pitot was about.

Jacques and Pierre watched the door through which Henri came. A long moment they watched before they turned to him.

Henri, noting the direction of their gaze, told them, "Babette, she did not come."

Disappointment put out the light in Pierre's newly-shaven face.

Henri dropped his pack upon the floor. He looked from Jacques to Pierre. "When I make my pack, I say, 'Babette, you come?' She look at me and her eyes get big and her lips they smile and she shake her head. 'No, Papa,' she say, 'I do not go.' When she shake her head like that, her hair it is like the dark spray of a waterfall. *Mon Dieu*, my own daughter—she ees beautiful!"

"'Pierre—and Jacques,' I say. She look at me again so long I t'ink she forget and then she toss her head. 'This time I do not go,' she say. And then she get that look in her eye like she think far-off thoughts and she say, 'Soon I t'ink I leave you, Papa.'"

Jacques' heart swelled to bursting. With her own lips she had said it! It was time for her to come. His mind flashed to his

lonely cabin in the forest which soon would be filled with light and beauty and the songs of Babette. He stole a look at Pierre whose face was red and whose hands were trembling.

Henri spread his hands and shrugged. "I wait," he went on, "but that is all she say. Sometimes I do not understand Babette. I do not understand what she t'inks. I know I must tell you somet'ing so I go up to her and I say, 'Jacques—and Pierre—what shall I tell them?' Then she look up at me and she have that little smile like the time she sneak in and spread honey on my chair. 'Tell them,' she say, 'I marry the first who brings me a red scarf from McPherson!'"

Jacques searched the old man's bearded face for a long moment and then dropped his gaze slowly to the floor. His expression was unreadable. After a while he looked up to meet the eyes of young Pierre.

"So be it," Pierre said, tentatively, eagerly.

"We will let my dogs rest one more day."

He opened the door and looked out over the bleak wastes to the north and east. An icy blast struck him in the face. Three hundred miles to McPherson. Three hundred cold and rough and treacherous miles and each of them snatching avidly for a man's life. Death lurked out there, hungry and grim. Surely Babette did not understand. He turned away somberly and sat against the wall.

Others arrived at Mountain Lake and the news spread quickly among them. There were muttered conversations and shaking of heads. "Babette, she ees a devil!" Jean growled, and looked quickly at Jacques who gave no sign.

Old Henri strutted about, beside himself with pride. He glowed as he told each newcomer of the test which Jacques and Pierre had entered upon solely for the love of his vivacious daughter.

Men looked at him strangely and drew together in small groups. There was not the usual gaiety, no song, no jest. Men stood in huddles, mumbling, and their conversation ceased when Henri approached. Jacques sat alone staring at the floor while others shuffled about him. Snatches of talk drifted to him.

"Why do they go?" one whispered disgustedly. "Why don't they tell her to get her own scarf! Babette, she ees a girl for no man!"

"You know they have to go," Alphonse answered. "Everyone knows they seek Babette—if she tell them to jump for the moon they must try. It is for their honor, and Babette's. Would they have her become a laughingstock?" Alphonse shook his head. "But I break my Marie's neck if she ever does like Babette!"

"It would be better if neither comes back," someone growled. "Babette, she marry a man and make him wish he never lived!"



IT WAS early morning when Jacques and Pierre began their long race. Plunging dogs carried the light sleds swiftly over the snow. Before they were out of sight Pierre had drawn into the lead. Jacques ran behind his sled with the short quick steps of the forest runner. The hard-driven snow cut his face like glass. The cold penetrated his heavy parka. Carefully he adjusted the scarf about his face; cold like this could sear a man's lungs.

Pierre looked back and waved. Young as Jacques and heavier, Pierre had the strength of a bear in his back and legs. Jacques lifted his arm in answer and then Pierre disappeared over a rise in the earth.

All that day Jacques ran steadily northward following the path of the man ahead. The snow was hard-packed and his snowshoes barely cut the surface and there was no need to break trail for the dogs. Sometimes he rode the sled for short intervals but mostly he ran behind, a mittened hand on the gee pole.

At noon he stopped to make hot tea and to munch a frozen biscuit. Then he roused the dogs.

About a mile farther on he saw where Pierre had built a hasty fire. Pierre was traveling fast, and grimly he urged on his own dogs.

Out there it seemed he was alone in a strange and frightening world, crawling over a white waste under a low-hanging, leaden sky. There was no sound except the wind and the panting and creaking of his dogs and sled. Low hills rolled be-

fore him into limitless space. One seemed insignificant in the barrens. In a land so huge, so cold, so magnificent, human affairs were paltry by comparison.

Late in the afternoon, Jacques' legs and back began to ache. Pierre was setting a fast pace. No one could keep this up, not even Pierre with all his strength. And it was not good to travel so hard in the far north.

After dark he caught the gleam of a fire in the lee of a hill. When he approached, Pierre sprang up and raced to his dogs but subsided when he saw that Jacques was stopping.

"You made me hurry," Jacques said, holding his hands over the flames.

Pierre grinned. "I'll go farther tomorrow," he promised.

Jacques unpacked enough food for himself and together they prepared supper. Afterward, they huddled close to the fire and filled their pipes.

"It is not good to travel so fast out here," Jacques said. "We may need our strength."

Pierre puffed slowly and waited for him to go on.

"It is better that we travel together," Jacques said. "A man hurt here alone could freeze to death in a few minutes. There is no need to hurry now. Let us travel together—until the last day. We can make our race then. It is safer to have company."

Pierre looked at him sharply. "I am not afraid," he said.

"I am," Jacques said simply. "I am not ashamed to be afraid of the barrens. You are strong, Pierre, and clever, but you don't know this country. You can find McPherson as well as I but there are other dangers we ought to face together. The last day can decide who wins."

Pierre knocked the ashes from his pipe and stood up. "No, Jacques," he said. "I want Babette. I am going to win and the race has started. Let us each go our own way."

Jacques shrugged and then thrust out his hand. Pierre gripped it and they smiled across the fire, each understanding the other.

When Jacques awoke in the darkness of the next morning, Pierre already had gone. Jacques chuckled. Let him go. The race

had hardly begun and long days would pass before they could return to Mountain Lake. It was well that his friend Pierre was ahead of him for now. Gifted with the strength of the grizzly and the endurance of the moose, Pierre was yet like a boy among the unfamiliar dangers of the barrens where death lurked on every side.

Jacques built up the fire and prepared his simple breakfast. Not today, nor tomorrow, nor the next day, but the last day—that was the time for the race. It was sufficient now to hold close to Pierre.

Pierre's trail led due northeastward on a dead line for McPherson. Jacques settled his dogs into the trail and ran steadily, cracking his long whip to maintain a gruelling speed. They circled low hills and plunged into little valleys where sometimes the snow was soft and the dogs labored and almost stopped. Often there were long stretches where the sled runners sank into the flaky surface and his snowshoes grew heavy. At these times Jacques ran ahead of his dogs to help pack the trail.

Pierre's tracks swung sharply around an area in which the white surface sagged in a long sweep. Jacques nodded approvingly. It was a deep gully filled with soft snow. A man and dogs could sink and flounder helplessly in such a place.

They were approaching a region of jutting crags and abrupt canyons, a wild upheaval of rocks and earth in the middle of the plain as though there once had been a giant eruption which tossed mountains of earth in violent frenzy. Pierre was headed directly for it and Jacques' concern grew with each mile. Surely Pierre would know better.

Already they had passed the edge of it and were within the area. Steep inclines and sharp descents made progress difficult. Jacques gripped the gee pole to keep the sled upright on the rocky trail. Snow-veiled depths lay about him, cavernous snares to trap a presumptuous traveler. Pierre must be insane to continue this trail.

With a great relief he noted finally that Pierre was circling to the left toward smoother travel. It was a long way around, many miles out of the way, but no one except a fool would attempt to go through.

Again Jacques settled into steady pursuit. Pierre was traveling fast, his tracks revealed his long strides and the plunging of his dogs. Jacques set his lips grimly and the crack of his long whip mingled with the whining of the team as they raced onward.



IN THE afternoon he began to grow tired and more and more he dropped on the sled to rest. But Pierre was still ahead although the trail revealed his strides were shortening and he, too, rode more often.

Mile after mile fell behind, miles of near exhaustion in which the twin ribbons of Pierre's sled stretched endlessly before him. Pierre also must be ready to drop but desperately he was holding on—two men driving themselves to death while Babette rested safely in a warm cabin awaiting the result of this test he had so carelessly demanded. Surely Babette did not realize what she had asked.

Late in the afternoon Jacques watched Pierre's trail with increasing puzzlement. They had gone around the dangerous area and Pierre had swung back eastward—but not far enough. They were well out of the region but Pierre continued in a straight course. He never would reach McPherson this way.

Jacques resisted the impulse to turn off the trail. This line would miss McPherson by a hundred miles and Pierre could wander through the barren waste for weeks until he finally dropped of exhaustion and hunger. No race was worth that.

That night he was glad to see Pierre's flickering fire ahead of him. There was a steady ache in his legs and a pain between his shoulders. When he pulled into camp Pierre was lying beside the fire. He sat up, surprised.

"You're a good man, Jacques," he said wearily.

"You set a fast pace."

"Not fast enough, I guess."

Later, with the fire smoldering between them, they lay staring up at the black sky.

"I'm glad you didn't try to go through the canyons," Jacques said.

"Yes. It looked too rough so I went around."

"It is ten miles through," Jacques said softly, "and thirty miles around, but a

man is a fool to try to go through." He stirred restlessly. "Maybe we're fools anyway, you and I."

"No man is a fool to do what he has to do."

Jacques stared at the reaching flames, fanned by the wind. "You're on the wrong trail," he said.

Pierre lifted himself to one elbow and looked curiously at him. "Why?"

"You are headed due north. McPherson is that way." Jacques pointed north-eastward.

Pierre lay back. "Thanks," he said. And after a moment, "You wouldn't have had to tell me. Thanks."

Again Pierre was gone when Jacques awoke, his trail heading straight for McPherson. The fire still was warm. Jacques moved swiftly in the darkness to prepare a scanty breakfast and to start pursuit.

The wind was high that day and Jacques was forced to lean into it. The cold penetrated his heavy furs and seemed to blow directly on his quivering skin. Before an hour had passed he was panting. This was the kind of a day to find the shelter of a hill and remain protected from the blast roaring down from the north. But always the thin parallel lines stretched mockingly ahead of him, demanding that he go on.

That night he did not stop at Pierre's fire. Five miles beyond he made his own camp. The feet of some of his dogs were bleeding from the sharp ice particles in the trail and he spent considerable time with them. He fell asleep with the cup of tea still untouched.

While he built his fire in the morning, Pierre raced past calling a friendly hello and lifting his arm in the gloom. This day was a repetition of the one before, cold and bleak and a constant fight against the wind. Jacques made a solitary camp that night an hour after he passed Pierre.

Jacques did not see him again until that day they arrived in McPherson. It was early in the afternoon when Jacques ran behind his sled down the street of this rude metropolis of the north. The rough buildings, built from logs freighted down the River, were a welcome sight. Here was warmth and solidarity and the companionship of men. It was like an oasis in the desert.

Pierre's dogs, harnessed to the sled, lay before one of the stores. Jacques laughed in pleasant anticipation as he pulled up and went in. Pierre was there, warming himself at the potbellied stove. He had bought his scarf; the end of the package protruded from his pocket.

He grinned at Jacques. "Now," he said, "starts the race."

Jacques flinched at the look of Pierre, at the gauntness which hollowed his cheeks and drew deep lines around his mouth. Pierre was nearing exhaustion.

"The race can start tomorrow as well," Jacques said. "You and I are tired, Pierre. Let's rest here tonight."

Pierre looked at him keenly. "You're thin, Jacques," he said, "and very tired. But this is child's play for me. I am going on."

Pierre waited while Jacques bought a scarf from the bearded trader. He selected a filmy one of scarlet which could serve no practical purpose but would delight Babette. Together they went outside.

"I will travel faster going back," Pierre warned.

"I am going to beat you, Pierre," Jacques said quietly. "On the last day I will win."

He thought he saw a look of fear spring into Pierre's eyes, but he could not be sure.

"Babette is mine," Pierre said. "She herself told me. If I have to run all the way without rest, I will win."



PIERRE lashed his dogs into movement and started swiftly on the back trail. Jacques bought enough provisions for the trip back and shortly, he, too, sped southward. Pierre already was out of sight among the white hills.

Pierre ought to have rested at McPherson; he was in no condition to go on. If Babette could see him now she would realize what she had done and would be all soft contriteness. Jacques pictured her as she would look when he and Pierre returned. She would gasp at sight of their drawn faces and her eyes would grow big and wet and she would fly to them murmuring sympathy and apologies. Babette would not have done this if she knew.

And surely Pierre was mistaken when

he said she had declared herself his. Pierre had misunderstood a friendly glance or perhaps a casual word. Long ago she had promised that one day she would come to him and Babette would not tell Pierre the same. Pierre's love had caused him to see what was not there.

Jacques grew ashamed for her when he thought of the witching glances she had cast at Pierre and the coy smiles and daring words. She ought not to have done that, not to big, friendly Pierre, his best friend. It was that she was young and did not understand. Unless— He cast the doubt savagely out of his mind.

That night he traveled two hours beyond Pierre's camp and the next morning was ready when Pierre went past. All that day they ran close together, their whips cracking loudly and the gray huskies straining at the harness.

They made camp together that night but talked very little. Pierre was morose and irritable to his dogs. They went to sleep without even their after-supper smokes.

Jacques was awakened by Pierre's stealthy preparations for departure. He sat up and Pierre waved at him as he slipped into the darkness beyond the circle of firelight. Jacques worked swiftly and in less than half an hour set out on the trail. It would not do to let Pierre get too far ahead now.

They were almost within sight of each other for the next two days. Jacques felt his strength wearing away and he knew that Pierre was ready to crack. In the late afternoons, the tracks showed that Pierre was staggering.

White-shrouded outcroppings of rock bore upward from the horizon ahead. Great craggy bulks surmounted by spires reached for the sky, resembling distant castles mantled with snow. The sight jolted him. Less than two days remained before Mountain Lake, and Pierre was ahead of him. Grimly he quickened his lagging pace.

It was not until he had covered the distance and had plunged into the outskirts of the canyon region that he knew what Pierre was planning to do. Where the tracks should be swinging out to make the big circle, they lined straight ahead. Soon it would be too late to go around.

He stopped his dogs and stared at the twisting gorges ahead of him, black walls of rock with forelocks of white hanging over. Pierre was going through. Ten miles through and thirty miles around, but it was ten miles of walking with death. Only a crazy man or a desperate one would ever attempt it.

He yelled until it seemed his voice would crack but the wind whipped the words away and he knew that a man a hundred yards away would never hear him. Finally he turned his dogs westward. Thirty miles against ten. If Pierre got through he would be far ahead when Jacques returned to the trail on the other side. Jacques sent the long black whip snapping over the backs of the lead dogs, grimly determined to run the legs off his huskies, if necessary. He could travel faster than his friend, but not three times faster.

He felt a sudden sympathy for Pierre. To dangle his life by so slender a thread, Pierre must indeed love Babette.



BACK at Mountain Lake, old Henri Pitot was waiting impatiently. For two days now he had spent much time at the door of the trading post scanning the horizon to the north. Worry showed in his eyes and in his nervous movements and in the way he smoked his pipe. They ought to be back—they ought to be back, kept running through his mind. He tried to reassure himself; they were delayed somehow. Perhaps they rested a few days at McPherson, enjoying themselves. Surely they would come soon. But the lines deepened in his forehead and at every slight noise outside he rushed to the door. Babette was wrong to demand this test. Always she had been a willful girl, but this time she had gone too far. It was good that she soon would settle down.

Henri did not sleep well that night.

The next day, each time he peered out, somber eyes followed him. "*Mon Dieu*," he would say, "why do they not come?"

Then, in the afternoon he flung the door wide and screamed shrilly, "Look! One comes! One comes!"

They crowded behind him. Across the barren whiteness crept a man and a dog

(Continued on page 127)

THE STAR IS DOWN

By
BEN SMITH

SHRADSBURO lay in the brassy sunlight on the scorching rocks of the bluff and looked down to where the river swirled, cool and green, against the cypress knees. His throat ached with the intensity of his desire for the shade of the river bank and his tongue was swollen with his thirst for the waters of the river. But, in the canebrakes that filled the low-ground, metal glinted. Men with rifles walked in the sandy mud below him, searching, eyes wary and fingers against the steel of their triggers.

Shradsbury looked at the sun. About three o'clock. It'll have to be tonight, he thought, maybe they'll go away when it gets dark. With satisfaction he reflected that the searchers below were in as great a fear of him as he, himself, was of them. They had rifles and safety in numbers, while his .38 held only three more cartridges. Yet, they were afraid.

He was a little man, was Lewis Shradsbury, halfway between five and six feet. His faded, shrunken denim pants, inches above his ankles, revealed bony legs. Slim arms, with a faint fuzz of golden hair on them, thrust beyond the worn cuffs of his gray shirt. The same golden hair hung from beneath his wobbly hat-brim almost to his shoulders. It had been seven weeks since he had had a haircut. His beard, lacking the attention of a razor, had grown until his eyes, like a puppy's, seemed to peer through a tangled swamp of hair.

He moved restlessly, like a lizard on his hot rock, and peered downward. Sunlight flashed from the river bank; the men with the rifles were still there. He grinned a little, bearded thin lips parting, showing tiny yellow teeth. None of them were so rash as to boldly ascend the hill before him. They didn't know he was up there, of course, but neither were any of them inclined to be foolhardy.

The sun sent long shadows shooting



ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLEHOFF



His rifle clattered on the rocks and the man collapsed slowly, as if loath to touch the heated ground.

across the hills, but Shradbury lay and roasted on his rock, and his thirst grew worse.

Two men came into a clearing two hundred yards from Shradbury and he watched them. His reddened eyes, like those of a snake, were fixed, unblinking. The bigger of the two, a veritable giant, rested his rifle over his forearm, fishing for a cigarette with his free hand.

"Not a damn sign," he said, scratching a match on the rough, checkered forepiece of his weapon. The smaller man sank wearily upon a stump, and, removing his hat, mopped at his face with a lurid bandana handkerchief.

"Chances are," he ventured, "he's in the next county."



SHRADSBURY grinned thinly. From where he lay, without moving more than six inches, he could drop rocks on them. The pair went on talking, their voices, in the stillness of the afternoon, coming plainly to the watcher above. There was something about their studied indolence as they rested in the shade that caused a tiny worry-wrinkle to dart between Shradbury's eyes. Cautiously, he inched around, looking over the broken ground behind him. Nothing. Satisfied, he turned back. For a moment he had been afraid the pair below him were staked out as decoys, holding his attention while more of them came upon him from behind.

Shradbury licked his lips, trying to wet them with a tongue as dry as the sun-baked limestone under him. Dragons of thirst crawled behind his teeth and his stomach rolled and pitched with hunger. Three days without food, thirty hours without water were far too long for a man on the move.

All in the same breath came the fiery, stabbing pain in his upper arm, the keening of a glancing bullet and the thunder of a heavy rifle. Numbed, Shradbury rolled over, gaining his feet in one fluid movement. He half crouched, his .38 gripped in one thin hand, eyes searching the undergrowth beyond the rocks. The sunlight danced mockingly and a thousand men seemed to slip from place to place behind the willows. Fifty feet from him, almost out of sight below a rise in the ground,

grew a scrub oak. As Shradbury watched, a tiny wisp of gray smoke came from behind it to waft thinly upward.

His .38 barked and the scrub oak shivered with the passage of the bullet. A man stood up, rifle in hand, gazing in unbelieving wonder at his shirtfront where a red rose blossomed. A gout of blood stained his shirt, the rifle clattered on the rocks, and the man fell. He collapsed slowly, as if loath to touch the heated ground. First he went to his knees, hands clutching at his chest, then, as a tree falls, he went over on his face.

Shradbury grinned, and there was satisfaction deep within his sun-faded eyes. Then, without looking below to see what the other two deputies were doing, he ran. His shoulder throbbed, awakening from the first shock of the hurt, and sticky wetness crawled beneath his arm.

For what seemed ages Shradbury stumbled on. From the river bank came excited shouts, and he knew the human hounds were again hot on his trail. The man behind the oak had, evidently, been a lone wolf. He had paid for his rashness with his life.

Leaving the rocks, Shradbury took to the forest, knowing instinctively that wounded, and faint with thirst, he'd soon pass out in the direct rays of the sun. As he beat away from the river, willows gave way to pine and oak and the country became gently rolling. Stooping, the fugitive crept along a rail fence. Across a dry wheatfield, white in the sunlight, came the excited yapping of some farmer's dog. It was too far away to interest Shradbury or to menace him.

From behind him a screaming devil rode the wind, keening a cry of death. Bark jumped from an elm tree near him, leaving a white scar where the wounded body of the tree showed through. Shradbury went to his knees, cowering in volunteer wheat that grew outside the fence row, and eyed his back trail. Nothing moved, nowhere was there sign of life. From where, then, had the shot come?

A bit of red flashed between the trees and the deputy with the bandana peered cautiously out. He had made good time from his resting place on the river bank.


It was dusk, and everything faded into the dim unreality of the half-light, as

Shradsbury watched the deputy carefully search the undergrowth. Once he passed almost within reaching distance of where the hiding man crouched in the wheat, but he walked on. Shradsbury tensed, and waited patiently.

Pain lanced his wounded shoulder like a thousand fiery needles, and, though the coolness brought some relief to his thirst, his hunger grew greater. From some farmhouse, probably the place where the dog had barked, came the odor of frying side-meat. Shradsbury licked his lips and growled, inaudibly, like an animal.

Footsteps, cautious slow footsteps came nearer, muted in the grass. The deputy with the red bandana about his neck came back, evidently not satisfied that the fugitive had passed beyond this point. Silently, his breathing quieted, Shradsbury waited.

The searcher was opposite him now, and Shradsbury froze. It was impossible that the man would fail to see him, poor as the light was. The deputy turned, the star on his shirt catching the last of the sunlight, and his back was toward the man in the high wheat. Gathering his strength, Shradsbury sprang.

 HIS thin fingers explored the size of the lump over the officer's ear, felt his pulse. Good! The blow had been just hard enough; he would live. Quickly, cursing silently with the pain from his wounded shoulder, Shradsbury exchanged clothing with him. They were a size, and, unless subjected to a searching scrutiny, the masquerade would go unnoticed. Taking the rifle but leaving the fallen deputy where he lay, Shradsbury faded among the trees.

A half-hour later, spent and half-conscious with privation and loss of blood, Shradsbury came to the river. He had doubled back on his trail, confident that the search would continue in the direction he had been going. As he rested on the muddy bank, a fusillade of gunfire reached his ears. The deputy, dressed in Shradsbury's clothing and stumbling about in the darkness, had found his friends.

Grinning, the wounded man bathed his shoulder in the river water and, tearing off one sleeve of his shirt, bound the fevered gash. The willows sighed in the darkness and the river answered liquidly.

Wearily Shradsbury leaned his head on his arms and waited for the throbbing in his shoulder to subside. He had drunk, and deeply, upon reaching the river, and the cold water made his empty stomach ache. Almost subconsciously he heard the dog barking again.

Then he straightened, a nameless fear touching his spine. That was no farm dog, it was a bloodhound! Shradsbury got to his feet and, half-stumbling, ran along the water's edge to where the shallow river lapped at a sandbar. Wading, the fugitive traveled a hundred yards down the bank to where the bar vanished and the river again grew deeper.

A gaunt cypress, its bare limbs extended like the arms of a corpse, hung over the water. Clinging to the rifle with his injured arm, Shradsbury managed to straddle an outthrusting limb. Inching his way, his senses reeling with pain and exhaustion, he made his way to the trunk of the tree and solid ground.

He listened. The water lapped, the night wind breathed through the thick foliage of the low-hanging willows and a bird, nesting in the tip of one of them murmured sleepily. Again came the awesome, lonely baying of the hound. Deep shadows crept along the river bank and touched him with ebony fingers. Shradsbury found himself shivering. He laughed, silently, mirthlessly. He was afraid.

Yet the tongue of the bloodhound had spoken to him of new danger. Against man, man was evenly pitted. But any man was loser profitlessly jousting against the senses of the lowest beast.

He made his way farther along the river, there was no other way to go. Another sandbar might offer another opportunity to baffle the keen nose of the hound behind him. Under his feet a frog grumped sleepily and hit the water. Shradsbury gasped, as if facing a douche of cold water, and was motionless. Faint silver edged the top of the hills to the east. Almost moonrise. Hastily he half slid along, feet uncertain in the gumbo mud. From behind came louder the baying of the bloodhound.

But injured, fevered as he was, near exhaustion from lack of food and loss of blood, it was nearly daylight before they cornered him. Backing into a crevice in a rocky hillside looking over the river,

Shradsbury looked to his rifle and pistol, putting them within easy reach of his hand. Lancing pain ran from his shoulder across his chest and the edges of the bullet furrow were growing green. Having no water, the fugitive merely bound the wound in another dirty rag.

It mattered little now.

The sun appeared over the hills, brilliant copper, and below him, on the low ground by the river, Shradsbury saw the bloodhound. Straining at his chain, pulling a reluctant deputy behind him, the baggy-eared dog came up the slight rise voicing his success.

Smoothly, effortlessly, forgetting in the tenseness of the moment his injured shoulder and his empty, hunger-stricken stomach, Shradsbury drew the rifle to his shoulder. His finger tensed on the trigger, he fired, and immediately fired again. The bloodhound settled where he stood, his long ears covering his face as if in shame that he had been taken by surprise. The deputy stood dumbly, his face nearly blown away, swaying. Then he collapsed on top of the dog.

Neither moved again.

Excited shouts as the rest of the posse drew up their ranks, closing in. Shradsbury threw the rifle away; inspection had proven it empty. He damned the deputy from whom he had taken it, for not keeping it fully loaded.

Two shots left in the .38. He fondled the pistol in his thin fingers, watching, waiting. His eyes, even redder now, were unblinking. His mobile nostrils flared above his bearded lips as he breathed in courage. He laid his hat beside him and long blond hair hung to his ears, drooping, unkempt.

Something moved in the defile below him. A man's hat appeared. Shradsbury snapped a shot at it, saw the hat twirl away. It was time. When a man was so

far gone that he fired at a hat held on a stick, it was time. His star was fading.

The men closing in below him heard the shot and, for a long time, refused to credit their senses. Then, one by one and cautiously, they moved up the hill to the crevice in the rock where Shradsbury lay, his .38 still in his hand. They didn't look at the dead deputy and the hound on the way up. From the top of the hill they could look back on the sprawled body, the motionless animal.



SHERIFF BUXTON was an immensely fat man and the activity of the past hours had taken its toll from him. Breathing heavily he sank upon a rock in the shade.

"Well, boys," he said. "It's all over. Seven weeks I been chasing him. Now it's over."

One of his deputies lighted a cigarette, crooked his head against the rising smoke. "We got one up on the rocks, one at the wheat field and one here to carry back to town," he summed up. The prospect of lugging the limp bodies under the hot sun had no appeal for him.

"We can jist bury the dog," Buxton decided.

"Thanks," the deputy replied. "That helps."

"Damn hawg stealer," Sheriff Buxton mouthed. His blue eyes were chunks of ice in his fat face. "We sure showed him, didn't we?"

The deputy with the cigarette looked over at Shradsbury, still holding the rusty .38 in his hand. Over his ear was a powder-burned hole where the desperate man had fired his last shot. He thought again of all the bodies and the heat of the sun. Somehow, he felt a vast dissatisfaction.

"Yeah," he said, stooping for his rifle. "We sure as hell did."





THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

IF YOU were flying over the jungles of Central Brazil, what would you see below you? Arthur J. Burks—our expert on that vast country to the south, larger than these United States of America by some 250,000 square miles—calls it a “sea of green”—one unbroken impenetrable expanse of tropical growth presenting a blank face to the airborne observer. But beneath the surface of that sea of foliage, the jungle teems with life. Along the Tapajos River, in territory marked unexplored on the map, is the land of chattering monkeys, darting lizards, birds of brilliant plumage, and deadly reptiles like the *suruçucu* Jan Harper meets in this month’s story, “The Mundurucu Mask.” There, too, is the land of many Indian tribes—the headhunting Kuruaia, the fierce Mundurucus and the club-wielding pygmy warriors, the Gaiapos. Mr. Burks reminisces a bit about some of his experiences in that strange and primitive part of the world—

I saw a *borduna* before I ever even heard of Gaiapos. I was spending a few months with a friend on the Tapajos River, Central Brazil. At a spot called São Luiz. This was in '46. I went upriver to the Franciscan Mission on the Cururu river, where I spent some weeks with German priests and nuns and got a lot of information on the Mundu-

rucus, Gaiapos, Kuruaia, Njambikwaras, Cajabi, Baquiri and other tribes. Always there was mention of *borduna*, the Gaiapo war club. The one I had seen, twice as heavy as a baseball bat, had had a touch of gray hair on the business end. It had slain an old Brazilian jungle dweller, been left beside the body. I came to love the Mundurucus, called “Black Faces” because of the deep green facial tattoos. They are ancient enemies of the slinking Gaiapos. The whole Gaiapo nation will not approach within miles of a single Mundurucu family. The Kuruaia are believed to be Mundurucus, also, somehow separated generations ago from the parent body.

When I came back downriver I stopped on the island in the mouth of Crepory River—whence I have my expedition in “The Mundurucu Mask” head into the jungles—and listened to harrowing tales of murders of Brazilian rubber cutters by Gaiapos. The Brazilians on the island were afraid to go into the jungles after their rubber. A Brazilian renegade was supposed to be arming the Gaiapos and training them for open battle against the Brazilians. Why did Brazilians believe that? The latest murder of a Brazilian had been not by *borduna* or arrow, but with an old muzzleloader filled with bits of metal and pebbles. The poor guy had been cut almost in two. Personally, I believed the Brazilians had fought among themselves, then blamed the Gaiapos. But they also said the Indians jeered at them from the bank in Portuguese. I was asked to “investigate.” I would have liked to, but I was racing against time to reach Belem before my visa expired.

Besides, an Indian agent of Brazil was with me, and he was afraid to be by himself, even on the perfectly safe island. He would not go along . . . Oh, I could think of many excuses. But thereafter we slept each night on islands in the Tapajos—the Gaiapos neither swim nor build canoes.

We slept on one island just west of Lorena Nova—"New Lorena"—Old Lorena having been abandoned by the Brazilians to the Gaiapos, when, about midnight, we were brought bolt upright in our hammocks by yelling from the mainland. Yelling from the jungles in the dark can be very weird.

The Brazilians with me clambered up and yelled, "Indios! Gaiapos! We are being attacked!"

I stayed in my hammock, remembering that I was on an island, but wondering if my information on the subject of no-swim, no-build-canoes was as inaccurate as most other information I had received. Alone under a shed surrounded by the island's thick brush and trees I could hear the "Gaiapos" creeping up on me from all sides! One Brazilian had the palsy so that he shook all over. The *Indios* scared him so much he stopped shaking for the first time in years. While it has nothing to do with the story, this shaking Brazilian was a dentist; I watched him pull teeth aboard our launch, with those shaking hands. It was a gruesome bloody business—so bloody I didn't see why *he* should be afraid of Gaiapos!

Gaiapos, after that, were seen even within spitting distance of São Luiz. Naked little men sometimes came out of the jungles to stare in open-mouthed wonder at roaring old trucks, motor-driven launches, and people who were ashamed, or something, to let anybody see their naked bodies. They carried *bordunas* and/or bow and arrows. When they carried *bordunas* they were raiding. Of course every frightened Brazilian saw every awestruck Gaiapo loaded down with *bordunas*. Then, I had a piece of Gaiapo bread, so hard it was like a rock . . . but of course there's a lot more.

I returned to the Tapajos in '47, lived on the river until late '48, with "The Mundurucu Mask" running through my mind the whole time, making it one of the longest-germinating yarns I ever wrote. I hope maybe it's worth the wait.

Oh, one other thing: the famous Colonel Percy Fawcett, lost in the jungles in the middle-twenties, is reputedly a captive of the Gaiapos—of several other tribes, including the Chavantes!—where he is forced to train the Indians in modern methods of war. But Fawcett disappeared in distant past, as regards "modern" warfare, so I dunno. But that's the background mixture of "The Mundurucu Mask."

RODGERS HAMILTON of the Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, who contributes the unusual story of the R.C.M.P. on page 34, writes—

I first got the idea for "Don't Always Get Your Man" while traveling last fall on board the R.C.M.P. Schooner *St. Roch*, veteran of the famous Northwest Passages. The boys used to do a bit of yarning about police experiences around the saloon table while off-watch, and I picked up some ideas from various more-or-less famous cases. Later on I was caught in the fall freeze-up at Aklavik, under conditions similar to those described in the beginning of the yarn, and during the enforced leisure roughed out this story. I was finally rescued by a flying missionary who took me back to Fort Yukon, Alaska, and from there I made my way back to the States and finished the story here.

As I say, the story is based on an idea culled from hearing about a number of Mounted Police cases, but it is primarily fiction. I have never heard of a Mounted Policeman being cashiered for the cause given, though occasionally they do produce a bad one. The boys used to do a lot of complaining over the impossibly idealized fiction written about them, which again was a source of stimulus for this tale. With regard to the locale, old Arctic hands will readily recognize it. The only reason I did not use the real geographic names was that I did not wish to embarrass my friends, the two constables now in charge of that post.

I had a very interesting journey this year, traveling down the little-known Kobuk River in a native kayak, and securing some skins of the local tsik-tsik, whose previous scientific anonymity provided me with the material for "Tsik-Tsik-Puk," in the February, 1948 *Adventure*. Spent some time in Kotzebue, over towards Siberia, also, and had a good visit with a bush pilot friend of mine. Then worked east to Coppermine in Northwest Territories, and spent some time in the sea ice aboard the *St. Roch*. At one point it looked like we'd have to spend the winter there, but both the *St. Roch* and myself got safely home, though by different ways.

Incidentally, you may be interested to know that *Adventure* can be purchased from a number of sources in Fairbanks, Alaska, and that the trader at Fort Yukon, north of the Arctic Circle, is an ardent subscriber.

HAVE you met those unforgettable characters in Joseph Emerson Newton's Singapore yarn "Malayan Gold"? We mean Coder and Perkins. On the principle that truth is stranger than fiction, we thought they must be living men whom the author had come across in his travels (see Newton's introductory remarks below, on his initial appearance at the *Camp-Fire*)—but no, they just "walked out of the typewriter." Let's hope they don't walk too far to turn up again in another story.

With a wife and three daughters, I am driven into refuge behind fishing rods, guns,

dogs, pipes, old clothes, profanity, and flee from my women and the routines of life into the Far East and Latin America, and all sorts of improbable places.

A story is made by the insanity of the writer, the patience of the literary agent, the judgment of the editor, and the kindness of the readers. Stories are not spun out of thin air; all of them have a basis of fact, no matter how small and how changed by the imagination and the spider web of the plot. In "Malayan Gold" the background is authentic, but I can't figure out where the characters came from. Coder and Perkins just walked out of the typewriter one day, and the Sultan of Dohore has no connection with the Sultan of Johore who is a very real and nice person.

Malaya is a very obvious place in comparison with the deep and bewildering patterns of other parts of Asia. But it has its own atmosphere, and it is full of all sorts of colorful people, and some of this I think is in the story. The temple ruins got in by a very indirect route.

Up in Cambodia the French discovered the great ruins of Angkor Wat. Those temples rival any in the world. They are equal to those of Egypt, Java, China, India, and the Mayan remains in Central America. A nation of thirty million people lived and perished in the jungles of Indo-China, and they left no record except those terrific temples. Barflies in Singapore have always insisted that some such ruins are in the jungles of Malaya.

There are ruins up and down the Malayan Peninsula, but most of them are Portuguese, and they date from the 17th century or thereabouts. Those old Portuguese who conquered so much of southern Asia were tough boys. A hundred and fifty of them took Malacca from twenty thousand Malays. The Portuguese carried that armor that soldiers sported in those days, and they had old blunderbusses. They advanced on Malacca under the blaze of the Malayan sun, and they had to attack through a swamp. But they did it, and it was one of their many achievements, though no more remarkable than the courage and deeds of our days.

My knowledge of the cities of the Orient and the Near East is thorough, for I spent years out there. But what I know of the Malayan jungle is very scanty. All I saw of it was what borders the highway between Singapore and Malacca. I never had the time to go further afield, and I probably wouldn't if I had had the chance. Mosquitoes feast on me, and while I escaped malaria, and cholera, and all the plagues of Asia, I got dengue, which is a mosquito fever, so many times that I was advised to dwell under mosquito nets, and have my meals sent in. That doesn't sound very adventurous, but those who have had it will understand.

There are all sorts of tales about the Far East. It is just a question of sifting material and making it understandable to

the boys at home. Politically we are being forced abroad, and so we should know something about those places and those peoples, and a writer is a better source of information than all those solemn "experts." Besides, if the desire for security is in the heart of woman, adventure is born in man.

JOHAN D. MacDonald, author of the fast-paced tale of the leaden-footed lads of the race-car circuit—"Death Is a Lap Ahead"—steps up to the *Camp-Fire* for the first time with a thought-provoking commentary on sport and sport fans in general. He writes from Cuernavaca, Mexico—

I enjoyed writing "Death Is a Lap Ahead," as it deals with the only sport countenanced in the United States where death is frankly admitted as one of the participants. Its counterpart is the bull ring here in Mexico. It is almost a truism that the higher the stakes a man plays for, the greater the drama inherent in his activities. For the writer, the deadly dirt tracks of the county fairs, the asphalt ovals of the south and west, the bricks at Indianapolis—all are large self-contained test tubes where the basic stuff of which a man is made can be weighed and tested.

For the amateur philosopher, there is nothing more peculiar than the tendency of men, since the beginning of recorded history, to gamble the highest stake, life itself, for the purpose of entertaining their fellow men. It is an interesting commentary that among the various motivations involved, profit has never been important.

Nor, is the basic motivation the desire to "show off." Forty years ago in this state of Morelos there was a young ranchero who became a hero to his fellow Morelenses because of the iron-cold nerve with which he risked his neck in a feat called *el paseo de la muerte*, transferring from his own horse to the bare back of an unbroken bronco at a full gallop just a few feet ahead of the thundering hooves of a whole troop of horsemen. This man, one of those instrumental in upsetting the cruel administration of the infamous Porfirio Diaz, became known as the most selfless and devoted leader of peasant armies in the history of Mexico. His name was Zapata.

I have gotten far afield. As for me, I am a fugitive from an office desk, maintaining precarious independence with wife and son on the proceeds of this fiction business. I like it.

BEN SMITH, who wrote the gripping account of a manhunt, in this issue, says he has read *Adventure* for many years but was surprised to make its pages with a story of his own—didn't think he was the "adventure type of writer." We think he

is wrong as hell on that score (and writers, as well as editors, can be very wrong at times—as you'll see if you read on to the end of this department). But judge for yourself about Ben Smith's self-appraisal when you read his yarn, "The Star Is Down."

Meanwhile Mr. Smith introduces himself briefly thus-wise—

The sun was hot enough to boil the pitch out of a pine knot and the boat smelled like a mildewed rubber boot. And, the fish weren't biting. I looked across the Ohio River to where the headlands hung like thunder clouds and wondered what it would be like to be up there on the baked limestone with a posse on your tail. Lewis Shradsbury obligingly gave me the answer in "The Star Is Down."

I was born in Michigan thirty-three years ago. I can still remember the bass being so hungry that they would strike at a shiny shingle nail. And the trout! Speckled beauties that lunged at the lowly angleworm.

In the intervening years I've been, in quick succession, an ironer, or "finisher" in a laundry; a linotype operator on a tank town weekly paper; a disc jockey; radio engineer and writer.

The last is one of my lesser accomplishments.

Being born with what is known locally as a "piddlin'" sort of curiosity, I've had my grimy fingers into life and other people's business over most of these United States. Somewhere in my prying, a wife and two husky kids stuck to me.

The future is in the lap of my typewriter. I'd like to travel some more, write a lot and find a place where the bass are striking.

ON JOINING the Writers' Brigade, John Wieting, author of "The Cruise of the Catalpa" sends along the following notes to accompany his factual narrative of a little-known sidelight on the Irish Rebellion—

I left high school in 1932 to take a job as ordinary seaman on an oil tanker bound for South America. After two trips I quit because of the monotony and the conditions (that was before the National Maritime Union). During the next eight years I was a gardener, roofer, Fuller brush man, electrician and printing salesman. When the war broke out I was busily making vitamin tablets in Brooklyn. I was drafted in 1942 and three years and nine months later, after OCS, eighteen months as an Infantry 2nd Lt. in the Aleutians, and a siege of Southern training camps, was once again on the side-walks of New York.

I had firmly made up my mind, in an

outpost hut buried in the snow on Attu, that once out of the Army, I was going to do what I wanted to do . . . which was to write. I found a job as proof-reader on a shipping paper and in a few months left to take a job as assistant to the editor of *The New York Forwarder*, an ocean shipping weekly, where I am at present.

The cruise of the *Catalpa* is almost a legend in my wife's family. My wife is the great-granddaughter of "Catalpa Jim" Reynolds. An interesting sidelight on the story, and one I might enlarge on some day, is the fact that John Holland, the shipwright who fitted the *Catalpa* for sea, built one of the first successful submarines. It was named the *Fenian Ram* and was built in this country for the express purpose of sinking the entire British Navy.

The slight problem of getting the *Ram* across the Atlantic Ocean had been overlooked, and for years this nemesis of England's fleet lay in the yard behind the home of James Reynolds in New Haven, a playhouse for children.

AND another newcomer to the pages of *Adventure*, Charles Elliott, describes himself as "a Georgia cracker, born, bred, and buttered."

The author of the duck hunting story, "Gentleman's Drake" on page 84, contributes a few interesting paragraphs to introduce himself to you—

I've got the best job of anyone I know. I hunt and fish for a living. I look out new places, experiment with new methods, meet new faces in my perennial outdoors adventure.

There's one bad detail: I must pause long enough between each trip to write it down on paper. I've been unable to find anyone to take care of this particular part of my job.

I first saw daylight on Thanksgiving day, 1906, (My parents have been wondering about that one ever since) on a high bluff overlooking the river. I studied (in spite of what my professors say) Forestry at the University of Georgia and have been in conservation work since that time. I was two summers with the U. S. Forest Service on the Cabinet National Forest in Montana, two years as Forester for the National Park Service in the southeastern states, a couple more years with the same outfit as regional Editor and Director of Public Relations. All my other work has been in conservation with the state of Georgia, where I served in such capacities as District Forester, Director of State Parks, Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources (which included the divisions of forestry, parks, mines and geology, and wildlife) and Director of the State Game and Fish Commission.

In spite of himself, any state employee

spends at least a portion of his time paddling around in the cesspool of state politics. When I got into a particularly unsavory area, I pulled my boat ashore, crawled to clean ground with my typewriter under my arm.

I'd had a little experience in writing, being editor of a couple of regional publications, and having authored, co-authored or edited eight books on conservation. Two of them, "Southern Forestry" and "Conservation of American Resources," have been adopted by a number of states as official text books. I have also sold articles and short stories to a few publications including *American Forests*, *Outdoor Life*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Sports Afield*, *Field and Stream*, *Bluebook*, *Argosy*, *American Legion*, *Outdoors*. And I've done some newspaper work on Georgia papers—Gainesville *News*, Augusta *Herald*, Atlanta *Constitution*, and Atlanta *Journal*.

Now, unessential details out of the way, back to my job. I've hunted and fished in most of the states, and some of the provinces from Alaska to Florida. I have found the initial cost of a gun or fishing rod to be negligible; it's the upkeep that's kept my banker with a wary eye and a red pencil in his hand. But some of the most enjoyable days I've had are in that part of Florida where the shore line swings in a great arc from St. Petersburg to Pensacola. It's a grand fishing area for both salt and fresh water fish and (I'll swear the Chamber of Commerce did not help me write this) one of the only partially discovered wintering grounds for ducks. A number of famous old hunting and fishing clubs lie around this bend of the state. Messrs. Dun and Bradstreet would never let me belong to one of them, but I've been a guest in several of these clubs.

I'd rather not say where the experience written into "Gentleman's Drake" happened, since a good many of the fellows belonging to that particular club have had enough embarrassment to last until a new generation of members come along.

ONE more introduction this month—Durand Kiefer having resigned as "Ask Adventure" expert on the U. S. Navy, due to the pressing demands of his work, for Radio Station KCBQ, San Diego, this post will now be filled by Frank Herold, who seems eminently qualified to handle the queries in this field. Quote from his letter to this department on joining the "Ask Adventure" staff: "Enlisted in the Navy in June 1917 at the age of 16. Father refused his consent because I was under age, so I entered a saloon for the first time in my life and paid a bum \$1.00 to go to a notary with me, sign as my father, etc. Got in a jam over it, but when the smoke

cleared away, the Navy let me stay because with the help of a couple million other guys I was winning the war (the way it feels at 16, anyway)." He goes on to tell of his travels, while in the Navy, to nineteen foreign countries; his promotions in rank; his twenty-eight consecutive years of service with the Navy and Coast Guard, at sea and on shore; his duty on the staff of the Captain of the Port of New York in 1939, '40 and '41, and later in command of the U.S. Maritime Service Pool in New York City during World War II; and his eventual discharge in August, 1945, at which time he was executive officer and navigator on the Coast Guard cutter *Ossipee*.

We think it might safely be said of Mr. Herold that he is a man who loves the sea. So—don't hold back with those United States Navy queries, gentlemen. You may fire when ready!

A NOTE from Colonel R. G. Emery on Edward Arthur Dolph's soldier-songs piece in the April issue—

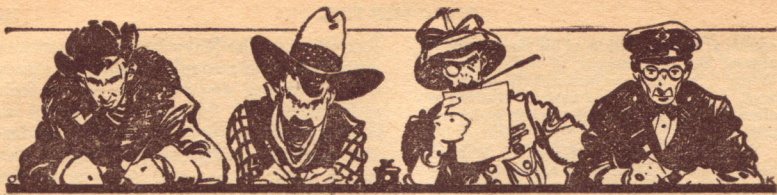
I would like to add a footnote to Edward Arthur Dolph's fine article, "From Yankee Doodle to Dirty Gertie."

His remarks regarding The Caisson Song are entirely correct. The song was written in 1907 for the Fifth Artillery. E. L. Gruber, now Major General, wrote the music. But the semi-official edition of the Songs of the United States Military Academy, published by Egner & Mayer (the same Mayer who arranged the music) at West Point, lists the authors of the lyrics as R. M. Danford, Wm. Bryden and E. L. Gruber. [Danford and Bryden both retired as Major Generals, also. Song writing would seem to be quite a beneficial hobby for soldiers!]

AND the following communication from David Todd Sampson concerning the same article—

I was greatly interested in Edward Arthur Dolph's article "From Yankee Doodle to Dirty Gertie" appearing in the April issue. The verse about the Vicksburg Bluffs appealed to me especially, as it closely parallels some verses found in a scrap-book that belonged to my deceased grandfather, David Humphrey Todd, a half-brother to Mary Todd, who became the wife of Abraham Lincoln. Grandfather Todd was captured at the fall of Vicksburg, where he had served in the 4th Louisiana under General Pemberton, under whom he had also served in the

(Continued on page 126)



ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

REQUIREMENTS for the Secret Service and F.B.I.

Query—I am very interested in the fields that you are covering for *Adventure* and if you would send me any information that you have on the Secret Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Border Patrol and State Police that you have on hand I would be very appreciative. I am a Navy vet and am now attending school so that I may enter college. Any information you could give me will help to decide what my studies will be and what end it will be for.

—R. L. Bennett,
Belmont, Mass.

Reply by Francis H. Bent:—Applicant for the Secret Service must be a citizen of the U. S.; between 21 and 38 years old; have at least 1 year of full time experience in high grade responsible investigational work, such as investigator in important criminal cases for reputable lawyers, or be a graduate from a recognized school of law with the degree of Bachelor of Laws; have no conspicuous physical oddities; be in the best of health and physical condition. Positions are filled by examination by the U. S. Civil Service Commission, Washington 25, D. C. Watch the bulletin board in first- or second-class Post Office for advance notice of examinations.

Applicant for position with the Federal Bureau of Investigation must be a citizen of the U. S.; between 25 and 36 years old, inclusive; willing to service where directed; have at least 2 years' commercial experience in legal, accounting or business fields; be a graduate from (a) a recognized school of law, or (b) recognized school of accounting, and able to qualify on the witness stand and in the practical accounting field as an expert, or (c) have had extensive investigational or

law-enforcement experience; be in the very best of health and physical condition; pass strict physical examination; be well proportioned as to height and weight; have no conspicuous physical oddities. Application should be in your own handwriting to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U. S. Department of Justice, Washington 25, D. C.

Requirements of the state police forces vary with the different departments. It is almost a necessity to be a resident of the state. Since your residence is in Massachusetts I'll give you the requirements for that state.

Must be between 22 and 32 years old; at least 5'7" tall; weigh in accordance with standard tables of weight for height and age; of good moral character; resident of the State. Stiff physical examination is given by the examining surgeon. If successful the applicant is then given mental examination based on subjects determined by the Commissioner of Public Safety. For application blanks and further information write to the Commissioner of Public Safety, Room 24, State House, Boston, Mass.

Hope the foregoing will be of some help to you. Incidentally, the Border Patrol does not require a college education. However, a study of foreign languages—especially Spanish, and possibly French, would be an asset.

SOUTH of the Border.

Query:—I have hope of some day being an author, and I would like to spend one or two months this winter in the country surrounding Mexico City.

Could you please tell me how I can secure a tourist's card, and approximately how much such a visit would cost, giving a few examples of prices? Do I need a guide, and what is the surrounding countryside like,

and lastly, what are the main occupations of the people?

—Mike Ceske,
Twin Falls, Idaho.

Reply by Wallace Montgomery:—You can secure a tourist card from any Mexican Consul in the U. S. on presentation of proof of U. S. citizenship. It will cost approximately \$2.10, and is good for six months.

Mexico City is the place to come first, then from your hotel you can secure information on the various parts of the country to visit. Or a regular tourist agency can advise you, if you inform them how much time you have available and what you want to see. Mexico is a country of diverse scenery, climate and peoples. You can see an excellent cross-section of Mexico and Mexican life by taking trips out of Mexico City to such places as Vera Cruz, Pueblo, Oaxaco, Merida, etc.

Costs are high, in spite of the rate of exchange of about \$6.80 pesos for \$1.00 U. S. You will find excellent food, good hotels and fair sanitary conditions in and around the larger towns, but once off the beaten track, conditions are primitive and food, water, etc., not too safe. Why not try a trip down to Mexico City to see how you like it, and then go on as you wish from there?

SLUGGERS and Fancy Dans.

Query:—Did Jack Dempsey ever fight Jack Sharkey? If so, what was the outcome of the contest?

To your knowledge did Eddie Eagan and Jack Dempsey ever put on an exhibition bout? What was Eagan's record; i.e., did he ever meet any outstanding men?

What happened to Tommy Farr after he fought Joe Louis? Is he still fighting?

Do you have any information regarding the present whereabouts and activities of Lou Nova? Was Nova ever a first-rate contender for the heavyweight crown? Did he ever meet his fellow Californian, Max Baer?

Could you tell me where I could obtain a biography of James J. Corbett?

Have you ever heard of an Australian fighter by the name of Griffin who used to stand on a handkerchief and ward off punches? Could you give a brief summary of his career? Was he a good boxer or merely a novelty?

—W. P. Reese,
Florence, Colo.

Reply by Col. Jean V. Grombach:—Jack Dempsey did fight Jack Sharkey on July 21, 1927, and the result was that Dempsey knocked out Sharkey. The details are that this was the final elimination for a world's championship fight with Tunney. Because Dempsey won, he fought Tunney the second time at Chicago—the fight of the "long count." In the Sharkey-Dempsey fight,

Sharkey had the best of it during most of the fight but Dempsey's superior punching ability began to assert itself and in the 7th round Dempsey hit Sharkey in the pit of the stomach, Sharkey turned around to complain to the referee that he had been hit low, and the fight was over a few seconds later as Dempsey hit him on the chin and knocked him out. It has often been called the "bone-head K.O."

Eddie Eagan and Jack Dempsey did put on an exhibition bout but notwithstanding rumors and reports, it was "no contest." Eagan had an imposing record as an amateur and intercollegiate boxer in the early days of amateur and collegiate competition and Olympic light-heavyweight champion in 1920. In 1924, when he fought heavyweight, he was decisively and badly beaten by an English heavyweight in the first elimination of the Olympics of that year in Paris. He is not considered by most people to have met any outstanding boxers or fighters, and never turned pro. According to many, his greatest fight was against "Soldier Adams" of the Springfield YMCA college. Eagan was a roundhouse puncher and quite rugged, but not too good a boxer and very short-armed for his weight and size. In 1920 he was a great amateur, but in 1924, with his speed gone, he was a sucker for speed and boxing ability.

Tommy Farr boxed for some time after his Louis fight and then retired and is living in England at the present time. It is reported that he has a pub and has gotten very fat.

Lou Nova tried a comeback some time ago but is definitely retired from boxing competition. In the opinion of most experts, he was not considered a first-rate contender for the heavyweight crown, although he received a great deal of publicity as he was a follower of the Yogi cult and tried to bring the Yogi cult into the ring. Unfortunately did not work. He did meet Max Baer twice after Baer had "gone over the hill"—winning by a technical knockout in the 11th round the first time, on June 1, 1939, due to severe cuts which Baer suffered inside his mouth which made him swallow so much blood that he could no longer breathe. The second time, on April 4, 1941, Nova knocked Baer out in the 8th round.

You can obtain a biography, or at least a history, on the life of James J. Corbett from Nat Fleischer's, c/o *Ring Magazine*, Madison Square Garden, New York City. The price is 75 cents.

Do not know of any prominent fighter from Australia named Griffin, but from your reference to the handkerchief, I believe you mean young Griffo, "the Australian Shadow." He was one of the cleverest boxers in ring history. Drunk or sober, he was unbeatable as a featherweight. Griffo never trained, had no punch but the speed of his hands and his countering defense were such that he was almost impossible to hit. While he was never champion at any class,

he fought draws with the greatest feathers and lightweights of his day—Little Chocolate, Joe Gans and Kid Lavigne. From 1888 to 1904 he fought all-comers at any weight. He was also famous for his tricks for the press, which consisted of picking beer out of the air and standing on a handkerchief and asking any and all newspapermen to try and hit him. He would counter, duck or slip all punches without moving off the handkerchief.

MORE mulish than the mule.

Query:—Could you tell me where I could buy donkeys or burros? I would like very much to get one or two small long-haired ones for pets.

Of course the closer I could get them the better, but I would be willing to pay shipping charges from any reasonable distance.

I have been told that the cold weather of Montana would not bother them.

Any information you could give me about them, habits, disposition, etc., would be greatly appreciated.

—Harold Kinread,
Galata, Montana.

Reply by John Richard Young:—In most parts of the Southwest you can pick up borros practically for peanuts. But if you don't intend to use them for light packing, why you should want to pick up any stumps me. They are not what I'd call ideal pets. They are smart little beasts and, if treated fairly, docile; but don't get the idea that you can train them as easily or as highly as you can train a horse or a pony. Because while a burro isn't dumb, his apparent docility is, I believe, based on a kind of indifference that amounts to total indifference to what he may very well know you want him to do. If he doesn't want to do it, he can act dumber than a Yokum of Dogpatch, Kentucky, and as stubborn as any mistreated mule. Some people think horses have a certain affection for human beings; but no one ever made that mistake about a burro. If want one or a pair for pets, you might as well resign yourself to the fact that you'll do all the petting.

Burros are hardy little brutes. They can thrive in bleak country that would reduce a horse or a pony to starvation. They can stand heat and cold. However, unless you have money to gamble, I'd advise you to wait until next summer before shipping even a burro from the Southwest up to Montana. The journey would mean quite a change of climate for the desert-bred animals, and while they might successfully weather the change before spring, I think it more likely that you would find yourself out of pocket their cost and the shipping charges. But if you brought them north in summer they'd have a better chance to become acclimated before the next winter. No, I don't think the Montana winters would hurt them if

you brought them up next summer; but just to be on the safe side in protecting your investment I would advise you to pasture them where you could keep an eye on them and, if possible, let them have at least an open shed (three walls, with the open side facing south) during their first fall and winter in Montana.

I am sending you the name and address of an Arizona horseman who tells me that he can get you all the burros you want for from three to six dollars a head. Write to him and tell him how many burros you want, of what age and sex, and how and when you want them shipped at your expense. He suggests that you'll be wise to specify yearlings or colts that have recently been weaned, rather than mature animals that have knocked, and been knocked, about the world, to the detriment of their dispositions. The usual colors are brown and gray, less frequently black.

LIFE on the Mississippi.

Query:—I am tired of apartments and greedy landlords, so if you can give me any information on the following I will appreciate it very much.

1. Could a houseboat be lived in all the year around in Illinois climate, and would it have to be specially designed or built or insulated, and with what?

2. Would a hull 30 or 32 feet long and 16 feet wide be oversize or too expensive?

3. What shape should the hull be, what materials should be used, and should it be copper sheathed?

4. What materials should be used for interior and how about bath and toilet facilities?

5. What would be the approximate weight of houseboat with furnishings, etc., included?

6. What make and horse-power outboard motor would you recommend to safely push this job up-current on the Mississippi? (I might want to cruise a little on vacation and naturally want to return under my own power.)

7. Can you give me the names of any builders specializing in houseboats, more especially local ones.

8. Can you recommend any books covering any part of the subject, including construction, river navigational laws, rules, regulations, etc.?

9. Do you know if houseboats are financeable? (I'm not an ex-G.I. so can't get that kind of a loan.)

10. Can you give me an approximate figure I should expect to spend for a houseboat, yearly upkeep cost and insurance rates?

11. How about water supply and electricity?

—Dave W. Graham,
Chicago, Ill.

Reply by Raymond S. Spears:—A houseboat is attractive and it has many advan-

tages—economy, isolation, transport hither and yon. At Detroit there is a large colony of cabinboaters—mechanics who take advantage of conveniences afloat.

But the houseboat is necessarily small, simple—crowded. It is camping out in a floating cabin. Where the streams freeze during the winter, one must skid the boat on shore, so ice won't crush the hull. This means a lot of problems—water, toilet, access to supplies, fuel, etc.

The chief advantage of a houseboat is had during the spring, summer and autumn open-water months "up north." Summer resort workers, farm hands, auto garage mechanics, busy three-fourths of the year, find several months to float down the Lower Mississippi below the freeze line, and mooring in backwaters when ice runouts and running drift come.

As a matter of fact, no two boats are alike—and living aboard in the stream-freeze up north is practiced—according to local conditions. And about the only answer to your No 1 question is—river people do!

2. A cabin-boat scow hull is usually at least three times as long as wide, and a 40' boat would best be, say, 10' wide—with a 30' cabin, 5' decks. The cost depends on lumber used and carpentering.

3-4. A scow hull 40' long would be 3', even 4' deep. The rake under bow and stern decks should be 6' long—so the hull slides over the water instead of bumps into it. The best hull depends on quality lumber; the best would be, perhaps, cypress hull on white oak frame and waterproof plywood cabin. You would do well to get several of the boat-building books on the book stands now. The camping books tell how to live in camps and floating camps. The toilet and bath are problems depending on anchorage, mooring, still or running waters.

5. This depends on light or heavy construction. A rag-shack on a hull might be less than 300 lbs.; furniture, side walls, plywood or body wood, roofing—size of the boat. I've been aboard a 24' boat that weighed 1200 lbs., and one that rated, say 800 lbs.

6. Bucking the Mississippi current depends. On your vacation it would be best to go upstream, rather than down. The scow hull should have lone rake, as said, to slide over the current; two 6-horse outboards develop a lot of power—and in muddy water better install radiators and tank for rainwater.

7-8. SHANTYBOAT, by the Lightys (Century Pub. Co.), is a fact account of river tripping. *A Year in a Yawl* by Double-day—a good bet is to look over shelves of second-hand book stores—boats, boating, naval construction, etc. Many good books are out of print—no two readers seek same lines. Better collect working-library of small boats—boat-builders located along waterfronts, and through lumber yards, ship-chandlers, etc.

9. You would probably build three or four boats before suiting yourself. Mate-

rials perhaps \$50, outfit \$50, building—Wages? Upkeep—painting, replacements, new equipment?

10. You save rent—I bought \$24.50 skiff, lived aboard 7 months, \$100—but cost twice that, same living now. You might find a second-hand boat, cheap; repairs a bargain.

11. A river man practically camps out. No electricity. Water from the river—and perhaps it should be boiled; or rainwater caught in a barrel from eaves; no bathtub—a kettle full of water in a foot-tub, or the like.

Ask Adventure has helped slant thousands into various lines. I've heard from more than a hundred outfits that tripped the Mississippi and tributaries on strength of reading my *fiction!* Stories that fair-warned against storms, river pirates, running drift, discomforts—against hunger, loneliness and difficulties; as if the prospect of adventure would check any one!

SHOOTING around corners.

Query:—Did the Germans in World War II actually have a rifle made with a curved barrel used in street fighting to shoot around corners?

If such a weapon exists where could I get a photo or a cut of it?

—W. J. Brummitt
Lethbridge, Alberta

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—Yes, Fritz DID have a gun with a curved barrel, that would shoot around an obstruction, and was very useful in street fighting, I am informed by men who went against them.

The information is rather small regarding this weapon, and the only thing I have seen on it is an article last summer in the following publication: *The American Rifleman*, c/o National Rifle Association, 1200 Rhode Island Avenue, Washington, D. C.

I have given my files of this publication to the Oregon State Library just this past week, and so they are not available now, but a letter to the above address will bring more information as to the exact issue that contains it. Possibly the enclosure of twenty-five cents would ensure the arrival of the copy.

As I recall the photos in the body of the article, the barrel of the weapon was bent at right angles, about six inches or so from the muzzle.

A N O T H E R gun query: velocity vs. trajectory.

Query—Can a .30 '06 be shot in a .30-40 Krag—or vice versa? What is the velocity of a .30-06 and a .30-40 using the same weight bullet, and what would be the trajectory of each at 200 yards? For 8 MM? Velocity of .22 Swift and .22 Hornet?

What does the 20-40-70-06 etc. mean after the caliber?

—John L. Bridge
Latrobe, Pa.

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—1st. No, the .30-40 Krag cartridge cannot be fired in the .30 '06, nor vice versa. The rifle bolts will not close on the wrong cartridge; I just tried both varieties in my own guns.

2nd. The .30-40 cartridge, using the load we generally find here, the 180 grain soft point bullet, gives 2480 foot seconds muzzle velocity; the .30 '06 with the same bullet gives 2710.

3rd. The midrange trajectory of the .30-40 at 100 yards is given as 3.5 inches, and the .30 '06 as 3 inches, even. This is the halfway mark to 200 yards, you see, as the ballisticians departments figure it. I wish they would sight the rifles in at 100 yards, and tell us what the bullets drop at 200 and 300 yards, as the English rifemakers do.

4th. The 8 MM, or 7.9 in the sporting version with 170 grain bullet, gives 2530 foot seconds muzzle velocity, and 3.5 inch trajectory at the 100 yards range, shooting at 200 yards.

5th. The .220 Swift is given 4140 foot seconds velocity, with 46 or 48 grain bullet, and the .22 Hornet with the 45 grain soft point bullet is given 2650, and with the hardened, 2600.

6th. The original figures after the caliber referred to the grains weight of black powder the original load carried, in the old days; thus, the .32-20 used 20 grains of black powder, but now uses far less of the modern smokeless powders. The "'06" refers to the year the Government adopted the present rifle cartridge, (1906) but there have been modifications introduced since that time.

Confidentially, they all look strange alongside the bullet with its greased patch, of the Kentucky flintlock rifle hanging over me as I write, but they've a lot more punch.

A "COLD" reception in the North.

Query:—I am a Minnesota trapper and am thinking of taking out citizenship papers in Canada. Is it true that there are many miles of free trapping territory in Canada? If not, how can I obtain said land? What is the price for average territory? I would like to have land in fairly dense wilderness country.

What is the age a person must be to become a citizen of Canada? Are there still homestead rights in the wilderness for

citizens of Canada? How long may a person live in Canada without becoming a citizen?

What weather conditions may I expect to find? What equipment would I need? How many traps? What size traps? How long must I live in Canada to obtain a trapping license?

Does the Hudson Bay Co. still operate? Is it true that trappers may get traps and equipment at a Hudson Bay Co. store on credit?

—John Stalcup
Hackensack, Minnesota

Reply by H. S. M. Kemp:—Things for the trapper aren't too rosy hereabouts just now. I dropped over to the Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources and got the dope from them. Here's what they say: There are no more surveyed homesteads available; trapping territory that is accessible is already overcrowded; and no license is granted until one has had a year's residence in that particular locality. In fact, the condition is so congested at the present time that the Department doesn't grant trapping licenses unless for a very good reason.

In the "North," conditions aren't quite the same. Here you still need that one year's residence—and I don't know how you'd keep yourself in the meantime, unless you lived off your grubstake and straight fish. The country there, all "wilderness," is set out in blocks, which are leased to the trappers; but as it is felt that the Indian and native-born Canadian (native to that part of the country) should get first chance, it is difficult to obtain a trapping-license. However, if you want first-hand information and information that is absolutely reliable, you should write the Department of Natural Resources here at Prince Albert yourself. But still, with the Indian coming first, the native-son second, you might find trouble in locating a district. The best will all have been taken, and one can no longer roam the country and grab what he wants. Still, as I say, write and get the official reaction yourself.

Regarding traps, you need just what you use in Minnesota. One does not have to be a naturalized British subject to live in Canada. I know some who have been years and years in the country and aren't naturalized yet. The Hudson's Bay Co. still operates, but is getting away from the credit system. And as for the weather, well, during this last winter the mercury dropped to the 45 below mark here and even touched 53 below. But that isn't bad; and there'll be a good summer coming up!



ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS



THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Air Mail is quicker for foreign service!

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do Not send questions to the magazine, unless so indicated (c/o *Adventure*). Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. No Reply will be made to requests for partners, financial backing or employment.

★(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

American Folklore and Legends: Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects; voodoo—HAROLD PREECE, c/o *Adventure*.

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, c/o *Adventure*.

Auto Racing—WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT, 4323 N. Elkhart Ave., Milwaukee 11, Wis.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, c/o *Adventure*.

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Mattawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: Guides and equipment—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure*.

Boxing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure*.

Camping and Outdoor Cookery—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Dogs—JACK DENTON SCOTT, R.F.D., Roxbury, Conn.

Fencing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure*.

Fishing, Fresh water: Fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, c/o *Adventure*.

Fly and Bait Casting Tournaments—"CHIEF" STARWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, c/o *Adventure*.

Horses and Horsemanship—JOHN RICHARD YOUNG, c/o *Adventure*.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: Regulations, mechanics, racing—CHARLES M. DODGE, c/o *Adventure*.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: American and Foreign—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 3325 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: American and foreign; wing shooting and field trials; gunsmithing—ROY S. TINNEY, Brielle, N. J.

Skating—WILLIAM C. CLAPP, The Mountain Book Shop, North Conway, N. H.

Small Boating: Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burd Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 2, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: American, north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure*.

Forestry, Tropical: Tropical forests and products—WM. H. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: Reptiles and amphibians—CLIFFORD H. POPE, c/o *Adventure*.

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: Anywhere in North America, Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure*.

Photography: Outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 86 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: Telegraphy, telephony history; receiver construction, portable sets—DONALD MCNICOL, c/o Adventure.

Railroads: In the United States, Mexico and Canada—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling: HAPSBURG LIBBE, c/o Adventure.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

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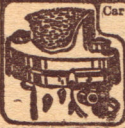
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(Continued from page 117)

Mexican War. The verses I refer to above are as follows—I do not know the author—

*Vicksburg is a hilly place
With a climate hot as hell
No other place on earth's surface
Can such a story tell.
Chol Hurrah for Louisiana
We're going to leave this town.
We'll pack our duds off on our backs
When we've swallowed our mule meat down.*

SACKCLOTH AND ASHES DEPT.

—And now for that item we mentioned several paragraphs above, to the effect that writers and editors are often in the wrong: We pulled a couple of real king-size boners in the April issue in Jules Archer's otherwise fine story of Australia in the last century, "Thunder Down Under". They were both errors of anachronism—which is a nice way of saying that we got our dates mixed when we permitted Bluey Coldstone to tote a .30-30 way back in 1854, and Johnny Queed to use dynamite some eight years before its invention was credited to Nobel. Mr. Archer is properly contrite about these inexcusable lapses; he has answered personally each letter received from our keen-eyed readers, and vows that next time he will check such facts meticulously—and thus avoid, as he says, "shooting holes in my own yarns." And we too will try our darndest to keep such errors to an absolute minimum in the future.

Meanwhile we are indebted to the following readers who wrote us about the above points: Mr. Gordon Bess of Canyon City, Colo.; Mr. Fred P. Rodgers of Chicago, Ill.; Mr. George Cathcart of Albemarle, B. C.; Mr. A. Roger Hart of Ashland, N. H.; Mr. D. C. Reynolds of Las Vegas, N. M.; Mr. F. J. Laraway of Albany, N. Y.; Mr. W. P. Eddy of Cleveland, Ohio; The Ven. Charles C. Jones, Archdeacon of Madison, Mineral Point, Wisc.; and Mr. Lou Wallace of Oakland, Calif. These readers not only took the time and trouble to set us straight, but they did so in a mighty considerate and friendly fashion. Gentlemen, our thanks.—K.W.G.



(Continued from page 107)

team, a black speck in the vast panorama. "Which one!"

They pushed outside, pulling on heavy coats and mittens. The man came slowly. He plodded behind the sled which the tried dogs dragged listlessly.

The snow was frozen and rough, and now and then the sled tilted crazily. The man gripped the pole to keep it upright. This they could see but their straining eyes could not tell further. This was the winner, but who—Pierre or Jacques?

When the sled drew close, they saw that the long bundle lashed upon it was the body of a man. Jacques slumped behind, his head bent forward. When finally he drew up before them he walked past the sled and silently unhooked the dogs. His eyes ran over the little group. Then he faced Henri Pitot.

"He was ahead of me," Jacques said. "And then he took the shorter way through the canyons. He thought that was the only way to win Babette. Later I knew he had not come out. I went back and found him at the foot of a cliff. Snow had given way and carried him down."

There was a rumbling among the trappers. Henri's shoulders sagged with the weight of the guilt he accepted as his own. Then his eyes traveled to Jacques' haggard face and grew soft at the misery he saw there. He put a mittened hand on Jacques' shoulder. "I t'ink Babette she like you best," he said.

Jacques stared out over the barrens which held the secret of the suffering he had endured for six hundred weary miles. "Yes," he said finally, "I think she does."

There was a grayness in his face as he looked down upon the still form on the sled. A filmy scarf of fine workmanship was wrapped about Pierre's head. Jacques stood immobile.

Henri put a comforting arm about him. "Come, my son," Henri said. "We will go to Babette."

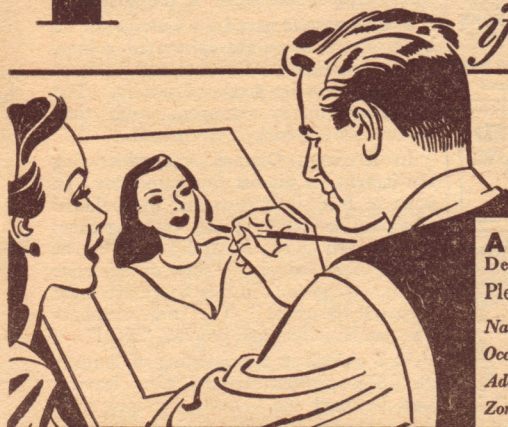
Swiftly Jacques leaned down and snatched a package from Pierre's pocket. He held it out to Henri.

"Give Babette this scarf," he said bitterly. "Pierre's gift to her." He pointed to the sled. "It is he who won. He returned ahead of me."

THE END

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(Continued from page 73)

"Heave to!" bellowed the colonel.

"What for?" Anthony replied.

"You have prisoners aboard that ship."

"You are mistaken," called Anthony. "We are all free men here." A slight breeze sprang up and the *Catalpa* started to move.

Finally, in frustration, the British officer screamed, "I'll give you fifteen minutes to heave to or I'll blow your masts out. I have the means to do it." He pointed to his gun. Anthony pointed to his ensign.

"This ship is on the high seas sailing under the American flag. If you fire on me, I warn you, you are firing on the American flag." Faced by what the British press later called "the trick of a Yankee sea-lawyer" the colonel was stumped.

Both ships were now about eighteen miles offshore. The *Georgette* crowded closer and Anthony feared the colonel was planning to board the *Catalpa* or force her within the twelve mile limit of Australian territorial waters. The wind was freshening steadily and Anthony decided that it was now or never. Orders were rapped out and, as the crew jumped to the sheets, the wheel was spun hard over and the *Catalpa* came about, heading straight for the *Georgette*. Thinking Anthony intended to ram, Captain O'Grady rang for full speed ahead and the jib-boom of the *Catalpa* barely cleared the stern of the steamer.

The *Georgette* paced the *Catalpa* for an hour. Once more the infuriated colonel called to Anthony to heave to and Anthony answered that he proposed not to. The *Georgette* finally stopped, and then steamed slowly back to Fremantle.

In England, Disraeli was addressing Parliament on almost this same day. In reply to Irish insistence that the political prisoners be freed, he was assuring them that the men sent to Australia were "... at this moment enjoying a state of existence which their friends in this house are quite prepared to accept." The Irish members stamped their feet and howled, "NO!"

At 2 o'clock in the morning of August 19, 1876, sixteen months after leaving New Bedford, the *Catalpa*, her long mission accomplished with complete success, dropped anchor off Castle Garden, in New York Harbor.

THE END

(Continued from page 43)

he's got himself in the prettiest little natural prison that anyone could want. He'll make stabs at surreptitious visits, probably in a year or so, but I'll be watching for him, and I think I can put the fear of God into him just as effectively as we did this time. The Kogs will soon catch on, and realize he's not getting away with anything.' He leaned back against the cabin and shoved his feet out straight. 'Ah,' he sighed, 'Tis a glamorous life the Mounties lead.'

"I grinned and held my peace.



"WELL," said Paddy, staring into his tea-cup. "I took advantage of the plane that came in from Conant to get out to Yellowknife, and from there I drifted down North along the river to Aklavik here. And the word along the coast is, all quiet on Crown Gulf. There hasn't been any serious trouble in the last two years, and I hear from Danning that the Bay factor at Baker Lake is reporting increased fur returns."

"And what of Conant?" one of the trappers asked.

"Conant?" said Paddy, "Well, now, that laddy didn't do so well. After his recovery they stationed him down in Alberta. He was found in the Federal jail one evening whipping a prisoner with a crude cat. There was quite a blow-up about it—they had a newspaper in the town—a psychologist reported definite sadistic tendencies, and he's doing time right now, ex-Arctic and ex-Mountie." He drained his cup. "And Kirk, he's corporal." He turned to me.

"You're going Outside, I hear?"

"Next plane," I answered.

"Well, if you get to Ottawa, give my regards to the commissioner—knew him when he was a sergeant at Great Whale River. You wouldn't embarrass him now, though, would you, by repeating this yarn? The commissioner's a Mountie all right, but he has to deal with the public a lot, and so, officially—" Paddy's eyes descended in a slow wink—"Ottawa knows nothing of the matter. The Mounties, you know, 'They Always Get Their Man.'" He turned. "Hey, Lucy, more tea!"

THE END

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Henry L. Durst, 2827 N. Cambridge, Chicago, Ill., would like to hear from Joe Bennett, Lt. Comdr., U.S.N.R., whom he met on the B.B. *Wisconsin* in 1947. Last heard from him from Port Arthur, Texas. He had lived in the Bronx, N. Y.

Anyone knowing whereabouts of Corp. McQuarry of Ashland, Me., formerly Co. C, 26th I.T. Bn., Camp Croft, please write Ed Stuart, Burgess Store, Va.

I would like to hear from anyone who has seen my brother, Sergeant Elmer J. Anderson #34783328, nose gunner in 15th Air Force, missing in action somewhere near Turnitz, Austria, August 23, 1944. He would be 24. George E. Anderson, 731 Crocker St., Los Angeles 21, Calif.

S/Sgt. Otis Hudson, Jr., 9217 Oels, Ft. Worth, Texas, would like to contact Charles Brenecke, formerly midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis.

Would appreciate receiving news of my brother, Ernest Voigt. When last heard from he was living on Eugenia St., Portland, Oregon, about 1930. Please write to William Voigt, Blackshear, Ga.

William A. West, 314 6th St., Bremerton, Wash., would like to hear from old friends in 331 School Squadron, 1942-43, Luke Field, Arizona.

Will anyone knowing whereabouts of my old overseas buddy, Joseph P. Doyle, of Boston, Mass., please ask him to get in touch with me? Guy A. Drummons, 516 South 4th St., Council Bluffs, Iowa.

Thomas Cooley, 1426 First Ave., N.Y.C. would like to locate Joseph Marshall, formerly of 500 E. 73rd St., New York, working at that time as orderly in New York Hospital.

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to \$30!

5. MONEY
SAVING!
STURDY!

**EASILY INSTALLED —
TAKES A FEW MINUTES!**
(on all make cars)

Specify style for YOUR car.

TYPE A—Solid back for 4-door sedan...front or rear. Rear for coach or coupe.

TYPE B—Divided back, solid seat for front coupe or coach.
TYPE C—Individual seats or bucket type for divided back and seat.



SENT ON APPROVAL! SEND NO MONEY!

ART-CRAFT CO., Dept. 27

1025 Broad St., Newark 2, N. J.

Gentlemen: Kindly rush ART-CRAFT Seat Covers

on special 5-day Money-Back Inspection Offer.

Color..... 2nd Color.....

Full set front & back covers \$7.95. My car is a

19... Make.....

Front seat cover only, \$3.98. 2-door 4-door

Back seat cover only, \$3.98 Type A Type B

Type C

On delivery I'll pay postman purchase price plus few cents postage and C.O.D. charges.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... Zone..... State.....

(PLEASE PRINT)

\$..... purchase price enclosed. You pay postage.

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE
with 5-Day FREE Trial

Mason's

New

ZIPPER SHOE

Shoe



ZIPS ON
ZIPS OFF



SELL MASON'S
GENUINE RUBBER
RAINCOATS

Sell fast. Big profits for you! Guaranteed waterproof in heaviest rainstorms . . . thousands of customers all around you.



MASON'S
LEATHER JACKETS

Keep profits rolling in with these soft, pliable, yet tough and warm, long-wearing Leather Jackets of specially dressed hides. Low Price — amazingly liberal commissions for you!

MASON'S MANY ADVANTAGES!

150,000 Pairs of Shoes!

You draw on our stock of 150,000 pairs of fine shoes in over 150 different styles plus immense daily factory-output. What a selection . . . exact size and width with perfect fit in the wanted style and color . . . every time! More shoes than your customers could find in many stores combined!

EVERY MASON SALESMAN
AN EXPERT SHOE FITTER

Learn to fit every customer through Mason simple, accurate, easy-to-learn methods. Mason TRAINS YOU and makes you a Foot Expert and Certified Shoe Fitter. Mason helps you build a Big Money-Making, Permanent, Repeat Shoe Business!

Akyrockets

your SALES
and PROFITS!

Customers everywhere eager to buy these unique "Zip-On . . . Zip-Off" shoes RIGHT NOW!

Top quality glove-soft leather . . . Mason craftsmanship . . . astonishing Zipper shoes lead record-breaking Mason line of over 200 superb styles of dress, work, sport shoes for men and women, with Leather Jackets, Raincoats, and other fast-selling items. A line that maintains Mason's 45-year reputation for LEADERSHIP.

POWERFUL NATIONAL ADVERTISING

Powerful National Advertising in SATURDAY EVENING POST, LIFE, GOOD HOUSEKEEPING . . . scores of other powerful National Magazines . . . paves the way for you.

SALES POTENTIAL TRIPLED

Cash in NOW. Help the people in your territory get highest quality, most comfortable exclusive Feature footwear they can ever buy for the money. Give them exclusive Personal Fitting Service and help yourself to a sweet, steady, ever-growing income!

GET SAMPLE OUTFIT FREE!

Sell the great Mason ZIPPER Shoe and hundreds of other newest styles and models! Get Big FREE Sample Outfit! Be first in your territory!

MEN AND WOMEN WELCOME COMFORT OF OF

Air Cushioned Velvet-Eez Shoes

Show men and women exclusive Air-Cushioned Velvet-Eez shoes that cradle foot on 10,000 tiny air bubbles! Many report they sell on six out of every ten calls!



DON'T DELAY - MAIL TODAY

CLIP and MAIL COUPON NOW!

MASON SHOE MFG. CO.
Dept. M-358, Chippewa Falls, Wis.

RUSH me your great New Free Sample Outfit. Include your Automatic Selling Plan and send the book 5,000 Salesmen wrote for me. I want to become a Foot Expert and Certified Shoe Expert . . . and start making big money fast. Send everything FREE and Prepaid.

(My own shoe size is.....)
Name
Address
Town..... State.....

MASON SHOE MANUFACTURING CO.
Dept. M-358 Chippewa Falls, Wis.