Action Stories of Every Variety

# ARGOSY

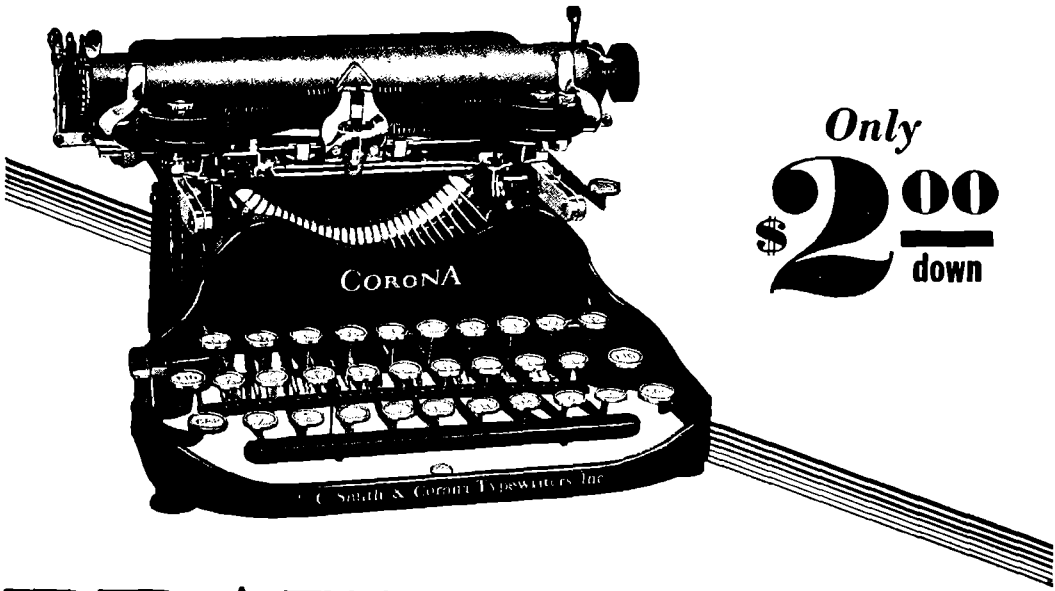
ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

OCT. 11
10¢
Canada 15¢

## Jungle Justice

*Gillian Hazeltine in the Orient by*
George F. Worts

Lieut. John Hopper
Fred MacIsaac
W. Wirt

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# A FREE TRIP to Hollywood and $1000.00 CASH

## Given ANYONE to Name This New Body Powder


## Free TRIP TO HOLLYWOOD

### For Promptness

Can you think of anything more pleasant than a trip to the famous city of movie stars, with all expenses paid — to spend a whole delightful week, have a private car and chauffeur at your command, see the show places of Hollywood, Los Angeles, and ocean beaches — observe a picture in the making, and see the famous stars? This is your opportunity. Send a name at once, be the winner, spend a glorious vacation at our expense. When it's over, return with our check for $1,000 in your pocket. If you are unable to come we will send the $1000.00 and give you the cost of the trip in cash. We hope you can come, and make this the greatest event of your life.

## Contest Rules

This contest is open to everyone except members of this firm, its employees and their relatives.

Each contestant may send only one name. Sending two or more names will cause all names submitted by that person to be thrown out. The prize will be awarded to the one sending the name we choose from among those submitted. Contest closes December 20, 1930. Duplicate prizes will be given in case of ties.

To win the promptness prize of a free trip to Hollywood, the winning name suggested must be mailed within three days after our announcement is read.



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We want you to help us select a name for a new Body Dusting Powder we are putting on the market. We feel sure you have in mind some name either simple or fancy . . . or you can suggest one after a few moments' thought. It makes no difference who you are or where you live, you can win this $1000.00 cash and a Free Trip to the famous city of Hollywood by simply sending us the most suitable name for our new Body Powder at once. This is all you have to do to win. Can you think of an easier way to make $1000.00 and secure a Free Trip to the land of Movie Stars with all expenses paid? Not a thing to buy, not a thing to sell to win both of these valuable prizes . . . $1000.00 cash and a Free Trip to Hollywood.

## Any Name May Win

We have paid thousands of dollars in prizes, and usually the person who least expected to win received the prize. You, too, may win just by sending a name. It costs you nothing to try and your opportunity to win is just as good as anyone's, for any name may win. This body powder is to be used on the body just like face powder is used on the face. It is particularly soothing and pleasant after the bath, and gives the body an odor as alluring and fragrant as a fresh morning breeze from a Hollywood Flower Garden. In choosing a name you may use a coined word, such as . . . Odorsweet, Fairytouch, Rosekist, etc., or the name of a flower, tree, bird, or any other name that comes to your mind may be submitted.

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**Dept. 123 1023 N. Sycamore Ave., Hollywood, Calif.**

Hollywood Marvel Products Co.,
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Dept. 123

Enclosed is my suggestion for a name.

Date this announcement was read.....

Date my suggestion is mailed.....

Name.....

Address.....

NOTE—Being prompt qualifies you for the free trip as outlined in this announcement.

# ARGOSY

ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

VOLUME 215 — CONTENTS FOR OCTOBER 11, 1930 — NUMBER 6


## SERIALS



## COMPLETE STORIES



## OTHER FEATURES



*This magazine is on sale every Wednesday throughout the United States and Canada*


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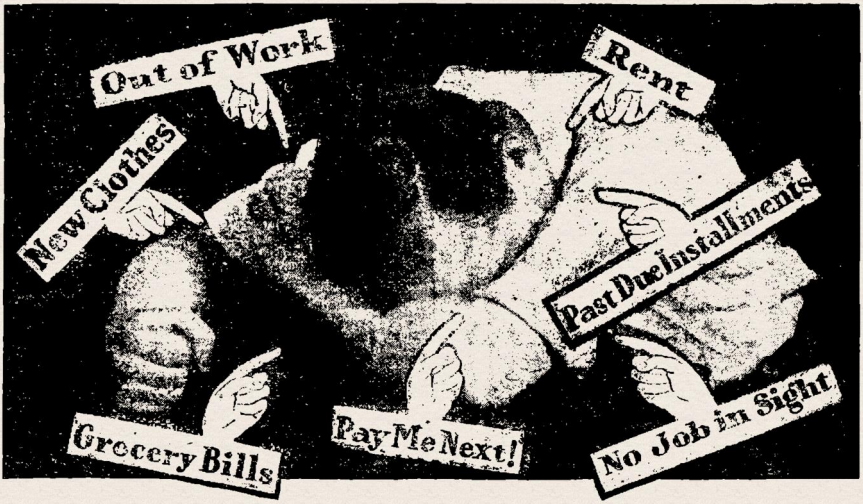


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## THEN SEND ME YOUR NAME AND I'LL GIVE YOU AN AMAZING OPPORTUNITY TO

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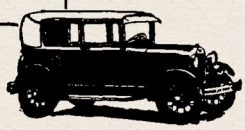
NOT a contest. I offer a brand-new car free to producers as an extra reward or bonus *—in addition* to their large cash profits. Mail coupon for particulars.



### Send No Money

I don't want your money. You positively don't need any capital. All I want is a chance to lay the facts before you. If you want his amazing chance to make $15 a day—with an old, reliable, million-dollar manufacturing company—then mail the coupon and see how easy it is to get started. Don't miss this chance. It doesn't cost a penny to investigate. Mail the coupon. Do it today—RIGHT NOW!

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ARGOSY
ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

VOLUME 215 | SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1930 | NUMBER 6

*"I had nothing to do with this!" she gasped*

# Jungle Justice

***Vacationing in the Orient, the great criminal lawyer Gillian Hazeltine is requested to take a strange case — and the Sultan of Senang, absolute despot, is not used to taking "no" for an answer***

**By GEORGE F. WORTS**

***Author of "Murder! Murder!" "The Lost Punch," etc.***

## CHAPTER I.

### A SULTAN'S COMMAND.

GILLIAN HAZELTINE stood in the bows of the little coolie ship as it crept up the tropical river, and watched the sun dive into the jungles of Indo-China. An hour later he watched an oriental city grow out of the approximate spot where the sun had plunged.

The nostrils of the famous criminal lawyer were dilated, as if he could sniff adventure in the very air. His eyes were sparkling. So this was Saigon, the modern French city that had been built in a terrific fight against the worst jungle north of Malaya! He

was sailing through the gateway of a dark and sinister continent where untamed savages shot down enemies with arrows dipped in poison, where ancient cities lay s t r a n g l e d in awful vines which went as deliberately about their murder as did the pythons writhing among them.

Gillian was on a vacation. Overwork had strained his iron nerves. A nerve specialist had given him the alternative of stopping work for six months, or in six months being in a sanitarium with a nervous breakdown. With only a little fuming and fretting, Gillian's choice had been the six months' vacation.

Since he was a small boy he had longed to visit the Far East, to see for himself the magic that glittered behind such names as Hongkong, Shanghai, Saigon, Singapore, Bangkok, Rangoon.

So far, he had been disappointed—not because of the cities, but because of the attention given him. There had been times when he wished he was traveling under an assumed name. In Yokohama and Nagasaki, reporters had harassed him; representatives of the Imperial Government had formally commanded his presence at dinners of state. What was he doing in the Far East? Taking a vacation? No one believed him.

In Shanghai, there had been more newspaper men. What was his opinion of the American crime situation, of the Chicago and New York racketeers? What was his opinion of the Russo-Japanese situation? To all of these questions Gillian had answered:

"I am not talking. This is a sightseeing tour."

The rumor got about that Gillian had been secretly sent to the Far East by no one less than President Hoover to "investigate conditions." From then on, Gillian's life was made miserable. In Manila, the reporters all but broke down the door of his hotel bedroom. He was shaving. The reporters didn't mind. They wouldn't have minded if he was hanging by his knees from the chandelier!

"Isn't it true that the State Department sent you to the Far East as a minister plenipotentiary—without portfolio?"

"No," Gillian said peevishly.

"Do you deny that you are representing the government?"

"I do."

"What is your opinion on the Japanese question?"

"I haven't any."

"Are you interested in the Philippine question?"

"Not in the least."

"Isn't it true that you are here to investigate America's management of the Islands?"

"No."

"Will you call upon the Governor-General, officially or unofficially?"

"No—no—no! Clear out of here!"

But Gillian did call. It was unavoidable. He was the guest of honor at a luncheon for forty at the Intramura Palace. A fascinating Manila society leader adroitly plied him with questions. Gillian b e c a m e as noncommittal as the Sphinx. After luncheon the Governor-General courteously offered to place a small gunboat at Gillian's disposal for an inspection of the Islands.

"You should see Luzon, Mr. Hazeltine. A visit with the Sultan of Sulu would be a delightful experience."

"My itinerary won't let me," said Gillian. "My wife is sailing around the world the other way to meet me in Singapore. She would not like to be

kept waiting. She has red hair, Governor."

At a banquet given in his honor that same night at the Army and Navy Club he was looked upon by his compatriots with uneasy suspicion. It was ridiculous. Americans of his importance simply did not visit the Far East for pleasure.

HE was glad when Manila was behind him. The next stop was Hongkong. Hongkong was British. Hongkong would not be interested in an American criminal lawyer. God save the King!

On the Hongkong landing stage he was met by a delegation of local barristers, who bore him off in triumph—giving him only enough time to change into evening clothes—to a dinner at Recourse Bay. Gillian had looked forward to prowling alone up dark, spooky lanes and snooping into forbidden Buddhist temples. Instead, he solemnly addressed a rapt audience on his famous court room methods. As one of the greatest criminal lawyers in America, he was expected to tell his Hongkong contemporaries amazing things.

Gillian did his best. He told them of the famous Violet Deering case, of the even more famous "Crime Circus." He then answered rude and insolent questions. One English barrister, after gazing at him through his monocle as if fascinated, drawled:

"Is it true, Mr. Hazeltine, that you are often referred to as the—er—Silver Fox—because of your—er—methods?"

Gillian controlled himself and courteously answered: "Perhaps I am called that because—er—my hair is black and—er—sprinkled with silver."

He was thankful to escape them at last. He got into some old clothes and, until dawn, prowled about the Hongkong water front and watched river coolies, in sampans and junks, smoke opium.

In Saigon, however, he was sure he would not be molested. Saigon was in the jungle and of the jungle. Saigon was French. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! God bless the French!

The muddy river swarmed with tiny exotic craft; sampans and junks; outriggers and proas. Brown-skinned women naked to the waist and brown-skinned men in nothing but vivid sarongs posed gracefully on the sterns of funny little boats loaded to the water's edge with vegetables and bright flowers and gazed at the steamer with dreamy contempt.

There was a murky oriental flavor in the sultry air of the Cambodian twilight. It came over the river on a breath from the crowding jungle, a breath heavy with the distilled sweetness of evening flowers—a sweetness much too sweet, and the fresh, oppressive odor of vegetation so fruitful, so swift growing, so damp that its very breath was somehow menacing.

Gillian inhaled deep lungfuls and shivered a little, as if with anticipation. Beyond Saigon, beyond Pnom-Penh, far up the river and to the north, lay Angkor, vast ruins of a lost and unknown civilization which had ruled southeastern Asia a thousand years before Hannibal threatened Rome.

Gillian wanted to see Angkor, and the Angkor Wat, greatest of all ancient temples, excepting Burabadur. But most of all he wanted to hunt tigers in the Cambodian jungles; for the tiger of Cambodia is a fierce and evil beast, worthy the attention of the mightiest hunter.

But Gillian was not to look upon the Angkor Wat, nor would he sight down the barrel of his Winchester into the smoldering yellow eyes of a Cambodian tiger. The tropical evening was brewing for him an adventure as oriental in its flavor as the taste of spiced rice wine, as bizarre as a tale by Scheherazade.

When the gangplank was lowered, Gillian went ashore and into the midst of a mob of screaming ricksha coolies. But there were no reporters, thank God, and no lawyers.

He enlisted the services of two rickshas, one for himself, the other for his luggage, and was presently seated in one of those exotic vehicles, dreamily smoking a cigar and gazing with delighted eyes at the wonders of this "Little Marseilles" that the home-loving French had established in a niche chopped out of jungle.

Yokohama had depressed him with its blatant modernity. Shanghai had amused him with its noisy wickedness. Hongkong had delighted him with its semitropical indolence, its curious mingling of East and West. But in Saigon he sensed the lure that he had traveled to Asia to find. It was in the air; a threat and a promise.

LODGED presently in a large, high room in the Hotel Continental, copper-screened against the fiendish insects which swarmed at night from the surrounding jungle, he made leisurely preparations for dinner. From one window he looked upon the Municipal Theater—a splendid building erected by the French in their determination to re-create a corner of home; from another he gazed down the Rue Catinat, which ended bluntly in the thick green oppressiveness of jungle.

When he signed the hotel register, the clerk's Gallic brows had not arched in the slightest when he read the name. Nor, when Gillian went down to dinner, did the head waiter pay him any but the most casual attention. Gillian gave him a five-piaster note out of sheer gratitude.

Gillian, delighted with the developments—or the lack of them—ordered a dry Martini cocktail. He would later recall every detail of this evening with painful vividness.

The cocktail came, and Gillian lifted it to his lips. Over the rim of the glass he saw a pair of large liquid brown eyes fixed upon him with searching scrutiny. It seemed to Gillian that they were asking him a question.

She was a slender girl of about twenty, and she was standing at the near-by table, a white sun helmet dangling by the strap from one hand. Her hair was a reckless mop of chestnut curls. Her lips were parted. He recalled later that a light from some source sparkled on her perfect white teeth, and that as she looked at him her breast rose as she drew a deep breath—a breath, it might have been, of determination.

Only for a moment did those luscious brown eyes glow into his. Then they were hidden by fringes of very long black lashes.

She was certainly a beauty. French? American?

Gillian glanced promptly at her companion, and suffered a faint shock of surprise. He was a thin, round-shouldered man in stiffly starched whites. He was neither oriental nor occidental; he fell somewhere in between. His nose was small. His eyes were small and unmistakably of the East. His chin was small and receding. He was almost entirely bald. He looked weak

and he looked mean. Gillian wondered about him and guessed his age at forty.

The couple sat down. Evidently they were persons of importance, for the head waiter was making a great to-do over them. Gillian, sipping his cocktail, scrutinized the girl more closely. Her complexion was tanned. She had a resolute little chin, a lovely mouth. Her profile was cameo-clean.

He could see the pulse beating rapidly in her throat. Nervous? What about? Her hands were playing with the silverware at her place; arranging and rearranging knives, forks, spoons. Those hands made him think of white moths, the way they fluttered. Certainly, she had a bad case of nerves.

Once she shot a quick glance at him. For another moment, their eyes met, and in hers he surprised an expression of such anguish that he caught his breath and felt his heart jump.

THE man was leaning forward and speaking to her in a low voice. The girl caught her lower lip between her white teeth and lowered her head.

Gillian was f a i n t l y frowning. Something about the girl had seemed reminiscent. Had he seen her in Hongkong — Shanghai — Manila? He had met so damned many people. But he would have remembered her. One did not easily forget a girl like this one.

Her lips were moving. They were not far away, not more than ten feet away, yet Gillian could hear nothing but the confused murmur of their low voices. The Eurasian glanced over at him once and again.

The impression grew upon Gillian that he was the subject of their discussion. Were they wondering about him as he was wondering about them? Was this sly, weak-looking half-caste married to this lovely white girl?

Gillian lingered over his dinner. When his coffee was served, he reached into his pocket for a cigar and found that he had none. He arose from his table and walked to the dining room door. At the door he turned. At a distance of perhaps twenty feet he now faced the girl.

She was staring at him. Her companion, facing her, had to turn his head to look at Gillian. For a moment a queer twisted smile appeared at the lips of the Eurasian.

There was a strange pause. Gillian waited, but nothing happened. He went on up to his room, still wondering about that oddly assorted pair. But his interest in them suddenly vanished. His Winchester was gone!

Gillian had placed the rifle, which was a 30-40 take-down model in a leather-and-canvas case, in the corner near the head of the bed when he had disposed of his luggage. Satisfying himself that the rifle was not in his room, he went to the dresser and looked in the top drawer where he had placed the handsome .38 caliber revolver which had been presented to him by the Force when he had been police commissioner.

The drawer was empty.

He was completing a search through the rest of his belongings when some one knocked at the shuttered half-doors.

Gillian said sharply: " Come in!"

The half-caste he had seen dining with the brown-eyed girl pushed open the doors and walked in. The same twisted smile was at his weak mouth. Gillian observed that the man was carrying a black walking stick, and that the hand clutching it resembled a yellow claw. The Eurasian's eyes were

like dots of gray fog; there seemed to be no light in them. Vaguely they encountered Gillian's. A smooth, oily voice rolled out of the Eurasian's mouth.

"Are you Mr. Gillian Hazeltine?"

Gillian said nothing. This fellow's visit, coming so close on the disappearance of his rifle and revolver, struck Gillian as being odd if not suspicious. He had prized that revolver. And he had treasured the rifle. His wife had given it to him last Christmas.

The Eurasian continued to smile.

"My name is Chester Chong. I am the attorney for the Sultan of Senang The Sultan sends me here with his compliments. He has ordered me to retain you as counsel for the defense in the trial of a young American whom the Sultan is holding prisoner on a charge of first-degree murder."

## CHAPTER II.

### ORIENTAL WILES.

GILLIAN folded his arms on his chest and waited. His steel-blue eyes were not encouraging. To himself he was saying: "Did this fellow take those guns, or didn't he? This is a racket. Perhaps it's a racket I have never heard of. Where does that girl come in?"

"You have come to Indo-China," Chester Chong went on in the same smooth tones, "to see the ancient ruins of Angkor. Permit me to say that the Sultan of Senang can show you oriental splendors surpassing any that you will see in Saigon or Angkor."

"Where," Gillian asked, "did the Sultan of Senang learn that I was coming to Indo-China?"

Chester Chong shrugged. It was not much of a shrug. It was hardly more than the ghost of a shrug.

"The Sultan," he answered quietly, "has many sources of information. He is an extremely modern man. Perhaps he got the news over his wireless from an agent in Hongkong. I do not know, Mr. Hazeltine. That is not in my department. When the Sultan learned of your impending visit to Saigon, he instructed me to call on you and retain you to defend this murderer. It was, in fact, the Sultan's order."

"Fortunately for me," Gillian said, "I don't at present owe allegiance to the Sultan of Senang. While I was at dinner, some one came into this room, in spite of the fact that the door was locked, and made off with my Winchester rifle and an ivory-handled Colt's revolver."

Mr. Chong again shrugged. "There are so many thieves in Asia," he said, and his manner was that of a man quoting a proverb which covered all of the sins of mankind.

It struck Gillian that, whatever Mr. Chong's racket might be, it would prove decidedly oriental.

"The Sultan wishes to give the murderer every fair opportunity," the Eurasian was saying. "When his majesty learned of your impending visit, he decided, Mr. Hazeltine, that you were the one man to defend this murderer. The Sultanate of Senang is inland about two days' travel. I can assure you that a visit to Senang, even if you do not care to take this case, will well repay you."

"I can't do it," said Gillian. "My time is too limited. Two days into Senang, a few days there and two days back would make it impossible for me to keep an urgent engagement in Singapore. I am taking the Messageries Maritimes steamer Saturday."

"Yes," said the baffling Mr. Chong, "I know. Mrs. Hazeltine is meeting you in Singapore. Why not cable her at the Raffles Hotel, where she has made reservations, to meet you at the Continental here? Or, if you wish, the Sultan would gladly arrange to have her brought to Senang."

"No," said Gillian.

Mr. Chong tried another tack.

"I am sure, Mr. Hazeltine, that this case would rank as one of the most fascinating you ever undertook. The trial will take place in a truly oriental court. The man to be tried is, or was, a mechanical engineer in the Sultan's employ. The man he murdered was a student of devil worship, another American. Devil worship has more strange features than African voodooism. It will be one of the most fascinating cases you have ever undertaken."

Gillian believed not one word of what Mr. Chong was saying, but his curiosity was aroused. What, he wanted to know, was Mr. Chong's racket?

"I'm sorry," said Gillian. "I haven't the time, and I came East on my doctor's orders to stay out of court rooms."

MR. CHONG smiled patiently. "The postman on his day off sometimes takes a long walk. Mr. Hazeltine, it would repay you to come to Senang. I will be quite frank. As a lawyer, I know all about you. I have admired your audacity. When his majesty learned that you would visit Indo-China, he was determined that you should be his guest. The Sultan of Senang is a cultured gentleman. He was educated at Oxford and at Harvard. He will pay a high price to see that brilliant legal mind of yours in action."

Mr. Chong paused. "Besides, the Sultan is convinced that this murderer should be put to death. The Senangese methods of execution are rather horrible, Mr. Hazeltine. Here is an opportunity to save, if you are clever enough, a fellow countryman from a horrible death by torture, and at the same time to earn perhaps the highest fee you have ever received. The Sultan has authorized me to offer you fifty thousand dollars in American gold for your services."

The smooth, unctuous voice paused again. The foggy eyes seemed to blur and become clear. What, Gillian continued to wonder, was this man's game, and where did the beauty of the dining room come in? Gillian would have wagered a goodly sum that there was no Sultan of Senang, and that if there was, Mr. Chester Chong had no connection with him.

"Perhaps," said Mr. Chong slyly, as if he had read Gillian's thoughts, "you believe I am not telling you the truth. Supposing you telephone to the manager of this hotel. He speaks English fluently."

Gillian gave him one more sharp glance and went to the telephone. He presently was connected with the manager's office. It appeared that the manager's name was Monsieur Duval.

"Do you," Gillian asked M. Duval, "know a man named Chester Chong, who claims to be the legal adviser of the Sultan of Senang?"

"But yes," said M. Duval. "He is a guest at this hotel, *monsieur*."

"Who," Gillian wanted to know, "is the Sultan of Senang?"

"The Sultan of Senang," the manager answered, "is a brilliant young man with somewhat eccentric habits. He is the ruler of the smallest yet richest sultanate in Indo-China. It is

reached in two or three days' travel by elephant from Saigon, or about the same length of time by river boat. I would not recommend the river route, *monsieur*. It is dangerous because of the hostility of certain native tribes—aborigines, they really are—who live along the shores. That route is unsafe for anything but a river gunboat. I have even heard the rumor that the Sultan takes pains to make it unsafe.

"The Sultan of Senang, I may say, has presented a difficult problem to the French authorities. According to a compact with the present Sultan's grandfather, Senang retained all the privileges of an independent principality. That compact has never been violated by the French, although there has been, from time to time, sufficient provocation. Do you wish to know more about the Sultan?"

Gillian assured him firmly that he did.

"The present Sultan," M. Duval obliged him, "is a headstrong young man, with dreams of empire which the French often find troublesome. He has caused a great deal of unrest in neighboring sultanates. When he returned from America, he started a small war. the French nipped it and exacted a promise from him to behave. Yet from time to time there has been trouble.

"He is not permitted to enter Saigon. On his last visit here, about three years ago, a ricksha coolie unintentionally brushed close to him. He ordered one of his bodyguard to shoot the coolie, and the coolie was shot. The incident was characteristic of the Sultan. He is an overbearing young man, who rather fancies himself as an oriental Napoleon. I feel it my duty to warn you that he is an extremely dangerous man with whom to deal in any way. If you wish further information concerning him, I shall be glad to secure his *dossier* from the Department of the Interior, and you can study it at your leisure."

"Maybe in the morning," said Gillian, and thanked him. He hung up the receiver and turned back to Chester Chong.

"Well?" said the legal adviser to the Sultan of Senang.

"M. DUVAL," Gillian said, "has confirmed what you have told me. Nevertheless I do not care to entertain the Sultan's proposition. I came to the Far East to rest. I came for amusement."

"There are," said the sly Mr. Chong, "beautiful girls in Senang; far more beautiful girls than there are in Saigon."

Gillian's smile was one of thinly worn patience, but Mr. Chong misconstrued it. He said eagerly:

"You have heard of the Shan girls, Mr. Hazeltine? You do not know oriental beauty until you see the Shans! Do not think you have seen any kind of beauty until you have seen our Shan girls. Their skin is like gold, not brown like these Tonkinese. Their eyes are deep-blue, sometimes gray. They are as slim as young trees. They are a hill tribe, Mr. Hazeltine; they know nothing but to laugh and play and love. The loveliest of the lot is yours, Mr. Hazeltine, for a snap of—"

"I am not interested," Gillian wearily interrupted, "in oriental women."

Mr. Chong's foglike eyes seemed to bore into him.

"I see," he said. And in a meaning echo, "I see."

"You can tell your Sultan," Gillian said, "that I have seriously considered his proposition, and that it pains me not

to avail myself of his gracious invitation."

"The Shan girls," said Mr. Chong in a disappointed tone, "do not tempt you, Mr. Hazeltine? They are as graceful, as tender, as young vines."

"No," Gillian growled.

Mr. Chong, grasping his black walking stick, backed to the shuttered doors.

"Pardon me for a moment," he said. "I will return."

The moment he was gone, Gillian started for the telephone. He was going to register a complaint about his missing rifle and revolver. But as he lifted the receiver, the doors swung open again, and the girl stood there, wide-eyed, as pale as death.

Gillian put back the receiver and said: "Come in. I expected you."

## CHAPTER III.

### A GIRL'S APPEAL.

HE might have added that he was expecting some further revelation of Mr. Chong's or the Sultan's exceedingly oriental personality.

While he gazed at the girl, she smiled, and it was the smile of one frozen with fear. The girl's eyes darted about the room, as if she were seeking a way of escape. She smiled and tossed her head coquettishly, and Gillian was visited by the suspicion that something was terribly wrong here; a mystery even more baffling than that presented by the oily Mr. Chong.

He went to the dresser and selected a cigar from an almost full box. He struck a match, bit off the end of the cigar, and when the cigar was going, carefully deposited the half-burned match in a blue dish. He puffed leisurely and considered the girl through the coils of pale smoke.

"Do you," he encouraged her, "also represent the Sultan of Senang—or is this merely coincidence, like the disappearance of my firearms and the visit of Mr. Chester Chong?"

He watched the pulse in her beautiful throat. It was an old habit. Watching the pulse in the throat of a woman on the witness stand often well repaid him. That pulse often confessed a lie—or the feeling of being in a very tight corner. The pulse of this girl was going like mad.

She came toward him, wearing that smile, and in a husky voice said:

"What do I care about Sultans or Chongs? You—you noticed me in the dining room, didn't you?"

Smoking the cigar, vaguely nodding, Gillian wondered what her game might be. He was certain that this coquetry would result in something soon.

"I could not help noticing you. You are a very beautiful young woman—as you doubtless know."

Her extraordinary lashes fluttered down. The liquid brown eyes rolled upward. She was so close to him now that Gillian could smell the delicate and alluring perfume she used. He watched her sharply, prepared for anything. He would not have been greatly surprised if she had suddenly reached down and produced a knife from the top of her stocking. But she was certainly not French. That accent of hers had been born on the great American prairies.

"If I had been alone," the soft husky voice went on, "would you—have dined with me?"

"If the occasion had presented itself," Gillian promptly answered, "I would have considered it an honor."

"I wanted to talk to you."

"The desire was mutual, Miss—"

"Thorne."

"Not *mademoiselle?*"

"What difference, if any, would that make?"

Gillian flicked an ash to the floor. The girl's lips were parted. Her eyes were swooning up at him.

"If," she added, "we—appeal to each other...or perhaps I do not appeal to you?"

"For purposes of the narrative," said Gillian dryly, "let us assume that you appeal to me tremendously. Let us assume that I am exerting every ounce of will power to keep my hands off you."

"You must not do that here," said Miss, or Mlle., Thorne.

"Then," said Gillian gravely, "let us immediately become specific. Let us discuss where, when and why."

"I cannot begin to tell you," said Miss Thorne, "how tremendously you affected me in the dining room. It was like a powerful magnet. It was as if I had been looking for you all over the world—for all my life. I could hardly keep my eyes away from you. Perhaps you noticed."

"No detail," said Gillian, "ever escapes me."

"Then," she burst out impulsively, "you will go to Senang with me?"

Her gleaming eyes, her parted lips, made of her pale face a mask of wantonness.

GILLIAN slipped aside and went to the door. He went into the hall. Just beside the door on the right side, flattened against the wall, was Mr. Chester Chong.

Mr. Chong relaxed. In a polite voice he said, "You wanted me, Mr. Hazeltine?"

Gillian gave him a slow glance, turned about, entered his room again and pulled the heavy outer door shut behind him. He turned the key in the lock and dropped the key into his pocket.

"Now," he said to the brown-eyed girl, "come clean."

She stared at him.

"Stop this acting," Gillian said impatiently. "Sit down in that chair, compose yourself, and tell me what this is all about. Would you like a drink of water?"

The girl sank down in the chair; her shoulders sagged. She slumped.

"Yes," she whispered.

Gillian poured her a drink and gave it to her. She took a sip and handed the glass back to him.

"He made me," she said.

"Mr. Chong?"

"Yes."

"Supposing," said Gillian, "I had gone to Senang with you?"

She looked at him frankly. "You are a gentleman."

"And you are a lady. Tell me just why you are pretending to be something else. How can Mr. Chong make you?"

Miss Thorne hung her head. For a moment Gillian was afraid that she was about to faint. But she lifted her eyes again.

"I came from Senang with Mr. Chong to try to persuade you to go back with us. If you do not go to Senang with us, the Sultan will punish Mr. Chong—and he will execute Richard."

"Who is Richard?"

"Richard Fowler, my *fiancé*. The Sultan has imprisoned him on a charge of murder. He wants a formal trial."

"Richard wants it?"

"No, Mr. Hazeltine; the Sultan. He is a very eccentric man, don't you understand? He has the power of life and death over his subjects. All he has to do is to drop a hibiscus flower before

a man he wants out of his way, and the man is executed."

"In that case," said Gillian, "why does this Sultan want a trial?"

Tears sprang into the girl's eyes. "Only because he is eccentric—maybe a little mad. Having you come up there to defend Richard, no matter how much it cost, appealed to him as a great lark. He wants to conduct a murder trial, with himself as presiding justice, you as the counsel for the defense, and Mr. Chong acting as the prosecuting attorney."

"But that is absurd, Miss Thorne."

"Richard's being in that cell is not absurd."

IMPATIENTLY Gillian said: "Miss Thorne, you aren't telling me the whole truth. Why do you bother coming to me? Richard Fowler, so Chong himself says, is an American citizen. There is an American consul in Saigon. Go to him."

"Richard is no longer an American citizen. In order to work for the Sultan, he was compelled to become a naturalized Senangese. The American consul is helpless. I went to him, but he can do absolutely nothing. And if you do not go to Senang, the Sultan will have Richard executed. Will you go?"

"Miss Thorne, I'll tell you just what I told Mr. Chong. I think you are both lying to me. I think this story you are telling me about a man being held for the murder of a devil-worshiper is preposterous. It doesn't hold together. It is neither logical nor sensible. Nor is this story of a Sultan who wants to hold a murder trial as a lark anything but a downright falsehood."

Miss Thorne quickly stood up. Spots of high color burned on her cheekbones.

"Mr. Hazeltine, I am not lying to you. Richard Fowler, the man I'm engaged to, is being held prisoner by the Sultan of Senang for the murder of an American named Ezra Meeker, who came to Senang last year to study the devil-worshipers. The Sultan heard you were coming to Saigon. He wants to conduct that murder trial with the greatest criminal lawyer in America defending Richard. He wants to pretend that Richard is getting a fairl trial. But he won't get a fair trial. Whether you defend him or not, he won't get a fair trial." She stopped. Her voice had become hysterical.

"Because—" Gillian prompted her.

"The Sultan wants him out of his way. He wants me!"

"Ah," said Gillian. "That story holds together much better. It has logic and motive. But if it makes no difference whether I defend your lover or not, what can be gained by going up there?"

"You have helped men escape from tighter corners than this!" she blazed. "You are clever enough to outwit a conceited, spoiled oriental!"

"I do not underestimate the cleverness of the oriental mind," Gillian answered. "And the odds against me would be too great."

"I have been told you loved a good fight!"

"I'm sorry, Miss Thorne, but you are wasting your arguments. I am booked to sail on a Messageries Maritimes boat Saturday for Singapore. My wife will be waiting for me."

"You can go overland by way of Chantaboon and Bangkok, then by rail through Malaya to Penang and Kuala Lumpur, and still reach Singapore ahead of the steamer. Elephants to Chantaboon, a steamer from Chantaboon to Bangkok."

"Elephants," said Gillian wearily, "don't like me. Besides, my doctor ordered me to stay out of court rooms to avoid a nervous breakdown. I am very sorry indeed, Miss Thorne. I can't help you."

Tears sprang into her eyes. And they were tears of authentic anguish, there was no doubt of that. Gillian was moved, but he did not weaken. He was sorry for Miss Thorne. He was always sorry for the wives and sisters and mothers and sweethearts who came to him with pathetic pleas to save the lives of men accused of murder—always wrongly or unfairly accused.

Miss Thorne went to the door and turned about.

"I'll unlock it," said Gillian gently. He did so, but still she did not move. And he knew that she was pulling herself together for a final desperate appeal. It suddenly came.

"Can you look at me and refuse to help save the life of the man I am going to marry?"

Gillian saved himself the pain of looking at her. He did not want to look into those stricken brown eyes again. He had to argue to himself that this was business. He could not undertake to defend every man accused of murder.

"I am sorry, Miss Thorne. I cannot help you."

He held the door open for her, and as she went out, she seemed to stagger. Gillian was certain that her revised story had been truthful. He was so certain that he waited now, with drawn breath, for the thud of her falling body as she fainted. But there was no thud. Instead, there was a firm rapping on the inner shuttered doors.

Without waiting for an invitation to enter, Mr. Chester Chong came in, wearing his artful smile. He was still clutching the black stick in one yellow claw.

"I return, Mr. Hazeltine," he said.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A FATEFUL LETTER.

GILLIAN softly expelled a sigh of utterly exhausted patience. That queer thumping which had sent him to the nerve specialist was beginning in his left temple again.

"Chong," he said irritably, "I wish you'd stop bothering me. Call off your beauties. Don't waste my time with your arguments. I am not going to Senang. Nothing in the world could induce me to go to Senang."

"*Maskee*," said Mr. Chong.

Gillian looked at him with interest. "What does that mean?"

Mr. Chong raised his almost invisible eyebrows. He shrugged his ghostly shrug.

"It is the most useful word in the Orient. It means 'All right.' It means 'Never mind.' It means 'Who cares?' It has the French meaning of a shrug, all depending on its delivery. It means 'What of it?' It means anything and everything and nothing. It is equivalent to 'Ah,' 'Oh,' 'Yes,' 'No.' Like the Buddhist's Nirvana, it is hard to understand, impossible to explain."

Gillian smiled. The throbbing had subsided a little.

"You orientals," he said, "are good poker players. I once played poker with three Chinese whom I was defending for murder. I won every dollar they possessed. But they were good sports. This game you've been playing, you've lost, Mr. Chong. Shall we call it quits and—have a drink?"

"I do not drink," said Mr. Chong coldly.

"Then will you have a cigar?"

"I do not smoke cigars."

"Then," said Gillian pleasantly, "supposing we call this interesting acquaintance at an end. Will you be so good as to return my rifle and revolver?"

"Perhaps, by morning," said Mr. Chong, "you will have changed your mind. In the morning, we will talk again."

He backed out of the room, but he did not take with him all of the tantalizing essence of his mysterious personality. It lingered like an invisible fog; a portent of evil, a threat, of very sinister eventualities.

Gillian defied his doctor's orders and lit still another cigar. His hands were trembling. He was, frankly, worried. He had wanted adventure and excitement, and he had stumbled upon both. Now that the mysterious East had tossed into his very lap, so to speak, an opportunity for adventure, bizarre beyond his wildest imaginings, he did not want bizarre adventure. He was suddenly homesick for his wife. He wanted to tell Vee about this amazing proposition from an insolent little Sultan; he wanted to hear once more her silvery laughter, so like the tinkling of little bells.

Gillian was preparing for bed when some one knocked on his door. He groaned. He simply could not go through another argument with Mr. Chong or that tragic girl.

But his worries were groundless. It was only a Tonkinese bellboy, almond eyes agleam. There was a red lacquer tray in his hand, and upon the tray a white square envelope.

It bore the official imprint of the American Customs Service, and it was addressed in a firm hand to Mr. Gillian Hazeltine, Hôtel Continental.

Gillian tore it open and extracted a sheet of notepaper, typed. He read:

> My dear Mr. Hazeltine:
>
> I have just heard of your arrival in Saigon, and deeply regret that I was not on hand to extend official and informal greetings. As I desire to secure your advice on a matter of the utmost importance, will you be so good as to come to my office on the Rue Legrandière at once? I will be here until midnight.
>
> Respectfully yours,
> Vincent Harrison,
> Consul.

Gillian finished reading and reflected: "I am going to put this matter of the missing rifle and revolver in his hands. These hotel people would only make gestures. The French always get so excited."

He finished redressing, went down into the lobby, and out, under the awning, upon the sidewalk. It was a still, oppressive night, and the air was full of unfamiliar, disturbing scents. What smelled to Gillian like tuberoses which had stood too long in stale water was, in reality, the fragrance of Maid-o'-the-Night and Chain-of-Love, flowers as pale as the high moon, as sickening as the kisses of a woman one has ceased to love.

A faint, steady murmur reached his ears. This sound was unfamiliar and disturbing, too; for Gillian had never before heard the night voice of the jungle. All he knew was that there was something ominous, threatening about it, like the almost unheard vibration of distant war drums.

A half-naked coolie in a ludicrous Tonkinese hat, his brown legs glistening as though they had been shellacked, came trotting up between the polished brass shafts of a ricksha. Gillian

climbed into it and tried his halting French:

"*Le consulat Americain.*"

"*Oui, oui.*"

"*Sur la Rue Legrandière.*"

"*Oui, monsieur.*"

"*Chop-chop!*" That phrase, anywhere in the East, meant only one thing: Hurry!

The coolie picked up the shafts and hurried. Down the Rue Catinat—and past the Rue Legrandière. Had Gillian known, the American Consulate was just around the corner from his hotel. But he did not know. And he was not thinking. He was spellbound by the night.

Never had he seen a moon so bright. It flooded the streets of Saigon with a metal whiter than silver. It made of shadows black blocks and pyramids hewn from solid ebony. Date palms and sago palms were etched against a sky that seemed composed of pale blue fire.

He was unprepared when the coolie's ludicrous hat vanished in deep darkness. He had swerved sharply from the street into a very narrow unlighted lane which smelled, Gillian recalled later, of cinnamon.

It was the lawyer's last clear impression for some time. The coolie abruptly halted and lowered the shafts so suddenly that Gillian was thrown forward out of the seat as if he had been catapulted. A great many unseen hands reached out of the blackness and seized him by the head and shoulders. A wet cold palm closed down on his mouth. A finger and thumb pinched his nose tight shut, so that he could not cry out or breathe.

For a space of seconds, Gillian fought with wildcat fury. Yet he could not free his mouth and nose of that stifling paw. He was thrown to the ground. While his hands and legs were held, rags were stuffed into his mouth. Then a boot struck him on the side of the head.

## CHAPTER V.

### "GUEST" OF AN ECCENTRIC SULTAN.

WHEN Gillian recovered consciousness, he was lying on a heap of rags under a crudely-hammered oil lamp of bronze which hung suspended by a raffia cord from an arched thatch ceiling. The lamp was swinging rhythmically to and fro, first to the left, then to the right.

His next impression was the sound of water. It was gurgling close to him. Turning his head slightly, he looked out a small oblong opening beyond which he saw a tall, half-naked man swaying from side to side on some sort of platform. A thick wooden handle was pressed against his naked side under one arm. Behind him was blackness. And Gillian realized that he was on board a small river boat, a sampan, and that the wooden handle was the inboard end of a sweep. This human engine was propelling him Heaven only knew where.

A familiar feminine voice said, "I saw him move."

A man's smooth syllables answered, "He is quite all right."

Gillian looked around and sat up. Perhaps ten feet from him sat Miss Thorne, her liquid brown eyes glowing in the swinging light of the *dong*. She seemed huddled in a small heap. Some distance from her squatted Mr. Chester Chong, and behind him was the shadowy brown figure of a native.

Miss Thorne exclaimed: "Mr. Hazeltine, I want you to know that I had nothing to do with this."

"It doesn't matter," said Gillian.

"Perhaps, then," said the Eurasian in his smooth voice, "you will accept my apologies for the roughness of my methods. I am, after all, but a soldier of the Sultan."

"Not his legal adviser?" said Gillian quickly.

"His legal adviser, yes, but with a soldierly habit of doing what I am told. I am tremendously sorry that it was necessary to resort to violence."

And Gillian said dryly, "*Maskee.*"

Mr. Chong's long, weak face lighted up. "I am glad that you take it in that spirit, Mr. Hazeltine. I assure you, my future happiness depended upon my bringing you to Senang. I realized that only one form of persuasion was left. If you resent my tactics, you must be pleased to know that we will meet in Senang as enemies. I am known, if you will pardon my egotism, as one of the most brilliant lawyers in the Far East. I consider it my sacred duty to prove in the Sultan's court, beyond reasonable doubt, that Richard Fowler should be executed for the murder of Ezra Mecker."

Gillian said again, "*Maskee.*"

Mr. Chong looked at him alertly. "Just what do you mean, Mr. Hazeltine?"

"There is an old saw," Gillian answered, "to the effect that while you can lead a horse to the trough, you can't force him to drink."

The Eurasian smiled thinly.

"The Sultan of Senang would find ways of making even the most unwilling horse, shall I say, realize his thirst? Now that it has been made so easy for you, do you mean to say that you are not interested in the case of Richard Fowler?"

"Not in the least," Gillian said.

"But, Mr. Hazeltine—"

"Lies, threats, and a kidnaping," Gillian interrupted, "are poor ways to sell an idea. I haven't been sold. You might just as well put me ashore, Mr. Chong. I don't intend to do a damned thing for you, your Sultan or Richard Fowler."

MR. CHONG sadly shook his head. "You are now the Sultan's guest. Let me warn you that it would be useless for you to try to escape. Saigon is behind us. There is nothing on either side of us but jungle. And the jungles of Indo-China are not healthy, Mr. Hazeltine. They are full of things that creep and squirm, and this river is alive with crocodiles. Please be patient. Please adjust yourself to the inevitable. You will be treated with the greatest deference. Your being kicked unconscious was a regrettable mistake. I instructed the men who captured you to use no violence."

There was a short silence. Miss Thorne remained huddled in a dejected heap. The *dong* over Gillian's head swung rhythmically to and fro.

"We are on our way," Mr. Chong continued, "to the Sultan's yacht, the Lotus. She is anchored behind an island a few miles farther up the river. The Lotus is not permitted within the extra-territorial limits of Saigon, or this short trip in this sampan would not have been necessary. Except for that regrettable blow on the head which knocked you unconscious, I assure you that every precaution has been taken and will be taken for your physical and mental comfort. I left word at the hotel that you are visiting the Sultan, so that your absence will surprise or frighten no one. Your luggage, I may add, all went on by another sampan to the Lotus."

"Including my rifle and revolver?" Gillian dryly asked.

"Including your rifle and revolver, Mr. Hazeltine."

"How long will I be the Sultan's guest?"

"Perhaps a week. Perhaps longer, depending on the time it takes us to render justice on Richard Fowler."

"My wife will want to know where I am."

"She will know the moment she reaches Singapore, Mr. Hazeltine. I sent her a cable, taking the liberty to sign your name, that she was to proceed by the first steamer to Saigon and wait for you at the Continental."

Gillian's anger left him, in the moment he realized its utter futility. He was in an inescapable situation, a stranger in the hands of strange enemies. What price wrath? He had wanted a glimpse of the oriental point of view, of the oriental mind, and he was certainly getting it! Miss Thorne was watching him with bright, hopeful eyes.

He made no further comments on Mr. Chong's explanation, but began watching the native behind Mr. Chong with great interest. The Tonkinese had before him a small round tray of black lacquer. On the tray were a spirit lamp, an opium pipe, a long needle, and a little round red box which, Gillian guessed, contained opium gum.

The native placed a little lump of the gum on the end of the needle, held it over the flame until it began to fizzle, then jammed it into the pipe. He handed the pipe to Mr. Chong, who deeply inhaled. Mr. Chong retained the smoke for a little while, then expelled it in a dense gray cloud.

He returned the pipe to the Tonkinese, who started to prepare another charge.

Three pipes the Sultan's legal advisor disposed of in quick succession, and when he again turned his attention to his enforced guest his manner was calmer, his eyes were brighter, his smile was actually more human.

"WOULD you like to try one, Mr. Hazeltine?"

Gillian shook his head. Mr. Chong was beginning to fascinate him.

"How many pipes of that stuff do you smoke a day?"

"No more than thirty," Mr. Chong said with an air so virtuous that Gillian could hardly repress a laugh. "Some of these Frenchmen put away as many as forty, fifty, sixty pipes a day, but it has got them. There is no harm in opium if you use it in moderation. I find that thirty pipes a day do very well by me. In a climate as enervating as this, opium is necessary."

"Does the Sultan smoke?"

"Every one smokes. Opium steadies the nerves, it is excellent for the intestines, and it is a splendid tonic. The Sultan is a very conservative smoker. The gum he uses is made expressly for him in the Portuguese opium colony at Macao. I have never seen him smoke more than fifteen pipes a day."

Mr. Chong, while he talked, occasionally interrupted himself to inhale of his "tonic." Gillian counted six pipes, then lost count, so great was his interest in what Mr. Chong was saying. His indignation at Mr. Chong's extremely oriental methods was almost gone, and the more Mr. Chong smoked, the smoother became his tongue, the more animated and fascinating his discourse.

"Opium makes all facts remarkably clear," he explained.

"Does it help to sharpen up only the facts?"

"It renders all dreams more enchanting," Mr. Chong said. "But I smoke only for the facts."

In poetic bursts he told Gillian the story of his life. He had been born in Hanoi, the issue of an American sea captain and a half-Tonkinese mother, whose own father had been an American, a trader. He was educated in Saigon, Haiphong, and he studied law in Berkeley.

"I love California. My sympathies are American. I would gladly live in America except that the East, especially this part of the East, so little known, gets you. It has got me. I hate it, but I cannot tear myself away. I detest and loathe and dread the jungle, yet it has its vines about me, as love has its vines about the heart of Miss Thorne. Oh, I could tell you stories of the jungle that would make your blood run cold, my friend."

And he proceeded to do so, but Gillian did not have occasion to wonder whether or not his blood ran cold, so fascinating were Mr. Chong's stories. He told of elephant leeches which dropped down from trees upon horses tethered overnight and sucked the animals' blood until, in the morning, nothing remained but lifeless heaps of skin and bone.

He told of beetles with horrible claws like sugar tongs, which would, in the same manner, attack a man helpless from illness or wounds, and would strip him of flesh, shred by shred, until only his gleaming skeleton remained. He told of wild jungle peoples no taller than a child of six who ran about on all fours and swung about in the trees with the agility of apes, and talked no language but merely gibbered, and who peered at travelers from their perches with bright hostile little eyes.

"Have any of them been captured and brought to civilization?" Gillian wanted to know.

"No," said Mr. Chong. "But some of them have been shot. The Sultan would rather hunt and shoot them than tigers. He is a great sportsman. These little people are most dangerous game because, you see, they use blowguns and darts dipped in the poison of the kreit adder. You have only time to feel the prick of one of these poisoned darts —and then you are in the convulsions of death."

Mr. Chong was looking amiably at Gillian with eyes no longer like spots of fog, but as bright as Chantaboon sapphires. He began talking of his Sultan, and in his enthusiasm Gillian perceived the weak, irresolute man's admiration for one who was so ruthless.

THE Sultans of Senang, Gillian learned, traced their ancestry back to the misty beginning of human history. The present Sultan Chaddore Wang Chot Shoddor must be, it seemed to Gillian, related to Adam. Most of his ancestors had been mighty warriors, leaders of the wild Cambodian tribes. So splendid was the court of one early Sultan of Senang that Marco Polo, the wanderer, had traveled many miles out of his way to visit there on one of his pilgrimages to the court of Kublai Khan.

Gillian learned that the Sultan of Senang was a devil worshiper and that all of his ancestors had been devil worshipers, and that the Senangese were related by blood to the wild Burmese hill tribe, the Moosars, the very fountainhead of *nat* worship.

His mind was so filled with fantastic oriental lore, poured forth by the inexhaustible Mr. Chong, that he forgot his surroundings. Perhaps the fumes of opium, now become a pall of aro-

matic mist, affected Gillian. Under the spell of Mr. Chong's oriental imagination, whipped by the drug, Gillian became enchanted. It required more than the noisy shouts outside to arouse him.

They were under the stern of the Lotus. Gillian stepped out on the little stern platform of the sampan, followed by Mr. Chong and the American girl. As the coolie at the sweep maneuvered the sampan alongside the companion ladder, she suddenly thrust her hand under Gillian's elbow. It was a small, cold hand. Gillian recalled what Mr. Chong had said about the vines of love that had crept about her heart. He was sorry for her.

She said in a low, husky voice:

"You will help him—won't you?"

"It seems," said Gillian dryly, "unavoidable, Miss Thorne."

She released his arm and ran up the ladder. Brown-faced, slit-eyed men in white drill met them at the top of the ladder, and as Gillian reached the wide teak deck his respect for Sultan Chaddore Wang Chot Shoddor increased.

The Lotus had been backed into a bayou in an island of mangroves. The yacht was cunningly hidden. He learned later that the Sultan had spent more than a million dollars for this yacht. She was of shallow draft for traveling in the rivers. She was propelled by twin Diesels. No possible comfort or luxury was lacking.

A TONKINESE steward who spoke fair English conducted Gillian to his stateroom, which was large and luxuriously furnished. It was so much cooler than the river air outside that Gillian wondered. He was to learn later that the Lotus was equipped with an elaborate ventilating system. Driers, filters and refrigerators cleaned and cooled the air in the staterooms. Regardless of high temperatures and high humidity on the river, the air in the staterooms would always be cool and dry.

He was attracted by a nickel-rimmed mahogany cabinet on one wall. Opening it, he found that it was a tiny unit of a refrigerating system. It contained frosted copper coils in one compartment. In another were bottles of Scotch, rye, ginger ale and charged water.

In a commodious closet Gillian found his luggage. In a corner of the closet was his Winchester. Obeying an impulse, Gillian opened the top bureau drawer—and found his revolver!

Pyjamas and dressing gown were laid out on the bed. Gillian was exploring the elaborate mysteries of his private bathroom when a discreet knock sounded on his door. He opened it. The Tonkinese steward stood there.

"Mr. Chong presents his compliments to the *birahi*, and wishes to know if the *birahi* finds everything *pukka*."

"You may tell Mr. Chong," Gillian said, "that the *birahi* says he finds everything quite *pukka*."

The steward bowed and withdrew. Gillian closed the door, locked it, undressed, and got into his pyjamas. It was almost four o'clock in the morning. He climbed into bed, turned out the lights and stretched out between silk sheets with a luxurious sigh. He distantly heard the clang of engine room bells, then the vibration of the powerful twin Diesels.

The Lotus was backing out of the bayou and shaping her course up the tropical river. And Gillian, against his wishes, was embarked on what dangerous river of experience!

**TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.**

*The parcel suddenly came undone*

# A Friend in Greed

***When an old carnival acquaintance handed Bill and Jim a package, they knew they were in for trouble—for he never gave anybody anything except perhaps a bum steer***

**By JOHN H. THOMPSON**

"HELLO, men! Certainly am tickled pink to see you again. Hold this package for me a few minutes, will you? Stick around the waiting room here for a while; I'll meet you later."

Almost before we had a chance to realize that it was Ed McWhortle speaking, he had shoved a small package into Bill's hand and hurriedly lost himself in the crowd of suburbanites scurrying for their underground holes.

The last time we had seen Ed he had been attached to a Federal marshal by something more material than the bonds of affection, and was boarding a train for Leavenworth for a sojourn of five or six years. The government is only too eager to play host to birds like Ed who get the idea that they can hand out prettier bank notes than the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

We had no use for Ed. Nor would anybody else who knew him. We met him first when we were traveling with Beary's Carnival. Ed drifted into the organization like a stray fly drifting into a pan of fresh cream. He posed as a financial expert, and after he had been with the show for a few weeks without stealing the tent from over the heads of the audience, the boss trans-

ferred him to the cashier's cage as an assistant.

Within a week "Honest John" Coons, the impeccable cashier who had been with the show since the days when constables arrested ladies who showed their ankles while riding side-saddle, was so hopelessly snarled up in his accounts that he started keeping his books in pencil so he could erase the entries easier from day to day. Honest John went to smash, and Ed was transferred to the sideshow.

Shortly thereafter the bearded lady missed her beard, and everybody else in the show started losing things. Ed finally landed in jail, where apparently he met some genius who convinced him that the best way to get a living was trying to compete with the Bureau of Engraving and Printing by passing phony bank notes. The genius wasn't so far wrong, at that, because it wasn't long before Ed moved to Leavenworth at government expense.

BILL, being acquainted with these slices of Ed's life history, gazed in dismay at the package which had been thrust into his hand. It made no difference what the contents of the package were—good luck tokens, or a time bomb—the fact that it came from Ed McWhortle was certification that it came from the headquarters of Old Dame Trouble herself.

A steely-eyed individual with a slouch hat and flat feet brushed against us. He stood on tipetoe, peering above the heads of those around him. He was looking for somebody—for somebody who didn't want to be looked for. We didn't need any town crier to convey the sweet tidings that he was looking for Ed any more than we would have needed a chromium-plated badge and a leather-sheathed billy to convey the additional information that the new arrival in the arena of action was a detective. We knew Ed, and we knew detectives.

"Here, Jim, maybe you better hold this package; I might drop it," suggested Bill, thrusting it at me.

"Ed handed it to you to mind for him, not to me," I pointed out reprovingly, as I shoved my hands into my pockets.

Bill groaned. He was fingering the string nervously. Suddenly the package came undone, and a stream of plain green-tinted paper, cut the exact size of the new bank notes, cascaded to the floor. My eyes bulged out as I observed that those green slips seemed to have the texture of government notes.

They had fallen almost under one of the long benches in the waiting room and a bunch of hurrying commuters shoved past us and trampled them out of sight, scattered under the bench.

Bill gazed in dismay at the shell of brown wrapping paper in his hands, and was about to crawl under the bench and retrieve the bills, when he caught a glimpse of the steely-eyed individual in the slouch hat, heading our way. Fortunately the dick seemed to be staring at faces in the crowd, and did not notice anything odd.

Without further ado we decided that the other end of the waiting room was better adapted for waiting. Bill pulled out his handkerchief and mopped his brow.

"Holy mackerel, Jim! Do you know what those papers looked like?" he demanded.

Both Bill and I had been drifting around enough to be postgraduates in spotting con games, even though we were too conscientious ever to practice them ourselves.

"Papers for the old money-making machine gag," I declared. "Stick those blanks in one end, and grind out twenties at the other—till the sucker buys the machine. No wonder Ed wanted to get them out of his hands—with a Federal penitentiary record behind him and a steely-eyed detective ahead of him. The dirty rat didn't have any compunctions about trying to foist them off on a couple of his friends. We must have looked as welcome to him as a pair of soup bones in an uncovered garbage can to a stray mongrel.

"Wait till he finds out you've lost his stuff," I concluded, chuckling. "That boy's got a temper like a wild elephant, and a tongue like a disillusioned bar fly's wife."

Bill groaned. He may be a hardened old drifter, but he is sensitive. He eyed the empty wrapper reflectively, and then had an inspiration. He dug into his inside coat pocket and fished out a small sheaf of folded automobile maps which we had picked up on a roadside rubbish heap. Once the maps were worth a quarter apiece, but apparently enough motorists didn't realize that fact, so the entire batch landed among the rubbish, where they had caught Bill's eye.

"I knew these danged maps would come in handy," chuckled Bill. He started wrapping them in the paper. "Ed won't discover that we've lost his green stuff until we're safely out of his way. These maps are just about the size of the other papers. We—" He paused as Ed loomed in front of us.

"WHAT the devil you crooks doing with my papers?" the con man demanded, suspiciously.

"Nothing," replied Bill meekly.

"Yes you were!" snapped Ed in anger. "I might have known I couldn't trust a pair of dirty bums like you and..."

Bill was about to peel off his coat and sail into action, but I couldn't see where the pleasure of swatting an insect like Ed would compensate for sixty days in jail, so I held Bill back. Ed grabbed his package and escaped into the eddying crowd.

"The miserable skunk!" sputtered Bill angrily. "'Crooks' and 'dirty bums,' he called us. I wouldn't mind even a horse thief or somebody like that calling us a pair of crooks or bums, but when it comes to Ed McWhortle calling us anything, it's carrying an insult too far. Remember how he bragged once about how he worked a con game on some poor old cripple who had to go to the poorhouse to die after Ed got through with him? That's the kind of low down specimen he is. He probably is planning to work the money-making machine gag on some other poor old cripple. The miserable crook ought to be in jail. I'd like to do my bit to help him land there. 'Dirty bums,' he called us. If there's any dirtier bum than—"

Bill stopped abruptly. We had proceeded up the ramp leading to the doors beyond which was the clatter and roar of traffic: and there, at the center doorway, was Ed McWhortle in the clutches of the steely-eyed individual.

Bill chuckled appreciatively.

"A patrol wagon will be backing up to the door in a few minutes," he whispered gleefully. "We'll stick around and watch 'em load in the meanest con man on the Atlantic seaboard. This is going to be good."

The steely-eyed one steered Ed over into a corner, however, and held him there while he started unwrapping the

paper package. Ed looked as innocent as a second-story man caught descending a drainpipe with a bag of family silverware over his shoulder.

The wrapper fell to the floor. The neat sheaf of automobile maps was exposed. The steely-eyed individual gaped in astonishment. It was obvious that he had expected to find something else. Ed, too, showed astonishment. He passed a hand across his face as though to brush aside an unbelievable vision. Like the detective, he had expected to see a sheaf of phony stuff, not a batch of innocuous automobile maps.

"There's no crime in carrying things like that, is there?" Ed sneered.

The steely-eyed one had recovered his aplomb.

"It's all right this time, McWhortle," he conceded good-naturedly. "I thought you had something else in that package. You did have when you came into the station here, but you've ditched it somewhere."

We didn't catch the rest of the conversation, but we saw the steely-eyed one depart, leaving McWhortle standing there, examining the inscriptions on the cover of the map folders.

"Come on," growled Bill in disgust. "There's no other skunk on the face of the globe that I'd rather push behind the bars than Ed McWhortle, and here I've gone and helped him slip it over on the police. Don't it beat blazes?"

Bill angrily kicked the stone balustrade and led the way out of the building.

EVEN the prospect of blowing in our capital of twenty cents on two suppers didn't cheer him up; and when the prospect of wrapping himself around some food fails to cheer up Bill, it's a sure sign that his morale has crawled into the tunnel under the subbasement.

"Let's eat," I suggested for the tenth time.

"What's the use of eating?" growled Bill despondently. "Just think—I helped save that miserable specimen of *homus geno*, or *genus homo*, or whatever it is, from the penitentiary where he belongs. Think of it! And yet you babble out here about eating!"

I almost felt ashamed of myself; otherwise I might have proposed that Bill surrender his share of the twenty cents and I eat it all.

"And he called us a pair of dirty bums," Bill reiterated. Bill is sensitive.

"Well, the police will get him eventually unless he reforms," I pointed out consolingly.

Bill didn't hear me, however. His thoughts were busy elsewhere.

"I'm going back in there," he announced with determination, nodding toward the station entrance. "I'm going back in there and find out for certain whether or not that skunk has even a shred of decency. If he has, he'll apologize for having called us dirty bums. If he hasn't, I'm going to knock his block off."

I remained outside. I figured that if the worst came to the worst I could be more helpful to Bill on the sunny side of the bars, trying to round up a bondsman, than in riding beside him in a patrol wagon. A fight in ordinary surroundings is a fight, but a fight in a railroad station is a riot. Anyhow, the idea of pawing over the spiritual swill that represented Ed McWhortle's character didn't appeal to me at all. Even if Ed did possess a shred or two of decency, the mess of moral dross was so much greater that it wouldn't pay to tap the lode.

No use of arguing with Bill, though. He strode belligerently into the station.

Two minutes later he was out again, unescorted by any minion of the law, unscathed and with a broad grin on his face.

"Did you knock him out the first smash, or was he grateful because you were instrumental in saving him from his just deserts?" I queried.

"Grateful?" Bill chuckled. "He hasn't got nothing to be grateful for. He's getting his just deserts, all right."

"Don't forget that you shoved those maps into his package in place of the phony money," I reminded him.

"I know why Dame Justice wears a blindfold," interposed Bill irrelevantly. "It's just so's to prevent cinders from getting into her eyes. It's easier and quicker for her to lift a blindfold once in a while than to gouge out cinders."

"The old dame sure had some cinders in her eyes a little while ago when she let Ed McWhortle get loose," I pointed out.

"Well, he ain't loose now," chuckled Bill reminiscently. "A cop has him in his clutches in there, waiting for the patrol wagon to rumble around."

"Did he swindle some poor cripple out of his life's savings, after all?" I demanded indignantly.

"The poor cripples will be safe for a while," grinned Bill. "Ed will get sixty or ninety days at the very least." He slapped me gleefully on the back.

"A guy that insists on passing phony money is bound to get—"

"He wasn't trying to pass any phony money," Bill interrupted. "They've nabbed him for peddling without a license—he was trying to sell maps to people in the station!"

"Nothing the matter with Dame Justice's eyes, at that," I conceded solemnly.

"Nor with my appetite either," chuckled Bill. "Come on, let's eat."

THE END.

## The World's Largest Tree

THE largest tree in the world is not one of the huge Californian redwoods as most Americans believe, nor the giant chestnut at the foot of Mt. Etna, but the colossal cypress near the little town of Santa Maria del Tule, State of Oaxaca, Mexico. The cypress is famous throughout Mexico as the great tree of Tule, its species being known by the Mexicans as *ahuehuete*.

This enormous tree is one hundred and sixty feet in height. Four feet from the ground the circumference of the trunk is one hundred and sixty-five feet and the spread of the giant branches is about one hundred and forty feet. It requires twenty-nine persons with outspread arms to encircle it. It is supposed to be more than two thousand years old. Cortez and his troops paused to rest beneath its shade some four centuries ago and commented upon its vastness. Baron von Humboldt, the German naturalist, on his visit to Mexico in 1803, was so enthusiastic over its Gargantuan proportions that he placed upon it a bronze tablet inscribed with his name. This now is so overgrown as to be almost unreadable. Even ancient trees, it seems, do not stand still in the march of Time.

*Gerald FitzGerald.*

*The Latin glared as the young officer bowed to the girl*

# Those Navy Ways

***A binge ashore, a señorita in red, a Central American dictator's vicious scheme —those were the elements that made Lieutenant Ellsworthy's future in the Navy as precarious as was his present existence in a seething tropic port***


**By LIEUT. JOHN HOPPER**

*Author of "The Jungle Arena," "The Wild Pitch," etc.*


*Novelette—Complete*

## CHAPTER I.

### THE SEÑORITA IN RED.

WITH annoyance Lieutenant Jack Ellsworthy, U. S. N., looked up at the black waiter standing close beside his chair. It was the third time the fellow had joggled his elbow.

"What the devil do you want?" demanded Ellsworthy. "What's the idea of nudging me like that?"

The waiter's thick lips parted in a wide grin, displaying a double row of large, gleaming white teeth. When he spoke, his voice betrayed that cockney accent common to the Jamaica Negro servants in the tropics.

"Beggin' your pardon, sir. A leddy gives me this fer yer. She says fer ter be careful in the openin' of it so that nobody sees yer. Thank yer, sir."

Below the level of the table, a small, folded square of paper passed from a black hand to a white. Ellsworthy kept watch upon his white-uniformed brother officers who sat at the table with him. They were too busy having a good time to notice the small by-play.

"What the devil!" he breathed to himself. Involuntarily, his eyes strayed across the tiny mirror of a dance floor. For a moment, they rested upon the face of the slender, dark-haired girl in red evening dress. His pulse quickened. Could it be possible that she had

noticed him, too; that she was interested? She did not have the look of one who would pass notes to strange men in a Central American night club.

Her slender, jeweled fingers were playing with her glass. Upon her face was thoughtful concentration. Ellsworthy detected a trace of anxiety.

Like a child enjoying the anticipation of eating a piece of candy, which he is hoarding until the last possible minute, he kept the note below the table. As he fingered it, he mused. A man who followed the vanishing tracks of the grim, gray dogs of war certainly saw curious places in the various nooks and crannies of the world.

Take this place, for instance: "Murphy's Biltmore." By a slight stretch of imagination, one might think himself in one of those countless little night clubs just a step off Broadway —instead of two thousand miles away. The midget dance floor, the dim lights, the draped walls and ceiling were the same. However, instead of the painted faces of chorines and the flushed ones of the suckers, here one saw the élite of a Central American republic. Proprietor Tim Murphy, born Moe Cohen, was profiting in his tropical venture.

And this night was the biggest of all. For the first time a unit of the United States Navy touched at Las Vegas, capital city of Costa Bella.

The cruise-weary officers and men, tired to death of their cramped, smelly quarters in the holds of submarines, were ashore gloriously catching up on the fun they had missed on the high seas, and storing up additional measure for the lonely night watches of the homeward cruise to come.

"Stand Navy down the field,
Sails set to the sky.
We'll never change our course,
So Army you steer shy-y-y-y . . ."

Two score lusty, sea-going voices billowed and crashed the thrilling, grand old Naval Academy song through the room. Suave, sleek, dark-haired, dark-eyed natives gazed in awe-struck silence upon the little ocean of white.

Now was the time, thought Ellsworthy, to read the note. Pushing away from the table, he squinted his eyes to read, in the poor light, the pencil scrawl:

Please ask me to dance. I must speak to you. It is most important.
THE LADY IN RED.

"Now," mused Ellsworthy to himself, "just what kind of a game is this?"

JACK ELLSWORTHY, senior lieutenant of the submarine S-189, crumpled the note into a ball, and carelessly thrust it into his pocket. Then, he leaned his husky bulk against the spindly back of the protesting chair, and lifted his cocktail glass on high. For an instant he surveyed the sparkling liquid contained therein. Then, his eyes flickered across to the girl in red, shot away and finally came to rest on his brother officers before him.

"A toast!" he cried. "A toast to

the United States Navy and its ways! Stand up, you sailor-men! If it weren't for the Navy, we'd all be back on the farm following the old gray mare. What more do you want? Here we are, a million miles from a camel, in the fairest port of Central America, 'where there ain't no ten commandments, and a man can raise a thirst.'"

"Yea!" roared his enthusiastic, laughing comrades, lifting up their glasses. "Those Navy ways!"

"To the cruise that brought us here!" continued Lieutenant Jack. "To those delightful, submersible sausages with the innards of a machine shop, and the disposition of an old maid school-teacher — the submarines. God —bless 'em!"

"Yea!" shrieked the officers of the submarine fleet.

"And last, but not least, to the fair port of Las Vegas, capital city of the most liberal-minded, indifferent, golly-woggin' republic of America, Costa Bella, and its most charming daughters, the *señoritas!*"

As he finished, amid a burst of hand-clapping, Ellsworthy bowed over his glass, while his blue eyes remained level and steady, fixed on the slightly flushed face of the girl in red, who sat, with a number of Costa Bellans, at the large table opposite.

With a slight gesture of confusion, the girl hastily turned her soft, liquid brown eyes away. The slim, too elegant Latin gentleman by her side bent inquiringly toward her. His brown face, startlingly dark in comparison with the dazzling whiteness of his collar and shirt bosom, came up with a frown. His black eyes smoldered as he stared haughtily at the grinning lieutenant. One narrow, mahogany hand played with a spiked end of his black mustache.

"Bull's-eye!" murmured the lieutenant to himself.

At that moment, the black orchestra launched into a jazz piece three months old on Broadway. Couples were beginning to leave the tables, and make their way to the floor.

Ellsworthy stood up. Now was the time. The sooner the better. Especially since the lady was quite good-looking.

Commander Edward Carson, captain of the submarine S-189, who had been sitting beside his lieutenant, leaped up like a jumping-jack out of a box. He placed a restraining hand upon the junior officer's shoulder.

"I'm wise to you, Jack, my boy," he grinned. "But leave these local women alone. Don't be foolish. Remember, this is the first time the Navy has stopped at Costa Bella. We don't know these people, and they don't know us. They will surely resent your speaking to one of their girls. You know how these Spanish are about these things. It might get us into a lot of trouble. Sit down, Jack."

Ellsworthy jauntily removed the detaining hand from his shoulder. He grinned his disarming smile, which won for him the hearts of all men, and not a few women.

"Tush, tush, commander!" he chided. "In case you don't know it, I have a rendezvous with yon vision in red."

"You'll be having a rendezvous with sudden death one of these days, if you don't watch out!" grunted the commander, with disbelief in his tone.

As he backed away from his superior officer, Jack shook a reproving finger. "Those Navy ways, commander! They all fall for 'em."

Commander Carson snorted.

"Those Navy ways are always get-

ting the Navy, especially the younger officers, in dutch!"

"I BEG your pardon. May I have this dance?"

The girl looked up at him. She tried to check the involuntary gasp. Her hand fluttered to her breast. Her table companions stared at Lieutenant Ellsworthy in astonishment. The man beside her rose half out of his seat.

Jack sensed that all eyes in the room were upon him. At the crowded tables near by, swarthy Costa Bellans stared at him with expressions of mixed wonder and hostility. Across the floor, his companions held their breath.

Her departure from the table was painful. A flowing end of her dress had caught beneath the chair, and almost tripped her. From her nervous fingers, her evening purse dropped. Finally they escaped from the area of black frowns and the hostilely charged atmosphere.

She drifted into his arms. And, as she did so, Jack fancied he heard behind him a forceful, if muffled curse. That, he decided, would be from the gentleman with the spiked mustache. Well, he never did like mustaches, especially waxed ones; and if they were black, to boot—

Forcing his mind to consider something besides the wonder in his arms, he began, "You wanted to tell me something?"

Her voice, low and musical, but withal nervous and strained, came to him from somewhere about the region of his chest.

"Oh, yes! I hope you'll forgive me for the method I took, but I had to do something soon. I was desperate. Your being here just at this time, of all times, looked like the kind hand of Fate to me."

Ellsworthy made a funny face into her, blue-black, perfumed hair. What the devil!

"Well, I . . ." he began modestly.

"The Navy, I mean," she quickly interrupted, suddenly realizing the interpretation that could have been put on the other speech.

"Good Lord," he groaned inwardly; "she wants the whole Navy! Some girl! What a method, what a line!" Who and what was she, anyway? This was not usual among the *señoritas*.

"My father is in very grave trouble and danger," she continued. "You may think it strange that I appeal to you, but I shall explain as I go along. That man you saw at the table beside me is Dr. Julio Villalobos. He is vice president of Costa Bella. I am going to marry him unless . . ."

While she had been talking, a black curl had escaped from her coiffure, and was erratically, although sedately, tickling his square, smooth-shaved chin. A scent, unbelievably exotic, a veritable breath of the tropics, had stolen into his nostrils, and from there into his blood stream, making his heart pound wildly. In his arms, she was thrillingly light, soft, and pliant.

She looked up at him. For the first time in his life, he was shocked out of his usual aplomb. From his arms, on a dance floor, many eyes had looked up into his. Some had been coy; some roguish; some simple and sweet; and some, just simple. But all had been flirtatious, whatever the system they used.

None had prepared him for the steady gaze he was receiving from those limpid, brown pools. In them, he saw a woman as old as Eve in the knowledge and sufferings of her sex, and as young as the new-born day in hope and promise. He caught his

breath. At last he realized why he had never married.

And she was going to marry that greased monkey on a stick.

"Unless—unless what?" he demanded.

HE felt the hand, with its long-nailed fingers, digging into his shoulder. He remembered reflecting with surprise that the man must be strong who could pull him around like that. The music shrilled into discords, and finally stopped altogether. The dancers crowded back against the tables to make a large, cleared circle for them. Just before he was spun around, Jack had a glimpse of the girl shrinking away from him, her eyes large with fear, one small, white hand pressed to her mouth.

He looked into the anger-sharpened features of Señor Villalobos, the vice president of Costa Bella.

"Well..." questioned the white-clad officer of the black-clad Costa Bellan.

"You have insult' me, vice preseedont of Costa Bella!" snarled the man. "You have insult' my *fiancée!* Americano—peeg!"

In conclusion, there was a loud smack, emphatically expressing the outraged feelings of Señor Villalobos. With his open hand, he had swung mightily and accurately, and had struck the surprised Ellsworthy full in the mouth.

Ordinarily Lieutenant Jack Ellsworthy was a good-natured fellow, exceedingly slow to wrath. But a smarting smack from the palm of the man who was going to marry *her*, particularly as it had happened in full view of his comrades, was just one smack too many.

Ellsworthy did the natural thing. Suddenly his fist described a short, vertical arc, and a beautiful uppercut landed neatly on the point of the *señor's* chin. Like an elevator, the vice president rose a couple of feet in the air, and then descended in a crumpled heap.

It had all occurred so quickly that no one had time to think of what to do. But just as the ruffled Ellsworthy was turning about to reclaim the girl in the red dress, many people had finished thinking. He did not see the figure rushing at his back with a champagne bottle lifted high in the air.

"Jack—*look out!*" roared Commander Edward Carson. He groaned in sympathy as the bottle descended. The cowardly assault infuriated him.

"Let's go, fellows!" Carson yelled. "Navy this way! Clear the field!"

Secretly delighted, two score gentlemen in white picked up whatever was at hand, and rushed across the floor to meet at least as many, if not more, gentlemen in black. They met on the dance floor.

Back and forth, over the prostrate, unconscious bodies of the principals, the battle raged and boiled. Curses, grunts, groans, victorious war-whooping Navy yells mingled with the ear-splitting shrieks and incoherent pleadings of the ladies, who stood on the sidelines. Every time a white figure flopped to the bottom of the heap, they shrieked an octave higher. And every time a man in evening dress dropped to the floor to be trampled upon, their Latin pleadings became more voluble and more incoherent.

Fists, bottles, and chairs were the weapons of the day. The place was rapidly assuming the look of a very low-grade junk shop. On top of the piano, surrounded by the pale, dusky faces of his orchestra and waiters, was

Mr. Murphy-Cohen, on his knees, praying audibly.

As they always do, discipline, coordinated action, and united attack won the day. A little group, their white uniforms which were a few minutes ago so neatly starched and creased, now in tatters, their hair snarled, their eyes glittering with the lust of battle, occupied the center of the floor, pugnaciously challenging all those who had not had sufficient, to come and get what they missed the first time. There were no takers.

Commander Edward Carson, one eye a lovely carmine, knelt to the floor and gently lifted the head and shoulders of his unconscious lieutenant to his knee.

"Come on, Jack, old boy," he urged. "Snap out of it."

Ellsworthy opened one eye, and then, two. In silent wonder, he took in the battle-scarred features of his commanding officer.

"What happened, sir? We have an earthquake?"

With his good eye, Carson peered suspiciously down at his lieutenant. He decided that Ellsworthy's question was asked for information, and was innocent of kidding.

"No, blast you!" he growled. "Just demonstrating some more of those Navy ways to the public. How's your head?"

Jack thrust a hand upon the bump on the back of his head.

"Ouch! How'd that happen?" Suddenly, he remembered. "Say, where's —where's the girl in red?" He didn't know her name. "She had something important to tell me."

"Oh, yea-ah?" The commander started to snarl, but he hastily changed his mind. Snarling didn't go well with split lips. "Well, she's gone. And if I never see her again, it 'll be too soon. Talk about Helen of Troy . . ."

## CHAPTER II.

### REPRIMAND, OLD STYLE.

CAPTAIN JOHN PAUL JONES TURNBULL was the epitome of the old-time, pre-war Navy. He was as big in soul as he was large of body. But old-time Navy methods and tactics were rapidly going into the discard. No longer was it customary for captains to rule their commands by the strength and power of the heft of a good, hairy, right fist.

This was the day of modern efficiency methods, of the thin, court-martial manual for discipline, of slim, immaculate, youthful-looking officers, whose voices remained always at the tea room pitch, regardless of the stress of a situation. As each year went by, there seemed to be less and less appreciation in the Navy for tough, grizzled, roaring Captain Turnbull.

This year they had shelved him off to command a fleet of submarines, which galled his man-o'-war heart exceedingly. He was like a duck which unexpectedly had hatched a school of fish.

Early on this bright, sunshiny, tropical morning he had summoned Lieutenant Ellsworthy, senior lieutenant of the submarine S-189, to appear before him on his flagship, the tubby tender, the mother ship of the flock of submarines.

With frowning, shaggy, gray eyebrows, the captain looked over the top of his desk at the tall, respectful young man before him.

"I have a communication here, lieutenant," he growled, "from the Costa Bellan Government."

Jack Ellsworthy's heart skipped a beat. The Costa Bellan authorities had not lost much time in making a report of last night's f r a c a s . The burning question was, what would the "old man" do about it?

"I have investigated the complaint," continued the captain, "and from what I've learned it appears that you were responsible for the disgraceful affair."

Turnbull glared at the junior officer.

Ellsworthy felt his knees getting weak beneath him.

"Well!" roared the old captain. "What about it? Come clean!"

"Yes, sir," responded Jack.

"'Yes, sir'—what?"

"That's all there was to it, sir. Yes, sir; I was responsible."

It was not in Ellsworthy's code to make an explanation that would even remotely seem like throwing the blame on a woman's head.

"That's all you have to say, eh?" sneered the captain.

"Yes, sir," replied the lieutenant quietly.

With a huge fist Captain Turnbull pounded the top of his desk. Inkwells, pens, pencils, all danced about crazily.

"You young jackass!" he shouted. "You nincompoop! What do you want to do, huh? What do you want to do? Answer me!"

Involuntarily Lieutenant Ellsworthy flinched from that mad wrath. He struggled desperately, futilely, to think up some answer to the captain's questions. But, he concluded hopelessly, how could he answer such questions?

THE captain got up from his desk and stalked around to where he could shake his fist beneath his lieutenant's nose.

"I'll break every bone in your body! I'll put you in irons! I don't know what the Navy is coming to. It's men like you— Tell me," the captain broke off, "was there a woman in the case?"

"Yes, sir," answered Ellsworthy, eyes straight to the front. He could not lie to his superior officer.

Captain John Paul Jones Turnbull became interested.

"Was she pretty?"

"Oh, captain!" began Ellsworthy, his eyes shining.

Captain Turnbull became gruff, dignified.

"That's enough! Now"—he pointed a condemning, s t u b b y finger at Jack's face—"get the hell out of here! You've been reprimanded, understand? I can't allow my officers to go around slugging vice presidents. Good naval officers are hard to get in these days, when most of them go around with lace sewed to their underwear."

With his heart beating a song of glad relief, Jack began to back from the room. What a grand old man was Captain Turnbull! A gentleman of the old school when to be in the Navy meant hell-roaring scrapes and devil take the hindermost.

"Wait!" o r d e r e d the captain. "There's a luncheon ashore to-day. The vice president is giving it in honor of the officers of the fleet. As this is an official affair, and there will probably be no ladies present, I expect, Mr. Ellsworthy, that you will be on your good behavior."

"Yes, sir."

"Humph! And, by the way, who won last night?"

"The Navy always wins, sir!"

"Humph!" growled the old man, as Jack, mopping the sweat from his forehead, closed the door behind him. "It's a damned good thing for you that it did!"

Alone, the captain allowed a grin to relax the sternness of his face.

"What the deuce," he murmured to himself. "Not another damfool captain in the Navy besides myself would act like this. But what the deuce—a pretty girl, a foreign port . . ."

## CHAPTER III.

### THE TRAP.

THE buzz of conversation, the clatter of silver and tableware, died away. Cigars and cigarettes were lit. Champagne glasses were refilled. The vice president, a gorgeous figure in his uniform of sky blue and dawn gray, with red trimmings and gold decorations, rose to his feet. He exercised his jaw a couple of times to see if it were still in workable condition. When he had awakened that morning he had sleepily put his hand to it to remove the ten-pound weight, but there had been no weight. He shot a glance of hate down the table at Lieutenant Ellsworthy demurely regarding him.

"Eet ees weeth regret," he began, "that the *presidente* say he cannot be here weeth you to-day. He have ask me . . ." And so on, and so on, with all the hokum, soft soap, and extravagant compliments customarily handed out so generously at diplomatic luncheons.

After the first five minutes of it had passed, Commander Carson nudged his lieutenant. "Your boy-friend is quite a spellbinder," he whispered. "Maybe it was a good thing you hung that one on his jaw, or we might be here all afternoon."

Ellsworthy's mind was far away. His eyes were dreamy. He was not hearing a word from the speaker at the head of the table.

"You know, commander," he said softly, "I can't get her out of my mind."

Carson snorted.

"She was so wonderful," Jack was saying. "Like a tender little flower in the month of May."

This time Commander Carson snorted so loudly that Captain Turnbull frowned at him and coughed warningly. With a suspicious glance at his lieutenant, Carson surreptitiously removed all the champagne glasses within reach. The lieutenant never noticed. That, decided Carson, was a very bad sign indeed.

"She had something to tell me—something most important. Oh, when I think that at this very moment she may be in danger, and I am sitting here . . . If only I knew her name, where to find her!"

"Why don't you ask the boy-friend?" suggested Carson sarcastically. "He ought to know. I'm sure he'll be tickled to tell you, too."

"Gosh!" Ellsworthy's blue eyes came to rest upon the commander's disgusted face. He snapped his fingers. "I never thought of that! I will."

The vice president had finished his speech of welcome. He sat himself pompously down amidst polite applause. Now Captain Turnbull was clearing his throat preparatory to making the reply. As speechmaking was a thing he detested more than anything else, he was grimacing horribly.

"Hey—come back here!" demanded Carson fiercely. He made an ineffectual grab at his preoccupied lieutenant, who was already on the way toward the head of the table.

The vice president, who had been deeply immersed in scowling thought, looked up as the naval officer neared him. Evidently he mistook the dis-

arming smile, the outstretched hand for indications of something other than peace.

A look of alarm crossed his startled face. From the silver pail beside him, he grabbed a large, green bottle. He struggled to get to his feet, which became a hard job owing to his long sword endeavoring to act as a third leg. Before the open-mouthed Costa Bellan diplomats, and the naval officers, he gave a wild cry, and waved menacingly the bottle in the air.

WHILE he had been at the Naval Academy, Ellsworthy had been a star left end. Now, to avoid the bottle—they made very efficient clubs as the lump on his head still attested—he put into use the principles he had learned on the football field.

He had never made a better flying tackle against the Army. The vice president's legs shot out from beneath him. With flying coat tails, and decorations popping off all over the room, the vice president, yielding forth a surprised grunt, landed ignominiously on the floor, Ellsworthy on top.

"Listen," said the lieutenant placatingly. "I only wanted to ask you who she was, and where she lived."

The vice president said nothing, but clutched a fistful of Ellsworthy's face with his long nails.

Inside the lieutenant was an all-gone feeling. He had not meant for his overture to turn out this way. If the Costa Bellan had only been a little less quick on the trigger, Ellsworthy had planned to apologize to him for what had happened the previous evening. Then, after friendly relations had been made, he had intended to try to learn the name of the girl in red. In a roundabout way, of course.

But here was disaster! This was an event that even Captain Turnbull could not pass by. A thing such as this, at a formal, diplomatic luncheon, might disrupt the relations between the two countries.

Lieutenant Ellsworthy decided quickly. Besides, the digging fingers hurt. As long as he was going to be hung, it might as well be for something worth while.

With his knee on the chest of the unfortunate vice president, he took both hands, and twisted the upraised arm down and around.

"Tell me," he demanded, "who is she?"

The vice president screamed a curse as the terrible pain shot through his arm. Ellsworthy only twisted harder. He had to get the answer in a hurry. He could hear the chairs being kicked back.

"Let's have it—or I'll break your arm!"

*"Señorita—señorita—"*

"Yes?"

"Adela Smith."

A dozen white-clad arms tore him from the exhausted vice president.

This time, Captain Turnbull's wrath was very real, and very earnest. His face purpled as he shook his fist in Ellsworthy's face.

"By God, sir!" He repeated. For an instant, he could get out nothing else. "Enough is enough, but too much—is too damn much!" he exploded. "Back to your ship, sir! In arrest!"

"Captain," Ellsworthy took a step forward, and extended his hand pleadingly. "Give me one hour, sir." He had to see her. If he had to desert the Navy, he was going to do it.

"No!" thundered the old man.

"But, sir, this means something to me! I've just got to have an hour!"

The captain looked at his watch. As he did so, he thought that the girl must be very pretty indeed.

"It is now two o'clock," he stated grimly. "You will be aboard your ship, in arrest, at three sharp."

"Yes, sir!"

SEÑORITA ADELA SMITH led the puffing lieutenant to a long, low divan. As they sat down, he looked at his wrist watch.

"It is fifteen minutes past two," he said. "You have half an hour to tell me what you were going to tell last night when—ah—we were interrupted. I must be back at my ship at three o'clock . . . Naval reasons, you know."

He grinned at her. She, in turn, gave him a slow smile, which inspired in him an irresistible desire to press kisses upon the red lips that made it. He compromised by taking her warm, little hand in his own.

"It is so good of you to come to see me," she began. "After last night, I thought that everything was ruined. But," she said, "how did you find me?—Who I was?—Where I lived?"

"I found you perfect," he grinned, leaning back, and gazing deep into her eyes. Her long lashes flickered over them. "Oh," he continued hastily, "it's just one of those Navy ways, finding people."

With her eyes still downcast, she said, in a low voice: "Those Navy ways . . . I suppose . . . find many girls . . . in every port?"

"Never a girl like you," he replied earnestly.

At that, she took her hand away from him. The conversation was getting too dangerously personal for only the second meeting.

"Time is going," she reminded him. "And I've simply got to tell you about it. Oh, I don't know what to do! I've felt that I simply had to tell some one. That I would go crazy, if I didn't. It is all so terrible, so awful. There wasn't a person I could go to here. You don't know the feeling when you realize there isn't a single human being in the world whom you can trust. When I saw you men last night, with United States written all over you, I made up my mind. I don't know what father would say. He has always fought his battles alone. I suppose he would be furious if he found out. But I am old enough now," she finished with spirit. "And if he won't ask for help, I shall."

Ellsworthy was mystified. This girl, who looked as if she had everything in the world, wealth, social position, power—what sort of trouble could she be in?

"Listen—er—"

"Adela," she consented.

"Listen, Adela; spill it. You came to the right person. You've got the whole Navy right with you."

"Oh, I know it will sound wild, fantastic, to you! But every bit of it is true. Too dangerously true."

She began tracing patterns with her tapering forefinger on her dress at the knee.

"My father is an American. In his younger days, he was what you might call a soldier of fortune. He was a friend and associate of all that famous crowd—Lee Christmas, Admiral Walker, and Raise-Hell Freer. With them he got in and out of more revolutions than there are gang wars in American cities to-day. Then, he met my mother, who was the daughter of a rich and well-known Costa Bellan family. He took her to the United States. I was born there."

"You were born in the United

States?" questioned Ellsworthy, who had been following her with increasing interest.

"Yes. But my mother missed her home and her people. Father, too was feeling the adventurous urge again, so they decided to return to Costa Bella. That was when I was a little girl.

"Well, to make a long story short, my mother died when I was twelve years old. Father had done well. With the influence and backing of mother's family, he became wealthy in the importing business. Then, as it was most natural for him to do, he entered politics. He couldn't keep out. It was in his blood, you see."

Ellsworthy thoughtfully nodded his head.

"He succeeded in Costa Bellan politics," she said proudly. "He finally became Secretary of the Treasury, which office he now holds. Then, little by little, troubles began to come along. First of all, mother's family, which was never very numerous, began to leave us."

"To die, you mean?" asked Ellsworthy gently. The girl nodded her head.

"With their going, all father's friends here seemed to turn against him. You see, they had always hated him. They hated the power of an American, a foreigner, over them. While mother's family were here, they had influence. They had many friends whom they kept in support of my father. But, when they were gone—you know how it is."

"I know," said Jack softly. The wolf pack turning against the stranger dog, who had held, for a little time, power among them.

"Father had no one to rely upon to help him fight. His own kind were gone, too. Christmas and Walker were dead. Freer was an officer in the U. S. Army somewhere. The cowards would have swept him under long ago if it were not for Villalobos."

"The vice president?" demanded Ellsworthy, astonished.

Adela slowly nodded her head.

"Why—why, I thought he—" Then a great light began to dawn in Ellsworthy's brain. "He's doing it for you! To make you marry him. But, I don't understand!"

"Oh, it was easy enough—for him," the girl interrupted wearily. "You see, all these people wanted was just an excuse to get father. As much as they would have liked to do so, they didn't dare just put father against a wall and shoot him without any cause whatsoever. Your Latin-American, you know, is extremely cautious. He'd rather do his betting on a sure thing.

"Villalobos found the excuse. It's a good one, too. You remember, I told you father was Secretary of the Treasury. Well, according to the account books in the Treasury Department, there is half a million dollars missing. And the penalty for a government official embezzling government funds is —death."

Ellsworthy exclaimed with horror. The diabolically clever scheme was very clear to him. Villalobos had "fixed" the books, no doubt getting some compatriots of his, underlings in the Treasury Department, to do the work for him.

"And so," said the lieutenant grimly, "if you marry Villalobos, everything will be hunky-dory. He'll straighten out the matter of the missing funds, and you will all live happily ever after. Is that it?"

Adela did not need to answer. Jack

could see her reply in the misery in her eyes.

"Yea-ah," he continued. "And about a month after the wedding march, they'll get your father just the same, on some other charge. Nice people! I never did like black mustaches anyway! Especially pointed ones."

With frowning brows, he pondered.

"You don't think," began Adela earnestly, "that I'm just telling you this? That—that my father really is guilty?"

Ellsworthy's head shot up, and he captured her hand again. "Say—with a daughter like you?"

She smiled at him through the starting tears.

"It's so hopeless," she said despairingly. "It's like—like being in a room with no doors or windows. We're trapped. Helpless."

"Oh, no, you're not!" he assured her heartily.

THERE were a few minutes of silence. Soberly, the girl watched him think. At last, she could stand it no longer.

"What are you thinking?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Just going over a few Navy ways to see if I can find one..." He paused. The expression on his face was like the sun breaking through clouds. She stared at him wonderingly. In spite of herself, hope began to flame in her breast.

"You wouldn't do it! You wouldn't dare!" he challenged her.

"What? What wouldn't I do?" she asked, mystified.

He snatched a hasty glance at his watch.

"Two thirty-one! Say ten minutes to get to the ship; that leaves us nineteen minutes. You know," he looked at her seriously, "a lot can happen in nineteen minutes."

A doubtful look began to spread across Adela's face. Had she picked the right man for help? She had liked his intelligent face, his good-humored eyes, his courageous mouth, but—had she been mistaken in appearances! In nineteen minutes! What was he going to do? What sensible thing could he do so soon, and in that short time?

"If I can pick up a couple of the fellows down town," he mused, with a speculative look on his face.

He glanced cautiously around. There appeared to be no one in the front part of the house, where they were. Still, he wasn't going to take any chances. He pressed his lips against her hair, and whispered in her ear.

"Oh, I couldn't do that!" she exclaimed. "Why—why—it's the wildest thing I ever heard!"

"It is not!" he defended. "It's the most sensible, logical, thing in the world!"

"Just another one of those Navy ways?" she interrupted him archly.

"Maybe. But a darned good one, if I do say so myself. Come on!" he urged impatiently. "Get your hat, or the old lace mantilla, or whatever you need in this country. We haven't a minute to lose!"

"I couldn't—"

He grabbed her and stood towering above her. She looked into his blue eyes and—looked some more.

"Listen, you!" He even shook her to give emphasis to his tumbling words. "No more shilly-shallying. You asked for help—and you're going to get it. Plenty. First of all, we'll put a spoke in Villa-whoozis's wheel—a permanent one. One he can't get around, no matter how hard he tries. That's the first step, and the biggest one. After that,

we'll see about the others. Now, how about it?"

He gave the breathless, amazed girl another shake which sent the curls flying about her head.

"A-a-all right!" she gasped.

As she went to get her hat, she turned at the doorway. "Those Navy ways!" she flung back at him.

Lieutenant Jack Ellsworthy grinned at her slim, vanishing form. "You ain't seen nothing yet!" he retorted.

## CHAPTER IV.

### IN ARREST.

AS Jack climbed aboard the narrow deck of the cigar-like S-189, the bell of the tender, four submarines away, was just beginning to sound the notes of three o'clock. He was smiling to himself. Occasionally he broke off to whistle the fox trot that had been popular when the fleet left New York.

Commander Carson was seated on a camp stool, with his back against the conning tower. He was in his shirt sleeves, for it was terrifically hot in the harbor. With disapproving gaze, he watched the second in command of the S-189 approach him.

"Cut out the damned whistling!" he said grumpily. "It's bad luck."

"Boy!" Ellsworthy cried inconsequently, and without warning. He clasped his hands together and swung around in a complete circle.

"Daft!" muttered the commander to himself. "Clean daft, and doesn't know it. He's gone tropical for fair." Then, to his lieutenant, he said coldly, "It doesn't seem to bother you that you're in arrest, does it?"

"What a wonderful girl!" sighed Ellsworthy.

"I give up!" cried Commander Carson, tossing his hands helplessly in the air. He got up from his chair, and made for the iron ladder leading to the top of the conning tower. As hot and smelly as it was below, it was better than listening to his demented lieutenant rave about the folly that had caused him enough trouble as it was.

"Wait!" demanded the lieutenant, catching hold of a shirt sleeve. "How would be the best way of going about starting a war in one of these countries?"

Carson gave him a look of withering scorn.

"Huh! You should know! If we don't have a war after last night, and the luncheon this noon, it won't be the fault of the vice president of Costa Bella." Now that he was on the subject, Commander Carson felt that it was time he took his lieutenant seriously to task.

"Say," he continued. "What the devil's the matter with you? What have you got against that poor vice president? I can tell you, Ellsworthy, you're in a serious jam. There's heck to pay. Captain Turnbull is furious. Do you know that the Costa Bellan government is threatening to sever diplomatic relations with us?"

"Good!"

"What's that?"

"I meant—er—I meant that'll be too bad, sir."

For a long time, Commander Carson looked at his junior officer in silence.

"I think you're crazy!" he said finally. Then, he continued. "There's a dance in our honor at the Club Union to-night. The fleet commander sent over word by special orderly that you were positively not to appear. You are to remain in close arrest aboard this ship."

Ellsworthy grinned.

"Commander, I'd like to see the captain."

"Not a chance! He won't see you. He's too damned sore. Besides, you know what his policy is. He very rarely places an officer in arrest, but when he does, he refuses to allow the officer to see him until he's been in arrest twenty-four hours. Going on the theory, I suppose, that it gives the officer a chance to reflect upon the seriousness of his crime. He wants to give his officers every chance possible. He doesn't want them going off half-cocked, giving away secrets damaging to themselves until they have had a chance to calm down, and think things over."

Carson's voice became kindly. He was very fond of his light-hearted, irresponsible, irrepressible, likable lieutenant. He placed a paternal hand upon the younger officer's shoulder.

"Please snap into it, Jack. Honestly, you are in a bad scrape. It is one of the old man's boasts that he never puts an officer in arrest without court-martialing him. And, Jack, I'm afraid—if you go before a court-martial board—with the facts as they are, you'll lose your commission. They'll have to tie the can to you. For the sake of diplomacy, if nothing else."

For once, Ellsworthy's smile faded.

"And you don't think Captain Turnbull will see me?" he anxiously asked again. He had banked heavily on Captain Turnbull. He had hoped, by telling the captain the situation, to gain his sympathy, to be released from arrest, even to win his help. But it appeared that Lieutenant Ellsworthy had been far too optimistic in his hopes. What he had light-heartedly taken for granted back in Adela's home, now seemed shatteringly impossible.

"I'm sure he won't; not to-day, anyway," Commander Carson was saying.

After the commander had gone below, Jack Ellsworthy walked soberly to the rope rail. For the first time in his life, it looked as if he had bitten off more than he could chew. And he had left Adela back there in the city, waiting, hoping with the first real hope she had had in months.

THE sun was an angry red eye dropping below the gray-green, jungle-covered hills in the distance far across the calm bay, when Commander Carson, resplendently clad in the gleaming white and glittering gold of tropical navy full dress, appeared once more on the deck of the S-189, white gloves in hand. In spite of the alleged seriousness of the situation, he could not repress a slight grin at the sight of his erstwhile gay lieutenant disconsolately slumped on a camp stool, staring, with unseeing eyes, at the far-away hills.

"Cheer up, Jack!" he urged, slapping the other's back. "At least you don't have to go to this diplomatic shindig. You know what they are."

"Commander, will you do something for me?" asked Ellsworthy, jumping to his feet. "When you get to a telephone, call Adela Smith. Tell her not to worry; that everything's all right. Tell her that I've been unexpectedly detained aboard ship, and that I'll see her very soon."

Commander Carson shook his head.

"For optimism," he said, "you've got 'em all beat! Sure; I'll tell her. By the way, have you been wondering who belonged to that swell looking yacht out there? Not that I want to bring up a sore subject, but it belongs to your old sparring partner, the vice president. Too bad," he continued,

drawing on his gloves, "that you two are such bad friends. I hear there's going to be a little party aboard her after the hop to-night. Sort of an informal affair to clear away the cobwebs of diplomacy. And, boy, I understand the parties that bird throws are no slouches—wine, women, song, and all that! Well, so long, Jackie—and for heaven's sake, be a good boy until papa returns! I'm almost afraid to leave you alone."

"Don't worry about me," said Lieutenant Ellsworthy somberly to the commander's retreating back.

Soon after Carson's departure, the shadows of night began to close in swiftly. A cool hush settled down over the bay. Riding lights of anchored craft began to twinkle.

Glumly, Ellsworthy slowly paced the tiny deck of the submarine. Ever and anon, he would halt, and stare fixedly at the dimly lit streets of the city reaching down to the water's edge. Somewhere up there, she was waiting. In her lap, slim hands were twisting. Why didn't he come?

He clenched his fists at the thought of it. She trusted him so completely. She had bestowed upon him the greatest faith a woman can give. And he was failing her, at the very beginning of the race. He was a big bluff. Those Navy ways—

He laughed mirthlessly to himself. What a dumb, blind, cocksure fool he was! He'd be in arrest long after the fleet left Las Vegas. A big help he'd be to her! He was a fool to have made her do what she had done this afternoon. It would only precipitate her troubles, add to them, instead of helping her. After the court-martial, he could return to help her; but by that time perhaps it would be too late.

The rope rail sagged under his weight as he leaned on it and gazed across the water at the slim, low-lying, dim white yacht that belonged to the vice president. There lay the power. The vice president was a man. He was no bluff. He had something to back him up. While Lieutenant John Ellsworthy was just an officer, a very junior one to boot, under a cloud.

AS he chewed his cud of bitter thought, a curious fact came slowly to his attention. He was moving! He shook the brain-clouding thoughts out of his head, and peered more sharply across the water. It was not he who was moving; it was the yacht! More swiftly now, like a gaunt ghost, she was backing out of the harbor.

"That's funny!" murmured Ellsworthy to himself. "I thought Carson said there was going to be a party aboard her to-night."

However, the goings and comings of Señor Villalobos's yacht were of no interest to him. He turned away from the rail. Two gobs were noisily clambering aboard the submarine.

In the darkness, Ellsworthy smiled to himself. The American gob was like a great, big-hearted, joyous child; yet, withal, best sailor-man and best fighter on the seven seas.

Judging from their slightly muddled conversation, this pair had been ashore, not too long, but too well. They had been moistening their bones against the arid season to come back in the United States.

For lack of anything better to do, Ellsworthy eavesdropped upon their thick phrases. It was evident that they were excited about something, and not a little indignant. As he listened, Jack's face, in the darkness, slowly became white; his smile faded.

"Issha damn shame, thash what I call it," one was saying. "Poor lil gal like that!"

"'Sall ri', buddy," the other condoled. "We sure done our bes'." He hiccuped, and clutched his comrade for support. Then he continued grandly. "We seen our duty, an' we done it. Poor lil gal. 'N'body wif half an eye could see she didn' wanna go in their ol' boat.

"The way she h o l l e r e d out 'n' kicked, 'n' yelled 'Jack!'" He broke off, swayed to his full height, and jabbed an emphasizing finger into his partner's chest. "My name's Jack," he stated. "Thash why I heard her. She was callin' me. See?"

"Poor lil gal!" The first one sadly shook his head. "But them for'ners ain't sh-shportin' men a-tall!" He became like a lawyer addressing a listening jury.

"Do they fight fair? They do not! Do they fight man t' man, one atta time? They do not!"

He then became confidential again. "'Sall ri', buddy. We done our bes', but they was stoo many for ush. 'N' they took the lil gal in the gig, 'n' off they went to that schlick yacht.

"I'll bet, buddy, some rish ole bug owns that yacht. Thash the way them fellers get the poor lil gals. They don' get 'em like you 'n' me does. No, siree!"

With Ellsworthy staring tensely at them, and gripping the rope rail until the white bones showed through the skin, they helped each other across the deck of the submarine. As they disappeared into the conning tower, one last sentence came floating back to Ellsworthy's straining ears. It was a maudlin threat, but it brightened the situation most amazingly for the listening lieutenant.

"If I ever get my hansh on that feller wif the black mustache, I'll . . ."

## CHAPTER V.

### INSUBORDINATION.

JACK knew what had happened. It hadn't taken a very elaborate process of reasoning to deduce the main facts. Somehow Villalobos must have found out what had occurred that afternoon between the American naval officer and Adela Smith.

After that, he had not been slow in striking. It must be that she was now a prisoner on his yacht. He was taking her away, away from her self-appointed protector until the fleet had sailed. She would have no chance of escaping the country with Ellsworthy. And, after the departure of the American submarines, he would take his own time, without fear of crossing or interruption, to settle matters to his liking.

Ellsworthy thanked the gods of luck. The lessons in courtesy he had drummed into the heads of these dumb sailors had borne fruit. Even while in their cups, they had shown the manliness of a United States gob. If they had been indifferent to what was going on at the water front, if they had not gone to render assistance, useless though it had been, to a lady in distress, Adela would have been gone, and Ellsworthy would never have known about it until too late.

Undoubtedly the vice president was making for one of those little islands not far from the coast. Jack shuddered.

He stared out to sea. Already, the lights of the yacht were mere pin points. He whirled toward the mother ship of the submarines.

"Ahoy, Bennington!" he roared.

Back came the answering hail from the deck watch.

"Is Captain Turnbull aboard?"

"No, sir. But Commander Jackson is the officer of the watch, sir."

"Never mind."

"Very well, sir."

Jack thought rapidly. Rule-sticking, efficient Jackson would be no help. He stared out into the black void. By now, even the pin points had vanished.

He paced the deck in agony. What could he do? What could he do?

He halted suddenly. At the very thought that was in his head, he felt his blood run cold. Yet he was the senior officer aboard the S-189—in fact, the only officer aboard.

He didn't dare! No; he must not even think of such a thing! It meant swift and certain court-martial. It might even mean years in the naval penitentiary.

The face of Adela came before him; appealing as she had told him her story; laughing at his funny sayings; holy, partly frightened, as she stood with him that afternoon; horror-filled, pleading, in the arms of Villalobos. He gritted his teeth. He made his decision.

He leaped to the conning tower, and climbed down into the control room.

"Mr. Poates!" he snapped at the petty officer reading a magazine at the table. "Have we enough men on board to man this old tub?"

"Yes, sir!" replied Mr. Poates, surprised. "Most of the men came back shortly after supper, sir."

"Very well. Prepare to get under way immediately!"

Mr. Poates's jaw dropped. He stared at Ellsworthy in dumb amazement.

"Right away, now, sir?" He spoke in a whisper.

"Yes—dammit! *Now!*"

The petty officer ducked as if the lieutenant had made a pass at him.

"But, sir; we have no orders! Commander Carson is not here. And is the lieutenant forgetting that he is in arrest?"

THIS time, Ellsworthy grabbed Mr. Poates by the collar of his coat and the slack of his breeches. He dragged him up off the chair.

"No," he said grimly and exasperatedly to the terrified Mr. Poates, who was not any too robust, and was studiously inclined anyhow. "No, Mr. Poates; I am not forgetting that I am in arrest. But you are forgetting that I am the only officer aboard this submarine. Now, do you obey my orders, or—"

"Yes, sir! Yes, sir! Right away, sir!" squealed the petty officer. "We'll be ready to go in a few minutes, sir." And, tremendously aided by a shove, he went flying aft.

"Crazy!" he cried tremblingly to the men, who had been hanging out of their hammocks listening to the conversation coming from the control room. "The lieutenant's crazy! He wants us to get under way at once!" He sat down and wiped his perspiring forehead.

Like monkeys from trees, the men scrambled down from their hammocks, which were slung close to the curved steel hull of the submarine.

"Crazy or not," laughed one, "I'm all for a ride. There's going to be a swell moon to-night!"

After what seemed an eternity of waiting, the impatient Ellsworthy felt the submarine vibrate from the huge, throbbing engines in her bowels. Shadowy figures raced along the dock, freeing ropes. Everything was ready.

Mr. Poates stood at the controls. Ellsworthy nodded his head, and the giant mechanical fish, making scarcely a ripple in the black waters, began to draw away from the school.

They had hardly cleared the harbor, when they got the reaction from the fleet. The wireless itself seemed to breathe anger, astonishment, dismay, as it buzzed in Sparks's phone. A grinning gob brought the message to the control tower.

> What the hell are you doing? Where the hell are you going?
>
> TURNBULL.

So Captain Turnbull had returned to his ship in time to see one of his fleet disappear before his eyes!

Now that the deed was done, and they were actually on the way, a measure of Lieutenant Ellsworthy's lightheartedness returned to him. Action always affected him that way. He realized that he was completely done for anyhow, so he decided that he might as well take all things as they came, and take them cheerfully. He grabbed a pencil, and scribbled on a sheet of paper.

"Here," he said to the sailor. "Send this to the Bennington."

If no word at all, reasoned Jack, came to the tender from the runaway submarine, Captain Turnbull might decide that something serious had happened to the ship, and give chase.

That was something Lieutenant Ellsworthy emphatically did not want.

So, a minute later, a message went winging through the tropical night air to Captain Turnbull striding furiously up and down his cabin.

> Taking a ride. Be back in a little while. ELLSWORTHY.

Captain John Paul Jones Turnbull collapsed in his chair, the message sheet in his hands. In all his years in the Navy, he had never seen anything like this happen before.

"By thunder!" he muttered weakly to the solicitous commanders grouped around him. "By thunder!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### ENGINE OF DESTRUCTION.

IN the magnificently furnished stateroom Adela knew that the yacht was no longer in motion. For some minutes past, now, she had been dimly conscious that the faint thrust of the propeller shaft was no longer apparent. Where were they?

She sprang off the silk-covered bed, upon which she had been lying fully clad, and stared through the porthole. Nothing but inky blackness met her eyes. The stars had disappeared, and the moon had set. By those signs, she knew that it must be near dawn.

Red-eyed, hair and clothes disarranged, she flung herself back upon the bed. Dry sobs racked her breast.

When they had first flung her into the cabin, she had torn and pulled at the door, imploring to be freed. Then the tears had come. She had prayed. She had prayed for that which she knew to be hopeless. She had prayed that Jack would come to her. Yet, she knew that each thrust of the propeller was carrying her farther and farther away from him. He would never know. Oh, why hadn't he returned to her as he had said he would?

Fear clutched her heart the more. Perhaps they had done something to him, too—her smiling, confident Jack. That afternoon the terror which had been dogging her for months had almost disappeared. Jack had seemed so sure, so capable. But now—

All through the long night, as the yacht rose and fell with the sea, the demons of despair, of fear, of doubt, gleefully ran riot in her head. Now, the coming dawn brought gradually increasing, icy hopelessness to her heart.

It was all so still, that morgue-like stillness of just before dawn, when human energy, human hopes, are at their lowest ebb. This might be a horrible nightmare, from which she would awaken with a scream. But the silken coverlet beneath her hands was not unreal stuff.

Then, terrifyingly loud in the stillness, there came a scratching at the door. A key was searching for the keyhole. She raised herself upon one arm, and, with eyes big with fear, stared fascinatedly at the mahogany door, whose polished surface reflected the cabin lights, which had burned steadily on through the night. Her other hand went to her breast as if to quiet the tumultuous beating of her heart.

As the man entered, and shut the door behind him, she leaped from the bed. With black eyes that glittered wetly, Señor Julio Villalobos, vice president of the republic of Costa Bella, regarded the disarranged condition of her dress, the lace peeping over the edge at her breast. He moistened his dry lips.

"Adela! Adela!" he whispered hoarsely.

With the eyes of an animal trapped, she backed before his slow advance. At last she was against the wall. There was no escape.

"No, no!" she cried, and flung out her arms to keep him away.

He brushed them aside as if they were nothing. He had her struggling in his arms.

"*Cara mia,*" he whispered, his breath hot upon her face. "*Yo te amo!* I love you! I cannot live without you! I must have you!"

"Oh, no, no!" she cried hysterically. With a sudden surge of strength, she flung him from her. He went back against a table, where he hesitated, hands gripping the edge. An angry light leaped, fully blazing, into his eyes. She would refuse him, him, Dr. Julio Villalobos, the most powerful man in Costa Bella, him to whom every one must yield!

HE caught her as she attempted to fly past him. He held her slender wrists in a cruel grip. Then his hands slipped up over her body. Inexorably, he was bending her back, forcing her back. She put her hand out in her struggle to remain upon her feet, and felt the silken coverlet!

"You prefer an unknown Americano dog to me, eh? He is not here now, is he? You think to fool me, Julio Villalobos, eh?"

He laughed. Her back was breaking. His chest, pressed hard against her face, was suffocating her.

He laughed again; wilder. As he spoke, his voice was thick.

"We are here alone, *cara mia!* When the day comes, we will be married by the *padre* in the little village on the island. We will stay here; it will be our honeymoon, until the Americano is gone. He will never know. He will not care. For your father, I shall adjust that little matter. I swear it. Adela . . . Adela . . ."

Exhausted, she dropped. There was nothing in her heart but prayer.

All at once, his long-nailed fingers ripped her dress, tore across her flesh, lacerating the tender skin—and left her entirely. It was as if a giant hand had

reached out and plucked him from her. Freed from the closeness of his body, she gulped in air—and stared.

There was a soul-satisfying thud, and Señor Villalobos hurtled across the room, to bring up with a crash against the opposite wall.

As in a trance, she continued to stare at the grinning, dripping apparition, clad in a skin-fitting blue bathing suit, who stood before her.

"Adela!" cried Lieutenant Jack Ellsworthy happily. "It's a good thing I decided to swim over here and have a look around this pirate tub instead of waiting until morning."

A SUDDEN movement behind Jack drew Adela's eyes. The vice president was not by any means out of the struggle yet.

"Look out—Jack!" she screamed.

The naval officer whirled. Villalobos rushed for the table, and Jack rushed for him. The vice president reached the table first. He jerked open the drawer, and Ellsworthy suddenly found himself staring into the muzzle of a glittering revolver.

"Back oop, Americano p e e g!" snapped the Costa Bellan. He sneered as his hand reached backward for the bell rope. "Now we shall see!"

As the two men narrowly watched each other, Jack mentally kicked himself. What a dumb fool he was! But he had thought he had landed a knockout blow.

"I am amaze'," said Señor Villalobos, "how you got here! Ees eet that the Americano Navee has turn pirates and sea robbers that eet ees allowed to their offeecers to come aboard a private sheep at night, and attack the captain of the sheep? No matter." He shrugged his shoulders. "Eet may be that I do not know how you got here, but," he paused meaningly, "I know how you leave. The penalty for piracy in Costa Bella ees death! And I am the government!" he cried, and drew himself to his full height.

Adela sprang before her lover, as if she would protect him from an attack.

"No, no!" she cried at Villalobos. "You cannot do that! You can't! You can't, I tell you. I love him. He is mine. You cannot kill him!"

She whirled, and flung her arms about Ellsworthy, dripping bathing suit and all. Jack gently stroked her silky, curly head. Meanwhile, his watchful eyes grimly returned the hate-filled glare of Villalobos.

"I cannot, *señorita?*" queried the vice president softly. "Een one moment, when my good Pedro and Juan shall come, I shall show you."

At that, she turned again to face her tormentor. Her words tumbled out in a hysterical flood.

"All right!" she cried. "You want me—take me! I cannot, I will not marry you! But I will follow you wherever you go, do whatever you ask. But you must let him go."

"Adela!" cried Ellsworthy.

At that instant, the door of the cabin opened silently, and a black, ugly face peered in. When it had taken cognizance of the situation, it disappeared.

Adela's words brought a look of cupidity to the face of Villalobos.

"Eet ees a bargain!"

The door opened again. In glided two huge Negroes, Pedro and Juan, personal bodyguard of Señor Villalobos, vice president of Costa Bella. Their white eyeballs, in their stupid, scarred face, rolled toward him for orders. In their fists they clutched the handles of long-bladed, gleaming machetes.

He started to wave them away when Ellsworthy took a threatening step forward.

"No, damn your monkey face, it's no bargain!" He turned to Adela. "Adela, you can't do that—you can't, that's all. But, thank you, dear."

Now, he turned back to Villalobos. As he did so, he pointed through the porthole, where the first jagged splinters of dawn were making a dark gray light.

"Listen!" he continued. "Take a look through that porthole! See what's out there? When I took off from that ship, I left an order. *That order will be carried out!*" He glanced at the clock on the wall. Involuntarily, all eyes in the room followed. "That submarine has the order that if I am not back on board her by five thirty, she is to let loose a torpedo!"

VILLALOBOS visibly paled. He snatched a hurried glance through the porthole. About five hundred yards away, he could just barely make out a grim, gray, sinister shape riding low in the water. Through the gloom, he could see a white letter and numbers on a squat, thick tower: "S-189." The nose of that undersea engine of destruction was pointing directly at the yacht! He licked dry lips.

"You would not dare!" he whispered huskily.

"No? Wait five minutes and see. I'd rather kill us all than let you have her."

With one accord, all faces except Ellsworthy's turned to the clock. Five twenty-five!

"Do you know what a torpedo will do to this match box?" continued Ellsworthy inexorably. "It will make kindling wood out of it. And it will scatter it all over the Caribbean. There won't be enough left in one spot to tell that there ever was a boat. You, all of us, will go with it. Now comb that out of your waxed tea-strainer!"

When Ellsworthy finished speaking, an atmosphere of tenseness gripped the room. In the silence, they could hear the clock ticking off the seconds, last seconds. They sounded as if they were made by hustling blacksmiths at anvils. And with each speeding second, the dawn became more powerful, overcoming the last shadows of night. Now, all in the room could see clearly through the porthole to where the steel submarine rested. They could see the little waves breaking where the exposed part of it met the water.

"You would not dare!" breathed Villalobos for the second time.

The more he thought of it, the surer he became that the American was doing what all Americans were noted for, "throwing the bluff."

They wouldn't dare torpedo a ship of another nation. It would be an atrocious crime. It would mean war; not only war with Costa Bella, but with other nations, more powerful ones, who would be glad for the excuse to make war upon the envied, hated United States. He laughed a little strainedly.

"Eet ees," he said, "a veree nice bluff. But eet does not work weeth me." His eyebrows came together with determination. "Pedro! Juan! Take thees Americano dog—"

Five thirty.

The girl screamed, and stared through the porthole with eyes of terror. She whirled about, and shrank against Ellsworthy. She closed her eyes tightly together, and shuddered. Ellsworthy, firm as a rock, held her. His face was a grim, serious mask.

Before the fear-bulged, incredulous eyes of Villalobos and his guards, it

was happening. In front of the submarine, something seemed to leap once in the water. Then, straight as an arrow, it raced at the yacht, leaving a band of white foam all along behind it.

"*Santa Maria!*" cried the vice president in anguished tones. This was no bluff. Pedro and Juan, whose faces were as near white as they would ever get in this life, dropped their machetes, and fled gibbering through the door.

Now Ellsworthy sprang into action. He grabbed the hand of the girl, who seemed frozen to the spot on which she stood, and yanked her toward the door.

"Come on!" he yelled.

A shot crashed through the room. A bullet splintered the door jamb. Beside himself with rage and terror, the vice president had fired.

"I weel keel you!" he shrieked. "Before we are blow' up, I myself shall keel you, weeth my own hand!"

With a single, swift motion, Ellsworthy shoved the girl in front of him, and through the door. Then he swung around.

No chance. Not ten feet away from him was Villalobos. The hand that pointed the revolver at Ellsworthy's heart had steadied itself. In his last moment, the vice president had found courage. His finger tightened slowly upon the trigger.

Just a second before the explosion of the gun, a jar shook the vessel. It was not such a tremendous shock, but just sufficient to deflect slightly, but enough, the muzzle of the revolver. As the bullet sped past him, Ellsworthy leaped.

AS Adela, from the doorway, watched the struggling men, she kept wondering, in the back of her mind, when the big explosion would occur. The torpedo had surely struck the yacht by now. It must have been that which caused the momentary jar. But what had happened to the terrific, rending concussion, which should have immediately followed? She was holding herself tensed, suspended, waiting for it. As if, when it did happen, she would have ever known about it.

Villalobos fought with the strength and fury of a wild animal trapped. He was as desperate as a man can be when he knows that his living moments are numbered. He scratched, dug, and gouged with his long-nailed fingers. He bit with his teeth. He kicked and squirmed.

Before the frightened gaze of Adela, the two men rolled and struggled across the floor. Now the vice president would be on top, seeking with his long fingers a grip on Ellsworthy's throat. Then the naval officer, by some sudden twist, would force the Costa Bellan to the bottom. Their labored breathing, coming from tortured lungs, filled the cabin with loud, harsh gasps.

Suddenly, like an eel, the slender Villalobos writhed from beneath. At the same time, Jack's head went back violently, and struck the wall. The resultant resounding crack wrung the girl's heart.

She screamed in fear, in appeal. Ellsworthy appeared to be stunned. With a maniacal laugh, the vice president leaped to his feet. He grasped a heavy chair, swung it over his shoulder and started to bring it down.

With rapidly clearing brain, Jack saw the descending chair. One foot lashed out, and caught the Costa Bellan in the midriff. He groaned. The chair slipped harmlessly out of his momentarily paralyzed hands.

In a flash, the naval officer was up. This time it was his fist that lashed out. His fist, with all he had behind it. It

caught the vice president squarely on the chin. He sank like a bag of cement dropped from the fourth story.

"Come on," gasped Ellsworthy to the girl, "before the rest of this bunch gets over their scare. We got to swim for it. Can you?"

She nodded her head.

"But the torpedo?" she got out, as they hurried to the deck. "It didn't explode."

"Nope," he grinned. "It wasn't that kind of a torpedo. I told them to fire a dummy; one of those we use for drill." Just before they plunged over the rail, he grinned again. "Just another one of those Navy ways."

## CHAPTER VII.

### COURT-MARTIAL.

IN the wardroom of the U. S. S. Bennington, Captain John Paul Jones Turnbull sat austerely upon the seat of authority. To one side of him was grouped a number of sober-faced naval officers. On the other side, among his brown-skinned associates and secretaries, sat Señor Don Julio Villalobos, malevolently regarding the proceedings. Separated by a little distance from the Costa Bellans was a very worried and very nervous Adela. With her was her father, a white-haired, rugged, distinguished-looking old man.

Captain Turnbull cleared his throat, and glared at the young officer standing erectly before him, eyes held straight to the front.

"Lieutenant Ellsworthy, this is an investigation of certain serious matters charged against you."

"Yes, sir."

"You are charged with assaulting, with intent to do great bodily harm, Dr. Julio Villalobos, vice president of the republic of Costa Bella, at a diplomatic luncheon on the twelfth instant. Do you desire to make any statement?"

Ellsworthy's reply came low, but distinctly.

"No, sir."

"All right. Commander Carson, will you please state what you know of this occurrence?"

Without granting his lieutenant a single look, Commander Carson launched into his version of what happened at the luncheon.

"Lieutenant Ellsworthy stated to me that he was going to the vice president to apologize for a certain episode which had previously happened. I saw the vice president get up from his chair to greet Lieutenant Ellsworthy. Then it appeared that Dr. Villalobos stumbled over his sword. He fell to the floor, and Lieutenant Ellsworthy ran to assist him, and, as he did so, he must have tripped; and he fell beside the vice president."

"What!" roared Captain Turnbull, purpling.

"Yes, sir!" snapped Commander Carson, staring him straight in the eye.

Captain Turnbull shifted uneasily in his chair.

"By thunder!" he fumed.

"Yes, sir."

"Don't stand there saying 'Yes, sir,' to me!" roared the captain. He turned his glare on the other naval officers. "Were any of you," he inquired sarcastically, "sober enough at that time to see a different version than this little love story which Commander Carson has just related? If so, please step forward."

Not a man moved.

"By thunder!" he ejaculated under his breath. He rattled the papers on

the table furiously. "That's all, commander," he said curtly.

Ellsworthy could not help grinning as the captain glared at him again. It was mighty good of Carson to testify that way. Of course, to one who had not observed the luncheon fracas very carefully, it might have looked the way the commander described it, but—

"SILENCE!" shouted the exasperated captain at Ellsworthy's grin. "Here's one you won't get out of so easily: You are charged with breaking arrest. You are additionally charged with mutiny against the United States for taking, without lawful order, or permit to do so, a ship of the United States Navy, to wit, a submarine, from its place of anchor. You are further charged with committing a piratical act by boarding a private vessel belonging to a citizen of a nation friendly to the United States, and assaulting said citizen, an official of said friendly nation, in the privacy of his own cabin."

The captain paused. A triumphant grin crossed his grizzled features. "Now, Mr. Ellsworthy," he continued, "what have you to say?"

After that question a silence fell upon the wardroom. The faces of the naval officers, more serious than ever, were turned toward the lieutenant in the middle of the room. Adela was leaning forward, her brown eyes glued to his face. In her lap her hands were nervously clasping and unclasping. With a pleased expression on his dark features, Señor Villalobos was toying with the freshly waxed ends of his mustache.

Ellsworthy's reply came clear and undaunted.

"I was doing what I thought was my duty, sir."

"What!"

"Yes, sir. I went to the aid of an *American citizen!*"

Captain Turnbull's voice was sarcastic.

"Who, may I ask, was the American citizen?"

"My wife. Adela Smith; who, on the afternoon of the twelfth instant, became Mrs. John Ellsworthy."

"But—but—" spluttered Captain Turnbull. "That doesn't make her an American citizen. She is a native of Costa Bella."

"Mrs. Ellsworthy," said her husband, "was born in the United States. At that time her father was an American citizen."

"Is this true, young lady?" Captain Turnbull roared at her.

She even found courage to smile.

"Yes, sir."

Captain Turnbull dropped back in his chair. So bewildered he was, that he thought aloud.

"Well, by thunder! Bless me, I don't know what to do!" He started figuring on his fingers. "Her father was an American citizen, but he isn't now. She was born in the United States, but she is the daughter of the Secretary of the Treasury of Costa Bella. She married an American naval officer. What is she? Damfiknow! Probably Irish!"

A TRIM sailor at that moment entered, and spoke in a low tone to the captain. Turnbull's head shot up in surprise. Finally he nodded his head. The sailor disappeared. Captain Turnbull turned and threw a peculiar look at the vice president.

A tramp of feet was heard coming down the hall. A file of *opera-bouffé* soldiers, led by a popinjay of an officer, entered the room. They proceeded directly to the vice president, who sud-

denly turned pale. While the soldiers arranged themselves sedately on either side of Villalobos, the officer extracted a long sheet of f o o l s c a p from his blouse and began to rattle off the contents thereof in Spanish.

"What's he doing?" demanded the mystified Ellsworthy of Adela.

Her face was a study in astonishment.

"They are arresting him for the theft of a half million dollars from the government."

"What!" cried the lieutenant. "I thought your father stole that money."

"Jack!" she cried indignantly.

"Excuse me, honey," he grinned. "You know what I mean."

After the forced departure of Villalobos, Captain Turnbull turned to Ellsworthy and his bride.

"Humph!" he snorted. But his eyes twinkled. "You're the luckiest dog that ever scraped the mud off the bottom with one of those damn' tin fish! You didn't know it, but there was a reason why the State Department had this fleet sent to Costa Bella. And," he continued, "judging by what has just happened, the mission is a success. The President of Costa Bella prefers to remain g o o d friends with the United States. He was able to solve this embarrassing diplomatic situation much more quickly, and more to the point, than I. Politics, in these countries, is a very funny thing.

"Lieutenant Ellsworthy!" He became stern again. "You are released from arrest and restored to duty—by reason of lack of evidence. The main witness appears—ah—to have pressing business elsewhere. As for your taking a submarine without authority, well" —he glared around at the captains of the various submarines—"in my opinion, I wish somebody would steal the whole damn' flock of them!"

ADELA turned to her father. "Do you think," she asked, "that the president knew all along that Villalobos was going to accuse you of stealing from the Treasury?"

Her father nodded his head. "I think so, Adela. They all wanted to get rid of me—until the fleet came. Then, it was just as Captain Turnbull said. The president suddenly decided that an American-born Secretary of the Treasury might not be a bad idea after all. So he s i m p l y seized this opportunity to double cross his partner, Villalobos. Tropical politics, my dear."

A determined hand pushed Ellsworthy aside.

"One side, lieutenant, one side!" commanded Captain Turnbull testily. "I haven't kissed the bride yet."

Pursing his lips, the captain closed his eyes and thrust his face forward.

"No, you don't, sir!" laughed Ellsworthy, snatching Adela to him. "I haven't kissed her myself since you had me put in irons."

"Aw, have a heart, Ellsworthy!" wheedled John Paul Jones Turnbull. "I had to put you in irons. If I didn't, there's no knowing what you would have done next! . . . Phew!" he burst out, and pretended to mop the perspiration from his forehead. "Do you always kiss 'em that way?"

"Just one of those Navy ways, captain," grinned Lieutenant Jack, finally emerging. "Just one of those Navy ways."

"And," smiled Adela, dutifully offering her red lips to the old sea dog, who didn't seem in the least reluctant, "the Navy way I like best of all!"

THE END.

*There was no sign of an opening in the stone cell*

# The Nine Red Gods Decide

***Jimmie Cordie and his five fellow-adventurers were time-tried soldiers of fortune in the far places of China — but that fortune had never before been such a cruel one for the reckless knights of the machine gun***

**By W. WIRT**

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**LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT**

ADVENTURERS of the far places of the earth are Jimmie Cordie and his fellow soldiers of fortune—big, Irish "Red" Dolan; the Fighting Yid—Abraham Cohen of Hester Street; the Boston Bean, alias Codfish or the Beaneater—John Cabot Winthrop of Back Bay, Boston; George Grigsby, tall, dark Kentuckian; and big, drawling Arthur Putney from Vermont.

Returning from helping Chieh-yu and his daughter Princess Chi Huan in Chinese Turkestan, they fall into a trap set by the War Lord Hsai of the city of Shun, who has sworn vengeance on them for slaying his War Brother K'ung. Decoyed to a ruined temple, Jimmie and Red disappear. The rest, with Shih-kai and his swordsmen of the dread secret order of the T'aip'ing, hurry to attack Hsai's city in the hope of rescuing their two comrades.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### INTO THE DRAGON'S LAIR.

THE house on the outskirts of Shun had been used for a sort of officers' club, and as the T'aip'ing came in through the windows, four of Hsai's officers stood by the door which was open. Hsai by

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chance had selected that very house to see the battle and had been there with his staff.

He was brave enough, as brave as most Chinese, but he saw no reason why he should stay, being commander-in-chief, and meet shock troops personally. As it was, he barely had time to get out of the building, leaving the four officers to hold the door long enough for him to order up men. So close were the T'aip'ing to him that as his officers bowed and stepped two to each side of the door, Shih-kai and three of his swordsmen were on them.

Hsai's officers were swordsmen of ability, but they faced some of the best swords in China, wielded by men who thought that their opponents stood between them and the "black-eyed, smiling one" on whose rescue they were quite sure their heads depended.

Shih-kai, his war-scarred young face now like that of a cold, merciless devil, engaged the young officer nearest the door on the right. The swords met and the officer parried the lightninglike cut. But he had no parry for the blade that started from where the parry ended in a slash driven by a moulinet of steel-like wrist, coming in a half circle from the right, neck high. The young officer went down, his head almost severed from his body.

As he fell, the officer on his left went down as did the one nearest the door on the other side. The one farther away on the left side killed the T'aip'ing that faced him. But his number was up and the respite was short—a matter of seconds. The T'aip'ing who stepped up was the War Brother of Shih-kai. There was a cut, a parry, a thrust, a parry, a feint that drew the blade of Hsai's man out of line, then a tierce point that went home.

"Get away from the door, Shih-kai!" shouted the Bean who had arrived as the last officer went down. "That's the boy! Let me speak to the gentlemen outside."

The machine gun was in action in the doorway before the words were out of the Bean's mouth—and, like Hsai's escape from the house, just in time. A company of swordsmen were coming up on the double. But the street was a narrow cañon between two- and three-story stone houses, mostly without windows fronting the street or having at the best one small cell-like opening above the door.

The oncoming Chinese filled it from side to side, and as the Bean opened up he swept the street from house to house on either side. The attackers did not even try to face it. The instant that first burst came, they started back to wherever they came from. Most of those who had been in the front ranks could not go back but lay still or writhing in the street.

As the Bean quit firing, the Yid and Grigsby and Putney arrived via the window. As soon as the Yid had clearance, the muzzle of his Browning slid out of the window at the rear and like the Bean he began to "speak to the gentlemen."

THE necessity of continued firing did not last much longer out there than it had in the street. The Chinese coming up from the canal bed and the road had absolutely no cover at all. They either threw themselves flat on the ground or turned and ran for the canal. The Yid might have stopped a second or so sooner than he did, but he was trying for a small bunch way out on the left by the road who were not running fast enough to suit him. He stood up with a pleased grin to find Grigsby looking at him.

"Oi, George," the Yid hastened to explain. "I thought maybe dot if I knocked it some of the staff officers off de tree, dare vould be less for—"

"What are you explaining to me for?" Grigsby asked curtly. "You know how much ammunition we have left as well as I do. It seems as if you always have a certain amount of—" He stopped as he saw the expression on the Yid's face, then went on, "It's all right, Abie, old kid. I'm a little fussed up about Jimmie and Red, I reckon."

"Here come some more callers," the Bean put in hastily. "They've got an old brass cannon."

Grigsby ran to the window. "We can't stay here. Right out and to the palace. We'll catch this trap-setting bird right where he lives. Get out with that gun, Bean. Go with him, Shih-kai. Putt, you and the Yid take the rear guard. Let's go! There's the palace on that hill. We'll sock this charge home."

The Boston Bean laughed, as his helpers picked up the Browning. "That's the boy, George."

The Chinese in the street wavered as they saw the lean brown muzzle of the machine gun appear in the doorway. Their old brass cannon was loaded and one of the gunners was blowing on a brand before applying it to the touch-hole.

He promptly dropped it and dived behind the gun-carriage. The Bean fired two bursts, then his helpers picked up the gun.

Out of that house into the street came an outfit that was as deadly and hard to stop as a wounded grizzly bear. First the Bean and a machine gun, then the T'aip'ing, then Grigsby, and close behind him, the Fighting Yid and Putney.

The company that had come in with the cannon turned and fled. They did not like the machine guns at all and when they saw the T'aip'ing swordsmen at close range, they liked them even less. All of the heads that had been peeking out of windows and over roof tops disappeared as if by magic.

"Now you see 'em und now you don't," said the Yid, with a grin.

"You'll see plenty, Mr. Cohen," Putney answered laconically, "if you will look back and up."

The Yid looked and swiftly knelt behind his gun, saying, "Oi, de houses und de roofs is leaking Chinks, ain't it? Watch poppa use de mop."

The Chinese from the canal bed and the side of the city facing the road, seeing that the defense had been withdrawn from the stone house at the rear, had closed in and were now coming through every opening. But they faced one of the most expert machine gunners in the Orient, and an equally expert rifleman who fired with true New England economy, getting the most for his outlay.

Putney and the Yid, ignoring the bullets that were beginning to hum and spatter on the walls around them, literally did what the Yid said, the mops being steel-jacketed bullets.

Grigsby ran back to them. "All right! Close up—we're going around the corner and across the square."

THERE was no resistance offered along the rest of the street. But when they got to the middle of the little square that was at the bottom of the hill on which the palace stood, there was a fast charge from all four sides.

Hsai had been notified of the break from the house while he was feasting with some of his officers in his gardens.

He had thought that he had the situation well in hand. The foreign devils were holed up in a stone house, he had plenty of men to send in, and he was confident that sooner or later the white men's ammunition would be exhausted. Then it would be a case of overwhelming them in a rush of swordsmen. His plans for torture had again seemed feasible and he was smiling when the messenger arrived. In that moment he heard the machine guns in action and sprang to his feet, the gloating smile gone from his lips.

These men had dared to approach his city and now, instead of fighting for their lives behind a stone barricade, they had further dared to try and shoot their way into its very heart.

Hsai snarled an order to an officer beside him to have his crack fighting troops brought up, withdrawing the ones he cared nothing about; then, being no coward personally, he ran to command them.

The charge was met and stopped by the guns of the Bean and the Yid before it had got halfway across the square. It was stopped—but at the cost of all ammunition but some twenty belts for the machine guns and what 30-30 shells were left in the cartridge belts—not many. All four had almost full belts of .45 cartridges left for their Colts.

"Up the hill!" Grigsby shouted. "We couldn't hold the palace. To that shrine on the left! Go through the palace with your men, Shih-kai. We'll cover you outside. Bring some official back with you. Get goin'. You shoot the way through, Codfish. No more from your gun, Yid; use your Colt."

Two belts more were used by the Boston Bean and all foes between them and the little shrine fell back—or down. As they made it, they could see Shih-kai lead the T'aip'ing through the door of the two-story palace of Hsai.

The shrine was built of wood and while it offered some little protection against rifle fire, it gave none at all against anything heavier. What it did do was to command absolutely any approach to the palace on three sides, being on a higher hill.

"Dig in," Grigsby commanded. "There's water here and—"

"Vat mit?" the Yid asked. "Ve got it no digging tools. I vish it dot ve vould find a sandwich or some—"

"Use your nose," the Bean suggested, grinning at his sidekick and starting his own trench with the heel of his boot. "Don't worry about any sandwiches, Mr. Cohen. You won't need any climbing the golden stairs, which you will be doing in a few minutes."

"I should vorry about dot, also. I vish I—vait, I see it some loose boards dot vill make svell spades. See, George, over by de—"

"Here they come trying to make the palace," Putney announced. "Show us later, Yid. Get on that gun."

"Just stop them," warned Grigsby, raising his rifle. "Let 'em know they can't make it—but save your ammunition."

After the first try, Hsai made no further attempt to enter the palace from that side or from any side that the shrine commanded. He drew completely out of sight all the troops he had, and a sudden unnatural-seeming stillness came over the city.

SHIH-KAI came out of the palace with eight men; the rest had died inside. With them ran an old man, dressed in the uniform of a high official.

"This dog," Shih-kai said, after

they arrived, " tells that none have been brought into the city as prisoners. He would know of it, had it been done."

" Ask him if he knew of Hsai's plans," Grigsby ordered.

Shih-kai spoke in Chinese and the old man answered, then Shih-kai said: " He did, yes. He is the ranking officer of the palace and of the prison. He tells of Hsai's actions when we arrived and is sure that something went wrong. He asks that his life be spared, being old and not a fighting man. He is sure that none have entered, as they would have been brought to him."

The Yid whispered to the Bean. " In again, out again, gone again—ain't it, Codfisher?"

" The ' in again ' is correct," the Bean answered, " except for the fact that we have never been here before. But as far as the ' out again ' goes, not so good."

Grigsby was talking and the Bean stopped to listen. "—his life will be spared. Tell him that he may live if he will go to Hsai and say that we will leave the city quietly, if we are unmolested."

The old man agreed to that eagerly and went down the hill in a dog-trot, so anxious was he to get away from the gleaming swords of the T'aip'ing that he had seen at work in the palace. In the hunt for the " Black-eyed Smiling One," the T'aip'ing had cut down all that stood in the way.

A half an hour later, an officer walked calmly up the hill under a flag of truce.

" The War Lord Hsai states that you will never leave his city alive. But if you surrender, he will make the torture short."

Shih-kai translated that curt statement and Grigsby smiled as he answered, " We will not surrender; and we will leave the city as we choose, after we have rested as long as we wished. When we do we will hunt for the War Lord Hsai and send him to join his ancestors in the cold darkness before we go."

The officer turned on his heel and walked down the hill and as he did, the Yid said, " And dot is dot. Vait till I dig it de trench a little deeper, Bean-eater, und den you and me go und hunt for something to eat, ain't it?"

" That's a good idea," the Bean agreed gravely. " We can probably find a restaurant open at this time somewhere down town."

" Bring me back a ham sandwich," Putney said. " While you are waiting for the Yid to get his trench deep enough, count your cartridges, Mr. Winthrop."

" Here it is," Grigsby said. " Jimmie and Red have disappeared into the blue, as far as we are concerned. In trying for them, we've got ourselves into a trap that is going to take some—"

" Vot kind of a trap?" the Yid demanded, straightening up from his trench. " Ve valked in—vy can't ve valk out de same vay?"

" We can, if you and the Bean will stop and get some more machine gun ammunition on the way back from that restaurant. How far do you think we would get on that walk with what we have, Mr. Ammunition-user?"

" Oi, George! For vy pick it on me? Beany shoot two to my von, all de vay."

" Which is past history," drawled Putney. " George, the best thing to do is to wait until night and then go over that wall at the rear of the palace. These birds that have us jammed don't like night fighting if they are like most Chinese, and we stand a pretty good chance of getting in the clear. If we get out there are plenty of places in the

hills we can make a better stand than here. Hsai can knock us off the Christmas tree at any time, here, if he's got any heavy stuff. Jimmie and Red aren't here and a running fight in the hills will make a lot of noise that they might hear, if they are loose and looking for us." It was a long speech for the taciturn Vermonter, and as sound as his suggestions always were.

"That's right," Grigsby agreed. "We'll pull just before dawn. These birds will be holed up against the cold more or less and those that are on watch will be full of hop. In the meantime I'm going to get some sleep. Shih-kai, stand guard with your men. Don't stay too long at that restaurant, Yid, you might miss the train."

"Dot being de case," the Yid said, as he curled up in his trench, "I don't think it I'll go mit, Codfisher. Vake me early, modder dear, for I'm to be kveen of de May."

Shih-kai's grim face smiled as the four men promptly went to sleep in the very heart of a hostile Chinese city, knowing that torture or death awaited them if they could not win out of it.

"Truly," he murmured to his War Brother, "the friends of the Black-eyed Smiling One are men unafraid."

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE UNDERGROUND TRAP.

JIMMIE CORDIE and Red had climbed over or worked their way around the ruins for some little while before Jimmie halted and beckoned the Chinaman up who had claimed to have been Dr. Harris's topside boy.

"Show us the exact place she was standing when she became frightened and ran," he commanded.

The man pointed down a narrow stone-paved walk and Jimmie and Red started down it. The two Chinese walked behind, about ten or twelve feet in the rear. About a hundred feet further on, there was a big pile of fallen stone in the way, forcing Jimmie and Red over to the left unless they wanted to climb up and over. The two or three steps they had to take to clear the obstruction brought them close to a standing wall.

"Ye would think now, wouldn't ye, Jimmie," Red said, taking off his hat to fan himself. "That herself would answer a call in American. Maybe-so she ran all the way—look out!"

The stone beneath their feet had dropped away. It had not moved because overbalanced; they had both feet on it and were about in the middle when it went down—not slowly, but as if it were falling through the air.

Red, with his hat in his hand, had absolutely no chance to draw a weapon. Jimmie Cordie, as fast always as a northern wolverine, had his gun half out before his head disappeared. Another stone slid swiftly from the wall across the hole and in a split second after the stone dropped, everything on top was as before except for the fact that there was no Jimmie Cordie or Red Dolan in sight.

They dropped about eight feet and lit on a pile of brush that had been put there to break the fall. Both of them got to their feet like big cats and as Red lit, his Colt also was out. It was absolute black darkness, but as Red drew, Jimmie Cordie's flash light went on and a moment later, Red's.

"Stand still, Red," Jimmie said calmly as he played his light along the smooth stone walls directly in front of him. "Throw your light over to the right."

Without moving, or speaking an-

other word they threw their lights around the four walls, the ceiling and the floor. Except for the pile of brush in which they stood, they were in an absolutely bare stone room, the walls within ten feet on all sides. There was nothing to show an entrance or any kind of an opening.

They could not see, in the beams of the flash lights, even where the slab of stone that had slid over to form the roof joined the walls.

Jimmie laughed. "Back over to the corner on the left, Red. Something will slide back in a minute. It won't be a corner. Snap your light out."

Red obeyed instantly and it was not until their backs were against the wall in the corner that he spoke.

"What the heck now, Jimmie?"

"Darned if I know, Mr. Dolan," answered Jimmie cheerfully. "All I know is that I stepped on a stone and fell through right after. You take a guess."

"I did the same. This damn place is so dark I could cut it wid me knife. Why did ye order out the lights, Jimmie, ye scut?"

"They lit up the whole works to a certain extent, you big ape. Enough to enable any one to take a pot shot at us through a loophole. Now, if you keep still we can hear anything that comes and maybe-so get a shot or two ourselves before we go 'on high.' They'll have to have some light and I'd a darn sight rather they held it than us. *Sabe*, Mr. Dolan?"

Red was silent for a moment then whispered: "I wonder now did the Bean and the Yid get dumped like we did."

"Maybe-so," answered Jimmie softly. "If they did, and as quick, there isn't much chance of George and the rest hearing anything. Shih-kai will come bustin' in, but it looks as if whoever framed this was hooked up to take care of—"

"What are ye stopping for, Jimmie?"

"Do you smell anything, Red?"

RED sniffed audibly. "I do not—beyant the damp, gravelike smell." He sniffed again. "I do, now. 'Tis like—like—now what the heck do be the name of that flower that stinks to—"

Jimmie made no attempt now to keep his voice down. "Cease searching for the name, old kid Dolan, and also put your gat up. What you smell is not a flower by a damn' sight. It's gas."

"What kind of gas?"

"Darned if I know. It's some kind of a narcotic gas. If you stay in it long enough, it's curtains. But if you are in an atmosphere that's composed partially of it and not left in it very long, you'll go to sleep. First you breathe hard and your face gets flushed and your pulse gets feeble and your tongue swollen and—"

"Enough," Red interrupted. "I see ye know the symptoms, ye shrimp."

Both of them laughed. In a pitch-dark, cell-like stone room under a part of a ruined temple in China, with gas seeping in, both laughed as if sitting in Grigsby's apartment in Hongkong.

"While there is time," Jimmie said, "I want to say that all in all, from the time I saw your red topknot in the Legion, I've had a good time at your party, Mr. Terrence Aloysius Dolan of Dublin."

"The same to ye," Red answered promptly, "and many happy returns av the day. Will it be all right, Jimmie, to put the flash on? If we are to go West, 'tis wan more look I'd like to have at the homely mug av ye."

"Go as far as you like," Jimmie answered, a little thickly. "It doesn't seem to be getting you, Red, as fast as it is me."

"It is," Red answered. "I feel as if I had the weight av the world on me chest. Jimmie, alanna, 'tis ye who have been always to me, like a—like a—there now, I do not know the words I want. Ye know how I feel, Jimmie."

"It's always been you and me, Red, in the last analysis," Jimmie answered gently. "Take it easy—old kid. We will—go—"

"Maybe-so ye think now that I'm afraid to go, ye half-sized portion av a shrimp?"

Jimmie laughed. "I know you are—you red-headed ape. I can hear your teeth chatter and—and—no, Red, you're not—"

"The wall! The wall!" shouted Red, his flash light steady on the wall to the left of them. "Jimmie! Come to! Heads up, Jimmie!" he pleaded. "Here they come! Are ye wid me, Jimmie?" His Colt was out and ready.

Jimmie Cordie, already relaxing against the wall, raised his head and with a terrible effort that took all he had of gameness, shook off the feeling of suffocation. He pulled himself straight, a smile on his lips, his Colt .45 in his hand.

"I'm right beside you, Red," he said clearly and distinctly.

Almost half of the stone wall on the left had slipped noiselessly back and now the light was like the gray of dawn.

Hsai's man who was in charge of the gas tank had made a mistake. He had figured the gas that had gone in had made the men in the room unconscious. It would have done so with the ordinary man, but both Red Dolan and Jimmie Cordie were in the pink of condition, as they were always from clean hard living in the open.

This man was a European chemist who after the war had taken service with Hsai's War Brother, the late unlamented K'ung. There is no question but that he knew gases and how to produce them, but what he didn't know—and it cost him his life—was the physical stamina of Red Dolan and Jimmie Cordie.

He had instructed the men that now massed in the opening to hold their breaths while they ran in and got the two men who by all laws of chemistry should be fully unconscious. As they waited for the side wall to slide back the chemist began calmly disengaging the tubes from the tank of gas in the corridor outside of the room.

Quite a little of the temple had fallen in, here and there, heaping loose stone and timbers. The part that Jimmie and Red were in was like a series of big and small caves.

THE Chinese started in, four of them, the rest standing in the opening or just back of it. Before their eyes could get adjusted to the darkness enough for them to be sure they saw the two standing figures, the room seemed to rock with the detonations of the heavy Colt .45's.

Red fired three times and Jimmie once, and the four Chinese pitched forward on their faces. The powder-smoke mingled with the remains of the gas, which luckily for Red and Jimmie was not of an explosive nature. The men still in the doorway let out a yell of terror and ran back along the corridor on either side.

"Outside, Red!" Jimmie panted, staggering forward.

As they reached the opening there was a swift rush of men from both left

and right. Hsai had announced that the foreign devils must be taken uninjured and that if hurt, the men responsible for it would be tortured to death; he had added that if the foreign devils were caught and then escaped, the same thing would happen.

It was lighter outside the door and the Chinese in the party assigned to aid the chemist could see that Jimmie was very weak and that the bigger man with the red hair was also swaying. Knowing Hsai and knowing also that the foreigner in charge of them would report any hanging back, they rushed in from both sides, bare-handed, relying on their wrestling skill once they got to close quarters.

That the deadly guns in the hands of the two men would no doubt wound or kill three or four of them, they knew, but that death was much preferable to the one that Hsai would hand out.

Red had reloaded as he started for the door and now, as the rush came he felt Jimmie Cordie's back come against his, as it always did in a tight place and he yelled a wild Irish yell of the love of battle. "Give 'em heck, Jimmie!"

With Jimmie Cordie in full possession of his mental and physical powers, the fight would not have lasted nearly as long. Slighter than Red and not nearly as heavy, he was like a black panther of the jungles of Brazil in quickness and strength.

Red emptied his Colt, holstered it, unslung his thirty-thirty rifle and began using it as a club. As he reached for it, he felt Jimmie's back slowly slip from his, but at the same time he heard the *pow-pow-pow* of Jimmie's Colt. Slower by far than his but still going.

Red turned and straddled Jimmie, who was holding his body off the stone floor with his left hand, firing up at the sea of faces and bodies that to his fading senses seemed like phantoms. If Red was fighting before from sheer love of fighting, now he began to fight like a buffalo cow in defense of its calf.

He charged the Chinese coming in at Jimmie, and the lighter Chinese went down under the crashing blows from the rifle stock like pins in a bowling alley. Red cleared Jimmie's front in that one charge, started after two or three that ran, stopped, turned and charged back on those that were left in his own territory.

They did not wait to receive him. The torture Hsai had promised was farther away, in that moment, than this red-headed devil who was bigger than any two of them and who had plainly gone mad. He was very close and coming closer, so they ran.

As they did, Red whirled around again and started back toward Jimmie who was trying to get up using the wall for support.

"Wait," Red commanded, "I'll carry ye."

FROM around the corner on Jimmie's side swiftly stepped the chemist. In his hand he held a Luger pistol and as Red spoke, he calmly raised it and fired point-blank at Red's right shoulder. Both Red and Jimmie, in the split second it took to see the action, knew that he was deliberately trying to cripple Red, not kill him.

As the man shot, Jimmie Cordie stopped trying to get up, slipping back to the floor, raised his Colt and put a .45 caliber bullet squarely between the eyes of the man who had sneered as he shot at Red. Hsai's chemist had paid in full for his mistake.

As he fell, Jimime said, "That's my last shell, Red. Load this gat for me."

"Wait till I load me own," Red an-

swered, dropping the rifle, the stock of which was shattered. "I'll do the family fightin' fer the both av us until ye come out of it."

"He got you in the shoulder, you big ape. Load this gat, then help me up. Bleeding much, Red?"

"Naw, 'tis nothin'. Gimme the Colt. Now, can ye walk, Jimmie darlin'?"

"I don't know. Give me a hand up. Holy cats, that gas sure made me—yeah, I can walk. Put your hand under my left arm. I'm getting better every minute. We'll go around the corner where that bird came from."

Red transferred his Colt to his left hand and slipped one brawny hand under Jimmie's left arm.

"What the heck is it all about, Jimmie?"

"Damned if I know. Some gent had it in for us and played spider and fly."

"Has he got the rest, do ye think?"

"I don't know that, either. If he has, you and I will—I can't talk much, Red. Wait till we get outside. My gosh, the air feels good."

Jimmie drew one or two deep breaths, then straightened up. "All right, Red. Let's go. I'm much better."

As he said it they came to what at one time had been a room beside the one they had been in, backing up to it from the rear. On the floor close to the wall was a steel tank, a little pump at the base and a tube running from the top of the tank into the wall.

"That's what he was sending the gas in from," Jimime said as he leaned against the wall for a minute. "Why the hell and high water he didn't put us clear under is—well, for Pete's sake!"

Red had seen a row of swords against the wall, left there by the Chinese that had started in after them.

As Jimime spoke Red was over to the swords. "Come and get ye wan, Jimmie."

JIMMIE laughed, not a very strong or full-chested laugh, but a laugh just the same. Red heard it and looked up. "So, 'tis back ye are. That time I felt the back av ye go away from mine—Mary Mother! I thought ye was gone!"

"Never mind what you thought. Pick out the one that appeals to you and let's go. There's a good-looking one over in the corner, Red. That one with the jade hilt."

"'Tis too light," objected Red. The fact that they were in some kind of a series of rooms underground in an old Chinese temple and without question surrounded by enemies, and the added fact that he had a bullet in the shoulder, made no difference to Red. Jimmie was up on his feet and able to laugh, and Red had some swords to choose from; and that was all that Terrence Aloysius Dolan needed at any time.

"Listen, you big red-headed—"

"The same to ye"—Red interrupted absently with a sword in each hand, weighing them and considering the beauty of the hilts—"ye shrimp av the world."

"Oh, my sainted Aunt Maria!" Jimmie said, sitting down on a fallen stone. "You and your darned swords! Well, make it snappy, Mr. Dolan. The Yid and the Bean are probably trapped and the good Lord knows what has happened to the rest by this time. Pick your sword out and let's go."

"If ye had the choice av 'em, now," Red said, "which wan av these two would ye take, Jimmie, alanna?"

Jimmie laughed, a real laugh this time. "You can't be beat, Red, do you realize for John's sake that we are

liable to get an attack any minute, or that this darn roof might fall in on us or what-not? And here you are picking out swords."

"And why not, ye pink-gilled shrimp? What attack could them scuts bring that we could not slap outta the way now that ye are all right. The bullet in me shoulder is in the muscles only. 'Tis sore I feel up there and some stiff, and that's all. Why should I not pick me a sword?"

"Go ahead and pick it, old kid," Jimmie answered cheerfully. "I'll wait. The sight of you jumping over me on that last charge of yours amply repays me for a little wasted time now, Mr. Dolan. Tell you what—cut the Gordian knot, take 'em both. I'll pack one for you."

"'Tis a fine idea," Red answered promptly, "and well worthy av ye, Jimmie darlin'. Are ye fit to travel?"

"I am."

Red handed Jimmie one of the swords. "You take this wan. Wait, give me your 30-30 to carry."

Jimmie took the sword in his left hand after Red had slung the rifle over the unwounded left shoulder.

They walked slowly through the mass of corridors, now more like tunnels, and through many rooms, some big, some small; but nowhere did they find any opening to the sunlight.

"What the hell kind av dump is this?" Red complained finally. "In and out and in and out, then round about and up and down."

"It's a cinch there is some way out," Jimmie answered. "The Chinese came in and they brought the gas tank in. Also, Mr. Dolan, there is a certain amount of light; but of course that may seep in through the cracks. If we can find a pick and shovel, you can start straight up, Red, and dig us out."

"And if I had a bucket av water in hell I could get a million dollars a cup for it," grunted Red who didn't care much about being underground or in any way penned up.

Jimmie laughed. "Has Ah lived to see de day dat Misto' Dolan's goat am jumpin' 'round and 'round?"

"Ye have not," Red grinned, "and well ye know it, Jimmie Cordie. Only 'tis outside I'd rather be, and so would ye and well ye know it also, ye—"

They were in a fairly big room, into which they had crawled over a pile of fallen material that closed the entrance to within two feet of the top.

Before Red uttered whatever blasphemous pet name he had in mind, a voice with an English accent called out, "I say, you chaps, go back through the doorway and turn to the left, then climb the stairs and push up on the rock that covers them. I couldn't budge the thing."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A KINDRED SPIRIT.

THE voice seemed to come from the ceiling. Before the second word was spoken both Jimmie and Red had their Colts out and ready. Once more Red felt Jimmie's back to his and this time it felt firm.

"Oh, I say!" the voice went on. "It's nothing like that, really. I'm in the same bally position myself and I haven't a weapon of any kind, you know. Please hurry, some of K'ung's men may be along any minute and jolly well scragg the three of us."

"What now, Jimmie?" Red demanded.

"Well, we better accept the gentleman's invitation. We can't do much else, Red," answered Jimmie calmly.

"It may be another trick, but for the moment, who are we to be choosey?"

"There is no trick," the voice assured, "word of honor. I say, you fellows better do what you Yanks call 'make it snappy.' The place literally swarms with K'ung's men."

"Which, of course, you are not," answered Jimmie. "All right, Mr. Voice, we shall go and push the rock up for you."

"And if ye are foolin' us," Red answered grimly, "and I get the two hands av me on the neck av ye, I'll twist it like a—"

"Don't threaten, Red," Jimmie chided, "unless you are in a position to do something."

"I said 'if,' didn't I? Do ye want me to boost ye up, Jimmie?"

"No, I can make it. I'm all right now. This double-damned sword of yours is in my way, that's all."

They climbed back over the pile in the doorway and after three or four paces found a flight of stone steps. They ran up about ten or eleven feet and seemed to end at a stone floor.

"All right," Jimmie called, as he and Red got as high as they could, "Here we come! Get that big back of yours against it, Red, and shove."

Red obeyed, in spite of the bullet in his shoulder that was making it sore and stiffer than he would admit. Jimmie, in the small crowded space, managed to get his shoulder under the stone also and together they shoved up. It gave slowly and Red grunted as he put all his strength into the push up. As it tilted, a pair of hands appeared over the edge and in a moment more, the stone went up and back like a trap-door.

"Righto," the voice said cheerfully. "Here, give me your hand."

"Get out av the way," Red answered, still breathing deep from the exertion. "Jimmie and me have got up outta worse holes than this widout help."

Red came up like a big grizzly bear coming out of his den and turning, even before looking to see who had helped them, took Jimmie Cordie's outstretched hand. Out came Jimmie's one hundred and seventy-five pounds like a jack-in-the-box.

THE slim, boyish-looking man dressed in soiled flying clothes chuckled as Jimmie's feet hit the floor.

"I say," he remarked to Red, "you are strong, what, what? Coming to grips with you would be like trying to outhug a polar bear, wouldn't it?"

Jimmie Cordie looked at the young man, whose clean-cut face was unmistakably English, and grinned. "Granted that Mr. Dolan is the strongest man in the world, where do we go from here?"

"First we'll put the jolly old stone back, what?"

Without a word they all stooped to the stone and turned it back. As it went into place Red straightened and demanded:

"And now, who the hell are ye, and what are ye doing here?"

"At the minute, the same as you are, old dear," the young man replied with a grin. "Dodging K'ung's men. I say, was it for you that our chemist friend was turning on the gas?"

"K'ung's men?" answered Red. "That scut has no men, me bucko wid the flyin' panties on. 'Tis dead he is, and a lot av his men wid him."

"K'ung dead? Since when? Then who— I say, you chaps are not by any chance trying to spoof the old man, are you? There isn't much time."

Jimmie laughed. "Let's sit down for a moment. There's a cross-fire here."

"Not here; come to my diggin's. We can see in every direction from there. I say, this is news to me. Is Hsai in control now?"

"We don't know the gentleman," answered Jimmie as they started. "K'ung is very, very dead, though. He was killed at Meng Wu by machine gun fire. Who, by the way, is one Captain Yao Wu?"

"He is one of the officers of the staff of Hsai, K'ung's war brother," answered the young Englishman promptly. "You know him?"

"Fairly well," answered Jimmie with a grin. "We met him personally a day or so ago. K'ung we only saw once or twice at a distance, but we heard quite a lot about him, haven't we, Red?"

"We have—and none av it good about the omadhaun, Jimmie darlin'," answered Red. "How long does it take to get out av here?"

"Not long—from where I hole up," answered the young man. He had been looking first at Red, then at Jimmie as they walked along, and then said: "I say! You're Red Dolan and Jimmie Cordie!"

"That's right," agreed Jimmie. "I'm Jimmie Cordie, and that small boy on your left is Red Dolan."

"My word! I thought you were, when you began speaking to each other. I've heard about you chaps ever since I landed in the Orient. I wish that I had—"

"What's the name av ye?" interrupted Red as they climbed some more steps this time that ended at a landing above.

"I'm John Cecil Carewe; and until I resigned to come and fly for this rotter K'ung, I was flight commander of the Essex squadron. I say, I'm glad to have met you chaps, and— Here we are at my chambers—not bad, what?"

"Darned good," answered Jimmie as he looked around the room they had entered.

IT was much higher up in the ruins than the ground floor, and while the roof was caved in on one side, it opened onto the blue sky. In one corner was a stone bench, and in the middle was a larger stone that served as a table. What was obviously more interesting to Red was the fact that the table was covered with things to eat, such as roast chicken and rice cakes, and there were several squat little stones or earthen jugs that evidently held wine.

"Where did you get it?" Red asked as he started for the table.

Carewe smiled. "This is a great place for the ancient and respectable worship of ancestors. They leave all kinds of food. Last week I had roast young suckling pigs and—"

"Give Red the bill of fare after we get out," Jimmie interrupted. "We have friends outside somewhere that are by now getting darned good and fussy about our being away so long."

"Friends! Outside? I say, I thought I heard four shots when I—"

"Ye did?" Red demanded. "Come on!"

"It may have been the Bean and the Yid," Jimmie said. "We better get started, Carewe. You can tell us later."

"I know you chaps know that I'm not afraid, but have you enough men to stand off any attack in force?"

"Have we?" mumbled Red, his mouth being fairly full of roast chicken. "We have, young feller me lad. We have enough, once we are all together, to stand off all the Chinks in China, and then some."

Jimmie grinned. "By that, Mr. Dolan means that we have four other men out there and some swordsmen, also two Brownings. Let's go."

"You have enough if the rest of them are like you chaps," answered Carewe. "I say, are they the other men that you both are usually with? The one called the Yid, and the Bean and—what were the other names?"

"Grigsby and Putney," supplied Jimmie as they started. "Yes, they are all there, or ought to be. The Yid and the Bean started in to do a little searching the same time we did. Red, give Carewe the rifle. You know how to work a Winchester, Carewe?"

"Yes; lever action, isn't it? My word, it feels good to get something in my hand again."

"Here's the belt that goes with it. Give Carewe your belt also, Red. He can take command of the rifle brigade. Got anything here you want to pack?"

"Nothing except what I stand in. I say, could I call you Jimmie and Red?"

"Ye can," answered Red, picking up a whole chicken, much to Jimmie's amusement. "Quit laughin', ye scut. I'm takin' this to Putt. He loves 'em."

"So does the Yid. Take two of them, why don't you?"

"How can I, wid dis sword and me Colt? Well, I might, at that." Both Jimmie and Carewe roared as Red tucked two chickens under his left arm.

"Lead the way—Jonathan," Jimmie said gravely to the Englishman. "The commissary is all hooked up."

AS Carewe led, Jimmie told him of K'ung's assault on Chieh-yu's city, of their part in it, of the trap that had been set there, and how he and Red at least had fallen into it. When he finished, Carewe started in.

"I came out to fly for K'ung because the blighter offered more pay for a year than I could draw in six at home. One day I ran out of petrol and landed to get some near the city of Shangtow. I went in and got some, fussed around for an hour or so, and then took off. I got home all right, and told K'ung what c a u s e d the delay. About a week after that there was a surprise attack that very nearly captured the city, and who do you think it was made by?"

"Seeing you here," answered Jimmie with a grin, "my first guess is that it was made by the War Lord of Shangtow."

"C'rect," answered young Carewe with a grin. "And what made it worse, old dears, was the fact that it came down t h r o u g h a pass that K'ung thought only he and his War Brother Hsai and a few higher officers knew about."

"Including Mr. John Cecil Carewe, his flyer," supplied Jimmie.

"Double c'rect this time," answered Carewe cheerfully. "Then what happened, Mr. Fortune Teller?"

"The chief of the flying department was placed under grave suspicion, and, hearing about it, took on the well-known lam?"

"C'rect as far as the first part goes. What is this lamb thing? I—there was no l a m b connected with it, to my knowledge."

"Lamb thing? Oh, I see. In the language as she is spoke by Yanks, Jonathan, l-a-m—not l-a-m-b—means to run. You take it on the lam—you run, see? A lamster, a man who runs. The same as 'make your elegant.' Is that clear to you?"

"'Tis way back ye are, ye scut," Red announced through a mouthful of chicken.

"Why, I think it is," Carewe answered. "Quite expressive, what? Lam, run; elegant, run also. But to get back to our muttons—my word, there's a real pun, what? See, lam—lamb—mutton. Not bad, what?"

"Darned good," answered Jimmie gravely. "But to get back, as you say, what happened to you?"

"Why, just as you guessed. The good War Brother Hsai and I never—er—took tea together; and when the attack was repulsed he suggested to K'ung that I had tipped off the path to the War Lord of Shangtow. I pointed out that if I had done so, I would hardly have come back and told them of my visit, but K'ung said that was just what I would do to throw off suspicion. Cagey chaps, these Chinese, what?

"I went back to my quarters, leaving K'ung and Hsai to argue it out, and when I reached there I found one of the palace officers whom I had chanced to do a favor. He told me that Hsai had persuaded K'ung to order my arrest, to be tortured until I confessed. So, from where I stood, I—took it—on the lam. Ha! That's neat, what, what?"

Both Jimmie and Red laughed with the gay, reckless-eyed young flyer, whom they had both promptly accepted after the first look.

"I made it out of the city after trying for my bus and failing. I holed up in the woods all day and at night I traveled toward the river. I got as far as the temple here and was resting up, having found the food and what not. Then I saw what I thought were K'ung's men coming, so I dug in a little deeper. When I smelled gas I knew that the chemist—whom I didn't like either—must be around somewhere, so I started to do a little scouting. I was going to fog up his giddy game if I could. I heard you chaps underfoot and peeked down through a crack. So there you are, old beans."

"Supposin' ye would have run onto some av them Chinks wid swords," demanded Red with a grin as he waved a chicken leg. "What would ye have done, me foine banty, widout a sword or a gun?"

"Tried for one of theirs," Carewe answered promptly, "or—what the deuce was it?—Oh, yes, or taken it on the lam. By George! I'm getting fair at that talk, what?"

"You are," Jimmie answered as they suddenly stepped out into the open air. "This isn't the side we came in on."

"This is the south side. You must have come from the west, the river side. We can swing around."

A SMALL party, ten or twelve Chinese, burst from the timber, not more than a hundred yards away, and charged. They were armed, this party, and dressed in the nondescript uniforms of the Army of the North. Four or five stopped for a moment and blazed away with their army rifles, but, as usual, the muzzles were more or less pointing up in the air.

"The nerve av them scuts," Red growled as he carefully laid his chickens down and drew his Colt. "If the chickens get dirty I'll be as mad as—"

*Pow-pow-pow-pow-pow!*

Carewe raised the 30-30, a happy smile on his face, and Jimmie, as he saw that expression, smiled also. He had sensed that the young Englishman was as game as the breed he came from, but he had not seen him in action. Carewe calmly unloaded the magazine, then lowered the rifle to reload. An expression of sorrow blend-

ed with deep disappointment took the place of the smile as he saw that after he reloaded there would be no more bandits to shoot at.

"I say," he protested. "You chaps shouldn't try for them all with revolvers, you know."

"And what were ye doin' wid that Winchester?" demanded Red sternly. He had also seen the little smile on Carewe's lips. From that minute on, the young Englishman was counted as one of Red's friends. "Playin' ring-around-the-rosy wid them, ye small-sized portion av nothin'?"

"You took a little more than your share, Jonathan," Jimmie added.

Carewe laughed and finished his reloading. "I've heard about what you chaps could do with a gun," he said, "and now I've seen it. My word, what shootin'!"

"Who was them Chinks?" asked Red as they started.

"I don't know. The woods are full of disbanded armies and all that. Probably a bunch that just arrived from somewhere. They saw us and thought they would look us over."

"Well," said Red grimly as he tucked his chickens under his arm once more, "they did it."

The three men walked around the ruins, not slowly, but in no hurry whatever. If hungry eyes watched them from the timber, there was no attack. What had happened to one party was more than enough to make others confine themselves to just watching.

In about ten minutes they came to the place where Captain Yao Wu's body lay almost alongside of Hsai's decoy who had paid for his mistake with his head. Jimmy looked at the body.

"Four holes—that means that the Yid and the Bean got back," he said slowly; "unless George and Putt fired twice—and they wouldn't need to. They found out that this bird knew something he wouldn't tell—or he did tell and then made a break."

"Here's the shells," Red announced as he picked up four empties. "Wan here and wan there and two close together."

"Fair enough, Red. Well, here it is, as I dope it. Something happened that made them suspect Yao Wu. He tried to get away, or at any rate did something that made them all crack down on him at once."

"'Tis right ye are, ye scut," answered Red. "Here is the Colt ye lent him on the junk."

"He started to draw, and they let him have it. Now turn that bird's head over, Red."

Red carefully put the chickens down and did as ordered. The head of the Chinaman slain by Shih-kai was hanging to the body by a thread of flesh, face down. Red lifted it for a moment, then let it drop.

"'Tis the wan that went down the path wid us," he announced.

"That's right. Well, that simplifies matters. He made some break, or told, and Yao Wu tried to—"

"Make his elegant," interrupted Carewe, without meaning at all to be flippant in the presence of death.

"That's right, John. He tried to make his elegant," Jimmie concluded gravely, knowing in what spirit the young English flyer meant it. "The fact that the bunch has pulled out means that they have got it in some way that we are supposedly being taken to the city. Only thing to do is to catch up with them as soon as possible. Counting the time we were in the hole and all, they must have three hours

start on us. We ought to—we ought —damn this fog! Why, I can hardly see a—"

Jimmie swayed and would have fallen if both Red and Carewe had not caught him.

"What is it?" demanded Red as they eased Jimmie to the ground. "Is he dead? Jimmie, ye damned scut—come to!"

"He's not dead," Carewe answered. "Feel his heart. Overplayed his hand after the gas. He's got to rest, Red, and have absolute quiet. Let's carry him over there where we can make hole up. I've seen that gas work before. By morning he'll be all right, if he lies flat on his back until then."

"He will," promised Red as he lifted Jimmie in his arms. "He will, if I have to sit on the spridhogue all day and all night. You be the army, now, till we get there."

The place Carewe indicated was one of the little outbuildings that had fallen in. It made a perfect little fort, as there was a spring of clear cold water in one corner and more than enough stones lying around to make a roof as well as to fill up the gaping holes in the sides.

Red laid Jimmie gently down on the ground and tucked his coat under him for a pillow, then helped Carewe build the fort. After it was finished, he sat in the opening facing the north and east, and Carewe sat at a peephole that faced south and west.

"Now let 'em come," Red announced grimly as he lighted a cigarette after passing them to Carewe. "You and me will make 'em keep quiet so that Jimmie can rest, if we have to shoot hell outta all China."

Carewe laughed softly. "Tell me about your outfit, Red," he requested, as he settled back comfortably. Not half as big as Red and bred from a different strain, inside they were as much alike as twin peas in a pod—at least in their reckless daring and contempt for all danger.

**TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.**

## *The Sacred Tooth of Buddha*

THE inhabitants of heathen nations have long reverenced the teeth of departed ancestors. The owners or worshipers of such teeth believe them to be protection from enemies or malevolent demons. The kings of Angola—Portuguese West Africa—firmly believe in the marvelous power of teeth, for each monarch is presented with a tooth of his predecessor. These teeth are kept in a strong box which is crown property, and without which it would be impossible to exercise regal authority.

Perhaps the most renowned of all these sacred teeth is the celebrated Tooth of Buddha which is enshrined in a beautiful temple at Kandy, India, and is revered by four hundred and fifty millions of people. This sacred tooth was once sold for many millions to the King of Burma, and it is reported to have survived miraculously many attempts to destroy it.

*Millard A. Adams.*

"Where am I?" he muttered

# The Man Who Played God

***Barton Thrall, Adirondack landowner and riverman, was clever and strong — and he needed both traits when he sat in the Judgment Seat over his neighbor-enemy***

***By WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE***

IN the total darkness of a corner of the big living room Barton Thrall sat with a mighty patience and waited for his enemy to deliver himself into his hands. Starlight, filtering in, touched with gray the center of the room, but the corner where Thrall was alert in a straight chair lay in all-concealing blackness.

From his position he could see the faintly outlined squares which were the windows. He could see the looming bulk of his high, old-fashioned rosewood secretary. Anything that came in at a window would be a blot against the dim light outside, and he could follow its progress to the secretary. No more than this was needed for the purpose that was in the heart of Thrall.

He was a big man, but well put together, and he could move with marvelous quickness. It had been necessary, on the river, to have a sure foot and hand and eye; and the strength of heart and limb of two or three ordinary men. A good man is needed to ride a rolling log, and one better than good to boss a turbulent gang of river drivers.

Barton Thrall had done these things. He had made men and logs obey him; and if he could not command the river he could at least defeat it.

The ticking of the big wooden clock that had been old when Thrall was a boy came evenly across the stillness of the room. For a long time there was no other sound, except the occasional

feeble protest of his chair when he shifted to ease cramped muscles. Then, very faintly, a scratching came from outside. A blob of darkness moved against one of the small window panes. Thrall leaned forward. Ansel Gregg had come.

There was some delay and Thrall guessed what the man outside was doing; he was glueing a sheet of paper over the glass so it would not fall when he broke it. The neighborhood knew that Barton Thrall was his own watch-dog, and a good one. He smiled grimly to himself in the darkness. A muffled thump came from the window. Now Gregg would be reaching in for the catch. The window slid up with no more than a whisper of sound. The square of light was darkened.

The feet of Gregg had made no noise when they touched the floor, but a board creaked and told Thrall that he was halfway across the room. The bulk of the secretary seemed to swell as Gregg reached it. His breathing came to Thrall. Now he would be tugging at the locked drawer wherein was hidden the bait of this trap. It was time for the jaws to close.

Of course Ansel Gregg's ears, fear-sharpened, heard movement in the room as Thrall sprang for him. But so swift was the plunge of the big man, and so short the distance, that Gregg had no more than time to turn half around before viselike hands closed upon him. Thrall lifted him into the air with a hiplock and hurled him to the floor with a force that jarred even that well-timbered house.

There was cold metal in the hand of Gregg when his captor fell upon him. Even as it was wrenched out of his grasp a narrow stream of flame ran along the darkness and the heavy report of a pistol filled the room.

Thrall's prisoner lay still now. It was not necessary for Barton to close the fingers which were sunk into Gregg's throat. Barton Thrall rose cautiously and made a light.

THE big nickel lamp illuminated even the far corners. It was a pleasant room, and very comfortable, although somewhat grim by reason of the mahogany furniture upholstered in brown rep. It had been thus for a great many years, and Barton Thrall himself was like the room, in a manner; strong, enduring, grim, but with the deep-set eyes of a dreamer. Youth still lingered in his rugged face.

He looked down upon Ansel Gregg, sprawling with slack jaw. Thrall heaved him up to a chair, and the prisoner groaned.

Gregg was well fleshed, but not fat; he was one of those muscular men whose strength is partly concealed by rounded body and limbs. Life came again to his bold eyes. He brought his head up with a jerk and gripped the arms of the chair. Slowly, as realization of what had happened came to him, he grew afraid. Fear was written in the sudden shifting of his glance, from window to doorway to the tall man standing over him. His mouth worked, but he did not speak at once.

"I've got you now, Ansel," said Thrall, after a time. "We'll have a talk pretty soon."

"You!" Gregg choked; then loosed a flood of abuse as rage overcame his discretion.

"I know you hate me," said Thrall, when the tirade ended. "Cuss, if it makes you feel better. For after I get through with you, Gregg, you won't have the spirit to cuss! No, nor do much of anything else, either. I know the dirty trick you played me to-day.

After you left here you sold out from under me that land I wanted!"

"It was mine!" Gregg gasped.

"By law it was! But the money over there in that secretary wasn't yours . . . I saw the way you looked at it this morning!"

Ansel Gregg swallowed. He started convulsively, and sank back in his chair.

"Well—what you going to do?"

"Listen a minute." The voice of Thrall was so low, so repressed that it sank almost to a whisper. "We never liked each other very well, Ansel, but since I left the river to stay home here I've treated you all right. But you had your eye on my south pasture. Always wanted it, didn't you?

"We all know the old surveys don't stand up very well." Thrall went on, without waiting for an answer. "When this country was settled they didn't care about a few acres more or less. So you had our line resurveyed and you sliced off twenty acres of my land! That's land my gran'ther cleared!"

"I got a right—" Gregg tried to interrupt, but Thrall stopped him with a gesture that was warning of a blow.

"It's legal!" Thrall growled. "But it was like slicing a hunk of meat off my ribs. Then I figgered if I offered you ready cash that you could look at, and a good price, you'd sell my own land back to me. That's why I had the money here this morning. You got an idea that was better than selling to me, I guess. I could see you thinking. I thought you planned to steal the money, and keep the land.

"I didn't know then that you'd had an offer for that south pasture; but before noon I heard in Valeboro that you'd sold to Abner Gaylord. It was then I made up my mind to get you, Ansel, right where I got you now. I bought one of your notes and had 'em call you to the bank. I wanted to make sure you'd try to rob me, right away.

"I spoke to Sim Barnard, the president, right in front of you about bringing back the cash I'd drawn to-morrow. I let ye smell the bait, Ansel! Paying up that note made you hurry. You had to go on with what you'd thought of this morning. You fool, I'd have paid twice what I offered, for my grandfather's land."

GREGG licked his lips. "I'll buy that land back, Bart, and let you have it. For—for nothing!"

"Not for nothing, Ansel. I wouldn't be beholden to you. But you're right about buying it back. You're going to get that land and sell it to me!"

"If Gaylord'll sell—"

"He'll sell, for enough. I'll furnish the money and you'll pay me back." A slow, terrible smile appeared about the mouth of Thrall. His eyes did not smile. He sat down at the secretary, half facing Gregg so that he could watch him, and unlocked a small drawer. Inside there were some neat, thin packets of money, just as they had come from the bank. Thrall took out a slip of white paper and looked at it.

"Here's a demand note, Ansel," he said, "for five thousand dollars. It's made out to me. Come here and sign it. You'll be good while I hold this!"

"What? You dirty—"

"Hold on!" thundered Thrall. "I let you cuss all you wanted to. It's time for business now. Come here."

"I won't!"

"Got any idea how long you'd stay in prison for attempted burglary and assault with a deadly weapon?"

Ansel Gregg had been leaning forward in his chair, as though he were

ready to spring. Now all the power went out of him with a rush. His head dropped to his hands. Thrall had threatened something which was, to either of these mountain men, worse than death.

"That'll clean me out!" Gregg raised his head. The color had been stricken from his face.

"It would if I ever collected it," said Thrall, "but I don't calculate to steal anything from you. Come over here and sign!"

He rose from his chair to give place to Gregg, but not for a moment did his watchfulness relax. Ansel Gregg crossed the room unsteadily and sank down before the secretary like an old man. He picked up the pen; and turned to look up at the silent figure that towered over him.

"What'll you do after I sign?"

"From now on," Thrall told him, slowly, "you're going to take orders from me. Every day you're going to do what I tell you until our account is squared. It'll be quite a while before you get enough together to pay the price Gaylord is going to ask. I'm boss. That's what the note's for. If you don't do as I tell you, the note goes to the bank for collection!"

Ansel Gregg sprang to his feet, livid with rage.

"Sit down!" roared Thrall.

Gregg dropped to the chair. He leaned heavily, reaching for the note and the pen with trembling fingers.

"So far as you're concerned, Ansel," said Thrall, "I'm God Almighty!"

BARTON THRALL was the master of his enemy's fate; the captain of his daily life. He ordered the work on Gregg's farm, and when he needed help he brought Ansel over to work for him. Thrall had met the staggering price that Gaylord asked for the land he wanted. Now Ansel Gregg was a slave working out that price.

Thrall was instinctively and fundamentally an honest man; he kept strict account of the services rendered by Gregg, of every dollar taken in for farm produce. It was in his mind to allow Ansel a fair price for the twenty acres in the final settlement. While he felt that by some right higher than man-made law the land belonged to him as it had to his ancestors who had cleared it, yet he was willing to yield to the law of the books and buy back his own.

Ansel Gregg did not understand all this. He hated with a bitterness that grew from day to day and from month to month, feeding upon itself and waxing great. To no one could he speak of the thing that had happened to him, for that would be to confess a humiliation and a defeat which were almost unbearable even while they remained secret. Moreover, it would be to confess a crime.

Thrall understood exactly what was in the mind of the man who came and went and did all things at his bidding. Sometimes, strong though he was, he shuddered at the fierceness of Ansel Gregg's hatred. It was a poison; a miasma. But, he told himself, it could not harm him. Gregg had been the undoing of Gregg. Now he was paying. Let him hate; he would in no way be released until the debt was paid.

At first, all through the summer of his victory and the autumn following, Thrall knew a feeling of triumph. Not only was the land restored to him but he had won a fight. He was still young like Gregg; a man in the very prime of

life. His days on the river were not far behind and a battle was a savage joy.

It was not until winter, when the roads were blocked with snow and movement about the country was difficult, that the savor left the triumph of Barton Thrall and he began to wish that the affair were finished. At times he wished this and at other times he took a strange and disturbing pleasure in walking over to the house of Gregg, five minutes down the road from his own, and giving orders.

Thrall lived alone, although he could well have afforded a housekeeper and a man.

Before the affair of the twenty acres he had intended to get help, but after that he understood that secrets are best kept where there is no one to dig them out. Gregg had no money to buy companionship. His earnings were a sacrifice upon the altar of the terrible god his greed had created.

Thrall brooded, and as the days of winter grew more and more irksome he became the victim of imaginings. He could no longer go out in his car, and it took time to drive to Valeboro and back with a horse. There would be time enough, while he was absent on that long trip, for Ansel to work out some devilish scheme. The desire for revenge was in the man's face, his eyes, every time his master looked at him. Or so that master fancied.

What could Gregg do? If he burned the house and barns there would be insurance. Perhaps he knew that. But did he know also that no money could replace, for Barton Thrall, that heavily built old house where three generations of Thralls had lived and died? Bart Thrall worried, and the lines seamed in his face grew deeper. They seemed to reshape themselves until he was not sure what man he saw looking back at him from his shaving mirror.

IT was on a day in January, that month when the northern mountains have been cold a long time and there is yet no sign of returning life, that Thrall went to Ansel Gregg's door with a new purpose. He struck the door a blow that cracked one of the panels; he glowered when Gregg faced him, snarling, from the other side of the threshold.

"Bring your trunk up to my house for the rest of the winter!" ordered Thrall. "I can watch you better there, damn ye! I'll be glad when this is over!"

A light leaped into the eyes of Ansel Gregg. Thrall realized instantly that he had shown his first sign of weakness, and he hated Gregg the more for seeing it. But it was something he could not help. He was a brave man. He wanted the thing he feared face to face with him; not hiding at a distance, ready to spring. Let Gregg try something now, if he dared! What? Thrall did not know. He knew only that he feared some evil.

Now began a strange and unholy life for the two men. This command to move to new living quarters was the first one that Ansel Gregg had obeyed with pleasure; it became obvious to Thrall that the man wanted to get at him.

How? Gregg was not going to tell. But there was something in his mind which gave him a dreadful joy. It gleamed in his eyes as he looked across the table at Thrall during their silent meals; it shot glances like venomed darts at times when it appeared that the master of the house was not looking.

Through the long evenings Barton Thrall read, or made a pretense of

reading, in the living room. Gregg had refused his curt invitation to sit there. He stayed in the kitchen until bedtime, alone, at times twisting his hands over and over each other while he sat with elbows on knees before the fire. Thrall could hear the rasp of the callouses on the hands of Ansel Gregg. He was acutely conscious of each movement when Gregg rose to put wood into the stove, to fill his pipe.

The winter dragged into March and it seemed to Thrall that fair weather would never come again. He allowed the rare warm days to arouse him to hope, although he knew better, and suffered bitter disappointment when the relaxing fingers of the frost tightened their grip once more. He began to believe that Nature was malevolent, jealous of this man who had usurped so much power. It seemed as though there was something personal in these thaws and little blizzards and heavy rains which tied him to Ansel Gregg after a long winter of suffering.

It would take Gregg the rest of the year to pay off his indebtedness. But Thrall was not so concerned with the future as he was with the present. Now was the time for his suffering. Later he would be able to stay out-of-doors; to drive, making Gregg go with him if he liked.

The long stretch of the past winter and the ever-present fear of what Gregg had in his mind had come so near a climax that at times Thrall thought he could bear the isolation no longer.

He dared not leave Gregg. Nature had caged them together there on the two farms. Barton Thrall was worn to a bony caricature of himself—a sunken-eyed creature of nerves and of brooding.

The ice wore out along the river banks and lifted perceptibly at the heaving of the flood underneath. Dark water ran in streams on each side of the ice bridge that had been two feet thick a short time before and as solid and firm as the frost-bound hills themselves.

The surface of the river looked greenish-gray under the clouded skies. It was to be expected, as April drew near, that the ice would break any warm day and go out in a mighty thunder of waters.

NOW Ansel Gregg spent all his free time watching the river, and there was a good deal of that free time. Work in the woods had ceased with the break-up of winter, and the ground was not yet ready for spring plowing. Hour after hour Gregg walked up and down the bank, staring at the slushy, honeycombed surface of the river as though he were urging it to do something. So it seemed to Thrall.

What did the man want? What was he waiting for? Was the river to him a symbol of freedom and did he find a kind of companionship with it in its struggle to shake off its bonds? Thrall wondered. He knew that he would like to shake off his own chains, but he was grimly determined to see the thing through to the end, meting out justice in the way he had chosen. Not even the invisible menace which seemed to press closer and closer could shake this resolve.

The night when the ice broke up Ansel Gregg did not go to bed. All night he sat by the kitchen stove, rising at intervals to open the kitchen door and look out into the blackness of a rain-swept world. The thunder of the ice blocks boomed continuously. At times the house, solid as it was,

trembled a little. Thrall could not find at all that sleep which had been so difficult to court lately.

At last he unlocked his bedroom door and finished the night smoking in the living room. He thought the shoulders of Gregg, when they framed themselves in the kitchen doorway against the night, were held straighter than they had been at anytime since that night when the man had chosen this servitude rather than a prison of stone and bars.

The next day Gregg wandered beside the brown flood that rose to the top of its banks, wandered with a pike pole in his hands, although he made no attempt to strike for the bits of driftwood that swept in close to the shore. He let a new plank go past, a good crate, some slabs which would have made fine kindling. He appeared to be waiting for something.

It was on the second day that Gregg caught a good saw log; a thirteen-foot stick of timber which was fully sixteen inches in diameter. It had strayed, of course, from some millpond; or it had been carried down from a waiting pile in the lumber woods. If the drives had not started already they soon would.

For that reason Thrall wondered why Gregg chained his log to an iron bar driven into the bank. It would surely go down with the first rush of timber from the woods.

The following morning a small detachment of bright-shirted river drivers went past the house, with canthooks clanking over their shoulders. They meant that a drive was coming immediately; their post would probably be at Dunder Falls, and the rapids below, to make sure that no jam formed there.

Ansel Gregg showed that he was repressing a vast excitement as the river drivers disappeared beyond a bend in the road.

BEFORE noon of that day the first of the logs began to come down the river. Thrall saw them from the doorway of the horse barn, where he was idling away an hour. The glistening black timbers shot downstream on the breast of a racing current. They drove like great lances, sometimes rolling a little as they were hurled onward. The first scattering logs were followed by groups of four and five, a dozen; soon the river would be black with them.

It was then that Ansel Gregg came briskly up from the river bank. He walked toward the barn. His face was lighted strangely and Thrall saw that the hand with which he pointed toward the river was trembling a little. The other hand hung at his side, holding an iron bale-hook with which it would appear that he had been working at his stick of timber.

"You and me could drag out that log I caught now, if we wanted to," he said. "The water's come up, so it won't be much of a lift to get it over the bank."

So that was what Ansel had been waiting for, thought Thrall. He had been stupid enough to read some unknown evil into a thing like that; the log would be worth a dollar or two at the mill.

This was one of the few times in all that winter Gregg had spoken, except when he had been spoken to. Thrall was pleased.

"All right," he said, and stepped down from the doorway to go to the river.

Gregg stood aside. The instant Thrall passed him he felt danger and

started to spring away. It was too late. He half turned in time to see a blow descending. Then the world vanished in blackness.

WITH consciousness, pain came to Barton Thrall. By that he knew that he must be alive, but so vast was the suffering which engulfed him that he did not want life. He wanted oblivion. This mercifully came and went for a time.

Slowly he learned that the easing of his pain came when he stirred and groaned; then there was a fragrance about him, a gentle voice spoke, careful hands lifted his head and he swallowed something which sent him again into the peace of sleep.

There came a day when he looked straight ahead and saw a cool surface covered with sprigs of little pictured pink roses. Somehow they cheered him.

There was not the least pain except when he tried to move. His eyes turned. Flowered curtains whipped ever so gently in a breeze. The smell of flowers drifted to him. There was a movement in the room and the face of a girl bent over him.

Her eyes were blue like his own, but there was no fierceness in the depths he saw above him. They held a warmth of pity, and a hint of smiles. He saw dark bands of hair, like tarnished copper.

Soft fingers touched his wrists, his forehead. His head was raised and he drank something that did not put him to sleep.

"What's happened?" he whispered.

The girl drew a chair up beside the bed and studied him for a long moment before she replied. She seemed to be debating his strength. He managed a smile.

"My father found you in the river, tied to a log," she said. Her voice was like the ripple of pleasant waters. "Your log was inshore, at the edge of the drive. He pulled it out with a pike pole."

"When?" asked Thrall.

"Three weeks ago."

"Where is this?"

She smiled and laid her hand on his forehead.

"You must not talk much more. My father is Palmer Haven. My name is Elaine. We live on the bend above Dunder Falls, where the river broadens out. You're going to be all right soon. And that's all for now. You're very weak!"

Barton Thrall knew how true this was. He could feel a dampness on his face merely from the effort of these few words.

Haven? He had heard the name, but he did not know the family. He had come all of four miles down the river, whirled and pounded and ground among the logs.

That he had not been drowned or completely crushed was little short of a miracle.

The man who had sent him on that journey had had every reason to expect that he would be carried over Dunder Falls and broken to fragments. No evidence would have come out of the caldron below the falls, where logs churned sometimes for hours before they were flung out to go pounding on through the rapids.

This was what Ansel Gregg had done to him. With a new treachery he had tried again to kill the man whom he had wronged and who had given him a chance to stay out of prison.

Thrall did not need the girl to tell him that he was going to get well.

He had to live. He could find peace nowhere in all the reaches of eternity if he did not go back and balance his account with Ansel Gregg.

THIS alone would have brought Barton Thrall back to life, but there was another reason, almost from the first moments of consciousness, why he willed to live. For the first time in his life he knew a continuing, satisfying happiness. Hitherto, his joy had been that of a drink, a battle won, the getting of something in money or property. Now he perceived that these things were in a way outside of himself, evanescent in their power, worth only what he thought they were worth.

The happiness that he met in the house of Palmer Haven was a condition of living; it depended on no single thing.

It was more than anything else like the air that a man breathed. Even before he was able to get up out of bed Thrall was happy, and he had always thought that a man might as well be dead as stretched out on his back.

There was no discord in this place to which the river had brought him. The days and nights went on in a smooth-flowing stream.

A time came when Thrall was able to leave his room for the first meal with the family. The table was laid on a porch that looked down over a blossoming apple orchard to the river, now reduced nearly to normal and long since cleared of the spring log drives. For the first time Thrall realized that the house was small and old and that a need for repairs was only partially hidden by the extreme neatness.

Palmer Haven was a man well on in years, with a square, strong face and eyes which held the same indefinable look of peace as the eyes of his daughter.

Watching him, Thrall wondered why a man like that had not got on better. There was no meat on the table. The guest understood now why the shirt that had been loaned to him was darned in half a dozen places.

When the meal was finished the three sat in the long twilight. Thrall wondered if that calm-faced old man, that deep-eyed girl, were conscious of the quiet delight that wrapped him like a garment. Yes; the same peace was in their faces. He wondered why it was here and why it was not up the river.

So far he had said nothing about himself. Perhaps the time had come. For, after his own affairs had been attended to, he had work to do here. But he would not speak of gratitude until he was ready to prove it.

"I'll be able to go soon," he said at the end of a long and pleasant silence.

"Not until you are stronger," Elaine told him.

"I'll see to any business you want done," offered Haven. "It will take a little time to get your strength back, Thrall."

"I'm the only one who can do the business I want done," said Thrall, grimly. "I know who tied me to that log. I hope he thinks I'm dead, as he probably does. It was lucky the doctor didn't know me, and that you didn't tell him I was tied. That keeps the law out of it. The chances are that no one in my neighborhood has heard of a man being pulled out of the river down here. You don't seem like people who talk much."

"No." Haven smiled. "I never could see much use in talking unless I

had something to say. And I guess Elaine takes after me."

"I'm going up there as soon as I can," said Thrall. "Then I'm coming back down here to see you... I never liked a place so well."

HAVEN stared out over the dimming white of the orchard.

"We won't be here much longer," he said, "but we'll be glad see you, anyhow."

Abruptly he rose and left the porch. Thrall turned to the girl. Even in the thickening dusk he could see that she was distressed.

"What's the matter, Elaine?"

"Father's going to lose the place." she said, in a low voice.

"Lose it?" echoed Thrall. "Why, that orchard alone ought to pay well!"

"It does." She hesitated. "You see, he backed a friend who had bad luck."

"Signed another man's note, I suppose!" exclaimed Thrall. "They're pressing him? The bank at Valeboro?"

"Nobody's pressing father," replied Elaine. "It was all between friends. He didn't sign anything. He just said he'd be responsible for what his friend borrowed. It was lost, and the other man needs it. Do you see? Nobody's to blame."

Thrall was silent for a moment; the situation bewildered him a little. Instinct told him not to come out with a bald offer of money,

"It would smash me up to lose my place," he said, at last. "They can't press him. He didn't sign anything."

"I heard my father say that a man was bigger than an acre of land!"

To that Thrall made no immediate reply. A man bigger than an acre of land? Mightier, yes! But she did not mean exactly that. Barton Thrall knew that he was stronger than a good many acres of land. He was able to fight the world, without quarter asked or given, for his land.

No more was said about the matter that evening, but after he had gone to bed Thrall lay for a long time meditating upon the strangeness of Elaine Haven and her father.

IN another week Thrall was ready to go upon his errand up the river. When strength began to flow back into him it came with a rush. His wasted muscles filled out, the rich color came again to his face, and the sparkle of well-nigh indestructible health to his eyes.

One night at supper he announced that he would go the next day; and later that evening, when he sat on the porch with Elaine under the spell of a world bathed in moonlight, he told her the story of himself and Ansel Gregg. He related facts, without comment or excuse, from the beginning up to the blow with the bale-hook.

"I am sorry for you," she said, slowly, surprisingly, when he had ended the story.

"You needn't be sorry for me!" Thrall gave a light laugh, with the ring of metal in it. "I know just what I'm going to do, and I'm able to do it. Be sorry for Gregg! He needs it!"

"I am," she said, very softly. "It's hard to have an enemy—or to be one."

"I won't have one when I get through with Ansel Gregg!"

To that she made no reply, although Thrall wished she would ask what he was going to do. With his habit of silence broken, with the moonlight softening his grimness, he was willing to talk.

But she had no more to say about Ansel Gregg and Thrall was warned by some subtle process that he had told her enough. She would know later.

Through many hours of careful consideration Thrall had worked out his plan for dealing with Gregg. He could not bring himself to do the thing which, as between mountain men, would have been the quintessence of vengeance. He could not send Ansel Gregg to prison. That would be worse than killing him. But Thrall did not find it in his nature to do either. He had a simple plan which combined some of the most effective elements of both these methods of revenge.

There was a brief wrench when he said good-by to the Havens the next day. But he was so sure that he would see them again in a short time, and so filled with his errand, that the parting was not too hard.

Once out of sight of the little house Thrall swung off with a mighty stride which did not slacken until he came into his own neighborhood. There, where he might be recognized from the houses or by people whom he met in the road, he struck for the river. He traveled upstream until he was on his own land and almost in sight of his own house. Then Thrall rested, and when he went on again it was cautiously, under the shelter of the steep bank.

All through the past weeks it had been certain in Thrall's mind that Ansel would stay on his place. Ansel could say that Bart had gone away and left him in charge, while if he returned to his own house there might be an investigation when Thrall was missed. Moreover, Gregg would want an opportunity to search for the note, for money.

Thrall believed that he would find Gregg in his house when he returned from the dead, and he was right.

ANSEL was standing in the big doorway of the horse barn when Thrall peered up over the river bank; he stood there staring at the swift waters just as the victim of the bale-hook had stood. The distance was too great for the face of Gregg to be visible in detail, but it seemed to Thrall that the man had changed greatly.

He wanted Ansel to come nearer to the river. What he had in mind would be most effective if his enemy were right there on the bank above him. Thrall waited a long time now, but he had to be content with something less than this.

It was all of half an hour before Ansel left the barn. He crossed the road slowly and walked down the lawn toward the rear of the house, which faced the river. He would be going in at the back door, Thrall thought. Another opportunity as good as this might not come.

Thrall lowered himself quickly into the river, thrust his head under and rose up dripping. Then he climbed up the bank, with little streams running down from his plastered hair, and began to walk with a swift but deliberate tread toward Ansel Gregg.

The river had given up its dead. This was the judgment.

Gregg moved backward, feeling with his hands for something by which to steady himself. He flattened against the house wall and stared at the apparition from the water. Yet there was something lacking in his astonishment; it was not the gibbering terror Thrall had expected.

Barton Thrall stopped and considered the man who had twice tried to kill him. Gregg's hair had been long

in the spring; it was longer now. It had been black on that day when he wielded the bale-hook. Now it was streaked with gray. His eyes were very tired. His hands trembled against the clapboards of the house.

"It's come!" he whispered. "Bart!"

"Go inside!" commanded Thrall. "Go on into the living room!"

The men tramped through a kitchen long since departed from the neatness with which Thrall had kept it. The living room was cleaner, but it had the air of a forsaken place. There were the marks of a chisel where the drawer of the secretary had been forced.

The blinds were half closed against the summer sunlight and Thrall did not at first see that there was some one sitting in his armchair. Not until Elaine Haven stood up, grave-eyed, unsmiling, did Thrall know that he was not alone with Ansel Gregg.

Thrall was struck speechless. It would have surprised him to find any one here with Gregg; to see Elaine Haven rising from his own chair stunned him. He stood staring at her, doubting his eyes.

"Mr. Gregg has told me about last winter," she said, calmly. "I wanted to see you play God."

Not yet could Thrall speak. He looked at Gregg; and now he saw that his enemy was so broken in spirit that even this remarkable thing which had happened to-day had little power to stir him. Ansel dropped to a chair. His head drooped forward and he gazed fixedly at the floor. He was waiting.

THRALL searched the face of Elaine Haven, which was as serious and concerned as if she were a doctor examining a grave case. At last he became capable of coherent thought. Did she believe that he had come to kill Gregg?

It was his intention simply to strip every possession from Ansel Gregg and leave him penniless except for the clothes he wore. Then, broken, discredited, poverty-stricken, Gregg would spend his last years at the poor farm. This had been written in the mind of Thrall as the decree he would issue.

Elaine was waiting, like Ansel. Her eyes turned slowly to Gregg's bowed head. They softened; sparkled.

"Look behind you, Barton," she said softly. "There's a mirror there. Look at the man who would play God."

He turned slowly and stared at the image that confronted him. The moment before, he had been looking at the quiet, grave, pitying face of Elaine. He shuddered now, and pulled his gaze away from what he saw in the mirror —hatred, mercilessness, the boundless self-importance of a man who had thought to sit in the Judgment Seat over another man.

In that mirror he saw himself with the eyes of Elaine.

There was a long silence. The clock ticked heavily through it. At last Thrall dared to look again at the girl in whose company he had once found peace.

Now, watching him, she smiled faintly. The light that he knew had come back to her eyes.

"Why don't you play your rôle?" she asked.

He did not answer her directly.

"Ansel," he said, with an awkward tongue, "you can go home if you want to. Our accounts are settled—everything's all right."

THE END.

*"You'll stand for anything I choose to put on you," Harmon snapped*

# The Legacy of Peril

***David battling Goliath had nothing on the lone wolf fight of the inexperienced Ted Glenn against the ruthless might of Ollie Harmon, czar of the strongest "mob" in New York City***


**By FRED MacISAAC**

***Author of "The Man of Gold," "The Wrong Kind of Money," etc.***


## LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

TED GLENN, young day clerk in Tom Mullen's haberdashery near Times Square, narrowly escapes death when two gunmen kill a rival gangster, Armstein, in the store; and Mullen is killed by accident. Dying, Mullen urges Ted to work for the conviction of Ollie Harmon, boss racketeer who had ordered Armstein's killing. He gives his executor, Sanford of the Mammoth National, orders to pay Ted one hundred and fifty dollars a week, and to turn over his fortune of some eighty-five thousand dollars when Harmon is convicted.

When Ted is again shot at, presumably to silence an eyewitness, he resolves to get Harmon if he can. His first lead comes when a bootlegger, Mooney, introduces him to Doll Dean, a girl who jilted Armstein. She gets


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him a try-out with Schultz, a confidence man who owes allegiance to Harmon.

## CHAPTER IX.

### SIREN OF BROADWAY.

MISS LAURA DEMEREST entered the lobby of the Blitz at six o'clock the following evening and asked the clerk to inform Mr. Theodore Glenn that she was waiting for him in the Winter Garden. There is no hotel in New York which is frequented by as effulgent and luxurious creatures as the Blitz, but the appearance of Miss Demerest affected even the blasé bellboys, and these had seen her often.

In the first place, she had amazing red hair. It wasn't red gold, but it was the color of lambent flame. And she had very long eyes of a curious shade, a sort of yellowish green—emerald flecked with topaz, was the way she liked to describe them.

Her profile was classic, though her features were large, and her skin was milk-white with never a touch of rouge on it. Her lips were vivid vermilion and her teeth were large but very regular and very white. Her figure—well, ten years before she had burst upon New York as a show girl. No figure like it had appeared on the stage before, and it was so perfect that she was able to withdraw from the theater in a very few weeks.

Her taste in clothes was exquisite, and she glorified any garment which she donned. She was more than thirty years old, but she was even more beautiful than when she first appeared as a green chorus girl and twenty times as intelligent. To-night she wore a green cloth suit trimmed with ermine which set off her hair and matched her eyes and overpowered the loungers in the Blitz lobby.

Of course she was a well-known figure in New York, and she had a reputation of being the most cold-blooded gold-digger who ever ruined a Wall Street banker. On the fourth finger of her right hand gleamed a diamond as big as a pigeon's egg, which had once occupied a prominent position in the crown of the Czar of Russia. The man who presented it to her, eight years before, committed suicide six months later.

She wore no other jewelry to-night. Her manner was absolutely perfect, her voice beautifully modulated and refined. It was hard to believe that any male person would consider this reincarnation of Venus and Helen of Troy a pest; but Ollie Harmon was a very strange man, and Laura had been his property for a decade.

Miss Demerest seated herself in the Winter Garden, oblivious of the delighted astonishment of several persons who were lounging there. She waited patiently until Ted Glenn appeared in the entrance. He hesitated, and she rose and walked toward him. The young man stared at her, petrified, and she smiled and completed his destruction.

"I am Miss Demerest, Mr. Glenn," she said in a low tone. "Greet me as though I were an old friend."

He extended his hand and tried to smile.

"I—I—" he babbled.

"You expected some frump," she said with a silvery laugh. "You ought to be pleased."

"I certainly am," he exclaimed. "My good fortune is incredible."

"Well, let us go into the dining room," she said good-naturedly. "You

can stare all you like when we are seated. I am glad to see you didn't dress."

"I was told not to."

"Right. I have to make a call right after dinner."

Ted walked beside the goddess, stealing side glances at her. Nothing so beautiful had ever entered his life. For the moment he forgot little Sally and he never gave a thought to Doll Dean. That siren was tawdry and ugly compared to this gorgeous creature.

The head waiter seated them, by her request, at a table in the middle of the room. Observing Ted's incompetency, she picked up the menu and ordered in French a dinner for two.

THE first shock over, Ted was able to study his companion with more attention to detail. That she was indescribably lovely was not to be denied; but there was something about her that warned him. The green eyes were cruel, he thought. She was like a great, sleek, magnificent t i g r e s s, a beautiful creature and a terrible one. And he knew that she was not a good w o m a n. She was a confederate of criminals, for she had been assigned to dine with him to-night and arrange for his presentation to Mrs. Potter Waring, of Butte, Montana.

Laura inspected her *vis-à-vis* much more astutely than he studied her, and what she saw surprised and puzzled her.

"You perplex me," she said frankly. "I am a fairly good judge of character, and I should say that you were an honest, ingenuous, and perfectly harmless youth. You are ideal for the job if you know what you are about. Do you?"

"I am to be introduced and to become friendly with a certain person," he replied. "That's the extent of my instructions at present."

"How did you happen to fall in with Schultz and his crowd?" she asked.

"Why, a friend suggested that I could make some easy money in a perfectly safe manner if he took me on, so I applied for a job and got one."

"You're not a crook, then."

He colored. "Well, I suppose a fellow has to make a start."

Her lips curled. "I'd like to meet a *man*, just once," she observed. "However, your appearance belies you. Mrs. Waring is c o m i n g into the dining room. She will be seated at the next table. As she is alone, I shall invite her to join us. When coffee comes I shall leave to keep my engagement. It's up to you to improve the shining hour."

Ted winced a little at the contempt in her voice and was a trifle resentful. After all, the woman was a crook and she had no right to be scornful of a young man in the same line of business.

He glanced up as the head waiter seated the mining man's widow. She was a slightly plump woman of early middle age. Her face was long with high cheek bones, and her skin was rough and sallow; but she was not a homely woman. She was in full evening dress which revealed broad, solid, well-tanned shoulders and a figure which was slightly too abundant. On her r i g h t arm were seven or eight broad diamond bracelets. Around her neck was a necklace of large pearls, possibly genuine. People at near-by tables were rude enough to stare, and she was conscious of it and a bit embarrassed.

"Is this table satisfactory, Mrs. Waring?" asked the head waiter.

Laura Demerest lifted her head at the name and turned halfway round in her chair.

"Surely not Mrs. Potter Waring of Butte?" she said in apparent astonishment.

Mrs. Waring looked around joyfully and her really fine brown eyes gleamed with admiration for the superb creature who had addressed her. She smiled, and her smile was frank and engaging.

"Why, yes," she replied eagerly. "But do I—I mean—I'm sure I couldn't have forgotten you if I had ever—"

Laura laughed brightly.

"Oh, you've never met me," she stated. "I happen to have a letter from Mr. Smythe, an attorney in your town. I believe he did some business for you. He happened to mention that you were coming to New York and suggested that I call on you. But I didn't know that you had arrived."

"Why, that is awfully kind, I'm sure," said Mrs. Waring heartily.

"I am Miss Demerest. Are you expecting some one?"

The woman shook her head. "My friends all seem to be out of town."

"I wonder—wouldn't you like to dine with us? Mr. Glenn will be delighted."

"Charmed," declared Ted Glenn, smiling.

"Well—if I won't be intruding—"

LAURA beckoned to the head waiter and ordered a third plate laid. Ted rose and stood behind Mrs. Waring's chair as she got up, and seated her gallantly at his table while Laura nodded approval.

"This is much more pleasant," said Mrs. Waring. "Only I do feel as though I were intruding. Do you know Mr. Smythe very well, Miss Demerest?"

"Very slightly. I met him a few times when he visited New York last summer."

"I only know him in a business way myself. I think it was very thoughtful of him to ask you to call on me."

Ted's private opinion was that Smythe was an agent of the New York criminals and had sent warning of the approach of a rich prize. Mrs. Waring was sweet, he thought. A pleasant, wholesome woman from a smaller city, who was without guile and had no defense against the wiles of people like Laura and the man Schultz. Well, he would be hanged if he would help them rob her. It came over him in a rush that he was utterly incapable of working with criminals.

However, if he pulled out, they would put another confidence man on the job and he doubted if Mrs. Waring was shrewd enough to protect herself even if warned. Better stall along for a few days and let matters take their course.

Mrs. Waring addressed a commonplace remark to him and he answered politely. In five minutes she was telling them the story of her life. She had been cooped up in one place for twenty years save for a few brief trips to Chicago. This was her first visit to New York. Her husband was much older than she and when he died six months ago of a lingering illness it was almost a relief. He had left her all his property and she had money enough to do all the things of which she had ever dreamed. She did hope she was not too old to enjoy life.

Ted assured her that she was at the peak of her youth and beauty and she was absurdly grateful for the fulsome compliment.

When the coffee was brought Laura glanced at her wrist watch and uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"It's a quarter of nine," she declared, "and I'm already ten minutes late for a bridge date. I'm sure you people will excuse me if I hurry away. No, please don't rise. Drink your coffee. I happen to know that Mr. Glenn has no engagement, Mrs. Waring. And I'll drop in on you to-morrow or next day around tea time. Ted will pay the check, Mrs. Waring. Oh, yes, I insist."

She whisked out of the dining room and Ted Glenn, confidence man, was alone with his victim, the woman from Butte. Mrs. Waring obviously did not mind being left alone with him. He was young and good looking.

She began to ask him questions about himself. She was glad he was a Princeton man.

"I've always heard Princeton was more democratic than Harvard or Yale," she stated. "You're much too young, though. I feel as though I were your mother."

"You can't be thirty," he declared.

"Well," she granted, permitting the underestimate of her age to pass uncorrected, "an elder sister, then. I wonder if you would let your elder sister accompany you to a theater this evening. I'm dying to see a Ziegfeld show and I hate to go alone."

"Now I'm a gigolo," muttered Ted under his breath. "Why, on condition that I pay for the tickets."

"No, no. You are paying for dinner. I insist," she said archly.

He shrugged his shoulders. At least while she was in his company nobody would make off with her diamond bracelets. He had an engagement that night to accompany Sally to a movie and had had to break it for business reasons. Now he was going to a theater with a golden goose. Mrs. Waring was going to be an easy victim for the criminals. If he told her the exact truth she would be shocked—and would promptly fall for the next passable looking young man.

## CHAPTER X.

### DISCOVERY.

THE president of the Mammoth National had summoned the first vice president to a conference. Mr. Seth Brown was the modern type of banker, a big brisk man whose ideas were large and whose motto was "Take a chance."

Through his daring the Mammoth had expanded from an institution with assets of $12,000,000, to an institution of something like $200,000,000 in less than ten years; but several times during this period it had been touch and go with Mr. Brown. Once a Federal penitentiary had yawned, but his great influence had delayed an impending visit from a Federal bank examiner until everything was ready to receive him.

Nowadays all was well with the Mammoth and Mr. Brown was several times a millionaire. He reeked opulence as he lit a dollar cigar and smiled at First Vice President Sanford.

"Phil," he began, "I happened to hear of a curious will in which we have an interest. This haberdasher who was killed by accident when they plugged Lou Armstein left all his money to a clerk in his shop, a chap named Glenn, on condition that he perform an important service for the city of New York. On his refusal to tackle the job or his failure to accomplish anything the money goes to the King of Eng-

land. This Mullen must have been a wag, eh?"

"He had a sense of humor," admitted Sanford with a cautious smile.

"No doubt about it, Phil. I've got one myself. You don't know it, but my ancestors were Jacobites back in the eighteenth century. I carry it so far myself that I should hate to see George Fifth come in for eighty thousand of good American money. Rather see the haberdasher's clerk get it. Wouldn't you?"

"Of course," replied Sanford.

"Well, let's give him a lift. I understand that Mullen leaves it entirely to you to decide whether the kid has fulfilled the conditions of the testament."

"Right."

"Well, now, I've got a lot of influence in this town. Suppose we start a citizens' movement for the Abolition of Noise. Make Glenn the chairman of the organization, get behind him and push some more ordinances through the Board of Aldermen. I'm telling you that one of the greatest benefits that could be brought about in New York would be to stop unnecessary racket. You agree with me?"

"Yes, I do."

"I think it could be done for thirty or forty thousand. Glenn would be delighted to have that amount deducted from his legacy for the sake of having it turned over to him in a few months. Don't you think so?"

"I wouldn't be surprised."

"Great. Get hold of him and make him the proposition. That's all."

"Not quite," said Sanford quietly. "It won't do at all, in fact."

"Eh? Why not?"

"Because that kind of public service is not what Tom Mullen had in mind."

"Nonsense. It's left to your discretion according to the will."

"According to the will. It happens that Mullen left me a letter of instructions."

"Oh, ho! Why didn't you say so before? What does he require? We'll fix it."

"It's something that we can't fix for Mr. Glenn, I'm afraid."

"My boy, anything can be fixed in this town. I know. What has the lad got to accomplish?"

Sanford shook his head. "I am not at liberty to say."

Brown began to get angry. "Why not? I'm the president of this bank, am I not?"

"Certainly, sir, but this is not a bank matter. I promised Mullen that no one would know his instructions except the clerk and myself."

"Confound it, Sanford, I only want to help the kid. I'm very much against King George. Big Bill Thompson and myself are opposed to King George."

"I appreciate your good intentions, sir. This happens to be something Mr. Glenn must manage for himself."

"Suppose you should die. Who would decide about the award?"

"That matter has been attended to."

"Can you give me any notion of the sort of thing required?"

"Against my agreement, Mr. Brown. And I really cannot understand your interest in a trifling affair like this."

"Curiosity, of course. That King of England clause. It seems to me you could confide in your chief."

"If it were not for my promise I should be delighted to do so."

"LOOK here," said Brown cajolingly, "I'll be frank with you. A man to whom I am under great obligations, who happened to be largely instrumental in pulling us through

when we were in a hole in 1924, happened to hear of this will. He wants the details of the instructions and I should like very much to oblige him."

Sanford looked Seth Brown squarely in the eye. "You mean the man who put five million dollars in cash into our vaults and took off our hands for ten days eight millions of frozen securities? Well, Ollie Harmon gets no information from me. He is the last man in New York—" Sanford broke off abruptly and grew very red. Anger had caused him to commit an indiscretion.

"Yes?" sneered Brown. "You be damned careful how you speak that name. All right, Sanford. Keep your silly secret."

Their eyes met and the president's were the first to fall. He forced a laugh:

"Forget this conversation. I wouldn't think of asking you to betray a confidence."

The vice president went back to his office flushed and angry. So Ollie Harmon has thrust his gory fingers right into the president's office of the great bank and forced the president to jump when he prodded him!

Sanford gnawed at his mustache and tapped the end of a penholder against his teeth, a habit he had when he was thoughtful. He had a vivid recollection of the black days in 1924 to which Brown had referred. He was fifth vice president at the time, with supervision of loans. The call loan rate was high, and over his protests President Brown had persisted in accepting huge blocks of speculative stocks and loaning on them considerably more than was safe.

There came a brief smash in the stock market, prices in many industrials dropped twenty to thirty points and many millions of dollars worth of securities were selling for less than the bank had loaned on them.

Brown, through underground channels, learned that the bank examiners were coming the following day. To call the loans would do no good for the owners could not redeem them, and to sell them and mark the loss down on the books was an admission of improper and reckless banking.

In the emergency Brown secured a couple of days delay in the visit of the examiners, appealed to Ollie Harmon with whom he had dealings, and five millions in cash were drawn from bootleggers' accounts in other banks and used to purchase the frozen securities. Ten days later they were back in the vaults, the market had recovered and all was well—except that Harmon had something on Seth Brown as he had on many other prominent citizens.

Sanford understood why Brown had bothered about the estate of Tom Mullen, but he could not comprehend why it interested Ollie Harmon. Of course the scheme to enable Glenn to perform a public service was an invention of Harmon's for the idea was out of Brown's line.

It was possible, of course, that the criminal leader, who overlooked no form of graft, had observed eighty thousand dollars lying around loose and saw no reason why he shouldn't pick up fifty per cent of it by railroading an ordinance through the Board of Aldermen. It was also possible that Harmon had some suspicion as to the real motive of the bequest. The hospital nurse might have listened at the keyhole while Mullen was dictating the letter which Sanford wrote and Tom signed.

He didn't think that likely, but one never knew who was lined up with

Harmon's gang. Why, Brown, the president of the bank, was in his toils! In any case he had been exceedingly indiscreet to flare up and tell Brown that he particularly did not want Harmon to know the terms of the letter of instruction.

Well, nothing to be done about it now. He plunged into his work and finished about four thirty. At five he was in his little apartment—his salary was only nine thousand a year and he had never profited like Brown by deals in his own bank stock. At seven he dined alone, attended a picture show and went to bed at eleven.

HE usually rose at seven, but the following morning he woke at eleven and was astonished to realize that he had overslept four hours. Phoning the bank that he was ill, he realized that he had a bad headache and a sickish feeling in his stomach. Curious, because he usually woke fresh and in fine fettle.

About eleven forty-five he arrived at his desk and tackled his mail. He was still under the weather. After reading three or four letters he picked up an envelope bearing the imprint of the Mammoth Bank, Safe Deposit Dept.

Inside was a slip from the superintendent. It was a copy of an order to admit bearer to his box in the vaults. It was stamped 10:05 A.M., time of admittance, 10:15 A.M., time of exit, that morning.

With an oath he strode out of his office and descended into the vaults.

"Let me see the original of this," he demanded harshly of the officer in charge.

"Certainly, Mr. Sanford."

The man produced an order bearing his signature, a beautiful job but a forgery. With a thumping heart Sanford signed another order, refraining from a repudiation of the forgery, for the moment. He passed inside the great bronze grille. The attendant took his key, inserted the bank key, and opened the small box which contained the fortune of Philip Sanford.

He entered a booth, lifted the cover and drew out the contents. There were about fifteen one thousand dollar bonds, some twelve thousand dollars in securities, mortgages worth fourteen or fifteen thousand dollars. His wealth was intact—but the letter of instructions from Tom Mullen was gone.

Sanford understood everything now. In some way he had been drugged last night or early this morning while he slept, and, secure in the knowledge that he would not awaken until nearly noon, a crook had presented a forged order and obtained admission to his safe deposit box.

The theft had been committed, of course, as a result of his statement to Seth Brown. The president had connived at the robbery of the box in his own vaults. No doubt he owed it to Brown that his securities had not been taken with the letter—poor Brown, wriggling on the hook of the master criminal, had been decent enough to insist that nothing but the letter be removed.

That the letter went directly into the hands of Ollie Harmon there was no doubt, and it meant the certain death of young Ted Glenn. That was appalling, but it meant something more terrible to Philip Sanford. He had undertaken to pay the reward to Glenn upon the conviction for murder of Ollie Harmon. He and Glenn were in a conspiracy to send Harmon to the chair; and Ollie Harmon would see that he shared the fate of the young man.

Sanford grew very weak and faint

and cold drops of perspiration ran down his brow.

He was an honest man and a capable bank executive, but he was not a fighter and he was afraid to die. What should he do? What could he do?

His first impulse was to accuse Brown of complicity in the robbery of his lock box. Brown would deny it and Sanford couldn't prove it. Besides, it was of minor consequence. In a few hours the killers would be upon him.

Well, if it cost him his life he would warn Glenn; then he would try to escape. How? Where? He didn't know.

He leaned against the side of the booth and tried to collect his forces. Harmon might laugh at the idea of a green boy getting him convicted for murder, but he would be rabid against the mature and substantial bank executive who stood ready to pay eighty thousand dollars for his elimination. Sanford knew he was in even greater danger than Ted Glenn.

Flight! He would put his securities in his breast pocket, say nothing to the vault manager, return to his desk, go on until lunch time as though nothing had happened, leave the bank and never return. His life was worth more than the job of first vice president of the institution whose president was a crook.

PULLING himself together, he disposed of the contents of the box about his person and returned the box to the attendant. He waited until he received his key, though he would never use it again, and then walked slowly back to his office. On his desk was a morning paper.

He found that a steamer sailed for Cherbourg at two o'clock. That was it. He would drive up in a taxi at the last minute, buy a ticket on the dock, and be on his way to Europe before the murderers were on the job. Perhaps he would have time to phone Glenn from the pier or else he would send him a radio from the ship. He could sell his securities in Europe and realize enough to live on his income in some village in the south of France.

It seemed hours to one o'clock. At five minutes of one he left the office, went out the rear door of the bank and picked up a taxi half a block down the street. So far so good.

His failure to reappear would mystify the bank employees, but Brown would understand and appreciate his shrewdness. The taxi delivered him at the French Line pier in a quarter of an hour. There was the usual throng and the usual bustle, which rejoiced him, for he would be unnoticed in the crowd. At the company's office he was informed that he could have a cabin. It was, fortunately, a light sailing. His passport was not vised, but that was the work of a moment.

He paid three hundred dollars cash, nearly all the money on his person, and, owning nothing but the clothes he wore, walked swiftly to the first cabin gangway.

He showed his ticket to the officer at the foot of the gangway and began to ascend.

There were three men coming off the ship; one of them a tall, very fat man he recognized as a United States Senator. Sanford had to back against the railing to permit the enormous Senator to wedge his way past, and then he looked into the face of the person who followed the solon. Sanford turned deadly pale, for he gazed into the eyes of Ollie Harmon. There was a second of horror. He had met Harmon a few times, but years before. Would the fiend recognize him?

But Ollie Harmon glanced casually at the slim, gray-mustached man, crowded past him and continued down the gangway to the pier. Breathing a prayer of thankfulness, Sanford went up to the deck, presented his ticket to a steward, and was conducted to his cabin.

"Where is your luggage, sir?" asked the steward.

"Coming later," he muttered. As soon as he was alone he locked the door and threw himself on the bed. He did not breathe freely until the ship began to move.

Thus Philip Sanford escaped from the menacing city of New York. On the second day out his conscience compelled him to write the following radiogram, which he addressed to Ted Glenn at the address which Ted had given him:

> Your intentions are known. Urge immediate departure from New York.
> SANFORD.

He was aware that Ted might already be lying cold and dead and that the radio would then fall into the hands of Harmon's agents, who would know that he had left New York on the Paris. There might be a hired assassin lying in wait for him at Cherbourg; but that chance his conscience demanded that he take. Sanford was not a heroic character, but he was no arrant coward.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### IN HARMON'S OFFICE.

TED GLENN was awakened, the morning after his meeting with Mrs. Potter Waring, by the ringing of his telephone. Mr. R. Z. Schultz was on the line.

"Hope I didn't break into your beauty sleep," he said jovially. "Glenn, you're getting on in the world. The big chief wants to see you."

"Who?" he asked sleepily.

"You go up to Number 121 East Seventy-blank Street and tell the phone operator you have an appointment at eleven thirty with Mr. Hertz."

"What for?" asked Ted. "Who is Mr. Hertz?"

"You'll find out. Evidently you did a good job last night and they have special instructions for you."

"All right," agreed Ted, with a grimace.

He was heartily ashamed of his part in cozening a foolish middle-aged woman, and he was about ready to pull out of a shameful organization. But the big chief—that might mean Harmon. He was going to see the arch villain, perhaps, though what good that would do him he did not know.

Shortly before eleven thirty he entered the pretentious lobby of a lofty apartment hotel and gave his name to the phone operator.

"You are expected," the man stated. "Eighteenth floor, apartment A."

He rode up in a rapid elevator, was told to go down the corridor to the right and ring at the end door. He followed instructions and was ushered into a small but luxuriously furnished waiting room. A few seconds later a keen-looking young man came out.

"I am Mr. Hertz, Mr. Harmon's secretary," he said. "The boss will see you right away. Just a minute."

He tapped the hip pockets of the young man, touched his side pockets, and felt under his arms.

"Some of Mr. Harmon's visitors aren't friendly," he said with a grin. "You're all right. Follow me."

He opened a door and led Ted into

the private office in which Ollie Harmon did his work. The big chief was sitting at his desk, and upon Glenn's entrance he dropped his pen, leaned back in his chair and inspected the newcomer sardonically.

"So you're Ted Glenn," he remarked. "Not much over twenty-five, are you?"

"Why—not a great deal, Mr. Harmon," he replied uneasily.

"Sit down, my boy, sit down. You are working for R. Z. Schultz, aren't you?"

"Why, yes, sir."

"I know him well. Fine chap. You made the acquaintance of Mrs. Potter Waring last night. How did she impress you?"

Mr. Harmon's manner was kindly, and he seemed to be secretly amused.

"I thought she was a nice woman, but rather silly."

"Very rich. Make a nice wife for a smart young fellow."

"Thank you, but I'm not marrying a woman ten years older than I am."

"Well," said Harmon, "I can't blame you for that. What makes you think you would succeed in a trade that is rather unethical?"

"Why—er—I heard there was easy money to be picked up without working for it," he said in some confusion, for the eye of Ollie Harmon was very penetrating.

"Glenn," said Harmon sharply, "you're a damned liar."

Ted colored and his eyes flashed, but he managed to suppress a retort.

"I feel rather friendly toward you," said Harmon with a flash of his yellowish teeth, "because you are responsible for the biggest laugh handed me in years. You poor boob!"

"Look here!" Ted said hotly. "I don't have to stand for that sort of stuff."

"Oh, yes, you do," replied Harmon sharply. "You have to stand for anything I choose to put on you. You have voluntarily joined one of my organizations, and I permit nobody to resign. You claim you want to make easy money. Well, you can make it, but you have to work for it.

"Schultz was crazy to assign you to that Blitz Hotel job. That takes diplomacy, finesse. You are a husky, broad-shouldered sap, probably can put up a good fight, but you could never vamp that old dame into letting you invest her money for her. I'm going to send you down to New Jersey this afternoon and let you ride home on a truck of hooch. Can you shoot?"

"I know how to use a revolver," replied Ted sullenly.

"All right. Go back to your hotel. A man named Maguire will call for you in an hour and go out on the job with you. Right?"

Ted hesitated. He had no desire for rum-running, but it was preferable to taking advantage of a confiding woman.

And he was in the Harmon organization now. Harmon professed to be friendly toward him; let him accept this assignment and he might get others close to the chief.

If he refused, he probably would get short shrift.

Harmon was entirely different from the low-browed brute Ted had expected to encounter. The man was smooth and very clever.

For a moment he thought the fellow had read his purpose in embracing a life of crime.

"All right," he said. "I guess you are right about my not being diplomatic."

"That's all. Go out through that door."

Ted passed into the anteroom.

HARMON threw his head back and laughed silently. He was still laughing when there entered from the drawing-room an exceedingly beautiful woman in a green street dress, cloche hat and silver fox fur.

"Hello, Laura," he said, still chuckling. "You look pretty good this morning."

Her sullen eyes lighted and she smiled. "Thanks for one of your rare compliments. You are better natured than I've seen you for some time."

"I have something very amusing on at the moment," he replied. "Tell me, what did you think of young Glenn last night?"

She seated herself and lighted for herself a cigarette. "If that boy is crooked, he will go far," she replied. "I would have said he was as straight as an arrow. It shows how appearances will sometimes deceive us."

"Yeah? Here, read this letter."

She read with growing astonishment the missive which he tossed at her.

"That kid!" she exclaimed. "He is to secure your arrest and conviction for murder, any murder?"

"Isn't that priceless?" he demanded.

"Then he was on the level, the poor fool," she commented bitterly. "I suppose he will be deftly scragged by your smoothly functioning organization."

"Well, why shouldn't he be?"

She frowned. "No reason, I suppose, but he seemed to be a nice boy."

"He's out to get me. Why shouldn't I eliminate him?"

She sighed. "No doubt you will."

"Bah," he exclaimed. "If he had undertaken to kill me, I'd have him filled so full of lead they couldn't lift his coffin, but he undertakes to secure my conviction. Can you imagine that?"

"Rather difficult. The boy doesn't know what he is up against."

"As you know, Laura, I am naturally kind-hearted— Now, can that sneer. I have to defend myself against my enemies. There are fifty men in this town who would shoot me on sight if I gave them an opportunity. But, if the police wanted to, they could never secure a scrap of evidence against me on any sort of charge."

"Well, what are you going to do about Glenn?"

He chuckled again. "I thought it would be fun to get Tom Mullen's eighty thousand dollars. I'm going to find some way to let the kid inherit and take it away from him."

"But it says here that he must secure your conviction for murder."

"That's a private letter of instructions that I got out of the safe-deposit vault of a vice president of a bank, one Sanford. The will says that this Glenn must perform some great public service. When Sanford found out that I had possession of this letter he disappeared. Probably gone to Europe. I will have him trailed and make him agree to pay over the cash for Glenn when I tell him to. In the meantime the kid is worth more dead than alive."

"What a schemer you are!" she exclaimed. "Now listen to me. You were out dancing with Doll Dean last night. I won't stand for it."

Harmon's face darkened. "How did you find that out?" he demanded.

"I have ways. Ollie, I'm not a woman you can use and toss away like an old dishrag."

"Who wants to?"

"I am beginning to think that you do," she said angrily. "You don't come

to see me once a week. You have left word downstairs that you were out, when I knew you were in your apartment. You don't love me any more."

"Oh, for the Lord's sake," he complained. "Are you going to start that all over again? I've made you a rich woman, haven't I? I've been in love with you for years, haven't I? Then why do you make a nuisance of yourself?"

She leaped to her feet and raged.

"Nuisance! So that's it! Anything I've received from you I earned. I've been a decoy and a stool for you for years. No later than last night I scraped acquaintance with that Waring woman and started you on your course toward millions. Now you remember this, Ollie Harmon. I won't be supplanted by Doll Dean or any other light-of-love around this town."

Harmon lost his temper. He pushed back his chair and pointed a long forefinger at her.

"You'll be anything I want you to be," he declared. "You're crazy with jealousy for no reason. I'll spend as much time as I like with any woman I like, and I won't stand for any backtalk from you. I let you come up here this morning in the friendliest spirit, but I'm through. You keep away from this apartment. When I want to see you I'll call on you."

"I won't be at home," she declared furiously.

"You'd better be," he warned. "From now on, watch your step. I won't interfere with you if you behave yourself, but you know a hell of a lot about my business, and if you try to pull anything, look out for yourself."

"Do you think I'm afraid of you?" she screamed.

He glared at her. "You had better be. Say, Laura, why can't you be reasonable? I have a right to play around a little. I'm not your husband."

"I warn you to keep away from Doll Dean," she exclaimed.

Harmon had pressed a button on his desk which summoned his secretary. "Miss Demerest is on her way," he said. "Escort her to the elevator, please."

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## CHAPTER XII.

### RUM TRUCKS.

SILFORD, New Jersey, is a hamlet south of the famous watering places of the North Jersey shore. It possesses a safe cove in which small boats may come in from the sea and tie up at a landing without a battle with the heavy ocean rollers. There is a chief of police who goes to bed at ten o'clock and who would refuse to hear the report of a sixteen-inch gun after that hour if it boomed in his ears.

There are several score of husky male inhabitants who sleep all day and row boats at night, and there is a magistrate who makes a weekly trip to Philadelphia to place in a safe-deposit vault a sizable wad of greenbacks.

Upon the night that Ted Glenn left New York there rolled into Silford, over various side roads, a number of empty trucks which were parked military fashion in a field within a short distance of the water's edge.

There was no moon that night, but the white ribbon of the State Road gleamed in the starlight. It was deserted. The reason was explained to Ted Glenn by Mr. Maguire. Half a mile up the road wooden horses had been laid across it, red lanterns were suspended from them, and a big sign

"Detour" turned motorists into a side road.

The detour returned to the highroad half a mile below Silford at a point also blocked off by horses and red lanterns. In the bushes at each detour sign were stationed several armed men whose job was to argue with drivers of cars who did not believe in signs.

Everything had been arranged for the evening's exercises. At a certain hour a steamer would appear off the shore and would show her location by a certain signal. A fleet of boats and launches would put out to her, load up and run into the Silford cove, where willing hands would transship the hooch to the waiting trucks.

As it was a Harmon party, arrangements had been made with the Coast Guard to be elsewhere at the witching hour of 1 A.M., but one never knew whether the Coast Guard would behave properly, and two fast motor boats armed with machine guns were on patrol.

There were two men on every truck, some forty men in the boats, and a dozen others placed as guards at strategic places. There were twelve trucks in all, and more than three thousand cases of veritable Scotch to be delivered at a warehouse in Brooklyn before dawn. Mr. John Maguire was commander in chief of the rum-running expedition.

John Maguire had been in the liquor business all his life and looked it. In the good old days, before the World War, he had been head bartender in a Fourteenth Street saloon. He was a solid man with a face like an iron mask, and in his prime had no equal in a brawl with or without a bungstarter.

Curiously, he was a teetotaler; even in the period when liquor was good he had never touched the stuff. Coming down on the truck he told Ted Glenn that he had promised his mother when he was fifteen years old that he would never take a drink and he had kept his word.

It was unfortunate that he had not promised his mother to refrain from murder, for he had a string of deaths to his discredit and a few years before it took all the influence of Ollie Harmon to save him from the electric chair.

Ted thought he was a ferocious ruffian, but he preferred his company to that of Mrs. Potter Waring, who was inclined to be mushy. Ted rode from New York to Asbury Park with Maguire in the smoking car, and some of the yarns that the rum-runner told him were amusing.

GLENN was young enough to get a thrill out of the adventure of landing and loading liquor under the nose of the Coast Guard, with its attendant perils. He considered himself an unofficial representative of law and order who, in order to land the big criminal in the toils, was justified in participating in a minor crime.

Of course he wouldn't shoot at a Revenue man, but he hoped that the thing would not come to actual fighting. Maguire said that his gang was so large and tough that the prohibition officers found it convenient to raid in some other direction when business was afoot, while they had ways of keeping off the Coast Guard.

They arrived in Asbury Park late in the afternoon, loafed a couple of hours in a speakeasy where Ted was introduced to three or four of his confrères and forced to partake of several glasses of the best Scotch which he had encountered in his slight experience. It seemed that this speakeasy was a hang-

out of the "boys" who supplied the proprietor with uncut liquor, just as it came off the boats.

Maguire professed to take a liking to Ted.

"Right out of college, are ye?" he demanded. "Well, if more of these college kids went into this game it would be a good thing for all of us now. Sure I used to be nice and refined myself, but associating with the dirty bums that row the boats and drive the trucks has sort of roughened me round the edges."

These remarks were received with jeers, but Maguire smiled a crooked smile and continued:

"You lads play rough games at college and then you take a job in a bank for a hundred dollars a month. Boy, you could make a hundred a day driving a hooch truck and be a lot safer than playing football. I'm going to send you back on a truck with Hog Jiggins and in no time at all you'll be rolling your own big wagon. You just play the game straight, keep your mouth shut and leave the rest to Jawn Maguire."

Maguire drove a truck down to Silford in person with Ted Glenn on the seat beside him. They followed the shore road. The wind blew from the sea and the tang of salt was in the breeze. Ted sniffed it appreciatively.

After all it was a romantic experience and as for smuggling, one of his ancestors in Colonial days had been a smuggler. Schooners came up the New Jersey coast in that remote period from the West Indies laden with Cuban and Jamaica rum and French brandy, all contraband, and old Enoch Glenn used to put out from what is now Spring Lake and bring in cargoes of stuff in his small sloop.

Of course it was the unjust customs duties of the British government against which his ancestor was in revolt, while these scoundrels were defying the laws of the United States, though, to do them justice, many of them believed the prohibition law to be grossly unfair.

Oh, Ted made out quite a case for the repulsive brute who sat beside him, an unlighted pipe clutched between his teeth. He almost pictured as crusaders the unsavory gang who obeyed the orders of Jawn Maguire.

Shortly after eleven the truck rumbled into Silford and turned into the sandy vacant lot close to the shore.

"Stay on the seat," commanded Maguire. "You go back on this truck. You tally the cases put aboard of her when they begin to load and Hog Jiggins will be along to drive her when the job is done."

The steamer was already off the beach. Ted could see a white light winking less than a mile out at sea and he wondered, since he could distinguish it, what might be the matter with the Revenue men.

Truck after truck arrived at the loading place and its crew dismounted and wandered down to the wooden pier which extended into the cove for a distance of a hundred and fifty feet. Ted knew there were a number of houses in the vicinity, for the truck had passed them as they drove into town, but despite the racket caused by the invasion, not a light showed anywhere. There must be some honest people in the town, he thought, and some of them would have a telephone. Why not notify the authorities?

He did not know, of course, how bootleggers treat informers. Not a man or woman in Silford would have dared give the alarm. The townsfolk knew that they were safe in the houses

if they attended to their own business and remained there.

TED heard the approaching rum fleet before he discerned it. First there was the *chug-chug* of gas engines in motor craft and then the creaking of scores of oars. There were a lot of Silford men in the boats. They made enough money on nights when the stuff was landed in their cove to keep themselves and their families comfortable for a month—another reason why nobody squealed in that village.

All the other drivers and helpers were at work unloading the boats and presently a line of men appeared, each carrying a couple of oblong boxes which were plenty heavy. The boats were returning to the steamer and coming back with fresh loads. Why, the thing was as tame as unloading fish from a mackerel fleet.

No! A ribbon of white swept across the water. It made a wide arc and suddenly illumined a short squat steamer with a high bow and stern and one narrow funnel, and revealed three or four rowboats moving away from her.

The hooch bearers turned as one man to look out to sea and then Jawn Maguire was storming and cursing among them.

"Go on with your work, you yellow rats!" he roared. "Never mind that. Jones will take care of that damned rum-chaser. It's all right, I tell you. Load them trucks."

The searchlight's beam disappeared and for two or three minutes no sound was heard but the grunting of the men who loaded the cases on the trucks and the creaking of rowlocks as the last boats pulled vigorously for the shore. And then:

*Tat-tat-tat-tat!*

It was the rattle of a machine gun. Ted, who had no duties, saw sparks of fire half a mile out and answering sparks from some other craft. The battle continued for several minutes while the rum-runners proceeded energetically about their business. A man climbed up on the seat of the truck beside Ted.

"I'm Jiggins," he declared. "You're a new man."

"Yes."

"Why the blazes did that so-and-so Maguire wish you on me? Why ain't this truck loaded?"

"I—I don't know."

"Hey, Jawn," shouted Jiggins.

Maguire arrived on the scene from nowhere.

"Yeah? What you want, Hog?"

"No stuff on this truck."

"That's all right. You load last and leave last."

He was interrupted by a string of oaths from the driver.

"Why the hell should I go last and why wish this chicken-livered kid on me?"

"Somebody has to bring up the rear and you're it, to-night. Keep your shirt on, Hog. Glenn's a fighter. That was nothing but a little sub-chaser out there commanded by some kid that lost his way. He betrayed his position by his searchlight and there ain't a man alive on his boat by now. You haven't got anything to be afraid of."

"Who says I'm scared? I just don't want anything put over on me," replied the slightly mollified Hog.

The first truck was loaded and was already pulling out, and the thud of cases of whisky upon the bottom of his own vehicle informed Hog that he wasn't being neglected.

Ted was petrified by the statement that the crew of the Coast Guard boat had met their death in the course of duty. A tremendous revulsion against the cold-blooded murderers with whom he was associated rose up within him. Fortunately Maguire did not address him, but went off to expedite the departure of other trucks.

Hog Jiggins sat beside him snarling under his breath. Glenn stole a look at him. His nickname was apt, for his profile was exactly like that of a fat porker. He had an enormous stomach and a pair of small, mean eyes.

"Sends me out last with a dumb kid on the box," muttered Jiggins. "The dirty bum has it in for me."

One after another the big trucks rumbled off. The loading was complete and there was left in the field only the machine occupied by Jiggins and Ted. Hog rose and inspected the tonneau.

"Say," he shouted to a dark figure which was moving back toward the pier, "we're only half loaded."

"That's all," shouted the man. "We lost a boat in the muss outside."

"Damn' queer," muttered Hog. "Damn' queer."

HE started his engine and threw in his gears and the machine rumbled off with many creaks and groans.

"Rotten old wagon, too," mumbled Hog. "It's the worst I ever drove. About ready to fall to pieces. Say, feller, do you know your job?"

"What do you want me to do?" asked Ted anxiously.

"Keep your eyes peeled ahead. If anybody steps into the road or you see somebody by the roadside, pour a broadside into him."

"But it might be some innocent person."

Hog swore fluently. "What the hell do we care? Can we take chances?"

They turned onto the concrete road and the truck ran more smoothly. Ted saw the tail light of the truck ahead climbing a hill several hundred yards in the distance.

"Getting away from us. I can't get any speed out of this damn thing," growled Hog. "They'll get away from us."

"Well, does it make any difference?"

"Does it make any difference? Why you poor—say, don't you know anything?"

"I told you this was my first experience of this sort," replied Ted meekly.

"Well, listen. A hooch train is poison, see. It's dynamite. Two or three gunmen on every truck and no interference permitted. You don't suppose these Revenue men don't know we're moving to-night? You don't suppose the police are asleep, do you? We got to go through some big towns and we make noise enough to wake the dead. But those yellow-bellied cops aren't going to jump out and try to stop the head of a caravan. Why? Because of the trucks coming up from behind. They don't want to battle with fifty good men. So what do they do? Usually they don't do nothing, but sometimes, when they need to make a showing, they try to cut off the last truck. Orders are no turning back. If the cars up front hear shooting behind, it's none of their business. Every time you read about the capture of a booze truck, it's the last car in a caravan."

"I perceive the strategy in that."

"Sure you do," declared Jiggins

whose remarks were making him better-natured. "Now see if you can dope this out. I'm in wrong with Maguire. I'm given a rotten old truck and told to bring up the rear. I get a lot of boloney about a boat being sunk and my truck is only half loaded. And besides that they hand a bum like you to me for a guard."

"You think they want us to be captured?" asked Ted, shocked.

"It looks damn queer, feller. I I wouldn't put it past Maguire to make a deal to lose one truck for the sake of getting the others through without trouble."

"What can we do about it?" asked Ted anxiously.

Jiggins swore again. "Not a thing," he said mournfully. "If I abandoned this truck, I'd be run down and pelted with lead, I would. I got to play the game even if I'm framed. And that means you, too," he added fiercely.

"Oh, I'll play the game," said Ted dolefully.

"A hell of a lot of good you'll be. Where's your gun?"

Reluctantly Ted drew from his pocket the heavy Navy revolver presented to him by Maguire.

"For Gawd's sake, they didn't even give you an automatic," cried Jiggins. "Now I know it's a frame."

Hog jammed his foot down upon the gas and the motor thundered and labored, but the truck did not gain upon the red light ahead. On the contrary, the tail light drew away and presently it was no longer visible.

THEY swung around a wide curve about ten miles from Silford at dangerous speed and the driver spat out a curse as he descried an obstruction across the road a couple of hundred yards ahead. It was a truck which had been planted sidewise in the middle of the highway so as to block it completely.

Hog honked his horn and a man appeared swinging a red lantern.

"Jobbed," snarled the driver. "Open up on him, you tramp. Give it to him in the belly."

Ted sat with the gun in his hand, but he made no motion to obey the command. The truck was bearing down upon the obstruction and Hog had to apply his brakes. He brought the machine to a stop fifty feet from the car which blocked the road, tore from a pocket an automatic and opened fire upon the man with the lantern.

Immediately from the shrubbery on either side of the road came loud reports and blinding gun-flashes.

Bullets pinged past Ted Glenn and bored through the wooden frame of the old truck.

"Damn you, you're in on this," shouted Hog and swung his gun toward his companion. Ted struck him savagely on the wrist of the gun arm and the weapon fell from his grasp. Hog had no time to take his revenge. He leaped from the truck and plunged toward the bushes at the roadside. Just before he reached the ditch a bullet got him. He spun completely around and dropped in his tracks.

Ted was still the target for half a dozen weapons, but the light was dim and thus far he had not been hit. He threw his gun into the road and held up his arms in surrender. Firing immediately ceased and six men came out of cover and bore down on him. They were in civilian clothes, but had badges pinned to their lapels.

"Get down out of there," commanded their leader harshly.

Very pale and in deep distress, Ted climbed down and stood in the road.

"Hold out your hands. Put your wrists together."

He obeyed. Cold steel encircled his wrists. Handcuffs clicked into place.

The leader peered into his face.

"Never saw this egg before," he declared. "Lucky thing for you, feller, that you didn't hit one of my men."

"That lad never fired a shot," proclaimed an officer who had been posted near to the spot where the truck came to a stop. "And I saw him knock the gun out of the driver's hand."

"Here's his gun," said another revenue man. "I just stumbled over it."

He handed it to the leader, who broke it.

"That's right," he declared. "Smart feller. Knew better than resist an officer. You'd have got what your pal got if you had. Is he dead?"

A man who had been examining the body of Hog Jiggins rose and nodded.

"Deader than Abraham Lincoln," he asserted.

"Well," said the leader to Ted Glenn, "you'll just be charged with rum running. Probably get off with a sentence of six months or a year if you don't put the State to the expense of trying you. How many cases on the truck, boys?"

"Only about a hundred and fifty," reported one of the officers.

"Well, that's better than nothing. Brown, you drive the truck into Asbury. I'll take the prisoner in my car. Put the dead body in the truck and turn it over to the police of the nearest town. We don't want to lug it around."

The prohibition raider and one officer drove Ted into New Brunswick which they reached just as dawn was breaking. They turned him over to the local police and he was thrust into a cell after being relieved of all his personal belongings. He gave a false name, of course, but, new to crime, he had not realized that they would identify him by the contents of his pocketbook. He was booked as Theodore Glenn.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### TRAPPED BODY AND SOUL.

ALTHOUGH Ted had been without sleep for twenty-two hours, he was too much dismayed by his situation to close his eyes. He sat on the side of a dirty bunk, head in hands, and gave himself up to bitter reflections.

This was the end of his absurd enterprise. They would convict him and make a jailbird out of him. Sally would hear of his disgrace and that would end a sweet friendship which was pointing to something even better. Because Maguire had a grudge against Hog Jiggins, he had placed him on the end of the rum caravan and tipped off the revenue men to nab him and his truck.

But why should Maguire, who had professed a liking for Ted, place him, on his first night as a bootlegger, upon a truck which was scheduled to be captured? The big chief, Harmon, had personally assigned Glenn to this enterprise and sent Maguire to escort him to Silford. Surely Maguire would not have dared to sacrifice a man in whom Harmon had taken an interest.

Ted uttered a poisonous expletive. Of course he wouldn't. Harmon had sent Ted Glenn upon this expedition with the intention of having him captured. He wanted him thrown into jail. That's why Maguire had placed him on the truck with the doomed Jiggins.

Hog had been wrong. There was a frameup, but Ted, not Jiggins, was intended as chief victim. Maguire had chosen Hog to share Ted's fate because he was down on him. They supposed that Ted would fight, in which case he would be killed by the officers or, if captured, given a long sentence for firing upon the Federal men. What happened to Jiggins didn't interest anybody.

Ted thought he understood now the sardonic smile upon the lips of Ollie Harmon when he transferred him from the "confidence" end of the criminal game to the active service. For some reason he wanted to get rid of the young recruit. Why? Was it possible that he had found out the purpose of Ted Glenn in joining the racketeers and gangsters? Nobody in the world save himself and Mr. Sanford knew the contents of the letter of instructions of the late Tom Mullen, and Sanford certainly wouldn't tell. Was it because he had been an eyewitness of the shooting of Lou Armstein? That was much more like it.

Anyway, Ollie Harmon had achieved his end. The presumptuous youth who had set out to secure the conviction of the big criminal would be up before a Federal judge and go to Atlanta for a year or two.

Caught red-handed in the act. No possibility of escape, unless Sanford could do something for him. Sanford was his only hope.

The hours dragged by slowly. His watch had been taken from him and he had no way of telling time. By the brightness of the light which came through the small high window of the cell he thought it was somewhere around noon.

With a clang the door of his cell opened.

"Come out, you," commanded a policeman.

Ted rose eagerly and followed the officer into the jail office. There was a sharp featured man in cits standing before the desk and a lieutenant gave him a paper to sign.

"All O K," said the police officer.

"Come on, Glenn," ordered the stranger.

Ted followed him docilely out into the fresh air. There was a small car parked near by. The man motioned Ted to enter and took the wheel himself.

"I'll drive you to Manhattan Transfer and you can go back to New York on the tube train," he said tersely.

"Aren't you coming with me?"

"Nope."

"But—but I was under arrest!"

"The police turned you over to a Federal officer—that's me—and you made your escape from him."

"But that makes me a fugitive."

The man at the wheel grinned. "Don't let that worry you. You're safe so long as you do as you are told."

"Say, are you working for Harmon?"

"None of your damned business," replied the man fiercely. "I've sprung you and I'm through with you. You're on Schultz's pay roll, ain't you?"

"Ye-es."

"Well, report to him in the morning."

TED could not believe that he was actually free until he sat alone in a Hudson Tube car which rumbled rapidly on its way to lower New York. He had it worked out to his satisfaction that Harmon had gone to considerable trouble, even to the extent of losing a truck with one hundred and fifty cases of Scotch whisky

upon it, in order to throw him into the hands of the Federal officials upon a very serious charge. Harmon had desired to have him buried in a Federal prison for a year or two until all chance of his identifying the murderers of Louis Armstein had passed. And now Harmon inexplicably had reached his long arm down to New Brunswick, opened his cell door and set him free. The motive of the scoundrel was beyond his comprehension.

However, before the train reached Fulton Street a motive presented itself. Ted was free only so long as he did exactly as he was told to do by the crooks. It would be reported that the prisoner taken in the raid upon the rum caravan had escaped from a Federal officer taking him to headquarters for examination. No effort would be made to pick him up unless Harmon gave the word, but Ted was now in the power of the gang. Over his head hung a jail sentence and when Harmon cracked the whip he would have to jump.

They rolled into the Fulton Street station and the passengers crowded out of the car. Ted brought up the rear. He glanced at his watch. It was three fifteen. The Mammoth National was not far away. In his predicament he thought of Sanford. The banker would advise him. Perhaps he would suggest a way out of the appalling situation. He might even have influence enough to have the charge against him dropped.

He sought the bank. He asked the young woman who had first conducted him into the vice president's office to send his name in to Mr. Sanford.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Mr. Sanford is not here. Will another officer do?"

"When do you expect him? Tomorrow?"

She shook her head. "He has taken an extended leave of absence. Mr. Goring is handling his work. Do you wish to see Mr. Goring?"

"A leave of absence. Has he left town?"

"I understand so."

"May I have his address?"

"He left no address. He wished a complete change from business," said the girl who was merely repeating instructions given her by the president, Mr. Brown.

Ted sighed. "I see," he said dolefully. "Well, I'm much obliged to you."

There didn't seem to be anything he could do except return to the Blitz, collect his belongings and go back to his old lodgings on West End Avenue, the rent for which was paid until the end of the month.

Before morning he must make up his mind whether he would report to R. Z. Schultz or sneak out of town. If he fled, it was probable that Harmon would set the Federal Government upon him, in which case there was no village in America where he would be safe. If he remained, he must take his orders and he could only guess what horrible things he would be commanded to do.

HE bought an evening paper on the subway uptown, glanced at the headlines carelessly and as he was about to drop it on the seat beside him a few paragraphs under a subhead at the bottom of the page caught his eye.

**REVENUE MEN MAKE HAUL—ONE DEAD**

Federal officers swooped down upon bootleggers coming from Silford in the small hours of this morning and captured a truck containing one hundred and fifty cases of Scotch.

There was a pitched battle between the officers and the two men on the truck. The driver, who has been identified as "Hog" Jiggins, was killed and the guard, Theodore Glenn, was captured and locked up in New Brunswick. Glenn gave his age as twenty-six. According to papers in his wallet he belonged in Freehold, New Jersey.

The capture of Glenn is important, as he is alleged to be a member of the gang which sank the small Coast Guard boat and killed or drowned its crew of four men off Silford about one o'clock this morning as was reported in the morning papers.

With blanched face he read this arraignment of himself. Exposure, disgrace, and a yawning prison. The thing was a hundred times worse than he had supposed because they could charge him with complicity in the massacre of the Coast Guards. Although not a lawyer, he knew that membership in an organization which is responsible for a crime makes the members accessories.

Why, they might jail him for five or ten years. So this was how the arch-fiend Harmon bound his followers to him! He thrust them into the hands of the law and extricated them, but always he held over them the punishment which he had only suspended.

He walked from the subway to the Hotel Blitz, ascended to his quarters and found upon his desk half a dozen slips asking him to call Mrs. Potter Waring, and one request to call a certain uptown telephone number. He did not know this number, but it was probably a summons of some sort from the gang. Well, he was in their toils. Might as well get his orders. He still had the privilege of refusing to obey them.

He gave the number and a woman's voice answered.

"Do you know my voice, Mr. Glenn?" she asked. "Don't mention names. Say yes or no."

"Why, I think so," he said slowly. It was very much like the voice of Miss Demerest.

"Go out and call me from a drug store pay station, immediately," she commanded and hung up.

He hesitated. She was amazingly beautiful, but she was one of the gang. Why should he obey her request? Yet she sounded agitated and she didn't want him to talk over the hotel line which might be tapped by an agent of Harmon.

Well, he would find out what the woman wanted.

He put on his hat and hastened to a corner drug store where he repeated the call.

"This is Ted Glenn," he said.

"Good. You are in a bad predicament and I may be able to help you. I'm taking a big risk. Suppose you get in a taxi and ride to — West Eightieth Street. Ring the bell of Apartment 14. Come immediately. I have been waiting here for hours and I must leave soon."

She hung up again, but now he was sure it was Miss Demerest. He certainly needed help and he didn't care from what quarter it came. He left the drug store and hailed a taxi. In fifteen minutes he descended before — West Eightieth Street. It was a small building with no lobby or attendants and with push buttons under the number of each apartment.

Ted rang the bell of Apartment 14, the door clicked and he rode up in an automatic elevator.

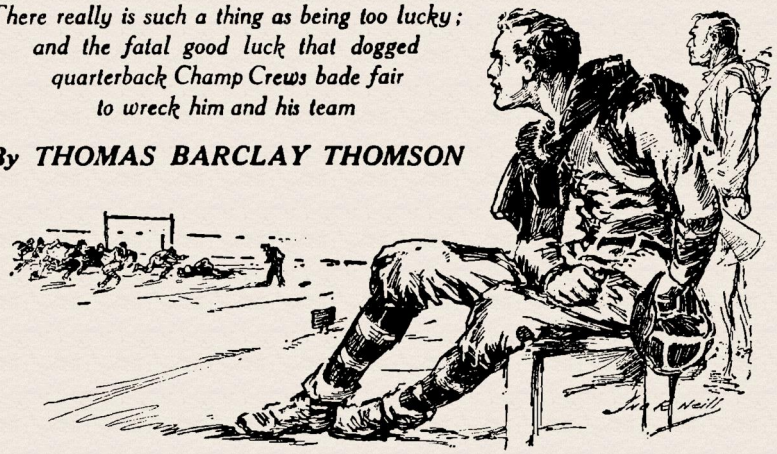
As he got off at the top floor a door opened and Laura Demerest thrust her head out.

**TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.**

# A Fool for Luck

*There really is such a thing as being too lucky; and the fatal good luck that dogged quarterback Champ Crews bade fair to wreck him and his team*

**By THOMAS BARCLAY THOMSON**



*He would have given anything to get back in*

THE ball shot high into the air, and the two ends, racing down the field, flung one glance upward to locate its direction. From then on, they read the message of the hurtling ball in the safety's actions.

Champ Crews, Milbury's safety, lithe, light-haired, and gray-eyed, frowned. He had hoped the punt would be difficult, giving him an excuse for dropping it. But it was coming right to him; nothing to do but gather it in. Just a few slips, however, on his part—where they wouldn't do too much harm—would be a fine thing for him—and for the team!

Champ planted himself, cupped his arms, and was reaching out in his first stride, when the ball landed. He clutched it tightly to him, quickly eluded the nearest end, but was unable to dodge the second one. This end dove to meet him, caught him about the knees, and the two went down. Champ's momentum continuing to carry him forward.

At the instant of impact, Champ allowed the ball to squish from his arms, and it shot high into the air, turning over and over, following the exact direction of its late owner. Champ came to a stop, twisted over, and pulled himself to a sitting position, as if much concerned over the lost ball.

With almost mathematical accuracy, the pigskin dropped squarely upon him. Instinctively he wrapped his arms around it, just an instant before an opponent, who was in frantic pursuit, could reach it. Champ grimaced as he regained his feet. What was football coming to—when a fellow couldn't even throw the ball away?

On the bench, Coach Oaks glanced questioningly at his assistant.

"Did you see any science or skill in

that performance?" he asked, quizzically.

"Just luck," Needham agreed. Then he burst out, excitedly: "Look! There goes Lady Luck's child—romping to another unearned touchdown!"

A perfectly executed end run had broken Champ into the open, and the opposing safety had obligingly slipped on a tricky bit of turf and had fallen flat, allowing Champ to trot, unopposed, over the goal line.

"That's the first time the interference has functioned this entire game!" Coach Oaks snorted. "And the first error for the opposition! Everything timed just right to make him into a hero. They call him 'Champ'; 'Rabbit-foot' would be more appropriate!"

"The team's getting fed up on it, too," Needham said. "They're envious, claim he's drawing a lot of unearned praise."

On the field, the ball was placed two yards out for the try-for-point. Milbury huddled, waiting for Captain Holly Eagan to call the play. But Holly hesitated; their attempts at conversion this season had been poor.

"Hurry it up!" snapped Tobey Watterman, left guard. "Give it to Four-Leaf Clover! He'll luck through for a point!"

"Shut up!" Holly ordered. "Champ can try a drop kick. Let's go!"

CHAMP had never before tried a drop kick in a game, but the score was 12 to 0, and the game almost over. A failure might take some of the curse off his luck, as far as the fellows were concerned. He caught the ball, dropped it to the ground, and kicked—almost with his eyes shut. The ball shot directly toward the goal posts.

For a second, the kick seemed low, destined to fail; then it struck the cross bar, and bounded straight up into the air. It dropped back—and again struck the cross bar. This time it bounced not nearly so high, and fell across on the far side for the extra point.

"There it goes!" Coach Oaks exploded, relieving himself of a lot of pent-up emotion. "Such luck! Honestly, it's ruining him as a football player!"

On the field, players went crazy for an instant, relieving the strain. They whooped, pounded each other on the back, then quieted down again.

"A little heavy defense work," Captain Holly said, gazing directly at the fullback, Truck Greening, "and this game'll be on ice!"

Truck flushed. "I'm givin' all I've got!"

"Why not let Truck trade places with Champ?" Rusty Steele, left end, demanded. "Champ would never have to make a tackle! The line, interference, and ball carrier would all get paralysis, the blind staggers, housemaid's knee, or some other equally fatal disease that would stop 'em for no gain, every time they shot a play in his direction!"

"Yeah!" Tobey said derisively. "Personally, I think he's hogging all the luck for the entire team."

"Lay off, will you?" Champ laughed, good-humoredly, although a trifle anxiously. He again detected a venomous note in the bantering of his teammates, and it worried him. He rose, stood balancing his one hundred and sixty pounds of lithe, whip-cord muscles on one foot, while tracing patterns on the green carpeted turf with the free toe.

"I know I'm getting more than my share of the breaks," he said, finally. "But what do you want me to do

about it? If you fellows turn in a perfect play and give me a clear field to the goal line, do you expect me to spoil your work by breaking a leg, or running the wrong way? My luck can't keep on forever. Some of it's bound to come to the rest of you, or else go to the other side. Let's take what's handed to us and figure it for what it is—breaks in our favor. That's football."

It was a rather long speech for such an occasion, but Champ, a keen student of the game—and of his fellow players—felt keenly the resentment which was slowly crystallizing against him, and ruining their harmonious teamplay.

His appeal was followed by immediate protestations from the other ten players, many of which scarcely rang true.

The game was resumed, only to be stopped within two minutes by the timer's gun.

"He's done it again," Needham said, rising. "Some day that luck'll break and leave us flat."

"I almost wish it would break," Coach Oaks surprisingly answered. "Three victories in a row, and all of them handed to us, unearned. Right now we should be learning to fight uphill battles to finish in front. Instead, the entire team is going soft, leaving the game to chance. Some day—"

He shook his head, leaving the sentence unfinished.

Coach Oaks had every reason to worry. His team was only mediocre, and, ahead, looming up with all the importance of tradition plus intense rivalry, was the annual game with Harbor Tech, made more serious by the exploits of Tech's back-field star. This man, Ted Brundage, had run wild in all of Tech's games to date. It would require all of Champ's luck, if Milbury expected to win.

Too, Milbury was playing a rather ragged brand of football, and getting into the proper psychological frame of mind to go all to pieces the first time the breaks went the wrong way.

DURING the next week, Champ went out of his way to praise his teammates for their good plays, urge them on. They were in a much friendlier attitude when the game started.

Milbury kicked off, and, two plays later, on an end run, Champ's eagle eyes detected the ball being held in a dangerous position by the opposing carrier. Dependable Rusty Steele had stripped the interference, and it was evident that Ward Donelly, left half, would stop the play for no gain; nevertheless, Champ shot forward at top speed. Something was apt to happen when Ward tackled, the way that fellow was carrying the ball.

Something did happen. Ward struck squarely and solidly; the two went down, and the ball—just as Champ had expected—rolled out into the open. Champ was on it in an instant.

"Good boy, Champ," Truck Greening enthused, giving him a friendly slap. "You saved me the trouble of picking it up. I was right behind you!"

"Sorry!" Champ's face fell instantly. "I wish you had beat me to it!"

"You might as well save your legs, Truck," Tobey Watterman said, with a sour laugh. "There's an unwritten law which gives Champ all the breaks."

Champ started to reply, but was shoved toward the huddle by an unseen teammate, so let the matter drop.

Possession of the ball, so close to the enemy goal line, resulted in an early

score for Milbury. But it was accomplished without Champ's being called upon to carry the ball. He played the quarterback position, but directing the team's offense was delegated to the captain. Holly, aware of the resentment of the remainder of the boys—perhaps slightly miffed himself—gave Champ a vacation from ball carrying, even after the ball had started seesawing up and down the field.

If Champ realized he was being intentionally slighted, he never let on; just played ahead, running interference. But it hurt, being slighted like that. He played on, taking less and less interest in his work.

On his own eight yard line he dropped a punt which had become lost in the sun. He was after it like a flash, and regained it—by inches—but the incident finished doing what his teammates' slights had already begun. It broke his morale.

His playing became ragged, ineffective. Twice in succession he failed to take out his man, and both times the unchecked player smashed through to drag down the Milbury ball carrier. Just before the end of the half Champ was withdrawn from the game—"jerked."

He saw the rest of that game from the bench—saw the little-better-than-average team go all to pieces and take a sorry licking from a vastly inferior outfit.

After that he, or any one else, would have given little for the team's chances against Tech.

The following week Coach Oaks, with no explanation to the crestfallen Champ, alternated Mory Thomas and Walt Hempstead at quarter in practice, and it was a question which put on the worse performance. Finally, in desperation, he temporarily returned Champ to the line-up. If possible, he did worse than either of the other two.

CHAMP knew he was in a slump, knew he had no business on the first string line-up; but that could not prevent him from wishing, with all his might, that he could be in, playing the old game. He loved football, loved every minute of every game, and his demotion hurt cruelly. But the thing which hurt worst of all was to have the other fellows act as if he was—well, unwanted. Thinking along this line didn't do his playing any good.

Champ knew that he hadn't blundered into all of the many breaks which had come to him. Was it to be counted against him if he noticed that an opponent went into a play carrying the ball in a careless manner? Or, observing that a certain opponent seemed unable to swerve quickly to the left, say, that he used that knowledge to run past that opponent on his bad side, in broken field running?

Those were things which came to him by virtue of his close watch on the game and on every opponent. He was entitled to profit from those things. His teammates' resentment was unjustified, however natural.

The team went from bad to worse. Two games between them and the Big Game. They lost one and tied the other, and were rated not even an outside chance to defeat their bitter enemy, Tech. The players were discouraged, too; careless in their execution of plays. All that was needed to complete a disastrous season was a thorough licking at the hands of Tech; and that was just around the corner.

Champ improved slightly—enough to insure his presence in the starting line-up—but he was far from being up to par. He knew what ailed him, all

right; knew he was just too thin-skinned—and he b l a m e d himself wholeheartedly for it.

"If I could only forget that the fellows are down on me!"

Steadily the reports drifted in concerning Tech's man, Brundage. Rumor had it that he couldn't be stopped, once he gained the open field; and Tech's staggering total of points scored for the season—mainly by this one man—was strong argument that the reports were true.

Too, according to those rumors, when Brundage wasn't running loose through impotent opponents, romping to touchdowns, he was standing back, tossing passes—high, wide, and handsome—to teammates for more touchdowns. So the question had become: to how few points could Tech be held? Hopes of winning had died completely.

To no one was this outlook so depressing as to Champ. He lived, ate, and dreamed football. While still in grammar school he had witnessed every game within reach. Too, he had organized the neighborhood boys into teams; and always he had played—as quarterback.

He loved to play quarter; he wished he, instead of Captain Holly, had the handling of the team. Now, in college, he was shunted to one side—almost. And the game with Harbor Tech, the Big Game, was upon them. No wonder he felt blue and discouraged!

AS he stood within the shadow of his own goal posts, awaiting the kick-off, Champ was a mass of seething emotion. Would he make a decent showing? Could he break into any spectacular plays? And if he did, would his teammates be glad, or would they be more hostile than ever?

Then, the shrill note of the referee's whistle, the plunk of toe against the poised ball, the forward sweep of the orange-clad Tech warriors, and Champ snapped back to the business at hand. The game was on.

He had hoped that the ball would go to one of the other boys on this first play, but it was not to be. He took two steps forward, waiting its arrival. One lightning glance at his forming interference; then, just the instant b e f o r e the ball struck, he launched forward.

But that hasty glance at his teammates had been bad. Faces had been turned in his direction, and his overwrought imagination—even in that brief glance—pictured displeasure, even hatred, in the looks they cast at him. He tried to concentrate on the ball, but it was no use. He was too busy feeling that the entire team was disappointed because the opening kick-off had come to him.

So, when the ball struck him it bounced away before he could wrap his arms around it—and rolled far to one side. It was recovered by Holly Eagan on Milbury's four yard line, and b a r e l y in the nick of time. A bad break.

No one said a word, but Champ felt the hostile glances which came his way as they went into the huddle. Holly sent Truck into the line from a fake punt location. Four yards the fullback gained—and more room to operate! Champ faked at left end, while Truck cracked the line again, this time for a nice seven yard gain.

First down, but they must go back to straight football—couldn't use all their t r i c k s up now. Tech's line strength became evident. Two plays netted almost no gain, and Ward Donelly punted. Champ dropped to safety, much worried. The two ends must turn

in the highly touted Ted Brundage on his famous end runs. Could they do it? Or would the backfield be called upon immediately to stop this elusive young man?

Champ felt sure that one more bad play would separate him from the game. And if Brundage got under headway—past end and halfback—he might never be able to yank him down.

Tech was now within Milbury territory, and had earned a reputation for scoring early in the game. To-day they had every reason for a try at an early and convincing touchdown. Champ edged forward; Tech musn't score—not if he could prevent it. He saw the ball snap back to Brundage, saw the right end smash forward, turning him in and allowing Captain Holly to dash in and catch him.

Champ licked his lips—they were terribly dry—and edged closer. Brundage attempted the left end, and Rusty Steele broke up the play. Again the Tech star was turned back toward the line, to be pulled down by Ward, left half, after gaining slightly.

Another like that, and Tech would surely kick, giving the ball back to Milbury. Brundage would try hard this time. Probably a trick play. If used—and successful—there would be work for the safety. Champ crept closer; he mustn't allow that demon open field runner to get under headway. Stop him before he started; that was the way!

THE ball was snapped, and Brundage was off, again toward his own right end. Could Rusty tear up this second play? Champ crept even closer, saw Rusty smash into the interference; but Rusty was being fought off. That would never do. Champ edged over, keeping in line with the play. But Brundage was angling back. Would he attempt to circle his own interference?

Then it happened; just when the entire Milbury backfield was off guard. Brundage suddenly turned, facing his own left side of the field, and rifled a pass in that direction. Champ whirled and started back on the dead run. His own territory was wide open!

He almost groaned. A Tech player had evidently sneaked around Holly, and was now squarely in Champ's territory, waiting for the ball. He saw the player cup his arms, ready to take the pass, while Champ was still many yards away. The player was almost upon the goal line; a sure touchdown.

Then the Goddess of Chance smiled on Milbury. The Tech receiver was either too confident, or else in too great a hurry. At any rate, he fumbled the ball, grounded it, and the danger was averted. Champ walked weakly to his position. He vowed, as he mopped cold perspiration from his brow, not to be caught like that again.

On the sidelines, reserve players and coaches sank back to their seats with sighs of relief.

"His luck's returned," Needham breathed. "Nothing else could have saved that touchdown."

"My heart can't stand any more of that sort of luck," Coach Oaks replied testily.

He beckoned toward the row of waiting subs, and Mory Thomas hurried to his side. A moment later, Mory raced on the field—and Champ was through. He subsided into his sheltering blanket, a mighty sick football player.

Soon, however, he partially forgot his own troubles in watching the game. It was worth studying. Tech's star—a potential scorer at all times—must be

provided with the proper chances, and Tech's entire game was directed toward that one purpose. With wide-eyed interest, Champ watched it being worked out.

There came an exchange of punts, and Tech, starting in her own territory, began a systematic assault upon Milbury's goal line. Straight end runs, occasional drives into the line, spinner plays and fakes. Always fakes, cunningly devised to spring Ted Brundage into the clear.

Milbury's backfield, remembering that one unsuccessful pass, consistently lay back, ready to defend against another. Again Brundage angled back, stopped as if to shoot a pass, and Milbury's defense scurried to position, every player covering his own territory. The next moment, the versatile player had tucked the ball tightly under his arm and was off.

He crossed the scrimmage line, gained the open, and was under way, running with speed and deception. Ward drove forward to drop him, was badly outguessed, and Mory, in Champ's position as safety, was the last defense. Mory gave all he had—but it wasn't enough. He snagged the elusive runner with one hand, and Brundage promptly spun free and raced on to a touchdown. The try for point was successful. Seven points!

TECH kicked off; there came a few plays, exchanges of punts, and again Brundage outsmarted his opponents and won past the line of scrimmage. But this time Ward reached him, sent him into an awkward spin, and Mory did the rest. The danger was averted.

"That 'll never do!" Coach Oaks groaned. "He's got to be stopped! Here!"

He whispered instructions to a sub and sent him in to replace the left guard. Another play, and Captain Holly requested time out. When play was resumed, Dutch Kenyon, the center, was back of the line, assisting Truck. This gave Milbury a six-man scrimmage line, with two fullbacks. The formation worked beautifully. No matter which end of the line Brundage attempted, there was both an end and a fullback waiting to slap him down—and his big gains stopped.

On the sideline, Champ nodded approval. It was funny to think of a jerked player approving the coach's plans, but Champ was a student of the game, possessing a deep insight into its complicated angles.

But that formation made him want, worse than ever, to get back into the game. It would leave him free to play the way he liked; lying back, watching every player, ferreting out the opposition's weaknesses. Even on the bench, he was studying Tech's every move, and the things he saw were indeed enlightening. If only Coach would return him to the game in the second half!

Tech's team, just to show its versatility, when blocked from using its star on end runs, began making serious use of him for forward passes. Short passes, longer ones, passes that started as end runs or drives into the line. Finally, with Brundage back where he could either punt, pass, or run, and fully capable of doing all three, the ball shot to another back, who flipped a flat pass to a teammate across the line.

The play was perfect—and good for about five yards, for both Dutch and Truck were closing in, even as the ball was caught. Then, instead of trying for all the yardage he could gain, the

rescuer coolly snapped the ball straight toward the side of the field—a lateral pass—to Brundage who, unnoticed, had slipped into position to receive it. Milbury's backfield was caught, flat-footed, and Brundage scored with ease, although the try for point failed. It left the score thirteen to nothing.

The game went on, and still Tech drew play after play from her bag of tricks. The Milbury team was hopelessly lost, never knowing what to expect. There was too much deception—and too much speed, much of it existing in Ted Brundage's sturdy legs.

The end of the half prevented further scoring, but the second half seemed doomed to be merely a repetition of the first. One big question existed: how high could Tech run the score?

CHAMP had a different question, however. Would Coach let him back into the game? If so, could he take advantage of what he'd seen? For his wide-open gray eyes had seen plenty; and he ached to make use of it.

Too, Champ found that the attitude of the other players had changed. They were ready, now, to welcome a few of his "good luck" touchdowns; say about three—with Tech shut out. They wanted to win, and no longer cared who did it—or how. This change cheered up Champ wonderfully; now if Coach would only put him back into the line-up!

But Coach didn't. The team went on as before, and Champ was in despair. He had never wanted to get into a game so badly in all his life.

Tech took the ball and immediately opened up with the same dazzling, deceptive style of play; again they were on the march to a touchdown. They seemed unstoppable. A trick play, which started as a line plunge, changed into a possible end run, and ended in a flat pass for twelve yards, brought Champ to his feet.

"The darned fools!" he breathed, as he settled back. "Why couldn't they see that? It was plain as day!"

Needham watched him for a moment queerly, and, a moment later, Champ was summoned to Coach Oaks's side.

"You may be only dreaming," the coach said, after listening to Champ's recital, "but the game's a nightmare to me, and a headache as well. Go ahead! Maybe some of your luck will come back—and pull us out!"

Champ raced out to the referee, reporting in—for Truck Greening. He was taking fullback; an unusual position for him. But the other players greeted him joyfully. Three or four ran to his side, slapped him on the back, welcoming him to the game. Champ was more than pleased at this warm reception, but he had the sense to keep his mouth shut.

On the first play, he rushed into a seemingly vacant bit of enemy territory, only to meet Tech's fullback doing a sneak back of the scrimmage line. He covered him, messing up the play; then he called for a conference.

They dropped into a compact huddle, listening for the message from their coach.

"All right, old Luck Hound, what's the orders?" Holly asked. "Anything important, or did you just come back to bring your luck into the game?"

But Holly said it without rancor—grinning—and Champ felt safe. He smiled quietly at other remarks of a like nature. Then he told them; told them what they were to do; how they were to play. The whys, what he had seen, he didn't mention. That wasn't

necessary. It was an outside chance—to save the game; but even a decent showing now would be appreciated, and Champ was only human.

"Now, remember," he said, in closing, addressing Dutch who was still playing a roving center's game, "the first time you see me go past the line of scrimmage to make a tackle, follow me! Chances are, there'll be a free ball for you to recover."

"You're not tackling the ball, are you?" Holly objected. "That idea isn't so hot!"

"Nothing that crude," Champ grinned. "But I think a certain kind of tackling will ruin that inflated star of theirs."

He didn't tell them he had learned that Brundage always shifted the ball when there seemed a chance of the tackler's hitting it. Frequently, he effected the change carelessly.

THINGS looked pretty black. It was second down, and Tech only five yards from a touchdown. Champ stood erect, watching, not Brundage, but Tech's little quarter. The next moment, he rushed toward Dutch's end of the line a split second ahead of the play. A concerted groan rose from every spectator. The play was aiming squarely at his vacated position.

But he never hesitated: never glanced back. Straight on he tore, cut in through the line—and met Brundage squarely on a reverse play. Third—and six to go!

On the bench, Coach Oaks scratched his head. "Looks as if he's right," he muttered. "He smelled that one out!"

The next play also started toward him, and, this time, he drove straight through to meet it. Dutch, remembering his instructions, followed.

Champ had barely crossed the scrimmage line when he saw Brundage coming. Brundage carried the ball under his left arm, out of danger. Champ aimed his tackle deliberately at that side, and, with a quick motion, Brundage shifted the ball to his right arm. Instantly Champ's aim changed, and he struck Brundage hard. A moment later, Dutch grabbed up the ball which Tech's star had fumbled.

"You darned lucky stiff!" Tobey Watterman muttered to Champ. "Nobody but you could have guessed that he was going to fumble! How do you do it?"

Champ just grinned—and called for a punt. He was running the team, now, and liked it.

Up the field, two plays later, Brundage repeated his fumble, and Milbury was far out of danger—and in possession of the ball. The rooting section was up on its toes, now, pulling strong for some more of Champ's proverbial luck. The team, too, had come to life, was up and coming.

Champ knew that this was the psychological time to make a substantial gain. He called a pet play—a delayed buck over center; it went for twelve yards, and the team was keyed to fighting pitch. Again he called the play, and again Ward made safe yardage. Every Milbury man was delirious with joy now, and rooting frantically for a touchdown. There wasn't time for two, of course, but one would help—mightily.

A third time Champ sent Ward across a ten yard marker on that split back, and Tech's captain was wild with anger, exhorting his team to watch that play.

For the fourth time, the play shot away to the right, and received scant attention; every Tech man was set for

the same old play. Result: the end run continued. Tech men were brushed aside with little effort, and Champ gained the open with two interference men still in front of him. He crossed the goal line standing up.

Captain Holly added the extra point with a place kick—one of his few good ones for the season—and things looked rosier. But little time was left; they would need breaks to score again.

TECH received, and again Champ seemed blessed with mind-reading ability. Only once or twice did he fail to go to the ultimate point of Tech's attempted break-through. Twice he deserted his position, with the play coming directly at him, and each time he profited greatly thereby. Tech was forced to punt.

However, a few new men in Tech's line—properly instructed before coming in—prevented further repetitions of the previous scoring play. The game became a seesaw affair, with time continuing to roll by.

Champ centralized on Brundage—hard. Twice more he made the great star fumble, one of the fumbles being recovered by Dutch. But Milbury couldn't get going again. Now, the game practically over, Tech had the ball, and seemed determined to keep it.

"I've got to get that ball," Champ whispered to himself. "I've got to!"

He set himself, watching the little Tech quarter—the player who, unconsciously, tipped off the play by the way he held his hands. There he was again, leaning forward, with his right elbow on his thigh. The play was going to the right! Had it been on his left elbow, the play would as certainly have gone to the left. A slight mannerism, and done wholly unconsciously, but gloriously illuminating to Champ.

Again he darted to his own left, aiming for the end of the line. He saw Brundage, carrying the ball, angling back. Was he going to pass? The direction the play was taking would indicate as much. The defense backed off, to cover the expected pass; all but Champ. He watched Brundage closely, looking for a certain movement. Brundage had a habit of taking a quick glance over his shoulder, locating his receiver, when he intended to pass.

But, this time, Brundage kept his eyes to the front, and Champ knew. Brundage would fake a pass, backing the opposition away; and sidestepping any defensive man who reached him would be easy—due to the players' efforts to block the pass. It was a dangerous moment. If Brundage made safe yardage on the play, the game would be over before another series of four plays could be executed. Clever!

Champ cut in, driving straight for his opponent. Brundage turned, raised the ball, faking a pass, and narrowly watching Champ. This was the moment when Champ should reach high in the air with both hands, striving to block the throw, and making himself a sucker for Brundage's shifty side step.

Instead, just when it was too late for Brundage to do a thing about it, Champ flashed forward, and brought him down in a smashing fall. But, as he fell, Champ loosened his hold, was scrambling to his feet. He knew that no teammate had followed him on this play; and he was gambling that Brundage, surprised, and now worried about his fumbling, would lose the ball again. Champ intended to make the recovery.

It worked. All the Tech players were in front of Brundage. The ball rolled backward, and Champ let it roll. It was due to become his ball

at the point of recovery, and every foot was important. He took possession of it, just an instant ahead of a desperate Tech player.

Champ raced back for a swift huddle. Time for one more play; possibly two. But no more. Thanks to Brundage's backward run, plus the ball's bouncing roll, they were a scant eleven yards from the Tech goal line.

ALL knew the necessity for haste. Not a word was said by the inrushing players, but many a look of frank admiration was shot in Champ's direction. His "luck" was pulling them through. But he was too busy to notice; he was deciding on the coming play. It must be a good one; their best. What should he do?

He remembered the Tech right half's weakness, the habit of making a lightning start for the line when an end run threatened. All right! He'd make use of it. Probably, in his excitement, the player would oblige in this play.

Quickly, he whispered the signal; some one started to object, but was instantly silenced by another. Champ repeated the signal in a shrill whisper, making doubly sure. Then they jumped to position.

The ball shot back, and the backfield got under instant headway, toward their own left end. All but Champ; he knifed through the fighting line, aiming for the defense right half position. He could have shrieked with pure joy and relief as he saw the defense half, true to expectations, rush desperately toward the threatened end of the line, leaving his territory undefended. Nothing like knowing the other fellow's weaknesses!

An instant later Holly, who carried the ball, whirled, took deliberate aim, and shot the ball to Champ. He caught it, noted that he was standing across the goal line, and deliberately touched it down for the tying points.

"Let him drop kick it!" Tobey Watterman whispered in the huddle. "He can make it bounce over somehow, the lucky stiff! Nobody but Champ could run into scoring territory and find it vacated—at a time like this! Let him do it!" But this time there was no jealousy in the words.

With joy in his heart, but no sign of it in his face, Champ booted a perfect drop kick over the cross bar for the winning point. He never bothered to inform his teammates of the hours he had spent secretly practicing for that kick—after having had the job unexpectedly assigned to him in that early game.

THE END.

## *Petrified Oyster Beds*

EACH year many tourists view the Petrified Forest in Arizona and wonder what cataclysmic disturbance caused a mighty forest to be perpetuated in stone.

The same upheaval or one like it occurred in Carbon County, Wyoming. At an elevation of sixty-five hundred feet above sea level, petrified oyster beds are to be found. Great beds of oysters, as natural as the day they lay in the bottom of the sea, are now perched on a ridge of the Rocky Mountains.

*Roy T. Wilcox.*

*"Get her started," Stevens grunted; "I'll stay here and hold 'em off"*

# Gambler's Throw

***Treachery adds to the perils that make a seething volcano of the Florida isle where a racketeer is "entertaining" a maddened, desperate group of kidnaped millionaires***

**By EUSTACE L. ADAMS**

*Author of "Old Safety-First," "Fools Rush In," etc.*

## LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

ON a lonely isle among the Ten Thousand Islands of the Gulf Coast of Florida, the pale, old-young racketeer Limpy Ashwood, a British war veteran who has gone into crime for sport, has imprisoned a group of kidnaped millionaires. They are One-shot Lucci, number one gang leader of Chicago; Hamilton, New York textile king who keeps from madness by playing solitaire; Mallory, Manhattan stockbroker-sportsman; Williams and Martin, of Chicago.

The others present are Nancy Wentworth, beautiful young actress; and three men who came to rescue her—Jerry Calhoun, young aviator; his rich friend Emory Battles; and Federal detective Stevens.

The September heat, and monotony,

This story began in the Argosy for September 13.

are driving them desperate, while Ashwood sits back and studies their reactions. He is collecting big sums from their relatives, and plans to sail away with Nancy after he tires of watching his prisoners. He brings a minister, Dr. Tillington, to marry Nancy to him; but Jerry gets to the minister first, and persuades him to wed Nancy to him instead. Ashwood seems to take his temporary defeat in sportsmanlike fashion.

Jerry overhears One-shot Lucci persuade Ashwood's gangsters to double cross their chief and support Lucci. Hamilton goes mad, kills Williams and a guard; but he is caught and tied up by Jerry and Stevens, who fall heir to the guard's automatic.

## CHAPTER XX *(Continued).*

### THE LID BLOWS OFF.

THE living room was still deserted. Jerry and the detective stepped out on the porch, looking toward the north where, near the end of the long, narrow island, the hangar nestled beside the inlet. To the west the Gulf of Mexico was a mighty expanse of black, through which cut the shimmering path of moonlight. To the east, the sheltered water which separated them from the nearest islands was as smooth as a lake of molten pitch.

From the direction of the hangar came a dark figure, making no effort at concealment.

The sound of voices could be heard from the westerly corner of the porch. The footsteps of two men crunched through the sawgrass and the sand. Those would be Ashwood and Emory, Jerry decided, returning from their stroll.

The flyer crouched a little, sensing an approaching crisis. The three walking men would reach the porch steps simultaneously. He felt Stevens's arm brush against his side and heard the faint metallic click of a safety catch. He could see the cripple's white hair, now, almost within reach from the porch rail. Suddenly the two strollers stopped. The white head turned toward the oncoming figure.

"Who is that?" Ashwood inquired.

"It's me, Lucci."

"Have you forgotten that I told you to remain in your room at night?"

Stevens, on hands and knees, crept toward the rail, Jerry close at his side. Jerry's pulse pounded. If he could but warn Emory of the peril that faced him, there in the dark!

"Ah, to hell with you and your orders!" snapped the Italian. "Stick 'em up, quick! I'm covering you and aching to drill you both!"

Jerry, peering through the interstices of the railing, could see the glint of the moonlight on the blue steel of the Italian's automatic. Emory and Ashwood had seen it too. Their hands were up.

"You are indiscreet, Lucci," the cripple told him coldly. "Have you forgotten my guards with their machine guns?"

"Not by a damn sight!" retorted the gangster. "They are *my* guards now! Since you are fading outa the picture they are joining my mob, starting now. Listen, Limpy, either you're hooking up with me, or I'm going to bump you off, here and now, see?" His voice was malignant.

Jerry had no doubt that he would carry out his threat. Although the moonlight made any target deceptive, the man was but twenty feet away and could hardly fail to hit the mark.

"Drop your gun, One-shot!" Stevens did not raise his voice, but the effect of his words was almost magical. Ashwood and Emory jumped in surprise.

There was a crimson spurt from the Italian's automatic. The bullet spatted between the two crouching men on the porch. The gangster, with a curse, turned and ran at full speed toward the hangar, zigzagging and dodging behind the slender trunks of the palms as he continued his precipitous flight through the darkness. Ashwood's gun flamed once, twice.

"Better cut it, Limpy," said the detective, "you'll need your cartridges. Wish you could get my old revolver from the feller who frisked me. These new-fangled automatics are always jamming at the wrong time. I could of winged that bird, then."

His voice was mildly regretful as he fussed with the instrument in his hand. The cripple gazed wonderingly at the porch.

"And they say there's no Santa Claus!" he marveled.

"Better come up here and let's talk it over," suggested the old man casually. "There'll be hell popping tonight, young man."

THE screen door squeaked on its hinges. Jerry spun around, his muscles quivering, tensed for sudden action. Then he relaxed. It was Alfred the steward. He glanced at the two vigilant men.

"Beg pardon, sir," he bowed, an anxious frown on his usually expressionless forehead. "I was looking for Mr. Ashwood, sir."

"Here I am, Alfred," called the cripple, limping up the steps. "What is it?"

"Sir, I must tell you that the other servants have all gone down to the hangar. I'm afraid there is trouble, sir. Here is a revolver. You will need it soon, I think."

"Good boy, Alfred. Better keep the gun. Any more of them around?"

"No, sir. I had this hidden under my mattress."

"So the whole outfit has deserted, eh?" The leader's voice held a tinge of regret. "I had thought they were loyal."

"They were, sir," the steward assured him, "until that Italian told them they would be arrested as soon as you left. Since they knew I would not join them, they did not trust me. I do not know their plans, but I think they are going to steal the planes and fly away."

Ashwood turned to the others.

"Alfred was my batman during the war," he explained simply. "We can count on him."

There came a series of staccato snapping noises, as though an ox driver were flicking his whip about their ears. The five dived unceremoniously for the shelter of the living room. From the easterly corner of the house, the knife-like flashes of a machine gun stabbed the darkness.

"That's the guard on the inshore beach," said the cripple. "Seem to be pretty well surrounded, don't we?"

The hall leading to the guests' rooms resounded with the rush of feet. Jerry started for the corridor, but was met by a rush of men—Martin, Mallory and Dr. Tillington. All demanded an explanation of the gunfire at the same time, drowning out Jerry's impatient questions until at last he shouldered his way through them and ran at full speed toward Nancy's room.

Her door was locked. He pounded on the panel, calling her. There was

no reply. He hammered with redoubled force, being conscious of a gnawing fear in his heart.

He took three steps backward, then hurled himself against the door like a human battering ram. The center panel splintered and the door sagged on its hinges. He kicked it into the room. He stood there, briefly glancing at the untenanted bed and the wide open window.

He dashed to the sill, to find the screen missing. He leaned far out, peering about until his eyes became accustomed to the darkness. A hundred yards to the north, three dark figures could be seen running toward the hangar. Jerry placed one hand on the sill and vaulted out on the grass.

At the same instant, Stevens burst into the room, just in time to see Jerry's hand flash downward out of sight. With an agility that was amazing for a man of his years, the detective slid out of the window to the ground where, not thirty feet behind the running pilot, he took up the chase.

THE two gangsters were half-carrying, half-pushing the struggling girl. Their progress impeded by her efforts to break away, Jerry was able to close up on them with every forward stride. Then, far over to the right, a machine gun stammered into action.

The pilot heard the whining drone of the bullets as they whipped through the palm leaves just over his head. With despair in his heart, he flung himself on his face. Another dozen feet and he would have been cut in two.

"Guess you flying fellers didn't learn much about the war," panted the detective, crawling up to him on hands and knees. "You were outlined against the Gulf as plain as in broad daylight."

"We've got to rescue Nancy!" declared Jerry vehemently.

"Sure," agreed the imperturbable voice, "but we can't do it if we're dead. Come on, let's crawl a bit."

A burst of firing sounded from the house behind them, echoed from the east by the chatter of a machine gun. Their progress was so slow that, time and time again, only the calm presence of the detective prevented Jerry from rising and making a dash in the face of certain death.

The flyer thought of Emory, back there in the beleaguered house, and was torn between the desire to go back there and fight by his side and the certainty that his duty lay in rescuing Nancy from Lucci's gangsters. Well, he would be back soon, if he lived. Emory and the others would be able to hold their own for awhile.

The vibrant roar of an airplane engine thundered through the night. Jerry identified it as that of the amphibian. The two men who carried Nancy had disappeared in the shadow of the hangar. In a few minutes it would be too late.

He attempted to rise, but the iron hand of the detective pushed him down. At redoubled speed the two scrambled on hands and knees through the sand and lacerating sawgrass.

The roof of the hangar could now be seen at the edge of the inlet which almost bisected the narrow strip of land. From the open door a wide white apron of light shone across the black waters, to be reflected on the silvery wing of Emory's monoplane, which stood on the hard sand, thirty or forty feet to the west of the building.

Sudden hope surged into Jerry's heart. He hastened his pace, veering slightly to head toward the plane. The broad single wing loomed larger and

larger as the two silent figures approached it. The popping of the amphibian's motor rose into an ear-splitting thunder as she taxied out into the inlet. Now, if ever, was the time to run for it. The guards were likely to be watching their ship rather than standing fast to their posts.

"Come on," Jerry whispered. "Make a dash for our plane."

The detective grunted inarticulately. The flyer rose from his crouch like a sprinter at the starting gun. Half the distance had been covered when a man appeared straight in front of him, gun outstretched, muzzle not six feet from Jerry's eyes. There was a sharp crack from behind the running pilot and the ominous figure before him crumpled.

Another man blocked his path, a guard who stood guarding the monoplane. But his attention was upon the flickering flames of the amphibian's exhaust which could be seen drawing a varicolored line through the darkness. With all the momentum of his plunging body, Jerry leaped for the guard. The two went down in a tangle, scrambling around beneath the shadow of the great wing as each sought to free himself of the other's clutches.

Stevens, arriving almost as they fell, brought the butt of his gun down with a hollow thwack upon the gangster's head and in the next instant jerked Jerry to his feet and shoved him into motion.

IN another moment, Jerry's flying feet had reached the step which led to the cockpit door. As he fumbled for the handle he became conscious of an unbelievable number of flashes and spurts of flame which seemed to come from all sides. The sharp *slap-slap!* of bullets was almost continuous.

He wondered how so many shots could possibly miss him. It seemed to take hours to open the door. Stevens's voice, calm and matter-of-fact, came to his ears through the inferno of sound.

"All right, son. Get her started. I'll stay here and hold 'em off."

He might have been discussing the heat, for all the strain in his voice, thought Jerry as he squirmed into the pilot's seat and reached for the starter.

Cold perspiration drenched the flyer's face as it occurred to him that the guards might have disabled the engine to prevent just such an effort to capture her. No use worrying about that now. The next few seconds would tell. The whirring, churning noise of the turning motor sounded dead and cold. Not a kick out of her.

The heavy crash of Stevens's automatic came from almost beneath the cabin floor. The old man was still alive, then, probably crouching behind the right wheel as he held the mob at bay. Great old fellow. Didn't like adventure, eh? Why in hell didn't the engine start? Churning, churning—would she never fire?

Jerry jazzed the throttle desperately, ducking instinctively as a bullet tore through the wall of the cabin and snapped close by his head. A gust of flame belched crimson from the slowly revolving motor before his eyes. Ah, she'd make it! No. Churning, churning, every second dragged itself into an infinity of time. Steve's gun still barked. Another bullet and another raked the cabin.

Another ball of flaming gas ballooned from the exhaust stack. Then the engine roared, backfired, missed and suddenly burst into full-throated, rhythmic life, causing the plane to vibrate in every inch of her fabric.

Steve's figure appeared in the door-

way. Over his shoulder, guns stabbed the night with their vicious points of scarlet. Jerry, trembling with eagerness to push forward on the throttle, watched the old man hesitate, turn back and fire a full clip of cartridges. Then, carefully closing and latching the cabin door, the detective took his seat.

The great monoplane rolled forward over the hard-packed shell, slowly, lumberingly at first, bumping and careening prodigiously. A man appeared directly in front of the glistening, whirring arc of the propeller. He turned to run. The propeller m i s s e d him, but there was a sudden jar as the ship rolled faster and faster.

Then she was free, an earth-borne monster no longer, a joyous, vibrant, birdlike thing hurtling with a roar through the air. Jerry held her bow down to gain flying speed, then pulled her back into a screaming zoom. When she had almost fallen off on her left wing he snapped her out and leveled off to look for the amphibian.

Stevens's steady forefinger pointed slightly to the left. Jerry banked over to follow a faint red line of exhaust fire. As he straightened out again he glanced down and backward toward the house. From a row of windows on the east end of the low building he could see the tiny pin-points of flame from the guns of the besieged. From three sides came answering flashes.

He repressed an impulse to fly over the attackers, to do something to divert those dotted lines of machine gun bullets which he k n e w were cutting through and through those thin walls which sheltered his friend. But an instant's deviation from his course would a l l o w the swift amphibian to escape into the night. He pushed against the throttle to assure himself that it was wide open.

"Guess I'll see if they've left us the Thompson gun." Stevens's voice came clearly through the muffled roar of the engine. The insulated walls of the cabin had been a wise bit of designing. The pilot nodded as the old man eased himself out of his seat and disappeared in the blackness to the rear.

THE exhaust flames of the amphibian were clearly visible now, and Jerry knew that he was gaining, slowly but steadily, upon the northward-speeding plane. Below, the shimmering, silvery waters were dotted with hundreds of tiny islands, some of them mere tufts of mangroves growing down to the water's edge, others miles long, outlined by sandy beaches against which long parallel rows of phosphorescent breakers beat in from the Gulf.

Even as he glanced below, the pilot saw the coast of the mainland approaching from the right, the edge of thousands of square miles of flat, uninhabited desolation.

The amphibian veered to the left, heading slightly offshore. Jerry gained during the change of course.

Stevens slid back into his seat, nursing his beloved sub-machine gun. He squinted ahead at the fleeing plane.

"How long?" he inquired tersely.

"Ten or fifteen minutes, rate we're going now."

"I'll want to poke this gun out of the window."

The pilot showed him a sliding panel in the non-shatterable glass and warned him against firing through the arc of the propeller. Then both lapsed into silence, their eyes fixed upon the irregular blur of black which was slowly resolving itself into the distinguishable outline of the amphibian. A sudden stream of spitting fire shot from the rear of its fuselage.

Jerry watched it carefully, holding it steadily to his course. Time enough to dodge the machine gun when he could see the tracer bullets. The detective slid open the glass panel and inserted a clip of bullets into the breach of his gun.

"Going to be a mite awkward," he observed peevishly, "to stop them without making them fall. Don't want to hit the pilot, or the girl, either."

Jerry saw a luminous streak of gray smoke draw a straight line from the gangster's flashing gun to a point a scant six inches from the monoplane's left wing tip. The gunner was getting the range. The smoking line veered inward, following the line of the wing, the bullets disappearing within the leading edge of the thick structure and reappearing from the trailing edge.

That would never do. Jerry pulled hard back on the stick, and the ship zoomed vertically for a hundred feet, leaving the line of death far below. He straightened out, still watching. Up, up came the tracers. He swung to the right, then plunged downward, gaining perceptibly upon the amphibian.

Stevens, his gun ready, paid no attention to the other's bullets, nor to the violent motions of the cockpit. He waited calmly for an opportunity to shoot without endangering the girl or causing a fatal crash. Twice he had pushed the snout of the gun through the orifice in the windshield, only to hesitate and pull it back to his lap.

The tracer bullets had been coming from a point just behind the pilot's cockpit in the bow of the other plane. Nancy was probably confined in the main cabin within the fabric-covered fuselage, to the rear of the cockpit. Jerry could see every detail of the ship. The tracer bullets were almost constant. He avoided them automatically.

"What shall I aim at?" inquired the puzzled detective. "No use killing the girl so's you can rescue her."

"Wait," snapped the pilot as he pulled back into a zoom. Full two hundred feet above the amphibian he leveled out and held her to her course above and slightly behind the lower ship.

"I'm going down," he declared. "We'll dive straight across her top wing. Shoot at her propeller."

Stevens nodded silently and pushed the muzzle of his gun through the panel. Jerry pushed on the stick, and the plane seemed to drop from under the two men as she hurtled downward like a falling projectile. The amphibian appeared to float up to meet them.

JERRY, leaning forward in his seat, watched the enemy ship with half closed eyes. He must miss that upper wing by inches only. The tracer bullets from below were sweeping the monoplane from wing tip to wing tip as the gangster gunner kept his finger clasped tight on his trigger.

Down, down. Funny, how long such a short dive could take. The tracer bullets annoyed him. They seemed to draw a ruled line between his own eyes and the other fellow's gun. He wondered vaguely why he hadn't been riddled with lead.

The luminous dial of the altimeter suddenly disappeared from the instrument board. Something else, too, had disintegrated as the gangster's bullets crashed through the panel. He could not stop to see what it was. No time for anything but to dive as close to that upper wing as he could. Must give old Steve a good target. Then he became aware of a new sound, a continued *tac-tac-tac* as of a steel riveter at work. It was Steve. Attaboy, Steve!

The long, broad upper wing seemed to leap upward at the bow of the plunging monoplane. Jerry pulled back desperately, wondering if he had waited too long. As the nose lifted, he listened for the crash that would mean the end of everything.

Steve was straightening up, pulling his gun barrel out of the panel. Jerry's breath whistled between his tight-shut teeth. They were clear! Missed a collision by fractions of an inch.

"Get it?" he demanded.

"I dunno. Usually do."

It was all of a night's work to the detective.

The monoplane was level again. Jerry banked hard over to return to the attack. The dark bulk of the other ship became visible. The pilot slapped his companion on the back.

"Look!" he shouted. "They're gliding!"

The amphibian, her exhaust pipes streaming flame, was gliding in a long, thin quarter-turn, her pilot obviously trying to reach the sandy beach of the mainland. Jerry measured the distance with his eye. Yes, they might make it. He must beat them to it. With his own engine on full he swung toward shore in a terrific power-dive, hoping against hope that he would find the beach suitable for a landing.

The gangster had switched off his motor. Without the drag of the propeller, the five-hundred-horsepower engine would have speedily raced to destruction.

Jerry thundered past the slowly gliding plane. With his own mighty engine wide open, he was covering two feet to the gangsters' one. Down, down, with the wind shrieking through the struts, the monoplane vibrating in every square inch of her structure.

There was no time to drag the beach to find out if the sand was soft or hard. He'd have to chance it. He closed the throttle and pivoted the ship around on her left wing tip. Then, kicking the rudder pedals hard right and left to kill her flying speed he dropped wheels and tail-skid on the sand.

The heavy plane lurched sickeningly. Jerry braced himself, thinking that she was about to dig in and roll over. She lurched once more, then rolled heavily to a full stop.

Stevens was out of the cabin before the pilot had cut the switch and snapped open his safety belt. Handicapped though he was by the heavy machine gun, the old man was as agile as a monkey.

The amphibian had just landed on the water, forty or fifty feet from shore and was now drifting in toward the beach under the forward momentum of its landing speed. With engine dead and its crew silent it looked like a black ghost ship in the night.

"ONE shot out of that gun," Stevens called, "and I'll give you the works."

There was no reply. The plane, its forward way almost lost, was inching across the last few feet to the shore.

"Throw your machine gun overboard." The detective's quiet voice carried far across the still water. "I want to hear it splash."

Still that eerie silence hung over everything. Jerry felt a tingle run through every nerve-end. The air seemed full of static electricity, like the moment between a sharp flash of lightning and the resulting crash of thunder.

"Duck, son," warned the detective, as his heavy hand bore hard down on Jerry's shoulder.

A vivid sheet of flame from the

amphibian's bow split the darkness. It seemed to be reflected instantly in a stabbing fire from close to the pilot's side. The whine of bullets filled his ears. As Jerry fell on his face, spatters of sand filled his eyes, mouth and ears. The reverberations from the machine gun fire died away into silence, utter and absolute, and he could hear the even, regular breathing of the quiet man at his side.

There was a heavy splash from the direction of the amphibian.

"That was the Tommy gun," came a strange voice.

"Where is One-shot?" demanded the detective, tersely.

"On the floor of the cockpit; him and Sam. You got 'em both."

"Another $150,000 shot to hell," mourned Stevens. "Money goes awful quick around here."

Jerry, scrambling to his feet, raced down the beach, brushed past the gangster who, his hands in the air, was wading through the shallow water, and climbed into the cockpit.

Carefully avoiding two dark, twisted figures on the floor, he worked his way through the maze of seats, control wheels and wires to the cabin door. Breathless, he clattered down the three steps into the blackness of the commodious compartment within the fuselage.

"Is that you, Jerry?" Nancy's voice was brave.

"Yes," he replied briefly, choking back the rush of words that came to his lips. In that instant he knew that he loved her, worshiped her. What use to try to keep his thoughts away from her, to try to ignore her very existence? He had loved her ever since he had first looked into those eyes, candid and level as a boy's, back there on the Merrick Road.

He clenched his teeth to prevent himself from telling her, while she waited so silently for him to find her there in the inky darkness. His wife! That spoiled it all, for had he not promised to have it annulled? How could he tell her that he loved her now, when her heart would be warm with gratitude toward him? And when they were back in New York, she would be Nancy Wentworth, not the helpless, frightened little girl of the tropics, but the self-reliant, light-hearted musical comedy star, beloved by all the world.

His groping hands touched hers. They were icy cold and clutched his own with remarkable strength.

"Nancy," he whispered, "are you all right?"

"Yes, Jerry," she replied calmly. "Except that my ankles are bound and I am tied to this seat."

His skillful hands untied the knots and unsnapped the safety buckle. He could feel her breath on his cheek as he bent over her to help her to her feet. She would never know the struggle he was making to keep himself from seizing her in his arms and smothering that glorious red mouth with his kisses. His wife! What a grim joke!

"What are you laughing at?" she demanded.

"I'm not laughing," he snapped shortly. "Let's get ashore."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### BACKS TO THE WALL.

"WELL, Ashie, old bean, it won't be long now!" Emory Battles's smoke-begrimed face broke into a wide-mouthed grin as he rolled over on his side and looked at the man who shared the shelter of the up-ended living room table.

The cripple ducked behind the heavy shield just as it vibrated under the sharp smack of a bullet. His pale, lined face was drawn with fatigue, but the dancing light in the blue eyes was undimmed as he returned the other's smile.

"One would think, my dilettante friend, that you looked forward with pleasure to dying." Ashwood's drawling voice had lost nothing of its mocking brilliance. He reached for a cigarette from Emory's case.

"From where I lie," he puffed, "it looks as though we would be able to hold them off about thirty more minutes at the longest, and then only if we are able to continue keeping them from passing to the rear of the house and surrounding us."

"Hell, they may all have sunstroke within the next thirty minutes," retorted Emory, squinting cautiously over the top for a brief glance toward the hangar which, in the first faint pastel tints of the dawn, looked strangely peaceful in comparison with the wrecked living room behind him. A bullet snapped by and he dropped his head unceremoniously. "You picked out some pretty fair sharpshooters when you organized your mob, Ashie," he declared ruefully.

"As ye sow, so shall ye—" pronounced a resonant voice from the center of the room.

"Please, please, Dr. Tillington," interrupted the cripple. "Spare us, on a morning like this, from triteness! If I hear just one more such quotation, I shall froth at the mouth and bite somebody!"

"Give us another then, Reverend," Mallory's voice was malicious. He slipped another clip into his hot automatic and peered out of the broken window at the other end of the long room. "All right then, if you won't, how about another little highball?"

The Rev. Dr. Tillington's long face was a study in mixed emotions as he measured three fingers of rye in each of several highball glasses, squirted the siphon and crept on hands and knees to pass the sparkling drinks to the vigilant men behind their improvised defenses.

"Gor', that's good!" murmured Alfred, the batman, as he sat up behind the overturned couch and drained his glass. The steward's face was ghastly pale. His left arm, roughly bandaged in torn sheeting, showed as a great splotch of crimson against the background of his white service jacket. A semicircle of empty clips was mute evidence to the fact that he had been a bulwark of strength during the long night's siege.

Martin, as usual, was silent. Propped on one elbow behind a parapet of chairs at the northwest corner window, he drank his highball greedily, then rolled over on his stomach and fingered his automatic lovingly.

EMORY, sipping his liquor slowly, gazed across the room at the strange, silent man with something like wonder in his eyes. Who would have thought that that taciturn, prosaic little real estate promoter would have his bright moment of cold-blooded, death-defying courage? Three hours before, Emory had watched Martin vault out of his window, sprint across fifty feet of bullet-swept sand, and retrieve an automatic dropped by a dead attacker. Hardly a chance in a thousand he had had, yet his action had been spontaneous and unhesitating.

"Tired of being shot at without being able to shoot back!" he had explained grimly to Emory, who had raced across the room, leaned out of

the window and whisked him back into the relative security of the barricades.

"You tell 'em," Emory had whooped. "Nothing like Chicago experience during a gang fight!"

Whereupon, the little fellow had glared at him as though resenting the reflection cast upon the city in whose real estate he had dealt.

And Mallory! There was another study in psychology. He had burst out of his room, cold sober, and at the first massed attack upon the house he had been quietly efficient, firing steadily, accurately, as though shooting at clay pigeons on a range.

Yet even through the hottest moments of the fight Mallory had never ceased digging at Ashwood with his scarcely veiled insults. Unfortunately for the stockbroker's intentions, however, the cripple enjoyed his sallies, retorting the cleverly pointed barbs that never failed to penetrate the other's thick hide.

Oh, yes, it had been a merry little night! Perhaps of them all, Dr. Tillington had been the outstanding hero. A man of peace, unable to have secured one of the all-too-few automatics had he wanted it, the minister had stood sentry-go over the two corridors leading to the rear wings to make sure that none of the gangsters had succeeded in slipping between the house and either beach for a flank attack.

The man was frightened; that was obvious. That very fact made his assumed indifference real heroism. He had bandaged Alfred's arm when the attackers were almost inside the room. When that almost-successful charge had been repulsed, Dr. Tillington had volunteered to make coffee in the dark and eerie kitchen.

Now, in the growing light, Emory could see him wince as an occasional bullet buried itself in the scarred wall opposite a window. Yet he had done his duty throughout the long night, even to the extent of preparing, somewhat against his will, alcoholic refreshment for the beleaguered men when they demanded it.

But most of all, it was the minister's tender watch over the unstrung Hamilton which had inspired even the insolent Ashwood's grudging admiration. Still tied with the bonds that Stevens had wound round him, Hamilton lay in coma, from which he had emerged into a few moments of wild delirium when the fighting had reached a crisis.

Yet through it all, Dr. Tillington had soothed him with never-flagging patience, crawling over to him at frequent intervals to see if he still slept and if the barricade of furniture and mattress still sheltered him from stray bullets.

"How much ammunition left?" called the cripple, sliding his empty tumbler toward the minister. "Alfred?"

"Only two clips, sir."

"Martin?"

"Four clips."

"Good. Mallory?"

"Three."

"Battles?"

"The same."

"That makes twelve. I have three myself. Fifteen in all. We'll have to go easy from now on. Don't shoot unless you know you can drop your man."

"WHY in hell doesn't Stevens come back?" grumbled Mallory. "With his machine gun we could run the blighters off the island!"

"Are you asking me a riddle?" retorted Emory sarcastically. For the

past three or four hours, he had tormented himself with the same question. What could have happened to the two men? Had the machine gunner on the amphibian brought them down? Or had they, perhaps, themselves been captured on the beach and taken away, with the girl, as prisoners? Or were they somewhere down among those palms, the first victims of the gang's treachery?

"You know, Mallory, just as well as the rest of us, that Stevens will come if he can, and so will Jerry. Be your age, man, and stop asking silly questions, or I'll come over there and slap you down till you can't get up."

"Tut, tut," chirrupped Ashwood delightedly. "Keep the home fires burning and all that! Nothing makes me feel as much at home as to hear the amiable Mallory passing the time of day with some one. I believe he misses his sweet-tempered Italian."

Mallory and Emory subsided, the former muttering angrily, the latter with his good humor restored by the cripple's bantering.

Emory, his eyes just over the chipped edge of the table, gazed steadily toward the hangar. Out of pistol range, five men stood in a little group, talking. As he watched them, curious, he saw two of them pick up a machine gun and tripod and walk in a wide curve toward the easterly side of the house. Then, just within range, they mounted the gun on its tripod and lay down.

The other three separated, two of them dodging behind one tree after another until they had worked their way as close to the house as they dared. The fifth pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket and advanced boldly, waving the white bit of cloth.

"Far enough, Mueller," called Ashwood as the gangster reached easy hailing distance.

"Come out on the porch, Limpy," yelled the lone man. "I want to talk to you."

"You hardly inspire me with confidence," retorted the other, "while you have a white flag in one hand and a gun in the other."

Mueller placed his automatic upon the ground at his feet. Ashwood limped out on the porch. Under his straightforward gaze, the man with the flag of truce shifted about uneasily.

"Limpy," he said at last, "we don't want to bump you off, but we want two-thirds of all the jack you got in the house. We'll take your word how much you got."

"Aren't you flattering?" mocked the slender, white-haired man from his exposed position on the porch. "I've been giving you all half of it as it came in, now you want two-thirds of my half. Just a little grasping, aren't you?"

"You'll have plenty left," the other evaded.

"Mueller, aren't you the man who persuaded the others to join Lucci's mob?"

"What if I am?"

"Nothing of importance," replied Ashwood evenly, "except that I'm going to write your name on a bullet. You've always made trouble, Mueller, wherever you have been. You'll find life very tiresome, so I'm going to do you a favor and end it for you before you leave this island."

"What about the jack? Are you going to kick in? If you don't, we'll charge the house and take it all."

"Charge if you like," retorted the cripple indifferently. "I'd advise you, Mueller, to remain behind a tree."

A sudden flush suffused the gang-

ster's face. So quickly that the eye could scarcely follow his movements, he dropped the flag and scooped up the automatic.

Emory, crouched behind his table, felt his own gun kick back in his hands. He saw Mueller stand upright, rigid, a look of astonishment replacing the rage on his stolid features. Standing still as a statue, the man dropped his gun, coughed and suddenly pitched forward full length upon the sawgrass. His outstretched fingers clawed the sand for a moment; then he lay very still.

A GUST of machine gun bullets rattled against the side of the house and knocked chips from the porch rail. Ashwood turned, calm and unhurried, and strolled back into the living room, where he took his place beside Emory.

"Much obliged, old thing," he said quietly. Then, turning toward the others: "They'll be coming, now. Don't let one of them slip past the house. We can't have an attack from the rear."

"How about another drink?" demanded Mallory. "I'm so dry I have to prime myself to spit."

"Reverend," smiled Ashwood, "to your duty as bartender!"

Emory fingered his trigger impatiently as he watched men scuttle from the shelter of one palm to the next, always working closer to the house. A tall glass was placed by his hand.

"Happy landings, Ashie!" he nodded, catching the other's eye. Ashwood's face was transformed. No longer mocking and cynical, it was alight with excited anticipation of the mêlée which was to come. Wiped clear of its hard lines, the cripple seemed to have lost twenty years of his age.

"Cheerio, old top, here's to the next war!" Ashwood drank deep.

Emory stared over the barricade. The attackers were making their way forward with infinite caution, taking advantage of every shelter.

"Listen, you fighting cock," said Emory, hitching himself closer to the other, "there's only one thing that'll keep me from kicking off with a smile on my face."

"And that is?" invited Ashwood quietly.

"I'm so curious about you that I'm itching all over. Since we'll all probably be bumped off during the next twenty minutes, can't you tell me what turned you from a damn' good partner on a binge, as you were back there in London, to a hard-boiled egg such as you are now?"

The blue eyes clouded as Ashwood regarded Emory uncertainly, then glanced out at the slowly advancing enemy. He looked thoughtfully at Mueller's sprawling figure.

"I owe you something," he acknowledged slowly, "so I suppose I may as well tell you. Some time before our little party together in London, I met a girl who drove an ambulance for the Overseas Club. Saw quite a bit of her. Asked her to marry me. Two nights after that evening of ours which ended in the fight with the M. P.'s, she stole some important military papers from my tunic pocket and disappeared. Only saw her once, years later, in Berlin.

"Some days after she took the papers, an important attack was smashed to bits by the Germans. My fault, you see. They cashiered me, blaming me also for several things I hadn't done. I had no defense. Spent a year in the Tower of London. Got this short leg trying to escape from

hell. Six months after the Armistice, I was pardoned. My friends had forgotten me, they had dropped me from my clubs." His face was set grimly as he went on:

"I sort of drifted around like a pariah. Needed excitement. Had no respect for justice, consequently none for the law which administered it. War taught me proper value of human life, which is less than nothing. Played the 'Lone Wolf' racket for a while. Then, as an experiment, I organized my mob—who, by the way, are beginning their attack."

HE turned abruptly and fired three shots as fast as he could pull the trigger. Emory, getting into action, saw two men stumble and fall. One pushed himself to his hands and knees and dragged himself back toward shelter.

Then the battle became general, but to Emory it was a matter of himself, alone, against half a dozen. He was conscious that to right and to left, guns barked. That was incidental. The only matter of importance was his own effort to keep that group of men from reaching the porch.

The leader charged desperately, zigzagging as he galloped ahead of his comrades. Emory wished to stand up and shoot it out with him, but from the shelter of the palms, a machine gun sprayed his window with leaden hail and made it very difficult for him even to raise his head for pot shots.

A dozen more steps and that chap with the contorted face and staring eyes would be able to duck beneath the ledge of the porch. *Now!* Emory's gun smacked against the palm of his hand. The man's face was suddenly suffused with a huge crimson smear. His onward pace did not falter.

Emory fired again, aiming at his body. He knew that he had not missed yet somehow, incredible as it was, the fellow came on. He crashed full against the front of the porch, the momentum of his charge carrying him headlong through the splintering railings.

He fell sprawled, his head and shoulders on the porch, his waist and legs dangling over the edge. He took a long time in dying.

Emory heard Mallory cursing in a monotone, on and on, endlessly, flatly, interrupted only by the heavy bark of his automatic. Ashwood was silent, his mouth set in a twisted grin, firing slowly, carefully, wasting not a single shot.

Somebody behind Emory shrieked in agony, but there was no time to look around to see who had been hit. Running men were falling in the sand, some to get up and resume the charge, others to drag themselves away or to writhe and twist where they lay.

The two machine guns hammered relentlessly, monotonously. They irritated Emory like two persistent mosquitoes on a hot, sleepless night. It would be, he thought, those two machine guns that would eventually turn the tide of battle against the defenders. Their bullets spattered through the room, the thin sides of the house forming no resistance to their steel jackets. Only the heavy barricades stopped them.

Emory glanced again at Ashwood. The cripple grinned, pointed at his automatic, then to a scattering of empty shells and held up three fingers. Three shots left. The pilot had lost count of his own. He only remembered that he had used most of his last clip.

All at once his ears became attuned to a new note in the battle. He had

been hearing it for some time, but it had not penetrated into his consciousness. That throbbing, vibrant beat—an airplane engine, of course! He listened again: the monoplane. No mistaking that uneven, pulsing drone.

"Hey!" he shouted above the din of battle, "the plane's back! Jerry and Steve!"

He looked back at his window. A man stood there, framed in the splintered sash, crouched, face distorted into a mask of frenzy, his automatic foreshortened into an ugly round hole as it pointed straight at Emory's head.

The flyer braced himself for the shock. His own gun was swinging upward with the speed of light. Still he knew he would be too late. He could see the forefinger tighten on the trigger. Then, suddenly, the man pitched over on top of him, drenching him with warm, sticky blood.

Emory squirmed from under, glancing at the cripple. Ashwood winked.

"We're even!" he called.

"Much obliged, old top," roared Emory, but the other seemed not to hear. He was using his last shot to stop a man who would have reached the barricade in another five steps.

ABOVE the all-pervading roar of the airplane engine, Emory could hear the steady hammering of its machine gun. The sound of wind screaming through wires and struts came to his ears. Then he saw the plane, as it dived through his range of vision.

For an instant he thought that it was falling, that it would crash headlong into the clump of palms which sheltered the nearest enemy machine gun. But just as the propeller seemed about to cut a swath through the leaves, the nose lifted and the plane zoomed clear, up and up until, whirling around on one wing tip, it dropped again to the attack. The hidden machine gun was silent.

The ground in front of the house seemed magically cleared of running men. The huddled figures lay where they had fallen. The wounded twisted spasmodically where they lay in the direct, hot rays of the sun.

The plane dived at the tree behind which the second machine gun had been mounted. Emory saw, now, the muzzle of Steve's gun projecting from the panel in the windshield. He glimpsed Jerry's head outlined in the window. Was there a third head in that darting, zooming, wheeling ship? It had zipped out of sight before he could make sure.

Ashwood rose, slipped his hot automatic into his shoulder holster and stretched, glancing about the room. Then the hard lines reappeared in his face as he glanced toward the far end of the room. Emory, getting on his feet, saw Alfred, the faithful little steward, lying motionless in a welter of blood.

The minister, his face ashen, was crossing his hands and drawing a sheet over his still body. Ashwood limped across the room, looked down into the the lifeless face and turned away.

"Let's pass out a round of grog, Ashie," suggested Emory. "I think we've earned it."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### AFTER THE STORM.

STEVENS pushed his well-scraped plate aside with a sigh of complete contentment.

"Now the excitement's all over and I've had my breakfast, I think I'll go and have a little nap. It's another hot

morning and I'm not as spry as I used to be. Getting too old for this helling around all night. You young fellers better take the speedboat and screw a spare propeller on that airplane we left on the beach. Might take a couple of sandwiches along, too. That baby we left with the plane might be feeling a little peckish by now."

He grinned comfortably at Nancy who, flushed and triumphant after the praises which had been lavished upon her cooking, looked adorable in her borrowed cook's costume.

Even the taciturn Martin had been almost garrulous when a well-heaped plate of scrambled eggs and Irish bacon had been placed before him. The minister, after eating prodigiously, declared that a dish of such food would make a new man out of Hamilton, and departed for the sick man's room, carrying a well-heaped tray.

The detective wandered to the door of the wrecked living room and surveyed the scene of desolation. In the reaction from the battle, it had been easy to forget the splintered walls and the ominous pools of blood.

"Glad I wasn't here last night," he observed judiciously. "Can't say I enjoy a ruckus any more. Must have been pretty good while it lasted, though. See you later."

"There," declared Jerry thoughtfully, "goes a real man. Did you ever see a bird shoot so fast in your life?"

"He's had more fun the past few days," stated Ashwood, smiling, "than he's had for ten years. For all his moaning about peace and quiet, that old fellow would rather fight than eat. And the funny part about it is that he doesn't realize it."

"If you'll excuse me," said Emory, rising, "I'm going to find a desk and write a letter. Back in 'arf a mo'."

"I'll ease out and see if the boys have cleaned up properly," decided the cripple. "Want to come along, you two?" He looked at Mallory and Martin so meaningly that they started, guiltily, from their chairs and followed him precipitately. Then, suddenly, Mallory returned.

"Here," he said to Nancy, "give these to the minister on the consideration that he'll keep his yap shut. If he thanks us, I'll tear his hide off, inch by inch."

As he retreated, she glanced at the two little slips of paper he had thrust into her hand. She looked at Jerry in astonishment.

"Look at these," she murmured and passed them across the table. They were two checks for twenty-five thousand dollars each, drawn simply to the order of "Dr. Tillington's church."

"The fight last night seems to have restored Mallory to something like normal," observed Jerry. "If it has done as much for Hamilton, we'll have a lot to be thankful for."

"The minister has finally agreed," said Nancy, "that if Hamilton wakes up in his right mind, nobody is to tell him about Williams and the guard. Their deaths will be explained as part of the general fight last night."

JERRY fell silent, his thoughts wandering. In another few hours they would be on their way back to civilization. In another week, perhaps, this glorious girl would be back on Broadway, charming the hearts of audiences, forgetting the fact that she had been, once, in name, at least, Mrs. Gerald Calhoun.

He had made his promise and he'd live up to it. Mrs. Gerald Calhoun! Well, it was something to have been able to do her a service, to have known

her at all. Their eyes met. A slow flush crept over her lovely cheeks. She rose hastily.

"And now, young man, you are going to help me with the dishes," she informed him, her eyes sparkling at his moody countenance. "Some of the men are staying here until Steve sends a boat down from Fort Meyers, so we must leave everything spick-and-span."

Rather awkwardly he stacked a pile of dishes and carried them into the kitchen. She watched him, a soft smile on her lips.

"How dare you put them into the water without scraping them! It's going to take me some time to train you, but I'll do it, yet!"

He was halfway back to the dining room when he suddenly turned around, marched over to her and grasped her roughly by both shoulders.

"What did you mean by that?" he demanded.

"You men are so awkward," she parried, not meeting his eyes. He shook her, furious.

"Now you listen! If you think you're going to taunt me, I'll shake you till you can't stand up! Isn't this whole business hard enough for me without your joking about it? Don't you know that I have every legal right to take you in our plane and carry you away to a place where you'll never see New York again? Don't you know that I'm trying to be a gentleman and keep my promises? You know I love you, so why try to plague me with it? You know that I worship you, your marvelous eyes, your saucy little nose, your kissable lips—and you laugh at me!"

A soft, slender hand crept up to his mouth and pressed hard against it with surprising strength.

"Jerry, you're so dumb!"

He sputtered and shook his head, trying to speak.

"Are you really," she asked softly, her clear eyes meeting his at last, "going to cast me off and divorce me?"

He stared incredulously at her, unable, not daring, to believe his ears.

"You're a beast!" Her voice shook a little. "Married two whole days and you haven't kissed me once!"

He reached for her hungrily and if his hard-muscled arms all but broke her back, she made no complaint. But, of course, she couldn't. Her lips were sealed.

AT length, it may have been five minutes later or an hour, Nancy Wentworth Calhoun pushed her husband away, straightened her hair and said:

"Now, my husband-who-has-just-come-to-his-senses, shall we finish our housework?"

"One more kiss!"

"Not until you return with another load of dishes."

"Heartless!" he grumbled, but hastened for the dining room.

Just as he was scooping up an armful of plates and cups his eye fell upon a large square envelope. Upon its face was his own name.

Anxious to return to Nancy, he grabbed a handful of plates and raced back to the kitchen. Before she again forced him back to work, he remembered the envelope which he had stuffed in his pocket. Thumbing open the flap, he withdrew the inclosure and stared, puzzled, at Emory's familiar handwriting. Why should Emory write?

The first half dozen words riveted his attention.

"What's the matter, Jerry?" Nancy was alarmed at his expression.

"Here, you read it to me." He thrust the letter into her hand, and she read:

DEAR OLD TOP:

It's almost time to shove off for New York, and, eventually, Boston. But I can't stick it, old-timer. I'm a restless bird of passage, a changeling child in a family to whom there is no world beyond Beacon Hill. I crave new scenes and new doings. It would never occur to me to fade out of the picture without you except that I know what you are too goofy to realize—that you are going to stay married.

So, old man, after these many years, we've come to the parting of the ways which comes inevitably when a girl makes a trio out of a duo. You and Nancy—a great pair, old man! You'll settle down.

Between pals, distance does not count. We'll drift together, old son, from time to time. I'll drop in on you, put my muddy feet on your mahogany desk and tell you how I got my tan and my touch of malaria. And you'll tell me how your tailor fusses about your respectable bulge.

You'll be sorry for me and I'll be sorry for you. And maybe, in all your conventional happiness, you'll envy me just a little. You'll smell the smells of burned oil and exhaust gas and you'll feel again the kick-back of a gat against your palm and you'll wonder where I am and what I'm doing. And that's the price, you'll pay, old man, for your happiness. But, as the old *cliché* goes, you can't have everything.

Remember, Jerry, how we'd roll the dice when we faced a difficult decision? Gambler's throw, one roll? Well, I've rolled 'em, and I'm joining up with Ashwood for a bit of a whirl somewhere. Next to you, he's the gamest little fighting-cock I've ever known. Unlike you, he has no future—in which he resembles me. So we're off, Jerry, on another gambler's throw. Off to somewhere, God knows where. But we'll have fun, Jerry, the kind we had in the war—the kind we've had these past few weeks.

You're an ornery cuss, Jerry. You fight too hard and too often. You look like an easy-going guy, but you're hell on skates when you get riled. And it's tough to have to shove off without you.

Listen, old top; we're swiping the speedboat, Ashie and I. With a couple of hours' leeway, we'll be off in the amphibian and you won't be able to catch us in the monoplane. Give us a break if you can. If not, we'll try to make a race of it.

I'm helping Ashwood to escape, thus sacrificing the $250,000 offered for his arrest. On the other hand, I relinquish, gladly, my share of the $600,000 you and Steve will get for rescuing the others. If you'll sharpen your pencil, you'll see you get more out of it the way it stands. (Who pays the reward for your wife?)

Slap Steve on the back for me and tell him that, so far as his conscience is concerned, he can sleep in his little house amid the pecan grove with the assurance that Ashwood won't operate again in the U. S. A. Elsewhere—who knows? Maybe we'll roll the dice again.

Best regards to yourself, old man. See you again, some time. Until then, happy landings.

EMORY.

P.S.—Kiss Nancy for me. If I hadn't lammed away I'd have done it myself.

"The last part of the letter sounds interesting," said a voice from the doorway. Nancy and Jerry wheeled around to face Stevens. The girl passed him the letter. He read it.

"How long they been gone?" he asked very quietly.

"Haven't any idea," confessed Jerry.

"Better give 'em a couple hours more. No sense in loading the dice on 'em."

The old man strode to the door. "After all," he said, "it's 'Gambler's Throw!'"

THE END.

*Tim's attempt to make friends with Pootch was disastrous*

# Pootch, Lover of Gold

***Gold makes trouble, as Jake Schmidt and his little fellow-prospector Tim Donovan learned in the Australian bush; but they were to have even more trouble over their curious black cockatoo mascot***

***By WYMAN SIDNEY SMITH***

POOTCH was not the kind of a bird any one except big Jake Schmidt would pick for a companion. He was unruly, temperamental, grouchy and mean. Technically he belonged to the genus *calyptorhynchus funereus,* but in other words he was just a common red-tailed black cockatoo of the Australian back country.

Big Jake had discovered the red-tailed, glinting-eyed rascal on his last trek into the "never-never" prospecting for gold in that desolation. Dust devils chased each other across the endless monotony of the landscape and Pootch was the only living thing Jake had seen for days.

The disgruntled cockatoo had evidently got into a fight with his flock or had fallen foul of some blackfellow's boomerang, for Jake found him with one wing broken and one leg twisted. Jake set the wing as best he could and took Pootch along for company.

"Son of a devil, you get well," he informed the bird. And Pootch got well. He never used his wings again, but he skipped and jumped around camp until he could run as fast as Jake could walk. When he didn't want to be handled, he could even keep out of Jake's clutches.

Jake spent hours trying to make Pootch talk, but the stubborn old rascal refused to utter a syllable.

Jake was buying grub for another

trip into the back country, the land of the white ant hills, when he met Tim Donovan in Brigen's public house. Where Jake was awkward and huge, Tim was small and wiry and quick.

"I tell you what," Jake proposed. "You come along an' if we find gold, I give you one-third."

Tim laughed. He laughed until Jake's eyes began to glitter. "You do me favor once," Jake declared, "otherwise you can go to hell and I never make such a offer."

Tim calmed down. "Nix on the gold," he said. "You've never found it yet and you never will. But I'm broke. Been waiting for the sugar-cane cutters' strike to get over and it hasn't. Give me five quid a month and grub and I'll hook up with you."

Jake grinned as he held out his hand. "Sure," he agreed, "twenty-five bucks a month I pay easy. But I tell you somedings. Three year ago I have come here from America to make my fortune. This time I am going to find gold."

The smaller man smiled skeptically; and the next day they set off for the interior with Pootch riding securely on top of the camel's pack while Jake and Tim rode their horses. It was the first camel Jake had ever owned, but his money was running low and he was taking his last long chance. Only a camel could carry enough food and water to reach the spots where water holes were few and far between.

Once Tim tried to make friends with Pootch and the cockatoo promptly grabbed a finger in his beak, which was hard as a pair of pliers. Tim would have killed the black rascal then except for a warning grunt from big Jake. He nursed a sore finger for days while they rode farther and farther into the never-never.

"Pootch don't make no friends," big Jake chuckled and pondered the idea gleefully. Every night when they slept, the odd bird would perch over Jake's head and waken at the least noise to let out a squawk of alarm. If Tim ever tried to run away, Pootch would be likely to squawk.

WATER holes were farther apart. Big Jake's horse went lame and he went on leading the animal. Little Tim offered to take his turn at walking, but Jake waved him back.

Tim didn't insist. As they left Brigen's public house farther and farther behind he began to regret his bargain. They might die of thirst in this drought-bitten country.

"Say, feller," he demanded at last, "how long you going on?"

Jake replied: "I pay you."

And so Tim whistled. He whistled and tried to fix landmarks in his mind so that he could get back. But he stopped whistling when his horse went lame on a stretch of "gibbers"—mile after mile of level plain covered with liver-brown pebbles that turned underfoot, that glittered like eyes in the sun.

Jake decided to rest the horses and the camel for a few days. He left Tim and Pootch in camp while he circled about, prospecting.

Tim observed the bird with calculating eyes. Pootch hunched up his feathers and glowered in return. Hour after hour they sat there.

Then Tim went to their bag of flour, mixed up a few pieces of dough and held them out to Pootch at the end of a stick. Pootch gobbled the dough down eagerly, and when big Jake returned to camp a little later, Tim was scratching the back of Pootch's head. Pootch gurgled with delight.

"You fool him, eh?" Jake said.

After that Pootch began to divide his attentions between the two, but he refused to talk, no matter which one coaxed him.

"Reckon he must have belonged to somebody some time," Tim announced once. "He acts smart."

"Sure," Jake replied. "He is maybe fifty or sixty years old. He have learned plenty."

Pootch proved his courage—and his familiarity with men's ways—when Jake led his lamed horse off to shoot it. The cockatoo never blinked at the sound of the shot, but remained as calm as though he had heard similar noises dozens of times before.

Tim was more disturbed than the bird. "How much farther you going?" he demanded.

"So far as I like," Jake retorted. "The horse was lame. If I let him stay, he starve—and he was no good to go along."

Tim grunted. He was beginning to realize that life in the never-never is a grim, bitter struggle for the survival of the fittest. He led his own lame horse on now without any attempt to ride occasionally as he had in the past.

They reached the next water hole late in the evening only to find it dry. Jake took down the water bags while Tim watched him shrewdly. "You knew there wasn't any water here," the smaller man said slowly.

"Sometimes is water," Jake retorted. His black hair and his bearded face gave him a stolid, immobile aspect—his eyes were growing hard as the glinting gibber pebbles.

WHEN they started to go on next morning, Tim refused to budge. "Jake, you don't know if there's water at the next spot or not. We'd better go back."

Jake strode up to him. "I do not ask you for advice," he threatened. "I pay you five quid a month."

Tim picked up the lead rein of his horse and started off through the grizzly bushes. A drove of kangaroos made off in the distance; a few emus strutted across the landscape to watch curiously; brilliant small birds flickered through the air. Once a flock of white cockatoos went sailing by.

But they missed the water holes, and made a dry camp again that night.

"You don't know where you're going," Tim charged the big man. "Hell, you'd think a bloke could live on air the way you go on."

Jake grinned and played with Pootch while the fire flickered into the blackness of the night. Then he lay down to sleep.

"If that wild dog they call dingo come along, Pootch will squawk," Jake said slowly. "Also if any wild blacks come prowling, Pootch will hear."

Tim glumly smoked out his pipe and rolled up in his blanket. The night was chilly in spite of the day's heat—Tim woke next morning after only a few snatches of sleep.

"Look here, Jake," he said as he saw the other preparing to go on. "You don't know this country. You ain't never been here before. And I ain't goin' on no more."

Jake glared, but Tim stood firm. As the big man came toward him, Tim reached for a club. Jake came on steadily, warded the blow that Tim aimed at him, and his fingers clutched at the smaller man's throat. Tim swung the club down over Jake's shoulders as the big man shook him like a bunch of rags.

"Get going," Jake ordered as he flung Tim away.

Tim rubbed his throat while the

other brought out a revolver that he had kept hidden. He strapped its holster to his belt.

"No," Jake said, "I do not know this country. That is why I come here. Nobody has come here—maybe that is why we find gold."

Tim trembled with horror—their water would barely last out the day. If they didn't find any, it would be three days' trek back to water.

But they found water that afternoon—a small pool in the rocks of a dry stream bed.

"See," Jake joked, "you give up too soon, Tim. You are like other fellows—they never find gold."

Tim scowled. "I'll go daffy if this keeps on," he muttered to himself.

But the water restored his good humor and he decided to get even with Jake. He set Pootch up on a rock and proceeded to talk to him: "Shut up, you liar—shut up, you liar." It was what Tim felt like saying to Jake whenever the big prospector commented on his hopes.

Pootch laid back his crest and grumbled. Big Jake hooted with derision. "See, Tim, even Pootch know too much for that."

Tim said nothing. He repeated the words over and over to the stubborn cockatoo, but Pootch went sulky.

DAY after day dragged on to a blazing fury of sunset and slow twilight. Tim listened to the creak of insects at night while he watched the Southern Cross in the sky. Pootch refused to leave his perch over Jake's head—and Tim worried. If anything happened to big Jake now, he could never find his way back to civilization. He was lost—those long sweeping hills looked all alike to him.

He lost his appetite.

"Eat, man," Jake grinned at him. "Maybe we have to starve yet."

Tim lived in a daze. Twice they left water holes three days behind. "If we don't find water, the camel can take us back," Jake informed him.

Tim hadn't thought of that. He went on, easier in spirit for a while. They saw more "white ant" diggings—high clay piles three or four feet across at the bottom and six or eight feet high. Jake searched the clay, looking for the sparkle of gold dust.

"Go ahead," Tim told him. "The camel will take us back."

Jake paused to grin again. "Sure," he nodded, "if the camel don't go lame. His feet are sore now."

"Jake," the smaller man replied evenly, "I'm going to kill you some day."

The big fellow shrugged his shoulders. "No," he said. "You wouldn't do it—you can not find your way out."

They didn't speak except when they had to. Tim kept on repeating to Pootch the sardonic refrain: "Shut up, you liar—shut up, you liar."

They were leaving a cluster of termite mounds one morning when Tim noticed a tiny sparkle in the clay of the ant hill. He scooped up the earth with trembling fingers as he shouted to Jake. They found a few more golden flakes in the ant hill and then scrambled around to other hills in a wild frenzy.

Pootch let out an excited squawk. Then he shouted: "Shut up, you liar—shut up, you liar." He added a volley of oaths and curses such as neither Jake nor Tim had ever used.

The two men looked at the old bird in amazement.

"Sure, singe your hides, we're sons of guns," Pootch screamed.

"He knows prospecting," Jake grunted.

They searched again, explored one ant hill after another and then started digging in the earth under the spot where they had discovered the first specks of gold.

Pootch watched them dig with devilish joy. Now and then he would let out a squawk to prepare himself for saying:

"Shut up, you liar—shut up, you liar."

They made camp and waited eagerly for the next dawn. Tim started digging a new hole. Jake went off down a gully twenty yards away. He kicked into the gravelly sands—and began to dance and shout. The sand was alive with gold.

"We got it," Tim cried. "We got it."

Jake began digging. "That ant was smart," he said.

"He must have lugged his couple of flakes all that way," Tim nodded. He laughed and laughed with the excitement of gold.

They took out ounce after ounce of gold. They carried water to wash out the gold, they panned and dug and sometimes blew out the dust when the wind was strong enough to push the fine refuse and dirt from the gold.

Pootch observed them soberly. He stalked about their feet. Jake tossed a small gold nugget at the bird and the cockatoo grabbed it in his beak to roll it around and around with his tongue as though he were nibbling at it. His shrewd eyes blinked.

"Pootch likes gold," Jake chuckled.

THEY stayed on until their grub began to peter out. "About fifty pounds," Tim estimated one noon as they stopped to have a bite to eat. He watched the fire curling up around the billy-can until the water boiled. Then he poured some tea into the quart can of hot water and leaned back contentedly.

"That'll make a couple thousand quid apiece," he went on. "It's a fortune."

Jake looked at him calmly. "I think it will make twenty thousand dollars," he nodded, "but nobody said nothing about splitting."

Tim jumped. "Say," he demanded, "you ain't going to stick to that bargain, are you?"

"I pay you your wages," Jake answered. "I am tired of you—day after day you have make that damn fool Pootch call me liar."

Tim grinned awkwardly. "You're joshing me," he said.

But Jake shook his head. "Nope—the gold is mine. I found you dead broke at Brigen's pub. I offered you to share, but you say you want pay, you lousy little runt. I find this gold myself."

Tim leaned over toward big Jake. "You double-heeled snake," he shouted. "You can't put me off. If I hadn't found the sparkles, we'd never have stopped here, would we?"

"Maybe no," Jake replied. "But I find this gold in the gully by myself."

"I'll get my share," Tim threatened, his face growing pale under the heavy tan.

"Not a pinch," Jake snapped. "I will give you grub and blueys and you get out." He went over to their pile of tucker and pulled out Tim's blankets. "There is your blueys," he said. "Now go!"

The bag of gold sat on the ground between them, but neither moved toward it. Jake took out his revolver and covered Tim.

"I'll kill you some day," Tim snarled. While Jake watched, he took

his share of the tinned beef, flour, bacon, tea, and sugar, made up a pack and saddled his horse. Then he rode away.

"It will teach him a lesson," Jake muttered stolidly.

His eyes popped as he saw Pootch start out after the rider, squawking, screaming and swearing.

"Come on, Pootch," Tim called.

"Come back here, Pootch," Jake thundered. But Pootch kept on after the departing Tim. Jake pulled up his gun and sent a shot into the dust in front of the scrambling parrot. "Come back, you!" he shouted. Tim had ducked and whirled at the shot, but seeing Jake's aim was to head off the parrot, he laughed grimly and rode on.

Pootch started off in another direction and Jake shot into the dust again. This time the black cockatoo braced himself and slid to a halt. He looked craftily at Jake and once more started off at an angle. Jake shot again.

Tim rode off into the bush. Pootch eyed the retreating figure for a long time before he came slowly back toward camp. Jake chuckled to himself. "I have lick' that bird this one time," he laughed.

But Pootch was glum and sour. He climbed on top the bag of gold and sat there all afternoon without a sound, as grimly as if he knew these two men were threatening each other with death, in their gold-jealousy.

Jake brought up the gold from his afternoon's digging, and the black rascal only g l o w e r e d at him. Jake chuckled again as he reached out a hand to brush Pootch aside. But with a flurry of wings Pootch seized Jake's finger and held it in a grip like a wire-cutter. Jake howled as he tried to shake the bird loose, but Pootch clung tighter.

Jake tried to smash Pootch against the earth, but the nerves seemed to go dead in his arm. He began twisting Pootch's neck with his free hand. Pootch dropped to the earth, expertly dodged Jake's kick, and slid away into the bushes.

Jake's finger bled like a cut artery; the flesh was mashed to the bone. He didn't stop to think, in his rage, but took a club and chased the shadowy black cockatoo from bush to bush and rock to rock. Then he pulled his gun and took a shot at the black fellow. But when he examined the rock, there was no sign of Pootch to be found.

Jake thought of the gold and rushed back to camp. It was still there. He laughed sardonically as he covered his bloody finger with ashes—a trick the black fellows had taught him—and wound up the cut flesh with a strip of cloth.

"Shut up, you liar!" The cockatoo's voice came from the settling darkness like a jeer.

JAKE cursed as he built a fire and set his quart can of water on to boil. He made a little tea, but the pain in his finger took away his appetite. Now and then Pootch would scream out vengefully from the darkness:

"Aw-w-w-k! Shut up, you liar! Shut up, you liar!"

Jake sat by the fire trying to think. He hadn't expected that Pootch would go mad. Tim would circle and come back now to get the gold, and there was no Pootch to stand guard. His finger burned like a hot brand. But he scrambled to his feet and lugged the heavy bag of gold after him into the darkness. He dug a hole, set the bag of gold in it, covered it with earth, and returned to camp. His head went dizzy—his finger throbbed—he was

sure he'd need a better hiding place for the gold.

He didn't dare to sleep,. because he feared Tim might sneak up and get the revolver. His finger throbbed with pain. The bush grew silent except for the dismal creaking of insects. A black bug flew into the fire and exploded with a bang. Jake jumped. His nerves were getting on edge. He cursed Pootch and Tim.

He waited for the night to pass, and in the morning drank a portion of tea. Then he went back to his digging. There was still plenty of gold. Gold!

His finger throbbed as he worked. The pain crept up his arm into his shoulder. Perspiration poured from his skin. He cursed as he unbuckled his revolver and laid it on the ground beside him. Now and then he scanned the bush for some sign of Tim.

But nothing moved. Pootch had disappeared or was hiding cleverly.

"To-morrow I go," Jake decided as he brought up another handful of gold. Half hoping for an answer, he called for Pootch. But there was no rustle or sound of the cockatoo. Jake's head buzzed. He took a sip of cold tea. Then the cup flew from his hands as he jumped and went off on a run to the diggings where he had left his gun.

The revolver was gone.

He cursed like a madman as he began a frantic search of the bushes. "Pootch!" he called. "Pootch, come here, you fox!"

The twilight turned into darkness, and Jake was still vainly searching for his gun. Finally he dragged himself back to camp and built a fire.

"Pootch," he called again patiently. This time a black blur of feathers came out of the shadows and Pootch stalked sedately up to him. Jake reached out his hand toward the bird. Pootch jumped as he seized a finger in his jaws and crunched down through the flesh. He groaned as he reached for the bird's neck, but Pootch let go and shot into the bushes.

Jake looked at his hands silently. One finger on one hand was bandaged. One finger on the other hand was cut and bleeding. He bandaged the fresh wound and poked up the fire around the billy can. He drank tea, cup after cup, so that it would keep him awake.

He jumped at every noise. If he could stay awake to-night, dig gold just one more day, then he could move. Maybe Tim had really gone home. If he ever found Tim, he would give him some of the gold. He chuckled—Tim wouldn't kill him until he found out where the gold was hidden.

His fingers throbbed as he sat there; first one, then the other—sometimes both together. He began counting the throbs and grew sleepy. Then he poked up the fire and drank more tea. Time after time he stirred himself only to sink back into a doze.

His head sank on his breast . . .

WHEN big Jake woke it was morning. His wrists and ankles were bound tight. On his head he felt a bump where a club had landed. He turned his eyes, to see Tim bending over the fire near by.

Jake grunted. "Ha, you have not find the gold, eh, Tim?"

Tim grinned triumphantly. "I came back and watched you bury it that night. But I wasn't taking any chances getting shot, see. I knew you were a fool and wouldn't sleep that night; so I slept. And last night, as I guessed, you could not keep awake . . . What did you do with the gun?"

Jake moistened his lips. "Pootch got it," he said.

Jake's eyes lingered on a bandaged finger of Tim's right hand for several moments, and a half smile swept his lips. "Pootch nab your finger?" he asked. Tim grunted.

"You leave me the camel and grub?" Jake asked.

Tim shook his head. He steeped the tea, drank it calmly, and eyed Jake. "I'll take you along to show me the way out—then maybe I'll—"

He left the sentence unfinished while he went toward the bag of gold, which sat near a clump of bushes. Near-by was the camel, its pack ready. Tim reached out to take the bag of gold. Jake watched the bush with straining eyes—a single bit of black like a shadow showed through the leaves. Next moment there was a black flash of feathers, and Tim howled. Pootch disappeared like a streak, leaving Tim to glare at a bruised and bleeding thumb.

Big Jake laughed. "Look—he fix me, too."

Jake held up his bound hands, and Tim looked at the two bandaged fingers as if unbelieving. Very slowly he unwrapped the cloth and looked at the angry red wounds.

"Pootch likes gold," Jake said. "He's smart bird. Been prospecting before. Maybe the partners fought over the gold, killed each other—that's why he ran wild. Maybe he knows what happens. Pootch, he's smart."

Tim looked thoughtful for a moment. "He took the gun," he puzzled. "Yes. Pootch, he's smart. Look, Jake—if I cut you loose, to get the gold, will you play fair and pay me what you promised back at Brigen's pub?"

Jake grinned as he stretched out his hands. "Nope. We go fifty-fifty now."

Tim slashed the cords, and gingerly, because of wounded fingers, the pair shook hands. Then they turned to the bag of gold. Pootch had come back, and was perched on it, his feathers ruffled, his eyes gleaming inscrutably as he cocked his head at them.

"We'll kill the little fiend!" Tim cried; but Jake stopped him.

"No," he said. "Pootch is wise old man. Somebody have train him for watch-bird. Black devil!"

TOGETHER they went off to search for the missing revolver. "Pootch don't like that gun," Jake decided at last. They gave up and returned to the camp. Jake stood over Pootch and carefully reached down one hand. Pootch snapped at it.

"Here," Tim said. "Let's shake hands again, and then maybe he'll let us both hoist him on to the camel, gold and all."

They shook hands vigorously while Pootch watched. Some of the glitter seemed to leave his eyes. Then they gingerly reached for the bag of gold, catching hold at the bottom, and hoisted it, watch-bird and all, onto the camel. Pootch gurgled, but his beak remained quiet.

"See," Jake chuckled. "That black rascal knows when we are friends sticking together."

They tossed Pootch a few seeds and bits of flour dough, which he ate greedily. Then Tim pulled a small nugget from his pocket and placed it beside the bird. Pootch took it up and rolled it round and round in his beak with his tongue.

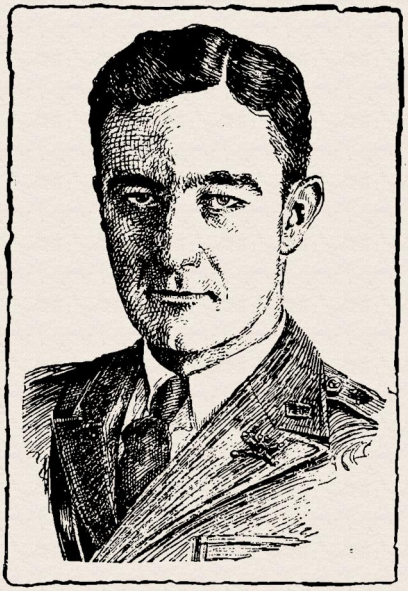
He was still playing with it, trying to nibble it and turning it to and fro, when they finished loading their outfit and set off together through the bush.

THE END.

# The Men Who Make The Argosy

## LIEUT. JOHN HOPPER

***Author of "Jolly Flies the Roger," "The Jungle Arena," "Those Navy Ways," etc.***



TO write interestingly of an uninteresting subject is one of the most difficult tasks in the world. That is why I am having such a hard time writing this. But anyway, here goes.

Like Ralph R. Perry and Calvin Coolidge, I was born in Massachusetts—Pittsfield, to be exact—which makes me a co-Yankee of theirs. It is surprising that our State, having the reputation for strictness, morality, etc., that it has, should produce so many story tellers. And, if you don't believe that an author is a natural born story teller, ask his wife.

I was born a little late, November 6, 1903; a fact which has caused me much sorrow in that I missed the big event of the century, the World War. I tried to get a ride on the caboose, however, and was removed by an irate father and a weeping mother. I often wondered who became the youngest man in the regiment after I—er—left.

My urge for the life military, however, was unquenched. I recall very clearly the day I left the war-time army. My company commander looked at my private's uniform, and roared, "Why, Hopper, you can't wear those clothes to West Point!" What he was after, you see, was the uniform. As I couldn't very well travel several hundred miles in my B. V. D.'s, he had to let me have it.

Five years later, I reported to the United States Military Academy, facetiously known by its inmates as "Sing-Sing-on-the-Hudson." For four long years I studied mathematics, paraded, drilled—and sweated. And, last, but not least, saw the Navy get licked twice and tied twice. Finally, in 1927, I blossomed forth as a spick-and-span, brand-new shave-tail. Glory was mine, the world was a hard-boiled egg, and I had a nutcracker in my hand.

Alas! The sad futility of a young man's dreams! I found our Uncle Samuel far more generous with his orders, and "thou-shalt-nots," than with his dough. The problem of a young officer trying to keep up a front to match his position and responsibilities with only a hundred and a quarter a month to do it with, proved to be the last mathematical straw. Although most authors are considered to live in a world of imagination, and to exist on romance and love, I found out that my stomach was too darned prosaic. It was not satisfied with being covered by nice uniforms; it had to eat also.

So, on Friday, the 13th of June, this present year, I resigned my commission in the Regular Army—and have been eating three times a day ever since. Sometimes, however, when I see how hard-boiled some of these editors are I almost yearn for even the stingy hand of Uncle Sam.

When the military longing will seize me again, I do not know. At the present time I am considering an offer to join the army of one of our sister republics in Central America. A colonel's commission, no less, am I offered. Think of that, Uncle Samuel! And pay and allowances accordingly! Now, if I don't have a head-on collision with the vice-president, who might be like our friend *Dr. Julio Villalobos* in "Those Navy Ways," and wind up all my careers against a stone wall, I'll be all right.

Perhaps you will get a better idea of me if I end this thing with some of my likes and dislikes.

Likes—Adventure (of any sort), accepted stories, beans, writing, ladies.

Dislikes—Adventure (when I get the worst of it), unaccepted stories, Limburger cheese, writing, ladies.

# Argonotes.

## The Readers' Viewpoint

R. F. STARZL, the latest addition to the ranks of our fantastic story writers, certainly rang the bell with his first story. A few readers say:

Benton, Harbor, Mich.

I just received my September 13 copy of ARGOSY and glancing over the index there was a short story under the title of "The Red Germ of Courage." I was about to pass it up when the word "interplanetary" caught my eye. Immediately I turned to page 169 and—I have just finished that story and I do not hesitate to say that R. F. Starzl is on a par with Ray Cummings when it comes to real stories of scientifiction and if he comes through with a novel of that type and it is just as interesting as his short story, he will immediately go to the head of the list, as far as I am concerned. I am glad to find an author that has a scientific background instead of introducing a lot of freak animals for the hero to battle with.

L. L. MCGARRY.

Cicero, Ill.

As an ardent scientific fiction fan, let me express my satisfaction at finding another of my favorite authors in ARGOSY. "The Red Germ of Courage," by R. F. Starzl, was fully up to that author's high standard; in fact, I have noticed that even the best authors seem to do better for ARGOSY than for other magazines.

Let's have more stories by R. F. Starzl, Murray Leinster, R. M. Farley and by the author of "Voodoo'd." It's good news to hear that A. Merritt is back.

RUTH BOEHM.

Ft. Lewis, Wash.

This R. F. Starzl—m-mm-m! That "Red Germ of Courage" was fine. It was so plausible, you know. He made me see a stupendous world as if I had been moved there and had had about a month to get accustomed to it—it was new yet, but not overpowering enough to be incomprehensible. And the humans were *human*, too.

Want more Murray Leinster. Like 'im, too, but these two are the only ones you have who can write half good pseudo-scientific stories—so far.

These Russian stories are pretty fair. I liked them in a lukewarm way, but I don't know enough about Russia to judge them. Fairly entertaining, I'd say.

Stories of the ancients—Rome, Greece, particularly of old Babylon, Assyria, and the Mayas—rather scarce, aren't they? But when one comes, don't forget to publish it. I enjoyed "Alexander the Red" and that Maya story.

Some didn't like "Moving Day." I did. A farcical character isn't supposed to have any sense, is he? It was dragged out a bit, but was so consistently dumb as to be very entertaining, which was what I think its light-hearted author intended—yes?

If the magazine doesn't get bad pretty soon, I am going to be compelled to subscribe to it, because my organization gets it, and I'm leaving the Army pretty soon. I'm very much afraid I'm getting to be an ARGOSY addict.

GEORGE D. KNIGHT.

WHEELER-NICHOLSON rings the bell with this reader who likes colorful period tales:

What a glorious tale, "The Baldassare Ruby!" After reading this romantic, swashbuckling treat, I was afraid to read another story! Fearing that any other story after that one would take the taste of "The Baldassare Ruby" out of my mouth!

Please persuade Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson to write more like this one; each with a different nation or principality for a locale, especially Prussia, Austria, Hungary, Kurland, Transylvania, Normandy, Picardy, Alsace-Lorraine, etc., all rich in this type of story material.

J. WASSO, JR.

AN ARGOSY convert speaks his piece:

St. Louis, Mo.

I am very fond of reading magazines, but it seems I have never kept buying one regularly. It seemed that every magazine I bought had something wrong with it. I was very hard to please.

A friend of mine took the ARGOSY every week, and suggested that I do the same. But I answered, "ARGOSY gives me a pain, with its old impossible stories." Nevertheless, I bought one, "just to try it out." Well, you know the rest; I thought ARGOSY was just "It."

Not long after I met my friend and he said,

"Say, Harry, why don't you try ARGOSY just once?" I answered that I had and then I said, "ARGOSY gives me a thrill, with its old impossible stories."

And if you were here on a Wednesday, you would see me going to a magazine store and coming out with the dear old ARGOSY. I have since found another magazine that suits my fancy, and that is *Detective Fiction Weekly*. I take them both regularly.

I have no favorite authors. I like them all. Here's more success to your splendid magazine.

HARRY HILL.

W. C. TUTTLE and "The Trail of Deceit" for this lady:

Golden, Col.

I have been reading the ARGOSY for the past two years and believe me I surely haven't missed a copy in all that time. Of them all "The Trail of Deceit," by W. C. Tuttle, hits the highest spot with me. My favorites are Tuttle, Ralph Farley, Loring Brent, Fred MacIsaac, William Merriam Rouse, Wheeler-Nicholson and Murray Leinster. There are several others, but I must not take up all of the page listing the authors I admire. Let's have some more of Tuttle's stories like "The Trail of Deceit."

Long live the ARGOSY.

IRENE GIBSON.

WORTS, Gardner, and the "impossible" stories for me, says this reader:

Rochester, N. Y.

I have read ARGOSY now for over a year and it is the only magazine on the market that I thoroughly enjoy.

I have just finished reading "Moving Day," by Edgar Franklin. The best stories you publish are the impossible stories, though all your stories are very interesting.

The "Whispering Tales," by Erle Stanley Gardner and the *Gillian Hazeltine* stories, by George F. Worts, are great!

Leave ARGOSY as it is; don't change it.

ROBERT EISELE.

BUT here's one who sees no excuse for tales of other planets and tells why, in no uncertain terms:

Springfield, Mo.

At last my fighting blood is up. I have listened to the impossible story fans until I am thoroughly sick. Mr. Schuyler Miller surely put a terrific right over the impossible story knockers' hearts. It seemed to take all the fight out of them. Well, here's one comeback that I hope will classify.

After all of these stories are boiled down, what have you? No history quality whatsoever. A few have color of character, but most of the authors had rather describe huge ants and brainy dragons. Some have plenty of action, but you have to wade through a maze of positively boring scientific phrases and half-explained theories to get to 'em. Maybe it does leave you something to think about; it leaves you with fantastic dreams half the night and the other half you are wide awake. You awake nervous as the result and usually succeed in spilling half of your cup of coffee on the breakfast table.

The best books and stories are not the impossible ones and I want the ARGOSY to be chuck full of the best.

As usual, I must send out a "bran' new" challenge of my own. Show me a "Book of the Month" that is one of your interstellar travel adventures.

I've seen a lot in "Argonotes" about so-called critics, too. The "Argonotes" are written by critics, so you have as much right to call us so-called critics as you would in calling Byrd a so-called adventurer.

Personally I think the ARGOSY is the best magazine on the stands regardless of price, so you can see why I'm interested in it. I have my favorite authors and stories as all knockers do. I think a pearl hunter story makes a marvelous appetizer. I prefer the *Bellow Bill* stories. Also like *Peter the Brazen* stories, and sincerely hope that *Susan O'Gilvie* gets sick of adventure—for Pete's sake!

I am sincerely hoping and trusting that you will give my story a thought.

KID KNOCKER.

OUR "best" authors—five in number—are chosen by this fan:

San Antonio, Texas.

I have only been reading your magazine for a short while, but I can tell I will read it until Niagara Falls.

My hobby used to be hunting, but I think now it is reading ARGOSY.

I think your five best authors are: Otis Adelbert Kline, Fred MacIsaac, Ralph R. Perry, Erle Stanley Gardner, and J. Allan Dunn. I don't hear much about Dunn in "Argonotes," but I think he is one of the best authors that write for ARGOSY.

Here's for more impossible, gangster and Western stories.

LOUIS MCCALL

BEDFORD-JONES and others get their meed of praise:

Jamaica, N. Y.

Being one of the fifty million strong readers of ARGOSY I thought I'd send in my say. I have

read many stories by H. Bedford-Jones, finishing his latest, "The Emergency Mate." Am wondering if it was Mr. Bedford-Jones who wrote "The King's Passport;" it was published in book form a few years ago. An interesting novel concerning French Cavaliers during the reign of Louis XIV. An amazing tale to read.

Some of the top notchers, in my opinion, are Richard Barry of "Hawaiian Heels," "Plumed Serpent," *Don Rando* yarns. John H. Thompson who wrote those stories of humor concerning *Bill* and *Jim*. "Captain Nemesis" was a rip-snorting tale of the sea. Sea, action and a good detective yarn are my dish.

I would suggest having two novelettes instead of the three short stories which are now running. Of course this is only a suggestion. I always read the novelettes first; as a general rule they are excellent. Let's hope we have more novelettes.

I don't care for the impossible stories such as "Maza of the Moon," "Radio Gun Runners." "City of the Blind" wasn't so good either.

"Hard-Boiled Cayhill's Christmas Eve Party," by Theodore Roscoe, certainly hit the spot. Still they say you can't please all of the people all of the time.

Let's have some more from Richard Barry, Charles Alden Seltzer, R. de S. Horn and last, but not least, the ever interesting stories of William Merriam Rouse.

CLAIR PROCTOR.

## YOUR CHOICE COUPON

*Editor,* ARGOSY,
280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

**The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:**

1.....

2.....

3.....

4.....

5.....

*Name*.....

*Street*.....

*City*.....*State*.....

10-11

# *Looking Ahead!*

***PIRATE DAYS LIVE AGAIN!***

DON McGREW

takes us back to the wild roaring days of the Spanish Main in his latest novel

Tiger Dick's Doubloons

J. E. GRINSTEAD

picks the little-known but colorful Texas timber country as the setting for his fast moving complete novelette

Snarling Saws

***COMING TO YOU IN THE ARGOSY OF OCTOBER 18th***

**—AND THE FOLLOWING WEEK**

The Snake Mother, the long awaited fantastic novel from the pen of A. MERRITT

# Minister's 9-Year Old Boy Runs $3 into "Fortune"

**Former Poor Country Preacher Reveals Small Son's Secret That Saved Family Home and Brought Prosperity and Happiness. A Life Drama With a New Kind of Happy Ending That Will Probably Amaze You Because It Shows How You, Too, May Find the End of the Rainbow.**

*As Related By*
REV. C. V. McMURPHY

"I Now Have No Fear of Financial Problems."

WITH a sigh of despair Rev. McMurphy thought of the hopelessness of his present situation. *Would the little home he had just built for his loving family be snatched away,* he thought. How could he ever meet the builder's notes that would soon be due? How could he even earn a living, now that *their little car* had broken down and they were no longer able to travel their district to carry on their ministerial work? The outlook was surely despairing!

Then as swiftly as misfortune had darkened their home, *the darkness vanished. And it* was his little boy who lifted the shadow. "Daddy," he exclaimed, "I have a surprise. Don't worry any more. I have a way out of our troubles." Excitedly he told his astonished father of an article he had read about the president of a million dollar institution in Ohio who had founded a plan to help worthy men and women out of their financial troubles. Breathlessly he told that he had written this man Curtis W. Van De Mark, called the great public benefactor because of the noble work he is doing for others.

Eagerly Rev. McMurphy read every word about the vast business of this big institution *scattered all over America* business so widespread that it is possible to help local men and women in a pleasant, dignified way to end their money troubles. "What a generous offer and how easy and simple, too. The end of my financial worries," exclaimed Rev. McMurphy!

Why he even offers to make a local profit-sharing "Pardner" of everyone who follows his easy plan. "How can such a *thing be possible?*" thought Rev. McMurphy. Yet it must be true. He won't even let anyone risk one penny buying anything. He just wants you to follow his simple plan in full or spare time.

"Why, Daddy," said the boy, "even I can do this easy work. Let me try please. Just loaning a few dollars to pay my expense, Daddy." Awakened by the courage and enthusiasm of this 9-year old child, he accepted this generous offer to help. But he also determined to allow this child to complete *his wonderful lesson in courage and faith,* so he let him go out alone to see what he would do. "My little boy came back in an hour with profits of nearly $3.00. I said to myself, 'If this child can make that much, I *can make* twice that amount. And I took up the work. I assure you I now have no fear of financial problems. The notes on the house have been burned and we have a nice car to ride around in and attend to our church affairs. Last Saturday I went out after two o'clock, made $20.00 and was back before sunset. If all the underpaid country *preachers could learn what a great opportunity* awaits them with you there would be fewer long faces from financial problems and more good cheer in preaching the gospel."

This true story of Rev. McMurphy's is simply *an example of the many letters Van has received* from men and women whom he has helped toward ending their financial troubles.

## Now Van Offers Cash to Other Honest Men and Women

***Just Say 20 Magic Words to 10 Ladies and Follow My Simple Instructions***

You don't need to sell a single thing to get this cash. This is the new, sensational plan *of the famous business genius*—Curtis W. Van De Mark—the wizard who has already put more than 30,000 men and women on the road to prosperity. "Conservative" leaders called Van "crazy" for making this radical cash offer. They said it would ruin "conservative" traditions. But cooler heads called it a master stroke that would prove a *tremendous boom to prosperity. Van not only* makes you his profit-sharing local "pardner" but he will actually pay you a cash penalty if you don't make $15 the very first day.

### No Need to Sell Anything

***To Get This Cash Payment***

Countless housewives have learned that they *can make big savings on our amazing* bargain offers. So in almost no time the sales of our products has expanded almost to the "bursting" point. Now we must hurry and employ 1100 more local men and women to take care of new and regular customers in each town. Time must not be wasted! Expense must not be considered! Orders must be filled quick! Customers must not be kept waiting! Big money for our representatives means nothing to us from now on! So I have smashed the so-called "conservative" business *traditions. I now offer every honest man* and woman steady work and will pay actual cash for just a few hours of their time. You don't need sales experience. What I want is sincere men and women who will be as honest with me as I am with them.

### I Pay You a Cash Penalty

***If You Don't Make Big Profits The Very First Day***

Just say 20 magic words to 10 ladies—20 secret words that have proven almost magic I money getters for over 30,000 of my "Pardners"—an amazing yet simple 20-word sentence that took me 35 years to discover, and I will pay you an actual cash penalty if your first ten calls do not show you a big profit. *I allow you to make a handsome profit* on every order my customers give you. So what is to stop you from making as high as $35.00 in a day like some of my other "Pardners?"

### I Send You $18 Worth of Goods

*to start you (retail value) at my risk. Send* no money for this amazing offer—just mail application below. I don't want you to risk one penny. I take all the chances. Maybe you think this is just ordinary work. But don't be mistaken. If you treat me fairly I'll set you up in a business of your own. I'll tell you a practical secret that will get others to make money for you. *Right* now I promise to help you forever ending your money worries forever, and I am known to 30,000 "Pardners" as the man who always keeps his promises. Mail the application below right *now for my offer. Start in spare time* if you wish and I'll still give you my cash offer. If you are a married woman you can surely devote a few spare hours a day. My plan is a funny one. Some of my women "Pardners" have actually made more than their husbands in a few hours on this pleasant, dignified work.

### RUSH APPLICATION

This announcement will probably "upset" the nation. Untold thousands will apply for these openings. The time to act is NOW! Tear out the application *below and mail it* quick. Send no money. **This is not an order. You do not pay anything for this offer. Nothing will be sent C. O. D. Curtis W. Van De Mark, President, THE HEALTH-O QUALITY PRODUCTS CO., Dept. 914-KK Health-O Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.**

**CURTIS W. VAN DE MARK, President,**
***The Health-O Quality Products Co.,***
**Dept. 914-KK Health-O Bldg.,**
**Cincinnati, O.**

Dear Van: I hereby apply for opening as "Pardner" in my town to start on your new cash Penalty plan. Send your sensational offer of $18 worth of products *(retail value)* to start me and your written warranty. Also tell me how I can make money introducing you to ten ladies and using the 20 magic words, and other instructions. **This is not an order—send nothing C. O. D. I risk nothing.** I want

$.....per hour.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

# SPECIAL 49¢

## INTRODUCTORY OFFER

**New Medicine Cabinet Bottle**
**FEEN-A-MINT**
**The Chewing Gum Laxative . . . Value 50c**

• • •

**DILLARD'S ASPERGUM**
**The Right and Easy Way**
**to Take Aspirin . . . Value 25c**
**Total Value 75c**

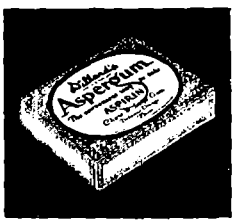
## SPECIAL PRICE FOR BOTH 49¢

### THE NEW MEDICINE CABINET SIZE FEEN-A-MINT BOTTLE

A NEW size package for Feen-a-mint, the original chewing gum laxative! Thousands of Feen-a-mint users have asked for a package that would slip into the most crowded medicine cabinet, yet contain an ample supply of Feen-a-mint for all the family. And here it is! Feen-a-mint is pleasant to take, safe and dependable in action and non-habit-forming. The chewing insures the thorough distribution of the laxative throughout the system—helps Feen-a-mint work without the distressing after-effects so common with ordinary laxatives.


### DILLARD'S ASPERGUM

THE finest aspirin scientifically combined with delicious chewing gum. Can be taken any time, any place. No bitter tablet to swallow, no fuss or bother—simply chew this deliciously flavored gum. Because you chew it the aspirin in Dillard's Aspergum is effective in smaller doses for relieving every type of pain for which aspirin is ordinarily used. Dillard's Aspergum is especially fine for relieving sore and irritated throats because while you chew it the aspirin combines with the saliva and quickly soothes and heals the irritated throat membranes. Recommended by physicians and throat specialists as the safe, effective way to take aspirin.




HEALTH PRODUCTS CORPORATION, Dept. AP-10
113 North 13th Street, Newark, N. J.

*Enclosed please find 49c in stamps for which please send me your introductory offer of Dillard's Aspergum and the new medicine cabinet size Feen-a-mint bottle.*

Name .....
Street .....
Town ..... State .....
My Druggist's Name .....
Address .....

### ACT NOW WHILE THIS OFFER IS STILL IN EFFECT!

*Your druggist can offer this remarkable value for a limited time only so it is important to act promptly to take advantage of this opportunity. If your druggist has not yet obtained his supply of these combination packages, fill in the coupon with your name and your druggist's name and send it at once with 49c in stamps to*

**HEALTH PRODUCTS CORPORATION**
**113 NORTH 13th STREET, NEWARK, N. J.**