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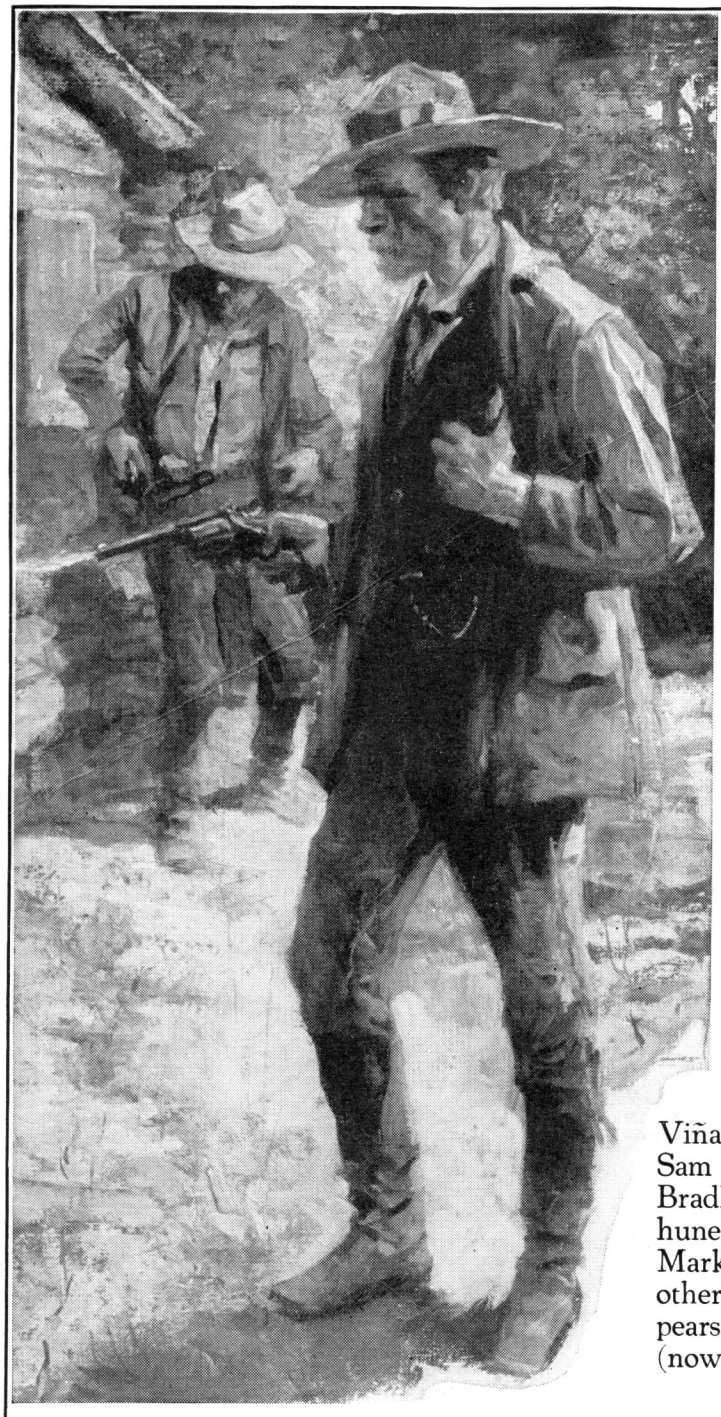

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THE BLUE BOOK

EDWIN BALMER, Editor
DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor

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Cover Design: Painted by Frank Hoban to illustrate "Tanar of Pellucidar."
Frontispiece: "Men Who Won the West—John C. Frémont—Explorer." Drawn by Paul Lehman

Two Remarkable Serials

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A splendid new hero and a thrilling new world brought home to you in fascinating fashion by the man who gave us Tarzan. (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)

All the Brave Rifles By Clarke Venable 100
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Wherein two untamed rodeo riders venture aloft in an airplane, and an exciting time is had by all. (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)

Three Mates By Captain Dingle 50
This noted writer of sea stories is at his best in this fine tale of a good fight and the men who fought it. (Illustrated by Paul Lehman.)

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A vivid tale of the underworld by a reformed newspaper man who knows his theme and his people well. (Illustrated by Ben Cohen.)

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An army pursuit pilot here writes a memorable story of a free balloon and the man who rode high therein. (Illustrated by William Molt.)

Hell's Angels Set a Trap By Warren Hastings Miller 78
The Foreign Legion in one of the hottest and strangest battles of their mountain campaign. (Illustrated by Paul Lehman.)

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Here the Easy Street Experts rescue an Eastern potentate from a subtle plot —and again line their purses and stomachs well. (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)

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"Three-toes and the Collie" presents the strange drama of a real Colorado wolf and her shepherd mate. (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)

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MAGAZINE

MARCH, 1929

Special Notice to Writers and Artists:
Manuscripts and art material submitted for publication in The Blue Book Magazine will only be received on the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury thereto while such manuscripts or art material are in the publisher's possession or in transit.

Special Note: Each issue of The Blue Book Magazine is copyrighted. Any republication of the matter appearing in the magazine, either wholly or in part, is not permitted except by special authorization.

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A Lively Novelette

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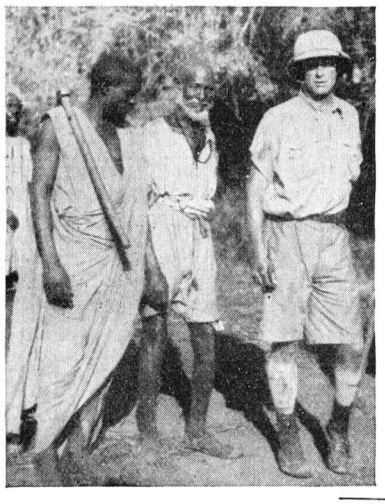

James Edwin Baum

The gifted author of "Spears in the Sun" is back from another venturesome safari through a hitherto unknown region of Africa, bringing with him the skin of a lion stopped just in the nick of time. More interesting and important to you, he brings with him a new and even more exciting novel of adventure in savage Abyssinia which begins in our next, the April, issue, under the title—

"The Lair of the Leopard"

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THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is issued on the first of the month preceding its date (March issue out February 1st), and is for sale by all newsdealers after that time. In the event of failure to obtain copies at news-stands or on trains, a notification to the Publisher will be appreciated.

Advertising forms close on the third of second month preceding date of issue. Advertising rates on application.

To the man who is 35 *and* DISSATISFIED

WE DELIBERATELY pass over a large proportion of the readers of this magazine in order to address this page directly to *men in their thirties.*

There is a powerful reason for this.

The dissatisfied man of twenty-five is not usually in a difficult position. He has few responsibilities; he can move easily; he can take a chance.

But from thirty-five to forty is the age of crisis. In these years a man either marks out the course which leads to definite advancement or settles into permanent unhappiness. There are thousands who see the years passing with a feeling close to desperation.

They say, "I must make more money," but they have no plan for making more.

They say, "There is no future for me here," but they see no other opening.

"I am managing to scrape along now," they say, "but how in the world will I ever educate my children?"

To men whose minds are constantly—and often almost hopelessly—at work on such thoughts, this page is addressed. It is devoid of rhetoric. It is plain, blunt common sense.

Let us get one thing straight at the very start—

We do not want you unless you want us

There is the dissatisfied man who will *do* something and the one who won't. We feel sorry for the latter but we cannot afford to enrol him. We have a reputation for training men who—as a result of our training—earn large salaries and hold responsible positions. That reputation must be maintained. We can do much, but we cannot *make* a man succeed who will not help himself. So rest assured you will not be unduly *urged* into anything.

Now what can happen to a dissatisfied man who acts?

We wish we could answer that question by letting you read the letters that come to us in every mail. Here is one, for example—from Victor F. Stine, of Hagerstown, Md.: "I was floundering around without a definite goal," he says, "and was seriously considering a Civil Service appointment." (You can tell from that how hopeless he was. A Civil Service appointment means a few thousand dollars a year *for life.)*

"The study of your Course and Service was not a hardship," he continues, "rather it was a real pleasure, because it is so practical and inspiring thruout." (The *method* of the Institute makes it practical and inspiring. We teach business not alone thru study, but thru *practice.* You learn executive thinking by meeting executive problems and making executive decisions.) "Added self-confidence and increased vision gained from the Institute's work," says Mr. Stine, "enabled me to accept and discharge added responsibilities successfully."

He is Secretary now of the organization in which he was then a dissatisfied cog.

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We attach a coupon to this advertisement. It is a little thing, but our experience proves that it separates out of every hundred readers the few who can act. If you are one of these let us mail you that wonderful little book, "Forging Ahead in Business." For thousands it has turned dissatisfaction into immediate progress. Mail the coupon today.

Announcing Three New Management Courses

The rapid developments in modern business have brought increasing demand for an extension of Institute service to executives.

To meet this demand the Institute now offers three new Management Courses in addition to its regular Modern Business Course and Service. These are a Course and Service in:

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2—Production Management
3—Finance Management

These new Courses are of particular interest to younger executives who want definite training in the management of the particular departments of business in which they are now engaged.

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THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE
Vol. 48 *MARCH 1929* *No. 5*

New Worlds for Old

"THE frontier has been pushed far back; mild drug-store soda fountains have replaced the roystering bar-rooms of Tucson and Tombstone; desert and mountain and jungle have for the most part been mapped and charted; this once so richly mysterious world has become, it sometimes seems, relatively humdrum and commonplace. . . . ."

Perhaps! Yet is not this way of looking at the matter a bit short-sighted and inaccurate? For even as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so is adventure in the mind of the venturesome—and mystery and romance likewise.

Consider for example the tremendous fascination exercised by "Tarzan" and the other romances by Edgar Rice Burroughs. These deal not with any actual frontiers of this much-mapped world of ours. And neither Tarzan nor Tanar is any real fellow-citizen you're likely to meet around the corner. Yet they are none the less true, real and actual—true to the imagination and eager fancy that is perhaps the best and most keenly alive part of us.

Tarzan you know, of course. His brother in the bright realm of high adventure is Tanar of Pellucidar—a country far indeed, an empire of the glamorous world in the imagined hollow core of this earth. . . . .

Yes, you are quite right: it's utterly preposterous. Incidentally, however, it's completely captivating. And you who join Mr. Burroughs in following the fortunes of Tanar across the uncharted tempestuous seas and peril-fraught wildernesses of Pellucidar will enjoy a rich reward—a pleasure you have not enjoyed, except with Tarzan, since your boyhood hours with "Robinson Crusoe," "The Mysterious Island" and "King Solomon's Mines."

NEXT month Tanar continues his hazardous and engrossing career. To keep him company, moreover, in that April issue will begin a new novel of swift adventure in that strangest and least-known land on earth, Abyssinia. James Edwin Baum, who gave us that well-liked serial "Spears in the Sun," is the author; and long journeys through the Land of the Lion have enabled him to give you a story not only lively and dramatic, but thoroughly accurate in color and background.

Many another good story will distinguish this great April issue: a new Mystery of Today, by Culpeper Zandtt, a stirring cowboy novelette by E. S. Pladwell, an engrossing tale of the Free Lances in Diplomacy by Clarence Herbert New, a Chinatown drama by that old Blue Book favorite Lemuel De Bra, and a splendid tale of airplane adventure by one of the Kelly Field pilots, Leland Jamieson. With the five prize stories of real experience by our readers added for good measure, we count on our readers echoing the enthusiasm we feel for the magazine here in the office.

—*The Editors.*

Drawn by Paul Lehman

MEN WHO WON THE WEST

John C. Frémont—Explorer

FOUR long, hazardous and important exploring expeditions through then unknown regions of the West have won for General Frémont a just and genuine distinction. Two journeys under Government auspices, through the Rockies, did much to map the trails to Oregon. The third was to California, and upon his arrival there Frémont took a prominent part in the so-called "Bear Flag War" and the fighting which won California for the United States. In 1848 after his resignation from the army, he led an expedition financed by his father-in-law Senator Benton to find passes for a railroad west from the headwaters of the Rio Grande, and in this endeavor he suffered severe hardship and lost several of his men from the intense winter mountain cold.

Later General Frémont was defeated as a candidate for the Presidency; and in the Civil War he was given responsibilities for which he seems not to have been fitted; but as an explorer his ventures were courageous and his accomplishments real.

TANAR of Pellucidar

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Here begins a romance of tremendous fascination, fully the equal of Mr. Burroughs' immortal Tarzan.

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

JASON GRIDLEY is a radio bug. Had he not been, this story never would have been written.

Jason is twenty-three and scandalously good-looking—too good-looking to be a bug of any sort. As a matter of fact, he does not seem a nut at all—just a normal, sane young American, who knows a great deal about many things in addition to radio; aëronautics, for example, and golf and tennis and polo.

But this is not Jason's story; he is only an incident—an important incident—in my life that made this story possible; and so, with a few more words of explanation, we shall leave Jason to his tubes and waves and amplifiers, concerning which he knows everything and I nothing.

Jason is an orphan with an income, and after he graduated from Stanford, he came down and bought a couple of acres at Tarzana, and that is how and when I met him.

While he was building, he made my office his headquarters and was often in my study; and afterward I returned the compliment by visiting him in his new "lab," as he calls it,—a quite large room at the rear of his home,—a quiet, restful room in a quiet, restful house of the Spanish-American farm type; or we rode together in the Santa Monica mountains in the cool air of early morning.

Jason is experimenting with some new principle of radio concerning which the less I say the better it will be for my reputation, since I know nothing whatsoever about it and am likely never to.

Perhaps I am too old; perhaps I am too dumb; perhaps I am just not interested—I prefer to ascribe my abysmal and persistent ignorance of all things pertaining to radio to the last state, that of disinterestedness; it salves my pride.

I do know this, however, because Jason has told me, that the idea he is playing with suggests an entirely new and unsuspected—well, let us call it wave.

He says the idea was suggested to him by the vagaries of static, and in groping around in search of some device to eliminate this he discovered in the ether an undercurrent that operated according to no previously known scientific laws.

At his Tarzana home he has erected a station and a few miles away, at the back of my ranch, another. Between these stations we talk to one another through some strange, ethereal medium that seems to pass through all other waves and all other stations, unsuspected and entirely harmless—so harmless is it that it has not the slightest effect upon Jason's regular set, standing in the same room and receiving over the same aërial.

But this, which is not very interesting to anyone except Jason, is all by the way of getting to the beginning of the amazing narrative of the adventures of Tanar of Pellucidar.

JASON and I were sitting in his lab one evening discussing, as we often did, innumerable subjects, including the Gridley wave, as we have named it.

Much of the time Jason kept on his earphones, than which there is no greater discourager of conversation. But that does not irk me; I like long silences and my own thoughts.

Presently, Jason removed the headpiece. "It is enough to drive a fellow to drink!" he exclaimed.

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"An inner world peopled by strange reptiles and men of the Stone Age who fight off the cave-bear with bow and arrow."

"What?" I asked.

"I am getting that same stuff again," he said. "I can hear voices—very faintly—unmistakably human voices. They are speaking a language unknown to man. It is maddening."

"Mars, perhaps," I suggested idly; "or Venus."

He knit his brows and then suddenly smiled one of his quick smiles. "Or Pellucidar."

I shrugged.

"Do you know, Admiral," he said (he calls me Admiral because of a yachting cap I wear at the beach), "that when I was a kid, I used to believe every word of those crazy stories of yours about Mars and Pellucidar. The inner world at the earth's core was as real to me as the high Sierras, the San Joaquin valley, or the Golden Gate, and I felt that I knew the twin cities of Helium better than I did Los Angeles.

"I saw nothing improbable at all in that trip of David Innes and old man Perry through the earth's crust to Pellucidar. Yes sir, that was all gospel to me when I was a kid."

"And now you are twenty-three and know that it can't be true," I said, with a smile.

"You are not trying to tell me it is true, are you?" he demanded, laughing.

"I never have told anyone that it is true," I replied. "I let people think what they think, but I reserve the right to do likewise."

"Why, you know perfectly well that it would be impossible for that iron mole of Perry's to have penetrated five hundred miles of the earth's crust; you know there is no such thing as an inner world peopled by strange reptiles and men of the Stone Age who fight off the cave-bear and the saber-toothed tiger with bow and arrow and spear; you know there is no Emperor of Pellucidar!" Jason was becoming excited, but his sense of humor came to our rescue and he laughed.

"I like to believe that there is a Dian the Beautiful," I said.

"Yes," he agreed, "but I am sorry you killed off Hooja the Sly One. He was a corking villain."

"There are always plenty of villains," I reminded him.

"They help the girls to keep their figgers and their schoolgirl complexions," he said.

"How?" I asked.

"The exercise they get being pursued."

"You are making fun of me," I reproached him, "but remember, please, that

I am but a simple historian. If damsels flee and villains pursue, I must truthfully record the fact."

"Baloney!" he exclaimed in the pure university English of America.

JASON replaced his headpiece and I returned to the perusal of the narrative of an ancient liar, who should have made a fortune out of the credulity of book-readers, but seems not to have. Thus we sat for some time.

Presently Jason removed his ear-phones and turned toward me. "I was getting music," he said; "strange, weird music, and then suddenly there came loud shouts and it seemed that I could hear blows struck and there were screams and the sound of shots."

"Perry, you know, was experimenting with gunpowder down there below, in Pellucidar," I reminded Jason, with a grin; but he was inclined to be serious.

"You know, of course," he said, "that there really has been a theory of an inner world for many years."

"Yes," I replied, "I have read works expounding and defending such a theory."

"It supposes polar openings leading into the interior of the earth," said Jason.

"And it is substantiated by many seemingly irrefutable scientific facts," I reminded him, "—open polar sea, warmer water farthest north, tropical vegetation floating southward from the polar regions, the Northern lights, the magnetic pole, the persistent stories of the Eskimos that they are descended from a race that came from a warm country far to the north."

"I'd like to make a try for one of the polar openings," mused Jason as he replaced the ear-phones.

Again there was a long silence, broken at last by a sharp exclamation from Jason. In apparent excitement he pushed an extra headpiece toward me.

"Listen!" he exclaimed.

As I adjusted the ear-phones I heard that which we had never before received on the Gridley wave—code! No wonder that Jason Gridley was excited, since there was no station on earth, other than his own, attuned to the Gridley wave.

Code! What could it mean? I was torn by conflicting emotions—to tear off the ear-phones and discuss this amazing thing with Jason, and to keep them on and listen.

I am not what one might call an expert in the intricacies of code, but I had no difficulty in understanding the simple signal of two letters, repeated in groups of three, with a pause after each group: *"D.I., D.I.,*

D.I.,"—pause; *"D.I., D.I., D.I.,"*—pause; over and over it came.

I glanced up at Jason. His eyes, filled with puzzled questioning, met mine, as though to ask: "What does it mean?"

The signals ceased and Jason touched his own key, sending his initials, *"J.G., J.G., J.G.,"* in the same grouping that we had received the *D.I.* signal. Almost instantly he was interrupted—you could feel the excitement of the sender.

"D.I., D.I., D.I., Pellucidar," rattled against our eardrums like machine-gun fire. Jason and I sat in dumb amazement, staring at one another.

"It is a hoax!" I exclaimed; and Jason, reading my lips, shook his head.

"How can it be a hoax?" he asked. "There is no other station on earth equipped to send or to receive over the Gridley wave, so there can be no means of perpetrating such a hoax."

OUR mysterious station was on the air again: *"If you get this, repeat my signal."* And he signed off with *"D.I., D.I., D.I."*

"That would be David Innes," mused Jason.

"Emperor of Pellucidar," I added.

Jason sent the message, *"D.I., D.I., D.I.,"* followed by, *"What station is this?"* and *"Who is sending?"*

"This is the Imperial Observatory at Greenwich, Pellucidar; Abner Perry sending. Who are you?"

"This is the private experimental laboratory of Jason Gridley, Tarzana, California; Gridley sending," replied Jason.

"I want to get into communication with Edgar Rice Burroughs; do you know him?"

"He is sitting here, listening in with me," replied Jason.

"Thank God, if that is true; but how am I to know that it is true?" demanded Perry.

I hastily scribbled a note to Jason: "Ask him if he recalls the fire in his first gunpowder factory and that the building would have been destroyed had they not extinguished the fire by shoveling his gunpowder onto it?"

Jason grinned as he read the note, and sent it.

"It was unkind of David to tell of that," came back the reply, *"but now I know that Burroughs is indeed there, as only he could have known of that incident. I have a long message for him. Are you ready?"*

"Yes," replied Jason.

"Then stand by."

And this is the message that Abner Perry sent from the bowels of the earth—from the Empire of Pellucidar.

INTRODUCTION

IT must be some fifteen years since David Innes and I broke through the inner surface of the earth's crust and emerged into savage Pellucidar, but when a stationary sun hangs eternally at high noon and there is no restless moon and there are no stars, time is measureless and so it may have been a hundred years ago or one. Who knows?

Of course, since David returned to earth and brought back many of the blessings of civilization we have had the means to measure time, but the people did not like it. They found that it put restrictions and limitations upon them that they never had felt before and they came to hate it and ignore it until David, in the goodness of his heart, issued an edict abolishing time in Pellucidar.

It seemed a backward step to me, but I am resigned now and perhaps happier, for, when all is said and done, time is a hard master, as you of the outer world, who are slaves of the sun, would be forced to admit were you to give the matter thought.

Here in Pellucidar we eat when we are hungry; we sleep when we are tired; we set out upon journeys when we leave and we arrive at our destinations when we get there; nor are we old because the earth has circled the sun seventy times since our birth, for we do not know that this has occurred.

Perhaps I have been here fifteen years, but what matter? When I came I knew nothing of radio—my researches and studies were along other lines; but when David came back from the outer world, he brought many scientific works and from these I learned all that I know of radio, which has been enough to permit me to erect two successful stations; one here at Greenwich and one at the capital of the Empire of Pellucidar.

But try as I would, I never could get anything from the outer world, and after a while I gave up trying.

In fact, we used our stations but seldom, for after all, Pellucidar is only commencing to emerge from the Stone Age, and in the economy of the Stone Age there seems to be no crying need for radio.

But sometimes I played with it and upon several occasions I thought that I heard voices and other sounds that were not of Pellucidar. They were too faint to be more than vague suggestions of intriguing possibilities, but yet they did suggest something most alluring, and so I set myself to making changes and adjustments until this wonderful thing that has happened but now was made possible.

And my delight in being able to talk with you is second only to my relief in being able to appeal to you for help. David is in trouble. He is a captive in the north, or what he and I call north, for there are no points of compass known to Pellucidarians.

I have heard from him, however. He has sent me a message and in it he suggests a startling theory that would make aid from the outer crust possible if—but first let me tell you the whole story; the story of the disaster that befell David Innes and what led up to it; then you will be in a better position to judge as to the practicability of sending succor to David from the outer crust.

The whole thing dates from our victories over the Mahars, the once-dominant race of Pellucidar. When, with our well-organized armies, equipped with firearms and other weapons unknown to the Mahars or their gorillalike mercenaries, the Sagoths, we defeated the reptilian monsters and drove their slimy hordes from the confines of the Empire, the human race of the inner world for the first time took its rightful place among the orders of creation.

But our victories laid the foundation for the disaster that has overwhelmed us.

For a while there was no Mahar within the boundaries of any of the kingdoms that constitute the Empire of Pellucidar; but presently we had word of them here and there—small parties living upon the shores of sea or lake far from the haunts of man.

They gave us no trouble—their old power had crumbled beyond recall; their Sagoths were now numbered among the regiments of the Empire; the Mahars had no longer the means to harm us. Yet we did not want them among us; they are eaters of human flesh and we had no assurance that lone hunters would be safe from their voracious appetites.

WE wanted them to be gone, and so David sent a force against them, but with orders to treat with them first and attempt to persuade them to leave the Empire peacefully rather than embroil themselves in another war that might mean total extermination.

Sagoths accompanied the expedition, for they alone of all the creatures of Pellucidar can converse in the sixth-sense, fourth-dimension language of the Mahars.

The story that the expedition brought back was rather pitiful and aroused David's sympathies, as stories of persecution and unhappiness always do.

After the Mahars had been driven from the Empire they had sought a haven where they might live in peace. They assured us that they had accepted the inevitable in a spirit of philosophy and entertained no thoughts of renewing their warfare against the human race or in any way attempting to win back their lost ascendancy.

Far away upon the shores of a mighty ocean, where there were no signs of man, they settled in peace—but their peace was not for long.

A great ship came, reminding the Mahars of the first ships they had seen—the ships that David and I had built—the first ships, as far as we knew, that ever had sailed the silent seas of Pellucidar.

Naturally it was a surprise to us to learn that there was a race within the inner world sufficiently far advanced to be able to build ships. But there was another surprise in store for us. The Mahars assured us that these people possessed firearms and that because of their ships and their firearms they were fully as formidable as we and they were much more ferocious, killing for the mere sport of slaughter. . . . .

After the first ship had sailed away the Mahars thought they might be allowed to live in peace—but this dream was short-lived, for presently the first ship returned and with it were many others manned by thousands of bloodthirsty enemies against whose weapons the great reptiles had little or no defense.

Seeking only escape from man, the Mahars left their new home and moved back a short distance toward the Empire, but now their enemies seemed bent only upon persecution; they hunted them, and when they found them the Mahars were again forced to fall back before the ferocity of their continued attacks.

Eventually they took refuge within the boundaries of the Empire, and scarcely had David's expedition to them returned with its report ere we had definite proof of the veracity of their tale through messages from our northernmost frontier bearing stories of invasion by a strange, savage race of white men.

Frantic was the message from Goork, King of Thoria, whose far-flung frontier stretches beyond the Land of Awful Shadow.

Some of his hunters had been surprised and all but a few killed or captured by the invaders.

He had sent warriors, then, against them, but these, too, had met a like fate, being greatly outnumbered, and so he sent a runner to David begging the Emperor to rush troops to his aid.

Scarcely had the first runner arrived when another came, bearing tidings of the capture and sack of the principal town of the Kingdom of Thuria; and then a third arrived from the commander of the invaders demanding that David come with tribute or they would destroy his country and slay the prisoners they held as hostages.

In reply David dispatched Tanar, son of Ghak, to demand the release of all prisoners and the departure of the invaders.

IMMEDIATELY runners were sent to the nearest kingdoms of the Empire, and ere Tanar had reached the Land of Awful Shadow, ten thousand warriors were marching along the same trail to enforce the demands of the Emperor and drive the savage foe from Pellucidar.

As David approached the Land of Awful Shadow, that lies beneath Pellucidar's mysterious satellite, a great column of smoke was observable in the horizonless distance.

It was not necessary to urge the tireless

"We'll show this son of a king that he is among real men now!" barked the Cid.

warriors to greater speed, for all who saw guessed that the invaders had taken another village and put it to the torch.

And then came the refugees—women and children only—and behind them a thin line of warriors striving to hold back swarthy, bearded strangers, armed with strange weapons that resembled ancient harquebuses with bell-shaped muzzles—huge, unwieldy things that belched smoke and flame and stones and bits of metal.

That the Pellucidarians, outnumbered ten to one, were able to hold back their savage foes at all was due to the more modern firearms that David and I had taught them to make and use.

Perhaps half the warriors of Thuria were armed with these and they were all that saved them from absolute rout and, perhaps, total annihilation.

Loud were the shouts of joy when the first of the refugees discovered and recognized the force coming to their delivery.

Goork and his people had been wavering in allegiance to the Empire, as were several other distant kingdoms, but I believe that this practical demonstration of the value of the Federation ended their doubts forever and left the people of the Land of Awful Shadow and their king the most loyal subjects that David possessed.

The effect upon the enemy of the appearance of ten thousand well-armed warriors was quickly apparent. They halted and as we advanced they withdrew, but though they retreated they gave us a good fight.

DAVID learned from Goork that Tanar had been retained as a hostage, but though he made several attempts to open negotiations with the enemy for the purpose of exchanging some prisoners that had fallen into our hands, for Tanar and other Pellucidarians, he never was able to do so.

Our forces drove the invaders far beyond the limits of the Empire to the shores of a distant sea where with difficulty and the loss of many men they at last succeeded in embarking their depleted forces in ships that were as archaic in design as were their ancient harquebuses.

These ships rose to exaggerated heights at stern and bow, the sterns being built up in several stories, or housed decks, one atop another. There was much carving in seemingly intricate designs everywhere above the water line and each ship carried at her prow a figurehead painted, like the balance of the ship, in gaudy colors—usually a life-size or a heroic figure of a naked woman or a mermaid.

The men themselves were equally bizarre and colorful, wearing gay cloths about their heads, wide sashes of bright colors and huge boots with flapping tops—those that were not half-naked and barefoot.

Besides their harquebuses they carried huge pistols and knives stuck in their belts, and at their hips were cutlasses. Altogether, with their bushy whiskers and fierce faces, they were at once a bad-looking yet a picturesque lot.

From some of the last prisoners he took, during the fighting at the seashore, David learned that Tanar was still alive and that the chief of the invaders had determined to take him home with him in the hope that he could learn from Tanar the secrets of our superior weapons and gunpowder, for notwithstanding my first failures, I had, not without some pride, finally achieved a gunpowder that would not only burn, but which would ignite with such force as to be quite satisfactory. I am now perfecting a noiseless, smokeless powder, though honesty compels me to confess that my first experiments have not been entirely what I had hoped they might be. The first batch detonated, nearly breaking my eardrums and so filling my eyes with smoke that I thought I had been blinded.

WHEN David saw the enemy ships sailing away with Tanar he was sick with grief, for Tanar always had been an especial favorite of the Emperor and his gracious Empress, Dian the Beautiful. He was like a son to them.

We had no ships upon this sea and David could not follow with his army; neither, being David, could he abandon the son of his best friend to a savage enemy before he had exhausted every resource at his command in an effort toward rescue.

In addition to the prisoners that had fallen into his hands David had captured one of the small boats that the enemy had used in embarking his forces, and this it was that suggested to David the mad scheme upon which he embarked.

The boat was about sixteen feet long and was equipped with both oars and a sail. It was broad of beam and had every appearance of being stanch and seaworthy, though pitifully small in which to face the dangers of an unknown sea, peopled, as are all the waters of Pellucidar, with huge monsters possessing short tempers and long appetites.

Standing upon the shore, gazing after the diminishing outlines of the departing ships, David reached his decision. Surrounding him were the captains and the kings of the Federated Kingdoms of Pellucidar and behind these ten thousand warriors, leaning upon their arms. To one side the sullen prisoners, heavily guarded, gazed after their departing comrades, with what sensations of hopelessness and envy one may only guess.

David turned toward his people. "Those departing ships have borne away Tanar, the son of Ghak, and perhaps a score more of the young men of Pellucidar. It is beyond reason to expect that the enemy ever will bring our comrades back to us, but it is easy to imagine the treatment they will receive at the hands of this savage, bloodthirsty race.

"We may not abandon them while a single avenue of pursuit remains open to us. Here is that avenue." He waved his hand across the broad ocean. "And here the means of traversing it." He pointed to the small boat.

"It could carry scarce twenty men," cried one, who stood near the Emperor.

"It need carry but three," replied David, "for it will sail to rescue, not by force, but by strategy; or perhaps only to locate the stronghold of the enemy, that we may return and lead a sufficient force upon it to overwhelm it.

"I shall go," concluded the Emperor. "Who will accompany me?"

INSTANTLY every man within hearing of his voice, saving the prisoners only, flashed a weapon above his head and pressed forward to offer his services. David smiled.

"I knew as much," he said, "but I cannot take you all. I shall need only one and that shall be Ja of Anoroc, the greatest sailor of Pellucidar."

A great shout arose, for Ja, the King of Anoroc, who is also the chief officer of the navy of Pellucidar, is vastly popular throughout the Empire and though all were disappointed in not being chosen, yet they appreciated the wisdom of David's selection.

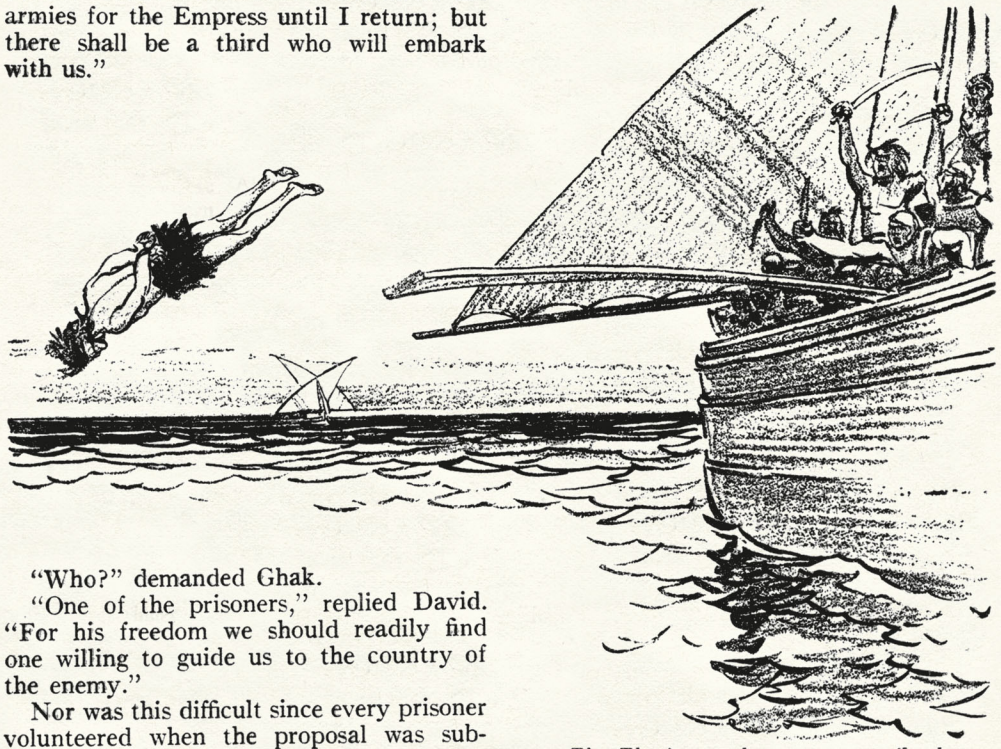
"But two is too small a number to hope for success," argued Ghak, "and I, the father of Tanar, should be permitted to accompany you."

"Numbers, such as we might crowd into that little boat, would avail us nothing," replied David, "so why risk a single additional life? If twenty could pass through the unknown dangers that lie ahead of us, two may do the same, while with fewer men we can carry a far greater supply of food and water against the unguessed extent of

the great sea that we face and the periods of calm and the long search."

"But two are too few to man the boat," expostulated another, "and Ghak is right—the father of Tanar should be among his rescuers."

"Ghak is needed by the Empire," replied David. "He must remain to command the armies for the Empress until I return; but there shall be a third who will embark with us."



The Thurian made no outcry; silently he leaped far out, and turning, dived head-foremost into the sea.

"Who?" demanded Ghak.

"One of the prisoners," replied David. "For his freedom we should readily find one willing to guide us to the country of the enemy."

Nor was this difficult since every prisoner volunteered when the proposal was submitted to them.

David chose a young fellow who said his name was Fitt and who seemed to possess a more open and honest countenance than any of his companions.

THEN came the provisioning of the boat. Bladders were filled with fresh water and quantities of corn and dried fish and jerked meat, as well as vegetables and fruits, were packed into other bladders, and all were stored in the boat until it seemed that she might carry no more. For three men the supplies might have been adequate for a year's voyage upon the outer crust, where time enters into all calculations.

The prisoner Fitt, who was to accompany David and Ja, assured David that one-fourth the quantity of supplies would be ample and that there were points along the route they might take where their water-supply could be replenished and where game abounded, as well as native fruits, nuts and vegetables; but David would not cut down by a single ounce the supplies that he had decided upon.

As the three were about to embark David had a last word with Ghak.

"You have seen the size and the armament of the enemy ships, Ghak," he said. "My last injunction to you is to build at once a fleet that can cope successfully with these great ships of the enemy and while the fleet is building—and it must be built upon the shores of this sea—send expeditions forth to search for a water-way from this ocean to our own. Can you find it, all of our ships can be utilized and the building of the greater navy accelerated by utilizing the shipyards of Anoroc.

"When you have completed and manned fifty ships, set forth to our rescue if we have not returned by then. Do not destroy these prisoners, but preserve them and treat them well, for they alone can guide you to their country."

And then David I, Emperor of Pellucidar, and Ja, King of Anoroc, with the prisoner Fitt, boarded the tiny boat; friendly hands pushed them out upon the long, oily

swells of a Pellucidarian sea; ten thousand throats cheered them upon their way and ten thousand pairs of eyes watched them until they had melted into the mist of the upcurving, horizonless distance of a Pellucidarian seascape.

David had departed upon a vain but glorious adventure, and in the distant capital of the Empire, Dian the Beautiful would be weeping.

CHAPTER 1

STELLARA

THE great ship trembled to the recoil of the cannon. The rattle of musketry, the roar of the guns aboard her sister ships and the roar of her own was deafening. Below decks the air was acrid with the fumes of burnt powder.

Tanar of Pellucidar, chained below with other prisoners, heard these sounds and smelled the smoke. He heard the rattle of the anchor chain; he felt the straining of the mast to which his shackles were bent and the altered motion of the hull told him that the ship was under way.

Presently the firing ceased and the regular rising and falling of the ship betokened that it was on its course. In the darkness of the hold Tanar could see nothing. Sometimes the prisoners spoke to one another, but their thoughts were not happy ones and so, for the most part, they remained silent —waiting. For what?

They grew very hungry and very thirsty. By this they knew that the ship was far at sea. They knew nothing of time. They only knew that they were hungry and thirsty and that the ship should be far at sea—far out upon an unknown sea, setting its course for an unknown port.

Presently a hatch was raised and men came with food and water—poor, rough food, and water that smelled badly and tasted worse; but it was water and they were thirsty.

One of the men said: "Where is he who is called Tanar?"

"I am Tanar," replied the son of Ghak.

"You are wanted on deck," said the man, and with a huge key he unlocked the massive, hand-wrought lock that held Tanar chained to the mast. "Follow me!"

The bright light of Pellucidar's perpetual day blinded the Sarian as he clambered to the deck from the dark hole in which he had been confined and it was a full minute before his eyes could endure the light, but his guard hustled him roughly along and Tanar was already stumbling up the long stairs leading to the high deck at the ship's stern by the time he regained the use of his eyes.

As he mounted the highest deck, he saw the chiefs of the Korsarian horde assembled and with them were two women. One appeared elderly and ill-favored; the other was young and beautiful; but for neither did Tanar have any eyes—he was interested only in the enemy men, for these he could fight, these he might kill, which was the sole interest that an enemy could hold for Tanar the Sarian, and being what he was Tanar could not fight women, not even enemy women; he could only ignore them, and this he did.

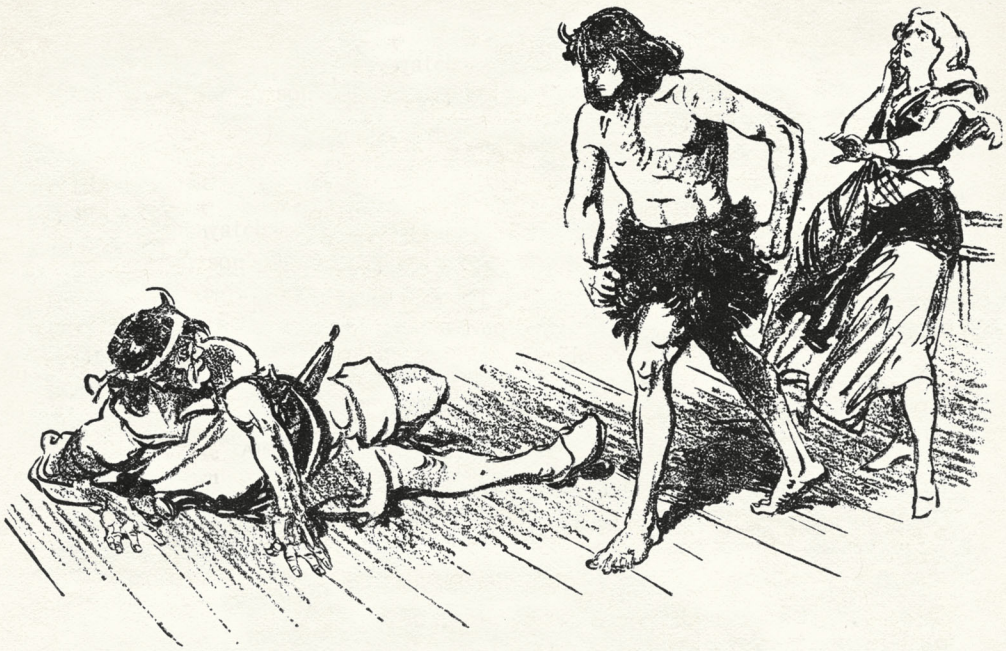
He was led before a huge fellow whose bushy whiskers almost hid his face—a great, blustering fellow with a scarlet scarf bound about his head. But for an embroidered, sleeveless jacket, open at the front, the man was naked above the waist, about which was wound another gaudy sash into which were stuck two pistols and as many long knives, while at his side dangled a cutlass, the hilt of which was richly ornamented with inlays of pearl and semi-precious stones.

A mighty man was the Cid, chief of the Korsarians—a burly, blustering bully of a man, whose position among the rough and quarrelsome Korsarians might be maintained only by such as he.

Surrounding him upon the high poop of his ship was a company of beefy ruffians of similar mold, while far below, in the waist of the vessel, a throng of lesser cut-throats, the common sailors, escaped from the dangers and demands of an arduous campaign, relaxed according to their various whims.

Stark brutes were most of these, naked but for shorts and the inevitable gaudy sashes and head-cloths—an unlovely company, yet picturesque.

AT the Cid's side stood a younger man who could well boast as hideous a countenance as any sun ever shone upon, for across a face that might have taxed even a mother's love ran a repulsive scar from above the left eye to below the right-hand corner of the mouth, cleaving the nose with a deep, red gash. The left eye was lidless and gazed perpetually upward and outward, as a dead eye might, while the upper lip



The Sarian stepped to one side, then in again—and Bohar sprawled upon the deck.

was permanently drawn upward at the right side in a sardonic sneer that exposed a single fanglike tooth.

Before these two, the Cid and Bohar, Tanar was roughly dragged.

"They call you Tanar?" bellowed the Cid.

Tanar nodded.

"And you are the son of a king!" The Cid laughed loudly. "With a ship's company I could destroy your father's entire kingdom and make a slave of him, as I have of his son."

"You had many ships' companies," replied Tanar; "but I did not see any of them destroying the kingdom of Sari. The army that chased them into the ocean was commanded by my father, under the Emperor."

The Cid scowled. "I have made men walk the plank for less than that," he growled.

"I do not know what you mean," said Tanar.

"You shall," barked the Cid. "And then, by the beard of the sea-god, you'll keep a civil tongue in your head. —Hey!" he shouted to one of his officers, "have a prisoner fetched and the plank run out. We'll show this son of a king who the Cid is and that he is among real men now."

"Why fetch another?" demanded Bohar the Brutal. "This fellow can walk and learn his lesson at the same time."

"But he could not profit by it," replied the Cid.

"Since when did the Cid become a dry nurse to an enemy?" demanded Bohar with a sneer.

WITHOUT a word the Cid wheeled and swung an ugly blow to Bohar's chin, and as the man went down the chief whipped a great pistol from his sash and stood over him, the muzzle pointed at Bohar's head.

"Perhaps that will knock your crooked face straight or bump some brains into your thick head!" roared the Cid.

Bohar lay glaring up at his chief.

"Who is your master?" demanded the Cid.

"You are," growled Bohar sullenly.

"Then get up and keep a civil tongue in your head," ordered the Cid.

As Bohar arose, he turned a scowling face upon Tanar. It was as though his one good eye had gathered all the hate and rage and venom in the wicked heart of the man and was concentrating them upon the Sarian, the indirect cause of his humiliation, and from that instant Tanar knew that Bohar hated him with a personal hatred distinct from any natural antipathy that he might have felt for an alien and an enemy.

On the lower deck men were eagerly running a long plank out over the starboard rail and making the inboard end fast to cleats with stout lines.

From an opened hatch others were drag-

ging a strapping prisoner from the kingdom of Thuria, who had been captured in the early fighting in the Land of Awful Shadow.

The primitive warrior held his head high and showed no terror in the presence of his rough captors. Tanar, looking down upon him from the upper deck, was proud of this fellow-man of the Empire. The Cid was watching, too.

"That tribe needs taming," he said.

The younger of the two women, both of whom had stepped to the edge of the deck and were looking down upon the scene in the waist, turned to the Cid.

"They seem brave men, all of them," she said. "It is a pity to kill one needlessly."

"Pouf, girl!" exclaimed the Cid. "What do you know of such things? It is the blood of your mother that speaks. By the beards of the gods, I would that you had more of your father's blood in your veins."

"It is brave blood, the blood of my mother," replied the girl, "for it does not fear to be itself before all men. The blood of my father dares not reveal its good to the eyes of men because it fears ridicule. It boasts of its courage to hide its cowardice."

The Cid swore a mighty oath. "You take advantage of our relationship, Stellara," he said, "but do not forget that there is a limit beyond which even you may not go with the Cid, who brooks no insults."

The girl laughed. "Reserve that talk for those who fear you," she said.

DURING this conversation, Tanar, who was standing near, had an opportunity to observe the girl more closely and was prompted to do so by the nature of her remarks and the quiet courage of her demeanor. For the first time he noticed her hair, which was like gold in warm sunlight, and because the women of his own country were nearly all dark-haired, the color of her hair impressed him. He thought it very lovely and when he looked more closely at her features he realized that they, too, were lovely, with a sunny, golden loveliness that seemed to reflect like qualities of heart and character. There was a certain feminine softness about her that was sometimes lacking in the sturdy, self-reliant, primitive women of his own race. It was not in any sense a weakness, however, as was evidenced by her fearless attitude toward the Cid and by the light of courage that shone from her brave eyes. Intelligent eyes they were, too—brave, intelligent and beautiful.

But there Tanar's interest ceased and he was repulsed by the thought that this woman belonged to the uncouth bully who ruled with an iron hand the whiskered brutes of the great fleet, for the Cid's reference to their relationship left no doubt in the mind of the Sarian that the woman was the mate of the chief.

AND now the attention of all was focused on the actors in the tragedy below. Men had bound the wrists of the prisoner together behind his back and placed a blindfold across his eyes.

"Watch below, son of a king," said the Cid to Tanar, "and you will know what it means to walk the plank."

"I am watching," said Tanar, "and I see that it takes many of your people to make one of mine do this thing, whatever it may be."

The girl laughed, but the Cid scowled more deeply, while Bohar cast a venomous glance at Tanar.

Now men with drawn knives and sharp pikes lined the plank on either side to the ship's rail and others lifted the prisoner to the inboard end so that he faced the opposite end of the plank that protruded far out over the sea, where great monsters of the deep cut the waves with giant backs as they paralleled the ship's course—giant saurians, long extinct upon the outer crust.

Prodding the defenseless man with knife and pike, they goaded him forward along the narrow plank to the accompaniment of loud oaths and vulgar jests and hoarse laughter.

Erect and proud, the Thurian marched fearlessly to his doom. He made no complaint and when he reached the outer end of the plank and his foot found no new place beyond he made no outcry. Just for an instant he drew back his foot and hesitated and then, silently, he leaped far out and, turning, dived head-foremost into the sea.

Tanar turned his eyes away, and it chanced that he turned them in the direction of the girl. To his surprise he saw that she, too, had refused to look at the last moment and in her face, turned toward his, he saw an expression of suffering.

Could it be that this woman of the Cid's brutal race felt sympathy and sorrow for a suffering enemy?

Tanar doubted it. More likely that

something she had eaten that day disagreed with her.

"NOW," cried the Cid, "you have seen a man walk the plank and know what I may do with you, if I choose."

Tanar shrugged. "I hope I may be as indifferent to my fate as was my comrade," he said, "for you certainly got little enough sport out of him."

"If I turn you over to Bohar we shall have sport," replied the Cid. "He has other means of enlivening a dull day that far surpass the tame exercise on the plank."

The girl turned angrily upon the Cid. "You shall not do that!" she cried. "You promised me that you would not torture any prisoners while I was with the fleet."

"If he behaves I shall not," said the Cid, "but if he does not I shall turn him over to Bohar. Do not forget that I am Chief of Korsar, and that even you may be punished if you interfere."

Again the girl laughed. "You can frighten the others, Chief of Korsar," she said, "but not me."

"If she were mine—" muttered Bohar threateningly, but the girl interrupted him.

"I am not, nor ever shall be," she said.

"Do not be too sure of that," growled the Cid. "I can give you to whom I please; let the matter drop." He turned to the Sarian prisoner. "What is your name, son of a king?" he asked.

"Tanar."

"Listen well, Tanar," said the Cid impressively: "Our prisoners do not live beyond the time that they be of service to us. Some of you will be kept to exhibit to the people of Korsar, after which they will be of little use to me—but *you* can purchase life and, perhaps, freedom."

"How?" demanded Tanar.

"Your people were armed with weapons far better than ours," explained the Cid; "your powder was more powerful and more dependable. Half the time ours fails to ignite at the first attempt."

"That must be embarrassing," remarked Tanar.

"It is fatal," said the Cid.

"But what has it to do with me?"

"If you will teach us how to make better weapons and such powder as your people have you shall be spared and shall have your freedom."

Tanar made no reply—he was thinking—thinking of the supremacy that their superior weapons gave his people—thinking of the fate that lay in store for him and for those poor devils in the dark, foul hole below deck.

"Well?" demanded the Cid.

"Will you spare the others too?" Tanar asked.

"Why should I?"

"I shall need their help," said Tanar. "I do not know all that is necessary to make the weapons and the powder."

As a matter of fact, he knew nothing about the manufacture of either, but he saw here a chance to save his fellow-prisoners, or to at least delay their destruction and gain time in which they might find means to escape; nor did he hesitate to deceive the Cid, for is not all fair in war?

"Very well," said the Korsarian chief; "if you and they give me no trouble you shall all live—provided you teach us how to make weapons and powder like your own."

"We cannot live in the filthy hole in which we are penned," retorted the Sarian; "neither can we live without food. Soon we shall all sicken and die. We are people of the open air—we cannot be smothered in dark holes filled with vermin and be starved, and live."

"You shall not be returned to the hold," said the Cid. "There is no danger that you will escape."

"And the others?" demanded Tanar.

"They remain where they are!"

"They will all die, and without them I cannot make powder," Tanar reminded him.

The Cid scowled. "You would have my ship overrun with enemies," he growled.

"They are unarmed."

"Then they certainly would be killed," said the Cid. "No one would survive long among that pack an' he were not armed." He waved a hand contemptuously toward the half-naked throng below.

"Then leave the hatches off and give them decent air and more and better food."

"I'll do it," said the Cid. "Bohar, have the forward hatches removed, place a guard there with orders to kill any prisoner who attempts to come on deck and any of our men who attempt to go below; see, too, that the prisoners get the same rations as our own men."

IT was with a feeling of relief that amounted almost to happiness that Tanar saw Bohar depart to carry out the orders of the Cid, for he knew well that his

people could not long survive the hideous and unaccustomed confinement and the vile food that had been his lot and theirs since they had been brought aboard this Korsar ship.

Presently the Cid went to his cabin and Tanar, left to his own devices, walked to the stern and leaning on the rail gazed back into the hazy upcurving distance where lay the land of the Sarians—his land—beyond the haze.

FAR astern a small boat rose and fell with the long billows. Fierce denizens of the deep constantly threatened it, storms menaced it, but on it forged in the wake of the great fleet—a frail and tiny thing made strong and powerful by the wills of three men.

But this Tanar did not see, for the mist hid it. He would have been heartened to know that his Emperor was risking his life to save him.

As he gazed and dreamed, he became conscious of a presence near him—but he did not turn, for who was there upon that ship, who might have access to this upper deck, whom he might care to see or speak with?

Presently he heard a voice at his elbow, a low, golden voice that brought him around facing its owner. It was the girl called Stellara.

"You are looking back toward your own country?" she asked.

"Yes."

"You will never see it again," she said, a note of sadness in her voice, as though she understood his feelings and sympathized.

"Perhaps not, but why should you care? I am an enemy."

"I do not know why I should care," replied the girl. "What is your name?"

"Tanar."

"Is that all?"

"I am called Tanar the Fleet One."

"Why?"

"Because in all Sari none can outdistance me."

"Sari—is that, then, the name of your country?"

"Yes."

"What is it like?"

"It is a high plateau among the mountains. It is a very lovely country, with leaping rivers and great trees. It is filled with game. We hunt the great ryth there and the tarag for meat and for sport, and there are countless lesser animals that give us food and clothing."

"Have you no enemies? You are not a warlike people as are the Korsarians."

"We defeated the warlike Korsarians," he reminded her.

"I would not speak of that too often," she said. "The tempers of the Korsarians are short, and they love to kill."

"Why do you not kill me, then?" he demanded. "You have a knife and a pistol in your sash, like the others."

The girl only smiled.

"Perhaps you are not a Korsarian," he exclaimed. "You were captured as I was and are a prisoner."

"I am no prisoner," she replied.

"But you are not a Korsarian," he insisted.

"Ask the Cid—he will doubtless cutlass you for your impertinence; but why do you think I am not a Korsarian?"

"You are too beautiful and too fine," he replied. "You have shown sympathy, and that is a finer sentiment far beyond their mental capability. They are—"

"Be careful, enemy; perhaps I am a Korsarian!"

"I do not believe it," said Tanar.

"Then keep your beliefs to yourself, prisoner," retorted the girl haughtily.

"WHAT is this?" demanded a rough voice behind Tanar. "What has this thing said to you, Stellara?"

Tanar wheeled to face Bohar the Brutal.

"I questioned that she was of the same race as you," snapped Tanar before the girl could reply. "It is inconceivable that one so beautiful could be tainted by the blood of Korsar."

His face flaming with rage, Bohar laid a hand upon one of his knives and stepped truculently toward the Sarian. "It is death to insult the daughter of the Cid," he cried, whipping the knife from his sash and striking a wicked blow at Tanar.

The Sarian, light of foot, trained from childhood in the defensive as well as offensive use of edged weapons, stepped quickly to one side and then as quickly in again, and once more Bohar sprawled upon the deck to a well-delivered blow.

The Korsarian was fairly foaming at the mouth with rage as he jerked his heavy pistol from his gaudy sash and aiming it at Tanar's chest from where he lay upon the deck, pulled the trigger. At the same instant the girl sprang forward.

It all happened so quickly that Tanar scarcely knew the sequence of events, but what he did know was that the powder failed to ignite, and then he laughed.

"You had better wait until I have taught you how to make powder that will burn before you try to murder me, Bohar," he said.

The ruffianly Korsarian scrambled to his feet and Tanar stood ready to receive the expected charge, but the girl stepped between them with an imperious gesture.

"Enough of this!" she cried. "It is the Cid's wish that this man live. Would you like to have the Cid know that you tried to pistol him, Bohar?"

The Korsarian stood glaring at Tanar for several seconds, then he wheeled and strode away without a word.

"It would seem that Bohar does not like me," said Tanar, smiling.

"He dislikes nearly everyone," said Stellara, "but he hates you—now."

"Because I knocked him down, I suppose. I cannot blame him."

"That is not the real reason," said the girl.

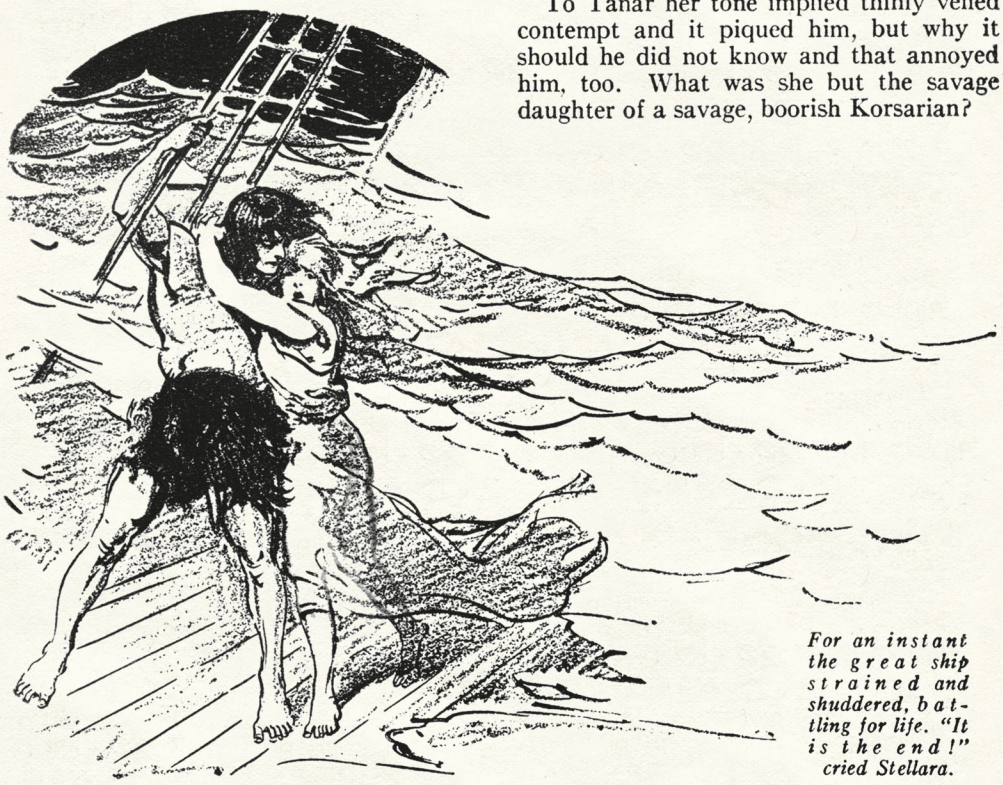
"What is, then?"

She hesitated and then she laughed. "He is jealous. Bohar wants me for his mate."

"But why should he be jealous of me?"

Stellara looked Tanar up and down and then she laughed again softly. "I do not know," she said. "You are not much of a man beside our huge Korsarians—with your beardless face and your small waist. It would take two of you to make one of them."

To Tanar her tone implied thinly veiled contempt and it piqued him, but why it should he did not know and that annoyed him, too. What was she but the savage daughter of a savage, boorish Korsarian?



For an instant the great ship strained and shuddered, battling for life. "It is the end!" cried Stellara.

When he had first learned from Bohar's lips that she was the daughter and not the mate of the Cid he had felt an unaccountable relief, half unconsciously and without at all attempting to analyze his reaction.

Perhaps it was the girl's beauty that had made such a relationship with the Cid seem repulsive, perhaps it was her lesser ruthlessness, which seemed superlative gentleness by contrast with the brutality of Bohar and the Cid, but now she seemed capable of a refined cruelty, which was, after all, what he might have expected to find in one form or another in the daughter of the chief of the Korsarians.

As one will, when piqued, and just at random, Tanar loosed a bolt in the hope that it might annoy her. "Bohar knows

you better than I," he said; "perhaps he knew that he had cause for jealousy."

"Perhaps," she replied, enigmatically, "but no one will ever know; for of a surety Bohar will kill you—I know *him* well enough to know that!"

CHAPTER II

DISASTER

UPON the timeless seas of Pellucidar a voyage may last for an hour or a year—that depends not upon its duration, but upon the important occurrences which mark its course.

Curving upward along the inside of the arc of a great circle the Korsar fleet plowed the restless sea. Favorable winds carried the ships onward. The noonday sun hung perpetually at zenith. Men ate when they were hungry, slept when they were tired, or slept against the time when sleep might be denied them—for the people of Pellucidar seem endowed with a faculty that permits them to store sleep, as it were, in times of ease, against the more strenuous periods of hunting and warfare when there is no opportunity for sleep. Similarly, they eat with unbelievable irregularity.

Tanar had slept and eaten several times since his encounter with Bohar, whom he had seen upon various occasions since without an actual meeting. The Brutal One seemed to be biding his time.

Stellara had kept to her cabin with the old woman, whom Tanar surmised was her mother. He wondered if Stellara would look like the mother or the Cid when she was older, and he shuddered when he considered either eventuality.

As he stood thus musing, Tanar's attention was attracted by the actions of the men on the lower deck. He saw them looking across the port bow and upward and, following the direction of their eyes with his, he saw the rare phenomenon of a cloud in the brilliant sky.

SOME one must have notified the Cid at about the same time, for he came from his cabin and looked long and searchingly at the heavens.

In his loud voice the Cid bellowed commands and his wild crew scrambled to their stations like monkeys, swarming aloft or standing by on deck ready to do his bidding.

Down came the great sails and reefed were the lesser ones, and throughout the fleet, scattered over the surface of the shining sea, the example of the commander was followed.

The cloud was increasing in size and coming rapidly nearer. No longer was it the small white cloud that had first attracted their attention, but a great, bulging, ominous, black mass that frowned down upon the ocean, turning it a sullen gray where the shadow lay.

The wind that had been blowing gently ceased suddenly. The ship fell off and rolled in the trough of the sea. The silence that followed cast a spell of terror over the ship's company.

Tanar, watching, saw the change. If these rough seafaring men blanched before the threat of the great cloud the danger must be great indeed.

The Sarians were mountain people. Tanar knew little of the sea, but if Tanar feared anything on Pellucidar it was the sea. The sight, therefore, of these savage Korsarian sailors cringing in terror was far from reassuring.

Some one had come to the rail and was standing at his side.

"When that has passed," said a voice, "there will be fewer ships in the fleet of Korsar and fewer men to go home to their women."

HE turned and saw Stellara looking upward at the cloud.

"You do not seem afraid," he said.

"Nor you," replied the girl. "We seem the only people aboard who are not afraid."

"Look down at the prisoners," he told her. "They show no fear."

"Why?" she asked.

"They are Pellucidarians," he replied proudly.

"We are all of Pellucidar," she reminded him.

"I refer to the Empire," he said.

"Why are you not afraid?" she asked. "Are you so much braver than the Korsarians?" There was no sarcasm in her tone, merely wonder.

"I am very much afraid," replied Tanar. "Mine are mountain people—we know little of the sea or its ways."

"But you show no fear," she insisted.

"That is the result of heredity and training," he replied.

"The Korsarians show their fear," she mused. She spoke as one who was of different blood. "They boast much of their

bravery," she continued as though speaking to herself, "but when the sky frowns they show fear." There seemed a little note of contempt in her voice. "See!" she cried. "It is coming!"

The cloud was tearing toward them now and beneath it the sea was lashed to fury. Shreds of cloud whirled and twisted at the edges of the great cloud mass. Shreds of spume whirled and twisted above the angry waves. And then the storm struck the ship, laying it over on its side.

What ensued was appalling to a mountaineer, unaccustomed to the sea—the chaos of watery mountains, tumbling, rolling, lashing at the wallowing ship; the shrieking wind; the driving, blinding spume; the terror-stricken crew cowering—no longer swaggering bullies.

Reeling, staggering, clutching at the rail, Bohar the Brutal passed Tanar where he clung with one arm about a stanchion and the other holding Stellara, who would have been hurled to the deck but for the quick action of the Sarian.

The face of Bohar was an ashen mask against which the red gash of his ugly scar stood out in startling contrast. He looked at Tanar and Stellara, but he passed them by, mumbling to himself.

Beyond them was the Cid, screaming orders that no one could hear. Toward him Bohar made his way. Above the storm Tanar heard him screaming at his chief.

"Save me! Save me!" he cried. "The boats—lower the boats! The ship is lost."

IT was apparent, even to a landsman, that no small boat could live in such a sea even if one could have been lowered. The Cid paid no attention to his lieutenant, but clung where he was, bawling commands.

A mighty sea rose suddenly above the bow; it hung there for an instant and then rolled in upon the lower deck—tons of crushing, pitiless, insensate sea—rolled in upon the huddled, screaming seamen. Naught but the high prow and the lofty poop showed above the angry waves—just for an instant the great ship strained and shuddered, battling for life.

"It is the end!" cried Stellara.

Bohar screamed like a dumb brute in the agony of death. The Cid kneeled on the deck, his face buried in his arms. Tanar stood watching, fascinated by the terrifying might of the elements. He saw man shrink to puny insignificance before a gust of wind, and a slow smile crossed his face.

THE wave receded and the ship, floundering, staggered upward, groaning. The smile left Tanar's lips as his eyes gazed down upon the lower deck. It was almost empty now. A few broken forms lay huddled in the scuppers; a dozen men, clinging here and there, showed signs of life. The others, all but those who had reached safety below deck, were gone.

The girl clung tightly to the man. "I did not think she could live through that," she said.

"Nor I," said Tanar.

"But you were not afraid," she said. "You seemed the only one who was not afraid."

"Of what use was Bohar's screaming?" he asked. "Would it save him?"

"Then you were afraid, but you hid it?"

He shrugged. "Perhaps," he said. "I do not know what you mean by fear. I did not want to die, if that is what you mean."

"Here comes another!" cried Stellara, shuddering, and pressing closer to him.

Tanar's arm tightened about the slim figure of the girl. It was an unconscious gesture of the protective instinct of the male. "Do not be afraid," he said.

"I am not—now," she replied.

AT the instant that the mighty comber engulfed the ship the angry hurricane struck suddenly with renewed fury—struck at a new angle—and the masts, already straining even to the minimum of canvas that had been necessary to give the ship headway and keep its nose into the storm, snapped like dry bones and crashed by the board in a tangle of cordage. The ship's head fell away and she rolled in the trough of the great seas, a hopeless derelict.

Above the screaming of the wind rose Bohar's screams. "The boats! The boats!" he repeated like a trained parrot gone mad from terror.

As though sated for the moment and worn out by its own exertions, the storm abated, the wind died, but the great seas rose and fell and the great ship rolled, helpless. At the bottom of each watery gorge it seemed that it must be engulfed by the gray-green cliff toppling above it and at the crest of each liquid mountain certain destruction loomed unescapable.

Bohar, still screaming, scrambled to the lower deck. He found men by some miracle still alive in the open, and others cringing in terror below deck. By dint of

curses and blows and the threat of his pistol he gathered them together and though they whimpered in fright he forced them to make a boat ready.

There were twenty of them and their gods or their devils must have been with them, for they lowered a boat and got clear of the floundering hulk in safety and without the loss of a man.

The Cid, seeing what Bohar contemplated, had tried to prevent the seemingly suicidal act by bellowing orders at him from above—but they had no effect and at the last moment the Cid had descended to the lower deck to enforce his commands, but had arrived too late.

Now he stood staring unbelievingly at the small boat riding the great seas in seeming security while the dismasted ship, pounded by the stumps of its masts, seemed doomed to destruction.

FROM corners where they had been hiding came the balance of the ship's company and when they saw Bohar's boat and the seemingly relative safety of the crew they clamored for escape by the other boats. With the idea once implanted in their minds there followed a mad panic as the half-brutes fought for places in the remaining boats.

"Come!" cried Stellara. "We must hurry or they will go without us." She started to move toward the companionway, but Tanar restrained her.

"Look at them," he said. "We are safer at the mercy of the sea and the storm."

Stellara shrank back close to him. She saw men knifing one another—those behind knifing those ahead, men dragging others from the boats and killing them on deck or being killed. She saw the Cid pistol a seaman in the back and leap to his place in the first boat to be lowered. She saw men leaping from the rail in a mad effort to reach this boat, and falling into the sea, or being thrown in if they succeeded in boarding the tossing shell.

She saw the other boats being lowered and men crushed between them and the ship's side—she saw the depths to which fear can plunge the braggart and the bully as the last of the ship's company, failing to win places in the last boat, deliberately leaped into the sea and were drowned.

STANDING there upon the high poop of the rolling derelict, Tanar and Stellara watched the frantic efforts of the oarsmen in the overcrowded small boats. They saw one boat foul another and both founder. They watched the drowning men battling for survival. They heard their hoarse oaths and their screams above the roaring of the sea and the shriek of the wind as the storm returned as though fearing that some might escape its fury.

"We are alone," said Stellara. "They have all gone."

"Let them go," replied Tanar. "I would not exchange places with them."

"But there can be no hope for us," said the girl.

"There is no more for them," replied the Sarian, "and at least we are not crowded into a small boat filled with cutthroats."

"You are more afraid of the men than you are of the sea," she said.

"For you, yes," he replied.

"Why should you fear for me?" she demanded. "Am I not also your enemy?"

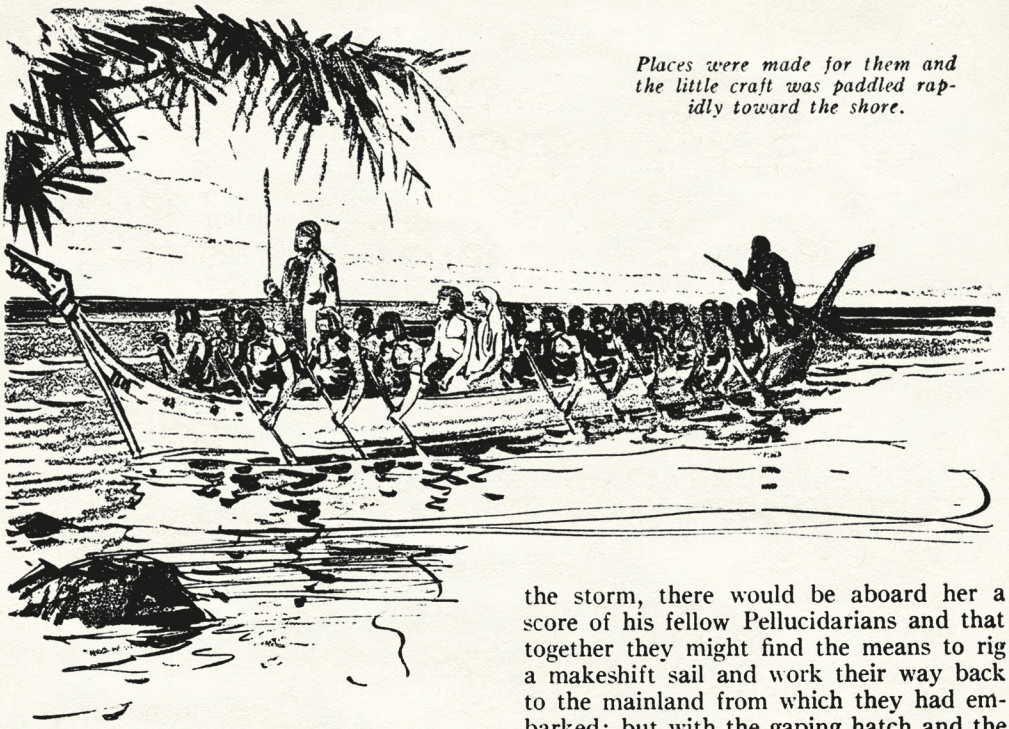
He turned his eyes quickly upon her and they were filled with surprise. "That is so," he said; "but, somehow, I had forgotten it—you do not seem like an enemy, as the others do. You do not seem like one of them, even."

CLINGING to the rail and supporting the girl upon the lurching deck, Tanar's lips were close to Stellara's ear as he sought to make himself heard above the storm. He sensed the faint aroma of a delicate sachet that was ever after to be a part of his memory of Stellara.

A sea struck the staggering ship throwing Tanar forward so that his cheek touched the cheek of the girl and as she turned her head his lips brushed hers. Each realized that it was an accident, but the effect was none the less surprising. Tanar, for the first time, felt the girl's body against his and consciousness of contact must have been reflected in his eyes for Stellara shrank back and there was an expression of fear in hers.

Tanar saw the fear in the eyes of an enemy, but it gave him no pleasure. He tried to think only of the treatment that would have been accorded a woman of his tribe had one been at the mercy of the Korsarians, but that, too, failed to satisfy him as it only could if he were to admit that he was of the same ignoble clay as the men of Korsar.

But whatever thoughts were troubling the minds of Stellara and Tanar were temporarily submerged by the grim tragedy of



Places were made for them and the little craft was paddled rapidly toward the shore.

the succeeding few moments as another tremendous sea, the most gigantic that had yet assailed the broken ship, hurled its countless tons upon her shivering deck.

To Tanar it seemed, indeed, that this must mark the end since it was inconceivable that the unmanageable hulk could rise again from the smother of water that surged completely over her almost to the very highest deck of the towering poop, where the two clung against the tearing wind and the frightful pitching of the derelict.

But as the sea rolled on, the ship slowly, sluggishly, struggled to the surface like an exhausted swimmer who, drowning, struggles weakly against the inevitability of fate and battles upward for one last gasp of air even though that will, at best, but prolong the agony of death.

AS the main deck slowly emerged from the receding waters, Tanar was horrified by the discovery that the forward hatch had been stove in. That the ship must have taken in considerable water, and that each succeeding wave that broke over it would add to the quantity, affected the Sarian less than knowledge of the fact that it was beneath this hatch that his fellow-prisoners were confined.

Through the black menace of his almost hopeless situation had shone a single bright ray of hope that, should the ship weather the storm, there would be aboard her a score of his fellow Pellucidarians and that together they might find the means to rig a makeshift sail and work their way back to the mainland from which they had embarked; but with the gaping hatch and the almost certain conclusion to be drawn from it he realized that it would, indeed, be a miracle if there remained alive aboard the derelict any other than Stellara and himself.

The girl was looking down at the havoc wrought below and now she turned her face toward his.

"They must all be drowned," she said, "and they were your people. I am sorry."

"Perhaps they would have chosen it to what might have awaited them in Korsar," he said.

"And they have been released only a little sooner than we shall be," she continued. "Do you notice how low the ship rides now and how sluggish she is? The hold must be half filled with water—another such sea as the last one will founder her."

For some time they stood in silence, each occupied with his own thoughts. The hulk rolled in the trough and momentarily it seemed that she might not roll back in time to avert the disaster of the next menacing comber, yet each time she staggered drunkenly to oppose a high side to the hungry waters.

"I believe the storm has spent itself," said Tanar.

"The wind has died and there has been no sea like the great one that stove in the forward hatch," said Stellara, hopefully.

The noonday sun broke from behind the black cloud that had shrouded it and the sea burst into a blaze of blue and silver beauty. The storm had passed. The seas diminished. The derelict rolled heavily upon the great swells, low in the water, but temporarily relieved of the menace of immediate disaster.

Tanar descended the companionway to the lower deck and aproached the forward hatch. A single glance below revealed only what he could have anticipated—floating corpses rolling with the roll of the derelict. All below were dead. With a sigh he turned away and returned to the upper deck.

The girl did not even question him, for she could read in his demeanor the story of what his eyes had beheld.

"You and I are the only living creatures that remain aboard," he said.

SHE waved a hand in a broad gesture that took in the sea about them. "Doubtless we alone of the entire ship's company have survived," she said. "I see no other ship nor any of the small boats."

Tanar strained his eyes in all directions. "Nor I," said he; "but perhaps some of them have escaped."

She shook her head. "I doubt it."

"Yours has been a heavy loss," sympathized the Sarian. "Beside so many of your people, you have lost your father and your mother."

Stellara looked up quickly into his eyes. "They were not my people," she said.

"What?" exclaimed Tanar. "They were not your people? But your father, the Cid, was Chief of the Korsarians."

"The Cid was not my father," replied the girl.

"And the woman was not your mother?"

"May the gods forbid," she exclaimed.

"But the Cid! He treated you like a daughter."

"He thought I was his daughter, but I am not."

"I do not understand," said Tanar; "yet I am glad that you are not. I could not understand how you, who are so different from them, could be a Korsarian."

"My mother was a native of the island of Amiocap and there the Cid, raiding for women, seized her. She told me about it many times before she died.

"Her mate was absent upon a great tandor hunt and she never saw him again. When I was born the Cid thought that I was his daughter, but my mother knew better for I bore upon my left shoulder a small, red birthmark identical with one upon the left shoulder of the mate from whom she had been stolen—my father.

"My mother never told the Cid the truth, for fear that he would kill me in accordance with the custom the Korsarians follow of destroying the children of their captives if a Korsarian is not the father."

"And the woman who was with you on board was not your mother?"

"No, she was the Cid's mate, but not my mother, who is now dead."

Tanar felt a distinct sense of relief that Stellara was not a Korsarian, but why this should be so he did not know, nor, perhaps, did he attempt to analyze his feelings.

"I am glad," he said again.

"But why?" she asked.

"Now we do not have to be enemies," he replied.

"Were we before?"

He hesitated and then he laughed. "I was not your enemy," he said, "but you reminded me that you were mine."

"It has been the habit of a lifetime to think of myself as a Korsarian," exclaimed Stellara, "although I knew that I was not. I felt no enmity toward you."

"Whatever we may have been, we must of necessity be friends now," he told her.

"That will depend upon you," she replied.

CHAPTER III

AMIOCAP

THE blue waters of the great sea known as Korsar Az wash the shores of a green island far from the mainland—a long, narrow island with verdure-clad hills and plateaus, its coast line indented by coves and tiny bays—Amiocap, an island of mystery and romance.

At a distance, and when there is a haze upon the waters, it looks like two islands rather than one, so low and narrow it is at one point, where coves run in on either side and the sea almost meets.

Thus it appeared to the two survivors from the deck of the Korsarian derelict drifting helplessly with the sluggish run of an ocean current and at the whim of vagrant winds.

Time is not even a word to the people of Pellucidar, so Tanar had given no thought to that. They had eaten many times, but as there was still an ample supply of provisions, even for a large ship's company, he

felt no concern upon that score, but he had been worried by the depletion of their supply of good water, for the contents of many casks that he had broached had been undrinkable.

They had slept much, which is the way of Pellucidarians when there is naught else to do, storing energy for possible future periods of long-drawn exertion.

They had been sleeping thus, for how long who may say in the measureless present of Pellucidar. Stellara was the first to come on deck from the cabin she had occupied next to that of the Cid. She looked about for Tanar, but not seeing him she let her eyes wander out over the upcurving expanse of water that merged in every direction with the blue domed vault of the brilliant sky, in the exact center of which hung the great noonday sun.

But suddenly her gaze was caught and held by something beside the illimitable waters and the ceaseless sun. She voiced a surprised and joyous cry and, turning, ran across the deck toward the cabin in which Tanar slept.

"Tanar! Tanar!" she cried, pounding upon the paneled door. "Land, Tanar, land!"

The door swung open and Tanar stepped out upon the deck where Stellara stood pointing across the starboard rail of the drifting derelict.

Close by rose the green hills of a long shore line that stretched away in both directions for many miles, but whether it was the mainland or an island they could not tell.

"Land!" breathed Tanar. "How good it looks!"

"The pleasant green of the soft foliage often hides terrible beasts and savage men," Stellara reminded him.

"But they are the dangers that I know—it is the unknown dangers of the sea that I do not like. I am not of the sea."

"You hate the sea?"

"No," he replied, "I do not hate it; I do not understand it—that is all. But there is something that I do understand." And he pointed toward the land.

IN Tanar's tone there was that which caused Stellara to look quickly in the direction he indicated.

"Men!" she exclaimed.

"Warriors," said Tanar.

"There must be twenty of them in that canoe," she said.

"And here comes another canoeful behind them."

From the mouth of a narrow cove the canoes were paddling out into the open sea.

"Look!" cried Stellara. "There are many more coming."

ONE after another twenty canoes moved in a long column out upon the quiet waters and as they drew steadily toward the ship the survivors saw that each was filled with almost naked warriors. Short, heavy spears, bone-tipped, bristled menacingly; stone knives protruded from every G-string and stone hatchets swung at every hip.

As the flotilla approached, Tanar went to a cabin and returned with two of the heavy pistols left behind by a fleeing Korsarian when the ship had been abandoned.

"Do you expect to repulse four hundred warriors with those?" asked the girl.

Tanar shrugged. "If they have never heard the report of a firearm a few shots may suffice to frighten them away, for a time, at least," he explained, "and if we do not go on the shore the current will carry us away from them in time."

"But suppose they do not frighten so easily?" she demanded.

"Then I can do no more than my best with the crude weapons and the inferior powder of the Korsarians," he said with the conscious superiority of one who had, with his people, so recently emerged from the stone age that he often instinctively grasped a pistol by the muzzle and used it as a war-club in sudden emergencies when at close quarters.

"Perhaps they will not be unfriendly," suggested Stellara.

Tanar laughed. "Then they are not of Pellucidar," he said, "but of some wondrous country inhabited by what Perry calls angels."

"Who is Perry?" she demanded. "I never heard of him."

"He is a madman who says that Pellucidar is the inside of a hollow stone that is as round as the strange world that hangs forever above the Land of Awful Shadow, and that upon the outside are seas and mountains and plains and countless people and a great country—from which he comes."

"He must be quite mad," said the girl.

"Yet he and David, our Emperor, have brought us many advantages that were before unknown in Pellucidar, so that now we can kill more warriors in a single battle than

was possible before during the course of a whole war. Perry calls this civilization and it is indeed a very wonderful thing."

"Perhaps he came from the frozen world from which the ancestors of the Korsarians came," suggested the girl. "They say that that country lies outside of Pellucidar."

"Here is the enemy," said Tanar. "Shall I fire at that big fellow standing in the bow of the first canoe?" Tanar raised one of the heavy pistols and took aim, but the girl laid a hand upon his arm.

"Wait," she begged. "They may be friendly. Do not fire unless you must—I hate killing."

"I can well believe that you are no Korsarian," he said, lowering the muzzle of his weapon.

THERE came a hail from the leading canoe. "We are prepared for you, Korsarians," shouted the tall warrior standing in the bow. "You are few in numbers. We are many. Your great canoe is a useless wreck; ours are manned by twenty warriors each. You are helpless. We are strong. It is not always thus and this time it is not we who shall be taken prisoners, but you, if you attempt to land. But we are not like you, Korsarians. We do not want to kill or capture. Go away and we shall not harm you."

"We cannot go away," replied Tanar. "Our ship is helpless. We are only two and our food and water are nearly exhausted. Let us land and remain until we can prepare to return to our own countries."

The warrior turned and conversed with the others in his canoe. Presently he faced Tanar again.

"No," he said; "my people will not permit Korsarians to come among us. They do not trust you. Neither do I. If you do not go away we shall take you as prisoners and your fate will be in the hands of the Council of the Chiefs."

"But we are not Korsarians," explained Tanar.

The warrior laughed. "You speak a lie," he said. "Do you think that we do not know the ships of Korsar?"

"This is a Korsarian ship," replied Tanar, "but we are not Korsarians. We were prisoners and when they abandoned their ship in a great storm they left us aboard."

AGAIN the warriors conferred and those in other canoes that had drawn alongside the first joined in the discussion.

"Who are you, then?" demanded the spokesman.

"I am Tanar of Pellucidar. My father is King of Sari."

"We are all of Pellucidar," replied the warrior; "but we never heard of a country called Sari. And the woman—she is your mate?"

"No!" cried Stellara, haughtily. "I am not his mate."

"Who are you? Are you a Sarian, also?"

"I am no Sarian. My father and mother were of Amiocap."

Again the warriors talked among themselves, some seeming to favor one idea, some another.

"Do you know the name of this country?" finally demanded the leading warrior, addressing Stellara.

"No," she replied.

"We were about to ask you that very question," said Tanar.

"And the woman is from Amiocap?" demanded the warrior.

"No other blood flows in my veins," said Stellara, proudly.

"Then it is strange that you do not recognize your own land and your own people," cried the warrior. "This is the island of Amiocap!"

STELLARA voiced a low cry of pleased astonishment. "Amiocap!" she breathed softly, as to herself. The tone was a caress, but the warriors in the canoes were too far away to hear her. They thought she was silent and embarrassed because they had discovered her deception.

"Go away!" they cried again.

"You will not send me away from the land of my parents!" cried Stellara, in astonishment.

"You have lied to us," replied a tall warrior. "You are not of Amiocap. You do not know us, nor do we know you."

"Listen!" cried Tanar. "I was a prisoner aboard this ship and, being no Korsar, the girl told me her story long before we sighted this land. She could not have known that we were near your island. I do not know that she even knew its location, but nevertheless I believe that her story is true.

"She has never said that she was from Amiocap, but that her parents were. She has never seen the island before now. Her mother was stolen by the Korsarians before she was born."

Once more the warriors spoke together

"It is quite plain," continued Zural, "that they are enemies. Take them away and keep them under guard until we decide how they shall be destroyed."

in low tones for a moment and then again the spokesman addressed Stellara. "What was your mother's name?" he demanded. "Who was your father?"

"My mother was called Allara," replied the girl. "I never saw my father, but my mother said that he was a chief and a great tandor hunter, called Fedol."

At a word from the tall warrior in the bow of the leading canoe the warriors paddled slowly nearer the drifting hulk, and as they approached the ship's waist Tanar and Stellara descended to the main deck, which was now almost awash, so deep the ship rode because of the water in her hold. As the canoe drifted alongside the warriors, with the exception of a couple, laid down their paddles and stood ready with their bone-tipped spears.

NOW the two upon the ship's deck and the tall warrior in the canoe stood almost upon the same level and face to face. The latter was a smooth-faced man with finely molded features and clear gray eyes that bespoke intelligence and courage. He was gazing intently at Stellara, as though he would search her very soul in search of proof of the veracity or falsity of her statements. Presently he spoke.

"You might well be her daughter," he said; "the resemblance is apparent."

"You knew my mother?" exclaimed Stellara.

"I am Vulhan. You have heard her speak of me?"

"My mother's brother!" exclaimed Stellara, with deep emotion, but there was no answering emotion in the manner of the Amiocap warrior. "My father, where is he? Is he alive?"

"That is the question," said Vulhan, seriously. "Who is your father? Your mother was stolen by a Korsarian. If the Korsarian is your father, you are a Korsarian."

"But he is not my father. Take me to my own father—although he has never seen me he will know me and I shall know him."

"It will do no harm," said a warrior who stood close to Vulhan. "If the girl is a Korsarian we shall know what to do with her."

"If she is the spawn of the Korsarian who stole Allara, Vulhan and Fedol will know how to treat her," said Vulhan savagely.

"I am not afraid," said Stellara.

"And this other," said Vulhan, nodding toward Tanar. "What of him?"

"He was a prisoner of war that the Korsarians were taking back to Korsar. Let him come with you. His people are

not sea people. He could not survive by the sea alone."

"You are sure that he is no Korsarian?" demanded Vulhan.

"Look at him!" exclaimed the girl. "The men of Amiocap must know the people of Korsar well by sight. Does this one look like a Korsarian?"

VULHAN was forced to admit that he did not. "Very well," he said, "he may come with us, but whatever your fate, he must share it."

"Gladly," agreed Tanar.

The two quit the deck of the derelict as places were made for them in the canoe and as the little craft was paddled rapidly toward shore neither felt any sorrow at parting from the drifting hulk that had been their home for so long. The last they saw of her, just as they were entering the cove, from which they had first seen the canoes emerge, she was drifting slowly with the ocean current parallel with the green shore of Amiocap.

At the upper end of the cove the canoes were beached and dragged beneath the concealing foliage of the luxuriant vegetation that grew almost to the water's edge. Here they were turned bottom-side-up and left until occasion again demanded their use.

The warriors of Amiocap conducted their two prisoners into the jungle that grew almost to the water's edge. At first there was no sign of trail and the leading warriors forced their way through the lush vegetation, which fortunately was free from thorns and briers, but presently they came upon a little path which opened into a broad, well-beaten trail along which the party moved in silence.

DURING the march Tanar had an opportunity to study the men of Amiocap more closely and he saw that almost without exception they were symmetrically built, with rounded, flowing muscles that suggested a combination of agility and strength. Their features were regular, and there was not among them one who might be termed ugly. On the whole their expressions were open rather than cunning and kindly rather than ferocious; yet the scars upon the bodies of many of them and their well-worn and efficient-looking, though crude, weapons suggested that they might be bold hunters and fierce warriors. There was a marked dignity in their carriage and demeanor which appealed to Tanar, as did their taciturnity, for the Sarians themselves are not given to useless talk.

Stellara, walking at his side, appeared unusually happy and there was an expression of contentment upon her face that the Sarian had never seen there before. She had been watching him as well as the Amiocapians, and now she addressed him in a whisper.

"What do you think of my people?" she asked, proudly. "Are they not wonderful?"

"They are a fine race," he replied, "and I hope for your sake that they will believe that you are one of them."

"It is all just as I have dreamed it so many times," said the girl, with a happy sigh. "I have always known that some day I should come to Amiocap and that it would be just as my mother told me that it was—the great trees, the giant ferns, the gorgeous flowering vines and bushes. There are fewer savage beasts here than in other parts of Pellucidar and the people seldom war among themselves, so that for the most part they live in peace and contentment, broken only by the raids of the Korsarians or an occasional raid upon their fields and villages by the great tandors. Do you know what tandors are, Tanar? Do you have them in your country?"

TANAR nodded. "I have heard of them in Amoz," he said, "though they are rare in Sari."

"There are thousands of them upon the island of Amiocap," said the girl, "and my people are the greatest tandor-hunters in Pellucidar."

Again they walked on in silence, Tanar wondering what the attitude of the Amiocapians would be towards them, and if friendly whether they would be able to assist him in making his way back to the distant mainland, where Sari lay. To this primitive mountaineer it seemed little short of hopeless even to dream of returning to his native land, for the sea appalled him; nor did he have any conception as to how he might set a course across its savage bosom, or navigate any craft that he might later find at his disposal; yet so powerful is the homing instinct in the Pellucidarians that there was no doubt in his mind that so long as he lived he would always be searching for a way back to Sari.

He was glad that he did not have to

worry about Stellara, for if it was true that she was among her own people she could remain upon Amiocap and there would rest upon him no sense of responsibility for her return to Korsar; but if they did not accept her—that was another matter; then Tanar would have to seek for means of escape from an island peopled by enemies and he would have to take Stellara with him.

But this train of thought was interrupted by a sudden exclamation from Stellara. "Look!" she cried. "Here is a village; perhaps it is the very village of my mother."

"What did you say?" inquired a warrior, walking near them.

"I said that perhaps this is the village where my mother lived before she was stolen by the Korsarians."

"And you say that your mother was Allara?" inquired the warrior.

"Yes."

"This was indeed the village in which Allara lived," said the warrior; "but do not hope, girl, that you will be received as one of them, for unless your father also was of Amiocap, you are not an Amiocapian. It will be hard to convince anyone that you are not the daughter of a Korsarian father, and as such you are a Korsarian and no Amiocapian."

"But how can you know that my father was a Korsarian?" demanded Stellara.

"We do not have to know," replied the warrior. "It is merely a matter of what we believe; but that is a question that will have to be settled by Zural, the chief of the village of Lar."

"Lar," repeated Stellara. "That is the village of my mother! I have heard her speak of it many times. This, then, must be Lar."

"It is," replied the warrior, "and presently you shall see Zural."

THE village of Lar consisted of perhaps a hundred thatched huts, each of which was divided into two or more rooms, one of which was invariably an open sitting-room without walls, in the center of which was a stone fireplace. The other rooms were ordinarily tightly walled and windowless, affording the necessary darkness for the Amiocapians when they wished to sleep.

The entire clearing was encircled by the most remarkable fence that Tanar had ever seen. The posts, instead of being set in the ground, were suspended from a heavy fiber rope that ran from tree to tree, the lower ends of the posts hanging at least four feet above the ground. Holes had been bored through the posts at intervals of twelve or eighteen inches and into these were inserted hardwood stakes, four or five feet in length and sharpened at either end. These stakes protruded from the posts in all directions, parallel with the ground, and the posts were hung at such a distance from one another that the points of the stakes, protruding from contiguous posts, left intervals of from two to four feet between. As a safeguard against an attacking enemy they seemed futile to Tanar, for in entering the village the party had passed through the open spaces between the posts without being hindered by the barrier.

BUT conjecture as to the purpose of this strange barrier was crowded from his thoughts by other more interesting occurrences, for no sooner had they entered the village than they were surrounded by a horde of men, women and children.

"Who are these?" demanded some.

"They say that they are friends," replied Vulhan, "but we believe that they are from Korsar."

"Korsarians!" cried the villagers.

"I am no Korsarian," cried Stellara, angrily. "I am the daughter of Allara, the sister of Vulhan."

"Let her tell that to Zural. It is his business to listen, not ours," cried one. "Zural will know what to do with Korsarians. Did they not steal his daughter and kill his son?"

"Yes, take them to Zural," cried another.

"It is to Zural that I am taking them," replied Vulhan.

The villagers made way for the warriors and their prisoners and as the latter passed through the aisles thus formed many were the ugly looks cast upon them and many the expressions of hatred that they overheard; but no violence was offered them and presently they were conducted to a large hut near the center of the village.

LIKE the other dwellings of the village of Lar, the floors of the chief's house were raised a foot or eighteen inches above the ground. The thatched roof of the great open living-room, into which they were conducted, was supported by enormous ivory tusks of the giant tandors. The floor, which appeared to be constructed of unglazed tile, was almost entirely covered by the hides of wild animals. There were a

number of low, wooden stools standing about the room, and one higher one that might almost have been said to have attained the dignity of a chair.

Upon this larger stool was seated a stern-faced man, who scrutinized them closely and silently as they were halted before him. For several seconds no one spoke, and then the man upon the chair turned to Vulhan.

"Who are these?" he demanded, "and what do they in the village of Lar?"

"We took them from a Korsar ship that was drifting helplessly with the ocean current," said Vulhan, "and we have brought them to Zural, chief of the village of Lar that he may hear their story and judge whether they be the friends they claim to be, or the Korsarian enemies that we believe them to be. This one," and Vulhan pointed to Stellara, "says that she is the daughter of Allara."

"I am the daughter of Allara," said Stellara.

"And who was your father?" demanded Zural.

"My father's name is Fedol," replied Stellara.

"How do you know?" asked Zural.

"My mother told me."

"Where were you born?" demanded Zural.

"In the Korsarian city of Allaban," replied Stellara.

"THEN you are a Korsarian," stated Zural with finality. "And this one, what has he to say for himself?" asked Zural, indicating Tanar with a nod.

"He claims that he was a prisoner of the Korsarians and that he comes from a distant kingdom called Sari."

"I have never heard of such a kingdom," said Zural. "Is there any warrior here who has ever heard of it?" he demanded. "If there is let him, in justice to the prisoner, speak." But the Amiocapians only shook their heads for there was none who had ever heard of the kingdom of Sari. "It is quite plain," continued Zural, "that they are enemies and that they are seeking by falsehood to gain our confidence. If there is a drop of Amiocapian blood in one of them, we are sorry for that drop. Take them away, Vulhan. Keep them under guard until we decide how they shall be destroyed."

"MY mother told me that the Amiocapians were a just and kindly people," said Stellara; "but it is neither just nor kindly to destroy this man who is not an enemy simply because you have never heard of the country from which he comes. I tell you that he is no Korsarian. I was on one of the ships of the fleet when the prisoners were brought aboard. I heard the Cid and Bohar the Brutal when they were questioning this man—and I know that he is no Korsarian and that he comes from a kingdom known as Sari. They did not doubt his word, so why should you? If you are a just and kindly people how can you destroy me without giving me an opportunity to talk with Fedol, my father. He will believe me; he will know that I am his daughter."

"The gods frown upon us if we harbor enemies in our village," replied Zural. "We should have bad luck, as all Amiocapians know. Wild beasts would kill our hunters and the tandors would trample our fields and destroy our villages. But worst of all the Korsarians would come and rescue you from us.

"As for Fedol, moreover, no man knows where he is. He is not of this village and the people of his own village have slept and eaten many times since they saw Fedol. They have slept and eaten many times since Fedol set forth upon his last tandor-hunt. Perhaps the tandors have avenged the killing of many of their fellows, or perhaps Fedol fell into the clutches of the Buried People. These things we do not know, but we do know that Fedol went away to hunt tandors and that he never came back and that we do not know where to find him. Take them away, Vulhan, and we shall hold a council of the chiefs and then we shall decide what shall be done with them."

"You are a cruel and wicked man, Zural," cried Stellara, "and no better than the Korsarians themselves!"

"It is useless, Stellara," said Tanar, laying a hand upon the girl's arm. "Let us go quietly with Vulhan." And then in a low whisper: "Do not anger them, for there is yet hope for us in the council of the chiefs if we do not antagonize them." And so without further word Stellara and Tanar, surrounded by a dozen stalwart warriors, were led from the house of Zural the chief.

The adventures of Tanar in the ensuing chapters are even more exciting. Do not fail to read the next installment in our forthcoming April issue.

In the closing minutes of play the Cubs threw discretion to the breezes and milled around the Badger net.

Old Verdun Himself

By HERBERT L. MCNARY

A stirring story of the fastest game in the world—ice hockey—by the able author of "The Winning Spirit" and other good ones.

Illustrated by William Molt

REPORTERS and telegraphers in the Garden press-coop sat behind clicking portable typewriters and telegraph instruments. A partition secluded two men; one poured a play-by-play account of the game into a microphone while the other, a Gallic-featured chap, sat by to review the play in French for the benefit of the legion of French-Canadian fans who followed major-league hockey so devotedly.

"Avril has the puck—he comes up the right lane. . . . . He's by center ice. . . . . He swings across the ice. . . . . Oh, Nelson trips him—but he passes as he falls to Orcutt. . . . . Orcutt scores. . . . . No, wait a minute. . . . . Something's wrong—the referee blew his whistle. . . . . The pass was offside, I guess, and then there's that tripping. . . . . He's putting Avril off the ice instead of Nelson. . . . . He's all mixed up—the Cubs and Badgers are all gathering around him. Now there's another row."

"Gosh, all this game is one long argument," exclaimed Harrington of the *Herald News*. He was the youngest of the scribes and sat beside the dean of the local writers, Gordon Brice.

"Hockey," enunciated Brice, "is naturally provocative, since it is the fastest of all professional games. . . . . Hold on," —he stayed a protest. "Just because you played for Yale, you don't have to stick up for football. Suppose Yale ran the kick-off back to the Harvard goal-line and fumbled, and a Harvard player ran it back to the Yale line and fumbled, and that kept up—what would happen to the spectators?"

"Be carried out on stretchers," chuckled Harrington.

"Well, that's hockey. The only cool man in the place is the old man of the nets himself, Tom Norton, down there in the Cubs net. He leans against that framework as nonchalantly as a cop against a lamp-post. But then, this must seem tame to a man who spent nearly four years in France with the Princess Pats."

"I think that wound he got at Vimy Ridge is beginning to slow the old boy," ventured Harrington. "Goals are slipping by."

"He can't win games alone. Give the man a team."

"A team? Why, Coleman spent a flock of money to get those stars."

"And that's what he got—a flock of stars that haven't been welded into a team. What good are stars in football without team-work or team-plays? It's the same in hockey—oh, the row is ended. Here they go again."

The sport writers sank to attention.

THE radio announcer spoke into the mike once more.

"Well, that argument's over. The goal doesn't count and the score is still Badgers 4, Cubs 3. Nelson goes to the penalty box for tripping, but Hobart returns and the Badgers still have a one-man advantage. . . . . Cummings gets the puck on the face-off. . . . . He passes back to Hobart. . . . . Hobart gets by the wing. . . . . He loses the puck—he has it again. . . . . He tries to get by Avril. . . . . Avril spills him. . . . . Hear the crowd yell! Boy, this Avril is sore over being tripped. . . . . There he goes up the ice with that puck—hear that crowd yell! Any time Avril starts one of these dashes, the crowd goes wild. . . . . He's going to pass to Orcutt—no, he's going up the ice alone. . . . . I think he should have passed, but Avril's doing the skating, not me. . . . . Old Tom Norton is rapping his stick on the ice—he's calling some one back to defense position. . . . . Avril tries to get by Perkins and Gregory. . . . . He spills Gregory. . . . . He loses the puck. . . . . Perkins gets it—he shoots it forward at the blue line to Cummings. . . . . Cummings passes back to Perkins at center ice. . . . . Hobart comes up on left wing —they've got three men in combination and only one man in front of them. . . . . Perkins passes back to Cummings. Now the three of them are racing in on Norton —looks like a certain score."

"OLD Tom Norton" would have agreed with the announcer. Just what he had feared when Avril went berserk had taken place. The Cubs had been caught up the ice. He had sounded warning through the understood signal of rapping on the ice, but none had heeded him and now he had to face the consequences.

Norton hopped over to the left side of his net, purposely leaving the other side of the net open as a bait. Cummings had the puck, and Cummings packed a mean shot. The play called for a pass to Hobart, particularly with the right side of the net exposed. Norton wanted Cummings to pass because he believed he could smother Hobart's shot.

Cummings' stick tensed. Norton leaped across to the other side to smother the pass —but Cummings didn't pass. He had chosen instead to attempt to smash the puck through Norton's defense; but when Norton leaped across the mouth of the net it appeared that he had deliberately avoided attempting to stop the puck, which went sailing into the net for the Badgers' fifth goal. A momentary silence greeted the goal and then the fans loudly shouted their resentment of Norton's tactics.

"Norton's gettin' old," cried Harrington in the press box. "He's ducking the swift ones."

"Ducked nothing," exclaimed Brice. "A three-man combination is like a shell game —you make your pick and you lose, just as Norton did. He figured Cummings for a pass, and Cummings had the fool luck to cross him up."

"Well, the crowd thinks the way I do," insisted Harrington. "I think the old boy's days are numbered. You've got a soft spot for him," and Harrington winked at Healy of the *Times*, "just because he's an old-timer like yourself. This is a day of youth."

NORTON might have made a play for sympathy by kicking the net or slamming his stick down or otherwise indicating that he had been outguessed, but he took the abuse without protest. He realized that out of the same mouth came jeers and cheers and so he leaned back against net and ignored the storm of boos and the many wise-cracks hurled at him. It was all in the game.

A few minutes later the gong sounded ending the period, and the players skated off the ice. The scoreboard read—Badgers 5, Cubs 3.

Manager Egan of the Cubs waylaid Norton. He was a thickset man, and the perennial frown on his swarthy features now deepened.

"What's the trouble, Norton—getting tender?"

Norton was above the average in height, although not a tall man. Padded as he was he looked rather bulky, but he weighed less than one hundred and sixty pounds. He had a long face and a serious visage heightened by gray eyes. These eyes now looked at the manager with wonderment.

"What's the matter?" he asked toler-

antly. "Are you letting the crowd get under your skin?"

"Well, why wouldn't they?" demanded the manager. "I'm handed a bunch of players that are supposed to be stars, and the papers go out and promise the town a championship. And look at us. Holdin' up the bottom of the league."

It was on the tip of Norton's tongue to review the individual mistakes and failings of the Cub players, but it went against his grain to criticize without authority. He merely scowled instead.

"Well, don't take it out on me," he said and clumped along the concrete surface that led to the dressing-room.

AFTER the prescribed rest the teams came out for the third and final period. The teams shifted goals. Norton went up to a net in front of fans who had been too far away during the previous period to fittingly express their sentiments. Some of the comments hurled at him were inspired by genuine ill feeling, but they stung less than others delivered in the hope of drawing laughs.

"Hey, Norton, throw the stick away an' get a pair of crutches."

"Take y'r cap off, Norton, 'n' show th' bald spot."

The teams faced off and the third period commenced. The Cubs in a desperate effort to tie the score sent four men up the ice. The Badgers might have played a five-man defense because of their two-goal lead, but the players resented the hard body playing of the Cubs and decided to make the beating as bad as possible. Three times Badgers jumped the puck and swept down the ice in combination. Twice Norton saved, but on the third attempt a rebound went in for the sixth score. In the closing minutes of play the Cubs threw discretion to the breezes and milled around the Badger net. The Cubs scored twice, but whenever they lost the puck Badger players could come down upon Norton unmolested. He made a number of brilliant saves, although his easy manner cloaked his cleverness; but three more Badger shots went home.

Nine goals had been scored against Norton, and if one failed to analyze the play this read like a grave indictment. Moreover, in the previous last three games the puck had been slammed into his net seventeen times.

Norton dressed after the game and went into the lobby to look for his wife. His failure to find her did not cause him any uneasiness. Usually she waited for him, but sometimes she hurried directly home to the apartment where they resided during the hockey season.

"Hello, Alice," he greeted Mrs. Norton, as he entered the apartment and found her waiting for him. "Did you stay for the end or did you leave early?"

"I left quite early in the game," she answered casually.

"Oh, just as well," he said as he hung up his coat and hat. "The Cubs are forgetting the fundamentals of team-play faster than I thought could be possible. Some one ought to introduce the boys. They act as if they were total strangers to each other."

"Tom, I'm not going to see any more games."

The tone, rather than the statement, caused Norton to look at his wife with quick concern.

"Gosh, are you gettin' the heebee-jeebees too?"

"Tom, the things they called you—"

"Oh, Alice, don't pay any attention—"

"I can't help it. It isn't right, after all you've given to the game, and with your wonderful war record, to have a bunch of hoodlums insult you."

"But those few are only a handful among thousands of fair fans."

"Well, they can mould opinion just the same. Tom, you've got to give up sometime. Why don't you do it before—" She didn't finish.

"Before I'm kicked out, huh?" He dropped into a chair and patted his head in a nervous gesture. "Why? Well, for three reasons. I love the game and get just as much kick out of the sport as when I broke in; it's my life. Secondly, I need the money I make. I know we've got acres of land up in Alberta; but considering the harvesting equipment and everything, I've got to put in money before I take any out. And then finally, I don't want to give up because I'm not all done. I'm not an old man—only thirty-six. You'd think I was an octogenarian." He abruptly stopped patting his head as he remembered his bald spot and its fringe of hair which, though still thick, was graying noticeably.

HE shot a guilty look at his wife, but the troubled light in her blue eyes showed her to be intent upon some thought.

"Tom," she said in a calm voice, "what are the extent of your finances? You've never been entirely frank with me."

"I didn't want to bother you with money details," he said evasively; but when he saw that she refused to be diverted he frowned and gazing at his hands, said: "I plunged rather deeply in land up in Alberta; it seemed so cheap and so fertile—well, the notes are rather heavy."

"And you've been counting on the money you would make out of hockey?"

"Well, if we get into the play-off as we should—we have time yet and we've got the stuff—everything ought to come out all right."

"Then—then I surely hope the team improves!"

"Oh, we've got to get the breaks sometime, Alice," exclaimed Norton with assumed cheerfulness.

TWO mornings later Norton sat down at breakfast and opened his paper and looked in vain for the sporting page. That was like giving a kid a horn without putting any ice-cream in it. He fumed and fussed and questioned his wife; she attempted to soothe him by suggesting several explanations. Later, when Norton went out and bought another *Tribune* he realized that his wife had hid the sporting page—and he found out why, for he read:

> The Cubs announce the purchase of a spare goal-tender in Covington of the Springfield American League team. Covington lives in Toronto and before turning professional made a name for himself on some of Canada's leading amateur teams. He is twenty-two years old.

Norton's face tightened as he read the notice several times. He turned to Brice's column to see if his favorite sport writer had any comment to make and he felt better when he saw that Brice had failed to find any significance in the purchase of another goal-tender. He bought the *Herald-News*. It said:

> We can expect any day now to learn of the passing from major-league hockey of one of the game's oldest veterans, Tom Norton of the Cubs. The local team announces the purchase of Covington, a young star goalie of the Springfield team. It was only a few years ago that Norton was considered the peer of all goal-tenders; but time takes its toll in this sport as in others.
>
> While the Cubs have been a high scoring team their opponents have run up even greater scores. When Norton let nine slip by him the other night the handwriting plainly made its appearance on the wall. . . . . .

There was more, but Norton crumpled the paper in disgust.

"It's a wonder a paper wouldn't put some one in charge of hockey who knew what he was writing about. Let nine goals *slip* by—"

He realized that he was mumbling to himself and causing curious glances to be sent his way by people he passed.

When he returned to the apartment his wife looked at him apprehensively; but he forced a chuckle.

"See the Cubs picked up a Springfield player. Well, our farm team is weak in the nets, so they'll probably ship him down to New Haven."

But when the Cubs went to Montreal for a Saturday game the new goal-tender came along. Norton looked him over, especially when the new man took a turn at the net in practice. He saw a good-looking youngster with a round face and healthy color. Most goal-tenders wear caps, but Covington exposed his dark, wavy locks to the fans, particularly to the ladies.

Norton started the game. The Cubs played an unusually steady game until the middle of the second period when they cracked wide open. Maple wings came through a deserted defense and worked a combination for a goal that Norton had no chance of stopping. But Egan made Norton appear at fault by pulling him out of the game immediately after the goal.

Norton came off the ice with eyes flashing. "What's the idea of making me the goat?"

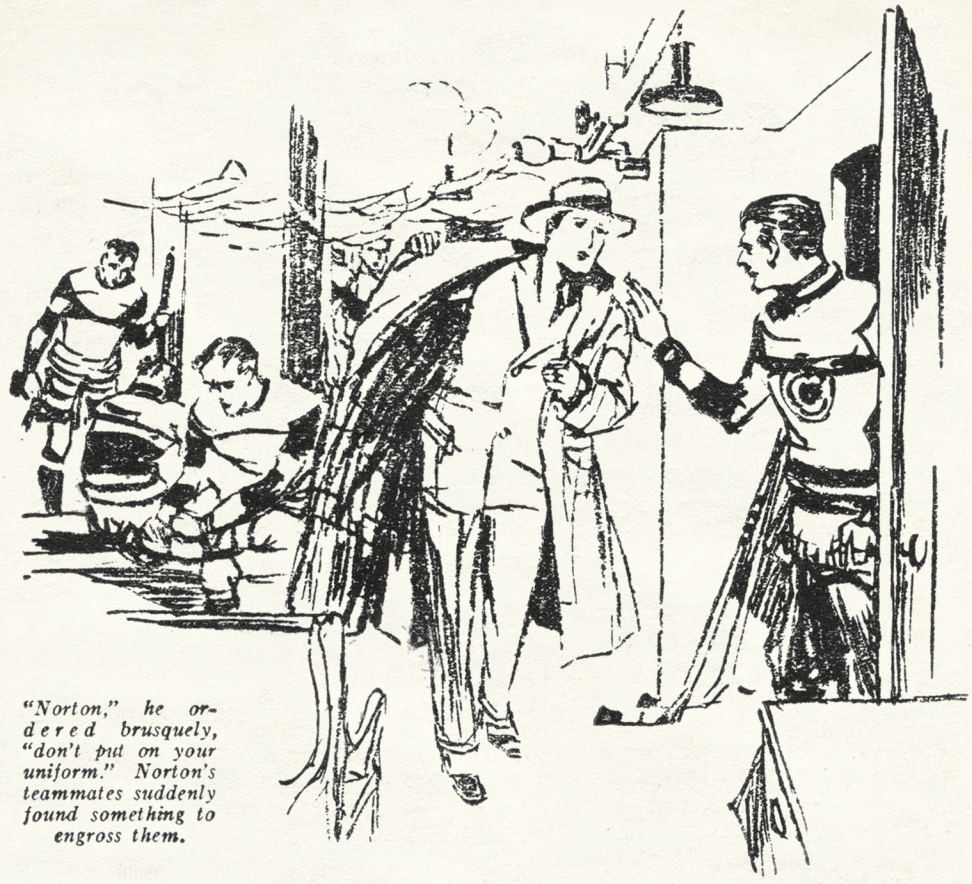
"I wanted to try out Covington," protested the manager.

"At least you might have waited until the period ended."

Norton sat down and watched his successor. The Maples attempted to take advantage of the nervousness they expected to encounter in a rookie goal-tender; but Covington had faith in himself. After awhile the Maples fell back on a defensive game to hold their lead and contented themselves with long shots. The Maples won without further scoring.

Coleman, a wing, rejoined the Cubs when they returned home. If he dressed he would make the thirteenth man, but rules allowed for only twelve men in uniform.

NORTON appreciated this development when he came into the dressing-room on Tuesday night and found Coleman and Covington both changing clothes. Manager



"Norton," he ordered brusquely, "don't put on your uniform." Norton's teammates suddenly found something to engross them.

Egan entered. He stopped short and cleared his throat uneasily.

"Norton," he ordered brusquely, "don't put on your uniform."

The veteran paled, but caught himself. "All right, you're the boss."

The steam drifted in from the showers to mingle with the strong scent of liniments and body odors; Norton had never before found the confined room seemingly so oppressive.

All his teammates suddenly found something to engross them. Many were playing their first season of major-league hockey, but they remembered him as a hero when they were learning the rudiments of the game on some frozen pond. Most of them were Canadians and were cognizant of his splendid war record. Perhaps they said to themselves, "Oh, well, he has to go sometime, and he has a nice little roll socked away."

Norton's startled thoughts had centered about his Alberta investments. When his notes came due—well, he might save something from his holdings, and he would have a few years of minor-league hockey yet. He might catch on as a manager. . . . . Then he shook himself. He hadn't been let go yet; Egan just wanted to give this kid a tryout, that was all.

Norton looked across to the broad back of the youthful Covington; then the veteran crossed over to him.

"Good luck, kid."

Covington took the proffered hand skeptically. "Thanks," he mumbled.

Norton, with a foot on the bench, assumed a conversational tone.

"You'll find the Wolverines toughest at the start. They have the strongest defense in the league and try to get the jump and then play a defensive game. Terrio is the trickiest man in the outfit. His favorite stunt is to pull you out of the net and then slip the puck by you. He's got it down pat and makes his play very tempting. But if you stick to your net you can draw him in far enough to block the shot."

Covington's jaw had set and his eyes shifted away. Norton saw that the advice was being wasted. What was the matter with the young pup? Did he think he knew all there was to be learned? Why, reflected

Norton, after all these years he himself was constantly adding to his lore! He went out of the dressing-room—to watch a game in civilian clothes.

THE home fans received Covington with mingled skepticism and curiosity and in the warming-up practice wherein the team skated about and took shots on the fly, the fans watched every move of the new goal-tender.

Covington reacted keenly to this interest. He went after everything, thrusting out arms and padded legs like a marionette and letting the flying rubber bound off his padded chest.

"Boy, there's action for you," exclaimed Harrington up in the press box as he slipped into his seat beside the veteran scribe, Brice. "You never saw Norton stop 'em like that!"

"No, Norton never pulled any theatricals in practice—or any other time."

"Still rootin' for the old-timer," chafed Harrington.

"Did you ever see Walter Johnson pitch?" asked Brice absently as he inserted paper into his typewriter.

"Apropos of what?"

"He was considered a fair pitcher, but he never wasted a motion. That's a sign of art. Norton's an artist. This kid is an acrobat."

"Well, I'm bettin' right now he gets Norton's job."

"Shouldn't wonder. Egan has to have an alibi."

"Well, I'll make another prediction," declared the youthful Harrington. "The Cubs will start winning with Covington in the net."

"Shouldn't wonder but what you're right again. The Cubs have a bunch of young stars that sooner or later must be welded into a team; and just about that time they will need the steadying influence of a veteran like Norton. Well, here's the face-off. Let's see how good this kid really is."

NORTON slumped at one end of the Cubs bench and looked out over the ice like an old retired sailor hunched over the stringpiece of a wharf, staring dreamily out to sea.

The Wolverines adopted the tactics used by the Maples and attempted to take advantage of any initial nervousness the new goal-tender might display; but the burly Avril and his running mate, Stevens, held close to their defense positions and broke up the assaults of the Wolverines. Terrio managed to get through three times in the first few moments but was forced to make sharp angle shots that Covington saved.

The game opened up as the Cubs threw combinations up the ice in efforts to cage the puck. Terrio poke-checked near his blue line and uncorked one of his startling solo dashes that took him in and out among the Cubs' sticks like a darting fish. He swung wide of the right defense and raced in for a shot at the net and tempted Covington to come out of the net in a desperate reach for the puck, just as Norton had warned.

But Covington crossed up Terrio. Instead of leaping for the puck he dived for Terrio himself, like a football player. The Wolverine star had whisked the puck away and was just about to poke it into the net when Covington unexpectedly crashed into him.

The puck slid wide of the net where Avril recovered it. Terrio rose, protesting and considerably shaken up, but the fans wildly cheered the aggressive tactics of the new goal-tender.

Terrio gave way to a replacement, but returned to the ice a few minutes later. He displayed by his eagerness how anxious he was to get another crack at Covington. Three dashes made by him were broken up, but on the fourth trip down the ice he fooled the defense and whirled in upon Covington. Again the goal-tender sprang out, but Terrio gave him his shoulder. Both men fell, but Terrio held onto the puck long enough to whisk it in for the first score of the game.

The Wolverines had their first score and resumed their usual tactics of tightening their defense. They tested Covington with long whistling shots on which he made some energetic and applause-winning stops, but he had no combinations or rebounds to contend with. The second period produced no score and the third period commenced with the Cubs trailing 1 to 0.

Tom Norton had worn a serious, even dejected, face at the time of the first face-off, but he had gradually warmed up to the game. He enjoyed the new angle he had of the play as he sat by in the rôle of spectator. He saw individual faults of the Cub players that could be corrected and combinations that could be perfected. Why, he could be a big help to Egan as a coach, even if he didn't play!

"Good work, kid," he congratulated. "You have a few faults, but—" "What faults?" snapped Covington belligerently.

Take that kid Covington, now. He had faults, plenty of them; but Norton could see his possibilities. The gray eyes gleamed brightly with a new ambition. He would make Covington his pupil, his protégé! He leaned forward eagerly with his chin resting on his clenched fist.

The Cubs had not been shut out all year and they had no intention of permitting the Wolverines to apply the whitewash. They started the last period by throwing all the strength possible up the ice, adopting a grueling body game, a swift passing attack and firing a bombardment of streaking shots at the Wolverine goal-tender, Bradley. The latter made some beautiful saves and then let one of the easiest of all shots trickle past him for the tying score.

This score upset the Wolverines just as it inspired the Cubs. They swarmed around the Wolverine net like hornets and at twelve minutes they scored the second goal.

The fans went wild as the teams faced off again.

The Wolverines abandoned their defensive tactics and opened up a desperate offensive to win back a score. Terrio became the wild man of the ice again. The players now stormed about the Cubs' net. The veteran Norton would have weathered the storm calmly, coolly catching the puck, brushing it aside or feeding it to the right man detected in all that excitement; but Covington met the savage offense with an equally savage defense. He threw himself in front of the puck, crashed into skaters and dived upon rebounds, repeatedly risking serious injury as he made himself the vortex of a heaving mass of players, skates and sticks.

When the clock read three minutes to go to the end of the period the Wolverines tied up the score and then played for an overtime period; but the youthful Cubs gambled and sent four men down the ice. In the last minute Orcutt hooked in a goal and for the remaining fifty-odd seconds Covington held the puck beneath the fighting pile of Wolverines who tried to force it into the net.

AN excited and happy bunch of Cubs clumped into their dressing-room when the game ended, and Norton felt just as enthusiastic as any of them; but he had to wait his turn before complimenting Covington.

"Good work, kid," he congratulated. "You played a strong game. You have a few faults, but—"

"What faults?" snapped Covington belligerently. Norton was taken back a bit.

"Why—er, we'll go over them sometime in practice session."

"I hardly think that's necessary, thank you."

Norton stared at the youngster in amazement. "I don't think you understand me," he persisted. "You have splendid possibilities and I have a wealth of experience. Why, I can develop you into one of the best goal-tenders in hockey."

Covington laughed sarcastically. "You mean you'd like to hold your job by making

out you want to teach me something. Well, you play goal your way and I play mine —and I guess tonight's score shows which is the best!"

Norton turned away helplessly, and saw Brice and Harrington standing near the door. They had been watching, evidently listening.

"We want to get a story," explained Brice as he lit a cigarette.

"What about—me?" exclaimed Covington eagerly.

"Well—that's what we came for," drawled Brice, "but I guess we got most of the facts."

HARRINGTON turned excitedly to the veteran scribe when they got outside the dressing-room.

"Say, Brice, that was dramatic, wasn't it—Norton offering to teach that self-satisfied kid all he knows—talking himself out of a job. Are you going to run it?"

"That," said Brice, "is one of those things you save for an obituary or an eulogy."

"Well, you come down to facts, Norton's a sap. Why should he help a rival?"

"Well, once upon a time Yale had a halfback whom the coaches were trying to develop into a triple star, but he couldn't pass the way you could or he would have got your place. I understand you spent hours trying to make a passer out of him."

A faint flush overspread Harrington's boyish face. "But that was for Yale."

"Oh, no, it was for football. One of the things I've always liked about Norton is his love for the game. It isn't money with him, although I understand he can use some. It will be hell for him to pass to the minors this way."

But Norton passed out of the league that very week. Coleman sent him down to his farm since he had him under contract anyway. But even this position had a dubious future, because the purpose of a farm is to develop young players rather than putting a veteran out to pasture like some broken-down race-horse.

The Cubs uncorked a winning streak and the fans quickly forgot about Norton. Covington performed colorfully and aggressively in the net and the public discounted the goals that slipped by him so long as the Cubs caged a greater number of scores in the opposite net. But gradually the team fell back to its old style of individual play. Egan floundered helplessly as a manager and injured his health through worry and nervousness. In the last week in January he handed in his resignation which was to take effect as soon as Coleman appointed a new manager.

Gordon Brice walked into the office of the Cubs' president one morning and took two of Coleman's fine cigars.

"Egan's through, isn't he?" asked the veteran scribe as he bent his attenuated form into the chair.

"That's confidential," warned the owner. "You can have it when I appoint his successor."

"And who is he?"

"I haven't decided."

Brice shot a cloud of smoke ceilingward. "Oh, I can guess," he yawned. "It's Tom Norton."

"Norton?"

"Yeah." Brice still squinted toward the ceiling and avoided noting the owner's astonishment. "He's already under contract to you and you wont have to dig up extra metal."

Cannily Brice had put the most receptive argument first. "He's down on the farm getting a little managerial experience," he added. "What this bunch of excitable youngsters needs is the guiding hand of a cool veteran. That's Norton."

"Well, as a matter of fact, you've guessed it," declared Coleman. "I've had Norton in mind all the time."

"You lie," said Brice in the same easy drawl. "But don't worry; I'll never expose you. And when Norton takes you into the play-off and the Stanley Cup series I'll be the first to hail you as a most astute judge of managerial timber."

"What's your interest in Norton?" asked the owner as Brice slapped his knee and rose.

"Well, for one thing, we old-timers must stick together against this tide of confident, not to say, conceited youth."

WHEN Coleman issued the news of Norton's recall and appointment as manager of the Cubs, scribes and fans suddenly remembered the long record of brilliant achievement that justified this selection. Only Covington seemed displeased at the veteran's return—and he forced the issue.

"Well, now that you're manager," he said belligerently, "I suppose the first thing you will do is get rid of me."

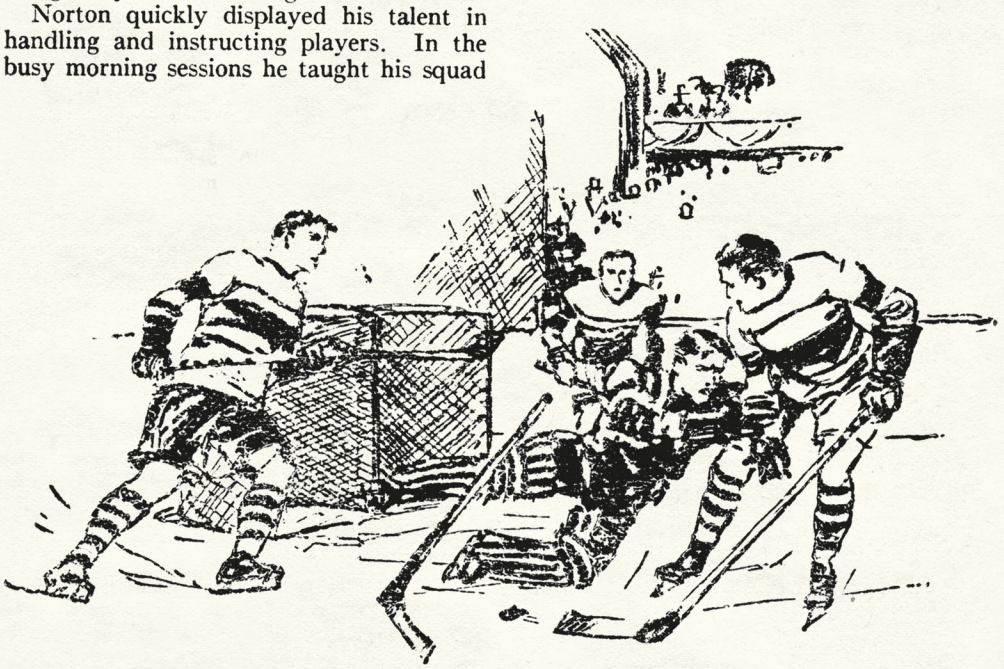
"That's up to you," answered Norton calmly and looking the youngster square in the eye. "I offered to help you all I could,

when it meant losing my job. I shouldn't offer to do less when keeping my job depends on my making the Cubs the best team I can out of the material I have."

Covington flushed and squirmed uneasily. "I've acted like an awful cad towards you, Mr. Norton," he admitted.

"Well, your case isn't hopeless when you recognize your own failings."

Norton quickly displayed his talent in handling and instructing players. In the busy morning sessions he taught his squad of youngsters to share the confidence they had in themselves with confidence in their teammates and in him. He made no radical changes in any man's style, but instead smoothed away the rough spots.



Instead of leaping for the puck, Covington dived for Terrio himself, like a football player.

Covington, having capitulated, now became an eager seeker after knowledge. Norton taught him many tricks of the trade, but did not deprive the youngster of his aggressiveness or even of his acrobatics. While many of Covington's actions in the net were superfluous they contributed "color" that the fans relished.

The Cubs stood in last place when Norton took over the management and the team appeared to be hopeless tailenders. The scribes spoke of what Norton might do the next season and washed the current season out of the reckoning; but Norton entertained some optimistic hopes. In hockey it is only necessary to get into third place in order to have an even chance of being champion, for the first three teams in each half of the league engage in a play-off. Two teams in each half are eliminated and the survivors meet for the World's Championship, one that is really international in scope.

Norton said nothing. The Cubs won; they continued to win. The fans welcomed the spurt; then the spurt continued into a streak—until suddenly excited fandom and uneasy opponents discovered that the Cubs had a mathematical possibility of reaching the play-off. But the Cubs couldn't afford to lose any games, or even tie, for a win counted two points and a tie but one, and the Cubs needed the deuces.

The hockey world hailed Norton as a brilliant manager, and the veteran himself became rather proud of this new facet developed in himself. Norton the manager forgot Norton the goal-tender.

"How is Covington holding out?" Alice Norton asked one day.

Norton looked sharply at his wife. She had an intuitive faculty of probing Norton and exposing critical matters of which he had been but vaguely conscious.

"He's good, but—well, he lacks experience. They all lack it; but if anything goes wrong we'll feel it in the nets. Once

a team loses confidence in its goal-tender it is helpless."

THAT same week the Cubs lost an overtime match to the Mohawks; and lost far more than the match itself, as Norton realized when the players trooped dejectedly into the dressing-room. They had swept through the league on a wave of youthful and enthusiastic confidence in their own infallibility. Now they realized they were but human.

Norton attempted to reinstill that confidence before the next game, but it takes managerial genius to stop a young team from cracking wide open when once the fission starts. The Cubs met the faltering Eagles and barely eked out a 6 to 5 win. The players began to realize that Covington, for all his brilliancy and aggressiveness, had let from two to five goals slip by him in every game and this weakness had been nullified only by the high-scoring spurt of the Cubs which already might have come to an end.

Norton attempted to hide his worries behind a mask of nonchalance, but the best the Cubs could do in the next game was to squeeze out a 3 to 3 tie. Covington began to lose faith in himself, and in the next game attempted to make up for his deficiencies by becoming more aggressive, hurling himself at opponents and fighting the puck. The Cubs trailed 4 to 1 when in the second period Covington received a gash over the eye from a swinging stick in a spill into which he had thrown himself impetuously. He came off the ice to get repairs and held up the game. It was then that Norton gambled with destiny.

"You'd better rest," he said to Covington. "I'll go on for the remainder of the game."

QUICKLY Norton exchanged street clothing for his uniform. He had not been under fire for a month. Suppose he made an exhibition of himself? In the last game in which he had played on this ice he had seen nine goals go by him. He had established a form of hero-worship among his players. If he lost this hold now he would lose everything. On the other hand, if he could bring them confidence he might yet knit them into a smoothly working team.

The fans accepted Norton dubiously as he skated out onto the ice. They did not know whether to hail him with hope or to look upon him as a last desperate effort to turn the tide. Norton, meanwhile, burned with the excitement of a youngster making his initial bow, but he fell instinctively into his old nonchalant pose.

The Generals tried him out immediately, but Norton turned aside their shots with an ease and grace decidedly in contrast with Covington's energetic efforts. Gradually a subtle change came over the Cub forwards. The effect of Norton's calm defense work was like the placing of a cool fatherly hand on the fevered brows of these excited youngsters.

AVRIL came back for a puck that Norton caught. "Gimme that puck," he demanded tensely. Norton tossed it aside and Avril took it at full speed. He started up the ice with those short powerful strokes and that dynamic charge uncorked for the first time in two weeks. He was unstoppable, as the fans quickly recognized. Weaving, reversing, eluding poke checks and crashing off the defense, he swept in on the Generals' net and smashed home a score.

A few minutes later the Cubs scored a third goal. They came out with the score 4 to 3 against them in the third period and hurled themselves into a fighting assault. They neglected their defense, but Norton did not caution them. He accepted the extra work placed upon him and brushed everything aside as nonchalantly as if in a practice session. The Cubs tied up the game and then ran up three more scores, winning 7 to 3 and sending the fans home trembling with excitement.

Gordon Brice stood up in the press-coop. "Well," he said to the youthful Harrington, "the season is over."

"What d'you mean, it's over?"

"When you get as expert as I am," drawled Brice, "you don't have to wait for the final game to predict the outcome. In baseball there's always a crucial series, maybe in August; there's always a play in the World Series that tells the story. Even in football a break may occur as early as the first play that will forecast the ultimate result. You've just seen what a doctor would call the crisis. Pin it in your hat that the Cubs will go into the play-off and probably into the Stanley Cup series."

The Cubs played through the final weeks of the campaign under a terrific strain that would have routed a team of veterans, to say nothing of a group of youngsters playing their first or second season of major-

league hockey. They couldn't afford to lose another game, and they had to battle every minute of every contest. The signs of their cracking were so palpable that the hockey world seemed tensed for the moment to exclaim, "There they go." But the brilliant goal-tending and the inspiring leadership of the "old man" in the nets held the Cubs together. They went into the play-off by winning in an overtime period the last game of the schedule.

Fans and scribes alike vetoed the possibility of the Cubs getting anywhere in the play-off. Even Brice wrote that Norton would certainly have to be a superhuman genius to get his faltering youngsters into the semi-finals.

THE Cubs lost their first game by a 2-1 score and then won the second game 2-0 when Norton made incredible stops in the strings. The total goal advantage sent the Cubs into the semi-finals. They lost one of the semi-final games but again had the advantage in total scores 7-6. In all four games the Cubs resembled a team playing in a frightened daze.

In the Cup series the Cubs confounded the experts by carrying the Maples into the final game. The Maples, so certain of victory, commenced to worry in this last game. They played cautiously. Norton matched them with a game equally cautious. Both teams appeared to be waiting for a break, unwilling to take chances.

When the Cubs came off the ice at the end of the second scoreless period Norton gathered his players together.

"All during the final weeks of the season and afterwards all through this play-off everyone has been waiting for you to crack. Well, when you go out on the ice you crack! Make your play as ragged as possible. I'll hold 'em off as long as I can. But as soon as the Maples score, why, snap into it. Make that combination play the smoothest you ever did in your life and we'll catch the wise Maples napping."

The Cubs "broke" in the third period. "There they go," cried the fans. The long-awaited crack had come. The Cub forwards and defense men floundered around on the ice like men who had never been on skates before.

The Maples jumped alertly at the opportunity. They peppered Norton with shots which he turned back for minutes—and then one went in.

The Maples skated back to their positions with confident smiles. The Cubs went to their positions with heads drooping. The referee dropped the puck. Hines at center snapped it back. Avril came up in a dash and got the puck while Rollins fell back. Avril passed to Orcutt and a three-man combination of Orcutt, Hines and Avril was sweeping through the startled Maples before they sensed the electrifying change that had come over their discouraged opponents.

Avril snapped the goal in almost without opposition. The teams formed again. The Maples were still in a daze when the Cubs again jumped the puck. This time Hines snapped in a rebound.

SUDDENLY the Maples realized that the score stood 2 to 1 against them. They in turn put on a swift offensive, but Norton met the best they could shoot at him.

"Old Verdun himself," cried Brice. "They shall not pass him."

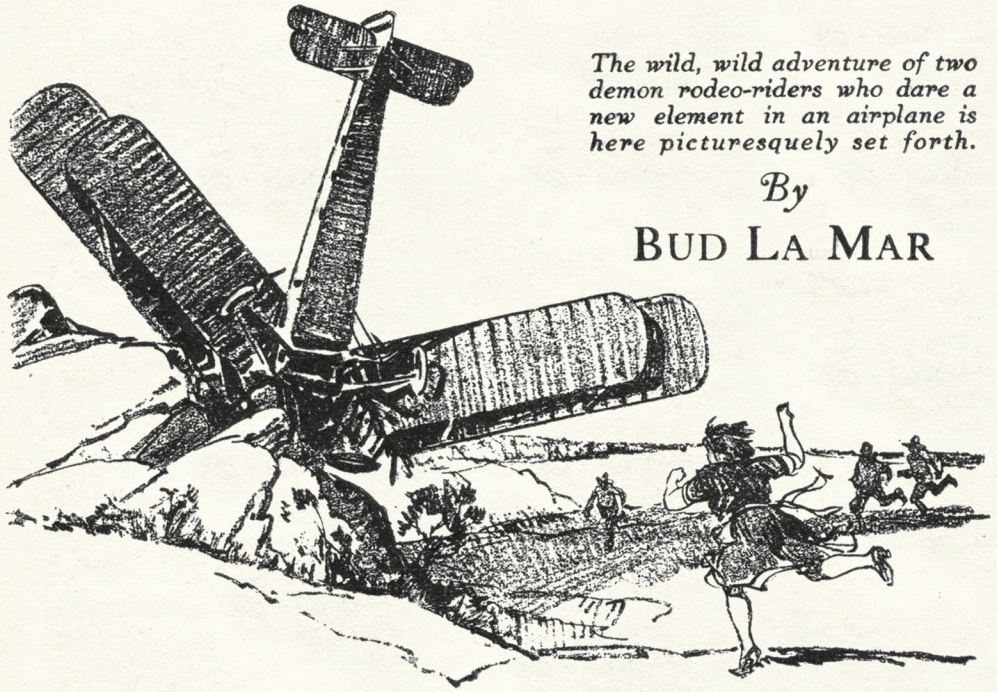
The game ended with every man save the Maples goalie crowded in front of the Cubs' net.

Brice and Harrington rose to their feet with thousands of others as the old man of the nets skated off the ice with his youngsters—champions!

"So help me," cried Brice, "I think the old fox gave the Maples that goal! There's a manager for you—and a man!"

A Splendid Story of Savage Abyssinia

The talented author of that much-discussed novel "Spears in the Sun" has written another fascinating novel of adventure in that strangest land in all the world—Abyssinia. Against the most bizarre and colorful background imaginable, Mr. Baum, who knows his Abyssinia as do few other white men, paints a captivating picture of valiant venturing and extreme hazard that you will not soon forget. Be sure to begin his novel in the next, the April, issue.



The wild, wild adventure of two demon rodeo-riders who dare a new element in an airplane is here picturesquely set forth.

By

BUD LA MAR

Buckin' the Air

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

JUST previous to the disastrous events which I am about to relate, Bearcat Gibson and me was the happiest cowboys this side of Denver. Old Lady Luck had patted us on the back and filled our pockets. The trail ahead was glitterin' bright with the promise of more to come. After a long spell of hard luck, we finally stood on our own feet, lookin' old man Trouble in the eye and daring him to do his worst.

After a great deal of planning and schemin' we had managed to sneak up on the rest of the boys and win most all the money offered for prizes at the Eldora rodeo. This in itself was reason enough to cause great rejoicing, but on the last day of the Eldora show we had received a message from our old pal Clay Hinkle, bearing news of a very important and joyous nature. The letter read as follows:

Dere boys:

Well, you ole horsethieves, I thot I wood rite you a few lines to let you no thet I had bin elekted head judge of the San Dominick Rodeo. Maybe you thot I had fergit about the time you got me out of jale in Berryville for chawin the cherifs ear off ha ha! Well, ole Clay Hinkle is a man which does not fergit past favors. If yore intrested in splitin 1st and 2d mony in the bronk ridin I beg to state thet I will be only too glad to give it to you. You understand I wood not go around offerin this propozichon to every Tom, Dick and Harry, but you boys bein spechel frends of mine I thot I wood give you 1st krak at it at the reguler rates 50-50. This is a bargin on akount the competichon will be very keen and I feel shure I coud git better terms only ole Clay Hinkle is a man which does not fergit past favors.

I beg to remain as ever yores sincarly and Korjaly yores.

CLAY HINKLE.

OF course we aimed to make the San Dominick stampede anyhow, but like Clay wrote, the competition was always very keen at that show on account it caught all the top hands on their way to the Eastern contests. Even after parting with half our winnings, we stood to collect a flock of money which wasn't to be sneezed at.

We cashed the checks donated to us by the Eldora rodeo committee and proceeded to stage a celebration befitting the occasion, before getting under way for San Dominick.

But as luck would have it, the natives

mistook our friendly ceremony for an effort on our part to destroy and plunder their moral community. Trouble came on the heels of this unfounded suspicion, and we was called upon to surrender and be led peaceful from the scene.

The marshal who made the suggestion was a big, tall, nervous-looking *hombre* with a diving Adam's apple and a large flowing pinto mustache. The only weapon he carried—that we could see, anyway—was a big crooked cane. And we wasn't to be overawed by any such ineffective display of force.

"Listen, Wild Bill," said Bearcat to the marshal. "As much as we 'preciate your kind offer, and not wishin' to cast any asparagus at your jail, we been in better ones and could not possibly be int'rested in visitin' yours."

A crowd had collected around us. Election-time was drawin' near, and the marshal had to protect his reputation. His Adam's apple made a few rapid trips from his chin to his belt-buckle and back again; the spotted misplaced horse's tail bristled like a bunch of quills; he elevated the crooked cane and charged us in the scientific fashion of a blind bull.

"Whoo—ah!" said the marshal, snorting and pawing at the air like a bear with a wasp up his nose. But immediate developments disclosed the surprising fact that getting hit with a cane wasn't a thing which we considered a privilege.

Bearcat and me stepped aside and allowed the marshal to get between us. Then Bearcat placed a boot-heel in the seat of his pants and pushed hard. The marshal's gasping form shot across the sidewalk like a flying comet and plowed its way through a plate-glass window which protected a display of elegant female lingerie.

THE old walrus began makin' frantic swimmin' motions, wallowin' in a sea of broken glass and silk negligees. Puffing like a wind-broke horse and clutching madly for support, he pulled down whole rows of pink stockin's and bright-colored, beflowered shawls and kimonos. Two wax dummies with Fourth-of-July complexions and adorned in glitterin' Paris creations came tumblin' down on top of him, addin' to the final touch of destruction.

"Whoo—ah!" screamed the marshal from under the smiling dummies. "Just wait till I git my hands on ye!"

We was willing to wait. We couldn't get away had we wanted to. Holding our shaking sides with both hands, we howled like a pair of treed panthers. This was too gosh-awful funny for words. Tears running from our eyes, we failed to notice the approach of a new and unlooked-for enemy, which turned out to be far more dangerous than the befuddled marshal.

The first I knew of it was when something heavy crashed on top of my head, which was luckily protected by my big hat. I sat down on the sidewalk and rolled to the side, lookin' up to see who was attackin' me. I beheld a large, powerful female belaborin' Bearcat with what looked to me like a bare human leg cut off above the knee. Not considering it safe to remain gazing at this strange, grisly spectacle, I regained a standing posture and took out from there like a wild colt with his tail on fire.

On the edge of town I was passed by a flyin' shadow which I recognized as Bearcat Gibson. I glanced fearfully back over my shoulder and saw a big mob of people hot on our trail. The marshal led the chase, waving a big old pistol he had produced from somewhere, and scattering silk doodads in his wake. Right on his heels Battling Mary followed, brandishing the human leg and uttering blood-curdling yells. . . . . In another half-second I had caught up with Bearcat.

We was leavin' Eldora, havin' become awful tired and disgusted with that particular metropolis.

A MILE farther and still goin' strong, we caught up with a dilapidated flivver which was fluttering between the fences at the speed of a limping turtle. Two men dressed in greasy unionalls sat in the front seat, fiddling with numerous buttons and levers which seemed to have bearin' on the exhausted engine under the hood.

"Hop in, boys!" said the driver. "You might beat us on a short spurt, but you'll get farther with old Lill."

We agreed with him on that, as we was beginning to falter in our stride. We scrambled inside the car, which seemed to grunt and squeak in protest at the added weight. Our pursuers had not yet appeared over the last hill, and we sank down on the back seat, feeling very kindly toward the men which had surely rescued us from a terrible fate.

"Lord! Knockin' folks around with human legs!" said I, shuddering at the

thought. "Can you imagine anything so crool?"

"It wasn't no human leg," put in Bearcat. "It was one of them there artificial things they display stockings on, in stores. The woman was the owner of the layout spoilt by the marshal. They should watch that woman. She'll murder somebody one of these days. I swear I never see such a mad person!" Bearcat rubbed various parts of his anatomy, very careful.

"Where you boys goin'?" grinned one of the men in the front seat.

"We aint so much goin' anywheres," I answered. "We're just leavin' Eldora."

"Well, we'll have to let you out pretty soon. We aint goin' far," continued the man.

DISASTER was starin' us in the face, and despair settled upon us. We knew them mad natives wouldn't give up the chase so easy. Most likely they'd have reward-posters out before morning. Dead or alive!

The little car had come to a stop in front of a gate opening into a large pasture. In the pasture we saw an airyplane setting on the ground.

"As far as we go!" said the man, gettin' out of the car to open the gate. "That's our crate in there."

The other fellow turned around and looked us over.

"Don't want to take a ride in the old lady, do you, boys?" he said anxious-like. "The thrill of a lifetime, and safer than old Lill, here. Three dollars only for fifteen minutes of exhilarating flying through the ether!"

I have a suspicion we could of went for a dollar and a half. You could tell at a glance that prosperity had deserted them particular aviators at the last crossroads. But as much as I desired to leave these parts, I did not crave any flying experiences. It was too much like jumping from the skillet into the stove.

But my crazy partner right away shut both eyes and jumped astraddle of the idea with all the enthusiasm of a roving preacher for a repenting sinner.

"Shore!" he whispered, nudging me in the ribs. "We could get them fellows to take us to San Dominick, where a rodeo is to be put on in a few days. Boy, we're shore lucky!" Then, without waitin' for me to say a word, he assumed the important and worried expression of a man who has just bought a string of oil-wells and has only a few minutes to reach a radio in order to accept the nomination.

"We'd like to go to San Dominick," he said to the aviator. "And we'd like to leave fairly soon."

The aviator's knees kinda buckled under him. All he could do for a spell was to look at us with tears in his eyes.

"Do you mean it?" he asked. "Boys, please don't kid a poor old man!"

"Shore we mean it," answered Bearcat. "If the price is right."

"The price couldn't be anything but right," said the aviator. "A few twists here and there, and we're goin' from here, gentlemen."

"Hey!" I put in, alarmed at the way things were coming out. "Who said I wanted to fly? I'm askin' you, did I ever express the slightest wish to do so? Did I, eh?"

The aviator cast a murderous and poisonous look upon me. Words dropped from his mouth like sweet drops of strychnine.

"Oh, come, now!" he said, trying to be pleasant. "There's no danger, you know. Surely a brave cowboy like you is not afraid of a little spin in the air!"

"I might be brave," said I. "And I might be a cowboy. But," —and I pronounced every word clear and loud,— "I wouldn't care to take any spins in the air!"

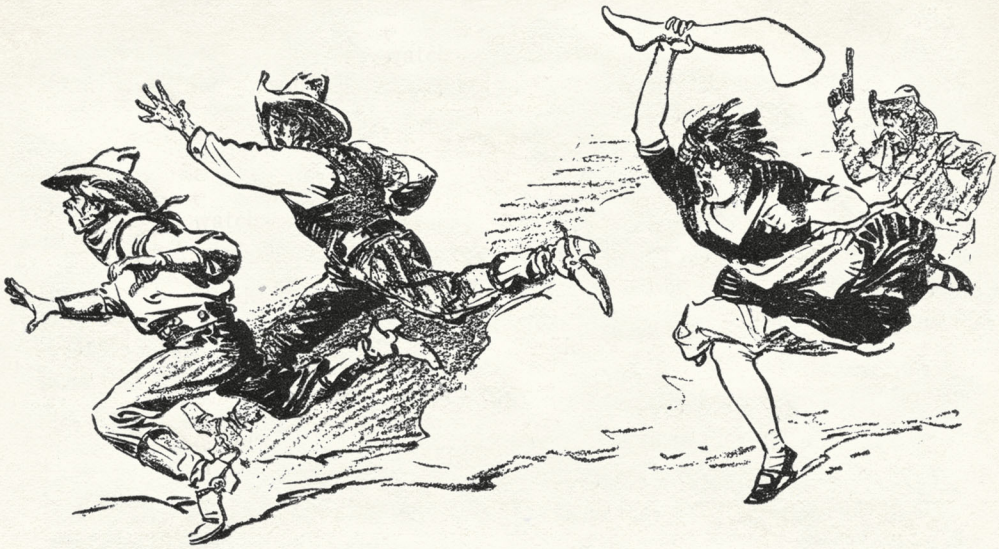
"Never mind him," put in Bearcat. "He's only foolin'. He just dotes on airyplanes and aviators and things like that. Why, that fellow is the original aviation fan!"

Meanin' me! Can you beat that—or tie it, even? I was struck dumb.

THE flivver went bouncing across the pasture and stopped alongside the airyplane. The aviators got out and started screwing up loose connections.

"It's no use, Bearcat," I stated very firm. "I have no taste for aviation." I'd heard about people riding in airyplanes, but I wasn't sufficiently informed on the subject to enter into discussion of it. Furthermore, I'd just as soon it hadn't been brought to my attention.

But Bearcat was a stubborn cuss and gifted with the power of persuasion. There wasn't nothing he didn't know about the safety devices used in modern aviation. For instance: out of 15,347 flights launched in the State of Maryland alone, in one year, fourteen only had been fatal. Which to his way of thinkin' was a very low rate.



I glanced fearfully back over my shoulder. The marshal led the chase; right on his heels Battling Mary followed, brandishing her human leg.

Accordin' to my opinion, fourteen dead men was fourteen dead men, even if everybody in Maryland had all gone crazy and took to leaping around in the air like a bunch of whizzing pelicans.

"Here!" said Bearcat. "While the man is tyin' a few of the vital parts together with hay-wire, I will explain the fundamental principles to you. This," he declaimed, pointing to a couple of oars, "this is the paddle. It paddles the wings. This," he continued, indicating a growth on the tail end, "this takes the place of the tail-feathers on a bird."

BUT I wasn't to be misled so easy; and anyway, if Bearcat knew the difference between a doughnut-cutter and a two-dollar bill, he had never showed any signs of it to me. Besides, I have an eye for details, and he can't make me believe that a good Number One airyplane should have rusty spots on it and be punched full of holes. When a Ford leaks oil, there's something wrong with it. Well, that thing leaked oil. And the longer I inspected the wreck of old 97, the more I was reminded of a busted kite which had been drug through a prickly-pear thicket.

Just then I overheard part of the conversation between the aviators.

"You give me a hand gettin' started," said one. "Then you can take our stuff to San Dominick in the car."

"Got enough gas for this flight?" asked the other.

"Well, I wouldn't be too sure, but I think there's enough."

He thought there was enough! Well sir, right then is when I made up my mind to take a airyplane trip. If that bleary-eyed fool was willin' to run out of gas while flyin' through the ether, I was too!

I noticed Bearcat had bleached out some. "Did you hear that?" he whispered.

"Shore!" says I. "Did you know that out of twenty-six fatal airyplane wrecks in Arkansaw alone, twenty-five was caused from runnin' out of gas? But shucks, there aint nothing to worry about. The gadget paddles the wings and the pin-feathers do the rest. Nothing to it!"

"Hum!" growls Bearcat lookin' suspicious. "Hum!"

About then the experts had decided everything was O.K., and they got ready to start her up. Me and Bearcat moved to a safe location where we could watch, and the pilot clumb in and fiddled around with various gimmicks. The other bird stood by the paddle.

"Contact!" he yells—just like that.

"Contact!" growls the other fellow in a deep tone of voice. Then the *hombre* outside puts on a dance, the likes of which I have never witnessed before, not even durin' my stay with the Osages. He grabs one end of the paddle, throws one leg up in the graceful fashion of a toe-dancer, swings and shivers a couple of times and jerks down on it.

Nothing happens. I felt sorry for him. You could tell he was disappointed. Something big should have come of it.

He looks up pitiful-like and yelps again: "Contact!"

"Contact!" rumbles the pilot, and on with the dance. The fellow goes through every single motion again. You could tell it was a question of great importance not to miss anything. He pounces down on that paddle like a hungry coyote on a gopher. And then—hell busts loose!

MY hat is jerked off my head like it had been shot off, and my shirt casts loose from its moorings and flies up in my face, blinding me complete. I falls over backward, clutching wildly for support. I feels a form wriggling under me. "Get off'n me, you idjit!" yelps a faint voice through the roar and thunder of the cyclone and hailstorm raging around us. "Get off from under me," I replies, peeved. "I saw that hole first!"

I managed to pull the shirt off my face and took a quick look around. Well, could you believe it? There wasn't no cyclone. Everything was fine and serene as before, only the old paddle had gone wild, and the tin whipporwill was shakin' fearsome, and roaring like four hundred mad bulls in a tunnel. The aviator was waving for us to get on. Holding our hats against our ears, we circled the old butter-tub on the run and approached it from the rear. I clumb in a hole in front of the pilot, and Bearcat settled himself in another hole in front of me.

All at once the roaring increased—although I wouldn't of thought it possible—and we started bumping across the field. Faster and faster we lunged along until the air was slapping me in the face like a wet saddle-blanket.

EVER since a safe fell on me when I was little, I have been given to imagining wrecks and catastrophes. I didn't need to stretch my imagination now. First I got to thinkin' what would happen if we come across a big ditch, or a rock, or a cow or other objects too ghastly to dwell upon. Then I looked down, and there it was—a fresh-plowed field which looked rougher to me than a chain of mountains. . . . . Lord, Lord, thinks I, this is no place for old Slocum Bill. I still have a chance to get away from this hell-bending Roman candle, and I aims to take it. I starts to climb off, whatever comes of it. I am accustomed to fallin' and rollin' on the ground. I know how to relax and protect myself. But all them fine principles don't apply to a smashed-up orange crate with wings. Now is the time for me and 97 to separate, for better or for worse.

I am about half out when I feels a hand on my shoulder. I takes a look and sees the pilot smiling, and then I makes a startling discovery. We had left old Mother Earth and I was about to fling myself through a hundred feet of empty air and not a hand-holt in sight! What's more, I caught a glimpse of a big car tearing down the road toward us, and in it was the marshal and Battling Mary and several other warlike-looking parties.

I settled back in my seat and watches the plowed field shrink to the size of a handkerchief. Well, here we are—it's too late to do anything now! I have one happy thought, and that's what I will do to Bearcat Gibson for getting me into such a predicament. We fly on and on through the exhilarating ether, gasping for breath and watching the scenery from where no scenery should be seen.

AFTER about ten minutes my sensible ears began to tell me there was something rotten somewhere not connected with the state of Denmark. I don't know if an airyplane in good working order is supposed to sputter, but this one was sputtering, and I didn't like it. Bearcat looked back at me, and his bogged-out eyes did not indicate a peaceful state of mind, either. I craned my neck around, and while I was doing so the sputtering changed to coughing, and the coughing died out, and our pilot said so we both could hear it: "Outa gas. . . . . Hold tight. . . . . I'll land 'er. . . . . No trouble."

Can you imagine a ring-tailed son-of-a-gun like that one? No trouble! Oh, no, no trouble at all! Maybe he thought us being in front, we would kinda break the fall for him. He began circling his busted skyrocket in wide loops, and the first thing I knew we was skimming trees and housetops.

The trouble was the fields in that country was too small, and there was too many obstacles in the way, and we was goin' too fast to let a little thing like a greenhouse stop us. The only indication we had of goin' through that greenhouse was a merry tinkle of broken glass and a whiff of flowers in bloom. Two big red geraniums fanned my cheeks; a bunch of gladiolas settled in my streamin' hair; and my lap was suddenly piled high with an assortment of posies and ferns.

On, like a wild bounding antelope we went, over a clover-field, bouncing over a culvert, across a road, into a cemetery, sowin' flowers and airyplane parts over the graves, merrily knockin' down tombstones and monuments right and left.

The thrill of a lifetime? Well, I hope to tell you!

ONCE I thought I lost an eye in an apple orchard, but it wasn't knocked out for good. It got all right in a couple of months. We also visited a watermelon patch, but soon left it behind after a good deal of crunching, and uprootin' of trailin' vines.

Bumping across a terrorized countryside at the speed of a comet, we met head-on with a herd of geese, and their goslings trooping innocently behind. A large cloud of feathers arose and was gone. A big red barn took a wing from us; a henhouse got the other. The paddle had busted in ten thousand splinters when crossin' the cornfield.

A creek loomed ahead, but it was a shallow one, and we forded it successfully. Had it not been for the opposite bank, which rose straight in the air, there is no tellin' how much farther we would have roamed, scattering death and destruction in our wake. But even that go-devil of an outfit couldn't get the best of a bank composed mostly of large rocks. There was a terrible crash; then the peaceful silence of an afternoon in the country.

I don't recollect much after that, only it seemed that I had a wonderful dream in which I lived over some of the past happenings. Bearcat floated through the air by my side. There was a ring of light around his big hat, and he flopped around with the help of a pair of wings. His open mouth was relaxed in the loving smile of an angel, and a large floral wreath bearing the golden inscription *"Rest in Peace"* hung about his shoulders. You could just imagine the mourners, heads bowed in sorrow, and the soft, mellow notes of an organ playing, "Here comes the bride—"

I COULD have remained in that position for hours, thinking beautiful thoughts. Our breathless dash across the country was something to look back on and write home about—the informal visit in the greenhouse, the evening scamper across the cemetery, the good-natured pushin' over of tombstones, the playful manner in which we had destroyed orchards, cornfields and barnyard fowls: I'll tell you, it was something to quicken a man's breath and make his eyes sparkle!

Then a harsh note tore me from this dream—several harsh notes, to be exact. I opened one eye—and then I shut it again very sudden.

The dream had changed now to a nightmare. Loud, grinding voices argued back and forth. I pinched myself to make sure I was awake. . . . .

I lay in a bed, a nice clean white bed. The well-known hospital smell was in the air. Cautiously, I opened the eye again to make sure I'd seen right the first time.

A group of excited people stood by my bed. Two of the figures I recognized only too well. One was tall and had a long flowing spotted mustache. The other had black skirts and a terrible disposition. Old Walrus and Battling Mary!

"Yes indeed, it's them!" screamed Mary. "Don't I know the scoundrels? Didn't I see them destroy hundreds of dollars' worth of merchandise for me? Will I, or will I not, get justice?"

"Be calm, madam, be calm!" said a soothing voice. "They are in no shape to be questioned now. They have some money which we have deposited in our safe. We feel sure it will more than cover your claims—"

THE group moved from the bed, and I took a look around. Bearcat was stretched out in another cot, close by. Unconsciousness had give him a look of almost human intelligence.

Our good bronk-ridin' money to go for ruint lingerie!

Just then I saw old Walrus glarin' at me. His Adam's apple was travelin' at a terrific rate of speed. Gosh, that man was mad! I remembered him wallowin' under the dummies and all the silk what-nots—and I covered up my head, and the white sheet began to shake, quiver and roll.

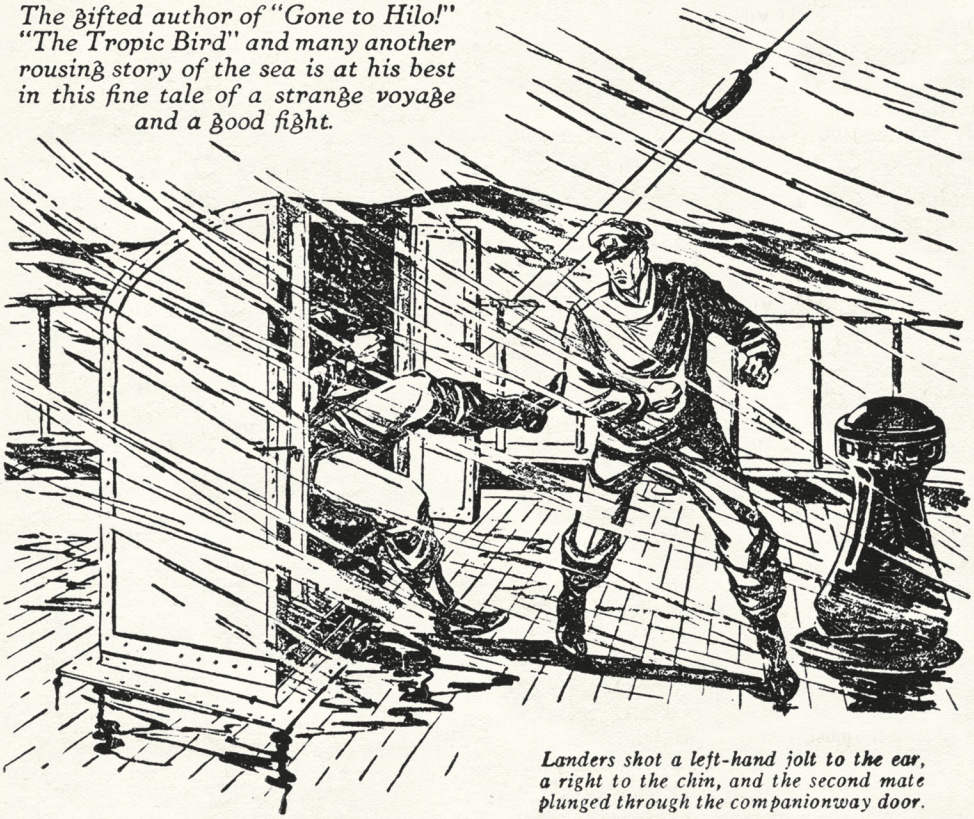
A nurse run out and pulled the covers from my tearful face. She was a stunning-looking girl!

She patted my pillow, a smile on her lips. Oh, well, maybe things wasn't as bad as they looked.

"You're a funny one," said the nurse. "Unconscious one minute, laughing fit to be tied the next. You cowboys are strange fellows."

"Lady," said I, "you don't know the half of it!"

The gifted author of "Gone to Hilo!" "The Tropic Bird" and many another rousing story of the sea is at his best in this fine tale of a strange voyage and a good fight.



Landers shot a left-hand jolt to the ear, a right to the chin, and the second mate plunged through the companionway door.

Three Mates

By CAPTAIN DINGLE

Illustrated by Paul Lehman

TOM SYDNEY was not sure. He had completed one-half of his first voyage in a steamship, after a novitiate in the hard school of a sailing-ship. Now, lying at a spice-scented wharf ten thousand miles from home, watching the stout back of the captain slowly vanish within a pony carriage, he could not say what he really thought of his start in a new career.

"You have your start, Mr. Sydney. The rest is up to yourself." That's what Captain Urquhart had said to him on joining the *Tiverton* as third mate, with the ink scarcely dry on his second mate's ticket. "It is a good employ you're in. This is only a cargo steamer, but the firm has finer vessels, and takes care of its employees. I joined as third officer myself, some years ago, and now I'm in line for the next vacancy as master of a passenger steamer. Your future's in your own hands. If you waste the present the future will always remain the future. Make the best of your opportunities, young man, and you'll earn a reward of contentment besides the more material reward of advancement and hard cash returns."

Sydney grinned reminiscently as he remembered that speech. He remembered reciting it to big Watson, the second mate.

"The old man's special brand o' bunk," Watson had sneered. "I heard it all. Forget it. You'll get what you damn' well earn, and you'll earn it damn' hard. You'll get promotion after all the nice little favorites are taken care of. Stand your watch, see that your relief's on time, and take your wages at the pay-off table like a man who's entitled to 'em. Come to my room and wet it."

Tom had wetted it in big Watson's room, and some of the sheer animal fascination of the second mate's immensely powerful carcass and lusty voice lingered long after the tang of the whisky passed. He had told Bobby Landers, the chief officer, what

the captain said, too. That was the first night at sea, with stars as big as shields, and a black satin sea through which the big steamer sliced musically. It was a far different scene to that in which he had somewhat sarcastically recited the skipper's oration to Watson. That was in a stuffy cabin, noisy with the rattle of cargo winches, redolent of strong pipes and whisky—and Watson, body and voice, fitted the scene. Somehow, Landers fitted this.

"Captain Urquhart is right, Sydney," the chief mate said quietly. There was something pleasing in his voice. It was soft, and lulling like the smooth sea; yet there was a timbre in it which hinted of slumbering force. There was a twinkle in Landers' eyes, too. Not a glitter, such as Watson's eyes held, but a straight, fearless, whimsical gleam, tolerant and kindly. "He knows what he's talking about. You can't stand still in this profession nowadays. Too many new gadgets coming into use. Radio bearings, gyro compass, sonic sounding devices, and all the rest, including Metal Mike himself. They're trying 'em all in the firm's new liner. I've done nothing but read ever since I heard about these things. And it takes me all my time to keep up. The man who neglects to keep polished up on new inventions in steam shipping is going to get left. Come to my room, sometime, and I'll lend you some books that'll be useful."

NOW Tom Sydney was uncertain. On that passage out he had looked into Landers' books. Not often. He had "wetted it" in Watson's room, rather oftener. He rather liked big Watson. He did not dislike Landers. But they were so different. Bobby Landers had a slight halt in one leg. Not bad, but noticeable. He never got very brown of skin. Every morning he had a cold salt-water douche from the bosun's hose on deck, and performed a series of easy calisthenics like Swedish drill. His body was as slim and white as a young boy's. Watson took his sea water too, hurled over him out of buckets. His morning exercise consisted in swarming up a backstay hand over hand like a great ape, and coming down the same way, his great muscles writhing beneath his brown skin like live things. And when Watson raised his voice, the ship rang with it. No man waited to be called twice.

At first Tom doubted Watson's real caliber. He had seen big, loud fellows found wanting in emergency. But Watson was all there. There had been that fireman, who dumped ashes over fresh paint. He had given Watson back talk about it when reprimanded, and he had shown fight. He was bigger, and noisier, but Watson fought him, stand-up, knock-down, rough-house, and whipped him into a state of respectful submission.

It was in the little Eastern river port that Watson gained the heights. Tom put him on the pedestal. They went ashore together one afternoon, stayed the evening, and Watson showed the youngster the rounds. In his sailing-ship days, Tom had only heard about some phases of the sailor-town of the ports. His pocket money had been too scanty to let him go far down the primrose path. But he had heard plenty, from sailors and from lads with more funds. Watson knew the ropes. He had seen the elephant and heard the owl. There was nothing in the roster of sailor-town attractions he did not boast acquaintance with. He knew Alexandria and Naples, Sydney and Bombay. He had fluttered curtains in Shanghai, and priced hair-combing damsels in the shops of Nagasaki. The imported beastliness of London and New York he had a deep and awesome knowledge of. And where he had not previously been, he knew the signs which made him as wise as if he had been born there. Tom Sydney missed nothing, with big Watson as mentor.

He was going gleefully to relate his adventures to Landers next morning, but Landers was giving a couple of hours of instruction in navigation to the boys from a sailing-ship that had been lying in the river for months.

"Old Landers is a stick!" Tom told Watson disgustedly. Watson was chuckling over some spicy photographs he had stolen the night before. The soiled glass of his "eye-opener" reeked on the desk; Tom's nose rebelled. Tom was not seasoned enough as yet to stand that so early on a morning after.

THE *Tiverton* lay two weeks getting her cargo. Tom gradually fell into the ways of Watson. He took his morning bath as Watson did. He swarmed the rigging. Unconsciously his voice took on a gruff note. What it lacked by nature, it got by training. And day by day Sydney and Watson became thicker pals. Tom drank too much; but was careful not to do so

aboard the steamer. He did his duty in a manner beyond cavil; but not more. Landers smilingly reminded him of fleeting hours, and he resented it. The mate only smiled, that gentle, tolerant smile of his, and shook his head.

Then Watson came to Tom one afternoon, seething with rage.

"What did I tell you?" he growled. "Remember what I said? Work your insides out, and promotion goes to owners' favorites. Old Urquhart spills a lot o' tripe about rewarded merit—"

"What's up?" Tom jerked out. He was young enough to be afraid that some of their joint escapades had borne fruit.

"Up? Word just came out that Landers is to go chief officer of the new liner when we get home."

"That's all right, isn't it?" Tom queried innocently. "It's a step for you."

"Step for me be damned!" roared Watson. "A new man's coming here! I'm not experienced enough! Step for me—hell!"

Tom spoke to Landers about it, taking Watson's viewpoint.

"I'm afraid Watson doesn't realize the need of keeping upsides with the necessities of modern shipping," Landers said. "I'm sorry he's disappointed. But it's not too late for him to take hold. He'll have to, if he expects to get along."

Somehow Tom hated that speech. It seemed so smug. Landers had not said the actual words, but Tom was certain that the entire speech was simply a lecture telling him of his own neglect of his opportunities. It was, clearly enough, Mr. Bobby Landers' way of saying:

"Sydney, my boy, let Watson's disappointment be a lesson to you. Come to my room. I'll be glad to lend you my books on the passage home."

TOM SYDNEY was young enough to resent anything resembling patronage, and to admire what seemed to be stark manhood. He was so constituted as to be in absolute need of somebody or something to look up to. He must have a hero. Since his youngest boyhood he had worshiped some hero: the captain of the school football team; the grammar teacher who unexpectedly whipped a village bully found interfering with the boys; Leonidas—when he got that far; the mate of the sailing-ship he served in, who was a roaring, swearing, bully-damning competent—able, willing, and anxious to lick into sailor shape any gang of waterfront toughs that ever breathed rum.

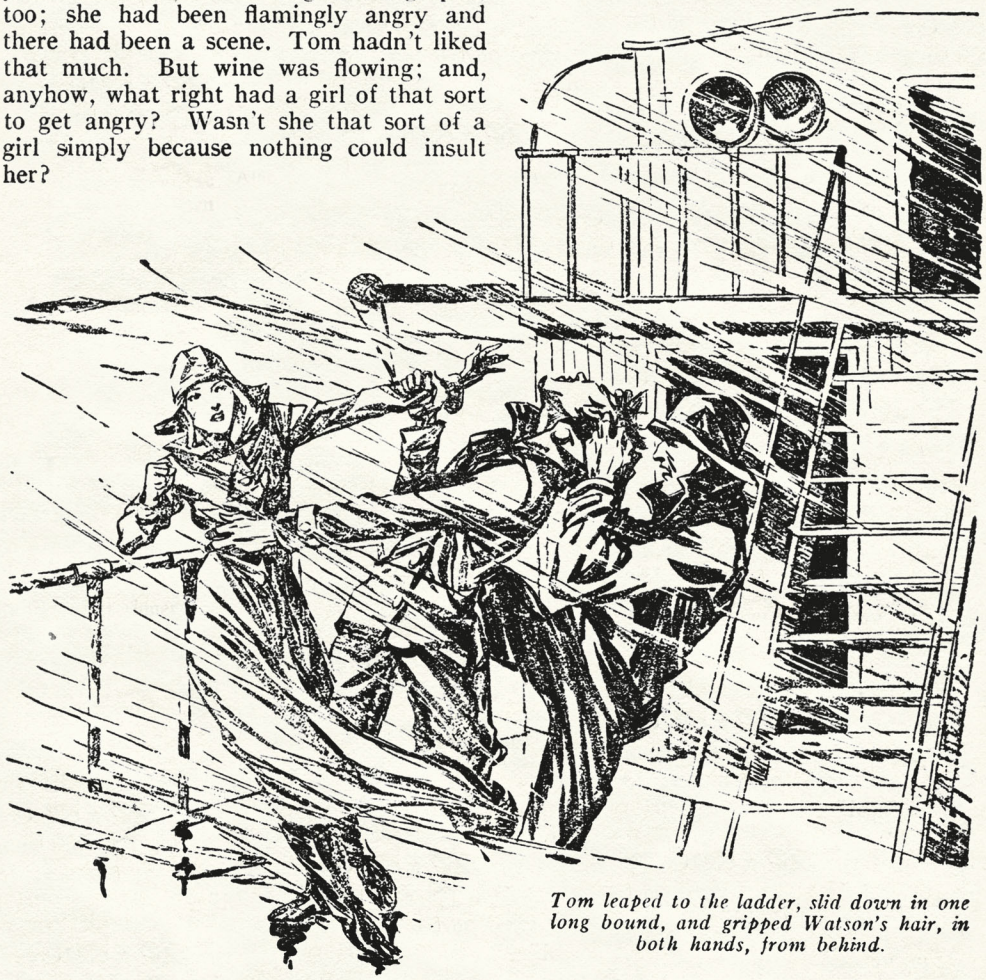
WATSON was very like that mate in many things. The windjammer mate had proved himself a true, if noisy, hero through four hard years of the hardest kind of sea life, and when Tom left to join the *Tiverton,* he had said:

"Talk straight, walk straight, and hit straight, m' lad. Don't walk on a man's neck when he's down; but let no man walk on yours. If you must give an order, roar it, and there's no fear of it not being heard; and when you've given it, back up your roar so it's obeyed. So long, m' lad, and luck to ye."

Watson could roar, and hit straight, and get orders obeyed. Tom Sydney had no doubt that, when occasion arose, Watson would have all those other qualities. Anyhow, he was a more tangible hero than Landers. Bobby Landers was no ninny. Nothing of the kind. He was agile and self-reliant enough. No cloud of uneasiness ever dimmed his eye when seas battered the deep-laden steamer. He had not yet manhandled any man of the crew; but neither had he yet failed to get an order obeyed promptly. The steward had remarked to Tom, one day at a solitary supper table, that Mr. Landers had a splendid record in the great war. He had done something or other, the steward didn't know exactly, but it was heroic, and he was decorated by three Governments, and had been hurt so that he would always limp. But Landers never mentioned it himself. Probably it was nothing much. Stewards like to talk. Any man who really had done something worthy of decoration by three Governments would talk about it. Watson did. Watson had been third mate of a steamer which towed in a dismasted barque, and he talked about that. Landers only smiled gently all the time, spoke softly, lived quietly, and studied. . . . .

So up went Watson on to Tom Sydney's pedestal. Tom told him what the mate had said about keeping up to date on all the new gadgets. Watson showed his resentment in his characteristic fashion. He took Tom ashore for a last whirl around the little port, and surpassed himself in the depth of his explorations. Tom drank too much again. When he awoke, on sailing morning, and tried to recall all the adventures of the night, he grinned with a foggy sort of pride.

"Jumping Cæsar! Watson's a holy terror!" he mused as he shaved shakily. He had never dreamed that two men could have so much fun with girls. Watson had shown him lines of sportiveness that had made him gasp at first. As he drank wine he gasped less and laughed more until he joined in. True, one of the girls had gasped, too; she had been flamingly angry and there had been a scene. Tom hadn't liked that much. But wine was flowing; and, anyhow, what right had a girl of that sort to get angry? Wasn't she that sort of a girl simply because nothing could insult her?



Tom leaped to the ladder, slid down in one long bound, and gripped Watson's hair, in both hands, from behind.

Tom cut himself. He had grace enough to realize that he was thinking along crooked lines. Watson thrust open the door, shoving in a peg of liquor.

"Down that, laddie, and spruce up," said Watson hoarsely. "Your best gear today. A passenger's going home with us. A smart little filly with an eye for a fine man." Watson winked into the mirror, and backed out. Tom didn't like that way of referring to a decent girl, such as a passenger must be. The *Tiverton* was not a passenger steamer; she had only the captain s accommodation available, and if a passenger were allowed to buy that, the old man had to sleep in the chartroom all the way home. So it was scarcely possible that a passenger could be other than respectable. Quite likely to be a connection of the agent, or even a friend of the owners. He gagged, too, on the whisky. It got into his nose, and he was not in good shape to swallow it. But he felt that he needed it, and when it was safely into his stomach he felt much better, much less finicky about Watson's reference to the passenger. He could even grin again at the recollection of that girl whom Watson had made furious last night.

"A devil with the girls, Watson is," he chuckled, and gave himself a final inspection before going on deck.

BETTY RICARDO was an astonishing young lady. She came on board with the agent just before the steamer cast off,

and at once assumed the position of joy dispenser to the ship. She was quite a child—perhaps eighteen—frank and innocent; devoid of all modern pretense to wiseness, which is not at all the same as wisdom. Merry as a grig, laughing in every curl and dimple, eager to know everything, and not bashful about asking.

Tom Sydney had plenty of opportunity to observe her as the *Tiverton* slowly swung seaward. His place was on the bridge, at the engine-room telegraph, waiting upon the skipper's orders. Bobby Landers was on the forecastle head: the chief mate's post always on entering or leaving port. Watson was aft, where second mates belong under the circumstances. The girl was bubbling over with excitement. She was going home to relatives to complete her schooling, and it was her first journey by sea. But she had been well posted by some one. Impatient though she was to chatter to somebody, she had been told not to talk to officers on duty, and she obeyed.

She watched Tom swinging his telegraph handle up and down; she listened for the clang of the bell. She watched Landers getting the haul-off anchor in, and the bow lines. She ran outside the covered bridge to look aft, where big Watson's bull roar drove the starboard watch to handling the stern lines. An imp of mischief danced in her bright gray eyes at the stout, important figure of the Captain. She winked deliberately at Tom behind the skipper's broad back, and Tom was so surprised he could not wink back. But he grinned, and resolved to put Watson wise to the possibilities for good sport in Miss Betty Ricardo.

There were many days, after the *Tiverton* left the muddy waters of the river astern, when the sea was sparkling as an emerald and the sky held no menace. Awnings shielded the short bridgedeck from a too intrusive sun; Captain Urquhart, with an eye, perhaps, to his own future in grand liners, set himself out to entertain his one passenger with as much circumstance as if she were a crowd. There were lunches, and afternoon teas, taken on deck under the awnings. The officers dressed as smartly as their resources permitted; and there had been really no need for the captain to suggest that to them. The steward growled at first because he had to use more clean white jackets than usual; but he never grumbled after Betty had been on board one whole day.

As for Tom Sydney—well, had he met Betty Ricardo before he joined the *Tiverton,* he would have fallen most desperately in love with her, and most assuredly would have been boyishly shy in her vivacious presence. He was intensely interested in her now; but somehow big Watson's acquaintance had given a sharper edge to his keenness towards women. It was a sophisticated Tom Sydney who played deck quoits with her and all the while calculated just how far a fellow might venture with her. He envied the ease with which Watson led her away from quoits into a cozy corner behind the boats. Green jealousy squirmed in his brain because he was on watch and could not find excuse for breaking in on them, with an apology of course, just to see for himself how cozy the corner was.

ONE morning Tom overheard a heated dispute between Landers and Watson. He could not help overhearing it. Landers no doubt believed that he and the second mate were alone; but Tom Sydney was willing to lean Watsonwards, and take the viewpoint that the quarrel was staged by the mate for no other purpose than to humiliate Watson before the junior officer and the passenger, whose cabin skylight was open. Tom Sydney was in the wheelhouse for a moment, when the argument rose to red heat. Landers was raking Watson over for some duty persistently neglected, and Watson, fuming over what he claimed to consider the injustice to be done him on arrival home, answered back rebelliously. The mate stuck to his point, adding a word regarding second mates who spent duty hours with passengers, and Watson flared into fury. He wanted to fight.

Landers maintained a level tone of voice, bidding Watson cool off and attend to his duty, to remember that he had a future ahead of him, to consider discipline and example before the men. Watson was noisy, belligerent, insulting, calling Landers yellow and toady to owners. Tom Sydney had come out, and saw Landers' face at that. It was livid. The kindly eyes flashed. The ordinarily smiling lips were tightly drawn and bloodless. But Landers walked away without another word; and Tom suddenly discovered that Betty Ricardo had come beside him unnoticed and had seen and heard that astonishing scene.

"Oh, wasn't it awful!" the girl breathed, her eyes troubled. "I really thought they would fight."

Tom laughed unpleasantly.

Tom fought hard, but the big second mate pounded the smaller man with crushing fists.

"No chance. Landers wont fight. You see the difference between those two, don't you? A fellow might get ahead faster by following a man like Landers; but who wants to be that sort of a yellow dog? Scared to death, that's what he was. Old Watson would have mopped the deck with him."

The girl was staring up at Tom's face in sheer anger.

"Why, I gave you credit for having more intelligence!" she cried. "Mr. Watson may be a noisier talker. Mr. Landers is just too decent to take advantage of a junior's ill temper, that's all. Any other man in his place might have forced Watson to do something rash and then had him broken. You'd be better off, perhaps, if you changed your pattern."

TOM followed the girl's retreating figure with boggling eyes. She turned her shapely back upon him and left him so definitely as to shock him. Heretofore she had been so agreeable. The very brightest hours of his days had been those spent with her, and she had not been niggardly. He had been jealous of Watson, but he had to admit that Betty Ricardo scarcely played favorites. If she did at all, Tom Sydney had no cause to complain, actually. Now she flouted him, gave Watson the glassy stare, and spent all her leisure time with Bobby Landers!

Watson tried to resume his friendly relations with her, but she cut him so coolly that even he was abashed. Tom was young, and his resentment took the form of silence. He looked over her, past her, through her, and spoke only when she spoke to him, and then in curtest monosyllables. He could hardly tackle Landers. Not on board the ship at least. But he would have an understanding with the girl, very soon, and he would attend to Landers after that, if Betty gave him any encouragement. No chief mate was going to steal the girl he was interested in. Betty didn't know any better. She was young, and Landers, with his rating and his imminent promotion, dazzled her. That was all. It was youth that did it.

From which it will be inferred that Tom Sydney rather fancied himself too. So soon

had he decided that he had a claim on Betty Ricardo, that Bobby Landers was trespassing upon his rights!

"When she isn't with the old man, she's with Landers," Tom growled in Watson's room that night. There was a stormy bite in the wind, and Watson's bottle was helping to temper the sting. The second mate himself was drinking more than was good for any watch officer at sea. His strong features were taking on a permanent scowl. Some of the crew were muttering about him. It was impossible to please him. He handed the whisky to Tom, swallowing a huge drink himself, and laughed savagely.

"And she's only filling in time with the old man so she can avoid me," he said.

Tom only got the significance of that brief remark after he had watched Watson climb on to the bridge, oilskinned for a wet watch.

"So she can avoid him!" Tom muttered, peevishly. "He's got his nerve!"

Watson shone less brilliantly as Tom's hero for a while. But sleep is a great healer. The next time they met, when the steamer was smashing her sturdy way against a rising gale and speech was difficult, Tom had swung back to his allegiance. He relieved Watson just after the stroke of the bell and gave ungrudging admiration to the second mate's defiant figure as he stood swaying, peering into the brine-shot wind. Landers was forward with the bosun, looking to the stowing of some iron drums that had worked loose in the waterways. Landers could never shape up like Watson. He looked insignificant down there, in his long slicker, with his limp, holding on to a backstay while the bosun and his men did the work. Tom was too freshly out of a sailing-ship to realize that steamship mates rarely need to jump in and pull and haul with the crowd.

"Bobby's chucking a bluff as usual," he grinned, thinking to chime with Watson's mood. Watson's rejoinder left Tom more or less dazed.

"East-southeast. Why th' hell don't you relieve on time?"

As the second mate passed him, scowling, not a ray of light in his dark face, Tom wondered at his surliness. It was not two minutes after the hour—that was prompt relief for a freighter. Then there came a strong whiff of whisky on the breeze, and the helmsman grinned knowingly at Tom.

"Watch your helm, there!" Tom snapped, and the man's face took on the stony expression of the unrepentant reproved who is too smart to risk actual insubordination. Tom understood it. The man was only biding his time. His own wheel relief was late; but when he got forward there would be a fine yarn to spin to the forecastle of a second mate who was hitting the bottle so hard he couldn't be civil to his buddy. But Tom was too sore over Watson's grouchy greeting to think of anything else. Hero-worship dropped several points during that watch.

The weather grew worse during the breakfast hour. Never so bad as to be alarming to a sailing-ship man, it still made the *Tiverton* do things Tom had never seen a sailing-ship do. For one thing, she held her stubborn course, crashing into the big seas with that blunt, tall, steel bow and filling her fore well deck with almost clocklike regularity. In the sailing-ship, he had seen great graybeards off the Horn lift themselves and tumble over the rails every now and then, and officers had been watchful of men's lives then. But this giant of steam and steel jammed her nose into every sea, shoveled tons of water over the forecastlehead, and rolled her decks clear again with a sickening motion.

CAPTAIN URQUHART appeared on deck after breakfast, stayed on the bridge until it was certain there would be no morning or noon observation, then retired to his reading. The weather threatened no worse than that. It was something to watch, though, especially for a healthy girl full of bubbling spirits and untroubled by the ship's motion. Betty came up while the captain was there. She was all aglow with the stinging wind, and her big eyes were alight as she watched the big seas roll up, meet that shearing bow, and come crashing aboard with a thunder-roar. When the skipper retired, Tom was a bit afraid of being left up there with the girl. But Betty had other ideas. She followed the captain down the bridge ladder. Next thing, Tom saw her take up a position beneath the bridge wing, in the angle of the bridge-deck rail. He liked that. He could look down upon her without her knowing it.

He walked the bridge. At every turn he glanced down at the trim figure in smartly cut oilskins and dainty sou'-wester, all wet with spray. Betty's hair was short and curly. One little wisp lay close to her red cheek, too wet to fly loose. Wise little

wisp, Tom thought. He had not meant to feel nice toward Betty. He was still angry at her. But that wet curl did look cute. A coarse brute like Watson had his nerve to imagine he could make a hit with that kind of girl!

Tom walked across the bridge. When he came back, he leaned out over the rail and stared down in swift anger. The trim, oilskinned figure was wrapped in a bear-like embrace, and Watson's inflamed face was close to Betty's, grinning like a satyr.

"Mr. Watson! Let me go. Please. Let me go, do you hear?" Betty did not cry out. She spoke quietly, as quietly as she could to be heard in the wind.

BUT Watson kissed her. His lips were crushed to hers, and his great arms seemed about to break her slim body in two at the waist. Silently she fought him. Her small fists beat upon his face. His head forced hers lower. Her eyes took on a look of fear. Tom saw no more. He leaped to the ladder, slid down in one long bound, ignoring steps, and gripped Watson's hair in both hands from behind, thrusting his knee hard into the man's back.

With a curse, Watson let Betty go. He swung around and struck at Tom before he saw who it was. The blow, partly missing because of Tom's position, yet had force enough to break the grip on his hair. When he recognized Tom, Watson's grin turned evil, and he stepped forward on flat feet, crouching, head weaving, big fists moving to strike. Tom saw only Watson's thick lips—the lips that had profaned Betty's. Tom recalled some of the things Watson had done that last night ashore. It nerved his arm. He gathered all his strength and spring, and smashed both fists home upon those thick red lips. But Watson only laughed—came forward with a cruel one-two punch, and Tom reeled against the rail.

"You're that sort of a pal, eh? I'll break you in two!" Watson gritted, hard balls of muscle standing out in his cheeks as he ground his teeth. Tom fought him hard, and Tom was no bargain in an ordinary row; but the big second mate, heated with liquor and furious besides, pounded the smaller man with crushing fists that cut the flesh and numbed the brain. Tom caught a glimpse of Betty running into the saloon companionway; he got another flash of a streak of red appearing at Watson's mouth at the moment that his own knuckles seemed to crack. Then two demoniacal eyes blazed into his; teeth shone between bleeding lips; Watson backed him against the companionway and drew back a finishing fist. Tom was helpless—his knees sagged—he would welcome that punch.

It did not come. Somebody caught him and pulled him aside. Somebody told him:

"You fool! Get back on the bridge before the old man sees you!"

Then he knew it was Landers. He knew that, in order to push him to the bridge ladder, so that he might yet escape being caught off the bridge in his watch on deck, Landers left himself open to a first terrific onslaught from Watson. Tom saw the mate hurled back to the rail. Then, from the bridge, he looked again and saw what amazed him. Landers was fighting. Fighting big Watson, and holding him off. Limping, yet moving like light, Landers worked around Watson like a professional boxer. Never once did the mate lose his habitual quiet half smile. He stepped in and struck, hard and straight; slipped inside punches or glided out of range; took a hard wallop when it was unavoidable, but always planted two for it. And he was being hit, too. Watson was a fighter. Tom knew that. And Watson was fighting now with a bitterness and rage not to be measured in words. There was the bitterness he nursed against Landers ever since the news of Landers' promotion came. There was the fury still hot since Landers had called him down for neglect of duty. There was the boiling passion that had hurled him upon Betty Ricardo, which was only boiling the hotter because of Tom's interruption, and was now turned against Landers to top all the rest because the mate had stopped the annihilation of Tom.

The steamer rolled. Spray flew. The fighting men staggered to the reeling motion. But Landers went to work, now he had been forced to start, as if on a gymnasium floor; and when Watson rushed, midway of a giddy lurch of the ship, and Landers stepped aside, the fight was done. For as big Watson hurtled by, Landers stepped in, shot a left-hand jolt to the ear and a right swing to the chin, and the second mate plunged through the companionway door, on down the stairs, and crashed on to the salon carpet in a sorry heap.

TOM SYDNEY had time to think over many things before his watch was over. Betty was one of them. She had gone

straight to get old Landers when the going got rough. And Landers had delivered the goods. Of course, if a girl as young as Betty wanted to run after an old stick like Landers. . . . . Yet, was he such an old stick? Tom was honest. He had the grace to remember that, faced with a job like tackling big Watson in a towering rage and full of murder, Bobby Landers spared time and thought to save his junior from certain disgrace by sending him back to his duty before the captain could discover he had left the bridge.

Betty had spent a lot of time with Landers since she and Tom disagreed regarding Landers' motive in not pushing that former quarrel with Watson. Oh, well, better with him than with Watson, of course. And Watson! Mere thought of Watson made Tom feel sick. And that was the man he had begun to pattern himself upon! Their evenings together. What horrors! What hogs they had been. Together. Oh, yes, Tom did not shirk his own share. But—

"That's that!" he said aloud.

"What's that, Mr. Sydney?"

Tom swung around. Captain Urquhart stood there, sextant in hand, hoping for a sight through thinning clouds.

"Nothing, sir. I was thinking aloud, that's all." Tom decided this was a good chance to get permission to leave the bridge for a moment, and he asked for it.

"Hurry back. I may want you at the chronometer any minute," the captain grunted, and Tom ran down the ladder and into the salon. He was going to make the *amende honorable*. He owed an apology to Landers. The steward was taking hot water into Watson's room. The door of Landers' room was hooked open, and Betty stood there talking to the mate. When Tom appeared, trying to look strong and unconcerned, but really looking like a martyr, Betty quickly handed something to Landers and turned to leave, giving Tom a soft, rather pitying smile. Tom felt hurt; but he had come to do the right thing. He put out his hand to Landers.

"Landers, you're a good sport. Thanks for not letting the old man catch me off the bridge. I've been a bit of a fool, too, about taking your advice. If you'll lend me those books—"

Landers smiled, a bit crookedly because of a split lip, but in his eyes was complete understanding. He reached down a book and gave it to Tom.

"When you've mastered that, I'll give you a quiz and lend you another," he said. "Come in any time."

"Thanks." Tom had meant to get off some grand stuff about congratulating Landers over Betty; but somehow that wouldn't come. Instead, Tom said:

"Sometime I'd like you to tell me about that stuff you pulled off during the war. I'd like to know where you learned to fight."

Landers smiled more gently, and pushed Tom from the room. "Sometime I may, Sydney, if I ever feel talkative," he said.

TOM returned to the bridge feeling all puffed up with pride in a hard task accomplished. . . . . But Betty Ricardo certainly was a corking girl. Unlikely there were many like her. However, Landers deserved her. He was established.

Tom could greet Betty with a smile when she appeared on the bridge presently. She too looked as if she had forgiven him much.

"I want to thank you for jumping in to help me," she said prettily. "I was really frightened to death. I do hope you were not badly hurt. Oh, you are! Your mouth is bleeding."

"Nothing at all," growled Tom gruffly. "Might have been worse if old Landers hadn't chipped in. He's a wonder, isn't he?" Tom was glad he got that out. He knew she would like that. She did. She cried warmly:

"He's marvelous! And that beautiful little wife of his! And those two darling boys! He showed me their pictures just as you came in just now. I'm going to spend my holidays at his place. It's only a little way from where the ships dock. I'm so glad you have discovered how fine a man Mr. Landers is. Perhaps you may visit him yourself sometime, and—"

Bobby Landers, mounting to the bridge to relieve the watch, saw two young people start rather guiltily. Betty dabbed at Tom's puffed lips with her entirely inadequate handkerchief, looking sorrowfully at the red stain. Bobby Landers, smiling wisely, took the handkerchief from Betty and gravely dabbed at her own piquant nose and chin, upon each of which had amazingly appeared a red stain too.

Betty ran down the ladder. Tom Sydney assumed his best duty air.

"East-southeast, the course, and the gale's moderating," he said. His pedestal was again occupied, securely and forever.

Selim Shapes Destiny

By SEVEN ANDERTON

The bandit was no match for his pursuer in fleetness of foot, and Selim soon brought him to earth.

A memorable underworld drama by the able writing-man who gave us "The Corpus Delicti" and "The Ghost of Dan the Fox."

Illustrated by Ben Cohen

SELIM GRAY was at peace with the world, the cops and himself. Softly whistling a gay little tune, he strolled along the quiet side street on which his home was located, a street not far from Lincoln Park on Chicago's North Side. It was a warm night in late May and well past midnight. The air was laden with the scent of flowers and young leaves, plus that something borne only on the air of a spring night.

"Stick 'em up!"

The command was snapped from behind a blue handkerchief that covered the face of a footpad. The hold-up gentleman had stepped suddenly into Selim's path from behind the trunk of a large tree.

The whistle died on Selim's lips and he promptly raised his hands above his head. He could feel the muzzle of the thug's ugly revolver pressing hard against his body, just above his belt buckle.

In spite of the danger in which he stood, Selim was amused at the idea of being held up. A faint smile came to his lips and he regarded the bandit with twinkling eyes.

The fellow was slender and of little more than medium height. A bandanna covered the lower part of his face and a dark felt hat was pulled low over his eyes. He wore a dark suit of very ordinary cut.

"Which pocket is your money in?" demanded the voice from behind the mask.

"Sorry, old top," answered Selim, "but I have less than a quarter about me. I live in the next block, however, and if you will come along to my house I will give you a check. I haven't my check-book with me."

"Never mind getting funny," snapped the hold-up man, running his left hand over Selim's person in search of a wallet or purse. "Even if you are broke, maybe you've got a watch that will bring something at a hock-shop."

"Sorry again," chuckled Selim, "but I never carry a watch. I'm afraid you will

have to come along home with me and get a check—or have your trouble for nothing."

By this time the footpad had made certain that Selim had neither money nor watch. He stepped from the sidewalk and motioned Selim to proceed.

"All right," he growled. "Beat it along home and don't look back this way for five minutes."

Selim lowered his hands and stood smiling at the bandit.

"Aren't you coming after the check?" he inquired.

The bandit backed away a step, the ugly gun held level with his waist still covering Selim.

"You'd better beat it while there aint any holes in you!" he snarled.

The street where Selim had been held up is a thoroughfare but little used after midnight. It was none too well-lighted, but there was light enough for the bandit to see the grin which spread across Selim's face.

"If you will take my advice," smiled Selim, "you will put that cannon away and walk along with me as though we were old friends. The cop on this beat just turned the corner and is coming this way."

HIS ruse worked. The bandit turned his head for a quick look in the direction Selim had mentioned. With the quickness of a cat Selim sprang, and before the bandit had time to realize that the policeman was a myth, the revolver had been torn from his hand and he lay sprawled on the ground where he had been hurled by the impact of Selim's knee in his midriff. Holding the captured weapon easily in his right hand, Selim stood smiling at the fallen robber.

"You are beyond a doubt the hardest man to give money to that I ever met!" he laughed. "Get up now and take that rag off your face and let's go to my place so I can write you a check."

The bandit rose and took off his mask. He stuffed the bandanna into his coat pocket and stood before Selim in a dejected attitude.

"Go on and call the cops," he muttered, "but let up on the funny stuff—it aint funny to me."

"I assure you that I have no intention of turning you over to the police," Selim declared. "If you will come with me to my house you will soon see that I mean what I said about giving you a check."

As he spoke Selim took the gun by the barrel and flung it across the street where it fell with a clatter among the rubbish of a vacant lot.

The bandit stood for a moment like one who doubted what his eyes had seen. Then he whirled and ran like a frightened deer. But the race was over before twenty yards had been covered. The bandit was no match for his pursuer in fleetness of foot, and Selim brought him to earth with a flying tackle. The fellow fought with the courage of desperation but was soon pinned beneath Gray.

"Now," chuckled Selim, "I will let you up and we will walk to my house like friends, or I will knock you cold and carry you there! Which shall it be?"

"I'll walk," said the vanquished bandit.

Selim led the way down the dimly lighted street to a small brick cottage overgrown with ivy and set in a neat lawn. Ten minutes later the two sat in Selim's cozy library facing each other from their easy-chairs. In Selim's lap lay a check-book and his right hand held a fountain pen.

"Before I write this check I should like to know how much money you need," remarked Selim. "I think that I am also entitled to know why you need it."

The bandit, who sat staring in a puzzled manner at his queer captor, was young and not unhandsome. He was of Nordic type with good color and level blue eyes. Desperation written on his face marred what would otherwise have been a perfect picture of clean, fresh American youth. His serge suit was neat but well-worn. His dark blue eyes looked at Selim with mixed fear and wonder.

"Are you honestly going to give me money?" inquired the youth. There was disbelief in his voice, despite the pen and the check-book in Selim's hands.

"Perhaps not honestly," chuckled Selim. "*Actually* might be a better word!"

The youth blinked and swallowed hard. Evidently the difference meant nothing to him. He moistened his lips with his tongue and continued to regard Selim with a puzzled expression.

"How much money were you planning to take away from Chicago citizens with that gun?" inquired Selim patiently.

"Lots," answered the youth.

"That," laughed Selim, "is a rather indefinite amount; I can hardly write a check for it. Perhaps if you will tell me why you decided to quit work and become a bandit, I can help decide just how much

"Put that cannon away," said Selim. "A cop just turned the corner and is coming this way!"

money you must have in order that Chicago may be a bit more safe for pedestrians."

"I didn't quit work," came the low answer. "I work every day in a shoe-store."

"I see," nodded Selim. "You work in a shoe-store during the day and follow the more risky but more lucrative profession of banditry at night. It is evident that you haven't been following your night work long. You are too clumsy at it and you choose such poor localities in which to work. How many men have you held up since you became a bandit?"

"Two," confessed the youth.

"How much money did you get from the other one?"

"Four dollars."

"And I was stony broke," laughed Selim. "It seems that you would have been a long time getting lots of money at that rate."

THE youth nodded his head but did not answer. His lips were trembling; suddenly he buried his face in his hands and burst into tears. Selim put away his checkbook and pen and stepped to the side of the sobbing boy. He laid his hand on the young fellow's shoulder.

"Brace up, lad," he soothed. "Believe me, I am your friend—and if you will tell me what the trouble is we will fix it up. It is the easiest thing in the world, you know, to straighten out the other fellow's troubles."

The youth looked up and his tearful eyes met the level gray ones of Selim.

"My girl will marry another man in the morning," he choked. "No one but God can help me now."

A queer expression flitted across the face of Selim Gray. He drew a chair close to that in which the youth sat, and seated himself.

"Now and then," he remarked, "I do a little chore that God has overlooked. Tell me about it. How did you plan to keep your girl from marrying this other fellow by holding me up? How would getting a lot of money have helped?"

"If I had a lot of money my girl would marry me instead of Tony Rosso," answered the erstwhile bandit.

"So," said Selim, his gray eyes narrowing, "Tony Rosso is your rival! How do you know your girl would turn Tony down for you if you had boodle?"

"Because she loves me."

"How do you know she does?"

"She has told me so many times."

"When was the last time?"

"Yesterday—when she told me she was going to marry Tony Rosso."

"Does she love Tony too?"

"No."

"How do you know she doesn't?"

"She told me she is going to marry Tony only because he has so much money that he can give her all the things she wants."

"Do you know how Tony Rosso gets his money?" inquired Selim.

"Yes," answered the youth. "He's a bootlegger."

Selim smiled. He knew the source of

Tony Rosso's wealth; it did not come from liquor. Rosso was not the first vulture to claim the false respectability that attached itself to the bootlegger with the coming of Prohibition.

"What's your girl's name, and how long have you known her?" Gray asked.

"Her name is Marietta Morgan," answered the youth. "I have known her since she came to the store to be cashier—almost a year ago."

"How long has she known Tony?"

"Three months."

Selim sat silent and studied the face of the lad. Too old to take the tragedy of youth seriously, Selim was one of those men who never grow too old to understand it, and his heart went out to the grieving boy sitting so dejectedly before him. Selim came to a sudden and definite decision. He would straighten this lad out, and at the same time do a bit of long-needed renovating in Chicago's underworld!

"What is your name, my friend?" he asked.

"Max Steele."

"Well, Max, suppose you had found two hundred dollars in my pockets and gotten away with it—what would you have done next?"

"I would have gone to see Marietta early in the morning and told her not to marry Tony Rosso because I was going to make big money from now on."

"And you would have shown her the two hundred dollars as proof?"

The boy nodded an affirmative.

"Then, I suppose, you would have married Marietta and have gone into the hold-up business for keeps. Would you have told Marietta where you got the money?"

"No," answered the boy. "I wouldn't have told her and I don't think I would have held up anyone else."

"How would you have kept on making big money if you quit being a robber?"

"I would have started bootlegging," the lad replied in all seriousness.

IN spite of himself Selim Gray laughed heartily. The confidence of youth is one of the few things that can be sublime and ridiculous at the same time. In a city where booze barons dealt in millions and guarded their territory with bombs and machine-guns, this lad blithely planned to set up a thriving bootleg business on a capital of two hundred dollars! Then Selim grew sober.

"Boy, I like you and I'm going to help you," he said, "but your viewpoint is all out of focus. Because Tony Rosso steals your girl, you buy a gun and turn highwayman. That's wrong. Rosso wrongs you, and you prey on society to get even. Why not hit back at Rosso?"

"I was going to kill him," muttered Steele.

"That also is a punk idea," answered Selim. "You planned to shoot him on Marietta's threshold, I believe. Romantic, I must admit, but a mussy method, lacking finesse and almost certain to bring your career to an abrupt close at the end of a rope."

"Then how do you mean I should hit back at him?" asked Steele.

"Well," smiled Selim, "the best way I can think of off-hand would be to encourage retribution. It gets the same results—and they can't hang you for it."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Tony Rosso has had a killing coming to him for a long time," said Selim. "Do you know that Tony is the head of one of the most powerful and most unscrupulous gangs in the underworld of this town?"

"Is he?"

"He is. You said he was a bootlegger. In a sense he may be, but I'll tell you how he gets his money. He runs in a large part of the narcotics that are sold in this town and its suburbs. He is a wholesaler of dope. I also have a hunch that he is something even worse than that. He is beyond doubt a dangerous man to oppose. I want you to realize that, because if you still want to take your girl away from him I am going to help you do it. Do you still want to?"

Steele nodded.

"If I agree to help you, will you promise to do exactly as I tell you?"

Hope flashed in the lad's eyes, but died again. "How can you help?" he asked.

"Did you ever hear of Selim Gray?"

A strange look came to young Steele's face and he nodded his head.

"Do you think Selim Gray could help you?"

"Selim Gray can do anything," answered the lad.

"I wish I were as sure of that as you seem," laughed Selim. "I am Selim Gray."

The youth's eyes widened. He leaned forward in his chair, hope returning to his face.

There were few among Chicago's mil-

lions who had not heard of Selim Gray. In two years he had become famed as the nemesis of Gangland's wealthy members. Crooks who had grown rich rapidly were his prey. Time could not age nor custom stale the infinite variety of his methods in relieving these wealthy transgressors of their ill-gotten gains. Gangland's upper strata teemed with men who would have paid dearly for a description of Selim Gray and his address. Could any of those amiable gentlemen have located him, Selim's carcass—beyond all surgical repair—would long since have been hauled to the morgue.

Selim, however, worked always in such a manner that after each raid on Gangland's boodle, its citizens knew only that the raid had been the work of Selim Gray. None of his victims ever had any idea what he looked like or where he might be found. Since his methods were usually as lawless as those of his victims, he was hunted almost as incessantly by the police as by the gangsters. There were many who said the police hunted him praying that they would not find him—and the papers openly applauded his activities. Chicago also buzzed with stories of how every penny of Selim Gray's loot found its way mysteriously into the homes where poverty and sickness stalked. The poor and the great middle class looked upon Selim Gray as a sort of Robin Hood who had made Chicago his Sherwood Forest.

The face of Max Steele fairly shone as he gazed at Selim.

"What would you have me do, Mr. Gray?" he asked in an awed voice.

SELIM rose and went to a wall safe. He returned with a roll of yellow bills which he handed to Steele.

"Here is two hundred dollars," he said. "I want you to go to the Monrovia Hotel and rent a room. In the morning go to your girl and show her the money. Tell her you have turned bootlegger and will be making two or three hundred dollars a week from now on. I will see that you get that much money every week. From what you have told me, Marietta will probably change her mind about marrying Tony Rosso."

"Oh, she will!" cried Steele. "I will marry her myself right away."

"Pardon me if I doubt that," Selim remarked, smiling.

The face of the youth darkened. "Why do you say that?" he asked.

"Don't feel hurt, old man," soothed Selim. "Of course, I don't know your Marietta and my hunch may be wrong. Far be it from me to build any detours on the path of true love! By all means marry her at once if you can."

The frown vanished from Steele's face. "But how can I ever repay you, Mr. Gray?"

"You were not worrying about that when you held me up," smiled Selim. "Why worry now? All I ask is that you say nothing of having met me. Do not mention my name to a soul, not even Marietta. Do not come to this house again, and forget where it is. I will look you up when I am ready to see you. Until then I will send money to your hotel as often as I think you need it. Can I depend upon you to do as I have asked?"

"Indeed you can, Mr. Gray," declared Steele. "And shall I take Marietta to the hotel when we are married?"

"Certainly," answered Selim after a moment of silence, "—when you are married. Now let me remind you that persons who get in Tony Rosso's way often die sudden and messy deaths. Bear that in mind and act accordingly. If I were you I would stay on well-lighted streets and keep my address a secret if possible. Now be on your way and luck go with you. Walk over to the boulevard before you take a taxi and forget me absolutely until I look you up."

The happy youth departed and Selim went to a shelf and took down a large book. He turned to a page headed "TONY ROSSO" and became deeply absorbed in the data concerning that rascal. After half an hour he closed the book and prepared to retire.

With dawn Selim rose and began a strange toilet. It started with a shave and bath, after which he anointed his entire body with a dark liquid from a large bottle. When he had finished his fair complexion had become a swarthy olive. Next he set to work with another liquid and soon his reddish-brown hair and brows were a glossy black. Then he took an electric curling-iron from a cabinet in the bathroom and in half an hour his hair clustered in tight curls. Some foil and a tube of cement next turned one of his gleaming white teeth to gold, and ten minutes' work with some cotton-like stuff gave his lean cheeks a rounded appearance. Pads of various shapes and sizes were carefully adjusted and securely fastened to his body. When he was dressed in a rough and unkempt suit,

blue shirt, nondescript cap and heavy tan shoes, Selim appeared to be a typical husky Italian of the lower class.

Posing before a mirror Selim grinned at his reflection and addressed it in a throaty voice. The Italian accent was perfect, not overdone, but apparently as natural as breathing. Nevertheless, Selim practiced it for almost two hours before he left the house and caught a street-car headed for the loop and breakfast.

TWO days later Gangland heard whispers of an apparently flush outsider who had intruded between Tony Rosso and his "moll." Rumor said that the girl had postponed a wedding with Tony because of the rush the outsider was giving her. Gangland smiled—and wondered how long the outsider would live. Tony was silent when seen about his favorite haunts, but the look on his face boded trouble for somebody.

A day or so after the rumor was first heard Tony and two of his lieutenants sat in the back room of a so-called soft-drink parlor in the heart of Little Italy. They were drinking pale wine from a tall bottle and talking in low tones.

At the bar in the front part of the place Selim Gray, now Luigi Marino, was sipping a glass of red wine and talking in Italian to the fat bartender. He was telling him that he was a mechanic and truck-driver who had recently come to Chicago from New York and was hunting a job. He had been in America ten years, he said, and was a native of Naples, Italy.

The bartender refilled Selim's wine-glass and went into the back room to answer a call from Rosso.

"There is a young fellow from your old home town in Italy out at the bar, Mr. Rosso," he said as he placed a fresh bottle of wine on the table. "His name is Luigi Marino and he is looking for a job in a garage or driving a truck."

There is no safer bridge across the moat of a man's suspicions than a common nativity. Tony Rosso sauntered out to where Selim stood at the bar.

"I hear you are from Naples," he said. "My name is Antonio Rosso. I too was born in Naples."

In good throaty Italian Selim introduced himself as Luigi Marino, and shook hands with Rosso.

An hour later in the back room Rosso ordered his lieutenants to be off on certain errands and was left alone with Selim, who had been invited by Rosso to share the gangster's wine.

"Marino," said Rosso, "you say you are a good driver. How would you like to have a good job with me?"

"Driving?" queried Selim.

"Yes, it is driving, but it is also a very important job," answered Rosso. "How much do you usually make?"

"From forty to fifty dollars a week," said Selim. "I am a good mechanic."

"If you work for me all you have to do is to drive," Rosso assured him. "And if you serve me well I will pay you one hundred dollars a week."

Selim seemed duly impressed. "Tell me what I shall do, Mr. Rosso," he begged.

Before he retired in one of Little Italy's lodging-houses that night Selim had been hired to drive a car for Tony Rosso. He was to drive the car to a certain place near the Canadian border the next day and bring back a package which he was to deliver personally to his employer at a North Side rendezvous. He had been impressed with the value of the package and the importance of secrecy on his mission. It had also been hinted that it would not be well for him should anything go wrong with the safe delivery of the package.

Selim smiled grimly as he crawled into bed. He knew well what that package would contain and the consequences if he were caught with it in his possession.

Things were working out exactly as Selim had planned, though with greater speed and ease than he had hoped for. Tony Rosso usually drove after the consignments of narcotics himself. He trusted few of his fellows and did not trust those few greatly. He was loath to leave Chicago, however, until he had taken his girl back from this fresh upstart who had butted into his romance. Not that Tony was particularly wild about Marietta, but his vanity was hurt—he could not endure to be laughed at.

Meanwhile Max Steele was doing exactly as Selim had expected the lovesick youth to do. He was rushing the lady in the case so energetically and constantly that Tony was finding it hard to hold his own.

Therefore Tony considered Selim a real find. Selim had played his part to perfection. He was just a green Italian mechanic to whom the job of driving a car for one hundred dollars a week was a godsend; apparently he was made to order for Tony's need.

Three times during the next two weeks Selim drove to the place near Canada and brought back packages, each time delivering them to Rosso at a different address.

Between the second and third trips Selim was approached in a pool-hall one night by a man whom he knew to be a retailer of dope and a rival of the Rosso organization. This fellow saw a chance to bribe the green Italian driver, strike a blow at Rosso and make a profit for himself.

Selim permitted himself to be tempted and finally agreed reluctantly to betray Rosso and deliver one of the precious packages to the rival gang for three thousand dollars. Arrangements were made for the transfer of the package and payment for it, and Selim and his tempter parted.

This was a situation Selim had not foreseen, but it fitted in well and strengthened his plans. It gave him an opportunity to make another unsuspected enemy for Tony Rosso.

MEANWHILE stories were being passed about Gangland that Tony's moll was still standing him up for the outsider. Because of the competition for her favors the girl had become the toast of the night-clubs and roadhouses. A smattering of the affair even got into the papers.

Several times Selim talked with Max Steele on the telephone, using a prearranged password to identify himself. He warned the youth to guard carefully against foul play. Twice he sent funds to Steele by messenger.

Then at breakfast in an Italian restaurant one morning, he saw a story on the front page of a morning paper. It told how a man had been shot down amid a crowd on State Street the night before. According to the story, the bullet had evidently been fired from an upper-story window across the street. The victim was at St. Luke's hospital, and it was thought he would recover. He gave his name as Max Steele, living at the Monrovia hotel. No trace of the assailant had been found. Both the police and the victim believed the bullet had been intended for some one else.

Tony had been riddled with bullets while seated at a table in a roadhouse.

"Game young devil, at that!" muttered Selim.

He finished his breakfast and then went to his room, where he wrote a note to the injured youth. He then walked to a railroad station and dispatched the message to Steele by a telegraph messenger.

That afternoon he started north in Rosso's high-powered car after another of the packages. Reaching his destination near Canada he slept all day. The next

evening he received his package, noted with pleasure that it appeared the same as its predecessors, and started immediately for Chicago.

He drove fast, for his plans made it necessary that he reach Chicago an hour earlier than his usual time. Shortly after daylight he stopped for a moment at a hotel in Evanston where he obtained two packages which were exact duplicates in appearance of one now hidden in his car.

The difference between them and the package in the car was that the small glass phials they contained held only innocent bath-salts. Selim had prepared these packages after his first trip and planted them in the hotel checkroom against future need.

He placed the duplicate packages under the back seat of his car. Then he called a certain number, in Chicago, on the telephone, after which he proceeded to the city. He drove first to his own home near Lincoln Park where he left the package of narcotics. Then he drove downtown and waited a few minutes at the curb in front of a big Loop hotel. A man stepped up to the car and after a quick look up and down the street spoke to him in a low tone.

"Have you got it?" asked the man.

"Yes," answered Selim. "Where's the money?"

The man produced a well-stuffed envelope which he handed to Selim. Selim lifted the flap, made a swift inventory of the bank-notes and slipped the envelope into his pocket. He then handed the man one of the packages he had acquired in Evanston. The man scurried into the hotel and Selim drove away to deliver the remaining package to Rosso.

He knew that Rosso would immediately deliver the package to a retailer and collect for it, believing it to be the contraband narcotics. What the reaction of the retailer would be when he discovered the true nature of his purchase was something for Tony Rosso to worry about!

AN hour later Selim entered his own home and made directly for the bathroom. When he emerged half an hour later his hair, plastered down with pomade, was again its original reddish brown. His swarthy complexion was gone, as were his puffy cheeks and gold tooth. With the shedding of the pads his slender figure, now dressed in a neat business suit, seemed to have lost thirty pounds.

Going to a typewriter in a corner of the library he typed a note. Then he opened the package of narcotics that lay on the table, inserted the note and rewrapped the package. He then addressed it to a certain Federal official, got his car from the garage and drove to the post office, where he mailed the package.

He smiled as he turned away from the parcel-post window. "As Bill Shakespeare said," chuckled Selim, " 'Mischief, thou art afoot!' "

In the meantime the little dark man who had received the package from Selim at the downtown hotel had a very unpleasant experience. Unwrapping the package in a dingy office in a building not far from where he had received it, he found a typewritten note which read:

> You will find these bath-salts expensive, but hereafter you will know better than to try to bribe one of my men. Thanks for the three grand.
>
> TONY ROSSO.

What the little dark man said after reading the note was not nice. The look on his face as he turned to a telephone on the desk was still more unwholesome.

Selim Gray awakened shortly after dawn the next morning. He dressed leisurely and walked to a grill several blocks from his home for breakfast. At the door of the grill he purchased a morning paper. He smiled grimly as he read the headlines:

GUNMEN SLAY TONY ROSSO

Over his breakfast he read the details. Tony had been riddled with bullets by three gunmen while seated with friends at a table in a roadhouse. The slayers had, as usual, escaped in a high-powered car. The police and the papers catalogued the event as just another casualty in the gang wars of the city. Selim sipped his coffee and wondered which of the men who had bought the bath-salts had found Tony first. He didn't care—he merely wondered.

After breakfast he went to a telephone-booth and called St. Luke's hospital. He was informed that Max Steele could talk to him on the telephone. Presently he heard Steele's voice and gave the password identifying him to that youth.

"How are you feeling?" asked Selim.

"Not so bad," came the answer. "The bullet only went through my shoulder."

"Fine," said Selim. "Have you money enough to pay your hospital bill?"

"Yes."

"Then pay it and get dressed. I will be around to get you in half an hour."

An hour later Selim and the injured youth again sat facing each other in Selim's library. Steele's left arm was in a sling. Selim handed the morning paper to his guest, indicating the headlines.

"Have you seen this?" he asked.

The youth gasped and shook his head. Selim laid the paper in his lap and Steele read the story.

"Did—did—" began Steele, when he had finished.

Selim laughed. "Did I do it?" he asked. "My friend, do you really think I would do anything so crude? You really should be ashamed! However, your rival has been removed from the field. You should now have little difficulty in winning Marietta."

"To hell with Marietta!" cried the youth, his eyes suddenly flashing. "To hell with all women!"

"Poor old Satan!" laughed Selim. "Why send him so much trouble in one consignment? I gather that you do not intend to marry Marietta. Tell me about it."

"Well, I did as you told me. When I showed her the money she agreed not to marry Tony, but she said she and I couldn't get married until we were sure I could keep on making big money."

"Prudent damsel," commented Selim.

"I spent all the money you gave me taking her out and buying things for her," went on Steele. "She kept saying we must wait a little while longer before we got married."

"Yes?" Selim prompted.

"The night I was shot I was coming from her apartment," continued the boy. "I had gone there and found her sitting on the lap of an old man whom she met at a night-club last week. He is old enough to be her grandfather, but he owns a lot of drug-stores out west. She told me she was through with me and Tony, both. Said she was going to marry the old man and go home to Denver with him."

"I hate to say I told you so," drawled Selim; "but she *would* do that. Probably she thinks this one can't live very long and then she'll have his money and no boss. They run pretty true to form."

"I've learned my lesson," muttered the boy. "To hell with all of them!"

"Hold on," laughed Selim. "Looks like I untwisted your viewpoint too far and gave it a twist the other way! I had no intention of turning a *Romeo* into a misogynist. Do you still want to be a bootlegger or a hold-up man?"

The youth shook his head. "I think I'll get my job back, if I can," he said. "I'll pay back your six hundred dollars just as soon as I can save it up."

SELIM regarded the penitent youth long and earnestly. A soft light came to his gray eyes and he rose and placed his hand on the lad's uninjured shoulder.

"Forget the six hundred dollars," he said. "And as for a job, I need an understudy. The job is yours if you want it."

Young Steele looked up and met Selim's eyes. "What will I have to do?" he asked.

"First, you will have to rest until your shoulder heals," answered Selim. "After that I will begin to train you to help with my work."

"What is your work?"

"Well," smiled Selim, "it is a rather sizable job—I might say it is a new field. I encourage retribution. To explain briefly, I have undertaken to show Chicago Gangland how to exterminate itself and make it pay me for the instruction. Sad to say, I find much opposition from the police, who should be my helpers. Therefore, I have decided to find and train my own aids. I liked you when I first met you. I am more than ever convinced now that you are the sort of timber I need. Do you want the job?"

"If you really want me, Mr. Gray," answered the youth.

"All right," smiled Selim. "You are hired—and your first task is to get well."

THE following day a certain Federal official opened a package which had come in the mail, to find more than five thousand dollars' worth of narcotics. A note enclosed in the package read:

> I intercepted this package on its way to somewhere from somewhere else, and exchanged a package of bath-salts for it. I am sending it to you because I feel certain that if I surrendered it to the police it would reach the place to which it was going when I headed it off.
>
> Sincerely,
> SELIM GRAY.

A reporter happened to be present when the package was opened, and the latest exploit of Selim Gray got into the papers. Gangland read it and knew that in some inexplicable manner Selim had had a hand in the bumping-off of Tony Rosso. . . . But months passed before gunmen ceased to search Chicago for one Luigi Marino, an Italian mechanic.

Conway paused. "A helluva lot you know about altitude records, fella! Want to fly this one, for a change?"

Altitude

A free-balloon expert soars high indeed—a vivid and authentic story by an officer of the army air service.

By

LELAND S. JAMIESON

Illustrated by William Molt

THE silver sphere that was the *Marie IV,* the balloon of all balloons to Captain Conway, tugged lightly at the sandbags that held her to the floor. A faint chill breeze whipped around the corner of the open hangar and swayed her gently; the grace of the oscillations suggested an eagerness to tear away from the moorings that lay in a neat square below her basket. Big beyond comparison with other free balloons, she was an object of affection from airmen. She was not just a free balloon, a fabrication of cloth and rope and wicker, filled with hydrogen; she was the *Marie IV;* her name was painted in tall blue letters on her side beneath the netting, and men spoke of her by name. To those familiar with her exploits she had a definite personality, as inanimate things may often have.

In the semi-gloom inside the hangar two men were working. Conway, the larger of these men, was standing in the wicker car of the balloon. Kisner, his aide on many past occasions, knelt upon the floor and sorted paraphernalia, pausing, now and then, to stand and pass some object up to Conway. It was cold; the mercury of the thermometer in the basket huddled in the tube at ten degrees above zero; both men wore heavy fur-lined flying clothes, though only Conway was going on the flight. Their hands were mittened and were huge, like paws; their feet were incased in awkward fleece-lined moccasins.

Kisner lifted a small steel cylinder, upon which was attached a parachute pack, and handed it to Conway; the larger man stepped to the opposite side of the wicker cage and tussled clumsily with the straps and lines that were meant to hold the cylinder in place against a framework on the outside of the car. His hands were all thumbs, and he had difficulty. Finally, in exasperation he turned to Kisner.

"Here, fella, give me a hand. I've got too many mittens."

"Take 'em off," Kisner suggested gravely, stepping around the basket. "You can't tie knots in a piece of rope with two thumbs."

Aiding one another, the two accomplished the task, and Kisner turned back to sorting the various lines and gear on the floor.

AN automobile drew to a stop just within the doorway of the hangar, and another man, also dressed in flying clothes—

the best protection from the cold—climbed out. Opening the rear door of the car he removed three small, black rectangular boxes. Handling them with infinite care, he walked toward the *Marie IV*. Conway saw him coming and turned to Kisner.

"Here comes Welkfurn with our instruments. We're just about all set now."

The man named Welkfurn called, as he approached the balloon: "You guys must 'a' been working all night, to be out here this time of day. How you making out?"

"Fine," Conway replied. "Set those barographs down and give us a hand here. What'd the jeweler say? I guess he got the oil off all right."

"Should have," said Welkfurn. "Told me he worked all night on 'em. Got a fine day for a trip like this, eh? Awful cold down here, though. . . . . Say, Charley Redfern ran into a culvert with that big new car of his last night. Saw the wreck a while ago as I was going to town. Tore her up mighty bad; Charley didn't have it paid for either. Don't know what he's—"

"Brought everything back from town, did you?" Conway interrupted.

"Yeah, everything you sent. . . . . Hello, Kisner! Got you working! How come? Say, Con, what time are you going to take off? Morning papers carried a story on you and the *Marie;* there's going to be a crowd out to see you shove off. I was talking to that skinny little reporter that covers the field on this kind of stuff; he was looking for you to get a write-up, and he wants to get a yarn and some pictures for a full page for Sunday. Told him you're busy as hell and that he'd get run off the place if he showed up out here, but he said: 'Got to do it, Lieutenant; guess I better get out there right after noon and see the Captain.' I'm going to get me a club and wait for him. Say, Kis, how about a cigarette?"

"You through talking?" Conway grinned. "Kisner's got a lot to do down there before I take off. How about doing a little work yourself?"

"Work?"—indignantly. "Say, who was it got up at seven o'clock this morning and drove thirty miles to get those barographs? Battery frozen, too; had to crank the bus by hand. Nearly froze to death! Just got the seat warmed up as I was driving up to the hangar—"

"Hand me those instruments," Conway interrupted. "Be careful with 'em too!"

Welkfurn handed the black boxes up, one at a time. Then he turned and squatted beside Kisner, busied himself with the adjustment of a sand-release on an empty sandbag.

OCCASIONALLY Kisner or Welkfurn looked up and directed some question at Conway, queried this or that in connection with the preparation for the flight. Kisner was all engaged with the work he had to do; Welkfurn, on the other hand, kept up a running conversation. From time to time he made some friendly jest about Conway's ability as a balloonist.

"Ought to get the record this time," Welkfurn called. "Tried it three times now; had lots of practice trying to get it. Better make it on this trip; you'll be running out of excuses pretty soon."

Conway paused, stopped his work and stood with mittened hands upon his hips.

"A helluva lot you know about altitude records, fella! Want to fly this one, for a change? I'll let you!"

"Guess not this time. *Marie* and I don't get along so well. I haven't got the master's touch." And Welkfurn laughed.

"Say, Con, I'll order flowers this afternoon. Got a friend in town who's a florist. I can get 'em cheap," he added.

"I'm supposed to laugh at that, I guess!" Conway said to Kisner. Then to Welkfurn: "Little stale this morning, son."

Kisner seemed annoyed.

"You talk like a fool, Welk!" he said soberly. "You talk like that, and something might happen!"

"Don't see any harm in it," Welkfurn replied defensively. "No harm meant; you don't need to get sore about it." He slipped into a moody silence.

Kisner climbed into the basket to help Conway with the equipment there. For two hours the three men worked, saying little. The sun crawled up in the east and stood almost overhead, but it brought no warmth as it climbed.

When the preparations for the flight were almost completed, Conway sent Welkfurn down to headquarters on an errand. Welkfurn was gone almost an hour, and when he returned Conway yelled to him:

"Hey, fella, where's my clock?"

"Clock?" Welkfurn asked blankly. "Search me; didn't know you sent a clock."

Conway paused. "Sure I sent one. Sent it with the barographs to have the oil cleaned out of it."

"Use another one," Welkfurn suggested "I'll get one out of another balloon."

"Use another one?" Kisner asked sourly. "Gosh, I thought you knew more than that! Con's got to have a clock that's dry—no oil inside of it—or the oil'll get stiff up high where it's cold, and the clock'll freeze! He's got to have that clock running to tell him when it's time to start back down. He's got oxygen for an hour and a half; he's got to save enough oxygen to get back down to fifteen thousand feet—where he can breathe air again. If the clock stops up there and he uses up all his oxygen—not knowing when the time'll be up—he'll suffocate before he gets back down!"

Conway laughed at Kisner's agitation.

"You better go back to town and get it," Kisner said. "Con's got to have it. And don't waste any time!"

"I don't think he's got time enough now," Conway said dryly. "I'm going to take off right after lunch, and Welk might get to talking downtown and not get back in time. Eh, Welk?"

Welkfurn looked up at the two men in the basket a moment, then at the floor. He tried to grin.

"I'll get your damn' clock!" he said hastily. He ran to the automobile, climbed in. Gears clashed for a moment, and he was gone.

"Good scout, Welkfurn," Conway said to Kisner. "Just young and inexperienced. Means everything fine. Just like a woman, though—always talking. Gets started to talking and forgets everything else. He doesn't remember it, but I told him yesterday about that clock. Some day he'll have to make a parachute jump from a balloon—if there's anybody else in the basket, Welk'll get started talking on the way down and forget to pull his rip-cord!"

CONWAY was scheduled to begin his flight at one o'clock that afternoon; he could not well delay it beyond two-thirty because, in doing so, he ran the risk of landing his balloon in strange country after night with the consequent hazard of being killed; or, if his parachute was resorted to, of losing the balloon.

The flight had been planned with infinite attention to detail in equipment and the weather. The equipment had been ready for a month, but the weather until now had made the flight impossible.

Captain Conway wanted to be the man who had gone to "the highest point up" ever attained by man, and he had made of that desire a lifelong ambition. For three years after entering the service he had studied and trained and worked unceasingly. At the end of that time he took a small balloon and flew it as high as he could go without oxygen—some twenty-six thousand feet. That was the beginning of a series of flights, each a little higher.

The result of this procedure was that after ten years in the service, Conway knew more about balloons and high-altitude balloon flying than any man had ever known before. But still, he didn't hold the record. He had held it, to be sure; but each time he got it in his grasp some other man, in a balloon or airplane, went up a few feet higher.

Conway wanted to stop that. He wanted to go so high that his record would stand until some one built a bigger balloon than his and learned to fly it better than he could fly the *Marie*.

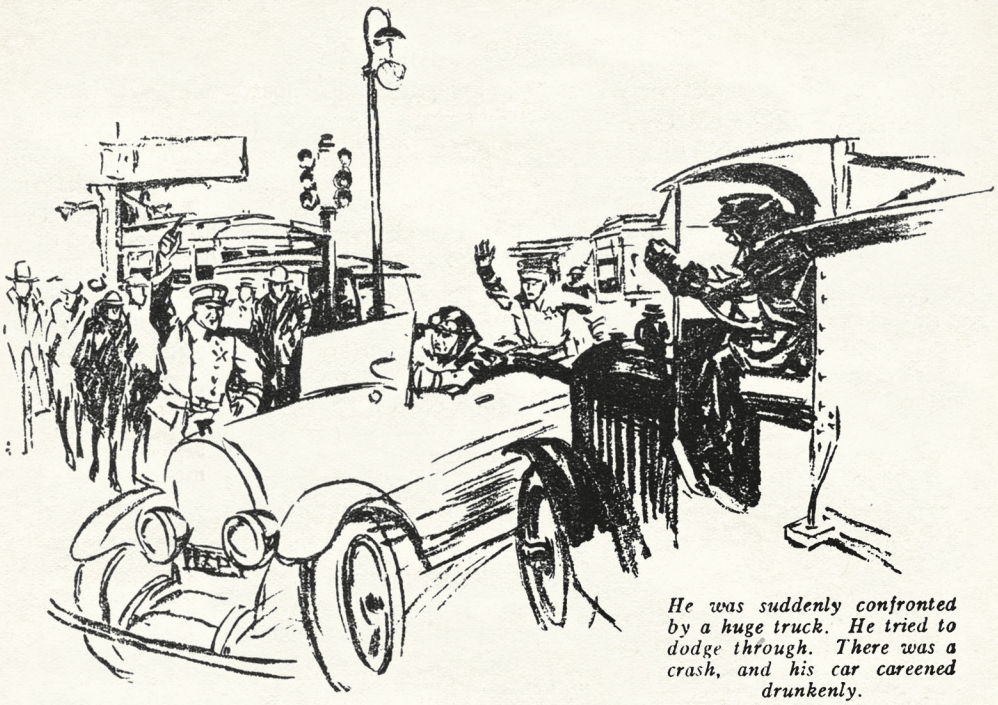
Conway and Kisner were through with the balloon by twelve o'clock, but now, to occupy their time, they made another inspection of the basket, checked every instrument carefully, examined the sand-releases, the barographs and radio. There was nothing more to do, and they drove back to the club and went to lunch, trying to calm their excitement in activity, as the time for the take-off drew nearer.

FROM the flying field to Greenburg was about fifteen miles; a car like Welkfurn's should have been able to traverse the distance in twenty minutes, or thirty at the most. Conway expected Welkfurn back within an hour, and when he returned to the balloon hangar after lunch he looked around for Welkfurn's car, but could not find it. The sergeant left with the balloon had seen nothing of Welkfurn.

"That little cuss!" said Kisner angrily. "I wonder where he is?"

Conway did not reply. He was looking appraisingly at the sky, as if he saw it now for the first time that day. High clouds were pushing rapidly in from the southwest. There had been no sign of them that morning; now they had slid well overhead. The sun's rays were dimming slowly, would be obscured soon. Already the shadow of the hangar was blurred.

"Snow tomorrow, Kis," said Conway. "If it warms up, it'll rain. We're in for a bad stretch of weather; there are the signs!"—pointing.



He was suddenly confronted by a huge truck. He tried to dodge through. There was a crash, and his car careened drunkenly.

"Something's happened to Welkfurn!" Kisner declared. "It's one-thirty. He's had plenty of time—something's happened to him."

Conway stepped briskly out to where he could view the road that led to the balloon hangar, examined the road carefully, looking for Welkfurn's car approaching. No car was in sight. He returned to the doorway of the hangar, waited briefly, then went out again. Still Welkfurn did not appear.

"If he doesn't hurry up, you can't go!" Kisner muttered angrily. "He knows better than to delay like this."

Conway studied the sky in silence. He finally shook his head.

"Say, Kis, call the jeweler; find out if Welkfurn's been there! Why didn't we think of that before?"

Conway stood by and listened while Kisner called his number. He looked at his watch—one-thirty-seven.

"Hasn't been there?" he heard Kisner question. "Haven't seen him? What the hell! Well, when he comes in there, tell him we're waiting for that clock!"

WELKFURN left Conway and Kisner in a mood of anger with himself. He realized that the clock was necessary for the flight. He hadn't thought of it before—a clock freezing in the air; but he could readily see, now that Kisner had explained it, that Conway ran a risk of death if his timepiece failed him on the flight. And Welkfurn knew Conway well enough to know that the balloonist would take off without the clock rather than postpone the trip. Well, he'd get it there in time. Conway wanted to take off at one o'clock, which gave Welkfurn a few minutes more than an hour to make the trip.

He drove furiously toward Greenburg, holding the car at its greatest speed, slowing only slightly for the turns. He knew that he could make the trip, with luck, in fifty minutes—even less than that. He wanted a good margin of time on the return trip. Conway had always laughed at him for talking constantly and forgetting things; and he knew that the other man had been justified in doing so.

Welkfurn had come some three miles toward Greenburg when he was startled by a blatant siren just behind him. He pulled carefully to the side of the road, holding his speed, to let the other vehicle pass; but the sound persisted. Then he saw, through the window in the rear, a motorcycle policeman riding close behind and to the side.

He had a crazy impulse to cut suddenly across the road, to wreck the officer's machine; but he realized the idiocy of that procedure and slowed angrily to a stop. The cop rode up alongside, rested his foot leisurely on the running-board of Welkfurn's car.

"Nice speedway here, aint it?"—acidly.

"What's the idea of stopping me?" Welkfurn barked in reply. "I'm going to town on official business; you can't stop me like this! I'm in a hurry!"

"Can't stop ya? That's too bad! You aint on the reservation now, buddy. Yer on the State highway, and yer speedin' somethin' awful!"

"I'll have your job!" Instantly he wished he had been silent. The policeman looked at him appraisingly, then smirked:

"You couldn't hold it!"

"Listen, Mister," Welkfurn said appeasingly, trying to hurry the matter, "a friend of mine's liable to get killed if I don't get back to the field in a hurry! Can't I sign a bond and then go on?"

"That's better. Yeah, you can sign a bond." He produced it, filled it out, and Welkfurn signed it hurriedly. "I'm goin' into town behind ya," the cop continued. "Better not go no faster'n the law allows, or you can't sign a bond next time!"

Welkfurn drove ahead at what seemed to him a snail's pace, the cop following at a distance.

IN town at last, and free of the policeman, Welkfurn opened up his car and tore through traffic toward the jeweler's place. Twice he was whistled at by traffic-officers, but both times he got away. He thought, mirthlessly: "I'll be afraid to come to town for a month after this ride!"

Ill luck pursued him, as it often does when haste is most essential. Rounding a corner at thirty miles an hour, he was suddenly confronted by a huge truck that almost blocked the street. He tried to dodge through—thought he had made it. There was a crash, his car careened drunkenly and skidded to a stop. A rear wheel lay splintered on the pavement; the axle of the car was resting on the curb.

It required ten precious minutes to pacify the truck-man. Welkfurn was made to fill out a card, giving his name and address and phone number. At last he was allowed to go, and he ran frantically to the store. He burst in and asked, breathlessly, for the clock.

"Somebody just called about you," the jeweler told him. "Seemed like he was sore about something. I told him you hadn't been here, and he said for you to hurry up, that they were waiting for you out there."

"Good! If he'll only wait, everything'll be all right. If he takes off without this clock, there'll be hell to pay!" He grabbed the instrument and hurried out. He found a cab and gave the driver directions, offering a double rate for speed. But on the highway the cab moved along at a speed within the limits of law. Looking back, Welkfurn saw the same motorcycle cop who had detained him earlier riding steadily along a hundred yards behind.

The cab left the highway and entered the reservation. The driver shoved the throttle down now, and in less than a minute more turned onto the road that led to the balloon hangar. And at that moment Welkfurn saw the *Marie,* gray and stately against the haze, rise slowly in the air.

WITH the weather all against him if his flight should be delayed, Conway decided, at two o'clock, to fly the *Marie IV* into the subzero temperatures of the upper air with an ordinary clock. Kisner tried in every way to dissuade him, but without success. Kisner persisted, like a mother who argues with a wayward son, until the other man turned on him impatiently.

"I know what I'm about!" Conway snapped. "Get the crew and put the *Marie* outside. If I don't go today I'll not have another chance before spring!"

"But see here, Con," Kisner said desperately. "That clock'll stop and you'll run out of oxygen up there! You'll die before you can get down! Dammit, you don't have to kill yourself trying to get that record!"

But Kisner saw that Conway was in earnest and he reluctantly put the crew to work. They hauled the balloon outside the hangar, took the place of the sandbags that had held it to the ground.

Conway came presently and shoved through the crowd of curious people, climbed into the basket and put on his fur-lined helmet and his parachute. He made a last-minute inspection of the oxygen equipment and spoke quietly to Kismer, who stood close by. He was in a good humor now that the flight was definitely under way.

"Tell that little cuss I'm going to break his neck when I get down," he said, referring to Welkfurn. "Going to get a club and run him all over this flying field!"

Kisner nodded gravely. He was in no mood for joking. He was tempted to try again to persuade Conway to postpone the flight, but he knew that it was useless. He

reached up and grasped the furry paw that was extended down to him.

"Good luck, old man," he said, keeping his voice steady with difficulty. "Call me up as soon as you get down and I'll come after you."

But Conway didn't notice his agitation.

"Thanks," he replied absently.

The *Marie* took off for altitude at two twenty-three that afternoon. The wind had died down during the day from a fitful, biting breeze to a dead calm; overhead the clouds had thickened perceptibly.

The weather was ideal. Cold air, dry and heavy; the balloon would go up into the higher reaches in a steady climb that would take it to forty thousand feet within an hour—or sooner, if Conway wanted it.

But Conway had no particular desire for speed. Rather, he wanted to go up slowly so that the effects of the change of atmospheric pressure on his body would not be acutely uncomfortable; he wanted to go up slowly, also, so that he might study the conditions of the air at varying elevations. When once at the top of his climb, with the record his, he wanted to remain there several minutes—as long as his oxygen supply would permit—to study the conditions there. For while he wanted the altitude record, he also wanted to make his flight of value to other flyers.

He had changed his clothes at noon, and now wore garments that were heated by electricity from the battery in the basket. His oxygen mask, which he would put on when rarefied air was reached, was heated also; and his goggles likewise. His helmet was equipped with earphones, and in the wicker cage a radio was rigged to bring in entertainment from the ground when he was flying high above the earth.

The *Marie* drifted lazily into the air, looking, from the ground, like a huge gray soap-bubble on which a drop of water clung. Conway stood at the rim of his tiny car and watched the earth drop slowly away below. He was watching nothing in particular, seeing the crowd and the flying field and Greenburg through the haze abstractedly. He noticed an automobile, a cab whose vivid color was its trademark, race along the road toward the balloon hangar. It came at last to the crowd, broke through the cordon of soldiers that had surrounded the *Marie* on the ground, raced to a spot directly underneath the balloon. A figure leaped out, waved frantically.

Conway did not recognize the car as Welkfurn's. He had been glancing at the road occasionally, hoping that the other man would arrive at the field in time. He knew the dangers of going into the cold of high altitudes with an oily clock, and he planned, if Welkfurn came in time, to return to earth to get the other timepiece.

He watched the waving figure for a moment and thought: "Must be that fool reporter. Too late even for a picture!"

The mottled earth dimmed slowly through the haze as the *Marie* went skyward.

Conway reached for his collar clumsily with his mittened fingers and adjusted the fur around his throat. Idly he watched a lone buzzard circle in the bleak and forlorn cold at two thousand feet. Slowly the balloon reached a level with the bird, went on up until Conway lost sight of the wheeling speck of black. The thermometer in the basket registered five degrees above zero; not cold, in comparison with the cold that would be encountered in the upper air, but cold enough that Conway's face felt drawn and hard and bitten. In a few minutes he would put his face mask on.

At five thousand feet the haze was denser; he could still see the earth below, but faintly now. The flying field stood out dimly from the other land surrounding it, but the giant hangar in its center seemed to fade imperceptibly into the haze.

The radio brought a rakish melody faintly to the earphones. The music soothed Conway, though if he had listened to it on the ground he would have turned to something else. It made him forget to some extent the loneliness of the infinity that stretched away above him. The earth was invisible now.

AT fifteen thousand feet the temperature had dropped to five degrees below. Conway put on his mask and adjusted it.

His goggles began to fog and, reaching down, he turned on his batteries; then, picking up his log sheet, made an entry:

"4 volts; much colder."

The air was becoming thinner, lighter. There was less oxygen to breathe, and he found himself sucking in the icy air in greedy gasps. Stooping, he twisted a valve that opened an oxygen tank. After that his breath came normally.

An airman going rapidly aloft to great altitudes sometimes experiences an acute

discomfort called, in aviation parlance, "bends," or sometimes "rickets." These "bends" may produce pains behind the flyer's ears, like mastoiditis, or an apparent buzzing in the ears and head. If prolonged these pains become unbearable. Conway suffered from this trouble now, and slowed the progress of the balloon until his body could become accustomed to the change in pressure of the air.

At sixteen thousand feet the *Marie* entered the first layer of clouds. The mist hugged tight around the basket; whereas before—when in clear air—Conway had been able to see a distance of fifty miles, he could scarcely see ten feet now. The feeling of isolation and aloneness was even more pronounced The temperature was fifteen degrees below, yet snow filtered down from the clouds above, passed Conway slowly. Gradually the rounded top of the huge bag was covered with snow, a perceptible weight to carry into the rarefied air as the flight progressed. Conway spilled more sand from his ballast bags, a thin yellow stream of grains that fell away like beads of amber glass.

At twenty thousand feet the *Marie* lifted herself out of the clouds and into clear sunshine. The sky here was a deep and lifeless blue Clouds stretched out in all directions—seemingly into infinity, low ridge after low ridge, with valleys in between: a flat plain of brilliantly white mist that was painful to the eye. Above these clouds there was no haze; the sun was intense, yet cold, unfriendly.

It was ten minutes until three o'clock. The radio was still bringing in music from an invisible, distant world. The bends grew less painful as the minutes passed.

But Conway's body was gradually growing numb from the lack of pressure on it—a normal phenomenon at extremely high altitudes. Some men may go to forty thousand feet before this sets in; others feel it coming on at thirty thousand. Conway began to suffer from it at thirty-five. He felt no cold, no pain; his body seemed to rest comfortably, with a kind of sensuous inertia that lulled him toward a seductive semiconsciousness. He tried to fight this feeling, tried to rouse himself. He knew its symptoms and its dangers: in its final form a few minutes of complete paralysis, then sleep. The oxygen would feed his lungs until it became exhausted, then sleep would carry him to death in the thin, anæmic air eight miles above the earth. He had felt that way on other flights, although less so than now. And he still had nine thousand feet to go before the record would be safely his. . . . . The mercury in the thermometer had tumbled down to twenty-nine below.

THERE was a sudden suffocating feeling in Conway's lungs. Quickly he changed from the first oxygen tank to the second; then, with a knife that dangled on a string inside the basket he cut the rubber tubing of the first tank and hacked at the lashings that protruded into the car. The empty cylinder fell silently away; the balloon lunged upward gently, hesitated with a slight jerk, then went up again.

Conway was dimly conscious that his radio was silent. He tuned it carefully, examined it at length without success. Finally he leaned over the side of the basket and looked down at the antenna—it was gone. Slowly he scrawled on his log:

"Cyl. dropped. Broke antenna off; no more music."

He busied himself for some minutes with entries in his log, writing now in an unsteady hand, clumsily. He set down the time shown on the clock and the voltage being drawn from his batteries—anything he saw or anything he thought about recording to occupy his mind.

Insidiously the numbness grew upon his body. He seemed unable to see his instruments clearly; he was like a drunken man, his vision blurred. Doggedly he shook his head, trying thus to clear his sight. His senses seemed all befuddled. Foolhardy though he knew the expenditure of energy to be—for he was not cold—he took to waving his mittened hands, clapping them together gently, as a freezing man might do when slipping into a fatal stupor in the cold. But that did no good; and he took up his pencil again and tried to make another entry in his log. His mind seemed to work in vagrant opposition to his will, disobeying reason and experience.

He read his altimeter and his clock and thermometer. These readings he put down carefully, with painful labor. The altimeter registered thirty-eight thousand feet; it was three-twenty by the clock; the temperature was down to thirty-four below. He found the line on the log below where his last entry had been made. There was something distantly familiar about the figures already there and the ones he was

trying to write; he fumbled in his mind to recall the connection—failed.

Time passed now in endless throbs. His legs felt numb; his feet like slugs of lead that hung inside his fur-lined moccasins in curious detachment from his body. With difficulty now he made new figures on the paper. Wearily he glanced at other entries and wondered where he had seen them; he glanced at all his instruments and back to the log once more. Slowly realization came to him.

There were three entries that gave the time of day as three-twenty! The clock, also, said three-twenty! He puzzled that; finally, through a blur, knew that the clock had stopped! He stared out into space, trying to collect his wits, incredulous.

The figure seemed to hang a moment on the rim, seemed to try to struggle free, then toppled from the car.

"The oil!" he thought. "How long ago?"

The altimeter registered forty-one thousand feet. He knew, dimly, that he must hurry; but there was no conscious fear among his muddled thoughts. Suddenly there was that suffocation in his lungs; he changed to the third cylinder of oxygen, his movements heavy. It was later than he had thought—the time was now almost too short!

Speed! Conway dropped the remainder of his sand, cut away the second cylinder to lighten the balloon still further. His movements were sluggish, and he fumbled stupidly. The paralysis was moving up-

ward in his body, was seeping into his arms already; would soon sweep up and touch his sight and hearing and his brain.

His foggy mind worked incoherently. Up two thousand more. . . . . Down twenty thousand—the air was thick down there. . . . . Thirty minutes on the last tank. . . . . Never make it! Go down now! But a dogged disregard for safety made him go ahead.

VAGUELY he remembered dropping his batteries to lighten the balloon still more. Speed! If he got caught up there without oxygen, he'd be dead before he could get down! The altimeter registered forty-two. He reached for the valve-cord with clownish awkwardness, then released it: he'd go on up. His mind worked things out in blurred succession as the needle crept slowly around the dial.

A free balloon is equipped with a "rip panel" in its top, which, when torn free, allows a complete deflation of the bag. The loss of gas permits the cloth of the bottom portion of the balloon to fold back within the upper portion, forming in that way an enormous cap, umbrella-like, over which the netting hangs. The netting holds this cap in place, and the balloon parachutes to earth. The descent is rapid.

The needle of the altimeter paused at forty-three thousand as the nerves in Conway's muscles died. He found himself unable to grasp the valve-cord with his hands; his arms were like wooden stakes, detached entirely from his shoulders. He could still hear and see, although there was a roaring in his brain. The balloon had stopped its climb, had reached its peak, would go no farther.

Conway realized that death was near. Unable to pull the cord that would release the gas, helpless at an altitude where life would perish without oxygen, he would be snuffed out in a few quick minutes when the last cylinder was empty. The rip-cord and the valve-cord dangled temptingly in the basket just in front of him; either would have served his purpose, would have sent the balloon back to earth again. But he could not control his muscles enough to pull either one of them. Every muscle in his arms and legs was uncontrollable. Only his head and neck were still unparalyzed.

There came that suffocating feeling now again. The tank was almost empty, would be gone in one more breath! Desperately, with strength born of panic, he sucked his lungs full. Then he bent his neck and raked his face against a rope that extended upward from the corner of the basket. His lungs seemed bursting; the mask still clung tenaciously on his face. He raked again, a grotesque movement, and the mask came halfway off. His head swam, reeled crazily; he wanted air—he had to breathe! He set his teeth hard over the cord that extended to the rip panel, bit hard down upon it, tried to jerk it with his head. He lost his balance, crumpled forward and lay, unconscious, on the basket floor.

IN the deathlike silence of the upper air the rasping sigh of escaping hydrogen echoed hollowly. The huge bag of the *Marie IV* crumpled slowly, collapsed, the bottom portion folding upward in the netting. It started down, gaining momentum rapidly. Air, passing through the ropes and rigging of the balloon, turned to howling shrieks as speed was gathered.

The *Marie* fell three thousand feet while the hydrogen was going out. When the bag was empty it should have parachuted, but it did not. It folded up into a knot in the apex of the netting, like a huge fist, gnarled and bulging on one side. Helpless from the force of gravity, the derelict was falling at a speed of two hundred miles an hour, the cloth and netting whipping violently upward in a high-flung streamer. The figure in the bottom of the basket lay as it had fallen, crumpled grotesquely.

The balloon plunged earthward at a constant speed now—air resistance was so great that it could gain no greater velocity. As it descended and reached denser air it even slowed a trifle, but still fell like a rock nearly three miles a minute. The flat plain of the clouds seemed to lift steadily up toward the basket of the balloon; the balloon itself seemed to drop but slowly. Then, at twenty thousand feet, the clouds enveloped it and there was no trace left of where the falling derelict had gone.

KISNER and Welkfurn, waiting at the club for hours now, were silent as the minutes passed and brought no word of Conway. At first there had been tense moments of angry denunciation from Kisner, a hysterical venting of his fears and feelings of impending evil. Welkfurn realized fully now the gravity of his failure to return in time with the clock. At first he made explanations hotly, told of his experiences in town, tried to pacify and allay

Kisner's agitation; but the other man would not listen.

They waited anxiously until the time when Conway should have returned to earth again: they knew how much oxygen he carried, how long it would supply him; and when the time was up, they drove silently from the club to the balloon hangar and waited there, scanning the sky and hoping desperately to see the balloon descending near at hand, yet knowing that winds in the upper air were apt to drift the bag many miles before it returned to earth. Time passed, and no word came of it. They waited now apathetically. They were sure that Conway was dead, and Kisner blamed Welkfurn bitterly.

"Why are we waiting here?" Welkfurn asked woodenly. "The balloon wont come down around here—the wind will drift it."

"All kinds of winds up there. Can't tell where it went. One wind might drift it one way, then up a little higher another wind might blow it back. Anyhow—"

Suddenly Welkfurn cried eagerly:

"Kisner, *look!*" He pointed up as he spoke, and finally Kisner saw a speck of gray above another speck of dark, three or four miles to the east. These specks fell together, rapidly, in a straight line earthward. Kisner, running to his car, obtained binoculars, focused them quickly.

THE basket of the balloon stood out quite plainly through the glass, the bag above it twisted hopelessly in the netting. There was no one in the car, and for a moment Kisner hoped that Conway had left his craft when higher up, was somewhere now coming down dangling on his parachute. The wreck hurtled toward the earth. Kisner judged that it was at six thousand feet when he first saw it. It reached four, then three; was plainer to be seen as it descended.

Then something lifted itself up inside the basket, seemed to hang a moment on the rim. It moved! Kisner saw it clearly! Then it sank again. The *Marie* was almost to the ground—two thousand feet, dropping at one hundred fifty miles an hour. The figure rose again, dully, lethargically. Slowly it climbed up higher in the basket, seemed to try to struggle free. It seemed to slump again, but rose a moment later, and toppled from the car, falling for a time in line with the plunging wreckage. Something white bubbled up above it, checked its fall. Lazily it drifted down. The balloon struck the ground four hundred feet below. Before the parachute had come to earth, Kisner and Welkfurn rode frantically along a road toward where it would come down. . . . .

Six minutes later they were lifting Conway carefully into the car. Nearer dead than alive, he fainted as they put him in.

LATE that evening Conway—the altitude-record holder of the world—and Kisner and Welkfurn sat before a roaring fire in the club. The balloonist was slightly pale, and was weakened from exposure. He should have been in bed recuperating, but his excitement had not waned, and he was not sleepy. From time to time he sucked deep breaths of air hungrily, held them in his lungs, and let them go.

"Can't explain it all," he said. "Can't see how it happened."

"What's the last thing you remember?" Kisner asked.

"That clock! I saw three entries on my log, all the same! It woke me up a little, scared me. After that I don't recall what happened. Must have been out on my feet; don't recall a thing.

"How I pulled the rip-cord of the balloon I can't see. When I came to, we were coming down like a brick—she hadn't parachuted normally at all. I saw the cloth of the bag rolled up in a ball in the top of the netting, just enough to slow us up a little. By the time I got my mind working, we must have been down low—I didn't see the altimeter. Just remember thinking: 'Big boy, you gotta jump!' Had a hard time getting out, too; just did make it. Kept thinking, 'Must be awful near the ground. Hurry! Hurry!' Well, you saw me come over the side."

"Good thing she *didn't* parachute just right up there," Kisner pointed out. "Your oxygen tanks were empty—if you hadn't come down fast, you'd have died before the balloon got down where the air was dense enough that you could breathe!" He puzzled the matter a moment, shook his head. "Don't see how you did it, Con."

"We'll see what I put on the log when I was up there," Conway said tiredly. "Say, Welk, you run over and get it—get the log. We'll have a look at it."

Welkfurn nodded and arose, pulled on his overcoat. He started toward the door, and Conway called after him, grinning:

"Don't be gone long, Welk; don't get to talking on the way!"

Hell's Angels Set a Trap

By

WARREN HASTINGS MILLER

Stealthy night attack, daring sortie and ingenious counter-trap—a thrilling tale of the Foreign Legion in the Sahara

Illustrated by Paul Lehman

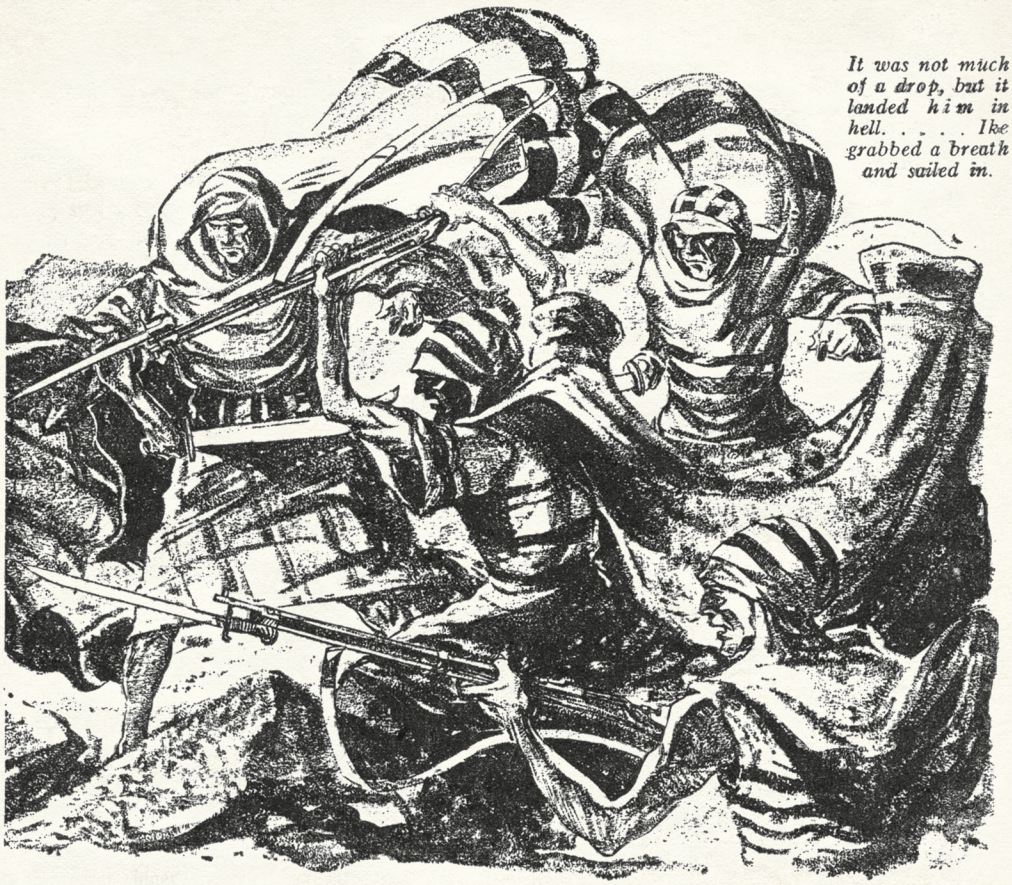
"WHY for did you fire, Criswell?" Top-Sergeant "Texas Ike" had crawled at considerable misery of his long bones to ask that question of Corporal Criswell, who was posted on the extreme right of the Légion's picket line along the Ouëd Aoudour. It was black as a pocket down here under the flanks of the huge Riff Mountains. Also full of boulders, thorns and an intemperate camel-weed that had hooked spikes.

Criswell, the giant Michigander of the Hell's Angels squad, turned to whisper cautiously: "Somethin' up, across the creek, Sergeant! I saw a head move and let drive."

"You ought to hev waited for more, Corp," reproved Ike. "The old man's back at my P. C. An' you know how he hates any shootin' unless you got somethin' to show fer it! Pass the word to Anzac Bill an' Jeff to lay low till we see what all this is about."

Criswell crawled off along the dark picket-line, while Ike lay for some time listening. It was silent as death over there across the Ouëd Aoudour. The stream came out of an immense gap in the mountains. No one knew its course, for all that country was held by the Beni Zeroual and the Beni Brahim. It had never been penetrated since the opening of the Riff war. By day they could see the stronghold of Kef el Ghoul crowning a summit three miles in the interior. Behind that the Djebel Beni Ider, its slopes lined with rifle-pits and barbed wire. Nice place to take—where neither artillery nor cavalry could help, and one lived on rock lizards after the rations ran out!

Ike started back for his P. C., a mere nest in the boulders. Commandant Knecht sat there over a flickering fire, three aërial photographs in his lap. They were not encouraging, those pictures the aviators had taken of the Ouergha Pocket! They showed that the tribesmen had been most industrious during the truce, when the French high command had been trying to induce Abd-el-Krim to accept some sort of terms. The negotiations had fallen through because England blocked the way. Abd-el-Krim was content to accept a French protectorate of the Riff; but England would not listen to that, because she would permit no one but Spain opposite Gibraltar. And Abd-el-Krim would not hear of any return of the Riff to Spain, whom he had licked handsomely once before. So there you were: nothing doing. Nothing left but a general final advance on the gallant Riff chieftain. A hundred thousand North African and French troops against some twenty thousand Riffians. It



It was not much of a drop, but it landed him in hell. . . . . Ike grabbed a breath and sailed in.

was not fair, Ike felt; but what else could you do?

Knecht looked up inquiringly from his photographs as Ike reëntered the nest of boulders. "Nawthin' much, Commandant," Ike reported. "One of the boys got excited an' let drive at somethin' moving across the crick. I passed the word to hold fire till we sees what them hosstyles is up to."

"Correct, my cowboy!" agreed Knecht genially. His large and burly body had made itself comfortable as possible, with big putteed legs sprawled before that fire while his enormous shoulders rested against the warmth of a rock. The Commandant pawed his bushy black beard as he examined those aërial photos more minutely. "*Voilà!* A devil of a task, my Sergeant!" he invited Ike's coöperation. "Regard you: Every trail, every road in the Ouergha Pocket for ten miles, is cut by trenches, blocked by boulders. And every open space is commanded by triple lines of trenches with barbed wire. They have learned the art of war, these Riff! And look at our blockhouses—Aoulai, Amzez, Mrala, Ourtzagh—all reconditioned and held against us! It will cost many a brave *garçon* of the 4th and 128th divisions to take back this country! *Alors,* a movement by the flank, then."

The Commandant relapsed into puzzled thought while Ike chewed solemnly and agreed that it would be fine to let those birds lie in their hills while the boys got around them by some flank movement and cut them all off from Abd-el-Krim. But where was your flank, Ike wanted to know. It was all serried and impenetrable hills along their front. And the riskiest sort of death-trap if you got caught in those gorges anywhere near Kef el Ghoul and Djebel Beni Ider!

"*Tiens!*" exclaimed Knecht. "*Ecoutez!*"

IKE listened. A faint splash had come from below somewhere in the creek. Together they arose and crept down through the bushes and boulders, guided by the Commandant's quick ear and his sense of direction. They found Anzac Bill at his post and peering intently into the gloom. There seemed a watery disturb-

ance in the river that was different than its usual murmur of ripples. Knecht touched Ike and Bill on the shoulder, and the three crept down toward the bank. Its black and fluid surface glinted with circular wavelets—by which Ike was able to locate a moving head. Slowly it was crossing the stream.

Knecht gripped his arm. *"Guardez-vous!"* he whispered. The three made ready for a simultaneous pounce on the Riffian. He reached their bank, held for some time to the alders, then crawled slowly out. Then Anzac Bill's burly weight had pinned and throttled him before he could utter a sound. *"Tiens!"* ejaculated Knecht again. Tied to the Riffi's waist he had found a strong cord. They pulled on that, while their prisoner was being bundled to the rear by more of the picket guard which had crept up. Presently the end of a long pole came to hand. It was cunningly cut to reach just across the stream. Knecht chortled jovially and sat him down with his two men to await further developments of this night raid by the enemy.

Presently another Riffi came crawling across and was nabbed. He was stripped to his loin-cloth and bore burnous and Mauser slung on his shoulders. The party grew interesting as more and more of them came over and fell into the Légion mouse-trap. Anzac Bill's thumb almost wore out. He had it down fine, that sudden jump and the throttling drive of his thumb through the beard and into the man's gullet! Ike, Criswell and Jeff were getting fairly explosive with excitement by the time the fiftieth man had crossed. Their chuckles and the scuffles on arrival were apparently interpreted on the opposite bank of the Ouëd Aoudour that all was well, for the Riff reconnaissance party was crossing two to the pole now, pulling themselves hand over hand along it. And always that iron thumb of Bill's by way of a studiously quiet reception!

"Danged ef we don't bag the hull Riff army, Commandant!" whispered Ike with throaty gurglings of joy as Bill and Criswell toiled at the end of the pole.

"Eh bien? La significance, alors? It is *that* that we must guess out, my Sergeant!" Knecht looked young and happy. He had not had a taste of campaign diversions such as this, right down among his men, in years. Always the poor brain puzzling over maps and figures, the movements of regiments of men, ammunition-trains, supplies, distances! The whole battalion adored him. But also they wanted to see what the old man was like in the middle of a close scrap. Always the Commandant was behind the battle-front, flinging his platoons this way and that, putting in guns where they would do the most good, feeding up ammunition, running the big-scale show. But never yet had his *garçons* let him get caught out in the dog-fights, where a single yataghan thrust might be disastrous to the whole command. His life was too valuable, much as they would love to see him at saber-strokes!

" 'Pears-like these guys is kinder curious about us, sir," said Ike. "They's shore a strong party of them! Fifty-two, so far."

JUST then the last man crossed. He was the sheik, for he wore a gold chain with a crescent pendent from it on his naked neck. He put up a terrific fight, but Criswell and Anzac Bill choked off his pungent Arabic oaths and laid him before Knecht.

For a time the party waited hopefully, but no more Riffians crossed on the swimming-bridge. *"Oui, la significance!"* reiterated Commandant Knecht as profound silence continued to reign across the creek. "Send the sheik back, Sergeant Ike. Perhaps Intelligence can get something out of him. For us it would be *inutile.* Torture—*jamais,* for me! We must do our own guessing. . . . . For why the strong reconnaissance party?"

"Aint they got a weak spot yander, Commandant?" offered Ike. "Sent them birds over to see how strong *we* mought be, this side, perhaps?"

"Excellent, my cowboy!" Knecht accepted the suggestion cordially. Democratic this council of war was going to be, if Knecht was around, for he knew his Légion! "Or, *par exemple,* it might be a strong spot," he went on to banter Ike. *"Oui;* they are feeling us out for an attack in force!" concluded Knecht with conviction. *"Regardez:* Trenches mean many men released from the defense. If I commanded *là-bas,"*—he waved a hand at the mountainous pocket of the Ouergha,—"I would gather as many men as could be spared and launch them on our flank *just* here! It is a natural *débouchement* from the mountains, this Aoudour creek, no? All it needs is a trail wide enough to march an attack column down from Kef el Ghoul."

Ike felt that the Commandant had guessed this reconnaissance party of Riffians out correctly. They had merely intended to feint an attack, which would develop just how strong this part of the French line was, and report back. Then, if *two* columns were launched down from Kef el Ghoul, one toward their old positions around Issoual and the other through this gorge of the Aoudour, they would soon flatten in Knecht's big salient. It was now three miles across and stuck into the Riff front like a cabbage-head. And what was the Commandant going to do about it?

"Eh bien?" their commander was saying. "I take a little holiday, me! Come along, *garçons!* We cross this pole and investigate!"

The Commandant jumped to his feet and rubbed his thick sides gleefully. His brown eyes twinkled at Hell's Angels, for this was a naughty spree that the commanding officer of their sector was going on, and he had no business with it at all.

"We'll go hev a look for ye, Commandant!" Ike protested.

"Bah!" retorted Knecht. "Is it that the eyes of a sergeant shall see what lies up that gorge? Perhaps it is a way to Kef el Ghoul, who knows? *En avant, enfants!"*

He was leading the way down to the pole, brushing aside their protests, when a gruff voice cut in behind them: *"Morbleu!* Pardon me, my Commandant, but you shall do no such thing!"

Knecht turned to face Lieutenant Hortet, their grizzled old Gaul of an ex-zouzou, who was detaining him with a face of wrath. *"Please!* I beg! I implore, my old one!" yelped Knecht half-humorously. "Consider, old comrade, how long has it been since you and I have been at hand-to-hand together with the *indigines!* Since when has this sword of mine known the cut-thrust-and-parry? Alas, I grow old!"

"Pardieu! He is mad, this one!" grinned Hortet through his sweeping gray mustaches. "Sergeant, you will arrest him and take him to the rear!"—to Ike.

"Peace, messieurs!" said Knecht, changing suddenly to sternness. "Listen, my zou-zou: This party of prisoners that we sent back to you were the enemy picket guard across the river. We have not heard a sound or a shot since—and *mon Dieu,* but we have been making noise enough! Therefore the way in is open. Something of importance is developing in there! And who knows but that this little river may be the flank route to Kef el Ghoul that the General Staff is looking for? Therefore I should see this route, all we can of it."

"Madness, my Commandant!" retorted Hortet stubbornly. "A river is the worst possible entry! It is choked with alders and ravines. No one can move troops along it—"

"And if the Riff have cut a trail along it?" queried Knecht softly, "a trail on which a column can move swiftly? She works both ways, that trail!"

"Eh?" And Hortet grinned delightedly. "But what a treasure, my Commandant! And if the trail leads up to Kef el Ghoul—we'll throw a column of the Légion on it this very night, *hein?"*

"Parfaitement!" agreed Knecht, and stumped down to the pole-end, followed by Hortet and Hell's Angels. Indeed, that intriguing conjecture of the Commandant's had made them all keen to find out! Ike felt that Knecht was right; if there *was* such a trail, he personally should explore along it until they were sure of its purpose, for the information would be of the utmost importance to the General Staff. . . . . And it was not much later when a group of dripping men were in the bushes on the far side of the Ouëd Aoudour.

Cautiously they felt their way upward to high ground. No snipers or sentries; no signs of a line of battle. Innocent of war was this peaceful gorge where the Ouëd Aoudour broke through! It was crowded with forest, Alpine pines, the only spot where anything resembling a tree could grow. But it was not as innocent as it looked, that gorge, for a hundred yards up they came to the end of a new trail.

Knecht clicked his tongue wisely. "Most kind of them!" he commented. "She saves my Légion much work, this little road!"

THE Riff had been busy at something else besides trenches during the truce, that sketchy road said! Enough trees had been felled to make a broad path down the gorge, following the bends and turns of the river below it. No wheeled thing could move on it, but a column on foot could be thrown down it—or up. The question was, where did it go?

Impetuously Frenchwise, Knecht and Hortet were leading on to find out. Ike followed with his squad. "You birds got your safeties off?" he queried in a hoarse whisper. "Us guys gotta git the Brains out'n this—God bless him!—most any

time now. There wont be no warning. We'll run slap into somethin' on this road, or I miss my guess!"

"Cheerio!" whispered Geoff, their young English aristocrat. "Stick-at-nothing does it, what? I mean, crash into the lot, so Knecht and the Lieutenant can escape."

"That's the idea, feller," agreed Ike. "Us bums aint nothin', see? It's the campaign what counts. Our job is to git the Commandant out whar he kin run it. Any guy what's hankerin' to live hed better git back to the lines now!" he added with grim ferocity. "Thinks I, Hell's Angels is goin' to be planted right hyar in this gorge, ef thar's any justice for fools in *this* world!"

Hell's Angels laughed, but not a guy showed any desire to make his own skin safe for democracy. As soldiers they were mighty interested in this expedition. The road kept on up and up the gorge, though a dark silence of whispering pines and the murmur of the *ouëd* below. Its very existence could not have been guessed from their lines around the rebuilt *poste* of Tafrant. Twenty thousand men lay in the pits back there, waiting for the signal for a general advance. Guns commanded the Ouergha Pocket and would give them an intensive artillery preparation, but no one looked for anything but casualties and yet more casualties when they tried to storm those entrenched mountains. A thousand men would be lost before they even took back Aoulai and the rest of the *postes*. And then the Riff would simply retreat to Kef el Ghoul and Beni Ider, strongholds more formidable still. A bleak prospect!

And here was this road. It had been completed not two days before, as the sappy stubs of undergrowth showed. They had come two miles up it by now, were far from home, in the very heart of the enemy; and still it obstinately continued to wind at right angles to the position of Kef el Ghoul. Ike fretted over it, was on edge to hear Knecht order a retreat; but how *could* he until the damned road did something definite? It seemed going nowhere in particular, farther and farther into the mountains. But if so, why had the Riff troubled to build a road here? A strategic road it was, that was certain!

And then the party stopped at Knecht's outstretched arm and listened. Murmurs of human voices, chatterings in Arabic, the shuffle of sandals was coming down the road. An indistinct mass of gray that moved and was a huddle of burnouses could be seen pouring around a bend above. Knecht motioned his party into the pines.

They were out of sight and prone just in time! And there passed a spectacle such as would make any commander's heart beat faster with anxiety. For there was no end to that column of Riffians. They poured around the bend in a river of burnouses, each man with a good Mauser strapped on shoulder, his burnouse crossed with heavy bandoliers of cartridges. They laughed and joked as they scuttled along at a terrific pace. One regiment or tribe, two, three; still they came on endlessly.

"Golly!" whispered Ike to Criswell. "The old man was right about this road—only he's a leetle late! The boys is goin' to ketch hell tonight! And him way up here! What's he goin' to do about it?"

"Search me!" said Criswell. "Glad I aint him just now!"

"We all are him, boob!" cut in Anzac Bill, who lay next to them. "There's no one here who is so thick—if you don't mind—that he can't see what *that* means!" He pointed at the still moving column.

"Silly old war!" laughed the Honorable Geoff. "Why doesn't he send back messengers? I'm game for a go at it!"

IKE chewed solemnly. The squad was enjoying itself running the war, as soldiers will when they get the idea back of a major-troop movement; but the responsible head of their sector seemed in a lovely fix, no matter how you looked at it! This moving column would not stop until it had stormed the heights around Tafrant and thrown out the Légion and as many of the Tirailleurs and Batt-Affs as it could find besides. It would strike them without warning, about an hour after midnight. Dawn would find the salient flat as a pancake and five more *postes* besieged inside the new Riff line. As for the grand enveloping movement that was to cut off the Ouergha Pocket from Abd-el-Krim—Ike gave a low and bitter snort! He remembered a darky back in li'l ole Texas who was going to dose his mule with a charge of quinine blown through a piece of hose. It worked fine—only the mule blew first!

The last block of burnouses passed, leaving Ike with no definite ideas save that Hell's Angels ought to get the old man out of this at any sacrifice and mighty *pronto*, for time was precious now. They still could not venture to move, for there were stragglers, no end of them, hurrying down

Presently another **Riffi** *came crawling across and was nabbed. . . . . The* **party** *grew interesting as more and more of them came over and fell into the Légion* **mouse-trap!**

the road in twos and threes to rejoin their units. And then a large hand pressed on Ike's shoulder, and there was the burly Commandant kneeling beside him. He did not seem in the least worried but rather inclined to badinage. "You find this reconnaissance interesting, my cowboy?" he asked in a jovial whisper.

"Yas'm. 'Taint bad," admitted Ike. "Though, so help me God, how we're ever goin' to get *you* back to headquarters is too many for this top, sir!" he exploded with suppressed feeling.

"Locked in! *Hein? Classique* remark of the drunken zouzou who had spent the night crawling around outside the iron fence that encircles the Bugeaud Monument in Algiers!" Knecht laughed, and punched Ike in the ribs.

Ike exploded suppressed guffaws over the supreme irony of that tale, and Anzac Bill had to be choked. "Looks that-a-way, sir! 'Bout steen thousand Ay-rabs atween us an' home, an' plenty mountains full of trenches all about, though! You tell 'em, Commandant!"

"Pauvre garçon!" commiserated Knecht. *"Eh bien?* I have not enjoyed myself so much since Hortet and I were young and we took the Col de Tiourda together—single-handed, he insists! This road, she leads down from Kef el Ghoul, that is certain. So many troops. It is the key, my sergeant! It will be *bien* useful to us, this road!"

Ike squirmed. Sure, even a mule could see that! But why the satisfaction, when the Commandant himself was shut in here?

"Come, we go have some more of the so-delightful adventures!" whispered Knecht with a reassuring pressure on Ike's shoulder.

THEY crept down through the pines. The going became atrocious as they stumbled and fell through the tangle of alders and boulders of the stream-bed. The squad swore and got wet again; but Knecht and Hortet led on, and there was nothing to do but keep on after them. They were worried and downcast. They could not imagine what the Commandant

was at, climbing this opposite mountain-slope. The way back was worse than ever down *that* front! Ike knew. He had often watched the lines of trenches and barbed wire that faced their own lines on this hill Fat chance of ever getting through—and didn't the Commandant realize it would not take that Riff column an hour to reach the crossing of the Aoudour?

They left the timber and were climbing cautiously up and up through bushes, goat-paths, rocks no end. A typical Mediterranean hillslope; also they were trending gradually toward their own front, Ike noted. Not a Riffi was posted up here. But down below at least eight hundred rifles of them were planted in three lines of defense. . . .

The landscape widened. You could see the tumbled ridges and peaks all about under the stars, deep voids of black that were enormous ravines. And lights! Their own front sparkled with them, dim points of light across the valley that were the P. C.'s of various units, lights from windows in the *postes* of Tafrant, Achirkane, Haddarine, each one perched on its hill summit.

"*Bien!*" said Knecht with satisfaction. "We build a lantern, *enfants!*"

It was going to be a canny thing, that lantern, Ike saw as the Commandant directed. They selected a natural nest of boulders and were some time chinking it up with more boulders and fortifying it with wings where a squad could lie prone and shoot. And then a small flame flickered in a pile of brush, grew to a steady fire. It was hidden on all sides by high boulders—save for one opening in the rocks that gave directly on the Légion P. C. as near as could be estimated.

"One might enjoy a considerable conversation before the enemy *là-bas* discovers this, eh, Sergeant Ike?" queried Knecht facetiously. "Eh, my cowboy that was so blue?" He poked Ike in the ribs. "Eh, my herring that was so worried because his commander was shut in by the enemy? Eh, *voilà!*"

He took off his kepi and began winking the light with it across the opening. "*P. C. L.—P. C. L.—Knecht!*" flashed the signals.

"You've got *me,* sir!" admitted Ike. "Golly, you kin have *my* hoss, Commandant!" he blazed out in the sudden revulsion from despondency to a grand elation over this certainty that the Commandant could still run the campaign—was in fact doing so at this very moment! Nor could the Riff below see that light. Only those on this level or near it would get the rays that shot out as the Commandant's kepi covered and uncovered the opening in their circle of boulders. He was some Commander in a pinch, Ike resolved—the kind of officer that belonged with a hard-boiled lot like the Légion!

A LANTERN moved out from the Légion post of command across the valley and began winking. "*Not here,*" it said.

"*Stupide!*" Knecht answered, waving industriously. "*Knecht talking. Four sections of artillery will concentrate on Aoudour ravine. Three thousand enemy column attacking there. Légion 15th Tirailleurs, and 47th Line will break this front immediately and storm hill guiding on this light. Notify P. C. 128th to attack their side Ouergha Pocket at once. Flank route to Kef el Ghoul found. Knecht.*"

He desisted, massaging a tired arm. "Eh my boiled-hard one?" the Commandant continued to razz Ike. "We have set off some little of fireworks, not? It is now to enjoy our front seat at the spectacle. The pincers begin to bite, if the 128th Division crush in their side, *ma foi!*" He mopped his brow with an urbane and genial imperturbability, did the Commandant, as they all sat down to watch.

The Légion P. C. lantern contented itself with the single laconic answer, "*Entendu!*" And presently the spectacle began to unfold itself in all its magnificence. Ike felt that a very special hell would pop loose all around their nest of boulders, once the Riff began their retreat up this hill toward Kef el Ghoul; but he was through with any more growls. That difficulty was up to Knecht, and he would manage it somehow; at present Ike was holding his breath spellbound as that vast attack opened up.

It began with the furious flashes of eight guns opposite the ravine of the Aoudour. *Wink-wink-wink!*—dazzling illuminations of orange-white shrapnel explosions glaring through the black pine silhouettes down in that gorge below them to their left. Then the long rolling thunder of it, echoing and reverbrating through the mountains. More guns took it up, the whole line of them opposite going into action piece by piece. Far to the east there was a glare in the sky and distant thunder—the 128th Divi-

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sion starting their drive on their side of the "pincers." Below them the vicious crack of shrapnel bursting over the Riff trenches came up in spiteful claps that punctuated vividly the continuous rumble from all the bellowing guns of the 4th Division. And everywhere, light—huge flashes of it that lit up the sky like an aurora borealis.

Ike thought it the most magnificent spectacle his eyes had ever witnessed. It was the first time he had seen a whole battle, full-scale, as the general staff saw it. As the Commandant had said, they had a front seat—if a dangerous one: that entire enveloping movement of the Ouergha Pocket was visible from here. It was not like looking at a map and comparing reports from the front—you could see all of it below: the shattered confusion of that Riff column in the glen, now under a galling artillery concentration; the preliminary barrage being laid down in front of them by the guns of the 4th; the hell breaking loose fifteen miles east where the 128th was going in.

For twenty minutes the deep thunder of that intensified artillery preparation kept up. The rattle of small arms on both sides was silent. Their pigmy chatter was hushed when the seventy-fives were talking! Knecht kept his eyes on the trenches below them, noting the damage by the incessant illumination of the shrapnel. The Riffians had a few guns captured from the Spanish, and they were busy replying, but it was a mere gallant gesture. Their infantry was sticking tight. Barbed wire, trench revetments, boulders, all were being swept away; but you could not beat the Berber for standing up to punishment! Nothing but infantry could drive them from that position.

"Enough!" said Knecht, rising to his feet and taking off his kepi. He moved it in front of the opening of their "lantern." *"Légion brigade, advance!"* the signals said.

Ike could not remember ever having heard of a situation in war where the commander-in-chief of a brigade directed it from a position two miles within the enemy's lines, but he was witnessing that piquant phenomenon now! Hortet chuckled with an old soldier's glee. "They comprehend *bien nette,* our good staff!" he commented. "Look, my old one! *Voilà le Légion!"*

UNDER the gun-flashes they could see three dense columns of shock troops moving out, blurred masses of men that sparkled with bayonets. On the right and about opposite them was the 2nd Etrangère; then the 15th Tirailleurs from Algeria; beyond them the 47th Line from France.

Sputtering flashes broke out all along

the Riff line, small-arms that they eagerly let loose in spite of the storm of shrapnel. Machine-guns chattered—were wiped out by the seventy-fives as soon as their spurts of fire gave their positions away. And on came Knecht's brigade, down, down the slope, into the ravine, up on the Riff side.

IT was not until then that sheets of musketry crashed from the leading ranks. And then the deployment, wings stretching out farther and farther in blazes of light until they touched similar wings thrown out by the Tirailleurs. Oh, it was magnificent, that massive movement of disciplined troops! Ike thrilled with pride over that triumph of our race, that organization of obedience by which one man could move thousands as a player moves a chess-man. No savage troops, however brave, could stand up to it.

And that one man was up here with him, their "old man"—to whom Ike and Hell's Angels felt now that they owed almost any heights of devotion, of sacrifice. They were all seasoned soldiers and could appreciate the logical, reasoned movement of this battle. It was not like being down in the thick of it, where no one knew what it was all about and one felt all the time that the command was blundering, wasting lives for nothing. This thing was plain as a pike-staff to Ike. The Commandant was breaking that Riff front below, and then would get the Légion up here and pounce with it on that road to Kef el Ghoul that they had discovered. There was nothing to stop him, save the shattered remnants of that column of Riffians that they had seen pass.

Nothing—save the intriguing proviso that this little squad here would inevitably be swept into oblivion by the sea of stragglers who would soon be retreating up this hill! Ike wondered what they were going to do about that. It was a fine battle, so far—but *this* piece of it would not survive to do any more directing, presently, for all Ike could see to the contrary!

"Ça va!" muttered Knecht beside him, who was watching intently below. There had been hand-to-hand for some five minutes down there. Now the Riff were in full retreat. Burnouses in mobs were coming up the hill, stopping to fire back from behind every boulder as the Légion line advanced. The Riff were by no means a defeated mob. They had abandoned their trenches before superior organization, but were yielding stubbornly every foot of ground. They would make short work of this squad when driven up to this vicinity!

"Guardez-vous, mon Commandant! Reinforcements coming!" The warning came from Hortet, whose war-wise ears had always attention for their rear, that slope up which they had come out of the ravine. It was noisy now, gabble of hurried Arabic, sound of cracking twigs and rolling stones. A large force of tribesmen was coming up behind them to help repel this attack on the Riff front. It was late—but it was a hideous complication for *this* squad! They, and Knecht too, would be massacred before the really important part of this battle was pushed through, Ike felt, the hair rising on the back of his neck!

The Commandant turned to face the danger, cool as ever. *"Alors, mes enfants!"* he said. "We shall not wait to welcome these people! And our lantern, she can no longer be seen from below—*inutile! Eh bien?* We go for a little promenade!"

He drew his sword and thumbed its keen edge. "Oh, the glorious day!" crowed their fat man boyishly. "I may even get in a stroke or two with Excalibur—if God is good!" he exclaimed. *"En avant, braves!* We rejoin the command!"

THEY cleared out of their nest not many minutes too soon. The leaders of those reinforcements were coming up over the brow of the hill as Hell's Angels drained out with Knecht in their midst. Ike was in a delirium of exaltation. Once a soldier of the line gets the drift of the campaign, he will give his all to see it succeed. They all knew the importance of getting their commander back where he could direct the taking of that road! He and they alone knew just where it was.

And then the Commandant took Ike's job away from him, for he had pushed to the front and was leading again.

"You find this amusing, my cowboy?" bantered Knecht as he followed a crooked goat trail downward beside Ike.

"Aint had so much fun since pap's mewl died, sir!" answered Ike hardily. "On'y, you please git back, sir! One of them guys is liable to smack you down, sir."

As if to emphasize his caution, a rifle spat over to their right and its bullet smote a rock close by and showered them with chips. It was the first Riffi to spy them, and he raised a shout of alarm.

"Pas gymnastique!" ordered Knecht sharply and led off with a six-foot jump

downward. The squad closed after him, doing steps that were gymnastic all right—stones, rubble, and uprooted bushes slithering and rolling down with them. They were being peppered at from all over the hill now, darkness and speed their only salvation.

The going grew hotter as they neared the Riff main line. Ike could see there wasn't a hope of their making it. Burnouses, hundreds of them, on the slope below, behind every rock, holding stubbornly a crackling line of rifles several hundred yards farther down. Not in a thousand years could his squad break through *that* with any sudden charge! And meanwhile, from those working around above them—

Knecht spied a ledge to the left of them and made for it in haste. "Prone, every man of you! *Feu!*" he yelled, throwing himself flat.

Their Lébels opened up. That ledge was one of those little precipices in which limestone country abounds. It could not be rushed from their front, and it afforded a brief respite. Into the burnouses below the squad poured rapid fire. Ike was working his bolt like a fiend. This refuge could not last ten minutes, even with Criswell and Hortet holding them off from above—but he had heard a deep shout below, a roar of men's voices like the rumble of lions when meat is brought. The good old Second had seen their line of flashes and understood, to a man! They were coming—shock troops!

"Behind you! *Guardez!*" Knecht was shouting in his ear and was tapping Anzac Bill and Geoff on the arm. Ike squirmed around. Three feet back from this ledge the bullets from below stormed overhead in a whizz like a gale, but were harmless. But up the hill—well, it required attention! Tribesmen were pouring across recklessly up there, flinging down a plunging fire that would have been fatal if their whole position had not been so blurred and dim that human forms could not be made out. Ike fired industriously at the flashes and wondered when they were going to rush down. If they were quick enough, they would get the Commandant yet!

Under the deafening musketry he heard a hoarse cheer below. Then Knecht came along from tapping each man. "*Now,* my sergeant!" his voice bit in tensely. "It is not much of a drop—and, *ma foi,* is it that I am to have *no* slash with Excalibur, *pardieu!* Fix on your bayonet, first!"

Ike comprehended that he was to drop over the cliff. They were all wriggling backward, the rifles silent—and it was high time, for the plunging stamp of feet was coming to them from above, close-up flashes of Mausers in the dark. Ike felt his legs hanging out over emptiness as he jerked the rifle-strap over shoulder. His toes touched bare rock below as his belly doubled over the last of solid earth. Then he had dropped to a hand-hold on a bush stem and let go. . . . .

A smart shock on his feet. It was not so much of a drop, perhaps twenty feet, but it landed him in hell. A tall bearded blackamoor greeted him with the lunge of a yataghan that he dodged staggering as he tore his rifle off shoulder and swung its bayonet on guard. Ike grabbed a breath and sailed in. He and Hell's Angels seemed to be Knecht's little bomb dropped into this solid mass of frantic tribesmen backed against that wall—and Ike took it that the bomb's job was to make a hole for him. They were at it now, all of them—a dog-fight of bayonet, and cartridge snapped off from the hip, that had a certain grim intensity. For, beyond the mob, Ike could see a dark wedge of men storming up the hill. It was not firing a shot, lest it hit a friend, but it was impressive in its glinting ranks of cold steel. If they could clear a space for Knecht for just five minutes!

HE dropped down among them about then, rebounded from the shock of landing, then led the charge with whirling slashes of that saber. Hortet—best swordsman in the army—pressed close at his elbow. He was always good, but Ike was simply amazed at the physical force and dexterity of their commander. He clave through the yataghans like some irresistible and dynamic ram of a battleship, behind him the steel wedge of the squad. Through the burnouses—a rage of cut-thrust-and-parry, of rifles exploding in one's very face, of a din of battle that drove men wild with the delirium of it!

And into Lieutenant Ressot's arms, who was leading the advance with Knecht's old battalion! They were embracing and kissing on cheeks, French-fashion, but it was all over now, the Commandant's holiday. He passed on to the rear, where his staff had been fuming for him at the P. C.

Ike and Hell's Angels resumed their old places in the battalion. They had no rest that night, little time to talk and explain.

Their battalion led the advance up the hill, were flung down into the ravine, arrived on that road after a full hour of driving the stubborn Riffians before them.

Rest? His command, Ike knew, was but the head of a long snake of men, the whole brigade, pouring up over that hill like a river! It could not stop. It kept on fighting its way up the gorge toward Kef el Ghoul. That road made the turn that they all had been looking for, some distance beyond where the squad had taken to the bushes when the Riff came down. It doubled back up a great valley between Beni Ider and Kef el Ghoul, and it was a fine strategic road—only North Africa's troops were on it now!

By dawn they had taken by storm both Riff strongholds. A bit later the advance regiments of the 128th touched their pickets, and the Ouergha Pocket was shut off definitely from Abd-el-Krim. It was still full of war-like Beni Zeroual and Beni Brahim, but two days later they sent in emissaries asking for peace. . . . .

And over to the east in the Taza sector, the Riff War came suddenly to an end. That mystic, Abd-el-Krim, who knew nothing of military matters but personified all the Riff hopes of independence, rode in one day on a donkey and gave himself up, realizing that it would be a slaughter of his people to keep on any longer. His dreams for his country had gone down in defeat—before an enemy he never saw, England. Ike felt badly about it—for Abd-el-Krim had proved a gallant fighter—and spoke his mind to the Commandant about it with the bitterness of a son of a free people who had fought for and won their independence.

Knecht looked up from his tent table and grinned genially. *"Pouf!"* he said. "Do not grieve, my *Américain!* He has won what he fought for, has he not? For, mark me, the Spanish have learned their lesson! They will leave the Riff alone after this, if they are wise! And we French are content. They will not raid down on our side of the frontier ever again, *ma foi!*"

Ike let it go at that. The Légion had done its part, with its usual brilliance. Now their orders were to go back to the High Atlas and resume the work down in southwest Morocco. He wondered how the friendly tribes had been making out since they had been gone. Two years, and exposed to all the vengeance of the Sahara! There'd be lots doing down there!

The Haunted Rajah

Wherein the Easy Street Experts rescue an Eastern potentate and thereby acquire diversion, money and much incidental refreshment.

By BERTRAM ATKEY

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

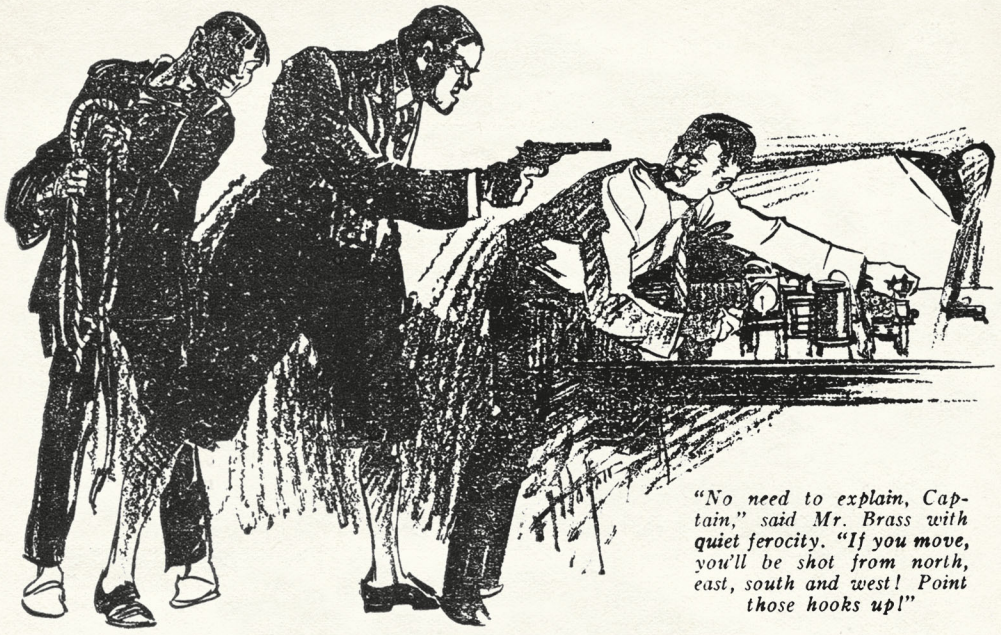
THE Honorable John Brass leaned back in his chair at a dining-table in his favorite corner of the Medieval Hall of the Astoritz Hotel and surveyed the top half of his rather grim-looking partner, Colonel Clumber, with an expression of good-humored but critical reproach on his large, red, full-fed face.

"It is not for me to pull your clothes to pieces, Squire," he said. "But at the same time, I'm bound to admit that your dress suit is a pretty frightful sight to see. It's not so much that it's green with old age, or that it's about as fashionable as the cartwheel collars they used to wear in the days of Queen Elizabeth—anybody could overlook that in a gentleman; but the thing doesn't *fit* you, man. It never has and it never will—not while you go to those ungodly tailors of yours! No."

He sipped his wine—if one cared to call the solid pull he took at it sipping—and squared himself heavily back into his own new and undeniably well-cut coat.

"Cut!" he went on inexorably. "Cut's the thing. Like this suit of mine. That get-up you're wearing—speaking as one old friend to another, as old friends can—is doing my reputation no good. To tell you the honest truth, it's high time you spent a few pounds at a first-class tailor's—not that I care for my own sake so much as for yours—"

The Colonel drew in a glass of champagne like one inhaling it rather than drinking it. He set down the fragile glass like a man regardless of destruction, and, his



"No need to explain, Captain," said Mr. Brass with quiet ferocity. "If you move, you'll be shot from north, east, south and west! Point those hooks up!"

face empurpled with what he evidently considered just anger, rather dangerously screwed his thick-pillared neck about in an effort to see how his coat fitted at the collar and shoulders.

"This suit—" he began. "Why, you insulting—hey, look here! I'll tell you something! Never mind about my clothes! Never mind. What you need to mind about is the insulting way you're getting into of criticizing your best friends—that's it! You're gradually getting to be so much in love with yourself that—"

HE broke off abruptly with the air of an infuriated grizzly sullenly retreating *pro tem*, as a very large, excessively black gentleman in extremely smart evening raiment came up and hung over their table like a total eclipse.

"How do you do yourselves att present period, I trust, sars—haha!" said this inky arrival, in the species of English which is used without mercy by many of the better-educated denizens of India's coral strand.

The partners in picaresque adventure, their friendly if slightly snarlsome differences instantly forgotten, looked up with the keen and welcoming interest which they were ever ready to extend to one whom past experience had always proved the herald of one of those financially happy *coups* of which the two adventurers were highly skilled executants.

The somber-hued but toothsomely smiling newcomer was, of course, their old friend Mirza Khan, confidential bodyservant and highly trained go-there and come-back boomerang of His Highness the Rajah of Jolapore, that plutocratic potentate who long ago had made the highly pleasing discovery that by the simple process of spending nine months of each year in London and Paris, he could rule his teeming millions of dusky subjects far more satisfactorily than by baking for eleven months out of the twelve in one or other of his red-hot palaces in Jolapore.

"Why, it's Mirza! Bless my soul—and his, if he's got one—it's Mirza Khan!" said Mr. Brass, and signed imperatively to the attentive tip-chaser in charge of their table to place a chair for the funereal-complexioned old-timer. "Well, well—Mirza Khan! D'ye notice him, Squire—it's Mirza!"

Even the dour Colonel Clumber beamed—a little morosely, maybe, but still with a sort of gloomy radiance, on the genial scoundrel now seating himself next to them.

"Very happy coincidence, meeting you here, Mirza," he muttered.

But the smooth Mirza, smiling with the genuine affection of the left jaw of a gin-trap for the right jaw, denied that.

"Oah, noa, sars," he stated. "Noa coincidence, I assure you. Calling att your flatt thee person of saffron hue, Sing, told me thatt I should find you here eating and drinking."

He shrugged.

"Noa champagne, sar!" he replied to the Honorable John's hospitable gesture with the air of one who has bathed *ad nauseam*

in that attractive if expensive fluid. "I will partake of plain wiskisoda in double quantity."

HIS poison duly set before him, and the greetings being complete, Mirza Khan proceeded to explain himself and to justify his sudden swoop on the partners.

It was in reply to a rather avid question from Mr. Brass that he told them, with every symptom of a man most anxiously uttering the stark-naked truth, that his master, the Rajah, had been in England staying at Shaveacre Castle—which he had rented for the shooting season—for the past month.

The Rajah had come on from Paris with all his suite except Mirza, who had been too unwell to accompany the Royal party.

"Fact of matter being trouble withinside, sars," explained Mirza. "Extremelee good *chef* in Paris. Yess. Soa veree good that I suffered from grave attack off disability digestive apparatus to accommodate visual estimate off victuals. Thatt is to say in good old Anglo-Saxon fashion 'eyes too big for belly!'—haha! Soa thee doctors operated on me same day as His Highness left for England, taking as bodyservant onlee thee creeping cobra off grass, crocodile off *ghat,* thee French vulture, Santoin!"

Mr. Brass laughed.

"You never liked Santoin, did you, Mirza?" he asked.

"Noa, sar!" Mirza was vehement.

"Well, what's he been doing this time?" continued the old wise-osopher, pushing his plate—his *empty* plate—away with the air of a man who has no further use for food.

"Ahaa! Thatt is precise reason off thiss visit upon you, sars!" exclaimed Mirza. "I will partake further wiskisoda and explain thatt!"

He partook, and having partaken, explained in such detail that by the time dinner was over, the pair of sharp-set old adventurers were looking so extremely businesslike and grim that the waiter hardly dared to present his truly formidable little bill—though, with an effort, he just managed to do it, as waiters, stout fellows, will.

IT appeared that His Highness, the Rajah of Jolapore, had started in life with the firmly fixed conviction that he was one of those mortals whom Nature had intended to be happy; one of those joyous souls who only wished to get the best out of life and to be left alone to enjoy the best of everything in his own way. He did not wish to interfere with anybody else, and he did not wish anybody to interfere with him or try to meddle and stop him from having precisely what he wanted exactly when he wanted it.

For some fifty years he had run himself through life according to these naïvely greedy notions—entirely to his own satisfaction. He had spent millions in pursuit of the things he felt he needed, and on the whole, had not been swindled much more than could be reasonably expected. Moreover this simple child of nature would have been entirely content to continue—to go on as he had started, so to express it. But, explained the fat and smiling Mirza Khan, certain difficulties had arisen. A bad nervous breakdown from which he had not yet completely recovered, for example. And on the heels of this, an even more serious trouble. For some considerable time past, the Rajah's ancestors had been appearing unto him, at awkward midnight moments, in the somewhat disconcerting form of phantoms. And they had, moreover, developed a truly affrighting habit of talking to him out of the air, so that he never felt certain that the spirit voice of his grandfather would not huskily break in upon his slumbers or maybe his conversation with a friend.

"That's a thundering nasty thing to happen to any man, Mirza, let me tell you," exclaimed Mr. Brass with warm sympathy. "Seeing visions and hearing voices! You mean he's getting hallucinations after his nervous breakdown, hey? That's bad!"

Mirza's face was graver than a graven image's as he nodded over another partaking of wiskisoda.

"Yess, sars, by Jove! Veree bad!" he said. "Speaking as fellow who has studied question to hand, I beg to assure hearty concurrence. The matter off ancestors bobbing up att totally inconvenient moments is question off veree serious nature to Moslem gentleman of rank, fashion and bad nerves."

He explained with a certain grim earnestness how much more seriously than a white man an Oriental would take such unusual and intrusive manifestations.

"Thee educated white man veree naturally would feel entitled to say to spirit, 'Get out—damn' impudence—call again later!' or words off thatt character. But Oriental gentleman would take matter much more seriouslee—oah, yess indeed!

There are great quantities superstition running freely to waste, don't you know, in my country," said Mirza. "And phantasms of ancestors who issue instructions to present surviving members off family are not to be ignored lightlee! Noa! We high-born Indian noblemen are ignorant chappies in some aspects, oah, decidedlee yess!"

He spoke sincerely, even if his English was rather crippled in both feet.

"Well, maybe, Mirza. But what is the trouble? What are these spirit grandfathers and folk commanding the Rajah to do?" demanded the Honorable John, not particularly caring, however.

MIRZA looked graver than ever.

"To abdicate his throne! To abandon forever thee luxuries of thee world, thee sins off thee flesh, thee vain things off life, to renounce, in peremptoree fashion, all thee vanities. Thatt iss to say, to throw all behind him, to take onlee begging-bowl and blanket and to goa forth from his palaces to live as simple holy man for the rest off his whole life. That iss sometimes done in India as matter of personal conviction," explained Mirza quickly. "Not soa often as formerly—but sometimes, oah, yess, by all means. A great man, rich, proud, mighty, decides to become poorest off poor. There is noa question off why and wherefore, sars. I cannot explain. It is done—sometimes. There is great story in English literature off such case—written, oah, jollee well, by great master, Mr. Kipling."

Mirza Khan drew breath and wiskisoda simultaneously, as he eyed the partners.

"Well, what of it?" said the Colonel heavily. "I don't suppose the Rajah's going to take any notice of these trunk-calls from the Never-never, is he? A man like him aint going to allow the phantom of his grandfather to upset the whole of his arrangements, is he?"

Mirza shrugged.

"Impossible to explain exact point off view, I see, sar," he said. "His Highness is gentleman of great courage—but owing to Oriental difference off code, off psychology and soa forth, he is in grave danger off reluctantly obeying behests of ancestral ghosts!"

"What's that, Mirza?" Mr. Brass, startled, broke in. "Are you trying to tell us that His Highness is liable to do as his spirits tell him—although he doesn't want to—and certainly, isn't cut out for a mendicant holy man? D'ye expect us as men of the world to believe that the Rajah—one of the most dashing sportsmen, for his age, I ever came across—is liable to do such a thing as *abdicate* because his old grandfather revisits him to say so?"

Mirza Khan's glossy face was glum, and his voice agitated as he replied most urgently:

"I do, sars. It iss matter off absolute certaintee that within short period of few weeks His Highness will be phantasmally frightened into this act of supreme sacrifice unless successful intervention is executed promptly by competent gentlemen qualified to give entire satisfaction, yours faithfully, *yess sar!*"

The Honorable John thrust out a thickish, rather brilliantly red lower lip, then drew it tightly in again so that his mouth looked like a species of weasel trap.

"Um!" he said. *"Umm!* Shall have to see what can be done about this! We've got the Rajah out of difficulty before—n'doubt it can be managed again! Must look into it, Mirza. Better come along to our flat and have a talk—discuss things—look into the matter—see what there is in it—um—so to put it."

They rose.

THREE days later Messrs. Brass and Clumber were installed as members of His Highness the Rajah of Jolapore's shooting party at Shaveacre Castle—the country seat of the Marquis of Muckhampton, who, advised in no uncertain terms by his advisers to regard himself as a certain starter for the Autumn Bankruptcy Stakes, had decided that he could not profitably continue to sit in his country-seat when a Rajah so rich as His Highness of Jolapore wished to sit in it instead.

It was a moderately motley houseful of guests that the smooth Mr. Brass and his partner encountered, and all seemed to be enjoying themselves except the Rajah, who in the three years which had flitted by since the partners had last seen him, had aged and fattened and dulled. He was pleased, he said, to see them again; and his tired eyes, over the heavy pouches left by half a century of the life luxurious as lived by a gayety-loving, novelty-seeking, enormously rich prince of sunny Ind, lighted up with a momentary flash of pleasure as he greeted them. There had been occasions in the past when they had really been of great service to him.

"Not the man he was, Colonel," said the Honorable John to his partner when they were alone. "No. His nerves have got into a very poor state. His health aint what it was. And he's uneasy—in fact, he looks scared to me. He never was a man easily scared, either. Mirza's right—there's something or somebody, ghosts or devils or just plain crooks, that are working hard on him some way or other. He begins to talk and look like a man who don't care much what happens, anyway. And that's not healthy. We shall have to keep our eyes open and our ears set like sails while we're here!"

TWO days of the eye and ear work advocated by the old expert produced quite a little crop of results—the said crop being greatly enriched by certain discoveries of the Honorable John's yellow valet the Chinaman Sing, who went gliding in his silent, ghostlike way about the castle at all hours of the day and night, making full use of a knowledge of locks so profound that ordinary keys had long since been superfluous to this saffron seeker after knowledge.

The fat and anxious Mirza Khan had helped considerably also, though he had had troubles of his own to deal with. He explained these one day after lunch.

"During my temporary absence from customary duty off personal attendance on His Highness due to recent grave illness withinside, sars, thee cadaverous snake off grass, creeping snipe off Paris gutters, thee man Santoin, had wormed his way into His Highness' good books and committed many libels to royal master concerning self. But have now succeeded in reëstablishing self in former exalted position in His Highness' regard and have pleasure in stating that thee situation is att finger-tips. Yess!"

The burly Mirza grinned.

"His Highness is great gentleman, sars. He suffers misunderstanding att periods, butt always in the end he relies on own bodyservant, self, that is to say, more than the French valet, the creeping creature Santoin, who is veree poor quality person!"

"Sure, sure," said Mr. Brass, who was well aware of the bitter jealousy, the almost bloodthirsty enmity, between Mirza and Santoin. "Now pass the whisky and tell me everything you've discovered. How're the ghosts getting on?"

Mirza looked glum.

"Ancestors have not visited personally for some days but have been extremelee vocal. He has heard at night urgent voices out off air belonging to his father's father, and to thee first *ranee*—who was adored wife of His Highness twenty years ago—and who died one year after marriage. He has never forgotten her—never loved subsequent wives in same degree. Noa! I wish in strongest fashion to say to you, sars, thatt it has been shock of veree desperate nature to royal master when he lies sleepless at hour off midnight, with self silent as mouse at post in alcove, to hear most lovely voice off long-dead queen issue from air saying, 'Arise now, beloved, cast off panoply of king, shake dust of palaces from feet, turn back on vain things, take begging-bowl, staff and beggar's robe, go forth to spend declining years in meditation, in search for thee true knowledge, wisdom and Perfect Way. For thee dear soul's sake!' Oah, yess, misters, I tell you it is jollee disconcerting to hear dead beloved's voice at midnight imploring such remarkable performance," insisted Mirza uneasily, and dropped his voice.

"It is difficult mystery. There is private detective in castle specially engaged figuring as guest—he is Captain Clanister—but he seems unable to solve puzzle—"

MR. BRASS nodded his heavy head, scowling at his glass.

"Yes, yes, we know about him. But get back to the voices, Mirza. This beloved—the *ranee* who died so long ago—have *you* heard her speak?"

Mirza Khan's hard eyes were uneasier than ever as he said that he had.

"Yess sar."

"Did you recognize the voice as that of the dead queen? How about the accent—the dialect—was it *right?* Was it correct in every detail? Would you swear this spirit voice *is* the voice of that dead queen? You knew her—back in the old days, I mean?"

Mirza understood.

"Yess sar, I knew her—I was in her high favor for personal devotion and service to Rajah!" he said. "And as she spoke in old days soa she speaks now—even to thee little personal peculiarities such as all persons have in speaking—I heard them again in thee air last night. Oah, it is undeniablee her voice!"

"Humph!" grunted Mr. Brass. "*You* evidently believe it is."

He sat thinking for a long time, scowling absently at Mirza and the Colonel. He

was evidently coming to an important, even vital conclusion.

"Pass the whisky," he said finally. "I see we shall need clear heads for this affair."

He took a stiffish head-clearer and began to ask Mirza a string of questions about Jolapore, continuing the cross-examination so long that Colonel Clumber, without troubling to stifle a dark and cavernous yawn, was moved to protest.

"Tonight you figure you'll persuade the Rajah to frighten himself into abdicating, eh?" "Yes sir!" twittered Santoin.

"Well, I like music," he said with heavy sarcasm. "And there's no doubt that you've got a very pretty voice—of its kind. But now I'll be leaving Mirza to do the rest of the listening. I've got an appointment to play golf with that attractive niece of old Colonel Standrishe this afternoon."

Mr. Brass stared.

"So do," he said stiffly. "I hardly expected you'd be able to catch the drift of my questions, Colonel. But later on I'll put the thing in simple words and get in a blackboard and a bit of chalk so that I can draw a few diagrams to help you understand."

He laughed, quite restored to good humor by this crushing, if ancient, repartee.

"Haha, sar—that is flea in ear in witty fashion," laughed Mirza, who was always charmed with the partners' frequent exchange of heavy-handed badinage.

"Wit!" echoed the Colonel. "That's not wit—it's jealousy because Beryl Standrishe prefers me as a golf partner!" he explained curtly, and left. . . . .

It was perhaps half an hour later when the door opened on the haze of smoke in the Honorable John's room to admit Sing, the lemon-tinted lad from far Cathay.

It appeared Sing had discovered something which he desired to show his owner. True, it was in the bedroom of the well-paid private detective, Captain Clanister, but the Captain was out. So they went to investigate Sing's discoveries.

IT was late on the following evening that the Honorable John was quietly introduced into the large and elaborate suite of the Rajah by Mirza Khan for an interview which was to be both private and delicate.

Mr. Brass and the Rajah had met several times before during the day, but by no means in circumstances which rendered a heart-to-heart talk a matter of facile arrangement. They had, for example, exchanged smiles at a corner of the Four-hundred-acre Wood, where the house-party was assembled, heavily armed, with the fixed intention of dealing fairly and squarely with every one of the highly expensive pheasants inhabiting said wood which inadvisedly came within reach. And they had, as it were, recognized each other distantly at dinner—again an occasion when Mr. Brass felt he could not tactfully bawl his most private convictions half the length of a gorgeous table to the host at its head.

The Rajah, whose confidence in the avid loyalty of Mirza Khan had evidently been completely restored, was awaiting Mr. Brass, together with a bottle or two of those matters which history proves to be highly effective lubricants of difficult dis-

cussions. It was in his big dressing-room—and his dressing-gown—that he received the genial old adventurer. . . . .

"Mirza Khan insists most turbulently that you have information of grave importance to impart to me, my dear Mr. Brass," said His Highness in the suave, pleasant, civilized manner that characterized him when he was in a good temper. "Wont you sit down and—have a chat with me?"

He turned to Mirza.

"Lock the door and pour wine," he advised that dusky vulture peremptorily.

The Honorable John smiled.

"That's a sound idea—locking the door, I mean—nine times out of ten, Your Highness. But this is one of the tenth times. What we're dealing with goes through locked doors as easily as unlocked, wide-open ones."

The Rajah's eyes glowed faintly. "You think so, Mr. Brass?"

"No, Your Highness; I know it." He took the foaming glass which the hovering Mirza proffered him and encountered the Rajah's friendly eyes over the pair of rims.

THE RAJAH set down his glass; Mirza refilled it and vanished.

"They tell me you have something of vital interest to say to me," he said, his deep, dark eyes burning. "I do not know whether that is true; for by God, Brass, I never know whether my servants tell me truth or lies."

The Honorable John waved a large, pacifying hand.

"Well, Your Highness can judge—though I'll admit that I can't call to mind anybody who was willing to pay me enough to make it worth my while to tell more lies than necessary. Hard work, lying, Your Highness. Still—"

He took from a gold casket, and carefully lit, a cigar. He thought for a few moments.

"Yes," he said presently, "this is a magnificent cigar, Your Highness."

Then, rather abruptly, he went on: "Speaking as a man who has a genuine anxiety to see you continue to enjoy health, happiness and prosperity, I'll say frankly that I don't see how Your Highness can very well expect to gain much by entering on a style of living from which wine and horses and congenial feminine companionship and—er—so on—are all cut out. Cut completely out. You've been used to these things all your life—they're second nature to you. To me, personally the thing's unthinkable," he added, warming up, as usual, at the sound of his own cheery voice. "I'd do it for no man, Rajah! And I've known what it is to rough it in my time, whereas *you*—"

He broke off. "You'd prefer me to be frank, Your Highness?"

"Oh, certainly—speak as one man to another."

"I was going to," said Mr. Brass comfortably. "Well, now, suppose you do this desperate thing you've been egged on to do. Last night I read up that story by Rudyard Kipling about the Indian Prime Minister, *Purun Dass*. And a damned good story it is, and the part of holy man fitted Mr. Dass like a fork fits a knife. But I don't see *you* in the part of a wandering holy man whose only property consists of a skin or a blanket, a staff, and a begging-bowl, which peasants will fill—maybe—for your dinner. What will you get, anyway—a little rice, a few little cakes, a bit of *ghi* or native butter, maybe a touch of rancid fish occasionally, and now and then a bit of sweet preserve—not so sweet at that—and for the rest, fruit and nuts. Fruit and nuts, begad, Rajah! Good enough things in their way, fruits and nuts, as accessories to a real meal, but no more than that, Rajah! No sir—no, Your Highness, the food question alone has got your idea beaten from the start. Lack of proper food, good wine and real tobacco would undermine your physical system in a month—and lack of good clean clothes, of real exciting sport, of riding, and of the tender influence of the ladies, would give you another breakdown in a week—and your good spirits would be—"

"Good spirits! Bah!" growled the Rajah. "Man, I have not been in good spirits for months!"

MR. BRASS smiled. "I know. That's why I'm here. I'm going to make it my business to get you smiling again."

The Rajah's eyes glowed. "If you can do that, Brass, I will make you a rich man—but you cannot. Unless," he added, with a species of nervous fury, "you can deal with the supernatural!"

The Honorable John chuckled.

"That will be all right," he promised.

"You are confident," said the Rajah, "with the confidence of ignorance."

He brooded for a moment. Then he said:

"Listen!"

In the low, urgent voice of one who is badly nerve-ridden, he told Mr. Brass the story of the ancestral apparitions and voices. Mr. Brass had heard it all before —but it sounded much more convincing from the Rajah than from Mirza Khan. The old adventurer was a little shocked at the evident sincerity of the Rajah's belief in the manifestations of his long dead but still enterprising grandfather—and his first wife.

He smoked quietly and let the Rajah run down.

"—so you see, Brass, that while I dread the notion of becoming a wandering holy man—I dread even more to continue disobeying these—behests. What am I to do?"

He drained a glass of champagne.

"Do? I'll tell you, Rajah, presently. Meantime, tell *me* something. Who is your heir—the formal, official heir, recognized by the British Government?"

"My eldest son, born of my second wife, the Prince Bahadur Bhil, hah!"

RATHER intently the Honorable John sat watching the Rajah.

"Um! His Highness the Prince Bahadur Bill! Do you get on pretty well together?" he pursued.

The Rajah snapped a thumb and finger.

"When I abdicate, Brass, Bahadur Bhil will step into my shoes smiling," he said. "And if I proffered him my empty mendicant's bowl on the next day, he would probably decline to fill it. My son—by my second chief wife! Doubtless he means well—but he was the son of the wrong wife! Bah!"

"I see," said Mr. Brass musingly. "It's a pity that you feel that you have to hand him a ready-made throne—still warm, so to put it. However—" He shrugged and took a little champagne. Not more than the glass would hold, of course.

He resumed his quiet questions for the next half-hour, at the end of which time the Rajah wearied. The Honorable John sensed that before the Rajah showed it, and rose.

"Well, so it goes, Your Highness. We shall see." He moved through into the next room and indicated a bell-push lying on a table by the Rajah's bedside.

"I took the liberty of having this installed today," he said. "It probably wont be needed, but if you hear any voices or see any ghosts tonight, Rajah, will you do me the favor of pressing this bell the instant they begin to utter or to appear? Don't worry—just ring, Rajah, just touch the button. The old man is on the lookout tonight and his brains were never brighter!"

The Rajah promised.

IT was just as the clocks about the place were striking two that the French valet of the Rajah, Monsieur Santoin, issued forth from the apartment occupied by that ancient Colonel who called himself, probably without any right to do so, "Sir George Standrishe," and smilingly catfooted his way down the corridor in the direction of the Rajah's suite.

After a long day of hard shooting, eating and drinking, the house-party had retired comparatively early, and the castle was silent as a deserted church. M. Santoin glanced about him as he went, but his glances were perfunctory and careless, like those of a man absolutely confident that no eye followed him on his nocturnal perambulations.

He came to an alcove just outside the door of the Rajah's bedroom and looked in with some interest and no admiration upon the figure of the faithful servant of His Highness, Mirza Khan, as usual on guard while his master slumbered.

He was, of course, sound asleep in his comfortable chair. His mouth was unprettily open and his big arms were lying loosely along the arms of the chair, the great hands dangling over the ends. On a table near the chair was a coffee-set, with the cup empty.

Mirza Khan was extraordinarily still—so still that he did not seem to be breathing at all.

The pallid smile of Monsieur Santoin faded suddenly and a certain sharp anxiety appeared in his eyes. He stepped forward and bent low, sniffing at the empty coffee-cup.

A fraction of a second later Mirza's two black hands were gripped about his scrawny neck, and even as he gasped at the shock, his own hands were clenched from behind by another pair, small, cool, but disconcertingly sinewy and powerful.

"Silence, snake off grass," said Mirza very softly, and rose, keeping his hands

closely associated with M. Santoin's neck. "Come with us, if you please."

SANTOIN perceived that the person in charge of his hands was Sing, and he found no more comfort in the face of the yellow man than in that of the black Mirza.

So he went with them—to the apartment of Mr. Brass, where, comfortably occupying big easy-chairs, the partners were awaiting them. Upon the refreshment-table between them, there lay, in addition to refreshment, a couple of the biggest and ugliest revolvers Santoin had ever seen in his life. They were so big that one might have hammered horseshoes out of cold iron with them. And though Santoin did not know it, that was about all they were fit for. Messrs. Brass and Clumber were not in the habit of using arms except for their moral influence, and these bulging bits of artillery had been borrowed temporarily out of the castle gun-room.

The look of sheer ferocity with which the Honorable John received his unwilling visitor would have been worth quite a few dollars to any film-producer.

"So you've brought him, you boys! That's good," he said. "Hold him, Sing, but don't break his arm with any *ju-jitsu* tricks—at least, not till I say so. I'll let you know presently."

M. Santoin paled noticeably at the implacable ferocity which tinged the Honorable John's voice.

Then the old rascal rose, seemed to inflate himself and looming over Santoin like an impending avalanche, held converse with him in this manner:

"Now, you traitorous fox, I'm going to ask you some questions. You'll answer 'em or I'll put you through not the third degree but the thirty-third! Try to trick me and it were better for you that you hung a millstone round your neck, passed through the eye of a needle and ran down a steep place into the sea—like that fellow in 'The Pilgrim's Process' or some such title. Mark you that, my lad!"

EVIDENTLY Santoin marked it, for he proceeded to betray his associates with a fluent and easy technique in the art of betrayal that could only have been the result of very much practice.

"Tonight you and your friends figure that you'll supernaturally persuade the Rajah finally to frighten himself into abdicating, hey?"

"Yes sir!" twittered Santoin.

"Then you'd cable Bill—Prince Bahadur Bill—to send on your money, and you'll split it and hook it in various directions, hey?"

"Yes sir."

"What was the job going to be worth to you all?"

Santoin hesitated.

"Come on, the truth, you hyena!" said Mr. Brass tensely.

Still Santoin hesitated.

"Break his arm, Sing," said Mr. Brass coolly.

"No, no—*pas du tout!*" observed Santoin hastily. "The recompense was to be two hundred thousand pounds!"

"Hey!" Mr. Brass was startled at the amount—for a moment only. Then he smiled blandly—like a large bear that has just found a bee's nest overflowing with honey.

"Write it off as a total loss, Santoin," he said. "And tell me—Clanister is one of you, aint he?"

"But certainly," said Monsieur Santoin.

The Honorable John glanced at the clock. "When do they start?"

"At half-past two."

Mr. Brass asked one or two more questions, then said, "Good! That's all for the present." He beamed. "Tie him up, Sing. Legs, hands, arms and mouth. Pass the whisky, Squire. . . . . Your good health, Mirza."

TEN minutes later a very silent but extremely formidable procession of four persons of various hues, including well-fed red, dark black and pale egg-yolk yellow, issued forth from the Honorable John's bedroom and headed, in complete silence, down the corridor—Mr. Brass, Colonel Clumber, Mirza Khan and Sing, all armed to the point of hideousness.

They stopped first at the room occupied by M. Santoin's notion of a private detective, Captain Clanister. The Honorable John tapped lightly on the door. Somebody inside coughed hackingly but briefly. Mr. Brass opened the well-oiled door and entered.

Captain Clanister, in his shirt-sleeves raised his sleek head from an instrument of highly electrical appearance on a table before him—and his jaw fell at sight of the gaping muzzles of the personal artillery of his callers.

"No need to explain, Captain," said Mr.

A second later Mirza's black hands were gripped about Santoin's scrawny neck and his own hands were clenched from behind.

Brass with quiet ferocity. "If you move, you'll be shot from north, south, east and west! Point those clever hooks up to the second floor—quick!"

The Captain conceded the point with considerable speed.

"Good. Tie him up, Sing, my lad! Arms, hands, legs and mouth—as the fashion is tonight."

Five minutes later, leaving a plain bundle where they had found a smart young fellow, they were tapping discreetly at the door of that aristocratic old gentleman Colonel Sir George Standrishe.

But it was a vastly different-seeming old gentleman who faced them as they entered in response to his low cough. Colonel Standrishe, save for a certain snakishness in his ancient eyes, was an admirable specimen of the old soldier who has spent most of his life in India—quite a handsome old fellow, in fact.

BUT the person who faced the Brass battery now was very unlike old Colonel Standrishe. Indeed, he looked much more like an old, old Moslem rajah—so much more, that Mirza Khan uttered an exclamation of amazement tinged with superstitious terror.

"Don't start anything rough, Colonel Standrishe," suggested Mr. Brass. "Bones at your age are brittle, you old scoundrel."

The man was so staggered that he made no resistance at all to the attentions of Sing. Carefully, and not too roughly, the Chinaman corded him up.

Mr. Brass looked at him curiously.

"Yes. He's done it well. He certainly looks like something that has escaped from a thirty years' occupation of a vault. He's got a gray kind of look. I suppose a ghost would have that. Is he really like the Rajah's father, Mirza?"

There was no mistaking the sincerity in Mirza Khan's voice as he replied:

"Sar, it is appalling resemblance. At first glance, heart stood still in mouth! I am brave man,—in favorable circumstances,—but confess hair erected self on head att sight off gentleman in question. Own personal eyes advised brain, 'Here iss spirit of old Rajah arisen again!' Common-sense stated otherwise—haha! Iff Colonel appeared in present fashion to me at middle off night, I confess should state privately to self, 'Here is perfectly genuine phantom of old master,' and should crawl under bed. Oah, yess. . . . . Veree nasty cunning old gentleman, thiss man, sars."

"Humph! Well, he's safe enough now, at any rate," said Mr. Brass. "And now for the lady."

Because, like the others, she was expecting Santoin's signal, she proved no more difficult to capture than her confederates.

She was standing at her dressing-table, and she no longer looked like the smart, up-to-date little Miss Beryl Standrishe who was so popular among the shooting-party

at the Castle. Instead, she looked exactly like the young and lovely little Queen of Jolapore she was about to impersonate—that never-forgotten little *ranee* who had been the Rajah's first wife and the only woman he had really loved.

"Oah!" said Mirza Khan, as the passionless Sing tied her up like the others. "Oah, there is something moast painful in this matter. She iss soa exactlee like little royal lady I served in past years!"

He stared at the woman.

"Oah, I am what you call veree sentimental—but she brings back to me all my youth, and thee brave old days in Jolapore!" he cried. "My little royal mistress whom I served veree faithfully—dead so many years ago and thee gallant youth of His Highness and thee honorable youth off Mirza Khan dead with her. Oah, I am ashamed man—"

A harsh voice cut into Mirza's dream like a hot knife into cold butter.

"Well, what are you going to do about it, Mirza?" demanded Mr. Brass. "The past was fine—devil a doubt of it—it always was. But we're dealing with the present—hey? It's time to go to the Rajah and explain."

And that is what he and Mirza did—leaving Colonel Clumber and Sing to collect the prisoners into one bunch ready to parade before the Rajah.

THIS adventure, the Honorable John always maintained, had probably the oddest finish of any one of his many adventures. For he and Mirza, hastening to the Rajah's bedroom, found him wide awake, yet strangely unable to move hand or foot. Santoin had contrived to see to it that he should be drugged by some subtle, evil and obscure drug that, for a little space, could rigidly enlock his muscular system into a paralysis so deadly that it deprived him of the power to move but yet did not affect his mentality.

A superstitious, nerve-ridden man under the influence of such a drug could gaze upon apparitions in the dim light of his bedroom, believe them to be real, and finding himself unable to move, consider himself the victim of their influence while they were present.

He could lie there and hear their voics when they were not present—but, even if he were in a condition to suspect trickery, he could not rise to prove it.

That, thanks to the sinister talents of Monsieur Santoin, of the man Clanister, and of Beryl and Colonel Standrishe, was what had happened. Heavily bribed by that far-off prince Bahadur Bhil, the quartet had almost succeeded in scaring the most superstitious ruler in India off the throne which Bahadur Bhil would occupy. The immense revenues of Jolapore would have made it almost ludicrously cheap at two hundred thousand pounds.

MR. BRASS paraded his captives before the motionless man on the royal bed.

For a long time, a very long time, his hot eyes surveyed them in silence, clinging chiefly to the impersonation of the dead queen.

Presently he spoke: "The voices I heard in the darkness were yours. The figures I have seen appear in the night were yours. If your speech had been incorrect,—your vernacular faulty,—I should have known. If your dress had been wrong in any particular, I should have seen that. Yet, I saw nothing. How does it happen that you, Colonel Standrishe, are so familiar with the speech and dress of my dead grandfather—and you, Miss Standrishe, with the voice and little gestures, mannerisms, and favorite dresses of—my wife?"

He could not move as he asked his questions. Neither Colonel Standrishe nor his niece would speak. Clever and dangerous crooks, they clung to the refuge of stubborn silence.

It was Mirza Khan who explained—or rather, began to explain, for the Rajah guessed an instant after Mirza began.

"In the old days, Your Highness, this man Standrishe was given post as master of horse under His Highness your father's father. His name then was Cartrall. I was young then but I remember veree well—"

"Enough, Mirza Khan. Now I too remember." The Rajah's eyes glowed.

"He could speak our tongue like one of us. And he knew us. He had trained the woman, as he only of all the English could train her, to be like my wife and to appear to me as the spirit of the *ranee!* Bahadur Bhil has bribed them to play upon my—superstition. Very good. There is no more to say. The other man—Clanister—is—"

"Oh, just a superior mechanic to arrange the voices by means of some telephonic device from his room to yours, Rajah!" explained Mr. Brass.

"And Santoin—"

"Iss merelee ordinary traitor—snake off thee grass, Highness," put in Mirza Khan.

"Exactly," said the motionless prince, and thought for five long, rather tense seconds.

Then he spoke:

"It is well for you—ghouls, soulless were-wolves that you are—that you do not stand before me in my palace at Jolapore, for I would have my elephants tear you to red rags, stamp you into the dust under their feet till you were less than the dust they trod!"

His eyes gleamed like jewels, on the woman—then dimmed.

"Or, it may be, because in spite of your evil intent, you have enabled me to recapture for a few moments an echo of the past—to hug a mirage to my heart—I might have spared you, vultures as you are!"

His eyes turned to Mr. Brass—and his head moved. The strength of the drug was dying.

"Hai!" said the Rajah. "Mirza Khan! Send by the cable to the man of whom we speak in this land as Oyoub—this message—*'The jewel is false and wholly without value.'"*

Mirza started, stared.

"Your Highness—" he stammered.

"Send it, Mirza Khan!"

The Rajah writhed—sat up.

"And these! What am I to do with these *canaille,* Mr. Brass?"

The Honorable John's genial laugh came like the sound of a roller breaking on the beach—steady, balanced, sane, unchanging.

"Why, Rajah, in this country we usually throw them out. But as one's a lady and the other is an old man, we shouldn't be out-of-the-way rough about it!"

"No?" said the Rajah. "Very well. Let them go back to their rooms. In the morning let them be fed, then taken to the railway station and left there to do as they desire."

"Including thee man Santoin, Your Highness?" demanded Mirza.

"Naturally, Mirza Khan," said the Rajah.

So they cleared the room.

BUT Mr. Brass, his partner and Mirza Khan returned by request—for the Rajah had something to say. He made it short.

"All my life, my friends," he said to the partners, "I have roweled myself with the spur of superstition. That spur was of base metal and it has now rusted away."

He drew from a gold box before him a great carved diamond—a colossal thing that blazed and burned with a hundred darting, prismatic fires under the electric light.

"This is the thing we have called the Fortunate Eye of the Kingdom through centuries of superstition, Brass. I am no longer superstitious, and therefore I have no longer any desire to keep a symbol, an emblem of superstition. Intrinsically—in spite of the carving—it must be worth fifty thousand pounds! Take it!"

"Thank you," said Mr. Brass, taking it.

IT was later that the old adventurer observed to Mirza Khan: "I hope this good-looking stone is not the jewel the Rajah spoke of in that cable as worthless. Hey?"

Mirza shook his head, but for once he did not smile.

"No sar," he whispered. "This jewel is worth to each of us partakers possible twentee thousand pounds each, gentleman. But jewel mentioned in cable was subtle method of referring to the Prince Bahadur Bhil!"

"Bill!" echoed Mr. Brass.

"Yess sars. Result of that cable will be serious for that royal gentleman. Within space of four days he will be victim of fatal accident. Matter off politics and secret treachery. Also well-deserved fate!"

But the Honorable John and his partner only smiled, evidently believing Mirza Khan to be quite wrong about that.

In a way they were right about Mirza being wrong.

It was five days later—not four, as Mirza had prophesied—that the newspapers announced briefly that the Prince Bahadur Bhil of Jolapore had been killed in the course of a tiger-hunt on foot—a practice against which he had frequently been warned by his best friends, including his father the Rajah.

It was startling news—but not startling enough to interrupt certain successful negotiations which Mr. Brass was then conducting with a famous diamond-buyer. For the Honorable John was ever a man of balance—one, so to put it, who would always be able to look Justice square in the eyes without quailing.

Another interesting story by Bertram Atkey will appear in an early issue.

ALL THE BRAVE

The rise of the bright lone star of Texas to freedom is vividly described in this stirring romance.

The Story So Far:

WILL SUMMERS spread out the map of Texas before his two friends Abel Roundtree and Lon Bullard—Tennessee pioneers all, in President Jackson's time.

"Look here, Lon—and you, Abel. This is Texas," he said, and went on in an eager attempt to persuade them to adventure with him to this new land whither his brother Jim had gone after his marriage. But he had difficulty in converting them. He ran into trouble, too, of a more violent kind, for this was election time. A strong Jackson man, Summers amicably opposed Davy Crockett, whom he had defeated in a rifle-shooting contest. It was shortly after this that the political trickery of one of his own party, named Crenshaw, caused Summers to strike the man, and a duel followed. Given choice of terms, Summers chose rifles, each to have one shot when he met his enemy, whom he was to seek out at night in a certain grove. Crenshaw, losing his nerve, fired too soon, and fled.

Temporarily giving over his Texas scheme, Summers went to Washington and studied law in the office of Major Langstone. There he made the acquaintance of a young doctor, Jefferson Buell, and fell in love with his sister Caroline, even as Jefferson had fallen in love with Caroline's friend Sally Ransome. It was shortly after Summers' admission to the bar that he received a letter from his sister-in-law Mary, —Jim's wife,—with the bitter news that her husband had been murdered and she

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Illustrated by Paul Lehman

RIFLES

By CLARKE VENABLE

dispossessed of their land by the Mexicans. And as he was packing to leave, Jefferson Buell burst in with the news that Sally Ransome was dead, betrayed by a handsome scoundrel named Gant, who had fled to Texas.

So to Texas at last journeyed Summers, with Jeff and Abel and Bullard! There they met Colonel Bowie and that strange outcast heroine Red Ruth, and became involved in the struggle for freedom from Mexican rule. There too they found Summers' old enemy Crenshaw, who had helped the Mexicans dispossess Jim's widow Mary. He—Crenshaw—was easily handled at the pistol's point and made to restore Mary's property. . . . . Later she remarried.

And now Austin issued a call to arms!

"There can now be no halfway measures," he declared at a public meeting. "War in full! The sword is drawn and the scabbard put aside until all the Mexican military are driven from Texas." *(The story continues in detail:)*

ON the following Monday morning, Summers and Abel came riding into town, rifles slung across the pommels of their saddles and with saddle-bags bulging like the jowls of a provident chipmunk. Summers' horse, Hard Cash, was full of life and anxious for a gallop; Abel's horse, Pete, seemed resentful of the bright sun and the weight of his spiritless rider. Each horse reflected the mood of his master.

Summers drew rein near one of the stores. Then, dismounting, and leading his horse, he walked over to accost a man who came walking swiftly down the street.

Abel halted and sat at slouching ease in his saddle.

"Mr. Austin?" Summers called.

The man wheeled. "Yes," he answered.

"My name is Summers. I have come to offer you my services."

Austin showed momentary surprise, then extended his hand.

"Williamson has told me of you," he said. "You haven't lost any time, Mr. Summers. But what about your crop?"

"It can wait. There will be men enough to employ that excuse. I am at your service —I and my friend."

Austin glanced at Abel, who sat slouching in his saddle. Then his eyes turned appraisingly to Hard Cash.

"You are well mounted," he said, approvingly. "If you are really ready to offer your services you can be of great help."

"I am ready, sir."

"Good! Word has come to me that General Cos has landed at Copano with four hundred troops. He is now moving to Goliad, with San Antonio de Bexar as his destination. I shall try to intercept him on the Lavaca. Would you undertake to ride to Gonzales, warn the settlers there and ask them to join with me at James Kerr's, on the Lavaca?"

"Yes, I will go."

"You know the road?"

"I have never been over it, but I will have no trouble. I am not one to get lost, Mr. Austin."

"Then come over to my office and I will give you a letter to Ponton, the alcalde at Gonzales. I hope you will make all haste, Mr. Summers."

Austin turned back down the street. Summers followed, leading his mount, and Abel followed after.

ABEL and Summers talked little along that swift, hard ride to Gonzales. Abel was too exasperated for conversation, while Summers found his thoughts sufficient— and at times almost overwhelming.

When he and Abel reached Gonzales, a small settlement of squat, drab houses on the east bank of the Guadalupe, they found there only eighteen men capable of bearing arms. Summers delivered his letter to the alcalde. Ponton read it hurriedly and then said:

"It looks like the trouble would start right here, sir. Several years ago this settlement was given a small, unmounted brass cannon for protection against the Indians. Yesterday the commander at Bexar sent five cavalrymen here with an oxcart to get this cannon. I put them off by telling them I couldn't deliver it until I had an order from the chief of this department. Their leader has gone back to Bexar, but he left four men on the other side of the river. He'll be back with reinforcements soon, or I miss my guess."

"You aint goin' to give it up, are you?" Abel asked, taking a sudden interest.

"No. But I need time. I have sent a rider to Bastrop, and one to Moore's place over on the Colorado, asking for help. They ought to get here before the Mexicans can get back from Bexar."

"How many men have you here now?" Summers asked.

"Eighteen."

"Countin' us?" Abel asked.

"No. Twenty, if you are here to stay."

"How many Mexicans did you say was over on the other side of the river?" Abel continued his questioning.

"Four," Ponton answered.

"Let's git 'em!" Abel at once became enthusiastic.

Ponton shook his head. "That wouldn't do us any good. We'll save our powder for bigger game."

"It wouldn't take much powder," Abel argued. "I was always a hand to take what's in sight."

"There'll be more in sight soon enough," Ponton told him.

That day the men of the town set about making ready for armed resistance. First they buried the cannon. Next they moved the ferry from the river front and concealed it in a bayou a short distance above the town.

Abel, meanwhile, was busy getting acquainted. His mind was still on the Mexican cavalrymen across the river.

"It aint sense not to go after them," he constantly argued. "They can see what we are doin', if they aint blind. It's like tryin' to keep a secret at a quiltin' bee."

Three other choice spirits agreed with him. Since there was yet no organization, and each man was the authority for his own actions, they went to the river and crossed over in a small boat. Once across, they boldly advanced upon the camp of the cavalrymen. One of these, suspecting trouble, mounted his horse and spurred away in the direction of San Antonio de Bexar. Abel fired at him, but the distance was too great. His shot, however, had a

very salutary effect upon the three other cavalrymen. They promptly surrendered. In high fettle Abel and his companions returned to the town with their prisoners.

In reporting the incident to Summers, Abel explained the escape of the one cavalryman, and added:

"I'm goin' to back out of this business, Will, if my shootin' don't git better. There's times when my back sight blurs somethin' awful."

TRUE to Ponton's predictions, a force of about one hundred Mexican horse appeared on the opposite side of the river the morning of October first. Their commander, Captain Francisco Castaneda, at once renewed the demand for the cannon and the return of the ferry to its proper place. This demand was carried across the river by a swimmer. But by this time the small force at Gonzales had been augmented by the arrival of nearly a hundred colonists from all along the Colorado, and they were in no temper to meet with the demand. The swimmer got only a bath for his pains.

Meanwhile, back in the town, preparations were being made to cross the river and attack the Mexicans the following morning.

A group of men had retired to Sowell's blacksmith shop and were busily fashioning improvised cannon-balls from pieces of scrap for use in the cannon which they had dug up and mounted on a pair of heavy wagon-wheels.

Abel was a prime mover in this group. For hours he stood at the forge, tirelessly working the small hand-bellows. He was not the least concerned with the meeting that had been called for the election of officers and the planning of the attack. He wanted to see more cannon-balls.

A heavy fog arose from the river that night, blanketing the lowlands. Colonel Moore, taking advantage of this added protective screen, moved his troops across the river and waited for daylight. Four o'clock came and the fog was thicker than ever. Moore at once threw out several scouts and began a cautious advance upon the Mexican position.

Abel, no longer lagging, volunteered as a scout and was promptly chosen. He moved forward and the fog swallowed him. Now and then he halted to listen. Off to the left a night bird uttered a querulous cry and was answered by the timid call of a warbler not yet sure of the dawn. Then, from the higher ground directly ahead, a horse whinnied. A guarded voice came through the fog, speaking a tongue which Abel could not understand. Again he moved forward.

Suddenly, from almost under his feet, a Mexican sentry rose up out of the tall grass and uttered a sharp command. Abel leaped upon him before he could lift his rifle. Down they went in the tall grass. Abel's fingers found the sentry's throat, choking back the cry of alarm. When at last the man was silent, Abel dragged him back to the advancing line. But another scout, over on the left, was less fortunate and an alert sentry sounded the alarm.

Colonel Moore quickly formed his men in battle-line and waited for the fog to clear. The brass cannon occupied the center of the line. Near it stood a standard-bearer, holding the flag which, wanting a breeze, hung limp along the staff.

At last the fog began to clear. The Mexican force, occupying the crest of a lift in the land, now stood out in bold relief.

In a thin line the Americans began the advance. When within three hundred yards of the Mexicans the little brass cannon thundered its first reply to Castaneda's demand for its surrender. A morning breeze came out of the east and extended the challenge of the Texans' banner.

Again the cannon roared defiance as the riflemen started forward on the run, holding their fire until they should come within forty or fifty yards of the enemy. But the enemy was in no humor for a pitched battle. Mounting hurriedly, they made a hasty retreat in the direction of Bexar.

The riflemen, on foot, could not well overtake them and were forced to content themselves with firing a few shots in the direction of the fleeing horsemen. One Mexican fell. He was promptly claimed by every man who could show an empty piece.

Colonel Moore was elated with the victory, as were all save Abel. He was disgusted.

"It's a mighty puny war!" he complained again and again.

"Just keep yore shirt on," one of the Texans told him. "You'll get more before it's finished."

"Maybe," Abel growled. "But the next battle I go into I'll go on horseback, so's I can git clost enough to the enemy to let him know I'm mad at him."

CHAPTER XVII

ALTHOUGH the clash at Gonzales was, as Abel put it, a mighty puny war, the news of it, carried from settlement to settlement by galloping couriers, served to arouse all those Texans who loved freedom and start them riding posthaste for Gonzales.

Back in Nacogdoches, both Bullard and Buell, like the majority of the citizens of the town, had been rather indifferent to the fulminations of the war-party. Buell's entire attention had been taken up by a growing practice. Jeff was delighted with his success, but each time he wrote to Caroline he indicated that he did not intend to stay in Nacogdoches. He knew she would follow him the minute she thought he was definitely established. He hinted, in one letter, that he might go on down to San Felipe, but added that he was only making the trip "to look around."

Bullard, having purchased a third interest in a mercantile store, had lost all interest in pushing on. The town was working its spell. As Bullard had been at the Forks, so was he here—content with his place, fond of his fellow-citizens and finding pleasure in their company. Then, too, deep in his heart he was pondering the wisdom of speaking of love to the woman who was known throughout the country as Red Ruth. Time and again he was on the verge of offering her another name, of offering her a chance to take a woman's place in the home.

Just when he had about made his decision, news came of the affair at Gonzales. He knew, instinctively, that Summers would be drawn into the conflict. This was now no proper time for a man to be pondering love. He plunged into the task of helping Johnson and Baker recruit a company of men well armed and equipped for action.

As for Jeff, he knew that on the line of march, and in battle, there would be need of the skilled hand of the physician. Into one of the supply wagons went his surgical tools and a chest of drugs. Over the pommel of his saddle he slung a rifle. So equipped he was ready to deal death or battle for a life.

ON the morning set for departure, when the volunteer company was forming in the plaza, Bullard turned back to his room in Teal's Tavern for one last look around. He could not escape the feeling that he was leaving something behind. When he came back from his room, and entered the lobby, he saw Ruth standing at the door, gazing out into the street. Indeed he *was* leaving something behind!

He glanced around. The room was wholly deserted. Everyone had been drawn into the street to bid farewell to the company of citizen-soldiers. Only Ruth remained behind, in the room where the wheel was now still. She was craning her neck in an effort to get one last look at a horseman who had not thought enough of her to say good-by.

"Ruth," Lon said quietly.

She wheeled. "Oh! I thought you had gone. I—I have been looking for you."

"I came back to say good-by," Lon explained. "You were not here when I came in, so I went to my room to see if I had left anything behind." He halted; then came close and drew her to him.

"*You* are what I had left behind," he said, and wondered at the sound of his voice repeating words which he had feared would sound like a pretty speech. He kissed her, awkwardly, as would a man who was graying at the temples and unused to expressions of love.

Ruth's free hand went up to her throbbing throat. She tried to speak but there were too many words struggling for expression. She merely stood there, inarticulate. Lon saw his answer in her eyes.

"I'll be back soon," he said.

The clatter of horsemen sounded out in the street. Again he kissed her, quickly, impulsively, and turned to the door.

After he was gone, and long after the cavalcade had clattered down the street, she stood there in the open doorway, looking westward. Her eyes were dim and she could not see beyond the curtain of her fears.

THE battle of Gonzales completely upset Austin's plans for ambushing General Cos on the Lavaca. He knew that the news of this affair would reach Cos and arm him against surprise. Consequently, the idea was abandoned and all efforts turned toward establishing Gonzales as a temporary mustering camp for the volunteers who were responding to the call to arms.

Cos, hearing of the fight at Gonzales and learning that the Texans were gathering there, at once made ready to proceed with all haste to San Antonio de Bexar and

Abel fired, but the distance was too great. His shot, however, had a salutary effect upon the other cavalrymen.

reinforce the small Mexican force holding that place. However, he left at Goliad a small force of about thirty men to guard a considerable quantity of military supplies; his thought being, doubtless, that he would subsequently return to this point.

But Cos had barely arrived in San Antonio when a small company of Texans, under Collingsworth, fell upon Goliad by night, capturing the entire garrison, including two hundred muskets, two pieces of artillery and a considerable quantity of ammunition.

When news of this reached Gonzales, the small army of volunteers at once lifted the cry, "On to Bexar." Austin had just arrived and had been elected commander-in-chief. He neither sought nor wanted the office. He was a colonist, not a soldier. But on being convinced that no other man could do so much to cement the various factions which had sprung up among the arriving volunteers, he accepted the post, dispatched couriers calling for more volunteers to join him on the line of march, and at once made ready to proceed against the enemy.

A temporary camp for the army had been established in a cornfield adjoining the town. Austin had selected Summers as one of his orderlies, doubtless because he was better mounted than any of the others. He found, to his surprise, that in selecting one orderly he had gained two. Where Summers went Abel went. As yet no organization of companies had been perfected and each man did about as he pleased. It pleased Abel to be with Summers.

ABEL and Summers kept their ears open for any news of the company coming from Nacogdoches. Word had come that such a company was on the way, and Summers knew, intuitively, that Lon and Jeff would be among them. This was definitely established by a lone rider who brought word that the Nacogdoches company was on the line of march, their progress somewhat impeded by the fact that they were bringing a small wagon-train carrying supplies and extra ammunition. This rider, who knew both Buell and Bullard, assured Summers that they were with the company.

Austin's decision to move at once was a blow to Summers and Abel. They had hoped to remain here until the arrival of Jeff and Lon. That night Abel was morose and surly. He had a great deal to say about the wisdom of the commanding general. A man was a fool, he declared, who would march away from reinforcements, especially when that company contained a rifleman like Bullard and a doctor like Buell. A doctor, Abel pointed out, was

the very thing they needed to round out the army. Men were sure to get sick and hurt. He, for one, had been ailing for the past several days! What was more, he did not intend to move a step until the arrival of the company from Nacogdoches. He would be eternally damned if he would move until he was good and ready. It wasn't his fight anyhow. . . . .

Summers blandly continued his preparations for the start on the morrow. He had heard Abel talk before.

NEXT morning the army crossed the river, making use of the ferry and the small boats. When the last man had crossed over, the newly elected officers began forming their companies for the line of march. It was not an easy task. Many of the men were unused to discipline and command. They had come to fight, not to be ordered around. It took nearly an hour to get them shaped into passable marching order. Even then the net result little resembled an army.

No two men were dressed alike. Most of them wore buckskin breeches, but even in the making of these each man had expressed his own ideas. There was no agreement in the matter of headdress. Some wore broad-brimmed sombreros; a few were more fashionably attired in big Pittsburgers and tall beegums, and there was a liberal sprinkling of coonskin caps, with the tails hanging behind in orthodox fashion.

There were a few men mounted on horses of good American stock. By their side pranced small-boned Spanish ponies and half-broken mustangs. Here and there were men riding sober-looking mules that were only waiting for a chance to show their independence.

Each man provided his own bedding and a small supply of provisions. For a canteen he carried a Spanish gourd, a peculiar member of the gourd family having two bowls connected by a short neck nicely suited for adjustment of strap or cord.

BY dint of hard labor and many shouted commands, this tatterdemalion army was at last worked into some semblance of marching order. At the head flew a flag bearing a picture of the cannon and the defiant legend, *"Come and Take It,"* while near the center of the column was the cannon itself, hitched to a yoke of longhorns. It was the only piece of artillery.

At last satisfied with the order, Austin gave the command to march. As the horsemen moved forward he rode out to one side to watch them pass in review. Summers, still acting as orderly, followed him. Abel, who was still acting as he pleased, ranged alongside.

Bravely the old cannon flag fluttered by, followed by company of horse. Then came the cannon, screeching on the wooden axles of its carriage as the driver prodded the oxen with his goad. Then came more horses, their riders armed with long lances in addition to their rifles. The end of the column was obscured in the dust cloud rising from the fine soil of the bottom land.

The line of march lay out over a high prairie. Before noon the riders became impatient over the delays caused by the slow-footed oxen dragging the cannon. But slow as they were, the wooden axles of the improvised gun-carriage began smoking. Then the oxen would be halted, water poured on the axles, and again the oxen prodded into a trot in order to catch up with the mounted riflemen who were beginning to be a little scornful of the pace. By the time the gap had been closed the axles would again be smoking.

On Sandy Creek, at Austin's orders, the gun was abandoned, but when the troops again moved forward, the cannon flag was still flying at the head of the column. They considered the invitation still good even though the object of dispute had come to an ignominious end.

On the second day they reached Cibolo Creek. Here Abel, who had been scouting ahead with a small force under Milam, rejoined the main body with the report that they had spied upon a large body of Mexican cavalry, which Milam thought had been sent out from Bexar as scouts.

Austin at once decided to pitch camp on the banks of Cibolo Creek and await further reinforcements. This did not please the command. They became restive. They had confidence in their own numbers and the delay irked them. For four days Austin held them in hand, looking in vain for the arrival of additional volunteers.

On the evening of the fourth day Abel again came riding into camp, jubilant with the news that a small body of the scouts had encountered a group of Mexican cavalry and had put them to flight. He avowed that if the rest of the Mexican soldiers were like those he had encountered thus far, three hundred Americans

could whip all of Mexico without sweating a hair.

This good news spread quickly, and Austin knew he could no longer hold his men in check. Another messenger arrived from Milam, stating that he had selected a strong position on Salado Creek, some five miles out of Bexar, which in case of attack could be better defended than the present camp on Cibolo.

Austin accordingly began the march to Salado Creek, having first sent couriers back along the Gonzales road to urge all volunteers to make haste.

All through the long night the army pressed forward, keeping in constant communication with Milam's scouts. Near daybreak they made camp on the Salado. On the march several enemy outposts were encountered, but they retired before the Texans came within gunshot range.

As the army was making camp, two very valuable recruits were added to the list. Bowie and "Deaf" Smith, both residents of Bexar, joined Austin's command. Smith, a noted scout, knew every inch of the country around Bexar. Austin at once dispatched him to aid Milam, while Bowie was attached to the main command.

Although an enemy outpost was clearly visible on a hilltop between the Salado and Bexar, Austin refused to make any further advance until his numbers were increased. He had received a few additional men on the way up from the Cibolo, but they in no way strengthened his cause. Among these was a tall, powerfully built man, wearing a gaudy sash about his middle and with a small bright blanket over his shoulders.

The giant of destiny had arrived.

But instead of walking like a giant, Houston at once began voicing his opposition to any further advance. He favored the abandonment of the campaign until such time as the untrained citizens could be properly trained. He advised falling back beyond the Guadalupe, there to await the establishment of a temporary form of government which could function in providing the army with reinforcements, supplies and artillery.

DISSENSION at once broke out in camp. The wise and cautious were with Houston. Here was a man, they argued, who knew how to go about getting ready for war. With their present force, and want of artillery, they could not hope to capture the strongly fortified town of San Antonio de Bexar and the stronghold of the Alamo.

Their arguments found strong rebuttal among the hotspurs. Who was Houston, anyhow? they asked. Where had he been when they put the Mexicans to flight at Gonzales? Had he heard of what Collingsworth had done at Goliad? Why, once they got within rifle-range the Mexicans would never stop running until they crossed the Rio Grande!

So they argued until the entire command became a debating society.

Then Houston arose. Fearlessly he pointed out their weaknesses and made a strong appeal for delay. His speech availed him nothing. The army had not come all this way to listen to speeches.

THAT night Summers, Abel, Bowie and Deaf Smith sat near a small campfire, playing a game of Old Sledge. Smith was a burly, squat man with the torso of a muscle-bound blacksmith. He rarely had anything to say and heard only so much as he wished to hear.

"What's all this talk about givin' up and goin' back?" Abel asked, holding a card aloft in readiness to follow Bowie's lead.

"Play your card!" Summers answered.

Abel threw down his cards in disgust.

"I'll play nothin'!" he retorted. "Ever' time I ask a question I'm told to do somethin'. I've wore myself out gittin' here and now they're talkin' about goin' back. I don't mind bein' sent out ahead as a sort of target fer Mexicans to practice on, but I mind a man like Houston comin' in on the tail end and tryin' to wag the dog. I've got a right to know what's goin' on. *You* tell me about it!" And he turned to Bowie.

Bowie tried to spread light on the situation. Smith, never interested in conversation, arose and walked over to another game.

Bowie's explanation did not satisfy Abel. He became particularly resentful when Bowie informed him that a number of men, including Houston, were returning to San Felipe for the purpose of establishing some form of government.

"Gover'mint be damned!" Abel exploded. "What we come here fer was to lick the Mexicans. The minute we git in sight of them a whole passel of us git interested in goin' back to talk about gover'mint. What we need is more action and less talk. That's a mighty safe place back there in San Felipe to do the talkin'. I've got some cotton back there what needs pickin' bad and I'm goin' back to pick it!" He arose and kicked a

stick into the fire. "I'm through!" he said with great decision. "I'm goin' back and help form the gover'mint." So saying, he turned and walked over to where his horse was picketed just beyond the circle of firelight.

Summers calmly began picking up the scattered cards.

"There'll be more deserting just like he is if Austin doesn't take a firmer hold," Bowie said.

"Deserting?" Summers said in surprise. Then he laughed. "You don't know Abel. Right this minute he's on his way up to the outpost."

AUSTIN had the good sense to know that in severing General Cos' line of retreat he had half won a battle not yet begun. He listened to all of Houston's arguments, but held steadfastly to his purpose. Houston, at last despairing of working his will, left camp with the other delegates from the army and made his way back to San Felipe.

Austin at once began tightening his lines around Bexar. He first moved his army forward to a temporary position at the Mission Espada. Then he ordered Bowie and Fannin, with a company of nearly a hundred men, to move forward and select a new site as near the town as was practicable. They were to do this with all speed, so that the army could be moved forward before the coming of night, for the position at the Mission Espada was poorly suited to defense in case of attack.

Summers had asked to be allowed to join Bowie in this enterprise, and Austin consented. Abel and two other scouts joined the company a little beyond the Mission Espada, advising Bowie that Cos himself was out reconnoitering and had been sighted across the river.

"How strong a body?" Bowie asked. He was extremely contemptuous of Mexican courage and was not to be deterred from his mission.

"About two hundred," Abel told him.

"I'd like to meet them," Bowie responded tersely as he pushed forward.

It was late evening before he and Fannin had decided upon a site at a bend of the river about five or six hundred yards from the old Mission Concepcion. The position offered splendid advantages for resisting attack. It now being too late in the evening for Austin to move forward, Bowie decided to disregard his order and to make camp for the night. Accordingly he dispatched a messenger to Austin, advising him of this decision. Then he set about disposing of his command in such fashion as to insure the greatest possible advantage in case of a surprise attack. Pickets were posted and every precaution taken. The men not on duty as pickets bedded down for the night.

IT was a night in late October and the bottom lands were chill. Shortly after nightfall a heavy fog began to lift from the river, and this in no way added to the comfort of the men. Summers and Abel, by pooling their blankets and gathering several armfuls of tall grass, succeeded in making a fairly comfortable bed.

Throughout the night Abel was restless. Two or three times he arose and walked over to the picket line. By two o'clock in the morning the fog had become so dense that objects a few feet away were indiscernible. This served to increase Abel's apprehension. The fourth time he arose, Summers growled complaint.

"Either go to bed or stay up," he said, sleepily. "What's the matter with you?"

"I don't like it here," Abel answered. "If those Mexican patrols weren't blind this afternoon, they could see us makin' camp. If they saw us, and don't surround us under the cover of this fog, then I'll say they aint lookin' fer a fight."

"Well, it's three hours before daylight," Summers replied. "Get under the blankets."

"Three hours aint so long," Abel commented succinctly and again made a trip to one of the outpost positions.

At dawn the camp was wrapped in a blanket of thick fog. Men moved through it like specters, looming up with a startling suddenness and a moment later disappearing like magic.

Abel and Summers were busy rolling their blankets when from somewhere directly in front of Fannin's company a rifle-shot sounded. This was at once answered by a number of shots in front of Bowie's company.

Abel dropped his end of the blanket and reached for his rifle.

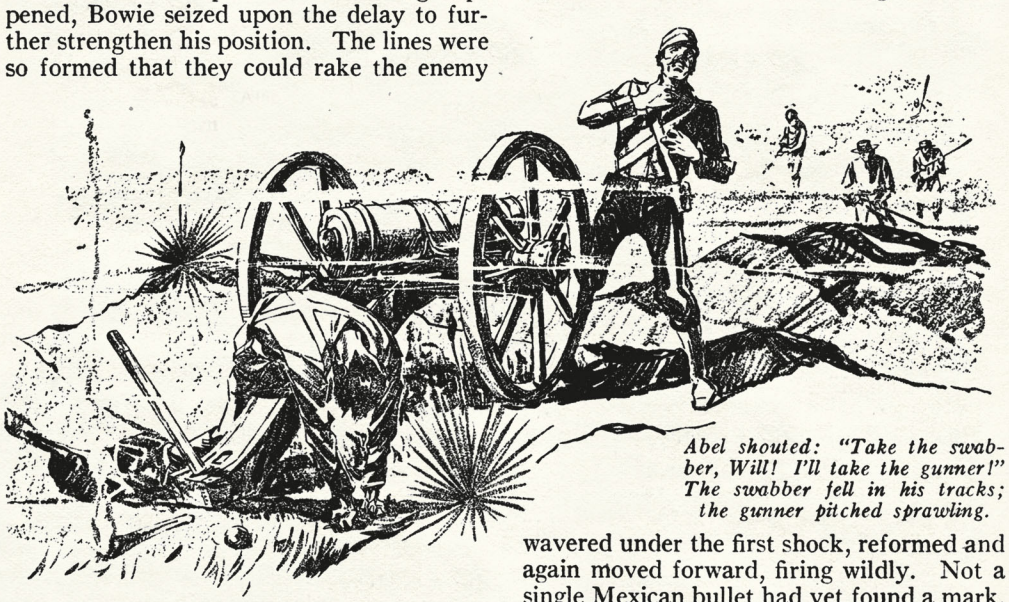
"Uh-huh!" he said knowingly. "They've at least got sense! They're on all sides, or I'm a Dutchman!"

The firing increased, but it accomplished nothing more than a waste of powder. Bowie was everywhere, arranging the positions and encouraging the men.

"Hold your fire," he ordered when one or two men fired into the thick wall of fog. "They wont attack until the fog lifts. Let them waste their powder."

The firing ceased as abruptly as it had begun. The silence became ominous. The Texans were straining their eyes in an effort to penetrate the fog. No one could tell what was going on beyond that white, thick curtain.

As the minutes passed and nothing happened, Bowie seized upon the delay to further strengthen his position. The lines were so formed that they could rake the enemy from whatever direction he might attack, and at the same time were held in a compact body so that they might be shifted from one line to another without great loss of time.



Abel shouted: "Take the swabber, Will! I'll take the gunner!" The swabber fell in his tracks; the gunner pitched sprawling.

When at last the fog lifted, the Texans knew they were surrounded. Fortunately, however, their position was such that the enemy could not well attack from all sides at once. As the sun began to burn up the fog, the Mexican infantry, supported by several companies of cavalry, began an advance against the right flank. They considered this the best point for attack.

Summers and Abel were in the division facing their advance.

"God A'mighty! There's more'n a million!" Abel said, nervously fingering his rifle-lock.

At once the advancing Mexicans began blazing away, but range was too great for the fire to have any effect. Seeing a cavalryman galloping along in front of the advancing troops, Abel lifted his rifle.

"Hold your fire!" Summers warned.

The crack of Abel's rifle was his answer. The horseman swayed uncertainly in his saddle, then pitched headlong to the ground.

Abel glanced quickly at Summers, a little gleam of triumph in his eye. "Hold nothin'!" he said. "I know when to begin shootin'."

The Texans all along that flank opened fire. It was not a salvo, but the slow, deliberate fire of men purposing no waste of ammunition. The advancing Mexicans wavered under the first shock, reformed and again moved forward, firing wildly. Not a single Mexican bullet had yet found a mark. Within fifty yards of the Texans they wavered under the steady, deadly fire. A brass bound six-pounder was rushed up to their support and spewed forth a round of grape. The aim was hasty and inflicted no damage. As the cannoneers were reloading, Abel shouted to Summers:

"Take the swabber, Will! I'll take the gunner."

The swabber fell in his tracks; the gunner pitched sprawling across the gun-carriage. Others sprang forward to take their places, but the Texans concentrated their fire there and the gun was cleared of all tenders.

The infantry began to fall back. Mounted officers rode up and down, sabers flashing as they tried to stem the tide of retreat. Several of these pitched from their saddles. Their frightened, riderless horses went galloping wildly through the scattering troops.

Another cannon swung into position. The accurate fire of the Texans cleared it of servers before it could fire a shot. Others again sprang forward to take their places.

"The cannon! Clear the cannon!" The cry ran up and down the line of Texas riflemen, and the cannoneers dropped as fast as they moved up to the piece.

To the rear a bugle sounded the clear note of the charge. The Mexican infantry, now spiritless, made one more feeble effort to advance. But they had no stomach for such accuracy of fire. In a few minutes they were rushing headlong for cover.

It was the beginning of a precipitate retreat. No effort was made to save the cannon. Escape was their compelling urge.

A wild cheering began in the Texan lines. Many were for rushing out in pursuit, but Bowie and Fannin held them fast, confident that so large a force would regain courage and return to the attack.

The fleeing Mexicans, however, had in mind only the safety to be found within the fortifications of Bexar.

When Bowie was certain that the retreat had become a rout, he began chafing. He had lost but one man, killed, and none wounded, while the losses of the Mexican force totaled nearly a hundred. If Austin were only here, they could pursue the fleeing Mexicans and cut them to pieces, but Bowie wisely decided that his own force was too small to abandon the advantage of position.

An hour later Austin arrived with his entire command. Surveying the field, he at once gave orders for the pursuit.

"Follow them right into town!" he shouted. "It will be ours in an hour!"

Bowie hastened to him. "It's too late now, General," he protested. "An hour ago we could have bagged them, but not now. The town is strongly fortified and mounted cannon will cover their confusion."

"We can take the town before they get reorganized," Austin replied. He was elated. "We must follow them! The victory is ours!"

"It is," Bowie calmly answered, "and it has cost us only one man. But if we rush into town and try to penetrate their works without suitable tools and cannon, it will cost us dearly. I know the town, General; I know what we would have to face. We have them bottled up now. We must wait for reinforcements. Throw your lines around the town and you can starve them into surrender without losing a man."

Fannin now came forward and added his arguments to Bowie's. Reluctantly, Austin accepted their advice and set about strengthening the position and arranging for plans of operation calculated to annoy the enemy and keep them within the town.

The army was jubilant.

Into camp next day came the companies from East Texas, well armed and equipped, and bringing the news that a company from Louisiana was on the way with a twelve-pounder.

Summers and Abel, hearing that the Nacogdoches company was moving up, galloped back to meet them. Their reunion with Buell and Bullard was ground for celebration. Abel loudly complained over the fact that his gourd canteen held nothing but water.

"You've come too late to have any of the fun," he told Lon that night as they sat around a small campfire, exchanging experiences and accounting for the lapse of time since their parting. "We've licked 'em! It's all over except cleanin' up the mess."

"It seems to me you've only driven the rat in the hole," Lon answered. "I think there'll be plenty of fun smoking him out."

CHAPTER XVIII

TIME proved Lon correct in his guess that the rat had only been driven into the hole and that the real difficulty would be in smoking him out. Reinforcements failed to arrive. As time dragged on, hot blood cooled under the unexciting tedium of riding patrol and waiting for the enemy to become hungry enough to lift the white flag.

Dissension again broke out. Many of the volunteers wanted to return home to salvage what they could from their unharvested crops. Days passed into weeks, with only one small skirmish to whet the appetite of the command. Austin was learning that an army in the field, when faced with inaction, turns its mind toward home.

In late November word came that the New Orleans Greys, bringing with them the much-talked-of twelve-pounder, would arrive in camp the following day. Austin knew it was now or never.

He promptly issued an order to the several commands to prepare for an attack upon the town. It was then that he discovered he had waited too long. Courage and confidence had been replaced by doubt and fear. Many of the officers, advising against the move, boldly stated that they would not join in so hazardous an undertaking.

His disappointment was keen. He was

faced with the necessity of returning to San Felipe to assist in the formation of the government and in raising volunteers. His great hope had been to lead in the capture of the town. Now he must turn over the command to another, despite his fear that it would mean the abandonment of the siege and the retirement of the army at the very time when victory seemed assured.

Wounded to the heart, he turned the command over to Burleson and began the long ride back to San Felipe. He could carry with him no news of victory to bolster up his appeals for more volunteers.

IT was two weeks after Austin's departure that Burleson determined to abandon the siege and fall back into winter quarters at Gonzales. He at once issued the order to break camp.

Milam, appointing himself as the leader of this faction, went to Burleson's quarters to protest against the retreat. His arrival there was coincident with that of a Mexican deserter who reported to Burleson that the defense of the town were weak, the soldiers discouraged and the supplies low. Still Burleson hesitated.

Milam saw his chance. "This is the time to call for volunteers, General," he said.

Burleson, thinking such a call would serve to convince the hotspurs that the great majority stood with him, replied:

"Very well, sir! Now is the proper time."

Milam turned to the men crowding round. In a loud, strong voice he shouted:

"Who will go with old Ben Milam into San Antonio?"

"I will!" came a ringing chorus.

"Then fall in line!" Milam called.

Abel jumped a full three feet forward, his coonskin cap impaled on the end of his rifle as he shouted: "Come on, boys! There's roofs and feathers and whisky in town and nothin' but open sky 'tween here and Gonzales. Let's sleep in a bed by tomorrow night!"

Over two hundred men stepped forward. Abel craned his neck to look down the forming line. Side by side stood Summers, Lon and Buell.

"And a doctor to patch you up if you git shot gittin' yore bed," Abel added, jubilantly.

At three o'clock the following morning a detachment of Texans under Colonel Neill crossed the river with a single piece of artillery. At dawn they began an assault upon the Alamo, diverting the attention of the enemy so that Milam's riflemen could effect an entrance to the town.

The attack soon resolved itself into a type of warfare in which the Texans showed to the greatest advantage. Two or three houses within rifle-range of the Mexican position were stormed and taken, and from this cover they set up a deadly fire upon the next strong point.

Cos had divided his army into two divisions; one division occupying the Alamo, the other strongly entrenched in the town. The Texans had one great objective—to drive the enemy from the town and force him back into the Alamo. From house to house they made their way, availing themselves of all possible cover and picking off the enemy sharpshooters stationed on the housetops and behind entrenchments.

Summers, Abel and Bullard kept close together during the day. The skill acquired in the woods and in the shooting matches back at the Forks was now bearing a red harvest. But the progress was slow all along the line. The Mexicans, holding the advantage of position, were putting up a determined resistance.

Buell had established a makeshift hospital in one of the houses first taken. By nightfall of the first day several dangerously wounded men were under his care.

Abel had captured a bed at the end of the day, but he was not to sleep in it. That night he toiled with the others, throwing up breastworks in order to hold what had been gained.

For the next two days the Texans made what progress they could, advancing from house to house and all the while tightening their lines and drawing nearer the plaza.

During the afternoon of the third day of fighting, Ben Milam was killed as he attempted to cross an open space between two houses. A Mexican rifleman had made a good shot, but in so doing sealed his own doom. Some one would have to pay for Ben Milam! The Texans, with grim resolution, at once set about collecting.

From the moment Milam fell, their fire never slackened. With battering-rams of heavy logs they smashed down doors, capturing and killing, fighting with the knife and with clubbed muskets, and all the while drawing nearer and nearer the plaza.

NIGHT fell, but the fighting continued. There was the constant rattle of musketry, punctuated now and then by the deep-throated roar of Mexican artillery.

Near midnight a small group of men at last forced their way into a house located in the square. It was a splendid vantage point. The enemy angered by the loss of this position, began a furious cannonading. Muskets rattled incessantly.

The fire of the Mexicans was largely a matter of noise. The Texans responded, but only when they were sure of their fire. They inflicted heavy losses, while sustaining but one fatality in their own forces.

Bullard received a slight scalp wound in helping take a house near the plaza. He refused to go back for any surgical aid, holding his place by Abel's side near a small window where they could fire at the stabbing points of light from the enemy lines.

They were holding this position when dawn came. With the coming of light the Texans increased their fire, while the Mexicans, strangely, decreased theirs.

Abel and Bullard, peeping from cover, were eagerly watching for a target. Summers kneeled at another window, his long rifle poked menacingly through the opening.

"Look yonder!" Abel called, recklessly exposing himself as he pointed through the window. "It's a white flag. Look, Will!"

"I see," Summers answered, his rifle covering the man who had lifted the flag above the Mexican position.

"I reckon that's another parley," Abel commented. "When things git hot these Mexicans are long on parleyin'. And while they're tryin' to talk their way out of the mess they'll be primin' their guns."

"I think they've got enough," Lon said, and for the first time began examining the wound on the side of his head.

"You mean they'll quit?" Abel asked.

"I think so," Lon answered.

Abel's eyes danced with delight. "Then we can go back home."

"Not yet," Summers spoke up. "They may quit but that doesn't end the war. We'll have to stay here and hold what we have won. Santa Anna still has an army."

"What we've won!" Abel snorted. "A bunch of rock and clay houses with the doors and roofs smashed in and the streets all tore up. What do we want it fer?"

"It is the strongest point in Texas," Summers answered.

"There are strong points nearer home," Abel retorted. "Look here, Will! If that flag means that they're going to surrender, do you mean to tell me you aim to stick around here all winter?"

"If we are needed here, yes."

"We?" Abel echoed. "You can jes' leave out the *we!* I'm sick and tired of followin' around after a bullhead. I'm goin' back home. And this is the last time I'm goin' to say that without doin' it. Come on, Lon, let's go out and see what's goin' on."

THE truce ended in surrender. General Cos had quite enough of Texan rifle-fire. The country south of the Rio Grande had become suddenly inviting. Life was a precious thing. If he could save his own neck and those of his troops by a surrender of arms and munitions, it was decidedly preferable to dying like rats.

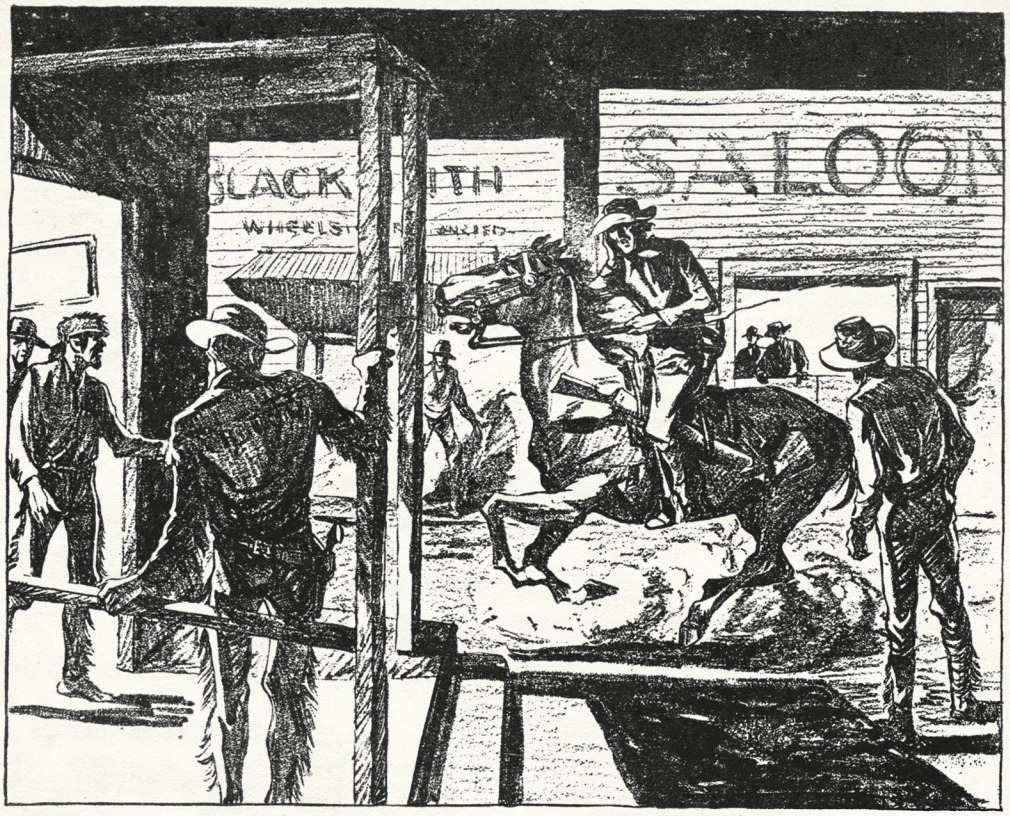
Burleson's terms of capitulation were promptly accepted. What mattered it, Cos reasoned, that he must agree to retire beyond the Rio Grande under parole, never again to take up arms against Texas? He who fights and runs away will live to fight another day. The matter of parole was of little consequence. Santa Anna, his brother-in-law and chief, would understand that a promise made at the point of a rifle is no promise at all. Santa Anna would accept it as evidence of good sense.

So reasoning, Cos signed the articles of capitulation, including the none-too-embarrassing clause of parole. A few days later he rode out of town at the head of his army, leaving San Antonio de Bexar in the hands of the hated Americans.

His army had not retired beyond the Rio Grande before confusion laid hold of his conquerors. Many of them, having accomplished the purpose for which they had set out, now turned their faces homeward. In responding to the call for volunteers they had made no promises as to the length of their service. The enemy had been expelled. It was now time to take up peaceful pursuits. The harvesting of crops had been abandoned when they took the field. That was loss enough. Spring must find them again behind the plow in an effort to make up for what had been lost.

Burleson, having dispatched riders to San Felipe and Washington with news of the capture of San Antonio, at once set about disbanding the army, with the exception of a small garrison who expressed a willingness to remain in San Antonio and occupy it until such time as they could be relieved by other colonists.

Abel at once presented arguments for an immediate return to San Felipe. Bullard, fearing that Santa Anna would march north in an effort to regain what Cos had



A dust-covered courier rode into San Felipe with news of the butchery at the Alamo.

lost, at once signified his intention of remaining in Bexar until peace was definitely established. Jeff Buell, occupied with the care of the sick and the wounded, turned a deaf ear to all of Abel's arguments favoring a return to San Felipe. Summers kept his thoughts and his plans to himself.

ON Christmas Day a rider came from San Felipe, bearing messages for the head of the army. He also brought several letters for the men.

Jeff Buell was one of the fortunate ones to receive a letter, but as he read his smile changed to a look of deep distress. When he had finished reading he at once set out in search of Summers. He found him, in company with Abel, lounging against a wall in the sunlit plaza.

Jeff touched Summers on the shoulder and beckoned him to one side.

"Will, Caroline's come," he announced.

"What!" Summers exclaimed, blinking as foolishly as one just coming out of a day-dream. "Here—in Bexar?"

"Not here—I meant in San Felipe. I've just received a letter from her."

Summers was still trying to shake himself awake. The thing didn't make sense.

"She has been there over a month," he heard Jeff saying. "Austin told her I was here—with you."

"She mentioned me?"

"Yes. Just think, Will. She has been there a month, yet she wouldn't write a word until she heard of our victory. That's Caroline for you."

"What in the world is she doing there?" Summers asked, still doubting his ears.

"Didn't you write her that I was coming to San Felipe from Nacogdoches to join you?"

"Why—yes, months ago. But I only wanted her to know that everything was working out all right—for you."

"Working out as you wanted it to work out, Will, not as I had planned. You don't know Caroline very well, do you?"

"What do you mean?" Summers asked quickly.

"Did it ever occur to you that I was not writing her the whole truth? I kept telling her I was undecided where I would locate. I knew Caroline too well to risk that. But you upset the whole plan."

Summers looked exceedingly blank. "I don't understand what you mean," he said.

Jeff was exasperated. "You can be the

dullest man—when you try! I suppose you never thought that Caroline would join me the minute she knew I was permanently located?"

"Not for a second!" Summers replied. "That's the truth, Jeff. I heard her say, many times, that she hated the sound of the name Texas, and that she didn't intend to do any pioneering."

Jeff shook his head sadly. "I say it again, Will: You can be mighty stupid when you try. Didn't you know she was only talking against the thing she feared? Couldn't you see it was because she knew she would make the sacrifice if she was brought face to face with it? . . . . No, you wouldn't see that. A woman is beyond your comprehension."

"I guess that's right," Summers answered, feeling suddenly weak. Then quickly: "You've got to start back, Jeff—at once. Where is she staying there?"

"She said in the letter that she had bought a little frame house and moved in."

"Alone?"

"Oh, no! Old Aunt Chloe is with her. But she must be lonely—and worried sick. I can't leave right now. The wounded men, and the sick ones, need me. It's different with you, Will. You can go."

Summers took a step backward. "I? Why, what could I do?"

"I tell you I can't go away and leave these men. Think, Will! This is Christmas Day. There isn't a soul there in the world, except old Chloe, who cares a snap for her. Remember Christmas Day at our house, two years ago?"

Summers nodded. He did not dare trust his voice.

"She must be mighty lonely—and mighty brave," Buell went on. "She is used to having a lot of people around. You've got to go back and see that she is getting along all right."

Summers shook his head. "She came here to find you, Jeff. There is mighty little I could do."

"Oh, yes, she came to find me, but it wasn't *my* letter that told her where she would find me. Will, are you going to be bullheaded all of your life?"

"What could I do?" Summers asked, ignoring the question.

"For one thing, you can carry the word to her that I'll be there just as soon as I can leave these men. For another, you can let her know that *I*, at least, think she is a mighty brave girl."

HE watched the effect of this last statement. The shot had gone home, but there was still an uncompromising set to Summers' lips.

"Up in Nacogdoches," Jeff went on, "you once asked me to stay behind and care for a friend when it was your duty to go on. You said that duty and friendship must be served first. Now it is my duty to stay here and it is your duty to serve friendship—the situation is reversed."

Without a word Summers turned and walked over to shake Abel out of a nap.

"Wake up, Abel!" he said. "Wake up! We're starting for San Felipe."

Abel awoke with alacrity. "Are you joshin' me, Will?"

"No. Where's Lon?"

"Eatin' Christmas dinner with that family of Mexicans he's been hobnobbin' with. Lon beats all. I believe he could make friends with a snake."

"He could," Buell agreed fervently.

"You know where the house is?" Summers asked.

"Shore. It's down by the river. Lon was fer takin' me along, but I can't—"

"Go find him," Summers interrupted curtly, "and tell him we are leaving here this afternoon."

"Wait a minute!" Buell put in. "Are you expecting him to go with you, Will?"

"Of course."

"But you know he has said he would stay here until he is sure the trouble's over. Besides, he doesn't want to go to San Felipe. He'll go back to Nacogdoches as soon as he can."

"That's nonsense," Summer retorted. "San Felipe is a much better town."

"For you, perhaps," Buell answered, "but not for Lon. I know some things you don't know."

"What are they?" Summers asked.

Buell shook his head and smiled. "Will, there are some things in this world beyond your management. You can't control all of the actions in everybody's life."

ABEL had just ground for complaint on the ride back to San Felipe. Summers was more silent than ever. He was looking ahead to the meeting with Caroline—wondering what she would have to say, trying to fashion replies to the censure he felt sure would be heaped upon him. He carried a letter from Jeff, together with the verbal assurance that Jeff would come on as soon as possible. Even so, would

this satisfy her? She had given up the things she had loved to follow Jeff into a life she despised, or at least feared. Beyond doubt she would think Jeff had been influenced by the very man she had welcomed to their home.

Summers knew there was little he could say. He could not tell her that Jeff had come on the trail of Gant—he could tell her the reason for his own coming, but beyond that he could not go.

The horses were not spared on that trip. They had left Bexar before sunup the day after Christmas; they reached the inn at San Felipe in time for supper on the third day. At least it was supper time for Abel.

Summers, however, had no thought for food. He went to the room assigned them and began washing the dust of the journey from his hands and face. That finished, he stood looking down at his soiled buckskin shirt and breeches. They bore the marks of campaigning. He glanced in the small mirror. What a different man from the one who used to stand before the mirror in broadcloth and fawn-colored trousers—back in Washington!

With lagging steps he turned from the room and went out on the street. A townsman, answering his inquiries, directed him to the house where Caroline lived.

His knock was sharp and decisive. He must not let the fear of a woman's look keep him from a duty.

A white-haired negro-woman, nearly as round as she was tall, peeped cautiously through the crack of a partly opened door.

"Who's dah?" Chloe demanded.

"Is Miss Buell at home?" he asked.

"I axed who's dah?"

Summers stepped over into the beam of light. "Don't you remember me, Aunt Chloe? Mr. Summers—who used to be down at Washington?"

The door flew wide open. "Lord God! Sarvent, marster. Come right in! I cain' see so well 'cause we been lookin' our eyes out fer you an' Marse Jeff. Whur is Marse Jeff? Cayoline!" She turned and called, shrilly. "Oh, Miss Cayoline! Look here, honey, who's come home!"

There came the sound of fluttering skirts and hurrying footsteps. A moment later Caroline entered the room, her eyes dancing in the soft glow of candle-light. One look at her and Summers knew that no matter what the surroundings, she would always be a patrician. A jewel in a pine box, indeed!

"Oh, I am so glad to see you!" she exclaimed. "And you haven't changed a bit! Where's Jeff?"

There was the dreaded question. Now where were the words he had fashioned for reply?

"I've a letter from him," Summers answered. Realizing that this was a stupid answer to her question, he began all over again. "He couldn't leave just the minute he got your letter. There were some wounded men, and several who were sick. Jeff felt he couldn't come until he had them patched up."

"Of course not!" Caroline agreed. "I didn't say a word to him about coming—at least not until he thought he should. But do sit down. I have so many things to ask you—so many things to talk about."

SUMMERS found courage to look in her eyes. She wasn't saying any of the things he had imagined.

As he seated himself he glanced down at his soiled buckskins, then across at her flowered dress. He felt like a small boy surprised at playing in the mud.

"You can't imagine how we rejoiced here when we heard of the victory at San Antonio," she told him eagerly. "I was frightened, when Mr. Austin first told me that you and Jeff were there, but I have been feeling mighty proud since the news came."

"Jeff has done some fine work," Summers replied. "You have good reason to be proud of him."

"Austin said the same of you," she declared. "He said there wasn't a better, braver rifle in the army." Seeing how this embarrassed Summers, she added hurriedly: "And he told me some of the funniest things about that man who was with you. Who is he?"

"I suppose you mean Abel," Summers answered. "He furnished some amusement for the army, although he didn't know he was doing it."

"Jeff wrote me about him. He came from Tennessee with you, didn't he?"

Summers nodded. Now she was starting back into the history of the thing. Her next question, however, indicated that she had no intention of probing further in that direction.

"Tell me," she said earnestly, "is Jeff really a good doctor?"

"He certainly is! He has made a name for himself with the army."

"Isn't that fine!" she enthused. "Now he can come back here and feel he is entitled to the confidence of the people. I'm sure he can build up a good practice."

Summers caught his breath and sank back in his chair. "You mean here?" he asked.

"Yes, of course! Didn't you say this was a good town? Isn't he planning on starting up here?"

"Why, yes—that is—oh, no! He is going back to Washington. I heard him say he was going back." It was a bold lie. As usual, he was planning what he wanted to come about.

Caroline's brows contracted into a puzzled frown. "Back to Washington? Why should he go back there?"

"Because of—that is, I don't think he likes it here."

"But he hasn't been here—in San Felipe," she protested. "I'm sure he will like it. Besides, we can't go back to Washington now."

"Why not?" Summers asked in surprise.

"Because I sold the place. Everything we have in the world is right here—except a little money Major Langstone is holding for us."

SUMMERS felt suddenly cold. His eyes turned to the fire crackling in the fireplace. It offered him no warmth. He was chilled to the marrow by the blast of his own folly.

Caroline was quick to see his distress. "You think I shouldn't have done it?" she asked. As he sought words she went on, "It wasn't as much of a sacrifice as you think. We had lived beyond our income. Jeff knew it all the time. That's why he wanted to go where he could find people with some confidence in his ability. But I was foolish. Oh, yes, I was," she hurried on as he lifted a hand in protest. "I didn't want to give up what I had no right to enjoy. When—when Sally died, and poor Jeff left because he couldn't stand it there any longer, it opened my eyes. I knew then I would come the minute he wrote that he was established."

"Did you even wait for him to write you that?" Summers asked, still looking in the fire.

The answer was long in coming. A sidelong glance told him that she was in confusion.

"No, I didn't," she answered at last. "I could tell, from the way he wrote from Nacogdoches, that he would keep putting me off. He was too vague about what he intended doing, and that wasn't like Jeff. When you wrote me that he was coming here, I guessed you didn't know what he had been writing."

Summers forced a thin, mirthless smile. "You are a good guesser," he admitted. "It's all my fault. I should have kept quiet."

"Should you?" she asked pointedly. "Don't you think you kept silent long enough? You wrote just once. Surely I could expect that much from — from a friend. Do you remember that you did not even let me know you were leaving Washington? I had to get the facts out of Major Langstone."

Summers shifted uneasily. He found it difficult to meet her eyes.

"The Major told me all about it," she continued. "He excused your actions on the ground that you never let your left hand know what your right hand was doing."

"He told you about—my brother's death?" Summers asked.

"Yes. And I have learned more since I came here. I think it was wonderfully unselfish. Why didn't you want to tell me about it?"

"It was all I could do. I—I didn't want to talk about it. Let's not talk about it now. What do you intend to do here?"

"Live here, of course. I talked it all over with the Major before I came and he said I was doing exactly right—for Jeff. Young men for new countries, he said. When Jeff gets back we can fix up this place and he can start practicing right here. I'm sure he will get along fine."

"That isn't the point," Summers said doggedly. "Of course he can get along. But what about you?"

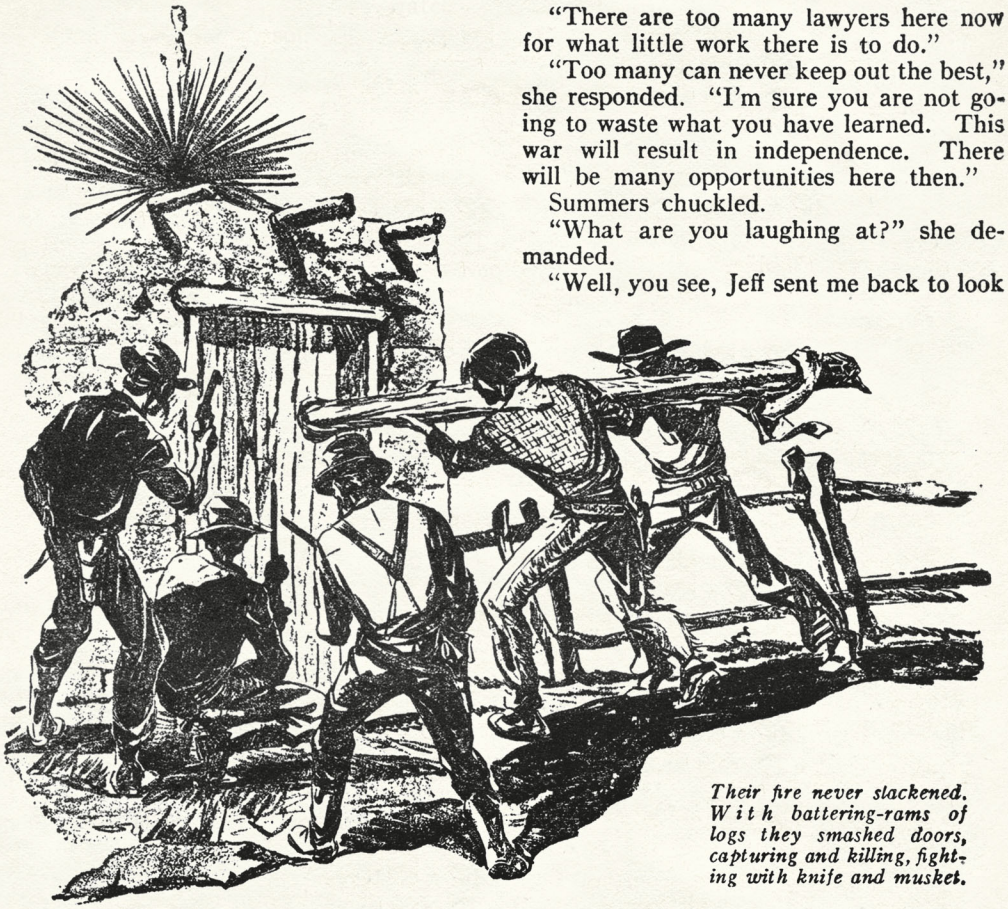
"What about me?" she echoed, a note of piquancy in her voice. "Well, what about me?"

"You can't live here."

"No? Aren't there a great many women living here?"

Summers studied her face for a long minute. There was courage there. Now, strangely, he did not want her to have to draw upon it, but he could not refrain from putting it to a little test.

"Yes, there are many women here," he answered, "but most of them are tired, work-worn, and with a look of hunger in their eyes; hungry for the things—" He



Their fire never slackened. With battering-rams of logs they smashed doors, capturing and killing, fighting with knife and musket.

broke off abruptly. With the toe of her slipper she was tracing the course of a pattern in the rag rug. He thought he saw moisture glistening in her lashes.

"It was a long time ago when I said that," she said, her voice very low. "I am seeing things different now. At any rate I have made up my mind. If Jeff likes it here, here he will stay. What do you intend to do, Will?"

He thrilled to his name. It was the first time she had used it this evening. It recalled one evening back in Washington when she had used it for the first time and he had been so very close to telling her what was in his heart. Dwelling in memory, he quite forgot her question.

"What do you intend to do?" she repeated.

"Go out on the farm with Abel, I suppose," he answered.

"That's foolish! After all you learned with Major Langstone? Why, you could be the best lawyer in the town."

"There are too many lawyers here now for what little work there is to do."

"Too many can never keep out the best," she responded. "I'm sure you are not going to waste what you have learned. This war will result in independence. There will be many opportunities here then."

Summers chuckled.

"What are you laughing at?" she demanded.

"Well, you see, Jeff sent me back to look after you and be of what help I could. I think both of us will have to turn to you for help."

It served to relieve the tension. Both of them had been cautiously feeling their way. Summers' statement served to put them on firmer ground.

For an hour they talked; Summers telling her incidents of the campaign against Bexar; she listening with the ears of a woman who searches for some hint of personal prowess with which to exalt her hero.

Later, as Summers walked back down the dark street to the inn, he thought the stars in the blue bowl of the sky exceptionally bright this night. He attributed it to the clear, crisp weather.

THE following morning Summers and Abel rode out to the farm. The cotton had long since been picked by the winds or beaten from the bolls by the heavy winter rains. The weeds and thickets at the edges of the field were white with it. It

grieved Abel to see the harvest of his labor dissipated by prodigal winds, but he rejoiced over the fact that the long trail had at last turned back to their own roof and their own bed. Everything in the house was just as they had left it, save that a fine layer of dust had settled over all and there was the damp, woody smell so common to a log house long in disuse.

A fire was started, doors were thrown open, and the two men, in man-like fashion, set about reëstablishing themselves. Abel went at it with the air of one who has his goal in sight, but Summers halted again and again, as one who is not sure of his purpose and ponders the advisability of continuing.

Every day, thereafter, Summers saddled his horse and rode into town to see that all was well with Caroline and to offer his help. He found old Chloe abundantly equal to the tasks imposed by a small, four-room house, and it just happened that her attention was always held by the kitchen from the moment he arrived until his departure.

Abel thought it strange that it took Summers so long to inquire into their health and to ask if any further word had come from Jeff. He wondered if these long visits were associated with the fact that Summers never asked him to ride along. . . . .

On the second week in January Jeff Buell rode into San Felipe. Old Chloe at once set about the preparation of a dinner for the following day, which she declared would be Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's all rolled into one.

Abel at last got his invitation. He protested that his buckskins were none too new, even though his appetite was a little above standard. He quickly abandoned the position when Summers reminded him that he himself had gone to Washington in buckskin and so attired had attended parties in the Buell home.

This settled the matter for Abel. He was seeking encouragement.

AT first Abel was something of a disappointment to Caroline. From the stories Summers and Jeff had told, she had expected some rare entertainment.

The sight of Caroline had awed Abel into silence. He had never seen a woman like this. Her dress made him all the more conscious of his buckskins. He watched her at such times as her attention was away from him. The high color under the thin skin of her cheeks, the white, soft hands, the indistinct yellow roses patterned in her dress—all made him feel that she was too exquisitely fragile for such surroundings. This feeling continued until, from the place where he was sitting, he saw old Chloe bringing a deliciously browned turkey to the dining-room table. Then he began to feel expansive. After all, he had not come to talk.

The dinner had a heartening effect upon him. He saw that it would not be difficult to talk to any woman who could offer him as many helpings as did Caroline. Thereafter, for an hour, he recited incidents that Caroline would never have dragged from Jeff or Summers. It amused her the way both of them tried to shift the conversation when they felt that Abel was getting on dangerous ground. When he came to the story of Crenshaw, Summers made a valiant effort to shut him off, but Abel was not to be denied. With one part fact and nine parts fiction, he wove a story on the loom of his imagination that was as new to Summers as it was to Caroline.

When he had finished, Caroline clapped her hands in delight.

"You are a member of the household, Mr. Roundtree! You see," she explained when she saw his look of bewilderment, "when Jeff and I lived back in Washington, we used to make every new guest tell the most thrilling thing that had happened in his life. Remember, Will?"

Summers nodded. How well he remembered!

Caroline turned back to Abel.

"When Mr. Summers first came to our house, he wouldn't say a word about himself. Even then he had had that first meeting with Crenshaw. Colonel Crockett told me something about it, but not in detail as you gave it, Mr. Roundtree."

"Will's bashful," Abel commented, ignoring Summers' glare. "We never could git him to talk about himself. He coulda run fer Congress back in Tennessee jest as well as Crockett, but he's too hard-headed to ask fer anything fer himself. That's why he's a bachelor. He coulda had any girl he wanted from the Obion to the Forks, but when there's wimmen around he's tongue-tied."

Summers felt around under the table with his foot, trying to locate Abel's shin. Failing, he manfully laid hold of the conversation and guided it into safer channels.

IN February, Jeff and Summers rented a small frame building adjoining the old saloon and billiard hall of Cooper & Cheaves and by erecting a partition of native lumber divided the one large room into two offices. At the door each nailed his sign and then sat back to await client and patient.

There was ample free time to help Abel with the tasks on the farm. Jeff found patients, even though older and better-known doctors had long been established in the town. The practice of law, however, presented quite a different problem. The country was in a chaotic condition. No one sought redress for a wrong in courts which could not well establish their rights to existence. There were simpler, more direct ways. Besides, just what was the law? Few asked; fewer still sought lawyers.

This fact caused Summers no uneasiness. He had a far more difficult problem confronting him. War talk was again taking on a threatening, ominous note. It was rumored that Santa Anna was collecting his forces at San Juan Bautista, on the Rio Grande, for an expedition against San Antonio de Bexar, and it was said that Cos had joined him and was violating the parole he had signed at Bexar.

Not for a day, since the capture of Bexar by the Americans, had Travis and Fannin ceased their calls for volunteers. For a while Summers looked upon them as alarmists, and many colonists held with him. However, if Santa Anna was making preparation for an invasion, then it was high time for Texans to take action.

SUMMERS found himself worrying greatly about Bullard. He had received no word from Lon. Was he still in Bexar, or had he made his way back to Nacogdoches? Even Abel was beginning to worry. Two or three times he had hinted to Summers that it might be wise for them to go back to Bexar. Summers was almost in agreement when one day Jeff, now alarmed at the increasing rumors, made the same proposal. That moment Summers knew beyond doubt that Caroline stood first in his heart. Not for a second could he consider the possibility of leaving her alone, and he knew that if he rode west Jeff would insist upon going. At once he began to discount the rumors.

His lips spoke one thing and his heart another. A few citizens of San Felipe were making ready to answer the appeals which Travis was sending back. On the day of their departure, Summers' heart sank. He found it increasingly difficult to hold up his head. No one could understand his problem; no one could know how much there was at stake. He began to wonder if Caroline herself would not think his actions a little strange.

Facing such a problem, time dragged. On the last day of February a rider came from Bexar bearing the definite news that Santa Anna was marching toward that place. Summers sought out the courier to question him. The man reported that Bullard was still there and seemed more than happy over the arrival of Colonel Crockett, of Tennessee. Summers could not believe his ears. He asked the messenger to describe Crockett. Still unconvinced, he continued to express his doubt until the rider, in exasperation, said:

"If you don't believe he's there, maybe it'd be just as well for you to ride out there and see. They'll be needin' help bad enough, God knows! If a man's got any friends in Bexar he had better be showing his friendship."

Summers turned away, cut to the heart. He went directly to the office, where he found Buell.

"I'm leaving here tomorrow for Bexar," he announced. "I'll ride out to the farm tonight to get Abel."

"All right," Jeff answered. "I'll be ready when you come by in the morning."

"You'll be ready?" Summers echoed. "Don't be a fool, Jeff! You can't go away and leave Caroline here alone."

"I know it. But I can't stay behind when you go, either. I thought you said there wasn't any cause for alarm."

"A messenger from Bexar has just reached town," Summers answered. "He says Bullard is still there and that Crockett is there also."

Jeff jumped from his chair. "Crockett! Why, it's impossible! What would he be doing there?"

Summers shook his head. "I don't know, but I do know it isn't impossible. It wasn't impossible for us, was it? We're not the first ones nor the last to come to Texas. This is a mess that would suit Crockett to a T."

"Isn't it odd?" Buell said, musingly. "Who would have thought, two years ago, that we would all be out here now? Do you remember how we used to talk about it and—" he broke off suddenly. His eyes narrowed and his mouth became hard. He

began pacing the floor. "How in the world am I ever going to find Gant now that Caroline has come?" he asked.

"That isn't the question now, Jeff. There are other things more important."

"Other things? Yes! For a year there have been other things. Always something standing in the way; always something that must be done first. I'm sick and tired of *other things!* I would rather see Gant dead than see Texas independent. I'd rather—"

"Wait a minute, Jeff! Texas will never gain independence if Texans do not answer the call to arms. It is my duty to go to Bexar; it is yours to stay here with Caroline."

Jeff wheeled on him. "Duty! Duty! You're always pointing out the other fellow's duty."

"And never my own?" Summers quietly asked, controlling his temper.

JEFF was at once all contrition. "Of course. I'm sorry I said that, Will. But when I remember—well, then I forget myself, and it is hard. God knows how hard it is. You're right about the duty. But look, Will. The convention meets at Washington tomorrow. Beyond doubt they will declare independence. Houston will be reelected commander-in-chief, according to all reports, and he will set about forming a larger army. We need more than just a few volunteers. Wait a few more days. Wait until we hear from Washington. If Santa Anna is marching on Bexar, Houston knows it. Besides, the men in Bexar can hold that town for a month against the entire Mexican army."

"You're right about needing an army instead of just a few volunteers," Summers agreed. "I'll wait a few days to see what they do at the convention. Then I am going to Bexar."

"And I'll be with you," Buell answered.

For the first time Jeff saw Summers resort to storm.

"Damn it to hell!" he barked. "That's just what I don't want you to do!"

Jeff pitted his will against that of Summers. "And for once you'll see me do as I please," he said. "I know what is *my* duty, just as well as you know yours."

But Summers had waited too long. On the very day the convention at Washington was declaring that "the people of Texas do now constitute a free, sovereign and independent republic," Santa Anna and General Cos, who had violated his parole, were storming the beleaguered Texans in the Alamo. And on the following Sunday morning, when Houston was leaving Washington to take command of the army at Gonzales, and at the hour when the citizens of San Felipe, in answer to the mission bells, were starting for church to worship the Prince of Peace, Santa Anna was putting to the knife the last brave defender of the Alamo.

Several days elapsed before a dust-covered, spent rider rode into San Felipe with news of the butchery. The messenger came from Houston, now at Gonzales, and he carried an urgent call for the men of San Felipe to arm themselves and hasten to the defense of the new republic.

Summers and Buell were together on the street when the courier arrived. Every man in the group that gathered around the rider at once became carriers of the news. In half an hour the town was buzzing.

Summers was staggered. Lon Bullard, the gentle, the wise and the generous, rose up before him. How had he served friendship? Never again would this life furnish so loyal a friend. Crockett, too, stood before him, watching him with serious eyes that had lost all their twinkle. Behind them stood Travis, Bowie, and all that gallant company of determined men with whom he had ridden on their westward trek to death. It would be a long time before Texas again saw their like.

In a daze Summers turned his steps toward his office. . . . .

Buell followed, in silence. His thoughts were not so much upon Bullard or the other men of that small command. He was thinking of Red Ruth. He, himself, had once been wounded by the type of wound that paralyzes but does not kill. Now his mind went back to the woman at Nacogdoches. There Red Ruth would wait, and wait, and wait. Through all the long years she would stand there at the wheel, her bright red hair changing to gray, and ever, as night came down, she would repeat to ears that hear but do not understand, "Round and round the little ball goes and where it stops nobody knows."

TOO dazed for action, Jeff and Summers were still deep in thoughts when Caroline came hurrying into the office. One glance at their set faces told her all.

"You have—heard," she said.

They nodded. Jeff turned and walked to the door, standing with his back to her.

"I know how you feel," she said, talking directly to Summers. "I know why you have stayed here when you thought you should go. Jeff told me. It is all my fault. I shouldn't have come until all this was over. But you can't stay any longer now. You must go—both of you."

Summers noticed that she was standing very erect, very determined. She seemed to be bracing herself for a blow. Jeff passed through the door into the street.

"But you can't—" Summers began.

"Don't tell me what I can't do!" she interrupted. "I have no more rights than any other woman in Texas. I am not the only one who must be left behind."

"But—but, Caroline—" Words failed him. In her eyes there was no appeal for sympathy. She was equal to the hour. But she seemed so frail, so like a tall flower trying to hold up under the peltings of a gusty shower.

Somehow he managed to cross the room. He never knew just where he gained the courage to take her in his arms. For one brief moment she lifted her lips in invitation. Then her hands went out against his chest, pushing him away. She knew that resolution would vanish once their lips met.

"No, Will—please! Not now. I—I couldn't give you up—after that. Please, Will! Can't you see I am trying—trying to be brave?"

He released her. "And when I come back?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes, yes! When you come back—"

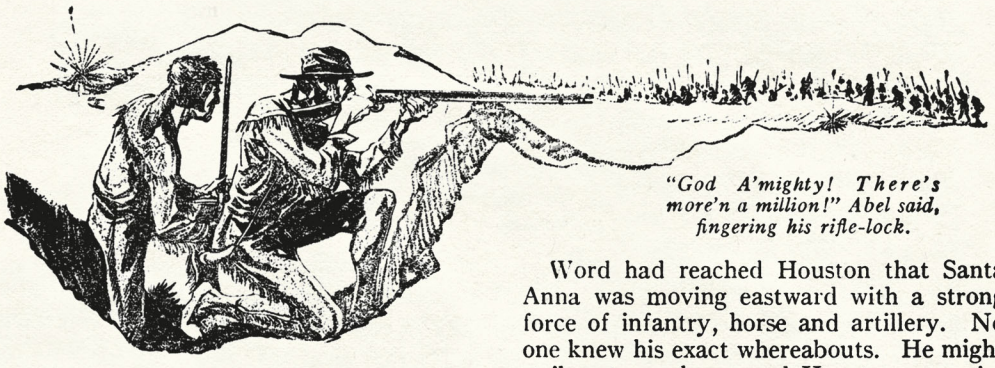
Jeff stuck his head in the door. "There's a public meeting at the alcalde's office, Will," he called. "Coming?"

"Yes. I'm coming."

Caroline put her hand against the doorjamb for support as she watched them hurry down the street.

CHAPTER XIX

THE wings of the wind would have been none too swift to suit Summers, Abel and Buell on their ride to Gonzales, but when they reached there it was to learn that the hard ride had been in vain. Houston, with a ragamuffin, untrained, undisciplined and poorly armed force totaling a little over three hundred, was preparing to evacuate Gonzales and fall back to the Colorado. He had already dispatched a messenger to Fannin ordering him to abandon the defense of Goliad and retreat to Victoria.



"God A'mighty! There's more'n a million!" Abel said, fingering his rifle-lock.

Word had reached Houston that Santa Anna was moving eastward with a strong force of infantry, horse and artillery. No one knew his exact whereabouts. He might strike at any hour, and Houston was wise enough to know that the pitiable army of Texans, however thirsty for the blood of the butcher of the Alamo, would be trampled under by the first charge of Santa Anna's dragoons. The Texans were poorly equipped and there was no supporting artillery.

Gonzales was a town of tears and panic. Thirty-two men from the small town had perished in the Alamo. Wives were weeping and wringing their hands; fatherless children were groping for an understanding of what had befallen them; and every rifle in the ragged army was challenging Houston to stand and fight.

This was the condition when Summers, Jeff and Abel reached there. That night they became three more miserable units in a crestfallen handful of men who, representing the army of Texas, filled their mouths with bitter oaths as Houston ordered the retreat. They had but two wagons and two yoke of oxen for transporting supplies and ammunition. The man who came without provisions in his saddlebags or in a cotton sack stood an excellent chance to go hungry.

Santa Anna, drunk with the blood of his victory at the Alamo, had publicly an-

nounced that he would burn every American house in Texas. To rob him of this satisfaction, Houston appointed Deaf Smith and Summers as the leaders of a small rear guard who were to burn everything in the wake of the retreating army. All night long the army of Texas moved eastward, their trail marked by the flaming walls and roofs of homes that had seen joy and sorrow, want and plenty, privation and the bright flame of zeal.

Four days and nights the army moved eastward, their progress greatly delayed by the necessity of riding wide on both flanks to warn and bring in unprotected families. Santa Anna's code did not exempt the defenseless.

On the fourth day they reached the Colorado, crossed over and went into camp. Two days thereafter the rear-guard scouts reported that a strong Mexican force under General Sesma was moving forward toward the river crossing. Houston at once began preparations to ambush them. The spirit of the men arose, but their enthusiasm was short-lived. The Mexicans, learning of the ambush, pitched camp on the opposite side of the river to await reinforcements. The chance for ambush gone, Houston began to make plans for recrossing the river and engaging the enemy in open battle.

While these plans were being pushed to completion, two reports came to him that quenched the fire of his ardor and threw his command into uproar. The convention at Washington, hearing of his retreat, had moved the seat of government to Harrisburg. This move, on the part of the leaders, threw all of east Texas into unreasoning panic. If both the government and army were fleeing before Santa Anna, the people reasoned, then it was high time for the citizens to take flight.

BUT it was the second report that staggered Houston. A rider came from Goliad, spurring frantically into camp and shouting out that Fannin's entire command at Goliad had been captured and massacred.

That night Houston did not sleep, and his men sat around their small campfires, retelling again and again the story the rider had brought from Goliad. First the Alamo, now Goliad. What manner of beast was this Santa Anna? Was it his rule to give no quarter? What would happen to this motley crowd if they chanced to fall in his path? Doubtless Sesma, across the river, was awaiting his arrival. Here was their chance to even the score! They would cross the river in the morning and give the Mexicans a taste of their own medicine. An eye for an eye. Blood for blood.

So they talked throughout the night. But Houston had been doing some clear thinking. He decided to fall back to the Brazos and by such continued retreat lure the enemy further and further away from their base. Perhaps Santa Anna might even divide his forces in his zeal to lay waste all Texas. At any rate, it was the one clear chance. To stand here would be to add another massacre to the blood-red record of Santa Anna's advance.

When dawn came, Houston, red-eyed from lack of sleep, but with his powerful shoulders squared to meet the blast of anger which he knew he was about to provoke, stalked before his paraded army and told them of his plan to strike camp and retreat to the Brazos.

THE storm broke. What had been a mob of untrained men now became a mob of open rebellion. They shouted curses and swore they would not retreat another step. "Look at him!" Abel growled to Summers. "He run out of Tennessee once and now he's fixin' to run clean out of Texas." He turned and shouted loud enough to be heard above the angry growls of the others. "Boys!" he called, "I stick right here. I come to fight, not to run. If I'd a-knowed the army was goin' to run plumb back to the Brazos I could a-stayed there and saved myself a lot of steps. I motion we stick right here and give 'em lead when they try to cross the river."

There was a shout of approval. Abel was voicing the will of every man present—save one. That one was the towering giant who stood so calmly before them, drawing his colored sash a little tighter about his middle and shifting his big hat to a more determined angle.

His voice rose above the others like the roar of a bull above the drone of bees. He offered no explanation; made no effort to tell them what he expected them to do. He told them what they were *going to do!* Only a few short, sharp sentences. Then he stood there, seeming to have the ability to look into the eyes of every man.

The growling ceased. Silently, in little groups, the men turned away and began to make ready for further retreat. Even Abel was silenced, and Summers knew he had met a will stronger than his own.

THE retreat to the Brazos was a way of sorrow. The spring rains began. Water fell in sheets. Creeks became rivers; the prairies were turned into bogs. The wagons and oxen were no sooner extricated from one mudhole than they forthwith mired down in another.

The countryside was in shambles. Every house had been abandoned, the owners fleeing eastward ahead of the retreating army. Beside the road was to be found bedding, trunks, kitchen ware, pieces of household furniture—all cast from overloaded wagons by frantic settlers who had tried to save all and were now willing to cast all aside in an effort to save their lives. Many of the wagons and oxcarts preceding the army were driven by women. Their husbands were in the army behind, or had perished at the Alamo or at Goliad. And many a man in Houston's army, coming in sight of his own home, saw that the door swung wide open and that all he had worked to gain—cattle, hogs, chickens, and the house itself—must be left in the path of the pursuing enemy, while somewhere ahead of the army his wife and children were goading weary oxen into still greater effort. Under such conditions, it took a brave man to stay behind with the army. Fortunately, many of them knew the quality of courage possessed by their women who, somewhere ahead, were plodding through the dark night and the lowering days, their long bull whips cracking over the backs of lagging oxen while their lips spoke courage and crooned melodies to frightened, crying children.

The army that trailed these refugees was sullen and angry. The man who rode at their head had once seen a star rising and had made prophecy. His speeches had been phrased in words of fire. Now, it seemed, the rains had quenched his fire; the sodden prairies sucked at his feet until he no longer walked like a giant.

Perhaps he was lost. Perhaps the clouds had blotted out the star.

SUMMERS was not of the bravest when it came to the question of Caroline's safety, and his worry changed to fear when word reached the army that the citizens of San Felipe were fleeing the town. He at once called Jeff and Abel into conference. They were solemn and depressed. Summers knew their distress was as great as his own.

"You can't stay with us any longer, Jeff," he began. "You must ride ahead and take Caroline up to Washington. I would say to Harrisburg, but Santa Anna is south of us and I'm afraid he is aiming at the new seat of government. To go there might be jumping out of the kettle into the fire."

"I'm glad you think I should go," Jeff answered. "I've been worried to death about her. Of course I hate to leave, but I can't stand to see her there alone when everyone is moving out."

"Old Sam says he's goin' to make a stand at the Brazos," Abel offered.

"He said the same at the Colorado," Summers answered dourly. "I've about lost faith in his standing ability. Besides, that would leave Caroline within gunshot of the battle and we can't expect Santa Anna to respect women. It's time to act, Jeff. Abel will go with you and—"

"Now, Will!" Abel protested. "I've been keepin' my powder dry in all this rain fer shootin', not fer runnin'. I figger to—"

"This is no time for argument, Abel!" Summers' voice was crisp. "If there is going to be any shooting, which I doubt, you'll get your share of it. I want you to go back with Jeff. Go out to the farm and get the wagon and the oxen, load up as much of Caroline's stuff as you can haul and take the road to Washington. Stay with Jeff until you get them to Washington. Then you can come back and join us—if Houston makes a stand. If you get word that he has fallen back beyond the Brazos, then light out for Nacogdoches. In that case, I'll join you along the road. I don't propose to stay with him a step beyond the Brazos."

"Let me git this straight, Will. If old Sam crosses the Brazos, I'm to stay with Jeff till you ketch up. That'll mean we're headed out of Texas."

"Yes. We can't make a stand alone—and I'm tired of running."

"It's kinda like desertin', aint it?"

"I don't care what it's like!" Summers retorted. "Some of us must go. Either you go, or I will."

"You might do better than me," Abel suggested.

Lacking logic with which to meet this argument, Summers resorted to flattery.

"It's a question of the best man for the job, Abel. I don't know of any man who can get more miles out of a yoke of oxen than you can. Buck and Bell will sulk on me, but you can keep the wheels rolling."

"I'm tolerable handy with a prod," Abel admitted. "Do you want me to take any of our stuff?"

"No. If we retreat beyond the river I'm through with Texas. Save all the space for Caroline."

"And Aunt Chloe," Abel added, grinning. "She'll take up a right smart of room."

WHEN Houston came in sight of San Felipe, he immediately announced his intention of moving north along the river to Groce's Ferry. Mutiny at once flamed up. Many of the men considered it another ruse for continuing the retreat. Houston had declared that he would not retreat beyond the Brazos, but had said nothing about retreating northward. It was a trick—a cowardly trick! The leaders pointed out that here was the place to make the stand. When Houston turned a deaf ear to this plan, a hundred and fifty men refused to follow him further. One group elected to remain at the San Felipe crossing, while a second smaller group moved down to the ferry at Fort Bend.

Houston was a commander without authority to enforce command. With set lips he ignored the rebellion and marched northward. Even in retreat he had a quality of leadership that made men follow. Five hundred growling, cursing, but still-loyal men followed him to Groce's and went into camp.

The downpour of rain continued. The camp at Groce's became first a quagmire, then a lake. The men were continually moving to higher ground until at last the camp became a small island surrounded by the coffee-colored backwater from the swollen river.

Houston, deaf to all complaints and favoring himself least of all, sternly went about the business of drilling his men and trying to whip them into an organization responsive to command. But his men had come to fight, not to spend hours drilling on a small island cut off from the world. Somewhere beyond the turgid water of the river their wives and children were fleeing east, north, south—anywhere but westward. It was a sorry time for drilling.

The rains never ceased. The clouds never broke. Gloom settled over the army. What man could see a star when even the sun was held in thrall by the darkest clouds that had ever lowered over Texas?

Every report that reached the army increased the gloom. Word came that Santa Anna was at the crossing at San Felipe, only to find the town in flames. Again the fleeing citizens had robbed him of one of his chief delights. With pillage denied him, he turned south to make a thrust at Harrisburg. He was tired of chasing a jack-rabbit that hadn't the nerve to stand and fight. He would raze Harrisburg and stamp out the rebel leaders.

Houston smiled as the army growled and clamored for pursuit. It was all working out just as he had planned. Santa Anna had grown contemptuous. Next he would become careless. He was working further and further away from his base and his forces were now divided and widely separated.

The hour had struck. Houston went before his army with a new gleam in his eye. Now they would see old Sam in action. The hare would become the hound. But, wisely, he gave them no word of his plans. There were too many men deserting for him to trust such a precious message to tongues that might tomorrow find expression in some place where eager ears would carry the news to Santa Anna.

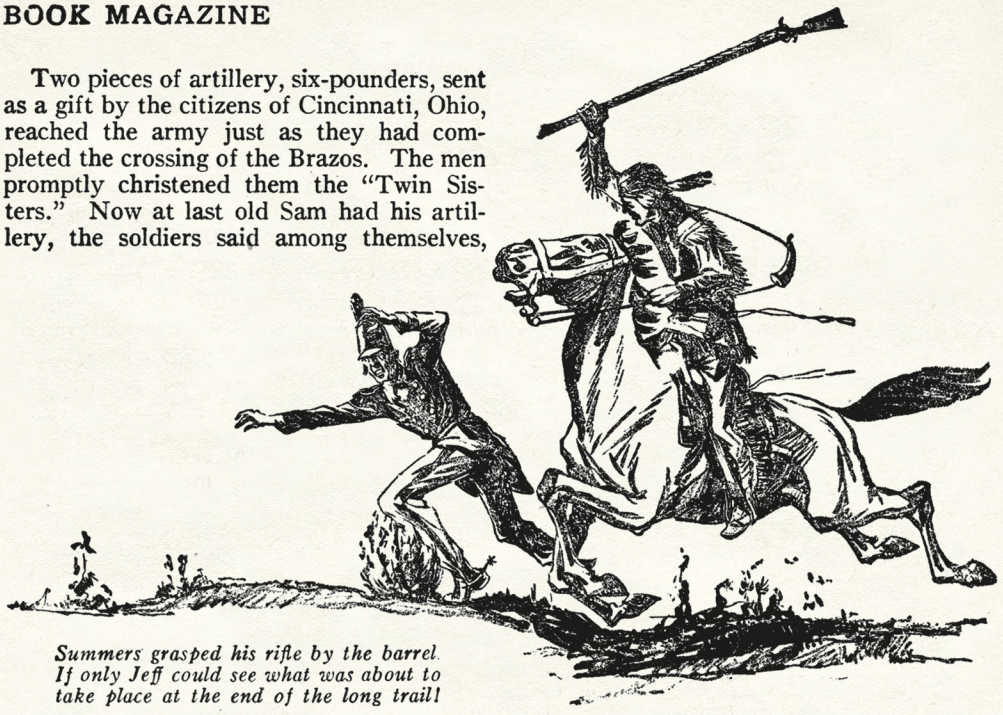
Keeping his plans to himself, he spent two days in crossing the swollen river, making use of a steamboat which he commandeered for that purpose.

THE crossing of the river filled Summers with misgivings. Houston offered the army no explanation of the move; gave no hint of his purpose. Many of the men thought it was the beginning of another long retreat, but there was something about the quiet force with which Houston now moved that caused Summers to believe that this silent, willful man was preparing to draw the sword. If so, Abel would be left out. If word of the move reached Washington, Abel and Jeff would consider it evidence of flight and would at once set out for Nacogdoches.

While Summers was debating in his mind whether to remain with the army or, as he had promised, leave it and rejoin Abel and Jeff at Washington, Houston ordered him to report as orderly. An hour after Summers reported, Houston started the march eastward toward Donohue's. It was at this place that the road forked, one road continuing eastward to the Trinity and thence north to Nacogdoches, the right-hand road turning south to Harrisburg.

Summers, now acting as orderly, decided to remain with the army until they reached Donohue's. There, where the road forked, old Sam would be forced to disclose his plan. Then the army would know whether they were in for a fight or a foot-race.

Two pieces of artillery, six-pounders, sent as a gift by the citizens of Cincinnati, Ohio, reached the army just as they had completed the crossing of the Brazos. The men promptly christened them the "Twin Sisters." Now at last old Sam had his artillery, the soldiers said among themselves,



Summers grasped his rifle by the barrel. If only Jeff could see what was about to take place at the end of the long trail!

and if he lacked the courage to use them and did not follow the road to Harrisburg some one would get a shot in the back!

As the army came within sight of the fork in the road at Donohue's, Wharton, who had brought the six-pounders from Velasco, rode up to Houston and said:

"Sir, these men are in no mood for further retreat."

Houston pressed his lips the tighter, gave his sash a determined hitch and answered not a word.

"They are ready to mutiny," Wharton warned.

Houston rode on in silence. Summers, who rode immediately behind, was one who could understand and appreciate the force of silence.

"If you take the fork to the Trinity," Wharton continued, "some of these men who have followed you so long will turn their rifles on *you,* sir."

Houston gave him a look of eloquent contempt. Summers, seeing this look, knew then that a tall man was riding at the head of the army. But Wharton was not yet satisfied.

"These men have a right to know your plans," he continued. "They want to know where you are going."

"Toward glory—glory enough for them all," Houston answered.

At that moment the advance guard reached the forks of the road. Without a moment's hesitation they swung south. Houston's eyes twinkled as he shot a quick glance at Wharton.

"There is your answer, sir," he said. "Perhaps the men will now save their powder for Mexicans."

A wild shouting went up as the ranks realized that at last the retreat had become an advance. Maybe old Sam had been right after all, they reasoned.

Summers did not join in the shouting, although he was as eager as any for combat. He had a score to settle as great as any of the others. If only Abel were here he could find heart for the shouting. But in all probability word would reach Washington that Houston was retreating to the Trinity. In that case, Abel and Jeff would start back along the road to Nacogdoches.

For the next two days Summers kept his eyes to the rear, hoping for the sight of a big-boned chestnut galloping along under a slouching, bearded rider.

IN the meanwhile Santa Anna was having a glorious time. He had burned Harrisburg. Then, confident that Houston was retreating toward the Trinity, he marched to New Washington and began amusing himself by setting fire to the homes of American colonists and making forays on their live stock. While he was thus employed one of his scouts brought the news that a force of Texans had appeared at

Lynch's Ferry and were preparing to march against the town.

Santa Anna was happy to learn that at least a few Texans had deserted the jackrabbit and had come to offer him more cups of blood like those which had been drunk at the Alamo and at Goliad.

In high spirits he set fire to the town and moved northward to trap the small band of foolish men who, his scouts declared, had crossed Buffalo Bayou and established a camp in a grove of trees near the junction of the bayou with the San Jacinto.

Reaching the prairie that extended in front of the position held by the Texans, he ordered a halt near the southern edge of this open ground and pitched camp with his back to a wide marsh which extended to San Jacinto bay. Having established his position, he sent forward a single piece of artillery, supported by a detachment of cavalry and infantry, to force the Texans from the woods into the open prairie where more fun could be had during the slaughter.

He had sent his men forward to rout out rabbits and they met a bear. From the cover of the woods the Twin Sisters greeted the advancing Mexicans. Unappreciative of the salutation and somewhat surprised thereby, the Mexicans retreated.

SANTA ANNA lost his lust for battle. He had but one piece of artillery. The enemy had two. He began looking anxiously for the arrival of reinforcements under General Cos. He began to wonder, too, as night came on, if he could have fallen into error in his guess that the jackrabbit was retreating beyond the Trinity. The Napoleon of the West, as he chose to call himself, began to have faint stirrings of misgiving.

Houston had reached his position by marching night and day. Again and again he had rolled up his sleeves to lend his strength to that of his staggering men as they sweated and grunted at the mud-clogged wheels of wagons and guns. He had won in his race to reach Lynch's Ferry ahead of Santa Anna and thus cut off the Dictator's only chance of escape. Now the Mexicans were trapped, but Houston's exhausted men were too tired to spring the trap. They had to content themselves with repulsing Santa Anna's feeble thrust. This, however, so enheartened them that strength returned and they chafed under the restraint of Houston's inactivity.

NIGHT closed down with the leaders and the men clamoring for a night attack. Houston counseled only with himself. He knew that the men needed rest and food. The hot fever of their excitement was not strength. Even when warned that Santa Anna might at any moment be reinforced by the arrival of Cos, Houston shook his head and held his tongue.

Morning came and the men at once began preparations for battle. Hours passed and still Houston made no move. The men again began their growling. Sure enough, the old fool had waited too long. Cos had arrived. Now it would be just like him to order a retreat.

Summers thought he saw the trick Houston was planning. He felt sure it was the commander's plan to remain inactive until the enemy was lulled into a feeling of security. Then he would strike quickly.

So thinking, Summers made his way through the camp, openly championing the delay. There was no man reckless enough to accuse this tall, powerful Tennesseean of lacking courage. They had seen too much of his strength on the long march, and many of them had seen him in action at Bexar. They listened to him, even though their patience was short.

Houston's position in the grove of trees was well concealed from the eyes of the enemy, while he could observe all that went on in their camp. Near two o'clock in the afternoon the Texans saw that the Mexicans were beginning to fortify their position. Houston at once sent for "Deaf" Smith.

"Smith," he said, when the squat, burly man entered the tent, "I am picking you for a job I would not trust to another. There is just one way out of this pocket—Vince's Bridge. Select some man to go with you, take axes and ride to Vince's Creek and destroy that bridge."

Smith's eyes lit up. "That's our only way of escape, General."

"There will be no escape," Houston answered dryly.

Smith beamed. "It looks like a fight at last."

"It is. The future of Texas will be decided here before sundown. You'd better hurry back if you want in the fight. Take one other man to help you."

"I'll take that man Summers, who has been actin' as your orderly," Smith replied. "He's got the only horse that can keep up with me on the way there or back.

Go slow, General. I've rode too long a way to miss out on this!"

AT three o'clock Houston ordered his officers to parade their commands. The right wing was under Colonel Millard, the center under Colonel Burleson, the left wing under Colonel Sherman. The Twin Sisters occupied the position on the right of the center, and the mounted men, under Lamar, ranged on the extreme right flank.

When they were formed, Houston mounted his mud-splashed white horse and rode down the length of his ragged and dirty command. His blanket was gone from his shoulders, lost somewhere on the line of march, and the incessant rains had faded the bright colors in his sash. It was nothing more than a soiled, tattered band. His saber hung suspended from buckskin thongs and his fawn-colored trousers were stuffed into boots that bore the caked mud of many a muddy mile. But they had carried a giant from seclusion to this field of decision.

"Forward!" rang out his sharp, incisive command.

On the left the clear notes of a fife struck up the tune, "Come to the Bower I Have Shaded for You." The Twin Sisters rolled forward, bumping and rumbling. There was the quick step of hurrying feet and the clatter of hoofs as the impatient cavalry swung into the advance.

"Hold your fire until you can pick your man!" Houston shouted as he rode down the line. "Hold your fire!"

Just as the cavalry unit under Lamar swung out from behind the trees masking their advance, Deaf Smith and Summers came dashing up to join them. Their horses were a welter of foam and mud. Smith was yelling like an Indian:

"The bridge is down! The bridge is down! You've got to lick 'em!"

Summers, spurring along the line, echoed the shout, "The bridge is down! The bridge is down! Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!"

All along the advancing line the cry was taken up: *"Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!"*

The attack had come at the very hour when the Mexicans had least suspected it. Many of them, including General Santa Anna, were taking an afternoon siesta. A considerable number of Mexican cavalry were leading their horses to water. Surprised by the suddenness of the attack, they rushed to their feeble fortifications and fired aimlessly at the advancing line. Several Texans, forgetting Houston's order, opened in reply.

Houston wheeled in his saddle. "Hold your fire, damn you! I told you to hold your fire!"

Summers could hold his fire but could not control the fire of vengeance within him. He sank his spurs into his tired horse and like a man mad by torturing memories rode full at the enemy's position. Infantry and horse quickly closed the gap and when almost upon the Mexicans the Texans opened fire. It was a volley at point-blank range. The Mexicans fell like grain before the sickle. No time for reloading now! The Texans clubbed their muskets and skulls were smashed like nuts under a heavy hammer. It was grim, close work.

"Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!" Between the swings of their clubbed rifles the men found time to keep up the cry.

All along the line the dazed Mexicans cast aside their guns, fell to their knees and cried out: "Me no Alamo! Me no Goliad!"

Summers was riding up and down the line, his rifle swinging in great arcs as he beat down all in his path. He was remembering the Alamo. He was adding to the red toll which Bullard and Crockett had taken before the weight of numbers bore them down.

Hard Cash, nostrils dilated and red with the strain of the hard ride to Vince's Bridge, caught the spirit of his master's vengeance. He became the coal black mount of Death.

A small group of Mexican soldiers and officers were attempting to rally on a small knoll a few yards back of the advance position. Summers saw them, as did a score of Lamar's horse, and with the unity of purpose that comes to men in moments of high action, they swung their horses into line and swept over the knoll as frightened cattle would beat down an ant-hill.

DIRECTLY in Summers' path a man, in the uniform of a Mexican officer, realizing nothing could stop that charge, fired wildly with his pistol and took to his heels. Summers swung wide to pursue him. The man cast one frightened look backward. Then it was that Summers recognized him. It was Gant, the betrayer of Sally, the plotter, the schemer, the philanderer, and now

a renegade in the uniform of a Mexican officer, running like a rabbit to escape death under the heels of a thundering black Nemesis.

A riderless horse, with bridle reins flying, came galloping across the field at an angle that would intersect Gant's line of flight. Gant had one hope left—that he could catch the reins of that fleeing horse.

Summers' rifle had been empty since that first charge, and there was now no time for reloading. As he drove his spurs into Hard Cash's flanks a hundred memories flashed through his mind. Before him, in the flesh it seemed, stood lovely Sally Ransome, her eyes wide with wonderment and dismay.

Summers sank deep his spurs and grasped his rifle by the very end of the long barrel. If only Jeff were here in his place—could see what was about to take place at the end of the long trail!

Gant, running and stumbling, threw his hands up to catch the reins of the riderless horse. They closed upon them and the horse, brought to a sudden stop, swung around in a wide half-circle.

That moment a tornado of vengeance struck. Summers' rifle, swinging in a great arc, descended on Gant's head like the hammer of angered Thor. There was a splintering crash, a flinging upward and outward of arms as Gant's fingers released their hold on the bridle-reins. Like a reed he went down under the pounding hoofs of Hard Cash.

Summers cast one backward look as he swung to rejoin the unit that had swept over the knoll and were turning to seek further opposition. The outstretched form in the tall grass lay very, very still. The riderless horse, again free, galloped away.

NOW, within ten minutes of the beginning of the attack, all the Mexicans left alive were in wild, frantic flight. They sought escape over the prairie, and they ran back into the marsh where, bogged down to their waists, they made easy targets for the Texans who seemed never to tire of that vengeful chant, *"Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!"*

Lamar's mud-covered cavalry unit rode pellmell through the camp and took up the individual pursuit of those seeking escape across the prairie toward the crossing where once had stood Vince's Bridge.

Houston, shot in the ankle and with his horse down, was being carried from the field. But not for a second did the fighting and the slaughter cease.

The battle had begun at sundown. Before the color had faded from the western sky the grass and flowers of the prairie were drinking freshets of blood. Vince's Creek ran red as the western sky. Eight hundred dead and wounded Mexicans had paid for blood with blood.

But Santa Anna had lost all appetite for it. The butcher of the Alamo, his heart turned from stone to a tremulous, pulsing thing that hammered like the heart of a frightened hare, was skulking through the tall grass seeking escape. Belly down in the wet grass, the Napoleon of the West crawled toward Vince's Bridge.

All night long galloping horsemen sought for him. The skies were clear now. Every man could see the bright star of independence rising. But not until Santa Anna was captured would it become a star of the first magnitude.

Over the prairies Summers ranged, in company with others from Lamar's command, urging their spent horses to still greater efforts. Lying in the tall grass, Santa Anna could hear the *clippety-clop, clippety-clop* of hoofs that would glory in riding him down.

From a campfire under the trees on the banks of Buffalo Bayou came the clear, soft notes of a single fife, playing over and over, the one tune known by the fifer, "Come to the Bower I Have Shaded for You."

Santa Anna heard the hated, alien tongues that were lifted in triumphant chorus. He heard, too, the ranging hoof beats of the more energetic Texans who would join voices in a still louder chorus could they but come upon the butcher of the Alamo.

Under a tree, where a campfire burned brightly, old Sam Houston, child of destiny, sat nursing a wounded ankle and listening with grim satisfaction to the acclaim of those who were now willing to admit that he had led them to a field where there was glory enough for all.

CHAPTER XX

AT sundown, on the sixth day after the defeat and subsequent capture of Santa Anna, Summers was riding northward from San Felipe toward Washington. The news of the victory at San Jacinto had spread rapidly. All day long he had met

wagons returning along the road to the homes which the colonists had so hastily abandoned. The road was full of mud-holes and a dozen times during the day Summers had stopped to put his shoulder to the wheel of a bogged-down wagon.

From each of these drivers he sought information concerning Caroline, Jeff and Abel, but it was late in the afternoon before he came across a driver who could give him anything definite. Yes, he had seen them at Washington, and so far as he knew they were still there. The man especially remembered the tall, bearded fellow who became so loudly profane when he heard of the victory at San Jacinto.

With a light heart Summers pressed on. Thank God they had not been foolish enough to start back to San Felipe!

The prairie to the west was swallowing the red sun as he topped the last rise south of Caney Creek. Halfway out across the bottom he saw another wagon, bogged down, and the driver was belaboring the floundering oxen. The light was none too good, the lowlands being blanketed in the soft purple lake of evening, but Summers' ears caught the sound of a familiar voice rising above the crack of a long bull-whip.

"Rise, Buck! Rise, Bell!"

It was Abel, standing knee-deep in the mud as he cracked his whip and tugged at one of the wheels.

Summers sent Hard Cash flying down the road leading to the bottom. Abel, seeing him coming, left off with his labors and took a few steps forward to meet him. Caroline was sitting on the pine seat, framed against old Chloe, who stood just behind her. Chloe was not trusting her weight to so thin a board.

"What in the world are you doing here?" Summers demanded of Abel as he rode alongside.

"Tryin' to git out of this mud-hole," Abel retorted. "What do you think? What's the road like ahead?"

"It's high ground. But you can't go ahead, you fool!"

"Why not, please?" It was Caroline speaking.

Summers wheeled his horse.

"Excuse my temper," he apologized, "but I wasn't expecting you here. Where's Jeff?"

"He's ridden back along the road to get help. Why do you say we can't go on?"

Abel answered the question. "Because he wants to direct ever'thing. He's the same feller who sent me up here and then rode south with Houston without sendin' me word whether he was still runnin' or fixin' to fight. Excuse me, ma'am, but he's ornery and bullheaded."

"Why can't we go on, Will?" Caroline repeated. "All the others are going back."

"Didn't you hear that San Felipe was burned? There's nothing left of the town."

"Yes, we heard that. And we also heard that Houston had captured Santa Anna. San Felipe will build again. Jeff said so. Think, Will! There isn't a family along this road that hasn't some sick member in need of a doctor."

"Nonsense!" Summers retorted. "We've got to turn back."

"Will! Just a minute!" There was command in Caroline's voice. She sat very erect. "I'm not turning back! I know what this country has cost all of us. We have paid too much to turn back."

THAT moment Summers knew he had met another will greater than his own. One foot left a stirrup, found the wagon wheel, and he slid from the saddle to the seat beside her. His hand closed over hers. Aunt Chloe was seized by a desire to look out of the back of the wagon, and Abel took a sudden interest in a rear wheel.

"Can't you see, Caroline, how utterly impossible it is?" Summers pleaded. "You can't stand such hardship. It's *you* I'm thinking about. Can't you see the way is too long and too hard—for you, dear?"

She couldn't see. Everything was too blindingly bright. She could only feel his lips, and nothing else seemed of any consequence. . . . .

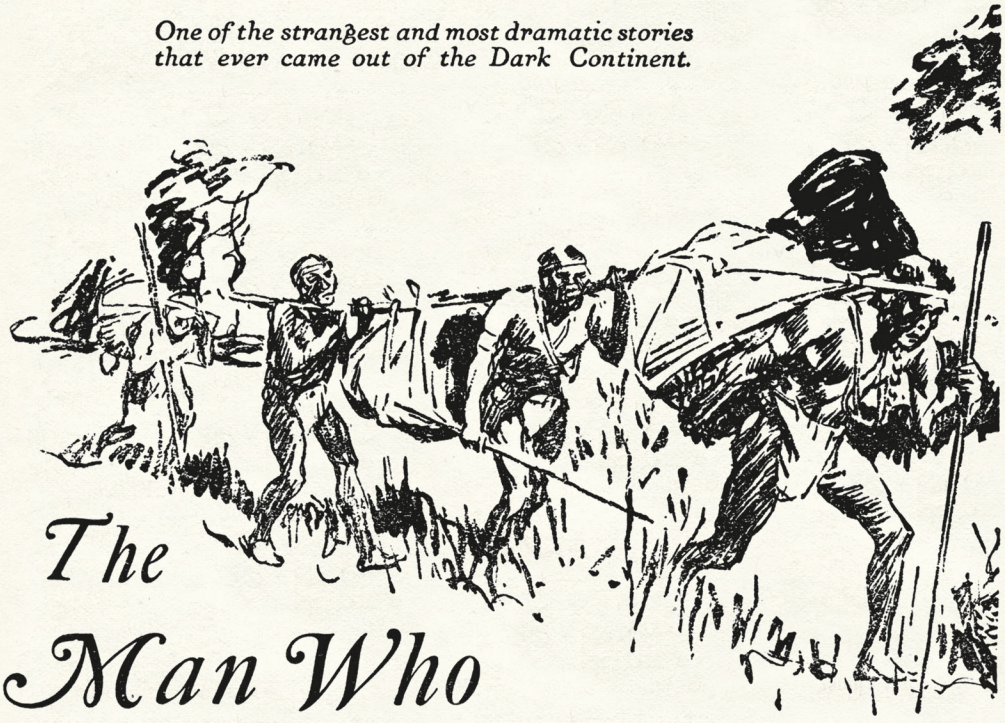
"It isn't too long, with you, Will," she whispered at last as her fingers ran through his matted brown hair. "Look!" She pointed to the west where the evening star hung like a flashing topaz in a great jewel box of red velvet. "Look, Will! Make a wish." Her lips began repeating the old rhyme that had come down from antiquity.

"Star light, star bright,
First star I see to-night—"

"Hey, Will!" Abel called. "If you'll git down off'n that seat and put your shoulder to this wheel maybe we can git out on the higher ground while there's still light." His bull-whip cracked with decision. "Rise, Buck! Rise, Bell!"

THE END

One of the strangest and most dramatic stories that ever came out of the Dark Continent.



The Man Who Was a God

By

JOHN EUGENE HASTY

Illustrated by William Molt

THE room was large and bare, with a high ceiling. Narrow strips of sunlight, coming through the Venetian blinds, revealed the outlines of a heavy carved desk. Behind it there emerged out of the dimness the head and shoulders of a plump little man in a frock coat. He looked up as Terrell entered, but he did not rise. It must have been fully thirty seconds that he sat there, gazing at Terrell, before he spoke.

"You are Monsieur James Terrell?"

"Yes sir."

"You have received complete instructions from Monsieur Bonnaud: that you are to proceed to Monsieur Beckendorff's station, and while there make a careful investigation of his operations?"

"Yes sir."

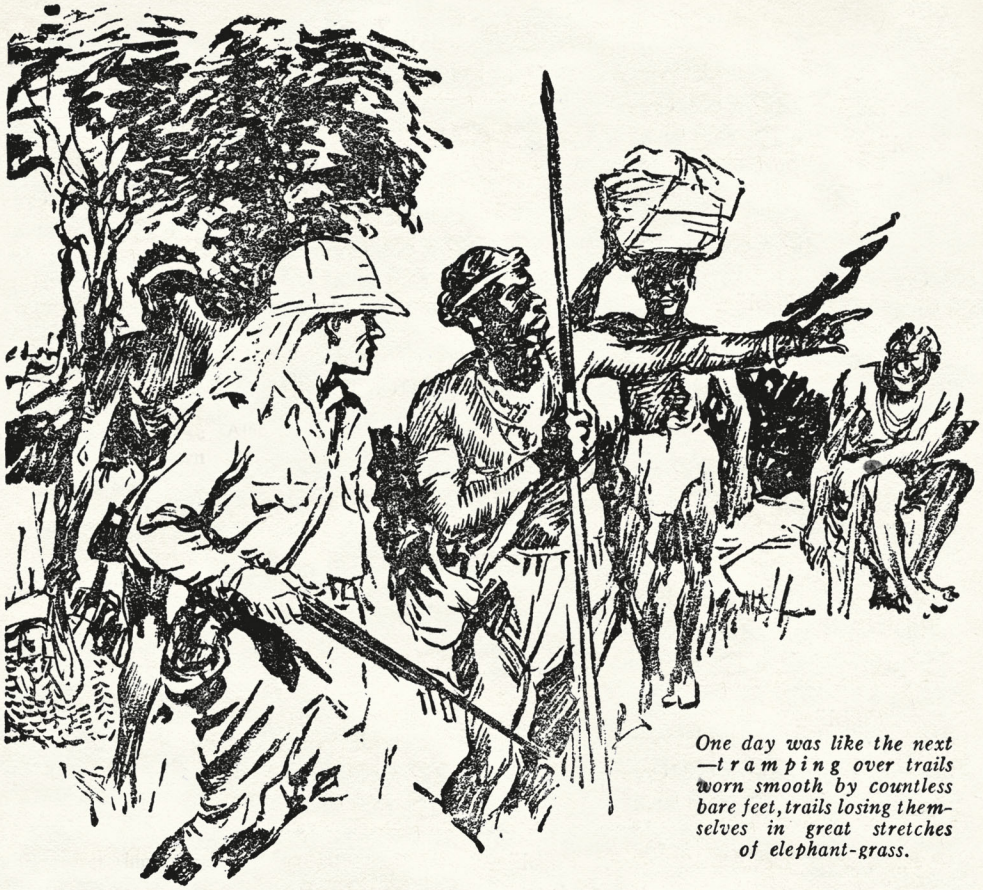
"You have been apprised, of course, as to the extreme importance of discussing your business with no one."

"Yes sir."

"*Bien!* I wish you success, Monsieur Terrell, and *bon voyage.* I shall look forward with interest toward receiving your report."

As the plump little gentleman arose to shake hands, Terrell noticed, or thought he noticed, the barest trace of a smile on his lips. Yet not a smile, either; rather, a thought, a sly, sardonic thought, which for the instant had become intensified in a muscular action. Somehow it left Terrell with the impression that there was something about the affair which was not quite right. Even after he had departed from the General Administration Offices and was proceeding through the narrow, cobblestone streets, with their whitewashed buildings reflecting the dazzling sunshine, the impression persisted. In spite of Bonnaud's voluminous and detailed instructions, he felt as if they were keeping something from him.

And yet, why should they? His errand was simple enough. Beckendorff, manager of one of their trading-stations, was suspected of lining his own pockets at the Company's expense. Terrell was to inves-



One day was like the next —t r a m p i n g over trails worn smooth by countless bare feet, trails losing themselves in great stretches of elephant-grass.

tigate, and to make a report. That's all there was to it. A holiday with pay. He was fortunate, he told himself, in securing the appointment at all—which, by the way, had come about in a curious manner.

AT luncheon one day a friend attached to the American Embassy had spoken of the position, and Terrell had casually remarked that he should like to make a try for it. He had no serious notion of doing so—was, in fact, on the point of leaving for America when his friend telephoned to him. It seemed that the friend was acquainted with some one in the Administration Offices, and had been pulling wires. At any rate, so the friend explained, the job was Terrell's for the asking. So, armed with a letter of introduction, he called around to have a chat with Bonnaud, the general secretary. Well, he got the appointment—got it quickly. Almost before he realized it, he had signed the necessary papers and was on board a steamer bound for Mombasa. Yet, as I say, he could not shake off the feeling of uneasiness; and in Kilo, some weeks later, he picked up a bit of information which caused him to wonder whether his intuition was so far wrong, after all.

While waiting to secure porters, he scraped up an acquaintance with a young Belgian who was engaged in some kind of secretarial work at the mines. One evening, as the two lingered over their coffee and some really excellent cognac, the Belgian leaned back comfortably in his chair, and apropos of nothing, remarked:

"One month from tonight, M'sieur, fortune permitting, I shall be back in an honest, God-fearing country again. Three years of Africa is quite enough. Oh, no, it is not the heat nor the monotony nor the thousand discomforts one has to endure. It is the damnable mystery of the place. The brooding, oppressive quiet, and the eternal whispering of things going on —dark, secretive things. It gets, as they say, under the skin. Look you: About a year ago, a party of natives came upon a man, an Englishman, lost in the bush, some place up country. By the time they got

him to Kilo, here, he was more dead than alive, although we took him to the house of the Director and did what we could for him. He babbled a great deal before he died. What ghastly shapes haunted his mind, who can tell? But once, he jerked himself into a sitting position, and cried out shrilly: 'Beckendorff! I've killed him! I've killed Beckendorff!' That was all, M'sieur. Who he was, who Beckendorff was, what sinister story lay behind the confession, no one knew. We will live and die without knowing."

While he was speaking, darkness closed in—the blue-black, star-studded night of Africa—Africa, the silent, the mysterious, the inscrutable. Working her inexorable way with men, guarding her secrets while centuries, like the sand in an hourglass, trickle into eternity—secrets of lusts, passions, greeds, old when Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, when Rome was founded on its seven hills, when Columbus watched the shores of Spain sink beneath the horizon . . . . . From somewhere in the darkness came the roll of drums, sinking and swelling, hanging on the air for a moment, then melting into silence. Although the evening was warm, Terrell shivered slightly.

OBTAINING porters proved to be a matter of considerable difficulty. No sooner did Terrell get his caravan organized than half of his men would sneak away into the bush. The young Belgian assured him that this was the natural state of things. "One never accomplishes anything out here. Delay, you might say, is the custom of the country. You must expect it."

"But it can't go on forever," Terrell protested. "Besides, I'm offering three times the ordinary pay."

The Belgian shrugged his shoulders and was silent.

At length, mainly because he had to have it out with some one, Terrell took his head-man aside, and laid down the law to him. The head-man was an extremely black, extremely arrogant individual, wearing a cast-off dress coat, loin-cloth and string of ju-ju charms, and reeking with the odor of cheap perfume. A smattering of English and French had made his services in demand throughout the settlement, and he appreciated the importance of his position. Nevertheless he squirmed uncomfortably under Terrell's questioning.

"Now, see here," Terrell began sharply: "I'm going to get at the bottom of this business right now. What have you been telling the boys?"

"Tell um you live past fine master. Tell um plenty food for belly."

"Yes, and what else?"

The head-man lowered his gaze, and dug his toes into the dust.

"What else did you tell them?" Terrell repeated.

"You think mebbe my mouth make lie, umph?"

"I think you know why we can't get porters; and if you want to save your black hide, you'll tell me what it is."

"Him find out what country going to. Him be proper scare. Run away—*vite!*"

"Scared? Scared of what?"

"Bad country. Past all things for strong magic."

"Nonsense!"

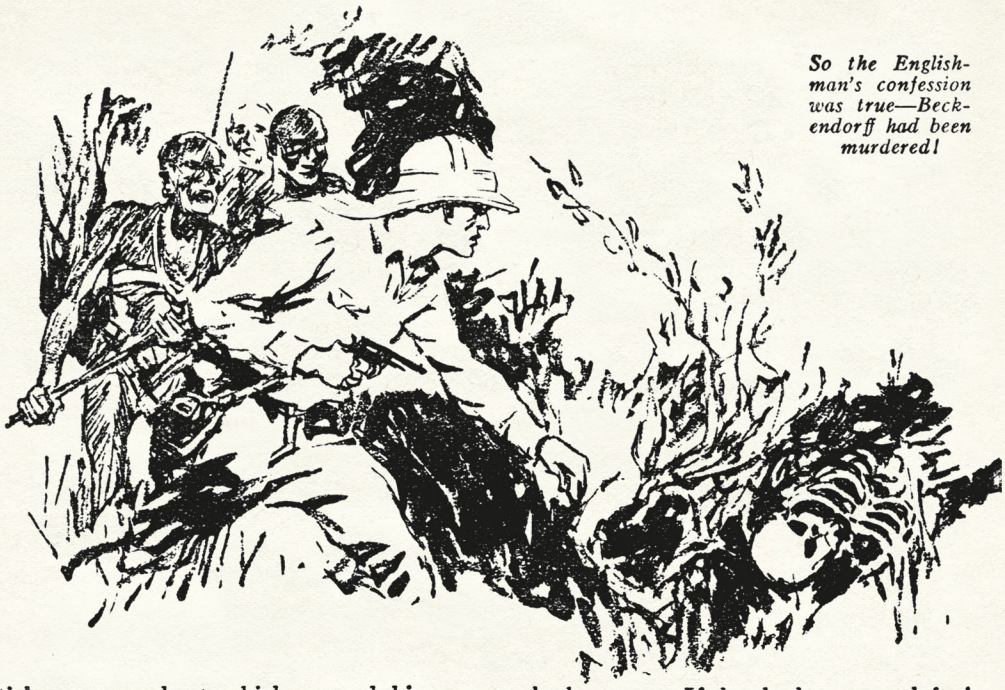
The negro looked at him out of calm eyes.

"You speak um say so. All same, strong magic."

"All right," Terrell responded; "but now, magic or no magic, you get your boys together, or I'm going to give you a taste of a rhinoceros-hide whip. Savvy? Now get out of here."

Apparently, Terrell's bluff had produced the desired effect; for the next day his head-man appeared and announced that the porters were available. The caravan left Kilo at daybreak the following day. *En route* one day was like the next. Routine: Breakfast in the still, foggy dawn; then tramping over trails—trails worn smooth by countless bare feet, trails twisting and turning up and down hills, losing themselves in great stretches of elephant-grass, gleaming dimly in the twilight of primeval forests. During the first few days they came upon an occasional mine. But these were in easy distance of Kilo. After that they encountered no one, no dwellings, no evidence of human activity. The uncanny silence was broken only by the soft, monotonous shuffling of feet.

Often the way was tortuous. It was necessary to cut with machetes through the thick tangle of creepers and underbrush, to creep cautiously over slimy morasses, clinging to vines to prevent sinking waist-deep in the fetid, decaying leaf-mold. A hundred obnoxious odors assailed Terrell's nostrils. A cloud of insects hung about his head. And hot! Good Lord! A



So the Englishman's confession was true—Beckendorff had been murdered!

sticky, muggy heat which sapped his energy, set his head to aching, suffocated him like a weight pressing against his chest. Perspiration streamed over his face, blinded his eyes, left a bitter, salty flavor on his parched lips. His suit of khaki was drenched with it.

They arrived at Beckendorff's station early one afternoon—a scattering of gaping, rotting grass huts, and a flimsy frame structure surrounded by a reed wall. The place was deserted—desolate, overgrown with vegetation. Wave after wave of green had flung itself against the little group of empty huts, had surged over them, submerging them in a dense leafy growth. Only the wall had been able to check Nature's advance. Terrell had sent some of his men ahead to cut through the lacing of vines which almost obscured the gap where the gate had hung, when there came to his ears the excited jabbering of native tongues. Slipping his revolver from its holster, he hurried forward.

JUST inside the inclosure lay the skeleton of a man, grass growing through the ribs, the skull grinning hideously as if at some interminable jest. So the Englishman's confession was true. Beckendorff had been murdered! Yet the discovery of this grisly evidence served somewhat to complicate matters. Terrell had become sufficiently acquainted with native temperament to know that it would be taken as a bad omen. If he had a man left in his party by morning, he could consider himself fortunate. Still, one thing was in his favor. There were yet four hours of daylight. Now that Beckendorff's death was practically established, he could make a quick inspection of the station, and start on the return march immediately, put a good ten or twelve kilometers between his camp and this unholy spot before nightfall. So curtly ordering the men back, he strode across the inclosure and into the bungalow.

It consisted of a large living-room, with a storeroom, or warehouse, adjoining. A filmy curtain of spiderwebs hung from the walls and ceiling. A moldy grass matting was underfoot. Furniture was tumbled about in the wildest kind of disorder: chairs overturned, a table with one leg splintered off, a chest of drawers, leaning drunkenly against the wall with one of the drawers pulled out, its contents spilled on the floor. The bed, with its curtain of mosquito-netting flung back, was unmade. In one corner stood a dilapidated writing-desk and bookcase. Unconsciously, Terrell's gaze swept across the row of titles—"Beyond Good and Evil," "The Prince," "Life of Napoleon," "Thus Spake Zarathustra" and several works on military tactics.

Crammed into one of the pigeonholes of the writing-desk was a sheaf of papers—letters, or rather copies of letters, which

Beckendorff had written to the Company. For the most part they were reports of business transactions and of exploration trips in search of a miraculously rich gold-deposit which, according to rumors among the natives, lay somewhere northwest of the station. These rumors had apparently fascinated Beckendorff, had eventually possessed him like some narcotic drug, stirring in his brain grotesque, fanciful dreams. Gold—wealth—power! The terms ran through the prosaic business reports like the recurring *motif* of a fugue.

Sitting there, Terrell pictured the tragedy which must have occurred: Beckendorff toying with the idea of finding this fabulous mine, brooding over it day after day until it became the uppermost thought in his mind, crowding out all else, relentlessly driving him upon an unending search. Then the Englishman appearing; and Beckendorff's suspicion, real or fancied, that the intruder was there to snatch away the treasure. A struggle—and the Englishman had won. The young Belgian's story and the bleached heap of bones out there in the courtyard, supplied the grim conclusion.

AS Terrell was returning the papers to their pigeonhole, one of the letters slipped from his fingers and fluttered to the floor. Stooping to retrieve it, he noticed, for the first time, the date-line. With an exclamation he snatched it up and scanned it with bewildered, unbelieving eyes. It was a copy of a letter written less than a week ago. The original was even now being taken by a carrier to the nearest postal station, was on its way to the General Administration Offices in Europe.

Now, Terrell prided himself upon being a practical-minded man. There was no predilection for the occult in his makeup, not the slightest leaning toward the supernatural. As an engineer, he was accustomed to dealing with hard, fast facts; and the facts in this case showed that Beckendorff was alive—no doubt out somewhere chasing the chimera of gold. The Englishman's confession had been false. A struggle of some kind had, undoubtedly, taken place; but the murdered man was not Beckendorff. Beckendorff was still conducting the business of the station.

With whom? Hardly with the natives, who, to all appearances, had cleared out in superstitious horror of the dead thing inside the inclosure—nor with white men either, since the nearest settlement was a good five or six days' march from the station. Besides, the bungalow had, manifestly, been unoccupied for some time. All right, then, Beckendorff had done the killing, and had fled to the coast. No, the date of the letter exploded that theory. Beckendorff had done the killing, but he had not fled. He was ostensibly carrying on the affairs of the station until he found his gold-deposit, returning to the bungalow at intervals to write fictitious reports.

Ah, that was it. But wait! The only entrance to the inclosure had been choked with an impenetrable growth of creepers and vines. No one had entered the station for months. Beckendorff, alive or dead, was inside the station! Here! Now!

Suddenly, Terrell was on his feet, filled, not with fear, but with an unreasonable anger, cursing the enigma which confronted him, cursing himself for having become involved in the affair. There was but one other solution to the mystery. He himself was crazy—mad as a March hare. . . . . Then occurred something which lent weight to the hypothesis. A voice, speaking in German but with a strange accent, commanded him to put up his hands.

Terrell turned swiftly, made a quick, unfinished motion toward his holster, and obeyed. Near the doorway leading to the storeroom stood a native, holding a Lüger automatic. He was taller than most of the natives of the locality, and his face bore the stamp of superior intelligence. It was his attire, however, which caused Terrell to gape at him in utter amazement. It might have been filched from the wardrobe room of some opera-bouffe company. A pith helmet, a red military blouse trimmed with tarnished gold braid, blue trousers with red stripes. His feet were bare; but as if to offset any loss of dignity which might arise from the lack of proper footwear, strung across his breast was a row of decorations. Not charms, but medals! Medals fashioned from bits of ribbon and the bottoms of cigarette tins, from brass buttons, from silver coins and copper wire.

SPEECHLESS, Terrell stared at this apparition. Finally he managed to find a voice. *"Was willst du haben?"* he asked.

The native replied at some length; he seemed to be making quite a speech. Although Terrell's knowledge of German was

scant, he gathered that he was a prisoner, and was to surrender his weapon. In spite of the fact that the muzzle of the Lüger automatic followed his movements menacingly, the situation was too fantastic for him to accept seriously. A negro who delivered orations in German, and who was garbed like a tenor in a comic opera—it was incredible! With a shrug he handed over his revolver, and awaited further orders.

"Vorwärts, marsch!"

Speechless, Terrell stared at this apparition—a negro who spoke German, and was garbed like a tenor in a comic opera

The negro motioned him into the empty storeroom. In the floor yawned a trapdoor. Followed by his captor, Terrell descended a short ladder into a dark, narrow tunnel. Here they were met by two more natives, clad in loincloths and carrying lanterns. For the first forty or fifty yards the ceiling was so low that it necessitated walking in a stooped position; then the tunnel gradually expanded, bringing up to a door set in a heavy wooden wall. The door gave into a small, natural cave. Candelabra, flanking the doorway, cast a fitful, wavering light over as weird a scene as was ever presented to human eyes.

The walls of the cave were completely covered with a cyclorama of grass mats, daubed with red and black cabalistic symbols. The floor sloped gently down to a huge crevasse, possibly four or five feet wide, running at right angles to the length of the room; and from the opposite side of this crevasse a set of steps ascended to a high platform on which rested what, in the dim, uncertain light, appeared to be an idol. It was covered with long hair, evidently the skins of animals. The face was hideous in the extreme: a huge, bushy beard through which protruded two long tusks, a nose like the snout of a pig, horns —antlers, rather—projecting from each side of the head. It sat crosslegged, arms folded across its chest, a perfect symbol of brooding malevolence.

Across Terrell's mind flashed reminiscences of the stories he had heard about voodoo rites, ghastly, blood-chilling tales of human sacrifice and cannibalism. Making a low obeisance to the figure on the platform, the negro addressed it rapidly in German, and then, strangely enough, gave an order to the lantern bearers, and the three withdrew through an exit concealed behind the matting, leaving Terrell alone. Aware of a growing, uncomfortable creepy feeling, Terrell remained motionless. Then, as minute grew into minute, and nothing happened, he ventured a cautious step in the direction of the wooden door. Instantly the figure on the platform stirred, moved, stood erect. It was not an idol. The thing was alive, was descending the stairs.

The rest is melodrama—sheer, unqualified melodrama. Even Terrell, involved in it as he was, could not reconcile it to actual experience. There is a point beyond which the human mind declines to respond. Halfway down the steps, the figure paused. With a rapid movement, the beastlike mask was removed. A revolver glinted in the half-light. Terrell found himself gazing at

the features of a man, a white man with an unmistakably German cast of countenance.

"Beckendorff!" he gasped. "It's—it's Beckendorff!"

"Precisely," the other replied sardonically. "Curious, is it not, how a simple trick, designed to impress the natives, should deceive such an intelligent man as yourself, M'sieur Terrell. Oh, yes, we know who you are. Our spies have been following your movements ever since your arrival in Kilo. In fact, we made it possible for you to get porters by sending you some of our own men. You are a valuable man to us, M'sieur Terrell."

"I—I guess I don't quite follow you," Terrell stammered. "If you're Beckendorff, then what—why—"

"Bah!" Beckendorff interrupted. "No vision—no imagination! Well, since you are not to leave this room alive, I shall explain. Attend, now. How many blacks do you suppose are in the Belgian Congo?"

"HOW many blacks?" Terrell repeated inanely.

"Yes. Shall we say ten million? Five million? Five million, then, ignorant, superstitious, practically held in slavery by a handful of white men. Suppose, now, by playing upon their superstition, even a million of these blacks could be roughly organized into an army, given fairly efficient leaders? Ah, but, you say, no man could do it, no man could extend his control over a million natives. Granted, my friend. But I am not a man. As you see, I have become a god."

"But the mines," Terrell began, "—this gold-deposit which you—"

"Ah, yes, the gold-deposit. I see you have been thoroughly instructed, M'sieur Terrell, but not so fortunate as M'sieur Howard, the other gentleman whom the company sent out to investigate the mines. He managed to escape when, in the struggle with him, I caught a blow on the head which placed me *hors de combat.* The mines, my dear friend, are a myth, a bit of fiction perpetrated to keep me in the company's pay until I perfected my plan. And I think you will admit that I have wasted no time. I foresaw another investigating party within a year; and my calculations have been proven remarkably accurate. But you are too late, M'sieur Terrell. In two weeks we will be ready to strike. Not an ordinary native uprising, but a concerted action of trained men. An ultimatum, then, to the Belgian government to recognize my authority over the Belgian Congo, or the lives of its subjects as a forfeit."

UNQUESTIONABLY, the man was insane; yet spawned by that insanity was an idea, a scheme shaped and molded with infinite care, down to the last detail. With the initial success of Beckendorff's own forces, thousands, hundreds of thousands of recruits would be drawn into the plan. Until troops could reach the scene, the entire territory would be at the mercy of a horde of natives, aroused to a fanatical, superstitious frenzy. For Beckendorff had proved himself a master of native psychology. To them, he was a supernatural being, capable of assuring a victory even against a superior force. In that lay the strength of his plan, and also its weakness. The entire project depended upon Beckendorff. Remove him, and it would crumble of its own accord. If Terrell could only leap across the crevasse, and wrest the revolver from Beckendorff's hand— He calculated the distance between himself and the steps where Beckendorff stood, and discarded the thought. The odds against him were too great. He didn't dare to fail. He must kill Beckendorff, even if it meant the sacrifice of his own life. It was Beckendorff's life, and Terrell's, perhaps, or the destruction of whole communities.

When Beckendorff spoke again, the note of bantering was gone.

"Come, M'sieur Terrell, we have had enough small-talk. Before I kill you, I want some information."

"And suppose I don't see fit to give it?" Terrell questioned calmly. He was playing for time now—and thinking rapidly.

"Then I shall kill you at once."

"Whether I die now, or an hour from now, makes very little difference," Terrell replied wryly. "If you want information from me, you'll have to bargain on a different basis."

Beckendorff scowled darkly for a moment, then beckoned Terrell forward to the edge of the crevasse.

"Occasionally, M'sieur Terrell," he explained, "we find it necessary to punish an unruly subject for the good of the state, and as an example to the others. So we sacrifice him to the god by dropping him into this fissure. As it is quite deep, sometimes the fall kills him; sometimes he lives three or four days. Either way, it is not

a pleasant death. I should imagine a shot through the heart would be much more preferable. That is the basis upon which I bargain, M'sieur Terrell."

Once again Terrell experienced the impression that all this was not real, a hideous nightmare from which he would presently awaken. Yet Beckendorff's revolver was real enough, and so was the crevasse. As he stepped back from its brink, his foot dislodged a small stone. He heard it strike the sides several times, before it splashed faintly into water at the bottom.

Beckendorff's command had brought him closer to the steps. There was yet the crevasse to be crossed. He could leap it; but the leap would leave him off balance. The slightest resistance from Beckendorff would be sufficient to topple him over backward. Even so, he decided to risk it. If he fell, he would drag Beckendorff with him. Yet if there were a chance of saving his own neck, he wanted to take it. But he must make the chance for himself.

His eyes sought Beckendorff's.

"There doesn't seem to be much choice. What is it you want to know?"

"What report did Howard make to the company?"

"He didn't make any; he died at Kilo."

"You are lying."

"What would I have to gain by lying? I tell you Howard died at Kilo—after he had confessed to killing *you*. The skeleton in the inclosure seemed to substantiate the confession."

Beckendorff smiled sourly.

"My own invention. I placed it there to keep out inquisitive natives. You talked with Bonnaud before you left, I presume. What did he tell you?"

"A great deal," Terrell answered. "But before I repeat it, I want to ask permission to smoke a cigarette. It might be my last."

"It *will* be," Beckendorff said grimly. "The permission is granted."

With fingers which trembled ever so slightly, Terrell sought his case in the pocket of his coat, brought it out, opened it; then pausing in the act of taking a cigarette, he extended the case to Beckendorff.

"Will you join me?"

BECKENDORFF nodded, reached forward. In that instant, Terrell leaped. As his arms encircled the German, the roar of explosion sounded in his ears, the hot flame of it scorched his cheek. The impact knocked the revolver from Beckendorff's hand, sent both men sprawling onto the steps. But in falling, Beckendorff managed partially to squirm out of Terrell's grasp. With the latter pinioning him around the thighs, he could still stretch sidewise and almost reach the revolver which lay on the next to the bottom step, scarcely an inch beyond his finger-tips.

Either because sound could not penetrate the walls of the cavern, or because Beckendorff hesitated to dispel his carefully created illusion of supernatural power by calling for human aid, he did not cry out. So began a strange, silent duel: Beckendorff straining to cover that inch; Terrell holding him back, clinging to the German's legs so tightly that the muscles of his arms ached.

YET the cramped position in which he lay was gradually weakening his hold. Little by little, Beckendorff was making perceptible gains. Little by little, his hand swung closer to the revolver. His fingers were hanging just over it, brushing against it. For Terrell to attempt a shift to a more advantageous hold would be suicidal. He could only hang on, hang on while his arms throbbed from wrist to shoulder.

Breathing heavily, Beckendorff had paused now, as if gathering strength for the effort, then jerked forward to bridge the last infinitesimal gap. Desperately, with the final ounce of energy, Terrell endeavored to throw him back—and failed. He saw Beckendorff's fingers close over the weapon, heard his chuckle of triumph. Terrell shut his eyes, and released his hold.

As he did so, a curious thing happened. Suddenly freed from the force which held him, Beckendorff pitched forward and slid head-foremost down the steps. For a fraction of a second, he clutched wildly at the bottom step. Then, with a shriek, he plunged into the crevasse. . . . .

Quickly Terrell arose, crossed the room, and cautiously felt his way through the tunnel. The bungalow was empty, the inclosure still deserted. With the exception of his own men, huddled together under a tree, there were no natives around the station. The very devices which Beckendorff had employed to guard the secret of his life—the skeleton, the tunnel, the soundproof cave—now traitorously guarded the secret of his death.

Terrell gave a command to his porters, and glanced at his wrist-watch. There were still three hours until sunset.

"Three-toes and the Collie" vividly and with authority sets forth the life-drama of a famous Colorado wolf.

Renegades of the Rangeland

By
ARTHUR H. CARHART
and
STANLEY P. YOUNG

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

FOR many weeks Three Toes, mate of old Whitey, had followed the trails on Bear Springs Mesa and north to the Apishapa. She was alone. Like some racing blight, the campaign of the Biological Survey had whipped through the wolf pack, obliterating all but Three Toes.

The trails that summer were lonesome ways. Old familiar runways no longer were marked by wolf footprints except her own —her peculiar three-toed footmark, made by trap-maimed paw. In desperation she had swung north to where on clear nights she could see the flaming beacons of the Pueblo steel-mills. Her way had led westward and upward to where the Greenhorn Mountains break from the plain, the first vanguard of the Rockies. She had loped up to the base of the Spanish Peaks, among the cool green fir and pine trees. She had skirted the peaks, gone up the valley of the Picketwire, had slunk by the crowded little coal-camps between Walsenburg and Trinidad, had even gone to the southward beyond square-headed Fisher's Peak, sentinel mountain above Trinidad.

Everywhere there was coyote scent. These yapping prowlers infested every range. For years wolves and coyotes had inhabited the plains regions, had even fought at the same kills. But never had coyote and wolf mated.

Coyotes may be camp-followers of wolves, licking up the remains of some kill, but wolves will not associate on even terms with coyotes. Three Toes, although tremendously hungry for wildlings' company, did not break traditions. She would have no coyote associate.

She found much dog scent. This interested her. Although usually opposed and ready to fly at each other's throats, dogs and wolves may become running-mates.

Recollections of Whitey lingered, leading her on in the search for wolf companionship. Over trails shaded by dusk or bright in early morning light she traveled, or when the moon spread a lacquer of silvery

plating over trees, rocks and cliffs, she followed the beckoning spirit of her lost wolf baron, the leader of the pack now gone.

The heat of summer passed. Winds with the pointed nip of fall chill came stealing from the high peaks where the first white sugary snow had dusted the gray old heads of the mountains. Flecks of new gold on the sides of the hills were seen from the mesa. Cottonwoods on the banks of the streams echoed the gold of the aspen in the hills. Signs of fall were on every hand; winter was but a few days away.

It was mating season for gray wolves. For days the knowledge that she was alone had oppressed Three Toes. She knew there was no other wolf in this region; yet instinct relentlessly drove her along the trail, seeking a new wolf lord, a masterful, powerful, dog wolf that might be father of her whelps. But her quest was fruitless.

Then came a day when Three Toes was lying relaxed under the shade of an overhanging piñon, looking under drooping eyelids at the valley below. Stock was grazing peacefully in a pasture beyond which were ranch buildings. As she watched, a buff and white form came leaping and barking from the ranch, ran around the herd of cattle, and with deft precision huddled them and started the group toward the corrals. Instantly Three Toes was all attention. She raised up, growled a little, then whined. The collie dog raced and bounced at the heels of the steers, diving in to nip if they were slow, heading them when they threatened to break and scatter. He was all life, bouncing and biting as though the task of cattle-herding was the most joyful thing in the world.

THE sun caught the glint of his yellow coat, cast shadows in the deep fur as his springy muscles rippled. Suddenly the cattle broke, swung, and headed back toward the cliff where Three Toes crouched. Like a flash of tarnished sunlight came the collie with long nose outstretched, with every fiber leaping and alive. He dived, nipped a steer, barked threateningly, then boisterously. He was a very army of energy, beating the truant cattle back toward the barn by the sharp intensity of his romping attack. With a flourish he headed the cattle through a gateway, and then a man came and put up the corral bars.

From her distant lookout point Three Toes saw the collie disappear at the heels of the man. First there had been only interest in her eyes; then as the cattle broke and drove toward her, she had risen to her feet, nervous and excited.

For many moments after the dog had disappeared, after the man had gone into the house beyond the gray poles of the corral, Three Toes lay with eyes wide, staring, looking toward the ranch building. Evening came. The clear red of the sunset was followed by the translucent tints of a cloudless afterglow. In the pale green-blue of the western sky hung the moon.

Three Toes arose and stretched. Throughout the afternoon she had kept her eyes on the ranch in the hope of again seeing the collie dog, but the afternoon had passed without the bronzy gold of his coat again flashing in the landscape.

SLOWLY Three Toes started along a trail. It was one of the old wolf-runs; every tree, shrub, rock, arroyo was familiar. Memories flooded back of the lost days when the old pack, ten strong, had raced along this way. She whined, started along the road, then stopped and looked to where the deepening shadows of night were blotting out the last reflections of the sunset.

Then with new definiteness, new determination, Three Toes started along the runway. The mating instinct was driving her irresistibly to seek her lost mate or a new one. Restlessly she looked from side to side, and peered at the light in the ranch-house. Finally she raised her head and in trembling crescendo sent forth the cry for the pack. This she had done before, but now there was a new challenging command in the call. Again and again, her throat vibrated with the ghostly wolf-howl. Then she was silent, listening, her ears pointed forward, her head dropped slightly between her hunching shoulders. In faint staccato came the answering bark of the dog at the ranch. A door opened; light flamed out; then there was quiet. Cautiously Three Toes crept down from the little overlook cliff and across the pasture, crouched as she went under the lower wire of the barbed wire fence, then slowly, watching every sign of the night, she circled toward the corral and the barn beyond. Finally she was within two hundred yards of the ranch-house. Before this her keen nose had picked up the scent of the dog where he had raced that afternoon. It had set new emotions surging through her. Whining, stopping to sniff the air, Three Toes approached the corrals.

For many moments she stood watching the blinking light in the window. Then without sound except the rustling padding of her feet, she raced toward the mesa, back to the old wolf-run, back to follow the beckoning call of the old pack, the phantom pack and the ghostly leader, the spirit of old Whitey.

Morning found Three Toes miles away from the ranch of the Carter Brothers and Thompson, the home of the collie dog.

But as the sun set the next evening and the harvest moon shone like silver inlay in the darkening sky, Three Toes was back at the little rocky cliff above the pasture, her eyes centered on the lighted window in the ranch-house kitchen.

SHEP was a ranch dog. From puppyhood he had known only the buildings and pastures of the Carter Brothers and Thompson ranch near Thatcher. Shep's mother had been a grade collie like himself; his father was a great imported Scotch collie with long slender nose and thick, shaggy, golden-hued coat.

Shep was part of the ranch organization. In his own mind the dog was quite certain that the routine of the place would not go ahead without him. He gathered the cows in the morning, then herded them back into the pasture, ran at the heels of the ranch foreman when he went out to round up some of the saddle stock, and after the morning chores were done, he would tag along with the men in the fields.

For the most part there was nothing but business in Shep's schedule. Occasionally the monotony of daily tasks would be shattered by the leap of a jack-rabbit from cover in an alfalfa patch. Shep would give chase, yapping and barking until the jack-rabbit would leave him yards behind.

These were great occasions. The excitement of the chase would send Shep's heart pounding, his breath quickening and sighing in his throat, and in his mind there leaped up visions inherited from some forgotten experience of his ancestors when they hunted in the wilds, depending on their own ability to bring down game and not having to eat food-scraps thrown to them by man.

Another daily event always gave the collie a thrill when he rounded up the cattle and with his quick, driving run headed them into the corral. There was a flashing of hoofs, the dash and drive of running the stock, a feeling on the part of the collie that he was master of the situation. Of all thrills the best was an occasional quick dive he made, nipping the heels of the cattle. Sometimes his hereditary instinct would dominate, and he would nip deep into a steer shank. Then there was always the exciting leap away from the flaring hoofs of the kicking steer.

Altogether, Shep's life was a fine dog's life. He knew he had the confidence of his human associates. He found pleasure in working with and for them. They in turn provided him with food, his choice of shelter and encouragement in his work.

But with all of these a ranch dog's life may be lonely. The nearest dog to the ranch was some miles away over a ridge. Very occasionally Shep would run away and hunt with this other ranch dog. Those were great holidays. Still there was lacking some dog companion. Lonely spells would come, and Shep would crawl under the kitchen stove or lie in the sun in front of the barn with far-away visions shadowing his mind.

On nights when wolves howled, Shep was restless. At the yap of a coyote he would always go scouting, for there was no tinge of fear in his heart. But when wolves crouched on the mesa and sent forth their pack call, Shep would bark, his hair would bristle, he would growl, whine, and finally seek the protection of the nearest human.

THEN came the night when Three Toes in her loneliness came back to the little cliff and sent out her wolf call filled with its yearning for a mate. As usual Shep growled, barked, put his tail between his legs, and slunk around the buildings. But there was something unusual in this call of the she-wolf; he felt it tingling within him. It beckoned him to the open trails, to the alluring life of the wild. Shep ran out a little distance in the pasture, stopped, barked. The call came again. It was a wolf call, even though it carried the big invitation, and Shep's instinct, smothered by associations with man and the habits formed in his ranch life, made him race back half in terror of the wildness in that call and half in fright from the cajoling cry of the she-wolf.

He stopped at the door of the house, whined, barked, in short, choppy little barks. Thompson, one of the ranch owners, let him in.

"What's got into that dog lately?" asked Mrs. Thompson.

"Plagued if I know," replied her husband. "He seems all upset and nervous. Guess he's just afraid of the wolves howling up there on the brakes."

Shep looked out from under the stove with inquiring eyes, seeking from these friends something which might give him the key to the curious enigma that confronted him.

The night passed and another came. Shadows had blended the detail of the ranch building into one black mass, and Shep was on his usual scouting tour around corral and sheds when the call of Three Toes came again. He stopped, whined, sniffed the air. Something clutched him. He trotted beyond the barn, around the corral, then out a little into the pasture. He did not bark tonight, but stood whining. Then he raced ahead for a few hundred feet, stopped again, whined, and for many moments waited nervously, trotting back and forth, peering into the darkness. . . . . Then like a gray shadow came Three Toes.

Slowly, pacing sedately, she approached the collie. She stopped, sniffed, then whined. Shep answered and took a step forward. The wolf stood her ground; the dog hesitated, trotted away a few paces, then came back and whined again. The gray wolf started toward him at a little dog trot. Suddenly fear, gaunt, stark, compelling, leaped through Shep. With a quick little short yelp he dived away, racing back toward the corral and the barn, where would be found the protection of humans.

Quick as a flash Three Toes was after him. For a hundred yards Shep ran desperately. Three Toes made a valiant effort to head him away from the ranch, back into the open pasture where his misgiving might have been overcome. But Shep, driven by a fear accumulated by his dog ancestors through years of civilized life, was endowed with unusual fleetness.

They were within two hundred yards of the corral when Three Toes, catching the man odor, stopped short, all four paws braced. Shep continued his wild run by the corral poles and clear to the door of the house before he stopped. Then he turned, looked back toward the open field and whined. He got up, faced the place where he had last seen Three Toes, then was startled by the quick opening of the door.

"Why, what's the matter, pup?" asked Thompson.

Shep nodded his head up and down, licked his lips rapidly, struck out with a forepaw sheepishly. Even had he been able definitely to express his uncertainty, he could never have told concisely of the turmoil of compelling emotions that mastered his dog mind.

Two nights later Three Toes again sent out her call to the collie. This time Shep trotted out into the open pasture. In the voice of the wolf there was an imperious demand that he answer that call.

Shep raced toward the cliff, slowed, stopped, stood waiting. Then from the darkness came the she-wolf. She walked slowly, cautiously, toward the dog. Shep stood nervously sniffing, his tail between his legs, his hair bristling, his mind whipped by a flood of uncertainty.

Three Toes whined appealingly, barked gruffly. Shep broke, started to run, but in the first few leaps he was headed and turned back toward the open country. He stopped, skidded, all four feet braced, and then stood taut. Three Toes stopped in the same instant. For a moment they stood rigid. Then the she-wolf put her nose forward and whined ever so little. She dropped on her front feet, then danced away in light, doggish play. Shep trotted a few steps, started back toward the barn, but was headed by the wolf. She again invited him to romp and play in the open pasture. With hesitation at first, the dog started trotting away with the wolf. They stopped, touched noses, sniffed, and then as though queer understanding had been reached, they romped away through the pasture, dived under the barbed-wire fence, and galloped out over the old wolf runways of the mesa.

New music was beating in the heart of Three Toes as she led the collie over the old wolf trails. Here was a new leader for a pack. She herself would teach him wolf lore, the knowledge of traps, of how to kill, of how to avoid the pitfalls that men set for killers. In the heart of Shep there was chorusing a song of the open. He raced madly with Three Toes over open parks and by sage-brush flats.

"I BELIEVE Shep is running with some of those wolves," said Thompson a few days later.

"Ah, come now," taunted Carter. "Shep's too steady an old dog for that sort of stuff."

"Well, I'm not so sure," said Thompson. "They all listen to the call of the wild, and when it gets strong enough, they

break loose and are gone. Whether he is or not, I'm going to lock him in the old chicken-run tonight. Maybe if he is fooling around with the wolves, they'll come down and we can get a shot at them."

Fierce revolt filled Shep that night when he was dragged protesting into the gate of the chicken-run and left there. For many moments he stood looking toward the disappearing figure of Thompson. Something told him that he was distrusted, that his jailing had something to do with his wild free life with Three Toes. Man was demanding undivided allegiance to civilization—and Shep had reached a point where this was impossible!

With dog companions at the ranch, Shep might never have sought comradeship with the wolf, but he had tasted of that strong, stirring life of the open range, and now nothing would ever blot it from his memory. The killing of steers, the taste of fresh blood, the excitement that came before the animal was downed by the driving snap of Three Toes' powerful jaws, had transformed him.

Wire and wood of the chicken-run made an effective jail. Shep looked off to the field where he had met Three Toes and whined.

Some moments later the call came. Shep barked. For many moments he stood watching and waiting. Again he barked and howled. Then through the dusk his keen eyes saw Three Toes. He whined, calling to her to come to him. Slowly at first, suspecting some trick or trap, she advanced. Long moments passed while she was reaching the side of the chicken-pen. Both were in a state of nervous excitement. Three Toes ripped with her teeth at the wire. It had no effect. Shep bit at the boards. Then suddenly the wolf began to dig. In a moment the same idea had been conveyed to the collie. Desperately, with quick little soft yelps, they kicked the dirt away with their feet. Soon the hole under the fence was complete. Shep squeezed through and away they went, racing across the pasture, away toward the open country.

NEVER again did Shep go back in peace to the Carter Brothers and Thompson ranch. In raids, quick, driving, vicious, under the guidance of his new wild mate, he visited his old home, and mad with the excitement of the kill, helped her slaughter the beeves that he had driven in happy fun, days before. One taste of warm blood and the collie became an outlaw. Latent wild flame leaped forth. He was more clumsy than the lithe, quick Three Toes, but he swiftly acquired some of her tricks in killing.

Happy, carefree, led by the spirits of the wild, they played in open sunny places, and then on dark nights trotted through the dusk, slaughtering and gorging in a bacchanalian orgy of blood feast.

Puppies would come about nine weeks after mating. Three Toes began to look for denning country. Shep took more of the brunt of the killing. With approving whines Three Toes watched his increasing skill. Her heart thrilled at the thought that here was the beginning of a new race of wild leaders that would dominate the mesa, would be filled with wolf craft and the keen learning acquired by dogs.

The great buff collie, with his handsome body, his long, shaggy hair that streamed when he ran, with his quick intelligence, was to be leader of the new pack. Three Toes would teach him the lore of leadership. Together they would train their whelps in all the varied knowledge that both had amassed.

Then new fear came to Three Toes. There was a man on the range with traps. Sagewa, who had stopped the raiding of Old Lefty, who had smashed the pack led by Unaweep, queen wolf of the Uncompahgre, and had caught Bigfoot of the Lane Country, had been sent to get this last wolf of Bear Springs mesa.

Pale moon was spreading faint light over the late winter landscape as the collie and Three Toes ran together one evening. They were racing down a woods road. Suddenly Three Toes stopped. Her keen nose had detected the scent of man. She whined to Shep. He stopped, looked back inquiringly, then trotted ahead as though to run away and leave her.

Quick as a streak of gray light Three Toes threw her body against his. With a half-bark, half-snarl, she knocked him out of the way. Shep bristled, snapped. It was their first quick quarrel.

But Three Toes was not inviting combat. Instead, she had sensed lurking trouble, and had thrown her body between it and the collie.

Slowly, head dropped, sniffing, Three Toes edged toward the cleverly concealed trap. Her hair bristled. Her teeth bared. Shep sensed danger, whined menacingly, edged beside Three Toes, then threw back

his big body and trotted away quickly, nervously. Suddenly he howled, with all the challenge he could muster, daring, threatening, inviting the unseen to come to combat. He now fully realized that man taint, formerly a friendly odor, now meant deadly enemies. He had begun to learn the death that hovers over the lives of four-footed murderers. Keenly Three Toes watched the collie as they went trotting cautiously down the trail. At the next trap set she gave a warning whine. Shep stopped, sniffed, stepped out of the trail.

New pride in this mate she had picked came to the she-wolf as they went on through the night seeking a kill. He had learned in a night the menace of a trap set.

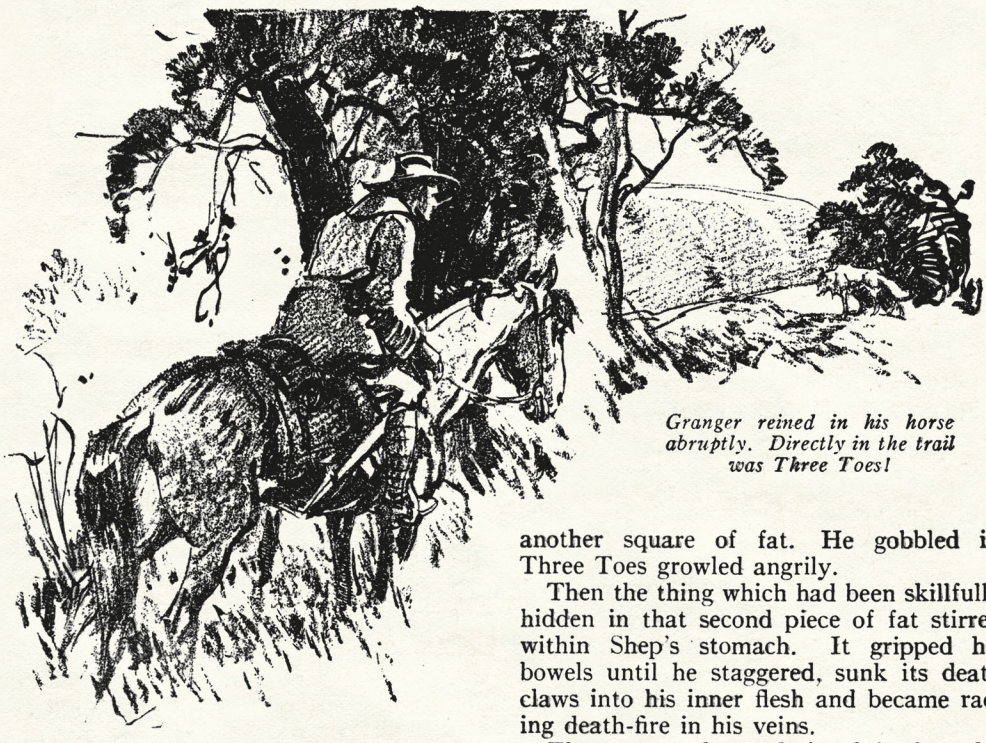
Then quickly, without warning, came the catastrophe. They had gone back scouting around an old kill. Curiosity alone brought them there. Shep had stubbornly insisted on this digression from the run they were following. Three Toes had been uneasy, but had followed.

They came to the little open space where the rack of steer ribs showed dimly in the night light. The collie stepped forward cautiously. He would have eaten of that carrion if the wolf had allowed it.

Shep scented something tempting at his feet. He dropped his head, and in one quick gulp wolfed the square of flank fat that had been set as a dummy bait. It was sweet, luscious, tickling his dog palate. In little circles he began quick, excited scouting. There might be other squares.

Three Toes growled, started away, came back, whined invitingly. The dog continued to hunt.

He found what he sought. It was another square of fat. He gobbled it. Three Toes growled angrily.



Granger reined in his horse abruptly. Directly in the trail was Three Toes!

Then the thing which had been skillfully hidden in that second piece of fat stirred within Shep's stomach. It gripped his bowels until he staggered, sunk its death claws into his inner flesh and became racing death-fire in his veins.

The processed strychnine left there by the hunter for any killer beast that might find it, swiftly did its work. Three Toes again faced the coming of her puppies and the hard job of rearing them without the aid of their father. Many times she returned to the chilling body of Shep. Many times she whined for him to follow her; but he did not move after that first frantic fight against the poison.

As morning dawned, Three Toes turned, lifted her head, wailed with her whole wolf heart—a challenge to the man tribe that had torn from her through trap, rifle and poison, her mates and her puppies.

DAYS later John W. McCook, tanned, with range-worn clothes, stood by the corral at the Carter Brothers and Thomp-

son ranch, talking to Roy Granger. McCook was one of the field assistants of the Survey from the Denver office.

"Of course we've got to get some one on the job here, now that Sagewa's been recalled," declared McCook. "After what I've told you about the game, you still want to try it?"

"You bet," declared Granger. "I can get this old female wolf."

McCook eyed the man for a moment. He had told Granger of the trying work of the Government hunter, the need for self-sacrifice, that when a man is set on the trail of a killer wolf, there is no let-up until the wolf is dead. Tales of blizzards, of fighting through mud, rain, wind, hail, keeping the traps at work at all hazard, had been spread before Granger, applicant for the job of Survey hunter.

But the blue-eyed young cowpuncher grinned good-naturedly. For several years he had punched cattle, and hardship and application to duty were a part of his life.

"Well, I'll repeat my offer," declared Granger earnestly. "I'll go after this wolf, and if I don't get her, you don't need even to pay me for my time. No wolf, no job, no pay. I know this old girl well—have for several seasons—and I know wolves. Give me a chance and a little time, and I'll prove this. If I do show you that I know this game, I get the job. Isn't that fair enough?"

McCook smiled. "I reckon nothin' could be much fairer," he agreed. "Tear to it, Granger. If you bring in that hide we'll want you steady."

McCook left the ranch after he had checked the Government outfit of traps and equipment over to Granger. The new wolfer of the Survey hurried to the little house that stood not far from the main ranch residence.

His entrance was greeted by a chorus of childish voices. Inez, six; Evelyn, five; Reba, three; and even Georgia, who had seen but a year and a half of this life, all scampered toward their daddy. Granger smiled, then turned to his wife. Her face lighted, her eyes flashed happily as they caught the significance of Granger's grin.

"You got the chance, Roy?" she said, half in confirmation of her own surmise.

"Yeh, shore did."

"Did they put you on steady?"

"Not exactly. But it's comin'. If I get this old Three Toes, I get the job for sure."

Mrs. Granger smiled. "Well, Roy, you can catch that wolf if you have the time to put into it, can't you?"

"You bet I can!"

Then followed talk in a happy vein, a mild celebration of good fortune ahead.

The Grangers had come to Colorado from Missouri nearly seven years before. Roy had started to wrangle cattle for the ranchers in the Thatcher section. He had gone as far as was possible for a cowboy. Now there came the chance to work up in the Survey, become one of their regular staff. Loving outdoor life, wishing for just such an opportunity, he made ready to prove that he was qualified as a hunter.

GRANGER lost no time in setting in motion his campaign. But Three Toes had become more canny, more elusive, more filled with man-hatred than before. It was three days later that Granger came into the ranch yard with a slight cast of worry on his features.

"Never saw anything like it," he declared to Thompson. "She knows most as much as a human. I set traps in the trail back of the second ridge, using every bit of care I could. She came right up to them, sniffed around, knew where those traps are and side-stepped 'em, neat."

Thompson looked serious. "She's killing cattle worse than ever," he declared. "Couple of our calves last night again."

"It's the pups. They're runnin' with her now. She's teachin' 'em how to kill."

Thompson turned away, his brow a bit dark. "Confound that fool collie of ours!" he exploded. "Now there's a new kind of a beast loose on the range—half-wolf, half-dog. Worse than either. And with that old killer Three Toes to teach them all the devilment she knows, too!"

It was a week later that Granger found where Three Toes had passed unusually close to one of his trap sets. That trap had been in the ground for five days. The day previous Three Toes had avoided another trap similarly but more recently set. It showed that a steel trap in the ground where the earth is moist will lose the man and steel scent in five days.

Acting on the knowledge, Granger reorganized his campaign. At an old stackyard where hay had been stored in years previous he made a new trap set, carefully concealed in the moist ground.

That evening he found new trouble at the little home. His wife, normally healthy in spite of her slender body, was ill.

"It's nothing, Roy," she declared optimistically. "Just you never mind. If you can get the kids their supper, I'll be all right in the morning."

Reluctantly Granger left the house next morning. But new impetus was given his determination to get Three Toes. It came from a brief conversation with Thompson.

"Roy, you've got to get her," declared the rancher soberly. "She's just gone crazy for killing."

"Something new?"

"Yes, she killed six calves last night. That can't keep up. It would just knock the stuffing out of our herd."

For a moment they were both silent.

"I made some pretty strong recommendations concerning you to the Survey, Roy. I still think I haven't misjudged your ability. I'd give a whole lot if you can stop this old brute soon."

Granger now felt a new worry. His friends were beginning to wonder why he did not succeed. Whipped by anxiety, spurred on by the necessity to kill Three Toes, obliterate her pack of half-breed wolves, he hurried away from the ranch with new, driving determination.

Ahead the trail wound, beckoning. On every side stretched the plains. Overhead the blue of the sky dome spread until it dipped to the horizon. Chipmunks, prairie dogs, magpies chattered and barked at him.

The horse passed over a sandy stretch in the trail where hoof-beats were muffled. Granger swung easily in the saddle. The trail dipped, came out of a little swale, topped a bit of a ridge and then emerged from behind a screen of cedars. Abruptly, with rapid, nervous reflex movement, he reined in his horse.

For a moment there was silence. Directly in the trail, with all the joyous abandon of a mother playing with her children with happy frolic, Three Toes was romping with her seven half-wolf puppies!

They dived, rolled, nipped, dodged, leaped, yapped a little, bit playfully at each other. The old wolf was the leader.

All this happened in vivid flashing movement in that fraction of a second before Granger reached for his rifle that hung in the saddle scabbard. With a quick dive his hand dropped for the butt of the gun. Here was the big chance, the one great opportunity to stop the renegades, the chance to reach his goal and then get back to his sick wife and his own babies.

A qualm flung through Granger as he realized he was about to smash that picture of wild happiness. But it was followed swiftly by the exultant knowledge that here lay the end of his quest, here might be the termination of the ferocious career of the old renegade wolf. But as he yanked at the gun there came a quick break in the tableau. Three Toes caught sight of the rider on the big horse.

With a wild cry, a sound filled with warning, thrilling with fear, she flung herself behind some sagebrush.

Like phantoms the wild pups scattered.

Granger jerked the rifle to readiness.

He spurred ahead frantically, seeking one of the pups. With one scalp of the wild half-dogs to bring home, there would be less chance of criticism falling on him.

He peered hopefully for one good look at a whelp.

THEN his attention was drawn away from the puppies. On a small butte, beyond the reach of the light high-power rifle, at a point she knew was safe, Three Toes had found a station. She came out in plain sight, inviting Granger's attention.

Howl after howl she hurled at him. In him she saw the force that was warring on her kind. Instinctively she knew that here was the man that was making her life one succession of pitfalls, poison, snares.

If ever a wolf of the wild talked to a man Three Toes talked to Granger. In her language there was every bit of venom and passionate anger that she carried against man. She dared him to come and get her, threatened him, poured forth the surging, boiling madness that filled her wolf heart.

And Granger, excited, hoping to get one long shot at her, spurred his horse toward the butte.

The horse crashed through the sage, stumbled, recovered, and galloped forward. A hundred yards more, and he would be within striking distance. The horse snorted in fright. Three Toes continued howling. There was nothing of fear in that mad cry —just dominating anger.

The hundred yards was almost covered. Granger reined in his horse.

Like a wraith the wolf dropped out of sight. And at that instant Granger knew she had outwitted him.

He quickly turned to follow out his original plan to catch one of the pups. But they were gone—had followed the com-

mand of their mother, voiced in that first wild cry.

"The darned old she-devil," Granger breathed, in half-admiration. "She knew! She sure knew."

GRANGER'S encounter with Three Toes left him groping for new methods of attack, brimming with fresh resolve to succeed. She had dared him, taunted him, urged him to come and get her, and then had disappeared.

"You must get her, Roy," declared his wife that night, as he told her of the incident in half-awed tones. "I know you can. I just know you can, Roy!"

"Well, with that faith back of me I will," he declared, mustering a smile.

The next morning he protested at leaving his wife, who was still ill.

"Don't you think we ought to get the doctor out?"

She shook her head. "I'll be all right. You run along to your traps."

A driving demand for results rode with Granger that day. He was grave, determined, whipped with the necessity for bringing his campaign against Three Toes to a close. . . . . The day passed without incident. Night approached. He turned his horse down toward the old stack yard. There he leaped to the ground—hurried forward. His heart bounded with new rhythm as he recognized the imprint of Three Toes.

The trap was gone! A song of triumph welled up in his heart as he saw the scarred trail where the wolf had fought her way across the open ground and into the arroyo that dropped into the Apishapa!

QUICKLY Granger unsheathed his gun. At a fast dog-trot he started on foot down the arroyo. Eyes alert, his pulse beating, his nerves atingle, he hurried along, and reached a point where the wolf had been hung up. The ground was ragged and torn. Brush was beaten down on every side. Scrub trees as big as a man's wrist were snapped off in the fight between the wolf and the trap. Everywhere the track of the wolf with three toes assured him he had caught the old renegade.

The arroyo broadened. He hurried along. Dusk crept into the shadows. The sun was setting back of the distant mountains. The arroyo came to the junction with the broad mud-walled channel of the Apishapa River. Snow was melting in the hills and dirty water swirled in several channels that spread over the broad bed of the stream.

The trail of the captured wolf skirted the bank—disappeared into the stream. It went through a pool where Granger looked in vain for sign that the dead wolf might be there, drowned.

A new dread came to him. Three Toes might thrash into the pools in the stream, become entangled with the trap and the accumulated trash that had become knotted in the chain, drown, and then sink from sight. He could never prove that he had caught the wolf. He might be cheated after all.

HE went ahead warily. Every time the trail swung into the river channel, his hope waned. When it climbed out again in draggled scrub brush at the side of the stream, he found renewed courage.

The unconquered she-wolf had fought along indomitably, through every obstacle. His progress was slow. He could not overlook one chance to find that dead wolf body in the pools or rapids of the Apishipa.

For several miles he worked down the stream, carefully. Shadows deepened. Yet he could not hurry. He dared not overlook any chance.

Night came. He was balked. He could travel no farther. Discouraged, disheartened, fearing that the river would at last cheat him of the chance of proving his catch, he turned back to the ranch.

There he found things were not any more encouraging. Mrs. Granger made a brave effort to be cheerful and bright, but she was not at all well. Granger worked around the house, straightening things up as best he could, cooked, washed dishes, scrubbed, and then put the babies to bed. . . . .

Morning came. Fever was hovering over his wife. Granger was torn between two duties. There was the certain knowledge of the tradition of the Biological Survey. Nothing must stand between the hunter and bringing in his renegade wolf. Out there in the choppy breaks above the Apishipa or along the dun-colored banks of the turbid stream was Three Toes, the renegade, fast in a trap. He must get back on the trail immediately or some one might find the wolf before he did, steal it, obliterate the evidence of his catch. But he also should stay at home and help his mate, his plucky wife.

"You must go, Roy," she insisted. "It

She was silent, listening. In faint staccato came the answering bark of the dog at the ranch.

would be worse for me to lie here and keep you from getting that wolf than to have you away out after Three Toes."

"Well, I'm going to phone the doctor to come out," he insisted. "I'll get out and get that wolf and be back before he leaves."

Granger picked up the trail again beside the roily flood of the Apishipa. Carefully he worked along the edge of the stream. Several hours passed. He realized that the doctor had come and gone at the ranch. But he could not give up that trail that lay ahead, demanding his immediate attention, imperative in its requirements that he stay with it until the end came.

The trail deserted the side of the stream, climbed over a sloping bank, threaded up an arroyo. Three Toes had traveled through tangle after tangle, fighting her way in an effort to attain liberty. He hurried, for he realized that this trail to higher ground assured him that the wolf was probably still alive and in the trap.

The trail climbed to the sage flats, threaded through piñon and scrub cedar. It was plain. At points there were circles where the wolf had thrashed while the trap was snagged in the brush.

He approached a stand of brush where there were signs of the wolf having been held by the drag-hook and chain. His nerves were taut with the intensity of the drive he was making in an effort to find the end of the trail. But caution dictated that he move slowly. Keen wolf teeth, bloodthirsty, ready to snap the veins in the throat of man, were at the end of his quest, and he could not come within their reach until they were made harmless.

He stepped forward slowly. His rifle was held at ready, and cocked. The brush cracked under his feet. Wind rustled eerily.

With a quick leap Granger threw himself back, then laughed nervously. A tiny bird, nesting in the undergrowth, had flown in terror. Its quick, darting movement had started the reflex jump instinctively.

Doggedly determined, Granger trudged forward. At one moment he moved cautiously. At the next he could trot across the open without hindrance or caution.

He reached the edge of a little mesa and climbed up to its tableland. He skirted some scrub cedars, eyes, ears alert.

Ahead, in a thicket of scrub cedars, there leaped a gray form—Three Toes in the wolf trap! Heart pounding, exultant, Granger trotted forward. Here was the triumph, the end of his campaign, the certainty of his recognition that he could do the work of the Survey hunter.

Frantically the wolf lunged. She threw her body out until the chain snapped. She lunged back in another direction. She seemed almost to try to climb the scrub tree in her frenzy to get away from the nearing doom.

Quickly Granger strung out new haywire, ready to muzzle her. He had brought his lariat with him. He made a quick loop. Three Toes ducked as the rope swirled in the air, snapped at it as it fell short.

He jerked the rope out of the way of those keen teeth, made another loop. Quick, positive in its action, the loop fell over the wolf's neck. He jerked with precision. The loop tightened. The wolf threshed a moment, then was still.

With another scrub cedar as a snubbing-post Granger stretched the gray form between the drag-hook where it was caught in a cedar and the rope. In a moment the man had straddled the wolf's neck. He made quick turns of the wire—her jaws were muzzled; then he eased the tension of the rope a little and slipped the loop.

"How old are your pups, you old vixen?" he said, talking to the wolf that was watching him with baleful glare. He reached to touch her. Quick as a flash, with vicious, nerve-shredding snarl, Three Toes leaped.

There was no indefiniteness in that plunge. It was Granger's life or hers!

Granger staggered back as her nose slammed into his windpipe. His scalp tingled as he realized that only the wire muzzle had saved his windpipe, had protected his arteries from being clipped.

"But you didn't make it, old girl," declared Granger grimly. "Thank God for that haywire!"

WITH the wolf on his horse, he made his way back jubilantly toward Carter Brothers and Thompson's ranch. Optimism had returned. Still there lurked the specter of the sickness that had laid its hand on his wife. But here was encouragement for her.

He reached the corral, came to the barnyard. No one was in sight. He unloaded the wolf that was hog-tied with the wire and muzzled.

Granger, unable to contain his triumph longer, yelled. The door of the ranch-house flung open. Thompson came running out, followed by Mrs. Thompson.

"I've got her, folks!" cried Roy exultantly. "Snagged the old brute! No more stock-killing for her. And I've made good my promise."

Quick exclamations came from both of his friends. Then curious silence came, blanketing their exuberance.

"I've got to tell the wife," said Granger excitedly. "She'll sure be happy."

Then the strained silence caught his attention.

"What's the matter? What's wrong, folks?"

Granger whipped around and looked toward his little house where his wife lay ill. A big new yellow sign on the door caught his eye.

"What's that?" he gasped. "What's that card?"

Fear had leaped into his voice. Shattered was the gladness of his triumph. His heart almost stopped beating.

"Not smallpox!" he demanded, a quaver in his voice.

Wordlessly Thompson nodded.

HARBINGER of death, like a specter, this dread disease had entered Colorado that season, and now had laid its fateful hand imperiously on the home of Roy Granger.

Night came, and in the dusk that settled Granger sat by the bedside of the plucky little woman who by her own courage had spurred him on to the goal of achievement. Long, dark hours passed. Perhaps it was a day or more. Time was of no consequence to him as he sat at her bedside. The crisis came; fate stalked into the little ranch home with the grim reaper. As the spirit of his mate entered the valley of death, his despairing soul sought to travel with her.

Uncounted time passed before his spirit came back, alone. . . . .

Then the hunter, benumbed by the blow that had fallen, bewildered, as had been Three Toes the day when her mate, the collie, had suddenly given up earth-life battles, groped toward the doorway of his little ranch home. There he looked out over the broad sweep of the dark, silent prairie and mesas that spread on every side of the ranch. His soul filled with their bigness.

Three Toes, wolf, had not given up. Unconquered, she had battled odds to the last ditch. Hers was a fighting heart.

Roy Granger, man, was now battered, bruised by the invincible, silent, stalking shadows that had entered his home. But within him beat a heart more brave, more true, than any wolf had ever possessed.

He straightened his shoulders, turned, stood a moment above the four sleeping babies. His eyes were misty but his heart was full of big resolve.

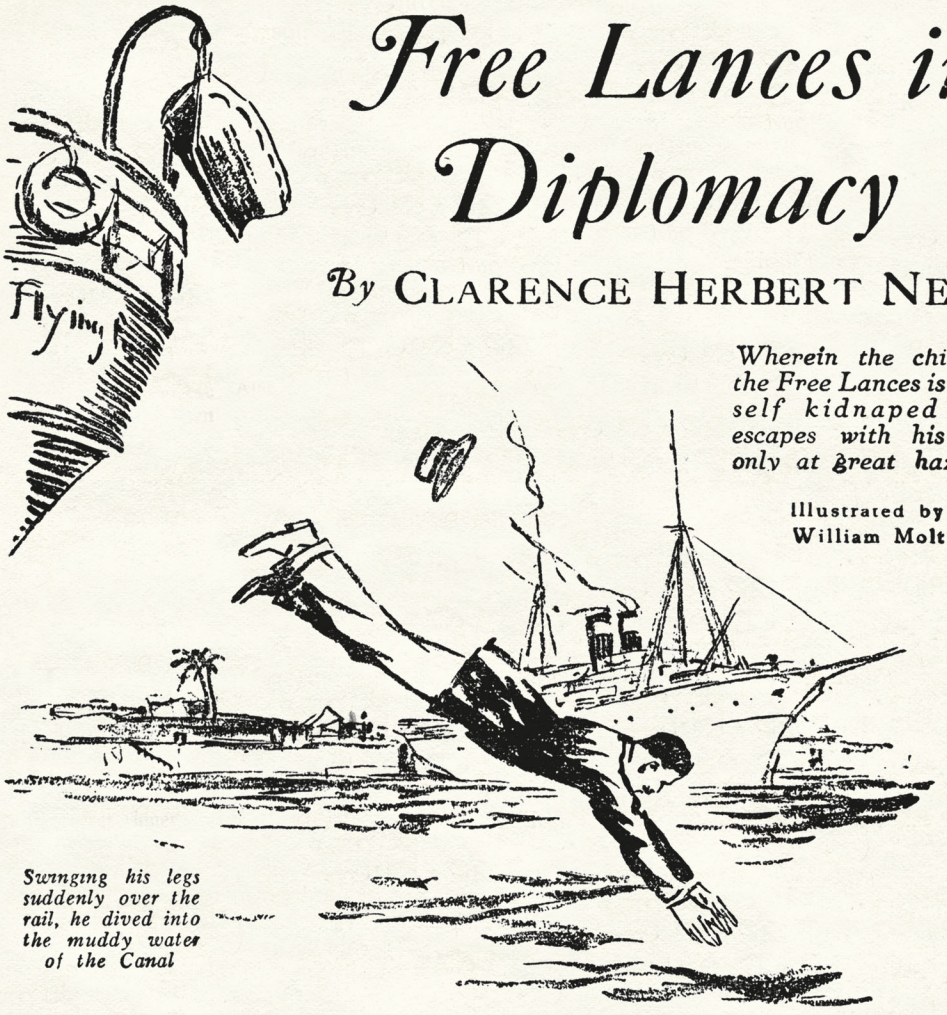
He would carry on!

Free Lances in Diplomacy

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

Wherein the chief of the Free Lances is himself kidnaped and escapes with his life only at great hazard.

Illustrated by William Molt



Swinging his legs suddenly over the rail, he dived into the muddy water of the Canal

THE week-end house-party at Stranleigh Towers was the usual mixture of young men and girls interested in dancing and tennis, and of middle-aged guests who played bridge, went out for the birds, or rode cross-country. Among the youngsters were undergraduates, subalterns, titled flappers—in the elder group were statesmen, scientists, big-game hunters and county squires.

One of the Cabinet men—Earl Trevor of Dyvnaint, whose administrative office was that of Lord Privy Seal—was an old friend of the Stranleighs, and he was very fond of the son and daughter of the house. The daughter, Marcia, had been telling him about the careless attitude of her brother toward his future vocation. So His Lordship took the opportunity when the two were off for a morning ride, for some questioning of the Honorable Bertie.

"Bertie, how are the medical studies coming along? You're to be at Guy's as soon as you come down from Magdalen, aren't you?"

"Oh, I've chucked all that, sir! What's the use? As a sawbones I'd be working behind the lines, of course, in the next war—but I'd be bombed or gassed just the same in the end. Might as well go out with a regiment and get it over quicker!"

"Um-m-m—of all the English chaps who went through the World War, more than two-thirds are still alive. Why feel so pessimistic about it?"

"Well—one looks out of the window in one's town-house an' sees quite a lot of those who are 'still alive,' as you say, sir. Sees 'em beggin' on the streets for enough food to keep the life in their bodies—sees 'em hobblin' along on one leg—with one arm, or none at all—coughin' blood from

the fragment of lung the gassin' left to 'em. What's the sense of educatin' one's self for a profession—an' then bein' wiped out just the same?"

EARL TREVOR'S face became stern. "You're young, Bertie," he said, "and sound—quite fit, by dint of your ridin', shootin' an' tennis—first-chop inheritance in the way of blood and ability. Don't think I ever heard of a coward in your family, before!"

The young fellow flinched at the word.

"In fact," Trevor added, "this line of talk is a sort which never would have come from one of your family unless he'd been listening to a lot of tommyrot from some bounder who's been poisoning his mind! Who is the chap?"

"Oh, nobody else is to blame for the way we Varsity men look at things now, sir; we've reached an age where we've got our eyes open—that's all! Why, even some of the Dons up at Oxford see it just as we do—and admit frankly that they see it! Take Fursome, here—stoppin' at the house—he's one of the Magdalen Dons. A lot of us chaps spend an evenin' in his diggin's occasionally, just for the jolly good argum'nt an' debate one gets there. He coaches us in our readin', d'ye see—an' makes us pass, too—no fear! But he says he can't help laughin' at us as he would at so many bugs crawlin' laboriously across the floor—each absorbed in his own little bug-affairs—d'rectly toward the big foot that's goin' to crush the life out of 'em in a minute or two. Chap asked him, one day, if he thought it possible he might be able to take a 'First' an' become one of the heads, some day. Fursome said he could think of but one reason against it, which was that the chap wouldn't be here to make it, in all probability."

"Um-m-m. What particular war was it that he had in mind?"

"Oh, just whichever one it happens to be. He pointed out conditions today all through Europe, and called attention to the fact that it would take but a spark to set the magazine off—also, that the next war will be a thousand times more annihilating than the last one."

"And none of you had the common sense to examine his statements to see how much arrant nons'nse there might be in them?" countered Trevor. "My word! I'm surprised at you, Bertie! . . . . Surprised at such chaps as your friends Bob Wrayburn or Ted Mounteney takin' anything of the sort without seein' the fallacies in it. The human race isn't going to be annihilated by war alone—in fact, I doubt if it will even be kept down to a safe limit of population by it, because there's too much of the earth's surface to cover with any means of destruction ever invented or likely to be invented in the next thousand years. The risk to you young chaps in war is not very much greater than it is from disease or accident in your daily lives. You have to take those risks, and you never think of them. But I'll tell you one cold fact which you'd best put down an' keep thinkin' over: There's nothing in the world that will destroy this generation of young men so completely as a loss of morale! This Fursome chap isn't talking to your crowd in such a way because he really believes what he's sayin'; as a Don, he should have far too much education for that. So what's the answer? Just this—he's feedin' the lot of you carefully thought-out propaganda intended to produce a certain result. What object has he in doing that? Well, it's for you chaps to find out—and you'll not wait too long before you do it unless you wish to see a national catastrophe! Do you know—I'm tempted to take that fellow on, after dinner tonight, in a bit of argum'nt—see if I can smoke out something. What?"

"I—I trust Your Lordship isn't thinkin' of makin' an unpleasant scene with Fursome before the other men? He's our guest, you know, an'—"

"Bertie, I'll put it up to your Governor, who has been my friend for many years, and see how much of a discussion he's willing to sanction. From what you tell me, Fursome has been talkin' what amounts to actual treason against His Majesty's Government!"

"Really, you know—I cawn't see *that!*"

"Perhaps you will when I talk with him. Stick around—tell your pals to stay, also."

A COUPLE of hours later, the Earl found Lord Stranleigh in his study and gave him the Honorable Bertie's explanation for the outlook upon life held by himself and his friends.

"There's a good deal that's putrid goin' on under the surface, Archie—we Cabinet men get whiffs of it which the rest of you never locate. It's serious enough at any time—even when we have it pretty well in hand. Then again—it sometimes gets

clean *out* of hand, an' we either have an explosion or just barely avert it. I've given you an idea as to the sort of talk this bounder has been spreading among the undergraduates up at Oxford—Bertie says that, includin' Cambridge also, there are possibly ten or twelve of 'em talkin' the same way. Do you fancy for one moment they're expressin' their own convictions?"

"Well—the academic point of view is always reformatory an' quite frequ'ntly pessimistic. I can recall that from my Varsity days."

"Aye—quite so. But when it has the effect of rank treason, it's time to jam the lid on, isn't it?" asked Trevor gravely.

"Faith, I agree with you there, most thoroughly. If our younger generation is goin' to pick up a course in communism, it shouldn't be in our schools, where we send 'em in their most formative period. Once they're out in the world, they usually acquire enough common sense and judgment to pick the weak spots in any line of argum'nt. I say, George! Why not dig into Fursome a bit after dinner an' see what line of argum'nt the fellow really does put up? Eh? Bein' a Cabinet man, you're in just the position to ask him questions which from the rest of us might be considered a bit personal."

"That's what I had in mind to do—with your permission. How far do you wish me to go?"

"Well, the fellow is our guest, of course. If you ride him too hard, I might have to protest a bit—but I'll not do it if he seems to deserve whatever you happen to say."

DURING the afternoon, it had gotten about that the tinge of socialism which had been noticeable in Fursome's talk was merely a slight indication of other things he had said at Oxford, and that Earl Trevor might possibly debate the question with him after dinner—so when the ladies left the table that evening, none of the men went with them. Some one closed the door after the nuts and port were on the table. Some one else casually asked Fursome what he thought of the present-day outlook in England. The Don laughed and said that as two of the Cabinet were present, such a question might better be asked of *them*. But he didn't stop there.

"Gentlemen," he went on, "I'm frankly pessimistic. I'm a close student of international affairs—have correspondents, who are very well informed, in a number of the Continental cities. They appear to be expecting, momentarily, the outbreak of some local war which, because of international affiliations, cannot be kept a local affair, and will draw all Europe into the vortex again. What ambitions can our younger generation have—with the certainty of early annihilation before their life-careers have more than started? It is the same all over the Continent—a spirit of lethargy is everywhere. Preparation for any sort of a career appears to be futile. In the industrial world the preparation for skilled labor is falling off. One sees specimens of some four million of unemployed dragging around everywhere, while those who formerly lived in comfort are beggared by staggering taxation."

There was a murmur of disagreement with this view. His Lordship had been listening thoughtfully—and now took up the discussion in a casual way:

"Is there any reason, Mr. Fursome, why the people of Europe should be forced into a war if they really don't want it? An absolute monarchy can declare war at any moment and commit its people to it—can draft them, and shoot them for insubordination if they hang back. But a limited monarchy finds it much less easy to do that. In a republic, it simply can't be done without a backing of popular opinion. So, in any great war, we must pre-suppose an intense desire for it running all through the population even to the offering of individual lives to carry it on. Do I understand that these 'correspondents' you mention advise you of a strong feeling in each of their nations favoring a war of aggression or a supporting war to back up some allied nation? Is the desire for war all through Europe really as strong as all that, today? Among my widely scattered commercial interests, I have possibly fifty correspondents to your one—and I don't get any such impression from *them*."

"But Your Lordship will admit, I think, the alliances which exist between all of the larger nations—the assurances that certain groups will defend their individual States with all the force available, against other groups which may become aggressive?"

"I should consider it a world-wide calamity if such alliances did *not* exist," Trevor asserted, "because the balance of power is so nearly even that any State will hesitate quite a while before drawing a dozen States into a general war, upon opposite sides."

"And if a State in one of those groups, with the opinion of its citizens behind it, invades a neighboring State of another group, with too much animus to permit of arbitration—wantonly committing acts of war in the border territory of another State—what then? How would your 'balance of power' handle the situation? The States involved would be inflamed, you know, and any so-called 'policing' upon the part of the greater Powers would soon drift into a general war—as Your Lordship very well knows!"

"PRIOR to the German War, it probably would," agreed Trevor calmly. "But today we have a different situation. No nation can force its people into war unless the demand is general. No nation would be now permitted to spend a quarter-century in obvious preparation for world-conquest. Japan has what she considers a rather serious grievance against the United States for discrimination against her nationals—but she's not going to completely ruin herself in a war of protest. Several of the European States have irritating questions to settle between them—but the tendency is to put economic pressure upon any which refuse to settle the points by arbitration-commissions. However—take the present war menace for what it is worth—admit it! How, then, would you say the next war will be fought?"

"I suppose Your Lordship would say 'in the air'—but that's only one frightful part of it. The various War Departments already have in readiness bombing-planes and lethal gases powerful enough to destroy a million people in any city without their being able to defend themselves!"

Another murmur of exception to this statement went around the table.

"No—they've nothing of the sort," His Lordship contradicted. "You should know your facts better before making positive statements, Fursome! The heaviest load a plane may carry, in containers, would only kill a lot of the people in one square quarter of a mile—provided they would stay on the surface to breathe it and provided the bombs could be evenly spaced in dropping. With six-foot fans at every 'tuppenny-tube' entrance, no gas can get down into them. All gases operating by inhalation lose their deadly effect inside of two or three hours, therefore anyone taking refuge in the tubes, or in cellars equipped with blower-fans, is safe until the gas is blown away—or until they come to the surface in some other spot which may be equally safe. All planes dropping bombs under fire from ground-artillery will lodge several very close together and others at considerable distance, like shots at any target. A plane dropping high-explosive will destroy buildings and lives within a very limited area—with a net result of damage far less than a barrage from field-howitzers.

"You will say, of course, that there are now five hundred planes in existence to one at the time of the German War—but don't overlook the fact that the larger a fleet of planes is, flying over any city, the more of them will be dropped by ground-fire before they do any damage. One shell, bursting near a half-dozen planes in the air, may drop every one of them."

"EVEN admitting all Your Lordship's contentions, they do not get away from the fact that any such aërial bombardment means death to men, women and children!" Fursome said defiantly.

"To a very limited extent—yes," admitted Trevor. "So do typhoid and automobile accidents—yet you don't cower down in abject fear at the thought of them. All the war-planes that Germany could muster today, for example, if they made raid after raid over London and our other large cities, couldn't begin to destroy our younger generation. For every fleet sent over our cities, not two-thirds would get back to their base—probably not half. Of all the gas and explosive bombs dropped, not a full quarter would do any serious damage to human life. One point we must never lose sight of: For every weapon of warfare, a defense always has been developed—and always will be! Let us go a little farther into the question of aërial warfare. A bomb dropped in a thickly populated city may kill a hundred people—but fifty bombs dropped in flying across open country may not kill a single one. And in the next two or three hundred years, no nation on earth is going to have a large enough supply of planes to cover entirely the open country of another nation and destroy all life in it! We'll be using entirely diff'rent methods before that. If we abolish closely populated centers like our great cities, living will be vastly cheaper, healthier and more comfortable. In fact, I consider it almost an impossibility for an invading army to conquer a

people who are scattered all over the country on farms or estates.

"Now let us consider the submarine. We rendered that practically obsolete in the last war—it is no longer the menace that it was at first. The trench-line? Yes, that wastes more human life than anything else—but we may discard that

"If ye starts anythink, there'll be lead in yer carcasses!" growled one bravo. "Suit yourselves," replied Trevor.

next time. Did you ever try walking five miles over loose sand—have it slide away under your feet until you were expending ten times the effort you would on solid ground, and soon became exhausted? Well, possibly during the next war, instead of the trench-line, we may adopt the tactics of retreating far in advance of an invading army—taking every scrap of food as we go—bombing the enemy columns from our planes as they march in. No armies are big enough to cover the entire country. They must eat—they must carry munitions and impedimenta. With no resistance, day after day, they tire themselves out—are ready to drop from fatigue and hunger. The more villages they destroy on the march, the less shelter for themselves. Do you get it?

"I don't say that such tactics are now planned—what I'm trying to show is that the British War Office is fully as well-equipped to deal with any war that may come up as that of any Government in the world, bar none; and no matter how sublimely terrible a war may happen to be, it will not destroy the current generation or even the half of it. What I consider especially deplorable in all this pessimistic talk is that it saps away the very foundation of something which never has been questioned in the history of our country—and that is British pluck—the good old 'carry-on' spirit! I'm told, Mr. Fursome, that when one of the undergraduates asked if you thought he could take a 'First' and eventually qualify as a Head Master, you said there was but one reason why he couldn't—that he wouldn't be alive at the time of the final exam? Is that true?"

"Why—yes, I dimly recall making some such remark. In fact, I've more than once expressed an opinion upon the futility of spending much time in preparation for a career one will never live to build up."

"One respects your nerve in making that admission, Mr. Fursome. But I fancy respect would stop about there!" Trevor turned to the group about the table. "You heard what Mr. Fursome admitted having said, gentlemen? Would you mind expressing an opinion upon such a remark, made by an instructor to undergraduates, in one of our Varsities? You, for example, Lord Ballater—how does it strike you?"

"Well, d'ye see—one doesn't wish to be personal, naturally. But it seems to me, y'know, a deuced ill-advised remark to make—the sort of remark which none but a cad an' a coward would make to lads in his charge! —An' you may take that

as you please, Mr. Fursome! Good Lord! What's the country coming to, if that's what our youngsters hear at Oxford?"

This opinion seemed to be unanimous. The Earl, however, expressed his regret that Mr. Fursome had not in some way evaded the admission.

"It was not my intention, sir, to drift into personalities—but you rather forced my hand. I hoped that you wouldn't—and I'm somewhat at a loss to understand how an Englishman can get so far away from all British tradition. In fact, if I'm permitted to put it bluntly—I don't believe that such talk expresses your own inner view at all."

"I don't think I quite understand Your Lordship. Whose view could it express but my own?"

"Well, it certainly has the appearance of propaganda,—*paid* propaganda,—don't you think? I'm only takin' the surface look of it, to be sure—just the way it would strike the average person who heard it from a supposed Englishman. Not sayin' it *is* paid propaganda, of course. I'm merely sayin' that would be one's impression—that's all."

At this point, Lord Stranleigh thought it might be as well to join the ladies before the discussion grew more acrimonious—and Trevor nodded in agreement.

BEFORE Trevor left, he got a chance, unobserved, for a chat with Captain John Enderbury of the Dragoon Guards (detailed to Staff work at the War Office, it was supposed). They climbed down the cliff, and started for a walk along the beach at low tide—where it was impossible for anyone to overhear them.

"Your corking good record in the Army Intelligence service, Captain, prompted my suggestion to Sir Austen that he put in a requisition to have you detailed to the F. O. for as long as the work suited you. Do you like it over there? Find Sir Austen a pretty good chief?"

"Aye, Your Lordship—he's certainly that! I'm really no end pleased with the berth—learning a good bit that never came my way in the Army work. This is the first I'd known of your hand in it—thanks, a lot!"

"You're more than welcome, John—your father and I were old pals out India way, some years ago. . . . . Er—you heard that discussion with Fursome, after dinner, last evening. Do you suppose anyone here at the Towers has any knowledge whatever of your connection with the F. O.?"

"If anyone has, I might as well resign! That's one of the things nobody is permitted to know!"

"Of course—it was perhaps a foolish question. H-m-m—John, I'm beginning to think there's a lot more than a socialistic Oxford Don in all this! Bertie says that ten of them, including some at Cambridge, are persistently talking in this same pessimistic way—discouraging all inclination for more than the perfunctory studying necessary to get an undergraduate through.

"I want you to go up on the same train with Fursome—express the opinion that I went too far with him—that a lot of the men in the Army feel about as he does. Say you're visiting cousins near Oxford next week; you may drop in to see him—would like to meet some of his friends. When you have a pretty good line on who they are, at both of the Varsities, just remark that your leave is up an' you have to get back to the War Office. But you're back there again very soon, made up in some other character which will get you in with them almost immediately. I want to know everything that can be known about that gang up there and what their affiliations are on the Continent. Sir Austen will give you full authority the moment you mention Number Seventy-nine to him—it is customary in the Cabinet to number all Service details of whatever sort. Understand?"

That afternoon, the Honorable Bertie and his two most intimate friends came to the Earl with a manner so entirely different from what he had noticed the morning before that he was amazed.

"I say, sir! We—that is, Bob an' Ted an' I—well, we'd like to tell Your Lordship how much we enjoyed the way you gave Fursome what-for, last night! None of us really like the fellow, but I fancy there's no use blinkin' the fact that he did chip away at our morale a bit. An' the way you sailed into him, sir, bucked us up no end! Deuced odd, you know, why none of us happened to think of those argum'nts you used on him. Fancy it was because he's so dashed plausible, d'ye see. Well, what one had in mind to say was that we've decided we're goin' on with the readin' we started, don't you know!"

"Lads—I'm immensely pleased over this! An' I'm going to mention something else which has occurred to me during the

Trevor started to wig-wag an S. O. S.—but the sailing-master conveyed the impression that further activities of that sort would be fatal.

last day or so. Your long vacation begins in two or three weeks, I fancy. Aye? An' you'll do but little reading before you go up again. Now, how would you three like a vacation job providing employment for some of those ex-Service men you mentioned, and starting a movement all over the country to counteract the sort of pessimism Fursome and his sort are putting out? Berths at good remuneration for you three—but a lot of concentrated effort in exchange for it. Sound int'resting?"

"Fancy we're on, sir! I'll wager anything you start will be jolly good fun in the doing—even without pay."

"May turn out a bit rough in spots, you know—but you're all pretty fit, I'd say. How many of your Oxford friends could you get here by tomorrow noon—chaps who'd like to go in with you, and who wont blab?"

In response to the telegrams sent out during the evening, several undergraduates began dropping down on the morning trains—being met at the station, six miles away, by Marcia and Bertie with a couple of the Tower cars. During the early afternoon others arrived in their own cars. After tea, the lot of them accompanied His Lordship down the steep cliff-path to the beach—where he outlined the discussion which had taken place with Fursome and the arguments he had used to show up the man's fallacious sophistries.

WHEN he saw that they were in a properly receptive mood, the Earl said:

"Men, an idea has occurred to me since I came down here which I fancy is worth trying out. All this talk which has been fed to you by instructors is not honest opinion at all; it is *paid propaganda*—just that! It has been cropping out among the people in France, Belgium, Italy, Roumania and Poland. Seems to me that a League can be formed to combat effectively that sort of poison all over Europe—the League workers to be paid a regular sum and to be recruited from the army of unemployed as far as possible. Do you get it? For example—I form a syndicate from among a number of capitalists who are bound to see the value of such an idea and contribute liberally. Fancy I can raise ten or twelve millions. With such a sum, we can employ a good many thousands at a living salary—for two or three years, at all events. Each recruit to the League will be coached until he thoroughly understands and believes all that I have just explained to you about world-prospects in the immediate future. He will swear to defend his country in the event of war—or to fight with any allied force engaged in police work which is also defending his own country—but his immediate job is to everlastingly talk against war to every man and woman he can get to argue with him!

"First, I would suggest concentrated effort all through the United Kingdom. Then the sending of the most able debaters into the various Continental cities—prefer-

ably those who are the best linguists and the best mixers—to build up a wide acquaintance among all classes and spread the anti-war doctrine. Establish local centers of the League everywhere. Start their members converting others to the idea and make them spread this counter-propaganda against national pessimism. We might call it the International Optimist League. No word against reasonable military preparedness, you understand—because that is obvious insurance to any nation—but just a ridiculing of the whole war-idea as a means of settling any international dispute. You will have to be exceedingly cautious about one point: Don't trust any man with membership in our scheme of operations unless you first have actual proof that he is neither socialist, communist or 'red.' Now—do you grasp the general idea?"

"My word, sir! . . . . It'll take a bit of doing, you know! Rather a large order—what? But if it can be done, one fancies that everybody in the world will be for it—to the limit!"

"Well—you've not to convert all Europe tomorrow, d'ye see—or even the next day. It'll be pilin' up grains of sand a few at a time—until you've a mountain of it. Don't try to get more than five converts each week, per man—but be sure they're enthusiastic. Even if you win over but one man or woman per week, the thing will grow beyond all believing in a year. In extending your acquaintance so widely, you will pick up information as to where there may be jobs for the unemployed. Keep that in mind—all the time. League members will have a first-class reference in applying for any commercial job.

"Now—I'll talk with you here for two or three days—give you any Governm'nt information it's permissible to let out. Then you go back to Oxford an' Cambridge—work among the undergraduates until the end of the term—after which, you begin the work in earnest during the long vacation. Your salary begins from tomorrow—first month paid in advance. I'll make a six-months' contract with you and all your converts at whatever pay we decide upon tomorrow—but it's understood that you cannot hold me to renewing that contract unless I'm satisfied with the work of each individual man or woman."

Ten days later, Captain Enderbury dined with the Earl and Countess of Dyvnaint in Park Lane. He described to them the acquaintance he had made among the Dons in both Universities, and his shadowing of them, disguised as a Russian political writer, who had letters from prominent men in Moscow and Petrograd—finding, as he had supposed, that every one of them was under orders from Muscovite agents acting as tutors and living in the University towns.

"Yesterday evening there was an out-and-out 'bolshi' meeting in one of the Oxford houses—to which I was invited as a matter of course. A good deal of dissatisfaction was expressed at the way things were moving. Not only was their propaganda apparently losing its kick, but there seemed to be a mysterious reaction against it—led, they think, by the Honorable Bertie Stranleigh and some of his pals. Fursome told 'em he had expected more or less of that after the discussion with Your Lordship at the Towers—but thought the effect would be confined to a few undergraduates among their intimates. Instead of that, an optimistic feeling appears to be spreading all through the University—and in Cambridge also. They blame their failure directly upon Your Lordship, and there was some ugly talk about the folly of permitting such a marplot to interfere with their plans. I fancy it would be well, sir, to watch out a bit. That lot are deuced unscrupulous, you know!"

"That's all in the day's work, Captain. My intimate friends and I have had some rather close misses. Some day, it may not be a 'miss'—but that's all as the cards fall."

A FORTNIGHT afterward, the Earl and Countess Nan went down to a friend's old castle in Wales.

On the following Sunday morning, Trevor and his friend were walking along a narrow beach. As they rounded a jutting rock into a little cove, they saw a man sitting in a launch, the bow of which had been run up a few feet upon the loose shale. Halfway around the cove were three men sitting upon rocks, and a glance behind them showed four others coming along the beach. The seven closed in—and displayed automatics.

"If you blokes is quiet an' peaceable-like, mebbe ye wont get hurted. If ye starts anythink, there'll be lead in yer carcasses, that's all," growled one bravo.

"Suit yourselves," replied Trevor. "We've no desire for anything unpleasant. I say, you chaps! Fancy you'll not be wanting

both of us—what? If Lord Kethvyn gives his word not to move from this spot until your launch is out of sight around the point, that will answer your purpose, wont it? You've no object in carryin' him off, eh?"

"Naw—but 'ow does we know 'e'll bide 'ere like you s'y?"

"His word is good—if you've any sense at all, you know that!"

"Oh—werry good! Inter the boat—you! An' if 'e moves afore we'm round the p'int—'e'll see us a-knockin' yer on the 'ead!"

Before they were out of hearing, Lord Kethvyn—who had protested against leaving his friend until the men told him that if they took him along, they'd cut his throat just to be rid of him—asked the Earl if he had any idea what it was all about, and what he should do. Trevor replied calmly:

" 'Bolshis,' I fancy. Just tell the Countess how it happened, Kethvyn—she'll know what to do. Case of ransom, possibly. These chaps look as if they could use a pot of money—an' she'll know how to get it to 'em safely. I'll have to talk it over and see what their ideas are in the matter. Au revoir, old chap!"

KETHVYN was anything but a coward. But there was nothing to do in the matter save accept the situation and watch a chance for rescue or escape. There was no question but that the burly, unscrupulous leader would have shot them both for any active resistance—and neither of the peers was armed. But as Kethvyn made his way back to the castle, he wished that he had even lost his life before letting his friend be carried off so tamely. He wasn't in a pleasant position to face the Countess—but to his relief, she merely complimented him upon his common sense, and immediately had a long-distance call put through to Downing Street.

Inside of an hour, orders wirelessed from the Admiralty started a number of destroyers and coastguard patrols combing the Irish Channel—stopping every variety of craft which might have been mixed up in the abduction. But it didn't seem necessary to overhaul a large deep-sea yacht, the *Flying Fish*—(which had a builders' plate in her engine-room, Леонора *(Leonora)*. Had they stopped her, His Lordship would have been slipped overboard with a couple of fire-bars lashed to his feet.

No objection was made to his going where he pleased on the yacht as long as he kept away from the wireless-room. Several times he saw other craft on the horizon, but none of them very near—and once, a large plane flew over the boat. He started to wig-wag an S.O.S. with his arms—but the sailing-master came along with an automatic and, though he spoke Russian, clearly conveyed the impression that further activities of that sort would be fatal.

Two men in the saloon with him appeared to be in authority on board—one, an educated Irishman, O'Brien—the other, Straub, might have been either of three or four nationalities. Except for those two, everyone seemed to be Russian—and for reasons of his own, His Lordship did not appear to understand a word of that language. He spoke beautiful French—passable German and Italian, which he could have spoken like a native had he chosen to do so. Consequently he was picking up a word here and there which occasionally conveyed fragmentary information. Once, the wireless operator had carelessly left the "cone" switched on to his set for a little while and the Earl, standing by the rail outside, caught the automatic radio-compass signal of the big Monsanto Station in Portugal, followed by the figures for "270 Degrees"—so he knew that they were passing the Portuguese coast directly west of Lisbon.

DURING the first day out, O'Brien and Straub had refused to say a word about the abduction or their plans in regard to Trevor—but on the second day, probably feeling that they were then safe from pursuit, O'Brien humored his prisoner—whom he found exceedingly good company, and apparently without the slightest feeling of apprehension.

"The inference, O'Brien, is that as a Cabinet man I must hold views which differ materially from yours an' Straub's—and that whatever party you favor in Parliam'nt stands a better chance of getting certain legislation passed with my pernicious influence removed? That really covers the case—doesn't it?"

"To some extent—yes. It goes, however, a good bit deeper than that. We've reason to believe that some of your activities are entirely outside of your Cabinet berth and that you carry them out in a way that stops at nothing. When you start anything, Trevor, you generally go all the way

through with it, whether the matter is commercial, political or financial. That's to say—if one finds you drawing cards in his game, you're a dangerous antagonist from the very first deal. You've been suspected of much secret political work which in no instance has been conclusively proved. But you started something at Stranleigh Towers which seriously interferes with the game in our alley. So we propose to eliminate the chief factor—that's all."

"Temporarily, I suppose?"

"Well, that's not for us to decide—we're only subordinates. All we know is that you were put aboard of us by a lot of Bristol beach-combers in a launch. We're on our way to a certain small island on business of our own. Your passage has been paid as far as that island. Beyond that, you'd be seriously in our way—we can't keep you aboard. Whether you'll ever see anyone on that island, we don't know."

"Do you know—I'm rather surprised that you go to all this trouble with me. I'm getting on in years—can't expect to be here much longer. Why wouldn't it be easier to slip a little cyanide into my food and then bury me at sea as a victim of heart-failure?"

"Too much risk! There isn't one chance in a thousand that you ever will be traced to this yacht—you were put aboard at two in the morning in a fog so thick that we were obliged to anchor. But the improbable might happen. Giving passage to a Cabinet Minister from one place to some other place, with his passage-money actually paid, is one thing—not more than a short imprisonment at the worst. Murder of anyone as prominent as yourself is something else again. If the men higher up, who join us presently, positively identify you as a man they've been suspecting for years, you wont last. . . . . However, there's no point in anticipating the worst. It may, of course, prove nothing more serious than your absence from England for some time."

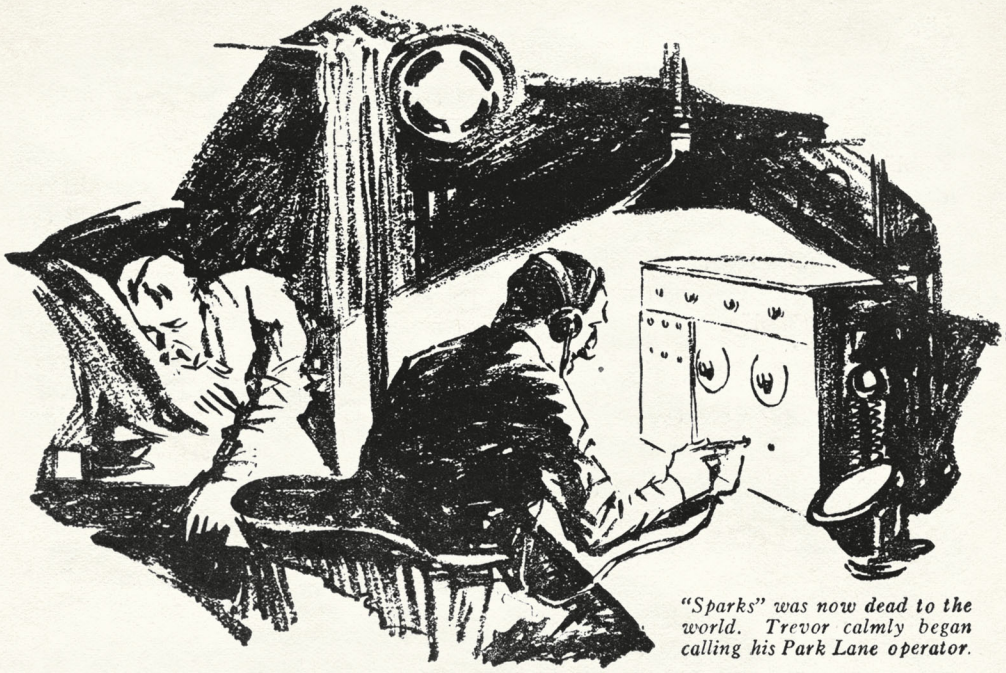
WHEN Countess Nan returned to Park Lane she found there, in response to her wires, Baron Abdool Mohammed, with Earl Lammerford of St. Ives, who had just flown over from Paris—each much concerned over Trevor's abduction when they heard about it. While they were discussing possible action in the matter, Captain Enderbury was shown in, an anxious expression upon his face.

"I trust Your Ladyship will pardon my interrupting you a few minutes; I've just motored down from Oxford as fast as my car would go. There was a meeting of those dashed 'reds' in the attic of an old house in the suburbs—I managed to overhear it, at some risk—was lying on the roof by one of the dormer windows. They got word that Earl Trevor was going to be abducted, and they're sending to join the gang a man who is positive he can identify His Lordship as a secret 'political' who's been scoring against the lot of them for several years. Man says he failed to identify him once or twice before, but has something new up his sleeve which he thinks will make it positive this time. He's to join the others at some port on the Mediterranean—and if he does identify him—well—we'd best get him first! Of course they're crazy—but—"

"As it happens, Captain, they've really got him this time! He and Lord Kethvyn were walking along the beach below his castle. They took the Earl off in a launch with the threat to kill him if Kethvyn moved before they were out of sight. The Admiralty has destroyers searching the Irish Channel—no trace of him yet. We were holding a council of war."

As she was speaking, their radio-operator came up from the "intelligence-room," fifty feet under the gardens, with a message from the Admiralty saying that every craft within two hundred miles of Bristol had been accounted for except two cargo-boats out of Glasgow and three from Liverpool which would be overhauled within twelve hours, and the large deep-sea yacht, *Flying Fish*—Plymouth to the Mediterranean. As she read it to them, there was an exclamation from Lammerford, who sprang up and took a Lloyd's Yacht Register from one of the book-shelves which lined the walls. Rapidly turning over the pages, he said in a moment:

"Just as I thought! That blasted *Flying Fish—ex-Leonora*—built at Clydebank for a Russian Grand Duke—sold by the Soviet to a Paris and London banker, Paul Taranov—re-christened by him the *Flying Fish.* Speed under forced draught, twenty-one knots—normal, eighteen! That's the craft, as you recall, upon which they carried off my ward, Baroness Wybury, three years ago, and were going to operate on her brain in that cove at Achill Island—west coast of Ireland. Taranov had chartered the yacht for three months—no chance of pinning anything on *him!* Charterer disappeared



"Sparks" was now dead to the world. Trevor calmly began calling his Park Lane operator.

—monthly account not being paid, the yacht went back to owner. The two scoundrels we caught on the yacht are still 'making little ones out of big ones' at Dartmoor. Seems to me we needn't bother with any of those other craft! George is on that *Flying Fish,* pretty well down to Portugal by now—not much question about it! My suggestion is to have the *Ranee Sylvia* ready to sail from Salcombe Harbor as soon as we can fly down there—and follow that damned Russian yacht! She's easily traced if she puts in at any port. The *Ranee* does thirty knots to her twenty-one in an average sea—and I've no idea they're running at more than eighteen because they wont believe it possible for anyone to suspect 'em. The destroyers passed fairly close without stoppin' her—"

Just then one of the household Afghans knocked upon the door to announce that the Honorable Bertie Stranleigh and a friend from Manchester were asking if they could see His Lordship at once.

Countess Nan directed that the young men be shown into the library.

"Bertie—you and Mr. Cummings tell us all about it. We're just His Lordship's family, here. Now—what's up?"

"Your Ladyship knew of what he was starting with us chaps at Oxford an' Cambridge, of course?"

"In a general way. The Optimist League, I think he called it in a joking way—though I believe a somewhat more ambiguous title was decided upon. From the limited time he had to discuss it with me, I gathered that the idea was anti-war propagarda all through Europe, as far as that was compatible with national defense. I don't know the details."

"He was going to form a syndicate to finance it. Meanwhile, the work was directed by Mr. Arbuthnot of the Universal Press Syndicate up back of Fleet Street.. Salaries and working-expenses have been paid by him to Cummings an' me upon our requisition-slips, but the syndicate is not yet functioning and Arbuthnot says he can't go beyond a certain sum without orders from His Lordship. Well, d'ye see, we chaps have been pretty active; idea seems to be catching-on no end—thing spreadin' all over England. His Lordship's plans for such rapid extension haven't been worked out yet with Arbuthnot—nor any detailed plans for financing the Continental work which we should be at within a few weeks because we already have suitable men for it—top-side linguists. Point is—if we have to let down the effort, it's goin' to have a bad effect. We should go on as we are—just everlastin'ly shovin' the idea—until we stiffen up the backbone of the whole country! Er—would it be possible to get at His Lordship anywhere this evenin', do you suppose?"

"I'm afraid not, Bertie—we'd like to consult with him ourselves. He left England quite unexpectedly—not saying just when

he may return. But we three here will see that your work goes on. I'll have Mr. Arbuthnot on the wire within the hour, and I'll authorize enough money to keep you going. Lammerford will have to remain in London because of matters coming up in the Cabinet—so he can get the beginnings of your syndicate started and partly functioning, until my husband gets back. At least, he'll do the best he can without knowing the general plan His Lordship had in mind. For any systematic handling of the scheme, you'll have to wait until he comes back and can organize it. Baron Abdool and I have to leave England immediately, but you stay and go over your League with Lammerford while I'm phoning Arbuthnot and getting ready. —Come down to Croydon with us in the car, Captain Enderbury—there are some points I'd like to go over."

AS the *Flying Fish* rounded Cadiz near enough for Trevor to recognize the coast-line, he became fairly certain that O'Brien intended running through the Mediterranean, the Canal and Red Sea, down into the Indian Ocean. He had caught a few words in Russian which indicated that two of the gang would join them at Ismailia, on the Canal. Somehow he had the feeling that, while they might not be sure of him in England or Paris, they'd experiment with his face while a prisoner on the yacht until they actually did identify him with some "political" they had known in the Continental cities. If he were going to get out of the scrape with his life, it looked like making the attempt before they reached Ismailia.

Trevor had been studying Izztovitch the radio-man, until he was familiar with the man's habits. He had noticed that the operator's meals, except breakfast, were always taken after the officers had finished, in order that those on deck might call him if they heard anything from the "cone" in the operating-room. Presently, an idea occurred to His Lordship. He went below and asked O'Brien if there was a medico on board.

"Not this trip—we just chartered for a couple of months. The owner usually carries one when she's in commission."

"But there's a medicine-chest, of course?"

"Oh, aye—a complete one, in the cabin used by the medico when he's aboard."

"Any objections to my mixing up a dose for myself? Liver's a bit off—deuce of a headache—fancy a bit of calomel an' a drop or two of 'nux' ought to do the business. I'm frequ'ntly off on my own boat without a medico, d'ye see, an' have enough general knowledge of medicine to fix up a dose from the chest for ord'n'ry illness."

"Help yourself! Come along to the sawbones' cabin and I'll show you where the chest is. Not a soul knows you're aboard of us—so if you poison yourself by mistake, it's up to you!"

As O'Brien knew nothing whatever of drugs or chemicals, he did not bother to see what the Earl mixed up—so Trevor was able to fill a small phial with chloral-hydrate and slip it into his pocket without being seen. He knew that Izztovitch came down for coffee and biscuits at six-bells—after his evening watch—and then went back to his bunk in the operating-room, where the big cone would waken him if his call-letters came in on it during the night, on six hundred meters.

His Lordship didn't expect any such luck as a chance of trying out his scheme the first night—he would have been well satisfied with even the third or fourth, but chance played into his hands. The cook happened to be out of the galley when "Sparks" came below for his coffee, so he took the pot from the range, himself, went into the mess-room and poured a cupful—then went out again with the pot to the galley.

Trevor had been watching through the open wings of the skylight. As he seated himself on the wide coaming, outside, and stuck his head under the wing, the man on the bridge took him for one of the deckhands or a quartermaster. The cup was directly under him on the table. With a perfectly steady hand, he tilted the phial and let a little stream of drops trickle directly into the steaming coffee below.

Izztovitch finished the biscuits while the coffee was cooling—then gulped it down and went on deck as far as the little companion leading down into his operating-room. He was by that time so sleepy that he merely staggered over to the bunk and fell upon it—unconscious.

WHEN Izztovitch was in his room, everyone took it for granted that he would guard it from any intrusion upon the part of their prisoner. As Trevor walked aft from the bow in the pitch darkness, anyone seeing him going down the little companion would have taken him for

the operator, but as it happened, nobody did see him. He was fairly sure that, aside from himself and the radio-operator, nobody on board understood code. "Sparks" was now dead to the world for several hours. As calmly as if he had every right to be in there, Trevor began calling his Park Lane operator on two thousand meters—knowing that the yacht-equipment had an aërial output of twenty kilowatts. Then, switching at once to the receiving set—with the head-frame over his ears—he listened for an acknowledgment. In fifteen minutes it came, and he sent his message in his own private code:

> *Flying Fish,* ex-*Leonora*—Passing Gib. Bound Indian Ocean—short stop Ismailia. *Ranee* may reach Canal first. If so—tie-up ten kilom. below Port Saïd. If not—overhaul in Red Sea. TREVOR.

Much to his surprise, there came an insistent call the moment he stopped: *"Flying Fish."* . . . *"Flying Fish."* . . . *"Flying Fish."* When he acknowledged, a message came ripping through the receivers:

> *Ranee Sylvia*—Crossing Biscay. About sixteen hours behind you. Listening in on two thousand every few minutes. Orders noted —will be carried out. Will catch any further communication. NAN.

As any of the gang connected with his abduction would be listening in on six hundred meters if at all—the regular steamer-wave for marine communication—the risk of their catching anything on two thousand was negligible, especially when in private code, but His Lordship decided not to tempt his luck by trying to get in communication with the *Ranee* again.

Izztovitch wakened at the usual time in the morning with a slight headache but no other noticeable effects from the knock-out drops. He hadn't the slightest suspicion that his instruments had been used during the night or that His Lordship's presence on board was known—or even suspected—to anybody outside.

So the *Flying Fish* ambled on leisurely to the Canal. She coaled at Port Saïd—Trevor being kept in the saloon with two guards until she left there—and swung off down the Canal at the usual reduced speed, when he was again permitted on deck.

At the ten-kilometer post, a large and graceful white yacht was apparently tied up to the bulkhead. When they were just abeam of her, His Lordship deliberately picked up the binoculars from the skylight-coaming and walked aft under the awning to the stern-rail for a look at her—then, swinging his legs suddenly over the rail, he dived clear of the screws into the muddy water of the Canal.

It all happened so quickly—with so little warning that such an action might be possible—that O'Brien and Straub, sipping their brandy-pegs in deck-chairs under the awning, didn't actually see what happened. They suddenly missed Trevor—but by the time they had run to the stern, he had swum around the screws of the *Ranee* and was making for the accommodation-ladder which had been lowered between the yacht and the Canal bulkhead.

O'Brien had his engines stopped at once and reversed—but when he had backed down, a handsome woman stepped to the rail of the *Ranee Sylvia* and hailed him:

"Were you by any chance looking for His Lordship? He's quite all right, thank you—he is changing his clothes just now. Sorry if he caused you any anxiety—he's a perfect fish in the water, you know. Er—don't let us keep you! Those other craft, astern, are whistling for gangway!"

NEITHER Countess Nan nor Baron Abdool gave much outward indication of the worry which had filled their minds during the last few days—but the fervor of her embrace when they were below in their own suite told more than she could say. They both knew that it had been a very near thing with him.

Later, Abdool said:

"You had the young men of the Universities and their fellow-workers fearing a blight upon their activities, *O Thakur Bahadur!* They are good executives—but no organizers. They were like sheep without the guiding hand."

"My word! I had hopes that the plan might be a success—the details were fairly well worked out—but, due to those bounders, I left rather hurriedly—before I'd a chance to get the thing fairly started, d'ye see. Have you heard much about it, Nan? Any of those young chaps come lookin' me up for advice?"

"Hmph! The thing was getting beyond them—spreading all over the place! As a matter of fact, George—your league against war—and equally against moral cowardice—is sweeping the United Kingdom, and indications are that it may sweep the Continent as well. For heaven's sake get your syndicate and the organization completely formed before you are abducted next time!"

The Cup of Gold

A most unusual and extremely exciting novelette by the gifted author of "Forgotten Country" and "Brothers of the Saddle."

By
ROLLIN BROWN

BLUE water, crystal blue, with sinuous indigo streaks upon it; and before the small coastwise tramp *Costa Blanca* big ground-swells took lazy slow form. A mile away they headed, combed over and smashed in ribbons of lacy white upon a beach that was tawny under the early sun. The *Costa Blanca* was quiet, her engines slowed; yet no sound of this came to her. Out at sea a dark thin line of smoke stretched across a full half of the open horizon, looking like a filmy string drawn laterally taut just above the circle where sky and water met. The smoke came from a tanker that had been in sight, paralleling our course, last night. She had kept out at sea this morning. There was no wind.

Some one was coming down the alleyway that opened behind onto the little foredeck. There was the sound of native rawhide sandals patting the deck and slapping up against bare heels. It was the cabin-boy, a sturdy Mexican youth whose features showed a thick strain of Indian blood.

"Señor—there!" he said, pointing inland toward the strip of curved beach. "That is Puerto San Feliciano."

Since the *Costa Blanca* was putting in here solely to land me, and since the other passengers, a scant handful, were native, my destination was conspicuous enough to anyone. The boy grinned.

"You are called Meester Don Cameron, is it not true?" he asked.

I nodded.

"That is strange, señor!" he said in slow Spanish. "Strange!"

"Why so?" I asked, without interest.

"Because, señor, another of your exact name is here at Puerto San Feliciano, also an American. He too came on the *Costa Blanca* and asked much concerning a valley called Copa de Oro, which no one of us could answer—just as you have done, señor."

WITHOUT interest, did I say? I flung an answering fury of questions at the boy, and in fear he drew away. But he could not, or would not, tell me more.

Illustrated by
William Molt

Shad held Sadoni's revolver; a peon lifting a shaking rifle bowled over before him. Sadoni turned to run.

While the *Costa Blanca* felt cautiously for the channel that would bring her nearer shore and finally dropped anchor, I mechanically paced the strip of foredeck, back and forth. The line of tawny beach was nearer now by half. I saw the cluster of tiled and thatched shacks beyond, against the deep green of the tropic jungle that filled the lowness of some opening valley bottom; I noted the graceful tall coco-palms and the feathery appearance of the rank growth strange to my northern eyes —I saw this without seeing. I smelled the land perfume that was stranger still to my Northern nostrils, but I did not note it.

There was no explanation for the cabin-boy's words, for the fact that another of my name had sought the Copa de Oro. But such a happening could not be coincidence. It changed everything suddenly.

I thought of "Señor Joe" Morning.

I had met and talked with Joe Morning for something like three hours, all told. I had seen him just once, those hours, and I had ended by giving him some five thousand dollars. I say *give*, because I meant it as a gift to him—to the man I sensed he was and had been, to the spirit that was still fighting within him.

AT the time, you see, it meant nothing to me. Five thousand dollars—what was that? A trifle. Glen Brockman had arranged the hurried meeting and introduction. Then he rushed away, leaving us standing on a traffic-mad corner just off Market—the man called Señor Joe Morning and myself.

I remember how white his hair was—snowy, with the fog-cleared sunlight of the street upon it; how thin, tall and straight, trembling slightly, he stood there, rolling the crumpled brim of an old Panama between his bony fingers, and the look that was in his gray-blue eyes. The Señor had not a drop of Spanish or Mexican blood in his veins.

He suggested lunch, and I followed at his side. I knew that he wanted something, but that suddenly made no difference in my liking for him. Once, as he collided with a newsboy in the jam of humanity

about us, he excused himself instinctively with words of formal Spanish and bowed ever so slightly. But mostly the crowd seemed to part before him, and I realized that people stared as we passed. It is not usual to see a man dressed in thin tropical "whites" upon the winter-time streets of San Francisco. And despite the proud tilt of his shoulders, the carriage of his body, anyone could see that this was a sick man.

We walked for better than a mile, I believe, his steps going finally short and slow, down to a little hole-in-a-wall restaurant on Pacific Street, just off the waterfront. The place was a dive and the food tasted of stale grease and strong garlic; but I noticed this no longer when Señor Joe Morning began to talk.

His slow soft English somehow had the intonation and liquid inflection of the Spanish. A waiter, a nervous, dark-skinned, stout fellow, hovered over us and came back time after time. But as a business proposition Joe Morning's Copa de Oro did not interest me—not at the time.

I am a mining man—or so I considered myself then; and the property seemed too far away for me to handle. Mexican waters, the coast, within the tropics. And I realized, as he told me of it, that the stuff would probably be nothing more than a pocket.

When we rose from the table, Joe Morning did not have enough money in his purse to pay the small table-check, but I knew better than to offer a bill from my own. He gave the waiter a tiny bag of dust and nuggets from the Copa de Oro which he had carried to show me.

There were no papers, no strings, attached to the money he got that same afternoon, for development work; I didn't mean that there should be. I had seen and knew that Señor Joe Morning was a sick man; as I say, I admired the fighting spirit in him.

He did not thank me; instead he said:

"My friend, half of the Copa de Oro is now yours, and half of what will come out of it."

I realized that he preferred to take the money in this way, and it was like the man I knew he was. As I say, it meant practically nothing to me—at the time.

THAT was the last money I ever gave away—from what might be called a whim. In just seven months' time I had lost a quarter million in inherited cash and securities and twice that in mining properties that had also come from my father. Attempting to spread out, insecurely, I was pinched—as has happened, after all, often enough before in the mining game, and to men older and more experienced than myself. The money was suddenly gone, wiped clean before I realized the fact. Nothing was left. For days I couldn't believe it.

I had just turned twenty-seven years old. I was broke—penniless, in fact, I finally realized; and I did not actually know how to go about making a living, starting anew.

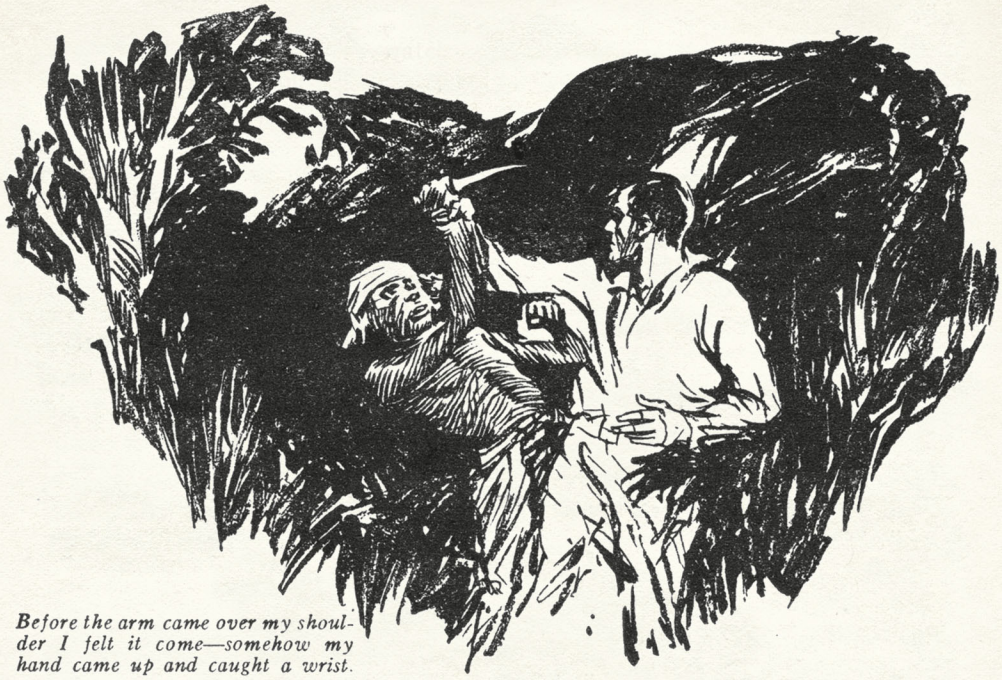
There were friends, of course. Some forgot me; others didn't—but I also was proud. Out in San Francisco—I was in Denver at the time—Glen Brockman owed me two thousand from an old loan. I borrowed the price to go to the Coast again—and Brockman put me off, as he had done by letter before. Since it had been he who had introduced Señor Joe Morning to me, I asked stiffly if he had ever heard from the man again. He hadn't; nor had I, so much as a word, in those months.

I took up a precarious existence, living on chance dollars earned here and there on the docks. Pride, a sort of false stiff pride, forced more of this than was necessary upon me. The docks, warehouses, became a shelter for the night, if one were lucky and could sneak in and hide away before the closing of the great doors. I met those who were living like myself, fell into step with them, thought and talked with them. A month more passed. I was bitter at the world, myself, my friends—and those like Glen Brockman. I remembered well enough, then, and cursed the day I had given money, five thousand dollars—a fortune, it now seemed—to an unknown man called Señor Joe Morning.

I cursed him, remembered his words: "My friend, half of the Copa de Oro is now yours, and half of what will come out of it." It sounded like mockery to me now.

At sunrise one morning I crept past the night guard and out of a reeking warehouse onto the dock. A stiff breeze across the bay fanned my face. I took a deep breath, lifted my head. . . . . Sometime in the night a small craft had tied up to the dock before me. Her name struck my eye—*Costa Blanca*. A cabin-boy came sleepily down her gangway; on the bridge a little dark-skinned mate stood gazing idly across the bay, breathing the fresh air.

An impulse moved me. I went aboard her and found my way up onto the little



Before the arm came over my shoulder I felt it come—somehow my hand came up and caught a wrist.

foredeck,—the same that I now paced,—up onto the bridge, questioning the mate.

Two hours later I entered Glen Brockman's office and found him alone. Perhaps he saw how my fingers itched for his throat; I was desperate, in fact. He gave me money out of that which he owed me, enough for a one-way passage, since the *Costa Blanca* was cheap. . . . .

"Señor!"

I halted, turned back on the little foredeck, answering the cabin-boy. "Yes."

"The small boat is lowered, señor. We wait."

"Good. Tell me this, boy: did this man who used my name resemble me?"

"No, señor. He was of dark complexion and shorter than you in height. He was quick in small motions, and strong, I think —as strong as you, perhaps. I do not remember much because it was long ago."

"How long ago?"

"Four months, five, since he came."

CHAPTER II

I HAD learned some Spanish,—or rather Mexican, for the two differ,—like all of those who have lived in the ranching or mining lands of the Southwest. And the first man I talked to, the fat proprietor of a squalid little *cantina* on the edge of the beach, answered my question.

"*Por cierto, Señor.* I knew him very well. He was like to come here often of an afternoon, and talk, talk of many things, while his eyes looked out across the water." There followed a long description, many words, but I sensed what had happened, knew then. I was not surprised when it finally came:

"The Señor Joe Morning went away and came back. He did not live long thereafter —weeks. A cough, señor. Now his friend, a Señor Don Cameron, works the Copa de Oro mine."

So Joe Morning had taken his money, the money I had given him, and returned—to die. I didn't ask more explanation. I thought I didn't need it. The man who called himself Don Cameron,—my name,—and worked the mine—yes! There was merely the detail of hiring a *mozo,* to guide, and a horse to carry me. I would see for myself first.

Two pesos hired the *mozo* and a pair of worn ponies. We turned inland, into the thick dank growth of the valley bottom that I had seen from the sea, following the ruts of a road which seemed to have been lost while it was still in the making.

I had never been in the jungle before, the *monte,* within the circle of the *tierra caliente,* hot earth. I had never seen the *tavachin,* the tree with blossoms red as coral; nor the thickness of vines from limbs overhead to the earth, the creeping ground mass of them; nor the sensitive plant of the tropics that closes its leaves

like tiny hands when it is touched, drawing away, folding up and wilting. I had never heard of the *pitaháya,* the flower that blooms at night and dies at dawn; nor the *huele de noche.* I had never before seen the tree that is called "Naked Indian," with limbs and trunk of living glistening brown—files of them, warm, like rooted human bodies.

As swiftly as we had come, we finally left the thick jungle of the bottoms and climbed onto a steep rocky side plateau. A swollen yellow sun was in our eyes. Sweat dripped from our ponies and splashed in hot drops upon the boulders of the little-used road.

We crossed the plateau and went over a range of chainlike ridges beyond. A second valley opened, narrower, smaller than the first, and we swung into its bottom growth, turning north. An hour later we entered a round gentle-sided basin of some size, and my guide spoke for the first time.

"Copa de Oro," he explained.

This, then, was the valley called Cup of Gold! Half of it was mine, and since Joe Morning was dead, there was every reason that I take it. . . . . Mine—such a thought seemed suddenly ridiculous. Nevertheless I had left just twenty *pesos* —ten dollars, American—to my name; I was in Copa de Oro, and I couldn't turn back if I wished.

WE passed two dark laborers by the roadside, bright *fajas* wound around their waists. A native woman walked along the road before us, her child swinging in a strip of colored cloth at her back. After a time an arched gate appeared ahead, and we rode through it, into an adobe-walled and plastered courtyard surrounding three sides of a house. My *mozo* gestured for me to dismount.

I swung stiffly from the saddle, stiffly looked about me. The *mozo* was taking the horses on to the stableyard that could be seen through a rear gate. Hand-formed crude tiles made a walk between two little rows of flowers up to the heavy door of the house. The building was long and low, also of plastered adobe, and the far side of it made a part of the rear wall. A deep veranda ran around the three open sides. In the roof-peak was a queer square-sided notch that had recently been cut away and patched. All else appeared old, very old and ancient—the walls, the discolored tile roof. I did not know then how swiftly the *tierra caliente* ages.

In the span of seconds while I stood there, and before the big main door had opened from within, I noted the two rows of flowers again. They were American flowers, planted in little bright rows like those we see in the States before some small cottage. Something in my mind should have made record of this and told me that they had been planted there since Joe Morning's death. Something in my mind should have asked: "Who planted them so? Who cared?" At least I should have been prepared, then, in a way, for what followed—for Maya Morning.

As it was, I entered the house, into a long front room, admitted by a native houseboy. He left, and I nervously paced the length of the room, planning now just how I would greet the man who was using my name here. I glanced out the front window, turned— Maya Morning stood in a room-to-room arch—and she must have been there for several seconds watching me.

I stared; I think I uttered some sort of exclamation.

SHE was dressed simply, in a dress that any American girl might wear about the house, and low shoes of a slender, woven-leather type that are made in Mazatlan. Her dark thick hair was drawn plainly back from a center part and coiled in a low gloss-sleek knot behind. Her eyes were dark pools, reflectively watching me, and her mouth generously molded, speculative.

What I should have said—eventually—I do not know. It was she who spoke, in English that was like Joe Morning's:

"You came to see Mr. Cameron?"

I nodded. What else was there to do?

She smiled in friendly fashion. "He is at the mine, but may I make you welcome until he comes. It will be soon. I am Joe Morning's daughter."

A simple speech, directly given. I blurted in answer, stupidly:

"I didn't know Joe Morning had a daughter!" That wasn't quite the truth; I had known it the second I saw her—known, too, why it was that Joe Morning still fought on, sick as I had seen him, to develop the Copa de Oro. She was the reason.

She caught at my words with swift interest. "You knew my father then? Where was it?"

"In San Francisco."

"Oh!" Her eyes were on mine. She threw the first thin cord, then, of what was to be the mesh of a verbal net, tightening gradually: "When?"

"About eight or ten months ago."

"Oh!"—that quick-given little exclamation of surprise again. "And your name? I am sorry; I didn't hear it, I guess."

My name? Yes, my name. In a sudden mental flash I saw myself as I had stood on the beach at Puerto San Feliciano short hours before. There, on the beach, I had visioned what I would do—how I would stride into the Copa de Oro (some crude placer camp of three or four flimsy tents), how I would speak my name, demand to see the impostor who dared use it here and smash his little game. Now I was asked the question by a slim dark-eyed girl, Señor Joe Morning's daughter. And at the instant, while her lips had really just closed from the question, the door from the veranda shot open, and a dark, stoutly built, nervous man entered the room.

"Here is Mr. Cameron now," she said.

He whirled, and his right hand dropped instinctively to his hip. His eyes bored into me—hard eyes, steely cold, intense.

"Mr. Cameron, this is Mr. ——" Maya Morning looked questioningly at me.

"Stevens," I finally said, with the first name that came into my mouth.

It wasn't fear that made me lie, not fear of this man who called himself Cameron. But I suddenly needed to know more now before I spoke out. Maya Morning, as she stood there, entered into this. It wasn't the time for some blundering mistake.

Cameron fired a staccato volley of questions at me:

"Mining man, I suppose, Stevens?"

"Yes. That is why I am here."

"So?" His dark brow knitted. "In what capacity?"

"To look over the Copa de Oro."

"It is not for sale. What made you think it was? Who told you? Why?"

I fumbled for words. It was Maya Morning who said carefully:

"Mr. Stevens was a friend of my father's. No one could have known father and not heard of the Copa de Oro." She turned back to me. "I hope you wont think our questions discourteous, Mr. Stevens. It's merely that so very few visitors come here. But we're intensely glad for those few."

Cameron was studying me, with his back to the window. He nodded.

"Yes," I heard him say suddenly. "Yes, of course. You brought your luggage up, Stevens? . . . . No. Well, you mustn't rush off now you're here. I'll send a *mozo* back for it immediately."

He walked off abruptly, and I felt a surge of hot anger come over me. My fingers itched for the feel of his throat, just as they had for Glen Brockman's that morning back in San Francisco. His presumption, in this house where he had no right to be, his cool command over things not his own! Mechanically I heard Maya Morning call the house-boy and tell him which room was to be mine. I followed.

Alone in my room, something still said: You can always play your hand; the time will come. But suppose the moment wasn't ripe now—*and you failed!* . . . .

I thought up a convincing enough story of explanation, to account for my appearance, which I told at lunch. But to my surprise, Cameron seemed to take no interest in it. He broke into my speech with a sketchy tale in Spanish, confining his words to a middle-aged Mexican woman who sat at the table with us, and who, I later learned, never left Maya Morning's side.

However, I thought I got away with the whole thing nicely, as well as could be hoped for. After all, intrigue, veiled craft, doesn't come easily to me.

AT the time I thought I got away with it, yes. Late that night I opened a bag, felt in the bottom of it, and knew I hadn't —not quite. An automatic pistol I had put there before dinner, thrust down into the leg of a second pair of boots, was gone. I hadn't wished to have the bulge of the thing showing as plainly as it was bound to under thin clothes while I sat at the dinner table.

The pistol was gone; that was all.

This slowly suggested a second thought to my mind. I wondered if I were being watched. If so, how closely? Cameron had been eager suddenly to have me here. The thought became insistent.

My room opened onto the veranda, close against the rear courtyard wall. I lighted a cigarette, thinking—then extinguished it, for the glow would show. Leaving my room dark, I opened the door a space and slid out. The tropic night can be silver and white with the moon upon it; or it can be a thing of unquenchable shadows, dank, soft—of sick-sweet odors and stars that are low, luminous like phosphorus and false. It was this, the latter, tonight.

I walked carefully along the veranda, stepped out beyond its eaves and moved along the wall—step by step, until my eyes became accustomed to the night. I had the sudden sense that this was silly, that my mind was exaggerating things which after all needed no exaggeration as they stood. What was I going to do, anyhow? But I kept on. Looking back once, I could see the silhouette of the roof-peak of the house against the big dull stars, and I noted again that queer square-sided notch cut there.

The gate was open. I passed through. Down the road a few paces, halting, turning. The idea that I was watched was silly, foolish, of course. Cameron might take my gun, just as a precaution; but he didn't know anything yet, not to be sure. I did; that was my advantage.

I THINK that before the arm came over my shoulder, then, in that fraction of a second before it touched me, I felt it come. . . . . I know only that somehow my right hand came up and caught a thin wrist. There was no thought, no conscious act about it.

The impact of a body hit mine as I whirled, doubled over. The man behind was lifted from his feet, swung around. He stumbled as his feet hit the ground again.

These things, in the swirl, swiftness, of action, I knew had happened.

We stood apart. I lunged for the blurred outline of scant gray-white clothing. Grappling, my arms found his; pinioned the right. In an instant it was over.

He had been weak under my hands—thin and slim of body and muscle. Nothing but a boy, I guessed. His teeth chattered as he tried to speak—saying that in the dark he had taken me for his old enemy, a boy from the stableyards. Would I not be kind, gracious, let him go this once? *Por Dios, señor!* The knife that had been in his hand? No, in the name of all that was holy, he hadn't intended to use it.

"I will take you to the Señor Cameron," I said slowly, testing the words and the idea behind them. "You can explain to him."

The boy broke down, muscles weak and quivering as jelly. His words were incoherent, but they prayed suddenly, pleaded. . . . . So Cameron, I told myself, evidently wasn't behind this. Or the boy wouldn't be afraid to go to him. And the boy's fear was real and terrible.

I told him to go finally, to take his knife with him, and remember this night. In so far as he remembered, I would forget. He faded into the shadows of the road.

Not until he had been gone for a moment did I find that we had not been alone. I saw a second figure move to one side, shuffle and change position.

"And *you?*" I whispered in Spanish, nerves jumping.

"Si, señor," acknowledged a deep guttural voice, muffled in the throat. "With a thousand pardons, *señor,* you have done two things just now. You have proved yourself a gracious *caballero,* and also saved your own life."

"My own life?" I repeated.

"Not as you mean, señor. All pardons—but the boy is my son. He was even weaker in spirit than in body; gold tempted him tonight, a handful. But you would not have taken him to the Señor Cameron—with all respect to you."

I understood. He had come upon us, had waited—ready, if I started with the boy toward the house.

"Buenos noches, señor," he said slowly, as I turned away.

I didn't answer, but from the veranda before my room I looked back. At the gate a match flared and was lifted, cupped in hands, to light a corn-husk cigarette. The match was bright; even from where I stood, I could see the face it illuminated—a countenance showing the pure blood of the *Indio* in its strength of feature. . . . . Long ago a noble race ruled this *tierra caliente;* strong proud men, conquerors, builders, artists, warriors. Sometimes, today, like a shadow from the past, the ghost of this greatness is reborn into a face.

The match was held lifted for a long time, longer than is needed to light a dozen *cigarillos.* Was I expected to see, and remember this face, perhaps? I wondered.

CHAPTER III

AT breakfast Cameron asked: "You slept well, Stevens?"

I nodded.

"There is one thing I probably should mention," he went on. "That is, there's a limit to the trust you can put in these natives."

"Yes?"

"Yes," he said steadily. "For instance, the watch that a white man commonly has on him, a bill or two, might be sufficient—

In an instant one of the mozos had slipped up, grabbed it, and run. I missed his head with the flat of my machete by an inch.

You understand? I wouldn't go outside the wall here at night—alone."

Maya hadn't yet appeared by the time we had finished coffee, and when Cameron asked me to go to the mine I agreed. From even the briefness of our conversation I already knew that he was no skilled mining man. I wanted to see the mine.

It proved to be much as Joe Morning had described it to me—a stringlike pocket. The developments were small, with a few natives sufficient to do all that could be done. They had inclined down a number of feet into the bed of an old stream channel, and against a slant-faced cross-dyke and bedrock scooped out an old deposit film of high-grade gravel. This was transported for a quarter of a mile to running water, and washed.

It was rich, very rich, what there was of it, Cameron told me; but I could see that wasn't much. It hadn't been a big thing, I mean. The dyke which had caught the stuff was not gold-bearing rock, and a drop-shaft prospect up the channel that had gone down to bedrock had failed to give any paying indications.

"Within the last two weeks," Cameron explained, at my side, "we've failed to get any more pay-gravel out of the incline."

I saw as much for myself. "You wont get any more," I told him. "You're at the end of the string, the end of the cross-dyke that once caught and held it."

He nodded calmly. "Yes, the thing's finished—done. I've realized it, as far as that goes. . . . . Yes. The shaft up-channel showed nothing. But Stevens—" I think that momentarily he had forgotten his own rôle and myself, everything except the mine. "But Stevens, this gold was water-transported, carried in here from somewhere, and caught against the dyke. From somewhere—sometime! The only way it could happen! Listen, Stevens, somewhere above is the deposit, the mother vein, big or small, that this gold once came from. If a man could only get some trace of it—"

I smiled. His lips closed sharply.

"Oh, well; it doesn't matter."

THE fact is, it did matter. As I say, I was a mining man by training and such experience as had been mine. Any fool would have known the thing that Cameron knew—and there was just that truth in the chance, one chance in a thousand, say.

"Listen, Stevens; somewhere above is the mother vein, big or small, that this gold once came from. If a man could only get some trace of it—" I smiled, but the thing was suddenly like rich hot wine in my blood.

Neither of us from that moment, I believe,—and it happened swiftly,—had the conscious desire to change things as they stood now—that is, for the present. The past became suddenly forgotten, and of no importance.

Cameron already had a few men in the jungle, hacking prospect trails up the old

channel. He now took all, except three or four who were kept at work on the incline shaft, and put them afield with machetes and picks. He followed at their heels, asking my advice frequently. And I gave it, such as it was, to the best of my knowledge.

If I went aside on my own,—and I often did,—there were always *mozos* following. I was never left alone for a minute; actually I was a prisoner in the circle of the Copa de Oro. I thought at the time that Cameron had an iron control over all of his men.

Other things, bearing on the past rather than the day, I learned, offhand. For instance, that odd square-shaped notch I had seen in the roof-peak mounted a machine-gun.

And no gold had been shipped since Cameron had come; it was stored in the house—practically all of it. It seemed, too, from all that I could gather, that Maya Morning trusted in Cameron implicitly.

SHE told me about it late one afternoon when we were alone—how Cameron had believed her father's words, that day in San Francisco, and given him the very necessary money when all others had laughed. Joe Morning had died at peace with himself and the world, gold in sight, with these final words on his lips: "If Cameron should come, do as he tells you, girl. He is a man you can believe in, and half of everything here is his. Remember that; there are no papers."

Cameron had come into Puerto San Feliciano within the month.

There was much of Señor Joe Morning in Maya. She was capable and fearless, I saw; and I knew she was also generous and fine. Perhaps it was the tradition of her surroundings and perhaps it was not, but the Mexican woman was always with her. And very often I saw that strong Indian face which had been lighted so clearly and so long at the gate that night watching near by. I asked the man's name and she told me—Pedro Miguel.

Yet these things, I say, seemed unimportant. Unimportant, too, an undercurrent below the false serenity of these passing days. I sensed the thing rather than reasoned it, and it was more than that which was in my own mind. There were visible signs. The gates were continually guarded, and there was a restlessness, an uneasy nervousness, about the house servants—as though they knew and waited for something, perhaps.

And we two, Cameron and I, who could only be enemies, who must fight each other to the end sometime, it seemed—we two, despicable as I thought him, worked together. It was madness, of course; and I can only say that gold has the power to make men mad.

Days had become a week, a second week, and this lengthened into a third. Then two things happened one afternoon.

I had been up in the tangled dank mass of the jungle that had overgrown the old stream channel; and returning to Cameron, in passing, told him:

"Somebody's worked this all out ahead of us. I'm sure of it now. There's a little prospect-hole up ahead that isn't a year old."

"It was Morning, I suppose," Cameron answered. "I've seen the same thing."

I went on, back, two *mozos* tagging my steps. In these days we hadn't found a chip of gold-bearing rock "float" up the channel, to give us hope; and if Morning had also prospected it, the chances were slim. I knew just how many things, geologically, can happen to wipe out the vein that may have been the source of any pay-gravel deposit. We had found no indications to work on.

Possibly ten minutes later I led through a thick piece of jungle growth where we had hacked a trail and out into a rough little clearing that was made by a tiny stream-bed branching into the old channel. To the far side of this opening a movement caught my eye. I saw a man freeze, motionless, into a shadow—swiftly, a second later, disappear. It was Pedro Miguel.

TURNING back to glance at the two *mozos* at my heels, I saw that neither of them had noted the movement.

My eyes turned into the jungle; I stumbled, practically—for the toe of my boot kicked it—upon a small chunk of quartz float. Half the size of a man's fist, it rolled and dodged out ahead of me; and even before I picked it up, I saw that the rock was shot through with red-yellow wire gold. . . . . Rich! Rotten with gold!

I stared at it, turning it over in the palm of my hand.

In an instant one of the *mozos* had slipped up behind, grabbed it from my fingers, and run. I missed his head with the flat of my machete by an inch. The

second native stood grinning impudently at me.

It was this same afternoon that the crews Cameron had up in the *monte* walked out on him. He offered no reason, no explanation—if he could give it—that night; he merely stated the fact. They had disappeared, taking with them what tools they had in hand, of course.

Across the width of a house table, Cameron and I looked at each other, measuring each other anew.

YOU see, that piece of float, that little piece of quartz I had picked up, meant a lot. It had come from somewhere, some rich vein, and the vein couldn't be so very far away because the chip of rock wasn't water-worn, as anyone could see. It may have taken half a century, more, for natural erosion to bring the chip down the little side stream-bed, to where I had stumbled on it—who knows? But there it was, and the vision of such a vein had been fire in the minds of both of us.

I knew the thieving *mozo* had carried the chip to Cameron, and he knew that I knew this. We measured each other, his sharp intense eyes boring into mine. The passivity in which we had lived these past days was gone, for no more reason than that little piece of quartz float. . . . . It was rich! Rotten with gold!

I went to my room early, to think, leaving Maya, the Mexican woman and Cameron together in the main room of the house. For hours, thereafter, I could just hear the occasional drone of their conversation through the walls, and I wondered what Cameron was saying and wished that I had stayed with them.

I believe that I had forgotten Pedro Miguel until this moment late in the night, while I tossed on my bed and couldn't sleep. Then it came to me in a flash, and I knew that I had been a fool not to think of it before. We'd cut a trail through there, walked across that rough little natural clearing a hundred times—many of us. It was foolish to think that that little piece of rich quartz had been there under our eyes—where one could stumble on it—all that while. Foolish!

I came to a sharp conclusion: Pedro Miguel had dropped it there short seconds before I came along—for one of us to find. For moments the thing ran through my head. In the end I was sure of it.

What was I waiting for, I asked myself finally. Waiting for Cameron to beat me to it, to get the jump on me? Wasn't it time for me to act—act first?

I decided that it was!

BUT at morning Cameron was gone. He had left before daylight, to go into the *monte*. And at the breakfast-table, while I was planning to follow him, Maya asked:

"Could I get you to go down to the village with me today, Mr. Stevens? A boat was due from down-coast yesterday, and she was to have supplies for us. Mr. Cameron evidently has forgotten."

There was no way to decline. She was ready, dressed in linen riding-breeches and a man's shirt, open at the neck. For the first time, as we rode off, the Mexican woman was not with her, but behind came Pedro Miguel and the second *mozo* who had been with me the day before—my guard, as usual, I gathered.

While I wanted to get back as swiftly as possible, at Puerto San Feliciano, a bit before noon, we learned that the boat hadn't come yesterday but that likely she would show in today. There was nothing else to do; we chose the only place where we could wait, the side veranda of the *cantina* which looked out onto the sea. Restlessly I sat there, seething inwardly to be gone. I had no chance to get Pedro Miguel alone and question him, for whatever that would be worth. . . . .

It was afternoon when we finally saw her, a tiny dirty white craft, put in, and finally heard her anchor-chain rattle out between the wash of the breakers. She dropped two small-boats from her davits and loaded, in a hurry evidently to be off.

I was watching the native oarsmen breast these two in, my eyes on a figure standing in the prow of the foremost, when Maya said:

"It's odd that my father never mentioned me to you, since you knew him so well."

There had been words verging on this before, the gradual tightening of the verbal net. "We talked mostly," I told her now, carefully, "of mining."

"And he never mentioned a Mr. Stevens to me," she continued.

"No? It is unimportant."

"But he told me so many things in those last days, you see. He wanted me to know everything—people, good and bad, as he had known them, because there was no reason or assurance that Don Cameron would come down here. I had to continue

with the Copa de Oro alone, or lose it all. Gold was in sight. He prepared me as best he could."

My nerves were ragged, I suppose, because I asked suddenly, stiffly: "You mean that underneath you doubt me, the existence of a Mr. Stevens?"

Her dark eyes were on my face, across the width of a little table. They were quite inscrutable and steady.

"Yes," she said, "since you ask it that way—I do."

I WAS silent. There was nothing, after all, to say. In silence I turned to studying the foremost boat breasting in and the figure in its prow. I saw that this was a white man—not by his face, which could not yet be seen, but somehow by the posture of his body, the way he moved, and his bearing.

"Whatever your reasons for being here," Maya Morning said slowly, "both Mr. Cameron and myself like you, and we'll want you to stay—at least until after our wedding."

What did she say? I whirled around, doubting my ears.

"Yes," she said. "It will be very soon now."

I sat silent, utterly still; for seconds my mind was blank. Then a hot gust of words were suddenly on my tongue, the whole story of the past, the truth. . . . . In an instant they were the cold ashes of unspoken words. I saw, in that instant, that she wouldn't, couldn't, believe them, coming from me now. I had waited too long!

The figure that stood in the prow of the first boat had gone clean from my mind. Now I heard a short breathless exclamation from Maya.

"That's Lee Shad!" she said. "Father once described him!"

Her hand lifted ever so slightly, indicating the beach.

UP through the beach sands, I saw, came a slightly built stooped man of apparent middle-age. He wore a suit of nondescript whites, somewhat soiled and very wrinkled; and he walked as though his legs were tired and the sand clinging and heavy. As he came closer I saw his face under a crumpled wide Panama. His hair was of a bleached graying blond and his eyes a faded blue in color. He looked commonplace and unconcerned.

He came quite close to us without glancing up. A heavy-linked gold watch-fob hung from the left breast-pocket of his coat, and he chewed passively on a pudgy black cigar. I have seen such expressions and faces looking down from the cabs of American locomotives, and as a boy I envied and admired them. (In fact, Lee Shad had come into the tropics as a locomotive engineer—on the narrow track that climbs through the rugged volcanic jungle much in the way a bird soars, from the coast inland to Guatemala City.)

He paused at the far side of the *cantina* and commanded of the proprietor:

"Horse, a *mozo!* Want to get to Copa de Oro. Man named Cameron there, yes?"

I heard the proprietor scraping and bowing before the man. I felt Maya's eyes upon mine again.

"Mr. Stevens," she suggested, formally, "it would probably be possible for you to leave here now, on this same boat. I think that would be best. I ask that you do it."

I saw sudden fear in her eyes.

CHAPTER IV

WHILE I made no move to obey, and seeing this, she said no more, nothing in my life, I think, had ever cut more than those words of Maya Morning's. I gave them this meaning, mentally, while they might have had another: She doubted my courage, and showed me the easy way to go free. A weakling was not of any use, she might have said, it seemed. . . . . What gave her fear so suddenly? Lee Shad? Who and what was he? What did she think of me, besides being useless and possibly a coward?

As we rode back to the Copa de Oro, these things had drawn a stiff wall of silence between us. The man called Lee Shad had gone ahead. I felt that I couldn't question Maya further, that she wouldn't answer.

At the house I saw neither Shad or Cameron, but there was a light in a room below mine which had formerly been vacant. I ate dinner with Maya, returned immediately to my room, undressed, blew out my light and went wearily to bed—for the sake of any spying *mozo*. I dressed again carefully in the darkness.

It was probably an hour later, perhaps two, when I heard the door below leisurely open and close. Steps, unhurried, slow, went on around the veranda. I followed.

A few moments later, with my ear carefully against Cameron's door, I heard Lee Shad say:

"So?"—dryly, shortly.

I couldn't see him, but I knew he sat in there, in the room, without expression or movement, except for the stub of black cigar he chewed. A tired-looking, commonplace sort of man with watery blue eyes—who would have appeared much more at ease up in the cab of some slow-rolling freight back in the States, overalls upon him and a greasy cotton bandana about his neck.

"Sure," Cameron answered, agreeing to something. There was a pause, and he went on: "But I think I'll stick on here, Lee. Don't want to go back to 'Frisco; I kinda like all this. Morning's land, here, is worth something, even if the mine is worked out."

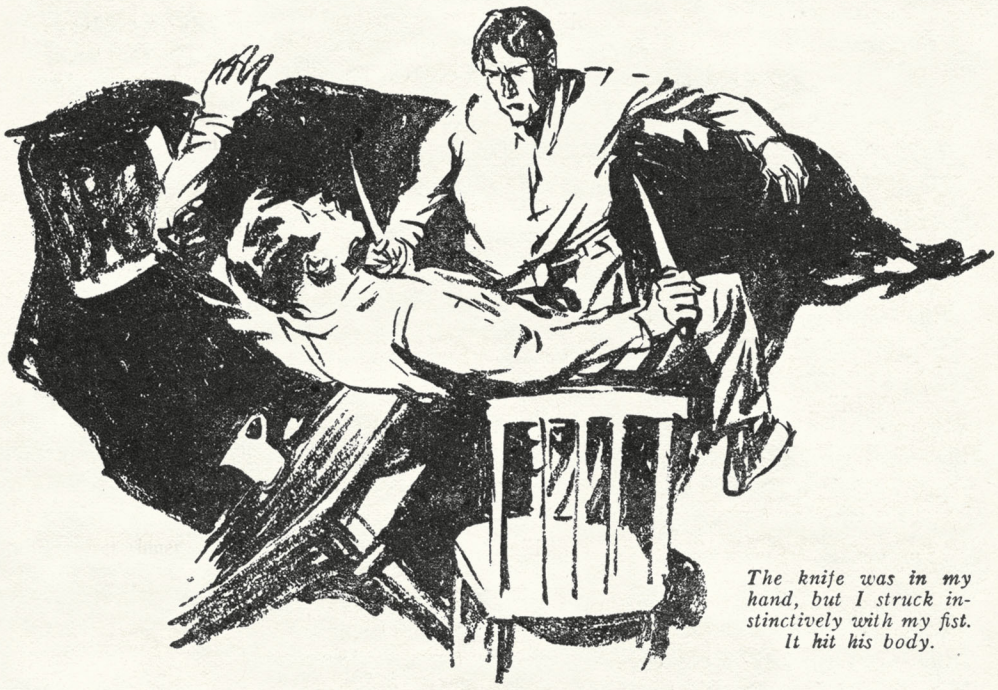
"So? How do you figure to get it? It isn't gold you can carry off. How—marry the girl?"

I couldn't hear Cameron's words in answer, but I heard Shad's laugh and knew what they had been. . . . . My fingers felt for the knob of the door suddenly, to go in. Lee Shad's voice sounding low and dry and stiff, halted me:

"So?" he said. "You think you can double-cross me, huh? And get away with it?" He spoke to Cameron, of course.

Balanced on my toes, I heard Cameron's shaky laugh. "Quit jokin', Lee. Why would I do a thing like that? Double-cross! Aint we been pards? You're crazy, man!"

"Crazy? And so?" Lee Shad's words had not lifted in tone, but they had a cut like cool steel in them. "Yeh, the double-cross! Listen, I know the tropics, and I know the men that come into 'em, and I know *you*—a dirty, hash-slingin' squealer outa 'Frisco. You got ability an' ambition, a lot of it. You aint afraid of some things, either. Yeh! But—"



The knife was in my hand, but I struck instinctively with my fist. It hit his body.

"What's the matter with my wanting this—this land? Maybe live here awhile?"

"Just that! For months you been crazy-achin' for 'Frisco. Now this—and more!"

Something clicked in my mind. I remembered a little hole-in-a-wall restaurant down on Pacific Street, just off the water-front, and a dark, stoutly built waiter who had come back to our table time after time, hovering about. I remembered the tiny bag of dust and nuggets Señor Joe Morning had given him. "A squealer outa 'Frisco!"

It was possible, perfectly possible. Just that!

I SENSED the sharp tenseness within the room. A boot scraped the flooring—in a silence where the drop of a pin would have sounded loud, in a silence which seemed to last for the span of moments.

"Go for your gun!" Cameron suddenly snapped. "Go for it! Pull it and find out! I'm waitin'." He laughed shrilly, sharply, in the silence. "I got a house-boy that can turn the trick even with your sort."

"Oh," said Shad. "Are you *sure?"*

"Sure? Sure, I'm sure."

"Maybe your boy failed this once," suggested Shad softly. "It was when he brought my bath, o' course. But maybe he failed—and lied to you later, being afraid. So? . . . Listen, you're a fool. But there's two-three things I want to know. Who's this fella Stevens, f'instance? Huh? And *why's he listenin' there at our door?"*

"What?"

I heard Cameron leave his chair. I might have run in the second before he reached the door. The night beyond was dark, inky. But what would that have got me? Yes, what? In that second I saw much of this stooped, placid, tired-looking man called Lee Shad. He had heard my hand touch the latch, noted it—and waited.

I opened the door in Cameron's face, saw that he had a gun in hand trained upon me. I saw more—back half across the room, slumped into a rattan arm-chair, Lee Shad idly held a stub-nosed automatic on the pair of us and smiled his placid smile. A rippling soft laugh echoed from his throat.

"Now we'll have a little chat, the three of us. This is better," he said. He spoke to Cameron, then. "Your gun—butt first. Sure, just hand it to me."

THERE was that about the man—slumped into the rattan chair, the automatic carelessly resting in a hand upon his knee, he dominated the situation utterly. I think that there was suddenly no question, no thought, except to obey, in Cameron's make-up. A house-boy who had failed! He seemed to reel slightly, catch himself. He stumbled the few steps across the room and gave his gun, butt first, into Shad's hand.

"Thanks," Shad chuckled dryly, and shifted Cameron's gun into his own right fingers. "Yes, your house-boy was a good one," he explained the action. "Got every damn' shell I had—two extra clips. Smart boy, all right!"

In the lamplight tiny beads of sweat glistened on Cameron's forehead. He tried to laugh, and it sounded more like a sob. This was Lee Shad, you see, a middle-aged, unconcerned man with a black cigar-stub between his lips, who could pull a trick like that—and make it stick. I didn't wonder now that there had been fear in Maya's eyes at the sight of him. A gun, after all, doesn't mean much; it's the man behind it.

HE took instant command.

"Sit down. Be comfortable—warm night. . . . Just who, Stevens, and what are you?" he asked.

"I'm *Cameron!"* I snapped.

Shad's body suddenly shook with inward laughter.

"Cameron, meet Cameron," he chuckled. "Cameron, meet Fred Sadoni, Cameron of the second part, 'Frisco tipster. Good man, too, until he decided he could double-cross me tonight. . . . . Stevens—I mean Cameron, just what's your idea? What d'you hope to do here? I mean, given the chance to do anything."

"You know what I'll do—given the chance," I told him.

He nodded, considering. "I suppose so. Don't be foolish, though—don't force me to take a shot at you. I mean it."

Fred Sadoni—Cameron of the second part, as Lee Shad termed him—had already cut in, blurting out the words:

"Listen, Lee, listen: I'll give you the straight dope on it. There's more to this thing than that little string-like pocket of Morning's, see!"

"So I gathered," said Lee Shad dryly.

"A lot more," Sadoni went on, unheeding. "There's a ledge, Lee—the mother vein that this little deposit we've been working must've come from. Morning had title to the whole of the Copa de Oro. Worthless as land, sure; but somewhere in it—"

Lee Shad laughed. "So? So you'd double-cross me for a wild idea like that, huh? You're a fool, Sadoni—a complete fool. Any mining man would have thought of the source of that little pay-streak of ours months ago. I thought of it. But you weren't in on it; that was my own little private deal." His voice lowered, speaking more to himself. "A ledge like that, a vein—make a man rich, it would. Lousy rich! Like I say, you weren't in on it."

"No? What d'you mean?"

"Just that," said Lee Shad lazily. "Before you'd even come down, I'd planted a man here, to prospect. He had money from me—a little—and his orders. Knows more about mining in a minute than you'll ever know, Sadoni. Knows the country here too—born here. He's one of the few smart natives that I ever found I could trust."

"Which is he?" Sadoni asked, his voice cracking.

"He's called Pedro Miguel. . . . . So? What're you going to do about it?"

"He—Pedro Miguel—found nothing?"

"Just that. You're wild—and a fool."

FRED SADONI didn't mention that little piece of gold-shot rock I'd picked up, but I knew he was thinking of it. I could almost see the thought worming and twisting around in his mind. Nor did I mention it. I was almost afraid to let my mind play with the idea—or was I mad?—that Pedro Miguel had surely planted that little piece of float there in the jungle, for one of us to find.

"Here's the way it looks," said Shad after a while. "Here are three of us, and the gold is here in the house. I staged the thing; Sadoni, here, had the idea and came on the ground; and you, Cameron, put in some cash once upon a time, I understand. Each of us thinks he has his own little special right to the stuff, huh? . . . . But at the moment I hold the gun, see! And Sadoni, you at least know just how quick I could snuff the two of you out—huh?—and take the pile of it. I'd go clean with it; you know that. Be safest, too, in the end." He paused, then slowly went on:

"All right. Maybe I have scruples, what? Anything. I'm here to take my half and I'm satisfied with that. But you, Sadoni, with the fool's game you were playing on me tonight—well, say you just split your half with Cameron, here. Everybody gets some then, everybody in on it. Fair, huh? We all clear out in the morning."

There was, of course, a reason below Lee Shad's offer; I learned it later beyond mistake. But now his words led up to this.

"No!" said Fred Sadoni. And I echoed him.

"It's the girl, then, after all, huh?" asked Lee Shad, smiling around his cigar. "All right. There's just *one way,* I suppose. I don't care."

Fred Sadoni's whole body trembled while he nodded. I didn't grasp the idea—it came about too calmly and was too unthinkable, mad, in itself. But Lee Shad, looking at me, took my gesture for assent.

"Knives?" he asked. "Better that way. While it don't matter, there's no reason for letting the natives—and the girl—know. Knives and a dark room, huh? It's as good a way as any."

Fred Sadoni was eying me, and he nodded again. Impossible, mad, was it? We three sat looking at each other in silence. I could hear Sadoni's breathing.

Then from the veranda, outside the door where I had stood and listened not long before, there sounded a low, muffled scream. We all three heard a body touch the door panels as it fell.

I saw Lee Shad nod to himself. "Public place for our conference, it seems. Careful! Just you, Sadoni—open the door. And keep in sight of me."

IT was Maya Morning. She lay there on the veranda tiles in a small fainted heap of skirts and body, in the shaft of light from the opening door—like a flower that has suddenly wilted and fallen on its stem. One slender arm was limply outstretched and the end of a bright shawl was still across one shoulder. Her face was white.

I forgot Lee Shad. Sadoni and I carried her into the room and to a cot that stood by one wall. Sadoni, swinging back to the open door, bellowed down the veranda for a house-boy; then he evidently thought of the carafe of water and bottle of brandy in the room, but I had already found them. Lee Shad only did not move. After a moment he said:

"House-boy didn't hear, I guess."

I remembered the remark later; at the time neither of us gave it attention. The Mexican woman, hurriedly dressed, came running in and dropped beside Maya. She took things in hand, and we stood away. After a time Sadoni absently went again to the door and called for the boy. He called twice. There was no answer, no sound of running steps or movement through the house. It seemed strangely deserted even for this hour of the night.

Maya's eyes suddenly fluttered open. Almost instantly she was sitting up, looking silently at each of us. Shad, immobile of face, chewed at the butt of his plump cigar; the hand that held the gun had moved under a wing of his coat front where the lumpy bulge was conspicuous.

"A shock, was it, young lady?" he asked slowly.

She paid no attention to him. "Cameron," she said.

I started, but I saw that she did not mean me.

"Yes," answered Sadoni.

"Didn't you ask me last night to be your wife? Is that true?"

"It's true," said Sadoni weakly; then more strongly: "Yes, yes, of course. Very soon—as soon as a priest can get up here from down-coast."

"Then—then, does this thing need to go on? Murder!" Her voice halted while her lips still moved. "Does this have to go on? A little bucketful of gold here in the house! Shares—"

I didn't hear the rest. Suddenly, for me, it didn't matter, nothing mattered. Sadoni, Cameron—names, names of men and fools, of no importance. It was Sadoni she was speaking to, saying this—and *she had heard!* Vaguely, then, I knew that she had turned to me and was speaking:

"I told you this afternoon it would be better for you to go. Take your part, any part, of the gold and go. Go! Go now! Before— Oh, go! Hurry!"

Shad nodded dryly. "So?" he said after a moment.

I turned, wordless, went out the door and down the veranda to my room.

YOU see, in my mind I had been so sure all this while that I would win.

Finally, hearing steps outside, I lighted the candle that stood on the table of the room. Lee Shad appeared, unhurried, mouthing the black stub of his cigar.

"Quite a girl," he remarked. "Broke down complete a minute after you left. But lots of nerve while it lasted."

I cursed him.

"So?" he said dryly. "But not so fast, Cameron. Nothing's changed as far as I'm concerned."

"As far as you're concerned?" I mentally groped for the reasoning I knew was there below his words.

"You've got to have a finger in the pie with the rest of us, Cameron. Sadoni's way seems most satisfactory all around. Later, y'see, I can't have a white man that's free and had no hand in it runnin' around the tropics—talkin'. See? It can't happen; that's all."

"God! You're a low outfit!" I told him. "You and Sadoni!"

"Wait a minute, Cameron. I'm giving you a chance when otherwise you wouldn't have any. Not the slightest! I'm seein' fair play tonight— One way or the other, it suits me. That's all."

His right hand held Sadoni's gun in the bulge of his coat pocket. The left came suddenly up with a thin knife and put it on the table, just beside the candle. And with one motion, the palm of his hand snuffed the light.

I heard him walk carefully out the door, a rectangle of murky gray in the blackness of the walls. I saw a figure slide in—Sadoni!

Lee Shad calmly closed the door, and continued to pace slowly back and forth along the tiles. . . . . Perhaps the years of tropic sun had given a touch of madness to Shad's brain that came out tonight; perhaps like some sleek evil cat he was playing two mice. I don't know. Perhaps there was no other way but this. Surely we three made the law unto ourselves here tonight—the strength and guile of the strongest. How else, other than this, could it work, perhaps?

SECONDS passed, and they seemed like moments, each measured by Lee Shad's slow steps upon the veranda tiles. Somewhere across the room Sadoni crouched. I had not moved from the table—only, my fingers had been drawn to the hilt of the knife, folding around it like steel strings.

A room that was inky black, thick with darkness. My ears were keyed to the slightest vibration—don't tell me that a man can move silently so, spring upon the other without warning, say! I knew that my breath whistled through my nostrils. I thought that Sadoni could hear the very pound of the blood in my veins. And I heard *clearly* the touch of his shirt-sleeve as it came softly against the wall, the hand feeling on.

I heard him creeping down the room, then. He wore no shoes, I realized. He made each step in time with those that paced the veranda tiles, so that the sound of them would cover his own movement. . . . . I waited, waited there at the table for him. I became suddenly anxious, eager, as I had been before now. All else was suddenly forgotten. He was after me —to kill! I wanted only, suddenly, the feel of his flesh below my knife-hand. The sound of Lee Shad's pacing, while it must have kept on, faded from my consciousness.

The gate broke open; it was instantly jammed with figures, bent upon looting, like children in a toy-house.

I heard nothing but the sound of Sadoni's stocking-steps on the room floor—minute as the sound was—felt him nearing, pause.

Perhaps the fact that I hadn't moved, scarcely so much as a muscle, puzzled him. Finally fingers, light as feathers, came in contact with the far edge of the table—I could feel their touch on the board against my body.

Waiting—waiting. . . . .

He struck with the swiftness of a rattler. I heard the thin *swish* of a full-arm circle sweep of his knife, felt the wind of it graze my lowered face.

I answered. The knife was in my hand, but I struck instinctively with my fist. It hit his body. I dropped; dived under the table for the point where I knew his legs must be.

He spun back and I didn't get them. It was a foolish move; no knife-man would ever make such a mistake.

He knew I was below him and leaped. But the table's edge must have caught the first thrust of his knife. He fell across me, and the table came down. Twisting over and up, my left arm grappled about him. A back thrust of his slashed thinly across the over-muscles of my shoulder. . . . . I held my knife in cast-hard fingers, and used my right hand as a fist. I forgot the knife now—while my fingers held it!

For fractions of seconds—for seconds—we grappled there, struck and fought. His knife grazed my ribs once, cleanly slitting the shirt open for inches. He struck another blow into my forearm, the thin point sinking against the bone—a paralyzing, fire-hot stab of pain! I somehow caught his knife-hand, as it came away, at the wrist.

Greater strength was mine at the instant—while I forced him back, down, under me. His free hand beat futilely. He was under me suddenly, powerless.

I thought of my own knife, then!

The point of it was already in the soft flesh of his back, over the heart, behind. This man surely deserved to die!

I SAW it all in a single mental flash: I saw how Shad would greet me when I came out of this room—*alone*. I would have killed a man; my tongue would be sealed. This dog would never have Maya Morning, whom he wanted only because of the Copa de Oro and that vision gold had given him. It was easy. At morning, then, I would fade out of the picture at Lee Shad's side. Perhaps I could do better—overpower Shad somehow. This was the only way, something said; the only thing I could do!

Was it? This was murder now! And didn't Maya Morning still love this man,

this dog, whatever he was and had been? . . . . . Maybe I was weak, as weak as water, for I slowly hissed into Sadoni's ear, finally:

"Drop your knife!"

He must have known that he still held the winning cards, if he played them right. I heard the knife drop from his hand to the floor. Groping, I picked it up. His body hadn't moved by so much as a quiver under my knife-blade.

Again I heard and noted Lee Shad's slow pacing on the veranda tiles. Nothing had changed! I stood up.

From somewhere in the courtyard beyond there came the screech of rusty iron swung on iron. The steps on the veranda stopped. Two shots, staccato and booming, cut the stillness of the sultry night. A native voice shouted shrilly. Some one was running toward the house, onto the veranda, on, on.

By this time I was at the door and outside.

"Jefe! Jefe!" a strong voice called from the yard gate.

Lee Shad answered—calmly and coolly taking command.

CHAPTER V

AT Shad's order Pedro Miguel and the crafty house-boy, who had been missing until he saw how his master's affairs turned out, manned the machine-gun in the roof-peak. Periodically they turned loose a rattling volley, sweeping a circle just over the yard walls. It was purely for moral effect, since none outside ventured near again. One other boy, out of the many, hadn't deserted. Shad sent him for drinks, a table and chairs for us on the front veranda.

Lee Shad called it "a show."

I can't explain Lee Shad. Fred Sadoni, yes. Ratlike courage was his, a scheming, wily ability, else he could not have handled things so long at the Copa de Oro; a thieving, underhanded nature, lacking even a sense of "thieves' loyalty," utterly unscrupulous, Fred Sadoni was like a poisonous carrion viper. But I can't explain Lee Shad. Surely he did not fear anything under the sun, man, life or death. Because he did not fear, I believe he saw no reason for others to fear. He was inhumanly hard.

Do these things seem strange to be in a man whose body was small and stooped, a commonplace man, to look at, with watery-blue eyes and graying blond hair? Perhaps. I thought so, never fully realizing them until the end.

It, the end, came toward dawn.

THROUGHOUT the passing hours of the late night we sat there on the veranda. There was no talk between us. Sadoni had gone into the house, seeing that his little locked arsenal of guns were loaded, waiting and ready should they be needed by us. Finally he left again, and we heard him climb to the roof notch. He did not return.

This happened an hour or so before the first splitting of night into day.

Moments later the house-boy came running down. He chattered like a monkey, trying to speak. We had no light.

"Jefe! Jefe, we open a box, and there are no shell rolls in it for the big gun. *Jefe, señor*—none! The box is filled with rocks, and dirt, to make it feel heavy like shells. *Señor—"*

"All right! Shut up," Lee Shad told the boy. He explained to me: "That's the trouble with this country. You can't trust anybody. Got those shells from Peele, Manzanillo—paid him twice what they were worth; told him to ship 'em here to Sadoni. Y'see?"

"How many shells left?" he asked the boy.

"Not many, *jefe*—not many! We did not know."

"Save 'em! Hear? No more shooting unless you see men. Hear that, boy?"

"We see men now—many! They have a big fire, *jefe,* 'way down in the jungle—"

"No more shooting, hear? Now get back where you belong!" Lee Shad swore in cool English; then suddenly he called the boy back.

"Tell Pedro Miguel to come here," he commanded.

WE sat in the dark thick silence of the late night, waiting. Finally Shad said: "Wonder what happened to Sadoni? Went in to take a nap, I suppose. I suppose—" His lips lingered with the final words, as though playing with some new, vaguely formed idea. . . . . Then Pedro Miguel stood before us, and his deep powerful voice came, respectful, yet with none of the cringing mockery that the boy had had, even in fear:

"Si, señor."

"Pedro, what about this?" Shad asked. "Tell me what you know."

"It is just this, *señor.* The Señor Cam-

eron—Sadoni, as you call him also—did not pay his men."

"No?" Lee Shad laughed shortly.

"No, each little fleck of gold stuck to his own fingers, stuck very tight. There was nothing for the men, month after month—just a little food. Some men, they steal. Two he caught, and one died from the whipping. Some few of these foolish men run away—they are brought back and also whipped."

"I see," said Shad amusedly. "Go on."

"Finally this Señor Stevens comes, and very quick Cameron-Sadoni offers a big reward, one hundred *pesos,* to the man who will kill him—noiselessly. Most of the men smile. This new white man is tall and strong, not easily killed, they think. They know, too, how the reward will stick to Cameron-Sadoni's fingers later. Except, señor—except my own son. He, my son, wants a hundred *pesos* badly — and fails. . . . .

"Swiftly then, señor, Cameron-Sadoni hears. He offers twice a hundred *pesos* on my own boy's head, because he has failed badly. That was his way. He says no more of Señor Stevens; they search the jungle side by side. But he does not forget my boy. No. . . . . And, señor, my son is not like these poor peons, no dull *regiondl.* Fire gets into his brain. He talks, talks much. Gold, gold they had earned, is here in the house. Fire come to their brains too, after a while. They plan; he tells them how.

"It is all planned—while only I talk against it, and my son. They desert; they take their tools for arms. . . . . Then that same night, the night before this, some peon thinks he would like to be leader himself and knifes my son while he sleeps. That is all I know."

His voice ended calmly; there was no emotion in it; stolidly, resignedly, he seemed to accept what had happened. I remembered the son; I remembered Pedro Miguel as he had spoken out of the darkness once before.

"These natives love the drama, don't they?" Lee Shad said in English after a moment. But I believe that the story had touched something below the cold hardness of him.

"Go back, Pedro," he said. "Don't open the gun unless they start over the wall."

Shad moved off down the veranda in the darkness. Twice I heard him call Sadoni's name.

MY mind was filled with a dozen impractical schemes. Impractical, because what was there that we could do? A few hours before I had known that we three men made a law unto ourselves here. We still made that law, the same law; there was no other within a hundred miles of rugged hills and jungle. A man might sneak through and trek to it, with guides, yes—in three days, four. It would take just as long to get back. Puerto San Feliciano — high-sounding name! — was a straggling row of squalid huts, and there was no hope of help from its timid barefoot population.

Had we had the ammunition for the machine-gun that should have been here, this would have been something of what Lee Shad meant by "a show." I mean that no ragged, poorly armed band of peons could hope to scale the walls under machine-gun fire, day or night. But we hadn't it—and nothing that could be done about it now. It had rested in the hands of a man named Peele, at Manzanillo, months before—"that's the trouble with this country!"

I wondered if Sadoni, who should have opened the box also months before, knew. For half an hour I had heard nothing more of Lee Shad.

FROM the vicinity of the gate there was a sudden shrill scream. Instantly a gun cut it short. I saw the pin-point flash of flame in the darkness, knew whose gun it was.

Running, I met Lee Shad already returning. He carried two rifles in the crook of one arm.

He didn't say anything, not for moments. Again we sat on the veranda chairs. There was a stillness over the jungle beyond—a hush that precedes the swift tropic dawn.

"Cameron," Lee Shad said finally, "I dropped in here unexpected because I more or less knew that Sadoni would try to pull something on me. There's a ten-per-cent government tax on all gold leaving the country. We didn't expect to pay it, of course, and that gave me a check on him, because I was the one who knew how to get it out. But I expected something—hiding some of it out, say. His house-boy got the shells out of my gun just because the trick was so damn' old I'd never expected to see it used again.

"Cameron, I've seen so many things that I thought I knew every move a man was capable of—in greed or fear of life. . . . . So? I didn't! Cameron, I never before

knew a white man to sell out other white men's lives to a ragged bunch of brown-skins."

We were silent for a long moment. "That was Sadoni you got down at the gate?" I asked.

"No—house-boy. Sadoni was outside. Within the last half-hour he's evidently made some kind of an agreement with the peon chief behind this gang. He'd sneaked the boy back, to rob the house of what guns we had. These were the last two."

I couldn't think of anything to say. There are times when any words are utterly futile. Sadoni, of course, had learned that the munition-box held nothing as soon, or before, we had.

In the end, he *had* double-crossed even Lee Shad—to save his own skin.

"But you can be sure," Lee Shad said, "that some native will get the chance out there and knife him before another night comes. Bound to happen."

Shad laughed shortly.

I TOOK one of the rifles Shad had recovered, a blunt-barreled .30-30 carbine. He took the other, and we divided between us a box of shells that had fallen sometime and scattered into a corner of the gunroom.

"Not my sort of gun," Shad said. "Not my sort!" I knew what he meant, that his sort of a gun was an automatic or revolver. He still had Sadoni's weapon with a loaded cylinder, but this he tucked into his waist-band.

We spoke no word of what had lastly happened to Maya Morning. It could do no good. We waited. What else was there to do?

There is something magical about the tropic dawn. The dawn of the north is slow, gradual; that of the tropics so swift. It is like other things in the *tierra caliente;* like flowers that burst into full gorgeous bloom, once ripe, in the span of minutes, almost. Like the sudden rising of streams; like the yellow full light after a midday storm. Many things. It is flamboyant, beautiful.

Dawn came upon us, the first fine brightening. It seemed sudenly to me that the night past could be nothing but an evil misshapen dream. . . . . Beyond the fore-wall a flock of tiny parrakeets, roosting in some tree-top, broke into shrill chatter. I thought they were wakening to the dawn. . . . . Pedro Miguel knew better.

Somewhere in the tree-tops of the jungle a rifle cracked sharply. I heard something fall and hit onto the roof above us. Instantly the machine-gun broke into full-pitched terrific rattle.

As swiftly it cut off. Before us the house-boy rolled off the veranda roof-edge and fell into the yard, sprawled across one of those tiny rows of American flowers—dead.

I heard Lee Shad say: "So?"

A heavy battering, as though by signal, began on the gate after seconds. Figures of blurred white suddenly appeared briefly along the edges of the walls. The machine-gun cut loose again, for a span of seconds, stopped. Lee Shad leaped out from under the veranda, called and motioned something up to Pedro Miguel. Silence.

The dawn had brightened. I turned, saw Maya Morning standing in the house doorway, holding, white-handed, to one casement. Lee Shad swore at her. The reason was apparent; in the swift-coming light a bullet ricocheted along the veranda tiles. A second later they began to *plop* with steady regularity into the adobe face of the house. The marksmen were up in the thickness of jungle trees and nothing could be seen of them. Such a one had killed the remaining boy with Pedro Miguel.

I could see Lee Shad's plump cigar-butt rolling between his lips. He poured himself a drink.

I felt that there was about this something ridiculous, foolish. It wasn't real. I hadn't fired a shot—there hadn't been a mark for a gun bead. Lee Shad stood there, pouring himself a drink—carefully, so that expensive English whisky would not be spilled and wasted. He drained the glass and started to place it back on the table. It shattered in his hand, a bullet *plopping* on into the adobe. He swore mildly.

The machine-gun opened up again, and I trembled as the whining staccato rattle continued without cutting off. Fraction-seconds that seemed like ages. I realized that Pedro Miguel was sweeping to the rear, into the jungle directly behind, where the house side made the wall. I didn't understand. Lee Shad bellowed sudden furious commands, cursing.

The gun stopped. I knew the final reason—the ammunition was exhausted.

WITHIN a moment one wing of the fore-gate broke inward, open—instantly jammed with dirt-white clothing, figures; brown faces and upper-bodies, hands wav-

ing machetes, a gun or two, picks. I saw a garden rake, a club of tool steel, a single-jack. Some of these faces I knew. Some had turned vicious, kill-lust upon them. Some were childish, wide-eyed, curious—childishly revengeful, bent upon looting like children in a strange toy house.

I couldn't shoot into the mass of them, not to kill! I turned my gun low—feet, legs—do as well as the other, armed the way they were. They scattered. Two or three dropped. Many turned sharply back. Lee Shad was reloading.

Pedro Miguel dropped down from the veranda roof, running into the house. Shad turned into the doorway, shouting for me to follow. A fair marksman—for a native—had got inside the wall, concealed in some of the low shrubbery. A bullet cut the flesh of my thigh, in turning; and the wound began to bleed more swiftly than it should. A few seconds later I heard the blood dripping and was surprised to see my trouser-leg red down to the knee.

A question flashed into my mind: Why had Pedro Miguel come off the front of the roof? Reckless? A ladder mounted up inside, up into that square-sided notch that had been cut down into the peak. An easier way. . . . . For a few seconds Shad had been talking to Pedro Miguel, back in the house.

He returned, and his hand tore into my pocket for the extra shells there. He said nothing. For the first time that I had seen his face was grim, his round mouth a tight-lipped slit; but the cigar was still there.

Still that unrealness of the thing, for me. An evil, terrible dream! My mind simply couldn't grasp it; refused. . . . . Yet that is not true. *I did know!*

THE mind is a queer thing, the way it works. A moment before I hadn't been able to draw a single heart-bead into that mass of peons.

Shad suddenly lurched back from the doorway and fell. But he pushed me off, mouthing a curse, and got to his feet alone. He came back into the same position, utterly unafraid.

"Been in as tight a hole before," I heard him mutter. Was he giving himself courage, this inhuman Lee Shad? Did even he need it now?

I saw an arm move in the shrubbery and fired.

"Don't shoot again!" Shad snapped.

A FULL minute had passed, with desultory fire from two or three of the guns stolen from the house coming in upon us. Single peons were climbing over the walls, scudding in through the gate like the first fall leaves before a north country storm. Not many, just a few. The main force, with its machetes, picks, clubs—and a garden rake—was still outside. We got a glimpse of it through the gate. They evidently planned to storm us, once convinced that our ammunition was exhausted.

Maybe Lee Shad waited for that, that final moment. I wondered.

His face had turned ashen. It was the wound, I knew. Pedro Miguel came up behind.

"Ready?" Shad snapped. Without waiting for reply, he said to me:

"Stick with the notch, Cameron, till they get down!" By *they* he meant the women.

I vaguely understood—followed Pedro Miguel without question. In the attic, formed by the angle of the roofs over the room-ceilings below, was Maya Morning, clothed like a man, and the Mexican woman, who trembled so that she could scarcely stand. We stood in a knot at the foot of the ladder leading into the machine-gun notch above, waiting.

I thought of Lee Shad below, wondering. I wondered when the rush would come through the gate. I wondered how much chance we actually had, if any.

We waited. Minutes passed. I saw that the dawn was bright outside, for it made white cracks between some of the roof tiles and shone in a strong stream of light through the opening-hole above. There was no sniping from the trees now. Silence, utter silence, except for the jungle sounds beyond. I wondered why Lee Shad didn't join us.

Below, he spoke a soft word. Pedro Miguel nodded and the Mexican woman went first. I saw Pedro Miguel hit her across the face with the back of his hand—to make anger take some of the shake out of her muscles. Then Maya Morning—she was not afraid! I came last, creeping on my belly onto the notch floor.

It was larger than had appeared from below, and the floor of it was dropped into the roof-peak so that even the two low sides would each offer a short wall of protection for a gunner. I dared not look over the side into the yard. Across the other we helped the women, flat of body. I felt that a hundred eyes must be seeing us,

watching, waiting, laughing, following our every futile movement.

Then Pedro Miguel slid off the roof edge below, helping the Mexican woman, Maya Morning after her. The thickness of the jungle was close. I saw them turn to it, motioned that they go on.

From the courtyard behind an excited babble of conversation was suddenly rising. That was the only sound. I realized that Shad had let the yard fill with the uneasy throng, in the hope that the lookouts would be drawn down, to be in on the looting. It was a mob of no organization, following one another like sheep—sheep with fangs. I wondered why Shad didn't come up.

Even now I didn't understand what this stooped, commonplace little man—with his habitual rolling stub of a cigar—was, below it all, capable of. I didn't realize his gesture. *I thought that he was coming!*

BELOW, within the house, seven rifle-shots volleyed with the swiftness that a trigger can be pulled and shells ejected. Screams. Shouts. Frantic movement in the courtyard. Running, scraping feet. I heard a white man's voice that I knew was Sadoni's. It came from the courtyard below. That made me lift my head, forget all consequences.

Despite their hatred of him, Sadoni was still master to the peons in his treachery. Some one of them would have killed him when the chance came. But in the courtyard he had been master, a white man—white of skin—with a drawn gun.

I saw Lee Shad spin out into the yard below me. The motley mass of peons parting, running away from him. Shad's hand held Sadoni's revolver—*his* sort of a gun! A peon with more courage than the others, lifting a shaking rifle, bowled over before him. Another dropped.

It happened in seconds, two or three—no more. Sadoni saw, looked suddenly into Shad's face—and there was nothing between them.

He turned, to run. Lee Shad shot him like a dog, in the back.

I shot once, twice, into the mass finally closing in on Shad. I worked the carbine lever and snapped a hammer onto a barrel that had no shells long after it was empty.

Lee Shad went down, fighting. . . . .

YOU see, this was the man called Lee Shad. He had shot Sadoni because the man needed killing. But that was only an incident. He was the man who would have coolly robbed Maya Morning of everything she had and never, I'm sure, have given a thought to it later. He was inhumanly hard—and utterly unafraid. But in the end—in the end, he had given his life for her, and us. That is just what it amounted to. In his hard brain, he had known that these seconds of utter confusion in the courtyard would give us time.

This is the only way I can see it. . . . .

I don't believe that any eye was turned on me, although I was standing upright in the notch. I think it was probably an accidentally discharged gun that caught me—sent me staggering back, turning and reeling.

Half-blinded, the far wall of the notch hit my stumbling knees. I sprawled over it and down the slant of the far roof that fell into the jungle's edge, rolling, unable to get hand-hold or stop. Then the drop at the end blotted everything out.

CHAPTER VI

IN a kind of half-light, a queer semi-darkness, I opened my eyes. It wasn't a room, I realized, and I wasn't lying on a bed. Nor was the hour night or dusk. My fingers—the only hand that I seemed able to move—felt a thick mattress of fresh grass under me covered by a single blanket, perhaps a *serape;* below that was dirt and rock. I was trussed with a stiff-feeling bandage across one shoulder and down the right side of my body. There was no pain—only a sort of stinging burn in my left thigh—which wasn't important. I remembered that I'd been nipped there by a bullet, and the wound had bled freely at the time.

This was some sort of cave, I decided, and closed my eyes. Instantly other thoughts began to come, a swirl of them. Most were questions. Some had to have an answer. I tried to open my lips and call.

"Hist!" said a voice somewhere, in Spanish. "The señor—"

Very swiftly some one came over me and bent down. I felt cool finger-tips touch my face and forehead. And, opening my eyes, I saw that it was Maya Morning.

Just this answered most of my questions—all, in fact, that were very necessary.

"Don," she said. It struck me as odd that she would use my name that way, I

remember, because the last person she had called by it had been Sadoni. "Something, Don?" she asked. "Anything we can do? But don't talk unless you have to."

I shook my head to indicate that there wasn't anything. I must have gone to sleep while she still bent over me.

THINGS became hazy and mixed in my mind—dream and fact intermingled, grotesque. As grotesque, and terrible, say, as that night and dawn and Lee Shad's last fight. For three days, they told me later, I was in a fever delirium. Pedro Miguel, with the strong arms that had turned, gathered me up, shouldered and carried me into the jungle, carried me back again to the Morning house.

There was no danger now. The house had been sacked and peons had fled far back into the *monte*. There was nothing of value left, to bring them back. Fire had been applied at one end of the house and had eaten into some of the ceiling rafters; but it takes a more earnest effort to destroy adobe walls and tile. Yet this is all that was left, the house—barren rooms, splintered furniture; defiled floors, strewn with smashed rubbish.

The bullet that had knocked me off the roof-peak notch had gone clean of my body. After the fever mending set in.

One evening Pedro came into my room and halted beside the rudely made chair I sat in. He stared down at his sandaled feet while he spoke.

"It will not be so bad after all, señor?" he said, in question.

"No," I told him, wondering.

"Not after what you now know, señor?"

"No." I paused, searching his strong, brown face. "Pedro, just what do I now know?"

"You were there, señor."

"Where was I, Pedro?"

"In the mine. It was the only safe place I knew to take you."

I thought for a long, long time, watching his face; and, standing there, he looked down at his feet.

"This mine has been opened up, worked before, then, Pedro—if I was carried into it?"

"*Si, señor*—a little way. But so long ago that no man could remember. The jungle has closed again over the hole."

I must have been silent for moments, although they seemed like seconds—thinking of American machinery, modern methods, on a vein that could never have known more than hand labor, probably no powder, primitive tools. No telling how old it was. . . . . Yes, a touch of that madness returned, the thing that had driven Sadoni and me, side by side, through the jungle for days. Yet it was different now.

"Pedro, that little piece of gold-shot quartz you dropped one day in the trail, for me to find—it came from there?" I finally asked.

He started guiltily, and after a time, nodded. "*Si, señor.* You and this Sadoni were getting too close. I thought I would drop that little piece of quartz where you would find it, and turn you away, into another direction."

I thought for a while, and asked: "Pedro, Lee Shad knew this? You told him of the mine?"

"*Si,* he was my *jefe, señor.* He knew."

Lee Shad had known—all the while!

MOMENTS later Maya Morning came into the room, and I told her. She nodded slowly, and at length, said:

"There's a saying among the *Indios,* half a legend, that men never find gold. They must buy it, pay its price. But I thought once—thought—"

"Yes?" I said after a while.

"Don, I knew you from the first moment, when you paced across the foreroom of the house, looked out the window—while I stood watching you. You aren't good at deceiving people. I tried to make you tell me the truth in those days—many times. But when I saw Shad, Don—then I was afraid. Afraid, terribly afraid—for you."

"For me?"

She nodded ever so little.

"You mean—" I asked uncertainly, not daring to believe—at first. "All that you did— Sadoni meant nothing to you?"

She nodded again, very slowly. Then she said simply: "The odds were too heavy. I had to fight for you, Don—try to."

I knew suddenly, then, the fight that she had made, and it was like a blow that stuns—fighting only as she could. Moments seemed to pass. It was forbidden, but I got from my improvised chair and went toward her, and she waited. . . . . I had thought that I knew Maya Morning, knew something of the depths of her character.

Names of men, and fools! How little I had known!

THE END

REAL EXPERIENCES

Caught in the 'Spout

By **Thomas Henry**

One of the most extraordinary experiences that ever befell a man is here vividly described.

INVARIABLY my bump of curiosity has gotten me into trouble. It proved no exception on an occasion when I was in the Bahamas, on a diving job for the British Government, in the summer of 1924.

From the first time I saw the sponge-fishing fleet lying off the island of Nassau, I determined to spend a day among them.

We were working seven days a week, but my opportunity came at last on a beautiful Sunday morning. Due to the failure of an air-compressor on the diving barge which could not be repaired before Tuesday, I was able to get away for the day.

Starting off in a small boat with Mose, my native tender, we soon covered the mile or so between the island and the fleet.

On a placid sea lay the boats, riding at anchor behind the keys. Not a cloud was in the sky, and the visibility was very clear. It looked as though one could reach out and touch some of the reefs that formed the keys behind which the boats were lying. In fact, all was so tranquil and serene that one could not but feel that the panorama was a stage setting rather than actuality.

Upon reaching our objective, Mose was hailed by an acquaintance on one of the boats and we were invited on board. Hardly had we landed on deck when one of the crew who was splicing a line in the fore-top shouted to the deck and pointed to the horizon. My untrained eyes could see nothing. I intimated this to Mose, who grabbed my arm in a viselike grip and hoarsely shouted: "My Gawd, Mr. Boss, is you blind? Did you eber see so many 'spouts in all your life?"

No, I never had. One would have suited me at any time, but now they were appearing as if by magic. I could count at least twenty. It was unreal. I could have understood had the sky been overcast, or the sea rough.

Already things were beginning to be disturbed. The undertow, rushing toward the great columns of water, caused the boats to tug at the anchor lines. The water moved swiftly, like so much oil. The temperature dropped rapidly, but not a breath of wind was felt. For a moment I took my eyes off the spouts which were rapidly approaching, and glanced around and overboard.

Stark fear was registered on the faces of those on board and a deathlike silence prevailed over the entire fleet. Mere man was helpless against this awful force of Nature. Nothing could be done. The weird stillness was broken only by a moaning, swishing

sound that I likened to the sound made by a northern blizzard that one hears from the protection of a spruce swamp.

Consternation reigned among the marine life. One could see the fish darting hither and thither as though fleeing from some unseen foe. I caught the shadow of a big hammerhead shark as he dived in against the keys for safety. These impressions all passed through my mind in a matter of seconds, and I wondered what means the natives would take to meet the peril.

Apparently there were none. There were the waterspouts a quarter of a mile away, approaching us at better than thirty knots, and we lay directly in their path. They looked like soldiers going over the top.

MY eyes were focused on the largest, which, like a leader, was somewhat in advance of the others. A huge column of green water, fully a hundred feet in diameter at the base, it narrowed to thirty feet at the top. It rose like the stem of a wine-glass for two hundred feet where it spread out again like a huge mushroom. The others were smaller, but exact replicas.

Breaking from the line, like a plane leading a flight, it headed directly toward us.

I felt a sickening sensation as I heard the anchor chain snap and we were sucked, stern first, into the vortex. Instinctively I clutched at the lashings on a hatch and my becoming entangled in the lines proved my salvation. The stern of the craft started to rise. Up—up—in a twisting motion. The air pressure and suction in the center was terrific.

How far the boat was drawn up I do not know. But I distinctly remember that the loosened hatch, with me on it, was jerked free and on upward. All the time I endured this terrible twisting under awful pressure. It seemed an age before this lessened and I was just semi-conscious as I started to fall. Down—down—a jar—still down—and I had enough reason left to know I was under the water. Instinctively I held my breath as I was forced up to the surface of the sea. . . . .

THEY found me floating with the lashing twisted about me, on top of the hatch. I must have come down on the outside of the spout, been forced down into the sea by the tons of falling water, and brought to the surface by the buoyancy of the hatch.

Certainly I was in bad shape. For days I passed through the experience over and over again. It was my cot in the hospital that would start to rise. I would grab a pillow to serve as a hatch and the scene would be complete. My nerves were a wreck. In addition I suffered from a type of paralysis characteristic of divers who have been brought up too quickly from deep water where they have been subjected to extreme air-pressure.

I never saw Mose again.

Of the twenty-three boats and one hundred and twenty men comprising the fleet, only seven of the craft escaped disaster. Strange to say, they were not even capsized.

The spectacle, as witnessed from shore, was related to me by a pal who stayed to help work on the broken air-compressor.

From the first appearance of the spouts until they were gone, the time was less than twenty minutes. The smaller spouts had deployed around the fleet of boats and left the work of destruction to the giant. The smaller ones veered around a point of the island, but not the big one. It took a course across the point, spreading destruction in its path and dropping hundreds of tons of water, uprooting trees and destroying huts. Upon reaching the sea on the other side, it immediately picked up in size again, as it raced in pursuit of the others.

SOME authorities claim that a waterspout is a solid column of water. Perhaps some are, but I know one that was not. This spout was hollow—and the pressure inside was terrific.

In conclusion, my idea is that a waterspout is just the same as the twister of the plains. The highly compressed, rotating air merely picks up the water as, on land, the cyclone picks up the dust of the prairies which often looks like moisture. It is well to avoid contact with either.

Previous to this experience I could work in ninety feet of water and not suffer from the air-pressure of the pumps. Now it bothers me to work in thirty feet. Doctors say this is due to the extreme pressure to which I was subjected while in the grip of the spout.

At present I am working in shallow water and am in a country where at least Nature does not play her pranks with water out of a clear sky. My insatiable curiosity to investigate is still with me, and I often wonder to what next it will lead me. Here's hoping that it is not quite so severe an experience as I had when I visited the sponging fleet off the Island of Nassau!

In the Box Car

By
W. R. Baker

A harvest worker runs into a tremendously exciting adventure.

ABOUT twenty years ago this fall I quit my job on a farm in New York State, and started for the Western harvest fields expecting to make seven or eight dollars a day.

In the course of time and events I found myself on a freight train in Minnesota, bound for the Dakotas. As I rode along I noticed that the wheat harvest was just starting in the western part of the State, and I decided that this would be a good place to try my luck.

Shortly after, the train stopped at Appleton, and I got off. About an hour later I was hired by a farmer who said he had ten days' work.

Of course I had picked out a year when the grain crop was light and the labor crop heavy. So I didn't get seven or eight dollars a day, nor even five; I got four dollars a day with board and "room," and I worked fifteen hours a day to get that.

But I was young and tough and I understood the work; the man I was working for passed along the word that I was a "good man," and this helped me to get other work around there. Altogether I earned two hundred dollars, spent nothing, and decided to call it a season.

When the last farmer had paid me off I was twenty miles from the railroad, and the only way I had to get to it was to walk, which I did. I followed a wagon-track trail across the prairie to a place called Milan, about eight miles east of Appleton, only to find when I got there that no passenger train would stop there before the next day. I was told, however, that I could do much better if I cared to walk to Appleton, which even then was a good-sized town.

Although I had just finished a six-hour walk I was not tired. In fact, after chasing a "binder" around for nearly two months, a little straight walking was a relief. So I bought a few crackers and started along the railroad track, expecting to be in Appleton by five or six o'clock that evening.

I noticed an old shed that stood near the track, about an eighth of a mile west of the village, but paid no particular attention to it because I saw no signs of life around it, nor for that matter anywhere else. So I was a little startled, just as I had passed it to hear some one say:

"Hey! What's your hurry?"

I TURNED rather quickly, and saw the man I have always remembered as "The Weathervane."

He was seated against the west end of

the shed, eating something which he had evidently just cooked. When I turned toward him he invited me over to share his meal.

For a moment I hesitated; I had heard tales of harvest workers being hijacked, or whatever it was called in those days, but the social instinct prevailed and I joined him.

"You heading west?" he inquired, after we had eaten.

I thought it best to keep to myself my financial condition and my real intentions, so I said I was going east but thought my chances to get a freight would be better at Appleton.

I know now that this "red herring" was no good. The Weathervane knew as soon as he got a good look at me that I had just finished working in the harvest, that I had made a stake and probably had it with me.

How did he know? Well, the grain in that country was thick with Canadian thistle, and my hands, face and neck were covered with scratches, some of them quite fresh! But I didn't think of that then, and my companion gave no hint that he knew.

"And which way are you going?" I asked him.

"Well," he said, "I'm like a weathervane; whichever way the winds of chance turn me, that's the way I go. Just now I'm pointing east."

BEFORE I could frame a reply to this odd fancy, he continued:

"If you are going east, you're all right where you are; there's a through eastbound freight due here about now that stops to let the limited through. If you want to ride it you can be in Minneapolis tomorrow morning. That's where I'm going and how."

I figured that this would save me a lot of carfare, and the Weathervane seemed friendly and harmless, so I decided to do as he suggested, and said so.

"All right," he said, "but let me put you wise to something: It's harder to ride east on this road than it is to ride west, and a little hard-luck story will help. Turn your coat inside out and let me fix you up a nice black eye with a piece of burnt wood. If the brakeman says anything you can say you was beaten and robbed. I'll do a little fixing myself and pretend I was hurt with a threshing outfit."

IT all seems silly now, but I was a greenhorn on the "road," and I believed all he told me. So he fixed me up to his satisfaction, and then tied a rag around his own head and practiced walking with a limp, while he instructed me in what to say and how to act if the brakeman should challenge us.

About four o'clock the freight came along and stopped on the siding. While it waited for the limited we climbed into an empty box car which stood with both doors open almost opposite the shed where we were waiting.

In a short time the limited roared by; a few minutes later I heard some one walking outside, and a moment after the brakeman appeared at the door of our car and looked in.

He was a big man, and a savage-looking brute. The floor of the car was level with his chest, and he raised both hands to rest on the floor. In one hand he held a club or brakestick and in the other he had an ugly-looking revolver.

He saw me first, and looked around without saying anything until he saw my companion, who was lying on the floor and groaning near one end of the car.

No doubt we looked quite harmless. I was certainly apprehensive and probably showed it, while my "black eye" must have been convincing in the shadow in which I stood. As for the Weathervane, he seemed completely down and out.

At all events the brakeman put his gun away before he said to me:

"What's the matter with that bum?" nodding toward the Weathervane.

Following my instructions I said he had got hurt on a threshing machine, and was going to the hospital at Montevideo.

"What are you riding on?" he asked, meaning did we have any money to give him.

I said that I had been robbed and was broke.

"Broke, eh? We'll see about that. If you are trying to ride my train on nothing you'll go to the hospital with that bum!" Evidently he had no doubts about the Weathervane.

Just then the engineer whistled, and the brakeman gave the signal to go ahead.

WHEN the train started, he walked alongside for a few minutes, and then suddenly jumped up and climbed into our car.

He first looked at the Weathervane, who was doubled up on the floor and groaning as though in great pain, and then started toward me as I backed away to the end of the car opposite the Weathervane.

I realized that the brakeman intended to use his club on me, and I suppose my expression betrayed my fear. But without actually looking at the Weathervane I had seen him get noiselessly up and creep toward us, and some change in my expression must have warned the brakeman, for he gave a swift glance behind, and reached for his gun—but he was too late.

The "injured" man was standing about six feet away. The rag he had tied around his head was pulled down to make a mask, and his right hand was holding a man-sized gun on a line with the brakeman's stomach!

"Right in the belly, if you make a wrong move!" he said.

I COULD see the brakeman's face pale as he let the hand holding his club drop slowly to his side, but he made no answer.

The Weathervane waved me aside as he took a step nearer. Then to the brakeman:

"You haven't got a chance in the world, and I only want an excuse to let you have it. So don't do anything I don't tell you to do! Drop that stick!"

It fell near my feet and I kicked it aside.

Next he made the brakeman lie face down on the floor, and had me tie his hands and feet together with a roll of picture wire, which he took from a pocket in his shirt. Evidently the Weathervane had come prepared for this job!

I made a good job of tying, you may be sure. And when I had finished the Weathervane proceeded thoroughly to search the prostrate brakeman.

From a belt around the brakeman's waist he took a large amount of money, which he stuffed in his own pockets without counting. I could see, however, that there were a number of ten and twenty-dollar bills.

In an inside pocket of the brakeman's jacket was a bill-fold which seemed to contain papers rather than money.

AFTER examining some of these, the Weathervane turned to the brakeman and said:

"You're not only a crook, but you're a damn' fool; there's evidence enough here to send you up for life! Don't forget that when you describe the man who tied you up. If we're pinched, you're out of luck. Got that?"

The brakeman nodded to show that he "had it." From the moment, in fact, that he turned and saw the Weathervane standing with leveled gun, that brakeman did not speak to us again.

OF course I will never know just how long all this action took; but we were still quite a way from Montevideo when the Weathervane told me to remove my make-up and get ready to jump when the train slowed down.

He must have sensed that I was nervously anxious, for he drew me aside and said in an undertone:

"Don't worry, kid; I don't want your bank-roll; if I did, I'd have taken it when I first met you. I came here to kill this guy! But I changed my mind when you came along to help me snare him. During the last month he has beaten and robbed a lot of harvest workers, and then thrown them off his train. The doors of this car were left open as a bait, but this time he didn't get fish. Don't worry about him making a squawk. He wont. These papers are our salvation. He wouldn't identify us if we were caught!"

He didn't tell me what the papers were about and I didn't ask him. All I wanted was to get safely out of that country.

When the train finally slowed down, about a mile west of Montevideo, we jumped out, leaving the brakeman just as he was, without even gagging him.

THE next few hours were a nightmare for me, but nothing happened. The Weathervane left me as soon as we left the car, and I have never seen him since, nor want to.

It was quite dusk when I got to the town, and there were quite a few people on the main street; many of them, I suppose, harvest workers.

My worst moments were when I bought a ticket for Minneapolis, and boarded the train. If there was only one policeman there, then I saw him many times. But, as I say, nothing untoward happened, and I got away safely.

I suppose the brakeman was missed when the train stopped, but when or whether he was released, I never knew.

Shooting a Crater Fire

By

Tex Thornton

Putting out gigantic oil-well fires by means of a nitroglycerin explosion is the parlor diversion by which Mr. Thornton gains his livelihood.

I AM an oil-well shooter. As I say in advertising: "I bring 'em in, and put 'em out;" that is, I shoot wells to start the oil flow, or to increase it, and I shoot burning wells to extinguish the fire—both with nitroglycerin.

Hairbreadth escapes from death or terrible burns are all in the day's work, and no more than I expect. I am so accustomed to danger that I give it little thought. I think I know how to handle nitroglycerin, and properly handled it is as harmless as a dove. The thing that actually "gets" me about my work is witnessing the tragedies which so frequently occur. I have seen some of my best friends horribly mangled, scalded, or blown to bits.

One night I planted a shot in a well I was to bring in, arranging for it to be set off some hours later. I then went to my shack for a little rest. I heard a terrible explosion and dashed out to find the well on fire, the crew of seven workers lying about dead, in the light of the roaring flames.

I live in Amarillo, Texas, and most of my experiences are in the Panhandle oil-field, sixty miles from there—the largest field in the world; but I am called to all parts of the United States. I have extinguished about three hundred seventy-five fires, some of them the most appalling on record.

An ordinary oil-well fire can usually be put out by the bridle-and-steam method; but in the case of the big gassers, such as we have here in the Panhandle, producing from one hundred forty million to two hundred million cubic feet of gas, or an oil gusher, nitroglycerin is the only satisfactory method. Last year I put out a fire in a well that was producing fifteen thousand barrels of oil and fifty thousand feet of gas. Steam would scarcely affect such a fire.

SINCE I am not permitted to transport my explosives by rail, I take them overland in a truck designed especially for that purpose. It is popularly known as my "death - wagon" — a twenty - eight - pound pressure will set off my nitro. I am not bothered with passengers, I assure you!

There are a number of causes for fires in an oil-field: lightning, friction, sparks from clashing cables, and so forth. It takes anywhere from two hours to several days to extinguish a fire, depending on the size of it. The time consumed goes into the preparation; the fire is extinguished instantly. All irons lying about the fire must be taken away; since they are red-hot, they would cause the well to ignite again after the fire is out. I fasten the pipes, and débris from the burned derrick, to a cable attached to a windlass and by this method they are drawn to one side. In order to do this I work within a few feet of fires visible for fifty miles around, and whose furious tearing roar causes the ground to tremble for a radius of several hundred yards. When at work I dress in asbestos clothing, shoes and helmet.

From twenty to several hundred quarts of nitroglycerin may be used in shooting a

fire. When everything is in readiness, I take the explosive, which has been emptied into galvanized iron tubes about four inches in diameter, holding as much as thirty each, to the fire, about four feet away. Then by means of a slanting cable which has been stretched between two tripods, I slide the shot to within a foot of the fire. Should I place it in the fire the gas pressure would blow it too far to one side, or up in the air, and the explosion would do no good. It takes about three minutes for a shot to explode. I put it where I want it and then *run!* A man can go a long way in three minutes if he wants to right bad. The explosion puffs out the fire as you would blow out a candle.

ONE of the most terrible fires I ever saw was one occurring at Corpus Christi, Texas, last January. It had been burning for two weeks when I was called on to take charge of it. The owners of the well had exhausted every method known to them in trying to extinguish the fire, at an expenditure of eleven thousand dollars. The well was a gasser making twenty-one million feet —not so great as gassers go, but the minute I looked her over I knew I had one of the meanest jobs I had ever tackled.

The mouth of the well was in a crater which had been formed by gas-pressure. At first the mouth of the well was on a level with the ground, but somewhere down in the well a pipe had collapsed and was being shot skyward in pieces from two to six feet in length. With the pipe that governs the trend of the gas gone, the gas was now blowing out in the shape of a funnel, bringing the pay sand from the twenty-four-hundred foot level with it. It was scooping the earth from around the mouth of the well and sweeping it into the air whence it would fall to the edge of the crater and roll back down, only to be swept out again. Finally, there was a rim of black dirt and sand five feet deep encircling the crater. When I first saw the fire the crater was about one hundred feet deep; before I got the fire out it was twice that deep, and ninety feet across.

One of the strangest and most interesting sights I ever saw were the formations that appeared in that fire. Great chunks of coalesced mud and sand would be hurled upward twenty or thirty feet above the earth and held there for some minutes by gas-pressure. They would take on fantastic shapes, such as a piano or a horse. Eventually they would work out of the fire and fall with a horrible spattering of hot mud.

THE big problem in extinguishing this fire lay in cooling the earth around it, so that it would not ignite the gas after the fire was out. By cooling, I mean taking off the red-hot heat. The walls of the crater, the rim, and the ground for twenty feet back of the rim were red-hot. Altogether our proposition looked like a young volcano.

The sand had melted, forming a glaze over the rim of the crater. It was so slick that my assistant and I had to drive tacks in the soles of our asbestos shoes to keep from slipping into the crater when we were at work Of course, the water we poured on it immediately ran off, doing no good at all; we had to blast the rim to pieces before we could cool it.

Our water, ten thousand barrels of it, had been obtained under the most annoying circumstances. The well was situated on a cliff two miles from the bay and we had to pump the water up to it. This would have been no great undertaking had the wind not changed to the north so frequently; but when it did the tide would recede and our pumps would stop. We were nine days getting enough water.

We had a canal five feet deep leading from our reservoir to the well, and through this the water poured into the crater—a horrible inferno of fire, steam, mud and sand. For twenty feet back from the crater the slush was waist deep.

It was not practicable to carry the explosive through this; anyway, it had to be under water to keep from being set off from the heat; so I waded down the canal with it. I slid the shot, ninety quarts, on a wire submerged in the water, down the stream and into the crater. Then I got away from there in a hurry.

I had gone but thirty feet when the explosion came. It was like a cyclone slamming me on the back, pushing me almost faster than my legs could go. I have never done such running in my life! My assistant, who was somewhere behind me, was thrown forward on his face. He got up instantly, but failed to note that everything was over, so he, too, ran like a madman. We nearly died laughing when we realized what we were doing—our mirth hurt us worse than the concussion!

We had been back in Amarillo one week when the well caught again, and all our work was to do over.

My Longest Five Minutes

By

Will R. Bird

Few men have gone through a more nerve-racking experience than that encountered by this visitor in the enemy trenches.

ON a certain July night in 1917 a patrol of ten men went out from the trenches of the Canadian Black Watch to explore a portion of No Man's Land in the vicinity of Mericourt. The area between fronts in that locality was over two hundred yards in width, cultivated land dotted with a few shell-holes, affording a clear field of observation. On successive evenings we had heard Fritz tinkering at his wire on our extreme right. The most searching scrutiny with field-glasses during the day failed to find any marked changes in front of his lines, so Brigade ordered a reconnaissance by our battalion.

The officer in charge of the patrol was a quiet young fellow who was always wondering, and who would take any chance —with you. When you were out with him you never knew what mad ideas he would develop with that "wondering" habit of his.

For instance, on the crater line at Vimy he had "wondered" if it were not possible to dress in white, and, with the added advantage of a snowstorm, go right in to Heinie's wire. The scheme worked to perfection, but they couldn't get through the wire, and in their excitement and the snow flurries they lost their sense of direction and re-visited the Hun three times before they landed back in their own trench, badly scared and badly frost-bitten.

We were to patrol to the left of our front, get in close to his wire as possible and work right. Every effort was to be made to locate the meaning of the mysterious work at his wire, and we were to avoid scrapping. Two hundred yards away from possible support was no place to start anything with Fritz.

It was one of those warm, still nights that seem made for devilish work. The

officer spread us fan-wise, five men on each wing, all armed with automatics and Mills bombs. For the first hundred yards it was a picnic. Fritz was not sending up any flares and the rough contour of the ground would give us cover if we encountered unexpected shooting. When little more than halfway over we lay still a long time, listening, and the officer had just given the word to move forward when the unmistakable twang of a cut wire came sharply from our right. Fritz was busy again at the same place. We lay longer and heard a shovel clang against some iron, heard clinks of steel as if the wielder of tools was not particular whether he were heard or not.

OUR officer signaled advance and we went on for twenty-five yards; then he crawled over to our flank. I was the end man and he halted beside me. "I was wondering," he said, "what the devil Fritz means by making so much noise. This is four nights he's been up to this stunt—and I believe he's making the racket on purpose."

"On purpose!" I whispered. "What's his idea?"

"He's got something over here, right ahead of us or to our left, that he doesn't want discovered. I remember when he pulled the same trick on us down at the Somme. He had us all watching for a wiring party in one place—while one of his crowds sneaked in from another point and cleaned out a post over on our left. No sir, I never trust old Fritz. I was wondering if we hadn't better keep on straight ahead and get in close to his wire."

We did. We crawled so close to the Hun trench that we could hear some guy getting blistered in German for something he did or didn't do. And before long we knew that there was an unusual activity on this part of his line. Men were shoveling and tugging over some digging operations; there were scrapings of heavy boots on planks and a steady muttering of their language. The officer squirmed over to me again. "I was right in wondering about their trick," he crowed. "Now all we got to find out is what they're doing."

"Exactly," I agreed, "but I guess that'll be a new story."

HE lay still for a spell and then squeezed my arm. "Listen, old-timer," he whispered, eager as a kid. "This is the chance of a lifetime!"

My heart sank; I wanted to go sick right then—I knew this officer! "A crew is no good here," he went on, "for one man can do the trick. It'll be a good stunt for you. Just locate his works and find out what's going on. I'll take the rest over on the right and kick up enough fuss to make him think his scheme is perfect. He'll be on his toes over there where he's trying to fool us, and down here you'll never be noticed."

"Sounds slick," I answered, "but how am I going to find out what he's doing? I can't ask him."

"Next thing to it," he said. "You can have a look. Find a lane in his wire and crawl inside. Don't make any more noise than you can help and keep low. He's so busy you'll never be seen. I'll rustle along now. Good luck."

What could I do with a guy like that?

After trying to figure a way out of my job I gave up, and began to edge in close to the barbed wire. I nearly threw a fit when a Fritz sneezed, not fifteen feet away, in the Hun trench. Foot by foot I felt along the wire. The Huns were tramping up and down their trench and making sounds like bullfrogs. No flares went up and I thought there was no one on guard until I spotted four of their "coal-scuttle" bonnets stuck up over the parapet as if they were on stakes, and I knew that under each one was over a big fat Heinie, with his eyes and ears working overtime. Then I came to a lane in his wire and crept into it by inches.

A moment later a few drops of rain hit my back and a wind began to stir. I knew we were in for one of those sudden showers we got in France, when it seemed as if the old man threw a barrel of water out the back door.

I was sprawled there, listening, looking, hardly breathing, when—*tramp, tramp*—I heard heavy feet pounding on the ground. Being with my ear in the grass the sounds appeared very near and I didn't need anyone to explain that a Fritzie patrol was coming in from No Man's Land and intended to use the lane in which I was spread.

One second I was shivering and my teeth chattering, the next instant I was in a hot sweat. I looked back, ahead, right and left so fast that my brain got dizzy, and then did the only thing left to do. I got up and walked right into the Heinie trench, slipping down a little incline and bringing up against a parados of sandbags. It was dark as a pocket and that saved me, for no

one gave challenge. I was too flustered to do anything but feel my way along to the left enough to clear the lane entrance. I just happened to turn that way—might as easily have gone in the other direction—and that was where old Lady Luck came into the game. The scouting party came in and—turned right!

I HAVE heard that men go into a daze when they are captured and since that night I've known what that expression means. I wasn't a prisoner exactly, but I was too dumbfounded to know what it was all about or to make a move until it was too late to go back out the lane. An ox of a Heinie, who towered high in the skyline, came from the direction the patrol had taken and took up post right in front of the lane, and at the same second I saw that a machine-gun was mounted not twenty feet farther on. If I could down the big fellow with my automatic I could hardly hope to dodge the spray of machine-gun bullets that would be sure to follow. A few flares went up away over on our right and I knew the officer was trying to draw attention there. Some machine-guns began to rattle and the promised shower commenced.

I began to come out of my daze and sneaked along a few steps till I bumped into some projection with my knees. It didn't take two minutes to find that Fritz was making preparations to send over a beautiful gas attack. He had his apparatus all installed, projectors that would fire the long shell containers, and I realized the value of my information. It was so dark that I dared not move quickly for fear of coming on a Heinie sentry unawares. I could only make out things above the level of the parapet, mainly a wire barricade that would take an hour to cut through. Then, just ahead of me, a light flickered for a second and I saw a small Fritz standing at the mouth of a dugout with a match in his hand, trying to spread a sort of poncho or rubber sheet preparatory to throwing it over his shoulders.

He was alongside one of those triangular gas alarms, and I knew he was the sentry for the dugout entrance. The beggar saw me just as his match flared out and he grunted something in their rough jargon. It was now or never. I grunted something in return and walked up to him, carelessly, all set to strike with the butt of my revolver. But somehow the little fellow sensed all was not well and he dodged just as I hit, caught his heels, and pitched backwards down that deep dark dugout, leaving me with his rubber sheet in my hand. His "coal bucket" was knocked from his head by an overhead timber and it rolled to my feet. He must have been wearing long boots for I heard a tremendous *thwack* of something hit heavily far below. Then all was still for a couple of watch-ticks.

I stood there, holding the German's waterproof, listening for that big buck back at the wire lane to come charging in to find what had happened. He didn't come and I was just drawing a long breath when I heard the slither of boots in the mud farther on. I swung round like a cat. It was too late to do anything! Outlined over the parapet came a whole row of bobbing "coal scuttle" hats, a Heinie carrying-party, and they would have to pass where I stood. I just had sense enough to throw that Heinie sheet around my shoulders and clap that tin bucket on my head that the sentry had lost, when the first sausage-grinder was coming in the bay. Again the dark saved me. Apparently they hadn't noticed my movements, and I squeezed in the corner by the gas alarm with my back to them, trembling all over.

THE five minutes that followed were the longest on record. I hardly dare breathe. Tramp, tramp, went feet right behind me, bodies bumped against mine. Squelch, squelch, went a guy with wet feet. Each man was puffing and grunting, and each fellow seemed to halt at my back, and look me up and down. Each second I expected a hand to grab me by the back of the neck and yank me out of my corner. But no one halted exactly. Some of the last to pass were chewing the fat as they went by and one spoke so suddenly, right back of me, that I half turned in spite of myself. It was just a glance, but my heart hung on dead center for a full minute afterward. Yet they could not have seen my white-faced terror. I saw that they were carrying the long gas containers to place in the projectors.

When the last man had passed I let my shoulders straighten and looked around. For about the tenth time that night I was dizzy, for there in the bay, a couple of steps away, were two more of the Kaiser's pets, talking low to each other. I lived years and my hair ought to have turned white right then. They were looking at

me, pointing now and again with their hands. My back and legs went "gooseflesh" and I got to shaking so that I put out one hand to take hold of something—and nearly yelled. I had seized on the cold barrel of the sentry's rifle that was jammed into the parapet in front of me. It may sound strange, but up to the time I touched that rifle I had forgotten about the chap who went down cellar so sudden. Now I sweated more as I wondered whether he was crawling back up again or not, or when some guy would go down. Then one of the pair behind me barked "Otto."

Who was "Otto"? Was it me or the other fellow? Thinking the game was over, I fingered the rubber sheet clear of my gun and got set for action and—along came the big ox who had stood sentry at the wire lane. He wheezed by me like a horse, and I saw him salute. At that instant a gust of wind whipped sheets of rain into the bay, almost blinding me. The Huns ducked, turned their backs, and then stepped into the dugout entrance. I snapped into high speed, the quickest I ever did in my life.

IN three seconds I was plunging through the wire lane. I caught the rubber sheet on some barbs but never stopped or let go of it and I was halfway home before Fritz sent up a shower of flares into the rain and opened fire with every machine-gun he had in the trench. Luckily I found a shell-hole, and I never minded the rain one particle, though it was twenty minutes before the Heinies let me go in. They seemed real peeved—maybe the chap that fell down the steps got hurt. Things moved fast when I got in and old Fritz must have swore for a week. The artillery opened up and busted in his front trench, gas works and all, making him have all that work for nothing.

An order came from Brigade thanking the scout officer for his splendid work, and that was all that resulted, except that my tunic remained too big for me. I never regained my full size again after the shrinking I did by that Heinie gas alarm, but there is one thing I've got as a souvenir of that evening that I wont sell for a hundred bones. It's a Heinie rubber sheet.

If reference is required, I was a corporal of Number Fourteen Platoon, "D" Company, Forty-second Royal Highlanders of Canada, serving in trenches from December 6th, 1916, to November 11th, 1918. The night mentioned was July 14th, 1917.

To Fish or Not to Fish

By

Fred Blanchard

PAWPAW BAYOU in the river-bottom land held no attraction for the game fisherman with his rod and reel. It was filled with sunken logs and tree-tops, and woven-wire fences crossed it in at least three places to provide water for as many pastures. But to me, twelve years old, and as yet able to catch only catfish and perch, and an occasional drum, it was paradise.

The month was July; the day was Sunday, and the hour, ten A. M. I had seated myself comfortably between the protruding roots of an overhanging cypress, my can of worms within reach. Already two yellow catfish about ten inches long had rewarded my,—I started to say effort, but there was none,—and thoughts of cockleburrs and crabgrass that would engage my attention the following days were very remote. I was happy.

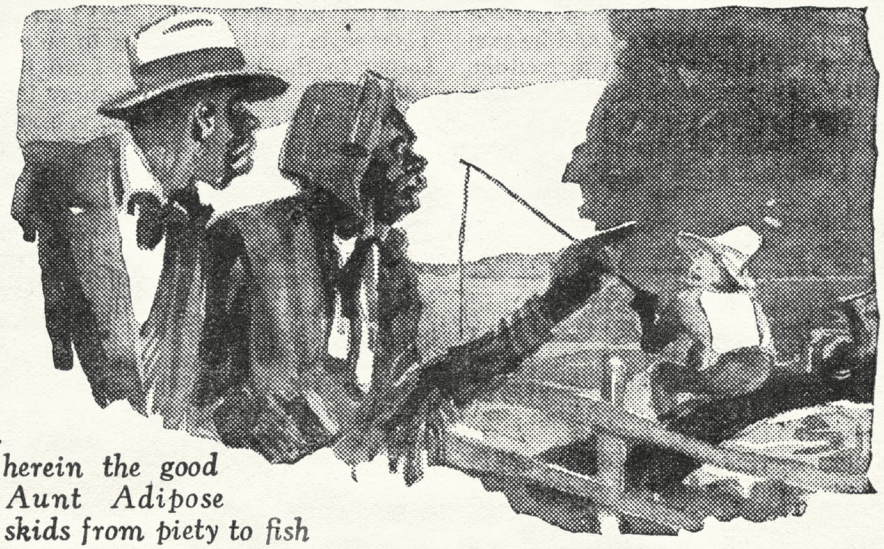
"White boy, doesn't you know that it is wrong to fish on a Sunday?" It was Aunt Adipose Coleman, our colored neighbor, for whom I had the highest respect. It was the season of religion, and she, with her husband, Uncle Bonaparte, was on her way to St. Paul's for the annual revival.

"Yes, Aunt Adipose," I replied.

"And doesn't you know that the Good Book say to remember the Sabbath day to keep it wholly without blemish and without spot? Doesn't you know that it say that it is a good thing to go up to the house of the Lord forever on Sunday morning?"

"Yes, Aunt Adipose, I know," I assented meekly.

I was almost converted, and nearly of a mind to go to Sunday-school that morning. But I had cut cockleburrs and crabgrass from endless rows of cotton the previous week, and by Saturday night my energy



Wherein the good Aunt Adipose skids from piety to fish

was at low ebb. I didn't have enough religion to boast about, either. Religion thrives best under less strenuous circumstances.

Then, suddenly, there was a steady jerk-jerk on my line, and another nice yellow catfish joined his comrades on the bank. Uncle Bonaparte saw my increasing good luck, and as he was not so religiously inclined as Aunt Adipose, he skidded nearly all the way from grace to fish. She must have noticed his wavering. "Come along, Boney," she said. "The Good Book do say to avoid the very appearance of the Evil One." He somewhat reluctantly followed her, and I adjusted myself once more to the comforts of my tree-roots.

About fifteen lazy July minutes floated slowly by. A red-and-white calf walked leisurely down to the water, waded in knee-deep, took a satisfying drink, then ambled back to his clover apparently without any thought of cockleburrs, cotton rows or Sunday school. "Being a calf," I thought, "is not without its advantages."

And then I saw Uncle Bonaparte coming to our tool-shed—not by the path that led directly to it, but by a roundabout way that kept him partly hidden by our garden fence. He came out a moment later carrying a long-handled shovel.

My curiosity was aroused and I determined to make an investigation. I tied my three catfish to a stout string and placed them in the water; then put out a well-baited hook to attract any straggler that might come along that way. I went around the lower end of the bayou and came up on the other side, hidden by the two rows of overhanging trees. I soon found Aunt Adipose and Uncle Bonaparte.

Spring rains had left a little string of pools extending some distance from the head of the bayou. These at first had been joined together, but as they dried up, there were left four or five separate holes not more than a foot or eighteen inches deep. I hid behind a pawpaw bush about thirty feet from the once church-bound pair. Uncle Bonaparte was industriously digging a trench from one pool to the next lower. After half an hour of honest toil the water began to run merrily down, and in a few more minutes the pool was nearly dry. But not empty! For there lay, gasping, a sleek yellow mud-cat that would weigh ten pounds if he weighed an ounce.

UNCLE BONAPARTE cut a strip of bark from a pawpaw bush, ran it through the gills of the fish and made a loop to carry the precious burden. He hid the long-handled shovel behind a log to be returned to its proper place some other time. Then the pair turned their faces opposite to the direction of St. Paul's, or in other words, homeward. Instead of going down the path that led by our house, they crossed over into old man Henson's cornfield, and within a few minutes were safe at home unseen by any eye save mine. I returned to my hook, added a small catfish to my string, and decided to fish no more that day.

I was interested in the house of Adipose and Bonaparte. Soon smoke could be seen coming from the stovepipe that pierced the roof of the lean-to of their little cabin. I waited thirty minutes more, perhaps, an interval that seemed like hours, then made my way to what I knew was a sumptuous repast.

Aunt Adipose heard my footsteps as I came up the path, and when I reached the open front door, she had come through the opening leading to the lean-to, and had drawn the calico curtain to hide the kitchen table from my view.

"How was the service, Aunt Adipose?" I asked innocently.

"Whazzat?" she snapped.

I did not repeat my question, but raised my nose and began to sniff in the direction of the kitchen door.

"You good-fer-nuthin' young repperbate," she guffawed, "you come into this kitchen, and I'll fill your stomach so full you can't talk till you has forgotten what to say!"

I needed no further urging.

I saw an old cracked ham dish piled high with chunks of tender catfish, browned to the proper turn. There was cornbread, yellow egg cornbread, cut into convenient squares. There were onions and radishes, fresh and crisp, pulled from the garden that hour. And there was black coffee, steaming hot, waiting to be poured into tin cups.

I was ready for such a repast, and Uncle Bonaparte had been ready for some time, but Aunt Adipose had a little talk to make to her God, now mine as well.

LONG years have gone by—years filled with days not all to me as happy as that day. Still I think I can remember almost word for word that prayer:

"Dear Lord, I know that Thou sayest in Thy blessed word to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. And I know that Thou sayest that it is better to be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness forevermore. And I know, fu'thermore, that Thou sayest that it is better to have a grindstone tied around your neck than to offend one of these little ones. But—Lord, Thou also sayest in Thy blessed word to gather up the fragments that nothing be lost.

"What I want to say, Good Lord, is that us, that is, I and Uncle Boney, did not have no previous knowledge of the presence of that catfish. We was walking along on our way to St. Paul's. Our souls were filled to the very brim with holiness, and being filled fuller every minute. Then there was a loud splash in the puddle-hole on Uncle Boney's right hand. He say, that is, Uncle Boney, 'Whazzat?' I say, 'Mister Dad Arnold's old sow and pigs.' He say, 'No sirree, no sow and pigs don't make no noise like that.' And then we looked and there was a ripple where sunthin' had gone under a log in that water.

"Then, Good Lord, we remembered the text of the preachah of last evenin': 'Blessed are the merciful; and if youah ass falleth into the ditch on Sunday, to get it out.' We knew, Good Lord, that the hot July soon-to-be August sun would dry up that puddle-hole. That poor catfish would suffumcate and die an ignominibus death. Thou knowest, Good Lord, our hearts and the rest. We pray Thee to bless the church at St. Paul's and also the white folks' church at Horn Ridge. Bless all Thy believin' childern ever'where. Bless and be a father to this poor white boy that hasn't got no real pappy of his own. Save our souls, and make us thankful for what we are about to receive, we ask for Jesus'es dear sake, Amen."

To which Uncle Boney and I responded fervently, *"Amen!"*

$500 in Cash Prizes

AFTER reading these five stories of Real Experience, you may feel that you too can write, in two thousand words or less, a true story of Adventure, Mystery, Humor, Sport or Business that will be deserving of a prize. If you wish to try this, write the story in your own way and send it to the Real Experience Editor of The Blue Book Magazine, 36 South State Street, Chicago, with stamps for its return if the Editor doesn't retain it for publication. If he does keep it, the Magazine's check for one hundred dollars will be sent you. Be sure to write your name and correct address in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your story, and keep a copy as insurance against loss of the original; for while we handle manuscripts with great care, we cannot accept responsibility for their return.

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Give a thought, for instance, to the experience of H. A. Nelson—

On a June day in 1917, H. A. Nelson reached New York from Holland—without friends or relatives, and unable to speak English. The only job he could get was sweeping floors.

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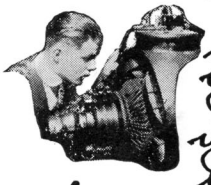

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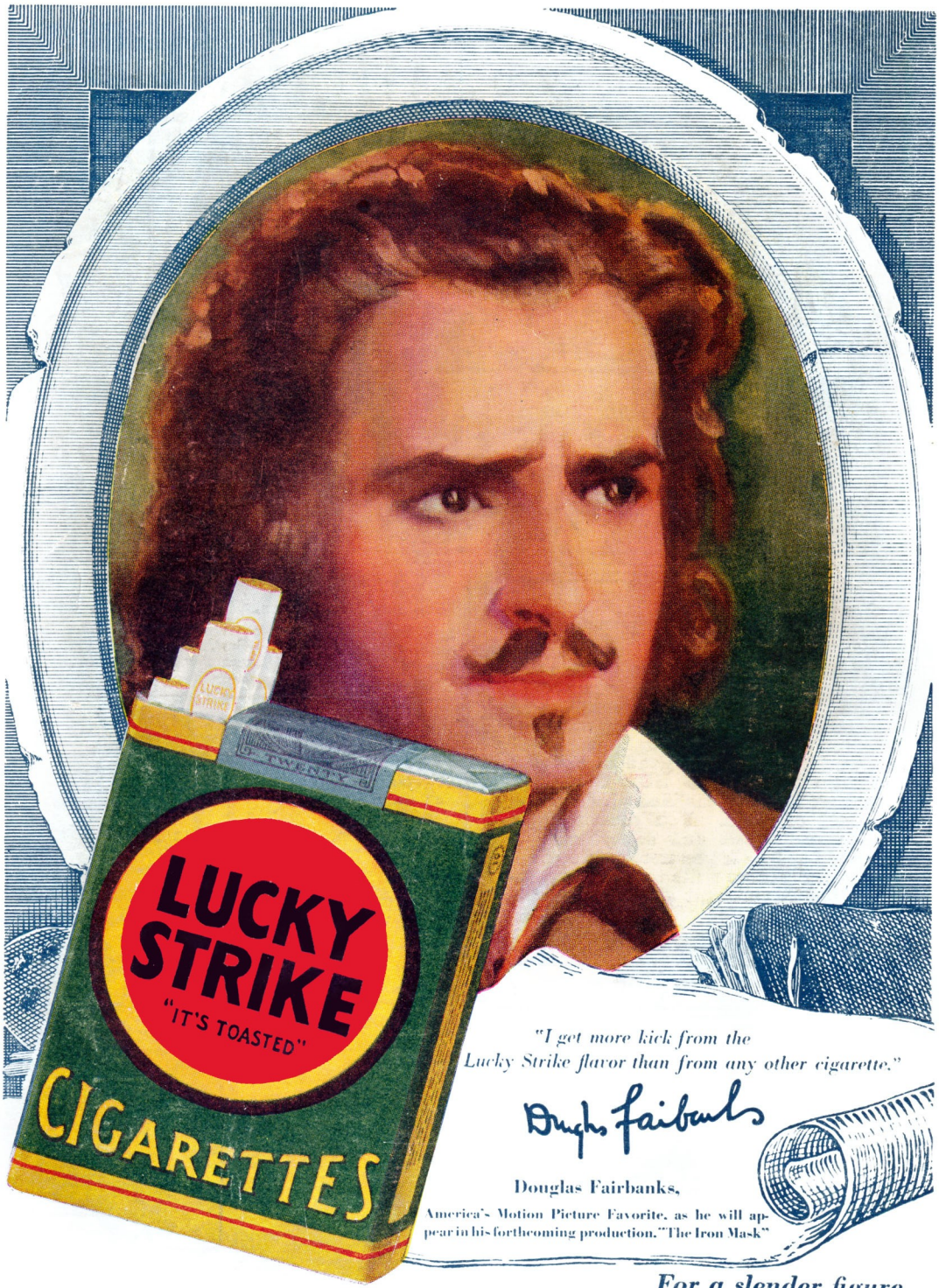

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