

Also in this April issue are three novels of exceptional power—"The Girl from God's Mercie," by William Byron Mowery, "Double Murder," by Rufus King, and "Mermaid and Centaur," by Rupert Hughes.

#### THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

of similar merit.

April issue now on sale

The Consolidated Magazines Corporation, Publisher, 36 So. State St., Chicago

## -and They Started By Reading This Amazing Book!



#### 300% Increase

reported b v reported by A. F. Thompson of Sioux City, Iowa, for mercreamery employee, after completing N. S. T. A. Course.

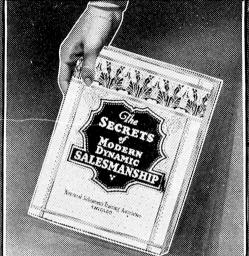






was the jump made by Mark Barichievich, San Fran-cisco, Cali-fornia, who rose from dishwasher to sale s man sales m a n through N.S. T. A.











#### More Money

now being made by L. H. Lundstedt, Chicago. N. H. Lundstedt, Chicago. N. S.T.A. train-ing helped raise him from a ste-nographer to head of business.

#### Where Shall We Send Your Copy...*FREE?*

A BOOK! Just seven ounces of paper and printer's ink—but it contains a most vivid and inspiring message that every ambitious man should read! It reveals facts and secrets that have led hundreds of men from every walk of life into success beyond their fondest expectations! So powerful and far-reaching has been the influence of this little volume that it is no wonder a famous business genius called it "The Most Amazing Book Ever Printed"!

This vital book, "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship," contains hundreds of surprising and little-known facts about the highest paid profession in the world. It reveals the real truth about the art of selling, It blasts dozens of lold theories, and tells exactly how the great sales records of nationally-known star salesmen are achieved. And not only that—it outlines a simple plan that will enable almost any man to master scientific salesmanship without spending years on the road—without losing a day or a dollar from his present position!

What This Actorishing Real Las

#### What This Astonishing Book Has Done!

The men who have increased their earning capacities as a direct result of "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship" are numbered in the thousands. For example, there is E. E. Williams of Pomona, Cal., who was struggling along in a minor position at a small salary. "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship" opened his eyes to opportunities he had never dreamed of—and he cast his lot with the National Salesmans. Training Association. Within a few short months of simple preparation, he was earning \$10,000 a year! Today he receives as much in 30 days as he formerly received in 365!

And then there is J. E. Muzzall, of Hopkinsville, Ky, He, too, read "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship" and found the answer within its pages. A former freight clerk and found the answer within its pages. A former freight clerk and found the answer within its pages. A former freight clerk and found the answer within its pages. A former freight clerk and found the answer within amount here cently reported yearly earnings running into five figures.

B. F. Bollon of Columbus, Ohio, wrote that his work as a salesman brought him annual earnings of \$5000—\$7000, an increase of 300% over his former income as a decorator. And F. L. Real of Wheeling, W. Va., a former cigar-maker, stepped into a position paying him \$4600 a year drawing account alone!

A Few Weeks—Then Bigger Pay

#### A Few Weeks-Then Bigger Pay

There was nothing "different" about these men when they started. Any man with average intelligence can duplicate the success they have achieved. For their experience proves that salesmen

are made—not "born," as some people have foolishly believed.
Salesmanship is just like any other profession. It has certain fundamental rules and laws—laws that you can master as easily as you learned the alphabet. Hundreds of men who never had a day's selling experience before acquiring this remarkable training have been extraordinarily successful, often beating the records of men with years of experience from the very first day.

#### YOUR INCOME MUL-TIPLIED OR YOU PAY NOTHING

NOTHING

N. S. T. A. is now offering, to every man who wants to increase his income, an amazing Double Money-Back bond that assures you a definite stipulated addition to your income, within three months after your training is completed—or the course costs you nothing. This daring offer is possible only because of the success of thousands of members. Remember, if you are really ambitious to increase your earnings, this opportunity is offered you by a million dollar institution, the oldest and largest of its kind in the world. Send coupon immediately for full details.

Free to Every Man

Free to Every Man

If we were asking several dollars a copy for "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship" you might hesitate. But it is now FREE. So get your copy now. Learn the real facts about the selling profession, and about the tremendous demand for trained salesmen in every line, to fill city and traveling positions paying up to \$5000 and \$11,000 a year. Last year this association received calls for over \$50,000 N. S. T. A. members from Wholesalers, Manufacturers and Jobers, "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship" tells the complete story in a vivid, inspiring way. A copy is yours for the asking, and your request entails no obligation. Simply fill out and mail the coupon. Do it now!

#### National Salesmen's Training Association

N. S. T. A. Bldg.

Dept. E-31

Chicago, Ill.

National Salesmen's Training Association,
Dept. E-31, N. S. T. A. Bldg., Chicago, Ill.
Without cost or obligation, send me your free book "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship." Also include a free copy of the new N. S. T. A. money-back bond that assures me a definite addition to my income within three months after completing training—or a complete refund of tuition fee.
Name
Address
City State
Age Occupation

### THE BLUE BOOK

EDWIN BALMER, Editor DONALD KENNICOTT, Associate Editor

Copyright, 1929, by The Consolidated Magazines Corporation (The Blue Book Magazine). Copyright, 1929, by The Consolidated Magazines Corporation in Great Britain and the Dominions.

Cover Design: Painted by Frank Hoban to illustrate "Tanar of Pellucidar." Frontispiece: "Men of the Frontier—Daniel Boone." Drawn by Paul Lehman.

T	7 A	7 7	C1	
I wo	<i>Wem</i>	orable	Serials	ş

I wo wemorable Serials	
Tanar of Pellucidar  Tarzan's companion-hero encounters terrific and fascinating adventures among gigantic beasts and ferocious men.  Glilustrated by Frank Hoban.)	34
The Lair of the Leopard  No man had ever returned from the savage Abyssinian jungle into which the naturalist Martindale of this story ventures. (Illustrated by Paul Lehman.)	90
Stirring Short Stories	
Three Who Would Hang  This captivating detective story deals with a crime which three men have separately confessed committing. (Illustrated by O. E. Hake.)	7
Madame Bluebeard By Beatrice Grimshaw In that strange far land New Caledonia occurs this brilliant story by the author of "The Wicked Island" and "The Singing Ghost." (Illustrated by Paul Lehman.)	21
The Chinati Hills Affair  The able flying-man and writing-man who gave us "The Episode of the Juxacanna" is in fine form here. (Illustrated by W. O. Kling.)	54
Egbert  A would-be murderer is fatally branded in this unusual and amusing tale. (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)	65
Crash Dive  A desperate adventure in the submarine service by the former commander of the S-11. (Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson.)	70
For the Old Bar Diamond  This dramatic story of cattle range and prize-ring is by the man who gave us "Vanishing Herds" and other good ones. (Illustrated by W. O. Kling.)	78
His Kind of Folks  A favorite BLUE BOOK writer contributes the faithful chronicle of a cowboy and a girl who was deceiving. (Illustrated by Frank Hoban.)	118
Free Lances in Diplomacy By Clarence Herbert New "When the Prince Came Home" employs recent events abroad to make one of the most absorbing stories of the year. (Illustrated by William Molt.)	125

THE CONSOLIDATED MAGAZINES CORPORATION, Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine, 36 South State Street, Chicago, Ill.

A forest ranger and two city criminals fight it out in the high Sierras. (Illus-

LOUIS ECKSTEIN President

CHARLES M. RICHTER Vice-President

The Day's Work

trated by William Molt.)

RALPH K. STRASSMAN Vice-President

By H. C. Wire 138

Office of the Director of Advertising, 420 Lexington Avenue, New York City, N. Y. LONDON OFFICES, 6 Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C. Entered as second-class matter July 24, 1906, at the post office at Chicago. Illimois, under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

### MAGAZINE

MAY, 1929

Special Notice to Writers and Artists:

Special voltes 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.

**Bridge Going Out** 

By Allison W. Ind 145

There's still romance in a railroad man's life, and this story is dramatic indeed. (Illustrated by Ben Cohen.)

#### A Thrill-filled Novelette

By Forbes Parkhill 154

The Empire of the Arctic

The author of "Nobody's Yes-Man" gives us a remarkable tale of airplane adventure in the Far North. (Illustrated by William Molt.)

Five Prize Stories of Real Experience

A Dog Accused

Dog Accused

This boy's dog was blamed for sheep-stealing—till the cougar appeared.

By C. H. Keeney 184

At White Horse Rips

White Horse Rips
A lumberman's hazardous adventure in the spring drive.

By Leonard W. Vinal 187

In No Man's Land By Captain Charles J. Sullivan 189 On the Italian front an American officer went through unforgetable hours.

Hoss Sense

By Tom Mikesell 192

Wherein a saddle-horse rescues his master.

The Boy and the Bandit

By David Rutherford 194

A youthful telegraph-operator outwits one of the Dalton gang.



#### Seven Anderton

He started life on a certain Section Seven in Nebraska, and was named for it. Since then he has traveled far, wide and handsome as a roving newspaper man. And his scrap-book contains clippings of his work, mostly signed, on over sixty different newspapers in over sixty different cities of these United States. Of late he has begun to capitalize his remarkable experiences in equally remarkable stories like "The Corpus Delicti" and, in this issue, "Three Who Would Hang." Next month we will probably print another of his vivid transcriptions from the life he has seen:

"The Medicine Man"

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: \$3.00 a year in advance. Canadian postage 50c per year. Foreign postage \$1.00 per year. Subscriptions are received by all newsdealers and booksellers, or may be sent direct to the Publisher. Remittances must be made by Draft, Post Office or Express Money Order, by Registered Letter or by Postage Stamps of 2-cent denomination, and not by check, because of exchange charges against the latter.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Do not subscribe for THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE through an agent unknown to you personally, or you may find yourself defrauded. Many complaints are received from people who have paid cash to some swindler, in which event, of course, the subscription never reaches this office.

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE is issued on the first of the month preceding its date (May issue out April 1st), and is for sale by all newsdelers; ter 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.

# "For men who want *specific* training" says Ezra Hershey

"the Institute's New Program should be invaluable"



EZRA HERSHEY, Treasurer, HERSHEY CHOCOLATE CORPORATION

The Hershey Chocolate Corporation is the largest manufacturer of chocolate and cocoa in the world. From 1922 to 1926 its sales and revenues increased over \$10,000,000. As Treasurer of this successful corporation, Ezra Hershey is notably equipped to speak on the value of business training.

ALEXANDER	HAMILTON	INSTITUTE
/LEXANDER	I I AMILTON	INSTITUTE

	1	827 Astor Place, New York City	
		Please send me the facts about the Institute's new fourfold service.	
Χ	<b>,</b> 1	Name	1
	. 1	Position	
	7	Business Address	
In	Canada,	address the Alexander Hamilton Institute, Ltd., C. P. I Bldg., Toronto.	3

N JANUARY FIRST, the Alexander Hamilton Institute inaugurated a new era in business training. The words of Mr. Hershey are typical of the letters that have been coming to us since that day from men of high station in the business world.

The new enlarged service is the result of two years of work with leaders of business management and business education. From this fourfold service, executives may now choose any one of the following courses:

- 1. The Complete Course and Service for General Executives
- 2. A Special Course and Service in Marketing Management
- 3. A Special Course and Service in Production Management
- 4. A Special Course and Service in Finance Management

The plan is too important and far-reaching to be set forth in an advertisement. We have prepared a special booklet describing the entire program. The following groups of men will find this booklet particularly useful in helping them to solve their most pressing business problems:

- The heads of businesses who recognize that the training of competent associates is their major problem.
- Executives interested especially in Marketing, Production and Finance, who want to concentrate their efforts in one of these branches of business.
- Younger men who desire definite training in the management of the particular departments of business in which they are now engaged.

This book is in itself an interesting business document, and well worth half an hour of your time. The convenient coupon at the right will bring it to your desk. We invite you to inform yourself on this great forward step in business education by mailing the coupon at once.

#### Them Words

THE old cow-puncher came to the ford across the Big Windy River and beheld, bogged down in the middle of the stream, a team of mules hitched to a buckboard containing a man, a woman and several children.

Promptly he called out to the driver, asking if he needed help. Yes, the man answered, he guessed he did. Whereupon the cow-puncher splashed out to the stalled equipage, meditating various plans for extricating the outfit. But first, he decided, he'd give those mules another try by themselves; and catching the near beast by the bridle, he addressed the team in proper mule-"Now, you blinkety-blank long-eared thus-and-so's," he ordered, "get up!"

And without special difficulty or effort, the long-eared thus-and-so's started up-though a bit suddenly, so that the occupants of the buckboard were upset upon the load in back; and the cow-puncher observed that this cargo consisted of Bibles and tracts! The man was a colporteur, distributing the scriptures.

The cow-puncher said nothing until the party halted on dry land. "I reckon," he said diffidently

then, "that I oughtn't to have spoken the way I did back there."

The parson looked at him thoughtfully. Then, "Brother," he made humble answer, "Brother, I been a-settin' in the middle of the Big Windy River for two hours, a-wantin' to say them words."

The appropriate word in the right place is a potent thing; and skill in its use is an important part of the writing-man's equipment. Yet after all, these words are but a means to an end—the conveying to you of a colorful picture, a dramatic event, an interesting character; and the writer who becomes preoccupied with his words is-not for us. The play-

the story—is the thing.

The fiction which follows is written by people skilled in the use of words-so skilled that they can forget them and devote themselves to their story. So too, when you read, you will not notice the words because you will be absorbed in what is happening-in the fascinating mystery of "Three Who Would Hang" and "Madame Bluebeard." in the terrific adventures of "Tanar of Pellucidar" and "The Lair of the Leopard," in the romance of "The Empire of the Arctic," and the humor of "Egbert."

And next month an equal pleasure will be yours in fiction written with a skill that forgets itself-in another stirring installment of "Tanar." another timely and authentic story of the Free Lances in Diplomacy, another stirring adventure in the high frontier of the air by Leland Jamieson, another of the Mysteries of Today by Culpeper Zandtt, and many companion stories of special and unusual merit.

In the BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, the story is the important thing.

-The Editors.



Drawn by Paul Lehman

#### MEN OF THE FRONTIER

Daniel Boone

"THE evangel of adventure," Emerson Hough has called this man, who will probably stand in history as the ideal American pioneer. His services in combating the savages and the British, and in opening up the dark and bloody ground of Kentucky, were enormous. His hardships in pioneer privation, and in wounds and weariness, were considerable. His triumphs as warrior, hunter and intrepid explorer of an untarnished wilderness were likewise great.

Of the many tales told of him, one en-

Of the many tales told of him, one encounter is typical: Attacked by two Indians, he threw himself to the ground at the flash of their flintlocks, and so escaped their bullets. He then shot one of his assailants, came to

close quarters with the other, and fending off the savage tomahawk with his rifle-barrel, killed the Indian with his knife.

On another occasion, Boone and his companions were attacked at a salt-lick by a large war-party of Indians and he was taken prisoner. Won by his many fine qualities, his captors refused an offer of ransom made by a British officer, and endeavored to make him a member of their tribe. After several months, however, learning that the Indians planned an attack in force upon his Kentucky comrades, he contrived to make his escape and after a hazardous two-hundred-mile journey, arrived in time to forewarn and save the Kentucky colony.

### THREE WHO WOULD HANG

#### By SEVEN ANDERTON

"Lock me up," said James Vane, "I've killed Malachi Montgomery." But when two other men separately made the same confession the police found a real problem on their hands, and you are offered a fascinating detective story.

Illustrated by Otto Hake

TT should have been done sooner," was the general verdict of many who knew I old Malachi Montgomery when the news spread that he had been murdered.

Montgomery was easily the most hated man in Chicago. He owned a chain of pawnshops and conducted other loan-concerns whose methods skinned close to usury. Rumor persisted that blackmail had been among Montgomery's activities but it had never been definitely proven. A bloodless old skinflint, he had amassed a fortune by means that made him an enemy for every dollar.

Even the police were inclined to agree that the old Shylock had richly deserved killing. And despite his vast wealth, it is doubtful whether the search for his slayer would have been very keen, had not affairs taken a peculiar turn.

Shortly before midnight on a hot July night a limousine pulled up to the door of police headquarters and a white-haired man dressed in a neat gray business suit stepped from the car and entered the station.

"Lock me up, Officer," he said to the sk-sergeant. "I have killed Malachi desk-sergeant. Montgomery."

Most of the officers in the room, including the desk-sergeant, knew the man who so calmly confessed to having slain a fellow-mortal. He was James G. Vane, vicepresident of one of Chicago's largest banks. He bore a reputation for honesty and square dealing that was questioned by none. He was a member of many clubs and civic organizations and moved in the best social circles. It would have been hard to find

among his host of acquaintances a single person who did not sincerely admire the elderly financier. He was as thoroughly liked as Montgomery had been hated.

Vane's request to be locked up was the first tip concerning Montgomery's death the police had received.

In answer to a question from the desksergeant, Vane replied: "I have nothing further to say. Please do not question me. I have told you all that is necessary. I am ready to be locked up."

He steadfastly refused to say anything more, and there was nothing to do but comply with his request for incarceration.

CHIEF of Police Robert Cotter was notified, and officers dispatched to the home of the murdered pawnbroker. A report by telephone in less than half an hour informed Chief Cotter that the officers had found the body lying on the library floor. Montgomery had been dead about two hours. The murderer had used a knife, but the weapon had not been found. Giving orders for the body to remain where it lay until the coroner arrived, and for two policemen to remain at the scene, the Chief hung up the receiver.

"Damned if I don't wish Vane hadn't confessed," growled the Chief. "The town is full of people with good and sufficient reasons for killing Montgomery. Without his confession, we could have suspected so many that there wouldn't have been any

need to arrest anybody."

The Chief and Vane had been personal friends for years, and I knew Cotter dreaded to think of the banker behind bars. Despite the hour, he had hurried at once to his office when told of his friend's confession.

I sat, now, across the desk from the Chief in his private office. I had been covering the police run for the Morning Advocate more than five years, and the Chief had taken a liking to me. One reason was that I never got quite good enough to beat him at chess, his favorite pastime. I had telephoned the story to my office, and another reporter and a camera-man had been sent to the Montgomery home while I stayed to get a more detailed statement from Vane. My efforts had been useless, and I had returned to the Chief's office.

"I wonder why Vane did it," I said in

answer to the Chief's remark.

"I haven't the slightest notion," answered the Chief. "But a man like Vane doesn't kill without a good rason. I can't conceive of his committing murder under any circumstances."

BEFORE I could offer another remark, the Chief's telephone buzzed.

"What!" exclaimed the Chief, a moment later. "Bring him in here. Don't say a word about Vane where he can hear it. Don't let Vane know about this, either."

The Chief hung up the receiver and an-

swered the question on my lips.

"Montgomery's gardener has just confessed that he did the killing." said the Chief. "They're bringing him in here. Be careful what you say. I don't want him to know about Vane."

The door opened, and an officer ushered in a gaunt, elderly man in a threadbare suit of dark material. The man halted just inside the door and stood with pale blue eyes fixed on the Chief, while he twisted his old felt hat nervously in his calloused and bony fingers.

"What's this about your having killed Malachi Montgomery?" demanded Cotter.

"Yes sir. I killed him," said the old man in a low but firm voice.

"Why did you kill him?"

"I had a good reason, but it don't make any difference. I'm giving myself up, and I don't want to talk any more about it," answered the gardener.

"What's your name?" queried the Chief. "Foster Burch," answered the old man. "I was Mr. Montgomery's gardener."

"When did you kill him?"
"About half-past nine."

"Where have you been since?"

"In my room above the garage, until I took a street-car and came here."

"How did you kill him?"

"With a knife."

"What did you do with the knife?"

"I left it on the floor beside his body," said the man. "Please don't ask me any more questions. I have told you enough, and I don't want to say anything more about it."

For several moments the Chief sat silent, his gray eyes boring into the haggard face of the old man. Then he turned to the officer who had ushered the gardener into the office.

"Put him in a cell where he can't talk to anybody, and don't let anybody see him,"

said the Chief meaningly.

The officer and his charge departed, and I dashed for the press-room to telephone my office this new angle in what was to be the news story of the day. Twenty minutes later I returned to find the door of the Chief's office locked.

"Who's there?" called the Chief as I

tried the door.

I called my name, was requested to wait a bit, and seated myself on the broad sill of an open window in the corridor. I could hear voices in the Chief's office, but could not distinguish the words. Presently the door opened, and an officer came out with a swarthy man of stocky build in charge. They moved down the corridor toward the cell-blocks.

"Chief says for you to come in," said the

officer as they passed me.

The Chief was sitting before his desk frowning darkly when I entered the office.

"That bird that just went out is another murderer of Malachi Montgomery," growled the Chief. "I knew there were plenty of people who would like to have bumped the old scalawag off, but darned if I thought there would be such a rush to claim the honor when it was done!"

"Another!" I exclaimed. "Wasn't that 'Taters Saxon that O'Toole led out of

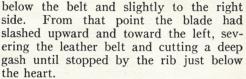
here?"

"Yes," answered the Chief, "and he says he knifed Montgomery about nine-thirty. Refuses to say anything more as to the details, except that he threw the knife into a vacant lot several blocks from the house. He says he had a good reason for killing Montgomery, but wont say what it was. Something is rotten a damsite nearer than Denmark."

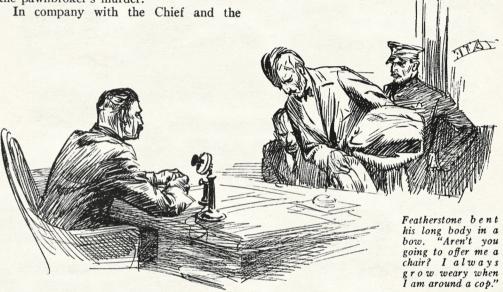
I turned to make another dash for the telephone. It was still forty minutes until the deadline of my paper's final edition.

"If any more of them wander in," I called back to the Chief, "don't lock them up without letting me know about it."

There were no more, however. The confession of 'Taters Saxon ended the epidemic, but the police had plenty to worry about without any more citizens admitting the pawnbroker's murder.



Examination of the body finished, the detectives searched every nook and corner of the room and made notes as to doors, windows, and so forth. On the smooth



captain of detectives, I went out to the home of the murdered man. The big oldfashioned house where Malachi Montgomery had lived stood in the center of about three acres of well-kept grounds some seven miles northwest of the loop. By the Chief's order, the place was under police guard, and the coroner had left the body where he had inspected it—lying on its face at the end of a table in the center of the library. An easy chair stood beside the table, and a book lay open on the floor between the body and the chair. dently Montgomery had been reading when he rose to meet the person who had killed him. The book might have been in his hand when the assassin struck. body was dressed in tan trousers and a soft white shirt. The stockingless feet were in house slippers. A large dark stain had spread from beneath the body on the worn carpet. While the rest of us stood back a short distance, the captain of detectives turned the body over.

The murderer had made a good job of it. The knife had entered the abdomen just lawn beside a privet hedge that bordered the gravel drive, one of the officers located the weapon.

It was a large hunting-knife; the eightinch blade was of heavy steel, and razorkeen. It was corroded with blood. The officer who found it picked it up by the point of the blade to avoid obliterating any fingerprints that might be on the walnut handle.

When the handle was treated, a set of fingerprints came up clearly, but they seemed only to muddle the case still more, for they were prints of small fingers; and Harper, chief of the fingerprint bureau, declared they had been made by a woman.

TWO days passed, and the police, despite their constant efforts to unravel the affair, were no nearer a solution than when they started. On behalf of my paper I was watching the case like a hawk. On the evening of the second day after the murder, I dropped into the office of the Chief to inquire about any new developments. There were none.

All three of the men who had confessed stuck firmly to their stories and refused to make any further statements. When brought together and confronted with the fact that at least two of them must be lying, each calmly declared that the other two were the liars. Because the Vane estate joined that of the murdered pawnbroker, Vane and Burch—the gardener—

knew each other by sight.

Neither of them had ever seen or spoken to 'Taters Saxon—a police character who had served time for a number of petty offenses before he reformed and became a huckster of potatoes and other vegetables; hence the name, 'Taters. For more than two years the police had been convinced that Saxon's reformation was genuine and permanent. He still lived in his old haunts and mixed with some of his former companions, but stayed on the straight and narrow remarkably well.

"We're at a standstill," admitted the Chief. "In fact, we are so stymied that I have called Wayne Featherstone. I hate to ask him to mix in, because he is such an arrogant old devil. His nasty tongue gets under our skin. He ruins the disposition of every officer with whom he comes in contact, including me, and leaves the members of the department ready to beat their wives; but he has an uncanny way of getting to the bottom of a mess like this. I am so anxious to straighten it out that I have telephoned him. He ought to be here shortly."

I was much interested. It had been a long time since Wayne Featherstone had been called to help the police, but I knew something of his colorful history, for he had been written up once or twice in the feature sections of the Sunday papers. I made up my mind that I would watch his work in this case closely—it ought to be

good for a whale of a story.

Featherstone was a retired crook. The description was his own, and he insisted that he had not reformed. One of his chief delights was to taunt the police with the fact that he had accumulated a tidy fortune by lawless methods, working under their very noses and never having been in jail or even in the police station, until he had come to help the police. He was full of contradictory traits. He professed a thorough contempt for all peace officers and the entire machinery of the law. But his first contact with the police had been when he volunteered the solution to a mys-

tery and caused the breaking up of a criminal ring which had so roused public opinion that the Chief had been on the verge of resigning under fire. Since then Featherstone had been called upon a few times by the police as a last resort. His attitude toward the officers, however, made them extremely loath to ask him for help.

I WAS still talking to the Chief when Featherstone arrived and was ushered into the Chief's private office by the desk-sergeant. He was a striking figure—two inches over six feet tall, thin, and as straight as an arrow. His soft hat was in his slender hand, and his thick and rather long hair was snow-white. In contrast to the snowy mane, his eyes were coal-black under their bushy brows, and his narrow mustache was dyed black. The effect was Mephistophelian.

"Good evening, Featherstone," greeted

the Chief.

Featherstone bent his long, lean body at the waist in a sardonic bow, and a smile flickered on his face.

"Perhaps it is," said Featherstone, a mocking note in his voice. "But I can hardly believe that I would have been called to your comfortable loafing-place if you were enjoying a good evening. My guess would be that some unkind wrongdoer has made it necessary for you parasites to attempt to earn the pensions you draw from the city. Not having any brains to think with, you are forced to call help. Am I right?"

The Chief's face flushed. "Confound your impudent soul, Featherstone," he snapped, "why can't you be civil? I've a damned good notion not to ask you to mix

into this after all."

"Suit yourself," answered the visitor quietly. "I don't care whether I help you or not. I can find plenty of other things to amuse me besides saving your sinecure for you. Aren't you going to offer me a chair? I always grow weary when I am around a cop."

"Sit down," growled the Chief.

Featherstone seated himself and crossed his long legs comfortably. He produced a soft leather cigarette-case and lighted a fag. Then he smiled into the scowling face of the Chief.

"I suppose I am here about the Montgomery murder," he remarked. "I notice by the papers that you have too many murderers on your hands. You probably want

to eliminate two of them. Which one do

you want to hang?"

"I'm not keen about hanging any of them," answered the Chief. "I would like to get the straight of things. I don't like to see innocent men wish themselves into jail."

"Especially when they are your friends," chuckled Featherstone. "Well, tell me all you know about the case. It can't take

vou long."

I could see that the Chief was boiling, and only his respect for the man's uncanny ability, and his desire to get at the bottom of the mystery, kept him from throwing Featherstone out of his office. He proceeded to give all the details of the case as it stood.

"All right," said Featherstone when the Chief concluded. "I'll untangle it for you, but you must cloak me with authority and let me absolutely alone."

"Go ahead," said the Chief.

I had been observing Wayne Featherstone closely. I liked the man despite his attitude, and I was suddenly consumed with a desire to become better acquainted with him, to get under that sardonic shell.

"May I introduce myself, Mr. Featherstone?" I asked. "I'm George Duncan, re-

porter on the Morning Advocate."

"Glad to know you," smiled Featherstone. "I thought you looked too intelligent to be a member of the police department. I note you know better than to expect even the most simple of the social graces from the police."

I was forced to smile, though at the same time I was wishing Featherstone would depart before he goaded the Chief

to violence.

"I wonder if you'd let me follow your work in this case," I ventured. "I've read and heard a little about you, and I'm very much interested in your methods. I should be very grateful if you'd let me just watch. I'll try to keep from being in your way or annoying you with questions."

There was silence for several moments while Featherstone's piercing black eyes gazed steadily into mine. Then he smiled.

"Sold," he said. "I have always wanted to meet a newspaperman who could keep from asking questions. If you prove to be that man, I may even teach you why the cops have to call retired crooks from their ease to do their chores for them. Like to drive out to my house with me now?"

"I'd be delighted," I answered, "if you'll

wait long enough for me to phone my office."

"Go ahead," said Featherstone. be in my car. It is parked at the door"

HALF an hour later we arrived at Featherstone's house—a vine-covered brick cottage set in a small lawn facing Irving Park Boulevard. There was a sizable garden in the rear where Featherstone spent much time. Growing things, and browsing among books, were his hobbies.

Parking the roadster at the curb, Featherstone led the way to the house and ushered me into the living-room. An interesting room: one end was a large bay window, literally filled with ferns and gay blossoming plants. A huge fireplace built of gray stone occupied the other end of the room except for two tall, narrow windows, one on either side of the fireplace. Woodbine covered both these windows until they admitted but little light. The walls between were lined with well-filled bookcases. A bright red parrot of huge proportions sat on its perch in a monster wicker cage suspended above the flowers in the bay window.

seated myself in an easy chair. Featherstone paused beside the table, took a cob pipe from a tray and stuffed it with tobacco and lighted it. Then he drew a chair nearer to the one in which I sat and sat down facing me. I became aware of a strange, sweet and altogether pleasant aroma. I sniffed slightly.

"Smoke?" smiled Featherstone. I drew my pipe from my pocket.

"Fill it up," said Featherstone, waving his hand toward the jar. "I prepare my own tobacco. Maybe you'll like it."

I rose, filled my pipe and lighted it. The taste was rich and the aroma delicious.

"Like it?" queried my host.

"Great," I replied. "What is it?"

"Ordinary Burley. It's the preparation that makes it so good. There's a blottingpaper pad in the cover of the jar. I keep it moistened with old English rum in which I mix two drops of oil of cinnamon to the ounce."

I made a mental note of the mixture as I returned to my chair.

"CO you want to be in on the job of finding out who killed Malachi Montgomery," said Featherstone when our pipes were going nicely.

I nodded.

"It's such a simple task," smiled my host, "that I have a notion to let you do

it yourself."

I was aching to ask questions, but I held my tongue. Featherstone drew deeply on his pipe several times and exhaled a blue cloud.

"How would you like to do the work under my direction?" he asked.

"Gladly, if you think I could," I answered.

"Of course you can," retorted Featherstone. "Anybody could do it except a cop or an idiot of the sort they keep locked up. I'll give you some pointers, and by tomorrow night you should have the thing pretty well cleared up."

My host took a small notebook from his pocket and studied it for a few moments. Then he closed the book, put it back into his pocket and with an elaborate gesture

he rolled up his sleeves.

"Note carefully that there is nothing concealed in the sleeves." He grinned. "I am about to begin to perform what the paper you work for once called legerdemain. You are about to behold Featherstone himself in action."

Then the smile faded and the twinkle left his eyes. "People have become so accustomed to the thick-headedness of the cops," he continued, "that one is called a wizard if he applies a little horse sense to a thing like this. As a matter of fact, this is

a very simple case.

"In the first place, there is only one of the three men who claim they did the killing who is physically capable of having done it. Have you considered the strength necessary to inflict such a wound as that which killed Montgomery? It was more than a foot long and was done with one stroke. It severed the leather belt Montgomery was wearing. The man who wielded that knife was no novice. I have carved my way out of a few tight corners myself: I know something about getting results with a blade. The man who knifed Montgomery knew the Ripper's litanythumb on the blade and strike up. He also possessed an abundance of strength."

"Harper says the fingerprints on the knife were made by a woman," I reminded

him.

"They probably were," answered Featherstone. "At least one woman usually manages to get mixed up in anything that happens. Just the same, no woman carved that gash in Montgomery. How those

fingerprints got on that knife is something we must find out. As I was saying, when I was so rudely interrupted, that killer had used a knife on men before. The point struck upward and touched the heart despite the protecting rib. The post-mortem revealed that.

"Now, neither Vane nor the gardener have the strength or the skill to have done the deed. Saxon might have the strength, but he didn't do the carving. Saxon is not the type of man who would do it. That is one of the many things that are wrong with the police. They pay no attention to what sort of a man the suspect is. Saxon is not a killer. His record before he reformed shows that. He was a petty thief. He might fight if cornered—even a rat will do that. However, he wouldn't use a knife. His weapon is a gun. His record shows that he was carrying a gun each time he was arrested."

"Then none of the three who have con-

fessed are guilty," I remarked.

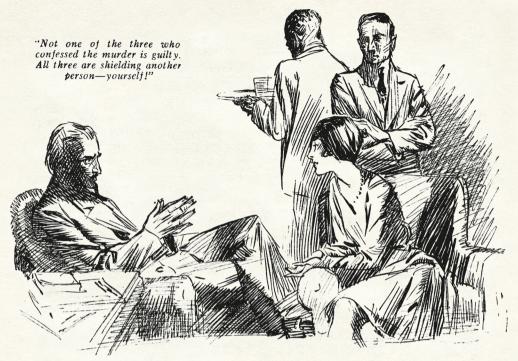
"No more than you are," said Featherstone. "Now, when one man confesses to a murder he didn't do, it is apt to be difficult to get at the bottom of the matter; but when three innocent men confess to the same murder, it simplifies things to beat the band."

I COULDN'T see how the situation had been simplified by the three confessions, but I waited patiently until Featherstone

relighted his pipe.

"The man doesn't live who really wants to be hanged or spend the rest of his life in prison," went on Featherstone. "So when a man confesses to a crime he didn't do, it's a safe bet he is trying to shield some one else-some one he thinks a lot of. In this case there is no reason why any of the three men who have confessed should be shielding either of the others. Therefore all three are shielding some one else. what makes it simple. Of course, there's a chance that they are not all shielding the same person, but my guess is that they are. We'll stick to that theory unless we become sure no one person exists who is dear to each of our trio of Don Quixotes.

"Tomorrow morning you must find out who the person is that they are shielding. Since the three are not friends, Saxon being a total stranger to the other two, it shouldn't be difficult to discover whether one person exists for whom all three would face the scaffold. Think you can do that?"



"I can try," I answered.

"How would you go about it?"

I thought hard for several minutes while Featherstone puffed slowly on his pipe and watched me steadily with those piercing olack eyes.

"I'd begin by learning the names of the persons of whom one of the three was most fond," I said finally. "Then I'd check that list to see if any person on it were among the close friends of the other two."

"Exactly," said Featherstone. "You see how simple it is. Tomorrow by noon I shall expect you to have located this mutual dear one of our three candidates for hanging. Report to me any time after ten o'clock. I never rise before ten, no matter who is in jail."

UNLIKE Featherstone, I was so eager to be at my task that I rose at dawn the following morning. After breakfast in a downtown lunch-room, I went to the office of my paper, where I could avail myself of the information contained in our reference library.

I began with Vane, the banker being the most prominent of the three confessed killers. An hour of search through "Who's Who" and the files of our paper supplied me with a list of more than two score persons of whom the banker was more than ordinarily fond. Then it occurred to me that it might be better to begin with one

of the less popular of the prisoners. I turned to Saxon. The files furnished me little information, and I decided to run over to the police station and find out what Chief Cotter knew about the intimates of the reformed thug.

The Chief had just reached his office when I arrived. He greeted me with a grin.

"Well, has Featherstone made a detective of you?" asked the Chief.

"I can't imagine Featherstone making a detective of anyone, unless he had a particular grudge against him," I answered. "By the way, is there anybody you know that 'Taters Saxon was particularly fond

of?"

"Nobody, except Virginia Vane," answered the Chief. "She was instrumental in his reformation, and when he's not peddling spuds, he works around the social center she runs on Grand Avenue. They say he's goofy over her. The last time before this that we had him in jail, it was for beating up a couple of bums who made uncomplimentary remarks about her."

"Virginia Vane!" I exclaimed, feeling I had stumbled on the object of my search.

"James G. Vane's daughter?"

"Yes," answered the Chief,—"that is, his adopted daughter. Vane's wife was an invalid. They adopted Virginia when she was a baby. She was eleven when Mrs. Vane died. She runs the house for him.

Virginia is a splendid girl, but she cares little for society—buries herself in social work in the slums most of the time. She was here to see her father and Saxon yesterday evening after you left with Featherstone. She has been to see them daily. The girl is all broken up by this thing, but I told her I was confident her father was innocent. She tried to get him to tell her something more than he told us, but he wouldn't."

"Did she talk to the others?" I asked.

"Yes, but they wouldn't tell her anything," said the Chief. "I never saw such a close-lipped bunch in my life. They all seem so darned anxious to hang that it's uncanny."

"May I talk to them?" I inquired.

The Chief consented, and Î spent the next hour in visits to the cells of Vane, Burch and Saxon. I learned little—the men all refused to discuss the murder or anything pertaining to it.

At the stroke of ten I called the house of

Wayne Featherstone.

"Featherstone speaking," came the answer after a wait of several moments.

"This is George Duncan," I informed him. "I think I have the information you told me to get."

"Good," said Featherstone. "Can you

come out here?"

"I'll grab a cab and be there in twenty minutes."

"Fine. Good-by."

FEATHERSTONE was at breakfast when I arrived. I was ushered into the din-

ing-room by Pierre.

"I never discuss anything until I have finished my breakfast," he smiled, "so you had just as well have a cup of Pierre's excellent coffee for the benefit of your patience."

I had the coffee, and then we went out to the big living-room and lighted our pipes.

"All right," said Featherstone as he tossed his match into the big ash-tray. "Unload."

I told him what I had learned. "The only flaw in it," I concluded, "is that there is no evidence that the old gardener, Burch, is fond enough of the girl to shield her with his life. So far as I can learn, he merely knew her as the daughter of the next-door neighbor."

Featherstone was silent for some time, sprawled in his easy chair blowing clouds of fragrant smoke at the ceiling. Then he

rose, laid his pipe in the tray and took some photographs from a drawer.

"Those are the fingerprints found on the handle of the knife that killed Montgomery," said Featherstone as he handed me the photographs. "They are also the fingerprints of Miss Virginia Vane. I am certain, but we will verify it very quickly. Can you drive my car?"

"Yes," I answered.

"All right," said Featherstone. "Take it and go to the Vane house. Tell Miss Virginia that I wish to see her, and bring her here. Tell her I need her assistance in proving her father innocent of murder. If she seems reluctant, tell her she is at liberty to call Chief Cotter and ask his advice."

Featherstone rang for his big negro servant and gave him an order. The man

bowed and departed.

"Pierre will have the car at the curb in a moment," said Featherstone. "Hurry back."

It was exactly noon when I returned, and Miss Vane accompanied me. She was a vivid and beautiful brunette in the early twenties. When I told her that Featherstone wished her aid in proving her father's innocence, she had been eager to come with me. I led the way into the house and introduced her to Featherstone.

"I'm glad to know you," smiled the girl, giving him her hand. "I have heard a great deal about you, Mr. Featherstone."

"From Harry Douglas?" queried Featherstone.

Miss Vane's face flushed, and she was

plainly flustered, but she nodded her head. I pricked up my ears. Harry Douglas was a young man who had recently been the subject of a number of newspaper stories. He had been sent to prison for the robbery of a jewelry store where he had been employed as clerk-he had been a wild youth with a prison record before that, but he had promised to go straight and had been given the jewelry-store job through the influence of the prison chaplain. And that, it seemed to me, was very strange, for jewelers are customarily very particular about their employees. Douglas had had little chance when the prosecuting attorney had finished his talk to the jury.

"By the way," continued Featherstone, "does your father know of your marriage

Protesting his innocence, he had gone back

to prison to serve five years.

to Douglas?"

The girl's face went pale. She grasped the back of a chair to steady herself.

"No, he-he doesn't," stammered Miss "Nobody knows. How did you know?"

"I have always been a very good friend of Harry's," answered Featherstone, smiling at the girl's confusion. "Besides, you know I am merely retired; I've not reformed. Men like 'Taters Saxon reform; the clever ones retire. I make it my business to keep in touch with the field in which I amassed my fortune. I still enjoy the respect and fellowship of my old-time cronies. I hear about most happenings of importance among them."

I was dizzy with excitement. What a story for the Advocate! The daughter of James G. Vane married to a convict! Then my spirits cooled as I remembered my promise of discretion concerning the using of knowledge gained through Featherstone

for publication.

MISS VANE had seated herself, and Featherstone touched the button for Pierre. At his master's orders the negro brought a glass of water for the girl, who drank a few sips and replaced the glass on the tray Pierre held.

Featherstone spoke a few words in French and the man placed the tray and glass upon the table and left the room.

"Please realize that I am your friend, Miss Vane," said Featherstone. "I shall betray none of your secrets; nor will my friend Duncan. It is our desire to help you clear your father of the charge he has placed against himself. I shall speak directly to the point. Not one of the three men who confessed to the murder of Malachi Montgomery is guilty. All three are shielding another person—and that person is yourself."

"Why-why, what do you mean?" stam-

mered the girl.

"I mean that your father, Saxon and Burch all believe you killed Montgomery; and they have confessed to keep you from being found out."

"But why should they think that?"

"That is what we want to find out," answered Featherstone. "You can help us by telling what you were doing at the scene of the murder, when or shortly after it was committed."

"I-I wasn't," said the bewildered girl. "Oh, yes, you were," smiled Featherstone.

He walked to the table, drawing a small bellows from his coat pocket as he went. With the bellows he blew a fine white powder on the glass from which the girl

had sipped her water.

"This glass has been specially prepared," said Featherstone. "See how clearly your fingerprints come up. If you care to compare them, you will note that they are identical with those found on the handle of the knife that killed Malachi Montgomery. If you were not at the scene of the murder, how did your fingerprints get on the handle of the knife?"

"I didn't kill Mr. Montgomery," cried the girl, her face going white. "I didn't!

I didn't!"

"Of course not, Miss Vane," soothed Featherstone. "Nobody thinks you did; nobody but a detective would even suspect you. But you were there, and you handled the knife. If you will tell us all about your part in it, I promise that the matter will

soon be cleared up."

"All right," said the girl slowly. tell you. I went over to the Montgomery house late that night. I had gone to bed but I couldn't sleep for thinking about Harry in prison and about something I had learned that might help to prove his innocence. I had found out that the goods stolen in the robbery for which Harry was sentenced were being disposed of through a I had also learned that Malachi Montgomery was the fence. Please don't ask me how I found out those things, because I can't tell you."

"I understand," nodded Featherstone. "I could probably make a pretty close guess, but I sha'n't do that. I know, you must remember, how well the underworld looks after its own. Go on with your

story."

"From my bedroom window," continued Miss Vane, "I could see into Mr. Montgomery's library. It was a very hot night, and the windows stood wide open. Montgomery sat beside the table reading a book. I kept thinking that he must know who was guilty of the robbery for which they sent my husband to jail. Finally I made up my mind to go to him and make him tell me what I wanted to know, by threatening to tell the police he was acting as a fence.

"I got up and dressed. Just before I left my room, I glanced out of the window. Mr. Montgomery still sat beside the table reading. It was about half-past nine. I slipped downstairs and out of the house. Using the gate in the brick wall that runs between our grounds and those of Mr. Montgomery, I hurried to his house. I carried a small revolver that Father bought for me years ago, as far as the gate in the wall. Then I laid it on the wall so I wouldn't be tempted to use it. I didn't want to ring the bell and rouse the servants. The door as well as the windows was open, and I planned to walk in quietly and demand the information I wanted.

"When I stepped up to the open door, the chair in which Mr. Montgomery had been sitting was vacant. Then I saw him lying on the floor at the end of the table. My first thought was that he must have had an attack of some sort. I ran to him to see if I could be of any help. Then I saw the blood on the rug, and the knife beside him. I tried to turn him over to see how badly he was hurt. When I caught sight of the terrible gash the knife had made. I knew he was dead. I became sickened and frightened at the same time. I turned and ran from the house. I was crossing the driveway when I remembered that I was still carrying the knife. I threw it away and ran home as fast as I could. At the gate I picked up my gun and took it into the house with me. I washed the blood from my hands in the bathroom and went to my room. I knew that I should report what had happened, but I had a horror of being mixed up in the publicity of the affair. I told myself that one of the servants would discover the murder and report it. After a while I managed to go to sleep.

"When I woke up next morning I found the maid in hysterics, and she gave me the paper containing the story of the murder and the confessions of Father and the other two. I rushed down to see Father but he wouldn't tell me anything. I understand now why he looked at me so queerly. I can't understand why he thought I had killed Mr. Montgomery. He retired before I did that night, and he is a sound sleeper. I was very careful to slip from the

house quietly."

FEATHERSTONE had been watching the girl closely while she talked. He rose and went to the telephone. In a moment he had Chief Cotter on the wire.

"Hello, Cotter," he said. "If you don't mind waking up for an hour or so I'll come down to your office. I'll bring Miss Vane with me. If we can have a little private conference consisting of Vane, Burch, Saxon, yourself, Miss Vane, Duncan and me, I think you can release your prisoners when it is over."

The Chief's answer brought a mocking

laugh from Featherstone.

"We'll start at once," he said, hanging up the receiver.

UPON our arrival at the station, we found the Chief and the three prisoners waiting in the Chief's office. Cotter invited us to be seated.

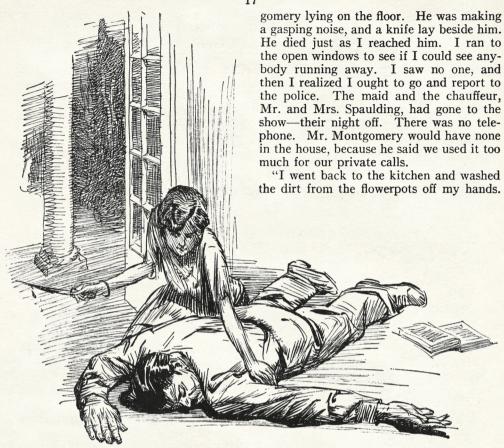
The conference began with Miss Vane's retelling of her story at Featherstone's request. All listened attentively until she had finished, the only interruption being an exclamation from Vane when the girl told of her secret marriage to Harry Douglas

"Now," said Featherstone, addressing the gathering, "I am satisfied that Mr. Vane, Mr. Burch and Mr. Saxon confessed because they believed Miss Vane killed Montgomery. Nobody but a policeman would ever have believed their stories or have locked them up. They are all innocent, but if each will tell why he believed Miss Vane guilty, it will speed up the catching of the real killer. Mr. Vane, will you please tell your story now?"

"I had gone to bed," began Vane after a moment of hesitation, "but it was such a hot night that I couldn't sleep. I lay looking out of my open window, when I saw Virginia hurry across the lawn toward the gate in the wall. It was bright moonlight, and I saw something in her hand that glinted like a gun or a knife. She went through the gate into the Montgomery grounds. In a few moments I became so uneasy about her that I arose, put on

some clothes and followed her.

"I entered the Montgomery grounds and got within fifty yards of the house when Virginia came out of the lighted library and ran across the lawn toward home. I stepped behind a bush and watched her. As she crossed the drive, I saw Burch step from behind the house and into the drive farther down. He stood watching Virginia until she disappeared through the gate. Then he turned toward the rear door of the house. I waited a few moments behind the lilac bush, and Burch again came hurrying out. He walked quickly down the drive to the street and disappeared. I then ran over to the veranda and looked into the



"I ran to him to see if I could be of any help. Then I saw the knife-"

library. I saw Montgomery lying as Virginia just now described him. I was certain that Virginia had killed him, for some reason. I knew that Burch had seen her, and I feared that he was on his way to report to the police. I went home, stole in quietly, finished dressing and hurried to the station in my car."

VIRGINIA had risen and was standing beside Vane as he finished, her hand resting on his shoulder. Featherstone nodded his head and fixed his black eyes on Burch.

"You seem to be next," he said to the old gardener.

"I was working with some slips of geraniums," said the old man after he had cleared his throat. "I was in the small room built onto the kitchen. I heard a kind of a strangled cry from the front of the house and the sound of something falling. I knew something was wrong and I hurried into the library. I found Mr. Mont-

Then I went out the rear door and started down the drive to go to the corner drugstore and call the police. I saw Vir—Miss Vane run across the drive. She came from the veranda, and I thought she must have been hidden there while I was in the library. That accounted for my seeing no one running away. All at once I knew she had killed Mr. Montgomery. I couldn't imagine why she had done it, but I changed my mind about calling the police. I caught a street-car and came down and told them I had killed my employer."

The old gardener ceased speaking, and his eyes dropped to the calloused hands lying in his lap.

"May I ask Mr. Burch a question?" inquired Vane, looking at Chief Cotter.

"Go ahead," spoke up Featherstone before the Chief could reply. "I'm in charge of this. The police are so overworked collecting graft and drawing their salaries that they have no time to keep innocent men out of jail." Chief Cotter's face flushed, but he said

nothing.

"Mr. Burch," said Vane, turning to the gardener, "might I ask you why you were willing to face a murder charge to shield my daughter, who is almost a stranger to you?"

Burch raised his eyes, and his lips parted as if to speak, but no sound came. His face went a trifle pale, and his eyes again

fell.

"I believe I can enlighten you on that score," said Featherstone. "Please look closely at the features of Mr. Burch and compare them with those of Miss Vane. Note particularly the shape of the nose and the contour of the ears, also the bulge just above the eyes. Then look at the hands and the shape of the fingernails. The family resemblance could not possibly escape anybody but a detective. What relation do you bear Miss Vane, Mr. Burch?"

There was a heavy hush in the room until it was broken by the low voice of the

old gardener.

"I am her-her father," said Burch.

Everyone sat very still for a full minute. Virginia looked quickly from Burch to her foster-father. Vane stared hard at Burch. Virginia finally broke the silence.

"My—my father?" she murmured in a puzzled voice. "I don't understand."

THE old gardener had again raised his pale blue eyes. His gaze was fixed on Virginia. There was a world of longing in

that gaze.

"Yes," said Burch, "I'm your father. When you were a year old, I left you and your mother in Chicago and went to Alaska-the Klondike gold-rush. I found no fortune and I couldn't stand the awful cold of the country. I had scurvy, and then smallpox, and I nearly died. For months I didn't get any word from your mother, and I couldn't write to her. During that time she died. When I finally was able to write, it was too late. I came back a pauper and found out about her death. And I found you had been adopted by the Vanes. That meant a future for you such as I couldn't ever give you. I didn't reveal myself. It has been hard, but I have been able to bear it, knowing that you were happy and well cared for. I took the job as gardener for Montgomery just to be near you."

As the old gardener ceased speaking, Vane rose and crossed to where he sat. Virginia walked beside her foster-father. Vane's left arm was about her waist. He extended his right hand to Burch.

"You've been very brave, Mr. Burch," said the banker, "but you've been very foolish. You should have made yourself known. It would have made no difference whatever in our love for Virginia and the care we would have given her. You have simply robbed yourself of the companionship of the most lovable of daughters."

Tears welled from the eyes of the old gardener as he clasped the hand of the banker. His lips trembled with emotion.

"I'm glad," he cried. "Now I can thank you for the care you have given her. For years I have wanted to do that."

LATER, when the emotion of the united father and daughter had quieted, Featherstone called attention back to the business in hand.

"Now let's hear Saxon's story," said

Featherstone.

All eyes turned to the swarthy vendor of potatoes. He licked his lips nervously.

"I went out to the Montgomery house that night," began Saxon, "to make the old *Shylock* help get Harry Douglas out of jail. I knowed Miss Vane was all busted up about Harry being railroaded. I used to sell the stuff I stole to Montgomery, before Miss Vane showed me that it was better to be honest. I figgered that I'd tell Montgomery that I would tell the police some things about him if he didn't do something for Douglas. I had heard that the swag from the store was being handled by Montgomery.

"I knowed Douglas didn't rob that store because he was going as straight as a string for Miss Vane's sake. I'd do anything in the world for Miss Vane—she's the only one who has always treated me white. She showed me how to make honest money and helped me to get customers lined up when I started in business. She loaned me money to buy a truck, and she made the cops lay off me so I could get a start. I thought if I could make old Montgomery clear Harry, it would partly pay her back

for being so good to me.

"When I got to Montgomery's house, I parked my truck at the curb out in front and went up the front walk aiming to ring the doorbell. Just before I got to the house, I saw Miss Vane stooping over Montgomery, who was laying on the floor. Then she straightened up and ran out of

the house. She was carrying a big knife in her hand as she went across the porch. I stood there a minute, and then I went back to my truck. I guessed Miss Vane had gone to see Montgomery about the same thing I had started to, and got mad and killed him.

"I got clear back to the truck before I happened to think that maybe Montgomery wasn't dead and would be able to tell who knifed him. I went back to see. He was as dead as a herring. Then I got to thinking that the dicks would probably find out who done it and arrest Miss Vane, so I come down and told the sergeant that I'd killed Montgomery. I thought it'd stop the flat-feet from investigating."

As Saxon finished his story, Featherstone shot a glance at me. I had been listening closely to all that was said, but I thought Featherstone had forgotten my presence.

He flashed me a smile.

"Well, Duncan," he said, "has anybody held out anything on us?"

"I don't think so," I replied after a mo-

ment of rapid thought.

"Think again," smiled Featherstone.
"Mr. Burch's reason for suspecting his daughter of murder is too thin. He had a lot better one which he has neglected to mention. I think he had better tell us what it was. It may be the very thing that will completely clear up this muddle."

BURCH lifted appealing eyes to his daughter, who stood beside his chair. "If you have withheld anything, tell it—Father," said the girl, halting over the last word.

"Well, I heard Mr. Montgomery tell a visitor that you were dangerous and he was afraid of you," said Burch, speaking to Virginia.

"Can you tell us as nearly as possible the exact words Montgomery used?" broke in Featherstone. "And did you know the

visitor?"

"I don't know who the man was," answered Burch. "He was a big man about forty. I didn't like his looks. I happened to be working in a flower-bed under the library window, when I heard Montgomery speak about Virginia. Montgomery said: 'Harry Douglas made a good goat, but I'm afraid of Virginia Vane. She's dangerous. She'd kill a man if she found out her boy friend had been framed!'"

"Good!" exclaimed Featherstone, turning toward the chief. "Now, Cotter, if

you'll release these prisoners, we'll round up the right man in short order."

"I can't release them offhand," answered the Chief. "There are certain—"

"A lot of red tape, I suppose," interrupted Featherstone. "Well, you can untape it quickly, or I will drop this affair right here. If I do, I'll lay you even money that the man who killed Malachi Montgomery wont be arrested. I agreed to do the work in this case for you on condition that I be allowed to manage it without interference. I want these men released."

Chief Cotter glowered for a moment and

then he reached for the telephone.

Ten minutes later the Chief turned from the telephone and informed the three prisoners that they were at liberty.

"NOW," said Featherstone, smiling triumphantly, "I want Martin Stephens, proprietor of the store where Harry Douglas worked, brought here. Send enough men after him to be sure they bring him in if he shows fight. I want you, Duncan, Mr. Burch and myself in this office when he's brought in. The others may be where they can listen, but I don't want them in sight."

"Where will we find this Stephens?"

asked Chief Cotter.

"At this time he will be at the store on Van Buren Street," answered Featherstone. "The remaining stock of the place is being sold at auction."

"Do you think Stephens killed Montgomery?" asked the chief after he had dispatched officers to bring in the proprietor

of the store.

"I know he did," answered Featherstone. "You recently railroaded an innocent man for the robbery of the store. It was just the sort of thing one might expect of police. You never took the trouble to look up the proprietor beyond learning that he had an alibi. For your information I will relate a little of his past.

"He inherited the jewelry store from an uncle less than a year ago. Before that he was a lumber-worker in northern Wisconsin, and then a laborer on lumber ships on the lakes until Prohibition came along. After that he mixed into running liquor

across the lakes from Canada.

"You will admit he hardly had the background to make a success of the retail business. He soon saw that, and planned to cash in. He insured the stock against robbery and then hired a clerk, intending to make the employee the goat.

He probably chose Harry because of the lad's record. He knew, as everybody does, how you birds delight in keeping a man down, once he slips. Then the store was robbed by somebody who had a key. Stephens had a good alibi. He probably

gave the key to a confederate.

"The police ran true to form and sent Harry Douglas to Joliet. Stephens then went ahead with his plans, collected his insurance and disposed through a fence of the stuff he had stolen from himself. Montgomery was the fence. He probably tried in some manner to double-cross Stephens—and Stephens used the steel. We'll find out the straight of it shortly after Stephens is brought in.

"Now, I want to rehearse the opening scene. You, Cotter, sit where you are and keep still. Mr. Burch will sit where he is and I'll stand beside him. Mr. Duncan, sit beside Chief Cotter—and keep still.

"Now, Mr. Burch, if the man the dicks bring in is the man to whom you heard Mr. Montgomery express fear of Miss Vane, I want you to look directly at him and say just four words—'That is the man.' Don't say anything else; I'll do the rest of the talking."

The stage for our little act was set. Miss Vane, her foster-father and Saxon went into an adjoining room, leaving the transom open. The rest of us took our places and waited, saying little. Featherstone

smoked a cigarette.

We did not wait long. The door opened, and two officers ushered in a big and rather flashily dressed man. He was about forty years old, and his face was ruddy but gross and told of dissipation. His bulky shoulders and bull-like neck told of a still powerful body. There was a moment of heavy silence before the old gardener spoke his piece.

"That is the man," said Burch slowly

and clearly.

The eyes of the prisoner fixed themselves on Burch for a moment, and then swept the rest of us with a glance in which hate seethed. Featherstone stepped from his place beside Burch and fixed his sharp black eyes on the prisoner.

"Martin Stephens," said Featherstone, "I arrest you for the murder of Malachi

Montgomery."

FOR a moment the man glared in silence at Featherstone. Suddenly he twisted from the grip of the officers and sprang for the door through which he had entered. The officers leaped after him, with Featherstone at their heels. An officer dragged him back just as his hand was on the door-knob.

The man fought like a demon, and Chief Cotter and myself rushed to the aid of the others. It was five minutes before we subdued the brute and handcuffs were snapped on him. Pushed into a chair, the man cursed out his confession, damning with every other breath the man whom he had slain.

He made a clean breast of things, including the robbery of his own store and the shifting of the blame to Harry Douglas. He told how he had killed Montgomery because the old fox had threatened to expose him as the robber of his own store unless he returned half of the seven thousand dollars Montgomery had originally paid for the loot. Montgomery had retained several of the most easily identified of the stolen watches and threatened to turn them over to the police with information that Stephens had pawned them at one of Montgomery's pawnshops.

Stephens was taken away and locked up. The others came from the adjoining room, and Chief Cotter promised to take immediate steps for the release of Harry Douglas from prison. Vane, Virginia and Burch left by auto for Joliet to tell the good news to the girl's imprisoned husband

ACCEPTED Featherstone's invitation to go home with him and remain for dinner. In the big living-room-library, we filled our pipes with Featherstone's fragrant tobacco and settled down for a chat.

"Not a bad day's work," chuckled Featherstone. "We have kept three men from being tried for murder, saving the taxpayers a lot of expense. We have got one innocent man out of prison and reunited a husband and wife and a father and daughter. We have wound up the career of a crook who was too crooked to play fair with his own kind. Not so punk."

As I was leaving I asked Featherstone's permission to write the story, telling of his

part in it.

"All right," said Featherstone after a moment of thought. "But don't say anything more about me than necessary—and don't call me a detective or a criminologist. I don't like that word 'criminologist.' It makes me think of a detective who has borrowed enough brains to go crazy."



Madame, struggling vainly, sank upon the floor; Vaiti picked her up and slung her into the chair.

### Madame Bluebeard

OU went to the villa up one of those steep grassy roads with a narrow foot-track in the middle, that lead to most places about the old convict settlement of Bourail. Like the other houses, it was somewhat retired and secret; behind its climbing roses, its carmine-and-gilt lantana, it seemed, somehow, to peer at you suspiciously. . . . .

Madame Gilles knew nobody; or at least so I thought, until I saw Vaiti, tall, lightfooted, in her South Sea robe of flowing white, turn in at the iron gateway.

I hadn't expected to see Vaiti there; but you could never calculate on that incomprehensible daughter of the islands. I, Richardson, wanderer in the South Seas, and a secret, hopeless lover of Vaiti,—that wild

and beautiful daughter of a Pacific Queen and an English Earl,—was staying at Bourail because I might as well be there as anywhere, and because the chief hotel did you very well for six shillings a day.

They did not talk freely in the hotel; no one talks freely to strangers about Bourail, where the entire population is either convict or of convict descent. But there were daughters of the inn, pretty barelegged things in brief smart frocks and no shoes; and one could flirt with them of a moonlit evening, when the great white jails of Bourail, long empty, were painted like silver palaces, and palms and bananas swung their glittering fronds to the night wind in the valley below.

On such a night even an idler like myself

might hope for kindly glances and loosened tongues.

And the girls of the house had talked—a little.

Madame Gilles was called, familiarly, Madame Barbe-Bleue—"Bluebeard." Why? Ah, who knew? Well, yes, it was said that she had killed four husbands. No, they were not guillotining in France just then—it was long ago—so she had been sent to New Caledonia. The last husband? Oh, very long ago—twenty years. . . . .

I was brought up short in my musings. Some one was looking at me, in the bright moonlight, through one of those latticed shutters common in the country of crimes and secrets. The shutter opened in a blank white wall—built, like all the walls of the settlement, for time and eternity. Through the lattice I could see eyes, light, glinting, with a red shawl misty above. Madame herself, perhaps.

In my dreaming, I had walked far from the hotel; under the moon the house of Madame Bluebeard reared its crenelated walls, its peering turret, beside me. I don't know what made me pause underneath the wall and take shelter from the night wind long enough to light and start a cigarette—while I listened.

Behind the lattice, the head had disappeared. There was no light visible, nor any sound except a curious rhythmic noise that seemed to come from the back of the house; a swinging, regular sound that was vaguely familiar to me, although I could not name it. It had been going when first I came; it continued, without a break. Held by it, I stood listening and wondering. Of what did it remind me?

Before I had settled that question, the noise came to an end, not abruptly, but ceasing by degrees, as a swing stops when children agree to "let the old cat die." Almost immediately the iron gate opened, and Vaiti of the Islands came out.

She hated to be spied on. Instinct made me dodge behind the nearest tree. I watched her step outside the wall of the villa, look down the long white thread of highway that wound towards Noumea, and turning, reënter the house.

"Nobody coming," I heard her say, in the rude pidgin-French that she used with such perfect aplomb. Vaiti, daughter of Island kings and English sea-rovers, had never heard that overworked modern word, "poise," but what she did not know about the thing itself was not worth knowing. If her brusque sea-queen manners, her language shorn of tenses and conjunctions, did not please you, you could do just as you liked about it.

"There was somebody here just now," the old woman answered. "Not those we are waiting for, but the tall, fair man who is staying at the inn. Is he a Government spy, dearie?"

"Don't know," answered Vaiti with utter indifference. "If he is, he's no good at it."

"Just a lover?" persisted the voice of Madame Gilles. It was a curious voice, mild and wheedling, yet through it ran a thread of something formidable, hard as steel.

I could hear Vaiti yawn; she made no other reply.

"You are tired," said the wheedling voice. "No one will come tonight; it is too late. Go to bed, dearie."

I did not hear Vaiti's answer; the fact that she was a guest at Madame Gilles' villa struck me so hard and unpleasantly that for the moment I could think of nothing else. What was she doing there—what interest had this old convict-woman in my Island queen? Into what new danger was Vaiti's rash, untamable nature leading her? These were the questions I asked myself, and I could find no answer.

At the inn that night I slept badly. Next morning I set myself seriously to do that which before I had been doing idly and carelessly. I wanted to get information from the girls.

Odette, the prettiest of the four, had never very much to do in the early hours of the forenoon, which was her time at the bar. Sitting over a bottle of wine in the dusky room that looked across Bourail's green-shaded street, I made love to Odette; not unwillingly, either—though I was, and always had been, deeply in love with Vaiti of the Islands. A man's heart, after all, is mighty like an inn: one may keep the best rooms for a favored guest, but there is also a place for lesser folk—round corners, under eaves, between the gilded suites that are so seldom used. . . . .

Odette, by and by, chattered as girls will. And from her chatter, bit by bit I gleaned the following.

MADAME GILLES had been in Bourail for many years; she was very old. In France, in the days when they had kings

and queens, Madame had killed three husbands. She would never have been found out had it not been for the fact that—like most murderers—she used the same methods more than once. Her first husband had been the proprietor of one of those infamous hotels of old France, where moneyed travelers were decoyed to their death. In the guest-chamber there was a movable ceiling; the proprietor used to work it from outside; when the guest was sleeping, a heavy drugged sleep, he would gradually slide it down. . . . .

slide it down. . . . . Madame's first husband died, and left her the hotel. It was proved later that he

had been poisoned by her.

She kept the secret of the descending ceiling, and with sublime audacity, made the room her nuptial chamber. Her second and third husbands—moneyed men both—fell victims to Madame's insatiable desire for more money and change of partners. The third murder was discovered through an accident. Madame expiated the accident by a life-sentence in New Caledonia.

Madame was a model prisoner; she got released, on ticket of leave—which is all the release ever given. She married again, acquired a fine villa and a farm. Her husband died—

No, nobody had ever proved anything. Monsieur Gilles died in a fit, while Madame was absent from the house. She had, indeed, been kindly helping a neighbor through her confinement, for the whole of a night and a day. No alibi could be more complete. Nevertheless, it was from that time—now many years ago—that the sinister nickname of "Madame Barbe-Bleue" had descended upon the too-frequently widowed lady.

SHE was supposed to be very rich and miserly. It was also supposed (here Odette lowered her voice, and looked anxiously about; it took more than one, or three, kisses to reassure her) that Madame was deep in with the "underground railway" system of the colony, which now and then, at enormous cost, restored a "libéré" to true liberty, elsewhere in the world. How did she spend her money? She was fond of good eating and drinking and of absurdly fine clothes, but that was not all. She had a son who ate her means. Who was this son-what was his name-did he live on the Islands? Odette couldn't, or wouldn't tell me.

Customers coming in broke off the tale, and I saw that for the present, my chance was gone.

OUT into the sun and rain of Bourail I went again, wandering unheedingly through a rainbow shower. It was a regal day; from the high coigns and slopes of the scrambling town, one saw miles and miles along the highroad, across the jadegreen sugar-cane farms, and the rich country that was checkered dark and light with coffee and maize, to fairy hills, bluepainted, and silver levels of sea. But for all the impression the beauty of it made on me, I might have been looking at a back-yard in Birmingham. Vaiti possessed my mind.

Then I met her, walking alone in a solitary place. She always went as a wave goes to shore, purposeful and swift, giving, as a wave does, the impression of something soft, yet strangely ruthless. How a man's heart is beaten down by the sure knowledge that he is not loved! I was five years older the moment my eyes caught sight of her wild beauty—I was at once less a man, and more a thing. Yet I would not have changed if I could; so are we

made.

She was for passing me with a nod; Vaiti never troubled to be commonly civil, unless she had an immediate use for you. But I would not have it so.

"Stop, and speak to me, Vaiti," I said.

"I want to talk."

She checked her step a little, and I walked beside her.

"You been talk plenty too much before," she said. "Your tongue he run like a dog." By this I knew that she had heard somehow of my questionings at the inn, and resented them. We were near the house of Madame Gilles. I marked it, crouching behind crenelated walls and seeming to peer through its creepers at us.

"Let's get away from that damned place," I said. "It chokes me!" —For the very breath of prison and crime seemed to cling about it, even on that day of gold, beneath the free and brilliant sky.

She made a mouth of contempt, and

walked on very fast.

"Look here," I said, "you oughtn't to stay in that place! I can guess what you are at—maybe I know as much about the 'underground railway' business as you—but it's too dangerous. She's too danger-

ous; she's a human wolf, and years in a cage aren't likely to have changed her." remembered the face of Madame Bluebeard, seen when passing her door: the walnut skin, carved deep with lines of evil passion, evil knowledge; the small yellow eyes, steady and sunless as a lizard's; the smile, that twisted itself under her crooked nose like worms writhing beneath the roots of a tree. I could not bear to think of Vaiti, the sea-queen's daughter, spending days and nights in that infected company.

Vaiti was smoking one of her usual cigars. She took it out of her mouth now, and looked at me with something like at-

tention.

"You pretty good man," she said. "Sometimes almos' I like vou. Suppose vou mind your own business, maybe I like you quite a little."

"You never would," I answered her, straight out, "but I'll go on liking you more than a little, Vaiti-and you can't keep me

from feeling anxious about you."

She took a long luxurious puff, and made no answer. Following her eyes, I saw she was watching the run of the road, away below. "She is expecting some one," I thought, "some one who comes by this afternoon's motorbus." And my intuition told me that it was some one who came for no good.

"Well, good-by," I said heavily. "You never would listen to me, and you never will." But in my mind I was decided what to do-I would be at Madame Bluebeard's after dark, and I would watch, concealed!

THERE was no moon that night, and the stars, on which I had counted for guidance, were smothered in wet mountain fog. I found the house, however, and found also a certain spying-place that I had earlier marked down. There was a single tall New Caledonian pine beside the villa; not left, nor planted there by accident, any more than were the other tall "lone pines" that one may mark upon the hills about Bourail. In convict days these served as watch-towers, signal-stations. Anyone can climb such pines; they are stepped the whole way up-and they run as high as a hundred feet or more.

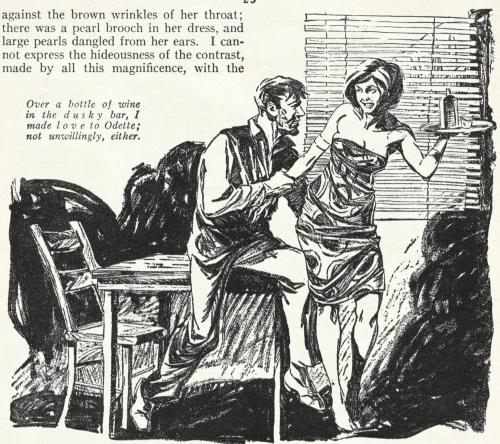
I had guessed right about the pine; climbing cautiously, I found that, at a good height, one overlooked the whole interior of the villa enclosure, and could see fairly well into more than one room; with the aid of field-glasses one could watch what took place as easily as though one stood with face pressed to the window.

At first there was nothing at all to be seen but an untenanted room, furnished with old-fashioned luxury; I noted among other things, a mahogany whatnot, a centerpiece ottoman, one of those absurd crookback seats called "causeuses," and a fine old rocking-chair, with the long wooden rockers and deep cushions of a by-gone day. The causeuse was insane, the center ottoman, with its back-to-back stiff seats, unattractive, and the other chairs were of the gilt-legged gingerbread style that any sensible person instinctively avoids. But the rocking-chair was the perfection of lazy ease. Cramped on one narrow bough, with one hand clasped round another, and the wet mists swirling over me like waves, I looked with longing at that brightly lighted interior, that supremely comfortable chair, and would have been glad to buy a session in it, even at the price of a little of Madame Gilles' company.

The mists were maddening; they came and went capriciously, as the wind from the mountains blew them, now hiding everything from sight, now drawing back the curtain again. In one of these eclipses, some one must have come into the room, for the lifting of the mist showed me a woman standing with her back to me, an old, small woman, bent and deformed in some odd way that at first I did not recognize. Then, with a shock, I did recognize it, or guessed at it-it was that marring of the human frame that comes from severe toil, long-continued and far beyond the ordinary capacity of nerve and They had a heavy hand with their convicts, male and female, in New Caledonia of old days! Of those who did not die, none escaped the mark of the beast-the "work-beast." This woman had been made into a work-beast, once-and in the making, she had also been made into an enemy of the human race.

I knew, before I saw again the face I had seen at the doorway, that it was Madame Bluebeard.

The magnificence of her dress amazed me. Usually she wore the shapeless black cotton frock and handkerchief tied over her head, that is the common garb of the old, furtive women who haunt Bourail. Tonight she was in the richest of black satin, with a collar of fine lace round her neck, and a kerchief of lace on her thin gray hair. A string of pearls showed startlingly white



twisted and evil look of Madame Gilles herself—a dusky gnome in satins, a devil hung with gems!

She was alone when first I saw her, but almost immediately the door opened, and two men came in. I recognized one of them as a commercial traveler who had never seemed to have much to do. The other was some insignificant unknown.

They waited. I also waited, high on my uncomfortable perch, drenched with mountain mist, shifting and fidgeting, and considering bitterly that I was not quite so young as I had once been, and that tree-climbing is an unsuitable pastime for the middle-aged. They talked a little while they waited. Madame used her hands in animated gesture—those ugly, blackish, misshapen hands, deformed by inhuman labors—and seemed to be explaining something. More than once she looked at the doorway.

I knew what I was going to see, but the shock was no less when Vaiti came in—

tall and white-clad, red jasmine in her hair—as self-possessed as ever, and ready apparently to join those criminals (for I was certain that they all were or had been convicts) in whatever plots they might be hatching—just for the sake of a little cash.

And yet she had never been simple. In this was she as simple as she looked?

DIDN'T know. But I knew that she had been mixed up in one escape already, and just escaped arrest by the French police. She must know the peril she was in —a double danger, owing to the nature of her associates. But there was no reason why Madame Bluebeard should treat her otherwise than well. Vaiti, by reason of her daring, her British citizenship, and the way she handled boats and sailing vessels, was no doubt invaluable to the "underground railway" plotters. No, there could not be any danger other than that which all the plotters shared—jail—so I argued with myself.

Nevertheless my heart, in defiance of logic, was cold—even colder than my cramped, chilled legs. And I had an uncomfortable certainty that the key to my fears was just round the corner, so to speak, if only I could reach out and seize it. What was it that I ought to think of? What?

The business of the evening began. Gathered round a small table the two men, Vaiti, and Madame Gilles read together certain letters; disputed, somewhat hotly as far as one could guess, over their contents; compared steamship time-tables. Money was produced by Madame Gilles and handed over to the men and to Vaiti.

So far, I remained uninterested. It was nothing to me which freed-man or freed-woman of the colony, steeped in ancient crime, was to be released to greater freedom abroad; who was to be paid, and how, for the planning of it. But I wanted to know why Madame—even with the history of Vaiti's late exploit within her knowledge, as no doubt it was—should have taken the trouble to send for her to the distant Isle of Pines, to bring her, a foreigner, into plots that were safest left to the discretion of the native-born. The link—what was it?

Have you ever tried to sketch from nature, with living figures as your subject? Have you, when unable to catch some outline, snapped your eyes shut, and opened them again, thus securing, as a camera-shutter does, one sharp, exact view? That was what the mists of Bourail did for me. They swept suddenly down; in a minute rose again, and I saw what I wanted—the swift, covetous glance that Madame threw at Vaiti, while her hand stole, unconsciously, to the string of pearls about her own toad-skinned neck. The link!

"My God!" I thought. "That's it—but you could never get Vaiti to believe it, if you talked till next century!"

FOR I alone—with the possible exception of one other (possibly) white man—knew what Vaiti carried in her bosom, had carried there, since the day months ago, when she and I and one now dead had together fronted the dangers of Brush Island. It was a small thing that she hid thus—a thing that your fingertip could cover—yet this tiny thing was powerful to slay, not only the bodies of men, but their souls.
.... It was a wonderful blue pearl,

which Simoni had already tried once to steal from her. But Vaiti had checkmated him with a threat of most unpleasant death, and in terror Simoni had bought his life by handing back the stolen gem.

Simoni was not likely to have talked about that incident. It was impossible that Madame could know anything about it. Yet that camera-shutter glance showed me that the impossible had happened—that she did know.

The link was not yet complete—would not be, till I knew how the impossible had come about. But I feared—

Vaiti—who could throw a knife like a Dago sailor, or quell a mutiny single-handed; Vaiti—resourceful as a weasel and subtle as a snake—what had I to fear for her? I could not tell; and that was where the horror of it came in.

THE session ended. Some conclusion had been reached; I did not know what it was, or whom it concerned. The two men got up and, talking, went out. Madame came close to Vaiti, put her arms around her, and squeezed her in a hideous embrace. She was saying good-night, I knew. What more the embrace meant, what it was intended to discover, I could guess—Madame was merely assuring herself that the blue pearl was still in its accustomed resting-place.

Vaiti endured the hug impassively, loosed herself as soon as possible, and swung out of the room. Madame, left alone, fingered her necklace, went up to one of the long gilt mirrors, and studied herself with a hideous complacency. Does female vanity ever die? After that night, I would not maintain that it ever does.

Her ghastly prinking was interrupted by the opening of the door. A man came ina youngish, fattish man with very black, greased hair, and lips as red as sealingwax. Madame, seeing his reflection in the glass, twisted herself back with amazing swiftness, caught him in her arms, and began smacking kisses on his face with furious affection. He not only stood it; he kissed her in return. And I saw, by a certain ghostly likeness between the two, what their relation was—they were mother and son! And now the whole of the link was plain. For the man was Simoni, and Simoni was the only creature in New Caledonia who conceivably might know that Vaiti carried in her breast a blue pearl worth half Noumea.



Simoni was also the only creature in New Caledonia who would cheerfully have danced upon Vaiti's grave. He had tricked Vaiti more than once when trading with her, but always Vaiti had played a supertrick upon him in return. At the moment the balance was greatly against him, and his mean soul cried out for revenge.

What more happened that night, I cannot tell you. The mist swept down again, and this time it stayed. After an hour's vain waiting, I saw the light in the room fade out. I climbed down, weary and stiff, anxious, yet not altogether unsatisfied, for it seemed to me that the threads were gathering into my hands.

As I touched earth, the strange rhythmic sound that I had noticed previously, started again. I cursed the mists; now would have been my time to find out what it was, if I could have seen into the house.

I WENT down the moonlit, misty road lost in a dream. Out of the dream I came suddenly, at the sight of Vaiti. I ran after her, and overtook her.

"Have you left the house?" I asked breathlessly.

She told me she had, for a day or so. Madame Gilles wanted her to go down to Noumea and purchase certain stores, leaving them in a secret place known to the members of the nameless society I have called the underground railway. Coolly she told me this, assuming that I knew all about it, and that it was useless to fence. Vaiti's guesses were usually as good as anyone else's reasoned proofs.

"What's Madame Gilles doing?" I asked her, hardly knowing why I did ask.

It seemed that Madame was going away too—for a day or so. The house would be shut up till she came back.

"Well, if it is," I thought, "that will be my chance. I'll get in—somehow or other!"

"You more better clear out of Bourail," observed Vaiti suddenly. "This place not good for you."

I felt myself turn red with pleasure; not often had Vaiti shown herself in any way regardful of my interests. Perhaps her

warning carried less weight because of that; perhaps I should have neglected it in any case. At all events, it did not shake my resolve.

There was something uncanny about that house; something that was wrong—what it was, I meant to find out. . . .

Early the next morning, the mists hung about Bourail, swathing as in silver bridal veils the boulevard trees of the main street, masking the square, sinister jail buildings, and swirling about the fortressed gendarmerie that hangs above the town, in such strange wise that it seemed like the heavenly city of some floating vision. Under the trees, the service motor swept away. carrying Vaiti with it. Somewhat earlier I had seen a buggy leaving, drawn by two powerful horses trotting smartly off, with a bent, black-cloaked figure on the back seat, and Simoni in front, driving. Madame, Madame's son, and Vaiti herself, who would have objected to my "meddling" quite as strenuously as anyone, had all gone off into the mists, and I was alone.

JUST to make sure there was no trap, I climbed a hill—the pine was too conspicuous for a daylight watch-tower—and waited till full morning and clear sun showed me the far-off road, with the buggy moving along it. The motor was long since gone.

Bourail was busy with its own affairs; few eat the bread of idleness in New Caledonia. Coffee and tobacco had to be cultivated, sugar-cane cut and carried to the mills, this being the busy season. Cattle were to be milked, fowls tended, bullocks harnessed to various tasks. Nobody had any time to attend to the stranger. This suited me. Smoking, I strolled along the road, out of the town, past the great jails that stood along the wayside, to the place where Madame's villa lurked behind its high stone walls.

Nobody was about the villa, nobody keeping watch at the gate, nobody in the poultry yard behind, where fowls strolled contentedly, making that *chirring* sound that above all others, speaks of country peace. No lock on the green gate at the back, that gave entrance to an enclosure joining the house itself. Roses growing there, heliotrope in great bushes scenting all the place. A little paved walk leading to a door. . . . It would be locked, of course.

But it was not.

"How lucky!" was my first thought. The second was, "I wonder!"

Everything seemed too easy, too like that kind of fairy-tale in which the doors are open, the castle apparently empty—with a dragon waiting to snatch at you under the stairs.

It was an odd simile; I burst out laughing, as I thought of it. For had I not seen the dragon, half an hour ago, driving down

the valley, miles away?

Like the hero of the fairy-tale, I pressed the latch and walked in. There were no dragons anywhere, and no place for them to hide. The door opened upon a closed and shuttered veranda; within, other doors—double, and of glass—showed dimly the interior of a prim little dining-room. "As well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb," I thought, as I crossed the dining-room and went up a flight of stairs.

The landing above had three doors; two led into bedrooms, the third ushered me at once into the very room upon which I had looked down from my porch in the pinetree. I could see the tree now; it seemed a long way off, and—to anyone who did not reckon with my field-glasses—perfectly harmless, from the point of view of desired

privacy.

I stood gazing about me. The house was extremely still; one could hear the tall clock ticking in the little parlor below stairs, and somewhere about the kitchen regions a water-pipe dripped slowly; other sound there was none. Again, I wondered what the curious rhythmic noise could have been. A pump? It was not metallic enough. Coffee-grinder? Meat-chopper? No, it was not either of these.

The furniture of the room I had already seen, from my tree. I now noted further some ornaments on shelves and tables, also a few cut-crystal bottles, containing various kinds of drinks. The largest seemed to have been recently filled; I took out the stopper, and smelled it. Scotch whisky, of the best and oldest—here, in New Caledonia, where nobody drank it, where it was so rare as to be worth its weight in silver!

I STOOD still for a moment, hearing in the stillness the tick-tock of the time-piece down below, the low, occasional *chirr* of a satisfied fowl outside. I am not exactly a drinking man, but I have been a rolling-stone about the Islands for half a lifetime, and to such a one good Scotch is rather more than good Scotch. Glasses

stood beside the bottle, and water, in a jug. I took a drink. I took another. Two —no more.

I went over to the window and looked out. The day was brighter than I had thought, the landscape pleasanter. It was a pleasant world all around, and this house of the old witch's was good. Would Vaiti be back tomorrow or not? I felt I must think that out, and the best, the only place for thinking and reposing, was that attractive rocking-chair.

I sank into its cushions; it swelled up all round me, embraced me softly, and at the touch of my foot upon the floor, began to swing back and forward, back and for-

ward. . . .

Why, that was the sound I had heard! It was a creaky sort of chair, for all its comfort; it made a noise like an old-fashioned cradle of the kind that used to roll and rattle on a scrubbed nursery floor. Somehow the recollection soothed me. I rocked and rocked, growing gradually sleepier, remembering days and things long past, drifting off into misty dreamland.

THEN happened that which I cannot recall without a shudder. A spider fell on my face from the ceiling. I loathe spiders in any case; and the tropical spider, large or small, is not to be treated lightly—its bite is usually poisonous. Thoroughly wakened, I leaped from my seat with a sharp exclamation, brushing away the hairy horror, and flinging it on the floor. I stamped hard on the remains. I picked up the gummy fragments, and as I was crossing the room to throw them out of the window, I chanced to look at the rocking-chair.

The smashed spider fell from my hand; I stood frozen. For the rocking-chair was softly and silently folding itself up!

Like the leaves of a screen, the two halves of the chair, deep and heavily padded, closed in upon one another lengthwise, pressing harder and harder, until the velvet of the cushions was crushed almost flat. For about five minutes, I judged, they remained pressed together. Then slowly, without sound, they opened again, fell into their former position, and became once more the complete form of a cozy, innocent chair.

"My God!" I thought. "If I had been in it—" Then I realized that I was meant to be in it; things had been planned, with devilish malignity, just to that end; the

trap had been set, and I had walked right in.

It had been carefully arranged that I should meet the fate of Madame Bluebeard's last husband, who had "died in a fit," what time Madame Bluebeard had been innocently absent on an errand of mercy elsewhere. She was innocently absent this time also. I should have died in a fit-should have been found by some indifferent person-Madame still away-in the comfortable chair, with a partly consumed bottle of whisky at hand. Was the whisky drugged? I thought not. It would have been analyzed and found harmless, as far as whisky ever is harmless; blamed perhaps for the oncoming of the "fit"-correctly too, for the chair would never have called so alluringly, had not the Scotch The ingenuity of the plot called first. amazed me, but I had no time to waste in thinking about it. Clearly Madame and her gang thought me a spy (after all, what else was I?) and were determined to make short work of me. Vaiti, I could swear, knew nothing about it; doubtless she herself was in as much danger as I.

I have been in tight places many times; I recognized this as another. Instinct suggested swiftly that I should move out of range of the windows, set everything as it had been before I entered the room, and get away as soon and as quietly as possible. It was just conceivable that nobody had seen me come in; if I could remove all traces of my visit, Madame might never know that I had surprised her hideous secret—that I had been saved, like Bruce of ancient tales, by a spider, and so had

I wished extremely to examine that chair of death; but time was gold just then, and I dared not. I could only say to myself—as I hurriedly, carefully, put back bottles and glasses in place, and rinsed my tumbler: "The mechanism is actuated by a spring that's wound up by the rocking of the chair; that's why it's just a little stiff. Clever, damned clever! Husband Number One must have explained all about the collapsing bed-canopy in the inn, and Madame remembered it. . . . .

lived to tell the tale.

"Who fixed up the chair, though? Not Husband Number Four—he died in it! A lover I reckon; Simoni's father, for a ducat. . . . . I say, this wont do; the bottle shows that I've had a whack out of it. Water? Yes, that's better, but the jug shows it now. That leaky tap—where is

it?" I ran softly downstairs, located the tap at once, filled up the jug, and returned it to its place. "Unless she drinks Scotch, which I'll swear she doesn't," I thought, "she'll never see anything wrong with that.

Now to get out, P. D. Q.!"

I reached the green gate in the yard, and lurked behind it for a minute, reconnoitering through a crack. A large blue butterfly went lazily past; the wind stirred the weeds that choked the grassy, highwalled lane. No other sign of life. Fowls, behind me, cackled away in the yard; roosters crowed—they seemed to be excited over something or somebody. I knew nothing about fowls; I was not interested.

"Did it all right!" I told myself triumphantly, closing the green gate, and tramping down the lane. "There's not a soul for half a mile; no one will ever know I was there. And now, Madame Vaiti, I daresay you'll believe me when I—"

Thereupon came darkness.

AFTER a long while, there was light, growing, hurting my eyes. There was a blank white wall in front of me. A wall? I was walking under a wall just now; one of the many old heavy walls about Bourail, with large loose stones on top. Hadn't I come to the end of it yet? It was night, and lamps were lighted.

Slowly consciousness came back, together with a tremendous headache. I was flat on my back in my little room at the inn; the wall was not a wall, but a white ceiling above me. With a painful effort I brought down my eyes; it hurt me to move them.

Odette of the inn was standing beside

me, a lamp in her hand.

"You are well again, Monsieur? Ah, but I am content," she said tremulously. I was beginning to feel flattered, in a confused misty way, when she went on: "Because, you see, Monsieur, in another little while my father would have had to call in the head gendarme and make a report to him—and that is never good for a hotel that is trying to make its way! But, since you are recovered— Tell me, Monsieur, it was at the other hotel you found so much good stuff, that you fell down on the road and hurt your head? Ah, if you had asked us, we have better drinks by far of all sorts, than those villains, those poisoners, up the road—the people who could not even see you safe home, but must leave you lying after dark right in the way of the ox-carts and the cars!"

She looked at me with grieved reproach. I had committed the sin, unforgivable in a hotel guest, of drinking elsewhere; or so little Odette imagined.

In silence I stared at her. I knew by this time that I must have been struck by a stone while passing Madame Gilles' boundary-wall. Racking my brains, I thought I remembered something large and heavy that had detached itself from the coping of the wall just as I went by.

Stones do fall from copings accidentally, as people are passing—but I judged that there was nothing accidental about this occurrence, save the fact that it had left me alive. That was certainly a mistake on the part of the person-whoever he or she might be-who had loosened the stone. I could have wagered that only the unusual traffic of the afternoon-on a day that was market-day-had saved me from being finished off. A bullock driver, taking a short-cut through the lane, had found me, dead drunk-or so he supposed-and conveyed me to the inn, with a rude joke as to the potency of the liquors in the rival establishment-which was half a mile nearer to Madame's than was my inn.

I left little Odette to suppose, if she liked, that I had been traitor to my host, asking her only for a hair of the dog that was supposed to have bitten me. She brought it, shaking her head.

"This is better than the other, Monsieur," she assured me. "This will put you on your feet again." And it did, though not in the way that she supposed.

SICK, shaky, with a head that seemed double its usual size, I still knew that I must somehow or other make my way out and seek what long ago I should have sought, the help of the law, to save Vaiti, if indeed it was not too late to save her from the consequences of her own folly. Odette exclaimed against my leaving the house, but out in the vaporous warm dusk of the mountain town I went, as straight as I could go to the gendar-merie.

I was received, as one generally is in French police offices, like a criminal. The head official kept his seat, and addressed me, standing in front of him. It appeared he thought I had been up to all sorts of nefarious doings, and was anxious now to inform on some associate, in order to save myself. Even when I succeeded in disabusing him of this idea, he still was



"He in plot to murder me and steal my blue pearl. I throw knife well, Richardson!"

not interested in what I had come to tell him. As a foreigner, I was in myself suspect, and he wanted to know all sorts of things about me before he listened to anything I might wish to say concerning French subjects. He questioned me so long that at last I burst out.

"Sergeant," I said, "I suppose it's nothing to you that there have been two attempts to murder me today; you wont let me talk—but I tell you that there is a plot at Madame Gilles' villa to get *libérés* out of the country, and they are probably meeting there now! Will you—"

THAT fetched him. He rose with dignity, cocked his *kepi* a little more on one side, and threw his chest out. "Why did you not tell me at once?" he said sternly. "I assure you that you cannot trifle with the law in this country. It will be well for you if you confess all you know."

"Oh, come on!" I cried. "They may be killing her at this very minute!"

"It is not allowed," said the sergeant pompously. "Without doubt you are mistaken. Referring to the misconduct of these libérés—"

He had followed me out by this time, and was tramping, with a sharp military step, through the mud and warm mist at my side. I didn't care what he said now; I let him talk on. He was coming, and if I did not mistake the sounds, a couple of gendarmes followed him.

When we got to the villa of Madame Gilles, the sergeant showed himself a good tactician, in spite of his unbelief. planted a gendarme at each gate, and, motioning to me to follow him in silence, crept up the front pathway as softly as a cat. Arrived at the door, he wasted no time in knocking, but applied a burglariouslooking instrument that he took out of his sleeve, wrenching the door open as you wrench apart the halves of a nut. He bounded up the staircase at a pace I could not emulate, though I was not long after Into the sitting-room we rushed, like dogs chasing a rabbit. And this was what we saw:

A table, with two coffee-cups upon it,

both stained and both empty. Furniture set tidily against the wall. A rocking-chair, not rocking. In the chair, half-hidden by deep cushions that had closed on one another as close the cruel leaves of the sundew upon its insect prey, was a

body, very still. . . . .

Still sick and weak from the blow on my head, I reeled against the wall of the sitting-room, and uttered a cry. So did the sergeant; but his was eloquent and profane. He sprang at once upon the imprisoned body, and applied his burglarious tool. He had the chair wrenched apart in twenty seconds; in twenty more, he had pulled the body out of it, and shown me the dead, darkened face of—

Madame Bluebeard!

IT was afterward that I heard what had

taken place that day.

It seemed that, as Vaiti truly said, I was "no good" as a spy. From the first, Madame Gilles had suspected me. She had not seen me up the pine-tree, but she had noted my wanderings, my haunting of the house, observed me talking to Vaiti on the highroad, and drawn her own conclusions.

Setting the trap as once before—perhaps more than once—it had been set, Madame withdrew herself out of the way, together with her son Simoni, who was to return in due time, wait outside (so as not to be seen near the house) and send some innocent person along to find the body. These careful plans had been balked by seeing me come out unharmed. In broad day, on the highroad, most people would have supposed that nothing could be done. Simoni's ingenuity, however, had been almost equal to the occasion. An inch farther, and the coping-stone he loosened would have struck full on my temple; I would never have moved again.

Having thus failed, Madame Bluebeard's lieutenant had gone into the house, and, as I had foreseen, examined the sitting-room with care. He could find no trace of anything beyond a casual visit. It must have appeared to him that I had come in and out without pausing to make special examination of anything; that the trap, carefully though it had been set, and baited with that which an Island wanderer rarely resists, was still unsprung.

I think he drew a breath of mingled annoyance and relief then, and put the business off till a later day. He was heard to

say to the old witch Madame Gilles, as she came back, "Eh, Mother, there are two sides to a stick; after all, it will make the other easier—and safer!" Then they went in.

I suppose the last thing they expected was to see Vaiti, who had set out by motor for Noumea; but she was at that moment, coming up the road. The car had broken down, and all the passengers had been obliged to walk back. Near sunset they reached their homes, and Vaiti made for Madame Bluebeard's house.

When they saw her coming, they made up their minds that it was to be done at once. So far my instinct had led me right; at the very moment when I was fruitlessly arguing with the sergeant of gendarmes,

Vaiti was indeed in deadly peril.

She entered the room with her head high up, tossing away the traveling scarf as if it irked her, and slipping her feet out of the shoes that she always hated. Simoni had vanished at her approach. Madame, greeting her with a little cry of surprise, feigned to commiserate her for the long walk she had had, and bustled about to make a cup of coffee.

THE coffee it was that excited Vaiti's suspicions, waked sudden doubt in her sharp brain. Like all people with the island Maori blood, she was keen as a weasel where plots and plotters were concerned. Madame, used to slothful, stupid New Caledonian half-castes, did not allow for the difference between those children of convicts and cannibals, and the daughter of English nobles and Island kings.

A something in Madame's manner, a certain gloating, as of a cat over a mouse almost secured, went not unnoticed by Vaiti. When the cups of coffee—prepared by Madame alone in the downstairs kitchen, and brought up by her, laid on the table by her—were ready, Vaiti sat calmly down to the table, and almost immediately sprang up with a strong seaoath on her lips. She had dropped a pearl on the carpet, she said—a pearl from her bosom, a great blue pearl. . . . .

At that Madame lost her head, as nothing else would have made her lose it, and went scrambling after the pearl. She picked it up, held it covetously for a minute or so, and then with an appraising glance at Vaiti's lithe, powerful figure, handed it back. There was an ugly grin on her face as she did so. Vaiti read it

rightly as "Wait!"-but she made no sign. She drank her coffee, and feigned to be very tired. Madame drank her coffee too. Vaiti had tasted it, during a swift interlude a minute or two past, when she had changed the cups.

"Not poison-sleep-medicine," she had thought, recognizing the faint aroma of something other than coffee. "Then she means something more. . . . ."

Madame drank, watching Vaiti slyly the while. In a minute or two, however, her senses seemed to cloud over.

"Satan! My Lord Satan!" she criedas others call on God. "What is this?" And that was the only hint that anyone, then or earlier, ever had of the true nature

of Madame Gilles' faith.

Vaiti watched her, cold-eyed.

Madame, struggling vainly, sank upon the floor; and Vaiti, who had always seen Madame reclining in the rocking-chair, rocking herself constantly back and forward (I have no doubt there was a catch that could be released at will) picked her up, and slung her into the chair.

I don't know how much, or how little, she suspected; it may have been everything, or nothing at all, or anything in between. Vaiti was always close-mouthed,

and she never told.

The catch was not on; why, one can guess. In a minute the frightful mechanism worked; and as I had seen it close, as the leaves of the cruel sundew close, as the praying-mantis closes its arms upon the butterfly that takes it for a simple flower, so the chair closed upon the unconscious body of Madame Gilles, and held her fast.

If Vaiti had struggled with all her strength, she could not have unlocked that grip. I think—I have always hoped—she knew it. At all events, she did not try to free the would-be murderess; she did not stay to witness the end. She fled into an inner room, and remained there.

AT this moment, or a little later, the sergeant and I made our entrance. When we had ascertained that all was over with Madame Bluebeard, and the sergeant, with clucks of professional delight, had made as much examination of the chair as was possible in that room (he had the floor taken to pieces afterwards, and told me that it was "superb-truly an invention superb!"), I became uneasy about Vaiti, and started to search for her.

I found her outside in the courtyard, under the yard lamp, playing with something small and round that she tossed about in her hand.

"You not hurry up very much," was her comment.

"What's that-and where is Simoni?" I asked her.

"Simoni he go," she answered. "He go very damn' quick down along road."

"He didn't do you any harm?" I de-

manded anxiously.

"No fear," she said. "He too glad to get away."

"What did you do to him?"

"Nothing. Pin him by ear against the door. He in the plot to murder me and steal my blue pearl. I throw knife well, Richardson!" She pointed to a red splotch in the panels, surrounding a cut. As if reminded by this she bent down and thrust, a little farther into her stocking, the hilt of her throwing-knife. She looked the famous bronze of "Diana Wounded," bending thus; and I think the sergeant, who had now followed me. thought the same-it is quite probable that being French, he knew the statue. At all events, he said something below his breath, and in the same moment, demanded to know who there was to arrest.

Vaiti told him, and he went off post-

haste down the road.

I INDER the lamp, she opened her fingers, and showed me a blue pearlnot very large, but wonderful in color. I knew the history of it; I could not help exclaiming, when I saw it. And I knew too, after seeing that splotch on the door, why Simoni had given it up.

She dropped it into the little bag in her

bosom, that already held another.

"Now I got them all," was her terse

comment.

"Vaiti, did you take up with these people only for-" I began to ask. looked at me with so stupid an expression. that you would have thought her semicrazed. But I, who knew Vaiti, knew bet-

"Some of these days you'll walk across razor-edges just once too often!" I told her. "Some of these-"

She was not listening to me; she never She had strolled off down the road into the darkness.

The sergeant was promoted. The house of Madame Bluebeard is no more.



# TANAR of Pellucidar

#### By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

The Story So Far:

STARTLING world, this Pellucidar in which Tanar and his primeval companions live—a world of perilous seas and faëry lands forlorn; of the cave-bear and the saber-toothed tiger; of the Buried People, a strange half-blind savage folk who dwell in caves; of those able intrepid seamen the Korsarians, who sail far and harry many a distant coast; of the Place of Awful Shadow, and of many another strange region. The sun hangs ever in the heavens, and having no division of day and night and season, they have no means of computing time.

To this world of Pellucidar in the hollow center of this our earth have penetrated two men of our own external world and time— David Innes and Abner Perry; while experimenting with a tremendously powerful "iron mole," a boring device designed to prospect in the earth's crust for valuable minerals, David and Abner lost control and presently, after terrific adventures, found themselves in this strange primitive reversed cosmos of Pellucidar.

There their adventures had been no less terrific. They had aided the Pellucidarians in their war with the terrible Mahars, vicious wingéd prehistoric monsters; and contriving to manufacture gunpowder and crude firearms, they had all but exterminated the enemy. But now a new menace threatens them and the people of Pellucidar; and the fascinating story of the amazing events which follow comes to Edgar Rice Burroughs unexpectedly one

Copyright, 1929, by Edgar Rice Burroughs, Incorporated. All rights reserved.



night by means of the far-reaching waves of the radio. . .

A powerful raiding armada of a strange semi-civilized white race, the Korsarians, had landed on the coast of Pellucidar and sacked many towns. Retreating at last in their high-decked Elizabethan ships, the Korsarians—a picturesque red-sashed gang armed with medieval arquebuses and led by a burly buccaneer called the Cid—carried off with them the young chieftain Tanar as hostage. And David Innes, giving instructions to the Pellucidarians to build a fleet and sail in pursuit when it is ready, himself set out in a small boat with only one companion—and a captive Korsarian as a guide—in a forlorn hope of effecting rescue.

Meanwhile on the Korsarian ship Tanar met the lovely Stellara, supposed to be a daughter of the Cid, but in reality a captive stolen in childhood from the beautiful island of Amiocap. And Tanar won at least the gratitude of Stellara when he rescued her from the attentions of the brutal Korsarian sub-chief Bohar.

Shortly thereafter a violent tempest scattered the Korsarian armada. The ship of the Cid was all but foundering, and the Korsarians took to the boats while Tanar and Stellara, unobserved, remained with the ship; and drifting unguided, the vessel was washed up on the shores of Stellara's native Amiocap.

The people of Amiocap, however, refused to accept Stellara's claim to kinship with It was their custom to kill all strangers in order that no alien blood or foreign corruption should mar the Arcadian simplicity of their lives. Tanar and Stellara therefore were held captive under guard until the method of their destruction should

Presently Letari, a comely maiden of the village who had been much attracted by Tanar, came and told them that they were to be burned alive as a warning to intruders. But before the sentence could be carried out, the village was attacked by a troop of gigantic tandors, a species of mastodon; and in the confusion Tanar and Stellara made their escape into the dense forests of Amiocap.

Before Tanar could fashion any weapons, however, one of the Coripis, or Buried People-weird sightless, hardly human folk who dwelt in caves—fell upon them, and only after a savage struggle was Tanar able to choke his terrible, long-taloned adversary into submission. Later, coming upon a lone hunter about to be overtaken by a tandor he had crippled but not killed, Tanar went to his aid and with the crude weapons he had been able to make, rescued him. And what was the joyful surprise of all three when Fedol the stranger recognized Stellara as his long-lost daughter, and their similar birthmarks further proved their relationship.

For a short, happy time Stellara and Tanar dwelt in Fedol's village. Then one day when Tanar was out hunting, the Korsarians under Bohar, who had likewise been cast away upon Amiocap, raided the village and carried off Stellara. Tanar went valiantly in pursuit and came up with the Korsarians, but to escape their firearms he had to take refuge in a cave, and there was made captive by a band of the hideous Coripis. (The story continues in detail:)

THE blank faces, the corpselike skin, the bulging protuberances where the eyes should have been, the hairless bodies, the clawlike hands combined to produce such a hideous aspect in the monsters as to make the stoutest of hearts quail.

And when they spoke! The mumbled mouthing withered the heart in the breast of the Sarian. Here indeed was a hideous end, for he knew that it was the end, since never in all the many tales the Amiocapians had told him of the Buried People was there any record of a human being escaping from their clutches.

Now they were addressing him and presently, in their hollow mewing, he discerned words. "How did you get into the land

of the Coripis?" demanded one.

"I fell into a hole in the ground," replied Tanar. "I did not seek to come here. Take me out and I will reward you."

"What have you to give the Coripis more than your flesh?" demanded another.

"Do not think to get out, for you never

shall," said a third.

Now two of them lifted him lightly and placed him upon the back of one of their companions. So easily the creature carried him that Tanar wondered how he had ever overcome the Coripi that he had met upon the surface of the ground.

Through long corridors, some very dark and others partly lighted by outcroppings of phosphorescent rock, the creature bore him. At times they passed through large grottoes, beautifully wrought in intricate designs by Nature, or climbed long stairways carved in the limestone, probably by the Coripis themselves, only presently to descend other stairways and follow winding tunnels that seemed interminable.

But at last the journey ended in a huge cavern, the ceiling of which rose at least two hundred feet above them. This stupendous grotto was more brilliantly lighted than any other section of the subterranean world that Tanar had passed through. Into its limestone walls were cut pathways that zigzagged back and forth upward toward the ceiling, and the entire surface of the surrounding walls was pierced by holes several feet in diameter that appeared to be the mouths of caves.

SQUATTING about on the floor of the cavern were hundreds of Coripis of all

ages and both sexes.

At one end of the grotto, in a large opening, a few feet above the floor, squatted a single large Coripi. His skin was mottled with a purplish hue that suggested a corpse in which mortification had progressed to a considerable degree. The protuberances that suggested huge eyeballs beneath the skin protruded much farther and were much

larger than those in any other of the Coripis that Tanar had observed. The creature was, by far, the most repulsive of all the repulsive horde.

On the floor of the grotto, directly before this creature, were gathered a number of male Coripis and toward this congrega-

tion Tanar's captors bore him.

Scarcely had they entered the grotto when it became apparent to Tanar that these creatures could see—a fact he had commenced to suspect shortly after his capture—for now, at sight of him, they commenced to scream and make whistling sounds, while from the openings of many of the high-flung caves within the walls heads protruded and the hideous, eyeless faces apparently bent eyes upon him.

ONE cry seemed to rise above all others as he was borne across the grotto toward the creature sitting in the niche. It was "Flesh! Flesh!" and it sounded gruesome and horrible in its suggestiveness.

Flesh! Yes, Tanar knew they ate human flesh and it seemed now that they were but awaiting a signal to leap upon him and devour him alive, tearing pieces from him with their heavy claws. But when one did rush upon him there came a scream from the creature in the niche and the fellow desisted, even as one of Tanar's captors had turned to defend him.

The cavern crossed at last, Tanar was deposited upon his feet in front of the creature squatting in the niche. Tanar could see great eyeballs revolving beneath the pulsing skin of the protuberances and though he could see no eyes, he knew that he was being examined coldly and calculatingly.

"Where did you get it?" finally demanded the creature, addressing Tanar's

captors.

"He tumbled into the Well of Sounding Water," replied one.

"How do you know?"

"He told us so."

"Do you believe him?"

"There was no other way in which he could enter the land of the Coripis," re-

plied one of the captors.

"Perhaps he was leading a party in to slay us," said the creature in the niche. "Go, many of you, and search the corridors and the tunnels about the Well of Sounding Water." Then the creature turned to Tanar's captors. "Take him and put him with the others; we have not yet enough."



TANAR was now again placed upon the back of a Coripi, who carried him across the grotto and up one of the pathways cut into the face of the limestone wall. Ascending this pathway a short distance the creature turned into one of the cave openings, and Tanar found himself again in a narrow, dark, winding tunnel.

The tunnels and corridors through which he had already been conducted had impressed upon Tanar the great antiquity of this underground labyrinthian world, since there was every evidence that the majority of these tunnels had been hewn from the limestone rock or natural passageways enlarged to accommodate the Coripis, and as these creatures appeared to have no implements other than their heavy, three-toed claws the construction of the tunnels must have represented the labor of countless

thousands of individuals over a period of many ages.

Tanar, of course, had only a hazy conception of what he described as the measurable aspect of duration. His consideration of the subject concerned itself with the countless millions of times that these creatures must have slept and eaten during the course of their stupendous labors.

But the mind of the captive was also occupied with other matters as the Coripi bore him through the long tunnel. He thought of the statement of the creature in the niche as he had ordered Tanar taken into confinement to the effect that there were not yet enough. What did that mean? Enough of what? Enough prisoners? And when there were enough to what purpose would they be devoted?

But perhaps, to a far greater extent, his

mind was occupied with thoughts of Stellara: with fears for her safety and with vain regret that he had been unable to accom-

plish her rescue.

From the moment that he had been so unexpectedly precipitated into the underground world of the Buried People, his dominant thought, of course, had been that of escape; but the farther into the bowels of the earth he was carried the more hopeless appeared the outcome of any venture in this direction; yet he never for once abandoned it, though he realized that he must wait until they had reached the place of his final confinement before he could consider intelligently any plan at all.

HOW far the tireless Coripi bore Tanar the Sarian could not guess, but presently they emerged into a dimly lighted grotto, before the narrow entrance to which squatted a dozen Coripis. Within the chamber were a score of Coripis and one human being—a man with bushy sandy hair, close-set eyes and a certain mean, crafty expression of countenance that repelled the Sarian immediately.

"Here is another," said the Coripi who had carried Tanar to the cavern, and with that he dumped the Sarian unceremoniously upon the stone floor at the feet of the dozen Coripis who stood guard at the en-

trance.

With teeth and claws they severed the bonds that secured his wrists and ankles.

"They come slowly," grumbled one of the guards. "How much longer must we wait?"

"Old Xax wishes to have the greatest number that has ever been collected before,"

remarked another of the Coripis.

"But we grow impatient," said the first speaker. "If he makes us wait much longer he may be one of the number here himself."

"Be careful," cautioned one of his fellows. "If Xax heard that you had said such a thing as that the number of our prisoners would be increased by one."

AS Tanar arose to his feet, after his bonds were severed, he was pushed roughly toward the other inmates of the room, whom he soon was to discover were prisoners, like himself. Naturally the first to approach him was the other human captive.

"Another," said the stranger. "Our numbers increase but slowly, yet each one brings us closer to our inevitable doom and so I do not know whether I am sorry to see you

here or glad because of the human company that I shall now have. I have eaten and slept many times since I was thrown into this accursed place with nothing but these hideous, mumbling things for company. God, how I hate and loathe them! Yet they are in the same predicament as we for they are doomed to the same fate."

"And what may that be?" asked Tanar.

"You do not know?"

"I may only guess," replied the Sarian.

"These creatures seldom get flesh with warm blood in it. They subsist mostly upon the fish in their underground rivers and upon the toads and lizards that inhabit their caves. Their expeditions to the surface ordinarily yield nothing more than the carcasses of dead beasts, yet they crave fresh flesh and warm blood. Heretofore they had killed their condemned prisoners one by one as they were available, but this plan gave only a mouthful of flesh to a very few Coripis. Recently Xax hit upon the plan of preserving his own condemned and the prisoners from the outer world until he had accumulated a sufficient number to feast the entire population of the cavern of which he is chief. I do not know how many that will be, but steadily the numbers grow and perhaps it will not be long now before there are enough of us to fill the bellies of Xax's tribe."

"Xax!" repeated Tanar. "Was he the creature sitting in the niche in the great cavern to which I was first taken?"

"That was Xax. He is ruler of that cavern. In the underground world of the Buried People there are many tribes, each of which occupies a large cavern similar to that in which you saw Xax. These tribes are not always friendly and the most of the prisoners that you see in this cavern are members of other tribes, though there are a few from the tribe of Xax who have been condemned to death for one reason or another."

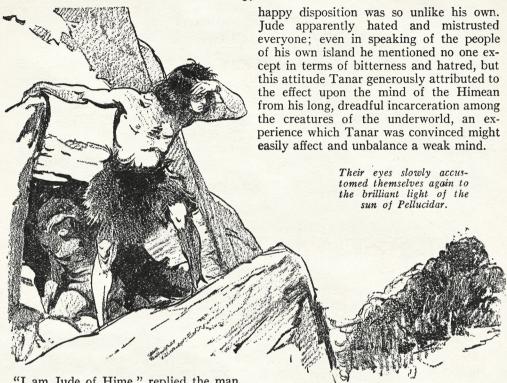
"And there is no escape?" asked Tanar.
"None," replied the other; "absolutely none. But tell me, who are you and from what country? I cannot believe that you are a native of Amiocap, for what Amiocapian is there who would need ask questions about the Buried People?"

"I am not of Amiocap," replied Tanar.
"I am from Sari, upon the far-distant main-

land."

"Sari! I never heard of such a country," said the other. "What is your name?" "Tanar. And yours?"

39



"I am Jude of Hime," replied the man. "Hime is an island not far from Amiocap. Perhaps you have heard of it."

"No," said Tanar.

"I was fishing in my canoe, off the coast of Hime," continued Jude, "when a great storm arose which blew me across the waters and hurled me upon the coast of Amiocap. I had gone into the forest to hunt for food when three of these creatures fell upon me and dragged me into their underworld."

"And you think that there is no escape?" demanded Tanar.

"None-absolutely none," replied Jude.

#### CHAPTER IX

#### Mow

IMPRISONMENT in the dark, ill-lighted, poorly ventilated cavern weighed heavily upon Tanar of Pellucidar. He knew that it was long, for he had eaten and slept many times and though other Coripi prisoners were brought from time to time there seemed not yet to be enough to satisfy Xax's bloody craving for flesh.

Tanar had been glad for the companionship of Jude, though he never thoroughly understood the man, whose sour and unEven in the breasts of some of the Coripi prisoners Tanar managed to arouse sentiments somewhat analogous to friendship.

Among the latter was a young Coripi named Mow from the grotto of Ictl, who hated all the Coripis from the grotto of Xax and seemed suspicious of those from other grottoes.

Though the creatures seemed endowed with few human attributes or characteristics, yet it was apparent to Tanar that they set a certain value upon companionship, and being denied this among the creatures of his own kind Mow gradually turned to Tanar, whose courageous and happy spirit had not been entirely dampened by his lot.

Jude would have nothing to do with Mow or any other of the Coripis and bitterly reproached Tanar for treating them in a

friendly manner.

"We are all prisoners together," Tanar reminded him, "and they will suffer the same fate as we. It will neither lessen our danger or add to our peace of mind to quarrel with our fellow-prisoners—and I, for my part, find it interesting to talk with them about this strange world which they inhabit."

And, indeed, Tanar had learned many in-

teresting things about the Coripis. Through his association with Mow he had discovered that the creatures are color-blind, seeing everything in blacks and whites and grays through the skin that covers their great eyeballs. He learned also that owing to the restricted amount of food at their command it had been necessary to restrict their number, and to this end it had become customary to destroy females who gave birth to too many children, the third child being equivalent to a death sentence for the mother.

He learned also that among these unhappy Coripis there are no diversions and no aim in life other than eating. So meager and unvaried is their diet of fish and toads and lizards that the promise of warm flesh is the only great event in the tiresome monotony of their deadly existence.

ALTHOUGH Mow had no words for love and no conception of its significance, Tanar was able to gather from his remarks that this sentiment did not exist among the Buried People. A mother looked upon each child as a threat to her existence and a prophecy of death, with the result that she loathed them from birth; nor is this strange when the fact is considered that the men choose as the mothers of their children the women whom they particularly loathe and hate, since the custom of destroying a woman who has borne three children deters them from mating with any female for whom they might entertain any degree of liking.

When not hunting or fishing the creatures squat upon their haunches, staring stupidly and sullenly at the floor of their cavern.

"I should think," said Tanar to Mow, "that, confronted by such a life, you would welcome death in any form."

The Coripi shook his head. "I do not want to die," he said.

"Why?" demanded Tanar.

"I do not know," replied Mow. "I simply wish to live."

"Then I take it that you would like to escape from this cavern, if you could," suggested Tanar.

"Of course I should like to escape," said Mow, "but if I try to escape and they catch me they will kill me."

"They are going to kill you anyway," Tanar reminded him.

"Yes, I never thought of that," said Mow. "That is quite true; they are going to kill me anyhow." "Could you escape?" asked Tanar.

"I could if I had some one to help me," said Mow.

"This cavern is filled with men who will

help you," said Tanar.

"The Coripis from the grotto of Xax will not help me," said Mow, "because if they escape there is no place where they may go in safety. If Xax recaptures them they will be killed, and the same is true if the ruler of any other grotto captures them."

"But there are men from other grottoes here," insisted Tanar, "and there are Jude

and I."

Mow shook his head. "I would not save any of the Coripis. I hate them. They are all enemies from other grottoes."

"But you do not hate me," said Tanar, "and I will help you, and so will Jude."

"I need but one," said Mow, "but he must be very strong—stronger than you, stronger than Jude."

"How strong?" asked Tanar.

"He must be able to lift my weight," replied the Coripi.

"Look then," said Tanar, and seizing Mow he held him high above his head.

When he had been set upon the floor again the Coripi gazed at Tanar in wonder. "You are, indeed, strong," he said.

"Then let us make our plans for escape,"

said Tanar.

"Just you and I," said the Coripi.

"We must take Jude with us," insisted Tanar.

Mow shrugged his shoulders. "It is all the same to me," he said. "He is not a Coripi, and if we become hungry and cannot find other food we can eat him."

TANAR made no reply, as he felt that it would be unwise to voice his disgust at this proposal, and he was sure that he and Jude together could prevent the Coripi from succumbing to his lust for flesh.

"You have noticed at the far end of the cavern, where the shadows are so dense, one may scarcely see a figure moving

there?" asked Mow.

"Yes," said Tanar.

"There the dim shadows hide the rough, rocky walls, and the ceiling is lost in total darkness; but in the ceiling is an opening that leads through a narrow shaft into a dark tunnel."

"How do you know this?" asked Tanar.
"I discovered it once when I was hunting. I came upon a strange tunnel leading from that along which I was making my

way to the upper world. I followed it to see where it led and I came at last to the opening in the ceiling of this cavern, from whence one may see all that takes place below without being himself seen. When I was brought here as a prisoner I recognized the spot immediately. That is how I know that one may escape if he has proper help."

"Explain," said Tanar.

"The wall beneath the opening is, as I have discovered, inclined backward from the floor to a considerable height and so rough that it can easily be scaled to a little ledge beneath the opening in the ceiling, but just so far beneath that one may not reach it unaided. If, however, I could lift you into the opening you could, in turn, reach down and help me up."

"But how may we hope to climb the wall without being seen by the guards?" de-

manded Tanar.

"That is the only chance of capture that we shall have to take," replied Mow. "It is very dark there and if we wait until another prisoner is brought and their attention is diverted we may be able to succeed in reaching the opening in the ceiling before we are discovered, and once there they cannot capture us."

Tanar discussed the plan with Jude the Himean, who was so elated at the prospect of escape that he almost revealed a sug-

gestion of happiness.

NOW commenced a seemingly interminable wait for the time when a new prisoner might be brought into the cavern. The three conspirators made it a practice to spend most of their time in the shadows at the far end of the cavern so that the guards might become accustomed to seeing them there. As no one other than themselves was aware of the opening in the ceiling at this point no suspicions were aroused, as the spot where they elected to be was at the opposite end of the cavern from the entrance, which was, so far as the guards knew, the only opening into the cavern.

Tanar, Jude and Mow ate and slept several times until it began to appear that no more prisoners would be brought to the cavern; but though no prisoners came, news trickled in and one item filled them with such alarm that they determined to risk all upon the hazard of a bold dash for freedom.

Some Coripis coming to relieve a part of the guard reported that it had been with difficulty that Xax had been able to suppress an uprising among his infuriated tribesmen, many of whom had conceived the conviction that Xax was saving all of the prisoners for himself.

The result had been that a demand had been made upon Xax for an immediate feast of flesh; perhaps already other Coripis were on their way to conduct the unfortunate prisoners to the great cavern of Xax, where they would be torn limb from limb by the fierce, hunger-mad throng.

And true enough, there had been time for but one hunger before the party arrived to conduct them back to the main grotto of the

tribe.

"Now is the time," whispered Tanar to Mow and Jude, seeing that the guard was engaged in conversation with the new-comers—and in accordance with their plan, previously made, the three started without an instant's hesitation to scale the far wall of the cavern.

UPON a little ledge, twenty-five feet from the floor, Tanar halted, and an instant later Mow and Jude stood upon either side of him. Without a word the Coripi lifted Tanar to his shoulders and in the darkness above Tanar groped for a handhold.

He soon found the opening into the shaft leading into the tunnel above and, too, he found splendid handholds there so that an instant later he had drawn himself up into the opening and was sitting upon a small ledge that entirely encircled it.

Bracing himself, he reached down and seized the hand of Jude, who was standing upon Mow's shoulders, and drew the Hi-

mean to the ledge beside him.

At that instant a great shouting arose below them, and glancing down Tanar saw that one of the guard had discovered them and that now a general rush of both guard and prisoners was being made in their direction.

Even as Tanar reached down to aid Mow to the safety of the shaft's mouth, some of the Coripis were already scaling the wall below them. Mow hesitated and turned to look at the enemies clambering rapidly toward him.

The ledge upon which Mow stood was narrow and the footing precarious. The surprise and shock of their discovery may have unnerved him, or in turning to look downward he may have lost his balance, but whatever it was Tanar saw him reel, topple and then lunge downward upon the ascending Coripis, scraping three of them from the wall in his descent as he crashed to the

rough stone floor below, where he lay limp and motionless.

Tanar turned to Jude. "We cannot help him," he said. "Come, we had better get out of this as quickly as possible."

FEELING for each new hand- and foothold the two climbed slowly up the short shaft and presently found themselves in the tunnel which Mow had described. The darkness was absolute.

"Do you know the way to the surface?"

asked Jude.

"No," said Tanar. "I was depending upon Mow to lead us."

"Then we might as well be back in the

cavern," said Jude.

"Not I," said Tanar; "for at least I am satisfied now that the Coripis will not eat

me alive, if they eat me at all."

Groping his way through the darkness and followed closely by Jude, Tanar crept slowly through the Stygian darkness. The tunnel seemed interminable. They became very hungry and there was no food, though they would have relished even the filthy fragments of decayed fish that the Coripis had hurled them while they were prisoners.

had hurled them while they were prisoners. "Almost," said Tanar, "could I eat a

toad."

They became exhausted and slept, and then again they crawled and stumbled onward. There seemed no end to the in-

terminable inky corridor.

For long distances the floor of the tunnel was quite level, but then again it would pitch downward, sometimes so steeply that they had difficulty in clinging to the sloping floor. It turned and twisted as though its original excavators had been seldom of the same mind as to the direction in which they wished to proceed.

On and on the two went; again they slept, but whether that meant that they had covered a great distance, or that they were becoming weak from hunger, neither knew.

When they awoke they went on again for a long time in silence, but the sleep did not seem to have refreshed them much, and Jude especially was soon exhausted again.

"I cannot go much farther," he said. "Why did you lure me into this crazy

escapade?"

"You need not have come," Tanar reminded him, "and if you had not you would by now be out of your misery since doubtless all the prisoners have long since been torn to pieces and devoured by the Coripis of the grotto of Xax."

Jude shuddered. "I do not mind being dead," he said, "but I should hate to be torn to pieces by those horrible creatures."

"This is a much nicer death," said Tanar, "for when we are sufficiently exhausted we shall simply sleep and awake no more."

"I do not wish to die," whimpered Jude.
"You have never seemed very happy,"
said Tanar. "I should think one as unhappy as you would be glad to die."

"I enjoy being unhappy," said Jude. "I know that I should be most miserable were I happy and anyway I should much rather be alive and unhappy than dead and unable

to know that I was unhappy."

"Take heart," said Tanar. "It cannot be much farther to the end of this long corridor. Mow came through it and he did not say that it was so great a length that he became either exhausted or hungry and he not only traversed it from end to end in one direction, but he had to turn around and retrace his steps after he reached the opening into the cavern which we left."

"The Coripis do not eat much; they are accustomed to starving," said Jude; "and

they sleep less than we."

"Perhaps you are right," said Tanar, "but I am sure that we are nearing the end."

"I am," said Jude, "but not the end that I had wished."

EVEN as they discussed the matter they were moving slowly along, when far ahead Tanar discerned a slight luminosity. "Look," he said," there is light. We are

nearing the end."

The discovery instilled new strength into both the men and with quickened steps they hastened along the tunnel in the direction of the promised escape. As they advanced the light became more apparent until finally they came to the point where the tunnel they had been traversing opened into a large corridor, which was filled with a subdued light from occasional patches of phosphorescent rock in walls and ceiling, but neither to the right nor the left could they see any sign of daylight.

"Which way now?" demanded Jude. Tanar shook his head. "I do not know,"

he said.

"At least I shall not die in that awful blackness," wailed Jude, and perhaps that factor of their seemingly inevitable doom had weighed most heavily upon the two Pellucidarians, for living as these people do beneath the brilliant rays of a perpetual noonday sun, darkness is a hideous and ab-



"If you know that the right direction lies to the left," said Tanar, "let us go to the left."

"I do not know," said Jude; "doubtless either direction is wrong."

"All right," said Tanar, with a laugh. "We shall go to the right." And turning, he set off briskly along the larger corridor.

"Do you notice anything, Jude?" asked Tanar after a few moments.

"No. Why do you ask?" inquired the Himean.

"I smell fresh air from the upper world," said Tanar, "and if I am right we must be near the mouth of the tunnel."

TANAR was almost running now; exhaustion was forgotten in the unexpected hope of immediate deliverance. To be out in the fresh air and the light of day! To be free from the depressing darkness and the constant menace of recapture by the hideous monsters of the underworld! And across that bright hope, like a sinister shadow, came the numbing fear of disappointment.

What if, after all, the breath of air which was now clear and fresh in their nostrils should prove to be entering the corridor through some unscalable shaft, such as the Well of Sounding Water into which he had

"I am too weak," said Stellara; "I cannot rise." "That can be remedied," growled Bohar, and seizing her by the hair, he lifted her to her feet.

fallen upon his entrance into the country of the Buried People; or what, if at the moment of escape, they should meet a party of the Coripis?

So heavily did these thoughts weigh upon Tanar's mind that he slackened his speed until once again he moved in a slow walk.

"What is the matter?" demanded Jude. "A moment ago you were running and now you are barely crawling along. Do not tell me that you were mistaken and that, after all, we are not approaching the mouth of the corridor."

"I do not know," said Tanar. "We may be about to meet a terrible disappointment and if that is true I wish to delay it as long as possible. It would be a terrible thing to have hope crushed within our breasts now."

"I suppose it would," said Jude, "but that is precisely what I have been expecting."

"You, I presume, would derive some satisfaction even from disappointment," said

"Yes," said Jude, "I suppose I would. It is my nature."

"Then prepare to be unhappy," cried Tanar suddenly, "for here indeed is the mouth of the tunnel."

He had spoken just as he had rounded a turn in the corridor, and when Jude came to his side the latter saw daylight creeping into the corridor through an opening just in front of them—an opening beyond which he saw the foliage of growing things and the blue sky of Pellucidar.

Emerging again to the light of the sun after their long incarceration in the bowels of the earth, the two men were compelled to cover their eyes with their hands, while the former slowly accustomed themselves again to the brilliant light of the noonday

sun of Pellucidar.

When he was able to uncover his eyes and look about him Tanar saw that the mouth of the tunnel was high upon the precipitous side of a lofty mountain. Below them wooded ravines ran down to a mighty forest, just beyond which lay the sparkling waters of a great ocean that, curving upward, merged in the haze of the distance.

Faintly discernible in the mid-distance an island raised its bulk out of the waters

of the ocean.

"That," said Jude, pointing, "is the island of Hime."

"Ah, if I, too, could but see my home from here," sighed Tanar, "my happiness would be almost complete. I envy you, Jude."

"It gives me no happiness to see Hime,"

said Jude. "I hate the place."

"Then you are not going to try to go back to it?" demanded Tanar.

"Certainly, I shall," said Jude.

"But why?" asked Tanar.

"There is no other place where I may go," grumbled Jude. "At least in Hime they will not kill me for no reason at all, as strangers would do if I went elsewhere."

JUDE'S attention was suddenly attracted by something below them in a little glade at the upper end of the ravine, which started a short distance below the mouth of the tunnel.

"Look," he cried, "there are people!"

Tanar looked in the direction in which Jude was pointing, and when his eyes found the figures far below they first went wide with incredulity, then narrowed with rage.

"God!" he exclaimed, and as he voiced that single exclamation he leaped swiftly downward in the direction of the figures in the glade below.

#### CHAPTER X

#### LOVE AND TREACHERY

STELLARA, lying upon a pallet of grasses beneath the shade of a large tree, above the beach where the Korsarians were completing the boat in which they hoped to embark for Korsar, knew that the fever had left her and that her strength was rapidly returning; but having discovered that illness, whether real or feigned, protected her from the attentions of Bohar, she continued to permit the Korsarians to believe that she was quite ill.

In the girl's mind there were constantly revolving various plans for escape, but she wished to delay the attempt as long as possible, not only that she might have time to store up a greater amount of reserve strength, but also because she realized that if she waited until the Korsar boat was completed it would be unlikely that the majority of the men would brook delay in departure for the purpose of gratifying any desire that Bohar might express to pursue

and recapture her.

Again, it was necessary to choose a time when none of the Korsarians was in camp and as one of the two who were detailed to prepare food and stand guard was invariably on duty, it appeared possible that she might never have the opportunity she hoped for, though she had determined that this fact would not prevent her from making at least an attempt at escape.

All of her hopes in this direction were centered upon one contingency, which her knowledge of nautical matters made to appear almost a certainty of the near future, and this was the fact that the launching of the boat would require the united efforts and strength of the entire party.

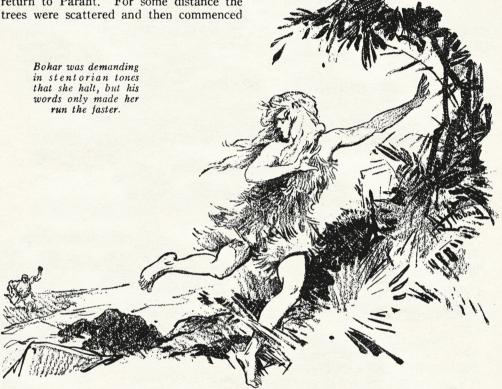
She knew from the discussions and conversations that she had overheard that it was Bohar's intention to launch the boat the moment that the hull was completed and to finish the balance of the work upon it while it floated in the little cove upon the beach of which it was being constructed.

This work would require no great amount of time or effort, since the mast, spars, rigging and sail were ready and at hand; bladders and gourds already prepared to receive fresh water, and food provisions for the trip, accumulated by the hunters detailed for this purpose, were neatly sewn up in hides and stored away in a cool, earth-covered dugout.

And so from her couch of grasses beneath

the great tree Stellara watched the work progressing upon the hull of the boat that was to carry Bohar and his men to Korsar, and as she watched she planned her method of escape.

Above the camp rose the forested slopes of the hills which she must cross in her return to Paraht. For some distance the trees were scattered and then commenced læus, long since extinct upon the outer crust. Of the men of Amiocap which she might possibly encounter she entertained little fear, even though they might be members of other tribes than hers, though she shuddered at the thought that she might



the dense forest. If she could reach this unobserved she felt that she might entertain high hope of successful escape, for once in the denser growth she could take advantage of the skill and experience she had acquired under Tanar's tutelage and prosecute her flight along the leafy pathways of the branches, leaving no spoor that Bohar might follow, yet at the same time safeguarding herself from the attacks of the larger and more dangerous beasts of the forest for, though few, there were still dangerous beasts upon Amiocap. Perhaps the most fearsome was the tarag, the giant saber-toothed tiger that once roamed the hills of the outer crust. For the tandor she felt less concern since they seldom attack an individual unless molested; but in the hills which she must cross the greatest danger lay in the presence of the tarag and the ryth, the gigantic cave-bear or Ursus Stefall into the hands of the Coripis, for these grotesque monsters were regarded by her with far greater fear than any other of the dangers that might possibly beset her way.

THE exhilaration of contemplated flight and the high hopes engendered within her at the prospect of a successful return to her father and her friends were dampened by the realization that Tanar would not be there to greet her. The death of the Sarian had cast a blight upon her happiness that naught ever could remove and her sorrow was the deeper, perhaps, because no words of love had passed between them, and therefore she had not the consolation of happy memories to relieve the gnawing anguish of her grief.

The work upon the hull of the boat was at last completed and the men, coming to camp to eat, spoke hopefully of an early departure for Korsar. Bohar approached Stellara's couch and stood glaring down upon her, his repulsive face darkened by a

malignant scowl.

"How much longer do you intend to lie here entirely useless to me?" he demanded. "You eat and sleep and the flush of fever has left your skin. I believe that you are feigning illness in order to escape fulfilling your duties as my mate—and if that is true, you shall suffer for it. Get up!"

"I am too weak," said Stellara. "I can-

not rise."

"That can be remedied," growled Bohar, and seizing her roughly by the hair he dragged her from her couch and lifted her to her feet.

As Bohar released his hold upon her Stellara staggered; her legs trembled, her knees gave beneath her, and she fell back upon her couch; and so realistic was the manner in which she carried out the deception that even Bohar was fooled.

"She is sick and dying," growled one of the Korsarians. "Why should we take her along in an overcrowded boat to eat the food and drink the water that some of us may be dying for before we reach Korsar?"

"Right," cried another. "Leave her be-

hind."

"Stick a knife into her," said a third.

"She is good for nothing."

"Shut up!" cried Bohar. "She is going to be my mate and she is going with us." He drew his two huge pistols. "Whoever objects will stay here with a bullet in his belly. Eat now, you filthy hounds, and be quick about it, for I shall need all hands and all your strength to launch the hull when you have eaten."

So they were going to launch the hull! Stellara trembled with excitement as the moment for her break for liberty drew near. With impatience she watched the Korsars as they bolted their food like a pack of hungry wolf-dogs. She saw some of them throw themselves down to sleep after they had eaten, but Bohar the Brutal kicked them into wakefulness and, at the point of his pistol, herded them to the beach, taking every available man and leaving Stellara alone and unguarded for the first time since he had seized her in the village of Fedol the chief.

She watched them as they descended to the hull, and waited until they seemed to be wholly engrossed in their efforts to shove the heavy boat into the sea; then she rose from her pallet and scurried like a frightened rabbit toward the forest on the slopes above the camp.

THE hazards of fate, while beyond our control, are the factors in life which often make for the success or failure of our most important ventures. Upon them hang the fruition of our most cherished hope. They are, in truth, the lap of the gods, where lies our future. It was only by the merest hazard that Bohar the Brutal chanced to glance back toward the camp at the very moment that Stellara rose from her couch to make her bid for freedom.

With an oath he abandoned the work of launching the hull and, calling his men to follow him, ran hurriedly up the steep

slopes in pursuit.

His fellows took in the situation at a glance and hesitated. "Let him chase his own woman," growled one. "What have we to do with it? Our business is to launch the boat and get her ready to sail to Korsar."

"Right," said another; "and if he is not back by the time that we are ready we shall

sail without him!"

"Good," cried a third. "Let us make haste then in the hope that we may be prepared to sail before he returns."

And so Bohar the Brutal, unaccompanied by his men, pursued Stellara alone. Perhaps it was as well for the girl that this was true, for there were many fleeter among the Korsarians than the beefy Bohar.

The girl was instantly aware that her attempt to escape had been discovered, for Bohar was shouting in stentorian tones demanding that she halt, but his words only made her run the faster, until presently she darted into the forest and was lost to his view.

Here she took to the trees, hoping thereby to elude him even though she knew that her speed would be reduced. She heard the sound of his advance as he crashed through the underbrush and she knew that he was gaining rapidly upon her, but this did not unnerve her since she was confident that he could have no suspicion that she was in the branches of the trees and just so long as she kept among thick foliage he might pass directly beneath her without being aware of her close presence, and that is precisely what he did, cursing and puffing as he made his bull-like way up the steep slopes of the hillside.

Stellara heard him pass beneath her and



go crashing on in pursuit and then she resumed her flight, turning to the right away from the direction of Bohar's advance until presently the noise of his passing was lost in the distance; then she turned upward again toward the height she must cross on her journey to Paraht.

Bohar sweated upward until finally almost utter exhaustion forced him to rest. He found himself in a little glade and here he lay down beneath a shrub that not only protected him from the rays of the sun, but hid him from sight as well, for in savage Pellucidar it is always well to seek rest in concealment.

Bohar's mind was filled with angry thoughts. He cursed himself for leaving the girl alone in camp and he cursed the girl for escaping, and he cursed the fate that had forced him to clamber up this steep hillside upon his futile mission, and most of all he cursed his absent followers whom he now realized had failed to accompany him. He knew that he had lost the girl and that it would be like looking for a particular minnow in the ocean to continue his search for her, and so, having rested, he was determined to hasten back to his camp when his attention was suddenly attracted by a noise at the lower end of the glade. Instinctively he reached for one of his pistols and to his dismay he found that both were gone, evidently having slipped from his sash or been scraped from it as he wallowed upward through the underbrush.

Bohar, despite his bluster and braggadocio, was far from courageous. Without his weapons he was an arrant coward and so now he cringed in his concealment as he strained his eyes to discover the author of the noise he had heard. As he watched a cunning leer of triumph curled his ugly mouth, for before him, at the far end of the glade, he saw Stellara drop from the lower branches of a tree and come upward across the glade toward him.

As the girl came abreast his hiding-place, Bohar the Brutal leaped to his feet and confronted her. With a stifled exclamation of dismay Stellara whirled and sought to escape, but the Korsarian was too close and too quick, and reaching forth he seized her roughly by the hair.

"Will you never learn that you cannot escape Bohar the Brutal?" he demanded. "You are mine-and for this I shall cut off both your feet at the ankles when I get you into the boat, so that there will be no chance whatever that you may again run away from me. But come, mate willingly with me and it will go less hard with you." And he drew her slim figure into his embrace.

"Never," cried Stellara, and she struck him in the face with her two clenched fists.

X/ITH an oath Bohar seized the girl by the throat and shook her. "You sheryth!" he cried. "If I did not want you so badly I should kill you-and by the god of Korsar if ever you strike me again I shall kill you."

"Then kill me," cried Stellara, "for I would rather die than mate with you!" And again she struck him with all her strength full in the face.

Bohar frothed with rage as he closed his fingers tightly upon the girl's soft neck.

"Die, then, you-

The words died upon his lips and he wheeled about as there fell upon his ears

a man's loud voice raised in anger.

As he stood there hesitating and looking in the direction of the sound the underbrush at the upper end of the glade parted and a warrior, leaping into the clearing, ran

swiftly toward him.

Bohar blanched as though he had seen a Then, hurling the girl roughly to the ground, he doggedly faced the lone warrior. He would have fled had he not realized the futility of flight, for what chance had he in a race with this lithe man, who leaped toward him with the grace and speed of a deer?

"Go away!" shouted Bohar. "Go away and leave us alone! This is my mate."

"You lie," growled Tanar of Pellucidar as he leaped upon the Korsarian.

OWN went the two men, the Sarian on top, and as they fell each sought a hold upon the other's throat and failing to secure it they struck blindly at each other's face.

Tanar was mad with rage. He fought like a wild beast, forgetting all that David Innes had taught him. His one thought was to kill; it mattered not how, just so long as he killed, and Bohar, on the defensive, fighting for his life, fought like a cornered rat. To his advantage were his great weight and his longer reach, but in strength and agility as well as courage Tanar was

his superior.

As they fought, Stellara slowly opened her eyes as she recovered from the swoon into which she had passed beneath the choking fingers of Bohar the Brutal. At first she did not recognize Tanar, seeing only two warriors battling to the death on the sward of the glade and knowing that she would be the prey of him who was victorious. But presently, in the course of the duel, the face of the Sarian was turned toward her.

"Tanar!" she cried. "God is merciful! I thought you were dead—but He has given vou back to me."

At her words the Sarian redoubled his efforts to overcome his antagonist, but Bohar succeeded in getting his fingers upon Tanar's throat.

Horrified, Stellara looked about her for a rock or a stick with which to come to the succor of her champion, but before she had found one she realized that he needed no outside assistance. With a single herculean movement he tore himself loose from Bohar and leaped to his feet.

Instantly the Korsarian sprang to an upright position and lowering his head he charged at the Sarian, like a mad bull.

NOW Tanar was fighting with cool calculation. The blood-madness of the first moment following the sight of Stellara in the choking, murderous fingers of the Korsar had passed. He awaited Bohar's rush, and as they came together he clamped an arm around the Korsar's head and, turning swiftly, hurled the man completely over his head and heavily to the ground. Then he waited.

Once more Bohar, shaking his head, staggered to his feet. Once more he rushed the Sarian, and once more that deadly arm was locked about his head, and once more he was hurled heavily to the ground.

This time he did not arise so quickly nor so easily. He came up more slowly, staggering and feeling of his head and neck.

"Prepare to die," growled Tanar. "For the suffering you have inflicted upon Stel-

lara you are about to die."

With a shriek of mingled rage and fright, Bohar, gone mad, charged the Sarian again, and for the third time his great carcass flew through the air to alight heavily upon the hard ground: but this time it did not arise, it did not stir-for Bohar the Brutal lay dead with a broken neck.

FOR a moment Tanar of Pellucidar stood ready over the body of his fallen foe, but when he realized that Bohar was dead he turned away with a sneer of disgust.

Before him stood Stellara, her beautiful eyes filled with incredulous happiness.

"Tanar!" It was only a whisper, but it carried to the youth a world of meaning that thrilled him.

"Stellara," he cried, as he took the girl in his arms, "Stellara, I love you!"

Her soft arms stole around his neck and drew his face to hers in a long kiss; then from her parted lips burst an exclamation of joy, while from the depths of her halfclosed eyes burned a love beyond all understanding.



"My mate!" he cried, as he pressed her to him.

"My mate," breathed Stellara, "while life remains in my body and after life, throughout death—forever!"

Suddenly she looked up and drew away. "Who is that, Tanar?" she asked.

As Tanar turned to look in the direction indicated by the girl he saw Jude emerging from the forest at the upper end of the glade.

"That is Jude," Tanar said to Stellara, "who escaped with me from the caverns of the Buried People."

Jude approached, his sullen countenance clouded by its habitual scowl.

"He frightens me," said Stellara, pressing closer to Tanar.

"You need not fear him," said the Sarian. "He is always scowling and unhappy; but he is my friend and even if he were not he is harmless."

"I do not like him," whispered Stellara. Jude approached and stopped before them. His eyes wandered for a moment to the body of Bohar and then came back and fastened themselves in a steady gaze upon Stellara, appraising her from head to foot. There was a crafty boldness in his look that disturbed Stellara even more than his sullen scowl.

"Who is the woman?" he demanded, without taking his eyes from her face.

"My mate," replied Tanar.

"Then she is going with us?" asked Jude.

Jude bound her wrists and ankles; then he lifted her to his shoulder and started over the edge of the clift.

"Of course," replied the Sarian.

"And where are we going?" demanded Jude.

"Stellara and I will return to Paraht, where her father, Fedol, is chief," replied Tanar. "You may come with us if you wish. We will see that you are received as a friend and treated well until you can find the means to return to Hime."

"Is he from Hime?" asked Stellara, and

Tanar felt her shudder.

"I am from Hime," said Jude, "but I do not care if I never return there, if your

people will let me live with them."

"That," said Tanar, "is something that must be decided by Fedol and his people, but I can promise you that they will let you remain with them, if not permanently, at least until you can find the means of returning to Hime. And now, before we set out for Paraht, let us renew our strength with food and sleep."

\\/\ITHOUT weapons it was not easy to secure game and they traveled up the mountain slopes for some distance before the two men were able to bring down a brace of large birds, which they knocked over with well-aimed stones. The birds closely resembled wild turkeys, of which their prototype were doubtless the progenitors of the wild turkeys of the outer crust. The hunt had brought them to a wide plateau, just below the summit of the hills. It was a rolling tableland, waist-deep in lush grasses, with here and there a giant tree or group of trees offering shade from the vertical rays of the noonday sun.

Beside a small stream, which rippled gayly downward toward the tree, they

halted to eat and sleep.

Jude gathered firewood while Tanar made fire by the primitive method of rapid-

ly revolving a sharpened stick in a tinder filled hole in a larger piece of dry wood. As these preparations were going forward Stellara prepared the birds and it was not long before the turkeys were roasting appetizingly over a hot fire.

THEIR hunger appeased, the urge to sleep took possession of them. Now Jude insisted that he stand the first watch, arguing that he had not been subjected to the fatigue of battle as had Tanar, and so Stellara and the Sarian lay down beneath the shade of the tree while the scowling Himean stood watch.

Even in the comparative safety of Amiocap danger might always be expected to lurk in the form of a carnivorous beast or a hunting man—but the watcher cast no solicitous glances beyond the camp. Instead, he squatted upon his haunches, devouring Stellara with his eyes. Not once did he remove them from the beautiful figure of the girl except occasionally to glance quickly at Tanar, where the regular rising and falling of his breast denoted undisturbed slumber.

Whatever thoughts the beauty of the sleeping girl engendered in the breast of the Himean were reflected only in the unremitting scowl that never lifted itself from the man's dark brows.

Presently he arose noiselessly and gathered a handful of soft grasses, which he rolled into a small ball. Then he crept stealthily to where Stellara lay and knelt beside her.

Suddenly he leaned over her and grasped her by the throat, at the same time clamping his other hand, in the palm of which lay the ball of grass, over her mouth.

Thus rudely awakened from deep slumber, the first glance of the girl's opening eyes revealed the scowling features of the Himean. Stellara opened her mouth to scream for help, and as she did so Jude forced the ball of grass between her teeth and deep into her mouth, dragged her to her feet and, throwing her across his shoulder, bore her swiftly downward across the tableland.

Stellara struggled and fought to free herself, but Jude was a powerful man and her efforts were of no avail against his strength. He held her in such a way that both her arms were confined and she could not force out with her tongue alone the ball of grass expanding in her mouth. A single scream she knew would awaken Tanar and bring

him to her rescue—but she could not scream,

Down across the rolling tableland the Himean carried Stellara to the edge of a steep cliff that overhung the sea at the upper end of a deep cove which cut far into the island at this point. Here he lowered the girl to her feet, but he still clung tightly to one of her wrists.

"Listen, woman," he growled, "you are coming to Hime to be the mate of Jude. If you come peaceably, no harm will befall you and if you will promise to make no outcry I shall remove the gag from your mouth. Do you promise?"

Stellara shook her head determinedly in an unquestionable negative and at the same time struggled to free herself from Jude's

grasp.

With an ugly growl the man struck her and as she fell unconscious he gathered long grasses and twisting them into a rope he bound her wrists and ankles; then he lifted her again to his shoulder and started down over the edge of the cliff, where a narrow trail now became discernible.

It was evident that Jude had had knowledge of this path since he had come to it so unerringly, and the ease and assurance with which he descended it strengthened this conviction.

The descent was not over a hundred feet to a small rocky ledge almost at the water's edge.

It was here that Stellara gained consciousness, and as she opened her eyes she saw before her a water-worn cave that ran far back beneath the cliff.

Into this, along the narrow ledge, Jude carried her to the far end of the cavern, where upon a narrow, pebbly beach were drawn up a half-dozen dugouts—the light, well-made canoes of the Himeans.

In one of these Jude placed the girl and pushing it off into the deep water of the cove, leaped into it himself, seized the paddle and skillfully directed its course out toward the open sea.

#### CHAPTER XI

#### PURSUIT

AWAKENING from a deep and refreshing slumber, Tanar opened his eyes and lay gazing up into the foliage of the tree above him. Happy thoughts filled his mind, a smile curved his lips and then, following the trend of his thoughts, his eyes

turned to feast upon the dear figure of his mate.

She was not there, where he had last seen her huddled snugly in her bed of grasses, but still he felt no concern, thinking merely that she had awakened before he had, and had arisen.

Idly his gaze made a circuit of the little camp, and then with a startled exclama-

all else save the prosecution of his search for Stellara and the punishment of Jude. And so he was unaware of the sinister figure that crept along the trail behind him.

Down across the tableland they went—the man and the great beast following silently in his tracks. Down to a cliff over-hanging the sea the trail led, and here as Tanar paused an instant to look out across the ocean he saw hazily in the distance a canoe and in the canoe were two figures, but who they were he could only guess since they were too far away to recognize.



tion he leaped to his feet, for he realized that both Stellara and Jude had disappeared. Again he looked about him, this time extending the field of his inquiring gaze, but nowhere was there any sign of either the man or the woman he sought.

He called their names aloud, but there was no response, and then he fell to examining the ground about the camp. He saw where Stellara had been sleeping and to his keen eyes were revealed the tracks of the Himean as he had approached her couch. He saw other tracks leading away, the tracks of Jude alone, but in the crushed grasses where the man had gone he read the true story, for they told him that more than the weight of a single man had bent and bruised them thus; they told him that Jude had carried Stellara off, and Tanar knew that it had been done by force.

Swiftly he followed the well-marked spoor through the long grass, oblivious of

As he stood there thus, stunned for a moment, a slight noise behind him claimed his attention—recalled him momentarily from the obsession of his sorrow and his rage so that he turned a quick, scowling glance in the direction from which the interruption had come, and there, not ten paces from him, loomed the snarling face of a great tarag.

Tanar saw the canoe that he was following disappear far ahead of him beyond the entrance of a cove.

The fangs of the saber-tooth gleamed in the sunlight; the furry snout was wrinkled in a snarl of anger; the lashing tail came suddenly to rest, except for a slight convulsive twitching of its tip; the beast crouched and Tanar knew it was about to charge.

Unarmed and single-handed as he was, the man was easy prey for the carnivore; not to right nor to left was there any avenue of escape.

All these things passed swiftly through the mind of the Sarian, yet never did they totally obliterate the memory of the two figures in the canoe far out at sea behind him, nor of the cliff overhanging the waters of the cove beneath.

And then the tarag charged.

A hideous scream broke from the savage throat as the great beast hurled itself forward with lightninglike rapidity. Two great bounds it took, and in mid-spring of the second Tanar turned and dived headforemost over the edge of the cliff, for the only alternative that remained to him was death beneath the rending fangs and talons of the saber-tooth.

For all he knew jagged rocks might lie just beneath the surface of the water, but there was one chance that the water was deep, while no chance for life remained to

him upon the cliff top.

The momentum of the great cat's spring, unchecked by the body of his expected prey, carried it also over the edge of the cliff so that man and beast hurtled downward almost side by side to the water far below.

Tanar cut the water cleanly with extended hands and turning quickly upward came to the surface scarcely a yard from where the great cat had alighted.

The two faced one another and at sight of the man the tarag burst again into hideous screams and struck out swiftly toward him.

TANAR knew that he might outdistance the tarag in the water, but the moment that they reached the beach he would be at the mercy of the great carnivore. The snarling face was close to his and the great claws were reaching for him as Tanar of Pellucidar dived beneath the beast.

A few swift strokes brought him up directly behind the cat and an instant later he had reached out and seized the furry hide. The tarag turned swiftly to strike at him, but already the man was upon its shoulders and his weight was carrying the

snarling face below the surface.

Choking, struggling, the maddened animal sought to reach the soft flesh of the man with its raking claws, but in the liquid element that filled the sea its usual methods of offense and defense were worthless. Quickly realizing that death stared it in the face, unless it could immediately overcome this handicap, the tarag now strained its every muscle to reach the solid footing of the land, while Tanar on his part sought to prevent it. Now his fingers had crept from their hold upon the furry shoulders down to the white-furred throat and like claws of steel they sank into the straining muscles.

No longer did the beast attempt to

scream and the man, upon his part, fought in silence.

It was a grim duel, a terrible duel, a savage encounter that might be enacted only in a world that was very young and between primitive creatures who never give up the stern battle for life until the scythe of the grim reaper has cut them down.

DEEP into the gloomy cavern beneath the cliff the tarag battled for the tiny strip of beach at the far end and grimly the man fought to hold it back and force its head beneath the water. He felt the efforts of the beast weakening and yet they were very close to the beach. At any instant the great claws might strike bottom and Tanar knew that there was still left within that giant carcass enough vitality to rend him to shreds if the tarag got its feet on solid ground and its head above the water.

With a last supreme effort he tightened his fingers upon the throat of the tarag and sliding from its back sought to drag it from its course, while the animal upon its part made one last supreme effort for life. It reared up in the water and wheeling about, struck at the man. The raking talons grazed his flesh, and then he was back upon the giant shoulders forcing the head once more beneath the surface of the sea. He felt a spasm pass through the great frame of the beast beneath him; the muscles relaxed and the tarag floated limp.

A moment later Tanar dragged himself to the pebbly beach, where he lay panting

from exhaustion.

RECOVERED,—nor did it take him long to recover, so urgent were the demands of the pursuit upon which he was engaged,-Tanar rose and looked about him. Before him were canoes, such as he had never seen before, drawn up on the narrow beach. Paddles lay in each of the canoes as though they but awaited the early return of their owners. Whence they had come and what they were doing here in this lonely cavern, Tanar could not guess. They were unlike the canoes of the Amiocapians, which fact convinced him that they belonged to a people from some other island, or possibly from the mainland itself. But these were questions which did not concern him greatly at the time. Here were canoes; here was the means of pursuing the two that he had seen far out at sea and whom he was convinced were none other than Jude and Stellara.

Seizing one of the small craft he dragged it to the water's edge and launched it. Then, leaping into it, he paddled swiftly down the cove out toward the sea, and as he paddled he had an opportunity to examine the craft more closely.

It was evidently fashioned from a single log of very light wood and was all of one piece, except a bulkhead at each end of the cockpit, which was large enough to accom-

modate three men.

Rapping with his paddle upon the surface of the deck and upon the bulkheads convinced him that the log had been entirely hollowed out beneath the deck and as the bulkheads themselves gave every appearance of having been so neatly fitted as to be watertight, Tanar guessed that the canoe was unsinkable.

HIS attention was next attracted by a well-tanned and well-worn hide lying in the bottom of the cockpit. A rawhide lacing ran around the entire periphery of the hide, and as he tried to determine the purpose to which the whole had been put his eyes fell upon a series of cleats extending entirely around the edge of the cockpit, and he guessed that the hide was intended as a covering for it. Examining it more closely he discovered an opening in it about the size of a man's body and immediately its purpose became apparent to him. With the covering in place and laced tightly around the cockpit and also laced around the man's body the canoe could ship no water and might prove a seaworthy craft, even in severe storms.

Since the Sarian fully realized his limitations as a seafaring man, he lost no time in availing himself of this added protection against the elements, and when he had adjusted it and laced it tightly about the outside of the cockpit and secured the lacing which ran around the opening in the center of the hide about his own body, he experienced a feeling of security that he had never before felt when he had been forced to surrender himself to the unknown dangers of the sea.

NOW he paddled rapidly in the direction in which he had last seen the canoe with its two occupants, and when he had passed out of the cove into the open sea he espied them again, but this time so far out that the craft and its passengers appeared only as a single dot upon the broad waters. But beyond them hazily loomed

the bulk of the island that Jude had pointed out as Hime and this tended to crystallize Tanar's assurance that the canoe ahead of him was being guided by Jude toward the island of his own people.

The open seas of Pellucidar present obstacles to the navigation of a small canoe that would seem insurmountable to men of the outer crust, for their waters are ofttimes alive with saurian monsters of a long past geologic epoch and it was encounters with these that the Sarian mountaineer apprehended with more acute concern than consideration of adverse wind or tempest

aroused within him.

He had noticed that one end of the long paddle he wielded was tipped with a piece of sharpened ivory from the end of a tandor's tusk. The thing seemed an utterly futile weapon with which to combat a tandoraz or an azdyryth, two of the mightiest and most fearsome inhabitants of the deep, but as far as he could see ahead the long, oily swells of a calm ocean were unruffled by marine life of any description.

Well aware of his slight experience and great deficiency as a paddler, Tanar held no expectation of being able to overhaul the canoe manned by the experienced Jude. The best that he could hope was that he might keep it in view until he could mark the spot upon Hime where it landed. And once upon solid ground again, even though it was an island peopled by enemies, the Sarian felt that he was able to cope with any emergency that might arise.

GRADUALLY the outlines of Hime took definite shape before him, while those of Amiocap became correspondingly vague behind.

And between him and the island of Hime the little dot upon the surface of the sea told him that his quarry had not as yet The pursuit seemed intermade land. minable. Hime seemed to be receding almost as rapidly as he approached it. He became hungry and thirsty, but there was neither food nor water—there was naught but to bend his paddle ceaselessly through the monotonous grind of pursuit; but at length the details of the shore line grew more distinct. He saw coves and inlets and wooded hills and then he saw the canoe that he was following disappear far ahead of him beyond the entrance of a cove. marked the spot well in his mind and redoubled his efforts to reach the shore. And

#### Tanar of Pellucidar

then fate arose in her inexorable perversity and confounded all his hopes and plans.

A sudden flurry on the surface of the water far to his right gave him his first warning. And then, like the hand of a giant, the wind caught his frail craft and turned it at right angles to the course he wished to pursue. The waves rolled; the wind shrieked; the storm was upon him in great fury and there was naught to do but turn and flee before it.

Down the coast of Hime he raced, parallel to the shore, farther and farther from the spot where Jude had landed with Stellara, but all the time Tanar was striving to drive his craft closer to the wooded slopes of Hime.

Ahead of him, and upon his right, he could see what appeared to be the end of the island. Should he be carried past this he realized that all would be lost, for doubtless the storm would carry him on out of sight of land and if it did he knew that he could never reach Hime nor return to Amiocap, since he had no means whatsoever of ascertaining direction once land slipped from view in the haze of the upcurving horizon.

Straining every muscle, continuously risking being capsized, Tanar strove to drive inward toward the shore, and though he saw that he was gaining he knew that it was too late, for already he was almost abreast of the island's extremity, and still he was a hundred yards offshore. But even so he did not despair, or if he did despair he did not cease to struggle for salvation.

He saw the island slip past him, but there was yet a chance, for in its lee he saw calm water and if he could reach that he would be saved.

Straining every muscle the Sarian bent to his crude paddle. Suddenly the breeze stopped and he shot out into the smooth water in the lee of the island, but he did not cease his strenuous efforts until the bow of the canoe had touched the sand of Hime.

Tanar leaped out and dragged the craft ashore. That he should ever need it again he doubted, yet he hid it beneath the foliage of near-by bushes, and alone and unarmed set forth to face the dangers of an unknown country in what appeared even to him as an almost hopeless quest for Stellara.

The adventures of Tanar upon the strange island of Hime are even more fascinating —in our forthcoming June issue.

## The Chinati Hills Affair

ND so these three skunks dynamited the express-car," Captain A Farr of the Texas Rangers continued gravely, "and killed the messenger! They got away with seventy-eight thousand dollars in bank shipments-all currency. They worked fast; they got up into the hills south of Marfa before any of my men even knew about the hold-up. I have only two men in that vicinity-at Presidio-and they're both hunting through the Chinati Hills now, but they probably wont have any luck finding them. By the time they can do anything, these stick-ups will be across the river into Mexico! I've got to have your help!"

Nick Wentworth, chief pilot of the air, patrol, nodded soberly as Farr related the details of the affair. When 'he other man had finished, Nick pulled a map of western Texas from his file-case, and studied it for several minutes. He located the Chinati Hills on the map, marked a dot with his pencil, and passed the map to Farr.

"That about where you think they are?" he asked.

The Ranger captain rumbled dark prognostications. "Hell," he cried, "if I knew where they are I'd have my men go there and get 'em! They're in those hills somewhere- they're bound to be, because that's the shortest and most remotely settled path to the Rio Grande—but I don't know within ten miles of where. I've sent a posse out, but by the time they get there it'll be too late! I know the air patrol is a Federal force, and not supposed to mix up with anything like this—but this is murder as well as a damn' big hold-up! Can't you send a coupla planes out there to scout around for me? You wont have to get mixed up in the fight—just locate the devils and report it." Farr blew violently through his white mustache. He arose and paced the floor. "Gad, man, what are you waiting on? Don't you see that this is serious?"

"A few minutes wont make much differ-



ence to an airplane, Captain Farr," Nick replied. "You can't jump into the cockpit of an airplane and take off the way you can saddle a horse—you've got to make careful plans. You'll come to grief if you don't." He pressed a button at his side. "I'll go, all right." Farr brightened.

A moment later Whittaker, Nick's chief clerk, stepped into the inner office.

"Find Scott," the pilot directed. "Tell him to get both our ships ready for a long trip—put in tool kits and all the things we carry when we go west of here. Make it snappy—I want to be in the air in thirty minutes." Then to Farr: "I'm going to put you in with Scott—my ship is a single-seater. We can drop you at Marfa or Presidio and you can get in touch with your Rangers there."

Farr stared. "No, you wont!" he barked. "I've been shot at and I've been near frozen on a prairie on horseback, but riding in an airplane is away beyond me! I'll ride the train!"

"As you wish, Captain," Nick laughed.

He arose and extended his hand. "I'll see you at Marfa—when you get there. We ought to have those bandits behind bars long before that time!" With his helmet and goggles in his hand, and chuckling occasionally, he walked out to the flying line.

THE village of Marfa huddles in the center of a broad plain that is stretched like an apron between four surrounding mountain ranges. It is cut off from the adjacent country on the west by the Tierra Viejas, on the north by the Puertacitas, on the east by a far-flung finger of the Comanches, and on the south by the Chinatis. The Southern Pacific Railroad, coming from the east, threads its way through the pass at Alpine, then drops down into the valley and begins a straight but gradual climb into Marfa, thence out again to the westward, following the rising slope until it twists around the northern end of the Van Horns and, finally, over the western pass at Sierra Blanca.

The train had been held up at two o'clock in the morning. Two of the bandits boarded it at Alpine, riding the "blinds" until four miles east of Marfa; then, crawling forward over the tender, they forced the fire-

man and engineer to uncouple the first baggage-car—in which the money shipments were-and pull it some distance up the track. With explosives they tore off the door of the car, and on horses supplied by a waiting confederate, they raced thirty miles into the hills south of Marfa and lost themselves from belated pursuit.

It was frankly admitted by Captain Farr that they would escape into Mexico unless the air-patrol pilots could locate them quickly, and, having done so, notify some portion of the Ranger force or the posse that was scattered throughout the hills. The country was rough to an extreme that made ordinary means of search so slow as to be almost worthless; there were a hundred cañons through which the men could ride unseen until they were only three or four miles from the Rio Grande, and at night it would not be difficult for them to slip through to the Border.

Farr realized that the planes were almost helpless in the actual apprehension of the There was nowhere that they could land in the immediate vicinity of the search, and even if a landing should be effected, they were not equipped for that They carried no machinesort of work. guns, either fixed or flexible, and pistols are as ineffectual as pop-guns firing from the air. So, after all, the job was up to the Ranger force; Nick and Scott were acting only as scouts.

The two patrol pilots arrived at the windswept flying field at Marfa late that afternoon. A three-day blizzard was dying out, leaving in its wake a still cold that etched like acid through their clothing and bit at the marrow of their bones.

They shivered by a fire while the planes were being put away, and when their bodies had returned to normal heat, the circulation and feeling restored again, they set out on foot and walked the three miles to town. There, before a roaring fire in their hotel, they made their plans.

THE following morning, after difficulty in starting their motors, they set out. Nick led the way; Scott trailed a mile to the side and half a mile behind. They were thus within sighting distance of each other at all times, in case of an emergency, and they could examine every foot of the ground that lay between them there below. They reached the hills within twenty minutes, struck up into the mountains, climbing slowly, and began the search.

They bored through the air toward the Rio Grande first, watching the rough-hewn and lonely peaks and cañons below, searching for a tell-tale string of smoke, or any movement on the ground. They reached the river presently, and patrolled it carefully from Presidio up to Ruidosa, then on to Candelaria, thinking that perhaps the bandits might have reached some point of vantage in the vicinity of the river, where they might be awaiting darkness before attempting a dash across the Border into Mexico. But though they searched up and down the Rio Grande for more than an hour they found no traces of the fugitives.

At length they saw a group of scattered horsemen near the river, and they turned and flew low to identify the party. The men waved to them as they passed at fifty feet, and they decided the riders were possemen or Rangers on the hunt. Nick made a mental note of the location and turned

again toward the mountains.

The two planes wheeled and circled slowly over the jutting peaks and deep-cut cañons. They covered the area of the Chinati Hills thoroughly without seeing any trace of the men who must be hidden there. The cold lashed at them with icy claws; the propeller blast, frost-laden, drove back constantly and cut through their clothing.

During the first portion of the search they had been flying low, skirting cañon rims and jagged flats at altitudes varying from ten to fifty feet. Scott, deciding that the men could not be sighted from so low an altitude, opened his throttle wide and

started toward a higher level.

He climbed to two thousand feet above the level of the rugged country, then leveled off and scanned the earth with tireless scrutiny. But in his absorption in the hunt he forgot to close his shutters after he had attained his altitude and was flying at reduced motor speed. He flew on for twenty minutes, never glancing at his instruments, his eyes glued to the rocky wastes below him. The temperature of the water in his radiator slowly dropped; the bottom froze, circulation stopped.

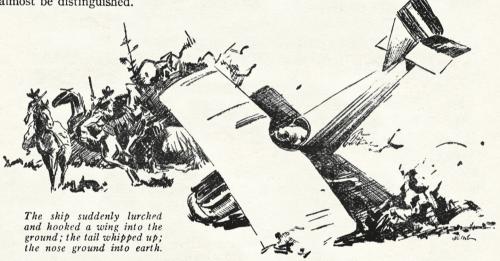
Scott was startled suddenly by the smell of paint that whiffed back with the propeller blast. He looked out along the cowling of his fuselage and saw a plume of steam jetting from the radiator overflow. In a flash

the danger came to him.

He studied the hills below for a place to land. He felt along the straps of his parachute to see that they were fastenedin case a jump should become necessary. He closed his shutters, hoping thus to thaw the bottom of the radiator. But his efforts all were unavailing; the plume of steam increased in size and velocity until it produced a sound not unlike a locomotive whistle, a shrill whine, prolonged, increasing momentarily. The motor began to knock roughly; it hammered itself into a shivering vibration as the pistons expanded and dragged against the cylinder walls. The revolutions slowed; the propeller slackened in its speed until its shining blades could almost be distinguished.

ually into the trough-like flat of land. The narrow end extended deep into the hills, becoming deeper and narrower as it wound its way and lost itself a mile or so away under overhanging cliffs. He saw that the flat was rock-strewn, and looked as if, in the torrential spring rains, the stones had been washed down from above.

Nick, flying well below his partner, saw the plume of steam and instantly recognized its meaning. He raced toward where the other plane was gliding down; he flew along-



Scott, fearing that the radiator might explode from steam pressure, cut his switches. The propeller still turned slowly as the incandescent carbon in the cylinders fired them. He cut his gasoline supply off. The motor stopped.

He was flying two thousand feet above the hills when the prop stopped turning. After some moments of searching he saw a tiny field, a clearing in the roughness of the country, as if Nature had run some giant roller over the ground, smoothing it in places. He knew that he could not hope to land in so small a place without wrecking his ship; he knew that the safer course lay in jumping with his parachute, but he decided to attempt a landing. If he jumped the ship would be a total loss, and landing with his parachute in country as rough as this he knew to be as dangerous as a "crackup." A broken leg and forty miles to walk!

As he neared the field he saw that it lay at the mouth of a shallow cañon. The cañon was V-shaped, the open end becoming wider and shallower until it merged gradside and signaled Scott to jump, but the pilot of the crippled plane was involved in appraising the landing field below—he paid Nick no attention.

The patrol chief was frantic. He waved his arms and flew tight circles around the other ship as it descended. He even yelled, shouting out his lungs to the tearing wind.

For he had seen, as he flashed across the upper end of the cañon, a thread of smoke that lifted lazily upward; he had caught a glimpse of three men squatting around the flames of a tiny fire; he had seen three horses, saddled, another with a pack upon its back, and still another that carried satchels tied above each flank! He had only a glimpse, for he passed over the cañon rim at two hundred feet.

Circling quickly back, and climbing, Nick caught sight of the men again. Apparently they had not known, until the patrol plane roared over the cañon roof, that they were being hunted from the air; but now, when Nick saw them again, they were upon their horses, fleeing madly down the gorge.

FROM their actions Nick knew that they had seen only his plane. They were unaware that Scott was about to land at the mouth of the cañon. But a moment later they rounded a turn and saw the other plane, just as Scott was bringing it down for a landing. They stopped their plunging hørses and grabbed at the carbines in the scabbards on their saddles; they fired volley after volley at Scott's plane.

The crippled ship, unhurt by rifle-fire when its wheels touched the rocky flat, suddenly lurched and hooked a wing into the ground. It seemed to hesitate a moment, then the tail whipped up and over. The nose of the ship ground itself into the earth in a fury of dust and smoke and spraying gasoline. The tail flopped violently over and smashed down. The ship still slid for-

ward for a moment, then stopped.

Nick watched the three men run down the cañon toward the crashed plane. They had dismounted after the plane had crashed, and their progress over the ground was slower; they ran together, in a tiny clot that seemed infinitesimal in comparison with the jagged wall that was their background. Nick circled overhead and emptied his pistol at them, but the shots were ineffective; the men seemed unaware that he had fired. He saw them reach the wreck, just as Scott crawled from beneath the wreckage and staggered to his feet.

Scott had no time to defend himself. He was dazed and shaken, and before he realized that there were men near him he was looking into the muzzles of three carbines. The bandits held a consultation for a few moments, then one of them searched Scott; after that the three men marched him back through the gorge to where their horses were standing. They put him on the horse that carried the satchels, and tied his hands behind him and his feet to the stirrups.

"Rangers'll shoot us now, huh?" the leader sneered. "Mister, thanks fer landin' there—you'll take us right to Mexico! Come along!" The speaker led the way, holding to the bridle of the pilot's horse; the other men followed close behind.

NICK, circling helplessly above, saw all this and instantly realized what was taking place. He could not capture the bandits; he could not materially delay them even. But he could speed them on their way! And in the confusion perhaps Scott could somehow escape.

He circled back, climbing rapidly now,

waiting for the crawling group to reach the mouth of the slit in the hills. Over his shoulder he watched them constantly; he knew that they watched him, too. They reached a point in the cañon where it widened, where the walls drew away from each other quite a distance—and from three thousand feet above them, Nick turned back again and dived.

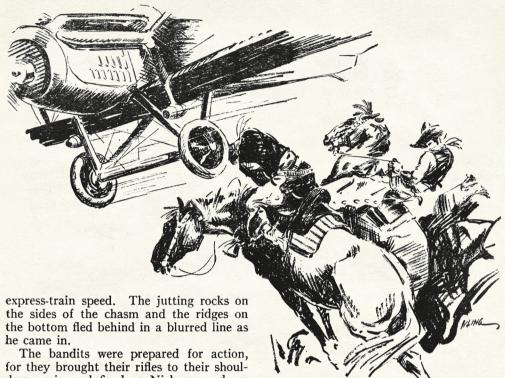
He had in mind a move that was desperate in its possibilities. Once, when in El Paso, he had seen a trooper's head bashed in by the landing gear of a lowflying airplane—it had been a gruesome thing. He did not want to kill these men in that way, even if he could judge his distance and his speed accurately enough to do so without wrecking his airplane. But he hoped to stampede their horses, to throw them into such confusion that Scott would have an opportunity to escape. He knew that his friend could not be thrown from his horse, for the bandits had tied Scott's feet to the stirrups, and if the animal should break away from the leader of the bandit gang there was little possibility that Scott would be recaptured.

It would have been much simpler for Nick if he had been able to wait a few moments longer before beginning his attack. But he knew that he must strike while the men were still within the mouth of the gorge, otherwise they could disperse and be out of his reach when his plane skimmed along the floor of the cañon at the bottom of its dive. In the present situation it was necessary that he plunge at tremendous speed into the cañon, down between its walls, then zoom up and out of danger before the sides of the chasm drew together and

trapped him there!

With his motor full on Nick shoved the control stick far forward. The nose of the ship went hard down, the wires picked up their frantic song and shrieked out a crazy monotone as the plane hurtled through the air. The airspeed-meter needle climbed around the dial to one hundred and sixty miles an hour, then stopped against the peg; but the ship still gathered speed as it plunged downward.

Nick dived two thousand feet before he made a move to pick the nose up, then he eased backward on the stick and decreased the dive to forty-five degrees. Finally, a hundred yards from the group of men, and almost to the cañon, he pulled the nose up until the plane was flying almost level, skimming the rock floor with three times



The undercarriage missed the first man's head by inches. It did not miss the second one!

The bandits were prepared for action, for they brought their rifles to their shoulders again and fired as Nick came down upon them. But they did not anticipate what Nick was trying to do, else they would have scattered and made for the protection of the cañon walls. They sat in their saddles and fired, trying to shoot Nick out of the sky; but their shots went wild because they did not allow for the tremendous speed of their target.

The bandits had stopped their horses when they saw Nick dive. The leader, with Scott's horse close behind, was perhaps sixty feet ahead of the other two men. Nick wanted nothing better than that. He held the nose down again, diving slightly, holding the ship pointed directly at the bandit leader. He saw the man slide off the horse to the ground, releasing Scott's mount, even before the plane was close at hand. A moment later the lower wing hid them.

Nick pulled up a little, to clear Scott, then dived again at the two men who were trailing the leader of the gang. He passed over Scott's head, missing it by a scant three feet, and dived madly on. At last the two remaining men understood something of his purpose, and turned their horses' heads to flee; but before the animals got under way the hurtling ship was down upon them. They caught sight of a grim face over the windshield as the ship came down.

The undercarriage missed the first man's head by two inches. It did not miss the

second one! Nick felt a terrific jar; the ship shuddered at the impact, then steadied.

Immediately the patrol pilot pulled the plane up into a steep climb; he pulled it to the vertical position, climbing straight into the heavens, then over on its back in the first half of a loop as the walls of the gorge drew together just in front of him. Deftly he rolled out of the upside-down position—a perfect Immelman out of the canon!

Quickly Nick looked around for the fugitives. He saw a crumpled figure lying on the cañon floor—the man who had been struck down; and far ahead, beyond the wreck of Scott's plane, the other two gunmen were riding rapidly away at right angles to the cañon. They seemed to be looking for something; now and then they stopped their horses and looked about them, then hurried on, changing their course occasionally.

SCOTT was nowhere to be seen. Nick climbed leisurely now, peering down into the maze of ravines and gorges that were eroded in the earth. He searched for ten minutes, watching the two remain-

ing bandits with brief glances, diverting his attention from his search for Scott only enough that he could keep a trace of them. And presently he saw Scott, still astride his horse, galloping up a smaller gorge. His friend had one hand free of the bonds behind his back, and he waved to Nick.

Then Scott began to struggle with the left-hand stirrup, and Nick presumed that he was trying to loose the bonds that held his feet. He leaned far over, and after a time apparently got his left foot free; then he leaned to the right-hand stirrup and worked with it. His left hand only was free; when he was working on the right stirrup he leaned so far down that Nick could hardly distinguish him from the horse.

It seemed to Nick that Scott worked with the stirrup a long time. He was bent almost double in the saddle, his left hand reaching down and struggling with the ropes around his foot. The horse was galloping around turn after turn as it proceeded up the slot in the hills, and each time it rounded a corner Scott was thrown off his balance. At one point in the cañon a point of rock jutted out across the rocky floor, so that the path almost doubled back upon itself; and when the horse came to this turn, instead of slackening his speed, he rounded it at a full gallop. Scott lost his balance entirely and was thrown.

Nick was crossing the top of the gorge when Scott was thrown. He saw his friend dive from the horse, but before he could see more, the ship carried him out of sight of the bottom of the cañon. He thought that Scott had loosened his bonds, even if he had been unhorsed. And Nick was relieved. He thought, almost jocularly: "You little shrimp, you can't ride a horse! Falling off like that!" He grinned, thinking of the joke that he would make of it when Scott was safely back in Marfa.

The patrol chief swung his plane back in a circle to see where Scott was. He found the place where the other man had been thrown, and he looked up and down the cañon for him, but Scott was not there. Then Nick saw the horse again, now three hundred yards farther up the twisting cañon. He felt suddenly sick; his stomach muscles twisted involuntarily at the sight that met his eyes.

FOR Scott had not fallen to the cañon floor! Apparently his right foot had still been held in the stirrup when he fell; now, hanging by that foot, he was being dragged

across the cañon floor, his head and shoulders bumping and lashing at the stones each time the horse plunged forward! The horse, frantic with fear, was jumping forward in jerking leaps, brushing the rocks on the walls at nearly every turn.

In agony Nick watched the progress of the horse. It seemed that the pinioned man must be killed, so violently did he strike the ground occasionally. The animal's progress up the chasm was a nightmare.

But at last, after what seemed a year to Nick, Scott's bonds were broken. He was thrown free, was catapulted away from the stirrup on a turn, much as a rock might be when released from a slingshot. He crashed into the sloping wall, rolled downward, and lay still. Then he moved, tried to crawl, then was still again. The horse, freed of its dragging burden, increased its speed and disappeared down an intersecting cañon.

Nick examined the barren hills for a place to land. Scott was badly injured, and speed was imperative. Two miles away was the field in which Scott had crashed, and he studied that; decided, finally, that it was too small for safety and was too far away. Safety! He thought of the word grimly. He cared nothing for his own, but if he landed in the field where Scott had crashed, he, too, would probably wreck his ship. He would be without a means of returning Scott to Marfa.

When first he had started looking for a field, Nick had noticed a flat-topped, rocky mesa that bordered the gulch in which Scott lay. He had dismissed it with a single thought as being impossible; but as his search went on, and he found no place in which he could land, he returned to examine the forbidding area. It was small and rough and rolling. The surface was of solid rock, chipped and treacherous for a landing; yet, provided the plane was small enough and could be landed slowly enough that it would not roll too far and dive over the edge, the place might be used. There was not one chance in fifty that a plane could land and take off successfully, but Nick decided to try that one chance.

He circled the place for several moments, trying to choose the best approach. The mesa was set upon the top of a high rock, tower-like; on three sides the solid stone sloped away for a few feet and became, in the descent, bare precipices. On the fourth side, toward the cañon, the descent was almost equally steep, but there were ledges here and there.

There was very little wind, which increased the difficulties of landing tremendously. Nick would have to put his wheels down the moment he reached the flattened top; he would have to land his plane on solid rock-and make a shorter landing than he had ever made before! The ship's tail-skid would not dig into the ground and slow his progress as it did when landing on a sod field—and the plane was not equipped with brakes. And another factor: here the altitude was almost six thousand feet; the Vought would land at sixty-five miles an hour, whereas it landed normally at sea level at forty!

Nick eased his throttle back, closed the radiator shutters carefully, and started

The first trial he overshot. He came in too high, and had to "gun" his motor and go around once more. The second time he made the approach lower, dropped his plane until, just before he reached the edge of the precipice, he was looking up at it! He had the nose of the Vought held high in the air; the airspeed was down to fifty-five, the ship held in the air by the propeller's thrust. He eased the throttle open farther, tried to pick the plane up enough to clear the edge. The airspeed was so low that the plane tried to spin—a wing went down and it took all the piloting ability Nick had to bring it up. He slipped over the edge of the rock-topped flat at fifty-seven miles an hour! He cleared the edge of it with his wheels by less than two inches; and cut his switches. It was now or never!

The plane seemed to Nick to be landing like a bullet; the tail-skid did no good, had no effect upon the speed that diminished so slowly. The brow of the flat was only a few feet away, was coming at him with sickening rapidity. He had an impulse to climb out of the cockpit and let the ship dive over the side by itself, but he knew that if he did, Scott could not be removed from where he lay-there would be no means of transportation.

Instead of doing that, Nick kicked full left rudder, hoping that the wheel would not collapse when he "ground-looped" away from the rim. The speed was still more than thirty miles an hour!

SLOWLY, it seemed to Nick, the plane responded. Centrifugal force canted it; the outside wing went down, the wing-skid dragged the rock, caught at it and tried to throw the ship back again-over the cliff. The rubber of the tires screamed as they skidded in the turn. Slowly, racked in agony, the little plane changed its course. The rim of the rock came into view. The outside wing of the plane reached it, hung over it and the turn was made. The wheel was within three feet of the edge, then two, then one. It reached it! It dropped off!

But the speed had been diminished by the force of the turn. When the wheel slipped over the edge of the rock the axle of the landing gear went down upon the ground, found a purchase, and held on.

The plane shuddered to a stop.

Weak and dizzy, Nick climbed apprehensively from his cockpit. He examined the plane, found that the wheel which was over the precipice was stripped of the tire. Otherwise the ship was undamaged, but it was in such a position that returning it to the level of the mesa was a task one man could not ordinarily accomplish. Leaving that, Nick looked for a means of descent to the canon floor.

The precipice that led down into the gorge was sloping at an angle of more than sixty degrees. There was some vegetation on it, hardy, dwarfed stuff that by sheer will to live had somehow clung to the chinks between the rocks. There were ledges there, some close together, some far apart; yet in some way Nick negotiated the edge of the cliff, climbed down three hundred feet and reached the canon floor.

He ran to where Scott lav.

jured pilot was torn and bruised.

"Scotty! Scotty!" Nick called. With infinite care he picked his friend up. Then he looked down the gorge toward where the bandits had gone. "I'll chase you clear to hell!" he cried.

Nick was tall and well-muscled; Scott was smaller than the average man. But it required more than brawn and muscle to carry Scott back up that cliff. hour Nick struggled, holding the other pilot in first one position and then another, always gentle, careful lest he hurt a wound.

At last he climbed over the edge of the cliff and out on top. Here he was faced with the problem of getting his ship back upon the level. The ship weighed fifteen hundred pounds as it stood there, yet Nick walked up under the motor just in front of the landing gear, placed his shoulders against the bottom of the fuselage, and lifted. He lifted the Vought nearly a foot into the air and set it back where he could start the motor!

The addition of Scott to the burden of the ship would make it sluggish in getting into the air on the take-off, and Nick, to solve that problem, drained out all but five gallons of his gasoline. Then he started his motor and taxied to the point from where he wished to take off. It occurred to him then, for the first time, that he had no place for Scott in the plane—there was one cockpit only.

But hesitation and debate over a difficulty of his work were things which Nick rarely resorted to. There was no extra cockpit in the plane for Scott, so Nick held him on his lap! Scott was still unconscious.

NICK ran his motor until it was hot; then, holding Scott firmly with his left arm, he reached across with his right hand and opened the throttle wide. While the propeller was picking up its revvs he grabbed the stick.

The ship quivered for a moment as the wheels were pulled out of a crevice in the rock. For a time it seemed that the motor was not powerful enough to start it rolling, but Nick "walked" the wheels out, kicking alternately on the rudder bars, swinging the tail back and forth until the wheels were clear. Then the plane began to roll, picking up its initial speed quickly, for there was no soil or grass to impede its acceleration. It reached thirty miles an hour, gradually increased its speed to thirty-five. The rock-floored mesa was filled with holes and deep cracks; when the wheels struck these the plane bounced into the air, then settled back again. The bounces were more violent because of the lack of a tire on one wheel, and each time the ship rocked back to earth it tried to "ground-loop." jars of striking the ground caused the motor to "cut out" momentarily—the carburetor floats were thrown up against the check valves on each jolt, cutting off the gasoline.

Twice Nick was tempted to cut his throttle, to try the take-off again; but each time the motor picked up again and ran smoothly. But the speed necessary for the take-off was not obtained quickly enough. The periods when the motor stopped running momentarily were more frequent as speed was attained; the acceleration was thus slowed down.

So it was that the airspeed meter registered only forty miles an hour when the edge of the mesa was reached! Too late then to cut the throttle—the plane would dive over anyhow! Nick held his breath.

The wheels rolled over. The tail, still being supported on the rock, nosed the ship down as it left the cliff. Nick was helpless; he had no control, because of lack of speed. The ship fell two hundred of the three hundred feet to the bottom of the cañon before it picked up enough speed to give the wings sufficient lift even partially to support it. Within a hundred feet Nick must regain control and pull the nose up! If he failed—

He was hampered because of Scott, in front of him. He could see out of one side of the cockpit only; the other side was "blind" and he could not tell whether he would strike a rock or a cañon wall before he could right the plane. He hauled frantically on the stick when the ship had yet fifty feet to fall; and, miraculously, the nose came up. He felt the tugging of first one wing and then the other as the plane attempted to spin, the airspeed being so low. But each time, by quick action of the controls, he righted it, held the nose up and kept the wings level.

The ground seemed to brush his wheels below. The nose was well up now, the ship squashing along through the air, wallowing heavily as the motor struggled to pick up speed. Once Nick thought that it was ended, that they would crash. The wing went down as an upward current of air caught the plane on the other side; it would not respond when he shoved the controls over. The wing stayed where it was; Nick felt the warning pull on his rudder, tried to lift that wing. But it stayed there until a corresponding counter-current from the other side of the hill pushed it up again.

After countless ages the motor succeeded in accelerating the airspeed to seventy miles an hour. The danger was over, and Nick turned back toward Marfa.

FIFTEEN minutes after that, bloodsmeared, and groggy from the strain, he landed at the flying field. Scott was still unconscious, and did not even groan when mechanics took him from Nick's arms. An ambulance was called from the Army post in town, and while it was coming to the field Nick worked over Scott, doing what he could to ease the wounds.

When the ambulance had gone, Nick serviced his plane with gasoline, replacing the amount that he had drained, and went into the air once more. He took up the search for the outlaws at the point where he had seen them after the encounter. He looked into every depression and ravine he



saw; he passed each, in turn, without seeing those he sought. He started crossing his former tracks—and finally found them.

But they were not where he expected them. They had gone back into the hills, and were now coming out again. They had found the horse which Scott had ridden, and they were leading him madly across a maze of gulches and low ridges, forcing their horses at such a pace that even from the air Nick could see that the animals were tiring and were lagging in their steps.

Using the same tactics he had used in the cañon when he first encountered them, Nick dived repeatedly now, hoping to drive them from their horses and leave them helpless. The Rangers would have an easy job after that. . . . . But the outlaws rode into a gulch and dismounted; they held their horses carefully, and regardless of how low Nick swooped, he could not frighten the animals enough that they would break away. After some minutes spent in that fashion, Nick turned back toward the river.

On the way, holding his control stick between his knees, he scribbled out a note; and when he reached a Ranger who was patrolling the foothills near the Rio Grande, he dropped it. The Ranger picked it up, read it hurriedly while Nick circled overhead, and waved in understanding.

The outlaws, when Nick returned to them, were riding hard through the hills again, trying desperately to reach the river before they were overtaken by the posse. They had abandoned their spare horses.

Evidently they realized that Nick, from the air, was powerless to stop them if they followed gulches and ravines; they kept under cover from his dives. So he contented himself with flying in circles over them until the posse came.

THE bandits almost reached the river before the posse picked up their trail. They reached the more open and level country in the valley, and had only two or three miles more to go before reaching Mexico, when five horsemen came over the hills behind them in pursuit. But Nick saw that unless something delayed the fugitives still further they would make the river before being apprehended!

He dived at them again, trying to scare them from their horses, but they would not dismount. The animals on which they rode were too fatigued to pay attention to the screaming noise that came at them from above, and plugged on at a steady gait. Nick could have beheaded the men one after the other with his landing gear if he had chosen to; but instead of that he flew ahead, following the narrow valley in which the bandits were approaching the river, and landed in an open field. Then, with his pistol reloaded, he ran to a cluster of bushes and concealed himself.

He had barely reached the brush when

the outlaws came over a hummock in front of him. They did not see the plane, for it was on the other side of a low hill, away from them; and they pushed their tired mounts directly toward where Nick was hidden. When they came within fifty yards of the bushes, Nick fired. One of the men lurched from his horse, grabbing at the carbine in his scabbard as he fell. The other one, unaware of the strength of the opposition ahead of him, wheeled his tired horse and struck out at right angles to his former path. As he did so, Nick saw two Rangers coming from that direction. The bandit saw them too, and turned again back toward Nick. He rode low on his mount's neck now, like an Indian eluding an attack. Nick fired at him as he passed the clump of bushes-missed. Just then he heard the bark of the Rangers' rifles. The horseman stopped, threw down his rifle, and surrendered.

Within ten minutes a motley group of thirty men had gathered—the posse and a handful of Rangers who had hurried into the vicinity. Captain Farr was not present; none of his men had seen him.

One of the outlaws had been slightly wounded by Nick's bullet; the other one was unhurt. They stood now with hand-cuffs on their wrists, locked to each other and to a deputy on either side.

"WHAT become of all the money?" a Ranger asked Nick. "These guys aint got but a few dollars apiece!"

Nick looked around for the horse that the bandits had been leading. It was nowhere to be seen.

"Yuh don't expect to find the dough, do yuh?" the unhurt bandit sneered. "Don't-cha wisht I'd tell yuh?"

"Hidin' it wont help you guys none!" the Ranger retorted. "You guys is gonna hang!" He paused for the effect. "By the neck—see? What'd ya do with that money?" He walked forward menacingly.

"Maybe the aviator seen some of it," another man suggested. "He seen 'em first—maybe he seen where they hid it at."

"It was on a spare horse—the one they were leading, I think," Nick replied.

"An' you been a-ridin' up there watchin' these guys all day, and ya didn't see where they hid it at?" The tone was suspicious.

"No, I didn't see it!" Nick said slowly. "Another crack like that and I'll knock hell outta you, partner! Are you through talking?"

"I was only kiddin', mister," the man explained. "Only kiddin'."

With a goading fear of what he might find when he reached Marfa, Nick sped through the air at one hundred and thirty miles an hour. He wondered how Scott was faring. . . . . He wanted to see Farr, to tell him something—yes, he had quite a few things to tell Farr! At last he reached the flying field.

IN the hospital he found Scott, bruised and battered, but now conscious. With a valiant spirit he smiled up through the bandages that swathed his face.

Nick was unable to express himself in words. He sat down beside his friend's bed, grasped Scott's hand, and grinned at him happily.

"Say, youngster, those rocks sure kinda

mashed your face!" he laughed.

Scott tried to smile. The bandages bothered him. "Didn't they? Say, orderly, bring that bag of mine in here. . . . . Well, Nick, when I get back home I'm gonna get me a horse and learn to ride him! I guess you saw it all. . . . . Well, I just fell off!"

The orderly brought in the bag that the hospital had furnished Scott, and laid it on the edge of the bed. The injured pilot dismissed him.

"What I want, Nick," he said, his eyes twinkling, "is for you to write a letter for me. There's some paper in that bag—" He looked at the ceiling while Nick unlatched the bag and opened it. He chuckled at Nick's amazement.

"Good Lord, kid! The money?"

"Yeah. I got one hand loose and found it in those pouches where the saddle-bags went. That's the reason I headed up that canon—I aimed to throw it behind a rock the first chance I got. But it was all rock—there wasn't a loose one—so I hid it in my shirt. Then I tried to untie my feet and fell plump off that horse!"

Nick, astounded, was counting the bills. "And that aint all of it, either," Scott continued. "The medico put the rest of it in the safe. I had him keep that much to show to you. There's ten grand there. Just count out five of 'em and stick 'em in your pocket. That's your half of the reward. Old Man Farr came blowin' in here a while ago and said for us to divide it—he just got in on the noon train. . . . . Funny old cuss, aint he?"

Scott yawned contentedly, and fell into the sleep of deep fatigue.



# Egbert

### TOM CURRY

Wherein a criminal is marked with a brand more conspicuous than ever wrought by red-hot iron.

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

THE Hamiltons owned a summer home an hour's ride from the city, an isolated six-room cottage built in the shelter of a great cliff. Here they were wont to go at the first call of spring and remain until winter blew its breath over the Connecticut hills.

Tom was commuting, driving his roadster to the station in the early morning, returning by six o'clock. He was an assistant district attorney, a prosecutor assigned to court work, engaged in the field battle for the State, fighting tricks and evasions of criminals' lawyers. His wife Dora was blonde and small, a contrast to her tall, black-haired husband. Both were goodhearted people, full of smiles, happy in their home.

They were sitting before the fire in the living-room one evening, enjoying the quiet of the hills, when Marvin, the English bulldog, raised his heavy head.

"Woof!" exclaimed Marvin.

With large eyes the dog looked in the direction of the kitchen. This was a habit of Marvin's; he was a good watchdog, as far as watching dogs went; he would growl until the cows came home. But so many times he had cried, "Woof, woof!" that little stock was taken by his proud family in his alarums. For the two years that he had been a respected and coddled member of the Hamilton ménage, Marvin had had the cream of everything. He never slept with less than a box spring underneath and a silk comfortable above. He ate only the finest-the latter not through any choice of his own, for Marvin had a taste for recherché delicacies such as decayed fish, a dirt-encrusted bone or a pail of luscious garbage.

"Hush, Marvin!" said Tom severely. "I

am speaking!"

"Woof, woof!" said Marvin, making it double this time, to show he would if he wanted to.

Would Marvin bite anybody, an intruder in the night, for instance? He made much noise at times, it is true, but usually ended by leaping up and licking the person's hand. Besides, he was a sound sleeper and hated to be disturbed.

Now he looked the picture of the brave watchdog protecting the master and mistress and the little ones from the wolves; however, he did not budge from the large armchair which had been drawn up before the fire for his use.

TOM and Dora, though used to such talk, listened in spite of themselves. Outside, at the rear of the house, they heard a scratching noise.

"It may be that spotted hound from down the road," said Tom. "He's a nuisance, the way he pulls the papers about."

The young man rose and tiptoed to the back door. He switched on the outside light, and looked through the glass panel.

"Come here, quickly, Dora," he called. She ran to his side. "What is it?"

"A skunk. See him? He's eating that butter you dropped on the floor and had to throw out."

The two watched the animal as it enthusiastically attacked the butter. The woman made a little gesture of repugnance. "Oh-

isn't he sinister-looking, Tom!"

Hamilton laughed. He pushed Marvin, who had waddled out to join the party, in the jowls. Marvin did not approve of anyone picking at his garbage-pail. It was a dirty shame, he growled, that he should be shut in the house while an interloper which looked much like a cat should be eating up all the tidbits!

"Cute, isn't he?" said the man.

He was referring to the skunk, but Mar-

vin licked his hand gratefully.

The skunk raised his head. He was but a few feet from them, and heard them speaking; however, he was not easily alarmed. After a glance in their direction and a frown at the light,—something he was not used to,—he went on fervently eating the butter.

They observed him for some time. He skillfully took the top off the garbage-can and picked out some bits of bread. When he had eaten his fill, he walked off with a piece of burned toast from breakfast.

"Let's call him Egbert," said Hamilton.

"We can make a pet of him."

Dora giggled. "I'm afraid of him," she confessed. "A skunk is the lowest form of animal life! What do you call a man who is mean and cruel? A skunk!"

"Yes," admitted Tom. "But that's only figuratively speaking. Egbert wont do us any harm. Skunks are easily tamed-only don't step on his tail. Marvin, never try to chase that cat up a tree!"

"Woof!" said Marvin, meaning he would

if he got the opportunity.

AS for Egbert the skunk, he felt that he had landed in clover. For a long time he had struggled for existence, trying to catch enough mice and insects to make a go of it. It was hard. The two red squirrels who robbed the bird-nests in the spring, and chattered about the place in the early morning, never would come out at night to speak to a self-respecting skunk. One of them would have made a fine meal for Egbert, and he knew it-but so did the squirrels.

The fact of the matter was that nobody liked Egbert. When the unfortunate skunk walked abroad, everybody went somewhere else—that is, everyone except the old tomcat down the line who walked so silently and smelled quite all right to a skunk. The tomcat and Egbert both hated dogs, and once the big hound on the neighboring farm had mistaken Egbert, passing on his way, for the cat.

"Curse you!" he had barked, rushing out at the catlike form.

For six weeks thereafter, the hound-dog had been an outcast.

But then the Hamiltons had come to their summer home. Egbert, forlorn, foiled that evening at the chickencoop half a mile away, the chuckles of the red squirrels in his baffled ears and only a caterpillar in his sorrowing stomach, came along and actually stepped on a pat of butter before he realized heaven had come to earth.

Butter! It was new to him; but one lick, and he knew he was an epicure, a common It was better than feeder no longer. chicken! And there were bits of bread, bits of beef, chicken bones with lots of meat left on, fish carcasses—why, here was a skunk's holiday!

Was it too good to be true?

EGBERT awakened the next evening at ten o'clock, made his toilet, and hurried out to see if he had been dreaming.

There it was, the receptacle filled with choice foods. He gloated for a moment, then fell to work.

Butter again, and right on the ground! He licked and licked. Suddenly the heavens lighted. Egbert looked up and caught the glare of an electric bulb in his eyes. He decided that butter was worth anything, and stood his ground.

Strange sounds reached his ears, almost growls, yet certainly not of evil intent. Besides, Egbert, if the truth must be told, was not any too bright. And no one had yet done him an injury. So he looked at the creatures inside the glass-paneled door and simply nodded in greeting.

He had the laugh now on the red squir-

rels. He didn't care if they never came out at night. No more long walks after chickens and a hard dig before one could get to them. No more waiting at mouse-holes and grubbing for insects.

Egbert felt a dull glow of gratitude. But

hark-what was that?

Marvin, the bulldog, had emitted another protest, almost a whimper of pain when he saw Egbert work the top off the garbage-pail with paws and sharp nose.

Egbert, placing the sound, glanced contemptuously in Marvin's direction. Luckily for the dog, the door interposed between

him and the outer world.

"He'll be a regular pet soon," said Hamilton.

And so Egbert became. He moved from his den over the hilltop to a cozy place under the large rock not ten yards from the Hamiltons' back doorstep and settled down to a summer of bliss.

During the day Marvin dug fruitlessly at the entrance-hole, sending the black dirt flying under his paws. But this only earned

for him a bath—which he detested.

As for Egbert, he grew more and more domesticated. He learned to pay no attention—barring a polite greeting, of course—to the people who thought him a one-ring circus. He took his strolls now at more leisurely gait, with his nose in the air, instead of hustling anxiously along, wondering where the next bite was coming from. The red squirrels, and the gray ones, the mice and the caterpillars, could go to hell!

He became so tame that when Hamilton wished to replenish the fire from the woodpile in the rear of the cottage, he had to rattle the latch of the door, whistle Sousa's march, and say, "Pardon me, Egbert." Then, if he felt like it, Egbert would waddle away a few yards so that Tom could slip

out and get his logs.

For in spite of the fact that they had grown to love Egbert, the young couple felt the sensations of a man with a pet rattlesnake. Good as Egbert's heart might be, suppose he forgot himself for a moment? What if, tummy full, dreaming of this and that, he should have a nightmare, think a hound-dog was leaping at him? Once would be enough. No matter what apologies he offered, no matter how sorry he felt, the damage would be done. Some one would be déclassé.

And, as has been said, Egbert was not any too bright.

Realizing the passionate taste Egbert had

developed for butter, Tom Hamilton would place a slice of bread spread with the delectable stuff near the back stoop, and Egbert would come along later and pick it up. Often, Egbert was crouching within a few feet of him—though Hamilton did not know it. The skunk had grown to be absolutely unafraid of the man—or of man. Hamilton could have patted Egbert's head and even invited him in for tea, save that Marvin the dog might have objected.

IT was a great relaxation for Hamilton to get back to his home in the hills, after the hard work of the day. And lately he had been studying much at night, and there were dark circles under his eyes, for the case on which he had been working was a difficult one.

Francisco Rimón, dark, cruel, sinister, a killer handy with the knife and with a nature which put vengeance on an enemy above all else, had been taken in the net of the law. Hamilton had been unable to collect enough evidence to indict Rimón for any of his numerous killings, but he had worked out a strong case charging the Cuban with highway robbery. And if convicted, Rimón went to prison for life, since it would be his fourth offense.

Rimón, rich and influential in the underworld, had hired clever attorneys to fight the battle for freedom for him, but Hamilton had broken down the defense at every They had tried to tire Hamilton out, by tricks and evasions; but he had at last won; and Rimón, convicted, would be sentenced automatically to life-imprison-Rimón, therefore, took the matter ment. as a personal encounter between himself and Hamilton. Several times when Hamilton made a thrilling counter-blow which struck the defense vitally, Rimón had to be forcibly restrained from throwing himself on the prosecutor. He had vowed vengeance on Hamilton. And now, as Hamilton had dug out the former convictions, and taken the leading part in the prosecution, Rimón blamed the young district attorney for all his troubles.

Rimón, dragged away from the bar, shook his fist and shouted he would "get" Hamilton. That afternoon he had been taken aboard a train bound north to the prison town where were the gray walls which would forever inclose him. Hamilton, weary, sick of the long battle, sighed with relief. He had felt uncomfortable about the Cuban's threats, more on Dora's account than on his

own, for he knew the nature of the criminal. But now he felt that Rimón was safely

under lock and key.

Hamilton had very carefully avoided mentioning the case of Rimón and the Cuban's threats to Dora, as he did not wish to alarm her. He had "forgotten" to bring home the newspaper describing Rimón's actions when convicted, so Dora was utterly unaware that any danger had threatened her husband. And now Hamilton pictured Rimón as already committed and beginning his life term. He was relieved, to say the least. . . . .

They were sitting before their open fire, reading. Marvin the dog was snoring. It was one of his accomplishments—a good, hearty snore. Let other dogs have the palm for beauty, speed, ferocity or bark, vet Marvin could give any one of them two-up and come in with snorting emphasis in the snore. He was a magnificent sleeper. Intrepid, with no fear of anything save that he might be left out on a meal, Marvin had been pampered to the point where he was about as useful as a kitten.

Later on, they watched Egbert eating his bread and butter, and then they re-Egbert usually made some noise taking the top off the garbage-pail and fiddling round the restaurant. If Marvin was awake, he would growl and woof; otherwise he let it go. Why worry? Marvin slept during the night at Hamilton's feet, snoring lustily, covered with a silk quilt.

Tom switched off the bedroom lights. He was weary from his hard day in court; his job had been well done; and he wanted to rest. From the back of the house came the scratching of Egbert, still at it.

Tom fell asleep in a few minutes, to the accompaniment of Marvin's enormous snores, which filled the dog's own ears. The silk comfort muffled all sounds from outside as far as Marvin was concerned.

HAMILTON was awakened suddenly, starting up in bed. The tail-end of a terrific shriek was drifting along the cliff, echoing in the night. Dora, with a cry, lay frozen with terror.

Hamilton reached for the pistol which he kept in the night-stand near the bed. He rose and tiptoed out into the living-

The night was dark—a slight fog had dropped over the hills. The man could see nothing outside. But straining his ears, he caught sounds of rapidly retreating footsteps, and at last, a hundred yards away, the roar of a motor.

Then another sense came into play. Hamilton, with a gasp, went back into the bedroom.

"Just a passing car," he said to Dora. "But something's disturbed poor Egbert. A dog, perhaps."

THEY shoved the bed over to the far side of the room; Marvin, alarmed and vigilant, kept woofing for some time. Tom did not again go to sleep. He lay listening, and waiting, for a vague fear had come to him, a fear which he tried to dismiss from his mind as absurd, but which kept his eves wide open.

Early in the morning the telephone-bell began ringing, and Hamilton went out to

answer the peremptory signal.

"That you, Tom?" came the voice from the other end of the wire. "Listen, this is Lewison. Say, Rimón broke away from Detective Marks, who was taking him up to prison yesterday. You know, old man, L remembered how he threatened you in court-said he'd cut your heart out, and so on-so I thought I'd better warn you in case he heads your way. See? He could easily find out where you live, and-well, you know. Best to be on the safe side."

"Thanks, Jack," said Hamilton. Lewison had helped him prepare the case

against Rimón.

"A couple of Rimón's pals were aboard the train," continued Lewison, "and Rimón asked for a drink of water. Marks unlocked the handcuffs, and let Rimón go ahead of him down the aisle. As Marks passed the last seat, Rimón's friends jumped up and struck Marks on the head with a blackjack. Then the three of 'em leaped from the train and ran for it. They stole a car from a woman on the highway, and got away clean."

"I'll see you later, then," said Hamilton

He lighted a cigarette, after ringing off, and stood for a minute, looking at the back of the house. Then he went over and

opened the door.

There were footprints in the soft mud at the rear of the cottage, footprints but an hour or two old, and not of Tom's making. And a long knife, shining in the morning sun, lav half buried near by, where the midnight intruder had stepped on it as he fled in terror. A white slip of paper attracted Hamilton's attention, and picking this up, he saw that it was a rough map of the roads leading from the railroad to his house, which was marked with a cross. And above all, there was Egbert-or where Egbert had been. This was undeniable; and Hamilton, with gasping breath, retreated down the path, where he threw the knife and the map into a clump of bushes.

Dora came out, ready to get his breakfast, and found Tom spreading a piece of

bread with butter.

"Heavens, Tom!" she exclaimed. "You're using a whole pound of butter!"
"That's all right," he replied. "We

better go into town for a few days, till the furore here dies down. Egbert is some skunk!"

He knew what had occurred-some one had stepped on Egbert's tail. And Hamilton was sure that it had been Rimón, creeping through the night to fulfill his vow of vengeance.

But he said nothing of this to Dora. He took her to town with him and left her at a hotel, then went to his office, where he reported the fact that Rimón had come to kill him.

"There oughtn't to be any trouble tracing him," said Hamilton with a grin; "not after Egbert!"

And sure enough Rimón was picked up before they returned to their country home, three days later. Branded as a criminal, he might have escaped; branded by Egbert, there was no haven of refuge for him. He retired to a country retreat, hiding away in a barn; but a farmer with a shotgun routed him out. He was located by local police, and shot one of them before he was taken. When they had him, they were sorry they had been so assiduous, but they locked him in an isolated cell and telephoned the Board of Health.

Y/HEN the Hamiltons got back to their cottage, things had calmed down The butter was gone, but somewhat. whether Egbert or a raiding dog had taken it, Hamilton could not tell. However, that evening he spread a slice of bread thickly with the skunk's favorite delicacy and left it outside. Then he listened and watched.

But Egbert did not appear. Another night passed; still Egbert was A. W. O. L.

Were Egbert's feelings hurt? Rimón killed him that night? Hamilton knew that Egbert had trusted man, and probably the skunk had not even moved when Rimón came creeping through the night on his mission of death.

A dog ate the bread and butter that night, Marvin grunting and woofing conscientious objections. Egbert did not come.

But one evening about ten-thirty, as they were reading, Marvin raised his head and gave the dog-alarm: "Woof!"

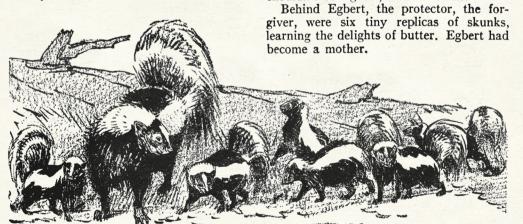
Hamilton rose, and went to the back door. He switched on the outside light.

"Come here, Dora!" he cried.

She ran to his side. Egbert, proud as a peacock, hove in sight. Calmly, majestically, the skunk stepped toward the large piece of bread and butter and began to lick it.

"He's forgiven us," cried Hamilton with a laugh.

"What for?" asked Dora curiously. "Oh, nothing. But look—his name shouldn't be Egbert, that's a cinch!"





"RIG ship for diving!"
Having just come from the submarine school at New London, I had yet to make my first "crash" dive, as the old-timers so aptly call it when you slam a submarine down and out of sight with full diving rudder, as if the enemy had suddenly come upon you in a fog.

The other officers on the ship, who had been "in the boats" for years, didn't seem to be much excited. Bud Tyler the executive, and Jack Lansing the engineering officer, were arguing away just as if they were discussing something important.

Their arguments usually had three stages—an extravagant statement by Bud, a flat contradiction by Jack, and a bet. Apparently, they had reached the third stage, so I joined them to act as judge.

"Any bet yet?" I asked.

"Yes, and I want you to bear witness that Bud bets me the first day's duty at Pensacola that the division commander will pester us with more, 'Why did you not do so and so?' messages on this trip south than, 'Cannot understand why you did so and so's.'"

"Does that include semaphore signals as well as radio?" I wanted to get the bet straight. "For we join the division commander and the other submarines after we finish our engineering runs, don't we?"

An American submarine officer tells a vivid story of his dangerous service.

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

"Yes," said Jack, "it means all messages from the time we left New London until we arrive in Pensacola."

That afternoon we "rigged ship for diving." As I wanted to learn all I could, I decided to make the rounds with the "chief-of-the-boat" to acquaint myself with the details—and there were a surprising lot of them. The chief-of-the-boat is, more or

less, a sea-going top-sergeant.

The diving-log was consulted to check up on the weights that had been added to, or taken aboard since the last dive. Any change of weight was compensated for by blowing out of, or flooding water into, special tanks designed for this purpose. The trim or balance, fore and aft, was also inspected and adjusted. All hatches and outboard openings, except those necessary for ventilation purposes, were closed and secured; batteries were charged, and air-tanks filled with compressed air for blowing water out of tanks.

"Ship rigged for diving, sir," reported the chief-of-the-boat.

The Captain decided on a "slow dive," as he wanted to accustom all hands to their

stations, since the ship had been in the Navy Yard for some time being overhauled. Moreover he wanted to check the diving trim under actual diving conditions before

making a crash dive.

At three o'clock the general alarm was sounded. The Diesel engines were stopped and the engine clutch thrown out. We then shifted to our electric motors, which are always used for the submerged run. All outboard openings, such as the engine exhausts and ventilating systems, were closed. The conning-tower hatch was closed and secured. The Kingston sea-valves were opened, flooding the six ballast tanks, and the ship slowly submerged.

We were then in a state of approximate neutral buoyancy—that is, neither heavier

nor lighter than water.

The Captain, who was at the periscope, keeping an eye out for any approaching vessels, gave the order: "Depth twenty-eight feet." The diving officer, noting that more "rise" than "dive" rudder was being used, ordered four or five hundred pounds of water pumped from the adjusting tank to sea. This helped, but we were still a little heavy forward. By pumping water from the extreme forward tank to the extreme after tank, a proper balance or trim was obtained.

She now held her depth easily. But to get a fine check, it was necessary to slow down to a very low speed, so that after a few more small adjustments of water, the ship would almost hang at any depth with very little rudder.

As soon as the Captain saw that the diving officer had his trim, he lowered the periscope and ordered different depths and speeds to give the diving-rudder men prac-

tice at depth-keeping.

Finally we reached one hundred feet. Everything went smoothly, so the Captain decided to come up. As we had been considerably below periscope depth for some time our motors were stopped and the hydrophone man trained his listening tube all around to see if there was any propeller noise from ships in the vicinity. Hearing none, the ship was brought rapidly to the surface by blowing the water from the ballast tanks, and soon we were cruising ahead again on our engines, Pensacola-bound.

WORD was passed shortly before eleven next morning to "rig ship for diving." We had just about completed our fullpower engine run and were preparing for our full-power run submerged. According to the rules, the dive on this run must be a crash dive, with a penalty applied against our yearly engineering standing if we did not get our conning-tower under water and out of sight in less than sixty seconds after the diving siren was sounded. A good diving crew could make it in considerably less time, but even with sixty seconds, each man had to know his job and do the right thing at exactly the right time.

The ship was rigged for diving; the crew was standing by diving stations, and all was in readiness for the diving alarm which was

to be sounded at eleven sharp.

There was a feeling of alertness in the air. Everyone kept glancing at the clock.

The chief-of-the-boat, an old-time chief gunner's mate with years of submarine service, was standing by the "main induction," which he was to close upon diving, and after that keep an eye on the other stations in the control-room, ready to supervise and help in any emergency.

N order to understand what happened, it will be best perhaps to explain that the main induction is a large air-intake or ventilating line, one part of which runs aft to the engine-room and motor-room, assuring a supply of air for the engines; the other leads forward to the torpedo-room, furnishing air to the forward part of the ship. These two parts join amidships in the control-room—which, as the name signifies, is where the ship is controlled when submerged—and forming an inverted T, pass through the upper part of the hull to the The main induction must be open air. closed before submerging, but should not be closed until the Diesel engines are stopped; for if by accident the conningtower hatch were also closed, the engines would use up all the air in the boat in four or five revolutions. Should this occur-and it has occurred on some submarines with almost fatal results—everyone in the boat would drop as if shot, from collapsed lungs. So you can see that the chief's station was an important one.

As the hands of the control-room clock moved to eleven and the second hand came to zero, the order rang out: "Sound diving

alarm."

"Aye-aye, sir," came from the officer-ofthe-deck, and the siren shrieked its call for action throughout the ship.

Men jumped to their tasks. Air was hissing; sharp orders were given; a dozen

things were being done at once. A single mistake, and the results might prove fatal to us all.

The watch on the bridge slid down the hatch, the quartermaster staying in the conning-tower ready to close the conning-tower hatch the instant he heard the engines shut down. The chief-of-the-boat had his hand on the stop valve ready to close the main induction. The diving-rudder men had "Hard dive" on the diving planes. The Kingston sea-valves were being opened, flooding the six ballast tanks, three on each side of the ship.

A slight list to starboard developed which rapidly increased to the point of danger. The chief-of-the-boat, seeing that the man at the Kingstons was having trouble opening the valves on the port side, so that water was flooding in the tanks on the other side only, thus tilting the boat heavily to the flooded side, jumped to help get the port valves open.

Were my premonitions coming true? Or was this just one of those emergencies that

submarine life is full of?.

While all this was happening, the engines had been shut down, the ship was going ahead on the electric motors, the conningtower hatch was closed, the diving rudders were at "Hard dive," and we were going down, down—with the main induction wide open and forgotten, all attention being focused on the other danger.

With the chief-of-the-boat's help, the port valves were soon opened, and with the water now flooding in the port ballast tanks, the ship began to right the big list to star-

board. What a relief!

All of this had happened in the space of a few seconds.

The Captain, seeing that the dangerous list was rapidly correcting itself, quickly looked around to make certain that the main induction had been properly closed and secured-and saw it was wide open to the sea! He sprang to close it. chief seeing his action, suddenly realizing what he had forgotten, shouted "My God, the main induction!" and rushed to help the Captain, but at that very instant—a split second too late-a telltale stream of water hit them in the face—an insignificant stream, just leakage around the valves; but it meant that the hull was below the surface and water was rushing through the big leads to the torpedo-room forward and the engine-room aft.

The Captain and the chief—both power-

fully built men—struggled with the valve, but it was instantly apparent that they would never get it closed against the great pressure of the inrushing water.

"Surface!" ordered the Captain.

This is an emergency order. Water is blown from tanks; diving-rudder men use "Hard rise" rudder; the motors go ahead full speed; the bow-buoyancy tank is blown to lift the bow. Normally these extreme measures will make the ship shoot to the surface.

"Close water-tight doors!" was the next order—scarcely a second after the first.

REALIZING the almost certain disaster that was upon us, I rushed to the torpedo-room, while Bud made a dash for the engine-room. Each had the same thought—to get the stop valves at the ends of the main induction closed, if humanly possible.

When I got to the torpedo-room, with my heart pounding as if it would jump right out of my chest, I saw that already the water was filling the bilges. The torpedo-men were striving with all their strength to get their stop closed, but it was the same story again—the pressure of the inrushing water

was too great to overcome.

As the water was pouring in so rapidly, it was only a matter of seconds before it would be too late to get the watertight door between compartments closed, and moreover, salt water might get into the batteries in the next compartment, which would cause chlorine gas and consequent strangulation, so I ordered everyone out of the torpedo-room.

Realizing that we did not have much time to spare before the water would be rushing through and prevent our closing the door, we could hardly wait for the last man to wade through before we slammed it shut. But one of the "dogs," or metal clamps, was turned the wrong way, so that the door would not close tight enough to be "dogged A little detail like this, which down." should have been noticed when we "rigged for diving," had turned out to be a possible matter of life or death, for the dog seemed jammed and would not budge an inch. The water had risen up to our waists, submerging the jammed dog before we gave up, and since it was then too late to get the door closed, we worked our way aft monkeyfashion because of the steep diving angle, hoping that the control-room was not flooded, and that we could find safety there.

The big diving angle caused by all the

extra water forward turned out to be a great advantage, for although the forward part of the compartment was flooded, the after part was not, and after some of the fastest work I ever expect to see, we had the controlroom door undogged-it had been closed by those in the control-room—and rushed through it, closing it behind us just as water began lapping around the bottom of the door. Thank God, the control-room wasn't flooded!

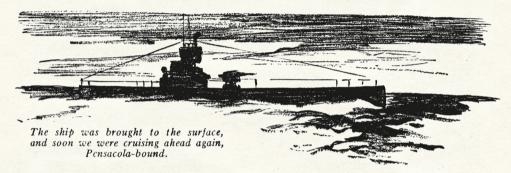
Just then the bow of the ship hit the bottom of the ocean—a rather cushioned blow. Must have been mud bottom. The motors

thrown by the heavy lurch, and upon trying to regain their feet, slipped on the wet deck and went down again. All this was unfortunately timed so that it occurred at exactly the wrong psychological momentjust when all hands were frantically trying to "surface" the vessel, and every man was needed to do his part.

When we hit bottom, we all expected to see the hull crushed by the impact, and the water rushing in; but the soft mud had saved us-for perhaps a much worse death.

The motors were stopped.

The ship gradually came to rest with the



had been backing to break the speed of the crash to the bottom as much as possible. This had been done when the Captain saw that all efforts to stop the dive and get to the surface were hopeless.

Fortunately, we had not dived in midocean, for nothing would have stopped our dive but the bottom. If we had been in over one hundred fathoms of water, our hull would have been crushed like an eggshell.

I saw the engine-room watertight door was open—the first thing I looked for when I rushed back to the control-room; and this meant that the engine-room gang had by some miracle managed to get their end of the main induction closed. Temporarily we were saved. But to what end?

HE deck of the control-room was so wet that it was necessary to hold on to something to prevent slipping. As luck would have it, just as we took on our big angle, a mess-cook had been passing through the control-room with a big tureen of soup and an armful of dishes. He was thrown off his balance by the sudden change of diving angle, with the result that hot soup and broken dishes were sprayed all over the deck, adding to the general confusion; nearly everyone in the control-room was bow on the ocean bed at an angle of about thirty degrees. The depth-gauge showed one hundred thirty-two feet.

"Bowers," said the Captain to the chief-of-the-boat, "have all the men go to the en-gine-room. Tell them there is nothing to worry about—that we will have the boat up in a few hours."

The crew gathered in the engine-room. Although there were several very scaredlooking faces, still they were taking it well with no signs of anyone breaking under the strain—as yet.

When Bowers joined the officers in the control-room, a conference that I'll never

forget was held.

"I guess you all realize what we are up against," said the Captain. "There's one thing certain, and that is that we will have to come to a quick decision, and it will have to be the right one the first time. submarine disasters have shown us that, for we probably wont have time to try out more than one plan of saving ourselves.

"First, let's size up the situation: With all that water forward, we have too much negative buoyancy to get to the surface,

even with tanks blown dry.

"Second, there's no possible way to get that water out.

"Now then, as to the length of time we

can live on the air we have—that's problematical. We have two bottles of oxygen, and plenty of air in the air-tanks—at least for breathing purposes—and as a last resort we could flood the ballast tanks again, which would force the air now in those tanks back through the vents into the boat. Still, what good would a fresh supply of air be, unless we could get rid of the old carbon dioxide given off when we breathe? might be able to take care of that when the time comes by starting the air-compressor, sucking the bad air out of the boat and storing it in one of the empty air-tanks. Something may happen to our electrical power by that time, in which case we might be able to turn the air-compressor over by hand. Thus, if we can take care of the carbon dioxide, we may have enough air to last a week. Unfortunately, we have no soda lime, or we could get rid of the carbon dioxide that way.

"The question is—can they find us in a week? And if they do find us, can they manage to rescue us or get fresh air to us

before our air-supply gives out?

"Our orders were to dive 'at discretion." Hence, they don't know when or where we dived. We wont be missed for another twenty-four or even forty-eight hours, for they'll naturally assume, if they don't hear from us, that our radio set is out of commission again. Fortunately we got through our eight A. M. position-report. Even so, they don't know how soon afterward we dived. Our oscillator was put out of commission by the crash, so it looks as if our chance of being located before our air gives out is too slim to bank on. However, we shall try to devise some means of getting word to the surface, in the hope that some stray vessel may pick up our message; but we can't rely on any such long chance.

"If we expect to come out of this alive, it looks as if we are thrown absolutely on

our own resources.

"Since we can't get rid of that water forward, we will have to take that handicap and make it work to our advantage."

"GO on, Skipper," said Bud, who could not keep quiet any longer, the strain being too much for him. "I think I've got the same idea you have."

"Yes, old man, I guess we all have. But can we do it? Can we make this old boat stand on her head, so that the stern will stick out of the water far enough to cut a hole in the hull and get out, or at least as-

sure us of an indefinite supply of fresh air? It's a big gamble! To accomplish it, we'll have to use up a lot of our previous supply of air in the air-tanks, because to get her at a big enough angle, it will be necessary to use up a lot of that air to blow overboard all our fuel, fresh water and lubricating oil, all of which is carried far enough aft so that when blown overboard it will tend to raise the stern.

"I don't think the electric pumps will last long, because when we begin to get her at a little greater angle, the electrolyte will probably run out of the batteries, or the water will get to them, and even if this doesn't cause a fire from short-circuits, or an explosion of the hydrogen gas, it will put our electrical power-plant out of commission. And the hand pumps are too slow for the enormous amount of water we have to handle, so it looks as if we will have to use a lot of our air. I think standing her on end is our one and only chance. Our lives depend upon the decision we are about to make. If any of you have any other ideas, let's hear them."

"I have some plans for getting messages to the surface," replied the 'Exec,' "but I think we had better go ahead with the stern plan without losing any time. We want to get our hole in the hull before nightfall, if possible, as we may be able to flag a passing ship. We can go ahead with my plan after we get the other job started."

The engineering officer said he had some plans about the oil slick that would be made on the surface by our fuel and lubricating

oil, but that also could wait.

As neither the chief-of-the-boat nor I had much to add to what had been said, we decided to go ahead with the up-ending of the boat without further delay. We all agreed to gamble our vital supply of fresh air and fresh water against the possible chance of getting the stern to the surface. If we failed in that, it probably only meant that the end would come sooner. We had hopes of outside help, but when we thought of the tragedy of other salvaging attempts, we knew how vain such hopes must be.

"Good submariners may be down but never out. Now let's hop to it," said the

Captain.

And the struggle to beat a lingering and

tortuous death was on!

The pumps were put on all the tanks aft of the torpedo room, with the Exec in charge of operations. The Captain and I

got out the ship's blue-prints. We had to know the exact distance from the bow to the point aft where we wanted to cut the hole in the hull.

Next, we had to figure what the actual depth was, for although the depth-gauge showed one hundred thirty-two feet, that was merely the depth amidships. With the boat at an angle of thirty degrees by the bow, the real depth was greater.

With the distance from the bow to the point on the stern where we were to drill

change, but such a heart-breakingly small change that we began to have our doubts as to whether we would make it or not. The electric pumps went out of commission shortly after we passed the sixty-degree mark. Then the electric lights went out, throwing the whole ship in absolute darkness. This meant that the batteries had gone dead, as we had greatly feared they would.

Although we had several flashlights—one big one in each compartment and several



the hull as the hypotenuse of a triangle, and with the computed depth as the second side of the triangle, we found that the ship had to be raised to an angle of at least seventy-seven degrees to get the stern above water.

Now we knew exactly what we had to do! Could we do it? In the first place, was it possible to get the ship at that great an angle, and in the second place, would there be time? All hands were working feverishly. Men not used at the pumps and valves were put to work carrying loose articles from the after part of the ship to the forward part. We even planned to dismantle the engines, everything that could be loosened from the deck and hull—anything that would get heavy objects farther torward.

As each agonizing hour went by, the angle-indicator showed an ever-increasing

smaller ones—the effect of the darkness on the morale was very soon felt.

It was easy enough to keep up courage as long as we had plenty of light, but when that went, hope seemed to go with it.

Moreover the salt water had apparently seeped through the deck in the battery-room and reached the batteries, probably causing them to go dead, but what was much worse, it was forming chlorine gas. This gas, which is so deadly that it was used during the war for gas attacks, was finding its way into the control-room through small leaks around supposedly watertight fittings in the battery-room bulkhead. Faint whiffs of this gas began to be noticed, both by its pungent smell and by the effect on the throat, which caused dry hacking coughs. While we might fight the carbon dioxide and live for a week, the chlorine gas was a much more serious matter. It cut down our

breathing limit from a possible week to two days at most.

The Captain was everywhere, encouraging the men. His leadership and resource-fulness were an inspiration to us all. In the face of the coming horrors which hour by hour were stealing in on us, he was somehow able to imbue us all with that "nevergive-up" spirit which accomplishes miracles.

SOME time after the lighting system failed, the Captain called the officers together to discuss possible ways of getting some message to the surface. He tried to keep us from seeing how discouraged he was, but we sensed it in spite of his efforts. The Exec advanced a theory that we might shoot out some calcium—obtained from the torpedo torch-pots, a few of which were in the magazine. This could be done through the submarine signaling device which was used in war-time for sending secret smoke signals to the surface to make friendly but overzealous vessels stop trying to sink you with- depth mines. This calcium, when ejected, would form gas which upon rising to the surface, and coming in contact with the air, would burst into flame. In this way, the oil which we had blown out might catch fire and thus attract the attention of any passing ship, particularly at night. It seemed rather a far-fetched theory, but we had reached the stage where we had nothing to lose by trying it.

Then escape through the conning-tower was considered. As a last resort we could try that! But as the Captain put it: "At this depth, I'm afraid that the pressure would get us, for with a pressure of two or three tons per square foot, our lungs would probably collapse, in which case we would sink instead of rise. If we did get to the surface alive, we would probably get the 'bends' or lose consciousness from the pressure, and drown. Life-preservers wouldn't prevent that, and we only have a few aboard anyway. That gives me an idea, We might roll up a kapoc mattress lengthwise, cut our message into that piece of oilcloth I saw lying around here, and sew it around the mattress. We could shoot that through the conning-tower escape hatch; the air bubbles would carry it to the surface, and as kapoc floats, it might be picked up by some ship, particularly if by that time they were looking for us. We will need a volunteer for this, for some one will have to manipulate the conningtower hatch, and that man, to have any

chance of withstanding the pressure, must be one of the strongest among us."

"When you're ready, Captain, I want to be that man," spoke up Bowers, "for I can probably stand the pressure better than anyone else, as I've had some deep-sea diving experience. What's more, I caused all this."

"All right, Bowers," said the Captain, visibly moved, "when the time comes, if I don't take on the job myself, your offer may be accepted. But I don't want to try that yet, for it would mean draining a lot of water into the boat, just making us that much heavier; and I don't want to do anything that will jeopardize our chances of getting our stern to the surface, for I have not given up hope of that by a damn' sight and wont so long as this chlorine gas allows us to keep moving weight forward."

THE calcium ejection was tried out, and was to be tried again that night. The results, of course, we unfortunately could not tell.

The hydrophone listener reported that he thought he detected a ship passing about five o'clock that evening. It was encouraging to know that ships did occasionally pass, but they couldn't help us yet for we had no way of letting them know where we were, unless they passed almost over us, in which case we might attract their attention by the oil slick, or blowing out big bubbles of air through the tanks. However, the Captain used the news to encourage the crew as much as possible.

All through the night we worked—with no thought of sleep. Most of the flash-lights had gone out. The men, in relays, worked at the hand pumps, pumping away in the darkness, hoping against hope that they would live to see the light of day.

The chlorine gas in the forward, now the lower part of the ship, had become almost too much to work in. Fortunately, we had a few gas-masks left over from our war allowance which were used by those whose duties kept them working forward. There were not enough to go around, however, as part of our allowance was kept in the flooded torpedo-room.

The futuristic effect of men in gas-masks, working their way up and down in a ship almost standing on its head, with the occasional flicker of a flashlight, was a sight to haunt one in one's dreams.

The uncertainty of our fate made the suspense almost unbearable, and the chlorine



terrible end.

At six the next morning—to think that meant glorious sunshine to those sailing tranguilly above us!—we had finally, by superhuman effort, got all after tanks dry, and nearly all movable weights forward. And our angle was only seventy-three de-

If we moved all hands forward and then could not get our angle, we were probably doomed, for it would take days to break down the heavy engine parts and move them, all in darkness; time would defeat us, as it has in other cases we all remembered but too well.

So we played our last card.

Forty-two men dragged themselves forward—that meant down into the chlorine gas—one man remaining aft in case of emergency, while the Captain watched the angle indicator with one of the two last remaining and fast-dimming flashlights.

We had done it! We had made her do what we wanted her to do, and with a little to spare, for she settled just a hair above seventy-eight degrees. At last we could commence cutting the hole in the hull.

This hole, to be above water, had to be way aft where the ship tapers to almost nothing, and as all such corners are utilized for special fixtures, storage, etc., the working space was very cramped. Then too, this now being the top part of the ship, the air was so foul that a man could only work ten or fifteen minutes before he would become exhausted and have to be relieved.

Twenty-five hours after our crash dive, the cold chisel—for we had to use hand tools—finally pierced the hull, and brought daylight!

Four hours more of body-racking work before we had a hole big enough to stick the head through.

No ships in sight!

LONG pole made by joining several sections of the pipe-frames of the crew's bunks together with a mattress cover painted with red lead tied on the end, was, after some trouble, finally forced through this hole. The slight roll of the ship from the ground-swell caused our distress signal to wave back and forth. We also tried to

## Crash Dive

give it additional motion by sliding it up and down as much as our cramped quarters would allow. From time to time the signal was pulled in to look for ships. Just before sundown the Captain took a final look. Again nothing in sight! It looked like another night in hell, perhaps several more,

if we could live that long.

He had just pulled his head in when he thought he heard a steamer's whistle. Were his senses deceiving him? The thought came to him that he must be losing his mind. Now even his eyes were deceiving him, for there certainly seemed to be a ship out there where none had been before—and not more than a few hundred yards away. Could it have approached at such an angle that the projection of the stern kept it out of sight until close aboard?

IT turned out to be a Coast Guard destroyer which had seen the flag, thought it looked suspicious—some rum-runner's trick—and had come over to investigate.

Well, we were soon out of our death-trap, thanks to some good seamanship on the destroyer's part in keeping our stern up with her anchor-chain, while they quickly enlarged the hole so that we could be pulled out, many of our crew being half-dead from gas, strain and exhaustion.

As the Captain, the last to leave the ship, climbed exhaustedly up the side of the destroyer, grimy, oily, unshaven, weary in mind and body, with throat and lungs raw from the chlorine gas, he was handed a radio from his Division Commander which had been intercepted by the destroyer, asking: "Why do you not make position reports?"

He turned to his officers, who were waiting to see that he got aboard safely, and handed them the message. "Here, one of you answer this for me. My brain wont work any longer; I am dead on my feet. Seems to me you had some sort of a bet on

these messages, anyway."

"That's right, we did," said Bud, as he glanced at the radio, and out of force of habit, was about to turn to Jack Lansing and start in on who had won the bet, but he too was so exhausted he could not remember just what the bet was about—and what's more, decided he did not care.

"All right, Captain, I'll attend to it for you. Shall I give the Division Commander

the whole story?" he asked.

"Hell, no! Get some sleep. Just reply 'Position Vertical!'"

# For the Old Bar Diamond

 $\mathcal{B}y$ 

# JAY LUCAS

A prize-fight story and a cowboy story all in one—by the author of "Vanishing Herds."

Illustrated by W. O. Kling

ROM almost within the corral gate, a skinny, long-legged calf whirled back.

Slim McKnight, range boss of the Bar Diamond, spun his wiry horse and darted away, shaking his rawhide rope loose as he went. The rope shot through the air from a seemingly careless flip of the wrist. Slim took his dallies, easing the calf to a stop.

"Well, here's the outlaw maverick, boys!" he grinned, as he jerked his rope from the neck of the terrified little calf after he had dragged it into the corral

where the other cattle stood.

"What's next?" asked old Dave Jenkins.
"Nothin' much, except to brand up this handful o' calves. Let's have it over, boys!"

Slim started quickly toward the fallen pine, to gather wood for the branding fire.

"Say," grunted Ben Larkin, as Slim returned with an armful of dead branches, "we can brand these jest as well without you. Why don't you go take a work-out?"

Slim grinned.

"Work-out! Say! I've more trainers than the heavyweight champ! You'd think I was gettin' ready for the world's championship, instead o' the light heavy title o' Coconino County, Arizona!"

"But," Ben Larkin said gravely, "the p'int is this: there's jest one feller of yore weight in the county jest now that knows enough about boxin' to lick a sick postage stamp, an' he's Red Shoemacher o' the Circle C outfit; an'—"



"And," concluded Bud Kelly, "if we get whipped by that gang o' good-fer-nothin', cattle-stealin'—"

Epithets growled forth until his voice became inarticulate with rage.

"Hello!" gasped Slim. "Here comes old Jim; an' say, aint he makin' the car go!"

DOWN the rough road came the heavy automobile, the dull roar telling of a mighty engine. As it came to a sudden stop outside the corral Slim hastened forward:

"What's the matter, Jim?"

Old Jim Coleman, shabby little owner of the Bar Diamond, released the wheel and turned his weather-beaten face to his range-boss.

"Matter!" he grumbled. "Newton Prince o' the Circle C was comin' out here with me, but I reckon I got ahead o' him

somewhere."

"Hoo-raw for you!" chuckled Slim. "I'd hate to see you break yore neck, Jim, but any time the Circle C can get ahead o' the Bar Diamond in any way—well, call around an' let me know!"

But somehow, little Jim Coleman did not seem duly elated at his winning of the race. He turned gravely to Slim:

"We was comin' out because he says he

has another cow of his in the corral with a calf branded Bar Diamond—found 'em yesterday—he wants to see about ventin' the brand, an' I told him we had to see you first."

"The devil!" exploded Slim. "I'll bet they're misbrandin' them calves themselves, jest so it wont look so bad when they're caught stealin' ours—which is sure often!"

Old Jim lowered his voice as the other car approached, although its open cutout would have more than drowned anything he could have said.

"He has his boxer, Red Shoemacher, with him."

"To whip me, I reckon!" grunted Slim furiously. "Well, let him come on!"

"Don't fight him!" whispered old Jim, as the car stopped. "Wait till the rodeo at Flagstaff, where there'll be a crowd to see him licked!" Then, aloud:

"Hello, Newton. Have a breakdown or

somethin'?"

"Blow-out," grunted the large, flashily

dressed man who approached.

A younger man, in cowboy clothes, was now coming from the car. He was rather short, but of very sturdy build, with abnormally wide shoulders, and a crown of red hair.

"Well," demanded Prince, "did you te'l

your ramrod that there was some more ventin' had to be done?"

"Yes," Slim interrupted his little employer, who had been about to speak, "he told me about it. How old was the calf? And the brand?"

"What difference does that make?" demanded the other sneeringly.

"I jest want to know," Slim said quietly.
"Well, the calf was about ten months, and the brand wasn't over two days old.

Now are you satisfied?"
Slim's lips drew a thin line.

"Yes, Prince—I'm satisfied. We've all been workin' horses lately, an' haven't branded up anything for jest ten days."

THERE came a moment of tense silence, ominous silence.

"What do you mean? What—" began Newton Prince.

"I mean—" Slim's eyes glittered as he stepped close to the other—"I mean, Prince, that it's jest as I was tellin' Jim here before you come—you've been misbrandin' yore own stock so that it wouldn't look so bad when you are caught misbrandin' ours—stealin' 'em, in plain English."

There came a motion of Prince's hand, and Red Shoemacher stepped between his paling employer and the angry Slim.

"What was you sayin', Slim?"

"I was sayin', Red, that the Circle C is a lot o' good-fer-nothin', cattle-stealin'—"

Slim stepped sidewise just in time. Shoemacher had put all the weight of his great shoulders behind a straight right to the chin. He had hoped to catch the other off his guard, but Slim was too clever a boxer for that. Slim tried a left uppercut to Red's jaw, but found it neatly blocked. Then they were at it, hammer and tongs.

Inexperienced fighters rush together with flailing arms at the start. But Slim and Red were circling each other cautiously, jabbing with their lefts. Despite the fact that Slim was much taller than the other, he had little or no advantage in reach, for Red had those peculiarly long, gangling arms often found on short and thick-set men.

"Get 'im, Red!"

It was a snarl from Prince, as Red rushed in quickly, trying to strike to the body. But Slim had danced away nimbly, out of reach.

"Stop an' fight!" grunted Red savagely. Slim did not trouble to answer, saving

his wind. It was, he thought, early in the fight, and there was no use in taking chances unnecessarily. Again they were feeling each other out, sparring gently. And again it was Red who rushed. This time, as Slim shuffled hastily backward, one of his high heels caught on a root, and he almost fell.

"Kill him, Red! That's it!"

Before Slim could recover his balance, a straight right caught him flush on the chin. He went down like a log.

"Red!" roared Prince gleefully.

But if Slim had gone down quickly, he was back on his feet just as speedily. He backed away a few steps, to get his bearings, and then rushed. It was now the other's turn to give ground.

"Yee-ee-ee, Slim!"

A mighty yell went up from the cowboys, led by the age-cracked voice of old Jim Coleman.

"Fight, you said!" grunted Slim.

He slipped another of those wicked straight rights, and countered with a left that made the other reel. Things were not going to suit Red Shoemacher in the least But whatever his faults, Red was game. He rushed savagely, and Slim stood his ground. They were swapping blow for blow.

"You got him, Slim!" came the yell of the cowboys.

"Careful, Red!" roared Prince.

But though the fight was scarcely two minutes old, it was too late to warn Red to be careful. He was outclassed a mile, as anyone could see—but he did not yield. Slim darted back and asked quickly:

"Red, do I have to give it to you?"
"I'll—I'll take all you have!" came the broken mumble, as Red rushed again.

"He's game!" thought Slim, as with a feeling of regret and respect he stepped in. A single uppercut to the chin, and Red was stretched helpless on the ground.

"Say! You fouled him!"

Newton Prince was rushing forward, his face red as a beet.

"Say, you hit him below—"
"That'll do, Newton!"

Slim faced the big man with a cold gleam in his eye that produced silence. Quietly he continued:

"Newton, that man o' yores can't fight, that's what. He can't hit hard enough to stop a featherweight, an' he can't take it. Outside o' that he might be a fighter. Get me?"

For a moment the other glared. Then he swung on his heel and strode to his car. "Say!" called old Jim after him. "How

about yore man here?"

Prince pretended not to hear, although he paused. Then he jerked something from his pocket, and scribbled hastily. Back he strode, to where Red was staggering to his feet, assisted by Slim.

"Here, you!" he snarled, thrusting a scrap of paper into Red's hand. "Here's your check for wages. You're fired! I'll send your saddle to town, an' don't you ever show your face round the Circle C

again."

"Say!" Slim stepped close. "That'll do! He wouldn't quit till he was knocked cold -he's game, an' did his best. Now git in yore car an' drift!"

There was a bitter silence as he drove away, a silence at last broken by Red:

"Well, I reckon I'll be driftin' on to town-it'll take me till night to walk there."

Slim seized his arm. "Heck, partner, don't rush off that way! We'll stake you to a horse an' saddle to go to town after dinner."

Red hesitated.

"Say," Slim lied, "we're shore short-handed right now. You don't want a job, do you? It will help us out."

A nod from Jim confirmed the offer.

"I'll take the job, an' thanks!" said "I'm broke but for this check-for six dollars and seventy-five cents! I'd a damned sight rather work for you an' Jim than for that-"

W/HEN several minutes later he ran out of breath, Slim and old Jim stood staring blankly at each other. At last the latter managed to gasp weakly:

"Slim, that must be one o' them there

things they call a vocabulary!"

"It's langwidge!"

Red grinned at them. "Mind if I go to the house an' wash up?"

After he had turned away, Jim said:

"He'll be a good sparrin'-partner for you, Slim, in case they match you with some one else for the rodeo. Pretty good, aint he?"

"Good boxer, sure—tricky an' fast! But he can't take it, though he sure is

game. Can't hit hard, neither.

"But," he continued a moment later, "I don't see who else they could match me with-no other boxer in the county but

Cotton-top Larson, an' he's a welter-

weight."

"Too bad!" moaned old Jim. "Too bad you couldn't lick Red that way at the rodeo in Flagstaff! Lick some one from the Circle C, I mean."

"I'd like to," murmured Slim McKnight dejectedly, "but I reckon I don't get to."

For three days he dropped his training completely, although his arduous life in the saddle was almost enough training in itself. On the morning of the fourth day, shortly after daybreak, he and his men were roping their horses to begin the day's work, when the roar of a powerful automobile came to them.

"Whe-ew!" grunted Bud. "The old man's steppin' on it! Must be somethin'

wrong!"

The heavy car tore around the bend in the road coming off the ridge. Then it slowed down, and the horn sounded sharply. Slim waved his hat in reply.

"Was afraid you'd have gone out to work," explained Jim a few moments later as he dropped to a log beside the car, rolling a brown cigarette with weather-beaten There was something curiously hands. tense about his manner.

"What's the matter?" asked Slim.

"This. Will you sign it?"

He produced a long envelope and drew from it a legal-looking paper which he handed to Slim. The latter looked it over hastily, and then read it through carefully. He laughed, and reached his hand to his employer:

"Gimme yore fountain pen."

His name signed, he handed the paper back to the old man.

"Fight eight rounds with Tom Purdy, or any other employee of the Circle C ranch!" he laughed. "Why the deuce would Newton Prince want me to sign to do that? I could whip any two men on the outfit at once-without signin' anything!"

"Are you plumb shore, Slim? No guess-

in'?"

Slim chuckled again, and shook his head. It was not worth while to answer. Old Jim looked relieved.

"Slim," he said quietly, "I've bet a pile on you-more than the outfit can stand to lose."

"Go back an' bet some more, Jim! I've about seven hundred in bank; I'll give you a check, an' let you bet it for me, if you can."

"I'll do it! Don't see how you could

lose—Red whipped every one on the Bar Diamond, an' you jest played with him. I'll bet all Prince will take!"

He stood up, but before he climbed into

his car he spoke again:

"No more ridin, of course, till after the fight. Train as hard as you can-it wont hurt any. I'll send Cotton-top out this evenin' to spar with you, an' Red may help out too."

"Help!" grunted Red, who had just come

up. "Yo're dang tootin' I'll help."

After the car had departed, and the men ridden away under the temporary leadership of old Dave Jenkins, Slim turned to Red: "You boxed quite a bit, didn't you?"

Red hesitated, the color mounting to his

face. At last he blurted forth:

"I-I'll tell you the truth. We hate to admit we failed, don't we?"

Slim was silent and Red continued:

"You've heard o' Mike O'Toole? He manages Battling Blake an' Young Sullivan, an' a lot o' other good boys. He saw me at a little rodeo over in New Mexico. where I went two rounds with another cowboy—it was to have gone ten, but I stopped him in the second.

"He took me to New York-said he'd make a champ o' me. I trained hard all one winter, with Blake an' Sullivan for sparrin'-partners. What happened? could box rings around them. They could hit me with all they had-kick me if they wanted to-in the body, an' it wouldn't faze me."

"But-" Slim tapped his jaw sympa-

thetically.

"That's it! Jest a stiff jab—that's all it took, on the chin, an' I dropped as if I was shot with a cannon. So-I didn't want to be a fourth-rater. Here I am back on the range again," he finished with a sigh.

"Too bad!" sympathized Slim. to change the subject he said tactfully: "I was readin' that they was goin' to have another championship bout in New

York this year. Jack Shafter wants the

belt-no chance, has he?"

Say!" Red "Jack Shafter! Chance! was leaning forward earnestly. "Put yore money on him. Since Tunney resigned the belt there's been lots of talk and a few good elimination bouts. There are a few more scheduled-and when they're over, you'll find Shafter has the belt.'

"But—I shore didn't think Shafter—" "No! No one does, but he's dangerous. I've seen him fight. Another thing, Jack Shafter's a spender—always needin' money. He could lick a bear for a million or sothat's what the title is worth, at least."

"Well," grinned Slim, "what has that to do with the light heavy title o' Coconino County? Let's put the gloves on, Red an' get busy!"

T was just fifteen days until the Fourth of July, when the Flagstaff rodeo was to be formally opened with the boxing match. Then would come the riding, the roping, the bulldogging, and other things. Since the World War, when many cowboys had been members of the A. E. F., a few rounds of fighting had been a recognized part of even the smallest cattle-country celebration, but it had never been regarded very seriously.

This time it was different, since the enmity between the Bar Diamond and the Circle C gave the thing more importance. For one thing, it was sure to be a real fight, and not a mild sparring match. For another, everyone in the county took sides with one or the other of the big outfits. A few were for Newton Prince, but only a very few, for the flashy ex-gambler was not liked. But little Jim Coleman—shabby little Jim with the wrinkled face and the soft voice! Few in the county, even among Prince's friends, could find it in their hearts to say they felt enmity toward the little cowman, the little man who had first entered the county, as he often told, with six cents and a half-sack of tobacco in

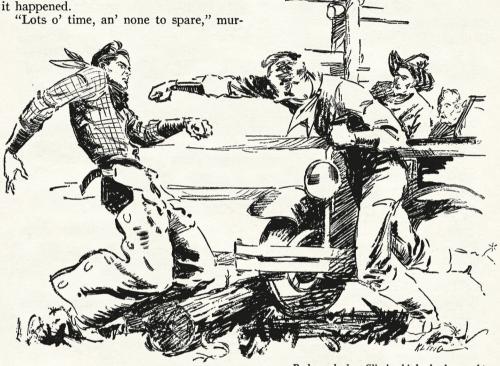
his torn chaps pockets.

All too soon for Slim the fifteen days went, for the thing was but a game to him. No riding, two clever sparring-partners, a glorious run over the pine-clad mountains at daybreak every morning. Who could ask better? And of course, the wonderful sense of well-being that comes from perfect There were vague physical condition. floating rumors that his opponent would not be one of the regular Circle C men after all, but some new cowboy who had just been hired—Blackie, he was called. A terrible man-eater, Blackie, according to reports! But Slim had passed him once on the street in town, and any fears that might have been creeping into his mind were set at rest. A very ordinary-looking fellow, Blackie looked to Slim, and not at A heavyweight of all to be dreaded. nearly two hundred pounds, with a rather mild face. Well, Slim would back his own hundred sixty-eight against him any time!

IN the stillness that followed, one could

The morning of the Fourth was far gone when the big car purred quietly into Flagstaff. With old Jim in the front seat were Red and Slim, and six cowboys had managed somehow to pack themselves uncomfortably into the rear, where they dropped hot cigarette-coals on one another, and used language hotter than the coals when it happened.

hear the low thud of old Jim's hands dropping from the wheel into his lap. The old man sagged, and the face he turned to his men was greenish-gray. But, old warrior that he was, his trembling hands



Red rushed. Slim's high heel caught on a root; before he could recover his balance, a straight right caught him flush on the chin.

mured Jim Coleman, swinging around a street-corner.

Suddenly he threw on the brake.

"There he is-Blackie, over there. Goin' out to the grounds already. See him?"

Slim chuckled:

"Shore don't look like the man-eater they say he is! Everyone knows the Circle C jest started them stories to scare me."

He was turning to Red:

"What you think o' him, Red? Don't look like- Say! What's the matter?"

The grin left his face, as he saw his trainer slumped forward in his seat, mouth hanging loosely open, eyes almost bulging from his head.

"Sick, Red?" he gasped.

Then Red turned to him a face that looked sick indeed—very sick. At last he managed to speak, in a voice scarcely audible:

"It's Jack Shafter!"

again seized the wheel, his thin shoulders jerked erect. He started to back the car.

"Where are you going?" asked Slim.

"Back to the ranch—for the last time. It'll have to go-to pay the bets. fool that I was!"

A steel-like hand fell on the wheel and jerked it around. Slim heard a voice that he hardly recognized for his own saying:

"Stop it! Drive to the grounds! I'm fightin' today!"

For an instant the old man hesitated. Then he snapped the gear-shift out of reverse, and shot the car forward. His voice was a trifle steadier as he spoke again:

"Slim, I'm a quitter-an' you doin' the

fightin', too!"

"The old Bar Diamond-we can't let it go!"

And suddenly Slim gritted four words: "I have to win!"

"By the Lord, I think he can do it!" It was a sudden explosion of Red's pent-up breath, as the car turned into the fairgrounds.

They had passed Jack Shafter somewhere, for now he was walking by them. He turned, and nodded in a friendly manner before continuing toward the dressing-

rooms beside the open-air ring.

"Clothes a bit seedy!" grunted Red. "Broke, as usual! Bet Newton didn't offer him over a thousand for this fight, if that much—an' cowboy's wages while he's here, so's we can't say he aint workin' for the outfit! O' course he doesn't figger on more than a light work-out, but-'

"'But' is right, Red!" remarked Slim grimly, as he too turned toward the dress-

ing-rooms.

A great crowd had gathered. Somehow, at the last moment, the news that Jack Shafter was fighting had leaked out-leaked even to the great hotels on the rim of the Grand Cañon, which had been quite emptied of tourists in the exodus toward Flagstaff that immediately ensued. Easterners were crowding around the ring, feeling a little dazed by the fact that they could see Jack Shafter fight, and no one to ask them for money or tickets.

A very thin, dismal-looking man in a particularly fuzzy hat turned out to be Bob Halgren, dean of New York sporting writers. He had been planning a trip to the Grand Cañon for a long time, and, getting wind of Shafter's coming fight, had decided to mix business with pleasure. Of course he didn't think an unknown cowboy could make any showing against the hardened Jack, but there was some chance. Perhaps it was because he took those long chances that he was acknowledged the king of his order. If Slim did win, Bob would have a "beat" that would go down in sporting history.

AT last the principals were in the ring, bathrobes off, their gleaming torsos above the fighting trunks drawing glances of admiration from the crowd. A murmur went up at Shafter's great shoulders; his bulging muscles seemed trying to burst through the glowing skin. Just one exclamation of approval was there for Slim:

"Say," some one grunted, "he looks as if he could give a Navajo runner cards an' spades an' beat him a mile!"

"But," the voice trailed off, "he's too thin to fight anything!"

The principals were going toward the center of the ring to have their hand bandages examined, when Red shot forward.

"Say," he demanded angrily, "who's referee?"

"I am."

Red stood a moment, glaring savagely at the fat man who, coatless and hatless, was examining the bandages.

You are!" roared Red. "You are! "Well, I like that! Tonny Merz, Jack's

manager, for referee!"

Tonny was no fool; he asked quietly:

"Well, can you get some one else that's onto the job? I wont stand for some hick that'll yell foul first time Jack hits that poor sucker."

Red's eye wandered hopelessly around,

but suddenly it lit up.

"There's Bob Halgren!"

"Suits me fine!" Tonny reached for his hat and coat.

Bob protested little, for he knew that there was no one else present suited for the job. With a sigh he removed his coat.

Jack Shafter and his manager were quietly chatting in their corner. In his corner, Slim was listening to the last advice of Red:

"An', Slim, remember this: these fighters you read about aint what lots o' people They don't knock people's heads off'm their shoulders with a jab. They're jest human, an' a stiff wallop to the chin will stop the best o' them. Get me?"

Slim nodded, but Red noted that his face was very white and drawn, that the gloved hands on the ropes trembled.

"Why, hell, Slim!" Red nodded toward the somewhat baby-faced fighter across the

ring. "Jest look at-"

Clang!

Slim started forward, but before he could leave his corner the other was upon Gone was the innocent baby look of the round face. A savagely grinning mouth was leaping into view, and the great shoulder-muscles seemed to be writhing and twisting beneath the skin like a rattlesnake in its death throes. There was no preliminary sparring for Jack Shafter; he tried for a knock-out from the first tap of the bell until the last. It was because of this, and because of his colorful personality, that he was so popular with the public.

"Poor Slim!" groaned old Jim.

Slim had, in some seemingly miraculous manner, managed to escape from his own corner, and was backing hurriedly around the ring, Jack the mauler after him like some untamed animal of the jungle. To the confused cowboy, it seemed that his opponent had a dozen padded fists, flying in at all angles. Slim blocked, ducked, used methods never heard of before, and always ran backward at an amazing pace. There was little noise from the crowd. The local people felt sorry for Slim, and the outsiders disgusted with the inequality of the fight, if fight it could be called. Only the Circle C contingent was vociferous.

"Kill him, Blackie!" they yelled, for by this name had they come to know Jack Shafter during his stay at the ranch.

"Yellow Bar Diamond!" they derided.

Jack Shafter stopped suddenly in the center of the ring.

"Well, for Gawd's sake!" he grunted. "Is this one of them Navajo runners I heard of?"

Slim was in a corner, and showed no signs of coming forth. Jack paused against the ropes a moment, and again started in pursuit. There came a heavy voice from the ringside:

"No hurry, Jack—you can get him any time!"

Jack paused a moment to glance out to where big Newton Prince sat, leaning back comfortably in his seat, easily puffing a long black cigar. There was a smile on the ex-gambler's face. Well he might smile—this would be his biggest winning!

"Augh!"

It was a grunt of disgust from Shafter. Evidently he did not relish fighting such a rank amateur as Slim. Then there came a look of resolution to his round face, a look that said that he'd have the unpleasant work over as soon as possible. Baring his teeth, he sprang, and in a moment Slim was in a neutral corner, blows shooting in like bullets at all angles. Covered up as he was, it was hard to strike him with force, but a trickle of blood came from his nose, and his mouth was cut slightlythe lip swelling. He made one last great effort to escape from the corner, but found he could not. And then the miracle happened; no one could ever tell exactly how, when it was discussed afterward.

Crack! Thud!

The ferocious Shafter was lying inert on the canvas, and Slim was standing over him, looking more dazed even than the prone fighter, his head swaying from side to side.

"One-two-three-"

Bob Halgren's long arm swayed like a pendulum while he tolled off the count. He too looked dazed. Indeed everyone did, for nothing had been more unexpected.

"Four—five—six—"

Something between a roar and a sigh was rising from the crowd. From among the Bar Diamond men came a single shrill, screaming yell.

"Seven-eight-"

Jack Shafter was on his feet, his gloves raised, but he was advancing very slowly. Clang!

The round was over.

SLIM somehow found himself on a stool in his corner, and felt a cool wet towel passing over his bruised face. He turned his head to Red and started to speak.

"Shet up!" grunted Red. "Talkin' interferes with breathin', an' you want to breathe all you can while yo're restin'. Course, if you have to say something—"

He gave his principal a deadly look that threatened murder if he had to speak. Then he saw the agony in Slim's eyes.

"Hell, partner!" he grunted, "I understand—you don't have to tell me. Stage fright—that was what ailed you. Everyone knows that," he lied. "They knowed you wasn't scared o' Jack!"

He quickly rubbed some powder in the

cut over Slim's eye.

"Well, the crowd's with you—they're all home folks. All but the Circle C gang, I mean—an' you don't care for them. You're over that scare?"

Slim nodded slowly.

"An' as to Jack: well, you dang nigh knocked him out in one round! Yo're not scared o' him!"

The eyes that turned to Red had lost the glazed look of a moment before. Now, to Red's amazement, a trace of a twinkle crept into them.

"You-"

Red scrambled from the ring as the tensecond whistle blew. He leaned back:

"You son-of-a-gun!" he hastened delightedly. "I wont lie to you, seein's yo're over the scare: Shafter wasn't fightin' that first round—he didn't think he had to. Look out for him now! But if you keep yore head, an' wade into him—"

Clang!

THIS time both bounded simultaneously. They met in the center of the ring, among the wild roars and shrill yells of the crowd. Jack Shafter had a sheepish grin on his face, as though apologizing to the audience for his carelessness in the first round. Still, he was more careful—a fighter, no matter how brave, always respects one who has sent him to the canvas for an eight-count.

"Be careful, Slimmy!" came the agonized voice of old Dave Jenkins as he flapped a bony hand against his leg.

"Careful, hell! Knock him cold, Slim!"

yelled young Bud Kelly.

Red, in his excitement, thrust the wrong end of his lighted cigarette in his mouth. In the middle of his agonized effort to spit out the coals, he stopped to squeak:

"Yip-yee! Slim!"

For Slim had tipped Shafter's head well back with a neat left to the chin. He shot in another straight left, but it passed harmlessly by Jack's head, while Shafter countered with a terrible right cross to the chin—perhaps the surest knock-out of all blows. But Slim blocked with the easy certainty of another Corbett.

"The son-of-a-gun!" gasped Red.

RED felt old Jim's hand on his arm—felt it tremble. He shot one glance at the face of the little cowman, which was white with anxiety. He heard the unsteady voice of the little man:

"Looks-looks like he's doin' better this

round?"

Jim Coleman knew nothing of boxing. He listened eagerly for Red's grunted answer:

"Doin' better! Well, I reckon! Whyzow-ee! Slim!"

Red's roar was drowned in the mighty voice of the audience:

"Cowboy! Cowboy!"

For a lightning one-two from Slim had sent Shafter reeling back, with his thin opponent after him like a streak. The roar grew, deafening, maddening:

"Cowboy!"

"Yip-ee-ee-ee! Ip-ip-ip! E-e-e-e-e!"

The roar died with a sudden "Uh!" as a swift counter-attack from Jack sent Slim back against the ropes, seemingly dazed from a right to the solar plexus that had been delivered so quickly that few of the audience saw it. A mad tiger could not have sprung more savagely than Jack did now. For the moment Slim seemed to be

almost helpless. A hooking left to the liver made him lower his gloves. Jack's feet were set, his right poised for a drive to the exposed chin, when—

Clang!

Red dropped his stool in its place as he darted through the ropes. He whirled to help his principal to his corner, but saw Slim walking coolly across the ring, a somewhat foolish look on his face.

"Wow! he panted, as he sank on the

stool. "That feller's a socker!"

"Yes, sweetheart!" chortled the delighted Red, "an' yo're the original sockabsorber! That crack in the bread-basket would have killed a mule!"

Red had frequently acted as second for Blake and Sullivan, and so had come to realize what many seconds never learn—that a fighter's minute in his corner is meant primarily for rest, and that manipulations should never be so strenuous as to interfere with this breathing-spell. He gently massaged the reddened spot in the V at the bottom of the other's lungs, as he quietly murmured:

"Can't you relax more, Slim?"

He felt the muscles suddenly sag under him.

"Wow!" he murmured. "That's great! Now you'll rest—an' furthermore, it means that yo're all over the scare o' that first round; otherwise you couldn't do it."

"Am-am I fightin' right?"

Red was dragging his stool and bucket

through the ropes.

"I can't do yo're head-work for you, Slim! Most managers never learn that. Jest one thing: yo're crowdin' too much—you can't wear Shafter out; he's as tough as a horseshoe. He'll let you wear yore-self out, an' then drop you. I'd say to slow up an'—"

Clang!

THE third round began with the two men in the center of the ring, jabbing with their lefts as though to feel each other out. Shafter seemed to have realized at last that he had struck a dangerous opponent, and with the practice of years, he was searching for weak spots in the other's armor. Slim, on the other hand, had taken Red's advice more seriously than had been intended. He was scarcely fighting at all, so anxious was he to avoid being too aggressive. Shafter left openings, but Slim ignored them, and was all too careful to protect himself. The close of a very tame



round found Red grunting regretfully in his principal's ear:

"Good Lord, Slim! I didn't mean to quit fightin' altogether! Jack takes that

round easy!"

Again in the fourth round Slim was not too aggressive. The audience did not like this, and neither did Red, but there was a crafty gleam in Jack Shafter's eye that his opponent saw, although no one else did. Slim was cautious, knowing of-perhaps overestimating—the tricks that a hundred fights had taught the other. It was another tame round, relieved toward the end by a rush on Shafter's part from which Slim backed away cautiously.

"Fight half over!" grunted Red. "An' yo're givin' every round to that feller!

What's the matter?"

Slim shook his head, unable to put his fears in words. He was breathing easily now, as was the man in the other corner.

"Slim," said Red slowly, "I don't want to make you reckless, but you've got to be pilin' up some p'ints if you want to win this fight, an' the only way you can do it is to crowd him hard. He's got the experience, an' can look like he has a pushover when he's gettin' all he can stand up under, an' make you look like a dub when yo're winnin'."

Red paused. Receiving no answer, he

shot out:

Slim turned his face to him slowly, and answered softly:

"Nothin', outside o' winnin' this fight,

Red."

Red glanced at him keenly:

"Well, hop to it-but you'll have to fight!"

BUT the fifth round promised to be even more tame than the preceding two, as the fighters cautiously approached in the center of the ring. They kept a far too respectful distance from each other to suit the audience. Old Jim's eyes seemed fixed, immovable, as he stared at them. Without looking around he asked Red:

"Who's gettin' the p'ints now, Red?" "P'ints! They're playin' tag-with

Jack winnin' the game."

"Wont Slim win?"

"Not unless he-Wow! Oh-h-h!"

"Cowboy! Cowboy!" came the sudden roar of the crowd.

"Whoop-ee! Ee-ee-ee-ip!"

Jack Shafter had made a sudden furious attack. For an instant Slim recoiled. Then an instant of toe-to-toe fighting, and Shafter had reeled back, his thin opponent seeming to climb on top of him in the fury of his rush. Around the ring backed Shafter, and around the ring after him went Slim, darting, ducking, leaping, but ever shooting in piston blows to the body.

"Cowboy! Cowboy!" roared the mob.

"Drop him!" tellowed the cracked voice of old Jim.

"Kill him!" screamed young Bud. "Cowbov!"

Shafter made a game stand. Again he retreated. Now Slim's head tipped back from a furious right. One step he backed, and again forward. A moment of toe-to-toe slugging. A clinch from which Bob Halgren tried to extricate them.

Clang!

"Boy," grunted Red, "that was action! Enough for six rounds!"

PERSPIRATION streamed down Slim's body in rivers. His fighting trunks, originally purple, seemed jet black, so drenched were they. He started to raise his arm to dash the water from his eyes, but Red drew the cooling towel across his face.

"Don't stir a finger, Slim—jest relax! Boy," he grunted again, "but you was

fightin'!"

He glanced across the ring, to where the distracted Tonny Merz was mopping and cursing his fighter at the same time, as visions of future millions seemed to recede from the perpetually hard-up manager. A championship fight lost for a measly twelve hundred dollars!—that was what Newton Prince had paid Shafter, besides railroad fare from Los Angeles, where he had had his training-camp.

"Keep after him, Slim! He's twice as bad off as you are. Those body-punches—they take it out of a man. Don't let him

rest!"

Newton Prince, his usually florid face now pale, sprang from his seat and rushed to Jack's corner.

"Stay back there! No talkin' to the

fighters allowed!"

Bob Halgren had sprung at him indig-

nantly and thrust him back.

"Say! Listen here!" Prince snarled, thrusting his chin in Bob's face aggressively. But Bob only snarled back at the much larger man:

"Get back, I say! If you don't, I see a deputy sheriff over there that'll have

something to say to you!"

The deputy was Pete Harkness, an old Bar Diamond hand. The big man beside him had no badge in sight, so Halgren did not know that it was the sheriff of Coconino County himself. Together the two men stood up, and started forward. There was a strange eagerness in their manner that Newton did not miss—he knew that they had no love for him. Growling threatening

things under his breath, he flung back to his seat.

In the excitement Red had not heard the ten-second whistle. He caught a quick signal from the referee, and dragged his stool and bucket from the ring just as the bell rang for the sixth round.

Slim had slid across the ring, and met Shafter before he had gone a yard from his corner. Like a tiger he whipped lefts and rights at the heavier man, but Jack covered up with the dexterity of years of fighting as he backed away.

"Cowboy! Cowboy!" came the yells.

A blow or two caught Slim, but there was little power behind them. He did not trouble about his guard now, for he figured that in swapping blow for blow he would get the best of the bargain.

"Yee-ee-ee-ee-ee!" came a furious concerted vell from the Bar Diamond men.

Shafter collided with the ropes. They threw him forward toward the darting cowboy. Then, no one knew just how, Shafter was down, down on his hands and knees, head dropping forward.

"One-two-"

Shafter tried to rise, but fell again.

"Three-four-"

MERZ was frantically waving to Jack to stay down for the nine-count, but Shafter seemed too far gone to understand. "Five—"

Shafter was up, and staggering forward. The instinct of years made him cover up.

"Sock him again!"

"Cowboy! Cowboy!"

"Kill him!"

Shafter fell into a clinch. The referee pried him away, but again he clinched. He was staggering, and his eyes seemed glassy. Slim paused a moment before delivering the knock-out blow.

Crack!

Thud!

The howls of the spectators died off in a queer, breathy "Ah-h-h-h" as Jack Shafter leaped over the prostrate Slim and danced across the ring on his toes. Everyone—even to Tonny Merz—had been fooled by Jack's trick of pretending to be groggy. It was no wonder that Slim, fighting a professional for the first time, had left himself wide open for his opponent to choose the time and place for a terrible blow.

"Blackie! Blackie!"

The yell of the Circle C rose to break

the moment of stillness. Then came the shouts of the outsiders, who were loath to see Shafter the terrible beaten by an unknown cowboy.

"One-two-

Old Jim Coleman sagged back in his seat, eyes suddenly dull and head drooping. hoarse cry came from Newton Prince, a cry of encouragement to Jack.

"Three—four—five—

"He's done for!" gasped Red. "No one could come up after that one!"

"Six-seven-"

Slim tried to rise, but fell again, and this time everyone could see that there was no shamming.

"Eight—nine—"

Slim was on his feet. He could hardly raise his hands, the gloves seemed so heavy. "Shafter!" came the yell of the outsiders.

"Blackie!" shrieked the Circle C men.

A single terrible leap—like a lion springing on his prey-Shafter was across the ring. Now his terrible grinning fighting face was seen at its worst.

Crack!

The ropes creaked as Slim crashed into Then the spring of them on his back. them threw him far forward, into the center of the ring on his face. Shafter was rising on his toes and sinking again, as he poised to deliver another blow if his opponent rose. Slowly the count went on:

"Six—seven—eight—nine—"

Slim was up, only to go down once more. The blood streamed down his face. This time he partly raised himself at the count of five, and took the nine-count on one knee. He managed to clinch as he The referee pried the men apart, and again Slim went to the floor. Could he rise again?

"Shafter! Shafter!" came the yell.

SLIM could see a face over the edge of the ring. A ghastly little face, wrinkled and marked with the carving of kindliness, but now ghastly. Poor little Jim Coleman! Slim seemed to see other things. Before his dazed eyes swam the shaggy side of a calf, and on it a black, new-burned brand. What was that brand? Oh, yes-it was the old Bar Diamond! The old Bar Diamond! He had to fight for the outfit!

At the nine-count he sprang, striking out with the fury of madness. A left caught him in the chin. A right! Another right! A one-two! He was sinking down!

THE buzzing in Slim's head suddenly grew louder. A wet towel dashed across his face. He could not hear the referee's count, but he knew that he had to spring to his feet.

He could not move.

Then something seemed to snap in his head, and he saw the crowd breaking up, heard the howls and yells of that crowd. The referee was dashing away, coat and hat forgotten, notebook in hand, in search of the telegraph office. And then Slim realized that the kindly hands of Red were swabbing his bruised and bleeding face. Old Jim Coleman was helping, too, and the boys from the Bar Diamond. In the bitterness of his heart, he could not speak at first, but at last the words came:

"How-how long was I out?"

Red started, and stooped down to look into his eyes. Then he jerked erect, and at a motion from him the cowboys crowded to one side. Slim looked across the ring with dazed eyes.

"What—what—" he gasped.

N the other corner, on the canvas, lay Jack Shafter, still as a corpse.

"Uh-uh- Double knock-out!" gasped

"Yeah!" grinned Red. "You were out, but not down!"

"Why-how-"

"He used up all he had in him tryin' to put you out-an' then you crawled him! Sent him to the canvas twice for a ninecount, an' then for a-a half-hour count, I reckon. Stood against the ropes till the referee come an' lifted yore glove, an' then walked to yore corner here an' sat down."

"I-I don't remember! I-"

"Heck—that happens often: A man keeps on fightin' after he's not able to tell what's happenin'."

Young Bud Kelly was staring openmouthed. At last he managed to gasp:

"But Slim—don't you remember that Halgren feller askin' you if he'd wire the New York papers that you were challengin' the champ? You jest grinned an' said 'Shore—he's next on the list!'"

Slim shook his head as he walked toward the dressing-room, guided by the proud hand of little Jim Coleman. He was still too dazed to realize what a match with the champion meant—both fame and fortune. But one thing he knew-he had fought for his outfit, the old Bar Diamond; and he had won.



# The Lair of the Leopard

# JAMES EDWIN BAUM

The gifted author of "Spears in the Sun" is at his best in this absorbing story of adventure in a forbidden land.

> Illustrated by Paul Lehman

The Story Thus Far:

"TT is a land from which no man has ever returned," explained Martindale's in-terpreter Birhano. And the Abyssinian went on to say that the Danakils, who dwelt in the northern part of his country, were a people of unexampled ferocity, and killed all intruding strangers; once when Menelik was king, an expedition sent against them had been massacred to a man.

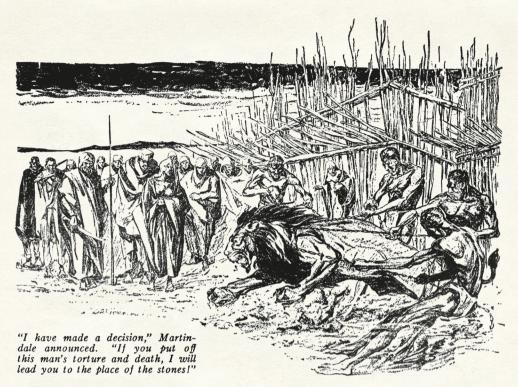
But to Martindale, collecting specimens of Abyssinian birds and beasts for his museum back in America, the proximity of

this unexplored land with its strange fauna was a challenge not to be denied, even though when he called upon the regent Ras Tessayah to ask permission for his collecting expedition, he was given further warning to stay away from the Danakils.

It was during this visit that an episode of much future importance occurred. For Martindale was introduced to one Trajanian, a sleek Levantine acting as adviser to the regent. And afterward Martindale rescued Trajanian from a pack of the pariah dogs which infest the Abyssinian capital, and which had already bitten him painfully. . . . .

Further events heightened the lure of Danakiland for Martindale. As his collecting expedition progressed in that direction, he heard repeated stories of the jingassa, a strange predatory beast un-known to science that ran in packs through the jungles there. What a feather in his professional cap if he could bring back a specimen! And at a village on the borders of the Danakil country he found wild excitement: the Danakil had raided it and car-

Copyright, 1929, by The Consolidated Magazines Corporation (The Blue Book Magazine). All rights reserved.



ried off a number of women—and had left behind one prisoner, a hardy upstanding fellow who won Martindale's regard by his courage in the face of imminent execution. Martindale saved the Danakil—the Leopard, his native name was translated—by buying him from the village chief; and with him as guide, the American boldly journeyed into this forbidden land of Africa.

It was shortly afterward that Martindale made a discovery of tremendous significance—he found in a shallow well a stratum of diamond-bearing clay. And, when he resumed his journey, a handful of the precious stones were hidden in his bag-

gage.

Despite the influence of the Leopard, who proved to be the son of one of the chief mullahs or priests, Martindale was ill-received by Ibn Ali, the Danakil sheik. When a search of the scientist's baggage disclosed to the savage chieftain the treasure of diamonds, the explorer was ordered at once to tell where he had found them. Realizing that his secret was the only guarantee of his safety, Martindale refused to disclose his knowledge until he had been escorted safely out to the borders of the Whereupon the explorer was country. seized, stripped and spread-eagled on the ground in preparation for torture which should force the secret from him. (The story continues in detail:)

BY turning his head, Martindale could see that Birhano was not to be put through the torture also. For that he was thankful. Ibn Ali knew that the boy was not in the secret—and Martindale felt a glow of relief at his own secretive conduct after finding the stones. Their Danakil guide and his father were not in evidence and this fact gave the white man a spark of hope. Perhaps they would find a way—

Ibn Ali called to a group of warriors ap-They hurried forward, and Martindale saw, behind them, two gigantic Somali slaves half-dragging, half-leading, by rawhide ropes fastened to a crude but heavy collar—a full-grown and snarling leopard. The animal alternately held back and lunged ahead, attempting to leap, now to this side and now to that, his long spotted tail lashing his sides in quick whiplike motions, his rippling muscles responding with the suddenness of steel springs. When the animal was dragged nearer, Martindale could understand the reason for its hesitating, crouching uncertainty; a tough sack of heavy rawhide had been thrown over its head and tied securely around the middle of the mottled body. The leopard could not see, and the heavy hide sack effectually prevented him from using his long fangs.

Then Martindale knew that Ibn Ali was far more subtle and skilled in the art of torture—if such a gruesome business can be

called an art—than he had suspected: no crude and brutal flogging would satisfy the refined taste in atrocity of an Oriental potentate of the caliber of the Sheik.

The powerful sun beat upon Martindale's bare back relentlessly, and he could feel its effects already; the tender skin, although exposed for but a few minutes, would soon burn and blister. But Ibn Ali was eager for the entertainment to begin. He issued orders in a voice that the white man recognized was much higher in key than his ordinary speaking voice. The anticipation of his favorite sport had roused the Sheik to a feverish state of stimulation that bordered upon the hysterical.

L YING there silent and helpless in a cold and deadly rage, Martindale began to suspect that the torture of captives had become a mania with this desert lord. His former dignity had been discarded as one would divest himself of a heavy coat. He issued orders in an excited, almost childish voice, running to one side and then the other, directing here, instructing there, and now and then breaking out in a torrent of words that Martindale, although he had no Arabic, knew were words of frantic vituperation against warriors he considered unskillful or slow in the detail of arrangement.

Finally Ibn Ali, panting from his exertions, came and got down on hands and knees beside Martindale's face. He bent his head almost to the ground, the better to look into his victim's eyes. In that unkingly attitude he remained a moment, then barked something over his shoulder in Arabic. Birhano, with hands tied behind his back, was pushed forward. The Sheik, his face close to Martindale's, shot out a string of words. Birhano translated:

"Oh, Gavtah!" The tears ran down the faithful boy's cheeks, and his voice shook with deep pity. "Oh, Gaytah! He is say if you do not tell w'ere the stone' are come from, he will pull the leopard. Gay You mus' tell!" And his voice broke. Gavtah!

Martindale answered before Birhano could begin again.

"Tell him,"-and the white man's eyes blazed with an intensity that gave the impression of that rare phenomenon cold heat, -"tell him that he shall never know, in spite of all he can do, until he puts us across the border! And say too—that if he goes through with this,"-the words were pronounced slowly and distinctly,-"he-shall

-surely-die."

Martindale did not expect his words to make any impression. In fact, he anticipated nothing more than a slight accentuation of that mirthless smile, but he was surprised to note, out of the corner of his eye, that Ibn Ali heard them with a gesture of actual relief; and then Martindale knew for sure that torture had become a mania with his captor. He shut his eyes, and the Sheik leaped to his feet, shouting orders.

The whole village had now ranged itself around the scene. Men leaned upon rifles, whispering expectantly. Women, and even small children, pressed eagerly forward to view the spectacle. The arrangements were obviously not new to them, for the leashed leopard created no curiosity; they knew only too well his important function in the coming entertainment. And Martindale surmised that the rawhide sack over the brute's head was to prevent his finishing things and thus destroying, with its possessor, the secret.

The two gigantic Somali slaves, one on each side holding the stout twisted leadropes that prevented the wild beast from leaping upon either man, dragged their charge to the prostrate victim. Carefully they jockeyed him, and after a few failures -at which Ibn Ali literally danced in an ecstasy of disappointment-succeeded in inducing the leopard to stand upon the prone victim's bare shoulders. Then two warriors hastily seized the hind legs and with all their strength pulled straight backward.

The leopard, feeling the live, quickening muscles of the sensitive back beneath. crouched and gripped with curving claws, desperately hanging on with the last atom of its strength, while the warriors behind, pulling with united force, slowly dragged the animal from Martindale's shoulders to his hips, the great claws sunk deep in quiv-

ering flesh all the way.

It was over more quickly than Martindale had dared to hope-much too soon to suit such a connoisseur as Ibn Ali. But that was not the fault of the slaves or the warriors handling the leopard: the animal made a sudden twist as the terrible claws reached the hips—a powerful movement that freed his hind legs and carried him within range of a slave holding one of the rawhide lead-ropes. The tall Somali was knocked flat and severely mauled almost in the twinkling of an eye. But the ropes were seized and pulled taut, and the furious beast was dragged away.

Ibn Ali cast a glance of indifference at

the unfortunate bleeding slave and bent over his white victim closely, observing with judgmatical eye the condition of Martindale's back. He stooped and touched the cruel lacerations daintily, lovingly, with gentle fingers. The excited eagerness so noticeable before had left him in a curious state of satisfied calm. His dignity returned, and as he straightened from the careful examination a string of orders flowed in his natural, composed voice of authority. Martindale, suffering intensely, could feel eight distinct cuts reaching from shoulder to hip, throbbing and burning under the pitiless rays of the desert sun.

He was thankful for the stamina and nerve that had enabled him to refrain from any outcry. Not a sound had escaped through the clenched teeth, and he felt that in this he had stolen some small part of his captor's pleasure. Now that the worst was over, for the time being, he felt a lassitude amounting almost to exhaustion stealing over him. The cold, murderous rage that had almost consumed him before was still undiminished; but it glowed with a deeper, quieter, and if possible more lasting flame. He would kill this fiend if it should be the last thing in life he accomplished!

To his infinite relief, Martindale was untied from the four stakes. He stood stiffly while they rebound his arms from behind. Every movement of the back muscles was extremely painful, and he stood before Ibn Ali in a position of unnatural rigidity. The Chief, now entirely composed, and with face set in his masklike and mirthless smile, calmly met the direct and unflinching gaze. They stood in that position for some time, neither making a move to break the The retainers and vassals of the Sheik in a dense mass on all sides watched those two countenances curiously. Martindale's face, drawn and pale from his ordeal, was the picture of angular, rocklike determination, and his unutterable desire and stark resolution to kill the Sheik was as apparent to those onlookers as if written in large and flowing Arabic characters upon his features. Before the intensity and concentration of that gaze they shifted; and one, in his absent-minded absorption, dropped the butt of his rifle on the bare foot of a neighbor. This slight commotion broke the spell, and Ibn Ali made a sign for Birhano to be brought closer.

With great deliberation the Sheik addressed the Abyssinian.

"He is kufanoo multo, Gaytah!" the boy cried in a shaking voice. "Oh, he is say the leopard will be pull' across the bare back each day until you tell w'at he want to know. He say it is gr-reat pleasure for him to pull the leopard. He have many leopard', he say. And oh, Gaytah,"—there was infinite apprehension in the voice,—"he has send to anoder village for an ambassa—a lion—wich is kept there!"

"Say to him,"—and Martindale's lips hardly moved to emit the words, so rigidly set was his jaw,—"that if there is a Christian God or a Mohammedan God—or no God at all—or any justice in the world—even so, I shall find a way to kill him!"

MARTINDALE was sure that Birhano translated those defiant words exactly as given. For the boy, although he expected to be torn to pieces for it, stood with outthrust chin and spoke in sharp, crackling Arabic sentences that seemed to have in them the jolt of muscular blows. crowd leaned forward as one man; a murmur rose; mouths opened in amazement; but Ibn Ali's fixed smile only intensified the enigmatic cruelty of his eyes. He was not to be provoked into any rash step that might cost him the knowledge he sought, and with a wave of the hand he dismissed them. Martindale and Birhano were led back to the dark straw-roofed tukul.

That night Martindale lay sleepless upon a pile of dry grass in the hut. Far away across the waste, hyenas boomed the deepvoiced foraging cry that proceeds from a massive chest and powerful lungs and has nothing in it suggestive of laughter. Jackals vapped interminably in high falsetto coyotekey, sounds typical of Africa and its relentless law of tooth and fang. Martindale's mind was here, there, everywhere across the face of the world. One moment, in imagination, he stood before Ras Tessayah in Addis Ababa, planning the swift descent of a powerful army upon the savage Danakil tribe, a foray to his own rescue. Again he pictured the French military post at Djibouti in Somaliland but two hundred miles to the eastward. With a few native troops, well-drilled and equipped, he could wipe out Ibn Ali and his entire people. How easily it could be done, if only-but there was the rub—if!

There was no chance of rescue from any outside source, he reasoned. There would not be time even if he had a way to send word. He thought of the Leopard, his

That resourceful young man had not been in evidence since his first meeting with the Sheik. Martindale prided himself on his judgment of men, his ability to appraise character, and he was sure the Leopard had not deserted him. "No," he decided, after turning the matter over in his mind, "he has not deserted—he is up to something."

As the night wore on and he tossed painfully upon the pile of dried grass, the hyenas and jackals ceased their cries, and soon a surprising new sound-strange and weird -broke through the thick silence of the night. It rose quavering and ululating to the stars and sank to a minor key to end with a low rumble that rivaled in volume the deepest notes of a lion's roar. He had never heard anything remotely like it, and with a start he sat up, causing his lacerated back to burn with pain. Again that deep booming roar came, resounding across miles of sandy desert.

Birhano, lying at his feet, awoke.

"Gaytah, thi-is thing is the jingassa, I think," he said.

Martindale promptly forgot his captivity, his raw and painful back, and got quickly to his feet. Straining his ears to catch every note of the sound, he stepped to the doorway. Two half-naked Danakil guards jumped before him with ready rifles.

"Here, Birhano!" Martindale exclaimed, tremendously thrilled at the far cry and almost neglecting to notice the rifle-muzzles in the pit of his stomach. "Ask these men what animal makes that roar."

After receiving a short reply from one of

the guards, Birhano said:

"It is the jingassa, Gaytah. They are call him something in the Arabic w'at I cannot say in the English, but it is the jingassa, for it is the word w'at is use' by the Nebur, the Leopard."

MARTINDALE stood in the moonlight in the doorway and cursed the cruelty of a Fate that allowed him to come within hearing of such a discovery, but left him as powerless to go ahead and finish the work as he would have been ten thousand miles away locked in a jail! And that same Fate had thrust into his hands a few shining stones worth a fortune but with them he could not even ransom his own miserable carcass from a petty desert chief! Martindale went disgustedly back to his bed of dry grass.

A few hours later he was awakened from

a fitful sleep by the grunting of camels, the barking of dogs and the calls of natives. A riot of jabbering arose in the village. Birhano sat up at his master's feet and listened:

"It is a hamla—a caravan, Gaytah. It is come here from somew'ere." Martindale's first impression was that the village had been attacked by Isa-Somali or Abys-But there was no firing, and he realized that the hope had been father to the thought. No, it would be nothing more than a native caravan of some sort, for he knew that the Danakils did much of their traveling at night to avoid the heat. they listened to the hullabaloo that always accompanies the unpacking of a caravan, a man's voice, clear and deep, rose above the pandemonium:

"Get down on yo' knees-you roughridin', stilt-laiged Mehari cross between a three-ringed circus and a gable-roofed house -kneel! Yo'-all are no stiffah than I am

-you overgrown Somali sheep!"

The camel must have knelt after this tirade, for the voice was still. Birhano and Martindale looked at each other in the ghostly moonlight with leaping hearts.

"Feringi!" exclaimed the Abyssinian with a note of hysterical joy. But now another voice reached their ears. The words were barely audible—but they too were English:

"Here are the men to lead us to my good friend the Sheik. Now we make w'atyou-call the visit of ceremony." Then the voice was lost in the noise of grunting

"Trajanian!" The name issued from Martindale's lips unconsciously. And Bir-

hano, wondering, whispered:

"It is the Feringi of Ras Tessayah!"

Martindale was too surprised for further comment. Trajanian! But what-what in the name of Jehovah was Trajanian, of all men, doing here—in the stronghold of the Danakil sheik Ibn Ali, hereditary enemy of Ras Tessayah; chief of a tribe that had been a thorn in the side of the Abyssinian nation since time immemorial! Martindale settled down to quiet thinking. He remembered scraps of Trajanian's conversation that evening in Addis Ababa: his insistence that Martindale should not go near the Danakil country, his warning that the Danakils were smuggling guns and ammunition and his further statement that he had advised Ras Tessayah against the use of armed measures to suppress it. Trajanian had just spoken of the Sheik to his white companion as, "my good friend."



Could he and his white companion be the actual ones engaged in smuggling those guns to Ibn Ali? If this were so—what a crooked, dirty business it was!

"I was right!" Martindale exclaimed aloud. "I knew he was a snake-in-the-grass the very minute I set eyes on him! He's here to collect his share of the smuggling proceeds!" And Martindale remembered with deep disgust Trajanian's smug pose and his hypocritical words about money: "I am like you, Ma-artindale-I do not care for the money. Your work is to collect the animal, the bird. Mine is to give of my best advice to His Highness-and for that I do not have much money. It is enough to know that I am doing what-youcall the good works." And later he had said: "I sometimes think it is not my fault if I am what-you-say, altruistic. It is only that I have more pleasure in the good works than in the big house, the gold and precious stone. Ah-ha! That is from the Bible, I think, no?" The American's disgust had been deep then; now it was too deep for expression.

Martindale lay down again upon the pile of straw. He wanted to think. Birhano talked volubly for a few minutes, but his master answered in monosyllables. boy took the hint and soon fell silent. Martindale studied the situation. The arrival of the caravan opened up a wide vista of possibilities, regardless of Trajanian's status. "But," he thought, "if the Levantine is indeed the brains behind a band of smugglers conveying guns and ammunition to the Danakil enemies of Ras Tessayah, he too will have, like Ibn Ali, the strongest motive for preventing me from coming out alive. What will be his reaction to my presence in this place? He will know that if I ever get out, his duplicity will be exposed and the game will be up! Leaving the diamond discovery out of it entirely, Trajanian will have reason to see that I never escape!"

TO ease the aching muscles of his lacerated back, Martindale turned over on his other side. He knew there was great danger of infection, though perhaps not so great as from the claws of a wild leopard that might have been feeding upon spoiled and tainted meat. But the strong rays of the sun had poured in a healing flood upon his open wounds, and he had great confidence in the sterilizing power of sunlight. His mind went back again to Trajanian and

his white companion. He was sure that the other man was American rather than English, for the words addressed to the camel were the expressions of an American and a Southerner. Assuming that the Levantine was the jackleg he suspected, it would be only natural to suppose that his partner would be of the same stripe, be he English or American. And being hand and glove with Trajanian in the smuggling, he would have almost the same powerful motives for desiring Martindale's death. Could help, after all, be expected from either of these two, all snarled up as they were, in such a crooked business?

And then Martindale tried his best to

put himself in Ibn Ali's position.

The Sheik's procedure would be entirely natural and consistent; to wring the location of the diamond field from his prisoner by torture, and then to put him to death, on the age-old theory that dead men tell no tales. But the sudden, and surely unexpected, appearance of Trajanian and his smuggling partner complicated an otherwise simple situation. Now, thought Martindale, if he were Ibn Ali what would he do in these new circumstances?

"First," he surmised, "I should be sure to keep all knowledge of diamonds from those other white men. It would be awkward if I should be compelled to put them to death also. There might be complications much more serious than anything that could arise from the death of an unknown man who came into my country on the childish pursuit of an animal. These others are bringing me guns and ammunition. They are making me powerful, and I need their further services. Also, they may have affiliations I know nothing about. deaths might have a far-reaching effect. I will chance this, of course, if I have to, to keep them from the secret, but it is a thing to be avoided if possible. . . .

"But how," thought Martindale in his endeavor to place himself in Ibn Ali's position, "can I keep these white men apart? The villagers will talk to the caravan men. Concealment will not be possible. They are sure to learn that another white man is my prisoner. Still, there is this to my advantage: Trajanian will be determined that the prisoner shall never go back alive to spoil the arrangements at the court of Ras Tessayah! But Trajanian must not know of the diamond discovery. And this other white man—

"I should not be surprised at a quiet visit

from the Sheik after the new arrivals have gone to sleep," Martindale concluded.

And within an hour Ibn Ali appeared in the moonlit doorway.

"Salaam," he said, with a distinct bow.

MARTINDALE sat up and Birhano jumped to his feet. The Sheik spoke a few Arabic words slowly, and Birhano, rubbing his eyes, translated:

"He say he is veree mad today w'en he pull the leopard. He say it is not nice for Danakil sheik to do thi-is thing. He say he

is much sorry this was done."

Martindale's cold rage at the barbarous torture had in some degree diminished; he had not allowed his mind to dwell unnecessarily upon it since the event; more important things had occupied his thoughts. But now that the Sheik brought the subject up, its cruelty became fresh again. His back throbbed steadily as the tender skin drew together in the slow healing process. He answered in a few short words:

"Tell him, if he comes here with any idea that he can convince me of a change of heart, he has come to the wrong shop. Such talk insults my intelligence. He is wasting

his time."

Ibn Ali dropped his repentant pose. The fixed and mirthless smile again masked his features; he stood in the dim moonlit doorway with six guards at his back and spoke at length in his natural dictatorial manner.

"He say," began Birhano, "that these two Feringies who arrive' are the fren's of his hear-rt. They are like the brothers to They are bring all the guns and the bullets w'at he like veree much to have. He is pay for these guns, he say, by the slave' he give to the Feringies. They are take these slave-ones to the Arab boat on the Red Sea, and they are sell them to the men w'at come from across the Red Sea. Then these slave' are put in the boat, and they are sail across to the desert country wich is call' in Feringi talk—Arabia. Oh, Gaytah, I think this is true words, because I think those men w'at come to the house of Trajanian w'en you eat there—they are of that country."

Martindale made no answer. He had wondered before where Ibn Ali got the money to pay for his guns. But the idea of slaves had never entered his head. He was far too well informed in Eastern practices to think that slave-raiding had ceased in the world with the Emancipation Proclamation. He knew that much clandestine

barter in "black ivory" went on between the Saharan Arabs and those of Arabia proper. He had heard that European warships occasionally capture Arab slave dhows carrying contraband cargo across the narrow Red Sea. And he had heard the British Resident protest to Ras Tessayah. So he was not completely surprised. But he was startled at the keen intelligence displayed by the Danakil chief in thus voluntarily laying his cards on the table. It was a supremely clever move for all its seeming foolhardiness. For by implicating Trajanian and his white partner, Ibn Ali at one stroke forestalled the possibility that either would side with the prisoner and complicate matters by an attempted rescue. He made it vital to Trajanian and his partner in villainy that Martindale should not live to spread such news in the outside world: the transportation of slaves on the high seas is piracy, and the wages of piracy is death.

Martindale looked at the Sheik with new interest. There was triumph now in that enigmatical smile and an air of brazen assurance that spoke eloquently of work well done. Martindale had seen such a look of complete satisfaction on the face of an expert chess-player as he watched his opponent struggle in vain to avoid inevitable

checkmate.

"Ibn Ali," Martindale said thoughtfully, "you have just double the brains I gave you credit for."

Ibn Ali nodded, and his smile deepened as he answered. Birhano translated:

"Oh, it is nothing. I am at the first w'en this caravan arrive'—a lit-tle worried. Then I think,"—he waved his hand again gracefully—"it is easy for me to think of these small things."

BIRHANO did not understand the real significance of what he was translating, but he gathered from the attitudes of the speakers that the situation of his master and himself had not improved with the arrival of the two Feringies. He whispered:

"It would be good thing now, Gaytah,

maybe to speak the magic words?"

But Ibn Ali squatted on his heels beside Martindale's pile of dried grass; in a businesslike tone he addressed Birhano at great length. Wondering what it was all about, the boy repeated:

"So now it is the time, he say, for you to have the talk of a seriousness. He say to tell you that he know' more of Feringies than w'at you think. He was not al-

ways here in thi-is place. He was in the country of Egypt one time. He was make the safari w'en a young man to Khartoum. He was go on the boat once to Aden too, he say. Oh, he is know much of those place'."

Martindale, in surprise, now realized why Ibn Ali had understood the value of the diamonds. He had been underestimating the mentality of this Sheik all along. And the catalogue of his travels accounted for many things—a young barbarian of quick mind will pick up much information on such journeys.

Birhano went on: "He say, now that you know of the slave-trading, the two Feringies will be more glad to have you kill' than Ibn Ali himself." The Sheik smiled with satisfaction at the thought of this master-stroke. "And he say therefore you mus' look upon him as the bes' frien' w'at you have got in thi-is boma. He do not want to kill you, he say. He want onlee to know w'ere the stones are come from."

Martindale decided upon a bluff:

"Tell the Sheik," he instructed, "that I shall take the first opportunity to mention to both Trajanian and his partner the full particulars of my secret—" He carefully avoided the word "diamond" and spoke thus vaguely to keep Birhano in the dark; there was no use sealing his fate also. "The knowledge will then be held by three white men. Ibn Ali,"—Martindale paused impressively,—"even you dare not put three Feringies to the torture and murder them afterward, as you might one man!"

The first laugh that Martindale had heard the Sheik utter came from the bearded lips. It was more an amused chuckle than a laugh. The bluff was called; Ibn Ali would not hesitate to execute the other white men to prevent the secret getting out!

"He say you are like the bohor—the reedbuck—we'n he is fall in the pit-trap. You jump. You rear up and fall down—but you cannot get out. Oh, Gaytah, he is laugh, for he know we are dead men!"

Ibn Ali carefully shifted his legs on the dried grass. The guards at his back were vigilant. Martindale and Birhano were unarmed, and he was perfectly at ease. The remnant of that fixed smile left his face, and the features became stern and implacable. "Now," thought Martindale, "he is coming to the point, the object of this visit."

The Sheik weighed his words and pronounced them slowly and distinctly; Birhano repeated, sentence by sentence:

"You have one chance for the life, he

But you mus' do as he command'. These other Feringies—w'en they know you are here and w'en they know you have hear of the slave-and-gun trade-will be want to kill you quicklee. The Sheik say he will not let them do thi-is thing. He will say to them that he have pulled the nebur, the leopard—for they will learn that anyway but he will say, too, that he have mean to kill you at once. Then he have decide you shall tell him many thing' he do not know of the animal and bird of his country. He will say to them that w'en he is learn enough of this, he will kill you in his own way. But he will not let them kill you. He say he is your bes' fren' w'ile you are here. But for this-you mus' not say to those other Feringies one word of the stones! For if he think you tell-then first he will kill those Then he will kill you later-veree slowly. If you do as he say, you are free w'en you 'ave tell him the secret."

FOR all his assumed easiness and confidence of manner the Sheik was in an embarrassing position. Martindale was sure he wished to avoid the necessity of kill-Martindale was ing those two valuable and necessary prime movers in the slave-and-arms trade. Ibn Ali would guard his prisoner with all the solicitude of a father for a beloved son until he had wrung the secret from him.

Forcing his thought a little deeper into the ramifications of the situation, Martindale saw that in spite of his helplessness to save himself, he now held the power of life and death over the other two white men! That was a strange thing—to be powerless to help himself, yet in possession of information which, if given them, would sign their death-warrants. It put him in the position of a condemned prisoner whose confession would condemn others to death. But with this difference; he could not trade upon that knowledge even to secure the aid of those he might condemn! No matter whether he kept silent or told, his own end was certain. And the men whose lives he held in his hand would be the most determined upon his death—but for another and equally powerful reason.

He thought whimsically of saying to "If you do not make every Trajanian: effort to get me out of here alive, I shall give you a certain bit of information. And if I do, Ibn Ali will surely execute you. I, a prisoner, hold your life in my hand."

He could imagine Trajanian, with his hypocritical smile, replying:

"But, my dear Mar-rtindale-you expect me to believe that! It is w'at-vou-call the statement of an idiot. Would I help you to go back into the gr-reat world and tell of my slave-and-smuggling-of-arms? My dear Mar-rtindale-it saddens me-

you have become deranged!"

And then Martindale considered a comparatively obvious possibility; he would tell Trajanian and his partner of the diamonds, speaking in English in the presence of the Sheik, for he knew he would never be allowed to see them alone. The Sheik would not know what he said. It would be simple, easy. Using a little craft and cleverness, he could let them know that he had discovered a diamond-field and offer to remain silent about their slavery operations and agree to let them in on his find in return for their help in escaping. With the aid of the Leopard and his father, Trajanian and his partner might effect a rescue. It was so encouraging compared to the former impasse that Martindale was decidedly optimistic. His face brightened perceptibly in the moonlight.

But Ibn Ali had been observing him with keen intuition. The Sheik appeared to be highly entertained, for there was about him an air of internal amusement. He leaned forward, and his mirthless smile was pronounced. And then Martindale received a crushing disappointment. The Sheik spoke directly to him—as if reading his mind—

and he spoke in English!

"This is not the time for the in-vain speculation—the foolish hope. I neglect to bifore,"—and Ibn Ali, infinitely pleased with the cruelty of his little comedy, looked down at his open hands with affected solicitude,-"I neglect to say bifore, but I speak the English veree well. I 'ave learn in Khartoum, in Cairo, in Aden. And I understand that talk even more better than I say it. It is not nize that I should forget to mention these lit-tle thing' sooner." And smiling with vast satisfaction at his own cleverness, he fell to studying his fingernails fastidiously. Martindale could have wrung the neck from his shoulders!

### CHAPTER VII

N the morning the prisoner was led out by a dozen stalwart guards armed to the teeth. As they entered the council house, Martindale saw, as he had expected, Ibn Ali seated cross-legged upon his couch, and the



interior of the long tukul crowded with warriors and priests. The green-turbaned mullah, the Leopard's father, was in the midst of his fanatical associates and the Leopard stood among the warriors. And seated beside Ibn Ali, resplendent in carefully brushed clothes, talking away in the utmost good humor, was the Levantine, Trajanian. Next to him sat his partner, the man whose voice the night before had marked him an American and a Southerner.

Trajanian looked up as Martindale was pushed forward; an affected start of surprise interrupted the genial flow of his conversation. He inclined his head with expansive politeness:

"My so-good friend, Mr. Mar-r-tindale! Dear, dear! Is it not w'at you say—the

world is a so-small place, no?"

"Yes, Trajanian," Martindale answered with cool indifference, "the world is a small place, after all. And a little information dropped in the right quarter will often travel far—even far enough to set in motion the wheels of justice." Martindale could not have told why he voiced that vague threat, except, possibly, to forestall the hypocrisy he expected from the Levantine. And he was determined that Trajanian should not have the satisfaction of goading him to a senseless and impotent display of temper. He had made up his mind, after Ibn Ali had left in the night, to play a waiting game, retain his secret of

the diamond discovery and see what would happen. There would be plenty of time to divulge that knowledge should he so decide.

Trajanian allowed the threat to pass unnoticed and turned to his partner. Laying a small hand upon the other's arm, he said:

"This is my friend and benefactor—Mr. Mar-rtindale—a gentleman from your own country, a very nice gentleman. Mr. Martindale, Mr. Todd James, my partner in sundry—ah—occupations."

The tone was so friendly and his expression of feature so genial and comradely that for a moment Martindale wondered if after all the Levantine might not feel his obligation sincerely enough to prove a friend. But Ibn Ali spoke up in his fair English:

"This prisoner has arrive' in my country to hunt the wild beast wich is not live anyw'ere else. He is-as you have say it, Trajanian, a veree nize gentleman. But he do not let me know he is coming. He jus' arrive. I am sorree that he have learn of our slave-and-gun business of exchange,"the Sheik smiled in affected pity and shook his head slowly, as if the whole thing was to him extremely regrettable,-"and so, of course, he mus' die. I have begin, bifore you arrive', to accomplish the death. But then I think—I am al-ways seem to be thinking, Trajanian—how nize it will be if he shall firs' tell me all w'at he know of the animal and bird of my country. Oh, he is veree wise man, and I am learn much things. And then, w'en it is all learn' from him—I mus', with the deep-most regret, see that he will depar-rt to be wi-ith Allah, w'ere is manny so-beautiful thing' and much clevaire woman."

Ibn Ali's fixed smile as he spoke the last words was a caricature of his affected sorrow. Martindale had seen Trajanian start slightly when the Sheik mentioned the slave and arms traffic, and his American partner had sat straighter, making no attempt to hide his surprise. "This man, Todd James, at least," he thought, "is no suave dissembler, no charlatan. He is no doubt, a thorough-going rogue—or he wouldn't be tangled up with these two. But he looks to be an honest rogue—if there are such."

Martindale met Todd James' appraising look, an expression that had in it something of puzzlement. Martindale thought he came pretty close to understanding what

was going on in his mind:

"He has nothing against me personally, and he would like to see a countryman well out of such an unpleasant position. But he is thinking—quite naturally—of his own life. He is wondering how he could help me without putting his own head in the noose. For the life of me I can't see how he could accomplish anything against these two—even if he knew I would never mention his connection with the slave trade."

"Mr. Mahtindale, suh," the Southerner asked in a forceful but liquidly soft tone, "can I rely upon yo' word of honah?"

"You can, sir-if I give it."

"Ibn Ali has intimated that you are a huntah—perhaps a scientist—a museum man?"

"I am."

Mr. Todd James seemed greatly relieved. He addressed Trajanian and the Sheik. "Then, gentlemen, I think we can dispense with the plan to put Mr. Mahtindale out of the way. A gentleman's word, suh, is legal tendah."

Trajanian yawned behind his small hand: "Really, my so-indiscreet colleague—it is w'at-you-say—the blood is thicker than the water, no?" He stifled his yawn and beamed cordially upon his partner, then turned to Ibn Ali, and the two exchanged a glance of perfect understanding. Martindale thought he detected in the Southerner's eyes a quick flash of temper. But Trajanian continued:

"Positive-ly, Todd, you are quaintly—wa't-shall-I-say—credulous—you are easy to swallow-things-whole. It is that, I think,

in the English. But anyway—Mr. Martindale is hardly, by any stretching of the imagination, our prisoner—we are only w'at you might say, guests here at the cour-rt of Ibn Ali. It seems to my poor thoughts that the chief of the Danakil tribe is the—"

Ibn Ali broke in. He was plainly not one to put up with interference in his own bailiwick; anger blazed in his eyes:

"I shall do wi-ith my prisoner the way I choose—in the time w'at I shall think to be best."

Both Trajanian and Todd James missed no small part of his expression. Martindale heard the American reply, with an easy smile of acquiescence:

"Yo'-all are quite correct, Ibn Ali. I

will say no mo'."

But Ibn Ali's anger did not die at once. He stole two or three calculating glances at Todd James and then clapped his hands loudly. A Somali slave ran forward and prostrated himself at the Sheik's feet. Ibn Ali said something in the Danakil language in an undertone. The slave rose, and his master put a hand upon his naked shoulder and drew his head down. He said a few more low words in the Somali's ear and the slave went out.

THE incident seemed to have been closed, for Ibn Ali and the two white men entered into a discussion that had to do with the proceeds of the last shipment of slaves. From the talk which flowed back and forth with entire freedom and lack of any attempt at concealment, Martindale gathered that not one of the three now had the slightest uncertainty about his fate, although at first the Southerner showed a decided tendency to be reticent. His companions, however, soon made admissions that rendered further "soft pedaling" useless, and he too entered the discussion with complete can-Martindale heard that operations were going on swimmingly. The Arabs who purchased the slaves on the east side of the Red Sea were paying high prices, and the market seemed to be unlimited. It was simply a question of how many blacks Ibn Ali's raiding parties could deliver at a certain point of embarkation, a rocky cove on the west shore of that ancient sea.

The Southerner, Todd James, procured the arms and ammunition with which he and Trajanian paid for the "black ivory." Trajanian's part in the dirty business seemed to be purely diplomatic, and the wily Levantine constantly referred to his

difficulty in influencing Ras Tessayah from sending into Danakiland a "gr-reat army" to wipe Ibn Ali and his people off the map. And he overlooked no opportunity to sow seeds of propaganda to make his connection with the organization more indispensable. Todd James, on the other hand, made no attempt to exaggerate the difficulties in his end of it. He was outspoken, direct, and threw no bouquets in his own The arms were bought by a direction. confidant of his from a certain European manufacturer, packed as steel plows and shipped to the Arabian port of Jiddah on the Red Sea. Martindale did not hear how they were disposed of from that place, but from there until they arrived in the Danakil country would be the simplest part of it.

Ibn Ali deplored the scarcity of Somali and Abyssinian villages within striking distance. Slaves were becoming harder to get every month. He must have more guns for every shackled caravan he sent down to the coast. Trajanian and Todd James argued against this raise in price. And the Levantine urged Ibn Ali to muster his forces and to make one gigantic raid in the near future far into Abyssinia. Somewhat inconsistently with his constant harping upon the difficulty of persuading Ras Tessayah from taking punitive measures, he promised Ibn Ali that he, Trajanian, by exercise of his admittedly remarkable tact and cleverness, could secure him immunity for years-provided he should be allowed an extra share of the profits to use as "palm oil" among Abyssinians in high positions at court.

Y/HILE Trajanian, Ibn Ali and the Southerner talked, Martindale studied his countryman. He was a full-blooded, powerful man of medium height, and his face, burned to a deep brown by the sun, was lean and rugged. A network of fine lines radiated from the outer corners of the eyes, the result of squinting in the bright sunlight of the desert. His weather-beaten features and his lithe unconscious movements, slow and controlled, told Martindale that he was primarily an out-of-doors man. He had the easy, relaxed posture of one to whom nerves were almost unknown. It would have been difficult, Martindale thought, to imagine him excited or giving way to unconsidered, hasty action. eves were dark and deep-set, and had a direct, piercing quality. Martindale thought:

"He is a type that I should give much to have upon my side in this affair. He speaks guardedly after due thought and consideration. And I imagine he thinks a good deal. But he is absolutely unscrupulous—for any white man who can barter human beings for money in this enlightened day can be nothing else! He is strong mentally and physically, and I should think that in a pinch he would prove a tough and ugly customer. There is not the slightest pretense about him, as there is in Trajanian. He knows he is thoroughly bad, and admits it, even to himself. But he has not been led into corrupt practices through weakness. No, he has been rather a leader; thoughtful, deliberate, he knows what he is doing every minute of the day!"

Martindale watched with increasing astonishment Ibn Ali playing his astute game with his two partners. The Sheik had removed Martindale's baggage and no doubt had the diamonds put away in a safe place. He knew their value, and still he could fence and argue for a slight increase in profits for himself with all the tenacity of an Arab peddler. He drew a harrowing picture of his need for guns and still more guns. He swore that slaves were worth more than he was getting in the nefarious trade. He called attention to his own alleged poverty, and cleverly pointed out that with more guns he could secure more slaves; without more firearms, the slavetrade would languish.

During a lull in Ibn Ali's oratory, the slave reëntered, bearing two drinking cups of buffalo horn. An amber-colored liquid, like the *tej* of the Abyssinians, slopped over as he handed one to the Sheik and the other to Trajanian. The slave retraced his steps and took a third cup from the hand of another slave, and with a deep obeisance offered it to the Southerner. Todd James was speaking to the Sheik in his low, drawling voice at the time, and took the horn cup without glancing at it.

Martindale happened to catch the eye of the Leopard where he stood in the group of warriors behind Ibn Ali, and that young man's face gave him a shock of suprise. His eyes were almost starting from his head, and his mouth moved in a desperate attempt to communicate Arabic words without uttering a sound. His staring eyes were fixed upon the cup that Todd James was now lifting to his lips. Martindale, uncomprehending, followed the Leopard's eyes to the cup. He saw the slave withdraw a hand that trembled and back hastily toward the doorway. The cup had reached the

Southerner's lips when Martindale saw a great light—and he took a quick step forward:

"Poison!" he shouted, so loudly and with such suddenness that Ibn Ali and Trajanian started. But the slow-moving Southerner only stopped with the drink poised. "Don't touch it! It's been poisoned!" Martindale repeated.

TODD JAMES had already wet his lips, and he now held the cup a few inches away and looked at it thoughtfully. There was no haste, no panic in his actions.

"Oh, I don't reckon so, suh," he drawled

incredulously.

Martindale felt a surge of respect for that admirable self-control. "Then let Ibn Ali

drink it," he suggested.

But the Sheik, quick as a cat, leaped to his feet. His face was suffused with anger. He barked orders in his own language. The slave was seized at the door and hustled forward, struggling desperately. At a word from Ibn Ali a warrior took the horn cup from Todd James and gave it to the Sheik. Holding it in his hand, Ibn Ali faced his two partners. He bowed gracefully.

"I do not think the slave would dare," he said coolly, the anger gone from his features, "to do such thing to my veree good frien'. But it is al-ways the custom in my countree for the slave to drink if the master

shall say so."

He motioned for the men holding the unhappy slave to bring him closer. The poor creature's face was convulsed with fear, but he was helpless in the grasp of four burly warriors. Ibn Ali, with a flourish and a wide smile, raised the horn cup high:

"To the veree good health of my frien'!" He bowed again to Todd James, and putting his left hand behind the slave's head, held it forward while a warrior pried open the clenched teeth with the point of his curved knife; and then, with deliberate care, the Sheik poured the contents down the gasping throat without spilling a drop.

IN a few minutes the agonized spasms ceased. The slave was dead.

Martindale, pity and disgust struggling for supremacy in his mind, had turned his back upon the horrible spectacle, but Ibn Ali, eyes shining with a greenish glow, literally fed upon the sight. Trajanian, sitting beside him, his small clenched fist beneath his chin, a half-sneer upon his face, missed no part of it. Todd James' features betrayed nothing. Martindale, as he glanced at the Southerner, could see no trace of pity, no emotion whatever reflected in that bronzed and rugged visage—nothing but a deep concentration.

"Has the man any emotions?" he thought. "Is he as cold and dead to suffering as the crocodiles that infest African rivers? Or does that blood-and-iron neutrality, that case-hardened unconcern, conceal powerful emotions schooled by an inflexible will?"

As the racked body of the slave stiffened and lay still, Todd James, with his deep-set eyes still fastened upon the black body, speaking slowly and very quietly, made this observation—apparently to the air:

"There, but fo' the grace of God-and

one other-lies Todd James."

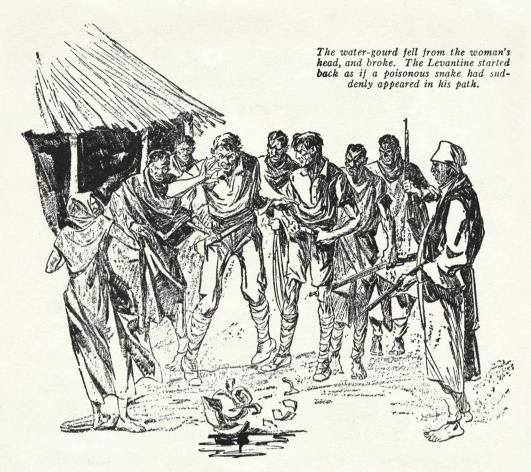
And Martindale, as he heard that thoughtful, sincere quotation, and watched the hard features settle again to the cool repose of granite, knew that he had one ally at least who, as the phrase has it, would "go to the end of the road" with him! But he also knew that Ibn Ali had sensed this from the first—that the Sheik had deliberately ordered the slave to poison the man for this reason. But strangely, there was no flare-up—were no accusations. Todd James was clever enough to let it appear that he thought the attempt uninspired. He went so far as to observe:

"I imagine, Ibn Ali, that yo' newly captured Somalis are hard to handle. He

meant that dose fo' you-all."

And Martindale, as he looked from one to the other, knew that Todd James knew. And he knew that Ibn Ali knew that Todd James knew. And as for Trajanian—one as skilled in treachery as he was not likely to be deceived.

"Now," thought Martindale, "matters will come to a head. This state of things cannot go on. Something must happen." He glanced behind the Sheik to the row of warriors standing as immobile as bronze The Leopard appeared as unconcerned as the rest, and in the midst of the priests the green-turbaned mullah, the Leopard's father, wore the same benign expression of easy-going and mild tolerance that Martindale had thought was so strangely contradicted by his darting, un-The ghastly scene evidently quiet eyes. had made no impression upon those grim fighting men or upon the mullahs. One Somali more or less-a hereditary enemyand the manner of his taking-off meant



nothing to them. It was, perhaps, a common occurrence at the *boma* of this Danakil sheik.

Ibn Ali issued a few curt orders, and the slave's body was dragged by the heels through the doorway.

The slave's death had so much of barbaric cruelty in it, and was so grossly unfair, that Martindale's blood boiled.

"How typically like an Oriental chief," he thought, "to sacrifice a mere slave as a gesture to save his own face. And all those shackled captives that go down to the Red Sea to be traded to the Arabs for guns with which to raid more Somalis and Abyssin-What must be their lot in the low black tents of the Bedouins whose cruel blood flows in the veins of this monster? Something has got to be done about this!" And then, while the three partners continued their discussion and enlarged upon plans for further outrages against humanity, Martindale vowed silently that he would bend every effort, not toward making his escape—but to accomplish the end of this nefarious trade before Ibn Ali succeeded in breaking him completely by torture; he resolved to do this thing if it were in the range of the possibilities. . . . .

The discussion continued exactly as if nothing had happened. The morning wore away, and still the indirect, roundabout palaver went on. Ibn Ali and Trajanian were both experts in haggling. Todd James made few comments, and then only when called upon to endorse some statement of one or the other. But occasionally Martindale, standing with his guards almost in front of the seated three, found the American appraising him with a look that Martindale was sure held much of friendly gratitude.

"He has enough to be grateful to me for," he thought, "and, for that matter, so has Trajanian. But this man Todd James seems to feel his obligation. And I imagine from his appearance that if he decides to 'go through' for me—he is the kind who will go the whole way."

After two more interminable hours Ibn Ali dismissed the gathering, and all three arose stiffly from their seats. Their affairs had apparently been settled satisfactorily to all concerned.

Trajanian said something to the Sheik with a laugh ending in a strange falsetto cackle that caused both Ibn Ali and Todd James to glance at him curiously. It was a small thing, that jarring high note, but for some reason it puzzled Martindale. It was not exactly the result of unstrung nerveswhich would have been easily understand-It was evidence of something else which Martindale could not determine. The two white men walked beside the Sheik into the bright sunlight, and Martindale, with his guards, followed.

A native woman was approaching, carry-As the ing a water-gourd on her head. Sheik and his companions moved forward, she saw them, and startled at their nearness, made a sudden step—an attempt to fade away from so much dazzling authority; it was a typical example of the shyness of native women. But the heavy gourd fell from her head. It broke into a hundred pieces, and the water splashed on the ground, running in tiny rivulets almost to Trajanian's feet. The Levantine started back as if a poisonous snake had suddenly appeared in his path. He backed, stumbling and shaking, into Martindale, a look of unutterable horror upon his face. Martindale seized him in strong arms, and bending down to look into the fear-stricken, convulsed features, saw small flecks of foam bubbling from the corners of the mouth. But Trajanian recovered almost instantly, bowed stiffly, and with ironical politeness touched himself on the chest and muttered:

"The hear-rt-it is to-say veree weak." The man's actions in this harmless affair of the water-jar were so unaccountable, and the strange incident followed so closely upon his freakish laughter, that it set Martindale to thinking. Todd James carelessly ascribed the peculiar actions of his partner to a touch of sun.

"Trajanian," he observed, "I reckon yo' helmet must be defective. Look it oveh when we get inside. Wont do to be laid out now. Eveh have much feveh?"

"It is the hear-rt, I think," Trajanian answered, again touching himself on the chest. "It goes w'at-you-say in the fit-and-start. I am all right in a lit-tle time."

Ibn Ali only grunted at what he considered another evidence of Feringi absurdity. The white race was indeed beyond understanding in its childish mixture of strength and weakness, its penchant for the silly pursuit of animals and birds, its uncanny cleverness in machinery, its disgust for all forms of torture, its susceptibility to heat, thirst and sun, its iron strength in war and its womanish weakness in some other things.

THE Sheik ordered Martindale's guards to follow with their prisoner to the Sheik's own dwelling. He would take no chances on the three white men getting together and arriving at a secret understanding. Martindale had expected this precaution and with the capable guards at his right and left followed obediently, in a preoccupied study; Trajanian's actions had set in motion a speculative train of thought.

At the Sheik's doorway the Levantine paused, and turning around, looked Martindale up and down coolly as if just aware of his presence. It was so surprising and haunted a look, coming as it did at that time, that Martindale, gazing into those strange eyes, wondered if the man were Trajanian continued his impersonal inspection for a moment.

"Oh," he said, "it is the prisoner of yours, Ibn Ali." His eyes shifted. "Tomorrowthis afternoon, maybe-you will make once more the leopard to use the claw, no?"

"The ambassa—the lion—w'at is in anoder village," answered the Sheik, smiling, "he is come 'ere in one-two day'. The ambassa is more stronger than the leopard, ves?"

Trajanian grinned vacantly, and again that cackling laugh fell upon Martindale's ears as a thing fantastically out of place. The proposal that he endure another siege of torture made Martindale see red. took all his self-control to remain silent, and then, as if in reward for his strength, another great light burst upon his mind.

"That's it!" he exclaimed aloud, and then to himself, he thought:

"A shot in the dark if ever there was one -but it might turn out to be true! And if true, such a bluff might do much to establish me with these superstitious people. I'll chance it!"

He retorted steadily:

"Trajanian, for that proposal I shall place a curse upon you—a curse that will surely cause your death in a very few days!" He tilted his head back and looked to the heavens as if invoking divine aid-a silly gesture, he knew, but he was playing to impress Ibn Ali and his people. He went on ominously, like an oracle of evil:

"May you become as the mad hyena and die foaming at the mouth-your jaws locked together as with bands of steel! I call upon all men to witness—this is my curse!"

Trajanian seemed not to comprehend, but he smiled vacantly. Ibn Ali's fixed and mirthless grimace did not change, and Todd James looked at Martindale with something of contempt but more of pity than had appeared upon that rugged face before. The contempt, Martindale thought, was for his weakness in giving way to what seemed nothing but impotent anger; the trace of pity, for what appeared to him to be simpleminded and futile religious fanaticism unbecoming a countryman and one who had saved his life but a moment ago—one from whom he had expected better things.

"Ibn Ali," continued Martindale, "would you mind explaining to these men of yours?" And he waved an arm to indicate the throng of warriors and mullahs within earshot. "I'd like them to know what I

said."

To his surprise, the Sheik had no objections. Contemptuously Ibn Ali harangued his men in the Danakil language. From his sardonic expression Martindale could guess that he was repeating the curse, with his own sarcastic comments upon its futility. He finished; warriors and mullahs, almost to a man, grinned understandingly at the ridicule in the words of their chief. But the Leopard and his father looked with a touch of horror at Trajanian, as if they expected him at the moment to fall in a frenzy. They, at least, were completely convinced of the power of Martindale's magic.

"Well, that's done," Martindale thought.
"No matter what facetious remarks of his own the Sheik may have added, all these men know the curse I have placed on Trajanian. If my guess is correct—we'll see later what they think of me as a sorcerer."

## CHAPTER VIII

IBN ALI without further talk led the way to his own tukul. Martindale was assigned one corner of the main room, and his guards were carefully instructed—given detailed orders at which Martindale could only guess but which, he was sure, would be definite enough, not to allow either of the other white men to approach the prisoner, under pain of death. Trajanian and Todd James left almost at once for their camp beyond the confines of the village. And as they walked away, Birhano, with four Danakil riflemen as guards, was led

in from his former prison to be confined with his master.

The Sheik composed himself comfortably upon a rude divan covered with soft and valuable rugs—rugs of the same texture as those Martindale had seen in Trajanian's house in Addis Ababa. He called for food and drink, and ate-or fed-in solitary grandeur, with vassals running in and out carrying the food in native baskets of plaited withes. One of the main dishes was raw meat, and Martindale was interested to note that the Danakil used the same method of cutting as Abyssinians; he held a strip in his teeth, pulled it straight out with the left hand and sliced off a bite with an upward stroke of his long knife. skillful operation had always fascinated Martindale; the razor-sharp knife flashed past the end of the nose by so small a margin that he never lost hope. But he had never once seen a native make a misstroke.

As he watched Ibn Ali consume pounds of the raw, dripping flesh, and heard his loudly champing jaws, he thought what a beast the man was, not only in his repulsive way of handling his food, but at heart.

He had just failed in a treacherous attempt to poison one of his slave-dealing partners. To save his own face and shift the appearance of guilt, he had, without a moment's hesitation, forced the deadly draft, which he had ordered prepared, down the throat of the poor unfortunate—one who must have been his most trusted and confidential servant. And now, on the heels of this brutish deed, he gorged himself on raw flesh with a gusto and abandon that suffered nothing from the pangs of conscience. And his abortive failure to murder Todd James apparently caused him not the slightest worry.

"He considers himself much too crafty for any white man," Martindale thought. "He knows that his intended victim is aware of his treachery—but so great is his selfsufficiency that he feels perfectly safe. I wonder when he will make another and better planned attempt; he wont fail a second

time."

Ibn Ali sat back at ease, his eyes care-

lessly surveying Martindale.

"This lit-tle slave-and-gun business of ours," he remarked, a ghost of a smile playing about the corners of his grim lips, "is veree good thing for us. It is not so good thing maybe for Martindale, no?" And the smile increased. "It is not nize that he should know of somet'ing w'ich he mus' not

know. It is mos' un-fortunate that Trajanian and Mr. Todd James cannot enjoy the sleep of peace until they know Martindale is kill' dead. But it is one thing veree happy for Martindale that his frien' Ibn Ali will not permit his death to be brought to him now, at once. Is it not so?"

"Why did you try to poison that man, your partner in crime?" Martindale delivered the verbal shot brusquely in a voice of

contempt.

The Sheik took no notice of the tone. His eyes wandered musingly; he answered by putting a counter-question: "W'en you have a *gemmel*—a camel—w'at you do not want any more to use, is it not the custom to get rid of that one?"

"Yes," returned Martindale, "but Todd James is necessary to your gun-running slave-trading game. With him out of the way where will you and Trajanian get the guns?" He did not expect to be enlightened on this point, but Ibn Ali replied:

"Oh, that is all arrange' for. It is so easy to be done. Trajanian is veree gr-reat one in some Feringi country across the sea from Egypt. You see you do not know one part of w'at Trajanian and Ibn Ali are so busy to plan for manny year. Ras Tessayah do not know; Todd James do not know. There is onlee Ibn Ali and Trajanian w'at know. It is not good for thees money to be divide' between three, w'en two is enough for do all the business, no?"

MARTINDALE made no comment. It was clear to him that Trajanian and Ibn Ali had decided upon the American's death some time ago, and Martindale's presence was only a minor contributing cause strengthening an already formed resolution. And as he thought of it further, he became convinced that the idea had been Trajanian's. For Trajanian would be the one to arrange for obtaining the guns else-And then Martindale speculated upon the meaning behind Ibn Ali's words when he had said: "You do not know one part of w'at Trajanian and Ibn Ali are so busy to plan for manny year. Ras Tessavah do not know."

Martindale was no expert in the tangled politics of the Levant and the Red Sea littoral, but in a general way he knew something of the practices in vogue among certain European nations when they decided to form a "protectorate" over a barbaric sultanate. They usually allied themselves with a powerful discontented faction in the

country, nursed and fed that discontent, winked at the illegal importation of arms, and finally, when the malcontents were strong enough to do the job themselves with very little assistance in the way of European money and troops, they fanned the smoldering coals to flame. And upon one pretext or another they gave moral support to the rebels, loaned money and a few skillful leaders, and set the rebel chief on the throne—under their protection—to rule, a mere figurehead, taking orders from Europe.

This, he knew, was the way those things were usually done. And what more probable than for any one of three or four European nations to covet the healthful highlands of Abyssinia, the only independent kingdom left in all Africa? strange thing about it was the fact that it had not been done before! And what more natural than for them to hit upon the idea of enlisting the Danakils to do the dirty work-Ras Tessayah's only rebellious subjects of any real strength? Also, what more clever than to employ as the go-between, the prime mover in the underhanded affair, a man of nondescript nationality whose intrigues would not be laid at the door of the right nation? And further—what could be more acceptable in the eyes of the world as an excuse for seizing the reins from the hands of the Abyssinian government than a loud exposé, a disclosure at the proper time, of the damnable traffic in slaves between Abyssinia and the Red Sea Arabs? The details of that heinous trade would never be known. Ras Tessayah as regent of Abyssinia would be blamed, and Ibn Ali would be touted as the reformer who rebelled against such inhuman practices.

The civilized world would applaud the overthrow of the Abyssinian ruler, and Ibn Ali, properly handled and advised, could maneuver himself into a moral position to receive the plaudits of the gullible half-informed public of Europe and America. And—the last independent country in Africa would be independent no more.

Martindale acted upon his newly formed theory. "Ibn Ali," he said, "I believe I have the honor of speaking to the future king of Abyssinia. Am I correct?"

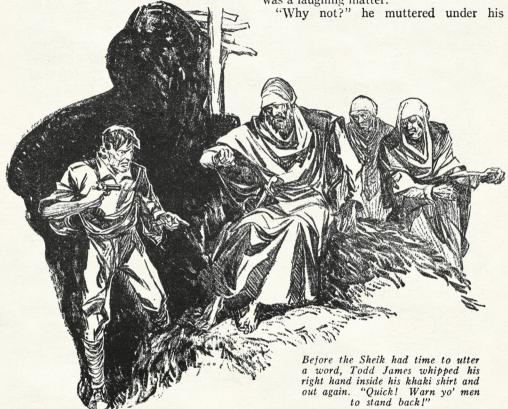
THE Sheik did not start with surprise. Instead, he inclined his head in a gesture that showed inordinate vanity and pleasure. He lifted a hand palm upward deprecatingly, but Martindale knew he had hit upon

the one line of flattery that would soothe that savage breast like the strains of a charmed musical instrument. Ibn Ali purred with pleasurable emotion.

"It is a too-bad shame," he murmured, still smiling, "that Martindale will not be there to see the gr-rand entr-ance of Ibn Ali

will go 'boom, boom, boom,' all through the night time." And the Sheik dreamily picked his teeth with the point of his curved knife.

Martindale's first impulse was to laugh at the bizarre project, but as he thoughtfully considered it, he was not so sure it was a laughing matter.



into Addis Ababa. Yes, that is a thing not so nize to think, is it not?"

"What job," inquired Martindale, enjoying hugely the spectacle of this ruffian swelling with the thought of his own aggrandizement to come, "what job will you assign to Trajanian after the fighting is over?"

But the Sheik did not care to relinquish the pleasing thought of his "gr-rand" entry.

"There will be, oh, manny of my warriors. There will be al-so the long line of mule', of camel', of horse'. It will be a gr-reat army to march into Addis Ababa, and the people of Ras Tessayah—ah, they will run to kiss the foot of Ibn Ali, for they do not want Ras Tessayah for be their king any longer. They will be glad for have Ibn Ali to be king. And there is much feasting to be done then, and the war-drum'

breath. "The thing has been done time and again on this—on all continents. Of course he expects to be absolute ruler. But the power behind Trajanian will put him in his place, when the time comes. And like all the other puppet kings, he'll be glad to remain the nominal ruler under their protection. And then for the exploitation: trade-agreements, concessions, monopolies, favored-nation treaties, and what-not. And Mr. Trajanian will be sitting in the catbird seat—if he survives, which I very much doubt!

"By the way, Ibn Ali," he said aloud, "you didn't seem much impressed with that curse I laid on Trajanian."

The Sheik smiled scornfully. "It was for the people of ignorance, so they think you are the big Feringi mullah w'at they mus' not kill. Oh, I know those thing'." "On the contrary, Ibn Ali," Martindale lied impressively, "it is a gift I have. You shall see. The curse will work out. Trajanian is doomed."

"Oh-ho!" The Sheik chuckled. He was in a good humor after his meal. "Martindale should not forget that Ibn Ali has made the safari to Cairo, to Khartoum and through the water to Aden. Ibn Ali is not the lit-tle child."

"Well," Martindale returned cheerfully, "you shall see."

THE Sheik remained silent for some time and the prisoner knew by his air of detached concentration that he had brushed aside the matter of the curse as something irrelevant and unworthy his serious attention. He had also regretfully relinquished the pleasant mental picture of his gaudy entrance into Addis Ababa, and his mind was now busy with the knotty problem of how to extract the location of the diamond-field from his stubborn prisoner.

Martindale, seated on the hard dirt floor,

considered his own problem.

Birhano, squatting in a corner, mumbled over and over in a low crooning sing-song: "'The time is come the Wullus say to talk of manny t'ing—'" until Ibn Ali, annoyed by the sound, reached above his head and pulled a heavy rhino-hide whip from the straw of the thatched roof and glanced eloquently in Birhano's direction. The Abyssinian youth took the hint and fell silent, his face the picture of despair.

The big tukul was divided into two rooms by a curtain of dirty cotton cloth, and as a draft coming in through the door whipped the curtain aside, Martindale could see a young native woman seated on the floor holding on her lap a seven- or eight-monthsold baby-evidently an offspring of the Sheik. A yellow-and-white dog with pointed ears was industriously licking the bare skin of the infant, beginning at the feet and working upward. It was the usual babies' bath that Danakil mothers insist upon for their young children at least once a day. The dog was well trained in his cleansing task, and after finishing off the face in a series of watery licks, retired with that virtuous air of relief and satisfaction so noticeable in a farmer's boy when the last evening chore is done.

Well-armed guards were constantly in evidence passing and repassing beyond the low door, and as Martindale took note of their vigilance and remembered that he was

many days' travel from the French post at Djibouti, separated by a flat sandy desert where concealment would be impossible and where waterholes were far apart and known only to the natives, the hopelessness of escape became apparent.

He summed up his position calmly and

without heroics.

"Escape for me is out of the question. I am, as Ibn Ali has said, like a reedbuck in a pit-trap. I may rear up and fall back, wear myself out in vain hopes and impossible plans—but the end will be the same; there is no way out. How much better it would be to bend every energy, in the few days I have left, to accomplish the death of this monster, and if possible, Todd James and Trajanian-although I think Trajanian's number is already up. But to kill this Sheik will effectively stick a period to the Danakil slave-trade. I shall not be giving my life to stop this human barter, for my life is forfeit anyway. I shall just be devoting my last few days to a good cause." And he said aloud:

"I'll do it!"

"Eh?" Ibn Ali looked at him question-

ingly.

"Just making a few plans," explained Martindale, engagingly, "a few little plots to bring about your death. For," he added carelessly, "you have lived much too long as it is, Ibn Ali."

Birhano, awestruck, looked at his master with the superstitious dread that some people exhibit when gazing upon a corpse. The inherited fear of those in authority, and his inbred terror of all Danakils, combined to render him almost abject in the terrible presence of his captor. It passed his comprehension how any man could face those fierce eyes and deliver such a speech with the careless good humor that Martindale displayed. But the white man was sure of his ground. He knew that Ibn Ali was no fool, and until the Sheik had succeeded in torturing the secret of the diamond field from him, his life would be safe.

But the Danakil chief did not long remain in that unusual mood of good-natured affability. His countenance became stern and his brows lowering. He continued to operate upon his white teeth with the point of his knife, and the dark eyes above the black beard moved constantly about the interior of the grass-roofed *tukul* as if searching for something. There was impatience in his bearing, and Martindale knew perfectly well that there was a sudden limit

to that uncertain temper which, if passed, might bring about an immediate resumption of the torture. From the Sheik's remark to Trajanian, Martindale assumed that he intended to await the arrival of the lion and the departure of the two white men before making a further move to torture the secret from his captive. But Martindale was not sure of this, and he decided upon another tack.

"This barbarian," he thought, "is in the grasp of a consuming ambition, and he is outrageously vain. Those are his weakest points. Trajanian is the stepping-stone to the realization of his great ambition. Now, if Trajanian dies within the next few days-and in my opinion the chances are better than fifty-fifty that he will-Ibn Ali will see in the Levantine's death the crash of his hopes to be some day supreme ruler of Abyssinia-for without the assistance of Trajanian's European backers, whoever they are, he cannot hope to invade Ras Tessayah's territories and beat him on his own ground. Supposing Trajanian dies-is there not some way in which I can make the play of stepping into his place-by promising to enlist the foreign aid his ambitious scheme depends upon? Once in such a position of confidence, if I can put myself there, it will be just possible that I may have the chance to kill him and end this slave trade once and for all, and at the same time find a way to save my own and Birhano's life.

"No," he decided, "Ibn Ali is too astute to be taken in that way. Still, stranger things have happened, and a little talk along those lines will not do any harm; it might possibly arouse in his mind a doubt; it may at least cause some delay with the torture."

at least cause some delay with the torture."
"You and I, Ibn Ali," Martindale broke
the long silence, "with the knowledge of
the little stones, could enlist the aid of a
powerful European country, form your warriors into an efficient army on the principle
of Feringi armies, and march to Addis
Ababa without serious opposition. Did you
ever stop to consider that I can get you
European support as well as Trajanian?
You might think this over in the next few
days."

"It is not needful that these thing' should be think over," the Sheik answered, yawning cavernously. "You are once more like the *bohor*, the reedbuck, in the pit-trap. Ibn Ali is not the lit-tle child." He bent a keen glance upon his captive that made plain the difficulty of an attempt to delude him by such a transparent ruse. "Beside', it is all arrange' for a long time. And," he finished with a subtle smile that showed how well his mind was working, "it would not be good thing if one other man here should have the knowledge of the lit-tle stones. It is much more better, if onlee Ibn Ali know of w'ere is the so-valuable stone', no?"

"When Trajanian dies, as he will within a few days," Martindale countered, "then what will happen to your well-arranged plans? Todd James, I can see, is not the man to put you on the throne of Ras Tessayah. You will need somebody—if you

expect to get there."

"It is time for the sleep," Ibn Ali answered, yawning again. He had not the slightest interest in the curse Martindale had put upon the Levantine. He was far too stable mentally to grant that theatrical action anything more than an attempt to play upon the superstitions of his people. The prospect of Trajanian's death was so remote a thing that he would not give it

a serious thought.

The white man regarded him a little humorously with half-closed eyes. "His surprise and consternation will be great to behold," he thought, "when he sees Trajanian struggling in the last stages, foaming at the mouth, jaws locked together as with bands of steel, and finally raving to his death. Horrible picture—yes; but if I have guessed right, as inevitable as the rising of the sun. What will be his reaction to that curse then? For all his apparent clearheadedness, he can't really be far beyond the dark superstitions of his people. The occult mystery he will see in that will shake him to the mental foundations!"

A SIMPLE meal, which Martindale shared with Birhano, was brought in. He was as happily confident that no attempt would be made to poison him as was the Sheik himself, and the flat, pancakelike native bread dipped in hot pepper sauce was disposed of with the same careless relish as the gourds of goat's milk. Birhano went in for the raw meat portion of the meal with all the eagerness to be expected from an Abyssinian, but the white man let it strictly alone, knowing as he did, that raw meat was the cause of tapeworm so prevalent among half-savage races in the tropics.

Ibn Ali again instructed the guards, three of whom remained standing with ready rifles within the *tukul*, and four or five on

the outside. The arrangements for the security of the prisoners were so thorough that Martindale knew there was no chance for the Leopard—if he should be so minded -or Todd James, anyone in fact, to come within a hundred yards of the Chief's tukul

without being challenged.

"Anything like a quiet rescue under cover of darkness, some one from the outside cutting a hole through the mud and wattle of the hut walls, spiriting the prisoners away, the silent mounting of carefully concealed camels in the gloom of night, the swift race to the border-all such hopes are as vain as a crank inventor's project for a trip to the moon. There can be but one end to this thing, but"-he thought-"I hope some opportunity arises first for me to kill this slave-raiding protégé of the devil."

MARTINDALE awoke several times in the night and as he lay upon the hard dirt floor he could see in the moonlight the shadowy figures of the three inside guards silently watching. Ibn Ali snored lustily, sleeping with the soundness of an innocent child, secure in the knowledge that his people were firmly under control and that his stronghold was too far within the broad vellow desert for either Abyssinians or the French from Djibouti to menace even if they should, by some miraculous means, learn of his doings.

Martindale thought with amusement of the commonly accepted theory, even with educated persons, that a clear conscience guarantees a sound night's rest, while evil deeds, on the other hand, march like ugly specters across the subconscious screen of the mind, stealing away that relaxation and composure so necessary to quiet rest.

"What a tangled mass of misapprehensions we human beings labor under," he mused. "Ibn Ali, with the black murder of a trusted and helpless slave, the cowardly attempt to poison a white man, one of his partners, and the torture of another white man, who has never done him the least injustice, fresh on his conscience—and with what other atrocities in mind for the future God only knows, eats and sleeps like a baby." He laughed a trifle bitterly. The guards were on the qui vive instantly. They took a step in his direction, rifles lowered and cocked. Ibn Ali only stirred in his sleep and turned over upon the divan. Birhano sat up, muttering sleepily. Martindale suppressed his desire to interrupt the enviable rest of the Chief by a loudly

shouted protest against the injustice of things in general, and lay quiet. "Let sleeping dogs lie" is a policy that cannot lead a man far wrong in any part of the world.

ALTOGETHER, it was the most restless night Martindale had ever put in, though his back was healing and his fear of infection lessened. But the dawn came at last. Dogs barked, and the undersized native chickens of the village crowed lustily as the first streaks of light filtered through the low doorway of the grass hut. Halfnaked women with empty earthen jars upon their heads passed the door in trailing lines on their way to the desert well for water. Camels and mules grunted and brayed, and the red sun, bursting over the far horizon with a rush, as if in a hurry to begin the day's race to the westward, came in through the open door with a genial warming flood of light. Ibn Ali stirred and raised himself upon an elbow. He had slept the long night through without once awakening to lie restlessly and ponder the enormity of his sins, as Martindale thought would have been more natural and fitting. One of the three vigilant guards at once called out in the Danakil language, and soon the Sheik's breakfast was laid before the couch by three or four slaves. Birhano had been awake for some time, and he whispered to his master with an eye of mingled dread and hatred upon the Sheik:

"It is today maybe, Gaytah, w'en the lion wich is come from another village is arrive in thi-is place. Oh, it is good thing now if you tell him w'ere is found the lit-tle stone?"

"Don't worry about that, Birhano," Martindale answered. "If I had told at first, you can bet we should not be alive now. Just sit tight, and remember that I know more about this than you; and remember I have said the magic words. If they kill us, the ghost will be safe on the Long Safari."

Birhano was always much relieved at that encouraging thought. The Abyssinian boy had been well brought up in the Coptic religion, and his right hand was no more real to him than that indefinable essence of personality men call variously, soul, ghost, spirit, shade or specter. If that intangible part of him could be saved, it was all that could be hoped for in the present chaotic wreck of things.

"It is melifiano,"—good,—"Gaytah," he

said with great resignation.

Ibn Ali's food baskets were given to the prisoners after the Sheik had finished his



own meal, and they consumed the remainder of the food. The white man was keyed to a high state of expectancy, for today, he knew, would show developments that must have a great bearing upon the situation. With Todd James and the Sheik at swords' points, and Trajanian, as he strongly suspected, almost upon the brink of the abyss,-and the much-dreaded lion perhaps nearing the boma of Ibn Ali,—confusion worse confounded might be expected to break out at any moment. Martindale had considered his own mode of action when the great animal should arrive and he should be given the alternative of parting with his secret—the one hold he had upon life—or submitting to torture twofold more severe than the experience he had already passed through.

"When the time comes," he had decided, "and the choice is put up to me definitely, when there is no further chance for putting it off and I must make my decision, then I shall, I think, agree to lead Ibn Ali to the place. Flesh and blood cannot bear such tortures as that monster can devise. After all, it will be better to be shot cleanly, or speared, than to be slowly broken—to be made a shapeless, gibbering idiot and then forced to divulge the information. I will, however, dissemble, sham, fence and 'lie

like a trooper' to postpone to the last minute the necessity for that choice. When I can no longer put it off—there will be but one thing to do."

Several minor chiefs arrived to confer with the Sheik evidently upon matters of small interest, for Ibn Ali talked with them but a short time and waved his hand in dismissal. The child in the women's division of the *tukul* cried lustily, and Martindale heard some one calling loudly in a high falsetto. Ibn Ali stepped outside and gave orders for new guards to be assigned. Under their escort Martindale and Birhano followed the chief to the large council house in the center of the *boma*.

THERE warriors and mullahs waited behind the rug-covered divan in solid phalanx as upon the day before, a few armed with spears but most holding modern rifles. The Leopard and his father were there in their respective positions, the Leopard impassive among the warriors, and the greenturbaned mullah wearing the fixed expression of benign toleration that was so patently contradicted by his burning, shifting eyes. Trajanian and Todd James had not arrived, but from the formal preparations, Martindale knew that another conference among the partners was in order.

The prisoners stood as before, directly in front of the divan. Ibn Ali seated him-

self and called a tall chief from among the warriors at his back. The man was well over six feet in height, with a brutal, domineering face and a modern rifle in his right hand. The flaring Hadendowa-bob to his hair gave him a more wild and reckless appearance than even his bulk and fierce face warranted. The Sheik spoke to him in low tones, and Martindale saw the warrior glance at the entrance two or three times as he nodded to the low words.

AFTER witnessing the tragic result of Ibn Ali's whispered communication with the slave the day before, Martindale determined to keep his eye upon that particular warrior when Trajanian and Todd James should make their appearance. And this was not long delayed, for within two or three minutes they entered the doorway, Trajanian in the lead, unarmed, and the Southerner following leisurely with his rifle in the right hand resting across the crook of his left arm.

"That man," thought Martindale with relief, "is fully aware of his precarious position, and I hope—" But before his thought was completed, the two white men drew near the Sheik, and as they passed the massed warriors, the tall, fierce-visaged man with whom the Sheik had whispered, reached out and seized the barrel of Todd James' rifle in iron grip. To Martindale's great surprise, Todd James did not attempt to pull it away or scuffle with the savage. Instead he calmly released the gun, inclined his head slightly and said clearly:

"If yo' please. Hold it fo' me till our business is finished; obliged to you." And he passed on without a glance behind. It was a magnificent piece of quick thinking, and Martindale stared with wonder and astonishment in his face. For only too well did he know that Todd James would never have brought his gun into the council hall if he had not thought he needed it and had not intended to use it if necessary in self-protection. But had he lost his head for the fraction of a second, had he even subconsciously jerked or wrenched at the gun,—as would have been the natural thing to do,—he would have been shot or speared upon the instant.

A smile of deep satisfaction flashed across the Sheik's face, and he greeted his partners with great affability and motioned for them to take seats beside him. Trajanian sat at his left, but Todd James, instead of taking a position on the couch as he had the day before, with Trajanian between himself and the Sheik, appeared not to notice the Sheik's graceful motion, and continuing past, seated himself with slow deliberation upon the Sheik's right.

"Ibn Ali," remarked the Southerner in his drawling tones, "yo' warriors are rough. That big man there meant the best in the world. He reckoned to be polite and hold my gun fo' me. But he jerked her away like he thought I was gunnin' fo' him."

The Sheik waved his hand carelessly. "He is the savage jus' from the desert. He do not know yet w'at it is to be the man of politeness, no? You mus' not mind w'at that one does. He is not know the Feringi, but he is good man, yes?"

"Yes, that's what I thought," returned the white man, smiling good-naturedly.

Martindale watched Todd James with renewed interest. "There," he thought with deep admiration, "unless I miss my guess, sits a man of superb nerve and unusual cleverness. I wonder-I wonder how he will come out of this." And as he caught Todd James' eye, he nodded pleasantly The Southerner returned the greeting politely but coldly, which Martindale thought might or might not be due to a desire to disarm Ibn Ali's suspicions. In fact, Martindale did not expect a man who would descend to the level of slave-dealing to jeopardize his life in a hopeless attempt to rescue a countryman even though that countryman had saved him from a ghastly death the day before.

Trajanian took no notice of the prisoner and his interpreter. Apparently he had not seen them. He kept shifting on his seat restlessly and Martindale was startled to see him sit with head hanging at times and sway gently from the hips. The action resembled an animal in a cage swinging incessantly to and from before the bars. . . .

The talk was of slaves and Arabs, guns and money—a continuation of yesterday's discussion. Two or three times within an hour Trajanian left his seat and wandered about in the large open space in front of the divan. He passed and repassed Martindale and Birhano, taking no notice of them whatever; and once, when the Levantine broke into a slow shuffling trot, Ibn Ali looked at him keenly, apprehensively, and Todd James ceased speaking and regarded him with puzzled eyes. Trajanian seemed to come to himself after that, and again took his seat and entered into the discussion. But he could not control the

restlessness and desire to move about that seemed to be consuming him from within. Martindale, after observing his erratic actions for a long time, muttered to himself:

"As sure as I am standing here—the man is a goner! My guess was correct—and now we must be careful!"

#### CHAPTER IX

TRAJANIAN'S eccentric actions fascinated Martindale, and Ibn Ali made no pretense at hiding his apprehension. The ambition of his life—to become ruler of all Abyssinia—depended upon the Levantine. The Sheik looked steadily at Martindale, and there was in his gaze an unsolved question. He would have given much to know what was affecting Trajanian this way, and to know its relation to that theatrical curse Martindale had put upon the Levantine the day before. But the prisoner knew Ibn Ali far too well by this time to expect him to believe that the curse really had much to do with it. The Leopard and his father of the green turban exchanged eloquent glances, and many of the warriors and mullahs shifted uneasily upon their feet and whispered together.

"It will not be long now," thought Martindale, "before the words of that curse are made good—to the last detail. And then I wonder what will happen in that supersti-

tious crowd!"

But at this point a slave entered the door of the long *tukul*. He went straight to Ibn Ali, prostrated himself and spoke in the Danakil tongue. The Sheik turned to his two partners with his cold and fixed grimace and announced:

"The lion from the other village—he is arrive' now." And he leaned toward Trajanian, who happened to be seated at the time, and continued:

"The ambassa is more stronger than the

leopard, no?"

Trajanian clapped his hands like a child, and his face lit up with an expression that is best described by the word *glee*. He stood up and appeared to be all eagerness:

"Now we will pull the lion, is it not?" And he glanced for the first time at Martindale. The Sheik made ready to speak, but before he had time to utter a word, Todd James whipped his right hand inside his khaki shirt and out again. The motion was almost too fast for the eye to follow; and now, in that lightning-quick, prodigiously

steady hand, there reposed a short, double-barreled derringer pistol of large caliber. It was the type of weapon in vogue a generation ago among gamblers in the mining-camps of the Rocky Mountains. The Southerner's rugged face was cold as a block of rough granite, but the voice was gentle and drawling as ever:

"Quick! Warn yo' men to stand back!" The short weapon was directed at the Sheik's right side, and the Southerner held it about five feet away—just beyond reach of Ibn Ali's right arm should he be foolhardy enough to attempt to seize it or to grapple with its owner: the technique of that deadly performance was above re-proach. Ibn Ali took in the situation at a glance. He raised his eyes to Todd James' face, and what he saw there brought hasty words in his own tongue—words of warning to the warriors but a few yards in his rear. Although such unexpected gunplay was entirely new to them, they grasped the situation instantly. And they were sensible enough to know that before a hand could be laid upon the white man, Ibn Ali would be a dead man. They stopped in mid-stride at the warning from their master. Todd James continued in his soft drawl:

"Mahtindale," he said, "if yo' please suh, and yo' boy, too, step heah." Then to Ibn Ali: "Tell yo' men to saddle my camel and Trajanian's fo' Mahtindale, and a third fo' the interpreteh." Ibn Ali appeared about to argue the point, but Todd James' deep-set eyes boring into him with naked murder in their shadowy depths made him abandon that reckless intention. He spoke again in the Danakil tongue. Several men detached themselves and went on a run

through the doorway.

"Now, gentlemen," the Southerner went on softly, "I reckon we'll wait until they return with the animals, and then—"

BEFORE he could finish the sentence, a lean warrior from the dense crowd behind took a sudden step forward, and grasping his long spear at the butt end of the shaft, made a swift, unerring thrust and drove the blade cleanly through the muscles of Todd James' right forearm! A spasmodic clutch of the fingers pulled off both barrels of the derringer, but that capable right arm, with spear-point projecting through, had been knocked a full yard to one side, and the bullets sped harmlessly past the Sheik's body.

Ibn Ali was on his wounded adversary

like a tiger before any of his warriors could bound across the intervening space. They were locked together in a wild, desperate struggle; and this it was, no doubt, that saved Todd James from instant death. The Sheik tore and bit at the Southerner in a frenzy of rage, and the American fought back with a cool and deadly ferocity that would have triumphed had he not been seized and borne down by sheer weight of numbers almost in an instant. And then Ibn Ali's self-control came back to him. He shouted orders in rapid-fire succession. Todd James was pinioned and held, while cartridge belts, rawhide sling-straps and turbans were produced to bind his arms and Martindale had not been able to reach his side through the press of halfnaked bodies before the affair was over and all thought of further fight useless.

Martindale now observed Trajanian for the first time since the Southerner had reached inside his shirt-front with such lightning swiftness. The Levantine had not moved from his seat, and his head was swaying slightly from side to side in that slow, rhythmic movement that recalled to Martindale the impatient, senseless action of a caged animal. His eyes were on the dirt floor, and an air of strange preoccupation enveloped him. Martindale wondered if indeed the man had grasped the meaning of the turmoil that had been going on not ten feet from where he sat. He appeared to be in an unhealthy trance, and Martindale muttered:

"He has almost reached the end of the Any moment now he may go to trail. pieces."

Ibn Ali paused in the midst of a flow of sharp orders to his men, and laying a hand upon Trajanian's shoulder, shook his slight frame:

"It is now we will pull the lion on thi-is one." And he glanced down at Todd James lying bound at his feet. "The ambassa is more stronger than the leopard, no?" And he smiled with pleasurable anticipation.

RAJANIAN seemed barely to rouse from his vacant mental detachment. His head ceased its strange swaying, and he looked up into Ibn Ali's face only half comprehending. Two deep lines of puzzled inquiry appeared between the Sheik's heavy black He threw a swift, questioning glance at Martindale, and again looked down upon the Levantine. He could not understand this mystifying phenomenon.

But Todd James, lying bound upon the floor, spoke:

"Mahtindale,"—the voice was as guietly unhurried as ever,-"I felt I owed the best I had to you suh, so I played the cahds the best I knew. I hoped I might make 'em win. It was a po' hand, though—a mighty po' hand. I beg yo' pahdon, suh, fo' makin' a failure."

Martindale felt his heart go out to this soft-spoken man. The unaffected sincerity of that speech went beneath his skin. There was no wailing and lamentation over his own predicament, no evidence of regret that he had thrown his life away to save the man to whom he was under an obligation; no bitterness against a Fate that had been too strong for him; just an unadorned statement of his good intentions and a dignified apology for his failure.

"And," he concluded, "I'd like to have you know-befo' they get around to-to dispose of me—that poison or no poison, obligation or no obligation, I'd have stuck till hell froze or I got yo'-all out of this Reckon you don't believe heah boma.

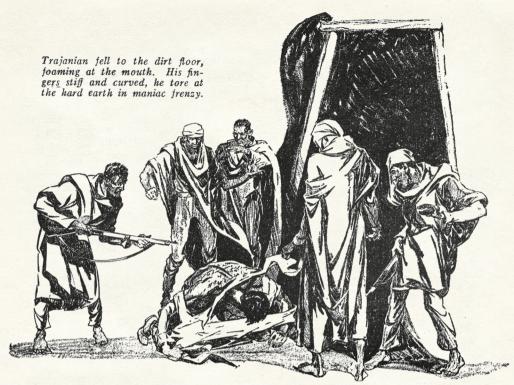
that?"

"I knew," Martindale replied, "I knew you would."

Todd James smiled, a queer, twisted "Don't be a fraud, Mahtindale. Don't be a fraud."

Martindale would not have thought it possible that a man could be guilty of deeds for which any right-thinking person would have the deepest abhorrence, and at the same time be the possessor of traits that those same right-thinking persons would give anything they owned to possess! But here was a man cold and hard and cruel to an amazing degree, a dealer in human flesh and blood-therefore, according to the verdict of civilization, a monster lower than the beasts of the field, one who ought to be shot on sight. But this same man had the admirable virtue of great courage and the willingness to throw his life away on a tento-one chance to save the life of an almost unknown countryman-"obligation or no obligation."

Martindale, like most men and women, had always pigeonholed the people of his acquaintance. A good man was good all the way through, and was placed forthwith into the mental pigeonhole that contained all the virtues. A man who had done an inexcusably evil thing was placed for all time in the category of the evil ones, and no good was ever to be expected from him



in this life. What a mistake this was he now realized, and as he looked down upon Todd James, slave-dealer, he saw also Todd James, Southern gentleman, whose old-fashioned sense of honor had led him to throw away his life in a forlorn hope, not for glory or for profit, but because he was what he was-and whose hardy spirit could accept a grim defeat that meant death with more calm imperturbability than many a man could accept a small loss at cards.

"That man," thought Martindale, "is

game to the core!"

BUT Ibn Ali did not allow him much time for thinking. At his quick and businesslike orders, several warriors hurried outside, and Martindale guessed that preparations were under way for the torture of Todd James. The lion from the neighboring village would be the principal actor in that terrible drama; and Martindale, remembering the intense suffering he had gone through with the smaller animal, was on the point of attempting something-he knew not what, but some diversion that might at least postpone that cruel ordealwhen Trajanian leaped from his seat and fell to the dirt floor, foaming at the mouth, snapping and biting and clawing at the ground in a rigid paroxysm. His fingers were stiff and curved, and he bit and tore at the hard earth in maniac frenzy. His

gripping hands clawed open his shirt, and tore it from him in long strings of cloth. His black, oily hair hung down covering his eyes, and the face was bestial in an expression of violent, feverish madness. The uncontrolled fury of his actions was incredible. Strange catlike sounds issued continuously from the tightly closed mouth. It was a spectacle of horror that left Martindale aghast.

From the first Ibn Ali had not moved. His features were a bewildering study in amazement and stupefaction. He watched, spellbound, the raging body writhe and

twist in its stiff, jerking motions.

Warriors and mullahs bent forward to see, and Martindale took note of the awe and superstitious horror upon those savage countenances. They, at least, were thinking of the curse he had called down so dramatically upon Trajanian's head the day before, and as the spasms increased, the crowd eased itself backward, foot by foot. The Leopard and the green-turbaned mullah were the only ones in the great throng who did not show surprise. They exchanged glances, and it was as if they said:

"See—it has come about just as the Feringi directed—as it was bound to do. This thing is not to be wondered at, for when a people can go in the sky like the amora, the vulture, anything is possible to them. It

is the will of Allah."

AND Martindale, watching the benign features of the old mullah, caught the man's eye and received a look that he would have sworn carried, besides a kind of reverence, a preponderance of straight gratitude. And the thought flashed through his mind:

"That thankful half-nod is not gratitude for saving his son's life away back there in the Abyssinian village. Not by any means! He is supremely grateful to me for, as he thinks, causing Trajanian's death and so undermining Ibn Ali's power with his people. For the old mullah is as set upon his own ambition to rule the Danakils, as the Sheik is upon ruling all Abyssinia. Yes, that would be his reason for conferring upon me that look of thankfulness!"

Todd James had rolled over on his side, and between the feet of the savage crowd about him could see something of Trajanian's furious writhing. But he said nothing until the Levantine finally wore himself out in his struggles and lay still upon his back, face upturned to the grass roof, eyes glassy and staring and teeth locked together tightly. During this comparatively quiet interval, when the warriors were standing motionless, staring at the incomprehensible and ghastly sight, the Southerner, mystified at the strange coincidence of Martindale's curse and Trajanian's seizure, nevertheless took his cue with keen intuition:

"I was not sure at first, Mahtindale," he said gently, "that you had the powah you claimed when you uttered that curse. But now I see yo'-all are one of those fortunate persons whose requests are granted. I salute you, suh!"

THE words, which were uttered for the benefit of Ibn Ali, made little impression on that barbarian. But the Sheik saw that his people were dangerously near to falling under the sway of a superstitious dread of Martindale that might become perilous. Thoroughly alive to the situation, he knew that their minds must be diverted before the thing went any further. Fortunately he had a victim lying bound and ready for torture at his feet, and the lion had arrived from the other village.

Ibn Ali raised his deep voice in words of ringing command. His retainers and vassals started toward the door of the council house, walking around the dying Levantine in a wide and gaping circle. Two strong men seized Todd James, and raising

him from the floor, carried him outside. Ibn Ali, Martindale and Birhano, with their guards and a few others, lingered. The Sheik bent down over Trajanian, and the stricken man glared up into those dark features with glassy unseeing eyes, his teeth set as in a vise and foam bubbling from his lips. Martindale addressed the Sheik:

"You see—the jaws are 'locked together as with bands of steel—he dies as the mad hyena, foaming at the mouth.' "And as Martindale quoted the words of his curse, Trajanian stiffened in a last spasm; then his rigid muscles relaxed, his head rolled limply to one side. The spirit had passed on.

BUT the Sheik was unconquered: The amazing fulfillment of that dramatic curse was not enough to shake from his mind the conviction that the whole thing was some sort of Feringi hoax. Looking into Martindale's face, he said:

"W'en you tell w'ere is the lit-tle stone—you will tell al-so w'at it is that do thi-is thing to my frien'. Ibn Ali will learn these thing' too." And Martindale knew that as far as the Danakil chief was concerned, his little play on the supernatural had fallen

upon stony ground.

As they looked down at the dead man and the Sheik realized that with the passing of the arch-conspirator his hope of becoming ruler of all Abyssinia had gone glimmering like a puff of smoke in the wind, such a look of fury and baffled desire fixed itself upon his features that Martindale drew back, apprehensive that in the crash of those old ambitions he might lose his head for the moment, forget the diamond field and seize gun or scimitar from a henchman and in his rage cut down even the one who held the valuable secret. But the Sheik's mind turned to Todd James. He roared something in the Danakil tongue in the voice of a mad bull, and forged ahead toward the doorway. Martindale's guards prodded him forward with their rifles.

Outside in the bright glare of the sunlight, Martindale saw that Todd James was already stripped and spread-eagled face down upon the sand. Warriors stood about in a black throng, and crowds of villagers were gathering to witness the spectacle. The Sheik increased his pace almost to a run as he neared the staked victim, shouting directions in the high, unnatural voice he had used upon the occasion of Martindale's ordeal.

Martindale's jaw set in grim determina-

tion. This thing could not go on! He would prevent it somehow! He started forward, but his guards grasped him by the shoulders.

"Ibn Ali," he called two or three times before the Sheik heard and turned his head. And at that moment Martindale saw, striding majestically between four burly Somali slaves, two on each side, at a safe distance, each holding a heavy chain attached to a wide rawhide collar, an immense blackmaned lion. It was a huge beast, even for its species. Martindale estimated its weight at close to five hundred pounds. There was nothing slinking and frightened in its demeanor as there had been with the leopard, for the big brute wore no rawhide sack over its wide, powerful head. Whether this was because the handlers had been unable to accomplish such a thing, or because this was to be a finish affair, he could only guess.

"Ibn Ali," he yelled over the heads of the warriors, "I have a proposal to make. Hear it first." He hardly knew what he intended to say. Delay was the one thing he hoped to obtain, and a wild, half-formed notion was flitting through his mind that if he could only find some way to postpone this torture, something might happen. He had been firmly convinced in moments of cool analysis of the situation that his own as well as Todd James' death was only a matter of a few days at most and the precise time made little difference, but when it came right down to the actual execution, a useless delay of an hour seemed one of the most valuable things in the world.

"Ibn Ali, Ibn Ali!" he called again. The Sheik passed the word to bring Martindale closer, and a lane was opened between the warriors. Martindale went forward with determined stride, controlling his agitation with iron resolution.

with iron resolution.

"I have made a decision," he announced.
"I will take you now—at once—to the place where the stones came from! If you will put off this man's torture and death,—keep him prisoner until you return,—I will lead you straight to the place of the stones! If you do not,—if you torture this man now,—then, so help me God, you shall never know that great secret!"

IBN ALI regarded him with fixed and humorless smile. He was on the point of waving aside such a proposition without consideration. He was in absolute control

of the situation. His experience had taught him that any man could be tortured into telling anything; still, this Feringi who had come to hunt the strange animal was not like other men—exactly. He had borne unflinchingly and without a murmur the n'durri, the ordeal of the leopard. He had cursed Trajanian, and Trajanian had died precisely as he said. That was probably some trick, some clever hoax—still, it was strange! And there was a look in the gray eyes— It would do no harm to find out the location of the diamond-field first. Todd James could be put to death as well afterward.

Ibn Ali paused in his instructions to his men. The more he thought of it, the more he became convinced that there was just a chance that Martindale might be able to live up to his determination. Feringies were surprising and wonder-working people, and this one might prove strong enough—

"It shall be as you have say it," he answered, and at once spoke to an underchief, who broadcast the news in stentorian tones that there would be no spectacle of torture that day. Todd James, his features as expressionless as granite, was unbound

from the stakes.

"It seems, suh," he remarked to Martindale as he stood up and three tall warriors rebound his arms behind his back, showing no consideration for his wound, "that I fall deeper in yo' debt every day I live. I'm greatly obliged to you, suh." The words were spoken with no more emotion than might have been expected from a gentleman for whom Martindale had done some polite, inconsequential favor. But this man had been literally dragged from the jaws of a wild beast, and still his remark of thanks bore not the faintest trace of effusiveness, although even his stout heart must be almost bursting from relief and gratitude.

"I would barter gold and precious stones," Martindale said to himself with a glow of the deepest admiration in his heart, "to possess that man's cool self-mastery and the bitter-end gameness of his fiber."

That Todd James did not understand the meaning of what had passed between Martindale and Ibn Ali was apparent in the look of puzzled inquiry with which he surveyed them. Martindale did not enlighten him, and the three tall warriors led the reprieved man away to be confined, bound and guarded, in the *tukul* of an under-chief.

The climax of this authentic novel of terrific adventure in a strange land occurs in the next installment—in our forthcoming June issue.



# His Kind of Folks

### By LEMUEL DE BRA

The author of "Evil Treasure" and "Not for Sale" here gives us an amusing tale of a credulous cowboy who woke up with a vengeance.

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

EY, Cactus!" bawled out Slim Patten, of the Flying-Box. "Come on an' gargle a snifter!"

With his big, freckled hand, Cactus Charlie slowly placed a black jack on a red queen, pressing it down as if afraid it might get away.

Then he looked up at Slim.

"Thanks, Slim," said Cactus in his habit-ually lazy drawl. "I hope you don't mind me refusin'; but, fact is, I've quit."
"What! You—quit?"

As if yanked by the same rope, the eight men lined up at the Lame Horse bar turned to stare incredulously at Cactus Charlie.

"Don't believe it!" declared Spot Woody, and hurled an emphatic shot of tobaccojuice in the general direction of the cuspidor.

"Neither do I!" declared several in unison.

"Cactus, don't make me laugh!" cackled old Jerry Twombley, poking a gnarled hand bewilderedly through the fringe of white hair over his left ear. "You quittin'! Say, fellers, is they pink ice-cream a foot deep all over Sunken Desert? Is they mushmelons growin' on mesquite trees? Is they?

Huh! When they is—then I'll believe that my little playmate, the aforesaid Cactus Charlie, has quit!"

"Same here!" roared the others.

"Just the same, I've quit," said Cactus Charlie quietly, and played a red three on a black four.

"Tell us about it, Cactus!" pleaded Flapjack Joe earnestly. "Are you gettin' 'fraid likker is goin' to stunt yore growth, or sumpin'?"

That brought a laugh as Cactus Charlie stood up, a six-foot, ox-shouldered man in leather vest and concha-studded chaps. He hitched his six-gun back over his hip, poked his sombrero off his forehead, and grinned good-naturedly at the crowd.

"Fellers, I aint never been wuth much. 'Course I allus worked hard; but I been a purty fair drinker and a purty fair spender. An' I've mixed with you boys all my ornery life. But now, boys, everything is changed. Now I'm goin' to-to conserve!"

A dead silence ensued as Cactus Charlie strode out; then-

"What'n tarnation does he meanconserve?" demanded Spot.

"I dunno!" declared old Jerry, shaking his head sadly; "but it sounds turrible! Dan, set up sumpin' for my nerves, quick!"

UNHURRIEDLY, but with a most unusual air of serious determination, Cactus Charlie passed down Avenida Sanchez—renamed by the American cattlemen "Sandwich Avenue." It was Saturday afternoon and the dusty little border town was a-crawl with life. Cactus Charlie, known and liked by every one, was kept busy nodding and smiling and responding to cheery greetings.

Two blocks from the Lame Horse Inn, Cactus Charlie paused, glanced around halffurtively as if hoping no one saw him, then slipped hastily into a shabby frame building across the front of which was a huge glaring

sign "The Red Bean."

A frown puckered the cowboy's good-natured face as he observed that the restaurant was unusually crowded. A huge, pock-marked cattleman was sitting at one of the tables talking in low tones with two traveling-men; while at the counter, three gayly attired punchers from the Two-Bar ranch were "ridin' the stools." From certain sounds that floated over their hunched shoulders, Cactus Charlie gathered that they were eating—and enjoying—the bean-soup for which the Red Bean was famous.

Cactus strolled past the three to the last stool—against the wall. Picking up a Yuma paper, he pretended to be very busy reading; but while he had one eye on the paper he kept the other on the swinging door that opened into the kitchen.

"Howdy, Cactus!" sang out one of the Two-Bar men. "Have a bean on me!"

"Nope," Cactus declined emphatically,

without looking up.

"Huh!" snorted the puncher over a mouthful of bean-soup. "Fust time I ever knowed you to act so durned uppish! Sick or sumpin'?"

"Nope," returned Cactus, still refusing

to look up. "Just quit."

"What!" And three beanladen spoons stopped in midair; three necks craned around, while three pairs of eyes stared in astonishment.

AT this juncture, much to Cactus Charlie's relief, the swinging door opened. Into the narrow space back of the counter floated a vision of female loveliness in closefitting black dress and a white apron that

amply attested to the fact that this had been a busy day at the Red Bean.

The two traveling-men took one glance at this vision of loveliness—then turned their gaze back to the pock-marked face of the old cattleman.

But not Cactus Charlie! To his enraptured eyes, the girl was entrancingly and overwhelmingly beautiful. He thought of her eyes as bits of the blue sky marvelously set between strangely black lashes. Her cheeks and lips reminded him of the brilliant scarlet of the ocatilla. Her neck he likened to the creamy white of the yucca in ripe bloom.

"'Lo, Cactus!" the girl tossed cautiously out of the corner of her mouth. "See you

in a minute!"

Cactus Charlie nodded, and sighed.

THE girl served pie to the three punchers, took the order at the tables, then started back to the kitchen. As if on sudden impulse, she stopped where Cactus sat and leaned over the counter—so close to him that he went suddenly weak all over.

"Stick around until them three cheap hair-legs vamoose," she whispered. "I

want to see you."

Again Cactus nodded, and sighed. And while he waited he came as near to hating those Two-Bar punchers who lingered noisily over their beans as it was in Cactus Charlie to hate anything.

Finally the three clattered out. The girl skidded a slab of apple pie down the counter to Cactus, drew a cup of coffee

and set it before him.

Then, resting her elbows on the counter, she lowered her voice so the men at the table could not hear.

"For cats' sake, I'm tired! Cactus, where

you been all week?"

"I been ridin' range, Miss Bodin," Cactus

mumbled over a mouthful of pie.

"For cats' sake, don't Miss Bodin me! Aint we friends—an' pardners? We better be, since we're goin' to get married as soon as you—as we are financially able. How do you get that way, Cactus? Call me by my first name! An' for cats' sake, don't say Beet-rice! It's Be-at-rice!"

"Yes'm," mumbled Cactus, and reached

for the sugar-bowl.

"You put sugar in that coffee once, Cactus! What makes you so nervous? Say, you know I been thinkin'—mebbe you d better not let your rough-neck friends know what big plans we have. Keep it a secret

120

just between you an' me, Cactus. You get

me?"

Cactus nodded. "I aint tellin' nuthin', Miss—er—Be-at-rice. Folks know I've changed, but I aint tellin' 'em why. An' as for my friends, they're purty good friends. They—"

"Sure, I know," the girl put in hastily. "But they aint your kind o' folks. You're different, Cactus. You an' me—well, we understand each other. Say, did you ever study finance? No? Well, it's deep stuff, I'll tell the world. All about capital an' int'rest.

"An'sso I been thinkin' you an' me not only need to *conserve* our funds but we oughta be pullin' down a little int'rest while we're waitin' for our nest-egg to grow big enough. You get me?"

"Yes'm," mumbled Cactus, eagerly stir-

ring his coffee.

"I knew you would," smiled Beatrice. "You're nobody's fool. You could think circles around me any day. Quiet, but deep. That's the kind of a man I like. Now about my idee, Cactus. Instead o' me keepin' my wages in my room where they might be swiped, an' instead o' you leavin' yours with the boss an' gettin' nothin' for the use o' all that jack, le's pool our finances, slap the whole thing in the Calzona Savings Bank, an' compound the int'rest. Then—"

THE street door swung open. Silently, a slender, immaculately dressed man glided in. His glittering black eyes swept the room. Leaving the door ajar, he turned to the counter.

Beatrice hurried forward. The man said

something Cactus did not catch.

"No; we don't keep cigars," Beatrice

snapped, and turned on her heel.

The man glided out. Beatrice set out another piece of pie. She ducked her head toward the door. "You know that bird, Cactus?"

Cactus shook his head. "A feller pointed him out to me as a good *hombre* to stay away from. I b'lieve he called him Five-Ace Frazer."

"Huh!" Beatrice curled her red lips. "He looks like a five-ace guy! Funny how you get wise to them birds in my business. I made you for a straight-shooter the minute I set my eyes on you. Say, have some cream on that pie? Sure! An' what about my idee? Class, eh? How much you got comin', Cactus?"

"Five months' wages; but I've drawed

some for—for tobacker an'—an' clothes. Reckon I got around two hundred comin'."

"Two hundred iron men! An' you don't get a cent o' int'rest? For cats' sake, that's not business! But then, I can't brag! Three months now since I come down from Phœnix an' while I've saved almost a century, it aint doin' me any good. Cactus, the more I think of it, the better I like my idee. You bring in that money an' we'll put it with mine an' slap it in the bank. That starts our nest-egg with three hundred bucks. The int'rest on that at—say eight per cent, is—twenty-four dollars! An' you work almost a whole month for that! For cats' sake!"

CACTUS set down his empty cup, and

took out the spoon.

"I'll do whatever you say, Be-at-rice; but I aint just sure that I can get my money just now. Sometimes the boss is short. But I'll ask him an' see you next Sattiday. Say," he went on with sudden boldness, "couldn't you an' me sort o' drift down to that movie tonight?"

"Gee, I'd like to, Cactus," replied Beatrice earnestly, "but I promised a girl friend I'd go to a lecture with her. Anyway, I tell you that the more we spend now the longer we'll have to wait to settle down.

Cactus, we gotta conserve!"

"That's right," Cactus agreed, a bit wistfully. "Well, I'll mosey along. See you

next Sattiday."

But conflicting emotions surged in Cactus Charlie's breast as he strode back down the street toward the Lame Horse Inn. After two lonely weeks on the range, it was a keen disappointment that he could not see Beatrice that evening. And what a shame it was that a girl like her had to slave her life away in that dump! Well, he'd end that! He'd scrimp and save and give her a home—a real home with piped water and electric lights all over the house, even on the front porch!

SUDDENLY the garish sign of the Lame Horse Inn broke into his meditations. He turned to enter, then halted. It was in his mind to indulge in a cigar—just one good cigar to keep him company on the long ride back to the Flying-Box.

"I wont do it!" he muttered, and drove on down the street. "There she is a-workin' to get money for our home—an' I'm thinkin' o' burnin' up a whole quarter. No, sir!

I'm goin' to conserve!"

Fatty Leonard, roustabout at the Border Livery Stable, led out Cactus Charlie's horse.

"Gee whillikens, Cactus!" he blurted. "Goin' home cold sober before dark! Hit

a crooked game or sumpin'?"

"None o' your durn business what I hit—or what's hit me!" growled Cactus, and rode off down the street, wondering if Ral-

"what's got into you lately, anyway? Used to be a regular hell-twister. Rather be tight than be president. Suddenly you quit! Drawed only two bucks all last month. 'Bout as sociable as a bull with a bellyache. . . . . Huh?"

Cactus Charlie twirled his sombrero around and around in his big freckled hands, and said nothing.



"These two are goin' away," explained Cactus. "All right," said the conductor; "but what's the idea of the handcuffs?"

ston would let him have all his back wages or if he'd stall for time.

IT was Sunday afternoon before he mustered up courage to see Ralston. He found the boss of the Flying-Box taking it easy on the front porch. Having decided to ask for his money, Cactus promptly but politely stated his request.

Slowly Henry Ralston lifted his stockinged feet off the porch-rail, and turned to

peer sharply at the cowboy.

"What'n hell is up now? Goin' to pitch a wild party? Buyin' a mine? Or just gettin' married?"

"Boss," said Cactus, "it's a-a sort o'

pussonal matter."

Ralston regarded Cactus a moment in silence. "See here!" he said earnestly,

"Aint minin' stock," went on Ralston. "You're too smart for that. Too smart for any man, I'm thinkin'." He paused significantly. "Any o' my business what you're goin' to do with your money, Cactus?"

"W-e-l-l," drawled Cactus, hesitatingly; "it's really a very pussonal matter. Since you ast me, though, I don't mind tellin' you the money will be put in the bank."

"That settles it!" Ralston put his stockinged feet back on the rail. "It's your money, an' you got a right to do what you damn' please with it. But what's the idee o' you herdin' by yourself so much lately?"

"I could tell you that, boss; but—well, them boys is good boys, but—well, they don't understand. An' neither would you."

Ralston gave the big puncher a searching look.

"Huh! Well, it's your business. As for that money, right now I'm short. As soon as I can I'll pay up. Meantime, Cactus, if you-if you want any advice about anything, remember I've always been your friend!"

"Thanks, boss," said Cactus, and left, wondering just what Ralston meant, and how long it would take him to raise the money. Cactus hoped it wouldn't be later than the following Saturday, when he was to see Beatrice.

THAT week was a repetition of what the previous weeks had been since Cactus had met Beatrice. Always a top-hand at any sort of work not beneath the dignity of an "honest-to-goodness cowhand," Cactus puzzled the boys and worried Ralston by his new absent-minded and aloof attitude toward his work and his fellow punchers.

Still no one complained until Cactus refused, rather curtly, to join the bunch in giving a dance to the new teacher over at White Water school. That raised a howl. All their gibes and questions, however, Cactus met with silence or annoyed evasions. "I s'pose the boys is all right," he mused; "but it's no use tryin' to explain. They wouldn't understand."

Saturday came, and Ralston hadn't said a word. The boys going to town began to drift around to the office, drew a little money, then hit the trail for Calzona. As time passed, Cactus began to feel uneasy. If Ralston didn't give him the money, what would Beatrice say? Wouldn't she justly accuse him of not being man enough to handle his own funds?

By one o'clock, Cactus could stand the suspense no longer. He strode over to Ralston's office-and found that Ralston had left.

"Gone over to Mad River Cañon," Mrs. Ralston informed him. "Wont be back until late tomorrow." She gave Cactus a searching look. "He said if you asked for him I was to give you this note," she finished, handing Cactus a sealed envelope.

CACTUS thanked her, and left. Outside he tore the envelope open. In it was a check for two hundred and thirty dollars.

Two hours later Cactus had put up his horse and was on his way to the Red Bean. Passing the bank, it occurred to him that it would be better to get the check cashed. Since their partnership was to be kept a secret, Beatrice might not like to start their

account with a check bearing his name and endorsement.

"For cats' sake!" Beatrice exclaimed when he told her what he had done, and handed her the roll of bills. "Of course, it's all right, Cactus! But don't you understand that all banking business is absolutely secret? Absolutely! That's why I'm goin' to put your money-an' mine-in what they call a joint account. Your name an' mine. See?"

Cactus nodded. "Whatever you do, suits

me. How about a piece o' pie?"
"Sure! An' cream, too! But listen, Cactus! I aint had my hour off yet today. An' I sure want to get to the bank before it closes. So I'll blow now. An' say! I been thinkin' about that invite you gave me to that movie. S'posin' you an' me splurge just this one night? Then we can settle down an' conserve in real earnest, eh?"

"That shore does suit me!" exclaimed

Cactus.

"Then that's settled. S'posin' you meet me here—at, say, eight o'clock."

"That's all I came to town for, Be-at-rice

-meetin' you. I'll sure be here."
"O. K.," said Beatrice, smiling at the happy cowboy. "I'll meet you outside. I'll give you the bankbook—our bankbook, Cactus. Then we'll take in that movie. S'long!"

Beatrice turned away. At the swinging door, she stopped. Over her shoulder she tossed Cactus a kiss—then was gone.

HE was fond of pie, but after that kiss, the pie and cream were absolutely tasteless. Knowing that Beatrice would leave by the kitchen door that opened on the side street, Cactus laid a quarter on the counter and hastened out. Yes, there she was, bless her heart, hurrying down the street toward the bank! Cactus watched until the girl entered the bank; then, his heart all aquiver, he walked unseeingly down the street, away from the railroad and the main business section, and into the poorer Mexican quarter.

For a long time Cactus Charlie walked aimlessly; then, surprised to note that more than an hour had passed, he turned back toward town. From force of habit, his steps led him to the door of the Lame

Horse Inn.

There he halted. The Lame Horse now stood for something in his life that he felt was past and gone. Why deliberately tempt himself to go back?

He turned away; but again he halted. Where could he go to spend the hours he had to put in before he could see Beatrice? Where did other people go when all they wanted to spend was time? In days past, Cactus had been a liberal contributor to the upkeep of the Lame Horse. Now he felt that he was entitled to a little consideration. And as for temptation, he wasn't afraid. He could hold himself above that.

He strolled through the swinging doors. "Whoop-ee—hic!" old Jerry's cracked voice called unsteadily from the bunch at the bar. "Ef it aint my—hic!—my ol' fr'en'—hic!—an' little playmate. Whoop-ee! Cactus, durn yore ornery—hic!—hide, waltz right up an'—hic!—ile yore gullet!"

"Nope, Jerry," Cactus answered, smiling. "I told you I done quit mixin' with you boys." He sat down at one of the tables next to the wall, picked up the deck of cards and began dealing for solitaire.

"No use, Jerry," spoke up Slim Patten. "Something's shore plumb ruined our little

playmate! Eh, Cactus?"

Cactus laid a black six on a red seven,

and said nothing.

"Sumpin' shore has!" put in Spot Woody.
"An' I'm shore sorry. When Cactus was drinkin', he was kind an' friendly an' generous an' hard-workin' an' a real gentleman; but now that he's cold sober all the time, he—well, now he's his own worst enemy!"

"Mebbe he's-hic!-in love!" suggested

old Jerry.

"Speakin' o' love," said Slim Patten, "I just seen a funny thing down at the dee-po. Just as the local for the junction was ringin' the bell an' startin' to pull out, a man an' a woman carryin' a couple o' war-bags ducks out o' the freight shed an' piles on. I bet a dollar they was elopin'!"

"Mebbe they was dodgin' the law," said Spot Woody. "Didn't you know 'em?"

"I aint sure; but the man looked a lot like that new feller they call Five-Ace Frazer. As for the woman,"—Slim paused to gulp down his whisky—"well, she reminded me o' that gal they call Beetrice, down at the Red Bean."

Cactus, about to play a red eight on a black nine, stopped as if suddenly frozen. A sickening tightness clutched at his stomach. Beatrice! It couldn't be true!

AS in a nightmare, Cactus heard the voices at the bar: "No, Jerry, you got enough!" "Bet it was Five-Ace!" "I heard the sheriff say he was goin' to run the

skunk out o' town." . . . . "But I'm shore s'prised at Beetrice! I sort o' liked—" "Huh! I ain't s'prised at what ary woman does!" . . . . "An' them slick snakes like Five-Ace shore has a way with women!" . . . . "Hey, Cactus! . . . . Where you goin'?"

Cactus did not answer. Blindly, he stumbled out on to the street. It couldn't

be true! And yet—

"No, Be-at-rice aint here an' aint gonna be!" Mrs. Hodgson, proprietor of the Red Bean answered peevishly. "The little hussy ast me for ten minutes off to put her wages in the bank, an' then never come back. I sent Jeb Wilkins to her room an' they told him she had packed in a hurry an' skipped. Don't know why. She wasn't crazy 'bout workin' but she drew the trade. S'pose some man talked the little fool into elopin'. What you want, Cactus? We got—"

Blindly, again, Cactus moved down the street. He got his horse, then stopped at the sheriff's office. Deputy Darrel was at

his desk.

"Shore, I run Five-Ace Frazer out o' town, Cactus! He wasn't—well, he wasn't just our kind o' folks. . . . . Yep, I seen him go. . . . . That gal who was workin' at the Red Bean went with him. . . . . Been wonderin' if she knowed the sort o' skunk he is. . . . . Hey, you! . . . . Cactus! . . . . Bring back them handcuffs!"

But Cactus was gone—up the street in a

swirl of dust.

IT was ten miles of easy trail to Calzona Junction where the spur line from Calzona connected with the main line. As Cactus rode up to the shabby station he heard the distant whistle of the east-bound express. Tossing the reins over the hitching pole, he strode unhurriedly toward the open door of the little waiting-room.

Yes, there was Beatrice! Across the room by an open window—the grips at her

feet.

With a shrill cry, Beatrice ran to meet him. "Oh, thank God, you have come—at last!" she whispered chokily. "Go quick, Cactus, an' catch him! He—"

"Meanin' Five-Ace?" asked Cactus

calmly.

"Yes! He seen you comin' an' beat it out the window. He talked me into this, Cactus! An' he's carryin' the money—our money. Hurry, or you wont catch him!"

Cactus glanced out the window, across the track, down a dim trail that vanished in a cluster of aspens.

"An' s'posin' I catch him?"

The woman flung him a startled look. "Why-get the money, Cactus! money! Then let him go where he damn'where he pleases; but you come back—to me. Don't you-don't you understand, dear?"

Cactus made no move to go. Down the track the whistle of the train sounded nearer.

"Why do you look at me that way, Cactus?" the woman flung out impatiently. "Why do you stand here while-while he's getting away with-with our money? For

God's sake, hurry!"

Still Cactus did not move. He was looking at the woman—not the vision that had entranced him-but the woman as he now saw she really was—the cold, calculating glint in her eyes, the ghastly pallor beneath the rouge, the hard line of her painted

And, suddenly, Cactus flung back his

head—and laughed! "I'm blind," he said; "but I shore aint plumb deaf an' blind!"

HE jerked out his forty-five, whirled on his heel. "Come out from behind that door!" he barked.

Five-Ace Frazer glided out, his hands upraised, his eyes glittering, his face ashen.

"She's got the money," he whimpered.

"That's a lie!" the woman denied hotly. Cactus chuckled. "I shore hate to muss up this here depot; but unless I see that money damn' quick pronto I'm goin' to scatter Five-Ace's liver all over the-"

"For God's sake, give him back his

money!" begged Frazer.

The woman hesitated. Down the track, the express whistled for the Junction

crossing.

Suddenly the woman whirled on Five-Ace Frazer. "You little coward! To think that I've worked these cheap cow-towns for two years with you! I'm done! You hear! If I never see you again that'll be two hundred years too soon!"

She turned to Cactus. "Here's your

money."

Cactus took the money. Watching Five-Ace, he stepped to the ticket-window. The station-agent had been an interested onlooker.

"Mr. Sharpe," said Cactus coolly, "gimme

a ticket for Mr. Five-Ace an' one for Mrs. Five-Ace. Figger up how far this here two hundred an' thirty dollars will take 'eman' send them that far!"

The agent did some rapid calculating, took two tickets from the rack, dated them, and shoved them across the counter.

"Have to hurry!" he called "Train's here!"

"I aint goin' with him," declared the woman.

The express was grinding to a stop.

"I reckon you are," said Cactus. "But first-" He stepped quickly to Five-Ace, searched him, found a small automatic and shoved it across the counter. "Keep that as a souvenir, Mr. Sharpe! Just a minute, Five-Ace!" Holstering his forty-five, Cactus got out the deputy sheriff's handcuffs.

Before Five-Ace could move, Cactus snapped one of the cuffs over his wrist. "All aboard!" said Cactus. "Waltz right into

that there chair-car!"

The woman hesitated, took one look at the cowboy, and started for the train. Cactus, leading Frazer by the handcuff chain, kept close behind her, and stopped her at the first vacant seat. As Cactus forced the two into the seats, he snapped the other cuff over the woman's wrist.

The conductor came hurrying up.

"What's the trouble?"

"No trouble a-tall," explained Cactus, smiling. "These two don't belong in this here country an' are goin' away off somewhere. I don't know just where, but here's the tickets."

"All right," said the conductor; "but what's the idea of the handcuffs?"

"Them handcuffs," said Cactus, "-why, them is just there so decent folks will know that Mr. Five-Ace an' Mrs. Five-Ace belong together!"

CACTUS CHARLIE jogged leisurely down the trail toward Calzona. There was a whimsical smile on his good-natured face. . . . . What would the bunch at the Lame Horse say when he walked in and ordered drinks for the house? . . . . Pretty good bunch they were. . . . . A little foolish, sometimes. . . . . But hard workers. . . . . And square - shooters. . . . . . And any of them would lend him half of what they had left—or give it to him. . . . .

"They don't know nuthin' 'bout finance nor how to conserve," muttered Cactus;

"but—they're my kind o' folks!"



## Free Lances in Diplomacy

## *By* Clarence Herbert New

"The Prince Comes Home" deals with recent European events in Mr. New's customary vigorous and dramatic fashion.

Illustrated by William Molt

AD anyone given a thought to the matter during the previous week, it might have been noticed that two or more of the ministers were in the Cabinet room at Number Ten Downing Street at almost any hour up to midnight. King's illness—at first supposed to be nothing more than a slight cold—was beginning to alarm the entire nation, although his physicians were still of the opinion that it was yielding to treatment as well as could be expected. There were, of course, no possible difficulties as to the question of succession in the extreme eventuality. The Prince was exceedingly popular throughout the United Kingdom and the Dominionsone of the best educated and most competent young men in the country. But in these days, when royalty only exists by courtesy to provide an official head for nations governed actually by the people themselves, any transition from one reign to another is a period of uncertainty for the current minister—an interregnum in which anything may happen if the lid comes off.

Earl Trevor of Dyvnaint, as Lord Privy Seal, held a portfolio which did not require his presence at all of the Cabinet meetings, and had frequently made short trips on the Continent either upon affairs of state or looking after his own personal matters; but since the King's illness he had not been out of London. Coming into Number Ten late one afternoon, he asked the Foreign Secretary concerning a rumor which had come to him but an hour before.

"I say, Sir Austen! What's this I hear about Ted Fordyce being involved in some impossible affair—handing in his resignation? Of course what has come to me is only a garbled account which puts Fordyce entirely in the wrong—left him nothing else to do. But I've known that chap for a good many years, an' his family before him. I'll need both sides of the story before I form any opinion. Give me the details!"

"Well—my feeling is much the same as Your Lordship's about Fordyce. I'd have said the yarn was impossible—but unfortunately, the evidence was rather conclu-

sive—and the affair comes at just a time when we're in no position to overlook anything of the sort. Fordyce was attached to your Radio Intelligence Department, which has proved simply invaluable—picking out of the air, as you do, code-messages on various wave-lengths sent by other chancelleries to their secret agents in all quarters of the globe. Owing to his ability as a linguist, he was holding one of our most confidential appointm'nts—having not only a lot of the foreign information passing over his desk, but also the measures we are taking to render the foreign activities abor-Now he appears to have fallen for a certain Russian countess who has been seen a great deal in London society—has been dining with her at the Ritz and the Milan, drinking a good deal of champagne. It is perfectly well known to the F. O. who the woman is, and her object here in London-or in any other capital. She has taken a small house in Belgravia for a year; Russian agents and Wilhelmstrasse men have been seen there-

"Hmph! I'd be willing to wager a stiffish amount that Ted has been deliberately cultivating her with the idea of digging up information which we should have!"

"THAT was naturally my first impression," Sir Austen agreed. "But it seems that Captain Bates-Porlock has been suspecting for some time that it was more in the line of an actual infatuation, and has made a point of checking up on Fordyce—"

"Um-m-m? Bates-Porlock is one of the most thoroughly competent men, judging by appearances, we have in the Service. He's been up to his job wherever he has been put; his reports are accurate. But—there is something about the chap which I instinctively distrust. I wouldn't have him working in any confidential capacity under me if he were the last man available!"

"Hmph! Deuced unfortunate you feel that way about him, Trevor. It just happens that he's the only available man to handle the work Fordyce was doing—the only one competent to handle it! I was obliged to consent that he take over Fordyce's desk at once—"

"Subject to my approval, of course! You'll remember, old chap, that when, after organizing and equipping that department at my own expense, running to a quarter of a million, sterling, I turned it over for Government use, it was stipulated in writing that my personal authority was to

be supreme in it—that I was privileged to dismantle my property or withdraw it from Governm'nt service if that authority were disputed?"

"Oh, there's no question whatever as to that! And if it should prove that you've really any grounds for distrusting Bates-Porlock, I'll regret very much that I gave

him that tentative appointm'nt."

"No harm done! He can't get beyond the reception-room on the ground floor even if he presents a Parliament'ry order—unless it has my countersign on it. We have some other good men among us; I'll put one of them on that desk until I look into this story about Ted a bit further. Any actual proof he couldn't be trusted?"

"Oh, yes, naturally—or his resignation wouldn't have been suggested. Bates-Porlock followed him to the Countess' house one evening—then came back to the F. O. Picked up Leftenant Grayson and John Enderby. Went back there with them. They climbed a brick wall from the mews in the rear-found a painter's ladder, climbed to the roof of a second-floor extension. dyce and the Countess were in a luxuriously furnished boudoir. She was cold sober, but he had been drinking enough to be talkative—and in a few minutes he began spilling F. O. matters. Not such a lot, but evidently what she wanted to hear. Then he slumped on the divan and went to sleep while she jotted down memoranda in a book. She went out and left him there. They got him out through the window, down the ladder, through a gate into the mews—and lugged him off to Enderby's rooms. But he didn't wake up enough to talk coherently until morning. Bates-Porlock and Grayson came in after breakfast -told Fordyce what he had done. Captain said there was no course but to send in his resignation at once—taking the chance that the F. O. would let it go at that. He asked Grayson and Enderby what they advised. They weren't strong for his resigning—but the poor chap seemed to be in a hole where there was no other way The resignation was posted."

"H-m-m—something dev'lish odd about the whole affair, Austen—something I fancy will bear looking into! At any ord'n'ry time, I'd hear Fordyce's side of it and probably reinstate him. But with the King in his present condition,—the Prince not due from East Africa until Wednesday,—there might be a dozen pretty serious complications hatching with the expecta-



tion that Governm'nt will have its hands too full of state affairs to look after anything else. Fancy I'll do a bit of quiet investigating during the next day or two. Er—any discussion about it among the Cabinet men, here?"

"There's been some—particularly from sir Michael Hudderman. He and Lord Marnly—Bates-Porlock's father, you know—are by way of being rather close friends. Sir Michael is quite open in his opinion concerning Bates-Porlock's ability—thinks this checking up on Fordyce is outstanding evidence of it. He's said quite a lot here, about men like Fordyce being a disgrace to the Service and his intention of starting a weeding-out campaign to see if there's more rotten timber to be discovered. In fact, it was he who was most insistent upon my turning over Ted's desk to the Captain."

"Hmph! Just what concern is it of Sir Michael's whom I detail to such confidential positions—and why does he consider himself better adapted than I to judging the fitness of any man for them? H-m-m—might be of interest to look up Hudderman's antecedents a bit. I say! Any idea where I might get in touch with John Enderby and Leftenant Grayson?"

"Why, I fancy they would be across the street at the F. O. just at the moment—looking in before they go to dinner."

"Good! I'll phone from here, if you can spare them for the next few hours. What?"

"Of course—if you've anything in mind for them. Have them put you through to Department K."

IT took but a few moments for His Lordship to ask if the F. O. men were at liberty to dine with him in Park Lane. Then, after chatting for a few moments with some of the ministers in the Cabinet room, he went out and was driven home.

After dinner he took Enderby and Grayson into the big Jacobean library at the other side of the hall, and closed the door.

"Gentlemen, I'm going to ask' you rather straight questions—in strict confidence, of course—and I'm depending upon you for equally straight answers. If it were some personal matter of your own, which would you trust the farther—Ted Fordyce or Captain Bates-Porlock?"

"Well—Your Lordship will understand in the first place that we were in the Army Intelligence with Fordyce during the war, saw him tested out in a good many ways—were helped out of a tight spot by him upon one occasion. I still think there wasn't reason enough for his resigning, though the Captain seemed to have a good bit more in reserve than he told us. If he'd known how much of a pal Ted had been, I fancy

he'd have taken almost anyone else with Still, he might have him that night. fancied that what we saw and heard would look worse to his friends than to casual acquaintances-

That's exactly my impression "Hmph! of what he did think! Er-what would you say as to Bates-Porlock's record and

ability?"

"If it were to the man in the street, I'd answer that question one way—the Captain has a record for absolute efficiency. But after several years in the Service, I fancy both Grayson and I would answer it from another slant altogether. There is such a thing as being too cursed good in what one does—the something which has the tendency to make the man a lot smarter than the master, the subordinate far too much more competent than his superiors. Of course the obvious explanation is the desire for early promotion to responsible and confidential positions. But there's a curious, indefinable line between the man who does it entirely for self-advancement and the one who has only in mind the good of the Service."

"Any idea where Fordyce is just at present-and how he feels about this?"

"Knowing that Your Lordship is one of Ted's best friends, I'll answer that question in a diff'rent way than if another person had asked it. In the clubs, it's generally understood that he has left for the Riviera—very much cut up over the affair -not making excuses, and feeling that his career is ruined. As a matter of fact, he's sticking pretty close to his diggings in the Temple—but made us promise to spread a report as to his being frightfully cut up. Frankly, sir—we're both of the impression that there's more to this affair than appears on the surface."

"Exactly what I think; myself. Now-I say! You two heard what Ted spilled to the Countess that night, didn't you? What

was it?"

"Well-he let her dig out of him that the F. O. has concluded a secret treaty with Italy—that we've succeeded in proving to them that Germany has no intention of carrying out the terms of her secret agreement just concluded with Rome, and is double-crossing them. That was about all —but the way it was dragged out of him made it sound pretty convincing."

"My word! If he actually made the woman believe that, it was as clever a bit of secret-service work as I've heard of in months! Great cats! We ought to give him a medal instead of considering his resigna-You see it, don't you? Was there a possibility of his having spilled anything

more damaging than that?"

"Well, the Captain had a lot of memoranda concerning what Ted had admitted to the woman upon other occasions—but Grayson and I can't swallow it—that's all. And Fordyce wasn't unconscious when we lugged him down that ladder, either. was excellent faking for a dark night-Bates-Porlock certainly didn't suspect him. But when he'd gone off with Grayson, Ted and I smoked for an hour-had some hot coffee before turning in. Ted's on the trail of something-looks to us as if he let this affair go through just as the Captain had planned to expose him, for the sake of lying low and turning up evidence of something rotten."

HALF an hour later the two Foreign Office men left the house-and His Lordship was driven to Fordyce's chambers in the Temple, after having telephoned to see if he were home. The former Service man received him smilingly, and pulled up two comfortable chairs before the open fire.

"Ted-I hear you're a disgrace to the

Service!"

"That's Bates-Porlock's opinion, I sup-You didn't by any chance let him get at my desk, I hope? . . . . No-I was fairly sure you wouldn't! I heard he'd been given the appointm'nt and was taking charge today. Wonder how far he'll consider it advisable to go in raising a row when he finds he can't get in? It'll be a facer, because he doesn't anticipate anything of the sort—you see, in the other cases, everything has worked with absolute smoothness, not a hitch anywhere; and it wont occur to him that you'll defy even a Parliament'ry order in that departm'nt. Still, when he finds out the sort of opposition he's running into, I fancy he may be inclined to let some of the Cabinet men fight it out for him rather than appear too anxious for the berth."

"What do you mean by 'the other cases,' Ted? What other cases? Anything like

this one of yours?"

"Yes-but not in the way they came The details were diff'rent each time, so that there was no marked resemblance in them. I fancy you'll have run across Major Lowry, of the Army Intelligence?"

"Aye. We've not seen much of him, but know the man as a jolly fine sort with a corking war-record—valuable chap."

"Er—quite so. He resigned a few months ago and went out to his brother's ranch in Canada. A Captain Francis Smythe has his berth in the War Office at present—very efficient chap—"

"But—what the deuce! How did the Major happen to resign? Come into a pot

of money?"

"No—he had very little beyond his pay
—was in line for promotion at considerably
better screw, and deserved it for his loyal,
brilliant record. He went out to that Alberta ranch to make his living. It was
rumored that he was caught cheating at
cards, one night, in the Army and Navy
Club. Affair was hushed up, of course—
but he was advised to send in his resignation, and did so."

"Major Lowry a card-sharp? Rot!" Trevor exploded. "Where were his friends that they didn't investigate the matter?"

"It just happened that none of his intimate friends were in the club at the time—and what the onlookers at the game thought they saw looked pretty bad. I've done some investigating myself—have managed to dig out proof that it was a frame-up. Cabled Lowry a week ago to come home and apply for reinstatement. Fancy you'll probably have heard of Leftenant Wycherly in the Navy Intelligence at the Admir'lty? Not?"

"Of course. Very able chap! He was on the cruiser which took me around to the Ægean during the war—just the right sort

of head for Intelligence work."

"Well, you know there is almost always a critical moment in obtaining secretservice information, when a man's actions -taken without knowledge of his preliminary or intended moves-may be shown up in a beastly unfavorable light. Somebody was spotting Wycherly at just the wrong moment-reported his actions as exceedingly suspicious. With his plans and work still incomplete, there wasn't much explanation he could give. So he was reduced two grades and ordered to a third-class cruiser of the Pacific Squadron. That gave him no chance to stay in London and get the information which would have exonerated him-it was either obey orders or resign. Naturally, he resigned—and a Captain Somerville has taken over his berth in the Navy Intelligence-an apparently thorough and capable man who seems to be doing very well. But Wycherly isn't the sort of chap to take such a frame-up lying down. Somehow, somewhere, he suspected collusion-and he's lying low here in London digging away at it. He's the man who first gave me a hint as to what might be going on-he'd spotted four other cases in various branches of the Service where firstchop loyal Englishmen had found themselves unexpectedly in compromising positions which apparently left no course but prompt resignation. In each case the vacant berth was filled by a man who was a good bit more efficient than the average. if I can prove-conclusively enough for a Cabinet investigating committee—that each one of the present incumbents is what I'm reasonably certain he is—well, that'll be something else. Governm'nt wont sleep well the night I prove my statements!"

"Gad, old chap! I'm beginning to catch the drift of what all this is leading up to! But, if it's what I'm vaguely suspecting, the thing is almost incredible! One doesn't see how it possibly could be pulled off!"

"SUPPOSE I give Your Lordship a few facts to consider. How much do you know about Bates-Porlock? Who is he? What is generally known about him?"

asked Fordyce quietly.

"Why—he'll be a younger son of Lord Marnly. Educated at Eton and Magdalen—went through Sandhurst—gazetted to one of the cavalry regiments—instructor in one of the training-camps during the first two years of the war, then detailed to the Army Intelligence in Asia Minor. Mentioned in dispatches for obtaining information behind the enemy's lines. Attached to the F. O. in various capacities since the war."

"Hmph! Your Lordship seems to have been making a few inquiries."

"Merely to find out if there is anything about the fellow to justify my instinctive dislike—that's all. And his record makes it appear foolish prejudice on my part."

"I wonder, now, why it didn't occur to you to dip into Burke's Peerage a bit—turn up what there is concerning Lord Marnly? I've a copy, here—let me read you one or two bits about him. . . . . Here we are! 'Algernon Charles Gregory Bates-Porlock—6th Baron Marnly of Evescote—and so forth. . . . . Born Evescote, Norfolk, 1865. Married, first—in 1898—the Baronin Hulda von Gronigratz. Her three-year-old son, Hermann Adolf von Groni-

gratz, legally adopted by His Lordship under name Herman Adolph Bates-Porlock. Baronin died 1902. His Lordship married, second wife, in 1905, Lady Harriet Chalmers, daughter of the Earl of Bartleigh—by whom he has issue, the Honorable Henry—Ysobel—and Jeanette Bates-Porlock. There's more of it—but that gives what we want to know."

"My word! Then this super-efficient bounder who wants your berth isn't a son of Marnly's at all—only a full-blooded Prussian step-son! Fancy! I think he'll

be leaving the Service presently!"

"Well, if there were no other cases than mine to indicate some sort of organized conspiracy, I fancy you'd not get him out as easily as you think. It would be claimed that he has been reared and educated as an Englishman from the age of three, that he has an exceptionally fine war and Service record. You'd find it would take some doing to get him out!"

"But-if you know of other foreigners

in the Service?"

"I can mention at least seven-all occupying responsible and confidential berths. Take the Captain Smythe who obtained Lowry's desk. He comes of a county family in Northumberland. At the time he was five, the family were known in one of the small towns as Lichnowsky-apparently of some means and education, but not taken up by the county people. the ground that his name created local prejudice, the father applied to the authorities and obtained legal authorization to change over and use his wife's name of Smythe. There are families of that name in the northern shires—but nobody seems to have identified them with any particular one. The children received the usual education of gentlemen's sons and daughters. tually, the father, mother and this bird are Russians born in Saratov. So that's what you've got in place of a loyal Englishman in Major Lowry's berth. In five other cases which I've traced, it's the same—the berths are now being held by foreigners without a drop of English blood in them!"

"But—I say, Ted! Do you mean to state as cold fact that there is an organized conspiracy, here, gradually to oust tried and loyal English officers from confidential berths in the various Governm'nt services—force their resignations—and fill their places with foreigners of one race or another who may become our enemies after any, possible enough, declaration of war?"

"Oh, no! I'm not making any such definite statement as that! The British law of libel is too severe to encourage statements which take a lot of proving. What I do say, however, is this: I suggest quiet but thorough investigation upon the part of this ministry into the facts which brought about the resignations, during the past year, of a good many loyal British officers whose record, up to that time, had been beyond reproach. Also a thorough investigation into the actual nationality of every officer occupying a confidential position in any of the services. I make no definite statement that a conspiracy exists—I merely point out that such investigations can harm nobody except enemy aliens, and that every Governm'nt should make them from time to time just to check up on its personnel. Beyond all that, I'd like to have this question put up to the Cabinet at the next meeting: Whether such a conspiracy exists or not, any intelligent person will admit that it's by no means impossible. Supposing the possibility—what would be the situation Governm'nt might have to face in the event that there is a change in the reign? Of course, none of us really expect anything as regrettable as that—His Majesty appears to have a good chance for a slow recovery. But in such a serious illness anything is possible. In such case, how serious a menace would it be to have foreigners, who once were of enemy nations, in positions of confidence and responsibility throughout the services? What might they succeed in doing, if there happened to be a much larger body of persons working under their orders? What conflicting instructions might be sent to our embassies and warships all over the globe?"

"I'LL see that the seriousness of such a contingency is placed before the Cabinet tomorrow morning, Ted," Trevor remarked. "But I'm of the impression that you've more to tell me before I leave—something which may prove to be a problem for immediate consideration. Eh?"

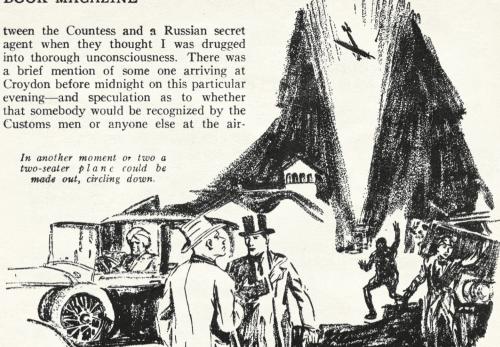
"H-m-m—it'll be a shot in the dark if I do! Is your car waiting outside, sir?
.... I fancied it would be. Have you the time to go down to Croydon with me—

at once?"

"Aye. This matter is of more importance than any minor engagem'nt. Were you thinking of flying to Paris—or expecting somebody?"

"There's just this which I overheard be-





drome. The inference I got was that the chap was coming over in a two-seater with a companion—flying-togs—merely a suitcase for each, which they'll have promptly examined, and leave the field at once."

"Any idea as to who the chap may be?"
"Oh—it's nothing but guesswork. I've three possibilities in mind, but one of them seems persistent—and the odd feature is that it's the most utterly impossible one of the lot."

"You're considering a possibility which may be part and parcel of the other conspiracy—if there is such a thing?"

"If the thing is done at all, it's all one proposition. But the joker in my mind is that the man who may be coming in tonight is just as likely to be straight goods as imitation. In fact, that may be the stronger possibility."

"The devil! Sometimes I'm not altogether stupid. I fancy I get the shadow of what's in your mind, old chap—and I've seen too much in the last quarter-century to say anything is really impossible. But let us hope it's a wild guess upon your part. Come along! We're in for a stormy night, I fancy—but we'll drive along carefully."

MUFFLED in a heavy ulster with the collar turned up, it was difficult to see much of the Earl's Afghan chauffeur and

devoted retainer except the flashing black eyes under the peak of his cap, but he handled the powerful car in a way which compelled respect.

As they rolled away toward Croydon, the Earl was saying to Fordyce:

"I fancy if the question had been put up to me in the Cabinet, I'd have said: 'Make it in two hops from Cairo—stopping at Malta to refuel.' It would have saved three days which are vitally important just now—and the risk in a properly inspected plane is negligible."

At Croydon the car was parked at His Lordship's own hangar, just outside the Customs lines. Being promptly recognized, he and Fordyce were permitted inside the inclosure, where the incoming planes came down. After twenty minutes a faint drone was heard through the drizzle of cold rain —the field-mechanics spotting it as a private plane not in any of the cross-Channel services. The field was flooded with powerful lights—a single orange-colored pencilbeacon shooting straight upward through the mist and clouds. In another moment or two the shape of a two-seater plane could be made out, circling down-and it presently made a very good landing on the hard but muddy ground in front of the entrancebuilding. Stepping forward as it came to a stop, Trevor and Fordyce got a close look at the faces of the two men who climbed out of the cockpit.

Removing their goggles, they hauled out a couple of suitcases which they started to unstrap for the Customs men—and turned the plane over to a couple of mechanics who were waiting for it. But with a peculiar expression, as he glanced at the face of the shorter aviator—still somewhat disguised by his helmet—the official in charge drew himself up in a formal salute, then fastened the straps again and chalked both suitcases without a glance inside.

"No examination necess'ry, sir. You've a car outside, I trust? Beastly weather!" "Aye—quite so. Thank you, sir."

OTICING the incident, the mechanics and a few persons waiting arrival of friends came closer to look at the mysterious strangers-but the Customs men waved them back until the aviators had disappeared through the entrance-building. Prompted by that intuition which made him the valuable man he was, Sabub Ali had run the car up from the Trevor hangar as soon as he heard the different drone of the two-seater-waiting near the other cars as the Earl and Fordyce came out. Getting in without apparently paying the slightest attention to the aviators or the car which had met them. His Lordship muttered to Sabub that he wanted him to start ahead on the road to the city—presently let the other car pass him-and then trail it if possible without being seen. As they rolled silently along in the rain and murk, Fordyce asked:

"Well? Was it—or wasn't it?"

"No—I'm fairly certain it was not. But there isn't one person in a hundred, knowing the man by sight, who would agree with me in that statement!"

"Why are you apparently sure about it? If anyone asked for my inside opinion, I'm afraid I'd say it was the man himself. Don't see how it could be anyone else! Of course we've both seen him at close quarters—talked with him hundreds of times. The average person in the street wouldn't be absolutely sure."

"In the first place, the man—one keeps thinking of him as a boy in spite of his thirty-four years—is naturally kind-hearted and decent all through. Which means that in spite of any personal inclinations he might have, he wouldn't cause one moment's extra anxiety to his family at such a time as this—nor anxiety to the nation,

either. He has a keen sense of his responsibilities—no man knows better than he that there are times when foolish, reckless or inconsidered actions are absolutely taboo—and that this is such a time. One thing you may bank upon is that he will travel exactly as the Cabinet requests him to travel. That's my slant on it. Now—what's yours?"

"You're aware, of course, that he has been very much interested in a certain Earl's daughter who is now, or has been very recently, seriously ill with pneumonia? And that he's had radio messages from her family every day since he arrived in Africa? Yes. Now we go back to a personal liking which has drawn as much remonstrance from people who are worried by it as his persistent riding to hounds—I'm referrin' to his giving secret-service men the slip. at times, and walking off on his own, wherever he happens to be. Never happened to hear him give any reason for it -but it's supposed to be something like That, when dressed in a morning suit, top-coat and soft felt hat, like the average man about town, not one person in a thousand would be really sure of his identity if he passed them walking along the sidewalk, unattended. Admitting that his face has been pictured so constantly in the public prints as to make it familiar everywhere—under the usual conditions it is nevertheless a fact that his face is not a sufficiently striking one to be recognized at a glance from any peculiarities in it. He represents a type of pleasant-looking young fellow which may exist by the hundreds, all having a certain general resemblance—and he might walk the streets of any city, particularly at night or on a muggy day, without being recognized, for hours on end. Just one man among thousands of other men—no better, no worse -no more outstanding because of his birth. Of course if he really has any such common-sense slant upon the 'divinity which doth hedge a king,' he's dead right.' On the other hand, excessive advertising makes a resemblance subconscious recognition in the average mind. It's a question as to how long a person would let it go as fancied resemblance or how many times he or she would be certain. Now, if it proves that you are right in this case, it's a very good illustration in point. Mind you, it's a drizzly night-very poor light-yet in spite of the flying-togs those men at Croydon were positive. They'll keep their mouths shut because they'll think that's what they're expected to do-but they'd swear to the identity just the same. And if the chap doesn't go straight to Buckingh'm from there, disappears for a day or two, those men are going to do a lot of uncomplimentary thinking—which is a very unfortunate thing to happen at such a time as this when we want the man before the nation in the most favorable light possible. If I'd shut my eyes when I heard the chap speak, I'd have sworn to his voice. If he's not the man, you may gamble upon his having been coached in everything likely to come up, until he could spend days at Buckingham without a serious slip. Sooner or later, of course, he would make a slipbut he might be so thoroughly accepted by that time that it wouldn't be noticed."

"Have you any real belief, Ted, that this man could actually get into Buckingh'm with any such impersonation? I'll admit that the resemblance is startling."

"That would depend almost entirely upon whether the real man gave this gang any chance for abduction by going about alone or insufficiently guarded. Should he do that, the thing is entirely possible—you know it as well as I do! I don't expect such a contingency to happen. But this impostor can embarrass the Governm'nt like the very devil in other ways. He can appear in places where he's sure to be recognized-places where it will offend the entire nation to have him appear at such a time as this-cast discredit upon the succession-stir up a nation-wide protest which will give excellent opportunity for a general upheaval if you don't watch out. What we've to do is trace and nab the impostor before anything really compromising can happen—that is, if you're right about his being an impostor. First chance we get, I vote we radio the Enterprise and get assurance that the right man is still aboard her. She'll reach Brindisi about eleven tomorrow morning-the express will leave by way of the St. Gothard within an hour. We should know positively that our man is on that express!"

SABUB ALI was past master in the art of trailing a motorcar without being seen. Coming up from Croydon, anyone making for the East End of the city is sure to switch off at a certain crossing. Going to any part of the West End, he would follow the straight road and cross the Thames by either Vauxhall or Westminster Bridge.

After making sure that the car ahead was making for the West End, Sabub made a detour at high speed and came in where the route branched to the left for Vauxhall considerably ahead of the other car, which passed him without suspicion near the bridge. Along the city streets, it was a simple matter to keep the car in sight without being noticed. In a few moments, a sharp exclamation came from Fordyce:

"By Jove! I was right, and Your Lordship was wrong! It's the man himself! See! He's making direct for the garden

gates of Buckingh'm!"

The Earl glanced along the street behind them, through the little window at the back.

"Yes-but this affair has been dev'lish well thought out! There's a car racing up behind us with two men on the running-I'll wager you a hundred quid they're going to pull off a fake abduction right at the gates, where the constables on duty are quite certain to recognize the fellow if he sticks his head out of the car! That'll clinch it, d'ye see! The abductors will manage to get away in that fast car before the bobbies can nab 'em-which leaves the dummy apparently rescued by their presence. Keep your head, Fordyce -an' follow my lead! We'll do the rescuing ourselves, even if we shoot to kill! We're entirely justified in killing any one of that lot! Now then! There they gojust as I fancied! Shoot to stop them!"

The affair had been planned with careful attention even to the smallest detail. As the first car approached the Palace gates, the pursuing one swerved around past that of His Lordship-ran alongside of its quarry-and the two men jumped to the running-board of the first car, one of them ordering the chauffeur to drive away from the Palace at top speed, as an automatic was jammed against his ribs, while the other covered the men inside. But to the amazement of the conspirators, a fusillade of shots came from a third car just behind them. One of the men on the running-board pitched down upon the roadway with a bullet through his body, while the other one fell off with a bullet through his right The chauffeur of the abductors' car, realizing that something had gone wrong, opened up his throttle and raced away as the first car came to a stop at the gates.

The two constables on duty were drawn up in a stiff salute to the man who leaned out of the car window—as Earl Trevor and Fordyce ran up, automatics in hand.

"One moment, constables! Don't let that car pass the gates! Those scoundrels have confederates inside the Palace!"

Then—to the man leaning out of the "I suggest that you accompany us to the house of a Cabinet minister until morning, sir. If you attempt to go in now, your presence will create surprise and confusion anyhow, because you are not expected before Wednesday. There certainly will be an attempt to kill you, either by knife or pistol—which will cause an uproar all through the building. His Majesty's life is hanging by a few weak heart-beats the slightest disturbance will be fatal! During the night, we will send word of your arrival to Her Majesty and the physicians. In the morning, you can go to the Palace with a sufficient guard to prevent either personal risk or disturbance. I will take him in my car, constable—and I'll be glad to have you accompany us in case of further trouble.'

THE two conspirators didn't know just where they were. It seemed quite evident that Government men had been following them from Croydon as a sort of unobtrusive guard, and had naturally rescued them from what was obviously attempted abduction. Apparently, nobody was suspicious of them. To fall in with their rescuer's suggestions seemed likely to insure their getting into the Palace in the morning under advantageous conditionsand still a good two days ahead of anyone coming by rail from Brindisi. To insist upon immediate entrance seemed very likely to arouse serious opposition for excellent and obvious reasons. After a word or two of whispered conference, the shorter of the two men got out of his car and stepped into that of His Lordship, closely followed by Fordyce, who still had his pistol in hand and was following the Earl's lead in everything, although he felt sure a serious mistake was being made.

As the second man started to get out of the car and join them, His Lordship waved him back—saying that one of the constables would get in and accompany him as extra guard—the one car following the other. Then the Earl drew the tall bobby aside for a moment and spoke rapidly in so low a tone that neither of the conspirators overheard a word of it.

"Constable, you know me pretty well—know I don't do crazy things without being sure of my ground. We're smashing

a beastly serious conspiracy, and need your Whistle for at least four of your reserves at once! This man is an impostor -absolutely! I want his companion taken to Scotland Yard in that other car and held there! Send Chief Inspector Baldwin to my house just as soon as a fast car will get him there. Have your men caution him not to mention my name or title under any conditions—be very careful that you don't make a slip and do it yourself! If this man were what you think he is, he would have recognized me at first glancewouldn't he? And he certainly hasn't the remotest idea who I really am! think that over-tell your men to think it You'll catch the force of it in a moment or two! Now call up your reserves-give them instructions-and then come along with us!"

All this was said in not over a minute. To the man in the Earl's car and his confederate in the other one, it seemed merely a giving of instructions by someone connected with the Government or police to protect them further against possible attack. The reserves came running up within a minute after the short blast of the whistle-and received their instruc-Then the two cars moved off-one. in the direction of Park Lane, and the following one turning down to Whitehall. The Earl chatted pleasantly with his supposed guest during the few moments it took to reach his town house-quite unfamiliar to the man-nothing he saw when taken into the big library conveyed any information to him as to whose house it might be or the identity of his host.

As his suitcase had been fetched along, the Earl suggested that the valet of the gentleman who owned the house take him up to the room he would occupy that night and assist him to change into a morning suit which would be more comfortable than were the heavy flying-togs. This perfectly natural suggestion was accepted without the least suspicion of any ulterior motive but the valet who helped him change managed to feel of every hem in the suit and underclothing for any sort of weapon or capsule of poison, in case the man suddenly decided upon taking that way out. While he was upstairs, Chief Inspector Baldwin arrived with another constable. Rapidly sketching the events of that evening and their suspicions of a conspiracy which had led up to them, the Earl suggested that the three of them test the man out when he came down again. Meanwhile, his private secretary had been talking with his powerful wireless station in South Devon, which had promptly called the cruiser Enterprise—then racing up the Adriatic—on one of the short waves. The South Devon operator had secured the desired information at once, and telephoned

"Er-you know this man, of course, sir?"-nodding toward the Earl.

"Why—his face is rather familiar. I've been trying to place him. One of the Scotland Yard people, I presume? I fancy we've not happened to meet before."

"Er-you're quite sure of that, sir?" "Oh—I'll not be positive, of course!



it up to Park Lane in London—the typewritten sheet being handed to His Lordship just after Baldwin's arrival:

Prince on board at this moment in his own cabin, playing cards with his secretary, his equerry and the commander. Has not been out of their sight since leaving Dar-es-Salaam. Expect to reach outer port, Brindisi, 11 A. M. tomorrow. H. R. H. will leave in about thirty minutes on fast express via Gothard to Boulogne, where he crosses on Biarritz.

Cummings:-Lieut. R. N.

This seemed conclusive enough to the chief inspector-but when the man rejoined them in a perfectly cut morning suit of the cloth and color usually worn by the man he was supposed to be, Baldwin was simply staggered. The face-the voice -the gestures-the little mannerismswere simply identical. It was uncannyimpossible! In a hesitating way, Baldwin had carried out His Lordship's suggestions by clicking his heels together and saluting like the Army man he had once been. Then, as the fellow smilingly motioned for him to be seated again, he remarked:

One meets so many people of all classes, you know. But if we have met, I fancy there was nothing to fix his name specially in my mind."

Baldwin muttered something which might have been: "My God!" And the two intelligent constables—who had been permitted to read the radiogram from the Enterprise—slowly and rather grimly shook their heads. In these days, the crime of "high treason" is something one reads about only in the histories. Baldwin's jaws came together with a snap as he reached a decision.

"Well—this affair may break me before we're through with it, but my idea would be to take this man wherever you're going to keep him and chain him to something pretty solid until we know where we're at. I don't care to risk having him at Scotland Yard with that face and voice! Somebody would be sure to think I'm crazy, and turn him loose! Now listen to me, sir! I may be making the mistake of my life. But you know what the conditions are in the Palace tonight as well as I do. You expect us to accept you as a certain personage? Here is a message that you are on a cruiser in the Adriatic at this moment! We'll know by Wednesday which is right—and then, if I'm wrong, I'll take my medicine! Meanwhile—you remain handcuffed to an iron bedstead or something heavier!"

The man's eyes flashed—his fists clenched. Then, with a gesture indicating that either anger or argument was useless

at the moment, he smiled.

"You seem to have the courage of your convictions, Inspector! In the days of my ancestors, you would have found your head on the block before you realized what was happening! But the times change. In fact, I'm not sure that I know just what the punishment is for high treason, today. I can certainly afford to wait a few hours if you can-but I hope you'll chain me up so that I'll get a good night's sleep on that bed. You see—I've been flying for thirty hours. One thing, however, you will bear in mind if you please—if there is any sudden change for the worse in His Majesty's condition, you will get me to the Palace as quickly as you can, or take the consequences! They'll be serious, I assure you! Understood? Now-I'll go to bed if there's nothing further to say.

When they had taken the man to a small room on the top floor and handcuffed him to the bed, the chief inspector left the constables on watch to relieve each other every

four hours.

Back in the library again, he said:

"Either that fellow has more cold nerve than any criminal I ever saw, or else we're making a simply frightful mistake! Even with the evidence of this radiogram from the cruiser, I wouldn't swear at this moment that the man coming up by rail isn't the dummy and this one the real thing! Some such decision may have been made in Egypt for reasons we know nothing about-some private reasons in the royal family which they haven't mentioned even to the Governm'nt. It's not impossible, you know, that they've feared the worst for the last three days and decided to get the man home in the quickest possible way. Your Lordship knows more about the usual procedure than I do-but I'm of the impression that even the Privy Council can't proclaim the succeeding sovereign unless he is actually present in person. If His Majesty should die tomorrow, we three

would be confronted with a very serious decision—to take this man at his own valuation and produce him before the Privy Council at Buckingh'm, or leave the nation without a sovereign until the other man reaches London. Even then, it might take Her Majesty to tell 'em apart! If we produce an impostor, we're in a rotten position—if we've got the real man chained up here, we're in a rottener one!"

AS the Inspector finished speaking, they heard the voices of newsboys in the street crying an extra. With a feeling of sickening foreboding, Fordyce went out for a couple of copies—but, fortunately, the extra had no reference to His Majesty's condition. It was an embarrassing blow against the Government in another direc-A rumor-said to have come from both the Admiralty and the War Officestated that a certain personage unquestionably had arrived at Croydon with a companion, from Egypt, in a two-seater plane at ten-thirty P. M.—had been recognized and passed by the Customs men-had started off in a car, presumably for Buckingham Palace, but had not been seen afterward.

Guarded reference was made to the man's propensity for going where he pleased and doing as he liked. It was pointed out that this was not the proper time for that sort of thing—that the nation might have reason to be very much dissatisfied with a person of that sort occupying a position of authority or passing upon questions of State. The extra had been issued by one of the radical sheets, of course, and was careful to keep its suggestions well inside the libel law—but the thing conveyed inference and innuendo reflecting upon the dynasty and Government at a time when little notice could be taken of them.

Without losing a moment, His Lordship called up the offices of the great press syndicate which he and the Countess controlled—reading over the *Enterprise* radiogram to the managing editor, and ordering him to have extras from five different newssheets on the streets within twenty minutes—printing the radiogram and denying, absolutely, the reported arrival at Croydon. He had scarcely finished when the telephone-bell rang again; a somewhat familiar voice inquired if Fordyce was with the Earl at the moment, and whether he might join them there. In less than fifteen minutes, a blood-stained figure, with one arm

in a sling and a bandage around the head, was fetched into the library-being recognized as the former Navy Intelligence Lieutenant called Wycherly. Staggering to a chair and gulping down a tumbler of whisky the Earl poured for him, he took from an inside pocket a Russia-leather memorandum-book nearly filled with fine

but legible writing, in German.

"I burgled that from a flat in Jermyn Street, gentlemen, which I was pretty sure must be the center of a spider-web. There was a small safe. Month ago-picked up by fool luck-memoranda which seemed to be combination of a safe. Got into this place when bounder was out-found evidence he's not a man at all but-most dangerously clever woman-ever came across. Known as-four diff'rent persons -here in London-three men-a woman. Combination worked. Stuffing my pockets when she came in-caught me-fired twice before I grabbed her. Choked her unconscious. Got away through window-up fire escape—over roofs. Fancy she didn't recognize me-face pretty black, you see. Memorandum-book-names of ninety-two -Germans, Hungarians, Russians-been in this country upwards of twenty-five years. Original names—English names. Present occupation—former occupation. Nine of 'em planted-Governm'nt services. Memoranda of-how done. How-moregoing to be-placed. Extras on the streets -work of those-damned foreigners-of course. Dev'lish mess-unless stopped at Can't you get some of-Cabinet here-this house-before morning? Show foreigners up-squash 'em! If you don't —hell to pay!"

WYCHERLY sagged down in his chair as he fainted. The Inspector and Fordyce poured whisky down his throat and started to re-dress his wounds which were bleeding a good deal—while His Lordship rapidly skimmed through the memorandumbook to see how much tangible proof it con-With Wycherly's testimony and what Ted Fordyce had managed to dig out concerning the conspirators, it looked almost convincing enough to place before the Cabinet.

After a moment's thought, Trevor decided to risk it-the situation did not admit of halfway measures. Getting through to Number Ten Downing Street, he called for John Craithness, the Premier—asking him to fetch the five leading Ministers of

the Cabinet to Park Lane as soon as he could get them there. As the King's condition was causing anxiety throughout the nation, none of them made any objection to this summons at one o'clock in the morning, but arrived in half an hour.

Detailing the seven known cases where loyal Englishmen had been forced to resign and were succeeded by men proved to be foreigners, he had Fordyce give them a brief resumé of his discoveries. By that time, Wycherly was sufficiently conscious to corroborate this and explain how he had obtained the memorandum-book. This was passed around among the Ministers—those who read German translating for the others the data on the ninety-two foreigners who had been reared as Englishmen. Then Trevor gave them the incidents of that evening-and took them quietly up to look at the sleeping man on the top floor. steel handcuff, chained to the bed, startled and shocked them. They were of the opinion that His Lordship had made a fearful mistake-but he handed them the Enterprise radiogram. Baldwin already had told them that the prisoner hadn't the remotest idea who his captor was. facts seemed unanswerable-but the amazing resemblance jarred severely. Wh they had returned downstairs, one said: When

"Queen Elizabeth came pretty close to the block just before her reign commenced —but this is the first I ever heard of a prospective monarch being chained to an ord'n'ry iron bed shortly before succeed-

ing to the throne!"

As the Ministers left the house after agreeing upon seven arrests by the F. O. before daylight, Inspector Baldwin nervously lighted one of the Earl's choice cigars and began pacing up and down the room. He was by no means sure that they were not in a very serious predicament.

Fordyce sat looking into the fire-until an idea suddenly occurred to him, and he

turned to Trevor.

"I say! You're the Lord Privy Seal, Wasn't there a Parliament'ry decision a few years ago that fingerprints of the royal family should be filed in your diggin's at the Treasury Office in Whitehall as a protection to the dynasty and the succession?"

"The devil! Now why is it that neither of us happened to think of that before? .... The obvious thing should have occurred to us at once! I wouldn't know where to look for any such prints among

#### Free Lances in Diplomacy

the Governm'nt files—but it just happens that I made some excellent prints of the whole royal family when we were all down at Windsor a year ago! They're in my file-room, sixty feet below the street-level. You go up and get prints from this bird, Inspector, while I'm fetching the other ones!"

In fifteen minutes, two sheets of paper were lying side by side on the long table under a large and powerful magnifying lens. They bore a closer resemblance than usually occurs in the prints from two different and unrelated persons—but they did not match.

Baldwin sank weakly into a chair and poured himself a stiff drink of whisky.

"My word! If I find my head full of gray hairs after breakfast I'll know how they got there! My compliments to Your Lordship! You were banking on what you knew of a certain young man's disposition—his instinctive avoiding of the things which aren't done; and you win! But I hope we never run into a complication like this again!"

NEXT afternoon—all day Tuesday—racing up the bootleg of Italy, roaring under the Alps, streaking across northern France to Boulogne, picked crews of three nations drove the most powerful locomotives in the service in an emergency run from Brindisi in five hours' shorter time than ever it had been done before—not knowing from hour to hour whether they were hauling, in a compartment with the curtain drawn, a king-emperor or an heirapparent. At Folkestone the British Premier met a tired and anxious young man whom he accompanied into Buckingham Palace shortly after ten that night.

On Wednesday morning, a room in Earl Trevor's Park Lane mansion was hung with sterilized sheets-everything else removed from it except a hospital operatingbed-and one of the most famous surgeons in London performed a minor operation upon the face of a man under anesthetics. Being in excellent physical condition, he had fully recovered in two weeks-but his features had changed so materially that nobody could have recognized him. He was drugged one night, taken out in a car, driven to a very respectable hotel and placed in a room which had been taken for him under a name selected at random. The Government did not further concern itself about him-he was no longer dangerous.

# The Day's Work

High in the Sierras a Forest Ranger solves a murder mystery and runs into a fight.

#### By H. C. WIRE

Illustrated by Paul Lehman

ARLIER in the afternoon a storm had threatened, with black thunder-heads curling over the high granite crest of Mount Whitney, and a tense silence enveloping that whole part of the Sierra Nevada range. But toward evening, as Jev Cotter, forest guard of the Inyo District, rode homeward from his day's patrol, the sky cleared and about him the gaunt red firs were again whispering their sighs of peace.

Contentment of the trees carried into his own heart. It filled him with a great satisfaction, though he could not have named the reason exactly. It was somehow the way a sea captain feels when all is well with his ship; the pride of a factory boss when each machine is clicking without a hitch. His domain was large, some nine hundred square miles of wooded mountains and grass-covered meadows, yet he knew it as intimately as those other men knew the deck or factory floor, and tonight all was running in perfect order.

He rode rapidly down a short slope of the range, crossed a half-mile of meadow set emerald-like in the fringe of darker pine, and came to his log cabin at one end. There he dismounted at a telephone hung in its iron box just outside the door and cranked two long rings. For a time he stood waiting.

Tall, straight, motionless, he fitted in quiet harmony with the tree trunks about him. His stiff-brimmed wide hat was pushed up from a firm young face. If his eyes were a bit serious, they still had in them a hidden spark of humor; and the mouth, that at times was hard and grim, could also laugh heartily. His khaki shirt



lay open at the throat, his breeches in high-topped boots gave a trim, clean-cut look, not to be mistaken for foppery. Jev Cotter knew well enough the meaning of work.

He was of those young men who are to be found ranging the Sierra Nevada Mountains in the summer months from June until October, drawing a certain pay from Uncle Sam, but finding a far greater reward in their own love of the life. There is adventure in it, and danger; and that is pay in itself. It isn't money that sends a man into a canon of fire, nor the thought of dollars that makes him strap on a gun and ride single-handed upon the trail of his enemies.

AT the telephone, Cotter rang again, twisting the little crank vigorously. The line seemed dead, with only a faint hum coming in through the receiver. In swift vision he followed it northward from his station, picturing possible weak spots as it climbed ridges and swung across cañons on its course of twenty miles to headquarters. An insulator might have broken, letting the wire short-circuit against a tree-trunk. Or a tree might have blown down. He'd have to patrol that early tomorrow.

A sense of isolation swept over him. His one contact with other parts of his own district and with those farther areas north and south was through this strand of wire radiating like a spider's web throughout the High Sierras. An invisible thing almost, largely unknown to tourists who packed along the trails, and yet so vital.

He was about to hang up his receiver when a loud hum suddenly flooded the line.

"Hello, hello!" came a far-off voice.

"Hello," Cotter returned. "Headquarters? Oh, hello, Chief! What's wrong with the wire?"

"Nothing," the voice answered. "I've had the switches pulled. Lot of lightning over here this afternoon."

"That so? I thought I had a job on my hands for tomorrow, looking it over. Well, I'm just checking in from the Kern River. Everything O. K."

"Looks like a quiet week in your area," the chief offered.

"Too quiet!"

There was a moment of silence, then the voice continued, a little more intent now: "Say, Jev, I had a call from outside this morning—talked with the sheriff down in Lone Pine. The State of Nevada has cleaned house. Chased their undesirables over the line onto us. A couple stopped in Bishop last week; card-sharks and handy with a gun. Sheriff's looking for 'em."

"Got a description?" Cotter asked.
"Not much, but you know the breed.
They came down the valley as far as Lone
Pine after shooting up a place in Bishop.
Maybe they went right on through, maybe
not. Anyhow, keep an eye on your tourist

trails."

"All right," Cotter agreed. "So-long." Turning from the telephone, he catalogued the news mentally, then thought no more about it.

For a time evening duties occupied him. He unsaddled his horse and turned it in

the fenced pasture; unlocked his cabin and lighted an oil lamp inside. The room was small, but remarkably well equipped, considering that every piece had been packed on a mule up the forty-five miles of trail from Lone Pine. An iron stove stood in one corner, with a table under one window near by. His bunk filled the end. The log walls were decorated solely by a rifle, a pair of deer-horns, and a fishing-rod.

He kindled a fire in the stove, put on a kettle of stew and while that was warming, sat down at the table to write out his daily report. In a small notebook, he put

down briefly:

Saturday, July 15. A.M. Patrol from Green Meadow Station to Kern River via Summit Trail.

P. M. Return from Kern River to Green Meadow via Red Rock.

REMARKS. Kern River high. Few campers. No smoke visible.

With pen lifted, he paused for a moment, then added: "Week quiet."

He sat for some time afterwards with the book open. His eyes were upon it, yet focused more on a changing picture, wrought within his imagination as they wandered slowly over the mountains, seemingly on a quest of their own. It was an instinctive alertness, born of his close contact with nature.

Outside, a small stream talked incessantly. High up, pines put their heads together and whispered. It was as if the woods too had eyes that were roving, and saw, where he was still blind. Their voices rose to a moan. He stood up, listening, then shrugged. The forest had a spell on him tonight.

I N another cabin four miles across the range from Jev Cotter's station, about sundown, old Fred Nado unbent his knotted frame from over the cook-stove and moved eagerly to the door. Visitors were a rare treat in his lonely camp, and surely he had heard visitors coming through the woods. In his day Fred Nado had ridden this range with the best of cow-punchers—a good hand, a good fighter and free with his money. But time and hard luck had changed that, until now, close to seventy years old, he ran only a small bunch of summer steers here on Bear Trap meadow. He worked alone.

Involuntarily he straightened a little as he reached his cabin door. There was still the fighter's look about him; in the alert posture of his body hunching slightly forward, in the grip of one gnarled brown hand on the door casement, even in the outthrust angle of his gray beard.

Presently he saw two men riding toward his place and stepped out to meet them.

"Howdy!" he called, and true old-timer that he was, before receiving an answer, he added: "Come in and eat!

The strangers approached until they stared down at him through the dusk. Gazing back in turn, Nado saw that they were not mountain men. Tourists maybe. Yet they had no pack-animal along. The two were of about medium height, a little soft-looking and pale-faced. At once he noticed they had been riding their horses too hard up the mountain trail, for the animals were wet and breathing heavily. Although his first impression of them was not good, it did not lessen his hospitality.

"Turn your critters in the pasture there," he urged. "Then come in."

"Thanks," one of the men answered

"We'll just tie up awhile."

Nado returned to his cabin and cut off two extra steaks for the frying-pan. Soon the strangers entered, casting quick glances about the room before they took the seats he pushed out from the table. He labeled them now as dude tourists, who might be ahead of their pack.

"Fishin'?" he asked.

"No," said one, "not exactly. Just traveling through." He was dark-haired, with black eyes set in a long thin face. Talk came easily from him, while his partner, younger by at least ten years, with nervous, washed-out eyes and loose mouth, sat on his bench and was silent.

"On sort of a vacation?" old Nado pursued, making conversation for the sound of his own voice.

"Yes," the one agreed, "on a vacation. A man ought to get away from the grind once in awhile."

Nado nodded, then chuckled. sure picked the right spot. A man can get away from most anything up here."

laughter burst behind "That's the damned truth, now, isn't it?"

Presently, the steaks occupied the attention of all three and silence fell. Then over a cup of coffee the spokesman remarked, "That was fine beef. Raised it yourself, I suppose?"

"Yep," said Nado. "Just killed this week. I don't run much stuff any more and sell most of the meat right here in the mountains. Got rid of five steers to the tourists at Jordan Hot Springs this week."

"That so? Ought to bring pretty good prices, up this far."

"Close to a hundred each, dressed."

Again there was a time of silence. Nado stood up, swept his dishes into a pan and placed it outside. "What the wildcats aint licked clean by mornin'," he said solemnly, "I'll wash."

Both men burst into laughter, and a feeling of good-fellowship filled the cabin. "You've got a snug layout here," said the black-eyed one. "But how do you pass your nights? Play cards?"
"Solitary," Nado admitted.

"Poker, too, if there's anyone around?" Old Nado's eyes surveyed the man across the table from him brightly. "Friend," he said, "I was born sixty-nine years ago, countin' holiday and leap years. Has poker got anything to do with a cowhand's life, then I play it!"

"Well, if that's the way you feel, let's sit in. I haven't held a hand for years, but I'd like a game. That is, if you don't

figure on too high a limit."

"Name your own price," Nado answered.

He reached to a shelf behind him and produced a deck. From a one-pound tobacco tin he drew a leather bag that clinked heavily upon the table boards. Young blood was running again in the old man's veins. It had been long since he'd sat in on a lively game. Now visions of those roaring times came flooding back; all-night plays in the round-up camp, canvas spread on the grass for a table, the red fire on a ring of men's faces!

S he threw out the cards and told the A first man to deal, he saw that the vounger one was showing signs of life. His white face had become flushed, his brown eyes glittered, his hands opened eagerly.

It was this younger one who said abruptly: "Here we sit and don't even know your name, friend. Mine's Miller.

This is Jack Helm."

The cattleman nodded. "Mine's Nado. Now, gentlemen, what will it be—whisky or gin?" He laughed as the two turned to him in quick surprise. "She's the real old goods!" he added. After putting a bottle on the table, he moved the lamp nearer and sat down, smiling, satisfied—the perfect host.

The game began as games are apt to do, with Lady Luck a flirt. She favored each in turn through several hands, but then sat definitely at old Nado's side. Or perhaps it was not wholly luck. If a man can't learn to read the spots in sixty-nine years, he never will. Nado was good. His pile grew. Across from him the two men had turned silent, their faces set, mouths in tight-lipped lines. It was not long before he learned something. They were more than familiar with the cards. Each in turn dealt with swift, clever fingers; each placed his bet or called the game in words that sounded of the big halls.

The room became filled with smoke through which the lamp flickered hazily. The little cabin was silent save for the snap of cards and the repeated demand:

"Pass the bottle."

Nado had no idea of how much time had elapsed when he came suddenly out of his trance-like luck to realize that all thought of limit had vanished. A great pile of money lay on the table. Dull light fell across greenbacks and yellow twenties; there was the glint of silver and the glow of gold. He checked the game rapidly. More than a thousand dollars were in this play between himself and Helm, the older man. Miller had dropped out some time ago. A little bewildered, Nado heard his own voice saying, "I'll raise that fifty."
Across from him, Helm answered:

"Fifty, right! And it'll cost you a hundred

to see her."

A hundred! Nado's hand fumbled nervously. All at once he realized that this wasn't his game of those younger days. His head had been clearer then, and there was always more money to be had. Now-one hundred dollars: It would clean his pile!

A goldpiece slipped from his fingers and rolled to the floor. He stooped to reclaim it, raised slowly and paused. Then with a sweep of his arm he shoved his wealth

into the pot.

His cards were down. His voice came hoarsely: "Full here. What's the news?"

Helm smiled. "Sorry, old man. I have a diamond straight." He reached for the money.

Nado made a motion as if to rise, then halted. "Stranger," he said, "I'll just

ask you to move your foot!"

The shot came from somewhere in the dark and from the side. Instantly Nado crumpled and lay motionless.

Helm sprang up. "You fool, Miller! No need to do that. You said when we left Bishop—"

"Shut up about Bishop!" the younger

man retorted. "I'm running this."

"Well, you've spoiled a good sleep. We could have stayed here. Now we'll have to ride all night." Helm stooped and picked a card from the floor.

"I'd think that foot of yours was big enough to cover one card!" Miller scoffed.

Helm shrugged. "What are we going to do now? Can't leave all this evidence." His eyes shifted to the oil lamp, then back to the body. "Fire the place! Make it look like an accident. Here—put him in his bunk!"

They worked with nervous haste until Nado's body sagged in his bed and the blankets covered him. These they soaked with oil. Helm raked the pile of money into a gunnysack. It took but an instant then to strike a match and run.

NINE-THIRTY. Time to turn in. Jev Cotter closed a book he had been reading and glanced at his watch. For a moment he sat thinking back over the day's work, until abruptly his thoughts were shattered by the sharp jangle of his telephone. He listened again. Three—his call! Something in the short, quick ring spoke urgently and he sprang outside to the iron box.

At once a voice came in to him: "Hello, Green Meadow; this is Kern Peak."

On clear days from the top of a knob near his cabin, he could see Kern Peak rising in a solitary pyramid of granite far to the north. With his glasses, he could even make out the little glass house perched on the apex, where, with a map on the table before him, the whole South Sierra below, sat a lookout with an everwatchful eye.

It was the lookout who now reported briefly: "You've got a fire, Cotter. Map

reading, one-seventy!"

"What the devil!" Cotter exclaimed. "There wasn't any lightning over here to-day."

"No-it isn't a lightning fire, and it

isn't very big yet."

"Sure it isn't some dude camp with a pile of logs? Turn your glasses on it, will you?" During the moment's wait Cotter glanced at the comfort of his cabin. He had ridden all day; this was an unwelcome promise for a night of it.

Soon the lookout reported with certainty. "It isn't a dude fire."

"All right, Kern Peak. Call you later." The job had him; fire, the eternal enemy, was in the woods!

Quickly he locked his quarters, took a bridle from the rack outside and went on a short distance to the pasture fence. Its wire enclosed more than a mile of green meadow, though there was one corner squared off into a small holding-corral. He let down the bars of this and whistled.

Presently came the sound of feet swishing through the grass, then a horse's low whinny. "Come on, boy," Cotter urged.

A black animal appeared out of the dark and halted with ears thrust forward. Cotter bridled him and turned away. A small white mule came up behind the horse, but stayed back warily and would not enter the log corral.

"Never mind," Cotter chuckled. "You

aren't going."

Immediately the mule came in and watched while the horse was saddled.

From a map corresponding to the one used by the lookout, Cotter had learned that the reading, one-seventy, indicated a section about Bear Trap meadow. So mounting now, carrying only a shorthandled shovel, and an ax in a saddle scabbard, he pushed his horse over the Bear Trap trail in less than an hour.

EVEN before he came out of the forest and crossed the open meadow, he caught sight of the red glow reflected upward against the high branches as if in a mist. With satisfaction he saw that the fire was dying, rather than spreading. Then suddenly the whole scene burst into view.

Only a heap of coals lay in the clearing where Fred Nado's cabin had been. Approaching at a lope, Cotter surveyed it with a puzzled scowl. He knew the old cattleman's habits. It wasn't like Fred to go off and leave anything to catch fire. He supposed Nado was riding his range and had camped out for the night. It was not until he had ridden in close, with the heat of embers halting him, that he saw the naked white bones at one end.

A swift tension came over him as he swung from his horse, dropped the reins and went on afoot. All other material of the cabin and bunk had burned away, leaving only this skeleton against the red coals. Cotter drew near and halted, star-



ing down. Behind him his horse snorted once, as if the animal too had seen, or had caught some knowledge through his sensitive nostrils.

Cotter turned and took a step toward him, saying quietly, "Easy, boy!" But the horse backed off, his muzzle extended, eyes widened in fear. The reins made a rattling sound as they dragged. At that he reared, struck in terror with both forefeet and plunged from the light.

Cotter knew the animal would not stop this side of Green Meadow. No matter. He returned to the fire, and now, as the embers burned lower about the skeleton. they revealed something he had not seen before—there was a small round hole at one side of the skull. Sight of it drove all else from his mind. He was suddenly hard, calculating, struck through with a single relentless purpose.

With scarcely a second downward glance, he walked a short distance into the woods and paused. Overhead, invisible if a man did not know the location, ran a thing that looked like silver in the moonlight. It came out of the dark, from tree to tree, and vanished in the dark; a strand of the vital telephone web. The little iron box hung on a post where Cotter had stopped. He turned the crank.

When a voice answered, he said, "Hello, Chief. This is Cotter, over at Bear Trap. Nado's cabin burned just now, with Nado in it. Looks like a killing, Chief. I'm trying to pick up a trail. . . . All right; call you later."

He broke off that connection and immediately rang again—one long ring. The voice that answered this time was faint, for it came from thirty miles down the mountains, where the valley highway ended on the eastern slope of the Sierra Range and the upward pack trail began. Cook's saddle camp marked the first station outside the forest.

"Hello," Cotter said. "That you, Cook? This is Jev Cotter. Say, have you sent any tourists up my direction lately?"

"A few," came the reply. "Party of six hired an outfit from me two days ago. They headed for Rock Creek. Then yesterday two men started for Kern River."

"What were those two?" Cotter asked.

"City men?"

"Not exactly. I just didn't make 'em out. Seemed to know the trail some."

"What are they riding?"

"My two bays."

"Headed for the Kern, are they?"

"Said so."

Cotter paused, scowling for a moment in the dark. His suspicion rested upon this pair, for they recalled his Chief's warning earlier in the night. But the Kern River trail was far to the north of his position here at Bear Trap.

"Cook," he said then, "what shoes were

your animals wearing?"

"Just been shod—smooth toe, small heel

calks, Number Two all around."

"All right," Cotter finished. "Thanks. If these *hombres* come back, hold them and get in touch with me."

THERE was still enough light from the fire to reveal an area of the clearing. Going back, he searched over the ground until his eyes fell upon newly-made tracks. Sharp excitement surged upon him as he saw there were two animals. He bent down. The toes were smooth. Heels had short lugs. A span of his fingers measured the marks for size. Number Two, he was certain, for his own animal wore the same width.

A plan was fully formed in his mind as he sprang again to the telephone. His message to Cook had already sewed up the north trail. He knew now that the pair had given Kern River only as a blind, then turned this way, heading south. Rapidly, one after the other, he called three patrol huts in far parts of the range. To each he gave the same order: "Hold two men riding Cook's bays." East, south, and west, in quick succession he blocked the trails that led outside. Then he moved upon his own plan of action.

If the two were heading south, he reasoned, that could mean but one thing. They expected to leave the mountains at Kernville. He could see their trick now. Some trouble in Bishop, then into the Sierras at Cook's camp for their get-away.

Without an animal, it was impossible for him to follow directly on the south trail, but there was another course, quicker, even if he was afoot. While the trail swung far around the mountain which bordered Bear Trap Meadow, and looped back to cross an easy gap, a drift fence—that barrier between cattle ranges—struck straight across the top and descended to intersect the trail on the other side.

Waiting only long enough to make certain that the fire could not spread, Cotter then crossed the meadow, came to a line of barbed wire and climbed beside it up the mountain slope. The forest deepened. Moonlight scarcely penetrated the black roof overhead. Often the crash of deer sounded before him and cold yellow eyes of cats glared from branches high up. Once the wide-set reddish lights of a mountain lion's eyes disputed the way with him. He dropped one hand to his gun. With that movement the lights vanished.

HE gained the peak, descended, and came at last to a break in the fence. Here where the trail crossed, he put up two logs of the gate, then moved some distance back along the narrow path. No

fresh tracks showed on the ground. He was ahead of his men, though doubtful as to how far.

That doubt was soon dispelled. He had not waited five minutes beside the trail, when a rapid clatter of horses' hoofs came from farther around the mountain. Crouching just up the bank, gun drawn, he waited. The sound approached. Then two forms appeared, one close behind the other. The color of the animals was hidden in the dark. These might be cattlemen. He'd chance that. When the first rider was not ten paces from him, he said evenly: "Halt there! You're covered."

His answer could have come from only a man driven to take long odds. A shot stabbed the night toward him. He leaped back. The first horse plunged by. But as the second raced below his position on the bank, he sprang with arms spread, legs forked. His hands gripped into cloth and he swung himself on behind the rider with his gun already in the fellow's ribs.

"Now move!" he snapped.

Clinging with one arm around the man's body, he freed his right hand and leveled his gun ahead. Beneath, the horse lunged powerfully, goaded by boots raking his flank, but it was a losing race, until suddenly from the trail beyond came a crash of wood and a wild human cry.

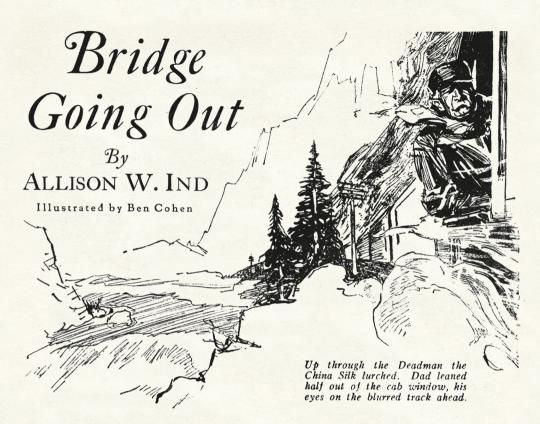
The next instant his mount too had reached the gate. A man was rising from the ground. Cotter covered him. He saw where the horse had broken through the log bars but had run on.

"Stay where you are!" he ordered; and to the one in the saddle he growled, "Get down there too!"

IT was a little before midnight when three men came over the Bear Trap trail to the Green Meadow station. Jev Cotter, riding, held the end of a rope that encircled two before him. At the base of a tree outside his cabin, he halted, tied his prisoners back to back with arms around the trunk and left them. His horse had returned to the corral. He unsaddled him along with the captured one, reported to his Chief on the way in, and then, entering the house, decided to call it a day.

When he lighted a lamp, his eyes fell first upon the notebook, open where he had left it. The last entry was, "Week quiet." Now under that he added simply:

11:30 P. M. Two men, wanted down below, killed Fred Nado. Brought them in.



A sturdy old rail of an engineer, the mightiest locomotive on the road—and a dilemma that demanded all their nerve and power.

OR thirty-three years Dad Summers had pulled a locomotive throttle on the Hills Division, and in all those thirty-three years Dad had been mad enough to quit just three times. With a few exceptions, nobody but the big Scotch master-mechanic over at the round-house had been on the pay-roll long enough to remember what a row there had been when they took the old 103 away from Dad and gave him the new 907. For weeks Dad had been about as pleasant to live with as a hungry rattlesnake, and then all at once he up and told Akerman there was only one engine on the whole division that was worth the steel to run on, and that engine was the new 907. Dad was funny that way. Then after Dad had spent a good share of those thirty-three years in the cab of the 907, he got another engine assignment, and while most folks in Cascade Junction were figuring how tickled Dad would be, he was as sore as a boiled owl.

It didn't matter a puff to Dad that the 1009 was the latest thing in mountain-type locomotives. She was a marvel—three

cylinders, booster engine that drove a pair of trailing wheels down under the cab, steam stoker, feed-water heater, arches and all the rest that came in to help the steam engine hold its own against the electric—power enough to tear the rails right out from under the drivers. She had the biggest tank Dad had ever seen on tender-trucks. . . . .

Akerman had known Dad would kick, but here they'd gone and sent him the best puller west of the river, with the hint that the motive-power department would have no further excuse for a failure to bring the fast stuff in on time.

Akerman snorted and looked through the dirty windows of his sheet-iron office at his gang pulling the grates out of 907. No excuses—humph! That depended on who pulled the 1009's throttle—the engine wasn't everything. Akerman banged his big fist on his desk until little soot-particles danced—and Dad got the 1009 while the 907 went to one of the younger men.

That was the second thing that peeved Dad, but a man would have to be a fool that would hold a grouch against 1009, and Dad was no fool—not by a long shot, he wasn't. Why, within two weeks after the first run, a man would have to cover many a division to find a pair that worked together as smoothly as Dad and the 1009.

FROM December to the middle of April, Dad and the 1009 stirred up the oil in the journal boxes of the Western Limited as far west as Lone Pine. Dad was beginning to feel right pleased. There was no reason why he shouldn't; best puller on the division, nice run and a high-class train. But when Southern got that official wire from Omaha, the likable division superintendent knew there was only one engine in the mountains that was good enough for the So just about the time Dad silk-train. began to enjoy life again, he got Southern's order to lay off a couple of days before he went to pulling the silk-train on a new fast No one envied Dad's assignschedule. ment-that silk-train run was a man-killer.

The "China Silk," they called her—that is, the directors did, because that classified her on the stockholders' reports. But on Coyer's train-sheet she was just plain X36, and on Southern's schedule file she was known as the crankiest, most petted time-killer on the division. Two times a week X36 was loaded to the eaves with raw silk from China, tripped the eastbound signals in the Seattle yards, crashed across four mountain ranges, kicked up the dust along the smooth, tired-looking plains, roared over the Missouri and the Mississippi and paid Chicago a short call before she hit out along the base of the Great Lakes for New York.

Ever since the first day they put her on, a new wrinkle appeared in Southern's forehead, and Coyer's general attention call rattled out on the wires with even less patience than it usually did.

THE China Silk never had exactly a local's running time on the Hills Division since the first day she checked in, but for over three months, now, she had been doing her coast-to-coast jaunt in less time than most fast trains took to go from Seattle to Buffalo or Cleveland. About the time the winter traffic began to ease off and the gang over in the car-shops were betting on the number of days before they would be pulling storm windows from the day-coaches, some one on the Board of Trade down in New York got busy and figured out just how much the country in general, and the speculators in particular, would profit if the silk from China arrived a few hours earlier. It would seem that this gentleman had more pull than a pair of double-heading mikados. Anyway, about the middle of April, Southern got that official from Omaha. So Dad was told he could run light to Lone Pine, couple onto X36 and bring her in without letting any grass grow green under him. And that was the cause of Dad's temper cutting the signals and going whooping down the main line like a wild engine. He went up to see Southern. What in thunder did Omaha want? Wasn't the China Silk already running on the fastest time west of the river?

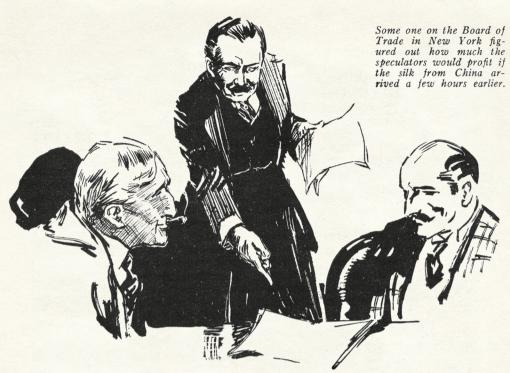
But it all went up the stack like a lot of heat-waves so far as Southern was concerned. While Dad was still laboring in all his eloquence and sort of gathering speed as he went along, Southern managed to force a soothing cigar between Dad's teeth and gently herded him to the door while mumbling something quietly about what a shame it would be if Mrs. Summers had to be told that her man was losing his grip and was ready to give up a run that required a good man to some young comer who didn't have half the good stuff in him that Southern thought Dad had in him. He didn't say any of it very loud, but Dad got He pulled the cigar from his teeth, glared at it, smelled of it and then glared at Southern. Behind the slammed door the division super heard him mutter: darn ye-I'll show ye!"

Did he? Well—just ask anyone in the roundhouse or up in the office, or even out in the yards, about the run Dad made from Seattle to Cascade Junction that night.

You'd hear how Dad wheeled down and coupled onto the China Silk before her brake-shoes had cooled half a degree; how Patterson, X36's conductor, came so close to missing the hand-rail on the last car that it wasn't even funny, all because the China Silk was already traveling more than twenty miles an hour before the rear car reached the spot where Patterson was waiting on the platform. They might even mention the two signal-lights that rattled out as X36 rattled under the east yard signal gantry.

Then there was the way the 1009 played snap-the-whip with the China Silk all the way up through the Deadman Cañon. Crawley, who fired for Dad, had been on some fast trains down east on the Reading, but Crawley discovered it was one thing to burn the steel in a perfectly level country where there weren't two dozen degrees of curvature on the whole division, and quite another up in the mountains where it was a rare thing for a man to have all his train in one straight line.

Crawley had heard the old gag about the line up through the cañon being so crooked that a cross-eyed fireman once threw coal



in the headlight instead of the furnace. Crawley had laughed about it then, but he didn't laugh tonight. The steel plates under his feet were pitching and bucking like the bridge of a destroyer in a typhoon, by the time the China Silk swooped around the sandstone pile of the Dutchman's Finger and out of the cañon.

Back in the rear car Patterson was wedged in between a seat and a locker. He started across the car once, and after that he had only one good hand to hang on with. The crack of the wheels over the joints had become a steady din punctured only by ear-splitting squeals and shrieks from the bouncing, shearing buffer-plates. A dozen times the wheel flanges seemed to be climbing as the China Silk swept like a Kansas cyclone around a curve, but each time they hung for a moment and then brought up against the other rail with a jar that seemed to shake the car to pieces. Patterson pulled out his watch and followed the second-hand as he counted the snapping rail-joints.

"Just look at that fool run!" was all he said to his brakeman.

IT was said that the 1009's furious exhausts were heard by the Harney Peak fire-look-out thirty-nine miles away. Old Art Grier, the track-walker, reported that the Spearfish River bridge girders vibrated a quarter of an hour after the China Silk's tail

lights went out of sight around the base of Thunder Rock. The night man at Pringle was struck by a piece of ballast rock that he declared was picked right off the roadbed by the suction as X36 banged through the yards, setting the signals so fast he thought there must have been half a dozen trains checking in and out at high speed.

The night the blizzard caught Pat and Akerman at the wrong end of the Gap, old Walter Long drove the 1414 from Flagrock to Cascade Junction in thirty-seven minutes even, and he was running light engine only. Well, Dad bruised the flanges to the tune of forty-one minutes, twelve seconds. But Dad had nine steel express-cars and one coach, and not one of them that couldn't be wrecked if the combination of steam and air wasn't handled just right up on the front end.

With steam billowing fifty feet high from a roaring safety and a dry, hard smell of burned brake-shoes, the China Silk came to a jarring stop under the office windows in Cascade Junction. Dad slipped down from the gangway steps. The fine crow's-feet lines at the corner of his eyes were plainer than usual because Dad was smiling just a little bit. Had he let any grass get green under him? He looked at his watch.

Southern didn't know whether to be pleased or not. Here Dad Summers had cut thirty-one minutes off the total running time on the Hills Division of a train that worried everybody into a state of nerves when it was on the old schedule!

But the thing was done. The report of Dad's hurry-up job had gone into Omaha, and Southern knew the next morning would bring a confirmation of the new running-time. Omaha might congratulate the Hills Division, but would make it clear that no excuses would be welcomed for failure to make the new schedule.

NLY once from the middle of April to that night of June sixth was a delay report entered against Dad and the China Silk. Just west of Rockford tunnel Dad had been forced to stop his train on an unfavorable grade while a frantic horseman drove some stray steers up the still snowy sides of the approach cutting. But the horseman and his steers were far away before the China Silk got under way again. Dad learned that even the best of draft-gear wouldn't stand the strain when the 1009 started up a bit too hasty with a heavy train behind; draw-bars would break. A yard engine sent out from Pringle nearly wore her main rods thin trying to push the China Silk into Hill City.

Well, sir, just about the time Dad ripped that draw-bar out, something happened that meant a whale of a lot more to Dad than the draw-bar did, but Dad didn't know anything about the meeting of silk men down in New York that day, and how they had decided to do a little speculating. Dad was to know more about it soon, though, because if there hadn't been any meeting, and if the 1009 had been a bit weaker engine than she was-well, maybe things wouldn't have shaped up the way they did June sixth, and there wouldn't have been a story to tell. Of course those two things weren't the only ones concerned. For instance, if the weather had been anything like the kind that usually hit the Hills Division in June, things would have been different.

The winter had been a double-header so far as snow was concerned; not so cold, but snow—why, there was hardly a day went by but what Akerman's battery of plows didn't go out ahead of traffic to clear the buried steel. Since late September the Twin Buttes and the Wasp River Range, off to the northwest, had been white-topped. That wasn't what worried the railroad men in Cascade Junction. It was the fact that their white tops persisted through the following May. What did it mean? It meant trouble—lots of it. It meant the mountain

snows were only partially melted in the low passes, while the high points were still covered with millions of tons. There was just an even chance the snow would melt before the late spring rains blotted it from view of the anxious men in the office. But if they came together—well, they did once, and it took just seventeen days to get traffic back where it belonged.

The morning of the first of June dawned clear, but the wind came moaning up the Fire Valley, to the east. By noon the sun was lost in a dull mist, and that was the last any one in the mountains saw of it for

eight days.

The first of the gray rains had brought the Spearfish River up a point or so on the indicator at the steel span where old Shedell had fought the swift mountain stream for three and a half months to run his lines. and still the white snow tops were visible. But as if that wasn't enough, Southern began to get snapped wires from Omaha and Chicago if the China Silk even hinted that she might lose a few minutes. It was this way: One of the fast transcontinental lines to the south was making a heavy bid for the silk traffic from China, and despite their somewhat greater distance, they had less footage to climb and fewer degrees of curvature than Southern's route over the Great Divide. On two occasions the line from Frisco had put their train through to Chicago in a time limit that looked like some lost business for the home road. And it would really mean a loss to strike off the revenue earned by the China Silk. made more money than any three other trains on the auditor's report. So the directors were nervous and communicated their feelings to the officials. The officials were more than nervous—they were downright fidgety. And on top of that came the threatened market crash that resulted from the little meeting of the silk men and the decisions they made that day.

THE buyers were desperate. They exhausted their reserve in buying up all the silk available, to cover, and yelled for more. They turned to the two railroads in a frenzy. They pleaded, stormed, orated, threatened, and offered a tremendous bonus to the road which would deliver the first train of silk to Chicago. That was the morning of the sixth of June.

But with the falling silk prices in New York, something was also falling in the mountains—rain. And with the rising of excitement in the East something was rising in the mountains—the water-level of the Spearfish at Shedell's bridge.

For days now the sullen gray had closed down in cold, cheerless, ever-falling rain. It was cold, but it was enough to soften the hard crusts on the Twin Buttes and the Wasp River range. The snow mass began to move and wash down with the water, and as it went down it melted. On the morning of the fifth there was only eleven

men knew Gardner—he had been one of them once. But Shedell said it couldn't be done. The bridge wasn't safe for another pound of traffic. Only two feet now, and by three o'clock that afternoon the river was pounding against the girders with great, trembling blows.

It wouldn't hold another pound, Shedell had said. Southern wired to Lone Pine. Dad Summers and the China Silk should be about ready to check out. Would he



feet between the dirty foam-flecked swirl and the lowest girders of Shedell's main span. The west approach was weakening, despite Shedell's gang of two hundred and fifty men with sand and ballast. By midnight the eleven feet were reduced to six; and still it rained, and still the snow-water roared down the gulches into the Spearfish.

On the morning of the sixth, Southern got three reports, one from Shedell and two from the East. Shedell's sounded bad, but after Southern read those from the East, Shedell's sounded worse. To the road bringing the first silk-train into Chicago on the eighth, there waited not only the fabulous bonus but an iron-clad long-period silk-transportation franchise. The second Eastern dispatch came from President Gardner. The whole reputation of the road depended on the Hills Division, was all he said; but it was enough. There wasn't a man on the division, car-tink to super, who would quit trying when that quiet little man in the East asked them to come in on time. Those

and the rest of the crew try to take the China Silk through after what Shedell had said about conditions at the Spearfish?

Dad read the wire and handed it to Crawley. Crawley whistled a couple of expressive notes and handed it to Patterson.

"Well?" Dad was waiting to see what the others thought. After all he was the only married man in the crew. Crawley was a free lance and Patterson a widower, while the brakemen were both young bloods who welcomed the idea of some excitement.

"It's a pretty car o' coal," Patterson ventured. "Shedell ought to know what he's talking about—that bridge has been his pet peeve ever since he worked up the first blueprints of it."

"Maybe so," said Crawley, staring into the fire burning in the round-bellied stove that never seemed to have the door shut. "But you know Shedell's a whole lot older man than he was when he spanned the Spearfish, and he isn't half so full of pep. Why, to listen to him, you'd think that everything was on a clear track to the junk-heap; nothing works right; Omaha wouldn't grant his requisitions, and the whole system on the west end isn't worth shooting at because they wont give him the stuff to fix it with. I wouldn't believe Shedell's signals unless somebody else

'd helped him set 'em."

"There's something in that too, Bud." Dad nodded his head slowly. "But I'll tell you right now when the old Spearfish gets on the tear, she aint no babe in arms. I've seen that river when she's been just about what I reckon she must be now, and I'm sayin', boys, Shedell's a master bridgebuilder if his steel will hold the Spearfish when she's mad-and the China Silk at the same time." Dad looked slowly from one to the other. "But," he added, "if you all vote for it—why, I'm with you. Guess if the 1009 gets across, the rest of the train will too."

THREE minutes later the 1009's short stack banged a series of smoke-clouds into the falling rain. The booster engine spat out steam in a shrill roar from under the cab, and in a few moments the China Silk's rear coach seemed to melt in a sullen

wall of swirling, rain-filled mist.

Anderson, the operator at Lone Pine, shook his head doubtfully. He fingered the telephone, and he wished he had the authority to annul any more traffic to the East, for Anderson figured that one train was enough to dump into the Spearfish. It seemed that Anderson wasn't the only one that felt that way, because within a minute he got the order from Southern to set the order-board against all east-bound stuff.

Dad felt that way himself, but Dad had other things to think about. Even if they did get through, it was going to be one of the toughest runs he had ever made. He eased the latch up a notch or so as the drivers seemed to lose their grip on the wet

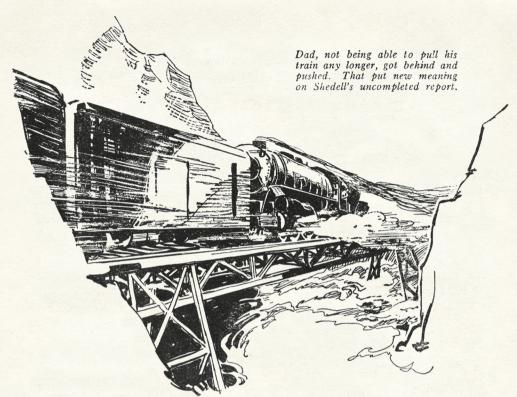
black rail.

The 1009 was up against a real test now. For one thing, Seattle had really loaded the China Silk this time-not the usual nine or ten cars, but thirteen heavy steel express-cars and one steel coach. the 1009 the rain was no longer dry and gripping—a black, slippery skin covered the steel. Every man that's ever pulled a throttle or thrown a controller, knows what a wet black rail means; just about what a banana peel means to a man walking down a dark narrow sidewalk. On top of that, the whole road-bed was beginning to feel the effects of the eternal rain. Even at reduced speed Dad could feel the 1009's frame strain as she hit the uneven spots

under the soaked ties.

Up through the Deadman the China Silk lurched and jerked like a drunken cowpuncher. Dad, long since drenched to the skin, leaned half his body out of the cab window, his squinting eyes fixed on the blurred track ahead. Instead of a straight, powerful beam, the headlight's field was only a swirling, reaching, confused blob that reflected almost as much light back into Dad's eyes as it let go through. The thumping exhausts sounded like a sick man coughing with his head under a pillow, while the 1009's whistle only let go a hiss of steam but no note. Now on Dad's side, now on Crawley's, boiled the black water of Deadman Creek. Two months more and the only thing wet about the now furious stream would be the memory of it. But tonight branches, slabs of wood, old ties and even young trees were being swept along in the flood. Sometimes it was crowded into a narrow rocky throat and again it broadened out till the water foamed against the breaker rocks that had been rolled down below the sub-ballast. Then suddenly there would be hollow thunder as bridge-pilings flashed under the 1009's cab, and the Deadman Creek shot away on the opposite side. A flickering green eye appeared in the muck ahead, dodged by and was gone. That would be Siding 19. Dad looked at his watch. Just three minutes late.

BUT after the China Silk left the Deadman, the real work began. From the Dutchman's Finger to Fossil Springs the line wormed and twisted, stretched and crowded for a toe-hold in the great, gray sandstone ridges that stuck out like bared bones of the mountain's skeleton. about once a year the company made a new survey in an attempt to make railroading a bit smoother in the sandstone country, but Caleb Walker's original line with its two-point-four grade still defied all comers. That two and four tenths per cent held from the Dutchman's Finger to Hangman's Cave, but from the Cave to the first mile-post beyond Fossil Springs, the climb came within an ace of being three per cent. What with two or three curves to the length of the train, no chance for a start at the bottom and a boiler-cracking



knob at the summit, Hangman's Hill from the Dutchman's Finger to Fossil Springs was as mean a stretch of railroading as a man ever wanted to see; it was mean any Dad knew every foot of the hill and snorted as he thought just how much a black rain and a blinding storm would

improve running conditions.

The 1009 clipped off just forty-one miles an hour as her pilot truck took the first elevation of Lazy S curve, at the base of the Hangman, but the cab indicator wasn't to hit forty again for a good long time. As they snaked around the S and struck out on a short tangent, the 1009's exhausts became slower and labored. With one hand Dad brushed the water from his eyes and with the other he nursed the throttle. The speed dropped from forty-one to twenty-five before they'd covered a half a mile, despite two hundred and twenty pounds of pressure in the boiler and as hot a fire as ever laid on the grates. Again and again the regular exhausts would break into a staccato fury, the drivers would spin like giant pinwheels and spout sparks from every tire. Then before Dad could ease the throttle, the wild wheels would bite into the rail and hold with a jerk that boomed the length of the sullen train behind them.

Now that the speed was reduced, Patter-

son wriggled out of his cramped but effective position and made for the watercooler. With a long sigh of relief he raised the paper cup to his lips-but the sigh became a bubbling snort. Patterson had had no idea of inhaling the moisture didn't know it could be done, as a matter of fact. Just the same, there was no water left in the cup and only a few drops on the floor. It was one of those jerks, as the 1009 recovered her traction, that caused Patterson to miscalculate a bit!

EVEN Dad could make out few landmarks, but he knew when they passed the Cave-he could feel the 1009 breathe harder and deeper on the stiffest stretch of Hangman's Hill. The speed went to fifteen, and Dad hooked in the booster engine. Slowly they felt their way through the wet blackness at the bottom of Bobtail gulch; dragged heavily around the spreading base of Centennial Mountain, and finally squirted the water out from under the ties as they pulled past the little station building at Fossil Springs.

And then the straining drivers suddenly lost their hold, and before Dad could ease the latch, they recovered, lost again and recovered, this time with a jerk that made the others seem like mere play. That jerk changed the fate of the China Silk.

BUT Southern and Coyer and the rest of them down at Cascade Junction didn't know a thing about the way the 1009's drivers stuttered that last time. All they could go by were Shedell's reports still coming in every quarter of an hour. Shedell meant what he said—the Spearfish was It was true the bridge was still in place and the steel wasn't out of line so far as Shedell could make out, but the river was clawing holes out of the west approach faster than sandbags and whole carloads of earth could fill them. It was the west approach; on the east the river bit into solid rock so there wasn't much danger of the Spearfish pulling out all Shedell's good work there. Shedell said he would keep the men jumping until the Spearfish was whipped or he was. But the old bridge engineer knew that everything depended on the west approach. If the Spearfish got under him there—well, the big steel span would go to pieces as if it had been made of toothpicks. His last report had come in just as Akerman, his face streaming and his slicker running rivulets, opened the

"Ay, what's the good word?" he asked, looking questioningly at Southern as the sounder stopped with a final click.

Southern looked serious. "Don't knowdon't know; Shedell says if Dad's on time, they've got an even chance of holding the river. They're throwing enough dirt down the west approach banks to dam up the whole Pacific Ocean."

Ackerman nodded slowly as Coyer said: "You see, Bob, the whole thing rests on Shedell's chance to keep the approach bolstered up—because if Dad can get his train over that and on beyond the center of the bridge, the rest will be easy; it's only a short run in then." Coyer stopped, and his eyes sought the clock. "Well, Dad was reported about on time at Pringle, and means he'll be at the approach pretty quick now."

The big master-mechanic's foot was tapping loudly against the table-leg. Then he kicked a bit savagely and stopped.

"Are you sure there's nothing else ye can do?" he barked.

But before anyone answered, all the eastbound wires went dead—the wind and rain had done for them.

COYER was whistling in that aimless way he did sometimes, and when Coyer whistled, the situation was a bit rough on the nerves. He whistled the time the Yellowstone Flyer's passenger list nearly became a casualty list, and again when the Resorter and second sixteen came within an ace of smashing things up that night in Elk Creek Gulch. He didn't whistle anything in particular-but just whistledquiet-like and without much speed. Then suddenly he stopped whistling. The west end sounder had begun to speak. something was wrong-it missed a letter here and there. Peculiar or not, the bobbing brass bar told them all too plainly:

D-A-D H-E-R-E E-N-G-I-N-E O-N B-R-I-D-G-E A-P-P-R-O-A-C-H G-O-I-N-G O-U-T B-R-I-D-G-E G-O-I-N-G E-V-E-R-Y-T-H-I-N-G G---

And with a couple of feeble taps that sounded like pistol-shots to the straining ears that heard them, the wire went dead.

Coyer's clenched fist banged the table.

He leaped to his feet.

"Everything's what?" he shouted, his finger pointed accusingly at the motionless sounder bar, as if to bully it into action again. Then he slowly dropped his arm and sunk into his chair.

"Oh, my God!" he said.

Akerman stared like a man in a trance at the unfinished report. Cover wasn't whistling now; the pencil dropped from his long fingers, that trembled just a little. He turned to Southern, but the superintendent's face was averted; he drooped; his eyes were closed and his brow was contracted like a man in pain. Coyer turned back and slowly reread the tragic news.

"It's only too easy to fill in the rest of that story." Coyer bit off the words as

if they hurt his mouth.

"That—that order to send Dad over the Spearfish was just plain murder." Southern spoke almost in a whisper. "Why, all the damn' silk in the whole country aint worth that."

"Don't you think there's a chance?" Akerman flung the question at them, "Are you sure everything's gone up the stack?"

"Lord, Bob, what can a man think? Look at that report," Coyer answered. "I can just see Shedell in his little watersoaked tent over there on the west approach. He calls his men off just as Dad swings around the hip of the rock and out on the approach. He can see Dad's headlight through the rain, and just as he follows it, he reaches around with one hand to pound the key and tell us about it. Then all at once he sees the string of light on the span begin to sway, just as Dad hits the steel. He has only got time to tell us the bridge is going out from under the 1009 when the approach lets go and carries all his wires with it."

Akerman nodded slowly. "I'm afraid you're right, Al. He says the engine was on the bridge; then a second or two later the approach and all begin to dive in.... Yes, he's just about to say 'Everything gone,' but his wires go out with the rest of the wreck."

"Even if Dad got to the center of the span before things began to break up, the rest of the train behind him would have pulled him down with it," Coyer added. And then: "Well, Akerman, I guess you might as well get the old 1313 and all the rest of the wrecker out. Don't know what good it'll do, but we'll send her anyway."

THE wires being down there was no way of telling President Gardner and Omaha that for the first time since Timothy Williams pulled the only throttle between the Missouri and the far side of the Rockies, the Hills Division had failed. But that is the way of railroading in the mountains. It is a man's game. Engineers, surveyors, and the first operating men fought the mountains, fought disease and fought the Some found death beside the elements. steel path they gave their lives for, while others found graves in unnamed cañons and unknown streams. Dollars and cents aren't all that keep a railroad running.

The rain beat against the black windows in drenching gusts. The office was strangely silent, for not a sounder clattered and not a key tapped—just the droning of the wires that ran along under the wide eaves outside.

Akerman was staring at the floor. Sud-

denly he jerked to his feet.

"Man, I've got to do something!" he bellowed. "I'm going to the roundhouse and find out what the devil they've done with that wrecker."

He turned to the door—but stopped in mid-turn, listening. The others heard it too.

Above the muffled hissing of the wind-driven rain, of a higher pitch than the droning telegraph-wires, came the uneven blast of a chime whistle. It was true! Something was coming down the yards at high speed! The lights on the yard diagram above the dispatcher's table blinked rapidly. It couldn't be. . . . No! Dad Summers and the China Silk. . . . No!

But yet, Southern had annulled all other traffic from the west.

FROM out of the blackness under the office windows, burst the shining bulk of a steel express car, followed by another and another. Why—they were being pushed! A flickering light drawing nearer marked the identification number. X36! As the brakes bit into steel wheels, the 1009 emerged from the wet night behind the rear coach.

Well, there is a rule that states there must be some one in the dispatcher's office at all times, but Akerman, Coyer and Southern bolted down the stairs and collided with Dad Summers and Crawley at the bottom. . . . .

The train from Frisco had left the west coast just thirty-one minutes before the China Silk clattered out of Seattle, but X36 checked into Chicago in just an hour and thirty minutes before the Frisco outfit. Pretty close? Well, rather—but the time

stood just the same.

But how did it all happen? It was that double jerk at Fossil Springs. It ripped out the 1009's draw-bar between her tender and the first express-car as if the heavy piece of steel had been a fine watch-chain. So, Dad not being able to pull his train any longer, got behind, by swinging around the siding at Fossil Springs, and pushed. That put a new meaning on Shedell's uncompleted report. When Dad and the 1009 got to the center of the span before the approach let go, it meant the rest of the China Silk was already on the safe land of the east end!

For once Coyer's mind was working a

little behind time.

"But why in thunder should Shedell say everything was gone?" he demanded.

Dad almost glared at Coyer and then

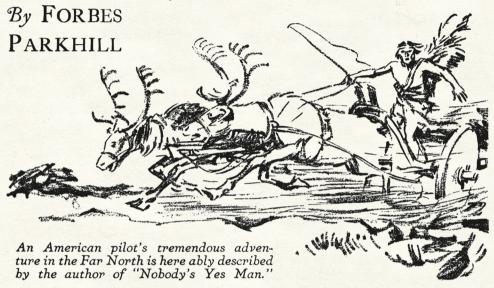
read the abbreviated report.

"Well, young fellow," he snorted, "I don't see where Shedell says anything of the kind; and what's more I reckon he didn't even intend to say it.... You brass-pounders shouldn't let your imagination fill in the tail end of a message—you might miss it. Especially with such a poor imagination!"

"Hmph!" It was Coyer's turn to look savage. "What's your guess, then?"

"Reckon if his wires had stayed with him a minute longer, it'd 'a' been: 'Bridge going out—everything got across,'" said Dad, dry as a heap of cinders.

# The Empire of the Arctic



Illustrated by William Molt

THE crack of the rifle was drowned by the roar of the whirlwind motor as the pilot, Don Carr, clad in fur-lined teddies to protect him against the cold of the Arctic wastes, warmed her up preparatory to hopping off from the sandy beach at Point Barrow.

The copper-jacketed, boat-tailed bullet, smashing through the cabin of the *Borealis*, giant plane built expressly for polar exploration, gave him the first intimation he and his plane were targets for a concealed rifleman. The bullet, ripping through the wooden structure of the cabin, screamed past within six inches of the carrot-red head of Windy McFeeney, hard-boiled but efficient mechanic who constituted the other half of the crew of the *Borealis*, and who was standing outside on the frozen sand adjusting his helmet.

"What in the name of the cock-eyed walrus!" the mechanic cried. His right hand dived inside his bulky Arctic flying uniform, and emerged an instant later clutching an automatic. "No Roosian bum can shoot at me, and get away with

it!" He turned and darted around the tail of the *Borealis*, bucking the slip-stream from the prop crabwise as his angry little blue eyes searched the beach for the hidden rifleman.

"Stop, you crazy fightin' fool!" shouted Carr as he cut the motor until it was barely idling, so his belligerent aide might hear. His gray eyes gleamed with excitement, and the muscles of his lean jaws bunched as his teeth snapped shut and his lips compressed into a thin, grim line. "Don't you know he's beyond the range of that popgun of yours? He can pepper the old crate as full of holes as a sieve before you can find him. Yank those chocks and hop in! And make it snappy!"

Cursing with disappointment at the prospect of being cheated out of a fight, Windy turned, stowed his gun, and jerked the chocks from beneath the wheels. The motor roared out its challenge to the frozen north. It was under way, rolling slowly, just as Windy rounded the wing-tip and dashed for the open door of the cabin. And even as he flung himself inside and



slammed the door, another bullet smashed through the frail shell of the cabin wall. Windy ripped out a rasping oath and shook a hairy fist in the direction whence the slug had come.

"S'all right, Skipper," he shouted to Carr. "Gas-tanks aint punctured!"

Carr merely grunted in reply. He was too busy preparing to get the heavily laden ship off the ground to waste time with words. The *Borealis* was more than an amphibian. It was equipped with wheels for landing and taking off-from solid earth, pontoons for water, and ski bottoms on the pontoons for snow. It was taxi-ing on wheels now, bumping heavily across the beach, which was streaked by wide bands of shallow, wind-drifted snow.

Presently the tail lifted. Then, as Carr pulled back on the stick, the landing-gear left the ground. They skimmed across over the beach toward the open water, gray

and sullen under the dim rays of the low-hanging Arctic sun.

As he gained height, Don banked her slightly, and swung about in a wide arc, sweeping back over the beach. Half a mile ahead of them lay the fifty-foot bluff, and the little cluster of shacks which marked the Point Barrow settlement.

On the beach ahead of them, they could see the figure of a man running—running toward the huge black-and-gold trimotored Russian all-metal monoplane five hundred yards to the west. The figure halted, turned, remained motionless. Carr knew it was the rifleman, shooting at the roaring *Borealis*. He sniffed contemptuously and held to his course, for he knew that now the marksman had but one chance in a million of winging his speeding target.

"Bank her over, Skipper, and gimme a shot at him!" called Windy imploringly. "I betcha I can trim his whiskers with this gat of mine! Just one chance at that fuzzy-headed sidewinder Markoff is all I

ast, Skipper-just one!"

But Carr shook his head. He knew that Windy had but one chance in a million of hitting the man on the beach. And he wasn't disposed to waste cartridges which, all too few, might prove precious later on. His only motive in swinging back over the beach was to assure himself his surmise was correct, that it was the burly Soviet flyer, Stefan Markoff, or the latter's aide, Vladimir Raskolnik, who had attempted to halt their flight into the unknown.

Having satisfied himself the marksman was Markoff himself, he swung the *Borealis* over, and nosed her straight out, north by west, over the leaden Arctic sea—straight out into the "blind spot" of the world.

COLUMBUS set sail in quest of a new world, with nothing but supreme faith and the evidence of a few strange shrubs washed up on the shores of Europe to indicate the existence of land to the west. Don Carr, like a modern Columbus of the air, hopped off from Point Barrow in quest of a new ice-bound empire in the Arctic, with little more than faith alone and the sheer love of adventure to urge him on.

Ahead of him lay the "blind spot" of the world—the only region of any considerable area on the face of the earth which had never been explored. There was some evidence that somewhere in that vast wasteland land existed. Birds had been known to fly north from Barrow, and to return in the spring with fledglings, indicating the

existence of open land.

And there were icebergs, drifting slowly southward. Mere ice floes form in open water, but huge bergs are formed only where there are mountains, where glaciers slide slowly to the sea, and there snap off.

But it was not upon this evidence that Don based his belief in the existence of a lost continent in the frozen wastes near the pole. He was staking his life, and the life of his mechanic upon the truth of the tale told by Metek, a dying Eskimo whom he had rescued from a drifting floe—a tale so fantastic as to seem almost incredible.

A tale of a lost empire, isolated from the rest of the world in the Arctic ice pack—a land rich in natural resources, where gold was so common it was considered almost without value, where precious stones were the medium of exchange!

Only the ravings of a starvation-crazed

native, any reasonable person would have said. And yet—and yet Metek had given his rescuer visible evidence of the truth of his fantastic story. A talisman of some sort, it seemed to be—a tiny bear, fashioned of soft gold, with emeralds for eyes—certainly a strange object to come from the Arctic wastes! Certainly beyond the powers of the simple Innuits, or Alaskan Eskimo, to fashion.

That talisman was what had convinced Carr of the truth of the weird tale babbled by the dying Metek. Only he and Windy, his aide, knew of the existence of the golden bear. Yet it needed no evidence so concrete to convince others of the truth of Metek's story. Brought to Barrow in the cabin of the Borealis, Metek had continued to talk of the lost empire, incoherently at times, until at length he died. Markoff, the bearded Soviet flyer, had heard the story, and he had believed it—or so subsequent developments seemed to prove.

But Columbus had no treacherous rival striving to beat him to his goal, as had Don and Windy. The evening before they planned to hop off, they discovered that their cache of reserve gasoline had been looted, and every drum of the precious fluid stolen! There was no other plane but Markoff's nearer than Juneau, so it was plain to see what had become of the stolen gas.

They were left with only what fuel remained in the tanks of the *Borealis*. Enough to carry them well into the interior; but that was all. None to get them back!

If Metek's strange story proved to be foundationless, it meant they would be forced down on the ice pack, without the barest chance of escaping with their lives. Even if they did find the lost empire of the Arctic, how would they get back?

Had it not been for the presence of Markoff and his ship, Carr certainly would have made a trip to "the outside" for more fuel before launching himself upon so perilous an adventure. But the presence of the Russian and the theft of his gas forced his hand.

As early explorers had dreamed of a northwest passage, so had aviators dreamed of air-lanes across the Arctic, shortening the distance between Europe, Asia and America. If there really were such a temperate land near the pole, the nation which possessed it would gain a position of dominating importance in the military and commercial affairs of the entire northern

hemisphere. For from such a base an air attack could be launched against any enemy power, and the nation controlling it would hold a monopoly upon any commercial polar air lanes of the future!

All these things flashed through Carr's mind as he held the nose of the *Borealis* on the hazy horizon. At least, he was off ahead of Markoff, to claim the Arctic empire for the United States! Even if he were to be stranded without gas, he could radio the amazing news back to the civilized world, and ask for help.

"Hey, Skipper!" called Windy. "The Roosian's last bullet smashed our radio!"

### CHAPTER II

DON CARR was one of the intrepid youngsters who had made aviation history for the Yanks during the World War. He had come through with a shrapnel wound in the hip, the scars of two machinegun bullets in one shoulder, an enemy plane to his credit, and an overwhelming craying for adventure.

He was lean and wiry, with gray eyes which on occasion could be cold and hard as flint, or gleaming with the fire of battle. He was a wizard at the stick, and other flyers admiringly credited him with the ability to make any ship ever built sit up on its hind legs and beg.

After the war, life on the ground had proven too humdrum for him. He had taken a fling at barnstorming with a commercial flying circus, at joining a South American revolution as a flying soldier of fortune, and finally as a pilot in the air mail service.

It was there he had met Windy, a ground man at the Cheyenne field. Before long the two had become inseparable pals. Windy possessed an uncanny mechanical ability, a quick temper, a sense of humor and a tendency to fight at the drop of the hat, if not sooner.

Carr's unexcelled record had won the appointment as pilot for the Van Schaak polar air expedition, financed by a Pittsburgh steel millionare aviation enthusiast who longed to be the first to reach the North Pole by air. Don had accepted the appointment only on condition Windy be taken along as mechanic. This was what had brought them to Point Barrow, where for weeks they had been preparing for their hop-off to the pole, which was planned for

early in April, at the dawn of the sixmonth Arctic day, when weather conditions would be most favorable.

Van Schaak, the commander of the proposed expedition, had become greatly attached to Carr. But shortly before the proposed hop-off he had fallen ill and died. On his deathbed he had bequeathed the Borealis to the pilot of whom he had grown so fond. Carr had every intention of going ahead with the polar hop—until the rescue of Metek.

rescue of Metek. . . . . .

The flyer Stefan Markoff had swooped down in his huge black-and-gold monoplane shortly before Van Schaak's death. He was, he explained, merely an aviation enthusiast, eager to be of assistance in the polar hop, and acting as an unofficial observer for the Soviet republic. He disclaimed any intention of making a rival flight, and placed his services and those of Raskolnik, his assistant, at the command of the American millionaire.

"You see," he smilingly explained, shrugging, his voice betraying the merest trace of an accent, "my poor ship is not equipped for such a flight. But if I cannot make the flight myself, I can help you to make it, eh? And we are all in the game for the advancement of aviation, not?"

IN spite of Markoff's obvious attempts to make himself pleasant, Carr had distrusted him from the first.

Nevertheless, the American had no fear the Soviet pilot might attempt a polar flight himself. He knew Markoff's ship, a German Roland Rohrbach, almost as well as the Soviet flyer knew it himself, and was well aware that all the Russian had said about its limitations were true. It was a splendid ship with powerful motors, considerably speedier than the Borealis, but lacking tank space for a sustained flight to the Pole and back, or on across to Spitzbergen. Being tri-motored, it burned a tremendous amount of gas. It might get the Russian to the Pole, but it certainly would never get him back again. On the other hand, the Borealis, with a single motor and much of its cabin space specially built for gasoline storage, was good for a non-stop flight clear across the top of the Moreover, the Borealis was of world. laminated wood construction throughout the fuselage, to avoid any compass deflection which might be caused in an all-metal job like Markoff's.

It was on a test flight over the leaden

Arctic while awaiting the weather to clear for the polar take-off that Carr had spotted a moving object on an ice floe far beneath him, and swooped down for a closer examination.

As he swept down close to the water, he realized the figure was that of a man-a man clad in a parka, crawling on hands and knees. Although the floes were fairly thick, and a landing would be fraught with peril, Carr never hesitated. With a human life in danger, there was but one thing to do, and he did it. He side-slipped, circled, and brought the Borealis down upon the surface of the water as near as possible to the floe which bore the crawling man. Then he taxied carefully between the ice cakes until he was alongside the floe.

He cast a line to the man, who had raised himself to his knees and was staring uncomprehendingly at the ship. shouted to him to seize it, so he could moor the Borealis to the floe. The parka-clad figure crawled weakly to the line, but lacked strength enough to hold it. light wind was causing the plane to drift faster than the floe, and the rope was drawn through his hands. He toppled forward, and dropped upon his face on the ice.

"Well, Skipper," Windy sighed, "reckon it's up to me. But I shore hate to get my

feet wet for a frowsy Esky."

HE crawled out upon a wing-tip, while Carr maneuvered the ship around alongside the floe once more. slipped off onto the floe, Don tossed him the line, and he made it fast. Then Carr piled out and joined his mechanic, who was kneeling over the prostrate figure.

"Snap out of it, buddy!" Windy admonished as he shook one shoulder. "Come alive, and hear the birdies cheep. What's the idea of cruisin' around so far from home? Speak up and spill it, kid!"

The man stirred, struggled feebly, rolled over and raised himself upon an elbow. The hood of his parka fell away, revealing a mop of long, but curly blond hair, utterly unlike the coarse, straight black hair of the Innuit. More than that, his eyes were blue. though broad cheek-bones and receding brow plainly betrayed Eskimo blood. His face once might have been chubby, but now it was gaunt and drawn, with skin sagging.

"Mercy!" he whispered weakly. "Mercy, O mighty sky spirits who ride upon the

wings of the roaring gull!"
"Plumb goofy!" Windy exclaimed.

"From his looks, and from the way he mixes English words with his chatter, he's a breed Esky that's strayed too far from the settlements. Spearin' fish from the floe, and his kayak drifted away and left him stranded, I reckon. Maybe a shot from the flask would key him up a bit, huh?"

As Windy clambered Carr nodded. back upon a pontoon and thence to the cabin, the pilot placed an arm behind the shoulders of the stranded man to support him.

"Don't get scared, old-timer," he advised in a soothing voice. "We aren't going to harm you. We're going to take you back to civilization. When you throw a few good feeds into yourself, you'll be as good as ever. Who are you, and where did you come from, and how did you happen to get adrift out here?"

The look of fear was replaced by one of relief and joy. Tears started from the fellow's eyes. It was plain he understood the gist of Don's reassuring words, if not most of the words themselves. Tears welled in his eyes as he seized the airman's gloved

hand and pressed it to his lips.

"I am Metek," he said huskily, in his part-English jargon. "Metek, in whose veins flows the blood of the white rulers who came to us long ago. Metek, once chief adviser to the Princess Orana herself, but now an outcast from Gohara, kingdom of the hunter people in the ice-locked land where the earth is warm. For days without number, even since the skies were dark in the long night, I have wandered—"

X/INDY, hopping from the plane to the floe with a canteen of water, a flask, and a pocketful of emergency rations, heard Metek's wandering explanation.

What did I tell yuh, Skipper?" he broke "Plumb goofy, what? If I give him a shot of this, he'll go plumb off his nut, don't yuh think? Maybe I better take it myself, so his jabbering will sound halfways reasonable."

"Pipe down, Windy," Carr directed. "I want to hear what this bird's got to say. A pipe dream, all right, but the funniest

one I ever ran across."

He mixed a thimbleful of the contents of the flask in a swig of water, and held it to the lips of the emaciated Metek. Then he gave him a small piece of chocolate, which was devoured voraciously, with pitiful pleas for more. Carr shook his head. "After a while, old-timer, you can have all you want. Tell us some more about this pipe dream—about this land of Gehenna or Gohara or whatever you call it. Where is it, and how do you get there?"

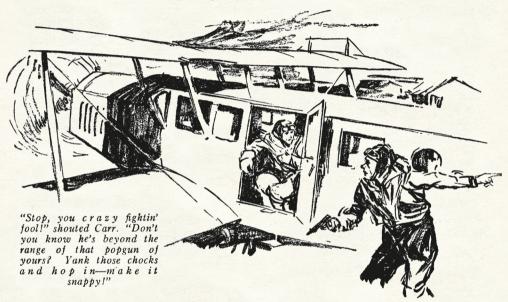
Metek had brightened perceptibly. He waved a fur-mittened hand in a wide arc to

the northwest.

"Gohara lies there—somewhere, O heaven-sent rescuers! For a long, long time

that shot, Skipper. Look what it's gone and went and done to him! 'The great god Uncle Sam!' I been called a heap of names, but this is the first time anybody ever pegged me as a herald. If I thought he meant that as a nasty crack, I'd slough him one, even if his belly is flappin' against his backbone!"

Without smiling, Don urged Metek to continue.



I have wandered across the ice pack. Longer yet have I drifted in the open water, without food. I have lost track of time, of distance, of direction."

"Something funny about this," Carr muttered to his pal. "Maybe this bird isn't goofy. His lingo doesn't sound like a breed from the settlements. D'you suppose there

could really be such a-"

"You doubt!" cried Metek, interrupting. He reached within the folds of his parka, and drew forth the delicately-chased figure of the golden bear with the emerald eyes—the talisman which was to prove the deciding factor. "Look! Do you believe now?"

He paused. And then: "And you, O sky-men who ride the roaring gull, I know you now. You are the ones named in the prophecy—the ones destined to deliver my beloved kingdom. You are the heralds of the great god Uncle Sam! You it is whose coming was prophesied by the founder of the white dynasty, by the Emperor Smith himself!"

Windy shook his head solemnly.

"I told you that you'd better not give him

"Go on, old-timer. Tell us about this Emperor Smith. Who is he, and where did he come from?"

The starvation-wasted form of Metek

trembled, and his eyes gleamed.

"It was long, long ago, O my rescuers. In my father's father's youth. Before that none of the hunter people of ice-locked Gohara had ever seen a white man. They were all of the dark, squat race which lives upon the ice-pack.

"Then, one day, our hunters, ranging far beyond beyond the mountain barrier which surrounds the kingdom, came upon the two white men, while searching for the white bear. They were near death from

lack of food, even as I am now.

"Our hunters placed them upon their sledges, and fed them, and brought them back to Gohara, the land where the earth is warm. One was he who became the Emperor Smith, and who founded a dynasty which has ruled our people, except for one brief period, ever since. It is his blood which flows in my veins, O white men of the sky.

"The other was called Lang. At first they were close friends; comrades. later they became bitter enemies, quarreling over a woman. The woman was Sievu, daughter of the headman, and when Smith won her and made himself emperor, she became empress. Lang gathered his adherents about him and made war upon the Emperor Smith. He was defeated, driven to the mountain fastnesses which border Gohara. Lang died and the Emperor Smith died, but those who came after kept up the quarrel. Lang's son vanquished enemies, and set himself up as dictator.

"He ruled for but a few years before he was overthrown, and the Smith dynasty restored. But the rivalry of the two factions continued unabated. The second emperor died a year ago, and since then Gohara has been ruled by a regency, for the princess Orana, his only daughter, is scarcely more

than a child.

"I, Metek, in whose veins flows the blood of the original Emperor Smith, was chief adviser to my kinswoman, Orana, until but recently. I discovered a plot on the part of Ootumah, the regent, to deliver the empire into the hands of the Lang faction, and was banished into the great outside wasteland of ice. And so, O deliverers from the sky, you see me here-"

"BUT," interrupted Carr curiously, still half convinced Metek was out of his head, "who were these birds, Smith and Lang, and where did they come from?"

"Birds?" repeated Metek, puzzled. "But they were not bird men, like you! They came from a ship which, although I have never seen such a thing, is said to resemble a giant kayak, big enough to carry a score or more of men. Gohara is surrounded by forbidding mountain ranges, and has no seacoast. This immense kayak they called a ship was seeking to find something which Smith and Lang called the North Pole, but none of our people has been able to understand just what this North Pole is."

"Do you know the name of this giant

kayak?" Carr broke in curiously.

"But yes! It was called the Jeannette. and was crushed in the ice pack far, far beyond the borders of Gohara. Smith and Lang set out together afoot to cross the ice pack, leaving the rest behind them. They never knew what happened to the others."

A gasp of amazement burst from Carr's lips. Because of his plan for a hop to the pole, he had read all he could get his hands on concerning polar expeditions. He was thoroughly familiar with the history of the ill-fated Jeannette which, under command of George Washington De Long, former United States naval officer, had been crushed in the ice north of Siberia half a

century previously.

He knew several members of the crew had set out together, afoot after the destruction of their vessel, and were supposed to have perished. Smith and Lang, he reasoned, must have been members of this party. Doubtless they had struck out to the eastward, hoping to reach Alaska, and the two survivors were the ones rescued by the inhabitants of this strange land described by Metek. He recalled that De Long and fourteen of his men had succeeded in reaching the coast of Siberia, but that all, with the exception of two despatched for help, had died of cold and starvation while awaiting help at the mouth of the Lena River.

"Yes, yes!" Carr cried out. "Go on! What else do you know about these men, Smith and Lang? You said something about a prophecy. Spill it, man!"

"The Emperor Smith was also a great prophet," Metek continued, his voice growing steadily weaker. "When, after our hunters had rescued them and they had recovered from their experience, Lang was eager to attempt to return to the world whence they had come, which gave rise to\_ their first quarrel.

"The Emperor Smith opposed his plan, claiming that they were certain to perish before they could reach their goal. pointed out that others of their people were certain to follow them. He said that Uncle Sam, who it appears is the great god of the white people, would never let them

perish.

"He kept prophesying that sooner or later Uncle Sam would find them. After a while, when he had taken a wife and had become emperor, he didn't wish to leave He claimed the Gohara empire for the great god Uncle Sam, and it was this claim which widened the breach between him and Lang. For Lang wanted to set up an empire of his own, denving the claim of Uncle Sam to the land of my people. It was this policy which attracted many followers to his banner.

"But the Emperor Smith was a great prophet, and all his prophecies came true, except this one, which even now is about to come true. He prophesied, months in advance, when a shadow would cross the face of the sun. On his deathbed he prophesied that some day, maybe soon, maybe many years in the future, emissaries of the great god Uncle Sam would come to us, to bring peace to our empire and destruction to the forces which would destroy it. And behold! From out of the sky you come! And I, Metek, banished from my beloved home-land, am the means through which my people are to be liberated!"

He paused, panting. For an instant a

doubting look came into his eyes.

"You-you are the representatives of

Uncle Sam, aren't you?"

"You said it, kiddo!" Windy assured him. "I'll tell the cock-eyed world we're Uncle Sam's favorite sons. Have another shot, and rave on."

"Pipe down!" scowled Carr, and turned again to Metek. "How come you speak

our tongue, old-timer?"

"It was the tongue of Smith and Lang, O deliverers! Two generations have passed since the white men came to Gohara, and a third, to which the Princess Orana belongs, is reaching maturity. The blood of Smith and Lang is mixed with that of many Goharans. So their tongue has spread, for it is the official speech of the court. Those of us who are, or have been, of the court, have learned to make marks by which your speech is written, and to read these marks. Much more did the Emperor Smith and his white rival teach us—the craftsmanship of working with gold, a system of exchange, improved weapons with which to hunt, means of building houses—that and much more, which I am too weary to tell you. I am growing faint, and-"

"Say, buddy," Windy broke in, "they aint got prohibition in your burg, have they? 'Cause if they aint, I'm all for—"

"Button your lip, you red-headed idiot!" Carr snapped. "Can't you see the poor devil's all in? Lend a hand, and we'll hoist him into the *Borealis*. We'll hop him back to Barrow, where the doc can look him over and patch him up. He'll be all right as soon as they take the wrinkles out of his belly."

Windy grinned as he reached down.

"Fair enough, Skipper. He wont be the first bozo I've helped home after he passed out. But I never lent a hand to anybody before that was as cuckoo as this!"

They loaded Metek in the cabin and, after taxi-ing for nearly thirty minutes be-

fore they found an open stretch of water between the floes of sufficient area to permit a good take-off, hopped off on their return journey to Barrow.

UPON their arrival in Barrow, Metek was plainly out of his head. For forty-eight hours he raved, repeating over and over the things he had told Don and Windy, as well as other things, mostly inconsequential, concerning the lost empire of the Arctic.

The substance of his strange babblings passed from mouth to mouth, and many there were who came to hear him, including the Russian, Markoff. All seemed convinced his ravings were those of a mad man.

"What do you think of him, Markoff?" Don asked the Russian the night that Metek died. "Think there's anything to

what he says?"

The Russian smiled and shrugged. "Who knows? Me, I think he is, as you Yankees say, outside of his head. It is too incredible, too childish, to merit belief. The Russian explorers, Deshnew and Kotzebue, penetrated well into the region north of Siberia, and they found no traces of any such strange people. Surely you do not give his story credence?"

Carr noted an odd, penetrating look of inquiry in the Russian's black eyes as he made his query. He wondered why Markoff seemed eager to belittle Metek's tale, eager to learn whether Don believed it.

"I don't know what to think, Markoff. It certainly sounds goofy, and yet there are certain elements which lend it the ring of

truth."

At first Carr had not realized the tremendous potentialities of the situation. He was pretty well convinced Metek's tale was based on fact-more so than he cared to admit to Markoff. Conceding it to be true, he began to realize the vital part such a land, providing an air base in the Arctic. would prove to the nation possessing it. As he began to consider a flight to determine the truth of Metek's story, the importance of the proposed polar hop receded into insignificance. If, perhaps, Markoff was attempting to dissuade him from making such a flight so the Russian himself could claim the land for the Soviet republic, then the very future of the United States was imperiled. At once he made his decision.

"Windy," he announced the evening before they hopped off, "I'm going to try it.

Are you with me?"

"If yuh ask me, Skipper, I'll say I think the Esky was full of hop. But Columbus took a chancet. When do we start?"

# CHAPTER III

AS the roaring motor drove the Borealis through the chill Arctic altitudes, steadily devouring distance, Don Carr, seated at the stick, had ample time for reflection. Already the sand spit and low bluff which marked Point Barrow had receded behind them until it was merely a smudgy line on the horizon. Ahead and below lay sullen gray waters dotted with ice floes, as far as the eye could reach.

Beyond that—what? Death's icy fingers as the penalty for their folly in heeding a dying native's rambling tale? Were they to be forced down on the ice pack when their fuel was exhausted, to perish miser-

ably of cold or starvation?

Or did that empire of the Arctic, as described by Metek, really await them at the end of their journey? Were they, like Columbus, to discover an entirely new world? Were they on a fool's errand, or were they about to enter upon one of the most glorious adventures of history? Were they to be the means of performing an inestimable service to their country by claiming new territory in its name, and protecting it for all time from the attack of enemy powers, launched in the air from a base at Uncle Sam's very back door?

During the preparation for the hurried flight, and during the hasty hop-off, Don had been so active he had had little time for reflection. Now, as he considered the tremendous possibilities of the flight, the possibilities both of disaster and glorious success, he drew a deep, quivering breath. The feeling he experienced was much like that when he had been a cadet, and had hopped off for his first solo flight. spice of danger added a strange thrill which could be gained in no other way. knowledge he was making the greatest gamble of his lifetime caused his jaws to tighten, and the lean muscles to bulge beneath the bronze of his cheeks.

Good old Windy! Loyal to the core! Ready to risk his life for his pilot pal! Had the redhead been convinced of the truth of Metek's tale, it would have been something else again. But he had only said: "Columbus took a chancet. When

do we start?" Some pal, that!

The night before, when Carr had made his final decision to abandon his polar dash in favor of this wild venture in search of a new world, the prospects had seemed far rosier than now.

For one thing, he had considered himself perfectly equipped for such a flight. The theft of his reserve supply of gas had been the first blow. It meant that, although he might reach his goal, he might never be able to return-might be forced to spend the rest of his life in Gohara, as would Windy-like the two members of the ill-fated De Long expedition.

THE second blow was the destruction of the Borealis' radio equipment by Markoff's bullet. With the radio working, even though they were stranded on the ice pack or in the lost empire itself, still there would be hope of bringing help from the outer world. Now this possibility had vanished. Another, and, to Don, a graver possibility loomed as a result of the disabling of the radio. What if Markoff should attempt to follow them? Even if they landed first and made first claim to the ice-locked empire in the name of the United States, how were they to prove their claim if Markoff should radio to the outside world that he had claimed the new world in the name of the Soviet republic?

However, he had little fear that Markoff would follow. To begin with, the Russian would be in much the same boat as Windy and he, so far as becoming stranded was concerned. Without reserve tanks, the giant tri-motored plane would soon exhaust its fuel and, even if it reached the goal would, like the *Borealis*, be unable to return.

Even so, it would have the advantage of the radio with which to communicate with the outside. On the other hand, it was handicapped for flying anywhere in the vicinity of the magnetic pole by its metal construction, which caused the compass

readings to be inaccurate.

True, both Carr and Markoff were equally in the dark so far as knowing the exact location of the Arctic empire in the vast unexplored expanse of the world's "blind spot." Carr was steering a course which would bring him to the approximate center of the widespread unmapped territory, hoping that from a great elevation he could "raise" the mountain range which marked the lost empire.

Markoff could follow the same plan, of course. But with inaccurate compass read-



United States couldn't lay claim to any land we might discover if Metek's story panned out as the truth. He figured if he could halt us or delay us, he might return to his own country and there organize a properly equipped expedition to beat us to it. I think we've seen the last of Markoff."

NINETY minutes from the time they had hopped off, the *Borealis* had reached the edge of the ice pack. Leaden water and drifting floes were replaced now by a limitless expanse of ice. Ten minutes more, and they were speeding over a region never before traversed by man, unless by chance at long intervals by wandering Eskimos.

They were surrounded by an even grayness now, with no lights or shadows to break the monotony. Everywhere the horizon was hidden by a thin haze. Here and there were patches of white ice clouds, easily distinguishable from the darker land clouds.

The drift indicator showed a strong wind from the north. They were crabbing, half-sidewise, bucking the wind at an angle. Outside, the temperature was hovering around twenty degrees below zero—fairly warm. Inside the cabin it was but a degree or two below zero.

They were entirely comfortable, wearing

next to the skin underclothing of reindeer hide, rubbed and scraped by Eskimo women until it was soft as velvet. They wore fur outer garments, and boots and mittens of sealskin.

The ice below them was rough, heaved up in great ridges extending from east to west. A forced landing upon the pack would prove disastrous, Carr knew only too well. There was the possibility the ship could land between the ridges, but it was far from a probability.

If they survived such a landing, they could expect to survive at least for several weeks. Their food supply included only those edibles which provided the most nourishment with the least possible bulk and weight—pemmican, chocolate, biscuits, malted milk, raisins. Then there were their rifles, with which they reasonably could expect to provide themselves with fresh meat so long as their scant supply of shells held out. They could make sledges from the framework of the *Borealis*. But even so, the prospect of a forced landing was not heartening.

For three hours they had been droning monotonously over a seemingly limitless expanse of ice, when Windy shouted: "Ahoy there, Skipper! Look what's on our tail!"

Carr turned, and looked behind. At

first he could see nothing. Then, following Windy's pointing finger he made out, far in the distance, a black speck against the haze on the horizon. It seemed stationary, and Don knew it could not be a bird. It could be nothing else than Markoff's plane!

His lips twisted into an expression of annoyance, then changed to a grin. Windy was removing one of the high-velocity

rifles from its case.

"This is an answer to my prayer, Skipper," the mechanic grinned. "'Twas gettin' so plumb monotonous, I was prayin' for somethin' to bust. And it looks like it's goin' to. Soon as he comes clost enough, I'll see can I dust him up a bit with this old .250-3000."

The appearance of Markoff's ship had been a surprise to Carr, for he had reasoned the Russian would never make the attempt to reach icebound Gohara. Now he knew his appraisal of the Soviet flyer had been wrong. He knew he had an opponent of nerve and daring, one who would hesitate at nothing to accomplish his ends.

"Oh, well," he shrugged, "the bigger they come, the harder they fall! His ship can fly rings round the *Borealis*. Wonder what he has up his sleeve? Is he just going to pass us, so he can be first to land and claim the new world in the Arctic? If that's his plan, I'll have a tough time stopping him because he can outrun me.

"But maybe he figures he can put us out of the way before either ship reaches Gohara, so he'll be sure his claim will never be contested. We're sure out of luck, if his crate is equipped with a machine-gun."

But, in the ensuing minutes, the spot in the sky behind them grew no larger. Carr was puzzled, for he knew the tri-motored ship was good for thirty miles an hour more than the *Borealis*.

A BANK of ice clouds loomed on the horizon ahead. As the *Borealis* neared them, the Russian craft seemed to spurt ahead. Ordinarily, Carr would have risen above them. But this time he chose to pick a course through them in an effort to throw his pursuer off the trail. He had no gas to waste on an extended goose chase through the clouds, but hoped he might elude the Russian.

But the pursuing plane merely approached closer, and then held a position at perhaps a thousand feet higher than the *Borealis*. When Carr, after dodging and twisting through the cloud masses, finally

emerged on the farther side, the black-andgold monoplane was riding high, but otherwise tight on his tail. To his astonishment, it once more dropped back to a position some miles in the rear, almost out of sight.

"Damned if I haven't figured it out at last!" he exclaimed finally. "With his compasses out of kilter, he's simply using us as his guide. When—or if—we come in sight of our goal, then he figures on shooting us down and then landing himself. If he'd tried to shoot us down now, he'd be

lost, and he knows it!"

For hours the flight continued, with the Russian always in sight, but far behind. The ice pack gave way at length to a flat tundra land swept bare of snow in places. Then the ice pack again, and Carr knew they had but skimmed over an island in the ice. He reasoned that they were nearing the center of the "blind spot" now, and he kept an anxious eye on the hazy horizon ahead. Windy was "shooting" the sun occasionally to check their course, and was spending the rest of his time keeping an eye on the plane in the rear.

It was Windy who first sighted the jagged peaks, barely visible to starboard. "Land ahead!" he shouted. "Attaboy,

Skipper! We've made it!"

# CHAPTER IV

THROUGH the haze, Carr made out the outline of jagged, snow-clad peaks. He swung the nose of the *Borealis* around until they were heading straight for the mountains. At first he thought they might have seen an Arctic mirage, but as he drew nearer and the outline of the peaks became clearer, he realized it was no mirage.

As the distance between the speeding ship and the mountain range diminished, Don made out a stratum of clouds—not white ice clouds, but the darker land clouds, this time—spreading just beneath the summits of the peaks. As the *Borealis* shoved the distance behind her, the air became much rougher, due to currents caused by the mountain barrier. The ship, riding light, with its supply of gas almost gone, was tossing about like a cork.

"Hey, Skipper!" Windy called out suddenly. "Take a slant at what's behind us!"

Carr turned, and saw Markoff's plane was much nearer than it had been before. He kept an eye on the Russian ship for some moments, and noted it was overhauling them speedily. His eyes narrowed, for he knew the final test was almost due. Windy was fingering his rifle eagerly.

The mountain range seemed to rise abruptly from the ice pack. As the Borealis approached the nearest peaks, climbing steadily, Don saw the jagged summits of another range projecting above the layer of clouds some miles beyond. Between these ranges, according to Metek's tale, should lie Gohara, the lost empire of the Arctic. But what really was beneath those clouds, Carr could only guess.

They were droning over the first range of peaks, now. The cloud bank, like a billowy ocean, was perhaps a thousand feet

beneath them.

"Heads up, Skipper!" called Windy suddenly. "Here comes the Roosian!"

CARR turned, to see the Roland Rohrbach diving on their tail. Although seated inside the cabin, he could hear nothing but the roar of his own motor, he saw a thin streamer of smoke suddenly rocket out toward them from the black-and-gold ship. He knew it was a tracer bullet, and that the Soviet ship was equipped with a machine-gun!

The first burst went well to one side of the *Borealis*. Don whipped her over, and slid off into a sideslip. Markoff was right after him. The Russian was no amateur; he seemed as skillful a pilot as Carr had

ever encountered.

Carr flattened out for an instant, dived to gain speed, and then zoomed upward. The maneuver brought him out above the Soviet plane, in perfect position to have poured a destructive stream of lead into the other ship, had he been equipped with a machine-gun. Windy smashed a window of the cabin with the muzzle of his rifle, but before he could shoot, the *Borealis* had overshot Markoff's ship, and the latter was out of range.

Virtually helpless without a machine-gun, Carr had no intention of fighting it out with Markoff. It would have been folly, suicide for him to have attempted it. Moreover, his gas was almost gone. He knew better than to risk a dogfight over the jagged peaks below, with the prospect of being shot down, or forced down through lack of gas. A forced landing through those clouds could end in nothing but disaster, so long as they were over the mountains. Unable to halt the Russian, his next best bet was to beat him to the

landing, so he would have a valid basis for his claim to the lost empire on behalf of the United States.

But this was just what Markoff intended to prevent. The Roland Rohrbach had caught itself, banked, climbed again, and once more was ready to swoop down on the *Borealis'* tail. While a speedier craft than Don's, it was harder to handle.

Carr waited until Markoff had nosed over into his dive. Then he slipped off on one side, but immediately whipped the *Borealis* over and around, shooting down across the path of the enemy plane, which seemed to be having a tough time to bring

itself out of the dive quickly.

The *Borealis* shot across in front of Markoff's ship so close that the wing tip seemed to miss one of the whirling propellers by inches. Had Carr's judgment erred by the tiniest bit, had his hand been less steady by the slightest degree, both ships would have gone plunging down through the clouds, a mass of wreckage.

His plan was to use the slip-stream of his propeller as an offensive weapon to upset the Roland Rohrbach. If his back-wash could stagger the big tri-motored ship, send it off balance and into a spin which might carry it into the clouds, even for the fraction of a minute, Don believed he could dive into the mist and lose himself so Markoff could never find him.

BUT the maneuver came within an ace of ending disastrously. True, the backwash of the *Borealis* caught one wing of the black-and-gold monoplane and tipped it slightly, but failed to overturn it. The drag of the three giant motors held Markoff's plane comparatively steady on its course.

But as Carr shot across its nose, he sped straight through a sudden burst of fire from the Russian's machine-gun. The stream of lead raked through the cabin of the Borealis. Carr drew a quick breath, for he expected momentarily for his ship to burst into flames in case the enemy's bullets had pierced his gas reserve tanks. An instant later, diving for the protection of the cloud bank below, he breathed a sigh of relief as he realized the gas-tanks were almost empty and that Markoff's bullets, even had they penetrated the tanks, would have been unlikely to have caused trouble.

But as the protecting mist enveloped him, he resolved to risk no more encounters with Markoff. His hope now lay in flight. A FRESH peril confronted him, however, flying blind through the clouds. He was not yet clear of the mountains. He had no way of knowing when he might crash into a peak hidden in the clouds. But for fully five minutes he held the Borealis to a steady course on an even keel, heading straight out toward the area in which he believed the valley of Gohara lay.

Then gradually he drew back on the stick and pulled the *Borealis* up above the cloud layer. He reasoned that Markoff would be too shrewd to follow him down into the bank of mist, but would hover above, figuring he'd have to come up to

get his bearings.

Suddenly there was a shout from Windy: "There's the Roosian, Skipper! Somethin's wrong with him—take a slant at the way he's circlin'. I see it now—dead stick, port motor! Crippled! We can outrun him now!"

Markoff's ship was but a short distance to one side of them, slightly higher in altitude. He was circling slowly downward. Sure enough, Carr could make out the dead stick, and knew one motor was out of commission. Still, he knew the other two could sustain the ship in the air, although at a reduced speed.

If it were merely motor trouble, doubtless Markoff's mechanic could get the dead stick spinning again shortly. But if the motor failure were due to lack of gas, if Markoff's tanks had run dry at last, then the other two motors were due to cough their last in a few moments, and the Russian must make a forced landing.

A forced landing might end in a crash, depending on the terrain beneath the clouds. Again, if they were well past the mountain wall, and over a flat country, Markoff might easily make a safe landing. And Don couldn't afford to let the Soviet representative be first to touch foot on the soil of Cohora!

soil of Gohara!

Instantly he nosed the *Borealis* over, diving back into the sea of mist. Two or three hundred feet down, and he flattened out slightly. Then he began to glide, lower and lower, but not so steeply that he could not zoom or swerve to one side in case he should see a granite peak looming up ahead.

Down, down he kept gliding, lower and lower, for what seemed an interminable period. There was no sign of Markoff, of course, for they could not see a hundred feet through the cloud. It seemed warmer in the cabin to Carr. And then, quite suddenly, they shot out from beneath the layer of clouds.

A thousand feet below stretched a comparatively level plain. Don gasped as he saw it was not white with snow, but verdant green, with stretches of forest behind them on the slope toward the mountains, and what seemed to be cultivated fields, dotted here and there with small lakes.

Windy let out a whoop of amazement. "Well, I'll be a wall-eyed son of a waltz-in' walrus!" he cried out. "Skipper, d'you see the same things I does? Is that a mirage? Strike me cockeyed if that aint a city over there! Lookit the smoke! And people! Lookit 'em runnin'! They see us, and they're plumb scared!"

CARR'S heart began to thump wildly. He had reached his goal at last! He actually had discovered a new world! Metek's story was no mere chimera of the imagination, after all. This was Gohara, the oasis in the Arctic, the key to the military and commercial domination of the entire northern hemisphere!

His elated thoughts were rudely interrupted by Markoff's ship, which came gliding down out of the clouds a thousand yards to the right. He realized he might be cheated out of claiming this new world for his own country unless he snapped out of it and landed before the Russian.

He shoved the stick forward, and nosed over into a power dive. From the corner of his eyes he could see Markoff diving, too. But now it seemed two of the Russian's motors had quit, and he might be forced to make a dead-stick landing.

A green field seemed to rush up at them. Don pulled her out of the dive, flattened out, cut the gun, and pulled a beautiful three-point landing near a clump of trees. A score of frightened natives were scurrying to shelter in the grove. Markoff landed half a mile away, fully thirty seconds later.

Carr hopped from the cabin door, and shouted: "I take possession of this territory in the name of the United States of America!" He held up one arm toward the cowering natives in a friendly gesture, and beckoned them to approach. Clinging together, spears in hand, they did so, ready to flee at the slightest false move. They were not clad in the heavy furs of the Eskimo, but in light skins befitting the temperate clime. They had the broad faces

# BOOK MAGAZINE

of the Eskimo, but were taller and better built. From what Metek had told him, Carr believed they might understand a few words of English, although they hadn't seemed to grasp his first words. And then he strove to make them understand.

"I come from the sky on a mission of peace, O Goharans! I am the emissary of the great god Uncle Sam!"

The light of understanding suddenly



"SKIPPER," chuckled Windy, "you got 'em goin' now! The United States of America don't spell nothin' to 'em. but they shore savvy when you pull that 'great god Uncle Sam' stuff! Look at 'em-scared stiff!"

And so they were, with the exception of one native, who seemed to be a leader. While the others dropped their spears, some of them falling to their knees, he stood his ground and questioned them. He spoke in a jargon of Innuit and English, using far less of the latter tongue than had Metek, but nevertheless managing to make himself understood.

"Greetings, O men who come from the sky on the wings of the giant bird which roars," he began. "You come to us and say you come upon a mission of peace, and yet you say you claim our land of Gohara. We are but simple folk, and I ask forgiveness if we do not understand. But we are a proud people, we Goharans, and we bend the knee to no conquercrs. Speak more, O emissaries from the skies, and tell

us-come you as friends, or be you bent on conquest?"

"Shall I sock him one on the jaw, Skipper?" Windy put in eagerly.

"Keep your trap shut!" Carr snapped. Then he turned to the natives.

"We are the ones whose coming was prophesied by your learned ruler and prophet, the Emperor Smith, men of Gohara!" he announced. "Did he not say that some day the emissaries of the great god Uncle Sam would appear, to deliver you from your enemies, to rid your land of civil strife? Out of the clouds we come, bringing with us peace and contentment and riches for Gohara. With our giant eagle that roars, we hold the power of death and destruction, yet we come not to exercise this power, if you meet us in peace. Lead me now to your ruler, the Princess Orana!"

The leader hesitated, and then bowed low in obeisance. He turned to his followers with a curt word of command, and they sprang to their feet.

"Gosh, Skipper!" breathed Windy. "I never knew you had it in you to pull a spiel like that! Me, I could do it at times—but not when I'm sober!"

"Windy," said Carr as he prepared to depart, "you stay here with the Borealis. I don't think there's a chance Markoff will try any dirty work immediately, but we can't afford to take chances. He might try to wreck our ship, or to drain our little remaining gas so he can use it himself, or some such trick. If he does, you know what to do. With dry tanks, he's stuck, but you can hop off at any time he tries any funny business, and land again a few miles away, out of his reach."

"Yeah, I will—not," muttered Windy in an undertone. "Catch me runnin' away from them bozos! I only hopes they pulls somethin'—I'm cravin' to blow 'em loose

from their eveteeth!"

From a near-by field the leader of the group of Goharans summoned as odd a vehicle as Carr had ever seen. It seemed to be an ancient chariot, and was drawn by a team of reindeer. Don imagined that the natives, all of Eskimo extraction and doubtless using only sledges, had been taught the advantages of wheeled vehicles by the white survivors of the Jeannette.

Carr climbed into the reindeer chariot with the Goharan leader and, with the rest of the natives trotting in the rear, swung into a narrow, but well-constructed road.

Only a mile or two ahead of them lay the city they had seen from the air. The houses seemed small, and of but one story, except for two or three masonry structures, apparently temples or palaces. Here, beyond the limits of the city, the houses were less substantial, constructed of mud and even occasionally of skins. The name of the city, Carr learned from the spokesman riding by his side, was Akla.

THEY had traveled but a short distance when they passed a steaming, spouting geyser, which drained into a small lake. Later Don saw another, at some little distance, and questioned his guide concerning them.

"They, O stranger from the clouds, are what keeps our land warm, they and Kablaka, the mountain which smokes, and which now is hidden yonder in the clouds. Within the lake of molten rock in the crater of Kablaka dwells Marsinga, the god of the Goharans. When he is pleased with his people, peace and plenty reigns in

Gohara. But when he is angry, he causes Kablaka to spout fire and ashes and molten rock. Homes and crops are destroyed, and starvation and desolation follows. For many years now, however, Marsinga has been pleased."

More natives dropped their work in the fields and joined them as they progressed toward the city. But Carr noted that all bore spears—that they worked with their

weapons always at hand.

The streets of Akla were narrow and winding. Don wondered that a race described by Metek as "hunter people" should no longer be nomads, but concluded the advent of the white survivors of the Jeannette had done much to revolutionize the lives and habits of the Goharans.

The street was thronged with a seething, excited mass of natives when at length they drew up before the largest structure in the city—a building which Carr's guide explained was the government palace, where the Princess Orana would receive him.

AFTER being forced to wait in an anteroom for some time, Don was ushered into what evidently was the throne-room. It was octagonal in shape, perhaps sixty feet across, and was roofed by a dome, which evidenced considerable architectural ability and constructive skill upon the part of the builder. The walls were draped with hangings of haircloth and skins, the latter deftly fashioned so the markings of the skins formed strange symmetrical patterns. Some of these were edged with borders of polished, glittering stones.

Upon a dais in the center of the hall, surrounded by the members of her court, sat the Princess Orana. Don repressed an involuntary gasp of amazement as he saw her, for she was certainly the most beautiful girl he ever had laid eyes upon.

Eighteen or nineteen, he judged her to be. Neither in build nor in complexion did she betray more than a hint of Eskimo blood. She had none of the squatness of the Innuit tribes, traces of which were more or less noticeable among her subjects. Court robes of velvety skins, encrusted with glittering jewels, revealed a rounded but slender figure. Upon one arm, bare to the shoulder, was a circlet of beaten gold, in which was set a single giant emerald.

Black hair, parted in the middle and brought down smoothly over her ears, was visible beneath the golden diadem upon her brow—a crown of hammered metal, encrusted with a border of flashing gems. Vivid coloring set off the dark eyes which gazed curiously at the fur-uniformed figure of the white aviator as he stood before her.

"Speak, stranger!" she commanded in a liquid voice, a rich contralto which, though low, carried throughout the audience chamber. Her English was as pure as his own. "Who are you, whence do you come, and

what is your mission here?"

"I, Princess of the Goharans," began Carr, "am he whose coming was foretold by your venerable ancestor, the Emperor Smith. I come to you from the clouds on the wings of the giant eagle, as emissary of the great god Uncle Sam! I bring you peace, deliverance from civil strife, protection of the greatest nation which ever existed. It is as a friend I come, with outstretched hand!"

The Princess gazed at him curiously for a moment, and then turned to a man many years her senior, seated at her right hand, but slightly below her. So engrossed had Carr been with the fascinating Princess Orana that he had not noticed this man, who was clad in a flowing robe of skins, bearing jeweled insignia which seemed to bespeak a position of authority. His skin was fair, but he possessed the high cheekbones and chunky build of the Eskimo.

"What say you, Ootumah, to the strange tale of this stranger? He seems to be fair spoken. I like the way he looks one in the eye when he speaks. It is my judgment he speaks the truth, and has no de-

signs upon our land."

Don started. So this was Ootumah, the regent, of whom Metek had spoken! Ootumah, who was plotting to deliver the empire into the hands of the rebel faction, and who had caused Metek to be banished to the icy outland when he had discovered the plot!

The regent scowled. "Patience, Highness. Honeyed words may hide a malig-

nant heart. Let us wait, and-"

HE was interrupted by a commotion at the door. Don turned, to see Markoff pushing his way through the awed natives, Markoff, in all the splendor of a high-ranking Soviet flyer's dress uniform. He cut a splendid figure as he stalked forward—tall, trim, bearded, handsome. Carr knew that he himself made but a sorry appearance in his bulky, oil-spattered fur teddies alongside the resplendent Russian officer.

"Wait!" cried Markoff. He snapped

suddenly into an old-time military salute of the Russian imperial régime, palm out, bending slightly at the waist.

"Your Highness—I denounce this man! He is no emissary of the gods, as he would have you believe! He represents a predatory nation, bent upon conquest! He would enslave you—grind you all beneath the iron heel of capitalism! He—"

The Princess Orana, puzzled, looked from Markoff to Don, studying the face of each, whispered something to Ootumah, and then, with a regal gesture of her hand

commanding silence, said:

"Then you are the one whose coming was foretold? You, and not he, are the emissary of the great god Uncle Sam?"

Markoff sneered. "Pardon, Your Highness," he began in his courtliest manner—a manner Don, with his direct bluntness, could never hope to achieve. "These are childish words he has spoken—words designed to impose upon you who are awaiting the fulfillment of the prophecy of your venerable ancestor.

"This man is no emissary of any god, or any nation. Greed and the hope of conquest have brought him here. I—I represent the great Soviet republic! I come to strike the shackles from your chains. To suppress rebellion, if need be, with the most ruthless force the world has ever known!"

# CHAPTER V

INSTINCTIVELY, Carr reached inside his fur flying-uniform for his automatic. He had no intention of starting hostilities, but he wanted to be prepared in case Markoff should attempt violence.

The Princess Orana frowned.

"We Goharans are fully competent to handle our own affairs," she said proudly, addressing both Carr and Markoff. "We seek no aid from others, we tolerate no interference in our affairs of state. If you come as friends, Gohara welcomes you as its guests. But if you come as enemies, the fate which awaits all enemies of our empire awaits you. It is my pleasure that each of you be granted an audience—alone. Each of you shall speak, and present your case. Then, perhaps, I shall decide. You who wear the fur garments shall be first, for you were first to arrive."

"Well spoken, Your Highness," smiled Ootumah, the regent. With a gesture he directed that the audience chamber be cleared. Markoff opened his mouth as if to protest, but as the Goharan spearmen advanced toward him, thought better of it, and retired as gracefully as he could.

Don knew he was no diplomat, but he realized everything depended on the impression he made in the next few minutes. Markoff presented a striking appearance, far more likely to impress the simple Goharans than his own. The Russian he knew to be a suave talker, and eloquent.

"Now," said Ootumah, as the audience chamber was cleared of all persons save the princess, the regent, and Carr himself, "speak, stranger! Tell what brings you out of the sky to the empire of Gohara."

"My message," Carr announced quietly, "is for the Princess Orana—and none other. What I say, I will say to her—alone."

OTUMAH scowled, and started to speak. A gesture from the princess silenced him. With a lowering look at Don he too retired from the audience chamber.

"What," asked the girl ruler of the Goharans when the regent had left, "is it that you have to say that the ears of Ootumah,

the regent, may not hear?"

"Princess Orana," Carr began bluntly, abandoning all attempt at courtly language, "I am a simple man, and I speak simply. If I transgress upon the customs of your court, I beg your forgiveness, for it is the transgression of a stranger who knows not your customs. I speak simply, but what I say comes from the heart.

"My name is Don Carr. I am of the same blood, the same race as your distinguished ancestor, the Emperor Smith. His nation and my nation are one. In foretelling the coming of others of his race to Gohara, he was pleased to symbolize his nation and my nation as the great god Uncle Sam—although in truth, this Uncle Sam is not a god at all, but the term by which the greatest of all nations is known. How much or how little he has told the people of Gohara about the great outside world, I do not profess to know.

"Far beyond the limits of Gohara lies another world—a world made up of great nations, far greater in extent and in power than Gohara; and greatest of these is my country, the country of Uncle Sam. I—"

"But," interrupted Orana, "tell me about yourself. How came you here, and why? My runners tell me you and the bearded man who seems to be your enemy, dropped from the sky in two huge—well, they described them as great, roaring birds, a thousand times larger than any birds we have in Gohara."

"That is true, Princess. But the birds are not living birds, but giant machines, fashioned by the hand of man. Of recent years the nations of the outside world engaged in a great war, in which huge fleets of these mechanical birds fought in the air. I was in the service of my country as one of these flying warriors.

"Not long since one of your kinsmen and chief advisers, Metek by name, was expelled from Gohara, banished to the far stretches of the ice pack which surrounds

your empire. He-"

"Metek!" burst from Orana's red lips scornfully. "He it was who was discovered plotting against me, and who was banished

by Ootumah-"

"I ask your pardon, Princess Orana, if I repeat the words of Metek who, dying, repeated many times his pledge of loyalty to you and to Gohara. It was I, and my companion, who found him adrift on an ice floe. It was in response to his appeal for aid for his beloved empire that we came here.

"That you may know I speak the truth, here is a talisman, a golden bear with emerald eyes, which Metek gave to me. The story he told was that he, Metek, had discovered a plot on the part of Ootumah to betray the empire into the hands of the rebel forces which have been seeking to overthrow your dynasty. Before he could make it known he was banished, he said, by Ootumah.

"Whether he spoke the truth, I do not know. But I do know that men who are at the brink of death do not often go into the great beyond with a lie upon their lips. This, Princess Orana, is the reason I asked a private audience with you, for I feared Octumah to be a traitor."

THE finely penciled black brows of the princess drew together in a thoughtful frown.

"I—I have heard many tales of dark intrigue within my court, Don Carr. I have dismissed them as the vaporings of courtiers fawning for favor. But now I—I do not know. Perhaps—"

She broke off suddenly, as if convinced she had admitted too much to this white stranger. In a moment she went on:

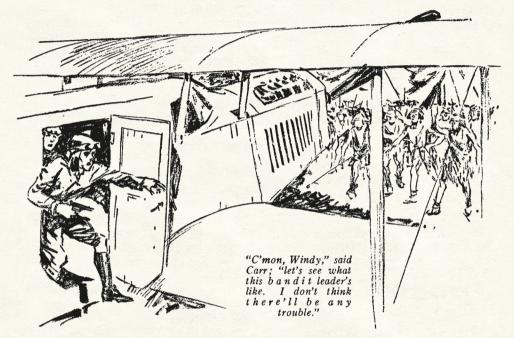
"But who is this other man—this bearded

flyer in the resplendent uniform? How came he here, and what is his interest?"

Carr shrugged and smiled. "His name is Markoff, Princess. He is a citizen of another nation of the outer world. I can merely guess as to his motives in coming here, and in seeking to destroy me and my companion before we could land. This much I know—he, too, heard Metek's tale,

"But tell me more about this world outside, Don Carr! My father's father told some wondrous tales of the white man's world—but he never told of machines that flew like birds."

For more than an hour thereafter they talked, the Princess Orana bombarding Don with eager questions. Her position seemed forgotten, and she talked much as any other



as Metek lay dying. I say nothing against him. I ask that you judge him by his own story, by your own estimation of the man."

For a moment the princess was silent, gravely studying the face of the young American flyer. Don met her gaze frankly.

"Tell me, Don Carr," she said at length, "what is it like to fly in the air like a bird?"

Carr could not repress a smile. "The sensation is difficult to describe, Princess. It would be my greatest pleasure to take you for a hop—a flight, that is—at any time you wish."

Of a sudden the girl ruler's formal manner deserted her. She clapped her hands, and red lips parted over even white teeth in an animated smile as her black eyes gleamed with anticipation.

"Oh, I should love it!" And then her smile faded. "But I fear the old men of the court would never permit it. Perhaps, though—well, we shall see!"

It was Carr's turn to smile. The Princess Orana went on:

girl, hungry for news of a strange world she had never seen. The formality of her court bearing in the presence of the courtiers was forgotten as she eagerly plied him with questions.

She sighed as, at last, she summoned the members of the Goharan court, and concluded the interview.

"I wish to hear more about this strange land, Don Carr," she told the Yankee flyer. "Tomorrow, at this time, I should be pleased to see this flying machine in which you journeyed here, and see if it is really true that it flies through the air like a bird."

She turned to a Goharan who apparently was the court chamberlain. "Kooblu, this stranger, Don Carr, is to be housed as a guest of the court. Pay him every honor due an honored guest of Gohara. Permit him the freedom of Akla, to go where he wishes.

"Where is the bearded white stranger? I would hear his story. At the conclusion of the audience, receive him with equal

honors. And on the morrow, or soon thereafter, I shall decide what is to be our permanent attitude."

Markoff entered the audience chamber in the company of Ootumah, and Don Carr, retiring, guessed the two had been in conversation since the regent had left the chamber at Orana's request. As he departed, he heard the Russian announce he wished no secret audience; that he had

nothing to conceal.

"A grandstand play, and a good one," Carr conceded. "The Russian is nobody's fool. It's up to me to watch my step, or he'll slip something over, yet. Gosh, I'd give an arm to know whether his radio is working! It it's motor-operated, like most, it's out of commission as long as the motor's out of gas. If it's like ours, capable of being operated by hand, then it's a cinch his mechanic had been bombarding the ether with announcements of the discovery of Gohara by Markoff and his claim upon the country in behalf of the Soviet. And if he's gotten word to the outside, we'll have a fleet of Russian ships in here inside a week, as soon as they can concentrate at Vladivostok and hop off!"

The court chamberlain escorted him through the waiting crowds to a building adjoining the palace. It was but one story high, but covered a considerable expanse. It was of masonry, the stones rudely cut on the outside, but smoothly finished within, and lavishly decorated with skins and hair-cloth hangings. Don discarded his outer uniform of fur, which was growing uncomfortably hot, and announced his wish to return to the *Borealis*. The chamberlain procured another chariot, larger and more ornate than the one in which he had been conveyed to Akla, and they set out again for the spot where he had left the air-

plane.

Carr found the *Borealis* surrounded by a huge crowd of gaping Goharans, many of them crouching in a circle beneath one wing. As Don approached, Windy, grinning, rose from the center of the group.

"I figgered you was lost, Skipper," he grinned. "I tried to patch up the radio, but it looks like she's gone plumb haywire, for good. So I got to chewin' the rag with these here brown-skinned bozos, and learnt they was one bit of civilization that old Emperor Smith gent plumb neglected to teach 'em. Look!"

He held out one palm, filled with glittering emeralds.

"Where did you get those?" Carr asked. "Teachin' the Goharans to shoot craps!" grinned Windy.

# CHAPTER VI

DURING the long Arctic night, the valley of Gohara was steeped in a misty gloom. The warm air rising from the earth, which maintained an even temperature throughout the year due to volcanic fires, coming in contact with the chill winds sweeping down from the vast expanse of ice, created a blanket of mist which overhung the valley during what the Goharans called the "dark" season.

But with the dawn of the six-month day and the warming of the upper atmosphere by the sun's rays, these clouds would gradually melt away. Nature's furnace, which spouted fire from time to time through the mouth of the volcano called Kablaka, and which was responsible for the many geysers spouting hot water throughout the valley, made of Gohara an oasis in the desert of ice, a region ever warm, where crops flourished the year round. It was shortly after the dawn of the "light" season that the two planes from the outer world had reached the Arctic empire.

In the first days following his arrival, Carr spent many hours in speculating as to the origin of this strange people. Goharan legends had it that the first inhabitants of the region were children of Marsinga, the volcano god, and had emerged from the mouth of the volcano Kablaka. Don thought it probable that wandering Eskimos had peopled the region, finding its warmth and abundant food supply more to their liking than the bleak wastes of the ice pack. The race had been kept from inbreeding, he surmised, by additions due to the infiltration of additional Eskimos from the surrounding Arctic wastes.

Changed customs, changed modes of living, had left their traces in the natives. With no need for the protective layer of fat which nature had given the Eskimos, this transplanted people had grown more slender, and taller. Living together in great numbers, they had developed a degree of civilization impossible to their cousins who roamed the ice, never gathering in villages of more than a few score souls.

Kooblu, the chamberlain, was Carr's official host and explained many things to him concerning the strange land lost in the Arctic. He showed him, in the archives of the empire, a crudely constructed giant book of coarse paper—paper, Kooblu explained, made by the Emperor Smith's own hands from wood pulp. The pages of the book were filled with thousands of words written by Smith himself, in an attempt to preserve for future generations of Goharans those arts of civilization known to the survivors of the Jeannette.

This intensely interesting document told briefly of the wreck of the *Jeannette*; the flight of Smith and Lang and their rescue by the Goharans; of their hope of rescue,

dimming with the fleeting years.

Although obviously written primarily for the guidance of the Goharans, there were passages which indicated that Emperor Smith's faith that Gohara ultimately would be discovered by the white races had never altogether vanished—passages apparently written in the belief they would be read some day by those whose coming he had

prophesied.

One such passage explained that he had established an autocratic form of government for the Goharans because of his belief they were not sufficiently advanced to govern themselves by means of a democracy. Another asserted he had made some early attempts to convert the Goharans to Christianity, but that their belief in Marsinga, the volcano god, was so strong that he dared not seek to change it for fear of being himself sacrificed to the volcano god.

AT first Carr had been so overjoyed at having discovered Gohara, and at having been first to land and, on behalf of his country, first to claim the Arctic empire, that he had given little thought to the future. But it wasn't long before he began to be disturbed by disquieting thoughts.

What good would his discovery do, so long as it was not known to the outside world? He was stranded, his radio out of commission, with but a few gallons of gas in the tanks of the *Borealis*—not enough to take them a tenth of the distance back to Barrow.

Yet as Carr analyzed the situation, their only hope lay in the *Borealis*. He wondered if it were not possible to devise some means of refining gasoline themselves. Kooblu had shown him a sample of crude oil which seeped from the ground in the foothills, and which the Goharans used in its crude state in lamps.

"Do you know anything about how gasoline is refined from crude oil, Windy?" he asked his aide.

"Not a thing, Skipper," Windy admitted.
"If it was alcohol we wanted—well, I've had a little experience with homemade stills."

Carr had been unable to learn what impression Markoff had made on the Princess Orana, although he was positive Ootumah favored the Russian.

At the conclusion of Markoff's audience, an order had been issued that both Carr and the Russian be accorded all the honors

of guests of state.

Thereafter, while Carr remained in the city as a guest of the court, Windy slept in the *Borealis* and never left it day or night, for Carr feared an attempt by Markoff to wreck the ship.

### CHAPTER VII

ON the day following his first audience with the Princess Orana, Don Carr staged the exhibition flight she had requested. News of the event had spread, with the result that half the citizenry of Gohara was gathered on the plain outside the city.

Carr had measured his remaining gasoline, and found he had a supply ample for perhaps half a dozen such short hops. The Princess Orana, wearing a jet black lightweight fur cloak edged with ermine, appeared to witness the event, accompanied by her retinue. Markoff too was present, resplendent in his dress uniform, scowling darkly as he witnessed Don and Windy

stealing his thunder.

"We're shore slippin' a fast one over on the Roosian, Skipper," Windy thuckled as they prepared to take off. "He looks about as pleased as if he was chawin' on a mouthful of soap. I figgered maybe he'd try to jim up our game last night by tryin' to send a coupla rifle bullets through our gas tank, so I kept a pretty clost watch. But he musta doped it out that two could play at that game, 'cause things was plumb

Once Carr was in the air, "he gave 'em the works' with every stunt in his category. He wanted to impress the Goharans, and he wanted to impress Markoff. He knew that even if the Russian could get his ship off the ground, it could never be maneuvered like the *Borealis*, and he thought this

peaceable."

a good opportunity to spike Markoff's guns —even though they appeared to be un-

He cut his hop short for, having accomplished his purpose of making a grandstand play to the audience of Goharans, there was no reason for wasting his precious remaining fuel. But when he sideslipped down for a landing, he found the field covered with a mob of natives. He dived, and shot across the field with motor roaring but a few feet above the heads of the crowd, opening a lane in which he landed a few minutes later.

Carr found the bulk of the natives awestricken, as he had expected. Ootumah was impressed, but suspicious, and Carr told himself Markoff had been attempting to belittle his exhibition in the eyes of the

regent.

"A marvelous exhibition," Ootumah conceded. "Doubtless the other bird machine could do much more, because it is so much larger. Is it true that Markoff's mechanical bird bears a machine which will spray death like a blast of fire from the volcano Kablaka? And will yours do this?"

Carr smiled. "Let Markoff himself show what his bird machine will do," was his

only reply.

"But you say you can bring peace to the empire. Yet if Akla were attacked by the rebels, swooping down from the hills, of what use would your bird machine be? Flying above their heads, it would be as useless as a hawk-or so it seems to me."

"This bird of mine," Carr explained gravely, resolving that he must immediately set about constructing some explosive bombs, "will lay eggs while in full flighteggs which burst when they strike the earth, destroying all living things within a hundred paces!"

THE Princess Orana seemed less interested in the military potentialities of the Borealis than in its possibilities for pleasure. Despite the formal court manner she adopted when in public, Don could see the sparkle of enthusiasm in her eyes and the

quickening of her breath.

"It must be glorious to speed through the air like a bird!" she exclaimed. Then her face fell. "I have asked permission to fly with you, Don Carr, but Ootumah and my other advisers have forbidden it. They fear I might fall out, or-or that you might fly away with me to that outside world of yours."

"Nothing would give me greater pleasure!" said Carr enthusiastically. "But you need have no fear as to that, Princess The time is coming when flying machines like this will be a common sight in Gohara. Perhaps, when that time comes, you, with members of your court, can make a flight to the outside world as guests of my people, as I am a guest of yours. When that time comes, I hope I may be the one to have the privilege of piloting you to the outer world."

With a covert glance at Ootumah, the Princess Orana lowered her voice.

"Tell me, Don Carr—though the princess of Gohara is barred from the skies, would you take a simple girl whose name, say, is Orana, for a trip in the clouds?"

The suddenness of this proposal that the princess should slip away incognito for a hop in the Borealis startled Carr. He realized the plan was full of dynamite. What if it were discovered he had taken Orana for a hop against the wishes of the Goharan officials? Might it not wreck all his hopes of gaining the friendship of the Arctic empire? Might it not be playing right into Markoff's hands?

His lips were framing a courteous refusal. But the black eyes of the princess were looking up at him so appealingly that he hesitated. After all, he'd picked the princess as the logical one to tie to, and not the intriguer, Ootumah. She was the one he must please—and how better could he win her favor than by taking her for a hop?

"You said it, Princess!" he blurted out in a voice too low for the others to hear. "You 'tend to the time, the place and the girl, and I'll do the rest!"

"Here, then," she whispered, "tonight,

at an hour after the retiring hour?"

Carr nodded a trifle reluctantly. . . . The Princess Orana, clad in a rude, parka-like fur garment doubtless worn by one of her serving maids, and with her face concealed by the voluminous hood, appeared at the appointed hour accompanied only by a fat, elderly, duenna-like woman.

Although, by the clock, it was nearing midnight, the Arctic sun was shining, hanging low over the mountainous horizon. Breathless with excitement and anticipation, Orana climbed into the cabin, assisted by Don. Windy followed, and they hopped

off.

It had been Don's intention to take her merely for a short flight, devoid of any risky stunting. But he changed his plan



when, after the excitement of the take-off, she recovered sufficiently to cry to him:

"Can we fly over those mountains that hem us in, Don Carr? I have heard of the great ice pack which hems Gohara in beyond that range, but I have never been permitted to venture beyond the plain, for fear of rebels who lurk in the mountains."

Carr nodded, and kicked the *Borealis* over into a steep bank. Orana gasped as the ship tilted far over, but it was not a gasp of fright. Carr pointed the nose of the *Borealis* straight toward the eastern range, and presently the broad valley of Gohara was left behind. He grabbed off a handful of altitude, and skimmed over the crest of the divide. Orana stared, wide-eyed and silent, at the vast expanse of ice, stretching as far as the eye could reach.

"I—I never dreamed the world was so large!" she faltered. "And you say there is even more—more than this?"

CARR smiled as he nodded. "Gohara and all this vast area around it is but one tiny corner of the world, Princess. Out there lie great nations, in any one of which Gohara would be but a small state. Immense ships bearing thousands of persons plow through the oceans. Great buildings tower half as high as these mountains. Trains—"

"Did yuh tell her about the movies, Skipper?" Windy put in. "If she ever lost her iob princessin', she sure could grab off a job in Hollywood as a movie queen, 'cause she's got it on 'em all for looks and—"

"Pipe down!" Carr ordered as he swung the *Borealis* around and headed back toward the valley of Gohara. Then, over his shoulder, he said to Orana: "We must be getting back, Princess. If your absence should be discovered—"

"Oh, I could fly like this forever!" the girl exclaimed enthusiastically. "Must we

stop so soon?"

"Gosh!" Windy muttered to himself, grinning. "Aint she just like a kid watchin' its first circus parade? I betcha it wouldn't make no matter to her if we kept right on keepin' on until we'd flew her back to the States. Poor kid! I reckon princessin' for a livin' has its drawbacks, like everything else!"

"But," the princess protested to Carr, an eager note in her words, "aren't you going to make the bird machine dip and turn and do the tricks you showed us to-

day?"

Carr shook his head. "I dare not, Princess. It is too dangerous. If anything

should happen to you-"

"Please!" she begged. He felt a tiny hand on his shoulder. He was weakening, but again he shook his head. Suddenly her attitude seemed to change.

"It is a command!" she announced. "I, Orana, princess of Gohara, command it! I am not accustomed to being disobeyed!" Carr shot a quick glance over his shoulder. Orana was smiling. "Oh, well," he grinned, shrugging, "if you put it that way!"

As soon as they were clear of the mountains, he shoved the *Borealis* into a loop. Then he shot off into a sideslip, and finally, as they neared Akla once more, into a spin. As he set the ship down for a three-point landing, his gasoline almost exhausted, Orana was gasping with delight.

"It was glorious, Don Carr!" she exclaimed as he lifted her from the cabin door to the ground. For the instant her weight rested in his arms, she looked up at him with dancing eyes, and he experienced a thrill he had never known before. "When

can we fly again?"

As he had left the plane, Don had become aware of a strange glow in the northern sky. Orana, too, noticed it, and her face blanched suddenly. "It is Kablaka, the volcano!" she breathed in a hushed voice. "Do you—do you think Marsinga, the volcano god, is angry with me, Don Carr, for flying with you? Do you?"

# CHAPTER VIII

HAVING determined it was hopeless to expect to repair the bullet-riddled radio, Carr had lost no time in attempting to manufacture a motor fuel. He was but dimly aware of the processes of refining gasoline from crude petroleum, but immediately set about rigging up a crude still The Borealis carried as and condenser. part of its equipment a cover for the motor and a stove for heating the motor, to be Under used at very low temperatures. Carr's direction Windy constructed the fractionating apparatus from the stove and motor cover. Don knew the lack of the stove and cover might spell disaster if, on a return flight, they might be forced down on the ice pack, because it would be almost impossible to start a cold engine at temperatures fifty or sixty degrees below zero.

Still, this was a chance they must take. If they could develop a fuel upon which the ship could operate, then would be time enough to face their other problems. He had used almost his last pint of gas in hopping the *Borealis* to the petroleum bog of which Kooblu, the chamberlain, had told him. There, by the side of the black slime which oozed from the earth, he and Windy set up their tiny oil refinery and began their experiments.

It was necessary to procure the necessary copper tubing from the *Borealis* itself. But as the ship couldn't fly without fuel, and as the tubing could be replaced after being used in the miniature refinery, Don had no hesitancy in removing it from the ship.

Their first experiment was a bitter disappointment. True, the still and condenser produced a lighter liquid from the crude oil, but it was a product utterly unsuitable for use as a motor fuel. They tried rerefining it, with indifferent success. Finally Carr, after much labor, fashioned a crude dephlegmator of copper tubing which, interposed between the still and the condenser, aided in more readily separating the condensable hydrocarbons. He felt they were on the right road, but he knew they still were far from obtaining a pure motor fuel

While Windy operated the tiny refinery, Carr spent considerable time in searching for materials from which he could manufacture bombs. He expected that these bombs would be used only as a demonstration to offset whatever display Markoff might make of his machine-gun, but he thought it well to be prepared in case he were called upon to make good his claims and take the field against the Goharan rebels.

He knew the explosion of an aërial bomb would be far more effective in making an impression upon the natives than would a machine-gun, even though the latter might prove more destructive. His knowledge of the manufacture of explosives was somewhat limited, but he knew the ingredients of gunpowder. The charcoal and sulphur was easily procurable, but the niter was

more of a problem.

His first bombs were crude affairs, comprising merely earthen Goharan jars, filled with his explosive mixture packed about a rifle cartridge, which he hoped would act as a detonator on impact when dropped from a considerable height. These were merely his "grandstand" bombs, designed to produce a loud explosion, but with little destructive force. As a measure of precaution, he manufactured a number of "business" bombs, like the others except that the earthen jars were partly filled with stones which would act as shrapnel upon explosion. With the Borealis now out of commission, he had no opportunity to test his bombs. He felt it was a toss-up as to whether they'd explode at all, or would prove to be duds.

HELL broke loose in Gohara the day after Orana made her first hop with Carr. But the American, intent on developing a fuel supply and his aërial bombs, remained in blissful ignorance of what was happening, for many hours.

The sudden activity of the volcano, Kablaka, noted at the conclusion of his hop with the princess, meant little or nothing to him, except that it explained an odor of sulphuric smoke he had noted just before

his landing in Gohara.

Orana's sudden fright at the thought her flight might have angered the volcano god he dismissed without a second thought as idle superstition. Idle superstition though it was, it was the means of bringing about a condition of chaos such as never had been known in the little Arctic empire.

Gohara awakened the next morning to find the sky overcast with a veil of powdery, yellow ash, sifting down upon the houses and fields in a fine dust. Through the yellow dust-mist, the northern sky was lit up by an angry red glow, centering about

the crater of Kablaka.

To the Goharans, an eruption of Kablaka always meant a reign of terror, followed by a long period of desolation and starvation. The simple natives took it as an indication of the anger of the volcano god, Marsinga. An eruption, however slight, was the signal for a period of wholesale sacrifice in an attempt to appease the wrath of the volcano god. Small wonder it was that the Emperor Smith had abandoned all effort to change the religious beliefs of the Goharans, for the volcano meant warmth for their land, fertility for their crops, life itself to the natives-and, on the occasion of an eruption, death and disaster! it was not strange that the Goharans should remain steadfast in their worship of the power which meant life or death to them.

The servant who had accompanied the princess when she made her flight had been chosen because Orana believed her most loyal. But her loyalty was not proof against superstition; with Orana herself terrified at the thought Marsinga was angered at her flight, it was little wonder that

the servant talked.

THE news spread like wildfire, first through the court, and then through the streets of Akla, and finally throughout the length of the outlying provinces.

Orana had betrayed her country by making a secret flight with the white stranger,

in direct disobedience to the edicts of her advisers! A wave of resentment swept through the terrified Goharans. They believed their princess had brought this threatened disaster upon them, and Orana seemed shorn of her last vestige of popularity and power. The whole panic-stricken empire was aroused against her, as being the agency which had brought down the wrath of the volcano god upon them.

The crafty Markoff, who thus far had remained in the background, plotting with Ootumah, supplied the force which the wavering regent lacked, and persuaded him to take immediate action. Since Markoff's arrival, he had been far from idle. Like Carr, he had been quick enough to see that everything depended upon getting a supply of motor fuel. He had followed much the same course, aided, however, by a knowledge of petroleum refining methods gained while stationed in the oil fields at Baku. With Raskolnik, his mechanic, he had set up a miniature experimental refinery, and had been able to produce a small quantity of usable gasoline by the time Don had made his demonstration flight.

But he had played his hand shrewdly. He knew Carr could have but little of his original supply of fuel left. A flight by Markoff at the time would have led Carr to conserve his remaining supply, as the Russian doubtless reasoned it out. If the Roland Rohrbach remained on the ground until Carr's fuel was all gone, then Markoff knew he would have the American at his mercy. No need to take the risk of shooting holes through the gas tank of the Borealis, for the American's flights to impress the natives were rapidly eating up his remaining fuel. As Don was in ignorance of Markoff's development of a new fuel, so was Markoff unaware of the operation of the American's little refinery.

With his first gallons of gasoline, Markoff had started his motor and, without leaving the ground, had attempted to radio to the outside world his claim to the discovery of Gohara. He had seen Don's ship leave the ground for the flight with Orana, and at first had been startled when the American ship had headed straight out over the mountains. Had the American found some new gas supply, and was he heading home? For a while Markoff was

tempted to follow.

But when the *Borealis* returned, Markoff merely grinned. "He ought to be about down to his last drop of gas by now," he

said to his mechanic. "Our turn is coming, soon." Markoff was unaware that Orana was Don's passenger, and he was puzzled to account for the flight. But he learned soon enough, the following day.

It was Ootumah who told him of the day's developments when Markoff penetrated the howling mob in the street outside the palace—a mob howling for the

blood of Princess Orana.

"Now is your time to strike, Ootumah," Markoff told the wavering regent. "That old fool, Kooblu the chamberlain, with a handful of the palace guards, are all that remain loyal to Orana. I will sweep down on them from above with my flying ship, and mow them down with my death-spraying gun.

"You can depose the princess, seize the government, and proclaim a dictatorship.

I'll back you up in everything."

"T is well spoken," Ootumah agreed. shall dispatch runners to Myouk's mountain stronghold at once. When he sweeps down on the city with his spearmen, I shall seize the reins of government. But not in my own name-not yet. If I did, I still should have Myouk opposing me, and would be in little better position than the Princess Orana. But if the wrath of the volcano god be not appeased immediately by the change in government, then, as soon as the eruption of Kablaka seems to slacken, will come my opportunity, for then I can claim the credit for appeasing Marsinga's anger, and can proclaim myself dictator."

"Spoken like a real politician, skilled in the use of the double-cross," smiled Markoff contemptuously. "But why wait for Myouk's spearmen? Point out to the princess the mob howling for her blood, and tell her her life depends on flight. I'll take her away in my ship, say to the mountain hideout of your rebel friend, Myouk. Then you can announce she's abdicated, and proclaim yourself ruler. If anything happens to her, you can blame it on Myouk. If that damned American has any gas left, he's sure to start after her, which will keep him away from the city while we pull our

little coup.

"But if he's out of gas, it will be easy enough to capture him. Then you can sacrifice him and his mechanic to the volcano god. That should satisfy the populace, and leave you with the empire of Gohara in the hollow of your hand."

# CHAPTER IX

CARR and Windy, blissfully ignorant of the reign of terror which had gripped Gohara, meanwhile were wildly elated over the successful termination of their attempt to manufacture gasoline. At last their efforts had been rewarded, and the tanks were filled with a fuel which, though lacking the purity and power of high-test gasoline, still served to keep their motor in operation.

"And it's just in time, Skipper, I'm tellin' you!" Windy exclaimed. "The way them ashes has been siftin' down out'n the air has had me plumb worried. Now we can hop off, right now, and it'll be only a matter of hours till we're safe in Barrow

again!"

Carr shook his head. "I'm afraid to leave Gohara until I know Markoff's guns are spiked. If I were positive his ship were out of commission— But if we can make our own gas, why can't he? Nope; we'll stick around until we're sure the Russian can't slip something over on us."

"That's easy!" grinned Windy. "We'll just drop one of them homemade bombs of your'n on his ship, and then we wont have

no more trouble from him!"

Before Carr could reply, they were startled by the appearance of a madly racing reindeer chariot, which resolved itself out of the ash-filled air and came dashing up to the *Borealis*. The driver, his robe of skins torn and one arm soaked with blood, leaped out and came staggering toward them. It was Kooblu the chamberlain.

"Help, white riders of the clouds!" he croaked hoarsely. "The streets of Akla run red with blood! Myouk's rebel spearmen are storming the gates of the city! The people of Gohara have turned upon their princess, and are demanding her life as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of Marsinga!

"The Princess Orana begs for your aid, O emissaries of the great god Uncle Sam! With her people in revolt and the enemy at the gates of Akla, she appeals to you to

save the empire, O men-"

"Where is she?" snapped Carr, galvanized into action. "Jump into the machine that flies, Kooblu, and we'll fly to the palace and—"

"But she no longer is in the palace, Don Carr! Her last words to me were to summon you to rescue Akla from disaster.

Ootumah has sent her away to a place of safety in the flying bird of the bearded white man, but she feared treachery, and-"

"To hell with Akla!" rasped Carr as he bundled the Goharan chamberlain roughly into the cabin. "First of all, we're going to find Orana! Where did that damned double-crossing Markoff take her? Speak

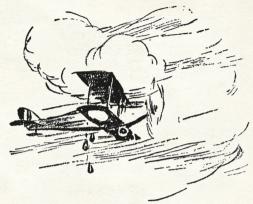
up, man!"

Kooblu shook his head weakly. not know, O white strangers. But it has been common knowledge in the court that Ootumah has been plotting with Myouk for months to overthrow Orana and usurp the throne. Hence, it is my humble belief that the bearded one has taken her to Myouk's stronghold in the mountain fastnesses at the foot of Kablaka-not for her own safety, but that she may remain in the power of those who plot against the throne! Can you-"

But his voice was drowned in the roar of the motor. The Borealis began to roll, and a moment later was in the air. Don nosed her around toward Akla, for he wanted to make sure Kooblu was not deceiving him. He kept low to the ground, for the ash-filled atmosphere was like a fog. As he swept over the low roofs of the city, he could see the streets filled with fighting spearmen. Kooblu himself could not distinguish friend from foe. An attempt at bombing would be futile. Besides, Carr was less interested at that moment in the fate of Akla than in the fate of the princess.

He kicked the Borealis over and pointed her nose in the direction of the smoking volcano. "Can you guide me to Myouk's stronghold?" he shouted at the chamberlain. Kooblu nodded.

They were bucking a stiff north wind.



As they swept over the group, Windy heaved an armful of bombs from the cabin window. There was a deafening explosion.

bearings, swung to the west when Kooblu shouted that the rebel headquarters lav on the farther slope of the mountain. And presently he had cause to breathe a prayer of thanks for the wind, for it was carrying the smoke and ash straight south from the crater, and they swung out at last into clear air.

With a sharp cry Kooblu pointed out a cluster of huts below as the headquarters of Myouk, the rebel chieftain. heart sank as a careful scrutiny failed to reveal any sign of Markoff's ship. He told himself they were wasting their time on a wild-goose chase. Nevertheless, he determined to land and question the natives. He could see a few of them running about and pointing at the plane, but reasoned that the bulk of the rebel forces must be taking part in the assault on Akla.



He gripped his automatic the instant after he brought the *Borealis* to the ground. But the natives running toward the ship seemed peaceable enough, acting as had the Goharans upon the occasion of Don's first landing in the Arctic empire. They were clad in heavier skins than the valley dwellers, were squattier in build, and seemed more closely akin to the Eskimos of the ice pack. Carr thrust his head through the cabin door.

"I seek news of another giant bird machine like this," he announced. "Have you

seen aught of such a-"

The natives broke into an excited chattering in the Goharan tongue, gesticulating excitedly. Carr turned to Kooblu, who was

crouching in the rear of the cabin.

"They say," said Kooblu, in response to his inquiring look, "that they cannot speak your tongue, but that the chieftain, Myouk, is in that huge tent of skins yonder, and that he can speak the language of the Emperor Smith and of his own grandfather, Lang."

"C'mon, Windy," said Carr, turning to his aide, "let's see what this bandit leader's like. There's a chance, even though it's a slim one, that he can put us on the track of Markoff and Orana. I don't think there'll be any trouble, but if there is, two automatics ought to be equal to a regiment

of spearmen!"

As he started to leave the cabin, he turned to Kooblu and thrust a pistol into

his hand.

"Use it on anybody who tries to monkey with the plane while we're gone," he told the chamberlain. The natives led them to a large tent of skins in the center of a group of smaller tent-houses, similar to the walrus-hide huts of the Alaskan Eskimos. There they found the rebel chieftain, Myouk, striding up and down in the midst of a score of warriors armed with spears. His light skin and hatchet face showed the blood of his white grandfather, Strang, which flowed in his veins. Beetling black brows, a long black mustache, and a bone sword thrust through his sash lent him a truly piratical aspect as he turned on them suddenly.

"So you are the white strangers of whom I have heard, whose coming has brought the anger of Marsinga down upon the heads

of the people of Gohara!"

"And thus brought to you the opportunity you long have sought, Myouk!" responded Carr. "But we come, not to discuss your quarrel with the constituted government, but solely in search of the Princess Orana, who has been kidnaped. Have you seen aught of a huge mechanical bird, such as the one which bears us through the clouds? In it the princess—"

"I know nothing of any mechanical bird, except the one which brought you here," scowled Myouk. "As for Orana, who wrongfully has occupied the throne of Gohara, I know nothing of her whereabouts."

His words were interrupted by a shrill feminine scream, coming from somewhere behind the skin partition which divided the chieftain's huge tent. "Don! Don Carr!

Help—"

The screaming appeal for help was suddenly muffled, as if a huge hand had smothered it. Carr whipped out his automatic, and leaped for the partition. Windy was but two jumps behind. Myouk boomed out an order to his spearmen. They leaped forward upon the white men.

A SPEAR whizzed past Carr's ear and sped on through the wall of the tent. A solid, bristling phalanx barred his way. He dared not shoot for fear his bullets might strike the imprisoned princess in the adjoining room. One of Myouk's warriors lunged at him. Don gripped the fellow's spear and wrested it away. With almost the same motion he swung the weapon at the row of bone-pointed spears in his path and swept them aside.

"Up and at 'em, Skipper!" roared Windy as he plunged into the fray. "Attaboy!

Give 'em the works!"

As he shouted he swung a huge fist at the nearest warrior. The fellow spun about and dropped like a log. Myouk whipped out his keen-edged bone sword, and sprang at Don from behind. He raised the weapon just as Don lunged with his spear at the nearest native. The sword whizzed through the air.

And then Windy's automatic barked, once. Myouk dropped his weapon, and, clutching at his abdomen, plunged face down upon the ground. With a whoop Windy turned upon the rebel warriors, fighting back to back with Carr. His pistol spat fire once, twice, thrice. Three native warriors dropped. For an instant the remainder seemed paralyzed with fright.

With a hoarse cry Carr plunged through the wavering line of spearmen. He felt a sudden sharp pain in his thigh. A downward glance showed him the bloodstained spear which had pierced his flesh, clattering to the ground. He gripped the skin

partition, and ripped it away.

There he saw Orana, struggling in the grip of a huge native guard. Don leaped forward. Behind him backed Windy, shooting as he retreated. In their excitement, neither had heard the roar of an

airplane motor overhead.

The next instant the muzzle of Don's automatic crashed down upon the head of Orana's guard. The fellow's grip relaxed, and he slipped to the ground. Don flung aside his pistol. He swept the girl from her feet into his arms. With a cry to Windy to cover his flight, he plunged through an opening in the rear of the tent with his precious burden.

Outside, he turned to dash for the Borealis. To his amazement he beheld a second plane by its side—Markoff's Roland Rohrbach! And, running toward him, automatics in their hands, were the Russian himself and his mechanic! Ootumah, just clambering from the tri-motored ship, thought better of it and retreated within

the cabin.

"Halt, or we'll shoot!" commanded Mar-

Helpless, Carr whirled about so his body would protect Orana from the Russians' fire. He saw Windy come stumbling backward out of Myouk's tent, followed by the rebel warriors. He saw Windy trip and fall—an instant later he was submerged beneath a wave of the spearmen. Don let Orana slide from his arms until she stood upon her feet; with one arm holding her close to him, he turned to face the grinning Markoff.

"So!" exclaimed the bearded flyer. "You walked—or flew—right into the little trap we'd set for you! Well, you American dog, you shall live but long enough to see the empire of Gohara a principality of the Soviet republic, and then—you die!"

#### CHAPTER X

FIVE minutes later Orana, Don Carr and Windy, bound hand and foot, were dragged into the audience tent of the dead rebel leader. Ootumah, now that the fighting was over, had emerged from the safety of the cabin of Markoff's ship, and was directing the remaining rebel warriors to remove the bodies of the natives who had

fallen in the fray. He smiled and shrugged as his eyes fell upon the contorted body of his co-conspirator, Myouk.

"Some one has saved me a disagreeable duty," he commented unfeelingly. "Now there is no question as to who shall rule

Gohara!"

"Did I not tell you, Ootumah," said Markoff, his beard not altogether concealing a sneer of triumph, "that the American would fall into our trap—if it were baited with the princess? Myouk did as he was directed while I flew back to Akla. Everything worked like clockwork. When Myouk's spearmen saw my ship, they retired so I could sweep the streets with my machine-gun. The warriors who remained loyal to Orana I either slaughtered like sheep, or so terrified with my death-spraying ship that they fled, and left the city in your hands.

"Where is the vaunted power of the great god Uncle Sam, now? The red republic

rules supreme, and I-"

"You speak, bearded white man," scowled Ootumah, "as if it were you, and not Ootumah, who rules Gohara. I owe you much, but take care of your tongue, lest you meet the fate to be dealt out to those others!"

"And what," frowned Markoff, "is that

to be?"

"Death!" rasped Ootumah, grinning cruelly. "Death in the crater of Kablaka yonder! Think you that I dare let Orana live, to stir up rebellion against me? Think you I dare go back to my people without making sacrifice to Marsinga of the evil woman who brought disaster upon them? Think you my Goharans would tolerate it if I were to permit these American flyers to live?"

"Wisely said, Ootumah!" commended Markoff. "Wisely said, so far as the Americans are concerned. As my attempts to communicate with the outside world by radio have failed because of the interference of the iron mountain, I cannot afford to let them live.

"But as to the princess—pardon, Ootumah, I mean the former princess—one cannot hurl a woman into that seething crater. I cannot permit it! If for no other reason,

because I want her for myself!"

"And who are you, bearded white man,"
Ootumah sneered, "to dictate to the emperor of Gohara? Have a care, lest you,
too, be cast into the crater. Remember,
my people have cause to be suspicious of

all white men, and it might not come amiss if I were to add you and your aide to the sacrifice! If you would defy me, speak now, or hold your peace!"

For a moment Markoff pondered, scowl-

ing. Then he smiled and shrugged.

"What matters the fate of one woman, Ootumah, even though she be as beautiful as the Arctic dawn, if it stands in the path of the red republic's future? Do as you will with Orana. What is your plan?"

Ootumah leered. "When Marsinga is angry, it is impossible to hurl the sacrificial victims over the brink of the crater in the customary manner, for the heat near the brink is too great to be borne, even by the executioners. So we shall take them as near as possible to the crater, and force them to run forward and hurl themselves in, or die beneath the spears of our warriors!"

"But they will all choose to die at the hands of your spearmen rather than face the torture of the boiling rock," protested Markoff. "You might as well spear them now, and save the journey. But I have a better plan—one which will insure their

death in the red-hot crater!

"Did I not notice while flying here that the top of Kablaka is flat? Then why not place them all, securely bound, in the American's flying bird, and send it shooting over the brink into the fire? I will fly it there myself, and my aide can take you, Ootumah, and a dozen warriors in my own ship of the air. I will start the death ship, and will see that it plunges over the brink to destruction in the molten rock below!"

Ootumah agreed enthusiastically and presently Don Carr found himself, with Orana and Windy, back in the cabin of the *Borealis*, but this time as a prisoner, with Markoff at the stick. He felt it was his last flight in the gallant *Borealis*, and that his last hour had come. Struggle as he would, he could not loosen his bonds.

Once more the *Borealis* landed, this time on the flat top of Kablaka, near the crater. Don could hear the roar of Markoff's own ship taxi-ing up beside them. Even inside the cabin he could feel the heat from the crater. Through the cabin window he could see the fountain of sparks and ashes shooting skyward. It seemed to him like one of the geysers on the plain below, magnified ten thousand times, for the eruption flared forth and then subsided with monotonous regularity. As nearly as he could estimate, it was perhaps two minutes be-

tween the pulsating blasts from the molten heart of the crater.

Markoff did not even cut the motor, did not even leave the cabin. With the aid of Raskolnik, dragging on one wing, he swung the ship around until it was pointing straight at the glowing crater. Don could see Ootumah and the other natives who had flown to the volcano top in the Russian's ship, prostrating themselves in some weird sacrificial ceremony before the imagined volcano god. He glanced at Orana, bound and helpless on the cabin floor. Her face was pallid, but she smiled back at him bravely. Windy was cursing the Russian, and was struggling at his bonds.

Without wasting words or time, Markoff revved up the motor until the *Borealis* began to roll. Then he abandoned the stick, and leaped from the cabin door! Straight toward the brink of the seething crater rolled the pilotless plane, gaining momentum at every revolution of the prop!

DEATH in its most horrible form stared them in the face. Don saw Orana close her eyes as she steeled herself against the shock of the death plunge into the giant cauldron. With a last mighty effort he strained against his bonds. But the effort was useless, and he sank back with a hoarse sob.

At that instant he was startled by a voice behind him.

"It is I, Kooblu! I do not know how to work this strange weapon you gave me. But I still have my knife!"

Carr's heart leaped suddenly as hope surged up again within him. He had almost forgotten Kooblu, whom he had left to guard the plane. The chamberlain, he had supposed, had fled when he had beheld the capture of the Americans. Never having held a pistol in his hand, he had tried in vain to fire it when Markoff, Ootumah and the natives had approached the ship. And when he had failed, he had crouched in the gloom in the rear of the cabin, wedged in behind the extra gas tanks.

An instant later, and Carr felt the bonds about his wrists part under the keen edge of Kooblu's knife. A split second later, and his legs were free. He sprang to the stick, fearing it was already too late. Just as his feet touched the rudder bar, the Borealis shot over the brink and into the

crater!

With a desperate yank at the stick, Carr nosed her upward, kicked her over and back. Another instant, and the plane roared up over the edge of the crater and

out of danger!

"Quick, Windy—the bombs!" Carr shouted frantically. He was speeding back, straight as an arrow toward the spot where Markoff's ship rested. He could see two tiny figures running toward the gold-and-black monoplane, and knew Markoff and his mechanic had not been too amazed at the startling reappearance of the *Borealis* from the crater, to attempt pursuit. Ootumah and the native warriors were standing in a cluster, gazing awe-stricken at the roaring *Borealis*.

As they swept over the group Windy, freed from his bonds by Kooblu, heaved a whole armful of Carr's homemade bombs from the cabin window. There was a deafening explosion. Don looked back, but could see only billowing clouds of smoke.

He banked, and started back to observe the effect of their bombardment. As the smoke cleared, he could see a cluster of holes in the flat earth where the bombs had struck—holes which told of the fate of the treacherous Ootumah and his men, who had been blown to bits!

But even as Carr looked, he saw Markoff's ship, unharmed, just rising into the air. This, then, was to be the showdown! The Russian's plane, speedier and equipped with a machine-gun, had every advantage. Was Don, after escaping death in the crater, to be shot down when success seemed within his very grasp?

FLIGHT was out of the question, because of the enemy's speed. Besides, Carr dared not leave Markoff out of his sight, now, for fear the Soviet flyer might start for the outside world. The showdown had come at last, with every advantage with the enemy; with three other lives beside his own at stake; and with the chance of performing a tremendous service to his country in the balance!

Carr's jaw-muscles bunched as he set his teeth and gripped the stick. Deliberately he swerved, and started across the crater, as if in flight. Markoff was right on his tail, now. A burst of fire from the machine-gun; a stream of bullets ripping through the *Borealis'* wings! Don twisted and dived. He was waiting, counting—counting! How long between those periodic eruptions? Two minutes? If he miscalculated by even a second—

Suddenly he turned, and dived straight across the smoking center of the crater. Markoff was close on his tail. Even as he shot across, a great burst of flame rocketed skyward from below. The tail of the *Borealis* was caught in the blast, and the ship was flung, twisting and turning like a leaf in the wind.

But as Carr righted the ship, safely beyond the spouting crater, he needed no backward glance to know his ruse had worked. Markoff had been lured into the fiery blast. He and his aide and his plane had been blown to bits! Carr heaved a great sigh of relief as he headed back toward Akla. No longer had he need to fear the encroachment of another world power in the Arctic! Nothing to do now but land Orana and Kooblu, and then fly away home to announce his discovery!

BUT the thought of leaving the gallant little princess suddenly sapped all the feeling of glory from his achievement. With her enemies destroyed and Kooblu to aid her, however, he knew she would have no difficulty in restoring her authority.

Orana's eyes were sparkling as, after landing on the outskirts of the capital, he

helped her to the ground.

"And now, Princess," he said in a voice that was dull and hopeless, "I must bid you farewell. I leave for the outside world. Some day I shall return. Meanwhile, the loyal Kooblu will help you rebuild your empire, and—"

"Don!" cried Orana, a great sob almost choking her. "Kooblu can stay and rule Gohara! I—I'm going with you! What do I care for an empire, when I can have you!" Suddenly she flung herself into his

outstretched arms. .

Windy, waiting, grinned at the astonished Kooblu, winked and spun the prop. The motor coughed and roared just as Don's arms closed about the princess, and his lips pressed against hers.

"Contact!" shouted the grinning Windy as he ran toward the cabin door. "Let's

go!"

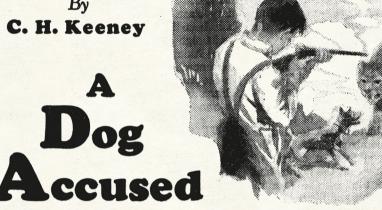
A moment later the *Borealis*, bearing the young American pilot who had found a new world and a princess of his very own, and the girl who had abandoned an empire for love, roared away from the valley of Gohara while a grinning and embarrassed mechanic pretended to be busy repairing a radio that never could be repaired.

THE END

# REAL EXPERIENCES

Gyp and his young master fight their way out of real trouble.

By



TF when you were a boy you owned a dog, then you will understand my feelings. And if you were as foolish over your dog as I was over mine, you may have gotten into trouble. I did.

One evening, a good many years ago, a man drew up short at our front gate.

"Jim!" he called impatiently. Father arose from his seat on the porch and went to meet him. My dog Gyp and I came bounding around the corner of the house; I had recognized this man's voice and felt there was trouble brewing.

There was—and it was very near at hand. Our visitor was in such a high-fevered state of grievance that he could not wait. He broke out loudly before Father was halfway down the path.

"Jim, somethin's been killin' my sheep! I aint accusin' no one, understand, but I've seen your kid's dog up my way lately, and if I lose any more sheep-"

My face grew hot with rage; my scalp tingled.

Tim Baxter, the big insinuating liar! He'd accuse my dog of killing sheep, would he? My dog Gyp! With a dozen other dogs in the neighborhood too, and no telling what might be coming down from the hills!

This was a deliberate frame-up. If Tim could cause the death of my dog, he would be inflicting severe grief on me. He knew this, and so did I; yet I was powerless in my own defense.

Tim Baxter had been an enemy of mine for some time. He lived "up the road a piece," as my grandparents used to say. He was a grouchy old bachelor with very decided views and no sense of humor. Consequently, he was a target for the excess energy of youth. All the boys in our neighborhood played pranks on him, and—well, I was one of them.

Unfortunately, Tim had caught me. He had vowed vengeance at the time, and since had blamed me for everything that happened to him.

CATHER knew nothing of this, and I did not want him to know. He was a kindly man, my father, but stern in the ways of justice. I knew he would demand some sort of atonement-and to my mind, that would be very humiliating. Therefore I now stood, boiling inwardly, but silent,

I took a firm hold on Gyp's collar, for he had begun a low, threatening growl. He cared no more than did I for this fellow Tim Baxter!

AT the gate now, Father was answering Tim; he broke in on him, in fact, suggesting that he be not too hasty. When Tim found he was not going to gain Father's full support, he quieted down considerably. The two of them continued in an undertone, so low that I could not make out the words.

Soon Tim moved on and Father came back to the porch.

I waited defiantly.

"Now, there's no use of your getting all upset, my boy," said Father. "Tim is a hasty man. But that gives you no right to be hasty too. We'll find out a few things first. —Gyp, come here!"

Gyp obeyed.

Father held him and carefully examined his mouth. I saw him take something from between Gyp's teeth.

"What's that?" I demanded. "Wool," said my father.

"But he didn't do it, I tell you. He's not a sheep-killin' dog! If he is, why don't he kill ours? They're two miles closer than Tim's!"

"Shut up!" Father's patience had been tried too far. "Didn't I ask you to wait?" he added. "Wool in Gyp's teeth doesn't necessarily mean that he killed Tim's sheep. It does look bad, though! Here, take him and tie him in the shed. I'll go up to Tim's the first thing in the morning. If anything happens up there tonight, then we'll know that Gyp is innocent."

This may have been good logic, but it was darned poor consolation to me. I wanted action—lots of it—and right now,

too!

As I tied the rope to Gyp's collar, his head and tail drooped sadly—a picture of

deep and unjust injury.

"You didn't do it, old fellow," I consoled him. "I don't care if you did have wool in your teeth; I know that you didn't kill Tim's sheep!"

GYP acted as if he understood. Head and tail came up instantly—the tail wagging. He licked my hand and threw himself upon me, to be petted. He ran the length of his rope, and when it would give no farther, gripped it in his teeth, shook it, and growled at it as if it could hear and understand this threat. This was a signal for play.

"Tug-o'-war" had always been our favorite game; we had played it ever since Gyp's puppyhood. He considered it the one sure test of my mood toward him. If I was willing to play, then his skies were cloudless. He would even run to meet me in the fields, dragging an old sack or a piece of rope. If I played, he would growl and pull as if life depended upon his wresting the object from me. And if successful, he would prance away, shaking it proudly, but being careful meanwhile to keep a watchful eye on me.

At a safe distance, he would lie down with it between his paws, apparently laugh-

ing at me.

"You see," he would seem to say, "you're not so strong, if a small dog like myself can take a rope away from you!"

Then he would circle near me several times, barking, each time a little nearer than before—until I caught him. Then the tugging and growling began all over again.

That night, however, I was in no mood for play; I was much too miserable. I saw to it that he had a good bed, then returned

to the house.

NEXT morning I started for school as usual. But that day I did not go far. Instead, when safely out of view, I climbed into a field and circled back. Some bushes at the rear of our place offered me hiding. From there I saw Father leave for Tim's. Then I sneaked up to the house, waited until Mother went upstairs, crept into the kitchen, took an old shotgun from the wall, grabbed a handful of shells from an open box, and sneaked out again. On my way I untied Gyp, and together we made for the old millrace which ran behind the barn.

This millrace also ran past Tim's, and there were trees around his house. A boy and his dog might hide there easily, and overhear the conversation which passed between Tim and my father.

If Father found that Gyp was guilty, then I would be satisfied. But Tim Baxter would never kill my dog!

We hurried, for we must be there when Father arrived. The raceway route was shorter, but he had a few minutes' start on

Within a short distance of Tim's, Gyp began acting strangely. He was trotting up the trail ahead of me, when he suddenly stopped short, sniffed the air, growled and ran back a few steps. As I came up, he began to whine uneasily.

"What is it, old fellow?" I asked. He continued to whine and ran still farther

back, begging me to follow. And when he saw that I would not heed his warning, he

barked at me sharply.

I looked around, but saw nothing to cause alarm. The only sign of life was the slow circling of a buzzard, almost directly above us.

"Fraidy-cat!" I scoffed. "Come on here! Don't be a fool!"

GYP, finding his entreaties scorned, followed—but very reluctantly. He whimpered and whined softly as he cow-

ered at my heels.

A few yards farther on I found what was causing him worry. A commotion in the underbrush at our right caught my attention first. Then, through the brush, I saw a yellow object go scooting up a slanting tree. A moment later we were on the edge of a small clearing, and I could see the object plainly. It was a cougar; and below it on the ground was the half-eaten carcass of a good-sized sheep.

Gyp took heart at the enemy's retreat and ran ahead, barking furiously, while the cougar crouched upon a limb, spitting at us. His tail was switching slowly back and forth, and I knew he soon would spring.

Now, there were a great many things that I didn't know about hunting. I didn't know, for instance, that a small dog and a shotgun were poor equipment for cougar-killing—the gun looked very large to me. And I did not know that when I grabbed so hastily for shells that morning, I had reached into a mixed box. I had buckshot and birdshot both, and there was one of each in my gun.

I did know, however, that the gun I had to use was of the old style double-barreled variety, and that the shell-ejector was worn and did not always work. But such knowledge as this did not make me cautious.

There before me was the varmint who had done the killing for which my dog was blamed! I had set out to purge Gyp's honor, or to atone; this was my heaven-sent opportunity.

I THREW the gun to my shoulder and fired. Through the smoke—for we used black powder then—I saw a flash of yellow in the air above me. A heavy body crashed to the ground. It came up, shook itself, and started toward me.

But by this time Gyp was in the midst of the fray. He barked so viciously and nipped so deeply at the big cat's hindquarters that the beast momentarily forgot all else. As he turned upon the dog, I fired the other barrel.

Again he went down. This time he did not rise so quickly. My first shot had broken his jaw—this one had crippled his shoulder. So much was in our favor. But we were needing it!

I broke the breech of my gun, to reload. Then panic seized me. The ejector had not caught and the shells were frozen tight. I tore at them with my fingers, but to no effect.

In a blur I saw cougar and dog whipping and thrashing about in a mad frenzy upon the ground. Gyp was like a flash of light around the savage animal, nipping him here, then there, and getting out of his way before he could retaliate.

The cat must have been partially blinded, or half stunned, for many of his blows were aimless. Twice he tried to bolt, or maneuver widely, but each time he ran into a tree—and Gyp was at him again.

FINALLY I had sense enough to snap my gun together again, and stop clawing vainly at the empty shells. The second time the ejector caught. Then, when I had reloaded, I was afraid to shoot. Gyp seemed everywhere at once, and always, apparently, within direct range.

Blindly trusting to luck, I fired—both

barrels this time.

There were several anxious moments before the smoke cleared. Then I saw that my shots had been fatal. A few jerky movements marked the great cat's last struggles for life.

That sight was certainly a great relief to me! I had had all the cougar-fighting I wanted. And when realization of my danger seized me, a few seconds later, I nearly fainted.

It was a very pallid boy, and a badly scratched dog, that Tim Baxter and my father found a few minutes later. They had heard the shots and came running to see what the rumpus was about.

That ended all my trouble with Tim. He was loud in his praise of my pluck, and everything was explained now, except the wool that Father had found in Gyp's teeth. That had me mystified for a while. Then one day, Gyp came running to meet me as usual, ready for play. But this time, instead of a rope or an old sack he was dragging a piece of sheepskin which we used as a pad for our binder-seat.



# At White Horse Rips

By Leonard W. Vinal

A lumberman's hazardous adventure during a log-drive.

HEN a truckload of lumber is dumped on the site of a structure in the city, passers-by have but a faint idea of the hardship and danger that has been met and overcome in the production of this finished lumber. Long days of man-killing toil, exposure to the elements, ever-present danger from falling trees, tumbling log-jams and rushing rivers, are all represented in that load of lumber on the city lot.

Out in the world, when a person is saved from drowning or other danger, the press will feature it in big headlines and some society or other will pin medals on the breast of the rescuer. But the hardship and danger endured by men who follow the log-drives seldom reach the outside world. Scarcely a day passes, however, that some man is not rescued from almost certain death by fellow-workers, and the act is looked on as simply a part of the day's work.

In the spring of 1901, we were driving the Branch with Red Kelley as river boss. Even under the best of conditions, it is no light task to drive eighty million feet of logs down one hundred and fifty miles of river and lakes, and this season conditions had been far from ideal. Red had been on the jump day and night for more than two months, and his temper was worn to a frazzle.

One morning as we were gathering around the bean-pot, just after daylight, Red came over to where I was sitting on a stump with a plate of steaming beans balanced on my knees.

"Shorty," he rumbled, "Pete Doucett is laid up this morning and you will have to take his station at White Horse Rips. Better take along a pocketful of dynamite—and God help you if it jams there today! Don't try to pick 'em out if you get a crosslog; just shoot hell out of 'em—for we've got more dynamite than what we have water now.

"If you let that place get the best of you, don't show up here tonight; the best thing you can do will be to keep on going downstream."

None of us resented Red's harshness, for we knew what he was up against. Already we were a month behind schedule, with at least a third more timber than usual, and the water dropping in the Branch every day.

Blackie Boynton was "tending-out" on the "wing" about two hundred yards below the foot of the Rips. Perhaps it would be well to explain that a wing is a jam of logs that reaches to the shore of the river, but does not obstruct the channel. At the head of the Rips, where I was stationed, two wings had been allowed to form, one on either shore. This had been done to narrow the channel, and by so doing create a greater depth of water over a point of ledge about midway. It was this ledge that was usually the cause of most jams at this

particular place.

Blackie and I reached the pitch before the logs began running from the rear, and I employed the time loading several shots of dynamite so as to have them ready if needed.

Red came down about one o'clock to see how the logs were running. While he was there he relieved his mind of some more of his troubles. It seemed Jake Adams, one of the best cant-dog men in the rear crew, had a pick driven into his foot and would be laid up for at least two weeks; the lunch-carrier had taken a boat to cross the river, and a jam had hauled, crowding him against a wing and smashing the boat; on top of this the water had dropped three inches.

"And there you have it!" Red growled morosely. "Just one damn' thing after another—yet every morning some white collared clerk sitting in a swivel-chair down in the city will call over the phone and want to know when the rear will be at the dam. They seem to think a man can drive logs in a heavy dew!" And borrowing a pipeful of tobacco, he started back upstream, a cloud of smoke trailing over his shoulder.

I HAD been having an easy time of it so far, with only an occasional snarl to unravel. For a few minutes I had been watching Blackie, who was trying to arrange a seat to his liking. Turning my eyes upstream, I saw a big crooked pine come rolling and bumping around the turn.

The minute I saw how it was acting I felt that I was in for trouble. With my peavey ready, I stood on the edge of the wing, hoping to work the trouble-maker over the pitch; then it would be up to Blackie to keep it going by his station. Just before reaching the wing, however, it swung square across the current, plugging the narrow channel completely, from wing to wing, and resting against that point of ledge in the center.

I tried to pry the end loose with my peavey, but could not budge it. Next I ran across the length of the log and tried to free the other end, but it was wedged tightly under the side of the wing. By now more logs were coming, and already quite a jam had formed. Watching my chance, I ran back over the twisting logs and raced for a shot of dynamite. In a few minutes

I was back with six sticks of eighty per-cent dynamite, tied to a maple pole. I was going to place the shot directly under the big pine where it rested against the ledge.

Scratching a match on the steel peaveyclasp, I lighted the long fuse and ran out to the head of the jam. Just as I was about to push the shot down between the logs, a big snarl of logs that I had not noticed crashed into the rear of the jam with such force that it started the whole mass like a shot.

I was thrown off my balance into the strong current at the head of the Rips, and with me went the pole and dynamite, with a lighted fuse attached. When I came to the surface after my plunge, my first thought was of the dynamite. A swift glance backward revealed the maple pole bobbing along not more than fifty feet behind me, with a spiral of smoke rising from the burning fuse; and back of this came the whole jam, tumbling and grinding down the rapids.

Never before had I put forth such effort in swimming; never before, indeed, had the need of speed been so great. I must make the wing ahead of the jam, or be ground to pieces! Down on the very tip of the wing, Blackie had driven his peavey into the end of a log, and with a firm hold on the end of the handle, awaited my coming. Behind me thundered the jam, and still nearer came the shot of dynamite, due to explode at any

AS the strong current was sweeping me past the wing, Blackie leaned far out over the water, and twisting his strong fingers into the collar of my flannel shirt, swung me into the eddy of the wing. Bracing his feet he pulled me to safety on the logs, just as a terrific explosion rent the air. Less than a hundred feet downstream, the charge of dynamite had exploded, throwing a veritable geyser of water high in the air and in every direction.

Releasing his hold of my collar Blackie had grasped his peavey and was working the jam past the wing. A roll on one log, a back-cant on another, a push here and

there, and the last log was by.

moment now.

Stepping back, Blackie drove his peavey into a log and pulled his pipe from his shirt pocket. He stuffed the bowl with fine-cut, laughingly looked me over from head to foot, and said:

"Shorty, can you give me a dry match?" It was just a part of the day's work.

# Bargain in No Man's Land

By
Captain Charles J.
Sullivan



One of the strangest episodes in the whole war was this American's adventure on the Italian front.

Y regiment, the 332nd American Infantry, arrived at Valvasone on the Tagliamento River after dark on November 3rd, 1918, my own platoon reaching the bank below the town about a half-hour before the main body was due. The night was cold, starless, blustery. A mile farther downstream the low clouds were red above a burning bridge; far to our front we could see a variegated string of flares and rockets. Far above us shells whined steadily, at the rate of about one per minute.

The stream at our feet rushed headlong over its white bed; it looked like speeding snow. None of us had ever seen this river by daylight. We had heard that it was about two miles wide; that it was a much stronger line than the Piave which we had crossed on the 24th of October; that it was so swift that no man could stand on his feet in it, to say nothing of swimming it.

I placed the outguards and sat down to

In less than five minutes a runner arrived from the rear. He carried a written order for me.

We were to cross the river immediately,

make a reconnaissance and return before daylight.

I gasped a little and scratched my head in astonishment.

Along with the order was a rough penciled map of this section of the river. The scale showed the river here to be slightly more than two miles wide, but a scrawled legend at the bottom indicated that its bed should not be full of water at this time of year. The map further showed that there should be not more than three or four narrow streams.

The first of these was indicated as right against our bank; it was about thirty-five feet wide, not more than five feet deep and had a current-speed of four feet per second. There should be two more within three hundred yards, then a wider one within a half mile of the left bank.

LEAVING my men rest, I went forward to reconnoiter. I waded boldly into the water, feeling my way with a stick. Suddenly I was whisked off my feet as if a giant had struck me. In less than two seconds I accomplished two complete and perfect pinwheels, saw thousands of stars, and—luckily, as I later learned—came to

on a sort of oxbow loop a hundred yards down stream.

I wasn't hurt much, but I sure was wakened, and my reconnaissance was certainly fruitful. The incident had roused my men, and when I recovered my breath I told of our new mission.

"How the—how we goin' to cross that damn' shoot-the-chute?" quericd a sergeant pertinently.

DIDN'T know, and I admitted as much, but we all knew that we were going to cross. I sent corporals in both directions to look for boats or a possible small bridge or ford.

We tried two or three methods without avail, and succeeded only in losing one man completely. (We found him in a Treviso hospital, however, long after the war was over.)

At last some one,—I never did know, in the darkness, who made this brilliant suggestion,—some one suggested that we remove our rifle slings and buckle them together, tie one end to the tallest man and let him fight it out to the opposite bank even if we had to follow him a mile downstream.

We did this and it worked, though the poor fellow wasn't much good when he got across. However, he took a turn around a boulder, and we all managed to hang on long enough to reach the other side. We pulled the last man over in the manner of landing a big trout.

We crossed not three, but seven streams in this fashion, though we had less trouble with the others. The last one was almost in the middle of the wide bed and was nearly a quarter of a mile wide. It was shallow, however, and had a current-speed of about three feet per second.

AT about midnight my runner and I, keeping about fifty yards ahead of the platoon, came to a high, dark bank. I signaled, by means of a tiny pocket light, for the platoon to deploy and lie down, while Kirstein (my runner) and I crept forward.

The bank at this point was of soft, black sand, sparsely covered with tufts of coarse grass. We made our way slowly up this slope, and were almost to the top when suddenly a shell, instead of going on to the rear as its predecessors had been doing all the time, fell short and burst not fifty yards beyond the bank. It was a large

British shell and it must have played hell among an outfit which had been asleep somewhere near by.

There was a terrible chorus of groans, moans, cries and curses immediately afterwards. Kirstein and I hugged the ground and waited. After a minute or two we were about to raise our heads and proceed upward when suddenly a deep voice not six feet away from us remarked as casually as if its owner were in a club:

"That's too damn' bad, with the armis-

tice not twelve hours away."

"Ja," answered another voice calmly, but followed the syllable with a half-dozen German oaths. Both men spoke in German, the latter with a Slavic accent.

I heard Kirstein breathe sharply, then his hand nearest to me pressed my arm

painfully.

"Don't the fools know that the armistice is to be signed at three o'clock this afternoon?" asked the first voice.

noon?" asked the first voice.
"Ja, they know," growled the second voice, "but they got us on the run now."

My mind flashed back over the last ten days' fighting and the pursuit—the bloody crossing of the Piave, the slaughter at the steep-banked Livenzia, the dozens of rearguard actions; and now—was it true that an armistice had been arranged?

SUDDENLY we heard that screeching of a shell that is so ominous. Kirstein and I hugged the ground. A voice above us called huskily:

"Down!"

At once two large bodies came hurtling out of the darkness on top of Kirstein and myself.

We lay there, stunned, for a moment, then dived down the bank after the two Germans who were floundering toward the bottom. We reached them before they could get to their feet or make an outcry, and pushing our pistols into their stomachs, ordered them to step lively toward the platoon.

They went readily enough, holding their hands above their heads, but when we arrived to the line of skirmishers and had disarmed our prisoners the taller and older of the two laughed in a low tone.

"Americans, eh?" he said in English.

"Yes," I answered.

"How in the world did you cross here?" he asked.

"I'll ask the questions, if you please," I answered. "What is your rank?"

191

"I am Lieutenant-Colonel Tarred, and this is Captain Simonsek, my adjutant," was the reply.

"You will come back with us," I said.

"Lead off."

THE Colonel started forward quickly with Kirstein behind him: then he halted and turned back toward me.

"May I say something first-something that may save a lot of lives and trouble?"

he asked courteously.

I nodded.

"Please to understand first, Lieutenant, that I am not begging off from being made prisoner. I have gone through four years of war.

"But if you take us back with you now -rather, if you start back with us,—there will be needless loss of life. I know that the Austro-Italian armistice is to be signed this afternoon at three o'clock. The division of which my battalion is a part is already far in the rear, and my orders are simply to hold this bank until daylight, then retire.

"However, the top of that bank there is well manned. There are twelve batteries of machine-guns and four of trench mortars, together with three companies of about four hundred men. You probably have forty men spread out here without cover, and there is no other cover for two miles. Neither have you any supports for two miles, and you have no liaison with your artillery. Our own machine-gun bar-rage line will just clear our heads where we are standing. You don't want me. You want valuable information. I have given you some. I suggest now a way in which you can get all you want.

"I will remain here with you as a hostage, or with one of your lieutenants. I will send Captain Simonsek with you or with anyone whom you designate. You may see our position, our guns, count our men, read my orders; then, when you have seen everything, return here, release myself and my adjutant, and return to your lines. I do this because I know that the war is over. I have gone through four years of it, and I want to go home to my wife and my garden. Is it a bargain?"

HE said this in as cool and kindly a voice as a father speaking to his son. I stood watching his elderly face in the faint light reflected from the white sand.

"Not one of us-myself included-will

ever reach the other bank," said the Colonel, as I did not speak.

"How will you get orders to your men?"

I asked.

With a movement of his head the Colonel

indicated his adjutant.

"Captain Simonsek there has a whistle between his lips. If we take another step to your rear, he will blow it. If you shoot him, he will not need to blow. Do you understand?" This also was spoken in a low, smooth voice, almost like a woman's except that it was gruff.

I bent toward the other prisoner and saw that he actually did have a small, dark

whistle in his mouth.

"It's a bargain," I said, and I don't believe that my voice was as suave as his.

A FEW minutes later Captain Simonsek and I climbed the bank and were met at the top by a silent group of Austrian junior officers to whom my guide said a few words. He then led me along the entrenched top of the bank where I counted twelve machine-guns nicely laid to cover the whole river-bed for a distance of more than a mile. Fifty yards in the rear I saw four trench mortars emplaced in shallow holes. Men were lying about everywhere, with sentries at about every fifty yards.

"There is another battalion at the bridgehead below us," remarked Captain Simonsek, "and another about a half mile upstream."

"Let's go back," I said.

Back with my platoon, I requested the Colonel to swear that he would live up to his part of the agreement. He did this willingly and gracefully; the three of us shook hands around in silence, then the Colonel clicked his heels together and bowed.

"Tomorrow at three o'clock we will be

friends," he said.

I do not remember the first half-mile of that return journey. I expected any minute to hear the deadly tat-tat of a dozen machine-guns, the terrifying splitting noise of a bursting mortar-shell; but nothing happened, and we regained our own lines a half hour before daylight. The information, it developed, was exactly what headquarters wanted.

At three o'clock that afternoon-while my men and I were asleep in a barn—the Austro-Italian armistice was signed. addition to good information we had

brought good news.

"Of that man who does not love horses beware!" writes this contributor.

# Hoss Sense

By
Tom
Mikesell



T was during the month of January, in the early nineties, that I chanced to be caught in a blizzard one night on the bleak prairies of northwestern Kansas. I was riding a horse known as an "Oregon broncho," and was en route from the famous McDonald ranch, in the extreme western part of Rawlins County, Kansas, to Atwood—the little county-seat town in which I lived—when the pitiless storm overtook me.

The snow was falling in long, driving slants—flakes as big as the end of my little finger—and the wind was blowing perhaps forty miles an hour from the northwest. It was about ten o'clock at night and I was some sixteen miles from Atwood on an open divide. There was not a house within ten miles, and no fences—just a dreary, desolate stretch of prairie. Being a plainsman, I knew better than to attempt to guide my horse. I simply dropped the reins over the pommel of my saddle, hunched my shoulders and determined to leave my fate entirely in the hands of the horse.

It is proverbial that one caught in a Kansas blizzard invariably travels in circles, losing all sense of direction. Not so with a horse, however. My broncho ambled on across the prairie at a dog-trot. At length we came to a great canon, or "draw" as they are called in that part of the country. I couldn't remember having traveled far in a canon but the horse seemed determined to go that way. The draw ran from northeast

to southwest. Knowing somewhat of the topography of the country, I realized that if we were going northeast we were approaching Atwood, but if southwest we were going directly away from my destination. However, I permitted the horse to have his head.

In those days, throughout the western part of Kansas there were many abandoned wells, especially in the draws. These had been dug by settlers who had believed it possible to make a living on those prairies by farming. Later, however, droughts and hot winds had driven the settlers out of the country. The open wells now constituted a deadly peril to night-riders on the plains, as well as to herds of cattle and horses.

AFTER perhaps an hour of traveling in that cañon, I became so numb from cold that I decided to dismount and walk for a while in order to increase my circulation. I was becoming drowsy from the cold and when I began to hear little birds sing I realized that I was in great danger of succumbing to the storm. Drowsiness and a hallucination of hearing birds singing always precedes a death-sleep in a blizzard.

As I dismounted I stepped directly into one of those open wells! This was approximately twelve feet in diameter at the top—having caved in a great deal since being abandoned—and of a depth of perhaps ten feet. There was no water in the well, but it was impossible for me to get out and the snow was rapidly drifting into it. I

tried in every way possible to scale the wall, but could not do so. Of course on my saddle-horn there was a long lariat—and I realized now how foolish I had been to dismount without loosening this lariat and tying one end of it about my waist. There I was, absolutely helpless—alone on a prairie in the wildest night I had ever known!

Being a horseman and having formed the habit, through many years, of talking to my horse, I now called to him: "Beat it, Sam!

Go on home!"

I repeated this a number of times, meanwhile praying that something would happen. I realized that if the horse remained in that cañon very long the probability was he would be destroyed by the blizzard.

I must have fallen asleep, as people always do when they are freezing to death. I do not know how long I slept, but when I awakened I looked up and saw several lanterns around the top of the abandoned well. Men were yelling at me, and one of them dropped a lariat into the well; it fell at my side as I lay at the bottom.

"Tie it around you, if are not too numb!"

one of them called to me.

In some way I managed to do this, and was pulled out of the well. They had tied the other end of the rope around the horn of a saddle and led a horse away, raising me to the surface. . . . .

In the town of Atwood was a chap by the name of Wesley Cochran. He and I had been very close friends for years and the barn at the ranch-house where I kept my broncho adjoined the corral of the Cochran place. It was Wesley Cochran who had thrown the rope into the well for me and called out instructions. After I was on top of the ground again Wesley gave me a bottle of something and I gulped this down thirstily. As Kansas was a dry state it might not be proper to say that the liquid was whisky-I do know, however, that it fired my blood and aroused me from my lethargic state.

Wesley raised a lantern and there stood Sam the Oregon broncho, pawing, shaking his head, and whinnying nervously.

The boys helped me to mount and we started away just as dawn was breaking. The storm had passed, but it was not convenient to talk as we rode along.

THAT afternoon after I had been asleep for some time, Wesley came in and told me the story of my rescue.

"Sometime in the night, when I was

sleeping very soundly, it seemed as if some one were throwing rocks on the porch of the house. I awakened with a start. The noise continued and at length I realized that it was a horse stomping on the steps of the Then the horse whinnied several times, loudly, in a strange manner. I went to the door, after lighting a lantern, and was close enough even in the blizzard to realize that he was your horse Sam. I could distinguish this by the star in the animal's forehead and by the chain on the bit. I tried to catch him but couldn't get near him. Mystified, I put on my coat, boots and hat, and went out. I knew you were on your way from the McDonald ranch, and I wondered where you were. I thought I should catch the horse and put him in the barn because of the storm, but the damned devil wouldn't let me come near him. He would run a little way, then stop. turn and look at me, then paw and whinny and shake his head. Whenever I started after him, he'd run a little distance on and then stop again.

"FINALLY there dawned on me what I have always known—that a horse has more sense than a man. I saddled a pony and rounded up Johnny Flannigan, Paul Hacker, and Zene Tindall. Then we just followed your broncho the best we could. It had almost stopped snowing and we could see the horse fairly well as it began to get lighter in the eastern sky.

"And that damn' broncho led us down a trail into the canon just west of Atwood and then went hell-beating it down the

cañon until he came to the well.

"We had brought lanterns because we didn't know what we might get into—and these were swinging on our saddle-horns, of course.

"Well, sir, Sam went directly to the edge of the well and looked into it; he was whinnying—almost screaming—the damnedest noise I have ever heard a horse make! I lay flat and peered over the edge, hanging my lantern down into the well at arm's-length. Then I saw you all huddled up in the snow. The rest you know."

We took another drink; that seemed fair enough. After rolling a cigarette and light-

ing it, I asked Wesley:

"What do you think of Sam now?"

"Well," Wesley answered with a grin, "if I ever meet a woman that's got half as much sense as that hoss, I'll grab her right pronto!"

 $B_{
m y}$  David Rutherford

Wherein a youthful telegrapher is held up by the Dalton gang.



HIS happened when the Dalton gang was active in Kansas and Oklahoma, holding up trains, robbing banks and engaging in other such pleasantries—trying their best to eclipse the still fresh reputation of the James Boys.

I was a kid then, not even old enough to vote, but had been a railroad man for several years, having learned how to pound the key in a little coal-mining village in western Kentucky when I was not quite fifteen. After I got good enough to hold down a regular job, my feet became restless and I wandered out west.

I had taken a more or less active part in the great race that marked the opening to settlement of the Cherokee Strip in Indian Territory, and in the rush to Crede, Colorado, following the discovery of rich silver deposits in that region. Then I got back into railroad work.

I was now railroad and express agent at one of the suddenly grown-up towns in northern Oklahoma, not many miles south of Coffeyville, Kansas. There was no assistant and consequently my hours were long—from early morning till late at night—but the work was not hard since I had a great amount of leisure time between the infrequent trains. It was rather an important point, however, and frequently I had in my care large sums of money belonging to the express company.

One late winter day, while the weather was still cold enough to keep a fire going in the big drum stove in the waiting-room of the station, I grabbed off the wires the news that the Daltons had robbed a bank at Coffeyville and were supposed to be heading back for their hide-out in the Indian Territory. That was before the rest of the old Indian Territory, in addition to the Cherokee Strip, had been thrown open to white settlement. The opened section was still sometimes referred to as "the Strip" or called by its proper name, Oklahoma Territory. But the name Territory alone was always used to designate the remainder of the old Indian Territory. To reach their Territory hide-out the Dalton gang would have to cross the "Strip," and there was no guaranty that they would not come on a line which would bring them through my little town.

A BOUT the first thought that occurred to me was of this; the next was that I had between six and seven thousand dollars of express-company funds in my care. There was a little of it in paper, but most of it was in gold coin with some silver. They are still rather partial to "hard" money west of the Missouri River. While I knew that I would not be held personally responsible should the robbers take the money away from me, naturally I had no

desire to have such a thing happen. And

I was a worried boy.

Of course I had no intention of resisting them if they did come. Their reputation was too well known to me to consider such a thing.

After much sweating and stewing I finally got out of the safe the canvas sack containing the money and hid it where I thought it would escape discovery—even if

the robbers should appear.

My last train for the night went through at nine thirty-two. Usually by the time I had reported it—Number Eight—and finished the rest of my day's work, it was ten o'clock. I slept in a room in the rear of the waiting-room and ate at a restaurant. It was my nightly practice to go to this restaurant for a good-night snack.

But this night I hesitated about leaving after I had done my chores, which included filling up the stove for the night and placing the three loaded coal scuttles along the wall back of the stove. It seemed I had a premonition that something out of the ordinary would happen. And it did!

My hand was reaching up to turn off the big oil lamp that hung from the center of the ceiling, when a cold blast from outside struck me, and a deep, rich voice sent more shivers up and down my spine.

"Hold it, kid," the voice said. "I need

some light."

I HELD it! In fact fear froze me stiff for a few seconds that seemed like days. Then I let my hand come down very slowly, and turned—very careful to make no quick move that might be misinterpreted.

I gazed at a black-whiskered face that I was certain rested on the shoulders of one of the Daltons. Once, a few months before, some one had pointed out to me a man who, he said, was Jim Dalton. Maybe I was too scared this night to see or think straight, but I know I felt that I was looking at a man very much like the one who had been pointed out to me.

The big six-shooter in his right hand was not pointed at me, but it couldn't have

looked any bigger if it had been.

He stepped quickly up to me and felt

my pockets to see if I was armed.

"All right, kid," he said with a grin, "you can let go now. I'll not hurt you if you behave. Got anything to eat?"

"No," I answered, trying very hard to keep my teeth from shaking loose. "I eat

at the restaurant."

"Anything to drink?" he demanded.

"Nothing but water," I replied with some return of courage—or rather with a little less fear.

"'Twont warm me." He grinned again, with his face but not with his eyes. "But you got a good fire that'll warm the outside. Sit over in that chair and be careful not to move, while I get warm."

PROBABLY I sat only for a few minutes, but it seemed an hour, as I watched him standing before the big stove, warming first one hand, then the other; turning his big body slowly around, all the time keeping his hand-cannon ready for instant use. So I sat, and thought and wondered, while all the time there kept going through my head the question: "Wonder how many scuttles of blood I'd fill if he plugged me?"

At last his toasting was complete and he broke the long silence. His voice was not unpleasant, and I had recovered enough from my scare to notice this fact.

"Reckon I'll have to go hungry tonight, kid. Can't trust you to go out and get me

some food."

"Where'd you come from?" I mustered enough hardihood to ask. "Drop off Num-

ber Eight?"

Again came that smile that didn't reach away from his mouth. "Better not ask any questions, kid. Might hurt you to know too much. 'Sides, I aint got time to talk with you. Gotter get going. Hop into that office now and open the safe—and be careful your hands don't touch anything else."

Certainly I got going. My fingers fumbled some because I couldn't keep from thinking of that cannon in his hand,—wondering if it was pointing at my back or my head,—and seeing those scuttles full of my blood. At last the combination worked and I pulled open the door, taking great care that neither hands, feet, nor body made a suspicious motion.

MY visitor waved me to one side, where he could keep me under observation while he glanced into the safe. Reaching his free hand in, he pulled out the money drawer. There were a few papers in it, but nothing of any value to him. He frowned and gave me a questioning glance.

"Did I get a bum steer, kid?" he growled.

"I don't understand."

"Huh," he grunted. "Somebody told me I'd find about seven thousand dollars here tonight. Where is it?" As he hurled the demand at me, he raised the gun suggestively. But I bravely lied.

"It—it was here today, but went out on

Number Eight."

"If you're lying, kid—" He did not finish the sentence. He did not need to because I knew the rest of it and prayed that if he did make a further search he would

prove to be a poor seeker.

He made the search—a very thorough one. First, though, he took the precaution of tying my hands and feet and then tying me to a chair in the waiting-room far away from my telegraph-key. He was pretty rough but told me that after he'd finished searching for that money—if he didn't find it—he would loosen the ropes a bit so I could squirm free in an hour or so.

Every place in the office that could hold or hide as much as a twenty-dollar gold-piece was looked into very carefully. Once I stopped thinking about my scuttles of blood long enough to ask him not to tear or destroy any of the papers because it might get me in bad with the company; he agreed

that he'd not do it intentionally.

Then he went through my little bedroom, even taking the mattress off the cot and pounding it all over. Finally he came back into the waiting-room and gave it not the once- but the twice- or thrice-over. I was mightily relieved when I saw that he was through, but I tried to make my face show that I knew he'd find nothing. All the same my heart beat a little faster when he turned to me.

"Well, kid, I reckon you haven't got it." Then he glared. "But listen: If you have got it hid, and I ever hear you kept it away from me, I'm coming back to see you!"

"Who'll I look for?" I asked, feeling a

little cocky.

"Look for me. Just look for me. You don't need to know my name. You'll know me when you see me again."

I did not answer, but mentally I agreed that I certainly would know him if I ever saw him again. He loosened my bonds. "Better take some good advice and don't try to get free till that clock strikes halfpast ten."

I looked at the clock on the wall and thought it must have stopped. It was tenfifteen. I had heard it strike ten as I started to put out the lamp, and I felt that hours and hours had elapsed since. But the clock hadn't stopped. I could hear it ticking as my visitor quietly opened and closed the door and disappeared from my sight—and, I am thankful to say, from my life.

I NEVER saw him again, nor heard him, but I sat very still until that clock struck ten-thirty, and then for a long five minutes more, before I began trying to wriggle out of the ropes. When I was free I did not go out for my good-night snack—I wasn't hungry. Instead, I went to bed. I wasn't sleepy but I wanted to lie down and rest. And I did not turn out the big hanging lamp—nor shut the door between the waiting-room and my bedroom.

Finally I did fall into a restless sleep, with the lamp still burning. At about five o'clock in the morning I awoke and turned

off the light.

When Number Five—the first eastbound passenger carrying express—blew, shortly before eight o'clock that morning, I grabbed a blank receipt from my desk, picked up one of the coal scuttles, emptied it on the floor, grabbed the canvas sack from among the coal, hid it under my coat, and hurried to the express car as the train stopped. I climbed halfway into the car before taking that sack from under my coat and handing it to the car agent.

I did not want Mr. Blackbeard or any of his men to see me handling anything that looked like money that morning!

#### \$500 In Cash Prizes

A FTER 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.

## Neglect of Home-Study Training Cost This Man \$47,424!

### How much are you paying to stay untrained?

Some time ago we received a letter which every man working for a living ought to read-whether he's making \$20 a week or \$200. Here it is:

"During the forty years that I have been working, my salary has averaged less than twenty-four dollars per week with the exception of the last two years while I have been acting as foreman. I made good in this position and saw, through the failings of others, what would happen to me unless I found a way to train for larger responsibilities.

"I had read of correspondence courses and began searching for one I thought would benefit me. I

found it in the LaSalle Modern Foremanship course, and benefited by it, my salary being nearly doubled, and I was promoted from foreman to factory superintendent.

"This happened in a period of about ten months, and by devoting only about four or five hours per week to the

"I am now enrolled as a member of the Industrial Management course. and find the work very interesting and beneficial. It can be applied

every day in the factory, and brings results.

"I regret that I put it off to so late a day in life to reap the benefits I am now enjoying, and can truthfully say to younger men that if they would only profit by the experience of others they can gain more knowledge through one year's training by LaSalle methods than can be obtained in ten years' practical experience by hard work.'

We quote the above letter not because the man who wrote it is making a staggering salary as a result of his training, but because it illustrates so clearly the principle behind LaSalle training.

Here is a man who all his life had accepted the thought that he was compelled to work for little or nothing.

For one thousand, nine hundred and seventy-six weeks the writer of this letter paid at least \$24 a week for the doubtful privilege of staying in the ranks of untrained men.

Can anyone doubt that training would have doubled his salary just as easily when he was thirty-eight years younger-when he could attack his work with the abundant energy of a younger man?

Yet his neglect of this main avenue of progress cost him—leaving simple and compound interest out of the reckoning—the appalling sum of \$47,424 -a fortune in itself.

#### If You Could Use \$47,424, Pause Before You Turn This Page

Perhaps you are already making quite as much as the writer of that letter - perhaps more. Perhaps, on that account, you may think that his experience does not apply to YOU.

But if training in Higher Accountancy—or Modern Salesmanship—or Business Management—or Law—or Business Correspondence—or any of a dozen other branches of business could change your fortyeight dollars into no more than \$72 a week (which is easily possible) and if you now NEGLECT to ad-

vance yourself-will you not find it difficult, thirtyeight years from now, to explain to those who are dear to you why you threw away \$47,424?

We're not going to moralize. We're not even going to cite any of the thousands of letters from men who have not merely increased but doubled and tripled their incomes through home-study training under the LaSalle Problem Method. We have the letters. We will show them to you, if you like. But understand, please, that they would not



alter the facts—they would merely emphasize them.

Below this text there's a coupon. It will bring you not only full details of the training that appeals to you, but also a copy of that most inspiring book, "Ten Years Promotion in One."

If you are sincere in your desire for advancement, you will not turn this page until you have clipped the coupon, filled it in, and by placing it in the nearest mail box placed yourself on the road to real success.

Find Yourself	Through Lo	aSalle! — —	
LaSalle Exter	noism I	Tariana	-: 4.
Lusuite Exter	ision (	Tuver	suy
The World's Largest 1	Business Train	ning Institutio	200

Dept. 5369-R		Chicago	
I would welcome an outlin	ne of the	LaSalle plan,	together with
a copy of "Ten Years' Pron	notion in (	One," all with	out obligation.
C		<b>-</b> -	

- J Business Management ☐ Modern Salesmanship
  ☐ Higher Accountancy
- ☐ Traffic Management
  ☐ Railway Station
  Management
- Banking and Finance
- ☐ Modern Business Corre-spondence ☐ Business English ☐ Effective Speaking ☐ Telegraphy
- ☐ Law-Degree of LL.B. Commercial Law
  Correspondence
  Industrial Management
  - ☐ Modern Foremanship
    ☐ Personnel Management
- Expert Bookkeeping
  Commercial Spanish
  C. P. A. Coaching
  Stenography—Stenotypy

Name	
Present Position	•••
Address	



habit unaided. It's often a losing fight against heavy nabit unaided. It's often a losing ight against heavy odds and may mean a serious shock to the nervous system. Let us help the tobacco habit to quit YOU. It will quit you, if you will just take Tobacco Redeemer according to directions. It is marvelously quick and thoroughly reliable.

#### Not a Substitute

Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind. It is in no sense a substitute for tobacco. After finishing the treatment you have absolutely no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. It makes not a particle of difference how long you have been using tobacco, how much you use or in what form you use it—whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chew plug or fine cut or use snuff, Tobacco Redeemer will positively remove all craving for tobacco in any form in a few days. This we abso-

topacco in any form in a few days. Inis we absolutely guarantee in every case or money refunded. Write today for our free booklet showing the deadly effect of tobacco upon the human system and positive proof that Tobacco Redeemer will quickly free you of the habit.

Newell Pharmacal Company, the 208 Clayton Station St. Louis, Mo. Dept. 308



Free Booklet-

and contract showing ho

#### In Railway Traffic Inspection

and they get as high as \$250 per month salary we'll train you—and upon completion of your training—assist you to a position paying at least \$120 per month salary plus expenses, or refund your tultion. It only takes about 3 months of spare time home study and you're ready to step into a profitable position with rapid salary advances to \$175 and up. It's healthful outdoor work with regular hours—away from dings shops and monotonus desks.

For ten years our graduates have been offered positions—For ten years oud graduates have been offered positions—to yeared.

we assist you to a position Standard Business Training Institute Div.-12, Buffalo, New York

### The Children's Summer

The problem of a happy summer for both parents and children is to put the children in a good summer camp. Assured of the right environment for your children, you are free of all worry, to travel or spend the season at the resorts you most enjoy.

Camps insure the children's develop health, character and self-reliance, teach sports, sportsmanship and many useful accomplishments. Dr. Eliot, President Emeritus of Harvard University, endorsed the organized camp as "the most important step in education that America has given the world."

Camps open July first. The best always fill early. Important for you to make your choice now. If you desire assistance in selecting a camp for your child, we will gladly help you from this personalized knowledge gained from visiting many hundreds of camps. Write fully about your boy or girl, the location and the kind of camp and activities you want. Address

The Director, Department of Education

THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE New York City Graybar Building,

#### SONGWRITERS!

SUBSTANTIAL ADVANCE ROYALTIES ARE PAID UPON publishable work. ANYONE having original ideas for Songs may submit poems for examination and advice.—
WALTER NEWCOMER, 1674 Broadway, N. Y.

### rite Your Own -AS A SALESMA

Make yourself independent—set your own salary as a salesman. Train to sell surely and effectively the La-Salle way. Reports from LaSalle trained salesmen everywhere show big money dividends on the low training cost. Train at home—on cars

—anywhere you have spare time. Price low—terms easy. Write today for free 64page book on "How to Sell."



LA SALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, Dept. 5369-S Chicago, III.

#### CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

#### BEAUTY HELPS

MASCARILLO for beautifying Eyebrows and Eyelashes, not a dye; 9 shades. Price \$1. Send 10c for samples of Exora Rouge, Cream, Powder and Mascarillo. Charles W. Meyer, 11 East 12th St., N. Y.

#### HELP WANTED

AGENTS—\$250 month. Raincoats. All Colors. Your choice \$2.65. Part time \$2 hour. Complete line 60 patterns, silks, suedes, tweeds, Leather-Lyke. Outfit sent free postage prepaid. Write Comer Mfg. Co., Dept. H-22, Dayton, Ohio.

BIG OHIO CORPORATION wants county manager. \$50 weekly commission. Earnings start immediately. Good for \$5,000 yearly. We furnish everything, deliver and collect. Capital or experience unnecessary. Fyr-Fyter Co., 1880 Fyr-Fyter Bidg., Dayton, Ohio.

SOMETHING DIFFERENT—new patented Home Filter for fruit juices, beverages. Perfect results guaranteed. Low priced. Sells like blazes! Make \$87.50 weekly. Write quick for Free Demonstrator and Territory Offer. Home Filter Co., 3005 Central Ave., Bay City, Mich.

AGENTS—\$50. WEEKLY SELLING SHIRTS. No capital or experience needed. Commissions in advance. Established 40 years. Samples Free. Madison Industries, 564 Broadway, New York.

#### HOW TO ENTERTAIN

PLAYS, Musical comedies and revues, minstrels, comedy and talking songs, blackface skits, vaudeville acts, monologs, dialogs, recitations, entertainments, musical readings, make-up goods. Catalog free. T. S. Denison & Co., 623 So. Wabash, Dept. 104, Chicago.

#### INSTRUCTION

WORK FOR "UNCLE SAM." Postoffice Clerks—Carriers—Railway Postal Clerks. \$1700-\$2700 year. Men 18-45. Sample coaching FREE. Write immediately. Franklin Institute, Dept. R24, Rochester, N. Y.

#### PATENT ATTORNEYS, ETC.

PATENTS—Trademarks—Write for our Guide Book, "How To Obtain a Patent" and Record of Invention Blank, sent Free. Send Model or sketch and description of your invention for our Inspection and Advice Free. Reasonable Terms. Highest References. Prompt service. Victor J. Evans & Co., 696 Ninth, Wash, D. C.

INVENTORS should write for our guide book, "How to Get Your Patent" and Evidence of Invention Blank. Send model or sketch and description of invention for Inspection and Instructions Free, Best terms. Randolph & Co., Dept. 177, Washington, D. C.

#### PHOTOPLAYS, STORIES, SONGS, POEMS, ETC.

WRITERS of song poems or melodies. Send a postal card immediately for my "real" proposition. Be convinced now.
Ray Hibbeler.

D13, 2104 N. Keystone Ave., Chicago.

SONGWRITERS: Substantial Advance Royalties are paid on publisher's acceptance. Write for Free Booklet on developing ideas for song words or music required by Talking Pictures. Newcomer Associates, 1674 Broadway, New York.

#### MISCELLANEOUS

TOBACCO HABIT Cured or No Pay. Any form, cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chewing or snuff. Guaranteed. Harmless. Used by over 600,000 people. Full treatment sent on trial. Costs \$1.50 if it cures. Nothing if it fails. Superba Co., Nl. Baltimore, Md.



Our Diamonds are radiant, sparkling, blue white gems, set in beautiful solid 18-k white gold rings, exquisitely engraved and pierced. Exceptional values—order today!

Satisfaction guaranteed or money back. Credit terms: Pay one-tenth down; balance weekly, semi-monthly, or monthly at your convonience. ALL GOODS DELIVERED ON FIRST PAYMENT. Our References: Any Bank or Banker in U. S. A.







No. 897 - Elgin No. 824 - The "Elite" solid 5800 No. 898 - Modern No. 898

Standard Railroad Watches on Credit at Cash Prices

Hamilton No. 992, 555
Elgin's Latest Raymond, \$55
Illinois "Bunn Special" \$50
Terms to Suit Your Convenience

Send Today for FREE Catalogue
Write for big free book of 2000 illustrations and descriptions
of Diamond Rings in Platinum and Solid Gold, Dinner Rings,
Pins, Brooches, All Standard Makes of Pocket Watches,
Pearls, Dresser Sets, Silverware, Clocks, Kodaks, Leather
Goods. Also many inexpensive novelties.

Let Her Interpret Your

#### STAR of DESTINY

If you are unhappy, discouraged, lonely, unsuccessful in love or business, do not hesitate to consult Madame Annette, America's best beloved woman, famous for her radio talks on Astrology.

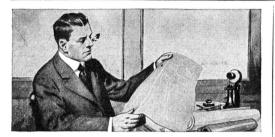
She will aid and advise you in your trouble and point out your star of destiny, lucky days and many secrets of happiness.

For only 25 cents she will send you her Special Dollar Reading, which may amaze you by its accuracy and explain much that seems dark and doubtful. Send her your correct birth date, name and address and 25 cents.

Address her as follows:

MADAME ANNETTE, Graduate Astrologer 42 Back Bay Station, Boston, Mass.





## Mechanical Engineering

#### Learn at Home

MECHANICAL Engineering embraces the design, construction and operation of machines and machine tools. It is a profession which offers almost unlimited opportunities to men who combine natural mechanical ability with technical training. For this is The Age of Machinery. Almost every convenience, luxury or necessity which we enjoy depends on machinery for its production or adaptability to our needs. Every new invention multiplies the opportunities for competent designers, builders, erecting engineers, etc.

One of the best ways to train yourself to secure a position

One of the best ways to train yourself to secure a position as a Mechanical Engineer is through the home-study courses of the International Correspondence Schools.

These courses are complete and up-to-date, and especially arranged to meet the needs of the student who studies at home. They are particularly helpful because they are written by well-known mechanical engineers with years of practical experience, who know the quickest, best way to solve every problem. Just mark and mail the coupon and we'll gladly send you Free Booklets describing the I. C. S. courses in Mechanical Engineering or any other course in which you are interested.

#### INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS Box 2419-C, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your book-let, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the course

before which I have marked X in	the list below:			
Mechanical Engineering   Mechanical Course   Drafting   Mechanical Drawling   Mechanical Drawling   Complete Shop Practice   Architect   Architectural Draftsman   Building Foreman   Concrete Builder   Contractor and Builder   Structural Draftsman   Structural Draftsman   Structural Engineer   Electrical Engineer   Electrical Engineer   Electrical Contractor   Electric Wiring   Electric Uighting   Electric Car Running   Telegraph Engineer   Telephone Work   Civil Engineer   Surveying and Manning   Surveying   Survey	the list below:    Toolmaking			
☐ Bridge Engineer	☐ Woolen Manufacturing			
☐ Gas Engine Operating ☐ Automobile Work	☐ Agriculture ☐ Fruit Growing ☐ Poultry Farming			
Airplane Engines	Mathematics Radio			
BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES				
☐ Business Management	☐ Business Correspondence			
Industrial Management	Show Card and Sign Lettering			
Personnel Management	Stenography and Typing			
Traffic Management	English			
Accounting and C. P. A. Coaching	☐ Civil Service ☐ Railway Mail Clerk			
Cost Accounting	Mail Carrier			
Bookkeeping	Common School Subjects			
Spanish   French	High School Subjects			
Salesmanship	Cartooning			
Advertising	☐ Illustrating			

City..... State

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

# e harmful effects of tobacco

the narmill effects of tobacco.
Don't try to banish unaided
the hold tobacco has upon you.
Join the thousands of inveterate tobacco users that have
found it easy to quit with the aid of the Keeley Treatment.



TREATMENT STOPS Tobacco Habit

Quickly banishes all craving for tobacco. Write today for Free Book telling how to quickly Free yourself from the tobacco habit and our Money Back Guarantee.

THE KEELEY INSTITUTE Dwight, Illinois

Days' Free Trial

ead cycle (O. Dept. B-14CHICAGO



Executive Accountants and C. P. A. 's earn \$3,000 to \$10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. Only \$,000 Certified Public Account-rough the property of t

Lack of Power or Energy, Weakness or excessive drains on the Nervous System Winchester's Specific Pill. \$1.00 postpaid, literature free. (Send now.)

Winchester & Co., Est. 70 Years

Box 254, Mount Vernon, N.Y.



YOU can earn good money in spare time at home making display cards. No selling or canvassing. We instruct you, furnish comcanvassing. home manning. We instruct you, furnish complete outfit and supply you with work. Write to-day for free booklet.

The MENHENITT COMPANY Limited 740 Dominion Bldg., Toronto, Ont.



\$1900 to \$2700 YEAR

Railway Postal Clerks Many U. S. Government Jobs open to men and women, 18 up.

MAIL COUPON Today Sure!

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE Dept. R285, Rochester, N. Y.

Rush to me, free information, telling how I can get a U.S. Government job. Send 32 page book describing positions now obtainable.

Address.....

#### SPECIALIZATION

This is an age of specialization in every field of activity. So complex is civilization and so keen the competition in the affairs of men that success and happiness are assured only to the man or woman who knows his craft—his art—his business.

If you would achieve success, you must first be trained. In the old days training was only acquired by years of arduous apprenticeship. Now in these days when education is so far reaching, there are schools organized to teach in a comprehensive way every specific line of endeavor.

ART SCHOOLS Schools of Design If you have a desire to paint, draw, design clothes or hats, then an art school or a school of costume design will help you to put your talent to profitable use.

CONSERVATORIES OF MUSIC If your inclination is to sing or play the violin or piano, then a conservatory of music is what you are looking for.

SCHOOLS OF DOMESTIC SCIENCE If you have a knack for cooking or running a house, a school of domestic science or housecraft will train you to do it in the best possible way. Positions as teachers, dietitians, cafeteria managers and many others are open to their graduates.

SCHOOLS OF DANCING AND DRAMATIC ART You may feel the lure of the stage or the movies. There are a dozen different schools of dramatic art or stagecraft that will give you the necessary training.

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS

Possibly your interests are more practical. You may want to be a secretary, a nurse, a physical culture teacher, a druggist or a photographer, an electrician or an accountant. There is a school for every one of these fields of work.

All these vocational schools are advertised in THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE. If you are undecided as to what school to choose, write us and we shall be glad to advise you.

Address The Director, Department of Education

### THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

Graybar Building

New York City



"It's toasted" No Throat Irritation - No Cough. © 1928, The American Tobacco Co., Manufacturers