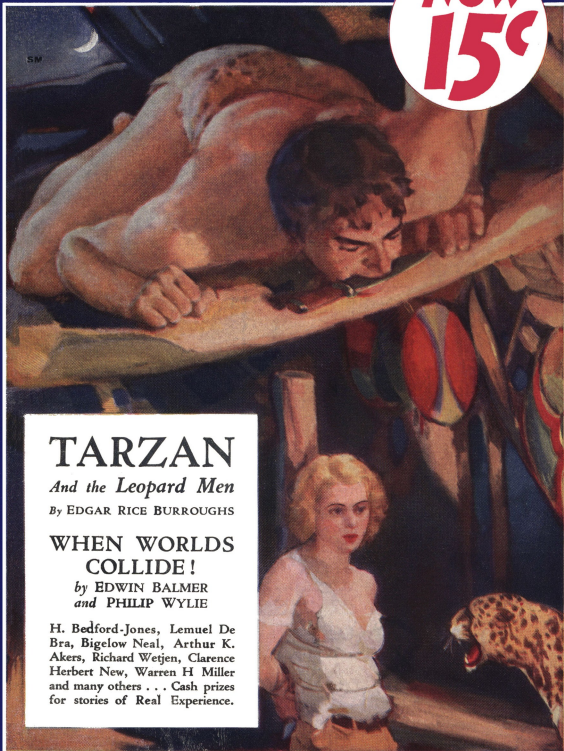


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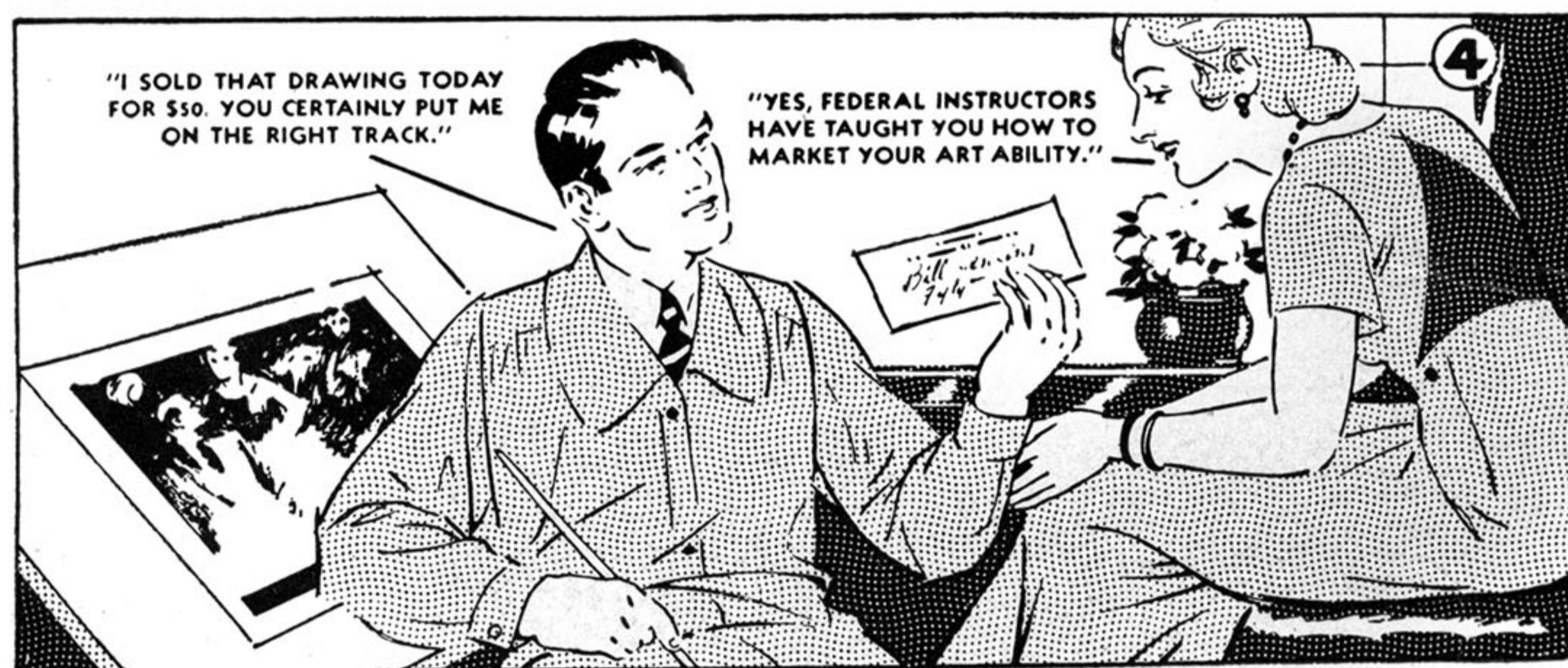
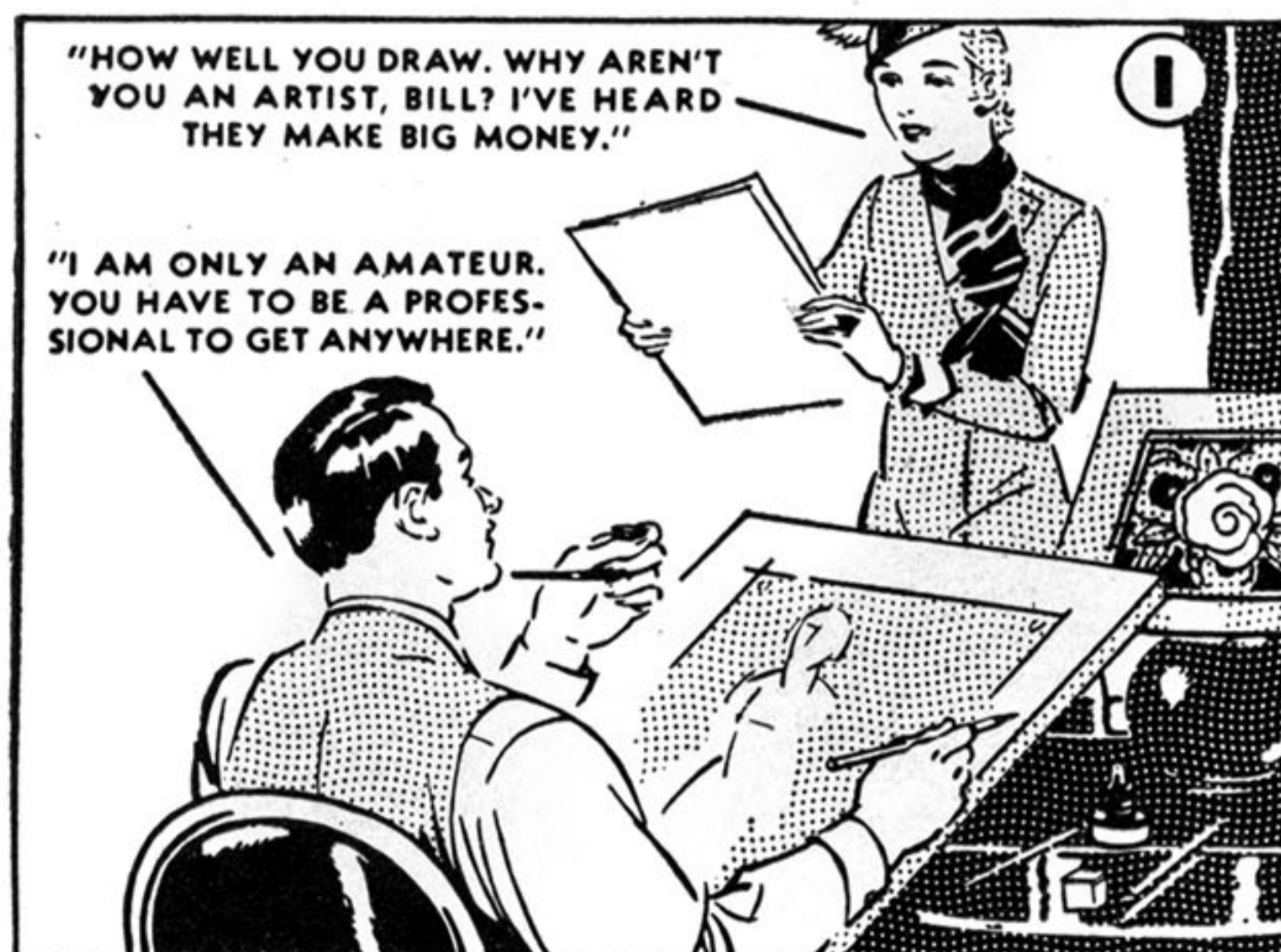
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The rest of our prophets lack inspiration, apparently, or they venture to deal with the unpredictable. One thing only are they safe in predicting: *change*—change in knowledge, in science, in government, in human viewpoint if not in human nature. And it is because of this, of course, that each month a magazine can give you stories essentially new, even though a thousand stories based on the same theme have been written before.

Clarence Herbert New, for example, has in "Free Lances in Diplomacy" written the longest series ever produced—they have appeared in this magazine almost without in-

of Change

terruption for over twenty years. Yet each story is new; for the ever-shifting scene of Europe each month provides him with ample fresh material. And in similar ways our other writers are constantly provided with fresh material by a constantly changing world.

Moreover new writers likewise add a continual novelty. Next month one of these, William Makin, gives us the first of a series about a daring Intelligence Service adventurer in mysterious Arabia. And deeply interesting stories they are, for Mr. Makin has a real gift, trained skill—and new material. Had you heard, for instance, that though no infidel may set foot in sacred Mecca, the telephone has penetrated thither? In one of these stories a British resident in another Arabian city picks up the phone, asks for Long Distance and then says: "Operator, give me Mecca, One!" Don't miss the first of these stories, "The Woman of Antioch," in our forthcoming November issue.

—The Editor.

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The Sportsman's Scrapbook

By EWING WALKER

II. James Figg—the First Champion



THERE had been plenty of fighting and bruising before his time—1719—but James Figg stands out as the first acknowledged champion of England. He was a rough, tough, heavy-limbed, hard-knuckled, two-fisted, toe-to-toe mauler. One admirer of his prowess penned the following:

Long was the great Figg, by the prize-fighting swains,
Sole monarch acknowledged of Marylebone plains;
To the towns far and wide did his glory extend,
And swam down the river from Thame to Gravesend.

Besides being champion, Figg was by way of being a promoter and manager. He would take on any ambitious bruiser; he would match any challenger with a man of his own; and he would provide the arena for the contest. Among the well-remembered fighters under his managerial wing were Ned Sutton, the Pipe-maker of Gravesend, Timothy Buck, Thomas Stokes and Bob Whitaker.

Figg's place was referred to as "A new Bear Garden, called Figg's theater, being a stage for the gladiators or prize-fighters"—and it was the scene of some of the rarest fights of the time.

The successful fighter during that period of the ring was of necessity a versatile battler, for it was necessary that he be able to fight not only with his fists but with various sorts of swords and quarterstaff as well. Not only would the doughty Figg meet any worthy challenger in any sort of mill, but he taught "Gentlemen ye use of ye small back-sword and quarterstaff at home and abroad." He was game to the tips of his broad toes, and more a slaughterer than a pugilist. In fact, boxing and pugilism, as we know them, came years after him.

THERE is no detailed record of Figg's fights, of which he had many. His chief rival was Sutton, the Gravesend

Pipe-maker, whom he met three times, winning twice and losing once.

It was during Figg's time that the first foreigner challenged the supremacy of the Englishman in the ring. The bold invader was a Venetian gondolier, a great hulk of a man, massively put together and of ponderous reputation. Jawbones were said to shatter like glass beneath his fists and his more peace-loving fellow citizens had paid him real money to move elsewhere.

Figg was approached. Could an Englishman be found to meet this foreign menace?

"Found!" said Figg. "Aye, my masters, plenty; but I don't know, d'ye see, as how that 'ere's truth about his breaking so many of his countrymen's jawbones with his fist. Howsomever, that's no matter; he can't break Bob Whitaker's jawbone even with a sledgehammer in his hand. And if Bob must knock under, why, before this 'ere outlandish waterman shall rule the roost, I'll give him a Figg to chew that perhaps he'll find some difficulty in swallowing."

The match took place at Figg's theater and an "elegant company" assembled. The herculean gondolier entered the ring all smiles and was a heavy favorite. When the battle started, the big one rushed Whitaker and, with a mighty lunge, knocked his opponent out of the ring and off the stage.

Bets were freely offered that Whitaker would not enter the ring again.

But Bob had other plans. Back into the ring he went. The gondolier was large; but, as Ruby Bob remarked, "The bigger they are, the harder they fall."

Whitaker ducked his head. Before him loomed the broad and inviting midriff of the Italian. Whitaker landed. All he had was in the blow.

It was enough—too much. As the Englishman's fist sank in, all remaining fight in the gondolier oozed out through the broad saffron stripe along his back! He was hammered from pillar to post, from

favoritism to ignominy; and finally he quit, to the disgust and considerable cost of his backers.

Then Figg delivered a speech, thus proving to us that oratory in the ring by several centuries antedated Bat Nelson:

"Gentlemen, perhaps you may think as how I have picked out the best man in London to beat this 'ere foreigner; but if you will come this day sennight, I'll produce a man that shall beat Bob Whitaker by fair hitting in ten minutes."

He was as good as his word. Nat Peartree blinded Whitaker after six minutes of fighting. Poor Bob was in a pitiable plight and finally gave in, declaring: "Damme, I'm not beat! But what signifies when I cannot see my man?"

Figg was champion, at the time of his death—December 8, 1734.

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The wreck of the Seramis, the desperate struggle of the castaways—and the making of a captain.

The *Third Officer*

By ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

CAPTAIN TODD was dying. It was, in fact, little less than a miracle he had survived so long—six blistering days in an open boat since the *Seramis* had caught fire, blown up and gone down. He had been in a bad way when he had first been hauled into the stern-sheets from where the explosion had flung him in the water, with his left side caved in, his gray mustache singed, his bald head smeared with blood and burns. Yet he had clung to consciousness and command, driven by some inner force, by some hard instinct that had made the fourteen other survivors regard him with awe, for all that the most of them were hard men too. Mr. Evans, the young third mate, knelt beside the Captain in the glow of a tropical dusk and was badly afraid.

"You'd like a drink, sir?"

Captain Todd shook his head and managed a faint smile.

"Water's about done. . . . No sense wasting it on me."

He breathed heavily for a moment and the boat rocked as the men moved aft to watch the end. The bosun stood up, a squat sturdy figure with a harsh lined face, towering over the two officers in the stern-sheets.

"About gone, aint he?" he said, wiping his mouth with the back of a hairy hand. The third mate did not answer, but Captain Todd smiled again.

"About gone, bosun," he admitted. He stared at his third mate. "You'll be in charge, Mr. Evans—the only officer left.

Your best chance is to make the coast of Africa. Steer dead east and you can't miss. You've got a chart and sextant and such."

"I'll manage, sir," said Mr. Evans hoarsely. He was not much over nineteen and was not sure of himself. A first command for him—an open boat and thirteen men! He tried to lick his parched lips and shuddered.

"There's a tin box in my pocket," said the Captain wearily. "And the ship's papers and money. Box holds jewelry consigned to owners. I promised to deliver it to Mr. Welsh, the junior partner. It's something special. If—if you get through you'll see to it."

"I'll see to it, sir."

"That's right." Captain Todd essayed to pat his third mate's shoulder. "Take over and carry on."

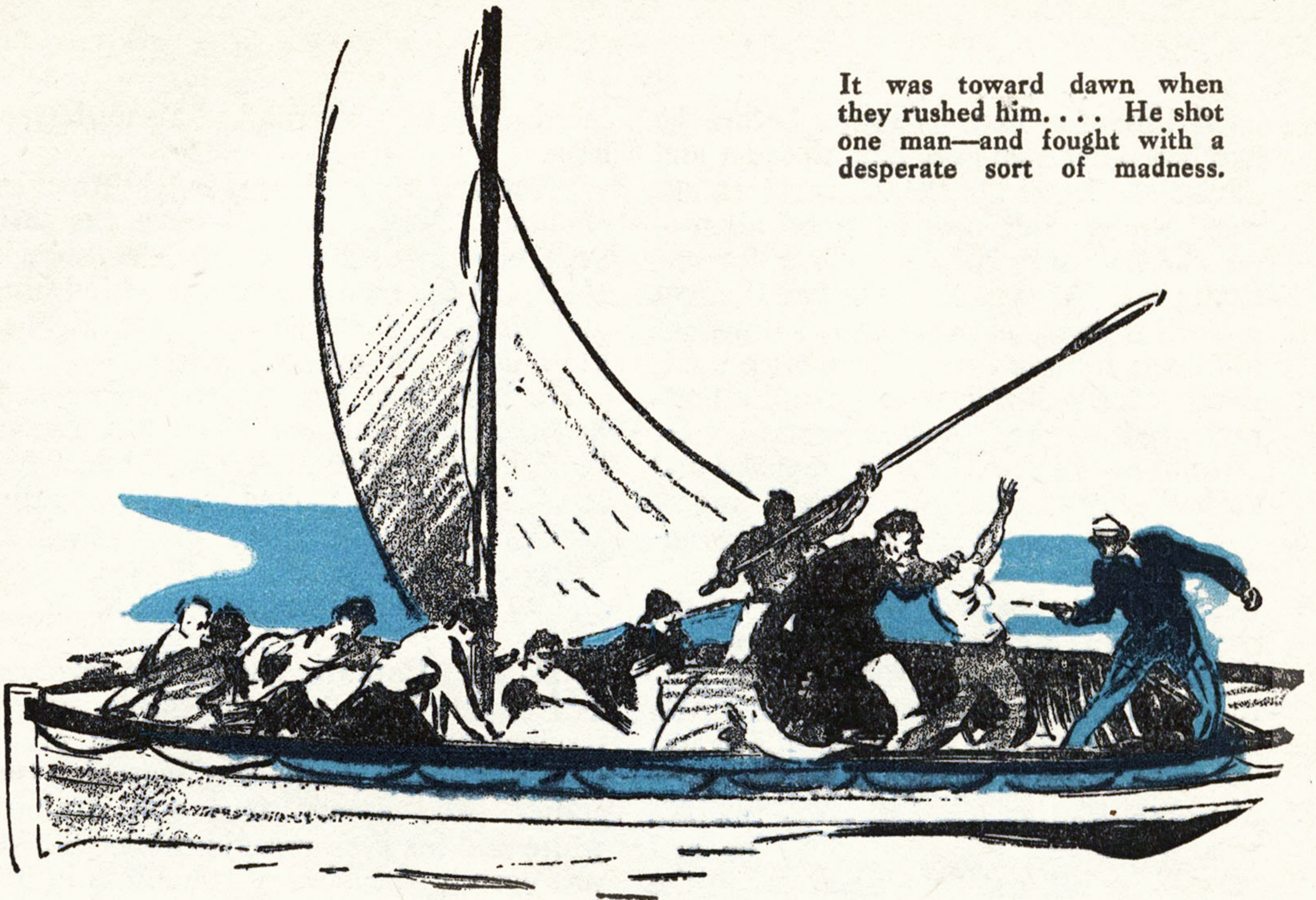
"I'll carry on, sir."

The bosun wiped his mouth again and shot a glance at the intent men crowded behind him. He said nothing.

Captain Todd gestured for the third mate to empty his pockets, and then sighed as if with relief. "That's all, Evans. Good luck!"

He died soon after dark, coughing once or twice and then growing still. Mr. Evans stared down at the black tin box he held in his lap, at the canvas-wrapped bundle of the ship's papers and money, at the heavy revolver that had been the Captain's. He was motionless so long, was so quiet, the bosun finally bent and shook him.

It was toward dawn when they rushed him. . . . He shot one man—and fought with a desperate sort of madness.



"Better get rid of him, eh?" he suggested, jerking a thumb at the sternsheets. The third mate nodded, his face ashen and horror in his eyes. The bosun stepped by him, bent, gave a slight grunt and a heave that was followed by a splash. The third mate shivered and closed his eyes.

The bosun noisily brushed his hands and sat down, close to the third mate.

"Let's have a look at the stuff," he suggested. "Something to pass the time."

HE took the box from beneath the other's unresisting hands, found a key attached to it by a thin chain and impatiently called to one of the men to light the hurricane-lamp.

"I never knew the old man was packing bullion," he ventured. "Bring that lamp aft!"

They crowded closer, as many as could before the bosun swore at them and warned them to keep the boat on an even keel. One man held up the lamp and the bosun opened the box. The contents were done up in neat tissue-paper-wrapped packages and he unfastened one or two, letting the dim light fall on ropes of pearls, diamond bars, emerald stick-pins and such. There was a murmur from the men, and it was that which finally roused the third mate.

He looked up, suddenly aware that they were crowding him, suddenly aware they had the box open and were putting out horny fingers to poke curiously at the contents.

"Here, that's enough of that!" he said shrilly. "Get 'midships!"

The bosun stared at him curiously, in a manner almost speculative.

"There's a lot of jack here, sir."

"What's that got to do with you? It's ship's property."

There was a small silence and the men's eyes glistened in the lamplight. The bosun hesitated a moment and then reluctantly replaced the contents of the box, locked it and handed it back.

"A breaker full of water'd be worth more'n that to us," he ventured with heavy humor. A man bent and whispered in his ear, and he reached up to grip the whisperer's arm, silencing him. "Not now," he said, out of the corner of his mouth.

"Did you speak, bosun?" inquired Mr. Evans, hitching himself into the sternsheets with a visible shudder.

"About water, sir," said the bosun. "Just said water'd be better than them jewels right now."

"Yes, we could do with that," agreed the third mate. He slipped the box into his pocket and took hold of the tiller. "Better trim that sail, bosun. The night wind's coming up."

He felt exhausted as well as afraid. His voice was strained, and it sounded unnatural even to himself. The men moved away from him, talking in low tones, but he did not catch what it was they were saying. He had so much to think about. He had to collect his thoughts, strive for calmness. It was a

hard time for him. Always before he had had older men over him, to order and advise, to take up the slack if things went wrong; but now he stood alone—and he had only been an officer for one short year. Always before he had thought himself a pretty clever sort of fellow, but now that he was face to face with stark reality, he realized how pitifully inexperienced he was, how uncertain. He was not even fully grown to manhood and he had only tradition to support him.

He gripped the tiller with shaking fingers and headed the boat to the east. It was not likely they would ever reach the coast; it was a clear four-days' run, even if the wind held fair, which in that latitude it almost certainly would not. And tomorrow would see the last of the drinking-water. He felt crushed by the sense of responsibility. He had never realized what it meant, not even when he had taken over his first bridge watch and the Captain had left him alone to handle the vessel. He had little petulant twinges of anger when he thought of it: It wasn't fair—wasn't fair of Captain Todd to die—of the mate and the second mate to perish in the fire! He was the least fitted of them all to be faced with what he was faced with now. And there was no way out—he was the last officer, and in charge. He had taken over. Carry on!

It was a hushed dawn. The eastern sky grew opal white, yawned to the zenith, and then flickers of pink and gold sat along the edge of the world. The sea turned from the gloomy purple of night to the brighter purple of day, and golden lights played in the long hollows of the quiet swells. The horizon blazed abruptly and the rim of the sun showed angry red. The sea was like blood where it ran to meet the sky, and the last of the night wind whispered out to nothingness.

THE men awoke slowly—yawning, scratching themselves, and muttering from dried lips. They began to sit up, and look about, at first with eager faces that quickly settled into sullen, bitter lines as the memory of their predicament returned to them. The bosun got up, stretched himself and tried to spit. He stared about, taking in all the horizon.

"Not a damned sail," he said. "An' the wind's gone."

Mr. Evans said nothing, but stared at him, wondering at the subtle menace of the other's hoarse voice.

"We aint got a chance," some one mut-

tered. The bosun scratched his unshaven chin.

"Not a chance," he agreed. "An' I'm choking. Might as well have the last swig now instead of waitin' fer noon." He heard the men getting up behind him and his eyes, fastened upon Mr. Evans, grew hard. "Come on, fellers!"

He bent over the water-breaker and had the bung half out when Mr. Evans lurched to his feet. A foot kicked his hand aside and he looked up with an oath.

"Get out!" the third mate choked. "Get out, damn you! And leave that alone. I'll tell you when we drink!"

HE held Captain Todd's big revolver in his hand and the bosun stared fascinatedly at the barrel. The other men had grown motionless, watching the scene. Mr. Evans' face was drained white and his eyes were burning. There was even a suspicion of trembling in his lips, but he held the gun with a steady hand. The bosun recovered his confidence after a moment and rose, sneering, his thumbs in his belt.

"Gettin' funny, eh? All right, kid. It's a long way to the coast."

"I'm in command here," said Mr. Evans tensely. "We'll keep to the same schedule that Captain Todd laid down."

The bosun stared at him for a while, then shrugged and rejoined his companions 'midships, talking to them in a low mutter. The third mate relaxed at last and sat down, putting his gun away. He was shaking all over, and deep down he was terribly frightened. Yet he had a feeling that he had done what was right, had asserted that authority passed on to him. He looked at the thin band of gold that adorned his cuffs and nodded to himself. Just one little band, but it made all the difference.

They drank the last of the water at noon, one man at a time coming aft on the word and receiving his ration from the third mate's hands. There was only a drop or two left for himself and when he had drunk he carefully replaced the bung in the empty breaker. The men watched him with burning, savage eyes in which the beginnings of strange deliriums were to be seen. The beat of the hot sun seemed to addle the brain. They were tortured and going mad. . . .

Time passed. The wind died and they sat motionless on an oily sea.

It was just after a red dawn, two terrible days later, when Mr. Evans was suddenly jarred to a semblance of con-



Captain Todd stared at his third mate. "You'll be in charge, Mr. Evans—the only officer left. . . . Take over—and carry on."

sciousness. The tiller was kicking in his hand and a cool wind was fanning at his back. He forced his eyes to open; peering round, he saw the sky was sullen with clouds and there was a slight chop on the water, disrupting the smoothness of the sea. The sail filled with a report, and water began to ripple along the boat's hull. The men stirred and came to life; then out of the growing wind there swept a series of sharp squalls, black and furious. They were like mad men in the boat, as hissing sheets of rain fell to port of them, to starboard, astern of them. It seemed as if the gods were playing, delighted to watch their sufferings. One man leaped overside with a hoarse cry and started to swim toward a wall of water that churned the sea not a hundred yards away, so close they could feel the gusts of cold air that emanated from it. He did not swim far; a lean fin slid into view from nowhere and the swimmer disappeared.

And then as if that had appeased the gods, a squall came right upon the boat, heeling her until her starboard gunwale was all but buried, and flooding her with water. The men stood up, staggering; they tried to dance; they ripped off their clothes to let the cool wetness drench

their parched skins. They held their mouths open and up toward the sky. They croaked and laughed; and only the third mate thought to fill the breaker, constructing a rude funnel out of the canvas sea-anchor, and holding the baling-bucket upright between his feet so that it would fill too.

But nature had not done with fortune, for right upon the heels of the squall, as it whipped away to leeward, the boat abruptly found herself in the very midst of a shoal of fish, like mullet. The surface of the sea literally boiled with these creatures. Obviously pursued by some foe, they leaped and floundered in desperate attempts to escape. Dozens flopped over and into the boat itself. The men used their shirts and caps to scoop up others. In less than half an hour, when the shoal had gone in the wake of the squall, the bottom boards were thick with gasping food.

They ate it raw, with the few hard ship's biscuits that yet remained. And then they were sick, and after that they ate again. Later, when the sun came out, they split some of the fish and dried them. They made a rather unsuccessful attempt to cook some over the flame of the hurricane-lamp. And then they re-

laxed and slept, the brackish water washing about them as they lay on the bottom boards, with the boat, now heeled steadily, running before the fair strong wind that would take them to the African coast. Mr. Evans was filled with relief as he held the kicking tiller and stared at the dancing sea ahead.

"We're all right," he kept saying to himself. "Lots of food and water now. A few more days and we'll make it! We're all right."

He felt strong again. His face was bright, though those two terrible days of being becalmed had left their mark on it. He had been very lucky, he had to admit, to run into a squall and a shoal like that, but that was the way at sea. He steered all through the morning and presently the men began to awake and stir again, to talk among themselves.

"We're all right now," called Mr. Evans cheerfully. "And you might relieve me at the tiller, bosun."

The faces of the men turned to stare at him as they absorbed his words. The bosun got up and came aft, hitching at his belt; he was wild-looking and menacing with his heavy growth of whiskers, and his burly body.

"Going to make the coast, eh?" he said carefully, looking down at the third mate. Mr. Evans nodded, smiling.

"I don't guarantee where, bosun, but according to my reckoning we ought to reach Sierra Leone."

"Going to head into Freetown, eh?"

"We ought to strike the coast a little to the north of it, and we can easily run down. . . . But why—" He was suddenly aware that all the men were regarding him intently, with strange eyes, speculative again. And he stopped.

THE bosun turned his head to regard the men and then faced Mr. Evans again, grinning a little.

"Coast's pretty wild south of Freetown, aint it?"

Mr. Evans shot him a startled look of surprise. "I don't know. I've never been there. Why?"

The bosun shrugged.

"Well, I have. And supposin' we miss Freetown and go on south a ways—"

It came to Mr. Evans that there was something behind all this. The men were acting now just as they had acted immediately after Captain Todd's death. They had been subdued when thirst and hunger racked them, but now they were fed again—what was on their minds?

"Have you gone crazy?" Mr. Evans demanded. "Why shouldn't we put into Freetown? I should think you'd be glad to get ashore."

One or two of the men laughed.

"Aw, don't act innocent, kid!" some one drawled.

IT was not until the third mate saw the bosun's gaze fastened on the black tin box that protruded slightly from his pocket that he really comprehended. And then a dull red flooded his face.

"None of that!" he said sharply. "We're going to Freetown!"

The bosun shrugged.

"Now what the hell! There's a lot of jack tied up in that box. We can split it, and no one'll be any the wiser. Land on the coast and work up to Freetown later. Tell 'em we wrecked the boat an' everything went down with it."

"You'd better not talk that way, bosun," said Mr. Evans stiffly.

Some of the men swore. Exclamations arose:

"Don't waste time arguing with him!" "Do it up right, bos'!" "You can't talk to a damned kid!"

But the bosun took no notice and continued, half-wheedling, half-explaining.

"Why not? What the hell! We been wrecked, aint we? Lost all we 'ad! We oughta get something for it. . . . And there aint no one but us knows about the stuff anyway."

Mr. Evans' face was white and tense now, his eyes steady and hard. He had toughened since that night when Captain Todd had died. He had tightened up; he had gathered ballast and a new firmness. He was not afraid now, only a trifle shocked and astonished.

"Forget it!" he snapped. "You must have gone insane! That jewelry has no value. It's sample stuff!"

The bosun spat deliberately, balancing himself with the boat's list across the bright sea. The wind tugged at his shirt and ruffled his tangled hair. He laughed.

"That's why the old man kept it in the safe, hey? Why you're making a fuss about it? Sample stuff, me eye! Now listen, kid—"

"I'm in charge of this boat, bosun. And don't talk to me like that!"

The other shrugged placatingly.

"All right, then. Listen, *sir!* Suppose we do go straight to Freetown. We can split the stuff before we get there and we can keep our mouths shut afterward. If there's any inquiries jest say

there wasn't time to get anything off the ship. They aint going to search distressed seamen. It's a cinch!"

"You'll get your pay," said Mr. Evans firmly. He met the concentrated battery of eyes without a tremor. "You'll get your pay and a passage home, and I suppose the Line will give you something for new outfits, as well as other jobs. As regards ship's property—you don't know what you're talking about! Besides, I tell you that jewelry has no value. It's nothing—"

"Our pay?" sneered the bosun, shutting him off. He spat aside and laughed. "Don't be a fool! What's a bit of pay beside what you got there? Your whack'll be the same as ours."

The utter hopelessness of making the man believe him became evident to Mr. Evans, and he grew angrily obstinate.

The bosun hitched at his belt and took another step forward. Mr. Evans put his free hand inside his pocket where rested Captain Todd's gun.

"You stay where you are!" he snapped. "You stay 'midships. This box and the ship's money goes to Freetown, untouched."

The bosun hesitated and licked his lips, watching the bulge of the gun.

"Didn't you say you wanted me to relieve you at the tiller?" he said mildly. "You'll be wantin' to sleep."

"I've changed my mind," said Mr. Evans. "You can go 'midships and stay there."

There was a short silence and then the bosun shrugged.

"All right, kid!" He spat insolently. "It's your own damned funeral!"

HE went back to his companions and they held a conference, the mutter of their voices drifting ominously aft. Mr. Evans tightened his mouth and surreptitiously wiped a trickle of cold sweat from his forehead. He wished for the hundredth time that Captain Todd hadn't died, or that the mate had lived to take charge. They would know what to do. Should he avoid trouble by letting the men have the box and the ship's money and then report the matter when they had all reached civilization? But no—if he did that they would guess his purpose and would see to it he did not talk. He had an instinctive feeling about that: They wouldn't trust him. He was an officer.

He braced himself and forced his attention to the compass beside him—to the

coast ahead. There was nothing to do really, but carry on. So the day waned and night fell and Mr. Evans had a hard job to keep awake. . . .

It was toward dawn when they rushed him, slipping quietly over the stretchers and almost reaching him before the uneven rocking of the boat jerked him out of a doze. They closed in then, cursing, and Mr. Evans stood up shouting with sudden hysteria and fright. He shot one man, and with the unshipped tiller he stunned another. He fought like a wild-cat, with a desperate sort of madness, shouting all the time. They drew off at last, cursing and sullen. It was hard to get at him, backed against the stern-sheets as he was.

"All right," the bosun grated through the darkness. "All right, kid. You gotta sleep sometime!"

MR. EVANS never had any clear recollection of the hours that followed. He did remember he could hardly sit upright, even with the tiller to brace him. He weaved with each motion of the boat, sometimes almost toppling forward or sideways, as if the muscles of his waist had lost all resiliency. His eyes were like balls of fire—heavy as lead, aching, the lids falling, ever falling, so that he had to set his teeth to keep them up. His body had become one vast weariness and his brain seemed to burn, throbbing with the one thought, that he must not sleep. He remembered the men watching him; visions of waiting faces, sneering faces, laughing faces swimming before him as in a haze. He was not even aware of the passage of time, not aware that another day had passed and another night had come while the boat slid forward over the sea. He only knew that suddenly there were stars again, and a colder wind, and that the boat was rocking uncertainly as the men came aft again.

"Get out!" he shouted, standing up and waving his gun. The boat slid sideways and wallowed in a trough as he let go the tiller, but none of them cared. Mr. Evans was later inclined to think that he was asleep even while he was fighting, for he could remember only the strangest things about the affair, such as a man's jagged teeth bared at him—such as a fist looming enormously before his eyes—such as one of the men stopping to blow his nose. He was firmly impelled, however, by the savage thought that he must stay awake and defend that ship's property which Captain Todd had



Mr. Evans scooped the box and bundle right out of the bosun's lap; then he was gone into the thick darkness.

rendered to him; and it made him savage to feel that he could not stay awake. He was even savage in his dreams, for he did dream horribly—and he fought and twitched after the men had at last overcome him and laid him on the bottom boards with argument and cursing. . . .

He came to, did the third mate, to discover himself on his back, the shadow of the sail moving across his face and the clear blue sky edging about the billowed canvas. He stared blankly upward at first; then he grew aware he was thirsty and tried to sit upright.

"Woke up, eh?" said the bosun, not in a bad humor. He was steering. "Might as well as saved us all that trouble, an' then you'd 'a' been more comfortable."

Mr. Evans tried to lick his dry lips.

"How long—" he started, and the bosun grinned, almost friendly now.

"You been under more'n a day, what with that crack on yer head and you needin' sleep. Larry there got you with an oar-blade."

One of the men laughed and nodded.

"I see," said Mr. Evans hoarsely. He was aware now of a splitting headache and of dried blood in his hair and down his face. The bosun leaned forward and gripping his shoulder aided him to a sitting position.

"Thirsty, eh?" He filled a pannikin from the breaker and held it out. One of the men sitting aft of the sail scowled.

"No sense coddlin' him, bos'. Drop 'im overside, says I!"

"You shut yer trap!" snarled the bosun, suddenly ugly. "I'm running this gang now. We aint aimin' to bump anyone off 'less we has to—an' maybe we c'n bring him round."

"Yeah, can it!" growled another man. "We need the kid to navigate, don't we?"

"I'll see you damned first!" choked Mr. Evans indignantly. "You're mutineers!"

"Now, kid," soothed the bosun. "You be good an' you'll see Mamma again!"

They all laughed then. Mr. Evans flushed red, bit his lip and subsided. He felt he had miserably failed in his duty. He could not imagine Captain Todd letting the men take charge like this.

They made him take a sight at noon, which he did more to satisfy his own curiosity as to their position than to please them. The coast was now a low purple line ahead and he scanned the chart with care, surprised to find they were a great deal farther north than he had suspected. There would be a better chance to make Dakar, French Senegal, than Freetown, Sierra Leone. He said nothing of that, however.

"We're north of Freetown," he told the bosun sullenly when they asked him.

That worthy grunted.

"That's all right. We're going to land and see if we can get something to eat, an' rest up; then we'll coast down, or maybe figure out something else."

"What are you going to do with me?" the third mate demanded.

The bosun shrugged.

"Aint much we *can* do, 'less you wants to be sensible and come in with us. We'll give you an equal whack an' I promises there won't be any double-crossing neither."

Mr. Evans stared at him and stared at the other men. Some of them were hard-bitten, he knew, and would stop at little or nothing. But some were reasonably honest mariners, carried away by the unusual circumstances, by the fake prospect of sudden wealth, by that madness which comes to the majority when all recognized authority is removed. And Mr. Evans hesitated. After all, why should he be concerned? The jewelry wasn't his, nor was the ship's money. He believed the bosun would see him through if he agreed to the man's proposals. And no one would know; he had only to say that everything had gone down with the *Seramis*. He could go home, get another ship and forget the whole incident. There was nothing—

His thoughts suddenly checked as he lifted an arm to wipe sweat from his forehead and the dull glint of the thin gold band on the cuff caught his eye. No, nothing, except he was the only officer left and Captain Todd had said— There was, after all, tradition—the game to be played. He was only nineteen and very serious.

"I'm not a thief!" he said bitterly. "You can go to hell!"

"You're a damned young fool!" exploded the bosun. "I been stoppin' some of this gang 'ere from bumping you off 'cause I thought you'd come around. What the hell! You've only got a third mate's pay, an' that won't make you rich!"

"It's ship's property you're stealing," said Mr. Evans doggedly. "And I was left in charge of it. You can't get away with anything like that."

THE blood congested in the bosun's face and his eyes grew ugly.

"All right. You leave that to us. The point is, you aint comin' in?"

"No!" muttered Mr. Evans. "I can't! Don't you see I can't?"

But they could not understand him. There was a small, tight silence; then some one said:

"Wasting time, that's all! If you'd 've listened to me—"

"Shut up!" snarled the bosun furious-

ly. "We aint bumping 'im—not the way you want it. Give 'im a break. 'E's only a fool kid, and there's no sense us takin' the chance of swinging."

MR. EVANS stared up at him, holding his throbbing head.

"Then what are you going to do with me?"

The bosun spat with deliberation.

"Nothing else for it, kid. We'll leave you ashore."

The third mate was appalled. Ashore on the African coast, miles from civilization, even from a native village—with neither food or weapons, and with no knowledge of the jungle! He did know the coast was sparsely settled; there were savage beasts and more savage men.

He set his jaw, his face ashen. "That's murder," he said shakily. "You might as well kill me now."

"You got a chance, anyway," the bosun reminded him. "You can 'ead for Freetown."

Inwardly the bosun was troubled, but he was also obstinate. Now that he had actually accomplished what he wished, brought off his *coup* and obtained the jewels, twinges of fear were his. It had all seemed simple and obvious out on deep water, with death likely to come any moment; but now, with the coast ahead, with safety not far off, with policemen and gunboats somewhere around, he began to sense complications. Supposing one of the men got drunk in Freetown and talked too much—or flashed some of the loot? It looked as if they'd have to chance that, but he couldn't chance letting the third mate come with them, the way he was feeling. Obstinate young fool! Choked up with a lot of officer ideas! On the other hand the bosun did not feel able to kill the youngster, at least not in cold blood. He began to understand the perplexities of leadership, but he also understood his companions well enough not to let them sense this. His outward demeanor was carelessly confident.

"You got a chance that way," he repeated to Mr. Evans. "If we puts you ashore." He looked at the other men, all staring at him, some of them uneasy, a few scowling and plainly angry. "By the time 'e gets through the jungle we'll be clear," he explained.

"If 'e gets through," said some one dryly and some one else laughed, breaking the tension. The matter was tacitly accepted. After a while, when unob-

served, the bosun leaned forward and tapped the third mate's shoulder.

"If we don't get clear 'fore you show up, you remember it was me who gave you the chance, eh?" The bosun wanted to keep a sheet-anchor to windward, and his eyes were uneasy. "This aint all my doin's. That's a tough crowd there, and them jewels—"

Mr. Evans stared at him.

"I'll see you to the devil first!" he cried passionately. "You'll turn that over to me now or take the consequences. Don't be such a fool, man! That jewelry isn't worth—"

"Shut up!" snarled the bosun, hardening. "You can't kid me! Ashore you'll go. An' I hopes you do croak!"

SLOWLY the afternoon waned; just before dusk they ran the boat into a convenient sandy cove, backed by palms and jungle and sheltered by low headlands. They beached the craft after a sharp tussle with the surf and a narrow escape from a half-hidden reef.

The men tumbled ashore, laughing excitedly, running up and down and stumbling on unfamiliar legs. They stretched themselves. They were safe at last after the terrible days on open water! Even the bosun went so far as to run like a boy to the edge of the trees and pluck handfuls of leaves and coarse grass, rubbing them hungrily between his hands. Mr. Evans, left to himself, climbed stiffly out of the boat.

It was in his mind to launch it and get away alone, but he knew the effort was far beyond his strength, and even if he did succeed in pushing the boat out of the shallows he would never be able to get past the reefs and through the surf without aid. Besides, the bosun had the ship's papers and money, and the box of jewelry. Reluctantly, filled with sullen anger and mortification because he was beaten, he slowly went up the beach to where the bosun was directing the lighting of a fire.

They cooked the last of the stinking, dried fish, cooked some land-crabs they knocked over, and ate them, together with a faintly bitter orange fruit they discovered in a small grove fringing the cove. They made clumsy cigarettes of dried leaves and toasted sea-weed, with the craving for tobacco strong upon them, and they sat around the fire coughing in the salty, acrid smoke, but moderately content. The night fell like a dark curtain and a chill came to the wind.

"We aint had a look at the stuff yet! Open 'er up, bouse!" they began to urge.

"No sense bein' fools about it," the bosun grumbled. "We aint going to split right now. If we do, you'll start to fight an' gamble, an' that'll mess everything proper. We'll wait till we sight Freetown and then divvy it."

There was some grumbling at this, but in general the bosun had the men with him. They demanded, however, that he let them at least see the contents of the black tin box, and count what ship's money had been brought along. The bosun swore, but finally agreed, drawing the box and the canvas-wrapped package of papers and money from inside his shirt. There was a general shuffling as the men gathered around.

Mr. Evans was entirely forgotten. He sat cross-legged outside the circle, staring nervously around at the dark walls of the jungle from which came rustlings of the night wind and faint cries of birds and small rodents. It was terrifying—all Africa looming at his back, mysterious and secret. Once a low, ominous drumming reached his ears; once some larger animal gave a high-pitched scream. Mr. Evans shivered and was very afraid. He stared at the moving shadows of the men hunched round the fire and his anger at them abruptly dispersed his fears. He would never, never live this down. He had been trusted and had failed. If he could not command a small boat, how could he expect to be given command, sometime, of a big ship? He got up—shaking, feverish, quite white and very tense. He had to do something!

The bosun was having trouble fitting the key to the box, for it had gotten bent during the various scuffles it had been through. No one heard Mr. Evans come up and stare over the bent shoulders of the small circle. Each man was intent and partially hypnotized by the dancing flames. Then it happened, and why it should have happened, Mr. Evans had never any clear idea. He only knew he was suddenly and furiously angry at them all, filled with a petulant childish rage that they should have so calmly thrust him aside and ignored him—forgotten his rank, laughed at his youth.

HE made a convulsive jump, scooped the tin box and the canvas bundle right out of the bosun's lap; then he was gone, running down the beach and into the thick darkness.

There was a period of utter astonish-

ment that held the men still. They hardly realized at first what had happened. Blinded by the fire, they were only aware that something or some one had leaned out of the night and taken their treasure. The bosun was the first to recover, lunging to his feet with a bull-like roar and a furious oath.

"That damned mate!" he choked and tugged Captain Todd's revolver from his pocket. He could see nothing to fire at and a man near him jostled him roughly.

"That's wot you get bringing him ashore with us," the man snarled.

WITH a curse the bosun knocked him down, and there was a brief *mêlée* that lost precious moments before the other men could stop it. They scattered then, each one swearing and raging, to search the beach and the jungle fringe; but once out of range of the firelight they were baffled and impotent. As the first of their rage wore off they grew uneasily aware of the brooding jungle wall, of the mysterious calls and rustlings. At last they drifted back to the fire and gathered about the bosun, who was uneasily glancing from one to the other.

"We'll get him," he promised darkly. "We'll get him in the morning. Foller him to Freetown if we has to."

They sneered at him, and one man called an ugly name across the fire, and that precipitated another fight. . . .

Mr. Evans had no idea where he was going when he ran off into the night. He was filled with sudden panic, possessed of a tingling between his shoulder-blades as he expected a thrown knife or a shot from the bosun's gun. Stumbling and weaving across the sand he went; then, as the first roar of pursuit broke out behind him, his head cleared and he grew calmer. He turned up the beach toward the jungle, crashed heavily into an unsuspected tree, circled it, and slowing down, worked his way deeper and deeper into the brush, his heart pounding so hard he was certain they could hear it.

He did not stop until he was entirely out of breath and exhausted; then he discovered himself to be in the midst of all but impenetrable darkness. He could not see so much as a star above; it seemed that even the air was thick and heavy. Whichever way he groped he encountered underbrush or the scaly barks of trees. Once he gulped convulsively as a pair of luminous eyes flashed into his for a moment and then vanished. Some ani-

mal raised a hair-lifting snarl on his right that set him running and blundering in a panic again. But at last he dropped half-unconscious to earth, holding the tin box and the canvas bundle to him, and sank into a coma-like sleep.

He snapped alert hours later when a faint grayness began to penetrate to him and the jungle took on a ghostly visualness. He heard men shouting to one another, and far-off the crashings and cracklings as they worked their way toward him. He got up, shaking from weakness and hunger, and keeping as quiet as he could he worked forward again. Once he heard a shot, evidently the bosun firing at some shadow or animal, and after that there was only the noise of the jungle. The sounds of pursuit died.

Mr. Evans sat down and thought a long time; then he made a rough but efficient sling of what remained of his jacket, fastening the tin box and the canvas bundle to his shoulders. He could not go back the way he had come, he knew. The bosun and the others might hang around for days looking for him. They would be fearful lest he escape to inform on them, and furiously angry at having lost all they had gained, or thought they had gained. Knowing the coast not at all, utterly unfamiliar with wood-lore, the third mate of the *Seramis* squared his shoulders, got a bearing from the sun, and heading first toward the sea he turned, after sighting it, to walk north along the coast.

THE consul at Dakar, French Senegal, had known many strange things to occur along the savage coast, but none stranger than the one just recently brought to his attention. First had come a French official with word of a mad young man brought into town by some natives who had found him with other natives miles and miles to the south. A mad young man, the consul would agree, to be wandering about without food or weapons—with a black tin box fastened on his back and with a lot of wild talk of mutineers and a sinking ship. At present the mad young man was in the hospital, unable to see anyone, but later on, since his nationality was obvious, no doubt the consul would be interested. . . .

The consul quite understood, sent a few wires and forgot the matter for some three weeks. Then he hastily re-read a brief report the authorities had handed him, and stared perplexedly at the gaunt youth his clerk had ushered in.

"So you are the third officer of the *Seramis*, wrecked by fire in mid-atlantic? Let me have the story, Mr. Evans."

THE gaunt young man sat down. He was dressed in a rumpled suit of borrowed whites; he fumbled awkwardly with a borrowed solar topee he held between his scarred hands. His eyes were sea-blue, the consul noted—very wide eyes and very intent as if they had seen many things. His cheeks were sunken. He possessed countless small scars which the jungle had given him. His hair, cropped short, held a touch of gray at the temples, and about his mouth there were etched fine lines. The consul felt vaguely uneasy—but he sent the masters of three ships away while he listened to the story of the *Seramis*. He heard it through and absently played with a rusty, battered tin box that lay on the desk before him, and with a filthy canvas-wrapped bundle, now opened.

"I don't remember much," said Mr. Evans simply when he had done. "Not after I got away. And then some natives looked after me." He was vague.

The consul stared at him and brushed a fly impatiently from the back of one hand. . . . A boy of nineteen! Third officer of a cargo boat—winning through all that terrible stretch of country! He was appalled.

"I have wired Freetown," he said slowly. "If the men reach there they will be held until we investigate further." He smiled a little and then opened the battered tin box. "So you stuck to this all through, eh?"

"Captain Todd told me to see it was delivered, sir. Ship's property."

The consul nodded.

"I suppose you'd have made the same effort if it had been a coil of rope—or a hurricane-lamp. Ship's property."

Mr. Evans did not quite understand.

"Captain Todd left me in charge," he said simply. "There was nothing else I could do."

The consul laughed and dipped his fingers into the jewelry in the box, allowing it to drip from his hand to the desk.

"I cabled Sydney about this," he said, "as soon as the French handed things over. It isn't worth ten dollars, the lot. Your owners were contemplating importing artificial jewelry and this was a box of samples."

Mr. Evans nodded.

"I knew that, sir," he said gravely.

"Eh?" said the consul. He grew rigid.

Several times he started to say something, but he could not get the words out.

Mr. Evans frowned. "I tried to explain to the men once or twice—but they wouldn't believe me. It was natural, I suppose, for them to think I was lying."

"I—see," choked the consul. "But—but it was ship's property, so you had to—"

"See it through, sir," Mr. Evans agreed.

"You damned young fool!" said the consul, and then sitting back, he began to laugh.

Mr. Evans slowly grew red.

"I don't understand, sir," he said stiffly. "I may be a fool— Oh, I see! Because it was artificial. . . . Well, what else could I do?"

ABRUPTLY the consul stopped laughing, and stared, smiling slightly but with a little pain round his heart. Nineteen years old—gray at the temples already—lines in the face before its time. Steady and serious blue eyes. Youth was so in earnest. . . . To suffer and all but die. For some vision and some ideal. . . . Lord, what had they to do with life and facts?

Mr. Evans compressed his lips. "I'm sorry if you think me—"

The consul made a gesture silencing him. . . . Wasn't it, after all, the principle that counted—the sense of duty? Where would the world be if there weren't some fools to think of duty? He glanced aside and caught a glimpse of his own reflection in the sheen of a framed photograph—a little tired, a little white, very lined and a little bent. Twenty years on the coast had done that. And then he stared back at Mr. Evans, only nineteen and already with the stamp of life upon him. For a box of cheap junk jewelry, a few ship's papers and a few pounds in gold!

Then there came to the consul a foolishly sentimental thing. He could see the figure of that centurion they had dug up from the ash-covered ruins of Pompeii—that soldier still in his harness, holding his spear, who had obviously remained at his post of guard while the city went under the earth—not stirring, because he had had no orders to stir. The discipline of the Legions! Nothing but duty.

The consul laughed oddly.

"Do you know what I think of you?" he said at last. "Do you know what I really think, Mr. Evans? I think that you will make a very fine Captain!"

The

Million-Dollar Certificate

A fascinating detective story

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

Illustrated by Joseph Maturo

CARTER was a long, lean, supple man with friendly blue eyes and, in rainy weather, a slight limp; a lion in Rhodesia had given him the limp; but he had the lion's pelt on the floor of his apartment in the Fifties, so the honors were his.

Like most hunters, Carter did not look the part. He did not look like a detective, either; and although on the books of Headquarters he was listed as a plain, ordinary detective, he was really nothing of the sort. He drew no salary, and Headquarters never applied to him unless they had a hunting job demanding his peculiar abilities.

At eight o'clock on the evening of Wednesday, November eleventh, Carter was just leaving for the opera when his telephone rang insistently. He picked up the receiver. The caller was Drummond, the police commissioner.

"Can you come straight to my office, Carter?"

"Yes," said Carter. "Important?"

"Of course. Gavin."

"I'll be there in twenty minutes."

HE had been reading about Gavin in the evening papers—a peculiar but not sinister case. Gavin had dropped dead that morning while playing golf at the West Franklin Club. Close to the eighth hole was the range of the Suydam Rifle Club, whose members were that morning holding an elimination meet for

the national tournament. A wild bullet had struck Gavin in the heart—perhaps a deflected bullet, since the range was most carefully placed not to endanger the golf-course.

Gavin's enormous wealth, his vast publishing and banking interests, gave the story tremendous publicity value.

Carter walked into the commissioner's office, found Drummond alone, and lighting a cigarette sank into a chair beside the desk.

"The bullet wasn't wild?" he asked.

Drummond regarded him sardonically.

"Nobody knows. Apparently it was. The ground's been searched, with no result. There are wooded patches near by, but it's not easy for a man with a rifle to sneak into that place and sneak out again afterward, without being seen. Those are all private grounds."

"It could be done," said Carter laconically. "You've tested the bullet?"

"Exactly. All afternoon the ballistics experts have been comparing bullets from every one of the rifles used on the range this morning. The bullet that hit Gavin came from none of those rifles."

"Then there was not the element of chance that the papers declared," said Carter, and frowned. His blue eyes lost their friendly gleam as his shaggy dark brows drew down; they became thin, alert, glittering. "Search the ground again."

"In the morning, yes," and Drummond

noded. "But there's more. We'd have accepted the finding, except for Gavin's widow. She called me in a couple of hours ago, and told me a queer story. You know the Treasury recently issued five hundred banknotes of a million dollars each?"

"For its short-term financing, primarily," assented Carter. "Quite a large number of them came to New York—weren't Gavin's banks interested in government loans?"

"Exactly," said Drummond. "Negotiable securities—as readily cashed, theoretically, as a dollar bill. Anyone with a million in cash could purchase one."

"The fool!" exclaimed Carter, realizing the truth.

DRUMMOND only shrugged. "Why not? He had the money. For several days he's been carrying it around showing it to friends, winning bets, and so forth. A million-dollar certificate isn't seen every day, you know, even by the class of men whom Gavin ran about with. His wife thinks he had it with him this morning when he went to the golf club. It wasn't found on his body, or in his locker; she hasn't found it at home. She suspects it was stolen, or lost."

"*Suspects* is the right word,"—and Carter smiled thinly.

"Anyhow," went on Drummond, "she has demanded that we get on the job. She's inherited almost the whole of his estate; she's an alert, vindictive, hard-eyed woman, Carter."

"I see," said Carter. "And the Gavin newspapers could raise hell, couldn't they? So she has exerted enough direct pull to make you put me on the job—eh?"

"If you'll take it. I don't want a soul to know that we're doing it; I don't want a hint to get out that an accidental-death finding hasn't been accepted fully. I've taken over every detail of the case. I'll give you every authority, every latitude."

"All right," said Carter. "Information handy?"

"Shoot!" Drummond indicated the sheaf of papers before him.

"His companions in the game?"

"His nephew Hartley Hollister; Flood, of the Dominion National; old Martin Anders, the octogenarian oil man; and Gavin's chief partner, Sunderby."

"All but Hollister very wealthy men. Rule them out," said Carter, and Drum-

mond nodded. "Hm! Any chance of the wife having swiped the certificate?"

"No. Married seven years, never a quarrel—a devoted couple. She had money of her own, plenty of it."

"Who handled the body?"

"No one. Hollister was the first to reach him, held Gavin's head until the others came up. No one else touched the body, finding him dead instantly."

"Looks bad for Hollister," said Carter. "Is he well fixed?"

"No. He's a minor partner in a brokerage firm, has lost heavily lately, sold out his partnership three days ago," returned Drummond, glancing over his papers. "Unmarried. There's nothing particularly against him—he enjoys life. Twenty-six."

"Did Gavin carry the certificate loose in his pocket?"

"No. It was four times as large as a dollar bill, engraved on the same paper; Gavin carried it in an empty gold watch-case attached to his key-ring and chain. Ring, chain and watch-case have vanished completely."

"Hollister could have slipped it out of Gavin's pocket as he held him?"

"Certainly. The others were at some little distance. Gavin's caddy was close by."

"The certificate can be traced by number?"

"Yes. Three-eight-two." Drummond hesitated, frowning. "But, Carter, don't you get the point? Hollister could flourish it in the streets tonight, and we couldn't touch him. Gavin apparently pocketed the certificate and replaced it with cash. There's no record of the note being his property, any more than if it were a mere dollar bill."

"Would its possession prove theft, if Hollister has it?"

"No. We don't know that Gavin didn't lend it to him to play with. We don't know that Gavin didn't lose it, give it away, or leave it lying around home." Drummond waved his hand impatiently. "There can't be a definite charge. Mrs. Gavin merely thinks, supposes, guesses, infers, dammit! She may yet find the thing around the house."

"Then what the devil," inquired Carter, "do you expect me to do about it?"

"I expect you to act on the assumption that Gavin was murdered," said Drummond curtly. He rose and picked up his light overcoat. "I'm going home. You can take this file and go over it at leisure. The sky's the limit. There'll



"Mr. Hollister took up Mr. Gavin's head in his arms, spoke to him, then laid him down again."

be questioning to do—the job was done very hurriedly today, naturally."

Carter glanced at his watch. "Thanks. I'll just make the second act of *Tristan*—which, after all, is the only important act. Do you know that the love duet takes exactly twenty-nine minutes to sing?"

Drummond merely snorted something and departed.

NEXT morning Carter obtained a private interview with Mrs. Gavin, who had gone completely to pieces. She was little better than a nervous wreck, but Carter learned the surprising fact that, only half an hour since, she had found her husband's key-ring, chain and

empty watch-case, still extremely empty. The million-dollar note was not in it. She had found it on her dresser, where Gavin must have laid it before departing to his last golf match.

Mrs. Gavin was entirely incapable of considering whether any of the servants might have taken the certificate from the watch-case. The more he talked with her, the less Carter liked her; as Drummond had suggested, she was rather harsh, yet her breakdown seemed sincere. He left abruptly, after getting a list of the servants from her.

At noon, Carter, who was now in complete charge of the case, received a telephone message. He got into his own car and went speeding out across the miles

to the West Franklin Club, where two Headquarters men had been working, very quietly. Their news was startling. The rifle that had fired the fatal shot was found, in a dense clump of brush sixty yards from the point where Gavin had fallen. It was a light rifle of ordinary make, with silencer attached. The men had said nothing to anyone about their find.

"No doubt the ballistics experts will prove that the bullet came from it," said Carter quietly. "You boys run along with it. No footprints?"

"We've gone over the ground with a fine-tooth comb, and there's not a thing," was the emphatic rejoinder. Carter nodded, and took their word for it.

WHEN they had departed, he went into the club and demanded the boy who had caddied for Gavin on Wednesday morning. The lad was at the caddy house now, and was summoned. When he arrived, Carter took him out on the terrace and settled comfortably into a chair.

"Your name's Malone, eh?" He surveyed the freckled, sharp-eyed youngster. Those alert, half-suspicious eyes, he noted, were heavy-lidded, close together. . . . Malone listened to him attentively, then shook his head.

"No sir, not a thing out of the way," he replied. "Mr. Hollister sliced into the rough and was hunting around for his ball; his caddy had lost it and was hunting away off the line. The other two gentlemen had driven, and they were walking up along the right of the course, because they didn't go far. Mr. Garvin laid out a beauty straight down, but thought his club head was loose and waited to look it over. That put him back of everybody else. I was pretty close behind him when he keeled over—never said a word. He fell forward on his face. I let out a yell and tried to get his head up; he was sort of slumped up. When I saw blood on my hand, I was scared. Then Mr. Hollister came along."

"So." Carter lighted a cigarette, to keep from showing any exultation. He had found something at last! "You heard no shot?"

"No sir. Not a sound. I'm positive."

"Had you seen anyone on the course?"

"No sir. Mr. Gavin usually came mornings so he'd have the course to himself; he'd send a phone-call ahead for me. I always caddied for him. I live

over in West Franklin—my mother and me—and I could get here early."

"Nobody else was on the course, then, from the time you left the first tee?"

"No sir. Not a soul, except Mr. Hollister's chauffeur."

"Eh? When was this?"

"At the sixth tee, sir. He came up after us from the clubhouse with a sack of clubs. I remember he showed them to Mr. Hollister—said they were his old clubs that had been lost for three weeks or so. He had just found them in the luggage compartment of the car. Everybody laughed about Mr. Hollister having put them there after too many drinks."

"Then what?" queried Carter.

"That's all, sir. Mr. Hollister said he preferred the new ones, and the chauffeur went back."

"Did you see him go back all the way?"

"Say, was I getting paid to watch him or the ball?" demanded Malone. "He started back."

"So! Didn't you say when the first questions were asked, that Mr. Hollister was the only one to touch Mr. Garvin's body?"

"No sir!" returned the boy emphatically. "Mr. Hollister said so. I guess he thought I didn't count. He took up Mr. Gavin's head and shoulders in his arms, spoke to him, and then laid him down again."

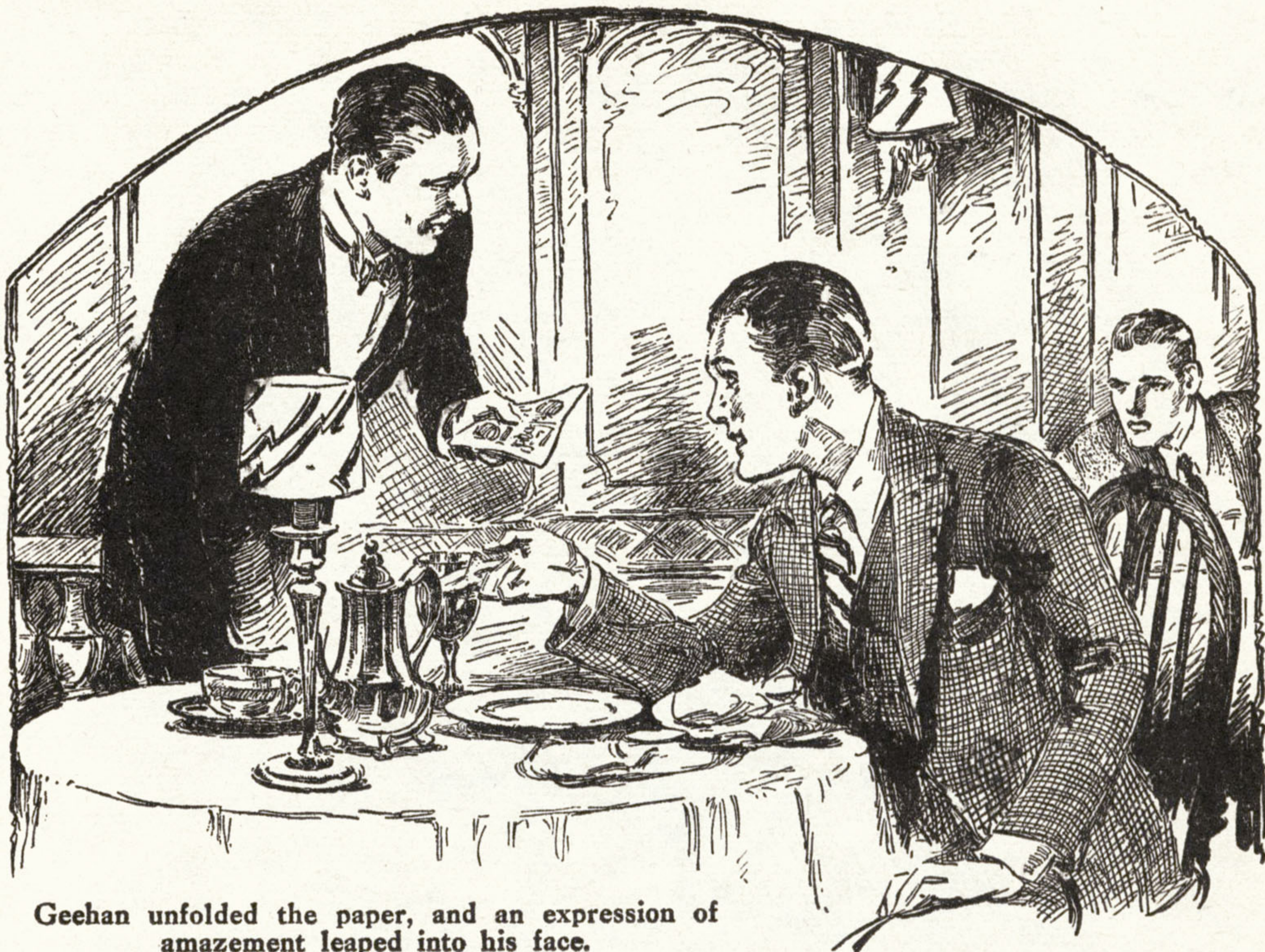
"Did you see him take anything from Mr. Gavin's pockets?"

Malone started. "No, sir! No, I didn't. I wasn't looking for things like that. I had seen a dead man once, and I knew Mr. Gavin was dead the minute I touched him. It—well, sir, it scared me a lot."

Carter nodded and rose. "I don't blame you, Malone. That's all, thanks."

HE returned to the city, thoughtfully enough. There might have been no robbery after all, then—except for one point that worried him, in the boy's story. Mrs. Gavin had found the empty watch-case herself. The certificate might have been taken by one of the servants, for Gavin had flourished it around among them all, enjoying his little jest.

For the rest of the day, and that following, he contented himself with a thorough and unhurried investigation of the Gavin domestic staff, but said nothing to anyone about his findings. Also, he spent much time over the map of the



Geehan unfolded the paper, and an expression of amazement leaped into his face.

West Franklin course, after discovering that the sixth tee was close to the dense patch of rough and brush where the rifle had been discovered.

And that rifle had been proved to have fired the death-shot; but all endeavor to trace it to any owner had failed signally.

On the conventional third day, Gavin was buried. Carter attended the funeral, which, as a plain-clothes man observed to him, did not begin to have the pomp and circumstance of Louie the Lip's burial favors. Carter gathered that SS. Simon and Jude, looking down from their high stained-glass perch, must be distinctly disappointed.

Mrs. Gavin was quite hidden beneath her heavy veil, which thus served its exact purpose. She was still in a state of semi-collapse, and was physically supported at the ceremony by Gavin's nephew. Carter regarded Hollister curiously. A young man, well-groomed, his carriage was firm and erect, his features were strong, vigorous, massive. Black hair, dark eyes, heavy brows. No nervousness, thought Carter; well poised, and a hard man to work upwind from, if he were being hunted.

Watching closely, Carter saw that Hollister did not glance at the woman who clung to his arm, drooping beneath

her veil; he gained the impression that this clinging was distasteful to the man. Then they passed from his range of vision.

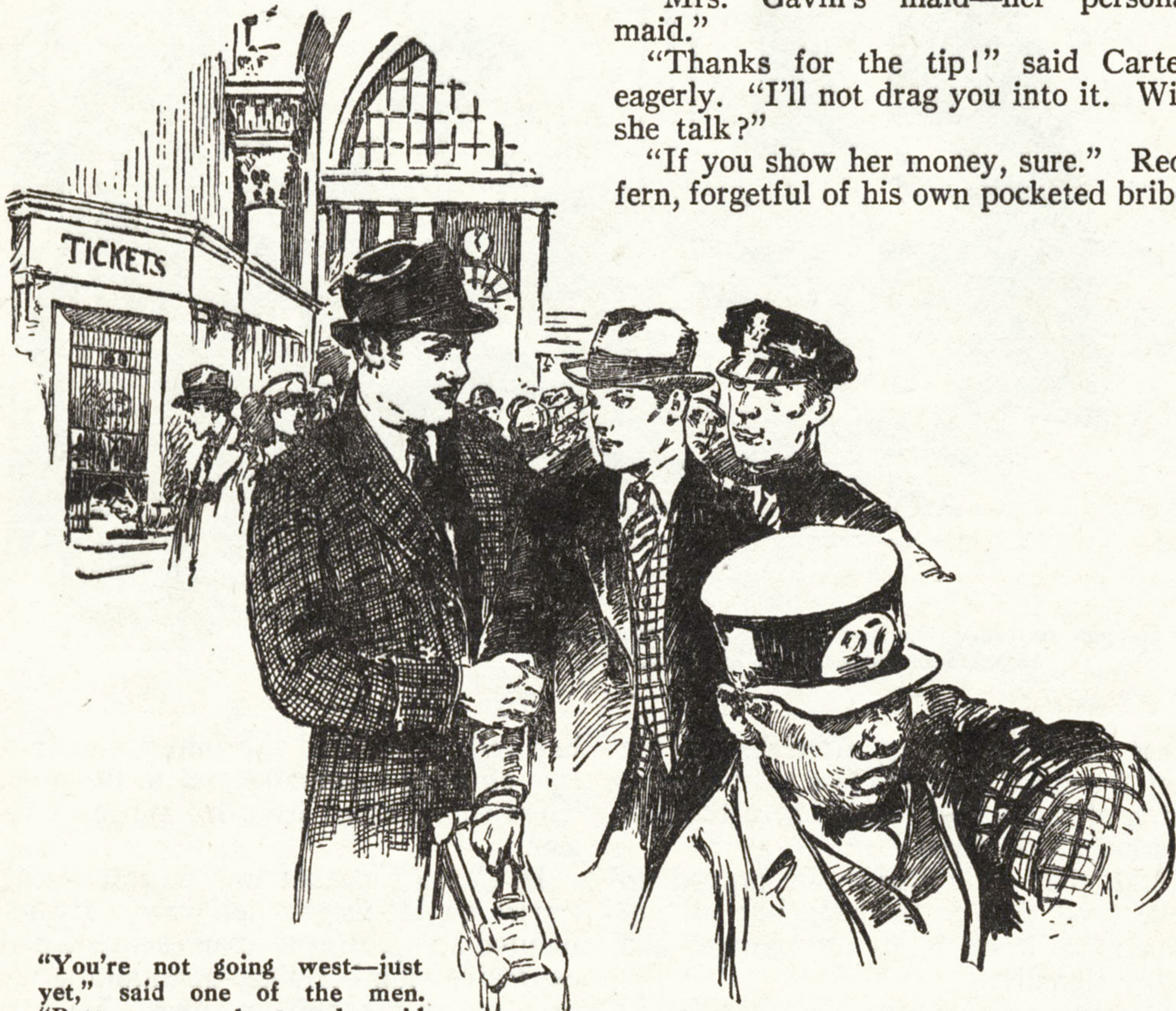
In Carter's pocket was an interesting report on Hollister's activities. He inhabited an apartment in an exclusive and expensive club building, maintaining his own car and chauffeur there. He had been on friendly, even intimate, terms with his uncle for years past, and dined with the Gavins on an average of twice a week. Within the past month Hollister had lost heavily in the market, had drifted about town and indulged in a good deal of drinking.

CARTER rose from his pew at the rear of the church and departed. Outside, he sauntered along the line of cars waiting behind the hearse. Chauffeurs stood about in groups, smoking and chatting. Carter stopped beside a large car whose chauffeur reclined behind the wheel, absorbed in the pages of a magazine, and with quick interest, Carter noted that it was a publication devoted exclusively to society and fashion.

As the chauffeur divined his presence and glanced up, Carter nodded pleasantly and threw back his coat to give a scant glimpse of his police badge.

"Reporter from the *Herald*," he said.

"You're Mr. Hollister's chauffeur, aren't you? I'd like to get hold of some information, if you'd care to earn a ten-spot. Nothing to affect your job, of course. What say?"



"You're not going west—just yet," said one of the men. "Better come along and avoid a scene."

"Yeah?" The chauffeur, named Redfern, was young, with powerful but pleasing features, and he surveyed Carter smilingly. "It doesn't worry my job. I'm quitting tomorrow, so shoot ahead with your questions."

"Retiring on your income?" asked Carter whimsically.

"Not much. I'm going back to Kansas where I came from. Going into business. Well, what do you want to know?"

Carter produced and handed over the promised ten-dollar note.

"I'm merely running down a few rumors," he said. "Your boss was on pretty good terms with his uncle, wasn't he?"

"I've always thought so, sure, until their row on Sunday night."

"A quarrel?"

Redfern shook his head. "You can't

drag me into it, partner. I only know what Sally told me. I didn't hear or see a thing myself. She said they had a whacking row about the boss owing a lot of money at Geehan's club."

"Who's Sally?"

"Mrs. Gavin's maid—her personal maid."

"Thanks for the tip!" said Carter eagerly. "I'll not drag you into it. Will she talk?"

"If you show her money, sure." Redfern, forgetful of his own pocketed bribe,

showed his contempt by a grimace. "That girl is the original gold-digger! She sure chisels it out of the Gavins, too."

"When is her night off?"

"Saturday—tonight. There's some talk of closing the house, though."

"Oh! Mrs. Gavin's going away, is she?"

"Search me," said Redfern, closing up suddenly. He picked up his magazine. Carter glanced at it again, nodded farewell, and sauntered away. He knew just where and when to find Sally McAfee if he wanted her. . . . Something else intervened, however.

When he came to a corner news-stand, Carter bought a copy of Redfern's magazine, and turned to the page Redfern had been perusing with such absorbed attention. It was devoted to an illustrated article on "What the Well-dressed

Man Will Wear After Six." A note gave the name of a fashionable and expensive tailor on Fifth Avenue who would cheerfully furnish the requisite garments for the well-dressed man to wear after six. As the tailor in question was only a few blocks uptown, Carter gained the Avenue and was presently speaking with the proprietor of the establishment, after properly identifying himself.

"Yes, Mr. Carter," said the tailor, after obtaining the order cards from his assistants, "I see that Charles Redfern was in on Tuesday, and again on Friday, yesterday, for a fitting. He was measured for the usual correct evening clothes, also for several sack suits, four in all."

"To be delivered in the city?"

"No, to be sent to him in Big Bend, Kansas."

Carter met the eye of the tailor, who returned his whimsical smile.

"I don't know Big Bend, Kansas," observed Carter, "but it is possible that one should wear only the correct thing there. How was payment made?"

"By check on the Chase Provincial."

The Chase Provincial, less than a block away, was closed to the public, but not to the police. Within twenty minutes Carter found that Redfern had a balance there of over eight thousand dollars, seven thousand of which had been deposited, in cash, on Thursday morning.

He went home thinking hard. There was nothing criminal in a chauffeur giving up his job and going back to Kansas with an outfit of the most expensive clothes for the proper social occasions. There was nothing very strange in the fact that Redfern had carried a lost bag of golf-clubs to the sixth tee on Wednesday morning. And there was nothing sinister in Redfern's deposit of seven thousand in cash on the morning after the murder. The coincidence, however, caused Carter to investigate Pullman reservations; he found that Redfern had taken a section on the Sunday night fast train for St. Louis.

THERE remained Sally McAfee—and Hollister. Calling up Geehan's club, a rather brazen establishment in the late Forties patronized by the edge of society, conducted by the ex-pugilist Geehan, Carter reserved a table for that evening. He knew that Hollister had not gone there since Gavin's murder, having been kept busy with the funeral

arrangements—and if Hollister did what he expected him to do, Carter intended to be on hand. This arranged, he set off at once for the boarding-house where Sally McAfee was to be found.

LUCK, he decided, was with him this day as seldom before; so much good fortune made him a trifle wary. For Miss McAfee was at home, and descended to the parlor at once to see him—a small woman, with sharp and pinched features. Her heavy-lidded eyes were closely set, but despite their shrewd gaze her manner was pleasant. Carter introduced himself as a newspaper man, with a flash of his badge.

"I was just wondering, Miss McAfee," he said, with his whimsical smile, "whether I could get any angle on the Gavin affair which might make a follow-up story. Without quoting you, of course. And I have a good expense account. It would be worth a ten-spot if I could pick up anything."

"Not to me," she said promptly.

"Twenty-five, then. I've heard rumors—though there may be nothing to them—about a quarrel between Gavin and his nephew."

She nodded silently, and Carter produced the money. She relaxed in her chair.

"There was a quarrel Sunday night," she said calmly. "Quite an angry one, too. Mr. Hollister owed a lot of money to Geehan's club, and Geehan had spoken to Mr. Gavin about the matter. I don't recall the details, except that Mr. Gavin was very angry and said his nephew was disgracing them all."

"And was he disgracing them, in your personal opinion?"

"He wasn't far from it," she said, an edge to her voice. "There was a lot of talk going on about him, how he was drinking and cutting up generally. Anyone could tell you that."

"I understand Mrs. Gavin is leaving the city shortly?"

"Not to my knowledge. I think she's staying here for the winter."

"Oh! I understood she was leaving immediately."

"Must be a mistake," came the firm response. "They have a place at Santa Barbara, but I don't think that'll be opened now. I'm sure I don't know her plans."

"Were Mr. Hollister's rather fast doings common talk—outside the family, I mean?"

"Oh, sure! Why, everybody—well," Miss McAfee checked herself, "I only know what's said in the family, of course."

Carter rose and smilingly took his departure.

"I don't think," he said to himself, "that my twenty-five dollars has been altogether wasted! But we'll see."

CARTER went early to the Tourist club. He disliked to dine in a hurry, so when he had dressed, he went straight to the club and ordered dinner. He rejected the table reserved for him, and chose another at the edge of the balcony, where there were only a dozen tables in all. Thus he could overlook the dance-floor below, and the tables surrounding it.

As he was wont to say, there were various methods of hunting. One could use a gun or a camera, a horse or an automobile, or even bow and arrow on occasion. Also, one might hunt for pelts, for food, for mere savage sport of killing, or for scientific purposes. His rather whimsical observations usually fell upon deaf ears, but he went his own chosen way regardless, and did very much as he pleased. If his methods and practices frequently horrified Commissioner Drummond, the results he invariably obtained were gratifying.

He observed Geehan, the ex-pugilist, with attention. Geehan stalked about the floor, went from table to table, greeted guests, sat down for an occasional drink; his attire was faultless, and his heavy-jawed features could be very amiable or scowling and menacing. Carter concluded that the man had no diplomacy whatever, no nicety in what he did or said, but ruled his robbers' roost with a jovial brutality that appealed to the fringes of society—those hapless fringes possessed of much money and pose, but not daring to own frank simplicity.

Carter dined at leisure and with discrimination. It was after nine when his table was cleared and he lighted a cigar, leaning back comfortably and looking down on the opening number of the floor entertainment.

"Tell Geehan I want to see him," said a level, controlled, cultured voice. "And sharp about it, Tim! I'll not be here any too long."

Carter turned and saw Hollister passing by his table, to another at the opposite side of the balcony.

Hollister sat down, took out a pocket flask openly, and mixed a drink. He appeared to be entirely at his ease. He would not have appeared on the floor, of course; Carter congratulated himself on his own acuity of reasoning. Gavin was buried, and Hollister had come straight here, but without any ostentation.

Presently Geehan appeared on the balcony and strode over to Hollister's table. Hollister glanced up, smiling a little, and nodded. Geehan drew out a chair, sat down, leaned over the table, talking rapidly; the man's heavy features were cordial, friendly. Hollister gave him a long, half-smiling look, and shrugged. He appeared to make Geehan some proposal, to which the ex-bruiser assented. With a careless gesture, Hollister took a folded paper from his pocket and handed it to the other.

Geehan unfolded it, looked at it; an expression of the most intense amazement leaped into his face. He looked up at Hollister, who watched him with quiet amusement; then he broke into irritable speech and thrust the paper back. Carter could guess that Hollister had offered to pay his debts, if Geehan could make change—and had produced the million-dollar certificate. Hollister shrugged again, pocketed the paper, chuckled at Geehan. The latter broke into a laugh, rose, and slapped Hollister on the shoulder, quite obviously telling him that his credit was good indefinitely. Then he strode away.

AFTER a moment Carter rose, puffed at his cigar, and sauntered over to Hollister's table.

"Beg pardon," he said. "You're Mr. Hollister, I think. My name's Carter—Anderson Carter. I'd be glad of a little chat with you."

Hollister rose. "Eh? Not the Anderson Carter who made that African lion film?"

Carter admitted the impeachment and shook hands, and Hollister's eyes twinkled.

"I'm frightfully glad to meet you, Carter! I've seen that film several times, and it's a marvel. Have a drink?"

"Thanks, no." Carter dropped into a chair. "You may not be so glad to meet me when I tell you that I'm a detective. Here's my badge to prove it."

Hollister was shocked into immobility by sight of the badge and by Carter's gaze. He froze a little.



The man started violently. "Damn it!" he exclaimed. "There was only one cartridge!"

"A detective! Is this some joke?"

"Unfortunately, no," said Carter amiably.

"I didn't know detectives were gentlemen, outside of stories," said Hollister.

"Thank you for the compliment," Carter smiled. "It's necessary for me to talk with you. I want certain information, and the best way to get it from a man like you is to come straight out with everything. Such, at least, is my premise."

"Thank you, in turn." Hollister's eyes searched him gravely, curiously. "And to what do I owe your interest in me?"

"To a portrait," said Carter. "A rather handsomely engraved portrait of William Harris Crawford, who was Secretary of the Treasury over a hundred years ago."

Hollister's jaw hardened for an instant. "So that's it!" he murmured.

"That's it," said Carter quietly. "I believe the number is three-eight-two. Right?"

Hollister nodded. "Right." He met Carter's gaze with challenging, defiant eyes. "You mean that—that you want to arrest me?"

Carter smiled and knocked the ash from his cigar.

"If I meant that, I'd have said it. Let me see the certificate, if you please."

Without demur, Hollister drew the folded paper from his pocket. Carter opened it and regarded it with curiosity. Except for its bald spot, the vigorous features of the portrait looked curiously like those of Hollister, and Carter commented on the fact. Hollister nodded.

"Yes, that's why my uncle— But see here, Carter! This is no place to talk. Suppose you come home with me. That is, unless you wanted to take me—with you."

Apprehension flashed in his eyes. Carter shook his head.

"By all means. I'd like to have a look about your place, to be quite frank. My car's waiting, if I may drive you. Shall I keep this temporarily?"

Hollister glanced at the million-dollar certificate, and nodded as he rose. "Right," he said. "I'll dismiss my car."

THEY drove in silence to the club apartments where Hollister resided, and Carter accompanied his host to a very cozy and luxurious apartment on the eighteenth floor.

"Make yourself comfortable," said Hollister. "I'll just make sure Redfern

hasn't come back—he acts as my man generally, and my chauffeur as needed.”

He disappeared, and returned a moment later, producing a box of excellent cigars, and dropping into an armchair.

“Now fire away,” he said cheerfully. “You're sure you're not going to arrest me for the theft of that certificate?”

Carter smiled. “No. There's nothing to prove theft, you know. Mrs. Gavin wanted it looked up, and I took for granted you had it.”

A bitter expression flashed into Hollister's face.

“Yes, she would—the damned cat!” he exclaimed. “I suppose the truth is that she accused me of taking it?”

Carter reflected. “To the best of my knowledge, she did not. I jumped to the conclusion that you might have taken it from your uncle's pocket as he lay in your arms.”

HOLLISTER'S face darkened with a rush of blood. For an instant he stiffened, then relaxed.

“Oh, well, no use being angry about it, I suppose,” he said. “After all, you might have been justified in such a theory. In reality, my uncle handed me the note that morning before we reached the golf club. He commented on the general resemblance of my features to those of Crawford, and told me to flash the certificate on his banker friends—showing them my face on a million-dollar bill. I suppose that doesn't sound very plausible, eh?”

Carter puffed at his cigar. “It might not sound plausible to say that a common old barnyard variety of ox could horn and stamp the life out of an active and hungry male lion, but I've seen it done,” he returned. “Now let me go into some intimate relations, Mr. Hollister. You are not friendly with Mrs. Gavin?”

“Friendly? Yes.” Hollister shrugged. “I don't think much of her, but we're friendly. Under the surface, I imagine she guesses how I feel.”

“Yes? She would resent contempt, eh? Is that her picture?”

Hollister reached over and lifted a silver-framed photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Gavin. Carter studied it; the smiling magnate stood with an arm about the shoulders of his wife, a slender, pretty woman. She was obviously much younger than he.

“Hm! I should judge,” said Carter, “that Mrs. Gavin has some good quali-

ties? She's certainly not a weak person.”

Hollister smiled. “Many good qualities, Mr. Carter. No, if she'd been weak, my uncle wouldn't have fallen in love with her.”

“They were a devoted couple, I understand.”

Hollister hesitated. “Yes, I believe they were, to be honest about it,” he rejoined.

“Did you have any quarrel with your uncle on Sunday night?”

This abrupt question startled Hollister. He gave Carter a sharp look.

“An argument, yes. A quarrel, no. He objected to my throwing away-money at night-clubs, as he termed it. Who told you about it?”

Carter did not reply. He glanced about the library and den in which they were sitting, and then, negligently, asked the question burning at his lips.

“Was Gavin carrying the certificate loose in his pocket when he gave it to you?”

“No,” said Hollister. “He carried it in the case of an old gold watch, crumpling it up considerably. He said that was safer. The watch-case was fastened to his key-chain.”

“This was before he left home, eh?”

“No,” said Hollister. “In the car. I picked him up with my car, you see. It was on the way out to the club.”

CARTER was thunderstruck, but gave no sign of it. Hollister did not know, of course, that Mrs. Gavin had herself found that watch-case and key-chain on her own dresser, where Gavin must have put it before leaving home.

“Then Gavin had the chain and watch-case when he was killed, eh?”

“I suppose so,” said Hollister.

“And why didn't you return the million dollars to Mrs. Gavin?”

Hollister flushed slightly. “I honestly forgot, until Wednesday night. Then she had gone to pieces—was badly broken up. I didn't see her again till the funeral today. I was kept busy with the arrangements. I wanted to flash the note on Geehan and one or two others. I was a fool, eh?”

“Yes,” agreed Carter. “And since I'm walking off with that certificate, let me identify myself to you. Anyone could flash a badge, you know.”

Hollister had never thought of this, to his chagrin. Carter made his identity plain, then rose and shook hands.

"I don't want you to go out of town tomorrow," he said frankly. "And I do want you to come down to Headquarters at ten Monday morning. Agreed?"

"Eh? Yes, if you put it that way," said Hollister uneasily. "But I was going up to Westchester in the morning—"

"Don't go," said Carter quietly. Hollister shrugged and assented, with a laugh.

When Carter climbed under the wheel of his car and headed for home, he whistled softly.

"Did Hollister tell the truth about the watch-case? I wonder! Or did he pay Redfern a few thousand dollars for services rendered? That bag of golf-clubs might have contained a rifle as well. That reminds me—I've not had any report on that rifle!"

Reaching home, he got into touch with the experts at Headquarters. The expert who had the matter in hand presently was on the line.

"We're up against trouble on that rifle, Carter," he replied. "Evidently it had been wiped clean. The prints on it were those of the two dicks who found it. We located just one other print, a thumb-mark, but there's not a chance of identifying it unless we had some possible clue."

"I'll give you that," said Carter. "Try Spike Ceorini. He's something of a racketeer, I believe; was brought in on suspicion in the Macdougall Street murders six months ago, but was released. You should have his prints on file. Look 'em up and call me back at once."

He waited. There was one thing that puzzled him, and that was the fact that Hollister claimed Gavin had the key-chain and watch-case on the way to the golf club—yet Mrs. Gavin had found it at home. Hollister might, perhaps, have been mistaken; or might have lied.

THE telephone summoned him. It was Headquarters again.

"O. K., Carter!" came the exultant response. "You sure hit it right. The thumb-print checks up with that of Ceorini. Want him brought in?"

"First thing in the morning. Bring him in and hold him—and get his laundry. Look for the handkerchief that wiped the rifle. Get me? And I want two men put on to one Charles Redfern, chauffeur for Hollister. He has a reservation to leave for St. Louis tomorrow night at six, but may slip away before then. If he does, grab him."

Assured that this order would go through, Carter hung up. Then he completed his unfinished thought about Hollister.

"Or," he reflected, "Hollister might have replaced the chain and watch-case on the dresser after taking the certificate! Who knows?"

AT six o'clock on Sunday evening, Charles Redfern, no longer in chauffeur's uniform but wearing a distinctly Fifth Avenue sack suit, walked toward the gates of the Pennsylvania Station, with just five minutes to make the westbound "cannonball." A porter, heavily laden with bags, preceded him. As Redfern presented his tickets, a group of men appeared suddenly and closed around.

"You're not going west—just yet," said one. "Better come along and avoid a scene."

Redfern protested violently, then calmed down and resigned himself to the inevitable.

Fifteen minutes later he was led into an office at Headquarters where Carter and Commissioner Drummond sat awaiting him. Carter occupied the desk, a number of papers before him. Redfern started slightly with recognition, then took the chair offered him.

"So we meet again, eh?" said Carter pleasantly. "We have a few questions—"

"Am I under arrest or not?" demanded Redfern composedly.

"You are not. But we're not convinced that Mr. Gavin's death was accidental; and you're held as a material witness." Carter's tone was less pleasant now. "Kindly repeat what Miss McAfee told you about a quarrel between Mr. Hollister and his uncle, last Sunday night."

"I told you I didn't want to be dragged into it!" said Redfern.

"You're in it," snapped Drummond. "Talk!"

Sullenly, Redfern repeated what he had previously told Carter.

"Did you ever hear Mr. Hollister utter threats against his uncle?"

"No."

"Did you expect to wear a Fifth Avenue wardrobe in Big Bend, Redfern?"

"Why, yes," said Redfern slowly, surprised by the question. "Why not?"

"Why?" asked Carter.

"My old man has a shop there. I'm turning it into a classy haberdashery. I

want to show 'em how things should be done, and so forth."

"Yes? You've made a good deal of money in New York?"

"Some," said Redfern, eying his questioner.

"You made a bank deposit of seven thousand dollars in cash, on Thursday morning?"

"Yes."

"Where'd you get it?"

"I sold out some stocks on Monday—stocks Mr. Hollister had advised me about several months ago. The brokers got the money for me in cash. I got it Wednesday afternoon, too late for the bank."

"I see. The stocks in question? And the broker's name?"

Redfern gave them. . . . Drummond leaned over, his lips at Carter's ear.

"Want to ask about those golf-clubs? and whether—"

Carter shook his head. He was still in charge of the matter.

"No," he said under his breath. "If he shows where he got that money, he's in the clear." He raised his voice. "All right, Redfern. We'll ask you to wait a few moments and then give us a deposition; after which I expect you'll be free to hit for Big Bend and the haberdashery business. And I want to thank you for coming across so frankly. Hope the delay won't bother you. In the next room, please. Now for the boy, Commissioner."

Drummond nodded to one of the waiting officers, and Malone was brought into the room. He wet his lips, his eyes flickered around; then he took the chair facing Carter.

"Hello, Malone," said Carter, smiling. "Young fellow, we owe you a lot, only you don't know it. Remember telling me about that blood you got on your hand? Well, sir, that was the key to everything, and now we need a little more information you can give us. Just why had you any reason to think that something might happen to Mr. Gavin?"

Malone started. He had not expected this question.

"Why—he had heart trouble, sir," he answered. Fright leaped in his eyes.

"He did? Then you did think something might happen to him, did you?"

"Yes—yes sir," stammered Malone. "He might have a heart-attack."

Carter leaned back. "Malone," he said gravely, "you've held out on us, and you've been mighty close to real trou-

ble, in consequence. Now come clean with it all, and you'll come clear. I promise you that, understand? There's no charge against you. All we want is information—and if we get it, you're in the clear. Get me?"

"Yes sir," said Malone, twisting uneasily.

"Why didn't you say a word to anyone about slipping the key-ring and watch-case out of Mr. Gavin's pocket? That's how you got the blood on your hand, of course."

"Yes, sir." Malone swallowed hard, staring at Carter. "Why, sir—I was—I thought maybe they would think I'd stolen it. When it happened, I just did it. Afterward, I got scared about it."

"I see. And just why did you take it, if not to steal it?"

"Why, it was for Mrs. Gavin, sir."

An exclamation broke from Drummond, who leaned forward, staring. Malone met his hard gaze without flinching.

"Yes, that's true, I swear it!" he cried earnestly. "You see, he had all his keys on that ring. If he had a heart-attack, anybody might take those keys and make trouble, or they might get lost. But if I slipped them out and took care of them, and got them back to Mrs. Gavin, it was all right. It might mean a lot to her. It did, and she was glad to get them. She sent me twenty dollars."

"She did, eh?" Carter nodded. "We'll ask you a little later, not now, who she sent the money by. Go with this officer into the back of the room, Malone, and wait. You're O. K., young fellow."

THE two departed to the other end of the office, which was a large one, placing Malone beyond earshot of the desk. Drummond leaned forward.

"Carter, is this straight? Did Mrs. Gavin—"

"No," said Carter. "It was Malone's sister."

"Eh? But—"

"Bring in the McAfee woman. Drummond, you remember that boy's face? Now look at this woman's face when she comes in—the same heavy-lidded, closely set eyes! All I had to do was to run down her history."

Drummond snorted something and sat back. Sally McAfee was led in by a policewoman; and at sight of Carter, her eyes widened. He smiled at her amusedly.

"Well, well! We're old friends, eh? Your name, please?"

"You know it very well," she snapped. "Sally McAfee."

At this instant she caught sight of Malone, at the other side of the room, and her face changed. Carter chuckled.

"Oh! Sally McAfee, eh? When you were married and lost the name of Malone, six months ago, you didn't want to use an Italian name, eh? And when you got the job with Mrs. Gavin, you took McAfee, eh?"

"Married?" she exclaimed, fright darting into her eyes. "I'm not married!"

"All right, if you insist." Carter waved his hand. "You'll probably change your mind when we show you the registers and so forth. And your husband will certainly recognize you. Now, why did you tell your brother, over there, all that fairy-tale about the bad heart of Mr. Gavin, and the eagerness of Mrs. Gavin to get hold of the watch-case?"

"I didn't!" she flashed out. "I never mentioned the watch-case! It was—"

She checked herself. "It was the key-ring, eh?" said Carter. "Exactly. I suppose you were astonished when you found the watch-case empty, eh?"

Her lips pressed tightly together, she glared at him and remained silent.

"You won't talk? Then I will," went on Carter. "You see, we know the whole thing. We know how Mr. Gavin showed you the million-dollar certificate, at the same time he showed it to his wife and to the butler, let you hold it in your hands, look at it closely. And it set fire to you, didn't it? A million dollars, a million that anyone could have that found it! Just set fire to you, burned you up inside! And you knew that your brother was Mr. Gavin's favorite caddy. It was all made to order for you, wasn't it? If you could just make sure that Gavin would fall over at the right time, when Malone would reach him first! So you quizzed the boy, and discovered about the patch of rough and the thick brush just at that spot, within rifle-shot of three holes of the course—oh, we've learned all about it!"

Perspiration showed on the woman's face as she listened. Her eyes drove past Carter at the boy in the distant corner, and her lips curled.

"The damned rat! I might have known he'd spill everything!" she cried out. Then she pulled herself together and sat back in her chair.

"I've nothing to say," she went on, and her lips snapped shut.

"Bring in the lady's husband," said Carter. "And take the lady out."

She departed without protest. In the hall outside she passed Spike Cecorini, handcuffed between two officers—a dark, swarthy handsome fellow, his face sullen. He stared after her, but was jerked ahead before he could speak. Carter surveyed him for a moment.

"Well, Cecorini, you haven't talked, have you?" he said quietly. "You will now. We've got her. There's the boy yonder—as honest as she's crooked. And she's talked."

"You lie," snarled the man.

"Suit yourself," said Carter pleasantly. "But you didn't wipe all the fingerprints from that rifle. One remained—enough to hang you. And you forgot that the greasy cartridges you put into the magazine carried your fingerprints, and—"

The man started violently.

"Damn it!" he exclaimed. "There was only one cartridge; and—"

"Correct." Carter leaned back. "Take him back, officers. Charge him with Gavin's murder—and the woman, his wife, as an accomplice."

COMMISSIONER DRUMMOND leaned forward.

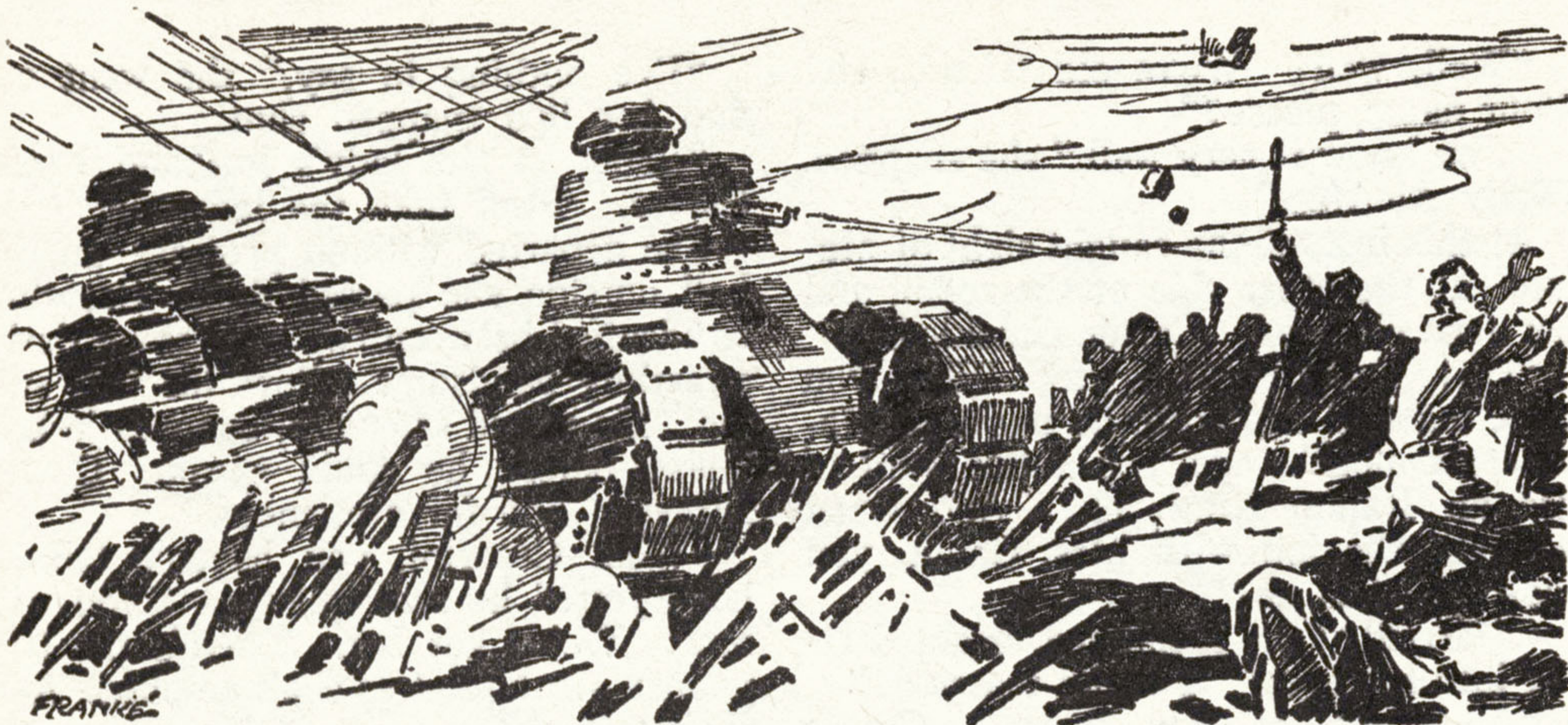
"Good work, Carter! So it was the woman who put the key-chain and watch-case on Mrs. Gavin's dresser, eh? But how did you know it?"

"That,"—and Carter grinned faintly,— "was like locating a lion in a thorn-patch. What you might call guess-work. And here, by the way, is the million-dollar certificate."

He laid it out on the desk, smoothed it, regarded it with a smile.

"You've been through a trying experience, Mr. William Harris Crawford," he addressed the imposing gentleman who looked up at him. "Certificate Number Three-eight-two, eh? I wonder, now, why nobody ever thought about your number? Certainly Gavin didn't—but if he'd done so, it might have saved him trouble. In this case, thirteen is sure one unlucky number for several people! Good-by, Mr. Crawford. I'd like to meet you again, as my property, and I'd take the chance on your unlucky number!"

And smiling, he rose to go home. So far as he was concerned, the case was finished.



When Worlds Collide

The Opening Chapters:

ONLY two tiny streaks upon a photographic plate—but to the scientists they announced terrific catastrophe; for they were pictures of two stranger stars hurtling out of space toward collision with this our world.

Professor Bronson in his South African observatory discovered them first. And when he had made repeated photographs and checked his calculations beyond risk of error, he entrusted the plates to a special messenger, the airmail pilot David Ransdell, who flew with them across the length of Africa and across to France to make connections with the express steamer *Europa* for New York.

There Ransdell delivered the precious plates to Cole Hendron of the American Electric and Power Corporation, recognized as the world's greatest physicist. And thus was born the League of the Last Days; for Hendron confirmed Bronson's observations and calculations; but in order to prevent world-wide panic and hysteria he at first gave out the news only to a selected group of the ablest scientists, the men best qualified to plan what—if anything—could be done to meet what seemed inevitable doom.

To one man who was not a scientist Hendron confided the facts: to that handsome and athletic young broker Tony Drake, who was deeply in love

By EDWIN BALMER

Illustrated by

with Hendron's lovely daughter Eve—and who saw with natural jealousy that Eve was attracted by the daring messenger from Africa, David Ransdell.

Later, when leaking rumors had compelled a preliminary public statement of the facts, Hendron confided in more detail to Tony:

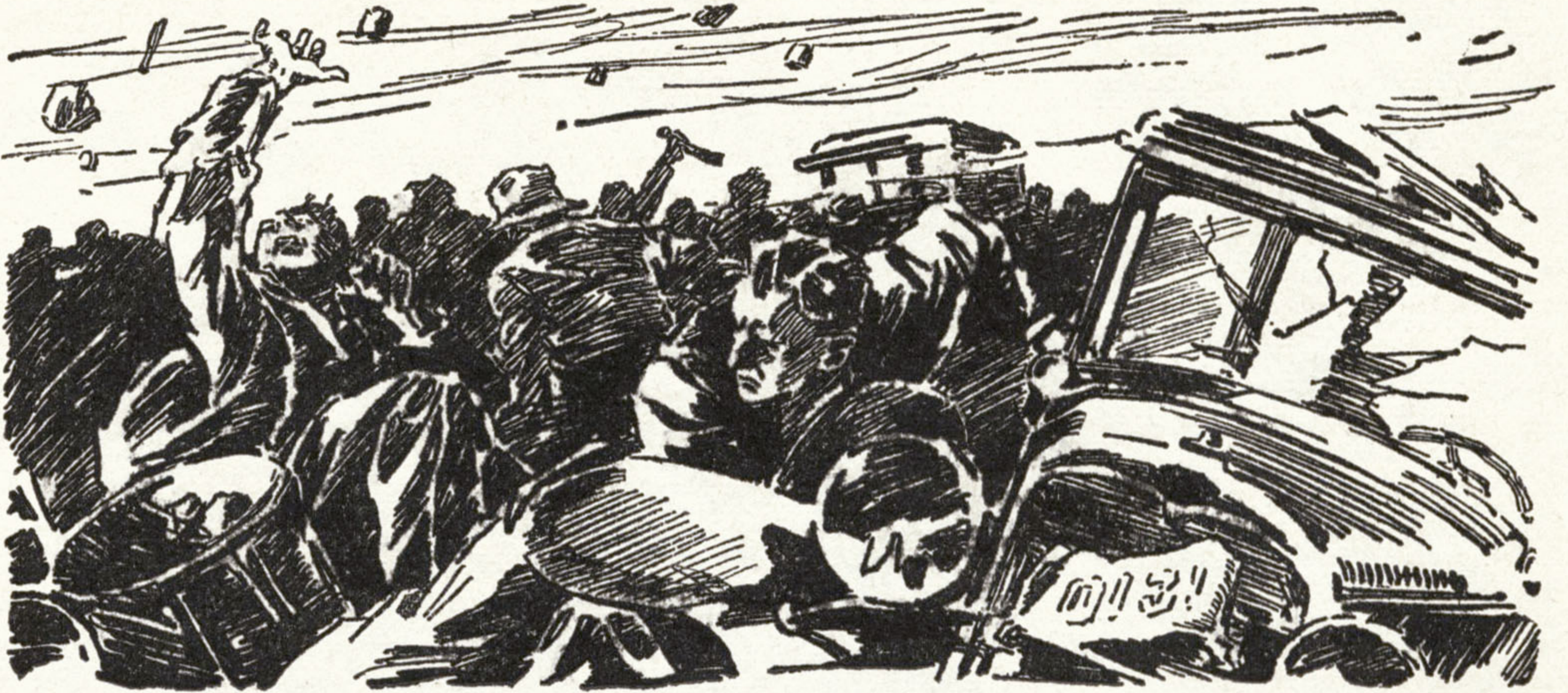
"Eve says she has told you what that result is to be," he said.

"Yes," said Tony, "she told me."

"And I told these men who demanded—ordered me—to explain to them everything we had. I told them that those specks were moving so that they would enter our solar system, and one of them would then come into collision with our world. They said, all right.

"You see, it really meant nothing to them originally; it stirred only a sort of excitement to close the Exchange and give everybody a hilarious holiday.

"Then I told them that, before the encounter, both of these moving bodies—Bronson Alpha and Bronson Beta—would first pass us close by and cause tides that would rise six hundred feet over us, from New York to San Francisco—and, of course, London and Paris and all sea-coasts everywhere.



The tremendous story of two stranger stars that spin out of space—one to destroy this world, one to offer asylum to the intrepid few who venture a desperate voyage.

and PHILIP WYLIE

Joseph Franké

"They began to oppose that, because they could understand it. I told them that the passing of the Bronson bodies would cause earthquakes on a scale unimaginable; half the inland cities would be shaken down, and the effect below the crust would set volcanoes into activity everywhere, as never since the world began. I said, perhaps a fifth of the people would survive the first passing of the Bronson bodies. I tried to point out some of the areas on the surface of the earth which would be comparatively safe.

"I could not designate New York or Philadelphia or Boston. . . . They told me that tomorrow I must make a more reassuring statement."

Cole Hendron gazed down again at his plates.

"I suppose, after all, it doesn't make much difference whether or not we succeed in moving a few million more people into the safer areas. They will be safe for only eight months more, in any case. For eight months later, we meet Bronson Beta on the other side of the sun. And no one on earth will escape.

"But there is a chance that a few individuals may leave the earth and live. I am not a religious man, as you know,

Tony; but as Eve said to you, it seems that it cannot be mere chance that there comes to us, out of space, not merely the sphere that will destroy us, but that ahead of it there spins a world like our own which some of us—*some* of us—may reach and be safe." (*The story continues in detail.*)

TONY took Dave Ransdell home with him. The South African wanted to "see" New York.

They awoke late; or at least Tony did, and for a few moments lay contentedly lazy, without recollection of the amazing developments of the day that was past.

Only a vague uneasiness warned him that, when he finally roused, it would be to some sort of trouble. Tony, being a healthy and highly vigorous young man, had drowsed through such semi-recollections before. . . . He had fought with and "put out" another policeman, perhaps? Tony became able to recollect "showing" some one the city; but who?

Now Tony could visualize him—a tanned, quiet-humored, solid chap who could look out for himself anywhere. And girls liked him; but he was wary, even if he hadn't been to New York before. Even if he did come from South Africa!

There, Tony had it! Dave Ransdell, the Pretoria flyer, who had brought



The two of them together against all the world—even against the end of the world, against utter annihilation!

the plates of the sky from Capetown to New York. Why? Because there were two little specks on those plates of the southern skies, which meant that two strange planetary bodies were approaching the earth—to wipe it out!

That was the trouble Tony had to remember when he fully awoke. It wasn't that he'd knocked another policeman for a goal. It was that—that this room, and the bed, and the chair, everything outside, everywhere and everyone, including you yourself, were simply going to cease to exist after a while. After a very definite and limited time, indeed, though the exact period he did not know.

Eve had refused to tell him; and so had Dr. Hendron. No; the exact amount of time left for everyone on the world, the members of the League of the Last Days would not yet impart.

Tony stirred; and Kyto, hearing him, came in and began to draw his bath.

"All right, Kyto; never mind," Tony

greeted him. "I'll take a shower this morning. Is Mr. Ransdell up?"

"Oh, entirely!"

"Has he had breakfast yet, Kyto?"

"Only one."

"You mean?"

"He said he would have a little now—that was an hour ago—and finish breakfast with you."

"Oh. All right. I'll hurry." And Tony did so, but forgetting Ransdell, mostly, for his thinking of Eve.

To have held her close to him, to have caught her against him while she clung to him, her lips on his—and then to be forbidden her! To be finally and completely forbidden to love her!

Tony arose defiantly. Last night he had been rebellious; this morning he was only more so. Never had he known or dreamed of such dear delight as when he had claimed her lithe body with his arms, and she had clung to him; the two of them together against all the world—even against the end of all the world, against the utter annihilation!

It was, he realized now, the terror of the approaching destruction which had thrown her so unquestioningly into his arms. Who could stand alone and look at doom? All nature, every instinct and impulse, opposed loneliness in danger. The first law of living things is self-perpetuation. Save yourself; and when you cannot, preserve your kind! Mate and beget—or give birth—before you die!

Nothing less elemental, less overwhelming, than this threw Eve Hendron and Tony Drake together; and no joy compared with the result. What had he heard said, that he understood now: "There is no happiness like that snatched under the shadow of the sword!"

But her father forbade that joy. He not only forbade it, but denied its further possibility for them. And her father controlled her, not merely as her father, but as a leader of this strange society, the uncanny power of which Tony Drake was just beginning to feel: The League of the Last Days!

A pledged and sworn circle of men, first in science all over the world, who devoted themselves to their purposes with a sternness and a discipline that recalled the steadfastness of the early Christians, who submitted to any martyrdom to found the Church. They demanded and commanded a complete allegiance. To this tyrannical society Eve was sworn; and when Cole Hen-

dron had spoken to her, he commanded her and forbade not only as her father but as her captain in the League of the Last Days. . . .

Tony found Ransdell at a window of the living-room. The morning paper was spread over a table.

"Hello," said Tony. "Hear you've been up awhile. You've altogether too many good habits."

The South African smiled pleasantly. "I'll need more than I have for a starter, if I'm joining the League of the Last Days," he observed.

"Then you've decided to?" asked Tony. It was one of the topics they'd discussed last night.

"Yes. The New York chapter, for choice."

"You're not going back to Capetown?"

"No. Headquarters will be here—or wherever Dr. Hendron is."

"That's good," said Tony, and glanced toward the paper, but did not pick it up. "Any special developments anywhere?"

"Apparently a rather unanimous opinion that yesterday's announcement may be wrong."

"Hendron said there'd be general reaction. When you think of yesterday, you'd see there'd have to be."

AND Tony took the paper to the breakfast-table, where Ransdell joined him for another cup of coffee.

The two young men, of widely differing natures and background and training, sipped their coffee and glanced at each other across the table.

"Well," questioned Tony at last, "want to tell me how you really feel?"

"Funny," confessed the South African. "I bring up the final proof that the world's going to end; and on the trip find the dear old footstool a pleasanter place for me than I ever figured before it might be. . . ."

"To mention the minor matters first," Ransdell continued in his engagingly frank and outright way, "I've never lived like this even for a day. I've never been valeted before."

Tony smiled. "That reminds me; wonder if they'll let Kyto into the League?"

"Not as our valet, I'm afraid," the South African said. "I hope you permit me the 'our' for the duration of my stay. I do fancy living like this, I must admit. I'll also tell you that I appreciate very much just being around where Miss Hendron is. I didn't know

there really was a girl like her anywhere in the world."

"Which is going to end, we must remember," Tony warned him. "Every time we mention the world, we must remember it is going to end."

"Will you permit me, then, a particularly personal remark?" inquired the South African.

"Shoot," said Tony.

"It is—that if I were in your place, I wouldn't particularly care what happened."

"My place, you mean, with—"

"With Miss Hendron. In other words, I heartily congratulate you."

"You don't know what you're talking about," said Tony—too brusquely, and realized it. "I beg your pardon. I mean, I thank you. . . . The Stock Exchange, I see, is going to be open today. In fact, it undoubtedly is open now; and I am not at my office watching the ticker and buying A. T. and T. on a scale down, and selling X—that's United States Steel—whenever it rises half a point, for somebody who wants to go short from lack of faith in the future. —What am I talking about? Where is the future? What's happened to it?"

"It seems to have regained its feet a bit today."

"Yes. The stock market is open. . . . There's the phone—probably my office. Mr. Balcom wants my personal advice after my last talk with Cole Hendron. I'm out or asleep, and you won't disturb me. You have my permission to put me into a coma—anything. . . . I ought to have said to you, Ransdell, I'm glad you're staying on. Stay on right here with me, if you like.

"There's no sense in my going to the office. There's no sense in anything on the world, now, but preparing and perfecting the Space Ship which—besides watching the stars—has been the business of the best brains in the League of the Last Days."

"How far have they got?"

"Not near far enough; but of course there's no mother to invention like necessity. And necessity seems to be distinctly visible—at least through a telescope—now."

TONY went downtown; he visited his office. Habit held him, as it was holding most of the hundreds of millions of humans in the world this day. Habit—and reaction.

What was threatened, could not be! If Cole Hendron and his brother-scientists refused, there were plenty of other people to put out reassuring statements; and the dwellers on the rim of the world regained much of their assurance. The President of the United States pointed out that, at worst, the sixty scientists had merely suggested disturbances of importance; and he predicted that if they occurred, they would be less than was now feared.

PROFESSOR COPLEY, known to Tony as a friend of Cole Hendron's, called at the office.

"I've some things to sell," he said, plucking the *pince-nez* from the center of his ruddy, cheerful face. "When do you think you can get me the most for them?"

And he laid down upon Tony's desk an envelope full of stock certificates. "I'm just back from Peru," he explained, "where I have been watching the progress of the Bronson bodies. Hendron tells me that you know the whole truth about them."

"It is the truth, then?" asked Tony.

"Do you mean, do I agree? Do you agree that the sun will rise tomorrow morning?" Professor Copley returned. "My dear friend, the Bronson bodies move from the effect of the same forces."

"But," pursued Tony, "exactly what do you think will happen to us?"

"What will happen," retorted Professor Copley, cheerfully enough, "if you toss a walnut in front of an eighteen-inch gun at the instant the shell comes out? The result, I should say, would be quite decisive and entirely final. So, I say, sell my stocks. My family, and my personal responsibilities, consist of only my wife and myself; there are many things we have desired to do which we have sacrificed in exchange for a certain security in the future. There being no future, why not start doing what we want immediately?—if now is the day to sell."

"Your guess on that," said Tony, "will be as good as mine. Today is better than yesterday; tomorrow the market may be nearer normal again—or there may be none at all. How do you find that people are taking it?"

"Superficially, today they deny; but they have had a terrible shock. Shock—that's the first effect. Bound to be. Afterward—they'll behave according to their separate natures. But now they re-

act in denials, because they cannot bear the shock.

"All over the world! Some are standing in the Place de l'Opéra in Paris, hour after hour, I hear, silent for the most part, incredulous, numb. These are the few that are too intelligent merely to deny and reject, too stunned to substitute a sudden end of everything for the prospect of years ahead for which they scrimped and saved.

"In Berlin there are similar groups. And imagine the reaction in Red Square, my friend! Imagine the Russians trying to realize that their revolution, their savage effort to remodel themselves and their inner nature, has gone for nothing. All wasted! It will be knocked aside by a mere pebble—a grain of sand sifting through the cosmos on an errand of its own. Knocked aside and annihilated, as if no Russian had ever lived! It is stupendous! Imagine being Stalin tonight, my friend. What horror! What humor! What merciless depths of tragedy!

"Imagine the haughty Mussolini, when he finds that the secret he could not exhort from his iron-souled men of learning is the secret of Fascism's vanity. Vanity of vanities! All, in the end, is vanity! Dust!

"He has juttied out his chin and lifted his hand in salute to his Black Shirts, mouthed his ringing sentences, and defied anyone or anything to stay him; and behold! Ten billion, billion, billion miles away some trifling approach of stars made unstable the orbits of a couple of planets and sent them out into space so long ago that Mussolini's ancestors were not yet hairy apes—and now they appear to confound him. Imagine our President trying to decry, now, this! Ah, I could weep. But I do not. Instead—I laugh. I laugh because few men—but some—some—some, my friend—even in the face of this colossal ignominy of fate, go on and on through the night, burning out their brains yet in the endeavor to guide their own destinies. What a gesture! But today—what appalling shock! And afterward—what a scene! When the world—the fifteen hundred millions of human beings realize, all of them, that nothing can save them, and they cannot possibly save themselves. What a scene! I hope to be spared for it. Meanwhile, sell my stocks for the best prices you can obtain, please; for my wife and I—we have saved for a long time, and denied ourselves too much."

DOOMSDAY!



“What appalling shock—what a scene—when human beings realize that nothing can save them, and they cannot possibly save themselves!”

In a taxi later in the day, Tony found the street suddenly blocked by a delirious group of men with locked arms, who charged out of a door, singing—drunk, senseless.

Tony was on his way to the Newark Airport, where a certain pilot, for whom he was to inquire, would fly him to the estate in the Adirondacks which had been turned over to Cole Hendron.

CHAPTER VII

EVE awaited him in a garden surrounded by trees. In the air was the scent of blossoms, the fragrance of the forest, the song of birds. It bore new qualities, a new interpretation of the external world, distinct from the tumultuous cacophony of the city.

She was in white, with her shoulders and arms bare, her slender body sheathed close in silk. All feminine, she was, too feminine, indeed, in her feeling for the task she set for herself. Would she suc-

ceed better at it if she had garbed herself like a nun?

An airplane droned in the twilight sky and dropped to its cleared and clipped landing-field. Eve arose from the bench beside the little pool, which was beginning to glint with the reflection of Venus, the evening star. She trembled, impatient; she circled the pool and sat down again.

Here he came at last and alone, as she hoped.

“Hello, Tony!” She tried to make it cool.

“Eve, my dear!”

“We mustn’t say even that! No—don’t kiss me or hold me so!”

“Why? . . . I know your father said not to. It’s discipline of the League of the Last Days. But why is it? Why must they ask it? And why must you obey?”

“There, Tony. Just touch my hands, like this—and I’ll try to explain to you. But first, how was it in the city today?”

Tony told her.

"I see. Now, Tony, let's sit here side by side—but not your arm around me. I want it so much, I can't have it. That's why, don't you see?"

"We're in a very solemn time, Tony. I spent a lot of today doing a queer thing—for me. I got to reading the Book of Daniel again—especially Belshazzar's feast. I read that over and over. I can remember it, Tony.

"Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

"They brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God; and the king, and his princes, his wives and his concubines, drank in them.

"They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone."

"Isn't that a good deal like what we've—most of us—been doing, Tony?"

"Now in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

"Then the king's countenance was changed; his knees smote together. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans and the soothsayers."

"And Daniel, you may remember, interpreted the writing on the wall. *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.* God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting. And in that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain."

"It is something very like that which is happening to us now, Tony; only the Finger, instead of writing again on the wall, this time has taken to writing in the sky—over our heads. The Finger of God, Tony, has traced two little streaks in the sky—two objects moving toward us, where nothing ought to move; and the message of one of them is perfectly plain.

"*Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting,*' that one says to us on this world. 'God has numbered thy kingdom and finished it.' But what does the other streak say?"

THAT is the strange one, Tony—the one that gives you the creeps and the thrills when you think of it. For

that is the afterthought of God—the chance He is sending us!

"Remember how the Old Testament showed God to us, stern and merciless. 'God saw that the wickedness of man in the earth was great!' it said. 'And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth. And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; both man, and beast and creeping things, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.' And then, God thought it over and softened a little; and He warned Noah to build the ark to save himself and some of the beasts, so that they could start all over again.

WELL, Tony, it seemed to me the second streak in the sky says that God is doing the same thing once more. He hasn't changed His nature since Genesis; not in that short time. Why should He? It seemed to me, Tony, He looked us all over again and got disgusted.

"Evolution, you know, has been going on upon this world for maybe five hundred million years; and I guess God thought that, if all we'd reached in all that time was what we have now, He'd wipe us out forever. So He started that streak toward us to meet us, and destroy us utterly. That's Bronson Beta. But before He sent it too far on its way, maybe He thought it all over again and decided to send Bronson Alpha along too.

"You see, after all, God had been working on the world for five hundred millions of years; and that must be an appreciable time, even to God. So I think He said, 'I'll wipe them out; but I'll give some of them a chance. If they're good enough to take the chance and transfer to the other world I'm sending them, maybe they're worth another trial. And I'll save five hundred millions of years.' For we'll start on the other world, Tony, where we left off here."

"I see that," Tony said. "What's in that to forbid my loving you now, my taking you in my arms, my—"

"I wish we could, Tony!"

"Then why not?"

"No reason not, if we were surely to die here, Tony—with all the rest of the world; but every reason not to, if we go on the Space Ship."

"I don't see that!"

"Don't you? Do you suppose, Tony, that the second streak in the sky—the streak that we call Bronson Beta which

will come close to this world, and possibly receive us safe, before Bronson Alpha wipes out all the rest—do you suppose, Tony, that it was sent just for you and me?”

“I don’t suppose it was sent at all,” objected Tony impatiently. “I don’t believe in a God Who plans and repents and wipes out worlds He made.”

“I do. A few months ago, I wouldn’t have believed in Him; but since this has happened, I do. What is coming is altogether too precise and exact to be unplanned by Intelligence somewhere, or to be purposeless. For those two streaks—the Bronson bodies—aren’t cutting in on our little system out by Neptune or Jupiter, where they’d find no living thing. They’ve chosen, out of all space near us, the single sphere that’s inhabited—they’re directed for us. Directed—*sent*, that is, Tony. And if the big one is sent to wipe out the world, I don’t believe the other is sent just to let me go on loving you and you go on loving me.”

“What is your idea, then?”

“It’s sent to save, perhaps, some of the results of five hundred million years of life on this world; but not you and me, Tony.”

“Why not? What are we?”

EVE smiled faintly. “We’re some of the results, of course. As such, we may go on the Space Ship. But if we go, we cease to be ourselves, don’t you see?”

“I don’t,” persisted Tony stubbornly.

“I mean, when we arrive on that strange empty world,—if we do,—we can’t possibly arrive as Tony Drake and Eve Hendron, to continue a love and a marriage started here. How insane that would be!”

“Insane?”

“Yes. Suppose one Space Ship got across with, say, thirty in its crew. We land and begin to live—thirty alone on an empty world as large as this. What, on that world, would we be? Individuals paired and set off, each from the others, as here? No; we become bits of biology, bearing within us seeds far more important than ourselves—far more important than our prejudices and loves and hates. We cannot then think of ourselves, only to preserve ourselves while we establish our kind.”

“Exactly what do you mean by that, Eve?”

“I mean that marriage on Bronson

Alpha—if we reach it—cannot possibly be what it is here, especially if only a few, a very few of us, reach it. It will be all-important then—it will be essential to take whatever action the circumstances may require to establish the race.”

“You mean,” said Tony savagely, remembering the remarks at breakfast, “if that flyer from South Africa—Ransdell—also made the passage on that Space Ship, and we all live, I may have to give you up to him—when circumstances seem to require it.”

“I don’t know, Tony. We can’t possibly describe it now; we can’t imagine the circumstances when we’re starting all over again. But one thing we can know—we must not first fix relations between us here which may only give trouble.”

“Relations like love and marriage!”

“They might not do at all, over there.”

“You’re mad, Eve. Your father’s been talking to you.”

“Of course he has; but there’s only sanity in what he says. He has thought so much more about it, he can look so calmly beyond the end of the world to what may be next that—that he won’t have us carry into the next world sentiments and attachments that may only bring us trouble and cause quarrels or rivalry and death. How frightful to fight and kill each other on that empty world! So we have to start freeing ourselves from such things here.”

“I’ll be no freer pretending I don’t want you more than anything else. What sort of thing does your father see for us—on Bronson Alpha?”

She evaded him. “Why bother about it, Tony, when there’s ten thousand chances to one we’ll never get there? But we’ll try for it—won’t we?”

“I certainly will, if you’re going to.”

“Then you’ll have to submit to the discipline.”

His arms hungered for her, and his lips ached for hers, but he turned away.

INSIDE the house, he found her father, Cole Hendron.

“Glad to see you, Tony. We’re going ahead with our plans. I suppose you knew I had been counting on you.”

“For what?” Tony inquired brusquely.

“For one of my crew. You’ve the health and the mind and the nerve, I think. It’s going to take more courage, in the end, than staying here on the world. For we will all leave—we will

shoot ourselves up into the sky while the world still seems safe. We leave, of course, before the end; and the end of the world will never be really believed till it comes. So I need men of your steadiness and quality. Can I count on you?"

Tony looked him over. "You can count on me, Mr. Hendron."

"Good. . . . I can guess that Eve had acquainted you with some features of the discipline of the League. I will tell you, in proper time, of others; nothing will be asked of you which will not be actually reasonable and necessary. But now I should advise you to learn something useful. Investment experience, and skill in trading, will scarcely be an asset on Bronson Alpha, whereas knowledge of agriculture and proficiency in manual arts and elementary mechanics may be invaluable. You have time to learn the simple, primary processes by which life is maintained. You will have, I might say, approximately two years to prepare, before affairs here become acute with the approach of the planets on their first passing."

CHAPTER VIII

NO record could picture a thousandth part of the changes that came in those two years. No single aspect of human enterprise was left undisturbed.

It was on the half of the world which we call the Northern Hemisphere that the effect of the approach of the planets proved most disastrous. Of course, it was the north that possessed the continents teeming with people—Asia, Europe, North Africa, North America. The Southern Hemisphere, in comparison, was sparsely settled; and the South, moreover, had the advantage of seeing the strange stars slowly become visible and slowly, thereafter, brighten. The South became accustomed to their shining in the sky.

But at the end of the first year after the announcement of their approach, they stood for the first time in the northern sky. Partly this was due to their actual approach, which was bringing them not only closer but higher in the heavens; but chiefly it was due to the seasonal shifts of the earth which, in spring, showed more and more of the southern skies.

So there they stood, not high above the horizon as seen from New York or

Chicago or San Francisco, but quite distinct and strange—two new stars clearly connected, one much brighter than the other. Even in a good field-glass, the brighter showed a round, gleaming disk, and the dimmer one appeared more than a point.

It was yet more than a year before the first serious physical manifestations were expected; so the statement that Hendron signed merely read:

"It is still impossible to forecast the entire effect of the approach of the Bronson bodies. Unquestionably they will disturb us greatly. We may anticipate, *as a minimum*, the following phenomena: tides which will destroy or render uninhabitable all coastal cities and all inland cities within five hundred or more feet of sea-level. We have no terrestrial precedent for such tides. The existing sixty-foot rise and fall in the Bay of Fundy will certainly be trifling in comparison. The tides we anticipate will be perhaps several hundreds of feet high, and will sweep overland with a violence difficult to anticipate.

"The second manifestation, which will be simultaneous, will consist of volcanic activity and earthquakes of unpredictable extent and violence.

"The Bronson bodies, if they pass on a parabola, will approach the earth twice. If, however, their course becomes modified into an ellipse, the earth will meet them again in its journey around the sun. Direct collision with one or another of the bodies, or grazing collision due to mutual attraction when in proximity, cannot be regarded as impossible. The succession of tides and earthquakes caused by gravity and resultant stresses may instantly or in time render the surface of this globe wholly uninhabitable; but we cannot say that there is no hope.

"Certain steps must be taken. All coastal cities in all parts of the world must be evacuated. Populaces must be moved to high, non-volcanic regions. Provision for feeding, clothing and domiciling migrated peoples must be made.

"There remains considerable doubt still existing concerning the origin and nature of the Bronson bodies. Efforts are being made to determine their composition, but determinations are difficult, as they are non-luminous.

"The scientists of the world are in agreement that the course outlined above is the only logical one to pursue. Since the first approach of the Bronson bodies



I for one am glad to see it. When the sea starts to rise and the earth starts to split open, I'm going to stand there and laugh. I'm going to say: 'Now what's the good of the Farm Relief? Now who's going to collect my income-tax? Now what does it matter whether we have Prohibition or not? Now who's going to stop your car and bawl you out because you drove on the wrong side of the street? Good-by, world.' That's what I'm going to say. 'Good-by! Good riddance!' I hope it wipes the whole damn' thing as clean as a billiard ball. . . ."

"Don't hold my hand so tight, Daddy. You hurt me. . . ."



may be expected to take place with effect upon the tides, and so forth, on and about the end of next summer, general migration should begin at once."

ON the morning succeeding the spread of this statement, Tony stood in the vast, populous waiting-room of the Grand Central Station. Yesterday there had been issued marching orders for fifteen hundred millions of human beings. If they did not now know that it was to be the end of the world, at least they were told that it was the end of the world as it had been.

He listened to fragments of the conversations in progress in his vicinity:

"I tell you, Henry, it's silly, that's all. If anybody expects me to give up my apartment and pack up my duds and move off one Hundred and Eighty-first Street just because a few gray-headed school-teachers happen to think there's a comet coming, then they're crazy. . . ."

"It's the end, that's what it is; and

Even the experimental rockets often failed because the heat generated within them melted away the walls intended to restrain it.

"It's ridiculous. They've been fighting about their fool figures for generations. They can't even tell whether it's going to rain or not tomorrow. How in the hell can they say this is going to happen? Give a scientist one idea, and a lot of trick figures, and he goes hay-wire, that's all. . . ."

"So I says to him, the big oaf: 'I'm a working-girl, and I'm gonna be a working-girl all my life, and you can tell me it doesn't matter on account of the world's coming to an end, and you can tell me the better I know you the better I'll like you, till you're blue in the face; but I'm gonna get out of this car right here and now, end of the world or no end of the world.' . . ."

"Laugh that off. Go ahead. Let me see you laugh that off. You've been laughing everything off ever since we were married. You laugh off the unpaid bills. You laugh off my ratty fur coat. You laugh off not being able to buy an automobile. Now let me see if you can laugh off an earthquake. . . ."

"I drew it all out and bought gold. I got two revolvers. I filled the house with canned goods. I said: 'Here you are, Sarah. You've been telling me all your life how well you can run things. Take the money. Take the house. Take these two guns. I'm leaving. If we've only got a couple of months left, I'm going to see to it that I have a little fun, anyway.' That's what I said to her; and by God, here I am. . . ."

Tony shook his head. Every word to which he had listened surfeited him with a sense of the immobility of humanity. Each individual related a cosmic circumstance to his particular case. Each individual planned to act independently not only of the rest of his fellows but of all signs and portents in the sky. Tony's mind conceived a picture of huge cities on the verge of inundation—cities in which thousands and even millions refused to budge and went about the infinitesimal affairs of their little lives selfishly, with nothing but resentment for the facts which wiser men were futilely attempting to impress upon them. He heard his train announced, and walked to the gate.

HE rode through a long dark tunnel and then out to the station at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street. His eyes rested uncomfortably on the close-packed accumulation of ugly houses. It had been taken for granted too long;

and upon the spawn who inhabited it, the best thoughts and dreams of the race fell unheeded. They lived and died and did not matter. A pollution ate steadily upward in every body of society from these far-reaching honeycombs of disease, dirt, stupidity, these world-wide remainders from the Middle Ages.

Tony, who had never been religious in any conventional sense, had begun to share the feeling of Eve about what was going to happen. She had not been religious; but emotionally, at least, she accepted the idea that God Himself had sickened with our selfishness, stupidity and squalor, and in disgust had tossed two pebbles through the sky on their errand which, night by night now, was becoming more apparent.

The train moved past the final outpost tenements into a verdant landscape with the river on one side—the Hudson, in which tides soon would rise to sweep high and far over the Palisades. Tony glanced back, once, toward the teeming city. The first flood would not top those tallest towers etched there; the pinnacles of man's triumphs would, for a while, rise above the tides; but all the rest? Tony turned away and looked out at the river, trying not to think of it.

CHAPTER IX

SETTLED in a chair, Tony glanced around the comfortable furnishings of the student's room and then gazed at the student himself. A lanky youth with red hair, good-humored blue eyes and a sprinkling of freckles that carried into his attained maturity more than a memory of the childhood he had so recently left.

"Yes," Tony repeated, "I'm from Cole Hendron. The dean told me about your academic work. Professor Gates showed me the thesis on Light which you turned in for your Ph.D. He said it was the finest thing he had had from the Graduate School since he'd held the chair of Physics."

Dull red came in the young man's face. "Nothing much. I just happened to have an idea. Probably never get another in my life."

Tony smiled. "I understand you were stroke in the varsity crew two years ago."

"That's right."

"That's the year you were rowing everybody out of the water, isn't it?"

"There weren't any good crews that year. We just happened to have the least bad ones."

TONY looked at the youth's hands, nervously clenching and unclenching. They were powerful hands, which nevertheless seemed to possess the capacity for minute adjustment. Tony smiled. "No need of being so modest, old fellow. It's just as I said. Cole Hendron in New York is getting together a bunch of people for some work he wants done during the next few months. It's work of a very private nature. I can't tell you what. I can't even assure you that he will accept you, but I'm touring around in the attempt to send him some likely people. You understand that I'm not offering you a job in the sense that jobs have been offered in the past. I don't know that any salary is attached to it at all. You will be supplied with a place to live, and provided with food, if you accept."

The tall youth grinned. "I suppose you know that offering a chance to associate with Cole Hendron, to a man like me, is just like offering the job of secretary to St. Peter, to a bishop."

"M-m-m. By the way, why did you stay here at the university when most of the graduate students have left?"

"No particular reason. I didn't have anything better to do. The university is on high ground, so it didn't seem sensible to move for that reason, and I thought I might as well go on with my work."

"I see," Tony replied.

His companion hesitated to say what was obviously on his mind, but finally broke the short silence. "Look here, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Drake. Tony Drake."

"Mr. Drake. I can't understand why on earth Hendron would want me. If he's planning to take a group of people to some safe spot in order to preserve scientific knowledge during the next year, he can find hundreds of people, thousands of people, that have more knowledge to save, and a better memory to save it in, than I have."

Tony looked at the good-humored blue eyes and liked the young man. He felt instinctively that here was one person whom Cole Hendron and the committee would surely accept. The name of the man before him, he recalled, was Jack Taylor—his record for a man of twenty-five was startling. He grinned

at the youth's speculation. "You're a physicist, Taylor. If you were in Cole Hendron's shoes, and were trying to take a group of people to a place of safety, just where, under the circumstances we anticipate, would you take them?"

The other man was thoughtful for an instant. "That's just what worried me. I can't think of any place on earth that would offer a refuge essentially satisfactory."

"Exactly. No place *on earth*." Tony emphasized the last two words.

Jack Taylor frowned quickly, and suddenly the freckles on his face stood out because his color had departed.

"God Almighty! You don't mean to suggest—"

Tony lifted his hand and dropped it. "I'm offering you a letter that will give you an interview with Cole Hendron. Do you want to go and see him?"

For a minute Taylor did not answer. Then he said disjointedly: "Marvelous! My God—Hendron's just the man—the only man! To think that anybody would come around to give me a shot at such a thing!" Tears suddenly filled his eyes, and he stood up and walked in two mighty strides to the window.

Tony slapped his back. "See you in New York. Better get going right away. So long, old man."

DEEPLY moved, proud that any race, any civilization should produce human beings of the temper and fineness of young Taylor, Tony walked out onto the university campus and hurried to keep an appointment with an obscure but talented assistant professor of chemistry whose investigations of colloids had placed his name on the long list furnished to Tony by Hendron and his associates.

Tony, having applied himself for months to acquisition of the primitive proficiencies in growing things and in the manual arts, had found himself appointed by Cole Hendron as his personal officer. Tony possessed, decidedly, a knack with people; and so Hendron was sending him about to recruit young men for the extraordinary duties of the crew of the Space Ship.

Her father had asked Eve to suggest, provisionally, the women who must go along; and Tony had met some whom Eve had selected.

Strange to think of them standing with you—and with a few other men out of all our world's creation—on the

soil of an empty planet! What would they be to each other there?

Stranger still, to gaze at night into the sky, and see a spot of light beside a brighter orb and realize that you might—you *might* become a visitor to that spot in the sky!

Tony returned, three weeks later, to New York City, where Hendron now spent most of his time. He had workshops and laboratories started in several places, but the advantage of conveniences in New York was so great that he had decided not to abandon his work there until later.

UPON his arrival in the city, late on a July afternoon, Tony went at once to see Hendron and Eve. He had business with Hendron—none with Eve; he merely longed to see her and be with her, more than he dared display. Not much change was observable in the city. The station was a sea of people, as it had been on the day of his departure. The streets were more than normally crowded, and his taxicab made slow progress.

There were three policemen in the front offices of the laboratories, and he was admitted only after a wait. Eve came into the reception-room first, and shook hands with him coolly. That is, outwardly it was coolly; but inwardly, Tony felt sure, she was trembling, even as was he.

"Oh, Tony," she said, her voice almost giving way, "I'm so glad to see you back! I've read all your reports."

"I've read all your acknowledgments of them," said Tony hoarsely. It was all that had passed between them. Reports and acknowledgments, in lieu of love-letters!

"Father will be right out. We've been working steadily ever since you left. You and Dad and I are going to have dinner together tonight."

"Anyone else?" asked Tony jealously.

"No; who would there be?"

"Your South African, I thought probably."

"Not mine, Tony!"

"Your father's, then. He keeps him in the laboratory—for you."

Hendron, wearing his laboratory apron, walked briskly into the front office. "Hello, there, Drake! Delighted to see you back. Your candidates have been arriving daily, and we've put them all to work. Dodson and Smith and Greve are enthusiastic about them." He looked at his watch. "Five-fifty. I've got a

little work to do here. Then we want you to come up to the house for dinner."

As Tony unlocked his apartment door, Kyto sprang to his feet.

"I take your presence," Kyto said, "with extravagant gratitude."

Tony laughed. "A bath, Kyto, a dinner jacket, something in the way of a highball—I haven't had a drink since I left. Good Lord! It's refreshing to see this digging again. You've missed me, eh?"

The little Jap ducked his head. "I have indulged my person in continual melancholy, which is now raised in the manner of a siege-gun."

"Swell," said Tony. "The drink, the bath, the clothes! Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. There's something in it, Kyto."

"I have become apprised of the Bronson circumstances *in toto*, and about your statement am agreement itself."

Tony's eyebrows raised. "Know all about it, hey?"

"I have a nice storehouse of information on same."

"Good. How's my mother?"

"Excellent as to health. Telephoning daily."

"Maybe you'd better ring her up first. On second thought, that's the thing to do. I telegraphed her occasionally, but heaven only knows when I'll see her. She is a darn' good sport."

"A person of profound esteemableness."

Tony looked with surprise at the back of the Jap as he started toward the telephone. The approach of the Bronson bodies had made his servant more loquacious than he had ever before been. Aside from that, no change in Kyto was discernible—nor did Tony anticipate any change. He began to remove his travel-worn clothes, and was in a bathrobe when Kyto succeeded in completing a telephone-connection with his mother's house in Connecticut.

TONY moved with a feeling of incredulity. The Hendron apartment was exactly as it had been. Leighton approached stiffly with a cocktail on a small silver tray. There was even jazz emerging softly from the radio. He smiled faintly. Funny that a girl of Eve's extraordinary education and taste should enjoy the monotonous rhythm of jazz coming over the radio, and yet she had always liked it.

Eve appeared—a new Eve who was

a little different from the old Eve. She wore a green evening dress that he remembered from an hour spent long ago on the balcony.

"Hello, Tony." In her eyes was the same wonderment, the same surprise and unbelief that he felt. She took the cocktail which Leighton had brought, and held it up to the light. A pink hemisphere, a few drops of something that belonged to a life in a world already as good as dead. "Happy days!"

Hendron appeared immediately after his daughter. "Drake! Evening, old man. No cocktail, thanks, Leighton. Well, this is odd. Here we stand, just as we did in the old days, eh?"

"Don't say the old days, Father. We'll be doing it all the rest of our lives."

Hendron's extravagantly blue eyes twinkled. "If you expect me to furnish you with cocktail glasses and smuggled Bacardi in the years that lie ahead on Bronson Alpha, Eve, you vastly overrate my paternal generosity and thought-

fulness. Let's have dinner. I want to get back to the laboratory for a conference at midnight."

The dining-room doors were opened. White, silver and red glittered under the indirect lights. "I point with pride," Eve said, "to the roses. It's something of an achievement these days."

They sat down. Leighton served consommé, and Tony picked up his silver spoon with a dreamy feeling of unreality which psychologists have noted and only badly explained.

Hendron brought him to his senses. "Tell us the news, Tony. We've been living down there at the laboratory ever since you left. This is Eve's and my first night off. Eating there, sleeping there. We have dormitories now on the floor above. What's going on in the world? You know, we even bar newspapers now. They're too much of a distraction, and Dodson has instructions to keep track of the news but not to give us any, unless it will have an effect on our work."

Hendron had already made great strides; he had succeeded in bombarding the surface of the moon with a comparatively small rocket.



Tony sipped the consommé. "You mean to say you haven't kept tabs on the effect of your own society's bitter pill?"

Hendron shook his head. "Not anything to speak of. A word here and there in reference to something else, that's all."

EVE said eagerly: "Go ahead, Tony! Tell us everything. What do you know about the world? What's it like in Boston? What do people think and say? What's the news from abroad? All we know is that the Government has at last done a little governing, and taken over the public utilities in order to keep them running."

Tony began to talk. He took what opportunity their questions gave, to eat.

"It hasn't made as much difference as you'd think. The Government at Washington is now less concerned with the fact that the populace should be moved away from the Coast, than it is with immediate problems. If you really have not read about them, I can give you some idea. There was a general strike in Chicago two weeks ago that tied up everything. No electric light and no water; nothing for a day. There was a terrific riot in Birmingham. The police forces in half a dozen cities walked out. The State governments weren't able to cope with the situation. In some cases it was just that the people decided not to work any more, and in others it was pure mob uproar. The Federal Government stepped in everywhere. They took over blanket control of the utilities, saw to it that trains were kept running, power-houses kept going, and so on. Nominally workers are jailed for dereliction, but actually I think they have found it necessary to execute them. Trouble began when I was in Boston, but in three days all the major functions of housing, food and transportation were working fairly well.

"I think the people looked first to the President, anyway; and the President had the good sense to kick politics in the face and take full authority upon himself to do anything and everything which he thought would keep the country in operation. There was some trouble in the Army and Navy, still more in the National Guard, especially with soldiers who were fathers and wanted to remain with their families. I suppose there are nearly half a million men doing police duty right now."

"It's strange," Eve said, "but I re-

alized things were functioning, without even having the time to investigate precisely why they were going."

Her father looked keenly at Tony. "That's all according to the plan that the League worked out before the news broke. A man named Carey is largely responsible for it. He's an economist. I believe he's a guest at the White House right now, and has been for ten days."

"I've seen his name," Tony said, and continued: "As I was saying, it hasn't made as much difference as you would imagine. I saw one nasty riot in Baltimore, between soldiers on one side and cops on the other, but in half an hour it was all over. I think that the work of keeping the public informed has been marvelous. The radio goes twenty-four hours a day, and the newspapers appear as often as they have anything fresh to print. People are kept encouraged and reassured and directed. Of course, part of the general calmness is due simply to mass inertia. For every person that will get hysterical or do something foolish, there are about ten who will not only fail to get hysterical, but who will not even recognize that their lives are presently going to be changed entirely. The whole city of Philadelphia, with the exception of the university, is almost unaltered. Anyway, that's the impression you get of it.

AND the unemployed have been corraled *en masse*. There is a project to turn the entire basin of the Mississippi north and west of Kansas City into an abode for the Coast populations, and the unemployed are building there, I understand, quarters of sorts for ten million people. Most of them are temporary. They are also planting vast areas of land in crops. I imagine that they are going to compel the migration when the interior of the country is prepared as well as possible to receive it, and when the danger of tidal waves draws near. As a matter of fact, every industrial center is working at top speed, and Chicago is headquarters for their produce. I don't just remember the figures, but an appalling quantity of canned goods, clothing, medical supplies and things like that are being prepared and distributed to bases in the Mississippi valley. Granted that the valley remains inhabitable, I really believe that a majority of our population will be successfully moved there and installed for an indefinite time."

"It's wonderful, isn't it?" Eve said.

Tony nodded. "The machinery which organized millions of men during the war was still more or less available for this much bigger undertaking, from the standpoint of plans and human cogs. The hardest thing is to convince the people that it must be done; but the leaders have recognized the fact, and are going ahead. A sort of prosperity has returned. Of course, all prices and wages are rigidly fixed now, but there is more than enough work to go around, and keeping busy is the secret of holding the masses in emotional balance."

HENDRON nodded. "Exactly, Drake. I'm really astonished to hear that they've done so well. It's unthinkable, isn't it? Absolutely unthinkable! Just a few months ago we were a nation floundering in the depths of what we thought were great difficulties and tribulations, and today, facing an infinitely greater difficulty, the people are more intelligent, more united—and more successful."

"I think it's thrilling," Eve said.

Tony shook his head in affirmation. "I can't give you a really good picture of it. I really know very little of it. It all came in dashes—things read in newspapers, things heard over the radio, things told me; but this country at least, has grasped the basic idea that there is going to be trouble, and great trouble, in a short time."

"Quite so," Hendron said. "Now how about the rest of the world?"

Tony's hand jerked as he buttered his roll. He looked up. "The rest of the world?" he repeated. "I don't know much about the rest of the world. What I do know I'll tell you, but you mustn't take my word as final. The information is garbled, contradictory and unreliable. For one thing, many of the European nations are still foolishly trying to keep their plans secret in order to protect their borders, and so on. In fact, I wouldn't be at all surprised if they fell to fighting. There seems to be small thought of coöperation, and they stick fiercely to national lines.

"England's labor troubles festered the minute she tried to institute compulsory work for those who tended her utilities. I believe London was without power or light for five or six days. There was a vast amount of sabotage. The police fought battles through Piccadilly and Trafalgar Square with armed mobs. A

curious thing happened in India. One would think that the Hindus would be the last people in the world to recognize what was about to happen. One would believe that their reaction would be fatalistic acceptance. However, according to one report at least, there is something in the Vheda which anticipated the Bronson bodies, or some similar cosmic manifestation; and with the spread of the news that disaster threatened the world, the Hindus and Brahmins rose together. Now no word comes from India at all. Every line of communication has been cut or silenced."

Tony paused, ate a little. "This is all very sententious. Most of what I'm saying is taken from the *clichés* of the newspapers. You'll have to forgive me, but you asked me to tell you."

"Don't stop, Drake, old man."

"Yes, go ahead, Tony."

"Australia and Canada, on the other hand, acted very much as the United States has acted. Their political leaders, or at least the ones who came immediately into prominence and power, accepted the fact that trouble was on the scene. They got down to brass tacks, and are doing what they can for and with their people. So is South Africa.

"The French are very gay about it, and very mad. They think it is very funny, and they think it is an insult to France at the same time. The whole country is filled with sputtering ineffective people. They're playing politics for all it's worth, and new cabinets come and go, sometimes at the rate of three a day, without ever getting anything accomplished at all. But at least they have kept functioning as a nation. Germany went fascist; a few communists were killed; and so were a few Jews.

"Mussolini is struggling to keep his control—so far, with success. As for Russia, little is known. Of course it is a terrible blow to the Soviet. The heavy industries which they developed so painstakingly and at such awful cost are scattered over a wide area. I believe the Soviet Government is carrying on rather bitterly, but as best it can. China is still just China. So you can tell very little about it. In South America the news has served merely to augment the regular crop of revolutions."

TONY put down his fork. "That's all I know." He reached for a cigarette, and lighted it. "What to expect tomorrow or a week from tomorrow, no one

can say. Since it's impossible to tell how high tides will be, how far inland they will rush, and what areas will be devastated, and since not even the best guess will be any indication whatsoever of where the land may rise, where it may fall, and what portions of it will witness eruptions and quakes, it may be that even the gigantic steps being taken by some governments will be futile. Am I not right?"

"My dear boy," Hendron replied after a pause, "you are eminently right. That is an amazingly clear picture you've given us. I'm surprised that any nation has had the intelligence to take steps, although I suppose, being patriotic in my heart, I rather hoped and expected that our own United States would leap from the backwash of villainous politics into a little good clear sailing before the crisis arrives. . . . Let's have our coffee in the other room."

AFTER dinner Leighton, whose customary mournfulness had, by some perversity, bloomed into the very flower of good nature, ushered Ransdell into the apartment.

Tony was furious at Ransdell's arrival. He had hoped to have Eve to himself.

How he had hoped to have her, and with what further satisfaction, he did not define; but at least he knew that he wanted Ransdell away; and the South African would not go away.

"He has flown five or six times to Washington for Father," Eve explained. "And he's wonderful in the laboratory. He has a genius for mechanics."

The South African listened to this account of himself with embarrassment; and Tony, observing him, realized that under any other circumstances he would have liked him.

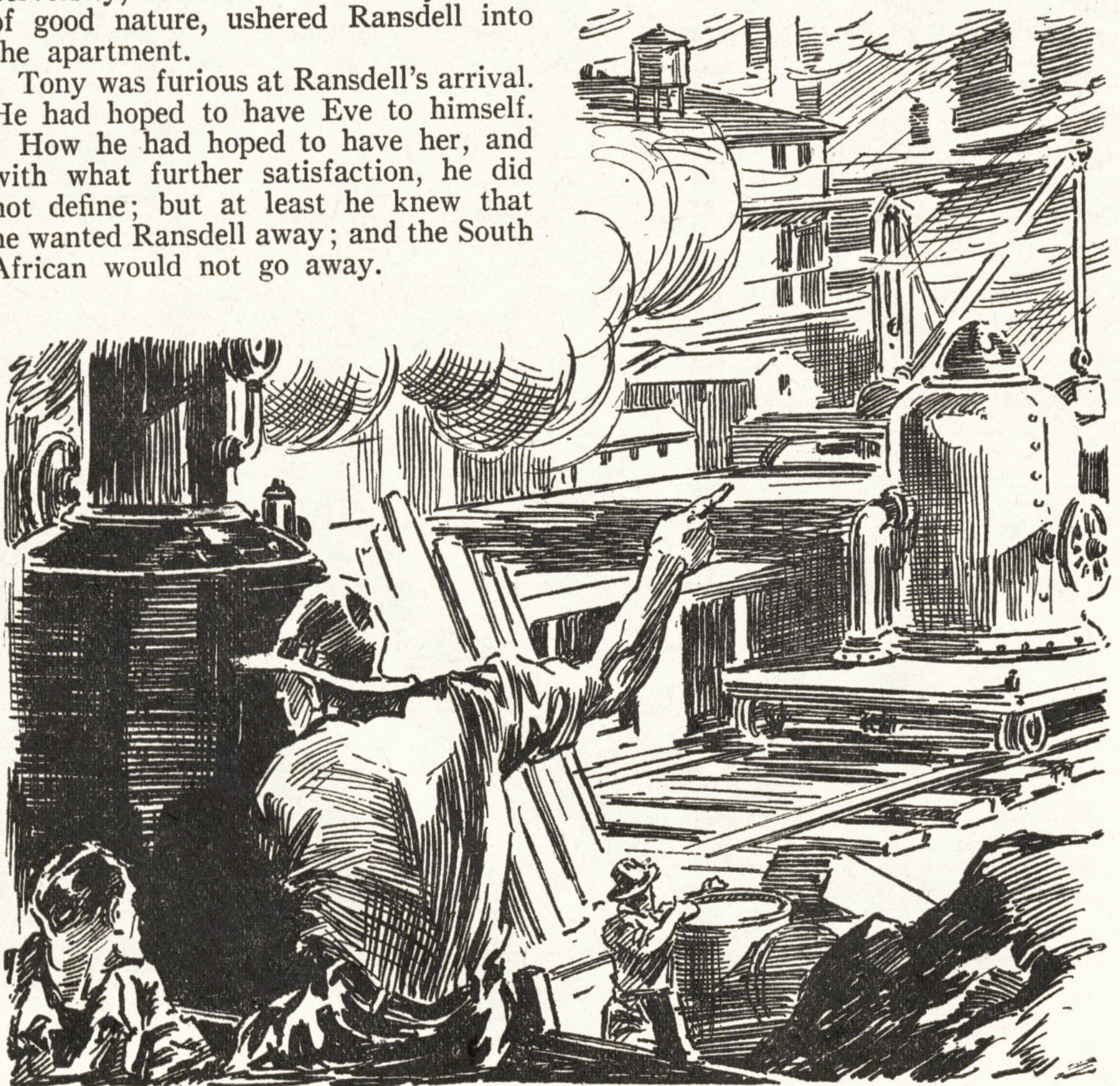
In fact, originally Tony had liked David Ransdell immensely—until he had realized that he also was to go with him—and with Eve—on the Space Ship!

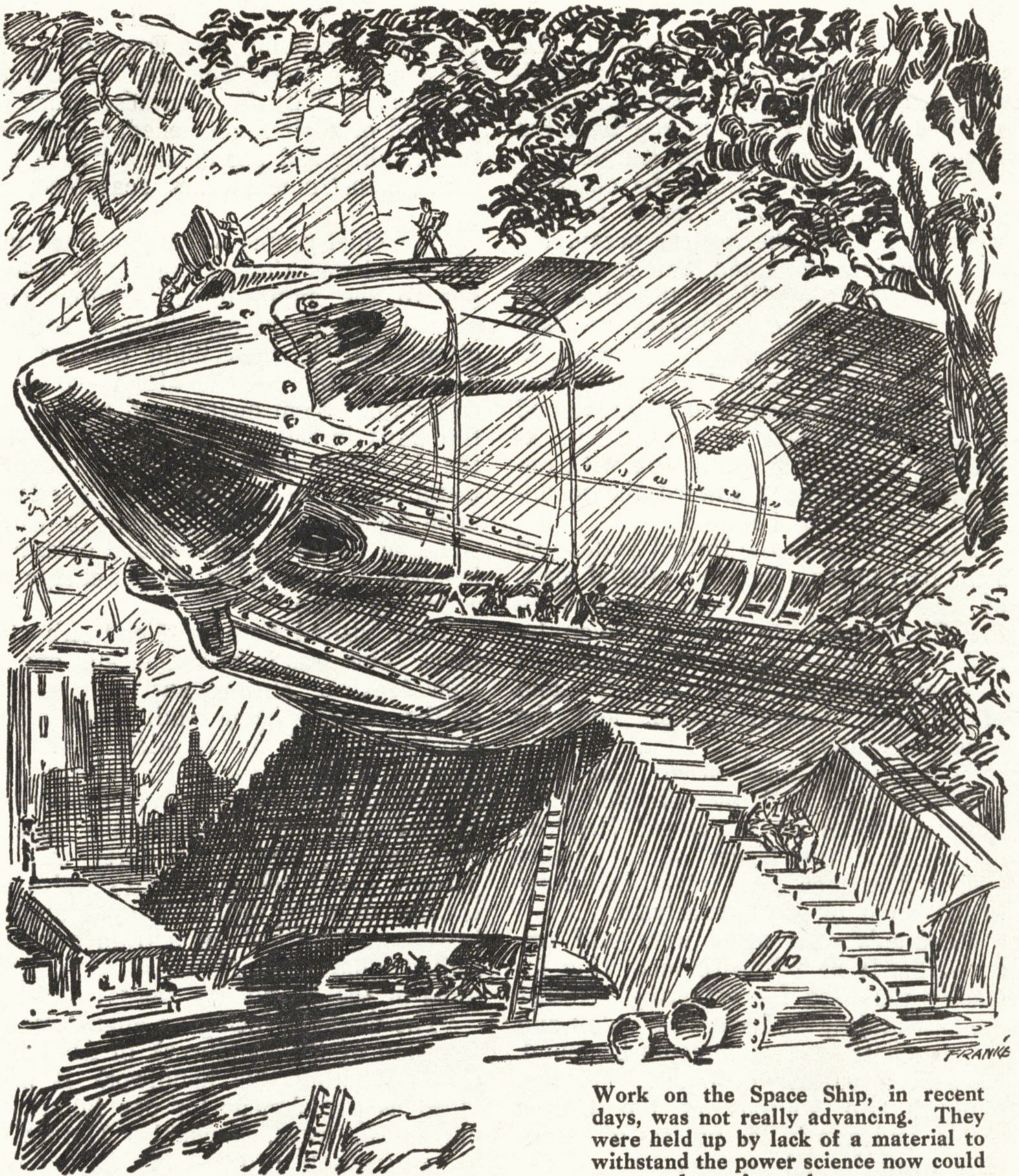
CHAPTER X

BRIGHTER and brighter, and higher and higher, each night the strange stars stood in the southern skies.

Indeed, one ceased to resemble a star at all and appeared, instead, as a small full moon which grew balefully each night; and now the other also showed a disk even to the naked eye.

Each night, also, they altered posi-





Work on the Space Ship, in recent days, was not really advancing. They were held up by lack of a material to withstand the power science now could loose from the atom.

tion slightly relatively to each other. For the gravitational control of the larger—Bronson Beta—swung the smaller, Bronson Alpha, about it in an orbit like that of the moon about the earth.

Their plain approach paralyzed enterprise on the earth, while the physical effects of their rush toward the world was measurable only in the instruments of the laboratories.

Throughout the civilized world two professions above all others adhered most universally to their calling: day and night, in the face of famine, blood, fire, disaster and every conceivable form of human anguish, doctors and surgeons clung steadfast to their high calling; and day and night amid the weltering change

of conditions and in the glut of fabulous alarms and reports, the men who gathered news and printed it, labored to fulfill their purposes.

TONY saw more of the world's activities than most of its citizens at this time. He had scarcely returned from his first tour of the Eastern cities when he was sent out again, this time to the Middle and Far West. That journey was arduous because of the increasing difficulties of travel. The railroads were moving the Pacific and the Atlantic civilizations inland, and passenger trains ran on uneasy schedules. He saw the vast accumulation of freight in the Midwestern depots. He saw the horizon-

filling settlements being prepared. He saw the breath-taking reaches of prairie which had been put under cultivation to feed the new horde in the high flat country north and west of Kansas.

Along the Pacific Coast he observed the preparations being made for the withdrawal from the western ocean. Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, the cities inevitably doomed, were digging up their roots. Millionaires drove eastward in great limousines with their most priceless treasures heaped around them; and small urchins cast an anxious eye at the Pacific and turned to look with uncomprehending hope toward the mountains that ranged beside it.

Every citizen in the United States had some part in the migration. Relief maps of the United States were supplied by the Government, so that any man by looking at one could tell whether he had put a thousand feet or five thousand of altitude between himself and the menacing waters.

Tony's work was varied. He continued to send back by ones and twos those scientists whose counsel Hendron desired, and the flower of the young men and women who might be useful in the event of great cataclysm.

Hendron's own ideas were still uncrystallized: he felt with increasing intensity the need for gathering together the best brains, the healthiest bodies and the stanchest hearts that could be found. He had a variety of plans. He had founded two stations in the United States, and was in the process of equipping them for all emergencies. Under the best conditions, the personality of his group might divide into two parts and move to those stations, there to remain until the first crisis passed so that afterward they could emerge as leaders in the final effort against doom.

IN his furious research Hendron had already made great strides. He succeeded in bombarding the surface of the moon with a comparatively small rocket. He had settled the problems of hull composition, insulation and aëration, which would arise in such a vessel. He had devised rockets which could be directed. He had constructed a rocket with vents at both ends so that a discharge in the opposite direction would break its fall. Several such rockets he actually dispatched under remote control, hurtling many miles into the air,

turning, descending part way under full force of their stern "engines," and checking their fall by forward discharges at the end of their flight, so that their actual landing had not destroyed even the delicate instruments they contained.

THE chief problem that remained unsolved was a metal sufficiently resistant to the awful force Hendron employed. Even the experimental rockets often failed in their flight because the heat generated by the atomic combustion within them melted and blew away the walls intended to retain it. So, at the Hendron laboratories, the world's metallurgists concentrated their efforts upon finding an alloy capable of withstanding the temperatures and pressures involved in employing atomic energy as a driving force.

Tony visited both of Hendron's stations. One was in Michigan and one in New Mexico. He brought back reports on the progress being made there in the construction of laboratories, machine-shops and dormitories. He returned on the day on which the President made his impassioned and soul-searching speech on courage. More than forty million persons heard the President's voice as it came over the radio. Tony, standing in the crowded aisle of a train between Philadelphia and New York, caught some of the President's words:

"The world is facing an august manifestation of the handiwork of Almighty God. Whether this handiwork is provided as punishment for our failure to pursue His ways, or whether Nature in her inscrutable processes is testing the courage of her most tender product man, we shall never know. But we stand on the brink of a situation from which we cannot hide, and which we cannot escape. We must meet this situation with fortitude, with generosity, with patience and endurance. We have provided punishments in our emergency decrees for the selfish. But so impoverished have our human resources become, that we can provide no reward for the noble, save that which they find in their own hearts.

"Many nations have already faltered and fallen in the outpouring of their own blood. Some nations, with obtuse stubbornness, have failed to accept the truth, and in stupid carelessness are endeavoring to ignore that which will presently devour them. America, recognizing the magnitude of the coming upheavals, has

taken every step, bent every effort, and enlisted every man and woman and child to do his and her utmost, not only, as a great predecessor in my office has said, 'that the Nation shall not perish from the earth,' but that humanity itself shall not perish from the earth. To you, my fellow-countrymen, I can offer but one word of advice, one single lamp to penetrate the onrushing gloom"—and his voice sank to a whisper more penetrating than any shout—"Courage."

AS Tony listened, his heart swelled with pride, and he saw in the abstracted eyes of his fellow-passengers a new light appear.

Courage! Courage was needed.

When Tony reached New York, he found Hendron sleepless and icily calm in the midst of his multitudinous enterprises.

But Eve showed the strain more than her father, and during the first evening, which they spent together, she expressed her fear: "Father's greatest hope was that his ship would be successful. There is more information than has been given out about the Bronson bodies. We admit that they will come very close. Terribly close. We do not admit yet precisely how close."

They were standing together on the balcony overlooking the brightly lighted and still noisy city. Their arms were locked together in defiance of their oath to the League.

"He'll succeed," Tony said.

"He has succeeded, except that every rocket he builds is limited in the distance it can fly and the power it can use by the fact that its propulsive tubes melt. There isn't a metal nor an alloy in the world that will withstand that heat."

Tony did not answer. After a long silence she spoke again. "It's an awful thing, Tony. Look down there. Look down on the city. Think of the people. Look at the lights, and then imagine water, mountains of it. Water that would reach to here!"

Tony held her arm more tightly. "Don't torture yourself, Eve."

"I can't help it. Oh, Tony, just think of it!"

"Well, that's the way things have to be, Eve." He could not say any more.

WHEN Tony went down, the street was still filled with people. All the people were talking. They walked,

but it did not seem to matter to them what direction they took or what chance company they shared.

The strange small moon, growing larger each night, shone palely in the sky.

Tony hailed a cab. His eyes settled on his shoes when he sat down. He thought grayly and without rhythm. Into every thought darted the face of Eve as he had last seen it—a face growing hourly more haggard. He remembered the downcasting of her eyes.

When he arrived at his apartment, Kyto was waiting. There was an expression of distinct anxiety on his usually inscrutable face. The emotion made him ludicrous—but Tony was more surprised than amused and Kyto commenced to talk immediately.

"All people frightful, now."

Tony tossed his hat aside. "Yes."

"Serious consequences close, you will inform me?"

"Of course. Do you want to leave now?"

"Contrarily. Safety surrounds you. Also charming good luck. I therefore prefer to stick."

"Right. And thanks."

Kyto padded softly away, and Tony stood thoughtfully in the center of his living-room for fully two minutes.

NEXT he called a number in Greenwich, Connecticut, waited an abnormally long time, then asked a maid for Mrs. Drake. His voice was warm and calm. "Hello, Mother. How are you?"

His mother's reply was controlled, but nerves stabbed through every word she said. "Tony, darling! I've tried and tried to reach you. Oh! I'm just an inch short of fainting. I thought something had happened to you."

"Sorry, Mother. I've been busy."

"I know. Come right out and tell me all about it."

"I can't."

There was a pause. "You can't put it in words?"

"No."

There was another long pause. Mrs. Drake's voice was lower, more tremulous—and yet it was not the voice of a hysterical or an unreasoning woman. "Tell me, Tony, how bad is it now to be?"

"The same as it was to be yesterday, Mother."

"Not hiding new developments, are you, Tony?"

"No, Mother; those we've announced that we expect, haven't really begun to happen yet."

"Yet you know more; I can feel you know more than you have ever told me."

"Mother, I swear you're being morbid—" How could he tell her that for her there was annihilation, but for himself some chance of escape? She would wish it for him, whatever happened to herself; but he could not accept it. A berth in the Space Ship, leaving her here! Leaving here millions of mothers—and children too!

Hendron did not permit himself such reflections; Hendron hardened himself and forbade it. He had to. If he began to let himself even consider the saving of individuals, and allowed himself personal judgment as to who should go,—as individuals,—he'd go mad. Stark, raving, crazy! He simply had to confine himself to selection on the sole point of saving the species—the race.

But probably no one at all would be saved, Tony recollected almost with relief. Work on the Space Ship, in recent days, was not really advancing. They were held up from lack of a material to withstand the power that science now could loose from the atom. The idea of escape was probably only a fantasy, utterly vain. So thinking, Tony ended his talk, and put up the receiver.

TAXICABS had been sent for Tony and his party. They made their way immediately downtown to the big building which housed the Hendron laboratories. The cab had covered a few blocks when Tony realized that not only on the waterfront, but throughout its length and breadth, Manhattan had been depopulated. Here and there a lone figure was visible—usually a figure in the uniform of a policeman or a soldier. Once he thought he caught sight of a man skulking in the shadows of a doorway. But he was not sure. And there were no women, no children.

After the sun had set, it was easy to appreciate why the last recalcitrant thousands of New York's populace had departed. The Bronson bodies, on this night, rose in frightful majesty: a sphere of lustrous white larger than the moon, and a second sphere much smaller, but equally brilliant. Their awesome illumination flooded the city, and had the street-lights been burning, they would

have been rendered unnecessary. News of this augmented size had undoubtedly reached New York during the day—and the last unbeliever must surely have been convinced if he remained to witness the phenomenon.

There were few lights in the skyscrapers. As the taxies bowled through the murk and dark, unchecked by traffic signals, Tony and Jack Taylor shuddered involuntarily to see the black buildings which man had deserted. Had they but known, a second shudder might have seized them—for already the tide was lapping the sea-wall at the Battery.

AT the elevator they were met by Eve. She kissed Tony, in an ecstasy of defiance, and then hurried to assist his group in the removal of their baggage, and in directing its disposal. Everyone left the street reluctantly. The Bronson bodies were hypnotic.

In the laboratories there was the utmost confusion. No longer was the inner door closed. Only a skeleton crew had remained in New York under Hendron. The scientist himself was introduced by Tony to each of the new arrivals, and to each he said a few words of welcome. Several were already known to him.

Then Hendron made an announcement to all of them—a statement which was repeated afterward in French and German. "Ladies and gentlemen—you will sleep in the dormitories above here tonight. Tomorrow we will remove by airplane to my field station in Michigan. The others are already there. In bidding you good-night, I must also request no one to leave the building. A splendid view of the firmament may be had from the roof. But the streets are entirely unsafe. The last wave of emigration left New York at sundown this evening. The people who remain are either law officers or marauders. I regret that I will be unable to entertain you myself, but I leave you in the hands of my assistants."

Jack Taylor was beside Tony when they reached the roof.

"As God lives, that's a marvelous thing!" He stared at the two yellow disks in the sky. "Think of it! The heavens are falling upon us—and a few hundred men, here and there, are sitting on this stymied golf-ball figuring how to get away!"

This thrilling tale, graphically depicting a catastrophe which actually could occur, continues with mounting interest in the forthcoming November issue.

The surprising romance of an Irish lighthouse keeper on a Red Sea island, and the strange fish that came to his net.

Xavier Murphy's Mermaid

Illustrated by
Margery Stocking



By DALE
COLLINS

IN Aden, that port of camels, sand and drought unending, there are two sun-bleached hotels, each of which houses an interesting guest—the one a merman, the other a mermaid. They lie in coffin-like boxes, strange dried monsters over six feet in length, with skins of black leather. Their bodies are human, but their arms end in fins, their legs in tails. The wise will tell you that they are manatées—those ocean mammals known to sailors as sea-cows—artistically improved by a Chinese or other wily Oriental. The local inhabitant, however, vows that they are the genuine article, caught in the gulf by fishermen, and they certainly look the part. Unlike their brothers and sisters in the old tales, they are dead and far from beautiful.

Xavier Murphy's mermaid had the advantage of them there. When he caught her, she was alive and more beautiful than the night—which is saying a good deal, for the night was a miracle such as only happens in the Red Sea.

At that time Xavier was a light-keeper on Jezirat Asfar, one of those sun-baked isles of rock and clay which boil in the hottest strip of water on the globe. The ships pass close to Jezirat Asfar, the passengers saying: "I wonder what that God-forsaken spot is? It can't be Perim, because Perim's bigger, and we passed it yesterday." Then they go in and have another drink. Up on the bridge a bearing of the light is taken. The ship goes on. That is all the attention paid to Jezirat Asfar, but it continues to sit there in the middle of the great sea-highway, winking a cautionary white eye. Its inhabitants are goats, rats, spiders, scorpions and the two light-keepers. At noon eggs could be fried on its stark rocks. It is the kind of place where, if you were



This was no shark,
no porpoise. "By
all the saints, a
mermaid!"

so optimistic as to hope to find anybody, you would look for a mad young Irishman with red hair.

Xavier was that Irishman. All in a year he had run away to sea from his father's farm in County Kerry, run away from his ship in Port Saïd, run away from the police there, run away from angry black men in Italian Somaliland, and finally, apparently out of breath, had run into his queer job on Jezirat Asfar, where life, to put it mildly, was sedentary.

There he had settled down happily enough. The work was nominal; he had plenty of time to sing and fish; and a salamander could not have complained of any lack of sunshine. A good, safe place for Xavier, who was a poet who did not write, and a dreamer who lived his dreams. Dynamite and moonshine are innocuous compounds compared with this Irish mixture.

But Life didn't intend to let Xavier play for safety. He was far too amusing for that. Since ordinary envoys would have been out of place on Jezirat Asfar, Life sent a mermaid after him.

HE was fishing from the short steel jetty when she arrived. Tremendous stars, throbbing hotly, crowded the black

sky. No breath of breeze stirred, and silence held the island. The great beam from the light swept out above his head—a shaft of creamy quartz, snatched away every five seconds and then restored again. Xavier was proud of his light. He regarded it as his own personal creation, and to send that glory smashing through the walls of darkness was a feat to make a man sing. As a result Xavier had the singing habit. He sang to himself and the light and the sea. More especially, on this night, to the sea.

For the sea had put on loveliness; the sea went in jewels and silver. As far as the eye could range, the water was a field of light. It scintillated, glowed, burned with a fairy brilliance. So strong was the phosphorescence that a blue mist hung over the surface, and the depths were dark no more. A ship sailed by—ebony and gold—nigh at hand, yet touched by magic so that she became an enchanted craft rather than a mail-boat carrying dyspeptic Anglo-Indians. The broad beam fell on her. She passed on. The red port light went out; the stern light showed. Then there was only the sea again, all afire.

"And who would be wanting more?" asked Xavier.

He lit his pipe, and watched a shoal of tiny fish, each wearing an armor of cold flame, flash by below him. Between puffs he hymned the beauties of Killarney, though his mind was not on them at all at all, being pleasantly blank. Time drifted, by as it will in paradise, until in due course Xavier bethought him of his net.

This was an ingenious device of his own contrivance. One end was made fast to the jetty and the other floated out on a buoy, carried by the current. Strange harvests he gathered in with it from those fertile waters.

"'Tis angels you'd look to be catching this night," he mused, as he began to haul on the line attached to the buoy.

The net stirred up a greater magnificence. Fish leaped and flurried in all directions, and the ripples on the surface flashed like lightning. All at once a heavy strain came on the line, and amid the shimmering smaller fry, a great fish burned.

"And sharks you're catching," added Xavier.

He hauled more warily, lest the monster should do havoc, but after a few feeble plunges it lay comatose, a dead weight in the net. Such mild behavior was unusual, and Xavier hauled the faster to make the most of it, his foot feeling about for the long-handled ax he kept in readiness for such customers as this.

"You ugly, black baste!" he said, which was good Irish, for the beast was neither black nor ugly, but a luminous shape which might have been a slice fallen from the beam of the lighthouse.

The jetty was only a foot or so above the shallow water which fairly blazed now with the struggles of the lesser prisoners. Xavier picked up the ax, and still pulling in the net, stepped to the edge in readiness to deal the death-blow. As he craned forward, however, the ax clattered down on the steel of the jetty.

This was no shark, no porpoise. It had a radiant cloud of hair, shimmering arms and legs, a body of white marble gowned in star-dust. It was—

"By all the saints, a mermaid!"

XAVIER, being an impractical lad, was not as dumfounded as he should have been. A fantastic marvel such as this struck him as quite appropriate to the fantastic night. He had been a fool entirely to be thinking of anything so ordinary as a shark!

With a whoop he leaped down into the

net and gathered up his treasure-trove from among the dancing fishes. The water was hot about his legs; but the mermaid, though silver fire poured off her, lay cold in his arms—cold and limp, but a vision of loveliness to make a man sing for joy.

"Poor darlint," he crooned, "and have I been and scared the life out of her with my net and all? Faith, and it's myself that wouldn't be harming a hair on your precious head!"

He rocked her soothingly, standing waist-deep in the enchanted sea, the fishes holding a carnival of panic about him, the great javelin of light flung out above his head. Now Xavier very naturally expected a mermaid to be good to look upon, but the face of this one of his, seen in the milky glow from the light, knocked the breath clean out of him.

"By Patrick," he gasped, "and it's yourself might be the blessed Virgin stepped straight out of a holy picture!"

IN awe and reverence he gazed at the perfect oval of her face. Her eyes were closed, and the long dark lashes made tracery against the old-ivory of her skin; her mouth was scarlet and neat as a rosebud; she made the sweetest burden that ever a red-headed Irishman held in his arms since time began. And though she lay so waxen still, the flutter of her heart, the rise and fall of snowy breasts, told that the life was still in her.

He jerked himself out of rapt contemplation.

"A fine sort of galoot you are, Xavier Murphy," he exclaimed, "to be standing here faysting on her beauty, and she, poor darlint, dead to the world and nading all your care—and not the wickedness of your sinful eyes! Her with no stitch on!"

Having thus sternly rebuked himself, he trampled heedlessly through the net; and all the minor unregarded fish, to their great astonishment, found they were free to swim away. . . .

Xavier carried his mermaid with care, as if she were some precious and fragile figure of Venetian glass. His mind, in a whirl, was quite incapable of grasping the situation. He went blindly up the beach, and the stars seemed to come down from high heaven to dance jigs about his head. Or perhaps he towered up among them. Hard to tell—hard to sort anything out sanely when the greatest of all fish stories has happened to you, and you are taking home a mermaid. . . .

The designers of the light-keepers' house had in mind, apparently, that an oven would be a fitting residence for anyone foolish enough to dwell in the Red Sea. The place was built of iron and divided into three compartments, all of which opened on to the veranda. It was as frugally furnished as a monk's cell, and the windows and doors, with their changing pictures of sea and sky, of blazing day and heavy night, were the sole decorations of the two bedrooms and the living-room. For the first time Xavier considered it ruefully. It was not worthy of his mermaid; it would give her a poor impression of life ashore.

MAHOMET ALI, his Arab confrère, sat on the veranda in a pool of lamplight, engaged in some interminable game of Oriental patience, his wrinkled hawk-like face bent over the greasy cards. A bearded goat slept on the ground beside him.

As the fisherman mounted the steps Mahomet looked up to see what luck he had had. Now, Mahomet was not a gentleman easily surprised; but Xavier's luck was too much even for him. He leaped to his feet, and his eyes goggled like amber marbles; he also exclaimed in his own tongue, asking, perhaps, whether the Irishman had been plundering Allah's paradise.

"And what will you be staring at?" Xavier demanded, stepping hastily into the shadows.

"Ha! Fine lady!" said Mahomet sagaciously, showing surprisingly white teeth.

"Have ye no dacency at all at all, ye black-hearted son of a camel, to be faysting your filthy eyes on the poor girl, and herself half drowned?"

It will be seen that in the prosaic surroundings of the house a change had come over Xavier's mermaid; but even though she had lapsed into a mere mortal, she remained divinely fair and a sight to wring the heart of any young Irishman who held her exhausted body in his wiry arms.

He marched off with her to his room, laid her on the bed, lit the lamp, drew an unclean but modest sheet over her, and continued the while to speak his thoughts.

"Poor colleen, and are you all spent and done? Faith, the marvel is you're not dead and eaten up entirely, the sea there so thick with sharks, and you such a tempting morsel for the black bastes!

But be l'aving yourself in the hands of your Xavier Murphy, mavourneen, and he'll have you gay as a lark before you're so much as knowing you've been in for a dip."

Xavier had seen a man saved on the point of drowning, and that experience enabled him to decide that her collapse was due to fatigue rather than immersion. Her strength must have held out until she became entangled in the net, and he had got her out before serious harm was done.

"But, by Patrick, yourself's by way of being a mermaid after all, acushla," he told her, remembering the passing liner from which she must have come. "And a mighty swim it was, you no more than a bit of thing a man can carry like thistle-down."

He chafed her hands and feet, dried her cloud of shining dark hair, and heedless of much waste of the precious last of the last bottle, contrived to get some whisky between her lips. She breathed more easily, then, and a little color returned to her cheeks. Xavier bunched the pillow up under her head—a pillow which, alas! might have been whiter—and sat down to await her return to life.

Mahomet, after one attempt at intrusion, accepted his lot fatalistically and now snored on the veranda. The light's beam came and went. Hot night pressed down on the iron hut which had become a fairy palace, and on stark Jezirat Asfar, isle of enchantment.

"A human crayture you may be," Xavier meditated, "but 'tis the blessed Virgin from a holy picture you bring most to my mind, as I kape telling you."

ONLY an Irishman with red hair could have been persuaded by any reasoning that Jezirat Asfar was an isle of enchantment. The morning sun poured scorchingly down from a sky bleached of all color; the sea glowed palest green; the rocks gave off a mirage-mist of heat; the iron of that oven of a house was red-hot to the touch. Yet Xavier dozed in his chair with a beatific grin on his lips, even though moisture dripped from his fingers and made pools on the floor.

He had earned and needed that respite, but a sigh—no more than a breath—sufficed to rouse him with a start. He sat up, shocked by his remissness, and the most beautiful pair of dark brown eyes he had ever seen gazed wonderingly, questioningly, into his. Far back in them, shadows of fear brooded.

Some of her songs laughed; some cried; and some went soaring up with rapture.



And remember, the singer was more lovely than her songs. It is seldom so.

“By the holy saints,” he cried in distress, “me awake all these hours and aslape just when you’re nading me. Now isn’t that too bad entirely? But a grand sight it is to see you coming round again. A great slape you’re after having and yourself will be yourself in no time.”

He patted her hand encouragingly, and waited eagerly for the sound of her voice. Her head stirred uneasily on the pillow, and her eyes wandered, seeking a clue to her whereabouts.

Then she spoke to Xavier in a voice sweet as a bird’s and in words as unintelligible to him as a bird’s notes.

Xavier rumbled his wild red hair.

“And what language is this? Indade, and it has only the sound of Double-Dutch to me, mavourneen. Will you be a foreigner, then?”

SHE shook her head feebly; evidently she did not understand. The ghost of a smile played about her face at his chagrined expression. By a gesture she asked for the glass of goat’s milk which stood in readiness on the table.

“You athirst and me goggling here like the great dolt I am!”

He held the glass for her, and she drank deeply, rested, drank again.

“The power of good will it do you,” he promised, easing her down. His solicitude, at least, she understood and appreciated. For all the shadows in her eyes her faint smile stole out again for him; then she turned on her side, sighed, and slipped off into restoring sleep, leaving Xavier a sore perplexed young man.

“Now isn’t that the way things go in this weary world?” he inquired of the stifling air. “Och, a bad business! Myself with a thousand things to tell her—a thousand to be asking her and her with her hurt eyes—and here we are as dumb as two dumb mutes that can’t spake so much as a Hail Mary, let alone talk as man and woman. Indade, ’tis as though the whole thing was under a spell entirely.”

That last thought persisted, and before it mortification gradually gave way to deeper reverence. The poet in him had to recognize that the barrier to mere conversation sustained the mystic quality of the adventure. It would keep things quaint and strange; it would confirm that she was one apart.

“Och,” he decided, “though all the swateness of the world I’d be telling her, yet it’s a fine grand thing to so much as look into her eyes, and it’s a mermaid

now she'll remain to me, talking the talk of the sea for all I know."

So he was both glad and sad all at the same time and on falling asleep again, the grin still hovered about his mouth.

She awoke at intervals during the day and took the tepid water or milk gratefully, but the ruby sun hung low above the sea before her eyes opened in full comprehension and she became really aware of him and her surroundings. Physically she seemed little the worse for her experience, but that spiritual shadow still clouded her eyes and saddened her Madonna face.

"You're the loveliest thing—just the loveliest thing!" Xavier breathed. "But what have they been doing to you that's hurt you so? Are there devils could have the black hearts to be hurting such swateness? Faith; I wish you could tell me the trouble that's on you! But perhaps if you could, you mightn't; so therefore it remains a blessing that you use a strange tongue, for otherwise how should Xavier Murphy, the poor light-keeper, be able to spake his love for you, and yourself the fine lady?"

For she was a fine lady, delicate and gentle. Naked and all as she had come, she bore the stamp of breeding and distinction; even beneath that dirty sheet she preserved dignity and grace.

THOUGH her smooth brow crinkled at the puzzle presented by his speech, something in the brown face, the light of adoration in the blue eyes, seemed eloquent enough for her. Behind the haunted look came a kind of serene radiance as she considered and weighed him. It set his heart thumping. Also she made him a pretty little address of gratitude—her manner and the gentle cadences of her voice explained its purport. Very liquid and pleasant this language of hers, full of vowels and soft sounds, so that Xavier thought of bird-songs at dawn. If the words had no actual meaning for him, their music had. He listened enraptured to that melody.

"Acushla," he said then, "'tis nothing at all at all I'm after doing for you, and myself should be down on my knees thanking you for coming to this bit of a rock and bringing all joy to me. Sure, an angel straight from hivin wouldn't be more welcome."

The sun, resting on the horizon, poured into the room a mist of rose which masked the bareness and touched the humble furnishings into splendor.

Xavier drew her attention to this circumstance with a wave of his hands, and said: "Will you be noting what beauty the light of your eyes is making in this humble home of mine?"

She answered him, and they drifted into animated talk under conditions which struck Xavier as ideal. No restrictions, no foolish barriers, no conventions. He could speak from his heart as freely as he wished without giving offense; she need have no scruples about imparting to him her deepest confidences. As a result immediate intimacy was established. They talked, as it were, outside the everyday world in the fourth dimension of fairyland.

PRESENTLY she pointed at him and raised her fine brows in inquiry.

"It's my name your swateness will be wanting?" He struck his chest. "The name of your humble sarvint, acushla, is Xavier Murphy." He repeated it for her, carefully.

She smiled her thanks, and tried the syllables on her tongue. The *Xavier* she managed very nicely, but she could do little with the *Murphy*. They grew quite merry together over her efforts.

"Faith, then, be calling me Xavier as I'm wishing you to, you flower of flowers. Xavier!" He nodded encouragement. "And you?"

"Maria Antonini."

"Maria? Then if I'm by way of being Xavier to you, it's Mary you must be to me, and the very name for you that's stepped straight out of a holy picture and your eyes like stars."

"Maria," she corrected.

"Mary!" he insisted, jaw stubborn.

A dimple that had been in hiding in her left cheek came out to tell him he could have his way.

The rose had faded into palest dove-gray; so Xavier, not wishing to lose sight of her face, rose and lit the lamp. When he had done so, she addressed him in a sudden burst of music which at first he was merely content to enjoy. But a certain embarrassment in her manner and a gesture of her arm along the sheet enlightened him. He blushed until his face matched his hair.

"A fine fool I am, not to so much as think of giving you clothes! You a good colleen and with nothing to wear! They're poor things I have, mavourneen, but they'll make you dacent. Let me be showing them to you."

He hastened to turn out the meager

contents of a battered case, and spread them on the chair for her to make a choice. Then he went out, closing the door behind him. On the veranda he paused. The night seemed to be full of the beauty of Mary just as his soul was. Spontaneously, naturally as a lark, he began to sing for joy, and air after air poured from his heart.

Mahomet Ali, returning from lighting the great lamp, shambled up the steps and remarked, "Ha! Fine lady!" but his tribute passed unheeded, and he went into the living-room to complete preparing the meal. Mahomet led an industrious life; the Irishman saw to that.

Xavier had just rendered "Kathleen Mavourneen"—with great gusto, for he substituted Mary for that other worthless name—when the door opened, and swinging about, he found her standing in the golden oblong, clapping her hands, smiling and nodding approval. For a moment he could only gape at that picture. She had put on a pair of ragged white shorts and a short-sleeved shirt; her feet were thrust into ancient and enormous white shoes, and her hair was arranged in smooth glossy coils about her neat head—coils held in place by large nails. The quaintness of this costume but emphasized her beauty.

"Glory be to God!" cried Xavier, "And it suits your swate loveliness better than all the silks and ermines of a royal queen. Och, you hivinly creature, and you honoring my old rags and clapping your lily hands for my poor bit of a song."

He could have hugged her in sheer delight; but of course, he did not, for Mary was no ordinary girl—the like you'd sit on your knee and put your arms about and be taking a kiss—but a divine visitor, a goddess to be worshiped.

"But it's famished you'll be!" he exclaimed instead. "The food is ready—poor stuff for the likes of you, Mary, but a feast it'll be for me, and you at the table."

MAHOMET had already begun on the fish when they entered the living-room, but like the courteous old gentleman he was, he rose and made salaam.

"Pay no heed to him at all at all, Mary darlint," Xavier advised, consigning Mahomet to oblivion with a sweep of his hand. "Sure, and he's no more than an ape that has come near l'arning to talk."

"Ha! Fine lady!" remarked Mahomet brightly, his eyes like marbles.

"Will you be kaping your filthy blather to yourself or be having your nose broken?" Xavier inquired fiercely.

Mahomet elected to go on with his fish. . . .

A strange meal, an odd meal, a vastly happy meal. The fish was good and the goat's flesh eatable if ignorance disarmed prejudice. Mahomet made excellent coffee. The plates, it is true, were of tin, the coffee served in mugs, and the knives and forks few, cheap and worn. But the stars looked in, and the night filled every open space with tapestry, and the sea played plaintive music for them. The strangeness and crudeness of it all seemed to act as a tonic on Xavier's guest. The clouds in her eyes began to disperse; she sparkled; everything pleased her. She told Xavier—in that queer language they were perfecting—that she had never eaten such food before, and that she found the stark and grim island of Asfar entirely to her taste.

"It's so utterly different," she appeared to say. "I didn't know people lived in such places—I'd never given it a thought. Really, it's astonishing fun. And to find some one as nice as you here! I am in luck! You're so funny with your red hair and your wide grin and your look of a little boy in a tart-shop. But you're a darling just the same, and your dear simplicity is doing me ever so much good."

"Och, you poem," her host exulted in reply. "Niver did Tara's hall see such a banquet or such a princess, and God be blessing the tower of Babel that makes me able to say it to your swate face!"

LIKE the most of mankind Xavier had been a lonely soul—not only during his stay on Jezirat Asfar. Now, however, he had found a playmate who stole the heart out of him and gave him all the joys of the world in recompense. He lived there, an opium-eater in a haze of dreams. The ships went by; the days went by; and there on the barren rock they lived an idyl. The marvel was that his visitor never complained of heat or hardships, but prospered in spirit and body in that primitive torrid retreat which might well have been a place of torment for such a fine lady.

It was as if she found something salty and harsh which she needed in the air, something enriching and soothing in Xavier's passionate devotion. The hurt went out of her wide eyes, and the benediction of her smile blessed everything

and everyone—even the goats who existed so miraculously on nothing. Even Mahomet Ali, whose "Ha! Fine lady!" had acquired a different ring now—a note which allowed it to pass unchallenged.

Xavier grew quite prideful.

"'Tis a better thing I'm after doing for you than fishing you out of the sea like a mermaid of wonder," he rejoiced. "They'd been harming your swateness out there before you came to me, but you're forgetting the wounds they gave you, and there's a smile back in your darlint heart again."

And she would tell him, in the most gracious, tender way, that he had every right to boast.

WHEN the sun held the island in bondage they rested, numbed by heat into a trance, held in golden glare like flies in amber. At dawn and sunset, droll in makeshift costumes, they bathed in a lukewarm pool from which the sharks were shut out by a wall of rocks. But the night it was that gave them the grand hours. A moon had come, rising red and fierce but growing gentle as it climbed the sky and melted the lighthouse's beam into a wider, softer diffusion. The sky shone silken; the sea sparkled; and out on the jetty, almost as if suspended in the void of space, Xavier and Mary would sit side by side, bare feet dangling, eyes full of moonshine, and sing to each other.

For Mary could sing just as beautifully as you'd have expected when once you'd had the bliss of hearing her speak. Some of her songs laughed; some of them cried; and some went soaring up to fill the milky dome with the rapture of nightingales. At times Xavier fancied they were in languages other than her own, but he never understood the words. That did not matter. He understood the songs. They caught and held him in a golden net, just as surely as he had caught his mermaid. Love heightened his native appreciation; he could have listened through eternity.

And, remember, the singer was more lovely than her songs. It is seldom so.

"You with the voice of all the seraphim," he would protest when she pleaded for him to contribute to their concert. "Isn't it the waste of time now for me to be lifting up my poor cracked notes?"

Yet he could refuse her nothing, and when he had exhausted the airs of Erin, he would go on to songs of the sea which were unfit for the drawing-room but had a rare lilt to them. These latter took on a

new innocence, because words as words had ceased to matter. Love sweetened the voice of Xavier Murphy so that Mary had good cause to clap her hands—white fluttering butterflies—in appreciation.

The strange thing was that despite this constant association in the privacy of Jezirat Asfar, with only the ships passing out there in another world and Mahomet at his patience, Xavier continued to see his Mary merely as the goddess, the untouchable, the immaculate. All the kisses of his lips might be in his singing, but never an everyday human kiss did he think of offering her. No doubt the language in which they communicated—that fairy Esperanto—had much to do with it; and there was also the gossamer delicacy of the whole adventure; whatever the reason, the fact remains that Xavier Murphy, who had had a sharp eye for the girls of Tralee, was quite content to remain his goddess' chanting priest—yes, a strange thing, entirely.

THE world went round; ships went by; the sun blazed and sank, the light was lit and quenched: but time did not exist for them. Preposterous to have entertained the thought that this would end! And then, all at once, like a black bird of prey, like a vulture, the supply boat pounced down on Jezirat Asfar, deep burdened with common sense and realities, to snatch away the vision and the dream. . . .

Captain Laroque was a small, round Frenchman in ambush behind a shrubbery of black beard over which he peeped with an air of tremendous slyness. He did not usually entertain light-keepers in his own cabin and produce the green bottle of Pernod; but on this occasion he had made an exception, not for any charm he found in the company of Xavier Murphy, but as a tribute to charming Maria Antonini, and because of his deep interest in the comedy so droll, so arresting, that he had found in progress on Jezirat Asfar, where nothing had ever happened before save two suicides.

Xavier sat on the edge of the settee, clenching his knees in his hands and biting his lip. He wore an expression of astonished, of incredulous dismay—the expression of one who has been strolling in the rose-gardens of heaven and has had the ground open beneath his feet to let him fall headlong into the sulphur-flames of hell. It was over. The knell rang in his soul. He could only suffer dumbly, his gaze fixed miserably on Mary. Al-

ready even in that small cabin she seemed remote from him. There would be no more singing.

She was speaking rapidly and at length to the Captain; and the speech which had been a bird's melody, he knew now to be only Italian. How beautiful but how unattainable she looked, with the flush in her dusky peach cheeks and the sparkle in her eyes that were sad no longer.

The Captain peeped out at her slyly and admiringly over his beard. He nodded; he chuckled; he made little animated sounds. Quite a treat for him, but no treat for Xavier.

AND when at last she ended her tale, Captain Laroque swiveled in his chair and turned his sly glance on the Irishman, while Maria Antonini waited, gay and fragrant as a flower, for her words to be translated. The Captain was still enjoying himself. He took a drink, re-lit his cigar, pointed it at Xavier like a pistol.

"Monsieur is indeed in luck," he began. "His is the greatest of the good fortunes. I explain myself: The Signorina 'as the desire that I make all clear to 'im. She 'opes soon to learn the language English, and that 'e will master also the Italian. In the meantime, I assist. It is the pleasure."

"Will you get on with it before my patience is worn out as a tinker's shoe?"

"Assuredly! Attend me! The Signorina says that Monsieur 'as a singing voice the most superior, the most exquisite. She believes there is the fortune in your voice, Monsieur—that with training it will be of the equality to that of your compatriot the John McCormack."

"Och, faith, the darlint," cried Xavier, eyes brimming, "and 'tis only the swateness of her golden heart that would be spaking such things!"

Captain Laroque sipped and shrugged.

"The Signorina should know," he pointed out. "Is she not Maria Antonini of the Milan opera?"

He turned to her and bowed quite an elaborate bow. It passed unheeded, for Maria had eyes only for her Irishman.

Captain Laroque showed a very nice discretion that morning. He did not explain that she had been given up for dead after she had vanished from the liner. One understood the situation. These opera singers—one knew of them as temperamental, all fire and impulse and nerves. There had been talk of an un-

happy love-affair, or an unsuccessful tour of the East. These things would prey on such a woman. The water that night, one heard, had made a fine show of phosphorescence. The temperament again! To slip over the side into the lovely water and be finished with it all! And then, of course, the instinct to live. Unconquerable. One would slip out of the impeding nightgown, and strike out for the lighthouse.

Yes, yes, Captain Laroque nodded to himself, finishing his absinthe, one could understand it. And now this other: It was even stranger. The temperament again. These artists!

"The Signorina," he resumed, after this mental survey which only occupied a second or so, "is of the opinion that Monsieur is one who misses 'is opportunities and yet makes gain thereby." The slyness of the eyes above the shrubbery! "That she has asked me to tell to you particularly. A riddle, *hein?*" But he looked so knowing that he seemed to have solved that riddle with the greatest ease.

Xavier blushed and looked completely befuddled.

"Moreover," said Captain Laroque, "there is this: she offers you two opportunities which you must not miss—the first is to develop your voice with 'er backing and assistance, and the second is that you will allow 'er to count you as 'er very good friend." Again Captain Laroque pointed his cigar at the dazed young man. "Monsieur," said he, "my congratulations! The Signorina is a lady the most beautiful. What is better than to 'ave youth and love?"

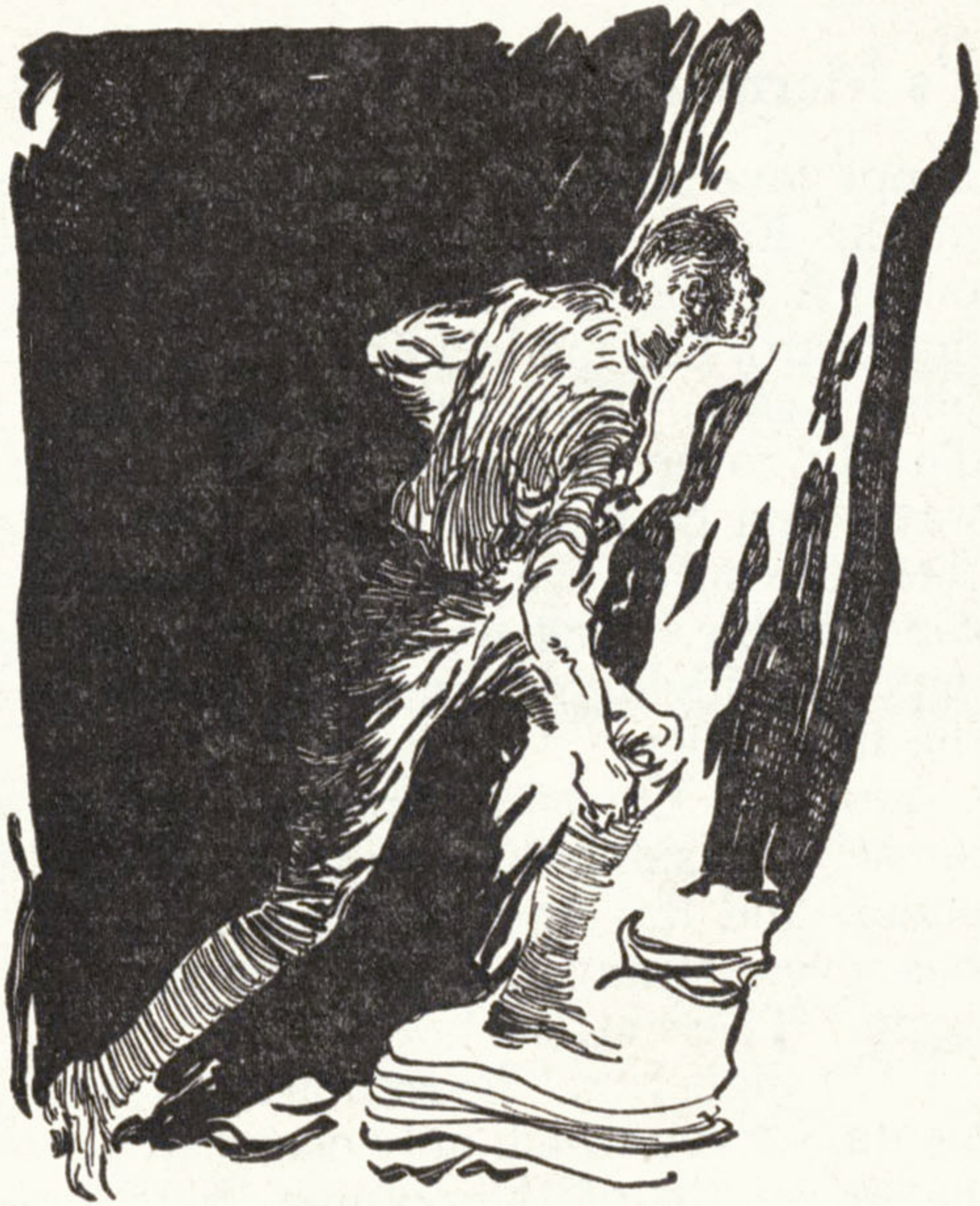
Absinthe and tender sentiment moistened his sly eyes.

NOW all at once Xavier Murphy comprehended that the moment was an opportunity he would not miss for anything on earth. Quite beyond speech, he leaped across the cabin, snatched up in his arms Maria Antonini, who was just Mary and an angel straight from heaven, and gave her the kiss so long delayed. It was the kiss of a mad young Irishman who had won his heart's desire. She seemed to like his kissing just as well as she liked everything else about him and Jezirat Asfar. . . .

The Captain, without taking his eyes off that ravishingly romantic group, helped himself to another absinthe.

A hawklike, wrinkled head popped impudently in at the open door.

"Ha! Fine lady!" said Mahomet Ali.



The Putsch

A timely and stirring story of the Free Lances in Diplomacy.

THE big horizon-blue craft seemed to be floating soundlessly westward along the north coast of the Channel—giving an impression of a ghostly bird when it dipped to three hundred meters—disappearing entirely except for an occasional instantaneous flash of reflection when it soared to a couple of thousand. To those who glanced up from boats in the Channel, the “floating” impression was only a first one born of its graceful flight—because a few seconds’ counting showed it way back yonder at first glance—then abreast—then far to the westward. They figured its gait at something over two hundred miles the hour. As a matter of fact, the Marquess of Lyonesse had left Croydon with Captain Jimmy Fortescue of the Foreign Office and an old friend,—one of Europe’s great specialists, the Herr Doctor Ruprecht von Simmerling, of Berlin,—an hour and a half before, and were now getting the loom of Scabacombe Cliffs dead ahead, with the Norman-Gothic Trevor Hall nestling on their southernmost crest and the Marquess’ big walled estate stretching along the top of them. At least three-quarters of this estate, seen from the air, is covered with virgin forest—but at the moment this was not visible owing to a dense smudge of smoke or fog which came well above the tree-tops. The Marquess was considerably surprised at this. To Fortescue and the Herr Doctor, also, the cloud looked like something serious.

“I say, Marquess! Looks like a rather bad fire—what? Gettin’ out of hand a bit—” Fortescue began.

“No—fancy not,” replied the Marquess equably. “The hangars an’ runway

are up among the trees at the north end. We’ll find out what’s up, in five minutes now.”

When the plane came down, a car was waiting to take them along the cliff-brow road up to Trevor Hall where Lord Salcombe—Ivo Trevor—and his bride Lady Jean took charge of the two guests, while the Marquess strolled along to another car in one of the hedged driveways in which a couple of men in overalls were comfortably smoking their pipes as they waited for the “Governor,” as they affectionately called him—men whose smudged and workmanlike appearance didn’t exactly match up with their social position. One was Sir Harry Archer, the Marquess’ chief electrician and companion on many hair-raising adventures—the other was Dr. Gordon-Smith, one of the foremost chemists and surgeons of his day.

The Marquess smiled as he looked at the two grinning faces.

“I say, you chaps! . . . What in the world have you been up to, now? Gave me rather a jolt when I first saw that smudge from a thousand meters!”

They looked critically over his flying-suit—then nodded to each other.

“Fancy he’ll do just as he is! It’s this way, Governor—we’ve worked out something that we think very favorably of. There’s still three hours of daylight, so take off your ’chute an’ strap this knapsack in its place. Hang this radio-compass frame from your belt—”

“What’s in the knapsack?”

“Midget receiving-set—good for about seventy miles. Up in the Keep at the Hall, that two-kilowatt radio-beacon is working. Jump in and come along with

That Failed

By CLARENCE
HERBERT NEW

Illustrated by A. E. Briggs

us—let's go places an' see things! We'll drive halfway down the edge of the forest an' go in from there."

They proceeded at once to do this.

When they got out of the car, Sir Harry tied one end of a two-hundred-foot length of sash-cord around a small tree and handed the other to the Marquess—with Archer and Gordon-Smith grasping it in between.

"Now, until you get used to this stuff, Chief, don't let go of the cord—best fasten it to your belt, I fancy. After you've tested for sound, direction and panic, we'll get to the beacon-signals—but we'll not try it before. As far as we've investigated, the stuff is absolutely harmless—but a person might easily die of fright if he let himself get rattled a bit. *Allons!* We now become scientific."

The Marquess, like the other Free-Lances, prided himself upon the ability to navigate London in the thickest "pea-soup" fog it ever saw—but he hadn't gone ten feet into that bank of seemingly solid white cloud before he realized that he was up against something entirely different from anything in his experience. By steadily concentrating upon his sense of polarity and orientation, he was just able to keep in mind the direction in which he was going—but he knew that in one moment's let-up on that concentration he'd be so thoroughly twisted that he'd only get out by a fluke, and might wander in that cloud for days without getting free of it. All sound was so thoroughly muffled that at six paces he had to shout in order to make the others hear—yet, like the Newfoundland fogs, there would come an occa-



"In this sort of fog the stuff seems so suffocatin' that if you get panic-stricken you're in a serious position!"

sional rift in the stuff through which he could hear quite clearly at a distance of eighty feet. Presently, when he had become accustomed to the cloud, he let go of the cord, put the earphones on, and distinctly heard the beat of the radio-beacon, easily getting the direction with the little compass-frame. They came to the edge of the wood in ten minutes. Then the Marquess wanted to know how the cloud was produced.

SIR HARRY thereupon described his experiments:

"Been workin' on a small generator, as you know, Governor—finally got it to the point where it is the lightest an' most powerful radio-generator for its size I've ever heard of—five times the power of any other. Tried every experiment I could think of. Was shooting fifty thousand kilowatts over a glass-enclosed electrode through the damp air over the tank in my lab. an' got a few wisps of mist. Well—everybody knows that salt will attract to itself every particle of moisture within a given radius, and I had that salt-flour in the bone-dry vault, in sealed casks—stuff we use for storage-battery experiments. Blew some of it up near the ceiling of the lab. where it remained a few minutes in suspension, then shot it with a hundred thousand kilocycles, and got this white

cloud. Shoved some rats into the center of it, with absolutely no effect upon 'em whatever—no electrolysis or nerve derangement. We've tried all sorts of tests since, including some on ourselves—and can produce that dense white cloud in almost any quantity anywhere, at any time, and the damper the air the better. Looks to us as if the stuff has a whale of a lot of value in some ways—but we haven't yet figured out what."

"Hmph! I agree with you, Harry! You certainly have got something—though I'm blessed if I see a use for it at the moment. However—we will see it, suddenly and unexpectedly, I dare say."

AT dinner, somebody asked Captain Fortescue if he had been in Berlin recently. He said he had just returned from an errand to the British Embassy there—but Salcombe, Archer and Lady Jean knew that he had spent three months of intensive investigation into Berlin political conditions—not as "Captain Fortescue," the brilliant *attaché* of the Foreign Office, but as a middle-aged repair and installation-man in the employ of the Telephone Department—careless as to clothes and general appearance. The Herr Doctor von Simmerling is one of those honest Teutons who considers the German War the most colossal blunder recorded in German history and is now not afraid to say so. As he does things with anatomy and in the line of plastic surgery which few other practitioners dare attempt, it is considered that his political opinions break no bones and are not sufficient cause to interfere with him.

It appeared that the Doctor was in London partly to consult with an eminent confrere upon certain possibilities in regard to brain-grafting—but it presently came out that he had left Berlin in a quiet rage of impotence over information he had picked up concerning a proposed *putsch* upon the part of Gustav Brinkler and his notorious collection of "Wuzzies"—a political growth which is neither fascist, communist, socialist or nationalist, but a sort of unholy mixture of all four. Brinkler undoubtedly owes his rise and his influence to business stagnation, excessive taxation and widespread discontent—but as head of the German Republic, he has a power which brings shivers to every Chancellery in Europe when it considers how far he may go if not stopped. Through some

confidential source of information, Von Simmerling had learned that forces of armed Wuzzies were being concentrated in all of the larger cities, to take over the various town governments and hold them subject to orders from Brinkler after he had pulled off a big *putsch* in Berlin on the first of the following month—and so entirely subservient to the personality of Brinkler were all his followers that it was generally believed there was nobody else capable of carrying out his stupendous plans if anything happened to him. The Wuzzies would be left, with a dozen secondary leaders—who would be quarreling among themselves inside of a week and taking orders from no one man.

Some one at the table asked the Herr Doctor why he didn't grab Brinkler some dark night and spirit him off somewhere.

Von Simmerling shook his massive head gravely.

"Pecause—look you—t'e man will nodd move away from t'e special guardt of t'ose Wuzzies w'ich iss always close aroundt where he iss! I couldt nodd get at 'im—nor couldt a tozen men get at 'im. Shoot t'e fellow—yess, easily—put mit getting myself shot t'e next moment—undt t'at would pe wasteful! I am Von Simmerling, der specialist—undt I haf knowledge mos' waluable for t'e human race w'ich mus' nodd pe snuffed out shust pecause I shoot fellow like Prinkler! *Nein!* Put—pring you dot man to me sometime—py my operatink room in Charlottenpurg—undt I do t'ings to 'is face so 'is own *Mutter* she wouldt nefer know she hadt porne soch a t'ing! I make 'im so he couldt go oudt t'rough t'e city undt standt pefore ten t'ousandt of his Wuzzies—undt t'ey wouldt laff—undt say: '*Wass iss dot?*' *Ja!*"

INTO four pairs of eyes around the table there came a sudden gleam, as the Marquess quietly asked:

"Is that a promise, my friend? Or are you just expressing yourself?"

"What you mean—'expressingk myself'?"

"You say this big *putsch* of Brinkler's is to be pulled off on the first of the month? Now, if somebody yanks Brinkler out from among his Wuzzy guards—from among his followers, no matter how big the crowd—would you really do what you've just said: Lift his face so his own mother wouldn't know him—and turn him loose? You see—havin' the job done by a German specialist



Two men felt their way to the consulting-room door, lugging an unconscious one between them, his head swathed in bandages.

makes it so no other surgeon of an outside Governm't can be accused of butting into your business. Frankly, you know—that idea rather intrigues me!”

The big specialist nodded ponderously.

“*Gott!* I do nodd know why you should talk of impossible t'ings, my good friend—it iss nodd like you! Put—*ja!* Pring you dot fellow to my operatink laporatory in Charlottenpurg—any way you like, so he iss alife, undt—*um Gottes Willen*—I do t'ings to him shust like I said. *Ja!* Dot iss a bromise! I only wish you couldt bromise to get 'im t'ere!”

“Perhaps we can. I wouldn't rag you on a question like this, Ruprecht—it's too damn' serious for all Europe! The

man is an irresponsible, radical firebrand. I wouldn't for a moment go into any plan for his assassination—don't believe in that sort of thing. But drawing his sting so that he's harmless for the rest of his life—well, that's something else again.”

“You bropose to get him yourself, my friend?”

“Oh, that would be a bit undignified—what? British peer—all that! But it just happens that I fancy the thing may not be as impossible as it looks. I'll not say it's certain, by a long shot—take a good bit of doin', d'ye see. But—well—it doesn't strike me as *impossible*, you know. —Would you consider it so, Fortescue?”

"Bit of an order, I'd say. There are more impossible things which have been pulled off—with luck. Still-an'-all—it would take organizin'—an' coördination by the clock, I fancy—"

"Care to have a go at it?"



"Prob'ly mean my resignation from the F. O. if it leaked out—the Chief couldn't countenance anything of the sort, even if he considered Brinkler as dangerous to Europe as we do. As a matter of fact, he doesn't. He's quite convinced that Brinkler can't get away with it, an' mightn't be much worse than the present Governm't if he did. But I fancy I might send a couple of men to you who would have a go at it as a sportin' proposition—an' particularly, if there were any chance of bein' paid in proportion to the risk. You get no really efficient men in the political *mouchard* class; that's down at the bottom—dregs who will do any dirty black-mailin' bit of spyin' for a few pounds. Men who can do a job like this successfully, belong in the 'gentleman-adventurer' lot—livin' on a decent income and knowing what they're worth when they do go adventuring."

MOST of this speech, as the Marquess and the other men well knew, was for the benefit of the innocent specialist, who in matters relating to the international underworld was as ignorant as a child. He nodded in perfect understanding when Captain Fortescue said that nobody officially connected with the British Foreign Office could undertake work of that sort. But each of the others was chuckling inwardly over memories of what F. O. men had occasionally pulled off in by-gone days.

Before they retired that night it was arranged and thoroughly understood

that a man would come to the Herr Doctor in Charlottenburg on the twenty-ninth of the month with a note asking the Doctor to give him a thorough examination to oblige an old friend—a note in which there would be five code-words at certain places in the text. When Von Simmerling was satisfied that the man was the one he expected him to be, his visitor would mention a certain type of radio-set which would be delivered at his house the following morning with full instructions as to how it must be operated by the specialist himself—being cautioned that, as the whole plan depended upon it to a serious extent, he must allow no other person to see or touch the machine. They assured him that he would understand the necessity for the radio-contrivance when the evening of the first came around—and the simple-minded great surgeon was childishly pleased to consider himself a political conspirator as a side-line. With the thoroughness for which his professional work was famous, they knew he would meticulously carry out every detail of instruction to the letter. Next afternoon he returned to London for the conference with his famous confrere—but Fortescue had phoned Downing Street that he was remaining in Devon another day, and Von Simmerling hadn't been gone two hours when they were ready to put on a show for Fortescue in the woods.

"We managed to keep our faces straight, Fortescue, when you were explainin' to the Doctor that your official position would prevent your havin' a go at anything of the sort; he swallowed every bit of it, too—seemed quite reasonable to him. But now that he's gone, you might tell us just how you are situated in Berlin. I happen to know a good bit about the 'telephone man'—an' I fancy you only came home to report this proposed *putsch*, see if pressure can't be brought to bear in the Reichstag, then go d'irectly back to watch developm'nts. You'll have been some assistance, of course—in the circumst'nces. Who's there with you?"

"Leftenants Reggie Soames, an' Bill Edgerton."

"Both good men. Young—but they've done good work in the Army Intelligence. Now before we go into the Brinkler matter further let us show you something we've recently developed."

They strapped a knapsack on his back—explained the tests to be made—then

took him deep into the woods. When Fortescue had worked his way out with the radio-beacon he couldn't believe that anything as thick as that cloud of fog could be produced entirely at will over any city.

They didn't consider it advisable to take him down into Archer's laboratory, but assured him the phenomenon had been tested out until they were quite positive as to what they could do. Then came the question as to whether he and the other two F. O. men would undertake to get Brinkler out from among his Wuzzy guard, put him in a car, give him a hypodermic, tie up his head in gauze bandages, for the benefit of police or others who might poke a flashlight into the car—and get him to Von Simmerling's surgery in Charlottenburg.

Fortescue agreed enthusiastically to make the attempt.

"My word! As far as I'm concerned, I'll tackle it like a shot! Only too pleased with the chance to put Brinkler out of the game! Of course Edgerton an' Soames are detailed under my orders—but most emphatically not for anything like this. However, they'll be keen to be in on it with me. Edgerton an' I both have been within a foot of Brinkler in Wuzzy uniform a dozen times—no diffic'ltly about doin' it again—your fog should make it an even more simple matter. Drivin' a car through any such mess as this in your woods by radio-signals will take a good bit of doin'—with plenty chances of collisions or accidents on the way—but after we pass the Kaiserplatz it'll be a straight run out Unter den Linden to Charlottenburg, an' we've plenty of time to familiarize ourselves with the street-intersections an' the diff'rent buildings. I fancy Brinkler will be usin' the big gymnasium in the East End on that particular night—and there's a short-cut from there to the Kaiserplatz. After that, it's a matter of keepin' on a straight line until we come to the Doctor's cross-street in Charlottenburg—an' the radio-beacon signals will be directly at right angles to us when we come to that. If we pull it off successfully, we'll communicate with you as soon as possible—prob'ly in code. Of course none of your planes will take the chance of coming down at the Tempelhof airport. Nothing to be gained—blind landing—sure to have inspectors nosing into the cabins."

"How about the time of day when Brinkler starts things? Is he likely to

make a move in the early morning—or afternoon?"

"We've considered that in connection with the scraps of information picked up, an' decided there's no chance of his startin' much before nine pip-emma. Y'see, he's gradually concentratin' men in Berlin from the surroundin' territory. In citizens' clothes nobody can tell whether they're Wuzzies, *bona-fide* citizens, or belongin' to the big number of unemployed—so the noticeable increase of men on the streets won't seem suspicious to the police or Army officers. He'll take no chance of showin' Wuzzy uniforms before dark—and after dark, a thousand Wuzzy uniforms give a pretty realistic suggestion of five thousand. Then—no German goes into any sort of a scrap on an empty stomach. Give 'em at least a couple of hours for refreshin' themselves on beer an' frankfurters—ham and cheese sandwiches. After which—"

IT was arranged that if any change in this program seemed likely, Fortescue and his officers would get a radio-message in to Trevor Hall somehow. Then the Captain hurried back to Berlin by plane.

Just before noon on the first of the month, two big amphibians went soaring up from the Scabbacombe Cliffs—



each carrying in its cabin a powerful smoke-screen blower and four casks of the salt-flour which had been sifted in a thoroughly dried vault and sealed in the casks against any possibility of moisture getting in. Following them came a larger amphibian designed to carry twenty passengers in addition to a crew

of five. But in place of the live weight, was a two-kilowatt broadcasting-set—and Sir Harry's recently developed generator, the further possibilities of which he was delightedly investigating.

WE come now to "Handsome Gustav," as he has been nicknamed all over Europe—presumably in derision. He had driven into the city with three of his aides in a powerful car about two in the afternoon, and had gone to the Adlon for a meal—three of the waiters and five of the near-by guests being Wuzzies in plain clothes. The man would have been safe enough in any of the leading hotels because the managements would have had their detectives looking after a celebrity who was, after all, a member of the Reichstag and under no risk of arrest by the Government. After the meal, the four lighted long black cigars and drove eastward. Turning south along the west end of the old Schloss, the car ran down to a house on the Friedrichsgracht where Brinkler was admitted by himself, his companions driving on across the west arm of the Spree to a large gymnasium pretty well down on Dresdenstrasse, where there was something of a crowd around the door and the big exercise-floor inside was closely packed with Wuzzies already in uniform.

Here was where Fortescue and the lieutenants made their first tactical error and came near losing the whole game. Their car had been parked near the other one at the side of the Adlon—but when Brinkler and his companions came out to drive eastward it seemed too much of a risk to follow it closely down Unter den Linden—too much chance of their faces being remembered and afterward spotted.

So they took a certain short cut from the old Kaiser Wilhelm Palace, and drove directly down to the gymnasium, which they knew to be the rendezvous for that particular evening, and sat waiting in the car at the curb—pulling on the brown shirts, caps and jackets which constituted the Wuzzy uniform—belting on the two large-caliber automatics which formed the mobile armament—exchanging jokes with men in other cars and hall-entrances who were doing likewise.

Presently Brinkler's car came up with his three companions, but minus the man himself.

Jimmy Fortescue's jaw dropped—this

was something he hadn't bargained for. He called out to the other car:

"*Wass iss* which you have done with the Herr Kommander, Kamerad?"

"Oh—he has another hour or two before the *Offiziers* will be coming with the final reports of the details. So he decided to call upon a lady in whom he is much interested. We go back after him—presently."

"*Ja*—but—it is dangerous, Kamerad! Suppose you were followed? There may be *Polizei* waiting outside when you get there—or—worse! *Der Teufel!* . . . This is no time to be taking chances like that! Is it far?"

The man hesitated.

"Why, ten minutes' drive, possibly—"

"Then go you back at once and remain within sight of the door!"

"Um! I think you're right, Kamerad—but—you see, it is rather a delicate matter. The Herr Kommander expressly ordered that we did not come back until the time he said—"

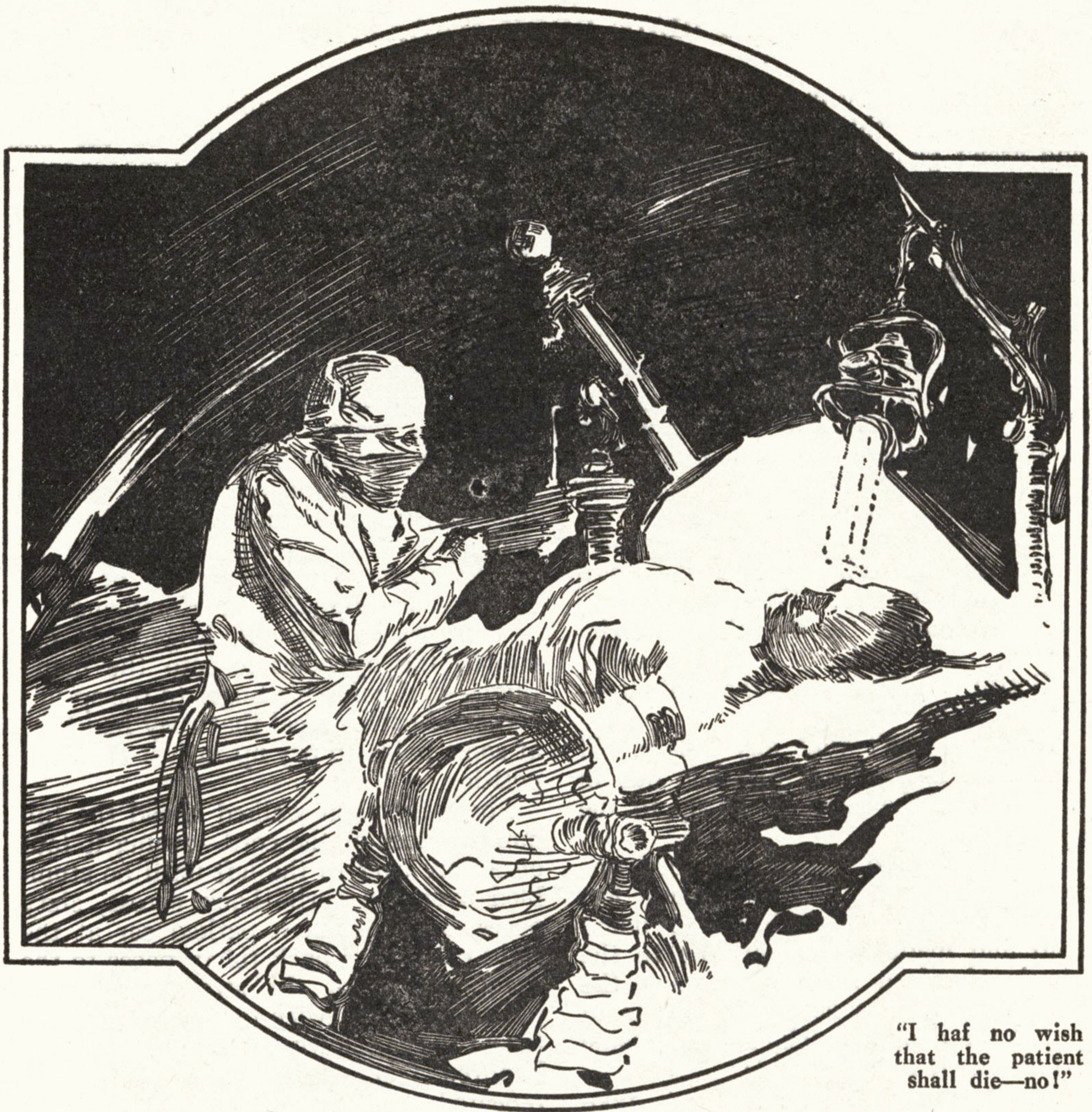
"But he didn't order that *we* should not! Probably might not recall our faces when he sees them. Give us the address—we'll just stick around quietly until you come after him—"

"H-m-m—well—again, I think you're right—but you know what the Chief is when it comes to ladies! No—we'd better obey orders and take no chance of his finding out that we disobeyed him—"

IT was getting noticeably darker in the streets—arc-lights were scintillating all over the city. For just a second, Fortescue had caught a glimpse of something more than a mile up in the sky, reflecting a flash of light, but his eyes refused to focus upon any moving spots up there after that—nor was there any hum of airplane motors. One of the Marquess' earlier patents had been a muffler which practically eliminated all noise from the exhaust, and another one which enabled the mechanic to alter the pitch of the propeller-blades at will. In another fifteen minutes, the Captain saw wisps of mist along the pavements, particularly on the side toward the Spree—and for a moment he cursed with a picturesqueness and originality which delighted his companions.

"Why the language, old chap?" Bill Edgerton laughed.

"My word! If the three of us don't manage to guess where 'Handsome Gustav' has just got to be—damn him—we're dished, that's all. Dished



"I haf no wish
that the patient
shall die—no!"

wide open—no time for even one mistake! Inside of twenty minutes nobody without the practice we've had in the last week can get a car a hundred feet through these streets—or walk a single block except by hauling along the railings! After which, the first cross-street ditches him! Think, you chaps—think! Where the dickens is that popinjay likely to be at this moment—in the circumstances?"

"Well, I'd say at the house of the Baroness Sofie von Klammart on the Friedrichsgracht—halfway from the first bridge to the next corner. I know the house if we get there in time to see it. She's by way of bein' rather nuts on Gustav. And I'm bettin' he's struttin' up an' down the room before her at this moment, posin' as the Man of Destiny—one hand in the neck of his brown shirt! What?"

Fortescue had whirled the car around the corner on two wheels, driven around the block, and was racing for the first bridge over the west arm of the Spree

as the mist thickened into the dense white cloud he had seen in Devon. Fortunately it was still thin enough for them to see Brinkler's unmistakable shadow on the second-floor shades of the house as they pulled up exactly opposite the gate in the iron railing.

AS the mist thickened, Fortescue lighted his pipe and relaxed against the cushions.

"I still think we were right not to tag his car all the way along Unter den Linden—but it damn' near made the whole game a washout! Not one of those men in the gymnasium could find him now on a bet—he couldn't get down there to save his whole bally *putsch*! If he doesn't turn up in the morning, the whole Wuzzy scheme is wrecked! Joke of it is—although we only saved the game by a hair, due to Bill's reliable old bean, his bein' here alone with the dame simplifies the matter a jolly big lot. He'll fall for any good argum'nt we put up—in a position where he can't do

anything else! By the way, you chaps! You see this 'pea-soup' thickenin' and aren't givin' it another thought because we Londoners are quite used to that sort of thing—but let me caution you a bit: You've not the faintest idea what you're up against! I've been in one of these—not the least diffic'ly in breathin' comfortably if you keep your head. But the stuff *seems* so suffocatin', that if you get panic-stricken you're in a pretty serious position. I've an impression that there may be a good many casualties by morning. So keep your heads—breathe naturally!"

"My word! But—but how—or where—does the stuff originate? I never saw fog like this before! What causes it?"

"Santa Claus. He doesn't like Brinkler."

"Gettin' thicker by the minute—what?"

"Aye—we can't wait any longer. If we do, he may refuse to come out in it. I'll take the rope an' go up to the door."

With a hundred feet of sash-cord, one end of which was tied to Soames' leg, Fortescue stepped out into the dense cloud and made a straight line to the gate in the iron fence, then rang the door-bell. When a neatly dressed maid opened the door a crack, he slid inside and closing it quickly, said:

"Listen, my girl! First—take an urgent message up to the Herr Kommander Brinkler, at once! Then close every door and window in the house! If you don't, you'll not be able to see across the rooms in fifteen minutes. Ask the Herr Kommander to come down and see me here at once. I am Major Bruchau of the Wuzzies. It is most important, if the arrangements are to be carried out. Now hurry, girl!"

BRINKLER was in no good humor as he came down the stairs,—already showing traces of haze in the halls,—and was starting to express himself when Fortescue cut him short:

"Herr Kommander—with all respect—if you get to the rendezvous at all, tonight, you must come at once! Your *Offiziers* will do nothing without your personal orders! Your car cannot possibly get back here for you! Here! . . . Glance outside! Can you see the electric light two doors away?" The Captain swung open the door for just a second—then closed it. "We have a car and can get you through this with

a rope and a man walking ahead. Practiced it last year in one of the bad Hamburg fogs. There is no time for argument, *Excellenz!* If you do not reach the gymnasium within half an hour the whole *putsch* is worse than a failure—"

THAT one glance outside had been enough. Handsome Gustav's heart went down into his boots as he ran upstairs for a last embrace with his Baroness—he feared his star was setting. Fortescue took his hand—got him across the sidewalk in a reasonably straight line—saying, as Brinkler climbed in the door:

"Watch out for a sharp bit of metal on the door-frame, Herr Kommander!"

This was Lieutenant Edgerton's cue to jab the hypodermic into the man's thigh—and guide his finger to the sprung corner of casing steel that they had been at some pains to pry up in just the right position.

Fortescue then walked ahead the full hundred feet of the cord—swung it taut on an arc over to the left until he stumbled over the curb—back across, sixty paces, until he hit a parked car at the right curb, then back thirty paces to the exact middle of the street, where he jerked the cord twice for Reggie Soames to run the car slowly after him. Another hundred feet straight ahead—then he repeated the curb-to-curb test. This sounds like slow work—but they had practiced it on a country road in the middle of the night until the man with the cord knew instinctively when he was straight ahead of the car and when swerving off toward either curb or ditch. In twenty minutes, they came alongside the big Schloss—turned left through the Koenigsplatz into Unter den Linden, where Fortescue looped the cord over the hood and took the wheel, with the radio-receivers over his ears ticking out the regular click of the radio-beacon in Charlottenburg.

It was the weirdest experience the F. O. men, with their unconscious captive, ever had had—a veritable bit from the Inferno! Suffocating white mist which prevented even a glimpse of the car's interior—occasional faint echoes of voices from disembodied spirits—not even a rim glow from arc-lights. Once, through a rift in the fog, came a horrid blood-curdling, bubbling scream as a murderer's knife secured for him a well-filled wallet. . . .

They now had a perfectly straight line

ahead of them—through the Brandenburger Thor—the Tiergarten—Bismarckstrasse to Kaiser Friedrichstrasse, where the beacon-signals were exactly at right angles to their course by the radio-compass. Even with the practice they'd had it was inevitable, of course, that they must hit something occasionally—they ripped off mudguards from four cars which had had to stop at the curb when the fog thickened. The rest of the way, if a tire ran up on a curb they knew they were too far at one side and got back cautiously to the middle until it happened again.

MEANWHILE, in a handsome Charlottenburg residence, a phlegmatic specialist had calmly eaten an ample and excellent dinner with his family—and dismissed them to their own part of the house, which had no communication with his consulting, operating or patients' rooms or his big laboratory. He meticulously read his two papers—conservative and radical—had his usual pint of champagne—and smoked his German pipe. Then he went into his laboratory, locked the door, and started the radio-beacon, exactly according to instructions, at seven P.M. What its object was, he hadn't the faintest idea; the sky had been perfectly clear when he sat down to dinner—Berlin rarely has anything like London fog. Presently, however, loud commotion in the other part of the house made him go through to stop the noise—and he found the family closing every opening to the outer air in an attempt to barricade such a cloud of fog as none of them ever had seen before. Now, with little real fog, Berlin has other phenomena dangerous to major operations—soft-coal smoke and soot, among the rest—gases, and plenty of air-pollution. So as a matter of necessity, Von Simmerling had run up a chimney whose top was nearly two hundred feet above the ground and had ventilating-ducts leading to it from all parts of the house—the fresh air from it being dried and filtered before entering the rooms. Going to the door of his consulting-room, he stepped outside—and got lost at once. But he methodically found the side of the house and got in again, after which he turned on a radio-set in his drawing-room, tuned it to eighteen hundred meters, and promptly got the beat of his laboratory "beacon."

"Hmph! . . . So *dot* wass it! But—but—this fog wass not down in der

Almanak! How der *Teufel* could der *gut* Marquess know there would be fog in Berlin on der first? Tell me t'at! No matter! I see him! Dot radio-beacon wass most clever—if he works! *Ja—if—he—works!*"

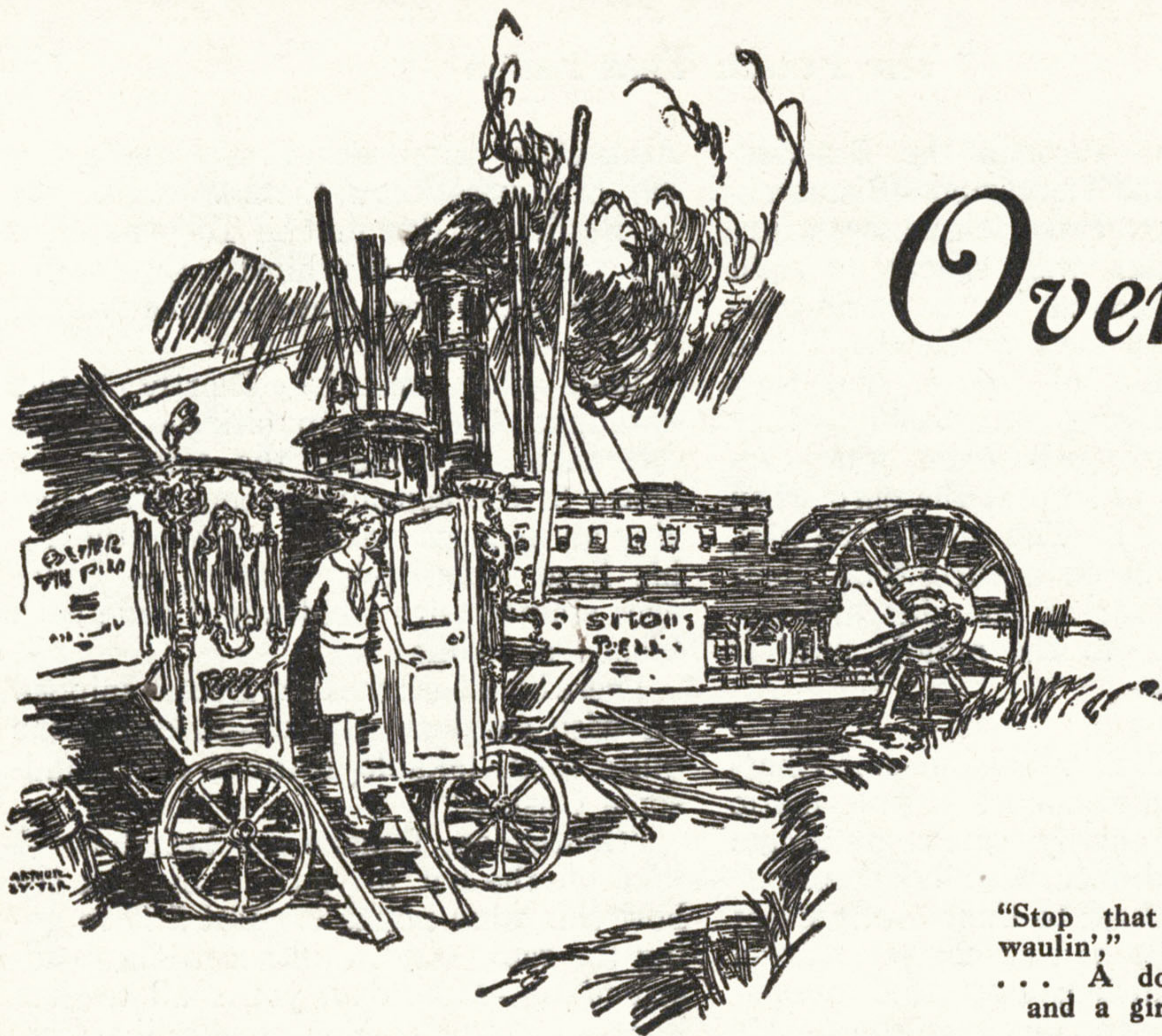
Well—"he worked." Shortly before midnight, two men in citizens' clothes felt their way along the side of the house to the consulting-room door, lugging an unconscious one between them—his head completely swathed in bandages stained with what might have been blood—or iodine!

These bandages the Herr Doctor snipped off with surgical scissors—revealing the quite unmistakable features of "Handsome Gustav."

"Gentlemen, I make my best bow—I take off the hat to you! I did not see how this wass possible. But I keep going the radio-beacon all according to instructions—some day, you shall tell me how he worked. You would like, perhaps, to see me operate—yes? Obviously I cannot have my own assistants in case like this—so you shall be my assistants undt must do exactly what I say, because I haf no wish that the patient shall die—no. It iss better that he should live undt learn humility. You will put on the antiseptic white overall—you will permit that I cover your faces mit antiseptic gauze undt your hands mit rubber gloves. You will hand me whatever I point to—and speak no word. You will also tell me what you haf use' in the hypo—and what strength."

A MILE up in the starlit sky, seven men in a big amphibian plane had been looking down while a billowing cloud of white fog on the terrain blotted out the blanket of jewels which had been the sparkling electrics of Berlin. Presently they would signal the two big planes overhead and fly westward to give Bremen and Hamburg their share of the night's fog, but the Marquess and Sir Harry were rather hoping they might get some word from the silent, brooding mystery below them. They knew that Fortescue had dropped a temporary aerial from the top of the Herr Doctor's big chimney and that he had a kilowatt of power for the radio-beacon. Half an hour's work would enable them to broadcast code with it before dismantling. And sure enough, they presently got their call:

"*City paralyzed. Operation successful.*"



Over the

"Stop that damned caterwaulin'," Clay bellowed. . . . A door swung open, and a girl stepped out.

"**W**OMEN and horses!" Clay Cable sighed lustily against the backstretch rail of Churchill Downs, and watched the law lead away the last but one of his racing stable. That one nuzzled the sparse grass at his feet—a spavined gelding. The law hadn't needed him to meet the feed-bills.

Beside the gelding, Black Asa grinned placatingly.

"Where do we go f'um here, Misteh Clay?"

Cable ignored him. "Women and horses!" he repeated. "Poison." He turned to Asa. "We're just only farmers, Ase, and we got no business mixing with them."

He roused himself. "I got you a job with Sanchez. He's shipping to Latonia, and I want that you should go along and get to the farm quick as possible. Get things going. Me and Ram, here, we'll come along overland."

Asa demurred feebly. "I aint leaving you, Misteh Clay."

The white man snatched the halter-ropes. "You're leaving right now," he amended, "before Sanchez changes his mind."

He watched the groom shuffle along through the stable lane. Then he shortened the line from Rameses' halter. A man in New Albany, across the river, wanted a good saddle-horse, and he was going over to make a deal.

That would clean things up. No more women—no more horses. Mules were a lot better on the business end of a plow.

He chirruped softly, and began to thread his way through the trees, leading the last of the Cable string—and singing:

*Git on 'at boat, an' down the river float,
While the moon is shinin' bright.
On 'at boat, an' down the river float,
'Cause we goin' to raise a ruckus tonight.*

He led the crippled Rameses off the ferry at New Albany, and paused to orient himself. The yellow Ohio curled lazily along the levee bank, through rows of shipping. Lines of singing black men, glistening in the sun, were loading tobacco, limestone, corn. He reckoned that if he went half a mile down the levee and then cut uphill, he'd come to the riding man's farm.

Halfway of that dodging, twisting river trek, he came upon an alien sight, and halted. An ancient stern-wheeler nuzzled the footpacked clay. A profusion of gilt and crimson paint was scaling from her scarred sides. Rising from the texas was a vast canvas sign.

Clay scrutinized the bleary lettering:

Belle Sefton's
RIVER BELLES
and
Old-Time Minstrels
10—20—30¢

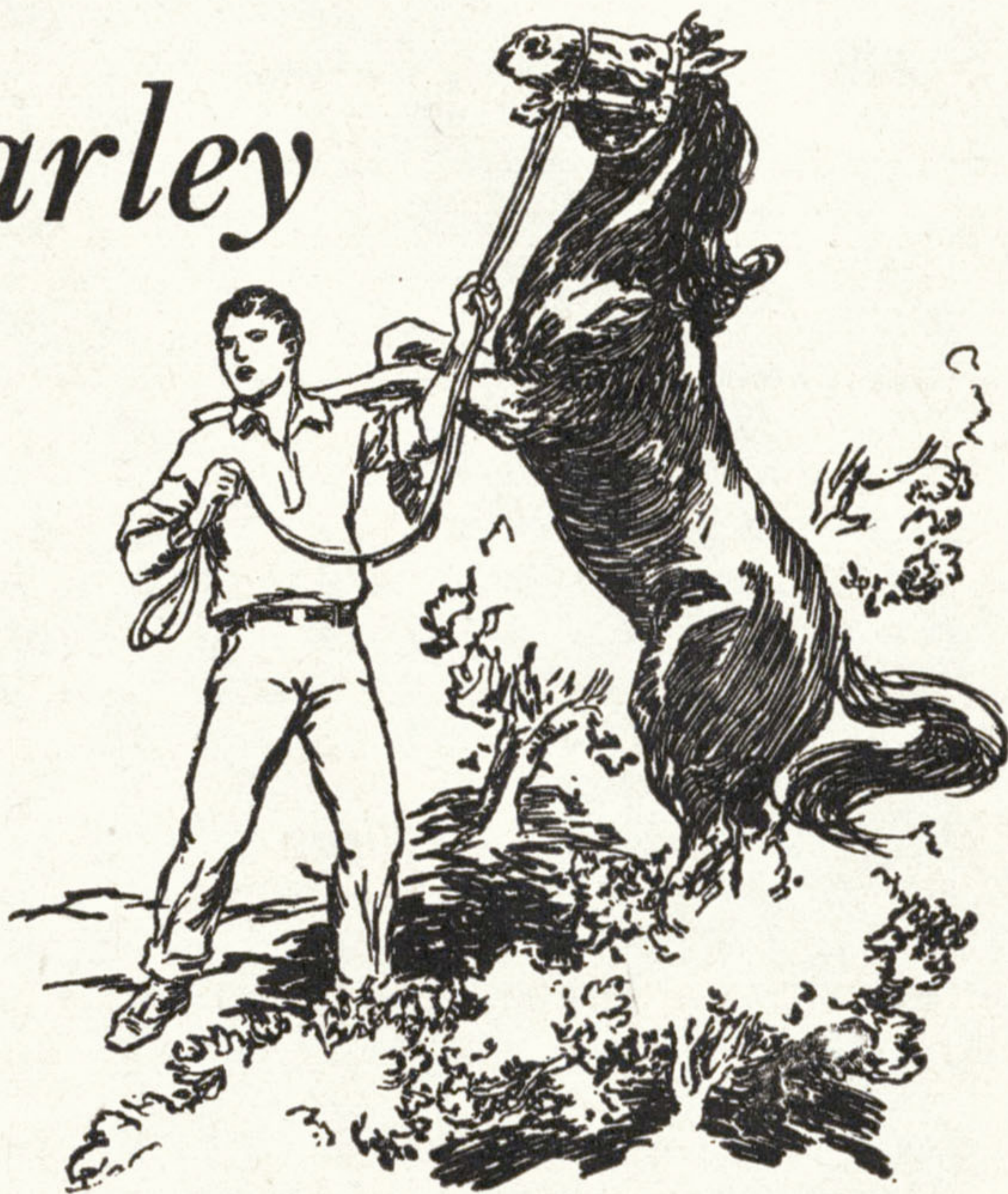
Below in fresher paint and a still un-

River, Charley

A vivid romance of show-boat life on the Ohio, by a gifted writer new to these pages.

By ODGERS
GURNEE

Illustrated by Arthur Lytle



steadier hand was a second fold of canvas ballyhoo:

Grand Added Specialty
"Over the River, Charley"
With Entire Cast and Chorus
MOSTLY GIRLS

Clay Cable grinned and sniffed. "Women!" he said.

He clucked to Rameses, and made to pass on. But as he fronted the creaky ticket booth at the gangplank, an unholy squeal of sound rose from landward and stormed about his ears.

Rameses quivered for an instant in fright and then went straight up on his sound hindlegs, pawing the air. The leather of the head-line groaned ominously with the strain, and Clay fought to ease the rearing horse to earth and peace in flurry of stamping hoofs and feet, and a bedlam of overpowering din.

Through the dust and spin of the *mêlée* he saw a boxlike thing on wheels set back from the river-bank. It too was shedding gilt and crimson paint. From its middle erupted swirls of black smoke, and an occasional hiss of steam—and from its innards wheezed and shrieked awful sounds he now recognized vaguely as having kinship with a popular air.

A steam calliope!

Rameses came back to earth and dug his hoofs into the clay, fighting frenziedly to be free.

Clay wove fingers through the halter and advanced as close as the frightened animal would permit.

"Stop that damned caterwaulin'!" he bellowed.

The scream of sound stopped abruptly. A door in the pocked frame swung open, and a girl stepped out.

Clay stared. He hadn't expected to see a woman—and certainly not one like this.

She had cornflower eyes—bluer, he thought, than most cornflowers. And corn-silk hair—only a bit silkier, perhaps. And she was as angry as he.

"I didn't think music would bother a jackass," she said evenly.

Clay went pop-eyed. "This here," he corrected slowly, indicating Rameses, "is a horse, ma'am."

The girl let her eyes flick toward the gelding and then back to Clay.

"Yes," she acknowledged; "but I didn't know that it was a horse that got scared."

She started to retreat once more into the calliope's interior, but some one laughed.

The laugh stung Clay like a whiplash.

"If you can't play that thing," he said cuttingly, "why don't you quit for keeps?"

Her eyes bored twin holes through his frazzled shirt-front.

"Kin you do better?"

"I sure couldn't do worse!"

A hand touched his arm, and he wheeled. An older woman, blonde too, and still holding traces of what must have been great beauty of a sort, was smiling.

"I'm downright sorry, Mister," she said, and then paused, regarding him. "Do you," she asked almost plaintively, "do you play piano?"

Clay bowed. "I can."

She indicated the horse.

"Is that your animal?"

He looked his surprise.

"Of course he is," she said quickly. And then: "Do you want a job?"

Clay stiffened. He was aware that she was taking in his rumpled clothes, his not-too-clean linen.

"Listen," she said: "I'm Belle Sefton. Last Saturday my husband—he played the piano and handled the money—ran out on us with all the week's take and the soubrette. They got away on the only horse we had."

She spread her hands apologetically.

"I've got to have a piano-player and a horse."

SOMEHOW Clay found himself laughing at the way she said it. He liked Belle Sefton.

"Ma'am," he assured her, "I reckon we can make a trade."

He nodded down the river. "I want to get to Covington. Are you going that far?"

She laughed too. "If we can keep ahead of the sheriff."

Clay turned back to the calliope. The girl was still standing in the opened door—still regarding him with those sharp cornflower eyes. Beside her, now, stood a man. His gaze was less intent, but it had a different quality.

There was hostility in the girl's look, enmity in his.

He was big—as tall as Clay, but heavier; and his face was thick and square with the jowls of a mastiff. A wavering scar zigzagged down across the cheek from the corner of the eye to the tip of the ear and drew the flesh tighter on that side, so that the left eye seemed bigger and more sinister than the right.

Clay faced the girl and bowed low. If there was in the gesture a hint of mockery, perhaps it was because he hadn't eaten for twelve hours, and he was a little giddy and light-headed from hunger.

He swung about then, leading Rameses to the gangplank.

"Rain in the wind, big boy," he whispered, "and a cuppy track." He had

made two enemies, and the job hadn't even begun. It looked like a bad start.

CLAY CABLE went to work, the first time in his life, at five-thirty that afternoon. So did Rameses. He tacked streamers on the sides of the calliope and tucked the gelding in the shafts.

Then, while Clay played, a man named Shil Morgan drove jerkily through the streets, and New Albany was made privy to the fact that Belle Sefton's River Belles were performing for one night only at its gates, and would leave tomorrow on the flood of the fair Ohio.

At seven o'clock he rushed through a quick rehearsal at the bandy-legged old piano, while Belle Sefton marked the cues for him.

"The first part's easy as pie, son," she assured him. "There ain't any olio, and the afterpiece is just plumb crazy."

She picked up one of his big hands and turned it over, examining the broad palm, calloused by hay-fork and halter-rope.

"That fist looks as if it belonged on the business end of a sledge-hammer, but you sure can make music with it."

Clay flushed. "I guess I was born with one of those things in my lap, Miss Sefton." He grinned a little proudly. "My mother studied in Paris."

She regarded him silently, nodding her head.

"I knew you were quality," she said.

He flushed again. "I'm a Cable, ma'am," he said quietly. To him that answered everything. Her answer made him laugh.

"I don't know anything about Cables," she said crisply, "but I'm an expert on piano-players. I married two of 'em."

She turned and thumbed the leaves of the score. "You got this all straight now?" she asked. "Any questions?"

He frowned. "Two! First off, I can't get this 'Over the River, Charley,' business straight in my head. It's—"

"Plumb crazy," she admitted. "When we started out with this troupe, we had a regular show—minstrel first part, then specialties for the olio, and a regular afterpiece. The juvenile got fired at Wheeling; a sister act walked out the next week; and last Saturday old man Sefton went skip-to-de-lou with the soubrette and the gate-money."

She sighed.

"If you were a trouper instead of a gentleman, you'd know what 'Over the River, Charley' meant. It means trouble. It means the troupe hasn't got



Clay banged out everything from "Money Musk" to "Good-by, my Bluebell," in the course of that "Over the River, Charley."

enough talent to put on a regular after-piece, so the whole outfit pitches in and does any old thing to fill out the show. It's ad-libbing your way through an emergency so the cash customers will go home thinking they have seen something for their dime."

She patted the back of his hand maternally, and smiled.

"Don't fret because you can't find any score for it. There isn't any. When somebody is about to bust into song, they walk up to the foots and say, 'Professor, can you play "Pop Goes the Weasel"?' or whatever it is, and—"

She shook a finger under his nose.

"When they do, you say yes, and play it."

"And if I don't know it?" he asked.

"You fake it," she answered decisively.

"Good Lord," Clay asked, "am I the whole orchestra in this troupe?"

"Why, no," she answered, surprised. "Didn't I tell you? That girl you were fussing with this morning, Cincy Doe—is the orchestra-leader. She plays fiddle."

A chill ran down Clay's neck and settled in his arms. His fingers began to feel like ten thumbs against the cracked

keys. Unconsciously he started to ripple out the melody of his marching song:

"*Git on 'at boat—*"

Belle Sefton grinned. "What's your second question?"

Clay continued to play softly.

"There isn't any question—you just answered it plenty," he assured her. The music went on. "*'Cause we goin' to raise a ruckus tonight.*"

Belle began to hum the tune. "What are you playing?" she demanded.

It was Clay's turn to grin.

"That's the Cable fighting song," he explained. "My dad's cavalry sang it going in and coming out of the Wilderness and Antietam. I've been singing it ever since—in emergencies."

AND Clay went through the first night at the keyboard in a welter of anxiety, contrition and conjecture. He had to watch Cincy to get the time from the swing of her left arm. He marveled at the way she fingered the stops and still kept the rhythmic up-down beat of the music.

When he was looking, she kept her eyes straight ahead, but he knew that when he turned to face the keys, those disdainful blue eyes were boring into his neck, and his hands would suddenly go clammy and feel as though the fingers were sticking together.

He was sorry about that affair on the levee. Of course, he hadn't known a woman would pop out of the infernal machine, and she'd certainly done her part to keep the pot boiling. Still, he felt contrite about it. He decided to apologize handsomely at the first opportunity.

As for conjecture, he wondered who she was—where she'd learned to play so well, who the big man with the scar was, and what—

The minstrel first part ended; and he discovered that she was leaving the pit.

"I work in the afterpiece," she said frigidly above his ear. "You play this alone." She brushed past him. "And for heaven's sake, don't flat every time you put your paws on the keys."

Clay banged out everything from "Money Musk" to "Good-by, my Bluebell," in the course of that first "Over the River, Charley." There didn't seem to be any special score for the chaser after the final curtain. So he played "We're Going to Raise a Ruckus," while the customers marched out. It seemed quite fitting.

HE attempted the handsome apology the next morning. The boat was paddling toward Madison. The rest of the women were eating breakfast. He found Cincy on the upper deck, washing stockings in a wooden bucket.

"I'm downright sorry," he began.

She looked up. "You ought to be," she assured him.

"I thought it was a man," he went on.

The stockings plopped back into the bucket. She faced him with a wet hand on each hip.

"Just what are you talking about?"

Clay was disconcerted. He motioned toward the distant shores of New Albany.

"Why," he stammered, "that fuss—about the calliope and all—"

She sniffed. "Oh, that," she said. "I thought you were apologizing for being a rotten piano-player."

He shook his head, grinning. She certainly had made him drop his guard before shooting that one home. "You win, lady," he said solemnly. "I'll throw that in too. So long as I'm apologizing, I might as well go the whole hog."

"Accepted," she said coldly.

"Then we're friends?" he insisted.

She lifted the dripping stockings onto a deck-chair. "No," she answered, and picking up the bucket, she added:

"If you don't move, you're liable to get these suds smack in that handsome face of yours, Mister, because I'm aiming to throw them in the river."

She swirled the foamy liquid menacingly, and he laughed and backed away. But watching her, he saw her eyes change bleakly. She put the bucket down; she seemed looking past him up the deck.

A thick voice rumbled at his shoulder-blades before he could turn. It was the man with the scar. The eyes were worse this morning,—red-rimmed,—and the big body swayed, exaggerating the slight list of the boat.

"Listen, rube," he said to Clay: "in show business, people don't bother folks that don't want to be bothered."

He stood with his feet planted far apart, and grotesquely sheared methodically at his fingernails with a pair of slim-bladed scissors.

The scar hitched his lips into a crooked smile.

"Chase yourself," he sneered.

Clay felt the muscles curl along his shoulders. People didn't talk that way to a cable!

The girl's voice broke in. "I'd be obliged if you'd go," she said flatly. He

turned to look at her. Her eyes were on the scissors in the big man's hand.

There was nothing for him to do but go. Clay bowed stiffly. "I beg your pardon again," he said, and went forward along the deck.

At the cabin door he looked back. She had picked up the bucket again. Then she let it go. But the suds didn't go into the river. They streamed full into the face of the man with the scar.

BELLE was still at breakfast when Clay went below.

"There's another question," he said quickly. "The man with the twisted face—who is he?"

She seemed to hesitate before answering. "His name is Hawkes—Dude Hawkes. He's the front man," she said then; "box-office." She looked at him intently. "Why?"

He shrugged. "I just wondered. I don't like him."

Belle broke a piece of toast and spread it slowly with jam.

"Don't get too worried about other people's troubles, sonny," she said. "Most folks can take care of themselves."

Clay smiled grimly. "In other words, mind my own business."

She thought that over for a spell, and bit into the toast with a sharp decisive snap.

"Well, no—but just don't spend too much time trying to mind somebody else's." She pointed the butter-knife at him, gesturing with a grave severity. "And remember you're a Cable."

He flushed heavily, confused.

"I don't see—" he began.

Belle rattled the dishes and rose.

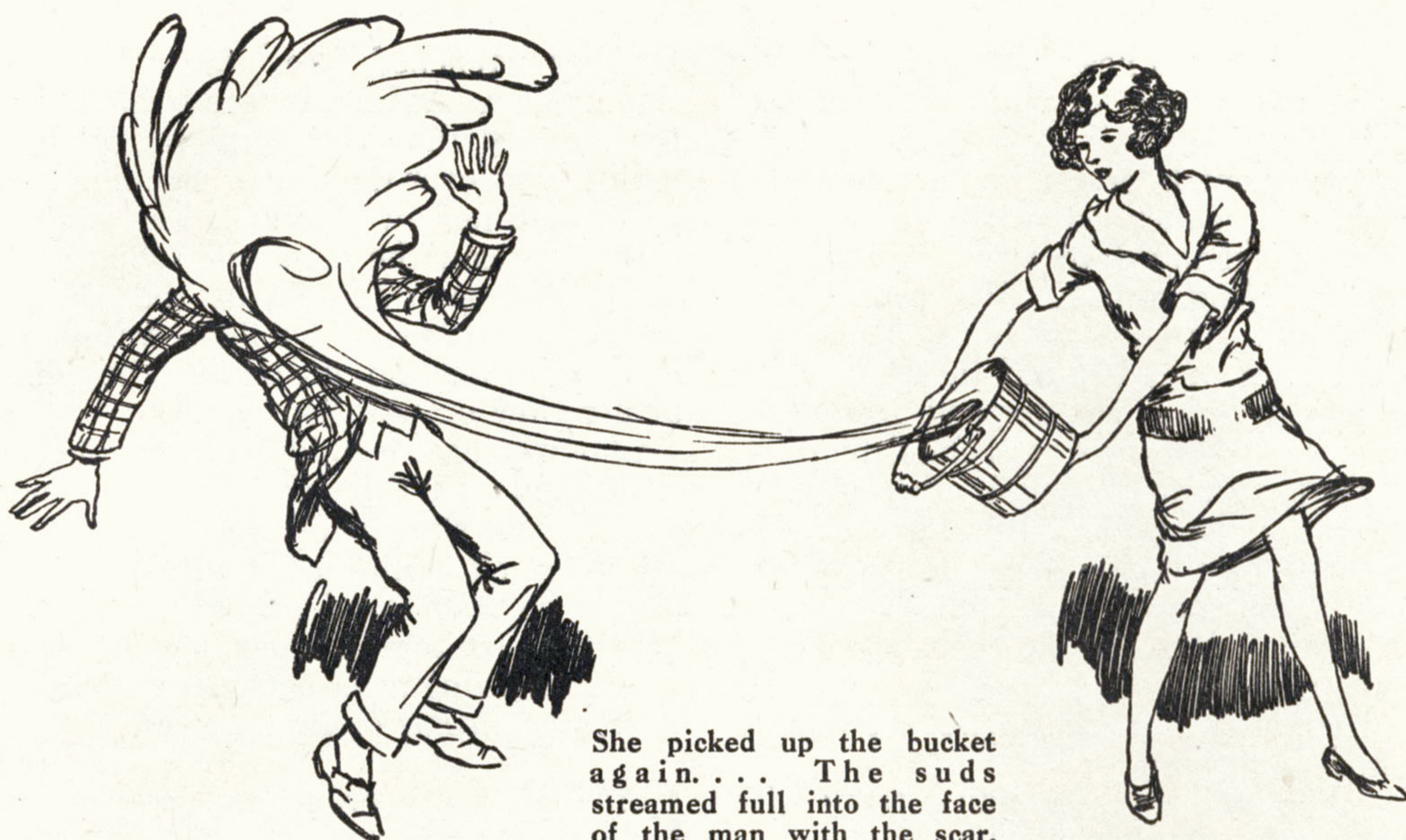
"Cincy Doe's an orphan," she said,—"a runaway one to boot. I took her in because she's a sweet kid, and needed looking out for. But she doesn't even know her own name—"

Clay gripped her elbow and swung her around, facing him.

"I don't know whether you're ragging me or not," he said. "I reckon I deserve it. That Cable stuff's all right—it's something to live up to. But from now on I'm just a farmer—corn and cows. There's two things I don't want anything to do with—horses and women. I'm through with them both."

Belle handed him a clean cup and poured coffee.

"That's mighty big talk for such a little boy," she said, smiling. "Just don't lay any bets on it!"



She picked up the bucket again. . . . The suds streamed full into the face of the man with the scar.

She went on out into the galley. Clay grinned and drained the cup.

"And besides," he said, "what difference does it make if she is an orphan?"

THEY played Madison that night, and the calliope might well have seemed the pipes of Hamelin. It brought them down in droves to spend their dimes and see the River Belles perform.

From the top deck Clay watched the long lines thread up to the ticket-booth and file inside.

He could see Dude Hawkes' long fingers raking in the cash, stripping the bills in neat piles, making change, in swift deft movements like a man dealing cards. Occasionally the line would bunch about the booth, and a customer would protest the total of his change.

Then some one behind would surge forward, slap his money on the ticket counter, and the protestant would be carried forward up the gangway.

And invariably, when this happened, Hawkes would produce a crumpled bill from his right hand and wave it ostentatiously under the bright light of the arcs as he motioned the line along.

And watching him more closely, Clay saw that always, when that happened; Shil Morgan, who should have been in the engine-room, banking the fires, was somewhere in the line close to the shorn lamb.

They were systematically short-changing the crowd—giving fives for tens, tens for twenties.

Clay wondered whether or not Belle

knew it. He felt that she didn't, but their talk of the morning was still fresh in his memory. "It's probably a good time to start minding my own business," he decided, and went below to take his post for the overture.

He went through the opening numbers with only half his mind on the music. If Hawkes would steal from the farmers, he would also steal from Belle Sefton! And he'd do it in some slick, shrewd way that easy-going Belle wouldn't catch until it was too late.

Clay was so preoccupied with the thought of it that he was halfway through the first part before he realized that something was wrong with Cincy. She was sliding into notes, missing some of them, so that he had to thump the bass to drown out her discords. The usual smooth, rhythmic beat of her left arm, keeping time, was jerky, and her bowing faltered.

Clay watched her closely, but she kept her head turned toward the footlights.

"Nervous," he mused. And then: "why?"

HE ran through the afterpiece alone in the pit. Suspicion had begun to sharpen his mind. It crystallized swiftly when he played the roaring chorus of the grand finale,—“entire cast and chorus,”—and Cincy wasn't on the stage.

Her room was on the upper deck, on the river side. He raced up the forward companionway and slid noiselessly down the corridor. From the deck outside, he could see a thin slant of light through the shuttered window. Standing close be-

side it, he could hear her moving quickly—hear the rustle of clothing, sounds of packing.

A moment later the key grated in the lock, and he stepped swiftly to the door. She had changed to street clothes and was carrying a bag. Her eyes looked frightened as she saw him. Then they went hard, and her mouth set in a determined line. He stepped inside the room and shut the door behind him.

"I don't aim to mind other people's business," he said. "But this concerns me. I took this job to get to Covington; and if you run off with Dude Hawkes, it will bust up the whole shebang and I'll have to walk."

He reached for the bag, but she whirled away from him.

"Who said I was running away with Hawkes?" she demanded.

Clay eyed her gravely. "You *were* running away with him," he said. "But now you aren't going any place."

He took the key from the lock and stepped back. "I'm sorry, but till I've had a little talk with the Dude, you'll just have to stay put."

He shut the door, locked it from the outside and pocketed the key. He felt badly, because he'd seen that she was crying. But business was business. He had several other things to do—and quickly.

There was Belle to be seen first. He went to her office under the wheelhouse. She wasn't there. That would have to come later. The horse was next.

Rameses had been stabled aft above the engine-room. The rest of the troupe were clattering up the stairs to their dressing-rooms. Clay walked past them, trying to mask his anxiety. No sense in raising an alarm—yet.

IT was pitch dark on the after-deck. Only a faint glow from the banked fires shone through the boiler-room grating, and shed a dim ruddy glow between him and Rameses' stall. He hurried now. As he ran, he sensed the pungent smell of kerosene. It grew stronger, and then he saw a match flare in the gelding's stall, and saw the heavy face of Hawkes in the flutter of light.

He shouted and dived at the man's shoulders. They fell heavily together, rolling in the straw. The kerosene smell was stifling now. Clay twisted his body, seeking the match. Apparently it had gone out.

The effort threw him off balance, and

Hawkes wrenched free, staggering into the corridor. As Clay lunged to hold him, the man's flailing right arm caught him with a blow over the heart, knocking him back. He fell away, and in the engine-room glow saw the same arm swing back and the fingers fumble at the Dude's waistcoat pocket. The light was poor, but there was no mistaking the glint of fire-glow on polished metal.

Clay watched the middle fingers of that right hand slide through the handle-holes of the long, slim manicure scissors, and saw them close into a fist with the keen blades pointing straight out above the knuckles, so that a blow meant three inches of biting steel between the ribs—or in the throat, or in the eyes.

HAWKES was crouching, swaying on the balls of his feet, his shoulders hunched over, and that deadly right hand cocked below his chin, ready to drive home. Clay set himself for the attack. There was no way out. At his back the four walls of the stall. Ahead of him the corridor and Hawkes barring the way.

Suddenly there was a puff of sound, and then the sting of hot smoke in his nostrils. The match had flared to life, and the straw had caught. He saw a rill of flame at his feet, and kicked at it. In that off-guard second, Hawkes dived and struck.

Clay saw the blow start and threw himself flat before it like a wrestler, curling up so that his feet caught the other's body belly-high and caromed it off against the stall door.

They rolled to their feet like cats, shedding wisps of blazing straw. Rameses was plunging at his halter-rope, his hoofs flailing at the burning bedding. The two men were close together now—arm's-length. Another puff, and the flame leaped along the inner wall, climbing with incredible swiftness to lick and bite at the heavy beams above.

It was light now as day. Watching the steel-shod fist, Clay realized he must call help. The fire would be beyond all hope of control before he could finish this man—or be finished.

"Fire!" he called. "Fire!" Hawkes moved as he called, a straight-armed thrust like a man with a bayonet. Clay side-stepped, but the blades ripped at his coat, caught, and cut into his shoulder. He could feel the scrape of steel against the bone.

The fingers of his left hand closed on the other's right wrist, bending it back.



He thrust his boots at her. "Hang on to them," he commanded. He climbed on the rail. "Let's go!"

With his right he beat twice at Hawkes' face until the heavier man was forced to cover up, to come in to him in a bear-like clinch.

They rolled out of the stall, bumping along the corridor. Hawkes' weight was bearing Clay back, bending him down. The right arm with the scissors was

twisting slowly under his fingers, working free. He could feel the thick bones turning in his grip.

Above him feet were clattering back and forth across the decks. People were shouting, and he could hear other feet on the stairs. Perhaps they would come in time. He wondered why they hadn't come already. He tried to call again, but his voice was hoarse from the struggle; and his breath, coming in deep sobs, wheezed through the futile shout, so that it scarcely could be heard above the roar of the flames.

Hawkes heaved suddenly, so that they thudded against the corridor wall and bounced back. For an instant the impact left Clay stunned, and Hawkes whirled free. In almost the same instant Rameses reared again inside the stall, the halter-rope parted, and the big gelding bounded madly out of the flames.

A lifting knee caught Hawkes shoulder-high and batted him against the floor. Clay saw one flash of the sweating bay chest before it struck him full on and sent him sprawling. Then the gelding was gone in a clatter of steel shoes.

CLAY propped himself on hands and knees and looked for Hawkes. The man was moaning and rolling over; the scissors still were locked in his fingers. Clay flattened the hand with his boot-heel and ripped the weapon away. Then he threw it into the burning straw and ran for help.

There was no one on the lower deck. He ran upstairs. The corridors were filled with smoke. He looked over the side. The last of the troupe were running up the levee with their belongings.

He raced back to Belle's office. She was stuffing papers in a money-belt.

"We could have put it out if you'd all come when I called," he panted.

She shook her head. "They were half gone before I knew about it," she said. "I thought you'd gone too."

"Don't be foolish. I caught Hawkes setting the fire. He was planning to rob your safe—"

He stopped short. He hadn't thought to search the Dude.

She anticipated the question.

"I'm not that big a fool," she said. She tapped the money-belt. "He put it in the safe every night, and then I took it right out and put it in here. The money's all right."

She strapped the belt about her and reached for his hand. "Let's go."

He stopped with a jerk.

"Cincy!" he said. "I'd forgotten her."

He thrust Belle toward the deck.

"Hurry!" he said. "I've got to get Cincy; she's locked in."

He raced up the stairs and out on the forward deck. Belle's feet sounded behind him.

"Go back," he called, "or it may be too late."

The key slipped in his fingers, and he fumbled with it. Then it took hold and the door opened.

She was lying on the bed, face down.

"Get out quick," he shouted. "The boat's burning."

Cincy twisted away. "I don't care if it is," she sobbed. "Go away."

He picked her up like a child and came out on deck. Belle was waiting. They started below; but halfway, there was a jarring shock that threw them together in a huddle on the steps.

Belle scrambled to her feet, pulling them up. "She's breaking away from her moorings! Hurry!"

They reached the lower deck. The gangplank hung crazily over-side. The aft hawser trailed in the water, and the boat was floating out broadside into the current. Only the forward rope still held; and as they looked, a man's figure ran staggering along the levee and chopped at it with an ax.

It was Hawkes.

The rope parted at the second swing, and the boat seemed to shake its head like a terrier, then slide into the whirl of the river.

Hawkes waved the ax derisively above his head, shouting something they couldn't understand. Then he flung it, end over end, after the drifting boat, and disappeared into the darkness above the bank.

Clay looked aft. The whole stern section was sheeted with flame. There was little wind, and what there was came cross-river. With luck they had twenty minutes—perhaps half an hour.

Ahead of them, the river ran like a silver arc between black distances. The bow was swinging slowly toward the Kentucky shore; and beyond, a headland marked the crest of the bend.

"Go forward," he told the two women. "Stay in the bow until I come."

HE went up to the pilothouse and lashed the wheel so that the blunt nose headed straight for the shoal water on the near side of the point. If they

could catch the drift right, it would bring them close to shore before the quickened current eddied out around the bend. Then they could swim for it.

He came down the smoke-filled main companionway and cut through the stripped forward section that had been the theater.

Rameses, sweating with fire-terror, was wedged between the rows of benches.

Clay rubbed his muzzle, soothing him. "I knew you had enough sense to stay out of the fire, fellah," he scolded, "but I thought you'd know enough to get outside where you could breathe."

He led the gelding to the forward deck. Belle and Cincy were huddled in the bow. The boat was in midriver.

"We've got to guess when we've got as near shore as we're going—and then hit the water," he said.

The wind veered a little, and a wave of heat and smoke billowed over them.

Belle hitched the money-belt across one hip.

"And it better be soon."

As the freshening wind increased the fire peril, it seemed to compensate in speeding the wavering course of the blazing boat.

THEY were less than fifty yards from the shore when the boilers let go.

The blast came without warning—a sudden thunderclap of sound, and the boat leaped like a shot deer and then seemed to fall apart slowly in the middle. A wall of flame roared from stern to bow, and blazing débris showered in its wake.

Clay ripped the coat from Belle's shoulders, holding Rameses with a hand in the halter.

"The second he hits the water," he shouted, "dive for him. Get on the lee side and hang onto his mane."

He forced the gelding to the forward gangway port and looked back. Belle was balanced on the rail.

"Go," he called, and brought his palm down with a stinging slap across the bay rump. Rameses quivered—and jumped. As the spray cleared, Belle dived.

Clay ran back to Cincy, watching the water. Belle's head bobbed close to the horse—then her hands gripped the long mane just above the withers, and they headed landward.

Clay threw off his own coat. Cincy was still clinging to the bow rail.

"You go next," he ordered. "I'll watch and dive to come up beside you."

She stirred slightly, and dropped her hands in a forlorn gesture.

"You go first," she said.

The torn hulk yawed and shook, and the logy bow end began to rise angularly beneath them. The boat was sinking.

Clay pulled her from the rail. "This is no time to argue—do as I say."

She smiled at him. "I can't swim."

"Hell!" he answered. "Why didn't you tell me?"

He ripped off his boots and thrust them at her.

"Take one of these in each hand," he commanded, "and hang on to them. When we hit water, roll on your back and relax."

He picked her up and climbed on the rail. "Let's go."

They came up in the in-sweeping eddy beyond the bow. Clay, swimming on his back, cupped his left hand beneath the girl's chin and floated her beside him.

At the crest of each swell, his head came up so that he could see the death-agony of the *River Belle*. She was settling fast now, stern first, and the scarred bow that had been their haven was pointing skyward like a blazing torch.

He shuddered. If he'd jumped first, Cincy never would have followed. He drew her closer to him, protectively.

"Don't fret, honey," he said. "We're sailing right along."

He began to swim faster, timing the beat of his legs, the flailing stroke of his right arm. He was singing to himself:

"On 'at boat and down the river float."

BELLE was waiting for them on the bank with her money-belt in one hand and Rameses' lead-line in the other.

"There's a light up the hill a way," she called. "Maybe they'll take us in for the night."

Cincy stood up and waded ashore. She handed Clay his boots. "Here," she said. "I hung onto 'em."

He grinned and put them on. "They'll come in handy for the next fifty miles," he said; "but I wasn't thinking so much about saving them as I was of making sure you had a handful of something so you wouldn't tear my hair out when you began to swallow water."

Belle was leading Rameses toward the house on the hill. Her voice came back from the darkness. "Hustle, you two! I'm freezing."

Cincy turned to follow—hesitated, and touched Clay's hand. She was shaking.

"You know how much I thank you," she said.

All the sharpness was gone out of her voice. Clay had never heard it like that.

"I got you into it," he said. "I had to get you out." He fumbled for words. "I'm sorry I messed things up—locking you in, and all that." He laughed a little bitterly. "It didn't do much good. I've still got to walk home, anyway—and now the boat's gone."

"And so's Dude Hawkes," she added.

He looked at her quickly.

"I'm sorry about that, too."

The crispness came back into her voice.

"I'm not," she said.

SHE halted him with a hand against his chest.

"Don't you see? I didn't want to go with him. I had to—I thought I had to. He'd found out I was only seventeen, and that I'd run away from the home. He said he'd send me back."

She swayed a little, and he caught her by the shoulders.

"I didn't know he was going to do all that, though—burn the boat and steal from Belle."

Clay turned her head slowly, with his hands cupped about her chin. He was singing again:

*Come along, ma honey, come along,
While the moon is shinin' bright.*

"I've just had an idea," he said.

He took a deep breath, because it seemed difficult to talk.

"I've got a farm. You and Belle and me are partners. We'll go down there, and I'll plow and milk; you'll cook and fiddle; and Belle can keep the books."

He waited. She didn't say no. So he moved her head up and down to signify yes, and kissed her.

"Come on, partner," he said, and started on up the hill. He was chuckling.

Cincy poked his arm with a forefinger.

"What are you laughing about?"

"I was just thinking," he said, "What my black boy Ase is going to say when he sees us come prancin' in."

"Oh!" she said suddenly. "Oh, yes. I heard you weren't ever going to have anything to do with women—or horses."

His laugh echoed up the hillside. From somewhere out of the dark, Rameses' shrill whinny echoed back.

Clay lifted the girl over a tangle of brush.

"Just *some* women, honey," he assured her. "Just *some* women—and *some* horses."

An American girl has been made a captive by members of that sinister jungle society the Leopard Men . . . But Tarzan himself is leading his men to battle against them.



TARZAN

And the Leopard Men

The Story So Far:

BENEATH the heavy hand of Usha the wind, the forest bent, and branches tossed madly. The girl turned uneasily upon her cot—awoke—and in a vivid flash of lightning saw a man entering her tent—Golato the headman.

"What do you want, Golato?" she asked.

"You, Kali Bwana," he replied huskily.

So it had come at last! For days she had been cognizant of the black's increasing insolence. . . . From a holster by her cot she drew a revolver. "Get out of here," she said, "or I'll kill you!"

For answer the black leaped toward her. She fired.

Next day the wounded headman and the rest of the safari had deserted; the girl was left alone in the heart of Africa.

Meanwhile a strange thing had happened not far away. For that greatest of all adventurers Tarzan of the Apes (born the son of an English lord, but through remarkable circumstance brought up among the wild folk of Africa to become Lord of the Jungle) had suffered a wilderness accident: a great tree-branch

torn loose by the tempest had struck him on the head, knocked him unconscious and pinned him down helpless. And although recued by a native—Orando—who revived him, Tarzan recovered his senses suffering from amnesia—that malady of complete forgetfulness which sometimes follows a heavy blow on the head. He did not know even his own identity; but Orando christened him "Muzimo," believing him the reincarnated spirit of one of his own ancestors.

As Muzimo, then, Tarzan hunted with Orando and shared the native's battles. For Orando's friend Nyamwegi had been killed by the Leopard Men, that extraordinary cannibalistic African secret society whose members adorn themselves with leopard skins, wear masks fashioned of leopard heads—and strike down their human victims with iron claws made to resemble those of the leopard. Tarzan accompanied Orando back to his village, where Orando told of his friend's death, and proposed a war-party to pursue the Leopard Men and exact vengeance. His guiding spirit Muzimo, Orando explained



By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

to Sobito the witch-doctor and the other tribesmen, would aid them in this raid upon a dreadful enemy.

The witch-doctor angrily urged the warriors to forgo the attack; but he was overruled by Orlando and the other young men, abetted by Muzimo—as they too called Tarzan. The latter's interference further angered Sobito, and he clashed openly with the giant stranger; but upon being defeated and humiliated before the other Utengas, Sobito fled in chagrined fury—not, however, before he had uttered threats of death against Muzimo. With Sobito's departure, preparations began for a raid upon the Leopard Men. Warriors from other villages joined them; among these was one Lupingu, who had been a rival of the murdered Nyamwegi for the heart of a certain dusky belle. Lupingu sought out Sobito—they held a secret conference; later both disappeared as the raiding-party was on the march.

While this was happening, two wandering ivory-poachers—Americans, but who knew each other only as “the Kid,” and “Old-timer”—had struck out separately

from their base camp, and Old-timer had come upon the white girl shortly after, exhausted and almost starved, she had succeeded in shooting a small boar. Despite the girl's reluctance to accept the man's aid,—for his churlish manner antagonized her sharply,—the poacher detailed one of his blacks to attend her. But during the white man's absence next day, the guard was killed by the Leopard Men, and the girl taken away to their stronghold. Here the priest Lulimi, leader of the party which had seized her, proclaimed her as high priestess of the Leopard Clan. She was forthwith transported down-river to the secret temple, where she was anointed with malodorous ointments and garbed in bizarre fashion—prepared for the hideous rites of the Leopard Men that would make her the high priestess of their savage god. (*The story continues in detail.*)

MUZIMO loafed through the forest. He was glad to be alone, away from the noisy, boasting creatures who were men. True, the Spirit

of Nyamwegi was given to boasting, but Muzimo never paid much attention to him. Sometimes he chided him for behaving so much like men; and as long as the Spirit of Nyamwegi could remember, he was quiet. But his memory was short; only when a certain stern expression entered the eyes of Muzimo and he spoke in a low voice that was half growl, was the Spirit of Nyamwegi quiet for long; but that occurred only when there was important need for silence. . . .

Muzimo and the Spirit of Nyamwegi had departed early from the camp of the Utengas for the purpose of locating and spying upon the village of the Leopard Men. Time, however, meant nothing to Muzimo. This thing that he had set out to do he would do when he was ready. So it was that the morning was all but spent before Muzimo caught sight of the village.

The warriors had already departed in search of the enemies from Watenga, and Muzimo had not seen them because he had taken a circuitous route from the camp to the village. The girl had also been taken away to the temple, though even had she still been there her presence would have meant nothing to the ancestral spirit of Orando, who was no more concerned with the fate of whites than he was with the fate of blacks.

The village upon which he looked from the concealing verdure of a near-by tree differed little from the quiet native village of Tumbai except that its palisade was taller and stronger. There were a few men and women in its single main street, the former lolling in the shade of trees, the latter busy with the endless duties of their sex, which they lightened by the world-wide medium of gossip.

AT first, Muzimo was not much interested in what he saw. There was no great concourse of warriors. A hundred Utengas, if they could surprise the village, could wreak vengeance upon it easily. He noted, however, that the gates were thick and high, that they were closed, and that a guard of warriors squatted near them in the shade of the palisade. Perhaps, he thought, it would be better to take the place by night when a few agile men might scale the palisade undetected and open the gates for their fellows. He finally decided that he would do that himself without assistance. For Muzimo it would be a simple matter.

Suddenly his eyes were arrested by a

group before a large hut. There was a large man, whom he intuitively knew to be the chief, and there were several others with whom this man was conversing; but it was not the chief who arrested his attention. It was one of the others. Instantly Muzimo recognized him, and his gray eyes narrowed. What was Lupingu doing in the village of the Leopard Men? It was evident that he was not a prisoner, for it was plainly to be seen that the conversation between the men was amicable.

MUZIMO waited. Presently he saw Lupingu leave the party before the chief's hut and approach the gates. He saw the warriors on guard open them, and he saw Lupingu pass through them and disappear into the forest in the direction of the camp of the Utengas. Muzimo was puzzled. What was Lupingu going to do? What had he already done? Perhaps he had gone to spy upon the Leopard Men and was returning with information for Orando.

Silently Muzimo slipped from the tree in which he had been hiding, and swung through the trees upon the trail of Lupingu, who, ignorant of the presence of the Nemesis hovering above him, trotted briskly in the direction of the camp of the tribesmen he had betrayed.

Presently from a distance far ahead Muzimo heard sounds—sounds that the ears of Lupingu could not hear. They told him that many people were coming through the forest in his direction. Later he interpreted them as the sounds made by warriors marching hurriedly. They were almost upon Lupingu before he heard them; when he did, he went off from the trail a short distance and hid in the underbrush.

Muzimo waited among the foliage above the trees. He had caught the scent of the oncoming men and had recognized none that was familiar to him. It was the scent of black warriors, and mixed with it was the scent of fresh blood. Evidently some of them were wounded; they had been in battle.

Presently they came in sight, and he saw that they were indeed not the Utengas, as his nostrils had already told him. He guessed that they were from the village of the Leopard Men, and that they were returning to it. This accounted for the small number of warriors that he had seen in the village. Where had they been? Had they been in battle with Orando's little force?



He counted them roughly as they passed below him. There were nearly three hundred of them, and Orando had but a hundred warriors. Yet he was sure that Orando had not been badly defeated, for he saw no prisoners nor were they bringing any dead warriors with them, not even their own dead, as they would have, if they were Leopard Men and had been victorious.

Evidently, whoever they had fought,—and it must have been Orando,—had repulsed them; but how had the Utengas fared? Their losses must have been great, in battle with a force that so greatly outnumbered them. But all this was only surmise. Presently he would find the Utengas and learn the truth. In the meantime he must keep an eye on Lupingu, who was still hiding at one side of the trail.

WHEN the Leopard Men had passed, Lupingu came from concealment, and continued on in the direction he had been going, while above him and a little in his rear swung Muzimo and the Spirit of Nyamwegi.

When they came at last to the place where the Utengas had camped, they found only grim reminders of the recent battle; the Utengas were not there. Lupingu looked about him, a pleased smile

The warriors saw him leap into the air as though he bore no burden whatsoever, seize a low-hanging limb, and disappear amidst the foliage.

on his crafty face. His efforts had not been in vain; the Leopard Men had at least driven the Utengas away, even though it had been as evident to him as it had been to Muzimo that their victory had been far from decisive.

For a moment he hesitated, of two minds as to whether to follow his former companions, or return to the village and take part in the ceremonies at the temple at the installation of the white priestess; but at last he decided that the safer plan was to rejoin the Utengas, lest a prolonged absence should arouse their suspicions as to his loyalty. He did not know that the matter was not in his hands at all, or that a power greater than his own lurked above him, all but reading his mind—a power that would have frustrated an attempt to return to the village of Gato Mgungu and would have carried him by force to the new camp of Orando.

Lupingu had jogged along on the plain trail of the retreating Utengas for a couple of miles when he was halted by a sentry whom he recognized at once



"Do not lie to me with questions," Old-timer snapped. "The white girl is here! For two days I have followed those who stole her."

as the brother of the girl whose affections Nyamwegi had stolen from him. When the sentry saw that it was Lupingu, the traitor was permitted to pass; and a moment later he entered the camp which he found bristling with spears, the nerve-shaken warriors having leaped to arms at the challenge of the sentry.

There were wounded men groaning upon the ground, and ten of the Utenga dead were stretched out at one side of the camp, where a burial-party was digging a shallow trench in which to inter them.

A volley of questions was hurled at Lupingu as he sought out Orlando, and the angry or suspicious looks that accompanied them warned him that his story must be a most convincing one if it were to avail him.

ORANDO greeted him with a questioning scowl.

"Where have you been, Lupingu, while we were fighting?" he demanded.

"I too have been fighting," replied Lupingu glibly.

"I did not see you," countered Orlando. "You were not there. You were not in camp this morning. Where were

you? See that your tongue speaks no lies."

"My tongue speaks only true words," insisted Lupingu. "Last night I said to myself: 'Orando does not like Lupingu. There are many who do not like Lupingu. Because he advised them not to make war against the Leopard Men they do not like him. Now he must do something to show them that he is a brave warrior. He must do something to save them from the Leopard Men.'

"And so I went out from camp while it was still dark to search for the village of the Leopard Men, that I might spy upon them and bring word to Orlando. But I did not find the village. I became lost, and while I was searching for it I met many warriors. I did not run. I stood and fought with them until I had killed three. Then some came from behind and seized me. They made me prisoner, and I learned that I was in the hands of the Leopard Men.

"Later they fought with you. I could not see the battle, as their guards held me far behind the fighting-men; but after a while the Leopard Men ran away, and I knew that the Utengas had been victorious. In the excitement I escaped

and hid. When they had all gone I came at once to the camp of Orando."

THE son of Lobongo the chief did not believe this story, although he did not guess the truth. The worst interpretation that he put on Lupingu's desertion was cowardice in the face of an impending battle; but that was something to be punished by the contempt of his fellow warriors and the ridicule of the women of his village, when he returned to Kibbu.

Orando shrugged. He had other and more important matters to occupy his thoughts. "If you want to win the praise of warriors," he advised, "remain and fight beside them." Then he turned away. . . .

With a startling suddenness that shocked the frayed nerves of the Utengas, Muzimo and the Spirit of Nyamwegi dropped unexpectedly into their midst from the overhanging branches of a tree. Once again three-score spears danced nervously, their owners ready to fight or fly as the first man set the example; but when they saw who it was their fears were calmed, and perhaps they felt a little more confidence, for the presence of two friendly spirits is most reassuring to a body of half-defeated warriors fearful of the return of the enemy.

"You have had a battle," said Muzimo to Orando. "I saw the Leopard Men running away; but your men act as though they too had been defeated. I do not understand."

"They came to our camp and fell upon us while we were unprepared," explained Orando. "Many of our men were killed or wounded in their first charge, but the Utengas were brave. They rallied and fought the Leopard Men off, killing many, wounding many; then the Leopard Men ran away, for we were fighting more bravely than they.

"We did not pursue them, because they greatly outnumbered us. After the battle my men were afraid they might return in still greater numbers. They did not wish to fight any more. They said that we had won, and that now Nyamwegi was fully avenged. They want to go home. Therefore we fell back to this new camp. Here we bury our dead. Tomorrow we do what the gods decide. I do not know.

"What I should like to know, though, is how the Leopard Men knew we were here. They shouted at us and told us

that the god of the Leopard Men had sent them to our camp to get much flesh for a great feast. They said that tonight they would eat us all. It was those words that frightened the Utengas and made them want to go home."

"Would you like to know who told the Leopard Men that you were coming and where your camp was?" asked Muzimo.

Lupingu's eyes reflected a sudden fear. He edged off toward the jungle.

"Watch Lupingu," directed Muzimo, "lest he go again to 'spy upon the Leopard Men.'" The words were scarcely uttered before Lupingu bolted; but a dozen warriors blocked his way, and presently he was dragged back, struggling and protesting. "It was not a god that told the Leopard Men that the Utengas were coming," continued Muzimo. "I crouched in a tree above their village, and saw the one who told them talking to their chief. Very friendly were they, as though both were Leopard Men. I followed him when he left the village. I saw him hide when the retreating warriors passed in the jungle. I followed him to the camp of the Utengas. I heard his tongue speak lies to Orando. I am Muzimo. I have spoken."

INSTANTLY hoarse cries for vengeance arose. Men fell upon Lupingu and knocked him about. He would have been killed at once had not Muzimo interfered. He seized the wretched man and shielded him with his great body, while the Spirit of Nyamwegi fled to the branches of a tree and screamed excitedly as he danced up and down in a perfect frenzy of rage—though what it was all about he did not know.

"Do not kill him," commanded Muzimo sternly. "Leave him to me."

"The traitor must die," shouted a warrior.

"Leave him to me," reiterated Muzimo.

"Leave him to Muzimo," commanded Orando, and at last, disgruntled, the warriors desisted from their attempts to lay hands upon the wretch.

"Bring ropes," directed Muzimo, "and bind his wrists and his ankles."

When eager hands had done as Muzimo bid, the warriors formed a half circle before him and Lupingu, waiting expectantly to witness the death of the prisoner, which they believed would take the form of some supernatural and particularly atrocious manifestation.

They saw Muzimo lift the man to one

broad shoulder. They saw him take a few running steps, leap as lightly into the air, as though he bore no burden whatsoever, seize a low-hanging limb as he swung himself upward, and disappear amidst the foliage above, melting into the shadows of the coming dusk.

CHAPTER IX

THE LEOPARD GOD

NIGHT was approaching. The sun, half-hidden by the tops of forest trees, swung downward into the west. Its departing rays turned the muddy waters of a broad river to the semblance of molten gold. A ragged white man emerged from a forest trail upon the outskirts of a broad field of manioc, at the far side of which a palisaded village cast long shadows back to meet the shadows of the forest where he stood with his two black companions. To his right the forest hemmed the field and came down to overhang the palisade at the rear of the village.

"Do not go on, Bwana," urged one of the blacks. "It is the village of the Leopard Men."

"It is the village of old Gato Mgungu," retorted Old-timer. "I have traded with him in the past."

"Then you came with many followers and with guns; then Gato Mgungu was a trader. Today you come with only two boys; today you will find that old Gato Mgungu is a Leopard Man."

"Bosh!" exclaimed the white man. "He would not dare harm a white."

"You do not know them," insisted the black. "They would kill their own mothers for flesh, if there was no one to see them do it."

"Every sign that we have seen indicates that the girl was brought here," argued Old-timer. "Leopard Men or no Leopard Men, I am going into the village."

"I do not wish to die," said the black.

"Nor do I," agreed his fellow.

"Then wait for me in the forest. Wait until the shadow of the forest has left the palisade in the morning. If I have not returned then, go back to the camp where the young Bwana waits, and tell him that I am dead."

The blacks shook their heads. "Do not go, Bwana. The white woman was not your wife, neither was she your mother nor sister. Why should you die for a woman who was nothing to you?"

Old-timer shook his head. "You would not understand." He wondered if he himself, understood. Vaguely he realized that the force that was driving him on was not governed by reason; back of it was something inherent, bred into his fiber through countless generations of his kind. Its name was duty. If there was another more powerful force actuating him he was not conscious of it. Perhaps there was no other. There were lesser forces, though; one of them was anger and another was a desire for revenge. But two days of tracking through the jungle had cooled these to the point where he would no longer have risked his life to gratify them. It was the less obvious but more powerful urge that drove him on.

"Perhaps I shall return in a few minutes," he said; "but if not, then—until tomorrow morning!" He shook their hands in parting.

"Good luck, Bwana!"

"May the good spirits watch over you, Bwana!"

He strode confidently along the path that skirted the manioc field toward the gates set in the palisade. Savage eyes watched his approach. Behind him the eyes of his servitors filled with tears. Inside the palisade a warrior ran to the hut of Gato Mgungu.

"A white man is coming," he reported. "He is alone."

"Let him enter, and bring him to me," ordered the chief.

AS Old-timer came closer to the gates, one of them swung open. He saw a few warriors surveying him more or less apathetically. There was nothing in their demeanor to suggest antagonism, neither was their greeting in any way friendly. Their manner was wholly perfunctory. He made the sign of peace, which they ignored; but that did not trouble him. He was not concerned with the attitude of warriors, only with that of Gato Mgungu, the chief. As he was, so would they be.

"I have come to visit my friend Gato Mgungu," he announced.

"He is waiting for you," replied the warrior who had taken word of his coming to the chief. "Come with me."

Old-timer noted the great number of warriors in the village. Among them he saw wounded men and knew that there had been a battle. He hoped that they had been victorious. Gato Mgungu would be in better humor were such the



A heavy object hurtled into the circle of squatting councilors, and they leaped to their feet in consternation. It was the corpse of a man.

case. The scowling, unfriendly glances of the villagers did not escape him as he followed his guide toward the hut of the chief. On the whole, the atmosphere of the village was far from reassuring; but he had gone too far to turn back, even had he been of a mind to do so.

Gato Mgungu received him with a surly nod. He was sitting on a stool in front of his hut, surrounded by a number of his principal followers. There was no answering smile or pleasant word to Old-timer's friendly greeting. The aspect of the situation appeared far from roseate.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Gato Mgungu.

The smile had faded from the white man's face. He knew that this was no time for soft words. There was danger in the very air. He sensed it without knowing the reason for it; and he knew that a bold front alone might release him from a serious situation.

"I have come for the white girl," he said.

Gato Mgungu's eyes shifted. "What white girl?" he demanded.

"Do not lie to me with questions,"

snapped Old-timer. "The white girl is here. For two days I have followed those who stole her from my camp. Give her to me. I wish to return to my people who wait for me in the forest."

"There is no white girl in my village," growled Gato Mgungu, "nor do I take orders from white men. I am Gato Mgungu, the chief. I give orders."

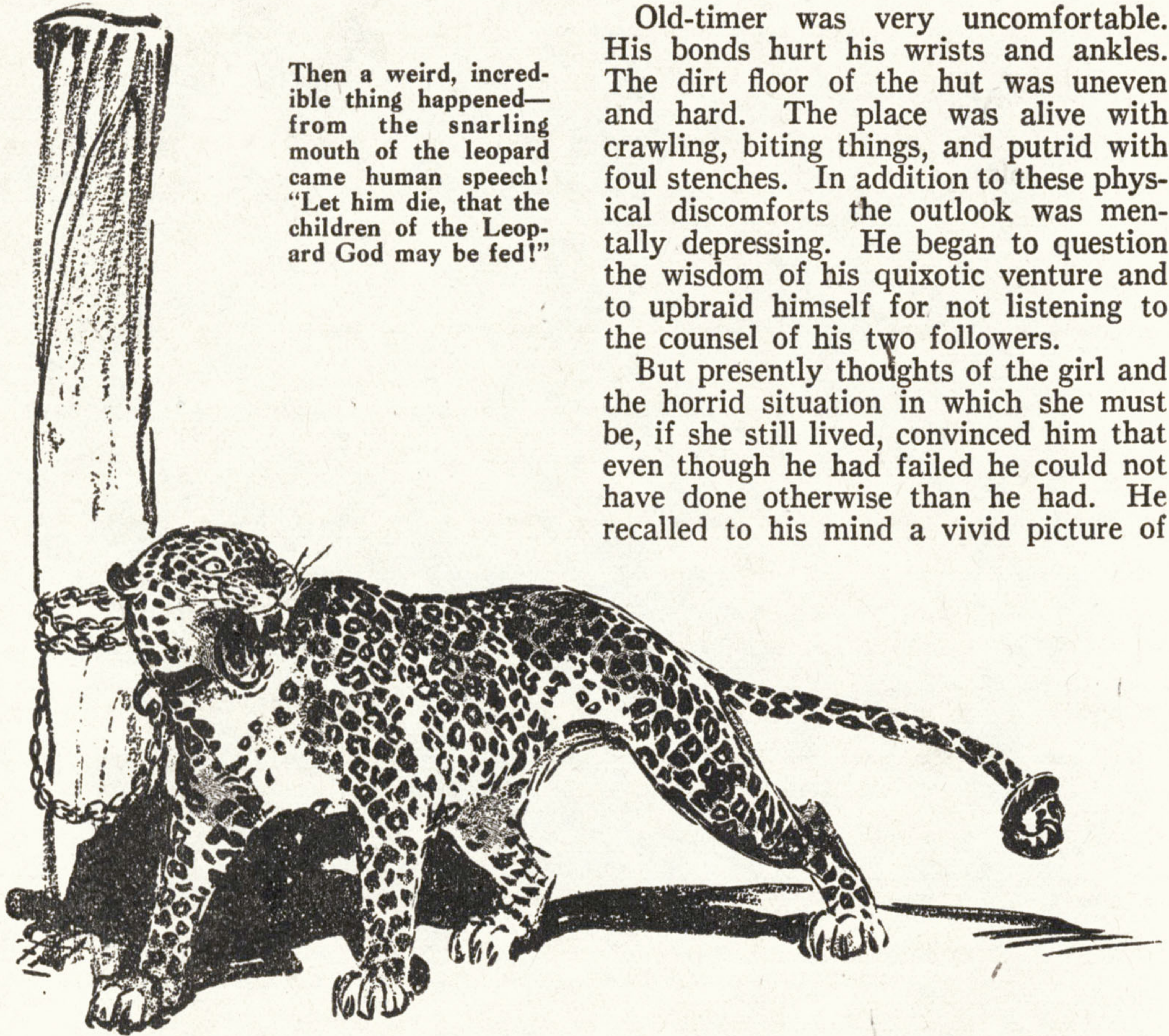
"You'll take orders from me, you old scoundrel," Old-timer threatened, "or I'll have a force down on your village that'll wipe it off the map."

Gato Mgungu sneered. "I know you, white man. There are two of you and six black men in your safari. You have few guns. You are poor. You steal ivory. You do not dare go where the white rulers are. They would put you in jail. You come with big words, but big words do not frighten Gato Mgungu, and now you are my prisoner."

"Well, what of it?" demanded Old-timer. "What do you think you're going to do with me?"

"Kill you," replied Gato Mgungu.

The white man laughed. "No, you won't—not if you know what's good for you. The Government would burn your



Then a weird, incredible thing happened—from the snarling mouth of the leopard came human speech! "Let him die, that the children of the Leopard God may be fed!"

Old-timer was very uncomfortable. His bonds hurt his wrists and ankles. The dirt floor of the hut was uneven and hard. The place was alive with crawling, biting things, and putrid with foul stench. In addition to these physical discomforts the outlook was mentally depressing. He began to question the wisdom of his quixotic venture and to upbraid himself for not listening to the counsel of his two followers.

But presently thoughts of the girl and the horrid situation in which she must be, if she still lived, convinced him that even though he had failed he could not have done otherwise than he had. He recalled to his mind a vivid picture of

village, and hang you, when they found it out."

"They will not find it out," retorted the chief. "Take him away. See that he does not escape."

Old-timer looked quickly around at the evil, scowling faces surrounding him. It was then that he recognized the chief Bobolo, with whom he had long been upon good terms. Two warriors laid heavy hands upon him to drag him away.

"Wait!" he exclaimed, thrusting them aside. "Let me speak to Bobolo. He certainly has sense enough to stop this foolishness."

"Take him away!" shouted Gato Mgungu.

Again the warriors seized him, and as Bobolo made no move to intercede in his behalf the white man accompanied his guard without further demonstration. After disarming him they took him to a small hut, filthy beyond description, and, tying him securely, left him under guard of a single sentry who squatted on the ground outside the low doorway; but they neglected to remove the pocket-knife from a pocket in his breeches.

her as he had last seen her—and he knew that if chance permitted him to escape from the village of Gato Mgungu he would face even greater perils to effect her rescue. . . .

His mind was still occupied with thoughts of her when he heard some one in conversation with his guard, and a moment later a figure entered the hut. It was now night; the only light was that reflected from the cooking-fires burning about the village and a few torches set in the ground before the hut of the chief. The interior of the prison-hut was in almost total darkness, and the features of the visitor were quite invisible. Old-timer wondered if he might be the executioner, come to inflict the death-penalty; but at the first words he recognized the voice of Bobolo.

"Perhaps I can help you," said his visitor. "You would like to get out of here?"

"Of course. Old Mgungu must have gone crazy. What's the matter with the old fool, anyway?"

"He does not like white men. But I am their friend; I will help you."

"Good for you, Bobolo!" exclaimed Old-timer. "You'll never regret it."

"It cannot be done for nothing," suggested Bobolo.

"Name your price."

"It is not *my* price," the black hastened to assure him; "it is what I shall have to pay to others."

"Well, how much?"

"Ten tusks of ivory."

Old-timer whistled. "Wouldn't you like a steam yacht and a Rolls Royce too?"

"Yes," agreed Bobolo, willing to accept anything, whether or not he knew what it was.

"Well, you don't get them; and furthermore, ten tusks are too many."

Bobolo shrugged. "You know best, white man, what your life is worth." He arose to go.

"Wait!" exclaimed Old-timer. "You know it is hard to get any ivory these days."

"I should have asked for a hundred tusks; but you are a friend, and so I asked only ten."

"Get me out of here and I will bring the tusks to you when I get them. It may take time, but I will bring them."

Bobolo shook his head. "I must have the tusks first. Send word to your white friend to send me the tusks; then you will be freed."

"How can I send word to him? My men are not here."

"I will send a messenger."

"All right, you old horse-thief," consented the white. "Untie my wrists and I'll write a note to him."

"That will not do. I would not know what the paper that talks has said. It might say things that would bring trouble to Bobolo."

"You're darn' right it would," soliloquized Old-timer. "If I could get that notebook and pencil out of my pocket the Kid would get a message that would land you in jail and hang Gato Mgungu into the bargain." But aloud he said, "How will he know that the message is from me?"

"Send something by the messenger that your friend will know is yours. You are wearing a ring. I saw it today."

"How do I know you will send the right message?" demurred Old-timer. "You might demand a hundred tusks."

"I am your friend. I am very honest. Also, there is no other way. Shall I take the ring?"

"Very well—take it."



The black stepped behind Old-timer and removed the ring from his finger. "When the ivory comes you will be set free," he said, as he stooped and passed out of the hut.

"I don't take any stock in the old fraud," thought the white man; "but a drowning man clutches at a straw."

BOBOLO grinned as he examined the ring by the light of a fire. "I am a bright man," he said to himself. "I shall have a ring as well as the ivory." As for freeing Old-timer, that was beyond his power; nor had he any intention of even attempting it. He was well contented with himself when he joined the other chiefs who were sitting in council with Gato Mgungu.

They were discussing, among other things, the method of dispatching the white prisoner. Some wished to have him slain and butchered in the village that they might not have to divide the flesh with the priests and the leopard god at the temple. Others insisted that

he be taken forthwith to the high priest, that his flesh might be utilized in the ceremonies accompanying the induction of the new white high priestess. There was a great deal of oratory; but that is ever the way of men in conferences. Black or white, they like to hear their own voices.

GATO MGUNGU was in the midst of a description of heroic acts he had performed in a battle that had been fought twenty years previously, when he was silenced by a terrifying interruption. There was a rustling of the leaves in the tree that overhung his hut; a heavy object hurtled down into the center of the circle formed by the squatting councilors, and as one man they leaped to their feet in consternation. Expressions of surprise, awe, or terror were registered upon every countenance. They turned affrighted glances upward into the tree, but nothing was visible there among the dark shadows; then they looked down at the thing lying at their feet. It was the corpse of a man, its wrists and ankles bound, its throat cut from ear to ear.

"It is Lupingu the Utenga," whispered Gato Mgungu. "He brought me word of the coming of the son of Lobongo and his warriors."

"It is an ill omen," whispered one.

"They have punished the traitor," said another.

"But who could have carried him into the tree and thrown him down upon us?" demanded Bobolo.

"He spoke today of one who claimed to be the *muzimo* of Orando," explained Gato Mgungu, "a huge white man whose powers were greater than the powers of Sobito, the witch-doctor of Tumbai."

"We have heard of him from another," interjected a chief.

"And he spoke of another," continued Gato Mgungu, "that is the spirit of Nyamwegi of Kibbu, who was killed by children of the Leopard God. This one has taken the form of a little monkey."

"Perhaps it was the *muzimo* that brought Lupingu here," suggested Bobolo. "It is a warning. Let us take the white man to the high priest to do with as he sees fit. If he kills him the fault will not be ours."

"Those are the words of a wise man." The speaker was one who owed a debt to Bobolo.

"It is dark," another muttered. "Perhaps we had better wait until morning."

"Now is the time," said Gato Mgungu. "If the *muzimo* is white and is angry because we have made this white man prisoner, he will hang around the village as long as we keep the other here. We will take him to the temple. The high priest and the Leopard God are stronger than any *muzimo*."

Hidden amid the foliage of a tree, Muzimo watched the blacks in the palisaded village below. He saw the warriors arming and forming under the commands of their chiefs. The white prisoner was dragged from the hut in which he had been imprisoned, the bonds were removed from his ankles, and he was hustled under guard toward the gateway through which the warriors were now debouching upon the river-front. Here they launched a flotilla of small canoes—some thirty in number—each with a capacity of about ten men, for there were almost three hundred warriors of the Leopard God in the party, only a few having been left in the village to act as a guard. The large war-canoes, seating fifty men, were left behind, bottom-up, upon the shore.

As the last canoe with its load of painted savages drifted down the dark current, Muzimo and the Spirit of Nyamwegi dropped from the tree concealing them, and followed along the shore, keeping the canoes within hearing.

THE Spirit of Nyamwegi, roused from sleep to follow many more of the hated Gomangani than he could count, was frightened and excited. "Let us turn back," he begged. "Why must we follow all these Gomangani who will kill us if they catch us, when we might be sleeping safely far away in a nice large tree?"

"They are the enemies of Orando," explained Muzimo. "We follow to see where they are going and what they are going to do."

"I do not care where they are going or what they are going to do," whimpered the Spirit of Nyamwegi. "I am sleepy. If we go on, Sheeta will get us—or Sabor, or Numa; if not they, then the Gomangani. Let us go back."

"No," replied the white giant. "I am a *muzimo*. *Muzimos* must know everything. Therefore I must go about by night as well as by day, watching the enemies of Orando. If you do not wish to come with me, you may climb a tree and sleep."

The Spirit of Nyamwegi was afraid to

go on with Muzimo, but he was more afraid to remain alone in this strange forest; so he said no more about the matter as Muzimo trotted along the dark trail beside the mysterious river.

They had covered about two miles when Muzimo became aware that the canoes had stopped, and a moment later he came to the bank of a small affluent of the larger stream. Into this the canoes were moving slowly in single file. He watched them, counting, until the last had entered the sluggish stream and disappeared in the darkness of the overhanging verdure; then, finding no trail, he took to the trees, following the canoes by the sound of the dipping paddles beneath him.

IT chanced that Old-timer was in a canoe commanded by Bobolo, and he took advantage of the opportunity to ask the chief whither they were taking him and why; but Bobolo cautioned him sternly to silence.

"Where you are going you will be safer," was the most that he would say.

The surface of the stream beneath the trees, which prevented even the faint light of a moonless sky from reaching it, was shrouded in utter darkness. Old-timer could not see the man next him, nor his own hand before his face. How the paddlers guided their craft along this narrow, tortuous river appeared little less than a miracle to him, yet they moved steadily and surely toward their destination. He wondered what that destination might be. The utter silence of the warriors accentuated the uncanniness of the situation. Everything combined to suggest to his imagination a company of dead men paddling up a river of death—three hundred ebon Charons escorting his dead soul to hell! It was not a pleasant thought, and he sought to thrust it from his mind.

"At least," he soliloquized, "I have the satisfaction of knowing that things can get no worse."

One thought which recurred persistently caused him the most concern. It was of the girl and her fate. While he was not convinced that she had not been in the village while he was captive there, he felt that such had not been the case. He realized that his judgment was based more upon intuition than reason, but the presentiment was so strong that it verged upon conviction. Being positive that she had been brought to the village only a short time before his arrival, he

sought to formulate some reasonable conjectures as to the disposition the savages had made of her. He doubted that they had killed her as yet. Knowing as he did that they were cannibals, he was positive that the killing of the girl, if they intended to kill her, would be reserved for a spectacular ceremony and followed by a dance and an orgy. There had not been time for such a celebration since she had been brought to the village; therefore it seemed probable that she had preceded him up this mysterious river of darkness.

His attention was now attracted by a light ahead, upon the river-bank. At first he saw only the light; but presently he perceived human figures dimly illuminated by its rays and behind it the outlines of a large structure. The number of the figures increased rapidly and more lights appeared. He saw that the former were the crews of the canoes which had preceded his; the latter were torches borne by people coming from the structure, which he now could see was a large building.

Presently his own canoe pulled in to the bank, and he was hustled ashore. Here, among the warriors who had come from the village, were savages clothed in the distinctive apparel of the Leopard Men. It was these who had emerged from the building, carrying torches. A few of them wore hideous masks. They were the priests of the Leopard God.

SLOWLY there dawned upon the consciousness of the white man the realization that he had been brought to that mysterious temple of the Leopard Men of which he had heard frightened, whispered stories from the lips of terrified blacks upon more than a single occasion, and which he had come to consider more fabulous than real. The reality of it, however, was impressed upon him with overpowering certainty as he was dragged through the portals of the building into its barbaric interior.

Lighted by many torches, the scene was one to be indelibly impressed upon the memory of a beholder. Already the great chamber was nearly filled with the black warriors from the village of Gato Mgungu. They were milling about several large piles of leopard skins presided over by masked priests who were issuing these ceremonial costumes to them. Gradually the picture changed as the warriors donned the garb of their savage order, until the white man saw about

him only the black and yellow hides of the carnivores; the curved, cruel steel talons; and the black faces, hideously painted; partially hidden by the leopard-head helmets.

The wavering torchlight played upon carved and painted idols; it glanced from naked human skulls, from gaudy shields and grotesque masks hung upon the huge pillars that supported the roof of the building. It lighted, more brilliantly than elsewhere, a raised dais at the far end of the chamber, where stood the high priest upon a smaller platform at the back of the dais. Below and around him were grouped a number of lesser priests, while chained to a heavy post near him was a large leopard, bristling and growling at the massed humanity beneath him, a devil-faced leopard that seemed to the imagination of the white man to personify the savage bestiality of the cult it symbolized.

THE man's eyes ranged the room in search of the girl, but she was not to be seen. He shuddered at the thought that she might be hidden somewhere in this frightful place, and would have risked everything to learn where, had his guards given him the slightest opportunity. If she were here her case was hopeless, as hopeless as he now realized his own to be; for since he had been brought to the temple of the Leopard Men, allowed to look upon their holy of holies, and to view their most secret rites, he knew that no power on earth could save him, and that the promises of Bobolo had been false—for no one other than a Leopard Man could look upon these sights and live.

Gato Mgungu, Bobolo, and the other chiefs had taken their places in front of the common warriors at the foot of the dais. Gato Mgungu had spoken to the high priest, and now at a word from the latter his guards dragged Old-timer forward and stood with him at the right of the dais. Savage eyes glared at him.

The high priest turned toward the snarling, mouthing leopard. "Leopard God," he cried in a high, shrill voice, "the children of the Leopard God have captured an enemy of his people. They have brought him to the great temple. What is the will of the Leopard God?"

There was a moment's silence during which all eyes were fixed upon the high priest and the leopard. Then a weird thing happened, a thing that turned the skin of the white man cold and stiffened

the hairs upon his scalp. From the snarling mouth of the leopard came human speech! It was incredible, yet with his own ears he heard it.

"Let him die that the children of the Leopard God may be fed!" The voice was low and husky and merged with bestial growls. "But first bring forth the new high priestess of the temple that my children may look upon her whom my brother commanded Lulimi to bring from a far country."

Lulimi, who by virtue of his high priestly rank stood nearest to the throne of the high priest, swelled visibly with pride. This was the big moment for which he had waited. All eyes were upon him. He trod a few steps of a savage dance, leaped high into the air, and voiced a hideous cry that echoed through the lofty rafters far above. The lay brothers were impressed; they would not soon forget Lulimi. But instantly their attention was distracted from Lulimi to the doorway at the rear of the dais. In the doorway stood a girl, naked but for a few ornaments. She stepped out upon the dais, to be followed immediately by eleven similarly garbed priestesses.

Old-timer wondered which of these was the new high priestess. There was little difference between them other than varying degrees of age and ugliness. Their yellow teeth were filed to sharp points; the septa of their noses were pierced and through these holes were inserted ivory skewers; the lobes of their ears were stretched to their shoulders by heavy ornaments of copper, iron, brass, and ivory; their faces were painted a ghoulish blue and white.

•Now the Leopard God spoke again. "Fetch the high priestess!" he commanded, and with three hundred others Old-timer centered his gaze again upon the aperture at the back of the dais. A figure, dimly seen, approached out of the darkness of the chamber beyond until it stood in the doorway, the flare of the torches playing upon it.

Old-timer stifled a cry of astonishment and horror. The figure was that of the white girl whom he sought.

CHAPTER X

WHILE THE PRIESTS SLEPT

AS Kali Bwana was pushed into the doorway at the rear of the dais by the old hag who was her chief guardian, she paused in consternation and horror



The Spirit of Nyamwegi was frightened and excited. "Let us turn back," he begged. "Why must we follow these Gomangani?"

at the sight which met her eyes. Directly before her stood the high priest, terrifying in his weird costume and horrid mask, and near him a great leopard, nervous and restless on its chain. Beyond these was a sea of savage, painted faces and grotesque masks, discernible vaguely in the light of torches against a background of leopard skins.

The atmosphere of the room was heavy with the acrid stench of black bodies. A wave of nausea surged over the girl; she reeled slightly and placed the back of one hand across her eyes to shut out the terrifying sight.

The old woman behind her whispered angrily and shoved her forward. A moment later Imigeg the high priest seized her hand and drew her to the center of the smaller, higher dais beside the growling leopard. The beast snarled and sprang at her; but Imigeg had anticipated such an emergency, and the leopard was brought to a sudden stop by its chain before its raking talons touched the soft flesh of the shrinking girl.

Old-timer shuddered as the horror of her position impressed itself more deeply upon his consciousness. His rage against the blacks and his own futility left him weak and trembling. His utter helplessness to aid her was maddening.

Then the wide eyes of the girl, now taking in the details of the scene before her, met his. For a moment she regarded him blankly; then she recognized him. Surprise and incredulity were writ-

ten upon her countenance. At first she did not realize that he too was a prisoner. His presence recalled his boorish and ungallant attitude toward her at their first meeting. She saw in him only another enemy; yet the fact that he was a white man imparted a new confidence. It did not seem possible that even he would stand idly by and permit a white woman to be imprisoned and maltreated by these blacks.

Then, slowly, it dawned upon her that he was a prisoner as well as she, and the new hope faded.

She wondered what queer trick of fate had brought them together again thus. She could not know, nor even dream, that he had been captured in an effort to succor her. . . .

As Old-timer watched the slender graceful figure and beautiful face of the new high priestess of the Leopard God, other eyes surveyed and appraised her. Among these were the eyes of Bobolo—savage eyes—greedy, lustful eyes. Bobolo licked his thick lips hungrily.

NOW the installation rites were proceeding. Imigeg, in the center of the stage, jabbering incessantly, sometimes addressing an under priest or a priestess, again the Leopard God; and when the beast answered, it never failed to elicit a subdued gasp of awe from the assembled warriors, though the white girl and Old-timer were less mystified or impressed after their first brief surprise.

There was another listener who also was mystified by the talking leopard, but who—though he had never heard of a ventriloquist—pierced the deception with his uncanny perceptive faculties as, perched upon a tie-beam of the roof that projected beyond the front wall of the building, he looked through an opening below the ridgepole at the barbaric scene being enacted beneath him.

IT was Muzimo; and beside him, trembling at sight of so many leopards, perched the Spirit of Nyamwegi. "I am afraid," said the latter. "Nkima is afraid. Let us go back to the land that is Tarzan's. Tarzan is king there; here no one knows him, and he is no better than a Gomangani."

"Always you speak of Nkima and Tarzan," complained Muzimo. "I have never heard of them. You are the Spirit of Nyamwegi and I am Muzimo. How many times must I tell you this?"

"You are Tarzan, and I am Nkima," insisted the little monkey. "You are a Tarmangani."

"I am the spirit of Orlando's ancestor," insisted the other. "Did not Orlando say so?"

"I do not know," sighed the Spirit of Nyamwegi wearily; "I do not understand the language of the Gomangani. All I know is that I am Nkima, and that Tarzan has changed. He is not the same since the tree fell upon him. I also know that I am afraid. I want to go away from here."

"Presently," promised Muzimo. He was watching the scene below him intently. He saw the white man and the white girl, and he guessed the fate that awaited them; but it did not move him to compassion, nor arouse within him any sense of blood-responsibility. He was the ancestral spirit of Orlando, the black son of a black chief; the fate of a couple of strange Tarmangani meant nothing to him. Presently, however, his observing eyes discovered something which did arouse his keen interest. Beneath one of the hideous priest-masks he caught a glimpse of familiar features. He was not surprised, for he had been watching this particular priest intently for some time.

The shadow of a smile touched the lips of Muzimo. "Come!" he whispered to the Spirit of Nyamwegi, as he clambered to the roof of the temple.

Sure-footed as a cat, he ran along the ridgepole, the little monkey at his heels.

Midway of the building he sprang lightly down the sloping roof and launched himself into the foliage of a near-by tree, and as the Spirit of Nyamwegi followed him, the two were engulfed in the darkness of the forest. . . .

Inside the temple the priestesses had lighted several fires upon the large clay dais and swung cooking-pots above them on crude tripods, while from a rear room of the temple the lesser priests had brought many cuts of meat, wrapped in plantain leaves. These the priestesses placed in the cooking-pots, while the priests returned for gourds and jugs of native beer, which were passed among the warriors.

As the men drank they commenced to dance. Slowly at first, their bodies bent forward from the hips, their elbows raised, they stepped gingerly, lifting their feet high. In their hands they grasped their spears and shields, holding them awkwardly because of the great curved steel talons affixed to their fingers. Restricted by lack of space upon the crowded floor, each warrior pivoted upon the same spot, pausing only to take long drinks from the beer jugs as they were passed to him. A low, rhythmic chant accompanied the dance, rising in volume and increasing in tempo as the tempo of the dance steps increased, until the temple floor was a mass of howling, leaping savages.

Upon the upper dais the Leopard God, aroused to fury by the din and movement about him and the scent of the flesh that was cooking in the pots, strained at his chain, snarling and growling in rage. The high priest, stimulated by the contents of a beer pot, danced madly before the frenzied carnivore, leaping almost within reach of its raking talons, then springing away again as the infuriated beast struck at him. The white girl shrank to the far side of the dais, her brain reeling at the hideous pandemonium surrounding her, half numb from fear and apprehension. She had seen the meat brought to the cooking-pots, but had only vaguely guessed the nature of it until a human hand had fallen from its wrappings of plantain leaves. Then the significance of the grisly object terrified and sickened her.

THE white man watching the scene about him looked often in her direction. Once he had tried to speak to her; but one of his guards had struck him heavily across the mouth, silencing

him. As the drinking and the dancing worked the savages into augmented fury, Old-timer's concern for the safety of the girl increased. He saw that drunkenness was rapidly robbing them of what few brains and little self-control Nature had vouchsafed them, and he trembled to think of what excesses they might commit when they had passed beyond even the restraint of their leaders; the fact that the chiefs, the priests, and priestesses were becoming as drunk as their followers but aggravated his fears.

BOBOLO too was watching the white girl. In his drunken brain schemes were forming. He saw her danger—and he wished to save her for himself. Just how he was going to get possession of her was not entirely clear to his muddled mind, yet it clung stubbornly to the idea. Then his eyes chanced to alight on Old-timer, and a scheme evolved hazily through the beer fumes.

The white man wished to save the white woman. This fact Bobolo knew and recalled. If he wished to save her he would protect her. The white man also wished to escape. He thought Bobolo was his friend. Thus the premises formed slowly in his addled brain. So far, so good! The white man would help him abduct the high priestess, but that could not be effected until practically every one was too drunk to prevent the accomplishment of his plan or remember it afterward. He would have to wait for the proper moment to arrive—but in the meantime he must get the girl out of this chamber and hide her in one of the other rooms of the temple. Already the black priestesses were mingling freely with the excited, drunken warriors; presently the orgy would be in full swing. After that possibly no one could save her, not even the high priest, who was now as drunk as any of them.

Bobolo approached Old-timer and spoke to his guards. "Go and join the others," he told them. "I will watch the prisoner."

The men, already half drunk, needed no second invitation. The word of a chief was enough; it released them from all responsibility. In a moment they were gone.

"Quick!" urged Bobolo, grasping Old-timer by the arm. "Come with me."

The white man drew back. "Where?" he demanded.

"I am going to help you to escape," whispered Bobolo.

"Not without the white woman," insisted the other.

This reply fitted so perfectly with Bobolo's plans that he was delighted. "I will arrange that too; but I must get you out of here into one of the back rooms of the temple. Then I shall come back for her. I could not take you both at the same time. It is very dangerous. Imigeg would have me killed if he discovered it. You must do just as I say."

"Why do you take this sudden interest in our welfare?" demanded the white suspiciously.

"Because you are both in danger here," replied Bobolo. "Everyone is very drunk, even the high priest. Soon there would be no one to protect either of you, and you would be lost. I am your friend; it is well for you that Bobolo is your friend, and that he is not drunk."

"Not very!" thought Old-timer as the black staggered at his side toward a doorway in the rear partition of the chamber.

Bobolo conducted him to a room at the far end of the temple. "Wait here," he said. "I shall go back and fetch the girl."

"Cut these cords at my wrists," demanded the white. "They hurt."

Bobolo hesitated, but only for a moment. "Why not?" he asked. "You do not have to try to escape, because I am going to take you away myself; furthermore, you could not escape alone. The temple stands upon an island surrounded by the river and by swamp-land alive with crocodiles. No trails lead from it other than the river. Ordinarily there are no canoes here, lest some of the priests or priestesses might escape. They too are prisoners. You will wait until I am ready to take you away."

"Of course I shall. Hurry, now, and bring the white woman."

Bobolo returned to the main chamber of the temple, but this time he approached it by way of the door that let upon the upper dais at its rear. Here he paused to reconnoiter. The meat from the cooking-pots was still being passed among the warriors, and the beer-jugs were still circulating freely. The high priest lay in a stupor at the side of the upper dais. The Leopard God crouched, growling, over a large bone.

KALI BWANA leaned against the wall close to the doorway where Bobolo stood. The black chief touched her upon the arm. Startled, she turned.

"Come!" he whispered, and beckoned her to follow.

The girl understood only the gesture, but she had seen this same man lead her fellow-prisoner away from the foot of the dais but a moment before; and instantly she concluded that by some queer freak of fate this black man might be friendly. Certainly there had been nothing threatening or unfriendly in his facial expressions as he had talked to the white man. Reasoning thus, she followed Bobolo into the gloomy chambers in the rear of the temple. She was afraid, and how close to harm she was only Bobolo knew.

Impelled to rashness by drink, he suddenly thought to drag her into one of the dark chambers that lined the corridor along which he was conducting her; but as he turned to seize her, a voice spoke at his elbow: "You got her more easily than I thought possible." Bobolo wheeled. "I followed you," added Old-timer, "thinking you might need help."

BOBOLO the chief grunted angrily; but the surprise had brought him to his senses. A scream or the noise of a scuffle might have brought a guardian of the temple to investigate, which would have meant death for Bobolo. He made no reply, but led them back to the room in which he had left Old-timer.

"Wait here for me," he cautioned them. "If you are discovered do not say that I brought you here. If you do I shall not be able to save you. Say that you were afraid and came here to hide." He turned to go.

"Wait," said Old-timer. "Suppose we are unable to get this girl away from here; what will become of her?"

Bobolo shrugged. "We have never before had a white priestess. Perhaps she is for the Leopard God, perhaps for the high priest. Who knows?" Then he left them.

"Perhaps for the Leopard God, perhaps for the high priest," repeated the girl. "Oh, how horrible!"

The girl was standing very close to the white man; he could feel the warmth of her body. When he tried to speak his voice was husky with emotion. He wanted to seize her and crush her to him; he wanted to cover her soft warm lips with kisses. What stayed him he did not know.

"Perhaps we shall escape soon," he said. "Bobolo has promised to take us away."

"You know him and can trust him?" she asked.

"I have known him for a couple of years," he replied, "but I do not trust him. I do not trust any of them. Bobolo is doing this for a price. He is an avaricious old scoundrel."

"What is the price?"

"Ivory."

"But I have none."

"Neither have I," he admitted, "but I'll get it."

"I will pay you for my share," she offered. "I have money with an agent at railhead."

He laughed. "Let's cross that bridge when we come to it, if we ever do."

"That doesn't sound very reassuring."

"We are in a bad hole," he explained. "We mustn't raise our hopes too high. Right now our only hope seems to lie in Bobolo. But he is a Leopard Man and a scoundrel, in addition to which he is drunk—a slender hope at best."

Bobolo, returning slightly sobered to the orgy, found himself suddenly frightened by what he had done. To bolster his waning courage he seized upon a large jug of beer and drained it. The contents exercised a magical effect upon Bobolo, for when presently his eyes fell upon a drunken priestess reeling in a corner she seemed transformed into a much-to-be-desired houri. . . . An hour later Bobolo was fast asleep in the middle of the floor.

THE effects of the native beer wore off almost as rapidly as they manifested themselves in its devotees, with the result that in a few hours the warriors commenced to bestir themselves. They were sick and their heads ached. They wished more beer; but when they demanded it they learned that there was no more, nor was there any food. They had consumed all the refreshments.

Gato Mgungu had never had any of the advantages of civilization, but he knew what to do under the circumstances, for the psychology of celebrators is doubtless the same in Africa as elsewhere. When there is nothing more to eat or drink, it must be time to go home. Gato Mgungu gathered the other chiefs and transmitted this philosophical reflection to them. They agreed, Bobolo included. His brain was slightly befogged. He had already forgotten several events of the past evening, including the houri-like priestess. He knew that there was something important on



With a silent prayer of thanksgiving they drifted inaudibly toward the great river.

his mind, but he could not recall just what it was; therefore he herded his men to their canoes just as the other chiefs and headmen were doing.

Presently he was headed down-river, part of a long procession of war canoes filled with headmen. Back in the temple lay a few warriors who had still been too drunk to stand. For these had been left a single canoe. These men were strewn about the floor of the temple, asleep. Among them were all of the lesser priests and the priestesses. Imigeg was curled up on one corner of the dais, fast asleep. The Leopard God, his belly filled, slept also.

Kali Bwana and Old-timer, waiting impatiently in the dark room at the rear of the temple for the return of Bobolo, had noted the increasing quiet in the front chamber of the building; then they had heard the preparations for departure as all but a few made ready to leave. They heard the shuffling of feet as the warriors passed out of the building; they heard the shouts and commands at the river-bank that told the white man that the natives were launching their canoes. Then there was silence.

"Bobolo ought to be coming along," remarked the man.

"Perhaps he has gone away and left us," suggested Kali Bwana.

They waited a little longer. Not a sound came from any part of the temple nor from the grounds outside. The silence of death reigned over the holy of holies of the Leopard God. Old-timer

stirred uneasily. "I am going to have a look out there," he said. "Perhaps Bobolo has gone—and if he has we want to know it." He moved toward the doorway. "I shall not be gone long," he whispered. "Do not be afraid."

AS the girl waited in the darkness her mind dwelt upon the man who had just left her. He had changed since the time of their first meeting. He appeared more solicitous as to her welfare and much less brusque and churlish. Yet she could not forget the harsh things he had said to her upon that other occasion. It galled her deeply to reflect that in the event of their escape she would be under obligations to him. As these thoughts occupied her mind, Old-timer crept stealthily along the dark corridor toward the small doorway that opened upon the upper dais.

Only a suggestion of light came through it now to guide his footsteps, and when he reached it he looked out into an almost deserted room. The embers of the cooking-fires were hidden by white ashes; only a single torch remained that had not burned out. Its smoky flame burned steadily in the quiet air, and in its feeble light he saw the sleepers sprawled upon the floor. In the dim light he could not distinguish the features of any; so he could not know if Bobolo was among them. One long searching look he gave that took in the whole interior of the chamber, a look that assured him that no single conscious

person remained in the temple. Then he turned and hastened back to the girl.

"Did you find him?" she asked.

"No. I doubt that he is here. Nearly all of them have left, except just a few who were too drunk to leave. I think it is our chance."

"What do you mean?"

"There is no one to prevent our escaping. There may be no canoe. Bobolo told me that no canoe was ever left here, for fear that the priests or priestesses might escape. He may have been lying, but whether he was or not we may as well take the chance. There is no hope for either of us if we remain here. Even the crocodiles would be kinder to you than these fiends."

"I will do whatever you say," she replied, "but if at any time I am a burden, if my presence might hinder your escape, do not consider me. Go on without me. Remember that you are under no obligations to me, nor—" She hesitated and stopped.

"Nor what?" he asked.

"Nor do I wish to be under obligations to you. I have not forgotten the things that you said to me when you came to my camp."

HE hesitated a moment before replying; then he ignored what she had said. "Come!" he commanded brusquely. "We have no time to waste."

He walked to a window in the rear wall of the room and looked out. It was very dark. He could see nothing. He knew that the building was raised on piles and that the drop to the ground might prove dangerous; but he also knew that a veranda stretched along one side of the structure. Whether it continued around to the rear of the building where this room was located he could not know. To go out through the main room among all those savages was too fraught with risk. An alternative was to find their way to one of the rooms overlooking the veranda that he knew was on the riverside of the building.

"I think we'll try another room," he whispered. "Give me your hand, so that we shall not become separated."

She slipped her hand into his. Quietly they tiptoed into the dark corridor, the man groping with his free hand until he found a doorway. Gingerly they crossed the room beyond in search of a window.

What if this was the apartment of some temple inmate who had left the orgy to come here and sleep! The thought brought cold sweat to the man's brow, and he swore in his heart that he would slay any creature that put itself in the way of the rescue of the girl. But fortunately the apartment was uninhabited, and the two came to the window unchallenged. The man threw a leg over the sill, and a moment later stood upon the veranda beyond; then reaching in, he assisted the girl to his side.

They were near the rear of the building. He dared not chance detection by going to the stairway that led to the ground from the front entrance to the temple. "We shall have to climb down one of the piles that support the building," he explained. "It is possible that there may be a guard at the front entrance. Do you think you can do it?"

"Certainly," she replied.

"I'll go first," he said. "If you slip I'll try to hold you."

"I shall not slip; go ahead."

The veranda had no railing. He lay down and felt beneath its edge until he found the top of a pile. "Here," he whispered; and lowered himself over the edge.

The girl followed. He dropped a little lower and guided her legs until they had found a hold upon the pile, which was the bole of a young tree about eight inches in diameter. Without difficulty they reached the ground, and again he took her hand and led her to the bank of the river. As they moved downstream parallel with the temple he sought for a canoe, and when they had come opposite the front of the building he could scarce restrain an exclamation of relief and delight when they came suddenly upon one drawn up on the shore, partially out of the water.

SILENTLY they strained to push the heavy craft into the river. At first it seemed that their efforts were of no avail; but at last it started to slip gently downward, and once it was loosened from the sticky mud of the bank that same medium became a slippery slide down which it coasted easily.

He helped her in, shoved the canoe out into the sluggish stream, and jumped in after her; then with a silent prayer of thanksgiving they drifted inaudibly down toward the great river.

Will the fugitives win clear of the fearsome clutches of the Leopard Clan? Be sure to read the next installment of this intriguing story—in the forthcoming November issue.

Haunted Mountains



A swift-moving story of the famous Hell's Angels squad of the Foreign Legion—and of a fight that repeated the famous "silent" battle of our own Civil War.



By

WARREN HASTINGS MILLER

Illustrated by Hubert Whately

HELL'S ANGELS were hard-boiled on the subject of ghosts—though they would admit the existence in Africa of unseen powers of which the white man could pretend to know nothing; but this region was sure a spooky place! The Betana, the Arabs of the Camel Corps called it, a tumbled and tortured area of volcanic mountains rising abruptly out of the sands. And all about were mysterious tombs, rock dolmens so ancient as to be prehistoric.

It was one of those dead October nights when the Sahara has not a breath and the silence is profound. Everywhere the jinn were talking—the faint whine and groan and crack of rock contracting after the scorching heat of day. The sough and rush of wind usually covered those mysterious noises. But Ressay's Camel Corps troopers never failed to have superstitious qualms when the desert was silent and the voices of the jinn could be heard. When the jinn talked, men died on the morrow—so ran a proverb that experience had shown well grounded. At that moment the entire platoon of the Erfoud *Méharistes*, as Ressay's unit of the Camel Corps was officially titled, were praying and filled with blue funk.

Sergeant Texas Ike chewed solemnly as Commandant Knecht approached the P. C. with a map in hand. The big and burly and genial *chef de battalion* bore a twinkle of malice in his eyes as he noted that the Hell's Angels squad had appropriated one of those tombs and were building a mulligan fire in it. "Ouff! Is it that you will boil the mar-

mite over the head of a king, my Buffalo Bill?" he inquired. "*Quelle théâtre!*"

Ike stopped chewing. "Meanin' thar's a corpse under them stones, Giner'l?" he asked. By the wooden expression of him, Knecht could gather nothing of Ike's reaction to this news. But his humorous twinkle expanded into a grin in his bushy black beard as he pursued this casual investigation on how Hell's Angels would take it.

"*Oui! A squelette!*" Knecht said vivaciously. "These are the tombs of ancient Garamantian kings. You would enjoy a ghost for company tonight, no?" the Commandant bantered.

"Provided he don't put no sand in our mulligan, sir," said Ike imperturbably. "We likes 'em well-behaved."

"*Bah!* You Americans!" chortled Commandant Knecht. "But have you no reverence for the mighty dead, that you build a fire over him?"

"I wouldn't tell 'em, sir," counseled Ike with practicality. "They'd dig him up, to see has he got any gold or jewels onto him. An' be all night a-doin' of it, when we ought to git some sleep for the fight tomorrow."

KNECHT laughed over that picture of the looting propensities of Légion soldiers. The ghost would not trouble them, unless he happened to have valuables buried with him, in which case they'd trouble *him!*

"*Pardieu*, you have reason, Sergeant. There are four thick slabs of stone over the crypt, and three feet of sand on top of that—no, they never had ornaments



buried with them," he hastened to add as a gleam came into Ike's eyes over these difficulties in the way of getting at any ancient treasure. "We had best let the poor ghost lie, since you would loot him—much less be afraid of him! It is Ressot's Chaamba that I am uneasy about. Listen!"

DOWN on the sands below the P. C. could be heard a muttering growl: "Allah! Allah-il-Allah! La illahi illa Alla-ah-h!" The entire Camel Corps platoon to a man was down on its knees and murmuring that formula ceaselessly, in varying accents of superstitious fear and religious fervor. Usually those Arab troopers were laughing and shouting, squatted in groups playing at their interminable game of *naar*—a burnous held up across a squad of six, hands passing a coin behind it, the opposite group watching to guess who had it when all the clenched fists were upraised. Now, however, they were all praying.

"These shore is haunted mountains, Commandant," said Ike. "The most hellish place you ever brang us into, if you asks me! Spooky, like. 'Taint a fit country for mortals. And now the wind has to go flat."

They sat listening awhile to hear the desert talk. Unearthly, eerie, shivery, those long-drawn moans, those sullen faint explosions, those whispers and mutterings half-heard! It was no use for your reason to tell you that these rock masses were heated to a hundred and forty in the sun, and cooled down at night so that they spalled and cracked and broke open new fissures constantly. The desert talked with the voices of its jinn—and calamity followed.

"Oui! Calamity," said Commandant Knecht aloud as if that word had entered both their minds simultaneously.

"This *harka* numbers seven hundred guns. They leave the Tafilelt and go to raid Tindouf, in company with their cousins, the Reguibat of the Iguidi desert. I take a hint from the great Stonewall Jackson and strike them before they can either join the Reguibat or return to the Tafilelt. For that reason we have come a hundred and fifty miles from Poste Erfoud, Sergeant. But it will take all our command to beat them. Nor will I retreat without giving battle," he added with force. "Peste! What can a commander do when his whole left wing is *cafard* with superstitious terrors?"

"Chow! Come and get it!" That shout in Corporal Criswell's voice broke in on the Commandant's perplexities. Ike said, hospitably: "Will you jine us, sir? We has mulligan an' speckled pup."

Knecht wrinkled up his nose. There was a perfectly good bottle of wine and a roast of lamb with green peas preparing for him by Balbuti, his Soudan orderly; but he loved to sit around the camp-fire with his Anglo-Saxon squad, they were such original and versatile devils.

"Merci!" he said. "I have never eaten dog, my Buffalo Bill, but this pup sounds intriguing. Is he roasted or boiled?"

"Rice and raisins, sir," Ike laughed. "An' don't say nothin' about that there stiff, sir, please."

Ike looked at the ancient Garamanian tomb with more interest as they moved on it together. Its upright pillars of split rock were sagged apart by the pressure of the sands. Gleams of ruddy fire-light came through the cracks. The roof, if it ever had one, was long since gone. Two tall splinters of rock facing south marked the entrance. The skeleton was to be found sitting in the crypt below, under four slabs of rock; its bones would crumble to the touch.



They maintained a discreet silence on all this as the Commandant bulked into the enclosure and all rose at salute. Ressayot was there, his uniform gleaming with the new captain's insignia of his promotion. With him was his Chaamba sheik of the Camel Corps, Sif-en-Nazr. Lieutenant Hortet sat puffing a vile pipe with his back against a broad pillar. A great off-duty loafing place was wherever Hell's Angels happened to be setting up housekeeping on campaign, for they were an exceptional lot and always interesting. Besides their giant Michigan corporal, Criswell, they still numbered Anzac Bill, the Australian soldier of fortune; Mr. Dee, the Count di Piat-ti; Calamity Cyclops, the best sharpshooter in any army for all he had only one eye; and Mora, the dark Spanish bull, who was logy but courageous as El Cid in a tight place. Knecht had put them in charge of a special combat unit invented by Ike, two horses carrying automatic rifles in saddle scabbards, and a led-mule for the great quantity of ammunition which the two machine-guns required.

Commandant Knecht spread out his scouts' map while the mulligan was being served, and proceeded to a business that his soul delighted in, planning a battle.

"Here, then, is the *sebkra* where they are camped, gentlemen," he said as Ressayot, Hortet, Ike and the sheik squatted about the sketch in the firelight. A *sebkra* was a swamp in rainy weather but pasturage most of the year. "You note that she is cut in two by a low height of ground, this swale. Here is a plateau commanding that division at easy rifle-range. You will take position there, Sergeant, with your two automatics. Hortet takes half the battalion and rides around through these ragged hills to

get on the west end of the *sebkra*. Ressayot takes the Camel Corps and circles the east end. When he hears Hortet attacking them at dawn, he rides down the *sebkra* and takes them in the rear. I will be with Ike's unit and have the reserve back of me, the other half of the battalion, in case it goes not too well. Zero hour will be four-thirty in the morning. *Entendu?*"

THEY all nodded. It was a simple battle plan, needing only prompt movement by Ressayot, on hearing Hortet's guns, to roll up the Ait Khebbash. The battalion scouts had reported the entire *harka* of the tribesmen encamped in this long narrow swale about five miles to the west. So little did they dream that Knecht was pouncing on them from distant Poste Erfoud, that they had not even guards out. A surprise attack early in the morning should not fail. And Ike with his automatics commanded any escape up the rocky slopes that surrounded the *sebkra* on all sides.

Ike ruminated over the battle plan. It was all right, but—well, there was one hole in it that seemed almost ridiculous to mention, a natural phenomenon that had once nearly ruined a battle plan very like it. That word *sebkra*, swamp, was awakening an old tale in Ike's memories. He had heard it from his father, a Confederate soldier who had fought at Seven Pines, that peculiar "silent battle" of the Civil War. Swamp—the swamps of the Chickahominy—the low-lying vapors between the two armies, rattle of musketry and roar of cannon on both sides—and not a sound of it could be heard, less than a mile away! Ike's memory could even hear the old warrior's vigorous description: "Lawd God, it was mighty spooky! Them Yanks fit right smart. An' we could

see Longstreet's boys goin' for 'em hell-bent; yit not a sound of them volleys comin' to us, not even the cannon. Him an' Hill had fifteen batteries in place, mind ye! An' us gittin' no orders to move, when anyone could see we'd ought to be right thar. We was Joe Johnston's left wing, thirteen brigades of us, but he wa'n't hearin' nawthin' either. Didn't know Longstreet was at 'em accordin' to battle orders. Slow, he allus was, ol' Dutch Longstreet."

More about that incredible battle. . . . The old Confederate never could explain it; something to do with the fog, maybe, but they nearly lost the fight because neither wing could hear the other. Ike noted that Knecht's plan involved exactly the same conditions, an attack by both wings and a long swamp between them. He thought of bringing the objection up, but things were spooky enough in the Betana now, without springing such an unheard-of phenomenon as a silent battle on the harassed commander! The chances were a thousand to one it would never occur again. Lots of battles besides Seven Pines had been fought in fogs.

The feed was now set on the sand, and Knecht folded his map as a movement to go into a huddle over it in the tomb shelter began.

"Please, sir!" Criswell, as host, gestured to the Commandant's place. A bowl of steaming mulligan stew, half a loaf of Légion bread looking like a brown béret, a canteen of *vin ordinaire*, and a kit-lid of that delicacy of raisins and rice known to the ungodly as speckled pup. Coarse but ample soldier's fare—but there was another guest below, an ancient king, dead two thousand years.

They had not reckoned on Di Piatti about that! The old Roman pagan in Di Piatti bade him pour a libation at this juncture. He dropped a gill of wine on the sands, looked around with a grin and said: "To you, Squelette!"

THEY all stopped eating. Anzac Bill reached for his trench pick. "Skeleton? Where? Any loot buried with him, Count?" There were movements on shovels and bayonets.

"Right under us!" Di Piatti declared, though the Commandant was looking at him blackly, with raised eyebrows. "Might be an emerald or a piece of jade as big as your fist, Bill!"

Plates were abandoned. Hortet had grabbed his and gone out, crossing him-

self abruptly. No eating over a corpse for the superstitious old Gaul! Ressayot was looking angrily at the Count, though his native sheik did not seem disturbed. The Anglo-Saxons were all for commencing a mine, and Knecht hastened to head that off.

"Nonsense, Di Piatti! You know very well there is nothing buried with them. The skeleton—"

Huhhhhhhhhhhh!

That ghostly, shuddering whisper soughed through the tomb and struck everybody silent. The grin left Di Piatti's face. Ressayot held his breath, one hand on the sheik's arm restraining him. The Anglo-Saxons sat like so many wooden images, listening. Knecht looked puzzled. There was a physical explanation for that voiceless murmur, of course, but he could not lay tongue to it.

A tiny singing whine, inexpressibly weird, came from underground somewhere, and then again that gibbering exhalation—*Huhhhhhh!* The two together were extraordinary in their suggestion of a haunted tomb. The sheik leaped to his feet and went out with the unnerved croak: "*Mashallah!* The jinn be upon us!" Ressayot flung himself after him to stop him, to reason with him before he fled shrieking back to his troopers. Knecht sat eying Di Piatti sternly.

"It's a jerboa, a little jumping-mouse. But did you put it in the crypt, Di Piatti? This is no time for jokes."

"On my honor, I didn't, sir!"

Ike chewed. "Them squeaks, sir, ought be a pack-rat, or somethin'. But that there winnowy noise! 'Taint mortal—"

"Air! Nothing but air!" the Commandant assured him. "Look for a draft-hole to the crypt, Sergeant. Every queer noise has its natural explanation."

"Not in Africa, sir! I'll believe anything here, till proved otherwise." Ike sat with troubled visage. Knecht looked on them with astonishment. Hell's Angels, his pet squad, his rock to rally on in disaster, his spearhead in action, getting the jitters over some curious noises in an ancient tomb! He could not believe it. They sat with untouched plates, with hands on picks and shovels,—but they seemed to have given up the idea of mining for any loot with this particular skeleton!

Woooooooooooo!

That noise was certainly in the air all about their ears! Everyone decamped

without further delay—leaving Knecht to deal with his ghost alone, as best he might. The Commandant stood his ground. There *must* be a natural explanation, but—

AFRICA was, in fact, truly a place of darkness and blood and violence. Her soil reeked with the spilled blood of mankind, as deep as you cared to dig—and *then* you would come to thousands of flint weapons that were witnesses of slayers and slain when the prehistoric beasts roamed the earth. Unlike Asia, she had never lifted her face to any God. Without God-ideals, unlimited injustice and hellish wickedness reigned unpunished, the agonies of tortured souls wrenched from life by cruelties inhuman, diabolic. . . .

Huhhhhhhhh!

The Commandant looked nervously over-shoulder at the third recurrence of that sound like a breath through the grinning jaws of the skeleton below. He half expected to see it peering in his face, in the shadows of that firelit tomb! Then he threw back his head with resolution. All this could be explained by some fact connected with the walls of this tomb and the crypt below. But at present he had a defection of half his command on his hands, perhaps a mutiny of the Chaamba—never a nice thing in the open Sahara. He could hear Ressot's angry expostulations outside, the abrupt retorts of the Sheik Sifen-Nazr, and the voices of Hell's Angels seconding Ressot's entreaties. Curiously, having been routed from the tomb themselves, they were most eager now to convince the sheik there was nothing to it but mouse-squeaks and drafts of air. The sheik brushed them off passionately: "*La!* None but fools fight when the jinn are awake and seeking whom they may devour! We be lucky if the wrath of Shaitan-the-Stoned does not fall upon us all! Nay, Captain, we flee this country of haunts and devils."

"Ya Sidi! I pray you consider: Would ye come this far and not strike?" Ressot was entreating—when a voice like a pistol-shot broke in on them.

"Sergeant!"

The tone of it snapped everybody to salute. Knecht's face was a study in wrath as they faced him. There was such a thing as Discipline! They gathered that—as Knecht went on, in a voice like a file: "Take a platoon of men. I want them in full battle kit and march-

ing rations. Go down there and bring me the Camel Corps rifles—all of them! If any resist, shoot him down." Knecht came a step nearer and said to the sheik, cuttingly: "Ya Sidi, your Chaamba are our allies. We subject you to no discipline such as holds with the rest of the Army. You are free to go, to fight or not as you choose. Your Lébel's and ammunition are loaned you by the Republic, not, *pardieu*, as ornaments, but as the weapons of strong men to fight your enemies and ours with. Name of God! I'd rather strike the Aït Khebbash with the Légion alone than depend for one moment on allies who fear silly noises of cracking rocks and gusts of wind in an old tomb! Take your troopers home, Ya Sidi! But La France insists your rifles and their ammunition must first be turned in! —Sergeant, you understood my order? Execute!"

Knecht turned brusquely on his heel with that command, leaving the sheik gasping, his eyes aflame with wounded pride and mortification. Ike had barked out the orders to fall in, and Hell's Angels were moving off in military formation to get the rest of their platoon and disarm that squadron of the Camel Corps now exclusively occupied with Arabic theology. His heart sang with relief. All this spookiness wiped out with a single stern gesture! Wasn't it like Knecht, though? He would go with you as far as you liked, if it was a mere interesting amusement; but the moment anything tended to vitiate morale in the command, he was prompt and stern. Ike heard a low growl of approval as they marched by the tomb in the dark. Lieutenant Hortet, that grizzled old Gaul, it was, going to rejoin his commander, with an empty tin of mulligan in his hand. Ike heard him say: "*Morbleu!* Let us strike them *now*, my old one! Use the other half of the battalion—and no reserves."

"*Oui!* No reserves!" the Commandant agreed. "Hurry back, Sergeant," he called after Ike. "I propose a night attack. As soon as we can get in position. These ghosts do get on one's nerves!"

A jovial laugh as Ike marched on out of hearing toward the Légion camp. There were bitter snorts, but not much said by Hell's Angels, for they were all somewhat ashamed.

Arrived at camp, Ike called out his platoon of two hundred men, ordered them into battle kits, gave them a brief

inspection. Then in column of fours the long file wound down the slopes to the Camel Corps camp on the sands below. Ressot had left it in his usual military formation, the camels parked in rows with their feed-mats spread out in front of each animal, the rifles stacked in regular *faisceaux* at intervals along the front. There was not even a sentry on patrol. A mass of humped burnouses covered the sands, chanting in the last stages of religious excitement. That *Allah-il-Allah* of theirs had reached the state of mob hypnotism, now. As fighting men, they were as useless as so many Hottentots under the sway of voodoo. Ike barked the order: "Right files deploy! Line of battle! Open order! *Houp!*"

The entire right flank of his column spread out in a long line between that mob and the stacked rifles, covering them from attack.



"Halt! Each man takes a rifle and bandolier from the *faisceaux!* *Houp!*"

The clatter of arms followed that execution order. In a few seconds Ressot's troops were disarmed. Poor devil, Ike thought. Ressot, with his new captain's stars could not help but feel disgraced.

The Camel Corps were still praying, not even aware that they were disarmed. And then the Sheik Sif-en-Nazr burst down upon them with cries, followed by Ressot, still expostulating. Ike did not stay to see the effect. He gave the brief order: "March! Battle line falls in as rear guard! *Houp!*"

Up the hill moved Ike's column, now doubly burdened with rifles and bandoliers. Behind them they left an indescribable uproar, shouts, imprecations, yells of despair. The voices of Ressot and the sheik could be heard trying to restore some sort of order. They still had their swords, without which no Arab trooper ever moves—their own property, as were the camels. They could be ugly if they got out of hand—but it would be a mere slaughter against Ike's rear guard. It was painful; but it was war. Poor Ressot!

The battalion was mounted and ready when Ike reported up on the plateau. Their own horses had been saddled, and Ike's special combat unit was ready for him. Knecht greeted the returning column with approval and sought out Di Piatti, after disposing the extra arms in saddle scabbards.

"My Count!" he said. "A word with you: I cannot spare Sergeant Ike for the left wing. He and the Hell's Angels are now our center—all that we have. You commanded a regiment in Italy. You will take the left wing, then. Having two sets of rifles, you should maintain a terrific combat fire, *pardieu!* Our old war-horse Hortet takes the right wing as before. You advance when you hear his guns, after taking position across the east end of this *sebkra* where the enemy are camped. We have no reserves; but—a vigorous charge, with fire *bien nourri*, and we shall need none."

Di Piatti's eyes shone as he nodded understanding of this simple battle plan. Meat for the tall Florentine, was this chance to lead troops again! Ike heard the orders with qualms of regret for good little Ressot. Fine, for their dashing Italian, but it should have been Ressot and his Camel Corps troopers—*would* have been, if this whole region was not such a spooky place! Well, it could not be helped now.

The battalion moved out under the Sahara stars in a long column of jingling harness and creaking leather, to descend into the dreadful sand plains of the Betana. All around them rose now the gloomy and half-seen flanks of

arid rock mountains with tortuous passages of white sand winding in among them. A dangerous place for an ambush in case some scout of the Aït Khebbash had already spied them out and warned the *harka* of their nearness. Knecht had thrown out flanking squads against that very eventuality. The *sebkra* lay five miles to the west. It formed the beginning of a tributary stream that flowed, once in a while, into that vast network of ravines known as the Seguiet-el-Hamra, the Red Valley, cutting through Spanish territory in Rio de Oro, to empty into the Atlantic two hundred miles farther west.

Hours passed. The command plodded along over discouraging sand with Knecht and the Arab guide group in the lead. Haunted mountains that groaned and popped with the chill of night shut off all vision of where they were and where they were going. Always a lane of sand, leading on and on into the unknown. None of this region had ever been mapped. It was a refuge for hostile *harkas* to gather, and whence launch their raids—on Tindouf, on the caravan routes to the Soudan, on posts above the Tafilelt. If met by a superior force, they retreated and vanished. Knecht was audaciously carrying the war into enemy territory with his small force.

About three in the morning the guides stopped and pointed. Over that ridge to the south lay the *sebkra*, they said. Yes, there was passage around it, at both ends. Vague about the distance—two miles, three—what did it matter? The Aït Khebbash were encamped in there; let the Commandant fall upon them, in the name of Allah!

It mattered a good deal to Knecht, the time it would take to get both his wings in position. They must attack almost simultaneously, first Hortet, then Di Piatti, as soon as he heard Hortet open up. Otherwise the Aït Khebbash would overwhelm Hortet alone and then turn down the *sebkra* to deal with Di Piatti.

"*Oui*. Suppose we put it at dawn, then?" said the Commandant, eyeing his watch. "That gives each of you one hour to get into position. Time enough to go twice three miles, to dispose of the horses, to deploy the battle line. Sergeant Ike and I will climb up from here with his combat unit and establish a central P. C., where we can signal both of you if possible. Can you get the horses up there, my Buffalo Bill?"

Ike eyed the rocky slopes, chewing. "Yep. Take us a leetle time, sir. All we want is the ammunition mawl anyhow. The boys kin lug up them sho-shos. That mawl kin climb a chimbly if he has to."

"*Bien!* March, *alors!* I give you one hour, gentlemen."



The command split up. Hortet set off west with four hundred men down a ribbon of sand that led into unexplored fastnesses of the Betana. The mere word of an Arab guide said that they would find a passage into the *sebkra* some distance to the west. No civilized way to launch a battle! But such was campaigning in the Sahara.

It did not worry Ike, who was principally interested in getting that mule up a practically impassable mountain slope. The formation was not stratified but volcanic, ragged masses of black tufa, and not a ledge that went anywhere. The animal was essential, for it bore hundreds of rounds of machine-gun ammunition neatly packed in belts under a tarp and a diamond hitch, a combat invention of Ike's. With the two sho-shos and limitless ammunition, you had the mobility of cavalry combined with the fire-intensity of a whole

battalion of infantry. Once the invaluable mule was up there, Knecht had all the reserve he needed.

Hell's Angels appreciated that as they pulled and pushed and booted that mule upward over atrocious going. The creature was sure-footed, would not fall off the mountain incontinently like a horse, but he had the stubbornness of his race and had to be shown, every foot of the way—more than once had to have a fire built under him. It was all of an hour by the time a sweating and cursing group of men led by Ike and the Commandant had gained the ridge with a mule in their midst. The first faint tinges of dawn were paling the eastern sky as they looked about over what appeared to be a petrified sea of rock waves, six or seven hundred feet to their crests, rising out of valleys of sand. Only down below was it not staring white. Dark and colorless, rather, under the stars. The greenery of the *sebkra*, marshy cat-tails in the spring rains, and goats the rest of the year. A sleeping camp lay below, hundreds of fast gray mehari camels dotting the valley floor, riders snuggled up against them, the whole barely distinguishable in the vaporous gloom. The Commandant's glasses were busy searching the east and west ends of the *sebkra* for signs of the gleam of light on bayonets that would announce the arrival of his two wings. Ike and Criswell picked out two emplacements for the machine-guns. That low rocky saddle crossed the *sebkra* below here, cutting it nearly in two. Its slopes joined the two opposite ridges in a talus that was far less steep than the prevailing hill flanks—a place that invited attack on their position if the Aït Khebbash cared to come up, it seemed to Ike. He set the two guns to sweep it with a plunging fire, and put Anzac Bill and Mora at laying up rocks to protect them against flanking snipers.

KNECHT, however, snapped his fingers joyously at sight of that low saddle. "*Eh, bien?* She may open us to attack, that little rise, my sergeant, but she enables Di Piatti to come down the whole east end of the *sebkra* unseen by those dissidents *là bas*," he pointed out. "If we only could signal him not to halt, without springing the bomb ourselves!"

It was a gorgeous opportunity for Di Piatti to get in close if they had only known it beforehand, for the Aït Khebbash camp was all in the west end. That

little rise shut off the east end from their sight. They had not even a lookout on it, that anyone could see. However, there was nothing to be done about it just now. They could not helio till the sun came up. The action would be over by then, probably. Di Piatti would have to depend on the sound of Hortet's guns for the signal to sweep down what would appear to him to be an empty valley.

Daylight grew. They were stirring down below, the rills of smoke from camp-fire embers beginning to rise here and there in the still morning air. No sort of guard seemed to be set. Knecht and his watchers on the heights looked on with more and more impatience. The hour had already passed, and no sign of either wing in the rocky gorges that closed the valley at both ends. Unmistakably the *harka* was preparing to break camp and move on—probably eastward, and then south to join the Reguibat.

A sigh of relief escaped Commandant Knecht at length. "*Ha!* She goes to commence, our little affair!" he said with satisfaction. "*Voilà, Di Piatti!*"

A LONG file of Légion horses was winding out between two overlapping promontories that seemed to close the *sebkra* to the east. It moved haltingly at first, its outriding scouts scouring the valley floor to locate any camp of hostiles and returning to report. Slowly the main column pushed out till its leading files were stopped by the flanks of the ridge to the south. Then it turned into a line of battle, each man right-facing his horse. It moved slowly down the *sebkra* some distance, then halted.

"Pretty!" commented Knecht. "If he only would come on!" But there was no mortal way to make him do that. Di Piatti was waiting to hear from Hortet, according to orders. He was at least a mile up the *sebkra* from where that saddle crossed below them; from there to where Hortet would appear was another mile. Well, there was nothing to worry about; you could hear gunfire twenty miles in a quiet morning like this.

And then an element of drama introduced itself, quite unexpectedly. A second file appeared, moving out through that gap between the promontories to the east—a file of mehari camels it was, ambling at an easy pace, an officer in uniform leading them. The rest were

just Arabs. They wore no stunning uniform such as the Spahi; they carried no Lébel rifle strapped over one shoulder upright with the jaunty precision of that corps. But they were Ressot and his Chaambra troopers, just the same, and they were weaponless save for their swords.

A general exclamation broke from the group around the machine-guns as the Camel Corps lined up some distance behind Di Piatti, in parade formation, with Ressot now some paces ahead of their center.

"Ah, bah! *Les pauvre enfants!*" came the pitying cry from Knecht. "They are ashamed, the *méchants!* Ressot has talked to them, and now they would fight, if it is with their bare hands! Can we not signal Di Piatti to give them back their arms, Sergeant?" Knecht asked in a burst of chivalrous forgiveness.

"Mought, sir. We kin send C'lamity, here, with the orders. 'Taint more'n a mile."

They could not really spare Calamity, whose sharpshooting talents would be needed right here to take care of any snipers on their machine-gun nest. But those repentant troopers were too much for this group at the P. C. Calamity was detailed immediately to go bring them Knecht's gesture of forgiveness.

But he was destined never to get there, for at that moment events began to move with a swiftness that put all thoughts of the Chaamba platoon out of mind. Two Aït Khebbash riders came shambling into the valley out of the western gorge, their camels dipping and swaying in the fast lope of the mehari. They waved arms and long guns, and immediately the whole camp of the Aït Khebbash was in a turmoil of activity, tiny figures below leaping into saddles and whacking their beasts to the pitch and toss of the upheaval of getting onto their feet. It was all a pantomime down there, not a sound or a cry, though they were only a few hundred feet above it, and not half a mile away in an air line.

"FUNNY, we don't hear nothin'!" Ike fretted, the first to notice it. "Them birds is shore raisin' hell below, an' them camels a-singin' like they allus does. This aint no theaytre; it's a battle—thar comes Hortet!"

There was no doubt about its being a battle when that old war-horse flung his column into anything! The west end

of the *sebkra* now glinted with bayonets and was being stabbed with red spurts of rifle-fire in the half light of dawn. Hortet's people had dismounted and were deploying to right and left around the rocky base of the flats at that end. But no sound of that action was coming up here, either, no sharp spang of the Lébels, no rolling thunder of the echoes, no crash of any volley as a whole squad happened to let off together. The Aït Khebbash had recoiled, but not for long. Brave as the Berber has been all down the centuries, canny, war-wise, they were sizing up this attack, keeping well apart, returning Hortet's fire with judgment and without panic. It would not take those experienced raiders long to realize that they far outnumbered this Légion force attacking them. One determined charge and they would have Hortet treed like a cat on a roof.

"Why don't Di Piatti move!"

IKE heard that burst of anguished astonishment escape from between the Commandant's clenched teeth. He turned to look up the valley himself—and saw that long line of Légion troopers still there, just as they had halted. Behind them the *méharistes*, also immovable, waiting. It was unbelievable! The impetuous Di Piatti, the fiery Ressot, eager to retrieve the disgrace to his Camel Corps troopers—both not moving a yard, when anyone could hear that Hortet was in full career at this end of the valley! Moreover he was being hard pressed now. The Aït Khebbash outnumbered him three to one. They had already driven most of his people to cover in the rocks with a destructive fire that left them no choice.

Knecht exploded. "*Mordieu!* Is it that they too cannot hear?" he demanded. "*Incroyable!* It staggers the intelligence! Ah, bah! Who ever heard of a silent battle? We must do something, Sergeant Ike! Can you not reach them with the machine-guns? Where is that messenger?"

Futile, his excitement! Calamity was already on his way. The range from their position was far too great to be of any help to Hortet with machine-gun sprays. Knecht pranced impotently; then began waving wig-wag with his kepi at those motionless lines of battle. In vain! At a mile distance his tiny and agitated figure among these rocks was just nothing at all to the eyes of Di Piatti and Ressot! They were waiting

for Hortet's guns, and not hearing them. Also because of the rise of that rock saddle they could see nothing of the action, so far. It was uncanny!

And it was Mora of Hell's Angels who nearly loosed panic in the P. C., including Knecht himself. He had been crossing himself fervidly over all this mysterious pantomime of a battle. The ghost of the tomb—the jinn talking in the desert—and now this sorcery that destroyed all sound—they were all too much for *his* peasant soul! "We are bewitched!" he croaked. "It is the land of Satan! Haunted mountains! *Madre de Dios*, save us!"

"Shet up, you!" Ike withered him with a raging glance of scorn. It was time to speak out, to tell the Commandant that old tale of another battle, long ago, that had no sound, either. For, nature had simply repeated these conditions here, he was sure. "Giner'l," he said, "my pappy fit at Seven Pines, an' it was jest like this, white layers of fog in the valley, an' our two wings was supposed to wham them Feder'ls together, but they didn't, 'cause Joe Johnston didn't hear no firin', though on'y a mile away at headquarters. My pappy was with Magruder's boys just acrost the river, and they could see Longstreet an' Hill chargin' ag'in and ag'in, an' all the batteries on both sides goin' it full blast—an' they couldn't hear a thing! Naw, sir! Not a sound, and fifty thousand men engaged! 'Twarn't a mile and a half from whar Magruder's boys stood lookin' on and wonderin' why ol' Joe didn't send 'em no order to git inter it. That's how Lee got command of the Army, sir. Pore ol' Joe didn't hear nothin' either, till it was nigh too late. Then he pitches in like a lion but gits took by a shell, an' it's Robert E. Lee to the front!" Ike concluded with a gleam of patriotic pride in his eyes.

INTEENTLY Knecht regarded him. His spirits rose vastly with this information that he was not the only commander afflicted with a silent battle that had upset completely a perfectly good battle-plan. Like Johnston he leaped with vigor to the remedy, once the supernatural suggestiveness of the mystery was quashed. "*Ouff! Quelle théâtre!*" he exclaimed jovially. "It is simple. If they cannot hear us, they shall see us, Name of God! We charge down with our center, Sergeant Ike! We attack from the saddle! Downhill with the

guns! Bring down that mule, Anzac Beel—throw him down if you can't move him any quicker! *En avant!*"

KNECHT and Hell's Angels made probably the quickest time on record down seven hundred feet of hill. They arrived with the machine-guns scrambled up with arms and legs in a sort of fricassée of steel and bones, and turned them point blank into the backs of the Aït Khebbash. The mule came booted down, caroming from rock to rock after them, propelled by the ungentle Iron Dog, as Knecht called Anzac Bill. Its ammunition-belts were yanked off the pack just in time to follow the last of those being ground out by Criswell and Ike. And that eruption of Légion people falling off a hill and going into action with promptitude on a skyline crossing the valley to the west of him was hint enough for Di Piatti. The thunder of his charge sweeping down the valley came to their ears within five minutes of drum-fire from the two machine-guns. *Clatter-clack! Clatter-clack! Clatter-clack!* Like a tidal wave they burst over Ike and Hell's Angels, divided around the guns, swept on with the gangle-legged Count waving his rifle in the lead and yelling like a fiend. Sputtering pops of musketry broke from them. The valley floor was a moving pageant, a spectacle of hard-riding Legionnaires firing at full gallop, and fiery Berbers meeting them with steel, Mausers, the long gun, everything they had. As seen from his rise it was a bewildering *mêlée* of friend and foe in the dust clouds, and so Ike turned the automatics on the hill flanks, which were becoming populous with dismounted snipers.

Scuff—scuff—scuff! That second wave was white meharis pacing in their five-foot stride, with long necks outstretched with yelling demons standing up in the saddles, waving yataghans. The Légion horses had outdistanced them in the dash up the *sebkra*—but when that wave struck home, it would be with the energy of a thunderbolt! It rolled over Ike's position and down the saddle decline into the fight. Behind it came Ressayre on the only horse in their outfit. He flung himself out of the saddle and tendered the reins to Knecht.

"Reporting for duty, sir," he said, saluting. "Perhaps the Commandant will need my mount?"

Knecht threw his arms around him

and embraced him French-fashion. "*Ah! —mon pauvre Capitaine!* It has been trying, no? The ghosts, the jinn this battle that makes no sound! Name of the devil! But it goes well now, *hein?*"

"We saw you. I yelled to Di Piatti, and we charged. My herrings—they'll show you they should have back their rifles today!" Ressot said with a trace of bitterness in his tone. His eyes were pleading to remount his horse and join his camel troopers.

"Take him!" said Knecht, handing back the reins. "I can see everything from here. Turn their left flank, Captain! It is the one gap left to close!"

RESSOT was off like a shot. The fight was growing stubborn with the Ait Khebbash now being surrounded on all sides. There was no difficulty, either, in hearing all the spiteful crackle of it, for the sun was up, the plain clear to vision, a blue sky overhead. Some scientist has demonstrated that the "silent battle" of Seven Pines was caused by layers of still vapors in a valley bottom obstructing the sound waves. Knecht knew nothing of that, but what Ike told him; he was occupied now entirely with the progress of his battle.

"*Tchk!*" he said regretfully. "They are escaping, Sergeant—but, *ma foi*, we cannot have everything! Had we been able to keep our position on the ridge—"

The battle was dwindling mysteriously, in that way Arab battles are prone to do. The Ait Khebbash were slipping away among the rocks. Criswell and Anzac Bill were peppering judiciously the hill flanks, but it was like trying to slap down a colony of fleas; there were too many of them. The booty, however, was enormous—some two hundred mehari camels with all their trappings and accouterments—when the Légion and the Camel Corps came up the valley again driving the lot, and bringing a few prisoners.

Knecht, by way of congratulations, had a duty to perform. And his chivalrous soul demanded that it be done with military ceremony. He ordered the command in parade formation, Di Piatti's platoon in a long line in front, then the Camel Corps, behind them Hortet's two platoons, all save the booty guard.

"First platoon, dismount!" he barked. "Stack arms! *Houp!*" Di Piatti's men did not need to be told which arms! A line of *faisceaux* grew quickly. The service cavalry carbines with the crook-

ed bolt that would not catch in clothing, they were, not the straight bolt of the infantry. The Camel Corps looked at them hungrily.

"Mount! By the right flank, march! *Houp!*" The platoon filed off, halted and dressed to one side.

"Camel Corps advance! Dismount!" shouted Knecht. Then, "*Pigs!*" he addressed them collectively, "ye that fear foolish noises made by the heat of the sun! Have ye no trust in Allah, who loves not fear? There are no jinn only Allah, who made the sun, the rocks, the wind and all that is. They do as He commands—and ye think it is of Shaitan! *Pah!*"

This was something new in Arabic theology, but it went. Eyes gleamed with glimmerings of conviction where riveted on the coveted rifles. There were nods of turbaned heads.

"Ye fear no men—that ye have proved this day!" Knecht went on. "Lo, the reward for valor!" A finger leveled at their rifle stands. "When next ye tremble before the unknown, think of Allah, for verily He knows about it all—He knows! Advance and take, my children!"

There was a rush on the weapons, then a sharp order from Ressot: "Present arms! —*Houp!*"

The Camel Corps stood each man before his slobbering beast, once more a military unit. Knecht gave the brief order, "Dismissed!" and that was that. Remained only the march back to Erfoud, for that *harka* of Ait Khebbash had been resolved into fugitive tribesmen on foot who would be a long while in organizing another raid on anywhere.

AS for the ghost of the Garamantian tomb, they laid him during the stop that night back at their old camp. A crack in a rock it was, that led clear down to the crypt below. An industrious jerboa had also tunneled a long burrow into the crypt from the hillside. He acted like a small piston as he came, and went, pushing a column of air ahead of him like a subway train. It soughed up through the crack.

"*Ouff!*" Knecht chortled. "I too was scared for a brief moment, messieurs!" he confessed. "And I was about to courtmartial *both* Di Piatti and Ressot for not moving at sound of Hortet's guns in our silent battle of yesterday. *Bah!* One can never trust the impressions of one's senses in this country!"



The Passing of

An epic of wilderness life in the America of our fathers, ably set forth by a Dakota ranchman and writer who knows it well—the author of “Captain Jack” and “The Field of Amber Gold.”

IN a wild-cherry patch on the slopes of Coyote Butte the buffalo calf Ta-na-ha first saw the light of dawn. For a time he was content to lie and feel the rasping tongue of his great shaggy mother as it smoothed and curled and dried the short brown hair along his back; but his was an adventurous disposition, and so within a few moments of his birth, he was attempting to defy the laws of gravitation.

He had abandoned an undignified position on his side, in favor of one in which his legs were spraddled to all four points of the compass. In this attitude the calf learned that one must attain proficiency in the art of balance. No matter how rigidly he held the cords of his neck, his head wobbled badly; presently a long series of unsuccessful efforts brought him to a state of exasperation and he allowed his nose to rest against the ground, while rolling his eyes from side to side.

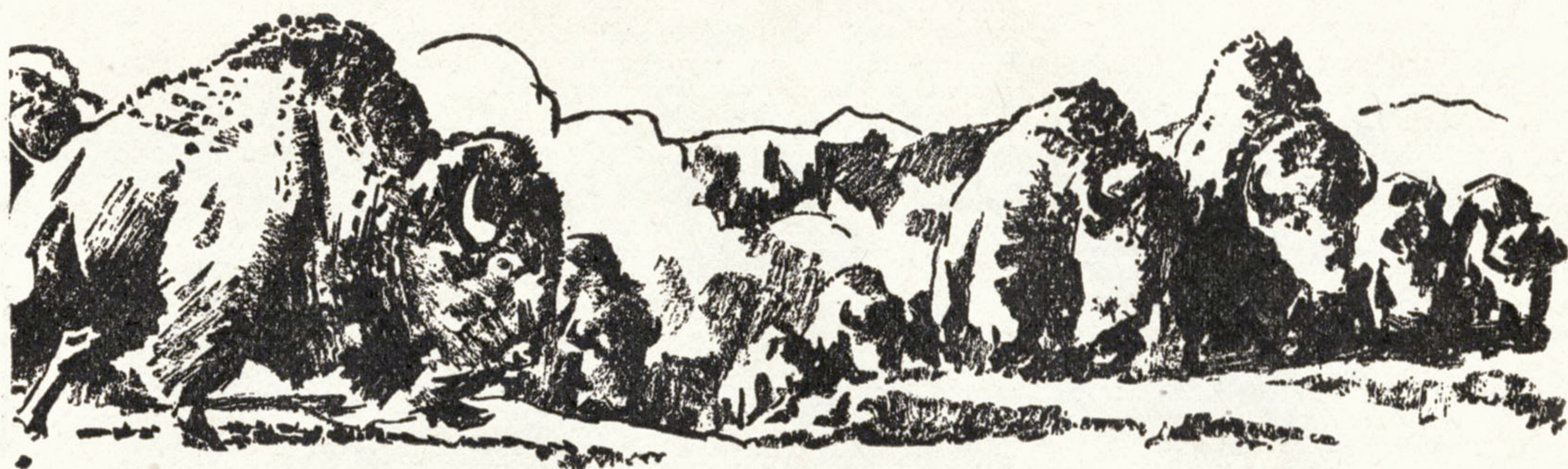
By this time his mother had worked from his rump along his back to his shoulders and her tongue was reaching farther and farther along his neck. She meant to be very gentle indeed; the mother heart which pounded between her great ribs was filled with naught but tenderness—but her little son rocked and pitched under her ministrations like a small boat in a heavy sea.

In the end, Ta-na-ha became exasper-

ated beyond endurance. Instinct whispered that his small hoofs were made to stand upon, and he set about the intricate problem of getting them between himself and the earth. His first essay was so unsatisfactory as to result in nothing more than the effort. His second trial brought him a few inches above the ground, only to lose control and fall panting on his side.

But Ta-na-ha possessed that quality which we know as bull-headed determination. Eventually it conquered, and in its hour of triumph he stood, weaving badly, it is true, but with his small nose towering more than a foot above all but the tallest grass.

From this point, he could see over the shorter buckbrush, and the things he saw were wonderful beyond his comprehension: hills, peaks and buttes, piled everywhere in hopeless confusion; barren, clay-sloped ravines; naked rock-walled cañons and tortuous washouts winding at random before his eyes. There were petrified trees whose last foliage had shriveled before the advance of glaciers, massive mushrooms whose caps of sandstone were supported on slender pillars of clay, and hog-backs whose sides were seamed by ages of erosion. Through all, over all, and under all, the yellow and red of clays was capped with the crimson and green of scoria, and the blue-white glare of alkali.



the Thunder Herd

By BIGELOW NEAL

Illustrated by Charles Fox

In some places bushes and trees clung to the slopes where their roots found moisture oozing from veins of lignite coal—box-elder, ash and cottonwood along the washouts, poplar, cedar and stunted evergreens on the higher slopes. The air of the spring dawn hung heavy with the perfume of thorn-apple and wild cherry, while most important of all, from the viewpoint of Ta-na-ha and his mother, were areas between the alkali and the clay where curly buffalo grass showed among the hills.

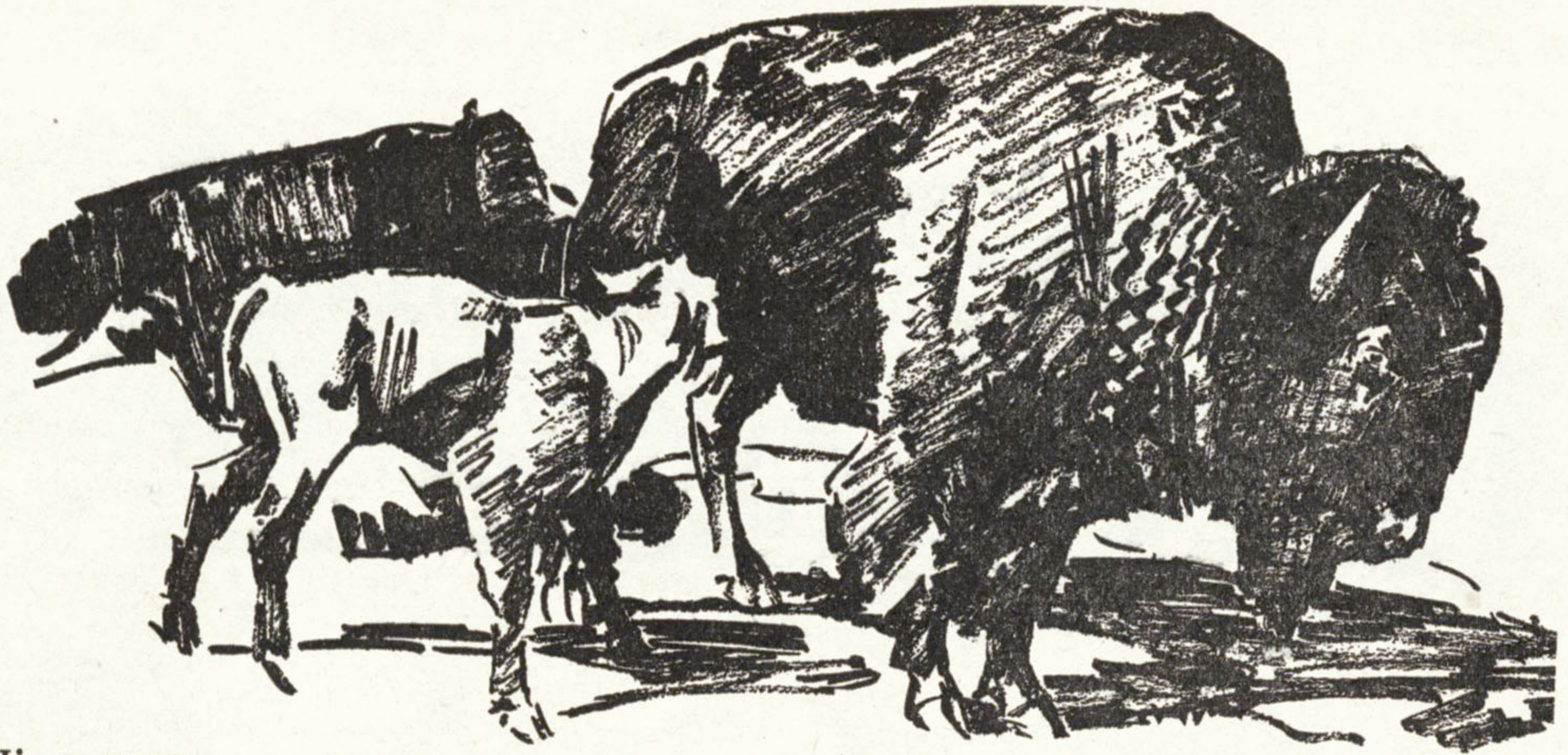
TO Ta-na-ha the wonders of nature were but a grotesque and varicolored blur. What did leave a definite and indelible impression upon his mind, however, was a low rumble like the ceaseless beating of the sea upon a rocky coast, as wave after wave of blackish-brown bodies surged steadily on and on. Those countless thousands, moving slowly, ponderously, but inexorably, through the Bad-lands, were of his kind, that much he knew; the low rumble of the herd was the natural accompaniment of life.

For some time Ta-na-ha had been aware of a gnawing in his stomach, and instinctively he turned to the shaggy bulk at his side. Beginning his exploration in the neighborhood of her shoulder, he attached himself to an unshed tuft of winter hair and for a time deluded himself into believing he had come to

the promised land. Presently, finding his labors all out of proportion to the results, he drew on his store of instinct for another idea. When it came, it told him to butt and butt hard. He did—he threw all the strength of his wabby legs behind a short, savage thrust of his curly head. Had his aim equaled his will, he might have avoided a severe blow to his pride, but as it was, he missed his target altogether and his head shot under his mother, so swiftly that his little hoofs could not keep up. As a result he stood on his head, with such force that he struggled to his feet with difficulty.

His next attempt was more successful, and presently his small tail began to wiggle, while his one free ear lay back to parallel its mate still sticking tight against his neck. Seemingly he reached the depths of contentment when long streamers of creamy froth began to drip from his lips and chin.

With a full stomach came drowsiness. For a while the old buffalo allowed him to bask in the warm rays of the sun. But the bulk of the herd had moved on; only stragglers were passing now, and as she looked back along the trail, she saw stealthy gray forms drifting down from the hills. She knew them all too well—they were the loboos or buffalo wolves, gray specters of sudden death that hovered ever in the rear and on the flanks of the herd. Moving a few paces away,



His next attempt was more successful, and presently creamy froth began to drip from his lips and chin.

the mother turned her head, and a tender, coaxing note came from her throat, Ta-na-ha looked up. Again she spoke after the manner of her kind, and the calf staggered to his feet. Walking stiff-legged, with his tail held to one side, his head half turned, leaning against the ribs of his mother and stopping at times for no good reason whatever, falling down again and again but getting up with rapidly increasing dexterity, Ta-na-ha was off on the trail of life.

MIDDAY on the prairies of Dakota. . . . Where the billowing waves of buffalo grass met the wind-carved nakedness of the Bad-lands, scorching rays of the sun struck fire from sheets of mica, and heat-waves danced like shimmering gauze above lakes and ponds of alkali.

Far to the eastward lay the borderland of civilization. To the westward was naught but the land of the setting sun. As far as white men were concerned it was a land of utter desolation. Geographers had called it the "Great American Desert," a place given over by day to the buffalo, the antelope and the black-tailed deer, and to the long-drawn chorus of coyote and wolf, when the shadows of night were gathered in.

On the top of Pedestal Butte, far above the level of the prairie, Ka-wa-tsu the Arikara lay flat against the ground. Unmindful of the glare from sun and alkali, heedless of flies and ants that searched out every weakness in his buckskin armor, the Indian scout lay as motionless as the rocks beneath, watching—ever watching—the blue-gray line to the south where the sky and prairie met.

Midday passed and the sun began its slow descent into the west. Nothing moved on the face of the land, not even

a breeze to stir the eagle-feathers in the headdress of the warrior.

And yet over this land of clay and sand and dazzling sun, like a cloud-borne charge of static, hung a tension, a feeling as of something about to happen. The leopard squirrels felt and knew, for of a sudden they burst forth into shrill cries of alarm; a bull-snake knew, for he broke off his sleepless basking on the southern slope and glided with a hissing sound of scales on grass to his hole beneath a rock. Even the nighthawks grew restless and took to the air long before their time, screaming from the sky in protest.

Then came a change on the southern horizon. The blue and the gray of sage faded slowly and turned to brown. The quivering tongues of the heat-waves, cut at their base, climbed high into the air, there to flicker and die. In their place came a seemingly endless wall of dust. From under the dust came the clicking of hoofs, the ceaseless rumble and bellow of thousands, and the clashing of horn on horn, all merged into a sullen roar: They were coming, countless thousands,—rank on rank, file on file,—surging, bellowing, on and on. It was the Thunder Herd of the prairies, the last great army of the bison host, answering the springtime call of the North.

On the top of Pedestal Butte the warrior knelt by a wisp of freshly cut sand grass. Within the grass a dull glow brightened under the breath of the scout and a slender spiral of white smoke climbed slowly into the air. He threw a handful of creeping cedar on the

crackling flame, and the white of the column changed to an oily brown. Four times a blanket cut the column at its base; now three fluffy dots, like shrapnel-bursts, hung poised against the sky.

Ka-wa-tsu turned to gaze long and steadily toward the north. Presently a duplicate of his message, three dots again, hung just above the horizon. The warrior sprang to the back of his pony; sunlight flashed from the polished head of his lance; the triple eagle-feathers of his headdress cut, for a moment, into the sky-line above the butte. Then they were gone, and only a long ribbon of dust remained pointing northward toward the Missouri and the villages of the Arikara on the farther shore.

IN the late afternoon of the same day that the signal-fires of the Arikara had written their messages against the sky, Ta-na-ha and his mother were following in the rear of the Thunder Herd. The calf was nearly two weeks old, and the wobble had long since gone out of his legs. With growing strength and confidence, his opinion of himself had grown as well. No longer did he lean against the ribs of the old buffalo. He had even discarded the habit of following doggedly and sleepy-eyed in her wake. Now he possessed a fund of surplus energy which frequently carried him on short excursions of his own. Among other things he found pleasure in running in circles with ears and tail held rigid and pointing to the sky. At other times he would become savage indeed, lowering his small and weaponless head, rolling his eyes with every appearance of anger and charging his own mother without any provocation whatever. Sometimes he struck her with all his might; then she would swing her ponderous head and lick his ear. Oftener than not he missed her altogether and went charging through the herd until fate landed him head-first against the legs of strangers. Once his aim was particularly good—too good, in fact, for he selected the hardest part of his mother's head for a target. For several days he carried a lump in the middle of his forehead, and there was something slightly amiss among the bearings of his neck.

This afternoon Ta-na-ha was frankly tired, and during the last hour his troubles were increased by the addition of hunger and thirst. The dust of the herd hung low, filling the youngster's lungs almost to the point of suffocation. And

worst of all, the herd was gradually increasing its speed, for somewhere ahead the thirsty buffaloes had scented water and they were forging steadily on across the prairie without pausing to graze.

AND then without warning the seemingly endless prairie came to an end. As Ta-na-ha followed over the brink of a high bluff, he caught a momentary vision of a broad green valley, all shot with gold from the setting of the sun. Far below, he saw wide bands of rippling green where air-currents moved the leaves of the cottonwoods, and between, a broader ribbon of burnished copper where the sun's rays struck the mirror-like surface of the river.

Presently the vision was gone. Ta-na-ha had become a hurrying atom in a new and greater cloud of dust. Slipping, sliding, rolling, the vanguard plunged over the crest and down the clay-covered slopes. A wild race down the gentler slope at the base of the bluff, a short rush across the bottom-land, another sliding scramble over a steep pitch into the timber; then they were surging on toward the sand-laden flood beyond the trees, while behind and above them the Thunder Herd flowed steadily from the hills, like streams of molten lava.

Looking ahead to the open sandbar, as he broke from the timber, Ta-na-ha saw a seething, struggling mass of flashing horns and waving tails surrounded by vast sheets of milk-white foam. The roar of the tortured waters was deafening and the slashing impact of heavy bodies added volume to the din. Involuntarily he tried to turn, but as well might he have tried to pit his puny strength against an avalanche. Seeing nothing but death in the thundering hoofs behind, the little buffalo bull gathered his muscles and sprang far out over the water. Down below the suffocating flood all was darkness, and for a time he was fighting for very life, under a tide of thrashing hoofs and lunging bodies. Not knowing what to do, he tried desperately to run, and in so doing he learned another great lesson: to those of his kind, running and swimming are synonymous. In a moment his head was above the surface, and he was striking out bravely for that fast-gliding shore three-quarters of a mile away.

It was a hard struggle, for the little calf was already tired from a long day on the prairie. Suckholes tugged hard at his legs and drew him down—only,

A wild race down the gentler slope at the base of the bluff, a rush across the bottom-land, another scramble over a steep pitch; then they were surging on toward the sand-laden flood, while behind and above them the Thunder Herd flowed from the hills like streams of molten lava.



with the coming of uprushing currents, to release their grip and as suddenly fling him to the surface, where he floundered badly. At one of these times fate threw him at his mother's side, and he made an attempt to climb upon her back, but it was wet and slippery, and he fell back into the flood. Once he got in front of a mighty bull and was beaten down under the plunging animal. But at last his tiny hoofs found footing on the sandy bottom, and in another moment he stood dripping and tired but triumphant, on the farther shore.

Here again was timber, but now the speed of the herd was not great, and after a time they were out of the shadows on open bench-land where the buffalo grass was curly and thick and green. Here the shaggy mother paused while Ta-na-ha drank his fill. Then she spoke to him in the mysterious language of the buffalo and he lay down, pressing his nose upon the ground, while his ears lay flat and low against his silken neck. She was gone then, into the dusk, and he was alone with the shadows in a silence broken only by the distant and tremulous cries of turtle-doves and the whispering of winds through the green aisles of buffalo grass.

NOW, as always, on the flanks or in rear of the herd, hung the gray creatures of the Tshe-sha. In a land whose wild-animal creed was always harsh, these great gaunt wolves were cruelest of all. The plainsmen called them buffalo-wolves, from their constant predatory

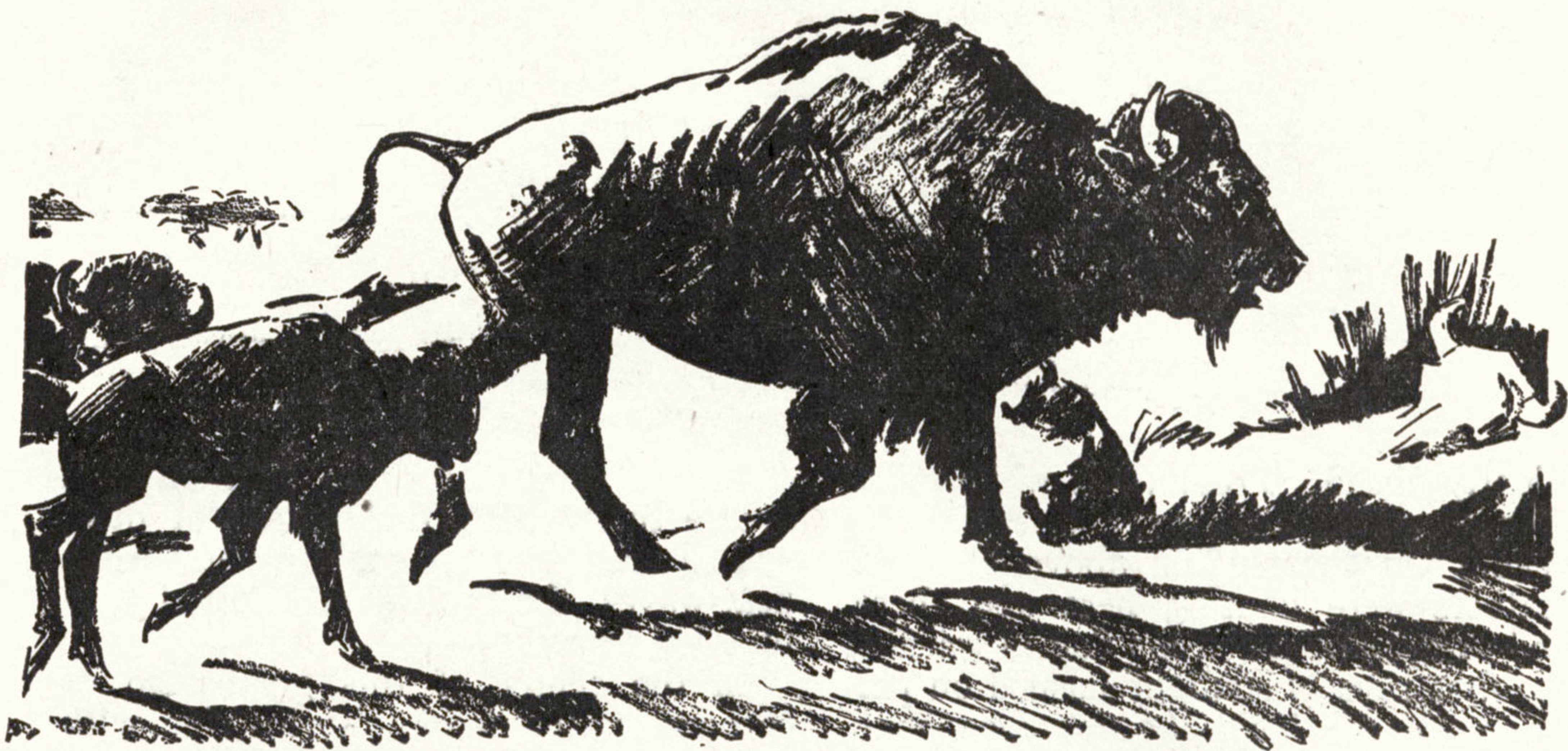
association with the bison. To them fell the young, the weak and the old, and sometimes even the strongest of bulls, should he wander on the prairie alone.

It was one of these wolves,—a great shaggy fellow as merciless as only his kind can be,—that caught the scent of Ta-na-ha the buffalo calf. As he sensed the presence of defenseless prey, he crouched to creep slowly forward, his eyes gleaming with the threat of death and the muscles of his lips contracted to expose long rows of milk-white fangs.

Ta-na-ha was becoming restless. He could not remember when his mother had left him so long alone. He broke a tenet of his instinctive creed by raising his head at a stealthy sound near him. When a night-hawk charged a mosquito-cloud hovering just above his head, he succumbed to temptation once more, and that time, through an opening in the leaves, he glimpsed the head and shoulders of the killer.

Ta-na-ha had never seen a wolf, nor had his mother ever warned him of those gaunt gray things of stalking death; and yet through channels of heredity he had felt the searing fangs, times without number. He needed no warning now, for when he saw, he knew that he lay in the presence of great danger.

With a high-pitched blat of terror he sprang to his feet and ran. Driven by his instinctive dread of the unknown, urged on by the ghostlike apparition so close behind, he borrowed the wings of fear. From the mounds of prairie-dogs and pocket-gophers his tiny hoofs raked



the dust; it rose and floated above the prairie to mark his path.

Behind him, in long low bounds, came the beast in whose presence all the wild folk of the Bad-lands trembled with dread. In spite of the speed of Ta-na-ha, there could seemingly be no escape.

Ta-na-ha's breath was coming in short gasps; his eyes were wide with fear; his first cries were thinning out to quavering, calf-like notes—when in the loose dirt of a pocket-gopher mound, he stumbled and fell.

With a snarl the gray one struck for the small throat; an inch farther and the life of Ta-na-ha would have paid the forfeit. But the killer miscalculated—he fell short in his leap—and instead of on the throat, it was across the shoulder and side of the calf that a long red gash appeared. Just as the wolf wheeled and sprang again, a great bulk came thundering out of the night and caught the would-be destroyer in midair.

In his excitement, with the taste of blood almost on his tongue, the wolf for once had failed. Clever as he was, he had not heard the answer to the frightened cry of the calf, nor did he hear when it was taken up and repeated. Blinded by the lust for blood, he did not see the dust-clouds gathering on every side. Now as the wounded calf scrambled to his feet and sprang away, that circle of death closed in. One attempt to escape did the killer make—all of his tremendous strength went into a leap which should have carried him onto the backs of the herd and so to safety.

But he landed upon the back of a bull old in the ways of the prairie. A short upward thrust of a powerful neck, and a long curved horn shot home. From the air above came a scream of mortal agony; a shapeless gray form whirled end over end, to fall among crashing horns, and on down to rending hoofs. When the dust-cloud settled there was nothing left to mark the spot but an area of trampled grass and in its center a shapeless mass of gray.

WITH the coming of dawn Ta-na-ha, weak from loss of blood, lay on the prairie. Occasionally he lifted his head and made an effort to rise to his feet, but his legs were not to be trusted.

Along the river bottom, groups of deer and elk mingled with the buffalo herd cropping their breakfast from the rose-buds. On the hillsides above, ever-shifting mottled blankets marked herds of antelope grazing high among the sage. Prairie chickens strutted here and there and magpies were coming from the timber. None among all the assembled thousands dreamed of danger.

And yet back in the hills there had been strange happenings since long before the break of dawn. Coyotes had seen moving shadows in the coulees; and long-eared jack-rabbits had sat erect listening to the low rhythmic beating of tom-toms, from somewhere in the distance. Now with the coming of day a great circle was forming. Painted horses carried still more weirdly painted men toward the river, and the coyotes drifted



Just as bows were bent, a voice rang out:
"Cock-ee! Cock-ee! Cock-ee!"

silently ahead. Presently a white-tailed deer stopped browsing and raised his head. On the skyline above the hills feathers were dancing here and there, and even as he lifted his flag in warning the first rays of sunlight flashed on polished metal. Then he too was gone, fading away into aisles of the timber with the antelope and the sharp-eared elk. On the peace of the morning air, mingled with the mellow call of killdeer and the cry of alighting plover, there sounded a thin quavering wail, a note that gradually swelled and broke in a series of staccato yelps which trembled and died away in a long-drawn anguished moan. Taken up to the east, the north and the west, it came again and again—the hunting-cry of the Arikara. The tribe was coming to take its spring-time toll from the ranks of the bison. This, then, was the answer to the signals written on the sky.

WHEN the mother of Ta-na-ha heard the wild yells of the red men and saw that circle closing in, she ran—and not until a faint cry sounded from behind her did she realize that her calf was unable to follow. Then she turned and raced back, to stand at bay before the little one.

The clear air of the morning became filled with clouds of swirling dust and the cry of the curlew was drowned in the thunder of hoofs. Crazed by fright, the herd was running for the hills. Through their ranks, howling, screaming, charging, passed the warriors of Ka-wa-tsu. Through the haze, flint and steel-tipped messengers of death sang their way into terror-stricken buffaloes; war-clubs rose and fell with the crunching sound of stone on bone; lances darted in and out like flashes of blood-rimmed lightning, while here and there sounded the dull report of a buffalo gun.

After a time the noise died out. A breeze threw back the curtain of dust, and as far as the eye could penetrate the heat-waves, the prairie was dotted with huddled forms.

In the center of this great field of carnage lay Ta-na-ha. By his side, with eyes flashing and head held low, stood his mother. Because it was never the policy of the red men to kill the cows or the calves of the bison, the warriors had swept across the field leaving the mother and her injured son unscathed. But now an army of small boys came on to the field, and cruel as boys often are,—whether red or white,—they made for the only living things in sight. But before the first arrow could be loosed on its mission of torture, Ka-wa-tsu the warrior had ridden between the boys and their prey. He raised his lance until the shaft was horizontal above his head. *"Cock-ee! Cock-ee! Cock-ee!"* ("No! No! No!") he cried.

From a coulee leading back from the bottom-lands the women and children and the very old among the men now came upon the plain. They came in a long twisting line: ponies loaded down with packs, wagons of every description issued by the Indian department, travois, their bouncing platforms supporting everything from the blankets and lodge-skins to the old and decrepit of both sexes, jouncing along under red and yellow blankets. With them came the noise of barking dogs, the clatter of hoofs from colts running free, the fretful cries of babies dangling from their mothers' backs and the shrill cries of squaws urging on the ponies. Through it all resounded the solemn clang-clang-clang of kettles and pans striking together or against the sun-dried ash of the travois.

A warrior rode to the center of the field. Stopping there he drove the butt of his ceremonial lance into the ground,

passing on to leave the vermilion-tipped feathers on the lance-head waving in the breeze.

As the head of the procession reached the field it turned, and moved in a wide circle around the lance. When by this maneuver the head of the line came in contact with the rear, all halted in place. Lodgepoles arose to form conical skeletons, their butts spread far apart, and up along their polished sides heavy buffalo-skins began to rise, pulled by the hands of the women and children. Simultaneously, slender columns of smoke rose above each lodge, and a pungent haze from burning willows drifted back and forth across the plain. In a few moments a city of warriors had literally risen from the prairie.

To Ta-na-ha and his mother, the long hours of the day dragged slowly. The calf was feverish and restless, and while able to stand for a few moments at a time, he could not walk. Surrounded by those she knew only as enemies, the mother, facing first in one direction and then in another, stood at bay with neither rest nor food. There was a spring near by, but with Indians constantly passing on either side she did not dare leave the wounded calf even to quench her thirst.

For the time being the work of the red men was done, but long before noon the squaws, with the travois, wagons and carts, had scattered over the prairie. Where the lance had been driven into the field a circular area was enclosed by poles set upright in the ground. From pole to pole, other poles were lashed and against these green branches of cottonwood leaned, forming a shaded border around the enclosure. Here later were to come the warriors, young and old—the old to sit and smoke in the shade, and the young, painted and decked with beads, feathers and flashing mirrors, to dance throughout the day and night, as hour after hour the big drum boomed its mellow cadence across the prairie.

IT was just before dusk when Ka-wa-tsu, followed by a group of warriors, rode out to the place where Ta-na-ha lay on the prairie. The mother, fearing for her calf, charged again and again—but they were clever, those men of the plains, and their horses were fleet of foot. Slowly but surely they crowded the old buffalo back away from her calf, sometimes imprisoning her and forcing her back by the actual weight of their horses.

Meanwhile Ka-wa-tsu dismounted and leaned over the wounded calf. With a bone needle he made holes in the skin along the edges of the wound; with deer sinews he drew the gaping flesh together; with a buffalo-skin bucket he brought water from the spring and drenched the little sufferer again and again.

TO understand the attitude of Ka-wa-tsu and his people toward Ta-na-ha and his mother, one must know something of the economic importance of the bison to the red men.

The lodges of the Indians were built largely of tanned and decorated buffalo-skins. The beds upon which they slept, and the covers which kept them warm, came from the same source. While it is true that the deer, the elk, the antelope and the bear contributed, these sources were not dependable. The ropes used for lariats and picket-lines, the harnesses which fastened dog to sled and pony to travois, and even the hobbles which kept the warrior's mount from wandering away at night, were made from the hides of buffaloes. Many articles of clothing, especially those of the poorer Indians, were made of buffalo hide and sewed with sinews from either the buffalo or the deer. A wind- and rainproof casing of buffalo hide lined with another of the softest elk-skin, padded between with a quilted layer of dried and powdered buffalo manure, then lined again with the softest fur of rabbits, was the almost permanent home of the Indian baby.

The flesh of the bison was their principal source of meat. Jerked and dried, it could be kept for years; mixed with buffalo-berries, chokecherries, thorn-apple and wild plums, crushed into a pulpy mass, packed into buffalo-hide sacks and sealed tight with suet, it became pemmican, an almost imperishable article of food.

The shoulder-blades of the buffalo were the red men's hoes; the ribs formed arches for many tribal games resembling croquet, as well as the clubs with which the game was played. They also were the runners upon which Indian children slid downhill, and sometimes even dogsleds were built upon them. Needles, too, came from the bones, as well as spoons and many other articles of the household. The horns ornamented the Indian's headdress and occasionally a skull, hollowed out to fit the human head, formed a dancer's mask while the

tails fastened on behind the dancer served their purpose in death almost as well as in life. Lastly the skulls arranged in certain ways on the prairie were a vital part of the Indian system of communication.

The marrow from the bones salved the sores of horses and man; it greased the axles of the carts; it aided in tanning and in the preservation of leather. It was a mild medicine for the Indian child.

These are some of the reasons why the Indians did not slaughter the buffalo wholesale. . . .

A week passed. The fever had gone from Ta-na-ha's veins now and he was able to walk; so one night a great shaggy bulk with a small wabby form following moved out from the camp. The mother of Ta-na-ha was following the dictates of instinct—she was setting out on a long and dangerous trail.

In two weeks the cow and her calf reached the top of the Continental Divide, that vast ridge of earth piled east and west by the last of the glaciers. But still the cow and calf moved steadily into the North. After months of steady progress they came at last to the crest of a hill and the edge of a long slope that reached to other hills and to timber. This, then, was the end of the trek, for the plains before them were covered with ever-shifting patches of brown. They had reached the grazing-ground of the Thunder Herd.

LONG before their arrival Ta-na-ha had forgotten his wound, and though traveling without pause, he had grown, day by day. He had even begun to assume a semblance of dignity, and sometimes when charging across the prairie he suddenly checked his rush to return with the solemnity of bison adolescence. He had many playfellows there on the Saskatchewan prairies and at first glance he was only slightly different from the others. But along his shoulder and his side where the fangs of the killer-wolf had done their work, the incoming hair was white, and by the time the Thunder Herd turned south the side of Ta-na-ha appeared as a golden and brown background for a lightning flash of white. It was an unmistakable mark.

Eventually there came days when the hot sun beat down no more, days when the soft southeast breezes changed to northwest winds and the green of the prairies turned slowly to gold. They were off then on a southward march, fol-

lowing hard on the trail of summer and the retreating sun.

Soon came mornings when the buffaloes arose from their beds of the night with their backs glistening white with frost, and days when long slanting lines of snow drove steadily across their path. Winter came early that year and in so doing contributed to another painful chapter in the life of Ta-na-ha.

IT began on the prairies north of the Missouri.

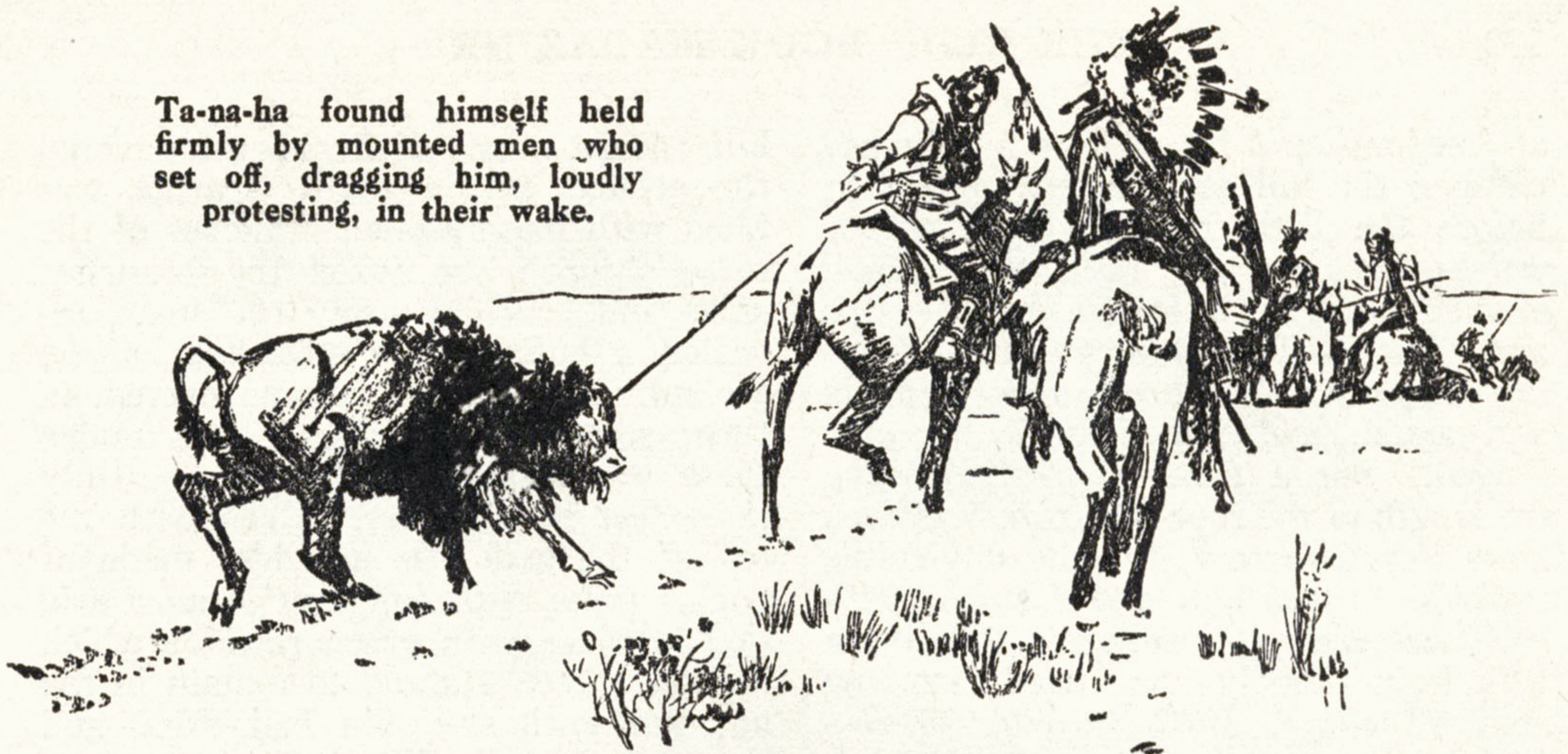
Ta-na-ha and his mother were traveling very slowly lagging far behind—and when they reached the river the herd had crossed. For some reason the great shaggy one stopped.

That night a storm struck from the northwest and the mother set out to find shelter from the wind; but she moved very slowly. After a time they came to a high bank offering some protection from the storm and there the old cow turned her back to the wind and lowered her head until her nose almost touched the ground. Ta-na-ha snuggled close against her side, and throughout that night, the day that followed, another day and another night they stood motionless in a cloud of swirling, blinding snow. Then the storm ceased and the wind went down. Colder and colder it grew, nearly to fifty degrees below zero. The Frost King had done his work.

At the dawn of a new day when a strong warm breeze came sweeping from the Southland to turn northeast, east and southeast across the prairies of Dakota it brought with it the odor of pines and sent the temperature up as rapidly as it had fallen. Ta-na-ha felt that it was time to go. He moved a little way out onto the prairie, but his mother did not follow. He turned and called. There was no answer. He went back, but she made no move in recognition. He ran his tongue along her neck, but there was no response. Finally growing fearful because he did not understand, he went away, leaving her to stand through the long winter days to come, a statue molded from flesh and blood—left her there to stand until warm winds from the south came to melt the frozen blood within her veins.

For a time Ta-na-ha wandered aimlessly about. Heretofore his responsibilities had been slight and his training had not fitted him to battle with the snow and cold. He found a few patches of grass swept bare by the wind and

Ta-na-ha found himself held firmly by mounted men who set off, dragging him, loudly protesting, in their wake.



learned that the snow could be utilized as a substitute for water. But meanwhile he was not fully grown and the hills were full of dangers, most of which he escaped from day to day only by a miracle.

One night two coyotes tried conclusions with Ta-na-ha. They were neither strong enough nor brave enough to pull him down and he fought them off, but not without some minor hurts and the trail of bloodspots from these wounds brought him to the verge of another tragedy.

He saw the killer wolves coming, and fear clutched at his heart. With a single glance across the snowy valley he turned and ran with all his might. But the odds were too great. The best he could do was not enough, and in almost no time they were at his heels. Terror-stricken, he cried out for his mother. Then his foot caught on a sage-bush; he staggered and went down. With a last frantic effort he disengaged himself from the snow, and turned at bay. But there were no enemies before him! For some strange reason he was alone.

But not for long. Hardly had the snow melted from his eyes when up from the valley below him came a line of mounted Indians. They too had been on his trail and he, a young buffalo bull, was their legitimate prey.

BUT again a miracle intervened. Just as bows were bent and lances poised for the throw a voice rang out, a voice he had heard before: "Cock-ee! Cock-ee! Cock-ee!" ("No! No! No!")

Ka-wa-tsu and Ta-na-ha had met again—and the buffalo calf owed the preservation of his life solely to the zig-zag line of white along his side. The Indians slung a rawhide rope around his neck and another about his feet, throw-

ing him violently to the earth. Here they held him while Ka-wa-tsu made a halter from another rope. Releasing the choking strands from Ta-na-ha's neck and the other from his legs they stepped back and he got to his feet; but when he tried to run he found himself held firmly by mounted men ahead who set off, dragging him, loudly protesting, in their wake.

On a point of land formed by the horseshoe curve in the course of the Missouri, protected on three sides by the great river and open to the prairie only on the north, stood the fortified village of the Arikara. Within a stockade of cottonwood logs were the lodges and tepees and council huts of the tribe. In times of peace or of comparative quiet the lodges overflowed until the stockade was frequently surrounded by a small city of skins and under the bluff at the foot of the southern wall, where a narrow strip of timber separated the foot of the slope from the river, ponies and dogs and even children were allowed the comparative freedom of the open. In daytime they roamed at will, but with the coming of dusk the horse herd was gathered in corrals at the foot of the hill and warrior guards moved out into the night to form a great protective circle, silent and constantly alert, listening for the slightest move on the prairie or in the timber and for the slightest splash from the hurrying river.

Here, at the foot of the hill and protected on all sides from the wind by clumps of diamond willow, Ka-wa-tsu and his warriors tied Ta-na-ha to a stout ash tree and left him alone.

Ta-na-ha was very tired. All the way he had fought against the hated rope; even his hoofs were sore, for he had been literally skidded over the prairie. But he was not too tired for another effort

at freedom—and his captors hardly had climbed the hill and passed from sight before the little buffalo, throwing his weight back on the rope, tugged and swayed until his breath came in gasps and whistles—but without result. Growing desperate, he threw himself again and again, and pulled until his eyes bulged. For a time he tried charging the length of the rope—but this was even more unsatisfactory, for the unyielding rawhide turned him end for end with such violence as to snap his tail like a whip-lash. Lastly he tried running around the tree. In this attempt he covered much more ground and with much less pain until finally the rope wound up on the tree and his head was slammed violently against its trunk. Turning the other way, he made a few turns, which allowed him more freedom. Now the shadows of night were closing about him, and there was a murmur of wind among the higher branches. The familiar sound of rustling leaves soothed him. Presently he lay down, his eyes closed and he was asleep. . . .

With daylight an Indian woman came down the hill. In her hand was an ax, while a long curved skinning-knife was thrust through her belt. It soon became evident, however, that she intended no harm, for after a few friendly overtures with voice and hand which only scared the buffalo calf into another attempt to choke himself, she moved a short distance away and cut down a young cottonwood tree. Then, leaning her ax against the stump, she used the long knife to trim off an armful of the tenderest branches from the top. She dropped the bundle of twigs within easy reach of the calf and went away. He was alone then for a long interval before his captor appeared. Ka-wa-tsu was dressed in fringed buckskin, his head and shoulders partly covered by the folds of a brilliant red blanket, and he was carrying a rifle whose well-worn barrel glittered ominously in the morning light. He caught the little fawn-colored buffalo roughly by one ear and proceeded to scratch the curly neck. Ta-na-ha struggled with all his might, and when Ka-wa-tsu went on, the warrior knew that eventually he and the buffalo calf would become friends.

LATER in the day the Indian woman returned. Noting the pile of twigs untouched, she passed on to a small level place on the slope, near the foot of the

hill. Here a mat of buckbrush covered the ground and a small clearing was filled with loosely piled branches of the same shrub. She lifted the branches aside and brushing away the snow, revealed a buffalo hide stretched on the ground. Lifting this, she uncovered, in turn, some crossed sticks, and under these was a hole in the sod, possibly three feet in diameter. Even with the top of the hole was a ladder made of poplar poles with rungs of slender ash, tied in place with green rawhide which had then been allowed to remain in the hot sun until the skin had dried and shrunken into ironlike bands.

The Indian woman passed down the ladder into a jug-shaped excavation perhaps fifteen feet across the bottom, its walls lined with bins and the space above filled with dangling braids of corn. The bins were filled mostly with beans and shelled corn, but there were sacks of watermelon seeds, as well as the seeds of squash and pumpkin. There was a stone there too, a boulder with a cup-shaped depression worn in its surface and another stone, much smaller and with a rounded end curved to fit roughly into the depression in the boulder. In this cup the woman placed a little corn and with the smaller stone, pounded and ground it to a coarse meal.

TA-NA-HA refused the corn as he had refused the twigs, for neither meant anything to him. But the Indian woman grasped him unceremoniously, and wedged him between her knee and the trunk of the tree. Then, catching his jaw, she forced the fingers of one hand into his mouth, while with the other she literally stuffed a handful of meal down his gullet.

Of course Ta-na-ha was outraged and the instant he was released he scattered the corn as far and as well as he could; but some few small particles came in contact with the taste-buds of his mouth and the belligerent look in his eyes faded slightly. When the second handful was thrust into his mouth he did not scatter it either so far or so well, and in another moment he had forgotten his caution and fear and was plunging his nose into the buffalo-skin bucket which held the source of supply. Then the woman brought him a small armful of hay, something of great value to the red men because it had been cut by hand. Cleverly she mixed the hay with the twigs—and when Ta-na-ha lay down

for the night there was nothing on the ground about the tree, excepting hard-packed snow.

The next day the calf learned to eat dried squash and pumpkin, and when it seemed that he would actually choke from thirst, the woman brought him some water from the river. By that time he was willing to try anything once and so he learned to drink, and his preliminary education was complete.

FROM then on until the end of the winter there was little change in the daily routine. One change came when Ka-wa-tsu taught him to lead. This was done at the expense of some corn, reinforced by much coaxing and tugging on the rope; but it proved to be worth while, for from then on the Indian woman led him to the river, and thenceforth he carried his own drink on the return.

Some of the nights were very cold and there were times when the wind roared above the trees, filling the air with snow, but hardly a draft reached under the shelter of the timber and Ta-na-ha minded the cold not at all. Day by day he ate and drank and grew. He lost all fear of the warrior and of the woman. He even learned to disregard the stares and noise of the children and their ever-present escorts, a regiment of dogs.

There was one, however, whom Ta-na-ha distrusted from the beginning.

Toronto—he acknowledged no other name, for reasons which were good and sufficient—was a piece of frontier wreckage so low in the scale of human standards that he was little more than a mechanism of anatomic trash.

Toronto had simply appeared; how he came or whence, he never told. He accepted the hospitality of the Arikara, however, with such enthusiasm that the wiser ones of the tribe suspected that he had come to a complete and permanent misunderstanding with those who enforced the white man's laws.

He had a squaw of his own. From his viewpoint she was merely a temporary arrangement, but according to her religion and the laws of her tribe, she was his legal wife. Regardless of the moral questions involved, it was she who kept the lodge; it was she who raised beans and potatoes, squash and corn, and who cut hay and the cottonwood trees for his pinto pony.

Toronto carefully avoided water, but drank anything which savored of alcohol, no matter how remote the association.

To obtain this luxury, which the Indian woman could not produce through her labors, Toronto occasionally stooped to hunting and trapping. He knew the value of hides and this knowledge of values caused him to cast covetous eyes on Ta-na-ha.

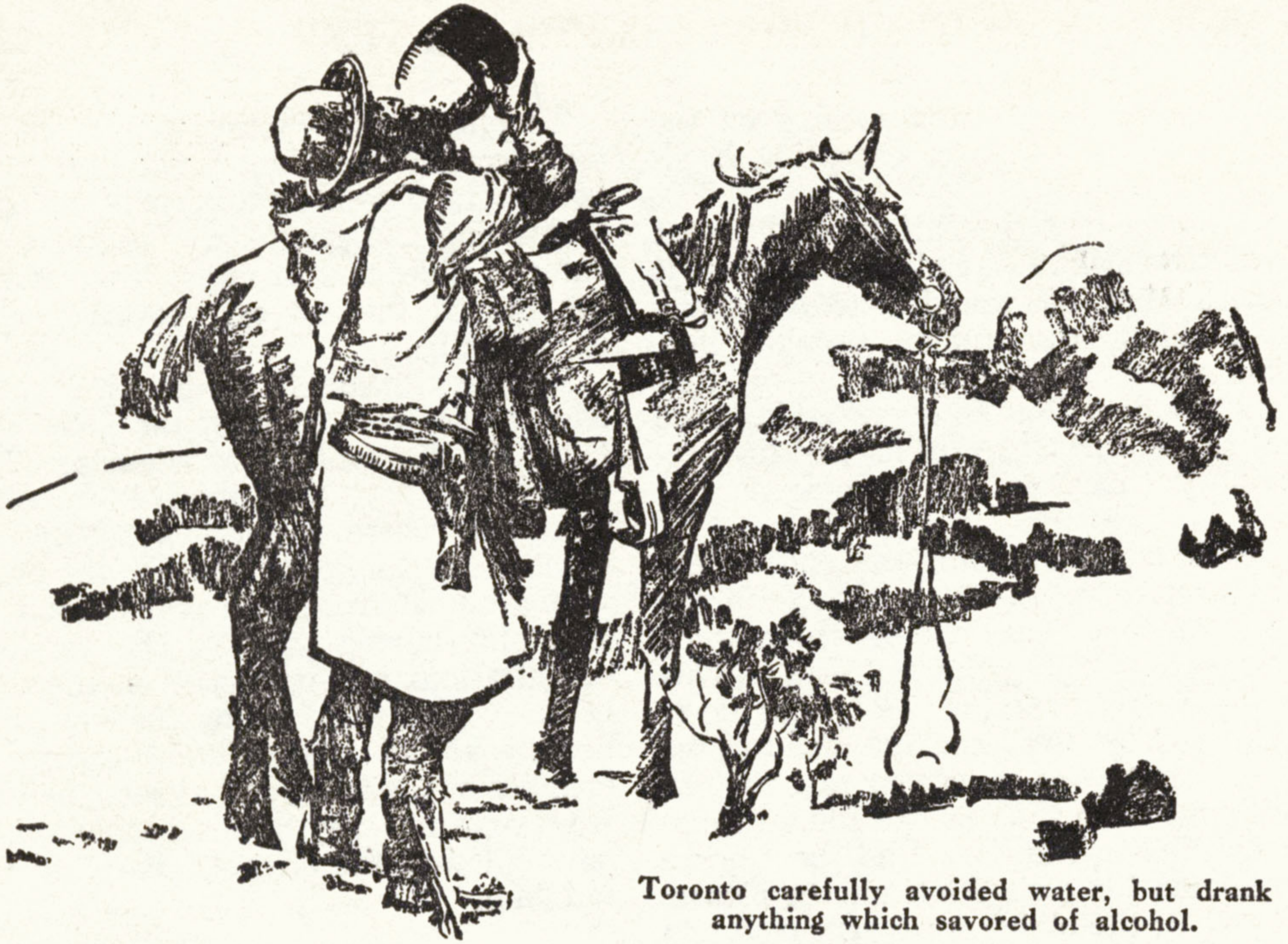
By every means in his power Toronto tried to get possession of the little buffalo. But Ka-wa-tsu was adamant. The warrior had been born and bred in an atmosphere where a guest was sacred—it made no difference whether the guest were a human being or a prairie squirrel. Ta-na-ha, having accepted the warrior's ministrations and protection at the time he was so cruelly torn by the wolf, had become to all intents and purposes a member of the tribe, and as such, neither Ka-wa-tsu nor any of his people would have allowed the slightest harm to befall him.

SPRING came at length; one morning the gates were thrown open and the pony herd was driven forth. With them went Ta-na-ha, still free and unfettered, allowed to wander as he pleased as long as he remained with the herd and within sight of the stockade.

The summer was mostly a period of indolence and ease, a matter of one day following another. On the heavy growth of green, Ta-na-ha developed bone and muscle, and with the coming of early fall and the first frosts, the ripening grasses covered his growing frame with layers of fat. When the long winters again the buffalo had become an equal in size to all but the largest of his pony companions.

But the growth and added beauty of the buffalo had its disadvantages. The larger he grew and the thicker and deeper the curly brown coat, the more desirable he became in the mind of the squaw-man Toronto. Now, in addition to the hide there was the head and its offensive armament of horns; those horns would take a polish, glowing softly in any light. Then Toronto visualized the hide, with its flash of white marking the course of the old wound, and the mounted head with its short curved horns, in the form of a rug before the fireside of some man of wealth.

One afternoon the squaw-man was down in the timber looking over the stock and he paused to study the buffalo bull. As he stood there an idea began to revolve in his brain. Snow was falling and drifting. If Ta-na-ha were to



Toronto carefully avoided water, but drank anything which savored of alcohol.

disappear during the night, who could say the buffalo had not drifted away in the storm and fallen into an air-hole in the river—or perhaps wandered into a deep drift, and so become the prey of the wolves? It would be easy to conceal the hide and head.

In theory, the idea was good. With the continuation of the storm it seemed to be without flaw. But Toronto failed to recall the fact that his squaw was a full sister to the wife of Ka-wa-tsu. Brains far keener than his had been anticipating some act of this kind.

The wind did not go down; on the contrary it blew even harder as darkness fell. Ta-na-ha was lying in his usual place, chewing contentedly on his cud, when a figure appeared out of the night and a rope was slipped about his horns. While Ta-na-ha did not like the squawman, he obeyed without hesitation the tug on the rope.

For a little way, following a trail on the edge of the prairie, the white man ahead floundered through the drifting snow and the unsuspecting bull lumbered sleepily in his wake. Because the wind was strong the white man heard nothing, but now he felt something slip inside the collar of his coat and close with the grip of a vise about his neck. Without delay the expedition turned in its tracks; Ta-na-ha went back to lie down and chew his cud, while Toronto, still held fast in Ka-wa-tsu's mighty grip, was pushed head-first through the drifts and up to the door of his lodge.

The following day, upon attempting to leave the stockade, Toronto found that he had become a prisoner where once he had been a guest; and that night he received a summons to appear in the council lodge of the tribe.

The council of the Arikara was a circular, dome-shaped affair built of poles and plastered with clay. When Toronto entered through its single low door the room, except for a clear space in the center, was filled with circle after circle of warriors. What little space remained, under and around the sloping walls, was occupied by the women of the tribe. Opposite the door on a pile of blankets, sat five men, constituting the Arikara council; as members thereof, they were those whom the white men called chiefs. Ka-wa-tsu was of the five, but the master of ceremonies was an old man, Son-of-the-Star, who as president of the council sat in the middle of the line of five.

It appeared Toronto had been tried, convicted, and sentenced before he reached the scene. All that remained was to deliver the sentence. The old chieftain, getting slowly to his feet, faced the thoroughly frightened man standing before him. Being an Indian, it required the use of many words, long periods devoted to deep thought, and a great many descriptive gestures to pronounce judgment, but the essence was clear. Son-of-the-Star reviewed the case for both parties and from all angles, calling to his aid the winds, the snows, and many flowers. By the time he was

ready for the final judgment, the squawman was nearly in a state of collapse. Then sentence came in a few words:

Toronto had attempted to commit a crime against another guest of the tribe and for that crime there was neither excuse nor pardon. It appeared, therefore, that the white man was to be expelled forever from the village and territory of the Arikara. But inasmuch as it meant certain death were he driven forth at that time of the year, the council had decided that the white man might remain within the stockade until the last snow of winter had gone. There was one condition attached to the sentence and that dealt with the welfare of Ta-na-ha the buffalo. Should bad luck of any kind come to Ta-na-ha—were he to wander away and become lost, or fall into the river, or were he merely to lie down and die—Here the old chief held up an implement that all might see. It was a war-club of the plains Indians—a stone the size and shape of a turkey-egg, fixed by a leather thong to a slender handle of ash. Toronto knew that were anything to happen to the buffalo bull, the war-club would search him out.

Back again in his lodge, the squawman threatened vengeance against Ka-wa-tsu, against Son-of-the-Star, and against the whole Arikara nation. He promised himself by all that was holy and unholy that he would devote his days from that time on to the killing and skinning of the buffalo bull. That was Toronto's idea of a fitting revenge.

FOR that winter also Ta-na-ha remained an honored guest of the Indian village. Still allowed his liberty, he followed the horses and learned to paw away the snow to reach the grass beneath. Occasionally he received gifts of corn and pumpkins, though mostly he was his own provider. But this proved no hardship to Ta-na-ha, for he was a true son of the prairie and well able to care for himself. Throughout the winter he continued the process of developing bone and muscle, until with the first warm days of spring when he rubbed off his winter coat against the rough bark of the cottonwoods, he stood forth a thing of beauty indeed—a buffalo bull, three-quarters grown and already larger by far than the average of his race at maturity.

One day when the snows had gone again, when the ice had left the river

and the last of the great V-shaped hosts of ducks and geese had crossed the sky, a warm breeze sprang up from the southeast. Ta-na-ha was quietly feeding with the herd when a scent came drifting on the air. It stirred something deep within him. He threw up his head, swung his great body up into the wind, while he wrinkled his nose again and again, sorting the air for another trace of that elusive and intangible something which stirred every fiber of his being.

AGAIN it came—stronger now; drawing in a mighty breath he expelled it with force enough to sway the grasses at his feet. Along the blood-lines of heredity, the call of the Thunder Herd was sounding faint but clear, and in that instant the great heart of Ta-na-ha went back to the wild. He set off at a trot, and a half-plaintive rumble which he had sent over the prairie toward the village that had been his home, changed to a deep-throated roar which held nothing of the past, only a challenge to the future.

A warrior herder saw and heard and understood. A cry rang out and other mounted men sprang into motion. In a few moments Ta-na-ha found men ahead and on either side of him. A rawhide rope hissed through the air and missed. Other ropes were ready for the throw; but from somewhere Ka-wa-tsu appeared and at his sharp command the red men fell back. The way was open.

On the brow of the bluff, Ta-na-ha stopped to ease his labored breathing and to glance back across the valley. Far below were a group of mounted men—his friends. Beyond, the stockade and acres of waving grass—his home. Again a mournful note crept into the voice of the great bull. Then a gust of air came up over the brow of the hill and once more his head went up while a roar burst from his throat. What matter that countless dangers lay ahead—that wolves shadowed him by night and by day—that mire-holes sucked at his feet and rivers struggled to hold him in their power? The call had come—and he had answered!

From far below the watching warriors, saw the giant head come up, saw sunlight sparkle on the polished horns, heard the reverberation to the bison's challenge. Then the curtain of heat waves shut down. Ta-na-ha had gone back to the wild.

This, greatest of Mr. Neal's unique animal stories, concludes in the next, the November, issue.

Bugwine Sells Short

Trouble was, he didn't have any fish—and if a boy went to borrow some, stock-market fashion, he might get sent to the jail-house for it.

By ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

BUGWINE BRECK arose from the sidewalk in front of the Columbus Collins detective agency to meet the future—and met Aspirin Edwards instead.

“Dawggone! Aint seen you in de longest, Aspirin!” Mr. Breck greeted his compatriot, while still rubbing the place where Columbus’ foot and his overalls had so recently met.

“White folks done had me out of circulation,” outlined Aspirin.

“Whut for?”

“Sells a calf shawt.”

Mr. Breck’s dusky brow knotted. “Shawt?” he sought light.

“Gits de idea from white-folks’ cotton brok’rage office whar I used be porter,” further elucidated Mr. Edwards.

“Sells de calf shawt of whut?” Mr. Breck remained bogged to the whiffle-trees, intellectually speaking.

“Shawt of de calf,” struggled Aspirin, as patient with ignorance as a stock-exchange head before a Senate committee. “I sells it like de white folks do’s cotton: sells a calf whut I aint got yit. Den dey gits *me*; Judge Tom Ewing slap me in de jail-house for it.”

Mr. Breck’s knitted forehead smoothed while the idea penetrated his final four inches of cranial concrete.

“Huccome you settin’ on your pants on de sidewalk jest now?” It was Aspirin’s turn to interrogate.

“Gits fired out of detectin’.”

“Huccome?”

“Columbus say I aint got no sense—”

“Is you?”

“Muddyfoots pesters me so, I aint had time to have no sense,” explained Mr. Breck comprehensively. “Mess me all up in my business.”

Mr. Edwards looked sympathetic. “Muddyfoots,” as installment collectors are known in darkest Alabama, were ever the bane of a buyer’s existence. “Which one of ’em b’arin’ down on you de roughest?” he queried.

Mr. Breck debated visibly. “Nip and tuck,” he estimated, “’tween de muddy-foot after de money for de big brass lamp I buys for Geranium—dat my wife—and Samson G. Bates, whut sell me my electric sign.”

“Electric sign? Whut *you* want wid no electric sign?” puzzled Aspirin.

Bugwine shifted uneasily—Geranium too kept on all the time talking the same way! “Second-hand ’lectric signs is hard to git,” he advanced the reason that had moved him at the time of purchase. “Boy cain’t never tell when he liable need a ’lectric sign; den s’pose he aint got one?”

Aspirin weakened before logic; then he thought of the wrong thing. “Whut dat sign say?”

Whereupon the illiterate Mr. Breck developed symptoms of a live coal in his trousers. “I aint know,” he admitted embarrassedly. “Never thunk of dat when I buys it, Samson talk so much. I pays him two dollars and a half down; and a dollar eve’y Sat’d day night he can find me, since den.”

Mr. Edwards ran his mind back over long acquaintance with Bugwine. “Whar-at *you* git no two dollars and a half?” he put the question that naturally arose.

Bugwine squirmed. “Dat whar de stink-bug fall in my molasses-pitcher,” he admitted ruefully. “Geranium gimme de two-fifty to pay on de lamp. On de way, I gits to kind of lickin’ my chops round de sign, wid de money in my

pocket—and when old Samson G. Bates had done quit talkin' I'd done paid him Geranium's lamp-money down on de sign. Cain't git me no rest for dodgin' dem muddyfoots ever since!"

"And dat big strong-bodied gal Geranium aint know you aint pay de lamp-man?"

"I's livin', aint I?" Geranium's half-pint-sized husband gloomily answered one question with another.

"Give out prizes for gittin' in jams," marveled Aspirin, "and you hawgs 'em all! And now you says you done lost yo' job too. How you gwine support all dem muddyfoots?"

Mr. Breck's expression indicated absence of any answer. "Old de-pression done mess up all de jobs," he mourned. "I wuz kind of aimin' while I wuz settin' dar on de sidewalk jest now, to go into business for myse'f, and git me a good boss dat way."

Aspirin fetched up short. "Well, dawg-gone!" he delivered himself. "Here I wuz jest fixin' to git into business for my ownse'f, too! Jail-house ruin de old job I had. Maybe us team up—"

"Haulin' whut?"

"You aint got no capital, neither," Mr. Edwards pursued his subject. "So us could do whut I wuz aimin' do: git in de commission-brok'rage business, same as white folks. '*Edwards and Breck, Brokers*'—how dat sound?"

"Sound too much like '*Edwards and Breck, broke*' to me. Whut us do den?"

"Find somep'n whut's for sale; den find somebody else whut craves to buy it. Gits commission on de deal, and us aint put up nothin'. You's one dem middlemen den whut eve'ybody cuss and cain't nobody git on widout."

Bugwine saw himself on the other side of the salesmanship fence at last. Here was where a profit got into buying! Also where he grew solvent. "Rallies round de brokerage!" he accepted a partnership. "Sho is lucky you is through wid de jail-house—"

Mr. Edwards' uneasiness deepened. "Well, I aint exactly *through*," he qualified then. "Jedge Tom, he jest kind of furloughed me out durin' de home-brew season—"

Bugwine wilted. Something always happened to his schemes. Fixing to cloud up over the commission business now, after all! "Huccome 'home-brew season?'" he questioned uncertainly.

"Well, Jedge Tom jest a half-time jedge. He's a magistrate. Runs a store

down on Ash Street on de side, when he aint jedgin'. T'other day he come over to the jail-house, and say, 'Aspirin, how you like git out on suspended sentence, durin' de good behavior?' I say, 'Jedge, if it accommodate you none, I git my brother to stay in de jail for me.' But he say, 'I aint mess up de jail wid dat brother o' yourn. All I wants is for you to come out and behave yo'self and make me up enough home-brew to git me through twel fall.' So here I is."

"Den you got to keep out of trouble, to keep from gwine to jail?"

"Dat's all."

Mr. Breck paused in conversation to peer anxiously down the street, where he saw the glint of sunlight on a gun-barrel. "W-who dat comin'?" he worried.

"Aint nobody but Ducktooth Carnes."

"Who he?"

"Muddyfootin' amongst de cullud trade for Jedge Tom Ewing's store last time I seen him. He—"

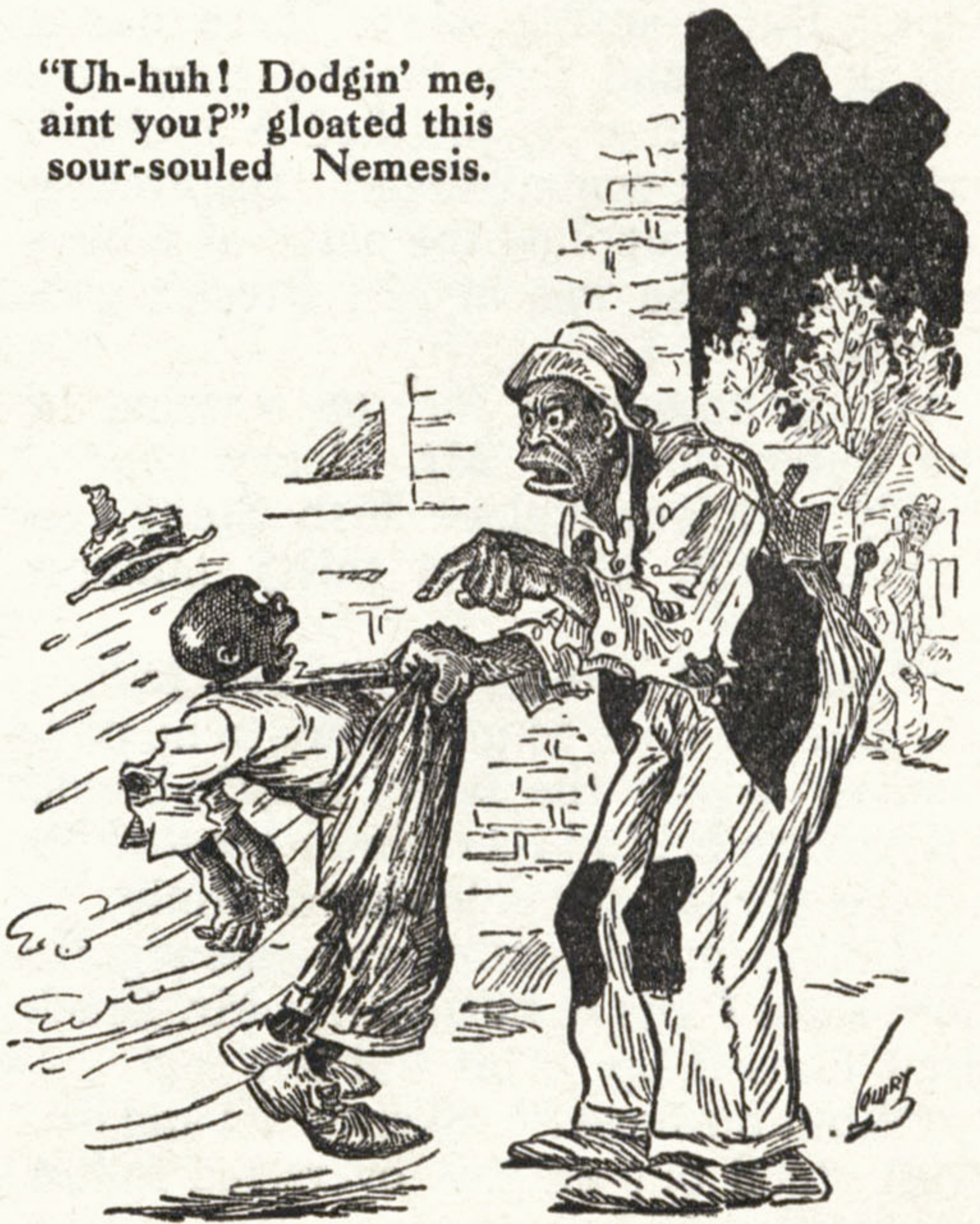
Bugwine was oozing into an adjacent doorway too rapidly to hear the rest.

"I aint owe de Jedge nothin'; but jest natu'ally cain't stand de sight of muddyfoots," he emerged to explain, as the squat-figured Mr. Carnes, who was reputed to make collections at the point of his muzzle-loader, passed morosely on.

"Ducktooth aint nobody to monkey wid, at dat," agreed Aspirin. . . . Bugwine remembered the remark later.

"Whar you gwine now?" persisted Mr. Edwards idly.

"Uh-huh! Dodgin' me, aint you?" gloated this sour-souled Nemesis.



"Bust into brokerin', dat whut. I works while old muddyfoots sleeps—cain't git about free no other time."

"Don't sell no calfs shawt!" warned Mr. Edwards earnestly. . . .

With Geranium loudly occupying Kaufman's Alley, and Ducktooth Carnes shuffling in the same direction, Ash Street beckoned Bugwine as a good place to start.

"Brokers all over de place," he mumbled, as he got his patched overalls and his straw hat with the hoof-hole in its crown into motion once more. "Rallies de buyers round de sellers, while old muddyfoots aint lookin'."

In pursuance of which announced policy, Mr. Breck—newly released to commerce from his profession—kept eyes, ears, and nose open to inspirations and suggestions.

The latter organ rang the first bell. Eyes backed it up, as they took in a galvanized tub of fresh river-fish, alluringly iced and set in front of a store. Bugwine could read figures, if not words; hence the gist of the sign the tub bore: "TAKE ME HOME FOR \$2," was shortly comprehended by him.

"Hot dawg! Old river-cat sniffs noble!" enthused Mr. Breck. A boy could sell what he believed in—if he had it. "Supply, whar-at Demand?"

IF echo didn't answer, imagination did. The beauties of brokering further appeared. Talking about investing two dollars in a tub of fish to a boy who didn't have two dollars, was waste of a good sign. But knowing where there was a tub of fish, and then finding some one who would buy it, justified a broker's existence and commissions! Inspiration had already supplied the name of a buyer; in fact, he was in Mr. Breck's own family.

Which accounted for the opening of the outer door to Mr. Henry Snews' highly redolent Palace Fish Stand, on Baptist Hill, less than thirty minutes later.

"I aint got enough fish to *sell* today; sho aint got none to give away to no pan-handlin' boy!" the large, muscle-bound Mr. Snews behind its counter greeted his sister's shrimp-sized husband firmly.

"I done quit detectin', and eats regular now, since I gits in business." Mr. Breck drew himself up to his full five feet.

"Whut business?" Skepticism and distrust stood out on this oversized in-law like quills on a porcupine.

"Broker business. How do a swell tub of fish for two bucks and a half hit you?"

"In a empty bin," rejoined Brother-in-law Snews, relenting a fraction. "Whut's wrong wid 'em?"

"Aint nothin' wrong wid 'em. Says I's a broker now. Gits old supply and demand together, on de percentage basis."

"Well, lemme see de fish. Buys 'em, is dey suit me."

"Got to git de two-fifty first," balked Mr. Breck. "Den I buys de fish and fotch 'em to you here. Aint got no capital froze up in de tub my ownse'f—jest de fish."

Mr. Snews glared down over his counter. "Last time you gits your hands on two dollars and a half," he recalled unpleasantly, "you had to turn round and pay it out to one dem muddyfoots, on a lamp. How I know I gits de fish, is I pay you first?"

"Tell Geranium on me, is I aint show up wid 'em," inspiration slapped a fresh mortgage on Mr. Breck's future.

As a surety-bond, the idea seemed to appeal to Henry as sound. "—And you better come clean wid me," he further warned, as he produced two greenbacks and a silver half-dollar. "Aint crave no doodle-business from you about dem fish."

Bugwine looked pained. Even when a boy intended to be honest, somebody was all the time doubting him. But—"Edwards and Breck, Service since Eighteen-fawty-nine!" he sloganed lustily if inaccurately. "Gangway for dem fish!" But events of the return journey decreed otherwise. Nearing the Frisco railway station, Bugwine went around the wrong corner—to find himself in the unexpected clutches of the muddyfoot from the furniture-store!

"*Uh-huh!* Dodgin' me, aint you? All over de Hill, and den some!" gloated this iron-jawed, sour-souled Nemesis as he hooked two capable and anchoring fingers within Mr. Breck's waistband. "Two-fifty right now, or us repossesses dat brass lamp of yourn, shawt-boy! Whut you got say to *dat*?"

But what Bugwine had to say bore more resemblance at first to the sound of water running out of a bath-tub than to human speech, consisting as it did of hollow gurglings arising from his thoughts of how Geranium had already given him the two dollars and a half to pay on that lamp—two dollars and a half which Mr. Breck had weakly converted into a down-payment to Samson on the electric sign,

instead. And now the day of reckoning had come—let this human steam-shovel once lay repossessive hands upon Geranium's lamp, thereby revealing to her that Bugwine had diverted her funds, and Mr. Breck's home life would at once become hell on the half-shell.

"Ug-glug-glubhhh!" further remarked Bugwine, as higher and higher above his splutterings towered the fact that only



With sinking heart Bugwine saw the tub still bearing its placard. And with a moan—Bugwine took it!

in Geranium's ignorance now lay Bugwine's chances for bliss. Under which circumstances there was but one thing for Mr. Breck to do. And he did it. So far as fish and future were concerned, there was but to let this lamp-collector take the cash and let the credit go!

"Uh—uh—here you is," the perspiring Bugwine was reaching into his overalls while chills paraded his spine. "I wuz jest fixin' fotch you dis here two-fifty when you grabs me."

"Yeah?" The skeptic unhooked his fingers from his customer's belt and clamped them equally firmly on what had been Henry Snews' advance-payment on the fish. "Well, dat sounds like a bum lie, but de money looks all right. So you keep de lamp—for another week."

"Never is been sho of nothin' for more'n a week!" breathed Mr. Breck in

relief. "Overalls, whar is you? Fixin' to come up for air!"

Then another thought returned. "Done made another payment on de lamp," he recapitulated. "But—fish, whar is you?"

The question carried no comfort; instead, it reminded him of Henry, and of the hostage so rashly given him! Wait now until Henry got word to Geranium about Bugwine's sale of a tub of fish he didn't own! Then, at the familiar words, another devastating thought: he had done that which Aspirin had done with the calf; that against which Aspirin had warned, under pain of jails—he had sold these fish "short!" Mr. Breck groaned at his mental glimpse of somebody sweeping out a cell for *him* next.

Every time a boy tried to get honest, he mourned, something came along and headed him off. With every arrange-

ment and intention right for handling Henry's purchase as a cash transaction, the muddyfoots had ruined him again!

"Lawd, he'p me to git right!" moaned the demoralized Mr. Breck in his dilemma, as he collapsed on the curb, his head in his hands, and his soul in his soles. His mind tore frantically about the encircling walls of circumstance, like a cat in a cage. And to equal purpose! He had to have money; for lack of money had been at the root of all his evils. Or he had to have fish, and that—

TERRIFYING, at length, came the inescapable answer. Bugwine shivered and shrank, but back he inevitably came to it: He had to have fish, or his latest payment to the lamp muddyfoot was in vain. And there was but one place to get a tub of fish now, get it promptly and as duly agreed. . . .

Up Ash Street, with water in his veins and despair in his soul, shuffled the overalled Bugwine Breck. Ash Street slumbered in the sunshine, particularly that portion of it distinguished by a tub of river-fish before a store. With sinking heart Bugwine saw it, still bearing its placard, "TAKE ME HOME FOR \$2.00."

And, with a moan—and a vast heaving to his shoulders—the desperate Bugwine took it! Not home, nor for two dollars; but with a frenzied pledge to himself to pay for them when again—if ever—two dollars should come his way!

Then he was staggering down the sunny street under his finny burden. With goose-flesh prickling his back, and expectation of being harshly hailed clawing at his spirit, he headed in haste for the fish-stand of Henry Snews.

But, a block away, his fifteenth fearful backward glance lent wings to his anguished ankles. He was being followed! And by Ducktooth Carnes at that. So Ducktooth must have seen him! Ducktooth, who was known as collector for Magistrate Tom Ewing in his mercantile capacity, following fast and signaling determinedly.

Then indeed Bugwine Breck flung himself into the task of hanging up something for the Olympics to shoot at, in the four-block dash in the tub-of-fish handicap! Bugwine's battered hat blew off in a gale of his own generating. The two-dollar sign went next. But Bugwine merely sped the faster. Safety lay only in speed. If Ducktooth got those fish back for the store of his employer now, he was going to have to overtake Bugwine Breck first.

But what if Ducktooth opened fire with his fowling-piece? Bugwine answered that question with zigzagging that would have done credit to a navy destroyer, until a fleeting glance signaled success: Ducktooth was falling behind, beckoning madly but futilely for his quarry to halt.

"Fish, slow down for crossin's!" exulted Mr. Breck briefly. "Been two more of you, and Ducktooth would have had me."

But, rounding a near-by corner into Decatur Street, Mr. Breck plumped into fresh phases of his business, in the person of his new partner, Aspirin Edwards, emerging from an alley-mouth with commendation in his eye and voice.

"Sho is rushin' round tendin' to business fast, Bugwine!" he admired his panting partner. "Never is see a boy move de stock so rapid! Whar you gwine?"

The blown Mr. Breck opened his mouth to answer, but only succeeded in renewing his wall-eyed imitation of a bathtub at ebb tide.

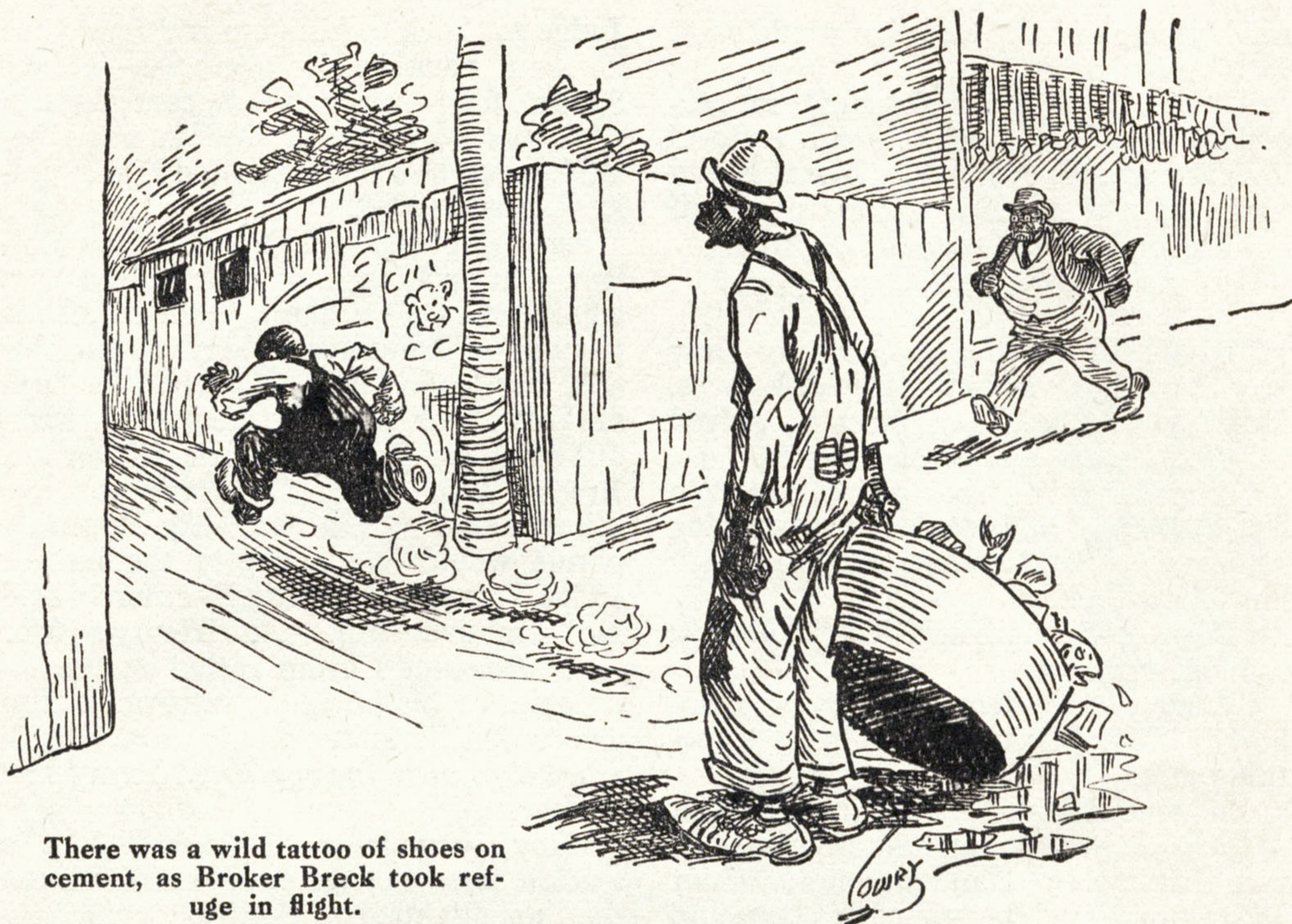
"Yas, suh," Aspirin fell into step beside him during this noisy inarticulateness. "Dat whut I calls *turnover!* Lemme help you tote 'em."

Suiting the words to the deed, Mr. Edwards gallantly seized a tub-handle. Bugwine's gurglings grew alarming if not coherent.

"Nemmind apologizin'," Aspirin misunderstood. "You is startin' off right, givin' speed and service wid de fish. I is proud to partner wid you!"

Bugwine made signs weakly, then ceased. Under Aspirin's admiration he could not bring himself to confess that Mr. Edwards was joining forces with him in the transportation of stolen fish—for, since Ducktooth had pursued him, there couldn't be any further blinking of that fact. Intentions at the time to pay later wouldn't get to first base in court. And now here was Aspirin laboring at the tub-handles as an evident though innocent accomplice to any and all irregularities in the acquisition of the fish. Yet, under Mr. Edwards' flattery, Bugwine could not bring himself to explanation and self-exposure. Wretchedly he trusted to luck and the short-windedness of the pursuing Ducktooth.

Yet it never rains but it pours. The frenzied *slap-slap* of Broker Breck's hastening soles suddenly ceased with the *clang!* of a tub of fish dropped sharply on the sidewalk, followed by a wild tattoo of shoes on cement as he took refuge in incontinent and unhampered flight,



There was a wild tattoo of shoes on cement, as Broker Breck took refuge in flight.

leaving the startled Mr. Edwards to hold not only the tub but the bag while he tried to fathom the cause of his partner's stampede.

Then it was made clear. Samson G. Bates, collector for the electric sign, was steaming corpulently into view. That sign that was like an old man of the sea about the financial neck of Bugwine.

Aspirin's gaze shifted, and took in what Mr. Breck's abrupt flight had caused him to miss. From up the street in the opposite direction came the car of Judge Tom Ewing.

"Old muddyfoots sho is stimulate Bugwine in de hoofs!" ruminated Mr. Edwards as he eyed the waddling Samson, the oncoming merchant-magistrate, the dwindling blur that was Bugwine. "Wonder whar-at dese fish gwine?" With which unanswered question before him, the blameless Aspirin settled himself comfortably on the rim of the tub, at the curb, to await the return of Bugwine better directions, or anything else that the turn of the wheel might bring.

Then Judge Ewing spied him, applied his brakes sharply, and called Mr. Edwards to his car.

CAUTIOUSLY, keeping as much under cover as scarcity of telephone-poles and garbage-cans permitted, Bugwine Breck made his return toward a spot that filled him with fear and fascination.

As he well knew, anything could happen there. And probably would. But, whatever he expected, reality was to prove even more devastating in its visible effects on him; for as he peered around the final pole, he froze in his tracks. What he saw could mean but one thing: the jig was up! Recovery of stolen property was undoubtedly 'taking place before his very eyes. Bugwine might have outdistanced the pursuing Ducktooth, but Aspirin had fallen into the clutches of the head-man! Samson was no longer in sight, but Aspirin was loading the tub of fish into the back seat of Mr. Tom Ewing's car. Bugwine's fish, Henry Snews' fish. . . . Bugwine staggered under the complications of their ownership—complications that would end with Bugwine in the jail-house. This thought but brought on still more complications—for Aspirin. *He* would be loaded next, for personal delivery by the Judge to the jail. Red-handed was a mild way to describe the way Aspirin had been caught—Aspirin, who was so far only out on good behavior in respect to short-selling that calf!

Bugwine's head whirled and his knees weakened. Black spots swam before his eyes as he recalled still more: that big muscle-bound Henry Snews would shortly be waiting for those fish; after which Geranium would start waiting for Bugwine with a flat-iron; after which the

muddyfoots of lamp and sign would start in all over again. . . .

Then a further development so perplexing that Mr. Breck's breath escaped in a gasp, and his eyes bulged like a choked frog's. For Judge Ewing was driving off—with the fish, but without Aspirin!

And Aspirin was grinning happily.

CURIOSITY and a temporarily clear coast drove Bugwine from his cover. Mystery was here that must be solved before he made any wrong moves.

"Whar-at Jedge Tom gwine wid dem fish, Asp'rin?" he broached a consuming subject when he had come warily up with his fellow-broker.

"Back to he store wid 'em." Aspirin sounded exultant.

"Whar you git dem fish, Bugwine, no-how?" Mr. Edwards thought of something else.

Bugwine buckled under new strain. A third element seemed entering a business that couldn't stand any more. "Aint Jedge Tom say?" he stalled for time and air.

"How *he* know?" Aspirin seemed puzzled by the question. Then he fished in his pocket, as though to clarify his position. What he produced, with a show of triumph, carried implications for Mr. Breck that made his previous gurglings seem but the feeble trickle of a dried brook in drought. If things were what they seemed—

"Yas, suh!" Aspirin was preening himself aloud, while suspense gnawed at Bugwine's very core. "You aint de only business-man in de firm! While you wuz gone gallopin' off up de alley dodgin' Samson, I done sold dem fish for dis dollar and a half to— Why, *whut de matter wid you, boy?*"

For Mr. Breck's prominent eyes apparently had got from under control, and were revolving glassily, unrelatedly; he was breathing hoarsely; his complexion had blanched to a rich brownish lavender, while his relaxed lower jaw waggled feebly upon his wishbone.

"Y-you mean," gasped the recovering Bugwine weakly, while his feet made futile movements upon the cement of the sidewalk, "dat you done *sold* dem fish to Jedge Tom?"

"Uh-huh. For dis dollar and a half. He say he aint been to de store yit."

Bugwine collapsed heavily on the curb. Only haste could save him now, flashed futilely over him. Haste to get his business fixed up with Judge Tom before the

Judge got back to his store and found out he had bought his own fish—Henry Snews' fish—from an innocent Aspirin who was only out of jail on good behavior, anyhow! Haste—and four dollars—was needed.

And Bugwine didn't have four dollars. In fact, lack of four dollars was what had been at the bottom of all his trouble—culminating in a situation now that was loaded in both barrels for both brokers. For had not the Judge's zealous employee Ducktooth been hot on Mr. Breck's trail before the theft was five minutes old? The unaware Aspirin's parole would end abruptly the instant Judge Tom found Aspirin had merely sold him his own fish. . . . Henry's fish. . . . Bugwine's brain reeled at the intricacies of his business, intricacies that an aroused Geranium would unravel with a bed-slat, once the aggrieved Henry had her ear.

"Boy, you keep on lookin' like a truck'd jest run over you," remonstrated the unenlightened Aspirin. "Here I makes a good cash deal for ouah fish, and you starts actin' like you'd done swallered a coconut whole. Why aint—"

But Mr. Edwards found he again was talking to himself. Bugwine had gone. And glancing up the street in the opposite direction, Aspirin perceived the cause: Ducktooth Carnes was stumping doggedly along the sidewalk, his ancient fowling-piece at right-shoulder.

"Bugwine gittin' wuss skeered of Ducktooth dan he is of Samson," marveled Aspirin. "Dem two liable gang him one day. Den he be up a tree right!"

Directly across from the remaining broker, the military Mr. Carnes evidently issued to himself an order to halt. With a clang of musket he achieved this.

"Seen nothin' of dat little sawed-off Bugwine Breck, Asp'rin?" he revealed the contents of his mind across the width of the street.

"Last time I see him, has to look twice to see him, he gittin' about so fast," evaded Mr. Edwards. You had to know what was wanted with a boy before you told too much!

Mr. Carnes wiped his gloomy visage with a flaming bandanna, then gave a loving rub with it to his gleaming gun-barrel.

"He sho is hard to come up wid," he rejoined fervently. "Look like I got to wing him, yit!"

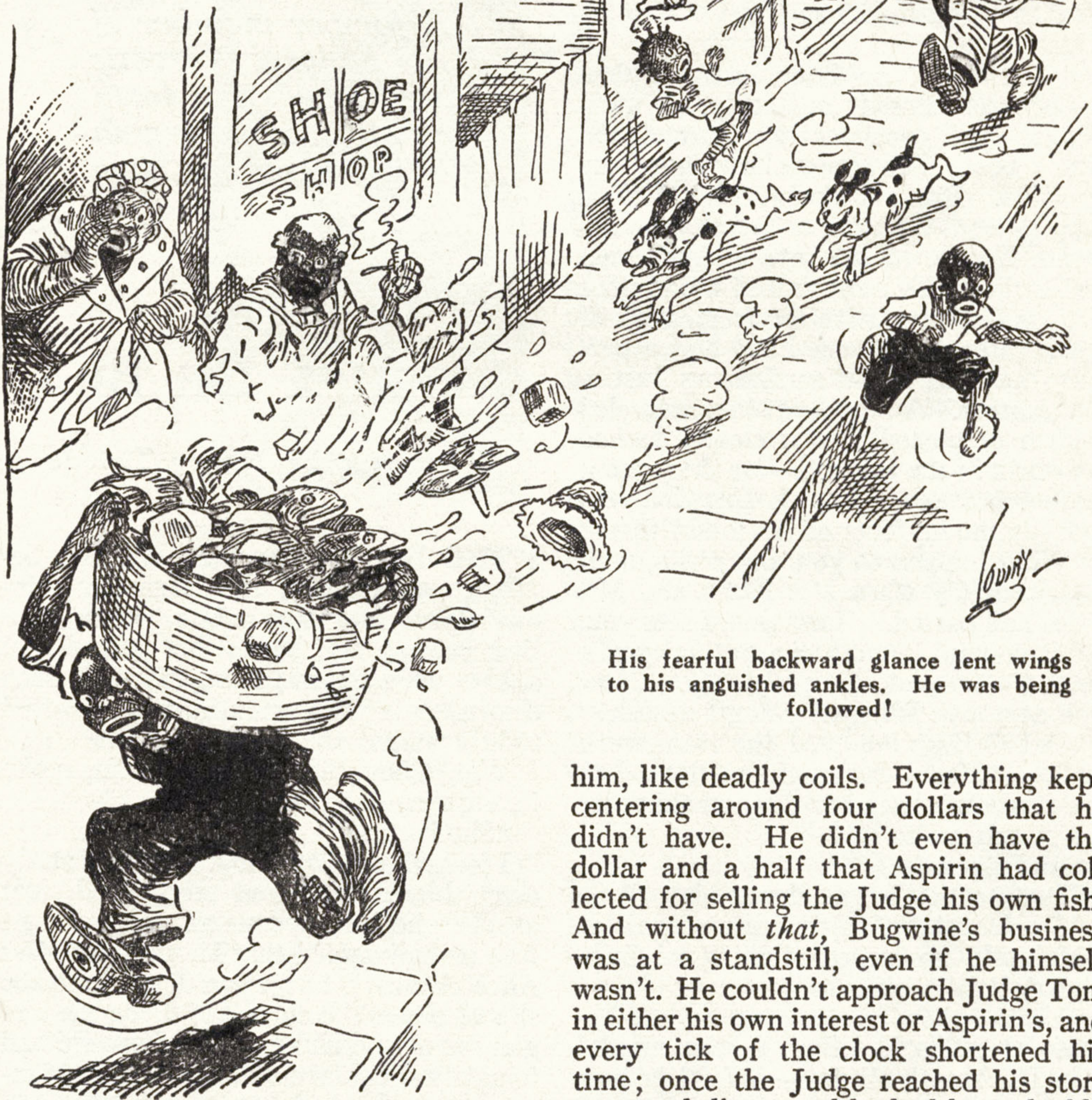
"Whut you want wid him?"

"Looks like he done got hold of some-

p'n he aint got no business wid: aims to give him a little *re-lief*, quick as I can git in sight of him again."

Aspirin wobbled slightly on his base. The eccentric Ducktooth's habit of saying it with fowling-pieces on occasion kept the colored community nervous at best. And Bugwine was in no shape mentally to be shot at, reflected Mr. Edwards solicitously. Something new that Aspirin couldn't get at was on that partial vacuum which Bugwine used for a mind.

"Bugwine leave out of here, gwine *dat* way!" Aspirin therefore pointed in precisely the wrong direction.



His fearful backward glance lent wings to his anguished ankles. He was being followed!

"In which case, I aims to keep on travelin' *dis* way," the astute Mr. Carnes took the correct—and opposite—one. "Black boy always lie about whar another boy is."

Meantime, Mr. Breck—on the hoof—was sweating and suffering in circles, circles that he sensed were fast closing in on

him, like deadly coils. Everything kept centering around four dollars that he didn't have. He didn't even have the dollar and a half that Aspirin had collected for selling the Judge his own fish. And without *that*, Bugwine's business was at a standstill, even if he himself wasn't. He couldn't approach Judge Tom in either his own interest or Aspirin's, and every tick of the clock shortened his time; once the Judge reached his store now, and discovered he had been doubly victimized, it would be simply too bad and too late. Too bad for Bugwine; too late for Aspirin. Nothing altered the fatal fact that Bugwine was caught short in the market—short one tub of river-fish upon which he could make neither delivery nor refund to Henry Snews; with all which that entailed, when word should reach Geranium. . . .

Groaning at the thought, Mr. Breck looked up, and heard not the fluttering of wings but the asthmatic wheezing of Mr. Bates—and true to form, Mr. Breck turned back in fright and flight. But near by a billboard beckoned, and Bugwine answered—to find himself a victim of mind-reading in its deadliest form!

“Jest like I ’lowed!” rang the exultant voice of capture in his startled ears as he rounded its end, only to freeze with terror at what confronted him there. “I knowed you owed too many people to stay out in de open long! Come on behind dis boa’d, boy, and save wear and tear on my feets—’ca’ze me and you is fixin’ to do business *now!*”

IN Ash Street an hour later, Aspirin Edwards stared amazedly. Thrice-rubbed eyes consistently returned the same report. The approaching figure was Bugwine. But a Bugwine who shuffled happily from the store of merchant-magistrate Ewing, to fall into amiable step beside the Hill’s most feared muddyfoot Samson G. Bates, with the framework of a half-eaten fish in one hand and a partially smoked cigar smoldering lustily in the other. A new Bugwine, marveled Aspirin perplexedly, who clearly looked the world in the eye and—for the present—owed not any man. A Bugwine who took his muddyfoots as he found them!

“Whut happen to you, boy?” inquired Aspirin avidly when Mr. Breck and Mr. Bates had parted. “Last time I sees you, you is dodgin’ round like a wet dawg at a weddin’—skeered of eve’ybody. Now look at you! Whar-at you git de fish?”

“Dat?” Bugwine eyed the framework fondly. “Henry Snews gimme dat, when I *re-funds* him back two-fifty on old order it aint suit me to fill—”

“And de seegar?”

“Ducktooth Carnes gimme dat—”

“*Ducktooth?*” Aspirin remembered incredulously an armed stalking of Bugwine so brief a while ago.

“Yeah—when he come up on me behind dat billboa’d. Boy, I been runnin’ from Ducktooth all day—and *all he wuz tryin’ to do wuz gimme five dollars—*”

“*Five dollars!*”

“—For dat old electric sign Samson sell me. I finds de sign say ‘BARBERSHOP,’ and Ducktooth done sold it *shawt* for six, to a boy whut gwine into de barberin’ business. —Like I tell Geranium all de time, a boy cain’t never tell when a second-hand electric sign gwine come in handy!”

The Diamond Necklace

A former member of the Federal Narcotic Squad here sets forth a swift-moving drama based upon his own experience.

By

LEMUEL DE BRA

Illustrated by Henry Thiede

SHE lay face down on the rug between me and the large bay window. Her slim white wrists were tied behind her back; her silken-clad ankles were bound; a napkin had been drawn over her mouth and knotted tightly across the back of her head.

Wing Choy, the Chinese servant, spoke in a quiet, flat tone:

“She is dead.”

I looked at Wing Choy. He stood stiffly erect, blank-faced and stony-eyed, just as when he had met me at the door. At first he had denied that he knew a “Miss Alice Aimes;” but when I got out the slip of paper the chief had given me and glanced at the name and address we had found in Pockface Bardetti’s memorandum-book, he had turned abruptly and slipped up the wide hall stairs—only to come tumbling down an instant later, beckoning frantically to me.

It struck me now as I looked at Wing Choy that his first appearance of fright had been a bit overdone.

“Phone the police!” I ordered.

Wing Choy slipped silently down the hall. I turned for a swift survey of the



room—a habit formed by years in the Secret Service. It was obviously a woman's room, a room richly and tastefully furnished. The large bay window was beautifully curtained; in the recess was a window-seat with brightly colored and embroidered cushions. I could not see that anything had been disturbed.

It took but a second to fasten that scene in my mind; then I stepped quickly to the woman's side. Dropping to my knees, I felt her wrists, hoping to find a pulse. If she were dead, as Wing Choy had stated, then I would do nothing until the police arrived; but if the faintest spark of life remained, then I would cut those bonds as quickly as possible.

The cord around her wrists had apparently been ripped from a silk dressing-gown. It had been wrapped around so many times that the spot where the pulse can be found was completely covered. Recalling my hospital training, I tried for a pulse in the woman's throat.

As I pressed the tips of my fingers into the soft white flesh of her throat, where one can feel the last heart-beat of a dying person, my gaze fell naturally on the

woman's face; and even though the napkin covered her lips, I was struck by her dainty and exquisite beauty. Her abundant hair, combed straight back from a smooth white forehead, was of that type usually described as "corn-silk," while her long lashes rested on cheeks devoid of rouge and as fair as a child's.

Suddenly I was tugging at the knotted napkin. I had detected a pulse-movement. With the gag removed, her wrists freed and her ankles unbound, I sprang up and stepped swiftly to the closed door. Opening it, I found, as I had expected, a bathroom. I stepped to the washstand, snatched a towel off the rack, and turned on the cold water.

I was wringing the surplus water from the towel when I chanced to see something that brought me up motionless, staring wide-eyed.

BEFORE me was a mirror. In that mirror I saw over my left shoulder the reflection of the woman lying on the floor in the room behind me. She had turned on one side, was picking up some object that lay on the rug where her shoulder had been. I saw a flash of rainbow colors; then the object vanished in the bosom of the woman's gown.

It was all over in the space of a breath. Again the woman lay on the rug as if in a dead faint.

I went on wringing out the towel. My cue, I decided, was to play up to the woman's deception.

But I couldn't hold back a bit of temper. I didn't like to have a woman make a fool of me. So I slapped that cold wet towel on her pretty face with unwonted roughness.

She sat up, gasping.

"Are you hurt?" I asked.

She stared at me while she rubbed her hands over her face where the napkin had been tied. In her violet eyes I caught a flash of mystification and alarm; then the lids narrowed with caution.

"N-o," she answered slowly, "I—I am not hurt. But what happened? And who are you?"

"Let me help you to a chair," I parried for time to think.

She gave me her arm. I helped her up—and into a chair. She flung a swift glance at the door opening into the hall, then looked up at me.

That glance reminded me that I had sent the Chinese servant to telephone for the police, and that he had been gone a long time. Wondering what was keep-

ing him, I stepped to the doorway and looked out. There was no one in sight. There was not a sound in the house.

I went thoughtfully back to where the woman sat watching me from between narrowed lids; and it was then that I first noticed the graceful curves of her figure as revealed by her close-fitting gown of Chuddah silk. It was of that color known as Pandora green—a color that harmonized perfectly with her blonde beauty.

"Who are you?" she repeated. "And what happened?"

"I am a book-agent," I lied easily. "I chanced to be passing when your Chinese servant called me in. He thought you were dead. As for what happened—that's for you to tell. I don't—"

The woman broke in with a choking cry of dismay. Springing up, she ran to her dressing-table, snatched up a flat leather case, and opened it.

"They're gone!" she cried, letting the case fall from her fingers. "I—I remember now!"

She walked unsteadily back to the chair by me and dropped into it.

"What's gone?" I asked.

"My diamonds," she answered dully. "A necklace—a gift from my father. It cost him fifty thousand dollars. And now—it's gone."

SO that was her story! Found in her room, bound and gagged, and her fifty-thousand-dollar diamond necklace gone. Yet while pretending to be in a dead faint, she had picked a diamond off the rug and concealed it in her bosom!

"The necklace may be recovered," I told her. "The first thing I did was to have your Chinese servant telephone for the police."

"The police!" She started, half rose from the chair. It was not a surprised start, I observed; it was more as if she had suddenly remembered hearing me order Wing Choy to call the police.

"Don't you want the police to investigate this?" I asked, eying her closely.

"Yes, yes!" She was not looking at me then. "Oh, I mean—no! I don't want the police! I couldn't stand the notoriety. I want my husband—he will know what to do."

She sprang out of the chair and ran to the hall door. "Wing!" she called imperatively. "Wing Choy! Wing Choy!"

Her shrill voice must have penetrated easily to every part of the house. But there was no answer. And as the woman

turned slowly and stared at me for a moment in silence, I knew that whatever her game was, the disappearance of Wing Choy had not been part of it.

THE woman slipped past me suddenly, through the double doors into the library. I heard her give a number—and I wondered why Wing Choy hadn't used that telephone. Presently she muttered something in annoyance, and gave another number. After a moment of waiting, she abruptly slammed the receiver onto the hook.

She came back into the room and looked at me distantly as if she had suddenly realized she didn't want a book-agent butting into her little game.

"My husband will be here presently," she said coldly. "I am very grateful to you for your help. But there is nothing more you can do. Thank you."

I looked at her, and smiled. For after the first few minutes of excitement that woman's face had begun to stir my memory—just as the name had when the chief gave me that slip of paper.

"Madam," I said, "I could not help hearing that you failed to get your husband on the telephone. You do not know whether or not he will come. You do not know where he is. But—I know."

The woman's eyes widened.

"Right at this moment," I went on before she could speak, "your husband is in conference with his client—*Pockface Bardetti*."

I thought that would stagger her, but it didn't. She had poise, and nerve, that woman!

"So you know my husband," she said thoughtfully, her gaze meeting mine steadily. "And you appear to know a great deal about his business—for a book-agent. Perhaps you will be good enough to explain."

"I knew your husband, Beatry Lansing, in college," I told her. "When you and he were married, I saw your picture in the papers. Since then I have seen you and Beatry together several times. I had forgotten, however, that your maiden name was—" Although I recalled the name perfectly, I got out that slip of paper the chief had given me, and pretended to consult it. "—That your maiden name was Alice Aimes."

With that, I turned quickly and stepped to the hall door, where for a moment I pretended to be listening for sounds of Wing Choy. I wanted Mrs. Lansing to do some thinking. I wanted her to won-



der *why* I had her maiden name written on that slip of paper.

Presently I turned back and faced her. She had paled. A look of alarm had come into her violet eyes.

"Who are you?" she demanded anxiously. "Why are you here?"

I made a pretense of hesitating while I regarded her fixedly. For a moment there was no sound save the faint drizzle of rain at the windows. I remember thinking how Mrs. Lansing's pallor accentuated her unusual beauty.

"The name is Hayden," I said. "At present I am working with the Federal Narcotic Squad."

I stopped there, watching her closely. In her eyes flickered for just an instant a light of comprehension. She knew why I was there!

"Last night," I went on, "we arrested Pockface Bardetti. On his person we found a memorandum-book containing the names and addresses of his customers. Understand?"

Mrs. Lansing nodded.

"Bardetti was released this morning on bond and went at once to see his attorney, your husband. Now, Mrs. Lansing, what would your husband think if he knew that while he is talking with

In the mirror I saw she had turned—
was picking up some object.

Bardetti, the most notorious drug-vendor on the Pacific coast, a Federal drug agent is here asking you why your name is in Bardetti's book?"

Mrs. Lansing flung up a shaking hand.

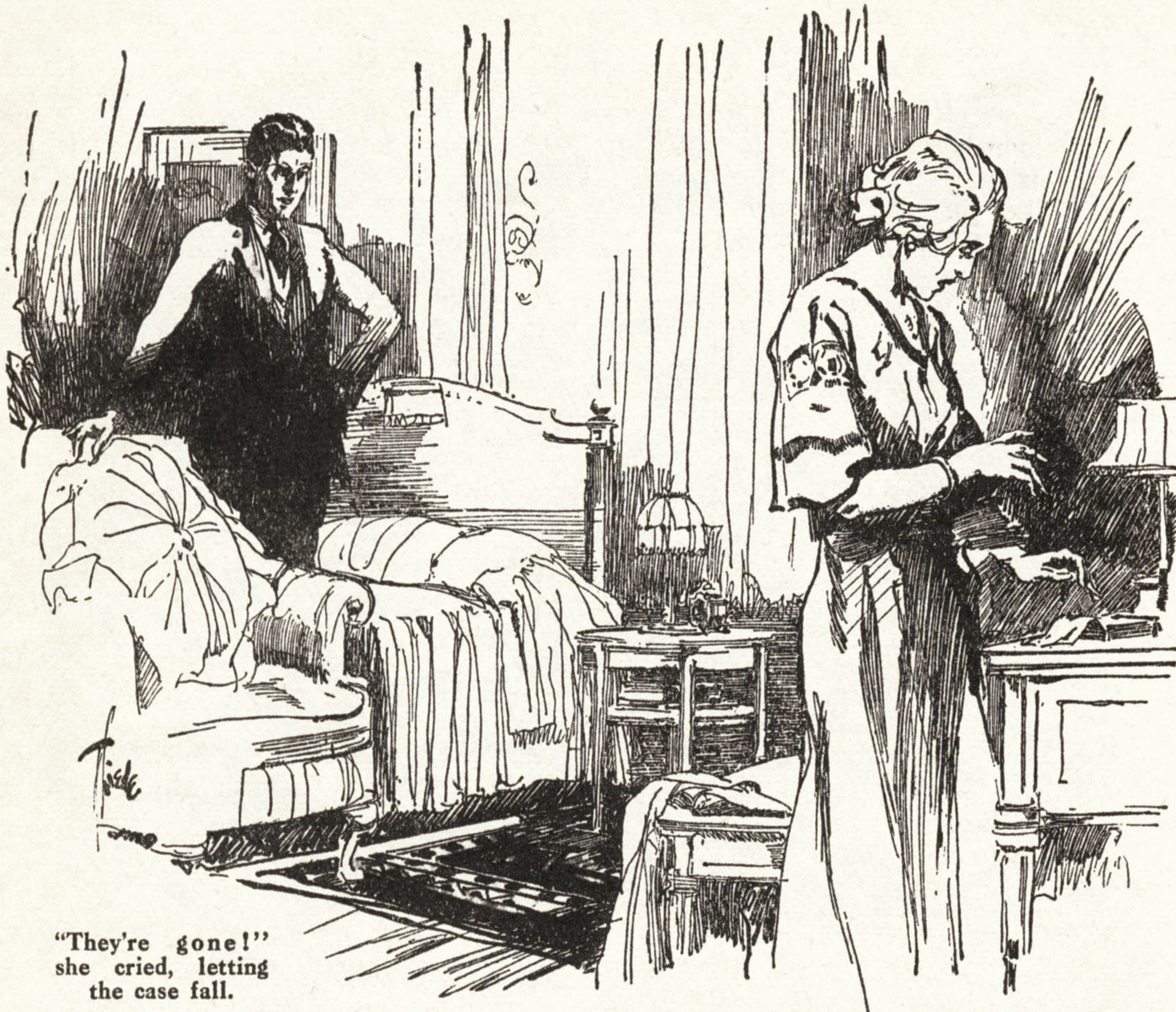
"Stop!" she cried in a choked whisper. Springing up, she ran to the hall door, looked out, then hastened back to my side. "Come in here," she begged, and led the way into the library.

The library was a large room with rows of books that showed use, a large desk, a reading-table, comfortable chairs, and flowers in vases.

MR.S. LANSING sat down at the desk. I took a chair near her. For a moment she regarded me in silence.

"Now, Mr. Hayden," she said then, more composedly and with the air of having decided to trust me, "please tell me quickly just why you called here."

There was something so appealing in her pale beauty that I was about to meet her trust with an equal frankness. Then I remembered that Mrs. Lansing and her Chinese servant had framed a fake robbery! Why? Where was the fifty-thou-



"They're gone!" she cried, letting the case fall.

sand-dollar necklace? Had Wing Choy double-crossed her and skipped?

I decided I had better telephone the chief for instructions.

"No, no!" Mrs. Lansing cried when I told her of my intention, and her hand flashed out to catch my arm as I reached for the telephone on the desk. "Don't do that! My husband must not learn of this! Wait! I will tell you anything you want to know—*anything!*"

"Very well," I yielded. "But aren't you worried about that necklace?"

"I am," she answered quietly. "But—I am more worried over what my husband will think if he learns—the truth. Mr. Lansing is the very soul of honor. He wouldn't understand. And it would kill him."

"How long have you known Pockface Bardetti?" I asked abruptly.

She looked up at me, took a deep sigh as if getting a grip on herself, then answered in a low tone:

"For about five years."

"Five years!" The astonished exclamation slipped from my lips before I could catch myself.

Mrs. Lansing nodded. "Yes, five years," she repeated slowly. "And I

know, of course, what you think. In a way, I am glad—terribly glad that you are mistaken; and yet I wonder what you will think of me when you know the truth. Had I been what you think, you might pity me; now, no doubt, you will despise me."

And then, without any prompting on my part, Mrs. Lansing was telling me the whole story. Although the years have passed, I can see her now as she sat before me that morning, her slim white hands picking nervously at her Chuddah silk gown, her wistful lips twitching, tears gleaming in her beautiful eyes. . . .

Alice Aimes was the daughter of a very wealthy man, but he was the type of man who begin life with a dime, retire rich, and still have the dime. Forced to slip away from home to find amusement, Alice fell into fast company. At seventeen the motherless girl ran away to marry a penniless youth she believed would one day be the world's greatest violinist—but who proved to be only a worthless idler with ambition no higher than an occasional job in some cheap café.

Disillusioned, Alice left the man and

got a divorce. Having inherited some of her father's strength of character, she began to fight her way back to respectability. Six months later, with honest money in her purse, she returned to her father and obtained his forgiveness. Two years later she married Beatry Lansing, a promising young attorney with splendid family connections.

On the eve of her wedding, Alice's father had given her a beautiful diamond necklace. It had cost old Jim Aimes fifty thousand dollars. But, Aimes explained, it wasn't like spending money. Diamonds were increasing in value. It was an investment.

Alice didn't give a hang about investments. To her, the gleaming jewels about her white throat were a symbol of victory—victory over her past.

"AND then," said Alice, her violet eyes burning with an odd intensity, "just when I thought the past was buried forever, I learned that the time had come when I was to pay. My former husband showed up. He had been in prison—had come out a broken wretch, ready to stoop to blackmail.

"I had told Mr. Lansing nothing, for I didn't see that it was either necessary or advisable. Terrified by my former husband's threats to expose me, I managed by one way or another to meet his repeated demands for money. Finally he told me that if I would give him ten thousand dollars he would go away and never bother me again. I told him that such a demand was impossible for me to meet. Then he—"

"Then he suggested that you pawn your necklace," I spoke up. "You took Wing Choy into your confidence and planned a phony robbery. I suspected something when I saw you pick a diamond off the rug and hide it in your gown. But where does Bardetti come in?"

"The blackmail money was paid to him, and all communications from my divorced husband came to me through Bardetti. As for what you saw me pick off the rug, that was a diamond ring that had been accidentally knocked off the dresser. And it wasn't Wing Choy who helped me; it was an old friend whom I knew I could trust. We did the whole thing while Wing was out on an errand. I planned on Wing discovering me when he returned, and notifying my husband. In the meantime, my friend was to pawn my necklace and—"

She broke off abruptly, and sprang up. I too had heard the muffled slam of the front door.

"My husband!" she whispered, looking around wildly. "Quick! Hide in that closet!"

"But I won't tell him—"

She stopped me with an impatient gesture. "Into that closet! Hurry!"

The door that opened into the hall was closed. On the left of that door was another, smaller door, standing ajar. I crossed quickly to it. As I backed into the closet, I saw Mrs. Lansing tugging at the double doors. Evidently she intended to keep Lansing in her room to prevent me from hearing what he had to say.

In that she was disappointed. Quick steps crossed her room. I saw a man step close to her. His face was white, his eyes blazing with anger.

But it was not her husband. It was a young man I knew slightly—Harry Blann—a good enough sort, but spoiled by too much money.

"Alice!" snapped Blann. "I want to know just what—"

"Wait!" Alice cut in. "Stay in there—and close these doors! We'll—"

"We'll talk in the library," Blann interrupted sharply. "I'm not going to have your husband sneak in and find us in your room. I'm in trouble enough as it is."

Reluctantly Alice followed Blann to the desk where he had been talking. Each remained standing. For a moment there was silence. And in that silence I made a startling discovery.

I was not alone in that closet! Behind me, in the darkness, I could hear the sound of suppressed breathing.

I pondered over that a few seconds, then muttered softly: "Wing Choy!"

Out of the dark came a harsh whisper: "Shut up, you!"

Beatry Lansing, this must be!

FOR a moment I was mystified; then it seemed simple. While Mrs. Lansing and I were in her room, her husband had entered the house. He had heard our voices. Jealous, suspicious, he had come up by way of the rear stairs and had hidden in this closet. And every word of the story Mrs. Lansing had told me had carried to his ears.

Now he was going to hear more. Harry Blann was talking.

"I took the necklace to Nate Levin as we agreed. I gave him the story we made

up—that the necklace belonged to my sister and that I wanted the money for her. He looked the stones over a long time, but it seemed to me he was thinking of something else.

“Suddenly he shoved the necklace at me and said curtly: ‘*We don’t lend money on imitations!*’”

With that, Blann took from his pocket something wrapped in tissue paper and flung it on the desk in front of Alice.

The man behind me stirred and took a step toward the door. I reached out in the dark and caught him by the arm.

“See here, Lansing!” I whispered sharply, “I know you heard what Mrs. Lansing told me—but you’d better not hold that against her. Forget it and give her—”

A heavy hand struck me on the chest and slammed me back against the wall. A voice hissed in my ear.

“You keep out of this! Stay in here and keep your damned mouth shut!”

The door was thrown open. I caught a glimpse of a tall, powerful figure; then the door slammed shut again.

BUT in the instant the door was open I had seen enough. For a moment I was too astounded to move. The man was not Beatry Lansing. He was Mrs. Lansing’s father—old Jim Aimes!

Cautiously I opened the door a few inches. And got another surprise.

In the double doorway, immaculate as always, erect and perfectly cool, an expression of mild surprise on his dark face, stood Lansing.

“Hello, Dad!” Beatry Lansing spoke in his quiet and well-modulated voice. “Harry, how are you? Alice—what’s up? You all appear to be—”

Jim Aimes broke in like a thunderclap:

“Blann! I’ll give you two seconds to do two things: Forget all this, and—get out!”

Blann colored, and looked at Alice, who nodded.

“Alice,” the old man snapped when Blann had left, “take a few of your things and go home! I’ll explain everything later.”

Alice hesitated, bewilderment and alarm in her face.

“You’d better go, dear,” Lansing said. “We’ll explain everything later. And there’s nothing for you to worry about.”

“That’s a damned lie!” bellowed old Aimes. “There’s plenty for you to worry about! I’ll be home and tell you as soon as I get through with this skunk.”

“Father!” Alice stared, horrified.

“Go home!” ordered Jim Aimes.

His daughter stamped her foot.

“I’ll do nothing of the kind!” she declared. “If you have anything to say to Beatry you’ll say it before me!” She turned appealingly to Lansing. “Beatry, what in heaven’s name does this mean?”

Lansing had stepped to her side. I saw him pat her on the shoulder.

“I haven’t the slightest idea, dear,” he said soothingly. “There must be some terrible mistake. I was at my office when Wing telephoned that he had found you bound and gagged. I left at once, got in a traffic jam, and—”

“Left for where?” Aimes cut in.

“Why, I left for home, Dad. I—”

“You’re a liar—and don’t call me ‘Dad!’ Alice, since you’re too obstinate to go home as I ordered, you’ll have to take your medicine. You’re going to hear something that will knock the legs from under you. Sit down before you fall down!”

Obediently, Alice sat down. Both Aimes and Lansing remained standing. From their attitudes I expected them to lunge at each other’s throat any minute.

“Lansing,” began old Aimes, “I learned sometime ago that you were neglecting your business and were broke. For my daughter’s sake I put a detective on your trail.

“I found out first that you had mortgaged this home—had a woman friend of yours forge Alice’s name. That woman got a thousand dollars for her dirty work and you spent a lot more of the money on her. The rest you shot over poker-tables.

“Broke again, you took your wife’s necklace to Nate Levin, had him make a copy, put the copy in Alice’s jewel-case, then pawned the original for twenty thousand dollars. You—”

Lansing broke in curtly: “Alice, there has been some mistake. I—”

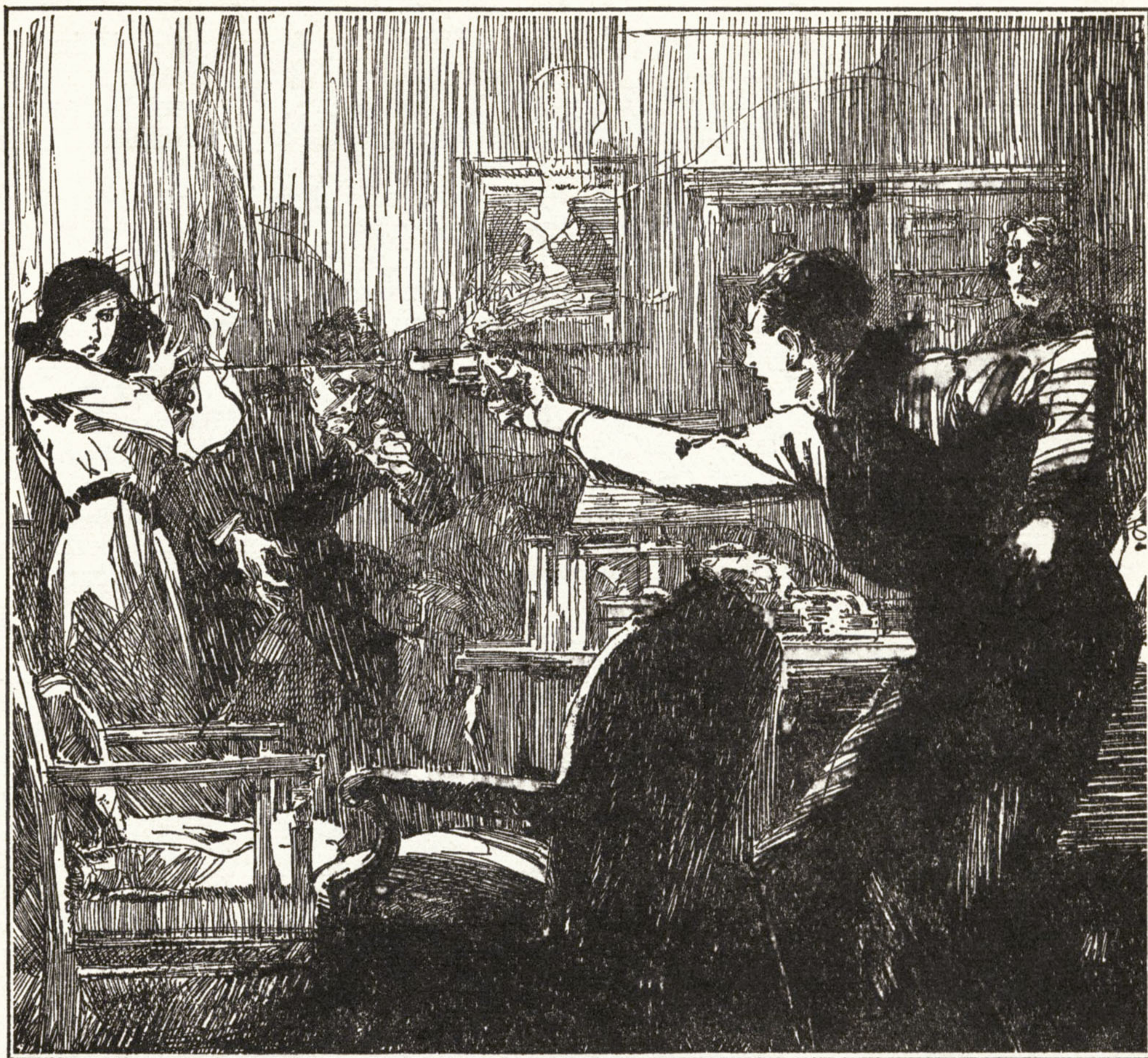
“Mistake, hell!” roared Jim Aimes. “Here’s the evidence!”

HE took a small parcel from his pocket, tore off the wrapper and held up a gleaming diamond necklace.

“I got this—and the whole story—from Nate Levin,” Aimes flung at Lansing. “Now what have you to say?”

Lansing’s handsome face had hardened. His eyes were gleaming slits. He said nothing.

Alice sat at the desk like a statue, white-lipped, dumfounded.



"Now!" cried Lansing. "You get what you deserve!" And he fired.

"Last night I decided that things had gone far enough," Aimes went on. "I made up my mind that I'd come here this morning and tell Alice the truth.

"As I opened the front door I heard voices—a strange man's voice, and Alice's. They were saying something about her necklace. That, with what Nate Levin had told me, made me suspicious. So I came up the rear stairs and hid in that closet."

Again Aimes paused. I saw Alice bow her head on her arms.

Beatry Lansing was the coolest of the three, but I did not like the look on his face. I watched him as he stepped casually to the desk. He opened a drawer. For a second or so his hand fumbled with something in the drawer—then came out with a cigarette.

"Alice, don't take this to heart," he said as he lit the cigarette with steady hand. "It's all a mistake. I can—"

Suddenly Alice leaped to her feet.

"Beatry!" she cried, her voice throb-

bing with anguish. "I don't care about the gambling! I don't care what you did about the necklace! I don't care if you are penniless! I don't care about anything—except that woman!"

Alice turned to her father. The tragedy in her face would have melted a heart of stone.

"Father! Tell me—that isn't true!"

Jim Aimes hesitated.

"No, little girl," he said huskily; "that part isn't true. But the rest—"

Right there Beatry Lansing made a tragic mistake.

"The rest," he snapped with sudden viciousness, "is all a lie too!"

Jim Aimes' head came up with a jerk. He took a quick step toward Lansing.

"You—damned—cur!" he ground out. "I would have saved her from the worst. But now—"

He swung around and faced the closet. "Come out of there!" he said.

The order came so unexpectedly that for an instant I could not believe that

Aimes was calling me. What part did he expect me to play in this affair?

Then I heard a stirring behind me. From the darkness at the far end of the closet came a woman's voice:

"Open that door, big boy!"

Mystified, I swung the door open, letting in the light. Her head up, the woman swept past me with a rustle of silk and a strong odor of perfume.

WITH a foreboding of serious trouble, I followed the woman into the library. At sight of me, Beatry Lansing gave a start of astonishment and dismay.

The woman had paused on Jim Aimes' right—between him and the desk. She was regarding Alice curiously, as if she had been wondering what sort of wife Lansing had. Although the woman was beautiful in a way, perfectly groomed and gowned, I remember thinking that compared with the pale little wife staring at her, she looked cheap and coarse.

Suddenly the woman turned to Lansing:

"Well, Beatie, old top, don't look so sick! This is all in the game, you know!"

Lansing said nothing. His face was livid, his clenched fists trembling; but his eyes were cool, calculating, as if he foresaw what was to come and was preparing to meet it.

"Wing Choy came to my apartment as you told him," the woman went on. "He said I was to fade for a while, and that he was to go to Chinatown and stay until you knew just what was up. I told him he could go to the devil as far as I was concerned—and shut the door in his face. Then—"

"Vera," Lansing broke in, "you needn't say any more. I understand. You have been paid—for your treachery."

"Why, certainly," admitted Vera, with a glance at Jim Aimes. "All in the game, aint it? I was getting bored with you, anyway. You—"

"Shut up!" Jim Aimes snapped. "You've said enough."

"Yes," said Lansing, "you have said enough. Alice,"—he did not look at her,— "I don't ask you to forgive me. All I ask is that you believe I mean it when I say that this is no fault of yours."

Alice said nothing, seemed unable to speak. Beatry Lansing leaned over the desk; and now his hand was steady as he crushed out his cigarette.

"As for you, Vera," he went on calmly, "I don't know what you got for betraying me. But now—"

As Lansing spoke, all of us looked at Vera. But when he hesitated, some instinct warned me. I turned—just as Lansing snatched a gun from the open drawer.

"*Now!*" cried Lansing. "You get what you deserve!"

And before any human being could have prevented it, Lansing fired.

Vera screamed, in terror and agony. Aimes and I, shouting something I do not recall, sprang at Lansing as he started to fire again.

Lansing leaped aside, putting the desk between him and us. Into his dark face had come that look I had seen before on the faces of men suddenly gone mad with pent-up hatred. With a savage curse he leveled the gun at Aimes.

There was another scream—the flash of a green gown—the roar of a gun. . . . Then, for a stunned moment, only the echoes of the explosion.

Mrs. Lansing lay on the rug, blood staining the front of her gown. Beatry Lansing was staring down at her in horrified dismay.

Suddenly he whirled and made a dash for the door. I sprang to catch him, but Aimes grabbed me by the arm, a strange expression in his gray eyes.

I FOLLOWED his gaze: Lansing had dashed into the bathroom. I saw him shut the door, heard the click of the lock. Then—a muffled shot.

Jim Aimes nodded his gray head. "The only decent thing he ever did," he said, and dropped on his knees beside Alice. "Phone for a doctor! But don't phone the police—yet."

I did as he wished, then went to where Vera lay on the rug, moaning. She was not seriously hurt, but would carry a hideous scar through the rest of her life, for Lansing's bullet had torn off part of her right cheek.

I fashioned a temporary bandage over the wound, then stepped to where Aimes knelt beside his daughter.

"You'll be all right soon," he was saying huskily. "And we're going home. Don't worry about—"

"Daddy," said Alice, "I'm not worrying about—this. I'm not worrying—about anything—except what you heard me tell this officer while you—"

Right there Jim Aimes stopped her with a kiss on her lips.

"Little girl," he said, "don't you know your old daddy is getting deaf? *I never heard a word you said!*"

REAL EXPERIENCES



Here five of your fellow readers tell of their most memorable experiences. (For details of this prize contest, see page 159). First, Mr. Mason, who was a sailor and a miner before he became a writer, vividly describes a strange episode in a Nevada mining-camp.

Chinaman's Chance

By **Arthur Mason**

TWENTY-EIGHT years ago there was a rush for gold to the hills of Nevada.

At this time I was prospecting around Barrel Springs, and my nearest source of supplies was Silver Peak, about twelve miles away. My grub was getting low, so I took my burro and went there.

Silver Peak was an old mining-camp that had died and been forgotten. There were still earmarks of its former days—in the old mining-dumps and tumble-down buildings.

And now a new generation of miners had brought the camp to life again, and Silver Peak opened its eyes on two saloons, a blacksmith shop, a general store, and a Chinese restaurant.

I put my burro in a corral and bought a feed of hay for him, then walked across from the corral to the restaurant. No one was in sight. The place smelled of opium-smoke. I rapped on the table with my knuckles, and pretty soon an old Chinaman hobbled out of the kitchen. He was so old he seemed almost petrified.

It seemed to me as if his cheekbones might puncture the yellow hide that covered them. There was a hollow in the back of his neck, deep enough to hold a hen's egg.

"Where do you come from?" he asked me. "What do you want?"

"I come from Barrel Springs."

He nodded. "Me savvy. You play poker?"

"Not much."

"You no savvy?"

"Oh, yes," I answered.

"What for you no play?"

"I have no money to play."

"Big poker game here tonight," he said. "One man sell him claim thousands dollars. He come today. Me play him."

I could smell the opium-smoke from his clothes now, and decided he was full of hop dreams, so I merely said:

"Let me have something to eat. I'm hungry."

"You like ham and eggs?" he asked.

"Yes, that'll do."

After while he brought the meal, and as he placed the plate in front of me, I noticed his thin hands and long tapering fingers.

He sat down on a chair opposite me. He seemed vaguely excited, as he vouchsafed:

"Me win tonight. Me go back China. Long time now, me no see China! Forty years."

A middle-aged man, with one arm missing, walked into the restaurant.

The old Chinaman got up hastily to meet him.

"Blake, he come?" he asked.

"No, not yet," answered the one-armed man. "But they're looking for him down there in the Red Star saloon. Three gamblers came a while ago from Goldfield."

"What for they come?" asked the Chinaman anxiously.

"Well, they heard that Blake got twenty thousand dollars for his claim that adjoins the Lane property. Bring me some ham and eggs, Wing."

THE Chinaman hurried back to the kitchen.

"Howdy, stranger," said the one-armed man to me.

"How-do!" I answered.

He came over toward me.

"Do you mind if I sit down at your table? I like to talk to people."

"Sit down," said I. "Who is this man Blake?"

"Oh, *him!* Well, he's all right, only he's a sucker at cards. He just can't keep away from poker. He's lucky in the hills, though. Got a hunk of money now, but maybe he'll lose it all this very night. They're all set to trim him. And Blake is a man you can't reason with. He will play poker, and when that's said, all's said. But Blake is a damned decent fellow. I've known him for ten years. He was an eye-witness to the last man I killed. I mean the one that shot this arm off me."

"So—that's how you lost your arm," I commented.

He nodded briefly.

"Yeah. Shot off."

"The Chinaman here—Wing, as you call him—seems to be a poker-player, too," I said.

"Yeah. Wing is a good poker-player. He's good in many other ways too. A man that needs a grub-stake can always get it from Wing. I owe him a couple of hundred dollars myself, but he'll get

it, sooner or later. I have a deal on now for free milling ore, and I guess I'll be selling it. When I do, Wing will be the first to get his money."

I grinned at him.

"Wing looks to me as if he wouldn't live a month," I said.

"Oh, he's lagging behind a bit lately, but he gets that way at times. If he should make a big winning tonight, you wouldn't know him tomorrow. He'll be as lively as a cricket, and he'll feed everybody chicken. Oh, I know Wing. Here he comes now with the ham and eggs."

The old fellow came shuffling in with the stranger's order.

AS I paid Wing for my meal, he said: "Res'urant close when Blake come. Open tomorrow, just samee."

"Good luck, Wing!" I said. "And I hope you win tonight."

I strolled down the dusty street to the Red Star saloon. The place was large and spacious. I walked up to the bar and rested a foot on the brass rail. There was no one behind the bar, but back where the tables were, a half-dozen men were on their feet pacing nervously around the floor space. I knew they were gamblers, from the pale indoor look of them. They were waiting for Blake the sucker, and his twenty thousand dollars.

I heard footsteps on the ceiling above me, then the heavy tread of boots on the stairway. A door opened into the back bar, and the proprietor of the Red Star saloon walked in. He was a heavy-set man with square shoulders, a kindly eye and a generous mouth.

He looked haggard, and his voice sounded weary as he asked me what would I have.

"A bottle of beer," I answered. "Won't you have a drink with me?"

"Yes," he said, "I will. I was going to take a drink, anyway. Things aint quite right with me. I'm worried. My wife, upstairs, has been trying to give birth to a baby for the past thirty-six hours, and nothing seems to come of it. I don't know what to do."

"Have you a doctor?" I asked.

"No, and I don't know if I can get one here for her. I sent a man with a fast team to Goldfield this morning for a doctor, but as the crow flies, Goldfield is thirty miles away. She's up there now alone with a squaw-woman. I can do nothing, but—it's hell to see her suffer!"

He poured himself a stiff drink of whisky.

"Well, here's luck, anyway!" he said, and drank.

I FELT sympathy for him. There was under his rough exterior a certain tenderness the like of which I hadn't met up with since I'd come to the hills of Nevada.

I glanced at the gamblers. Spider-eyed, they waited for their prey, and I wished there and then that Blake and his money were safely out of the hands of those sharks.

"Now," said the proprietor, "you have a drink with me, before I go upstairs again."

"I understand there's going to be a poker game here tonight," I said.

"Yes, there is," he answered, "but I have no heart for anything—only for her up there. I'd give all I possess if I knew she'd come out of it all right."

As evening approached, the prospectors began to come in from the hills. But as yet there was no sign of the man with the twenty thousand dollars.

The acetylene lights were lit. The gamblers sat around the poker-table, waiting.

I judged from the harrowed, anxious look on the proprietor's face that the physician had not come, and that his wife upstairs was still in labor. Nevertheless, he attended abstractedly to the business of serving drinks.

It was about nine o'clock when Wing entered the saloon.

The old Chinaman wore sandals, and a black satin coat beautifully embroidered on its front and sleeves. A black skull-cap covered the top of his head. His hands were hidden in the wide sleeves of his coat, and as he walked up to the bar, his sandals made a shuffling sound on the floor of the saloon.

"Blake no come yet?" he asked the proprietor.

The man shook his head wearily.

"Not yet, Wing."

SLOWLY the Chinaman edged his way toward the poker-table. He glanced at the gamblers, and the gamblers stared at him.

"You play tonight?" one of them demanded.

"Yes, I play," answered the Chinaman.

"The stakes'll run high when Blake gets here."

"Me savvy Blake." The Chinaman took a chair and sat down at the table to wait with the rest.

One of the gamblers sat shuffling a deck of cards; the noise that he made with them sounded like a snipe taking wing from a bog. He was a small man with a heavy red mustache, and there was something compelling about his steel-gray eyes—they gleamed as if they could call any bluff. His name was Patsy.

Those keen eyes were on the Chinaman now, searching his face to find the weak spot. In a few minutes he looked away and smiled, saying, "Will that fellow ever come?"

It was ten o'clock before Blake rode up to the saloon. The one-armed man had been on the lookout for him, and at once he hailed him:

"Hello, Blake! That you?"

"It is, Jim. I've been trying all day to get here. Just rode in from Tonopah. It's hell, getting real money out of some of those Easterners, but I finally got it, Jim! Got it right here—tied to the saddle behind me!"

BLAKE dismounted and untied a satchel from his saddle. "Take this horse up to the corral, Jim, and give him a feed of oats."

As Blake walked into the saloon, the crowd gathered around him and shook him by the hand.

"Well," said Blake, "every man in the house have a drink, gamblers and all. I'm sorry I kept you waiting. I said I'd come—so here I am, money and all. If any of you fellows are hungry, now's the time to shout."

He looked at the faces around him. "How about you, Tom?" he said to a tall lanky prospector.

"No hurry, Blake," said Tom. "I'll see you later."

I'd wondered why Blake had dared ride from Tonopah with all that money strapped to his saddle; but as I saw him in the light of the saloon I told myself he was perfectly safe. He looked as if he owned only the bleached khaki suit he was wearing. He hadn't even stopped there long enough to get a haircut or a beard trim. The hat he was wearing had holes burned in it from fanning the sagebrush fire to cook his meals. It would be difficult to guess his age. But his eyes attracted me to him at once: In them lay mirrored the romance of the hills, and many summers of

laughter had etched the corners of his mouth with pleasant lines. Evidently this man was the kind who knew how to be happy, whether with or without money.

Blake now flung forty dollars on the bar and said to the proprietor, "Ring up the change."

The gambler Patsy was taking him in with his camera eye. He wore a look of confidence, which seemed to say that he would be going back to Goldfield tomorrow, heavy of pocket!

Wing also was looking at Blake. His eyes looked as if they had been washed in belladonna. Back to China *he* was going again, after forty years!

WHEN the proprietor had served the drinks he rushed upstairs to his suffering wife. The doctor had not yet arrived, and the squaw sat by the bedside waiting stolidly.

The poker-players sat down at the table. Six, there were in all. Patsy took a seat where he could command a perfect view of Blake's face. The Chinaman sat on the left of Blake.

Patsy said, "We won't bother with chips. We'll play money instead."

"That goes with me," said Blake.

"And," continued Patsy, "while we're talking, we might as well settle another thing. Is it table-stakes only?"

"I'll play out of this satchel," said Blake, "as long as it lasts."

Patsy smiled and showed his gold-filled teeth. "That's what I like to hear," he said. He reached into his inside coat pocket and pulled out a wallet. "I'm playing four thousand dollars," he said, "—all I have."

Patsy's companions reached into their pockets and laid down thick wallets on the table.

Then Patsy spoke to the old Chinaman. "How about you?" he asked. "What are you playing?"

"Me savvy. Me play plenty." There was a cord around the Chinaman's neck with a canvas bag on the end of it. He lifted the cord over his head and laid the bag in front of him. Then he opened the bag and clawed out of it gold, silver and bills.

"All set," said Patsy. "Straight poker, and a square game. High spade deals."

The bar was deserted now, and the crowd was around the poker-table. The proprietor stood outside the saloon door, listening to the sounds that came through the night, straining to hear the

rattle of the wagon that would bring the doctor. . . .

The deal fell to the Chinaman. He ante'd a dollar. He dealt nervously, with his eye on Blake's satchel.

Patsy stayed, and raised it ten dollars. All stood the raise. Patsy drew one card. Blake looked at him. "Got something, hey?" he said. Patsy lit a cigar. When the cards came to Blake, he drew three. The Chinaman dealt himself two. Patsy looked at him. The Chinaman must have a set of threes. Patsy had two small pair. He looked under the eave of the card that was dealt him. It didn't help his hand. It was his bet. He couldn't afford to hesitate. Patsy bet a hundred dollars, and shoved it over into the pot as if it were nothing. His companions threw their hands into the discard. Blake had a pile of gold in front of him. He'd never miss a hundred out of it, but he hesitated; after a while he said, "Well, I call it, anyway." The Chinaman called the hundred-dollar bet, and on the show-down he won, on three sixes.

As Wing raked in the pot, his eyes were shining brilliantly. A cigarette hung to his dry lips. He counted the money and stacked it up.

Then Patsy dealt. He dealt swiftly, the cards falling in front of the players like snowflakes out of the sky.

An hour went by. No one seemed to suffer any great loss. Blake played cautiously. When he was called upon to show his hand, he had something in it.

Patsy decided that the only way to get Blake's money was to bluff him out of it. As for his companions, he knew where they stood. They were simply a means to play his hand. He had no fear of the Chinaman, for Wing had shown that he was no bluffer. By twelve o'clock Patsy felt that it was only a matter of time until he had cleaned Blake.

The game went on. Patsy was winning—betting five hundred and a thousand dollars with nothing in his hand. I felt sorry for Blake, as I saw him losing his money.

"He shouldn't play poker," I thought. "His money is a gift."

AT one o'clock that night the doctor came, covered with the desert dust. He laid his satchel of instruments down on the bar, and took a drink of whisky; then he hurried upstairs with the proprietor, satchel in hand.

I felt relieved. While the game interested me greatly, I was conscious of that poor creature upstairs waiting, waiting, for the slow, irrevocable working of nature.

At three o'clock that morning the silence of the desert filled the saloon. Had a pin dropped on the floor, it would have made a startling noise. There wasn't a sound, yet the place was as full of men as it had been in the early evening.

The silence came when thousands of dollars were in a pot on the table, and it was all in before the draw. Three players contested the pot—Patsy, the Chinaman, and Blake.

BLAKE dealt the cards. When the Chinaman looked at his hand he saw he held three aces, and he bet five hundred dollars. Patsy had three queens, and called the five hundred, raising the bet a thousand dollars. Blake looked long and carefully at his hand. He held a king high—practically nothing to go on. He hadn't bluffed once since the game started. He counted fifteen hundred dollars; then he counted two thousand dollars more.

"I'm raising the bet," he said, "two thousand." He pushed the money toward the center of the table.

The Chinaman's eyes danced. He held three aces. He was so excited that Patsy had to help him to count his two thousand that was pushed into the pot. Patsy called the bet, but didn't raise it back.

"Deal," he said to Blake.

"Cards, men?"

"Two," said the Chinaman.

"Two," said Patsy.

Blake laid what was left of the deck on the table.

The Chinaman stared at Blake.

"What?" said Patsy sharply. "You aint drawing any cards?"

"No," said Blake. "I'll play these."

It was not to be expected that the Chinaman would take the play with apparently a pat hand on the right of him. He passed, without looking at the two cards he had drawn. Time enough for that when he saw what Blake would do.

Patsy was of the same opinion, but he looked at his two cards. A pair of eights. He now had a queen full. "Pass," he said.

There was no hesitating about Blake. He had the right, because of the deal, to make it a showdown. "Men," he said, "I'm betting five thousand dollars."

And to the Chinaman he said, "You can get in for what's in front of you. We can make it a side pot."

The Chinaman trembled. His breath came in short quick puffs. The long nails on his fingers nibbled on the corners of his two cards that he had drawn. All eyes were on Wing. He squatted low in the chair to get a peep at the cards, and out of those eyes that had mirrored opium fantasies, he saw another ace. He gasped, and his head fell forward over his hands that covered the five cards.

"You're passing?" asked Patsy.

"Of course he's passing," said Blake. "Can't you see?"

No one took any further notice of the Chinaman. The face of Blake now held Patsy. He searched him with his steel-gray eyes. Blake sat there, sat like the stump of an old tree—as silent and as immovable.

Then it was that the silence of the desert rode into the Red Star. Minutes flew with wings on them. Still the silence; still the searching of Blake's face. Not a boot moved on the floor.

Suddenly from upstairs came a primitive cry. All eyes were raised to the ceiling—all but the Chinaman's. His head lay on his hands. Why didn't he raise his head to listen? . . . Well, that was his affair.

Finally Patsy spoke to Blake. "I'm not betting five thousand dollars. Take the pot, Blake."

Blake raked in the pot of thousands of dollars. "You had me beat, Patsy," he said. "But you didn't have the guts to call me."

He showed his hand. "Here is a king high for you."

Patsy's eyes snapped. "Whose deal is it?" he said.

"It's the Chinaman's deal."

Patsy grabbed Wing by the arm. "Wake up! It's your deal! Hurry!"

The old fellow did not move.

PATSY placed his hand under the Chinaman's chin.

"God, men!" he cried. "He's dead!"

Blake reached for the Chinaman's cards and turned them up. "Well, I'll be damned!" he exclaimed. "—If he didn't pass out with four aces in his hand!"

The proprietor came running down the stairs, and cried exultantly:

"Everybody in the house have a drink on me! I'm the father of a boy!"

He undertook to finish a dangerous race after the jockey had fallen—and nearly got away with it, too!

By **W. D. Smith**



The Steeplechase

“ and in the event of a rider of a horse being disabled his horse may be ridden home by any person of sufficient weight provided he be qualified according to the conditions of the race.”

SO reads Rule 170 of the National Hunt Rules, under which steeplechasing is carried on in England. It is a rule not generally known, but due to it I had an experience which I shall remember all the days of my life.

I had always taken a great interest in the steeplechases and point-to-point meetings in the north of England, riding occasionally in the latter races when they were held in my own district and I decided to make the trip to Liverpool to see the Grand National in company with a friend, George Atkinson. We got to Liverpool early on the day of the race and believing that we would see more of the excitement if we stationed ourselves beside one of the fences, we walked down the course a few minutes before the race was due to start.

The bookmakers were offering thirty-three to one against a horse called Patrick O'More, and as I'd backed him and won my money at a meeting near home, I risked a pound on him again. George laughed when I handed the pound to the bookmaker and said it was throw-

ing money away. At the back of my mind I thought so myself, but his scornful remark set us arguing and soon I found myself defending Patrick O'More as if he was mine. Even before the race had commenced I was thus vitally interested in Patrick's fortunes.

We took up a position at one side of a jump five feet high, about six hundred yards from the winning post. There are thirty jumps altogether on the National course, including a water-jump, and as none of these fences are less than four and a half feet high and some over five feet, the course is the world's most difficult test for a horse. Only one or two horses manage to complete the double circuit year after year, out of the thirty or forty which start. There were thirty-seven runners on this occasion and at last a roar from the stands announced that they were off. “Good-by to your pound, old man,” George laughed.

Far in the distance we could see the horses sailing over the jumps, but they were too far away for us to distinguish the colors. There were numerous rumors around to the effect that such and such a horse was down.

The Grand National course is oblong in shape and soon the field was thundering down the long straight stretch which

runs parallel with the Liverpool Grand Canal. They turned toward us at last; to my delight I saw Patrick O'More leading the field—and going so strongly that I couldn't help feeling I was going to win my money.

Approaching our jump, the jockey steadied the horse perceptibly and I believe now that this restraining action was the cause of the catastrophe. I think if he had let the horse stride freely at the fence and permitted him to take off at his own free will, Patrick O'More would never have fallen. Actually, the horse was thrown out of his stride just as he was preparing to leap. He wavered a moment, hit the gorse at the top of the fence and came down in one of the heaviest crashes I have ever seen on a race-course.

There were twenty or thirty of us watching and a quick, shuddering gasp went up as horse and rider came to earth. The jockey rolled right under the hedge, into the ditch at its foot. It was fortunate for him that he did so, it probably saved his life, for next moment the remainder of the field started coming over.

Police and ambulance-men ran to the jockey's assistance, attending to him with horses flying directly over their heads. He was too dazed to stand without assistance.

"Well, your pound's gone west this time, all right," remarked George as we watched the ambulance-men assist the jockey off the course.

I looked around and saw Patrick O'More standing a few yards away with the reins hanging forlornly in front of him. Usually when a horse falls he gallops on with the others—if he can. But Patrick O'More looked too dejected to continue.

"There's your hoss," said George facetiously. "Why don't you get on his back and go for a ride on your hero?"

THE rule which permits a horse to be ridden home by anyone able to make the weight flashed into my mind. Why not? I'd been used to riding horses all my life; why neglect this great opportunity? Patrick O'More was just waiting for some one to mount him!

"Damn, I'll do it, if I break my neck!" I exclaimed; and before I'd had time to think better of it I threw off my cap and coat and ran across to Patrick O'More. I threw the reins back over his head and vaulted into the saddle.

IT was a reckless thing to do and in a calmer moment I'd never have considered it, but sight of the horse standing there wanting only a rider "got me" completely. George said afterward that it was the thought of the thirty-three pounds I might win that caused me to lose my head—but it wasn't that. I wasn't thinking of such prosaic things as bets at that moment!

Patrick was off, the moment I was in the saddle. The feel of a rider on his back wakened him in earnest and he set off after the others at a great pace. I didn't feel in the least nervous—until I saw the water-jump right ahead! It was a far different type of obstacle from the kind I'd been accustomed to, and Patrick O'More was bearing down on it at a great clip.

I felt a severe squirming sensation in the pit of my stomach, and did something which at the time I wouldn't for worlds have admitted doing—I closed my eyes when we were five yards from that water-jump, and I didn't open them until we landed on the other side! And I really believe that if Patrick's original jockey had had the sense to do the same, he'd still have been riding the horse.

Anyway we were safely over the water-jump, with the packed stands on my right and the roar of a thousand voices in my ears. The others were two jumps ahead. Patrick got down to it in earnest. I knew that the others would all have to fall before we'd have a chance—but they *have* all fallen in the National on occasion! So to frenzied yells of, "Stick it, ould Oireland!" from those who recognized Patrick O'More's number on the saddle-cloth, we tore after the field.

At Becher's Brook three horses came down in a heap, reducing the field to five, besides Patrick. Just five! In my mind's eye I saw them falling one after the other until only Patrick was left standing. But I put that thought out of my head, or I believe I'd have brought the horse down out of sheer excitement.

Another horse fell at the Canal Turn. Six more fences to be jumped and four horses in front! Patrick was going like a machine, with a tremendous smooth, raking stride, and taking the jumps like a bird.

"Come on, old boy. We'll beat them yet!" I urged. I don't know whether he understood me, but he seemed to lengthen his stride and we tore down the Canal straight and flew over a couple

of fences like a tornado. We rounded the turn for home and in the distance I heard a roar like thunder from the stands.

Two more fences and the National would be over. Three horses were still up, racing about level, as far as I could tell. I have never been able to decide whether I knew it was hopeless and blinded myself to that fact, or whether I really thought there was still a chance of winning. Whatever it was, I urged Patrick on for all I was worth. And if ever there was a gallant horse it was Patrick O'More—despite the terrific fall he'd taken, he never faltered in that great raking stride of his.

Two more jumps and the race would be over. Patrick went "all out" at the first of them. He took off splendidly; the wind shrieked past my head as we flew through the air. Then we landed. George was at that jump, but I'd forgotten all about him. I was mighty glad afterward that I kept my eyes open while taking *that* fence!

The horses in front sailed into the air at the last jump just as we landed. Unless they'd all fallen on the far side we hadn't a chance—but I rode Patrick as I'd never ridden a horse before. The ground fairly skidded beneath his flying hoofs. Roar upon roar from the crowd rolled down to meet us. I crouched forward and talked incessantly to Patrick. I was race-mad.

Then Patrick cracked. He'd put up a marvelous show, and it was no wonder he gave way under the tremendous pace. We were a dozen yards from the last fence when I felt him falter under me. My experience told me instantly that I was on a beaten horse. Before I had time to think the fence was in front of us. I gave Patrick a free hand and hoped desperately for the best. He made a gallant attempt, and failed by a scant inch. His strength had gone, and his hind legs caught the very top of the thorn. . . . We plunged sickeningly to earth on the far side.

I CAME to my senses to find George bending over me. I staggered to my feet. Patrick O'More was standing in very much the same dejected attitude as before.

"That horse," I muttered, "deserves a pension!"

"And you," said George, "have lost a pound. And some one's pinched your hat and coat."

Treed!

Miles from a ranch-house, and treed by savage cattle, these girls had an experience that was thrilling indeed.

By **Ella Duncan**

I WAS raised in southeastern Oklahoma, on a cotton farm. There the women and girls worked in the fields, picking and hoeing cotton, and plowing, the same as the men.

When I was about sixteen, a neighbor girl who was my chum and I decided we preferred making our living some other way. We had several times gone to town with our fathers, and had had a glimpse of the fresh beauty of the girls there, and of their apparently care-free life—so we decided to break away from the cotton-fields and try to be like them.

Opportunely, a woman "peddler" came along—selling spices, extracts, and toilet-goods, and getting agents to take up the work in each neighborhood. It didn't take her long to discover that Othie and I were seeking a promotion from the cotton-field, and she was a good talker. In a few moments she had us seeing visions of pretty clothes we could buy from mail-order catalogues, and she made the work seem fascinating.

In the end Mother went to the cracked cream-pitcher on the top shelf of the kitchen safe, and took down the egg-money she had been saving for so long, to make the necessary deposit to turn me into a full-fledged agent.

In a few days two black hand-satchels, filled with smelly extracts, soap and powders came out on the rural mail route. The next day Othie and I took up the satchels and started down the road, on our first selling job.

We had planned to walk ten miles that day to a little country town, stay there all night with an aunt of Othie's, then the next day walk on fifteen miles more



to another little inland town, and stay a few days with another aunt of hers while we "worked" that "settlemint"—stopping at each house along the road as we went, and peddling our wares. Our business was not very thriving until we reached the first little town—about two hours before sundown—but from then until dark it took a decided jump, and that night by the dim lamplight, we found we were quite rich—in fact, had made almost a dollar and a half apiece!

The next day we rose with the sun and started down the dew-drenched road, impatient to reach the little town fifteen miles ahead. Those fifteen miles lay through ranch country and we knew there would be very few houses along them. Othie suggested that it would be a wise course to cut through the Maston ranch, in order to cut about five miles from our journey. I hesitated, because I liked the protection of the high barbed-wire fences between us and those long-horned steers in the ranch pastures. I was especially afraid of the vicious, lowing animals "Old Man" Maston had brought into existence by crossing the Texas long-horns with a bunch of imported Brahma cattle. Othie argued, however, that we could keep out of their sight in the thick underbrush, and if they did close in on us we could climb a tree. The sun had risen bright and

hot, and my feet were aching from the long walk the day before, so I finally agreed, and with bated breath followed her as she crept under the fence.

Several times cattle spied us and with low angry bawls called to others, but we always succeeded in dodging them in the underbrush. I soon discovered that Othie was not as afraid of that menacing bawl as she was of the thought that she might step on a snake in the weeds; if we came to a particularly heavy clump of weeds, she refused to go through and we had to circle around, while probably at the next heavy patch I would hear a steer thrashing around within and we would have to go around that one too.

Between those two fears, it was noon before we suddenly discovered that we were thirsty, hungry, exhausted—and lost! In circling the heavy patches of underbrush, we had lost our direction. We were not much frightened, because we had been raised in the woods and knew that with a few minutes' thought we would get our sense of direction back. Othie picked out a tall tree and climbed it, to see if she could find any familiar landscapes. She failed to find any such, but discovered a high bare hill that rose above the timber just in front of us. We decided to climb it, in order to find out where we were.

WE got to the top without thinking of the cattle, or being seen by them, but we hadn't any sooner reached there, than a herd grazing in a valley on the opposite side of the hill spied us and started toward us in a swift, lumbering gait, at the same time calling others with their angry bawls. It seemed that in half a second they were running from every direction toward that hill!

We ran for the nearest timber—only to find the underbrush alive with them, all thrashing and lowing, and running in every direction, looking for us. In the *mêlée* we became separated and I came to find myself safely in a big oak tree, with a pawing, bawling, milling sea of staring-eyed long-horns at its foot. But Othie was gone! I had visions of her trampled into the earth somewhere under those milling hoofs, and I began to scream at the top of my lungs. Those screams only seemed to anger the cattle more; their bawls became an engulfing wave of sound that drowned my voice out entirely, and froze my heart with terror. I finally discovered that by my remaining perfectly still their bawls

would be lowered and at times would cease entirely—but at the least movement on my part they rose in full volume again. During one of those breaks, however, I discovered another bawling mob farther over in the woods, and knew they either had Othie up a tree alive or on the ground dead.

There was nothing to do but sit still and hope they would leave; but as the afternoon wore on it became apparent they had no intention of doing so. They did quiet down though, and about sundown I heard Othie calling me. I tried to answer, but the sound of her voice started the hullabaloo all over again.

Though in terror lest I should fall, I climbed up as high as I could and tied my handkerchief to the highest bough I could reach, all the while being "bawled out" by that milling mob on the ground. During the next interval of quiet I called to Othie what I had done, and told her to look around and locate the tree I was in. It was ten or fifteen minutes later, after things had grown quiet again that she answered back that she was in an elm tree—and that the leaves were so thick that she just knew there were snakes in them!

WE relayed scraps of information back and forth until dark, then mutually agreed we would not say anything more and would sit perfectly still—maybe the cattle would go away. But they proceeded to bed down under the trees and once when Othie called that she *knew* she had seen a snake on a limb above her head!—they were on their feet in a flash, seemingly angrier than ever.

After dark the dew began to fall, and my hands and arms became numb with the penetrating cold. My whole body ached, my throat was dry from thirst, and I was very hungry. I had never been afraid of the dark, but I knew it held innumerable terrors for Othie. A dozen other fears assailed me, though—I was afraid that I would go to sleep in spite of all I could do, or that my arms would become so numb I could no longer hold on in my cramped position, and would fall down among that mad herd in the dark. That thought became too much for my taut nerves, and I began to cry—but when a sob escaped me, it was answered by a hostile low from the ground below!

The Maston pasture contained five thousand acres, and the ranch-house, on an infrequently used road, were at the

extreme southern edge of it. We had crawled under the fence about ten miles from that spot, but in our wanderings and circlings we had no way of knowing how far we were from it now. If we were out of calling distance of the house,—and we apparently were, because our screams the evening before had not been heard,—there wasn't any telling when we would be discovered, for although the cowboys rode the fences every day or so, they rarely had cause to ride anywhere else in the pasture at that season of the year. But I thought if we could manage to get through the night the cattle would be hungry and thirsty in the morning, and would go in search of food and water.

AFTER what seemed like years, that night passed; at daybreak the herd began to rise and search around for something to eat. I was almost afraid to breathe, for fear of attracting their attention, but Othie evidently forgot what effect our voices had on them, and she called to tell me that she had been too paralyzed with fear, all night, to speak. That was enough—in a few moments those straying cattle were again a compact, bawling mass under our trees.

That day became as hot as the night had been cold, and Othie called over about ten o'clock that she couldn't hold out any longer. I was so weak and dizzy that spots were dancing before my eyes, and it was an effort to keep from relaxing my hold around the tree. But I called back to scold her for even thinking of such a thing.

She became hysterical, and her screams brought that blood-curdling sound from a thousand angry throats again. But a thought struck me that our only hope lay in keeping those cattle bawling as loud and as long as we could; then in case anyone passed close enough they would hear them. I was so hoarse from screaming the day before that I couldn't call for help any longer. So I climbed down on a lower limb and removing my skirt, began to wave it just over their heads. When they showed signs of ceasing their bawls, I would shake the skirt!

At two o'clock I was still mechanically waving that skirt. I remember only, as through a haze, that men on horses suddenly appeared—and when they took me from that tree I fainted, for the first and only time in life.

Since then, "peddlin'" has never held any appeal for me, in the least!



A sailor swept overboard in a wartime collision at sea regains consciousness to find that he has swapped ships.

By **E. L. Bates**

Overboard Transfer

IT was back in 1917 when I was a member of the Rainbow Division that the most thrilling as well as the most terrible experience of my life took place.

I was just a youngster of eighteen or so, and had run away from my home in southern Georgia to enlist in the Army.

I was the "look-out" for submarines, on the ship *Von Struben*, when we were off the coast of Ireland. The two German ships *Von Struben*, and its sister ship the *Von Fleet* had been confiscated while in an American port.

Both ships were full of troops, and there were sixteen to eighteen ships in each convoy.

My ship, and the *Von Fleet* would change course every eight minutes in order to avoid ramming into each other.

One evening, as a crowd of us sat on the lower deck having smokes, we were startled by the sharp command: "Submarines! Scramble!"

Wild with excitement, we extinguished our smokes and made a rush to our cabins for arms. Just then there was a huge lunge, followed by a terrific blow—as the two ships, missing their course, rammed violently together. I was sent hurling into space. I felt myself spinning in mid-air—then the dark cold water drenched me, pulling me down.

Suddenly I landed against something hard and sharp, and lost consciousness.

Minutes or hours afterward (I never knew which) I awakened to find myself

lying almost on the edge of the deck. The ship plunged on; wave after wave swept over me, bringing me slowly nearer to the edge of the deck.

As a huge wave passed over me, I slipped over the deck. I tried to pull myself back, but I was weak, and a still larger wave swung me clear of the ship except for one clinging hand. I felt my grip giving way, as I slipped further down into the cold Atlantic.

I closed my eyes as my hand lost its hold on the ship—then it caught on something, and with every ounce of strength I held on, meanwhile reaching my other hand up in a surer grip.

I had caught a small piece of rope hanging from the deck. It might give way at any moment—but with the desperation born of facing certain death, I slowly pulled myself forward.

For the longest time, I hung by that little rope, expecting each moment to lose my hold and be drowned. But somehow, some way, I kept my grip; little by little I edged myself near enough to clutch the sides of the ship, and at last pulled myself on deck.

Saved by the grace of God! I felt dazed as I lay on deck, too weak to think. Later I pulled myself to my feet and stumbled inside, longing only for my bunk where I could rest. But as I reached the cabin, I was surprised and infuriated to see a strange fellow occupying my bunk.

"What are you doing in here? Get out!" I said roughly.

I must have been a sorry sight—my clothes were dripping water, and blood streamed from an ugly cut in my head.

The fellow made no move to leave; instead he asked me: "What are you doing here yourself?"

"Here—I'm in no mood for kidding! I've been struck in the head, and nearly drowned. I want to rest. I'm all in—so get out."

"You're either crazy or drunk! This is *my* bunk. Get going and make it snappy!"

He sprang to his feet, and started toward me. I caught him by the shoulder, trying to force him out. I was weak from my struggle in the water, but managed to give him a push, just as he gave me a crack in the jaw that sent me reeling for the moment; then I hit back and we were grappling like death.

By this time several other fellows had gathered around us. They soon had us separated and we stood glaring.

"This wild-eyed chap came in, and ordered me off my bunk, saying it was his—when I refused, he tried to force me out!" my opponent was explaining.

I felt exhausted and unnerved, and a severe pain—from the blow when my head had struck the ship—was throbbing in my temples; but my sense of injury was the only thing that seemed to matter just at the time.

I decided to appeal to the men. "Fellows, you all know me—and you know that this is my bunk! I—"

I stopped speaking, in dismay—for suddenly the realization flashed over me that these men were strangers to me!

Here a big fellow caught me roughly by the arm, giving me a shake. "Are you drunk or crazy? We all know Watson is in his own bunk. But we don't know you!"

I was seeing red by this time. As I hit him, I reeled against the wall.

A half dozen rough fellows caught and held me up.

"Since he wants to fight, we'll take him to the Captain. He'll put him in chains all right!" one of them said.

Imagine my surprise when I saw a stranger sitting in my Captain's place, wearing his uniform! "My God, am I really crazy?" I moaned.

"Captain, this fellow is either drunk or crazy," my captor stated. "He entered Watson's bunk and ordered him to get out, claiming it was his; and he's

knocked one man down, so we brought him to you."

"I'm not drunk. I'm not crazy. I had a bad fall in the water—and now, nobody seems to be on the ship that I knew before I was knocked senseless!" I cried helplessly.

Almost crazed with the sharp pain in my head, together with the strangeness of it all, my voice had risen to a shriek—and I felt sobs rising in my throat.

"Nobody believes me—but I'm *not* drunk!" I cried, bursting into tears.

I felt a steadying hand on my arm. "Buck up, soldier, and tell me all about it," said the Captain—and suddenly I felt more normal and sane.

"Now, what's your story? I'll believe you," said the Captain, looking at me keenly. Again a feeling of indignation swept over me.

"I was having smokes on deck just as the two ships rammed together; I was knocked senseless and — er — almost drowned," I began. "When I came back—all these strange fellows—" I stopped, feeling utterly at a loss to make myself understand, much less anybody else.

The Captain looked me over keenly, as he shot question after question at me.

The pain in my head had become unbearable. Suddenly weakness overpowered me and I felt myself losing consciousness, as the Captain said:

"Take this man to my stateroom. Give him every attention. He's neither drunk nor crazy—he's just a victim of circumstances."

HOURS later when I awakened, my head was bandaged, and the Captain was standing over me. He smiled, as he held out his hand, and said:

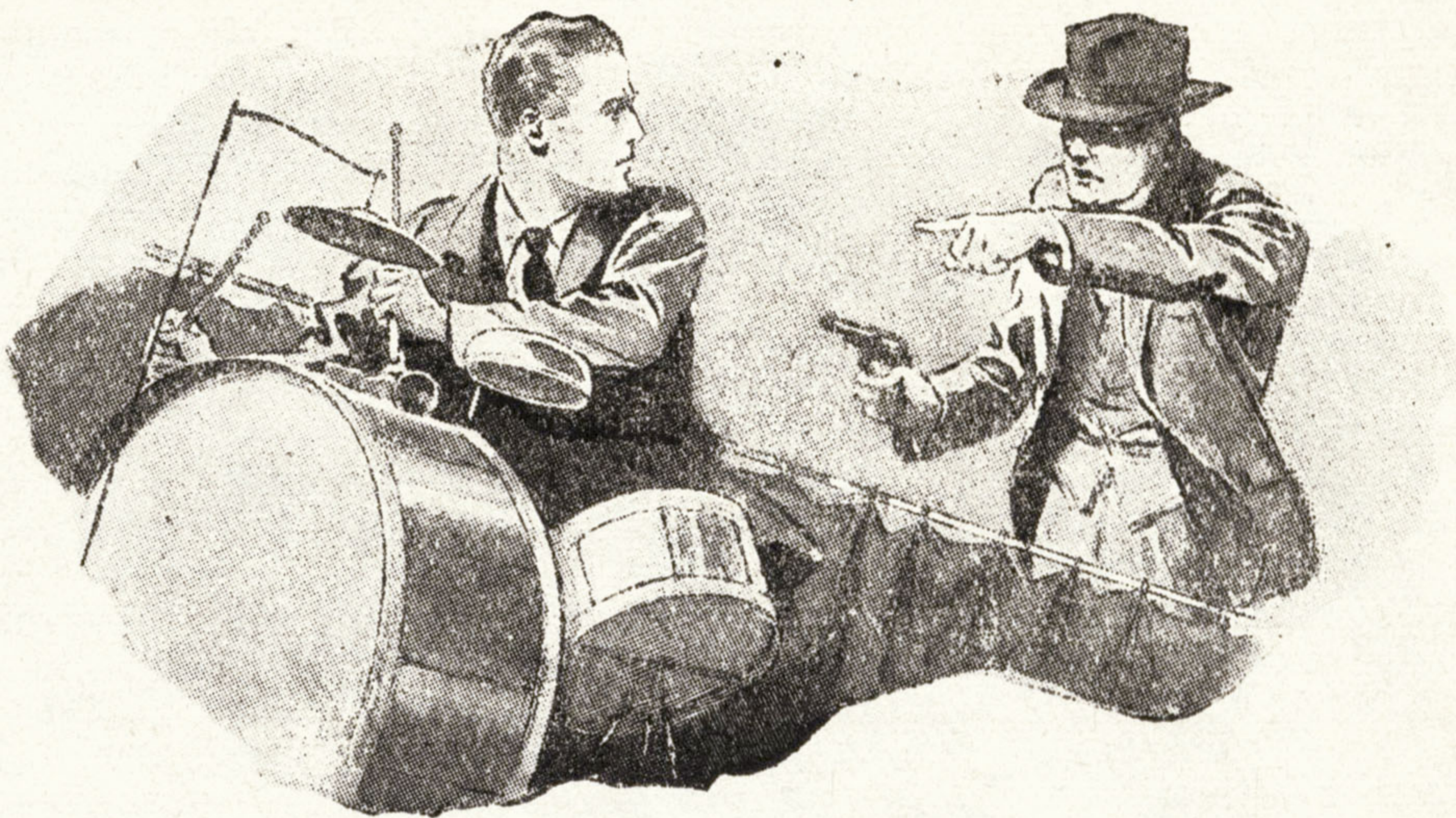
"Watson, and every man on board, owes you an apology!"

"What do you mean?" I asked breathlessly.

"I mean that when you and your fellow-soldiers were hurled into space when the two ships missed their courses and rammed together, they were killed, but you landed on deck of the other ship!"

"When you regained consciousness you were so dazed that you thought you were on your own ship. Both ships are built exactly alike. Of course you know that you are now on the *Von Fleet*."

It was hard for me to believe, but that is just what had happened. I had been saved from death by a miracle—while the other poor fellows had met instant death!



Death and the Drummer

An orchestra leader in a Southern theater has to handle a gun-play not on the program.

By **Frank Schindler**

THE man was calm and collected. There was nothing flustered about his actions as he walked into the crowded theater and informed Etwell that he was going to shoot him. There was no rancor in his voice; just a deadly earnestness.

This was "down South," in a town we may call Filliesburg. It was during the age when the automobile was coming out of its lumbering stage and people still rode in carriages behind beautiful horses.

I was musical director in the Majestic Theater—one of those alleged "majestic" show-shops made out of a couple of stores. It had a small stage; a flight of stairs led to this stage right behind the drummer. Instead of going down a hole, to leave the pit, we went up these six steps behind the drums.

However, the man who figured out the switches for the stage lights was a real genius. The idea was to save the wages of an electrician.

There were two switches; one for the footlights and one for the border lights and those around the proscenium arch. This genius had placed these switches in the orchestra pit. When a performer wanted a spotlight, it was my business to put the stage lights out. I would give the boys a down beat, take the fiddle

from under my chin, reach over and pull the switches. When the song ended, I reached up with a long leg and kicked them back.

This got monotonous, so I cut in on them and connected the wires to some tall push-buttons in a block of wood, and placed the block under my feet. I had one button rigged up so that I could douse both circuits with one push. That worked nicely. This description may be a trifle long but it's important.

I HAD a lad named Jimmy playing piano for me. He and I had been to the Big Town the Sunday previous to the Fourth of July. We had come back with a stack of "cannon" firecrackers, and we now started to celebrate the Fourth as it deserved. We were blasting the crackers off, when down the street came a smart carriage, in which was seated a beautiful young woman.

The carriage was drawn by a pair of black horses that pranced without seeming to touch the ground. Jimmy threw a cannon cracker into the street—he didn't notice the carriage—and it exploded with a mighty bang. The horses reared and were on the verge of bolting. The colored Jehu held them with all his strength, his eyeballs almost popping out

of his ebony face. I dashed into the street and caught them by the bits. I talked soothingly to them, stroked their noses, and they finally quieted down. Then I went around to the side of the carriage, hat in hand.

"I beg your pardon," I apologized to the young woman. "It was very careless of the boy."

"I'll forgive you this time," she smiled, and sized me up from shoes to dome. "I'd like to help you celebrate, myself."

I held out a cracker to her, but she declined it with a laugh.

"No, thank you," she murmured. "My horses might bolt. Home, Howard!"—to the driver. "This is no day to be on the street with these horses."

THE carriage drove away and Jim and I resumed celebrating, though keeping an eye open for skittish horses. Then a policeman came—an unreasonable, unpatriotic constable, who put an end to the noise. He adorned his prelude with much explosive language.

We regarded him with astonishment.

"Where have you been all this time?" I asked. "Don't they teach history in your schools, or didn't you ever go to school? We're celebrating the Fourth, the natal day of this great and glorious republic, this great land reaching from rock-ribbed Maine to sun-kissed California; that great day back in 1776 when John Hancock and the rest of the boys signed the Declaration of Independence, that memorable document that will stand until—"

"Until hell freezes over," the copper laughed. "If you're making a speech, you're a little too soon and the speech-making will be done in Henry Clay Park."

"Well, what's all the noise about?" asked Jim. "Can't we celebrate?"

"Not here," the copper affirmed.

"This is a fine simp burg we're in!" exclaimed Jim, glaring at the officer. "I quit! Here's a man in a uniform and he hasn't any patriotism!"

It was the copper's turn to get indignant. "Oh, haven't I! I got plenty of that! All I know, there is an ordinance against it. You may mean well, but you'll have to cut it out."

"Well, it's a simp idea!" insisted Jim. "And this is a simp burg! My dad fought in Cuba, Granddad was with Grant, and my great-grandpap was with Scott in Mexico. Yah! I should live in such a simp burg! I quit!"

Quit he did! But his reason for so doing was simply because he was homesick. I, being more versatile than the one-man stage crew we had, moved the piano into the middle of the pit and went right along playing shows without a violin.

Jim had hardly left when Harry, the drummer, had a hankering to go out with a minstrel show.

"Go ahead," I said. "If you think you'll get fat on one-night stands, I won't stand in your way."

The reason I said that, I had had a letter from a drummer in a town in Indiana, telling me what a "whale" he was on the percussion nuisance. I wired him, at Harry's expense, to come with his drums and the rest of his instruments.

Etwell came in the next day. All four of us took a good look at him while he set his drums up in the pit, alongside of the stairway. The verdict was unanimous. He wasn't only handsome; his chiseled face would have been a credit to Adonis.

"Believe me, boy," remarked the cornet-player, a hard-boiled veteran who had put in six years in Alaska honky-tonks, "if I had a pan like that guy, I wouldn't waste my time drubbin' a drum! I'd go into pictures. You don't need to act, with a face like that!"

But Etwell, in spite of all his manly beauty, his trick college clothes and funny hats, was a good scout and, more to the point, he knew his drums.

EVEN before the cannon-cracker incident, I had seen the handsome young woman occupant of the carriage. The first time I had seen her was when I was leading the show with the violin. She sat behind me and in resting her foot on my chair, had dug her toe into my back.

I reached behind me without turning. My hand closed over a slim ankle and moved her foot over.

"I beg your pardon," she murmured.

"You should have brought a footstool," I informed her gravely, and took a good look at her.

This was during the second night show. When we finished the "chaser," she said: "Would you like to take a walk?"

"No," I declined, "I wouldn't. I have a very important engagement with a musical composition that needs my immediate attention."

"Then some other night, perhaps?" she suggested.

"Perhaps," I grunted, which didn't mean anything.

I could see that my refusal to walk with her piqued her. I was a new species to her, I guess.

I saw her after that in different parts of the theater, and she always had a warm smile for me. However, I had a girl back in Chicago—the one I have still; I married her—and I wouldn't have fallen for Cleopatra or the Queen of Sheba.

The next time she sat down in front was when I had the piano in the middle of the pit. She told me I was clever.

"Oh," I said nonchalantly, "there is no end to my cleverness. I do all that hard stuff—juggle dishes, eat pie with a spoon, shoot craps—everything."

SHE thought that was funny. "Won't you come and play for me, sometime?" she asked.

"Sometime," I answered noncommittally. I looked hard at her left hand and she followed my gaze. Then she slipped a wedding-ring from her finger and dropped it into her bag.

"That doesn't mean anything," she said. Then she looked at Etwell.

"Where did you get the handsome drummer?" she queried.

"That's just it," I informed her. "I just got him, he's a good one, and I'd like to keep him a while. You can try to kid me, but leave my drummer alone!"

Then she commenced flirting with Etwell. Of course, he had good vision. I noticed this.

"Listen," I said to Etwell over the bass drum; "you can do whatever you darned please outside, but while you're in here, keep your mind on your work!"

Some days later she came down the street in her carriage, behind the two high-stepping equines. She saw me and asked the colored driver to stop. She gave me a "come-hither" smile and beckoned to me. I tipped my hat but didn't move. She spoke to the colored boy and he pulled up to the curb.

"Won't you ride with me?" she asked.

"Really, I would consider it a great pleasure and a compliment, but I don't think I will. Why not get Etwell? He is better-looking."

"Possibly; but you're such a whimsical fellow," she laughed. "I know I'd enjoy talking with you."

"No doubt," I ruminated. "But your husband may not think I'm so confidently whimsical. I have excep-

(Continued on page 158)

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tionally good health, and I'm never careless with it."

"Oh, my husband is in Saratoga, New York," she said. "He's been there for over a month."

"You can say for me that he's a fine chump," I returned blandly. "If I had the good fortune to have you for a wife and business called me anywhere, I'd take you with me."

"The trouble with you is you're afraid," she baited me.

"Ah-hah," I drawled. "And have good sense! Guess I'll amble along. I surely enjoyed our little chat. Good day!"

After that, she still spoke to me, but Etwell got all her smiles. She wanted some one to amuse her, so Etwell had to do. He was highly intelligent in a musical way, but otherwise he was just dumb enough to shove a foot in where angels would have feared to tread.

I wanted to know what this was all about. I made inquiries about her and learned that her father had given her hand in matrimony to an old race-horse owner, to square his racing debts. She was a chattel, bought and paid for to uphold the alleged family honor. She was placed in the position of being tied to a man whom she didn't love, and didn't see often enough to learn even to admire him, assuming he had any admirable qualities. He contended that he loved her, but he had more love for his horses, which he followed from track to track. She was merely a pretty embellishment in his home, with no one for company except a lot of colored servants.

HOWEVER, Etwell was much in her company and rode in her carriage. Perhaps she wanted to find out whether such didoes would have any effect on her husband. There was nothing underhanded about her; she carried this harmless flirtation with Etwell right out in the open, where every person could see it. In a big town, where people don't even know their neighbors, nothing would have been thought of it. Here, it was something on the verge of scandal, and just one of those things that aren't done.

I tried to give Etwell a few words of good advice, and he only got peeved.

"I do my work," he asserted.

"You bet," I agreed.

"And I'm giving you satisfaction?"

"Nothing else but."

"Well, that lets me out, doesn't it?"

"All right, kid," I shrugged. "Pick out the spot you want to be buried on

and make arrangements with a good undertaker. Any particular style of casket you'd like?"

"Apple-sauce!" scoffed Etwell.

ONE day the cornet-player and I stepped into a tavern to get a glass of cold buttermilk. The copper who had stopped the Fourth of July celebration was in the place, tipping over a *seidel* of amber mead.

"Hello, Shindy; how's Bert?" he greeted us. "First time I ever saw musicians drink buttermilk. That ought to go good on a hot day."

"Why not?" said I. "It combines food and drink."

The copper nodded, closed the lid of his stein, and said, "Oh, by the way, you're going to lose a drummer."

"I am?" I asked inquisitively. "How's this?"

"Well, the girl's husband is back. People have been talking. Better tell him to get out of town, if he don't want to go in a box. We can't watch everybody. If I know anything about that old duffer, he'll get him, sooner or later."

"Cheerful news," I commented. "I've warned the darned fool, but he wouldn't listen to me. Thanks for the tip. I'll tell him."

I told Etwell. He only jeered at my warning. I shrugged my shoulders; it was his funeral, not mine.

That same night we were playing for a pair of slapstick comedians. They were out "in one" and were exchanging old wheezes and pounding each other with rolled-up newspapers. The audience howled at their squibs.

At the height of this hilarity a man of about fifty years of age came down the right-hand aisle. He looked like any other late comer looking for a seat. There was nothing hurried or any fluster about his appearance. He had a duty to perform and was going to do it calmly. He came down with a calm nonchalance, stopped before Etwell, produced one of those flashy dueling pistols, toyed with it, and then pronounced his sentence:

"My friend, if you know how to pray, I'll give you a chance to say your prayers; because, when you say 'Amen'—*I'm going to kill you!*"

The audience knew the man and seemed to be under the impression that this was no idle threat. A deathly stillness fell over the house. Etwell's face was drained of all color.

(Continued on page 160)

Our Prize Offer

For Stories of Real Experience

IT has been said that there is material for a novel in every person's life. Whether this is true or not, we do believe that in the lives of most of us some experience has occurred sufficiently exciting to merit description in print. With this idea in mind we shall be pleased to receive and to print true stories of real experience, running from one thousand to four thousand words each. For each of the five best of these received each month we will pay, according to our appraisal of its length and strength, \$50 or more.

In theme the stories may deal with adventure, mystery, sport, humor,—especially humor!—war or business. Sex is barred. Manuscripts should be addressed to the Real Experience Editor, the Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. Preferably but not necessarily they should be typewritten, and should be accompanied by a stamped and self-addressed envelope for use in case the story is unavailable. A pen name may be used if desired, but in all cases the writer's real name and permanent address should accompany the manuscript. 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. As this is a monthly contest, from one to two months may elapse before you receive a report on your story.



This is real money

"Today I received a check for \$20.00 for a story. Another I sold for \$34.00. Not bad for a beginner, is it? The other day I counted up just how much I have won on advertisement contests. It amounted to \$1,620.00."—Mrs. L. L. Gray, 579 E. McHarg Ave., Stamford, Texas.

What makes WRITING ability GROW?

For a number of years, the Newspaper Institute of America has been giving free Writing Aptitude Tests to men and women with literary ambitions.

Sometimes it seems half the people in America who are fired with the desire to write have taken advantage of this offer to measure their ability.

What the tests show

Up to date, no one that could be called a "born writer" has filled out our Writing Aptitude Test. We have not yet discovered a single individual miraculously endowed by nature with *all* the qualities that go to make up a successful author.

One aspirant has interesting ideas—and a dull, uninteresting style. Another has great creative imagination but is woefully weak on structure and technique. A third has a natural knack for stringing words together—yet lacks judgment and knowledge of human behavior. In each case, success can come only after the *missing links* have been forged in.

Here, then, is the principal reason why so many promising writers fail to go ahead. Their talent is one-sided—incomplete. It needs rounding out.

Learn to write by writing

NEWSPAPER Institute training is based on journalism—continuous writing—the sort of training that turns out more successful writers than any other experience. Newspaper-trained writers are numbered not by dozens but by hundreds.

One advantage of our New York Copy-Desk Method is that it starts you writing and keeps you writing in your own home, on your own time. Week by week, you receive actual assignments, just as if you were right at work on a great metropolitan daily.

All your writing is individually corrected and criticized by veteran New York newspaper men—editors who have had years of experience "breaking in" new writers. They will point out those faults of style, structure or viewpoint that keep you from progressing. At the same time, they will give you constructive suggestions for *building up* and developing your natural aptitudes.

In fact, so stimulating is this association that student members often begin to sell their work *before* they finish the course. We do not mean to insinuate that they sky-rocket into the "big money," or become prominent overnight. Most beginnings are made with earnings of \$25, \$50, \$100, or more, for material that takes little time to write—stories, articles on business, fads, travels, sports, recipes, etc.—things that can easily be turned out in leisure hours, and often on the impulse of the moment.

For those who want to know

If you really *want* to know the truth about your writing ambitions, send for our interesting Writing Aptitude Test. This searching test of your native abilities is free—entirely without obligation. Fill in and send the coupon. Newspaper Institute of America, 1776 Broadway, New York.

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Send me, without cost or obligation, your *Writing Aptitude Test* and further information about writing for profit, as promised in Blue Book, October.

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One comedian stood with upraised arm, ready to strike his partner with a club of paper. The other stood with his mouth agape. I can still see him. A woman sobbed and another woman to the right was tearing a palm-leaf fan with her teeth, while her eyes bulged out of her head. A pasty-faced man was snapping shut and opening the lid of a watch. The cornet-player, that graduate of the Alaska dance-halls, who had seen enough sudden death to fill volumes, regarded the man curiously. The clarinet-player was sucking on a new reed and almost swallowed it.

All those things my roving eyes took in. I lived in a world of manufactured drama, but here was the genuine article in the making. All my nerves bunched up and I moved my foot toward the block under my foot. Etwell saw the movement and I could read the prayer in his eyes.

THE house lights were out, as is customary in a theater. I stepped on the button under my foot and all the stage lights blinked out.

Behind Etwell were the steps to the stage. He must have made all six in one jump. I heard the door slam, then the heavy stage door thump. Then I stepped on the other button and the lights flared up. The man blinked his eyes, looked in astonishment at the vacant chair, and then glowered at me.

"Did you put those lights out?" he demanded, and I nodded my head, wondering what he was going to do about it. "I ought to shoot *you!*" he added sullenly. "You called me a chump!"

"Indeed?" I asked. "Go ahead,"—and I turned my back on him.

"You got a hell of a lot of nerve!" he grated. "Well, I don't shoot men in the back." He tapped my shoulder with the muzzle. "Listen." I turned my head. "Tell that fellow if he remains in town, he will get the contents of—*this!*"

"Yours of even date received and placed on file," I wheezed.

He nodded with a grim smile, pocketed his hardware and started up the aisle.

"Next act!" I yelled aloud. "Bring on the women!"—and I swung into "Dixie" and turned the tremendous tension into a laugh, while the two relieved comedians on the rostrum executed a comedy drill, like two wooden soldiers.

There was a train north in the early hours of the morning. Etwell had been scared so badly he wouldn't have remained there for all the gold in the world. The cornet-player, I, and a couple of coppers saw him off and bid him *bon voyage* to where the candlelight gleams through the sycamores on the banks of the Wabash, far from pistol-toting old gents.

"You're a hell of a guy!" Etwell complained to me. "Why didn't you tell me the woman was married? Why didn't you give me a little good advice—you're older than I am and have been around more."

"Yeah!" I grunted, staring at him with a desire to punch his nose; and in those days, when I clunked one of his kind, they stayed clunked!

"Well, I sure got a thrill out of it, anyway," he came back.

"Yeah, you would have received a damned sight bigger thrill had that old devil plugged you through the heart," I responded. "Well, good-by and good luck—and get your brains renovated! It's a goofy world, and it's guys like you make it that way! So long, simp!"

The train moved out, and one of the coppers gave me a sour smile.

"That's gratitude," he offered.

"Aint it the truth?" I grimaced. "I save his hide and he bawls me out for not giving him good advice; and that's what I *did* do! I have a premonition that something else is going to happen. Well, I got to shoot out a telegram."

I went into the station and sent a telegram to Harry,—who had written complaining that he was fed up on one-night stands,—telling him to come back to work. Then I went home, to catch up on some sleep.

ABOUT ten o'clock the landlady roused me out and said I was wanted on the phone.

It was the young woman, telling me that her husband had died of heart-failure and she wanted the band for his funeral. Well, she buried him in the style befitting a man of his standing in the community, and inherited a big bale of bonds, a big bank-balance, and a racing stable. She bought the show-shop in which I worked—and I got fired, for reasons I leave to the reader to deduce.

She married Etwell.



RODGERS of the Red Sea! Few claimed to have set eyes on this strange white man who could live among the Arabs, think like the Arab and even fight like the Arab. "A Robin Hood of the desert," some one had once named him; and there had even been strange stories of brigandage on his part. Then he became one of the British Intelligence Service. And whenever stories were told of Lawrence, of St. John Philby, of Bertram Thomas, inevitably some adventure of Rodgers of the Red Sea would be related to cap them all.

The first adventure of this Wolf of the Desert, will be ably described by William J. Makin in our next issue, under the title:

"The Woman of Antioch"

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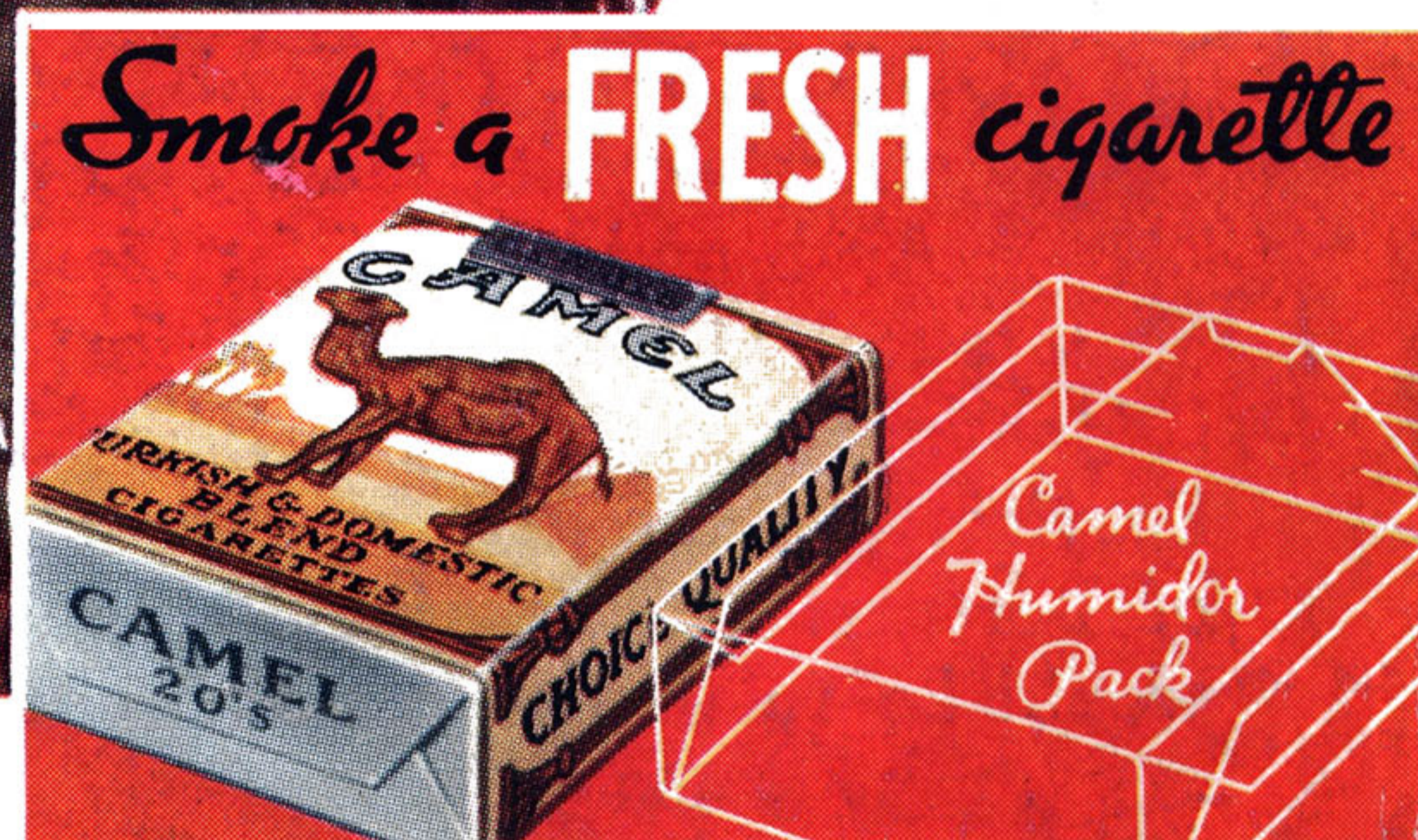
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