# BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

December

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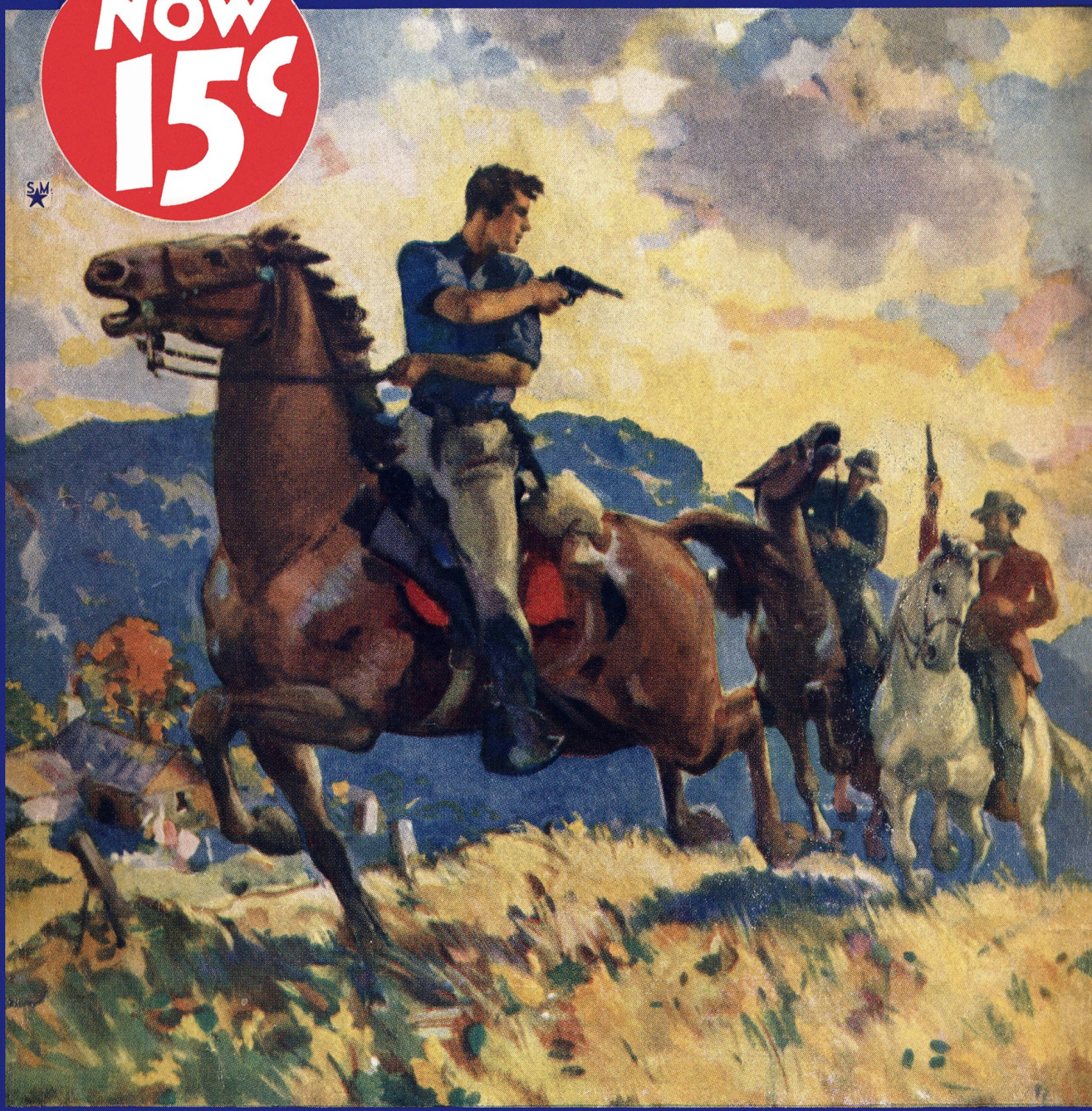

The GAME of DEATH • The DESERT of SINGING SANDS

## When Worlds Collide

by Edwin Balmer and Philip Wylie

Edgar Rice Burroughs'

## TARZAN

Cash Prizes for Real Experiences

# *The Game of Life*

ELSEWHERE in this magazine appears a story, "The Game of Death," in which a company of people are asked to choose which one of their number shall give up his life to save the others. They attempt, by appraising each other's worth, to decide the question on its merits. And in the face of conflicting theories and codes and prejudices, they find the task impossible—until tragedy steps in to force the issue. It is a fascinating story none the less; and it provokes inquiry as to how much life (and fiction, which mirrors life) deals with conditions, and how much it is concerned with theories.

"There's nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Not wholly true, of course—one must be a philosopher stoic indeed to think away hunger or pain or bereavement. Yet how many of life's struggles and perplexities do spring from mere thinking rather than from facts? How often has a conflict of mere theories *(Deutschland über Alles!)* sent men by the millions to die on the battlefield?

It is interesting to observe, as one reads the magazine through, how fiction reflects the fact that thought is indeed the seed of action—not only in "The Game of Death" but elsewhere: in "Mountain Men," where an exaggerated code of honor explodes in murder, and on a feather-light provocation starts a little war that kills men just as dead as did the Battle of the Marne. In that much-discussed novel "When Worlds Collide," where the "survival of the fittest" theory is invoked to make possible the escape of a few from what seems universal catastrophe. And elsewhere through the book—even in the real experience stories, sometimes—it is the conflict of ideas no less than the collision of facts that provokes the swift dramatic action essential to a good story.

*—The Editor*

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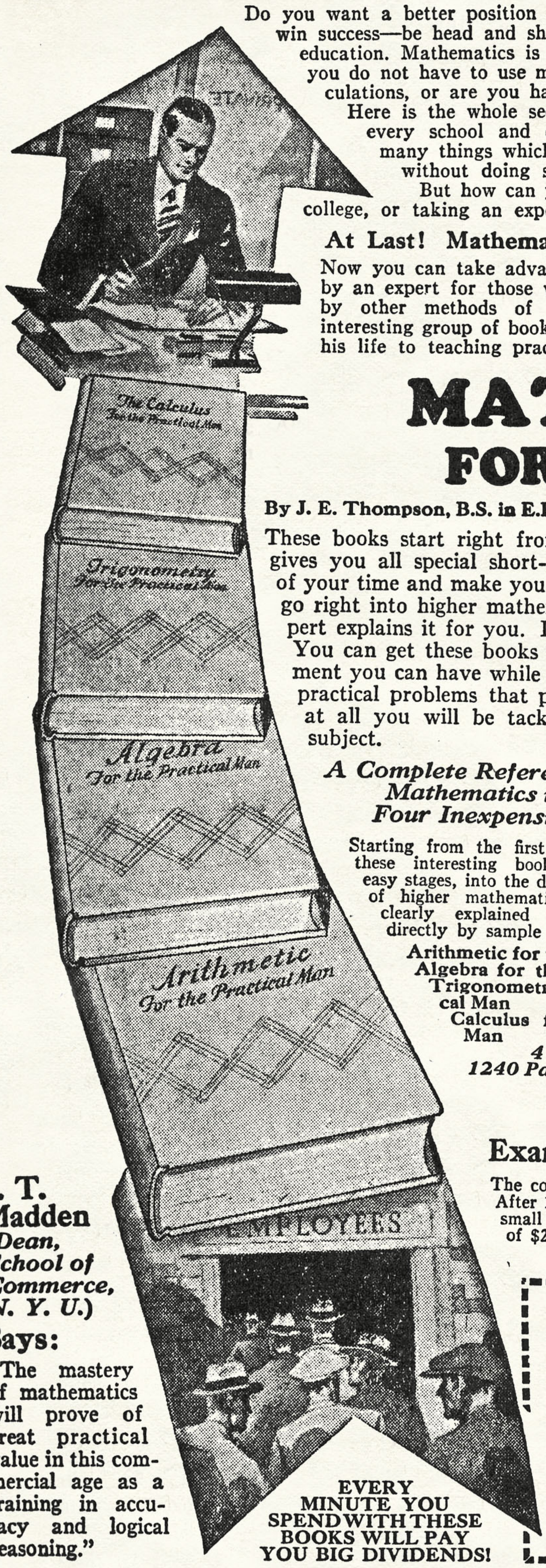


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# BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

DECEMBER, 1932 VOL. 56, NO. 2


## *Deeply Interesting Short Stories*


**The Game of Death** By Roy Chanslor 6
A conspicuously unusual story by a writer new to this magazine.

**The Desert of Singing Sands** By William Makin 18
A desperate adventure of the Wolf of Arabia.

**The Sportsman's Scrapbook** By Ewing Walker 31
About the woman prize-fighters of an earlier day.

**The Bamboo Jewel** By H. Bedford-Jones 56
Events happen swiftly in this story of a mine-manager in China.

**The Clue of the Two Black Masks** By George Barton 65
A detective story no less interesting because it is true.

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An epic of early days in the West.

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What happened when a stranger star threatened the world with disaster.

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Exciting exploits of fiction's premier adventurer.


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The story of an earnest little war in the Kentucky mountains.


## *Prize Stories of Real Experience*


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A war-correspondent writes of news-gathering under fire.

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A fine chronicle of courage in the face of great danger.

**A Call in Alaska** By Mrs. Howell Parker 155
A lady of the North pays her social obligations under difficulties.

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**Cover Design** Painted by Joseph Chenoweth


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Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine
DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

Published monthly, at McCall St., Dayton, Ohio. Subscription Offices—Dayton, Ohio. Editorial and Executive Offices—230 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. The BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE—December, 1932, Vol. LVI. No. 2.


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Entered as second-class matter, November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Subscription Price, $1.50 per year. Canadian postage 50c; foreign postage $1.00. For change of address, give us four weeks notice and send old address as well as new.


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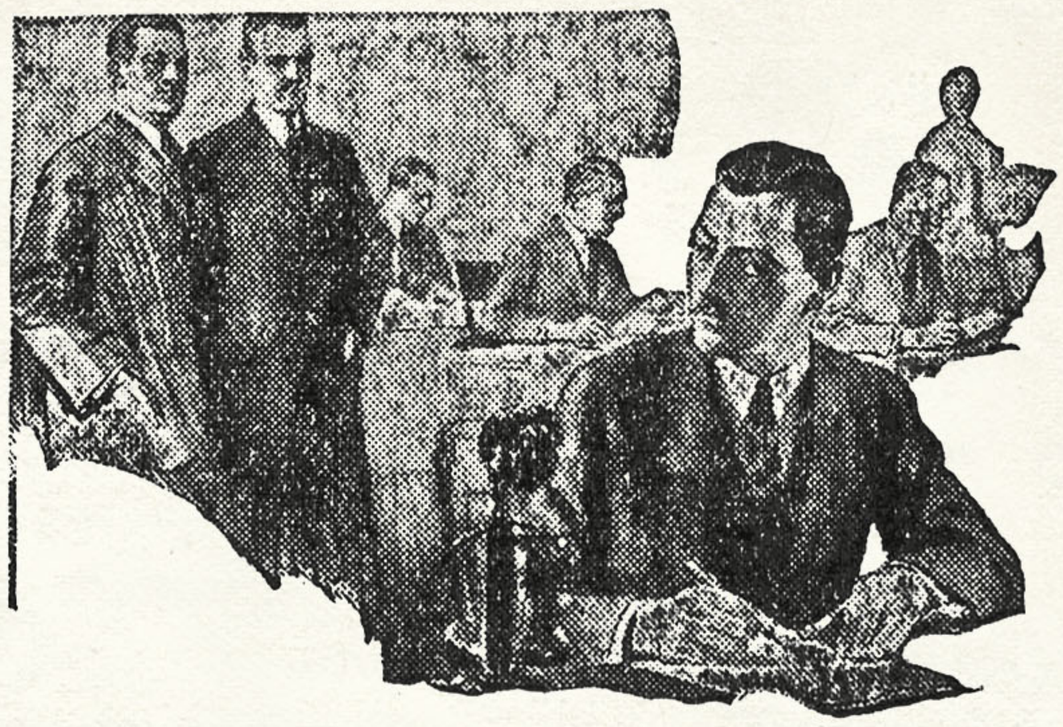

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of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE published monthly at Dayton, Ohio, for October 1st, 1932.

State of New York, County of New York, ss.

Before me, a Notary in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared John D. Hartman, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Assistant Treasurer of The McCall Company, publisher of The Blue Book Magazine, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

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*Why don't you write?*

Stephen Drake, the inventor.

# The Game

***The extraordinary story of a daring game that was played for keeps against an implacable antagonist —by an able writer new to these pages.***

THE discussion which led to the game of death was begun innocently enough by the host himself as he sat with his house guests at luncheon that bright spring Sunday in the huge many-windowed combination dining- and living-room of that fantastically modern house he had built himself on the lonely country hillside.

It was a house which was a fitting monument to the life-work of Stephen Drake. Too perfect, too utterly mechanized for the ordinary person, it was like one of those monstrous model dwellings of the future one encounters in expositions—and it was perfectly suited to its creator.

For forty years Stephen Drake had tinkered and wrought, perfecting those mechanical contrivances, those innumerable and absurdly efficient gadgets, which went to make up this house which bore such abundant testimony to his genius for practical invention.

Now at sixty, wealthy, famous, honored, his work done, he could look back on time well spent for himself and his fellow-man, and enjoy his leisure and the company of his friends—of whom the nine with him that day were prime favorites.

They were persons of some importance, although that was not why Drake liked them. They were a friendly company, despite the emotional cross-currents which eddied about them, and he was warmed and stimulated by them. As for the others, they were both amused and frequently a little touched by his eccentricities:

There was Huxley Gaunt, tall, loosely-built, assured, the great bio-chemist, pride and hope of the Lafitte Foundation, a man who at something under forty was accounted one of the three foremost men in his field.

At his left sat Terrence Kane, the playwright, blond, lean, bored and lazy, interrupted in his conversation with the lovely lady across the table, Diana Faraday the actress, who so charmingly adorned his current comedy success at the Empire.

Diana was at the full glory of her beauty and fame, the woman Huxley Gaunt loved in his cool undemonstrative fashion; that Lane Andrews, the young California poet worshiped; that Maurice Mann, the painter, desired with a hopeless, resigned passion, a passion which he never tired of dramatizing.

Andrews, twenty-one, eager and sincere, sat on one side of Diana; Mann, the self-consciously moody brooding man of forty, on the other, ever devouring her with his dark Hebraic eyes.

Then there was Dr. Peter Carle, the surgeon, a quiet man of forty-seven; Frank Norman, the architect, forty-two, sybarite, voluptuary, whose florid face and soft body belied the brain of steel responsible for the stupendous International Building; and finally Gaunt's younger brother Wesley, a mechanical engineer, and his wife Anne, mother of two beautiful children. . . .

For no particular reason, except that it was prominently in the news of the day, Drake began to talk about the sinking of a submarine in Long Island Sound and the rescue of the crew at the sac-

# *of Death*

*By* ROY CHANSLOR

**Illustrated by A. E. Briggs**

**Huxley Gaunt, the scientist.**

rifice of his own life by the young commander of the vessel.

The men were shot through one of the torpedo-tubes, one by one, to safety, until only the young commander and one other man were left. The commander had then forced the other into the tube, shot him to the surface, and stood by alone to await his certain death by suffocation.

"What an ass!" Huxley Gaunt said, his lips twisting in his characteristic sardonic smile.

"I think it was perfect," objected his brother Wesley. "It's the kind of high courage which makes one proud to be a man."

"High courage?" said Huxley. "I call it criminal sentimentality."

There were a few mild unexcited protests; and Wesley shrugged, smiled, and said it was like Huxley to say that, but he really didn't believe it for a moment. But quite seriously, Huxley insisted that he did.

In his quiet, even voice he said that this was a typical case of "emotional stupidity." The commander, he said, had not been ruled by sound reason, but by a kind of hysteria. He was probably the ablest man aboard the ship, the one whose death could least be afforded—in other words, the one most worthy of living, since comparative usefulness was the only rational criterion for such fitness. That being the case, he actually had no right to make the gesture of sacrifice. He was being traitor to the best interests of his kind.

"And what would you have had him do?" asked Stephen Drake.

"The rational course is obvious," said Huxley. "As commander, he should have seen to it that the most valuable, the most important men of his crew were saved. He himself, in all likelihood, was most important, in the real scale of values; at least, he was one of those whose rescue was imperative in the name of good sense."

"Then he should have been the first to be shot to the surface?" asked Drake.

"Not at all," said Huxley. "As commander, he had certain responsibilities. He should have supervised the rescue of the other men, down to the point where there were only himself and another left. Then he should have taken his place in the tube."

"It sounds rational enough," said Drake.

"His sacrifice is bad human economics," said Huxley.

"Perhaps," said Drake. "I don't know. But I don't think that any man, under such stress, would react with such cool and objective rationality. I feel that any civilized man would be guided rather by the dictates of his heart."

Huxley laughed.

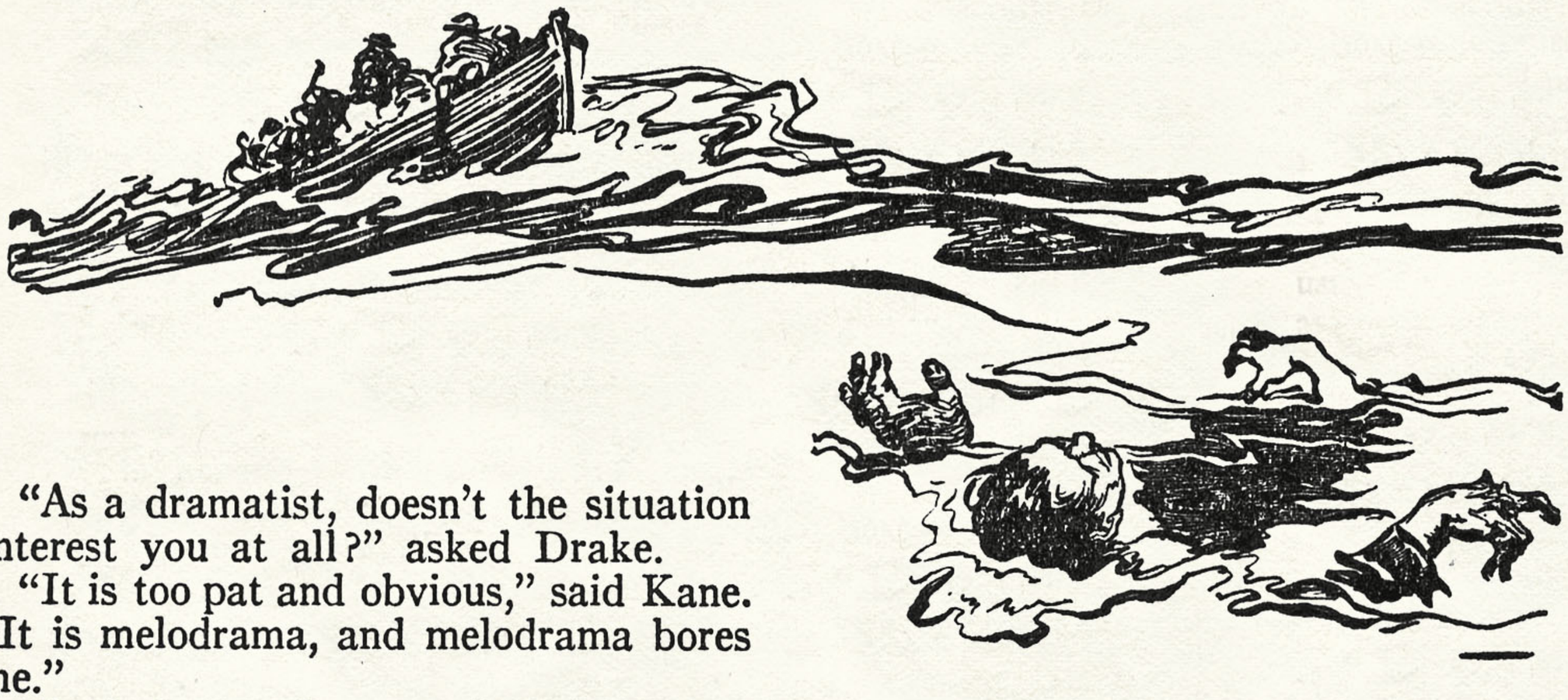
"The human heart," he said patiently, "is a mere motor. It has nothing to do with human conduct."

"Still," said Drake, "I admire this young commander. I think he was very gallant, very brave."

"And very foolish," said Huxley.

"Ah," said Drake. "What do you think, Kane?"

"My God!" said Kane wearily. "Are we going to discuss Life?"



"As a dramatist, doesn't the situation interest you at all?" asked Drake.

"It is too pat and obvious," said Kane. "It is melodrama, and melodrama bores me."

"I admire our hero too," said Maurice Mann suddenly. "His act was a beautiful gesture. In dying like that he gave his life a pattern which it otherwise would have lacked. The act gave it meaning and dignity."

Huxley smiled and shrugged. Drake turned inquiringly toward Frank Norman, the architect, and asked what he thought of the commander's deed.

"It depends on the emotions of the man making the gesture," he said. "If it appealed to his sense of drama, if it indeed gave his life that pattern of which Maurice speaks, if it exalted him, if in other words it gave him that exquisite sensation of pleasure which is the aim of all life, I think it was justified. If not, I think he was a fool."

DR. CARLE gave his opinion in a low voice.

"I think the young man did his job well, according to his lights, and I respect him for it. I can't share Huxley's mystic faith in the relative importance of men. It is so like these dreaming 'scientists' who imagine that their test-tubes may some day set men free. I am a practical man, interested almost solely in my job, which is repairing, with cold steel, nature's bungling."

"Ah," said Huxley, "but there is an old problem of your craft, Peter, much like the situation in that submarine. I mean the one involving a choice on the part of a doctor if he has two serious cases. Suppose you had a child, and a great man or woman under your care, and could save the life of only one. Which would you save?"

"I have answered that one many times," said Dr. Carle, with a smile, "and always the same. If I had such a choice, I must remember that the child may become a person of even more importance than the great man. And I must also be influenced by another factor: which is the more interesting case? Which would be more likely to increase medical knowledge?"

"Excellent!" said Huxley. "Admirable! I salute you. I should save the great man, of course, but you are the purer scientist."

"We have different values," said Dr. Carle.

"Well, I *do* believe in the importance of men, the importance of life, the importance of courage," said young Andrews. "The commander's courage was a beautiful thing."

"Probably Huxley is right," said his brother Wesley. "Probably it is bad human economics, folly. But I think it was a splendid folly."

Huxley smiled again and shrugged. Drake turned to Anne Gaunt.

"I was just thinking," she said, "that the commander's wife, if he had one, must be very proud of him."

"Of course," said Huxley. "Women love to send their men to heroic death. It is a characteristic which keeps war alive."

Diana Faraday was the last to state her opinion.

"I am not concerned with logic," she said, "but with spirit. I think the commander died in the great tradition of gallantry."

Huxley snorted impatiently.

"What rot!" he said. "I still say it was the rankest kind of criminal sentimentality."

"The same, no doubt, which won for you the Croix de Guerre?" said Diana.

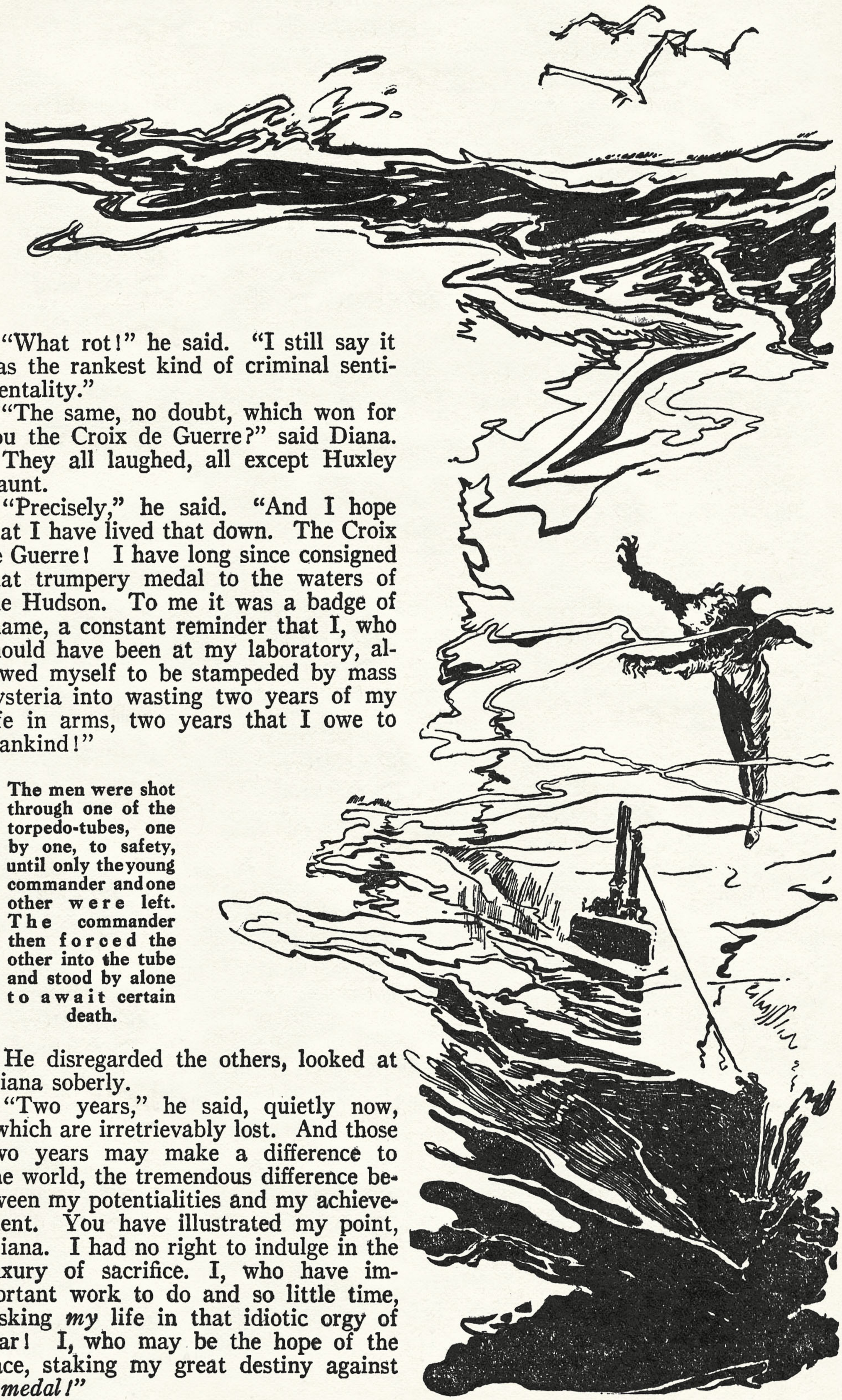
They all laughed, all except Huxley Gaunt.

"Precisely," he said. "And I hope that I have lived that down. The Croix de Guerre! I have long since consigned that trumpery medal to the waters of the Hudson. To me it was a badge of shame, a constant reminder that I, who should have been at my laboratory, allowed myself to be stampeded by mass hysteria into wasting two years of my life in arms, two years that I owe to mankind!"

**The men were shot through one of the torpedo-tubes, one by one, to safety, until only the young commander and one other were left. The commander then forced the other into the tube and stood by alone to await certain death.**

He disregarded the others, looked at Diana soberly.

"Two years," he said, quietly now, "which are irretrievably lost. And those two years may make a difference to the world, the tremendous difference between my potentialities and my achievement. You have illustrated my point, Diana. I had no right to indulge in the luxury of sacrifice. I, who have important work to do and so little time, risking *my* life in that idiotic orgy of war! I, who may be the hope of the race, staking my great destiny against a *medal!*"



They all sat silent for a moment, affected, moved by his passion, his colossal self-faith. Dr. Carle smiled; Stephen Drake seemed to be far away, as if pondering something. Then Huxley shook his head, as if shaking off something, smiled too, and asked, curiously, how Diana happened to know about that pesky Croix de Guerre.

"Your brother told me about it," she said. "He was very proud of you."

Huxley shrugged.

"His lingering infantilism," he said.

"I suppose," Drake said suddenly, "that if you were that commander, you would have acted quite differently, Huxley?"

"Of course," said Huxley. "There isn't the shadow of a doubt how I should have acted."

"Ah," said Drake sarcastically, "the scientist speaks! And he has foreseen the results of an untried experiment without bothering to put them to the test. Like any theologian, he *knows* the answer!"

Huxley smiled tolerantly.

"Why, Stephen," he said, "don't get excited."

"Answer me," said Drake irritably. "How can any man who sets himself up as a scientist predict how he or anyone else would act under certain untried conditions?"

"Not a bad point," said Huxley. "But may I say this? I have frequently known, from my knowledge of my materials, just how an experiment was going to turn out, simply confirming it later, in the strict scientific tradition. In this case I have the same confidence. Unfortunately I cannot put it to the test."

"Would you like to?" asked Drake.

"I should welcome the opportunity," said Huxley.

Drake stared at him for a long moment. The others began to stir, restlessly. They were becoming a little uncomfortable.

"Come," said Diana finally. "Let's not let this glorious sunshine go to waste."

THERE was an air of relief, a general scraping of chairs, and everyone but Drake went outdoors, the matter dismissed from their minds. Drake remained inside, leaving his guests to amuse themselves. He often did this and no one paid any particular attention to it on this occasion.

They did not see him again until after cocktails, when he appeared in the living-room, wearing greasy overalls, looking oddly engrossed. But he greeted them cordially, apologized for his clothes and departed to clean up. There was a rather mysterious air about him, as if he were excited; but they were used to him.

"Stephen is probably working on that better mousetrap," said Huxley, smiling, as Drake hurried away.

They dined well, as usual, in that room which was such a triumph of the machine age. The courses appeared, literally out of the floor, at the push of buttons. The dishes, glasses, silver vanished in the same way. Only a single servant ever presided over these automatic feasts.

FINALLY, when they had finished and Drake had pressed the button which caused the table to sink into the floor, they scattered about the room, broke up in groups, prepared for a quiet evening.

They were served with coffee, brandy, cigarettes. Then Drake disappeared briefly, following the servant from the room. When he returned he closed the door behind him by grasping the gleaming knob, turned, surveyed them all for a moment and then proposed the game of death.

It was rather a surprise. They were fond of informal conversation, but not addicted to the parlor diversions of the bored; indeed the mere mention of "game" was something of a shock. But Drake was so well-liked and ordinarily such an unexacting host that everyone decided to humor him that evening and there were no protests, although Terry Kane sighed heavily and draped himself across a comfortable lounge, as if determined to make the best of it.

"The discussion at luncheon and especially Huxley's rather irritating pose of infallibility suggested this game to me," said Drake. "If I remember correctly, our friend the bio-chemist said he would welcome an opportunity to prove his points by actual experiment. This game will give him that chance."

Drake looked at Huxley, who merely smiled.

"I said actual experiment," said Drake. "I should have said a make-believe experiment. At any rate, here is the game. Let us suppose that we are all in a situation similar to that which those men faced in that submarine. We are facing

"No!" cried Diana Faraday, springing to her feet. "I am a mere mimic, a poor player that struts and frets her little hour. . . . I should be chosen."

death. One of us can save the rest at the sacrifice of his own life. Which one shall it be? And shall the choice be dictated by calm reason or by that 'emotional stupidity' which Huxley so abhors?"

Drake looked at Gaunt, who shrugged. Drake continued:

"Lacking the submarine, let us dramatize our situation a bit, in spite of Terry Kane's antipathy to melodrama. Let us take the old and tried formula of the mad inventor. That would be *me*. Let us suppose that it is my whim to test you all, and my cocksure friend Huxley Gaunt, particularly.

"Here is the situation: I, in the character of the mad inventor, have so arranged it that we are all prisoners in this room. As you know, those windows do not open. The ventilation, the heating, is all automatic. Exit can be made only through one of those doors. These may be opened only by grasping the steel knobs beside them.

"For the sake of the game, these knobs have been charged with enormous electrical voltage. The touching of any of them will cause instant electrocution. I have sent the servants home for the night. The telephone-wires have been cut. I have mined the house with high explosives, and a time-clock is ticking away the minutes until the stroke of midnight, when the mines will be exploded."

He looked about him and smiled.

"We are in a pretty predicament, eh? But there is *one* way out. Nine of us may live if one will die to save us. How is that for a situation, Mr. Playwright?"

KANE yawned slightly. "Hokum," he said, "but true to formula."

"That is good," said Drake. "I want the thing reduced to its elementals. I will explain how nine may be saved at the sacrifice of one. On the circuit with which I have charged the exits to this room, I have placed a fuse, sufficiently strong to carry the heavy load, but certain to blow out in the event of a short circuit.

"Directly in front of each door I have installed steel plates which you cannot notice because they are concealed by those small rugs. There is only one way that a short circuit may be caused. One of you must stand on one of those steel plates, grasp the steel knob firmly and take the full brunt of the load. That one will die instantly, the fuse will blow, the time-clock will stop, the doors will open, the others will walk out. Simple, isn't it?"

"Much too simple," said Huxley Gaunt. "The weakness of your human experiment lies in the fact—"

"Just a moment," interrupted Stephen Drake, with a smile. "I know what you are going to say, my friend. Its weakness lies in the fact that it is entirely hypothetical. But have you no imagination? Can't you *assume* that the situation is actual? Look, it *is* actual! I *am* the mad inventor. You are all in a trap. See!"

He pulled his hair forward grotesquely, pulled his lips back, as if in simulation of a dangerous maniac, leered

**Peter Carle the surgeon — "interested almost solely in my job, which is repairing, with cold steel, nature's bungling."**

about him, chuckled horribly, extended one lean hand, crooked, like a claw. The people in the room stared at him. Anne shuddered. Diana, as if admiring a great bit of acting, silently applauded. Then he changed completely back to the smiling, unctuous host.

"Now," he said, "can't you accept matters? You will now choose which of you is to be the hero—or heroine."

"How shall we choose?" asked Wesley Gaunt.

"That is immaterial to the mad inventor," said Drake, with a shrug. "I only ask that you look into your hearts, that you make your choice, honestly, according to whatever convictions you possess. I only suggest, that to make the parallel with the submarine commander, Huxley Gaunt be placed in charge. Perhaps you will all choose to die together rather than sacrifice one of your number. That would be interesting and quite a joke on the mad inventor, I should say, because he would die too! The only condition is that you may not choose the mad inventor to be the hero, because he simply will not oblige. He is playing the god from the machine. Will you take charge, Huxley Gaunt?"

"Very well," said Huxley, rising gravely. "I will do my best to handle this situation as if it were real. Is it agreed that I am in charge?"

Everyone nodded. Huxley Gaunt looked at them, smiling.

"The first thing to do, then," he said, "is eliminate those of you who can least be spared by the world. This situation is unlike the one in the submarine in that we are all obviously more important than the members of that crew. It is complicated by the fact that we are all good friends; and still further by the fact that two of us are women, and men are notoriously irrational when it comes to the ladies.

"But we must remember that we are concerned now with an experiment, a scientific human experiment, and act accordingly. Let us forget chivalry, rigorously eschew sentimentality. First, I am going to let each of you speak for himself, be his own defense or prosecuting attorney. Consider me to be the judge, the rest to be the jury. Stephen will take no part in the deliberations. He will be a mere spectator."

He looked inquiringly at Drake, who nodded, without smiling. The inventor had taken a chair at the end of the room, near the main exit. He sat astride of it, facing the others, his chin propped against the chair's back. Huxley looked from one face to another. Everyone seemed interested in the game, save Kane, who had his head back, and was staring absently at the ceiling.

"NOW," said Huxley, "let us begin. Anne Gaunt, will you rise and show cause why you should or should not be selected for this duty?"

Anne rose, raised her head, and said in a clear voice:

"I believe I should be eliminated from consideration. First, because I am a mother, and my children need me; second, because I am young, with a long and useful life ahead of me; third, because I am a woman."

She sat down. Huxley Gaunt gazed at her for a long moment. He shook his head.

"Elimination denied," he said, "on the ground that you have failed to make out a case for yourself. What have you ever done that any other healthy female could not do? Achieved offspring? A cow can do as much. But *human* life? More important, I grant you. But you are in no way unique. You are sweet; you are charming; you are pretty; but when all is said and done, there are plenty of others to step forward and fill your place in the world. No, you must take

your chance in the last lottery. Next witness!"

Wesley Gaunt rose and faced his brother.

"I wish to volunteer, conditionally, and with an explanation," he said. "The condition is this: If Anne is chosen, I will take her place; I will take it, first, because I love her and could not bear to see her die, second, because she is the mother of my children and they need her, third, because I should deem it an honor and a privilege to die for her."

"Your offer is rejected," said Huxley Gaunt, "on the ground that it is sentimental, irrational and irrelevant. You are quite capable of bringing up your children, with the aid of a good governess, or a school. And in spite of your sentimentality you are of value to mankind. You are apparently quite devoid of intellect, but you have skill of a kind which is necessary; you are a good technician. Next witness!"

No one stirred. Huxley Gaunt's eyes went to the reclining Terrence Kane.

"Terry," he said, "do you wish to be a hero?"

Kane brought his eyes down from the ceiling. He did not bother to rise. When he spoke it was in an amused, tolerant tone.

"Don't be silly," he said. "I am a selfish fellow and a dreadful coward, afraid of pain, terrified of death. I have no illusions about my importance, but you can't choose me to do this job for the simple reason that I am physically unable to bring it off. I'd sooner stand by and see us all blown to hell. In fact, if I have to die, I'll enjoy taking you all with me. Let's not discuss it further. It fatigues me."

He settled back on the couch with a sigh. Huxley Gaunt smiled.

"Good," he said. "I admire your candor and I believe you would be useless for the task. Therefore I am glad to eliminate you from further consideration. Next witness, please."

"I am a fatalist," said Frank Norman, cheerfully, as he rose and faced Huxley Gaunt. "What must be, must be. I will neither volunteer for this assignment nor beg off from it. If I am chosen I will die without too many regrets, for I have had a good time."

"VERY well," said Huxley Gaunt. "I will respect your fatalism. I will provisionally allow you to stand in the final lottery. I believe you to be an important man, but perhaps you have already contributed to the world what you have to give it. Next witness."

Frank Norman the architect, whose soft body belied his brain of steel.

"I ask to be excused," said Dr. Carle, quietly, "not because I feel that I am of any importance but because of an interesting experiment in my craft which I have before me, the nature of which I cannot now reveal for fear of spoiling your game."

"Excused," said Huxley Gaunt promptly. "How about you, Maurice?"

"I wish to volunteer for death," said the painter, rising, his dark eyes somberly fixed on Diana Faraday. "Let me be the hero. For my life lacks that pattern, meaning, dignity, of which I spoke, and it can achieve it now in no other way. I am tired of life, consumed as I am by a desire that I shall never fulfill. I am wasted, empty, disconsolate, because of love. Let me die that she whom I love may live, in the hope that my 'splendid folly' may win for me, in death, a fragment of her heart, that 'mere motor' which has made her radiant, beautiful and profound."

"No!" cried Diana Faraday, springing to her feet. "No, Maurice is surely not the least among us. He is a great artist, a creator of beauty, while I—I am a mere mimic of passions, 'a poor player—strutting her little hour on the stage.' I am the one who should be chosen!"

The company, embarrassed, self-conscious, at the words of Maurice, was thrown into a momentary confusion from which Lane Andrews the poet was first to recover.

"No, no, no! You are too beautiful to die!" he cried.

Only Huxley Gaunt and Stephen Drake sat with immobile faces. The rest, even the lethargic Terrence Kane, leaned forward in their seats, watching the three, the woman and the two men who loved her without being loved. Maurice said nothing, his eyes never leaving Diana. She turned toward the poet, smiled affectionately.

"I hope that I am beautiful," she said, softly. "But my kind of beauty is not important. It is too transitory, fleeting. On some not far distant tomorrow I shall be old, misshapen, ugly. But as for you, Lane, and you, Maurice, the beauty you create will never grow old."

Huxley Gaunt broke in sharply.

"What is this prattle of beauty?" he demanded. "Why are the colored patterns of a Maurice Mann, the prettily arranged words of a Lane Andrews, the delectable curves of a Diana Faraday held up as symbols of beauty? Beauty is made of sterner stuff than words, daubs of color on canvas, the texture of a woman's skin, the sculpture of her body!"

"No!" said Lane Andrews. "No!"

"Sit down," said Huxley Gaunt.

Lane Andrews sat, his face a storm of protest. Maurice Mann quietly sank back into his chair. Diana still faced Huxley Gaunt, her lips half parted.

"I am sorry, Diana," said Huxley Gaunt, "that your plea for martyrdom has been interrupted. Will you proceed?"

"I have only this to say," she said. "Let me die now while I am beautiful and loved. Let me make this selfish little gesture which may gain for me an immortality which I shall otherwise never know. Let the world not remember the faded rheumatic hag which I must otherwise surely become. Rather let me have this chance to become a legend, the beautiful play-actress who gave her life, at the height of her glory, that her friends —and her lover—might live."

HUXLEY GAUNT applauded lightly and smiled.

"Nicely played, Diana," he said. "It would be difficult to refuse you such an opportunity after such an eloquent plea. Your request is partially granted. You shall be in the last list."

She smiled and sat down. Huxley Gaunt turned to Maurice Mann.

"As for you, Maurice," he said, "your offer is rejected, after some thought. You apparently yearn for death and I believe in your despair, while Diana's gesture I consider merely very good theatrics. But your reasons are inadequate. You are shirking your destiny, making a great pother about unfulfilled desire and love, when you should be pouring this passion into your work. No, you have not the right to die yet. Out of your despair you must build and create. Now let us hear from the poet."

LANE ANDREWS rose and said gravely: "I am physically weak and afraid of death; like you, also, I believe in my great destiny; furthermore, I believe in the supreme importance of beauty, of poetry as an instrument of beauty; and I believe that I am worthy of that instrument. I believe, in fine, that I am worthier of life than you, just as I believe that Keats was worthier than your great namesake, Huxley."

"Bravo!" said Huxley Gaunt. "An intelligent statement. You are excused."

"But I have not finished," said Lane Andrews. "I do not wish to live if Diana Faraday is to die, for, as I have said, she is too beautiful to die. Should you choose her, I will take her place. Because I have no conviction which is as strong as love, no principle which can go against my heart."

"So," said Huxley Gaunt, "we are back to love, eh, and the heart? Can't we rid our minds of this rubbish—these idiotic euphemisms? What has the heart to do with love?"

"Everything," said Lane Andrews.

"The connection between the human heart and that phenomenon which we call love," said Huxley Gaunt, like a schoolmaster addressing a backward pupil, "is simply this: the heart, given the proper nervous stimuli, pumps the blood to those centers of the body—"

"You fool!" cried Lane Andrews. "You poor blind fool! You worse than blind fool, you presumptuous ass! Do you think that you can conquer the poets with your babble of elementary physiology? In your myopic wisdom you cannot see beyond mere organs, while we of clearer vision know the great dark gods!"

"My great dark gods," said Huxley Gaunt, gently, "are evil gods, the dragons of disease, superstition, ignorance, death. And I am a dragon-hunter, little word-mason, a knight armed only with my brain, which I have purged of symbols for realities. I use these symbols now, my young friends, only to try to break through the darkness and communicate with you."

Lane Andrews rubbed his hands across

his eyes. He turned away from Huxley Gaunt, toward Diana, as if from night toward the sunrise. He said no more. But Huxley Gaunt was not finished.

"As for your offer, Lane Andrews," he said, "I refer it to the lady. If she wishes, you shall be her alternate."

Diana shook her head.

"No," she said.

"Well," said Huxley Gaunt, "that leaves four of us as candidates for death, Anne, Frank, Diana, and myself, and I have not had my say. I shall now take the stand.

"I am seeking the key to mysteries which may mean the salvation of the human race. Perhaps I shall never find this key; but the least I can say for myself is to know that I shall make the finding of the key a little nearer to realization, that I shall have charted paths

**"Which is it, man of science?" he mocked. "Your cluttered brain or your 'mere motor' of a heart?"**

leading toward that key which other, greater men, may follow, so that one day one of them may find it.

"Which among all of you has a similar opportunity? The erector of sky-scrapers, cathedrals, movie palaces? The good mother? The mimic of passions? The dauber of canvas? The virtuoso of appendectomy? The technician? The fabricator of refrigerators, coffee-pots, all the little time-saving devices? The juggler of words?"

"O despiser of symbols," said Lane Andrews, "I accept your symbol of the key, but I know that it is to be found only in the human heart, a wilderness to which you have charted no paths; and in the human soul, that Great Unknown Quantity against which you in your half-knowledge, have blasphemed. Life, forgive this man, for he knows not what he does!"

"Life, bless me, for I alone know what I do," said Huxley Gaunt quietly. Then he raised his voice: "In the absence of

intelligent argument to the contrary, I hereby formally eliminate myself from the last consideration. Anne, Frank, Diana, are the candidates. I believe that it makes little difference to the world which one is chosen. In the name of logic, however, it seems to me that that slight difference favors first, Frank, creator of buildings, second, Diana, skilled counterfeiter of emotions, least of all, Anne, wife and mother."

He looked speculatively at the man and the two women and went on:

"I will therefore eliminate Frank, in spite of his fatalism, in spite of my suspicion that his work is done, on the chance that he will again contribute something important to civilization. That narrows it down to the women."

He fastened his eyes on Diana. Then he continued:

"Diana is a great actress, not only in my opinion, but in that of press and public. She is also a very lovely and desirable woman, and furthermore, the woman, who by an accident of the hormones, arouses in me that phenomenon known as sexual love."

Lane Andrews snorted with disgust. Huxley Gaunt smiled and went on:

"But I am going to choose between them. For, if I chose to eliminate Diana, I should be suspect of an irrational emotional reaction; and if I chose for her to die and Anne to live, I should be suspect of mere bravado. No, I shall not choose. Rather let us all choose, by ballot, which it is to be."

HE took a neat loose-leaf notebook from his pocket, carefully extracted nine sheets of the paper, handed one to each person save Stephen Drake, and kept one for himself.

"Stephen, being judge, will not vote," he said. "The rest of us will each put his own name at the top of the ballot and the name of the selected heroine in the middle. There are nine of us and hence can be no tie. Let us vote now."

He marked his own ballot, then collected the others, placing his own on the bottom. Then he read off the results: Diana chose herself; Anne chose Diana; Maurice chose Anne; Dr. Carle chose Diana; Lane voted for Anne; Wesley for Diana; Terrence for Anne; Frank Norman for Diana. Huxley Gaunt glanced up.

"It is Diana," he said, "five to three."

"How did you vote?" asked Maurice.

"For Anne," said Huxley, "for reasons already given. That makes it Diana five to four. Some of these are very interesting. It is clear, of course, why Maurice and Lane chose Anne; they love Diana, and thus are consistent in their sentimentality. Diana, of course, chose herself to carry through her gesture. Terrence chose Anne with intelligent self-interest; Diana is important to the success of his play."

"Righto," said Terrence.

"Wesley, who would rather die himself than Anne, naturally chose Diana. Only two votes really puzzle me. Why did Frank and Peter select Diana?"

Said Frank Norman:

"Because of her speech."

Said Dr. Carle:

"Simply because I thought that my experiment would be more interesting on her than on Anne."

"What?" said Huxley Gaunt. "Your experiment!"

"Yes," said Dr. Carle, "the reason I gave for eliminating myself. It has been said that there is a possibility of reviving a body after electrocution. I have equipment with me, adrenalin, and so forth. I wanted to see if it could be done."

"You are marvelous, Peter," said Huxley Gaunt admiringly. "Do you think you could really pull it off?"

"I don't know," said Dr. Carle. "I could try. Diana offers the most interesting possibilities, because she is a more perfect physical specimen than Anne."

"As the mad inventor," Stephen Drake put in, suddenly, "I had thought of that possibility, Dr. Carle. To make the experiment sure, I therefore took the precaution to destroy your equipment."

Dr. Carle looked about him in mock consternation.

"I've never been your personal physician, Stephen," he observed, "so I can't speak with complete authority. But you don't play the part perfectly—a madman never admits that *he* is insane." He said this lightly enough. But his eyes searched Drake's face and figure with an intentness distinctly professional.

Stephen Drake laughed.

"Figuratively, only, of course," he said. "I believe you left your kit in the other room."

Huxley Gaunt smiled.

"You think of everything, don't you, Stephen?" he said.

"Of course," said Stephen. "I planned the experiment well."

"Well," said Huxley Gaunt. "We have chosen. Are you satisfied?"

"Almost," said Stephen Drake, "but let us play the game out to the end. Diana is to die. Let her act her part, walk to this door, grasp the steel knob, embrace the thunderbolt, that we may go free."

"Of course," said Diana, turning as if to go to the door.

"Wait," said Stephen Drake. "Have you no farewell to make?"

Diana turned, smiled, and walked toward Huxley Gaunt. He too smiled and went toward her. Then, like two lovers in a romantic tragedy, they played out a little scene of farewell. She went close to him, said in her warm, rich voice that he had acted wisely and well, that she was proud of him. Now that she had but a little while of life, would he hold her close? Huxley took her into his arms, kissed her. The dark eyes of Maurice Mann closed in pain. The boy Andrews clenched his fists, turned away.

Diana then stepped back from her lover with a little sob, caught her breath, then composed herself, made a simple little gesture, a heartbreaking little gesture of good-by, turned and walked steadily toward the door. All watched her now, silently, held by her power of make-believe. At the door she turned again, brought both hands to her lips, flung her arms wide.

"Good-by, my friends, my lover," she said, "farewell."

She turned to grasp the steel knob.

"Wait," said Stephen Drake.

There was something in his voice, something ominous, terrifying, that had not been there before. The spell of Diana's play-acting was snapped. The audience turned from the performance to the inventor. Diana, the rhythm broken, turned also. Drake stretched out his hand, in a commanding gesture.

"The play-acting is over," he said. "You must know the truth. Those knobs *are* charged. We all *are* trapped! And one of you must die if the rest are to live! Peter Carle cannot save you; I *have* destroyed his kit! The clock is ticking below! It is five minutes to twelve! Time is inexorable! Now, Huxley Gaunt, your experiment is before you! Are you a *brain* or are you a man?"

There was an awful hush. The dawning smiles of disbelief fled. There was conviction in Stephen Drake's words, above all in his eyes, his face, his whole being. Then Diana Faraday gasped.

"No, no!" she cried, turned, and sprang toward the door.

Huxley Gaunt seized her in one great leap, just as she reached for the gleaming knob, hurled her back, held her firm.

Stephen Drake stepped between the struggling lovers and the door. He kicked away the small rug, stood on the new steel plate beneath it.

"Let me go!" Diana cried, trying to wrench herself free. "It is right!"

Frank Norman and Wesley Gaunt came forward quickly. Huxley held Diana until she had ceased to struggle. Then, without a word, he kissed her quickly, handed her to Wesley and Frank. She cried out again and tried to break loose, but they held her, as Huxley turned toward the door.

Stephen Drake stood in front of him.

"Which is it, man of science?" he mocked. "Your cluttered brain or your 'mere motor' of a heart?"

"Neither, you fool!" said Huxley Gaunt. "Get out of the way."

Drake backed away in front of Huxley Gaunt. Now he was close to the door.

"My experiment," Drake said, "seems to have been a success."

THEN he turned swiftly, seized the gleaming knob with both hands. He stiffened in one horrible spasm, then collapsed slowly to the floor. Huxley stepped over him, seized the knob. The door sprang open. The others crowded forward, about the body of Drake. Frank and Wesley released Diana, who ran to Huxley Gaunt. He took her in his arms.

Dr. Carle dropped to one knee beside the body. He felt his heart, briefly, shook his head—then motioned the others back while he undertook a more thorough examination. He made no attempt to seek restoratives; and at length he rose.

"He is dead," he said to Gaunt and Diana, who had hurried forward. "Who can blame him? A disease like that—one of the few that are still hopeless! I had begun to suspect something—the marks of the constant pain were showing on his face. . . . . How like him all this was!"

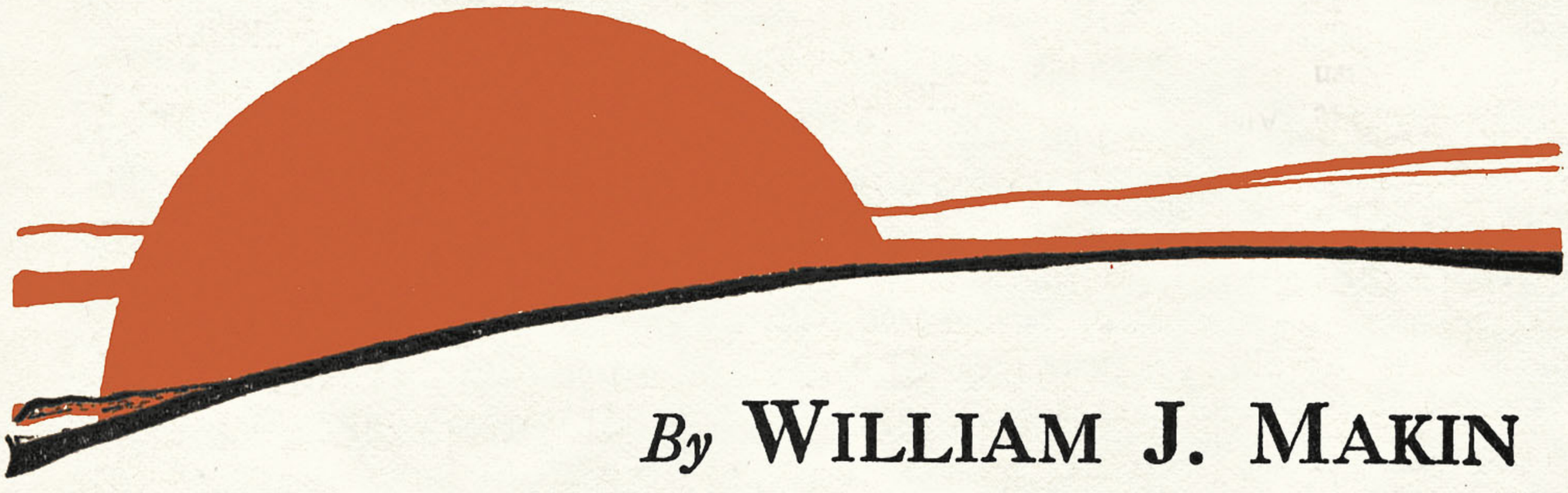
But Huxley and Diana stood together looking down at Stephen Drake.

"Old man," said Huxley Gaunt, "you have defeated me, robbed me of my power. I am not a Brain; I am nothing but a man."

Diana sobbed. He tightened his arms about her. Then he turned to the open door. They walked out, still arm in arm, the actress still sobbing.

# *The Desert of Singing*

***A thrill-filled adventure of the Intelligence officer known as the Wolf of Arabia.***



*By* WILLIAM J. MAKIN

"AND you believe in Allah?"

"I believe in God, for I know He exists."

"You *know* He exists! A sweeping statement, my friend. Even the greatest of philosophers have hesitated to make that claim."

"But the revelation can be discovered by anyone."

"Where? In the Bible? In the Koran?"

"No. In Schubert's 'Unfinished Symphony.'"

"But have you the audacity, my dear fellow, to claim all that for a mere piece of music?"

Paul Rodgers smiled, and stroked the back of his flaming red head.

"I assure you, Selworthy," he said, in his quiet dominant tone, "that if ever I was asked to prove the existence of God, I would take my questioner to hear a great orchestra play the 'Unfinished Symphony.' When there comes the call of the horn just before the *reprise* in the second movement, on the octave of E, *pianissimo*, four times repeated, then, in that great moment, I know God exists. And the little bespectacled Schubert, who suffered and sorrowed and died young, also knew that God existed. He gave the world his vision in the 'Unfinished Symphony.'"

Adrian Selworthy plucked nervously at his little fair mustache.

"Well, perhaps you're right, Rodgers," he said. "But that music is a little too ethereal for me. I prefer—"

The rest of his sentence was lost in the crash of sounding brass. A servant was hammering a gong announcing that dinner was served.

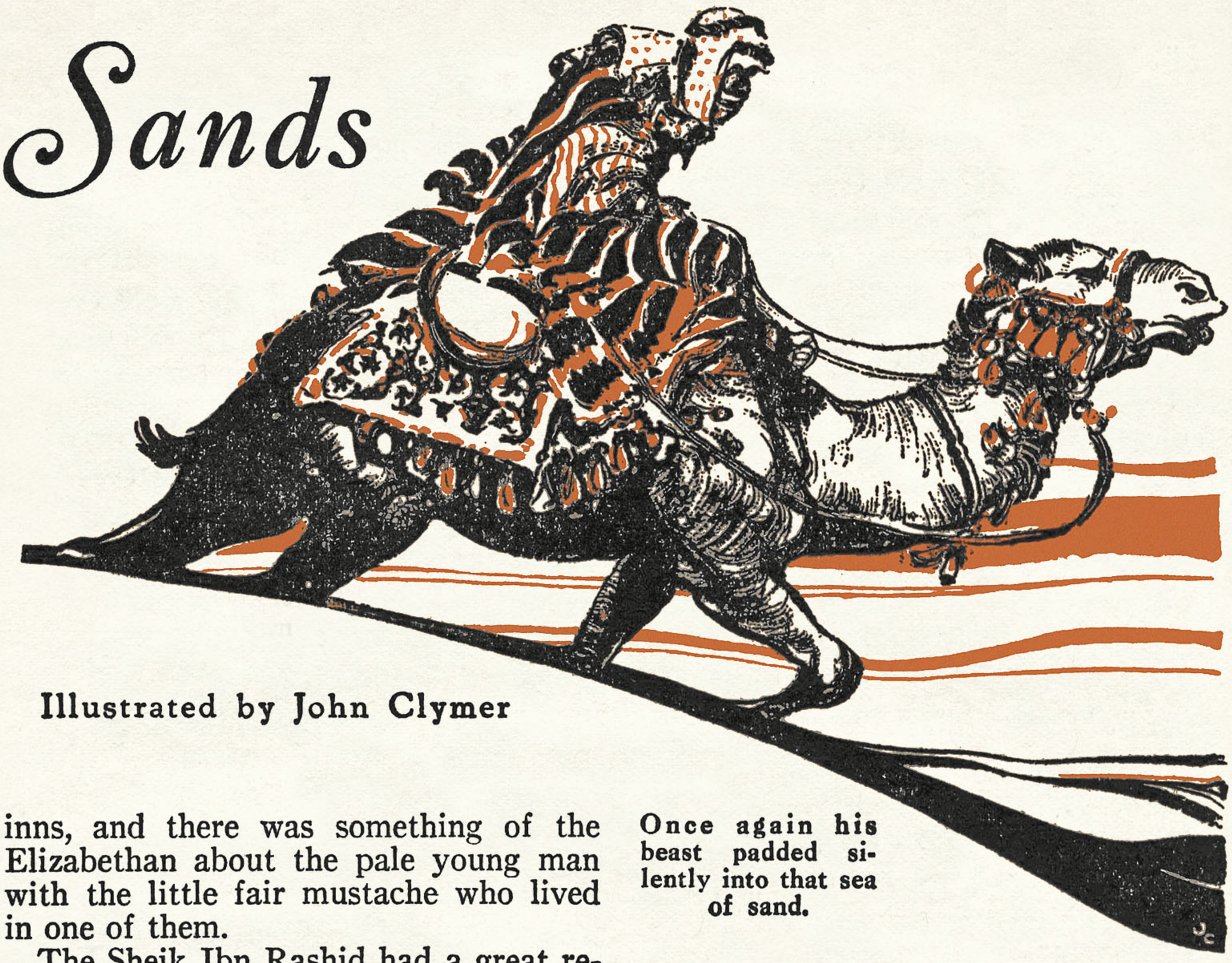
"The music that commands," laughed Selworthy, indicating the dim regions below, from which the gong had sounded.

Both men, garbed in evening dress, stood on a balcony. Their conversation, their habit, even the food they were about to eat, suggested all the sophistication of modern civilization. And yet, standing on this balcony, the two men were within a few hundred yards of savagery.

The balcony hung from a crazy house overlooking the harbor of Hodeidah. It was the port of mysterious dhows. Arab cutthroats of every variety sooner or later jumped from a dhow and waded waist-deep toward the rotting jetty of this strange port. Paul Rodgers—an Anglo-American of mysterious past and many adventures, whose exploits as an Intelligence officer had made him known among the natives as the Wolf of Arabia—was never able to resist the fascination of Hodeidah. On his voyage to Aden he had landed there, and was now enjoying the hospitality of Adrian Selworthy, a young Englishman who was known as adviser to the ruling sheik, Ibn Rashid.

Adrian Selworthy lived in one of those tall, crazy houses that had been so fretted and carved by Arab artistry that the whole structure seemed in danger of collapse. From a distance those houses had a startling resemblance to Elizabethan

# Sands



Illustrated by John Clymer

Once again his beast padded silently into that sea of sand.

inns, and there was something of the Elizabethan about the pale young man with the little fair mustache who lived in one of them.

The Sheik Ibn Rashid had a great respect for his European adviser. He appreciated the acute mind behind that bloodless mask. It was a political mind. Selworthy, by sheer diplomacy, had brought all the tribes of the Southwest Desert into one great group, and by tactics that were as subtle as they were Machiavellian, had set Ibn Rashid to rule over them. Ibn Rashid thanked him in lavish Arabian fashion. Now, Adrian Selworthy leaned back and sipped the Chateau Yquem of which the cellar of that crazy house had an excellent stock.

"I ought to have told you," said Selworthy to Rodgers, as they were descending the stairs, "that I have another guest to dinner tonight."

"Oh, who is he?" asked the Intelligence officer indifferently.

"He's a man who sells beds," murmured Selworthy.

Rodgers, one foot poised above the stair, stopped.

"A man who sells beds!" he exclaimed.

Adrian Selworthy chuckled. In the dim light of the staircase, his pale face seemed to have the phosphorescent glow of a ghost.

"Yes. Why not?" he asked.

Again Rodgers stroked his hair.

"A strange occupation!" he murmured. "Does he sell many beds?"

"Hundreds—hundreds," replied Selworthy. "The Arabs seem to have developed a passion for bedsteads within the past year, and Talata is landing another eighty beds from the tramp steamer which we watched coming toward the coast this afternoon."

"Talata?"

"Yes, he's the man who sells the bedsteads. Josef Talata, a Czech. Speaks English excellently. A fat, jovial fellow. You'll like him."

Rodgers nodded.

"I'm sure I shall," he murmured. "I'm even anxious to meet him."

He continued his descent of the staircase, humming aimlessly.

"That's a fascinating melody," said Selworthy, behind him.

Rodgers looked back.

"From the 'Unfinished Symphony,'" he replied. "Another proof of the Deity."

But Selworthy was looking over Red Rodgers' shoulder. A fat swarthy man was gazing toward them, his rubicund face wreathed in smiles.

"Good evening, Mr. Selworthy," he cried.

"Good evening, Talata. How's business?"

"Flourishing," smiled the fat man.

He held out a pudgy but exquisitely manicured hand as the two men reached the last stair. . . .

They sat down to dinner. Rodgers sipped appreciatively at the Tokay which the Arab servants poured gently into his glass. Josef Talata, fat and smiling, gurgled his joy, his obvious jollity, throughout the meal. Like so many Europeans he spoke English with an American directness.

"You sure do yourself well here, Mr. Selworthy," he grinned.

Selworthy looked slightly bored.

"It would be foolish to live otherwise," he drawled. "My throat is rather delicate, and Arab knives are keen. Frankly, I am an interloper in this Arab state, and I don't suppose I'm particularly loved. But I do my best to make the Arabs respect me."

"How?" asked Josef Talata.

The bloodless hand of Selworthy indicated the polished table and its glittering glass, the walls of the room draped in rich tapestries, and the array of quiet, efficient servants.

"By living like a prince," he murmured. "Nothing impresses more than luxury. The Arabs love a man who has the good sense to display his riches. They have only contempt for the poor Bedouin of the desert. Have you ever read the Arabian Nights?"

"Never," smiled Talata.

"You'll find that the hero or the successful one in all those stories is invariably the sheik or grand vizier."

"And you, my dear Selworthy, are a modern grand vizier, eh?" interposed Rodgers.

"Exactly. And it behooves me to live like a grand vizier."

Rodgers sipped again from his glass.

"An excellent philosophy, Selworthy, but a little too aristocratic for these modern times," he said quietly. "Granted your methods capture the respect of the Arabs; they will not capture the hearts of the Arabs. And in a tight corner I would rather have stout hearts than feared inspired respect."

TALATA drained his glass with greedy joy.

"I agree with you, Rodgers. I think I know something about the Arabs. I've journeyed with them through the desert. And I believe in getting to their hearts every time."

"Nonsense!" Adrian Selworthy smiled. "You're both sentimentalists. . . . Let us go into the next room for coffee. I have a cigar, Talata, that I'd like your opinion on."

"All your cigars are good," sighed Talata, rising regretfully from the table.

Selworthy led the way into a room of easy-chairs and Arab mosaics. A piano crossed one corner.

"Do you know the Arabs well, Rodgers?" asked the genial Czech, ensconcing himself in one of the easy-chairs.

"Not very well."

"A wonderful race—marvelous history—artists, too."

A servant handed him a cup of Arab coffee. A box of cigars was pushed toward him.

"You, I understand, are bringing them the benefits of modern civilization," murmured Rodgers, waving the cigars aside.

Talata's face wreathed itself in smiles.

"I bring them beds," he said.

"And they like beds?"

Two dark eyes swiveled toward him. His face was blandly innocent. A chuckle escaped the Czech.

"They love 'em," he replied. "I'm landing eighty here tonight." He turned toward his host. "By the way, Mr. Selworthy—I hope you'll excuse me mentioning it, but I wanted to know whether you'd pass that consignment through for me tonight. I want to set off with a caravan into the desert tomorrow."

Selworthy, reclining in a cloud of blue smoke, nodded.

"Certainly, Talata. Who are the beds for?"

"For the Sheik Mubarak."

Like a resurrected man, Adrian Selworthy rose slowly and gazed with his pale face at the Czech.

"For the Sheik Mubarak!" he said. "Then your caravan goes to Sana, a journey of nearly two hundred miles?"

"That's so," said the Czech. "Is there any objection?"

Selworthy sank back into his chair.

"No," he said briefly. "But it's a devil of a journey. Not many water-holes, and the world's worst desert."

Talata chuckled.

"I do not mind," he murmured. "I have made many such journeys into the desert."

Rodgers smiled ingenuously.

"Yours is indeed a romantic occupation, Mr. Talata," he murmured. "I never knew Arabs to be so passionately fond of beds. In fact, it intrigues me to speculate why the Sheik Mubarak should buy eighty beds."

Josef Talata laughed.

"Sixty, to be exact, Mr. Rodgers. The other twenty I leave here in Hodeidah."

"Even so, sixty beds!"

"It is said," smirked the Czech, "that the Sheik Mubarak has sixty wives. Maybe he ordered them for his harem."

"Verily, the West has come to the East," murmured Rodgers. "And how do you convey sixty beds across the desert, Mr. Talata?"

"By camels, and by camels alone."

Rodgers nodded in a preoccupied fashion and wandered idly to the piano. But he stopped with his long, slender fingers on the keyboard as the voice of Adrian Selworthy spoke through the blue haze of smoke.

"I ought to warn you, Talata, that your journey may be rather dangerous."

"Dangerous! Why?"

The Czech seemed alarmed.

"At the present moment the Sheik Mubarak is contemplating revolt against the Sheik Ibn Rashid. Of course it is just bluff on the part of the old fellow; but political relations are slightly strained. That is why I suggest your journey might be dangerous. The time is not propitious for legitimate trading."

Talata laughed.

"Oh, is that all!" he said, in a relieved tone. "Thanks for the tip, Mr. Selworthy, but I never let the political situation worry me. I'll go off with my beds tomorrow; and believe me, I'll get through with 'em. And what can be more suggestive of peace than sixty beds delivered to the Sheik Mubarak?"

He laughed loudly. But the pale face of Selworthy was troubled.

"I'm not so certain that an Arab lying on a bed thinking is not more dangerous than an Arab careering about the desert on a camel," he murmured.

Talata shook his head mirthfully. At the same moment the fingers of Rodgers rippled lightly over the keys of the piano. Idly they strayed; and then the vague, unsubstantial music of Debussy began to tremble forth.

Talata yawned slightly. He rose, and walked over to the European adviser to the Sheik Ibn Rashid.

"Will you think me very rude, Mr. Selworthy, if I run away and go down to the harbor?" he said. "I've a good deal of work before me if I'm to move off into the desert tomorrow."

Selworthy rose. "That's all right, Talata. I understand. You're a business man. Thank God, I'm not."

They shook hands gravely.

"And I'm to take it the consignment is cleared?" asked the Czech.

"Of course."

"Thank you." He turned to Rodgers, whose fingers were moving with exquisite artistry over the keyboard. "Good night, Mr. Rodgers."

"Good night."

Rodgers whispered it over his shoulder, for he was engrossed in the music. He did not turn his head to see the departure of the man who sold beds. His shoulders hunched themselves over the piano as though his whole being were intent on torturing the very essence of expression out of the piano. And the queer, unsubstantial music of Debussy came forth in a sort of magical dissonance.

Selworthy returned to the room. With his pale face he gazed at the hunched figure over the piano.

"What is that you're playing?" he asked suddenly.

His guest was lost in a medley of his own creating.

"'Cathedrals under the Sea,'" he murmured.

A smile crossed the pale face of Selworthy.

"A strange title."

The red hair of the man at the piano nodded an acquiescence.

"Almost as strange as—bedsteads in the desert," he said, and then bent again over the keyboard.

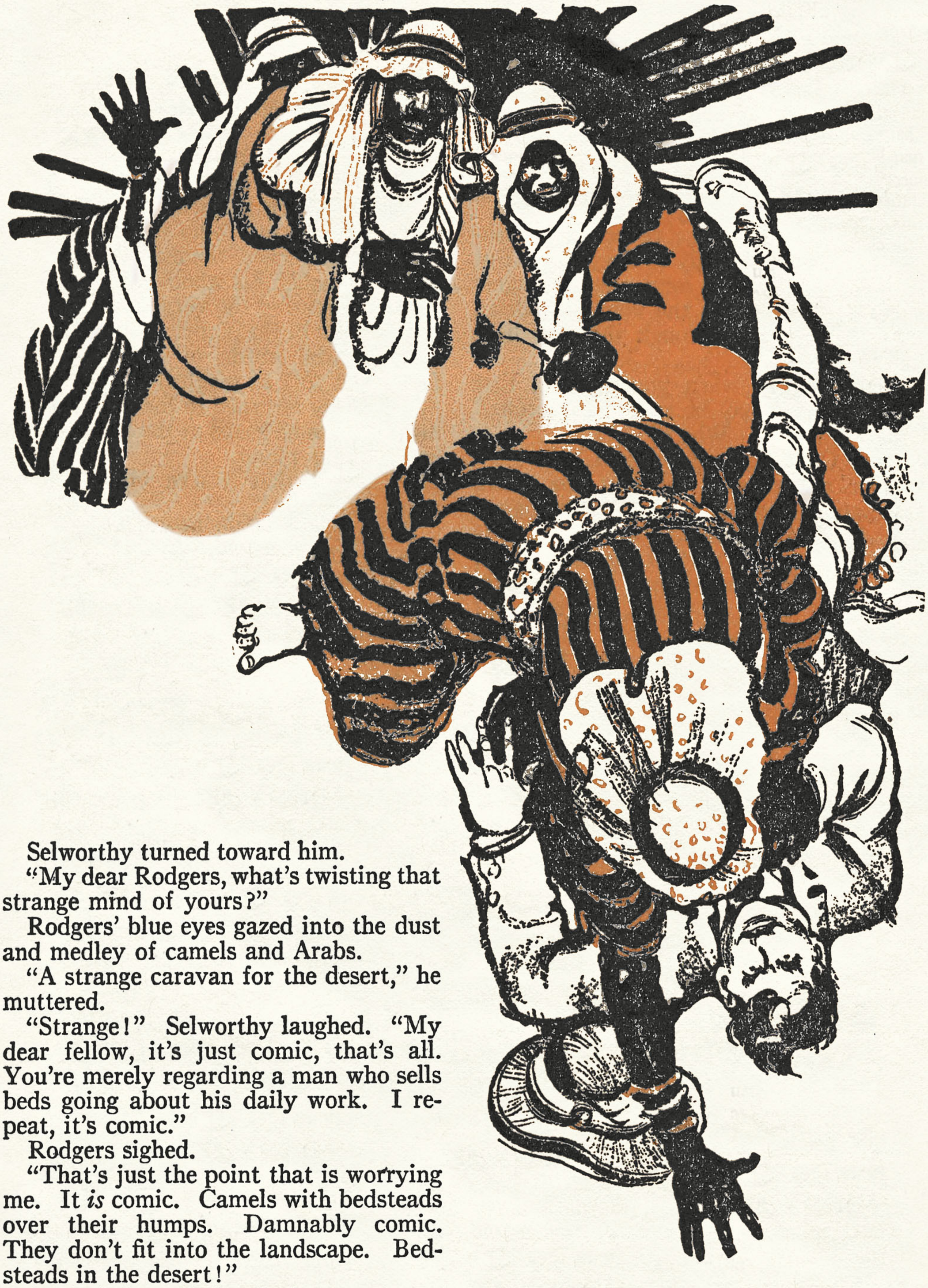
NEXT day they watched the collection of camels being loaded with the lacquered steelwork of sixty bedsteads.

Rodgers and Adrian Selworthy stood outside the store of a Parsee merchant, Dadaboy Dinshaw, who was the agent for the man who sold beds. Twenty of these bedsteads were already reposing within the shadows of his store. Sixty were being roped to the mangy backs of protesting, whimpering camels.

Josef Talata, in a thin white riding garb, and perspiring beneath an enormous sun-helmet, paced among the Arabs and camels that made up his convoy, crying commands in Arabic. Yet despite his preoccupation and his evident urgency, he never lost that jovial expression. More than once his face was turned toward the two Englishmen regarding these activities. He grinned pleasantly. And under the aurora of that smile, the Arabs lashing the bedsteads worked and sweated furiously.

"A man who is happy at his job," murmured Selworthy, nodding toward the grinning Talata.

"Yes, too happy," commented Rodgers.



Selworthy turned toward him.

"My dear Rodgers, what's twisting that strange mind of yours?"

Rodgers' blue eyes gazed into the dust and medley of camels and Arabs.

"A strange caravan for the desert," he muttered.

"Strange!" Selworthy laughed. "My dear fellow, it's just comic, that's all. You're merely regarding a man who sells beds going about his daily work. I repeat, it's comic."

Rodgers sighed.

"That's just the point that is worrying me. It *is* comic. Camels with bedsteads over their humps. Damnably comic. They don't fit into the landscape. Bedsteads in the desert!"

Again Selworthy laughed.

"Well, let us hope that they will be regarded as an omen of peace to the Sheik Mubarak. I'm not anxious to have any more trouble in the desert."

At that moment there was a loud shout from the Arabs. The last bedstead had been lashed. The camels moaned and slobbered their dismay as one by one they were urged from their squatting postures in the sand. While the din was at its height, Josef Talata came over to the two Englishmen. He held out his hand to Selworthy.

"Good-by, Mr. Selworthy. And thanks for what you've done."

The hunchback sprawled forward and brought the Czech rolling to the ground.

"Nothing at all," smiled Selworthy.

The jovial face turned to Rodgers.

"Good-by, Mr. Rodgers."

"*Au revoir*," murmured Rodgers, smiling in turn.

The fat Czech regarded him for a moment. But the jovial expression never left his features. Then, with a parting grin, he turned away and walked toward his camel. In practiced Arab fashion he settled himself behind the hump. His riding boots kicked against the mangy sides. With a protesting roar, the beast rose to its feet, and lurched forward to a place at the head of the caravan. An Arab guide galloped his camel alongside.

Talata twisted his fat body in the saddle so that he faced his caravan of Arabs, camels and bedsteads.

"Forward!" he cried in Arabic, and simultaneously his camel moved.

And so he led them, into the yellow sands and sunshine horizon that stretched endlessly in front. The camels stirred the dust and sand at the feet of the two Englishmen as they stood outside the store of the Parsee and watched the cavalcade go by. Men shouted. Bells tinkled. The bedsteads rattled. And with their supercilious mouths dripping, the camels lurched past.

At last they were nothing but a cloud of dust against the horizon. Rodgers, whose blue eyes had been following them with a puzzled expression, sighed and turned to regard the Parsee store of Dadaboy Dinshaw.

"What now?" asked Adrian Selworthy.

Rodgers walked slowly toward the store.

"I think I'll buy a bed," he murmured.

Something like an expression of horror crossed the pale face of the European adviser.

"Do you mean to say, Rodgers, that you're going to buy one of those damned bedsteads and bring it into my house?"

"Why not?" asked his guest innocently.

"But they're monstrously ugly," protested Selworthy.

"Exactly. But I recall your saying last night that you were not so certain that an Arab lying on a bed thinking, wasn't more dangerous than an Arab careering about the desert on a camel."

"Perhaps I did. But how does that explain your reason for buying one of these beds?"

"I want to lie on one—and think," murmured Rodgers. And with a nod he walked into the store.

THE inscrutable, *café-au-lait* face of Dadaboy Dinshaw showed no sign of surprise when Rodgers expressed a desire to purchase a lacquered bedstead. Perhaps the liquid brown eyes opened a shade more, but that was all.

"Certainlee, Mr. Rodgers. And when you like eet?"

"This afternoon. I want to rest on it."

"Ver' good, Mr. Rodgers."

An hour later the appalled Adrian Selworthy watched the fearsomely ugly contraption pass into his house overlooking the harbor of Hodeidah. Later he strolled into a room and discovered Red Rodgers in an extraordinary yellow dressing-gown, stretched at full length on the bed and filling the room with cigarette-smoke. The vision affronted Selworthy's æsthetic tastes.

"A yellow dressing-gown, a black bedstead, and a flaming crop of red hair," he murmured. "It's like an absinthe drunken painting out of Montparnasse."

Rodgers grinned.

"The clash of colors suits the clash of ideas," he said. "I'm still wondering why these damned bedsteads should be wanted in the desert."

Selworthy sighed.

"Wouldn't it be better to accept the simple and obvious idea—that they're being taken into the desert to be slept upon?"

"I know the Arab," retorted Rodgers.

Selworthy paced the room through the swathes of cigarette smoke. The sunken immobility of his friend irritated him. Once again he gazed distastefully at the yellow dressing-gown and the reclining crop of red hair.

"I really believe you glory in that carroty hair of yours," he said.

Rodgers rose, a look of mild surprise on his face.

"Of course I do," he replied. "Read your history books, and discover what an important part red hair has played in history."

"A ravisher of kings, eh?" suggested Selworthy.

Rodgers laughed.

"Rebellious red hair! A symbol of revolt. And yet a passionate love of life. You'll find the red-haired people finely rebellious spirits, Selworthy. And how we are envied by the neutral-haired crowd —the mousy browns, the brassy yellows, and the indifferent blacks! There's a theme for a poem. Do you still write verse, my dear fellow?"

With a snort Selworthy stalked out of the room—and Rodgers sank back.

HIS preoccupation lasted for the remainder of the day. After dinner Rodgers lounged to the piano and began playing a showy piece by Liszt. Selworthy sat enthralled. But later the player lapsed into ineffectual improvisations, while the European adviser lounged listlessly about the room. Stopping in the middle of an intricate affair of counterpoint, Rodgers whirled about on his stool.

"Have you a map?" he asked.

"A map!" repeated Selworthy blankly.

"Yes, of the desert over which our friend Talata and his sixty beds are journeying."

"I've a map of sorts," replied the other, and gave orders to one of the Arab servants.

A moment later they were both bent over a rough scroll.

"Here is Sana, the headquarters of the Sheik Mubarak," said Selworthy, laying a finger on a dot on the map. "And here is the two hundred miles of desert"—as his finger traveled over a blank space—"through which Talata journeys. It's a bad stretch of desert, as I told the fellow. Some of the Arabs call it the Desert of the Singing Sands."

"The Desert of the Singing Sands!" murmured Rodgers. "It sounds interesting." Then he went on as though speaking to himself. "With those bedsteads the caravan cannot travel more than four miles an hour. Talata has now been gone for six hours, which means that he is twenty-four miles into the desert. Probably he's camping now."

"Yes, I expect he's settling down for the night."

Rodgers yawned.

"And I think I'll settle down for the night," he said. "Good night, my dear fellow."

And with a nod to the surprised Selworthy, he lounged out of the room.

Next day Rodgers looked as though he had not slept. He did not speak at breakfast.

"You slept badly?" asked Selworthy.

His guest sighed. "I didn't sleep at all."

"It's that damned bedstead," commented the other. "Send it back to the Parsee, and have done with this silly business."

But Rodgers persisted in his strange madness. At dinner that evening he demanded the map once more, and pored over it.

"Our commercial traveler with his sixty beds should be here this evening," he muttered, stabbing the map with his finger. "Over fifty miles from Hodeidah."

Selworthy shrugged his shoulders.

"Well on the way to the Sheik Mubarak," he commented. "What are you going to do about it, Rodgers?"

The Intelligence officer glanced wistfully at the piano. Then he pulled himself together as for a great effort.

"I think I shall go to bed," he said.

And so night came sweeping across the Red Sea, and shrouded in darkness that room where a man in a yellow dressing-gown lounged listlessly on a black-lacquered bedstead. . . .

It was four o'clock in the morning when Adrian Selworthy was roused from his slumbers by an abrupt shake of the shoulders. He blinked. That red-haired figure in the yellow dressing-gown stood by the side of his bed. Rodgers' eyes were bright and feverish.

"Selworthy! I want the finest camel in Hodeidah."

Selworthy blinked again.

"Well, you shall have it, my dear fellow," he yawned. "We'll discuss it after breakfast."

"I want it now—at once."

The tone was peremptory. The European adviser felt nettled.

"But why?"

"To journey to the Desert of Singing Sands."

"But that's a hundred miles' journey."

"I know. I must get there before Josef Talata and his sixty bedsteads."

"Talata and his sixty bedsteads! I don't understand. What have they to do with your journey?"

"Everything. Those sixty bedsteads must never reach the Sheik Mubarak. I've discovered the secret. It's just come to me. What a fool I've been! Quick, Selworthy, the finest camel in Hodeidah."

Undoubtedly the fellow had gone mad—Adrian Selworthy had no doubts about it. All this came of sleeping on a damned iron bedstead—the *idée-fixe*. And now this red-haired madman was babbling for a camel!

With a groan of despair the European adviser slid out of bed. He clapped his hands. A sleepy Arab shuffled in. He gave orders that the red-haired madman should be introduced to the best camel-dealer in Hodeidah, at once, and allowed the choice of the finest beast.

"Thanks, my dear fellow," said Rodgers. "I shan't see you again for some days. But I hope to tell you a story that'll amuse you. *Au revoir!*"

"Go to the devil!" growled Selworthy, and yawning in the face of the madman in the yellow dressing-gown, he turned over and went to sleep again.

Before Selworthy awoke for breakfast, Rodgers had been lost in that pink horizon, a solitary figure rising and falling with the swift stride of his racing camel.

There was no doubt that he had the best camel in Hodeidah. It was neither too fat nor too thin. The hump was of hard, fatless muscle, and from the manner in which the beast carried its head, it pleased Rodgers from the beginning. He did not spare it. Throughout the day he kept it going at a good jog-trot, its long legs going like huge pistons. A small sack of flour and a water-bag dangled from the saddle. And despite the sea of sand-dunes which rolled away into the desert from Hodeidah, he had covered forty miles when a convenient water-hole decided him to camp for the night.

SOLITARY in the desert, Rodgers was at his happiest. He had discarded his European clothes for the *kuftan* of the Arab. A strip of flapping white cloth hid his red hair. With his face burnt half black by sun and wind, he passed easily for a Bedouin. Before settling for the night he examined the camel from Hodeidah once again. Upon this scraggy beast depended the whole adventure. It squatted in the sand, its supercilious mouth engaged in chewing a piece of cactus that it had discovered. Despite the forty miles through the sand, it seemed in excellent condition.

He rested no more than four hours. Wrapped in his *kuftan* and couched against a sand-dune, he slept peacefully. But moonlight was still flooding the desert when he rose, climbed into the saddle and urged the protesting camel to its feet. Then once again his beast padded silently into that sea of sand, the huge legs pounding away. And squatting on its back in a dirty *kuftan*, Rodgers of the Red Sea smiled somberly to himself.

"The Desert of Singing Sands," he whispered, and urged his camel to even further efforts.

"THE Desert of Singing Sands," said the Arab guide to Josef Talata.

His brown arm pointed to the horizon where the sand dunes rose and fell like an angry sea.

"Do we pass through that desert to reach Sana?" asked the Czech.

The Arab guide narrowed his eyes.

"It would make the journey shorter, but it is not wise," he said briefly.

"Why?"

"It is a strange desert. There are jinn in it."

"Am I a child, that you talk to me of jinn?" snarled Talata in Arabic.

The Arab grinned.

"One believes in jinn—in the desert," he replied. "Our route lies away from the Desert of the Singing Sands."

"Too slow—too slow," growled the Czech. "The Sheik Mubarak waits for his beds. It would be better to risk the wrath of the jinn, and—"

A shouting from the rear of the caravan turned him round in his saddle. He gazed back over the sixty lacquered bedsteads lashed across the backs of the mangy camels, to the group of Arabs who brought up the rear. They were pointing across the desert.

"What are they shouting about?" asked the Czech.

The Arab guide gazed in the same direction.

"They see a man on a camel," he replied.

Talata stopped his camel and gazed in the distance.

"I see—nothing."

Once more the Arab guide smiled.

"You will see him through your glasses, master," he said.

The Czech sought his binoculars, and turned them in the direction pointed by the guide. Even then he could only just discern the lope of a camel and a figure perched by the hump.

When Talata stopped, the whole caravan halted. Even the long line of beasts carrying the bedsteads turned instinctively to gaze at this solitary figure racing out of the horizon.

"A man in a great hurry," murmured the guide. "His camel has been ridden to the bones."

Josef Talata noticed that one of the Arabs was fingering an old rifle, nervously. Evidently this man racing toward them had something of the frightening quality of those jinn in which the men of the desert believed.

"By all the powers, he looks like a jinni," muttered the guide, as though answering the Czech's thoughts.

Again Talata focused his binoculars.

"He looks to me like—a hunchback!" he said aloud.

"A hunchback!"

The Arab guide was plainly disturbed.

"A hunchback—from Hodeidah!"

The cry came from the Arabs in the rear of the caravan. And in that cry was something of the awe in which all Arabs hold the deformed.

And now the solitary figure crouched on the back of a racing camel was almost upon them. The beast, ghostlike with the white dust of travel smothering its mangy flanks, raised a head and whinnied. At that sound all the camels of the caravan sent back an answering whine. And the Arabs in the rear raised their hands in greeting.

"It *is* a hunchback," muttered the Arab guide.

ON reaching the rear of the caravan, the fellow brought his racing camel to a standstill and slipped easily from the saddle. As he stood beside his beast, Talata from the distance could see the strange contrast of the hump on the camel and the hump on the newcomer's back. And the fact that the hunchback was covered from head to foot with that same ghost-like dust of travel suggested that the jinn had attempted, in the fashion of the Arabian Nights, to change the man into a camel. A crooked figure among the tall, straight Arabs, the hunchback talked and gesticulated like a man born to command.

One of the Arabs came to the head of the caravan.

"He is a hunchback, from Hodeidah," he explained. "He rides to Sana with messages for the Sheik Mubarak. The messages are important, and must be carried in haste. He begs that he may be permitted to join the safety of our caravan against the Bedouins."

Despite the uncouth Arabic, Josef Talata understood.

"Bring the hunchback before me," he ordered.

The Arab gave a call. It was answered. A moment later, and the crooked figure plodded through the sand and stood before Talata. The Czech gazed down upon him from the saddle's height.

"Your name?" he asked.

"Dar Kobar."

"I have not heard of you. I am a friend of the Sheik Mubarak."

The crooked figure smothered in white dust did not hesitate.

"The jackal slinks and is not seen," he said. "I am but a carrier of messages."

"Important messages, eh?" asked Talata, eying him shrewdly.

"Most important," whispered the hunchback. He gave a quick glance round. "It is the signal for the Brethren of the Black Tents to ride forth and slay their enemies."

"I understand." A faint flush mounted the cheeks of the Czech. His face wreathed itself in a jovial smile. "You shall go with us to the Sheik Mubarak."

The hunchback was eying the bedsteads strapped to the camels.

"I wish, master, to travel in great haste," he murmured. "These are not messages to sleep with at water-holes."

Josef Talata nodded.

"Neither are these bedsteads to sleep with at water-holes. I too am in haste to reach Sana and the Sheik Mubarak."

The hunchback gave a smile that was as twisted as his own body.

"Then you will take the quickest journey," he murmured, "through the Desert of the Singing Sands."

"Do you know it?" asked the Czech.

"I have traveled it many times, master."

"But this fellow fears it, because of the jinn," said Talata, pointing to the Arab guide beside him.

"The jinn!" There was contempt in the voice of the hunchback.

"He *is* a jinni, master," quavered the Arab guide.

Harshly, the hunchback laughed.

**The storm was gaining upon them; or rather, they seemed to be riding toward it!**

"Will you let me take this fellow's place?" he asked. "I will lead your caravan through the Desert of the Singing Sands."

The Czech eyed him in silence for a moment. Then his face assumed its inevitable joviality.

"And so you shall," he cried. "Bring your camel to my side. You shall tell me stories of these desert jinn as we ride together."

The hunchback bowed, and scrambled back to the rear. There he mounted his racing camel and rode toward the Czech. And as he went to take his place at the head of that strange caravan, one of the Arabs whispered:

"Ahee! Truly he is a jinni. For not only is his back twisted into a shape of a camel's hump, but I saw that his hair flames like the sun."

THEY were in the Desert of the Singing Sands. Despite its name, it was at the moment a Desert of Silence. Even the camels ceased their whining, and the whole of that strange caravan plodded like ghosts in another world.

One night had been spent round the camp-fires, with the hunchback enlivening all with tales that Scheherazade would have bartered with Time for a chance of hearing. Huddled in his ragged and travel-stained *kuftan*, this crooked man had held them all with desert stories and the adventures of jinn. Even the fat and jovial Talata had listened entranced.

"You're a liar—but a magnificent liar," he had laughed, before twisting into his sleeping-bag for the night.

And while the fires smoldered into ashes, while the camels rested in statuesque immobility, the Arabs of the caravan dreamed of the fantasies that filled the desert through which they traveled.

But now, beneath a brassy sky, they were experiencing a reality. They were engulfed in an awful emptiness. Men ceased their talk. The long legs of the camels plodded through the heavy sand with a silence that suggested heavy pads on the feet. Josef Talata felt the heat and the silence like a blanket on his mind. It was suffocating him.

"Who was the fool who called the desert the Garden of Allah?" he cried aloud suddenly. Then he drew in his breath sharply, for he had ripped that veil of silence.

The hunchback replied. His face twisted into a smile. He gazed up at the fat Czech who now seemed so troubled.

"A desert of devils," he whispered.

The Czech swung round on him.

"Be quiet! You and your damned jinn!" he cried.

THEN he dragged forth a handkerchief to mop the perspiration from his face. He seemed to shrink into himself in that spacious yet smothering emptiness. The cruel sun made him shrink. The white sand was like a terrible storm frozen solid at its height. It was as though the whole earth had been heaving in a gigantic turmoil, and Death had passed over the face of the earth. Wandering through these sands, one believed in the awful might of Jehovah. Those brassy skies could send down annihilation like a bolt. Lot's wife had been changed into a pillar of salt. Swift death!

"Curse the desert!" whispered Josef Talata, and gazed round fearfully. Only the grin of the hunchback met his gaze. "How many more miles to the Sheik Mubarak?" he asked.

"Another fifty miles, and our camels should be greeting the camels of the Sheik," replied the hunchback.

"Does the Sheik Mubarak ride through this desert?"

The grin of the hunchback widened.

"No man rides through this desert except those who fear not devils or jinn."

Josef Talata laughed aloud.

"A thousand devils will not stop me from taking those bedsteads to the Sheik Mubarak," he cried.

"Ahee! The bedsteads are important, eh, my master?" ventured the hunchback.

A heavy eyelid drooped in the fat face.

"Very important."

Once again he laughed, a harsh laugh with no merriment in it. It was a flout to the silence. And it died away on the lips of Josef Talata as he saw the hunchback on his camel with his head cocked at one side in an attitude of listening.

"What's the matter?" he whispered.

"Ssh!" The hunchback lifted a warning hand. "Don't you hear it, master?"

Instinctively the whole caravan had halted. It became as immobile as that static storm of sand. Josef Talata flung back the draperies that shaded his head, and listened intently.

"There is nothing—nothing," he whispered. "It's this cursed silence. It's got your nerves."

The hunchback did not move. Neither did he lower his hand.

"By Allah, but there *is* something," said the hunchback. "Listen again, master!"

The saddle on the Czech's camel creaked as he flung back his body, impatiently. But he listened once again. This time he heard something. It was like the droning on a single note of some musical instrument, in the far distance—like a phonograph-needle caught in the plowed groove of a revolving record.

"I hear a queer sound," he whispered. "What is it?"

A muttering arose among the Arabs at the rear of the caravan. The camels were swinging their heads in the eerie fashion of caged beasts.

"The singing sands!" cried the hunchback. "The jinn are stirring them. We must ride—ride fast."

The face of the Czech paled.

"Why?"

The hunchback pointed to the empty horizon, whence came that droning note.

"A storm sweeps toward us. There are no sandstorms to equal those stirred up by the devils of the Desert of the Singing Sands. By Allah, we must ride."

And kicking his heels into the flanks of his long-legged racing camel, the hunchback launched forth as though shot from a catapult.

With a shout, the other Arabs followed. Josef Talata also found himself carried along in that mad rush. The camels needed no urging. The long line of beasts, the bedsteads strapped to their backs, lurched forward with an instinctive sense of the danger threatening them.

The droning note in the distance was now pitched in a higher key. To the Czech it sounded like a distant factory whistle.

"It's getting nearer," he shouted, above the jolting of his camel and its paraphernalia.

But the hunchback did not answer. He continued to urge his racing camel a little ahead of the whole caravan. All blindly followed him.

NOW a new phenomenon began. The Czech heard a sharp *phut* under his camel's feet, like the falling of a spent bullet. So realistic was the impression that he drew his revolver from a holster and glanced wildly round. The *phut—phut* continued. A faint breeze stirred against his cheek.

A crash and a jangle behind him. One of the camels carrying a bedstead had stumbled and fallen. Another, immediately behind, staggered over the fallen beast and also came to the ground. Black lacquered steel and mangy bodies were inextricably mixed. A dull red began to stain the sands. One of the beasts had broken a leg.

HALF the caravan had stopped at this catastrophe. While several Arabs were still galloping ahead, the hunchback swung round, raced his camel to the fallen beasts, and dropped from his saddle. To the astonishment of Josef Talata, who was watching the scene, the hunchback fumbled in his ragged *kuftan* and produced a revolver. Two loud reports, and the camels sagged to the sand. A moment later, and the hunchback, again in his saddle, was racing past.

"But the bedsteads!" pleaded the Czech, galloping his camel in vain pursuit.

"Follow me, master!" cried the hunchback.

The fellow seemed to be stampeding the caravan in a queer direction. Some of the Arabs who had galloped ahead had halted, irresolute. The hunchback was yelling and pointing in a more northerly direction. He seemed so sure of himself that the Arabs wheeled their camels and followed him.

And now the singing sands were strumming a fiercer note. It sounded in the eardrums like a wetted finger drawn across a pane of glass. A shrill note. The screaming of a thousand jinn. Pellets of sand began to sting the jovial cheeks of the Czech.

Talata bent his head and urged his camel to further efforts. But the storm was gaining upon them. Or rather, they seemed to be riding toward it—or was it merely his excited imagination? A moment later he drew in his camel, for the hunchback had stopped and turned about. Arabs shrouded in their hoods, gathered round him.

"The caravan delays us," yelled the hunchback. "These cursed iron beds! Cut them away and free the camels!"

"No—no, damn you!" cried Talata. "The bedsteads stay on the camels."

"Then we die for the sake of these beds, eh?" yelled the hunchback. "By Allah, not if I know it! Listen to that storm!"

Beneath the high-pitched whine there now sounded a rumble like a thousand drums. Even the dark faces of the Arabs paled.

"Is it not enough, brothers?" asked the hunchback.

"Ahee! It is enough," came the roar from their throats.

"Then away with these trappings," cried the hunchback, leaping from his saddle, and his hand reaching out for his knife.

"Stop, you devil with a hump!" snarled the Czech. "If you touch those bedsteads, you die."

Swarthy faces turned toward the white man. He held a revolver in his hand and leveled it at the hunchback. Talata had slipped from his saddle and straddled triumphantly in the sand.

"But the storm, master!" pleaded the hunchback. "It will suffocate us."

"Then we suffocate—with the bedsteads," said Talata.

AT the same moment he fired. But he was too late. Even as he had spoken, the hunchback had sprawled forward, grasped one of those straddling legs, and brought the Czech rolling to the ground. One twist of the wrist; and with a yell of pain, the white man had dropped the revolver. With a grin on his face, the hunchback slipped it within the folds of his *kuftan*. Then he left the Czech and raced toward the convoy of camels, a knife in his hand.

Other Arabs helped him. The black-lacquered bedsteads clanged and fell with a thud in the sand. Released from their burdens, the camels shook themselves, and began to trot away from the storm. In a few minutes they were all free. The desert was strewn with the wreckage of sixty bedsteads.

"Now race for your lives!" yelled the hunchback.

A wall of sand seemed to be rushing toward them. The sky had been blotted out. Pellets of sand whirled all about them. The sound was like the twanging of mighty harps accompanied by those thudding drums.

Josef Talata gazed at that miserable heap of black-lacquered bedsteads in the yellow sand. Disaster! The end of a desperate adventure. And then a hand caught the reins of his camel and tugged at them. It was the hunchback.

"Save yourself!" he yelled. "The devils are upon us."

The two camels lurched forward. Side by side the hunchback and the Czech

raced away from that swift-traveling wall of sand. But a moment later the storm was upon them. Talata followed the example of the hunchback and bowed his head. Even so, he felt like a man drowning under water. There was a roaring in his ears, and his vision was blotted out. Sand choked his nostrils filled his throat, and he struggled against the awful fear of suffocation. One hand clutched the scraggy back of his camel. The beast was bowed, and staggered along helplessly beneath the crushing weight of traveling sand.

TALATA felt his senses leaving him. He was like a live man being stamped ruthlessly into a grave of sand. The jinn of the desert were grinning at him! And their faces were all crooked, like that of the hunchback. But he was dying, slowly. He was blind. The roaring had become a medley of steel hammers thudding away. He gasped vainly for breath. The next moment he pitched forward in his saddle and would have fallen, but a strong brown hand gripped him. The hunchback, bowed beneath the sandstorm, held on to the drowning man. The hunchback's mind was filled with music—mad music.

"Tchaikovsky in his most ridiculous and bombastic mood," he thought.

And there was a suspicion of a grin on the face of Rodgers, the Red Wolf of Arabia. . . .

Two hours later the desert was silent again. A clear evening sky with the stars glittering overhead. A waste of sand frozen into queer shapes. A group of Arabs gathering their camels together while the Czech, helped by the hunchback, struggled back to consciousness.

"The bedsteads?" he gasped.

The hunchback pointed to those waves of sand, immobile once more.

"Lost," he murmured. "Lost in that waste of sand."

The Czech realized it was the end.

"And what now?" he asked.

"We ride back to Hodeidah," said the hunchback quietly. "You have no beds for the Sheik Mubarak, and I have no message. All is lost in the Desert of the Singing Sands."

The Czech regarded the crooked man thoughtfully.

"BUT why all this excitement over sixty cheap and nasty beds?"

It was Adrian Selworthy who asked the question of the red-haired man in evening dress who strummed idly at the piano in the crazy house in Hodeidah.

"Very necessary," murmured Rodgers. "I must ask you to put an embargo on all such beds entering Arabia through this port."

"But why? Am I to deny the poor Arab a bed to rest his body?"

"Of that type of bed—yes," replied Rodgers. "It took me a long time to discover why the Sheik Mubarak was so anxious to have sixty of them, and why Josef Talata was willing to convey them through the desert. Cheap and nasty they are, my dear fellow. But they're all steel tubes. Framework and everything. And those steel tubes make excellent rifle-barrels. Our jovial friend Talata was a gun-runner, disguising his wares as bedsteads. And you were helping him! Once that valuable consignment had reached Sana, the Sheik would easily have transformed the tubes into rifles. He had the stocks of old rifles ready to fit the new tubes. There would have followed an unpleasant revolt."

"Thank heaven the bedsteads never reached Sana!" murmured Selworthy.

Rodgers grinned.

"For one moment," he said, "I thought I was going to miss that storm in the Desert of the Singing Sands. I really don't know what I would have done if the caravan hadn't followed me and ridden right into it. Luck, again."

Selworthy took one of the hands that was fingering the keys of the piano.

"Thanks!" he said quietly.

But Rodgers seemed wrapped in his own thoughts.

"What a subject for a modern composer in that desert storm," he murmured. "I would begin it *pianissimo*."

His fingers strummed lightly. One monotonous note sounded.

Selworthy groaned, and left the room.

A FORTNIGHT later the Woman of Antioch, in a little house in Suez, received a visitor. He was a fat jovial man, a Czech, who sold beds. The woman of Antioch listened until he had told his story. Only the clenched hands revealed the hatred seething in her.

"Rodgers of the Red Sea, eh?" she murmured. "The Red Wolf of Arabia, eh—once again he has thwarted us! But our time is coming. This man must be trodden like a beetle in the dust. Listen, Talata, my friend—"

And strange words were whispered in that little house in Suez.

# *The Sportsman's Scrapbook*

## III—Ladies of the Prize-Ring

*By* EWING WALKER

*"Challenge! I, Elizabeth Wilkinson, of Clerkenwell, having had some words with Hannah Hyfield, and now requiring satisfaction, do invite her to meet me upon the stage, and box me for three guineas; each woman holding a half-a-crown in each hand, and the first woman that drops the money to lose the battle."*

*"Answer! I, Hannah Hyfield, of Newgate Market, hearing the resoluteness of Elizabeth Wilkinson, will not fail, God willing, to give her more blows than words, desiring home blows and from her no favour. She may expect a good thumping."*

History does not record whether 'twas Elizabeth or Hannah who received the most of the "good thumping," but in the "Challenge" and "Answer" we think we see the hand of the press-agent. "Grudge fights" are always good drawing-cards.

This clutching of a coin in either hand was an astute provision, as it precluded face-scratching and hair-pulling.

BUT Elizabeth and Hannah, somehow, are not especially pugilistic appellations.

It is not easy to picture one dubbed Elizabeth as lacking a few front teeth or one christened Hannah as sporting a cauliflower ear. It's different in the case of Bruising Peg. Ah, there was a lass fittingly named! Bruising Peg! There's a hunch to her shoulders; her fists swing low at her sides—knotted and red fists; her smile is a grimace, and when she favors us with it we see two teeth are missing from her gums; her hair grows low upon her sinewy neck and a hank of it whips in the breeze. She's Bruising Peg, and we can more readily picture her mothering a pit bull whelp than an infant.

In 1768 appeared the following newspaper account of one of Peg's "goes":

"Two women fought for a new shift, valued at half-a-crown, in the Spa Fields, near Islington. The battle was won by a woman called Bruising Peg, who beat her antagonist in a terrible manner."

If a mere man happened to cross the path of one of these Amazons, it was all one to her. In the same 1768, "An extraordinary battle was fought in the Spa Fields by two women against two tailors, for a guinea a head, which was won by the ladies, who beat the tailors in a severe manner."

Not only did the ladies have their recognized championships to contend for, but an accepted ring costume. They were dressed "in close jacket, short petticoats, and holland drawers, and with white stockings and pumps."

In the dawn of prize-fighting as we know it, the period of the sword in the ring somewhat overlapped that of the bare fists; and not only did men meet men, women meet women and women meet men, but they even staged their mixed doubles. Men fighters with the cold steel were at times assisted by women, a man and woman meeting another couple in the ring. In 1725 "Sutton, the champion of Kent, and a courageous female heroine of that county, fought Stokes and his much-admired consort of London, at Figg's. £40 was to be given to the male and female who gave most cuts with the swords, and £20 for most blows at quarter-staff, besides the collection in the box."

MEN have been squaring off before one another in England these several hundred years and women about as long, however.

The rollicking James Fig or Figg was proprietor of a "bear garden" or theater where set-to's between the women fighters were frequent. "Mrs. Stokes, the City championess," stated one of his announcements, "is ready to meet the Hibernian Heroine at Figg's." These doughty Amazons also frequently fought in the booths of touring fairs for prizes and for the championships of their sex.

# When Worlds Collide

***Doomsday—and dawn after Doomsday: the unforgetable story of what happens when two stranger planets spin out of space, one to destroy this world, the other to offer harbor to the gallant few who risk a desperate voyage.***

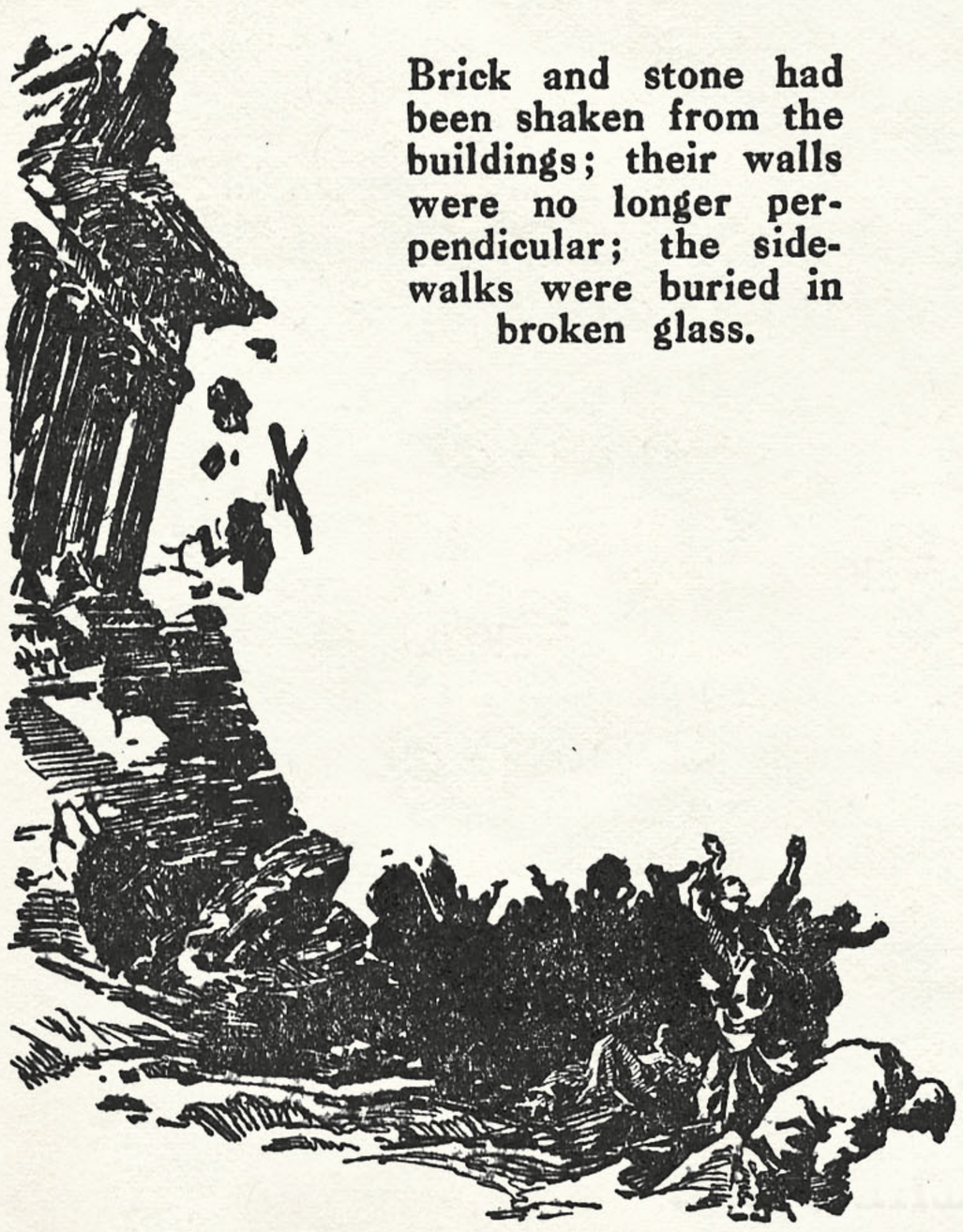
## By EDWIN BALMER *and*

*The Story Thus Far:*

TWO stranger stars hurtling out of space toward collision with this world!

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

There Ransdell delivered the precious plates to Cole Hendron, 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 scientists, men best qualified to plan what—if anything—could be done to meet what seemed inevitable doom.



**Brick and stone had been shaken from the buildings; their walls were no longer perpendicular; the sidewalks were buried in broken glass.**

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 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, Hendron confided in more detail to Tony:

"Those specks are moving so that they will enter our solar system, and one of them will then come into collision with our world.

"Before the encounter, both of these moving bodies—both Bronson Alpha and Bronson Beta—will first pass us close by and cause tides that will rise six hundred feet over all sea-coasts everywhere.

"And the passing of the Bronson Bodies will cause earthquakes on a scale unimaginable; half the inland cities will be shaken down. Perhaps a fifth of the people will survive the first passing of the Bronson Bodies.

"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. For ahead of the sphere that will destroy us, there spins a world like our own which some of us—*some* of us—may reach and be safe."

Later Tony talked it over with Eve. "Remember Belshazzar's feast in the

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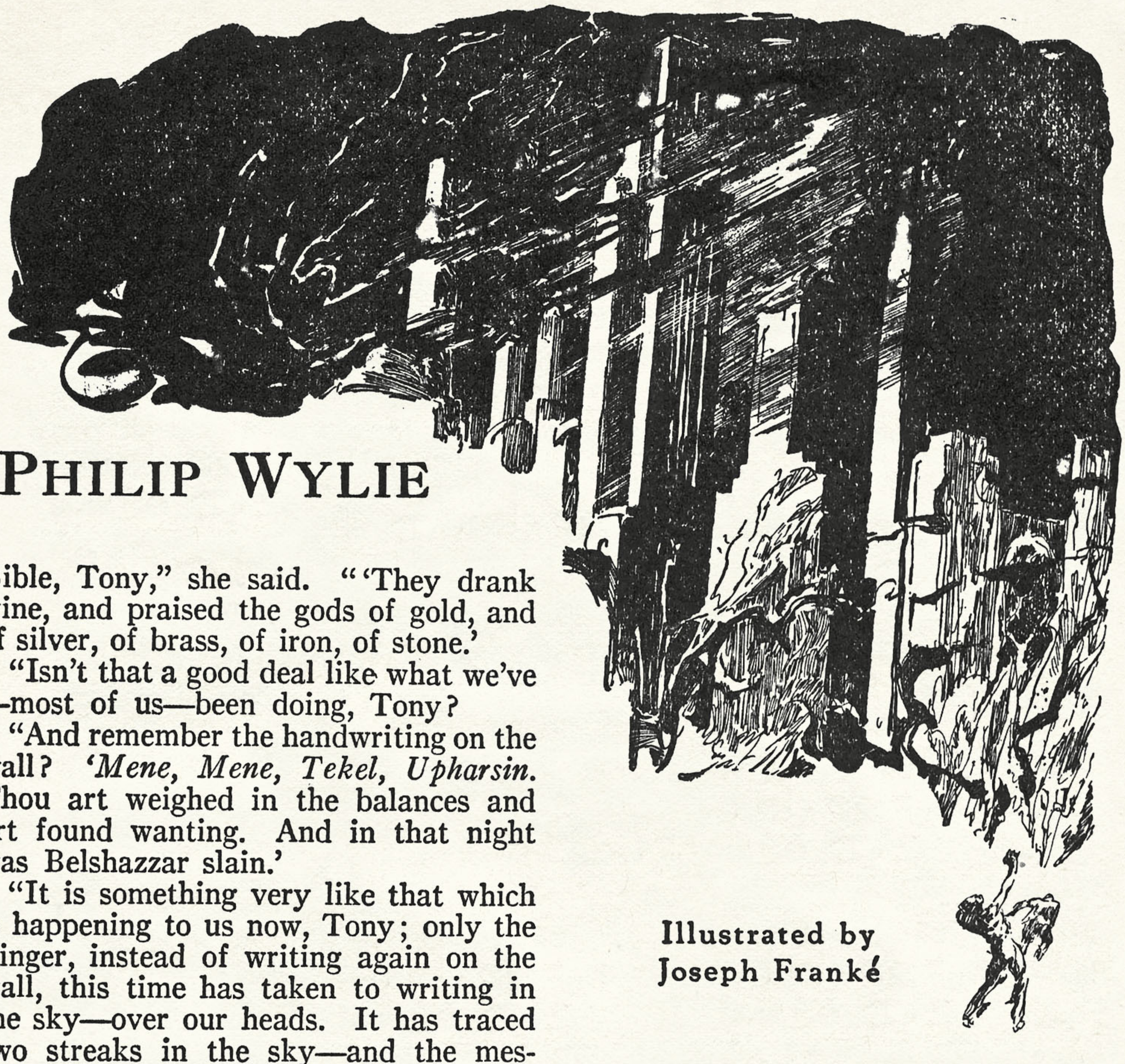


# PHILIP WYLIE

Illustrated by
Joseph Franké

Bible, Tony," she said. "'They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of stone.'

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

"And remember the handwriting on the wall? *'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.* Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting. And in that night was Belshazzar 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. It has traced two streaks in the sky—and the message of one of them is perfectly plain.

"*'Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting,'* that one says to us. But what does the other streak say?

"That is the strange one, Tony. For that one is the afterthought of God—the chance of rescue He is sending us!"

The various governments took such steps as they could to move their people away from tidal and volcanic perils. Meanwhile, Hendron started the building of his projected Space Ship at a work-camp in Michigan; and Tony was made a personnel officer to recruit the best brains of the country to join the League of the Last Days and help in their desperate project. . . .

Now Bronson Alpha and its sister stranger from space became visible to the naked eye. And terrific tides began to drive out the people of the coastal cities.

There were of course all manner of riots and public disturbances. Tony's mother was murdered by a gang of marauders. But after her funeral there was no time to grieve, for along with Eve Hendron he had to flee for his life in an airplane to the relatively safe work-camp in northern Michigan. Even there the cataclysm that accompanied the first passing of the Bronson Bodies was terrific: continual earthquakes, a constant hurricane, a deluge of volcanic mud. Bruised and beaten, barely alive, the survivors set at the work of rehabilitation when this preliminary catastrophe had abated. They learned that the moon had been destroyed while they lay flattened to earth by the dark tempest; and Tony expressed regret that they could not have seen it.

"However," said Hendron, "when the world encounters Bronson Beta, we'll see that, I hope."

"See it—from the world?" said Tony.

"From space, I hope, if we succeed with our ship—from space on our way to Bronson Alpha. What a show that will be!" *(The story continues in detail:)*

SO through the darkness of that moon-lost night, Tony continued to work. He mustered new gangs for the dreary tasks of salvage, and of rehabilitating and reconstructing the shelters.

A light in her eyes, Eve said good-by to Ransdell.

He organized, directed, exhorted and cheered men on, wondering at them as they responded and redoubled their efforts. He wondered no less at himself. What use, in the end, was all this labor? A few months, and they would meet the Bronson Bodies again; and this time, Bronson Beta would not pass the world. As it had extinguished the moon, it would annihilate the earth too! This solid ground!

Tony stamped upon it.

No wonder, really, that these men responded and that he exhorted and urged them on. They, and he, could not realize that the world was doomed, any more than a man could realize that he himself must die. Death is what happens to others! So other worlds may perish; but not ours, on which we stand!

Tony clapped his hands together loudly. "All right, fellows! Come on! Come on!" Clouds gathered again, and rain was pouring down.

When light began again to filter through the darkly streaming heavens, Hendron re-awoke. He found Tony drunk with fatigue, carrying on by sheer effort of will, and refusing to rest.

Hendron called some of the men who had been taking Tony's commands, and had him carried bodily to bed. . . .

Tony opened his eyes. One by one he collected all the disjointed memories of the past days. He perceived that he was lying on a couch in Hendron's offices in the west end of the machine-shop and laboratory building. He sat up and looked out the window. It was notably lighter, although the clouds were still dense; and as he looked, a stained mist commenced to descend. A slight noise in one corner of the room attracted his attention. A man sat there at a desk quietly scribbling. He raised his eyes when Tony looked at him. He was a tall, very thin man, with dark curly hair and long-lashed blue eyes. His age might have been thirty-five—or fifty. He had a remarkably high forehead and slim, tactile hands. He smiled at Tony, and spoke with a trace of accent.

"Good morning, Mr. Drake. It is not necessary to ask if you slept well. Your sleep was patently of the most profound order."

Tony swung his feet on to the floor. "Yes, I think I did sleep well. We haven't met, have we?"

The other man shook his head. "No, we haven't; but I've heard about you, and I should imagine that you have heard my name once or twice in the last few weeks." A smile flickered on his face. "I am Sven Bronson."

"Good Lord!" Tony walked across the room and held out his hand. "I'm surely delighted to meet the man who—" He hesitated.

The Scandinavian's smile returned.

"You were going to say, 'the man who was responsible for all this.'"

Tony chuckled, shook Bronson's hand, and then looked down at the bedraggled garments which only partially covered him. "I've got to find some clothes and get shaved."

"It's all been prepared," Bronson said. "In the private office, there's a bath of sorts ready for you, and some clean clothes and a razor."

"Somebody has taken terribly good care of me," Tony said. He yawned and stretched. "I feel fine." At the door he hesitated. "What's the news, by the way? How are things? How is everybody?"

Bronson tapped his desk with his pencil. "Everybody is doing nicely. There are only a dozen people left in the hospital now. Your friend Taylor has the commissary completely rehabilitated, and everybody here is saying pleasant things about him. I don't know all the news, but it is picturesque, to say the least. Appalling, too! For instance the spot on which we now reside was very considerably raised last week. It has apparently been lifted again, together with no one knows how much surrounding territory, so the elevator sensations we felt in the field were decidedly accurate. We presume that many thousands of square miles may have been raised simultaneously; otherwise there would have been more local fracture. The radio station has been functioning again."

"Good Lord!" Tony exclaimed. "I forgot all about the radio station last night—that is to say, today is tomorrow, isn't it? What day is this?"

"This is the twenty-ninth." Tony realized that he had been asleep for twenty-four hours. "The man in the wireless division went to work on the station immediately. Anyway, not much has come in, though we picked up a station in New Mexico, and a very feeble station somewhere in Ohio. The New Mexico station reports some sort of extraordinary phenomena, together with a violent eruption of a volcanic nature in their district; the one in Ohio merely appealed steadily for help."

AT once Tony inferred the import of Bronson's words. "You mean to say that you've only heard two stations in all this country?"

"You deduce things quickly, Mr. Drake. Of course the static is so tremendous still that it would be impossible to hear anything from any foreign country; and doubtless other stations are working which we will pick up later, as well as many which will be reconditioned in the future; but so far, we have received only two calls."

Tony opened the door to the adjacent office. "That means, then, that nearly everybody has been—"

The Scandinavian's long white hands locked, and his eyes affirmed Tony's speculation. . . .

"I'll get myself cleaned up," said Tony.

And he stepped into a big galvanized tub of water that had been kept warm by a small electric heater. He bathed, shaved and dressed in his own clothes, which had been brought from his quarters in the partly demolished men's dormitory. Afterward he went to the laboratories and found Hendron.

"By George, you look fit, Tony!" were Hendron's first words. "Eve is impatiently waiting for you. She's at the dining-hall."

TONY found Eve cheerful and bright-eyed. With a dozen or more women, she was rearranging and redecorating the dining-hall, which had been immaculately cleaned. She went out on the long veranda with him.

"Notice how much clearer the air is?" Eve asked. "Most of the fumes have disappeared. . . . It's hard to shake the superstition that natural disasters are directed at you, isn't it, Tony?"

"Are we sure it's a superstition, Eve?"

"After all, what has happened to us is only the sort of thing that has happened before, thousands of times, on this earth of ours, Tony, on a smaller scale—at Pompeii, at Mt. Pelée and Krakatoa and at other places. What can be the differences in the scale of the God of the cosmos, whether He shakes down San Francisco and Tokio twenty years apart, buries Pompeii when Titus was ruling Rome, and blows up Krakatoa eighteen hundred years later—or whether he decides to smash it all at once? It's all the same sort of thing."

"Yes," agreed Tony. "It's only the scale of the performance that's different. Anyway, we've survived so far. I heard you were safe, Eve; and then when I could hear no more, I supposed you were safe. You *had* to be safe."

"Why, Tony?"

"If anything was to keep any meaning for me." He stared at her, himself amazed at what he said. "The moon's gone, I suppose you know!"

"Yes. It was known that it would go."

"And we—the world goes like the moon, with the return of Bronson Beta!"

"That's still true, Tony," she said, standing before him, and quivering as he did.

He gestured about. "They all know that now."

"Yes," she said. "They've been told it."

"But they don't *know* it. They can't *know* a thing like that just from being told—or even from what they've just been through."

"Neither can we, Tony."

"No; we think we—you and I, at least—are going to be safe somehow. We are sure, down in our hearts—aren't we, Eve?—that you and I will pull through. There'll be some error in the calculations that will save *us;* or the Space Ship will take us away; or—something."

She nodded. "There's no error in the calculations, Tony. Too many good men have made them, independently of each other."

"Did they all count in the collision with the moon, Eve?"

"All the good ones did, dear. There's no chance of escape because of the encounter with the moon. It deflected the Bronson Bodies a little, of course; but not enough to save the world. I know that with my head, Tony; but—you're right—I don't know it with my heart. I don't know it with—*me*."

TONY seized and held her with a fierceness and with a tenderness in his ferocity, neither of which he had ever known before. He looked down at her in his arms, and it was difficult to believe that anyone so exquisite, so splendidly fragile, could have survived the orgy of elemental passion through which they all had passed. Yet that—he knew—was nothing to what would be.

He kissed her, long and deeply; and when he drew his lips away, he continued to stare down at her, whispering words which she, with her lips almost at his, yet could not hear.

"What is it, Tony?"

"Only—an incantation, dear."

"What?" she asked; so he repeated it audibly:

"'*A thousand shall fall before thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee!*' Remember it, Eve?"

"The psalmist!" whispered Eve.

"He must have seen some one he loved, threatened," said Tony. "'*For he shall give his angels charge over thee,*'" he continued, "'*to keep thee in all thy ways.*

"'*They shall bear thee in their hands; that thou hurt not thy foot against a stone.*'

"It stayed in my head, hearing it at the church where Mother used to take me. I'd read it in the responses, too. I remember that, I suppose, because it's beautiful—if no more."

"If no more," said Eve; and very gently, she freed herself from him; for, far more faithfully than he, she heeded her father.

HE sighed. She looked up at him. "They tell me, Tony, that you kept the whole camp going single-handed," she returned him to practical affairs.

"I just rallied around and looked at people who were doing something and said: 'Great! Go ahead.' That's all I did."

She laughed, proud of him. "You put heart in them all again. That's you, Tony. . . . Did you know Professor Bronson is here?"

"Yes; I saw him—spoke to him. Funny feeling I had, when I heard his name. Bronson—of the Bronson Bodies. It made him almost to blame for them. How did he happen to come?"

"He'd arrived in the country and was almost here when the storm struck. He's known about what was to happen, and he's been figuring it out for a longer time than anyone else. He's had the highest respect for Father. Of course you know it was to Father that he sent his results. They had to get together, Father and he. They agreed it was better to work here than in South Africa; so he did the traveling. He'll be invaluable—if we do get away."

"You mean, if we get away from the world."

"Yes. You see, Father's chief work has been—and will be—on the Space Ship; how to get away from the world and reach Bronson Alpha, when it returns."

"And before Bronson Beta smashes us as it did the moon," said Tony grimly.

Eve nodded. "That's all Father can possibly arrange—if not more. He can't take any time to figuring how we'll live, if we reach that other world. But Professor Bronson has been doing that for months. For more than a year he practically lived—in his mind—on Bronson Alpha. So he's here to make the right

preparation for the party that goes on the ship: who they should be, what they should carry, and what they must do to live—if they land there."

In three days the static in the air vanished to such an extent that messages from various parts of the world became audible. Out of those messages a large map was constructed in the executive offices. It was a speculative map, and its accuracy was by no means guaranteed. It showed islands where Australia had been, two huge islands in the place of South America, and only the central and southern part of Europe and Asia. There was a blank in place of Africa, for no one knew what had happened to the Dark Continent. A few points of land were all that was left of the British Isles, and over the air came the terrible story of the last-minute flight from London across the Channel, in which the populace was overwhelmed on the Great Lowland Plain. Among the minor phenomena reported was the disappearance of the Great Lakes, which had been inclined from west to east and tipped like trays of water into the valley of the St. Lawrence. On the fifth day they learned that an airplane flight had been made over what was the site of New York. The Hudson River Valley was a deep estuary; the sea rolled up to Newburgh; and the entire coast along its new line was scoured with east-to-west-running valleys which were piled high with the wreckage of a mighty civilization. Everywhere were still fœtid plains of cooling lava; and in many areas, apparently, the flow from the earth had been not molten rock but metal, which lay in fantastic and solidified seas already red with rust.

It was impossible to make any estimate whatsoever of the number of people who had survived the catastrophe. Doubtless the figure ran into scores of millions; but except in a few fortunate and prearranged places, they were destitute, disorganized and doomed to perish of hunger and exposure.

ON the tenth day the sun shone for the first time. It pierced the clouds for a few minutes only, and even at its strongest it was hazy, penetrating the belts of fog with scarcely enough strength to cast shadows. . . .

At the end of two weeks it would have been difficult to tell that the settlement in Michigan had undergone any great cataclysm, save that the miniature precipice remained on the flying-field, and that great mounds of chocolate-colored earth were piled within view of the inhabitants.

On the evening of the fifteenth day a considerable patch of blue sky appeared at twilight, and for three hours afforded a view of the stars. The astronomers took advantage of that extended opportunity to make observation of the Bronson Bodies, which had become morning stars, showing rims like the planet Venus as they moved between the earth and the sun.

Carefully, meticulously, both by direct observation and by photographic methods, they measured and plotted the course of the two terrible strangers from space; and with infinitesimal differences, the results of all the observers were the same. Bronson Alpha—the habitable world—on its return would pass by closer than before; but it would pass.

There would be no escape from Bronson Beta.

IN all the fifteen days the earth had not ceased trembling. Sometimes the shocks were violent enough to jar objects from shelves, but ordinarily they were so light as to be barely detectable.

In all those fifteen days, furthermore, there had been no visitor to the camp from the outside world, and the radio station had contented itself with the messages it received, for fear that by giving its position and a hint of its security, it might be overwhelmed by a rush of desperate and starving survivors.

At the end of three weeks one of the airplanes which had escaped the storm was put in condition, and Eliot James and Ransdell made a five-hundred-mile reconnaissance. At Hendron's request the young author addressed the entire gathering in the dining-hall after his return. He held spellbound the thousand men and women who were thirsty for any syllable of information about the world over the horizon.

"Mr. Ransdell and myself," James began, "took our ship off the ground this morning at eight o'clock. We flew due north for about seventy-five miles. Then we made a circle of which that distance was the radius, covering the territory that formerly constituted parts of Michigan and Wisconsin.

"I say 'formerly,' ladies and gentlemen, because the land which we observed has nothing to do with the United States as it once was, and our flight was like a journey of discovery. You have already been

told that the Great Lakes have disappeared. They are, however, not entirely gone, and I should say that about one-third of Lake Superior, possibly now land-locked, remains in its bed.

"The country we covered, as you doubtless know, was formerly heavily wooded and hilly. It contained many lakes, and was a mining center. I will make no attempt to describe the astonishing aspect of the empty lake-bed, the chasms and flat beaches which were revealed when the water uncovered them, or the broad cracks and crevices which stretch across the bed. I am unable to convey to you the utter desolation of the scene. It is easier, somewhat, to give an idea of the land over which we flew. Most of the forests have been burned away. Seams have opened underneath them, which are in reality mighty cañons, abysses in the naked earth. Steam pours from them and hovers in them. All about the landscape there are fumaroles, hot springs, geysers and boiling wells.

"In the course of our flight we observed the ruins of a moderate-sized town and of several villages. We also saw the charred remains of what we assumed were farms, and possibly lumber- and mining-camps. Not only have great clefts been made, but hills have been created, and in innumerable places the earth shows raw and multicolored—the purplish red of iron veins, the glaring white of quartz, the dark monotony of basalt intermingled in a giant's conglomerate. I can only suggest the majesty and the unearthliness of the scene by saying it closely resembled my conception of what the lunar landscape must have been.

"We observed a few areas which, like our own, were relatively undisturbed. There were a number of oases in this destruction where forests still stood, apparently sheltered from the hurricanes and in no danger of conflagration. This district, as you know, is sparsely settled. I will complete my wholly inadequate re-

**"Gas," Ransdell said, gasping. No other words were necessary to interpret the frightful fate of Chicago.**

port to you by satisfying what must be your major curiosity: we saw in the course of our flying a number of human beings. Some of them wandered over this nude, tumultuous country alone and obviously without resources for their sustenance. Others were gathered together in small communities in the glades and sheltered places. They had fires going, and they were apparently secure at least for the time being. All of them attempted to attract our attention to themselves, and it is with regret that I must say that not only is their rescue inadvisable from the sheer necessity of our own self-preservation, but that in most cases it would be difficult if not impossible, as we found no place in which we might have landed a plane, if the surface of the water that remains in Lake Superior be excepted, and a few other ponds and lakes. And it would be difficult indeed to go on foot to the succor of those unfortunates."

AFTER the speech, people crowded around James. Peter Vanderbilt, moving through the crowd, glimpsed Ransdell as he was walking through the front doors of the hall. The New Yorker stepped out on the porch beside the pilot; the sophisticated Manhattan *dilettante* with his smooth graying hair, his worldly-wise and -weary eyes, his svelte accent, beside the rugged tan-faced, blue-eyed, powerful adventurer. One, the product of millions, of Eastern universities and of society at its most sumptuous, the other a man whose entire resources always had been held in his own hands, and who had lived in a world of frontiers.

"I wanted to ask you something," Vanderbilt said. Ransdell turned, and as usual he did not speak but simply waited.

"Has Hendron commissioned you to do any more flying?"

"No."

"Do you think it would be possible to hop around the country during the next few months?"

"With a good ship—an amphibian."

Vanderbilt tapped his cigarette-holder delicately against one of the posts on the porch. "You and I are both supernumeraries around here, in a sense. I was wondering if it might not be a good idea to make an expedition around the country and see for ourselves just what has happened. If this old planet is really going to be smashed,—and from the evidence furnished two weeks ago I'll believe it,—yet there's something to see on its surface still. Let's look at it."

RANSDELL thought inarticulately of Eve. He was drawn to her as never to any girl before; but, he reckoned, she must remain here. Not only that, but under the discipline which was clamped upon the settlement, no rival could claim her while he would be gone. And the adventure that Vanderbilt offered tremendously allured him.

"I'd like to try it," Ransdell replied simply.

"Then I'll see Hendron; we must have his consent, of course, to take a ship."

Ransdell was struck by a thought. "Shall we take James too? He'd join, I think."

"Excellent," Vanderbilt accepted. "He could write up the trip. It would be ignominious, if any of us got to Bronson Alpha, with no record of the real history of this old earth's last days."

Together they broached the subject to Hendron. He considered them for several minutes without replying, and then said: "You realize, of course, that such an expedition will be extremely hazardous? You could carry fuel and provisions for a long flight, but nothing like what you'd need. You'd have to take pot-luck everywhere you went; gasoline would be almost impossible to find—what hasn't leaked away must have been burned, for the most part; and whenever you set the ship down, you would be a target for any and every person lurking in the vicinity. The conditions prevailing, physically, socially and morally, must be wholly without precedent."

"That," replied Vanderbilt calmly, "is precisely why we cannot be men and fear to study them."

"Exactly," jerked Hendron; and he gazed at Ransdell.

The gray-blue eyes fixed steadily on Hendron's, and the scientist abruptly decided: "Very well, I'll sanction it."

Ransdell and Vanderbilt knocked on the door of Eliot James' room, from which issued the sound of typewriting. The poet swung wide the door and greeted them with an expression of pleasure. "What's up?"

They told him.

"Go?" James repeated, his face alight with excitement. "Of course I'll go. What a record to write—whether or not anyone lives to read it!"

Tony received the news with mingled feelings. He could not help an impulse of jealousy at not being chosen for the adventure; but he understood that Ransdell hardly would have selected him. Also, he realized that his position as vice to Hendron in command of the cantonment did not leave him free for adventure.

Yet it was almost with shame that Tony assisted in the take-off of the big plane two days later. Eve emerged from the crowd at the edge of the landing-field and walked to Ransdell; and Tony saw the light in her eyes which comes to a woman watching a man embark on high adventure. The very needlessness, the impracticalness of it, increased her feeling for him—a feeling not to be roused by a man performing a merely useful service, no matter how hazardous. Tony walked around to the other side of the plane and stayed there until Eve had said good-by to the pilot.

The motor was turning over slowly. The mechanics had made their last inspection. The maximum amount of fuel had been taken aboard, and all provisions, supplies, ammunition, instruments and paraphernalia which were deemed needful. Many of the more prominent members of the colony were grouped near the plane shaking hands with Vanderbilt and Eliot James. Bronson was there, Dodson, Smith and a dozen more, besides Hendron. Vanderbilt's farewells were debonair and light. "We'll send you postcards picturing latest developments." Eliot James was receiving last-minute advice from the scientists, who had burdened him with questions, the answers of which they wished him to discover by observation. Ransdell came around the fuselage of the plane, Eve behind him.

He cast one look at the sky, where the heavy and still numerous clouds moved on a regular wind, and one at the available half of the landing-field, on which the sun shone tentatively.

"Let's go," he said.

There were a few last handshakes; there was a shout as the chocks were removed from the wheels of the plane. It made a long bumpy run across the field, rose slowly, circled once over the heads of the waving throng, and gradually disappeared toward the south.

Eve signaled Tony. "Aren't they fine, those three men? Going off into nowhere like that."

Tony made his answer enthusiastic. "I never thought I'd meet three such people in my life—one, perhaps, but not three. And there are literally hundreds of people here who are capable of the same sort of thing."

Eve was still watching the plane. "I like Dave Ransdell."

"No one could help liking him," Tony agreed.

"He's so interested in everything, and yet so aloof," went on Eve, still watching. "In spite of all he's been through with us, he's still absolutely terrified of me."

"I can understand that," said Tony grimly.

"But you've never been that way about me."

"I didn't show it that way; no. But I know—and you know—what it means."

"Yes, I know it," Eve replied simply.

The sun, which had been shielded by a cloud, suddenly shone on them, and both glanced toward it.

Off there to the side of the sun, and hidden by its glare, moved the Bronson Bodies on their paths which would cause them to circle the sun and return—one to pass close to the earth and the other to shatter the world—in little more than seven months more.

"If they are away only thirty days, we're not to count them missing," Eve was saying—of the crew of the airplane, of course. "If they're not back in thirty—we're to forget them. Especially we're not to send anyone to search for them."

"Who said so?"

"David. It's the last thing he asked."

## CHAPTER XVI

### The Saga

THE thirty days raced by. Under the circumstances, time could not drag. Nine-tenths of the people at Hendron's encampment spent their waking and sleeping hours under a death-sentence. No one could be sure of a place on the Space Ship. No one, in fact, was positive that the colossal rocket would be able to leave the earth. Every man, every woman, knew that in six months the two Bronson Bodies would return from their rush into the space beyond the sun; even the most sanguine knew that a contact was inevitable.

Consequently every day, every hour, was precious to them. They were intelligent, courageous people. They collaborated in keeping up the general morale. The various department heads in the miniature city made every effort to occupy their colleagues and workers—and Hendron's own foresight had assisted in the procedure. . . .

The First Passage was followed by relative calm. As soon as order had been restored, a routine was set up. Everyone had his or her duty. Those duties were divided into five parts: First, the preparation of the rocket itself; second, the preparation of the rocket's equipment and load; third, observation of the receding and returning Bodies to determine their nature and exact course; fourth, maintenance of the life of the colony; fifth, miscellaneous occupations.

Hendron, in charge of the first division, spent most of his time in the rocket's vast hangar, the laboratories and the machine-shop. Bronson headed the second division. The third duty was shared by several astronomers; and in this division Eve, with her phenomenal skill in making precise measurements, was an important worker. The maintenance division was under the direction of Dodson, and under Dodson, a subcommittee headed by Jack Taylor took charge of sports and amusements. Tony was assigned to the miscellaneous category, as were the three absent adventurers.

The days did not suffice for the work to be done, particularly in preparation of the Space Ship.

Hendron had the power. Under the pressure of impending doom, the group laboring under him had "liberated" the amazing energy in the atom—under laboratory conditions. They had possessed, therefore, a potential driving power enormously in excess of that ever made available before. They could "break up" the atom at will, and set its almost endless energies to work; but what material could harness that energy and direct it into a driving force for the Space Ship?

Hendron and his group experimented for hour after desperate hour through their days, with one metal, another alloy and another after another.

At night, in the reaction of relaxation, there were games, motion pictures which had been preserved, and a variety of private enterprises which included organization and rehearsal of a very fine orchestra. There were dances, too; and while the thin crescents of the Bronson Bodies hung in the sky like cosmic swords of Damocles, there were plays satirizing human hopes and fates in the shed next to that wherein the Space Ship, still lacking its engine, was being prepared.

The excellent temper of the colony was flawed rarely. However, there were occasional lapses. One night during a dance a girl from California suddenly became hysterical and was carried from the hall shouting: *"I won't die!"* On another occasion a Berlin astronomer was found dead in his bed—beside him an empty bottle of sleeping-powders holding down a note which read: *"Esteemed friends: The vitality of youth is required to meet the tension of these terrible days with calmness. I salute you."* The astronomer was buried with honors.

TONY perceived an evidence of the increasing tension in Eve when they walked, late one afternoon, through the near-by woods.

She saw on the pine-needle carpet of the forest a white flower. She plucked it, looked at it, smelled it and carried it away. After they had proceeded silently for some distance, she said: "It's strange to think about matters like this flower. To think that there will never be any more flowers like this again in the universe—unless we take seeds with us!"

"That impresses you, perhaps," said Tony, "because we can come closer to realizing the verdict—no more flowers—than we can the verdict 'no more us'."

"I suppose so, Tony. Did David ever tell you that, in his first conference at Capetown with Lord Rhondin and Professor Bronson, they were excited over realizing there would be no more lions?"

"No," said Tony, very quietly. "He never mentioned it to me."

"Tell me, Tony," she asked quickly, "you aren't jealous?"

"How, under the conditions laid down by your father," retorted Tony, "could anybody be 'jealous?' You're not going to be free to pick or choose your own husband—or mate—or whatever he'll be called, on Bronson Alpha. And if we never get there, certainly I'll have nothing to be jealous about."

The strain was telling, too, on Tony.

"He may not even return to us here," Eve reminded. "And we would never know what happened to the three of them."

"It would have to be a good deal, to stop them. Each one's damn' resourceful in his own way; and Ransdell is sure a flyer," Tony granted ungrudgingly. "Yet if the plane cracked, they'd never get back. There's not a road ten miles long that isn't broken by some sort of landslip or a chasm. Land travel has simply ceased. It isn't possible that there's a railroad of any length anywhere in operation; and a car would have to be an amphibian as well as a tank to get anywhere.

"Sometimes, when day follows day and nobody arrives or passes, I think it must mean that everyone else in the world is dead; then I remember the look of the land—especially of the roads, and I understand it. This certainly has become a mess of a world; and I suppose the best we can expect is some such state awaiting us," Tony smiled grimly, "if we get across to Bronson Alpha."

"No; that's one of the funny things about our possible future situation. If we get across to Bronson Alpha, we'll find far less damage there."

"Why?" Tony had not happened to be with the scientists when this had been discussed.

"Because Bronson Alpha seems certain to be a world a lot like this; and it has never been as close as we have been to Bronson Beta. It wasn't the passing of Bronson Alpha that tore us up so badly; it was the passing of the big one, Bronson Beta. Now, Bronson Alpha has never been nearly so close to Bronson Beta as we have been. Alpha circles Beta, but never gets within a million miles of it. So if we ever step upon that world, we'll find it about as it has been."

AS it has been—for how many years?" Tony asked.

"The ages and epochs of travel through space . . . You ought to talk more with Professor Bronson, Tony. He just *lives* there. He's so sure we'll get there! Exactly how, he doesn't bother about; he's passed that on to Father. His work assumes we can get across space in the Ship, and land. He starts with the landing; what may we reasonably expect to find there, beyond water and air—and soil? Which of us, who may make up the possible crew of the ship, will have most chances to survive under the prob-

"Those human beings who have not perished, have reverted to savagery, almost without exception."

able conditions? What immediate supplies and implements—food and so on—must we have with us? What ultimate supplies—seeds and seedlings to furnish us with food later? What animals, what birds and insects and crustacea, should we take along?

"You see, that world must be dead, Tony. It must have been dead, preserved in the frightful, complete cold of absolute zero for millions of years. . . . You'd be surprised at some of the assumptions Professor Bronson makes.

"He assumes, among other things, that we can find some edible food—some sort of grain, probably, which absolute zero would have preserved. He assumes that some vegetable life—the vegetation that springs from spores, which mere cold cannot destroy—will spring to life automatically.

"Tony, you must see his lists of most essential things to take with us. His work is the most fascinating here. What animals, do you suppose, he's figured we must take with us to help us to survive?"

ON the tenth of August, the inhabitants of the strangely isolated station which existed for the perfection of the Space Ship, began to look—although prematurely—for the return of the explorers into the world which had been theirs.

The three had agreed on the fourteenth as the first possible day for their return; but so great was the longing to learn the state of the outside world, that on the twelfth even those who felt no particular concern for the men who ventured in the airplane, began to watch the sky, casting upward glances as their duties took them out of doors.

It was difficult for anyone to work on the appointed day. The fourteenth was bright. The wind was gentle and visibility good—although the weather had never returned to what would have been considered normal for northern Michigan in the summer. There was always a moderate amount of haze. Sometimes the sky was obscured by new and interminable clouds of volcanic dust. The thermometer ranged between eighty and ninety-five, seldom falling below the first figure. From the laboratory, the dining-halls, the shops, power-house, kitchens and the hangar, men and women constantly emerged into the outdoors to stand silently, inspecting the sky.

NO one went to bed that night until long after the usual hour. Then, reluctantly, those overwearied, those who had arduous tasks and heavy responsibilities on the morrow, regretfully withdrew. Fears now had voices.

"They're so damn' resourceful, I can't believe they could miss out."

"But—after all—what do we know about outside conditions?"

"Think of the risks! God only knows what they might have faced. Anything, from the violence of a mob to a volcanic blast blowing them out of the sky."

Tony was in charge of the landing arrangements. At three A. M. he was sitting on the edge of the field with Eve. Hendron had left, after giving instructions that he was to be wakened if they arrived. They had little to say to each other. They sat with straining eyes and ears. Coffee and soup simmered on a camp-stove near the plane-shed against which they leaned their chairs. Dr. Dodson lay on a cot, ready in case the landing should result in accident.

At four, nothing had changed. It began to grow light. Since the passing of

the Bronson Bodies, dawn had been minutes earlier than formerly.

Eve stood up stiffly and stretched. "Maybe I'd better leave. I have some work laid out for morning."

But she had not walked more than ten steps when she halted.

"I thought I heard motors," she said.

Tony nodded, unwilling to break the stillness. A dog barked in the camp. Far away toward the stockyards a rooster crowed. The first sun rays tipped the lowest clouds with gold.

Then the sound came unmistakably. For a full minute they heard the rise and fall of a churning motor—remote, soft, yet unmistakable.

"It's coming!" Eve said. She rushed to Tony and held his shoulder.

HE lifted his hand. The sound vanished, came back again—a waspish drone somewhere in the sky. Their eyes swept the heavens. Then they saw it simultaneously—a speck in the dawning atmosphere. The speck enlarged. It took the shape of a cross.

"Tony!" Eve breathed.

The ship was not flying well. It lurched and staggered in its course.

Tony rushed to the cot where Dodson slept. "They're coming," he said, shaking the Doctor. "And they may need you."

The ship was nearer. Those who beheld it now appreciated not only the irregularity of its course, but the fact that it was flying slowly.

"They've only got two motors," somebody said. The words were not shouted.

Scarcely breathing, they stood at the edge of the field. The plane made a dizzy line toward them. It flew like a duck mortally wounded.

There was no sign of the men in the cabin. The pilot did not wiggle his wings or circle. In a shambling slip he dropped toward the ground, changing his course a little in order not to strike the ten-foot precipice which had bisected the field. The plane was a thousand yards from the ground. Five hundred.

"She's going to crash!" some one yelled.

Tony, Dodson and Jack Taylor were already in a light truck. Fire-apparatus and stretchers were in the space behind them. The truck's engine raced.

The plane touched the ground heavily, bounced, touched again, ran forward and slewed. It nosed over. The propeller on the forward engine bent.

Tony threw in the clutch of the car and shot toward it. As he approached, he realized that fire had not started. He leaped from the truck, and with the Doctor and Jack at his heels, he flung open the cabin door and looked into the canted chamber.

Everything that the comfortable cabin had once contained was gone. Two men lay on the floor at the forward end—Vanderbilt and James. Ransdell was unconscious over the instrument panel. Vanderbilt looked up at Tony. His face was paper-white; his shirt was blood-soaked. And yet there showed momentarily in the fading light in his eyes a spark of unquenchable, deathless, reckless and almost diabolical glee. His voice was quite distinct. He said: "In the words of the immortal Lindbergh, *'Here we are.'*" Then he fainted.

James was unconscious.

The truck came back toward the throng very slowly and carefully. In its bed, Dodson looked up from his three charges. He announced briefly as way was made for them: "They've been through hell. They're shot, bruised, half-starved. But so far, I've found nothing surely fatal." Then to Tony, who was still driving: "You can put on a little speed, Tony. I want to get these boys where I can treat them."

Two or three hundred people waited outside the surgery door for an hour. Then a man appeared and said: "Announcements will be made about the condition of the flyers in the dining-hall at breakfast time."

The waiting crowd moved away.

An hour later, with every member of the community who could leave his post assembled, Hendron stepped to the rostrum in the dining-hall.

"All three will live," he said simply.

Cheering made it impossible for him to continue. He waited for silence. "James has a broken arm and concussion. Vanderbilt has been shot through the shoulder. Ransdell brought in the ship with a compound fracture of the left arm, and five machine-gun bullets in his right thigh. They undoubtedly have traveled for some time in that state. Ransdell's feat is one of distinguished heroism."

Again cheering broke tumultuously through the hall. Again Hendron stood quietly until it subsided. "This evening we will meet again. At that time I shall read to you from the diary which James kept during the past thirty days.

I have skimmed some of its pages. It is a remarkable document. I must prepare you by saying, my friends, that those of our fellow human beings who have not perished, have reverted to savagery, almost without notable exception."

A hush followed those words. Then Hendron stepped from the platform, and a din of excited conversation filled the room. The scientist stopped to speak to three or four people, then came over to his daughter. He seemed excited.

"Eve," he said, "I want you and Drake to come to the office right away."

BRONSON and Dodson were already there when they arrived.

A dozen other men joined them; and last to appear was Hendron himself. Everyone was standing, and Hendron invited them to sit down. It was easy to perceive his excitement now. His surpassingly calm blue eyes were fiery. His cheeks concentrated their color in two red spots. He commenced to speak immediately.

"My friends, the word I have to add to my announcement in the hall is of stupendous importance!

"When we took off Ransdell's clothes, we found belted to his body, and heavily wrapped, a note, a map, and a chunk of metal. You will remember, doubtless, that Ransdell was once a miner and a prospector. His main interest had always been diamonds. And his knowledge of geology and metallurgy is self-taught and of the practical sort."

Bronson, unable to control himself, burst into speech. "Good God, Hendron! He found it!"

The scientist continued impassively: "The eruptions caused by the passage of the Bodies were of so intense a nature that they brought to earth not only molten rock, but vast quantities of the internal substance of the earth—which, as you know, is presumably of metal, as the earth's total density is slightly greater than that of iron. Ransdell noticed on the edge of such a flow a quantity of solid unmelted material. Realizing that the heat surrounding it had been enormous, he secured specimens. He found the substance to be a metal or natural alloy, hard but machinable. Remembering our dilemma here in the matter of lining for the power tubes for the Space Ship, he carefully carried back a sample —protecting it, in fact, with his life.

"My friends,"—Hendron's voice began to tremble,—"for the past seventy-five minutes this metal has withstood not only the heat of an atomic blast, but the immeasurably greater heat of Professor Kane's recently developed atomic furnace. We are at the end of the quest!"

Suddenly, to the astonishment of his hearers, Hendron bowed his head in his arms and cried like a woman.

No one moved. They waited in respect, or in a gratitude that was almost hysterical. In a few moments Hendron lifted his face.

"I apologize. These are days when nerves are worn thin. But all of you must realize the strain under which I have labored. Perhaps you will forgive me. I am moved to meditate on the almost supernatural element of this discovery. At a time when nature has doomed the world, she seems to have offered the means of escape to those who, let us hope and trust, are best fitted to save her most imaginative gesture of creation—mankind."

Hendron bowed his head once more, and Eve came wordlessly to his side.

HENDRON stood before an audience of nearly a thousand persons. It was a feverish audience. It had a gayety mingled with solemnity such as, on a smaller scale, overwhelmed the thoughtful on a night in November in 1918 when the Armistice had been signed.

Hendron bowed to the applause.

"I speak to you tonight, my friends, in the first full flush of the knowledge that your sacrifices and sufferings have not been in vain. Ransdell has solved our last technical problem. We have assured ourselves by observation that life on the planet-to-be will be possible. My heart is surging with pride and wonderment when I find myself able to say: man shall live; we are the forefathers of his new history."

The wild applause proclaimed the hopes no one had dared declare before.

"But tonight I wish to talk not of the future. There is time enough for that. I wish to talk—or rather to read —of the present." He picked up from a small table the topmost of a number of ordinary notebooks. "I have here James' record of the journey that brought us salvation. I cannot read you all of it. But I shall have it printed in the course of the next few days. I anticipate that printing merely because I understand your collective interest in the document.

"This is the first of the seven note-

books James filled. I shall read with the minimum of comment."

He opened the book. He read:

"'August 16th. Tonight Ransdell, Vanderbilt and I descended at six o'clock precisely on a small body of water which is a residue in the bed of Lake Michigan. We are lying at anchor about a mile from Chicago.

"'Our journey has been bizarre in the extreme. Following south along what was once the coast of Lake Michigan, we flew over scenes of desolation and destruction identical with those described after our first reconnaissance. In making this direct-line flight, it was forced upon our reluctant intelligences that the world has indeed been wrecked.

"'The resultant feeling of eeriness reached its quintessence when we anchored here. Sharply outlined against the late afternoon sun stood the memorable skyline of the metropolis—relatively undamaged! With an emotion of indescribable joy, after the hours of depressive desolation, I recognized the Wrigley Building, the Tribune Tower, the 333 North Michigan Avenue Building, and others. My companions shouted, evidently sharing my emotions.

"'We had landed on the water from the north. We anchored near shore and quickly made our way to land. We exercised certain precautions, however. All of us were armed. Lots were drawn to determine whether Ransdell or Vanderbilt would remain on guard beside the ship. I was useless in that capacity, as I would be unable to fly it in case of emergency. It was agreed that the lone guard was to take off instantly upon the approach of any persons whatever. Our ship was our only refuge, our salvation, our life-insurance.

"'Vanderbilt was elected to remain. Ransdell and I started off at once toward the city. The pool on which we lay was approximately a mile in diameter and some two hundred feet below the level

**Blast furnaces were upset. Hundreds perished in the hell that existed in the steel mills.**

of the city. We started across the weird water-bottom. Mud, weeds, wrecks, débris, puddles, cracks, cliffs and steep ascents impeded our progress. But we reached the edge of what had been a lake, without mishap. The angle of our ascent had concealed the city during the latter part of our climb.

"'Our first close view was had as we scrambled to the top of a sea-wall. The streets of the metropolis stretched before us—empty. The silence of the grave, of the tomb. Chicago was a dead city.

"'We stood on the top of the wall for a few minutes. We strained our ears and eyes. There was nothing. No light in the staring windows. No plume of steam on the lofty buildings. We started forward together. Unconsciously, we had both drawn our revolvers.

"'Behind us and to the right was the Navy Pier, which I remember as the Municipal Pier. Directly ahead of us were the skyscrapers of the northern business district. We observed them from this closer point only after we had been reassured by the silence of the city, and had slipped our revolvers back into our pockets. Large sections of brick and stonework had been shaken from the sides of the buildings, leaving yawning holes which looked as if caused by shell-fire. The great windows had been shaken into the street, and wherever we went, we found the sidewalks literally buried in broken glass. A still more amazing phenomenon was noticeable from our position on the lake shore: the skyscrapers were visibly out of plumb. We made no measurements of this angulation, but I imagine some of the towers were off center by several feet, perhaps by as much as fifteen or twenty feet. No doubt the earthquakes in the vicinity had been relatively light, but the wavelike rise and fall of the land had been sufficient to tilt these great edifices, much as if they had been sticks standing perpendicularly in soft mud.

"'Ransdell and I commented on the strangeness of the spectacle, and then together we moved forward into the business district. We had crossed the railroad tracks before we found any bodies; but on the other side they appeared here and there—most of them lying underneath the cascades of glass, horribly mangled and now in a state of decomposition.

"'It was Ransdell who turned to me and in his monosyllabic, taciturn way said: "No rats. Noticed it?"

"'I was stricken by a double feeling of horror, first in the realization that upon such a ghastly scene the armies of rats should be marching, and second by the meaning of Ransdell's words—that if there were no rats, there must be some dreadful mystery to explain their absence.

"'We walked over the rubble and glass in the streets. Here and there it was necessary to circumvent an enormous pile of débris which had cascaded from the side of one of the buildings. It was immediately manifest that the people who had left Chicago had taken with them every object upon which they could lay their hands, every possession which they coveted, every article for which they thought they might find use. The stores were like open bazaars; their glass windows had been broken in by marauders or burst out by the quakes, and their contents had been ravaged.

"'We continued to notice that the dead on the street did not represent even a tithe of a tithe of the metropolitan population, and I expressed the opinion that the passing of the Bronson Bodies must have caused a mighty exodus.

"'Ransdell's reply was a shrug, and abruptly my mind was discharged upon a new course. "You think they're all upstairs?" I asked.

"'He nodded. A block farther along, we came to an open fissure. It was not a large fissure in comparison to the gigantic openings in the earth which we had seen hitherto, but it appeared to go deep into the earth, and a thin veil of steam escaped from it. As we approached it, the wind blew toward us a wisp of this exuding gas, and instantly we were thrown into fits of coughing. Our lungs burned, our eyes stung and our senses were partially confounded, so that with one accord we snatched each other's arms and ran uncertainly from the place.

"'"Gas," Ransdell said, gasping.

"'NO other words were necessary to interpret the frightful fate of Chicago; nothing could better demonstrate how profound was the disturbance under the earth's crust. For in this region noted for its freedom from seismic shocks and remote from the recognized volcanic region, it was evident that deadly, suffocating gases such as previously had found the surface only through volcanoes, here had seeped up and blotted out the population. When the Bronson Bodies

were nearest the earth and the stresses began to break the crust,—when, doubtless, part of the population in that great interior metropolis were madly fleeing and another part was grimly holding on,—there were discharged somewhere in the vicinity deadly gases of the sort which suffocated the people about Mt. Pelée and La Soufrière. Only this emission of gas—whether through cracks in the crust or through some true new crater yet to be discovered—was incomparably greater. Like those gases, largely hydrochloric, it was heavier than air; and apparently it lay like a choking cloud on the ground. When those who escaped the first suffocating currents—and apparently they were in the majority—climbed to upper floors to escape, they were followed by the rising vapors. That frightful theory explained why there were so few dead on the street, why no one had returned to the silent city, and above all, why there were no rats.

"'We would have liked to climb up the staircases of some of the buildings to test the accuracy of our concept so far as it might concern the numbers who had remained in the city, to be smothered by gas; but darkness was approaching.

"'We were sure of Vanderbilt's safety, for we had heard no shot. It was odd to think that we could expect to hear such a shot at a distance of more than a mile when we were standing in a place where recently the machine-gun fire of gangsters had been almost inaudible in the roaring daylight. Moreover, our single experience with the potency of the gas even in dilution warned us that a deeper penetration of the metropolitan area was more than dangerous.

"'We found Vanderbilt sitting upon a stone on the shore beside the plane. We pushed out to it in the collapsible boat; and while we ate supper, we told him what we had seen.

"'His comment perhaps is suitable for closing this record of the great city of Chicago: "Sitting alone, I realized what you were investigating; and for the first time, gentlemen, I understand what the end of the world would mean. I have never come so close to losing my nerve. It was awful."'"

Hendron looked up from the book. "I think, my friends, we will all find ourselves in agreement with Mr. James and Mr. Vanderbilt." He turned a few pages, and their whisper was audible in the silence of his audience. "I am now skipping a portion of Mr. James' record. It covers their investigation of the Great Lakes and describes with care the geological uplifting of that basin. From Chicago they flew to Detroit. In Detroit they found a different form of desolation. The waters of Lake Huron had poured through the city and the surrounding district, completely depopulating it and largely destroying it. They were able to land their plane on a large boulevard, a section of which was unbroken, and they refueled in the vicinity. They were disturbed by no one, and they saw no one. Cleveland had suffered a similar fate. They then continued their flight to Pittsburgh. I read from Mr. James' record:

"'LIKE God leading the children of Israel, Pittsburgh remains in my memory as a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. My astonishment may be imagined when I say that, as we approached the city after our visit to the ravaged metropolises of Ohio, we saw smoke arising against the sky. Presently the lichen-like area of buildings began to clarify in the morning haze. Vanderbilt dampered the motors and we dropped toward the Monongahela River, which was full to the brim of the levees and threatened to inundate the city. Earthquakes had half wrecked its structures. They lay broken and battered on "The Point" which lies between the two rivers. Smoke and steam emerged from a rent in Mt. Washington. The bridges were all down. I noticed that one of them had fallen directly upon a river steamer in which human beings had evidently sought to escape.

"'Our ship came to rest, and we taxied cautiously toward one of the submerged bridges—every landing on water was dangerous, because of the likelihood of unsuspected snags, and we always exercised the maximum of care. From the top of the pontoon I threw a rope over one of the girders, and we made fast, the perceptible current keeping us clear. We went ashore by way of the taut rope.

"'It was easy to perceive the cause of the smoke. A large area of Pittsburgh, or what remained of Pittsburgh, was in flames, and to our ears came clearly a not distant din. We had already guessed its identity in our descent. It was the din of battle. Rifles cracked incessantly; machine-guns clattered; and occasionally we heard the cough of a hand-grenade.

"'It was not wise to proceed farther. Nevertheless, bent upon discovering the

nature of the combat, I insisted on going forward while my companions returned to guard our precious ship. I had not invaded the city deeply before I saw evidence of the fighting. Bullets buzzed overhead. I took cover. Not far away, in a street that was a shambles, I saw men moving. They carried rifles which they fired frequently; and they wore, I perceived, the tattered remnants of the uniform of the National Guard.

"'A squad of these men retreated toward me, and as they did so, I perceived their enemy. Far down the street a mass of people surged over the barricade-like ruins of a building. They were terrible to see, even at that distance. Half naked, savage, screaming, armed with every tool that might be used as a weapon—a mob of the most desperate sort. The retreating squad stopped, took aim and several of the approaching savages fell. In their united voices I detected the tones of women.

"'As the guardsmen reached my vicinity, one of them clapped his hand to his arm, dropped his rifle and staggered away from his fellows to shelter. The squad was at that instant reinforced by a number of soldiers who carried a machine-gun. The mob was temporarily checked by its clatter.

"'I made my way to the wounded man, and he gratefully accepted the ministrations I could offer from the small kit I carried in my pocket. His right arm had been pierced. It was from him that I was able to learn the story of Pittsburgh. Some day I hope I may expand his tale into a complete document, but since my time at the moment is short, and since we are now flying southward and writing is difficult, I will compress it.

"'The man's name was George Schultz. He had been a bank-clerk, married, the father of two children, and had joined the National Guard because it offered an opportunity for recreation. He told me rather pitifully that he had doubted the menace of the Bronson Bodies, and that he had compelled his wife to keep the children in their flat, against her better judgment. His wife had wished to take them to their aunt's home in Kansas. On the night of the twenty-sixth, although frightened by the size of the Bronson Bodies, he had nonchalantly gone out to a drug-store for cigarettes, and the first tremor which struck Pittsburgh had shaken down his home on the heads of his family. He was not very clear about the next forty-eight hours.

"'The mills at Pittsburgh had been working to the last moment. The Government deemed that the great steel city was in no danger from the tides, and had used it for manufacturing during the last days. Schultz described to me the horrible effect of the earthquakes in the steel-mills, as blast furnaces were upset and as ladles tipped their molten contents onto the mill floors. Hundreds perished in the artificial hell that existed in the steel-mills; but tens of thousands died in the city proper. In many parts of the city area the effect of the earthquakes was rendered doubly more frightful by the collapse of the honeycomb of mine galleries underlying the surface. Blocks of buildings literally dropped out of sight in some places.

"'After the quake, what was left of the administrative powers immediately organized the remnant of the police and National Guard. Food, water and medical attention were their first objectives, and policing only a secondary consideration. However, food ran low; medical supplies gave out; the populace rebelled.

"'Three days before our arrival, a mob had armed itself, stormed one of the warehouses in which a commissary functioned, and captured it. Encouraged by that success, the mob had attempted to take over the distribution of the remaining food and supplies.

"'I had appeared on the scene apparently after the mob and the forces of law and order had been fighting for three days; and it was not necessary for Schultz to explain to me that in a very short time the National Guardsmen and police would be routed: their numbers were vastly inferior; their ammunition was being exhausted, and organized warfare was out of the question in that madman's terrain.

"'I abandoned Schultz to his comrades and made my way back to the river.

"'We lost no time in taking off; and as we flew over Pittsburgh, we could see below us, moving antlike through the ruins, the savage mob, with scattered bands of guardsmen and police opposing it.'"

AGAIN Hendron looked up from the notebook.

"That, my friends, ends the account of the fate of Pittsburgh.

"Mr. James' diary next describes a hazardous flight across the Appalachians and their arrival at Washington, or rather the site of Washington: 'It is not possible to describe our feelings when we ac-

**Their ammunition was being exhausted. Organized warfare was out of the question in that madman's terrain.**

tually flew over the site of Washington. We had passed the state in which emotions may be expressed by commonplace thought. We had reached a condition, in fact, where our senses rejected all feeling, and our brains made a record that might be useful in the future while it was insensible in the present. When I say that the ocean covered what had been the Capital of our nation, I mean it precisely. No spire, no pinnacle, no monument, no tower appeared above the blue water that rippled to the feet of the Appalachian chain. There was no trace of Chesapeake Bay, no sign of the Potomac River, no memory of the great works of architecture which had existed at the Capital. It was gone—gone into the grave of Atlantis; and over it was the inscrutable salt sea, stretching to the utmost reaches of the eye. The Eastern seaboard has dropped. We turned back after assuring ourselves that this condition obtained along the entire East Coast.'

"Mr. James," Hendron said, "now describes their return across the mountains. He adds to our geographical knowledge by revealing that the whole Mississippi Basin, as well as the East Coast and Gulf States, has been submerged. Cincinnati is under water. The sea swells not only over Memphis but over St. Louis, where it becomes a wide estuary stretching in two great arms almost to Chicago and to Davenport.

"They next investigated the refuge area in the Middle West. Here they found indescribable chaos, and although order was being made out of it, although they were hospitably received by the President himself in Hutchinson, Kansas, which had become the temporary Capital of the United States, they found the migrated population in a sorry plight. Mr. James uses the President's own words to describe that predicament. Again I refer to the diary.

"'Following the directions we had been given, we flew to Hutchinson. For a number of reasons, Hutchinson had been chosen as the temporary Capital of the

refuge area. It is normally fifteen hundred feet above sea level. It is in the center of a rich grain, farm, poultry, dairy, live-stock and lumber region. It has large packing plants, grain elevators, creameries, flour-mills. It is served by three railroads, and hence is an excellent site for the accumulation of produce. Thither, in the weeks preceding the passage of the Bronson Bodies, the multitudes of the United States flocked.

"'The speed of that migration accelerated greatly after the Bronson Bodies

had appeared above the southern horizon, and the most obtuse person could appreciate in their visible diameter the approach of something definite and fearful. It is estimated that more than eleven million people from the East Coast and three million from the West Coast actually reached the Mississippi Valley before the arrival of the Bodies. More than half of them were exterminated by the tide which rushed up the valley and which remained in the form of a gigantic bay in the new sunken area that now almost bisects the United States. We found Hutchinson a scene of prodigious military and civil activity—it resembled more than anything else an area behind the front lines, in some titanic war.

"'After presentation of our credentials and a considerable wait, we left our plane, which was put under a heavy guard, and drove in an automobile to the new "White House"—a ramshackle rehabilitation of a huge metal garage. Here we found the President and his Cabinet; and here sitting around a table, we listened to his words. The President was worn and thin. His hand trembled visibly as he smoked. We learned later that he had been living on a diet of beans and bacon. He looked at us with considerable interest and said: "I sent for you, because I wished to hear about Cole Hendron's project. I know what he is planning to do, and I'm eager to learn if he thinks he will be successful."

"'We explained the situation to the President, and he was delighted to know that we had survived the crises of the Passing. He then continued gravely: "I believe that Hendron will be successful. You alone, perhaps, may carry away the hope of humanity and the records of this life on earth; and I will return to the tasks confronting me here with the solace offered by the knowledge that the enterprise could be in no—"'"

HERE Hendron stopped, realizing that he was reading praise of himself to his colleagues. A subdued murmur of sympathetic amusement ran through the crowd of listeners, and the scientist read again from James' journal.

"'"The theory of migration to the Western Plains," the President told us, "was correct in so far as it concerned escape from the tides. It was mistaken only in that it underestimated the fury of the quakes, and particularly the force and velocity of the hurricane which accompanied them. I removed from Washington on the night of the twenty-fourth. At that time the migration was proceeding in an orderly fashion. Transcontinental highways, and particularly the Lincoln Highway, were choked with traffic, and railroads were overburdened; but the cantonments were ready, the food was here, the spring crops were thriving and I felt reasonably certain that with millions of my countrymen the onslaught might be survived. I doubted, and I still profoundly doubt, that the earth itself will be destroyed by a collision. Accurate as the predictions of the scientists may be, I still trust that God Himself will intervene if necessary with some unforeseen derangement and save the planet from total destruction."

"'The President then described the passing of the Bronson Bodies and their effect on the prodigious Plains Settlement on the night of the twenty-fifth.

"'"We were as nearly ready as could be expected. People arrived in the area at the rate of three hundred thousand per hour that night. Tent colonies if nothing better, bulging granaries and a hastily made but strong supply organization was ready for them.

"'"Then the blow fell. Throughout the district the earth opened up. Lava poured from it. On the western boundary of our territory, which extended into Eastern Colorado, a veritable sea of lava and molten metal poured into the country drained by the Solomon, Saline, Smoky Hill and Arkansas rivers. A huge volcanic range was thrown up along the North Platte. Many if not most of our flimsily constructed buildings were toppled to the ground in utter confusion. However, for the first few hours of this awful disaster most of our people escaped. It was the hurricane which went through our ranks like a scythe. In this flat country the wind blew unobstructed. Those who could, hastened into cyclone-cellars, of which there are many. These cellars, however, often collapsed from the force of the earthquakes, and many died in them. No one knows what velocity the wind attained, but an idea of it may be had by the fact that it swept the landscape almost bare, that it moved our stone buildings.

"'"This wind-driven scourge, which continued for thirty-six hours, abated on a scene of ruin. When I emerged from the cellar in which I had remained, I did not believe that a single one of my countrymen had survived it until I saw them reappear slowly, painfully, more often

wounded than not, like soldiers coming out of shell-holes after an extensive bombardment. Our titanic effort had been for nothing. With the remnant of our ranks, we collected what we could find of our provisions and stores. In that hurricane my hopes of a united and re-formed United States were dashed to the ground. I now am struggling to preserve, not so much the nation, but that fraction of the race which has been left under my command; and I struggle against tremendous odds."

"'Those were the words of the President of the United States. After the interview he wished us Godspeed and good fortune in our projected journey; and we left him, a solitary figure whose individual greatness had been like a rock to his people.'"

Hendron put down the fifth of the notebooks from which he had been reading. "We now come," he said, "to the last stages of this remarkable flight. James' sixth diary describes the grant of fuel to them by the President, and their departure from the ruins of the great mushroom area that had grown up in Kansas and Nebraska, only to be destroyed. They made an attempt at flight over the Rockies, but found there conditions both terrestrial and atmospheric which turned them back. Hot lava still belched from the age-old hills; the sky was sulphurous and air-currents and temperature wholly uncertain. They had been flying for three weeks, sleeping little, living on bad food, and it was time for them to return if they were to keep their pledged date. They decided to go back by way of St. Paul and Milwaukee.

"On the way to St. Paul, they were forced down on a small lake and it was there that Ransom noticed the unmelted metal in a flow of magma. The country was apparently deserted, and they investigated a tongue of molten metal after an arduous and perilous journey to reach it. When they were sure of its nature, they collected samples and brought them back to the plane. Repairs to the oil-feeding system were required, and they were made. They took off on the day before their return, and reached the vicinity of St. Paul safely. It was in St. Paul —which as you will realize, is less than two hundred miles from here—that they received the injuries with which they returned. St. Paul was in much the same condition as Pittsburgh, except that it had undergone the further decay occasioned by two additional weeks of famine and pestilence. They landed on the Mississippi River near the shore, late that night. Almost immediately they were attacked, doubtless because it was believed they possessed food. The last words in James' diary are these, 'Boats have put out toward us. One of them has a machine-gun mounted in the bow. Ransdell has succeeded in starting the motors, but the plane is listing. I believe that bullets have perforated one of the pontoons, and that it is filling. We may never leave the water. Vanderbilt is throwing out every object that can be removed, in order to lighten the ship. Our forward progress is slow. It may be that it will be necessary to repulse the first boatload before we can take off. . . . It is.'"

Hendron dropped the seventh notebook on the table. "You may construct what followed, my friends. The hand-to-hand fight on the plane with a boatload of hunger-driven maniacs—a fight in which all three heroic members of the airplane company were hurt. We may imagine them at last beating back their assailants, and with their floundering ship taking off before a second boatload was upon them. We may imagine Ransdell guiding his ship through the night with gritted teeth while his occasional backward glances offered him little reassurance of the safety of his comrades. The rest we know. And this, my friends, completes their saga."

## CHAPTER XVII

### The Attack

AUTUMN had set in, but it was like no autumn the world had ever known before. The weather remained unnaturally hot. The skies were still hazy. An enormous amount of fine volcanic dust, discharged mostly from the chain of great craters that rimmed the Pacific Ocean, remained suspended in the upper air-currents; and when some of it settled, it was constantly renewed.

Vulcanists had enumerated, before the disturbance of the First Passage, some four hundred and thirty active volcanic vents. Counting the cones which, because of their slightly eroded condition, had been considered dormant, there had been several thousand. All of these, it now was calculated, had become active. Along the Andes, through Central America, through the Pacific States into Canada, then along the Aleutian chain of craters to Asia, and turning southward

through Kamchatka, Japan and the Philippines into the East Indies stood the cones which continued to erupt into the atmosphere. The sun rose red and huge, and set in astounding haloes. Tropical rains, tawny with volcanic dust, fell in torrents. Steam and vapors, as well as lavas and dust, were pouring from innumerable vents out from under the cracked and fissured crust of the world.

The neighboring vent, opened in the vicinity of St. Paul, supplied Hendron with more than the necessary amount of the new metal, which could be machined but which withstood even the heat of the atomic blast. Hendron had not waited for his explorers to recover. On the day after the reading of the diaries, he had flown with another pilot, found a source of the strange material from the center of the earth; and he had loaded the plane. Repeated trips had thereafter provided more than enough metal for the tubes of the atomic engines.

The engine-makers could not melt the metal by any heat they applied; they could not fuse it; but they could cut it, and by patient machining, shape it into lining of tubes which, at last, endured the frightful temperatures of the atom releasing its power.

The problem of the engine for the Space Ship was solved. There existed no doubt that it could, when required, lift the ship from the earth, successfully oppose the pull of gravity and propel it into interplanetary regions.

This transformed the psychology of the camp. It was not merely that hope appeared to be realized at last. The effect of Ransdell's discovery was far more profound than that.

The finding of the essential metal became, in the over-emotionalized mind of the camp, no mere accident, or bit of good luck, or result of intelligence. It became an event "ordained," and therefore endowed with more than physical meaning. It was a portent and omen of promise—indeed, of more than promise.

And now there ensued a period of frantic impatience for the return of the Bronson Bodies! For the camp, in its new hysteria, had become perfectly confident that the Space Ship must succeed in making its desperate journey. The camp was resolved—that part of it which should be chosen—to go.

"When a resolution is once taken," observed Polybius nearly two millennia before, "nothing tortures men like the wait before it can be executed."

TONY kept on at his work, tormented by a torture of his own. Together with Eliot James and Vanderbilt, who had been less hurt than he, Ransdell had now recovered from his wounds.

For his part in the great adventure which James had reported in detail, the pilot would have become popular, even if he had not also proved the discoverer of the metal that would not melt. That by itself would have lifted him above every other man in the camp.

Not above Hendron in authority; for the flyer never in the slightest attempted to assert authority. Ransdell became, indeed, even more retiring and reserved than before; and so the women of the camp, and especially the younger ones, worshiped him.

When Eve walked with Ransdell, as she often did, Tony became a potential killer. In reaction, he could laugh at himself; he knew it was the hysteria working in him—his fear and terrors at facing almost inevitable and terrible death, and at knowing that Eve also must be annihilated. It was these emotions that at moments almost broke out in a demonstration against Ransdell.

Almost but never did—quite.

When Tony was with Eve, she seemed to him less the civilized creature of cultured and sophisticated society, and more an impulsive and primitive woman.

Her very features seemed altered, bolder, her eyes darker and larger, her lips softer, her hair filled with a brighter fire. She was stronger, also, and more taut.

"We're going to get over," she said to him one day. "To get over" meant to make the passage successfully to Bronson Alpha, when it returned. The camp had phrases and euphemisms of its own for the hopes and fears it discussed.

"Yes," agreed Tony. No one, now, openly doubted it, whatever he hid in his heart. "How do you—" he began, and then made his challenge less directly personal by adding: "How do you girls now like the idea of ceasing to be individuals and becoming 'biological representatives of the human race'—after we get across?"

HE saw Eve flush, and the warmth in her stirred him. "We talk about it, of course," she replied. "And—I suppose we'll do it."

"Breed the race, you mean," Tony continued mercilessly. "Reproduce the type—mating with whoever is best to insure the strongest and best children for

the place, and to establish a new generation of the greatest possible variety from the few individuals which we can hope to land safely. That's the program."

"Yes," said Eve, "that's the purpose."

For a minute he did not speak, thinking how—though he temporarily might possess her—so Ransdell might, too. And others. His hands clenched; and Eve, looking at him, said:

"If you get across, Tony, there probably must be other wives—other mates—for you too."

"Would you care?"

"Care, Tony?" she began, her face flooded with color. She checked herself. "No one must care; we have sworn not to care—to conquer caring. And we must train ourselves to it now, you know. We can't suddenly stop caring about such things, when we find ourselves on Bronson Alpha, unless we've at least made a start at downing selfishness here."

"You call it selfishness?"

"I know it's not the word, Tony; but I've no word for it. *Morals* isn't the word, either. What are morals, fundamentally, Tony? Morals are nothing but the code of conduct required of an individual in the best interests of the group of which he's a member. So what's 'moral' here wouldn't be moral at all on Bronson Alpha."

"Damn Bronson Alpha! Have you no feeling for me?"

"Tony, is there any sense in making more difficult for ourselves what we may have to do?"

"Yes; damn it," Tony burst out again, "I want it difficult. I want it impossible for you!"

WANDERERS from other places began to discover the camp. While they were few in number, it was possible to feed and clothe and even shelter them, at least temporarily. Then there was no choice but to give them a meal and send them away. But daily the dealings of the desperate, reckless groups became more and more ugly and hazardous.

Tony found that Hendron long ago had foreseen the certainty of such emergencies, and had provided against it. Tony himself directed the extension of the protection of the camp by a barrier of barbed-wire half a mile beyond the buildings. There were four gates which he sentineled and where he turned back all vagrant visitors. If this was cruelty, he had no alternative but chaos. Let the barriers be broken, and the settlement would be overwhelmed.

But bigger and uglier bands continued to come. It became a commonplace to turn them back at the bayonet-point and under the threat of machine-guns. Tony had to forbid, except in special cases, the handing out of rations to the vagrants. The issuance of food not only permitted the gangs to lurk in the neighborhood, but it brought in others. It became unsafe for anyone—man or woman—to leave the enclosure except by airplane.

Rifles cracked from concealments, and bullets sang by; some found their marks.

Ransdell scouted the surroundings from the air; and Tony and three others, unshaven and disheveled, crept forth at night and mingled with the men besieging the camp. They discovered that Hendron's group was hopelessly outnumbered.

"What saves us for the time," Tony reported to Hendron on his return, "is that they're not yet united. They are gangs and groups which fight savagely enough among themselves, but in general tolerate each other. They join on only one thing. They want to get in here. They want to get us—and our women.

"There are women among them, but not like ours; and they are too few for so many men. Our women also would be too few—but they want them.

"They talk about smashing in here and getting our food, our shelters—and our women. They'd soon be killing each other in here, after they wiped us out. That desire—and hate of us—is their sole force of cohesion."

Hendron considered silently. "There was no way for us to avoid that hate. And there is no hate like that of men who have lost their morale, against those who have retained it."

Tony looked away. "If they get in, we'll see something new in savagery."

THE attack began on the following night. It began with gunfire, raking the barriers. A siren on top of the power-house sounded a wholly unnecessary warning. "Women to cover! Men to arms!"

Low on the horizon that night, which was speckled here by gunfire, shone two new evening stars. They were the Bronson Bodies which now had turned about the sun and were rushing toward their next meeting-place with the earth: one of them to offer itself for refuge, the other to end the world forever.

**This thrilling story continues with mounting interest in the forthcoming January issue.**

*The desperate adventure of an American mine-manager in China.*

# The Bamboo Jewel

HANECY took hold of the mine vigorously, and inside six months had doubled the tin output. The previous manager had left the mine in good shape; and Hanecy knew his business, and was used to Chinese ways.

Owing to the ceaseless turmoil of interior China in these latter days, Hanecy left his family at Canton. True, the Gomorrah mine was only three days' travel from Yunnan City, and when Hanecy took over, Yunnan was peaceful and well-controlled; but anything might happen, so Hanecy played safe.

In the first month of his incumbency, Hanecy made firm friends with the hunter Ngan, who scorned any idea of work, but trailed the hills with his old Lébel rifle and brought in game for the village, pelts for himself, and occasional wildfowl for Hanecy, who supplied him with cartridges. The village had grown up around the mine, naturally. When trouble began, Hanecy could learn nothing from the native managers, so one night he sent for Ngan.

Ngan came in the evening, after Erh, the Number One boy, had departed with his staff for the village, and Hanecy was alone in his house. It had been a temple once, and was set up on the hill-flank above the village, its pleasant courtyard looking out across the valley at the hills where the moon rose. Hanecy was lying stretched out in his Singapore chair with his pipe, when Ngan came and squatted before him, grinning cheerfully.

"Ngan, there is trouble down below," said Hanecy. "Whence comes it?"

"*Feng shui,* Heavenborn," said the hunter, without evasion.

Hanecy reflected. About the village he had seen a tattered *feng shui* man, a "wind-and-water" wizard, one of the unhealthy crop of necromancers infesting every Chinese countryside, preying on the superstition of villagers. Not a burial or house-building can take place without their divination as to lucky sites, and they make trouble in many ways.

"What is the name of this wizard, Ngan?"

**"You are a prisoner, foreign devil!" he shouted aloud. "If you move, my men will shoot you."**

# *By* H. BEDFORD-JONES

**Illustrated by George Avison**

"He is called Sheng Ti, Heavenborn, and has lately come here."

"You do not like him?" asked Hanecy shrewdly. The hunter spat.

"Bah! He is a wizard, but my rifle is a better wizard."

"Go and bring him to me."

Half an hour later the wizard appeared, not altogether willingly, and stood sullenly glaring at Hanecy in the moonlight. He was a tattered, filthy person.

"So you are a wizard, eh?" said Hanecy in his abrupt way. "I am a wizard myself, Sheng Ti; and I have learned that this is a very unlucky place for you to stay. You are causing trouble here. Go back whence you came."

"The gods have told me to stay here," said Sheng Ti.

"And I tell you to depart," said Hanecy. "If you are here after sunrise tomorrow, you will be shot, and then you will find my words true. This will be a most unlucky place for you. —Ngan! Do you understand? If this man appears in the village after sunrise, or if he remains in the vicinity, he is to be shot."

"It is understood, Heavenborn," said Ngan with unconcealed delight. "Offspring of turtles, depart from the presence!"

So Sheng Ti departed, and with sunrise he was gone. . . .

In the months that followed, everything remained quiet at the tin mine, although Yunnan was increasingly disturbed by the rebel bandit Chong Yu, or Pure Jade—a name of great promise, not fulfilled in the event. For Chong Yu burned, slew and robbed with the object of making his name feared, and he succeeded. Men flocked to him. His army was a flying corps, now striking here, now there, levying tribute and disappearing. The French interests in Yunnan became seriously alarmed, and the Governor of Yunnan City put a price of ten thousand taels on his head; but Chong Yu increased in power daily.

This did not worry Hanecy particularly. He refused to have a batch of lazy, shiftless soldiers at the mine, for there

was nothing here Chong Yu could steal; a tin mine could not be greatly damaged, and for himself Hanecy had no fear.

Occasionally he enjoyed hunting trips with Ngan, but did little shooting, for his hunting was of another sort. Avidly interested in geology, in semi-precious stones, in prospecting on his own account, he wandered among the hill villages, and gradually his house became littered to overflowing with all manner of specimens.

He bought many things in his trips, both from the natives and from the traveling Arab peddlers who came up from Burma and down from Tibet.

One day the peddler Abdul arrived in the village, and came that evening to the house on the hill, bringing various things that might interest Hanecy. Some of them did, indeed; and then Abdul produced a little sack containing a dozen stones of varying sizes, none of them large, and handed them over with a smile.

"Perhaps, beloved of heaven, you can tell me what these stones are?" he said.

Scenting a trick, Hanecy examined the bits of stone, which were light and porus. They ranged from translucent to opaque and were of a yellowish or bluish white. They were unlike any stones he had ever seen.

"Evidently some variety of opal," he said. "What are they?"

"Let the master touch one to his tongue," suggested Abdul, with a covert smile.

Hanecy obeyed, and the bit of stone adhered so firmly that he had to pull it away.

"Snake-stone?" he exclaimed.

"So it is called in India, although in my own language it is known as *tabixir*."

"Oh! Tabasheer, eh? That's what our mineralogists call it," said Hanecy with quick interest. "Let me test it. If this is tabasheer, I'll buy some of it. Where did you get it?"

"In Burma," said Abdul. "There is no market for it here, these infidels not knowing its value. In India, however, a good price can be obtained, for it is said to cure snake-bites."

HANECY made one or two tests, and presently bought the lot.

"Do you know where it comes from?" he asked. "From certain varieties of Burmese bamboo. It is formed by sap in diseased joints."

Abdul smiled incredulously. "A stone formed within a tree?"

Hanecy nodded. "Yes. By evaporation. It's not a true stone at all. It has some very curious properties, too. If you find any more before you return here, buy it for me."

"In the name of Allah!" said Abdul, and took his leave.

For some days Hanecy played with his bamboo jewels, but suddenly he had more important things than tabasheer to think of, for Chong Yu descended with all his men upon Gomorrah.

IN the thin hours of dawn came a scratching at his door, and Hanecy wakened to find Ngan the hunter there, panting heavily.

"Heavenborn! Chong Yu is coming!" exclaimed Ngan in great agitation. "His men are guarding all the roads and trails. He will be here in half an hour, with a hundred men."

"Can you get through to Wuting, to send word to Yunnan City?" demanded Hanecy. "Remember, there is a reward of ten thousand taels on his head!"

"That is well known, Heavenborn, but it is impossible to get through. His men hold the bridges across the gorges."

"True." And Hanecy reflected briefly. Undoubtedly the bandit was swooping down to obtain whatever plunder in the way of food or other supplies the mine would afford; perhaps he would demand an indemnity.

"Well, give warning to the managers and the other villagers," said Hanecy. "Better hide your rifle, Ngan! If anyone can get through to Wuting, well and good. If not, make the best of things. Don't let any commotion get started in the village. Get hold of Erh and send him here at once—don't tell him Chong Yu is coming, or he'll never show up."

Ngan scratched his matted locks, nodded assent, and streaked away with all the silence of a flitting ghost.

Hanecy sprang up and got into his clothes. On his table, where he had been experimenting with them the previous night, were spread out the specimens of tabasheer, and he hastily scooped them up and put them into his jacket pocket. He had very little money on the place. His reports and other papers he caught up, and hurrying out to the courtyard, pried up a loose flagstone there and deposited them under it. His pistol he thrust into the pocket of an old torn hunting-coat in his closet; he must resign himself to losing rifle and shotgun,

he reflected, since he had no hiding-place for them.

The sun was crimson behind the eastern hills when he finished his few precautions and welcomed Erh and his other two houseboys when they arrived, panting and wondering at this early summons. Hanecy did not enlighten them, but ordered breakfast at once. He was anxious to be found apparently unwarned and at his usual occupations.

Wutingchow, the nearest city of any size, was eight hours' travel away, and to reach it, one must cross several deep gorges by means of swinging bamboo bridges. If the bandit's men held these bridges, they effectually commanded the roads, and it would be useless to send any word out in hope of getting succor. Ngan would send one or two men to make the effort, certainly, and would no doubt slip into the jungle himself and hide out until trouble was past. He was brave enough, but only a fool would take chances with the dreaded Chong Yu.

NO sounds of alarm arose from the village below, although from the house the mine and village were invisible. The old temple grounds had been cleared, but huge evergreens and cryptomeria towered up around the house, and outside the original enclosure, the forest brush came down in a thick wall of green, almost as thick as in the jungled valleys. The one open side, where the courtyard looked out over the valley to the hills, gave access to the trail leading below.

Hanecy was seated at the table in the courtyard, engaged with his breakfast, when Erh gave a wild yell of terror and fell prostrate. A dozen ragged soldiers, turbans about their heads, had appeared, and an officer in less ragged garb was striding into the courtyard, a pistol in his hand. He halted and threw up the weapon.

"You are a prisoner, foreign devil!" he shouted loudly. "If you move, my men will shoot you!"

"That's all right," returned Hanecy calmly, and motioned. "Come along and join me at breakfast. I'm not armed. You're not Chong Yu?"

"I am Colonel Tieh, his chief of staff," returned the officer importantly; then his jaw fell, and he stared at Hanecy. "How did you know—did you expect him?"

"I knew he was coming, of course," said Hanecy. "Am I not a wizard? I know everything. Erh! Get up and start some breakfast for Colonel Tieh, unless you want him to show you what iron he's made of! Jump!"

The officer, whose name meant *"iron,"* grinned broadly and advanced. When he had frisked Hanecy briefly but thoroughly, he drew up a chair and sat down. Hanecy continued his meal.

"You will not be so calm when you see General Chong Yu," said the Colonel.

"No? Does he frighten people, then?"

"Perhaps he will frighten you, foreign devil!"

"Maybe. Where is he now?"

Colonel Tieh jerked his head. "Down there. At the village."

"So he left men to hold the bridges, and came on with a hundred or so, eh?" asked Hanecy, and the yellow man blinked at him in fresh wonder. "Well, there's nothing here that is worth plundering, so I suppose you'll not be staying long."

The other shrugged, and flung an order at his men to keep watch. Then there drifted up a sound on the morning—a sharp, ragged crepitation of rifle-fire from down below. It was repeated twice, and Hanecy gave Colonel Tieh an inquiring glance. The yellow man grinned.

"General Chong Yu is shooting some of your villagers. He expected to send some of them to join their ancestors—certain ones whom he disliked."

"Eh?" Hanecy frowned at him. "But he's not been here! How could he know any of them?"

"If you are a wizard, you should know!" And the other chuckled heartily, then started to work on the breakfast that Erh fetched him.

A FEW alarm-gongs sounded from the valley, then fell silent. Hanecy was considerably disturbed, but gave no sign of it. Presently Colonel Tieh gave him a sharp look.

"You need not expect to live very long, foreign devil. Can you foresee death?"

"Not for myself," said Hanecy pleasantly. "But Chong Yu has never molested foreigners."

"There is always a beginning, and it is here," returned the officer. "Besides, the General is very anxious to see you. Tell me, if you knew that we were coming, why did you not run away or send word to Yunnan City?"

"I did not run away, because I am not afraid of you," returned Hanecy. "And as for Yunnan-fu, I sent word there, and troops are on the way here already."

Colonel Tieh looked startled.

"Perhaps it is true that you are a wizard," he said doubtfully. "Still, that will not save you from dying."

"Even wizards die." And Hanecy laughed cheerfully. "Generals die also, eh? There is a reward of ten thousand taels for the death of Chong Yu, I believe. If I were to take his head in to Yunnan City and claim the reward, it would be paid me. If some accident happened to him, and you claimed the reward—"

Colonel Tieh chuckled at this. "There is a reward of five hundred taels for my head."

"Undoubtedly. But suppose I claimed the greater reward and turned it over to you?"

The crafty yellow features betrayed the impact of this idea, evidently a new and pleasing one. Hanecy puffed at his pipe, content to leave things as they were, and hoping that he could control himself when the bandit leader appeared. Therein, he perceived, lay his only hope.

A sharp word broke from the soldiers, who straightened up.

Colonel Tieh rose abruptly from the table, crossed to the other side of the courtyard, and saluted. Hanecy laid down his pipe. Voices, a scrape of feet on the stones; more soldiers joined the group; and into the courtyard strode a tall, lean figure, alone, his gold-laced uniform the horizon-blue of a French officer—doubtless stolen from some looted luggage. Certainly it lent him distinction among the khaki-clad Chinese.

HANECY regarded the man curiously. His features were swarthy, lean-cheeked,—reptilian in effect,—his nostrils splayed, his eyes heavy and brutal. He strode forward and then halted, staring at Hanecy, who had not moved.

"Foreign devil!" he exclaimed harshly. "Things are different now, are they not?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Hanecy. "You are General Chong Yu?"

"Yes, to your sorrow," returned the bandit, and laughed evilly as he looked down at the white man. "So you do not remember the day when you told me you were a wizard, eh? Here in this very spot?"

Hanecy frowned slightly. True, there was something in that evil face which faintly jogged his memory, but he could not place it.

"Well," said the other, "the people in that village remember me, and you shall soon remember me also, foreign devil! Perhaps you remember Sheng Ti better, do you?"

A low whistle broke from Hanecy as he met those glittering eyes. Sheng Ti, the wind-and-water wizard—of course! Sheng Ti, who had become the powerful Chong Yu!

CHONG YU motioned two soldiers forward, and pointed at Hanecy.

"Tie him into that chair. Was anything here touched, Colonel Tieh?"

"Nothing was touched, Excellency," responded the officer with haste.

Hanecy made no protest, offered no vain resistance, as the two soldiers tied him firmly to the chair with green bamboo withes. He gave no sign of the utter dismay that had seized upon him, at this recognition. Only too well he realized why some of those villagers had been shot, and what manner of man he was now facing.

Chong Yu leaned forward and went through Hanecy's pockets, ignoring the stones in his jacket, but taking his watch and other possessions. Then he straightened up.

"I have not found the hunter Ngan. Where is he?"

"Off on a hunt, I believe," said Hanecy.

The bandit struck him across the face.

"Liar! He came home this morning and vanished again. He is not far away. My men will find him. Presently you shall sit on a stake and think of Sheng Ti. Come, Colonel Tieh!"

The officer joined him, and together they strode into the house.

Time passed; the morning wore along. From the sounds reaching Hanecy, and from the fact that soldiers were called into the house from time to time, emerging with bundles that they bore away, Hanecy knew that Chong Yu must be systematically looting the place of whatever took his fancy or that of his aide.

Presently Chong Yu emerged, puffing at one of Hanecy's cheroots, and ordered the trembling Erh to get to work and cook a meal. He came over to the table, settled his long, lean body in the chair opposite Hanecy, and transfixed the latter with his glittering eyes.

"Colonel Tieh tells me that you are a wizard, foreign devil," he said, with a sneer and a thin laugh. "Having been in that business myself, I have my doubts. Is it true that you sent word to Yunnan City?"

"Come!" said Chong Yu. "Either show me that trick, or my men will place you on the stake."

"Judge for yourself," returned Hanecy. "As you probably have learned, foreign devils have many ways of sending messages."

Chong Yu scowled at him thoughtfully. After all, he was a wandering wizard turned bandit; if he had learned much in the past few months, his mental horizon was also bounded by ignorance and a dim realization of how much he had failed to learn.

"Well, it does not matter," he responded. "In an hour we shall be gone, and when the soldiers come, they will find you here to greet them. —Colonel Tieh!"

The aid appeared hastily from the house, and saluted.

"Send a man to the village below, with word that we march in an hour and the company must be ready. Have two men prepare a stake for this foreign devil. Let two others dig a hole yonder at the edge of the court, where he can sit looking over the valley."

Tieh saluted and departed. Chong Yu looked at Hanecy and grinned.

"You thought I would ransom you perhaps, eh? Well, I am no such fool. I do not touch foreign devils, because I do not want to provoke the French until I am ready to take Yunnan City. It will not be long now! And I can get money enough without the bother of ransoming you. And I am much happier to think of paying back the debt I owe you—the debt Sheng Ti owes you!"

Hanecy made no response to this. He saw there was no escaping the fate that had come upon him, and thought of it made him sweat. Presently two men appeared, loosening one of the large courtyard stones, throwing back the gravel.

"The stake will be put into that hole," said Chong Yu, "and you will sit there, sinking down upon the stake inch by inch, until tomorrow or next day it reaches your heart, and you die. I am sorry that I cannot remain here to watch you die, but I must rejoin my army. You see, I brought only a hundred men, and most of them are busy down in the village; I have three thousand men awaiting my return. And you, a wizard, said this was an unlucky place for me—you remember? It is not so lucky for you!"

Chong Yu chuckled over this, as he mouthed his cigar and eyed Hanecy. The latter, however, met his gaze cheerfully enough. It had occurred to him that, since there was no hope whatever for

him, another and quicker way of dying would be vastly preferable to that stake.

"It is true that I am a wizard, Chong Yu," he said slowly, "but I am a more powerful wizard than you are, and a real one to boot."

"Yes?" The lean saffron features curled in a snaky grin. "Then free yourself from those bonds, wizard!"

"That is something else again, as you very well know," said Hanecy reflectively. "Now, different men have different powers. You used to foretell by *feng shui* methods the various lucky spots, though you did not serve yourself very well when you came here. On the contrary, I cannot do this; but I can do other things."

"Very likely," agreed Chong Yu. "But you cannot do anything while you remain tied fast in that chair, foreign devil!"

"You are right," said Hanecy. "If I were sitting at that table, I could show you some very great wonders, however. I might even show you how to perform them, if you would spare my life."

CHONG YU'S eyes glittered at this. Promises were cheap, of course! Just then the two men who had been cutting the stake came and dumped it down near the hole—a young tree, very neatly trimmed and pointed, some eight feet in length.

"Indeed?" said the yellow man cautiously. "What sort of wonders can you perform?"

"Many sorts," said Hanecy. "For example, I could show you how to take a stone from the ground here at your feet, and place it in a bowl of water. The stone would make the water boil, and then would become invisible. You would pluck it out of the water, a bare stone!"

Chong Yu regarded him steadily for a moment.

"Do you jest, foreign devil? Or is this one of the tricks that Taoist monks perform, by making people imagine things?"

"It is as I say," declared Hanecy.

"Good! If you can perform that wizardry, and can show me how to do it, then I will spare your life," said Chong Yu promptly.

"Agreed," said Hanecy eagerly. "In order to do the trick, however, I must have water in a glass. And I must get my old shooting-coat from inside the house."

For a space Chong Yu looked at him, a thin smile curving the cruel lips; then he shot an order at the soldiers, and two of them came across the courtyard. At his command, they cut loose Hanecy's shrinking bamboo withes.

"Now," said Chong Yu blandly, "we will go into the house. You shall get what you wish, and if you try to escape, I will shoot you myself—through the leg, so that the stake will not be evaded."

"How could I escape?" asked Hanecy with a shrug, as the other produced an automatic and slipped off the safety catch. He rose, rubbing his wrists, and the two men closed in on him as he turned to the house. Chong Yu followed behind, pistol ready.

Would it work? Hanecy fought down the eagerness that thrilled him in every vein. If he could but get that old loose khaki coat with the pistol in its pocket—then he would have this yellow devil at his mercy. And after that, no matter what happened! Indeed, if he could slap a bullet into Chong Yu, the soldiers would very likely turn tail and run, for they had heard this talk of wizardry, and were watching him uneasily. And in China, when a leader dies, his men go to pieces.

"A stone make water boil, and then become invisible—huh!" grunted Chong Yu, from behind him. "I am no fool, foreign devil. If a stone would do this, it would be a great wonder; but you cannot trick me with powders and drugs, remember."

"It is as I say," said Hanecy again.

THEY came into the house, where Colonel Tieh had just unearthed Hanecy's binoculars and was trying them out. Chong Yu took them from him and slipped the strap over his own neck, and ordered the Colonel to attention. Then Hanecy picked up a long and narrow glass vase, which had been in the house when he came, and handed it to Tieh.

"Fill this with plain water, Colonel Tieh, and place it on the table outside."

At a nod from Chong Yu, his aid departed obediently, and Hanecy went on into his own bedroom, straight to the closet. Some of his clothes had been flung about the floor, but the old shooting-jacket was where he had left it. He reached out and took it from the hook, and a surge of exultation ran through him—the weight of it told him the pistol was still in its pocket.

He slipped it on, thrust his hands into the pockets, felt the welcome grip of the pistol under his fingers. Then, as he

turned, he found Chong Yu smiling at him with cruel mockery and delight.

"Be careful what kind of magic you try, foreign devil!" said the bandit, and laughed. "Oh, that was very well done, very well done! I wondered why you had left that pistol in your coat pocket, and now I see. But there are no cartridges left in it, wizard. Try it and see!"

Hanecy turned red as a beet, for the two soldiers were laughing also, and he perceived that Chong Yu was no fool, in all truth. He took the pistol from his pocket, pressing the trigger as he did so, and only a click resulted.

"So!" And Chong Yu reached out, tore it from his hand, and thrust it into a pocket. "So your story of wizardry was all a lie, eh?"

HANECY reached forward to a table, where a box of cheroots had been torn open, took one of them up, and lighted it from the match-box. With an effort, he kept a grip on himself, forced himself to meet those mocking reptilian eyes with a cool shake of the head.

"No, General Chong, no lie at all," he returned. "You are very clever; you saw through my scheme. Well, so be it!"

And taking off the shooting-jacket, he tossed it on the floor.

"There is no more time to waste," said Chong Yu with grim finality. "Come! Either show me that trick, as you promised, or my men will seize you and place you on the stake. Which?"

"The trick, by all means," answered Hanecy. "Come back to the table, then, outside."

A man on either side of him, watchful, and Chong Yu behind with ready weapon, he returned to where Colonel Tieh stood by the table in the courtyard. Failure! He had failed dismally and entirely. All the while, this yellow devil had been playing with him, and now doubted everything he had said. But he must go through with it now, hoping against hope that something might turn up, watching for some straw that might be snatched for salvation.

As he came up to the table, he caught the eye of Colonel Tieh, and winked.

"Would it not be better to accept a ransom for my life, General Chong?" he inquired, turning to the bandit leader. "I will give you five thousand taels to draw off your men and leave the place alone."

"I would give ten thousand to see you sitting on that stake!" snapped Chong Yu grimly, then remembered what he had promised. "That is," he added, "if you were not about to show me something worth much more than that."

"Your promise is good, then?" inquired Hanecy, playing with the tabasheer stones in his jacket pocket. "You will set me free if I teach you this wizardry over stones?"

"I swear it by the gods!" exclaimed Chong Yu, with a nod of assent.

"Very well. Then, in order that you may see I am not tricking you," returned Hanecy, removing one of the larger pieces from his pocket, "watch while I pick up a stone here—"

He stooped to the gravel between the flagstones, and rose with the flat bit of tabasheer between his fingers. Turning to Chong Yu, he handed it to him.

"You see? It is a common stone."

"That is true," said Chong Yu, wrinkling his brows in scowling attention.

Hanecy placed the stone on the table, beside the little fluted glass vase, and made certain passes in the air with his hand. He was nearing the end of his rope now. He could see nothing for it except a dash for liberty before they bound him again—a dash that would force them to shoot him down. With the other soldiers out there on the trail, beyond the courtyard, he had not a chance in the world of getting clear.

Showing no trace of his inner desperation, he picked up the glinting opaque stone and held it above the vase, in the sunlight, so that all could see what happened. He let the stone drop into the water. It slowly settled down to the bottom of the vase.

AN exclamation burst from Chong Yu, who craned forward eagerly. Hanecy gathered his muscles, but as he did, the other's pistol was thrust against his side in mute warning. He relaxed, and spoke quietly, calmly.

"Watch it. You see that it makes the water boil. Presently you will see it vanish completely. Then I will take it out again, as it was before—"

"Two of you! Watch this foreign devil—here, Colonel Tieh!" Excited as he was, Chong Yu was still too clever to be caught off guard. "Your pistol—watch him closely! Stand to one side, all of you—"

The two soldiers were gaping at the vase, open-mouthed. Chong Yu, satis-

fied that Hanecy stood under the pistol of his aid, gave all his attention to it. For, indubitably, the water was boiling; at least, rapid streams of air-bubbles were pouring up through the water, giving it all the appearance of boiling. Chong Yu touched the surface with one finger, and uttered an exclamation of astonishment on finding the water cold.

"It boils, and yet it does not boil!" he cried. "And if the stone disappears—"

"Watch it," said Hanecy.

He himself was not watching it. He looked at Colonel Tieh, and in the shrewd oblique eyes read caution, no mercy, alertness. Well, at the worst he might make a dash for it, and go down with a bullet in him—or if he could wrench away the pistol that touched his side—ah! Better to end it all with a fight, if he could do it!

Hanecy took the cheroot from his mouth, puffed unconcernedly. He tensed himself, gathered himself for the swift, sure movement. Outwardly he appeared quite at his ease.

"It is vanishing!" exclaimed Chong Yu, standing leaning over, staring down at the vase, his own pistol lowered but still gripped in his hand. "It is vanishing!"

That was true. The tabasheer, whose enormous capacity for absorbing fluids made it the cure-all stone of the Middle Ages, had given off the air it contained; and now, as it absorbed water to a bulk equal with its own, the shimmering opaque stone became transparent—if not invisible, then something very much like it; and behind the fluted glass it was all but invisible.

CHONG YU caught his breath, leaned over farther—and Hanecy, seeing the gaze of Colonel Tieh flicker to the vase, seized the instant.

Like a flash, he brought up the edge of his hand beneath the wrist of Tieh in a sharp blow. The fingers relaxed, as they must relax to such a blow; but Hanecy missed the pistol as it fell. Tieh reached for it with a cry, collided with him, and both of them went sprawling, with the pistol under them. Hanecy got it, knocked Tieh headlong, and came to one knee—

Chong Yu had whirled, was throwing up his pistol. Hanecy saw that he was lost, and flung himself sidewise. But Chong Yu did not fire. An expression of astonishment leaped in his face, a little blue hole appeared between his eyes; and he toppled forward to the ringing crack of a Lébel rifle from among the trees.

"I TOLD you that I was a wizard," said Hanecy coolly.

He had heard the peculiar crack of that Lébel too often to mistake it, and seized his advantage instantly. No one knew whence the shot had come. The soldiers were staring around, their weapons ready, seeing no enemy. And Hanecy, pistol in hand, was covering Colonel Tieh as the latter rose, terrified. The body of Chong Yu lay sprawled on the stones, and a sharp wailing cry burst from the soldiers.

"Quickly!" said Hanecy, facing the aid. "Take your choice, Tieh! My death will profit you nothing. I will give you five thousand taels to order your troops away. Yes or no?"

The alternative was eloquently plain, there in Hanecy's hand. Colonel Tieh swallowed hard, looked at his dead chief, and nodded.

"Very well," he said weakly.

"Then do it."

And Colonel Tieh did it, sending the orders, remaining alone there with two men, and discussing with Hanecy where and how he was to receive the five thousand taels. He was thoroughly terrified by that one unseen shot, and was more than half convinced that Hanecy had brought it to pass through wizardry. . . .

Ten minutes later, Colonel Tieh went striding off down the path with his two men, while Hanecy shouted at the mountain devils not to harm him.

The trembling house-boys still in hiding, the hunter Ngan came from his covert, wriggled out to the courtyard, and then stood grinning at Hanecy as he leaned on his Lébel rifle.

"I am a good hunter, Heavenborn!" he exclaimed proudly. "And these cartridges you got for me are good. They make no smoke."

"You are a damned intelligent man," said Hanecy in English, which Ngan did not in the least comprehend. "And we'll get off tomorrow for Yunnan City," he added in the dialect, "and I'll see that you collect the reward offered for Chong Yu. You are content?"

"I am content," said Ngan the hunter.

Hanecy picked up the vase, which had been knocked over, and held up the tabasheer stone in his fingers for a moment, then dropped it into his pocket.

"So am I," he observed.

*The Mills of God again grind slowly but exceeding small, in this true detective story.*

By GEORGE BARTON

# The Clue of the Two Black Masks

TWENTY-FIVE years ago Thomas Farrow and his wife lived at Number 34 High Street, Deptford, —then a parliamentary borough in the counties of Kent and Essex, though now a portion of metropolitan London. Located three miles southeast of London Bridge, directly on the River Thames, it pursued a placid existence quite unmindful of the bustle and noise only a short distance away.

Farrow was the manager of an oil-shop which occupied the first floor of the building in which he lived. He had held this position for twenty-four years and was one of the best-known men in the community. He was about seventy years old and his wife a few years younger. They were a gentle old couple, courteous, industrious and highly respected by all with whom they came in contact. They had reached a time when they should have been enjoying a well-earned rest, but not having a competence they were compelled still to labor for the necessities of life; however, the old man was fond of saying:

"The Lord has been good to me. He has given me a loving wife, good health and an opportunity to earn a living. What more could any man ask?"

On the evening of March 26th, 1905, the old couple took a walk along the banks of the Thames. It was their habit to take a little exercise before retiring for the night. They returned home about ten o'clock, and soon retired.

When Farrow's assistant came to work at about half-past seven on the following morning he was alarmed by the uncanny silence of the house. As a rule he was met by the manager, but even when he was not, he could hear signs of life in the upper rooms. But now a strange silence brooded over the entire place, and instinctively he felt that something was wrong. As he moved about the shop his feet came into contact with an object on the floor. He gave a cry of terror as he looked down and beheld the motionless figure of Thomas Farrow.

He hurried up to the bedroom to give the alarm to Mrs. Farrow, and there he met with another sight that gave him a cold chill: Mrs. Farrow lay wounded and unconscious on the floor beside her bed. The young man was almost frantic; he realized that the gentle old couple had been cruelly attacked.

He gave the alarm and in a few minutes the police were making an examination of the premises. The physician who was called in estimated that the old man must have died at about half-past six, although neighbors living on the other side of the street testified that Mr. Farrow came to the door at seven o'clock, as was his daily custom. But his head was bleeding; he looked about him in a dazed sort of way and then went in again. They had not gone over to investigate because the seriousness of the situation had not impressed itself upon them. Others in the neighborhood said that two young

men were seen coming out of the shop at seven-fifteen. There was nothing unusual about that; the observers took it for granted that the men were customers. The theory was that after the old man had been struck he had risen, staggered to the door, then groped his way back into the house and fell to the floor dead. Traces of blood leading from the doorway to the center of the shop carried out that theory. Mrs. Farrow, still unconscious, was hurried to the hospital. She died without becoming able to speak.

THE police in the course of investigation found two black masks which proved vital clues in the solution of the mystery. They were of woolen material and looked as if crudely made from a pair of black stockings. It was evident that the murderers had worn these masks while they were committing the double crime and in their haste to get away had been guilty of the grave indiscretion of leaving this evidence behind them. Presumably they hoped to hide their identity in case either of the victims should survive long enough to tell the story of the outrage.

On the floor the police also found a tin cash-box in which Farrow and his wife were in the habit of keeping their money. It was empty, and the presence of some small coins on the floor indicated that the bulk of the money had been hastily grabbed just before the crooks made their get-away. That was still another indiscretion, for the science of fingerprints had just come into vogue and the marks of fingers were found on the cash-box.

The fiends might have been heartless, but their work was done so carelessly that they could hardly be considered professional thieves. Such persons are not in the habit of leaving conspicuous clues in their wake.

At all events, the police were greatly pleased with what they had found and were confident that the black masks and the marks on the cash-box would figure in proving the identity of the murderers. The usual custom of rounding up suspects and disreputable persons was followed. In this case results came quicker than usual. All London was shocked by the brutality of the crime and Scotland Yard was stimulated to more than ordinary activity—which is a high compliment that will be understood by those who know the efficiency of the Yard in matters of this kind.

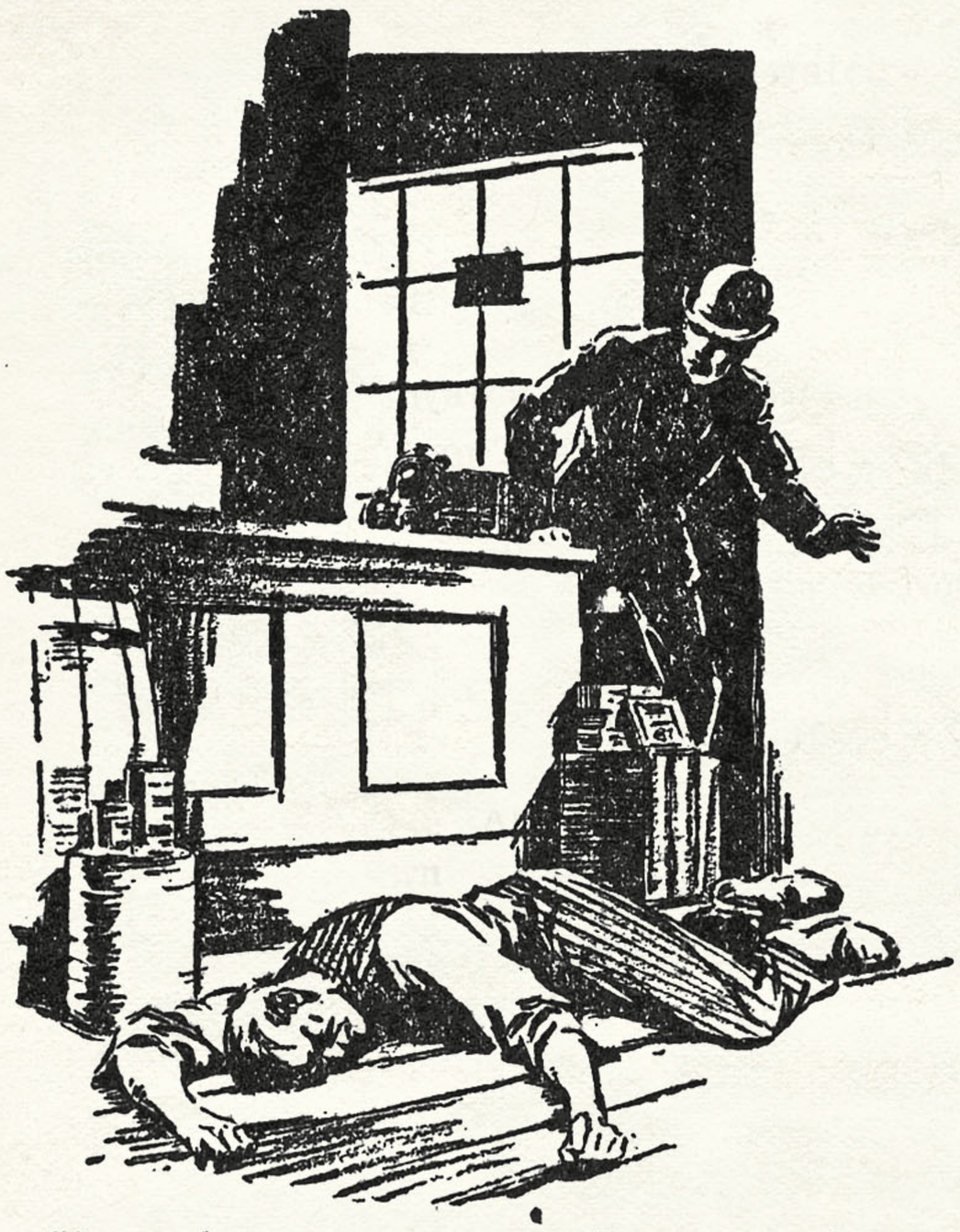
One of those caught in the first round-up was Alfred Stratton. His inability to give a clear or connected account of his movements on the night of the double murder aroused the suspicions of the police. Some of the evasive replies he made to questions led to the arrest of his brother, Albert Stratton. The detectives dug deeply into the past life of the two brothers and the result showed that they were a pair of ne'er-do-wells who disliked work and lived by their wits. One of the theories of Scotland Yard is that when you find an idle man you also find a potential criminal. This accords with the view of most criminologists and wardens. They are almost unanimous in asserting that idleness is the chief cause of crime. Drink plays its part, and so does environment and early associations, but idleness undoubtedly leads all of the other causes.

Hence the fact that these two shiftless men were known to have been in that neighborhood on the night of the tragedy convinced the authorities that they were on the right track. Both Alfred and Albert protested their innocence and insisted that there was no justification for their arrests. As the first test the police decided to take fingerprints of the two suspects. As far as this phase of the investigation went Albert had to be given a clean bill of health. But when Alfred was submitted to the same ordeal he did not come out so well.

In other words the right thumb of Alfred Stratton corresponded precisely with the marks found on the tray of the cash-box.

This was circumstantial evidence of the most convincing kind. As we know, no two prints are alike; for the lines vary with each individual. It had special significance in the Stratton case, because the Henry system of fingerprint classification perfected by Sir Edward Richard Henry, Commissioner of London police, was just coming into use at that time. Later, many extraordinary cases went on record of criminals being traced after accidentally leaving fingerprints at the scenes of their crimes.

YET the fingerprint test was not considered sufficient in itself to convict Alfred Stratton of the Farrow murders. So the police proceeded to find out more about his movements on the night of the crime. They found he had been living in the house of Mrs. Hannah Cromarty in Brookmill Road. He occupied a front room on the first floor and it opened out onto the street. Mrs. Cromarty proved



The assistant gave a cry of terror as he beheld the motionless figure of Farrow.

to be a woman with an air of candor that made her valuable to the police. She said that on the Sunday evening preceding the murder she was aroused by hearing some one tap on the window of Alfred Stratton's room. It must have been ten o'clock. Presently Stratton answered and there was a long, low-toned conversation. Mrs. Cromarty wondered what on earth two men could have to talk about at such length and why they should lower their voices. Presently the visitor left and Mrs. Cromarty turned over and went to sleep.

It must have been midnight when she was aroused for the second time by the sound of a gentle tapping on the window below her room. There was no answer and the tapping was repeated, only a little louder. After a brief interval the listener heard the noise of the window as it was being raised. Then a sleepy voice said:

"What do you want?"

"I came to tell you that everything is set."

"Well, what about it?" grunted Alfred Stratton.

"That's up to you. Shall we go out tonight or leave it until another night?"

The landlady could not make out the remainder of the conversation because the men had lowered their voices. But she wondered what it was that could take anybody out after midnight. She went to sleep with the echo of window-tapping in her ears and dreamed of strange men acting mysteriously. She woke early in the morning, and when she went downstairs she saw Alfred Stratton in his room fully dressed. She could not swear that he had gone out, but there was no doubt in her mind that he had.

The incident of the window-tapping and the secret conversation was not the only suspicious thing she noticed about her star boarder. On the Monday after the murder she declares that Alfred's trousers smelled of paraffin. This, it may be said parenthetically, was a substance that was sold in the oil-shop of the Farrows. Taking advantage of a woman's prerogative, Mrs. Cromarty asked him how it came about and he told her that he had spilled some of it while he was filling the bedroom lamp.

The good lady took that explanation with a grain of salt.

But there was more to come. Alfred Stratton was the possessor of an attractive-looking brown overcoat; and on the Tuesday after the murder she noticed that it was missing. She asked him what had become of it, and in a rather stammering way he said he had given the overcoat to a destitute friend.

What was the real reason for parting with an overcoat he valued? Was it bloodstained and had he destroyed it for fear that it might be the means of getting him into trouble?

IT is not surprising that Mrs. Cromarty should think Alfred Stratton was acting very queerly. On the day after the crime at the oil-shop in Deptford she saw him in his room working vigorously over a pair of shoes. The curious lady was amazed, and no wonder, for Alfred was engaged in blacking his brown shoes. She asked herself why, and she could not answer her own question.

Finally he came to her and with great earnestness told her that if there was any inquiry concerning his movements she was to say that he had been in bed all of Sunday night and that he had not gone out until after nine o'clock on Monday morning.

*Why?*

She told all of these things to the police with an innocence and simplicity that would have given Alfred Stratton nervous prostration if he could have heard the conversation. Mrs. Cromarty could no more keep a secret than a sieve could hold

water. She did not know what it was all about, but the Scotland Yard man who was questioning her had a few ideas on the subject. His experience in dealing with crooks had taught him a thing or two and he was certain that Alfred was engaged in the age-old game of manufacturing an alibi.

When they added these facts to the episode of the thumb-print, they were satisfied that Alfred Stratton was one of the two men seen coming from the High Street shop on the morning the Farrows were killed. It should be said that they had taken the fingerprints of all who were likely to have handled the tin cash-box, including Mr. and Mrs. Farrow—and those of Alfred were the only ones that corresponded precisely with the ones on the box.

But what of Albert Stratton—in what way was he connected with the case? The police discovered that he had lodged with a Mrs. Kate Wade. She was subjected to a cross-examination and proved to be quite as talkative as Mrs. Cromarty. Innocently enough the two women were helping to put the noose around the necks of the two brothers.

It developed that about a week before the murder Albert had called on Mrs. Wade.

"Can you let me have a pair of old black woolen stockings?" the young man asked.

She laughed at the question.

"What do you want with a pair of women's stockings?" she asked.

"Never mind what I want with them," he replied crossly. "What I want to know is whether you have anything of that kind around the house."

"I have not," was the retort, "and if I did I'd want them to wear."

He turned away abruptly and left the house. She could not understand why he should be so sulky because she had been unable to give him the stockings.

Two days later Alfred called at the house and asked for Albert. He was not at home and the caller, without so much as "by your leave" went to his brother's room. Mrs. Wade stood outside the room and watched him. She saw him go to the wardrobe, reach up to the top shelf, and take from it a chisel and a screwdriver. He slipped these in his coat pocket and left the house. The landlady was frankly puzzled. What did he want with these tools—and why had they been in his brother's wardrobe? Neither of the men were carpenters.

Some weeks before Mrs. Wade had made a discovery that was startling.

Turning up the mattress of the bed she found under it a pair of woolen stocking-tops with strings and holes in them, and bits of elastic at either end!

She realized that she had come across a pair of black masks. The next day when she made a second examination of the room the masks were gone. Now what could the Stratton brothers be doing with masks? It might be suggested that they had used them or were going to use them at a masquerade-party. But she knew them well enough to realize that they were not the sort of men to attend social gatherings of that kind. She was able to give a perfect description of these face-coverings and when she did, the Scotland Yard men who were doing the questioning was filled with elation—for the description she gave corresponded with the two black masks that had been found in the shop and in the bedroom in which Mr. and Mrs. Farrow had been fatally slugged.

THE trial was a notable one in many ways. The accused were given the benefit of very able legal assistance—Sir Henry Curtis Bennett appeared for Alfred Stratton and Harold Morris conducted the case for Albert Stratton. The prosecution was conducted by Sir Richard Muir, senior counsel to the British Treasury. Muir at that time was a terror to evildoers, and for a very good reason: Whenever he went after his man he got him. He worked in harmony with the police and when he got up in court to conduct a case he had the evidence at his fingertips.

In this particular instance he was at his best. He had made a close study of all the facts in the case; he had personally visited the scene of the double slaying and he had cross-examined all of the Scotland Yard men who had handled it. Best of all he had primed himself with all the knowledge it was possible to obtain of the new science of fingerprinting. The defense was at a disadvantage in this respect. They called one expert who admitted that he had offered his services to either side. When this fact came out Justice Channell abruptly dismissed him on the ground that he could not be regarded as a trustworthy witness.

"Muir," declared his biographer, Sidney Theodore Felstead, "had a way of working all his own. Judges used to describe him as the most thorough man

at the bar, and without a doubt they were right. There will never be another lawyer who will put as much work in his cases as Muir did. When a set of papers came into his chambers he would first of all read them through, usually seated in his favorite arm-chair, with his legs up. After having thoroughly digested the brief,—sometimes a lengthy job,—he would sit down and on a special writing-pad note down the principal points of the case. Often while doing this some of his intimate friends would come in and chaff him about rewriting what he already possessed, but Muir would only reply:

"'That's the only way I can get them in my head.'

"It was largely the secret of his unfailing accuracy. By writing out the salient features of a case he got them firmly embedded in his mind even if he did not have to conduct the case for some weeks later. Rarely, indeed, did his memory fail him. While making notes from the brief he would also jot down on a foolscap sheet beside him points of interest to be dealt with when the police officers engaged on the case came to consult with him. When all this had been concluded he would set to work again and write out in narrative form the story of the crime as he intended to present it to the court."

This, then, was the man the Stratton brothers had to face in their fight for life. Seated in the dock, side by side, they presented a pathetic rather than a revolting appearance. The Strattons were not much more than boys. Alfred was twenty-two, Albert twenty. They resembled one another and yet they were radically different: Alfred purported to be the leader; Albert submissively followed. But now both of them sat with eyes fixed upon the terrible Muir whose mission was to send them to the gallows.

It was like a play, with one incident following another in quick succession. The crowds in the courtroom sat silent and tense, awaiting an inevitable climax. The famous playwright, George R. Sims, attended the trial, looking for material for his own work. He had been present in court during the course of many famous cases, but he had never been thrilled as he was at this one. Writing of Muir's final speech he said:

"His words rang out like the execution-bell at Newgate, tolling the doom of the prisoners—so deadly was his condemnation of the brutal crime."

This impression was shared by Felstead, who in speaking of Muir's work in this trial, said:

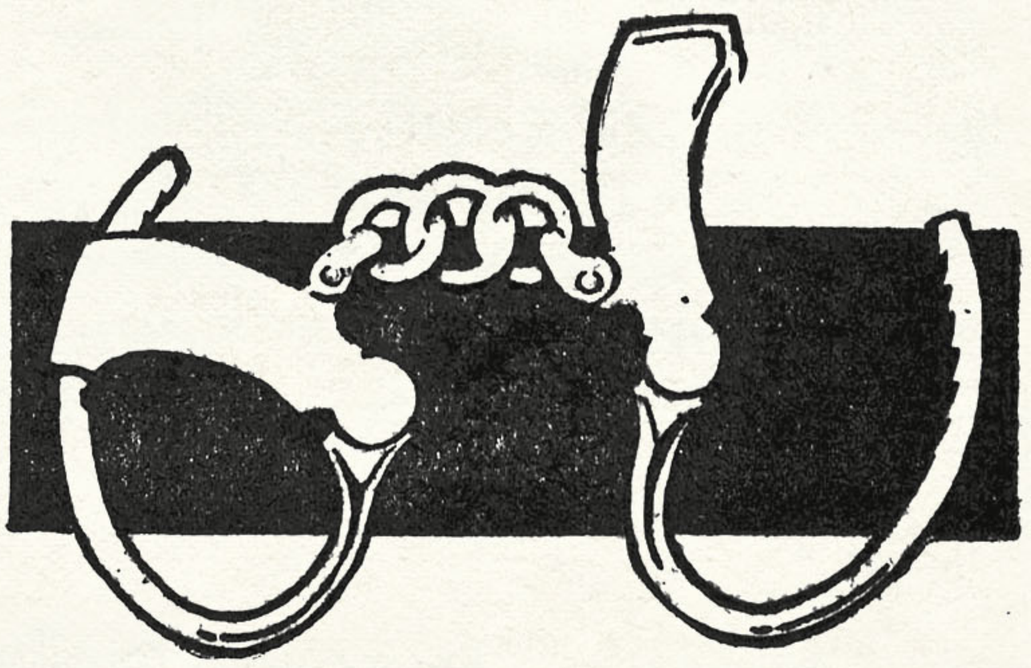
"In the hundreds of murder cases in which he prosecuted for the Crown, Muir never revealed such animosity toward prisoners in the dock as he did toward the two Strattons. He looked upon it as the most brutal crime he had ever come across, saying that the manner in which the faces of the poor old couple had been battered made it quite impossible for him to extend the slightest consideration to their murderers. His final speech to the jury was one of the greatest efforts of his career. He spoke more slowly and deliberately than usual, but with a deadly effect which made the men in the dock feel that Muir and not the Judge might order their immediate execution."

As he proceeded the brothers shrank back as if they were trying to repel physical violence. Many persons wondered how two young men could be guilty of such a dreadful crime. Yet they did not become criminals overnight, nor upon impulse. They made the mistake of taking the "easiest way." Too indolent to do honest work, they preyed on society. The finding of the two masks between the mattresses in Albert's room indicated that they had been following the profession of burglary long before the Farrow tragedy.

The jury did not deliberate long and in the end they brought in a verdict of murder in the first degree.

BOTH prisoners showed a craven spirit; each blamed the actual slaying upon the other. But the Judge who presided over the trial was of the opinion that one of them killed Mr. Farrow and the other fatally injured Mrs. Farrow.

However that might have been, both of them met their doom because of their carelessness in leaving the two black masks at the scene of the double murder.



# TARZAN *and the*

***The world's champion fiction adventurer fights against tremendous odds toward the rescue of a daring American girl made captive by a sinister secret society of the jungle.***

*The Story So Far:*

BENEATH the hand of Usha the wind, the forest bent and the tree branches tossed wildly. The girl awoke—and in a flash of lightning saw a man entering her tent—Golato the headman.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"You, Kali Bwana," he replied huskily—but as the black leaped toward her, she fired pointblank at him.

Next day the wounded headman and the rest of the safari 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 had suffered a wilderness accident: a great tree-branch had knocked him unconscious. When Tarzan recovered his senses he did not know even his own identity; but the native who rescued him christened him "Muzimo," believing him the reincarnated spirit of one of his own ancestors.

As Muzimo, then, Tarzan hunted for a time with the native Orando, and shared his 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 and the Utenga warriors in a raid upon the Leopard Men's chief village, and exposed the treachery of their witch-doctor Sobito, who secretly belonged to the enemy. During the fighting, a second severe blow upon the head happily restored to him his memory and again he became himself.

While this was happening, two ivory-poachers—Americans, who called each other only "the Kid," and "Old-timer"—had struck out separately from their base camp, and Old-timer had come upon the white girl. During his absence next day, the black detailed to guard the girl was killed by the Leopard Men, and she was taken away to their stronghold. Old-timer followed, heedless of the protests of his remaining porters. He was himself made prisoner, however, and transported down-river to the secret temple, where preparations were being made for a savage cannibal orgy.

Here he found the white girl; but in an unsuccessful attempt at escape, he was recaptured, while the girl was pulled

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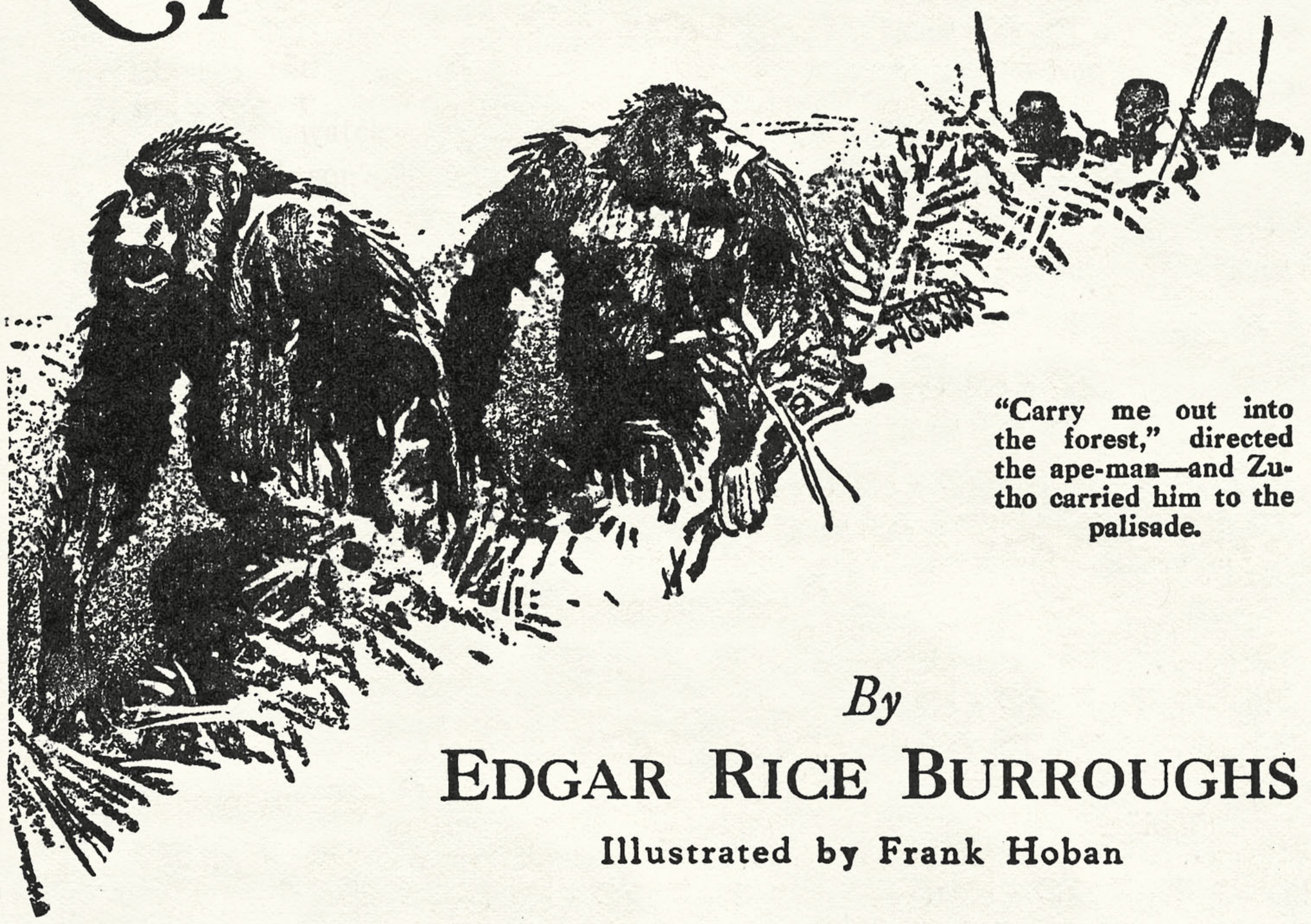
# Leopard Men



"Carry me out into the forest," directed the ape-man—and Zutho carried him to the palisade.

*By*

## EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

**Illustrated by Frank Hoban**

into the canoe of a native sub-chief Bobolo. Old-timer, taken back to the Leopard temple, was on the point of being subjected to frightful torture as a preliminary to being eaten, when Tarzan effected a daring rescue. Starting Old-timer out upon the river in a canoe, Tarzan then set all the other canoes adrift and himself escaped through the trees—leaving the hapless Leopard Men marooned in their temple.

Bobolo, meanwhile, arrived at his village with the white girl Kali Bwana, but met instant resentment on the part of his numerous black wives. So intense was their feeling, in fact, that he took counsel with his witch-doctor Kapopa, who advised removing Kali Bwana to a village of the pygmies. This was done, Bobolo promising to bring the pygmies much food the next day in return for their shelter of the girl. But when the third day came and he had not returned, an angry council was held before the hut of Rebega the pygmy chief. "What do we want of meal or fish—when we have flesh here for all?" asked one, jerking a thumb significantly in the direction of the white girl's hut. And the others agreed vociferously. At last Rebega promised that if Bobolo did not keep his word before dark, they should have a feast that night. *(The story continues in detail:)*

IN the hut of Wlala, Kali Bwana heard the loud shouts of approval that greeted Rebega's announcement and she thought that the food Bobolo had promised had arrived. She hoped that they would give her some of it, for she was weak from hunger. When Wlala came the girl asked if the food had arrived.

"Bobolo has sent no food, but we shall eat tonight," replied the woman, grinning. "We shall eat all that we wish; but it will not be meal, nor plantain, nor fish." She came over to the girl then and felt of her body, pinching the flesh slightly between her fingers. "Yes, we shall eat," she concluded.

To Kali Bwana the inference was obvious, but the strange chemistry of emotion had fortunately robbed her of the power to feel repugnance for the idea that would have been so horribly revolting to her a few short weeks before. She did not think of the grisly aftermath; she thought only of death, and welcomed it.

**It was Sobito; but how had Sobito come here? Here was a mystery indeed!**

The food from Bobolo did not come, and that night the Betetes gathered in the compound before Rebega's hut. The women dragged cooking-pots to the scene and built many fires. The men danced a little; but only for a short time, for they had been so long on scanty rations that their energy was at low ebb.

At last a few of them went to the hut of Wlala and dragged Kali Bwana to the scene of the festivities. There was some dispute as to who was to kill her. Rebega was frankly afraid of the wrath of Kapopa, though he was not so much concerned about Bobolo. Bobolo could only follow them with warriors whom they could see and kill; but Kapopa could remain in his village and send demons and ghosts after them. At last it was decided that the women should kill her; and Wlala, remembering the blows that the white girl had struck her, and longing for revenge, volunteered to do the work herself.

"Tie her hands and feet," she said, "and I will kill her." She did not care to risk a repetition of the scene in her hut at the time she had attempted to beat the girl.

Kali Bwana understood, and as the warriors prepared to bind her she crossed her hands to facilitate their work. They threw her to the ground and secured her feet; then she closed her eyes and breathed a prayer. It was for those she had left behind in that far-away country, and for "Jerry."

## CHAPTER XVI

### A Clue

THE night that Tarzan had brought Sobito to their camp the Utengas had celebrated the event in beer salvaged from the loot of Gato Mgungu's village before they had burned it. They had celebrated late into the night, stopping only when the last of the beer had been consumed; then they had slept heavily and well. Even the sentries had dozed at their posts, for much beer poured into stomachs already filled with food induces a lethargy difficult to combat.

And while the Utenga warriors slept, Sobito was not idle. Violently he pulled and tugged at the bonds that held his wrists, with little fear that his desperate efforts would attract attention. At last he felt them gradually stretching. Sweat poured from his tough old hide; beads of it stood out upon his wrinkled forehead. He was panting from the violence of his exertions. Slowly he dragged one hand farther and farther through the loop; just a hair's-breadth at a time it

moved, but eventually it slipped out—free!

For a moment the old witch-doctor lay still, recouping the energy that he had expended in his efforts to escape his bonds. Slowly his eyes ranged the camp. No one stirred. Only the heavy, stertorous breathing of the half-drunken warriors disturbed the silence of the night. Sobito drew his feet up within reach of his hands and untied the knots of the cords that confined them; then quietly and slowly he arose and slipped, bent half-double, down toward the river. In a moment the darkness had swallowed him, and the sleeping camp slept on.

ON the shore he found canoes the Utengas had captured from the forces of Gato Mgungu; with considerable difficulty he pushed one of the smaller of them into the river, after satisfying himself that there was at least one paddle in it. As he leaped into it and felt it glide out into the current, he felt like one snatched from the jaws of death by some unexpected miracle.

His plans were already made. He had had plenty of time to formulate them while he was working with his bonds. He might not with safety return to the temple of the Leopard God, that he knew full well; but down the river lay the village of his old friend Bobolo, who by the theft of the white priestess was doubtless as much anathema in the eyes of the Leopard Men as he. To Bobolo's village, therefore, he determined to go. What he would do afterward was in the laps of the gods. . . .

Another lone boatman was drifting down the broad river toward the village of Bobolo. It was Old-timer. He too had determined to pay a visit to the citadel of Bobolo; but it would be no friendly visit. In fact, if Old-timer's plans were successful, Bobolo would not be aware that a visit was being paid him, lest the guest might never be permitted to depart. It was the white girl, not Bobolo, who lured Old-timer to this venture. Something within him more powerful than reason told him that he must save her, and he knew that if any succor was to avail it must come to her at once. As to how he was to accomplish it he had not the most remote conception; all that must depend upon his reconnaissance and his resourcefulness.

As he drifted downward, paddling gently, his mind was filled with visions of the girl. He saw her as he had first seen her in her camp, with blood-smeared clothing, and stained with dirt and perspiration, but over all the radiance of her fair face, the haunting allure of her blonde hair, disheveled and falling in wavy ringlets across her forehead and about her ears. He saw her as he had seen her in the temple of the Leopard God, garbed in savage, barbaric splendor, and more beautiful than ever. It thrilled him to live again the moments during which he had talked to her or touched her.

Forgotten was the girl whose callous selfishness had made him a wanderer and an outcast. The picture that he had carried constantly upon the screen of memory for two long years had faded. When he thought of her now he laughed; and instead of cursing her, as he had so often done before, he blessed her for having him sent here to meet this glorious creature who now filled his dreams.

Old-timer was familiar with this stretch of the river. He knew the exact location of Bobolo's village, and he knew that day would break before he came within sight of it. To come boldly to it would be suicidal; for since Bobolo was aware that the white man knew of his connection with the Leopard Men, his life would not be safe if he fell into the hands of the crafty sub-chief.

For a short time after the sun rose he drifted on downstream, keeping close to the left bank; and shortly before he reached the village he turned the prow of his craft in toward shore. He did not know that he would ever need the canoe again; but on the chance that he might, he secured it to the branch of a tree, and then clambered up into the leafy shelter of the forest giant.

He planned to make his way through the forest toward the village in the hope of finding some vantage-point from which he might spy upon it; but he was confident that he would have to wait until after darkness had fallen before he could venture close; then it was his plan to scale the palisade and search the village for the girl while the natives slept. A mad scheme—but men have essayed even madder when spurred on by infatuation for a woman!

AS Old-timer was about to leave the tree and start toward the village of Bobolo, his attention was attracted toward the river by a canoe which had just come within sight around a bend a short distance upstream. In this ca-

noe was a single native. Apprehending that any movement on his part might attract the attention of the lone paddler and wishing above all things to arrive at the village unseen, Old-timer remained motionless. Closer and closer came the canoe, but it was not until it was directly opposite him that the white man recognized its occupant as that priest of the Leopard God whom his rescuer had demanded should be delivered into his hands.

Yes, it was Sobito; but how had Sobito come here? What was the meaning of it? Old-timer was confident that the strange white giant who had rescued him had not demanded Sobito for the purpose of setting him free. Here was a mystery. Its solution was beyond him, but he could not see that it materially concerned him in any way; so he gave it no further thought after Sobito had drifted out of sight beyond the next turning of the river below.

MOVING cautiously through the jungle, the white man came at last within sight of the village of Bobolo. Here he climbed a tree well off the trail where he could look over the village without being observed. He was not surprised that he did not see the girl, knowing that she was doubtless a prisoner in one of the huts of the chief's compound. All he could do was wait until darkness had fallen—wait and hope.

Two days' march on the opposite side of the river lay his own camp. He had thought of going there first and enlisting the aid of his partner, but he dared not risk the four days' delay. He wondered what the Kid was doing; he hoped the young man had been more successful in his search for ivory than he himself had been.

The tree in which Old-timer had stationed himself was at the edge of a clearing. Below him and at a little distance women were working, hoeing with sharpened sticks. They were chattering like a band of monkeys. He saw a few warriors set out to inspect their traps and snares. The scene was peacefully pastoral. Old-timer recognized most of the warriors and some of the women, for he was well acquainted in the village of Bobolo. The villagers had been friendly, but he knew that because of his knowledge of Bobolo's connection with the Leopard Men he dared no longer approach the village openly. Because of that fact and the theft of the white girl, the chief could not afford to let him live; he knew too much.

Old-timer had seen the village many times before, but now it had taken on a new aspect. Before, it had been only another native village inhabited by savage blacks; today it was glorified in his eyes by the presence of a girl. Thus does imagination color our perceptions. How different would the village of Bobolo have appeared in the eyes of the watcher had he known the truth—had he known that the girl he thought so near him was far away in the hut of Wlala, the Betete pygmy, grinding corn beneath the hate-filled eyes of a cruel taskmistress, and suffering from hunger!

In the village Bobolo was having troubles of his own. Sobito had come. The chief knew nothing of what had befallen the priest of the Leopard God; he did not know Sobito had been discredited in the eyes of the order, nor did Sobito plan to enlighten him. The wily old witch-doctor was not sure that he had any plans at all. He could not return to Tumbai, but he had to live somewhere. At least he thought so; and he needed allies. He saw in Bobolo a possible ally. He knew that the chief had stolen the white priestess, and he hoped that this knowledge might prove of advantage to him; but he said nothing about the white girl. He believed that she was in the village, and that sooner or later he would see her. Bobolo and Sobito had talked of many things since the witch-doctor's arrival, but they had not spoken of the Leopard Men nor of the white girl. Sobito was waiting for any turn of events that would give him a cue to his advantage.

Bobolo was nervous. He had been planning to take food to Rebega this day and visit his white wife. Sobito had upset his plans. He tried to think of some way by which he could rid himself of this unwelcome guest. Poison occurred to him; but he had already gone too far in arousing the antagonism of the Leopard Men, and knowing that there were loyal members of the clan in his village, he feared to add the poisoning of a priest to his other crimes against the Leopard God.

The day dragged on. Bobolo had not yet discovered why Sobito had come to his village; Sobito had not yet seen the white girl. Old-timer was still perched in the tree overlooking the village. He was hungry and thirsty, but he did not dare desert his post lest something might

**Tarzan wheeled and faced the roaring monster. Back went his spear-arm.**

occur in the village that it would be to his advantage to see. Off and on all day he had seen Bobolo and Sobito. They were always talking. He wondered if they were discussing the fate of the girl. He wished that night would come. He would like to get down and stretch his legs and get a drink. His thirst annoyed him more than his hunger; but even if he had contemplated deserting his post to obtain water, it could not be done now. The women in the field were working closer to his tree. Two of them, indeed were just beneath its overhanging branches. They paused in the shade to rest, their tongues prattling ceaselessly.

Old-timer overheard a number of extremely intimate anecdotes relating to members of the tribe. He learned that if a certain woman was not careful her husband was going to catch her in an embarrassing situation—that certain charms are more efficacious when mixed with nail-parings—that the young son of another woman had a demon in his belly that caused him intense suffering when he over-ate. These things did not interest Old-timer greatly, but presently one of the women asked a question that brought him to alert attention.

"What do you think Bobolo did with his white wife?"

"He told Ubooga that he had sent her back to the Leopard Men from whom he says that he stole her," replied the other.

"Bobolo has a lying tongue in his head," rejoined the first woman; "it does not know the truth."

"I know what he did with her," volunteered the other. "I overheard Kapopa telling his wife."

"What did he say?"

"He said that they took her to the village of the little men."

"They will eat her."

"No, Bobolo has promised to give them food every moon if they keep her for him."

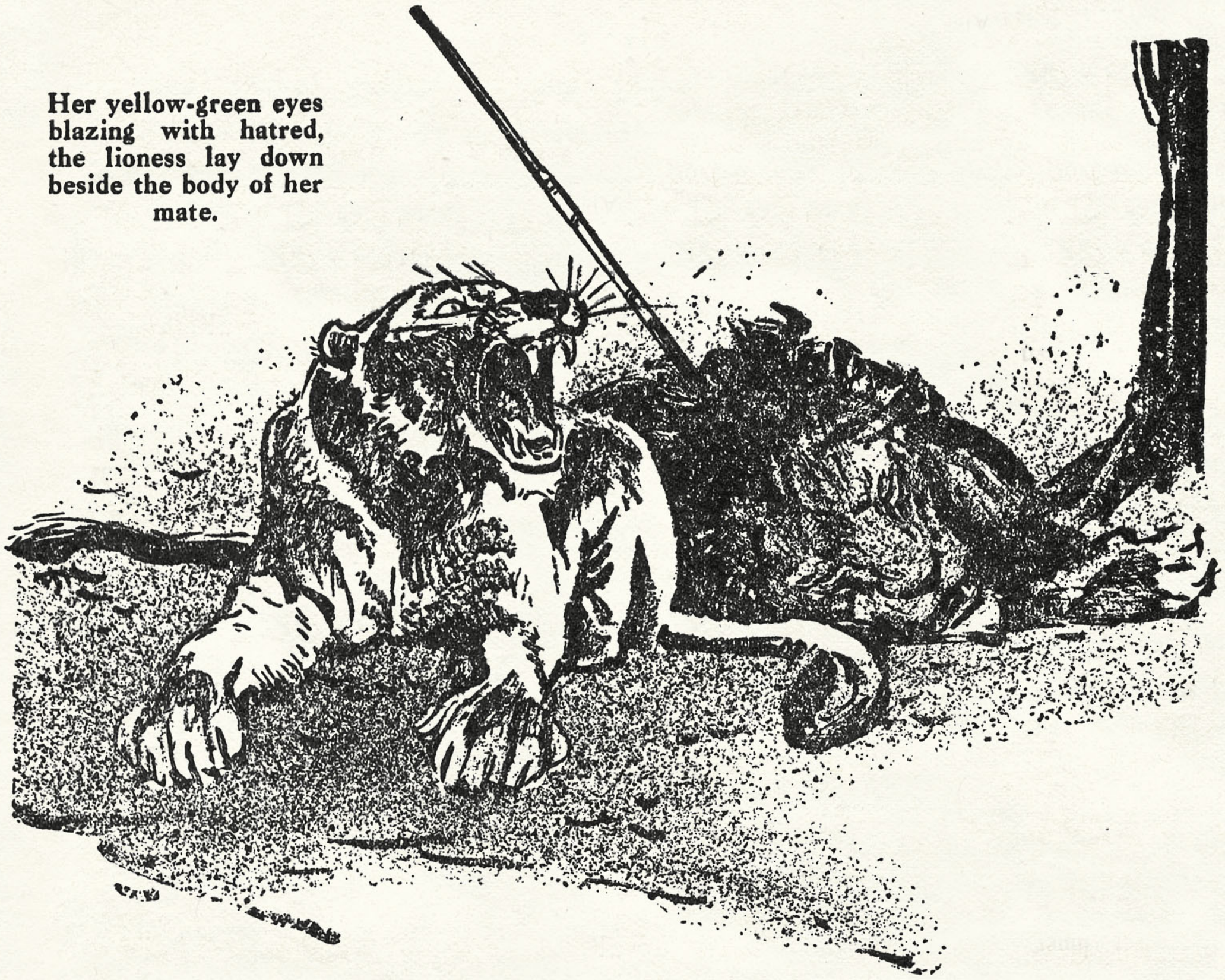
"I would not like to be in the village of the little men, no matter what they promised! They are eaters of men; they are always hungry; and they are great liars." Then the women's work carried them away from the tree, and Old-timer heard no more; but that which he had heard had changed all his plans.

No longer was he interested in the village of Bobolo; once again it was only another native village.

## CHAPTER XVII

### Charging Lions

WHEN Tarzan of the Apes left the camp of the Utengas, he appropriated one of the canoes of the defeated Leopard Men, as Sobito was to do several



Her yellow-green eyes blazing with hatred, the lioness lay down beside the body of her mate.

hours later, and paddled across the broad river to its opposite shore. His destination was the village of Bobolo; his mission, to question the chief relative to the white girl. He felt no keen personal interest in her and was concerned only because of racial ties, which after all are not very binding. She was a white woman and he was a white man, a fact that he sometimes forgot, since before anything else he was a wild beast.

He had been very active for several days and nights, and he was tired. Little Nkima also was tired, nor did he let Tarzan forget it for long; so when the ape-man leaped ashore from the canoe he sought a comfortable place among the branches of a tree where they might lie up for a few hours.

The sun was high in the heavens when Tarzan awoke. Little Nkima, snuggling close to him, would have slept longer; but the ape-man caught him by the scruff of the neck and shook him into wakefulness.

"I am hungry," said Tarzan; "let us find food and eat."

"There is plenty to eat in the forest," replied the little monkey; "let us sleep a little longer."

"I do not want fruit or nuts," said the ape-man. "I want meat. Nkima may remain here and sleep, but Tarzan goes to kill."

"I shall go with you," announced Nkima. "Strong in this forest is the scent of Sheeta the leopard. I am afraid to remain alone. Sheeta is hunting too; he is hunting for little Nkima."

The shadow of a smile touched the lips of the ape-man, one of those rare smiles that but few ever saw.

"Come," he said, "and while Tarzan hunts for meat Nkima can rob birds' nests."

THE hunting was not good; though the ape-man ranged far through the forest his searching nostrils were not rewarded with the scent of flesh that he liked. Always strong was the scent of Sheeta, but Tarzan liked not the flesh of the carnivores. Driven to it by the extremity of hunger, he had eaten more than once of Sheeta and Numa and Sabor; but it was the flesh of the herbivores that he preferred.

Knowing that the hunting was better farther from the river, where there were fewer men, he swung deeper and deeper into the primeval forest until he was many miles from the river. This country was new to Tarzan, and he did not like it; there was too little game.

This thought was in his mind when there came to his nostrils the scent of Wappi the antelope. It was very faint, but it was enough. Straight into the wind swung Tarzan of the Apes, and steadily the scent of Wappi grew stronger in his nostrils. Mingling with it were other scents: the scent of Pacco the zebra, and of Numa the lion; the fresh scent of open grass-land.

ON swung Tarzan of the Apes and little Nkima. Ever stronger grew the scent-spoor of the quarry in the hunter's nostrils, and stronger the hunger-craving gnawing in his belly. His keen nostrils told him that there was not one antelope ahead but many. This must be a good hunting-ground that he was approaching! Then the forest ended; and a rolling, grassy plain, tree-dotted, stretched before him to blue mountains in the distance.

Before him, as he halted at the forest's edge, the plain was rich with lush grasses; a mile away a herd of antelope grazed, and beyond them the plain was dotted with zebra. An almost inaudible growl rumbled from his deep chest; it was the anticipatory growl of the hunting beast that is about to feed.

Strong in his nostrils was the scent of Numa the lion. In those deep grasses were lions; but in such rich hunting-ground they must be well fed, he knew, and so he could ignore them. They would not bother him if he did not bother them, which he had no intention of doing; it was not Numa that he hunted.

To stalk the antelope amid the concealment of this tall grass was no difficult matter for the ape-man. He did not have to see them; his nose would guide him to them. First he noted carefully the terrain, the location of each tree, an outcropping of rock that rose above the grasses. It was likely that the lions would be lying up there in the shadow of the rocks.

He beckoned to Nkima, but Nkima held back.

"Numa is there," complained the monkey, "with all his brothers and sisters. They are waiting there to eat little Nkima. Nkima is afraid."

"Stay where you are, then; and when I have made my kill I will return."

"Nkima is afraid to remain."

Tarzan shook his head.

"Nkima is a great coward," he said. "He may do what he pleases. Tarzan goes to make his kill."

Silently he slid into the tall grasses, while Nkima crouched high in a great tree, choosing the lesser of two evils. The little monkey watched him go out into the great plain where the lions were; and he shivered, though it was very warm.

Tarzan made a detour to avoid the rocks; but even where he was, the lion scent was so strong that he almost lost the scent of Wappi. Yet he felt no apprehension. Fear he did not know. By now he had covered half the distance to the quarry, which was still feeding quietly, unmindful of danger.

Suddenly to his left he heard the angry coughing growl of a lion. It was a warning growl that the ape-man knew might presage a charge. Tarzan sought no encounter with Numa; all that he wished was to make his kill and depart. He moved away to the right. Fifty feet ahead of him was a tree. If the lion charged, it might be necessary to seek sanctuary there; but he did not believe that Numa would charge. He had given him no reason to do so; then a cross-current of wind brought to his nostrils a scent that warned him of his peril. It was the scent of Sabor the lioness. Now Tarzan understood; he had nearly stumbled upon a mating lion—which meant that a charge was almost inevitable, for a mating lion will charge anything without provocation.

Now the tree was but twenty-five feet away. A roar thundered from the grass behind him. A quick backward glance, showing the grass tops waving tumultuously, revealed the imminence of his danger; Numa was charging!

UP to that time he had seen no lion, but now a massive head framed by a dark brown mane burst into view. Tarzan of the Apes was angry. It galled him to flee. A dignified retreat prompted by caution was one thing; abject flight, another. Few creatures can move with the swiftness of Tarzan, and he had a start of twenty-five feet. He could have reached the tree ahead of the lion, but he did not at once attempt to do so. Instead he wheeled and faced the roaring, green-eyed monster. Back went his spear arm, his muscles rolling like molten steel beneath his bronzed skin; then forward with all the weight of his powerful frame backed by those mighty thews. The heavy Utenga war-spear shot from his hand. Not until then did Tarzan of the Apes turn and flee; but he did

not run from the lion that was pursuing him. Behind Numa he had seen Sabor coming, and behind her the grasses waved in many places above the rushing bodies of charging lions. Tarzan of the Apes fled from certain and sudden death.

The spear momentarily checked the charge of the nearest lion, and in the fraction of a split-second that spelled the difference between life and death the ape-man swarmed up the tree which had been his goal, while the raking talons of Numa all but grazed his heel.

SAFE out of reach, Tarzan turned and looked down. Below, a great lion was clawing at the haft of the spear that was buried in his heart. Behind the first lion a lioness and six more males had burst into view. Far out across the plain the antelopes and the zebras were disappearing in the distance, startled into flight by the savage roars of the charging lion.

The lioness, never pausing in her charge, ran far up the bole of the tree in her effort to drag down the man-thing. She had succeeded in getting one foreleg across a lower branch, and she hung there a moment in an effort to scramble farther upward; but she could not get sufficient footing for her hind feet to force her heavy weight higher, and presently she slipped back to the ground. She sniffed at her dead mate and then circled the tree, growling. The six males paced to and fro, adding their angry roars to the protest of Sabor; while from above them the ape-man looked down and through snarling lips growled out his own disappointment and displeasure. In a tree-top half a mile away a little monkey screamed and scolded.

For half an hour the lioness circled the tree, looking up at Tarzan, her yellow-green eyes blazing with rage and hatred; then she lay down beside the body of her fallen mate, while the six males squatted upon their haunches and watched now Sabor, now Tarzan, and now one another.

Tarzan of the Apes gazed ruefully after his departed quarry and back toward the forest. He was hungrier now than ever. Even if the lions went away and permitted him to descend, he was still as far from a meal as he had been when he awoke in the morning. He broke twigs and branches from the tree and hurled them at Sabor in an attempt to drive her away, knowing that wherever she went the males would follow; but she only growled the more ferociously and remained in her place beside the dead lion.

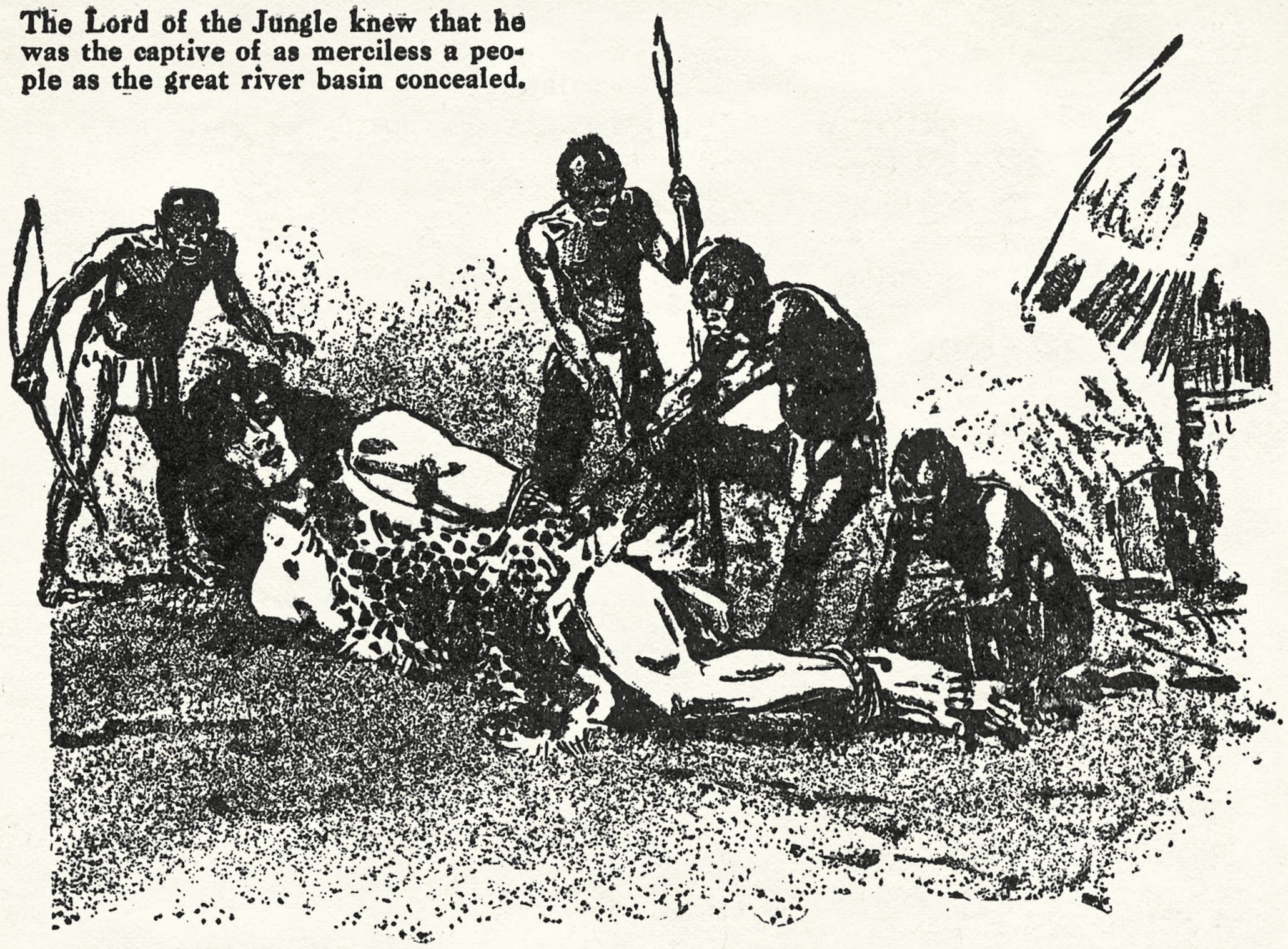
Thus passed the remainder of the day. Night came, and still the lioness remained beside her dead mate. Tarzan upbraided himself for leaving his bow and arrows behind in the forest. With them he could have killed the lioness and the lions and escaped. Without them he could do nothing but throw futile twigs at them and wait. He wondered how long he would have to wait. When the lioness waxed hungry enough she would go away; but when would that be? From the size of her belly and the smell of her breath the man-beast squatting above her knew that she had eaten recently and well.

Tarzan had long since resigned himself to his fate. When he had found that hurling things at Sabor would not drive her away, he desisted. Unlike man, he did not continue to annoy her merely for the purpose of venting his displeasure. Instead, he curled himself in a crotch of the tree and slept.

In the forest at the edge of the plain a terrified little monkey rolled himself into the tiniest ball that he could achieve and suffered in silence. If he were too large or too noisy, he feared that he might sooner attract the attention of Sheeta the leopard. That Sheeta would come eventually and eat him he was certain. But why hasten the evil moment?

WHEN the sun rose and he was still alive, Nkima was surprised but not convinced. Sheeta might have overlooked him in the dark, but in the daylight he would be sure to see him; however, there was some consolation in knowing that he could see Sheeta sooner and doubtless escape him. With the rising sun his spirits rose, but he was still unhappy because Tarzan had not returned. Out on the plain he could see him in the tree, and he wondered why he did not come down and return to little Nkima. He saw the lions too; but it did not occur to him that it was they who prevented Tarzan from returning. He could not conceive that there might be any creature or any number of creatures which his mighty master could not overcome.

Tarzan was irked. The lioness gave no sign that she was ever going away. Several of the males had departed to hunt during the night, and one that had made a kill near by lay on it not far from the tree. Tarzan hoped that Sabor



The Lord of the Jungle knew that he was the captive of as merciless a people as the great river basin concealed.

would be attracted by it; but though the odor of the kill was strong in the ape-man's nostrils, the lioness was not tempted away by it.

Noon came. Tarzan was famished and his throat was dry. He was tempted to cut a club from a tree branch and attempt to battle his way to liberty; but he knew only too well what the outcome would be. Not even he, Tarzan of the Apes, could hope to survive the onslaught of all those lions, which was certain to follow immediately he descended from the tree if the lioness attacked him. That she would attack him if he approached that close to her dead mate was a foregone conclusion. There was nothing to do but wait. Eventually she would go away; she could not remain there forever.

Nor did she. Shortly after noon she arose and slunk toward the kill that one of the males had made. As she disappeared in the tall grass, the other males followed her. It was fortunate for the ape-man that the kill lay beyond the tree in which he had taken refuge, away from the forest. He did not wait after the last male disappeared among the waving grasses, but dropped from the tree, recovered his spear from the carcass of Numa, and started at a brisk walk toward the forest. His keen ears took note of every sound. Not even soft-padded Numa could have stalked him without his being aware of it—but no lion followed him.

Nkima was frantic with joy. Tarzan was only hungry and thirsty. He was not long in finding the means for quenching his thirst, but it was late before he made a kill and satisfied his hunger; then his thoughts returned to the object of his excursion. He would go to the village of Bobolo and reconnoiter. . . .

He had gone far inland from the river, and his hunting had taken him down the valley to a point which he guessed was about opposite the village where he hoped to find the girl. He had passed a band of great apes led by Zu-tho, whom he had thought far away in his own country, and he had stopped to talk with them for a moment; but neither the great apes nor Tarzan, who was reared among them, are loquacious, therefore he soon left them to pursue the purpose he had undertaken.

Now he swung through the trees directly toward the river, where he knew that he could find landmarks to assure him of his position.

IT was already dark; so Nkima clung to the back of his master, his little arms about the bronzed neck. By day he swung through the trees with Tarzan; but at night he clung tightly to him, for

by night there are terrible creatures abroad in the jungle, and they are all hunting for little Nkima.

The scent-spoor of man was growing stronger in the nostrils of Tarzan, so he knew that he was approaching a village of the Gomangani. He was certain that it could not be the village of Bobolo; it was too far from the river. Furthermore, there was an indication in the odors wafted to his nostrils that the people who inhabited it were not of the same tribe as was Bobolo. The mere presence of Gomangani would have been sufficient to have caused Tarzan to investigate, for it was the business of the Lord of the Jungle to have knowledge of all things in his vast domain; but there was another scent-spoor faintly appreciable among the varied stenches emanating from the village that in itself would have been sufficient to turn him from his direct path to the river. It was but the faintest suggestion of a scent, yet the ape-man recognized it for what it was, and it told him that the girl he sought was close at hand.

Silently he approached the village, until from the outspreading branches of a great tree he looked down upon the compound before the hut of Rebega the pygmy chief.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Arrows out of the Night

THE KID had returned to his camp after a fruitless search for elephants. He hoped that Old-timer had been more successful. At first he thought that the other's protracted absence indicated this, but as the days passed and his friend did not return he became anxious. His position was not an enviable one. The faith and loyalty of his three black retainers had been sorely shaken. Only a genuine attachment for the two white men had kept them with them during the recent months of disappointment and ill fortune. How much longer he could expect to hold them he did not know. He was equally at a loss to imagine what he would do if they deserted him, yet his chief concern was not for himself but for his friend.

Fortunately he had been able to keep the camp well supplied with fresh meat, and the natives, therefore, reasonably contented; but he knew that they longed to return to their own villages now that they could not see any likelihood of profiting by their connection with these two poverty-stricken white men.

Such thoughts were occupying his mind late one afternoon upon his return from a successful hunt for meat when his revery was interrupted by the shouts of his "boys." Glancing up, he saw two of the men who had accompanied Old-timer entering the camp. Leaping to his feet, he went forward to meet them, expecting to see his old friend and the third black following closely behind them; but when he was close enough to see the expressions upon their faces he realized that something was amiss.

"Where are your bwana and Andereya?" he demanded.

"They are both dead," replied one of the returning blacks.

"Dead!" ejaculated the Kid. It seemed to him that the bottom had suddenly dropped from his world. Old-timer dead! It was unthinkable! Until now he had scarcely realized how much he had depended upon the older man for guidance and support, nor to what extent this friendship had become a part of him.

"How did it happen?" he inquired. "Was it an elephant?"

"The Leopard Men, Bwana," explained the black who had made the announcement.

"The Leopard Men! Tell me how it happened."

With attention to minute details and with much circumlocution the two boys told all that they knew, and when at last they had finished, the Kid saw a suggestion of a ray of hope. They had not actually seen Old-timer killed. He might still be a prisoner in the village of Gato Mgungu.

"He said that if he had not returned to us by the time the shadow of the forest had left the palisade in the morning we should know that he was dead," insisted a black.

MENTALLY the youth surveyed his resources: five discontented blacks and himself—six men to march upon the stronghold of the Leopard Men and demand an accounting of them. And five of these men held the Leopard Men in such awe that he knew that they would not accompany him. He raised his eyes suddenly to the waiting blacks.

"Be ready to march when the sun rises tomorrow," he snapped.

There was a moment's hesitation. "Where do we march?" demanded one suspiciously.

"Where I lead you," he replied shortly; then he returned to his tent, his mind occupied with plans for the future and with the tragic story that the two blacks had narrated.

He wondered who the girl might be. What was Old-timer doing pursuing a white woman? Had he gone crazy, or had he forgotten that he hated all white women?

Of course, the Kid reflected, there was probably nothing else that his friend could have done. The girl had been in danger, and that of course would have been enough to have sent Old-timer on the trail of her abductors; but how had he become involved with her in the first place? The boys had not been explicit upon this point. He saw them now, talking with their fellows. All of them appeared excited. Presently they started across the camp toward his tent.

"Well, what is it now?" he asked as they stopped before him.

"If you are going to the village of the Leopard Men, Bwana," announced the spokesman, "we will not follow you. We are few; and they would kill us all and eat us."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Kid. "They will do nothing of the sort. They would not dare."

"That is what the old bwana said," replied the spokesman, "but he did not return to us. He is dead."

"I do not believe that he is dead," retorted the Kid. "We are going to find out."

"You, perhaps, but not we," rejoined the black.

The Kid saw that he could not shake them in their decision. The outlook appeared gloomy, but he was determined to go if he had to go alone. Yet what could he accomplish without them? A plan occurred to him.

"Will you go part way with me?" he asked.

"How far?"

"To the village of Bobolo. I may be able to get help from him."

For a moment the blacks argued among themselves in low voices; then their spokesman turned again to the white man.

"We will go as far as the village of Bobolo," he said.

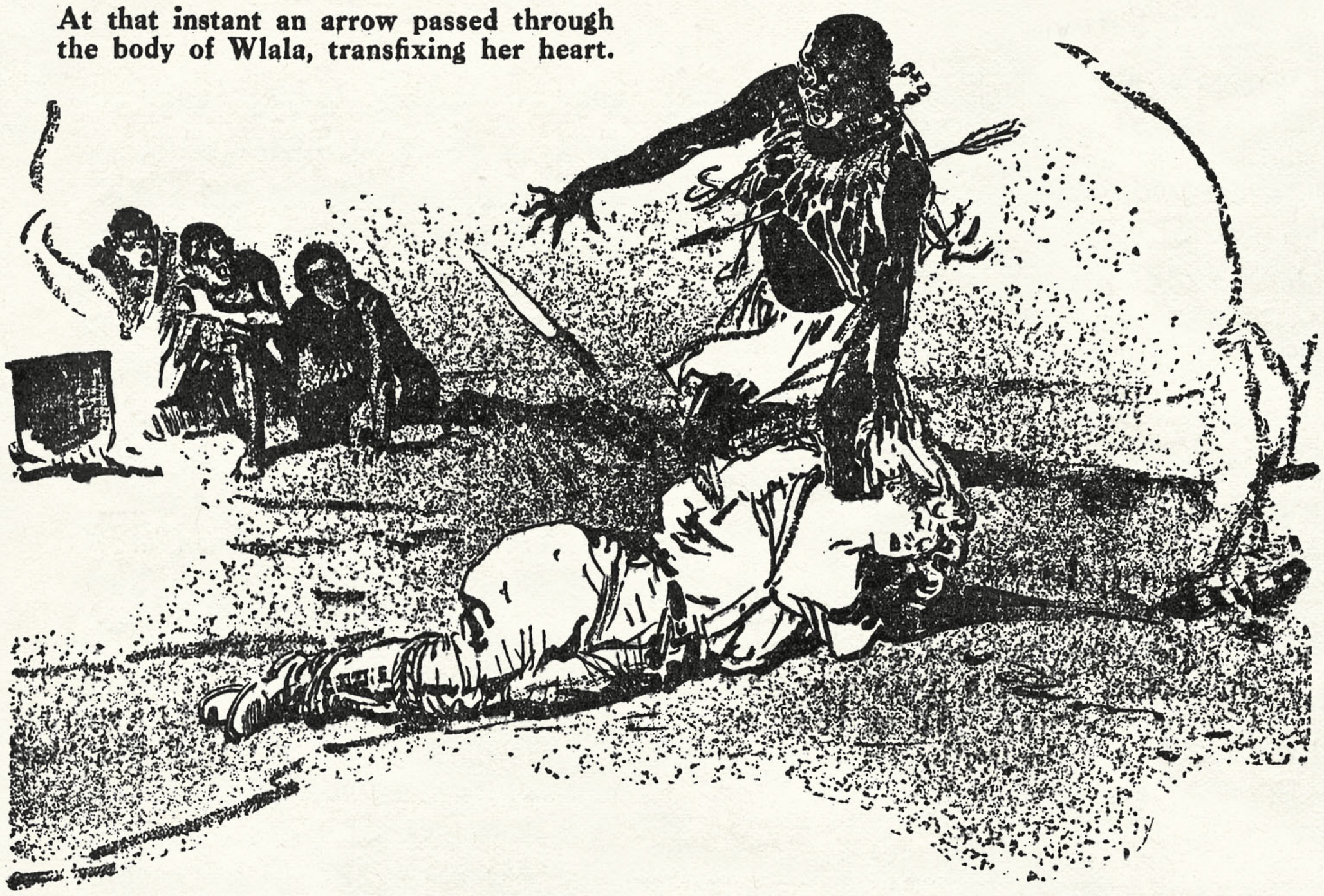
OLD-TIMER waited until the women hoeing in the field had departed a little distance from the tree in which he was hiding; then he slipped cautiously to the ground on the side opposite them. He had never been to the village of the little men. He had often heard the natives of Bobolo's village speak of them and knew in a general way the direction in which the pygmy village lay, but there were many trails in this part of the forest. It would be easy to take the wrong one.

He knew enough of the Betetes to know that he might have difficulty in entering their village. They were a savage, warlike race of pygmies and even reputed to be cannibals. The trails to their village were well guarded, and the first challenge might be a poisoned spear. Though he knew these things to be true, the idea of abandoning his search for the girl because of them did not occur to him. He did not hesitate in reaching a decision, but the very fact that she was there hastened it instead.

DARK overtook him, but he stopped only because he could not see to go on. At the first break of dawn he was away again. The forest was dense and gloomy. He could not see the sun, and he was haunted by the conviction that he was on the wrong trail. It must have been about mid-afternoon when he came to a sudden halt, baffled. He had recognized his own footprints in the trail ahead of him; he had walked in a great circle.

Absolutely at a loss as to which direction to take, he struck out blindly along a narrow winding trail that intercepted the one he had been traversing at the point at which he had made his harrowing discovery. Where the trail led or in what direction he could not know, nor even whether it led back toward the river or farther inland; but he must be moving, he must go on.

Now he examined carefully every trail that crossed or branched from the one he was following. The trails, some of them at least, were well-worn; the ground was damp; the spoor of animals was often plain before his eyes. But he saw nothing that might afford him a clew until shortly before dark; then careful scrutiny of an intersecting trail revealed the tiny footprint of a pygmy. Old-timer was elated. It was the first sense of elation that he had experienced during all that dreary day. He had come to hate the forest. Its sunless gloom oppressed him. It had assumed for him the menacing personality of a powerful remorseless enemy that sought not only



**At that instant an arrow passed through the body of Wlala, transfixing her heart.**

to thwart his plans but to lure him to his death.

He hastened along the new trail, but darkness overtook him before he learned whether or not it led to his goal. Yet now he did not stop as he had the previous night. So long had the forest defeated and mocked him that perhaps he was a little mad. Something seemed to be calling to him out of the blackness ahead. Was it a woman's voice? He knew better, yet he listened intently as he groped his way through the darkness.

Presently his tensely listening ears were rewarded by a sound. It was not the voice of a woman calling to him, but it was the sound of human voices. Muffled and indistinct, it came to him out of that black void ahead. His heart beat a little faster, he moved more cautiously.

When he came at last within sight of a village he could see nothing beyond the palisade other than the firelight playing upon the foliage of overspreading trees and upon the thatched roofs of huts, but he knew that it was the village of the little men. There, behind that palisade, was the girl he sought. He wanted to cry aloud, shouting words of encouragement to her. He wanted her to know that he was near her, that he had come to save her; but he made no sound.

Cautiously he crept nearer. There was no sign of sentry. The little men do not need sentries in the dark forest at night, for few are the human enemies that dare invite the dangers of the nocturnal jungle. The forest was itself their protection, by night.

The poles that had been stuck in the ground to form the palisade were loosely bound together by lianas; there were spaces between them through which he glimpsed the firelight. Old-timer moved cautiously forward until he stood close against the palisade beside a gate. Placing an eye to one of the apertures, he looked into the village of Rebega. What he saw was not particularly interesting: a group of natives gathered before a central hut which he assumed to be the hut of the chief. They appeared to be arguing about something, and some of the men were dancing. He could see their heads bobbing above those of the natives who shut off his view.

Old-timer was not interested in what the little men were doing—at least he thought he was not. He was interested only in the girl, and he searched the village for some evidence of her presence there, though he was not surprised that he did not see her. Undoubtedly she was a prisoner in one of the huts. Had he known the truth he would have been far more interested in the activities of that little group of pygmies, the bodies of some of which hid from his sight the bound girl lying at its center!

Old-timer examined the gate and discovered that it was crudely secured with a fiber rope. From his breeches' pocket he took the pocket-knife that the Leop-

ard Men had overlooked and began cutting the fastening, congratulating himself upon the fact that the villagers were occupied to such an extent with something over by the chief's hut that he could complete his work without fear of detection.

He planned only to prepare a way into the village, when he undertook his search for the girl after the natives had retired to their huts for the night, and a way out when he had found her. For some unaccountable reason his spirits were high; success seemed assured. Already he was anticipating his reunion with the girl.

Then as he worked at the rope, there came a break in the circle of natives between him and the center of the group, and through that break he saw a sight that turned him suddenly cold with dread.

It was the girl, bound hand and foot, and a savage-faced pygmy woman wielding a large knife. As Old-timer saw the hideous tableau revealed for a moment to his horrified gaze, the woman seized the girl by the hair and forced her head back. The knife flashed in the light of the cooking-fires that had been prepared against the coming feast, as Old-timer, unarmed save for a small knife, burst through the gates and ran toward the scene of impending murder.

A cry of remonstrance burst from his lips that sounded in the ears of the astonished pygmies like the war-cry of attacking natives, and at the same instant an arrow passed through the body of Wlala from behind, transfixing her heart. Old-timer's eyes were on the executioner at the moment, and he saw the arrow, as did many of the pygmies; but like them he had no idea from whence it had come.

FOR a moment the little men stood in stupid astonishment, but the white man realized their inactivity would be brief when they discovered that they had only a lone and unarmed man to deal with; it was then that there flashed to his fertile brain a forlorn hope.

Half-turning, he shouted back toward the open gate, "Surround the village! Let no one escape, but do not kill unless they kill me." He spoke in a dialect that he knew they would understand —the language of the people of Bobolo's tribe—and then to the villagers: "Stand aside! Let me take the white woman, and you will not be harmed."

But he did not wait for permission. Leaping to the girl's side, he raised her in his arms; and then it was that Rebega seemed to awaken from his stupor. He saw only one man. Perhaps there were others outside his village, but did he not have warriors who could fight? "Kill the white man!" he shouted, leaping forward.

A second arrow passed through the body of Rebega; and as he sank to the ground three more, shot in rapid succession, brought down three warriors who had sprung forward to do his biding. Instantly terror filled the breasts of the remaining pygmies, sending them scurrying to the greater security of their huts.

Throwing the girl across his shoulder, Old-timer bolted for the open gate and disappeared in the forest. He heard a rending and a crash behind him, but he did not know what had happened, nor did he seek to ascertain.

## CHAPTER XIX

### "THE DEMONS ARE COMING!"

THE sight that met the eyes of Tarzan of the Apes as he looked down into the compound of the village of Rebega the Betete chief gave him cause for astonishment. He saw a white girl being bound. He saw the cooking-pots and the fires, and he guessed what was about to transpire. He was on his way to the village of Bobolo in search of a white girl imprisoned there. Could there be two white girls captives of natives in this same district? It scarcely seemed probable. This, therefore, must be the white girl whom he had supposed in the village of Bobolo; but how had she come here?

The question was of less importance than the fact that she *was* here, or the other still more important fact that he must save her. Dropping to the ground, he scaled the palisade and crept through the village from the rear, keeping well in the shadow of the huts; while little Nkima remained behind in the tree that the ape-man had quitted, his courage having carried him as far as it could.

When the pygmies had cleared a space for their village they had left a few trees within the enclosure to afford them shade, and one of these grew in front of the hut of Rebega. To this tree Tarzan made his way, keeping the bole of it between him and the natives assembled about the fires; and into its branches he swung just in time to see Wlala seize

the girl by the hair and lift her blade to slash the fair throat.

There was no time for thought, barely time for action. The muscles of the ape-man responded almost automatically to the stimulus of necessity. To fit an arrow to his bow and to loose the shaft required but the fraction of a split-second. Simultaneously he heard the noise at the gate, saw the white man running forward, heard him yell. Even had he not recognized him, he would have known instinctively that he was here for but one purpose—the rescue of the girl. And when Tarzan heard Rebega's command,—knowing the danger that the white man faced,—he shot the additional arrows that brought down those most closely menacing him and frightened the rest of the pygmies away for the short time necessary to permit the removal of the captive from the village.

Tarzan of the Apes had no quarrel with the little men. He had accomplished that for which he had come and was ready to depart, but as he turned to descend from the tree there was a rending of wood, and the limb upon which he was standing broke suddenly from the stem of the tree and crashed to the ground beneath, carrying the ape-man with it. . . .

The fall stunned him momentarily, and when he regained consciousness he found his body overrun by pygmy warriors who were just completing the act of trussing his arms and legs securely. Not knowing that they had completed their job, nor how well they had done it, the ape-man surged heavily upon his bonds, the effort sending the pygmies in all directions; but the cords held and the Lord of the Jungle knew that he was the captive of as cruel and merciless a people as the forests of the great river basin concealed.

THE Betetes were still nervous and fearful. They had refastened the gates Old-timer had opened, and a force of warriors was guarding this entrance as well as the one at the opposite end of the village. Poison-tipped spears and arrows were in readiness for any enemy who might approach, but the whole village was in a state of nervous terror bordering upon panic. Their chief was dead; the white girl whom they had been about to devour was gone; a gigantic white man had dropped from the heavens into their village and was now their prisoner. All these things had happened within a few seconds; it was little wonder that they were nervous.

As to their new captive there was a difference of opinion. Some thought that he should be slain at once, lest he escape. Others, impressed by the mysterious manner of his entrance into the village, were inclined to wait, being fearful because of their ignorance of his origin, which might easily be supernatural.

The possible danger of an attack by an enemy beyond their gates finally was a reprieve for the ape-man, for the simple reason that they dared not distract their attention from the defense of the village to indulge in an orgy of eating. Tomorrow night would answer even better, their leaders argued; and so a score of them half carried, half dragged the great body of their prisoner into an unoccupied hut, two of their number remaining outside the entrance on guard.

SWAYING upon the topmost branch of a tree, Nkima hugged himself in grief and terror, principally terror; for in many respects he was not greatly unlike the rest of us who, with Nkima, have descended from a common ancestor. His own troubles affected him more than the troubles of another, even though that other was a loved one.

This seemed a cruel world indeed to little Nkima. He was never long out of one trouble before another had him in its grip, though more often than not the troubles were of his own making. This time, however, he had been behaving perfectly (largely through the fact that he was terror-stricken in this strange forest); he had not insulted a single creature all day nor thrown missiles at one; yet here he was alone in the dark, the scent of Sheeta strong in his nostrils, and Tarzan a prisoner in the hands of the little Gomangani!

He wished that Muviro and the other Waziri were here, or Jad-bal-ja, the Golden Lion. Either of these would come to the rescue of Tarzan and save Nkima too; but they were far away. So far away were they that Nkima had long since given up hope of seeing any of them again. He wanted to go into the village of the little Gomangani that he might be near his master, but he dared not. He could only crouch in the tree and wait for Sheeta or Kudu. If Sheeta came first, as Nkima fully expected him to do, that would be the last of the little monkey.

But perhaps Kudu the sun would

come first, in which event there would be another day of comparative safety before hideous night settled down again upon an unhappy world.

As his thoughts dwelt upon such lugubrious prophecies, there rose from the village below him the uncanny notes of a weird cry. The natives in the village were startled and terrified, because they only half guessed what it was. They had occasionally heard it before during their lives, sounding mysterious and awe-inspiring, from the dark distances of the jungle; but they had never heard it so close to them before. It sounded almost in the village. They had scarcely had time to think these thoughts when they learned that the terrible cry had been voiced from one of their own huts.

Two terrified warriors apprised them of this, the two warriors who had been placed on guard over their giant captive. Wide-eyed and breathless, they fled from their post of duty.

"It is no man that we have captured," cried one of them, "but a demon. He has changed himself into a great ape. Did you not hear him?"

The other natives were equally frightened. They had no chief, no one to give orders, no one to whom they might look for advice and protection in an emergency of this nature.

"Did you see him?" inquired one of the sentries. "What does he look like?"

"We did not see him, but we heard him."

"If you did not see him, how do you know that he has changed himself into a great ape?"

"Did I not say that I heard him?" demanded a sentry. "When the lion roars, do you have to go out into the forest to look at him to know that he is a lion?"

The skeptic scratched his head. Here was irrefutable logic. However, he felt that he must have the last word.

"If you had looked, you would have known for sure," he said. "Had I been on guard I should have looked in the hut. I should not have run away like an old woman."

"Go and look, then," cried one of the sentries. And the skeptic was silenced.

NKIMA heard the weird cry from the village of the little men. It thrilled him too, but did not frighten him. He listened intently, but no sound broke the silence of the great forest. He became uneasy. He wished to raise his voice but he dared not, knowing that Sheeta would hear. He wished to go to the side of his master, but fear was stronger than love. All he could do was wait and shiver; he did not dare whimper, for fear of Sheeta.

Five minutes passed—five minutes during which the Betetes did a maximum of talking and a minimum of thinking. However, a few of them had almost succeeded in screwing up their courage to a point that would permit them to investigate the hut in which the captive was immured, when again the weird cry shattered the silence of the night; whereupon the investigation was delayed by common consent.

Now faintly from afar sounded the roar of a lion, and a moment later out of the dim distance came an eerie cry that seemed a counterpart of that which had issued from the hut. After that, silence fell again upon the forest, but only for a short time. Now the wives of Rebega and the wives of the warriors who had been killed commenced their lamentations. They moaned and howled and smeared themselves with ashes.

AN hour passed, during which the warriors held a council and chose a temporary chief. He was Nyalwa, known as a brave warrior. The little men felt better now; there was a recrudescence of courage. Nyalwa perceived this and realized that he should take advantage of it while it was hot. He also felt that, being chief, he should do something important.

"Let us go and kill the white man," he said. "We shall be safer when he is dead."

"And our bellies will be fuller," remarked a warrior.

"But what if he is not a man, but a demon?" demanded another.

This started a controversy that lasted another hour, but at last it was decided that several of them should go to the hut and kill the prisoner; then more time was consumed deciding who should go. And during this time little Nkima had experienced an accession of courage. He had been watching the village all the time; and he had seen that no one approached the hut in which Tarzan was confined and that none of the natives were in that part of the village, all of them being congregated in the open space before the hut of the dead Rebega.

Fearfully Nkima descended from the tree and scampered to the palisade,

which he scaled at the far end of the village where there were no little men, even those who had been guarding the rear gate having deserted it at the first cry of the prisoner. It took him but a moment to reach the hut in which Tarzan lay. At the entrance he stopped and peered into the dark interior, but he could see nothing. Again he grew very much afraid.

"It is little Nkima," he said. "Sheeta was there in the forest waiting for me. He tried to stop me, but I was not afraid. I have come to help Tarzan."

The darkness hid the smile that curved the lips of the ape-man. He knew Nkima —knew that if Sheeta had been within a mile of him he would not have moved from the safety of the slenderest high-flung branch, to which no Sheeta could pursue him. But he merely said, "Nkima is very brave."

The little monkey entered the hut and leaped to the broad chest of the ape-man. "I have come to gnaw the cords that hold you," he announced.

"That you cannot do," replied Tarzan; "otherwise I should have called you long ago."

"Why can I not?" demanded Nkima. "My teeth are very sharp."

"After the little men bound me with rope," explained Tarzan, "they twisted copper wire about my wrists and ankles. Nkima cannot gnaw through copper wire."

"I can gnaw through the cords," insisted Nkima, "and then I can take the wire off with my fingers."

"You can try," replied Tarzan, "but I think that you cannot do it."

NYALWA had succeeded in finding five warriors who would accompany him to the hut and kill the prisoner. He regretted that he had suggested the plan, for he had found it necessary, as candidate for permanent chieftainship, to volunteer to head the party.

As they crept slowly toward the hut, Tarzan raised his head. "They come!" he whispered to Nkima. "Go out and meet them. Hurry!"

Nkima crept cautiously through the doorway. The sight that first met his eyes was of the six warriors creeping stealthily toward him. "They come!" he screamed to Tarzan. "The little Gomangani come!" And then he fled precipitately.

The Betetes saw him and were astonished. They were also not a little fearful. "The demon has changed himself into a little monkey and escaped," cried a warrior.

Nyalwa hoped so, but it seemed almost too good to be true; however, he grasped at the suggestion.

"Then we may go back," he said. "If he has gone we cannot kill him."

"We should look into the hut," urged a warrior who had hoped to be chief and who would have been glad to demonstrate that he was braver than Nyalwa.

"We can look into it in the morning when it is light," argued Nyalwa; "it is very dark now."

"I will go and get a brand from the fire," said the warrior. "And then if Nyalwa is afraid I will go into the hut. I am not afraid."

"I am not afraid," cried Nyalwa. "I will go in without any light." But he had no more than spoken, when he regretted it. Why was he always saying things first and thinking afterward?

"Then why do you stand still?" demanded the warrior. "You cannot get into the hut by standing still."

"I am not standing still," remonstrated Nyalwa, creeping forward very slowly.

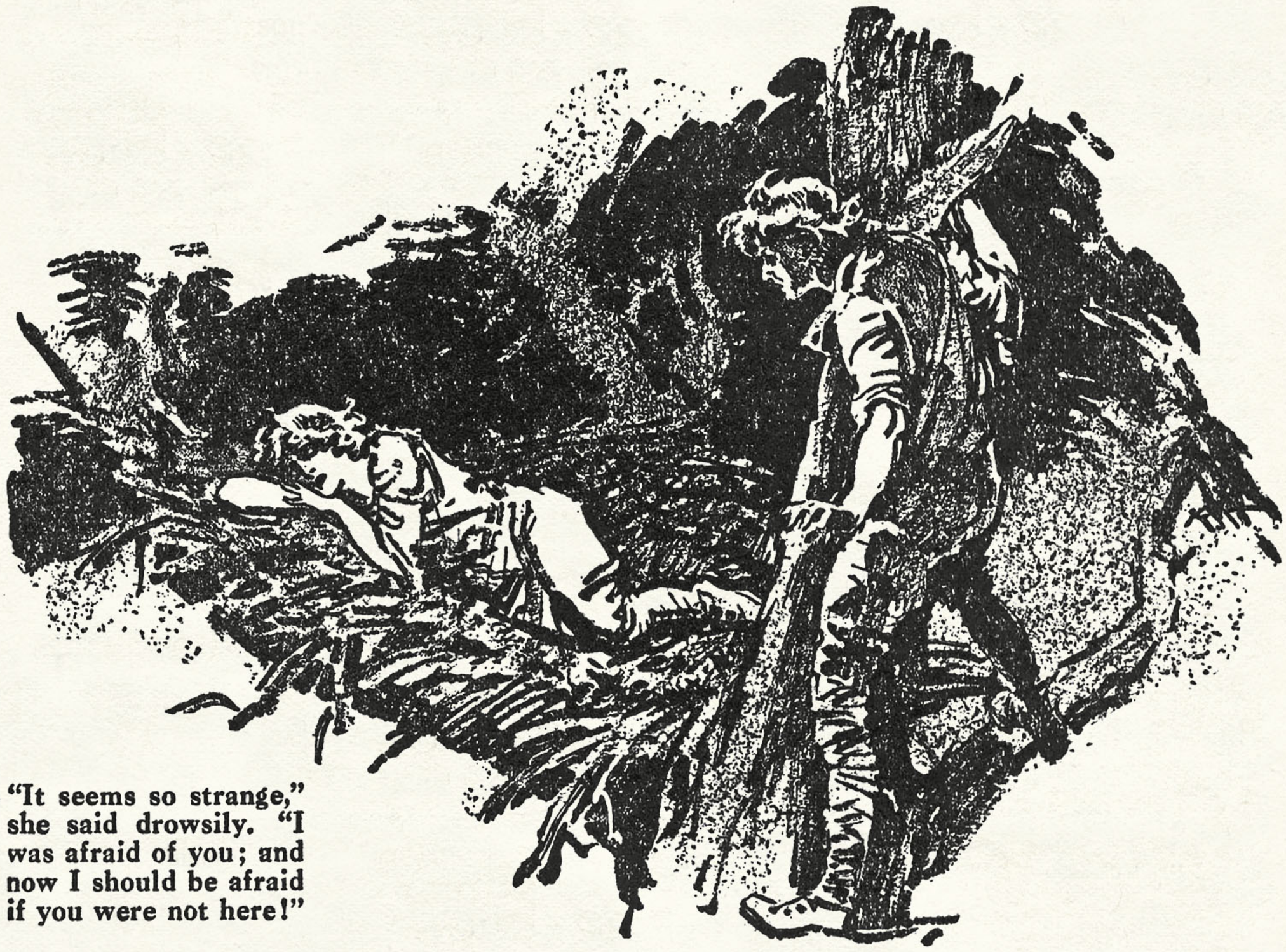
WHILE they argued, Nkima scaled the palisade and fled into the dark forest. He was very much afraid, but he felt better when he had reached the smaller branches of the trees, far above the ground. He did not pause here, however, but swung on through the darkness, for there was a fixed purpose in the mind of little Nkima. Even his fear of Sheeta was submerged in the exhilaration of his mission.

Nyalwa crept to the doorway of the hut and peered in. He could see nothing. Prodding ahead of him with his spear, he stepped inside. The five warriors crowded to the entrance behind him. Suddenly there burst upon Nyalwa's startled ears the same weird cry that had so terrified them all before. Nyalwa wheeled and bolted for the open air, but the five barred his exit. He collided with them and tried to claw his way over or through them. He was terrified, but it was a question as to whether he was any more terrified than the five. They had not barred his way intentionally, but only because they had not moved as quickly as he. Now they rolled out upon the ground, and scrambling to their feet, bolted for the opposite end of the village.

"He is still there," announced Nyalwa

after he had regained his breath. "That was what I went into the hut to learn. I have done what I said I would."

"We were going to kill him," said the warrior who would be chief. "Why did you not kill him? You were in there with him and you had your spear. He was bound and helpless. If you had let me go in, I would have killed him."



**"It seems so strange," she said drowsily. "I was afraid of you; and now I should be afraid if you were not here!"**

"Go in and kill him then," growled Nyalwa disgustedly.

"I have a better way," announced another warrior.

"What is it?" demanded Nyalwa, who was ready to jump at any suggestion.

"Let us all go and surround the hut; then when you give the word we will hurl our spears through the walls. In this way we shall be sure to kill the white man."

"That is just what I was going to suggest," stated Nyalwa. "We will all go; follow me!"

The little men crept again stealthily toward the hut. Their numbers gave them courage. At last they had surrounded it and were waiting the signal from Nyalwa. The spears with their poisoned tips were poised.

The life of the ape-man hung in the balance, when a chorus of angry growls just beyond the palisade stilled the word of command on the lips of Nyalwa.

"What is that?" he cried.

The little men glanced toward the palisade and saw dark forms surmounting it.

"The demons are coming!" shrieked one.

"It is the hairy men of the forest," cried another.

Huge dark forms scaled the palisade and dropped into the village. The Betetes dropped back, hurling their spears. A little monkey perched upon the roof of a hut screamed and chattered. "This way!" he cried. "This way, Zu-tho! Here is Tarzan of the Apes in this nest of the Gomangani."

A huge hulking form with great shoulders and long arms rolled toward the hut. Behind him were half a dozen enormous bulls.

The Betetes had fallen back in terror to the front of Rebega's hut.

"Here!" called Tarzan. "Tarzan is here, Zu-tho!"

The great ape stooped and peered into the dark interior of the hut. His enormous frame was too large for the small doorway. With his great hands he seized the hut by its door posts and tore it from the ground, tipping it over upon its back, as little Nkima leaped, screaming, to the roof of an adjacent hut.

"Carry me out into the forest," directed the ape-man.

Zu-tho lifted the white man in his arms

and carried him to the palisade, while the pygmies huddled behind the hut of Rebega, not knowing what was transpiring in that other part of their village. The other bulls followed, growling angrily. They did not like the scent of the man-things. They wished to get away. As they had come, they departed, swinging themselves over the palisade; and a few moments later the dark shadows of the jungle engulfed them.

## CHAPTER XX

### "I Hate You!"

AS Old-timer carried the girl out of the village of the Betetes into the forest, he thrilled to the contact of her soft, warm body. At last he held her in his arms. Even the danger of their situation was forgotten for the moment in the ecstasy of his gladness. He had found her! He had saved her! No other woman had ever aroused within him such an overpowering tide of emotion.

She had not spoken; she had not cried out. As a matter of fact she did not know into whose hands she had now fallen. Her reaction to her rescue had been anything but a happy one, for she felt that she had been snatched from merciful death to face some new horror of life. The most reasonable explanation was that Bobolo had arrived in time to snatch her from the hands of the pygmies, and she preferred death to Bobolo.

A short distance from the village Old-timer lowered her to the ground and commenced to cut away her bonds. He had not spoken either. He had not dared trust his voice to speak, so loudly was his heart pounding in his throat. When the last bond was cut he helped her to her feet. He wanted to take her in his arms and crush her to him, but something stayed him. Suddenly he felt almost afraid of her. Then he found his voice.

"Thank God I came in time!" he said.

The girl voiced a startled exclamation of surprise. "You are a white man!" she cried. "Who are you?"

"Who did you think I was?"

"Bobolo."

He laughed. "I am the man you don't like," he explained.

"Oh! And you risked your life to save me. Why did you do it? It was obvious that you did not like me; perhaps that was the reason I did not like you."

"Let's forget all that and start over."

"Yes, of course," she agreed; "but you must have come a long way and faced many dangers to save me. Why did you do it?"

"Because I—" He hesitated. "Because I couldn't see a white woman fall into the hands of these devils."

"What are we going to do now? Where can we go?"

"We can't do much of anything before morning," he replied. "I'd like to get a little farther away from that village; then we must rest until morning. After that we'll try to reach my camp. It's two days' march on the opposite side of the river—if I can find the river. I got lost trying to locate the pygmy village."

They moved on slowly through the darkness. He knew that they were starting in the right direction, for when he had come to the clearing where the village stood he had noted the constellations in the sky; but how long they could continue to hold their course in the blackness of the forest night where the stars were hidden from their view, he did not know.

"What happened to you after Bobolo dragged me from the canoe at the mouth of that frightful river?" she asked.

"They took me back to the temple."

The girl shuddered. "That terrible place!"

"They were going to—to prepare me for one of their feasts," he continued. "I imagine I'll never be so close to death as that again without dying. The priestesses were just about to mess me up with their clubs."

"HOW did you escape?" gasped the girl.

"It was nothing short of a miracle," he replied. "Even now I cannot explain it. A voice called down from the rafters of the temple, claiming to be the *muzimo* of some native. A *muzimo*, you know, is some kind of ghost; I think each one of them is supposed to have a *muzimo* that looks after him. Then the finest-looking white man I ever saw shinned down one of the pillars, grabbed me right out from under the noses of the priests and priestesses, and escorted me to the river where he had a canoe waiting for me."

"Hadn't you ever seen him before?"

"No. I tell you it was a modern miracle, not unlike one that happened in the pygmy village just as I busted in to head off that bloodthirsty old she-devil who was going to knife you."

"The only miracle that I am aware of was your coming just when you did; if there was another I didn't witness it.

You see I had my eyes closed, waiting for Wlala to use her knife, when you stopped her."

"*I* didn't stop her!"

"What?"

"That was the miracle."

"I do not understand."

"Just as the woman grabbed you by the hair and raised her knife to kill you, an arrow passed completely through her body, and she fell dead. Then as I rushed in and the warriors started to interfere with me, three or four of them fell with arrows through them, but where the arrows came from I haven't the slightest idea. I didn't see anyone who might have shot them. I don't know whether it was some one trying to aid us, or some natives attacking the Betete village."

"Or some one else trying to steal me," suggested the girl. "I have been stolen so many times recently that I have come to expect it; but I hope it wasn't that, for they might be following us."

"Happy thought," commented Old-timer; "but I hope you're wrong. I think you are, too—for if they had been following us to get you, they would have been on us before. There is no reason why they should have waited."

THEY moved on slowly through the darkness for about half an hour longer; then the man stopped. "I think we had better rest until morning," he said, "though I don't know just how we are going to accomplish it. There is no place to lie down but the trail, and as that is used by the leopards at night it isn't exactly a safe couch."

"We might try the trees," she suggested.

"It is the only alternative. The underbrush is too thick here—we couldn't find a place large enough to lie down. Can you climb?"

"I may need a little help."

"I'll go up first and reach down and help you up," he suggested.

A moment later he had found a low branch and clambered onto it. "Here," he said, reaching down, "give me your hand." Without difficulty he swung her to his side. "Stay here until I find a more comfortable place."

She heard him climbing about in the tree for a few minutes, and then he returned to her. "I found just the place," he announced. "It couldn't have been better if it had been made to order." He helped her to her feet; then he put an arm about her and assisted her from branch to branch as they climbed upward toward the retreat he had located.

IT was a great crotch where three branches forked, two of them laterally and almost parallel. "I can fix this up like a Pullman," he observed. "Just wait a minute until I cut some small branches. How I ever stumbled on it in the dark gets me."

"Another miracle, perhaps," she suggested.

Growing all about them were small branches, and it did not take Old-timer long to cut as many as he needed. These he laid close together across the two parallel branches. Over them he placed a covering of leaves.

"Try that," he directed. "It may not be a feather-bed, but it's better than none."

"It's wonderful." She had stretched out on it in the first utter relaxation she had experienced for days—relaxation of mind and nerves even more than of the body. For the first time in days she did not lie with terror at her side.

"Where are *you* going to sleep?" she asked.

"I'll find a place," he replied huskily. He was edging closer to her.

"I am so happy," she whispered sleepily. "I didn't expect ever to be happy again. It must be because I feel so safe with you."

The man made no reply. "What the devil did she say that for?" he soliloquized. He felt that it was not fair. What right had she to say it? She was *not* safe with him! Had he not saved her life at the risk of his own? Did she not owe him something? Did not all women owe him a debt for what one woman had done to him?

"It seems so strange," the girl added drowsily.

"What?" he asked.

"I was so afraid of you after you came to my camp, and now I should be afraid if you were not here. It just goes to show that I am not a very good judge of character, but really you were not very nice then. You seem to have changed."

He made no comment, but he groped about in the darkness until he had found a place where he could settle himself with a minimum of discomfort.

**This intriguing tale of romance and adventure in the jungle reaches an intensely interesting climax in the next, the January, issue.**

*In "The Passing of the Thunder Herd" Mr. Neal told you the story of the buffalo calf Ta-na-ha who was made captive by the Indians, who incurred the bitter enmity of the renegade white hunter Toronto, and who finally, as a young bull, won his freedom. Here we present the sequel to this fine epic of the West—*

*By*

BIGELOW NEAL

# *The Last Of the Thunder Herd*

IT was springtime on the prairies of Dakota. All day long the migrating host of the Thunder Herd had been crossing the Missouri, and now with the coming of evening they were gathered together in a vast carpet of brown, filling the valley from river to bluffs and all but covering the mantle of green buffalo grass upon which they grazed.

Coming down the river valley and from the west, directly toward the Thunder Herd, were two travelers, one of them far in the lead of the other. The first, Ta-na-ha the buffalo bull, was fresh from his long captivity among the people of the Arikara nation. The second, the white man Toronto, mounted on a decrepit pony and leading a pack-animal even more decrepit, was trailing the buffalo bull ahead.

Alone on the prairie with his prey, Toronto saw his chance to strike. Although he was far behind and darkness fast setting in, he was pressing his worn pony to the utmost, for Ta-na-ha might stop to feed or to rest.

The Thunder Herd was grazing peacefully. Blackbirds, feeding on the flies that always accompanied the buffaloes, flitted from back to back, and curlews sailed back and forth. The sun hung low in the west and the bright light of day merged into the golden glory of sunset. And then from the west came a sound which startled the feeding buffaloes into raising their shaggy heads in wonder. It was a low deep-throated call that rose and fell, to die away in a plaintive wail. It was the home-coming cry of a wanderer, the voice of Ta-na-ha returning to a people who were his, yet of whom he had only the slightest memory. Obviously he came in peace, for there was no note of challenge in his call, no light of battle in his eyes.

But a little way beyond the outskirts of the herd, Ta-na-ha came to a sudden halt. He had heard an answer to his call. It had come from the top of a rocky knoll far ahead, where a warrior champion of the bison host had taken his stand so that the evening breeze might have a chance to drive away the myriads of tormenting insects. The answer which reached Ta-na-ha bore nothing of welcome, nothing of friendship. Instead it carried a menace, a threat and a warning, for the mighty warrior on the knoll interpreted the call of the stranger as a challenge to his power.

Heading by
W. J. Wilwerding

Illustrations by
Charles Fox

**There was no second shot; and Ta-na-ha, not having seen the white man, ran with the herd.**

For a moment Ta-na-ha stood as if in doubt. When he came into the valley, he bore no ill-will toward any creature, and he expected to be received in the same spirit; but it was also true that he was incapable of fear and he paused now because he was in doubt, not because he was afraid.

Presently he was in motion again. Disregarding the warnings that came now in rapid succession, echoing from bluff to bluff, he advanced until he was in the midst of the herd. But here too the wanderer found no welcome. The buffaloes had sensed the ring of battle in the roars of the older bull and they shunned the newcomer, drawing apart until a lane was opened for his advance.

TA-NA-HA came to a stop on a broad patch of alkali. It was smooth and level where he stood, but around him the ground sloped rapidly upward, forming a natural amphitheater among the hills. From the top of the knoll ahead the great bull was slowly descending, and as if by some magic a wide avenue was cleared between the two, closing in behind the enraged warrior's advance and surrounding the antagonists by a vast oval of staring faces, flashing horns and waving tails.

Halfway down the slope the great bull paused, turned, and raked the ground with his forefoot, sending clouds of dust above his back. His eyes were flashing now, his ponderous head held low while roar after roar reverberated among the bluffs. As he stood gathering courage and hatred for his charge, the sun sank below the horizon, its last coppery flare striking fire from his polished horns. Far heavier than Ta-na-ha, and old in the ways of battle, he seemed to have the advantage. But he still had the major portion of his winter coat hanging in ragged patches from his sides and back, and that was to his disadvantage for the air was very warm and the next few moments would call for an exertion greater than any to which he had put himself for many a day.

Suddenly he lowered his head. Now he was moving slowly forward. Then breaking into a trot, and with a final roar, he sprang forward to the attack. Under his mighty tread it seemed that the very earth trembled. The air was charged with the drama of battle and the silence of strained expectation set-

tled over the valley. There was no sound save that thunderous tread.

The last roar of the champion bull carried to Ta-na-ha's veins the virus of hate, and it struck with a force that changed him, in the twinkling of an eye, from a friendly wanderer into another demon of vengeance. He too dropped his head; he too sent out a roar fully as blood-curdling as the roar of his antagonist, and then he too sprang forward. In that second the last of gentleness sped from the heart of the young bull and he was, as his Creator intended, as wild as the wildest of them all.

IN the center of the field they met, with a crash of bone on bone and a menacing click and grind of horn on horn. The aim of both was true and the impact was terrific. If the old bull expected his opponent's neck to buckle or his head to drop, he was disappointed for the muscles in Ta-na-ha's neck were strong as steel. He gave ground, but only because his hoofs and knees would not hold fast to the ground before the superior weight of his enemy, and he was driven backward as if from the blow of a battering-ram. As he slid down a slight incline, a cloud of milk-white dust arose from his raking hoofs shrouding the combatants within its folds and powdering them as white as snow. When the dust moved aside they were kneeling horn to horn, neither giving way an inch and each breathing defiance into the face of his foe.

For a time, dazed by the shock of impact, they were both content to kneel as they were. In that position the battle became merely a duel of horns, with each trying to break the other's grip, using short, sharp thrusts at face and throat. But this method proved ineffectual and unsatisfactory to both, and presently they were on their feet again face to face, eyes blazing with hate and rage, and bursts of dusty air spurting from their nostrils.

Suddenly the old bull gave ground and swung his head slightly to one side. It was a trick of the experienced fighter and Ta-na-ha fell into the trap. Thinking he saw an opening to the throat of his enemy, he leaped to the assault, to be met with a terrible side-swipe from the shaggy monster's head that seemed to tear the young bull's head from his shoulders. That blow drew first blood for the big fellow. His horn ripped Ta-na-ha's jaw, leaving a bright red trail in its wake.

Once again they drew apart and this time it was the younger who took the offensive. Ta-na-ha dropped his head and charged, but almost at the point of impact he veered away, threw his hindquarters off at right angles and came in with one horn directed at the throat and shoulder of his opponent. Had he struck as he intended he might have driven the horn in full length, but the wise old bull by swinging his body slightly out of line allowed the assault to expend itself in a glancing blow while he drove up from below with all the power of that mighty neck, in an effort to rip open the belly of Ta-na-ha. But he too missed a direct hit, and now the advantage lay with Ta-na-ha, for if he lacked in cunning he had by far the greater speed. Whirling suddenly, he raked the hindquarters of the old bull twice before that one could change ends. As they faced each other panting, roaring with anger that had passed all limits, blood spread slowly on the alkali at their feet.

In a moment they were at it again. Back and forth across the field, ripping, tearing, bellowing, crashing together in head-on collision with a force to crush the bones of any but fighters of the buffalo species, the battle raged. Up to that time honors were even. The scales tipped first one way and then the other. It was youth and agility against greater weight and experience. Although Ta-na-ha was breathing heavily the old bull was actually fighting for every breath. His course was almost run. Once again and for the last time the fighters came together, and in spite of his cunning the old bull struck too high. Ta-na-ha came in and the ironlike top of his head struck low on the other's nose. Slowly the great neck buckled. And just as slowly Ta-na-ha's deadly horns drove under the other's breast and every ounce of his strength went into the onward and upward thrust. The front feet of the old

champion left the ground. He was lifted up and up until he stood erect. For an instant only he balanced on his hind legs; then on, over and down he went, to strike with a terrific crash, full length upon the ground. He might have died as he lay there had not Ta-na-ha been too far spent to follow up his advantage. One charge he made, battering against the ribs of his fallen enemy and completing the demoralization of his vanquished foe. That was all. As the old warrior finally struggled to his feet and slowly retreated from the field, the victor stood still in his tracks, too weary to follow or to care. . . .

The new champion stood breathing heavily and all but exhausted when suddenly something struck the ground at his feet and a new spurt of dust arose, followed by the whine of a ricocheting bullet. Hard on the tail of the bullet came a dull roar and a burst of smoke from the crest of a near-by bluff. Because he could approach no closer without attracting the attention of the watching bison, Toronto had tried a long downhill shot. Had his aim been a little higher the career of Ta-na-ha might have ended then and there. There was no second shot, for the squaw-man had no time to reload before that whole section of the Thunder Herd was in confusion and his intended prey was lost to sight in the rush below. Not having seen the white man and uncertain of any real cause for alarm, Ta-na-ha simply ran with the herd. When the herd stopped to rest, he stopped too. And so Ta-na-ha spent his first night at liberty surrounded by the countless thousands of his own kind, listening to the never-ending chorus of the wolves and coyotes. When another day came he got somewhat stiffly to his feet and set out with the vanguard of the great host on its pilgrimage into the north.

FOR a time now, indeed for many years, the story of Ta-na-ha is obscure. Owing partly to the fact that he formed no immediate attachments, and partly to that tendency fairly constant among his kind, to work slowly against the wind during summers of frequent rains, and the resulting hosts of mosquitoes, the young bull was far to the west when the time came for the southward journey in the fall. Thus, instead of traveling south with that section of the herd which followed the route east of the Black Hills, he followed the western route between the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and the western shore of the Little Missouri, ending his long tramp on the plains of Wyoming.

Thus it happened that Toronto waited in vain at the eastern crossing of the Missouri for the bull with the lightning-flash mark along his side. Not only did the squaw-man search the ranks of the Thunder Herd again and again without results, but continued disappointment and the consequent postponement of his revenge resulted in a gradual loss of hope and it came to be a matter of years rather than seasons, before he caught another glimpse of his intended victim.

Meanwhile history was being written on the prairies. North and east of the Missouri, Ta-na-ha's friend, Son-of-the-Star, kept faith with the white men and remained loyal to them. His copper-colored cavalrymen, headed by Ka-wa-tsu, swept back and forth across the northern boundary of the Sioux territory, protecting trappers and settlers as well as telegraph-lines, and his village always offered sanctuary to the harassed traveler as it had to the buffalo calf so long before.

South and west of the Missouri, the eighteen or twenty tribes which made up the Federation of the Dakotas, commonly known as the Sioux, reigned supreme. During the swiftly passing years of Ta-na-ha's prime when he roamed the plains of Montana, the great Indian mystic, politician, and patriot—or, if you prefer, the crafty, cruel and treacherous hostile—Sitting Bull, arose to power. From the same school of prairie warfare and diplomacy, came those other two, perhaps the greatest of them all, Crazy Horse and Gall. Together with Crow King and a host of minor chieftains these men found themselves in exactly the same predicament we of today would find ourselves, were some all-powerful combination of foreign nations to tell us that every cow and hog in America was not for us but for them,

theirs to kill and waste just for the sport of killing.

There came a time when the white men hunted buffaloes and shot them down in scores for no better reason than to see them fall. Year by year the ranks of the migrating bison were thinned until the Thunder Herd dwindled to a mere shadow of itself. And the smaller the herd became, the more difficult it was for the red men of the plains to live. Realizing that they stood literally with their backs against the wall, they turned and fought. And so the blood of many brave men, both red and white, was mixed with the blood of the bison.

But the Indian was no match for the white man. No matter how brave he might be, he lacked the man-power and the equipment to carry on. In the end the Indian was driven from the plains, and with him passed forever the glory of the Thunder Herd.

And so we come once more to the story of Ta-na-ha. . . .

Again the sun was setting on the prairies of Dakota and again a traveler was coming from the west. For many days he had been forging steadily though slowly eastward, but as yet he had not found that which he sought,—the Thunder Herd,—nor had there come a single answer to his calls.

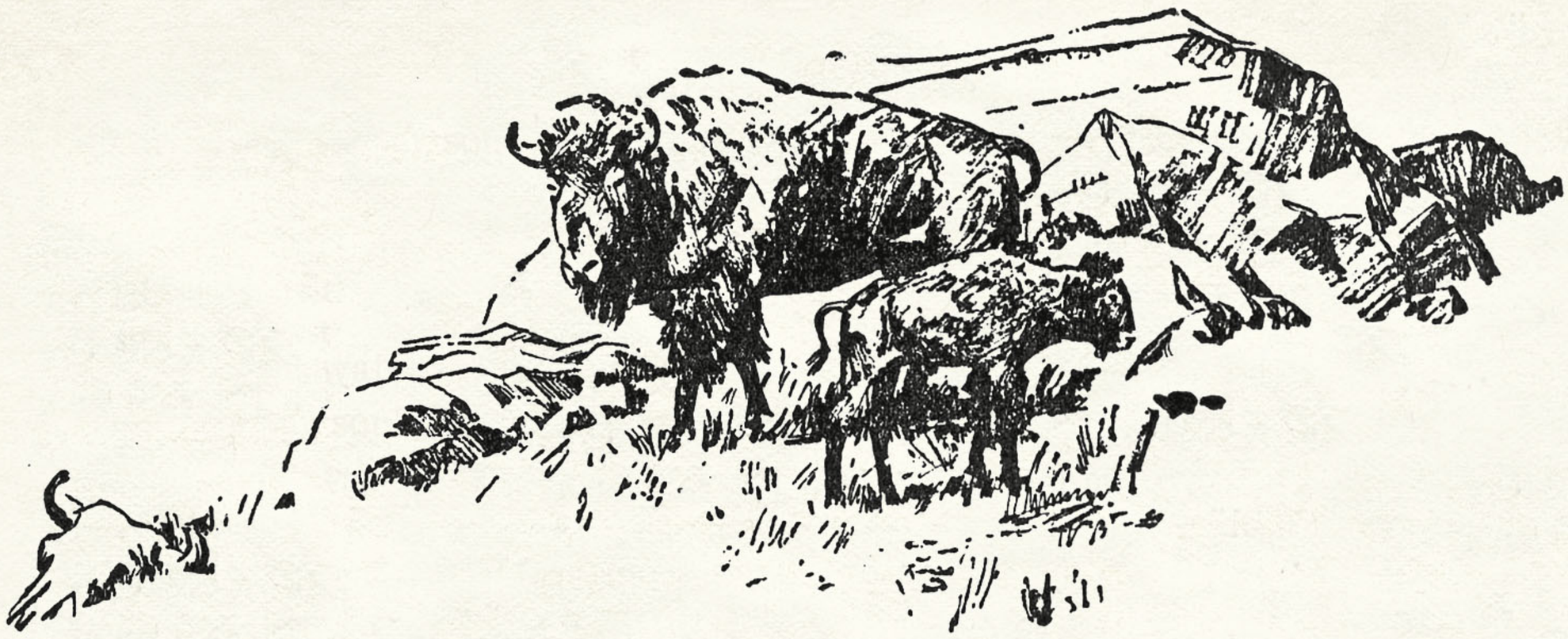
Driven from the plains and from the foothills of the Rockies by the hide- and blood-lust of man, Ta-na-ha was once more a wanderer. Again and again Ta-na-ha had slipped through human traps set for his destruction, and experience had given him the craft to escape many more.

But now, as far as he knew, the herd of the West had gone—and except for scattered groups it had in truth vanished forever. He might have remained to die with the others, but of late his memory had become increasingly active and there were times when he could see back through the years to the Indian village where there had been no persecutions and where the red men had fed him when he was hungry and sheltered him when he needed shelter. He had come north with a pitiful remnant of the western herd less than a month before. Now they were either dead or scattered to the four points of the compass—and he was going back to the prairies in search of the haven of his youth. Topping a rise just above the valley of the Mouse River, Ta-na-ha paused to gaze out over the lower land. He saw nothing but a few deer feeding along the narrow belt of timber; he heard nothing but the cries of the curlews and plovers; but the breeze brought him once more a scent of the Thunder Herd. Breaking into a trot, he crossed the valley, stopping every little way to call and call again. Without pausing to drink he forded the shallow stream and climbed the opposite slope. Here he could see on the lowlands to the east a few hundred buffaloes, all that remained of the host of former years. He broke into a lumbering lope that carried him swiftly into their midst. . . .

Here on the northern plains they were in the main undisturbed, and Ta-na-ha found it a period of lazy and uneventful peace. There was nothing to do but to eat and to sleep, and the old bull divided his time largely between grazing, chewing his cud or dozing in the sunshine. It was here too, that he was stricken with a belated attack of sentiment.

ONCE this buffalo cow had also been a thing of beauty, but the years had taxed her heavily. Now she was weather-beaten and shaggy. Her latest effort by way of populating the prairie had resulted in twins and although up to that time, Ta-na-ha had found himself rather impatient of calves, he now attached himself to the family in a dual capacity —half nursemaid and half protector. It appeared that the mother enjoyed her greatest popularity at meal-times, but with their hunger appeased, they revolved around Ta-na-ha, using his great legs for butting-posts when he was grazing, and his cumbrous body for shade when he lay down to chew his cud. Then at night when eerie sounds came from all around, and the coyote concert began in earnest, they would creep in and lie close against his side.

Thus the summer passed and a time came when gray skies and cold nights gave warning of autumn's approach. Then one day it rained, and afterward when the wind changed to the northwest it carried a chill from the early snowfields in the Rockies. The next morning the herd began to move. At first they merely grazed back along the trail they had followed in the spring, but as the winds grew colder and drizzling clouds again hung low, their pace gradually quickened. Soon there came longer walks between bites of grass; then they settled down to short marches between meals. With the first frosts, they crossed



the Canadian border and a squall of snow saw them once more fording the Mouse. From there they moved even faster—although the weather was kinder, for Indian summer covered their advance, seeing them well south of the land of heavy snows.

On the march, Ta-na-ha remained with the little family of his adoption. The calves were older now, and had grown very rapidly during the summer. The mother buffalo always took the lead and set the pace, the calves following with Ta-na-ha bringing up the rear. It was well perhaps that he did, for often when the old cow wandered to one side of the herd or allowed ripe mint plants along some stream to tempt her into dallying and they fell behind, the darkness brought gray forms out of the shadows, for the wolves grew hungrier as the cold increased. Then the great bull would stand throughout the night, to watch while the others slept. One glance at his mighty form was usually sufficient, and when he dropped his head as if to charge, or a warning rumble formed in his throat, the shadows faded silently into the night. . . . .

(After Audubon saw the Thunder Herd he said: "The roaring of the bulls was like the beating of a hundred drums.")

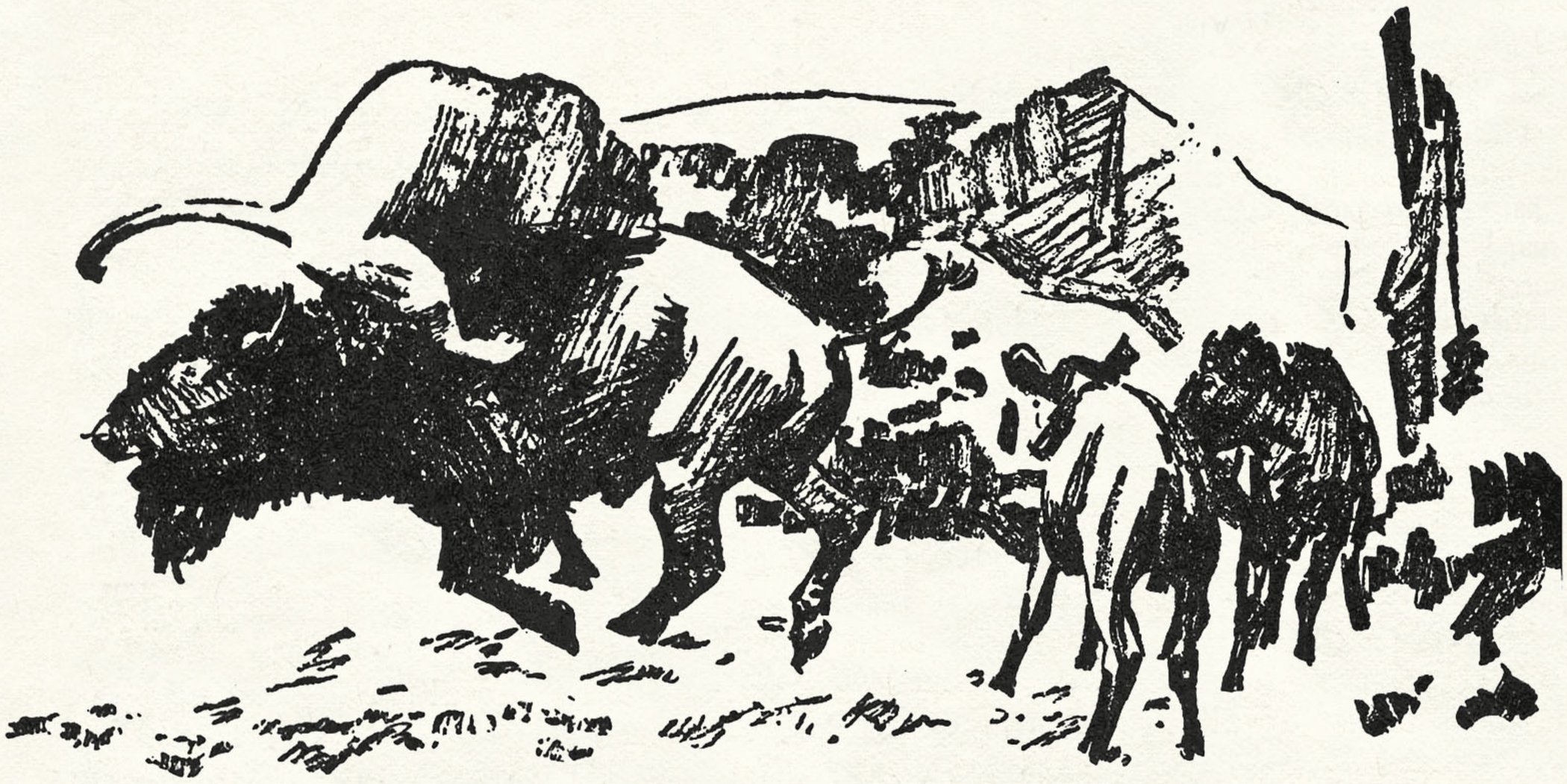
DRIVEN by the north wind, the bison leaders pressed on to the timber, Ta-na-ha and his little family among them. Then the pressure of the herd became so great that the foremost were forced out of the timber onto a sandbar and then onto the end of the bar with the swish and murmur of the river at their feet. Here Ta-na-ha turned and tried to make a stand, but nothing could resist the relentless rush of those crowding and now panic-stricken bodies. Ta-na-ha heard a splash beside him, and wheeled to see the old cow struggling in the muddy waters. Other splashes followed and the calves were by her side. At that, he too plunged in, striking with a roar and sinking into a cold and suffocating darkness; but he won out of the depths even against the deadly sucking of the whirling cones and split the waters in his path with mighty strokes, thrusting them to either side in rolling waves of foam.

Shadows appeared out of the night, shooting by in rapid succession—floating logs and trees, complete from roots to branches, had plunged into the river when the current cut the sand from under them. Then another and greater shadow loomed ahead and Ta-na-ha felt earth beneath his feet. One last short struggle with quicksand at the water's edge, then across a bar covered with willows and so up into the timber. Here they stopped for a time to regain their breath; presently they moved on into a clearing and lay down for a much-needed rest.

At daylight the old cow took the lead once more. Climbing to the level prairie, they were off at a steady pace toward the south, when a new danger appeared. There were puffs of smoke hanging above the horizon as there had been on that day when Ta-na-ha himself was young and his mother had brought him on his first pilgrimage into the North. Crossing the river had taken them out of the territory of the Arikara and the misfortune which forced them into the river was good fortune to the extent that they thus missed the autumn hunt of the tribe.

Now, however, they were entering the territory of the Sioux; here their dangers were multiplied a hundredfold.

Late that evening, tired, hungry and



**The lion left the ground in a long soaring leap, landing upon his back. She ripped and tore in a furious effort to reach the spinal cord.**

thirsty, they mounted the crest of the bluffs above the valley of the Knife River. Far below, Ta-na-ha saw clusters of twinkling campfires, while up through the crisp night air came the rhythmic beat of many drums and the high-pitched songs of painted warriors celebrating, in anticipation of the coming day when the prairie would echo to the milling of the Thunder Herd.

All night the Thunder Herd flowed over the bluffs and down into the valley, not in great droves and winding columns but in slender lines and in small scattered bands. Truly the bison were trusting, for the campfires of the Sioux caused no more than a split in their ranks as they divided to pass on either side.

WITH the first daylight, Ta-na-ha, the buffalo cow, and the calves were up, feeding slowly toward the hills that lay across their course to the south. Picking a mouthful here and there, with longer intervals between bites as they progressed, they were well under way on their day's march, when in topping a rise they saw horsemen ahead. The old cow turned abruptly, changing her course to the west, but before they had progressed far this avenue also appeared to be blocked. Turning again, they retraced their steps and attempted a passage to the east. But this also proved unsuccessful, for some part of the great circle of warriors confronted them at every move. Not only that, but as they failed in their attempt to escape to the east, Ta-na-ha turned and the bright light of the rising sun flashed along his side. Out among that encircling line of enemies, Toronto the squaw-man saw the flash of white along the side of the great bull. Toronto had not forgotten. For years he had watched the spring and autumn migrations of the herd, always searching for the object of his desire and revenge. Of late he had lost hope, for Ta-na-ha's shift from the eastern to the western range had made it appear that he had fallen a prey to other hands. The squaw-man's chance had come at last. He left his place in the line and spurred his horse forward to keep abreast of his intended victim.

Now from somewhere, seemingly from here and there and everywhere, even from the earth itself, came a sound, weird and startling. It was not a yell; it was not a cry; rather it was a mournful wail rising to ear-piercing heights, to fall away in a long-drawn, agonizing moan. It came again, and still again, and in answer to this signal, the long line of warriors leaped ahead.

They came from every point of the compass, these fighting men of the prairies, and their charging lines glittered with a flash of sunlight on lances and arrow-heads, on polished rifle-barrels, on copper ornaments and knives and on painted flesh. They were a hideous host at best. The flashing colors of their hunting paint, the red and yellow of blankets, the startling effect of brightly colored ribbons of calico woven into the tails and manes of their ponies, created a riot of rushing color while the shrill yells ripping back and forth along the line, and the thunder of their horses'

tread added an ear-splitting din to the chaos of color and sound.

The Thunder Herd recoiled. The far-flung groups turned and rushed toward the wholly mythical protection of the greater body. And then, crowded together in a great, terror-stricken mass they were at the mercy of their relentless foe, a foe which constantly circled about them, yelling, slashing, stabbing and shooting.

Presently the great herd began to mill. As the attacking line circled, striking again and again against the outer borders of the herd, the effect was to set the edge in motion in a direction away from the assault. Very soon the Thunder Herd was revolving like a giant wheel and now the dust from their pounding hoofs almost turned day into night.

In this mass of fear-stricken animals Ta-na-ha, the old cow and the two calves were but atoms in the surging sea. Near the edge of the herd and yet far enough within its bulk to escape immediate annihilation, again and again Ta-na-ha stumbled and fell,—sometimes over prairie-dog mounds, sometimes over the ridges of alkali wash-outs, sometimes over the bodies of dead or wounded bison,—but always he staggered to his feet again and struggled on. Behind him followed closely the buffalo cow, while the frightened calves pressed against his sides, for under his giant ribs there was some protection for those so small.

Once Ta-na-ha found himself pushed to the outer edge and one of those fluttering arrows struck full against his side. His skin was tough and the underlying fat thick and spongy, and the arrow had little effect other than to turn the fear of the bull to anger. His eyes were red now and he ran with his head down, watching for something at which to strike.

When another arrow embedded itself in the great bulge of muscles that formed the hump above his shoulders, although it too was nearly harmless, the pain of the wound changed him from a hunted, terror-stricken fugitive into a demon. Through the cloud of dust ahead he saw a man and a horse. He saw a flash; he heard a loud report and felt a searing pain along his side. At last Ta-na-ha and the squaw-man had met.

With a roar of hate the bison lowered his head and charged directly at his foe. On his one side a long knife flashed, on the other a war-club rose high in the air; but neither reached its mark. Then with a crash, and a shrill cry of fear, it was over. The squaw-man's mount turned end over end, rolling on top of his rider. Onto the pile plunged the infuriated bull, driving ahead and downward with all the power in his neck. He did not pause for long, but leaping over his now prostrate foes he was on again through the cloud of dust. On one side a rider appeared; Ta-na-ha charged, and the warrior faded into the gloom. Another came but he too backed from sight. Then the way to the prairie was open and Ta-na-ha was free.

FOR a mile he ran without slowing down. Into washouts and out again, over ridges and across coulees, forcing his way against walls of brush and tangles of vines and thorny plums, he finally gained the temporary shelter of the hills. There, exhausted, he paused to pant for air and clear his lungs. When something rubbed against his side he turned to see one of the calves. The other one also was there, clinging closely against his other side; but the mother was not in sight—somewhere along the way she had met death.

Ta-na-ha did not rest long. The sound of that circling, screaming host was still too close. Presently he was off again at a lumbering trot. Too tired to climb the high bluffs along the river, he followed the upper slopes of the valley toward the west. Gradually the noise of the hunt died out; but the sting of the arrows still persisted, urging him steadily ahead throughout the day, and not until dusk came did he succeed in rubbing them off against a tree. Then, when a cold wind came from the north, he found a sheltered spot in a clump of thorn-apples and with the calves beside him, he lay down for the night. . . .

By way of a combination of circumstances entirely beyond his control, Ta-na-ha had fallen into the position of mother as well as that of protector to the calves. They were old enough to be able to depend solely upon grass; nevertheless they were a constant source of responsibility. When they became tired on the march, they were liable to lie down at any time and at any place. The situation thus created was very embarrassing to Ta-na-ha, because he did not know how to enforce obedience as the mother buffalo had done. The result was that he must necessarily stop when they stopped, and it soon became an open question as to who was the actual

leader of the expedition. Also he discovered that two was twice as many as one. Heretofore there had been the mother as well as himself to answer the many calls for help. Now with one calf some distance to one side, frightened by a coyote or a wolf, and another as far or farther on the other side blatting because he couldn't climb a cut bank and didn't have sense enough to go around, the old bull frequently found his position complicated indeed.

DAY after day he led the reluctant youngsters westward. His course, leading constantly to the west, was due to the combat of two tendencies: There was his natural instinct to go south, on the one hand, and the pull of the Arikara village on the other. And as a result he went neither south nor northwest, but headed for a point of the compass about halfway between. This deviation from the usual course in the migration of the buffaloes was to have a decided effect on his future, for Toronto was again on the trail of the great bull and expecting to find him on the way south with the main herd.

One night the bull and the two calves were moving slowly across the level prairie. A spell of cold weather had come and gone, bringing in its wake a time of balmy air even though the prairies were streaked with snow. But now clouds were piling up high again in the west and Ta-na-ha sensed another change, one which would call for far better shelter than any to be had on the level plain. For this reason he was using the early part of the moonlight night to search for some refuge for himself and his charges.

Suddenly Ta-na-ha stopped. He stood on the brink of a precipitous slope and he was looking out over a land that was different from anything he had ever seen. At his feet the slope fell away to a strange valley surrounded by narrow flat-topped bluffs and slender blood-tipped peaks. The sides of the bluffs were cut deep by the frosts and winds and waters of ages.

In places he could see patches of grass lying like scattered rugs among the hills. Here, dazzling white alkali glittered in the moonlight; there, a column of steam climbed slowly on the still air from where a prairie fire had ignited a vein of coal and he could see the dull glow of light reflected from subterranean fires, while to his nostrils came the pungent odor of burning sulphur. A weird and strange land!

Slowly the bison worked their way down the face of the bluff, Ta-na-ha in the lead and the two calves following. Frequently they passed the mouths of dark and mysterious tunnels where the odor of coyote and wolf was strong; and under the edge of a limestone ledge they passed a cave where the rocks were littered with the bones of larger animals such as elk and deer. Here there was another scent not only strong but entirely new to the bison.

At last after much slipping and sliding they came to the bottom of a steep ravine leading down to the floor of the Bad-lands. Here the walking was easier. They were in brush now and passing under the shadows of ash and poplars. Once the bull stopped, for a golden-brown ball hung before him on the drooping branch of a wild plum-tree, but he recognized it as nothing more dangerous than a porcupine browsing on tender bark.

Presently they came out on the valley floor. Here they found water bubbling from beneath a vein of coal, and a patch of grass where they ate and bedded down. But even then there was little rest for Ta-na-ha, because of scents and sounds which spoke of so many things the bull did not understand. From somewhere near came a strange sputtering repeated at intervals and interspersed with louder sucking noises. High overhead the wind roared across the heights. Not far away was the gnawed and dried carcass of some animal, and the wind, shifting back and forth, drew rasping notes from taut sinew and membrane.

Apparently Ta-na-ha had come to a paradise for wild things, for there was hardly a moment when some creature was not moving within sight. Around the dead animal there was much activity among the smaller of the wild folk. Weasels, pure white in their new winter coats, came to gnaw awhile and to retreat in haste when a lynx stole silently by. A bobcat stopped to sniff at the doubtful banquet and gave way, in turn, before a harmless-looking stranger which walked onto the scene waving a black-and-white plume above her back. A sudden pattering on the hard clay, and the bull swung his head to note the passing of an elk; and once, toward morning, the slopes above were alive with the small hurrying forms of antelopes.

With the coming of daylight, the bull

and the calves ate and drank again. Afterward the bull lay down and slept, for there was no hurry now that the cold winds could no longer reach them, and the leader was glad to rest. But his was the restless disposition of the bison and by midday he was up and on again.

He had not gone far, however, when he came to a sudden halt—and none too soon. His warning came in the form of quaking ground under his feet. Directly before him was a circular area of slate-colored mud, with a sputtering cone in its center and circular waves spreading outward from the cone. Here, but for his sense of caution, Ta-na-ha might have ended his days, for he was looking into one of those menaces to the buffalo, known as a sink-hole. How they were formed, or when or why, no one knows, for they were all-but-bottomless pits filled with slimy mud warmed by spring water, so that they frequently did not freeze even in the coldest weather and sometimes served as a vent for subterranean gases which caused their eternal restlessness. Turning in his tracks, Ta-na-ha fought to clear his feet from the sucking borders of the sink-hole, and once again on firm land, he made a wide detour to avoid the deadly pit.

Born on the prairie as they had been, the calves appeared to find the Bad-lands a source of never-ceasing wonder—wonder liberally mixed with fear. Where heretofore they had shown a decided tendency to lag behind, they now kept well at the side of their protector, even leaning against his ribs while on the march. Close under the shaggy monster who was their only friend, they found courage to pass many seemingly great dangers with calm-eyed indifference, though they knew nothing of the real perils of the expedition and most of their fears were based on oddly colored rocks, grotesque clumps of stunted sage and other enemies of like nature.

There were real dangers, however; some of them very real indeed. Never was there a time during the days of their long march when there was not one or more gaunt gray wolves close behind. They came slowly and silently, on softly padded feet, watching every moment for a chance to strike at the defenseless calves; but they did not come too close, for they dared not face the shaggy monster who guarded the calves so cleverly. With his ponderous shoulders and neck, his shaggy coat and mane, and those wicked curving horns flashing in the sunlight or moonlight he was an object to be respected.

One night they came to a valley which took them down to the shores of the Little Missouri. The river was filled with floating anchor-ice and Ta-na-ha stood on the shore for a long time watching and listening to the hurrying, hissing stream. Here he fought another battle between his natural inclination toward the memory of his quiet and peaceful days among the red men, and the all-powerful call of instinct. Turn to the right and his course would take him directly back to the Arikara village; or to the left, it would take him parallel to the trail of the Thunder Herd and south to a warmer land. In the end, instinct won again, and he turned to the left; but he moved slowly, frequently turning his head, as if in doubt, to gaze back along the trail.

ONE night they stopped in a cañon that was the strangest of all in that strange land. Once it had been the floor of a vast forest. Then a glacier had leveled the trees and covered them with soil; or perhaps water had covered them for centuries. In course of time they were buried deep and their original level was far below that of the newly built land. Then the day of the glacier passed and warm sunshine drove back the wall of ice into the Northland whence it had come. The great drainage system of the Missouri River was created to carry away the waters from the melting ice, and the river in turn cut deeply into the newly made land. The valley in which Ta-na-ha stopped that night was cleanly cut from the glacial drift; and the process of erosion had gone on in this place, until once more the age-old trees were exposed to the light of day. Once they had towered above a tropical swamp swarming with prehistoric life, their lush green foliage casting deep shadows upon the stagnant pools beneath; now they lay prone or piled in hopeless confusion, shorn of branches and foliage, and the silicon deposits of ages had crept into their very pores, turning them from living things into stone. And there was more than the petrified forest to give this valley the appearance of an abandoned cemetery. Everywhere there were monuments of wind and rain, of frost-carved clay and stone. There were giant mushrooms, flat pieces of stone supported by slender pillars of clay, some of them towering far above the heads of

travelers. Once they had been integral parts of the hills, but now the hills were gone leaving only the rocks and pillars which they had protected from the rain. Near one of these rock-capped mushrooms and at the foot of the steep bluff, Ta-na-ha found grass and a place to bed down for the night.

AGAIN the night was clear and soon a yellow moon rose above the peaks to flood the valley with a mellow light. Apparently all was peaceful—or as nearly so as night could be when a semicircle of wolves sitting on their haunches were trying to find courage for an attack—but here Ta-na-ha was to meet a deadly foe. There had been other silent footfalls in their wake ever since the buffaloes had passed the den on the high butte miles back along the trail.

Where Ta-na-ha and the calves lay there was an irregularity in the face of the butte forming an alcove where the nearly perpendicular slope met the level floor of the valley; on one side, this alcove was continued in a measure by a ridge covered by boulders and petrified trees. The third side was open to the valley and the fourth side was also open except for the pillar of clay and the limestone slab balanced across the top.

Sometime during the night, when the moon was high overhead and the valley nearly as light as day, something moved on the top of the balanced rock. At first it was merely the suggestion of motion as if, perhaps, the breeze had stirred a sprig of sage or a night-flying bird had hovered above the slab. But there was only the slightest sound and Ta-na-ha heard nothing. After a time the same phenomenon occurred again, but now two discs like molten fire shone from the overhanging rim. Still Ta-na-ha neither heard nor saw.

For awhile there was no further motion except that the twin fires on the rock above seemed to glow and fade in intensity with each passing moment, seemed to shift from yellow to glittering bronze and then to a pale green that gleamed like phosphorus in the moonlight. Slowly the points of light began to advance; then a head appeared, triangular, streaked with golden-white, its mouth half-open, with milk-white fangs, long and curved and sharp. Now the head hung down the side of the rock and suddenly the whole long sinuous body followed. It did not leap or spring; it flowed in a stream of bronze from the rock to the ground, landing almost noiselessly and immediately crouching so low against the earth as to merge, except for its glowing eyes, into the grass and rocks.

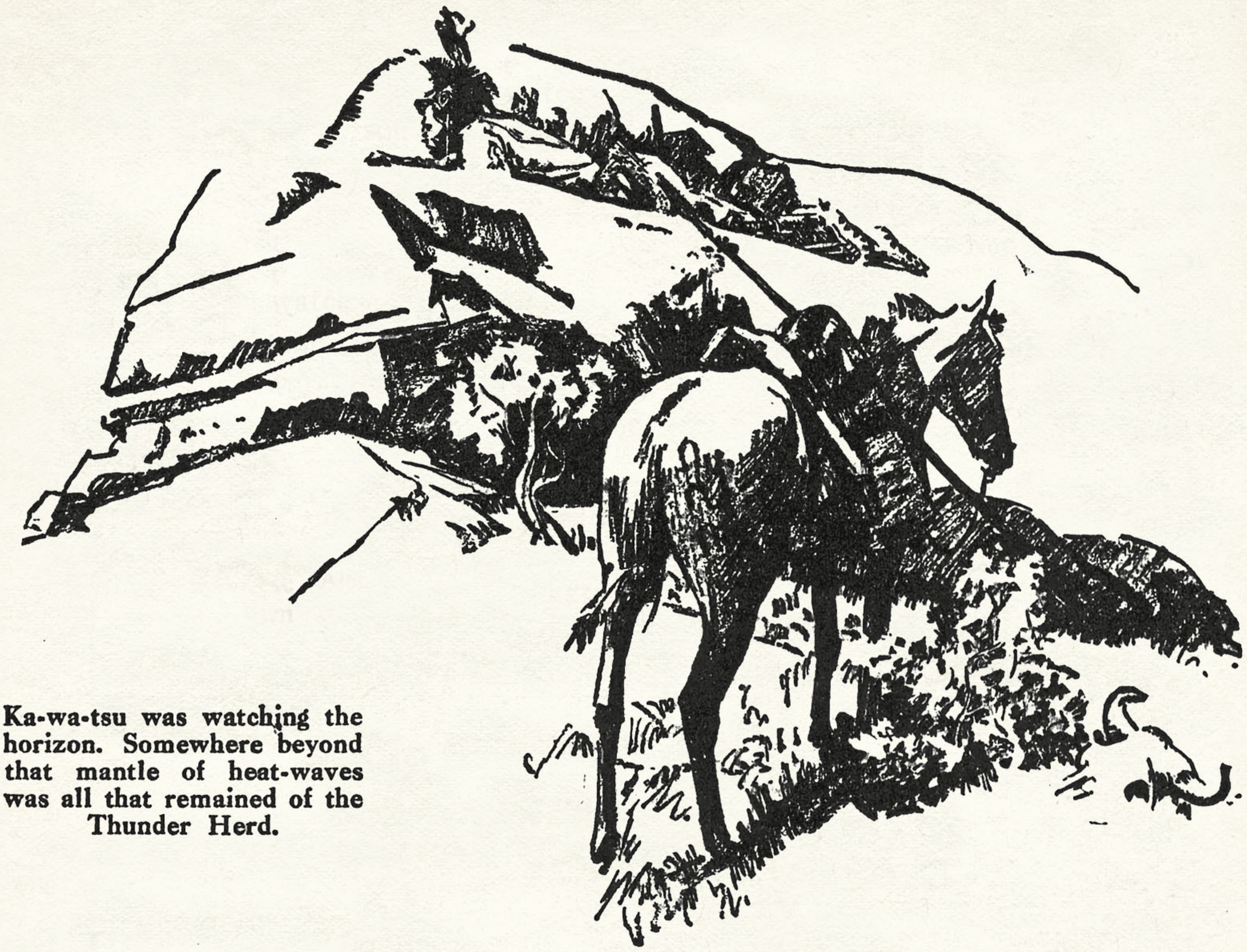
But a sound had reached the ears of the buffalo bull. He opened his eyes and his head swung around to face the source of the disturbance. He saw the twin points of light and the cruel head behind them. But Ta-na-ha feared nothing that walked; he merely opened his eyes and watched.

Slowly, silently, the tawny thing was flowing on; as it came the bull could for the first time see its full length, and his look of wonder became one of amazement—for never before had he seen a mountain lion, and this one seemed to stretch along the ground to nearly his own length. Truly it was another mighty beast—and Ta-na-ha got defensively to his feet.

Had the great cat struck while the bull was in the act of rising, one of the calves would surely have fallen to her lot; but she let the moment go and there would not be another, for she was faced now with a fighter worthy of her skill.

Originally, the the cat had not considered the bull at all, for the calves offered easier prey; but now that Ta-na-ha had risen directly in her path she was balked in her purpose. Catlike, she opened wide her mouth and gave vent to a sudden sharp, spitting hiss. That was another mistake, for Ta-na-ha felt it to be a challenge and a sound gathered deep in his mighty chest—a dull rumble at first, rising rapidly through many tones to break in a long roar of rage. So deep and strong was the war-cry of the bison that the very hills seemed to tremble as the roaring notes reverberated from crest to crest.

But this was a quarrel which spitting and roaring could never decide, for neither of the great beasts could be frightened away by such demonstrations. The lion, driven beyond caution by her rage at prospect of losing her prey, suddenly left the ground in a long soaring leap which carried her over the head of the bull, landing squarely upon his back. Driving four sets of claws deep into fat and muscles, she ripped and tore in a furious effort to reach the spinal cord—but to no avail, for Ta-na-ha was protected by a hide that was thick and tough and also by layer after layer of fat, which proved too strong a defense even for the razor-sharp weapons of the lion.



Ka-wa-tsu was watching the horizon. Somewhere beyond that mantle of heat-waves was all that remained of the Thunder Herd.

Maddened by the pain and spurred to speed far greater than seemed possible to one of his great bulk, the bull changed ends like the snap of a whip. This maneuver caused the lion to lose her hold and spring far to one side, barely avoiding the flashing horns. And again the two combatants were face to face.

This time Ta-na-ha forced the issue. But Ta-na-ha was used to foes who met him halfway, and when the cat passed high over his murderous horns again and landed very much as before, the bull realized his mistake as the terrible fangs and claws were driven home once more.

Another sudden twist dislodged the lion and again she leaped clear of danger; but Ta-na-ha had learned his lesson. Following her as she sprang away, he caught her with a series of quartering jabs which filled the air with yellow fur, before the tawny killer was again on guard. When she recovered her balance, however, and set back on her haunches, striking terrific cross-blows with her front paws, the bull could not stand the ripping about his eyes and tender nose, and he backed away for another charge.

Once again he dropped his great shaggy head and with a roar which made the watching coyotes give ground and caused even the wolves to step back in fear, the old champion of the prairies came on again. And now there was more than the light of battle in his eyes, for the brain behind that broad forehead was functioning clearly at last.

He came exactly as before, head low and open for her attack, but when she left the ground the giant head came up to catch her midway in the air. One horn struck home, burying its polished length in the belly of the cat. For an instant, her fight arrested, she actually spun upon his horn, striking, kicking and biting. The great head rose and fell again, dropping her and catching her a second time, to send her up end over end. Probably she was dead before she struck the ground; but Ta-na-ha threw all the strength of his mighty neck behind the power of his head and drove down upon her. Kneeling, he increased the pressure nearly to his total weight. Then he got to his feet, raked one great hoof across the ground to throw a cloud of dust above his head, while another roar burst from his throat—this time a ringing cry of triumph.

TA-NA-HA was the victor and the cost was light except in stinging pain, but whatever doubts he had held as to his course were now ended. For the time being he had seen enough of the Badlands and to reach the Arikara village he would have to re-cross them. Ac-

cordingly he left his prostrate foe where she lay, and swinging his head toward the south, left the glade. The calves followed him closely and nothing remained but the fallen lion, with the gray shadows closing swiftly in upon it.

Slowly, day by day, Ta-na-ha and his charges plodded into the south. Following the eastern shore of the Little Missouri, they threaded their way amid the tangle of buttes and winding cañons, sometimes checked by washouts, sometimes by seemingly endless walls of clay or deeply drifted snow, but always finding a way and winning through.

Occasionally the wanderers passed small Indian camps along the river but the scent of willow-smoke always gave warning and Ta-na-ha avoided them all. Nor did he see anything of Toronto the squaw-man, for the sudden shift in the line of march had again thrown the white man off the trail. But it was only a temporary check, for in the spring Toronto would be waiting the return of the herd—when it would not be difficult to locate the great bull with the silver flash along his side.

Behind the travelers the northern winter shut down, piling the prairies with ice and drifting snow. Back there the cold was intense and only the young and strong among the wild things could survive; but Ta-na-ha and the calves were in advance of the coldest waves and thus missed the worst. Passing west of the Black Hills, they entered a region of heavy snow but of tempered storms; then they came to Ta-na-ha's winter stamping-ground of the previous years. But there was no bison host to greet him. Here the columns of smoke that threaded their way into the still evening air came from the homes of white men. The lodge-fires and signal-smokes of the red men, together with the buffalo, had gone forever.

Anxiously seeking the remnants of the herd, the bull swung eastward away from the prevailing winds. And so after many miles of journeying he came at last to the valley of the Platte, to a sheltered flat along the stream, and there he found the last pitiful and harried band of buffaloes, all that remained of the Thunder Herd.

When Ta-na-ha arrived at the end of his journey two-thirds of the winter had passed and already the herd was growing restless, for the call of many generations was urging them back again, over the well-worn trails to Saskatchewan. The call had come and it could not be resisted, no matter what the dangers.

With the first thaws of spring, the herd streamed up from the river onto the prairie and the leaders turned back toward the north. And thus the story of Ta-na-ha returns almost to the place of its beginning—to the gently rolling plain that swept out from the face of Pedestal Butte.

AGAIN it was a day when heat-waves curtained the four horizons and bull-snakes lay basking in the warm sun on the slopes. Again the prairie was hushed, and as before, the only sounds came from the dry crackle of red-winged grasshoppers, and from kingbirds arguing the right of way with magpies and hawks. And, even as on that day so long ago, a warrior lay on the highest point of the peak—Ka-wa-tsu again, but older now, although his oiled hair and painted body showed little signs of age, and the eagle-feathers still nodded bravely from the crest of his porcupine headdress.

Ka-wa-tsu was watching the southern horizon. They were coming. He knew that somewhere just beyond the blue wavering mantle, was all that remained of the Thunder Herd. The chieftain had read the signal-smokes against the sky and he knew that few, a very few indeed, were all that remained of the mighty hosts whose hoofs had literally made an empire tremble and whose voices had echoed from the timber of Minnesota to the foothills of the Rockies.

Not always, however, were the eyes of the warrior focused on the curtain of heat-waves; frequently they shifted and his gaze was fixed on the plain below: First, away to the right, where in a clump of bushes he had seen the flash of sunlight on polished steel, and on his left, along the crest of the ridge where feathered headdresses were outlined against the sky. Beyond, a faint haze arose where mounted men were forming some sort of line on the hidden plain.

Ka-wa-tsu lay not only on the highest point of the butte but also on its outer edge. In the hollow to his rear were other warriors, but none among them wore hunting paint. Their mission, if mission there proved to be, was one of war. And now a scout appeared over the rear of the butte and sliding forward on his stomach, joined the chieftain on the crest. In reply to the unspoken question in the face of Ka-wa-

tsu he said: "Over there,"—pointing to the right,—"half-breeds mostly, some white men. Maybe two hundred, maybe more. Over here,"—indicating the left,—"more Sioux and more white men —as many more maybe." And then pointing farther beyond to the hidden plain: "Many white men!"

Ka-wa-tsu said nothing but turned his head to scan again the mantle of heat-waves. He knew that the last act was on in the greatest wild-animal drama of the plains. He knew that the hour of the Thunder Herd had struck, and now he knew that he could do nothing to save them. He had come painted, for war, and if necessary, to meet "The Great Mysterious One" above, in defense of the herd. He had thought to usher them once more into the North, for perhaps it was not yet too late for the white man to open his eyes and give them permanent protection. Son-of-the-Star, very old and feeble now, had told Ka-wa-tsu to come and fight if he must —but now he found that he could not strike his hereditary foe, the Sioux, without striking the white man as well. He could not go back to Son-of-the-Star and report that he had broken their treaty with the white men, kept inviolate for three-quarters of a century.

The Thunder Herd was doomed.

As these thoughts flashed through his mind he looked again into the south, and now out from under the heat-waves came the Thunder Herd, a slender column of brown. The enemy scouts had seen too, for a puff of smoke climbed into the air above a neighboring peak. Then another and still another until three of them hung against the sky, feathery puffs of smoke floating slowly away across the prairie. Ka-wa-tsu caught again that flash of light on metal multiplied many times, while the haze on his left grew more and more dense, spreading farther and farther into the south.

Into that man-made trap plodded the Thunder Herd, expecting nothing and fearing nothing. But where once they had covered the prairies from horizon to horizon, now Ka-wa-tsu, looking down from the heights of Pedestal Butte, saw only a few hundred out of that countless host of buffaloes—and all because the white man had brought a new code to the prairies: killing neither for food nor for legitimate gain, but for the mere pleasure of killing and because of an uncurbed lust for the blood of wild things.

It was late in the afternoon when the human storm broke on the luckless bison. Already the sun hung low in the west. Beginning with the hunting-cry of the half-breeds, the uproar ended in wild whoops and yells of civilized men. Against the thinning ranks of the herd there was brought into play every weapon known to the times—arrows and lances, rifles, shotguns and revolvers.

Ka-wa-tsu was watching intently. He saw the assault strike the head and rear as well as both flanks at the same time, with three times as many assaulters as assaulted. Then mercifully a swirling cloud of dust hid them from sight. Nor was the end long in coming, and toward the last the red warrior saw something which caused him to reach for the rifle at his side. He saw a great bull, followed by two young ones, charging to safety through a ring of men. Ka-wa-tsu looked again, for the bull carried a silvery flash along his side, and the red man remembered. He watched anxiously this gallant break for liberty. Before the charge of the bull the line broke and parted and he was through. Just a little way ahead on the timbered slope lay safety.

Then one of the young ones crashed to the ground and lay still. A moment later the other staggered, swerved from his course and dropped to his knees—but as he went down he cried out.

TA-NA-HA was among the trees, out of the line of fire—but he heard that cry of the stricken youngster. Many times he had come at that call to scatter wolves or coyotes,—though more often for purely imaginary enemies,—and now he answered for the last time. Turning suddenly, he charged the mass of mounted men again. There were some among them who fell back and did not fire. Those were the men with enough of the spirit of fair play, and enough of admiration for loyalty and courage, to withhold their fire; but there were many not of that kind.

Ka-wa-tsu saw spurts of dust and hair where bullets struck on the back and sides of the charging bull. Once he grasped his rifle, but the dust-clouds shut down again and he dared not fire. Ka-wa-tsu judged from the cries of men and the shadows darting through the haze, that Ta-na-ha had won through again, and watched the slopes carefully for his appearance.

The noise died out. Only an occasional shot now, as the hunters rushed about

the field dispatching the wounded. Then the wind blew the dust aside. The Thunder Herd had passed into the archives of history. . . . .

It was nearly sundown when Ka-wa-tsu saw Ta-na-ha again. The great bison was coming from the trees at the base of the butte, following a path that led to the summit. Obviously he was exhausted, for he walked very slowly and paused often to rest. The warrior saw and understood. Ta-na-ha had climbed like paths many times in the past, in search of a breeze that would drive away the mosquitoes and flies. Now he was climbing the butte to find relief from those stinging things in his back and sides. But it was a long way and his strength was ebbing fast. At last, however, he reached the summit. Ka-wa-tsu and Ta-na-ha had met again.

Then the warrior saw something else —he saw Toronto close on the trail of the wounded one. He was hurrying his pony up the path and on to the flat top of the butte. Ta-na-ha was there, standing with his head turned to the breeze, too weary to struggle longer. The squaw-man raised his rifle—

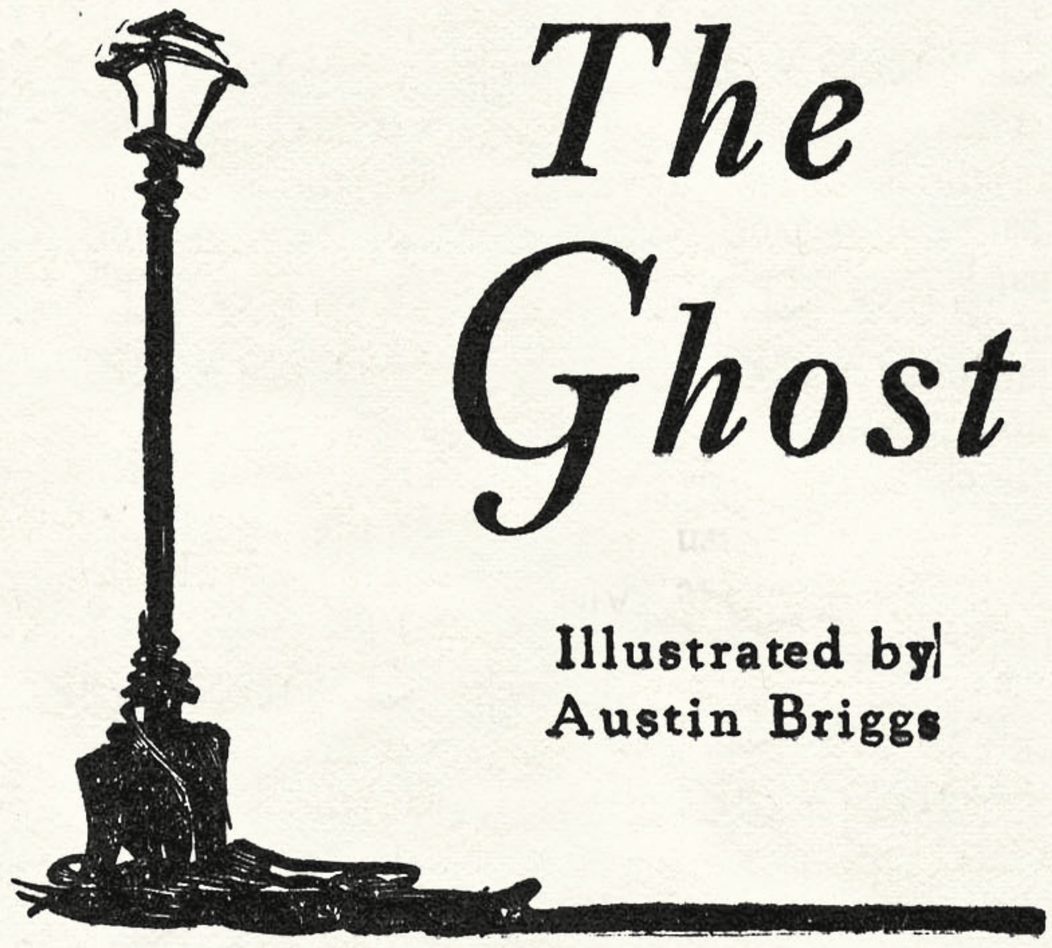
*"Cockee! Cockee! Cockee!"*

Toronto hesitated. He saw that Ka-wa-tsu was looking down the barrel of a rifle and he judged it wise to drop his own. Behind the warrior he saw other red men and he knew that he had failed. The squaw-man muttered under his breath, but the rifle-barrel was motioning him back the way he had come. Perhaps it would be wise to leave. . . . And so Toronto turned with a curse and left Ta-na-ha to his friends.

After a time the old bull lay down. Ka-wa-tsu stood leaning on his rifle beside the stricken buffalo. Ta-na-ha's head swung around to his side; his eyes closed and he appeared to sleep. Later, when the sun had set, when drums were beating in the camp below, and when night-hawks took the air, a cool breeze came up from the lowlands to sweep over the top of the butte. As it moved on over the prairies and Bad-lands, over the valley of the Missouri and the village on its northern shore, it carried a message in puffs of smoke, that climbed into the air from the crest of Pedestal Butte. A message written in the language of the Arikara that they who could read, might know:

*Ta-na-ha, last of the Thunder Herd, had come again—and gone.*

THE END



# The Ghost

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

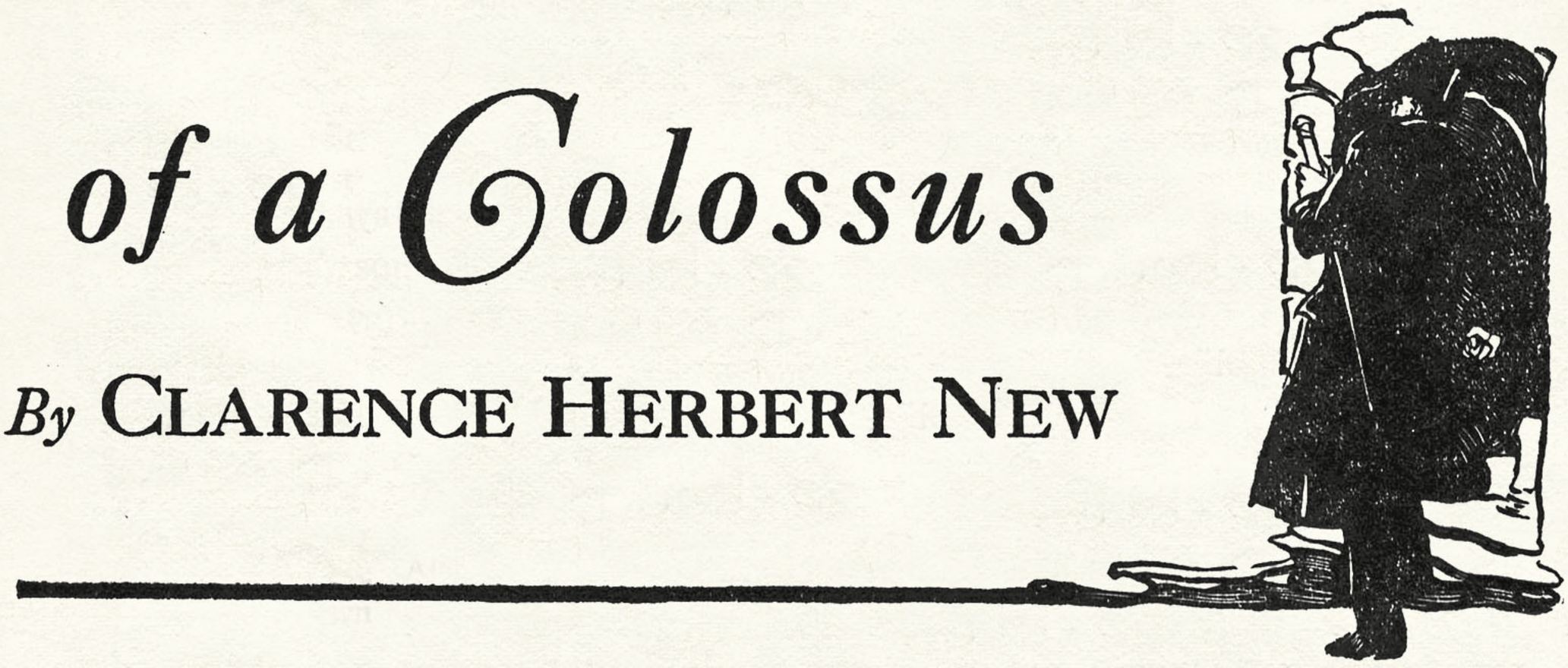
AS chairman of the board, Lord Croamly sat at the head of the table. Among the directors along one side Lord Salcombe—chairman of the advisory council—sat opposite his old friend Earl Lammerford of St. Ives. At the foot of the table was Martin L. Amberg, generally supposed to be American-born, but a financial colossus of such widely spread interests in various countries that he might have claimed to be a native of any one of half a dozen. Amberg was considered ruthless in his methods, potentially dangerous to all business if he actually was working toward the secret objects with which he was credited. It was supposed that he must control almost as much of the world's gold supply as either the United States or France, and that it was his intention to corner it if he could. As he sat there in this particular board room, there were many who credited him with more actual power, at the moment, than the ruler of any country in the world—as long as nothing prevented his brain from functioning or gave the big-money men he controlled a chance to get out from under his thumb. And he had just told Lord Croamly that his company would have to sign certain long-term German contracts whether its directorate wished to do so or not—for the sufficient reason that fifty-one per cent of their outstanding share-capital was represented by the proxies he laid upon the table.

Croamly glanced at young Lord Salcombe,—only son of the Marquess of Lyonesse but already, at twenty-nine a power in the world of finance,—who deliberated for a second or two and then said that before giving Mr. Amberg a

*A deeply interesting story of the Free Lances in Diplomacy.*

# *of a Colossus*

## By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW



definite answer he would like to consult one of the advisory council over the telephone. A grim smile wrinkled the corners of Amberg's mouth as he nodded a contemptuous agreement and lighted a cigar. In fifteen minutes Salcombe reëntered the room and resumed his seat. He inferred from the expressions upon the faces of several directors that they considered Amberg a dangerous man to antagonize and were ready to fall in with his wishes when he impatiently said:

"Your Lordship agrees to my proposition for your company, I suppose?"

"On the contrary, Mr. Amberg—we feel that we should not make any such commitments as you suggest. We would have no guarantee that the long-term settlements might not be indefinitely postponed, like the reparations payments. I've been conferring with three of the shareholders whose proxies you have—they admit giving them, under considerable pressure, and have now withdrawn them under pressure of another sort."

MURMURS of protest ran around the table—Salcombe didn't seem to know the sort of financial power they were up against. But the majority of the board had a good deal of faith in their advisory council. When Amberg saw that the Viscount controlled his company, his face became slowly purple, the veins standing out on his temples. His voice was still civil enough—but there was deadly menace in it.

"Well—I'm sorry that you reject the simpler way, gentlemen. Business in general cannot recover until the balances of trade have become a good deal more stabilized. Europe desperately needs at this moment German states that are financially strong instead of on the verge of bankruptcy and revolution. As for this company—it will sign those long-term contracts, I think, within a few days, or else it will not continue to exist. Good afternoon, gentlemen!"

As Amberg slowly walked toward the door, he was so preoccupied that his steps hesitated once or twice, and he forgot to close the door after him; and his valet-secretary Marshall, who had been waiting for him in the anteroom, stepped quickly forward to pull the door shut. The directors had been watching the man as he went out, but saw nothing in his bearing beyond an implacable determination to smash them unless they came around to his proposition. Some of them asked Salcombe if he realized what they were up against.

"Prob'ly better than you do—because I've some idea as to how many billions he controls at this moment. But it's time that some of the interests he considers under his thumb said *no!* I see no reason why Britons should blindly take orders from this fellow. Er—Lammerford, were you watching the man as he went out? Would you say there was anything the matter with him?"

"I've been studying him closely from the moment he came in. He felt pretty snappy at first—evidently didn't anticipate anything more than negligible opposition in our case. But after your getting those proxies withdrawn, he wasn't feeling so good. When he went out, he had a lot on his mind—I fancy we may have been necess'ry to him for reasons which do not appear on the sur-

face. Which brings up a question in world-finance: If he goes to pieces, or dies—what happens to the large number of banks and companies that he has all tangled up at this moment?"

As the sober-faced directors adjourned, discussing this threatening possibility, Earl Lammerford and Salcombe were getting into their car, below, on their way home to Park Lane for dinner—and the Earl went on with what he had been saying:

"There was something about Amberg which puzzled me during the meeting, Ivo—a vague resemblance to somebody I've known very well at one time or another—but until he went out I couldn't place it. Do you remember those pictures Abdool took of Captain Freddy Harden—'F.O.' on the *Ranee Sylvia* in the Dutch Indies, last year?"

"Yes, but— You're right. There is a resemblance—quite amazin', as I think of it."

"Quite! And, d'ye see—Harden was five years connected with the Indian Secret Service before he came home to take up this F.O. berth—attaché on the surface of it, but really the sort of Secret Service for which a chap must have a natural aptitude to make good at all. He was one of the very few who could an' did hang about the bazaars of India for days an' weeks as a Mahratta—Ghoorka—Pathan—Bengali. So much for his ability in impersonation. He's the same height an' build as Amberg to a quarter of an inch, I'd say—same complexion an' flesh tones. Now—beyond all that—he has no use at all for Amberg—knows something of his financial operations and fancies it'll be a catastrophe for Europe if he carries out his present intentions, whatever they may be. More than that, he's been present at social affairs where the bounder has spoken to his exceedingly attractive wife like a cad. And Harden likes any sort of adventure for the game itself—whether there is any other serious object or not."

Lord Salcombe nodded.

"Fancy I catch what you have in mind, Lammy. Puttin' Freddy Harden up to impersonatin' Amberg in some place or other where he might get valuable information if he pulls it off? What?"

"It'll run to a lot more than *that* if I catch Freddy's imagination an' he thinks he'd have a ghost of a chance of getting by with it. Simple enough matter for our lot just quietly to withdraw Amberg from circulation for a few weeks or months, and have Harden take up his everyday life without a break—at his conferences, all over the place! I don't know about his home—though I'm told Amberg and his wife aren't really living together. But of course a man's own wife would be pretty hard to fool. But if we can get inside information as to what the fellow is really up to—how he means to use the immense sums he's accumulatin'—it should enable us to block him an' avert disaster."

A MAN handling operations of any such magnitude as those of Amberg's cannot avoid ruining opponents, here and there—making enemies who hesitate at nothing to put him out of the way.

Attempts to kill Amberg had sometimes proved nearly successful, and so he had surrounded himself with various men, formerly in the police or army, who were qualified marksmen, and guarded him night and day—guarded his townhouse in London, his private-car or plane when traveling. In addition to these defenses he arranged his daily schedules so that his chauffeurs never knew when starting out with him whether he would return with them or not; his valet-secretary Marshall, sometimes procured a taxi, and sometimes acted as chauffeur himself.

A week later there was a directors' meeting of another company in which Earl Lammerford and Viscount Salcombe were on the board. In this case Amberg proposed consolidation with two other companies, one of them Belgian, which it was rumored he controlled. In a discussion with several directors before the meeting, Lammerford had secured agreement that nothing definite would be promised until there had been more time for consideration—and Amberg immediately sensed the probability that the opposition came from the same two men who had blocked him in the other company. But presently Earl Lammerford said that if Amberg's engagements for the evening were not of first importance, and he could arrange to dine with them at St. James' Club, he and Salcombe would discuss the matter for a couple of hours with him—quite possibly come to some agreement which the board would accept.

Their car was at the curb below, he said, and they would take him to his own house afterward.

Amberg was ruthless in his methods.

Amberg was accustomed to snap decisions at times when he had to do quick thinking. And he found himself forced into a position which didn't leave him much choice. He reached for one of the telephones on the table, canceled a dinner engagement and a later, social one with his wife—then nodded acceptance of Lammerford's suggestion. As they passed out through the anteroom, he told Marshall of his changed plans and dismissed him.

As he seated himself in Lammerford's car, he gave a slight exclamation—said that something on the cushions had pricked him. When he stood up for a moment, the Earl ran his hand over the seat and picked up a good-sized pin which he showed the man and then tossed out of the window with the remark that Lady Salcombe had been driving with them.

Amberg's last conscious recollection was that of being driven along the familiar streets directly to St. James' Club, by the shortest cut. . . .

Later in the week—when a certain German banker was dining with three members of the same club, they recalled Amberg's being there with Lammerford and the Marquess of Lyonesse upon the evening mentioned—said he had afterward been discussing something with them in the smoking-room for a couple of hours, and that they had then driven the man to his own town-house shortly before midnight.

IN Amberg's house, one of the footmen had as usual taken the top-coat and hat of the man he supposed to be his master, and asked if he would be wanting anything served in his study.

"Yes," came the casual reply. "Tell Barker to fetch along some of that old Scotch, and lay out the cigarettes." In the study—which Harden had located instinctively because it was exactly where a study would be, on the ground floor—he sat down in the swivel-chair behind a large table-desk with a plate-glass top, and blotter, letting his eyes travel slowly around the oak-sheathed room with its book-shelving and carved panels at the side of the big fireplace, behind one of which he thought a safe must be concealed.

As he slowly sipped his whisky and lighted a cigarette, the door opened very quietly, and admitted a strikingly beautiful woman who softly closed it.

"Martin," she said, her face flushed with anger, "just why did you put me in the embarrassing position you did this evening? Of course I know you don't care much what you do or say to me, these days, but I should think you—"

"Oh, cut out that beefing for once, Kate! If you've got to have an explanation for tonight, I'll give it to you! It's vitally important to my plans that I consolidate three companies—use them as one in a certain line of trade instead of so many competitors. Two of the directors thought we might reach an agreement if we threshed it out at their club. We dined there—and I think the consolidation is going through. What's a dinner-party—even at the Duchess of Albaugh's—with any such proposition on the other side of the scale?"

SHE looked across the desk at him with just a touch of surprise. There had been very little of the usual irritable brutality in his tone—and she thought, looking him over casually, that she never had seen him looking quite so well. As her anger cooled, her perplexity deepened.

"Well—I suppose that is some excuse," she said. "You never favor me with even a hint of your operations—so I don't know when to make allowances. Tell me something: Why is it that Feldmann the German financier—Kroner, the head of the Reichsbank—Somilov the

Moscow banker—Morovaczy, the Hungarian speculator—all speak of you as a business associate—as if they were very closely interested in your operations—as if, according to my understanding of the word, you are members of a syndicate in which none of the other nations are represented? Have they any right to convey such an impression?"

"Merely the right of so many jackals to pose as big dogs because they've been made use of in a business way! Any others you've heard discussing my affairs or referring to them?"

There was now the old contemptuous edge to his voice—but for the moment she discounted it.

She mentioned several persons who had said things—which gave him valuable pointers. Then she asked:

"Why not give me more of your confidence, Martin? It might be worth doing when you least suspect it."

"I trust nobody—that's impossible—least of all, a woman!"

"That's rather brutal, don't you think—considering that you married me? Has it never occurred to you that—for that sort of thing and many other reasons—I might start proceedings for a divorce?"

"Among other negligible considerations—yes. But I doubt very much if you would. It's too overwhelmingly to your interest—and that of your precious family—to stick!"

The flush of anger came back to her face—for what this man said was true. He had, in a sense, bought her—had capitalized the need of her father, whose failing mind had led him into unwise investments; and of her younger brother, who was continually getting himself into trouble with some youthful foolishness or other. Moreover, Amberg had been careful to keep a hold over his wife by taking care that the allowances he made to her and her family never exceeded immediate needs; and he had been careful, too, to avoid any overt conduct which would give her easy cause for a divorce action.

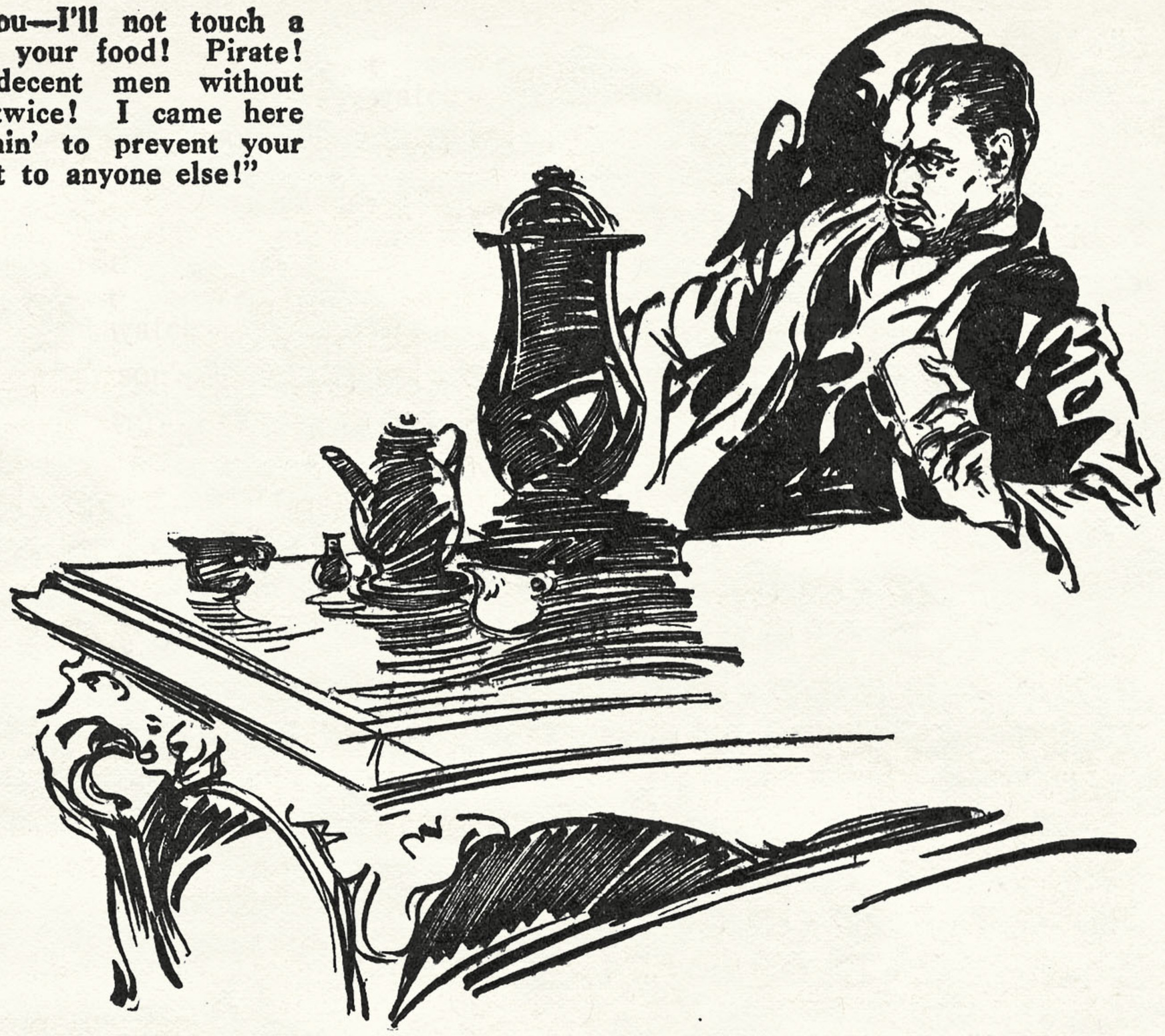
AS she stood on the other side of the desk, her eyes wandered over his face, his shoulders and arms—the strong capable hands with their efficient fingers. She looked again at the small odd-shaped birthmark half hidden in the hair on his neck—at the slightly enlarged knuckle on one of his hands. These were both there; all the identifying marks were there. But in that moment, somehow, perhaps because of that voice-quality so essentially individual in anyone, she knew that this man was not her husband. Yet she did not cry out, did not betray her discovery. She must first find out what was behind all this. And so she closed the discussion, adding, "Oh, well—I suppose I'm wasting my breath! Good night!"

As she opened the door, he said:

"I wish you'd ask Marshall to come in here—right away."

The man was in a strange house which he never had entered before. It was necessary for him to know within a few minutes where his personal suite was located—how frequently his valet-secretary had access to it and where he slept—how much absent-mindedness in the way of forgetting servants' names and appointments he could get away with upon the ground of having too much on his mind to keep track of unimportant details. He never had spoken to his supposed wife before. The man who was her husband

"Damn you—I'll not touch a morsel of your food! Pirate! Ruining decent men without thinking twice! I came here this mornin' to prevent your doin' it to anyone else!"



had been stripped to his skin and gone over inch by inch for birthmarks, scars, moles, differences in physical development. Three moles and two old scars—(one at the edge of the hair on his neck)—had been carefully reproduced. A slightly enlarged knuckle on the left hand had been treated subcutaneously until it was a perfect resemblance. Somewhere, there'd been picked up gossip that Amberg never permitted his valet to shave him because he didn't care to risk having a razor in another man's hands that near his throat—which the Ghost considered a lucky break for him. Presently Marshall tapped gently upon the study door, and came in.

The man looked up abruptly.

"Marshall—I may be up half the night, writing and figuring. Put a big lump of coal on the fire. Then go up and lay out pajamas and dressing-gown in my room—I'll be up immediately."

"Yes sir. Will you be needing a memorandum of the appointments for tomorrow and next day?"

"No. . . . Wait! I've some of them in my book—but I'd better have the complete list of every hour I'm dated up for the next two weeks. Several men I shall have to see in that time—remind me to tell you. Go up and lay out the change for me, first!"

He followed the valet so quickly that he saw him going into a room at the end of the hall—but took the precaution of first glancing through the open door. Evidently it was Marshall's own room—which he had gone into to get the appointment-lists. Taking a chance on its being unoccupied at the moment, the supposed Amberg opened the door of another room and slipped inside while the valet was returning along the wide hall. This time, he followed along rather closely and decided that what he saw was undoubtedly Amberg's own private suite.

IN a few moments Marshall had assisted him to change—handed him the appointment memoranda, mentioned papers he might need in three different drawers of the big study-desk. After which the Ghost descended to the main floor again and found the butler placing a tray with sandwiches, coffee and whisky upon one corner of the desk. Before Marshall and Barker went out, their employer asked which of the guards were on duty that night and where they were posted. Barker mentioned the names—said that the emergency-bell at the end of the row under the top ledge of the desk would fetch any or all of them running, depending upon how many times it was rung. (Evidently the emergency-bell was a recent installation. Another break for the Ghost.)

When the two had left the room and the door had been locked, the supposed Amberg drew the window-curtains so that neither his outside guards nor anyone else could get a glimpse into the room. Then he walked over and studied the paneling at the side of the fireplace. He knew that the other man, having no business office in London, must keep check-books, vouchers, letters, memoranda of various sorts, somewhere in his London house—and that there was no room other than that study which he would risk for anything of the sort. Therefore there must be a safe concealed in it—and the paneling on the left side of the fireplace had a slightly hollow sound. Fifteen minutes of careful examination finally located the spring and opened the panel, revealing a safe of much larger size than he had expected to find. Originally, in Stuart days, it had been a "priest-hole" which Amberg had had lined with reinforced concrete and steel.

THE Ghost had of course had no chance to obtain the combination; it existed only in Amberg's head—but before going up to change, he had placed a small parcel in the lower drawer of the desk which he locked from Amberg's bunch of keys. He now took out this parcel and adjusted over his ears a supersensitive microphone developed and patented some years before by the Marquess of Lyonesse. Placing the "receiver" end against the steel at the side of the combination-lock, he turned the knob—very slowly, very gently. Presently there was a faint click. Jotting down the dial-number, he then turned the knob in the opposite direction until it clicked again—and repeated the proceeding, twice—testing the latch-handle each time. After the fifth click, the well-oiled bolts slid smoothly back, and he pulled open the door.

Stepping inside, he switched on the incandescent which hung from a drilled hole just big enough for its wires and glanced at the shelving, upon which were several sets of business books—carefully labeled files—tin boxes marked *"Check-vouchers"* and *"Duplicate documents"*—the inference being that the signed originals were in the vaults of some safe-deposit company. Looking for such a name in the files, he found the number of a large box in Chancery Lane, and another in the Bank of England—each with its necessary password. Undoubtedly Amberg had other boxes in New York, Paris and Berlin, but there was nothing to indicate that he had any others in London.

Among the check-vouchers the Ghost found those of six English banks, two in Paris, two in Berlin, and a close study of the signatures with a magnifying-glass showed that the signature for each bank had some trifling difference which would not be noticed unless a person were looking for it, but which, nevertheless, would prevent payment by the wrong bank the moment a teller looked at it. Picking out a check from each one he pinned them together and put them into his pocket to study later. In the boxes of duplicate documents he found several which Amberg had signed in pencil to remind him of exactly what little changes he had made in his signature upon various papers of that sort. He had found ten of the usual large check-books, three or four on a page, in the locked bottom drawer of the desk, but the stubs showed merely the amounts drawn, not the balances. So he hunted in the strong-room again until he found a small sheepskin ledger in which the checks were entered frequently enough to show the current balance in each bank if one had the check-book for comparison since the last entry. This ledger showed, when footed up, operations running into the hundred millions. Some of the check-books showed who had had the money. And with his own very wide knowledge of commercial affairs—a man may pick up a great deal in the diplomatic service if he keeps his eyes and ears open—the Ghost came closer to a working comprehension of what Amberg had done, presumably meant to do, than any other living person outside of the man himself.

LOCKING the strong-room and closing the panel in the wainscoting, the Ghost laid out several blank letter-sheets upon the desk and began copying the peculiar signature upon each check-voucher—then, on each sort of a legal document, and the everyday way of signing letters of various sorts. By three in the morning he felt that he could sign Amberg's name at any time, perfectly, without glancing at an original—and was fairly certain that he could differentiate between the varieties. (One gets a lot of practice in decoding cipher at the Foreign Office.)

Stirring up the glowing embers in the sea-coal fire, he carefully placed all the sheets he had been working upon down

in the reddest center of them and prodded with a poker until every scrap had been consumed.

Then he calmly went up to bed.

HARDEN was going through the morning's mail during a late breakfast when Barker came in to say that a "Mr. Raeburn" was calling—wished to see him upon a matter of the utmost importance. Vaguely, it ran through his mind that the name "Raeburn" had occurred in some document he had glanced through during the night, but he couldn't recall what the connection had been. However—the Ghost nodded—told the butler to fetch his caller into the dining-room. Although this was something which never had happened before in Barker's recollection, he thought nothing of it—one never knew in advance when Amberg was going to do something he hadn't been known to do before.

When the caller was admitted and given a chair at the table near the other man, the supposed Amberg asked him civilly enough, but without a smile:

"Had your breakfast, Mr. Raeburn? Care for a cup of American coffee and some bacon? Or would you prefer whisky and tobacco?"

The man's mouth opened like that of a fish out of water—evidently this was about the last sort of reception he'd expected to receive.

"Why—er—er—*no!* I've other things to think of this morning besides breakfast—as you doubtless know!"

"What I do know is that anything looks a damned sight worse on an empty stomach than it probably is. —Barker, give Mr. Raeburn some hot coffee and something appetizing. —I don't know what's on your mind, Raeburn, but I'm in no hurry this morning. I'll wait until you've got something inside—"

"Damn you—I'll not touch a morsel of your food! Pirate! Ghoul! Ruining decent men without thinking twice—kicking 'em out of your path when you've squeezed 'em dry! I came here this mornin' to prevent your doin' it to anyone else, Amberg—an' by God you're *for* it!"

With a motion so quick and smooth that it came as a total surprise to Barker and the footman, Raeburn's hand came up from under the table-edge with an automatic. But before it was actually in sight,—at least a second before he could have pulled the trigger,—a cupful of hot coffee splashed into his face and eyes so painfully that the automatic dropped upon the table. In the next two seconds, the supposed Amberg was standing behind him with a wet napkin, soaked in the caller's tumbler, bathing his eyes and face—after slipping the pistol into his pocket. He said calmly:

"As a rule, the eyes close instinctively before anything can hit them, and that coffee cooled some going through the air—I doubt if you get any more inconvenience than a little smarting on the outside of the lids. Now—just let me run over your clothes to see if you've any more weapons. You've evidently something pretty bad on your mind. Suppose we discuss it quietly—see if it's as bad as you think. I infer that you're accusing me of ruining you? In what way?"

Raeburn glared at him despite the pain of his smarting eyes.

"I was majority shareholder of Raeburn's, Limited—dyestuffs, established by my grandfather, as you very well know, Amberg. Dyes against which the Germans never have been able to compete. We found it diffic'lt, then impossible, to get some of our basic chemicals, although we were buying from British houses only. Their only explanation was that 'new int'rests' had bought in—an' they couldn't supply us. We tried another line of products—same diffic'lty. Our honorable old house has been forced closer an' closer to the wall. We go through bankruptcy next week!"

IN silence the supposed Amberg considered this—figuring various features in this particular case as it bore upon the whole proposition. The problem was how much of Amberg's work could be permanently undone or rendered negligible in whatever time there might be before the impersonation was suspected—the Ghost killed or arrested. At first glance one would have said that he should get to work without losing a second—but this meant additional risk of discovery, probably before the worst of Amberg's plans could be effectively blocked.

However, as he sat at the breakfast-table, the Ghost saw that the action he suddenly decided upon in the Raeburn matter couldn't be handled before the butler and footman, for the simple reason that it was too much at variance with the man as they knew him.

"Suppose we go into my study and discuss the matter, Raeburn," he said. "I want to hear your side of it, though I

think you're acting like a fool in going through bankruptcy! Barker—don't let anybody disturb us."

In the study, he locked the door and set the decanter in front of his nonplused caller.

"Now—give me an idea, approximately, of how much you think you've lost through my operations?"

"Before you began to interfere with us, Raeburn's, Limited, was worth at least eighty thousand pounds, gold standard. At auction, today, the plant an' equipment wouldn't fetch a thousand!"

"When you found what was happening, why didn't you consolidate with McPherson and Denny, of Glasgow—or Bothwell and Jones, of Birmingham—or Glassford, Limited, of Manchester? That's what I would have done!"

"Raeburn's always has won or lost on its own feet—we consolidate with nobody!"

"That's the line the Prussians assured me you'd take—but I didn't think you were such a fool! Never expected to eliminate your competition that easy! This is an age of concentration—consolidation. Two of those other houses are getting their basic chemicals from sources the Prussians can't control—and they can easily give you all you need. I'll make you a proposition, Raeburn: Give me your word that you'll consolidate with those English and Scotch houses as soon as you can put it through—and I'll write you a check on the Bank of England, now, for eighty thousand pounds. You are to deposit the check in your bank at once."

NOBODY else saw that check drawn—nobody paid any attention to the transaction for two months—although the Prussians, to their amazement, found the Raeburn consolidation a competitor who was getting the dyestuff trade away from them instead of a defunct concern. The check was cleared and paid in due course by the Bank of England without question, inasmuch as it had the proper little variations in the signature—known to no living persons but Amberg himself and four of the bank officials. As Raeburn left the house, Marshall came into the study to ask if his employer had forgotten the appointment with Feldmann, the Prussian financier—and another with Kroner, Somilov and Morovaczy, later in the afternoon.

"No! I've not forgotten! But all four of those fools are getting out of hand. I heard something last night. Call 'em up—cancel both of those appointments, Marshall!"

"But—excuse me, sir. Won't they take serious offense?"

"Dø them good to stew a bit! I'm fed up, anyhow. Cancel those engagements—do you hear!"

AS soon as the Berliner's secretary had given him the message, Feldmann requested that Amberg come to the phone—which the Ghost flatly refused to do. Feldmann then said he was coming to the house at once—there were matters which must be settled between them. Amberg made no reply—didn't say he would or he wouldn't be at home. In half an hour Feldmann arrived—accompanied by Kroner and Somilov. As soon as the study door was closed, they began complaining heatedly against Amberg's treating them as if their time was of no value—but he cut in on them coldly, leaving no doubt as to his change of feeling in regard to them:

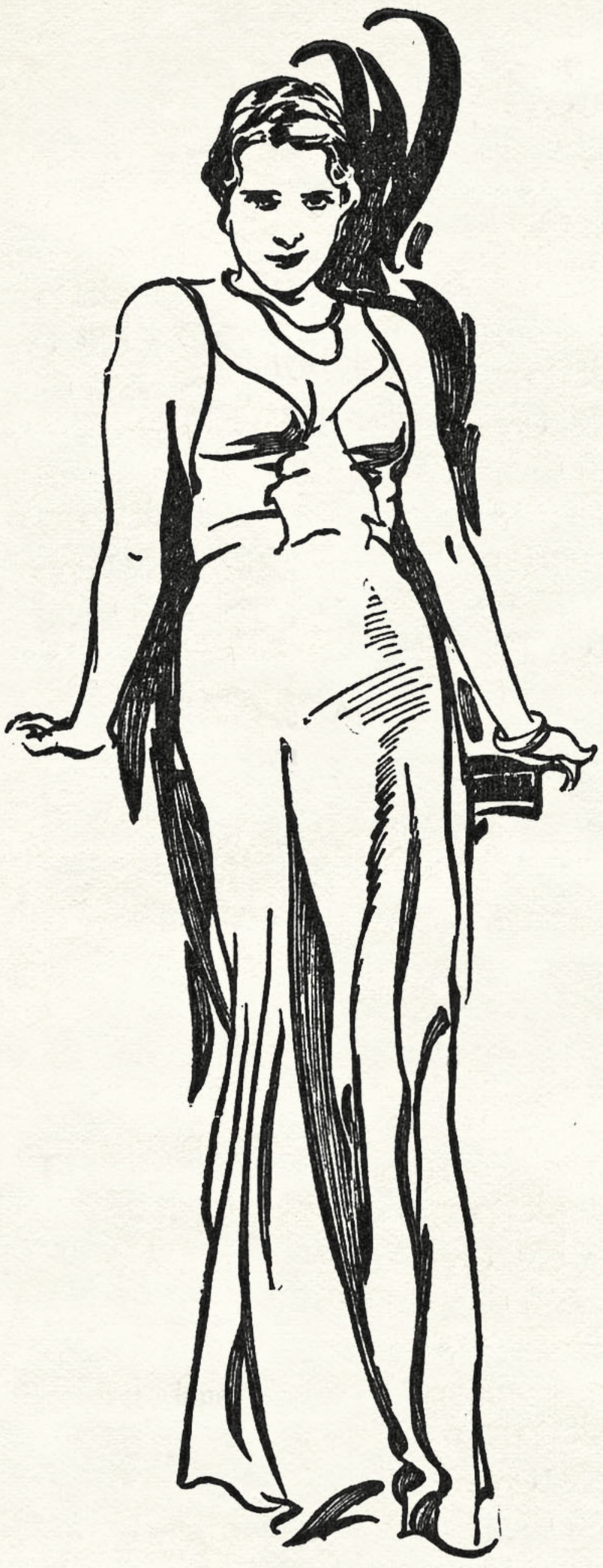
"Look here, you three! We'll have a little less of your wishes and a little more of mine, I think! For the past few weeks you have been letting it be understood around London and Paris that you and I are closely associated in some secret syndicate formed to carry on gigantic Prussian operations! I warned you several times that no such impression could be allowed to get about; it's a foolish risk of nullifying several necessary factors in the game—even more particularly, several of my other operations with which you've nothing whatever to do. Keep in mind that I don't associate myself with any group of international speculators. I play a lone hand, and always will!"

"You wass playing wit' us, t'is time, Amberg—just t'e same! Look you! It wass all right to keep t'e shut mouth while t'ings wass in critical brocess of getting toget'er—but now, when der plan wass all finished undt cleaned up, what iss der objection to letting eferybody know t'at we undt der Vaterlandt gontrol der whole worldt? Eh?"

"For one reason, because you don't! Without me and my backing, you've actually less power than any other nation of the first class!"

"But your backing haf been pledged, Amberg! T'at iss all ofer undt done wit'! We haf your initialed agreements—"

"Subject to a certain interpretation of what was to be done! Having the control



**In that moment, she knew that this man was not her husband. But she did not betray her discovery.**

of world-finance in the hands of one nation with unlimited opportunity for 'peaceful penetration' rather appealed to me. That was Albert Ballin's idea—your country would be immeasurably better off, today, if the Kaiser had listened to him, and I supposed that your financial leaders had got a little sense knocked into you by this time." It suddenly occurred to the Ghost that an unexpected bluff might secure an admission from these men which would make the whole situation clear. "But now—I've got it pretty straight that you consider our whole proposition as a war-chest—mean to attempt another war of world-conquest within two years! And that, you scoundrels—simply—does—not—go!"

"But you haf understoodt all along, Amberg, t'at ultimately such war iss necessary. T'ere iss no ot'er way to get all of t'e trade undt holdt it—no ot'er way of imposing our business ideas upon t'e worldt!"

"You're blind, pig-headed liar! Both ways! No such possibility ever has been discussed between us! However—as you don't even attempt any denial of what you have in mind, it's a waste of breath discussing the matter. You may consider all dealings of whatever nature between us canceled! And I've no more time to waste on you this morning!"

"You mean—you will not transfer der goldt-reserve to der Reichsbank tomorrow morning—as haf been most seriously bromised?"

"Just so! Not a solitary mark of it! I'm not financing another war—there are better uses for my money outside of your country! You haven't any agreements with me beyond initialed memoranda—not signed or witnessed—worth just so much waste-paper in a court of law."

They sat there stunned—but gradually filling up with cold rage.

"Subbose—subbose we just kill you in t'is room—pefore you haf time to stop some of t'e larger checks undt drafts? Eh?"

"I did that by telephone—before you got here. Also—I've three husky guards in the hall, the other side of that door, and two more outside of that window. You will not be allowed to leave the premises until all five have come in and spoken to me—are perfectly satisfied that I haven't been wounded, poisoned or doped. This bell under my finger would tell them to smash in the door. So—you can proceed with your killing as soon as you like. You will certainly hang if you do—and Scotland Yard will know within an hour that you have threatened me. Better terminate our acquaintance—let it go at that!"

THROUGH observation in going about the house, Harden managed to locate his supposed wife's suite and check the door of the living-room in which she spent a good deal of her time. Knocking upon this door, he went in for a short talk before luncheon.

"Kate—who are your heirs, in case anything happens to you?"

"Why—if I died without making a will, I suppose Alice—my sister—would be one. And Fred's two girls—Helen and Dorothy Evesham. That's all the near relatives I have left. You yourself would come in for a third—wouldn't you?"

"That claim's waived—I don't mean to have one penny's interest in your death, as a matter of principle. Ever make a will?"

"Once—many years ago, before we were married. I think it's in some New York lawyer's office."

"Well—as a matter of advisable precaution and a personal favor to me, I want you to go to your attorney's office this afternoon—have a will drawn up just as you wish to leave things—and sign it before you leave. Make any good trust company your executors. Leave your bequests in the form of percentages of whatever your net estate amounts to—in preference to specified sums. I'll illustrate the reason for this. You like the Evesham girls a lot—I presume you would be inclined to leave them a good big legacy. Well—with what you inherit from me, even from marriage settlements alone, you may have more than you think. Suppose you left the girls a lump sum of twenty thousand pounds? That limits it—they wouldn't get any more than that. But if you left them twenty per cent—it might be five or ten times that. Now will you do this—no fooling?"

The interview—his manner toward her, and his request—puzzled her a good deal. She had known for weeks that the man was an impostor—was thoroughly convinced that he simply couldn't be her husband. But if he wasn't—where was Amberg? Murdered? Hastily buried somewhere? But—this matter of her will? He was not trying to persuade her to leave money to him. Quite the contrary! So she acquiesced in the suggestion—even carried it out. She must, she decided, play a waiting game.

FROM the house, the Ghost was driven to the offices of the old and influential solicitors who handled the most important of Amberg's transactions in London.

First he established a trust fund for his wife—a rather amazing sum—two well-known banks and the law firm being the trustees. Interest payable to her monthly during her lifetime—and the principal a part of her estate after death. Then he established an Ocean Freights Trust, with an immense gold-reserve held by the Bank of England—the bank itself, four other leading banks and the law firm, acting as trustees—with power to grant freight subsidies—somewhat on the idea of the Government mail-subsidies—upon any line of British goods which could not compete in foreign ports when heavy ocean freights were against them.

One of the Ghost's chief problems, you understand, was to place that immense gold-reserve where Amberg never could touch it again or hand it over to the war junta, and yet apply it to such a purpose that he would appear as a public benefactor and there could be no possible question as to his doing it intentionally—of his own free will.

Inside of a week the Ghost had managed to sequestrate and side-track more than half of the monstrous sums which Amberg had been accumulating for his own secret purposes—releasing a number of banks and commercial companies which had been so tied up that they'd had no choice but to do business in the directions Amberg permitted them.

AT the end of a month it was becoming evident that not only were the man's old enemies still on the war-path but that the Feldmann, Kroner and Somilov crowd had determined, somehow, to get him into their hands and extract millions by "pressure" before they let him go again—or killed him. Altogether—the Ghost felt that he had run that sort of risk about long enough. He had accomplished far more than he had hoped.

Amberg had been kept in a certain house near Hendon in a partly doped condition ever since the night he was supposed to have dined at St. James' Club. He had exercise enough in the house and garden to keep in fairly good physical condition—and two weeks' freedom from the drug would clear his brain until it functioned normally. But—how make his household accept him without suspicion during those two weeks? That took a bit of doing.

In the early post, one morning, Marshall found  letter which he laid aside for his employer to act upon himself. It was a request for a confidential interview with an Austrian more or less associated with the Feldmann-Kroner crowd, but whose relations with Amberg had been pleasant and profitable. The letter said he had some vitally important information which would save him from walking into a trap with his eyes open. It said that they could meet in an upper room which he would reserve at a roadside Inn known as the Dog & Bull on the Reading Road—Amberg fetching along any protection he thought necessary.

When Marshall took in the letter, the Ghost considered it—laid it aside without

comment until he had gone through the rest of the morning's post—then took it up and read it again. Finally he said that the Austrian had always been straight with him and that he thought it advisable to keep the appointment. He would not need Marshall—but one of the chauffeurs could take the car and two of the guards. He thought this would be ample protection, because he would telephone the Austrian at his hotel, referring merely to "the place mentioned in your letter, tomorrow night." So if anybody was tapping his wires, there would be nothing to indicate where he was going.

That afternoon a well-dressed man who spoke German like a Berliner, but whom the banker couldn't place, called at Kroner's office—and after some insistence was granted an interview. He told the banker of the conference at the Dog & Bull scheduled for the following night—and suggested that if Kroner or one of his associates cared to motor out there he might hear some pretty interesting talk between Amberg and the Austrian. This so impressed Kroner that he went out to the inn next evening accompanied by Feldmann and Somilov.

Half an hour before their arrival, Earl Lammerford—who looked like somebody else—with a gentleman who walked straight enough, talked just a bit thickly, and evidently had had a few glasses before getting that far—drove up to the Inn, asking for a room which had been reserved. When they reached it, they sat down for more drinks and smokes. Then the Ghost drove up—told his guards to remain outside watching a lighted window, which he pointed out to them, and if he didn't come down in two hours, to come up after him. In an adjoining room, upstairs, he washed the gray out of his hair, affixed a false mustache to his upper lip and went below to wait in Lammerford's car, having first assured himself that the real Amberg was in the next room.

When Feldmann and his companions reached the inn, they were shown up to the room where Amberg sat, as expected guests—and in spite of his fogginess, the financier recognized them. He greeted them rather irritably—with a noticeable thickness of speech.

Kroner drew Somilov over near the window—and whispered: "Half-stewed! We can do what we like with him!"

"Those two men outside—some of his bullies. They know us! We can't kill him—sure to be implicated!"

"You're a doctor, Somilov—can't you suggest something?"

"I can drug him with stuff that will make his mind too sluggish for any sort of business during the next four or five weeks—been carrying the drug about with me just on the chance. While he's in that condition he'll not be cautious—we'll catch him alone, somewhere."

After a round of drinks with Amberg they whispered to the waiter that he was pretty well pickled and that his servants had better take him home. Then they drove away in their own car. The waiter took the guards upstairs.

The guards knew the man drank—quite a lot—though they never had seen him partly helpless before. He stumbled downstairs—into his own car, was driven home—and for a month went about in a daze. As his physician admitted to the reporters that he had been drugged with something which remained in the system a long time—as he had been in perfect health up to the evening he went to the Dog & Bull Inn, according to his guards, his chauffeurs, his physician and household—as he had been with nobody but the three men who left him in that upper room and who were identified by his chauffeur and guards—the inference was pretty strong as to what had happened to him and who were responsible. They found it advisable to leave London for a while—making no further attempts against him.

IT took Amberg months to figure out just what condition his affairs were in and what had happened to them during that unexplained month. In his talks with two or three hundred different persons, he found that any one of them would swear positively that it was he and nobody else whom they had dealt with—that testimony was simply unshakable. But there are half a dozen persons now living who know that his Ghost averted a world-wide catastrophe. . . .

On the day after Amberg returned from the Dog & Bull, in his partly doped condition, Lady Kate had seen him at dinner—and knew at once that her real husband had returned.

But now—through the grace of that strange impostor who had vanished as inexplicably as he had come—she had ample personal funds to take care of herself and of her family. And she therefore promptly and joyously started legal action to win freedom from a tyranny under which she had endured much.

*In this deeply interesting novelette, one of the most gifted of Southern authors tells the moving story of a hard-fought little war in the Kentucky hill country.*

# Mountain Men

MR. JAMES BUCKNER, aged twenty-four, attorney-at-law, slim, lean-bodied, with a Duke of Wellington nose, black eyes and, as his old grandmother had announced, "a Bucknah all ovah," sat in his law office in the little Kentucky valley town of Lorton.

He had come down from the mountains, gone to school, then studied law in Judge Shelby's office in Winchester, and had been admitted to the bar; now, two years later, he was being groomed by his party leaders for District Attorney.

It was a hot day and he sat at the roll-top desk, his soft white silk shirt open at the neck, his sleeves turned up. Through the open window he could hear the strains of an old ballad, "Barbara Allen." Several young men had ridden down from the hills that morning and were now sitting in the shade afforded by Slaughter and Letcher's general store. As Buckner passed them, a short time before, they had greeted him with, "Howdy, Jim!" and, "Come on ovah hyar and git you a drink of cawn-likkah!"

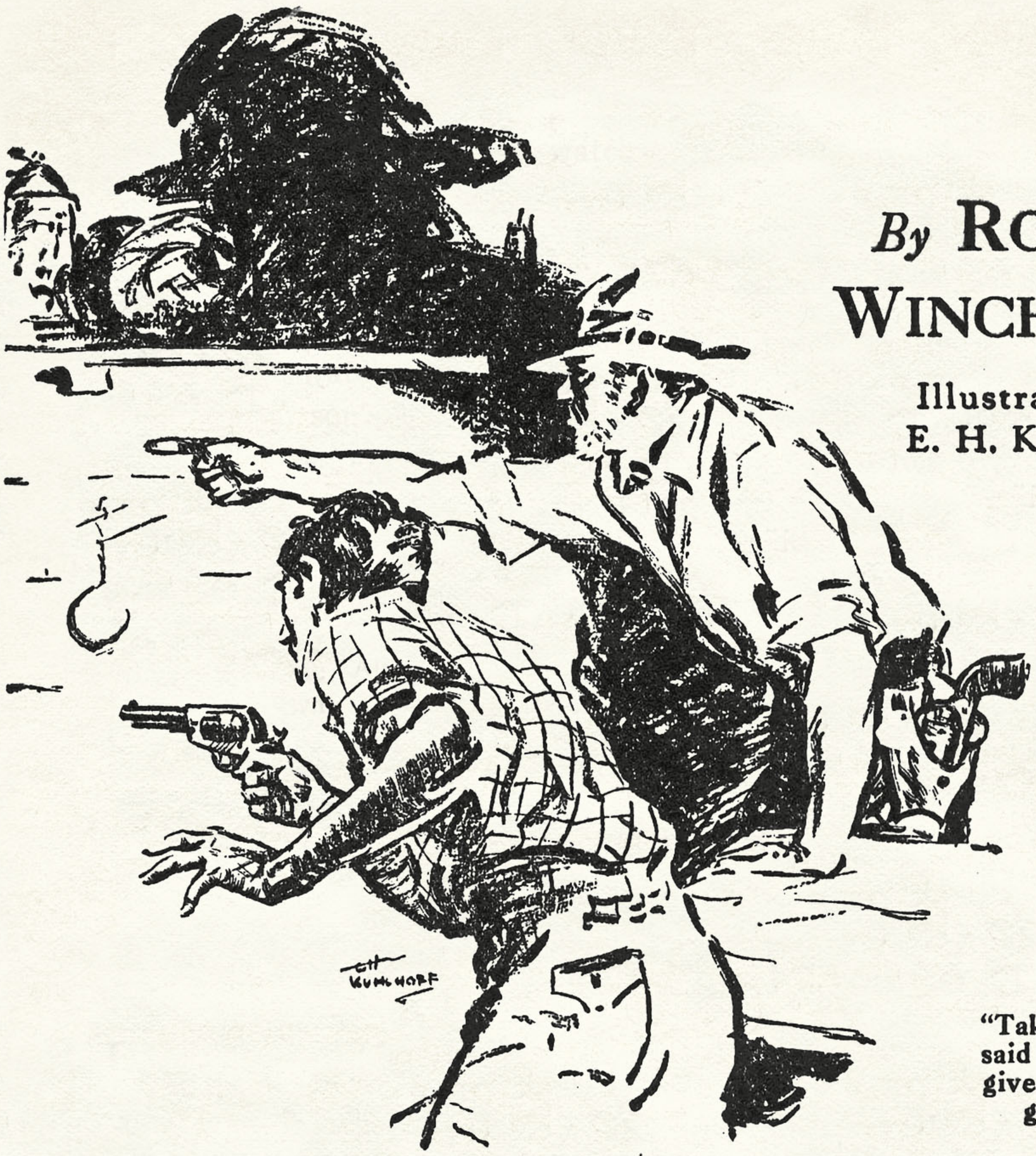
He had grinned and waved his hand, not stopping his horse. "Hit haint fitten for me to do hit," he called, using the mountain dialect. "I got me a right smart lot of work to wrassle, please suh."

The young men had laughed and waved him on. Buckner could see that two or three of them had been drinking heavily and knowing their quick hot tempers, he hoped, as he got off and tied his horse to the rack in front of his office, that some of the older men in Lorton would try to scatter them out a little.

The young men were crooning the ancient ballad, "Brennon on the Moor." Buckner smiled as he put down the brief he was reading and reached for his pipe. He could hear the reedy tenor of his young cousin Beriah Buckner, who lived up in Deer Gap, where most of the Buckners had their mountain farms.

He filled his pipe, reached for a card of sulphur matches, and started to draw one across the rough patch at the bottom of the card. He never completed the operation, at least with that match. There was silence for a minute, then a shot—a pistol-shot—and a moment later, a rifle-shot that seemed to Buckner to come from the gallery of the store across the street.

Jimmy Buckner shoved his chair back,




# By ROBERT WINCHESTER

**Illustrated by E. H. Kuhlhoff**

**"Take this Bucknah out," said Anson Bryan, "and give him what he has given the Bryans."**

reached for a rifle standing in the angle of the wall behind him, and in an instant was up and across the room and out of the door on the wooden sidewalk.

He was just in time to see his cousin Beriah Buckner sway back and forth, one hand clutching his breast, then fall across the body of a young man who lay face down on the ground.

Another young man was on a horse in front of the store. As Buckner made the sidewalk, this man whirled his mount around and with a rifle still smoking held in his right hand, rode down the dusty little street, heading for the mountains at the edge of the town. A pretty girl was standing almost in the middle of the street; there was an expression of horror in her dark eyes, fixed on the form of young Beriah Buckner, not thirty feet away. Three young men who had been in the group were on their feet, pistols out; all three were more than a little drunk.

None of them were related either to Beriah Buckner or to Isaac Bryan, the man whom young Buckner had killed. They knew there had been a "killin'" and being of the fighting mountain families, they had drawn their pistols.

James Buckner, attorney-at-law, mentioned for District Attorney, with four years of schooling in the valley and three more in the quiet dignified law office of a Judge, sloughed it all off in a split second as he saw a Buckner fall, and became again Jimmy Buckner of Deer Gap. He raised his rifle, and as the young man on the horse turned to see if he were being pursued Jimmy sent a rifle-bullet between his eyes. The rider fell from the saddle, one foot catching in the stirrup, and was dragged by the frenzied horse for a hundred yards before the foot loosened. Preston Bryan died because he had killed Beriah Buckner, who had killed Isaac Bryan—and the Buckner-Bryan feud was on.

Now men had come out of the store, and from the one across the street, and from the ground-floor offices that lined the block-long street.

The pretty girl had run to where Beriah Buckner lay and was cradling his head in her arms.

Older men came running up. Two men related to Preston Bryan were lifting his body from the street, and carrying it into a little cottage at whose gate he had died.

Buckner looked around, up and down the street to see if there were any more Bryans in sight, or if the two men he had seen carry Preston Bryan into the cottage had come out. They had not, and as he looked he saw three Buckners, all cousins, standing in front of their offices, their pistols ready. One was the county surveyor, the others were deputy sheriffs. From a quiet little Kentucky town, basking in the sun, it had suddenly become hostile Indian country with tribe against tribe. There were more Buckners and their kin in the town than there were Bryans. Those of the Bryan family who were in Lorton were already making for the hills at the news of the triple killing. The two men who had carried Preston Bryan into the cottage had left by the back door, crouching low to avoid being seen. Lorton was a Buckner stronghold, and they knew it; but in the hills the situation would be different.

BUCKNER walked over, the men making way for him. His thin tanned face was not smiling now, but as stern and impassive as an Indian's. He looked down at the girl who was crying.

"B'riah's gone, honey," he said gently. "Be a brave good girl and let Uncle Billy and Gabe take him."

"You let me be, Jimmy Bucknah," flared the girl, her dark eyes flashing through the tears. "Reckon he haint dead, no such thing—he's jest funnin' and teasin' me like he always does!" And she cuddled the boy's head against her warm young breast. "No suh," she went on, rocking back and forth. "'Riah aint dead, are you, honey? Darlin', please don't tease Betty no more!"

Buckner stooped and loosened her arms, and as he did, two of the men took up the body.

Betty Shelby stood up, or rather she allowed Buckner to lift her to her feet, and as she drew a long, sobbing breath, Buckner said: "Yo' ah a Shelby, honey. Act like one. See, there is Mrs. Garrard helping Uncle Billy with Beriah. Be a good girl now and let us menfolks handle things. Go and see if you can help her, honey."

As Betty ran across the street, Buckner turned to the three young men who had by now shaken some of the effects of the new moonshine whisky from their brains.

"What happened?" he demanded of them curtly.

"Well, suh," drawled Buck Greenup, "I reckon I'm right oncertain 'bout hit, Jimmy! We-uns was a-singin' and passin' round the cawn. Beriah was feelin' right pert an' so was Ike—an' so was we-uns. Betty Shelby comes out of the store and starts to mosey along, goin' to Letcher's, I reckon. I wasn't payin' me no neveh mind to nothin', but I heahs Ike say, 'Doggone! Iffen Betty toes in ary mo' she'll be a reg'lar Injun, no foolin'!' Then I heahs Beriah say, 'Take hit back, you low-down!'—and Ike he says, 'The dogs don't bark at no Bucknah'—and then as I sits up I sees the pistol-guns, and I heahs *kapow*. Beriah done beat Ike to—"

"Wait a minute, Buck. They both drew?"

"Yes suh," put in Wesley Owsley. "They sure did, Jimmy. Only 'Riah was faster—Ike nevah did git his pistol-gun all out."

"Where was Pres when it started?"

"Just gittin' ready to straddle his nag. He seen hit and laid a bead on Beriah from whar he was standin'."

One of the older men spoke. "Jimmy, we-uns been right quiet and peaceful heah in Lorton for a long time now. You reckon you can make this heah town neutral ground? Since your pappy died, yo' ah the head of the Bucknahs. Hit's goin' to be mighty bad for we-uns, Jimmy, onless you can."

"If the Bryans agree," Buckner said shortly. "You can tell them I said so."

The Justice of the Peace, an old man

with a long white beard, came up to Jimmy. With him were the two deputy sheriffs. "Reckon this is a right bad thing that's happened, Jimmy," he drawled. "Means a lot more killin's and goin's-on. And men will be drawn in that'd a mighty sight rather be peaceful."

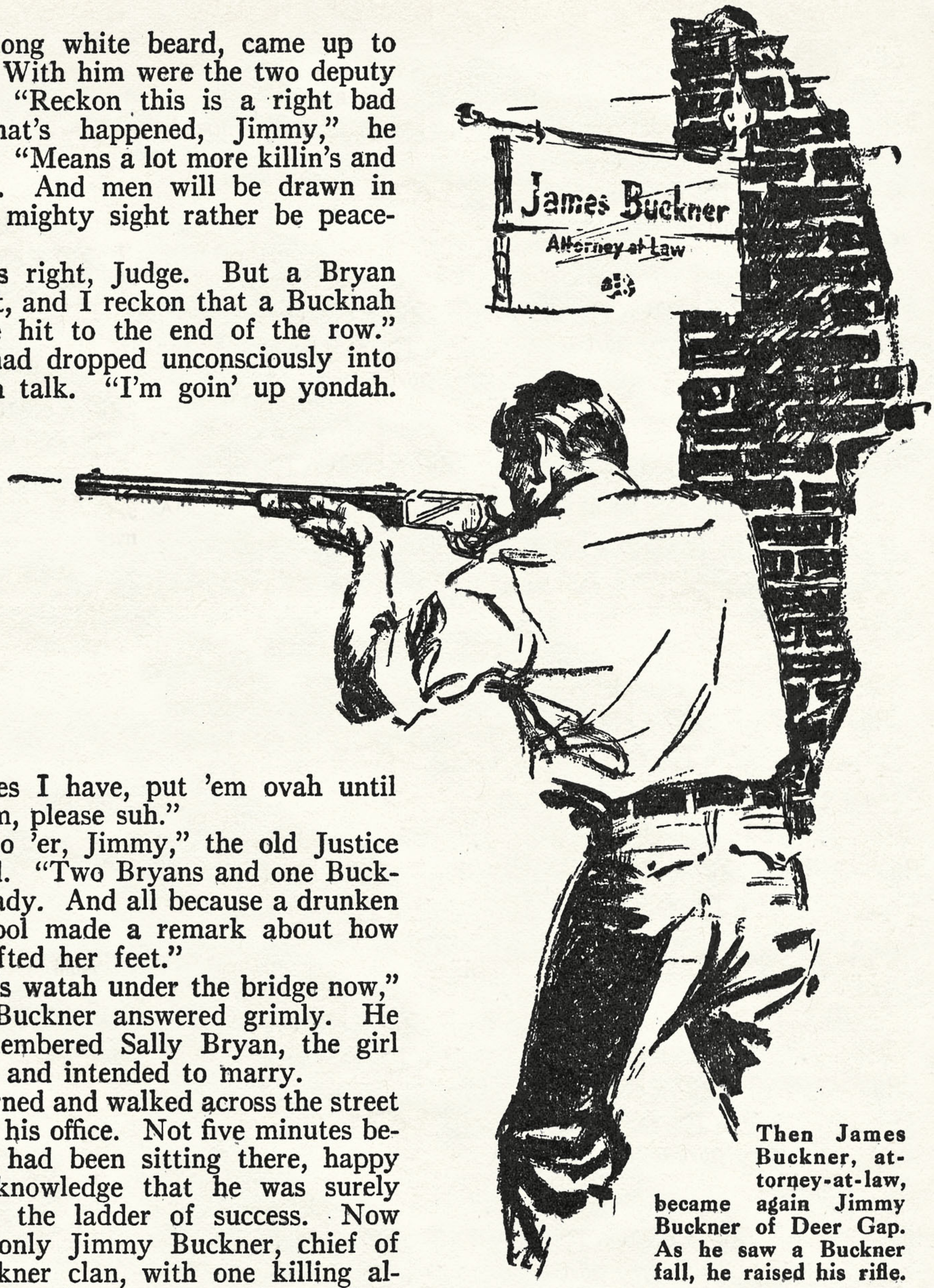
"That's right, Judge. But a Bryan started it, and I reckon that a Bucknah can take hit to the end of the row." Jimmy had dropped unconsciously into mountain talk. "I'm goin' up yondah. Any cases I have, put 'em ovah until next term, please suh."

"I'll do 'er, Jimmy," the old Justice answered. "Two Bryans and one Bucknah already. And all because a drunken young fool made a remark about how a girl lifted her feet."

"That's watah under the bridge now," Jimmy Buckner answered grimly. He had remembered Sally Bryan, the girl he loved and intended to marry.

He turned and walked across the street and into his office. Not five minutes before, he had been sitting there, happy in the knowledge that he was surely climbing the ladder of success. Now he was only Jimmy Buckner, chief of the Buckner clan, with one killing already marked up against him, and at feud with the family of the girl he loved. He went into his office, laid his rifle on the desk, opened a drawer and took out a cartridge-belt from which hung two heavy holstered pistols. This he strapped around his waist, and began picking up private papers to lock in the little safe in the corner.

HE heard a horse coming down the street; the rapid hoof-beats stopped in front of his door, and he knew before the door opened that it was Sally Bryan. He straightened up and faced her. She looked exactly what she was, this dainty girl of eighteen who confronted Jimmy Buckner. From the top of her proud head to the tips of her toes, she was lovely, a Kentucky thoroughbred.




**Then James Buckner, attorney-at-law, became again Jimmy Buckner of Deer Gap. As he saw a Buckner fall, he raised his rifle.**

Her riding habit and boots still wet from where she had splashed through creeks, riding straight across country to see Jimmy Buckner. Her eyes were level as she asked: "Jimmy, is hit true?" The tone also was level.

"I reckon hit is, Sally," Jimmy answered quietly. "If you've heard the straight of hit."

"I met Johnny and Uncle George coming down. They told me that Beriah killed Isaac, and that Preston had killed Beriah—and that you shot Preston out of his saddle. Is that true, Jimmy?"

"Yes, Sally. Hit is all true."

Sally Bryan drew a long quivering breath and in spite of her efforts her pretty lips quivered slightly. "You—you killed my cousin, Preston, knowin' that—"

"Your second cousin, Sally. He—"

"Reckon I know what kin he is," answered Sally hotly. "You killed him and I— Jimmy! Hit's a bad dream, isn't hit? Tell me so! . . . . Hit is true, then! You've killed my kinfolks and—you stand there with your pistol-guns on, ready to kill some more. I—Reckon you were lyin' when you told me you loved me. You couldn't love me, and—"

"I do love you, Sally," interrupted Jimmy, his face white in spite of the tan.

"What? You, a Bucknah, love a Bryan! Well, I don't love *you*—you killed my love when you shot Preston off his nag. I didn't believe hit, I reckon, but now I—"

"He killed Beriah, Sally—Beriah, who we used to take hunting with us and carry ovah the creeks and hills."

"I don't care *who* he killed!" She took a ring from her finger and flung it on the floor at his feet. "Now, I reckon that I'm free! I'm a Bryan, and yo' ah nothin' in the world but a low-down Bucknah. I—"

"I love you, Sally," Jimmy repeated gently. "No matter what happens, I—"

"What? You dare tell me that after you have killed my kin? My pappy will kill you, Jimmy Bucknah. Wait till my pappy comes home or my granddaddy or Sam or Mase meet up with you. Oh, I wish *I* had a pistol!"

Jimmy drew one of his and held it out to her, butt-first. "Go ahead," he said bitterly. "Reckon that's the best thing that could happen to me."

Sally's hand reached out—hesitated—then dropped. "No; reckon my menfolks can tend to the shootin'. I did love you and I was so happy and—and—now I hate you and always will, and I hope that—that my menfolks kill you right away. Reckon if I turn my back you're liable to shoot me!"

AT this deadly insult Jimmy grew even whiter—if that were possible. In feuds any man could walk through the enemy's country with safety if he carried a child in his arms. To tell a man he was likely to shoot a woman in the back was to tell him that he was beyond the pale in every way.

Sally was walking toward the door. As she reached and opened it, she turned and looked at Jimmy. "I reckon," she said slowly, "that my Jimmy died too, when—when this Bucknah hyar shot my kinsman."

Jimmy didn't answer; he couldn't. Sally opened the door and went out, closing it softly behind her. He stood as if frozen until he could no longer hear the rapid beat of the horse's hoofs that were carrying the girl he loved away from him.

TWO hours later he rode slowly up into the hills. He knew that word had already been sent out and that to the Buckners would come the Shelbys and Madisons and Metcalfes, and to the Bryans, the Clarks, the Knotts and the Scotts—all mountain families, all inhabiting little principalities of their own—and up to the moment of Isaac Bryan's idle criticism, all friends, men who hunted and fished together, made moonshine "likker" and together stood off the "revenooers."

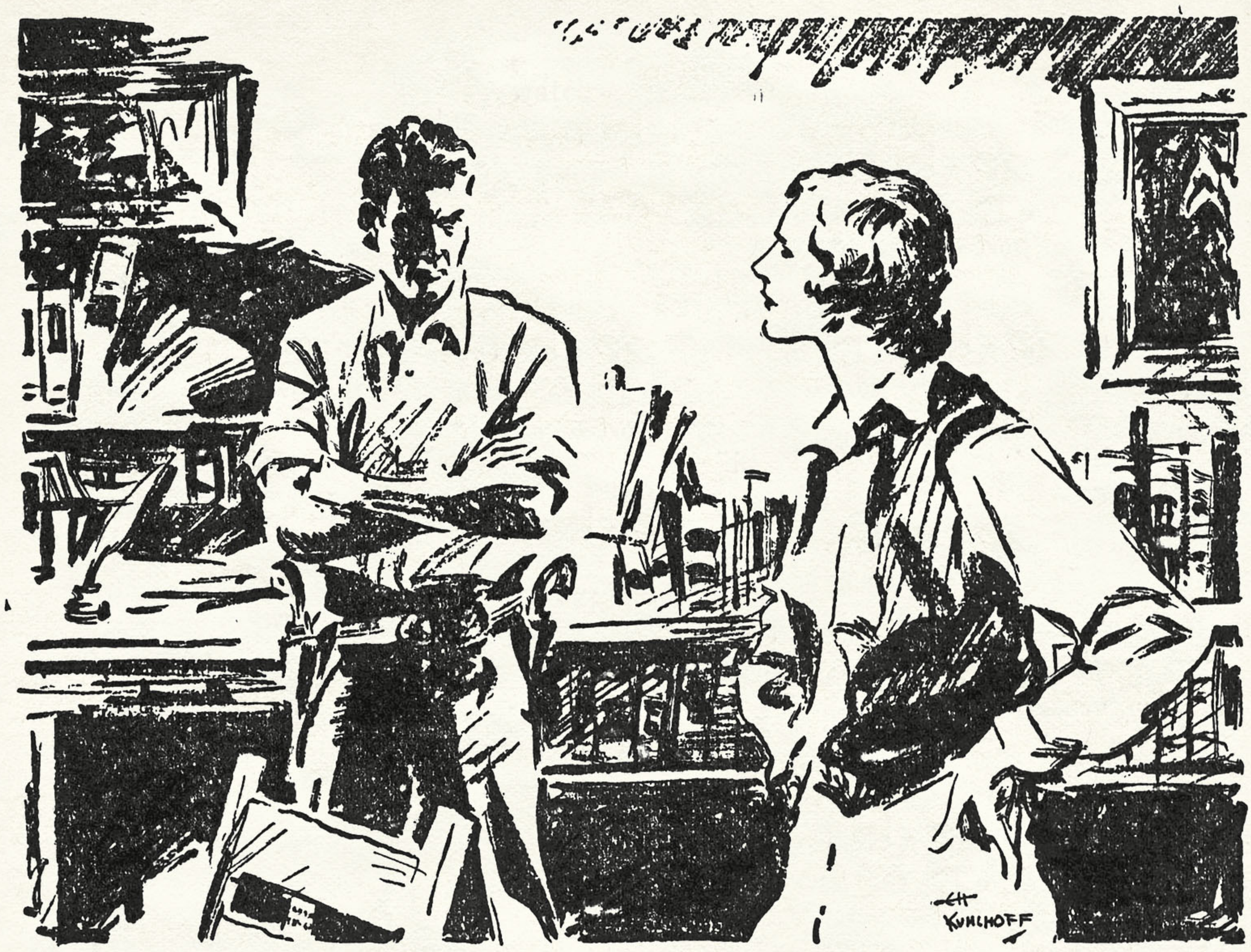
That one carelessly uttered sentence had turned the friends into enemies, as deadly as any Apache or Sioux. To shoot from ambush was considered entirely fair; for two or more of one family to kill one of the other was fair also. But no woman or child was ever hurt intentionally. . . .

It was steep climbing, and Jimmy did not urge the beautiful slim colt he was riding. His light hand on the reins became heavy for an instant; the colt tossed its head in protest and as it did, it stopped. Jimmy became alert, and his rifle came up, until he saw an old man carrying a little girl of about seven, coming down the path that crossed the one he was on. The old man was tall and gaunt, with smooth-shaven, hawk-like face.

The little girl was protesting about being carried. "But I can walk, granddaddy darlin'! Reckon you don't have to carry me—I'm a big gal, now!"

The old man was nuzzling her little neck and did not see Jimmy for a moment. "Shucks, Maylou, that's right! Yo' ah gittin' to be such a big gal that pore old grandpappy's done lost his baby. Sugar-chil', this hyar is a mighty rough road for them little feet! Don't you like to have ol' grandpappy carry you no more?"

Then the little girl saw Jimmy, who had dismounted. She wriggled around




**"I don't care who he killed!" She took a ring from her finger and flung it on the floor. "Now I'm free."**

and tried to slip out of the enfolding arms. "Put me right down, grandpappy," she commanded. "Hit's Jimmy! I want to ride on Jimmy's nag. I'm comin', Jimmy darlin'!"

The old man—Anson Bryan, Sally's grandfather and chief of the Bryan clan, as Jimmy was of the Buckners—looked up as the little girl said, "Hit's Jimmy," and tightening his arms around her, he walked down to where Jimmy was standing.

It was on the Buckner side of the hills, and Bryan did not know how many rifles might be lined up on him from the timber. As long as he had Maylou in his arms, he was safe.

Jimmy smiled at the pretty little Maylou and held out his arms. "Word of honah, Bryan," he said swiftly. "My arms or yoahs—yo' shield. Why, darlin', you don't know how glad yo' old Jimmy is to see you!"

The old man released the little girl. "Iffen ary Bucknah is layin' a bead, reckon you better hollah," he drawled.

"Thar haint," answered Jimmy. "Not that I knows of. I come alone. But wait a minute." He gently put Maylou down and stepped up on a rock beside the path, transferring his rifle to his left hand. He raised his right hand high above his head, palm out and slowly turned all the way around, then stepped down. "Reckon that'll stop any Bucknah from shootin', ontil I mosey along."

It would have stopped any Buckner feudists, but it wouldn't have stopped two boys of about twelve and thirteen who were snugly hidden in a thicket up on the ridge of a hill about four hundred feet ahead and on the right. They were Clem and Jesse Clark—who, having been told that the Bryans were feuding the Buckners, and being second or third cousins of the Bryans, had at once taken two of the old "hog rifles" from the rack over the fireplace and gone out to "git 'em a Bucknah."

And they very nearly succeeded in that desire. At the second Jimmy Buckner reached for Maylou, both rifles were full on him. As Jimmy took the little girl, both rifles were lowered. "Doggone that dad-blamed Maylou!" said Mr. Jesse Clark—aged twelve—bitterly. "I had that ornery Bucknah dead centah!"

"You better had mind me," answered his brother, with all the authority his eighteen months of seniority gave him. "Scrooch down and watch. See, he's wavin' any Bucknah back—Grandpappy's

talkin' to him. Hit's a truce, boy. Wait till hit's ovah and he gits started. We-uns will git him then, no foolin'."

"Take yo' hands off the reins, Jimmy," Miss Maylou Clark was commanding. "I can ride him. Turn him loose."

Jimmy laughed and stepped back, obeying the order. "Just ride him up and down the path, darlin'." The colt shook his head once or twice, then decided to be tractable, and stepped daintily forward.

"Hit's thisaway, Jimmy," Bryan said, his eyes on the horse to see if Maylou could handle him. "Hit aint no question as to the right or wrong of hit. Thar's been Bryans killed, and a Bucknah. Reckon the rifle-guns and pistol-guns kin do the noratin'. The word come to me that you-uns was willin' to make Lorton neutral ground. That suits the Bryans, and we-uns agree. How about the meetin'-house and the grist-mill down yondah?"

"Both neutral, as far as we-uns go," answered Jimmy curtly.

He knew that the Buckners could control all three places and keep the Bryans out. He knew that, as chief of his clan, he should have laughed at old Grandpappy Bryan and told him that any Bryan went anywhere at any time—with his life at stake. But he couldn't. He knew that he, as chief of his family, was expected to take every advantage that could be taken; yet he said "neutral."

"I reckon that's all, then," Bryan went on, watching Maylou come down the path, the colt pacing with little dainty steps, much to Maylou's delight. "I'll be moseyin' back up yonder."

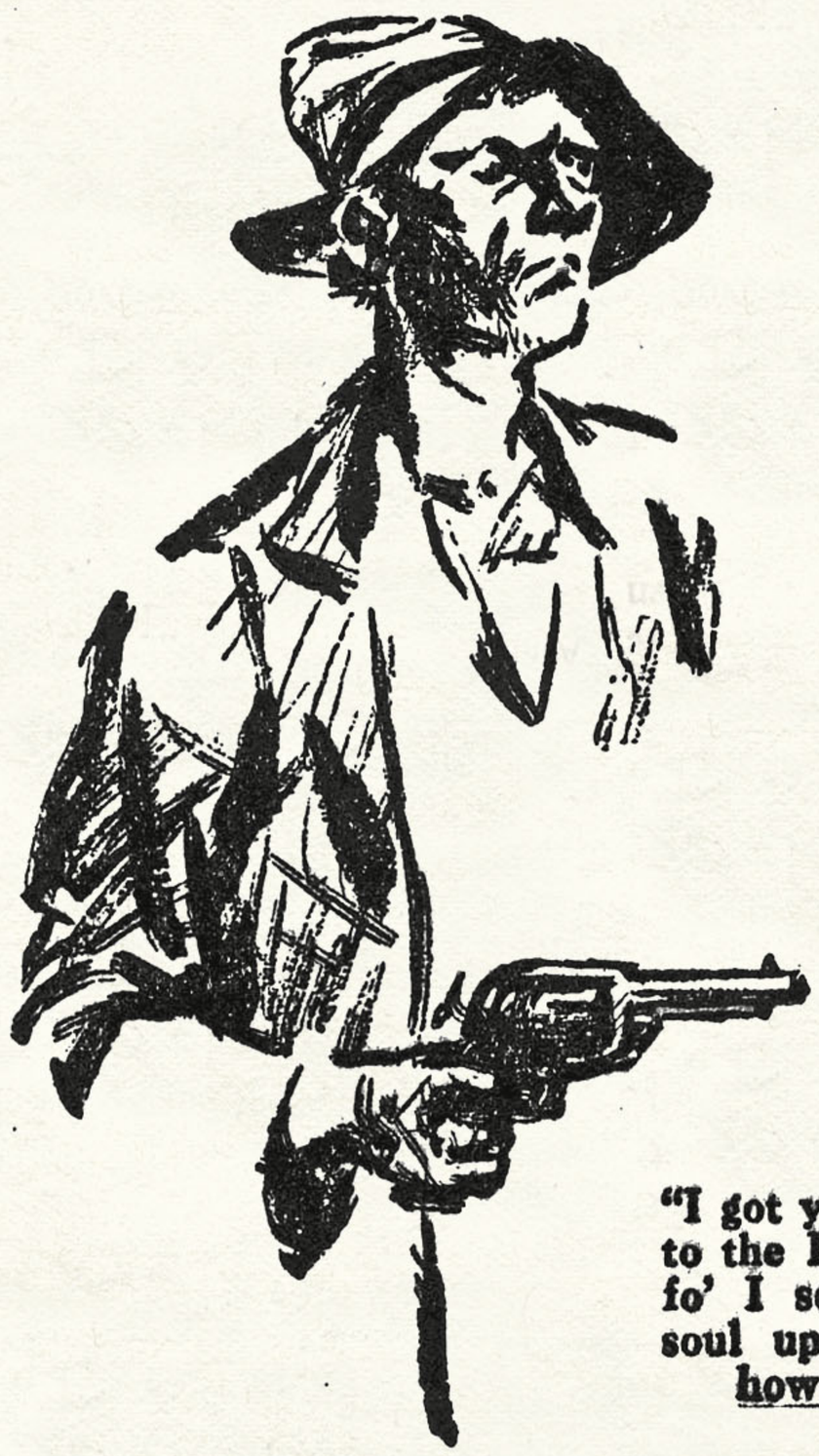
"I rided him, Jimmy, didn't I?" demanded Maylou as she held out her arms for Jimmy to lift her down.

"Yes suh, you sure did ride this doggone' ol' high-steppah, honey! Yo ah a ridin' scoundrel, no foolin'. Kiss Jimmy good-by, Maylou. Be a good girl and do what yo' mammy says."

"I will, Jimmy," promised Maylou from her grandfather's arms. "I will, honest and truly. Come see us, Jimmy."

THE old man had started up the path toward the hills as Maylou spoke.

"I will, honey," Jimmy answered, as he looped the reins over the horn of his saddle and slapped the colt gently on the rump. With a toss of his head the colt wheeled and promptly started for home. Jimmy was already turning toward the thick second growth, and before the colt had even started, he was out of sight.



"I got ya! Pray to the Lord befo' I sends yo' soul up to say howdy!"

"Well, for Pete's sake!" said Jesse Clark, astonishment in his tone and in his eyes as he lowered his rifle. "What do you reckon scared him thataway, Clem? Whar did he go?"

"Into the bresh, dummy. Maybe-so he's goin' to bushwhack ol' Grandpappy."

"Dummy yo' own self!" Jesse replied. "Not with Maylou along, he couldn't. Reckon he heerd some one a-comin'. Doggone, maybe hit's a Bryan. Reckon we better go on down and—"

"Hunker down, fool! Aint no time to be doin' that. Git that rifle-gun of yoahs ready. Iffen hit's a Bryan we-uns will shoot ovah his haid and warn him. Then we-uns can go down and git us that Bucknah."

The boys waited, but no Bryan or anyone else appeared. They waited five minutes; then Jesse began to get uneasy. "Doggone hit, reckon he must have holed up and—"

"Oh, no, he didn't," drawled Jimmy, rising from a bush just behind them. As he handed Maylou to Bryan he had caught a flash as the sun glinted from a rifle-barrel and had "Injuned" up to see who it was. Both boys stiffened and lay perfectly quiet; they knew who it was without being told. Jimmy Buckner had outsmarted them. There they

were, face down to the ground, their rifles straight out, and behind them the Buckner they had been going to get! To the two boys the world suddenly seemed to have become gray and cold.

"WE-UNS will git up," Clem said, trying hard to keep a quiver out of his voice, "so as to have the bullet-holes in front. Come on, Jesse."

"That's a right good idea," Jimmy answered calmly. "Leave them rifles right thar on the ground; stand up, and face me."

Both boys obeyed and stood, their young faces gray. Both were trying to act like men unafraid, but they couldn't help a slight trembling at the knees.

"Go on, shoot," commanded Clem. "Aint ary Clark afeerd of no Bucknah."

"No suh," corroborated Jesse manfully. "Reckon that we-uns kin take hit like men. Go on—shoot! W-what are you waitin' f-for?" He couldn't help the stammer.

"I'm waitin'," said Jimmy sternly, "ontil the ornery sun gits outen my eyes. Right now I'm plumb blind, no foolin'. Reckon hit'll be two or three minutes ontil I can see to shoot."

Both boys drew long breaths as they stared at Jimmy. They knew that the sun wasn't shining in his eyes at all; they knew what he meant—and with one accord they dived for the brush and disappeared.

Jimmy smiled as he stooped to pick up the rifles. "I reckon," he said softly, "that the Buckners don't need those two no-'count young scoundrels."

The smile was still on his face as he stepped into a little path some ten minutes later. He had tossed the two rifles down a cliff after breaking off the hammers on a rock. But the smile was wiped off his face as a man rose from behind a fallen tree with pistol held full on Jimmy. It was Andrew Bryan, a drunken, irresponsible moonshiner who operated a small "plant" up in the hills.

"I got ya," he sneered. "I got ya, Bucknah! Pray to the Lord befo' I sends yo' soul to say howdy. Git down on yo' knees an' pray." He was one of the very few among the mountaineers who had a strain of cruelty in him. The raw whisky he was always swilling had made him more like an animal than a man.

"Howdy, Andy," Jimmy answered calmly. "You haint got me a-tall—not as long as I got me Maylou in my arms! Reckon yo' kin wouldn't stand for no killin' thataway." Jimmy, as Andrew Bryan was rising from behind the rock, had thought of Grandpappy and Maylou—and used the thought.

The man stared at Jimmy through bloodshot eyes. "You *what?*" he demanded. "I don't see no gal. Yo' ah loony, you no-'count—"

"What?" Jimmy shouted. "You don't see Maylou Clark heah in my arms? *Yo'* ah the loony! Tell him so, Maylou honey. Tell this ornery ol' Andy Bryan that he's plumb loony!" Jimmy was talking fast, his eyes on Bryan. "Dog-gone hit, I know yo' ah loony—you'll be tellin' me next that Preston aint standin' right beside you!"

The man was half-crazy at all times from the moonshine whisky and he firmly believed in "ha'nts," as Jimmy knew. He had been told that Preston Bryan had been killed, and when Jimmy Buckner in such positive tones said that Preston was standing beside him, he could not control his eyes. They flickered to one side for a split second. That was time enough for Jimmy Buckner. His right hand flashed to his side, and he put a bullet squarely between the eyes of Andrew Bryan. Then he went on.

JESSE and Clem got almost to the Bryan cabin before much was said. Neither of them could think of much to say. They heard the shot, but were too excited to pay any attention to it. On the way Jesse had gasped, as they ran, "Dog my cats! He—he—he turned us loose!" And Clem had answered, "Yes, suh, he sure did! Save yo' wind for runnin', boy. Iffen we-uns can git to Bryans—maybe-so some of the men kin cut him off."

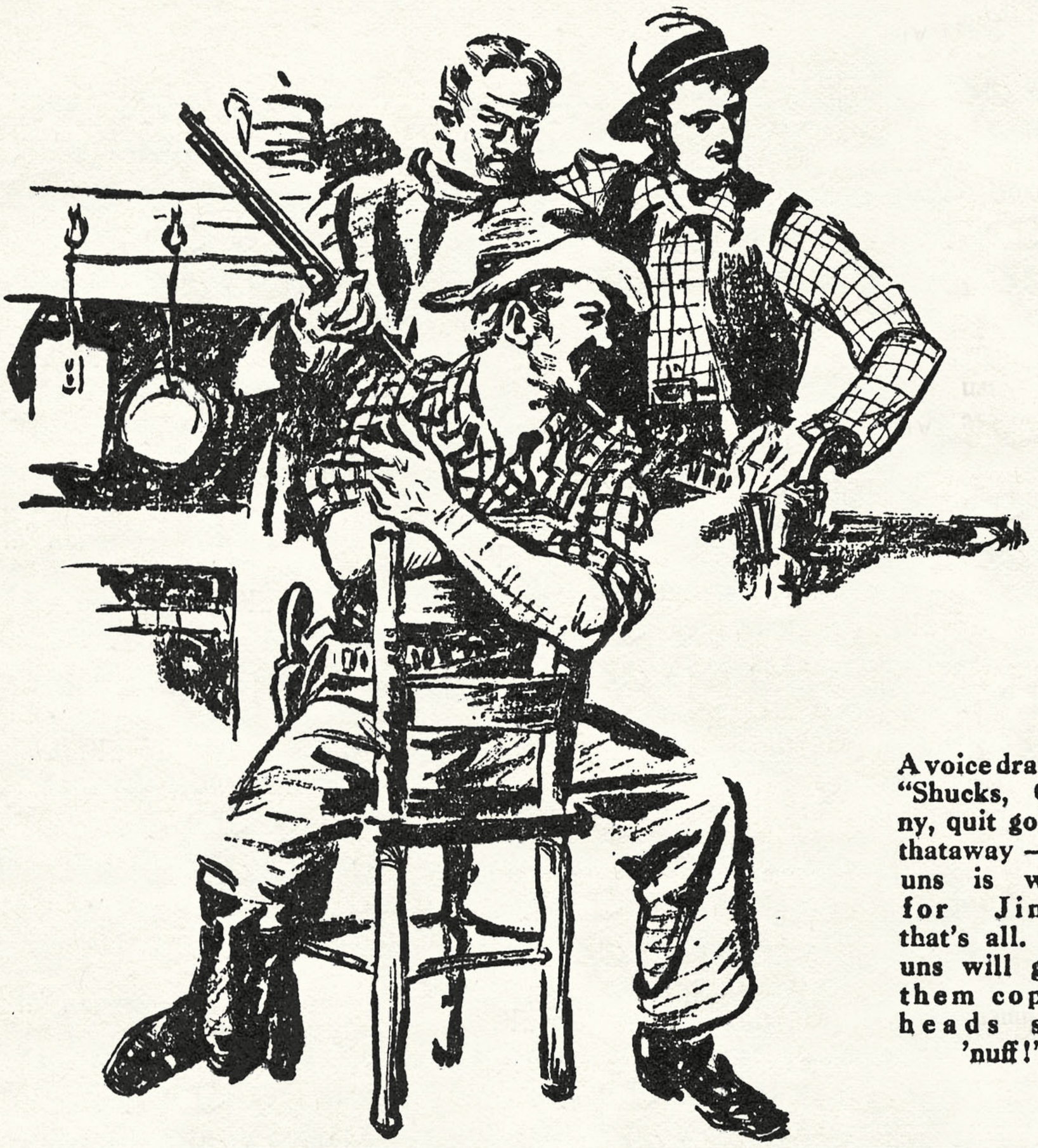
At this Jesse had stopped and glared at his brother. "Jimmy Bucknah turned us loose," he announced firmly. "I haint feudin' *him* no more! I'm feudin' the rest, same as you—but I haint feudin' Jimmy. No suh!"

At that moment, Sally Bryan came up.

"You boys stop that fightin' right away," she ordered. "Reckon there is enough fightin' goin' on without you two children startin' any."

At this insult, Clem and Jesse Clark, who privately considered themselves men—and darn' good ones—both forgot any brotherly arguments and turned to confront a common foe.

"Jesse and me is long past bein' children," declared Clem hotly.



A voice drawled: "Shucks, Granny, quit goin' on thataway — we-uns is waitin' for Jimmy, that's all. We-uns will git us them copperheads soon 'nuff!"

"Doggone' right we-uns are," asserted Jesse. "Why, just now we-uns blame' near got a Bucknah, didn't we, Clem?"

"What Bucknah?" demanded Sally, her pretty face paling.

"That ornery ol' Jimmy Bucknah," Clem answered. "And iffen Grandpappy hadn't come along with Maylou we-uns would 'a' got him—wouldn't we, Jesse?"

"Yes suh, we-uns would, no foolin'. I had me a bead smack on him, and—"

"Stop that boastin' and tell me," Sally commanded.

"Haint boastin'. We-uns was up on Piney Ridge and along comes Jimmy—I mean that ornery Bucknah. Just as we-uns was a pullin' triggah, along comes Grandpappy and Maylou. Him and that no-'count Bucknah talk, and Maylou she rides up and down on Jim—on that low-down's nag. We-uns wait ontil Jimmy lifts Maylou off and kisses her, and—"

"Jimmy kissed Maylou?" asked Sally.

"Yes suh! Then he hits that colt of his'n a smack and—doggone' iffen he don't fade into the bresh just like a ol' red fox! So we-uns waited to see what all he was up to—thinkin' that maybe a Bryan was comin' along. But thar wasn't. And all of a sudden—all of a sudden thar was nothin' happened, so we-uns came home," Clem ended lamely.

"Yes, something did happen," said Sally firmly. "You tell me right away! *You* tell me, Jesse."

"Aw, Sally, nothin' happened! Cross my heart and—and—"

"You better not say 'Holy Bible,' Jesse Clark," warned Sally. "Tell Sally, darlin'! You better had—or I'll tell Grandpappy who took his mountain-tea."

At this dire threat Jesse weakened. "Doggone all gals anyway! That ornery ol' Jimmy he snuck up on we-uns from behind, and—doggone near scared me to death, no foolin'," he confessed.

"What? Jimmy snuck up on you-all and then—and then turned you loose without shootin' you-all, and—"

"He said that the sun was plumb in his eyes," interrupted Jesse with a grin, "and that he'd have to wait ontil hit got out before he commenced shootin'—so we-uns took to the bresh. The sun *wasn't* in his eyes, Sally, no sich thing."

"Jimmy said that—" began Sally slowly. "He—he turned you-all loose?"

Then she did a most graceful thing—she restored their status as men to Clem and Jesse. "Oh, I reckon I know why he did hit. He and Grandpappy must have made the law that the feud didn't start ontil they both had got home. Hit wasn't because you-all was Jesse and Clem. No suh, he knows that you-all

"Haint you-all men no more? What you-all waitin' for? Take yo' rifle-guns and go out and wipe the smiles offen the lips of—"

are right good men with a rifle-gun, and he'd gone through to the end of the row to git him two straight-shootin' Clarks —yes suh, he would."

Forgotten was the fact that a few moments before she had called them children. Both Clem and Jesse straightened their shoulders proudly.

"That's right," agreed Clem. "I nevah thought of that. Haint no disgrace to have left them old hog rifles, Jesse. Come on; let's see iffen Granny will onloosen with some cookies."

"I haint feudin' Jimmy no more, though," answered Jesse, who was a young man with a single-track mind.

Sally stood and watched them swagger toward the cabin, her eyes misty. . . .

"An' you men sittin' hyar—with a Bucknah dead, his face to the ground! Haint you-all men no more? Bucknahs, Shelbys, Madisons and Metcalfes, I see you hyar. What you-all waitin' for? The Bryans and the Clarks and the Knotts and the rest of thar kin are laughin' at you-all. Take yo' rifle-guns and go out and wipe the smiles offen the lips of—"

Jimmy stood for a moment outside the cabin door and listened to his grandmother. Then a voice drawled: "Shucks, Granny, quit goin' on thataway! We-uns is waitin' for Jimmy, that's all. We-uns will git us them copperheads soon 'nuff!"

Jimmy opened the door and stepped in. It was a big rambling old place, the stronghold of the Buckners. Wings had been added here and there, and the room that Jimmy entered was a big one. There were fifteen or sixteen men sitting around. On one of the tables was a big stone jug and around it a dozen or more tin cups. The men were all of the lean lanky mountain type, with clean-cut, deeply tanned faces. Leaning against the walls were rifles and shotguns, and every man carried pistols in his belt.

Standing with her back to the big open fireplace, Jimmy's grandmother was talking to the men. In spite of her age, there were traces left of the beauty which all the Madison women possessed. Her black eyes were flaming with wrath. In one hand she held the rifle that had belonged to her "man."

As Jimmy opened the door she was pointing to the stock, on which there were several crosses cut with a knife-point. "*I* put one of them lines thar," she was saying. "One for each one of the ornery Powells, and my man who

was a Bucknah, crossed hit when he laid them low for me, when the Madisons were feudin' the Powells. Are you-all any less Bucknahs and Madisons and—"

Then she saw Jimmy. "Hit's bout time that you come up hyar! Come and kiss yo' ol' granny! Betty, fetch Jimmy some of that cawn-likkah. Sit down, darlin'. *Now* I reckon that the Bucknahs will take hit to the end of the row with them Bryans! Jimmy's done come."

Jimmy grinned and kissed the old lady, then greeted the men. "Howdy, Bud! Howdy, Cap'n! Howdy, Tom!"

"Jimmy," said his grandmother, "hit's yo' doin's from now on. Take hit ovah, boy. Hyar!" She handed him the rifle. "It's yo' grandpappy's rifle-gun. Hit's a betterner one than yoahs. Take hit."

JIMMY took the gun and smiled at his grandmother. One of the men, who ran a crossroads store, put his cup on the table and spoke. "Jimmy, you know that us Metcalfes is with you-all to the end of the row, and I reckon that no one can say that ary Metcalfe was afeerd."

"That's right, Cap'n," answered Jimmy, as he sat down. "No one can say that."

"Well, hit is thisaway, Jimmy. We-uns is all kinda mixed up with the Bryans and the Knotts and the—"

"Git onmixed, then," said a young man who had been drinking steadily. "Me and Tom hyar will do the onmixin' with ouah—"

"What *yo'll* do is to keep right still," interrupted Jimmy. "Thar's plenty old-ah men hyar to do the plannin'. Cap'n, hit's as you say. But hyar hit is without nary a slightin' of the row. Thar's been a Bucknah killed and three Bryans. We-uns is four to one stronger than the Bryans and all their kin. We-uns can take any fight that they can bring to—"

*"What?"* his grandmother demanded. "Have I lived to see the day come that —O Lord, smite me down right hyar and now! I've lived too long when I heahs a Bucknah say that they can take a fight iffen hit is brought to them! Take yo' rifle-guns and git out and—"

The door opened and a tall heavy-set man stalked into the room. He was clothed in a faded and patched but clean Prince Albert coat, black trousers tucked into cowhide boots, soft white shirt opened at the neck. His face was emaciated and stern, his eyes deep-set and blazing.

"Dog my cats," muttered Alan. "The preachah!"

The man heard it and glared at Alan. "That's right, you onregenerate limb of Satan!" he shouted. "The preachah!" He turned to the old lady, who stood with defiance on her handsome face. "I heerd you, woman—I heerd you callin' on the Lord to smite you. Take care that he does not smite, Elizabeth Madison Bucknah! Take shame to yo'self that you have stood hyar excitin' menfolks to killin'."

"I'll take whatevah the Lord sends," she answered hotly. "And I reckon that this haint nothin' that needs ary preachah to—"

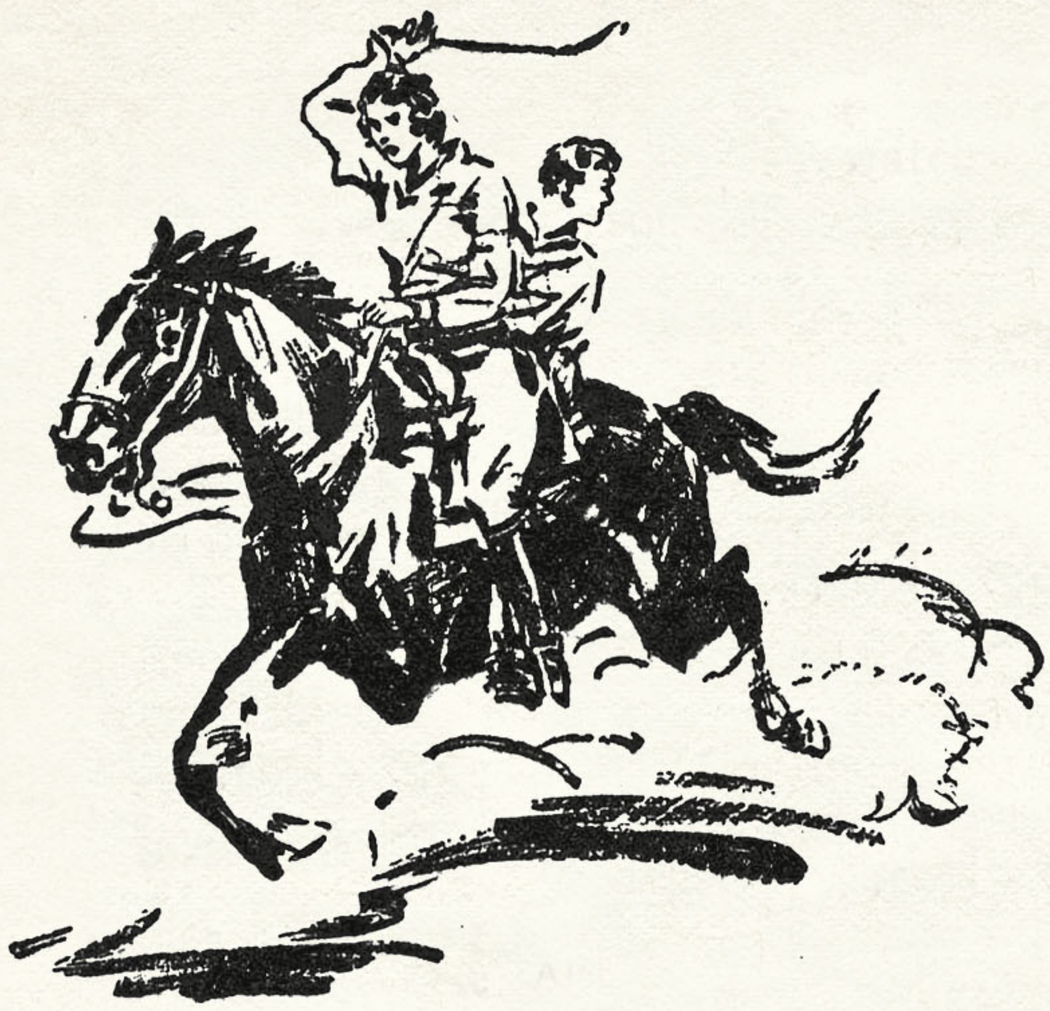
"Stop, woman—stop right thar! In defyin' me, you defy the Lord God. I know you, Elizabeth Madison Bucknah; I knowed you when you was a Madison, proud and haughty. Stop, woman, and think. You men think also"—he turned to the men sitting with impassive faces. "You-all sit hyar plannin' how to send naked souls a-shudderin' up before their God. Men who have done nothin' to—"

"Onless you call killin' a Bucknah something," drawled the old lady. "You was one of the Wilsons—before you 'saw the light.' I can remember the Wilson-Garrard feud right well. Seems to me I heerd about a David Wilson who done a right smart lot of that sending naked souls a-shudderin' up to the Lord God."

The preacher turned to her. "Silence!" he shouted. "Will you fling the past in my face? I was that David Wilson—yes. But I saw the light and now—" He turned to the men. "Men, some day you-all have got to be a-standin' thar. Not as Bucknahs nor Madisons nor Metcalfes, but jest as naked souls. The Lord God is goin' to ask you some mighty hard questions, iffen you go up yondah oncleaned of yo' sins. I come to say this to you-all—and from hyar I ride to the Bryans. This hyar ongodly killin' in the hills must stop. You-all heah me? I say hit must and will stop. Too many men have been killed—men that were good men, fotchin' up families."

"I say hit won't stop!" flared the old lady, stepping forward. "I say that hit won't—not as long as thar is a Bryan or a Knott or a Clark or a Scott left."

"An' I say that hit will! On yo' knees, woman, and pray for the Lord to forgive you. Down on yo' knees, Elizabeth Madison Bucknah!"



"Hang on tight!" She turned the horse and started madly away.

"Haint no man, preachah or no preachah, that can send me to my knees! Nevah has been done yet, and I'm right old. Reckon the Lord is a gentleman and will understand about this hyar business without—"

"Blaspheme not! Change, woman, or burn forevah in hellfire!" He turned to Jimmy. "I call on you, James Bucknah, the leader of yo' clan. Stop this killin'—or I will stop hit for you. The hills have run red with too much blood. Stop hit, as I am goin' to tell the Bryans to stop hit. Iffen you don't, by the eternal Christ that gave his blood for us pore sinnahs, I'll use carnal means and stop hit!"

He turned and stalked out, slamming the door behind him.

A LITTLE later Alan and Tom Metcalfe started for home. They had not gone very far up the winding path before Betty Shelby rose from where she had been sitting on a rock waiting for them.

Both young men smiled shyly at her; they greatly admired the pretty Betty Shelby, who had been away to school among the "furriners." Now as they came up the path they both took off their wide-brimmed black hats.

"I've been waitin' to see you-all, Alan and Tom," Betty said with a smile. "Sit down and tell me what's been planned."

"Jimmy says," Alan answered, "that we-uns haint to carry no fight to the Bryans, but that we-uns is to watch 'em right close—and iffen they starts 'em anything, for we-uns to finish hit up."

"That's right," agreed Tom. "He sure did, Betty. I don't see no sense in actin' thataway. Maybe Jimmy's got him some way-down-deep plan and is jest a-leadin' them copperheads on."

"I reckon I can tell you-all why Jimmy is acting that way," Betty interrupted, her eyes cold. "Jimmy is in love with Sally Bryan." She paused; then: "You-all loved Beriah, didn't you?"

The faces of the young men clouded and Alan stirred uneasily. "Yes suh, we-uns did," he answered simply.

"So did I," answered Betty. "He—he died defendin' me, Alan and Tom. I—" She rose. "I don't toe in, do I, Alan and Tom?"

Both young men looked very embarrassed at this personal question, but their eyes went to the little archcd feet. "No suh, you don't," Alan announced positively.

"Hit's a lie," stated Tom hotly, "an' I'll kill the man that—"

"Beriah has already killed him—for me. And my Beriah is dead because he defended me, his kinswoman. Reckon you-all are my kin too."

Tom rose to his feet, a smothered curse on his lips. "And we-uns a-sittin' heah with them Bryans a-runnin' round snickerin'! Come on, Alan; we-uns will go and git us them houn'-pups that are walkin' round grinnin' 'bout Beriah."

"Iffen Jimmy," drawled Betty—forgetting her valley "schooling"—"could be made to see that Sally plumb hated him, reckon he'd begin to take the fight to Bryans, no foolin'."

Both young men paused. They sensed that Betty had some plan.

"She knows that when Jimmy come outen his office, he saw Beriah fallin' and that he killed the man that done hit without ary thinkin' who he was," went on Betty calmly. "I reckon she's done told Jimmy that she hates him—but she don't, and Jimmy don't believe she does, neither. But iffen she thought Jimmy had done something in cold blood, then she would—"

"Doggone," protested Alan. "I can't make me no haid or no tail to all this hatin' and not hatin' gibble-gabble. Reckon yo' ah plumb right, Betty, whatever hit is. Tell we-uns in straight talk."

"Old Baldy Bryan lives ovah yonder on Possum P'int," began Betty, her eyes on a squirrel scolding at them from the branches of a tree. "Reckon Sally Bryan sets a heap of store by him. Iffen something of Jimmy's could be found beside

him, Sally would be right apt to think that Jimmy done hit. I could git Jimmy's rifle-gun while he's out yonder with the menfolks by the well. Iffen that was found right near old Baldy Bryan—"

Alan saw the flaw and interrupted: "How-come Jimmy would leave his rifle-gun after killin' Baldy?"

That question could not be answered by Betty Shelby. "Why—I don't reckon that I rightly know—"

"I got 'er," interrupted Alan. "Ol' Mose is hangin' around ouah plant all the time gittin' free likker. After we-uns git us that snake-eatah of a Bryan, Mose can go trapesin' round by the Bryans an' tell Sally that he done saw Jimmy Bucknah bushwhack ol' Baldy."

"But Alan, that old darky haint right sound in the haid," Betty objected, "and iffen Sally questions him he'll—"

"What all questionin' will she be doin'?" Alan interrupted. "No suh, that Sally Bryan she's goin' to go plumb up and hit the loft. I know that little ol' no-'count scoundrel of a Sally and—I mean I know that durn' Bryan and—"

"Yes," Betty said, "I reckon she would. Well, I'll be goin' back. I'm right glad to have met up with you-uns and mighty sorry I haint got time to stay a spell."

"We-uns is sorry, too," Alan answered politely, "that we-uns haint got no time to even stop and say howdy!" And he and Tom started up the path like a couple of young Indian bucks going on the war-trail. . . .

But old Baldy Bryan knew that the feud was on and he had been in feuds before—long before Alan and Tom Metcalfe were born.

He was on the lookout and saw the young men long before they came close to his cabin. Just as they were about to hole up and await his appearance, Baldy Bryan rose out of a stack of hay, within twenty feet of them, his rifle in his hands. They had no time to cock and raise their rifles; they dropped them and went after their pistols. But the bullets from Tom and Alan's pistols went into the ground and far overhead, as Bryan's bullets went home in their young hearts; and the Buckner-Bryan feud was even—three and three.

OLD Baldy Bryan was in the cabin of the Bryans, boasting how he got two of the Buckner clan. It was of the same type as the Buckner cabin and the men sitting around were of the same type also. Old Anson Bryan sat with the rest.

Eben Bryan, Sally's father, spoke. "Hit was outsmartin' them, Baldy, and we-uns is sure beholden to you for hit. Now is the time to strike at them Bucknahs—right now while they are still grievin' about Alan and Tom. Thar is a bunch of them that gathah round down at Capt'n Metcalfe's store in the Gap. Well, we-uns will purtend a attack on Bucknah's house. That'll keep 'em holed up, them that is thar. Them Shelbys and Madisons and Metcalfes will come a-blowin' and a-puffin' to the rescue. We-uns will ambush 'em at the ridge."

"Thar's a right smart lot of women and children at the Bucknah house," said old Anson Bryan. "Yo' plan is good, boy, but I reckon she won't do. I haint aimin' on havin' the blood of no innocents on my old hands."

"Doggone hit, Pappy, we-uns will give 'em time for to git 'em all out o' thar or up in the loft afore the shootin' commences."

The old man laughed. "You goin' to git Elizabeth Bucknah outen her house when thar is a fight goin' on? Man, she's right liable to ansah any holler 'bout *that* with a rifle-gun! Then what all you goin' to do?

"No; we-uns will ride like men up to Metcalfe's store, come the second dark, and shoot hit out with whoevah is thar. Not all of us; some will be ambushed along the ridge; and when the Bucknahs come a-runnin' to the rescue, then we-uns will git 'em. When we start shootin', aftah surroundin' Metcalfe's, we-uns will send word to the Buckner house that we-uns are attackin', and—"

"How?" demanded old Baldy.

"By one of the young Madisons that we-uns will pick up on the way. Thar's one up on the old Bar Hill with his cousins. Mase and Sam seed him this mornin'. We can take him without no trouble, come dark. When we-uns git to Metcalfe's we'll let him think he's gittin' away whilst on the valley road. Whar will he run to, not bein' able to git to his pappy?"

"Bucknah's—after Jimmy and the rest," answered several of the men.

"And then," old Bryan went on, "when they do as Eben says—come a-blowin' and a-puffin' to the rescue, we-uns will line the Ridge and learn 'em 'bout killin' Bryans." And so it was agreed. . . .

Betty Shelby rode through the hills alone. It was night, with only a faint light once in a while as the moon came out from behind black storm-clouds. But

though she rode recklessly, she could not outride her thoughts. "Alan and Tom—Alan and Tom," the beat of the horse's hoofs seemed to say. She had sent them to their death. . . .

As the horse started up a slight incline, he shied over to one side and came to a halt almost on his haunches. There on the narrow road he had almost run down a small figure.

The moon was out stronger now and the little figure which had swerved past halted. "Is that you, Aunt Betty, a-ridin' Hawk God?" it asked.

Betty dismounted. "Yes, this is Betty, honey. Who might you—why, hit's Johnny Metcalfe! What all you doin' out—"

"Yes ma'am, hit's me," the boy answered. "I'm right glad you come along, Aunt Betty. I run ontil I'm right puny." He was holding his side and Betty could see in the moonlight that his face was pale, and crusted with mud.

"Nevah mind, darlin', yo' ah all right now. Aunt Betty is right hyar, honey! What was you runnin' from, Johnny?"

"Them durn' ol' Bryans," answered Johnny, relieved at finding succor. "They got me up at Uncle Billy's and took me prisonah. They said they was a-goin' to shoot me, and ol' Grandpappy Bryan, he wouldn't let 'em. No suh, he wouldn't. I'd of shot 'em with my—"

"The Bryans took you! Tell Aunt Betty quick, Johnny. Where are they now?"

"They said they was a-goin' to take me down to my pappy's store and kill him first, and then kill me!" Johnny began to sniffle.

"Well, I reckon they won't, no such thing," Betty said positively, tightening her arms around him. "You tell me, Johnny, and then we-uns will go and git Jimmy Bucknah and—"

"They're goin' to kill my pappy," wailed Johnny. "I was a-runnin' to git J-J-Jimmy and t-tell him to c-come—"

"Johnny, I want you to stop actin' like a girl, and tell me right away. The Bryans took you prisonah up at Uncle Billy's?"

"Yes ma'am, Aunt Betty."

"And they took you almost to yo' pappy's store?"

"Yes ma'am; but I wiggled outen the holt that Mase Bryan had on me, and—"

"Had they started shootin'?"

"Yes ma'am—that is, some of them had. The rest was a-talkin' about how they was goin' to kill my pappy an' all the Metcalfes an'—then go and git all the Bucknahs," Johnny went on, as Betty lifted him to the horse.

Then Betty was in the saddle. "Ketch holt, honey," she said, "and hang on right tight. Show Aunt Betty that yo' ah a ridah." She turned the horse and started madly away.

When they reached the Buckner cabin, there were men waiting to lift them both from the saddle. The rapid approach of the horse had been heard.

"The Bryans," Betty said as she was being lifted down. "At Cap'n Metcalfe's! They took Johnny prisoner, and he got away. I met him on the road, and—"

"We-uns will see that some of them stay right thar," Jimmy answered grimly, as he and the rest of the men ran for their rifles.

THE attack on Metcalfe's store was not a surprise. The Bryans had ridden across-country from the valley road so as to come up on the store from the rear, and in doing so they had been seen by an old negro who was out to investigate a neighboring chicken-coop. He came running through the door, shouting, "De Bryans am comin'! De Bryans am comin'!"

The response of Captain Metcalfe and the three men sitting with him was instantaneous. One of them ran to the door and shut it. As he did, the other two reached for the rifles on the counter and went to either side of the store, where there was a solid wooden shutter which when in place covered the window. As the men were swinging these shut, Captain Metcalfe reached up and turned out a big kerosene lamp hanging from the ceiling.

"Roll undah the countah, boy," he commanded the old darky.

"Ah's undah a'ready, Cap'n Bas!" came the muffled answer.

The men snapped the fastening of the shutters, then stepped to one side and slid back small panels in the wall about a foot away from the window. The man who had closed the front door did the same for the big window looking out on the gallery surrounding the store on three sides, Captain Metcalfe went to the back door, closed it, and slid a panel back. The panels were about six inches long and two inches wide.

Inside of one minute from the time the darky shouted "De Bryans am comin'!" the Metcalfe store had become a fortress with silent and unafraid defenders.

It was none too soon. The Bryans, six of them, with Eben Bryan as leader, rode up and under cover of one of the sheds, were dismounting as the light went out. "They done been warned," Eben said curtly. "Scattah out and surround the store. Pour yo' lead right into hit. We-uns will keep 'em busy ontil we-uns heah Grandpappy up on the Ridge. Me an' Mase will take this heah side."

His orders were obeyed. Lead began to thud against the store from all sides.

One of the Bryans on the west side, wishing to get more on a line with where he knew the panel was, crouched low, and when the moon went behind a cloud, started over toward a pile of cut lumber. He had almost made it when the moon came out again and shone full on him. There was the crack of a rifle, and Philip Bryan rose from his crouching run, throwing his arms high as the rifle dropped from his nerveless hand.

The man who had been with him on that side began to crawl back, keeping his cover between him and the panel from where the deadly rifle had issued the Metcalfe defiance. He went far back and came up at the rear, where Eben and Mase Bryan lay.

"The Metcalfes done got Phil," he announced. "I told him not to take no chances on gittin' across."

"They killed Phil? An' heah we lay a-lettin' 'em pick off ouah kin thataway! Come on!" Eben Bryan forgot all plans. "We-uns will go right smack in. Git round to the front."

Three minutes later the Bryans, their rifles discarded, charged straight at the front door. Two of them carried a door which they had taken from one of the sheds; the rest maintained the firing on the building. It was not much of a shield, but it gave the men running behind it some little shelter. It was a sudden charge, and a swift one. One of the men carrying the door dropped his end as they made the gallery and went down—dead before he hit the ground. The rest made it, and crashed against the door, breaking it in.

As they came in, the moon went behind the clouds. The Metcalfes sent a sleet of lead, first from their rifles, then from their pistols, against the doorway. Another Bryan went down. Now the three who were left were inside, firing at the flashes. Eben Bryan fired upward and to the left of a fiery streak coming from a pistol in the rear of the store, and Captain Metcalfe died as he was pulling trigger.

Eben Bryan knew the store was in Metcalfe territory, and there were plenty of Metcalfes and Shelbys to respond. The plan had been for him to hold the Metcalfes inside as long as possible, then retreat if attacked in numbers. Now his hot blood had got him into a bad jam. To retreat, he must call out the order, whereupon the Metcalfes would concentrate their fire on the doorway.

There was only one thing to do, and that was try for the Metcalfes, man for man. He knew by the flashes that there were only three of them in the store, and they were spread out—one in front and one on each side.

"Pick yo' man," he shouted, stooping low for a moment. "An' go git him! Hit's even! Mase, git that one on the left. Straight ahaid, Micah. I'll 'tend to this one ovah heah!"

At this shouted command one of the Metcalfes rose from behind the counter and drawled: "Come a-runnin', Micah. I'm right heah."

"Hold hit," called the Metcalfe over on the left. "Iffen hit's goin to be man for man, let's git us some light."

"Who's goin' to light up?" demanded Eben Bryan. "Reckon we-uns haint afeerd to fight no Metcalfe man to man in the light. No shootin' ontil the light comes!"

"You, Abraham!" called the first Metcalfe who had spoken. "Git up from

undah that countah and light the lamp! You heah me!"

"Oh, mah Lordy me!" moaned the old darky. "Ah can't, Mist' Vincent. No suh, Ah can't do 'er! All dis pistol-shootin' and—"

He was hidden under the counter almost back of where Eben Bryan was crouching; and at his voice Bryan had whirled around, his pistol ready. Now he laughed. "Git up, Abe, you old fool!" he said. "You haint worth wasting no lead on."

It was significant of the feud days and of Kentucky that no one made any attempt to move or to shoot while the talking was going on in the dark room. These men would try their best to kill each other once the light was on, but now, after a Metcalfe had proposed a man-to-man fight with lights, and a Bryan had agreed, "No shootin' ontil the light comes," there would be none.

The old colored man, with many a protest and moan, got up and fumbled around for the box containing the sulphur matches. Finally he found them and lit the lamp. The second he did, he dropped to the floor.

"Now!" cried Vince Metcalfe. "Come a-runnin' with all you got, Bryan!"

The three Metcalfes had stepped out into the open space, making the three points of a triangle. Facing them, not fifteen feet away, stood the three Bryans.

As Vince Metcalfe spoke, there was a rush of feet on the gallery, and first the doorway and then the front of the store filled with Metcalfes and Shelbys, firing as they came. The two Bryans nearest them turned and answered the fire. Eben Bryan, wounded in two places, shot and killed the Metcalfe who had been facing him, ran back to the door and turned to cover the retreat of the two walking backward toward him, firing as they came. As he turned, he saw them both go down under the merciless hail of bullets. They had drawn most of the fire for the moment. He saw them fall and knew they were dead. Captain Metcalfe had not locked the back door, and as Eben Bryan emptied his pistol at the foe, he reached behind him and turned the knob, pushing out. The door swung open, and he backed out of it. Wounded badly, he still had strength enough to run to his horse, untie it, mount and ride away. The Metcalfes could hear the plunging of horses, and when Eben called out, as he did on his way to the horse, "Come on, we-uns got 'em now. Git in thar, men!" the two Metcalfes promptly took cover by the door to await and repel the rush they thought was coming. It was not until they heard Eben's galloping horse that they knew he had outsmarted them.

Eben's one coherent thought was to get to where the Bryans were on the

**"May God put all feuds and feudists deep down in hell!" said Jimmy.**

Ridge and warn his father that he had failed to hold the Metcalfes, and that attack might come from the rear when pursuit was organized.

JIMMY BUCKNER and his kinsmen rode swiftly. As they came to a narrow road that crossed the valley road Jimmy pulled his horse to a halt, and threw up his right arm. The rest halted, and they sat listening intently.

"One nag," said Bud Shelby softly, "a-runnin' plumb wild." Then a moment later he went on: "Done turned from the road and is a-smashin' his way through the bresh up the Ridge. Listen to thet!"

"Maybe-so a Metcalfe done got away," one of the men said, patting his restless horse on the neck.

"He wouldn't be turnin' up on the Ridge," observed Jimmy, puzzled. "Betty said that Johnny Metcalfe got away from the Bryans, and—and—dog my cats! We-uns was a-ridin' into a ambush! Iffen Johnny got away from the Bryans, it was because they wanted him to git away."

"That's right, Jimmy," agreed two or three of his kinsmen.

"Haint no one goin' to git loose from them scoundrels onless'n they wants hit that way," added another.

"They turned him loose," said Jimmy slowly, "knowing that he'd run to we-uns—not bein' able to make hit home. What would we-uns do?"

"Jest what we-uns *be* a-doin'," answered one. "Come a-rarin' to the rescue!"

"That's her," Jimmy asserted. "Something happened down yonder at Capt'n Metcalfe's and some one of them comes a-runnin' to tell the rest—not knowin' that Betty picked Johnny up and that we-uns are on the way so quick. They figured hit out thet they'd have them a good hour, maybe more."

"Yes suh, thet's hit, sure 'nuff! We-uns can leave ouah nags right heah and go ovah the old hog-back, Jimmy. I know me a path that'll fotch us right smack on top of 'em."

"Lead the way," ordered Jimmy as he dismounted.

The path did lead them out on top of the Ridge. Once there, they strung out in a line, with about twenty or thirty feet between the men and began slowly and silently to ease down toward the road. Jimmy was about in the center; he could not see fifteen feet away.

He halted as a voice seemed to rise at his very feet—that of old Anson Bryan. "And so you, a Bryan, forgot all else and went in ag'in' them! And now you come, wounded and alone, back to tell me—"

A rifle-shot came, far out to the right, and as Jimmy rose from where he had gone down on his face behind a tree, he heard old Anson shout; "They ah on us! Git to yo' pistols! Adam, you and Wes git Eben outen heah. Ride with him! No—do as I say; git him home!"

There were more shots now, all around Jimmy. As he started down toward where the voice had come from,—his rifle ready,—his head seemed to burst, and he fell into a well of darkness.

SALLY BRYAN rode calmly through hostile territory. She knew that keen eyes were watching her from the hills, and that word was being passed: "Sally Bryan's a-ridin' toward Bucknah's!" She was doing a thing unheard-of in the feud country, a thing that would be talked about for years to come. . . .

It had been a running fight, that night on the Ridge. The Bryans and their kinsmen, knowing they were outnumbered, had retreated, but had fought like wildcats doing it. The darkness and the thick second-growth had helped save lives in the ambush that had failed. It was almost impossible to tell friend from foe, and the Buckners had maintained as much as possible their line of battle, content to drive the Bryans back.

Jimmy had been found and picked up by two of his kinsmen who did not know whether he was alive or dead. Eben Bryan had been carried home, as had Jimmy. Old Anson Bryan had come out unscathed, and so had several other Bryans and Clarks and Knotts, but counting those who were killed in Metcalfe's store with those who fell in the woods on the Ridge, the Bryans were, as one of them said, "Plumb shot to pieces!"

Eben Bryan would live, but his active participancy in the feud was out of the question for months. In the woods the feudists lost practically man for man. But the Buckners could replace every man who had fallen with three more, while the Bryans could not. But there was no lessening of the feud spirit.

Sally Bryan had pinned the last pin in a bandage and gone out precipitately into the open. The news of the fight had been sent out via "grapevine telegraph." In this case, the old colored man Abe was the chief operator. He told other darkies; they told still others.

Sally received from a similar source the information that sent her on that ride—a little darky boy who had seen Sally with Jimmy Buckner many times, and once or twice had carried messages for them.

Now she mounted and rode out of the yard without a word of good-by or telling where she was going. As she rode into the Buckner yard, she was greeted uproariously by ten or twelve hounds. For the first time since she started, her pretty lips curved in the hint of a smile. "Down, Tige! You Red, quit that jumpin'! Lady! Be a good dog, now!" She was sitting in her saddle talking to them. As she rode in, three or four men had risen from where they were lounging. They took off their hats and said, "Howdy, Sally," then stood still, watching her.

As she spoke to the dog called Lady, the cabin door opened, and Betty Shelby stood for a moment in the doorway, then came out and walked toward Sally, who dismounted. There was a moment's confusion as the dogs all tried to kiss Sally at once. The men called them off, and Sally confronted Betty Shelby. The two

girls had known each other since baby-hood days, and had been close friends. Now, Betty Shelby stood and looked at Sally Bryan as if at a stranger.

Sally spoke first. "I rode ovah, Betty, to see if—to see how Jimmy was."

"Hit's a right strange thing," Betty answered coldly, "to see a Bryan comin' to ask how a Bucknah is! Reckon you bettah git on yo' nag and ride back to—"

"Betty! Please, Betty. You know that I— Is he hurt bad, Betty?"

AS she asked the question, Elizabeth Madison Buckner came out of the cabin, and crossed the wide gallery. She halted and looked at Sally, her black eyes blazing with wrath. "You Sarah Clark Bryan," she called, "git on thet nag of yoahs and git! This hyar haint no place for a Bryan. Send ovah yo' menfolks with their rifle-guns iffen thar is anything the Bryans want from the Bucknahs. Mosey along, gal!"

"Oh, Granny," Sally pleaded, using the appellation that she had used since baby-hood to the stern old woman, "please don't act thataway to me!" Her hands reached out in a little unconscious gesture of appeal. "I heerd that—"

"We-uns don't care what all you heerd. Git offen Bucknah ground afore I—"

"Git up in the loft, you women," said a voice behind her. Jimmy Buckner, his head bandaged, stood in the doorway, holding to the jamb for support. The bullet that struck him had creased him, and he had lost a lot of blood; his face was white and his lips gray, but the Jimmy inside was just the same.

The old lady whirled at the sound of the voice. Sally dropped her hands, and Betty Shelby turned also. The men in the yard walked in closer.

"Who you talkin' to?" demanded old Elizabeth Madison Buckner. "You git back into that bed and—"

"I'm talkin' to you and Betty Shelby," replied Jimmy grimly. "You Bucknah women git in the loft and be right smart a-doin' hit!"

The old lady drew a long breath. "You —you— Tell me to git in the—"

Jimmy let go his hold and took a step forward, his steel-cold eyes meeting the old lady's glare. "Thar's only one haid to the Bucknahs when hit comes to the daid centah, and that thar haid is me! Hit haint no younkah talkin', Granny; hit's a Bucknah man tellin' his women-folks to git up in the loft. Git in, both of you."

The old lady started to say something explosive, then changed it into a gentle, "Yo' ah right, Jimmy; hit's a Bucknah man a-givin' his womenfolks ordahs. Come on in hyar, you Elizabeth Shelby!" And she went into the cabin, looking straight ahead. Betty Shelby walked slowly up on the gallery. As she passed Jimmy, she managed a scornful little smile.

The men turned and walked back to where they had been sitting, and Sally Bryan was left alone with Jimmy.

"Come and sit down on the step, Sally," he said, a smile on his colorless lips. Sally saw the warm glow in his eyes, and knew that Jimmy Buckner loved her. It brought peace to her troubled heart. What else mattered?

"I—I don't reckon I bettah," Sally answered—but she did, just the same. "Jimmy, I heerd that you was hurted right bad and—and I jest couldn't keep from— Jimmy, I know I'm a Bryan and you ah a Bucknah and that we-uns is feudin' you-uns, but—but—"

"Go on, Sally, finish hit—for Jimmy!"

"I can't, hon—I mean, Jimmy. Reckon I bettah be gittin' back now—"

"*I'll* finish hit for you, Sally, darlin'," Jimmy interrupted. "Hit was because you loved me, like I love you. No mattah what happens, Sally, we-uns can't change that."

"No, Jimmy darlin', we-uns can't change that," she said softly.

"May God put all feuds and feudin' deep down in hell!" said Jimmy fervently. "I been thinkin' hit out while I been down on my back. I mean hit when I say that I wish thar was some way of stoppin' hit."

"What started the feud?" Sally demanded.

"Why, when Ike Bryan said that iffen Betty Shelby toed in ary moah, she'd be a regular Injun."

"That's right," drawled Sally. "Hit started when a Bryan said that about a Bucknah kin—and a Bucknah took hit up, thar being no Shelby thar."

"What all you drivin' at, Sally?" asked Jimmy, rising.

"Jimmy Bucknah, you sit right down! No, you mind me!" Then as Jimmy obeyed, she went on: "I don't rightly know. I'm goin' to see— No, reckon I bettah not say ary word about hit. I'm goin', Jimmy. No, you mustn't git up; reckon I can git on a nag without help. Jimmy, I love you—no mattah what happens, always remembah that, darlin'."

Sally ran to her horse, mounted and was out of the yard before Jimmy halfway recovered from his puzzlement at her disjointed speech. He knew that she had, or at least thought she had, discovered some way she hoped would stop the Buckner-Bryan feud. Jimmy sat there in the shade for a little while, pondering. He did not think that anything could stop the feud but the passing out of the men.

A week later Sally was with Maylou and old Baldy Bryan on the side of one of the hills. There was a lull in the feud, because of the nursing of wounds, and the funerals. It was just as dangerous for a Buckner or a Bryan to walk or ride in the hills, but this place where the girls and the old man were picking berries was well inside of Bryan territory, and they knew that some of younger Bryans and Clarks and Knotts were covering the approaches. Even knowing that, Baldy Bryan's eyes constantly searched for a sign, however slight, of danger. Sally noticed it and began, "Reckon we-uns is—" Just then a wild turkey hen rose off her nest about two hundred yards away with a whir of wings.

"Git!" yelled Baldy, diving for a fallen tree. Sally and little Maylou needed no warning. As Baldy yelled and dived head-first, they had also started for a clump of brush.

Baldy Bryan, killer of Alan and Tom Metcalfe, never made cover. A rifle-bullet tore through him as he left his feet. Sally had thrown her right arm out; a bullet cut deep across the firm white flesh and sped on. The blood was pouring down her arm.

"Oh!" gasped Maylou. "You got hitted! Oh, I—"

Sally was tearing at her skirt with her left hand. "Take off yo' waist, darlin'," she ordered calmly, "and bind it around Aunt Sally's arm. Quick, Maylou! Don't cry! Be a right brave girl and—"

"Git in close, you killahs!" commanded Wilson. "Now, Adam, say hit—go with a clean soul to yo' God."

Adam Bryan raised his head and in spite of the blood running from his lips, said clearly: "I take hit back. . . . Betty Shelby don't—toe in."

David Wilson the preacher appeared—walked calmly across the open space and knelt by Sally. "I'll fix hit, honey," he said gently.

A glance had been enough to show him that old Baldy Bryan had been outsmarted at last. Two of the Metcalfes had eased in past the Bryan patrols, taking all night to do it. They were out for one man, the man who had killed two Metcalfes—and they had got him. The wounding of Sally had been entirely unintentional.

David Wilson bound the wound, then lifted Sally—now limp and white from loss of blood—to his arms. "Git for home, Maylou," he commanded, "and

tell yo' grandpappy that the preacher done took Sally up to old Peg Martin's house. Can you remembah that, honey?"

"I will," promised Maylou, starting off. "I'll run all the way."

AGAIN the grapevine telegraph went into action over the hills. "The Metcalfes done got 'em Baldy Bryan thet killed Alan and Tom, and Miss Sally Bryan got shot by accident while they was a-doin' hit."

Jimmy Buckner heard the news in Lorton, where he had ridden with two of his kinsmen. By the time it got to him, rumor had it that Sally was either dead or dying of her wounds.

Jimmy started for his horse without saying a word. He mounted and rode out of town in spite of pleas. The two men who had ridden down with him ran for their horses, and other kinsmen who lived in Lorton ran toward their stables.

Jimmy's one thought was to get to Sally. He forgot that he was chief of a feuding clan, and all else. He saw a horse and rider coming down the narrow road, and subconsciously recognized that it was David Wilson, the preacher; but he would have ridden by if Wilson had not swung his horse across the road.

"Git outen the way!" Jimmy ordered, his tone almost a snarl.

"Whar you goin'?" demanded Wilson calmly. He knew—but he wanted to hear Jimmy say it.

"To Bryan's! Git outen my way, Reverend; I haint nevah cracked down on no preacher, but by—"

Wilson saw that Jimmy Buckner was beyond reach of argument. Pulling his horse over, he said, "I'm gittin', Jimmy." Had Jimmy been halfway sane, he would have become suspicious of David Wilson's sudden meekness—Wilson gave no right of way to any man until he was through with him! But Jimmy was oblivious to this, and as Wilson's horse eased over, Jimmy urged his on by.

As he passed Wilson, an arm like a steel cable reached out and lifted him from the saddle. A hand shot down to his belt and jerked the pistols out, dropping them in the road. Then the hand slipped up under Jimmy's arm. David Wilson was "ketchin' holt." Jimmy was as powerless in that grip as he would have been in the coils of a python. He fought silently to release himself, but for all his slim, wiry young strength, he could not. Wilson dismounted with Jimmy still held tightly. As soon as his feet touched the ground, Wilson said: "Iffen I let loose, will you stand, Jimmy—word of honah?"

Jimmy strained about until he could look up at the grim, austere face a foot above his. "Who's talkin'?" he demanded, his tone icy.

Wilson answered promptly: "Hit's the preachah talkin'—not Wilson, Jimmy."

"Turn me loose, then. I'll stand—word of hon'ah."

Wilson did so, saying, "Pick up yo' pistol-guns and holster 'em. Sally haint at Bryan's, Jimmy. She haint daid or even bad wounded. You can't go up to whar she is, Jimmy."

"Whar is she, Reverend?"

"Up at Peg Martin's, on the—"

Jimmy laughed. "I know whar Peg Martin's house is! I reckon I can take me 'nuff men to hold off all the Bryans thet's holed up waitin' for me."

"Sally is right weak; iffen you go up thar, and pistols begin to talk—do you want to kill her daid, you young fool?"

"She rode to see *me*. I reckon thet—"

"A *woman* rode. Could a Bryan or a clansman have rode through to Bucknah and lived? Git sense, Jimmy! Go home and wait ontil I—"

THE men who had followed Jimmy rode up at this juncture. There were eight of them, including the two deputy sheriffs—Buckner kinsmen—who lived in Lorton. Wilson greeted them curtly, then mounted his horse. He turned in his saddle and spoke to them all. "Git to yo' homes, you men. Thar will be a settlement of this hyar feud mighty soon! Git to yo' homes, and pray that I will be—" He stopped, and without finishing his sentence, rode away.

"What all was the preachah tellin' you, Jimmy?" asked one of the deputies.

Jimmy mounted his horse before he answered. "He said that Sally Bryan wasn't daid. Thet she got her a wound, not a bad one. She is up yondah at Peg Martin's, and is guarded by Bryans who are waitin' for me to come."

One of the men laughed. "Well suh," he drawled, "hyar's nine men! Reckon thet we-uns can shoot you a road right smack into Martin's, Jimmy, iffen hit be so that you wants to go thar."

"Preachah says that if we-uns do that and Sally hyars the pistol-guns hit will make her worse," demurred Jimmy.

"Jimmy, what you want is to git up thar and jest see Sally, haint hit?" demanded the other deputy sheriff.

"That's right, Lewis. That's exactly what I want to do."

"Well, I reckon I can take you right smack up ag'in' Martin's house, no mattah how many Bryans are waitin' round. When I fotched old Pegleg Martin down for court last yeah I got me a right smart lot of knowin' the ways round his place. Thar is a mine tunnel runnin' from his house plumb back in the bresh. Yes suh, Jimmy, a regular tunnel! Hit opens up right back of the fiahplace."

"You take me to hit," commanded Jimmy. "Rest of you-uns go down to old Baldy Bryan's place and fiah hit. Haint no one thar now. Hit may draw some of them Bryans down. Mosey along now!"

SALLY BRYAN lay in an old four-poster bed that was in the one-room Martin cabin. She was propped up with two large pillows. The color was back in her face now.

"But, darlin'," Sally was protesting, "I feel absolutely all right, and I want to git up!"

Mrs. Bryan smiled and shook her head. "Not today, sugar-chil'. Come day aftah, and I reckon that you can go home and see Daddy. Be a right good gal and stop teasin' yoah pore ol' mothah."

Sally looked at Mrs. Bryan's smiling face, and smiled herself.

"You know," she said sternly, "that you ah the prettiest thing right now—and not a pore ol' anything! Darlin', reckon you forgot thet the Bryans only marry them right good-lookin' women!" This last was a hill saying.

They both laughed; and Maylou, who had insisted on coming along when Mrs. Bryan left for the Martin house, joined in from where she was playing with a very dilapidated rag doll.

"I'm pinin' to see Daddy," Sally went on. "Are you right sure that he's gittin' well?"

"Iffen his tempah is any sign, I reckon he is," answered Sally's mother, the corners of her mouth curving. "My goodness gracious, hit must be right late! Maylou, you git to baid, right now."

"And you do the same, darlin'," ordered Sally. "I'm sleepy, myself." She yawned ostentatiously, knowing that her mother had not slept at all the night before.

"I am kind of yearnin' for some sleep," confessed Mrs. Bryan. Two cots with bedding had been brought up from the Bryan cabin, and after seeing that Maylou was securely tucked in on one of them, Mrs. Bryan lay down on the other. Sally opened her eyes as soon as she was convinced that they were both asleep, and lay looking out at the stars.

A sound that seemed to come from in back of the fireplace reached her ears. She did not know anything about the tunnel, and she watched with widening eyes as the left half of the hearth slid slowly back.

Before she saw a head come up from the level of the floor, Sally had said in her heart, *"Jimmy!"* And as Jimmy pulled himself out of the tunnel, after that three-hundred-yard crawl five feet underground, she seemed the most beautiful girl in the world.

"Quiet, Jimmy darlin'," Sally said in a low tone—not a whisper, for she knew that a whisper carries farther than a low voice and will wake people quicker. "Stand whar you are! Mothah and Maylou are hyar. I am all right, Jimmy. Honest and truly I am. The bullet only grazed my arm."

"Are you, Sally?" asked Jimmy, obediently halting. "Please, Sally, tell Jimmy if—"

"Cross my heart and Holy Bible!" Sally smiled as she used the old childish oath of truth. "Jimmy, you mustn't stay hyar. Please git right down in that tunnel and—"

There was a pistol-shot far out in the hills; one—then two—then three or four so close together that a count could not be made.

Jimmy turned to the tunnel-hole—and as he did so he confronted Julian Bryan and Luther Clark! Their pistols were full on him. Jimmy's right hand tensed; then he heard the long sobbing breath that Sally drew, and it relaxed.

"Git back ag'in' the wall," commanded Clark, "an' raise yo' arms whilst a-doin' hit, Bucknah!"

As Jimmy obeyed, Julian Bryan said: "We-uns are a-gettin' Lewis Metcalfe, and now we-uns will git us the Bucknah that thought he could outsmart a Bryan."

As he spoke, he and Clark were climbing through the hole. The door had opened, and the room seemed to fill with men, old Anson Bryan coming in first.

MRS. BRYAN and Maylou awoke. Mrs. Bryan saw Jimmy with his back against the wall, saw the hole by the fireplace and the stern faces of her kinsmen, led by her father-in-law. She was

a mountain woman, and reacted as a mountain woman would; she said calmly to Maylou: "Come over hyar with Aunt Cicely, Maylou. Not a word, now! This is menfolks' business."

Julian Bryan walked up to Jimmy and jerked his pistols from their holsters.

OLD Anson Bryan gazed at the youthful figure standing so erectly, and at the clean-cut fearless young face. He had known Jimmy Buckner all the young man's life; now it was up to him to condemn him to death. He was the leader of the family that was feuding the Bryans—and Jimmy had killed Bryans. Old Anson Bryan fully believed in his heart that he had a duty to perform.

"I reckon," he said slowly, "that thar haint ary man hyar or in the hills that will say or think that my grandchild Sarah had ary thing to do with this Bucknah a-bein' hyar. Iffen thar is, I'll kill him—no mattah iffen hit be my own son."

"Sally didn't," answered Jimmy calmly. "Lewis knowed of the tunnel, and I made him fotch me to hit. I heerd down in Lorton thet Sally was wounded. I jest got hyar when—"

"Jimmy," interrupted a Bryan, "we-uns know thet." There was a pause for a moment; then Anson Bryan said heavily. "Take this Bucknah out and give him what he has given the Bryans."

Jimmy laughed coldly. "Those Bryans had something in thar hands when they went out—and my pistols are a-layin' thar on the ground! Reckon hit's right what all I heerd folks say—that 'the dogs won't bark at no Bryan'!"

In the mountains, when it is said, "the dogs won't bark" at any certain person or family, it means that person or family are cowards. And when Jimmy made that remark, several of the men behind Anson Bryan stirred uneasily. One called, "Give that low-down his pistol-guns, Grandpappy! Ary one of us will take hit to the end with him."

"Yes suh," drawled another. "Haint nary man goin' to say that."

"Jimmy," said Anson Bryan, "you know right well that what you jest said haint true. Pick up yo' pistol-guns, and— Wait, thar is womenfolks hyar. Do hit with the onderstandin' that thar is to be no shootin' in this room."

Jimmy laughed, a reckless amused laugh, and as he stopped for his pistols, he said: "I know hit haint true, ary word of hit. I take hit back. Haint no Bryan or Clark or Knott, or none of thar kin, evah bred a coward. I said hit to taunt you-all into lettin' me pick up my pistol-guns." He holstered them both and added: "Now I reckon I'm ready for the hoe-down!"

Sally had been swiftly dressing under cover of the crazy quilt on her bed. Her clothes, folded, had been on a chair beside the bed. As Jimmy finished, she slipped out of the bed, fully dressed, on the side where Jimmy and Bryan were standing. She had only three steps to take to get directly between them. The fire had been replenished and some one had lighted a lamp. The room was now almost as light as day.

"I reckon that I'm ready for the hoe-down, too," Sally announced calmly. "Jimmy Bucknah haint goin' outen hyar with no Bryan or any Bryan kin! He come to see me when I was ailin', and he's goin' out when he gits him good and ready—and he's goin' plumb to his house in safety and honah."

AT this flat declaration there was a moment's silence.

"Git back in that thar baid, gal!" thundered old Anson. "Take double-shame to yo'self for a bad girl who mixes in with menfolks' business. Git back in thar!"

"I won't!" flared Sally. "I won't. And you are not my darlin' granddaddy at all! Standin' thar o'dahin' Jimmy to be taken out and shot like a—like a shoat! Reckon that yo' ah some strange man that has come up heah to hurt me. My own darlin' wouldn't let you make my heart bleed. No suh, he wouldn't! My granddaddy always loves me and wants me to be happy."

"Yoah granddaddy's right," Jimmy said sternly. "This is menfolks' doin's!"

"Git in that baid, gal," commanded Anson. But his voice was much less firm. It was known among all the Bryans that Sally, from the moment her soft little baby hand had curled around old Anson's finger, could and did lead that grim, hard-fighting man around by the nose.

"Doggone hit!" whispered one of the young Bryans to a Clark beside him. "That little ol' scoundrel is a-goin' to talk Grandpappy plumb outen—"

"Shet yo' fool mouth," the Clark whispered back. "Don't I know that? We-uns can git him ag'in, iffen she does."

"I won't," Sally answered hotly. "I want my own granddaddy to come and hold me in his arms and—and make this

strange man that's hurtin' me go away. I—"

Old Anson turned and took a step forward. In doing it he covered Jimmy for a moment. "Enough!" he shouted, raising both arms above his head. "Enough! I say that this heah Bucknah—"

THERE was a movement behind him. One of the men shouted; Sally drew a long breath, and Anson turned. Jimmy Buckner had dived into the tunnel like an otter into a lake!

"Out!" cried one man. "We-uns can catch him at the mouth before he—"

One of the others laughed. "Iffen we-uns had wings! That Jimmy Buckner will be out and gone long before we-uns could git halfway through the bresh. Reckon he outsmarted we-uns this time!"

"Git in thar aftah him," said Julian. "A pistol-bullet can outrun him! Gi'me room; I'll—"

"Let me go first, and—" There was a quick rush toward the opening.

"Stand whar you are!" shouted Anson. "He can kill ary man jumpin' down, iffen he's a-waitin', long before you can git yo' balance! You men git out and try to git him in the open betwixt heah and—"

"Come on! We-uns will show him that he haint outsmarted us yet and—"

"He didn't outsmart you-all," Sally said, from her grandfather's arms, lifting her pretty tear-wet face from his breast. "Haint ary Bucknah goin' to outsmart a Bryan! Hit was me that outsmarted you-all, me and my darlin' granddaddy. Reckon he knew what Jimmy would do when he stepped in front of him. You-all was outsmarted by yo' love for me, and I—I—I am *not* going to cry!"

"Hush, baby!" old Anson patted the top of the head pressed to his heart. "Yo' ah a right good gal and a smart one. Yo' granddaddy done got you safe in his arms! That strange man is gone, honey; yo' granddaddy chased him far away. Git outen hyar, all of you-uns, and comb the bresh!"

As Anson spoke, one of the men who had already slipped out came in. "Thar's a light in the sky over yondah by Baldy's, and Bob Clark jest came a-zoomin' by. He says that the Bucknahs and theah kin is all up, and a-burnin' and a-slayin'. Word was fotched by a darky who—"

"Mount yo' nags!" shouted Anson, releasing Sally, the light of battle coming in his eyes. "Julian, you and Ellis stay right hyar! Enoch, you stay too. All the rest that can hold a rifle-gun, mount and ride! We gathah at Gum Forks. By the livin' God, we-uns will take the fight to 'em, iffen they be fifty to one!"

The men ran from the room, with old Anson behind them, the three who had been ordered to stay leaving also for places where they could oversee the cabin. . . .

Jimmy had run through the tunnel and out in the open as the Clark was telling about the Buckner uprising. Not far from the entrance he found the body of Lewis Metcalfe, who had seen the Bryans closing in on the tunnel mouth. Lewis could have got away, but had gone back to give battle and warn Jimmy. In doing so he had died—living up to his code. Jimmy paused to place a handkerchief over the still face; then he started for the Buckner house.

"I reckon," said Sally's mother, after a few moments, "that we-uns can go back home right now. The menfolks that are stayin' with us can take us right through any Bucknahs that are a-burnin' and a-slayin'!"

There were no Buckners or anyone else to dispute the way, and soon the little party arrived safely. Eben Bryan was there and several of the older men. They swung a circle around the Bryan house that would be hard for any foeman to break through. But before they did, Sally had slipped through into the hills on foot; she had not dared to go to the stable, for fear of being halted.

DAVID WILSON sat in the cabin of old Simon Wilson,—chief of his family,—on the far side of Sawtooth Mountain, in the heart of Wilson territory. Simon Wilson was older than David, and absolute head of all the Wilsons and their kinfolks. His beard was white and his steel-blue eyes cold as ice.

"No, David," he said, "I don't feel no call to step in betwixt the Bucknahs and the Bryans. We-uns could stop hit, yes. At my call thar is a hundred men that would take up thar rifle-guns. Countin' all kin, I reckon that we-uns could put ovah two hundred, with more behind them, to halt what you call this ongodly killin'. But I will not do—"

"Must men be killed daid because a younkah passes a say-so about a gal's toes?" interrupted David hotly. "The time has come to stop all such, I tell you, and—"

Simon Wilson raised a thin blue-veined hand. "I do not yearn to heah about hit, David. Do you remembah what started the Wilson-Garrard feud? Hit wasn't much more than that. No, David, try no more. I will not step in for you. The Bucknahs and theah kin and the Bryans and theah kin would turn and fight we-uns! They'd come chargin' right in on we-uns."

"Hit would be ag'in' the army of the Lord," answered David Wilson, his eyes gleaming with the true belief of a fanatic, his hands clenched. "Iffen they did —then let the Lord punish them!"

"That's a p'int I haint right sure about," answered Simon, a cold smile on his lips and in his eyes. "I haint quite sure that the Lord would call any army made up of Wilsons *His* army. Knowin' them as I do, I reckon he wouldn't. No, David. Drink yo' cawn-likkah, and quit pestahin' me."

A WOMAN'S voice said from the kitchen: "He's in thar, Sally; go right in." Both men looked up, to see Sally Bryan enter. She had made it to Wilson's alone and on foot over Sawtooth Mountain.

Both men rose, and old Simon said: "Well, suh, iffen hit haint my little Miss Sally Bryan come all the way to say howdy! Sit down, honey; yo' ah welcome to my house! Dog my old cats, but you have sure grown to be a right big gal since I seen you. How is yo' pretty ma, and yo' daddy and that old scoundrel of a granddaddy?"

Sally smiled and answered politely, "All right well, thank you, suh. That is, exceptin' my daddy—and he is gittin' bettah now."

"Sit down, darlin'. Yo' ah right smack at home hyar! Was you wantin' to ask me or David something? Don't be afeerd to speak right up; haint nobody hyar but two ol' no-'count menfolks, jest a-waitin' to please you."

"I reckon I haint got much time to be sittin' down," answered Sally. "I come to find the preacher and tell him that iffen he is goin' to put ouah—put his plan into bein', the time has come to do hit. The Buckners and the Bryans are a-gathahin' for a pitched battle, and—"

"Shucks, honey," interrupted Simon. "Let the menfolks 'tend to—"

"I have another way, Simon," said David Wilson. "Hit is not a sure way, but I will try hit—iffen you won't act for the Lord."

"Go as a preachah and not as a Wilson, then," Simon commanded curtly. Then his voice softened as he turned to Sally. "Are you stayin', honey? We-uns will take hit as a mighty big compliment iffen you do."

"No, thank you, suh," answered Sally, smiling at the old man. "I reckon I'll go with the preachah."

"Come, then," urged David Wilson, starting for the door. "Good-by, Simon!"

"Good-by, Sally and David," replied the old feudist. . . .

The burning of Baldy Bryan's barn, designed to detract attention from Jimmy Buckner's journey into Bryan territory, had brought on a pitched battle. It had not taken two hours to rally the clan—and not much longer for the Bryans to summon the Clarks, the Knotts and the Scotts. There had been a fight at Gum Forks and another at the crossroads. Several of the small parties coming in had met and fought it out where they were. Some had made it to natural "hole-ups" in the hills and were defending them against odds, but most of the opposing clans had reached old Baldy Bryan's place, now a glowing pile of embers in the gray dawn.

Jimmy Buckner on his way home had met a party of Madisons who were riding fast. He had already seen the glare of fire in the sky and without a word swung up behind one of the riders.

IN the first quick clash, when the Bryans who reached there first charged in, there had been men shot out of their saddles, as the Buckners, outnumbered, had slowly retreated to the cover offered by the gently sloping hill on the south. There they had stiffened the resistance and driven the Bryans back to the hill opposite. Baldy's place lay in a little valley between the hills. The clearing his house formerly occupied, was no place for a man on his feet—not with the deadly rifles of the Kentucky hillmen covering it!

Anson Bryan had arrived and taken command, just about the time Jimmy Buckner got there. In all, on the Bryan side there were now twenty-five men—with several boys of fourteen and fifteen, including Clem Clark, who had "snuck along." Jesse Clark had been restrained from doing likewise by main force put forth by his mother.

Of the Buckners and their kin, there were still on their feet forty-odd men, also some boys. There were some of the

Bryans not yet arrived, and more of the Buckners.

Jimmy Buckner went along the irregular line that was searching the opposite hill with bullets. Alvah Shelby looked up and grinned as Jimmy crawled up beside him.

"Howdy, Jimmy! Doggone, you come jest in time, boy. We-uns got 'em holed up."

Jimmy grinned. "Have we-uns got *them* holed up—or have they got us? Hit looks like a tie, right this minute."

"Hit does, at that," admitted Alvah, "but—"

There was a burst of shots behind him, and the shouts of men as they rose to take the fight that had been brought to them by the Bryans. Old Anson had left enough Bryans on the firing-line to maintain a front, and with a party of ten Clarks and Scotts had slipped around, crossed a little stream under cover of the heavy timber, and come up on the left flank and to the rear of the Buckners. With the first volley, he had more than made the fight an even one in numbers. There was nothing to choose from as far as courage and fighting ability went.

The Buckners rallied and slowly fought the Bryans back down the hill. Anson Bryan ordered a retreat.

"Straight across now!" shouted Jimmy Buckner, who was unwounded. "We-uns will be thar to greet 'em face to face!" The Buckner faction left on their feet gave vent to a wild yell and charged down the hill after the slim form of their leader.

Anson Bryan and the men with him heard that yell and knew what was happening.

"Up the valley!" Anson shouted. "We-uns got 'em in the open!"

OLD Elizabeth Madison Buckner stood up on the fallen tree behind which she had been crouching. With her was the equally ancient darky Mose.

"Oh, my Lawd!" he groaned, catching at her skirt. "Don't do 'er, Miss Liz'beth! Honey, for Gawd's sake, stay down; one of dem bullets mought come erlong and smack you right in the haid. Git down, honey-chil', for ol' Mose!"

"Take yoah hand offen me, boy," commanded the old lady. "I reckon I didn't come this far not to see what all is goin' on! Why don't that younkah drive them outen thar? He's got him 'nuff men!"

The shots of Anson Bryan's almost successful try came as a burst of sound. Then as the shouts and the firing receded, she smiled.

"Jimmy's showin' 'em what for!" she announced. "Reckon that young scoundrel takes aftah his granddaddy! Lift yo' fool head, Mose, and see the Bucknah and the Madison menfolks come a-chargin' ovah to—" The old lady stepped down from the fallen tree, one hand to her heart. She drew a short breath. "Reckon I'm goin to git me one of them attacks the doctor—" Her hand dropped from her over-strained old fighting heart, and she held both arms out, her face in some strange way becoming young and smooth and lovely. There was a smile on her lips as she said: "Why! Why, Jared, have you come for me at last?"

MOSE, his fear of bullets forgotten, sprang to his feet in time to keep the body of Elizabeth Madison Buckner from falling, the smile still on her lips.

As he lowered her gently to the ground, David Wilson and Sally came around the tree. Sally looked white and tired—so tired she could hardly walk. Her feet were bruised and more than one abrasion showed where she had fallen. But the fighting Kentucky spirit still shone unquenched in her blue eyes.

In Wilson's arms was Adam Bryan, badly wounded.

"You stay hyar with her," commanded Wilson. "I ordah you to do hit in the name of the Lord God who has taken this ovah from now on. Stay hyar, woman!" And he stalked down the hill with the young man in his arms, carrying him as easily as he would a baby.

He walked directly down into the clearing, talking in a low tone to Adam Bryan.

Anson Bryan was close enough to see who it was Wilson had in his arms, and he shouted an order. The firing ceased from the men behind him and also on the hillside. Jimmy Buckner and his kinsmen saw also and halted where they were, their guns silent.

Wilson walked slowly to the middle of the clearing; then he knelt down, supporting Adam with one arm and knee. He drew a white handkerchief from his pocket and held it up.

"Hit is the flag of the Lord!" he shouted in a voice that carried far. "Honah hit, you men!"

Jimmy Buckner raised his right hand; and after a moment Anson Bryan did the same. The Bryans came down the hill; those in the clearing with Anson came forward with him. On one side of the

kneeling preacher the Buckners, the Metcalfes, the Shelbys and the Madisons gathered, on the other the Bryans, the Clarks, the Knotts and the Scotts—all men who had once been friends, but whose faces now were grim and hard, and whose eyes still held the killing lust as they looked at each other. Most of them had wounds, more or less serious. None knew what was going to happen, and their hands were still tensed around their gun-butts.

"Git in close, you killahs!" commanded Wilson. "Hit's the preachah talkin', an' not a Wilson! Now, Adam, say hit—and go with a clean soul to yo' God."

Adam Bryan raised his head and said, clearly and distinctly, in spite of the blood running from his lips: "I am a Bryan—and—I take hit back. . . . Betty Shelby don't—toe in—a-tall!" It was as if he had received strength to speak, from some hidden source. As he finished, his head fell back, and his gallant young soul went up to his God.

The preacher eased him gently down on the ground, then stood up.

"A Bryan started the Bryan-Bucknah feud," he said grimly, "and a Bryan has ended hit by takin' hit back. The Bryan-Bucknah feud is ovah. Git to yo' homes and bury yo' daid!" He turned and walked away.

IT had been so sudden and so totally unexpected that no man there had moved an inch. Old Anson Bryan spoke first.

"Why—I reckon that *does* settle hit," he said slowly. "A Bryan done took hit back, and that—"

"Hit wasn't because we-uns—" one of the Clarks interrupted hotly.

Jimmy Buckner stepped forward, his pistols holstered. "Hold hit a minute, Larry! I haint as old as some of the men hyar, but I am the haid of the Bucknahs and thar kin right now. I say this, for the Bucknahs, the Madisons, the Shelbys, the Metcalfes and all othahs: We-uns know that no Bryan or Clark or Knott or Scott or thar kin evah would take hit back because they were afeerd of anything on this earth. No suh, they wouldn't! I'll take hit to the end of the row with ary man who says they would. Adam done hit because his soul was a-goin' in front of God, and he wanted to go so as to say that he had helped stop the killin'. He said hit ondah them circumstances. We-uns didn't make yo'-all take hit back—no suh, we-uns didn't. But hit was taken back, and I say—as haid of the Bucknahs—that the Bucknah-Bryan feud is ovah as far as we-uns go, iffen you Bryans—"

"Stop right thar, Jimmy," old Anson Bryan shouted. "You've said a plenty! Hit is enough for we-uns to know that thar haint no shame on us. I say that the Bucknah-Bryan feud is ovah! And I am haid of the Bryans. Let ary man say different, and you and I will ketch holts with him!"

AT this statement the men standing with their dead almost at their feet,—their wounds an agony, but their faces now not grim and hard,—laughed. The lust to kill died out of their eyes.

"Yo' ah plenty for ary man to ketch holts with, Granddaddy," one of them called, "let alone that little ol' no-'count scoundrel of a Jimmy Bucknah!" The same magic worked now that had worked to start the feud. From friends to enemies at a remark—then the four words, "I take hit back!" and all that had happened in between to be counted as honorable warfare! Friends once more, helping bind up wounds; a Buckner helping a Clark—a Bryan helping a Metcalfe. "When you drawed that bead on me, Bud, I remembahed how you could git ol' Mr. Squirrel—and I thinks, 'good-by, Wes!'"

"Shucks, boy—when you-all came a-bammin' in up yondah and you throws that pistol-gun down on me, I was right lucky only to git me the slug through the shouldah, no foolin'."

Jimmy Buckner, wounded in the arm, saw Sally rise to greet the preacher, up on the hill by the fallen tree. He had been talking to Anson Bryan. "Yes suh, I reckon that we-uns can do 'er thataway. I—thar's Sally!"

"Whar? Iffen that gal don't keep outen menfolks' business, I'm a-goin' to—"

Jimmy laughed as he started. "Bettah not try 'er, Grandpappy! Reckon that little ol' Sally will git right in iffen she thinks hit is necessary."

Sally Bryan saw Jimmy, and came down to meet him. She walked straight into Jimmy Buckner's arms—which were outstretched, even if one was injured.

"Hit's ovah, darlin," said Jimmy, ignoring the pain in his arm as he kissed her. "Thar haint no more Buckner-Bryan feud, thanks to you and the preachah—and Adam."

"And thar won't evah be another," answered Sally firmly. "Because—because right soon now, I'm going to be a Bucknah, myself!"

# *Alabama Ace*

*By* ARTHUR K. AKERS

**Illustrated by Everett Lowry**

A RAZOR in his shoe and mayhem in his heart, Willie Freeman hustled for Captain Ed Rogerville's house. Captain Ed was Willie's "white-folks," hence his financial, domestic and social adviser. And a new arrival in Demopolis had just messed Willie up in all three departments.

"What's the matter now, Willie? Wife after you again?" probed his protector as Mr. Freeman galloped around the house from the rear, in anxiety and overalls.

"Naw, suh, Cap'n; she done quit me. Done got me another gal now—almost. Dat huccome de trouble."

"What do you mean, *almost*'?"

"She name Bessie. Den dat new Bumin'ham boy, Paregoric Logan, come signifyin' around—"

"You mean that new yellow boy in town—skinny, and with all those loud clothes?"

"Yas, suh; dat him! Git here yest'day. Bessie cain't see me no mo' since he hit town wearin' old football helmet and eatin' chicken and braggin' round how he wuz aviator in de big waw—"

"*Aviator?*" Ex-flyer Rogerville seemed taking a sudden and gratifying interest.

"Yas, suh. Sho is lap up chicken, too!"

"You mean that fast-working city negro comes down here and cuts you out with Bessie in one day by claiming to be an aviator, eh?"

Willie wriggled hopefully; this sounded like professional jealousy!

"Yas suh. Jest wants tell you 'bout it, so when you gits de word to please, suh, come git me out de jail-house, you'll know how it happened. I's aimin' to fix dat Paregoric boy so he own mamma'll have to look in de book to tell who is he!"

"Yeah? Well, you get mixed up in any cutting-scrape," barked the ex-ace white-folks, "and I never even heard of *you* before! Besides, haven't you ever heard that the brain is mightier than the razor? . . . . *Aviator*, eh? Now, get to hell out of here! But, Willie—"

"Yas, suh?"

"Speaking of chickens, er—spread the word among your friends that *mine* are in a new coon-proof hen-house back there now: trapdoor in the top, and no other way for anybody but a chicken to get in it."

"Yas, suh. Jest tryin' last ni—" Willie's tongue slipped, but he caught himself in time, and was gone.

Halfway back to Baptist Hill, he had to pass the railroad station. Here his business went around a fresh corner. Yet seemingly it was only Latham Hooper alighting from a local train.

LATHAM was a slim, slab-footed darky of a rich chocolate color, who had left Demopolis only the week before, with money in his pocket and a lot of big talk in his mouth. Both features seemed lacking now.

"Sho is make your killin' quick!" Willie greeted him. "How much you git away from dem Bumin'ham boys de first day?"

"Shet up all time hollerin' so loud!" Mr. Hooper looked about him uneasily.

"Aint nobody tell *you* to quit hollerin' when you left here," reminded Willie. "Hears you plumb to Mobile tellin' how good you wuz!"

"Shet up! Things aint turn out so good."

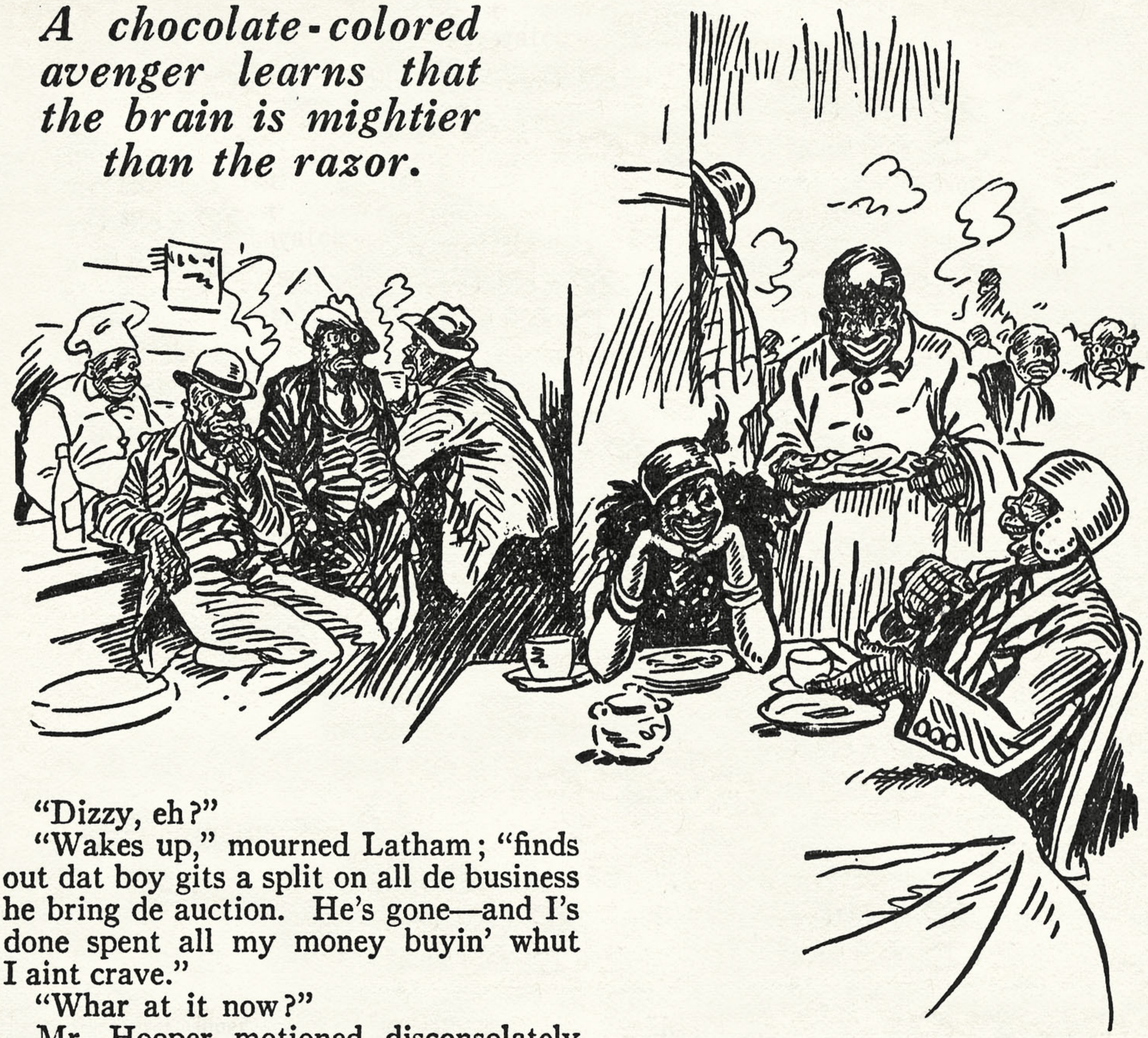
"Huccome?" Willie diminuendo-ed enough to invite confidences.

"Mess of crooks! Meets you at de train up dar, tryin' to sell you somep'n."

"You aint have to buy it."

"Aint aim to! But slick-talkin' boy gimme couple shots dat Fourth Alley Tiger-sweat, and takes me to whut he calls Army goods auction. Ax me to stand up on my chair and bid on de bargains for him: say de Tiger-prespiration make him too dizzy to."

***A chocolate-colored avenger learns that the brain is mightier than the razor.***



"Bessie can't see me no mo'," mourned Willie, "since he hit town wearin' ol' football helmet."

"Dizzy, eh?"

"Wakes up," mourned Latham; "finds out dat boy gits a split on all de business he bring de auction. He's gone—and I's done spent all my money buyin' whut I aint crave."

"Whar at it now?"

Mr. Hooper motioned disconsolately toward the baggage-car. "Fotch it wid me. All I got to show for my fifteen bucks is bein' drunk and high-bidder on old tent, a dozen garbage-cans, and a parachute, and seven dem machine-gun tripods. Cain't ricollect no more, my head hurts so bad."

"Better lap yourse'f up some more gin, and git unconscious again."

"Not twel I can git back to Bumin'-ham and give dat commission-boy a swimmin' in he head wid a plank whut *is* a swimmin'! I'll 'dizzy' him!"

"Got trouble my ownse'f," Willie bid for his share of the spotlight.

"Means you thinks you is!"

"New cullud boy here," persisted Mr. Freeman ruefully. "Callin' hisself de 'Alabama Ace.' High-flyin' boy, all time lappin' up chicken and braggin' round 'mongst de women how he wuz de flyer whut win de waw all by hisself. My gal Bessie cain't see *me* no more for listenin' to him!"

"Women dat way—all time follerin' de loudest band up de wrong street. Besides, sawed-off little pants-presser like you competes feeble wid a hero, every time. You looks too much like a mess of fish whut's been caught too long in wawm weather, nohow."

DURING this exchange of sorrows colorful events were occurring in the barbecue stand of one "Bees'-knees" Thompson—with Bessie in the forefront of the audience there.

"—Mainmost cullud aviator in de whole waw wuz me," Paregoric Logan was continuing a broadcast, and reaching for more chicken. "Germans sees me comin', dey hollers 'Here come dat Alabama Ace!' and flies back into de bushes!"

The latter proud words were what first caught the attention of a lugubrious-looking patron who was thereby galvanized into startled erectness.

Bees'-Knees shuffled toward him at this moment. "Aint seed you lately!" he greeted. "Whut you crave yo'se'f?"

Then he paused in alarm. The last time Bees'-Knees had seen that look on

a customer's face, four tables, a mirror, and a local Lothario had been practically ruined.

"Fricasseed ace—wid carbolic-acid dressin'!" hissed Mr. Hooper vindictively.

"Wait a minute, Latham! Wait a minute!" implored Mr. Thompson. "Tromp easy twel you knows whut you's doin'! Dat's de big war-winner jest come to town, de 'Alabama Ace—'"

"*Alabama Ace?*"

"Uh-huh."

Memories flashed across the red murk that was Latham's mind. And mathematics—two and two making four! So his trouble and Willie's trouble were the same big-town, big-mouthed boy, were they?

But let Willie fry his own fish. Vengeance—and this "ace"—belonged to Latham now, with mere mayhem not enough! Mr. Hooper's festering wrongs cried aloud for humiliations of the spirit as well as the flesh—dictating anonymity while he planned them, and strategic quiet until they were ripe.

Then, in a sudden timely rush of the Hooperian brains to the head, a scheme! Just when it was needed, a plan full-born and in full bloom!

SWIFTLY Latham snatched up a left-behind newspaper, spread it concealingly before his face, and beckoned the anxious-eyed Bees'-Knees nearer.

"Tell dat ace-boy I craves to hear him talk," he directed. "But don't tell him who I is."

When anybody wanted to hear Paregoric Logan talk, they got service. In practically no time, a scraping of chair-legs opposite Latham bespoke delivery at his table. At which Latham lowered his paper—and the "ace" lowered his jaw.

"*Y-y-you!*" He half-leaped from his seat in startled recognition.

"Set down!" Mr. Hooper seemed to have forgotten Birmingham. "Aint I hear you wuz de big aviator in de waw?"

"Alabama Ace, dat's me," admitted Paregoric uneasily. Meeting an old victim in a new place introduced dynamite into any situation that didn't involve amnesia.

"And aint I also hear dat you is made right smart headway lovin' Bessie yander?"

"Women falls for me pow'ful fast. Cain't he'p myse'f—"

"Yeah? Well, dat's huccome I got little proposition to make you, Eagle—before I starts talkin' nothin' over wid Bessie—"

Latham left his point in mid-air. The air being his native element, Paregoric seemed able immediately to grasp it—to the effect that Latham was a boy who had to be traded with.

"How much money you got, Ace?" Mr. Hooper's definiteness increased.

"Sixteen dollars." Paregoric was temporarily too fuddled to lie.

"You is lucky!"

"Huccome lucky?" A lot of white was getting into the ace's eyes.

"Beca'ze whut you is gwine buy now jest cost you fifteen—"

"Whut *I* is gwine buy?"

"—Back from me! So dey aint no loose talk git started in town about you not bein' no aviator, like you says; but jest a cheap crook whut gits dizzy is he even stand on a thick rug, like *I* says! Couldn't git up on a chair to bid on de Army goods!"

Mr. Logan experienced all the sensations of having been bombed. "Drinkin'-liquor make me dizzy," he defended feebly. "And buy whut?"

"Whut you needs in yo' business, or I talks—*a parachute!*"

"Dey's a new bandit-boy bawn every minute!" surrendered Mr. Logan in wrathful anguish, "but *you* must of been twins!"

"Whut you and Latham Hooper talkin' so big about in here dis noontime?" demanded a flattered and fluttering Bessie that evening, as again she and the self-styled ace sat at his favorite dish, chicken.

The door interrupted Mr. Logan's reply, by opening to admit Willie Freeman. Paregoric saw and seized the chance to kill two birds with one stone.

"I was jest pickin' myself up a bargain in parachutes," he outlined easily yet loudly to her, as the out-moded Willie shuffled morosely past them.

"Pair of shoots? Whut dat?"

"Gits out and floats down in it, is old plane git stalled in de sky. Us aces carries one on our rear, same as a spare-tire."

Bessie's reaction was gratifying. Willie's face was more than a study: it was a whole curriculum.

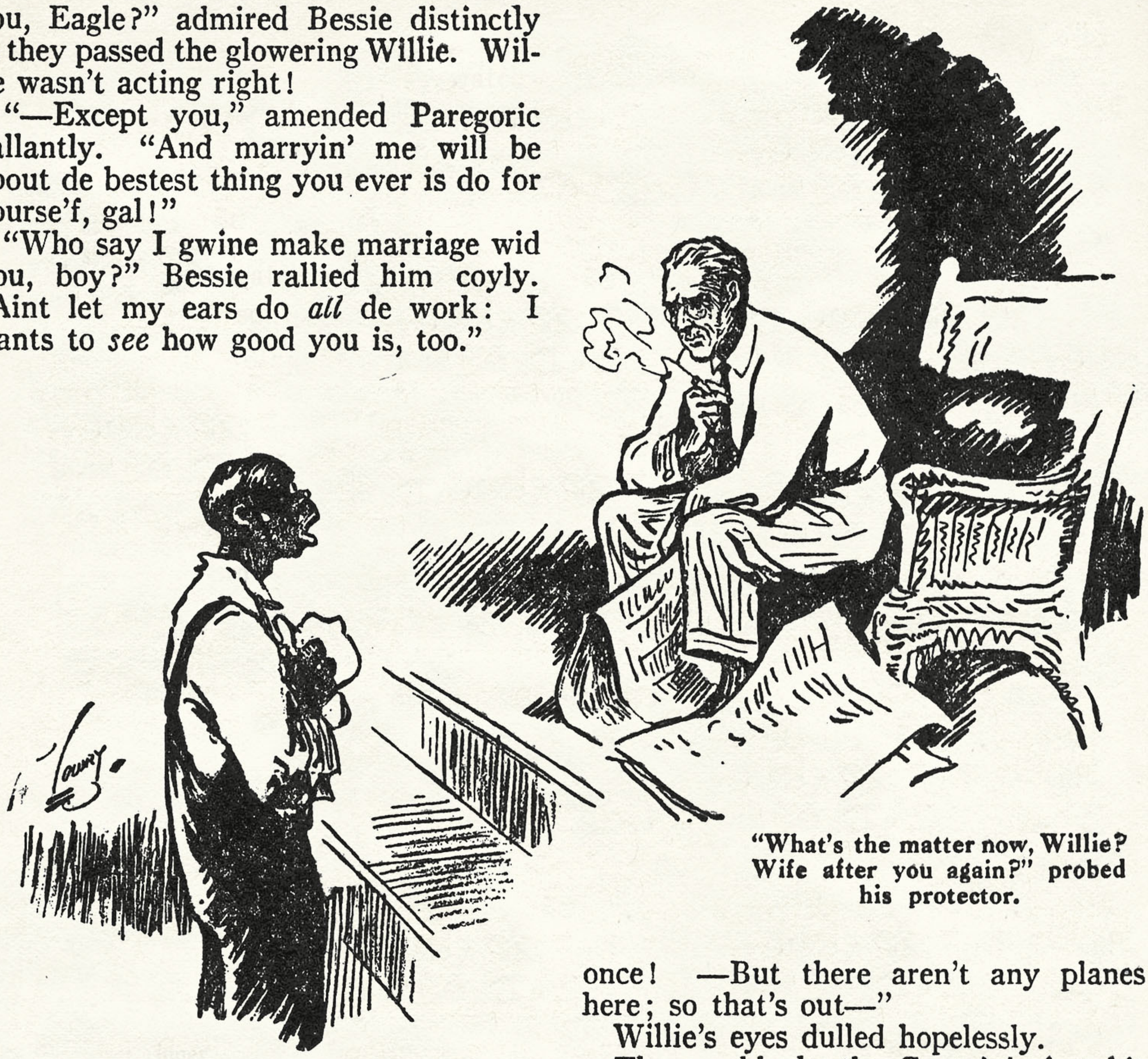
"Come on wid me now, honey,"—Mr. Logan finished his fryer, and played his final card loudly,—"while I gits my parachute from de man. Shows you jest how it look."

"You got jest about eve'ything, aint

you, Eagle?" admired Bessie distinctly as they passed the glowering Willie. Willie wasn't acting right!

"—Except you," amended Paregoric gallantly. "And marryin' me will be about de bestest thing you ever is do for yourse'f, gal!"

"Who say I gwine make marriage wid you, boy?" Bessie rallied him coyly. "Aint let my ears do *all* de work: I wants to *see* how good you is, too."



**"What's the matter now, Willie? Wife after you again?" probed his protector.**

"Den smoke yo' telescope good!" boasted Paregoric breezily. "Beca'ze gals is gone blind from jest lookin' at me, flyin' around in de sun, same as old eagle!"

Brooding over this type of competition again brought the luckless Mr. Freeman to his overlord. Captain Ed had endorsed brains and deprecated razors, but Willie was all out of brains, also of luck. Paregoric was soaring and Willie sunk! "Well, you look like you'd just made a bad landing!" Captain Ed hailed him jocosely. "What's the matter now? Parachute fail to open with you?"

Willie winced at the accuracy of a chance shot. "*Parachute's* right!" he mourned. "Paregoric Logan git hisse'f one—look jest *like* a aviator in de seat of he pants now!"

"*What?*"

"From Latham Hooper, he git it. Done mess me up all over again wid Bessie; big-mouthin' round about him bein' de 'Alabama Ace—'"

"'*Alabama Ace!*'" These two words always seemed to irritate Captain Ed. "I'd like to get him up in a plane just once! —But there aren't any planes here; so that's out—"

Willie's eyes dulled hopelessly.

Then suddenly the Captain's feet hit the veranda floor, as he brought his chair-legs down hard, as if in inspiration.

"Willie!" he barked. "I don't like that yellow boy!"

"Naw suh, Cap'n; aint nobody like him but my gal, Bessie—"

"—And the one sure way to cure a gas-bag is a match," continued the Captain. "How about *this?*" . . . .

Willie and his white-folks went into a huddle.

"Do you follow me?" Captain Rogerville concluded it.

"*Foller* you? Cap'n, I's so fur ahead of you I's lonesome!" chortled Mr. Freeman. "Dawg, move over and lemme at dat grass yander! It's my day to roll, and I's fixin' to rotate! Aviator, hunt your hole!"

"But remember, it's your idea—not mine—if you ball it up," warned his patron. "I'm just giving it to you for what it may be worth, and in the interest of—er—aviation, just before I leave town tonight for a week."

"Sim Silver, de undertakin'-boy, will he'p me wid it," estimated Willie enthusiastically, and was gone—out past

**"Dey's a new bandit-boy bawn every minute," surrendered Mr. Logan in wrathful anguish, "but *you* must of been twins!"**

the Captain's new-style African-proof hen-house with the trapdoor in its roof—past Fish Alley and its painful memories—and on toward Baptist Hill and the shop of a compatriot newly needed in Willie's business.

With Bessie proudly on his arm, his parachute now dangling magnificently at the seat of his trousers, Paregoric Logan was taking the air, afoot. For there were no planes in Demopolis.

"Whut all dat crowd about, up yander by de fish-fry place, honey?" Mr. Logan had his attention caught, a question no sooner raised than voiced.

"Aint know. Look like fight or somep'n, way dem folks is all crowdin' around."

"Well, gal, dey aint no better lookers dan you. Let's us go look too. And how about you sayin' when us is gwine make marriage now—me and you?"

"Waitin' to see how good you is, first, big boy!" parried Bessie coquettishly. "Aint done nothin' but jest *hear* so fur."

"I'd be up dar showin' you right now," Mr. Logan was looking grandly aloft, "wuz dey jest a airplane in town. Sho is cramp me, havin' to stick around on de ground all time, same as dat little pants-pressin' Willie Freeman. Cain't even practice myse'f wid dis new parachute."

As they neared the swarming crowd, Paregoric quickened his step. He liked his audiences large—especially with Bessie about.

"Here he comes! Mess around in de air like old eagle!" ran quotations from his own boastings that were like wine to him.

Yet, at first blush, the occasion was disappointing. Nothing intriguing was in sight—merely the inconsequential figure of Willie Freeman, the groundling, tacking a fresh-printed hand-bill to a tree. More bills lay on the curb beside him.

Paregoric elbowed a passageway, that he and Bessie might get a close-up of what the unimportant Willie was posting.

They got it. With the first—and worst effect on Paregoric. Yet one that he realized he must conceal at all costs! For he must remain an outward-seeming combination of nonchalance, confidence, and delight—even though the surrounding scenery was a-spin for him under the impact of Captain Ed's idea and Willie's execution of it.

"Now aint dat de *very* thing you is been itchin' for!" giggled Bessie as she read.

"Y-yeah—aint it!" gurgled Paregoric as *he* read:

DEATH DEFYIN PARASHOOT LEAP!

From the Tombiggbee river BridgE
by the
World reNoUNDED World WaR FLYIN AcE
PARRIGORIC LOGAN
of Birmingham
At 12 oclock noontime Sat. Jan. 16, 1932

*Posters complements of*
*SIM SILVER'S UNDERTAKIN PARLORS*
*"A FUNERAL To FiT EvERY PURSE"*

BESSIE looked at Paregoric, narrowly if proudly.

Paregoric couldn't see Bessie for seeing that bridge—and Sim Silver's wares. In guarding against the presence of

planes, he had overlooked bridges! And now he, who had never made a parachute-leap in his life—who, indeed, could scarcely get his shoes half-soled without growing dizzy from the added height—had talked himself into a hundred-foot jump from a bridge!

Shudders swept Mr. Logan. Feebly he strove to register the eagerness naturally to be expected of one self-proclaimed far and wide as the Alabama Ace—fearless among altitudes, companion of eagles, co-winner with the Allies of the world war!

Then Bessie again, further, unwittingly, irrevocably completing what the vengeful Willie and Latham had begun, with:

"And jest soon as you finishes showin' whut a swell pair-of-shoots jumper you is, Eagle, I is decided me and you is gwine make marriage *now!*"

"Kind of hog-tie de big-mouth, aint us!" exulted Latham Hooper, as he and Mr. Freeman forgathered some hours later. "Never *is* see anybody look so non-produced!"

"Me and Cap'n Ed done learn him!" boasted Willie. "Git Bessie back now, and I be settin' pretty!"

"Sell me a mess of junk, is he?" gloated Latham. "Dat whar he started somep'n he cain't stop—like havin' to parachute-jump off dat high bridge into de river."

"*He* aint gwine jump off no bridge!" Mr. Freeman grew increasingly positive. "All he gwine jump now is fences—gittin' away from here tonight. Wish Bessie could see him den!"

This remark, however, suddenly threw fresh light on Mr. Freeman's personal situation—from a new and disturbing angle: that of a woman's mind.

"Dat whar *your* trouble gwine come now, Willie—no matter whut de Ace do," Latham dragged it forth. "Bessie done git a taste of *hero* now. And let a gal git a mouthful of dat, and it's like tastin' chicken—she aint no good for hamburger no more! When a woman git her head set for hero, pants-pressers aint qualify."

Willie couldn't handle but one idea at a time. "Aint be nothin' left of dat Paregoric but his tracks by mawnin'!" he strutted verbally. "And *dey* be fur apart!"

But at breakfast in the crowded barbecue-stand next morning, Mr. Freeman got a jolt. Paregoric wasn't gone! And Bessie was with him.

Worse, he appeared still able to take nourishment; while even worse than that was Mr. Logan's loud if hollow: "Jest one more piece chicken now, Bessie. I always lunches light when I's fixin' to parachute-jump."

When he parachute-jumped? Then Paregoric *was* going to jump!

All the painful sensations of having flung a boomerang flooded and froze Mr. Freeman. So he had guessed this ace wrong. Instead of his calling Paregoric's bluff, Paregoric had called his! Leaving Willie clearly hoist by his own petard—and posters; while a self-styled ace was about to become a real ace—giving Bessie her hero after all, and Willie and Latham the laugh.

NOON—and Latham—found Willie Freeman still in the barbecue-stand, in dull despair. Across the room, the returned Paregoric ate chicken and held forth in forced but unmistakable loudness upon his favorite subject, himself.

"Ace done rally hisself," croaked the crushed Willie in answer to the unspoken comment in Latham's eyes.

"Dat boy aint rallied—he's *cornered,*" grunted Latham shrewdly.

"Huccome cornered?"

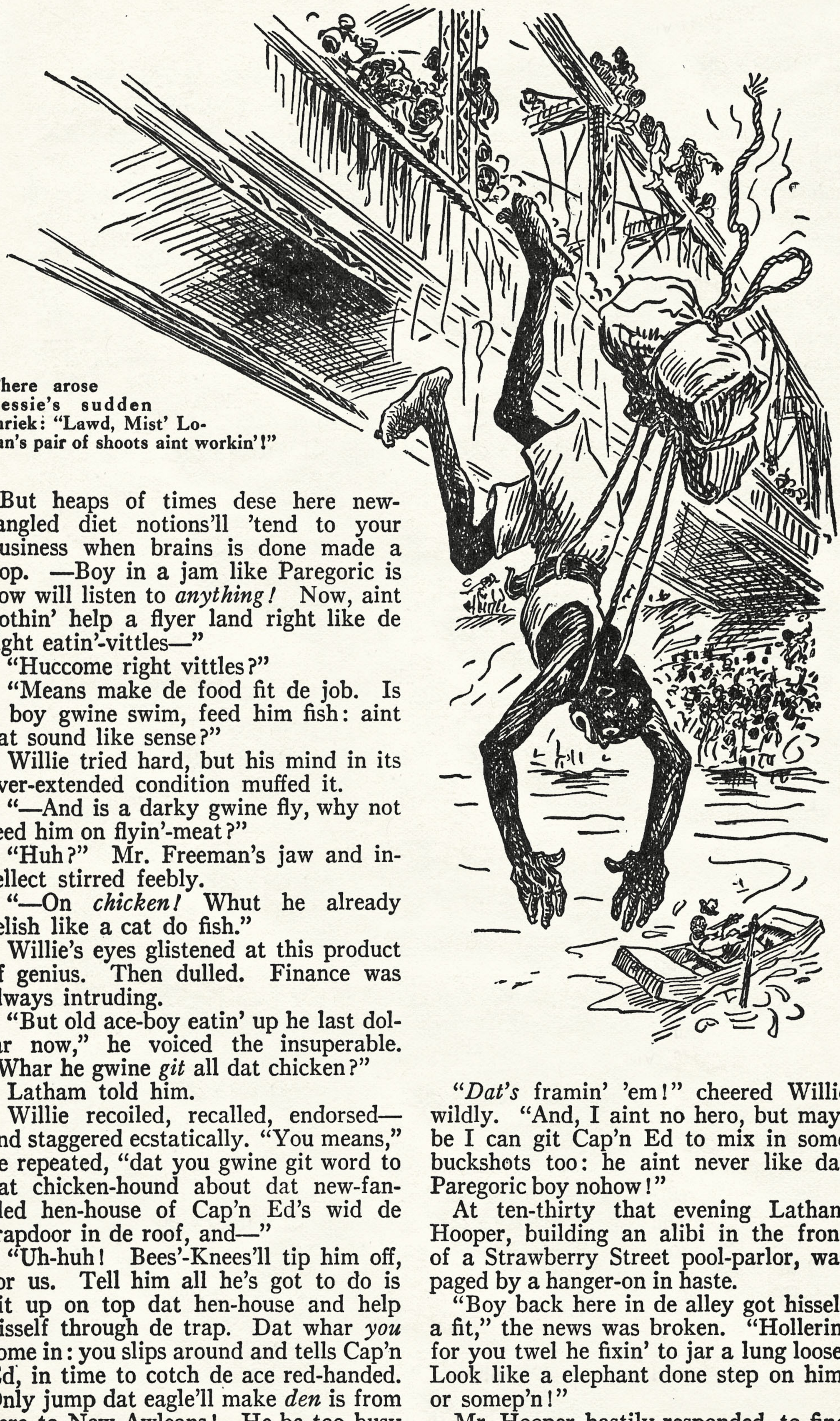
"Means you gum up yo' business again. Is you want a boy to back down, you got to leave him room to back down *in.* But you, you works too raw! Done sewed him up so tight wid your posters—and Bessie tellin' him she gwine marry him now, is he jump—dat he *cain't* quit now. He *got* to jump! And, is he is, you done spilled sand in your soup; Bessie git a hero, like she lookin' for. And, is he aint, you still aint no better off: aint nothin' suit dat gal but a hero from now on—and hero is whut *you* is most aint!"

Willie blinked and began limping in anguished circles under blistering revelations and realizations. Latham was right, but what could a boy do when old brain had turned around and bit the hand that fed it? He was worse off than before!

"Course now," Mr. Hooper's voice seemed to come from far off, "dey is more ways of chokin' a cat dan jest tyin' knots in its tail—"

Something in his tone caught Willie in mid-gloom. "You means you is done thunk up a new way to head off dat Ace yit?" he breathed his new hope hoarsely.

"Aint mean nothin' twel I git time to do a little sig-nifyin' round," Latham refused to be committed prematurely.



**There arose Bessie's sudden shriek: "Lawd, Mist' Logan's pair of shoots aint workin'!"**

"But heaps of times dese here newfangled diet notions'll 'tend to your business when brains is done made a flop. —Boy in a jam like Paregoric is now will listen to *anything!* Now, aint nothin' help a flyer land right like de right eatin'-vittles—"

"Huccome right vittles?"

"Means make de food fit de job. Is a boy gwine swim, feed him fish: aint dat sound like sense?"

Willie tried hard, but his mind in its over-extended condition muffed it.

"—And is a darky gwine fly, why not feed him on flyin'-meat?"

"Huh?" Mr. Freeman's jaw and intellect stirred feebly.

"—On *chicken!* Whut he already relish like a cat do fish."

Willie's eyes glistened at this product of genius. Then dulled. Finance was always intruding.

"But old ace-boy eatin' up he last dollar now," he voiced the insuperable. "Whar he gwine *git* all dat chicken?"

Latham told him.

Willie recoiled, recalled, endorsed—and staggered ecstatically. "You means," he repeated, "dat you gwine git word to dat chicken-hound about dat new-fangled hen-house of Cap'n Ed's wid de trapdoor in de roof, and—"

"Uh-huh! Bees'-Knees'll tip him off, for us. Tell him all he's got to do is git up on top dat hen-house and help hisself through de trap. Dat whar *you* come in: you slips around and tells Cap'n Ed, in time to cotch de ace red-handed. Only jump dat eagle'll make *den* is from here to New Awleans! He be too busy pickin' de birdshot out he pants from den on to mess wid no parachute!"

"*Dat's* framin' 'em!" cheered Willie wildly. "And, I aint no hero, but maybe I can git Cap'n Ed to mix in some buckshots too: he aint never like dat Paregoric boy nohow!"

At ten-thirty that evening Latham Hooper, building an alibi in the front of a Strawberry Street pool-parlor, was paged by a hanger-on in haste.

"Boy back here in de alley got hisself a fit," the news was broken. "Hollerin' for you twel he fixin' to jar a lung loose. Look like a elephant done step on him, or somep'n!"

Mr. Hooper hastily responded, to find the description accurate. Something small and dark and depressed in the alley

and overalls was disturbing the lower stars with his anguished caterwaulings of despair. Evidently the pendulum of Mr. Freeman's affairs had swung again.

"Forgits about Cap'n Ed say he gwine be out of town for a week!" wailed Willie, "twel Paregoric git plumb on top dat hen-house roof! Now he fishin' for dem hens, *and aint nobody dar to shoot him!*"

Latham turned scathingly on his aide. "All broke out wid brains, aint you!" he seared him. "Eve'ything you starts, you messes up! I tries to help you out your jam, and whut is you do? All you do is show de boy whut's already stole yo' gal how to steal yo' white-folks' chickens, too! Tries to help you play hero, and you plays hell! Solidified—dat all *you* is, *solidified*, between both ears! Done mess wid you for de last time! And Bessie is too!"

"Gwine back up by Cap'n Ed's, see can I think up nothin'," hazarded life's latest failure as the storm slackened.

"Think *wid* whut?" Latham concluded scornfully, and left him.

BY eleven o'clock on the morning of January 16th, Baptist Hill was empty, Strawberry Street deserted, and the bridge-rails correspondingly black with onlookers.

By common consent, as noon neared, a space alongside the downstream rail, in mid-span, was cleared for Paregoric's plunge.

Awed feminine murmurings ran along the lofty bridge. Janitors, porters, and tire-changers lost heavily in the assembled feminine eyes that looked enviously on Bessie. She in turn looked urreptitiously around for Willie—that he might notice her not noticing him. But Willie was missing.

Noon, chorused the whistles. And a new absence thrust itself into prominence. The hour had come, but Paregoric Logan had not.

Neither had Willie. But, then, recalled Bessie, no one had come to see Willie. He was through, sunk, washed-up—or would be, when the Alabama Ace had shot gracefully (if unavoidably) downward to where life-saver-for-a-day Shakespeare Shackelford was already patrolling the river in a skiff.

Twelve-thirty arrived; and still no Paregoric. The crowd began to mill and mutter; to remember who had posted the handbills, and got up the show—

Then, suddenly, from the townward end of the bridge, a long-awaited sound—the sputter and rattle of Strawberry Street's one taxi! Paregoric was not only coming, but coming in style!

Straight for the center of the span sped the taxi, to afford through its unwashed windows stirring glimpses of the great parachute-jumper secluded in masterly showmanship within it.

Instant acclaim swept the structure. Paregoric was about to jump! Vindicating, Latham realized, all that he had said and Bessie had thought about himself. Bessie was now turning exultant spiritual handsprings in her relief. She had held out for a hero, and won! Henceforth only heroes need apply: not that there would be any *henceforth* now!

Confirmatory things were already happening fast. The car halted in mid-bridge. From its rear door sprang a dark figure in a lemon-yellow bathing-suit. It flashed from car to bridge-rail, poised momentarily there like some huge tanglefooted bumblebee. Then a wild toppling, a wilder squall, and the yellow-clad parachutist shot downward toward the river far below.

After which nothing seemed according to Hoyle or Willie's posters. Beginning with Bessie's sudden shriek of, *"Lawd, Mist' Logan's pair of shoots aint workin'!"*

A thousand protruding eyes, five hundred horror-stricken spectators took in that vital fact. Turning over and over in the air, squalling like a tomcat with cramps, the yellow-clad parachutist was dropping to his doom! With a *smack* that all but lowered the level of the river, and splashed spectators on both banks, he smote the surface, and disappeared.

Then pandemonium indeed!

*"Git a barrel!" "Git a boat!" "Git a hearse!"* rang variously from bridge and bank. Down to the water's edge in hair-raising hysterics plunged the screeching Bessie. Dead or alive now, was it not *her* man who was causing all this furor?

AMATEUR life-savers splashed and floundered in fruitless circles. The excited Shakespeare beat the river into foam with frenzied oars. Why hadn't the parachute opened? How long could a first-class parachutist live under water with the breath smacked out of him? These and other matters grew into open and agonizing questions.

But success at last—and accidentally—was Shakespeare's. One thrashing oar caught in what proved to be the slack of a yellow bathing-suit. A limp, wet

bundle was hoisted from the turbid water—to be followed by the appearance upon the face of Mr. Shackelford of an expression so startled as to be noticeable from both banks.

Latham met rescued and rescuer at the bank. Together they dragged the sodden yellow heap from the bottom of the boat, flung it prone and limp upon the ground while a stumpy spectator set up a new record for the hundred-yard barrel-handicap dash.

Then, shortly, Bessie—when extensive drainage operations with the barrel had produced first feeble stirrings and crowings—was loudly beseeching her hero to speak to her, to look at her.

Yet, with her last request met, she shot off inexplicably into louder and fresher hysterics — a phenomenon concerning which preliminary examination of the hero but deepened the mystery and produced new bewilderment as to how a river could smack an ace so cross-eyed that you couldn't recognize him!

On top of all there came, as an apex, a new accident, suddenly putting a new face upon everything—including the parachutist! The accident of a restoring blow between the ace's shoulder-blades, so powerful as instantly to undo the river's work—and there blinked up into the assembled faces ringing him, a hero, straight-eyed and recognizable once more as—*not* Paregoric, but Alabama's newer ace, *Willie Freeman!*

"How *I* know you is got to pull no ring to make a parachute open?" shortly, and explanatorily, demanded a gasping Willie, still awed by the superiority of accident over design in snatching triumph from defeat, a penitent Bessie from Paregoric.

"How *you* git dat parachute, nohow?" ran counter-question.

"Got it from Paregoric Logan—after he git stun' last night—"

"Git stunned?"

"Yeah, from old tail-spin he do. Knock him so cold he cotch a bus back to Bumin'ham while he wuz still too coo-coo to ricollect hisself—"

"*Tail-spin?* Huccome tail-spin? Dat eagle aint had no plane!"

"Aint need none. You, see dat yellow boy wuz all time four-flushin'. So, when he climb up last night to steal dem chickens, dat boy, whut wuz all time braggin' about flyin' wid de eagles and messin' 'mongst de stars, *gits dizzy from de al-ti-tude*—and falls off Cap'n Ed's new hen-house on he head!"

# REAL EX-

*In this department your fellow-readers tell of their most exciting experiences. What was yours? (For details of this contest see page 5.)*

# The News

By **Gerald**

IN November, 1910, I was sent by a New York newspaper group to cover the revolution in Mexico, and, attaching myself to the Federal column commanded by General Navarro, I waited impatiently for a week while the careful veteran organized his forces for his incursion into the sierra. Chafing at his delay, I rode into the mountains with my camera and obtained the first pictures of the rebels, whom I found some twenty miles north of the Federal outposts. There had been no bloodshed so far, and the revolutionists were glad to pose for me.

A few days later Navarro led his column into the sierra, and took me along as a sort of guest. I messed with the General's staff, and was given two orderlies, one a personal servant and the other to care for my horse.

We first came in contact with the rebels at San Pedro. We not only outnumbered them but had the advantage of range with our Mausers against their hunting-rifles. After a short exchange they scurried into the hills, followed by shells from our mountain howitzers.

The rebels retreated into the mountains, and we followed. The entire countryside was hostile. At Cerro Prieto, a straggling village of a few hundred huts, the revolutionists made a stand, heroic but useless. The column advanced up the valley. I was riding in the van with a big camera strapped over my shoulder. We came to a group of huts surrounded by barbed wire. We could see the adobe walls were pierced with loopholes, indicating resistance.

Our officer sent back to warn the General and halted to await the artillery.

# PERIENCES

*Here an adventurous war-correspondent describes his dangerous work in obtaining the news of the various Mexican revolutions.*

# of Battle

## Brandon

Hoping to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, I spurred forward, waving my handkerchief.

The revolutionists let me reach the wire. A door opened, and a long-haired Indian peered out, covering me with his rifle.

"What do you want?"

"I am a noncombatant—a newspaper man, and only want to warn you that you are throwing away your lives. You have not a chance against the artillery that will be opening fire in a few minutes. If you must fight, at least get the women and children out of the way before the party starts. The shells will not spare anyone."

The man appeared grateful. He spoke to his companions. Three more faces appeared at the door. They made a striking picture, and I swung forward my camera and focused them. As the brass-bound lens snapped into view, all four men started shooting. They mistook the camera for a machine-gun!

One bullet went through my horse's head and buried itself in my abdomen. Another hit me in the forearm. My horse reared and fell, pinning me down.

Next thing I knew, my orderly was kneeling beside me unbuttoning my coat to seek my wound. Just then a slug took him through the head, and he spouted blood and brains all over me. Then I went out. . . .

While I was unconscious, the artillery came up and unlimbered.

In a few minutes there was nothing left of the hamlet. I struggled from under my horse and got up stiffly. Several riderless mounts were standing around. I picked out the best and clambered with difficulty into the saddle. My back was sore, and so was the leg that had been under the horse, but I felt nothing but numbness where all the blood was.

The fighting was over, and so I went to the village store that was serving as field hospital. The medico shook his head. Abdominal wounds usually mean peritonitis. He stuck his forceps into the hole—and laughed. The bullet had mushroomed going through the horse's head, and had barely penetrated my abdominal wall. I had been saved by the very deadliness of the missile, which had been a soft-nosed bullet. . . .

One day a relief column joined us, and Navarro received dispatches from headquarters complaining that I had been stressing the shooting of prisoners in my stories, thereby fomenting an anti-government feeling throughout the world.

Navarro was kind but cold. "I have been instructed to eliminate you," he said, "and I have no alternative."

"Do you realize, General, that you will be doing your government the worst possible disservice if you shoot an American newspaper man?" I argued. "If you get the American people down on you, the revolutionists will be able to get all the arms and ammunition they need across the border."

"You are right," the General came back. "You have given me an idea. I will let the rebels shoot you, and the odium will be theirs."

That night I was put out of camp afoot, without arms and only my camera and a blanket as equipment.

I picked my way cautiously among the rocks, hoping that I might get close enough to the rebels to be taken prisoner instead of being sniped at. No such luck! I was seen, and bullets began to whine about me. Raising my handkerchief on a stick, I crouched in a depression and waited. A couple of revolutionists crawled over to me and listened incredulously to my story. Eventually they decided to let Pascual Orozco take the responsibility.

Pascual Orozco was hard-boiled. He said "thumbs down." I had been with the Federals and now was with the revolutionists. I was a spy and had earned a spy's fate. I would be shot in the morning. In the meantime, however, I could have some supper if I felt like it.

At about four o'clock in the morning Felix Sommerfield rode into camp. He was covering the campaign from the rebel side for the Associated Press, work-

ing with Chris Haggerty and Dave Lawrence out of El Paso. Sommerfield had great influence with the revolutionists. He identified me positively as a neutral correspondent, and Orozco set me free.

Francisco Madero, titular head of the revolution, crossed the border with Giuseppi Garibaldi and an American Legion recruited in Texas. They risked all in a pitched battle and were crushingly defeated. I ran into Madero, Orozco and Garibaldi one day in Cañon Azul. They had less than two hundred men, practically no ammunition, and their mounts were in terrible shape.

I suggested to Madero that Pancho Villa, the bandit, had five hundred men and plenty of stores and remounts. I had come across Villa in my wanderings through the mountains, and had found him a sincere sort of chap.

Madero commissioned me to find Villa and invite him to a conference. Villa received the message with delight. He moved his entire outfit to Hacienda Bustillos and placed it at Madero's orders.

I TAGGED along with Madero's forces from that time on. The revolution was gaining strength throughout the country, and it was well known that if the Federal troops received one substantial reverse, Porfirio Diaz would resign the Presidency which he had held for thirty-five years. Madero therefore decided to assault Juarez, where General Navarro with some fifteen hundred men, guarded the main railroad gateway from the United States into Mexico.

The rebels attacked from every direction, but concentrated from the north, taking cover under the banks of the Rio Grande on the theory that the Federals would not dare answer their fire for fear of American retaliation. In the heat of the fighting, however, the American warning was forgotten, and many casualties were registered in El Paso.

There were a couple of hundred wounded in Juarez who had had no attention. They were suffering tortures of thirst and fever, and we newspaper men in El Paso made it our business to see to them. A telegram signed by the municipal authorities and the forty correspondents there was sent to President Taft, asking that immigration and neutrality laws be set aside for the nonce in the name of humanity.

Taft got in touch with President Porfirio Diaz in Mexico City, who authorized Navarro to negotiate a truce and to send both Federal and Revolutionary casualties to El Paso for treatment.

Now the problem was to take Diaz' message in to Navarro. An employee of the Mexican consulate volunteered, but was wounded before he had advanced three blocks from the International bridge. Then a rebel officer tried to get in, but weakened when a machine-gun on the roof of the bull-ring failed to respect his white flag.

No one else wanted to take in the message, wherefore I figured it was up to me. At the bridge I was joined by Jimmy Hare, pioneer war-photographer, whose pictures of the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War made pictorial history. We carried half a dozen canteens of water and our cameras.

Deciding that we would trust to our luck and do the thing properly, Hare and I proceeded calmly down the middle of the street, stopping to give a drink to every casualty we encountered, and dragging the most exposed ones to the shelter of doorways. While we were still in the rebel lines we were fired at by the Federals on the roof-tops. Each time we passed a street intersection we would receive cross-fire from hidden rebel snipers who knew nothing of our mission.

Our luck held, however, and we reached the barricade near the Customhouse, where I was recognized and passed.

Navarro was in a bad way. One of his two surgeons had been wounded, and the other was down with typhoid. He was glad of the opportunity to have his wounded cared for, and agreed to cease firing if the rebels would promise not to advance during the truce.

Ambulances from El Paso gathered in the casualties, and that evening the battle was resumed with greater intensity. Two days later Navarro surrendered. . . .

Following the fall of Juarez, Diaz sent emissaries to the border and peace was declared. I went southward to Mexico City with Madero, who was the national idol. The revolution was over, but Mexico had got into my blood, and I got a job on a Mexico City paper. For a while it was all politics. Then a dozen isolated revolutions broke out.

When Pascual Orozco, who had been appointed military governor of Chihuahua, started his revolution against Madero, my paper sent me to cover the story. Madero had commissioned his Secretary of War, General Gonzales Salas, to command the operations; and Salas refused to allow war-correspond-

ents to accompany his column. I therefore found it necessary to disguise myself as a peon and to obtain employment in the railroad construction-gang that formed part of the column.

We were in six trains, and were pushing up through central Mexico to Torreon, and from there into Chihuahua, thinking to find Orozco somewhere in the neighborhood of Chihuahua City. At Rellano we received the surprise of our lives. From around a curve in the mountains, one hundred miles south of where we expected contact with the enemy, a locomotive, running wild and laden with dynamite, came down the single track and collided with the first train of our convoy, wrecking it with great loss of life. Simultaneously a trestle was blown up behind us, and the attacking Orozquistas swarmed out of the mountain pass.

Before the troops could be detrained and a defense plan formulated, one thousand Federals had been killed or captured, and large quantities of munitions of war had been hauled into the hills.

Gonzales Salas lost his head and committed suicide in his private car. General Trucy Aubert took command, and after repairing the trestle, fell back on Torreon. Fortunately the rebels had only got away with six of our field-guns, and very little ammunition for them.

I knew Trucy Aubert very well, and reported to him on the spot. He let me use the military wire, and my story of the disaster was the most complete newspaper beat that it has ever been my fortune to put over.

Madero now sent General Victoriano Huerta to take charge of operations against Orozco. Huerta had no inhibitions against newspaper men, and he attached me regularly to his staff with the assimilated rank of major.

General Huerta was a careful soldier, and while the main body of the army kept to the trains, he covered our flanks and rear with clouds of irregular cavalry, under the command of Raoul Madero, a younger brother of the President.

One day we sighted a large body of cavalry approaching, but it turned out to be Pancho Villa with two thousand five hundred veterans who had come to reinforce us, laden with the spoils of six months of campaigning.

From the beginning Villa and Huerta failed to agree. Huerta was a strict disciplinarian; Villa was refractory to discipline, and never recognized the principle that an enemy had property rights. At Jiménez there was a Russian storekeeper who had been trading with Orozco, and was therefore an enemy in Villa's eyes. The Russian had imported two Arabian stallions, and Villa promptly added them to his personal string.

The Russian complained to Huerta, who ordered Villa to give back the horses. Villa objected, and is said to have pulled his gun on Huerta, but was overpowered, courtmartialed and condemned to death for insubordination. When this was reported to Madero, he requested Huerta to commute the punishment to a prison sentence.

The column at length reached Rellano, where Gonzales Salas had been ambushed seven months before. Orozco had fortified the heights and made his first effort at serious resistance. We detrained and shelled the enemy positions with our two hundred pieces of artillery. They hadn't a chance. Their only guns were the few pieces they had captured from Gonzales, and their home-made ammunition was defective.

All during the following day Huerta's artillery kept pounding away at the positions the enemy had evacuated long since. That night Huerta sent a report to Mexico stating that he had inflicted an overwhelming defeat on the enemy, who had lost two thousand men. As a matter of fact, only seventeen Orozquista dead were found, and I so informed my paper, my story creating a sad anti-climax to Huerta's report.

SOME days later I inadvertently advanced too far from our outposts and was captured by Orozquista scouts. I was well treated, and after a few days was permitted to return to the Federal lines. Immediately upon my arrival I was placed under arrest, and was found guilty by summary court-martial of having communicated with the enemy. The penalty was death. I had lost all right to protest when I accepted Huerta's appointment as a member of his staff.

I will never know whether Huerta truly intended to have me shot, but he certainly made a great try at convincing me. My friend Raoul Madero took the matter up with his brother the President by wireless, and Huerta was ordered to send me back to Mexico City under suspended sentence. I was held incommunicado for three days, and then sent south on a military train under guard.

*(Mr. Brandon will continue his interesting story in an early issue.)*

# Fire in the Powder Mill

*Courage, says Mr. Hook, is the heritage of most men—and he gives good reasons for his belief.*

*By* **Will Hook**

THE fire of which I write, taught me that the quality of bravery is the heritage of the average man and not confined to the exception.

In the manufacture of nitro-starch dynamite, after the raw starch had been nitrated and washed, it was taken to the dry-house. Here it was spread on long lengths of canvas and warm dry air was circulated through the building until the nitro-starch was bone-dry. It was then a fine, light, white dust—and it was the most inflammable stuff on earth.

The dry nitro-starch went to the mixing house where it was mixed with nitre and other chemicals into dynamite. The actual mixing was done in a wooden box mounted on a revolving shaft. The dynamite fell from end to end through rough screens. The charge was about three hundred pounds and heavy wooden doors were required to hold it. These were luted by means of a heavy bolt running through the box. There was generally over nine hundred pounds of loose dynamite in the building, and four hundred to a thousand pounds of unmixed nitro-starch. Two men did the mixing: Charley Powers, a favorite with all of us, and Sing Low, a jolly old Chinaman.

The dynamite went to the punching-house where it was punched into sticks; then these were paraffined and packed into fifty-pound boxes. This work was done by Chinamen and white girls.

All three of the buildings—the dry-house, the mixing-house and the punching-house, were covered by the clinging white dust—the inflammable nitro-starch—and the workers' clothes were full of it.

The distance between each of the three buildings was about a hundred and fifty feet. The laboratory was a small shack some thirty-five feet from the mixing-house and between it and the dry-house.

I was the plant chemist; and when the fire occurred, I was seated on a high stool, working at the balance. There came a sudden flare of light and a prolonged *Who-o-o-o-sh!* I went off that stool backward, and took one dive through the door! The flames from the mixing-house seemed to be three hundred feet high and right over me.

Charley Powers was just running into the boiler-house. His clothes were flaming thirty feet high; he was a living torch. I knew he was running to dive into the tank behind the boiler-house.

Sing Low was running down the track toward the punching-house. His clothes were also burning, and if he got inside, there was no power on earth that could have saved the lives of the others.

He was within ten feet of the door, when the foreman of the punching-house leaped out in a clean diving tackle that carried both of them over the bank.

It was a perfect combination of instantaneous action, wonderful judgment and self-sacrifice. The foreman's own clothes were saturated with this nitro-starch—far more inflammable than gasoline—yet he dived at a mass of flame!

Indeed, his clothes were burned beyond repair even in the short time it took the two of them to fall into the water.

Another of the men was running past me, to escape. I remember he yelled, "Run, Hook! Run! She'll go, any minute!" But he stopped when I called to him, and helped me get a fire-hose out. We started drenching the dry-house.

This was real heroism too, for that man had just returned to work after spending six months in the hospital from a previ-

ous fire, where he had been badly burned and almost lost his life.

Until one of the other men relieved me, we kept the water on the dry-house. I was in charge of that end of the plant in case of fire, but drenching that building was the most important consideration.

After I returned to the laboratory I learned of still another case of heroism. The general foreman, Jim Dethlefson, had seen the fire start.

He said they were taking the lid off the mixer when the fire started in the box. We never knew the cause, but probably the friction caused by dragging the heavy cover over the threads of the bolt, dropped a spark into the dynamite.

They all saw it start, and they ran. There was, of course, nothing else they could do. All three of them were at least thirty feet away from the building when the six hundred pounds of straight unmixed nitro-starch caught. The burning (not explosion) of this, raised the roof and toppled the walls out and threw flame for a long distance.

It was this flame that I had seen. It had entirely enveloped the laboratory and even blistered the paint badly. It was this same flame that had gotten the men. The reason that I had not seen Jim, at the time, was that the instant the flame hit him, he had dived into the ditch. Notwithstanding this, he was badly burned though his clothes were not saturated with the nitro-starch as the others were. The edges of both of his ears were gone; the back of his head was burned open and raw. The backs of his hands were burned to the bone.

In this condition, he had stayed and fought the fire, instead of going to the hospital with the other men. Mighty few men could have done that!

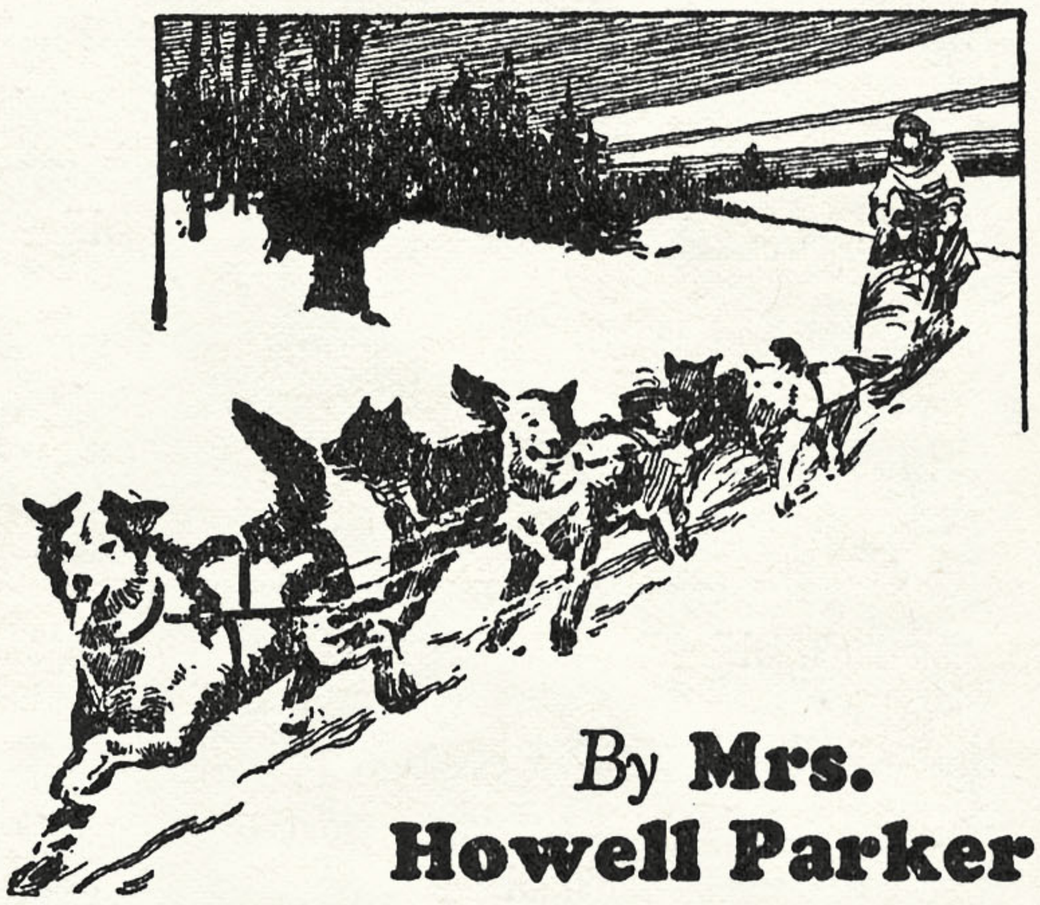
Charley Powers died in the hospital the next morning at four o'clock. His case was hopeless from the first.

Sing Low's back was badly burned and there were lesser burns on his hands and face, but he returned to work after a month in the hospital.

Jim went to the doctor that night. But in the month that followed infection set in and some drastic measures were required to save Jim's life, though eventually he entirely recovered.

# A Call In Alaska

*Wherein a lady goes to visit a friend—and has an all-too-interesting experience.*



By **Mrs. Howell Parker**

WHEN I was in the interior of Alaska in the year of 1916, I had a very unusual experience.

My husband and I, with our little son Bobby were up on a creek where good prospects had been found.

Often while my husband worked digging shafts and hoisting the gold-bearing gravel to the surface, he became so engrossed in his work that he did not wish to take the twenty-mile trip to the village to buy provisions, and when the weather was nice and the trails good, I delighted in doing it. I used to wrap my little son in fur robes and take him along. Dog-sled rides were our only recreation, indeed, in the wilds. Our nearest neighbor lived fifteen miles away.

One day when the sun shone bright on the mountain-tops and the squirrels chirped as they jumped from one limb to the other, I felt tired of staying around the camp, and I said to my husband:

"Jack, I haven't seen another woman for six months. I would like to take a drive out to Mrs. Powers' on Iron Creek."

"Go ahead," he said. "The trail is in first-class shape, and the dogs need exercise; there's no reason why you can't go. You'll stay there over night, won't you?"

"Yes, you know it's fifteen miles; it wouldn't pay to go for just a day."

I expected to arrive at Mrs. Powers' about two o'clock, and had allowed myself five hours for the trip, having left home at nine. We had traveled nearly ten miles when we saw a team of about nine dogs coming toward us. There were two men with the team.

Just as they were passing, my mischievous leader made a dart after the other team. The sled was jerked out of my control, with such force that my shoulder became dislocated.

I screamed; and the pain was so excruciating that I then sat down on the trail, moaning. The dogs became entangled with the other team, and began fighting. There were fourteen dogs in one mess, chewing and growling.

After some time the men managed to separate the enraged dogs, some of which were badly wounded. My dogs escaped being badly bitten. The men straightened out the tow-lines and fastened the dogs to some small trees; then they came to see if they could help me.

"We'll put you and the boy in our sled and drive you home—one of us will drive your dogs back for you," one said.

"Oh, no, no," I protested. "It is fifteen miles back home, while we are only about five miles from Powers'—it's the nearest place. I think I'll be all right if one of you will give my shoulder a little pull—it's dislocated. If you will pull it, perhaps it will go back in place!"

One of the men took hold of my arm, trying to pull it in place—but every time he tried to pull I came along, screaming from the pain. After several attempts, the men bundled Bobby and me into their big sleigh, one taking the responsibility of driving us to Powers', while the other drove my team of dogs, following.

When we arrived at Powers', Mrs. Powers at once got busy with hot-water packs to take the swelling down.

"What in the world can we do?" she said. "I don't know of anyone capable of replacing dislocated joints. And no doctor nearer than Ruby City, three hundred miles from here!"

Mr. Powers, who was out at his diggings, came in when he noticed that company had arrived.

"What in the world is the matter, Mrs. Parker?" he asked. After I told him about the mishap on the trail, he said: "Well, I'll fix that. Come on over here and take hold of the top of that doorframe."

I did this.

"Now hold on tight! Hold tight!"

I held as tightly as I could with such a painful shoulder.

Suddenly he put both his hands on my shoulder, seizing me so quickly and with such force that I do not know yet how it all happened; the pain disappeared like magic after the one great shooting agony when he jerked the shoulder in place. It was rather sore that day, but by evening my suffering was forgotten, and we had a fine visit. Mrs. Powers baked a big cake, and invited friends from nearby claims to spend the evening.

THE next day after lunch, Bobby and I started on our return trip home. The trails were becoming soft on the hillsides, but we had good luck all the way home until the last few miles. My shoulder was as well as could be expected; and I was careful not to give it a twist.

The trail became so soft that when I rode in the sled, the runners sank on the lower side of the trail, upsetting it, and when I tried to walk my feet broke through; at every step I sank in snow to my knees. I tried to stand on one runner on the upper side of the sidling trail. But the sled slid down sideways against a stump, with such force that I lurched against the handle-bars and broke them down. Luckily neither Bobby nor I got a scratch. It was then about six o'clock in the evening, and we were over three miles from home.

I unhitched the dogs and tied each of them up to a different tree to prevent them from fighting. Then I took the robe in the sled and wrapped Bobby and myself in it to sit and wait for the night temperature to freeze the trail.

The dogs evidently wondered what it was all about. Now and then they would look at us as if to ask, "Isn't there going to be any feed?"

By midnight the trail began to freeze hard enough that I could walk the rest of the way, so I hitched up the dogs and we continued our journey home slowly. As the handle-bars were broken, I could no longer steer the sled, and frequently it would upset, rolling Bobby out.

It was after three o'clock when we reached home, and Jack was fast asleep. When he came to the door, he asked: "What in the world is the idea in coming home at this time of night? I thought you'd decided to stay and visit over another night—when you didn't show up last evening."

I only answered, "Wait until we've rested and I'll tell you why!"

# The Bombing of Zeebrugge

*The tremendous adventure of a bomb-attack far inside the enemy lines is vividly described by a participant.*

By **L. C. Nichols**

THE week prior to St. George's Day,—April 23rd,—1918, was one of feverish activity at the airdrome of the Fourteenth British bombing squadron at St. Inglevert, France.

We were under secret orders to bomb Zeebrugge on the Belgian coast to cover the landing of the Royal Marines and to mask the real objective—the sinking of the obsolete British battle-cruiser, H.M.S. *Vindictive* in the narrow channel to prevent the entrance of the German U-boats.

Sixteen heavy bombers were overhauled with great care and a cargo of fifty-pound bombs for each were loaded with an explosive, then new, of terrific power—called Lewisite. These deadly sky-eggs were carried in twin rows of eight in a center line of bomb-racks under the fuselage. We usually set the trips to release four bombs simultaneously, two from each end, to equalize the weight as each set of bombs left their nests.

I was the gunner in the third plane and occupied the rear cockpit. Lieutenant Bradford was the pilot. I adjusted helmet and goggles as the roar of thirty-two powerful motors cut the silence. The time was one A.M.—and history was written in blood that night. Blocks were pulled. Lieutenant Bradford's hand rose and fell. We took off in pairs; at a thousand feet we formed a giant V and swung north, gradually rising to four thousand feet. I assured myself the bomb-releases were in perfect working order and warmed my twin guns with a few short bursts.

Twenty minutes later we were droning along in wild-goose formation through a dark night with only a quarter moon, when I saw quick signals far over us. They reminded me of fireflies, but I knew they came from our light fighting craft flying at twelve thousand feet and ready to dive at the first sign of the enemy.

We suddenly banked, turned westward and swung out to sea. Ten minutes later we got signals from the ships; only twenty miles to go now. We rose a thousand feet and turned up the channel. Suddenly slender fingers of light flashed skyward. One picked up our wing commander. His plane nosed over sharply and started a long dive. The formation followed as one man. I threw a glance down to my right at a dozen searchlights sweeping the bay while rings of shore batteries flamed in unison and spouted tons of steel at the advancing ships even as I saw a score of shell-bursts in and around the German guns—and knew the ships were replying. Far out to seaward, about seven miles I judged, were black smudges on the sky-line. These were the British monitors—short heavy ships which floated with decks almost awash and mounted two giant fifteen-inch guns in twin turrets forward and aft, thereby presenting a very small target to hostile batteries. The monitors lumbered forward like charging grizzlies, as they brought the shore batteries under range.

Among the sand dunes a mile behind the base heavy German mortars turned their short blunt muzzles skyward and roared defiance. The trajectory of their shells was very high, describing an arc five miles from point of flight before falling. These huge messengers of death reminded me of plunging meteors. I later learned they made two hits on the advancing ships.

At the pilot's nod I pulled the release on two bomb-racks. Instantly the plane zoomed and climbed for altitude. I half turned in the cockpit and glanced down. Each bomber had released one quarter of its deadly load. Over half of them were direct hits. The concussion was so terrific that we were blown upward a hundred feet or more. Many search-lights were extinguished. Apparently one bomb fell on an ammunition-dump serving what I judged was a five-inch battery. I saw several guns and two-score men leap skyward and vanish in a great wave of flame. We banked sharply for another dive and events happened with lightning rapidity. I was aware that squadron after squadron of light fighting craft had followed in our wake with twin machine-guns burning red as they poured streams of steel on the searchlights and gun crews.

My next impression was that the sky was black with ships. A plane came down in a screaming dive with throttle wide. It cut across our stern and in a search-light's glare I noted the black crosses on wing tips. It was the first Fokker! Two British Spads duplicated his mad dive. I am positive I saw this within three seconds. My next impression was that a huge dog-fight was on and our fighters tried desperately to prevent the Fokkers from shooting the bombers down until we could release our remaining bombs. From across the canal new anti-aircraft batteries opened on friend and foe alike. I heard the roaring explosions of the shells around us and was aware my plane pitched violently. One of these shells made a direct hit on a Fokker, which vanished in trails of black smoke. To my rear and higher was a blinding crash and in a flashing glance I saw that a Fokker and a Camel had collided, telescoped each other and burst into flames. They fell like a single meteor and struck the last bomber on our right wing formation. The three ships, like fabled flying dragons, still locked in deadly combat, fell together. We swung in to fill the gap as the wing commander signaled for another dive. I saw one Fokker closing in fast with a British Spad on his tail. They seemed to come straight up a searchlight beam. I made the most of my opportunity as he flew into my sights and caught the Fokker with one long burst. He nosed over and went down but I never knew which of us got him. We dived and I pulled the release on the second group of bombs as my turn came. It looked like Hades down there. We zoomed again, and for the first time I had a good view of the seaward side of the base.

Steam trawlers,—similar to American mine-sweepers,—crowded with British marines were alongside the breakwater, and the marines charged cheering up that narrow causeway straight into the muzzles of blazing machine-guns set for rapid fire. No blaring bands and waving flags there—this was grim war! Their ranks grew thinner as they neared the mainland. Entire platoons seemed to melt away in their tracks while scores of others threw their rifles away, stumbled and rolled into the black water. Heroes all; I never dreamed of a more sublime exhibition of desperate courage in the face of certain death. An old British submarine filled with dynamite and manned by a volunteer crew ran under the mole unobserved by the Germans. It crept slowly up alongside the breakwater until it rested on the mud. Time-fuses were laid and the crew escaped in a tiny boat. There was an awful explosion; three hundred feet of the mole rose skyward, carrying a hundred Germans with it.

WE dived twice more and released our remaining loads of Lewisite with success. The smoke was now too thick to be sure of our aim. We then expended five thousand rounds of machine-gun ammunition on the searchlights and their crews. Here the light Spads did yeoman work as they dived to a hundred feet with Lewis and Vickers guns spewing death at six hundred rounds per minute. We again climbed for altitude and I caught a fleeting glimpse of the old *Vindictive* lying off the mole. She had been filled with concrete. Heavy batteries were trained on her at close range. A great gaping hole was torn in her bow. Her superstructure and after turret was gone. Even as I looked, her forward mast and fighting top went down, taking a smoke-stack with them. Screaming shells tossed huge geysers of water on her decks. Some one pressed a key and the mines attached to her bottom exploded. Great columns of water rose skyward; she settled to her last home in the bottom of the channel—and the great raid was over!

We landed safely at our hangars over an hour later minus four bombers and seven pursuit-ships. Lieutenant Bradford grinned and pointed to neat rows of holes between his cockpit and mine, as he inquired if my harp was in tune. Thus St. George's Dav was celebrated.

# The Fight Aboard the Bisley

*The lively story of a mutiny aboard a British Ship.*

By **Capt. Barry O'Brien**

I WAS serving as second mate of the S. S. *Bisley*, a British-owned tramp steamer when I had a nerve-racking experience. We had been chartered by a French shipping company for a voyage to the River Plate.

Our crew of twenty ratings, which had been engaged at Rotterdam, were a nondescript crowd, composed of Dutchmen, Belgians, a couple of Greeks, an Armenian, and an American, who had been a stoker in the Peruvian Navy.

All went well until we reached Santos, in Brazil. While discharging part of our cargo there, we discovered that a lot of stuff, including booze and a case of gold watches, had been pilfered. At first we blamed the stevedores, but when, the night before we left Santos, our own crew got gloriously drunk, we knew that they were the culprits, and the Captain took the mate and me to search the crew's quarters.

In the sailors' fo'c'sle the Captain discovered a couple of gold watches, which he dropped into his pocket. He was about to search a third bunk, when a big bucko named Swartz confronted us.

"Who the hell invited you in here?" demanded the big seaman truculently. "Get out, or be thrown out."

"So this has been your game," retorted the Captain, meeting the bully's eyes unflinchingly. "Embezzling cargo, eh?"

Hardly were the words out of his mouth than an empty bottle hurtled across the fo'c'sle, and smashed against a stanchion within a few inches of the Captain's head. The next instant there was a rush of men. The Captain fell, jumped up, and staggered back toward the door. Some one struck me in the face. I responded with a right swing, and a man in front of me collapsed in his tracks. Wielding an empty bottle with his right hand, the mate kept the crowd at bay, while he pulled the Captain out.

Shouts of derision rang out from the fo'c'sle as we retreated. "By God, it's mutiny," muttered the Captain. "They'll pay for this!"

At midday the chief engineer reported that the firemen had refused duty. It was decided the Captain and our supercargo should keep all the bridge watches, while we three deck officers, assisted by the bo's'un and carpenter, kept the fires going. Then the American ex-Navy man came up on the bridge, and announced he intended to carry on with his job.

Before dark, fearing an attack from forward during the night, we rigged a fire-hose above the fore well deck. It was arranged that a single blast on the siren should be the signal for the engineer to start the ballast pump, and for those off duty to rush up onto the bridge.

A shrill blast on the siren awakened me about two o'clock. Leaping from my bunk I ran out on deck and up onto the bridge. The Captain was already there, and a moment later the carpenter and stand-by cadet arrived.

"There's something in the wind," the Captain murmured quietly. "All of you keep your eyes skinned, now."

On the fore deck, dark figures were flitting stealthily to and fro. Presently, keeping in the shadow of the bulwarks, the crew began to creep aft. Slipping down onto the upper deck we manned the fire-hose, and waited. I had hold of the nozzle; the cadet stood by the hydrant valve.

Suddenly with a wild shout, the whole crowd on the fore deck rushed us. The cadet opened the hydrant valve, and with a seething hiss a long, fierce jet of cold water leaped from the nozzle right into the midst of the howling mob. Gasping and

spluttering, and almost swept off their feet, the men staggered backward.

Suddenly, above the uproar, came the rasping shout of Swartz's voice: "Come on, boys. Let's pull out the fires!" The next moment, leaving us in possession of the upper deck, the mutineers rushed aft.

The Captain broke into a laugh.

"They'll catch hell down there," he declared. "Anyway, let's follow them."

Leaving our supercargo in charge of the bridge, we ran aft. The mutineers had gone down over the fiddley top; we went down by way of the engine-room, clattering down its iron ladders as fast as our legs would carry us. As we reached the maneuvering platform, yells and shouts arose from the stokehold, at the fore end of the engine-room. Among them I distinguished the voice of our American stoker, charged with fury. The dull thud of a blow from the flat of a shovel suddenly rent the air, followed by a stream of guttural oaths and screams from one of the mutineers. The Captain had been right. Quite clearly, the mutineers were not having it all their own way. Two of them lay stretched out on the stokehold plates when we arrived on the scene, bleeding freely from nasty wounds on their heads. The remainder had been herded into a corner. Armed with shovels and iron bolts, and streaked with blood about their faces, the engineers and our stokehold squad looked a truly formidable lot. The unexpected arrival of the Captain, carpenter, and myself definitely turned the scales in our favor, and realizing this fact the mutineers made a rush for the fiddley ladders that led up to the deck above. The majority of them succeeded in making their "get-away" in this manner, but Swartz and three others were cornered, and clapped into irons. Locking them up in the engineer's storeroom, and leaving one engineer to stand guard over them, and another to tend the engines, the remainder of us hurried up on deck—to find everything now quiet. The mutineers barricaded themselves in their quarters. To make doubly sure of them we barred and padlocked the fo'c'sle doors from the outside.

Thirty-six hours later, flying the signal, "Mutiny on board," we steamed into Maldonado Bay, where the British cruiser *Amethyst* was lying. The mutineers were placed under formal arrest, and later, with the *Amethyst's* armed guard on deck, we proceeded to Montevideo.

At the latter port the mutineers were handed over to the Argentine police. Later they were brought back on board, and tried by a naval court.


Every Good Boy Deserves Fun

LOOK!

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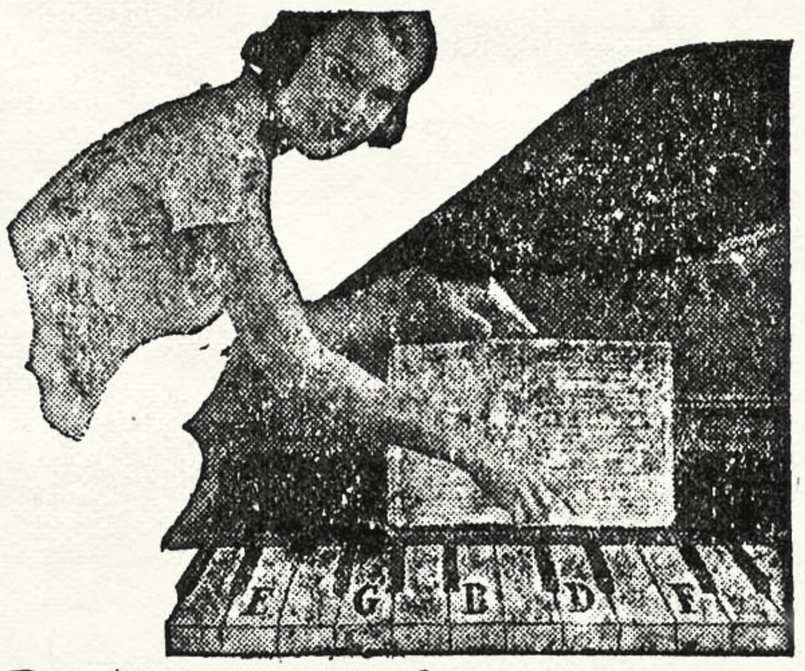


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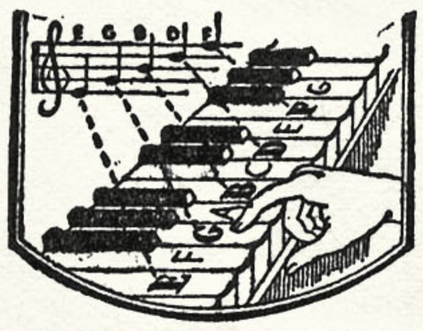

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