BLUE BOOK
MAGAZINE

January

NOW 15c

SINISTER SHADOWS
The Story of a Flying Fur-Trader

With the LEGION in BATTLE
A Real Experience by Prince Aage of Denmark

Also Edwin Balmer and Philip Wylie, Edgar Rice Burroughs and a Wolf of Arabia story by William Makin

Cash Prizes for Real Experiences

On Choosing Stories

"WRITING," observed an acute commentator, "is not literature unless it gives to the reader a pleasure which arises not only from the things said, but from the way in which they are said; and that pleasure is only given when the words are carefully or curiously or beautifully put together."

In the choice of material for this magazine we are governed first by what is said: by the power and pace and originality of the story; by the reality and human appeal of the people in it; by the interest of its background. But we must also be governed by the manner in which a story is told; for our readers are entitled to the best in this respect also.

Indeed, excellence of matter and of manner often come together; for the same fine qualities of mind which give originality, power and humanity to a story are likely to grace it with individuality and inspire it with force of expression. Consider for instance the stories of William Makin—"The Desert of Singing Sands" in our last issue, "The Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere" in this. They have everything that is required of a good story; with it they have that skill and felicity of statement that make living literature. (Another of these splendid Wolf of Arabia stories is scheduled for our next issue.) Consider also "When Worlds Collide" —a daring idea, set forth with purpose and conviction; people who are real and deserving of your friendship; added to these, a fine quality in the telling that makes it a novel among a thousand.

So too with Prince Aage's remarkable fact story "Combat Groups, Forward!" The same high qualities that made him the knight *sans peur et sans reproche* of the Foreign Legion shine forth here in the brilliant and moving style of his narrative.

Another conspicuous example of our theme awaits you next month, in Frederick Bechdolt's fascinating romance of sea and shore "Breakers Ahead," which appears in our next issue. Here again we offer you a novel that is a deeply interesting story—told, moreover, with a skill that makes it really literature.

—The Editor

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BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

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Cover Design Painted by Joseph Chenoweth

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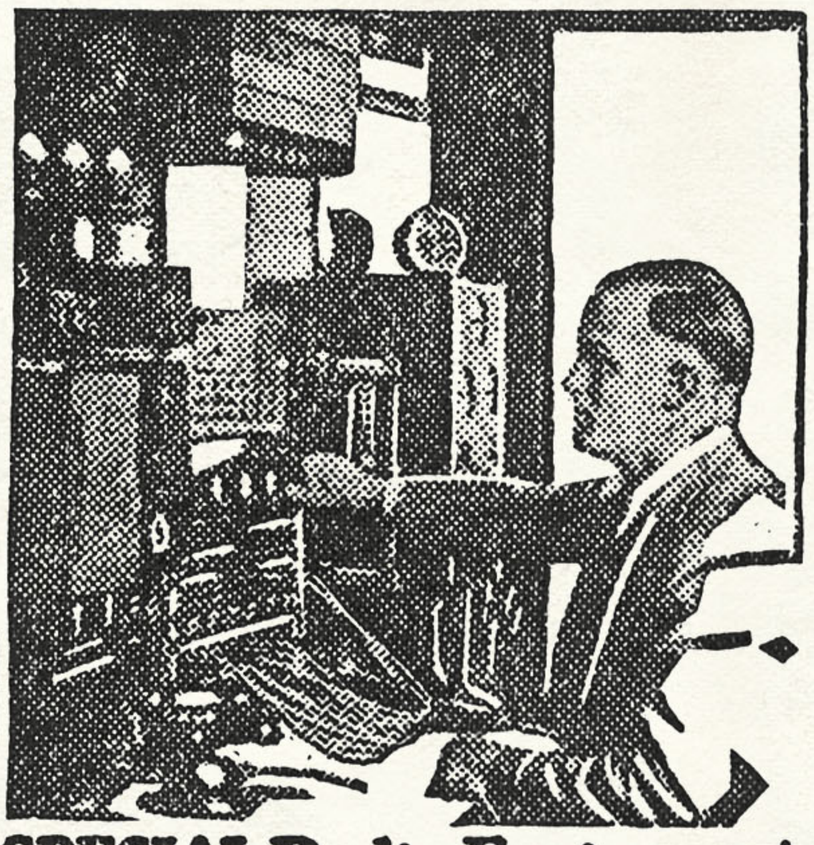

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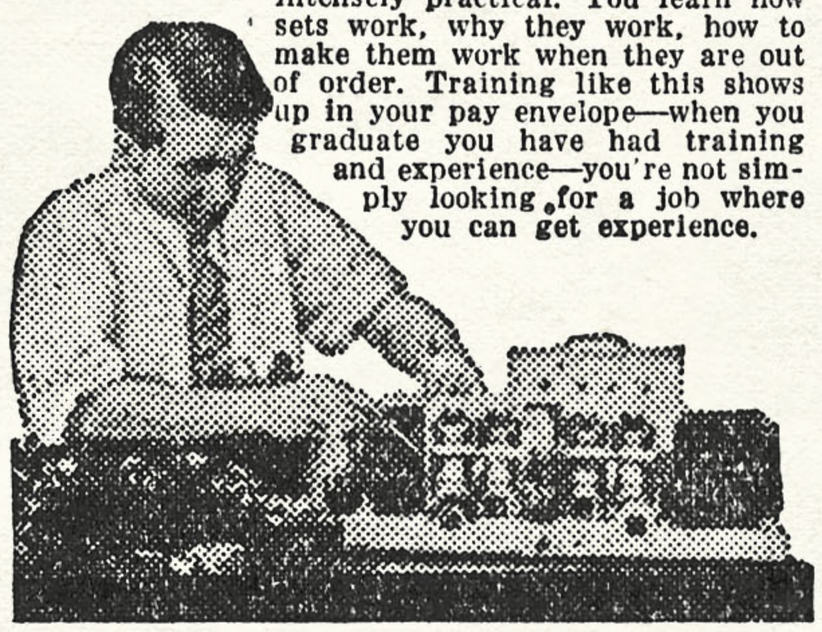

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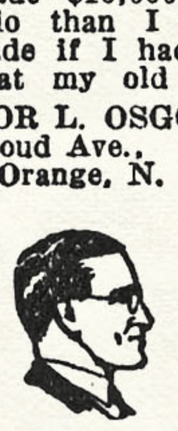

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The Sportsman's

IV—Freak Bets

SOMEWHAT more than a century ago, a fever of gambling swept England. No class was immune. Members of the nobility lost their estates, their reputations, and not infrequently their lives because of it. Others among the lowliest acquired great wealth. Not only were vast sums wagered, but freak bets made, of every conceivable kind.

"A hundred guineas to twenty," cried a young nobleman at a hanging of two criminals, "that the shorter gives the last kick." The bet was accepted. He won.

A waiter in one of the gambling-clubs fell in an apoplectic fit. "Dead, for a thousand pounds!" a noble peer exclaimed. The wager was instantly accepted. When the landlord would send for a doctor, the bettor upon death objected to any medical aid, insisting that all be left to the efforts of Nature or the bet was void; and when the proprietor dwelt upon the loss he would sustain by the death of a faithful servant, His Lordship removed all grounds for objection by ordering that "the fellow be charged on my bill."

In 1809 Capt. Barclay, a famous pedestrian and sportsman, successfully ended a walk of one thousand miles in a thousand successive hours, winning thereby the equivalent of $80,000 for himself and over $420,000 for his backers.

Six years later an itinerant baker abandoned his dough long enough to win an unique wager. He bet $50 to $250 that he would stand upon one leg for twelve hours. The sportsmen assembled with purses; the crowd laid and took the odds. A square of carpet was nailed to the floor of a room and at three o'clock the hardy baker appeared without hat, coat or shoes, and proceeded to stand, duck-fashion, upon his right foot. At the end of eight and one-half hours his face showed the agony he suffered and the gentleman who had bet against him offered him half the wager to desist. To the astonishment of all, he declared he'd

Scrapbook

By Ewing Walker

win all or none, though the odds had risen to fifty to one against him. And win all he did, remaining upon one leg three minutes over the stipulated time.

Nothing was too trivial or too weird to prompt a wager during that hectic period. A Yorkshire sportsman won a considerable sum on the extent to which a pound of cotton could be drawn into thread. The loser bet it would not reach two miles. It reached over *twenty-three!*

Bets of huge sums, of fortunes, were frequent. Whole properties often changed hands at the card-table. The owner of Warthall Hall, for instance, lost all his money at cards; then, in a frenzy of excitement, he staked his entire estate upon *one cut of the cards,* the low to win. He cut the deuce of diamonds, and to commemorate the event placed upon the front of his house a representation of his lucky card and under it the inscription—

"Up now deuce and then a trey,
Or Warthall's gone for ever and aye."

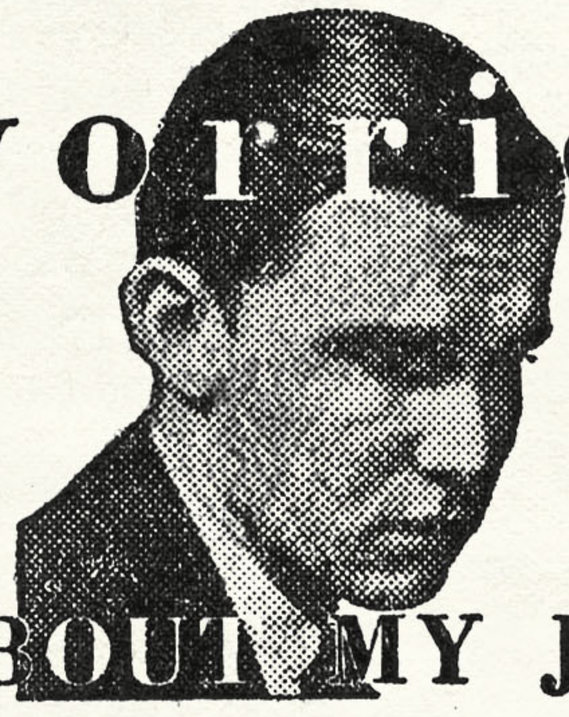
The sporting squire of Shelley Hall, in Suffolk, England,—one Thomas Kerridge, who died in 1743,—gambled away his house room by room; and, when the furnishings also were lost and the house gutted, he pulled down certain portions and gambled away the bricks.

Other freak bets were:

Lord Montford wagers Sir William Stanhope twenty guineas that Lady Mary Coke has a child before Lady Kildare, and twenty guineas more that Lady Mary Coke has a child before Lady Fawkener.

In the record-book at White's appears the following entry dated Nov. 4, 1754: "Lord Montfort wagers Sir John Bland one hundred guineas that Mr. Nash outlives Mr. Cibber." This had reference to two very old men, one the great "Beau Nash," the other an actor. Below this entry, in another handwriting, is the significant note: "Both Lord M. and Sir John Bland put an end to their own lives before the bet was decided."

"I WAS



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The Dhow

A tremendous adventure of that daring intelligence officer known to the natives as the Wolf of Arabia.

Illustrated by
John F. Clymer

The cargo was a human cargo; the skipper of the *Black Pearl* had bluffed another load of strange freight through the British patrol!

that Sailed to Nowhere

By WILLIAM J. MAKIN

"D'YE no ken anything that's more familiar-like than yon music, Rodgers?" asked McIntyre, the engineer on H. M. Sloop *Daffodil*. With an aggrieved air he reached for the whisky-bottle and helped himself liberally.

"You don't like Scarlatti, eh?" smiled Rodgers, seated at the piano. The Intelligence officer had been playing in the wardroom while the gray-painted, heavily armed sloop tore a trail of phosphorescence across the inky surface of the Red Sea at night. Lieutenants McIntyre and Rushworth lounged at ease, pipes aglow, and glasses at their elbows.

"Well, how d'you like this?" asked the musician—that amazing musician whose desperate adventures had earned him the name, among the natives, of the Wolf of Arabia.

He began to play some lilting melody cleverly syncopated. The two lieutenants brightened considerably. Rushworth began to tap the faded carpet with his foot.

"What is it?" he asked, as Rodgers brought it to a crashing finale.

"Haven't the faintest idea," smiled Rodgers, swinging round on the piano stool. "I'm told it's the latest musical comedy in London and taking three thousand pounds a week."

"Losh! Wouldn't it be grand to be sitting in the first row of the stalls tonight, you fellers?" said the engineer. "Instead of flitting about this damned Red Sea like a firefly gone mad."

"You'd only be happy, Mac, if someone else had paid for those stalls," grinned Lieutenant Rushworth, and cleverly dodged the book on navigation that was hurled forthwith.

At that moment there was a loud knock on the door of the wardroom. It swung open to reveal a bluejacket, his white garb giving him a ghostly appearance against the velvet-black background.

"Beg pardon, sirs!" he said. "Captain's compliments to Lieutenant Rushworth, and will he kindly report to the bridge."

He saluted smartly, turned on his heel, and disappeared.

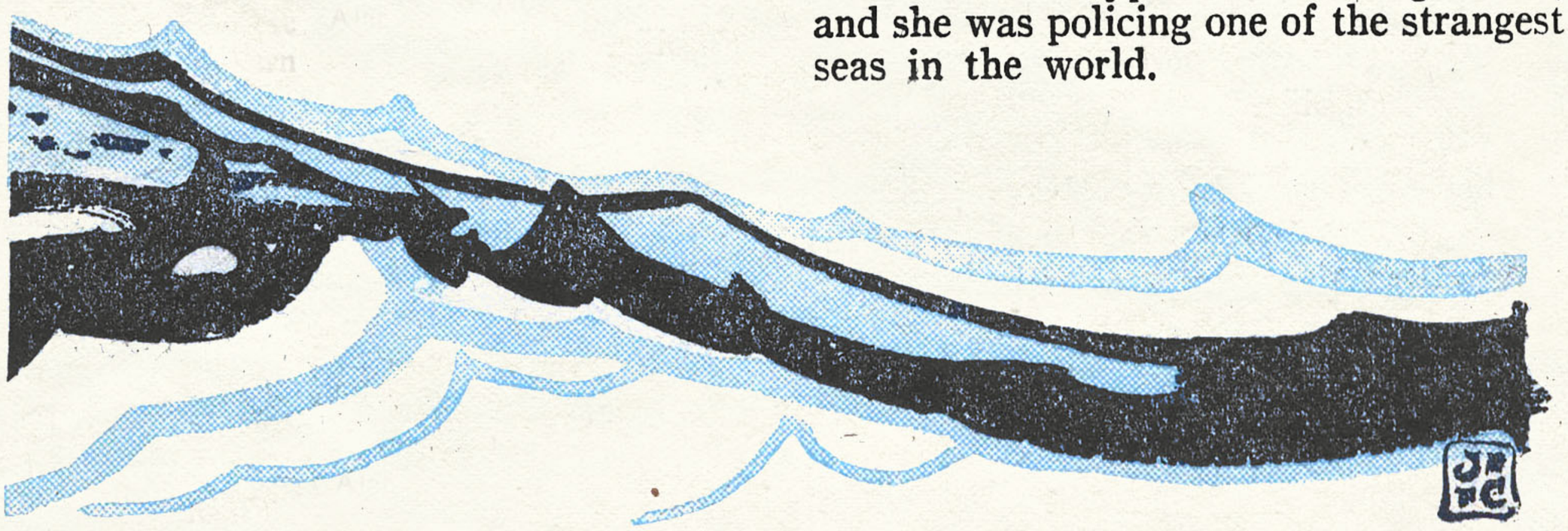
"Wonder what the old man's found now," growled Rushworth, emptying his glass hastily and seizing his cap.

"I think I'll come with you, Rushworth," interposed Paul Rodgers. "The old man asked me to go on the navigation bridge sometime this evening."

"Righto, if you're ready," said Rushworth cheerfully.

THE two men left the wardroom together. As they closed the door, Lieutenant McIntyre waddled solemnly toward the piano, set his glass on the top of it, and with one finger began painfully to poke out a melody that was suspiciously like "Annie Laurie." And tears dimmed his eyes.

Outside, Rodgers and Lieutenant Rushworth walked smartly along the throbbing deck. The powerful engines pounded away steadily. The *Daffodil* was the latest type of Red Sea gunboat, and she was policing one of the strangest seas in the world.



The full heat of this glowing, throbbing steel craft smote them as they began to climb the steel ladder that led aloft. Down below, streaming with perspiration, men were watching the oil furnace. From the smokestacks at their back a glow tinted the trail of black smoke. Above that, the bright starry sky swung over with the lurch of the sloop.

"Good evening, sir."

"Good evening, Lieutenant. Oh, is that you, Rodgers?"

Captain Dagenham punctiliously returned the salute of Lieutenant Rushworth. They stood on the confined bridge of the sloop, the hot moist atmosphere of the Red Sea smothering their faces like a relay of hot towels.

"Take the glasses, Lieutenant, and tell me what you think of that dhow," indicated the Captain.

Leveling the night binoculars, Lieutenant Rushworth stared steadily at an Arab craft heeling over to the bulge of its ungainly sail in the darkness.

"It seems to me, sir," he said, speaking slowly, "that it's the same dhow—the white dhow."

"I thought so," grunted the Captain.

"What's wrong with the white dhow?" asked Rodgers. He also was leveling his glasses in the same direction.

"Nothing," muttered Captain Dagenham, "—except—well, it's the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere."

"The Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere!" repeated the Intelligence officer. "A strange name."

"Yes, and a strange craft," murmured Captain Dagenham. "Three weeks ago, Rodgers, we came across the same dhow at this identical spot. But it was in the late afternoon. We watched it heading for some particularly dangerous coral reefs, two points to starboard. Then suddenly it vanished. We thought it had sunk with all hands. We even cruised about, expecting to find survivors. But one can't go very close to those damned reefs. And now, here's the white dhow again on the same bearing."

"Shall we signal her, sir?" asked Rushworth.

"Give her the searchlight!" ordered the Captain.

A COMMAND was whistled along the deck. Next moment the darkness was sliced by a white beam that swung like a gigantic wheel-spoke across the sea and settled starkly on the heeling dhow. Even more ghostlike was the white craft in that dazzling beam. But as the sloop nosed its way nearer, every detail of the dhow and its crew stood out with stereoscopic clarity. The crew seemed momentarily dazed by this beam of light blazing at them. They stood in stiff attitudes close to the mast and its crazy sail. A huge tarpaulin stretched across the boat to the high-built poop-deck with its tiller.

IT was the Arab at the tiller of the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere who attracted Rodgers' attention. He was tall, hook-nosed, and with the black beard of a corsair. A blood-red turban was twisted about his head. And his oblique eyes stared back challengingly to the little group on the bridge of H. M. Sloop *Daffodil*.

"A real sailor!" muttered Rodgers in admiration.

"Tell him to heave to!" ordered Captain Dagenham.

The order was barked along the deck. A man with a megaphone shouted into the night in Arabic. The Arab at the tiller gave a curt order; the static crew sprang to life like a collection of dolls jerked by a single string, and in a few moments the sail was flopping downward like a landslide.

"Shall I launch a boat and board her, sir?" asked Lieutenant Rushworth.

"No need to do that," barked the Captain. "Can you tell me, Rodgers, what that damned shorthand painted over her bow means in English?"

Rodgers had already seen it.

"The *Black Pearl*," he replied.

"The *Black Pearl*, eh?" repeated the Captain. "D'you see anything suspicious about her, Lieutenant?"

"She looks like a pearler to me, sir," replied the lieutenant. "You can see those lumps of rock aboard her. The divers tie them to their waist as they go overboard. And I believe those reefs are regular pearling-grounds."

"Umph!" The Captain still seemed suspicious. The crew were now walking over that black stretch of tarpaulin.

"Ask him where he's bound, where he comes from, and what he's got beneath the tarpaulin?" snapped out the Captain.

Again the man with the megaphone was busy. It was the corsair with the black beard who replied, standing with a dignified straddle on his little deck, and shouting his reply with cupped hands.

"He comes from Suakin—bound for the pearling reefs known to the Arabs as Ras Zukur—and has a cargo of dates to sell to other pearling dhows."

"Seems all right," muttered Captain Dagenham. "At the same time I'll swear this is the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere."

"I agree, sir," said Lieutenant Rushworth modestly.

"Switch off the searchlight—give him half a minute of darkness—and then switch it on him again!" ordered the Captain. "Tell him we're satisfied."

The megaphone bellowed. With what might have been an ironical salute, the Arab with the black beard raised his hand to the blood-red turban. And at that same moment, darkness obliterated him.

The three white men on the bridge waited, tense, for the darkness to be split again. They could hear the engines of the sloop pounding gently beneath them. Otherwise the darkness had brought with it a strange stillness. Even the gurgle of the sea was missing.

Somewhere in the darkness a bluejacket was counting the seconds.

"Twenty—twenty-one—twenty-two."

Captain Dagenham leveled his night glasses. His lieutenant followed his example.

"Twenty-eight—twenty-nine—let 'im have it!"

The searchlight stretched its bright arm onto the Red Sea. It revealed only a waste of waters. The light seemed to hesitate, uncertainly. It wavered, and then swept swiftly from side to side. But only the gray sea came within its orbit. The dhow had vanished as completely as though it had disappeared beneath the surface.

"The Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere—I knew it!" cursed Captain Dagenham.

"Yes sir," confirmed Lieutenant Rushworth.

They turned to hear Paul Rodgers' comment. But he also had disappeared.

Actually, he had made his way for'ard. There, leaning against one of the quick-firing guns, he followed the beam of light as it cut through the darkness of sky and sea.

THE Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere interested him. His gray eyes had glimpsed something aboard the dhow that even the keen vision of the naval men had missed. He had seen the tarpaulin move. Even though the Arab crew had walked lithely across it, he was not prepared to be fooled by the statement that the cargo was dates. He knew that something lived and moved beneath that tarpaulin. The cargo was a human cargo—and the black-bearded skipper of the *Black Pearl* had bluffed another load of strange freight through the watchful patrol of a British sloop!

LATER Rodgers sat at dinner with Captain Dagenham and his officers. The sloop was now throbbing its way toward Port Sudan, where it would stay some thirty-six hours before resuming its patrol of the Red Sea.

"Tell me, sir," murmured Rodgers, passing the port-decanter on to the watchful Captain, "do you find much slave-smuggling between Africa and Arabia?"

Lieutenant Rushworth winced. Captain Dagenham glared, the port-decanter poised in his hand.

Rodgers smiled. He knew that he was regarded as a queer fellow by these naval men. Despite the flaming friendliness of his hair and the charm of his manner, they could not help but regard him with a certain amount of suspicion. He belonged, vaguely, to that suspicious department known as Intelligence. Naval men have an instinctive dislike of Intelligence, be it naval or military.

Moreover, the adventures of this red-haired fellow with the gray eyes, had been recounted in that wardroom again and again. Whether the adventures were mythical or real, they savored somewhat of the underworld. And now that the fellow was actually among them,—a radio message from the admiral of the East India Squadron had ordered them to pick him up at Aden and convey him to Port Sudan,—his intellectual detachment secretly antagonized them.

"Of course there will always be slave-traffic between Africa and Arabia," said the Captain. "We wouldn't be cruising about in this damned hot weather if there wasn't any. But I think I can claim that we've stamped out the best part of it. Yes sir, there's very little of it crossing this ditch now. . . . But—er—you're not suggesting that the cursed dhow we stopped this evening was a slaver?"

"Of course not," smiled Rodgers, cracking a walnut between his palms.

"Well, then?" insisted the Captain.

"I happened to be in Mecca, some little time ago," said Rodgers. He spoke

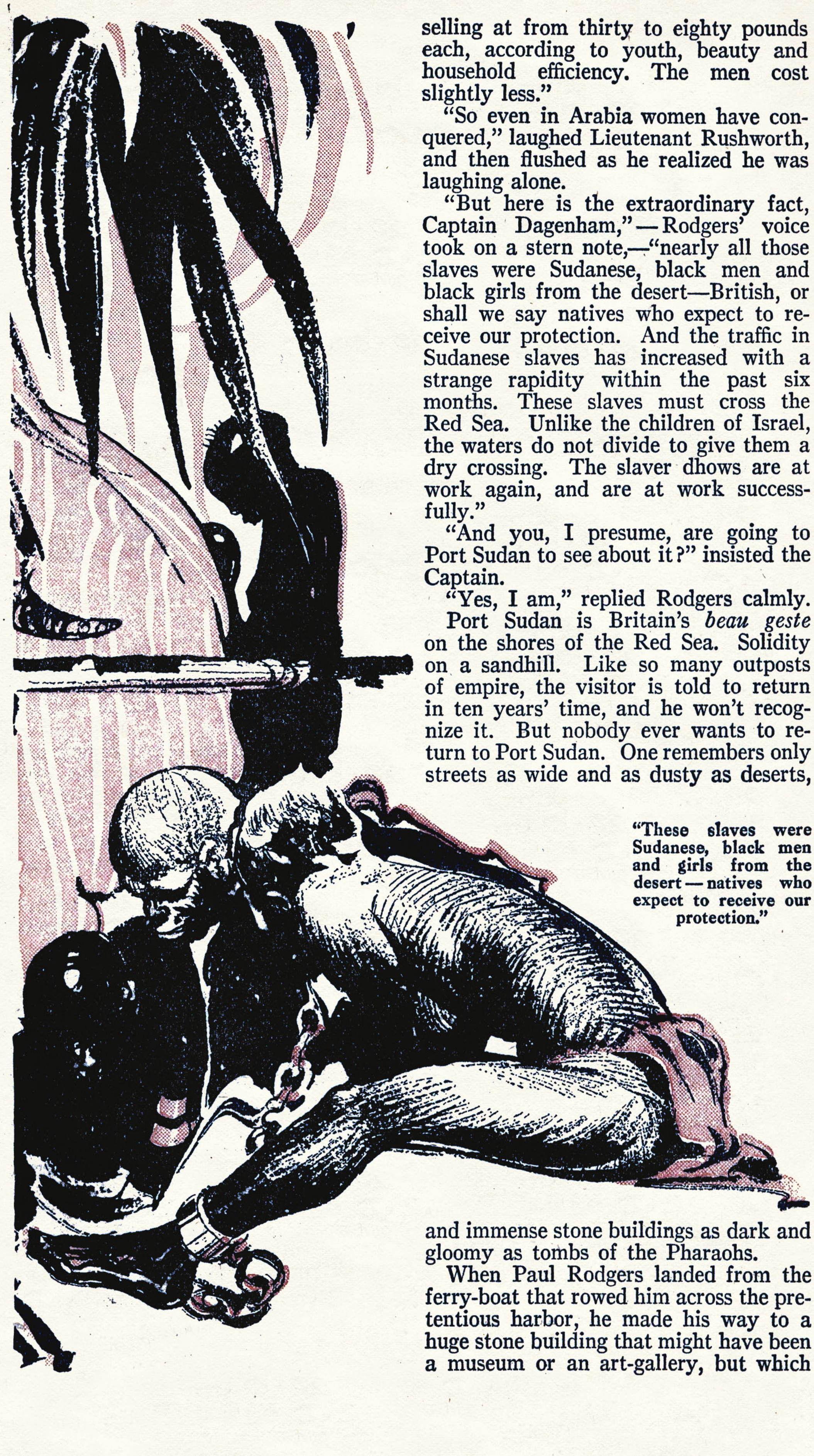
of the holy city as though it was as easy of access as a London suburb.

"As an Arab, I suppose," snorted the Captain.

"Naturally," smiled Rodgers. "And while I was there I strolled through the Sûk el 'Abîd, or Slave Market. It is a very narrow street. Tall houses on either side almost hide the sunshine and make a chasm of it. And the street is made even narrower by long benches of stone, rather like high steps, in front of some of the houses. On these benches, from early morning to late evening, sit the slaves who are for sale. Rather like a local dog-market, I thought."

"Disgusting, of course," said Captain Dagenham, replenishing his glass from decanter. "But as we have no control over Arabia, I don't see—"

"I talked with several of those slaves," went on Rodgers imperturbably. "There were girls as well as men. Their Arab masters were anxious to display the best points. They looked upon me as a prospective purchaser. The girls were veiled, but at one word from the Arab slaver, the veils were torn aside. The girls were



"These slaves were Sudanese, black men and girls from the desert — natives who expect to receive our protection."

selling at from thirty to eighty pounds each, according to youth, beauty and household efficiency. The men cost slightly less."

"So even in Arabia women have conquered," laughed Lieutenant Rushworth, and then flushed as he realized he was laughing alone.

"But here is the extraordinary fact, Captain Dagenham," — Rodgers' voice took on a stern note,—"nearly all those slaves were Sudanese, black men and black girls from the desert—British, or shall we say natives who expect to receive our protection. And the traffic in Sudanese slaves has increased with a strange rapidity within the past six months. These slaves must cross the Red Sea. Unlike the children of Israel, the waters do not divide to give them a dry crossing. The slaver dhows are at work again, and are at work successfully."

"And you, I presume, are going to Port Sudan to see about it?" insisted the Captain.

"Yes, I am," replied Rodgers calmly.

Port Sudan is Britain's *beau geste* on the shores of the Red Sea. Solidity on a sandhill. Like so many outposts of empire, the visitor is told to return in ten years' time, and he won't recognize it. But nobody ever wants to return to Port Sudan. One remembers only streets as wide and as dusty as deserts, and immense stone buildings as dark and gloomy as tombs of the Pharaohs.

When Paul Rodgers landed from the ferry-boat that rowed him across the pretentious harbor, he made his way to a huge stone building that might have been a museum or an art-gallery, but which

was really the hotel. That hotel he knew to be the most luxurious along the whole coast of the Red Sea from Suez to Aden. To everyone on the Red Sea it was known simply as *the* hotel.

RODGERS was received by the little excitable Syrian manager.

"Ah, Meestair Rodger'! You visit us once again, *hein?* Of course we have a room. You shall have the best. But I must ask you to excuse me for two meenits—two leetle meenits. A man is dying."

"Good heavens—where? Not in your best room, surely?"

The Syrian waggled his little head like a ridiculous doll that could not be stopped. His podgy white hand clung to the telephone-receiver.

"No—no—no. He is dying outside the hotel—outside *the* hotel. He will not go away and die elsewhere. He insists on dying outside *the* hotel. *Pouf!* It must be stopped. It is reediculous. I telephone the Residency at once."

"What is he—native?" asked Rodgers.

"He is a big black Sudanese," went on the Syrian manager, his loose head threatening to roll off his shoulders. "He is dying. You can see for yourself." His podgy hand waved toward the shaded side of the hotel. "Ah!" he cried in triumph into the telephone. "Ees that the Publeek Works Department?"

While the manager spluttered and explained over the telephone, Rodgers strolled onto the veranda that surrounded the hotel. On the shaded side, rooms opened out onto this veranda. A few dusty pepper-trees helped the shade, and beyond was the yellow desert of the street. And there, in the roadway, close to the hotel, was the dying Sudanese.

Rodgers strolled into the morning sunshine that beat down like a bludgeon on the bared fuzzy head of the Sudanese. He was an old man. What had once been a khaki shirt, now tattered and greasy, was flung carelessly across the broad black shoulders. He was a big black Sudanese, as the Syrian manager had said, but his body was terribly emaciated. The ribs stood out like charred sticks.

"What is your trouble, old man?" asked Rodgers in Arabic.

The man understood. He turned two glazed eyes upward. His wrinkled black face had flies swarming over it. He seemed too tired or indifferent to sweep them away.

"I am a lonely old man who is dying," he muttered. "Allah give me peace!"

"Allah will surely grant it," said Rodgers gravely. "But why not have the comfort of the hospital and the white doctor?"

The old man swayed to and fro, mournfully, in his squatting position in the dust. It was obvious that he was dying from malnutrition and exposure; his big body had suffered some terrible trial.

"I would rather die here," the old man mumbled. "I *will* die here!" His clenched fist struck the dust. "If they take me away, I will crawl back and die in this spot. And he who has taken my black pearl will have my shadow haunting him for the rest of his days."

The Black Pearl! As the old man dribbled the words in Arabic, Rodgers had a cinema flashback in his mind of a white dhow glistening in the beam of a searchlight. The *Black Pearl* was the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere.

"A black pearl!" repeated Rodgers. "A valuable black pearl, eh?"

"The only thing I loved and cherished in this world," mumbled the old man.

"And who has dared to rob you of this treasure?" asked Rodgers.

"A white man. One who lives and laughs, but whom I will torment with my shadow. He is—"

The old man raised a skinny black arm, the finger pointing. But at that same moment two khaki-clad Sudanese soldiers, their tarbooshes cocked at an angle and their military buttons gleaming in the sunshine, seized the arms of the dying Sudanese.

"Take heem away—at once!" spluttered a familiar voice from the veranda.

FOR a moment, as Rodgers gazed on this old man whose arms were held aloft by the Sudanese, he visualized that ancient great general of the Red Sea, Moses, who brought victory to the Israelites while his dying body was held up in this same fashion by two of his followers. He shrugged his shoulders.

"See that he is treated well!" he ordered the Sudanese soldiers. "He is not long for this world."

And he thrust a handful of loose silver into a fold of that greasy shirt.

Raised, and half-carried, the old man moaned a final protest.

"I will come back and die as I want to die."

A loud laugh came from the veranda of the hotel. As though lashed by a whip,

Rodgers turned. He saw an extraordinary figure standing there, a cigarette elongated in a cigarette-holder in one hand, a cocktail glass in the other: a tall man with a monocle in one eye. And the figure was garbed in the white military uniform of a Russian officer.

"PERMIT me to introduce myself, Mr. Rodgers," said the figure in the white uniform. "I am Captain Vladimir Korolenko, formerly of the White Russian Army. And I feel sure you need a cocktail after that compassionate little interlude in the hot sunshine. Permit me to order you a cocktail."

And without waiting for the curt refusal that was on the tip of Rodgers' tongue, he pressed the bell-button.

"Of course you feel sorry for that old man," went on the Russian.

"Who wouldn't?" replied Rodgers, nettled at the other's easy cynicism.

The Russian drained his glass as the native servant in the long white robe entered.

"Two Martinis!" he ordered briefly.

He indicated a cane chair. Aggressive, but nevertheless insatiably curious, Rodgers sank into it. The Russian lounged against the stone coping of the veranda.

"After all, he is an old man, and has lived his life. It does not seem to have been a particularly luxurious one. He is better dead. Why sympathize with anything that is already in decay?"

"A stern philosophy," remarked Rodgers, narrowing his gray eyes as if he would measure the queer mind that hid itself behind that apparently gay mask.

"Life itself is stern," retorted the Russian. "It is kill or be killed in these hot countries about the Red Sea. You know that as well as anyone." His smile was more disarming than ever. "It is only in decadent Europe that one can afford to keep alive the old and feeble. Africa is virile and ignores such a self-destroying philosophy. I understand the Zulus used to club their old men and women, once they became too feeble. Only when the humanitarian British governed them did the practice cease. But I must apologize. I was forgetting you are British, too."

"You seem to be acquainted with me," dryly remarked Rodgers. He accepted the cocktail that the native placed before him.

The Russian waved his cigarette-holder with a deprecatory gesture.

"Who has not heard of Paul Rodgers of the Red Sea?" he said quietly. "Your exploits, my dear Rodgers, are recounted from one end of the Red Sea to the other."

"You move about a good deal yourself, then?"

The smile faltered for a second.

"I am engaged in what you call 'business' in these regions."

"Mining?"

"No."

"Pearls, then?"

The smile on the face of the Russian was a little set.

"Is not everybody here interested in pearls?" he countered. "Naturally, a Russian refugee such as myself is grateful if he can pick up a pearl cheaply."

"Black pearls, for example."

The Russian shrugged his shoulders.

"A black pearl for preference. One must live."

It was Rodgers who smiled now during this conversation.

"That, if I may so, seems the essence of your philosophy, Captain Korolenko. One must live. Curiously enough that old Sudanese who has just been carried away only desired to die—and to die within a few yards of this veranda."

THE Russian removed his monocle and polished it with his handkerchief.

"Let him die!" he said with quiet vehemence. "Let him wallow in the misery of his last hours on earth. He enjoys his despair."

And with an india-rubber squeeze on his face, he replaced the monocle.

"That, if I may say so," said Rodgers, rising, "is a terrible philosophy."

"Terribleness belongs to greatness," smiled the Russian. "Let us not deceive ourselves."

"I think I recognize the quotation," murmured Rodgers. "Nietzsche, is it not?"

"Exactly," replied the Russian, holding out his hand. "I see that you are acquainted with the only philosophy that civilized men like ourselves can accept in these hot countries. . . . I hope we shall meet later."

"I am sure we shall," smiled the Red Wolf of Arabia; and taking the proffered white hand, he held it for a moment in his sunburned fist. Thus they stood and eyed each other.

"Au revoir!" murmured the Russian, and instinctively clicked his heels together and made a brief bow.

Rodgers sauntered back to the office. The loose head of the Syrian was lolling from side to side with a little more complacency.

"Ah, Meestair Rodger'. We have given you the best room. Number Eighteen. Your bags are already there."

"Let me see," mused Rodgers, "that is the room next to the Russian, eh?"

"Captain Vladimir Korolenko—yes. You have made his acquaintance, *hein?* A charming gentleman."

"Very charming—very charming," continued Rodgers, apparently in a daydream of indifference. "Where does he come from, eh?"

THE head of the Syrian began its metronome progress.

"He was once a personage of importance in St. Petersburg. But there the revolution—bah, these revolutions!—made him a refugee. He joined the Russian White army and fought against the Bolsheviks. He is said to be veree brave—veree rash."

"I'm sure he is," encouraged Rodgers.

"Naturally, after the failure of the counter-revolution, he fled—to Cairo. But there were so many Russians in Cairo. All those princes and princesses—those haughty princes and those exquisite princesses, *ma foi!* He left Cairo and came south. He goes up and down the Red Sea, just like yourself, Meestair Rodger'. Yes, just like yourself."

The words were being jerked out to the rhythm of his lolling head.

"But tell me," asked Rodgers with quiet directness, "how does he live?"

The Syrian gave a superb shrug of the shoulders.

"How do any of us live in these parts, Meestair Rodger'? Somehow, *hein?* He stays at the hotel on occasions. Visits the deserted city of Suakin, that city lost in the sand dunes, just forty miles from here. They say that he buys black pearls there, and sends them to a little shop on Fifth Avenue, New York. There is much money in black pearls."

"Black pearls, eh?"

Paul Rodgers stroked the back of his flaming crop with a characteristic gesture. He was thinking hard.

"And it is also said that he deals in *bêche-de-mer* on a little island in the Red Sea," continued the Syrian.

"*Bêche-de-mer!* But I thought the Chinese had cornered that."

The Syrian grinned.

"The Chinese collect it. There are two on the island. But the Captain Korolenko is the big business man. He is the man who does things in style. He has ordered the best motorcar in Port Sudan to take him tomorrow to Suakin. Business again. He is the devil for business."

"And the island—where is that?" inquired Rodgers.

The Syrian waved a hand vaguely toward that shimmering sheet of glass that stretched away from the yellow sand.

"Somewhere in the Red Sea, somewhere—"

He stopped. His eyes filled with horror. His head began to roll in hopeless fashion. Rodgers swung round and gazed in the same direction.

"That big black Sudanese has come back here again to die. *Sacré!* But I will not stand it." His podgy hand reached out for the telephone. "Geeve me the Publeek Works Department at once!"

Rodgers smiled and turned away. Then a thought struck him. He leaned over to the Syrian, who was perspiring in an agony of impatience at the telephone.

"By the way—you might order the second best motorcar in Port Sudan to be at my disposal tomorrow morning. Maybe I'll go over to Suakin."

"The Publeek Works Department—" moaned the Syrian.

RODGERS walked slowly along the cool corridors of the hotel toward his room. He still wore the light deck shoes that he had used aboard the *Daffodil*. His easy, lithe walk made no sound.

He suddenly found himself outside the open door of a room. He was about to walk in, thinking it his own. But he stopped. Inside that room Captain Vladimir Korolenko was laughing softly to himself. Something amused the Russian vastly. Seated in a cane chair, he was staring in front of him as at a picture.

Rodgers stepped softly to one side. He wanted to see the object that caused such strange mirth. He found himself staring into a mirror that was so balanced on a table that it reflected with the clarity of a cinema show the sunlit road beyond. And in the center of that mirror, an old man with the flies crawling over his black face, sat dying.

The Russian sat in his chair, smoking and laughing. The vision amused him. Rodgers tiptoed past the open door and reached his own room.

"A very interesting fellow, the Captain Vladimir Korolenko," he murmured to himself.

NEXT day two white men entered the deserted city of Suakin, and disappeared completely. They left the hotel at Port Sudan separately. And each of them sent back by his chauffeur a message to the Syrian manager that his baggage should be stored away until called for. But only one of those white men ever collected his baggage.

The Syrian manager was sorry to see each of them go. They were both residents of interest. And in the hotel visitors were never too plentiful. Business, at the moment, was placid. To the relief of the manager the old Sudanese had died during the night. He was discovered stark in the early morning sunshine. The Public Works Department did its duty expeditiously. The body was removed as a lump of refuse.

"And so he never recovered the black pearl he prized so much," mused Rodgers as the second-best automobile rushed him through the sand toward Suakin. His chauffeur was following in the tracks made by the car which carried Captain Vladimir Korolenko, and which had had a two-hours' start from Port Sudan. "Perhaps his shadow is even now haunting the man whose hand closed upon that black pearl," continued Rodgers, lolling at his ease behind the fezzed driver.

They bumped across the causeway that led from the mainland to the coral island on which Suakin was built. Soon they were in the town itself. Rodgers gave some curt orders to the chauffeur, and they turned through an Arab gateway into a courtyard. There the car was left while the Intelligence officer proceeded on foot into the town.

Suakin was not unknown to him. It always suggested itself as a city at the bottom of the sea. The houses, built of white coral stone, the deep silences of the deserted streets, the surge of the sea against the coral reef softened from a distance into a caress, and the peculiar greenish-blue sky of infinite depths that overhung this white grotto of a city—all emphasized the Debussy tones of its mystic unreality. Once, Suakin had been a flourishing Arab port. Then the British created the immensity of Port Sudan, thirty-six miles away. Sea and sand had swept through the deserted coral streets of Suakin. Its palaces were now empty of humans, except for stray fishermen or pearl merchants, solitary dwellers in a city that had been abandoned.

Into one of these apparently deserted palaces of white coral Rodgers strolled. He passed through filtering shafts of sunlight and shadow made by the fretted windows, until he came to a heavy door in front of which squatted four Somalis. Each Somali had a cruelly curved knife well displayed; fierce dark eyes were twisted into a slant of permanent suspicion, and their fuzzy golliwog hair could have concealed a whole army of daggers.

"Tell your master, Kra Krishna, that I would speak with him!" ordered Rodgers in the Somali tongue.

The four men regarded him with silent insolence. Then one condescended to stretch himself and lounged through the doorway. A few muttered words, and Rodgers was permitted to enter the room.

HE found himself regarding a fat brown Buddha who peered through a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles. Kra Krishna, despite his likeness to the squatting god of millions, was, however, a Hindu. He was so gross in proportions that he always gave the impression of having been forced into a chair. Much of the brown flesh bulged over. But Kra Krishna was one of the most successful pearl-dealers in the whole Red Sea region. Fleets of dhows set out from little Arab ports at one gesture of his podgy brown hand. Through those steel-rimmed spectacles he had squinted upon fortunes in the shape of glistening white and black pearls.

"Ah, it is Rodger' *sahib* who honors me with a visit!" exclaimed the Hindu, in a struggle to extricate himself from the chair. He was restrained by Rodgers' outstretched hand, which shook his own in friendly fashion. He sank back in his chair, while the Intelligence officer seated himself in another facing him.

"It is a long time since we did business in pearls together," smiled the Hindu, revealing teeth stained by betel-nut. At the same time he clapped his podgy hands together, creating a devastating sound that suggested that his whole body had exploded like a paper-bag. A Somali lurched into the room at the noise.

"Champagne—one big bottle!" ordered Kra Krishna.

Rodgers began a protest, but that commanding podgy hand stifled it.

"Please—please, Rodger' *sahib*. Let us treat this as a ceremonial occasion. I

am deeply honored. And champagne is the national drink of all white men in these parts. Afterward we can talk business."

For ten minutes they sipped the oversweet warmish wine, and made inquiries about mutual acquaintances. It was all done leisurely in the best Oriental tradition. Then, lighting a cigarette, Rodgers asked casually:

"Ever do business with a Russian—Captain Vladimir Korolenko?"

THE Hindu's eyes narrowed. A brimming glass of champagne was in his hand, but he conveyed it to his lips without a tremor.

"I have heard of him, but we have never met," murmured Kra Krishna evasively.

"Captain Korolenko is in Suakin at this moment."

The Hindu replaced his glass on the table.

"Captain Korolenko is often in Suakin," he said.

Rodgers nodded.

"I know. He says he is interested in pearls—black pearls."

"I have heard it said."

"And black pearls are your specialty, Kra Krishna."

"That is so."

Rodgers drained his glass.

"Doesn't it occur to you as strange, Kra Krishna, that anyone who is interested in black pearls should ignore the one merchant in the Red Sea who has the finest collection?"

"I am a dealer in pearls, Rodger' *sahib*," muttered the Hindu. "And black pearls are considered very rare. But there is, if you will permit me to say so, a type of black pearl that is common in the Red Sea. That kind of black pearl I do not bother about. Trafficking in it is too—er—dangerous."

It was as though the podgy brown hands had clapped together in an explosion again. Paul Rodgers realized everything. Black pearls! Slaves, of course. The Arab colloquialism. Farther south in Africa they talked of black ivory. Here on the Red Sea they whispered of black pearls.

His brain bubbled, like that awful champagne he had just drunk. The Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere, the *Black Pearl*, was a slaver. The black pearl that had been the treasured possession of the old man who died in the dust, was in all probability, a daughter. She had been sold and bought as a slave. And a white man was engaged in this business. The Nietzschean philosophy drawled forth so cynically by the Russian, was that the apologia of a slaver?

"I think I understand, Kra Krishna," he murmured.

He walked toward an open window. It showed the blue expanse of sea, polished in the morning sunshine like a sheet of metal. A trail of surf revealed the long, tortuous channel that led to the harbor of Suakin. Idly he watched a dhow coming in from the open sea and being cleverly maneuvered into that difficult channel of coral reefs. A white dhow. There was something familiar in its appearance.

An ancient pair of binoculars rested on a table by the window. Rodgers seized them, leveled them at the dhow making for Suakin. Like a close-up on a cinema screen, a tall hook-nosed Arab with a black beard came into his vision. There was a blood-red turban twisted about the man's head. Rodgers slanted the glasses toward the Arabic scroll over the bows. The *Black Pearl!* So the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere was coming home. It was ready to run the blockade of British sloops with another cargo.

He snapped the glasses back and turned to the Hindu.

"Can I hire a dhow in Suakin for several days' voyage, Kra Krishna?" he asked.

The Hindu sighed, and tried to wheeze his body out of the chair.

"It is possible, Rodger' *sahib*," he replied. "The dhow is easy to obtain, but the crew—not so easy. Where do you want to go?"

"To an island, where they say there is much *bêche-de-mer*."

The Hindu moaned aloud.

"You will never get a crew, Rodger' *sahib*. I do not think you understand. This black-pearl business is a very dangerous business, and—" He hesitated.

"And Captain Vladimir Korolenko a very dangerous man, eh?" completed Rodgers.

A wave of the brown hand admitted it.

RODGERS walked back to the table. From his pocket he produced a handkerchief. Carelessly he spread it on the desk before the eyes of the Hindu. In the center of the handkerchief was a black pearl.

"How much would you say that is worth, Kra Krishna?"

"I am a dealer in black pearls," muttered the Hindu. "And black pearls are very rare. But there is a type of black pearl that is common in the Red Sea. That kind I do not bother about. Trafficking in it is too — dangerous."

Two brown fingers picked up the pearl and twisted it toward the sunlight. Eyes squinted at it. Then the pearl trickled into the Hindu's palm. The podgy, sweating hand weighed it as sensitively as a knife-balanced scale. A moment's silence, and then:

"I would give you two hundred pounds for it, Rodger' *sahib*."

"Meaning that it is worth at least three hundred!"

The Hindu looked pained.

"But I don't want to sell," went on Rodgers. "I only want to barter. You would like that pearl, eh?"

"It is a fine black pearl," conceded the Hindu.

"And you, Kra Krishna, have a small fleet of dhows, pearling dhows, in this harbor. I will give you the pearl, yes, give it in exchange for the use of one of those dhows and a crew of three men."

The Hindu perspired more than ever.

"Who will navigate the dhow?"

"I will."

"You are taking it into dangerous waters," murmured Kra Krishna.

"It is a very good black pearl," persisted Rodgers.

"True." The Hindu's eyes rested once more on the little black globule.

"Very well, Rodger' *sahib*." He twisted himself by a supreme effort out of the chair. "I will give the necessary orders."

THE two white men had left Port Sudan within an hour of each other in separate motorcars. They left the treacherous harbor of Suakin within an hour of each other in separate dhows.

Lying on the little deck near the rudder of the dhow *Sahalla,* Rodgers sensed through the medium of smell and sound the strange activities proceeding in the night aboard the *Black Pearl,* the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere, which was moored against an old coral jetty a hundred yards away.

It was too early in the night for the moon. A velvet blackness, pricked only by stars, overhung everything. Yet, stretched out on the little wooden deck, a turban and a draped loin-cloth his only garments, Paul Rodgers could visualize everything as clearly as though the brilliant searchlight of H. M. Sloop *Daffodil* were shining on the midnight scene.

There were the whispered words of command in Arabic, uttered by the *raïs,* the black-bearded Arab in the blood-red turban. His crew obeyed quickly, padding about the dhow with catlike tread. Ghosts, moving about a ghost ship. Within half an hour, the dhow was ready for sea.

Then came ten minutes of tense waiting. Silence enwrapped the *Black Pearl.* And an equally tense silence enwrapped Rodgers' dhow *Sahalla.* The sea lapped gently against the battered sides of the anchored dhows. A thin cat which stalked the little deck alongside the outstretched form of Rodgers, mewed plaintively. In the darkness a light shone for a moment and then flickered out. It came from the city of Suakin, the white coral walls of which loomed ghostly in the distance.

At last Paul Rodgers raised his turbaned head like a jackal, sensing the darkness. He heard the sound for which he had been waiting, the sound that told him that the age-old traffic between Africa and Arabia was still being pursued. It was the shuffle of bare feet in the darkness, a slithering, sighing sound punctuated by the soft *pad—pad—pad* of the feet that trod in freedom.

The slithering shuffle denoted the chain of slaves moving over the jetty to the dhow. They shuffled in that tired dissonance which marks the tread of slaves all over the world, whether they are listlessly walking into one of the innumerable elevators in a great city blithely whistling them upward to the factories and workshops, or treading the gangway plank of a dhow that means the beginning of a trail of endless toil and miserable endurances.

Pad—pad—pad! A muttered curse in Arabic. And then the smell of that chain of slaves. Sweating black men, the tang of dirty flesh, combined with the odor of soiled clothes, the halitosis of hashish-smokers and the pervading smell of stale coffee—a smell that had trailed across Sudan sands, dogged by jackals and suspiciously scented by the bigger beasts.

Pad—pad—pad. They were treading the gangway plank of the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere. It creaked protestingly beneath the weight of the chain of slaves. The catlike crew of the dhow clambered about the deck. The slaves were being stowed away, their bruised black backs against the worn wooden ribs of the dhow. More and more were stowed away. Rodgers calculated that about fifty slaves had shuffled aboard. There were more whispers in the darkness. Then the creaking of the gangway was lost in the creaking of the huge sail being hauled aloft. Like a black cloud scudding across a wind-swept sky, the *Black Pearl* glided between the coral reefs toward the sea.

Rodgers did not stir. Still crouched on the little deck of the *Sahalla,* he watched the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere nosing its way through the narrow channel. The whispering ghost craft merged into the darkness. He waited—half an hour, three-quarters of an hour, one hour. Then he rose.

"Let us start," he ordered in Arabic.

The crew of three Sudanese leaped toward the mast. The thin cat scurried out of sight. Creaking and shrilling, the sails climbed that crazy mast.

"Alù, Allah! Alù, Allah—the sails, O Allah!" chanted the crew.

The anchor was hailed aboard, and the dhow winged away from the jetty.

RODGERS had never navigated this coral-reefed channel. In the house of the Hindu Kra Krishna he had discovered an old Admiralty chart which he had studied closely, and its markings were imprinted on his mind. But for the most part he intended to sense his way toward the open sea with that same instinct that brought him safely through the desert wastes of Arabia.

At the same time the moon, like a blazing oil tanker on the horizon, began to climb out of the sea. Soon it silvered the surface and revealed to Rodgers'

searching gray eyes those treacherous depths where the knife-edged coral cut the watery envelope. With a hand on the tiller and occasional sharp commands in Arabic, he maneuvered the *Sahalla* with uncanny skill. Only once did he feel the gentle bump beneath that told him that the dhow was on the reef. But one of the crew had also sensed the danger. Without hesitation the Sudanese jumped overboard; he wallowed through the surf and seemed in a moment to be walking on the surface of the sea. Actually, he was standing on the reef, pushing madly at the bows of the boat. A moment later they were in deep water again, and the Sudanese had clambered back. His black feet were bleeding freely from those knife edges of the coral. But he pattered about the deck nonchalantly, leaving a trail of blood.

"Wallah! But you are a sailor in a thousand!" cried Rodgers.

The Sudanese grinned, showing his filed white teeth, and swaggered for'ard.

AT last they were out of the channel and in the Red Sea proper. A strong southeast wind was blowing.

"It is the Azzieb, master!" explained one of the Sudanese.

Rodgers nodded. He knew that wind only too well. It meant that they would have a rough passage. He set his turban tightly over that blazing crop of red hair and twisted another fold in the draped loin-cloth. Away in the distance the moonlight showed him a black sail cutting the surface like a shark's fin. He jammed the tiller hard over, and set off in pursuit.

Spray and sand pelted his half-naked body as he drove the dhow forward. The wind was sweeping across the Arabian desert, and the sand was carried over the sea. The *Sahalla* lurched and bounced in the troughs with all the buck-antics of which a dhow is capable. One moment her bows were pointing to the moon; then with an aërial spin and slide-slip she crashed back again. She followed this up by rolling her stern in the air, and wallowing once more in the spume. Every timber in her groaned and creaked.

But Paul Rodgers was thoroughly enjoying himself. He loved the Red Sea in this tempestuous mood. There was a challenge in the driving spray and sand that he was only too eager to take up; the sea was in a mood that suited his own temper. Drenched to the skin, the wind whistling against his body, he hummed snatches of strange music. He pulled away the turban and flung it at his feet. The three Sudanese, working like black demons at the mast, were awed at the sight of this man whose flaming red hair was strewn and matted by wind and spray over his dark eager face.

"Wallah! But I would sail with this *raïs* through the gates of hell and beyond," cried the Sudanese who had jumped overboard earlier in the voyage.

Never for one moment over the tumbling seas did Rodgers lose sight of that black fin cutting through the waves. The *Black Pearl* was a fast dhow. The black-bearded captain was also no fair-weather sailor. And despite his moaning cargo of slaves, he got a fine speed out of his pitching boat. The Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere was heading straight for some definite destination.

So intent was Rodgers on following the trail, so unwavering his gaze, that he did not notice a long black shape rolling and racketing toward him. It was only when he heard a warning yell from one of the Sudanese that he glanced swiftly to port. A heavy black mass of throbbing steel and pouring smoke was bearing down upon him.

Without hesitation Rodgers swung his helm hard over. Simultaneously he yelled to the black crew. The crazy sail swung sidewise. Tons of water poured over the deck. Rodgers had a glimpse of the thin cat being swept by the wave into the waste. He stretched out a hand and grabbed it. It squalled fiendishly.

At the same moment the throbbing mass of steel lurched past. Voices were yelling. Lights twinkled. The ship swung round in a ragged circle. Then a beam of light came stabbing from the steel ship. It was aimed directly at the *Sahalla*.

"Hey! Heave to, there!" megaphoned a familiar voice.

Half blind with salt and spray, a sodden loin-cloth clinging to his slim figure, Rodgers stared into the searchlight.

"This is H. M. Sloop *Daffodil!*" boomed the voice of Lieutenant Rushworth. "What the hell are you doing without lights on a night like this?"

FURTHER remarks were yelled in Arabic. Rodgers grinned into the searchlight. His hand still clung to the tiller. He was certain that not even his companions of the wardroom would recognize

in this sea-soaked Arab on the deck of a dhow the red-haired white man who had played Scarlatti on their piano. At the same time, taking no risks, he calmly donned the turban.

"My respects to the Captain of H. M. Sloop *Daffodil,*" he yelled back in Arabic, "and tell him to mind his own cursed business. I don't intend to heave to."

There was an audible gasp from the interpreter at this reply. Rodgers wondered what the effect would be upon Captain Dagenham. He felt sure that the silent service would not remain silent for long. He gave a curt order to the Sudanese. His crazy sail flapped over; he leaned hard against the tiller, and in a few seconds he had cut through the searchlight and was back again in that waste of sea.

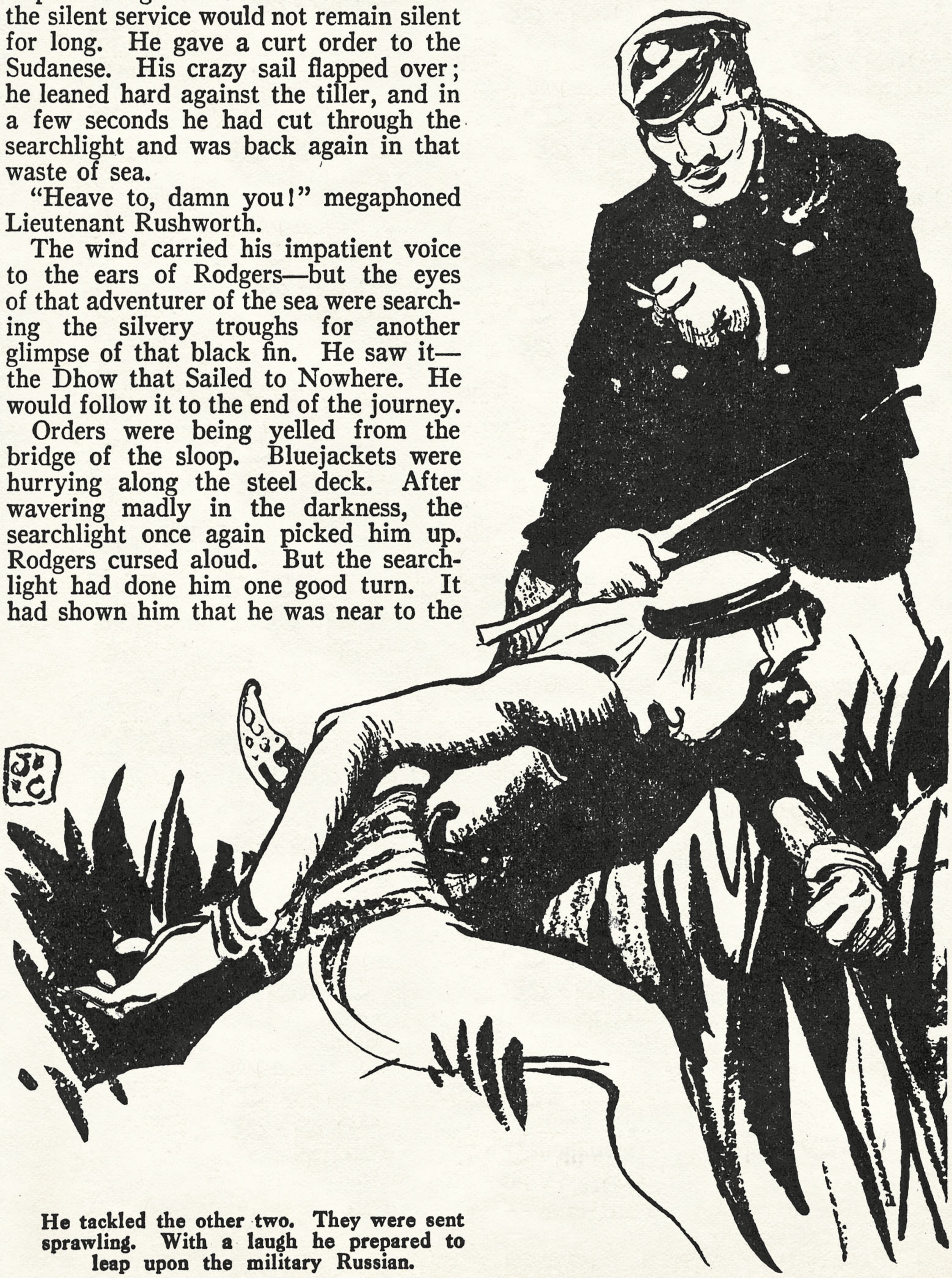
"Heave to, damn you!" megaphoned Lieutenant Rushworth.

The wind carried his impatient voice to the ears of Rodgers—but the eyes of that adventurer of the sea were searching the silvery troughs for another glimpse of that black fin. He saw it—the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere. He would follow it to the end of the journey.

Orders were being yelled from the bridge of the sloop. Bluejackets were hurrying along the steel deck. After wavering madly in the darkness, the searchlight once again picked him up. Rodgers cursed aloud. But the searchlight had done him one good turn. It had shown him that he was near to the pearling reefs known to the Arabs as Ras Zukur. He was almost in the same spot as that previous night when the searchlight had revealed the *Black Pearl.*

Now the searchlight was on the dhow *Sahalla.* The sloop was pitching in the heavy seas, while the dhow was being thrown about like a cork.

"I'm sure they're going to let off that gun that I once leaned against," muttered Rodgers to himself. "But I'll doff



He tackled the other two. They were sent sprawling. With a laugh he prepared to leap upon the military Russian.

my hat to gunnery mathematics, if they hit us."

"Heave to, or we'll fire!" came a distant shout from the megaphone.

Rodgers grinned, and kept his hand firmly on the tiller. The thin cat was busy with intimate ablutions at his feet.

Boom!

A spout of water shot up a hundred yards ahead.

Rodgers knew that this was a preliminary warning. He clenched his teeth, yelled an order to the Sudanese that sent them crouching out of sight against the ribs of the dhow, and swung the tiller over again.

Boom!

A whistle through the air that was not the wind caused the thin cat to look up curiously. The shot had missed the dhow by a few feet.

"I'll compliment that gunner next time I see him," muttered Rodgers.

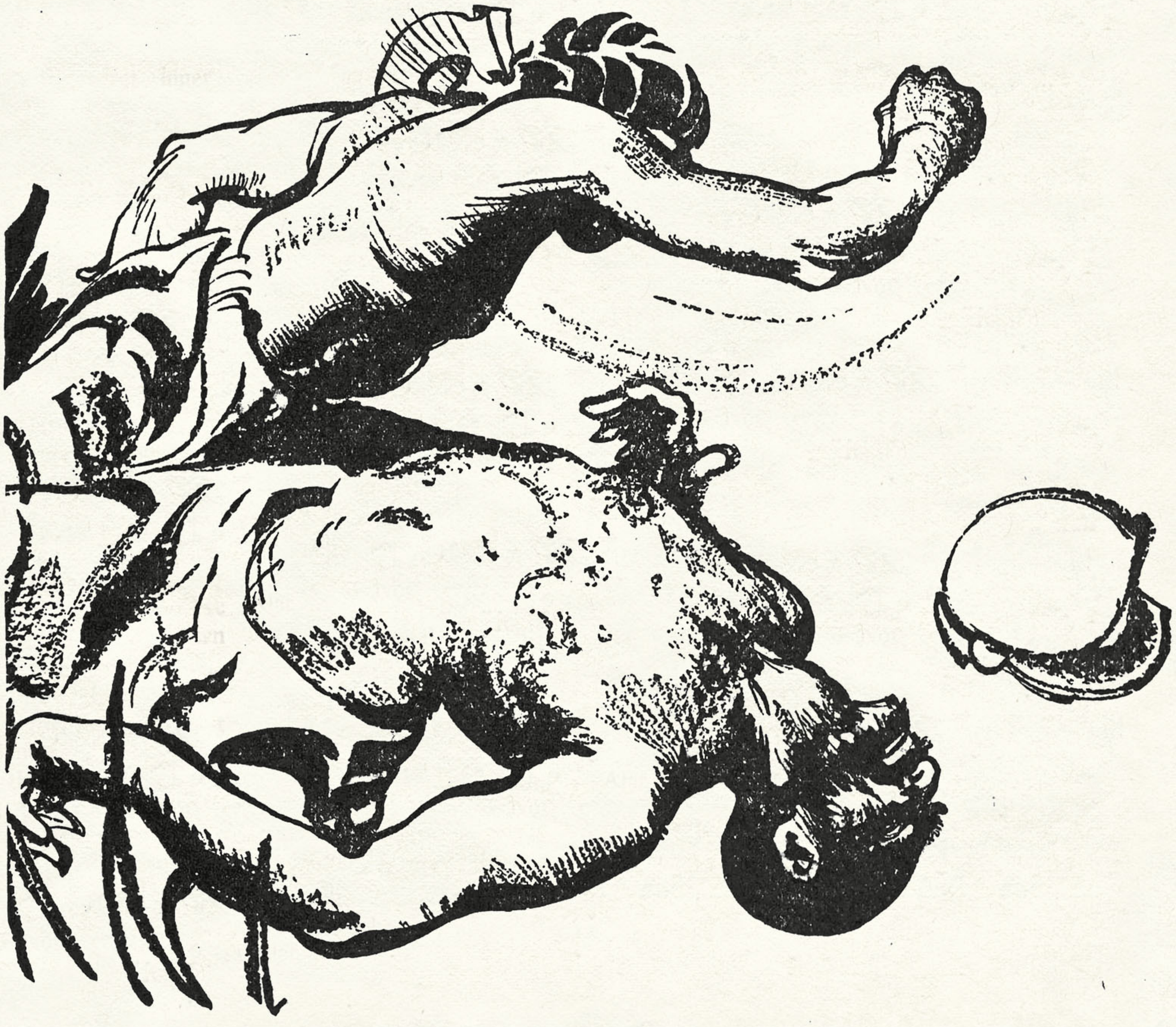
A third shot was wide of the mark. It was more difficult than shooting with a rifle at a celluloid ball bobbing about on a jet of water. Both the dhow and the sloop were pitching heavily. Nevertheless Rodgers kept on his course. His eyes were still on the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere.

The engines of the sloop were thundering into activity again. The searchlight wavered for a moment, and the *Sahalla* slipped into darkness. Rodgers glimpsed a line of creamy foam stretching before him. The coral reef again. His eyes searched it for a possible opening. He could see none. The black-bearded captain of the other dhow knew it well, and had gone through. In the minute's grace that the sloop was giving him, Rodgers decided on a gamble. He would jump the reef.

It was only a narrow strip; but if the white teeth came against the bottom of the dhow, the timbers would be ripped asunder. The gamble depended upon the heavy waves that were rolling over it. One of them might just carry the *Sahalla* over. He tacked, and waited.

"Pray to Allah, my men!" he yelled.

It was at that moment that he saw a heavy wave bearing down upon them from behind. It came towering toward the stern with a rush that threatened to engulf them. Rodgers flung his weight against the tiller. The wave caught



them, lifted them, rushed them forward and sent the dhow hurtling at the reef almost as a porpoise shoots from the sea.

In those few seconds Rodgers lived with an intensity and zest that few men can experience in a lifetime. The wind whistled against the dhow; the crazy sail flapped madly; the whole sky and the moon with a tattered cloud stretched across it, heeled sideways. And then came a sickening crash, and a welter of water swirled over the dhow. The bow lifted. Rodgers, knocked half-unconscious by the weight of the sea, still clung desperately to the tiller.

"*Allah O Akbar!* We are over!" the Sudanese cried.

He lifted a black hand in salutation to this mighty red-haired *raïs* who was giving them the sea-adventure of their lives.

WITH the dawn streaking the sky, Paul Rodgers found himself in calm but treacherous waters. The *Sahalla* seemed floating in a Sargasso of coral, red seaweed and queerly tinted water. When the vermilion drop-scene of the dawn had raised, he searched in vain for a glimpse of the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere. It had disappeared. Instead his gaze followed the pointing finger of a Sudanese who had climbed the mast. An island, a coral island, lay ahead.

Rodgers twisted his drenched body and gazed back at the reef over which they had driven the *Sahalla* like a sea-horse at a deadly leap. He was able, then, to see quite clearly the narrow channel through the reef, which the other dhow had successfully navigated. He pointed it out to the crew. They nodded their heads and grinned. Beyond the reef, against the rose-tinted sky was a thick smear of smoke. H. M. Sloop *Daffodil* was cruising there, watchful and, no doubt, irritated. Captain Dagenham had not dared navigate that expensive piece of floating steel nearer the reef. But he was determined to wait there for the return of that dhow whose captain had grinned into his searchlight.

Rodgers navigated the *Sahalla* slowly but surely through this maze of coral. At last they bumped against a beach. It was the island, a lump of coral rising from that wine-red sea and known to the Arabs as Ras Zukur. The three Sudanese raised a shout, and flung themselves down like tired beasts.

Paul Rodgers, however, wasted no time. He rummaged below the little deck and brought forth an Arab burnous, a doubtful white in color, but at least dry. This he donned, adjusted his turban, and called to the Sudanese. They stood before him, three tired but admiring men.

He spoke slowly and deliberately to them in Arabic. He pointed to the horizon beyond. They showed the whites of their eyes in surprise. Then he repeated his orders. They nodded understandingly. Finally he drew a scrap of paper from his burnous, scribbled on it in pencil, folded it and handed it to one of the Sudanese. Then with a smile, he clapped each of them on the back and stepped from the dhow onto the island.

"Time is precious," he warned the Sudanese.

In two minutes they had prepared the *Sahalla* for sea again. Rodgers watched them float gently away. The Sudanese at the tiller maneuvered her with a certain clumsy skill. They shouted a farewell to him.

"May Allah grant that we meet again, O master of the sea!"

Rodgers laughed, and turning on his heel, walked up the beach.

ALL was silent. Except for the *splash, splash, slosh, slosh* of small fish jumping away from the sharks that swarmed about the island, there was not a sound to be heard. The sharp coral cut through the sandals that Rodgers wore, and the sun swinging into the sky blistered him with devastating heat.

Slowly and painfully he crawled toward the top of a high ridge of coral. Once he had surmounted it, he gazed down upon a scene vastly different from that beach on which he had landed. Noise, tumult and life swarmed there. Black men, brown men and yellow men mingled in the mass. Three dhows, including the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere, were stretched like dead monsters on the farther beach. He realized that his guess had been correct. He was on the island of slaves.

Without hesitation he strolled down toward the swarming beach. In his dirty white burnous and turban he looked like any of the other Arabs who were kicking and hitting the black slaves toward a pen, built of coral, that had been prepared for them.

Rodgers joined in the mêlée.

The slaves that had been landed by

the *Black Pearl* seemed cowed enough by the storm of overnight. One of them dragged a broken limb over the sharp coral. There were several Sudanese girls in this batch, their finely built black bodies swathed only by pieces of dirty white calico. A few Galla men tried to carry themselves proudly, but repeated jabs from poles carried by some of the Arabs sent them sprawling again and again to the coral.

One of these Galla men, knocked to the ground, rose slowly with the gleam of madness in his eyes. He sprang with the agility of a flying acrobat upon the Arab who snarled above him—and with a sudden twist of his two black hands, he broke the neck of that Arab. The whole of that black and brown multitude seemed frozen into inaction. They followed the rapid sequence of events purely as an audience.

The Galla slave gazed down upon the dead Arab, stirred him with his black foot, and laughed. Then with swift strides he rushed over the beach toward the sea. Without hesitation he waded in to his thighs, and then struck out, swimming with powerful strokes.

Suddenly the mass of watchers were jerked into action as though a string had been pulled. Men ran to and fro, while babel broke loose. Then a girl slave screamed, and continued screaming at the top of her voice. She was pointing toward the sea, where the Galla man was still swimming.

Gliding toward the black arms thrashing the water were the fins of two sharks. The Galla slave saw them. He turned on his back and began kicking the water madly. But the fins came on relentlessly. He attempted a despairing dive to escape them. The white belly of a shark caught the sunlight as it twisted downward after its prey. The black body never came to the surface again. A patch of red appeared, floating like scum.

"QUITE rightly they call it the Red Sea, eh, Mr. Rodgers?" drawled a voice in English at the Intelligence officer's side.

He turned quickly. Captain Vladimir Korolenko, smart and alert in his white military uniform, stood there. The Russian was lowering a pair of binoculars through which he had been watching the futile efforts of the escaping slave.

Rodgers did not betray himself by any movement. He could see, out of the corners of his gray eyes, that four Arabs armed with pistols had, at a gesture from the Russian, casually grouped themselves about him. The other Arabs were speeding the slaves into the pen.

"The Red Sea, unfortunately, swarms with vermin—white vermin, such as yourself," quietly replied Paul Rodgers.

THE smile twisted dangerously on the face of the Russian. He stabbed a cigarette into the long holder, lit it, and puffed it with enjoyment for a few seconds.

"The death of that slave is unfortunate—financially," he drawled then.

"For you, no doubt," replied Rodgers. "But I think the slave is to be congratulated rather than pitied. That death is infinitely preferable to the life that you were prepared to sell him into."

The Russian sighed.

"Ah, these humanitarians! What a nuisance they are! Tell me, Mr. Rodgers, what do you think that slave was worth?"

Paul Rodgers shrugged his shoulders.

"I have seen such slaves sold in Mecca for forty pounds," he said.

"Forty pounds, eh?" muttered the Russian. "Not a bad price. Now, that unfortunate incident has cost me forty pounds. A lot of money."

"Blood money!"

The Russian laughed.

"Let us continue this interesting discussion on the market price of slaves," he murmured. "Tell me, my dear Mr. Rodgers, what price do you think would be bid for your own living body in the Sûk el 'Abîd at Mecca?"

"There will be no bidding for my body, alive or dead," replied Rodgers.

"No?" Captain Korolenko with a swift movement tore the burnous from the shoulders of the Intelligence officer. Then he eyed the physique with the appraising glance of a cattle-dealer. "A little thin, but wiry and strong," he murmured. "Yes, I think, Mr. Rodgers, that we could get fifty pounds for you."

"You flatter me," said Rodgers, narrowly eying the Arabs and their pistols.

"Not at all," continued the Russian. "Providence has been kind to me. I lose a slave in the sea. But no sooner is he lost, than a new one appears, one who very nicely walks into my camp. . . . Ah, my dear Mr. Rodgers, I knew you were interested in my activities as soon as I saw you at Sudan. When I heard that you had followed me to Suakin, I was certain. It was very adventurous

of you to follow the *Black Pearl* to our little island, but I gave orders to the captain that he should permit your dhow to keep us in sight. . . . And here you are, Rodgers of the Red Sea, as ubiquitous as ever, and full of the egotism of the lone fighter."

"Exactly, and not at your service."

"Of course not," replied the Russian, puffing a little cloud of smoke into the sunlit air. "A dangerous man, eh, who set out to thwart my choice of this historic and venerable profession—slave-dealing."

"I'm glad you're proud of it," said Rodgers, scorn in his voice.

"I find it—er—amusing and profitable," replied the Russian. "Is it, after all, any worse than that of the blackguardly business-man who thinks he can buy a typist, body and soul, for thirty shillings a week? There is plenty of slavery in London and New York, you know. Men deal in white pearls, as well as black pearls."

"Not decent men."

The Russian bowed.

"Vileness can only be practiced by great men. *I* am a great man. Yes, laugh, my dear Mr. Rodgers, but I rise above the common emotions of mankind. For example—yourself. I have already said you are a dangerous man. You intend to put an end to my profitable traffic. Logically it would seem best for me to have you killed like a dog, here on this coral island. I have only to give the word to these Arabs, and their pistols would spurt lead at you."

"And pray, why don't you?"

"Because my philosophy is stronger than logic," went on the Russian. "An enemy is a nuisance. He must be re-

"I'm afraid that won't be much use," a voice drawled. Half-naked, Red Rodgers confronted him.

"So!" murmured the Russian. "I might have known that we should have a final duel."

moved. But if, in removing him, I can also profit by him,—well, so much the better. And so it is with you, my dear Mr. Rodgers. I shall remove you, by the *Black Pearl,* to the shores of Arabia. There a price will be paid for you that will bring some profit to myself. I think you understand. There is nothing more to be said. My apologies for talking philosophy at such length in this damnable heat."

He bowed, and at the same time whispered a command in Arabic. The four Arabs threw themselves upon Rodgers. He caught one in the pit of the stomach with his foot, and sent him howling to the ground. His fist crashed into another's jaw and the fellow dropped with a grunt. He then tackled the other two. They were sent spinning. With a laugh, he prepared to leap upon the military-clad Russian who seemed to be watching the struggle with mild amusement.

But at that same moment something caught Rodgers round the throat and brought him choking to the ground. He tore at it with his fingers, and found a silken cord biting deeper and deeper into the flesh. His brain reeled. In the mists of unconsciousness that swirled about him, he heard the mocking voice of Captain Vladimir Korolenko:

"My Chinese servants can always be depended upon, Mr. Rodgers. They fish, not only for *bêche-de-mer,* but also for men. And they draw their nets uncommonly tight, don't they?"

And so the Red Wolf of Arabia was dragged across the beach to the coral pen where a multitude of slaves awaited their fate. . . .

At seven o'clock, in the cool of the evening, Captain Vladimir Korolenko sat down at his dinner table. He was dressed as a civilized European—semi-military mess-jacket, stiff shirt, two miniature black pearls as studs, a black bow tie that emphasized the ironic cast of his features. His monocled eye glanced approvingly over the white napery of the table, the gleaming cutlery, and the iced cocktail that stood beside his napkin.

"Excellent, Li Chung!" he murmured to the impassive Chinaman who stood beside the table. "Let us begin."

He smacked his lips appreciatively over the cocktail, and surveyed the luxury of the little hut which had been specially built on this island of coral. A sizzling kerosene lamp blazed on its brilliance—on the Persian rug that smothered the floor, the Indian hangings, the fretted

Arabian stools, and a long, low couch with cushions. And in the center the European table, laden with good things, including a bottle of rare *Chateau Margaux* which even now the Russian was carefully pouring into his glass. A bookcase, tightly packed, flanked one side of the hut.

The Chinaman placed a small dish of what appeared to be dried bananas before the solitary diner.

"*Bêche-de-mer,* eh?" exclaimed Captain Korolenko. "What a pity one is never served with them at the best restaurants in Europe! And how horrified the waiter would be if you told him you had a passion for sun-dried sea-slugs."

Li Chung, who understood but little of this meditation of a gourmet, did not change his blank expression.

The Russian ate with evident relish. A pilau, piled high with rice, followed. It encouraged the solitary diner to tip more of the *Chateau Margaux* into his glass and indulge in further meditations.

"A good job I didn't sell this cook to some pot-bellied Egyptian. He's the best slave I ever kept for myself. A Goanese. I really think he feeds me well because he hates me like the devil. And he hasn't had the courage yet to smother my food with powdered glass. 'Let me have fat men about me,' said the Shakespearean *Caesar* who feared assassination. But as a Nietzchean, I say: 'Let me have enemies about me, for then I am safe.' Even you, you expressionless yellow devil who waits at my table, you would delight in the chance of initiating me to some exquisite torture learned in the byways of Canton! Your health, and long life to me, Li Chung!"

He raised his glass of wine to the impassive Oriental.

SLOWLY and deliberately the meal proceeded. Through the open window facing him came a breeze from the sea. He could hear the sigh of the surf as it lashed into foam against the coral reef.

"A great man, this Paul Rodgers, of the Red Sea," he murmured to himself. "There is not room for two such men as Paul Rodgers and Vladimir Korolenko, in this region of the Red Sea. The greatest genius must survive, and he can survive only by crushing the other. It is well that my brain told me to wait. Sooner or later we had to meet. And now he is in my net, never to escape. This is indeed a night for celebration. Li Chung! Another bottle!"

With faintly blurred vision he watched the uncorking of the wine. The meal was ending. The cigarette-holder pointed toward heaven, and the incense of smoke curled happily toward the sizzling lamp.

The Russian stirred.

"Send Syyed to me!" he ordered.

NOISELESSLY the Chinaman slipped away. A few moments later a squint-eyed Arab entered. He cringed like a whipped dog before its master.

"Syyed, I would play the Caliph tonight," burbled Captain Korolenko in Arabic. "I noticed a tall coffee-colored Abyssinian girl in that bunch we brought over from Suakin last night—a girl in a white *chamma.*"

"She is in the pen, master," replied Syyed. There was a furtive grin on his face.

"Send her to me!" commanded the Russian, and with a wave of his hand dismissed the squint-eyed Arab.

A glass of wine in his hand, he walked over to a phonograph that stood in one corner of the hut. Above it, against a wall, hung a whip with a long lash. A slaver's whip.

"The emblem of my trade!" he chuckled as his monocled eye glimpsed it.

With the deliberation of a semi-drunken man he selected a record, placed it on the disk, and switched on the mechanism. The needle blurred its way into the *Roman Carnival Overture* by Berlioz. The symphony orchestra fiddled madly to the crescendo of the fireworks music.

"Gay music—wine—women," he burbled.

A shot rang out in the night. Then another. Bent in drunken ecstasy over the music, Captain Korolenko did not hear them. But he swayed round as Syyed, the squinting Arab, stumbled into the room. The man's dirty brown hands were clasping his side, and his face twitched with pain.

"Master—the slaves!" he moaned.

"Well, where is the girl?" demanded the Russian.

"The slaves—they are loose," cried the Arab in desperation. "That red-haired fiend whom you flung into the pen—he—he gathered the Africans together and attacked the guards. They have broken through the coral wall, have killed my men, and—and are now rushing toward this hut."

A silence followed these gasped words. Instinctively Captain Korolenko straight-

ened himself. His head jerked sidewise in a listening attitude. Then his face went pale as he heard that distant roar which was not the sea, a roar at the sound of which all men who have lived in colored countries shiver: A mob looting and intent on murder. The slaves—free, and seeking vengeance.

"The dhows! Get to the dhows!" cried the Russian.

The Arab groaned.

"Too late! They're burning them! Look!"

He pointed to the window. One swift glance by the Russian was enough. He beheld a Dantesque scene, a blazing ship on the beach with naked black men dancing madly in the glow of the flames.

"Your men!" commanded the Russian.

"All dead—or dying—even as I die!" groaned Syyed.

He took his hands from his side and looked at them, stupidly. They were stained with his blood. He stood for a moment in the attitude of a dirty schoolboy told to go and wash himself.

"Allah O Akbar!" he muttered, and pitched dead to the floor.

Captain Korolenko cursed aloud. He walked quickly to the prostrate body and kicked it.

"Fool! You let a handful of niggers get the better of you!"

The roar of the freed slaves grew louder. He jerked himself into action. Quickly he darted to the stool where his revolver lay gleaming in the unreal light of the kerosene lamp. As his fingers closed upon it the cool steel gave him a thrill of comfort.

"I'm afraid that won't be much use," a voice drawled from the window.

KOROLENKO turned with a gasp. Half-naked, Red Rodgers confronted him. He had climbed silently through the window and now stood against the phonograph which still churned its gay, carnival music by Berlioz.

"So!" murmured the Russian, drawing himself to his full height. The monocle gleamed evilly. "I might have known that we should have a final duel. Well, my friend, it is true that there is not room for both of us in these Red Sea regions, but by all the prophets of the Koran, you are the one to die!"

And with cold deliberation he raised the revolver and fired.

But simultaneously he dropped the gun and his fingers clawed at his throat while a hoarse scream rent the air. A silken noose was biting into his flesh, and behind him the yellow face of Li Chung was bared to the teeth in a ghastly grin.

AT the same time the symphony orchestra playing Berlioz went mad. It roared and snapped. The bullet had been jerked into the phonograph. Rodgers watched the Russian go on his knees. The monocle fell to the rug and rolled irresponsibly in a series of circles until it flopped into the blood of the dead Syyed. Korolenko's eyes bulged; his face went purple.

"I don't want him killed!" snapped Rodgers.

The Chinaman relaxed slightly. "All li'," he muttered. "He belong to me."

Another shot rang out in the darkness. The flames of the burning dhow flickered weirdly. Rodgers glanced through the window. A boat had sped, skillfully driven, through the surf and dark figures were landing on the beach. Bluejackets!

"Steady, men—steady!" yelled the voice of Lieutenant Rushworth.

"Keep him tied up!" ordered Rodgers to the Chinaman.

"All li'," replied Li Chung, and he grinned happily as Rodgers swung himself through the window again and sped along the beach.

The bluejackets were rounding up the slaves. They were managing to get some order out of this black chaos that spilled like a gigantic pool of ink over the white coral.

Paul Rodgers was shaking hands with Lieutenant Rushworth.

"Of course we didn't entirely believe those blighters in the dhow when they came alongside the *Daffodil,"* explained the lieutenant, "but your note seemed genuine enough. The old man was in a bad temper, too, and inclined to let you go to the devil."

"I'll wager he was drinking port at dinner," smiled Rodgers.

"How did you guess?" asked the lieutenant.

"Just a touch of omniscience."

"Anyhow, he let me take a launch and one of your black fellows, and we came through the reef and landed here. Just in time, apparently. What's the celebration?"

"Freedom," replied Rodgers. "This is a slave island, a sort of halfway house between Africa and Asia. These poor devils are the slaves. They battered to death the Arabs who guarded them."

"And who's the boss of this island?" asked the lieutenant.

"I'm going to introduce you to the gentleman," grinned Rodgers. "He's a Russian, full of philosophy and good wine. And he calls himself—"

He stopped, and stared at a flame that shot up in the darkness. The lieutenant turned and stared in the same direction.

"Gosh! That hut is ablaze. Petty Officer!"

"Yes, sir!"

A man jerked to his side, and saluted. But while the lieutenant was giving orders to the bluejackets, Rodgers was racing back to the hut. It was well ablaze when he reached it.

The dining-table was a chaos. A bottle of *Chateau Margaux* had rolled on its side and dribbled wine to the floor where it mixed with the blood of the dead Arab. Of the Chinaman and Captain Vladimir Korolenko there was no sign. Only one other object was missing from the room. It was the heavy slave whip that had hung above the phonograph.

A MOMENT later, the bluejackets were vainly attempting to quench the flames. There was nothing on that bare coral reef to aid them, however, and they had to stand looking on, helplessly.

"Beg pardon, sir!"

A bluejacket was saluting at Lieutenant Rushworth's side.

"Yes?"

"One of them dhows, sir, has just set out to sea!"

"What!"

Rodgers and the lieutenant swung round and gazed toward the white curl of surf. A dhow, the Dhow that Sailed to Nowhere, was leaping toward the darkness.

"Who the devil is it?" asked the Lieutenant.

Rodgers had seized his binoculars and was focusing them on the dhow. He was able to discern a strange figure at the tiller. It was not the hook-nosed Arab in the blood-red turban. He was lying on the beach, his head battered with coral, lolling drunkenly in the surf. The man at the tiller was Li Chung, and he grinned at a bound figure—a man in European dress who lay before him. And Li Chung held something else in his hand besides the tiller. It was the slave whip. Occasionally he lashed playfully at the trussed Russian. Rodgers swung his binoculars to another figure, clambering the mast and unfurling the crazy sail. A Goanese; Captain Vladimir Korolenko was in their hands.

A little shiver passed through Rodgers.

"Just a trio. They've escaped!" he muttered.

"There's still one dhow left," said the lieutenant. "I'll use that to take the slaves back to the *Daffodil*. A good night's work, eh?"

SOME hours later, Paul Rodgers stood once again on the deck of H. M. Sloop *Daffodil*. He was in Captain Dagenham's own cabin, and "the old man" was regarding him dubiously.

"Is this your usual costume, Rodgers, for adventuring in these waters?" he asked.

He noticed, rather petulantly, that the half-naked body was dripping water on his best carpet.

"I find it—er—the most convenient for my purpose," murmured Rodgers.

"I see." Captain Dagenham shuffled. "Er—have a drink, will you?"

"Thanks, but I'd rather not. I just stepped aboard to thank you for your excellent co-operation. Now I'll get back to my dhow."

"D'ye mean to say that you're going to sail that crazy thing back to Suakin?" exclaimed the Captain.

Rodgers nodded, a smile on his face.

"My crew expect me," he replied simply. "They're fine fellows, you know." He held out his hand. "Well, good-by, sir, and thank you."

Captain Dagenham took his hand.

Five minutes later, the officers and men of H. M. Sloop *Daffodil* watched that lithe figure with the flaming crop of red hair take its place at the tiller of the dhow *Sahalla*. The searchlight glared on the craft.

Rodgers snapped an order. The three Sudanese scrambled at the mast. Like a gigantic bat, the sail squealed upward.

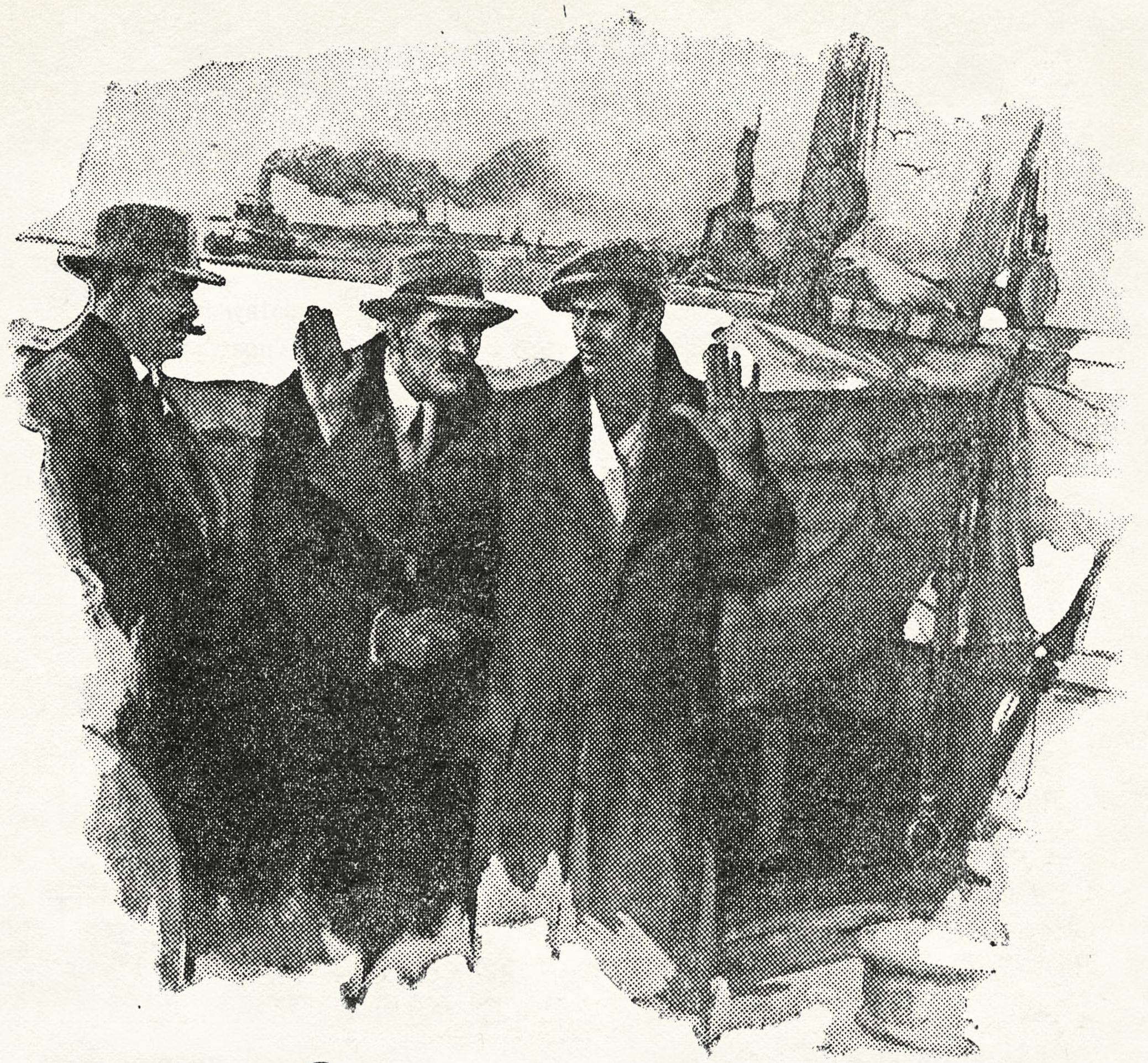
"*Alù Allah! Alù Allah!* The sails, O Allah!" chanted the crew.

A wave of the hand, a cheer from the bluejackets, and the dhow glided out of the shaft of the searchlight. . . .

One night, a year later, squatting in a circle of coffee-drinkers around the fire of the Brethren of the Black Tents, the Bedouins of the desert, Rodgers heard of a Russian, blind and crippled, who had been sold amidst laughter for five pounds in the Sûk el 'Abîd at Mecca.

He sipped his coffee thoughtfully.

Another thrilling adventure of the Wolf of Arabia will appear in an early issue.



The Last Half Hour

A specially interesting detective story.

By CHARLES LENT

Illustrated by J. C. Chenoweth

THE day I went to the docks where the *Rosa* was sailing for Italy, I didn't imagine there'd be anything special in it. That was early in November, a chilly, gray day. I had to see a guy who was sailing—on his honeymoon, *he* said, but to escape an investigation into how New York is run, my editor thought. I took a photographer along; I was to get a picture of the bride and groom even if I didn't get anything else.

I am a reporter on the *Star*. And I had been worrying a lot about my job. Because of hard times the paper had been cutting down its staff, and I was afraid I'd be next. A guy with a wife and family has a lot of serious thoughts in times like this. I told my wife Kitty, if I could only run across something big, —a murder or a scandal—a scoop of some kind,—it would put me in solid even in these times; but all I got was routine stuff like this assignment to the *Rosa*.

I WENT to the boat good and early and found my man. His name was O'Leary; he's a smooth guy, leader of a district over on the East Side where they get away with murder. That's no figure of speech, either. A guy who tried to buck him in the last primary met with a little accident—he was beat up and nearly killed one dark night; he landed in the hospital and stayed there until

the primaries were over. No fight left in him when he came out, and he raised no fuss. Didn't dare, so a lot of folks thought. His friends claimed—but not right out loud—that he'd been put on the spot by O'Leary and only the fact they didn't hit him as hard as they meant to, had saved him from croaking.

O'Leary had a swell suite on board the *Rosa* and the doll he married was a good-looker, so we got some photographs of her that would show up fine in our Sunday roto section; but I couldn't get O'Leary to talk.

So I sent the photographer off and decided to give the ship the once-over before I left, for it was still three hours till sailing-time; the *Rosa* was due to pull out at four in the afternoon. I'd noticed a lot of champagne in the O'Leary suite, and thought maybe after he'd drunk some of it with the friends who were seeing him off, he'd talk. So I decided to hang around, for I hated to fall down on my job.

Say, that *Rosa* is one swell boat—the last word in luxury. That surprised me, for it was an Italian boat and I'd never thought of Italians as sailors. Of course, Columbus was one, and he was some sailor—but that was a long time ago.

THERE were a couple thousand people sailing. There must be some folks left in this country with a lot of dough, for it costs like sin to go across on a boat like the *Rosa*. I saw a lot of important-looking people around, and I beat it down to the purser to ask him if there was anybody on board that I ought to interview. He gave me the tip that a prominent lady novelist was sailing, though her name wasn't on the passenger-list. I went to see if I could get an interview with her. Her cabin was down on B-deck and I went down there.

I found her a mighty nice woman, not young and not old, very pleasant and friendly. I mentioned that O'Leary and his bride were sailing with her. That bit of information made no hit at all. She made it plain that she had no opinion of the O'Learys and such-like in the New York city government. She said plenty, most of which I could quote. She didn't mention O'Leary by name—she didn't have to, for me to get wise as to whom she meant.

She found it strange, she said, that Americans stood for so much these days.

"Look at our big cities," she said. "Badly and extravagantly run, with graft rampant and unashamed. Or take any city you choose, provided it is big enough."

"Chicago?" I asked with a grin. The lady comes from Chicago.

"Why not New York? And what do *you* do about it? I'll venture to say you never even vote."

"You're wrong there," I told her. "I vote, usually for the loser."

"I've never heard of a band of patriotic young New Yorkers tossing the equivalent of tea into the harbor!"

"They know it wouldn't do them any good. They'd be arrested," I countered.

"The point I make is that they do nothing—they are supine! But they will wake up some day, and then the day of the grafter will be over. They will protest—and refuse to be put off with a wisecrack."

"Wait a moment till I get that down," I said. This was turning out to be great stuff. An exclusive interview—it would make me solid with the *Star!*

I must have sounded too eager; anyway, the lady took alarm.

"Please!" she said, then went on to explain that she wasn't talking for publication. She'd been misquoted once and it had been disagreeable. She was sorry; perhaps when she came back she'd give me a real interview, but not now.

I had to be satisfied, or pretend to be. But I felt disgusted with myself, for if only I hadn't put her on her guard, I'd have had a real interview!

STARTING down the corridor, I ran smack into a man who was rushing down the passage-way that ran at right angles to the one I was walking through. A woman was clinging to his arm. He didn't see me, and I didn't see him in time, and we met head-on. Gosh, for a minute I saw stars!

When I could see again, I looked up and I'll be blamed if I didn't know the guy who'd run into me! He was a small-time bootlegger, who came into the *Star* office every now and then. His name was Louis Sanafini.

"For Pete's sake, Louis, why don't you look where you're going?" I demanded.

Louis stared at me as if he'd never seen me in his life before. He looked dazed and queer; I thought he'd been drinking some of his own hooch; then I noticed for the first time that he was pale. Why, the guy was scared!

The woman with him grabbed his arm and began to talk fast to him in Italian.

She seemed to be protesting about something. Louis answered her in the same language. It was quite an argument. Louis wanted to do something that the woman didn't want him to do; she was half crying and very much upset. I could tell that, even if I didn't understand a word of what she said. Louis answered her impatiently, waving his arms and acting excited. He took a letter from his pocket and showed it to her, pointing to one sentence in it particularly.

Indifferently she started to read it—her manner said that no matter what was in the letter it wouldn't change her opinion. But what a change came over her! She looked up at him startled—afraid. He nodded his head as if to say, "You see," and she read on. By the time she'd read to the end you could see terror grip her. In a moment she was more frightened than he was; she grabbed his arm, not to hold him back as before, but to urge him on. The two of them started to run, and the letter she'd been reading floated to the floor at my feet.

"This young man picked up a letter on B-deck that I think you should see at once," said the purser.

"Hi," I yelled after them. "Louis, you dropped your letter!"

Louis looked at me over his shoulder as he turned a corner, but he did not stop, and a second later they were out of sight. I stooped down, picked the

letter up from the floor, and glanced at it; it was written in Italian and that was Greek to me. I started after them, meaning to give it back—the way they had both acted it must be important.

But I couldn't catch them. The last I saw of them they were running down the gangplank. They were bareheaded, and the woman had no coat. They were too far ahead of me for me to stand any chance of catching up with them. When they struck the dock, they both turned and looked up at the *Rosa* in a queer frightened sort of way and then went down the dock, still on the lope.

"A couple of nuts," I muttered to myself, and gave up any thought of trying to catch them. I looked at the letter in my hand. What the dickens was I to do with it? What did it all mean?

After thinking a minute, I decided to turn it over to the purser. He'd be able to read it and if it was important he'd maybe think of some way to get it back to them. So I walked to the purser's office. He was busy with a fussy passenger when I found him, but he gave me the high sign that he'd be with me in a minute.

I STOOD with the letter in my hand, wondering what it was all about. Louis was sure frightened; so was the woman with him—and they'd scuttled off the ship as if the devil himself was after them. Some secret-society stuff, I thought; it's said those exist over here. I was in a courtroom once when a witness on the stand got some sort of a signal—and shut up like a clam. He'd looked about as scared as Louis had. Neither the Judge nor the District Attorney could get a word out of him after that and all their threats made no impression on him. Queer, but they do say the average Italian is scared to death of these secret societies.

The purser got rid of the pest of a passenger and turned to me. I meant to hand him the letter and then ask him if he had another celebrity tucked away on board. I'd fallen down on two interviews since I'd come aboard the *Rosa*, but perhaps my luck would turn—maybe I'd get a story yet!

"Here's a letter I picked up down on B-deck," I said. "Written in Italian, I guess. Give it the once-over, will you, and tell me if it's important enough to get it back to the man it belongs to?"

"Certainly," the purser replied, holding out his hand for the letter.

HE took it and hadn't read three lines before he looked as startled as the woman had. He looked as if I'd hit him over the head with a club.

"Where did you get this?" he asked excitedly.

"Down on B-deck, just as I told you. A woman dropped it."

"Where is she now?"

"Over around Second Avenue now, I should say, from the rate she was going when she went from here."

"She's gone?"

"And how! She and the man ran off the ship so fast I couldn't catch up with them. I knew the man."

"This is straight goods you're giving me? This letter isn't a fake? I don't always trust you reporters."

"I don't know a darn' thing about the letter. I can't even read it. The woman dropped it and I picked it up. That's the straight of it. They turned and ran off the ship like a couple of scared rabbits; then I brought the letter to you."

The first thing the purser did was to look at his lists. He had a Mr. and Mrs. Louis Sanafini down on the list, with a cabin on B-deck.

I wondered what the heck could be in that letter, to get everyone so excited.

"Give me the low-down," I urged him. "What's in the letter?"

"Come with me," was all he said, as he started off on the run. He headed for B-deck, where he called a steward and had him open the door of one of the staterooms—Louis Sanafini's cabin, it was. From all the hurry and excitement I expected to find a dead body stretched out on the floor or something, but the place looked perfectly normal. There were three suitcases—one of them a woman's, to judge from the looks. That suitcase was half open and some one had started to unpack it. Magazines, some flowers, a big box of candy—all the usual stuff you see in a passenger's stateroom at sailing-time.

THE purser snapped a lot of questions at the steward:

"Where are these people? Have you talked to them since they came aboard? Any visitors? Any messages?"

"Yes sir. They ran out of here a few minutes ago—first the man, and then the woman after him."

"Ran?"

"Yes sir. They were in a great hurry."

"Did they say anything to you?"

"Not a word."

"Had anyone been in their cabin?"

"No visitors that I saw."

"Any messages?"

"Only a letter that I took to them a few minutes before they left."

"Stay here, steward; if they return let me know at once," the purser directed. Then he turned to me.

"Come on, we must see the Captain at once!"

He was off like a shot and me after him, wondering what it was all about. The purser wouldn't answer any of my questions on the way—just shook his head impatiently and hurried the faster. We were both out of breath when we got to the Captain. I'd gone along willingly, even eagerly, for I sensed that I might have a story before I left the *Rosa*. It must be something mighty important that would take us to the Captain.

ON board ship, the Captain is a reigning monarch—an absolute ruler. I can't think offhand of anybody who has quite as much power as has the Captain of a ship. That's as it should be. Take the *Rosa* for instance: She had cost millions to build; she had a cargo in her hold that was worth a lot; U. S. mails on board; money from American banks in her strong-room; and about two thousand passengers, with a crew of eight hundred or more. The boss of it all was this Captain I was being taken to see. Some important guy, I'll say, and I was being dragged along to him so fast you'd think we were going to a fire.

A fine-looking man, that Captain was, with eyes like an eagle. He looked at us sharply as we stood before him.

The purser didn't lose any time.

"This young man picked up a letter on B-deck that I think you should see at once," he said; and he thrust the letter into the Captain's hands.

The Captain read the letter quickly, and it got him going the way it had everyone who'd seen it—in an instant he was all hot and bothered. He talked a streak to the purser in Italian, not a word of which I could understand. He glared at me suspiciously and evidently asked the purser about me. I could just make out that the purser was telling him I was O. K.

Then the Captain turned to me and asked in English: "You know the man who dropped this letter?"

"It was the woman who dropped it. Yes, I've seen the man often—Louis Sanafini is his name. He's a bootlegger; I've seen him around our office."

"Do you know anything about this Louis Sanafini?"

"Not a thing."

Turning to the purser, the Captain asked: "The Sanafini cabin—has it been searched?"

"No sir."

"Better have it done at once."

The purser saluted and went out. I started to follow him.

"Wait, young man, if you will," the Captain said. "You may be of assistance to me."

"Certainly," I agreed.

"You do not read or speak Italian?"

"No sir."

Then the Captain did a queer thing. He stood over me, glowered, shook his fist in my face, and spoke rapidly in Italian. I looked at him, amazed—I wondered if he'd gone cuckoo. I didn't know he was handing me some choice and juicy insults in Italian to test me; he wanted to be sure I was ignorant of the language. Then he apologized, in English, and told me what he had been up to.

"You do not belong to any organization, any political organization, I mean, opposed to the Italian government?"

"No."

"I find that I must take you into my confidence. This letter warns Louis Sanafini not to sail on this ship. It says further that the *Rosa* is to be destroyed on this trip."

"Destroyed?" I gasped.

"Yes—blown up! The letter says that an infernal machine has been planted on board and that the ship will be destroyed before it is out of the harbor."

"Do you suppose that's so?"

"I don't know. It may be the work of a crank—or it may be a practical joke on the part of Sanafini's friends or enemies. I'm inclined to favor the crank theory, but I dare not take chances. You remember that some of the *Lusitania's* passengers were warned?"

"That's so," I agreed thoughtfully.

"YOU can help me decide. Think carefully—were these people really frightened? Was their fright genuine?"

"It sure was. Louis was badly scared, and the moment the woman read the letter, she was more frightened than he was, if that is possible."

"Was the dropping of the letter purely accidental, or did they do it purposely? Sanafini knows you're a reporter?"

"Yes; he's seen me in the office of the *Star*. But it wasn't a plant. They were both too frightened to know what they were doing."

The Captain hesitated; then he said:

"I'm going to put my cards on the table, the American way. This letter may be the work of a crank, but one of my passengers is an important Italian official. He has been in Washington on a secret mission. There are persons here who are opposed to my government. They may know of this passenger and what he has been doing in this country—and they may plan that he never reaches home with his report."

I just nodded.

"I shall be glad if you will remain near. I'm going to telephone to your Secret Service. They will naturally wish to question you. You won't mind staying, will you?"

SAY, that was a foolish question! He couldn't have driven me away from a story like this!

"Certainly, I'll wait. I'll do anything you say," I agreed with alacrity.

The Captain gave me a seat and a cigar, and went off to telephone. His ship was connected to the shore by phone, and would be, till a few minutes before sailing-time.

It didn't seem ten minutes to me before the Secret Service men and the cops were on the job. It must have been longer—but they weren't long about getting there. The head man of the Secret Service was named Stoddard. A mighty nice fellow! He didn't look like a cop; more like a prosperous business man, quiet and forceful.

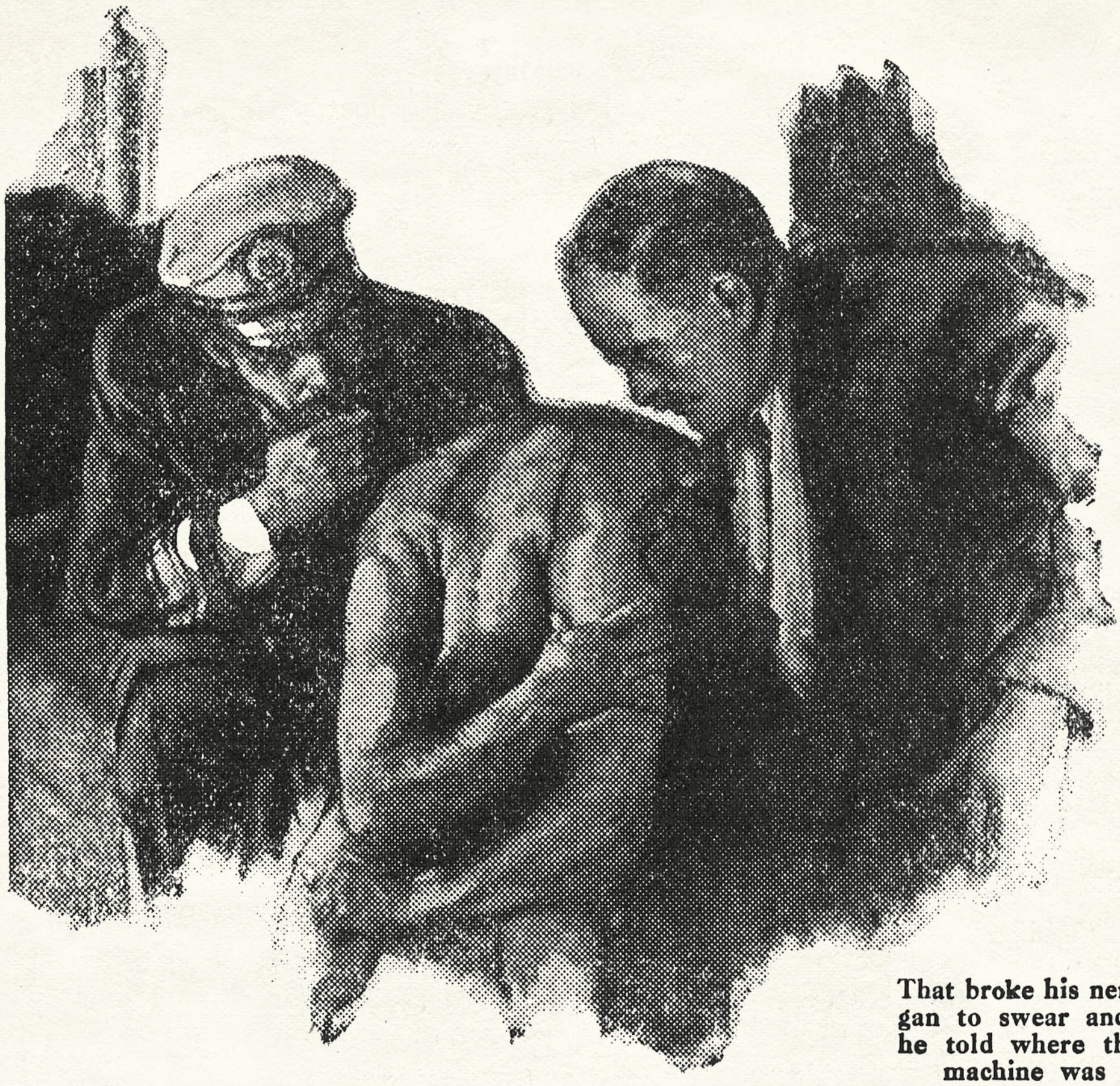
I was one of the first people he talked to when he came aboard. I told him all I knew about Louis, and the letter, and everything. He listened and then got busy. He didn't tell me to go, so I hung around, and no one objected.

The first thing this Stoddard did was to send a couple of his men ashore to look for Louis Sanafini. The next, was to get in touch with the harbor police and have a police-boat come alongside. He didn't say what for, but I soon found out—it was to take this important Italian guy off the ship and transfer him to another ship. He didn't want to go, insisted he wasn't afraid; but Stoddard explained that the Secret Service men were responsible for his safety—so go he did, but reluctantly.

And then the search began. Those cops went over the entire ship. And how they hurried! You see, they had to, for they were working against time. If the letter was right, there was no time to spare. The *Rosa* was to sail at four o'clock and if she was to be blown up before she got out of the harbor, that meant before five o'clock. It was one-thirty when Stoddard came aboard and took charge. The Captain and Stoddard worked hand in hand; the crew helped the cops. Secret Service men checked the passengers' passports; the stewards searched baggage in the cabins, and when they found anyone of whom they were the least bit suspicious, they rushed that one up before the Captain and put him through the third degree. With such a big passenger-list it wasn't surprising that they found some people who couldn't account for themselves—the *Rosa* was the world in miniature.

Stoddard called the minutes aloud: *"Four-twenty-eight — four-twenty-nine—four-thirty—"*

THE first sensation was the suicide of a passenger on C-deck. A cop and a steward had entered his cabin; the cop asked to see his passport, and the steward started to go through his baggage. This man,—he was down on the passenger-list as Richard C. Carter of Des Moines,—took one look at them, drew out his gun and blew his brains out.



That broke his nerve; he began to swear and sob—and he told where the infernal machine was hidden.

The purser came panting up to report this, and I trailed along when Stoddard started down to investigate.

When we entered that cabin on C-deck, sure enough there was the dead man, with one of Stoddard's men and a badly frightened steward.

The ship's surgeon came in a minute after we got there, knelt down by the body and examined it.

"He must have died instantly," he reported.

"Did he say anything?" Stoddard asked.

"Nothing. Looked frightened when we entered, pulled a gun, and shot himself."

"What's in the trunk?" Stoddard asked the steward.

"I haven't looked yet."

"Look now—quickly."

It was an ordinary steamer-trunk. They found the key in the dead man's pocket. It looked just like any trunk when it was opened. Gingerly the steward poked about among the shirts, pajamas, and underwear that made the first layer. I wondered if an infernal machine was hidden under the clothing.

Nothing like that—but what they found made my eyes stick out. A briefcase full of money—big bills, lots of them, and some important-looking stock certificates. Stoddard took the briefcase from the steward and let its contents fall out on the berth. We all knew we were looking at a fortune. Stoddard examined some of the bills and two of the stock certificates.

"Absconding bank clerk," was his verdict—and he was right. That's just who Richard C. Carter was. His name wasn't Carter and he wasn't from Des Moines, and he'd taken plenty when he decided to leave. When a cop came into his cabin, he had concluded he was caught and ended things right there and then.

But he hadn't the faintest connection with the bomb scare, so far as Stoddard could see. They examined his cabin and there was absolutely nothing to connect him with any anti-Italian agitation.

They didn't find anything suspicious anywhere else and the search was about over. The Captain thought—and Stoddard was inclined to agree with him—that the letter was the work of a crank or of Louis Sanafini's enemies. Some

one wanted to get him off the ship—and had thrown a scare into him.

That seemed reasonable, for they couldn't find anything amiss on the ship. . . . It seemed not only reasonable but a certainty when the men Stoddard had sent to look for Louis came back and said they'd found him dead—lying in the gutter outside a speak-easy, in the heart of an Italian settlement below Washington Square.

They'd found his body and that's all they found. It was broad daylight and some one must have seen him bumped off, but no one would talk. It was days before the police found out that he'd gone into that speak-easy and talked too much. He made it his headquarters and thought he was among friends. He was scared and talkative—told anyone who'd listen what a narrow escape he'd had, and that the *Rosa* was doomed. He got his, for talking too much.

Well, that seemed to make it certain that the letter was a ruse to get him off the ship where he could be put on the spot—that, and the fact that all was apparently shipshape on the *Rosa*. The Captain decided to sail as per schedule, and Stoddard was willing.

Stoddard said he'd stay aboard and have a police-launch take him and a few of his men off at Quarantine. He told me I could sail down the bay and leave the ship when he did. I wanted more dope on the passenger who'd killed himself, if I could get it, and I jumped at this chance.

AT four o'clock precisely the *Rosa* started. I went up to the sport-deck and stood looking over the side. Right below me was the boat-deck. I was facing New York and watched the skyline slip by. We were close to the shore and I could see autos going up and down West Street on the waterfront. People went about their business as usual and never even looked up as the *Rosa* went by. I don't mind telling you that dry land looked mighty good to me. The Captain was satisfied, and so was Stoddard, but I had my doubts. This ship was heading for Europe with a threat over her, and I couldn't help feeling a bit uneasy. I was glad I wasn't going all the way with her. We passed the Battery and I moved over to the other side of the ship. I wanted to see the Statue of Liberty when we passed her and I wanted to see if the launch that would take us off was in sight.

The sun was going down over on the New Jersey shore and ahead of us was Staten Island. I could see the ferry-boat for New York leaving St. George.

JUST ahead of us was a small launch headed so as to cross our bow. I looked at it, wondering if it was the one that I'd climb down into. Gee, it looked small—and it was a long way to the water from where I stood! I didn't relish having to climb down a rope ladder to it. I looked away and wouldn't have paid any more attention to the launch if some one in it hadn't thrown a beam of light in my eyes and blame' near blinded me. Do you remember doing something of that sort, in grammar school? You know, a piece of glass or a pocket-mirror that you dazzled the other kids with—or the teacher, if you dared.

I thought there was some kid on the launch just having some clean fun, till I noticed a guy below me on the boat-deck doing the same thing. He was wedged in beside a lifeboat where he was out of sight of the few people around him; only my being above him looking down enabled me to see what he was doing. I watched him idly for a moment, thinking he must be in his second childhood to get a kick out of such a kid trick. Then it dawned on me he was sending signals to the launch—and that they replied.

I was feeling nervous anyway, and when I really got what he was up to, my heart came up in my throat. Maybe the danger wasn't over. Maybe the *Rosa* was in danger—and I was on her, and Kitty and the baby were over there in Brooklyn waiting for me! Maybe I'd never get back to them!

I stood there—unable to move. I knew that something was wrong. The fellow down there was dark—an Italian, undoubtedly. Then the wind blew back the skirts of the fellow's overcoat and I saw that he had on a bathing-suit, socks and shoes and nothing else. On a November afternoon, that was queer! True, there was a swimming-pool on board,—I'd seen it,—but even if the guy had been going into it, he wouldn't first go up on the boat-deck. I watched him work the pocket-mirror he held in his hand. He was sending off a lot of dots and dashes. How I wished I knew the Morse code! But I'm no telegrapher—I'm not even a Boy Scout. I saw an answer flashed back from the launch—

And then I woke up!

I turned and ran down the deck and down the companionway to where I'd left Stoddard. Fortunately, I found him where I'd left him.

"Come quick! It's a matter of life and death!" I cried. "There's a man up on the boat-deck, making signals to a launch alongside. He's about ready to go over the side. Grab him quick!"

Luckily Stoddard was quick on the uptake. He didn't waste any time asking questions, but ran up on the boat-deck with me and collected a couple of his men as he went along. I led him to where the man was standing with his back to us, looking down at the launch that was now almost alongside.

Just as we arrived, this man kicked off his shoes, and started to shrug himself out of his overcoat. He was preparing to dive overboard.

STODDARD stopped that by pressing a gun in the middle of his back and ordering him to throw up his hands. The guy did as he was told, and in a jiffy they'd shoved him into the bar where a lot of impatient passengers were waiting for the ship to pass the twelve-mile limit.

The cops cleared out these prospective customers of the bar. The Captain arrived, also the purser, and more of Stoddard's men.

The prisoner was an Italian, all right —dark hair and eyes; not a bad-looking guy. Young, too, not much older than I am. And was he scared!

He was stubborn at first—wouldn't talk. They yanked off his overcoat and he stood there in his bathing-suit. He had a partly inflated belt under his arms; he wasn't taking chances about not being able to swim to the launch. He kept looking nervously at the clock over the bar. Stoddard knew why.

"It's four-twenty. You haven't much time," Stoddard told him.

The fellow looked up at the clock in a startled way.

"Where is the machine—and what time is it set for?" Stoddard asked savagely.

No answer—but he looked at the clock again and began to shake and shiver.

"Better give his cabin a thorough search again," Stoddard ordered two of his men. "Where is his cabin—does anyone know?"

The purser did, and told him.

"Next to the cabin of your important passenger," Stoddard said to the Captain. "Let's take him there."

We all moved out of the bar and into the cabin of this prisoner. He went along reluctantly and looked around absolutely terrified when we got back to that stateroom.

Stoddard took out his watch and called the minutes aloud: *"Four-twenty-eight—four-twenty-nine—four-thirty—"*

That broke his nerve. He began to swear and sob, and then he told where the infernal machine was. Begging and praying and sobbing, he showed the Secret Service men where to look in a ventilator. Stoddard took it in his hands,—it wasn't any bigger than my portable typewriter,—and carried it gingerly out of the stateroom to the deck. There, swinging his arm carefully, once—twice —thrice—he heaved it over the side. We all gave a sigh of relief. The prisoner gave a little moan.

At that, it was a narrow escape—for it wasn't ten minutes later that there was an upheaval in the sea behind us. A great column of water rose in the air, sixty feet or more. It looked like a waterspout.

"If that hadn't gone overboard, it would have split the ship in two," Stoddard said soberly. . . . .

I thought of Kitty and the baby waiting for me over in Flatbush. It gave me the creeps to think what might have happened to me.

The Captain and Stoddard had an argument about the prisoner. The Captain won out, for the man's passport showed he was an Italian; and he went to the ship's brig,—that's the jail,—to stay till he could be turned over to the Italian police at Naples. That scared the guy about as much as the bomb had. I guess the Italian cops are rough guys.

I went down a rope ladder into a launch when we got to Quarantine and never batted an eye, I was so darn' glad to leave the *Rosa!* When I thought what might have happened, I could have kissed dry land when I set foot on it!

I RAN to a phone and got the *Star;* a rewrite man took my story and when I got to the office later, they received me like some trans-Atlantic flyer. The *Star* had scooped the town on the attempted bombing of the *Rosa*—and I was in solid.

Then I headed for home and Kitty. I could hardly wait to get there, to tell her the news!

A fact story of campaign and battle

Combat Groups,

By PRINCE AAGE

THE company of the Foreign Legion, so spick-and-span in its fresh khaki when we marched out of Fez four weeks ago, now resembles a band of brigands. Wind and sun have tanned us until we are as swarthy as natives. The men, who strip to the waist whenever they have hard work to do, exhibit torsoes that a life-guard on a fashionable beach might well envy.

Four weeks have passed, and the moments of revelry in the garrison town appear like glittering stars, very remote from our black present. It seems many years since we stood at the bars of luxurious hotels, since we faced our friends across dinner-tables bearing porcelain and silver; and when one of us evokes such memories, we listen in wonder, like children hearing a fairy-table.

For twenty-eight days we have been plunging farther and farther through the Middle Atlas hills, and we are beginning to lose our sense of time and distance. We have fought one hard combat already; and we shall have to fight more very soon. Our camp becomes the goal of hostile prowlers every night; and snipers' fire has caused us to lose men and animals. We have known days without water, when our men would go about begging a drink from each other. On such occasions fatigue parties going down to the river with buckets have been ambushed, and men have been killed.

The column of which our company of the Legion is an element, is composed of about ten thousand men. Aside from the units of the Foreign Regiments, there are spahis (native cavalry), tirailleurs (native infantry), and Senegalese, troopers recruited in French West Africa. Airplanes fly above us every day. Aviation is invaluable here, reporting the progress of a combat, bringing us information as to where to find water, where we may encounter the enemy—precious tidings in a country where water is all-important, where the foe fights on his own soil and knows every fold of ground. The airmen also supply us with photographic maps, to help us pick our way in the maze of ravines and passages. And they bring our mail, which is tossed down to us enclosed in large canvas sacks.

And we must advance, slowly, carefully, until we attain our goal: El-Mers.

This native village is the political center of one of the most hostile tribes in Morocco, a tribe which has never submitted to alien rule, which resisted the authority of the sultan as it resists that of France. Their chief not only wields earthly power, but he is an inspired religious leader, a marabout. We all know that he has aroused the fanaticism of his followers, that he has promised them that French steel or lead cannot harm them, so we are aware that the battle will be bitterly waged.

Our foes are well armed with modern

with the Foreign Legion.

Forward!

OF DENMARK

Illustrated by
Grattan Condon

repeating rifles, and have ammunition in plenty. They know we are coming, know where we plan to attack them; and our native secret service has brought in information to the effect that two powerful neighboring tribes have promised to help them against the European invaders. The storming of El-Mers by our forces is scheduled for the 24th of June. This is presumably secret; but what hope of secrecy remains when ten thousand men are preparing for the fight?

Today is June 23rd.

Yesterday at twilight we reached this big plain marked on the maps as Attia. Before us, in the direction of El-Mers, there are several tall mountain ridges, and some distance south of our encampment a river runs. With the order to camp, tent after tent rose, tents stretching in straight, orderly lines. Fatigue parties gathered large stones, to build a wall surrounding the camp. Sentries were posted, and soon smoke rose from a hundred fires, to curl into the clear sky. The cooks prepared our food.

Today, although presumed to be resting, we were working, preparing for the attack. All military material was examined, small repairs made. Arms were cleaned, ammunition distributed. The men washed their clothes and bathed in the river. It is a consolation to die clean.

OUR staff-officers have been on the move all day long, for orders had to be prepared, delivered, acknowledged. The military surgeons are perhaps even busier. They have been told our probable percentage of losses, and are getting ready for so many wounded, for the transportation of those who shall need evacuation to a base hospital.

Summer is hot in Morocco, even in the Middle Atlas. Today has been even warmer, more sultry than others. Not a breath of air stirred, and the men perspired at their work. The only patch of shade was supplied by a lone fig-tree, on the river-bank. A midday siesta was impossible, for not only was the interior of the tents exceedingly warm, but the swarms of enormous, stinging Moroccan flies removed the last possibility of sleep.

After lunch, I killed time until work started again, by strolling about the camp. The tent-flaps were propped open with sticks, and I could see the Legionnaires within, sprawled, only half-conscious after their hard work. Even those who were asleep beat the air with their hands to keep the flies away. Not one had the energy to talk, and the only sounds were of heavy snoring and an occasional oath.

These men thought only of present discomforts. I am certain that few of them considered that there were several among them who would never snore, or fight flies in their sleep, after tomorrow. I passed near a kitchen. The meat for the eve-

ning meal had been left on the ground, near a caldron, and was so thickly covered with flies that one could not see any part of it, the whole being overlaid with moving insects.

There was nothing for me to say: the cook in charge was doing his best, swinging an empty sack, bringing it down on the flies. Each blow would kill many flies, but more would come to replace the dead. He could not clear the meat of the voracious insects once, and ended by covering the whole mess with the sack, and laid down to sleep, using one of his tin boilers as a shade for his face.

It was then that I first noticed, against the horizon, masses of dark clouds gathering. And I hoped for a storm that would abate the heat. . . .

The thunderstorm breaks now.

Never in my life have I seen such a downpour. In the space of a minute the encampment is flooded. Tents collapse under cascades of water, while terrifying lightning-flashes split the sky.

Suddenly we are blinded by two dazzling streams of electric flame, accompanied by a roar loud as the discharge of a thousand cannon. Sulphurous vapors fill the atmosphere; and in the tumult of rain and thunder, a cry rises from the lines of the native infantry:

"Stretcher-bearers, here! Stretcher-bearers!"

"What happened?" a hundred voices shout. And we all start on the run to the spot struck by the lightning. Three Arab privates, who were working on the wall surrounding the camp, have been struck by the blast. The first found is dead, with a small hole in his skull. The second is dead also, stripped of all clothing, burnt black all over the body.

The third is unconscious. He moans, badly burned about the body. Within the hour he will die also.

THE downpour slackens, and the sun comes out. The entire camp steams, and a thick haze envelopes the camp as the moisture evaporates. Within a short time everything is dry again, dry as in the morning!

It is all over—save that behind the ambulance tents a fatigue party of Legionnaires is digging three fresh graves. We had not expected to suffer three casualties today; but this is Morocco, and human beings are not our sole foes.

We are informed that the advance of tomorrow is to start at four in the morning. We are instructed to avoid bugle signals, unnecessary noises, fires, anything that might give warning to the enemy. We turn in early. We are to storm El-Mers in the morning. . . .

"Get up, Captain; it's half-past two!"

My orderly has thrown the tent open.

"Light the candle—"

"All lights forbidden, Captain," he replies. "I have your clothes ready, here."

SUDDENLY I realize that this is the 24th of June, and that we fight today—fight the Ait Seghouchen tribesmen, whom the holy men have excited against the infidel, the Christian dogs. Each one of them is sure that the slaying of one of us means a ticket straight to Paradise. . . . Cheerful prospect, in the small hours of the morning!

I fumble into my uniform. The air is warm; through the opening of the tent I can see the crisp spread of black sky dusted with stars. My baggage-mule is already standing before my shelter, waiting to be loaded, so I go outside to wash and finish dressing, while my orderly takes down the tent, rolls it into a bundle.

As soon as I am ready, I join a group of officers gathered around a wooden box on which tin cups are arrayed. Near by is a pailful of cold black coffee. I pick up one of the cups, dip it in the pail, take a long swallow. With the fog of sleep still in our brains, we are not very talkative this morning.

"We're sure due for a hard time," one of the captains says at last. "It's devilish terrain we have to advance through."

"Yes," another officer agrees. "I've seen the photographs brought in by the aviation, and you can be sure that there will be empty places at our mess by evening."

"Stop all that pessimistic nonsense," an old officer, who has served long in Africa, objects. "We'll get through all right. Say, don't forget we lived through the World War, and this is child's play compared with that." He interrupts himself, points in the direction of our advance: "But—what the devil is that?"

A distant flame has flickered on the far slopes, and as we watch, a string of bonfires blooms in the darkness. More and more appear with the passing seconds.

"Those devils have found out that we're going forward. Can't keep anything secret here!"

Those fires are signals to neighboring tribes to come to the battle. I see a youthful lieutenant standing by, staring at the ominous flares. He holds a tin

cup in his hand, but does not dip it in the pail. He is a nice young fellow, just returned from a honeymoon.

"Better get your coffee," I suggest.

"Thanks, no," he replies. "I couldn't drink anything. I've an odd hunch that I won't get through the day. Captain, will you take this letter and mail it if anything happens to me?"

"Sure," I agree, "but I won't have to send it. I've had such premonitions myself, often enough, and I'm still around."

The units are assembling. The men are grouped near the field-kitchens, drinking coffee. Legionnaires love combat, and spirits rise high. A group starts singing.

"Shut up—what the devil do you think you're doing? Shut up!" An enraged sergeant stops the chorus.

Orders are to preserve absolute silence, of course, to avoid giving warning. But one can behold glowing cigarette-tips all along the lines, the flare of matches. Mules are braying; horses neigh; supply-corps men are convincing balky mules of the need for labor.

Our column will be split into two groups, one striking right, the other left. Everyone is at his place. The sky is growing red in the east—sunrise!

It is four-thirty.

A few staff-officers circulate through the formations, whispering final orders to group commanders. A muffled order, and we are on the move toward El-Mers.

Our first objective is a mountainous ridge stretching across the horizon before us about four miles away. We progress in comparative silence; not a shot has been fired. We already rejoice, hoping that despite the bonfires the enemy does not expect us so early, and will be caught by surprise.

Our cavalry, forming a screen before the advancing infantry, goes ahead quickly. The riders reach the ridge, and we can see them climbing the slopes in the semi-darkness. They attain the crest, and stand silhouetted against the horizon.

UNEXPECTEDLY a volley crashes out on our right flank. A moment later, rifle fire is intense.

The infantry moves ahead faster. A battery which had followed behind my company swings aside, unlimbers on a position to our right; its guns open fire. The fight is well under way when the enormous, blazing ball of the sun appears over the mountains.

The battle of El-Mers has begun. . . .

My company has been one of the front companies in the right group. I receive an order to advance as swiftly as possible, to take a covered position on the ridge, some distance to the right of the skirmishing cavalry.

Bullets are sighing near our ears already, as we shift from column formation to open order. We double forward up the slope, close to the spot where the squadron of cavalry is fighting hard.

The cavalrymen are suffering great losses; the commander has been mortally wounded; one lieutenant is dead, another wounded. A young lieutenant has taken charge of the survivors. A bullet has creased him near the right temple, and blood is trickling down his cheek, over his collar, and is reddening his white tunic.

I order my machine-gunners to get into position on the right of the squadron, and to open fire immediately. The tumult is so tremendous that one cannot distinguish a word, even when screamed at the top of one's voice.

Machine-gun Number One goes into action, at my side.

"Bang-bang-bang!" Machine-gun fire in a mountainous zone is impressive. The weapon fires its bullets at a speed of four hundred to the minute, each detonation hammering distinctly. The ripping discharge of a machine-gun has a certain lilt which sends the blood racing through one's body at a swifter pace. Somehow the sound inspires courage.

The gun suddenly ceases firing.

The gunner, a young German corporal, has been hit—the bullet ripped his stomach open. Another man drags him aside, takes his place. The wounded man lies next to me. The blood gushes from his horrible wound; he is evidently dying.

"Captain, do you understand German?"

I creep nearer; he whispers his family's address, and his right name, into my ear. "Tell them that I did my duty—that I died a good soldier."

A moment later he is dead.

AND as he dies, the firing which had resumed momentarily, stops again. The gunner has been killed outright, struck by a bullet in the head. The body is lifted up, laid aside; a third Legionnaire handles the gun. A few minutes later the fourth gunner is slain at his post. And a fifth replaces him!

Four heavy crashes in rapid succession resound on my right. I turn toward the spot: a battery of mountain artillery has drawn up to the front line, unlimbered and opened fire. The four cannon pump shells into the enemy, giving us time to take breath. The natives' fire grows weaker.

We are ordered to advance again.

It is now nine o'clock—I had lost count of lapsing time. The heat is unbearable; the dust kicked up by thousands of boots and hoofs hangs in a stifling cloud. This dust clots on our perspiration.

Panting, dirty, sweating, we reach the next objective, in an ever-increasing whining of flying lead. Our machine-guns get into position.

The battalion commander points toward a spot before us, a clear zone between two trees, from which riflemen are pouring bullets into our lines.

"Tell that battery behind us to fire on that spot."

I run back to the mountain battery, six hundred yards from our position, atop a small knoll; I locate the commander, a very young lieutenant, and give him my battalion commander's message.

As we talk, a senior sergeant is measuring the range with a telemeter, a few feet away. Suddenly I hear a dry impact, like the cracking of a dry branch, and the sergeant turns a somersault while the lieutenant at my side drops down. The officer shows a nasty wound in the thigh from a ricochet.

I make for the sergeant, who is picking himself up. The missile struck him in the jaw, and has knocked out all his front teeth, before caroming off to strike the lieutenant! The sergeant bleeds freely, spits fragments of teeth, and starts swearing, while stretcher-bearers are taking the officer away. Then he remembers that he is senior in rank, in charge of the battery, and gives the order to open fire on the indicated spot.

"They'll pay for my teeth pretty dearly," he mumbles to me in parting.

I run back to my company, reach it just in time for the next leap forward, and we storm the nearest enemy position with the bayonet. From here we can see El-Mers in the middle of the valley below, surrounded by fig and olive trees, in the center of green cornfields.

The sight makes us extremely happy: there is fresh water near. If only we can get there soon and quench our raging thirst! This eventuality does not seem likely, for the enemy has taken position on the surrounding mountains, and from them showers us with lead.

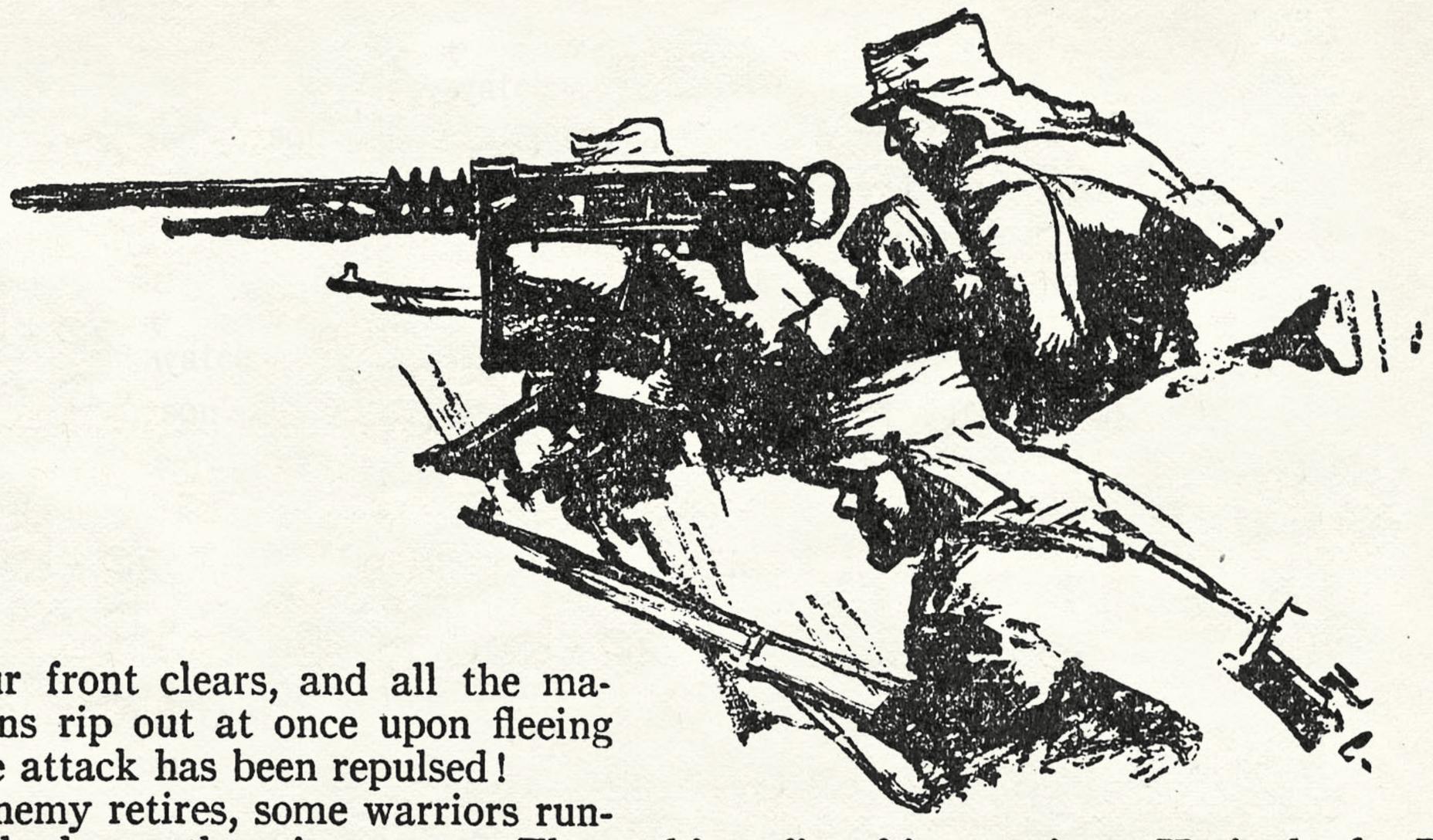
Forward again!

We stumble over loose stones, slide on slippery rocks. Our hands, our knees, are scraped and scratched as we tear our way through thorny bushes. Our clothing is in rags.

We halt at times, to turn our machine-gun loose. The artillery keeps up a constant bombardment of our foes' positions. Planes soar above us, swoop low to drop weighted messages reporting the enemy's whereabouts and his movements.

At times one of them shoots out a green flare, a signal for us to make ready to face a counterattack. Then our machine-guns are installed, the riflemen fix bayonets. A few minutes of waiting, and the natives are coming at us.

Yells, screams, hissing bullets, detonations near by, the swoop of the steel blades, the dull thuds of rifle-butts on bone and flesh: we fight them off like wild animals. No one has time to think; no one is conscious of his surroundings. We don't even know what is happening; each one of us fights on his own, for himself.



Then our front clears, and all the machine-guns rip out at once upon fleeing foes: the attack has been repulsed!

The enemy retires, some warriors running back alone, others in groups. They are cut down by our fire. Wounded, dying, dead are scattered about. Stretcher-bearers come up, and we carry on again.

The day drags on; we advance; we beat off attackers.

At six o'clock in the afternoon the enemy has been pushed back everywhere; El-Mers, down in the valley, is occupied by some of our troops.

"Camp where you are!" comes the order.

We have reached the mountain ridges. And now come the tasks we detest: we must erect stone walls to protect ourselves. Snipers shoot at us constantly, and some of our men drop.

The tents go up; cooks light their fires. The protecting wall is sufficiently high to shield us partly, but not altogether, for some of our foes have gained higher ground and rake our camp with a plunging fire. The artillery opens up again, rains shells on them.

This does not help much: they are so well sheltered among the rocks that it is hard to hit them.

The big tents of the field-hospital go up, in the valley; as the sun sinks, acetylene lamps are lighted in them. The doctors go about in their white aprons, sleeves rolled up to the elbows. There are many operations to perform. We have lost rather heavily today, perhaps three hundred men.

On my way down to the valley I pass stretcher after stretcher, each with its suffering burden. Some of the men are frightfully mangled. I feel the acute sympathy, the utter helplessness, invariably felt before hurt and stoical men.

On one stretcher I recognize the young lieutenant who was too worried to drink his coffee this morning. He is dead. I shall have to mail his letter, after all.

The full stretchers are lined near the tents of the ambulance, bearing wounded from all the units engaged. The ground is littered with blood-soaked bandages; the air reeks with the smells of antiseptics, ether and fresh blood,

"Eh, Cap'n! Give me a cigarette," a voice hails me in English.

I turn. It is one of my men, an American called Hunter. I cross to his stretcher, give him all the cigarettes I have on me.

"Where you hit, old boy?"

Hunter shows me his right leg. The bone has been shattered into fragments by a bullet. He will be out of the service permanently.

I VISIT the other wounded from my company, and return to camp. My orderly is erecting my tent; the groom is building a small wall of stones around it. Within, an oblong of soil has been cleared of pebbles and twigs, the earth softened, to place my couch.

The officers' dinner is served in a tent, on folding tables. A lantern dangling from the tent-pole lights the interior. From the first, snipers' bullets whisper and hum about our heads as we eat. But we are too tired, too sleepy and hungry to pay attention to them.

One of the mess orderlies is serving the major, who sits at the head of the table. There is the sound of an impact, and the servant slumps on the battalion commander, while the plate and the food on it crash to the table top. Blood and shreds of brain spurt all over the place. The major leaps to his feet, with an oath.

"Those devils can't even let us eat in

peace!" he grumbled. "It's that damned lamp that attracts attention! Put a paper around it, somebody!"

The body of the orderly is taken out, the table cleaned up, and a new mess orderly brings in more food. The improvised shade turns the trick: the snipers aim elsewhere.

The meal over, we retire, tired out. Today has been long and hot. After the great nerve strain, the reaction sets in. I fall asleep at once, and nothing disturbs me, neither our artillery and machine-gun fire, nor the natives' bullets.

ON waking next morning I am informed by my orderly that fourteen men have been killed or wounded during the night.

We are busy the whole day, strengthening our defenses, putting up stone walls, cutting trails and steps down the slopes. The wounded that can be transported are placed on metal stretchers which are fastened on mules, two to each animal, one stretcher on each side.

In this country traveling on such stretchers is sheer torture. The wounded men are constantly bumped, by the mule's swaying, by its stumbling. Not a few animals lose their footing, and fall.

The convoy of wounded starts at nine in the morning. Detachments of troops have been dispatched ahead to guard the paths, and two squadrons of cavalry escort the cortège. The more severely wounded have been sent to a base hospital on the ambulance planes—thus they were placed on the operating-table in a well-equipped hospital, within two hours.

During the afternoon we bury our dead. The ceremony is impressive. Detachments represent each unit in the column, and all officers not held back by duty attend, with the general commanding the group. Two army chaplains, one a Catholic, the other a Protestant, read the prayers. The European dead fill one of the two big graves. The names appear on the small crosses planted above it. The priest blesses the grave; the pastor delivers a short speech.

The Moslem dead are in the other grave. For each one a small wooden tablet is erected above the sod, bearing the name and the crescent emblematic of his faith.

A few native strongholds, *kasbahs,* situated at the far end of the valley are still occupied by native riflemen. They fire constantly at those moving in the valley.

After two or three men have been

wounded, our general's patience is at an end. He states that on the following morning a squadron of native cavalry shall attack those *kasbahs* and clean them out of defenders.

Meanwhile I receive orders to take my company to one of the ridges dominating these *kasbahs,* to keep the foes from getting away unscathed. I am at the appointed spot next morning at six o'clock, machine-guns ready. From our point of vantage we have a splendid view of the native cavalry charging at a headlong gallop against the little fort. A few bullets whistle in our direction, but we feel comparatively safe.

Most of us stand, to follow what is happening in the valley. The squadrons reach the *kasbahs.* The men dismount, rush into the houses, and the heavy thudding of grenades inform us that they are fighting close to the enemy.

At this time one of my sergeants nudges me.

"Did you see that Lieutenant B. B. had dropped, Captain?"

"Where?"

He indicates the squadron of cavalry supporting our company. The riders are a hundred yards away. I run toward them, with two Legionnaires carrying a stretcher.

I find B. B. on the ground, drenched with blood. We get him on the stretcher, take him to the ambulance at the double. The doctor who examines him informs me that he is very badly off, that it is doubtful whether he will pull through. (B. B. survived the wound, but was incapacitated for army service. He is now a distinguished politician!)

I return to my company—and find the show over. The *kasbahs* have been taken.

SEVERAL days have passed; uneasy peace has settled upon our camp. Enemy snipers have become scarcer and scarcer, for we found their hiding-places, harassed them with cannon and trench mortars. But we still have to be on the alert constantly, and not a night passes but a few bullets whine into our positions. However, our losses are decreasing steadily, for our stone walls are now so high that we are well protected. Most of the tents within the camp are also defended by individual stone walls.

With the passing of time our camp has become orderly, almost beautiful. The traders have established their shops, and these form a sort of town center.

In Arabic, a *souk* is a shop, and the Franco-Arabic term *soukier,* designating a trader, sprang into being naturally. Before the start of a campaign in Morocca *soukiers* apply to the military authority for permission to follow the troops. Permission is readily granted, for the *soukier* has proved himself invaluable. Often, while the military transports have failed to keep up with the progress of the troops, the *soukiers* contrive to arrive where needed. From them, we can purchase anything, from American khaki shirts, suspenders, buttons, pen, ink, writing-papers and vegetables, to perfume, soap, brandy, Scotch whisky, German beer and choice wines!

There are wealthy *soukiers*, Arab, Jewish or Levantine, with several tent-booths, ten or twelve mules, a couple of motor trucks and four to five assistants. Then there is the poorer *soukier,* who has no tent at all, and keeps up with a tin kettle and a small donkey.

At the camp outside El-Mers we had an old *soukier* by the name of Abdullah, whose entire equipment consisted of a tin kettle, a small wooden box, carried by an old donkey so covered with scars and fresh wounds, so decrepit in appearance, that no one understood how it could walk. But it walked on and on.

At the halt Abdullah would install his shop—that is, array upon the wooden box a couple of glasses. He brewed native mint tea in his kettle, and peddled the thick hot fluid at one franc a glass. He had many customers, for he gave credit freely.

I don't know whether he was ever repaid, but he did not have to worry. No Legionnaire refused him a cigarette or a piece of bread when he was in need. He was quite the filthiest native I have ever seen, and such a statement has meaning!

He claimed he has served in the native cavalry, the spahis, when young, but could not prove it, as he had no papers to show. Only one thing was sure: he loved the Legion above all other troops, and followed it everywhere, even in battle. I have seen him in the front line, giving tea to thirsty Legionnaires. I have seen him help the stretcher-bearers to dress a wound, or to carry a man to safety.

His thin, emaciated body was covered by a dilapidated cloak, through the rents of which one could see the protruding ribs. He slept on the bare ground, near his box, beside his donkey, and seemed to lead quite a happy life. His glorious days were the days of battle. Then he was seen all over the place. He had been known to take rifle and cartridges from a dead man, to take a place in the firing-line.

Fighting made him better-natured than usual; and on the evening following a combat, anyone could get his tea on credit. But there came one day when he returned from his adventures at the front, to find his small donkey dead near his wooden box, slain by a stray bullet.

THEN we saw old Abdullah cry. Tears streamed down his wrinkled cheeks, vanished in his unkempt gray beard. It seemed to him that life was over. Lacking his donkey, how could he bring stolen fresh vegetables to the officers' mess?

The Legionnaires laughed at him.

"What the devil do you need a donkey for? You can carry your own rotten stuff yourself, can't you? Give us a cup of tea!"

Nobody showed him any pity.

Abdullah squatted and cried, staring at the carcass of his old donkey stiffening beside the wooden box. And when the old fellow dropped off to sleep that night, he was undecided whether he would throw himself in the river next morning, or allow himself to be captured by the enemy—just as certain an end.

But when he awoke next morning the carcass was gone; and a gray donkey, younger and in much better condition than the other, stood by the wooden box.

Abdullah showed his new donkey to the whole camp, asked everyone where it came from. No one told him; no one seemed to know. The oddest detail is that no donkey was missing elsewhere!

IN the evenings the camp is animated. The officers have their own trader, a Greek named Dmitri. He has built up a bar with old packing-cases, and before dinner we gather there, to discuss the day's news over a glass of *amér-picon.*

But we work during the day; we work hard. We have to build a road between El-Mers and the pacified zone of Morocco, so that our supplies may reach us by motor trucks. Following this, we shall have to establish a number of outposts. One battalion of the Legion is to remain here near El-Mers to assure calm in the region, while the column pushes farther into hostile territory.

At four o'clock every morning detachments leave camp, some to protect the vicinity, others to labor on the trails. By the fifth day the road is usable, and the first motor-trucks reach the valley. It is hard to express our happiness at their arrival. We all run down to meet them. It is somehow reminiscent of the excitement in a provincial town at train-time. Aside from material for military purposes, rolls of barbed wires, sacks of cement, bags of tools, the automobiles have brought fresh food. Fresh food—and our mail, held up ten days!

The *vaguemestres,* military postmen, bring up the bags to camp on mules, distribute the envelopes and parcels. I receive much mail, great yellowish rolls of Danish and British magazines, bearing black seals and multicolored stamps.

Here are letters, postal cards from Copenhagen, from Elsinor, sent to me by people who have just finished an excellent dinner, with the usual banal formulas: "We are thinking of you," "We miss you," and "Are you returning soon?"

If they could only see me in my dingy, soiled uniform, burned black as a native! See me in this heat, with perspiration streaming down my face at every move!

I rip open the envelopes of the papers and magazines. I note that this or that horse has come in first of his field at the races, that this or that football team has made so many goals. That this lady has worn such and such a dress at such and such a wedding. How far away it all seems! And it really matters so little to me, yet it fascinates me oddly. I read even the advertisements with pleasure.

The bugle blows—mess call.

I throw all the papers, magazines and letters on my cot, and rush to the mess tent. My comrades gather, letters in hand, and comment on the latest news.

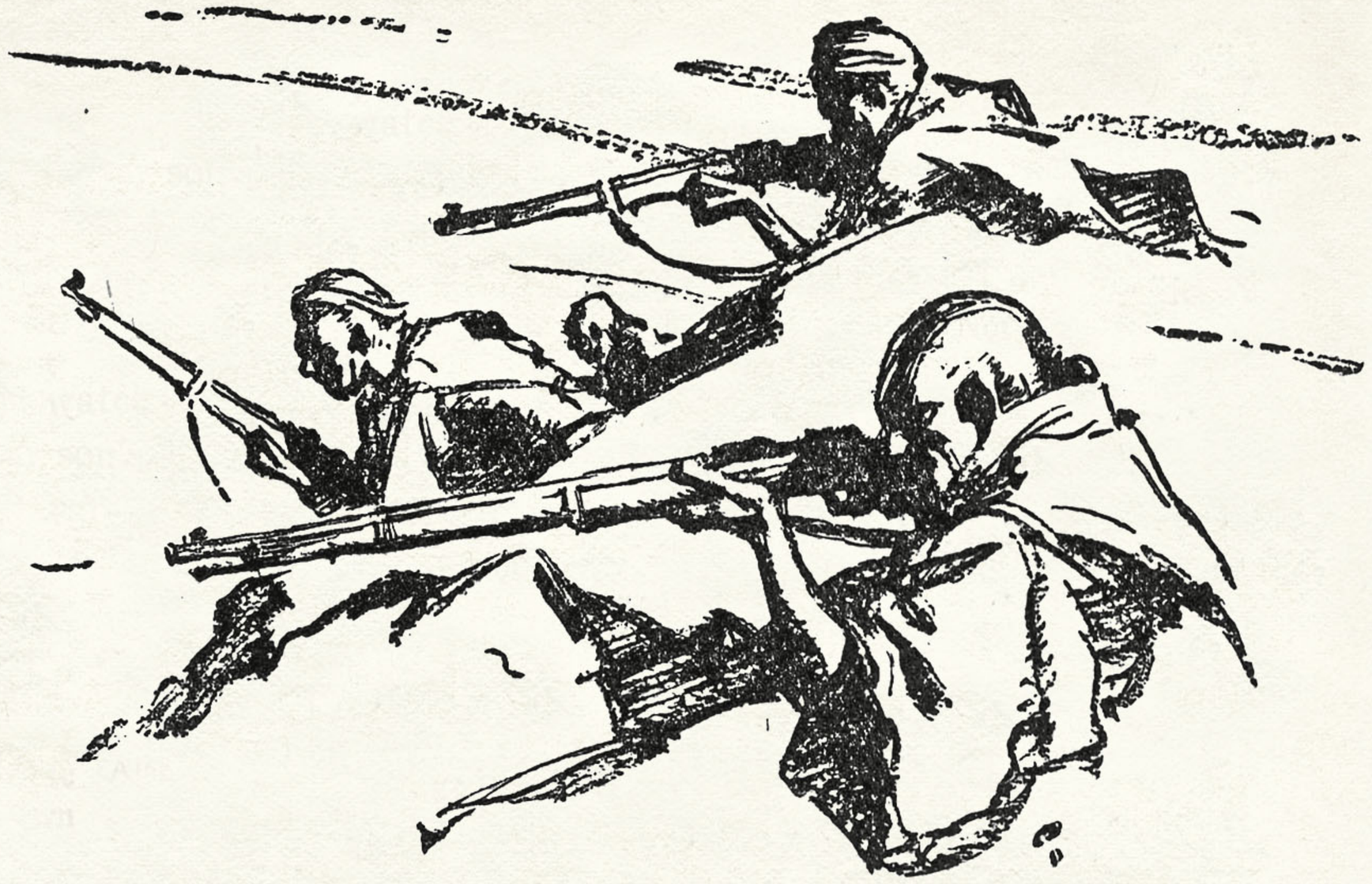
The major speaks to us before we leave. He tells us that we are to select the emplacements for blockhouses and outposts, starting that afternoon. The general has spoken to him that morning, stated that all must be in readiness to start actual work by nightfall—construction to begin on the morrow. Everything must be done in a fortnight, for the expedition must move ahead at the end of that delay. So there is no time to lose.

Posts must be constructed to hold a company, others to house a platoon; and there must be also many small posts, which we call guard-towers, which can hold five or six men. These posts of varying sizes are the nails which fasten France's hold on Morocco. But building them is hard work, and the Legionnaires detest the task heartily.

WHEN the outline of a post has been agreed upon, the first thing done is to construct walls on the outside. Generally, a detail is sent to blast stone from the mountain-side. These blocks are shaped, then transported where desired on mules. Most often there are not enough mules, so fatigue parties of troopers have to assist. The carrying of heavy blocks for three to five hundred yards under a broiling sun, or beneath a beating rain, is an undertaking.

Legionnaires stripped to the waist make an endless file, each man bearing a huge stone on one shoulder. They toil slowly, patiently, monotonously, without words, without cessation. Perspiration streams down their backs and chests.

When the work is done for the day, they slump on a heap of sacking, are asleep instantly, too weary to think of the present, the past or the future. Specialists finish trimming the stones, heave them to the masons. Mules are used to



bring up barrels of water from the nearest stream, to mix with cement.

Sentinels stand watch, and the days pass. The post emerges from the earth, until it suddenly stands completed, white as chalk, with its solid walls of stone, its barracks, warehouses and stores. The transport service brings up sacks of flour, of rice, of potatoes, crates filled with macaroni, with American canned meats, barrels of wine, ammunition for rifles, machine-guns, cannon, grenades, flares and other military equipment.

The posts are to be supplied with food and ammunition for six months, before we leave. For during the winters snow falls so heavily that the trails are impassable, even to mules.

I receive an invitation to lunch, one day, from the young lieutenant who took command of the cavalry squadron which suffered so heavily during the battle of the 24th of June.

This squadron is camped down the slope from our lines. From the lieutenant's tent, where we are served lunch, we have a magnificent view over the valley, and the river passes less than twenty yards below. It is almost dry now, a mere trickling of water, over which one can step at a single stride.

The lieutenant's cook, being a native, has prepared an enormous dish of *couscous,* a sort of boiled meal, drenched with a peppery sauce stuffed with pieces of meat. The day is quite clear, and I have forgotten that this morning thick black clouds clung to the mountain-tops.

After coffee has been served, chairs and tables are moved from the tent to the shade of a tree. From this new position we can behold the entire valley. The mules of a battery are lined up for inspection just below us, along the dry bed of the river.

I play on my banjo, brought along for the occasion—old familiar tunes which we hum. All is peaceful.

"What the devil is that?" my host asks suddenly.

I stop playing, to listen, and hear a peculiar sound coming from afar. It increases in volume with extreme rapidity, and resembles the noise of an on-rushing express-train.

Then suddenly a wall of dirty brownish water, ten feet high, rushes down the river-bed from bank to bank with the speed of a racing car. Before we are able to stir from our seats this wall has struck the mules, and we remain petrified, witnessing a ghastly phenomenon. The torrent roars and swirls, sweeps men and mules away.

At last we run down to the river-bank, but there is nothing to be done. In a few seconds' time everything has vanished downstream, and we shall never see men or animals again! The battery has lost seventy mules and four soldiers!

The explanation is easily understood: a cloudburst in the mountains, and the water finding the easiest path. I have seen this occur several times in Morocco.

THE posts are constructed, everything is completed.

We are ordered forward again, to new combats, to new posts. We are promised that this campaign will be over by the end of August, but September and October pass by, and we are still marching.

We go farther and farther. The weather turns cold; the nights are freezing.

It is raining; we tramp through mud.

The men try to prevent the trickling of water into their tents by piling stones around the bottom of the canvas, but the rain drips through the thick cloth. They are chilled to the bone. At night they light huge bonfires to warm themselves. The battalion commander has given orders to grant them double wine rations. All of us are ill-humored and sulky. We are fed up with Morocco.

My orderly has taken an empty kerosene tin, punched holes in its inside with a bayonet; and this, filled with charcoal, serves as a heater. When he pushes it into my tent, I am always cheered. It means that I can have dry clothing occasionally. As a rule, even my sheets are moist, and at the slightest touch, the tent canvas starts dripping.

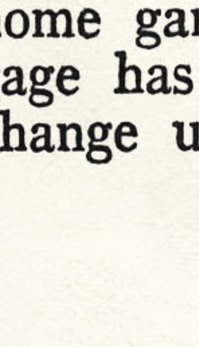
In the morning the fog is so dense that one has to grope through it. My hands are so damp, so cold, that I dress with much difficulty. I can hardly wash or shave. We are all in pitiable condition, after five months in the field.

IT is the beginning of November.

I have been detached to a battalion of the Second Foreign Regiment of Infantry, which is to leave for Meknès when this expedition is over. Little by little our hope has vanished.

But suddenly orders come that we are to start back to Meknès tomorrow. When the tidings are spread, the Legionnaires go mad with joy.

"The war's over!" they yell.



Fatigue and hardships are forgotten; weary limbs seem fresh again. An extra ration of wine is issued that evening. The men sing, joke, seated around the fires, and they laugh at the pouring rain.

Next day we head for the rear under the constant downpour. We march over mountains, across plains, our boots slushing merrily. We are soaked to the skin, and we swallow enormous quantities of quinine at every meal, against fever. Filth and mud crust our boots, our uniforms. Hair and beard are caked with mud. But the campaign is finished; we are going home.

We attain Fez, and are told that after a night's rest we are marching on to our home garrison, Meknès! All our luggage has been sent ahead; we cannot change uniforms. I am lucky enough to get leave to go to town, where I stop at a large hotel. I shave, take a bath and put on my garments, sent to dry in the kitchen during my ablutions.

I feel better, although I still resemble a tramp.

Next morning we are on the march once more, with two days travel before we get to Meknès, sixty miles away. It starts raining again; the slushing tramping resumes. No one complains: we are going home!

November 10th—the wind penetrates through our soaked garments; we are chilled. Tomorrow, date of our arrival, is Armistice Day. No one seems to know whether we are to take part in the parade with the rest of the garrison.

We pitch camp in the afternoon. The men are quartered in some abandoned barracks, remnants of an old camp, in which they are sheltered from wind and rain. We officers settle in a smaller barracks, and our cooks prepare dinner.

A staff motorcar arrives, bearing an officer, who calls for the battalion commander. He informs the major that the general has given orders for the battalion to march on to Meknès, to participate in the parade on the next morning. The show starts, he states, at eight o'clock.

The major refuses. He explains that the men are too tired, and that even should we reach Meknès on time, the men will not be able to change to fresh uniforms before the parade is under way.

"Never mind that," the staff-officer says. "The general has given orders that your battalion is to take part in the parade in the condition in which it returns from the campaign."

"In that case, agreed," the major replies. "We'll get there."

The staff car drives away. The men are told that they are to march on as soon as their meal is finished. They greet the news with shouts of joy. They prefer to get this monotonous march over with today. The battalion commander gets to a telephone, calls up Meknès headquarters, and gives instructions to have hot food and drink ready for us.

ON the march again! But now the rain has stopped, the wind has driven the clouds from the sky, and the sun comes out. The thought that this is the last lap gives us courage, strength. And by evening the lights of Meknès glitter ahead of us.

We reach the military camp—just time to eat and drink the hot stuff prepared

for us, and we all tumble into our blankets, to sleep like dead men. We have covered sixty miles today.

NOVEMBER 11TH: I am up at six, and go to the canteen for my coffee. I find the major and most of our officers already there, drinking hot coffee, eating sausage and bread. We look disheveled and ragged, in our campaign uniforms. For our baggage has not yet arrived—another unexplained delay. Our trousers are patched like checker-boards; the khaki has been washed by so much rain, faded by such a strong sun, that it has no definite color. The major shows a long untrimmed beard, as do most of the officers. With the chiefs in this condition, it is easy to picture what the men look like!

Our battalion marches from camp toward the city at seven-thirty.

We are to march past the reviewing stand occupied by the general and all the important civilians in the city, mayor included. This stand has been erected facing the World War Memorial.

Spahis, tirailleurs, all the other troops, are ahead of us. They all wear parade uniforms, are gleaming with decorations, swords, shining buttons, weapons furbished clean. All wear brand-new boots and leathers. They look splendid. The sparkle of the bands' brass instruments hurts the eyes! Officers' horses have been brushed, the leather soaped and dried, every bit of metal polished.

Fortunately, there is no rain.

The bands start playing the Native Infantry's March; the front units swing forward. They pass before the general, the officials. The schoolchildren stand by, with bouquets, and the troops are thrown flowers as they pass.

Our turn comes at last: the Legion's!

The bands play our marching tune: *"Tiens, voilà du boudin!"*

Then comes a spectacle that one can never forget. Our *clique*, the drummers and buglers, leads the way. The drums are mute, for the skins are hanging in shreds from the hollow frames. The major follows, riding on an old lame gray horse, beard hiding his tanned wrinkled face—and the companies, one after another, stride by.

The men are bearded, filthy, swarthy. Some wear tunics made of sacking; one has replaced his pack with a piece of tent-cloth. Many wear canvas slippers, sandals; the majority lack puttees; not a few are bareheaded, or have wound rag turbans to replace the lost *képis*. Bayonets are dulled by grime collected on the oil; cartridge-pouches bulge with ammunition, the small flag of our battalion, the *fanion*, is torn by bullets, its staff replaced with a stick.

We have lost thirty per cent of our strength since we left Meknès. The missing have remained under their small wooden crosses in the Middle Atlas, or are scattered in various hospitals from the hills northward, fighting against wounds and fever.

The men tramp steadily; mud jets against ladies' dresses, on the Sunday garb of the children, but nobody seems to care. They stare at us in awe-struck silence for a moment; then thunderous applause breaks loose.

The major's wife rushes from the crowd with a shrill cry, tosses a bouquet into his bearded face. Marching confidently, the battalion goes on, through the main street, where we take a right turn to get back to camp.

There the men find fresh clothes, shower-baths, soap. They turn out for the midday meal, unrecognizable! The town authorities have given them wine, cigars, cigarettes, and they are happy.

The festivities start.

VAGUELY I remember wounded and maimed men who screamed and swore in dust and filth. And I think that only half of those who left returned. But that is our life: today their turn, tomorrow mine. We live in the present, forget the past, and ignore tomorrow.

Forget the past? Not altogether: Our past is the Legion's history; it fills its *Salles d'Honneur* and maintains its glory and traditions.

We pass—the Legion lives!

When Worlds

The tremendous story of two stranger planets that whirl out of space—one to destroy this world, the other to offer hope of a new life to the few who venture a terrific voyage in an Ark of the air.

The Story Thus Far:

THE astronomer Bronson in his South African observatory discovered them first—two stranger stars hurtling out of space toward collision with this world! And when he had made repeated photographs, he entrusted the plates to a special messenger, the air-mail 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.

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.

The two stranger stars would pass the earth in their first swing about their new orbits, and would cause gigantic tides and terrific earthquakes. On their second transit, eight months later, Bronson Beta would strike and destroy the earth, even though its sister-planet Bronson Alpha would pass.

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

After the immediate first danger was over, work on the Space Ship was re-

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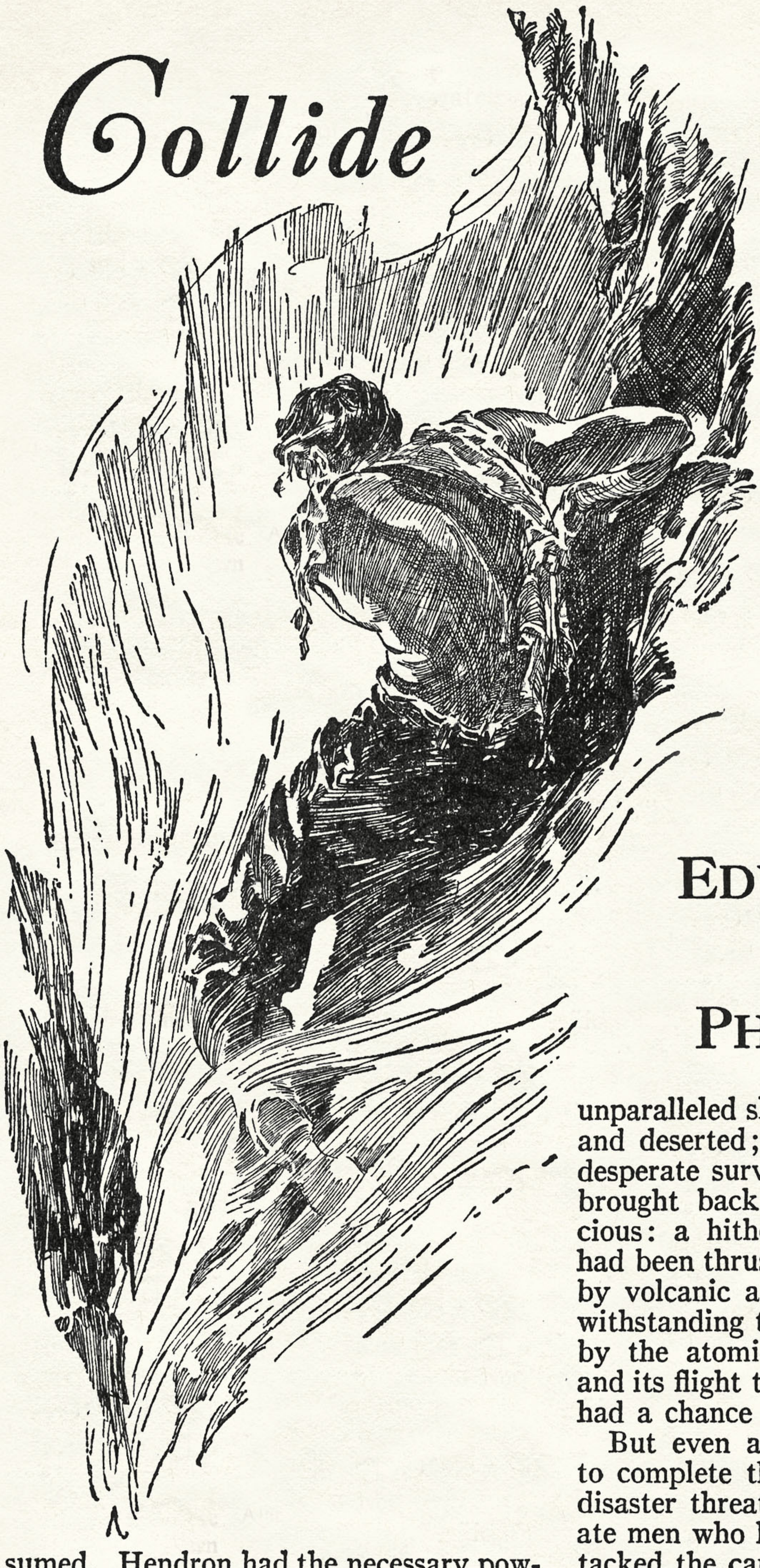
Collide



Illustrated by
Joseph Franké

By

Edwin Balmer

and

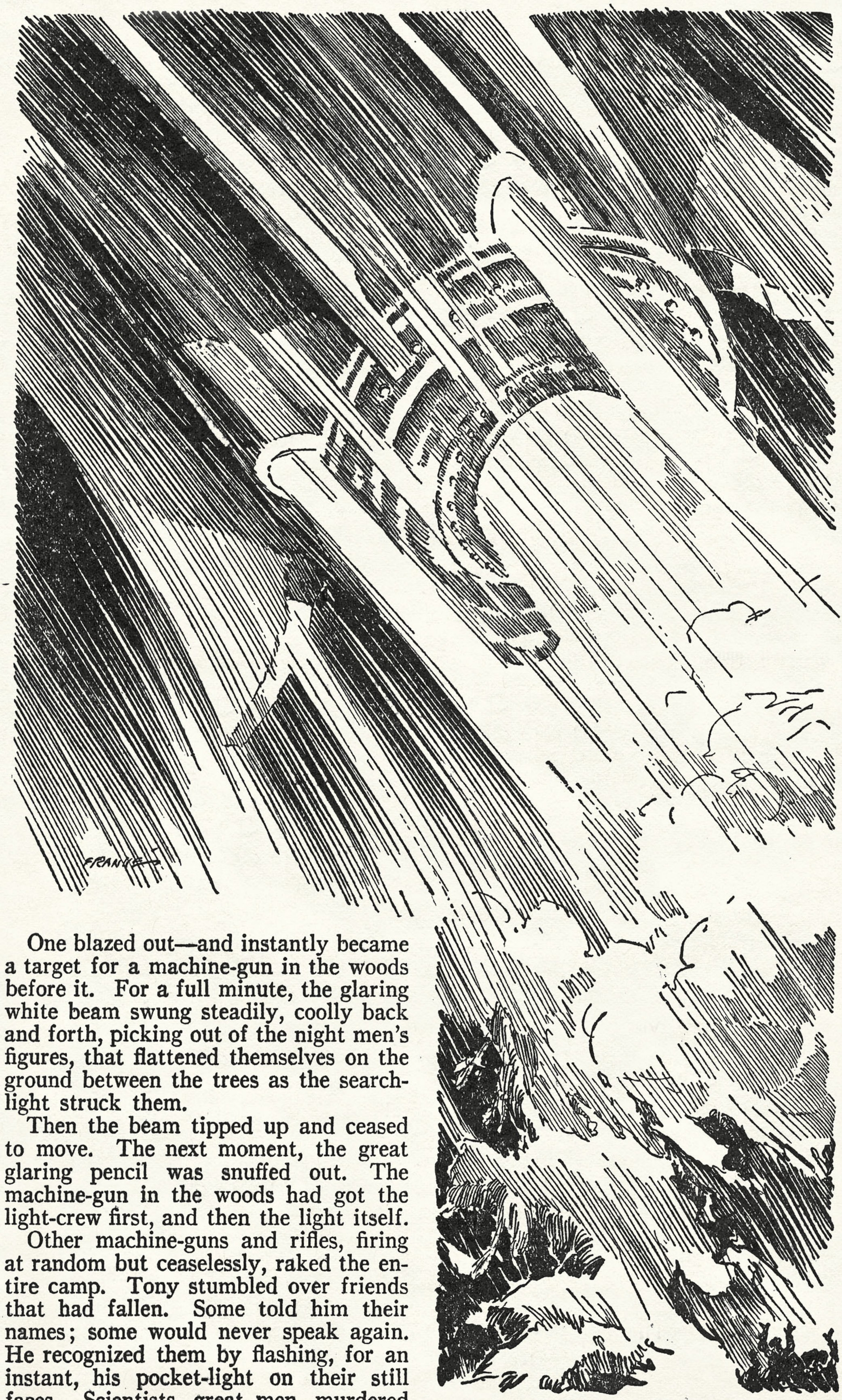
Philip Wylie

sumed. Hendron had the necessary power—had learned how to release and use the tremendous power of atomic energy. But he lacked any material that would stand the terrific heat thereby engendered.

It was decided to send out an airplane, piloted by Ransdell, to see how the rest of the world had fared. . . . The ship returned after thirty days, with a dreadful report of enormous destruction and unparalleled slaughter; of cities smashed and deserted; of a few communities of desperate survivors. But the plane also brought back something infinitely precious: a hitherto unknown metal that had been thrust up from the earth's core by volcanic action—a metal capable of withstanding the extreme heat generated by the atomic blast. The Space Ship and its flight to refuge on Bronson Alpha had a chance of success!

But even as they labored frantically to complete this Ark of the Air, a new disaster threatened: an army of desperate men who had survived elsewhere, attacked the camp. *(The story continues in detail:)*

TONY, directing the disposal of his men, longed for the moon—the shattered moon that survived tonight only in fragments too scattered and distant to lend any light. The stars had to suffice. The stars and the three searchlights fixed on the roofs of the laboratories nearest to the three fronts of the encampment.



One blazed out—and instantly became a target for a machine-gun in the woods before it. For a full minute, the glaring white beam swung steadily, coolly back and forth, picking out of the night men's figures, that flattened themselves on the ground between the trees as the search-light struck them.

Then the beam tipped up and ceased to move. The next moment, the great glaring pencil was snuffed out. The machine-gun in the woods had got the light-crew first, and then the light itself.

Other machine-guns and rifles, firing at random but ceaselessly, raked the entire camp. Tony stumbled over friends that had fallen. Some told him their names; some would never speak again. He recognized them by flashing, for an instant, his pocket-light on their still faces. Scientists, great men, murdered in mass! For this was not war. This

The frightful heat seared and incinerated, killing at its touch.

was mere murder; and it would be massacre, if the frail defenses of the camp failed, and the horde broke in.

A defending machine-gun showed its spatter of flashes off to the right; Tony ran to it, and dropped down beside the gun-crew.

"Give me the gun!" he begged. He had to have a shot at them himself; yet when he had his finger on the trigger, he withheld his fire. The enemy—that merciless, murderous enemy—was invisible. They showed not even the flash of gunfire; and outside the wire barriers, there was silence.

The only firing, the only spatters of red, the only rattle, was within the defenses. It was impossible that, so suddenly, the attack had ceased or had been beaten off. No; this pause must have been prearranged; it was part of the strategy of the assault.

It alarmed Tony far more than a continuance of the surrounding fire. There was more plan, more intelligence, in the attack than he had guessed.

"Lights!" he yelled. "Lights!"

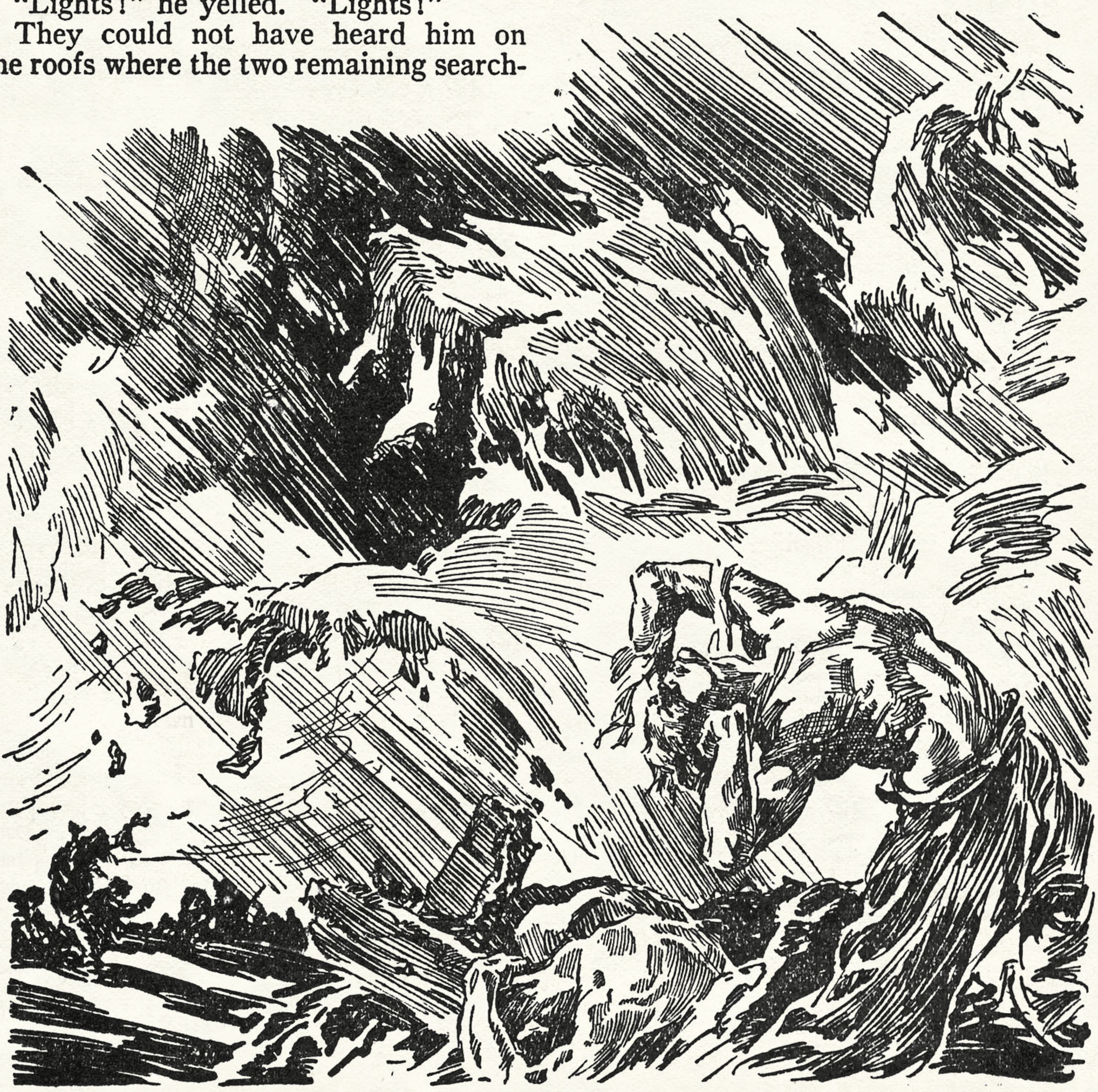
They could not have heard him on the roofs where the two remaining searchlights stood; but they blazed out, one sweeping the woods before Tony. The glare caught a hundred men before they could drop; and Tony savagely held the trigger back, praying to catch them with his bullets. He blazed with fury such as he never had known; but he knew, as he fired, that his bullets were too few and too scattered. His targets were gone; but had he killed them? The searchlight swept by and back again, then was gone.

Machine-guns were spitting from the woods once more, and both lights were blinded.

A rocket rasped its yellow streak into the air and burst above in shower of stars. A Fourth of July rocket, unquestionably a signal!

Tony fired at random into the woods; all through the camp, rifles and machine-guns were going. But no attack came.

A second rocket rasped up and broke its spatter of stars. Now the camp held its fire and listened. It heard—Tony heard, only a whistle, like a traffic whis-



tle, or the whistle that summoned squads to attacking order.

A third rocket went up.

"Here they come!" some one said; and Tony wondered how he knew it. Soaked in perspiration, Tony glared into the blackness of the woods. He longed for the lights; he longed for military rockets. But there never had been any of these. Hendron, in making his preparation, had not foreseen this sort of attack. He had imagined vagrants in groups, or even mobs of desperate men, but nothing that the wire would not stop or a few machine-guns scatter. That is, he had imagined nothing worse until it was too late to prepare, adequately, for—this.

NOW machine-guns in the woods were sweeping the camp enclosure. The fire radiated from a few points; and as it was certain that the attackers were not in the path of their own fire, but were in the dark spaces between, Tony swept these with his bullets.

The gun bucked under his tense fingers. Yells rewarded him. He was wounding, killing the attackers—units of that horde that had sent that murderous fire to mow down the men, the splendid men, the great men who had whispered their names quietly to Tony as he had bent over them before they died.

Shouts drowned the yells of the wounded—savage, taunting shouts. There must be a thousand men on this bit of the front alone, more than all the men in the camp. Tony heard his voice bawling over the tumult: *"Get 'em! Get 'em! Don't let 'em by!"*

His machine-gun was overheating. A little light came from somewhere; Tony could not see what it was, except that it flickered. Something was burning. Tony could see figures at the wire, now. He could not reckon their numbers, did not try to. He tried only to shoot them down. Once through that wire,—that wire so weak that he could not see it,—and that thousand with the thousands behind them would be over him and the men beside him, they would be over the line of older men behind; then they would reach the women.

Tony's lips receded from his teeth. He aimed the gun with diabolic care, and watched it take effect as wind affects standing wheat. The attackers broke, and ran back to the woods.

In the central part of the cantonment the growth afforded better cover and gave the assault shorter range. Men went in pairs to the tops of the buildings, and through loopholes which had been provided for such a contingency began sniping at those who moved in the territory around the buildings.

Everyone was overmastered by the same sort of rage which had possessed Tony. The reason for their existence had been to them a high and holy purpose. They defended it with the fanaticism of zealots. They could not know that the flight of their planes to and from the Ransdell metal-supply had indicated to the frantic hordes that somewhere human beings lived in discipline and decency. They could not know how for weeks they had been spied upon by ravenous eyes. They could not know how the countryside around, and the distant cities, had been recruited to form an army to attack them. They could not know that nearly ten thousand men, hungry, desperate, most of them already murderers many times over, armed, supplied with crafty plans which had been formulated by disordered heads once devoted to important, intelligent pursuits —how these besieged them now, partly for spoils, but to a greater degree in a fury of lust and envy. They had traveled on broken roads, growing as they marched. It was a heathen horde, a barbaric and ruthless horde, which attacked the colony.

The siege relaxed to an intermittent exchange of volleys. At his machine-gun station, Tony, suffering acutely from thirst, with six of his comrades lying dead near by, fought intermittently.

Reinforcements came from the center of the camp—Jack Taylor and two more of the younger men.

"Hurt, Tony?" Taylor challenged him.

"No," replied Tony; and he did not mention his dead; for Taylor, creeping up, had encountered them. "Who's killed in the buildings?"

"Not Hendron," said Taylor, "or Eve —though she might have been. She was one of the girls that went out to attend to the wounded. Two of the girls were hit, but not Eve. . . . Hendron wants to see you, Tony."

"Now?"

"Right now."

"Where is he?"

"At the ship. I'll take over here for you. Good luck!"

TONY stumbled through the dark to the buildings, black except for faint cracks of light at the doors behind which

Bronson, the discoverer of the two stranger planets, lay there in his blood, a bayonet through his throat.

the wounded were collected. He found Hendron inside the Space Ship, and there, since its metal made an armor for it, a light was burning. Hendron sat at a table; it was now his headquarters.

"Who's hurt?" said Tony.

"Too many," Hendron dismissed this. "What do they think *they* are doing?" he challenged Tony abruptly.

"Getting ready to come again," Tony returned.

"Tonight, probably?"

Tony glanced at his wrist-watch; it was eleven o'clock. "Midnight, would be my guess, sir," he said.

"Will they get in next time?" Hendron demanded.

"They can."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean, if they come on more resolutely. They can do more than they have done."

"Whereas we," Hendron took up for him, "can scarcely do more."

"Yes sir," said Tony. "We used all the defenses we had; and they could have carried us an hour ago, if they'd come on."

"Exactly," nodded Hendron. "And now we are fewer. We will be fewer still, of course, after the next attack; and fewer yet, after they get in."

"Yes sir."

"However," observed Hendron thoughtfully, "that will be, in one way, an advantage."

Tony was used, by now, to be astonished by Hendron; yet he said: "I don't follow you, sir."

"We will defend the enclosure as long as we can, Tony," Hendron said. "But when they are in,—if they get in,—no one is to throw himself away fighting them uselessly. They must be delayed as long as they can be; but when they *are* in, we gather—all of us that are left, Tony—here."

"Here?"

"Inside this ship. Hadn't that occurred to you, Tony? Don't you *see?* Don't you *see?*"

Tony stared at his chief, and straightened, the blood of hope racing again hot within.

"Of course I see!" he almost shouted. "Of course I see!"

"Very well. Then issue cloths—white cloths, Tony; distribute them."

"Cloths?" repeated Tony, but before Hendron answered, he realized the reason.

"For arm-bands, Tony; so, in the dark, we will know our own."

"Yes sir."

"No time to lose, Tony."

"No sir. But—Eve is safe?"

"She is not hurt, I hear. You might see her for an instant. The women are tearing up bandages."

Tony found her, but not alone; she was in a room with twenty others, tearing white cloth into strips. At least, he

saw for himself that she was not yet hurt; at least he had one word with her.

"Tony! Take care of yourself!"

"How about you, Eve?"

She disregarded this; said only:

"Get back to the ship, Tony, after the fight. Oh, get back to the ship!" He went out again. A bullet pinged on the wall beside him; bullets were flying again. Behind Tony, on the other edge of the camp, sporadic firing flashed along the road and in the woods. The bursts of machine-gun fire sounded uglier; there were groans again, and screams. Tony could sense rather than see the gathering of attackers on this edge; then firing broke out on the other side too.

He wondered how many of his runners with the arm-bands and with the orders would fall before they reached the first line of the defense. With his own burden of machine-gun cartridges, he returned to the post he had fought.

"That you, Tony?" Jack Taylor hailed. "Cartridges? Great! We'll scrap those bimboes. Hell! Just in time, I'd say. . . . Here they come!"

"Listen!" yelled Tony, giving his orders with realization that, if he did not speak now, he might never: "If they get in, delay them but don't mix with them; each man tie a white cloth on his sleeve —and retreat to the ship!" And he issued the strips he had brought with him.

From the buildings, reinforcements arrived—six men with guns slung over their shoulders, and bayonets that caught a glint from the firing. They were burdened with more cartridge-cases, and they carried another machine-gun. Tony placed them almost without comment.

One of the new men produced a Very pistol. His private property, he explained, which he had brought along "for emergencies."

"It's one now," Tony said simply, and took the pistol from him. He fired it; and the Very light, hanging in the air, revealed men at the wire everywhere. A thousand men—two thousand; no sense even in estimating them.

IN the green glare which showed them, Jack Taylor looked at Tony. "My God, I forgot," he said, and shoved Tony his canteen.

Tony tasted the whisky and passed it on, then again he claimed the machine-gun. He made a flat fan of the flashes before him as he swung the gun back and forth. He was killing men by scores, he knew; but he knew, also, that if the hundreds had the nerve to stick, they were "in."

CHAPTER XIX

Escape

THEY were in! And Tony did not need the green flare of the last light from the Very pistol to tell him so.

"Fall back! Fall back to the ship—fighting!" Tony yelled again and again.

He did not need to tell his men to fight. They were doing that. The trouble was, they still wanted to fight, holding on here.

What saved them was, the machine-gun ammunition was gone. The machine-guns were useless; nothing to do but abandon them.

"Fall back!" Tony yelled. "Oh, fall back!"

A few obeyed him. The rest could not, he suddenly realized; and he had to leave them, dying. Jack Taylor was beside him, firing a rifle. They were five altogether who were falling back, firing, from the machine-gun post.

Figures from the black leaped at them, and it was hand to hand. Tony fought with a bayonet, then with a clubbed rifle, madly and wildly swinging. He was struck, and reeled. Some one caught him, and he clutched the other's throat to strangle him before his eyes got the patch of gray which was a white arm band.

"Come on!" cried Jack Taylor's voice; and with Taylor, he ran in the dark. Clear of the attack for an instant, they rallied—the two of them—found a pistol on a body over which they stumbled, emptied it at the attackers, and fell back again.

They reached the buildings. Gunfire was flashing from the laboratories which otherwise were black. The dormitories sprang into light; windows shone, and spread illumination which showed that they were deserted and were being used, now, by the defenders of the camp to light the space already abandoned. The final concentration was in the center, dominated by the looming black bulk of the Space Ship standing in its stocks.

The lights from the dormitories were holding up the advance of the attackers. They could not shoot out hundreds of globes so simply as they had smashed the searchlights. And they could not advance into that illuminated area, under

the machine-guns and rifles of the laboratories. They had first to take the deserted dormitories and darken them.

They were doing this; but it delayed them. It held them up a few minutes. Here and there a few, drunker or more reckless than the rest, charged in between the buildings, but they dropped to the ground dead or wounded—or waiting for the support that was soon to come.

Room by room, dormitory windows went black. The lights were not being turned out; they were being smashed and the window-panes were crashing. Yells celebrated the smashing, and shots.

The yells ceased; and the defenders knew that some sort of assault was being reorganized.

Tony moved in the dark, recognized by his voice, and knowing others in the same way.

"Keep down—down—down," he was crying. "Below the window-line. Down!" For bullets from machine-guns, evidently aimed from the dormitory windows, were striking in.

Many did not obey him; he did not expect them to. They had to fight back, firing from the windows. Yells at the farther end of the main laboratory told that it was hand-to-hand there, in the dark. A charge—a rush had been pushed home.

Tony found Taylor beside him; they had stuck together in the dark; and a dozen others rose and ran with them into the mêlée.

Men of science, Tony was realizing even as he stumbled in the dark, the best brains of the modern world, fighting hand to hand with savages! Shoot and stab and club, wildly, desperately in the dark!

Your comrade went down; you stepped back over him, and shot and stabbed again; yelling, groaning, slipping, struggling up again. But many did not get up. More and more lay where they fell. Tony, stumbling and slipping on the stickily wet floor, realized that this rush was stopped. There was nobody left in the room to fight—nobody but two or three distinguished as friends by the spots of the arm bands.

"Jack?" gasped Tony; and Taylor's voice answered him. They were staggering and bleeding, both of them; but they had survived the fight together.

"Who was here?" Tony asked. Who of their comrades and friends were dead and dying at their feet, he meant. Tony found the flash-light which, all through the fight, he had had in his pocket, and he bent to the floor and held it close to the faces.

He caught breath, bitterly. Bronson was there. Bronson, the discoverer of the two stranger planets whose passing had loosed this savagery; Dr. Sven Bronson, the first scientist of the southern hemisphere, lay there in his blood, a bayonet through his throat! Beside him Dodson was dying, his right arm hacked almost off. He recognized Tony, spoke two words which Tony could not hear, and lost consciousness.

A few of those less hurt were rising.

"To the ship! *Into the ship!*" Tony cried to them. "Everybody into the ship! Spread the word! Jack! . . . Everybody, everybody into the ship!" There was no alternative.

Three-fourths of the camp was in the hands of the horde; and the laboratories could not possibly beat off another rush. They could not have beaten back this, if it had been more organized.

Bullets flew through the dark.

"To the ship! *To the ship!*"

Creeping on hands and knees, from wounds or from caution, and dragging the wounded with them, the men started the retreat to the ship. Women were helping them.

Yells and whistles warned that another rush was gathering; and this would be from all sides; the laboratories and the ship were completely surrounded.

Tony caught up in his arms a young man who was barely breathing. He had a bullet through him; but he lived. Tony staggered with him into the ship.

HENDRON was there at the portal of the great metal rocket. He was cooler than anyone else. "Inside, inside," he was saying confidently.

"Where's Eve?" Tony gasped at him.

"I saw her—a moment ago."

"Safe?"

Her father nodded.

Tony bore in his burden, laid it down. Ransdell confronted him. From head to foot, the South African was dabbled and clotted with blood. He was three-quarters naked; a bullet had creased his forehead; a bayonet had slashed his shoulder. His lips were set back from his teeth. His eyes, the only portion of him not crimson, gazed from the pit of his face, and a voice that croaked out of his wheezing lungs said: "Seen Eve?"

"Her father has, Dave. She's all right," replied Tony.

Ransdell pitched head foremost toward the floor as Tony caught him.

The second rush was coming. No doubt of it, and it would be utterly overwhelming. There would be no survivors—but the women. None. For the horde would take no prisoners. They were killing the wounded already—their own badly wounded and the camp's wounded that they had captured.

Eliot James, a bullet through his thigh, but saved by the dark, crawled in with this information. Tony carried him into the ship.

They were all in the ship—all the survivors. The horde did not suspect it. The horde, as it charged in the dark, yelling and firing, closed in on the laboratories, clambered in the windows, smashing, shooting, screaming. Meeting no resistance, they shot and bayoneted the bodies of their own men and of the camp's which had been left there.

Then they came on toward the ship. They suddenly seemed to realize that the ship was the last refuge. They surrounded it, firing at it. Their bullets glanced from its metal. Somebody who had grenades bombed it.

A frightful flame shattered them. Probably they imagined, at first, that the grenade had exploded some sort of a powder magazine within the huge metal tube, and that it was exploding. Few of those near to the ship, and outside it, lived to see what was happening.

THE great metal rocket rose from the earth, the awful blast from its power tubes lifting it. The frightful heat seared and incinerated, killing at its touch. A hundred of the horde were dead before the ship was above the buildings.

Hendron lifted it five hundred feet farther, and the blast spread in a funnel below it. A thousand died in that instant. Hendron ceased to elevate the ship. Indeed, he lowered it a little, and the power of the atomic blast which was keeping two thousand tons of metal and of human flesh suspended over the earth, played upon the ground—and upon the flesh on the ground—as no force ever released by man before.

Tony lay on his face on the floor of the ship, gazing down through the protective quartz-glass at the ground lighted by the garish glare of the awful heat.

In the midst of the blaring, blinding, screaming crisis, a man on horseback appeared. His coming seemed spectral. He rode in full uniform; he had a sword which he brandished to rally his doomed horde. Probably he was drunk; certainly he had no conception of what was occurring; but his courage was splendid. He spurred into the center of the lurid light, into the center of the circle of death and tumult, stiff-legged in stirrups of leather, like one of the horrible horsemen of the Apocalypse.

He was, for a flaming instant, the apotheosis of valor. He was the crazed commander of the horde.

But he was more. He was the futility of all the armies on earth. He was man, the soldier.

Probably he appeared to live after he had died, he and his horse together. For the horse stood there motionless like a statue, and he sat his horse, sword in hand. Then, like all about them, they also crumpled to the ground.

Half an hour later, Hendron brought the ship down.

CHAPTER XX

Day

A PALE delicate light carried away the depths of night. From the numbness and exhaustion which had seized it, the colony roused itself. It gazed with empty eyes upon that which surrounded it. The last battle of brains against brutality had been fought on the bosom of the earth. And the intelligence of man had conquered his primeval ruthless. But at what cost! Around a table in the office of the laboratories a few men and women stared at each other; Hendron pale and shaken, Tony in shoes and trousers, white bandages over his wounds, Eve staring from him to the short broad-shouldered silent form of Ransdell, whose hands, blackened, ugly, hung limply at his sides, whose gorilla-like strength seemed to have deserted him; the German actress, her dress disheveled, her hands covering her eyes; Smith the surgeon, stupefied in the face of this hopeless summons to his calling.

At last Hendron sucked a breath into his lungs. He spoke above the nerve-shattering clamor which penetrated the room continually. "My friends, what must be done is obvious. We must first bury the dead. There are no survivors of the enemy. If others are gathering, I believe we need fear no further attack. Doctor Smith, you will kindly take charge of all hospital and medical ar-

rangements for our people. I will request that those who are able to do so appear immediately on the airplane field, which I believe is—unobstructed. I shall dispatch the majority of them to your assistance, and with those who remain, I shall take such steps as are necessary. Let's go."

Only three hundred and eighty persons were counted by Tony as they struggled shuddering to the landing-field. Almost half of them were women, for the women, except in the case of individuals who joined the fighting voluntarily, had been secluded.

As in the other emergency, Taylor was assigned to the kitchen. He walked to the kitchen with his men. Tony with ten other men, a pitiful number for the appalling task that confronted them, went down to the field and began to gather up in trucks the bodies there. Not far from the cantonment, on what had been a lumber road, an enormous fissure yawned in the earth. . . .

All that day they tended their own wounded. Many of them perished. . . .

In those nightmare days no one spoke unless it was necessary. Lifelong friendships and strong new friendships had been obliterated. Loves that in two months had flowered into vehement reality were ended. And only the slowest progress was made against the increasing charnel horror surrounding the cantonment. For two weeks abysmal sadness and funereal silence held them. Only the necessary ardors of their toil prevented many of them from going mad. But at the end of two weeks Tony, returning from an errand to the fissure where the last bodies had been entombed by a blast of dynamite, stood on the hill where he had so often regarded the encampment, and saw that once again the grass grew greenly, once again the buildings were clean and trim. The odor of fresh paint was carried to his nostrils, and from far away the droning voices of the cattle in the stockyards reached his ears. He was weary, although for the last few nights he had been allowed adequate sleep, and his heart ached.

"Millions, Hendron, millions! That's the price I'm offering you for my life."

While he stood there, his attention was attracted by a strange sound—the sound of an airplane motor; and the plane itself became visible. It was not one of their own planes, and he looked at it with hostile curiosity. It landed presently on their field, and Tony was one of several men who approached it. The cabin door opened, and out stepped a man. There was something familiar about him to Tony, but he could not decide what it was. The man had a high crackling voice. His hair was snow-white. His features were drawn, and his skin was yellow. His pilot remained at the controls of the plane, and the old man hobbled toward Tony, saying as he approached:

"Please take me to Mr. Hendron."

Tony stepped forward. "I'm Mr. Hendron's assistant. We don't allow visitors here. Perhaps you will tell me your errand."

"I'll see Hendron," the other snapped. Tony realized that the man constituted no menace. "Perhaps," he said coldly, "if you will tell me your reason for wanting to see Hendron, I can arrange for the interview."

The old man almost shrieked. "*You* can arrange an interview! I tell you, young fellow, I said I would see Hendron, and that's all there is to it." He came abruptly closer, snatched Tony's lapel, cocked his head and peered into his face. "You're Drake, aren't you, young Tony Drake?"

Suddenly Tony recognized the man. He was staggered. Before him stood Nathaniel Borgan, fourth richest man in America, friend of all tycoons of the land, friend indeed of Hendron himself. Tony had last seen Borgan in Hendron's house in New York, when Borgan had been immaculate, powerful, self-assured and barely approaching middle age. He now looked senile, degenerate and slovenly.

"Aren't you Drake?" the crackling voice repeated. Tony nodded mechanically. "Yes," he said, "come with me."

HENDRON did not recognize Borgan until Tony had pronounced his name. Then upon his face there appeared briefly a look of consternation, and Borgan in his shrill grating voice began to talk excitedly. "Of course I knew what you were doing, Hendron, knew all about it. Meant to offer you financial assistance, but got tangled up taking care of my affairs in the last few weeks. I haven't been able to come here before, for a variety of reasons. But now I'm here. You'll take me with you when you go, of course." He banged his fist on the table in a bizarre burlesque of his former gestures. "You'll take me, all right, all right, and I'll tell you why you'll take me—for my money. When all else fails, I'll have my money. I ask only that you spare my life, that you'll take me from this awful place, and in turn go out to my plane, go out to the plane that is waiting there for you. Look inside." Suddenly his voice sank to a whisper, and his head was shot forward. "It's full of bills, full of bills, Hendron, hundred-dollar bills, thousand-dollar bills, ten-thousand-dollar bills—stacked with them, bales of them, bundles of them—millions, Hendron, millions! That's the price I'm offering you for my life."

Hendron and Tony looked at this man in whose hands the destiny of colossal American industries had once been so firmly held; and they knew that he was mad.

ODDLY enough, the arrival of Nathaniel Borgan and his effort to purchase passage on the Space Ship with millions in bills as worthless as Civil War shin-plasters, acted as a sort of catalyst on the survivors of the attack. The deep melancholy which had settled upon them, and which in many cases had been so powerful an emotion that all interest in the future was swept away, evaporated as the story of Borgan ran through the colony. To people living in a normal world, the millionaire's behavior might have seemed shocking. But Hendron's colonists were beyond the point where they could be shocked. Instead they were reawakened to an intense consciousness of their unique position and their vast responsibilities.

They sent Borgan away with his pilot and his plane full of money; and the last words of the financier were pronounced in a voice intended to be threatening as he leaned out of the cabin door: "I'll get an injunction against you from the President himself. I'll have the Supreme Court behind me within twenty-four hours."

Somebody laughed, and then somebody else. It was not gay laughter, but Homeric laughter, the sort of laughter that contains too many emotions to be otherwise expressed.

After the plane disappeared in the sky, people found themselves talking to each other about their lives once more. On the following morning a small quota of bathers appeared and plunged into the pool. Their voices were still restrained; but Hendron, watching from the roof of the laboratory, sighed with infinite relief. He had almost reached the point when he would have given way to utter despair over the morale of his people. That evening the strains of phonograph music floated over the place that had been a battlefield. They played old favorites for a while; but when some one put on a dance record, there was no objection.

The energy of interest returned to their work, replacing the energy of dogged and bleak determination. . . .

At that time, nearly three weeks after the attack, a census was retaken. There were two hundred and nine uninjured women, one hundred and eighty-two uninjured men. There were about eighty men and women who were expected wholly to recover. There were more than a hundred who would suffer some disability. Four hundred and ninety-three people had been killed or had died after the conflict.

Work of course was redistributed. More than five months lay ahead of them. The Space Ship could be completed even with this reduced group, in three weeks. The greatest loss was in the death of men, specialists in various fields of human knowledge. That their branches of learning might not be unrepresented, schools were immediately opened, and more than two hundred men and women began an intensive training in a vast variety of the branches of science. . . .

On one of the unseasonably warm afternoons in December Tony received what he considered afterward the greatest compliment ever paid to him in his life. He was making one of his regular tours of the stockyards when Ransdell, walking alone on the road, overtook him. In all their recent encounters, Ransdell had not spoken a hundred words to Tony; but now finding him alone, he stopped him and said almost gruffly: "I'd like to speak to you."

Tony turned and smiled with his usual geniality.

The South African hesitated, and almost blushed. "I'm not talkative," he said bluntly, "but I've been trying to find you alone for weeks." Again he hesitated.

"Yes?"

"That fight you put up—" Ransdell took a huge pocket-knife from his flannel shirt and commenced to open and shut its blade nervously. "That was a damn' fine piece of work, fellow."

"What was yours?" Tony replied, heartily. Ransdell held out his hand. They gripped, and in that grip the hands of lesser men would have been broken.

FROM that time on, those rivals in love were as blood brothers. They were seen together more often than Ransdell was seen with his two companions of the long flight; they made an odd pair, the tall garrulous good-humored Tony striding here and there on his numerous duties, accompanied by the short, equally broad and herculean British-American.

Another general meeting was held in the dining-hall. It began a little quietly, for those who gathered there were reminded intensely of the diminution of their numbers by the number of empty seats. Hendron again took charge, and his words from beginning to end were a complete surprise to the community.

IN his office and at his business a relatively silent man, Hendron none the less enjoyed making speeches. He stood on the platform that night, his hair a little grayer than formerly, the lines around his eyes a little deeper, the square set of his shoulders slightly bowed, and his mouth fixed in a more implacable line than before. The five-hundred-odd people who listened to him appreciated from the first moment that Hendron had something of importance to impart, and something which he knew would please them.

"I have called you together," he began, "for two distinct purposes: I shall dispatch the first of these with what I know will be your approval; and the second I am sure will meet with equal approval.

"I want each one of you tonight to forget for the moment the tragedies that have overtaken us. I want each of you tonight to think of yourself as a member of the human race who, buffeted by fortune, overwhelmed by Nature, threatened by your fellow-men, is nevertheless steadfastly continuing upon the greatest enterprise mankind has ever undertaken.

"And while you are thinking that, I will draw your attention to the fact that certain of our number have made, at the risk of their own lives and with the exhibition of incredible heroism, contributions to our lives here, the value of which cannot be expressed.

"I am thinking of Peter Vanderbilt, Eliot James and David Ransdell, who brought to us a record of the fate of our nation, and especially of Ransdell, who not only carried home his companions when he was severely wounded, but who discovered and brought back the substance which will make our escape from here possible."

Applause and cheering checked Hendron for a while. Then he continued:

"I am thinking also of Jack Taylor and Anthony Drake, whose courageous defense was largely responsible for our presence here today." The cheers were redoubled.

"Because we are all human, and because we wish to recognize by some to-

ken services so extraordinary and distinguished as these, I have had struck off five gold medals." Hendron held up his hand to check the tumult. "These medals bear on one side the motto of the United States of America, which I think we might still adopt as our own. Out of the many nationalities represented before, we intend to create a single race. Therefore the medals bear the inscription, *'E pluribus unum,'* the names of their recipients, and beneath the names the words *'For valor.'* On the opposite face of these medals is the head of Sven Bronson, who first discovered the Bronson Bodies, who gave warning to the world, and who was one of those who surrendered his life, that the rest of us might not perish."

There was now silence in the room. One by one Hendron called the names of the five men to whom he wished to do honor. As each rose and stepped forward, he spoke a few words descriptive of the reasons for awarding the medal, and the occasion which had won the award. Vanderbilt and James were gracefully embarrassed. Jack Taylor was dumb-stricken and crimson. Tony shuffled to and from the platform with a bent head, and Ransdell accepted his medal with a white face and a military precision which showed clearly the emotional price he was paying for every step and gesture he made.

WHEN the applause had at last died, Hendron began again in a different tone: "The second matter which I have to discuss with you is one which will come, I am sure, as a distinct surprise. It is the result of my earnest thought and of careful calculations. I arrived at it no sooner, because I anticipated neither the temper nor the quality of the people who would be gathered before me at this time, and because I was uncertain of the mechanical facilities that would be available to us. From the standpoint of realism,—and I have learned that all of you are courageous enough to face truths,—I am forced to add that my decision has been made possible by the diminution of our numbers.

"All of you know that I founded this village of ours for the purpose of transferring to the planet that will take the place of Earth a company of about one hundred people, with the hope that they might perpetuate our doomed race. The number I considered was in a measure arbitrary, but it seemed to me that a ship large enough to accommodate such a number might be fabricated and launched by the one thousand persons who were originally assembled here. It is obvious, of course, that the more intelligent and healthy units of humanity we are able to transfer to the planet, the better the chances for founding a new race will be."

He paused and his eyes roved over the throng. Not a breath was drawn, and not a word was spoken. Many guessed in a blinding flash of ecstasy what Hendron was going to say.

"My friends, we are five hundred in number. There is not one man or woman left among us who bears such disability as will prevent him from surviving, if anyone may, the trip through space; there is not one but who, if we effect our landing upon Bronson Alpha and find it habitable, will be fit to propagate there the human race.

"On the night of the attack, we all of us—and some who since have died—crammed into the Space Ship. We all realize that no such crowding will be possible on the voyage through space; we all realize that much cargo, other than humanity, must be stowed on the ship if there is to be any point and purpose in our safe landing upon another planet. One hundred persons remains my estimate of the probable crew and passenger-list of the ship which saved us all on that night.

"But I have come to the conclusion that, by dint of tremendous effort and coöperation, and largely because of the success of the experiments which we have made with Ransdell's metal, it will be possible within the remaining months of time to construct a second and larger vessel which will be capable of removing the entire residual personnel of this camp."

Hendron sat down. No cheer was lifted. As if they had seen the Gorgon's Head, the audience was turned to stone. The sentence imposed by the death-lottery had been lifted. Every man and woman who sat there was free. Every one of them had a chance to live, to fight and to make a new career elsewhere in the starlit firmament.

They sat silently, many with bowed heads, as if they were engaged in prayer. Then sound came: A man's racking sob, the low hysterical laughter of a woman; after that, like the rising of a great wind, the cheers.

CHAPTER XXI

Diary

IN Eliot James' diaries the days appeared to be crammed with events. A glance at its pages would have made the observer believe that life was filled with excitement for the dwellers in Hendron's colony, although to the dwellers themselves, the weeks passed in what seemed like a steady routine, and James had been so busy that he was unable to write voluminously:

"Dec. 4th: Today what we call the keel of the second Space Ship was laid. The first has been popularly named *'Noah's Ark,'* and we have offered a prize of five thousand dollars in absolutely worthless bank-notes for anybody who

"Into the ship —everybody!" cried Tony.

will contrive a name for the second. It was a spectacular affair—all of us dressed in what we call our best clothes, Hendron making another of his usual speeches, full of stirring words and periodic sentences, and the molten metal pouring into its forms.

"Dec. 7th: Today was a gala day for Tony Drake. Kyto, the Japanese servant whom he had had for some years in New York, and of whom he was inordinately fond, walked peacefully into camp, after he had been supposedly lost in the trip here from New York. The inscrutable little Jap walked up to Tony, whose back was turned. Kyto's face was like a smiling Buddha's; and fully appreciating the drama of the situation, he said in his odd voice: 'With exceedingly humbleness request possibilities of return to former employment.' Peter Vanderbilt and I had brought him up to Tony, and when Tony spun around, I thought he was going to faint. Immediately afterward he began thumping Kyto's back so hard that I personally feared for the Jap's life. But he seems to be wiry; in fact, he must have the constitution of a steel spring, for he has traveled over land more than eight hundred miles in the past two months, and his story, which I am getting out of him piecemeal, is one of fabulous adventure. Eve seemed almost as much pleased to see

Kyto as was Tony himself. She took his hand and held it and cried over him, while he stood there blinking and saying that he was humbly and honorably this and that.

"Dec. 8th: Four deer wandered into the camp today, and were corralled for our menagerie after a very exciting chase.

"Dec. 19th: Hendron is a curiously ingenious devil. I discovered only today that he has used for insulation, between the double walls of the now completed Ark, two thick layers of asbestos, and between them, books. The books make reasonably good insulating material, and when we arrive at our future home, if we do not arrive with too hard a blow, we will be provided with an enormous and complete library. I even saw a first edition of Shelley which was designated for the lining of the second ship. Amazing fellow, Hendron.

"DEC. 31ST: We had our Christmas dinner last Thursday, and except for the absence of turkey, it was complete, even to plum pudding. The weather continues to be warm, and the gardens which we replanted have flourished under this new sub-tropical climate, so that already we are reaping huge harvests which are being stored in the Space Ships.

"Jan. 18th: A flight was made to the 'mines' from which Ransdell's metals have been taken, and in the course of it the plane passed over St. Paul and Milwaukee. Apparently the mobs in those two cities have for the most part either perished or migrated, as there was very little sign of life—smoke columns rising here and there amid the ruins betokening small cooking-fires, and an occasional figure on the streets, nothing more. However, we have not drawn in the outposts stationed around the cantonment after the last attack, and if we should be again attacked in force, we shall be warned in time and shall not temporize but use the final weapon at once. However, no one expects another attack. Even in this dying world, the word of our weapon has spread.

"Jan. 20th: There was dancing in the hall of the women's dormitory and Ransdell so far overcame his almost animal shyness that he danced twice with Eve. The rivalry between Ransdell and Tony is the most popular subject of discussion among the girls and women. I myself have been much interested in the triangle, and for a while I was disturbed about it, but such a bond has grown between the two men that I know whoever is defeated in the contest, if there is victory or defeat, will take his medicine honorably and generously. I am wondering, however, about that business of victory and defeat. The women here slightly outnumber the men. It will be necessary for them to bear children on the new planet. Variation of our new race will be desirable. To care for the same, fifty girls and twenty-five men are already deeply immersed in the study of obstetrics, nursing, pediatry, child psychology, etc. Perhaps we will resort in the main to polyandry and abolish, because of biological necessity, all marriage. There are a good many very real love-affairs existent already. That is to be expected, when the very flower of young womanhood and the best men of all ages are segregated in the wilderness. I myself doubtless reflect the mental attitude of most of the men here. There are a hundred women, I shall say two hundred, any one of whom I would be proud to have as my wife. But so great have been the trials of our life, so enormous is the need for our concentrated efforts, that little energy or time has been left to them to think about love or marriage.

"Jan. 31st: It is too bad that the change in the earth's orbit and the inclination of its axis did not occur long ago. Generations of people who have been snowbound at this time in Michigan would rub their eyes in wonderment if they could see the trees still in leaf, the flowers still in bloom, the fields still green, sunshine alternating with occasional warm rains, and the thermometer standing between 65 and 85 every day.

"FEB. 17TH: In a little more than a month it will be time for our departure. As that solemn hour approaches, each of us intends to think back into our lives, rather than forward toward our new lives. Hendron has not hesitated to make it clear that our relatively short jump through space will be dangerous indeed. The ships may not have been contrived properly to withstand what are at best merely theoretical conditions. The cold of outer space may overwhelm us. The sun may beat through the sides of the ship and consume us. The rays which travel through the empty reaches when we thrust ourselves among them clad in the thin cylinders of our Ark may assert a different potency from that experienced under the layer of Earth's at-

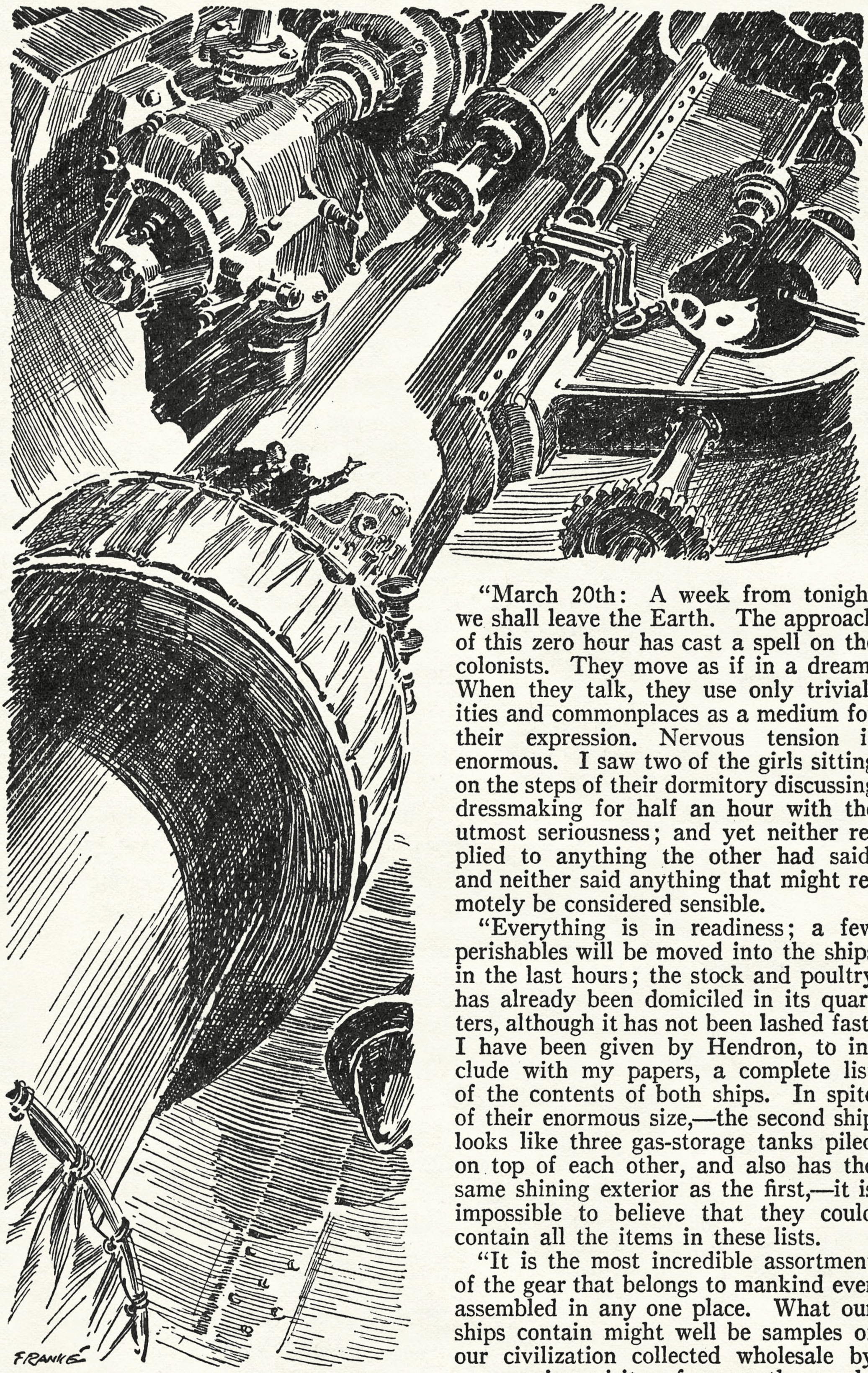
mosphere. Either or both of our two projectiles may collide with a wandering asteroid, in which case the consequences will be similar to those anticipated for the collision of Earth with Bronson Beta. Hendron assures us only that the ships will fly, and that if they reach the atmosphere of Bronson Alpha, it will be possible to land them.

"Feb. 22nd: The Bronson Bodies have reappeared in the sky with visible discs. Beta once more looks like a coin, and Alpha not unlike the head of a large pin. Observations through our modest telescope show clearly that Bronson Alpha, warmed by the sun, has a surface now completely thawed. Its once solid atmosphere is drifting about it filled with clouds, and through those clouds we are able to glimpse patches of dark and patches of brilliance, which indicate continents and oceans. At the first approach, an excellent spectroscopic analysis was made of the planet's composition. The analysis denoted its fitness to support human life, but we stand in such awe of it that we say to ourselves only: 'Perhaps we shall be able to live if we ever disembark there;' but we cannot know. There may be things upon its mysterious surface, elemental conditions undreamed of by man. However, there is some mysterious comfort, a sort of superstitious courage, afforded to many of our numbers by the fact that as our doom approaches, a future home is also waxing brightly in the dark sky. We spend many evenings staring toward the heavens.

"Feb. 28th: Tremendous effort is being expended upon the second Ark. The task of accumulating metal for its construction was tremendous, inasmuch as the vast stores accumulated by Hendron for the building of the first ship in the cantonment itself were insufficient. There was no time to smelt iron from the deposits in this district, and it had to be collected from every possible source. The hangar which had protected the first ship was confiscated. Two steel bridges across what used to be a river near by have furnished us with much of the extra material required, but we are now engaged in smelting every object for which we shall have no future use. Copper is at a premium, and our lighting system is now being conducted over iron wires, to the great detriment of its efficacy. Women are doing tasks that women have never done before, and we are all working on a sixteen-hour-a-day schedule. Hendronville looks like a little Pittsburgh—its furnaces going all night, its roads rutted by heavy trucking, and its foundries shaking with a continual roar of machinery. The construction of the second Ark in such a record time would have been impossible had it not been for the adaptability of Hendron's solution of atomic disintegration. Power and heat we have in unlimited quantities, but we are making progress, and we shall finish in time.

"March 6th: The day and hour of departure have been announced. In order to intercept the Bronson Body at its most advantageous point, we shall leave the Earth on the 27th of this month at 1:45 A. M. precisely. It is estimated that the journey will require about ninety hours, although it could be made much more quickly.

"MARCH 18TH: In running over my notes, I find I have not mentioned one source of constant interest and speculation here at the camp. From time to time, when our own receiving apparatus has been functioning, we have overheard radio broadcasts from the world outside. The static is still tremendous, and these broadcasts, whether on spark sets or over regular stations, have been most unsatisfactory. Once in November and again in January we heard the President of the United States. He recited in a very strained and weary voice a few fragmentary details of life in his small kingdom. Not in any hope of aid, but as if he wished to inform anyone else who might be listening, what the situation was. He did not address his own constituents, so we may assume they have no receiving sets and are still struggling against appalling handicaps which Ransdell and myself observed. On three or four occasions through the rattle in the earphones we have caught snatches of broadcasts from foreign stations. But, except for a lull immediately after the storms, we have never been able to overhear enough so that we know anything definite about the situation in Europe or elsewhere, except that on the night of, I think, December 8th, we heard a short segment of a Frenchman's oration which evidently was intended to move his hearers toward peace. We assumed that in spite of the appalling conditions that must prevail abroad as they do here, Europe, still sticking stubbornly to her nationalism, is again engaged in some form of warfare.



Hendron waved his arm around the chamber. "This is the forward power-cabin," he began. "The breeches of the main tubes are concealed; but you can see here the breeches of the smaller surrounding tubes."

"March 20th: A week from tonight we shall leave the Earth. The approach of this zero hour has cast a spell on the colonists. They move as if in a dream. When they talk, they use only trivialities and commonplaces as a medium for their expression. Nervous tension is enormous. I saw two of the girls sitting on the steps of their dormitory discussing dressmaking for half an hour with the utmost seriousness; and yet neither replied to anything the other had said, and neither said anything that might remotely be considered sensible.

"Everything is in readiness; a few perishables will be moved into the ships in the last hours; the stock and poultry has already been domiciled in its quarters, although it has not been lashed fast. I have been given by Hendron, to include with my papers, a complete list of the contents of both ships. In spite of their enormous size,—the second ship looks like three gas-storage tanks piled on top of each other, and also has the same shining exterior as the first,—it is impossible to believe that they could contain all the items in these lists.

"It is the most incredible assortment of the gear that belongs to mankind ever assembled in any one place. What our ships contain might well be samples of our civilization collected wholesale by some curious visitors from another world and taken home in order that their weird fellows might look upon the wisdom, the genius, the entertainment and the interests of men. We are ready."

CHAPTER XXII

Ave Atque Vale

"WHEN I think," Tony said to Eve as they sat side by side on a small hilltop watching the descent of twilight into the busy valley, "of the foresight and ingenuity of your father, I am appalled. He was ahead of most of the people in the world in his idea for leaving the earth, and he was ahead of all of us when he saw the possibility and the practicability of taking everybody who was left after the struggle, to the new planet. It's odd. I used to imagine scenes that would exist when the Ark was ready to leave, and of the thousand of us here only a hundred would be chosen. It would have been a terrible period for everyone. Then I used to think what would have happened if the world knew about the Ark. Hundreds of men like Borgan would have offered their millions in return for a ticket. Husbands would have deserted their wives and their children. People would have fought until they were killed, trying to get aboard. Prospective stowaways would have offered fabulous prices. No wonder he insisted on isolation and secrecy. And now we can all go—"

Eve hugged herself with her arms and looked at him sidewise. "I knew all about Dad's plans for the departure, and I knew something else. You were not to go, were you?"

"Me? Of course not. What good would I have been?"

Eve smiled. On this evening, an evening so close to the great adventure, she seemed radiant and unusually tender. "You're modest, Tony. That's one of your greatest charms. Let me tell you: Once I saw the list Dad had made up. He had given Bronson first place. I came second. Dodson was third. Ransdell was fourth. And you were fifth, Tony. When he could pick almost as he wished from the whole world, he made you fifth. That's pretty high up."

"Your father must be sentimental to consider me at all. But I am glad he gave Ransdell that fourth position. I can't imagine any situation in the world which Dave couldn't handle."

Eve ignored the compliment. "Father took the list away from me, and he was very angry that I had seen it. Peter Vanderbilt was on it. There are a good many high-minding and high-binding communists—that is, there used to be a good many—who would be mighty sore to think that into the blood of the future race would go that of the American aristocracy which they so passionately hate. Funny! I got into the habit of thinking, just as Dodson and the other men were thinking, about whom to preserve, and when you consider it, Vanderbilt has as much to offer as almost anyone. The delicacy that comes from overbreeding, a wiry nervous constitution, an artist's temperament, taste, a learned mind, a gorgeous sense of humor and courage. Probably he's wasteful, spendthrift, decadent and jaded—or at least he used to be; but how greatly his positive virtues outweigh his vices!"

"He's a good egg," Tony replied. "I knew him for years. His sister went to school with my mother."

"Another thing: Dad's name wasn't on that list. I think when Dad thought he could save only a hundred people, he figured that he was too old, and that his work had been done; and I'll bet if the first ship had been ready to leave and there had been none other, Dad would have been missing at the crucial time, so that they would have been compelled to go without him."

"Yes," Tony said thoughtfully. "That's exactly what your father would have done. And how calmly we are able to consider that! It's strange the way people change. I remember once when I was in college, seeing a man in Boston struck by an automobile. I don't suppose he was really badly injured, and yet for days afterward I was actually sick. And I used to brood about the awfulness of people being locked up in prisons, about electrocution and operations.

"I couldn't stand the thought of people being hurt. I used to lie in my bed at night in a cold sweat thinking about the, to me, impossible courage of men who volunteered during the wars to go on missions that meant sure death. And now"—he shrugged his shoulders—"death has lost all its meaning. Suffering has become something we accept as the logical accompaniment of life. I am not even shocked when I think that your father would deliberately commit suicide on this planet if he decided his biological usefulness was at an end—although, of course, such a decision would have been mistaken."

EVE nodded in agreement. "He intended to do it, I think, as a lesson—a sort of instruction—to the others."

A SILENCE fell between them. In the cantonment a mechanical siren tooted, and the night-shift exchanged places with the day-shift to the noisy undertone of moving trucks and banging doors. Lights sparkled in all the windows of the dining-hall, and as the doors opened and closed, a streak of vivid purplish light darted across the open campus. Tony began to talk again. "I have changed my ideas about everything, Eve—not only about life and death! I think that even my ideas about you are changing. When Ransdell came to New York under such dramatic circumstances, and when I saw your interest in him, I was jealous. I pretended I wasn't, even to myself; but I was. And in some small way—some small-minded way—I felt superior to him. I was better educated, better bred, better trained socially. Since I've come to know that man, I've learned that from the standpoint of everything that counts, he's a man, and I'm still in short pants.

"It would have been hard to talk to you about such things at one time; in fact it would have been impossible, because I would have considered it bad form. Now it's all different. The day after tomorrow we are going to sail. I may not have a chance to see you alone again between now and then. I don't want to burden you with a feeling of unnecessary responsibility. There isn't any responsibility on your part. But I must tell you that I love you. I've told you that before, long ago, and what I said then has nothing to do with what I feel now. In saying it I am asking you for nothing. I mean that you shall know only that whatever happens, whatever you decide, whatever either of us does in the future, cannot alter the fact that I now do and always shall hold for you intact the most fundamental part of all that any man can feel toward any woman."

He had finished his words with his face turned toward her, and his eyes looking into her eyes.

Eve spread her palms on the ground behind her and leaned back. "I love you too, Tony. I shall always love you."

A long second passed, and then he said in a startled and absent-minded tone: "What?"

"I said I shall always love you. What did you expect me to say?"

"I don't know," Tony replied.

"Can a girl say anything more?"

"I guess not."

"Well, what's the matter with you then?"

Tony thrust his hand against his forehead. "I don't know. I can't believe it. I don't think either of us can guess what we will 'always' do—if we reach Bronson Alpha."

Eve was still leaning on her straightened arms. "Whether we'll have marriage on the other planet or not, I can't tell. Maybe I'll be expected to share you with some of the other girls. I think the old system of living will never quite return. You're thinking of Ransdell: I admire him; I'm fascinated by him. Sometimes I have brief periods in which I get a tremendous yen for him. So much manhood in one person is irresistible. Probably I'm the first girl in the world who thrust into one of these intimate *têtes-à-tête* a statement of the truth. I am assuring you I love you. I'm telling you something that every human being knows and that every human being tries to pretend is not true—that love on a night like this can always be pledged as enduring; but that love through the years invariably proves to be something that is capricious, something that waxes and wanes. I'm not saying that I love you with reservations, Tony. I'm saying only that I'm human."

Tony took her in his arms then and kissed her.

"I'll try to understand what you've told me," he said a long time afterward. "I don't deserve this."

Eve laughed softly. Her copper hair was disheveled, and her black eyes were luminous in the dark. Tony, looking down into them, was frightened even when he heard her laughter, and the words that followed it. "I'll be the person who decides in the future about your merits and demerits. Perhaps in giving up the power to choose the men she loves, the fathers for her children, by accepting our false single standards, woman has thrown away the key to freedom for both sexes. Anyway, let's not worry about that right this minute."

"YOU whistle so persistently and so cheerfully," Jack Taylor said to Tony on the following morning, "that it makes me irritable."

"Good!" Tony replied, and kept on whistling.

"I came here to bring you news, various kinds of news. The first item is interesting and historical: Ransdell is just in from a flight, and says he found how

all those people got up here from the cities to attack us. There's a road reasonably undamaged that leads nearly three-quarters of the way from St. Paul here. The places wrecked by the earthquakes have been hastily repaired, and the whole road is littered with broken-down automobiles. Most of that mob must have driven a good part of the way. They must have spent weeks getting ready to strike."

Tony looked up from the suitcase which he was strapping in his room. He had stopped whistling. "That a fact? Well, that's one mystery cleared up, anyway."

"The second item is that the list of who goes in which ship has just been posted."

"Huh."

"I thought that would get a rise out of you. Don't worry, don't worry. You're in the first ship, with Eve, all right. Hendron's in command. You're a lieutenant. James is with you. But guess who's in command of the second ship."

"Jessup?"

"Guess again."

"Kane?"

"Nope; you're all wet. Those two noble scientists are second in command. The big ship is going out under the instructions of your good friend David Ransdell."

"That's grand," Tony said; "but will he have sufficient technical knowledge to run the thing?"

"Oh, Jessup and Kane will do that all right. Ransdell's only going to be a figurehead until they get to Bronson Alpha. But isn't that sweet?"

"That's swell."

"I mean for you and Eve. Think of it. Alone together in the reaches of utter space for ninety whole hours, cooped up with only about a hundred other people."

Tony groaned, kicked the lock on his suitcase shut, and said: "Jack, how'd you like to be lying on this floor unconscious?"

"Sure you could make the grade?"

"What do you think?"

Jack scratched his head in mock calculation.

"Well, remember back in Harvard when you were sounding me out to see if I'd be a likely candidate for this jaunt? Remember your asking me if I hadn't rowed on a crew, and my telling you that I had, but it wasn't much of a crew, and we were champions that year because the others were still worse?"

Tony nodded with mock menace. "I remember. What about it?"

"Well, on thinking it over, I've decided that that was a pretty good crew, after all. Now on this matter of whether I'm going to be lying on the floor unconscious, or you, I have another item to point out beside my quondam skill at the oars. I was a little bit rattled the day you came into my room, and I forgot to mention that I was also captain of the boxing team."

Tony stepped back. "Professionalism rearing its ugly head, eh? All right. We'll find something else to decide our positions. How about baseball-bats?"

"My idea exactly. Celluloid baseball-bats."

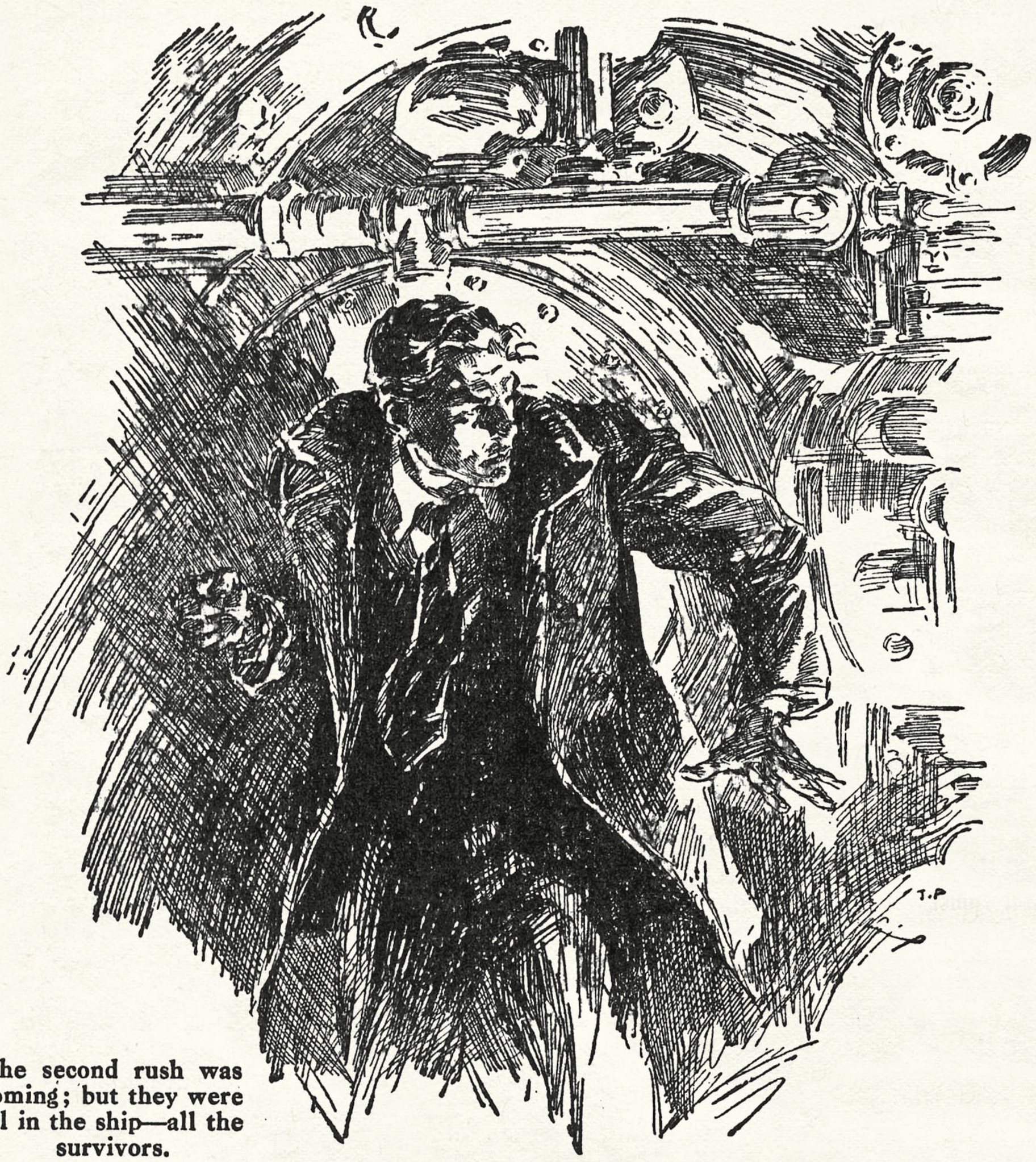
"Fine. I'll meet you and your seconds out behind the power-house in half an hour. In the meantime I've got to get packed up here. You know we're going places tomorrow."

Jack sat down on the bed. "That reminds me: I'm going on the second ship too."

Tony's face fell. They were serious again.

Jack said: "When you are all set, they want you down at the Ark. Everybody's going through it, and getting assigned to their quarters."

TONY walked up a long flight of steps to the airlock. As he went, he cast an upward glance at the elaborate structure of beams which supported the Ark, and which workmen were now removing. The interior of the Ark was brilliantly lighted by electricity. Through its center ran a spiral staircase, and a long taut cable inside the stairs. At eight-foot intervals steel floors cut the cylinder into sections. The two forward sections were crammed with machinery and instruments, and across them ran the great thrust-beams against which the atomic tubes would exert their force. A ring of smaller tubes pointing outward around the upper and lower sections like spokes were provided to give free dimensional control of the ship, and to make the adjustments necessary for grounding. It had been planned to travel head-on for the greater part of the distance. When the reaction forces were started, the whole ship would be upside down for some time, and eventually the landing would be made after turning it end for end; and although the probabilities of depositing the ship precisely upon her stern, and of keeping her in that position,



The second rush was coming; but they were all in the ship—all the survivors.

were small, it was felt that after she had landed she might tip over,—a motion that would be broken by the use of the horizontal jets,—or that she might even roll, which could also be stopped by the jets, as had been done on the short and simple hop from the ground on the night of the attack.

TONY walked up the spiral staircase from the stern's engine-room. Above it were stockrooms with their arrangements for lashing fast the livestock which the Ark carried. Above the stockrooms were storerooms reaching to the center of the ship, and tightly packed. In the center of the ship were the human quarters, their walls carefully padded, and lashings, similar to but more comfortable than those provided for the animals, arranged along the floor.

These accommodations were not alluring. They suggested that the journey would be cramped and unpleasant, but inasmuch as it would take only ninety hours if it was successful, everything had been sacrificed to utility. On the side walls were water-taps, and in steel closets food for a considerably longer time than four days had been stored; but in their journey through space the travelers would enjoy no comfortable beds, eat no hot meals and divert themselves with no entertainments. The exact conditions of flight through space were unknown; and underneath the springs and paddings which lined the passengers' quarters was apparatus both for refrigeration and for heating. Tony passed through the double layer of passengers quarters, through the layers of storerooms and the engine-room at the front end of the great cylinder, climbing all the way on the spiral stairs. There he found Hendron, who was testing some of the apparatus.

"You sent for me?" Tony asked.

"No. Oh, I see what it was. They were giving out the numbers of your slings down below. I've asked everyone to get in slings before we start and when

we land, as I'm not sure, from the single test, exactly what the general effect will be. I think King was in charge of the list, but if you see him any time within the next few hours, he will tell you your number and position."

AS Tony was about to go, Hendron recalled him. "I never showed you my engines, did I?"

"No," Tony said.

Hendron waved his arm around the chamber. It looked very much like the interior of a submarine. "This is the forward power-cabin," he began. "The breeches of the main tubes are concealed behind a wall which is reinforced by the thrust-beams. Those are the ones which are to break the force of our fall; but you can see here the breeches of the smaller surrounding tubes. They are not unlike cannon, and they work on the same principle. Acting at right angles to our line of flight, they can turn the ship and revolve it end for end, in fact, like a thrown fire-cracker, if we should turn on jets on opposite sides and opposite ends. The breech of each of these little tubes,"—at that point Hendron turned a wheel with a handle on it, and the rear of one of the tubes slowly opened,—"is provided with the tubes which generate the rays that split atoms of beryllium into their protons and nuclei. The forces engendered in the process, which is like a molecular explosion, but vastly greater, together with the disrupted matter, is then discharged through the gun, the barrel which is lined with Ransdell's metal. The consumption of fuel, so to speak, both in quantity and rate, is regulated by a mechanism on the breech itself. The rate and volume of the discharge will be, of course, immensely greater for leaving the earth, than it was on the mere hop from the ground on the night of the assault. The ship proved itself then to be a gun, or rather a number of guns, which we will fire steadily on the trip through space. By Newton's Law, which Einstein has modified only in microscopic effects, for every action there is an equal and positive reaction, so that through space the speed and energy of the discharge from the tubes—which we also call the engines and motors, rather inaccurately—are what will determine the speed and motion of the ship."

Tony looked at the breech of the tube and nodded.

"Journeying through space we will be a rocket that can be fired from both ends and from all around the sides of both ends?"

"Exactly, although the side firing is of lesser intensity. We have twenty stern vents and twenty forward, you see, and twelve around the circumference at each end." Hendron smiled. "It is very beautiful, our ship; and according to the laws of physics, by the release of more power, it will navigate space as surely as it hopped from the ground, when we required it to. We'll leave this world, Tony; and, I believe, we'll land upon Bronson Alpha."

Tony stared at him: "And we'll live?"

"Why not, Tony? I can control the landing as I can control the leaving."

"I meant," said Tony, "granting that —granting we travel through space and reach that other planet and land upon it safely, will we live afterward?"

"Why not?" Hendron returned again. "We can count upon vegetation on Bronson Alpha almost surely. No, surely, I should say. Higher forms of life must have been annihilated by the cold; but the spores of vegetation could survive.

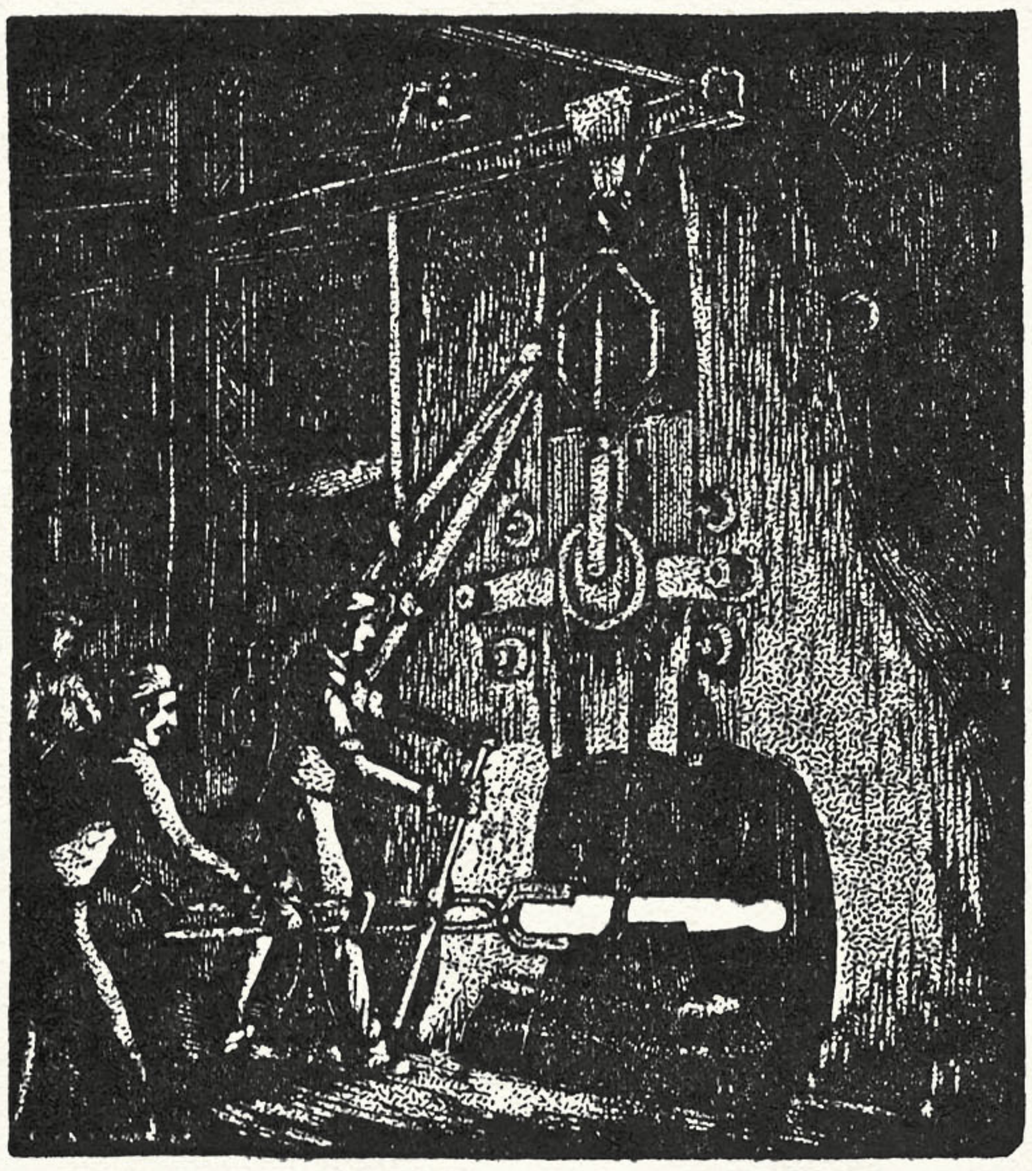
"Arrhenius, the great Swedish physicist, demonstrated years ago that the germinating powers of spores may be preserved rather than killed by intense cold. He cited, indeed, micro-organisms that had been kept in liquid air, at a temperature of some two hundred degrees below zero, centigrade, for many months without being deprived of their germinating power.

"We know too little about the lower temperatures; but what we have discovered indicates that the germinating power of micro-organisms and spores should be preserved at lower temperatures for much longer periods than at our ordinary temperatures.

"Arrhenius made calculations on a cold of only minus 220 centigrade, which is much warmer than the almost 'absolute cold' in which all organisms on Bronson Alpha have been preserved."

HENDRON referred to a notebook: "'The loss of germinating power,' Arrhenius observed, 'is no doubt due to some chemical process, and all chemical processes proceed at slower rates at lower temperatures than they do at higher. The vital functions are intensified in the ratio of 1:2.5 when the temperature is raised by ten degrees Centigrade.'

"So in the case of spores at a distance from the sun of the orbit of Neptune, after their temperature had been lowered



to minus 220, their vital energy would, according to this ratio, react with one thousand millions less intensity than at ten plus. Arrhenius figured that the germinating power of spores would not deteriorate in three millions of years at minus 220 more than it would in *one day* at an ordinary earthly temperature. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to believe that at the much lower temperatures which must have prevailed on Bronson Alpha, spores and micro-organisms could have been preserved indefinitely.

"These, now, have been thawed, and are being revived by the sun; so I feel we can count at least upon vegetation upon Bronson Alpha."

"At least!" Tony caught up his words. "You will not deny, then, that there may be a possibility of higher life surviving or capable of being revived—too?"

HENDRON shook his head. "I have seen too many incredible things occur, Tony," he replied, "to deny any possibility—particularly under conditions of which no one on this world has had any experience. But I do not expect it. I do expect vegetation, especially vegetation that grows from spores.

"In the early days on this world, the great majority of plants did not reproduce by seeds, but by the far more resistant spores, which have survived as the method of reproduction of many varieties. So we will count upon a native flora which, undoubtedly, will appear very strange to us. Of course, as you know, we are taking across with us our own seeds and our own spores."

"I know," said Tony, "and even our own insects too."

"An amazing list—isn't it, Tony?—our necessities for existence. We take so much for granted, don't we? You do not realize what has been supplied you by nature on this world of ours—until you come to count up what you must take along with you, if you hope to survive."

"Yes," said Tony, "Ants and angleworms—and mayflies."

"Exactly. You've been talking with Keppler, I see. I put that problem entirely up to Keppler.

"Our first and most necessary unit for self-preservation proved to be the common honey bee, to secure pollination of flowering plants, trees and so on. Keppler says that of some twenty thousand nectar insects, this one species pollinates more than all the rest put together. The honey bee would take care of practically all of this work, as his range is tremendous. There are a few plants—Keppler tells me—such as red clover, which he cannot work on; but his cousin the bumblebee, with his longer proboscis, could attend to them. So, first and foremost among living things, we bring bees.

"We also bring ants, especially the common little brown variety, to ventilate, drain and work the soil; and, as you have observed, angleworms also.

"Since we are going to bring with us fish eggs to hatch into fish over there, we have to bring mayflies. Their larvæ, in addition to providing food for the fish, are necessary to keep the inland waters from becoming choked with algæ and the lower water plants.

"In the whole of the Lepidoptera there is not, Keppler, says, one necessary or even useful species; but for sheer beauty's sake—and because they take small space—we will take six butterflies and at least the Luna moth.

"And we must take one of the reputed scourges of the earth."

"What?" said Tony.

"The grasshopper—the locust. Such an insect will be vitally necessary to keep the greenery from choking our new earth; and the one best suited for this job is, paradoxically enough, one of mankind's oldest scourges, the grasshopper. He is an omnivorous feeder and would keep the greenery in check—after he got his start. Our first problem may be that he will not multiply fast enough; and then that he multiply too fast. So to keep him in check, and also the butter-

fly and the moth, we will take parasitic flies. We will have to have these—two or three of the dozen common Tachinidæ have been chosen.

"These will be the essential insects. Here on earth, with a balanced and bewilderingly intricate economy already established, a tremendously longer list would be vital to provide the proper checks and balances; but starting anew, on Bronson Alpha, we can begin, at least, with the few insects we have chosen. Unquestionably, differentiation and evolution will swiftly set in, and they will find new forms.

"We are bringing along vials of mushroom and other fungi spores. Otherwise vegetation would fall down, never disintegrate, and pile up till everything was choked. A vial the size of your thumb holds several billion spores of assorted fungi—in case the spores of the fungi of Bronson Alpha have not survived. They are absolutely essential.

"Also, besides our own water supply for the voyage, we are taking bottles of stagnant pond-water and another of seawater containing our micro-organisms such as diatoms, plankton, unicellular plants and animals which form the basis for our own biotic economy and would supplement, or replace, such life on the other globe.

"About animals—" He halted.

"Yes, about animals," Tony urged.

"There is, naturally, still discussion. Our space is so limited, and there is most tremendous competition. Birds offer a somewhat simpler problem; but possibly you have heard some of the arguments over them."

"I have," said Tony, "and joined in them. I confess I argued for warblers—yellow warblers. I like them; I have always liked them; and meadow larks."

"The matter of dogs and cats is the most difficult," Hendron said, closing the subject. Air pumps murmured somewhere within the ship, which seemed half-alive. Electric generators hummed, and from somewhere came the high note of one of the electronic engines. Tony left Hendron and went from the ship.

That night, the emigrants from the Earth gathered again in the dining-hall. Hendron addressed them, outlining the general final preparations which were augmented by specific, printed instructions to meet such contingencies as could be foreseen.

The large ship, an exact duplicate of the original Ark with the exception of its greater proportions, stood on a concrete platform three hundred yards from its smaller companion.

AFTER the meeting, the crowd moved outdoors and stood awhile, looking at the Bronson Bodies. As in their former approach their size had increased in diametric proportion during the last few days and nights, and they now dominated the heavens, Beta eclipsed by Alpha, which rushed toward the earth ahead of it, in the same position as that held by a planet in transit across the face of the sun. The spectacle was one of weird beauty, and one calculated to strike terror in the bravest. Bronson Beta looked like the rising moon, except that it was much larger than any moon had ever seemed to be; and its edges, instead of being sharp, were furred with a luminous aura which indicated its atmosphere. Riding as if on the bosom of Bronson Beta was its smaller comrade, and it was sometimes difficult for the eye to delineate it exactly, for both planets gave off a brilliant white light. On Beta dark irregular "continental" splashes could be seen, and similar areas of maximum brightness doubtless indicated great oceans.

It seemed as they rose over the horizon on that last night that they increased visibly in size as the onlookers regarded them.

And such might have been the case, for now the earth was no longer rushing away from the stranger bodies, but toward them.

Already the desolate and wounded surface of man's world was stirring to their approach. Slight earthquake shocks were felt from time to time, and the very winds seemed to be moving in a consciousness of the awful cataclysm that was drawing near. All over the world, the tides—unnaturally absent since the shattering of the moon—rose again and licked up the sides of the fresh, raw shores; the people who huddled on mountains and prairie plateaus that night knew instinctively that this was indeed the end.

The thrilling account of the journey to the unknown planet will appear in the next installment of this unforgetable story—in the forthcoming February issue.

The Foreign-Office Murder

PHIL WARDER had left the boat at Cherbourg to keep a business appointment—but had told Mountford that he would be returning to London as soon as he could finish up, and had been looking forward to renewing the warm steamer friendship which had sprung up with Randall Mountford and his attractive sister "Bobs"—who lived with a widowed aunt in Hants. Mountford had given him the street and phone-number of his flat in St. Johns Wood—so Warder called him within half an hour after booking a room at the Piccadilly Hotel.

An unfamiliar voice came over the wire saying that "Mr. Mountford was h'at present h'in 'is bawth, sir—but 'is man will tike the message h'if you please, sir." When Warder had mentioned his name, there was a moment or two of silence; then the voice was saying that Mr. Mountford wished to know if Mr. Warder would come around to his diggings at once and dine with him, later. Getting into a dinner-jacket and light top-coat, Warder went down in the lift and got into a taxi at the side-door. In less than twenty minutes he was dropped at a very decent-looking block of apartments and was climbing to the third floor.

When the door of No. 6-C was opened in response to his ring, he saw a dimly lighted entry, in which a man in a lounge-suit, whose features were somewhat indistinct, deftly removed his top-coat, took hat, stick and gloves, and said in the same cockney voice he'd heard over the wire, that if Mr. Warder would make himself comfortable in the living-room, where he would find cocktails and cigarettes, Mr. Mountford would join him in just a few moments.

Warder paid no further attention to the man, naturally supposing that he had gone back to his own service-quarters in some other part of the flat—so didn't see him step quietly out upon the stair-landing, close the main hall-door and lock it from the outside—then calmly disappear with the top-coat, hat and gloves.

The living-room was very comfortably furnished, in excellent taste. There were pipes, tobacco-jar, cigars and cigarettes in a humidor, liquid refreshments on a Chinese brass tray—ruby silk drapery with dragons embroidered in dull gold around the big window, three beautiful Saruk rugs upon the parquetry floor; books, pictures, spurs, Oriental weapons—in short, the attractive bachelor-quarters of a man with independent income.

When Warder had comfortably stretched himself in one of the leather chairs, muffled voices from an adjoining room conveyed the impression that his host was going over some matter with another visitor—presumably one who had called upon a business matter. After a few minutes, the general nature of what was being said began to penetrate his consciousness with a realization that, instead of a conversation between two men, he was listening to a radio.

Presently it began to seem a bit odd—unlike what he'd seen of Mountford—that he should be amusing himself with a radio in another room while his dinner-guest was waiting for him in the living-room.

Then Warder's attention focused on what was coming through the air from "2LO." Evidently a police-broadcast concerning a dangerous criminal who was supposed to be at large in London:

"So far—Scotland Yard has not sufficient evidence to warrant the arrest of this man, who uses the names 'Henry Bolles,' 'Stefan Malinski,' 'Georges de Freycinet,' and 'Sir John Smallen' at various times and places. He is described as weighing about eleven stone—five feet seven in height—sometimes with a pointed black beard, at others, smoothly shaved—dark brown or black eyes, average features and appearance. His Majesty's Government has been informed that this man is in London with the supposed purpose of killing Government officials or other persons who know of his criminal activities. Any information lead-

A fascinating story of the Free Lances in Diplomacy.

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

Illustrated by Austin Briggs

ing to his arrest should be given to Scotland Yard at once as a matter of safety to the general public."

Warder thought, with a grin at the utter absurdity of such a suggestion, that this description would fit Mountford's low-voiced, obsequious valet, who had been mentioned on the boat several times, about as well as anyone he had seen—but promptly admitted to himself that it would fit a thousand other men in the streets of London equally well. . . .

After fifteen or twenty minutes, as the wireless droned on with other features of its program, it struck Warder that there was something devilish queer about the atmosphere of the apartment and of his friend's failure to put in an appearance. It got on his nerves!

He got out of his chair and went over to the door of the adjoining room—knocked upon the panel—knocked again, considerably louder.

After a moment's wait, he called:

"Oh-h-h, Randall! I say—Randall! . . . Are you in there?"

No answer. Just the radio, playing with nerve-racking fidelity the "Danse Macabre" of Saint Saëns. Then—the "Valse Triste."

He turned the knob and opened the door. The room evidently was Mountford's sleeping apartment: bed, bureau, table, chairs—the radio on a small table near the head of the bed, a great oval bowl with goldfish on the broad window-sill. Stepping around the bed, Warder shut off the loud-speaker, so that he might have a chance to think without distraction. Mountford was nowhere in evidence—the bed was perfectly smooth. At the end of the room, another door stood slightly ajar—he glimpsed the white tiling of a bathroom. Pushing this door farther open, he took one glance inside—then stood there completely stunned.

For Mountford was there—lying back against the sloping end of the tub—his throat slashed through to the vertebræ.

One pitiful arm dangled over the rim almost to the floor—and in the stiffening hand there was a tan glove, the mate to it lying upon the spattered mosaic floor. And Warder's eyes kept returning to those gloves with a horrid fascination. For they were the same pair he himself had handed to the valet when he came in!

WARDER'S first impulse was to drag that glove from the dead man's hand, pick up the other—and manage somehow to burn them. Then a flash of common sense warned him not to step a foot inside that door. His business was to get out of that apartment as quickly as he could—ask the advice of the one man he knew in London—then, presumably, communicate with the police. Every moment he remained there was at the risk of his own neck! What on earth could he say to account for his presence that wouldn't sound fishy, one way or another?

Closing the bathroom door, he went hurriedly out through the other rooms,

searching for his hat, stick and top-coat —but there wasn't a sign of them anywhere. And he was in dinner-kit—not a costume in which one walks through the streets of London bareheaded, or even rides in a taxi, at that time of year. He located the kitchenette, with its service-lift, and a small servant's-bedroom—but there was no sign of the valet. A service-door from the kitchenette into the stair-hall was bolted on the inside, which was natural enough at night—but he was amazed to find the front door of the apartment also locked, with no key in it, inside or outside.

To batter open that lock and door would make noise enough to arouse every tenant in the building—something which he had most compelling reasons for not doing, considering what there was in that bathroom. He recalled having seen a fire-escape outside the window of the only guest-room, and hurried back to it. Before he had more than half got out upon the steel slats of the escape, however, something zipped along the side of his head, taking a few hairs with it, and hit the bricks with a sharp "spat!" as it glanced off them. From the coping of the roof overhead, at the same instant, he heard a sound like a partly muffled cough —and realized that somebody was potting at him with a pistol upon which a silencer had been screwed.

IT was a hint that he would be shot if he attempted getting out of any window in the apartment—and already he had discarded the idea of letting himself down from one of the front ones with knotted strips cut from a blanket. He was in no position to attract attention, either from people on the street or a passing constable, by any suspicious action! The service-lift occurred to him —presumably there was a little door in the penthouse on the roof to permit a greasing or repairing of the hoisting sheaves. Standing upon the top of the little car, he could easily haul himself up. But again the mysterious some one on the roof outguessed him. As he started to put one foot on the top of the car, another cough from overhead—another spat of a bullet against the side of the shaft—warned him that another way of escape was barred. Then—he sat down in the living-room with a cigarette and started to think.

It was clearly evident that he was to be kept in that apartment for a certain period of time—but why? It seemed fairly obvious that the intention was to have him caught there by the police as a supposed murderer. But again—why? He knew nothing of Randall Mountford or his personal entanglements beyond what he'd seen of the man during their short steamer-acquaintance. Mountford wasn't in business of any sort, had an independent income, was fond of sports and traveling—just like hundreds of other wealthy and attractive young Englishmen who have no obsession for work as a pastime. It wouldn't make any difference how entirely respectable Warder's own antecedents were—nobody would believe he had not some political or vengeful reason for doing Mountford in.

AFTER a moment, it struck Warder that the one man he knew in London—His Lordship George Trevor, Marquis of Dyvnaint—might be located on the telephone. He found the phone-directory and the number without trouble. But when he picked up the French phone from its forked standard, there was no click on the diaphragm—the line was dead: the man on the roof was overlooking no bets. Warder lighted another cigarette—and did some more thinking. Then he examined the cord leading down to the bell-box on the baseboard, and found that it had been cut with nippers flush with the iron box.

For the first time in a worried twenty minutes, the American grinned, as he drew from his pocket an English jack-knife with a screwdriver, saw, claw-hook and blades of the best tempered steel. In a moment or two he had the box-cover unscrewed and the insulation scraped from the cut end of the cord. Another two minutes saw the proper connection made, the box screwed up, and the wire in serviceable condition again. In five minutes more, he was put through to Trevor's secretary. And the urgency in Warder's voice induced the secretary to call his chief at once.

"This is Phil Warder speaking! Recognize my voice, sir?"

"I certainly do. Where are you—now? When did you get here?"

"This afternoon—and I'm in one hell of a hole, sir! Made a mighty pleasant acquaintance on the boat, crossing. Went to Paris first—got here and booked at the Piccadilly about four. Called up my friend. His man answered the phone—said he was in his bath. Came back in a minute, saying Mountford wanted me to come around at once and dine with

him. Started in a taxi. Just take down the street- and flat-number before anyone cuts us off!" He repeated them, twice, then resumed:

"Valet let me in, took my hat and coat—asked me to wait in the living-room. Nothing happened for some time—then I started to investigate. Can't tell you over the phone what the conditions are. Whoever is responsible took my hat, coat, gloves and stick—locked me in here, cut the wire—and potted at me twice with a pistol when I tried getting out by a window and the service-lift. I'm not trying to bust open that door or take any other suspicious action—I'm in a dinner-coat—situation bad enough as it is. Naturally, I repaired the cut wire. Now—what do you advise, sir?"

"Hmph! I think I grasp the situation. You say those birds are on the roof—now?"

"They were ten minutes ago. There's a narrow alley at the side where the fire-escapes go down—probably a service-entrance to it at the back, with a pretty good chance to pot anyone climbing the back fences. But of course they may come down from the roofs through any building in the block."

"H'm! Well—you just sit tight. I'll be over there in a few minutes—and bring some competent helpers with me."

WHEN he had replaced the phone on its forks, Warder made a thorough examination of the rooms. On the parquetry flooring, with all the lights turned on, he now saw eight or ten drops of blood—upon which by sheer fool luck he hadn't happened to step; but to his horror, he suddenly noticed that the palm and fingers of his right hand were sticky with partly congealed blood. A moment's reflection indicated that it must have been on the phone-receiver when he picked it up. Mainly because he couldn't bear letting his hands remain in that condition, he stepped carefully into the bathroom, avoiding contact with anything, and thoroughly scrubbed them. Back in the living-room, he then found a woman's dainty handkerchief in a corner behind one of the chairs—with a vaguely familiar but elusive perfume. In the ash-tray on the table he now noticed four cork-tipped butts of cigarettes which were of a less expensive sort than those in the humidor, and an unsmoked cigarette under the edge of a rug near where the handkerchief had lain in one corner. Under the bed in the sleeping-room he saw, but didn't touch, a Japanese knife with silver dragons in relief on a brass hilt—the blade and part of the hilt blood-stained. Further investigation might have revealed other bits of evidence, but a long ring at the front-door bell sent him running along the entrance-hall:

"That you, sir?"

THE door was a thick one, but he made out the reply: "Are you Mr. Mountford? Open the door, please!"

"Mr. Mountford is unable to leave his room—I'm a guest who called expecting to dine with him, and the door has been locked from the outside—impossible for me to open it! I'm waiting for help which I have summoned." Warder wasn't giving himself away until he knew just who was on the opposite side of that door. He had an automatic in his pocket—ready to use if necessary.

There was a conference outside. He understood there was some hesitation about forcing a door without a warrant.

"That's Warder's voice, Sir Edward! Tell your man to get busy with that jimmy."

There was a sound of prying, a creaking and ripping of the oak casing—then the door swung inward, revealing three well-dressed men outside in the hall—two in evening-kit, the other in a lounge-suit of expensive gray tweed.

"By thunder, I'm glad to see you gentlemen! Come in and fasten that door with the bolts—unless you've other men with you who'll prevent our being interrupted."

"We've another man in the hall, Phil, and three posted outside. Now—what's the matter, here? What's it all about?"

"Cold-blooded, brutal murder—of a mighty likable chap whom I supposed hadn't an enemy in the world!"

He rapidly but concisely sketched everything that had happened since he was admitted to the apartment by the supposed valet. "To prevent any suspicious misunderstanding, I'm telling you right now that my gloves are in that bathroom—one of them gripped in the dead man's hand—and that I suddenly discovered that my right hand was covered with blood. Took me a minute or so to figure where I got it—then I discovered it on the telephone. You will find my finger-prints on the receiver, of course, but you'll find others, too, unless mine have covered them all up, which isn't likely. I washed the hand. I've

Another two minutes, and the wire was in serviceable condition again.

also done some looking about while I waited. Found a handkerchief in that corner and a cigarette under the edge of the rug—haven't touched 'em, of course. There are four butts on the ash-tray which don't match the ones in Mountford's humidor, and don't seem to be the sort a woman would smoke. The knife used is lying under Mountford's bed where it was tossed. Naturally, I didn't touch that, either. The fact is—this combination of evidence appears to be so much against me that I've been damned careful not to touch anything or do any of the dozen things these scoundrels evidently figured I would do—just as any man would after he got rattled in such a situation. And I certainly scored by fixing up that telephone!

"As near as I can figure, they were going to pick some critical time and then phone Scotland Yard that they heard a murder being committed here—leaving me in the trap, to be nabbed red-handed when the police came. Just why they picked on me, I simply can't imagine! Say—was some enemy of Mountford's on the boat while we were crossing—unknown to any of us? He might have heard me tell Randall I'd look him up when I came over from Paris—but he'd have had to have me shadowed to know anything about when I actually came to London. The murder unquestionably had just been committed when I called this apartment from the Piccadilly—so it simply couldn't have been a prearranged plan to work me into this mess—they couldn't have known my, or Mountford's, movements well enough to make everything synchronize so perfectly. That supposed valet who answered the phone must have seen the possibility of dragging me into it when I called this number. But having just committed a murder I can't understand why he should have answered the phone at all—why he wasn't getting away from here without drawing attention to himself? I simply don't get it—any part of the whole butchering business!"

Chief Inspector Beresford and Sir Edward Pelham, the deputy commissioner, who had been called to aid by His Lordship, had been given a rapid sketch of Warder's antecedents by the famous Free Lance in Diplomacy as they drove to St. Johns Wood; and their first impression of the younger man was exceedingly favorable. But as the time passed, each of them began to wonder if it was humanly possible that he could be entirely innocent—considering the evidence piling up against him. Even the most genial and well-educated police-officials become pretty hard-boiled when it comes to murder-evidence.

While they were talking, one of the constables came down from the roof with a light-colored top-coat, streaked with blood, which he had found stuffed into the flue of a chimney. None of the police, nor even Trevor, had any doubt as to its being the one worn by the murderer—until Warder quietly remarked:

"They seem determined to make a thorough job of hanging me, gentlemen. That's the coat I wore coming here—the one that valet took with my hat and gloves at the door. There are some of my belongings in the pockets—and I've no doubt the hall-boys and porters at the Piccadilly would identify it."

The police officials glanced at each other. The case was beginning to as-

sume a more serious aspect than even the murder itself would give it. As far as circumstantial evidence went, Warder was as guilty as the devil himself.

"Suppose we check up a bit, Chief Inspector?" said Warder. "Will you and Sir Edward go into the guest-room next to this and examine with your flash-lights the outside of the window-casing and the bricks next to it for traces of a bullet, fired from somewhere along the roof-coping? See if you think I could have fired the shot myself without leaving traces of powder-burns at that close range. Then look inside the shaft of the service-lift for a gouge in the plaster wall made by a bullet fired from the penthouse on the roof. If you look in the cellar, you may find the bullet itself at the bottom of the shaft. I saw Sir Edward picking up silk-insulation scrapings from the floor. If I didn't scrape that insulation from the cut end of this telephone cord in order to connect the wires inside the box, see if you can find where those scrapings came from. Further than that—the connection was originally made by the usual little pin-points soldered on to the wire-ends. You'll find them on the bottom of the iron bell-box, inside—where I left them—with an inch of the cut cord. I had no solder to fasten them on the bare wires I scraped. You'll find my fingerprints on the phone-receiver, and other prints as well—but you'll find only mine inside that box. Would the murderer cut that cord and then take the trouble to make the connection again? Your Scotland Yard photographer is here—I'll open the bell-box for him so that he can shoot the inside of it, and the pin-points, just as they lie there."

While they were doing this, one of the constables came in with a quiet man of thoroughly respectable appearance and evidently a fair amount of education, who said he was Mountford's butler—wanted to know where his employer was, and what was going on in the apartment. He explained that as Mr. Mountford was dining at his club, he had been given the evening off to visit relatives at Richmond, and had returned as nearly around ten as possible, in order to be at home when his employer returned. Sir Edward and Beresford, after verifying Warder's statements in every particular, were now questioning the butler—and for the first time, he caught a glimpse of Warder.

"My word! Mr. Warder, is it not, sir?"

"Sure is! But—you weren't on the boat with us, Merkes. Of course I heard Mr. Mountford and his sister mention you several times; that's why the man who let me in here didn't seem quite like the impression I'd formed of you—but I supposed of course that this was my mistake. How do you happen to know me?"

"Came abroad at Cherbourg, sir—as the master requested. You were leaving on the same tender, outside the breakwater. Miss Bobs pointed you out to me—said you were a great pal of theirs an' would be lookin' the master up as soon as you reached London. He was looking for you any day."

WARDER nodded in complete understanding.

"It should be easy enough to identify Merkes, Inspector—Miss Roberta will do that the moment she comes. I s'pose I've got to see her at the aunt's place in Surrey, and let them know what's happened, before you give it to the newspapers—but I sure hate the job! And that reminds me: I'm not figuring upon doing much of anything else until I run down the brutal scoundrel who killed poor Randall, and find out why he did it—or at least assist you gentlemen in doing that, as far as possible. Now—won't we stand a better chance of tracing and nailing the brute if you can keep the murder out of the newspapers for a while?"

"Er—well—as long as none of the newspapermen have got a hint of this already, Warder, I fancy that would be our preferable course in a case of this sort. We've physicians, coroners an' undertakers who work a good bit in collaboration with the Yard—an' keep strictly mum about what they see or know. In regard to your position in this matter, sir—we'll be taking a chance in leaving you at large—censure from the Home Secretary and dismissal from the force, quite possibly, if all the evidence were known. But we're rather of the opinion that there is altogether too much evidence against you for any human being to leave, even accidentally, after committing such a murder—an' we've verified several of your statem'nts. But we must keep you under surveillance, of course."

"Oh, that's understood—you'd be asleep at the switch if you didn't!"

"And by the way, Mr. Warder—you Americans carry weapons about on you rather more frequently than we do on

this side: Have you such a thing about you?"

"Yes. You'd like to look at it, of course?" (He took the gun from his pocket and passed it over.)

"Have you a permit, sir?"

"Only this New York one. Reached London at four this afternoon—so haven't had time to get an English one."

Beresford examined the pistol, with the magazine out.

"I notice you keep the barrel very clean inside—but there are only seven shells in the magazine—steel-jacketed."

"Yes—I don't like to carry one in the barrel unless I'm expecting to use the gun at any moment. Last time I used it was on the boat—crossing. Fired a few shots at a shark that was pretty close alongside."

"Um-m-m—you didn't go into the bathroom with us when our surgeon came, an hour ago. . . . You see—we found that Mountford had been shot in the back with a thirty-eight caliber, soft-nosed bullet, which had been notched with a jack-knife. His throat was cut afterward. Of course, if your steel-jacket shells were not put into the magazine within the last three or four hours—and there was no soft-nosed one in the barrel—that lets you out. There are no blackened rags or scraps of newspaper about the flat to indicate that you cleaned it here—although they easily could have been washed down the waste-pipe. We'll have two or three of the traps opened just to make sure that nothing did go down that pipe. And I fancy—just as an ord'n'ry measure of precaution—that we'll overhaul your room an' luggage at the Piccadilly a bit. We've really no excuse for not doing that, you know."

"Of course you haven't, Inspector—that's perfectly all right. Shall I come with you to answer any questions which may come up?"

"Um—well—I hadn't considered having you along with us; but on the whole—perhaps it'll be just as well. His Lordship thoughtfully fetched along a top-coat an' hat for you, so the dinner-kit won't be conspicuous—and you've other togs with your luggage."

AS the four quite-respectable appearing gentlemen entered the lobby of the Piccadilly and Warder was recognized, a peculiar expression appeared in the faces of the hotel people. One of the clerks immediately stepped back into the private office; then the assistant manager quietly came out of a door farther down the side-hall. Approaching the Deputy Commissioner, who was very well-known to him, he said in a low tone that he supposed Warder was under arrest.

SIR EDWARD glanced at him in a surprise he could hardly conceal:

"Just why should you suppose anything of the sort, Mr. Frazier?"

"Why, sir—one of your detective Inspectors was here, half an hour since, with a constable in uniform. Said that a shocking murder had been committed somewhere up Maida Vale, and that the evidence was so overwhelmingly against Mr. Warder, that he had been arrested at once; the Inspector an' constable were here to search his room an' luggage before any accomplices had an opportunity to get in an' remove whatever evidence there might be. I naturally asked to see his warrant—but he pointed out that there had been no time to procure a warrant, that every moment was valuable in securing evidence which might be destroyed, and produced the usual identification-credentials, which were quite in order. They had been sent here from the Yard, Sir Edward—doubtless while you were still at the scene of the crime! They've not been gone above ten minutes—said they had found evidence enough to hang him."

"Hmph! . . . Mr. Frazier, I'm going to overstep our rules a bit and give you a confidential hint. At this moment, nobody in authority at the Yard knows just what occurred near Maida Vale; they've had no word of evidence against any suspected person; Mr. Warder has not been arrested and isn't likely to be, from any facts now at our disposal. In future, never permit anybody to inspect your premises without a duly executed warrant unless some one here knows the officers personally—or unless some crime actually has been committed within the hotel. We are going up to Mr. Warder's rooms with him at his invitation—as his guests. You will make a point of having your floor-detectives see that nobody molests him during the night. Understood?"

"Oh, quite! An' I'm very much pleased, Sir Edward, in having our course made so thoroughly clear in any future occurrence like this. I'm also immensely relieved to have Mr. Warder's status cleared up."

When they were up in Warder's suite, with the door closed, they took in the general appearance of the room. There

was no upheaval of bureau-drawers dumped in the middle of the floor, and bedding ripped open—the mess which burglars leave behind them when hurried in their work. But the place bore evidence of exactly the sort of search usually conducted by the detective-branch of a city police department—and it seemed evident that the searchers had become alarmed over the possibility of being caught there—getting out before they had quite finished their job. Sir Edward presently sat down by the table, lighted his pipe and summed up his impressions:

"The inference that some Inspector trying out a bit of extra officiousness for the *kudos* which might be in it for him if he just did turn up anything of importance, really isn't impossible. There are two Inspectors I have in mind who might have the nerve to do just this sort of thing. But as it happens, one of those men is convalescing in the hospital—and the other was sent to Madrid on a case big enough to keep him busy, a week ago. Aside from that, none of our men outside of Beresford and myself have been in the living-room of Mountford's apartment tonight during our search of the place and discussion of the evidence against Mr. Warder. Which simply eliminates all possibility of these officers having been in any way connected with the Yard or the Governm'nt, and places them unquestionably among those who committed the murder.

"NOW—we'll consider their object: They were supposed to be searching these rooms for evidence incriminating Mr. Warder. Afraid of being caught, they were forced to leave with their job not quite finished—very cleverly giving the impression that if they had finished the search, they would have found something which has been planted here for us to find when we came in—as they were certain we would do. Sounds rather complicated, but those scoundrels appear to be most infernally clever in the way they've piled up the evidence against Mr. Warder.

"Very good! . . . We now proceed to look for what we are evidently expected to find. They moved the pictures—nothing behind them. They turned up the carpet all round—nothing concealed there. They overhauled the bed and remade it—not very smoothly. They looked into that ventilating-duct, forgetting to replace one screw—nothing there. Searched all the drawers—unsuccessfully. By the process of elimination, that leaves just about one place in the whole suite which they didn't search—and they might as well have painted a dotted line on the floor leading to it: the flue above that open fireplace!"

Getting down on one knee, the Deputy Commissioner reached one hand up into the flue, felt around—and pulled down a folded piece of paper considerably smudged with soot on the outside, but quite clean inside when it was unfolded. A few lines of coded memoranda were written on the page. After examining them and making a penciled experiment or two, Sir Edward said:

"They purposely used about the simplest code they could think of—the 'one, two, three, numerical.' I can work this this out in a moment without wasting any time in the decoding department!"

IN a few minutes, he had written out the translation:

I suspected the man who calls himself Warder when I saw him with a couple of the Reds in Chicago—and afterward in Washington. In New York, I traced him to a rendezvous on the upper East Side used by communists and the regular Moscow agents—found that he had memoranda giving names of men connected with the U. S. and British governments who were actively carrying out Muscovite plans—hope to steal this list from him later. Fancy he has no suspicion of my F. O. connection. My sister went to the States with me to strengthen the impression of my being innocuous. Warder much taken with her on the boat—which helped a lot. Searched his luggage and room, unsuccessfully—but fancy I've guessed where he carries secret memoranda. If he once suspects me, I shall have to "watch my step," as the Americans say. We're now quite chummy—he's to see me in London, but he'll not see Bobs again—must keep her away from the rotter.

"Phew! That's what I call absolutely Machiavellian! Does it look to you anything like Mountford's writing, Warder?"

"Hmph! . . . I've had but two notes from him—yet I'd almost swear on the witness-stand that he wrote that. He had a peculiar way of forming the upper-part of certain tailed letters like '*g*,' '*y*,' and '*p*,' which is perfectly reproduced in this memorandum."

"Then they were certain that at least half a dozen persons could and would identify this as his writing—which would make it a rather undeniable accusation against you from the tomb! What?

Clever? . . . My word, that scoundrel is clever! What he didn't and couldn't figure on was the fact that His Lordship knows you well, and doubtless can alibi any statem'nt they make as to your activities at any particular time. Otherwise, the evidence against you is simply overwhelming—as it is meant to be! This coded memoranda, on the face of it, carries the conviction that it was somewhere among Mountford's papers when he was killed, that you had reason to believe he might have jotted down something of the sort, and searched for it—fetched it away with you after killing him, hid it in this flue until you had time to decode it—hurried back to that apartm'nt to make a more thorough search, and were locked in there by some F. O. man who had been following you. There's an unexplained interval of perhaps two hours, during which you might have done all of these things."

Beresford nodded in agreement with Sir Edward's reconstruction—then asked:

"What do you make of this case so far, Your Lordship? We've a pretty close idea of what the murderer did and the way he figured out our probable reaction to it—but I can't see that we've turned up any clue to his identity or where we may possibly look for him. What?"

"Well—there's one line of investigation which suggests itself to me. Mountford had been back home, here, in London nearly a week before he was killed. In that time there were doubtless acquaintances—possibly including women—who came to see him in his apartment. Merkes—the real butler and man-of-all-work—knows something about such persons. We left him there more or less in charge of the detective-sergeant—probably he hasn't gone to bed yet. Why not have him come around here and tell us what he does know?"

THE suggestion was valuable. Sir Edward and Beresford had intended to examine Merkes in the morning, but time was obviously a consideration, so they phoned the St. Johns Wood flat, and Merkes came to the Piccadilly as soon as he could make it. Trevor examined him.

"Merkes, you were only on that boat with Mountford and his sister while it was crossing the Channel to Southampton, but you may have noticed other passengers with whom they seemed to be more or less friendly. Can you recall anyone of that sort?"

"Aye, sir—there were two who seemed to be with them more than other passengers—I fancy they may have talked with them more after Mr. Warder left at Cherbourg. One was a baronet of possibly forty whom I understood had gone in for flying as a sport—qualified as a pilot, an' with a good plane of his own at one of the flying-fields in Sussex. His name would be Sir Henry Smallen. I was by way of havin' a chat with his man in the second class—picked up a bit of information as to a brother—John Smallen—who was considered a bit of a bounder, hobnobbin' with French communists an' Moscow Reds—frequ'ntly passin' himself off as the baronet, and calling himself Sir John Smallen when he hadn't the least right to the title. The brothers are said to resemble each other in a way. Well, d'ye see, sir—the real baronet appears to have a most excellent social reputation—lives at the Marlborough Club when he's in town—sometimes away for several months. The other person who was around a good bit with the master an' Miss Bobs was a lady of German-American family, I understood—a Miss Freda Barnfeld of Cincinnati. I fancy Miss Roberta didn't care for her such a lot—but she seemed to find the master very good comp'ny an' I fancy he rather liked her."

"Have either of them called at the apartment since Mountford came home?"

"Sir Henry has been twice, sir—but to the best of my knowledge Miss Barnfeld has not been here. The master was a bit particular about having women in his apartm'nt unless accompanied by some one."

"What other persons called there during the week?"

"None but a couple of the master's old Army friends, sir. We put Miss Bobs up the night they arrived in London—but she motored down to her aunt's place in Surrey after breakfast."

"How many times were you out when Mountford was alone in the apartment, Merkes?"

"This evening was the first time, sir. I'd not have asked permission to go if he'd been dining at home."

"And you don't recall hearing anything like high words or a quarrel between Mountford and any of his callers?"

"Nothing of the sort, sir—he was the sort of man very well liked by everyone. I'd have said nobody in the world could have wished him an ill turn."

"There's one more point, Merkes. Of course if Mountford were alive and well

it would be thoroughly understood that you couldn't give any information as to his private affairs—and wouldn't do so. But he has been brutally murdered—his murderer must be caught and made to pay for what he did. The police have the legal right to insist upon your telling them everything which might throw some light on this murderer or enable them to figure out some object for the crime. Now—was Mountford connected in any way with the Government—the Foreign Office, say?"

"Not to my knowledge, sir. He may have been—but I fancy I'd not have been permitted to know of the fact."

The Scotland Yard officials asked the butler a few more questions—then said they would take a room for him at the hotel if he felt that he couldn't sleep at the apartment. But he had served through the German war—said he was not in the least nervous about sleeping in such an atmosphere of tragedy—and thought that in the work of packing away Mountford's belongings for his sister, he might turn up something in the way of important evidence.

As soon as Merkes had left, the Marquis suggested their going to his house, where he wanted to look up something in his reference-books, and where he could put them up until breakfast. When they were comfortably smoking in his library, Phil Warder gave a sharp exclamation—then asked:

"Wasn't 'Sir John Smallen' one of the aliases mentioned in that police broadcast I heard from 2LO, Inspector? I knew it sounded dev'lish familiar when Merkes was giving us what he knew!"

"That I can't tell you, Mr. Warder—you see we know nothing about that broadcast at the Yard. I called up to inquire."

"Then—what—who—where did it come from? Who authorized it?"

"Presumably, from the Foreign Office—it would have been directly in their line, d'ye see."

"Anybody there at this time of night who could tell us about it?"

"Captain Hugh Warrendon might know if he were there—but he'll be just about retiring, at his own diggings, I fancy. I'll get through to him on the wire—an' see."

WARRENDON wasn't yet in bed—said, when he found who was talking, that the information leading to that broadcast had been supplied by a man

"Sir Henry Smallen."

who recently had picked it up in America—confirmed the fact that "Sir John Smallen" had been one of the aliases mentioned—wanted to know if Beresford's inquiry had been suggested by the death of anyone. The Chief Inspector admitted the truth of this surmise. Then Warrendon said he had feared something of the sort would happen—explaining that his informant had been secretly connected with the F. O. for some years and must have been in possession of exceedingly dangerous information at the time of his death. As Beresford rang off, His Lordship looked up from a volume of Burke's Peerage & Baronetage.

"Now—here's something interesting—and I'm telling you I had a hunch it would be exactly what I'd find when I started really digging. Henry Smallen was created a baronet by King George in 1920 for political data collected while at the head of an expedition North of the Shan States. Has hunted big game and done various bits of exploring from time to time. Has a country-seat in Sussex. Two sisters—both married—one deceased—but no brothers. Neither of the sisters married anybody of the same name. This is really what I hoped to find—but of course it's the easiest thing in the world to be mistaken when one gets a fixed idea in mind."

"Then—the inference is that any fellow calling himself 'Sir John Smallen' is unquestionably an impostor!"

"Well—I'd say there's no doubt whatever upon that point—but if my hunch is still well-grounded, I think there's a lot more than that in it. For instance—this is the nineteen-thirty edition of Burke. It mentions amateur exploration, big-game hunting, racing and yachting, as Sir Henry's principal activities when he's doing anything beyond enjoying life—but it says nothing at all about

his interest in aviation. Yet Merkes picked up definite information that he's a licensed pilot with an expensive plane of his own and a record of a good many solo-hours in the air, which implies an active participation in flying for at least one or two years. Does that suggest anything to you gentlemen?"

BERESFORD shrugged slightly.

"Chiefly, that he's proved an unusually apt pupil in the flying school, with natural 'flyin'-sense'—as has occurred in many known instances. This edition of Burke will have been compiled at least eighteen months ago, if not longer—plenty of time for him to have qualified as a flyer since the proofs of even this last edition were corrected."

"Oh—all right. You two are always ragging me because I go at a criminal case from the psychological end instead of your pet 'indisputable evidence for the jury.' But I'll make a little bet with you that I prove, more or less convincingly, who murdered Randall Mountford, inside of three days! Ten quid? Eh?"

"Faith—you're on! I could do with twenty p'und—book me for that if you really wish to gamble. As a matter of fact, I'm willing to lose that much if this case can be cleaned up in any such time. But we'll win your money—an' then listen to other wagers of the same nature. Now—what'll be your first move?"

"Well, first, I'm going to lunch with my old friend General Lord Barnston, at the Marlborough Club—where he's been a member for the last twenty-five years. Meanwhile—if Phil cares about taking the risk—and it looks to me as if there might be a pretty serious risk one way or another—he's going by motor down to that estate in Surrey for an interview with Roberta Mountford. He'll telephone the hotel before breakfast to have a private car and chauffeur waiting for him at the side-entrance about ten o'clock—plenty of time for the reservation to be talked about in the hotel. And Beresford is going to have two of the fast Yard cars follow him, closely enough to prevent anything happening on the way to the place. When he leaves to come back, he'll take another route—and the police-cars won't be anywhere in sight, though they've got to work out some system of posting men and one other car ahead so they can trap anybody interfering with Warder before they get away with anything serious."

"H-m-m—just what is your idea?"

"They confidently expect that Warder will be under arrest in the morning. When they find that he's apparently at liberty, their first impression will be that he is under close espionage and is expected to lead the police to some of his confederates—sooner or later. Then—when he apparently is not being followed after leaving Miss Mountford, they'll figure that his sudden disappearance, as if he'd managed to leave the country, will be just the last straw to clinch the evidence already against him—and they'll see that he disappears. They won't kill him anywhere in England because that would rather prove his innocence—but if they ever do get him over to France, he'll need a miracle to get through alive. Do you care about tackling a job of that sort, Phil?"

"All I want is assurance on one point: Does British law permit me to kill one or two of those rotters in self-defense?"

Beresford gave a grin which showed his perfect appreciation of the point.

"Couldn't you wing or lame him, Mr. Warder—or put a bullet through some place that isn't vital?"

"If there's but one of them—yes. I'm a pretty good shot. But if two or three are potting at me at once I aim to stop them, whether I do it permanently or not. Of course I prefer seeing the murderer hang—if I can get him alive!"

WHILE lunching at the Club with General Barnston, the Marquis casually asked if he were at all acquainted with Sir Henry Smallen.

"Oh—naturally. We've been fellow-members here for many years, d'ye see. Rather likable chap—possibly a bit more genial before the last year or two. Went off on one of his explorin' trips in the less-known parts of the Dutch Indies—contracted a frightful dose of jungle fever. Medicos sent him up to the Tosari Sanitarium in Java, while he was convalescin'. Must have fed him well, too—because he'd put on weight a bit when he came home on one of the Stoomvaart Maatschappij boats. But he'd changed in some ways—mind not quite as good as it used to be—the old bean fails him at times on matters he should remember quite easily—names an' faces, for example. Knew me at once—but it would be quite remarkable if he didn't, considerin' the rubbers of bridge we've played in the past. . . . What sort of a lookin' chap? You've never seen him—eh? Well—attractive personality an' all that, y'know,

but nothin' marked about his appearance. Just the average smooth-faced, dark-haired, well-dressed chap you'd see on the street by the hundred. Average height, weight an' colorin', d'ye see. Been away somewhere for two or three months —but he was lunchin' here yesterday with some foreign chap. I've not seen him, since."

"Some one was telling me he's gone in for aviation—seems to have a natural genius for it."

"Aye—so I've heard—new departure altogether. Never knew him to have the slightest int'rest in flyin' durin' the war —but I fancy one of the Dutch aviators took him up, out there in Java, an' he's rather drifted into it."

"Whereabouts in Sussex is his place?"

"Just below the River Adur, West Grimstead. One motors down through Dorking an' Horsham."

"That's low, flat country—just about right for flying-fields, I'd say."

From the club, His Lordship got through to "Victoria 7000" and asked Sir Edward to meet him with Beresford and Captain Warrendon in a high-powered car—which they did in a few minutes, then drove south through Surrey, into Sussex. When they were in open country beyond the city, they wanted to know where they were going and what he thought he was going to do.

"Well—I'm still playing my hunch, gentlemen. It was agreed that Phil wouldn't leave Miss Mountford and start to return in his car until around two o'clock—it still lacks five minutes of that. Now—according to my figuring—anyone who gets him, if they do get him, will make for exactly the same spot we're heading for in Sussex. If I'm wrong we'll have had our ride for nothing and miss the fireworks—if not, I win bets from two of you. At least—I think I do!"

AFTER leaving West Grimstead and crossing the creek which lower down became a river, His Lordship spotted with his binoculars the manor house which had been described to him as having been purchased with the surrounding five hundred acres by Sir Henry Smallen, a year before—and a good-sized hangar at the edge of open ground which made a perfect flying-field. He could see a large double-motored plane out in front of the hangar, and two men, evidently tinkering with it or tuning it up. An excellent macadam road led off at right angles from the one they were on, to the manor-house and the hangar beyond it. Stopping where the road-hedge screened them from observation, Trevor asked:

"How long will it take this car to get from here to that hangar?"

"Not over forty seconds, unless we hit something unexpected."

"This appears to be a back road—the other car will come down that main turnpike over on the hill. (Psst! Look!) They've got him—in that closed car! I told him not to put up any fight until they started to get out of the country with him—either by speed-boat or plane."

THE closed car stopped close to the plane, whose motors were turning slowly over. There seemed to be some discussion and bargaining with the pilot. Then a man was hauled out of the car and evidently told to climb into the cockpit, just as another car came racing down the hill and Beresford sent his own machine jumping along that macadam road like a greyhound. Before Warder's captors or the two men by the plane realized what was happening, four constables and His Lordship's party were within fifty feet of them. On that open ground, there wasn't a chance for them to escape. The pilot started to jump into the plane with his mechanic—but saw that he couldn't get it off the ground in time, and lighted a cigarette instead—saying:

"What's all the excitement about, gentlemen? I seem to have been picked out for various unexpected attentions this afternoon! First these men came racing down upon my flyin'-field and offered me two hundred quid to set them across the Channel—then four constables and another car-load come tearing in! What's it all about, anyway?"

"An invitation for dinner in town, Sir Henry—if you'll be so good as to accompany us."

"Where?"

"Scotland Yard."

"I don't understand—not in the least! I am Sir Henry Smallen—you are on my private estate! I see my friend Captain Warrendon is with you—he will identify me if you doubt my word."

Warrendon smiled in a puzzled way—but Warder suddenly pulled an automatic from somewhere inside his clothes and covered the supposed baronet.

"Stick 'em up, Smallen—or Malinski—or whatever your damned name really is! I arrest you for the murder of Captain Randall Mountford in St. Johns Wood last evening. . . . No—you—don't!"

The pseudo "Sir Henry" had suddenly whipped out a pistol. Whether he would have raised it to his own head or fired at Warder, the spectators were undecided—but Warder was too quick for him. Two jets of flame spurted from his own pistol—and a bullet smashed the other man's right hand. The murderer's confederates were too greatly outnumbered to put up any resistance.

Captain Warrendon came over and shook hands with Warder.

"We've had some exchange of dispatches, Mr. Warder—but I fancy this is our first meeting. The whole affair is still a bit vague to me. Advices from Hongkong reported the most dangerous Soviet agent ever known to them had been making a frightful lot of trouble among the Chinese in Canton and the provinces—was supposed to contemplate crossing to Vancouver on one of the C. P. R. boats with the intention of making trouble in Canada, the States, and finally the United Kingdom. They'd evidence that he paid Chinese pirates to murder a couple of F. O. men out in Hankow. We jumped Captain Mountford over to Montreal, supposedly on a pleasure-trip with his sister—and know he was on the pier when the *Empress* came in. He spotted this man Malinski—followed him to Toronto—then down to New York, his sister knowing nothing of his connection with us; they all crossed on the same boat, Mountford being fairly certain 'Sir Henry'—as he'd booked on the liner—hadn't suspected him. Meanwhile—our Hongkong people knew Mr. Warder well, and introduced him to the Marquis of Dyvnaint, who was in the harbor on the *Ranee Sylvia* at the time. His Lordship found he was coming this way to close with people in Paris on an engineering matter, and persuaded him to see what he could do by way of assisting us to round up this brute. Now for your side of it, Mr. Warder!"

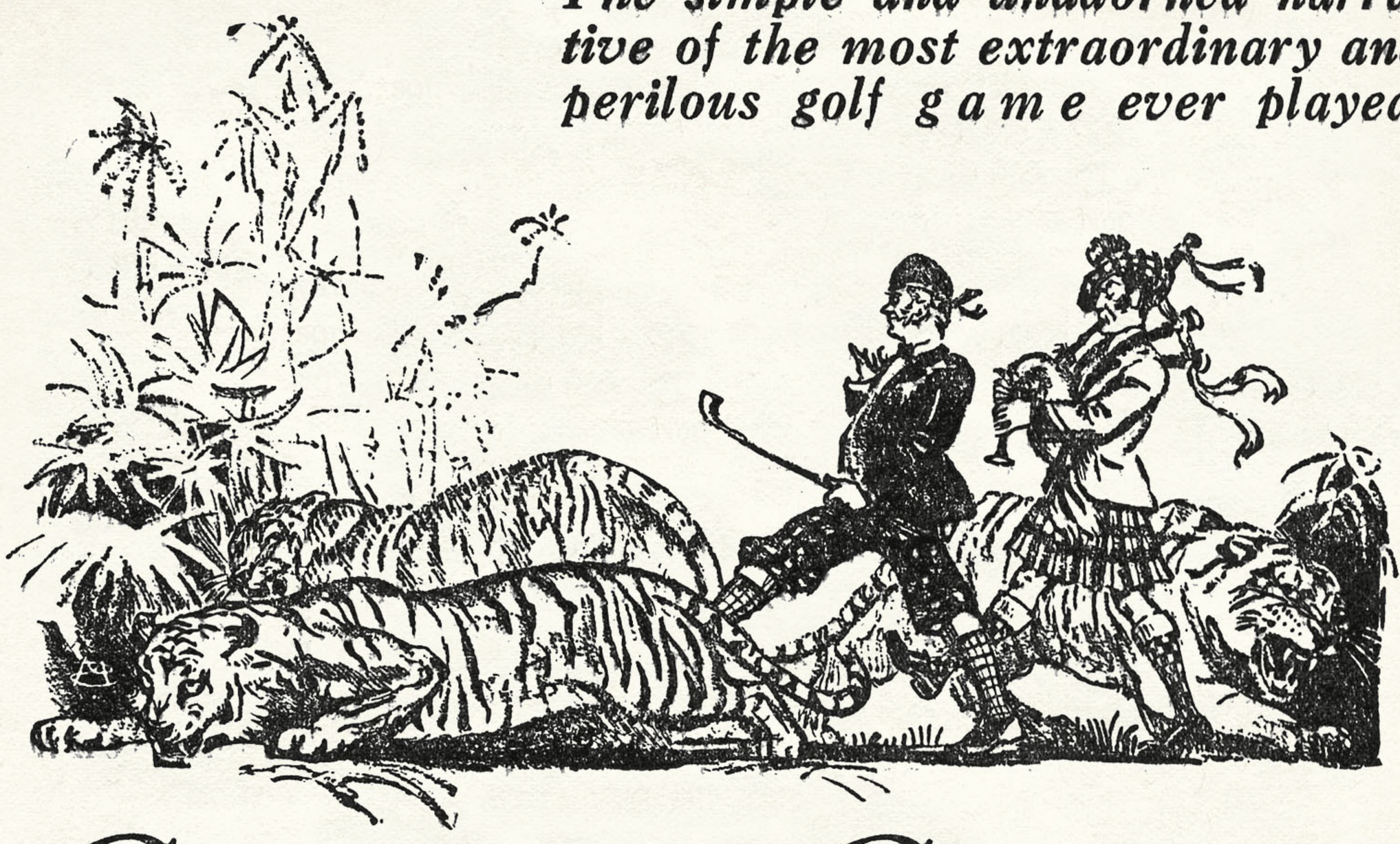
WARDER began abruptly: "Well—the adventure of being semi-officially connected with the British Foreign Office for a month or so rather appealed to me—gave me a chance to see how the machinery worked on the inside. I was on Malinski's tail in Hongkong before we left, but couldn't seem to get sight of him. Fairly certain that he must be on the *Empress*—but couldn't seem to spot him. The brute made up so damned well as the bluff, attractive English baronet that he fooled me. Once or twice I suspected him—then thought I must be crazy.

"Of course I knew nothing whatever of Randall Mountford's connection with the F. O.—thought I was the only one from that office on board. And the Mountfords never dreamed that I—an American—could have an affiliation with you. Malinski appears to be the only one who really had us tabbed all the time. When I saw him in that dim hall of Mountford's flat, he bore no resemblance whatever to the fake Sir Henry—and I'd never, to my knowledge, had a glimpse of him as Malinski. Naturally, I recognized who the man in that broadcast must be—but I still couldn't see any possible reason for trying to convict me as Randall's murderer—didn't see how anybody could have known about my connection with the F. O. because it hadn't been discussed outside of the Governor's study in Hongkong—His Excellency had even handed me the roll of expense-money in that room. The minute I got out of the car here, I recognized Malinski from his profile, and saw the whole game. What puzzles me, however, is how His Lordship got on to him soon enough to fetch you chaps here in the nick of time!"

THE Marquis explained in turn: "The fact that Sir Henry Smallen had no brother John, when I looked him up at my house last night, started me speculating about him. We knew that Sir Henry had crossed with you and the Mountfords—Merkes told us that—but of course I never dreamed that Phil could be in it officially. At lunch today, General Barnston told me how much of a change he'd noticed in Sir Henry after he came home from that dose of fever in Borneo—his difficulty at times in recollecting names and faces—and the whole game flashed across me in one big hunch. He must have been with the real Sir Henry when he was down with the fever—knifed him—shoved him into the river or underbrush—then dragged himself into camp as the sick man and made the Dyaks tote him in a hammock down to Banjermassin.

"Here in London, he simply picked up Sir Henry's life—his activities and acquaintances—in order to watch and kill any of the F. O. men who were getting too close on to the Soviet's tail—spending a month in China to wipe out some of them there. We're in luck to get him at the cost of but one valuable life. It might have been a lot worse!"

The simple and unadorned narrative of the most extraordinary and perilous golf game ever played.



Champion of Champions

By CHARLES LAYNG

Illustrated by Margery Stocking

THE pro's shop at the Ossawunky Field and Country Club is in the basement of the clubhouse, and its semi-subterranean location makes it a fairly cool place in the summertime. It has an additional advantage in the presence there of the MacMudd, pro at Ossawunky these many years, and in the proud boast of our Ossawunky members, a champion of champions. It is true, we admit, that he is not the national pro champion, nor yet the state pro champion: his honors he has won in a far more crowded and difficult field, for he is the champion golf liar of the universe.

It was a sweltering day at Ossawunky. Ben Hatwell and I had just finished a round, and after a shower we sought the cool haven of the pro's shop.

"This is just about the hottest day I ever saw," Ben gasped.

MacMudd looked at us over the top of his glasses. "Weel, now," he said, "it is a bit warm, I'll grant you; but I shouldna say it was hot—na, not really hot."

"And where, may I ask," I inserted, "have you ever seen it hotter?"

That far-away ethereal look characteristic of our champion at his best came into MacMudd's eyes.

In Merangkor (MacMudd said), in ninety-four,—na, 'twas in ninety-five, on the tenth of February to be exact,—when Angus MacGonigal and I were making our golfing tour of the Orient.

The Federated Malay States, as ye might know if ye'd ever been there, which same ye never were, are hot; and Merangkor is the hottest of them all, which makes it, beyond all doot, the hottest place in the world. It's not an easy place to get to, even now, and it was worse then; and how we happened to be there at all is a long story, which I shall not relate at the moment, pausing only to say that we'd been in Burma, teaching golf to the ladies of the sultan's harem; and Angus, the scoundrel, got his games mixed. He always was a de'il wi' the ladies, that laddie, and much trouble it got us into, by and large. This time we had to leave Burma in the dead of the night and strike southward through the jungle. So it was that, after adventures with polar bears—

"Polar bears!" Ben and I cried in startled unison.

Aye, polar bears! (MacMudd continued inexorably.) As I was saying, after adventures with polar bears and

penguins and such that would make yer hair stand on end, we arrived in Merangkor early one morning by canoe, with nothing left of our baggage save only my bag of clubs, the chiefest of which was Betsy, my darling driver. There, gentlemen, was a club, and her swift kiss on the ball was good for three hundred, aye, and four and five hundred yards, every time. There never was such another wood as Betsy, and if I still had her, it's pro champion of the world I'd be now.

There was a goodly crowd to greet us at the dock, including no less a personage than the Sultan of Merangkor himself, our coming having been announced by radio. (At this, MacMudd cast a stern eye in our direction, but finding only absorbed interest, he continued.)

"What, ho!" the Sultan said, as soon as he saw my bag. "A golfer, as I live and breathe! What luck, and all that sort of thing! I haven't had a good match in months."

"Not only a golfer," Angus said, for his eye was as sharp for loose siller as 'twas for women, "but MacMudd, a champion golfer, and willing to play anyone for a hundred pounds."

"Done!" cried the Sultan.

There was little likelihood of there being a golfer in these benighted parts, even a sultan, who could beat me in an eighteen-hole match. Even so, I thought I'd like a practise round or two; but the Malays wouldn't permit that, so it was a new course to me as I stood on the first tee that afternoon.

Alas for pride, even the eminently justifiable pride of a MacMudd! It bit the dust with both canines and molars that afternoon on that little nine-hole course in the depths of the Malay jungle, with the thermometer, if there'd been one, which there wasn't, at two hundred and four. For, and I know ye'll never believe this, knowing the thorough soundness, the flashing brilliance, of my game as ye do, when the tea interval came, at the end of the first nine holes, I, the MacMudd, was exactly nine holes down! And that to a scrawny sultan of a Malay who'd never so much as heard of haggis! But when I tell ye, as I presently shall, of the fiendishness of that links, ye'll no be surprised.

Ye may imagine that I sat down to my spot of tea in no pleasant mood; and my worry wasna alleviated by a bit of an incident at the ninth green. Angus, who, like me, had been sweating blood all around the course, spied a most unusual decoration on a coconut-palm near the green. There were long strings draped from the tree, festooned with grisly objects.

"What's yon?" he asked the Sultan.

"Ears," said the Sultan.

"Ears?" asked Angus.

"Yes, human ears," the Sultan replied, with a friendly smile; "but they needn't concern ye, at all. They're simply the ears of golfers—and their managers—who lost matches to me and then couldn't pay the agreed stakes."

"Both ears?" asked Angus.

"Both ears," the Sultan replied.

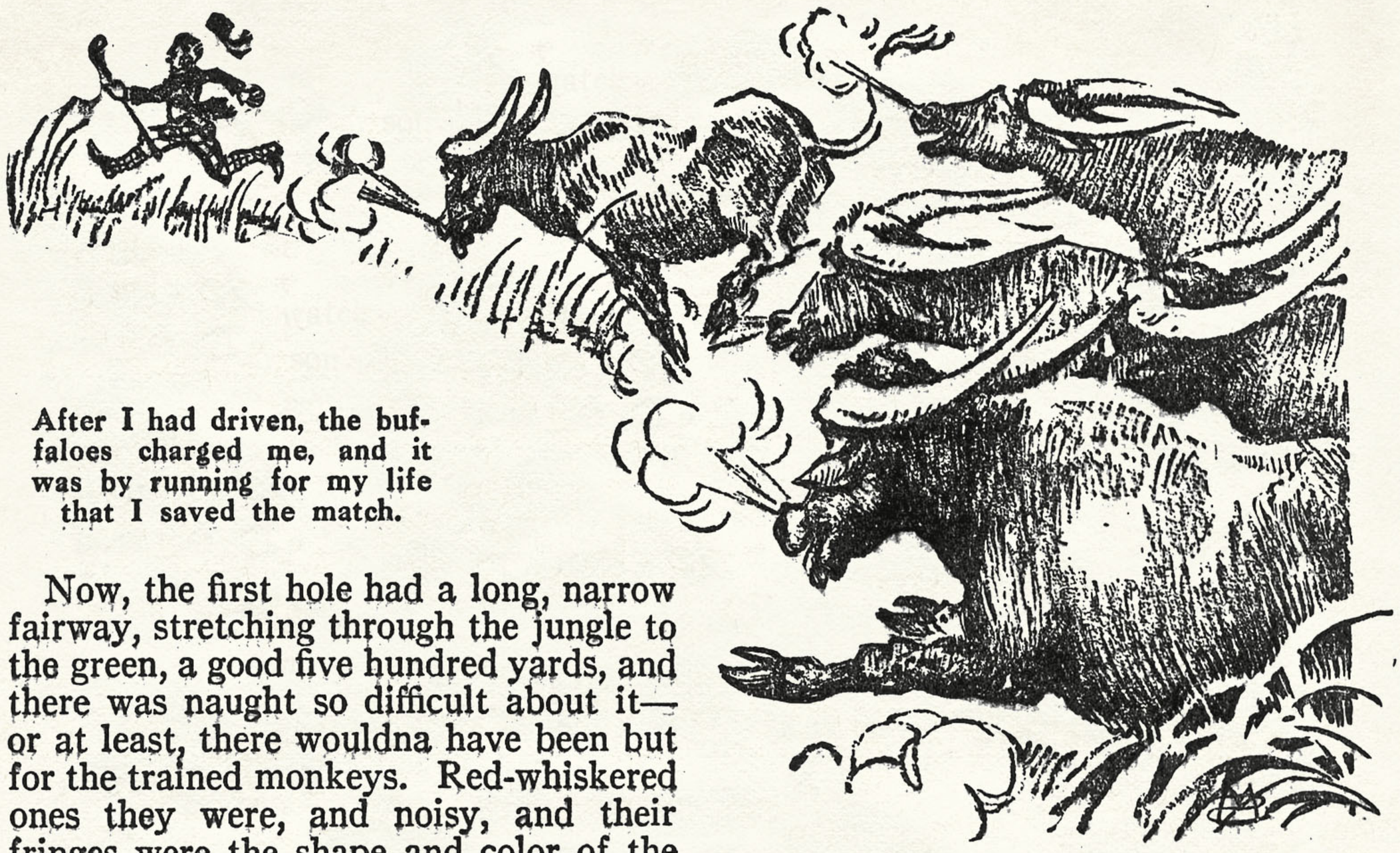
"Managers too?" asked Angus.

"Oh, aye," the Sultan replied.

With that, Angus went into one of his brown studies, and I felt a bit cheered, for he had a brain on him, had Angus; and he was, moreover, as fond of his ears as the next one, perhaps even fonder, for the next one has usually not regarded his ears as removable.

"Take yer time over yer tea," said Angus to me presently. "I'm off to the market."

I took my time, but we were actually on the first tee again, ready to drive off, when Angus reappeared; and when he did, he had a safari of natives with him, bearing various and sundry objects. I hadna time to observe what they were, for the Sultan drove, it being very much his honor.



After I had driven, the buffaloes charged me, and it was by running for my life that I saved the match.

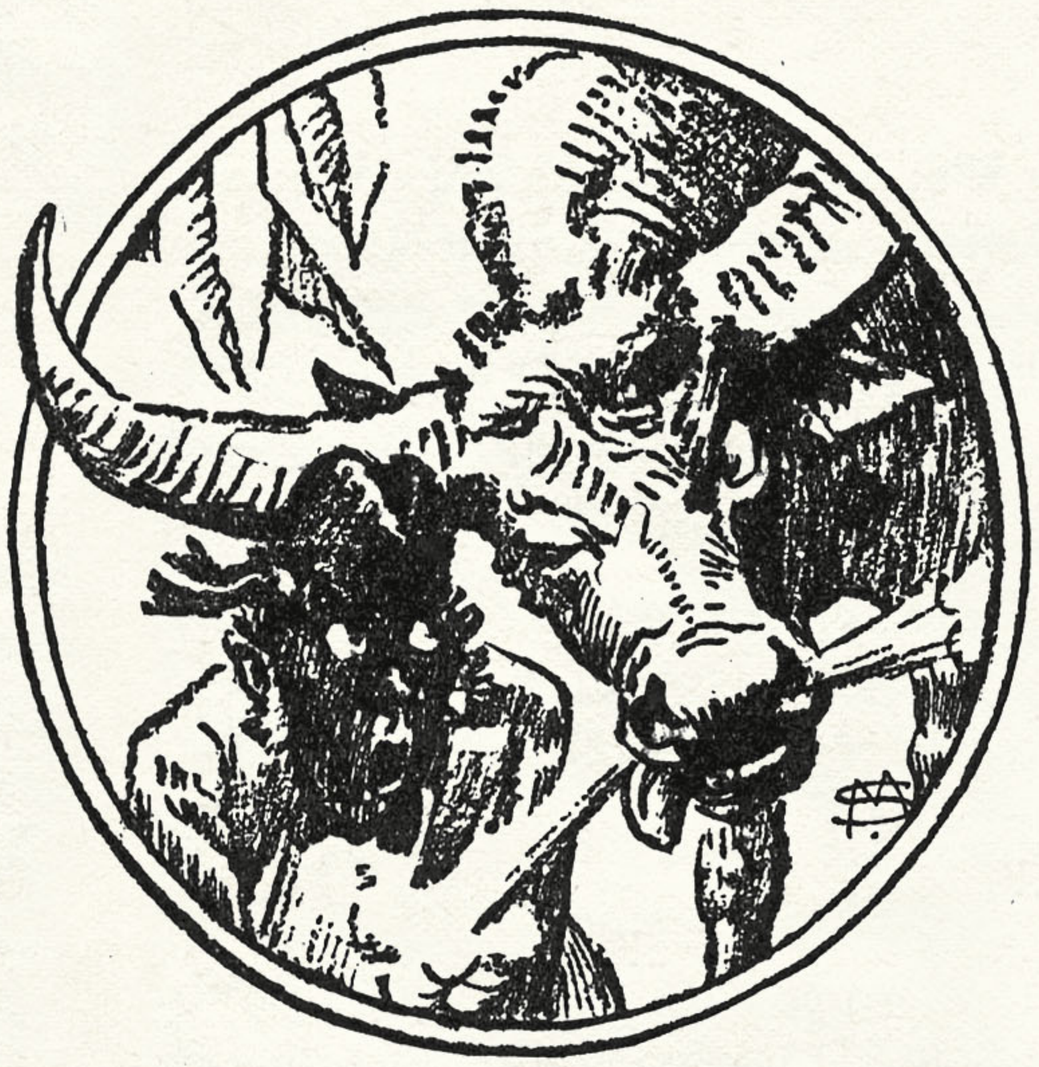
Now, the first hole had a long, narrow fairway, stretching through the jungle to the green, a good five hundred yards, and there was naught so difficult about it—or at least, there wouldna have been but for the trained monkeys. Red-whiskered ones they were, and noisy, and their fringes were the shape and color of the whiskers of Donald McGregor of Auchterlochie, my great-uncle. Now when the Sultan shot, these little de'ils said not a word; but when I shot, they made the racket of a Fourth of July; and on the first round, they flustered me so much that I lost the hole by many strokes. It is a rare thing that I give golfing advice free, but I'm doing it now, and it is strongly to advise ye against playing a hole with a thousand of yer great-uncles, whom you dinna like in the first place, screaming and waving their whiskers at ye. But Angus, trusty Angus, was equal to the task; for the second round, he had brought me a wadding of cotton to stuff into my ears, and blinkers to wear alongside my eyes, and with this assistance, I won the hole with an eagle three—leaving me, ye ken, but eight down, and eight to go.

The second hole was all rough from the tee to the green, and the distance was much too far to carry. Waist-high bushes grew all the way along the fairway, if you could call it a fairway at all, and the rub was that some of them were mimosa bushes, and some were not. The Sultan knew the clumps of mimosas as he knew the inside of his hat, and he drove into them; whereupon the mimosas, as is their habit when any foreign object strikes them, promptly wilted and lay down, giving him a clear shot. After losing ten balls (belonging to the Sultan, of course) I had conceded him the hole on the first round; but the second round was different, for Angus had tied a bit of red cord on each mimosa clump; and since it was simple for me, with Betsy, to hit even the eye of a needle with a golf-ball at two hundred yards, I had no difficulty, and won the hole, leaving me seven down and seven to play, and in slightly better spirits, although I had my doots about that next hole, which we were now approaching for the second time.

IT was a simple enough two-shotter, with an excellent fairway, but grazing on the fairway were some thirty water-buffaloes. Now, it is a well-known fact that water-buffaloes can be driven about by natives, even down to youngsters of five or six; but that they will attack white people violently. The Sultan had had no difficulty; but after I had driven and tried to walk to my ball, they charged me, and it was only by running for my life that I saved the match from ending then and there. Naturally, I had conceded that hole; and since the same buffaloes were still there, looking fiercer, if anything, I could see nothing to be done but to concede the hole again, and with it the match and my ears.

But Angus was equal to the occasion. He had brought some burnt cork, and swiftly turned me into as black a blackamoor as has ever been seen. I drove, and singing, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," I walked fearlessly among the buffaloes, to hole out my midiron shot unmolested, and to win that hole, leaving me but six down and six to play.

The next hole was a water-hole, and by



its tee was a sign saying: *"Players driving into the water must positively retrieve the ball themselves, or forfeit the match."* Under normal circumstances I shouldn't have minded this rule, for ye ken well that I'm the only golfer in this club that is brave enough to retrieve a golf ball from Colonel Furioso's back yard, when the colonel is at home, but there were worse things than colonels here. The water was a swamp, and it was full of casual crocodiles.

"What do ye do, Sully," I asked the Sultan, "when ye drive into the water, accidental-like?"

"Oh," he told me, "I toss in a native or two at the other end to distract the crocodiles' attention—and while they are eating my subjects, I fish out my ball."

"Could ye," I asked him, as politely as ye please, "spare me a subject or two for the same purpose—just in case?"

"I could not," he told me, so I had to concede him that hole.

But for the second round Angus had brought along a pig, and with the knowledge that the pig would serve the same purpose as a sultan's subject if anything did happen to go wrong, I was able to clear the water, and win that hole with a birdie two.

"My hundred pounds don't seem so secure," remarked the Sultan, like the sportsman that he was.

"And my ears seem much—" Angus began, but I throttled him. After all, it is the white man's burden to keep these natives from knowing too much.

IF ye have been keeping track, ye will ken I was now five down, with five to go, a position to make the heart of the stoutest golfer quail, and there was I, knowing the terrible odds I had to overcome on the succeeding holes. But I had Angus, the fox, on my side, and my own superb ability to fall back upon, and the combination was an excellent one. I'll no bore ye with the recital of how Angus dropped the fruit of a durian tree to call off the howling hyenas on the fourteenth, nor yet how he marked a rubber tree for me to bounce from, to give me desperately needed distance on the dog-legged fifteenth, nor even, although it was full of interest, how he painted the ball with ipecac to circumvent the hoop-snakes, those vicious ball-stealers, who lurked in the vicinity of the sixteenth. All this he arranged for; and on each hole, thanks to the relief from distractions that he afforded me, I was able to give my best, and to ye, who know me, I need not say more. . . .

The Sultan was a golfer; that I'll grant ye; and he had a fighting heart. He reeled off a succession of pars and birdies, but I countered with birdies and eagles, and the match was still going strong when we reached the seventeenth tee, with me dormie two. But that seventeenth and eighteenth had me worried, for good and sufficient reasons, as ye shall see.

The first of these had a fairway that was broad and clear, but in the jungles that lay beside, tigers lurked, great, nasty beasts, with vicious tempers, as I, who had suffered the loss of the seat of my second-best pair of knickers could attest. And they came out into the fairway, too, when they were hungry, which was all the time. It was with great amazement, the first time we played the hole that I saw several caddies bring up a portable hut of thorn bushes, into which the Sultan climbed through the front door, after he drove. Several natives got in with him, and they started down the fairway carrying the thing.

"What's that?" I called to the Sultan.

"It's a boma," he said. "No golfer in these parts should be without one. Tigers can't get you in here."

Even without a boma, I started after my ball, and then is when, simultaneously, I lost the seat of my pants and the hole.

This time, the caddies trotted out the boma again, and I couldn't for the life of me see how I was to play that hole, for I could see the tawny beasts lurking in the jungle and licking their chops. But Angus, good old Angus, came to the rescue; as I drove, there came the shrill music of the bag-pipes behind me. They

were playing: "The Campbells Are Coming," and with that song at my back, I'd have faced my first wife, let alone a nest of tigers. Bravely I started up the fairway, swinging my mashie, but I needn't have feared. After the first few notes, I could see pained expressions come to the faces of all the tigers within earshot, and they went hastily away from there. Angus was a wee bit out of practise, and the beasties couldna face the music.

The eighteenth and last tee was placed upon the back of an elephant. Ye may well start, gentlemen, for I'll grant ye that it was most irregular, but there is was none the less, a fact, and facts are facts. A nasty beast he was, too, but well-trained, as I found to my sorrow. The first round, before the Sultan drove, the elephant had run practically up to the green, leaving my opponent just a mashie pitch. When I was about to tee off, however, he dashed madly in the other direction, and stopped only when he was three-quarters of a mile from the green. I tried my mightiest, but the handicap proved too much; the Sultan had won.

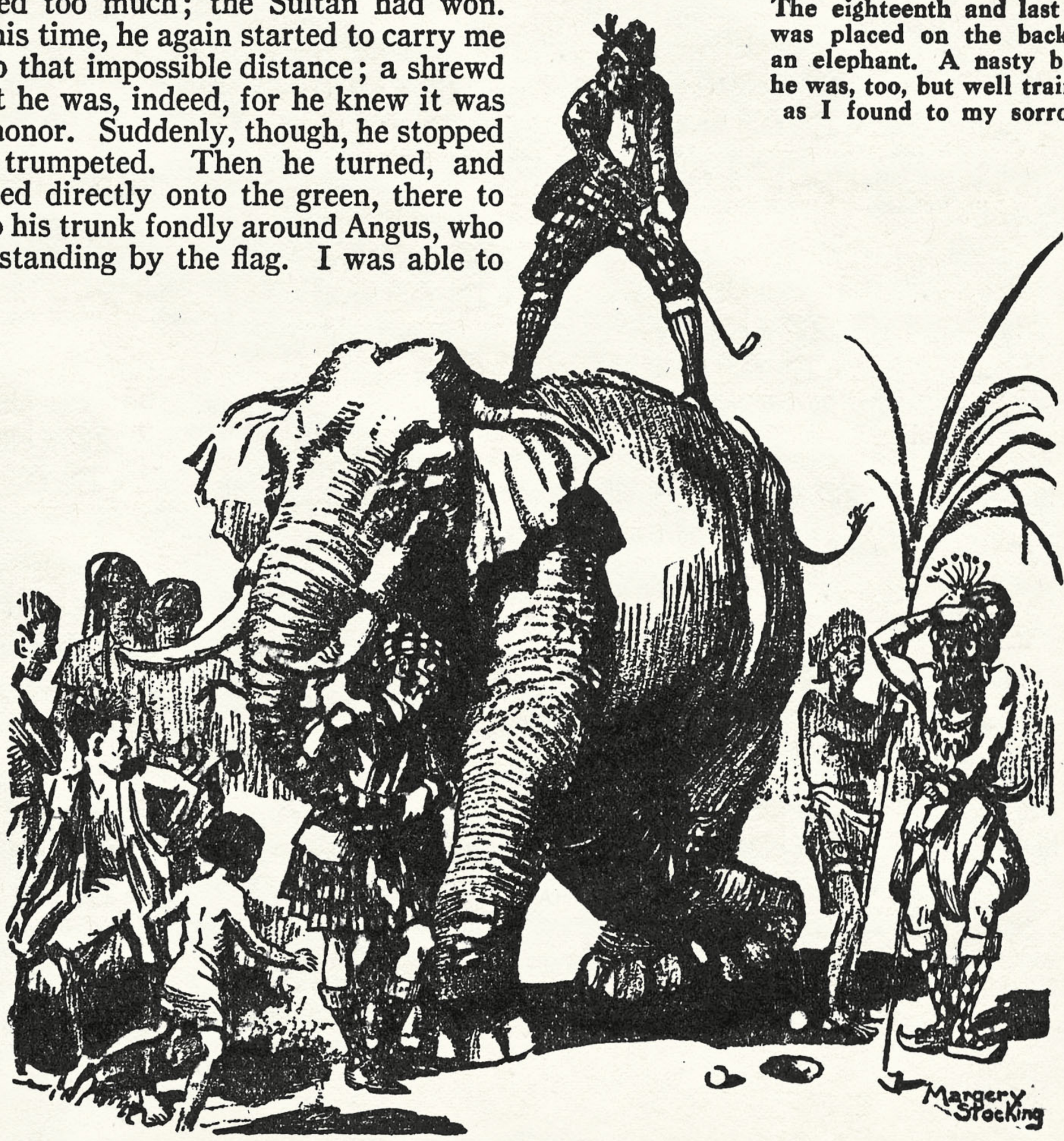
This time, he again started to carry me off to that impossible distance; a shrewd beast he was, indeed, for he knew it was my honor. Suddenly, though, he stopped and trumpeted. Then he turned, and walked directly onto the green, there to wrap his trunk fondly around Angus, who was standing by the flag. I was able to putt directly over his side and into the cup for a hole in one. Then Angus moved off, and the elephant followed, despite the yells of his driver. The Sultan had a midiron shot, but he couldn't sink it, and, as it rimmed the cup, I put my hand up to my ears and breathed a sigh of relief.

ANGUS was busy collecting the hundred pounds, while I gathered in the plaudits of the multitude, but finally we came together, and I said to him:

"What do you suppose made that elephant act that way on the eighteenth, and what the hell are ye doing in them specs and those green whiskers?"

Angus looked to the right, and he looked to the left, and then he looked up and down.

"*Sh-h!*" he said. "I'm made up as the doctor who took a thorn out of that elephant's foot at a circus in London, fourteen years ago—and an elephant, my dear MacMudd, never forgets."



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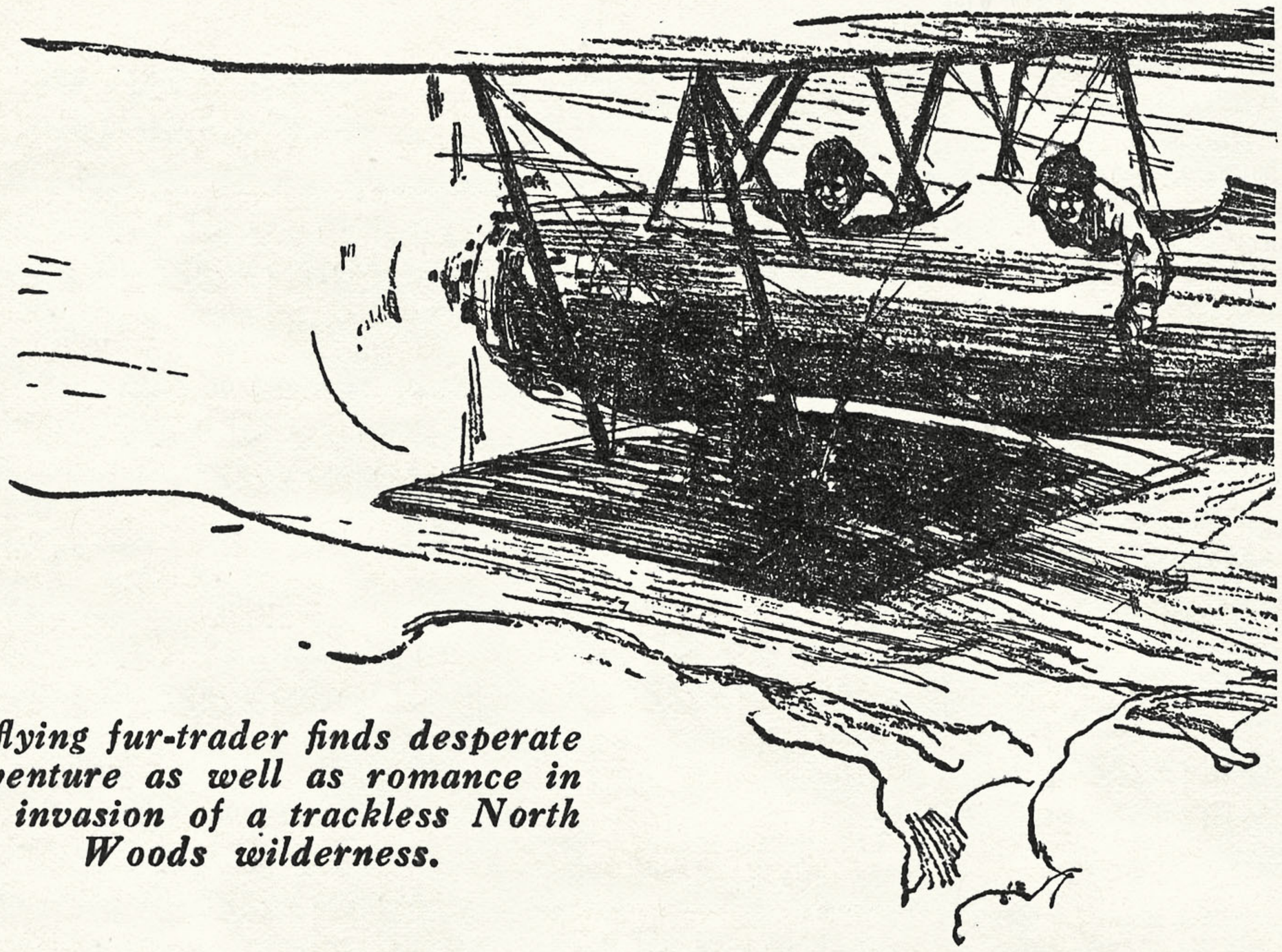


A flying fur-trader finds desperate adventure as well as romance in his invasion of a trackless North Woods wilderness.

Sinister Shadows

HUGH MALLOY, trail-weary and with nerves rasped raw by the maddening cloud of suspicion that had been hanging over him for months, paused in the deepening twilight to gaze across the broad valley of the Lame Bear.

A flying fur-trader, Malloy made it his business to know the whereabouts of trappers and their trap-lines. Yet not once in the three seasons that he had been winging his way about this Far North fur country, had he ever heard of a trapper, red or white, who laid his lines in the far reaches of this great watershed. A country that looked like a trapper's paradise; and not a cabin within forty miles! What was wrong with the place?

Now, however, his eyes came to rest on a small patch of white in the forested depths—upon a pin-point of light at the edge of the white patch. Candleshine in a cabin window! He set out at once to make his way thither; and he was glad indeed of this puzzle to distract his mind. For when one is suspected of murder by the Mounted police his thoughts are not pleasant even if the suspicion is wholly unmerited.

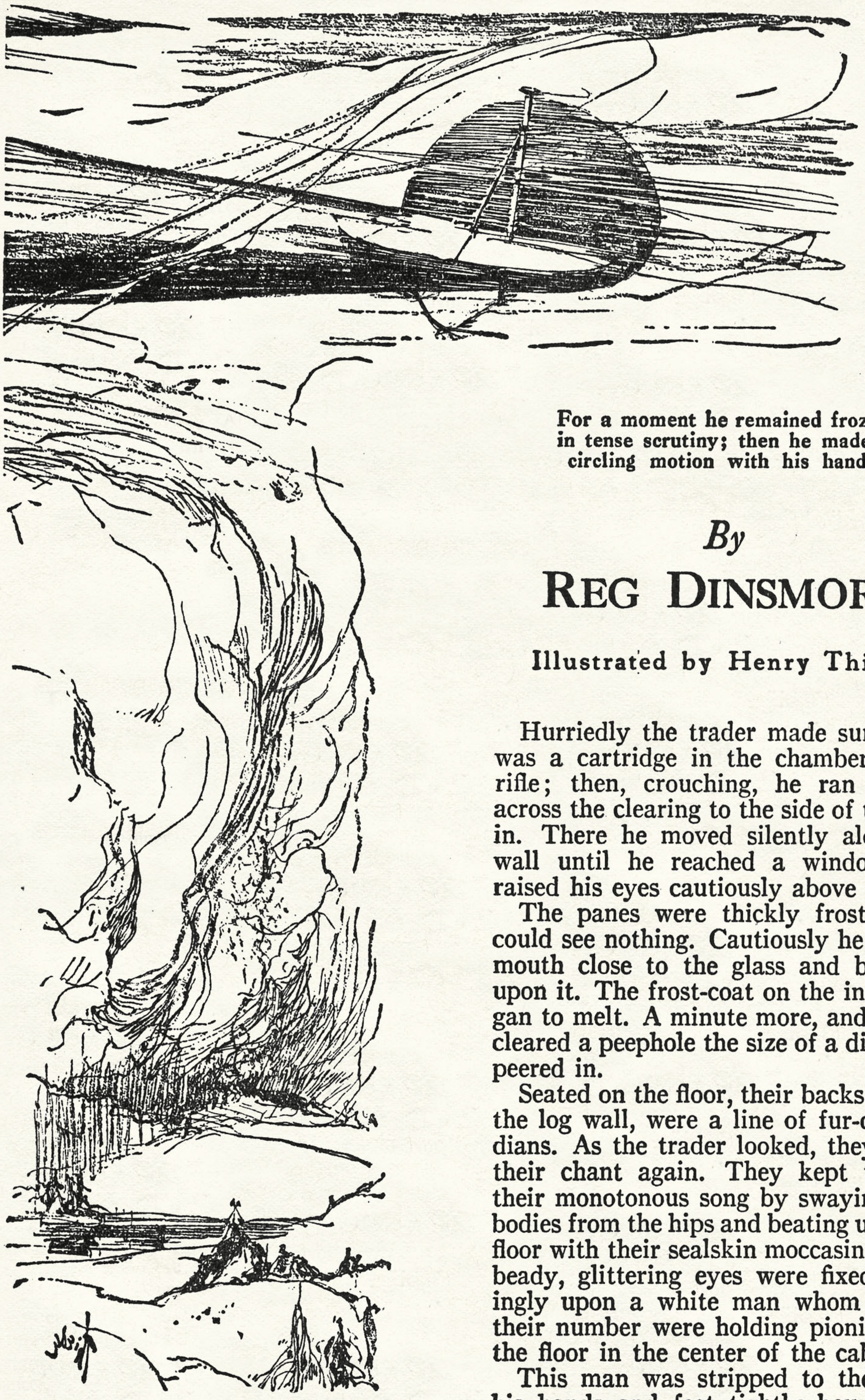
It was nearly dark when Malloy reached the clearing, and with the characteristic caution of a good woodsman, paused in the edge of the timber to survey the place. To his intense surprise, he discovered that not only was there one cabin in the clearing, but *five*. Here in this secluded valley he had stumbled upon a hidden settlement.

Even in the near-darkness it was easy to see that these buildings were not the nondescript dwellings of Indians. Neither did they have the hastily built appearance of white trappers' cabins. There was about them a finish and stability that gave them the look of comfortable little homes. But whose homes?

No one was in sight about the place. Four of the cabins were dark. The windows of the other, the largest of the five, blazed with light. And from the lighted cabin came the rumble of men's voices.

As the trader stood listening and watching, the sing-song of a savage chant arose, and grew both in volume and barbaric abandon. Sled-dogs somewhere at the back of the cabins, hearing it, lifted their voices in an eerie refrain. A wolf answered mournfully from a distant hill.

An apprehensive chill coursed down Malloy's spine. There was something sinister about this wild song. Cold and tuneless as the grinding of an ice-floe, yet



For a moment he remained frozen in tense scrutiny; then he made a circling motion with his hands.

By

REG DINSMORE

Illustrated by Henry Thiede

Hurriedly the trader made sure there was a cartridge in the chamber of his rifle; then, crouching, he ran swiftly across the clearing to the side of the cabin. There he moved silently along the wall until he reached a window, and raised his eyes cautiously above the sill.

The panes were thickly frosted. He could see nothing. Cautiously he put his mouth close to the glass and breathed upon it. The frost-coat on the inside began to melt. A minute more, and he had cleared a peephole the size of a dime. He peered in.

Seated on the floor, their backs against the log wall, were a line of fur-clad Indians. As the trader looked, they began their chant again. They kept time to their monotonous song by swaying their bodies from the hips and beating upon the floor with their sealskin moccasins. Their beady, glittering eyes were fixed gloatingly upon a white man whom two of their number were holding pionioned to the floor in the center of the cabin.

This man was stripped to the waist, his hands and feet tightly bound with rawhide thongs. In the light of a great blaze that leaped and flickered in a huge stone fireplace his skin gleamed white as a woman's.

As the captive strained at his bonds the long muscles of his beautifully proportioned torso slid and writhed beneath his

expressive of hate and triumph, its savage gutturals rolled on and on. The trader crept nearer. The chanting suddenly ceased, and for an instant all was silence. Then, out of the stillness came a groan—a low cry so expressive of agony that it caused Malloy's scalp to prickle.

skin with a smoothness that betokened great strength. His yellow hair, untouched by barber's shears for months, fell across his face in wild disarray. He struggled again, rolled, twisted. The shock of hair fell from his features, and Malloy saw that he was hardly more than a boy. The trader also saw another thing: across one of the youth's shoulders ran a livid six-inch welt, a burn.

Another white man swaggered into Malloy's range of vision, a man with the body of a heavy-weight pugilist and the face of a hawk. He wore a beautiful shirt of beaded caribou skin, the heavy woolen breeches of the North-country woodsman, and the hand-sewn sealskin boots of an Eskimo. A long-bladed, ivory-handled knife and an automatic pistol swung at his hip. Striding to the captive, he stood glowering down upon him.

As the firelight fell upon the man's black-bearded face, Hugh Malloy gasped. From nose to chin-point a terrible, vertical scar split the lips, and the upright slash gave the man the appearance of having two mouths.

Malloy had never seen this man before, yet he had heard Indians and trappers speak of him. Always they coupled his name with a curse. The scar left no doubt as to his identity.

"Two-Mouth Carney—and his gang of Sealrib mongrels!" was the trader's startled thought. "The scum of the North! Great Lucifer, what have I bumped into?"

THERE was little time for conjecture. Now the Indians had again ceased their chanting and were bending forward, watching the captive from smoldering eyes. Two-mouth Carney bent above the young man and spoke.

"Yer old man, Kardson—tell me where he's hid. Tell, or this time I'll have Iksho drill that hot poker clean through yer damned heart!"

The boy on the floor twisted over onto his back. With a defiant jerk of his head he tossed the long hair out of his eyes and stared coolly up into Carney's repulsive face.

"Better lay off this torture stuff," he told the outlaw evenly. "You'll get nothing more out of me!"

Malloy's pulse quickened and he grinned admiringly. Who was this gritty, yellow-haired young Kardson, anyhow?

"Liar!" shrieked Carney, driving his sealskin boot into Kardson's face. "I'll make you talk, damn you!" He whirled

He cleared a peephole and peered in.

to one of his men who was crouching by the fireside and barked something in the Sealrib tongue.

The Indian by the fire arose. He drew a white-hot poker from the coals.

Hugh Malloy waited to see no more. Heedless of the odds against him, he twisted out of his packstraps and snowshoe thongs, leaped around the corner of the cabin and kicked open the door.

The surprise of the trader's entrance worked to his advantage. Halfway to his victim, the Indian with the poker paused in surprise. Malloy, knowing how ruthless were these men with whom he was dealing, wasted no time with words. He promptly put a bullet through the poker-bearer's arm.

The Indian screeched; the poker fell; blue smoke curled from the floor beneath its hot tip. The two Indians who had been holding the captive sprang away and backed against the wall. But Carney's hand shot to his hip, came away gripping an automatic.

Malloy fired instantly—and perhaps because his eyes were on that gun of Carney's, that is where his bullet hit. Smashed out of the outlaw's grip, it clattered on the stones of the hearth.

The burly Carney's hands shot above his head.

Young Kardson, grasping the situation instantly, rolled swiftly toward Malloy. "Got a knife, buddy?" he gasped.

Without taking his eyes from the men before him, keeping them covered with one hand, Malloy pulled a heavy clasp-knife from his pocket. He touched a button in its handle; the blade flipped open and locked. He dropped it beside Kardson.

As if the act had been rehearsed, Kardson wriggled about until his bound hands got hold of the knife. He forced the blade deeply into a crack of the floor, then sawed the thongs that bound his wrists across its keen edge. In a moment his hands were free. Another instant, and he had slashed the thongs from his ankles and was standing beside Malloy.

"Ready to go?" asked the trader.

"And how!" grinned the yellow-haired one. "But not without my shirt. That guy's got it on." He pointed a meaning finger at a villainous-visaged Sealrib. "Come on, Flat-face, cough up the shirt!"

Grudgingly the Indian pulled off the heavy checkered shirt with which he had adorned his slouching shoulders and flung it at the young man's feet.

With a wry grimace, Kardson picked up the garment, shook it, and slipped into it. He winced as the rough fabric rasped the great burn on his shoulder but in the next breath was joking again.

"Lice and all, I've got to wear it. Guess I'd better have that beaded one of Carney's too. It's no bathing-suit weather outdoors. Come on, Two-mouth, shuck yourself out of your pretty!"

"Like hell I will!" Carney snarled.

"Off with that shirt!" ordered Malloy curtly.

Muttering a steady stream of profanity, the outlaw began pulling at his shirt. He slipped the bottom of the garment partly over his head; and then, as if bothered by a button, one of his hands began fumbling underneath—toward a second pistol in a shoulder-holster.

A VIOLET flame spurted from a fold of Carney's garment, and at the same instant a great numbness seemed to flow down the trader's body. The walls of the cabin reeled about him. Dimly he saw the Indians start up, heard them yell. Then dizziness overcame him and he pitched forward onto his face.

Consciousness did not wholly desert Malloy. As from a great distance he heard the slam of a door and the grate of a hasp, and was vaguely aware that young Kardson had leaped out into the night.

Yelling Indians sprang across the trader's prostrate body, trampling upon him in their frenzied attempt to open the door. It resisted their efforts. Evidently Kardson had somehow managed to fasten it on the outside.

Carney raved insanely at his men. In the excitement of the moment he spoke English.

"Outside, you hellions! What chance we got of finding old Kardson and that cache if he gets away? Smash that damned door! Go through a window! *Get* him!"

Burly shoulders at last forced the door. Men lurched out into the night. Carney followed, picking up Malloy's rifle as he stepped across him. Evidently he thought the trader dead, for he paid him not the slightest heed.

MALLOY realized he must steady his reeling senses, must fight that restful darkness that beckoned. By a mighty effort he raised his head—and found that he was alone in the cabin.

He could hear the Indians calling to each other as they searched for Kardson. From somewhere near the other cabins, Carney was bellowing commands. The trader knew that as soon as the first flurry of the hunt was over they would return to the cabin to organize a systematic search. If he were to get away, he must do so at once.

Rolling onto his hands and knees, he tried to rise, but his legs prickled, refused to support him. Something warm was trickling down across his cheek. Raising an unsteady hand, he discovered a slash along the side of the tight-fitting flyer's helmet he wore.

"Only creased!" was his thankful thought. "Mustn't let a scratch like that stop me!" Flat on his belly, he dragged himself out into the night.

To his surprise, Malloy found that it was snowing hard—a blinding squall that would doubtless be soon over, yet its blustering smother might mean life itself to him. For an instant he lay motionless in the snow, listening. At the edge of the timber the cries of the manhunt continued. Carney was still raving at Indians from somewhere off in the dark.

No one had seen Malloy crawl through the lighted doorway. As swiftly as his

half-numbed limbs would permit, he dragged himself around the corner to where he had left his snowshoes and pack. Both were gone.

"Kardson got 'em," was the trader's swift thought. "Guess they'll do the kid more good than they would me—me with my running-gear gone on a strike. Now for the timber!"

The twenty-yard crawl to the timber was a nightmare to Malloy. Twice men came so close that he could have touched them, but he groveled deeply into the snow, and in the driving smother of the squall, they passed. After what seemed an age his shoulder touched the bole of a tree: he had reached the woods. He grasped the rough trunk of the spruce and drew himself erect. To his delight, he found he could now stand; slowly the deadly numbness was leaving his legs.

As the trader stood there weak and panting, he glanced back. The lighted doorway of the cabin stood out in the darkness, a yellow rectangle of radiance. Then suddenly it framed the dark form of a man. Despite the swirling snowflakes, Malloy recognized the ponderous bulk of Carney.

The squaw man took one look inside the cabin, then whirled. His wild yell cut like a knife through the howl of the storm as he warned his Indians of Malloy's escape.

Thankful that the drifting snow was blotting his tracks almost as fast as they were made, the trader stumbled on into the utter blackness of the timber. Where he was going, he had no idea—without rifle, snowshoes or food, surely not far. Yet he must put this place behind him. With an arm crooked before his face to shield his eyes from clawing branches, he plunged on.

The howl of the wind and the rasping whisper of dry snow as it swirled down through the branches were now the only sounds. The yelling of the Indians had ceased. They were hunting silently as weasels now, and for that reason were the more dangerous. But with his tracks blotted by the snow, Malloy had little fear of pursuit.

He realized, however, that his greatest danger lay in stumbling squarely upon one of Carney's men. To guard against this, he leaned against a tree and listened, to make sure no one was in his path.

AND suddenly—something cold was laid against his throat. A needlelike point pricked his neck just below his ear.

He tried to spring aside, but before his half-numbed legs could function, a hand clutched the sleeve of his parka.

"Keep quiet or die!" a determined voice whispered in his ear.

Malloy cursed himself for a blundering fool and stood still.

A swift hand slid over him, exploring for weapons. It touched his belt, patted his pockets.

Malloy's muscles were set like taut steel cables, ready to take advantage of the slightest relaxation on the part of his captor. Yet never once did that knife-point at his throat waver. The trader attempted to talk his invisible captor off his guard.

"All right," he said easily, "you've got me. Why linger here? Let's get back to the cabin and have it over with."

A surprised gasp came from the darkness. "Who are you?" And the voice was that of a girl.

It was Malloy's turn to be surprised. A *girl*, here in the forest and the storm! A girl, with the wolfish Two-mouth Carney so near!

"Easy with the knife, lady, and I'll introduce myself," he said. "Name's Malloy—Hugh Malloy. Occupation, flying fur-trader. Had a forced landing twenty miles south of here this morning, and was on my way back to headquarters to get

Malloy fired instantly — and Carney's hands shot above his head.

gas for my ship when I stumbled onto this—"

"A flying fur-trader! You're not one of Carney's men?"

"Carney's man—no! Here, feel my headgear. Carney's men wouldn't be wearing flying helmets, would they?"

The girl's hand fluttered for an instant at his helmet. Then the knife was taken away. "Have you seen Knute Kardson?" she questioned. "Do you know if he's here?"

"I'll say I've seen him! Carney and his gang had the lad, and were trying to torture some kind of information out of him. He got away. He's hiding somewhere here in the woods. He's got snowshoes, a pack of grub and blankets—should be able to take care of himself. Now, if you're satisfied, let's pull out of here. This is no place for a girl."

"I'll go; but if you're lying, I'll kill you!" promised the girl evenly. "Come!"

Seizing one of Malloy's hands, she led him at a swift walk deeper into the thick timber.

They had gone but a few steps when, back near the clearing, a medley of triumphant yells ripped through the noises of the storm.

The girl stopped so quickly that Malloy, in the darkness, bumped against her. He could feel her trembling.

"Knute!" she breathed. "They've got him again!"

Malloy knew she was right. "He thinks I'm still in the cabin, was probably going back to help me," he told her. "Tough luck!"

"So you were in one of the cabins?"

"Yes. I couldn't stand outside and watch the things they were doing to that lad. I tried to help him. Carney tricked the both of us. In the mix-up that followed, Kardson got away."

"That explains why he went back," said the girl. "Knute would never go away and leave a man who had befriended him. He isn't built that way. Now Carney will—"

"Got a gun on you?" asked Malloy grimly. "Carney's got mine."

"No. I made Knute take my automatic when he left me this afternoon to hunt for the cache."

Again that cache! There was no time for questions, however.

Silently Malloy turned back toward the noise of the fighting.

The girl was instantly at his side.

"What are you going to do?" she whispered.

"Can't leave that guy to Carney. You stay here. When I come back, I'll hoot like an owl—twice. You can find me that way."

"But I'll *not* stay!"

Time was precious. Malloy recognized the futility of argument. Together they stole cautiously to the edge of the clearing and they reached there just in time to see young Kardson, snow-covered and disheveled from the fight he had put up, led into one of the smaller cabins by his captors. Some one had lighted a candle in the place, and through the open doorway, they saw four Indians bind the lad hand and foot.

The gloating Carney, who had superintended the binding of Kardson, spoke; and above the wail of the wind Malloy and the girl caught his words.

"There aint no hurry, me cub. Take yer time. We're sittin' pretty here, the Injuns an' I. As long as the grub holds out, we aint pining to rush back north. You look to be a husky young buck. Got a fine appetite, I expect. When you git hungry enough, you'll be damned glad to tell me where yer old man's hiding!"

"You wait," taunted the boy. "This guy you got in the big cabin's from the outside. He's got friends. The law'll be coming to the Lame Bear, Carney!"

"I aint got nobody in the big cabin," snarled Carney. "Yer smart-Alec friend sneaked out an' left you. But he aint got snowshoes nor rifle nor grub, an' he won't get far. And I'm sending the Injuns out in the morning to run him down. I'd like to know where the hell he come from, though."

"You'll find out soon enough!" bluffed young Kardson. "If I'm not a bum guesser, there was a scarlet tunic under that parka he was wearing. If you'll take a tip from me, Carney, you'll slap the harnesses onto your dogs and *drift*."

"Blah, that bird was no Redcoat!" sneered Carney. But the boy's bluff had reached him. He took an uneasy turn about the cabin, then strode back and shook a knotted fist in the lad's face.

"Mounty or no Mounty, I'm gonna find that cache! I know there *is* a cache; 'cause Chris Kardson would never dare sell all that fur—not so soon after killing Alex La Flamme an' burning the Kettle Portage trading-post!"

DIMLY Malloy heard a horrified gasp from the girl at his side. Yet the outlaw's words meant so much to him that he was hardly conscious of her distress. And well they might.

For this man was speaking of the very murder and robbery of which he, Malloy, was suspected!

Circumstantial evidence, his presence in the locality at the time of the crime, and the natural assumption by the authorities that bad feelings had existed between him and Alex La Flamme, rival traders, had linked Malloy with the atrocity. The police had proven nothing against him, to be sure; but he could not offer an alibi; and hardly a week passed but a grim and keen-eyed officer of the law came to ask questions and to search curiously through his furs.

Yes, this news was hopeful indeed—but it did not take Malloy's eyes away from the scene in the cabin!

UPON young Kardson also, Carney's words had an electrical effect. Bound though he was, the boy struggled to his feet and stood swaying there, facing the outlaw, his eyes glowing like embers.

"Carney, you lying hound," he said slowly, "are you trying to tell me that *my father* killed La Flamme? Are you trying to make me believe he'd do a thing like that? If my hands were only free, I'd kill you! I'd—"

Carney's harsh laugh rasped out. Putting a big hand into the boy's face, he stiff-armed him again to the floor.

"Ha, you kin see now why I'm so anxious to find the old man, eh? Mebbe yer've heard what was taken from La Flamme's trade-room before fire was put to the place? No? Well, it's all the same. Thing for you to do, kid, is to open up an' tell me where Chris Kardson's at. Not gonna peep, huh? All right, not a crumb nor a drink till you do!"

Leaving the four Indians as guards, Carney came outside and slammed the door. A moment later he let himself into the big cabin.

"And that," whispered Malloy, "gives us a little time. A man won't starve overnight. Let's get away from here and go some place where we can talk."

The girl took the lead. Unhesitatingly she led him into the blackness of the storm-filled forest. He marveled at her. She seemed to have the nocturnal eyes and direction-sense of a lynx. After a long time they entered a narrow ravine, and here the trader glimpsed the still-glowing coals of a small campfire. She tossed kindlings upon the embers, and a wavering blaze sprang up. For the first time they faced each other in the light.

The girl was dressed for the trail. She wore high-cut moosehide moccasins, woolen riding breeches and a blanket-cloth parka. On her hands were soft-tanned

mittens made from the skin of the caribou fawn, and trimmed at the wrists with the pure white fur of winter-caught ermine. A bright voyageur's sash girdled her waist. Her dark, level eyes appraised Malloy with unwavering steadiness.

Instinctively the trader pulled off his helmet—and the girl's eyes leaped to the crimson trickle that leaked from the edge of Malloy's hair. "You're hurt—shot!" she gasped.

"Only a scratch," he assured her. "The least of my troubles. I'm a whole lot more interested in finding out about you and what was going on back there at the cabins."

But the girl would not have it so. She stepped out of the firelight and in a moment was back dragging a narrow, light-built sled. From a small pack upon it she took a smoke-blackened kettle, and filling it with snow, set it over the coals. When the snow had melted, she made Malloy sit upon the sled and went to work on his bullet-grooved scalp.

After a moment, he looked around at the girl. "Well, who tells their story first?" he asked.

"You," she said tersely, intent on her work.

"Right! Here's the works:

"You already know my name. Home's Providence, U. S. A. My headquarters here in the North is the auxiliary schooner *Gray Gull*—just now frozen into an inlet south of White Whale Point on Hudson Bay."

"Why, that's seventy miles from here!"

"A mighty short distance—with a good plane under you; but a whale of a hike when you're piking back after gas."

"You ran out of gas?"

"Did I? My tanks are *dusty!* Leak—wasn't watching my gauge and didn't get wise till my motor conked."

"And you've got to go clear to the Bay after a supply?"

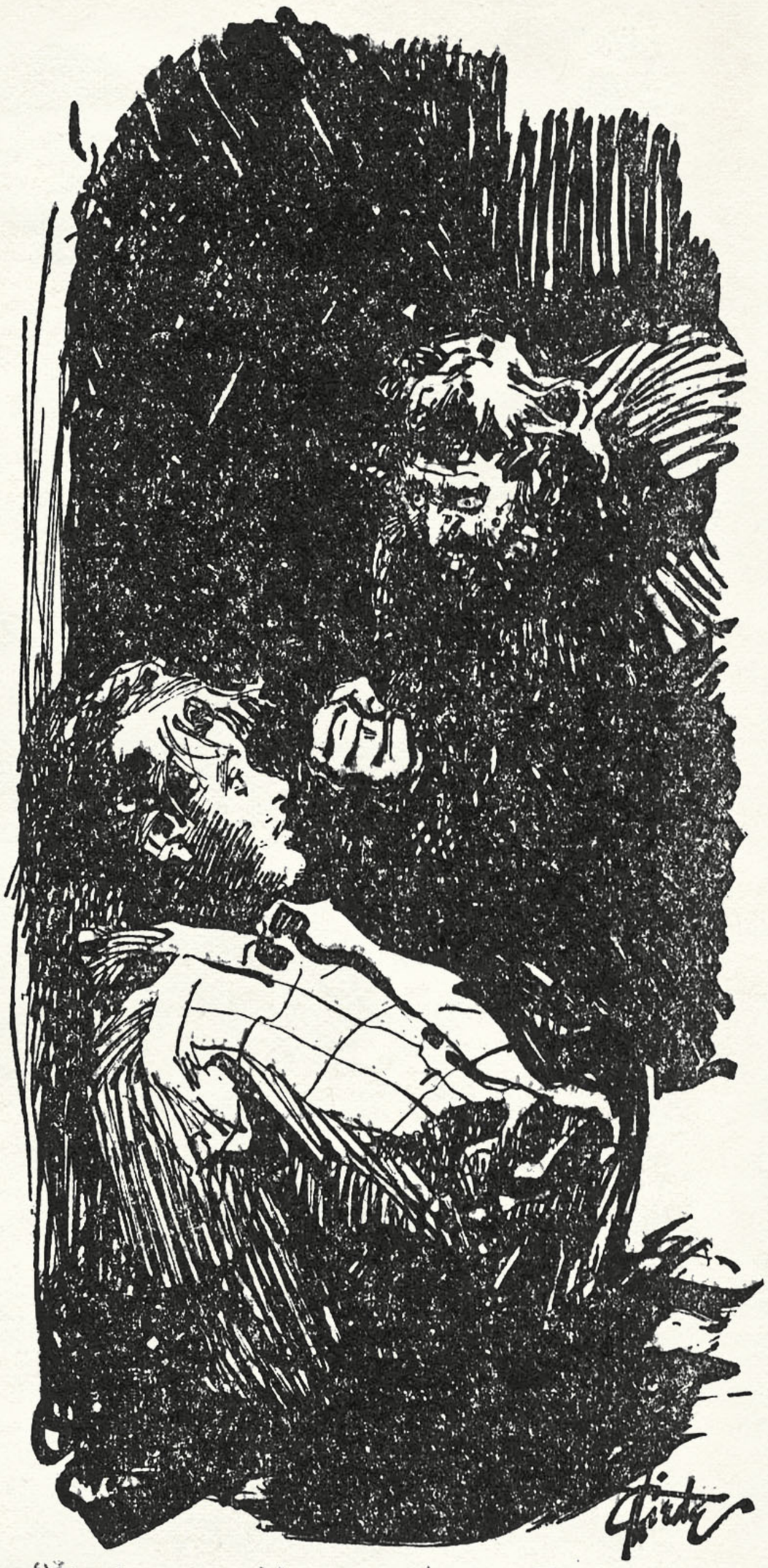
"Correct—and hand-sled it back to the plane. A two-weeks' job, hang the luck!"

"You have friends at the schooner?"

"Sure! Old Jake Dresser, my partner. Jake's the greatest old sea-dog out of Gloucester. He's going to have seventeen kinds of fits when I fail to show up back there on schedule time."

"Where's your plane?"

"Twenty miles or so to the south of here. Happened to have plenty of altitude when the motor went blooey, so I set her down okay on the ice of a lake. Drained the oil, and she's lashed down all snug in a protected cove, and will be all right if no Indians find her. If they do, I'm due for a loss. Her forward cockpit is crammed full of trade-goods."



"Kardson would never dare sell that fur so soon after killing Alex La Flamme!"

THE girl stepped quickly back and bent to look more closely into his face. "Trade-goods—*food?*" she asked—and waited breathlessly for his reply.

"Food? Sure, oodles of it! Flour, bacon, canned goods, and dried fruit. Why, some of those Swampy Crees who've been a long time in the bush will trade a mink-skin, even-Stephen, for a handful of raisins!"

"Will you trade food for gasoline?" The question fairly shot from the girl's lips.

"Will I! Dig me up enough gas to get me back to the *Gray Gull*, and you're welcome to every crumb that's aboard my bus. Fat chance of doing it in this country, though!"

"If you had the gas, would you go away and leave Knute Kardson in Carney's hands?" asked the girl cautiously.

Malloy laughed grimly. "If I had the gas, I'd make it so uncomfortable for that bird he'd be the one who'd crave to go places!"

For a moment the girl gazed into the fire, apparently lost in deep meditation. Then her head came up and she said:

"I'm taking you at your word, Mr. Malloy. I know where there's fifteen gallons of gasoline stored. It's less than a mile from here."

Malloy came to his feet with a leap, grabbed her by the arm and swung her around so that the firelight fell full on her face. "You—you're not kidding me?"

"I'm not. My people use the gas in the outboard motors on their canoes when they make their annual trip to Sandy Point trading-post every summer. It's stored at the foot of Lame Bear rapids—in five-gallon tins. It would be easy to load on this sled and haul to your plane."

Malloy did a wild double shuffle in the snow. "Wow!" he exulted. "Who says the Malloy luck has busted? We're off after that gas directly. But first, as a matter of reciprocity, shoot me a li'l explanatory sketch, will you? These Kardsons—who are they? Why do you need food so badly? And why are you here alone in these woods tonight? And, above all, who are you?"

"I am Joan Brent. Knute Kardson is the son of Chris Kardson, the 'old man Kardson' that Carney is so anxious to find. And Chris Kardson—well, he's just himself, that's all. There's no one else like him, so self-sacrificing and lovable, I mean."

"Your description doesn't tally with what Carney said, Miss Brent! I can't picture a *lovable* man doing the things that happened at Kettle Portage."

The girl's small moccasin stamped the snow in anger. "That's all a lie: Chris Kardson never did those things! He couldn't!"

"Still, Carney is a hundred miles nearer civilization and the law than he ever came before. He's looking for something that was taken from the Kettle Portage trade-room, thinking it's cached here on the Lame Bear. How come?"

The girl tossed her hands in a despairing gesture. Her troubled eyes filled with quick tears. Malloy, aware that he was hurting her, hastened to change the trend of talk.

"I'm curious to know more about that little settlement back there," he told her. "The Kardsons lived there?"

"Yes, the Kardsons, three other families, my mother and I. It was our home until Carney and his murdering Sealribs swooped down on the place and drove us away. That was a month ago. Since then Carney and his men have been holding Refuge—that's the name of our little settlement—and living like pigs in our cabins. They've been feeding our supply of smoked fish and caribou meat to their dogs. They've been running our trap-lines and taking our fur as if it were their own."

"Was there a fight?"

"No; one of our trappers saw them and raced ahead to warn us. We had just time to harness the dogs, take what provisions we could throw on the sleds and escape. Darkness and a blizzard saved us. At daylight we were hidden away in a big swamp twenty miles to the south of here."

"Tough! But you did the wise thing, getting out, I mean. That Carney is a bad actor."

"Perhaps. But it was a terrible thing, that night. The dogs were overloaded with provisions and the small children who had to ride the sleds. A child and a woman died on the trail."

The girl's voice lowered to a whisper. "The woman was my mother."

FOR a long time neither spoke. Malloy tossed more fuel onto the blaze, sending sparks like snaky streamers up to meet the falling snow.

Presently she went on with her story, and Hugh Malloy learned many astonishing things. He learned that the people of Refuge were still hiding in the swamp, living in brush wiki-ups and trying to keep warm by a single fire.

One of the men, who had started for Sandy Point, on the Bay, for help, had failed to return, had doubtless perished on the journey. Another was dangerously sick. A third man, Duane by name, was working himself to death on half rations, trying to keep the camp in rabbit-meat and fuel.

A week ago, Chris Kardson had returned to Refuge, alone. One of Carney's Indians had sighted him, shot at him and wounded him severely. Kardson had eluded pursuit, and after two days, had managed to reach the camp in the swamp again. But fever had developed; for the past three days he had lain delirious and at the point of death.

The girl said that in his delirium Chris Kardson had raved continually of a hidden cache—a cache which he claimed contained "the entire savings of the people of Refuge." Joan and Knute, who were caring for Kardson in his sickness, at first thought it was a fantasy of the sick man's mind. Later, however, Knute became convinced there was a cache, and leaving his father in care of the people of the camp, had come back to the vicinity of Refuge to search for it. Joan Brent had come with him because she would not listen to the boy's venturing into danger alone.

It was a strange tale. That such things could happen in the peaceful country over which Malloy had been winging daily for the past three winters seemed unbelievable.

"I understand by what you've told me, Miss Brent," he said, "that Chris Kardson was the big shot of Refuge, a kind of general manager. But wasn't it rather an unusual state of affairs?"

"No. You see, each person of Refuge worked for the welfare of all. Everyone shared and shared alike. The meat, the fish, the furs—all were pooled. Every man had his own particular branch of the work to attend to. It was a happy arrangement.

"The three other men of the place were away much at their hunting, fishing, and trapping. Chris Kardson stayed at the settlement most of the time, and did the work of three men there. I know that the others intrusted all financial matters to him."

"But Miss Brent," said Malloy, "I've never heard of Refuge before—has it been in existence long?"

"It was fifteen years ago that Uncle Chris and his friends came up from the States and settled here. But very few white men do know of the existence of Refuge—the Provincial authorities, of course, and the factor at Sandy Point trading-post; that's about all. Refuge didn't want publicity; it wanted seclusion and peace. That's why the existence of the village has been kept as secret as possible. As for the Indians, the Nascaupees and Montagnais have a superstitious aversion to the valley of the Lame Bear. They shun it and seldom speak of it."

"But you, Miss Brent? You haven't always lived here. You seem more like a girl from home—the States, I mean."

"I've been here only three years. Came with my mother from New Hampshire. Mother was Chris Kardson's sister. Father died and left us nearly penniless. Uncle Chris came down to visit us, and would listen to nothing but that we come back to Refuge with him. I've been doing my part here as a teacher for the children."

"And Knute?"

"Knute has been at school down in the States for the past six years. He only came back to Refuge three months ago."

"One more question. Do you really believe there is a valuable cache here on the Lame Bear?"

The girl was thoughtful for a long moment. Then: "It's possible, of course, but please don't believe it's what that terrible Carney said it was. It just *can't* be! If you knew Uncle Chris, if you'd seen him labor and sacrifice for the people of Refuge as I have, you'd know he could never do a thing like that."

But though Hugh Malloy admired Joan Brent's loyalty to her uncle, he could not forget those startling words of Two-mouth Carney—*"Chris Kardson would never dare sell all that fur—not so soon after killing Alex La Flamme and burning the Kettle Portage trading-post."*

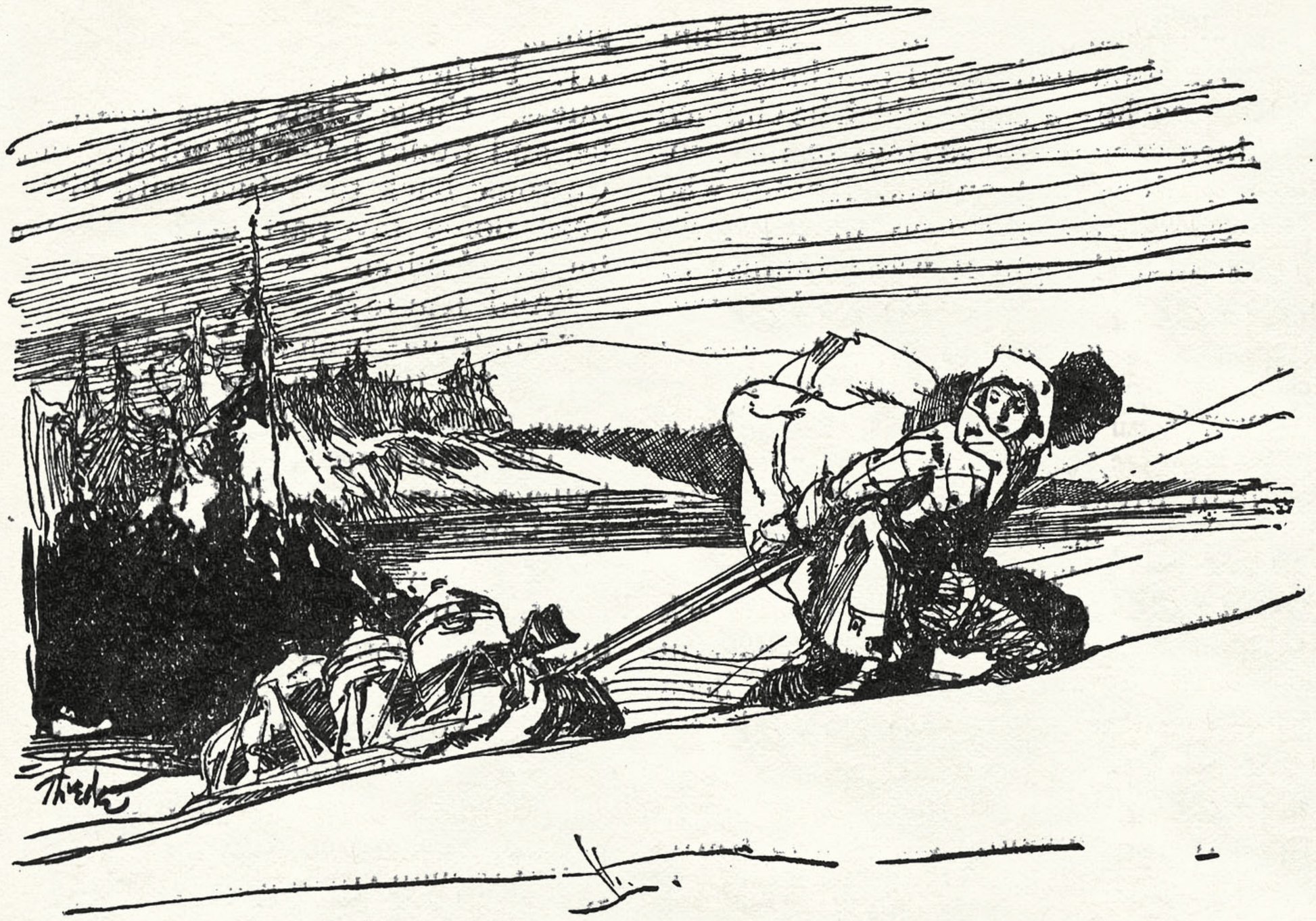
SNOW still swirled down through the frozen boughs of the spruces and the forest moaned and wailed beneath the lash of the wind.

Malloy glanced at his watch, his eyes narrowing in thought. "Do you feel equal to traveling all night?" he asked the girl.

"I'm strong and used to woods travel. I'm ready to do anything that will help those poor people and Knute. What are your plans?"

"Take the gas to the plane and fly that grub to the camp in the swamp," was the trader's decision. "I've got a pocket compass here with a luminous dial. We can keep our direction. If we pull out now, the snow will cover our trail, and Carney's men won't be able to follow us in the morning. We know that Knute's in no immediate danger. Let me have your snowshoes, and you ride the sled. Let's go!" . . . .

The gray pallor of dawn found Hugh Malloy doggedly mushing toward his plane. On the sled that he dragged were three five-gallon cans of gasoline. Joan Brent followed in the loosely-packed trail, and on the upgrades she joined him in the pull. In the darkness and the rough traveling they had covered hardly more than eight miles during the night.



The dawn found Malloy and Joan Brent doggedly mushing toward his plane.

The handicap of but one pair of snowshoes had slowed their progress by a half.

An hour after daylight they stopped to make tea and to eat a hurried snack of smoked caribou venison that was in the girl's pack. Malloy built a tiny fire and melted down a kettle of snow. There was little danger that their campfire smoke would disclose their whereabouts to Carney's men, for although the storm had abated somewhat, snow still fell.

Near by, a little hill pushed its steep slopes above the surrounding forest. The girl studied it in thoughtful silence for a moment, then began fastening on the snowshoes that Malloy had removed.

"I'm going up there," she told the trader, nodding toward the summit. "It's about done snowing. Perhaps I can pick a route that'll save us time and distance. I'll be back by the time tea's ready."

Crouched by the fire, feeding the blaze beneath the blackened kettle, Malloy watched her go. What courage this Joan Brent had!

The snow in the kettle melted. Malloy tossed in a handful of black tea and waited for the stuff to boil. When at last it was ready, he moved the kettle to where it would keep hot and dug into the pack for some of the caribou jerky. He laid the smoke-cured meat on a chip near the blaze to melt the frost from it, and awaited Joan Brent's return.

A half-hour passed, and the girl did not come. It had stopped snowing, and Malloy kicked the fire apart and slowly smothered it with snow. He dared not risk the tell-tale of its smoke. The tea was fast getting cold. What could be keeping her?

The trader ventured a shout. No response. He became worried. He waited another five minutes, then climbed the hill. There, upon the acre-sized plateau that formed the summit, he came upon a plainly-written tale in the new snow that chilled his blood.

Here were Joan Brent's tracks where she had walked toward open ledges that offered a view of the country to the east. Here was where she had rounded a house-sized boulder and—*had met two men!*

There were no signs of a struggle—just the tracks where the men had leaped to the girl's side, and the trail where all three had gone away into the north—back toward Refuge.

HUGH MALLOY read the story plainly enough. Carney, thinking to capture him, had sent men into the forest at an early hour. Doubtless the outlaw had given them directions to scatter to the four points of the compass in the hope of cutting his trail. Without question these two Indians had climbed the hill for the same purpose that Joan Brent had climbed it—to get the lie of the country. And they had chanced upon the girl. Two-mouth Carney would reward them well for bringing in a girl

like Joan Brent—and a niece of Chris Kardson's at that.

The trader was nonplused. Without snowshoes he hadn't a chance in the world of overtaking the two Sealribs and their captive. Even though he could come up with them, what could he do without a gun?

But why had not the girl called to him when the Indians had captured her? At once the significance of the girl's easy capture burst upon Malloy.

Joan Brent had realized that the two Sealribs, coming onto the hill from the opposite side as they had, had no idea of his presence. She had not called to him because she did not wish to betray his presence to the Indians. She wanted him to go on to his plane, get food to the starving people in the swamp, and get back to Refuge to help Knute Kardson. She had submitted quietly to capture, gambling that he would carry on and make good.

IN great plunging strides, Hugh Malloy raced back to the sled. He gulped down a huge quantity of the now lukewarm tea, filled a pocket of his parka with caribou jerky. Then, slipping the pull-rope of the sled over his shoulders, he took a new compass bearing and lunged away into the southeast, nibbling at the hard meat as he ran.

On well-packed snow fifteen gallons of gas on an easy-running sled would be little hindrance to speed. But in this loose snow the sled sank to its cross-bars and dragged like a dead weight. Malloy, too, went knee-deep at every stride. In such traveling he knew he would do well to make a mile an hour. He realized that at best he could not hope to reach his plane before dark. And after dark it would be impossible to find the swamp where the people of Refuge were camped. He ground his teeth and lurched desperately at the pull-rope.

After a time the forest gave way before him, and he came out onto a long and narrow lake. The fury of the wind had swept the ice almost bare of snow. Here on the glare surface the sled ran lightly as thistledown. And the lake led toward where his plane was hidden. The trader covered that six miles of blessed ice without once breaking his run.

Another pause to take compass-bearings. Three more hours of heart-breaking toil; and then through the trees, Malloy again caught the blue gleam of wind-swept ice.

He burst from the timber and looked about him. The shoreline of the little lake had a familiar look. Joyfully he recognized the lake, and found the plane was as he had left it.

Luckily the ship had a gas tank in each wing. Between each tank and the main gas-line that fed the motor was a shut-off cock. It was but the work of minutes to turn the cock of the leaky tank and fill the other from the cans on the sled. To build a fire, heat the frozen oil and replace it in the motor took longer; but when it was done the warmed cylinders burst into a deep-throated song of power almost as soon as he tried the starter.

The trader glanced anxiously at the pale sun. It hung barely above the skyline of treetops in the west. Little enough daylight left. Begrudging the time it took, he warmed the motor thoroughly, then taxied the ship skillfully through the narrow entrance of the cove. Once on the open ice of the lake, he pushed the throttle forward, and a moment later was in the air.

Joan Brent had told him the location of the camp in the swamp. She had said that not a quarter-mile from the camp was the deadwater of a sizable stream. This would have to answer as a landing place. With his eyes glued to the compass on his instrument-board he put the ship upon the course, and gave her the last notch of throttle that he dared.

The powerful drone of the motor and the rush of the slip-stream against his cheeks were like a tonic to Hugh Malloy. For three seasons, now, he had flown this tried and true little ship across thousands of miles of Canadian wilderness, and he had confidence in it.

A STRANGE game, this flying fur-trade. Malloy's partner, the salty old Jake Dresser, had owned the schooner *Gray Gull*. Malloy had contributed their airworthy little plane. They managed to borrow enough money to purchase a stock of trade-goods, and with the goods and the plane aboard the schooner, they had sailed out of Portland harbor, and two months later, after skirting Labrador's forbidding shores, had swung south into Hudson Bay. They had coasted down the eastern shore until they found the sheltered inlet south of White Whale Point. There they had made the schooner snug for the winter and established headquarters. As soon as early winter had closed the lakes and rivers of Lab-

rador's "East Main," Malloy began making flights inland.

For the first time the trappers found themselves able to trade their furs for tobacco, food, blankets and ammunition at the very doors of their remote trapping cabins. Malloy gave them as good or better values as they could get at the distant trading-posts. They welcomed the flying fur-trader, offered him the very best of their catch. The trading venture proved a success; and Malloy had come to love the country and his work.

And then the shadow had fallen:

When, in midsummer, he had made that flight to the north of the Leaf, with only the exploration of new territory as an object, how was he to have known that a grim tragedy was to be enacted there? Why, *why*, had he chanced to choose that little natural meadow within five miles of the fateful spot on which to set his plane down and to camp for the night? How was he to have known that the distant smoke that he sighted next morning was rising from the smoldering logs of the pillaged post—the funeral pyre of Alex La Flamme?

Why had perverse fate directed the keen eyes of a scarlet-coated corporal—who himself was hurrying toward the ominous smoke—to his plane as he took off that morning and headed back to the south?

Oh, it was inevitable, of course, that, failing to discover any clue of a murderer at the scene of the crime, the suspicion of the Mounted should have fallen upon him. And now—*now*, Malloy was on his way to meet the real murderer. Soon, with good luck, he would be face to face with the man who had caused him these months of mental horror!

A glance at the clock on his instrument-board told Malloy that he had been in the air nearly fifteen minutes. By now he should be nearing the swamp where the camp lay. Leaning his head out into the cold slip-stream, he began studying the country below.

DOWN there, a few miles to the west, a dense growth of fir like a dark green blanket contrasted vividly with the growth of pallid birches and silvery spruce that surrounded it. In the deepening shadows he could make out the white thread of a frozen stream that wound through the mile-wide strip of evergreen growth. A swamp, surely!

In a long glide the trader lost altitude and circled above the place.

To set his ship down on the ice of the deadwater was but the work of minutes. Then, hurriedly filling a sack with tinned stuff and other supplies from his load, he plunged into the swamp.

He had gone but a short distance when a man came stumbling to meet him. Hunger and suffering was written in the woodsman's face. The wonder of a man dropping from the sky in this isolated spot seemed secondary to his interest in the sack upon Malloy's shoulder.

"I'm Duane," he croaked. "Food?" He pointed with a shaking hand at the sack.

"Slathers of it!" Malloy assured him. "And more back in the bus."

"Thank God!" whispered Duane fervently, and leaned weakly against a tree.

"Is Chris Kardson alive?" the trader asked.

"Yes, alive—and in his right mind for the first time for days."

"I must talk with him," Malloy told the man and strode on toward the camp.

Duane followed, new hope in his emaciated face.

As they walked into the huddled circle of wiki-ups, Malloy passed Duane the food sack.

"I probably don't need to tell you to go mighty light on the grub at first," he warned. "You'll find canned tomatoes there. Better start on those. If there's any scurvy among you, there's nothing better. Now, which is Kardson's camp?"

Duane pointed to one of the shelters, and then fell avidly upon the food sack.

Children whose great eyes stared curiously from hunger-pinched faces gaped at the trader as he crossed to Kardson's wiki-up. At the entrance of the wiki-up he paused and peered inside. At first he could make out only a blanket-covered form upon a bed of boughs. Then as his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he saw a man's massive head and a pale face framed in a shock of hair and beard that glinted like gold in the firelight. Steady, appraising eyes bored into his own.

"And this man a murderer!" was Malloy's mental ejaculation. "Looks more like a wounded lion to me!"

"Kardson," he said quietly, "my name's Malloy. I just came from Refuge. Do you feel strong enough to talk?"

A sonorous voice—a voice in keeping with the size of the man, rumbled from the blankets.

"Did you see my son? My people tell me he went there yesterday."

"Yes, I saw him. But both he and Joan Brent are captives of Two-mouth Carney." And in as few words as possible, the trader outlined what had happened, omitting mention of the cache.

The story brought Chris Kardson up onto an elbow. When Malloy had finished, the man fell back, coughing, his face convulsed by pain. For a moment he lay breathing heavily. Then:

"Malloy, it was I who brought these good people into the North. Naturally I feel responsible for their welfare. In a way I am to blame for this misfortune that has come upon them. Listen:

"Blount, who started for Sandy Point post for help, must have died on the way. Sabin is flat on his back with pneumonia in one of those shelters across the fire. Duane—well, you've seen with your own eyes what a wreck starvation and hard work has made of him. I am helpless with a bullet dangerously near my heart. Already you've placed me heavily in your debt, but I must ask you to do more."

"You don't need to ask," Malloy told him coolly. "I intend to try to rescue your son and Joan Brent, if that's what you mean. I'm flying back to Refuge as soon as I'm through here. I plan to land some distance from the settlement and try to catch Carney off his guard."

"You'll never catch that wolf off guard, young man! Knowing you're at liberty, he'll be expecting something of the sort. What's more, on a night as still as this promises to be, the sound of an airplane motor will carry for miles. They might hear you land and capture your ship. Then our last hope would be smashed. No, you mustn't go back to Refuge tonight!"

"Let me get this straight, Kardson: What you desire most of all, of course, is to get Knute and that girl away from Carney. Am I right?"

"Only partly right," replied the old man calmly. "Although I tremble for their safety, they are but two among the eleven souls of Refuge who must be considered. Theirs is the more immediate danger perhaps, but we must not sacrifice all to save them. Knute is young and impulsive, of course, but he should not have left here without orders or sanction from me. The girl went of her own volition, I've been told. I was unconscious at the time, or I would have stopped them, but now they're there, their danger shall not jeopardize these other sufferers."

"What sort of man are you?" cried Malloy. "I've brought food enough for a month. Now do you think I'm going to sit quietly down and let Two-mouth Carney have his own way with those two young people? I should say *not!*"

"But if you should fail and Carney should discover this camp, it would mean the end of all of us," persisted Kardson.

"Thinking of your own precious hide, are you? I thought so! Well, Kardson, I'm borrowing that rifle there. Then you're going to answer a few questions for me. Then I'm leaving!" Malloy stepped toward a rifle that was leaning against an upright of the wiki-up.

KARDSON'S voice came level and low, but in it was a grimness that caused the trader to pause.

"Keep your hands off that rifle, or I'll shoot you where you stand! You're as rash as Knute!"

Malloy looked toward the bunk. In Kardson's hand was a heavy automatic. Its frowning muzzle was covering him unwaveringly.

In his rage, Malloy gave his danger little thought. "Knute rash!" he barked. "Well, he may be, but he's loyal to you. D'you know why he was standing Carney's torture without a word? D'you know why he'll have to undergo more of it if he isn't rescued?"

"I don't think you've told me, young man."

"Well, I will: Carney was trying to make him tell where you're hidden. Carney knows that somewhere near the Lame Bear *you've cached the loot from Kettle Portage post!*"

"Loot!" Kardson voiced the word in a rasping shout. He lurched up onto an elbow again, his eyes burning.

"Do Knute and Joan think this too?"

"Why shouldn't they? I heard Carney tell your son that it was *you* who killed Alex La Flamme, looted the post, and burned it to cover your crime. As for Miss Brent, she told me you talked of nothing but this cache in your delirium. In fact, it was the cache that Knute went back to Refuge to find."

Chris Kardson groaned as if a knife had been twisted between his ribs. A trembling seized upon him, and his huge body beneath the blankets shook as if with ague. The pistol fell fror his hand.

"Do—do the others here"—he indicated the camp with rolling eyes—"think the same?"

"What would they think?" asked Malloy, sliding the pistol out of the man's reach with his foot.

Kardson fell heavily back onto the bunk. He had been terribly shaken. He lay with closed eyes, motionless.

"Kardson!" Malloy said urgently.

The eyes on the bunk slowly opened.

"Circumstantial evidence has linked me with that killing and robbery at Kettle Portage. I'm under suspicion. My every movement is watched by the Mounted. It's not right that this should be so. It's getting me—it's got to end!"

Kardson's eyes were wide, incredulous.

"Now," continued Malloy, "if you're guilty of that crime, Kardson, I want you to write a confession. A signed confession. I am waiting!"

For a moment longer, Kardson stared. Then his lips moved in a whisper:

"Bark—birch-bark. A smooth piece that I can write on."

Exultantly the trader hurried into the timber, found a birch and peeled a square of bark from its ghostly trunk. When he returned to the wiki-up he found Kardson with a pencil ready.

"Now a brand from the fire. I must see."

Malloy brought a flaming fagot of pitch-wood and propped it upright beside the bunk. Working an arm beneath Kardson's massive shoulders he lifted him to a sitting posture.

After a terrible spell of coughing, Kardson began to write.

Malloy went outside by the fire and filled his pipe. His heart felt lighter than in months. Duane, exhausted by toil, sat dozing with his back against a tree.

A slight noise from Kardson's wiki-up caused Malloy to turn his head. Kardson was sitting tensely erect. The bark had fallen upon his lap. His arms were outstretched, beckoning to Malloy. His mouth was forming soundless words.

THE trader needed but one look to recognize the mark of death upon the man's face. With a sharp cry to the sleeping Duane, he sprang to Kardson's side.

Kardson fell back upon the bunk; his lips still moved. He was trying to speak.

Malloy put his ear close to those fast-numbing lips. Faintly,—the words were only mere ghosts of whispers,—he caught the fragments of labored sentences:

"Latchtok.... Rain-fox.... Book.... Both of us.... The cache—evenly—my poor people.... My rifle.... Knute, my dear son." . . .

The strange jumble told Malloy noth-

Carney, whimpering like a blood-hungry wolf, began fumbling for the fur-trader's throat.

ing; and Kardson was trying so hard to make him understand. Gently the trader shook one of the great shoulders. "Can you speak louder, Kardson?" But even as he asked the question, he knew that the lips of Christian Kardson were forever stilled.

"Gone?" gulped the wide-eyed Duane, who had followed into the wiki-up.

For answer, Malloy drew the blanket across the still face and stood up.

"Duane," he asked, "you can attend to what's necessary here, can't you?"

"Ye—es. But Chris, *gone!* We'll be lost without him!"

"No, no, Duane! You people of Refuge will carry on. Good men have dropped out of this life before, and still the world has rolled right along. Now listen: I'm hitting the air again. If I have good luck, you people will be back in your homes again soon. First I've got to unload my plane. Will you help me?"

"Will I! I'll do anything for the man who brought grub to these starving kids!"

"Thanks! Find me three pair of snowshoes if you have them here."

Duane hurried away.

Malloy picked up the square of birch-bark from the bunk and glanced at it anxiously. Yes, Kardson had finished the confession—there at the bottom was a scrawling signature. The trader carried the bark out to the fire, ran his gaze down the written lines—and his heart seemed clutched by a hand of ice. The scrawl that Kardson had written was not a confession of the murder of Alex La Flamme. Instead, it was a note to Two-mouth Carney! It ran:

Carney:

Rain-fox, the Nascaupee, is still alive—and I know where he is. You know what he can tell.

The airplane that drops you this note can bring the Redcoat law to Refuge in one day.

Release my son and the girl, uninjured, at daylight tomorrow morning, and start at once for your own country north of the Leaf, and I will remain silent. Otherwise I shall send the plane for the law.

Kardson.

Even though Malloy could make no sense of Kardson's dying statements, it was plain that the man intended for him to drop this note to Carney from the air. Now, as he gave the matter careful thought, he concluded it was the logical thing to do, for unaware of Kardson's death, the outlaw might be bluffed into releasing Joan Brent and Knute Kardson. Anyhow, it was worth a try.

Duane returned with the snowshoes.

"I'll need a gun," Malloy told him. "What's the reason I can't take Kardson's forty-five?"—picking up the pistol.

"Sure—and take Chris' rifle there too."

"Thanks, I will. I've plenty of ammunition for both among the trade-goods in my plane."

"Ready to go?"

"Just a moment, Duane. Did you ever know a Nascaupee by the name of Rain-fox?"

"Never heard of no such Injun."

"All right. Let's go!"

AS he followed Duane toward the plane, Malloy wondered how much the man knew of a hidden cache. He observed:

"You people have sure had some tough breaks, Duane!"

"Tough! It's a terrible thing to drive women and children out of their homes to starve and freeze! Damn that Carney, he's as soulless as a wolf! Maybe he's after something Chris brought back from the north. Now Chris is dead, we'll probably never know. . . . What was it Chris told you, there at the last?"

"I couldn't make sense of it, Duane.

Just a jumble of words that meant nothing to me."

"I'm worried!" admitted Duane frankly. "We've done well at Refuge. Every season we've made mighty good catches of fur. Our living has been inexpensive. Somewhere there must be a substantial sum laid away. Why couldn't Chris have cleared up this financial business before he went? If there's anything that belongs to us, we need it."

THE trade-goods were soon taken from the plane and stacked on the ice. Then Malloy set about the preparation of the note he must drop to Carney.

One end of a six-foot birch rod he weighted with a small stone. At the other end he bound his handkerchief, which he had soaked with gasoline from his tank. About the middle of the rod he wound the birch-bark note and tied it firmly in place.

Before dropping the stick into Refuge, he would touch off the flare. The weighted end would cause it to fall like a plummet, and to stand stiffly erect in the snow. The flaming handkerchief would call the attention of Carney or some of his men. They could hardly miss seeing it.

Instructing Duane to pile some brush on the ice of the deadwater, and to fire it to act as a landing-flare should he return, the trader climbed into his ship and lifted it toward the wintry stars.

Flying into the west, he cut a thirty-mile curve through the night sky and came down over Refuge from a different direction than that of the camp in the swamp. The forest, a mystic thing of shadows and moon-washed glades, swam back beneath him. With little difficulty he picked up the broad white ribbon of the Lame Bear and followed it to the cabins.

The settlement was in darkness.

The trader swooped low across the moonlit clearing. Even in the rushing seconds that he was passing in front of the line of cabins, he discovered that the door of each stood wide open. No smoke was rising from the chimneys. The place appeared deserted.

Deeply puzzled, he hedge-hopped above the encircling spruces, banked around and repeated the maneuver. Not a sign of life did he see. With sudden decision he swung the ship out over the broad reach of the river and set her gently down upon the ice.

The trader well knew the long chance he was taking. He knew that this apparent desertion might turn out to be a trap. If so, he must be prepared for a quick get-away. Pointing the nose of the ship in the right direction for a take-off, he left the motor idling, the prop swinging through a slow, ghostly arc. Then, with his rifle, he sprang out of the cockpit, and at a crouching run, sprinted for the shelter of the river-bank.

Reaching the bank, he crouched, listening. Then he tried the age-old ruse of lifting his helmet above the crest of the bank on the muzzle of his rifle. It drew no shots.

Cautiously, his nerves as taut as stretched wires, he climbed the bank and stood in full view of the cabins. Now, if this were a trap, would come the break.

Then, so suddenly that it lifted Malloy onto his toes, came an impatient yell.

"Hey! For the luva Pete, hurry!"

It was the voice of Knute Kardson, and it came from the cabin at the far end of the line.

Malloy had seen enough of the lad to know that no torture that Carney could inflict would cause the lad to use his voice to lure a friend into a trap. He sprang forward at a run.

HE found Knute lashed to the upright of a bunk. The boy was weak with the exertion of fighting his bonds, but he was still game.

"You're a regular guy to come back, Malloy! Joan got a chance to tell me about you before they took her away."

"They've taken her?" Malloy felt his throat tighten with fear.

"You don't think Carney would leave her, do you? That wolf isn't passing up a girl like Joan! He's signing his death-warrant, though. Every white man north of Mistassini will be out to hunt him down!"

"I'll save them the trouble!" Malloy grimly promised.

"That's the old fight! Say, light that lantern hanging there on the wall, then slash this rawhide off me. I'd have got out of it myself in another hour. Carney fixed it so I could get loose after he'd got a good start. Wanted me to take a message to my father. He'd have bumped me off, I guess, if it hadn't been for that."

Malloy found the lantern, and cut the boy's bonds.

"Knute," he said gently, "I've got some pretty bad news for you, son. I've been to the camp in the swamp. I saw your father and talked with him. His—his last words were of you."

The boy went rigid. "You don't mean —he isn't—"

Malloy nodded gravely. "Yes, gone."

Knute Kardson walked slowly to the open door. For a long time he stood looking up at the winter stars. He turned. He came back to Malloy and put both hands on the trader's shoulders.

"Malloy," he said steadily, "Joan has told me that you heard Carney accuse my father of that crime at Kettle Portage. You know that Carney is responsible for my father's death. What would you do if you were me?"

"Do? I'd do the very things that are in your mind at this moment, Knute. I'd tear all hell loose by the roots, to make Carney pay! And if you'll let me, I'll help you do it! But first do you feel like telling me what the message was that Carney left for your father?"

"Just another of the hound's lies! He said for me to tell Father that one of his Indians had found the cached loot of Kettle Portage post and that he was taking it back to the north with him."

Hugh Malloy was stunned. So Carney had found the cache—then Chris Kardson *had* committed the Kettle Portage crime—and died without confessing!

The trader's only hope now was to overtake Carney and overpower him. By doing this he would not only be saving Joan Brent, but would acquire evidence which would clear him of suspicion.

But what about this clear-eyed boy?

As if reading Malloy's mind, Knute Kardson spoke.

"Don't consider me, Malloy. If Carney did find a cache, it was not what he said it was. My father could have never done the things that happened at Kettle Portage! If there was a cache, it was, as Father said in his delirium, the savings of the people of Refuge. I'd stake my life on his word! Let's get after Carney!"

"Right! Just let's plan a moment."

JOAN BRENT'S peril was flaying Malloy like a lash. With each hour the girl was being carried farther into the north. With each hour the chances of a rescue were growing less.

Carney was doubtless watching his back trail. To follow him afoot would be only to invite ambush and death. He, Malloy, must be the one to lay the ambush. To do so he must get ahead of the fleeing outlaw. That was easy enough—with an airplane.

Yet since putting the fifteen gallons of gas in his tank, Malloy had done considerable flying. It would never do to venture into the north, with so limited a supply of fuel. He must fly back to the schooner, repair the leaky tank, and take on a full load of gas. Until daylight there was little hope of sighting the outlaw band, anyway.

The trader turned to young Kardson.

"There's a long, cold trip ahead of us, Knute. If those thieving Sealribs have left any clothes here, put them on."

NINETY minutes later, Malloy picked up the white expanse of frozen inlet where the *Gray Gull* lay. Looking down over the cockpit coaming, he saw the deadlights of the schooner's deck house suddenly blaze with light and knew that Jake Dresser had heard him coming. A moment later the white radiance of a searchlight swept the ice, lighting him to a landing.

Malloy set the plane gently down and taxied close to the schooner's side. He cut his switches, and as the thunder of the motor ceased, heard his old partner's voice roaring a characteristic welcome from the head of the gangway.

"Twelve hours overdue, you young hellcat! If you don't quit this business of bein' late I gonna dissolve partnership! I'm too dummed old to do so much worryin'!"

The trader, with Knute Kardson following, sprang up the gangway that had been built from deck to ice. "Rustle us a hot meal, will you, Jake? This is Knute Kardson. He's in a peck of trouble. I'll tell you about it as we eat."

Captain Dresser, sensing something serious was afoot, grunted acknowledgment of the introduction and dived down the companionway. As he prepared a steaming meal, Malloy told him the strange story, leaving out such parts as he feared would distress young Kardson.

"Goin' after that gal, o' course?"

"Naturally! Hopping off an hour before daylight. Only reason I came here was to fix that tank and get a fill of gas."

By midnight the leaky tank had been repaired and filled, and the plane was ready for flight. Her cockpits bristled like miniature arsenals with four repeating rifles that stood in hastily improvised racks. A heavy automatic pistol and a pair of binoculars hung by each seat. Food, blankets, an ax, snowshoes, and a spare tin each of oil and gas completed the cargo.

Both Malloy and Knute Kardson were nearly dead on their feet for want of

Granite splinters fell like buckshot, and the Indian's rifle whirled into the air.

sleep; leaving Captain Dresser to call them before dawn, they crawled into a pair of the *Gray Gull's* berths and promptly went to sleep. . . .

An increasing pressure on one of Malloy's hands aroused him. He opened his eyes to find Captain Dresser standing by his berth and steadily squeezing his fingers—a sure way to waken a sleeping person without startling him into speech.

Dresser laid a warning finger on his lips and nodded significantly at the sleeping boy in the opposite berth. "Come on deck," he whispered.

Malloy rose, dressed, and followed the Captain up the companionway stairs.

Dresser crouched in the lee of the deckhouse, out of the cutting night-wind and pulled Malloy down beside him. "Hughie," he said, "I been with you nigh three years. I know you so well it's mighty hard for you to fool the old man. Now, what is it you was holding out on me when you was telling yer story?"

Malloy told him—told him the significant facts that pointed to the dead Chris Kardson as the murderer of trader La Flamme. Told him how Kardson had fooled him about the written confession, and had then died. Told him of the message that Carney had left to be delivered to Kardson, whom the outlaw thought still alive.

The old Captain listened attentively. When Malloy had finished, he rapped the dottle of his pipe into a horny palm that tossed it over the rail. "Don't take no navigator to read that chart, Hughie! Get Carney. Get the gal. *Get the loot.* The loot will put you all in the clear."

"Yes, I guess it will, Jake. But it's going to be mighty tough on this boy down in the cabin!"

"Yes. But this aint no time for fine scruples, Hughie! Let the guilt fall where it's due, says I!"

"You mean upon Chris Kardson?"

"Who else? Listen: Yesterday five Injuns came here to the schooner to trade. Nascaupees, they were, from up north of the Leaf.

"Course I knew nothin' about this Kardson, but considering what was hanging over you, Hughie, I pricked up my ears when one o' them happened to mention La Flamme, and when them Injuns went away, I'd learned this much:

"For the past six summers a big yellow-haired man had been coming up out of the south to the Kettle Portage trading-post. He'd stay about a week each time he came. He was there at the time La Flamme was murdered and the post burned. A hunchback Injun who worked for La Flamme, a Nascaupee by the name of Rain-fox, disappeared at the time. La Flamme's post wasn't the regular kind of a trading-post that carries a big stock of trade-goods and takes all furs that come in, but a small post that stocked only a few special articles that are hard to get up in that country and which took in trade only the very finest of fur—the best of marten, and silver fox and fisher."

"Did these Indians have any idea who killed La Flamme?"

"They think the yellow-haired man did it."

A figure stepped around the corner of the deckhouse and stood before them—Knute Kardson. The boy's voice was thin and strained when he spoke.

"I didn't mean to eavesdrop. I woke up just as you two were leaving the cab-

in. Thought perhaps you were going to do some more work on the plane, and I wanted to help. I followed—and have heard all you've said. But regardless of what you men or the people of Refuge think, regardless of this network of evidence that's piling up against his name, I believe my father innocent! I've got to be shown before I'll believe anything different! If this Rain-fox can tell me anything, I'm going to find him and *know!*"

"That's man's talk, Kardson!" cried Captain Dresser, jumping up. "Now le's get below decks outa this cussed wind!"

LONG before the first faint tinge of daylight, Malloy took off once more. In a long climbing turn he went up to two thousand and pointed the nose of the ship toward the Lame Bear.

With the coming of daylight, and while yet thirty miles from Refuge, the trader swung his ship gradually into the north and put her into a gentle climb. He would swing a big semicircle and cut Carney's probable course far ahead of the outlaw. He would climb to so great an altitude that his motor could not be heard. Then he would beat slowly south again, watching through the binoculars.

There were numerous openings in the forest—glades, muskegs, sterile ridge-crests where no trees grew. And there were many ice-covered lakes and streams. Perhaps the outlaw band could be sighted as it crossed one of these.

The day gave promise of being clear. Far below, dark shadows still shrouded the earth, but up where they were flying, dawn had come. Malloy switched off the instrument-board light.

Up in the front cockpit Knute Kardson stirred—shoved up the goggles with which Malloy had equipped him, and gluing a pair of binoculars to his eyes, began searching the forest.

An hour passed—two. The forest below seemed as empty of life as a dead world. Like some mighty carpet of a green-and-white pattern it sped back beneath them as if moving on swift, invisible rollers.

Now the northern edge of the hilly country was swimming beneath them, and beyond the hills could be seen the winding ribbon of the river—the Lame Bear. It was useless to go any farther; Malloy kicked the ship into a turn.

Knute Kardson, hanging over the coaming, his glasses pointed straight down, raised a warning hand. For a moment he remained frozen in tense scrutiny. Then he made a circling motion with his hand.

The trader put the plane into a sharp bank and circled the spot. Leading north from Refuge, a deep ravine, a kind of pass, cut through the hills to the country beyond. Directly below the plane, this ravine widened for a space and formed a sort of basin perhaps three hundred yards long and a hundred in width. High bluffs shouldered close on each side. A fringe of spruces had found foothold in the rocky soil at the foot of the western bluff, and showed as a dark blot against the snow-covered floor of the depression. It was near these spruces that Malloy caught sight of four or five tiny specks that moved.

From such a height the specks were minute and formless. Sometimes there was but one of them in sight, sometimes nearly a dozen. They moved in an aimless manner in and out of the spruces.

Malloy could not bring himself to believe that wolves would be acting in this manner. Yet surely Carney, who had left Refuge nearly twenty-four hours ago, would be farther away than this.

But as the plane swung and circled there in those cold clear heights like some mighty hawk of silver plumage, the watchers saw another figure emerge from the trees. A man. The tiny specks came racing to it from all sides, clustering about it like ants about an injured beetle.

Knute Kardson twisted in his seat. The eyes of the flyers met. The significance of the thing was plain.

Dogs and a man—unharnessed dogs that were wandering aimlessly about! It meant that hidden beneath the spruces there was a camp—in all probability the camp of Two-mouth Carney. But why Carney should be camped so near Refuge, after leaving the message that he had for Chris Kardson, was a puzzle too deep for Hugh Malloy. Yet here was the outlaw, and the time to act had arrived.

With a dozen plans of attack racing through his brain, the trader leveled off the plane and pointed her back to the north. They must land somewhere near, put the Sealribs to flight and get the girl. Two men against a dozen!

Within a radius of five miles a half-dozen small lakes showed in the timber below. All offered safe landing-places, and Malloy selected one just north of the hills, hardly two miles from Carney's camp, and deliberately cut his switches.

Knute Kardson turned a startled face.

"Okay, Knute!" Malloy assured him.

"We'll dead-stick. Don't dare land so near with a live motor."

"Man, am I cold!" chattered the boy. "I'll be mighty glad to get down! That must be Carney; but why is he camped there?"

Gently as a falling leaf, the ship floated down to a landing. Discarding some of their heavy garments, the two hurriedly strapped on snowshoes and entered the hills. Knute was carrying a rifle in either hand: a forty-five swung at his belt.

"Take this side of the ravine," directed Malloy, "and keep well back in the hills till you're opposite the camp. Then work carefully out to the edge of the bluff. Get in behind a boulder or something, and wait till you see me in position on the opposite side. I'm branching off here. While you're pouring the lead to them from across the ravine, I'll slip down the bluff and try to get Miss Brent."

The boy nodded. His eyes were very bright, his cheeks flushed. Malloy, hurrying up the back slope of the bluff, had but a short distance to go to reach a point where he could look down onto the camp, when suddenly a dog in the ravine below barked warningly. Instantly the voices of the pack joined in a wild medley of excited yelps and howls. Then, on the opposite bluff it sounded as if a machine-gun had gone into action.

Crack—crack—crack—crack! The reports were so close together as almost to blend.

The tempo of fire suddenly slowed. It became deliberate, as if the marksman were carefully sighting his shots. And now to the bedlam of dogs' voices were added human yells of pain and fear.

Malloy realized instantly what had happened. Some vagrant breeze had carried Knute Kardson's scent down to the keen nose of a husky. The dog had aroused the camp, and Knute had been forced into action before the agreed time.

It took the trader at least two minutes to fight his way through the thick limbs of the stunted spruces to the open face of the bluff. When he looked into the ravine, dogs were running wildly about, and three wounded Sealribs were dragging themselves toward shelter.

Out of the corner of his eye, Malloy caught a flicker of movement. He turned—down at his right, where the basin narrowed, two Indians came running from the direction of Refuge. He saw the Sealribs come to a surprised halt and stare at their wounded companions. Then one of them, evidently catching sight of Knute Kardson on the slope, threw up his rifle and set himself for a shot.

Malloy's rifle leaped and blazed. The Sealrib threw his arms wide and pitched forward into the snow. His companion, whirling, disappeared around a bend of the ravine. The trader, jacking a fresh cartridge into the chamber of his weapon, plunged down the slope.

IN the spruces, where he was sure a terrific fight awaited, Malloy found the camp strangely quiet. There was a semicircular windbreak of brush with a fire burning before it. Near by was a small brush wiki-up. Two dog-sleds, their carioles empty, leaned against the wiki-up. Dog-harness and a sack or two of provisions hung from limbs of trees. Not a human being was in sight.

An ermine-trimmed mitten in the wiki-up showed that here was where the girl had stayed. And here sled-tracks and the beds of dogs in the snow showed where a harnessed dog-team had been hitched. From this spot a trail led away through the timber—sled tracks and the tracks of two men.

Even as the significance of it all clicked clear in Malloy's brain and he sprang away along the trail, Knute Kardson's ringing yell reached him:

"Look out, Malloy! Down at the north end of the timber! Carney! He's slipping out of the ravine! He's got Joan on the sled: I don't dare shoot!"

Malloy sprinted to the edge of the spruces, and he reached the open just in time to see two running men and a dog-team disappear into the narrow northern outlet of the basin.

Malloy crossed the open space at a swift run and entered the ravine not a minute behind them. He turned a sharp bend of the passage—and a swart face lifted from behind a boulder at the side of the trail. A rifle blazed within six feet of him. A bullet jerked savagely at his parka sleeve and smacked against the shoulder of rock behind him.

The trader fired from the hip—and almost instantly fired again. His first shot was a miss, but his second struck the top of the rock within two inches of the Sealrib's face; granite splinters flew like buckshot, and the Indian's rifle whirled into the air. He crouched, covering his torn face with his hands.

Malloy was upon the man like a panther. One drive of his rifle-butt stretched the Sealrib senseless in the snow. A minute sufficed to pump the cartridges from

the Indian's rifle and to smash the weapon across a rock. Then again he was racing along the trail of the sled.

As Malloy ran, his mind was busy with the strange outcome of the fight at the camp. Now he knew, or thought he knew, why it was that the outlaw had camped so near Refuge.

Carney had not found the cache. The message he had left to be delivered by Knute had been only a ruse. . . .

The outlaw doubtless figured that when Chris Kardson learned that both Joan Brent and the contents of the cache were being carried away into the north, he and the other men of Refuge would follow. This would mean that Carney could ambush them in the pass, capture the old man and torture him until he disclosed the hiding-place of the loot.

The trader fell into the long, loose-hipped stride of the expert snowshoe-runner. Miles of silent forest, desolate muskegs and wind-whipped ridges swept back beneath his webs. Hours passed; the short winter day was fast drawing to a close, and as yet he had not once sighted the sled he was following. But Carney could not be so very far ahead.

Soon the sled-tracks led out onto the ice of a stream where the well-packed snow made better traveling. Malloy followed for a mile. He knew that not far ahead this stream bent to the east, then swung back again in a great loop to the lake into which it debouched. Here was a chance to gain on Carney!

With sudden decision the trader took a swift run at the river-bank, forced his way up through the tangled willows and hurried up the ridge.

NOT five minutes after Malloy had left the stream, a man descended the opposite bank, and bent above the track of Carney's sled. He pulled off a mitten and with a finger tested the depressions made by the runners. He studied Malloy's track. For a long moment he stood in thought. Then, shaking his head in apparent puzzlement, he moved swiftly away along the back trail—toward Refuge. Presently he camped for the night.

Darkness was creeping into the thickets when Malloy reached the lake shore, and across the ice of a little cove, saw Carney just halting his team before a deserted trapper's cabin on the opposite bank.

Carney hitched his dogs to trees, then untied the lashings that held Joan Brent to the sled. Though the light was poor, Malloy could make out that the girl's hands and feet were tightly bound, and could see her furious struggle when the outlaw lifted her from the cariole. Carrying the girl, Carney entered the cabin.

Malloy, realizing that to cross the open ice meant that the dogs would betray his presence, ran swiftly through the timber around the end of the cove and approached the cabin from the rear. In the soft snow he made no sound. What little wind there was blew toward him; and the dogs, busy biting the caked snow from between their toes, neither saw nor scented him.

Close against the windowless back wall of the cabin he crouched, and hurriedly began removing his snowshoes and bungling parka. As he worked, the blurry rumble of the outlaw's voice reached him.

"Ah, but they aint gonna catch *me*, pretty one! It's a good start we've got, an' we'll keep it. It'll storm soon, an' when she comes, I'll turn square off to the east. The snow'll cover our trail. Then it'll only be a matter of moseyin' across to the Forbidden Grounds; they'll never find us, baby!"

"You beast!" came the girl's voice.

Malloy leaped around the corner of the cabin and drove a foot against the door. The wooden latch splintered, and he paused in the doorway, his rifle trained on Carney's indistinct form.

Carney, with the quickness and ferocity of a cornered lynx, ducked sidewise and charged straight at the trader.

Malloy was left no choice but to shoot, and he pulled the trigger. In his haste he missed.

Carney screeched triumphantly and came on.

There was no time for a second shot. With the butt of his weapon Malloy chopped a desperate blow at the man's head.

Carney's head slipped aside like that of a trained boxer's, and the rifle-butt crashed harmlessly against the log wall. Malloy was driven off his feet by the impact of the man's heavy body, and the rifle was knocked from his hands. As he went down under Carney, he caught the gleam of metal in the outlaw's hand, and by a lucky grab, secured a hold on the man's knife-wrist.

Joan Brent, bound and helpless at the far end of the cabin, did not scream. Instead her clear young voice burst into prayer.

Carney, whimpering like a blood-hungry wolf, began fumbling with a gorilla-like hand for the trader's throat. Again

and again his knee drove viciously up in an attempt to reach Malloy's groin.

With every ounce of his strength, the trader clung to that hairy wrist. To loosen his hold even for a split second meant death. But now Carney's fingers were closing upon his throat. His breath stopped as suddenly as if he had been plunged into a vacuum. The terrible pressure was numbing his very senses.

In the knowledge that he must act or die, Hugh Malloy found super-strength, and his muscles achieved an explosion of effort. How he did it he did not know, but he found himself out from under Carney, and on his feet. And as the outlaw lurched up, he put every bit of his strength into a blow to the man's jaw.

Malloy could hit. Years of vigorous living had given him muscles of steel. Had Carney been an average man he would have gone down in a cold knockout. As it was, the blow only staggered him backward through the doorway and made him drop his knife. He lurched back into the open, caught his balance, and gurgling a mad laugh, went for the pistol at his hip.

Malloy, who had followed outside, went for his own gun. But before the trader's weapon was free of the leather, Carney's first bullet spun him in a side-long fall against the logs of the cabin. Conscious of hot pain in his arm, he crouched in the snow, returning the fire.

Firing as he came, Carney walked slowly toward him. Malloy knew that he was throwing his own bullets true, for he could see the spasmodic jerk of the man's huge body with his every shot. Would he never go down?

Bullets thudded into the logs behind Malloy, tugged savagely at his clothing, and threw snow into his eyes, and still Carney came on. And then the trader, steadying himself, held on the pale blur that was the outlaw's face and squeezed the trigger with all the care of a target shooter.

Carney stopped. His head fell forward onto his chest. For a fleeting instant he stood thus, dead on his feet; then his huge body silently crumpled.

EXCEPT for the mental strain of the past two days, Joan Brent was unharmed by her abduction. As she bandaged Malloy's wounded arm and listened to his story, the news of Chris Kardson's death seemed to shake her more than her own late experience. Knute Kardson's present danger troubled her most of all.

"Tell this young man his father asked me to bring this talking paper to his cabin."

Long before daylight next morning the two were on their way back toward Refuge, the girl, pale, silent, and worried, riding in the cariole of the dead Carney's sled, Malloy mushing at the gee-pole.

Rounding a bend of the stream not far below where Malloy had left it the afternoon before, the lead dog lifted his voice in sudden challenge and pricked his ears toward the bank. There among the spruces a campfire flickered ruddily in the dim morning light.

A voice hailed. Malloy halted the team and answered. A moment later a dim figure descended the bank and approached. With a strange tightening of the heart, the trader recognized Corporal Baker of the Mounted.

The officer swung up to the sled. His searching glance swept the team, the girl, and Malloy. "Well?" he asked tersely.

Swiftly, concisely, Malloy told his story. He made no play for favor. He stated only the raw facts.

Corporal Baker listened respectfully. When the trader had finished, he nodded and said: "Better come along down to Headquarters with me and tell that to the Inspector. I've an idea it'll be to

your advantage to do so. Miss Brent can swear, if need be, that you killed Carney in self-defense. That part needn't worry you. You'll come?"

"Gladly, Corporal! Anything to get this Kettle Portage affair cleared up!"

"Good! Just a moment, while I go back to the fire and get my pack, and we'll be on our way. If we find young Kardson's all right, we'll move those wounded Sealribs to Refuge, and he and Miss Brent can keep an eye on them until the Inspector sends a detail to take them out. Then you and I, on our way to Headquarters, will visit the camp in the swamp, and tell those people that they can return to their homes."

It was mid-afternoon when they turned the bend in the ravine and came again within sight of Carney's camp. Knute came running to meet them.

The joy of again seeing Joan Brent safe seemed for the moment to blot all other things from the boy's mind. It was Malloy's question that brought him back to grimmer things.

"Any trouble with the Indians after I left, Knute?"

"Not yesterday. That Sealrib that was with the one you dropped—the one that beat it back into the pass—must have told his buddies this place wasn't healthy any more. Anyhow, they've stayed away. But something happened this morning that's not so hot!"

"What?"

"Remember those three Sealribs I downed when we opened the show?"

The trader nodded.

"Well, they weren't hurt bad—not fatally, I mean. I just shot a leg out from under each of 'em. After you'd gone, I waited up there on the bluff till I was pretty certain none of the others were coming back; then I came down to see if I couldn't do something for the poor devils lying there in the snow.

"They were glad enough to have me help 'em. I twisted tourniquets around their legs and hauled them to the campfire on one of the dog-sleds. I was taking no chances, though, so I tied 'em up.

"The day wore along. You didn't come. There was nothing for me to do but wait. I kept a weather eye out for more Indians, and collected wood for the night fire.

"It came dark. I fed the wounded Sealribs some grub from the packs and began a watch. Didn't dare sleep, for fear those others might come back and snuff me out. I kept back out of the firelight, and put in my time shivering and trying to keep awake.

"Along about daylight this morning I must have dozed. Couldn't have slept more'n a minute, either; but when I woke, there was a man bending over those three Sealribs. I saw a knife in his hand, and figured it was one of their buddies come back to cut 'em loose. And he had—*from their lives!*"

"He'd killed them?" shouted Malloy and the Corporal.

"Just that."

"Then what happened?"

"Nothin' much. I threw down on him with the rifle, but he didn't offer to put up a scrap. I've got him tied up there in camp. Come on and have a look at him."

Crouched on his heels at the foot of the spruce to which Knute Kardson had lashed him, was the killer. The man was an Indian. Shrouded as he was by the blanket young Kardson had mercifully thrown over his shoulders, only his face was visible. As they came up and stood about him, that wrinkled, mahogany face remained as expressionless as a mask.

Neither Malloy or the Corporal had ever seen the man before. They questioned him in Montagnais, in Nascaupee, in Eskimo and in French, but by not so much as the flicker of a dusky eyelid did he indicate that he heard.

Malloy turned to the officer.

"You'll take this Indian along to Headquarters, I suppose? Shall we start?"

"Yes, I'll have to take him along. We'll go at once."

The trader walked to the dog-sled. He pulled his rifle—Chris Kardson's rifle—from beneath the lashings, and handed the weapon to the boy.

"Here's your father's rifle, Knute. I won't need it any longer. I'm afraid I gave it quite a smash against a log last night. Cracked the butt-plate. I'm sorry." He rested the muzzle of the weapon on a root and showed the boy where the blow that had missed Carney's head had cracked the hard rubber butt-plate squarely across its center.

Idly he took hold of half of the plate and twisted it upon the screw that still held it to the wood. The rubber slid a bit to the side, and in the wood of the stock beneath, Malloy caught sight of a small hole.

He pushed the rubber still farther aside, and stared in astonishment at what he had found.

In the hollowed-out walnut of the rifle-stock was a tightly-rolled sheet of paper.

INTO Hugh Malloy's memory again flashed the dying words of Chris Kardson. The man had tried to tell him something about a rifle. Was it this rifle?

He inverted the weapon. The paper slid out into his hand, and he passed it to the boy. "Here, Knute, this must be yours. Your father tried to tell me something about it, I think. Better take a look at it."

Knute Kardson broke the thread that held the roll. He ran his eyes down the page. His face went white.

"This paper is in my father's handwriting," he said. "It gives the location of a hidden cave near Refuge. It says that in that cave, which is a cave where ice can be found the year around, is now stored twenty-five thousand dollars' worth of fine furs. And at the top of the sheet is written, *'The Location of the Kettle Portage Furs.'*"

For a long moment there was a stunned silence. Then Joan Brent, walking swiftly to the boy, laid a hand on his arm.

Without a word young Kardson turned and walked out of the camp. The girl went with him, her hand linked in his.

In a low voice, Corporal Baker spoke. "Well, Malloy, that just about lets you out. Since we know that Chris Kardson brought the Kettle Portage fur here to the Lame Bear, there's but little question who killed La Flamme. I see no reason why you need go to Headquarters with me now. After I report to the Inspector you'll have nothing more to worry about. Congratulations!"

"Thanks! It's mighty good to be out from under the shadow. But that boy, Corporal—I'm sorry for him! People will always lay Alex La Flamme's murder at Chris Kardson's door."

For the first time the Indian by the tree stirred. His sloe eyes lifted to Malloy's, burned into them. Slowly and with as much dignity as his bonds would permit, he struggled to his feet. In the Nascaupee tongue he addressed the trader.

"I am on my way to see the yellow-

haired man of whom you speak. I would see him before the man of the Redcoat law takes me away."

Malloy looked at him in astonishment. "Chris Kardson? He is dead—killed by one of Carney's Indians!"

The Indian's eyes returned to the three rigid forms across the fire. "Then," he said very slowly and softly, "I am sorry that I killed these three Sealrib wolves so quickly. The strokes should have been slow and twisting. The yellow-haired man was my friend."

Bound as he was, the Nascaupee could not hold the blanket about him. It slipped down from his shoulders. Malloy saw that the man was misshapen, a hunchback. "Rain-fox!" he exclaimed.

The Indian gravely inclined his head. "So I am called. And now, if the yellow-haired man is dead and this yellow-haired youth is his son, I have something for him. Will you call him?"

Malloy yelled to the lad, and wonderingly watched Rain-fox fumble a small package from beneath his parka with his bound hands.

Knute Kardson and Joan Brent came hurrying back, and when the Indian had ceremoniously placed the package in Knute's hands, he turned to Malloy and requested:

"Tell this young man that his father asked me to bring this talking paper to his cabin on the Lame Bear. Tell him also that I could not come before, because of a bullet that had torn my side."

Malloy translated the speech.

SLOWLY, a look of profound puzzlement on his young face, Knute removed the soiled rabbit-skin in which the package was wrapped. A small, flexible-bound book fell out into his hand. He ran the pages swiftly through. His face lighted with a great joy. Springing to Corporal Baker, he shoved the book into the officer's hands.

"Here, Corporal, you're the man to read this! Read it quickly, man! Read it *aloud!* I want Joan and Malloy to hear! I wish the whole world were here to listen!"

Corporal Baker flicked through a few pages of the little book. His honest face puckered in concentration. "Um-mm, seems to be a diary. *'The diary of Alex La Flamme.'* I guess this first entry, written on New Year's Day, 1927, just about tells La Flamme's story. I always was a duffer at translating French, but here goes:

"'The New Year again finds me in the employment of Mr. Kardson. A man more honorable never lived. It is a pleasure to serve him. I only hope that in the coming year I can manage the Kettle Portage post as satisfactorily to him as I have in the six years past.

"'My commissions are small, to be sure, but my duties are light. I crave few luxuries. With my books, my radio, and the faithful Rain-fox as my servant-companion, I am content. A man whose health is as shaky as mine cannot expect to move mountains, I suppose.

"'Six months from now Mr. Kardson will come again to bring trade-goods and to take back the furs. I look ahead to his brief visits as the main event of the year. I suppose we shall indulge, as usual, in our old discussion as to whether it is advisable that he hold those furs for higher prices, as he has been doing for the past five years, or whether it would be better to market them at once.

"'There is no question but what raw furs will keep indefinitely in the dry cold of that ice-cave of his, but what if some dishonest person were to find them? Mr. Kardson and the people of Refuge can ill afford to lose that fur. He tells me that it represents their entire savings for all the time they have been in the North.

"'A band of caribou just crossed the river here above the post. Their hoofs cling to the glare ice surprisingly well. . . . Drear skies. Mercury at twenty-eight below all day. A typical New Year Day for northern Quebec. . . .'"

Corporal Baker ceased reading, and thumbed through more pages. "Just day-by-day entries from now on. Nothing special." He looked up at Knute Kardson.

"Seems your father *owned* the Kettle Portage post, what?" he said in surprise.

The boy was smiling. "The last two pages in the book, Corporal. Please hurry and read them!"

BAKER turned to the last pages and began.

"'June 8th, 1927.

"'My Dear People of Refuge:

"'I am wounded. I have a long trail ahead of me, and a heavy load. Against the possibility that I may never reach Refuge, I, Christian Kardson, am writing this and intrusting its delivery to other hands.

"'Yesterday an outlaw, Two-mouth Carney, with four of his Sealrib Indians, raided the fur post at Kettle Portage.

They murdered Alex La Flamme, the trader, then pillaged the trade-room and burned the post.

"'I was some ten miles distant at the time, visiting a sick Indian child. Rain-fox, the bearer of this book, who made his home with La Flamme, barely escaped with his life and a few of La Flamme's possessions, among which was this diary. He came to tell me of what had happened. Together he and I followed Carney and recaptured the furs. In the fight, a Sealrib drove a bone spear through my thigh, and Rain-fox was badly wounded by a bullet.

"'I shall attempt to return to Refuge with the fur by the regular route. I shall send Rain-fox with this book by another way. The four Sealribs who were with Carney died in the fight. Carney escaped. It is known that he has a following of a score of these outlaw Indians. Should he follow me with more of his men, he will doubtless overtake me, for my progress southward will necessarily be slow.

"'You of Refuge have intrusted me with your financial affairs. I have been deeply honored by that trust and have tried to conduct those affairs in an advantageous manner. The banker of civilization always invests the funds of his depositors in securities. I have invested yours in furs.

"'When we had accumulated sufficient capital I established a fur-post at Kettle Portage. I put one Alex La Flamme, a capable and honest man, in charge. Each year I have taken to the post a stock of trade-goods which were purchased with the surplus of your own fur catch.

"'Each year I have brought back the furs that La Flamme collected, and have stored them in an ice-cave near Refuge. I have allowed them to accumulate there, because they keep perfectly in the cold place and because the steadily rising price of raw furs seemed to warrant such action.

"'As no one knows that I—or rather *we*—were the owners of Kettle Portage post, and as I am in this country at the time of La Flamme's murder, I have grave fears that I will be accused of the crime. If Rain-fox should not win through to Refuge with this writing, I will have no way of proving my innocence. Therefore, until he comes, I shall say nothing of what happened here—providing, of course, that I reach Refuge myself.

"'If I fail to return, and Rain-fox brings you this, it will prove to you, dear people, and to my beloved son, that my presence at Kettle Portage was in the nature of honorable enterprise.

"'Below are directions by which you may find the cache.

"Your cheerful servant,

"'Christian Kardson.'"

Corporal Baker snapped the book shut with an air of finality.

KNUTE'S face was radiant with happiness. "I knew Dad *couldn't* have been anything but straight!" he said with quiet pride. "And now I understand something he said when he came back wounded to the camp in the swamp. 'Knute,' he said, 'if this bullet ends me, I want you to take my rifle apart, *every piece,* from butt-plate to barrel, and give it a thorough cleaning. Will you promise?'

"I wondered what he was driving at, but of course I promised. I can see now it was the way he took to make sure that we eventually found the cache."

Corporal Baker was releasing Rain-fox, and making ready to leave. Malloy turned to him.

"The Kettle Portage case is closed, Corporal?"

"Closed—that is, with the exception of Rain-fox answering to the law for his knife-work. Being an Indian, that won't trouble him any more than it would to get his feet wet. He has avenged his friends; the rest doesn't matter."

THREE days later, after helping the people of Refuge back to their homes, Hugh Malloy again set his plane down beside the *Gray Gull.* Captain Dresser was on the ice to meet him. The trader leaped down from his cockpit and nearly cracked the old man's ribs with a bear-hug of joy.

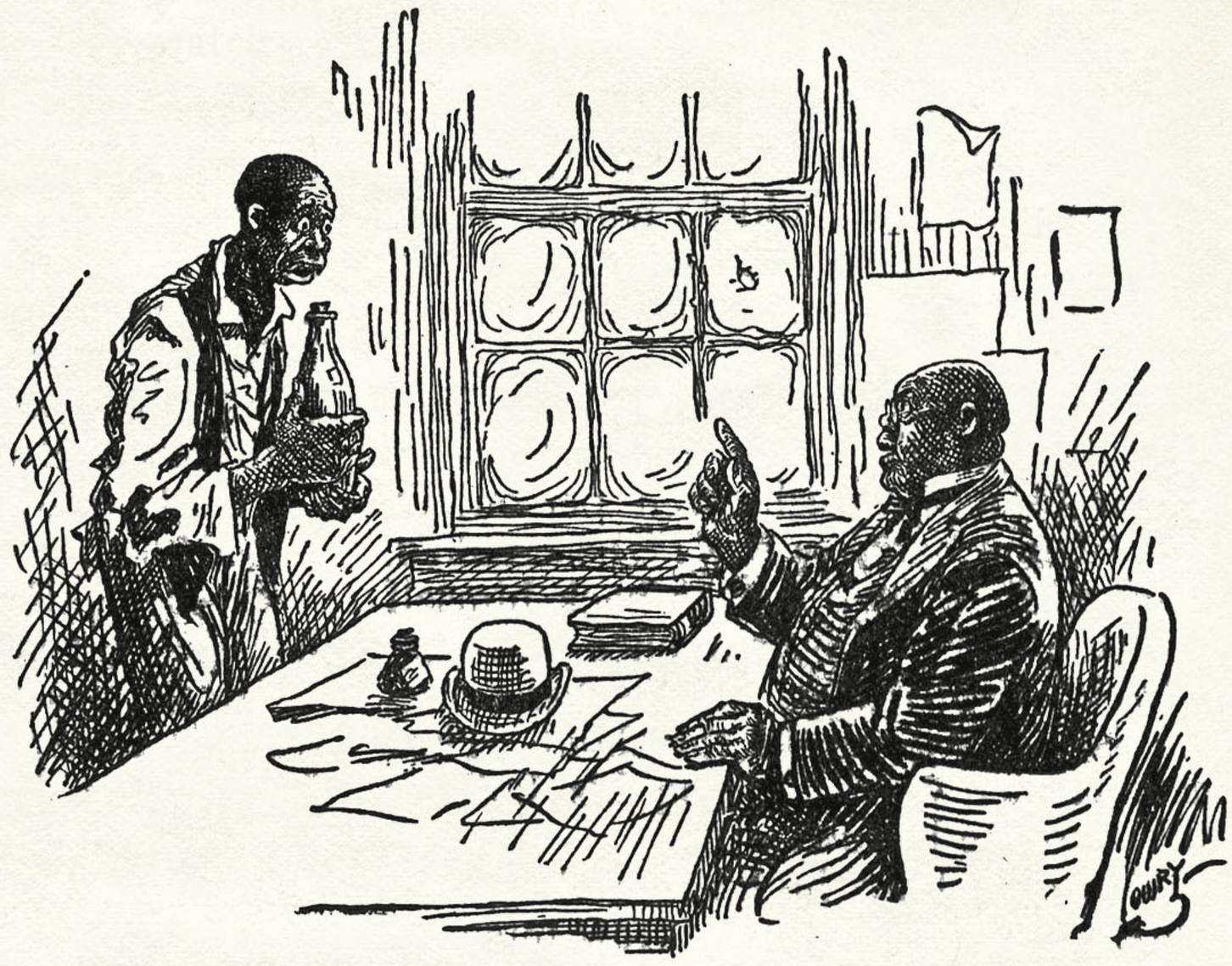
"Think of it, Jake!" he exulted. "I'm in the clear again—out from under that cursed shadow! Honestly I feel so light-hearted I believe I could strip the wings clean off my old bus and still fly her straight up to the moon!"

"Fine, Hughie! But belay thumpin' my ribs loose from my keel, will yer, and tell me somethin' about this gal, Joan Brent."

Captain Dresser's cloud-busting partner flushed beneath his tan. His white teeth gleamed in a swift grin.

"You've been wanting to bring Mrs. Dresser along on the *Gray Gull,* Jack. Reckon she'd come if—if there was another woman for company?"

"A boy married to Angie can't git in no mo' trouble," mourned Jeff; but then his partner dranktoomuchbitters and climbed a telephone-pole in search of a bear to fight.



Illustrated by
Everett Lowry

A Boom in Bitters

By ARTHUR K. AKERS

JUST in time, President Jeff Baker slapped a stamp from the extended tongue of vice-president and janitor Willie Freeman. "Whar dat letter gwine?" he demanded.

"It de one us writ about not havin' no forty-two dollars—to Samson G. Bates, here in town."

"And you fixin' to stick a air-mail stamp on it?"

"Old brains must done step out to lunch," Willie grew abashed.

"Wid us *makin'* Baker's Brain Bitters!" Jeff vented his disgust. "And advertisin' dey'll make a smart boy out of a stunned half-wit!"

Willie wilted further, then picked up his janitorial broom and bucket. "Samson G. Bates," he muttered explanatorily, "done mess me all up, nohow."

"Mess *you* all up? How-come? Aint us incorp'rated?"

"*And* married. Let's see you incorp'rate *dat* off!"

The skinny Jeff trod heavily on his personal brakes. Conversation sounded like it was fixing to enter a new field. "You mean Samson 'bout to bear down on de Sisters de Flowerin' Forty lodge too?" he questioned. As husband to Angie, Grand Utmost Orchid in this floral forty, Jeff was interested by marriage.

"Beulah aint beller nothin' else," gloomed Mr. Freeman, whose membership was also in his wife's name. "She de Powerful Peony in dat lodge: she say Samson holdin' a thirty-five-dollar maw'gage on dey lodge regalia. Comin' due on de twenty-fifth. And Samson collects, cripples or forecloses. Got dem women worried."

Jeff thought of something else. "Boy, as vice-president in charge of debts, you better start yo'self some worryin' too," he voiced it. "Along 'bout de twenty-fo'th."

"About whut?"

"Dem forty-two dollars us owes Samson and aint got. Interest on de twenty-five bucks us borrers last summer!"

"Dat all?"

"Aint dat enough?"

"Not no more, it aint. Us done got fresh trouble I aint tell you 'bout yit."

"A boy married to Angie," retorted Mr. Baker earnestly, "cain't *git* in no mo' trouble."

"Can—is he competin' wid Samson G. Bates!"

"Us aint competin' wid him—jest owin' him—"

"Twel Samson started makin' bitters yest'day too, you means. Den eve'ything gits different. *'Bates' Mule-Kick Brand*

—*Chain-Lightnin's Only Rival,*' de bottle say."

President Jeff buckled, physically and spiritually. Samson G. Bates was Baptist Hill's local Wolf of Wall Street, with *Monopoly* his middle name. Making his entry into the bitters—or any other—business cataclysmic for competitors.

Willie looked out of the window. Then he looked at President Jeff. Then he turned to a brownish-green personally. "Here come Samson now!" he croaked.

Jeff scarcely had time to back himself into the "frocktail" coat once worn by a "white-folks" judge on the bench before Samson was on the threshold. Then the financier was crowding his hulking bulk into the little room.

"Mawnin', Jeff," he ignored vice-presidents. "Sho is cold out. How much to sell out befo' comp'tition git too hot for you?"

Jeff gurgled unhappily. Let Angie hear that he had refused a cash offer, and flatirons were liable to get to buzzing about a boy's ears like mosquitoes. Yet being a big business man was all that kept him from having to go to work.

"Us aint sellin'," he mustered a poor imitation of a firm refusal.

"How much de offer?" The frog-eyed Willie dropped his broom and donned his coat. That made him vice-president.

"Eighty bucks, lock, stock and barrel."

"Old bitters business fixin' to boom," side-stepped Jeff. "Aint matter whut ail a boy, he all time r'arin' to lap a shot of bitters out a dollar-bottle for it."

Mr. Bates hoisted himself abruptly to his feet. "Tomorrow de offer'll be seventy smackers." He indicated a bearish trend in the market for bitters common. "And eve'y time I has to come back, de price done shrunk some mo'. Aint no ponds round here big enough for two frawgs no more: when *I* splashes in, other frawgs starts sproutin' fur and livin' on land!"

FIVE minutes and five fewer blocks after which ultimatum, Mr. Bates wheezed his way into his scantily furnished den back of an alley barbershop.

"Gladstone!" he loosed a summoning bellow.

"Here me!" Something long, dark and dim-witted pried itself reluctantly from the back side of a hot stove in the corner.

"One time I aint cotch you in a rest'-rant! Craves service. Is you put dat anti-freeze in my car yit? Gittin' colder by de minute."

"Been waitin' for you come read de label to me—aint crave to mess nothin' up."

"You mess eve'ything up widout cravin' to! Fixin' change yo' orders now. I done scum a scheme for you to 'tend to before you 'tends to de car. Is you know whar at Jeff and Willie makin' dem Brain Bitters of theirn?"

"Upstairs over de pool-room."

"Got somep'n straight *one* time!"

"Sho is sniff noble round dar!" interjected Mr. Smith irrelevantly.

"In de closet yander," continued Samson, "is somep'n whut'll tend to de sniffin' of *one* batch dem boys' bitters! Fotch it out now—de big left-hand bottle."

Gladstone fumbled and found.

"Now, listen: slip dat bottle under yo' overalls, and git on up dar. Make out like you's fixin' to buy a whole mess of Brain Bitters—eve'ybody knows yo' brains needs help! Git Jeff in a sweat to give service, den, while dey's rushin' round, watch yo' chance and dump dat bottleful in a tub of bitters brew and—"

"Bottleful of whut?" demurred Gladstone. Samson was the sort who would not stop at putting rough-on-rats in a competitor's household remedy.

"As'fœtida—"

"Says huh?"

"As'fœtida. Part of a scheme I done scum." And Samson grinned craftily.

In Hogan's Alley below the second-floor "laboratory" of two eminent scientists an hour later, a curious crowd was flocking fast.

"Told you I'd done scum a scheme!" wheezed a gratified Samson into the ear of an amazed Gladstone among them. "Wait'll *dat* batch hits de market!"

Cause for the convocation lay in the antics of one Willie Freeman, vice-president and chief-taster for his firm. Willie, ordinarily a frog-faced little darky with patched pants and an inferiority complex, was alternating now between simian swinging by his hands from the cross-arms of a telephone-pole, and vigorous efforts to gnaw the same pole in two at its base.

"Whuff!" proclaimed Mr. Freeman from aloft in a hoarsened howl. "I's a one-man army on de waw-path. I's a tornado wid two tails!"

He slithered suddenly downward, to gallop in terrifying circles about the base of his perch. "Fotch me lions!"

he widened his territory. "Whar at de lions? Craves somep'n my size to lick!"

"Willie sho aint underestimate hisself none!" ran random and delighted comment.

"Done lap hisself up a overdose of he own bitters again," enlightened more sophisticated spectators, as Willie compromised publicly on grizzly bears.

"Whuff!" he further rang the welkin, before he shook himself like a horse relieved of its harness, sneezed, and then squatted glassy-eyed to pick daisies from the cement sidewalk. Then Willie was not well. . . .

Slowly, at length, the light of reason returned to the lusterless orbs of Mr. Freeman. He looked aloft. He looked at the tooth-marks on his pole, and spat splinters. He looked at his gallery—and some inkling began to penetrate.

"Old bitters must been too green yit," he diagnosed his product and recent performance. "Gangway while I sets dat batch back to season some mo'!"

At which, "Dat batch of bitters done got detoured," quarreled a thwarted Samson to the fuddled Gladstone. "Got to scum up a new scheme now."

IN the laboratories of Jeff and Willie, a disturbed president and convalescent vice-president hung anxiously over the bedside of a gasping treasury.

"How de kitty holdin' up?" Willie was solicitous: it was his day to eat lunch.

"Dollar-eighty, and de labels gittin' low," Jeff rendered a financial statement. "Dat printin'-boy gittin' tight on de credit, too."

"How de sales doin'?"

"You is still our mainmost customer: all time lappin' up de stock."

"Last lot done cure me!" Willie grew greenish at the memory. Then: "Here come old Samson up de stair-steps again."

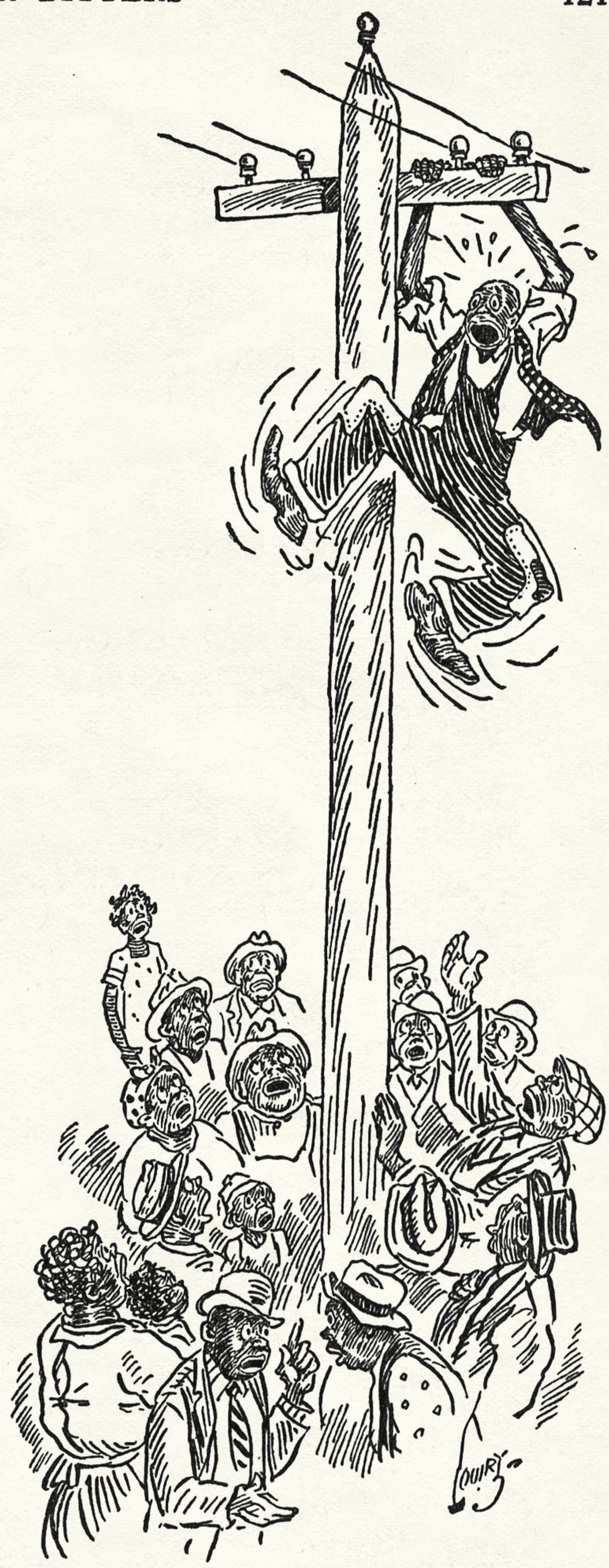
"Samson comin' up—offer goin' down," forecast Jeff uneasily.

"How you boys gittin' on now?" wheezed the entering Mr. Bates heartily.

Willie detected a new note in his voice. And new notes in Samson's voice often ended with new notes in the bank for a boy to pay later.

"Rushin' round," four-flushed Jeff. " 'Stead of sellin' out, us fixin' to put on more hired help."

"Not forgittin' dey is forty-two dollars interest due me by you on de twenty-fo'th," Mr. Bates reminded.



"Whuff!" proclaimed Mr. Freeman from aloft in a hoarsened voice. "I's a one-man army on de waw-path! I's a tornado wid two tails!"

"Sales is swell; it's jest collections dat's hell," Jeff quoted the white-folks in protection of his corporate rear.

"Makin' it time to slip in a moratorium, den?" suggested Samson.

"Whut dat?" Willie shied off automatically from big words. *Amortization* had cost him two dollars once.

"Means pay me when you gits it."

Jeff sniffed unsuccessfully for rats. When Samson G. Bates—

"Fact is," broke in their overstuffed creditor-competitor, "you boys is puttin' up a powerful pretty piece of competition in de bitters business. Done got *me* licked. I craves to let bygones be bygones: let de lion lie down wid de lamb—"

"Wid who inside?" The janitor blood in Vice-president Willie would out.

"Big-hearted—live and let live—dat's me!" purred Mr. Bates. "Wants see you boys git on good. Plenty of room in de bitters game for more'n one frawg. So I done come over here to give you a idea what'll boost up your business."

Jeff looked at Willie. Willie looked like a boy looking for the ant in the amber, and not finding it.

"De reg'lar ways of gittin' business aint no good nowadays," pursued Samson.

"Sho aint!" Experience jarred a heartfelt yelp out of Jeff.

"So, like I's tellin' Gladstone, I done scum up a scheme for you. Like dis: you puts out word dat you gwine give a cash prize to de women's lodge whut first brings in to you five hundred labels from yo' Brain Bitters bottles, befo' January twenty-fifth. Dat'll bust business into a gallop for you, and—"

"How *much* cash? Whar at us git no cash?" Willie started vice-presidenting again.

"Forty dollars. From yo' sales, dat's whar. You sells so much bitters dat way dat forty dollars aint gwine be nothin'."

JEFF took an ecstatic squint at the future, and reeled dizzily. Fundamentally, the bitters business was sound: just wasn't anybody buying any. Now they would!

"Take in so much money wid dat scheme," Samson went on painting the lily while he had the brush in his hand, "you gwine need a bank to hold it."

Jeff saw himself going into banks.

"*White-folks'* bank," Samson added a gilded dome to the glittering structure Jeff saw.

"Willie, make haste and open us a account wid de Rob'tson Bank downtown," instructed Jeff in instant opulence.

"Wid whut?" Willie was thirty years behind on class, but up-to-date on condition of the firm's treasury.

"Wid whut us gwine take in. Git yo'self some vision! Git shet dem janitor-sized notions, boy! Business fixin' to boom."

"Vision," endorsed Samson pointedly, "is whut make de difference 'tween a president and jest a *vice*-president."

Behind the Grecian-appearing back of a departing Mr. Bates who had borne gifts, Willie's brain developed a traffic-jam. "Samson say he craves to see *us* git on good?" he checked up on his ears.

"You heard him!" Jeff looked down from altitudes.

"Us competin' wid him in de bitters business—and owes him money—and *he* wants to see *us* git on good?" It took pavement-breakers to introduce an idea fully into Willie's head, it appeared.

"Room for two frawgs in de pond now—old pond gittin' bigger," Jeff had small time for small-time vice-presidents. "Stand back while I gits word to de lodges!"

AROUND the Baker vine and fig-tree that night, Jeff tuned in on short-wave station A-N-G-I-E, broadcasting on forty thousand kilocycles and even more words than that. For the first time since he had committed a serious error to the march from "Lohengrin" on a parlor organ, Jeff was apparently about to come out from under the cloud of his bad and irregular standing around his own home.

"Flowerin' Forty is fixin' pay off de maw'gage on dey regalia—de thirty-five bucks us owes Samson G. Bates," Angie set down a hot iron and a hotter idea with the same thump.

Jeff failed at first to effect a brain-wide hook-up between cause and effect.

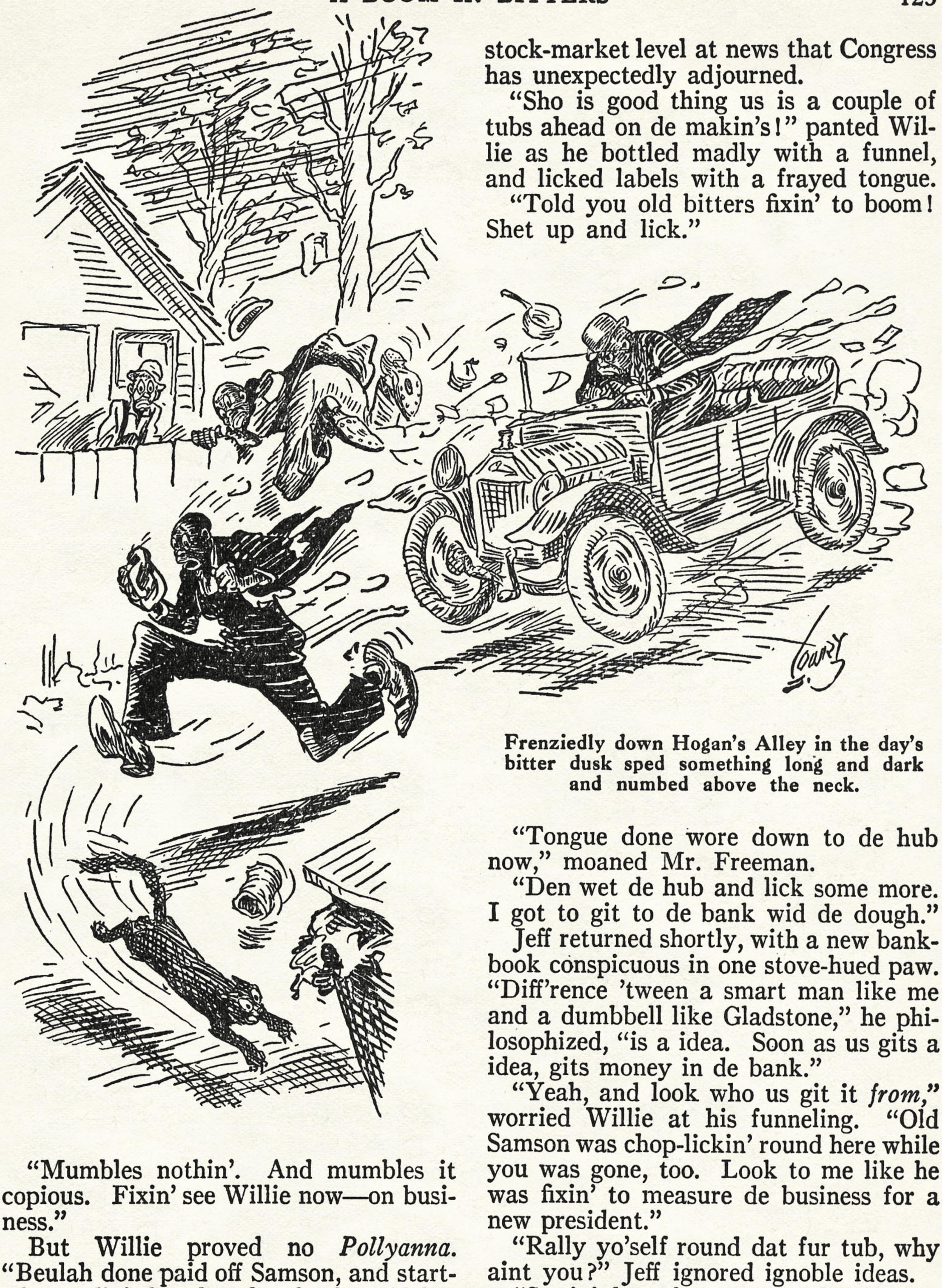
"Dat one-tub bitters business of yourn and dat louse-sized Willie Freeman," Angie assisted his understanding, "is fixin' to hand out forty dollars to de Flowerin' Forty lodge, your bills says, for bringin' in de first five hundred of dem Brain Bitters labels between now and de twenty-fifth. Us pays off wid it."

"Yeah, but s'pose dem Daughters of Daniel's Den gits dar first wid de most labels?" Mr. Baker touched on alternatives.

"In which case, dem Daniel's Denners gits dat prize over *your* dead body," Angie cleared and complicated with one sentence.

Jeff jumped. And, "Sees *now* why Samson so anxious for me and Willie to git on good!" he greeted enlightenment's dim dawn in a married mumble. "So *you* can pay *him*."

"Mumbles which?" Angie held the iron poised ominously.



Frenziedly down Hogan's Alley in the day's bitter dusk sped something long and dark and numbed above the neck.

"Mumbles nothin'. And mumbles it copious. Fixin' see Willie now—on business."

But Willie proved no *Pollyanna.* "Beulah done paid off Samson, and started spendin' de other five bucks wid her mouth," Mr. Freeman sadly summarized his own situation. "Old ears done wore off shawt, listenin' to her, already."

"But s'pose de Flowerin' Forty aint win?" Mr. Baker kept coming back to the big new trouble with the bitters business.

"*I* aint married to none dem Daniel's Denners," Willie sidestepped responsibility.

And shortly the sales-chart for Baker's Brain Bitters shot upward like a stock-market level at news that Congress has unexpectedly adjourned.

"Sho is good thing us is a couple of tubs ahead on de makin's!" panted Willie as he bottled madly with a funnel, and licked labels with a frayed tongue.

"Told you old bitters fixin' to boom! Shet up and lick."

"Tongue done wore down to de hub now," moaned Mr. Freeman.

"Den wet de hub and lick some more. I got to git to de bank wid de dough."

Jeff returned shortly, with a new bankbook conspicuous in one stove-hued paw. "Diff'rence 'tween a smart man like me and a dumbbell like Gladstone," he philosophized, "is a idea. Soon as us gits a idea, gits money in de bank."

"Yeah, and look who us git it *from,*" worried Willie at his funneling. "Old Samson was chop-lickin' round here while you was gone, too. Look to me like he was fixin' to measure de business for a new president."

"Rally yo'self round dat fur tub, why aint you?" Jeff ignored ignoble ideas.

"Settin' dat tub to season. Look whut happen last time I tastes it!"

"How 'bout dat fresh case dat de Daniel's Denners done ordered?"

"Dust aint settled from service yit. Dem women sho laps up bitters!"

Jeff chilled at the pit of his stomach. As a president, business was business; but as a husband, if the Daniel's Denners won, Jeff lost. Angie had already said whose thirty-five-dollar mortgage his prize was lifting, or else—

Three days went by without develop-

ing a flaw in Samson's sales psychology. Willie fumbled but couldn't fathom. Business boomed. Samson himself called daily and disarmingly.

"Sho is pleasure myself watchin' you boys makin' good in a big way!" he purred on the third day. "How de bank-account comin' along?"

"Passed forty-four dollars dis mawnin', and still goin' strong!" bragged Jeff.

"Dat's de way I likes to hear 'em talk!" applauded the confessed beaten-at-bitters Mr. Bates. "Aint nothin' in dis cutthroat business."

Jeff saw another chance to make a grandstand play. "Stand back, Willie," he directed importantly, "while I writes a check. Twelve bucks to de printin'-boy for dat last lot of labels. All time in a sweat, dat boy is, to git his'n."

JEFF BAKER edged into his home alley that evening with look-outs posted at his personal port and starboard sides. A boy married to Angie had to watch out for mines, reefs, and sudden squalls until this lodge-label contest got settled.

"Cook a pork-chop in Chicawgo, and you'd be dar, walkin', before night!" the two-hundred-pound Utmost Orchid greeted him, as she slapped a skillet across the stove instead of his skull. "But come on in: fixin' to 'scuss lodge business wid you."

"Old ears works while I nourishes," Jeff indicated understanding that discussion was a one-way street when Angie traveled it.

"Flowerin' Forty Sisters done 'cumulated de labels off about four hundred bottles dem bum bitters of yourn," Angie accounted for the recent spurt in business. "Passes five-hundred mark by tomorrer noon, is dey stomachs hold out."

"Dem Daniel's Denners lappin' noble, too, Willie say," ventured Jeff dubiously.

"Let 'em lap!" Angie's brows drew together in the international danger-signal for husbands. "Aint none *dem* married to de president of a bitters business, is dey?"

The following morning, Jeff found Willie Freeman staggering across the laboratory floor with a fresh tub of potent bitters. "Demand fixin' to run faster'n supply," quarreled Willie. "Us gittin' down to de last tub. Dem Denners women keeps orderin'. Look like dey gwine win, to me."

"Is dey is, you got to win a foot-race from Beulah. Whar at de bank-book?"

"Always gits busy at de bank 'bout time I got a fresh mess of bitters to bottle, aint you? Hear you hollerin' and braggin' plumb to Mobile, eve'ytime you gits two-bits to run bank wid de white-folks! You better git 'em to show you de forty-four dollars us got in dar, befo' you shoves no mo' money through dem bars, boy!"

"Looks at it pussonal, jest to show you aint got no business about you," retorted Jeff. Statistics showed ignorance among vice-presidents mounting alarmingly.

Thirty minutes later a black frock-coat entered the Baker laboratory without visible means of support and seemingly traveling under its own unaided power. Far down inside of it was something shrunken and stricken that had once been a president.

Willie whirled disapprovingly. "Well, is you see de money?" he demanded.

Sounds reminiscent of water running out of a bathtub issued feebly from the frock-coat. "A-aint no money," the gurgle achieved coherence in a croak.

"*Bank* aint got no money?" Willie wilted to half-fare size.

"*Us* aint got no money!" corrected Jeff, collapsing across a tub.

"*Us* aint got no money? Who git it?"

"I ax de white-folks—to lemme *look* at it; and dey say—dey say," Jeff's presidential message rose to a wail, "old bank-account done been padlocked. . . . Attached—by de sheriff!"

Willie watched the laboratory revolve. Even more disturbing thoughts dizzied him. "*Beulah!*" he breathed them.

"*Angie!*" anguished from between Jeff's tortured tonsils.

"Aimin' to win de forty bucks prize from us, to pay Samson wid!"

"And us aint *got* it no more! And jest one tub bitters left—"

"Wid dis de twenty-fo'th!"

"De day *us* owes dat *Shylock*, Samson, dem forty-two bucks!"

THE vice-president in charge of debts saw a greater, more blinding light. "*Samson!*" he yowled as he saw all. "Dat half-hippopotamus *done pay hisself off!*"

"Wid de Flowerin' Forty's prize-money! Knows now why he come waggin' he tail round us, showin' us how to git money in de bank—so *he* could git it!" moaned Jeff from the depths of illumination and his coat.

"Maybe dem Daniel's Denners wins?" Willie brought on more talk.

"Den *both* lodges gits sore at us!

"Whooo-ooops!" reverberated the battle-cry of the Powerful Peony as she launched a fresh attack.

Angie and Beulah's beca'ze dey loses—and de Daniel's Denners beca'ze dey wins. Boy, how's your hoofs?"

Willie's reply was interrupted by a caller, the long-suffering Tuskegeeian who printed their labels. There was, moreover, something unusually familiar about him this time—Jeff's twelve-dollar check in his hand, to be exact.

"Bank says is you boys had ten dollars *more,* you'd be flat busted," he displayed it. "And there's laws for writin' rubber checks. Pay me twelve bucks."

"Wid whut?" Willie reverted to type.

"That's *your* business. Give you till this time tomorrow; then you can talk to the sheriff about it."

"Done talked to him too much now!"

Behind Tuskegee's retreating back, Baker's Brain Bitters, Inc., held a board meeting. "Add up de assets—and step on it!" Jeff partially emerged from eclipse.

"One tub of bitters left—wuth four dollars," inventoried Willie. "Canada, I hears you callin' me! Old Samson'll be round next."

"Samson settin' out in de middle Strawberry Street in he car, in a big cloud of steam and cussin', when I starts to de bank," croaked Jeff. "Look and sound like he radiator done froze. Gladstone all time gummin' him up—"

A lower form of human life known locally as "Worm-holes" Ford thrust interrupting head through the doorway. "Yo' wife Angie, Jeff," he contributed further to the gloom within, "says for me to make haste and fotch over a case dem Brain Bitters to de Flowerin' Forty lodge. Closin' in fast on dem Denners women. Fixin' to lap up dis case in dey hall, and den march over here behind a band to collect dem forty bucks prize from you."

Jeff needed air. Bitters business was getting distinctly worse as it improved!

"Work fast wid yo' brains, Willie," he directed when the door had closed behind their final case of bitters. "Whar us gwine git twelve dollars?"

"Whar us gwine git forty first?" Willie went farther. "Samson got—"

Then salvation smote Willie between the eyes. And terrible as was the solution, it was the only course left open. It was the sort of deal that beleaguered corporate directors agree to at three o'clock in the morning with shades drawn and bankers' pistols at their heads.

"Samson got *eve'ything!*" echoed Jeff.

"Not yit he aint," groaned Willie. "Jest *gwine* to. Samson's bitters done swallered our bitters, though, when de smoke blows away."

"For eighty bucks?" Wild hope flared up in Jeff's anguished eyes.

"For twelve bucks, to cover dat bum check wid. Samson can smell a business whut's cotched in a trap nine miles off. He knows us got to sell out now—cain't git us up twelve dollars quick enough no other way."

Willie glanced out the window, and shivered at what he saw. "Here come Samson again now," he announced dully. "He been makin' talk wid dat printin'-boy, too."

"When somep'n dead, buzzards always gits de news first," croaked Jeff. "Sees eve'ything now: when you wants buy a business cheap you wrecks it first, den buys it—like Samson done done us."

"Well, how you boys gittin' on now?" Mr. Bates cut the funereal atmosphere. "Little late beca'ze my car froze up: kills Gladstone quick as I gits time."

"Lower'n a snake's snowshoes," the husband joined the president in Jeff's reply.

"Aint sound so cocky dis time, is you?" Samson was pulling a familiar-looking paper from his pocket. "Now, 'bout dis note: jest to make eve'ything regular, so I can release dem other two bucks in yo' bank-account, gimme yo' check for de forty-two dollars you-all owes me. No hard feelin's—I jest collects or cripples, is all."

Jeff wrote a check. And, "How about us gittin' together, Samson?" he groaningly accompanied its delivery. Something to avoid casualties still had to be done before Angie and Beulah arrived at the head of the Amazons to receive a now non-existent cash prize.

"Old pond shrinkin' fast now. So is prices," Mr. Bates seemed hesitant.

"Fifty dollars, and you puts yo' 'Mule-Kick' brand labels on both sets of bitters bottles," horse-traded a desperate Jeff. Liabilities loomed.

"Eight bucks, for de good will," countered Samson firmly, "is all I can see in a busted business. You aint got nothin' now but liabilities."

"Yeah, and whose scheme busted it? Us—" Jeff's restraining heel on Willie's corns cut off unwise utterance.

"Make it ten, and us starves quiet," proffered President Baker hoarsely.

"Ten it is, den!" And Samson was eliminating the sheriff but not the sorrow from Jeff's future. "I moves right in now and takes charge. Takes over eve'ything but de liabilities. You gits to keep *dem:* I aint no hog."

Two blocks down the street a burned child started dreading the fire again. Willie recalled that big words had to be watched: look what *amortization* had done to him once!

"Whut dat word *'liabilities'* mean, whut Samson say, Jeff?" he asked.

"Aint pesterin' 'bout no words: aint us got de twelve bucks for dat printin'-boy?"

"Big word cost me two bucks once," gloomed Willie uneasily.

"Dat's right, beller about it!" Mr. Baker's disgust mounted. ""Jest to shet you up, I axes de white-folks in de bank whut it mean, when us gits our two bucks."

Crushed men have come out of the front doors of banks before, but the ultimate in a flattened condition and a frock coat emerged now.

"*Now* whut?" breathed the startled Willie. Jeff looked amortized to him!

"White-folks say," croaked the wreckage, "liabilities is whut us owes. Samson say he aint take on dem—meanin' dem women still sees *us* about dem forty bucks!"

As Powerful Peony Beulah's husband, Willie watched a street scene go into a tail-spin. As Utmost Orchid Angie's, Jeff was already going down for the third time.

"And de Flowerin' Forty lappin' up dat last case right now!" wailed Willie while his eyes refused to focus. "Hell sho fixin' to bust loose for husbands!"

BLARE of band in Hogan's Alley. Samson G. Bates, the new sole proprietor of the entire and merged bitters business of Baptist Hill, thrust forth an inquiring head. Below, the alley was crowded. Not only with music and its onlookers but with a motley array of Amazons. *"SiSTErs oF FLowEriNG 40"* proclaimed the tipsy banner beneath which they marched.

Followed the clump of many uncertain feet on what was now Samson's stairway.

Utmost Orchid Angie Baker entered first, a pasteboard shoe-box clamped under one able arm. Beside her, Powerful Peony Beulah Freeman strode grimly, a man's hat rammed rakishly over one watchful eye.

"Dis here de Brain Bitters' place?" Angie overcame certain impediments. "Us comes collectin' de forty bucks prize on dese labels. And make 't shnappy."

"Whuff!" announced the Powerful Peony startlingly, beside her. "I done growed nine feet since breakfast, and aint started to stunt myself yit!"

Samson glanced uneasily about him. Some new spirit seemed moving the Flowering Forty. "De right place but de wrong man," he essayed to correct costly misunderstanding. "All I takes over is de business: See Jeff and Willie 'bout de forty."

"You means you aint gwine pay us?" Angie's hat slid down over her forehead in the way that always preceded Jeff's taking a trip.

"Means *I* aint got nothin' to do wid it," Samson grew irritable. "All I craves see *you* about is dem thirty-five dollars due me tomorrer—else I forecloses on all dat lodge regalia of yourn."

Something was in the air. Samson sensed it as he spoke. But yet—

"Is you-all feel funny?" the Powerful Peony was demanding fuzzily of a weaving rear-ranker behind her. Mystery was not all Samson's.

"Which one of me?" returned the rear-ranker militantly. "Gal, all six of me is r'arin' to tangle up wid dat fat double-crosser now, is he aint pay off!"

"Yeee-*eee-OWWWWWW!*" a keynote seemed struck at this. "Dat last mess of dem bitterses sho lapped noble! Why aint us wreck de joint, is he aint pay? Craves myself exercise, copious. Yeee-*owwww-WHUFF!!!*"

Wildfire would have seemed slow beside it.

Clang! A galvanized iron tub was the opening shot. And the riot was on! A lodge sister seemingly given superhuman strength by something in her diet seized and whirled the laboratory stove aloft, before sending it crashing through a window, to cause consternation and near-casualties in the crowded alley below.

Following-clangor of the soot-choked stovepipe but added to the physical and mental darkness, as the panicked Samson dived for the door. Something had happened to these women, rang in his mind as their screeching rang in his ears.

"Whooo-ooops!" reverberated the battle-cry of the Powerful Peony as she launched a fresh attack in a new quarter, amid din of tubs and crash of bottles. "Finishes wid de joint, and *starts on Samson now!*"

Samson started too. Very fast, but far from fast enough! Halfway across the sill of the shattered second-story window, they seized him. Eager hands hauled him in. Then it grew terrible....

"Wait a minute! *Wait a minute!*" shortly arose the frenzied pleadings of a fat and frantic wreck that had once been Wolf of Wall Street on Baptist Hill. "Unbite my ear! I pays off—prompt and pussonal. I got forty dollars on me—whut I gits from couple of boys dis mawnin'. *Owww!* Gimme receipt for it—gimme two receipts!"

"Gives you nothin'—except five bucks change and a boost in de pants; when you gives *us* back dat maw'gage-paper for de thirty-five!" hiccoughed the ample Angie belligerently. "Who you thinks you is, big boy? Me, I sho does feel numerous!"

And abjectly Samson gave it.

FRENZIEDLY down Hogan's Alley in the day's bitter dusk sped something long and dark and numbed above the neck. Furiously behind him, horn a-honk and radiator still steaming, drove Samson G. Bates, in savage pursuit.

Into Decatur Street shot Gladstone in terror, and Samson in high—and Willie Freeman leaped a fence for his life, as the hunt clamored across the sidewalk. Jeff's fence, it proved to be.

"Whut ail Samson *now?*" Willie directed a startled question toward Jeff who had emerged, pork-chop in hand, from evident new and novel domestic bliss within, at sound of the chase.

Jeff staggered. "Aint you *know?*" he demanded incredulously.

"Aint I know whut?"

Again Jeff gasped, rocked to the risibilities of it: to the thought of how in setting forth to wreck a rival's business Samson had but hurled a boomerang in the bitters! "Know eve'ybody done been paid off now—wid de same forty-two dollars! When dat dumb Gladstone gum eve'ything up dat way!"

"*Gladstone?* Why, he—"

"Yeah!" Jeff's joyous guffaw jarred the stars. "You, and Samson's car, and de Flowerin' Forty—all gits cock-eyed when Samson tell Gladstone pour as'fœtida in whut was our last batch of bitters. But Gladstone so goofy he—"

"Put de as'fœtida in Samson's car?" yelped Willie before the coming dawn.

"And pours de *anti-freeze in de bitters!* And boy, *is it* give dem women power!"

Tarzan again strides victor through his jungle kingdom in the climax of this fascinating tale by a great story-teller. And a daring American girl wins her way to happiness through utmost peril.

TARZAN *and the*

By EDGAR RICE

The Story So Far:

THE forest bent with the force of the wind, and tree branches tossed wildly. The girl awoke—and in a lightning-flash 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, not far away, that greatest of all adventurers Tarzan of the Apes had suffered a wilderness accident: a great tree-branch had knocked him unconscious. When he recovered his senses he did not know his own identity.

The native Orando rescued him, and for a time Tarzan hunted with 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, but was also made a prisoner, 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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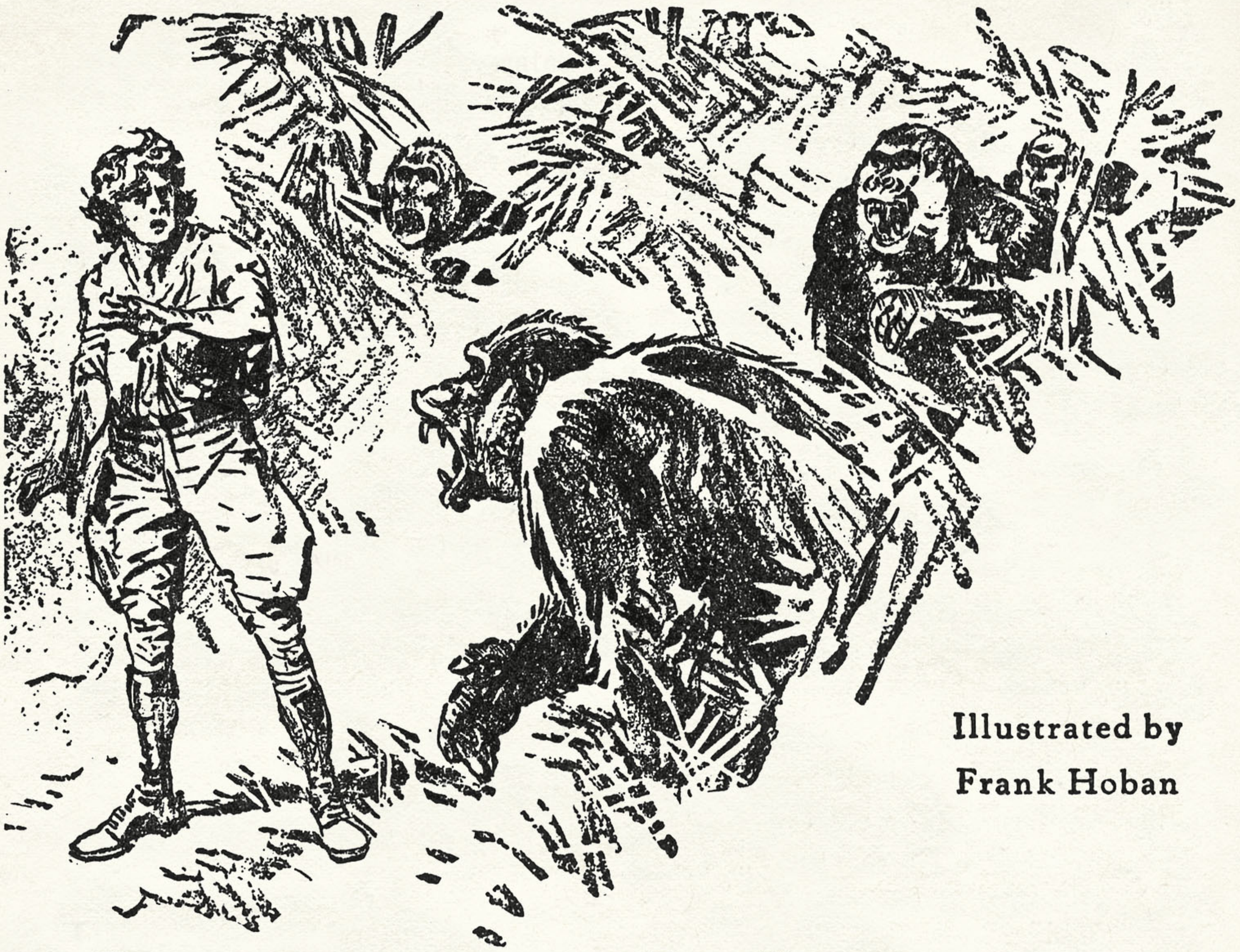


Illustrated by
Frank Hoban

Leopard Men

BURROUGHS

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. The ape-man then set the other canoes adrift and himself escaped through the trees—leaving the Leopard Men marooned in the 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, the pygmies decided they had waited long enough, and made ready to sacrifice the white girl for a cannibal feast. Indeed the fatal knife was already uplifted for murder when Old-timer, who had at last tracked the girl to her prison, made a desperate rush, and carried her off into the jungle before their eyes.

More, the white man and girl were successful in getting away to the sanctuary of the forest. For Tarzan also had traced the girl to the place of her captivity, and covered their retreat with a deadly flight of arrows. He himself, however, was not so lucky; for the tree-branch upon which he stood broke under him, his fall knocked him unconscious, and he was placed bound and helpless in a hut to await sacrifice. Tarzan's familiar spirit, however, the monkey little Nkima, was equal to the occasion. He streaked through the forest in panic haste till he found a band of Tarzan's great ape friends, and led them back to overawe the pygmies and bear Tarzan away. *(The story continues in detail:)*

OLD-TIMER wedged himself into a crotch where a great limb branched from the main bole of the tree. He was very uncomfortable there, but at least

there was less danger that he might fall should he doze. The girl was a short distance above him. She seemed to radiate an influence that enveloped him in an aura at once delicious and painful. He was too far from her to touch her, yet always he felt her presence there. He heard the regular breathing that denoted she slept. Somehow it reminded him of a baby—innocent, trusting, confident. He wished that it did not. Why was she so lovely? Why did she have hair like that? Why had God given her such eyes and lips? Why—

But tired nature would be denied no longer. He slept.

OLD-TIMER was stiff and sore when he awoke at daylight. He glanced up toward the girl. She was sitting up looking at him. When their eyes met, she smiled. Little things, trivial things, often have a tremendous effect upon our lives. Had Kali Bwana not smiled then in just the way that she did, the lives of two people might have been very different.

"Good morning," she called, as Old-timer smiled back at her. "Did you sleep in that awful position all night?"

"It wasn't so bad," he assured her; "at least, I slept."

"You fixed such a nice place for me; why didn't you do the same for yourself?"

"You slept well?" he asked.

"All night. I must have been dead tired; but perhaps what counted most was the relief from apprehension. It is the first night since before my men deserted me that I have felt free to sleep."

"I am glad," he said; "and now we must be on the move; we must get out of this district."

"Where can we go?"

"I want to go west first, until we are below Bobolo's stamping-grounds and then cut across in a northerly direction toward the river. We may have a little difficulty crossing it, but we'll find a way. At present I am more concerned about the Betetes than about Bobolo. His is a river tribe. They hunt and trap only a short distance in from the river, but the Betetes range pretty well through the forest. Fortunately for us, they don't go very far toward the west."

He helped her to the ground, and presently they found a trail that seemed to run in a westerly direction. Occasionally he saw fruits that he knew to be edible, and gathered them; thus they ate as they moved slowly through the forest. They could not make rapid progress, because both were physically weak from long abstinence from sufficient food; but necessity drove them, and though they were forced to frequent rests, they kept going.

Thirst had been troubling them to a considerable extent when they came upon a small stream, and here they drank and rested. Old-timer had been carefully scrutinizing the trail which they were following, for signs of the pygmies; but he had discovered no spoor of human foot, and was convinced that this trail was seldom used by the Betetes.

The girl sat with her back against the bole of a small tree, while Old-timer lay where he could gaze at her profile surreptitiously. Since that morning smile he had looked upon her out of new eyes, from which the scales of selfishness had fallen. He saw now beyond the glittering barrier of her physical charms a beauty of character that far transcended the former. Now he could appreciate the loyalty and the courage that had given her the strength to face the dangers of this savage world for—what?

The question brought his pleasant reveries to an abrupt conclusion with a shock. For what? Why, for Jerry Jerome, of course. Old-timer had never seen Jerry Jerome. All that he knew about him was his name; yet he disliked the man with all the fervor of blind jealousy. Suddenly he sat up.

"Are you married?" He shot the words as though from a pistol.

The girl looked at him in surprise. "Why, no," she replied.

"Are you engaged?"

"Aren't your questions a little personal?" There was just a suggestion of the frigidity that had marked her intercourse with him that day that he had come upon her in her camp.

Why shouldn't he be personal, he thought. Had he not saved her life—did she not owe him everything? Then came a realization of the caddishness of his attitude.

"I am sorry," he said.

FOR a long time he sat gazing at the ground, his arms folded across his knees, his chin resting on them. The girl watched him intently; those level gray eyes seemed to be evaluating him. For the first time since she had met him she was examining his countenance carefully.

She tried to push him away. "How dare you?" she cried. "I hate you!"

Through the unkempt beard she saw strong, regular features, saw that the man was handsome in spite of the dirt and the haggard look caused by deprivation and anxiety. Neither was he as old as she had thought him. She judged that he must still be in his twenties.

"Do you know," she remarked presently, "that I do not even know your name?"

He hesitated a moment before replying and then said: "The Kid calls me Old-timer."

"That is not a name," she remonstrated; "and you are not old."

"Thank you," he acknowledged; "but if a man is as old as he feels, I am the oldest living man."

"You are tired," she said soothingly, her voice like the caress of a mother's hand; "you have been through so much, and all for me." Perhaps she recalled the manner in which she had replied to his recent question, and regretted it. "I think you should rest here as long as you can."

"I am all right," he told her; "it is you who should rest; but it is not safe here. We must go on, no matter how tired we are, until we are farther away from the Betete country." He rose slowly to his feet and offered her his hand.

Across the stream, through which he carried her despite her objections that he must not overtax his strength, they came upon a wider trail along which they could walk abreast. Here he stopped again to cut two staffs. "They will help us limp along," he remarked with a smile; "we are getting rather old, you know." But the one that he cut for himself was heavy and knotted at one end. It had more the appearance of a weapon than a walking-stick.

AGAIN they took up their weary flight, elbow to elbow. The feel of her arm touching his occasionally sent thrills through every fiber of his body; but recollection of Jerry Jerome dampened them. For some time they did not speak, each occupied with his own thoughts. It was the girl who broke the silence.

"Old-timer is not a name," she said. "I cannot call you that—it's silly."

"It is not much worse than my real name," he assured her. "I was named for my grandfather, and grandfathers so often have peculiar names."

"I know it," she agreed, "but yet they were good old substantial names. Mine was *Abner*."

"Did you have only one grandfather?" he bantered.

"Only one named Abner. What was yours, the one you were named for?"

"Hiram; but my friends call me Hi," he added hastily.

"But your last name? I can't call you Hi."

"Why not? We are friends, I hope."

"All right," she agreed; "but you haven't told me your last name."

"Just call me Hi," he said a little shortly.

"But suppose I have to introduce you to some one?"

"To whom, for instance?"

"Oh, Bobolo," she suggested, laughing.

"I've already met the gentleman; but speaking about names," he added, "I don't know yours."

"The natives called me Kali Bwana."

"But I am not a native," he reminded her.

"I like Kali," she said: "call me Kali."

"It means *woman*. All right, Woman."

"If you call me that, I sha'n't answer you."

"Just as you say, Kali." Then after a moment: "I rather like it myself · it makes a cute name for a girl."

AS they trudged wearily along, the forest became more open, the underbrush not so dense, and the trees farther apart. In an open space Old-timer halted and looked up at the sun; then he shook his head.

"We've been going east instead of south," he announced.

"How hopeless!"

"I'm sorry; it was stupid of me, but I couldn't see the sun because of the damned trees. Often inanimate objects seem to assume malign personalities that try to thwart one at every turn and then gloat over his misfortunes."

"Oh, it wasn't your fault," she cried quickly. "I didn't intend to imply that. You've done all that anyone could have."

"I'll tell you what we can do," he announced.

"Yes, what?"

"We can go on to the next stream, and follow that to the river; it's bound to run into the river somewhere. It's too dangerous to go back to the one we crossed back there. In the meantime we might as well make up our minds that we're in for a long, hard trek and prepare for it."

"How? What do you mean?"

"We must eat; and we have no means of obtaining food other than the occasional fruits and tubers that we may find, which are not very strengthening food to trek on. We must have meat, but we have no means for obtaining it. We need weapons."

"And there is no sporting-goods house near, not even a hardware store." Her occasional unexpected gayeties heartened him. She never sighed or complained. She was often serious, as became their situation, but even disaster added to all the trials she had endured for weeks, could not dampen her spirits entirely nor destroy her sense of humor.

"We shall have to be our own armorers," he explained. "We shall have to make our own weapons."

"Let's start on a couple of Thompson machine-guns," she suggested. "I should feel much safer if we had them."

"Bows and arrows and a couple of spears are about all we rate," he assured her.

"I imagine I could make a machine-gun as readily," she admitted. "What useless things modern women are!"

"I should scarcely say that. I don't know what I should do without you." The involuntary admission slipped out so suddenly that he scarcely realized what he had said—he, the woman-hater! But the girl did, and she smiled.

"I thought you didn't like women," she remarked, quite seriously. "It seems to me that I recall quite distinctly that you gave me that impression the afternoon that you came to my camp."

"Please don't," he begged. "I did not know you then."

"What a pretty speech! It doesn't sound at all like the old bear I first met."

"I am not the same man, Kali." He spoke the words in a low voice.

To the girl it sounded like a confession and a plea for forgiveness. Impulsively she placed a hand on his arm. The soft warm touch was like a spark to powder. He wheeled and seized her, pressing her close to him, and in the same instant, before she could prevent it, his lips covered hers in a brief, hot kiss.

She struck at him and tried to push him away. "How—how dare you?" she cried. "I hate you!"

He let her go and they stood looking at one another, panting a little from exertion and excitement.

"I hate you!" she repeated.

He looked into her blazing eyes steadily for a long moment. "I love you, Kali," he said. "My Kali!"

"Go and fetch one," Tarzan ordered. "Do not kill—bring him here!"

CHAPTER XXI

Because Nsenene Loved

ZU-THO the great ape had quarreled with To-yat the king. Each had coveted a young she just come into maturity. To-yat was a mighty bull, the mightiest of the tribe, for which excellent reason he was king; therefore Zu-tho hesitated to engage him in mortal combat. However, that did not lessen his desire for the fair one, so he ran away with her, coaxing some of the younger bulls who were dissatisfied with the rule of To-yat, to accompany them. They came and brought their mates. Thus are new tribes formed. There is always a woman at the bottom of it.

Desiring peace, Zu-tho had moved to new hunting-grounds far removed from danger of a chance meeting with To-yat. Ga-yat, his lifelong friend, was among those who had accompanied him. Ga-yat was a mighty bull, perhaps mightier than To-yat himself; but Ga-yat was of an easy-going disposition. He did not care who was king, so long as he had plenty to eat and was not disturbed in the possession of his mates, a contingency that his enormous size and his great strength rendered remote.

Ga-yat and Zu-tho were good friends of Tarzan, perhaps Ga-yat even more than the latter, for Ga-yat was more inclined to be friendly; so when they saw Tarzan in the new jungle they had chosen for their home, they were glad; and when they heard his cry for help, they hastened to him, taking all but the two that Zu-tho left to guard the shes and the balus.

They had carried Tarzan far away from the village of the Gomangani, to a little open glade beside a stream. Here they laid him on soft grasses beneath the shade of a tree, but they could not remove the wires that held his wrists and ankles. They tried, and Nkima tried; but all to no avail, though the little monkey finally succeeded in gnawing the ropes which had also been placed around both Tarzan's wrists and his ankles.

Nkima and Ga-yat brought food and water to Tarzan, and the great apes were a protection to him against the prowling carnivores; but the ape-man knew that this could not last for long. Soon they would move on to some other part of the forest, as was their way; nor would any consideration of sympathy or friendship hold them. Of the former they knew little or nothing, and of the latter not sufficient to raise them to any heights of self-sacrifice.

Nkima would remain with Tarzan; he would bring food and water, but he

"Hush!" cautioned the girl. "Do not speak my name. They would kill me if they knew I had come here."

would be no protection. At the first glimpse of Dango the hyena, or Sheeta the leopard, little Nkima would flee screaming to the trees. Tarzan racked his fertile brain for a solution of his problem. He thought of his great and good friend Tantor the elephant, but was forced to discard him as a possibility for escape, as Tantor could no more remove his bonds than the apes. He could carry him, but whither? There was no friend within reach to untwist the confining wires. Tantor would protect him, but of what use would protection be if he must lie here bound and helpless? Better death, than that!

Presently, however, a solution suggested itself; and he called Ga-yat to him. The great bull came lumbering to his side.

"I am Ga-yat," he announced curtly, after the manner of the great apes. It was a much shorter way of saying: "You called me, and I am here. What do you want?"

"Ga-yat is not afraid of anything," was Tarzan's manner of approaching the subject he had in mind.

"Ga-yat is not afraid," growled the bull. "Ga-yat kills."

"Ga-yat is not afraid of the Gomangani," continued the ape-man.

"Ga-yat is not afraid!"—which was a much longer way of saying no.

"Only the Tarmangani or the Gomangani can remove the bonds that keep Tarzan a prisoner."

"Ga-yat kills the Tarmangani and the Gomangani."

"No," objected Tarzan. "Ga-yat will go and fetch one to take the wires from Tarzan. Do not kill. Bring him here."

"Ga-yat understands," said the bull after a moment's thought.

"Go now," directed the ape-man; and with no further words Ga-yat lumbered away, and a moment later had disappeared into the forest.

THE KID and his five followers arrived at the north bank of the river opposite the village of Bobolo, where they had no difficulty in attracting the attention of the natives upon the opposite side, and by means of signs apprising them that they wished to cross.

Presently several canoes put out from the village and paddled upstream to make the crossing. They were filled with warriors, for as yet Bobolo did not know either the identity or number of his visitors, and was taking no chances. Sobito was still with him, and had given no intimation that the Leopard Men suspected that he had stolen the white

priestess; yet there was always danger that Gato Mgungu might lead an expedition against him.

When the leading canoe came close to where the Kid stood, several of the warriors in it recognized him, for he had been often at the village of Bobolo; and soon he and his men were taken aboard and paddled across to the opposite bank.

There was little ceremony shown him, for he was only a poor elephant-poacher with a miserable following of five blacks; but eventually Bobolo condescended to receive him, and he was led to the chief's hut, where Bobolo and Sobito, with several of the village elders, were seated in the shade.

The Kid's friendly greeting was answered with a surly nod. "What does the white man want?" demanded Bobolo.

The youth was quick to discern the altered attitude of the chief; before, he had always been friendly. He did not relish the implied discourtesy of the black's salutation, the omission of the deferential *Bwana;* but what was he to do? He fully realized his own impotency, and though it galled him to do so, he was forced to overlook the insulting inflection that Bobolo had given the words "white man."

"I have come to get you to help me find my friend the old *bwana,*" he said. "My boys say that he went into the village of Gato Mgungu, but that he never came out."

"Why do you come to me, then?" demanded Bobolo. "Why do you not go to Gato Mgungu?"

"Because you are our friend," replied the Kid; "I believed that you would help me."

"How can I help you? I know nothing about your friend."

"You can send men with me to the village of Gato Mgungu," replied the Kid, "while I demand the release of the old *bwana.*"

"What will you pay me?" asked Bobolo.

"I can pay you nothing now. When we get ivory, I will pay."

Bobolo sneered. "I have no men to send with you," he said. "You come to a great chief and bring no presents; you ask him to give you warriors, and you have nothing to pay for them."

The Kid lost his temper. "You lousy old scoundrel!" he exclaimed. "You can't talk that way to me and get away with it. I'll give you until tomorrow morning to come to your senses." He turned on his heel and walked down the village street, followed by his five retainers; then he heard Bobolo yelling excitedly to his men to seize him. Instantly the youth realized the predicament in which his hot temper had placed him. He thought quickly, and before the warriors had an opportunity to arrest him, he turned back toward Bobolo's hut.

"And another thing," he said as he stood again before the chief: "I have already dispatched a messenger down-river to the station telling them about this affair and my suspicions. I told them that I would be here waiting for them when they came with soldiers. If you are thinking of harming me, Bobolo, be sure that you have a good story ready, for I told them that I was particularly suspicious of you."

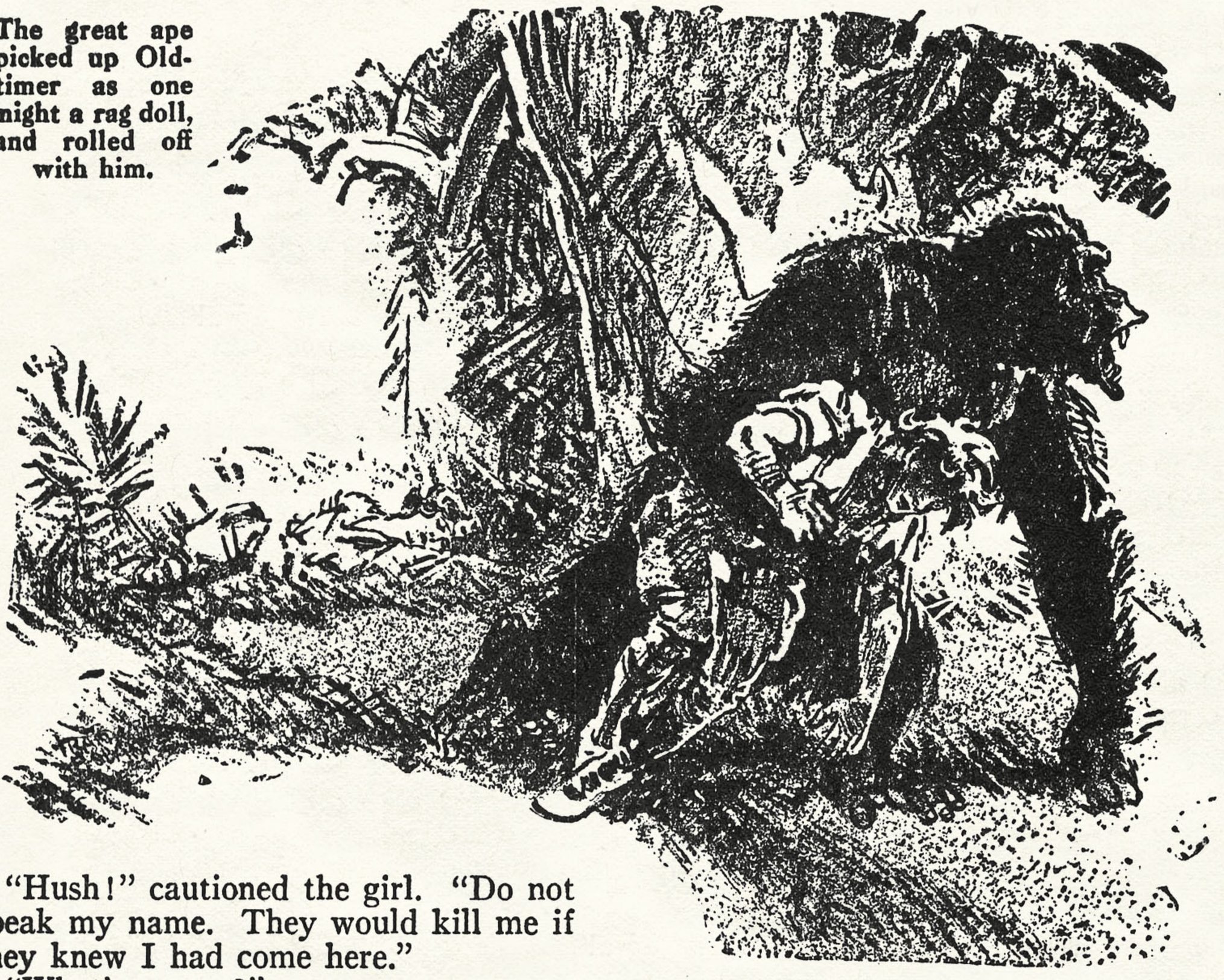
He waited for no reply, but turned again and walked toward the village gate; nor was any hand raised to stay him. He grinned to himself as he passed out of the village, for he had sent no messenger, and no soldiers were coming.

AS a gesture of contempt for the threats of Bobolo, the Kid made camp close to the village; but his men were much perturbed. Some of the villagers came out with food; and from his almost exhausted stores the white extracted enough cloth to purchase a day's rations for himself and his men. Among his callers was a girl whom he had known for some time. She was a happy, good-natured creature, and the Kid had found amusement in talking to her. In the past he had given her little presents, which pleased her simple heart, as did the extravagant compliments the Kid amused himself by paying her.

Bring a girl presents often, and tell her that she is the most beautiful girl in the village, and you may be laying the foundation for something difficult in the future. You may be joking, but the girl may be in earnest. This one was. That she had fallen in love with the Kid should have worked to his detriment as a punishment for his thoughtlessness, but it did not.

At dusk the girl returned, sneaking stealthily through the shadows. The Kid was startled by her abrupt appearance before his tent, where he sat smoking.

"Hello there, Nsenene!" he exclaimed. "What brings you here?" He was suddenly impressed by the unusually grave demeanor of the girl, and her evident excitement.



The great ape picked up Old-timer as one might a rag doll, and rolled off with him.

"Hush!" cautioned the girl. "Do not speak my name. They would kill me if they knew I had come here."

"What's wrong?"

"Much is wrong. Bobolo is going to send men with you tomorrow. He will tell you that they are going to the village of Gato Mgungu with you, but they will not. When they get you out in the river out of sight of the village, they will kill you and all your men and throw you to the crocodiles. Then when the white men come, they will tell them that they left you at the village of Gato Mgungu; and the white men will go and they will find no village, because it has been burned by the Utengas. There will be no one there to tell them that Bobolo lied."

"Gato Mgungu's village burned! What became of the old *bwana?*"

"I know nothing about him, but he is not at the village of Gato Mgungu, because there is no village there. I think he is dead. I heard it said that the Leopard Men killed him. Bobolo is afraid of the Leopard Men, because he stole their white priestess from them."

"White priestess! What do you mean?"

"They had a white priestess. I saw her here when Bobolo brought her to be his wife; but Ubooga would not have her around, and made Bobolo send her away. She was a white woman, very white, with hair the color of the moon."

"When was this?" demanded the astonished youth.

"Three days ago, maybe four days. I do not remember."

"Where is she now? I should like to see her."

"You will never see her," replied Nsenene; "no one will ever see her."

"Why not?"

"Because they sent her to the village of the little men."

"You mean the Betetes?"

"Yes, the Betetes. They are eaters of men."

"Where is their village?" asked the Kid.

"You want to go there and get the white woman?" demanded Nsenene suspiciously.

There was something in the way the girl asked the question that gave the Kid his first intimation that her interest was prompted by more than friendship for him, for there was an unquestionable tinge of jealous suspicion in her tone. He leaned forward with a finger on his lips. "Don't tell anybody, Nsenene," he cautioned in a whisper; "but the white woman is my sister. I must go to her rescue. Now tell me where the village is, and next time I come I'll bring you a fine present."

If he had felt any compunction about lying to the girl, which he did not, he could easily have salved his conscience with the knowledge that he had done it in a good cause; for if there was any truth in the story of the white priestess, captive of the Betetes, then there was but one course of procedure possible for him, the only white man in the district who had knowledge of her predicament. He had thought of saying that the woman was his mother or daughter, but had compromised on sister as appearing more reasonable.

"Your sister!" exclaimed Nsenene. "Yes, now that I remember, she looked like you."

The Kid suppressed a smile. Suggestion and imagination were potent powers. "We do look alike," he admitted. "But tell me, where is the village?"

As well as she could, Nsenene described the location of the village of Rebega. "I will go with you, if you will take me," she suggested. "I do not wish to stay here any longer. My father is going to sell me to an old man whom I do not like. I will go with you and cook for you. I will cook for you until I die."

"I cannot take you now," replied the Kid. "Maybe some other time, but this time there may be fighting."

"Some other time, then," said the girl. "Now I must go back to the village before they close the gates."

At the first break of dawn the Kid set out in search of the village of Rebega. He told his men that he had given up the idea of going to the village of Gato Mgungu, but that while they were here, he was going to look for ivory on this side of the river. If he had told them the truth, they would not have accompanied him.

CHAPTER XXII

In the Crucible of Danger

FOR a long time Old-timer and the girl walked on in silence. There were no more interchanges of friendly conversation. The atmosphere was frigid. Kali Bwana walked a little behind the man. Often her eyes were upon him. She was thinking seriously, but what her thoughts were, she did not reveal.

When they came to a pleasant open stretch through which a small stream wound, Old-timer stopped beneath a great tree that grew upon the bank of the stream. "We shall remain here for a while," he said.

The girl made no comment; and he did not look at her, but started at once to make camp. First he gathered dead branches of suitable size for a shelter, cutting a few green ones to give it greater strength. These he formed into a framework resembling that of an Indian wicki-up, then covered the whole with leafy branches and grasses.

WHILE he worked, the girl assisted him, following his example without asking for directions. Thus they worked in silence. When the shelter was finished, he gathered wood for a fire. In this work she helped him too.

"We shall be on short rations," he said, "until I can make a bow and some arrows."

This elicited no response from the girl, and he went his way, searching for suitable material for his weapon. He never went far, never out of sight of the camp; and presently he was back again with the best that he could find. With his knife he shaped a bow, rough but practical; and then he strung it with the pliable stem of a slender creeper that he had seen natives use for the same purpose in an emergency. This done, he commenced to make arrows. He worked rapidly, and the girl noticed the deftness of his strong fingers. Sometimes she watched his face, but on the few occasions that he chanced to look up she had quickly turned her eyes away before he could catch them upon him.

There were other eyes watching them from the edge of a bit of jungle farther up the stream—close-set, red-rimmed savage eyes beneath beetling brows; but neither of them was aware of this; and the man continued his work, and the girl continued to study his face contemplatively. She still felt his arms about her; his lips were still hot upon hers. How strong he was! She had felt in that brief moment that he could have crushed her like an egg-shell; and yet in spite of his savage impulsiveness he had been tender and gentle.

But these thoughts she tried to put from her, and remember only that he was a boor and a cad. She scanned his clothing, which now no longer bore even a resemblance to clothing, being nothing but a series of rags held together by a few shreds and the hand of Providence. What a creature to dare take her in his arms! What a thing to dare kiss her!

She flushed anew at the recollection. Then she let her eyes wander again to his face. She tried to see only the unkempt beard, but through it her eyes persisted in seeing the contours of his fine features. She became almost angry with herself, and turned her eyes away, that she might no longer entertain this thought; and as she did so, she stifled a scream and leaped to her feet.

"Oh!" she cried. "Look!"

At her first cry the man raised his eyes. Then he too leaped to his feet. "Run!" he cried to the girl. "For God's sake, Kali, run!"

But she did not run. She stood there waiting, in her hand the futile staff he had cut for her, which she had seized as she leaped to her feet; and the man waited, his heavier cudgel ready in his hand.

Almost upon them, rolling toward them in his awkward gait, was an enormous bull ape, the largest that Old-timer had ever seen. The man glanced quickly sidewise, and was horrified to see the girl still standing there near him.

"Please run away, Kali," he implored. "I cannot stop him; but I can delay him, and you must get away before he can get you. Don't you understand, Kali? It is you he wants." But the girl did not move, and the great beast was advancing steadily.

"Please!" begged the man.

"You didn't run away when I was in danger," she reminded him.

He started to reply; but the words were never spoken, for it was then that the ape charged. Old-timer struck with his club, and the girl rushed in and struck with hers. Utter futility! The beast grasped the man's weapon, tore it from his hand, and flung it aside. With his other hand he sent Kali Bwana spinning with a blow that might have felled an ox, had not the man broken its force by seizing the shaggy arm; then the ape picked Old-timer up as one might a rag doll, and rolled off with him toward the jungle.

WHEN the girl, half dazed from the effects of the blow, staggered to her feet, she was alone; the man and the beast had disappeared. She called aloud, but there was no reply. She thought that she had been unconscious, but she did not know; so she could not know how long it had been since the beast had carried the man away. She tried to follow, but she did not know in which direction they had gone; she would have followed and fought for the man—her man. The words formed in her mind, and brought no revulsion of feeling. Had he not called her "my Kali"—*my woman?*

What a change this brief episode had wrought in her! A moment before, she had been trying to hate him, trying to seek out everything displeasing about him—his rags, his beard, the dirt upon him. Now she would have given a world to have him back; nor was it alone because she craved protection. This she realized. Perhaps she realized the truth, too; but if she did, she was not ashamed. She loved him, loved this nameless man of rags and tatters.

TARZAN of the Apes stoically awaited his fate, whatever it might be. He neither wasted his strength in useless efforts to break bonds that he had found unbreakable, nor dissipated his nervous energy in futile repining. He merely lay still. Nkima squatted dejectedly beside him. There was always something wrong with the world; so Nkima should have been accustomed to that; but he liked to feel sorry for himself. Today he was in his prime; he could scarcely have been more miserable if Sheeta had been pursuing him.

The afternoon was waning as Tarzan's keen ears caught the sound of approaching footsteps. He heard them before either Nkima or the great apes heard them, and he voiced a low growl that apprised the others. Instantly the great shaggy beasts were alert. The shes and the balus gathered nearer the bulls; all listened in absolute silence. They sniffed the air; but the wind blew from them toward whatever was approaching, so that they could detect no revealing spoor. The bulls were nervous; they were prepared either for instant battle or for flight.

Silently, notwithstanding its great weight, a mighty figure emerged from the forest. It was Ga-yat. Under one arm he carried a man-thing. Zu-tho growled. He could see Ga-yat, but he could not smell him, and one knows that one's eyes may deceive one, but never one's nose. "I am Zu-tho," he growled, baring his great fighting fangs. "I kill!"

"I am Ga-yat," answered the other, as he lumbered toward Tarzan.

Presently the others caught his scent-spoor and were satisfied, but the scent of the man-thing annoyed and angered them. They came forward, growling.

"Kill the Tarmangani!" was on the lips of many.

Ga-yat carried Old-timer to where Tarzan lay, and threw him unceremoniously to the ground. "I am Ga-yat," he said. "Here is a Tarmangani. Ga-yat saw no Gomangani."

The other bulls were crowding close, anxious to fall upon the man-thing. Old-timer had never seen such a concourse of great apes, had never known that they grew so large. It was evident that they were not gorillas, and they were more man-like than any other apes he had seen. He recalled the stories that natives had told of these hairy men of the forest, stories that he had not believed. He saw the white man lying bound and helpless among them, but at first he did not recognize him. He thought that he too was a prisoner of these man-like brutes. What terrible creatures they were! He was thankful that his captor had taken him rather than Kali. Poor Kali! What would become of her now?

The bulls were pressing closer. Their intentions were evident even to the man. He thought the end was near. Then, to his astonishment, he heard savage growls burst from the lips of the man near him, saw his lip curl upward, revealing strong white teeth.

"The Tarmangani belongs to Tarzan," growled the ape-man. "Do not harm that which is Tarzan's."

GA-YAT and Zu-tho turned upon the other bulls and drove them back, while Old-timer looked on in astonishment. He had not understood what Tarzan said; he could scarcely believe that he had communicated with the apes, yet the evidence was such that he was convinced of it against his better judgment. He lay staring at the huge, hairy creatures moving slowly away from him; even they seemed unreal.

"You are no sooner out of one difficulty than you find yourself in another," said a deep, low voice in English.

Old-timer turned his eyes toward the speaker. The voice was familiar. Now he recognized him. "You are the man who got me out of that mess in the temple!" he exclaimed.

"And now *I* am in a mess," said the other.

"Both of us," added Old-timer. "What do you suppose they will do with us?"

"Nothing," replied the ape-man.

"Then why did they bring me here?"

"I told one of them to go and get me a man," replied Tarzan. "Evidently you chanced to be the first man he came upon. I didn't expect a white man."

"You sent that big brute that got me? They do what you ask? Who are you, and why did you send for a man?"

"I am Tarzan of the Apes, and I wanted some one who could untwist these wires that are around my wrists; neither the apes nor Nkima could do it."

"Tarzan of the Apes!" exclaimed Old-timer. "I thought you were only a part of the folk-lore of the natives." As he spoke, he started to work on the wires that confined the ape-man's wrists.

"What became of the white girl?" asked the latter. "You got her out of the Betete village, but I couldn't follow you, because the little devils got me."

"You were there! Ah, now I see; it was you who shot the arrows."

"Yes."

"How did they get you, and how did you get away from them?"

"I was in a tree above them. The branch broke. I was stunned for a moment. Then they bound me."

"That was the crash I heard as I was leaving the village."

"Doubtless," agreed the ape-man. "I called the great apes," he continued, "and they came and carried me here. Where is the white girl?"

"She and I were on our way toward my camp when the ape got me," explained Old-timer. "She is alone back there now. When I get these wires off, may I go back to her?"

"I shall go with you. Where was the place? Do you think you can find it?"

"It cannot be far, not more than a few miles; yet I may not be able to find it."

"I can," said Tarzan.

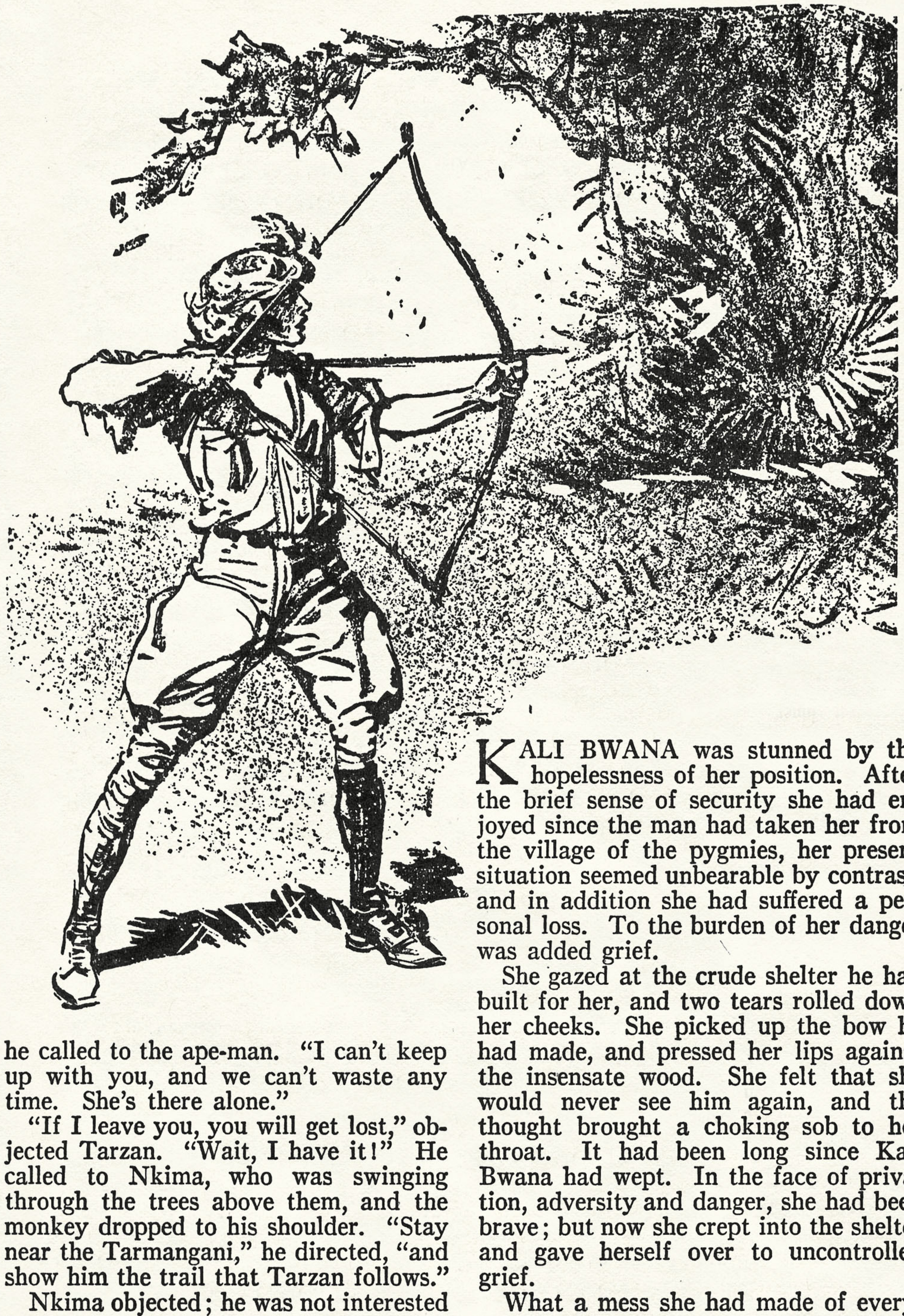
"How?" inquired Old-timer.

"By Ga-yat's spoor. It is still fresh."

OLD-TIMER nodded, but he was not convinced. He thought it would be a slow procedure, picking out the footprints of the beast all the way back to the spot at which he had been seized. He had removed the wires from Tarzan's wrists and was working upon those on his ankles; a moment later the ape-man was free. He leaped to his feet.

"Come!" he directed, and started at a trot toward the spot at which Ga-yat had emerged from the jungle.

Old-timer tried to keep up with him, but discovered that he was weak from hunger and exhaustion. "You go ahead,"



he called to the ape-man. "I can't keep up with you, and we can't waste any time. She's there alone."

"If I leave you, you will get lost," objected Tarzan. "Wait, I have it!" He called to Nkima, who was swinging through the trees above them, and the monkey dropped to his shoulder. "Stay near the Tarmangani," he directed, "and show him the trail that Tarzan follows."

Nkima objected; he was not interested in the Tarmangani; but at last he understood that he must do as Tarzan wished. Old-timer watched them chattering to one another. It seemed incredible that they were conversing, yet the illusion was perfect.

"Follow Nkima," said Tarzan; "he will guide you in the right direction." Then he was off at a swinging trot along a track that Old-timer could not see.

KALI BWANA was stunned by the hopelessness of her position. After the brief sense of security she had enjoyed since the man had taken her from the village of the pygmies, her present situation seemed unbearable by contrast, and in addition she had suffered a personal loss. To the burden of her danger was added grief.

She gazed at the crude shelter he had built for her, and two tears rolled down her cheeks. She picked up the bow he had made, and pressed her lips against the insensate wood. She felt that she would never see him again, and the thought brought a choking sob to her throat. It had been long since Kali Bwana had wept. In the face of privation, adversity and danger, she had been brave; but now she crept into the shelter and gave herself over to uncontrolled grief.

What a mess she had made of everything! Thus ran her thoughts. Her ill-conceived search for Jerry had ended in failure; but worse, it had embroiled a total stranger and led him to his death; nor was he the first to die because of her. There had been the faithful Andereya, whom the Leopard Men had killed when they captured her; and there had been Wlala, and Rebega, and his three warriors—all these lives snuffed

out because of her stubborn refusal to understand her own limitations. The white officers and civilians along the lower stretch of the river had tried to convince her, but she had refused to listen. She had had her own way, but at what a price!

For some time she lay there, a victim of vain regrets; then she realized the futility of repining, and by an effort of the will seized control of her shaken nerves. She told herself that she must not give up, that even this last terrible blow must not stop her. She still lived, and she had not found Jerry. She would go on. She would try to reach the river; she would try in some way to cross it, and she would find Old-timer's camp and enlist the aid of his partner.

But she must have food, strength-giving flesh. She could not carry on in her weakened condition. The bow that *he* had made, and that she had hugged to her breast as she lay in the shelter, would furnish her the means to secure meat; and with this thought in mind she arose and went out to gather up the arrows. It was still not too late to hunt.

As she emerged from the frail hut, she saw one of the creatures that she had long feared inwardly, knowing that this forest abounded in them—a leopard. The beast was standing at the edge of the jungle looking toward her. As its yellow eyes discovered her, it dropped to its belly, its face grimacing in a horrid snarl. Then it started to creep cautiously toward her, its tail weaving sinuously. It could have charged and destroyed her without these preliminaries; but it seemed to be playing with her, as a cat plays with a mouse.

Nearer and nearer it came. The girl fitted an arrow to the bow. She knew how futile a gesture it would be to launch that tiny missile at this great engine of destruction; but she was courageous, and she would not give up her life without defending it to the last.

The girl fitted an arrow to the bow. She knew how futile a gesture it would be to launch that tiny missile; but she was courageous.

THE beast was coming closer; she wondered when it would charge. Many things passed through her mind, but clear and outstanding above all the rest was the image of a man in rags and tatters. Then, beyond the leopard, she saw a figure emerge from the jungle—a giant white man, naked but for a loin-cloth.

He did not hesitate. She saw him running quickly forward toward the leopard; and she saw that the beast did not see him, for its eyes were upon her. The man made no sound as he sprang lightly across the soft turf. Suddenly to her horror, she saw that he was unarmed.

The leopard raised its body a little from the ground. It gathered its hind feet beneath it. It was about to start the swift rush that would end in death for her. Then she saw the running man launch himself through the air, straight for the back of the grim beast. She wanted to close her eyes to shut out the horrid scene that she knew must ensue as the leopard turned and tore his rash antagonist to ribbons.

What followed after the bronzed body of the white man closed with that of the great cat defied her astonished eyes to follow. There was a swift intermingling of spotted hide and bronzed skin, of arms and legs, of talons and teeth; and above all rose the hideous growls of two blood-mad beasts. To her horror she realized that not the cat alone was the author of them; the growls of the man were as savage as those of the beast.

From the midst of the whirling mass she saw the man suddenly rise to his feet, dragging the leopard with him. His powerful fingers encircled the throat of the carnivore from behind. The beast struck and struggled to free itself from that grip of death, but no longer did it growl. Slowly its struggles lessened in violence, and at last it went limp; then the man released one hand and twisted

its neck until the vertebræ snapped, after which he cast the carcass to the ground. For a moment he stood over it. He seemed to have forgotten the girl; then he placed a foot upon it, and the forest reëchoed to the savage victory-cry of the bull ape!

KALI BWANA shuddered. She felt her flesh turn cold. She thought to flee from this wild man of the forest; then he turned toward her, and she knew that it was too late. She still held the bow and arrow ready in her hands. She wondered if she could hold him off with these. He did not appear an easy man to frighten.

Then he spoke to her. "I seem to have arrived just in time," he said quietly. "Your friend will be here presently," he added, for he saw that she was afraid of him. That one should fear him was no new thing to Tarzan of the Apes. There were many who had feared him, and perhaps for this reason he had come to expect it from every stranger. "You may put down your bow. I shall not harm you."

She lowered the weapon to her side. "My friend!" she repeated. "Who? Whom do you mean?"

"I do not know his name. Have you many friends here?"

"Only one, but I thought him dead. A huge ape carried him away."

"He is safe," the ape-man assured her. "He is following behind me."

Kali Bwana sank limply to the ground. "Thank God!" she murmured.

Tarzan stood with folded arms watching her. How small and delicate she looked! He wondered that she had been able to survive all that she had passed through. The Lord of the Jungle admired courage, and he knew what courage this slender girl must possess to have undergone what she had undergone, and still be able to face a charging leopard with that puny weapon lying on the grass beside her.

Presently he heard some one approaching, and knew it was the man. When he appeared, he was breathing hard from his exertion, but at sight of the girl he ran forward. "You are all right?" he cried. He had seen the dead leopard lying near her.

"Yes," she replied.

To Tarzan, her manner seemed constrained, and so did that of the man. He did not know what had passed between them just before they had been separated. He could not guess what was in the heart of each; nor could Old-timer guess what was in the heart of the girl. Being a girl, now that the man was safe, she sought to hide her true emotions from him. And Old-timer was ill at ease. Fresh in his mind were the events of the afternoon; ringing in his ears her bitter cry: "I hate you!"

Briefly he told her all that had occurred since the ape had carried him away, and then they planned with Tarzan for the future. He told them that he would remain with them until they had reached the man's camp, or that he would accompany them downriver to the first station; but to Old-timer's surprise the girl said that she would go to his camp and there attempt to organize a new safari, either to accompany her down river or in the further prosecution of her search for Jerry Jerome.

Before night fell, Tarzan had brought meat to the camp, using the bow and arrows that Old-timer had made, and the man and the girl cooked theirs over a fire while the ape-man sat apart tearing at the raw flesh with his strong white teeth. Little Nkima, perched upon his shoulder, nodded sleepily.

CHAPTER XXIII

Converging Trails

EARLY the next morning they started for the river, but they had not gone far when the wind veered into the north, and Tarzan halted. His delicate nostrils questioned the tell-tale breeze.

"There is a camp just ahead of us," he announced. "There are white men in it."

Old-timer strained his eyes into the forest. "I can see nothing," he said.

"Neither can I," admitted Tarzan; "but I have a nose."

"You can smell them?" asked Kali.

"Certainly; and because my nose tells me that there are white men there, I assume that it is a friendly camp; but we will have a look at it before we go too close. Wait here."

He swung into the trees and was gone, leaving the man and the girl alone together; yet neither spoke what was in his heart. The constraint of yesterday still lay heavily upon them. He wanted to ask her forgiveness for having taken her into his arms, for having dared to kiss her. She wanted him to take her into his arms again and kiss her. But

"You are coming with us," she said.

they stood there in silence like two strangers until Tarzan returned.

"They are all right," announced the ape-man. "It is a company of soldiers with their white officers and one civilian. Come! They may prove the solution of all your difficulties."

The soldiers were breaking camp as Tarzan and his companions arrived. The surprised shouts of the black soldiers attracted the attention of the white men,—two officers and a civilian,—who came forward to meet them. As his eyes fell upon the civilian, Old-timer voiced an exclamation of surprise.

"The Kid!" he exclaimed, and then the girl brushed past him and ran forward, a glad cry upon her lips.

"Jerry! Jerry!" she cried, as she threw herself into the Kid's arms.

Old-timer's heart sank. Jerry! Jerry Jerome, his best friend! What cruel tricks fate can play!

When the greetings and the introductions were over, the strange combination of circumstances that had brought them together thus unexpectedly were explained as the story of each was told.

"Not long ago," the lieutenant in command of the expedition explained to Kali, "we heard rumors of the desertion of your men. We arrested some of them in their villages and got the whole story. Then I was ordered out to search for you. We had come as far as Bobolo's yesterday, when we got an inkling of your whereabouts from a girl named Nsenene. We started for the Betete village at once, and met this young man wandering about, lost, just as we were going into camp here. Now you have assured the success of my mission by walking in on me this morning! There remains nothing now but to take you back to civilization."

"There is one other thing that you can do while you are here," said Old-timer.

"And that?" inquired the lieutenant.

"There are two known Leopard Men in the village of Bobolo. Three of us have seen them in the temple of the Leopard God, taking active parts in the rites. If you wish to arrest them, it will be easy."

"I certainly do," replied the officer. "Do you know them by sight?"

"Absolutely," stated Old-timer. "One of them is an old witch-doctor named Sobito, and the other is Bobolo himself."

"Sobito!" exclaimed Tarzan. "Are you sure he is in Bobolo's village?"

"He is the same man you carried away from the temple, the man you called Sobito. I saw him drifting down the river in a canoe the morning after I escaped."

"We shall arrest them both," said the officer; "and now as the men are ready to march, we will be off."

"I shall leave you here," said the ape-man. "You are safe now," he added, turning to the girl. "Go out of the jungle with these men, and do not come back; it is no place for a white girl alone."

"Do not go yet," exclaimed the officer. "I shall need you to identify Sobito."

"You will need no one to identify Sobito," replied the ape-man, and swinging into a tree, he vanished from sight.

"And that is that," said the Kid.

ON the march toward Bobolo's village, the girl and the Kid walked close together, while Old-timer followed dejectedly behind. Finally the Kid turned and addressed him. "Come on up here, old man, and join us; I was

just telling Jessie about a strange coincidence in something I said in Bobolo's village last night. There is a girl there named Nsenene. You probably remember her, Old-timer. Well, she told me about this white girl who was a captive in the pygmy village, and when I showed interest in her and wanted to know where the village was so that I could try to get the girl away from them, the little rascal got jealous. I discovered that she had a crush on me; so I had to think quickly to explain my interest in the white girl, and the first thing that entered my head was to tell her that the girl was my sister. Wasn't that a mighty strange coincidence?"

"Where's the coincidence?" demanded Old-timer.

The Kid looked at him blankly. "Why, didn't you know?" he exclaimed. "Jessie *is* my sister."

Old-timer's jaw dropped. "Your sister!" Once again the sun shone and the birds sang. "Why didn't you tell me you were looking for your brother?" he demanded of Kali.

"Why didn't you tell me that you knew Jerry Jerome?" she countered.

"I didn't know that I knew him," he explained. "I never knew the Kid's name. He didn't tell me, and I never asked."

"There was a reason why I couldn't tell you," said the Kid; "but it's all right now. Jessie just told me."

"You see—" She hesitated.

"Hi," prompted Old-timer.

The girl smiled, and flushed slightly. "You see, Hi," she commenced again, "Jerry thought that he had killed a man. I am going to tell you the whole story, because you and he are such friends.

"Jerry was in love with a girl in our town. He learned one night that an older man, a man with a vile reputation, had enticed her to his apartment. Jerry went there and broke in. The man was furious, and in the fight that followed, Jerry shot him. Then he took the girl home, swearing her to secrecy about her part in the affair. That same night he ran away, leaving a note saying that he had shot Sam Berger, but giving no reason.

"Berger did not die, and refused to prosecute; so the case was dropped. We knew that Jerry had run away to save the girl from notoriety, more than from fear of punishment; but we did not know where he had gone. I didn't know where to look for him, for a long time.

"Then Berger was shot and killed by another girl, and in the meantime I got a clue from an old school friend of Jerry's, and knew that he had come to Africa. Now there was absolutely no reason why he should not return home; and I started out to look for him."

"And you found him," said Old-timer.

"I found something else," said the girl, but he did not catch her meaning.

IT was late when they arrived at the village of Bobolo, which they found in a state of excitement. The officer marched his men directly into the village, and formed them so that they could command any situation that might arise.

At sight of the Kid and Old-timer and the girl, Bobolo appeared frightened. He sought to escape from the village, but the soldiers stopped him, and the officer informed him he was under arrest. Bobolo did not ask why. He knew.

"Where is the witch-doctor called Sobito?" demanded the officer.

Bobolo trembled. "He is gone!"

"Where?" demanded the officer.

"To Tumbai," replied Bobolo. "A little while ago a demon came and carried him away. He dropped into the village from the sky, and took Sobito up in his arms as though he had no weight at all. Then he cried: 'Sobito is going back to the village of Tumbai!' And he ran through the gateway and was gone into the forest before anyone could stop him."

"Did anyone try?" inquired Old-timer with a grin.

"No," admitted Bobolo. "Who could stop a spirit?"

THE sun was sinking behind the western forest, its light playing upon the surging current of the great river that rolled past the village of Bobolo. A man and a woman stood looking out across the water that was plunging westward in its long journey to the sea down to the trading-posts and the towns and the ships, which are the frail links that connect the dark forest with civilization.

"Tomorrow you will start," said the man. "In six or eight weeks you will be home. Home!" There was a world of wistfulness in the simple word.

She came closer to him and stood directly in front of him, looking straight into his eyes. "You are coming with us," she said.

"What makes you think so?" he asked.

"Because I love you, you will come."

THE END

The Silver Bracelet

A lively drama of the West, by the author of that classic short story "Rock of Ages."

By H. C. WIRE

ONLY the driver, and one other man in the long dust-covered stage, knew instantly that it was a hold-up.

The driver knew it, because he saw the blue barrel of a rifle leveled at him through the roadside brush, even before the bandit rose with his order to halt. The man in the rear seat knew it, because this was a thing he had expected. All other passengers thought for a moment that it was just one more stop to let the stage motor cool. It had boiled often this morning here between the hot furnace walls of the Rio Grande.

The stage lurched to a stop with brakes set. A man stepped into the road ahead of it. He was masked with a black cloth, wore greasy nondescript overalls, and kept the rifle at aim from his shoulder. It was then plain enough to every passenger what this was: a hold-up!

"You all sit where you are!" said the man. "Keep your hands up!" He moved to one side and squinted along the rows of occupants. Suddenly he ordered: "You two in the back seat, get out!"

John Austin had expected this. He had not turned gray-haired on the Southwestern deserts for nothing. He had bucked life there, knew it was a grim proposition, and always would be.

"Old Copper John," men called him, and they had seen him most of his days in work-clothes of khaki, and boots, as he went about his copper properties that lay among the red buttes. But now he wore a neat gray suit and looked like a retired banker.

At the bandit's order, John Austin turned to the girl beside him and said quietly: "Don't be frightened, Ellen; it's all right."

Ellen was his daughter, and had much of old Copper John's straight, clean-cut features, and also his direct brown-eyed gaze—though where he was a rugged figure, she was very much as a girl of twenty should be; supple-bodied, lithe in movement, yet wholly feminine. Her hair was long and dark, and winged down to frame the delicate oval of a small lively face.

But at the bandit's curt words a little flicker of fright had crossed her lips.

Again her father said, putting his hand on her knee:

"It's all right, Ellen. We'll get out. I have nothing."

He opened the door, and together they stepped onto the running-board, then down upon the desert dust.

The man in greasy overalls motioned with his rifle-barrel, and jerked his chin at the stage-driver. "You, throw out that gun you've got in your pocket. Quick!"

A blue metal object dropped beside the road as the driver obeyed.

The man kicked it off farther with his boot-toe, and followed it into the brush. "Now, don't move, none of you!" Then to John Austin and the girl, he snapped: "Come over here!"

Standing so that he could cover them with his rifle and keep an eye on the stage as well, he said quickly: "You've got twenty thousand dollars on you, old-timer. Fork it over."

JOHN AUSTIN smiled bleakly. "Sorry, brother—you made a bad guess that time."

The black-masked face bent nearer, its eyes peering through slits that had been slashed with a knife.

"I aint makin' no guess," he growled. "Come on! Shell out!"

Austin shook his gray head.

"Why don't you go through me?" he asked. "If you didn't make a bad guess, then you followed a bum hunch!" Again he smiled. "You see, friend, I followed a hunch too. I had a hunch that too many ears had heard that I sold the Rio Bravo mine for twenty thousand cash. Did you think I was bringing the money out with me? Too bad. All your trouble for nothing. Now search us, and then let us go on."

He held his hands high and continued to smile as the man put greasy fingers in one pocket after another. There was nothing in them save small-change.

The man stepped back.

"Slick, aint you?" he sneered. "Pulled a fast one!"

Behind the eye-slits, his glance shot from Austin to the girl. His masked face remained turned to her, and it seemed that a slow but cunning brain was at work through the moments that he stood silent.

"Huh!" he said suddenly, as if an idea had clicked.

His left hand jerked out and gripped the girl's wrist. She cringed, then stood fixed as a trapped animal. But her dark eyes were turned up to her father's, looking to him in confidence.

He advanced on the bandit. "Take your hand off her!"

The gun chopped up into his face. "Yeah? Stand back, you! Now look here. This girl's goin' with me. Get that? And she'll stay with me till you rustle up your twenty thousand. No hurt to her if you play ball. If you don't—" His shoulders came up in a slow shrug, Mexican-fashion.

"Know where Lone Spruce Tree is?" he went on. "Over on Brazos Mesa?"

YES, John Austin knew where Lone Tree was.

Who did not know? This would not be the first time that the solitary, aged spruce, standing as a landmark for many a mile on the red mesa top, had been made a meeting-place. Campfires of Indians centuries ago had burned there, then those of Spanish *conquistadores*, followed by American hunters, traders, outlaws. Loot had been split more than once beneath the shade of its high branches.

"You come there tomorrow," said the gunman to John Austin. "In daylight. Come alone, see? And bring the money. Your kid'll be taken care of, and she'll be let go then. Now beat it!"

Still gripping the girl's wrist, he drove Austin back to the car. There, standing at the roadside, he snapped: "You, driver, get started and keep movin'."

The stage-driver flung a look back to Austin, as if asking the desert man for orders. Austin nodded. He was again in the rear seat, but with his eyes holding Ellen's, reassuring her.

His nod meant: "Yes, go on." The motor roared, and the stage lurched ahead. It was then that he bent and shouted up front: "Crowd her, kid! For God's sake, hurry!"

Voices of other passengers rose in the jumbled chatter of relieved nerves. Their words were meaningless, until there came one sane cry:

"Get a ranger! Bill Noble! Get Bill!"

IN the gray cube of an adobe that housed the Brazos division of the Texas Rangers three men sat sweltering and muttering their individual comments on the weather, the country, the food and one another.

The weather, they said, was hot—to which each in turn added his version of just how hot it was. The country, all agreed, had gone to the dogs. The food—well, one had found a horse-hair in his beef soup. As for each other—

"Take Bill, there," said one, he who was sprawled full length on a bench, a grizzled, scar-faced man with shirt open, hat dropped on the floor, gun and gun-belt hung on the wall above his head. "Take a ignorant cuss like Bill, who don't scare worth a damn—and what chancet has the rest of us got!"

He rose up on his elbow far enough to wink across at another, of his same desert-hardened looks and lank build. This one nodded from his bench, screwed his tough lips sidewise and squinted at the third figure, who sat bent over a flat-topped desk.

"That's a fact," he echoed. "What chancet have *men* got! They send these schoolboys down here that don't know how to get scairt, make 'em lieutenants, and let 'em go out and grab all the good jobs. Like that one last month! Did we get a chancet to do a little gun-fightin'? No! Says the Loot'nant, 'I'll handle this myself.' Which he does."

"And that other one," the first man offered. "Did we go down—"

Casually Lieutenant Bill Noble weighted the papers on his desk, turned in his swivel chair and grinned.

"Say, you two: go take a walk! Don't you ever get tired of beefing?" His words trailed in a Texas drawl and his smile was mostly a crinkling about the corners of his gray-blue eyes.

Ranger Number One grinned back. "What else have we got to do, Bill? Honest, now—"

The sharp jangle of the telephone cut him short.

Bill Noble swung back and reached for the instrument.

"Brazos patrol," he said. "Lieutenant Noble speaking. . . . *What?*"

Suddenly his thick shoulders hunched a little forward. His head with its shock of tawny, sunburned hair went down.

"What's that?"

He reached for a pad and pencil. For a moment conversation was all from the other end of the wire. Bill sat listening, making an occasional notation in the book.

His expression, usually, was easy-going, good-humored, though never carefree. And Bill Noble's twenty-four years rested upon him lightly, letting him seem even younger at times, when his tanned face broke into a slow boyish grin. Yet in strange contrast, his eyes were never without a tense look. It was something more than the steadiness of his gaze.

That tension deepened now as he bent to the telephone. He finished writing, and swallowed once before answering: "I'll come right over."

He swung about. The two old veterans behind him had stood up and were reaching for gun-belts.

Bill shook his head. "I'll go, boys. Never mind."

They slumped back onto their benches and stared at him.

Bill flipped his belt about his khaki middle, ran his fingers mechanically over the full shell-loops, then hefted his revolver in the holster. He jammed on his hat, stooping a little in going out the door.

The two old-timers broke their silence explosively.

Then said one: "It'd take more 'rithmetic than I've got, to figure that fellow out!"

"Never seen his like," put in the other. "Trouble? It's his meat an' licker."

BILL continued his stride along the adobe-walled street until he came to the stage office. A door marked "Private" opened at his knock, and he entered.

Two men faced him. Bill nodded a friendly "Howdy" to the stage-line manager, but turned to the other man with a sudden exclamation.

"Why, hello, John! What are you doing here? Thought you and Ellen were down the river."

John Austin's handshake was even more gripping than usual. It signaled trouble. A set look on his face cut short Bill Noble's pleased grin.

Lately Bill had been an occasional visitor to the Austin home in Brazos. He had seen old John frequently; they had much in common to talk about, and their friendship had grown. Ellen Austin and young Lieutenant Noble, too, were often spoken of in the same breath; gossip among the adobes said they were engaged. As a matter of fact, however, they were not. For Bill Noble was timid, in some ways.

"JOHN!" said Noble quickly. "What is it?"

Yet he knew only one thing could put that look in the desert man's eyes. "Has something happened to Ellen? Tell me!"

Austin nodded. "Yes." He told of the hold-up.

"What did the fellow look like?" Bill demanded.

Austin described him.

"Greasy Miller!" Bill exclaimed. "Sure, that's him, in those rotten overalls! Did you see anyone else?"

"No."

"Well, he had a partner off in the brush, watching. That would be Tex Benton. They always trail together. Just the two. I've got 'em on my book now—wanted for a job near Del Rio."

Bill gazed out of the office window, his mind flashing to the work ahead. Ellen! That pair! Yet she would be safe for a time. They were after money. He thought of the demand—twenty thousand dollars to be taken to Lone Spruce Tree.

Austin broke into his thought.

"I'll pay them, Billy. Might as well. It's the first time I've ever let a game like that be pulled on me. But where it's Ellen—"

Abruptly Bill faced him. "John, I'm thinking of Ellen too. You know what—no, you don't know what she means to me. But look. You can't let that pair get away with this. They'd try it again. Here! How much do you trust me—my way of work, I mean?"

Copper John considered him with straight gray eyes that narrowed in their intent look of approval.

"What's on your mind?" he asked.

Bill took his arm. "Come outside."

IN the beginning, when the Great Hand scattered seed of buckthorn, chamiso and sage over the new-made plateaus of the Southwest, it came to that red rock country of the Brazos and closed tight. For no seed, save one, fell there.

Mesa-tops lie flat and barren. A man riding across them can be seen an hour away. Even coyotes shun the place, because there is not so much as a crack for them to slink into.

Yet one seed dropped from that closed Hand. Square in the middle of the Brazos mesa-top is an ancient spruce. It stands as straight and tall-trunked as a Christmas tree; with sunrise in its thick needles often making a show of candles.

It was mid-morning when John Austin rode his horse across the miles of open mesa and approached the tree. Presently he passed under the high branches, swung off and looped his tie-rope around the trunk. Then he sat down to wait.

Noon came, then afternoon. It was almost dusk when another horseman appeared from the opposite direction.

He approached at an easy lope, not so fast but that he could scan the mesa minutely as he crossed it. Off at a distance he drew rein and called: "Put your hands up and keep 'em there!"

His own right hand was lowered to the pistol-belt around his greasy overalls. The black cloth with eye-slits masked his face. When Austin had put his hands up, the rider moved in closer.

"Got the money?" he asked at once. "You can put 'em down now. I see you aint packin' a gun."

Austin relaxed his arms. "I'll have the money for you tomorrow. You wanted cash. It'll take until tomorrow for my check to go through the banks."

The man sat hunched in his saddle and said nothing, until suddenly he snapped: "Think you're trickin' me, do you?"

"Not any," said Austin. "Do you figure I'd risk my girl for twenty thousand? I'll be here tomorrow, with the money. That's a promise, and I don't give my word in a lie to any man—not even one like you."

The rider's gun-hand jerked down. But he let it fall past his belt. Again he sat in silence, as if to let a slow wit figure this thing out.

"If I thought you was lyin'—" he began.

"I'll bring the money tomorrow," Austin repeated. "All of it, twenty thousand in cash. You don't expect a bank to hand out that much on a minute's notice, do you?"

The man shrugged. "Well, get goin', then! And come back like you did today, alone. See?"

"Exactly," said Austin. He swung onto his horse, wheeled and loped north.

For some time the man sat sidewise in his saddle, watching. He took down the mask and rolled a smoke. Twilight came rapidly about him, then the edge of darkness advancing like a wall across the mesa-top. Suddenly he spurred his horse and rode south.

Almost at once there came a shower of bark down the old spruce-tree. From a rotted hollow among thick branches halfway up the trunk, a figure emerged and descended. It dropped the last ten feet from the lowest limb. Bill Noble stood squinting into the night.

He moved stiffened arms and winced. Fourteen hours, he had been cramped in that hollow—from the dark of early this morning until now. He stretched his long legs and twisted his body to loosen his painfully stiffened joints.

FROM his high nest he had marked the direction of Greasy Miller's coming. Greasy had loped back almost the same way. Well, then, somewhere due south was the hangout. And the best place due south for a hide-away would be in the sand caves of the Little Dry River.

Bill started south at a jog-trot, a strange-looking ranger in the loose trousers and light moccasins that he had exchanged for the heavier service garb. Through an hour he went on at the shuffling, space-eating gait. But where the mesa began to break down in the beginnings of creek-beds, he turned a little westward. He had been completing plans as he trotted along. Now he had a hunch.

Later, when a dog barked in the half-howl of a coyote, Bill knew he was not far from Indian Tom's. All the old Indian's pack of dogs were crossed with the desert breed.

Bill went ahead cautiously at a walk, one hand on his gun. The dogs were bad; and old Tom might mistake him for a hijacker—no telling. This spot was near the border now, and a place that any man had best come into warily.

It had been several months since a certain day when the Indian and Bill Noble had come together in the Brazos court. But because of that day, and what happened, Bill knew the Indian would not forget him. Perhaps Navajo Tom did make mescal here along the Little Dry River; and perhaps he did drink too much of it now and then. Bill did not argue that.

Yet that day in Brazos, when a mob had wanted to hang somebody for cattle-rustling, and had picked on the old Indian because he was the handiest victim, Bill did argue—and with the use of his two bronze fists.

An Indian of Tom's blood never forgets. So Bill Noble had a hunch, and now in the dark of this night he stalked warily into the ravine that sheltered Tom's wicki-up.

He saw the dogs first, then the round reed-and-mud hut. It was not until he had stopped and stood motionless for several minutes that he saw the man.

Like a tall straight barrel of saguaro cactus, was Tom's figure not ten paces away. He carried a rifle.

"Tom?" said Bill quietly. "Bill Noble, here. I'm Bill. Ranger from Brazos, savvy?"

There was a time of silence. Then a husky voice asked, "What you want?"

"Talk," said Bill. "Want talk you. Me, I'm trouble now. Remember Brazos? I want talk."

The Indian took a step. He emerged from the dark, a lean, long-haired form of about Bill's size, but clothed in rags of cast-off Army khaki. He thrust forward his sharp brown face as he advanced. The rifle was ready in his right hand. Then he grunted.

"You ranger, trouble?"

Bill nodded. "Plenty! Anyone here?"

"No."

"Anyone pass tonight? Horse-rider?"

"No."

"Tom," asked Bill suddenly, "where camp Greasy Miller?"

Thin brown lips shut tight. Black eyes narrowed.

Bill was satisfied that old Tom knew. He jerked his head toward the Indian's wicki-up with its dogs, its hut, and its burro-corral. "Let's go talk."

UNDER the white-hot noontime sun a burro-man toiled along the banks of the Little Dry River. He was cutting hearts of maguey later to be crushed and fermented into pulque.

With an eighteen-inch knife, razor sharp, he slashed off the parts of the plants that he wanted, and tossed them into the woven-willow panniers of his burro. He moved in and out the short draws of the river, along one side, then the other, but always working south. He was lean and long-haired and filthy in the loose-fitting garments thrown into the trash-heap of some border military post; and he urged on the burro in a muttered jargon.

In time he reached a cross ravine larger than the rest, and turned up it. At once a voice snarled from above:

"Say, you! Get back there! Where you think you're goin'?"

His order fell on deaf ears.

"Tom!" the voice snapped. "You get—"

The maguey-cutter stood up from his work and brushed long hair from his eyes. It fell back again. He raised a hand in signal, then reached into one of the willow panniers. Out came a thick brown bottle. He held it up.

"Well," growled the man, "maybe that's different. You stay there. I'll come down."

HIS boots scattered rock as he descended the ravine bank. It took perhaps a minute to reach the bottom. Bill Noble remained a little stooped, the long hair about his face. Then, with the footsteps close above him, he raised his head and peered through the black strings—burro's tail, it was, thick and heavy.

The man was not Greasy Miller; Bill had calculated to arrive at a time when Greasy was again riding to Lone Spruce Tree. Tex Benton was the one striding down. And on Tex Benton's left wrist was a thick silver bracelet. Blue turquoise studded it in a pattern of old Aztec design. In all the Southwest there was no other like it. Bill knew that, for this was one he had found himself and given to Ellen Austin.

What happened within him was the work of a vivid imagination. He saw Tex dragging the bracelet from the girl's arm. And he saw Tex Benton's grin as he touched her, for the man thought he was a woman-charmer.

At half a dozen paces from him, Tex Benton had stopped and was reaching out his hand. "All right," he said, "toss up your bottle. Then get out! You know better'n to come around here."

Bill straightened from his stooped position. Tex saw; a hand flew to his

gun, but his fingers never touched the weapon.

The heavy brush knife flashed once as it hurtled up through the air. Benton grabbed his wrist and doubled with pain. He spun about, caught himself. Then his left hand darted for the gun that his right had missed.

Bill lunged. His outstretched arms met the hard catlike body of the other, and they went in a rolling ball down the ravine bank—two men struggling for the revolver. But in one was the high, wild joy that every son of nature has in battling for his mate. Bill gripped Benton's gun and flung it away. He took a throat hold and hung on. Benton kicked with heavy boots. Bill caught a leg and threatened to tie it in knots. Then he sat upon his man, saw that the knife had struck flatwise and had not made a deep wound, so bound him there in the ravine and left him.

Above, on a ledge of red rock was a cave. Bill scrambled up; inside, he stood staring about a shallow cavity that contained nothing more than a few black cooking-kettles and the necessities of a two-man camp.

He leaped back to the mouth, and then from the air a cry came to him:

"Bill!"

He looked up. A second, smaller cave was above the first, and over the ledge of this a brown head was peering.

"Ellen!"

"Oh! Billy!" It was a gasp; a little, breathless sob of amazed relief. "I knew it! I knew you would come!" Then quickly: "For heaven's sake get me down. There's a knotted rope somewhere."

Bill found it, tossed it up, and on something inside the cave she made a loop fast. She came down then, and two arms met her, and the first thing Bill Noble did was to slip a silver bracelet back upon her wrist.

LATER, when Greasy Miller returned at a run with twenty thousand dollars in his pocket,—for Austin had paid him according to promise,—he met a rifle at the ravine mouth; and Bill Noble was sorry there was no fight.

Later still, the burro's tail removed from his tawny hair, and old Indian Tom's clothing changed for his own, Bill tramped northward across the mesa, his two prisoners trudging sullenly ahead of him, while a girl upon a borrowed burro rode close at his side.

REAL EX-

Most of us have been through at least one tremendously exciting experience. (Haven't you? For details of this prize contest, see page 159.) Here is the story of an enemy submarine that, astonishingly, saved one of its victims.

By **I. W. BUCH**

Rescued by

I JOINED the *Hillcock* in Port Arthur, Texas, as boatswain. The vessel was a tank-boat, and bound for Rotterdam with kerosene.

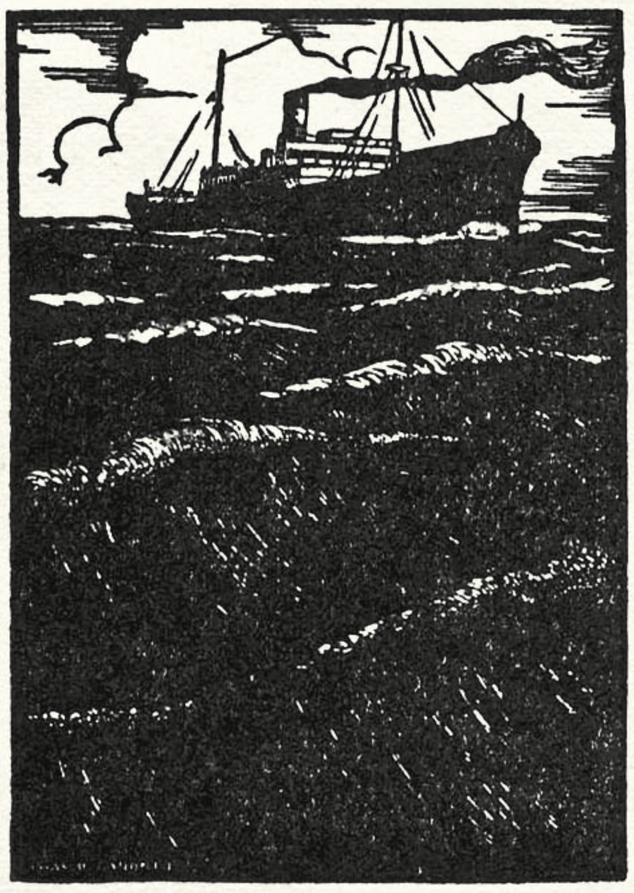
I don't remember the exact time that I joined the vessel; however, our country had entered the war some time before; you would have known that when you saw the two guns, one three-inch on the fo'c'sle-head, and one six-inch aft on the poop-deck; and the vessel carried a gun-crew of twenty-four navy men under the command of a chief gunner.

The *Hillcock* left Port Arthur the day after I had joined. She was a fine vessel, only a year old, and well kept. I remember thinking that it would be too bad if a vessel like her should be torpedoed, and trying to figure out what might happen if the kerosene took fire.

I decided it was no use figuring on that, but made myself a small canvas bag in which I put a change of heavy underwear, socks and a suit of overalls, thinking that it would come in handy in a lifeboat up in the North Sea during the month of October. We were not allowed to take more in the lifeboats.

There wasn't much work done out to sea in those days. Two of the sailors were on lookout night and day, one in the forward crow's-nest and one in the after. Besides, the captain would be on the bridge from fourteen to eighteen hours

PERIENCES



the Enemy

a day, and there would be a mate on watch and the chief gunner also spent most of his time on lookout, and had one gunner forward and one aft; all were using binoculars spying for submarines.

For my part I never had my clothes off on any trip out to sea in the war-zone, and always wore heavy clothes. Now, going up north of Scotland, I was more careful yet, and had my small ditty bag with extra clothes hanging on deck where I could grab it any time.

We had fairly good weather over until we were past the Banks; then we had a heavy blow from the northwest, which lasted several days until we were nearing the north of Scotland; then the wind calmed, but the swell continued and the main deck was awash all the time.

We were heading for Pentland Firth, the strait between Scotland and Orkney Islands, and were expecting to make land the following afternoon. It was about time to knock-off for the day. I was standing at the break of the poop-deck, with a sailor, doing odd jobs, when a terrible explosion shook the ship, and a spout of rusty water and bits of scraps shot high into the air. Something bright went spinning past my head and struck the man by my side. He fell into a heap at my feet—half his head was cut off, and the object which struck him was lying on deck—the propeller of a torpedo.

The following minutes, or seconds, passed quicker than I can write it down. The general alarm-bell was ringing and the whistle blew—signal to man the boats. I forgot my bag hanging ready close by, and I ran for my boat, the one on the port side of the midship boatdeck. The boats were always swung out before getting into the war-zone, and I cut the lashings which kept the boat from swinging. The mate was there; one sailor came running, and a messboy; a little later four gunners from the forward gun came—and that was all. We should have been fifteen men in the boat, but there was no time to wait; they all got into the boat but the sailor and myself; we lowered the boat into the water, then slid down the lifelines.

Our boat was launched fine, but the after boat on the same side lay with the bow up in the air, the tackle still holding on, while the after end of the boat was submerged and the whole crew were in the water. Apparently the fall had got away from the man lowering the after end, and the boat had fallen and thrown the occupants out. We could do nothing to help the others, for we had our hands full keeping our boat off the ship's side. We were on the weather side, and the breeze and heavy swell kept us from coming clear. I was up in the bow pushing with an oar, and had succeeded in swinging the bow out. I had noticed that the vessel was sinking fast, the after end going down, and we were drifting aft to where the maindeck was awash.

"Get your oars out!" the mate called to the gunners. But they were all of them young fellows and not used to boats. It took them some time to get the oars clear, and then one of them knocked my oar out of the rowlock. A heavy swell came, raised the boat, carried it in on the rail of the vessel. There was a crash as the bottom was stove in, then the boat capsized on the deck.

WE crawled around in the water, trying to grab something to keep from being washed about. I made my way, I don't know how, over to the starboard side to look for the other two boats. I saw them about a hundred yards off; the men were pulling for their lives, trying to get away from the suction when the vessel should sink. And it was going down fast. I waved my arms, but saw it was of no use. Then I threw off my coat and dived.

I swam in the direction where I had seen the boats go. Every time a swell came and lifted me up, I could see the boats farther off, but I swam frantically, sometimes high up on the crest of a breaker, then deep down in the trough of the seas, the next instant to be pulled down by the suction as a roller would break over my head. But I kept on, at times swimming under water, and when I came to the surface I cried wildly to those in the boats, although I knew they were too far off now.

I hadn't looked back at the *Hillcock* once, only kept looking ahead for the boats whenever a wave lifted me high up. Suddenly, when I had been under the water for what seemed an eternity, a gray mass raised itself out of the water not thirty feet away. It looked like some monster, but even before a sea washed me down under the surface again, I knew I was close to the submarine that had torpedoed the *Hillcock*.

IT occurred to me that if I let myself be known, they would fire at me, so I swam to one side while I still was under the water; but when I again came up to the surface, the submarine was still closer.

A hatch on the conning-tower was opened, and a man, an officer, came up. He spied ahead with a pair of binoculars. I could get nowhere; the sea kept washing me toward the submarine. The officer turned to call down the hatch, and then he saw me. I remember the surprised look on his hard set face as he stared at me. He was an old man with a long beard which the breeze parted in two. He waved for me to come closer. Apparently he noticed that I was afraid. Just then a roller broke over me, and I swam hard to get to the surface. I had been feeling that it was harder to come to the surface each time I went under. When I again came up, I saw one man going down the ladder from the conning-tower; he carried a small lifebelt with a line attached. When he was down on deck, he threw the lifebelt to me. I grabbed it, and was pulled to the side of the submarine, and climbed on board.

"Come up here!" the officer called in good English. And as I climbed up the ladder to the conning-tower and stood before him, he said: "There are times when even war permits us to be human." There came a wistful look in the old man's eyes. "I have sons bigger than you are." He pulled erect, issued an order in German, took his glasses and looked over my shoulder. As I turned to look in the same direction, I almost fell off my feet from a powerful explosion which shook the conning-tower. On the deck where I had come up only a few seconds before was a big gun, probably a six-inch one; and now it was disappearing almost noiselessly after having fired the shot.

I looked in the direction the officer was looking and knew the reason for the shot. About four or five hundred yards off was the *Hillcock* standing on end with the fore part of the vessel sticking about thirty feet up in the air; but there was a big gaping hole showing through from side to side, where the shell had struck.

"Now your vessel will sink," the old officer said, and turned in the opposite direction and raised the binoculars. "There are your boats."

I turned also and could see both boats; they were about two miles off now, and had set sails. It was getting dark, and the boats would soon be out of sight. The officer gave the engine-telegraph an order that I suppose meant Full Ahead, and called down the speaking-tube to the wheelsman; and soon we were heading for the lifeboats.

In a few minutes we had caught up with the lifeboats and the officer stopped the engines as he waved to those in the boats to come closer. Then he turned to me: "Well, my boy, sorry I can not take you farther: and you will have to swim to the boats—it's too rough for them to come alongside." He then gave me the course to steer to the nearest point we could make and told me good-by. I went down to the deck and looking up at the old officer, I called: "Good-by, and thank you." He held up his hand; his face looked mild, almost tender.

I dived, and with a few strokes I was over to one of the boats and was helped up. The submarine was submerging when I looked back, but there was no sign of the *Hillcock*.

EIGHT men were in this boat—in the other ten; there should have been sixteen in one and fifteen in the other, besides myself. The other two boats were lost with their crew. I was the only one saved from those other boats.

We took the course the officer had given me, and early the following morning, after a hard night, we were picked up by a British patrol-boat. But I shall never forget that swim, nor the old officer who gave me a ride.

A Strange Santa Claus

A boy feeds part of Coxey's army; and this bread cast upon the waters returns to him.

By
Joseph C. Coyle

AS Christmas time draws near again, and I read about a "hunger" army being on the way to the nation's capitol, my mind goes back to one of the happiest Christmases in my life, and a comic yet pathetic incident connected with it, which happened during the march of "General" Coxey's army years ago.

My mother died when I was five. At six I trailed my father into the trackless mountains of western Montana on a search for gold.

Father drew a very small pension from the Government, and we existed mostly on sour-dough bread, salt pork and beans. At times we slept on a bed of boughs, beneath some tall spreading cedar; again we established camp, building a shed from cedar bark. At first I was frightened at the solitude of the forest and the call of mountain lions at night.

However, as the years passed, I became accustomed to the life, and was not afraid. Father taught me to read and write, and I learned to throw a stone with almost the speed and accuracy of a bullet—and many a mess of grouse or "fool-hen" we owed to my skill.

When Coxey's army invaded that part of Montana we had a log cabin at one of our claims about ten miles above St. Regis, and near the river of the same name. One branch of the Northern Pacific railroad traversed that bank of the river from the headwaters, near Saltese.

On freight-trains, hand-cars, push-cars and on foot, the nondescript horde of every nationality and religion (and plenty without religion) flooded the railroad. It was the only way through, for there were no wagon roads. Scrapings of the melting-pot they were, from sixteen to sixty. One day while we were away, a gang broke down the door and took along everything they couldn't eat on the spot. After that Father never left the premises, but sent me to St. Regis for grub when we needed it.

One day my pack consisted solely of potatoes—a special treat made possible by a small sum of back pension Father had received—and a bundle of magazines and late newspapers.

Below the track roared the treacherous waters of the St. Regis River, muddy and swollen with the run-off from the past winter's snows. For days, perhaps weeks, this stream would be impassable.

I sat down, resting the pack on the end of a tie, to take the weight off the shoulder-straps, and was deep in the pages of the San Francisco Weekly *Examiner*, when I became aware of shouts, mingled with the roar of the river. Looking across the rushing stream, I rubbed my eyes in wonder. What a dozen or so scarecrows could be doing on the uninhabited bank of the river, I couldn't figure out! Moreover, these figures were animated. Cloth hanging in strips from most of their legs and arms, the queer-looking company lined up on the river-bank were going through all the antics of bathing beauties on September morn, and with scarcely more clothing.

As my eyes focused on the grotesque assembly, they resolved themselves into men, of all shapes and sizes. A short fat guy at first looked like a hula-hula dancer. Upon close inspection, however, I saw that the tail of the brick-colored coat he wore was torn into ribbons. When he drew it about his chubby form, it gave the unique sea-grass effect. Below the coat a small fringe of tattered underwear was exposed, below that a pair of hairy legs. Shoes he had none. A small, skinny fellow boasted a pair of brogans and a pair of gray pants about four sizes too large, tied to his waist with what looked to be the remnant of his undershirt. Another fellow was attired in a union suit, with, of all things, a shredded linen duster drawn about his spindly form! All wore several days' beard; yet one middle-aged man appeared to have just stepped out of some office into the wilderness. He wore what had been a white shirt and collar, with a tie, and the crotch of a pair of black pants peeped out from under the tattered tail of what had been a good coat of the same color. A battered derby surmounted his bewhiskered face. And so on down the line. Some of them had one article of clothing that had survived the clawing underbrush, others had something else, but no one of the gang was clothed outright.

I couldn't understand a word they said, but the ludicrous pantomime told me they were hungry. I held up one of the spuds, to make them understand that I had nothing else. They indicated that I should throw it. I did so; but in spite of all my skill, it fell short.

But I hadn't reckoned with the pangs of hunger that drove the scarecrow horde. Boldly a gigantic Swede, in torn mackinaw, shredded breeches and high-topped boots, plunged into the raging water, holding out his mitts in approved catcher's form. Another wanderer grabbed the mackinaw coat firmly in both hands. Still another man grasped him, and so they formed a living chain. Once the Swede and the man behind him were swept from their feet, and the others drew them out. Then another husky waded out above the Scandinavian, as a brace and breakwater, and this time they held their position, in swirling water up to their waists.

THE bushel of spuds was almost gone when the Swede signaled that they had enough. On the bank he lifted his right leg, drew his hand back and then forward in the motion of striking a match. I had matches in my pocket—but getting them across the raging river safely was something else. An idea occurred to me, and taking a potato that was perfectly shaped for throwing, I cut a long plug out of one end with my pocket-knife. I rolled half the matches I had tightly in the bill I had received for the spuds, stuck the wad inside the potato, and cutting off most of the plug, I replaced it and pinned it fast with a pin of wood from a railroad tie.

I signaled the human chain to get set. My throwing arm was practically disabled from the strenuous work it had done, but I managed to put the potato in the big Swede's bony hands. Others in the party had been gathering dry twigs, and I'll never forget the husky cheer that arose as they burst into flame and the ragged Coxeyites started rolling in the spuds. I had about a mess left for Dad and me. I knew it would be all right with him when I explained.

ON the next trip to St. Regis I found how the "scarecrow squad" came to be stranded in the wilderness. Either because he was incensed at depredations of the numerous bands of wanderers, or as a practical joke, the railroad agent at Saltese had directed this particular detachment down a dim trail on the uninhabited side of the river, telling them that they would intercept the railroad again a few miles down the river, cutting off several miles by the detour. Squeezing through the laurel thickets along the river-bank, the bunch was almost naked and starved before they won through to St. Regis, crossing the flood on a railroad bridge near the mouth of the river. The potatoes were the first food they had eaten on the strenuous trip.

They had learned my name from the storekeeper at St. Regis, but I had no thought of any return for the spuds until, the day before the next Christmas, the mixed accommodation train slowed down as it passed our cabin, and the baggageman rolled out a good-sized barrel. On the head was my name and address. Some wit had added, "*Them spuds bane good!* OLE AND THE GANG." When or how they got together on the deal, or how many participated, I had no way of learning, but inside that barrel were enough books, toys, clothing and good things to eat to have made a glad Christmas for several boys my age.

In Search of Zapata

The war-correspondent who gave us "The News of Battle" in our last issue, here carries on his interesting story.

By **Gerald Brandon**

THE officer in command of the train taking me back to Mexico City was a chap I knew quite well. We played poker all the way to Salamanca, in the State of Guanajuato, where we were held up by a flood that had washed away the tracks ahead.

Salamanca stands on high ground, but between the railroad and the center of the town there is a strip of valley perhaps half a mile wide, where the floodwaters had extended. This section was built up with adobe huts, the habitations of the poorer class. As the water reached the adobe walls, these would soften and collapse into heaps of mud that quickly disintegrated in the flood.

We stayed before Salamanca for a week, and the water rose and rose. We saw dozens of peons drown before our eyes and before those of the inhabitants of the upper town, who thronged the edge of the rising water with hopeless laments but did nothing to help the victims. There is little water in the high Mexican plateau and its inhabitants never have the opportunity to learn to swim.

At the height of the flood I begged the train commander to let me try a hand at helping the few peons who still survived in the flooded area, clinging to wreckage. He accepted my parole that I would not attempt to escape, and allowed me to seek volunteer helpers among his men. There were ten soldiers who hailed from the coast country and were therefore not afraid of water, and I organized a life-saving corps, stringing life-lines across, and taking off not only thirty-odd men and women, but also a considerable quantity of live-stock and household goods.

Word got around, and the Salamancans came out on their roofs to witness the rescue work. Before perhaps twenty thousand spectators I had an opportunity to pull off a stunt that earned me forgiveness for my political indiscretions. An old Indian couple were huddled on the wreckage of their hut on the far side of a nasty piece of racing water where there was probably an old arroyo bed. We had got our life-lines as far as the edge of this channel, and three times I had attempted to carry a line across, only to be swept back by the pressure of the current on the slack of the rope.

At last I dived in without a rope and buffeted my way across. Taking the woman first, I carried her to my men in the back-wash.

I was pretty well worn out, and the man still remained—a formidable burden; he must have weighed almost two hundred pounds.

The wreckage was disintegrating, and I had to work fast. I noticed that there was a power transmission-line crossing the valley on steel towers. Tying a line to my belt, I climbed a tower and made my way along the wires hand over hand, dangling some forty feet above the rushing waters. Needless to say, I first made sure that there was no current in the wires. The flood had carried away the dam that ran the hydro-electric plant.

Once the rope was across, it was an easy matter to bring in the half-drowned peon—who, instead of thanking me, complained bitterly because I had made him leave behind his water-soaked serape!

When we reached Mexico City, much was made of what, after all, was just a lucky break for me: I was taken directly to the Secretary of War, who accompanied me to the President's palace, where Madero announced that he had exercised the executive prerogative of clemency, and that I was a free man. A week later I was decorated by the Presi-

dent at a function held in my honor at the National Theater.

Madero requested me to keep away from the Chihuahua front for a while, out of consideration for Huerta, so during the next few months I confined my activities to the Zapatista revolution in southern Mexico.

WHILE Huerta was up in Chihuahua driving Pascual Orozco over the border, Emiliano Zapata maintained the states of Morelos, Mexico and Guerrero in constant unrest. One morning an opposition newspaper in Mexico City carried a story stating that Zapatistas had been seen within the Federal District near Xochimilco, and stated that Mount Ajuzco, overlooking the capital, was in their possession.

As the government had recently reported that the Zapatista problem was practically solved save for scattered bands on the border of Guerrero, my paper sent me to skirt the Federal District on horseback, in order to have first-hand information of what was going on.

Mexico City is perched in a valley seventy-eight hundred feet above the sea and surrounded by mountains, the lowest of which is Ajuzco, and the highest Popocatepetl. The valley was formerly a lake and perhaps one third of its area is still occupied by Texcoco and Xochimilco—swamps rather than lakes, great flats covered with hyacinth and lotus, haunts of myriads of water-fowl. Xochimilco is famous for its floating gardens. The natives heap muck from the bottom on intertwining hyacinth roots that float on the surface, and raise thereon the finest flowers and vegetables imaginable.

Sure enough, the Zapatistas had been seen in Xochimilco two days before. They had killed the two local Rurales and taken their horses and arms; had mulcted the village treasury of one thousand dollars in exchange for not doing material damage, and had purchased coffee and salt from the local store, paying in cash. Then, having cut the telegraph wires, they had ridden off toward the Ajuzco. The band numbered about fifty, I was told.

I hired a horse and started toward the Ajuzco, which seemed very near. The horse was not good at mountain-climbing, and most of the time I had to lead him. After a few hours I was frankly lost. The horse was such a handicap that at last I decided to get rid of him, and turned him loose, hiding my saddle in a little dell which I thought I might identify later, and blazing the trees in a circle around it. My blanket and saddle-bags I shouldered. I had only a six-shooter and a hunting-knife as weapons.

Up and down hill I struggled till I was fairly worn out. Night came; I kindled a campfire and made coffee, which with crackers and cheese did me for the time. I was too tired to do more ambitious cooking, and I fell asleep.

Suddenly I was awakened by the jar of a rifle-butt on the soles of my feet. Four fantastic figures grabbed me, gagged me and put me on a horse without uttering a word. I had found the Zapatistas.

A couple of hours later we reached a camp and I was allowed to dismount. I tried to talk to my captors, but they were like graven images.

"Wait till the General comes. He will talk to you," was all the answer I got.

At about three in the morning the General arrived at camp, routing out his men for a raid. He was told of my presence.

"We will take him along," he said; and they did—again gagging and blindfolding me, and putting me on a horse.

I never have had such a dreadful ride. The pony, unlike the one I had abandoned a few hours before, must have been crossed with a mountain sheep, judging by the way he scrambled up and down precipices that I sensed, since I could not see. It seemed incredible to me, bred in the saddle as I was, that I found it impossible to coördinate with my pony's gait. Try riding blindfolded across-country, and you will see what I mean.

The Zapatistas halted at the edge of a clearing, and I was left under guard. Pretty soon shots were heard, and fearful screams. Then through my blindfold I felt a glare. They had set fire to the hacienda. Then my captors returned, and we again set off at breakneck speed through the defiles of the forest.

The General, to my intense surprise, was no Mexican, but a Syrian. He had been an itinerant peddler and had been robbed by the government troops; whereupon he joined the rebels. He was a big chap and fairly educated and had immediately risen to command a company of his own. At this time he had some two hundred men, mostly charcoal-burners, who would ply their trade as noncombatants in the daytime, but

raid with him in the night. He acknowledged allegiance to Zapata but had never met him and was not anxious to, in view of Zapata's decided aversion to foreigners.

The General was glad to have me with him. He was lonely and wanted some one to talk to, for his men were like brutes. Few of them had ever left the forests of Ajuzco even to visit Mexico City fifty miles away.

After a few days I begged leave of the General to return to the city, but he was afraid to let me go. I knew too much of his movements, and he was not quite sure that I was what I represented myself to be. He begged me not to insist, or he would have to shoot me for his own protection.

The Syrian kept me with him for three weeks. One day he sent some men down to a village to buy coffee, and the package came wrapped in an old newspaper that carried my picture and the story of my relief work among the peons at Salamanca. I was vindicated. Not only I was no spy, but I was a friend of the poor and downtrodden. I was free to go where I willed.

The Syrian suggested that I try to get in touch with Zapata, and asked me to tell the revolutionary leader what a good man he, the Syrian, was. The prospect was inviting. No newspaper man had ever succeeded in reaching Zapata in his native haunts.

I was passed on from one Zapatista band to another for about a week, then at last I came into the presence of Emiliano Zapata. My newspaper clipping was read to him, and he accepted me as a friend. I stayed with him two weeks and witnessed half a dozen raids on villages and haciendas. It would have been a grand sport save for the strain of seeing prisoners tortured and executed, and valuable property destroyed by fire.

However, I figured out a great scheme to make myself some big money. Why not take moving pictures of these raids? They would be worth a fortune.

I sold the idea to Zapata as a publicity stunt, telling him that if the rest of Mexico knew the extent of his operations, his cause would be helped. He saw the point, and authorized me to return to Mexico to bring back a camera and a camera-man. I was to keep in touch with him through various agents in the settled district.

Back in Mexico City, I interested two kindred spirits in the adventure; we purchased camera and film and spent a few weeks learning to use it. When we announced our departure the local Press Club,—of which I was vice-president, and my partner Ignacio Herrerias president,—gave us a peach of a farewell spread. My other partner was Joe Rivera, an American of Mexican descent, from Los Angeles.

I LEFT Mexico City alone, in order to communicate with Zapata's agent as had been agreed. He told me where to go, and I wired my partners to meet me at a certain destination with the equipment. I went on ahead to get horses. The train should have brought my friends at five the next afternoon, but it did not show up. The wires were dead. Probably another Zapatista raid. I rode down the track the following day for about twenty miles—and found the wrecked train and the bodies of forty soldiers and sixty passengers. The bodies had been stacked like firewood, drenched with oil from the engine and set ablaze. I was unable to identify my friends, but took pictures of the wreck and the funeral pyres.

I had been very fond of the two boys, and felt in a measure responsible for their deaths. Though not naturally of a vengeful nature, I was prompted to avenge them, and rode into the next garrisoned village and offered my services to the officer in command. There were forty soldiers in that village, quartered in the church, and using the belfry as a look-out.

A few days later, at nightfall, we spied a mass of people streaming along the road a mile away. As soon as they came within range, the soldiers opened fire with a machine-gun, and sent up rockets to tell neighboring garrisons that we were being attacked.

Next morning a couple of hundred Federals had come to reinforce us, and we emerged from our stronghold to reconnoiter. They found the machine-gun had killed some dozens of old men, women and children, who, fleeing the Zapatistas, had come to take refuge in our village.

My thirst for blood evaporated. I wanted to get back to Mexico City; and disguising myself as a peon charcoal-burner, driving a burro, I set out afoot to cover the two-hundred-mile journey. The railroad had not yet been repaired after the Ticuman massacre.

(More of these interesting experiences will appear in an early issue.)

Lucky

The vivid account of ninety seconds during which "there was not time for personal fear."

By E. E. Bon Durant

FOR several years I was employed by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Co. at their lime quarries at Calcite, Colorado. My position with them at that time was that of powder foreman, and my duties consisted chiefly of taking charge of all blasting in the four quarries located in two adjoining cañons in the Sangre de Christo Range.

In Quarry No. 1, the height of the solid lime ledge was over four hundred feet.

In making the big shots on the face of the ledge, men were first let down by rope from the top to clean off loose rock above the location of the hole. With jack hammers (small drills run by compressed air), holes were made into the face of the ledge. Pieces of steel were put in these holes and projected out far enough to hold a platform on which rested the big old-type piston machines which we used at that time for deep drilling.

With these machines holes were drilled up to twenty-two feet deep. After a series of deep holes had been drilled, the machine was removed.

The "spring gang" then loaded each hole with a small charge of dynamite and exploded it. This was repeated from three to six times, increasing the charge each time, until the hole was properly chambered to hold the amount of black powder required to pull the burden.

The holes were then ready for loading, but I never allowed them to be loaded with black powder the same day they were chambered, because of the intense heat generated by the dynamite explosions. When the holes were filled with black powder, electric detonators were inserted and attached to wires leading away to the batteries behind some shelter.

All pit-cars were then run out of the quarry, and tracks removed from the floor. At the end of the shift, when all workers and bosses were out of range, I gave the signal and my men pushed down the handles of the batteries. *Boom!*

Those who watched from a safe distance might see a great portion of the ledge move straight out as in a solid mass, and then, without losing altitude, disintegrate into a million pieces. It seemed to crumble, and yet did not fly apart. Black smoke and dust rolled through the innumerable new-made crevices and enveloped it, just as gravity overcame the outward thrust of the explosive and caused the whole to drop. Almost the entire mass fell at the foot of the ledge from which it had been shot.

On the afternoon of August 4th we had such a series of holes as I have described, ready for shooting, high in the solid of Quarry No. 1. Beneath, over in the corner of the quarry, was an individual hole intended to take out a bench about twelve feet in height, which was interfering with a rearrangement of tracks on the floor. This hole, as well as thirty to forty block-holes, was to be shot before the signal would be given for the detonation of the upper series.

During the operation of springing the individual hole, it had opened up a crack in the ledge. This was nothing unusual. The hole itself was about sixteen feet deep, and after examining it, we loaded it with eight kegs of black powder.

All the batteries were in use at this time, either for heavy springing or for the holes above, so we put in a fuse and cap. I told the men who were to operate the batteries above that we would first fire the lower shots, then I would signal.

The six o'clock whistle blew, and every-

(Continued on page 160)

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one started to leave the quarry except the force which was to light the block-holes, A. E. Higgins, pit boss of Quarry No. 1, and me.

Although I always supervised the work of my men, I had not myself lit a fuse for months. Now, because the men would be hurried to get all the block-holes lighted, I climbed up on the twelve-foot bench and gave the signal for them to start lighting. One of the men, an Italian, stooped to light the fuse in a boulder directly beneath me as I stood ready to light the individual hole in the bench.

The fuse had already been split, and a bit of dynamite inserted to insure easy lighting. I stooped and touched a match to the fuse. Now, in loading a hole with black powder a few grains usually fall outside the hole. If the firing is then accomplished by means of a battery, no harm is done; but in this case, a fuse was used.

The instant the flame from the match touched the fuse, a minute particle of burning dynamite dropped from it. The grains of black powder into which it fell, flashed up. Then I saw a faint flash of light in the crack in the ledge. Instantly I knew that explosion would take place at once. It did.

Even as I straightened and turned to leap, my mind was registering every detail, and was working with a speed and clearness it has never equaled except in other moments of extreme danger. I realized just what the force over which I stood would do to the rock which opposed it—how tons of that rock would suddenly be disintegrated into dust and fragments.

The one brief glance I got before I was shut in by the smother of smoke and dust from the explosion showed me the Italian raising himself from the block-hole he had lit. I recognized his danger, and was conscious of a feeling of responsibility for his situation. Oddly enough, I felt no fear for myself. Perhaps there was not time for personal fear.

The rock rose beneath my feet, and immediately I was enveloped in choking black smoke and dust. I seemed still to be in an upright position, with the rock still pressing against the soles of my feet as I shot through the air. There was barely time to feel surprise that I was alive, before I was thrown through, and beyond, the rolling smoke. I lit on my feet, running, on the quarry floor, about a hundred feet from the site of the shot.

The sense of responsibility for the Italian was still so heavy in my mind that as quickly as I could check my momentum, I wheeled and ran back into the cloud that rolled just behind me. There was no time to lose, as the block-holes were all lighted.

Art Higgins, who had started leisurely toward a shelter, had not yet reached it and at the first sound of the premature explosion turned to face the storm of rock that hurtled over and around him. The flash of amazement which he said he felt at seeing me dash out of the smoke, was quickly changed to dismay when I plunged back into it. He felt sure that the Italian was both dead and buried, and judged by my actions that my brain was injured. "My God!" he exclaimed. "He's gone back for his hat!"

Without a moment's hesitation he rushed into the smoke after me, and followed through the rocks that were rolling in our path, straight to the Italian. He lay sprawled on his stomach across the block-hole he had lighted not more than twenty seconds before. Together, we carried the unconscious man over and around the débris, through smoke and dust that made breathing very nearly impossible.

The block-holes were going when we got him through the door of the powder shack. Since we were using fuse cut to allow one and one-half minutes from time of lighting until explosion, the entire proceedings had occurred in that time.

The men who had been lighting block-holes, except the Italian who was injured, had been protected from the premature shot by a shoulder of the quarry, and had run out of danger.

THE doctor came up and looked me over. My back, legs and arms were thickly covered with what looked like large water-blisters, but they were filled with *air* instead of water. We were at a loss to know how to account for them, but in a few hours they had entirely disappeared. My hair was filled with sand and gravel. My hat, which I had picked up later, was as full of small holes as if it had been shot with a shotgun at close range. But except for a soreness in my scalp and chest, not one ill effect was apparent forty-eight hours later.

The Italian's skull was fractured, and there were other injuries. Some months later he returned to his job at Calcite, a long white scar showing on his scalp.

To the old friends of quarry days I am still known as "Lucky Bon Durant," in memory of the *fullest* minute and a half I ever spent.

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By FREDERICK R. BECHDOLT

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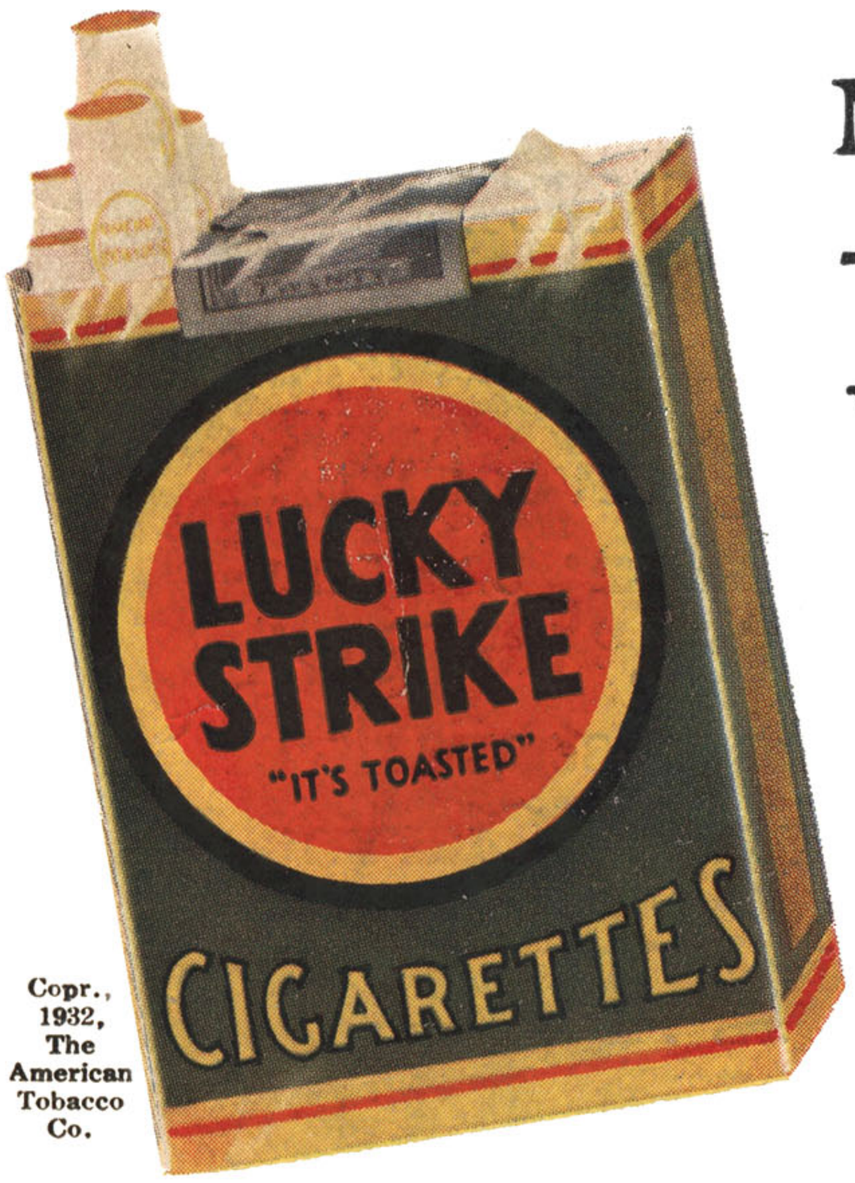
In the next (the February) issue



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